



Glossary of LGBTQIA+ Terms

These are terms commonly used by LGBTQIA+ people and their allies.

A note about these definitions: each of these definitions has been carefully analyzed from theoretical and practical perspectives for cultural sensitivity, common usage, and general appropriateness. We have done our best to represent the most popular uses of the terms listed; however, there may be some variation in definitions depending on location.

This is a working glossary. If you would like to offer any additions, corrections, or disputes about these definitions, please contact us at pridecenter@lehigh.edu and we will be happy to take your comments into consideration.

Please note that each person who uses any or all of these terms does so in a unique way (especially terms that are used in the context of an identity label). If you do not understand the context in which a person is using one of these terms or when one should use/utilize a term, it is always appropriate to ask. This is especially recommended when using terms that we have noted that can have a derogatory connotation.

Ace – Someone who identifies as asexual.

Ag / Aggressive – A term used by some people of color to describe a masculine lesbian. Also known as *stud*.

Agender – A person without gender. An agender individual's body does not necessarily correspond with their lack of gender identity. Often, agender individuals are not concerned with their physical sex, but some may seek to look androgynous.

[Related Terms: neutrois, genderless, gender neutral]

Alloromantic – Someone who is not on the aromantic spectrum.

Allosexual – Someone who is not on the asexual spectrum.

Ally – **1.** Someone who actively confronts heterosexism, anti- LGBTQ biases, heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others **2.** Has concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersex, queer, and other similarly identified people **3.** Believes that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social justice issues. **4.** Being an ally is not an identity. Rather, being an ally is an action (allyship).

Amatonormativity – The assumption that a central, exclusive, amorous relationship is normal for humans, in that it is a universally shared goal, and that such a relationship is normative, in the sense that it should be aimed at in preference to other relationship types.

Androgyne – Person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman. Some androgyne individuals may present in a gender neutral or androgynous way.

Aro – a short, slang version of aromantic.



Aromantic – Person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others.

Asexual – Person who does not experience sexual attraction. They may or may not experience emotional, physical, and/or romantic attraction. Asexuality differs from celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation, not a choice.

Assigned at Birth – Commonly utilized by trans* individuals, the term illustrates that the individual's sex (and subsequently gender in early life) was assigned without involving the person who's sex was being assigned. Commonly seen as *Female Assigned At Birth* (FAAB) or *Assigned Female at Birth* (AFAB) and *Male Assigned At Birth* (MAAB) *Assigned Male at Birth* (AMAB).

BDSM – (Bondage, Discipline/Domination, Submission/Sadism, and Masochism) The terms *sadism* and *masochism* refer to deriving pleasure from inflicting or receiving pain, often in a sexual context. The terms *bondage*, *submission*, *discipline*, and *domination* refer to playing with various power roles, in both sexual and social context. These practices are often misunderstood as abusive, but when practiced in a safe, consensual manner can be a part of health sex life. **[Related Terms: kink, leather]**

Bear – 1. A gay or bisexual man who has facial/body hair and a cuddly body. 2. An umbrella term that is often defined as more of an attitude and a sense of comfort with natural masculinity and bodies.

Bicurious – A person who identifies as gay or straight while showing some curiosity for a relationship or sexual activity with a person of a sex/gender they do not usually engage with. **[Related terms: heteroflexible, homoflexible]**

Bigender – A person whose gender identity is a combination of or alternation between two genders.

Binding – The process of flattening one's breasts to have a more masculine or flat appearing chest.

Biphobia – Direct negative attitudes toward and unfair treatment of bisexual people. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQ community, as well as in general society.

Bisexual – A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to people of their own gender as well as other genders, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Boi (pronounced boy) – 1. A person who was assigned female at birth who expresses or presents themselves in a culturally/stereotypically masculine, particularly boyish way.

Bottom – 1. A person who is the receiving partner during sexual activity. 2. A person who is the penetrated partner during sexual activity.

Bottom Surgery – Surgery on the genitals designed to create a body in harmony with a person's gender identity to reduce dysphoria. **[Related Terms: Gender Confirming Surgery, Sexual Reassignment Surgery, Lower Surgery]**

Brown Boi – A masculine of center person of color.

