

Common LGBTQ+ Terms and Definitions

Sex vs. Gender:

Sexual Orientation: Describes who people are attracted to and/ or who people fall in love with.

Sexual Behavior: What we do sexually and with whom.

Sexual Identity: What we call ourselves in terms of our own sexuality. It can define our culture and community, and provide a framework within which we come to understand ourselves.

Sex: Refers to the biological characteristics (physical and chromosomal) that defines a human as male or female. Also refers to sexually motivated behavior.

Gender: Describes widely shared expectations and norms within a society about appropriate “male” and “female” behavior, characteristics and roles.

Gender Identity: Describes how people perceive their own internal sense of maleness, femaleness, or an identity outside of or between established genders. The gender an individual identifies as psychologically, regardless of what sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Expression: How someone presents or expresses themselves in terms of gender. Includes appearance, clothing, mannerisms, and behavior.

The LGBTQQIA+ Acronym:

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally and physically attracted to SOME other women.

Gay: A man who is emotionally and physically attracted to SOME other men. Also means happy. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for the LGB and/or LGBTQ communities.

Bisexual: People attracted emotionally and physically to SOME people of two/multiple genders.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose internal sense of their gender does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Queer: An umbrella term used by some people to describe their sexual identity and/ or gender identity. Meaning “different, unconventional, or deviating from the expected.” Some people feel that this term is less restrictive than gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Often used pejoratively; offensive to some people.

Questioning: Someone who is unsure about their sexual orientation or gender identity, or is in the process of discovering it.

Intersex: Describes a person who does not fit the typical definition of male or female. An intersex person may have variations in their chromosomes, gonads, or genitalia. NOTE: Being intersex has to do with biological characteristics, rather than gender identity.

Asexual: People who experience little to no sexual/physical attraction.

+: See also, pansexual, demisexual, etc.

Transgender Umbrella:

MTF: Male to female. Describes a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies as a woman. Now more commonly referred to as a transgender woman or trans woman.

FTM: Female to male. Describes a person who was assigned female at birth but identifies as a man. Now more commonly referred to as a transgender man or trans man.

Non-Binary: A term for identities that fall somewhere in the middle or outside of the male/female spectrum. A gender identity that is between, beyond, or some combination of genders.

See also: Gender non-conforming, genderqueer, agender, genderfluid, bigender, pangender, neutrois, and more!

AMAB: Assigned male at birth: Also written: designated male at birth/DMAB, MAAB. Can refer to both trans women and nonbinary individuals.

AFAB: Assigned female at birth. Also written: designated female at birth/DFAB, FAAB. Can refer to both trans men and non binary individuals.

Transsexual: An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. A person who pursues gender affirmation to bring their physical characteristics in line with their identity through use of hormones and/or surgery.

Transition: The process by which a transgender person strives to have their physical presentation align more closely with their identity. May include surgery and/or hormone therapy; changes in appearance, legal documents, and name; and the “coming out” process.

Oppression and Marginalization of the LGBTQ Community:

Homophobia: The irrational fear or hatred of people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Applies to other people, and also to oneself. See also, biphobia.

Transphobia: Fear or hatred of people because of their actual or perceived gender identity and/or gender expression.

Heterosexism: The assumption or belief that everyone is heterosexual and cisgender, and if not, they should be; the belief that heterosexuality is “normal” and therefore more “natural” than other forms of sexuality. See also: heteronormativity; cissexism.

Other Terms and Identities:

Heterosexual: Men who are emotionally and physically attracted to SOME women and women who are emotionally and physically attracted to SOME men. Also referred to as “straight.”

Cisgender: A term used to describe people who, for the most part, identify with the sex they were assigned at birth. A way of saying “not transgender.”

Crossdresser: A person who dresses in clothing considered to be “appropriate” for a different gender.

Drag: Performance that uses gender expectations and stereotypes to entertain and/or enlighten.

Ally: A person who works to eliminate the oppression and marginalization of the LGBTQ+ community.

**Compiled by Identity Youth Center
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