

## LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions

**advocate** – **1 noun** : a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. **2 verb** to actively support/plea in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance, educate others, etc.

**agender** – *adj.* : a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender neutral, or genderless.

**ally** /"al-lie"/ – *noun* : a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take action on in support and respect.

- "Coming out" as an ally is when you reveal (or take an action that reveals) your support of the LGBTQ community. Being an active supporter can, at times, be stigmatizing, though it is not usually recognized, many allies go through a "coming out process" of their own.

**androgyny/ous** /"an-jrah-jun-ee"; "an-jrah-jun-uss"/ – *adj.* : **1** a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; **2** occasionally used in place of "intersex" to describe a person with both female and male anatomy.

**androsexual / androphilic** – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some men, males, and/or masculinity.

**aromantic** – *adj.* : experiencing little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/behavior. Aromanticism exists on a continuum from people who experience no romantic attraction or have any desire for romantic activities, to those who experience low levels, or romantic attraction only under specific conditions, and many of these different places on

the continuum have their own identity labels (see demiromantic). Sometimes abbreviated to "aro" (pronounced like "arrow").

**asexual** – *adj.* : experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions, and many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see demisexual). Sometimes abbreviated to "ace."

- Asexuality is different from celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation whereas celibacy is an abstaining from a certain action.
- Not all asexual people are aromantic.

**bigender** – *adj.* : a person who fluctuates between traditionally "woman" and "man" gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with both genders (and sometimes a third gender).

**bicurious** – *adj.* : a curiosity about having attraction to people of the same gender/sex (similar to questioning).

**biological sex** – *noun* : a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply "sex," "physical sex," "anatomical sex," or specifically as "sex assigned at birth."

- Often seen as a binary but as there are many combinations of chromosomes, hormones, and primary/secondary sex characteristics, it's more accurate to view this as a spectrum (which is more inclusive of intersex people as well as trans\*-identified people).\* – Is commonly conflated with gender.

**biphobia** – *noun* : a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have or express towards bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as straight society. Biphobic – *adj.* : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards bisexual people.

- Example of bi-invisibility and bi-erasure would be the assumption that any man in a relationship with a woman is straight or anyone dating someone of the same gender means you're gay. In neither case do we assume anyone could be bisexual.
- Really important to recognize that many of our "stereotypes" of bisexual people – they're overly sexual, greedy, it's just a phase – have harmful and stigmatizing effects (and that gay, straight, and many other queer individuals harbor these beliefs too).

**bisexual** – *adj.* : **1** a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to males/men and females/women. **2** a person who is emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people of their gender and another gender . This attraction does not have to be equally split or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders or sexes an individual may be attracted to.

- Can simply be shortened to "bi."
- Many people who recognize the limitations of a binary understanding of gender may still use the word bisexual as their sexual orientation label, this is often because many people are familiar with the term bisexual (while less are familiar to the term pansexual).

**butch** – *noun & adj.* a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. 'Butch' is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

**cisgender** /"siss-jendur"/ – *adj.* : a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and assigned male at birth). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to "cis."

- "Cis" is a latin prefix that means "on the same side [as]" or "on this side [of]."

**cissexism** – *noun* : behavior that grants preferential treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being transgender, and/or makes other genders invisible.

**cisnormativity** – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans\* identities or people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

**closeted** – *adj.* : an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. (See coming out)

**coming Out** – **1** the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). **2** The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

- This is a continual, life-long process. Everyday, all the time, one has to evaluate and re-evaluate who they are comfortable coming out to, if it is safe, and what the consequences might be.

**constellation** – *noun* : a way to describe the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship.

**cross-dresser** – *noun* : someone who wears clothes of another gender/sex.

**demiromantic** – *adj.* : little or no capacity to experience romantic attraction until a strong sexual or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a sexual relationship.

**demisexual** – *adj.* : little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic or emotional connection is formed with another individual, often within a romantic relationship.

**down low** – *adj.* : typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by communities of color.

**drag king** – *noun* : someone who performs masculinity theatrically.

**drag queen** – *noun* : someone who performs femininity theatrically.

**dyke** – *noun* : referring to a masculine presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it can be adopted affirmatively by many lesbians (both more masculine and more feminine presenting lesbians not necessarily masculine ones) as a positive self-identity term.

**emotional attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in romantic intimate behavior (e.g., sharing, confiding, trusting, interdepending), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**fag(got)** – *noun* : derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. Occasionally used as a self-identifying affirming term by some gay men, at times in the shortened form 'fag'.

**feminine-of-center; masculine-of-center** – *adj.* : a word that indicates a range of terms of gender identity and gender presentation for folks who present, understand themselves, and/or relate to others in a more feminine/masculine way, but don't necessarily identify as women/men. Feminine-of-center individuals may also identify as femme, submissive, transfeminine, etc.; masculine-of-center individuals may also often identify as butch, stud, aggressive, boi, transmasculine, etc.

**feminine-presenting; masculine-presenting** – *adj.* : a way to describe someone who expresses gender in a more feminine/masculine way. Often confused with feminine-of-center/masculine-of-center, which generally include a focus on identity as well as expression.

