

Getting to know

LGBTIQ TERMINOLOGY



Common Terms

Sexual Orientation

The scientifically accurate term for a person's physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to another person. Sexual orientations can include heterosexual (straight), lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, asexual, and other orientations.

The usage of words such as sexual preference/selection/bias instead of sexual orientation in reporting and expressing will inaccurately suggest that being gay, lesbian, or bisexual is voluntary and "curable". As such these terms should be avoided.

Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Transgender people have sexual orientations that may be straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc.

Sex

Sex is a label assigned at birth based on the appearance of the external physical characteristics. Most people are assigned either as male or female and this assigned sex at birth is what is included in the birth certificate. However, a person's sex is determined by a mixture of internal and external reproductive organs, hormones and chromosomes.

Gender

Gender is largely culturally determined and are social constructs that are assumed from the sex assigned at birth. "Gender stereotypes" or "Gender roles" are the stereotypical social behaviours that culture and society assigns to individuals based on their gender.

Gender Identity

Gender identity is the personal sense of one's own gender. Gender identity can co-relate with a person's assigned sex or can differ from it. In most individuals, the various biological determinants of sex are congruent, and consistent with the individual's gender identity.

Gender Expression

Gender expression is how a person chooses to express their gender identity through their name, pronouns, clothing, hair style, behaviour, voice, or physical features.

LGBTIQ

LGBTIQ is the acronym for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer/Questioning community.

This umbrella term LGBTIQ is used because it mostly acknowledges the diversity of the community. It is also used as a pronoun as it could be used in common to describe the entire community. Umbrella terms such as Queer and Gay are also used to refer to the LGBTIQ community, i.e. Queer Community, Gay community.

Questioning/Queer

Questioning: a person who is wondering whether their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is binary or hetero-normative or whether it might have other dimensions to it - OR -

Queer: referring to any one person of the LGBTIQ community and also used as an umbrella term for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or cisgender.



Sexual Orientation

Heterosexual (Straight)

A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex or gender.

Homosexual

A person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex.

Because of the clinical history of the word “homosexual,” it is used by some to suggest that people attracted to the same sex are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered – notions discredited by the *American Psychological Association* and the *American Psychiatric Association* in the 1970s, the *World Health Organization (WHO)* in 1990s and the *Sri Lanka College of Psychiatrists* in 2021.

Gay

- Term used to describe men who are attracted to men in an emotional, physical and/or sexual sense.
- Term used to refer to the LGBTIQ community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

Pansexual

A person who can form physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to any person, irrespective of their sex/gender or any other aspects.

Asexual and Aromantics

Asexuality is the lack of sexual attraction and Aromanticism is the lack of romantic attraction.

Both are a spectrum and hence also act as an umbrella term that include people who are demisexual, graysexual etc. meaning a person who does experience some or infrequent sexual attraction, but only in certain situations, for example, after they have formed a strong emotional or romantic connection with a partner.

Lesbian

Term used to describe women who are attracted to women in an emotional, physical and/or sexual sense.

Bisexual

A term describing a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to men and women. This attraction does not have to be equally split between gender/sex and there may be a preference for one gender/sex over others.

Sex Characteristics

Intersex

A term describing a person with one or more innate sex characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, and chromosomes, that fall outside of traditional conceptions of male or female bodies.

Do not confuse having an intersex trait with being transgender. Intersex people are assigned a sex at birth — either male or female — and that decision made by medical providers and parents may not match the true gender identity of the child.

Endosex

A term describing a person who was born with sex characteristics that fit typical binary notions of male or female bodies. An endosex person may identify with any gender identity or sexual orientation.

Gender Identity & Expression

Gender Binary

The idea that there are only two genders – male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

Gender Fluid

Gender fluidity refers to change over time in a person's gender expression or gender identity, or both. That change might be in expression, but not identity, or in identity, but not expression. Or both expression and identity might change together.

Non-binary

Nonbinary is an adjective used by people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the binary gender categories of man and woman.

Gender Non-conforming

A gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation. A gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the traditional gender binary of male and female.

Gender Identity & Expression

(Continued)

Androgynous

An identity or presentation of an individual which is not perceived as either masculine or feminine.

Biological men and women might identify as androgynous if they do not identify with the gender identity of their biological sex, or with the gender identity of the opposite sex. Or they identify with both. This is what would set the androgynous apart from the transgender people, who identify with the gender identity of the opposite sex.

Drag Queen

A performer, typically one who was assigned male at birth, whose act involves a stylized and exaggerated interpretation of femininity that plays with stereotypical gender themes. It is a temporary form of gender expression.

Agender

Someone who doesn't identify as any particular gender.

Transgender

It is an adjective to describe someone whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

Cross-dresser

Someone who wears clothes traditionally assigned to another gender/sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender. It is a form of gender expression.

Avoid using the older term 'transvestite' which is now considered a derogatory term.

Drag King

A performer, typically one who was assigned female at birth, whose act involves a stylized and exaggerated interpretation of masculinity that plays with stereotypical gender themes. It is a temporary form of gender expression.

Cis Gender

Someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Identity & Expression

(Continued)

Transgender Terminology:

Transition

Transition is the process a person undertakes to bring their gender expression and/or their body into alignment with their gender identity. It is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time and the exact steps involved in transition will vary from person to person. Transition can include:

- **Social transition** - Telling family, friends, and co-workers, using a different name, using different pronouns, dressing differently, starting or stopping wearing make-up and jewellery, etc.
- **Legal transition** - Changing your name and/or sex marker on documents like a driver's license, passport, social security record, bank accounts, etc.
- **Medical transition** - Hormone replacement therapy and/or one or more surgical procedures.

Transgender Man

A man who was assigned female at birth may use this term to describe himself. He may shorten it to trans man. (Note: trans man, not "transman.") Some may prefer to simply be called men, without any modifier. Use the term the person uses to describe their gender.

Transgender Woman

A woman who was assigned male at birth may use this term to describe herself. She may shorten it to trans woman. (Note: trans woman, not "transwoman.") Some may prefer to simply be called women, without any modifier. Use the term the person uses to describe their gender.

Transexual

An older term that originated in the medical and psychological communities. As the gay and lesbian community rejected homosexual and replaced it with gay and lesbian, the transgender community rejected transsexual and replaced it with transgender. Some people within the transgender community may still call themselves transsexual. Do not use transsexual to describe a person unless it is a word they use to describe themselves.

Gender Identity & Expression

(Continued)

Transgender Terminology:

Dead-name

The name that a transgender person was given at birth and no longer uses upon transitioning. Never ask a transgender person what their name was before. You don't need to know a person's dead-name to respect them. A dead-name is called a dead-name for a reason.

Misgendering

Referring to someone in a way that does not correctly reflect their gender identity, typically by using incorrect pronouns.

Gender Dysphoria

The psychological distress that occurs when a person's gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender Affirming Care

The WHO defines gender-affirming health care as any combination of "social, psychological, behavioral or medical interventions designed to support and affirm an individual's gender identity."

Gender Confirming Surgery

Medical surgeries used to modify one's body to be more matching with one's gender identity.

Sexual Reassignment Surgery (SRS)

A term used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's "sex". Also known as "Gender Confirming Surgery."

Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)

This enables trans people to be legally recognized in their affirmed gender and to change their gender on their birth certificate. Not all trans people will apply for a GRC and currently, a person must be above 16 years to apply for a GRC.



“Out” vs “Closeted”

Coming Out

A lifelong process of self-acceptance. People come to understand their own sexual orientation first, and then they may reveal it to others. It is not necessary to have sexual experiences to come out as LGBTIQ, nor is it necessary to tell others. It is possible to simply be out to one's self.

Out

A person who self-identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer and/or transgender in their personal, public, and/or professional lives.

Code Switch

In short, code switch means changing the way you naturally speak in order to match the speech of others in the current setting. Often, queer folk have to mask their natural voices, certain aspects of their personality and mannerisms in order to prevent offensive or hurtful responses from homophobic or transphobic individuals. It is considered a protective measure.

Openly Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender

This phrase is now dated. "Openly gay" has been used to describe people who self-identify as gay in their personal, public, and/or professional lives. Also openly lesbian, openly bisexual, openly transgender, openly queer has been similarly used. While technically accurate, the phrase implies a confessional aspect to publicly acknowledging one's sexual orientation or gender identity. It is now better to avoid this phrase.

Closeted

Describes a person who is not open about their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is better to simply refer to them as a person who is not out about their identity as a LGBTIQ individual.

People may be out to some people in their life, but not out to others due to fear of rejection, harassment, violence, losing one's job, or other concerns.

Outing

The act of publicly revealing (sometimes based on rumour and/or speculation) another person's sexual orientation or gender identity without that person's consent. It is seen as an inappropriate and potentially dangerous act, and a violation of a person's privacy, confidentiality, autonomy and consent.

Relationships

Domestic Partnerships

Civil/legal recognition of a committed relationship between two people. At times, this provides them with limited legal protection.

Civil Union

Same-sex relationship that is recognized by the state offering some or all the state rights and protection.

While many Western countries have now legalized marriage equality, others only legally recognize same-sex relationships through civil unions or other legal partnerships.

Marriage

Marriage is the legal union of a couple, which allows them to receive state sponsorship and access to other services.

When reporting on marriage for same-sex couples, preferred terminology includes marriage equality, marriage for same-sex couples, or simply marriage.

