

LGBTQ+ Glossary of Living Language

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 experiences.

General Terms

Ally | A person who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. Includes straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (for example, a lesbian who is an ally to the transgender community). Someone who uses their privilege to actively show support and consistently promote equality.

Closeted | Describes an LGBTQ+ person who has not shared their sexual orientation and/or gender identity with others.

Coming out | The process of acknowledging, accepting, and appreciating one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, and beginning to share that with others.

Intersectionality | Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw, refers to the interconnected nature of social categories (such as sexual orientation, gender, and especially race) as they create interdependent systems of discrimination and unequal access to power. This term is often misused to simply state that people have different identities and to ignore racism.

LGBTQ+ | An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and other minoritized sexual and gender identities. Other acronyms include LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTQIA, GLBT, or LGBTQQIP2SAA. Be sure the language used is accurate to those you describe.

Living openly | Describes LGBTQ+ people who are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.

Outing | Exposing someone's LGBTQ+ identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

Privilege | The sociological concept that some groups of people have advantages relative to other groups.

Queer | A term often used to express fluid identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Often used interchangeably with LGBTQ+ or as a catch-all to include many people who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. Some people do not use "queer" because of its history as a slur, although it has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement. Allies should be thoughtful when using this word.

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

Two-Spirit | An umbrella, code-switching term used to describe Native American and First Nation social roles outside of the Western male/female and heteronormative sex binary. Some, but not all, Two Spirit people identify as LGBTQ+.

Gender-Related Terms

Agender | Translated as 'without gender,' agender can be a non-binary gender or a state of not having a gender identity.

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

Binary | The gender binary is a system of two and only two possible genders, man/male and woman/female, which are assigned on the basis of genitalia. This system can be used to socially-impose restrictions to gender expression and sex characteristics.

Cisgender | A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. The prefix cis- means “on this side of” (as opposed to trans-, meaning “on the other side of”).

Deadname | Deadnaming is the act of referring to a transgender person's birth name instead of their chosen name. Deadnaming can be a form of transphobia and can lead to dangerous situations if the person is outed, especially in public.

Gender dysphoria | Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. Gender dysphoria is listed in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and can be a required diagnosis before accessing transition-related health care. Please note that not all trans people experience dysphoria and that being trans is an identity, *not* a diagnosis.

Gender-expansive or **gender diverse** | Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring their gender expression and/or gender identity.

Gender expression | External appearance of one's identity expressed through behavior, style, voice, etc. May or may not conform to socially defined behaviors/characteristics typically associated with masculinity, femininity, or androgyny.

Genderfluid | A person who does not identify with a fixed gender; a person having or expressing a fluid 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 assigned sex.

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 gender identity with their 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, medical transitions to modify their bodies.

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 physical aspects. About 1.7% of people are intersex.

Nonbinary | An umbrella term referring to those who identify outside of the male/female gender binary. Sometimes identifying as male and female, neither male nor female, or another gender entirely. Some non-binary people identify as trans, some do not. Some may use the term "enby" (sounds like N B) to describe themselves.

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.

Sex Assigned at Birth, Assigned Sex | The identity assigned to someone at birth, typically by a doctor, based on one's external anatomy. In the US, it is common practice to assign a child "male" or "female," even if the child is intersex.

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 used 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. Trans and transgender are adjectives (e.g., transgender man or trans man, not transgendered or transman).

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

Sexual/Romantic Orientation-Related Terms

Aromantic | Describes a person who does not experience romantic attraction or desire for other people. Some may use the term “aro” (sounds like ay-roe).

Asexual | Describes a person who experiences little, no, or conditional sexual attraction or desire for other people. Sometimes shortened to “ace.”

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

Bisexual, biromantic | A person attracted to more than one gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Some may use the term “bi.”

Demisexual | A term to describe someone who feels sexual attraction for others only after establishing a romantic bond. Some may use the term “demi.”

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 | Prejudice, fear or hatred toward people who are attracted to members of the same sex.

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

Omnisexual, omniromantic | A term for a person attracted to all genders; however, gender is a factor in attraction.

Pansexual, panromantic | A term for a person attracted to people regardless of their assigned sex, gender identity or expression, including those out of the gender binary.

Polysexual, polyromantic | A term for a person sexually attracted to multiple gender identities or expressions, including those out of the binary.

Same-gender loving/SGL | Coined for African-American use by Cleo Manago in the 1990s: an Afrocentric term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

Sexual orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring sexual attraction to others, independent of one’s own gender identity.

Romantic orientation | An inherent or immutable enduring romantic or emotional attraction to others, independent of one’s own gender identity.