

DEFINITIONS OF LGBTQ+ CONCEPTS AND TERMS

By the *LGBT Advocacy Project*

The City Bar Justice Center’s LGBT Advocacy Project created this publication to provide a basic understanding of terms and concepts related to sex and gender, sexual orientation, and romantic orientation used by the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ people use various terms and expressions to identify themselves and their experiences that may not be included in this glossary. Always listen for and respect a person’s way of self-identifying.

Why this is important. When we educate ourselves about the multitude of identities in our world, we learn how to best honor and support each other– and we also often learn more about ourselves. As service providers, and as people, we can then better understand, respect, communicate, and advocate for members of the LGBTQ+ community – who could be our clients, co-workers, friends, family, and ourselves.

Terms related to sex and gender identities

Gender identity is the innate personal knowledge and felt experience of one’s gender, which may or may not correlate with the assigned sex given at birth.

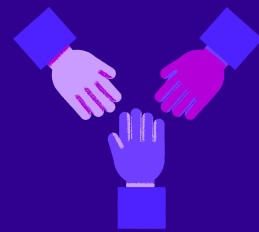


- Agender: One who identifies without a gender, also called “gender-neutral” or “genderless.”
- Androgynous: Possessing traits of masculinity and femininity.
- Bigender: A word to describe someone’s gender that often refers to someone who has two genders or who doesn’t identify with a gender. These can be, but are not always, male and female.
- Biological Sex/Assigned Sex: Sex is usually assigned at birth as male or female by a medical practitioner based on biological characteristics (e.g., reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones). This may be referred to as assigned female at birth (AFAB) or assigned male at birth (AMAB)
- Cisgender: Individuals whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth.
- Gender: A societal and cultural construct that often is expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity.
- Gender expression: The way one expresses their gender through actions and/or appearance.
- Gender fluid: An individual whose gender identity can change and fluctuate over time, not being fixed as male or female.
- Gender nonconforming/Non-binary: An individual who does not identify with the societal constructs and traditions of gender, or whose gender expression does not fit into a single category. Sometimes called “gender queer”.

- Intersex: An umbrella term used for a variety of situations in which a person is born with reproductive or biological characteristics (e.g., reproductive organs, chromosomes, hormones) that don't fit the boxes of "female" or "male."
- MTF/M2F or FTM/F2M: These acronyms may be used to further describe a transgender individual's identity. MTF/M2F: male to female; FTM/F2M: female to male.
- Pronouns: A word used to refer to an individual by gender in conversation (e.g., he, she, they, ze).
- Queer: An umbrella term for a wide variety of individuals across sexual orientations and gender identities. While this was originally a derogatory term, 'Queer' has been reclaimed by people within the LGBTQ+ community. Queer as a reclaimed term should be used as an adjective and not a noun, and because the term has a history of use as an epithet, one should only use it to refer to someone else after that person has expressed a desire or comfort to have the term used to identify them.
- QPOC: An acronym for Queer Person of Color.
- QTPOC: An acronym for Queer Trans Person of Color.
- Transgender or Trans: An individual whose gender identity is different than their sex assigned at birth. Transgender is an adjective and should not be used as a noun. For example, "Zed is a transgender person/man/woman".
- Transmasculine: An umbrella term to describe those assigned female at birth who identify with masculinity.
- Transfeminine: An umbrella term to describe those assigned male at birth who identify with femininity.
- Two-Spirit: An umbrella term that bridges Indigenous and Western understandings of an individual who embodies a masculine and feminine energy and exists outside of a gender binary. These individuals are considered born with two spirits, which some consider to be one male and one female spirit. Two-spirit individuals are considered sacred or divine by many Indigenous cultures.

Terms related to sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is a person's identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they are or are not sexually attracted.



- Asexual: An individual who does not experience sexual attraction.
- Ace: An umbrella term used to describe a person who experiences a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of sexual attraction.
- Bisexual: The potential to be romantically or sexually attracted to people of more than one sex or gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.
- Gay: A male-identifying individual who has a romantic and/or sexual attraction toward other male-identifying individuals. This term may also be used broadly to describe lesbian and gay sexuality.
- Heterosexual/Straight: This refers to a male-identifying individual who has a romantic and/or sexual attraction toward women or to a female-identifying individual who has a romantic and/or sexual attraction toward men.

- Homosexual: Outdated clinical language that describes gay, lesbian, or queer individuals; this term is now often deemed derogatory due to its history of oppressive implications.
- Lesbian: A female-identifying person who experiences romantic or sexual attraction toward other female/identifying individuals. Non-binary individuals may also identify with this term.
- Omnisexual: An individual who is attracted to people of all genders.
- Pansexual: An individual whose romantic and/or sexual attraction toward others is not limited by sex or gender.
- Same-Gender Loving (SGL): A phrase coined by Cleo Manago in the 1990s specific to members of the Black community to express sexual orientation without using Eurocentric terminology.

Terms related to romantic orientation

Romantic orientation refers to terms used to describe a person's experience of romantic attraction toward others, or lack thereof.



- Aro: An umbrella term used to describe an individual who experiences a lack of, varying, or occasional experiences of romantic attraction.
- Aromantic: An individual who does not experience romantic attraction.
- Panromantic: To experience romantic attraction to a person regardless of sex or gender identity.
- Polyamorous: A term to describe an individual who engages in, or has the desire to engage in, multiple concurrent consenting romantic relationships.

References

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