

LGBTQ2S+ Terms and Definitions

LGBTQ2S+, **2SLGBTQIA+**, **LGBTQ**, **LGBT**, **LGBTQA**, **TBLG**, etc. are some of the acronyms that refer to Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Asexual. Although all of the different identities within “LGBT” are often lumped together (and share sexism as a common root of oppression), there are specific needs and concerns related to each individual identity.

Advocate:

is a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized social group.

Ally:

is someone who supports 2SLGBTQ+ people.

Androgyny:

A gender expression that has elements of both stereotypical constructions of masculinity and femininity; or occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person whose sex cannot be categorized as “male” or “female.”

Asexual:

is a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction.

Bigender:

a person whose gender fluctuates between different gender identities, often identifying with binary genders (and sometimes a third gender).

Binary Gender:

is a traditional, colonial understanding of gender, which limits possibilities to two genders “man” and “woman”.

Binary Sex:

is a traditional, medicalized understanding of sex, which limits possibilities to “female” or “male” ignoring the existence of intersex.

Biological Sex:

refers to physical anatomy, generally described as male, female, or intersex (often confused with gender). Characteristics of the body that have been used to determine sex may include genitals, gonads, hormones, chromosomes, and secondary sex characteristics (e.g. breasts, body hair, etc.).

Biphobia:

is an aversion toward bisexuality and bisexual people as a social group or as individuals. People of any sexual orientation can experience such feelings of aversion. Biphobia is a source of discrimination against bisexuals and may be based on negative bisexual stereotypes or irrational fear.

Bisexual:

a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender.

Cisgender/Cissexual (Cis):

is a person whose gender identity matches their birth-assigned sex.

Cis man:

is a person who was assigned the male sex identity at birth and identifies as a man.

Cis woman:

is a person who was assigned the female sex identity at birth and identifies as a woman.

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Cissexism:

is a belief that being cisgender is the only acceptable and “natural” form of gender expression, or that ignores/doesn’t acknowledge the existence of non-cisgender identities.

Closeted:

is a term to describe someone who is keeping their sexuality or gender identity private, and has yet to “come out of the closet”.

Crossdresser:

is someone who dresses in clothing typically associated with another gender as part of their gender expression. “Transvestite” is a similar but a derogatory term used to refer to someone who dresses in clothing that doesn’t appear to conform with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Cross-dressing:

is wearing clothing typically associated with another gender (e.g., a man wearing a dress) for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, sexual gratification, etc; often conflated with transsexuality.

Fluid(ity):

describes a sexual or gender identity that fluctuates among a mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, gay and straight); not to be confused with “transitioning”.

Gay:

A person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender; most often used to refer to male-identified individuals only; but can also refer to other individuals who experience same-gender attraction.

Gender/Gender Identity:

is an individual’s personal sense of identity as a man, woman, both, or neither, regardless of physical characteristics.

Gender Expression:

is a person’s external display of gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, often measured on a scale of masculinity and femininity.

Genderqueer/Gender nonconforming:

are umbrella terms that describe people who defy gender restrictions and/or deconstruct gender norms in their gender identity and expression.

Gender Dysphoria:

is a formal psychiatric diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th Edition) used by medical and psychiatric professionals to describe the sensation of cognitive dissonance many trans people feel between their birth-assigned sex and their gender identity.

Heterosexism:

is a belief that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than non-heterosexuality, or that ignores/doesn’t acknowledge the existence of non-heterosexual identities.

Heterosexual:

refers to someone of a binary gender (e.g. a man...) who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the other binary gender (...attracted to women).

Homophobia:

is fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, or discomfort with 2SLGBTQ+ people.

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Intersex:

is an umbrella term used to describe a person whose external and/or internal physical sex characteristics do not fit traditional medical definitions of the male or female sex. Infants may be categorized as intersex at birth if the genitals cannot be identified as either a penis or a vagina, however many intersex individuals are not aware that they are intersex, or may only discover this information later in life.

Lesbian:

is a person who identifies as female and who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same sex and/or gender.

Non Binary:

a person who doesn't align with the categories of "male/man" or "female/woman." A non-binary person may have a gender that blends male and female genders, may experience their gender as being something different altogether, or may simply not identify with any gender at all. These may also change or shift over time. A non-binary person may also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do.

Outing [someone]:

is when someone reveals another person's sexuality or gender identity to an individual or group without the person's consent or approval; not to be confused with "coming out".

Pansexual:

is a person who experiences sexual, romantic, and/or physical attraction to people of all gender identities/expressions or regardless of gender identity/expression.

Passing:

usually refers to a transgender person's ability to go through daily life without others making an assumption that they are transgender. The term can be problematic when used by cisgender people to imply that "passing" means "passing as something you're not". When transgender people are living as their authentic selves, and are not perceived as transgender by others, that does not make them deceptive or misleading.

Queer:

is an umbrella term used proudly by some people to defy gender or sexual restrictions. Not used by all and not to be used by people not identifying as part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community. Can be considered offensive to individuals both inside and outside the 2SLGBTQ+ community due to its pejorative origins.

Questioning:

describes the process of exploring one's own sexual orientation or gender identity, investigating influences that may come from external or internal motivations.

Sexual orientation:

describes a person's emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attraction to other people.

Same Gender Loving (SGL):

is a phrase coined by African American/Black communities as an alternative for "gay" and "lesbian" by people who see those as terms originating and belonging to the White 2SLGBTQ+ community.

Stealth:

describes a trans person who passes socially as a member of their gender and does not discuss or reveal their trans identity to others. The term is problematic because "stealth" connotes deceit.

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When transgender people are living as their authentic selves, and are not perceived as transgender by others, that does not make them deceptive or misleading.

Third Gender:

A person who does not identify with the traditional genders of “man” or “woman,” and identifies with another gender; or a gender category available in societies that recognize three or more genders.

Trans:

is an umbrella term for a person whose gender identity does not match society's expectations of someone with their physical sex characteristics.

Trans Man:

is a person who was assigned the female sex identity at birth and identifies as a man.

Trans Woman:

is a person who was assigned the male sex identity at birth and identifies as a woman.

Transition:

is the process trans people go through to overcome physical, legal, and social barriers so they can express their self-identified gender. Includes gender confirmation surgeries, name changes, gender marker changes, etc.

Transphobia:

is an irrational fear, hatred, and/or intolerance of people who are trans, perceived to be trans, or who cross societal gender norms.

Transsexual:

A medical term more widely used in the past and is often considered derogatory or pathologizing, similarly to “homosexual.” It refers to someone whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. While this might be the term used by some, many people prefer the terms trans or transgender.

Two-Spirit:

is an Indigenous cultural identity used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender, and/or spiritual identity as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit. As an umbrella term, it may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance.