

# RISE LGBTQ Glossary

The definitions offered here can help when navigating the often ever-changing world of LGBTQ terminology. Please remember, however, not to impose these words as labels upon people who identify as LGBTQ. Ask people how they self-identify and ask about language that makes them feel safe. If they choose to avoid self-identifying terms, honor their decision—doing this will clearly indicate their right to be themselves and to be safe.

**Affirm:** To acknowledge or assert as fact; here, to assert one's own sexual orientation or gender identity strongly and publicly or to openly acknowledge and publicly assert the rights and dignity of LGBTQ people.

**Ally:** A person or organization that actively aligns and uses their resources to support individuals and communities with a specific issue; here, an individual who openly supports and affirms the rights and dignity of LGBTQ people may be considered an ally.

**Androgynous:** A gender expression that has both masculine and feminine elements.

**Agender:** Agender individuals may find that they have no gender identity, or a gender identity that is neutral. Agender is an identity under the nonbinary and transgender umbrella terms

**Anti-Gay Bias:** Hatred of, discrimination against, or aversion to lesbian, gay, and/or bisexual (LGB) people; people perceived to be LGB; and/or those associated with persons who are LGB. Often referred to as homophobia.

**Anti-transgender Bias:** Hatred of, discrimination against, or aversion to transgender or gender variant people; people perceived to be transgender or gender variant; and/or those associated with persons who are transgender or gender variant. Often referred to as transphobia.

**Asexual:** A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction

**Bigender:** A gender identity in which an individual identifies as two genders. These can be any two genders and can be experienced in many different ways.

**Binarism:** Hatred of, aversion to and/or discrimination against people whose identities exist outside of the gender/sex binary.

**Binary:** Consist of, indicating, or involving two.

**Biological Sex:** The sex assigned at birth by a doctor; based on physical anatomy and hormones. Designations include male, female and intersex. Also referred to as assigned sex at birth.

**Bisexual:** A person who is attracted to people of their own gender as well as another gender.

**Cisgender:** A description for a person whose gender identity and biological sex align. (e.g., a person identifies as a man and was assigned male at birth by a doctor).

**Cisgender Privilege:** The implicit and explicit privileges that cisgender people exercise. For example, the privileges include freedom from questions about one's anatomy (often by strangers) and freedom from frequent misgendering. Cisgender people also enjoy a presumed "validity" as a man/woman/human and this validity is not based on surgical procedures or how well one "passes" as a man/woman/human, etc.

**Coming out:** The process of acknowledging one's sexual orientation or gender identity to oneself and/or individuals in one's life; often incorrectly thought of to be a one-time event, this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process.

**Conversion Therapy:** A range of discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. These practices have been rejected by every mainstream medical and mental health organization.

**Cross Dress:** To cross-dress is to wear clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of the other gender.

**Demisexuality:** A sexual orientation in which someone feels sexual attraction only to people with whom they have an emotional bond. Demisexuals are considered to be on the asexual spectrum, meaning they are closely aligned with asexuality, but not quite asexual.

**Drag queen/drag king:** Someone who dresses and acts like the opposite gender for entertainment purposes; usually does not self-identify as transgender.

**External oppression:** Occurs when an individual, group, or force with privilege and/or power harms an individual or group without those privileges.

**Female-to-male (FTM):** a person who transitions from female to male; a person who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a male. Similar self-identifications for this term may include: transgender man, transgender boy, transman.

**Feminine:** A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of females.

**Gay:** A term used to describe a man who is attracted to another man; this term may also be used by women attracted to other women.

**Gay-straight alliance (GSA):** Formal organization of LGBTQ and straight people in support of the dignity and rights of LGBTQ people, usually developed in the context of creating change in educational institutions and environments.

**Gender:** Social and cultural expression of sex; is different than biological sex.

**Gender Binary:** The idea that there are only two genders (males/females and man/woman) and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**Gender conformity:** Acting within socially and culturally expected gender roles.

**Gender dysphoria:** A DSM-5 diagnosis described as an incongruence between a person's experienced gender and the gender others assign to them. Gender dysphoria replaces "gender identity disorder."

**Gender expression:** The ways in which an individual communicates their gender to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, etc.; not an indication of sexual orientation.

**Gender fluid:** An individual whose gender identity may continually change throughout their lifetime. These individuals may not feel confined within the socially and culturally expected gender roles and in fact may identify differently from situation to situation.

**Gender identity:** One's internal, personal sense of their gender. Gender identity can be represented as a spectrum and an individual may move around this spectrum. Some terms that are associated with this spectrum are male, female, agender, gender fluid, genderqueer, trans\*, transgender and two-spirit.

**Gender neutral:** Anything (such as clothing, styles, activities, or spaces) that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations.

**Gender nonconformity:** Expressing gender and/or having gender characteristics that do not conform to the expectations of society and culture. Also referred to as gender variant or gender creative.

**Gender role:** Culturally or socially determined sets of attitudes and behaviors that are expected of an individual based on her/his assigned sex at birth or perceived sex.

**Genderqueer** (also gender queer): An umbrella term some people use to describe when their gender identity falls out of the binary of male or female.

**Gender Variant:** Expressing gender and/or having gender characteristics that do not conform to the expectations of society and culture. Also referred to as gender nonconformity or gender creative.

**Heterosexism:** A dominant notion that everyone is heterosexual (or should be) and that heterosexuality is superior, better, and preferred.

**Heterosexual:** Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to a person(s) of the opposite gender with which one identifies; sometimes referred to as being "straight".