**femme** – (noun & adj) someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman.

**fluid(ity)** – *adj.* : generally with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid-sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of the options available (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight).

**FtM / F2M; MtF / M2F** – *abbreviation* : female-to-male transgender or transsexual person; male-to-female transgender or transsexual person.

**gay** – *adj.* : : **1** individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. More commonly used when referring to men who are attracted to other men, but can be applied to women as well. **2** An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

- “Gay” is a word that’s had many different meanings throughout time. In the 12th century is meant “happy,” in the 17th century it was more commonly used to mean “immoral” (describing a loose and pleasure-seeking person), and by the 19th it meant a female prostitute (and a “gay man” was a guy who had sex with female prostitutes a lot). It wasn’t until the 20th century that it started to mean what it means today. Interesting, right?

**gender binary** – *noun* : the idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.

**gender expression** – *noun* : the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

**gender fluid**– *adj.* : : gender fluid is a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days.

**gender identity** – *noun* : the internal perception of an one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more. Often confused with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

**gender neutrois** – *adj.* : see agender.

**gender non-conforming** – *adj.* : **1** a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man) **2** a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as "GNC."

**gender normative / gender straight** – *adj.* : someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society's gender-based expectations.

**genderqueer** – *adj.* : a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).

- may combine aspects man and woman and other identities (bigender, pangender);
- not having a gender or identifying with a gender (genderless, agender);
- moving between genders (genderfluid);
- third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender having an overlap of, or blurred lines between, gender identity and sexual and romantic orientation.

**gender variant** – *adj.* : someone who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, gender-queer, cross-dresser, etc).

**gynosexual / gynephilic** / "guy-nuh-seks-shu-uhl" / – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some woman, females, and/or femininity.

**heteronormativity** – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual (e.g. asking a woman if she has a boyfriend) and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

**hermaphrodite** – *noun* : an outdated medical term previously used to refer to someone who was born with some combination of typically-male and typically-female sex characteristics. It's considered stigmatizing and inaccurate. See *intersex*.

**heteronormativity** – *noun* : the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: *when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband's name is*. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

**heterosexism** – *noun* : behavior that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more "right" than queerness, and/or makes other sexualities invisible.

**heterosexual** – *adj.* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex. Also known as straight.

**homophobia** – *noun* : an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have towards members of LGBTQ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. Homophobic – *adj.* : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards gay people.

- The term can be extended to bisexual and transgender people as well; however, the terms biphobia and transphobia are used to emphasize the specific biases against individuals of bisexual and transgender communities.
- May be experienced inwardly by someone who identifies as queer (internalized homophobia).

**homosexual** – *adj. & noun* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatizing (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

- Until 1973 “Homosexuality” was classified as a mental disorder in the DSM Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders. This is just one of the reasons that there are such heavy negative and clinical connotations with this term.
- There was a study done prior to DADT (Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell) being revoked about peoples’ feelings towards open queer service members. When asked, “How do you feel about open gay and lesbian service members,” there was about 65% support (at the time).” When the question was changed to, “How do you feel about open homosexual service members,” the same demographic of people being asked – support drops over 20%. There are different connotations to the word homosexual than there are to gay/lesbian individuals for both straight and queer people.

**intersex** – *adj.* : term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

**lesbian** – *noun & adj.* women who have the capacity to be attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to some other women.

**LGBTQ; GSM; DSG** – *abbreviations* : shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer

and/or Questioning (sometimes people add a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Sexualities and Genders. Other options include the initialism GLBT or LGBT and the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans\* Bisexual Asexual [or Allied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]).

- There is no “correct” initialism or acronym — what is preferred varies by person, region, and often evolves over time.
- The efforts to represent more and more identities led to some folks describe the ever-lengthening initialism as “Alphabet Soup,” which was part of the impetus for GSM and DSG.

**lipstick lesbian** – *noun* : Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is assumed to be (or passes for) straight.

**metrosexual** – *adj.* : a man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative.

**MSM / WSW** – *abbreviations* : men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women, to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities: *because a man is straight, it doesn't mean he's not having sex with men.* Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

**Mx.** / “mix” or “schwa” / – an honorific (e.g. Mr., Ms., Mrs., etc.) that is gender neutral. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the gender binary: *Mx. Smith is a great teacher.*

**outing** – *verb* : involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

**pansexual** – *adj.* : a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to “pan.”

**passing** – *adj. & verb* : **1** trans\* people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their self-identified gender identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth) without being identified as trans\*. **2** An LGB/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

- Passing is a controversial term because it often is focusing on the person who is observing or interacting with the individual who is “passing” and puts the power/authority in observer rather than giving agency to the individual.
- While some people are looking to “pass” or perhaps more accurately be accepted for the identity that they feel most aligns with who they are “passing” is not always a positive experience.
- Some individuals experience a sense of erasure or a feeling of being invisible to their own community when they are perceived to be part of the dominant group.

**PGPs** – *abbreviation* : preferred gender pronouns. Often used during introductions, becoming more common in educational institutions. Many suggest removing the “preferred,” because it indicates flexibility and/or the power for the speaker to decide which pronouns to use for someone else.

