

## LGBTQ+ Glossary | Gender Identities, Orientations & Terms

**Abrosexual:** An individual that has a fluid and/or rapidly changing sexuality that fluctuates between different sexualities.

**Affirmed gender:** The gender by which one wishes to be known. This term is often used to replace terms like *new gender* or *chosen gender*, which imply that an individual's gender was not always their gender or that the gender was chosen rather than simply in existence.

**Agender:** Refers to a person who does not identify with any gender.

**Ally:** A term used to describe someone who is supportive of LGBTQ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Whereas allies to the LGB community typically identify as straight, allies to the transgender community also come from the LGBTQ community. Transgender individuals who identify as straight can be allies to the LGB community as well.

**Androgyne:** An androgynous individual.

**Androgynous:** Typically used to describe a person's appearances or clothing as having elements of both femininity and masculinity.

**Aromantic:** Refers to an individual who does not experience romantic attraction.

**Asexual:** Refers to an individual who does not experience sexual attraction. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction, and arousal somewhat differently. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are chosen behaviors, in that asexuality is a sexual orientation that does not necessarily entail either of those behaviors.

**Assigned sex:** The sex that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics.

**Assigned gender:** The gender that is assigned to an infant at birth which is meant to correspond to the child's assigned sex.

**Assumed gender:** The gender others assume an individual to be based on the sex they are assigned at birth, as well as apparent gender markers such as physical build, voice, clothes, and hair.

**Bear Community:** a part of the queer community composed of queer men similar in looks and interests, most of them big, hairy, friendly and affectionate. The community aims to provide spaces where one feels wanted, desired, and liked. It nourishes and values an individual's process of making friends, of learning self-care and self-love through the unity and support of

the community. Bears, Cubs, Otters, Wolves, Chasers, Admirers and other wildlife comprise what has come to be known as the Brotherhood of Bears and/or the Bear community. See also: Ursula

**Bigender:** Someone who identifies with both male and female genders, or even a third gender.

**Biological sex:** Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that determine if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, genes, and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often confused or interchanged with gender, which involves personal identity and social factors, and is not determined by biological sex.

**Biphobia:** Prejudice, fear or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

**Bisexual:** Refers to an individual who has the capacity for attraction—sexually, romantically, emotionally, or otherwise—to people with the same, and to people with a different, gender and/or gender identity as themselves. People who identify as bisexual need not have had equal experience- or equal levels of attraction- with people across genders, nor any experience at all: it is merely attraction and self-identification that determine orientation. Bisexuality, as it is frequently used today, can act as an umbrella term that encapsulates many identities such as pansexual. Sometimes referred to as *bi* or *bi+*.

**BlaQ/BlaQueer:** Folks of Black/African descent and/or from the African diaspora who recognize their queerness/LGBTQIA identity as a salient identity attached to their Blackness and vice versa. (T. Porter)

**Butch:** A gender expression that fits societal definitions of masculinity. Usually used by queer women and trans people, particularly by lesbians. Some consider “butch” to be its own gender identity.

**Cisgender:** Refers to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the one typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Closeted:** Describes a person who is not open about 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.

**Demisexual:** Similar to asexual people, as they do not feel sexual attraction, but they may develop sexual attraction towards someone once they form a strong (usually romantic) bond with them. The people they may feel romantic feelings towards is determined by one of the following labels.

**Disclosure:** A word that some people use to describe the act or process of revealing one's transgender or gender-expansive identity to another person in a specific instance. Some find the term offensive, implying the need to disclose something shameful, and prefer to use the term *coming out*, whereas others find *coming out* offensive, and prefer to use *disclosure*.

**Drag:** The act of performing a gender or presenting as a different gender, usually for the purpose of entertainment (i.e. drag kings and queens). Many people who do drag may not wish to present as a different gender all of the time.

**Femme:** Historically used in the lesbian community, it is being increasingly used by other LGBTQIA people to describe gender expressions that reclaim/claim and/or disrupt traditional constructs of femininity.

**Gay:** The adjective used to describe people who are emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to people of the same gender (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, *lesbian* is often a preferred term for women, though many women use the term *gay* to describe themselves. People who are gay need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction and self-identification that determine orientation.

**Gender:** A set of social, psychological, and/or emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as man, woman, a mixture of both, or neither.

