

Glossary of LGBTQIA2S+ Terms

This is a list of carefully researched and thoughtfully discussed definitions for key gender and sexuality terms. It is by no means a comprehensive list, but it is a good place for us to start. Identity terms mean very particular things to different individuals. The definitions provided in this document reflect the current general understanding of these terms. We understand that language around sexuality and gender is always changing and we will review these terms regularly.

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Getting Started



To understand LGBTQIA2S+ identities and communities we must first distinguish three important concepts (gender, sex, and sexuality) and discuss the version of the acronym we are using.

Gender, sex, and sexuality are often misunderstood terms that are distinct, but also connected. Their definitions are sometimes collapsed and the terms are used interchangeably. This is particularly true for “gender” and “sex.” Additionally, people’s conception of these terms is often quite limited and rooted in cisheteronormative and binary understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality. Understanding the distinctions and connections between these concepts is critical to understanding the definitions that follow.

Birth-Assigned Sex - the designation that refers to a person’s biological, morphological, hormonal, and genetic composition. One’s sex is typically assigned at birth and classified as either male or female. “Assigned-at-birth” serves to imply that sex assignment is without the agency of the individual. Birth-assigned sex is often mistakenly confused with gender.

Gender – A social construct. This term is often understood as a binary, however, historically and presently, gender is expansive and dynamic. Gender is framed by a society’s understanding of masculinity and femininity as related to roles, behaviors, expectations, activities, identities, and attributes. The key elements of an individual's gender are gender identity, gender attribution, and gender expression.

Sexuality - A person’s sexual feelings, thoughts, desires, identities, values, and behaviors. This includes one’s sexual identity and is sometimes related to one’s romantic identity. Sexuality includes how and if we engage in sexual (and possibly romantic activity), what activities we enjoy, and with whom we engage.

Unpacking the Acronym

The GSCC primarily uses the acronym “LGBTQIA2S+.” This acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and trans, queer and questioning, intersex, asexual or agender, and two-spirit. This plus-sign signifies additional identity terms. In addition, we will sometimes use the acronym “LGBTQIA2S+” or “LGBTQIA+,” depending on context. Additionally, we will sometimes refer to the community as the Queer and Trans community. The acronym “LGBTQIA2S+” is the current best option.



Birth-Assigned Sex Terms

Birth-Assigned Sex - the designation that refers to a person's biological, morphological, hormonal, and genetic composition. One's sex is typically assigned at birth and classified as either male or female.

"Assigned-at-birth" serves to imply that sex assignment is without the agency of the individual. Birth-assigned sex is often mistakenly confused with gender.

Female - An adjective denoting the biological sex that produces eggs. This is not a gender term, and does not imply a gender identity.

Intersex – A general term used for a variety of conditions in which an individual's reproductive or sexual anatomy (incl: genitals, secondary sex characteristics, chromosomes, and/or hormone levels) do not fit into the medical/societal definition of male or female. Some members of the intersex community prefer to use person first language to describe themselves (e.g. a person with intersex condition) and conceptualize their condition as one of medical diagnosis. Others (re)claim intersex as an identity. Some people with intersex conditions do not consider themselves to be members of the LGBTQA2S+ community and some do.

Male - An adjective denoting the biological sex that produces sperm. This is not a gender term, and does not imply a gender identity.

Gender Terms

The following terms are related to gender and gender identity

Agender – A gender identity term for individuals who often conceptualize their gender as not aligning with any gender categories, having no other words that quite fit, and not caring about the project of gender altogether. Some people who are agender understand this identity to mean genderless.

Bigender – A gender identity term for a person identifying as two genders, either simultaneously or varying between the two.

Cisgender – A gender identity term for individuals whose gender identity aligns with the gender identity assumed based on their birth-assigned sex. Cisgender people receive benefits that trans and nonbinary do not receive. Abbreviated to "cis". (See [Cisgender Privilege](#))



Cisgender (Cis) Man - a man who was assigned male (or intersex) at birth and identifies as a cisgender man. Cisgender man is one of two gender identities included in the gender binary, with “cisgender woman” being the other in the binary. “Man” and “male” are not interchangeable.

Cisgender (Cis) Woman - a woman who was assigned female (or intersex) at birth and identifies as a cisgender woman. Cisgender woman is one of two gender identities included in the gender binary, with “cisgender man” being the other in the binary. “Woman” and “female” are not interchangeable.

Femininity – A set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with girls and women, which may be expressed and embodied by people regardless of their gender or birth-assigned sex. Performing femininity in a culturally established way is expected of people assigned female-at-birth.

Gender – A social construct framed by a society’s understanding of masculinity and femininity as related to roles, behaviors, expectations, activities, identities, and attributes. This term is often understood as a binary, however, historically and presently, gender is expansive and dynamic. The key elements of an individual’s gender are gender identity, gender attribution, and gender expression.

Gender Attribution – The act of attributing a gender to another with or without knowledge of that person’s gender identity. In Western culture, these assumptions are rooted in our cultural understanding of gender as a binary system and how gender is socialized. Assuming a person’s gender pronouns is one example of gender attribution.

Gender Affirmation Surgeries – Surgical procedures that some trans folks pursue that create congruence between one’s body and one’s gender identity. Historically, gender affirmation surgery has been referred to as sex reassignment surgery.

