

LGBTQIA++ Terms

Advocate – (noun) (1) a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. (verb) (2) to actively support/plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance, educate others, etc.

Ally – (noun) a (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports, and respects for members of the LGBTQ community. While the word doesn't necessitate action, we consider people to be active allies who take action upon this support and respect, this also indicates to others that you are an ally.

Androgyny/ous – (adj; pronounced “an-jrah-jun-ee”) (1) a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; (2) occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy

Androsexual/Androphilic – (adj) attraction to men, males, and/or masculinity

Aromantic – (adj) is a person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in forming romantic relationships.

Asexual – (adj) having a lack of (or low level of) sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners. Asexuality exists on a spectrum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex to those who experience low levels and only after significant amounts of time, many of these different places on the spectrum have their own identity labels. Another term used within the asexual community is “ace,” meaning someone who is asexual.

Bigender – (adj) a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (and sometimes a third gender)

Bicurious – (adj) a curiosity about having attraction to people of the same gender/sex (similar to questioning).

Biological Sex – (noun) a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned [or designated] at birth.”

Biphobia – (noun) a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have/express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the queer community as well as straight society. Biphobic – (adj) a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards bisexual people.

Bisexual – (adj) a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women. Other individuals may use this to indicate an attraction to individuals who identify outside of the gender binary as well and may use bisexual as a way to indicate an interest in more than one gender or sex (i.e. men and genderqueer people). This attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders or sexes an individual may be attracted to.

Butch – (noun & adj) a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Cisgender – (adj; pronounced “siss-jendur”) a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and male-assigned). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not trans*, they are cisgender.

Cisnormativity – (noun) the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

Closeted – (adj) an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. (See coming out)

Coming Out – (1) the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). (2) The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

Constellation – (noun) the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship.

Cross-dresser – (noun) someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

Demisexual – (noun) an individual who does not experience sexual attraction unless they have formed a strong emotional connection with another individual. Often within a romantic relationship.

Drag King – (noun) someone who performs masculinity theatrically.

Drag Queen – (noun) someone who performs femininity theatrically.

Dyke – (noun) a term referring to a masculine presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it can be adopted affirmatively by many lesbians (and not necessarily masculine ones) as a positive self-identity term

Emotional/Spiritual Attraction – (noun) an affinity for someone that evokes the want to engage in emotional intimate behavior (e.g., sharing, confiding, trusting, interdepending), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-non, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction and sexual attraction.

Fag(got) – (noun) derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. Occasionally used as a self-identifying affirming term by some gay men, at times in the shortened form ‘fag’.

Feminine Presenting; Masculine Presenting – (adj) a way to describe someone who expresses gender in a more feminine or masculine way, for example in their hair style, demeanor, clothing choice, or style.

Not to be confused with Feminine of Center and Masculine of Center, which often includes a focus on identity as well as expression.

Feminine of Center; Masculine of Center – (adj) a word that indicates a range of terms of gender identity and gender presentation for folks who present, understand themselves, relate to others in a more feminine/masculine way. Feminine of center individuals may also identify as femme, submissive, transfeminine, or more; masculine of center individuals may also often identify as butch, stud, aggressive, boi, transmasculine, or more.

Femme – (noun & adj) someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman .

Fluid(ity) – (adj) generally with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight).

FtM / F2M; MtF / M2F – (adj) abbreviation for female-to-male transgender or transsexual person; abbreviation for male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

Gay – (adj) (1) a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. More commonly used when referring to males/men-identified ppl who are attracted to males/men-identified ppl, but can be applied to females/women-identified ppl as well. (2) An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

Gender Binary – (noun) the idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

Gender Expression – (noun) the external display of one's gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as "gender presentation."

Gender Fluid – (adj) gender fluid is a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days.

Gender Identity – (noun) the internal perception of an one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) – (adj) someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, does not align in a predicted fashion with gender-based expectations.

Gender Normative / Gender Straight – (adj) someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society's gender-based expectations.

Genderqueer – (adj) a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid). Genderqueer people may think of themselves as one or more of the following, and they may define these terms differently:

may combine aspects man and woman and other identities (bigender, pangender);

not having a gender or identifying with a gender (genderless, agender);

moving between genders (genderfluid);

third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender having an overlap of, or blurred lines between, gender identity and sexual and romantic orientation.

Gender Variant– (adj) someone who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender-queer, cross-dresser, etc.).

Gynesexual/Gynephilic – (adj; pronounced “guy-nuh-seks-shu-uhl”) attracted to woman, females, and/or femininity

Heteronormativity – (noun) the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities. Often included in this concept is a level of gender normativity and gender roles, the assumption that individuals should identify as men and women, and be masculine men and feminine women, and finally that men and women are a complimentary pair.

