
LGBTQ+ DEFINITIONS

Agender: A person who does not feel they are a gender defined by society, or they do not identify themselves as having a particular gender.

Ally: A person, who through attitude and behavior, is active in providing support for individuals who are different than themselves and challenges misinformation and mistreatment caused by fear and lack of knowledge and awareness. Individuals advocating for the LGBTQ+ community can be either be members of this community or heterosexual and cisgender.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which refers to sexual behavior and is a personal choice, this sexuality is an integral part of that person's identity. These individuals may have romantic relationships and/or spiritual/affectionate bonds with their partners or they may be single. Some even will have sexual relationships with their partners that is based on the partner's needs instead of their own.

Bisexuality (Bi): A person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally. This used to be defined as a person who is attracted to both genders or both sexes, but since there are not only two sexes (see intersex and transsexual) and there are not only two genders (see transgender), this definition is inaccurate.

Cisgender: This privileged identity refers to people whose sex, gender, and identity match according to predominant cultural standards: women who were assigned female as their sex, men who were assigned male as their sex. (also referred to as "Gender-straight" or "Gender Normative")

Coming out: This is an ongoing process where an LGBTQ+ individual decides whether or not to reveal their sexual identity or gender identity with each new situation or encounter. Revealing the "queer" aspect of one's identity, for most LGBTQ+ individuals, is one of the most important and difficult moments in their life

Discrimination: The act of showing partiality or prejudice; a prejudicial act. Using one's privilege to exert power over a marginalized group.

Enby: A nonbinary person (see: nonbinary) using the phonetic pronunciation of the initials "N.B." as a shortened way to identify; the spelling of "enby" is used in respect of members of the Black community, who may use "NB" to mean non-black.

Fluidity: A notion or understanding that sexual orientation, sexuality, and gender are dynamic identities that may change over time as individuals discover more about themselves. Fluidity can be an identity, such as sexually fluid or gender fluid.

FTM/F2M: Abbreviation for a female-to-male transgender or transsexual person. This describes someone who is assigned female at birth, but socially and/or physically transitions to presenting and being a man/male

Gay: A man, cisgender or transgender, who is emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually oriented to bond and share affection with other men. Some women choose to use this label for themselves when they are emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually oriented toward other women. In the past this has been used to refer to the community in general, though this is out of favor now because it is exclusionary and most use LGBTQ+ community or queer community.

Gender: 1) A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. Words that refer to gender include: man, woman, transgender, masculine, feminine, and gender queer. 2) One's sense of self as masculine or feminine regardless of external genitalia. Gender is often conflated with sex. This is inaccurate because sex refers to bodies and gender refers to personality characteristics.

Gender Diverse: A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc) preferable to "gender variant" because it does not imply a standard normativity.

Gender Dysphoria: 1) The medical diagnosis in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostics and Statistics Manual V (DSM5), defined as a conflict between a person's physical or assigned gender and the gender with which he/she/they identify. People with gender dysphoria may be very uncomfortable with the gender they were assigned, sometimes described as being uncomfortable with their body (particularly developments during puberty) or being uncomfortable with the expected roles of their assigned gender. This diagnosis replaced "Gender Identity Disorder" in the DSM. 2) significant distress and/or problems functioning associated with the conflict between the way they feel and think of themselves (referred to as experienced or expressed gender) and their physical or assigned gender

Gender Expression: The way in which a person expresses their gender identity through clothing, behavior, posture, mannerisms, speech patterns, activities and more. Expression can be different or the same as gender identity and can only be defined by the person who is doing the expressing.

Gender Identity: An individual's internal sense of gender, which may or may not be the same as one's gender assigned at birth. Some gender identities are "woman," "transman" and "agender," but there are countless identities. Since gender identity is internal it isn't necessarily visible to others, it is important not to assume someone's gender identity. Additionally, gender identity is often conflated with sex, but they are separate concepts. Sex is biological, gender is emotional and societal.

Gender-Neutral/Gender-Inclusive Pronouns and Language: Inclusive language to describe relationships ("spouse" and "partner" instead of "husband/boyfriend" and "wife/girlfriend"), spaces (gender-neutral/inclusive restrooms are for use by all genders), pronouns ("they" and "ze" are gender neutral/inclusive pronouns) among other things.

Gender Non-Conforming/Nonbinary Gender: A person whose gender identity/expression can be described as neither man nor woman, between or beyond genders, or some combination of genders. This identity is usually related to or in reaction to the social construction of gender, gender stereotypes, and the gender binary system. Some people with this identity fall under the transgender umbrella while others do not. Some individuals who fall under this umbrella may choose another, more specific term to refer to themselves, such as Agender, Bigender, Androgyn, Boi, etc.

Genderqueer: A person whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This identity is usually related to or in reaction to the social construction of gender, gender stereotypes and the gender binary system in the sense that "man and woman" do not encompass all genders and expressions. Some genderqueer people identify under the transgender umbrella while others do not.