Note, the terms "gay marriage" and "same-sex marriage" should be avoided, as they can suggest marriage for same-sex couples is somehow different or less equal than other marriages.

As of 2022, marriage for same-sex couples is legally recognized in 32 countries. Same-sex couples cannot get married in Sri Lanka or any other South Asian country (as of date of this publishing).

Legal Issues & Attitudes

Sodomy Laws

Historically used to selectively persecute LGBTIQ people. "Sodomy" should never be used to describe relationships or sexual orientations.

Colonization by the British brought about the laws that criminalized and persecuted LGBTIQ people in Sri Lanka. Section 365 and 365A of the Sri Lankan Penal Code, which dates back to 1883 during the time of colonial British Ceylon, criminalizes consenting adult sexual activities between LGBTIQ individuals. Section 399 ('cheating by personation) of the Sri Lankan Penal Code is often used against transgender individuals, while Section 353 (abduction) is sometimes used by the police to charge Lesbians.

Lifestyle

Inaccurate term used by anti-LGBTIQ extremists to denigrate LGBTIQ people and inaccurately imply that being LGBTIQ is a voluntary act or a "choice." As there is no straight lifestyle, there is no LGBTIQ lifestyle.

Legal Issues & Attitudes

(Continued)

Homophobia/Internalized Homophobia

An umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, hatred, or discomfort) that one may have toward LGBTIQ people. The term can also indicate a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as a LGBTIQ individual.

Internalized homophobia occurs when a person is subject to society's negative perceptions, intolerance, and stigma toward LGBTIQ persons. They then turn those ideas inward, believing that they are true, and experience self-hatred as a result of being a socially stigmatized person.

Transphobia/Internalized Transphobia

Transphobia is the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of transgender people, the transgender community, or gender ambiguity. A range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, hatred, or discomfort) that one may have or express toward transgender individuals.

Internalized transphobia, like internalized homophobia, refers to a discomfort with one's own transgenderism as a result of internalizing society's normative gender expectations.

Biphobia/Internalized Biphobia

A range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, hatred, or discomfort) that one may have or express toward bisexual individuals. Biphobia can come from and be seen within the LGBTQ community as well as in straight society.

Anyone who is bisexual might experience biphobia, or monosexism, from others. Or, they might have internalized monosexism, which involves having negative thoughts about their own sexual orientation.

Heterosexism

A system of oppression that considers heterosexuality the norm and discriminates against people who display non-heterosexual behaviors and identities.

Cissexism

A system of oppression that says there are only two genders (male and female), which are considered the norm, and that everyone's gender aligns with their sex at birth.

Legal Issues & Attitudes

(Continued)

Monosexism

Monosexism refers to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination directed at people who are romantically or sexually attracted to people of multiple genders.

Cisnormative

The assumption, in individuals and in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to transgender identities and people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

Heteronormativity

The assumption, in individuals and in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to transgender identities and people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

Heterosexual Privilege

The societal advantages that heterosexual individuals get which LGBTQ people don't.

Transmisogyny

A blend of transphobia and misogyny, which manifests as discrimination against "trans women and trans and gender non-conforming people on the feminine end of the gender spectrum."

LGBTIQ Ally

A straight and/or cis gender person who supports, respects and advocates for LGBTIQ people and their rights.





PRIDE

PRIDE Rainbow Flag

The universal symbol of PRIDE for LGBTIQ people around the world.

LGBTIQ PRIDE

PRIDE takes many forms – from carnivalesque marches to film screenings and debates – and is a moment of celebration of people who are marginalized by strict, traditional definitions of gender identity and sexual orientation.

Events are organized throughout the year, depending on where you are. Whatever the event, it's a moment for LGBTIQ people to show that they are proud to be who they are.

PRIDE festivals are banned in several countries around the world, including Russia, Saudi Arabia, Uganda and most recently Turkey. PRIDE celebrates the LGBTIQ movement in all its diversity and amplifies the call to respect and protect LGBTIQ rights. In Sri Lanka, Colombo PRIDE is an annual PRIDE festival celebrated by the LGBTIQ community, their Family, Friends and Allies. Today PRIDE is celebrated in all parts of the country and includes the business community, CSOs, electronic/digital media, radio and mainstream media.

'It's okay if your sexuality evolves over time, you are not lying to yourself or faking anything. You deserve to feel comfortable and worthy of being loved and respected, just the way you are.'

EQUAL GROUND would like to extend its sincere thanks to everyone who provided their valuable assistance in developing this Glossary of Terms. We would like to mention that this document will be revised and updated from time to time. Also, EQUAL GROUND acknowledges that there might be more terms related to the LGBTIQ community which we couldn't explore or cover.

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