Butch – 1. A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally 2. Sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Cisgender – someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity assigned to them based on their physical sex.

Cisgender Privilege – The set of privileges conferred to people who are cisgender (some of which are conferred conditionally to transgender people who are perceived to be cisgender). **(Examples: having one's gender pronouns used correctly, no harassment in public restrooms, no barriers to correct name and gender marker documentation, no denial of expected access to health care, etc.)**

Cisnormativity – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cissexual, and that cisgender people's identities are more normal, valid, and worthy of respect than transgender people's identities.



Cissexism – A pervasive and institutionalized system that “others” transgender people by treating their needs and identities as less important than those of cisgender people. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subjugates people because of their status as transgender.

Coming Out – **1.** The process of accepting one’s own sex, gender, and/or sexual identities (to “come out” to oneself). **2.** The process of sharing one’s sex, gender, and sexual identity statuses with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.). **3.** A life-long process for individuals in the LGBTQ community.

Cross-dressing – Wearing clothing that conflicts with the traditional gender expression of your sex and gender identity (e.g., a man wearing a dress) for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification.

Demiromantic – A person who does not experience romantic attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone.

Demisexual – A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone. It’s more commonly seen in but by no means confined to romantic relationships.

Discrimination – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individual acts of hatred or injustice and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

Domestic Partner – one who lives with their beloved and/or is at least emotionally and financially connected in a supportive manner with another; can also be shortened to “partner.”

Down Low – Typically used by men of color to describe men who identify as heterosexual, but who have sex with men. Many avoid sharing this information even if they have female sexual partners. [**Related terms:** Men who sleep with men (MSM)]

Drag – The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically.

Drag King – A person who consciously performs “masculinity,” usually in a show or theatre setting, presenting an exaggerated form of masculine expression, often times done by a woman.

Drag Queen – A person who consciously performs “femininity,” usually in a show or theatre setting, presenting an exaggerated form of feminine expression, often times done by a man.

Dyke – 1. Sometimes adopted affirmatively by lesbians (not necessarily masculine ones) to refer to themselves as a reclaimed term. 2. Derogatory term referring to (often masculine) lesbians.

Fag – 1. Derogatory term for a gay or effeminate man. 2. Derogatory term for any individual who does not match their assigned gender role. 3. Sometimes reclaimed by gay men as a self-identifier.

Family – Colloquial term used to identify other LGBTQ community members

Family of Choice – Persons or a group of people an individual sees as significant in one’s life. It may include none, all, or some members of their own family of origin. In addition, it may include individuals such as significant others, domestic partners, friends, and/or coworkers

Femme – An individual of any assigned sex who identifies with femininity, specifically through a queer and/or politically radical and/or subversive context. A femme person who is read as a woman may often be read as straight or gender normative, even if this is not the case.

FTM/MTF – (**F**emale **T**o **M**ale, or **M**ale **T**o **F**emale) A person who has undergone medical treatments to change their sex characteristics, often times to align them with their gender identity.



Gay – 1. Used in some cultural settings to represent men who are exclusively or primarily attracted to other men in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution [**See**: Down Low, Bisexual, MSM]. 2. A general term for gay men and lesbians.

Gender – A complex system of roles, expressions, identities, performances, and more that are given gendered meaning by a society and usually assigned to people based on the appearance of their sex characteristics at birth. How gender is embodied and defined varies from culture to culture and from person to person.

Gender Binary – The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or. [**See also**: Identity Sphere]

Gender Confirming Surgery – Medical surgeries used to modify one’s body to be more congruent with one’s gender identity.

Gender Dysphoria (GD) – Discomfort or distress caused by one’s assigned sex and the desire to change the characteristics that are the source.

Gender Expression – How one presents oneself and one’s gender to the world via dress, mannerisms, hairstyle, facial hair etc. This may or may not coincide with or indicate one’s gender identity. Many utilize gender expression in an attempt to determine the gender/sex of another individual. However, a person’s gender expression may not always match their gender identity.