Heterosexuality: Sexual, emotional, and/or romantic attraction to a sex other than your own. Commonly defined as "attraction to the opposite sex" but since there are not only two sexes (see "Intersex" and "Transsexual"), this definition is inaccurate.

Homophobia: The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are homosexual or of homosexual feelings within one's self. This assumes that heterosexuality is superior.

Intersex: Intersex is a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with "sex chromosomes," external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered "standard" for either male or female. The existence of intersexual people shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed.

In the Closet: A term that describes hiding one's sexual and/or gender identity because of internalized homophobia, job and housing security, or self-protection from abandonment by loved ones such as family and friends

Invisible Minority: A group whose minority status is not always immediately visible, such as some disabled people and LGBTIQ people. This lack of visibility may make organizing for rights difficult. This is often something used as a weapon by opponents, e.g. "Well why don't you just pretend you're not?"

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, physically, mentally, and/or spiritually oriented to bond and share affection with other women. This applies to all women regardless of trans or cis identities.

LGBTQIA: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, Asexual; there are several variations of this acronym, but the idea of the acronym is to be as encompassing as possible without forgetting identities. Other phrases/acronyms include GSM (gender and sexuality minorities), GSRD (Gender, sexual, and romantically diverse), LGBT, LGBTQ, etc.

MTF/M2F: An identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transgender individuals to signify that they are women. It is a way to still embrace their transition/journey to where they are at and have a label to self-identify their transgender status.

Omnisexual: One whose romantic, emotional, or sexual attractions are geared towards others regardless of sex and/or gender expression; omnisexual persons see and acknowledge gender, but consider it irrelevant to their attraction

Out (of the Closet): Refers to varying degrees of being open about one's sexual orientation and/or sex identity or gender identity; this is often used to describe someone who has actively told others, whether everyone or select people, that they identify as LGBTQ

Nonbinary: Having a gender identity and/or expression that do not fit into the traditional man/woman identity roles; this can be an identity on its own, or an umbrella term for any identity that does not follow the man/woman dichotomy

Pangender: A non-binary gender experience which refers to a wide multiplicity of genders that can (or not) stretch to the infinite (meaning that this experience can go beyond the current knowledge of genders), always within the person's own culture and life experience

Pansexual: A person who is not limited in sexual choice regarding biological sex, gender, or gender identity; this is very similar to bisexual, but is often defined of attraction regardless of gender, or that gender is not a deciding factor of attraction

Queer: This word has been reclaimed by some members of the LGBTQ+ communities to refer to people who transgress culturally imposed norms of heteronormativity and the gender binary. It is also an umbrella term used to refer to the LGBTQ+ Community. This word may also connote a political identity as one who is committed to advocacy/activism for LGBTQ+ rights.

Many older LGBT people feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it.

Questioning: The process of considering one's own sexual orientation or gender identity. Usually, an individual is considering an identity that is not heterosexual or not cisgender.

Sex: A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Common terms are "male," "female" and "intersex."

Sexual Orientation: The deep-seated direction of one's sexual and/or erotic attraction. It is on a continuum and not a set of absolute categories. Sometimes referred to as affection, orientation or sexuality. Sexual orientation evolves through a multistage developmental process and may change over time. Asexuality is also a sexual orientation.

Straight: Person who is attracted to a gender other than their own. Commonly thought of as "attraction to the opposite gender," but since there are not only two genders (see transgender), this definition is inaccurate.

Transgender: Someone whose gender does not align with the social expectations for their assigned sex. This term can also be used as an umbrella term for a vast array of identity categories, which describe people who challenge societal gender norms. People must self-identify as this term for it to be appropriately used to describe them.

Transition: A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transgender people align their anatomy with their sex identity and/or their gender expression with their gender identity. Does not necessarily mean surgery. Transition can be social, physical, spiritual, emotional, and/or a combination of all these things.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in several ways, including violence, harassment and discrimination. This is a belief held in order to justify hostility and disapproval of one's gender identity and/or experience, and when left unchecked, can be fatal.

Two-Spirit: This term was coined in 1990 at the third annual inter-tribal Native American/ First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg. The term is inter-tribal (individual tribes also have their own terms and categories to understand gender and sexuality) and is used to create a more accurate understanding of Native LGBTQ+ identities given the rich history and spiritual and social significance found in Native communities. While some tribes and traditions still acknowledge these individuals as they once did, homo/bi/transphobia are also often present in modern Native communities. This label was created not only to define themselves within their cultural context (unlike identities such as those represented in LGBTQ+) but also to reclaim their traditions and combat contemporary issues affecting these individuals in their communities. This term is one that is used only by those who are both LGBTQ+ and Native.

Sources

University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh, LGBTQ Resource Center, SAFE Training Manual
University of California - Berkeley; LGBT@uclink.berkeley.edu.