

Glossary of Important Terms on Gender and Sexual Diversity

Asexual – A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction to others, regardless of gender identity.

Biphobia - Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval towards bisexuality and bisexual people. Biphobia can be manifested in numerous ways, such as verbally, emotionally, and through physical attacks.

Bisexual – A term for someone who is sexually and romantically attracted to people of more than one gender or sex.

Cisgender –A person whose gender identity matches with the sex they were assigned at birth (e.g. someone assigned female at birth who goes through life identifying as a woman).

Cisnormative - The assumption that all, or almost all, individuals are cisgender, unless otherwise specified.

Coming out – The process of coming to terms with one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity and disclosing it to others. Others typically assume heterosexuality and fixed gender states that fit into the binary of F and M, therefore, coming-out is an ongoing process.

FTM – A person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies as male. Also known as trans man or transgender man. FTM is the acronym for Female-to-Male.

Gay - A term used to describe a man who is sexually and romantically attracted to men. Some women who are attracted to women also use this term while others might prefer lesbian (see: Lesbian).

Gender expansive - An umbrella term sometimes used in place of "gender non-binary" or "gender non-conforming", to describe individuals with gender identities and expressions that expand and broaden definitions of cisnormative and gender normative identities.

Gender expression - How a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways of expressing gender.

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Gender fluid - Refers to a gender identity that varies and fluctuates over time. A person who identifies as gender fluid may have an identity that alternates between female, male, and any other gender identity.

Gender identity – Gender identity is a person's subjective experience of their own gender. It is a deep internal feeling of whether they identify as female, male, genderqueer, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or differ from the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gender non-binary - A term used to describe individuals who do not subscribe or conform to the gender binary. Gender non-binary is also used as an umbrella term for those who do not identify exclusively as female or male.

Gender-normative – Refers to people conforming to what is considered culturally appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour.

Genderqueer – A self-identity category/term used to describe individuals who do not subscribe or conform to the gender binary, but identify as neither, both, or a combination of male and female.

Heteronormativity – The belief that heterosexuality is the default or 'normal' sexual orientation. It assumes the gender binary (i.e., that there are only two distinct, opposite genders) and that sexual and romantic relations are between "females" and "males".

Heterosexual – A term used to describe someone who is sexually and romantically attracted to people of the opposite sex or gender. Also known as 'straight'.

Homophobia – Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval of homosexuality. Homophobia can be manifested in numerous ways, such as verbally, emotionally, and through physical attacks.

LGBTQ2S – Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and 2-spirit people.

MTF – A person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies as female. Also known as trans woman or transgender woman. MTF is the acronym for Male-to-Female.

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Pansexual – When a person is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to people of all gender identities and sexes.

Queer – A term that has been reclaimed by LGBTQ2S people as a self-identity for those who do not identify with binary terms that describe sexual, gender, and political identities.

Sexual identity – How a person identifies to whom they are sexually and romantically attracted to (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, etc.)

Transgender – A term used to describe people whose gender identity does not match with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender is also used as an umbrella term and can encompass those who identify as genderqueer, genderfluid and whose gender identities challenge gender norms. Transgender is an adjective and should never be used as a noun, for example, instead of saying: “Chris is a transgender”, say: “Chris is a transgender person”, there is never a need to add an “-ed” at the end of “transgender”.

Transition – When a transgender individual begins to live life in the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex they were assigned at birth. For some this includes changing one’s first name and/or other legal documents (e.g. health card, driver’s license, etc.), dressing differently, taking hormones and/or undergoing surgery. Each person’s transition is different and deeply personal.

Transphobia - Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval towards transgender people or people who are gender-nonconforming. Transphobia can be manifested in numerous ways, such as verbally, emotionally, and through physical attacks.

Two-Spirit - This term is culturally specific to people of Indigenous ancestry and refers to Indigenous people who identify as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit. This term is not exclusive to gender identity, and can also refer to sexual orientation, and spiritual identity. “Two-spirit” is a modern term and was conceived of through discussions at an Indigenous LGBTQ gathering in 1990 and brought forward by Myra Laramée. The term is a translation of the Anishinaabemowin term *niizh manidoowag*, two spirits. The use of this term by people who are not Indigenous is considered cultural appropriation.