LGBTQI Definitions & Information

LGBTQI stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex.

Below are definitions of LGBTQI terms and related information that will help you understand LGBTQI persons and their community*:

- **Ally** - Someone who advocates for and supports members of a community other than their own, reaching across differences to achieve mutual goals.
- **Asexual** - Refers to a person who consistently does not experience sexual attraction toward other people.
- **Bias** - Prejudice; an inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment.
- **Biphobia** - The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are bisexual, or the marginalization or refusal to acknowledge bisexuality as a legitimate sexuality.
- **Bisexual** - Also colloquially referred to as “bi.” A person who is attracted to two sexes or two genders, but not necessarily simultaneously or equally. This used to be defined as a person who is attracted to both genders or both sexes, but since sex and gender don’t operate on binaries (see “intersex”/“transsexual” and “transgender”), this definition is inaccurate.
- **Cisgenderism** - Holding people to traditional expectations based on gender, or punishing or excluding those who don’t conform to traditional gender expectations.
- **Cissexism** - The belief and treatment of trans* people as inferior on less authentic than cissexual (non-trans*) people.
- **Coming Out** - To recognize one’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex identity, and to be open about it with oneself and with others.
- **Cross-Dresser** - Individuals who regularly or occasionally wear the clothing socially assigned to a gender not their own, but are usually comfortable with their anatomy and do not wish to change it (i.e. they are not transsexuals). Cross-dresser is the preferred term for men who enjoy or prefer women’s clothing and social roles. Contrary to popular belief, the overwhelming majority of male cross-dressers identify as straight and often are married. Very few women call themselves cross-dressers.
- **Demisexual** - An orientation placed between sexual and asexual. Demisexuals generally do not form random sexual attraction to people (regardless of sex or gender), but if they get to know someone, sexual attraction can develop as a result of or alongside an emotional connection.
- **Discrimination** - The act of showing partiality or prejudice; a prejudicial act.
- **Domestic Partner** - One who lives with their beloved and/or is at least emotionally and financially connected in a supportive manner with another. Another word for spouse, lover, significant other, etc.
- **Dominant Culture** - The cultural values, beliefs, and practices that are assumed to be the most common and influential within a given society.
- **Drag** - The act of dressing in gendered clothing as part of a performance. Drag Queens perform in highly feminine attire. Drag Kings perform in highly masculine attire. Drag may be performed as a political comment on gender, as parody, or simply as entertainment. Drag performance does not indicate sexuality, gender identity, or sex identity.
- **Family** - Colloquial term used to identify other LGBTIQ community members. For example, an LGBTQI person saying, “that person is family” often means that the person they are referring to is LGBTIQ as well.
- **Family of choice (chosen family)** - Persons or group of people an individual sees as significant in zir life. It may include none, all, or some members of zir family of origin. In addition, it may include individuals such as significant others, domestic partners, friends, and coworkers.
- **FTM/F2M** - Female-to-Male Transsexual.
- **Gay** - Men attracted emotionally, romantically, and/or sexually to men. Colloquially used at times as an umbrella term to include all LGBTIQ people.
- **Gender** - A socially constructed system of classification that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristics can change over time and are different between cultures. Words that refer to gender include: man, woman, transgender, masculine, feminine, genderqueer, bigender, and agender. One’s sense of self as masculine or feminine regardless of external genitalia. Gender is often conflated with sex. This is inaccurate because sex refers to bodies and gender refers to personality characteristics.
• **Gender Conformity/Cisgendered** - When a person's gender identity and sex are in alignment (i.e. fit social norms), e.g. a male who is masculine and identifies as a man. The term "cisgendered" was coined in the early 1990s as a way to refer to people who do not identify as transgender, and the prefix "cis-" is used in the term "cissexual" to refer to the same concept as applied to biological sex.

• **Gender Dysphoria** - Being discontent with the biological sex and/or gender that a person was assigned at birth. This discontent can lead to serious discomfort and feelings of "wrongness," that the person was born in the wrong body. The professional diagnosis for gender dysphoria has been gender identity disorder (GID), though it is likely that the term will be removed from the DSM-V and replaced with gender dysphoria. A modern remedy for gender dysphoria consists primarily of physical alterations to bring the person's body more into alignment with that person's perception of zero gender identity (see "transition"); however, it is important to remember that transitioning does not eliminate the difference between sex and gender.

• **Gender Expression** - The way that a person chooses to express herself. This sometimes can conflate with gender identity, but is not agiven; for example, someone who identifies as a woman can still choose to express herself in a way deemed by society as masculine, e.g. certain hairstyles, clothing, and behaviors. Gender expression terms are masculine, feminine, and androgynous.