**Heterosexual Privilege:** The privileges that heterosexual people have because of heterosexism. Being heterosexual carries with it privileges that may be explicit or implicit such as the right to marry, adopt children, be a foster parent, receive fair employment, etc.

**Homosexual:** Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to a person(s) of the same gender with which one identifies. Although some individuals may identify with this term, it is now a dated term that has negative connotations and is considered derogatory.

**Identity:** What, how, and who one perceives oneself to be; a multi-faceted component of self-concept and can evolve throughout one's life span.

**In the closet:** The intentional concealment of an individual's own gender identity and/or sexual orientation, usually due to fear of discrimination and/or violence; can cause isolation and psychological pain.

**Internalized oppression:** The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate myths and stereotypes applied to the group

**Intersex:** A general term constructed to describe a variety of conditions for a person born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard (or typical) to be defined as male or female due to chromosomal, hormonal, and reproductive differences. Chromosomal, hormonal, and reproductive differences can include extra or missing chromosomes, elements of both male and female reproductive systems, or genitalia that do not appear clearly male or clearly female at birth.

**Lesbian:** A term used to describe a woman who is attracted to another woman.

**LGBTQ:** An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning or Queer.

**Male-to-female (MTF):** A person who transitions from male to female; a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a female. Additional self-identifications for this term may include: transgender woman, transgender girl, transwoman.

**Masculine:** A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of males.

**Misgender:** To refer to another person as a gender with which they do not identify. This could be done intentionally to cause emotional and psychological harm or unintentionally because of assumptions.

**Out:** Openly acknowledging one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity; may be partial (that is, out to some people and not to others). Sometimes referred to as being "out of the closet."

**Outed:** When someone else accidentally or deliberately reveals another's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, usually without permission.

**Pangender (and/or Omnigender):** is a non-binary gender experience which refers to a wide multiplicity of genders that can (or not) tend to the infinite (meaning that this experience can go beyond the current knowledge of genders). This experience can be either simultaneously or over time.

**Pansexual:** A sexual orientation characterized by a potential aesthetic attraction, romantic love and/or sexual desire for a person regardless of gender identity.

**Pride:** National, citywide, and neighborhood local events and programs, usually during the month of June in celebration of the ongoing fight for equality for LGBTQ people.

**Queer:** Historically, this was a derogatory slang term used to identify LGBTQ people. It is now a term that some LGBTQ people are reclaiming and embracing as a symbol of pride that represents all individuals who fall outside of gender and sexual orientation “norms”.

**Questioning:** Being unsure of where one's primary attraction or gender identity lies.

**Safe space:** A place where anyone can relax and fully express themselves, without fear of being made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, or unsafe on account of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, cultural background, age, and/or physical or mental ability. A place where the rules guard each person's self-respect and dignity and strongly encourage everyone to respect others.

**Same-gender loving:** A term created within the African-American LGBTQ community and used by some people of color who see 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms more connected to a white lesbian or gay identity.

**Sex Binary:** The classification of sex into two distinct, opposite and rigidly fixed anatomical options: male or female, both grounded in a person's physical anatomy.

**Sexism:** Discrimination and unfair treatment based on sex or gender in which privilege is usually afforded to men and not women.

**Sexual Behavior:** The physical, intimate acts one may do with another person(s). This is distinct from sexual orientation.

**Sexual Orientation:** Describes the emotional, romantic, and physical feelings of attraction (usually over a period of time); it is distinct from sexual behavior.

**Stealth:** This term refers to when a person chooses to be secretive in the public sphere about their gender history, either after transitioning or while successful passing. (Also referred to as 'going stealth' or 'living in stealth mode').

**Stem:** A urban term often used by young people of color to describe a femal-bodied person who gender expresses between what's traditionally considered masculine and feminine. Stems

generally appear androgynous, rather than adhering to strictly feminine or masculine norms and gender identities.

**Gender Affirmation Surgery (also known as gender reassignment surgery):** is the surgical procedure (or procedures) by which a transgender person's physical appearance and function of their existing sexual characteristics are altered to resemble that of their identified gender.

**Stud:** A urban term often used by young people of color to describe a female-bodied person who gender expresses masculine. The sexual orientation of a stud is usually lesbian. Terms like stud are used in urban communities of color because the words lesbian and butch historically were not used to talk about women of color with same gender attractions. In nonurban settings, studs are usually referred to butch.

**Third Gender:** Is the concept that individuals are categorized, either by themselves or by society, as neither man nor woman. It also describes a social category present in those societies that recognize three or more genders.

**Trans\*:** An umbrella term that refers to all non-cisgender identities within the gender identity spectrum.

**Transgender:** An individual whose gender identity differs from their biological sex.

**Transsexual:** A medical term historically used to identify a person who has undergone hormone and surgical treatments to attain the physical characteristics that affirms their gender identity. Although some individuals may identify as transsexual, this term is now generally considered a derogatory term.

**Transition:** A term used to describe the process of moving from one sex/gender to another, sometimes this is done by hormone or surgical treatments.

**Transvestite:** A person who sometimes wears clothing traditionally worn by and associated with the opposite sex. Transvestite should not be confused with transgender or transsexual; transvestites are often happy with their gender and have no desire to change their sex, but simply enjoy being able to cross dress from time to time. When speaking of, to, or about an individual who identifies as transgender, the term transvestite is typically seen as derogatory.

**Trigender:** A trigender people experience exactly three gender identities, either simultaneously or varying between them. These three gender identities can be male, female and/or any non-binary identities.

**Two-Spirit:** A term traditionally used by some Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both genders; often considered part male and part female or wholly male and wholly female; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans.



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