

# Glossary of LGBTQ Terms

**Affirmed gender:** The gender by which one wishes to be known. This term is often used to replace terms like “new gender” or “chosen gender,” which imply that the current gender was not always a person’s gender or that the gender was chosen rather than simply in existence.

**Agender:** A person who does not identify with any gender.

**Ally:** A person who may not share the sexual orientation or gender identity of LGBTQ students, but who supports and honors sexual and gender diversity and challenges homophobic, transphobic and heterosexist remarks and behaviors.

**Androgynous** - Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine. A non-binary gender identity typically used to describe a person’s appearances or clothing.

**Asexual:** An individual who does not experience sexual attraction. There is considerable diversity among the asexual community; each asexual person experiences things like relationships, attraction, and arousal somewhat differently. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy or sexual abstinence, which are chosen behaviors, while asexuality is a sexual orientation that does not necessarily entail either of those behaviors. Some asexual individuals do have sex, for a variety of reasons.



**Assigned sex:** The sex that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child’s visible sex organs, including genitalia and other physical characteristics.

**Assumed gender:** The gender a person is assumed to be based on the sex they are assigned at birth.

**Antidiscrimination laws:** Federal, state, and local laws that prohibit the government and/or private organizations from discriminating against someone based on certain personal characteristics, such as race, religion, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.

**Asexual** - The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.

**Biological sex:** Refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic, or physical attributes that define if a person is male, female, or intersex. These include genitalia, gonads, hormone levels, hormone receptors, chromosomes, genes, and secondary sex characteristics. Sex is often confused or interchanged with gender, which is thought of as more social and less biological, though there is some considerable overlap.

**Biphobia** - Prejudice, fear or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

**Bisexual:** A person who has significant sexual, romantic and/or spiritual attractions to both men and women or someone who identifies as a member of this community.

**Cisgender:** a term used to describe those who are not-transgender – having a gender identity or performing in gender roles that society considers appropriate for one’s sex.

**Closeted** - Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Coming out:** The process of disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to other people. coming to terms with one's sexual or gender identity. Can also mean stating openly that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. The term is usually applied to members of the LGBT community, but heterosexual people can experience a similar process of coming to terms with their sexual orientation and/or their identity as an ally.

**Cross dressing (Cross-dresser)** is the act of wearing items of clothing and other accoutrements commonly associated with the opposite sex within a particular society. Cross-dressing has been used for purposes of disguise, comfort, and self-actualization in modern times and throughout history.

**Cyberbullying:** Harassment or intimidation conducted through electronic communications methods such as the internet and text messages.

**Day of silence:** A national observance founded by GLSEN, usually occurring in April and organized by student groups, during which students take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest discrimination against LGBTQ students.

**Discrimination:** The different and unfair treatment of certain groups of people based on specific characteristics, such as race, religion, age, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

**Dyke:** although once used negatively, this term has been reclaimed by some in the LGBT community to refer to lesbian or bisexual women.

**Equal protection:** A constitutional guarantee that the government will treat one person or group of people the same way that it would treat any other person or group of people under the same circumstances.

**FTM:** female-to-male. Indicates a transgender individual who was originally assigned the gender of female at birth, but has claimed a male identity through clothing, surgery, or attitude changes.

**First amendment:** A provision of the U.S. Constitution that guarantees freedoms of association and expression, including freedom of speech.

**Freedom of speech:** The constitutional right to express your thoughts, ideas, and opinions without interference from the government.

**Gay:** A term that can be used to describe either a man whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to other men or to reference anyone whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to a person who is the same sex as themselves. This term can also be used to apply to lesbians, bisexuals, and on some occasions, be used as an umbrella term for all LGBT people.

**Gay-straight alliance:** A student club for LGBTQ students and their straight allies, designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for social interaction, education, and advocacy.

**Gender:** A set of social, physical, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other.

**Gender-affirming surgery (GAS), Gender Confirmation Surgery (GCS), Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS):** Surgical procedures that help people adjust their bodies in a way that more closely matches their innate or internal gender identity. Not every transgender person will desire or have resources for surgery. This should be used in place of the older and often offensive term "sex change." Also sometimes referred to as sexual reassignment surgery (SRS), genital reconstruction surgery, or medical transition.

**Gender dysphoria** - Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term - which replaces Gender Identity Disorder - "is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."