Heterosexism – (noun) behavior that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than queerness, or makes other sexualities invisible

Heterosexual – (adj) a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex. Also known as straight.

Homophobia – (noun) an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have towards members of LGBTQ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. The term is extended to bisexual and transgender people as well; however, the terms biphobia and transphobia are used to emphasize the specific biases against individuals of bisexual and transgender communities.

Homosexual – (adj) a [medical] term used to describe a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This term is considered stigmatizing due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

Intersex – (noun) someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. In the medical care of infants the initialism DSD (“Differing/Disorders of Sex Development”). Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now considered outdated and derogatory.

Lesbian – (noun) a term used to describe women attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

LGBTQ / GSM / DSG / + – (noun) initialisms used as shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ

is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer (sometimes people add a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Genders and Sexualities. Other popular options include the initialism GLBT and the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans* Bisexual Asexual [or Allied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]).

Lipstick Lesbian – (noun) Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is assumed to be (or passes for) straight.

Metrosexual – (noun & adj) a man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative.

Masculine of Center – (adj) a word that indicates a range of personal understanding both in terms of gender identity and gender presentation of lesbian/queer women who present, understand themselves, relate to others in a more masculine way. These individuals may also often identify as butch, stud, aggressive, boi, trans-masculine among other identities.

MSM / WSW – (noun) initialisms for “men who have sex with men” and “women who have sex with women,” to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities (e.g., because a man is straight, it doesn’t mean he’s not having sex with men). Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

Mx. – (typically pronounced mix) is a title (e.g. Mr., Ms., etc.) that is gender neutral. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the cisgender binary.

Outing – (verb) involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

Pansexual – (adj) a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions

Passing – (verb) (1) a term for trans* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their self-identified gender/sex identity (regardless of birth sex). (2) An LGB/queer individual who can be believed to be or perceived as straight.

Polyamory/Polyamorous– (noun/adj) refers to the practice of, desire to, or orientation towards having ethically, honest, consensually non-monogamous relationships (i.e. relationships that may include multiple partners). This may include open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves more than two people being in romantic and/or sexual relationships which is not open to additional partners), amongst many other set ups. Some poly(amorous) people have a “primary” relationship or relationship(s) and then “secondary” relationship(s) which may indicate different allocations of resources, time, or priority.

Questioning (verb, adjective) – an individual who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

Romantic Attraction – (noun) an affinity for someone that evokes the want to engage in relational intimate behavior (e.g., flirting, dating, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-non, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction or emotional/spiritual attraction.

Same Gender Loving / SGL – (adj) a term sometimes used by members of the African-American / Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

Sexual Attraction – (noun) an affinity for someone that evokes the want to engage in physical intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-non, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction or emotional/spiritual attraction.

Sexual Orientation – (noun) the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to (often mistakenly referred to as sexual preference)

Sexual Preference – (1) the types of sexual intercourse, stimulation, and gratification one likes to receive and participate in. (2) Generally when this term is used, it is being mistakenly interchanged with “sexual orientation,” creating an illusion that one has a choice (or “preference”) in who they are attracted to

Sex Reassignment Surgery / SRS – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s biological sex. “Gender confirmation surgery” is considered by many to be a more affirming term. In most cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Some refer to different surgical procedures as “top” surgery and “bottom” surgery to discuss what type of surgery they are having without having to be more explicit.

Skoliosexual – (adj) attracted to genderqueer and transsexual people and expressions (people who don’t identify as cisgender)

Stud – (noun) an term most commonly used to indicate a Black/African-American and/or Latina masculine lesbian/queer woman. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive’.

Third Gender – (noun) a term for a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. This gender category is used by societies that recognise three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

Top Surgery – (noun) this term refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest or breast augmentation for a female-type chest.

Trans*/Transgender – (adj) (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an * is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on sex assigned at birth.

Transition(ing) – (noun & verb) this term is primarily used to refer to the process a trans* person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

Transman ; Transwoman – (noun) An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transgender people or transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as assigned female

sex at birth. (sometimes referred to as transguy) (2) Identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals or transgender people to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as assigned male sex at birth.

Transphobia –(noun) the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society.

Transsexual – (noun & adj) a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

Transvestite – (noun) a person who dresses as the binary opposite gender expression (“cross-dresses”) for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification (often called a “cross-dresser,” and should not be confused with transsexual)

Two-Spirit – (noun) is an umbrella term traditionally used by Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders

Ze / Hir – alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some trans* people. Pronounced /zee/ and /here/ they replace “he” and “she” and “his” and “hers” respectively. Alternatively some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun “they/their” as a gender neutral singular pronoun.