

LGBTQ Glossary of Terms

Adapted from the Human Rights Campaign, July 2016, with some definitions from Gender Wiki. Please use the list of living language as a reference resource, but know that no list can be inclusive of all LGBTQ-related terms or encompass all definitions of identities and experiences.

General Terms

Ally | A person who is not LGBTQ but actively shows support and consistently promotes equality.

Closeted | Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Coming out | The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

LGBTQ | An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer.”

Living openly | A state in which LGBTQ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.

Outing | Exposing someone’s lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

Queer | A term people often use to express fluid identities and orientations. Often used interchangeably with "LGBTQ." **Some people do not use this term because of its history as a slur. Allies should be especially thoughtful when using the word “queer.”

Questioning | A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

* | Some people use an asterisk (*) to indicate expansiveness, such as with trans*. Many people feel the * is not a symbol of inclusion, but rather marginalization. Allies should respect a person’s choice to use or not use the *.

Gender Related Terms

Agender | Agender is a term which can be literally translated as 'without gender'. It can be seen either as a non-binary gender identity or as a statement of not having a gender identity.

Androgynous | Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

Binary | The gender binary is a term used to describe the idea that there are only two possible genders, man and woman, which can be assigned on the basis of genitalia. This system often also enforces masculinity for men and femininity for women through gender roles and socially-imposed restrictions to gender expression and sex characteristics.

Cisgender | A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Deadname | Deadnaming is the act of referring to a transgender person's birth name instead of their chosen name. Many consider deadnaming to be a form of transphobia.

Gender dysphoria | Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term - which replaces Gender Identity Disorder - "is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

Gender-expansive | Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.

Gender expression | External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Genderfluid | a person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

Gender identity | One’s innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Related Terms, continued

Gender non-conforming | A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Genderqueer | Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender transition | The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.

Intersex | (not necessarily a gender-related term) refers to a person who may not fall within what is typically assigned male or female based on anatomy, hormones, chromosomes, or other aspects of the body. About 1.5% of the population is intersex.

Misgender | Misgendering describes any situation in which a person is referred to as, or implied to be, a gender other than their gender identity. This includes using the wrong form of gendered language, such as pronouns or titles, but can also include challenging someone's right to be in a gender-restricted area such as a public bathroom.

Spectrum | The gender spectrum at its simplest is a line of possibility drawn between "male" and "female" and at its most complex is an infinite dimensional vector space. The term is often to validate that there are more than two genders and that there are infinite ways to express yourself and your identities.

Trans, transgender | An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transphobia | The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people.

Sexual/Romantic Orientation-Related Terms

Aromantic | The lack of a romantic attraction or desire for other people.

Asexual | The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.

Biphobia | Prejudice, fear or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

Bisexual | A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Demisexual | A term to describe someone who may feel sexual attraction for other people only after establishing a romantic bond.

Gay | A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender.

Grey-romantic | A term to describe someone who may feel some romantic attraction for other people.

Grey-sexual | A term to describe someone who may feel some sexual attraction for other people.

Homophobia | The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

Lesbian | A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women.

Pansexual | A term for a person who may be attracted to people of any birth-assigned sex or gender identity or expression, including those outside the gender binary.

Polysexual | A term for a person who may be attracted to multiple genders, including those outside the gender binary.

Same-gender loving | A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. (ex: "women-loving woman" / WLW or "man-loving man" MLM)

Sexual orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring sexual attraction to others

Romantic orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring romantic or emotional attraction to others