Gender Binary – A socially constructed gender system in which gender is classified into two distinct and opposite categories. These gender categories are both narrowly defined and disconnected from one another. They are strictly enforced through rigid gender roles and expectations. Further, there is a hierarchy inherent to the classification, in which one gender, men/boys/masculinity, has access to power and privilege and the other, women/girls/femininity, is marginalized and oppressed. These classifications are seen as immutable; those assigned male at birth should identify as men and embody masculinity, and those assigned female at birth should identify as women and embody femininity. This binary system excludes nonbinary, genderqueer, and gender non-conforming individuals. All people are harmed by the gender binary system, but your place within the system determines the degree and quality of harm. The gender binary is weaponized through conquest,

colonization, and continued occupation of indigenous peoples' lands. The gender binary system is inherently violent and foregrounds all gender-based oppression.



Gender Dysphoria – Discomfort and/or distress that varies in intensity, duration, and interval for an individual extending from the disjuncture between one's conceptualization of their gender and the way their body is. Serves as a medical term and diagnosis in the the American Psychological Association's (APA) Diagnostics and Statistical Manual (DSM-5), which contributes to the stigmatization of transgender identities as a mental disorder. Clinically speaking, gender dysphoria is present when a person experiences significant distress related to their gender. The concept of dysphoria, rather than the diagnosis, is employed frequently by the trans/nonbinary community to name their experience. Not all trans people experience gender dysphoria, and not everyone views gender dysphoria as a mental health diagnosis.

Gender Essentialism – Gender essentialism is the belief that there is a universal experience of gender, often linked to sex assignment at birth. Gender essentialism often fails to address the intersections of race, class, and sexuality.

Gender Expression – The way in which someone expresses their gender, either consciously or unconsciously. This can encompass everything that communicates our gender to others, including clothing, hairstyle, body language, manner of speaking, social interactions, and gender roles. Most people have some blend of masculine and feminine qualities that comprise their gender expression, and this expression can also vary depending on the social context. There is not always a direct translation between gender identity and gender expression. A person's gender expression may or may not align with the way people attribute gender to that person.

Gender Euphoria - The inverse of Gender Dysphoria. This is a state of comfort, joy, or satisfaction with one's gender expression or attribution.

Gender Fluid or Genderfluid – A gender identity term for people whose gender expression is variable across time and space.

Gender Identity – A person's individual understanding of their own gender and the language they use to describe this understanding. This can also be considered one's innate and personal experience of gender.

Gender-Inclusive – A term used to describe language and spaces that validate the existence and experiences of all gender identities and expressions, especially marginalized gender identities.

Gender Marker – The identification of your gender on legal documents, often conflated with legal sex.



Gender Nonconforming – A term that describes a person whose behavior or appearance does not conform to societal and cultural expectations of what is appropriate for their gender. This term is usually more related to gender expression or gender attribution than gender identity. It is usually used as a descriptor. Although rare, some people do use this term as a gender identity term.

Gender Roles – A set of social and behavioral norms that are considered appropriate for particular genders. Gender roles change across time, space, culture, region, and context. When viewed in Western culture, gender roles are expressed within the gender binary system.

Genderqueer – A gender identity term for people who conceptualize their gender as beyond, existing outside of, or not included within the gender binary. This term is linked to the academic discipline of Queer Theory and carries a political and/or disruptive connotation. As an identity term, genderqueer is sometimes conceptualized as a type of nonbinary identity. Genderqueer is sometimes written as GenderQueer. (See [Queer](#))

High Femme – A femme person who expresses their gender in ultra feminine ways. Often, but not exclusively, this refers to a queer woman.

Masculine of Center – A person whose gender expression is more masculine than feminine. If gender is viewed as a spectrum, someone who is masculine of center would express their gender on the masculine side of the spectrum.

Masculinity – A socially constructed set of attributes, behaviors, and roles associated with boys and men, which may be expressed and embodied by people regardless of their gender or birth-assigned sex. Performing masculinity in a culturally established way is expected of people assigned-male-at-birth.

Mx. – (pronounced as mixer, or mix) A gender-inclusive honorific.

Nonbinary – A gender identity term for a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Nonbinary is also conceptualized as an array of genders at some distance from the gender binary. Nonbinary is sometimes written as “non-binary.” A common abbreviation for nonbinary is enby.

Neutrois – A gender identity term for a person with a nonbinary gender identity who identifies as having a neutral or null gender identity. This is similar to agender identity.

Soft Butch – An identity term often used by queer women or lesbians who exhibit some stereotypical butch traits without entirely fitting the masculine stereotype associated with butch lesbians.



Stud – A term used to describe Black masculine presenting women. Coined from Black lesbian communities to separate from the term 'butch'.

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

Transgender or Trans – A gender identity term for an individual whose gender identity does not match or is at some distance from the gender identity assumed based on their birth-assigned sex. For some folks, transgender and/or trans are considered to be umbrella terms.

Transitioning – The process in which a trans or nonbinary person begins to live as their gender identity. It may include changing one’s name, taking hormones, having surgery, and/or altering legal documents. Transitioning means very different things to different people. There is no right way to transition and each trans person has their own path. There are different types of transition:

Social Transition – a social transition includes transition from one gender to another by changing mannerisms, dress, hair, pronouns, name, and a variety of other means. A social transition involves elements of a transition that are not necessarily medical or legal.

Legal Transition – the process of changing how one’s gender is represented on legal documents, inclusive of one’s birth certificate, driver’s license, social security, insurance, and/or passport. Many countries and US states have legal barriers that make it expensive and difficult for trans people to legally transition.

Medical Transition – a medical transition may include hormones and/or surgeries.

Transmasculine - Abbreviated as Transmasc. An adjective describing a transgender person assigned female at birth with a primarily masculine-spectrum gender identity. This term is inclusive of both binary and nonbinary transgender people.

Transfeminine - Abbreviated as Transfemme. An adjective describing a transgender person assigned male at birth with a primarily feminine-spectrum gender identity. This term is inclusive of both binary and nonbinary transgender people.

Trans Man – A man who was assigned female (or intersex) at birth and identifies as a trans man.

Trans Woman – A woman who was assigned male (or intersex) at birth and identifies as a trans woman.



Two-Spirit – A Native American or indigenous 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 LGBTQIA+ Native American people to describe themselves. The “2S” in the LGBTQIA2S+ acronym stands for two-spirit. Non-native people should not use this term to describe themselves.

Sexuality Terms

The following terms are related to sexuality and sexual identity/orientation.

Allosexual – A sexual identity term for a person who experiences sexual attraction.

Asexual – Abbreviated as "Ace". A sexual identity term for people who do not feel sexual attraction, experience little sexual attraction to others, or do not feel desire for a sexual partner or partners. Asexuality can be conceptualized as a continuum with identities along said continuum possessing their own identity labels. Some asexual individuals may still experience romantic attractions. Not all asexual people are aromantic. Asexuality is distinct from celibacy because celibacy is a choice.

BDSM – An acronym used in kink and fetish communities that stands for “Bondage & Discipline,” “Dominance & Submission” and “Sadism & Masochism” and describes a dynamic between partner(s). These practices may or may not be sexual and may take place continually throughout a relationship or for discrete periods of time, often referred to as “play.” These practices are often misunderstood as abusive, but when practiced in a safe, sane, and consensual manner they can be a part of a healthy sex life. Trust, consent, and intimacy are all important parts of BDSM. Please see [“Safe, Sane and Consensual”](#) for more information.

Bisexual – Sometimes shortened to “bi”. A sexual identity term that most often refers to a person who is attracted to:

- people of multiple genders.
- their own gender and another gender.
- all genders (see [pansexual](#)).
- men and women
 - This understanding of bisexuality has been critiqued for being reductive and not inclusive of transgender, nonbinary, and genderqueer identities



Bisexuals can be attracted to a variety of genders to varying degrees. Some consider bisexual to be an umbrella term that encompasses all non-monosexual identities. When speaking generally about bisexuals or bisexuality, it is best to use and assume more inclusive definitions.

Bottom - An adjective describing a receptive sexual role, or a verb describing the act of performing a receptive sexual role. This can be used as a sexual identity term, or a description of a discrete sexual experience.

Demisexual – A sexual identity term for people who feel sexual attraction only to people with whom they have an emotional bond. Demisexuals vary in the quality (type) and intensity of their sexual desire, many feeling sexual attraction rarely and some having little to no interest in sexual activity. Some conceptualize demisexuality as a part of the asexual spectrum.

Dominant – Person who exercises control in a Dominant/Submissive relationship or BDSM activities. Can be used for any gender. (Masculine: Dom, Feminine: Domme)

Down Low – A term used to refer to men who may or may not explicitly identify as heterosexual, who engage in relationships with women, but who engage in sex with men. Typically, these men do not identify themselves as gay or bisexual. The term originated in the Black community, but the behavior is not unique to any race, ethnicity, or culture.

Fluid – Generally with another term attached, like “genderfluid” or “fluid-sexuality,” “fluid(ity)” describes an identity that may change or shift over time between/within/without various identities.

Gay – A sexual identity term that most often refers to a person who is sexually attracted to a person of the same or a similar gender.

Grey Ace – A sexual identity term for people who experience very little, limited, or low sexual attraction, or only experience sexual attraction rarely. Grey Ace individuals are a part of the broader asexual community

Heterosexual – A sexual identity term that most often refers to men who are only sexually attracted to women and women who are only sexually attracted to men.

Homosexual – A sexual identity term that most often refers to a person who is sexually attracted to people of their same gender. Presently considered offensive and dated to many in the LGBTQIA2S+ community, though some still claim it as an identity.

Kink - A sexual practice or desire that falls outside of mainstream or commonplace understandings of sexuality.



Leather Community – A community which encompasses those who engage in 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 - A sexual identity term most commonly for women who are attracted to women.

Monosexual Identities – Sexual identity terms, like gay, straight, and lesbian, in which a person is attracted to one gender. This term is considered to be the opposite of polysexuality or bisexuality.

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

Omnisexual – A sexual identity term that most often refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction to people of all and/or many gender identities/expressions. Also commonly shortened to “omni.”

Pansexual – A sexual identity term that most often refers to a person who experiences sexual attraction to people of all and/or many gender identities/expressions. Also commonly shortened to “pan.”

Polysexual Identities – Sexual identity terms, like bisexual and pansexual, in which a person is attracted to more than one gender. This term is considered by some to be the opposite of monosexual identities.

Safe, Sane, and Consensual – The phrase “Safe, Sane, and Consensual” sometimes shortened to SSC can be traced back to a Gay-Male-S/M Activists report from August 1983, which appears to be its earliest mention. It is thought that the “safe” and “sane” originated from the saying of having a “safe and sane” 4th of July celebration. The idea of having a good time while being careful seemed appropriate for BDSM and began to pick up in popularity. As BDSM communities became more cohesive and an accepted place to express our kinky interests, it became a saying of safety and ethical practice. The idea has continued to evolve among the BDSM culture.

Sexuality – A person’s sexual feelings, thoughts, desires, identities, values, and behaviors. This includes one’s sexual identity and romantic identity. Sexuality also includes the “who/what/where/when/why/how” of how each of us engages (or not) in sexual activity.

Sexual Behavior – The way a person acts or behaves sexually. Sexual behavior may or may not align with one’s sexual identity or sexual attractions. Sexual behavior includes the sexual activities that a person engages in (or does not engage in).



Sexual Identity – The language a person uses to describe themselves as a sexual being. This is the more current term for sexual orientation. One's sexual identity may or may not align with one's sexual behavior or sexual attractions. A few common sexual identity terms include bisexual, pansexual, lesbian, gay, and straight. Frequently called Sexual Orientation

Straight – A slang term for heterosexual. First used in gay communities as slang: to "go straight" was to stop engaging in any form of queer sexual or romantic behavior.

Submissive – A person who allows themselves to be dominated by a partner who may hold the identity of a dominant or dom within BDSM activities. This could take the form of a 24/7 dynamic, or an identity that exists within specific agreed-upon time and space.

Switch – A person who switches between sexual roles. Both dominant/submissive, top/bottom, etc.

Top - An adjective describing a giving sexual role, or a verb describing the act of performing a giving sexual role. This can be used as a sexual identity term, or a description of a discrete sexual experience.

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

Identity Terms

These terms signify one's identity in relation to the LGBTQIA2S+ community. It's important to note that identities are fluid and context-specific, and a member of the community can identify themselves with one or more of these identities.

AG - An identity term for Black queer women, distinct from Butch or Stud: typically describing a masculine-of-center person who is sexually dominant.

Bear – Subcategory in the queer community. A bear is typically a larger man (trans or cis) with a lot of body and facial hair. Many people masculine of center use this term who do not have all of these characteristics. The Bear community is focused on body positivity and friendliness, and some describe being a bear as more of an attitude than anything else.

Boi – An identity term first coined to describe masculine presenting queer black women whose gender presentation can be more fluid and/or androgynous than completely masculine. Purposely coined to be different from stud/ag because of the rigid conformity to masculinity in those communities.



Brown Boi – An identity term for a masculine of center person of color.

Butch – An identity term often used by queer women, particularly by lesbians, who express themselves in masculine ways. Some consider butch to be its own gender identity. While an identity term to some, it can be used as an insult.

Cishet - An adjective combining the identity terms Cisgender and Heterosexual.

Coming Out – The process by which queer and trans folks recognize, accept, typically appreciate, and often celebrate their sexual identity, sexuality, or gender identity/expression, either to themselves or others. Coming out is different across communities and cultures. There is no right or wrong way to be a queer or trans person and coming out is not a possibility for everyone.

Drag King – a person who enacts gender and masculinity for the pleasure and entertainment of others in the act of performance.

Drag Performer – a person who enacts gender for the pleasure and entertainment of others in the act of performance.

Drag Queen – a person who enacts gender and femininity for the pleasure and entertainment of others in the act of performance.

Family – A colloquial term used to identify other LGBTQIA2S+ 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. Also called "chosen family."

Femme – An identity term often used by queer people who express themselves in feminine ways. Some consider femme to be its own gender identity. While an identity term to some, it can be used as an insult, specifically in gay/queer men's community.

Masc - An identity term often used by queer people who express themselves in masculine ways. Both an identity term and a signifier of privilege.

Men Loving Men - Abbreviated as MLM. An adjective describing men who experience romantic or sexual attraction to other men. This term is inclusive of both monosexual and polysexual individuals.



Neopronouns - Sets of pronouns that are used in place of common ones such as “he”, “she”, and “they” used by some people who feel that these pronouns provide options that are more representative of their identities. Some examples of neopronouns are “xe/xym/xyr”, “ze/hir/hirs”, and “ey/em/eir

Pronouns – Linguistic tools we use to refer to proper nouns. In the context of gender, pronouns are used to refer to people and are often gendered. Some examples of pronouns include: they/them/theirs, she/her/hers, he/him/his, and ze/hir/hirs. Most pronouns are gendered and binary, although there are personal pronouns in many languages that are not gender specific. We use pronouns to attribute gender (see [gender attribution](#)). Using incorrect pronouns or assuming them based on appearance is a way to misgender someone (see [misgender](#)). For more information on pronouns, please visit our [pronouns page](#).

Queer – A reclaimed derogatory term that is used in a few different ways: a catchall term for the LGBTQIA2S+ community; a sexual identity term that may incorporate fluidity and anti-normativity; an academic term to represent a postmodern feminist theoretical project centered on sexuality and gender. While Queer has been used to as an in-community term since at least the 1920s, it gained widespread use in the academic and organizing circles in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Questioning – An identity term for a person who is exploring their sexuality and/or gender. People may be questioning at different times in their lives, because gender and sexuality can be experienced as fluid and/or ever-changing. It does not have to be a linear experience or progression.

Same-Gender-Loving – An identity term often attributed to Cleo Manago to describe queer sexual identities among black queer and trans communities. Manago created the term as an Afrocentric alternative to more white, academic, elite terms like queer, gay, and lesbian.

Women Loving Women - Abbreviated as WLW. An adjective describing women who experience romantic or sexual attraction to other women. This term is inclusive of both monosexual and polysexual individuals.

Trans Community Terms

These terms are specific to trans and gender non-conforming communities. Many of these terms are not meant for allies and accomplices to use as this is community-oriented language.



