

# LGBTQ+ Terminology

LGBTQ+ is an acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to a population of people united by having gender identities or sexual orientations that differ from the heterosexual and cisgender majority.

Other names for this population include GSM (Gender and Sexuality Minorities), GSD (Gender and Sexuality Diverse), and the extended acronym LGBTQQIAP2S, which stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, and Two-Spirit.

Some people experience their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as fluid. This means that their identities might shift over time. This is normal and okay. You are not a bad representative of the LGBTQ+ community for having a fluid identity.

Many other people experience their sexual orientation and/or gender identity as stable and enduring over time. This is also normal. Sexuality and gender are complicated, and there are more variations than there are shades in the rainbow!

## **Basic Terminology**

**Gender Identity-** Your gender identity is your intuitive sense of who you are, in terms of gender. It can incorporate how you want other people to see you, how you relate to others, and how you see yourself.

**Sexual Orientation-** The pattern your sexual attraction takes based on gender. In other words, sexual orientation is about the gender of the people you tend to find sexually attractive.

### **Queer-**

1. An umbrella term for the LGBTQ+ community (ex: the queer community).
2. A sexual orientation that is intentionally left vague. Many people identify as queer because they feel that no other sexuality term applies to them. People who identify as queer might also do so for political reasons: to specifically and publically reject society's prevailing view of sexuality. Some people experience "queer" as a slur, so use this term with care.

**Questioning-** Being unsure of your gender identity, being unsure of your sexual orientation, or both. Many people go through a stage of questioning during their lives, sometimes several times. This can be because they learn new words that fit them better, or it can be that their actual feelings of gender or attraction change over time.

**Coming Out-** Letting someone know what your sexual orientation or gender identity is. Coming out can be a continuous process as you encounter new people and gain new understanding of your own identity. In mainstream American culture, people tend to assume that you are

heterosexual and cisgender unless you tell them otherwise. This is why LGBTQ+ people tend to “come out” and heterosexual and/or cisgender people do not.

**Intersex-** A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male. (from Intersex Society of North America)

**Two-Spirit-** A term for LGBTQ members of the Native American community, first coined in 1990 by a Native American group in Winnipeg. The term references a tradition common to several tribes, where some individuals possessed and manifested a balance of both feminine and masculine energies, making them inherently sacred people. (Derived from <http://www.baait.org/> Bay Area American Indian Two Spirits)

## Gender Topics

**Gender non-conforming-** Anyone who does not fit neatly into a gender role. Sometimes this is used to suggest that there is something wrong with people who do not fit gender roles. There is not.

**Transgender-** Transgender people have a gender identity or expression different from the one they were assigned at birth or are expected to exhibit in adulthood.

**Trans\*-** Is an umbrella term derived from a contraction of “transgender” or “transsexual”. The asterisk is a “wildcard” that stands for the multitude of ways that trans\* people identify. The prefix “trans” can mean beyond, across, between, through, transcending, or changing. Many trans\* people have a gender identity that is different from the one they were assigned at birth. Some people identify as trans\* if their gender expression is different than what is expected for their gender.

**Cisgender-** Someone who identifies as the gender that society assigns to them; someone who is not transgender. “Cis” is a latin prefix meaning “on the same side”. You are cisgender if you do not feel conflict with the gender assigned to you at birth. Cis people can still be gender non-conforming.

### MTF-

1. “male to female”; a person who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a woman.
2. Some trans\* people use “MTF” to describe their medical transition goals; they want their body to lose some “male-typical” sex characteristics and gain some “female-typical” sex characteristics.

### FTM-

1. “female to male”; a person who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a man.

2. Some trans\* people use “FTM” to describe their medical transition goals; they want their body to lose some “female-typical” sex characteristics and gain some “male-typical” sex characteristics.

### **Genderqueer-**

1. any person with a “queer” gender identity or gender expression. This definition has been in use since the mid-1990s. See also the book *Gender Queer*, published in 2002.