Gender Identity – A person’s sense of self as a man, a woman, a different gender, a combination of genders, or having no gender at all, regardless of genitalia.

Gender Non-Conforming – A person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, butch, cross-dresser, etc.).

Gender Normative – A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society.

Gender Oppression - The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege cisgender people and subjugate and disparage transgender or gender non-conforming people.

Gender Variance (GV) - Cultural expressions of multiple genders (i.e., more than two) and the opportunity for individuals to change gender roles and identities over the course of their lifetimes.

Genderqueer – An individual whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Sometimes this includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system. Genderqueer individuals may or may not pursue any physical changes, such as hormonal or surgical intervention, and may not identify as trans*.

Grey Ace – Someone who identifies as part of the asexual community but does not identify as completely asexual. This differs from demisexuality in that being demisexual is a specific orientation and a grey ace is used as a catch all for any unspecified identity under the Ace umbrella.

Greyromantic – Someone who identifies as part of the aromantic community but does not identify as completely aromantic. This differs from demiromanticism in that being demiromantic is a specific identity and greyromantic is used as a catch all for any unspecified identity under the aromantic umbrella.

Heteronormativity – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality, bisexuality, and other sexual orientations.

Heteroromantic – Someone who has romantic feelings for someone of a different sex or gender.

Heterosexual – A medical definition for a person who is primarily or exclusively attracted to those of a different sex or gender. Also known as *straight*.



Heterosexism – The structural privileging of heterosexual behaviors and identities at the expense of individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subjugates people because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Heterosexual Privilege – Those benefits conferred to heterosexual people (some of which are conferred conditionally to others who are perceived as heterosexual or claim a heterosexual identity) that are denied to people of other sexual orientations.

HIV-phobia – The irrational fear or hatred of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

Homophobia – Direct negative attitudes toward and unfair treatment of people who identify or are perceived as non-heterosexual, including the fear of being read as part of the LGBT community. Homophobic behavior can range from telling gay jokes, to verbal abuse, to acts of physical violence.

Homoromantic – Someone who has romantic feelings for members of the same sex or gender.

Homosexual – A medical definition for a person who is primarily or exclusively attracted to those of the same gender or sex they have; this is considered an offensive/stigmatizing term by many members of the queer community.

Identity Sphere – The idea that gender identities and expressions do not fit on a linear scale, but rather on a sphere that allows room for all expression without weighting any one expression as better or more important than another.

In the Closet – Refers to a person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since medical practice is often to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet.” For example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family.

Institutional Oppression – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

Internalized Oppression – The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

Intersex – Individual(s) born with the condition of having physical sex markers (genitals, hormones, gonads, or chromosomes) that are neither clearly male nor female. Intersex people are sometimes defined as having “ambiguous” genitalia.

Leather Community – A community which encompasses those who are into leather, sado-masochism, bondage and domination, uniform, cowboys, rubber, and other fetishes. Although the leather community is often associated with the queer community, it is not a “gay-only” community.

Lesbian – Term used to describe women who are exclusively or primarily attracted to other women in a romantic, erotic, and/or emotional sense. Not all women who engage in “homosexual behavior” identify as lesbians, and as such this label should be used with caution [**See:** Down Low, Bisexual, WSW].

LGBTQ – A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning people. The acronym is used as an umbrella term when talking about non heterosexual and non-cisgender identities, and does not always reflect members of the community. The acronym may be expanded to LGBTQIA to include intersex individuals, allies, and/or asexual people, or shortened to LGBQ when discussing only sexual orientation.

Lipstick Lesbian – Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way, depending on who is using it. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is seen as automatically passing for heterosexual.



Masculine of Center – a term used by people of color to describe lesbian/queer/ womyn who tilt toward the masculine side of the gender scale and includes a wide range of identities such as butch, stud, aggressive/AG, dom, macha, tomboi, trans masculine, etc.

MSM – “men who have sex with men,” men who engage in same-sex behavior, but who may not necessarily self-identify as gay.

Monosexual – Attracted to one gender. May be used for individuals who identify as straight, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, etc.

