

LGBTQ Basic Glossary

Ally: A person who supports and respects sexual diversity, acts accordingly to challenge homophobic and heterosexist remarks and behaviors, and is willing to explore and understand these forms of bias within him or herself. Often describes a heterosexual individual who is nevertheless part of the LGBT community.

Asexual: Someone who does not experience sexual attraction towards other people, and who identifies as asexual. May still have romantic, emotional, affectional, or relational attractions to other people.

Biphobia: Fear of, hatred of, or discomfort with people who are bisexual.

Bisexual: A person (male or female) who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, or relationally attracted to both men and women, or who identifies as a member of the bisexual community.

Closet: Used as slang for the state of not publicizing one's sexual identity, keeping it private, living an outwardly heterosexual life while identifying as LGBT, or not being forthcoming about one's identity. At times, being in the closet also means not wanting to admit one's sexual identity to oneself.

Coming Out: To disclose one sexual identity or gender identity. It can mean telling others or it can refer to the time when a person comes out to him/herself by admitting that his/her identity is not what was previously assumed. In some situations, a heterosexual may feel the need to come out about her or his identity.

Crossdresser: Individual who dresses in the "opposite" gender clothing for a variety of reasons, sometimes for sexual pleasure. Crossdressing is not indicative of sexual orientation. This term replaces the sometimes pejorative term *transvestite*.

FTM: An abbreviation for female-to-male transsexual. This person most likely prefers masculine pronouns.

Gay Male: A man who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, or relationally attracted to other men, or who identifies as a member of the gay community. At times, "gay" is used to refer to all people, regardless of sex, who have their primary sexual and or romantic attractions to people of the same sex. Lesbians and bisexuals may feel excluded by the term "gay."

Gender: A binary sociological construct defining the collection of characteristics that are culturally associated with maleness or femaleness; *masculine* and *feminine* make up *gender* just as *male* and *female* comprise *sex*.

Gender Identity: How one perceives oneself – as a man, a woman, or otherwise.

Gender Role: Norms of expected behavior for men and women assigned primarily on the basis of biological sex; a sociological construct which varies from culture to culture.

Genderqueer: A gender identity that rejects the notion that all genders can be described on the masculine/feminine binary.

Heteronormativity: Processes through which social institutions and policies reinforce the notion that there are only two possibilities for sex, gender, and sexual attraction: male/masculine/attracted to women and female/feminine/attracted to men.

Heterosexism: Norms and behaviors that result from the assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. This system of oppression assumes that heterosexuality is inherently normal and superior and negates LGBTQ peoples' lives and relationships.

Heterosexual: A person who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, or relationally attracted to members of the opposite sex. Often called a straight person.

Homophobia: Fear of, hatred of, or discomfort with people who love and sexually desire members of the same sex. Homophobic reactions often lead to intolerance, bigotry, and violence against anyone not acting within socio-cultural norms of heterosexuality. Because most LGBTQ people are raised in the same society as heterosexuals, they learn the same beliefs and stereotypes prevalent in the dominant society, leading to a phenomenon known as internalized homophobia.

Homosexual: The clinical term, coined in the field of psychology, for people with a same-sex sexual attraction. The word is often associated with the idea that same-sex attractions are a mental disorder, and is therefore offensive to some people.

Intersex: Term used for a variety of medical conditions in which a person is born with chromosomes, genitalia, and/or secondary sexual characteristics that are inconsistent with the typical definition of a male or female body. The term disorders of sex development (DSD) also describes these conditions. Replaces the inaccurate term "hermaphrodite."

LGBT: Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender. GLBT may also be used. At times, a Q will be added for Queer and/or Questioning, an A for Ally, an I for Intersex and/or a TS for Two-Spirit.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, or relationally attracted to other women, or someone who identifies as a member of the lesbian community. Bisexual women may or may not feel included by this term.

Lifestyle: A word often used outside the LGBTQ community to describe life as an LGBTQ person, e.g. “the homosexual lifestyle.” Many people find this word inappropriate because it trivializes identity, implies that sexual orientation is a choice, and ignores the variety of lifestyles that LGBTQ people live.

MSM: An abbreviation for men who have sex with men. This term emphasizes the behavior, rather than the identities of the individuals involved.

MTF: An abbreviation for male-to-female transsexual. This person most likely prefers feminine pronouns.

Pansexual: A person who is emotionally, romantically, sexually, affectionately, or relationally attracted to people regardless of their gender identity or biological sex. Use of the term usually signals a repudiation of the concept of binary sexes (a concept implied by “bisexual”).

To Pass: To represent one’s self as a member of a social group other than one’s own. For example, a lesbian who passes for straight, or a biological man who is perceived to be a woman.

Queer: Term describing people who have a non-normative gender identity, sexual orientation, or sexual anatomy—includes lesbians, gay men, bisexual people, and transgender people. Since the term is sometimes used as a slur, it has a negative connotation for some LGBT people; however, others have reclaimed it and are comfortable using it to describe themselves.

Questioning: The process of examining one’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Can be used as an adjective.

Same-Gender Loving (SGL): How some African-Americans prefer to describe their sexual orientation, seeing “gay” and “lesbian” as primarily white terms. “Same-sex loving” is also in use.

Sex: 1. A biological term dividing a species into male or female, usually on the basis of sex chromosomes (XX = female, XY = male); hormone levels, secondary sex characteristics, and internal and external genitalia may also be considered criteria. 2. Another term for sexual behavior or gratification. Sex is a biological fact or a physical act.

Sexuality: The complex range of components which make us sexual beings; includes emotional, physical, and sexual aspects, as well as self-identification (including sexual orientation and gender), behavioral preferences and practices, fantasies, and feelings of affection and emotional affinity.

Sexual Orientation: The direction of one’s sexual interest toward members of certain sexes. Can involve fantasy, behavior, and self-identification; a person’s general makeup or alignment in terms of partner attraction. Includes (among others) a same-sex orientation, male-female orientation, a bisexual orientation, and a pansexual orientation.

Third Gender: A term for those who belong to a category other than masculine or feminine. For example, Native American *two-spirit* people, *hijira* in India, *kathoey*s in Thailand and Cambodia, and *travestis* in Brazil.

Transgender: An umbrella term for those individuals whose gender identity does not match with that assigned for their physical sex. Includes, among others, transsexuals, genderqueer people, and crossdressers. In its general sense, it refers to anyone whose behavior or identity falls outside of stereotypical expectations for their gender. Transgender people may identify as straight, gay, bisexual, or some other sexual orientation. Sometimes shortened as *trans*.

Transphobia: Fear of, hatred of, or discomfort with people who are transgender or otherwise gender non-normative.

Transsexual: Term referring to a person whose gender identity consistently differs from what is culturally associated with his/her biological sex at birth. Some choose to undergo sexual reassignment surgery.

Two-Spirit: Contemporary term chosen to describe Native American and Canadian First Nation people who identify with a third gender, implying a masculine and a feminine spirit in one body. Replaces the offensive term *berdache*.

WSW: An abbreviation for women who have sex with women. This term emphasizes the behavior, rather than the identities of the individuals involved.