

Glossary of Terms

Asexual

An adjective used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction (e.g., asexual person). Asexual is an umbrella term that can also include people who are demisexual, meaning a person who does experience some sexual attraction, but only in certain situations.

Bisexual, Bi, Bi+

An adjective used to describe a person who has the potential to be physically, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree. The *bi* in bisexual refers to genders the same as and different from one's own gender.

Gay

An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex. Sometimes lesbian is the preferred term for women.

Gender identity and sexual orientation

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people have sexual orientations, and they may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, etc. For example, a transgender woman who is attracted exclusively to women may typically describe herself a lesbian; if she were exclusively attracted to men, she would likely describe herself a straight woman. A transgender person who is attracted to more than one gender will likely identify as bisexual or pansexual.

Heterosexual

An adjective used to describe a person whose enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attraction is to people of a sex different than their own.

Homosexual

People are described as homosexual on the basis of their gender and the gender of their sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is the same as the individual's, then the person may be homosexual. It is recommended to use the terms lesbian and gay men instead of homosexual people. The terms lesbian and gay are being considered neutral and positive, and the focus is on the identity.

Intersex

An adjective used to describe a person with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies. Intersex is not the same as transgender.

Lesbian

A woman whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay or as gay women.

LGBTQ

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. The Q generally stands for queer when LGBTQ organizations, leaders, and media use the acronym. It can also mean Questioning. LGBT and LGBTQ+ are also used, with the + added in recognition of all non-straight, non-cisgender identities. Both are acceptable, as are other versions of this acronym. LGBTQ community or LGBTQ+ community are recommended community terms.

MSM

Any man who engages in male-to-male sex, regardless of his sexual identity or orientation

Nonbinary

Nonbinary is an adjective used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender

expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of man and woman. Some nonbinary people may also call themselves transgender and consider themselves part of the transgender community. Nonbinary is an umbrella term that encompasses many different ways to understand one's gender. Some nonbinary people may also use words like agender, bigender, demigender, pangender, etc. to describe the specific way in which they are nonbinary. Nonbinary may also be written as non-binary. Both forms are commonly used within the community.

Pansexual

An adjective used to describe a person who has the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/ or emotional attractions to any person, regardless of gender identity. This is one of several terms under the bi+ umbrella.

Queer

An adjective used by some people, whose sexual orientation is not exclusively heterosexual (e.g. queer person, queer woman). For those who identify as queer, the terms lesbian, gay, and bisexual can be perceived to be too limiting and/or fraught with cultural connotations. Queer has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ people to describe themselves. When Q is seen at the end of LGBT, it typically means queer. It may also mean questioning.

Questioning

An adjective used by some people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sexual Orientation

The scientific term for a person's enduring physical, romantic and/ or emotional attraction to another person. Sexual orientations can include heterosexual (straight), lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other orientations.

SOGIESC

Acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, and sex characteristics. Inclusive of all sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics, including intersex traits. Some also use SOGI (sexual orientation, gender identity) or SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression). The acronym refers to all humans with sexual orientations and gender identities, including cisgender and straight people.

Transgender

An adjective to describe people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. People who are transgender may also use other terms, in addition to transgender, to describe their gender more specifically. Being transgender is not dependent upon physical appearance or medical procedures. A person can call themselves transgender the moment they realize that their gender identity is different than the sex they were assigned at birth.

Two-Spirit

An adjective used by some Indigenous and First Nations people as an umbrella term to describe people who are not straight and/or cisgender. Many Indigenous communities have specific words in their language to describe these experiences, but some do not. This term does not describe people who are not Indigenous. It should be used for an Indigenous person if they use it to describe themselves.