**polyamory / polyamorous** – *noun, adj.* refers to the practice of, desire to, or orientation towards having ethically, honest, and consensual non-monogamous relationships (i.e. relationships that may include multiple partners). This may include open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves more than two people being in romantic and/or sexual relationships which is not open to additional partners), amongst many other set-ups.

**queer** – *adj.* : used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight. Also used to describe people who have a non-normative gender identity, or as a political affiliation. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ community. The term “queer” can often be use interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., “queer folks” instead of “LGBTQ folks”).

- If a person tells you they are not comfortable with you referring to them as queer, don’t. Always respect individual’s preferences when it comes to

identity labels, particularly contentious ones (or ones with troubled histories) like this.

- Use the word queer only if you are comfortable explaining to others what it means, because some people feel uncomfortable with the word, it is best to know/feel comfortable explaining why you choose to use it if someone inquires.

**questioning** – *verb, adj.* an individual who or time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**QPOC / QTPOC** – *abbreviation* : initialisms that stand for queer people of color and queer and/or trans people of color.

**romantic attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in romantic intimate behavior (e.g., dating, relationships, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**same gender loving (SGL)** – *adj.* : sometimes used by some members of the African-American or Black community to express an non-straight sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

**sex assigned at birth (SAAB)** – *abbreviation* : a phrase used to intentionally recognize a person's assigned sex (not gender identity). Sometimes called "designated sex at birth" (DSAB) or "sex coercively assigned at birth" (SCAB), or specifically used as "assigned male at birth" (AMAB) or "assigned female at birth" (AFAB): *Jenny was assigned male at birth, but identifies as a woman.*

**sexual attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in physical intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

**sexual orientation** – *noun* : the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

**sexual preference** – *noun* : the types of sexual intercourse, stimulation, and gratification one likes to receive and participate in. Generally when this term is used, it is being mistakenly interchanged with “sexual orientation,” creating an illusion that one has a choice (or “preference”) in who they are attracted to.

**sex reassignment surgery (SRS)** – *noun* : used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person’s biological sex. “Gender confirmation surgery” is considered by many to be a more affirming term. In most cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Some refer to different surgical procedures as “top” surgery and “bottom” surgery to discuss what type of surgery they are having without having to be more explicit.

**skoliosexual** – *adj.* : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some genderqueer, transgender, transsexual, and/or non-binary people.

**spiritual attraction** – *noun* : a capacity that evokes the want to engage in intimate behavior based on one’s experience with, interpretation of, or belief in the supernatural (e.g., religious teachings, messages from a deity), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or emotional attraction.

**stealth** – *adj.* : a trans person who is not “out” as trans, and is perceived by others as cisgender.

**straight** – *adj.* : a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

**stud** – *noun* : most commonly used to indicate a Black/African-American and/or Latina masculine lesbian/queer woman. Also known as ‘butch’ or ‘aggressive’.

**third gender** – *noun* : for a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. This gender category is used by societies that recognise three or more genders, both contemporary and historic,

and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

**top surgery** – *noun* : this term refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest or breast augmentation for a female-type chest.

**trans\*** – *adj.* : An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written forms (not spoken) to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (trans women).

**transgender** – *adj.* : A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that assigned at birth based on anatomical sex.

- Because sexuality labels (e.g., gay, straight, bi) are generally based on the relationship between the person's gender and the genders they are attracted to, trans\* sexuality can be defined in a couple of ways. Some people may choose to self-identify as straight, gay, bi, lesbian, or pansexual (or others, using their gender identity as a basis), or they might describe their sexuality using other-focused terms like gynosexual, androsexual, or skoliosexual (see full list for definitions for these terms).
- A trans\* person can be straight, gay, bisexual, queer, or any other sexual orientation.

**transition / transitioning** – *noun, verb* this term is primarily used to refer to the process a trans\* person undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex they feel themselves to be and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

**transman; transwoman** – *noun* : An identity label sometimes adopted by female-to-male transgender people or transsexuals to signify that they are men while still affirming their history as assigned female sex at birth. (sometimes referred to as transguy) 2 Identity label sometimes adopted by male-to-female transsexuals or transgender people to signify that they are women while still affirming their history as assigned male sex at birth.

**transphobia** – *noun* : the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans\* people, the trans\* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society. Transphobia is often manifested in violent and deadly means. While the exact numbers and percentages aren't incredibly solid on this, it's safe to say that trans\* people are far more likely than their cisgender peers (including LGB people) to be the victims of violent crimes and murder. Transphobic – *adj.* : a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes, thoughts, intents, towards trans\* people.

**transsexual** – *noun and adj.* a person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

**transvestite** – *noun* : a person who dresses as the binary opposite gender expression ("cross-dresses") for any one of many reasons, including relaxation, fun, and sexual gratification (often called a "cross-dresser," and should not be confused with transsexual).

**two-spirit** – *noun* : is an umbrella term traditionally used by Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders.

**ze / zir / "zee", "zerr" or "zeer"/** – alternate pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some trans\* people. They replace "he" and "she" and "his" and "hers" respectively. Alternatively some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun "they/their" as a gender neutral singular pronoun.