AFAB – An abbreviation for “assigned-female-at-birth,” a term frequently used, often by the transmasculine community, as a self-descriptor. “Assigned-at-birth” serves to imply that sex assignment is without the agency of the individual.

AMAB – An abbreviation for “assigned-male-at-birth,” a term frequently used, often by the transfeminine community, as a self-descriptor. “Assigned-at-birth” serves to imply that sex assignment is without the agency of the individual.

Binding – a method of reducing or flattening the appearance of one’s chest.

Biological Sex - an outdated term for birth-assigned sex. See birth-assigned sex.

Birth-Assigned Sex - the designation that refers to a person’s biological, morphological, hormonal, and genetic composition. One’s sex is typically assigned at birth and classified as either male or female. “Assigned-at-birth” serves to imply that sex assignment is without the agency of the individual. Birth-assigned sex is often mistakenly confused with gender.

Egg – Slang term for someone who is trans but doesn’t know it yet. Someone who is an embryo of the trans person they will eventually hatch into.

Gaff – Compressive underwear used to make tucking easier that is designed for trans women and transfeminine people.

Hormone Replacement Therapy – Also known as HRT, a hormone therapy taken by some trans folks to alter the hormonal composition and physical features of the body. Some people will choose to undergo gender-affirmation surgery in conjunction with HRT and some will not. HRT should be supervised by a medical professional.

Living Full-Time – When a trans person is living full-time in their gender. This may be a requirement to obtain gender affirmation surgery.

Microdosing – A form of hormone replacement therapy in which a person takes a significantly lower dose of hormones than someone would typically take. Microdosing may result in more subtle physical and emotional changes and can be an appropriate medical intervention for some trans folks, particularly nonbinary, genderqueer, or agender individuals. Microdosing, like all forms of HRT, should be supervised by a medical professional.

Packing – The act of wearing padding or a prosthetic to give the appearance of having a penis.



Packer – A phallic object worn in the underwear to pack or to give the appearance of having a penis. Packers range from padded forms to rolled up socks to prosthetics. This is most often used by trans men or masculine presenting people who were not assigned-male-at-birth.

Pronouns - (see [Pronouns](#))

Tucking – The practice of concealing the penis and testes so that the person's front is flat, or without a bulge, especially in tight clothing. Tucking usually involves pushing the penis between one's legs and then putting underwear or tape on to keep it in place. It can also involve tucking the testes back up inside the person.

Romantic Identity Terms

Alloromantic – A romantic identity term for a person who experiences romantic attraction.

Aro – Someone who identifies as aromantic. Can also refer to the aromantic community as a whole. See Aromantic.

Aromantic – A romantic identity term for a person who experiences little to no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships, activities, or connections. Not all aromantic people are asexual.

Demiromantic – A romantic identity term for people who feel romantic attraction only to people with whom they have an emotional bond. Demiromantic people vary in the quality and intensity of their romantic desire, with many feeling romantic attraction rarely and some having little to no interest in romantic activity. Some conceptualize demiromantic as a part of the aromantic spectrum.

Greyromantic – A romantic identity term for 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.

Heteroromantic – A romantic identity term that most often refers to a person who is romantically attracted to people of a different gender.



Homoromantic – A romantic identity term that most often refers to a person who is romantically attracted to people of their same gender.

Monogamy – A relationship structure that centers on the practice of having only one partner/significant other at a time or of having only one sexual and/or romantic partner at a time.

Panromantic – A romantic identity term for someone who has romantic feelings for a person regardless of their sex or gender.

Polyamory – Relationship structure that centers on the practice of consensually having or being open to having more than one partner/significant other. Sometimes used as an umbrella term for all forms of ethical, consensual, and loving non-monogamy.

Romantic Identity – The language someone uses to describe themselves as a romantic being. One's romantic identity may or may not align with one's sexual identity. A few common sexual identity terms include aromantic, grayromantic, panromantic, and heteroromantic.

Romantic Behavior – The way a person acts or behaves romantically. Romantic behavior may or may not align with sexual behavior or romantic identity. Romantic behavior includes the romantic activities that a person engages in (or does not engage in).

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

Oppressive/Demoralizing terms, and terms for Forms of Oppression

Terms listed in this section are either themselves oppressive, or are names for kinds of oppression. Many have been reclaimed by the communities they target, and should only be used by members of those communities.

Bi Erasure – A pervasive problem within mainstream culture and also in the LGBTQIA2S+ community in which the existence and/or legitimacy of bisexuality is questioned or denied.

Biphobia – The fear, hatred, and intolerance of bisexual, pansexual, and fluid people.



Cisheteronormativity - a pervasive system of belief that centers and naturalizes heterosexuality and a binary system of assigned sex/gender when there are two rigid, distinct ways of being: assigned-male-at-birth masculine men and assigned-female-at-birth feminine women.

Cisheterosexism - The system of oppression that values and centers cisgender and heterosexual people by upholding heterosexuality and the gender binary as normal and neutral, while marginalizing, oppressing, and making invisible LGBTQIA2S+ people.

Cissexism – The system of oppression that values and privileges cisgender people, upholds the gender binary, and marginalizes, oppresses, and makes invisible the lives and experiences of transgender and nonbinary people. Cissexism enacts violence through erasure, pathologization, and invalidation.

Dyke – A derogatory term for a lesbian, with lesbians beginning to reclaim the word in the 1970's. Today, many lesbians affirmatively refer to themselves as dykes, but it is still commonly used as an insult and should be avoided by those outside of the lesbian community.