• **Gender Identity** - The gender that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a gender. Gender identity is also often conflated with sexual orientation, but this is inaccurate. Gender identity does not cause sexual orientation. For example, a masculine woman is not necessarily a lesbian.

• **Gender-Neutral** - Nondiscriminatory language to describe relationships—e.g. "spouse" and "partner" are gender-neutral alternatives to the gender-specific words "husband," "wife," "boyfriend" and "girlfriend."

• **Gender Queer (or Genderqueer)** - A person who redefines or plays with gender, or who refuses gender altogether. A label for people who bend/break the rules of gender and blur the boundaries.

• **Gender Role** - How "masculine" or "feminine" an individual acts. Societies commonly have norms regarding how males and females should behave, expecting people to have personality characteristics and/or act a certain way based on their biological sex.

• **Gender-variant/Gender non-conforming** - Displaying gender traits that are not normatively associated with their biological sex. "Feminine" behavior or appearance in a male is gender-variant as is "masculine" behavior or appearance a female. Gender-variant behavior is culturally specific.

• **GSM** - stands for "gender and sexual minority." An umbrella term to meant to refer to and include all people in the LGBTQQIAAP* community that is slowly gaining popularity, similar to the changing acronym in some places of GSA to "gender and sexuality alliance." Some people prefer to use this as an umbrella term rather than "queer," since GSM doesn't hold the same historically negative connotation.

• **Hate Crime** - Hate crime legislation often defines a hate crime as a crime motivated by the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender identity, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.

• **Heteronormativity** - The cultural bias in favor of opposite-sex relationships of a sexual nature, and against same-sex relationships of a sexual nature. Heteronormative practices or techniques are multiple and organise categories of identity into hierarchical binaries. This means that man has been set up as the opposite (and superior) of woman, and heterosexual as the opposite (and superior) of homosexual. Heteronormativity thus is damaging to people in many different groups.

• **Heterosexuality** - Sexual attraction to a sex other than your own. Commonly thought of as "attraction to the opposite sex" but since there are not only two sexes (see intersex and transsexual), this definition is inaccurate.

• **Heteroromantic** - Romantic and/or emotional attraction to a gender other than your own. Commonly thought of as "attraction to the opposite gender" but since there are not only two genders (see "gender identity"), this definition is inaccurate.

• **Heterosexism** - Assuming every person to be heterosexual therefore marginalizing persons who do not identify as heterosexual. It is also believing heterosexuality to be superior to homosexuality and all other sexual orientations.

• **Heterosexual Privilege** - Benefits derived automatically by being (or being perceived as) heterosexual that are denied to homosexuals, bisexuals, and queers.

• **Homonormativity** - Norm that takes it for granted that everybody with any lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (homosexual) connection is and act as if they were homosexual. Homosexuals are commonly defined as: persons who are attracted to individuals of the same gender; any person illustrating any homosexual norm or stereotype to be homosexual. The same problems apply with homonormativity as with heteronormativity; it can marginalize or punish persons who do not exhibit stereotypically "gay" behavior.