**Gender-expansive** - Conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system.

**Gender neutral:** Not gendered. Can refer to language (including pronouns), spaces (like bathrooms), or identities (like being gender queer, for example).

**Gender expression:** The outward manifestation of internal gender identity, through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms and other characteristics.

**Gender-fluid:** Term used by people who identify their gender as fluid within a spectrum of gender identities and expression. Gender-fluid people may or may not also identify as transgender.

**Gender identity:** An individual's inner sense of being male, female or another gender. Gender identity is not necessarily the same as sex assigned or presumed at birth. Everyone has a gender identity.

**Gender-nonconforming:** Behaving in a way that does not match social stereotypes about female or male gender, usually through dress or physical appearance. A term used to describe those who view their gender identity as one of many possible genders beyond strictly female or male. More current terms include "gender expansive," "differently gendered," "gender creative," "gender variant," "gender queer," "gender fluid," "gender neutral," "bigender," "androgynous," or "gender diverse."

**Genderqueer:** A rejection of the gender binary (male/female) in favor of a more fluid, nontraditional identity.

**Gender role:** The social expectation of how an individual should look or behave, often based upon the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender spectrum:** The concept that gender exists beyond a simple "male/female" binary model, but instead exists on an infinite continuum that transcends the two. Some people fall towards more masculine or more feminine aspects, some people move fluidly along the spectrum, and some identify off the spectrum entirely.

**Gender variant:** A term, often used by the medical community, to describe children and youth who dress, behave, or express themselves in a way that does not conform to dominant gender norms. (See "gender nonconforming.") People outside the medical community tend to avoid this term because they feel it suggests these identities are abnormal, preferring terms such as "gender expansive" and "gender creative."

**Gender transition:** This term describes both a shift over time from occupying the social role of one gender to that of another and to the medical procedures that sometimes accompany that shift. Transition may or may not include medical or legal aspects such as taking hormones, having surgeries, or changing identity documents to reflect one's gender identity.

**Harassment:** Actions or words that harm or distress a person, and do not otherwise serve a legitimate purpose. Harassment often interferes with the ability to take full advantage of educational opportunities.

**Hate crime:** A crime that is motivated by personal characteristics such as race, religion, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Under federal law and some state and local laws, hate crimes may be investigated by additional law enforcement personnel and can carry additional penalties.

**Heterosexual:** a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted or committed to members of the opposite sex.

**Heterosexual Privilege:** The societal assumption and norm that all people are heterosexual. The basic civil rights and social privileges that a heterosexual person automatically receives, that are systematically denied to gay, lesbian, or bisexual persons, simply because of their sexual orientation.

**Heterosexism:** The assumption that sexuality between people of different sexes is normal, standard, superior or universal and other sexual orientations are substandard, inferior, abnormal, marginal or invalid.

**Hir:** a non-gendered pronoun used by some transgender people. Hir (pronounced “here”) corresponds to his, her, and him, and is used as a dative and possessive pronoun (see “Se”).

**Homophobia:** A fear of or hostility toward lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual people, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence. Internalized homophobia is a fear of same-sex tendencies within oneself and can lead to repression. Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions.

**Homosexuality:** defines attraction to the same sex, and is one orientation on the continuum from homosexual to bisexual to heterosexual. Many prefer the terms “gay”, “lesbian”, or “bisexual” to describe their identities.

**Intersex:** A health condition, often present at birth, involving anatomy or physiology that differs from societal expectations of male and female. Intersex conditions can affect the genitals, the chromosomes and/or other body structures. Intersex conditions are sometimes referred to as “disorders of sexual development.” People with intersex conditions should not be assumed to be transgender.

**Lesbian:** A woman whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is to other women.

**LGBT (also GLBT):** the acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender”. The acronym may be expanded to a variation of LGBTIQA to include intersex, questioning, queer-identified people and/or allies. Can also be used as an adjective (i.e. – “I am an LGBT person.”)

**LGBT History Month:** A month-long celebration of the LGBT rights movement and of historical LGBT figures, celebrated in October in the United States.

**Lifestyle:** A negative term often incorrectly used to describe the lives of people who are LGBTQ. The term is disliked because it implies that being LGBTQ is a choice.

**Living openly** - A state in which LGBTQ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or gender identity – where and when it feels appropriate to them.

