

Glossary of Terms LGBTQ+

Ally: An adjective used to describe a straight and/or cisgender person who supports and advocates for LGBTQ+ people. Plural is *allies*.

Asexual: Often called “ace” for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, or conditional sexual attraction.

Bisexual, Bi: A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeable with pansexual.

Cisgender: An adjective used to describe people who are not transgender. A cisgender person is a person whose gender identity is aligned with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Coming Out: A lifelong process of self-acceptance. People come to understand their own sexual orientation first, and then they may reveal it to others. It is not necessary to have sexual experiences to come out as LGBTQ+, nor is it necessary to tell others. It is possible to simply be out to oneself. People may be out to some people in their life, but not out to others due to fear or rejection, harassment, violence, losing one’s job, or other concerns.

Family of Choice: Describes diverse family structures created by LGBTQ+ people, immigrants, and racial or ethnic minorities, that include but are not limited to life partners, close friends, and other loved ones not biologically related or legally recognized but who are the source of social and caregiving support.

Family of Origin: The family in which a person grows up, or the first social group a person belongs to, which is often a person’s biological or adoptive family.

Gay: Word used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex (e.g., gay man, gay people). Sometimes lesbian is the preferred term for women.

Gender: A person’s internal sense of being male, female or another gender. A person may choose to express their gender through culturally defined norms associated with male and female, which may or may not align with a person’s internal gender identity or with the sex they were assigned at birth.

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

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female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender Confirmation Surgery: A medical transition that involves bringing a person's body into alignment with their gender identity. Not all transgender people chose to, are physically healthy enough to, or can afford to undergo surgeries.

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

Gender-expansive: A person with 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 the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

Gender Identity: A person's internal, deeply held knowledge of their own gender. For most people their gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. For transgender people, their gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Many people have a gender identity of man or woman (or, for children, boy or girl). For other people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one

of those two binary genders (see Non-binary)

Gender Role: Societal, ethnic or cultural expectations about how a person should dress, look, talk, and behave based on whether they are female or male.

Gender-fluid: A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

Gender Perception: How observers classify a person's gender.

Heterosexual: Used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to people of a sex different than their own; also known as straight.

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer" with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of our community.

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term used to refer to lesbians and gay men that is not considered derogatory and offensive.

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,

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somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.

Pansexual: Describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with bisexual.

Queer: A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.

Lifestyle: Term used to inaccurately imply that being LGBTQ+ is voluntary or a "choice." Just as there is no one straight "lifestyle," there is no one LGBTQ+ lifestyle.

Out: A person who self-identifies as LGBTQ+ in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. For example: Ricky Martin is an out gay pop star from Puerto Rico. Preferred to the now-dated term "openly gay."

Outing: The act of publically telling (sometimes based on rumor and/or speculation) or revealing another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without a person's consent. It is considered inappropriate by a large portion of the LGBTQ+ community, and can be very damaging socially, personally, and/or professionally to the individuals who are "outed."

Partner: A nondiscriminatory and gender neutral way to describe one of the people in a committed, long-term relationship.

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

Same-Gender Loving (SGL): A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

Sex: The classification of people as male or female based on their anatomy (genitals or reproductive organs) and/or biology (chromosomes and/or hormones).

Sex Assigned at Birth: The sex, male, female or intersex, that a doctor or midwife uses to describe a child at birth based on their external anatomy.

Sexual Orientation: An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Note: an individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity.

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SOGIE: Acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression that refers to all humans with sexual orientations and gender identities, including cisgender and straight people.

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.

Transitioning: A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically included social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all or none of these processes.

Hormone Therapy: The use of hormone treatments to bring a person's gender expression and/or body into alignment with their gender identity.

Two-Spirit: This term refers to LGBTQ+ people and reflects traditions among many Native American communities that accept and celebrate the diversity of human gender, spirituality, and sexuality.

Adapted from:

www.lgbtagingcenter.org

www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms

www.gladd.org/reference/terms