2. The act of transgressing gender norms. This definition has been in use since the mid-1990s.

3. A specific non-binary gender. This definition has been in use since the mid-2000s.

**Non-binary-** A person whose gender identity does not fit the strict man/woman dichotomy. Some non-binary people feel that their gender identity is between man and woman, is simultaneously fully man and fully woman, changes from man to woman and back, is a separate entity without connection to man or woman, is similar to either man or woman but is not quite either, is entirely neutral, or does not exist at all.

**Transition-** The process of changing one’s gender presentation to match their internal sense of gender. Transitioning can include some or all of the following: coming out, change in wardrobe, change in name, change in pronoun usage, surgery, hormone treatments, change in body language, change in the pitch and manner of speech, and personal grooming changes.

**Stealth-** A trans\* person is said to “go stealth” if they are out as their preferred gender, but not out as trans\*. Many trans\* people “go stealth” for safety reasons, but some do it because they do not feel a connection to the trans\* community and thus do not want to be associated with it.

**Gender Assigned at Birth-**When a baby is born, a cursory inspection of their genitals leads a doctor to declare "it's a boy" or "it's a girl". Infants who have an intersex condition sometimes undergo surgery on their reproductive organs to make them look more "typical" of the gender they were assigned. Often used acronyms: AFAB/FAAB: Assigned Female at Birth, AMAB/MAAB: Assigned Male at Birth.

**Gender Role-** A set of behaviors and expectations that society associates with a gender.

**Gender Expression-** The visual, interpersonal, and behavioral methods that people use to express their gender identity. This can include personal grooming, clothing, body language, vocabulary, intonation, vocal pitch, and other behaviors.

There are many other words too. Be aware, there are some words like 'two-spirit', 'higra', and 'kathoe'y' that are specific to people of certain cultures. If your cultural background does not include these terms, it is offensive to appropriate them for your own use.

## **Sexuality Topics**

**Lesbian-** Typically, a woman who is romantically and sexually attracted to other women. Some trans\* people who were assigned female at birth (AFAB) who are attracted to women also identify as lesbians due to their connection to that community and/or due to the lack of terminology for “non-binary gendered person who is attracted to women”.

**Gay-** A person who is romantically and sexually attracted to other people of their own gender. “Gay” is usually used by men, but not always.

**Bisexual-** A person who is romantically and sexually attracted to two (or all) genders.

**Pansexuality-** Pansexuality is often confused with bisexuality. People who identify as pansexual define it in multiple ways. Some people identify as pansexual because they see “bisexual” as not including non-binary trans\* people. Other pansexual people explain it as a sexual attraction to people irrespective of gender or sex.

**Heterosexual-** A person who is romantically and sexually attracted to people of the other binary gender; “straight”.

**Asexual-** A person who does not experience sexual attraction under most circumstances. An asexual person may or may not experience romantic attraction.

**Gray-asexuality-** The space between asexuality and other sexual orientations; experiencing sexual attraction only very rarely.

**Demi-sexuality-** Exists in the spectrum on gray-asexuality. It involves sexual attraction only to people one has developed a close emotional bond with. It is not to be confused with the lifestyle choice to only have sex in the context of a romantic relationship.

**Romantic Orientation-** A person’s romantic orientation has to do with who they tend to form romantic bonds with, based on gender. For many people, romantic and sexual orientations overlap considerably. But for some people, their sexual orientation and their romantic orientation are not equivalent. These people may use several words to describe their orientation instead of only one. Ex: bi-romantic asexual, or homo-romantic bisexual

**Biromantic-** Being romantically attracted to two genders (or all genders)

**Homoromatic-** Being romantically attracted to people of your own gender

**Heteroromatic-** Being romantically attracted to people of a gender other than your own

**Panromantic-** Being romantically attracted to all genders

**Aromantic-** Not experiencing romantic attraction