Fag or Faggot – A derogatory word used to denote a gay man. Occasionally used as a self-identity affirming term by some members of the queer and trans community, but should be avoided by those outside of the community.

Hermaphrodite – An outdated term for a intersex person/a person with intersex condition. While some in the intersex community may reclaim/self-describe with the term, it is considered offensive and should not be used by those outside the community. See [intersex](#).

Heterosexism – The system of oppression that values and centers heterosexual people, upholds heterosexuality as normative and natural, and marginalizes queer people and communities. Heterosexism enacts violence through erasure, pathologization, and invalidation.

Heterosexual Privilege – The system of unearned advantages and rights that are provided by cisheteronormative society to heterosexual people and are denied to all other sexual identities. These advantages and rights are so embedded into all dimensions of society that they are taken for granted and practically unrecognizable to heterosexual people.

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



Homonormativity – A concept crystallized by Lisa Duggan that describes the ever-present phenomenon where members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community subscribe to heteronormative approximations of intimate, romantic, and sexual lives.

Homophobia – The irrational fear, hatred, and intolerance of gay and/or queer people. Sometimes used as an umbrella term encompassing phobias associated with marginalized sexual and gender identities.

Internalized Oppression – The irrational fear or self hatred of one's own identity. LGBTQIA2S+ individuals are subjected to the fear, hatred, and intolerance of LGBTQIA2S+ identities within cisheteropatriarchal society. Due to their socialization, LGBTQIA2S+ individuals learn negative ideas about their community and identity and begin to view them as true. One form of internalized oppression is the acceptance of the myths and stereotypes applied to the oppressed group. Common types of internalized oppression include: internalized homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia. An example of internalized homophobia is when a gay person polices fellow LGBTQIA2S+ community members for being “too queer” or “too femme” (read: outside of cisheteronormativity).

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.

Lifestyle – An offensive term attributed to the queer and trans community, often deployed by people to trivialize these identities and experiences. This term supports an understanding of sexual and gender identity as “a choice” or behavior that can be “corrected.”

Misgender – To intentionally or unintentionally use language which does not align with the person's gender identity, e.g. gender identity terms, pronouns, honorifics, deadname, gendered terms of endearment. Misgendering a person can cause a great deal of pain and can potentially put the person's life, safety, or security at risk.

Monosexual Privilege - The system of unearned advantages and rights that are provided by cisheteronormative society to people with monosexual identities and are denied to people with bi, pan, and fluid sexual identities. These advantages and rights are so embedded into all dimensions of society that they are taken for granted and practically unrecognizable to heterosexual people.

Outing – The act of disclosing, intentionally or unintentionally, a person's identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious consequences on their safety, employment, family situation, etc.



Trans Exclusive Radical Feminism (TERF)– A term for feminists who define and celebrate womanhood through the medically defined “female” body. TERFs believe that trans women are not women because they were socialized as boys. This is a biological essentialist argument. By and large, TERF ideology is rejected by mainstream feminism, as well as most queer and trans communities. However, TERF ideology does still infiltrate many women’s spaces.

Transphobia – Fear, hatred, and intolerance of transgender, nonbinary, genderqueer, and gender nonconforming people, or those who break, blur, or transgress assigned gender roles and the gender binary.

Legal, Academic, and Legislation Terms

Accomplice – A term coined by Indigenous Action Network to critique the ways in which “ally” as an identity term has been deployed absent of action, accountability, or risk-taking. See Allyship.

Ally – A person who continually practices allyship. See Allyship.

Allyship – The lifelong process of building relationships with marginalized communities to which one does not belong. This is a practice of showing up, working in solidarity with, and centering the needs and voices of marginalized groups. This work should be done as directed by those communities. These efforts can be named as allyship only by the marginalized group. To be acting in allyship means that you are actively working to dismantle structures of oppression. Please note that not all LGBTQIA2S+ spaces are open or welcoming to people who identify as allies or who demonstrate allyship. See Accomplice for more information.

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.

Cisgender privilege – The system of unearned advantages and rights that are provided by cisheteronormative society to cisgender people and are denied to all other gender identities. These advantages and rights are so embedded into all dimensions of society that they are taken for granted and practically unrecognizable to cisgender people.

Cisheteronormativity – A pervasive system of belief that centers and naturalizes heterosexuality and a binary system of assigned sex/gender where there are two rigid, distinct ways of being: assigned-male-at-birth masculine man and assigned-female-at-birth feminine woman, both of whom experience exclusively heterosexual attraction.



Cisheteropatriarchy – A socio-political system in which cisgender heterosexual men have authority over everyone else. Also, the way we describe society as being fundamentally based on heterosexism, cissexism, sexism, and male dominance. Here, all actors are presumed to be heterosexual, cisgender, and operate in alignment with strict gender binary roles. Patriarchy is reliant upon ideologies of domination and the exploitation of all things related to the feminine, queerness, and transness.

Civil Marriage – Marriage that is performed and carried out by a government institution in accordance with the marriage laws of the jurisdiction. In order for a marriage to be recognized by the state, it must be a civil marriage. For many people, there is a religious or community ceremony in addition to the legal requirements of a civil marriage.

