

LGBTQ+

TERMS TO KNOW*

An abbreviation for the community of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, plus any other sexual or gender minority. The acronym can vary in a number of ways and often includes "I" for intersex and "A" for asexual.

AFAB/AMAB

Short for *assigned female at birth* and *assigned male at birth*. This acronym is used to describe the sex a person is first assigned based on their physical characteristics, which may or may not be different from their inner sense of gender identity.

ALLY

A person who supports the LGBTQ+ community.

ASEXUAL

A term used to describe a person who does not feel sexual attraction to others, or who has limited sexual interest or desire for others. This term should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

BISEXUAL

A term used to describe a person who is emotionally, sexually, or romantically attracted to people of the same and other genders. This term should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

CISGENDER

A term used to describe people whose gender identity matches that of their biological sex. Often abbreviated to *cis*. This term should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

CISNORMATIVITY

Cultural rules and expectations (including social, family, legal, and linguistic) that promote and assume the idea that everyone's gender identity is either female or male and that it matches their biological sex; an assumption that all people are cisgender.¹

COMING OUT OF THE CLOSET

The process of self-acceptance and disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity to others. People can disclose to none, some, or all of the people they know, often based on the perceived safety of their environment.

DISCLOSURE

The act or process of sharing one's sexual orientation or gender identity. In the workplace, this term is often used to refer to employees voluntarily self-identifying for the purposes of diversity and inclusion-related data collection. Disclosure policies, procedures, and laws vary across companies and countries and should be taken carefully into account.

GAY

A term used to describe a person who is primarily emotionally, sexually, or romantically attracted to people of the same gender. This term is preferred over *homosexual*, which is outdated and clinical. Also, this term should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

GENDER

The external, socially constructed rules, roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a society imposes on people based on their identity as a woman, man, or other alternative. Traditional gender categories are binary: woman and man; however not everyone identifies within this binary, and other categories are now accepted at some companies.

GENDER EXPANSIVE

A term used to describe people who do not identify with the woman/man gender binary, but instead identify with one of many identities on a more expansive spectrum. This term is preferred over *gender non-conforming*, which is outdated.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How people communicate their gender through appearance, behavior, grooming, and/or dress.

GENDER FLUID

A term to describe people who move between two or more gendered identities.

GENDER IDENTITY

People's inner sense of their gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth.

GENDER PERFORMANCE

The ways in which people act out their gender identity through behavior, helping to shape and reinforce their desired form of gender expression.

GENDER ROLE

Rules assigned by society that define what behaviors, thoughts, feelings, relationships, clothing, occupations, etc., are considered appropriate and inappropriate for people based on their gender.

GENDERQUEER

See *non-binary*.

HETERONORMATIVITY

Cultural rules and expectations (including social, family, legal, and linguistic) that promote a heterosexual standard of identity as the natural norm; an assumption that all people are straight.

HETEROSEXISM

The attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation. Heterosexism denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, relationship, or community. Heterosexism often takes the form of ignoring or discriminating against LGBTQ+ people or discounting their experiences altogether.

HETEROSEXUAL

See *straight*.

HOMOPHOBIA

The hatred, hostility, disapproval, or fear of people who identify as, or are assumed to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer.

IN THE CLOSET

A term used to describe LGBTQ+ individuals who do not disclose their sexual orientation and/or gender identity to others. People can disclose to none, some, or all of the people they know. Often shortened to *closeted*.

INTERSEX

A term used to describe people whose anatomy and physiology are neither typically male nor typically female at birth, often due to chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. This term should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

LESBIAN

A woman who is primarily emotionally, sexually, or romantically attracted to other women.

LGBTQ+

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NON-BINARY

A category for gender identities that are outside the woman/man gender binary; also called *genderqueer*.

OUT EMPLOYEE

An employee who discloses their LGBTQ+ identity to a few, some, or all of their coworkers.

PRONOUNS

Linguistic part of speech used to refer to individuals (such as she/her, he/him). Non-binary people may choose gender-neutral pronouns such as "they," "ze," or "xe." Companies may update organizational policies, procedures and/or HR systems to be inclusive of employees whose pronouns differ from the she/he binary.

QUEER

A broad term with numerous meanings. It is commonly used to describe sexual orientation and/or gender identity or gender expression that does not conform to heterosexual and cisgender norms. Historically it has been used pejoratively, but it has recently been reclaimed, particularly by younger generations, as an inclusive term for the entire LGBTQ+ community or to capture a more fluid sense of identity.

SEX

A person's biological characteristics including the internal and external sex organs, chromosomes, and hormones that make up their anatomy and physiology; sex categories are female, male, and intersex.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

This term describes a person's innate sense of who they are emotionally, sexually, or romantically attracted to—people of the same gender, different gender, multiple genders, or some other variation.

STRAIGHT

A term used to describe a person who is primarily emotionally, sexually, or romantically attracted to people of a different gender.

TRANSGENDER

A term used to describe people who identify with the physical characteristics, roles, behaviors, and/or desires of a gender different from the one associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. This is an umbrella term that encompasses anyone who is not cisgender, from people who are gender fluid to people who undergo surgery to better align their physical body with their gender identity. Often abbreviated to *trans*. This term should be used as an adjective, not as a noun.

TRANSITIONING

The process a transgender person goes through to change their gender presentation and/or sex characteristics to better match their gender identity. These changes can include sex reassignment surgery and/or hormone therapy. Note that not everyone who identifies as transgender will undergo a transition, or chose to transition in the same ways.

TRANSMAN

A man who was assigned female at birth (AFAB). A related term is *FTM*, short for female-to-male.

TRANSWOMAN

A woman who was assigned male at birth (AMAB). A related term is *MTF*, short for male-to-female.

TWO-SPIRIT

A contemporary Native American/First Nations/Indigenous umbrella term for people within the community who embody both female and male spirits. Often, two-spirit people are honored members of the community who play an important role in spiritual gatherings. Individual tribes have their own terms in their own languages. This term is not synonymous with gay and it should not be used to refer to anyone who does not have Native American/First Nations/Indigenous heritage.²

* The following sources helped inform this product: Catalyst, *Making Change: LGBT Inclusion—Implementing Policies, Programs, and Practices* (2007); UC Davis LGBTQIA Resource Center, "[LGBTQIA Resource Center Glossary](#)"; PFLAG, "[PFLAG National Glossary of Terms](#)."

¹ Amherst College Queer Resource Center, "Terms, Definitions & Labels."

² Elton Naswood and Mattee Jim, "Mending the Rainbow: Working with the Native LGBT/Two Spirit Community," Powerpoint Presentation for the 13th National Indian Nations Conference, December 2012; Walter L. Williams, "The 'Two-Spirit' People of Indigenous North Americans," First People.