

LGBTI+ glossary



It is important to remember that language around LGBTI+ issues is constantly changing and evolving. Particularly as many terms are related to people's personal identities, the terms may be used by different people to mean different things and at different times.

Please use the terms that people ask you to use to describe them. If you haven't heard a term someone is using to describe themselves, just ask what it means to them; it's okay not to fully understand an identity as long as you are respectful of people and who they are.

This is a short list of some LGBTI+ terms, you can find a longer list on our website at www.equality-network.org

Ace / asexual

Asexual people are not drawn to people sexually and don't desire to act sexually on attraction to others. Asexuality is a spectrum which includes many forms of attraction, e.g. sensual or aesthetic. Asexuality is often shortened to ace.

Acephobia

Discriminatory or prejudiced actions or ideas related to someone's actual or perceived ace identity or erasure of ace identities.

Allosexual and alloromantic

Used to describe individuals who do not fall into the asexual and aromantic spectrums.

Ally

Someone who is actively supportive of LGBTI+ people. It includes straight and cisgender allies, and also LGBTI+ people who support each other (e.g. a lesbian who is a trans ally).

Aro / aromantic

Aromantic people experience little or no romantic attraction to others. As with asexuality, this is not a choice, but an intrinsic part of their individuality.

Bi / bisexual / biromantic

Terms describing people who are romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender or regardless of gender. We use the umbrella term bi+ to include all of these identities as well as pan, queer and others.

Biphobia

Discriminatory or prejudiced actions or ideas related to someone's actual or perceived bi+ orientation or erasure of bi+ identities.

Cis / cisgender

A person who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisgender is the word for anyone who is not transgender.

Come out

To tell others that you are LGBTI+.

Cross-dressing

Wearing clothes, make-up, or other accessories associated with a gender that you do not identify as.

Deadnaming

Calling someone by a previous name after they have changed the name they want to be called. Often associated with trans people who have changed their name as part of their transition.

Gay

Refers to men with a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards other men. Some women and non-binary people also define themselves as gay rather than using another term.

Gender binary

The dominant idea in Western society that there are only two genders, that all people are one of these two genders, and that the two are opposite.

Gender expression

External characteristics and behaviours that are typically socially defined as masculine, feminine, or somewhere in between, such as clothing, hairstyle, make-up, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

Gender identity

Refers to our internal sense of who we are, and how we see ourselves in regards to being a man, a woman, or somewhere in between/beyond these identities.

Gender reassignment

The language used in the Equality Act to refer to any part of a process of transitioning to live in a different gender (regardless of whether any hormonal or surgical changes take place).

Homophobia

Discriminatory or prejudiced actions or ideas related to someone's actual or perceived same sex attraction.

Intersex / variations in sex characteristics (I/VSC)

An umbrella term used for people who are born with variations in biological sex characteristics — this may mean that they may have bodies which do not always fit society's perception of typically male or female bodies. This is sometimes referred to as DSD (Differences of sex development), but many dislike this term. I/VSC is not the same as gender identity (our sense of self) or sexual orientation (who we are attracted to) but is about the physical body we are born with.

Lesbian

Refers to a woman who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women. Some non-binary people also identify as lesbian.

LGBT / LGBT+ / LGBTI / LGBTIA

Acronym which includes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Asexual. While the acronym can vary, the general aim is to inclusively group together marginalised groups of sexual and gender identities.

Non-binary

Identifying as either having a gender which is in-between or beyond the two categories 'man' and 'woman', as fluctuating between 'man' and 'woman', or as having no gender, either permanently or some of the time.

Outing

Exposing someone's LGBTI+ identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on their personal safety and their home or work situations.

Pan / pansexual

Refers to a person whose romantic and/or sexual attraction towards others is not limited by gender.

Pronoun

Words we use to refer to people in conversation — for example, ‘he’ or ‘she’. Some people prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as ‘they/them’.

Queer

A term used by those wanting to reject specific labels of romantic/sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Some LGBT+ people view the word as a slur, but others have reclaimed and are proud to use it.

Questioning

The process of exploring one’s own gender or sexual orientation.

Romantic orientation

Refers to the gender(s) to which a person is romantically attracted or the absence of this attraction.

Sexual orientation

Refers to the gender(s) to which a person is sexually attracted or the absence of this attraction.

Sexuality

Refers to the sum of various aspects of attraction and behaviour that add up to how a person expresses themselves as a sexual being. This includes the type or types of partner a person is attracted to, the kinds of sexual activities they prefer and how they organise their relationships, for example: monogamy or polyamory.

Straight / heterosexual

A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of a different gender only.

Trans / transgender

Equivalent inclusive umbrella terms for anyone whose gender identity or gender expression does not fully correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Trans man

A person who was assigned female at birth but has a male gender identity and therefore transitions to live as a man.

Trans woman

A person who was assigned male at birth but has a female gender identity and therefore transitions to live as a woman.

Transphobia

Discriminatory or prejudiced actions or ideas related to someone's actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression or erasure of trans identities.

Transsexual

An older word for someone whose gender identity is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Transsexual is also the term used in many British legal documents. Most (but not all) trans people now prefer the term trans or transgender, and so the term should only be used for another person if you are certain that that is how they refer to themselves.

Other formats

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This document is available in PDF format on our website: www.equality-network.org



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