**Gender-affirming surgery (GAS):** Surgical procedures that can help people adjust their bodies to more closely match their innate or internal gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. This term should be used in place of the older and often offensive term *sex change*. Also, sometimes referred to as *sexual reassignment surgery* (or *SRS*), *genital reconstruction surgery*, or *medical transition*.

**Gender binary:** The concept that there are only two genders, man and woman, and that everyone must be one or the other. Also implies the assumption that gender is biologically determined.

**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.

**Gender-fluid:** According to the Oxford English Dictionary, 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 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.

**Gender Outlaw:** A person who refuses to be defined by conventional definitions of male and female.

**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 socialization:** The process by which individual on is taught how they should behave as a boy or as a girl. Parents, teachers, peers, media, and books are some of the many agents of gender socialization.

**Gender spectrum:** The concept that gender exists beyond a simple man/woman binary model, but instead exists on a continuum. Some people fall towards more masculine or more feminine aspects, some people move fluidly along the spectrum, and some identify off the spectrum entirely.

**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.

**Gender variant:** A term, often used by the medical community, to describe children, youth, and some individuals who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform to dominant gender norms. (See *gender nonconforming*.) People outside the medical community

tend to avoid this term because they feel it suggests these identities are abnormal, preferring terms such as *gender expansive* and *gender creative*.

**Heterosexism:** The assumption that sexuality between people of different sexes is normal, standard, superior or universal and other sexual orientations are substandard, inferior, abnormal, marginal or invalid.

**Homophobia:** An aversion to lesbian or gay people that often manifests itself in the form of prejudice and bias. Similarly, *biphobia* is an aversion people who are bisexual, and *transphobia* is an aversion to people who are transgender. *Homophobic*, *biphobic*, and *transphobic* are the related adjectives. Collectively, these attitudes are referred to as *anti- LGBTQ bias*.

**Homosexual:** An outdated clinical term often considered derogatory and offensive, as opposed to the generally preferred terms, *gay*, *lesbian*, or *queer*.

**Intergender:** Someone whose identity is between genders and/or a combination of gender identities and expressions.

**Intersex/differences of sexual development (DSD):** Refers to individuals born with ambiguous genitalia or bodies that appear neither typically male nor female, often arising from chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. Medical professionals often assign a gender to the individual and proceeded to perform surgeries to 'align' their physical appearance with typical male or female sex characteristics beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child is able to give informed consent.

**Intersectionality:** The idea that people who find themselves at the crossroads of multiple identities (for example, in terms of race, gender, or sexuality) experience discrimination in a way uniquely different from those who with whom they may only share one or some identities in common. For example, Black women will experience racism differently than Black men and sexism differently than white women, and the way they experience racism and sexism is informed by their unique intersectional identities. The term was first used in the context of feminism by civil rights scholar and advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw.

**Latinx:** a gender-expansive term used to be more inclusive of all genders than the binary terms *Latino* or *Latina* permit, as these are terms of identity found in Spanish, a gendered language.

**Lesbian:** Refers to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to other women. People who are lesbians need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

**LGBTQAI+:** An acronym that collectively refers to individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. It is sometimes stated as *LGBT* (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender), *GLBT* (gay, lesbian, bi, and transgender). The addition of the *Q* is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term *queer* focus increasingly on its positive,

reclaimed definition, which recognizes more fluid identities; and as a move towards greater inclusivity for gender expansive people. The *Q* can also stand for *questioning*, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. Occasionally, the acronym is also stated as *LGBT* to include people who are asexual, *LGBTI*, with the *I* representing intersex, or *LGBTQ+* or *LGBTQIA* to represent all of the above.

**Lifestyle:** A negative term often incorrectly used to describe the lives of people who are LGBTQ. The term is disliked because it implies that being LGBTQ is a choice.

**Omnigender:** Possessing all genders. The term is used specifically to refute the concept of only two genders.

**Misgender:** To refer to someone, especially a transgender or gender-expansive person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

**Non-binary:** An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.

**Out:** Generally, describes people who openly self-identify as LGBTQ in their private, public, and/or professional lives. Sometimes, individuals are outed by others who they may have already come out to. Outing an LGBTQ person without their consent is disrespectful and potentially dangerous for the LGBTQ individual. Some people who are transgender prefer to use the term *disclose* (defined above).