Civil Union – A civil union is a legal relationship between two people that provides legal protections to the couple only at the state level. Civil unions do not provide federal protections, benefits, or responsibilities to couples, and a civil union may not be recognized by all states. Civil unions, similar in some ways to domestic partnerships, were established primarily as an alternative for same-sex couples in states where marriage was unavailable prior to the federal supreme court decision in 2015. See “Defense of Marriage Act.”

Consent – A mutual agreement between people to engage in sexual and/or romantic behavior. It should be continuous and sober. Consent can’t be implied, and consent for one behavior is not consent for all or other behaviors. Having agreed to do something previously does not mean that a person gives consent in the present. Consent can be given in words and actions, but it’s important to remember that nonverbal communication can be misinterpreted, and the clearest way to know that you have consent is to make sure that you ask.

Deadname – The previously given name of a person who has decided to change their name in order to better align with their gender identity. As a verb, to deadname someone means to misgender someone by using a name they no longer use. This can be intentional or unintentional.

Domestic Partnership – Legal recognition of unmarried couples, offered by some state and local governments. Domestic partnerships offer some of the same benefits enjoyed by married persons- – including the right to share health insurance coverage and rights under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

Equality Act – A bill in the US Congress that, if passed, would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include prohibitions on the discrimination based on gender identity or sexual identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, federal funding credit, public education, and the jury system. The Equality Act passed in the House of Representative on March 13, 2019 and is awaiting a hearing by the Senate. There are currently no



federal laws that prohibit discrimination against LGBTQIA2S+ people on the basis of gender identity and/or sexual identity. Only 21 states and DC have comprehensive laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity and/or sexual identity.

Legal Transition – the process of changing how one’s gender is represented on legal documents, inclusive of one’s birth certificate, driver’s license, social security, insurance, and/or passport. Many countries and US states have legal barriers that make it expensive and difficult for trans people to legally transition.

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 LGBTQIA2S+ to include intersex individuals, asexuals, and two-spirit individuals, or shortened to LGBQ when discussing only sexual identity.

Queer Theory – A collection of academic and intellectual pursuits growing out of feminist theory in the early to mid 1990’s. It presents a post-structuralist, post-modern complication of sex, gender, and sexuality characterized by destruction/destabilization of said categories and positions ‘the queer’ as definitively anti-normative. It offers up the challenge to investigate manifestations of fixed identity and to consider its permutations in varied and non-predictable ways.

Historical Terms

Bicurious – An outdated term for a person with an interest in engaging in sexual activities with more than one gender. Often this term is used when desire or interest is present, but a person has yet to act. See [Questioning](#).

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.

FTM – "Female-to-Male". A term referring to men who were assigned female-at-birth. Some trans men reject this term because they have always been a man, regardless of sex assignment. This term is considered by some to be outdated and overly focused on medical transition, while others embrace it as an identity term.



MTF – "Male-to-Female". A term referring to women who were assigned-male-at-birth. Some trans women reject this term because they have always been female, regardless of sex assignment. This term is considered by some to be outdated and overly focused on medical transition, while others embrace it as an identity term.

Passing - In transgender communities, a verb for being attributed, or read as, the correct gender by the general public. Passing is often a matter of safety for trans individuals, and is not desired or sought out by everyone. Passing may require acting, dressing, or otherwise presenting in normatively-gendered ways.

Stealth – Similar to passing, a term that describes when a transgender person lives full-time as their gender identity and does not claim their transgender identity. Being stealth isn't the goal of all trans folks, but it is for some. Oftentimes, this means acting in ways that are gender normative.

Transsexual – An identity term most commonly used for individuals whose assigned-sex-at-birth does not match their gender identity and who, through gender affirmation surgery and/or hormone treatments, seek to change their physical body to better align with their gender identity. The term "transsexual" is not interchangeable with the term "transgender." This term is considered by many to be outdated, but remains an important and salient identity term for some.

XTX – A response by trans folks who reject the terms FTM and MTF, claiming that they were always their gender identity, regardless of birth-assigned sex. Sometimes using XTF and XTM to describe their gender.

Racial Identity and Racial Justice Terms

Black vs African American - Black and African American are NOT synonymous. The term "Black" refers to a racialized group of people who are perceived to have dark skin. They can be a part of any ethnicity or nationality.

African Americans (also referred to as Black Americans and Afro-Americans) are an ethnic group consisting of Americans with partial or total ancestry from sub-Saharan Africa. The term "African American" generally denotes descendants of enslaved Africans who are from the United States.

It is crucial to mirror the language individuals use for themselves. Black and African American are not interchangeable. Some individuals prefer the term Black because they do not identify as African and/or American.



Latine/x/a/o vs Chicane/x/a/o vs. Hispanic - These terms are often used interchangeably, however, they can convey different meanings.

The term “Latine/x/a/o” refers to people who are from or have ancestry from Latin America. Latine and Latinx are non-gendered ways of referring to people from Latin America. Latina is the feminine form of Latine/x, while Latino is the masculine form of Latine/x.

The term “Hispanic” refers to individuals that speak Spanish and/or are of Spanish descent. Not all Latines are Hispanic, and not all Hispanic people are Latine. For example, Brazilians are Latinos, but not Hispanic as they speak Portuguese.

In the same way that “Hispanic” identifies someone with Spanish roots, “Chicane/x/a/o” refers to Americans of Mexican ancestry. These folks may not identify as Hispanic or Latine. Chicane and Chicanx are non-gendered ways to refer to individuals who are Americans of Mexican ancestry. Chicana is the feminine form of Chicane/x, while Chicano is the masculine form of Chicane/x.

Respect and mirror the language individuals use for themselves and their communities.

