

A Glossary Of Terms Associated With The LGBTQ Communities



This glossary is provided as a starting point for discussion and better understanding. Language is dynamic, continually growing and changing. This is particularly true with the language we use to identify ourselves. We should strive to be sure that our language does not demean, exclude or offend, by respectfully allowing others to self-identify.

Ally: A person who does not identify with a group, but still advocates for that group's rights.

Asexual: A person who has no sexual orientation and/or has a lack of interest in sex.

Biphobia: Negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors against people who are, or are perceived to be, bisexual or pansexual. It may also be a fear of one's own bisexual or pansexual attractions.

Bisexual: A person who is sexually attracted to men and women.

Cisgender: Someone who is comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth. The state of not being transgender.

Cissexism: The systems of advantages bestowed on people who are cisgender. It can also be the assumption that all people are, or should be, cisgender.

Crossdresser: A person who dresses in clothing deemed inappropriate by society for the gender assigned them at birth. The purpose is usually emotional comfort or erotic fulfillment.

Demisexual: A person who is only sexually attracted to people after a strong emotional bond has been formed.

Drag King & Drag Queen: A person who crossdresses as a means of performance or entertainment.

Gay: While most often associated with men, in its broadest meaning, this is a person who is sexually attracted to people of the same sex.

Gender: The range of characteristics associated with men and women and the masculine and feminine attributes assigned to them by society.

Gender Expression: The part of a person's identity that is about expressing masculinity or femininity as influenced by society, culture and individual expectations.

Gender Identity: The part of a person's identity that is about their sense of self as male or female, neither or both.

Genderqueer: A person who does not identify as a man or a woman. They might identify as both, neither or somewhere between.

Heteronormative: A term that describes the marginalization of non-heterosexual relationships and reinforces the binary system of viewing gender.

Heterosexism: The systems of advantages bestowed on people who are heterosexual. It can also be the assumption that all people are, or should be, heterosexual and gender-conforming.

Heterosexual: A man who is only sexually attracted to women or a woman who is only sexually attracted to men; also known as straight.

Homophobia: Negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors against LGBTQ people or people perceived to be LGBTQ. It may also be a fear of one's own same-sex attractions.

Homosexual: An outdated clinical term used to describe someone who is gay or lesbian. Many people dislike the term since it was used to denote a mental illness.

Intersex: A person whose biological anatomy and/or genes vary from the expected male or female anatomy and/or genetics.

Lesbian: A woman who is sexually attracted to other women.

LGBTQQIAA2SP: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Ally, Asexual, Two-Spirit, Pansexual

MSM: An abbreviation for men who have sex with men. They may or may not identify as gay, bisexual or pansexual.

Omni-gender: Possessing all genders. The term is used to oppose the idea that there are only two genders.

Out of the Closet: Living openly and honestly by not hiding one's sexual orientation or gender identity. The term is sometimes shortened to being "out."

Pansexual: A person who is sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender identity, gender expression or biological sex. This term goes beyond a gender binary. Some people prefer the term omnisexual.

Polyamory: Having more than one romantic partner with the consent and knowledge of all individuals.

Queer: A simple label to explain sexual orientations, gender identities and/or gender expressions that do not conform to societal expectations. Some people view this as a term of empowerment and others strongly dislike this term.

Questioning: A person who is unsure about their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Same-Gender Loving (SGL): A term used most frequently in communities of color that affirms the same-sex attraction of individuals. The term may be preferred over lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Sex: The identification of the biological/physical gender most often categorized as male or female.

Sexual Behavior: Actions that express a person's desire, love, romance and affection.

Sexual Orientation: The part of our identity related to whom we are sexually attracted. It can be broken into three distinct orientations: affectional, romantic and erotic.

Trans*: An inclusive term that encourages people to remember all of the identities under the transgender umbrella, including: transsexual, crossdresser, genderqueer, genderfluid, two-spirit, etc.

Transgender: In its broadest meaning, this umbrella term encompasses anyone whose self-identity, behavior or anatomy falls outside of societal gender norms and expectations.

Transphobia: Negative feelings, attitudes, actions, or behaviors against transgender people or people perceived to be transgender. It may also be a fear of one's own gender non-conformity.

Transsexual: A person whose gender identity is not congruent with their biological sex. These individuals may or may not pursue hormonal or surgical means to bring congruency to themselves. Some people dislike this term and prefer the terms: transgender, trans or trans*.

Two-Spirit: A Native American term for LGBTQ individuals with dual or multiple genders. It can mean having both a masculine and a feminine spirit. It has different meanings in different communities.