**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.

**Pansexual:** Refers to a person whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to people of all genders and biological sexes. People who are pansexual need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction and self-identification that determines the orientation. Often included under the umbrella of bisexuality.

**Pangender:** Someone whose identity is comprised of all or many gender identities and expressions.

**Polysexual/Polyamorous:** Attraction to multiple partners simultaneously. Poly people can also be bi, straight, gay, pan, or other type of orientation. They have two or more partners at the same time; these relationships can be very healthy and happy, so remember that even if a certain type of relationship doesn't work for you, doesn't mean you get to say what does and doesn't work for other people.

**Pronouns:** Linguistic tools used to refer to someone in the third person. Examples are they/them/theirs, ze/hir/hirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his. In English and some other languages, pronouns have been tied to gender and are a common site of misgendering (attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect.)

**Queer:** A term used by some people—particularly youth—to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use, the term is valued by some for its defiance, by some because it can be inclusive of the entire community, and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are gay, *queer* is still sometimes disliked within the LGBTQ community. Due to its varying meanings, this word should only be used when self-identifying or quoting someone who self-identifies as queer (i.e. “My cousin identifies as queer”).

**Questioning:** Describes those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof.

**Same-Gender Loving:** A term sometimes used by some members of the African-American/Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation (gay/bisexual) without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

**Sex:** Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that define if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include both primary and secondary sex characteristics, including genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, and genes. Sex is often conflated or interchanged with gender, which is more social than biological, though there is some overlap.

**Sex assigned at birth:** The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy. This is also referred to as "assigned sex at birth."

**Sexual orientation:** Emotional, romantic, or sexual feelings toward other people. While sexual behavior involves the choices, one makes in acting on one's sexual orientation, sexual orientation is part of the human condition, one's sexual activity does not define one's sexual orientation; typically, it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

**Skoliosexual:** Someone who is attracted to non-cisgender people. This includes trans, gender fluid, androgynous, and other gender-queer people.

**Stealth:** A term used to describe transgender or gender-expansive individuals who do not disclose their transgender or gender-expansive status in their public or private lives (or certain aspects of their public and private lives). The term is increasingly considered offensive by some as it implies an element of deception. The phrase maintaining privacy is often used instead, though some individuals use both terms interchangeably.

**Transgender:** Often shortened to *trans*. A term describing a person's gender identity that does not necessarily match their assigned sex at birth. Other terms commonly used are *female to male* (or *FTM*), *male to female* (or *MTF*), *assigned male at birth* (or *AMAB*), *assigned female at birth* (or *AFAB*), *genderqueer*, and *gender expansive*. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as a broad umbrella term to describe those who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression. Like any umbrella term, many different groups of people with different histories and experiences are often included within the greater transgender community—such groups include, but are certainly not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous.

**Transition:** A term sometimes used to refer to the process—social, legal, and/or medical—one goes through to discover and/or affirm one's gender identity. This may, but does not always, include taking hormones; having surgeries; and changing names, pronouns, identification documents, and more. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. The validity of an individual's gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity.

**Trans man:** A person may choose to identify this way to capture their gender identity as well as their lived experience as a transgender person. Some trans men may also use the term *FTM* or *F2M* to describe their identity.

**Trans woman:** A person may choose to identify this way to capture their gender identity as well as their lived experience as a transgender person. Some trans women may also use *MTF* or *M2F* to describe their identity.

**Transsexual:** A less frequently used—and sometimes misunderstood—term (considered by some to be outdated or possibly offensive, and others to be uniquely applicable to them) which refers to people who use (or consider using) medical interventions such as hormone therapy or gender-affirming surgeries (*GAS*), also called *sex reassignment surgery (SRS)* (or a combination of the two) or pursue medical interventions as part of the process of expressing their gender. Some people who identify as transsexual do not identify as transgender and vice versa.

**Two-Spirit (also two spirit or, occasionally, twospirited):** A modern, pan-Indian, umbrella term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe certain people in their communities who fulfill a traditional third-gender (or other gender-variant) ceremonial role in their cultures.

**Ursula:** Some lesbians, particularly butch dykes, also participate in Bear culture referring to themselves with the distinct label *Ursula*.

**Womyn/Womxn:** some womyn spell the word with a “y” or an “x” as a form of empowerment to move away from the “men” in the “traditional” spelling of women.