Monosexism – The structural privileging of monosexual identities and behaviors, including the assumption that everyone is attracted to only one gender, that it is better to be monosexual than to be bisexual, that only monosexual identities are real, or that monosexual issues are the only ones deserving of attention. Monosexism causes bisexual erasure, discrimination against bisexual people, social isolation and poor mental health of bisexual people.

Nonbinary – A gender identity where the sex you were assigned at birth does not align with your current gender identity and your gender identity is outside of the Woman/Man binary, both an identity and umbrella term

Nonmonosexual – Attracted to more than one gender. May be used for individuals who identify as queer, fluid, bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, ambisexual, etc.

Neutrois – A person who identifies as being neither male nor female. This differs from androgyne, in that an androgyne sees themselves as a mix of two genders and neutrois individual sees themselves as not having a gender. [**Similar terms:** genderless, agender, or non-gendered.]

Oppression – The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

Outing – When someone discloses information about another’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics, generally without their knowledge and/or consent.

Packing – Wearing a phallic device on the groin and under clothing for any purposes including: (for someone without a biological penis) the validation or confirmation of one’s masculine gender identity; seduction; and/or sexual readiness (for one who likes to penetrate another during sexual intercourse).

Panromantic – Someone who has romantic feelings for a person regardless of their sex or gender.

Pansexual – A person who has the potential to experience sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions.

Passing – Being read as belonging to an identity to which you do not belong (i.e. a person of mixed racial background being read as white, a gay person being read as heterosexual, or a transitioned transgender person being read as cisgender). This should be used with caution in reference to trans people, because it can misleadingly imply that the trans person does not really belong to their gender but is merely passing as that gender.

Polyamory – Refers to having honest, non-monogamous relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a “primary” relationship or relationships and various “secondary” relationships).

Polysexual – Being sexually and/or romantically attracted to more than one sex or gender.

Prejudice – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members. Anyone can be prejudiced toward another individual or group.

Queer – **1.** An umbrella term which includes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, trans* people, intersex persons, radical sex communities, and many other sexually transgressive communities. **2.** This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label or gender identity label used to denote a non-heterosexual or cisgender identity without having to define specifics. **3.** A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been reclaimed by some folks in the LGBTQ community. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold “queer” to be a hateful insult.



Queerplatonic – Refers to a relationship that has the sort of intensity, closeness, and emotional connection expected of a romantic relationship, but is not romantic. Often abbreviated to QP, with QPR meaning a QP relationship and QPP standing for QP partner. People who are uncomfortable using the term “queer” use **quasiplatonic** instead to refer to the same type of relationship.

Questioning – An individual who is unsure of and/or exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

Sex – A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Because sex is usually subdivided into male and female, this category often does not recognize the existence of intersex or transsexual bodies.

Sex Identity – How a person identifies physically: female, male, in between, beyond, or neither.

Sexual Orientation – The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender/sex, another gender/sex, or multiple genders/sexes.

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS) – A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s sex characteristics. In most states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender status. Also known as Gender Confirming Surgery.

Sexuality – Refers to a person’s exploration of sexual behaviors, practices and identities in the social world.

Squish – An intense feeling of platonic attraction and appreciation toward a particular person; the platonic version of a crush.

Stealth – This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successfully passing as a cisgender person of their gender. Also referred to as “going stealth” or “living in stealth mode.”

Stem – A person whose gender expression falls somewhere between a stud and a femme. [**See also:** Femme and Stud]

Stereotype – A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. Some stereotypes can be positive. However, they can have a negative impact, simply because they involve broad generalizations that ignore individual realities.

Stonewall Riots – On June 28th, 1969, New York City Police attempted a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a working-class gay and lesbian bar in New York’s Greenwich Village. Unexpectedly, the patrons resisted, and the incident escalated into a riot that continued for several days. Many people attribute this event as the catalyst for the American Gay Liberation Movement, although there were previous riots and actions against homophobic and transphobic oppression. It is often left out that the more frequent patrons of the Stonewall Inn were trans women, drag queens, and butch lesbians.

