

Glossary of LGBT-Related Terms

Courtesy of GLSEN¹

The glossary is designed to provide basic definitions of words and phrases commonly used in discussions about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people and related issues. All language is constantly evolving; new terms are introduced, while others fade from use or change their meaning over time. This remains true for the following terms and definitions. For terms that refer to people's identities, people must self-identify for these terms to be appropriately used to describe them.

Term	Definition
Ally:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A member of the majority or dominant group who works to end oppression by supporting or advocating for the oppressed population. For example, any non-LGBT person who supports and stands up for the equality of LGBT people (sometimes referred to as a "straight ally.")
Androgynous:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having the characteristics or nature of both maleness and femaleness; neither specifically feminine nor masculine.
Asexual:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who does not experience sexual attraction.
Biphobia:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An irrational fear of or aversion to bisexuality or bisexual people.
Bisexual:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to some males and some females.
Cisgender:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refers to a person whose gender identity and expression are aligned with their gender assigned at birth.
Coming Out:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declaring one's identity – specifically, being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender – whether to a person in private or a group of people. To be "in the closet" means to hide one's identity.
Drag:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wearing the clothing typically associated with another gender, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. Individuals may identify as drag kings (in drag presenting as male) or drag queens (in drag presenting as female) when performing gender as parody, art, or entertainment.
Dyke:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A slang term referring to a lesbian, most often used in derogatory way. Originally, it was a pejorative label for a masculine woman.
Fag/Faggot:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A slang term referring to a gay person, most often used in a derogatory way.
FTM or F2M (female-to-male):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person who was assigned the gender of female at birth, and who identifies as male or masculine. Other related terms include: transgender male, transman and affirmed male.
Gay:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to some members of the same sex. Although gay can refer to both males and females, many prefer the term lesbian for females. Gay is sometimes used as an umbrella term to refer to all lesbian, gay and bisexual people, but some prefer the more inclusive term LGBT.
Gender:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A social construct based on a group of emotional, behavioral, and cultural characteristics attached to a person's assigned biological sex. The gender construct then classifies an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous, or other. Gender can be understood to have several components, including gender identity, gender expression, and gender role.

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Gender Binary:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The concept that everyone is one of two genders: male or female. It also describes the system by which society divides people into male and female roles, identities, and attributes.
Gender Expression:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual's physical characteristics, behaviors, and presentation that are linked, traditionally, to either masculinity or femininity, such as: appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.
Gender Identity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How we identify ourselves in terms of our gender. Identities may be: male, female, androgynous, transgender, genderqueer, and others.
Gender Identity Disorder:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A clinical psychological diagnosis defined as intense, continuous discomfort resulting from an individual's sense of the inappropriateness of their assigned gender at birth, its corresponding gender identity, and the resulting gender-role expectations. This diagnosis is seen as offensive by some, but is often required for those who wish to receive medical supervision of treatments relating to transition, such as hormones or surgery.
Gender-Neutral Pronoun:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pronoun that does not associate a gender with the person being discussed. Two of the most common genderneutral pronouns are "zie" replacing she and he, and "hir" replacing her and him.
Gender Non-Conforming or Gender Variant:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person who has gender characteristics and/or behaviors that do not conform to traditional or societal binary gender expectations.
Gender Orientation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An individual's internal sense of their gender (e.g., feeling male, female, or neither). Gender orientation doesn't necessarily align with the gender assigned at birth.
Gender Role:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social expectations of how an individual should act, think, and/or feel based upon one's assigned biological sex. A set of traditional and stereotypical roles, traits, dress, characteristics, qualities, mannerisms, and behaviors that are associated with societal norms of what is male and what is female.
Genderism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The systematic belief that people need to conform to the gender role assigned to them based on a gender binary system which allows only female and male.
Genderqueer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person who identifies as and/or express themselves as somewhere in the continuum between maleness/masculinity and femaleness/femininity or outside of the gender binary system. Genderqueer people may or may not identify as LGBT.
Heteronormative:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The belief system that heterosexuality is the norm; the assumption that heterosexuality is universal and that anything other than heterosexuality is unnatural.
Heterosexism:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applies to attitudes, bias, and discrimination in favor of heterosexual sexuality and relationships. It includes the presumption that everyone is heterosexual or that male/female attractions and relationships are the norm and therefore superior. It is the belief that everyone is or should be straight.
Heterosexual:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to some members of another sex (specifically, a male who is attracted to some females or a female who is attracted to some males). Often referred to as "straight."

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Homophobia:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An irrational fear or aversion to homosexuality or lesbian, gay, or bisexual people.
Homosexual:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person who is emotionally and sexually attracted to some members of their own gender; originated in the medical and psychological professions. Currently, many prefer the terms "lesbian" or "gay".
Intersex:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. Intersex conditions can affect the genitals, the chromosomes, and/or secondary sex characteristics.
Lesbian:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A sexual orientation and/or identity of a person who is female-identified and who is emotionally and sexually attracted to some other females.
LGBT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An umbrella term referring collectively to people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/ or transgender. Sometimes the acronym is written as LGBTQ, with the "Q" referring to those who identify as questioning and/or queer. In the past "gay" was used as a general, overarching term, but currently the more inclusive terms LGBT and LGBTQ are regularly used and preferred by many LGBT people and allies.
MTF or M2F (male-to-female):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person who was assigned the gender of male at birth, and who identifies as female or feminine. Other related terms include: transgender female, transwoman, affirmed female.
Queer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An umbrella term used to describe a sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression that does not conform to dominant societal norms. While it is used as a neutral, or even a positive term among many LGBT people today, historically it has been used negatively.
Questioning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person who is uncertain of their sexual orientation/identity and/or their gender orientation/identity.
Sex or Biological Sex:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is determined by our chromosomes (such as XX or XY), our hormones, and our internal and external genitalia. Typically, we are assigned the gender of male or female at birth.
Sexual Behavior:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What we do sexually and with whom.
Sexual Identity:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What we call ourselves in terms of our sexuality. Such labels include "lesbian," "gay," "bisexual," "queer," "heterosexual," "straight," and many more.
Sexual Orientation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inner feelings of whom we are attracted or oriented to emotionally and sexually.
Transgender:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An identity of a person whose gender identity is not aligned with their sex assigned at birth and/or whose gender expression is non-conforming.

i GLSEN. "The Safe Space Kit: Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students." Washington D.C.: Gay, Lesbian, & Straight Education Network, 2011. <https://safespace.glsen.org/about.cfm>