

LGBTQI Terminology Basics

Language is constantly evolving; this list is only a starting point.
Different people prefer different words. When in doubt, ask!

ASSIGNED SEX – sex recorded at birth, usually on the basis of external genitalia.

BI/BISEXUAL – capable of being physically, sexually and emotionally attracted to both men and women.

CISGENDER – someone whose assigned sex and gender identity match.

COMING OUT – becoming aware of one's own sexual orientation/gender identity or disclosing sexual orientation or gender differences to others.

CROSS-DRESSER – people who at certain times wear clothing associated with the "opposite" sex. Most prefer the term cross dresser to the term transvestite, which has been pathologized and associated with fetishism.

DRAG KINGS AND QUEENS – people of one assigned sex who perform or entertain by adopting an alternate persona that is of a different sex; this persona often expresses exaggerated gender characteristics or stereotypes

GENDER – collection of traits thought by a culture to be associated with maleness or femaleness.

GENDER BINARY – The assumption that there are only two genders (male and female), rather than multiple genders or gender fluidity.

GENDER IDENTITY – how someone feels inside about whether they are male, female, neither or something outside the traditional binary gender system.

GENDER PRESENTATION – how people express their gender based on mannerisms, dress, etc. A person's gender presentation may not always match their gender identity.

GENDER QUEER – people who don't identify as either specifically male or female, but rather something outside the traditional binary gender system.

GENDER VARIANCE – Not fitting traditional expectations for the male or female role that matches one's body. This could range from a girl who wants to be an engineer to a person with a penis having surgical breast implants.

HETEROSEXISM – assumption that everyone is heterosexual, or that being straight is normal or better. Also, the system of benefits or privileges given to individuals who identify as heterosexual.

HOMOSEXUAL – romantically, erotically and/or physically attracted to a person of the same sex or gender. Many people don't like this term because it sounds too clinical.

INTERSEX – people who are born with physical or genetic characteristics that do not fit the traditional definition of male or female. Some intersex people also use the term "disorders of sex development."

LGBTQ – An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning.

QUEER – having a sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, or physical sex that is different from that acceptable in mainstream society.

SEX – categorization as male, female or intersex by the shape of genitalia or other biological features.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION – to whom a person is romantically, erotically and/or physically attracted.

STRAIGHT – heterosexual; romantically, erotically and/or physically attracted to the "opposite" sex.

TRANS – an umbrella term that describes a gender presentation or identity that is outside social norms.

TRANSGENDER – when a person's gender presentation or identity falls outside the cultural norms for people of their assigned sex they may consider themselves transgender.

TRANSSEXUAL – a person whose gender identity does not match their anatomical sex. Transsexuals generally desire a physical transition that includes hormones and/or surgery.