Straight – A man or woman who is attracted to people of the other binary gender.

Straight-Acting – A term usually applied to gay men who readily pass as heterosexual. The term implies that there is a certain way that gay men should act that is significantly different from heterosexual men. Straight-acting gay men may be critiqued by members of the LGBTQ community for seemingly accessing heterosexual privilege

Third Gender – 1. A person who does not identify with the traditional genders of “man” or “woman,” but identifies with another gender; 2. The gender category available in societies that recognize three or more genders.

Top – 1. A person who is the giving partner during sexual activity. 2. A person who is the penetrating partner during sexual activity.

Top Surgery – This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

Trans* – An abbreviation that is used to refer to a transgender/gender queer/ gender non-conforming person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term



is sometimes used to refer to the whole gender non-conforming community that might include (but is not limited to) transgender, genderqueer, gender fluid, non-binary, gender*ck, transsexual, agender, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, trans man, trans woman, gender non-conforming, trans masculine, trans feminine, and gender questioning.

Trans feminine – 1. An umbrella term used to describe those who were assigned male at birth (AMAB), but identify as more female than male. Can include both trans women and non-binary trans people. 2. An AMAB person who identifies as trans and to some degree identifies with femaleness or womanhood, but does not identify completely or solely as a woman. It should be noted that trans feminine is not a descriptor of gender expression but of identity. Trans feminine people do not necessarily have to be stereotypically feminine in their interests or even presentation.

Transgender – A person who identifies with a gender other than the gender they were assigned at birth. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

Transition – This term is primarily used to refer to the processes a transgender or gender variant person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance (via hormone replacement therapy, surgery, or other medical procedures), gender expression, and/or documentation to be more congruent with the gender/sex with which they identify.

Trans masculine – 1. An umbrella term used to describe those who were assigned female at birth (AFAB), but identify as more male than female. Can include both trans men and non-binary trans people 2. An AFAB person who identifies as trans and to some degree identifies with maleness or manhood, but does not identify completely or solely as a man. It should be noted that trans masculine is not a descriptor of gender expression but of identity. Trans masculine people do not necessarily have to be stereotypically masculine in their interests or even presentation.

Trans Man – A man who was assigned female at birth. Signifies that he is a man while still affirming his transgender history.

Transphobia – Direct negative attitudes toward and unfair treatment of those who are transgender or gender non-conforming. Transphobic behavior can range from ridiculing trans* people, to verbal abuse, to acts of physical violence, often including murder. Transphobia can be seen within the LGBTQ community, as well as in general society.

Trans Woman – A woman who was assigned male at birth. Signifies that she is a woman while still affirming her transgender history.

Two-Spirit – A Native American term for people who blend the masculine and the feminine. It is commonly used to describe individuals who historically crossed gender. It is often used by contemporary LGBTQ Native American people to describe themselves.

WSW – “women who have sex with women,” women who engage in same-sex behavior, but who may not necessarily self-identify as lesbians.

Ze / Hir / Hirs – Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some gender variant persons. Pronounced /zee/, /heer/, and /heers/, they replace “he”/“she,” “him”/“her,” and “his”/“hers,” respectively.



A few notes about language

1. Language is bound by time, context, and history
2. Language can be liberatory and restrictive
3. Use of terms/identity/words is dependent on individual experience, desires, and cultural understandings

Golden rule of language: use the terms that someone uses for themselves in all cases, regardless of what you may or may not know about a person's identity or prior understanding of language



Gender Pronouns

Please note that these are not the only pronouns. There are an infinite number of pronouns as new ones emerge in our language. Always ask someone for their pronouns.

Norm	Objective	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive	Example
She	Her	Hers	Herself	She is speaking. I listened to her. The backpack is hers.
He	Him	His	Himself	He is speaking. I listened to him. The backpack is his.
They	Them	Theirs	Themselves	They are speaking. I listened to them. The backpack is theirs.
Ze	Hir/Zir	Hirs/Zirs	Hirself/ Zirself	Ze is speaking. I listened to hir. The backpack is zirs.

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For more information,
go to transstudent.org/graphics

TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources



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