Indigenous/Native/Native American - “Indigenous” refers to peoples with pre-existing sovereignty who were living together as a community prior to contact with settler populations. Indigenous is the most inclusive term, as there are Indigenous peoples on every continent throughout the world (such as the Sami in Sweden, the First Nations in Canada, Mayas in Mexico and Guatemala, and the Ainu in Japan) fighting to remain culturally intact on their land bases. Indigenous Peoples refers to a group of Indigenous peoples with a shared national identity, such as “Navajo” or “Sami.

“Native American” and “American Indian” are terms used to refer to peoples living within what is now the United States prior to European contact. American Indian has a specific legal context because the branch of law, Federal Indian Law, uses this terminology. American Indian is also used by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget through the U.S. Census Bureau.

“Native” is a general term that refers to a person or thing that has originated from a particular place. The term “Native” does not denote a specific Indigenous ethnicity (such as Apache, Navajo, Lenape, etc.).

In the United States, the term “Native American” is commonly used to describe Indigenous peoples.

In Canada, the term “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous” is generally preferred to “Native.”



Whenever possible, it is best to use the name of an individual's particular Indigenous community or nation of people; for example, "Tongva," "Tataviam" and "Chumash" are the Indigenous Peoples of the Los Angeles area, and they are also "American Indian," "Native American," and "Indigenous."

APIDA - APIDA is an abbreviation that stands for Asian Pacific Islander Desi American. The term is meant to refer to US citizens and residents who identify as Asian, Pacific Islander, or Desi (or who have an identity that includes one of these heritages).

Desi is sometimes used as an identifying term for a person who is of South Asian descent or who traces their heritage to the Indian subcontinent. Please note: the meaning and implications of the word Desi vary from person to person.

BIPOC – Black Indigenous People of Color - BIPOC stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Pronounced "bye-pock," this is a term specific to the United States, intended to center the experiences of Black and Indigenous groups and demonstrate solidarity between communities of color.

QTBIPOC– Queer Transgender Black Indigenous People of Color - QTBIPOC stands for Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, People of Color. QTBIPOC was developed as a way for folks to highlight the specific needs for BIPOC folks within the LGBTQIA+ community. QTBIPOC folks must navigate the effects of both racism and anti-LGBTQIA+ discrimination.

POC – People of Color - POC is an abbreviation for Person of Color or People of Color.

Marginalized/Minoritized vs Minority - Marginalized/Minoritized describes an identity-based group made to feel othered and excluded from the dominant society.

Minority describes any group that is a fractionally smaller population than another group.

Ex: People of Color are a marginalized and minoritized group in the United States, as they face legal and societal subordination, but they are not a minority group in many places in the world.

Colorism - Colorism is prejudice or discrimination favoring people with lighter skin over those with darker skin.

Colorism is a pervasive issue in many communities of color. Rooted in internalized racism, colorism impedes social justice and equity.



Racism - Racism is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular minoritized/marginalized racial or ethnic group.

Racism is also the process by which systems and policies, actions and attitudes create inequitable opportunities and outcomes for people based on race.

Reverse Racism - Reverse racism is the idea that people and institutions can be racist towards white people, or that white people can experience racism in society

Sometimes referred to as reverse discrimination, reverse racism is the concept that affirmative action and similar race-conscious programs for addressing inequality are anti-white racism.

This is a false narrative, since racism can only exist when groups are marginalized in society. Since white people hold the dominant power in society, they cannot be victims of racism.

Race vs Ethnicity vs Nationality:

- **Race**

- Race is a socially constructed group defined by similar physical characteristics (i.e. skin color, hair type, facial features, etc). Race is usually associated with biology and linked with physical characteristics such as hair texture and skin color.
- Ex: Black, Asian, White/Caucasian.

- **Ethnicity**

- Ethnicity is a broader term than race. The term differentiates among groups of people according to cultural expression and identification. Commonalities such as race, national origin, tribal heritage, religion, language, and culture can describe someone's ethnicity.
- Ex: Irish, Italian, Apache, Mexican
- Note that the line between race and ethnicity is often blurry, and there may be some overlap based on how people self-identify.

- **Nationality**

- Nationality refers to an individual's country of citizenship. Nationality is sometimes used to mean ethnicity, although the two are technically different.
- Ex: American



Misogynoir - Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against Black women. Misogynoir shows how sexism and racism manifest in Black women's lives to create intersecting forms of oppression.

Anti-Blackness - Anti-Blackness refers to actions or behaviors that minimize, marginalize or devalue the full participation of Black people. The spectrum of anti-Black actions and behaviors spans from unconscious bias to motivated acts of prejudice. They include the tolerance of or indifference to the under-representation, differential success and advancement, or experience of Black people.

The impact of anti-Blackness is aggravated by intersectional dimensions of diversity—class, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender expression, immigrant and immigration status, sexual orientation, veteran status, among others.

Colonialism - a practice of domination, which involves the subjugation of one people by another. Colonialism can be understood as the institutional and social practice of a nation or group of people taking control of another, often using tactics of genocide, assimilation, and exploitation to subordinate the Native community. Colonialism has happened and is still happening across the world

Colonialism in the United States is responsible for the erasure and attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples. Colonialism is intrinsically linked to the history of the United States and is ingrained in politics, society, and cultural norms/values.

Settler colonialism - the type of colonialism that took place in the U.S., is a type of colonialism in which the Indigenous peoples of a colonized region are displaced by settlers who permanently form a society there.