**Intersex/differences of sexual development (DSD):** Individuals born with ambiguous genitalia or bodies that appear neither typically male nor female, often arising from chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. In the past, medical professionals commonly assigned a male or female gender to the individual and proceeded to perform gender-affirming surgeries beginning in infancy and often continuing into adolescence, before a child was able to give informed consent. Formerly the medical terms “hermaphrodite” and “pseudo-hermaphrodite”

were used; these terms are now considered neither acceptable nor scientifically accurate. The Intersex Society of North America opposes this practice of genital mutilation on infants and children.

**Misgender:** To refer to someone, especially a transgender person, using a word, especially a pronoun or form of address, which does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify.

**MTF:** male-to-female. Indicates a transgender individual who was originally assigned the gender of male at birth, but has claimed a female identity through clothing, surgery, or attitude changes.

**Out:** A description for someone who expresses, or does not hide, his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Pansexual:** A person whose emotional, romantic, and/or physical attraction is to people of all gender identities and biological sexes. People who are pansexual need not have had any sexual experience; it is the attraction that helps determine orientation.

**Preferred Gender Pronouns:** A preferred gender pronoun, or PGP, is the pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. In English, the singular pronouns that we use most frequently are gendered, which can create an issue for transgender and gender-nonconforming people, who may prefer that you use gender neutral or gender-inclusive pronouns when talking to or about them. The most commonly used singular gender-neutral pronouns are “ze” (sometimes spelled “zie”) and “hir.” Some also use “they” and “their” as gender-neutral singular pronouns.

**Pride:** The idea, and events celebrating the idea, that people should be proud of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

**Queer:** A traditionally pejorative term for LGBTQ people that has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ activists, who use it self-descriptively as a means to empower the LGBTQ community. Gender Non-conforming.

**Questioning:** A term that describes someone who is unsure of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity. A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Same-gender loving** - A term some prefer to use instead of lesbian, gay or bisexual to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender.

**Se:** Se (pronounced “zee” or “see”) corresponds to he and she, and is used as an accusative pronoun.

**Sex:** An act, series of acts, that humans do as a part of the expression of their sexual nature and their desire for love and affection. Or the identification of biological gender.

**Sexual Orientation:** how one thinks of oneself in terms of to whom one is sexually or romantically attracted. Orientation is not dependent on physical experience, but rather on a person’s feelings and attractions.

**Stealth:** A term used to describe transgender or gender-expansive individuals who do not disclose their transgender or gender-expansive status in their public or private lives (or certain aspects of their public lives). The term is increasingly considered offensive by some as it implies an element of deception. The phrase “maintaining privacy” is often used instead.

**Title IX :** A federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in any educational program or activity that receives assistance from the federal government.

**Transgender:** Refers to people whose gender identity, one's inner sense of being male, female, or something else, differs from their assigned or presumed sex at birth. Used both as an umbrella term and as an identity. The term refers to anyone who transgresses traditional sex and gender categories.

**Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR):** occurs annually on November 20, is a day to memorialize those who have been murdered as a result of transphobia and to bring attention to the continued violence endured by the transgender community.

**Transgender man:** Describes the trajectory of a person who is changing or has changed their body and lived gender role from a birth-assigned female to an affirmed male. Also, trans male, trans man, FTM or transman.

**Transgender woman:** Describes the trajectory of a person who is changing or has changed their body and lived gender role from a birth-assigned male to an affirmed female. Also, trans woman, MTF or trans female.

**Transphobia:** The fear or hatred of transgender people, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.

**Transsexual:** People who feel that their gender identity is something other than their biological sex. Some transsexuals choose to use hormones and/or have an operation to change their physical anatomy to be congruent with their self-perception.

**Transvestite:** someone who dresses according to the social norms characteristic of a gender identity that is something other than their biological sex. This may be a behavior that is expressed only at certain times and is independent of sexual orientation.

Sources:

**Lambda Legal** - <http://www.lambdalegal.org/know-your-rights/youth/glossary-lgbtq-terms>

**University of Connecticut** - <http://rainbowcenter.uconn.edu/terms/>

**Human Rights Campaign – (HRC)**

Source – HRC <http://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>

**PFLAG – Parents Family Lesbian And Gay** <https://www.pflag.org/glossary>