• **Homophobia** - The irrational fear and intolerance of people who are homosexual or of homosexual feelings within one's self. This assumes that heterosexuality is superior.
• **Homoromantic** - Emotional or romantic attraction to persons of the same gender
• **Homosexuality** - Sexual attraction to persons of the same sex.
• **Institutional Oppression** - Arrangement of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media education, religion, economics, etc.
• **Internalized Dominance** - The inability of a group or an individual to see the privilege of being the dominant group or being a member of the dominant group.
• **Internalized Oppression** - The process by which an oppressed person comes to believe, accept, or live out the inaccurate stereotypes and misinformation about their group.
• **Intersex** - Intersexuality is a set of medical conditions that feature congenital anomaly of the reproductive and sexual system. That is, intersex people are born with “sex chromosomes,” external genitalia, or internal reproductive systems that are not considered “standard” for either male or female. The existence of intersexuals shows that there are not just two sexes and that our ways of thinking about sex (trying to force everyone to fit into either the male box or the female box) is socially constructed.
• **In the Closet** - Keeping one's sexual orientation and/or gender or sex identity a secret.
• **Invisible Minority** - A group whose minority status is not always immediately visible, such as some disabled people and LGBTIQ people. This lack of visibility may make organizing for rights difficult.
• **Lambda** - The Gay Activist Alliance originally chose the lambda, the Greek letter “L”, as a symbol in 1970. Organizers chose the letter “L” to signify liberation. The word has become a way of expressing the concept "lesbian and gay male" in a minimum of syllables and has been adopted by such organizations as Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund.
• **Lesbian** - A woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to other women.
• **Marginalized** - Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group/society/community.
• **Men who have sex with men (MSM)** - Men who engage in same-sex behavior, but who may not necessarily self-identify as gay (sometimes referred to as 'on the down-low').
• **MTF/M2F** - Male-to-Female Transsexual.
• **Out (of the closet)** - Refers to varying degrees of being open about one's sexual orientation and/or sex identity or gender identity.
• **Panromantic** - An emotional and/or romantic orientation characterized by romantic attraction toward any gender.
• **Pansexual** - A person who is fluid in sexuality.
• **Polyamory** - The practice of having multiple open, honest love relationships.
• **Queer** - An umbrella term to refer to all LGBTIQ people. A political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid. A simple label to explain a complex set of sexual behaviors and desires. For example, a person who is attracted to multiple genders may identify as queer. Many older LGBT people feel the word has been hatefully used against them for too long and are reluctant to embrace it.
• **Rainbow Flag** - The Rainbow Freedom Flag was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker to designate the great diversity of the LGBTIQ community. It has been recognized by the International Flag Makers Association as the official flag of the LGBTIQ civil rights movement.
• **Sex Identity** - The sex that a person sees themselves as. This can include refusing to label oneself with a sex.
• **Sexual minority** - Refers to members of sexual orientations or who engage in sexual activities that are not part of the mainstream. Refers to members of sex groups that do not fall into the majority categories of male or female, such as intersexuals and transsexuals.
• **Sex (versus gender)** - Refers to a person based on their anatomy (external genitalia, chromosomes, and internal reproductive system). Sex terms are male, female, transsexual, and intersex. Sex is biological, although social views and experiences of sex are cultural.
• **Sexuality** - The deep-seated direction of one's sexual (erotic) attraction. It is on a continuum and not a set of absolute categories. Sometimes referred to as affection orientation or sexuality. Sexual orientation evolves through a multistage developmental process, and may change over time.
• **SRS** - Acronym for Sexual Reassignment Surgery, the surgery done by transsexuals to make their bodies and their sex identity match.
• **Stereotype** - An exaggerated, oversimplified belief about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences.
• **Straight** - Person who is attracted to a gender other than their own. Commonly thought of as “attraction to the opposite gender,” but since gender does not exist solely on a binary (see “transgender”), this definition is inaccurate.
Transgender - Transgender (sometimes shortened to trans or TG) people are those whose psychological self ("gender identity") differs from the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with. To understand this, one must understand the difference between biological sex, which is one's body (genitals, chromosomes, etc.), and social gender, which refers to levels of masculinity and femininity. Often, society conflates sex and gender, viewing them as the same thing. But, gender and sex are not the same thing. Transgender people are those whose psychological self ("gender identity") differs from the social expectations for the physical sex they were born with. For example, a female with a masculine gender identity or who identifies as a man. An umbrella term for transsexuals, cross-dressers (transvestites), transgenderists, gender queers, and people who identify as neither female nor male and/or as neither a man or as a woman. Transgender is not a sexual orientation - transgender people may have any sexual orientation. It is important to acknowledge that while some people may fit under this definition of transgender, they may not identify as such.

Transgenderist - A person who lives either full time, or most of the time, in a gender role different than the role associated with their biological or chromosomal sex (a gender non-conformist).

Transition - A complicated, multi-step process that can take years as transsexuals align their anatomy with their sex identity; this process may ultimately include sex reassignment surgery (SRS).

Transphobia - Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment and discrimination.

Transsexual - Transsexual refers to a person who experiences a mismatch of the sex they were born as and the sex they identify as. A transsexual sometimes undergoes medical treatment to change his/her physical sex to match his/her sex identity through hormone treatments and/or surgically. Not all transsexuals can have or desire to have surgery.

Triangle - A symbol of remembrance. Gay men in the Nazi concentration camps were forced to wear the pink triangle as a designation of being homosexual. Women who did not conform to social roles, often believed to be lesbians, had to wear the black triangle. The triangles are worn today as symbols of freedom, reminding us to never forget.

Ze/Zer - Gender neutral pronouns that can be used instead of he/she and his/her.

* This is not intended to be a comprehensive list, nor do we assume that the definitions included in this list are completely accurate; no offense is meant in defining the above terms. If an inconsistency is found, a term is found that is not included in this list, or a definition is offensive, please don't hesitate to inform us. We will correct the discrepancies as they are found.