

A Glossary of Terms

Adapted by Alex Weissman from materials by Daniel Rose

Cisgender—Anyone who identifies with the sex and gender that were assigned to them at birth.

Biological Sex—The set of physical traits (chromosomes, hormones, gonads, internal and external sexual/reproductive organs) which are, in Western society, culturally and medically associated with a particular gender or combination of genders. It is commonly believed that there are only two ‘packages’ of these traits—one called ‘male’, and the other called ‘female’.

Biphobia—Fear or hatred of bisexuals; this is present in both gay and lesbian as well as straight communities. Biphobia is manifested in violence, harassment, and discrimination, as well as refusing to acknowledge that bisexuality exists or is anything other than “sitting on the fence.”

Bisexual—Anyone who is attracted to more than one gender/sex. Some people prefer the term **pansexual** to acknowledge that there are more than two genders and sexes.

FTM (‘female to-male’; transman)—A person who was assigned at birth to be female and was raised as a girl, who knows himself to be a man and who wishes to or does live as a man part or all of the time.

Gay—People who are attracted to the same gender as themselves. This term is applicable to all genders, though is often understood to refer to men only. Some women choose not to identify as gay for this reason.

Gender Expression—Outward behaviors and appearances (e.g. hair, clothing, voice, body language) by which people manifest their gender identity or gender choices.

Gender Identity—A person’s inner understanding of what gender(s) they belong to or identify as. This is each person’s unique knowing or feeling, and is separate from a person’s physical body or appearance (though may be related.)

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)—An umbrella term that can include anyone whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is outside of social norms of women who are ‘feminine’ and men who are ‘masculine’.

Gender-queer—Anyone who sees their gender as falling outside of mainstream understandings of “male” and “female”, this can include transgender men and women, people who identify as neither male nor female, both male and female or who claim an alternate gender identity.

Heretosexism—The social, cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that assume that heterosexuality is the natural, normal, and superior sexual orientation. It can include the presumption that everyone is heterosexual until proven otherwise. This has an impact on internalized, interpersonal, and institutional levels.

Homophobia—Fear or hatred of lesbians and gays; homophobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Homosexual—A term developed in the late 19th Century used to pathologize same-sex sexual behavior. Few people within LGBTQI communities use this word now to refer to themselves, in part because of the pathological connotations.

Intersex—General term used for people who are born with, or develop without intervention, anatomies, hormones, and chromosomes, that may not fit the typical definitions of female or male. A dated, pathological term is hermaphrodite, but this term has largely been rejected by intersex communities.

Lesbian—A term adapted in the 20th Century to refer to women attracted to women to differentiate the political needs of women from gay men.

MTF (‘male to-female’; transwoman)—A person who was assigned at birth to be male, and was raised as a boy, who knows herself to be female, and who wishes to or does live as a woman part or all of the time.

Queer—A broad political and cultural identity that includes many (but not all) lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people, as well as others who see their sexuality as falling outside of mainstream heterosexual norms. This word is contested by some and often considered an “in-group” word.

Questioning—A person who thinks their sexual orientation and/or gender identity may be different from what they had previously thought.

Sexual Orientation—The aspect of a person that describes the relationship between their gender identity and the gender(s) of the people to whom they are attracted.

Transgender—Anyone who does not identify with the sex and/or gender that they were assigned at birth. This can include people who take medical steps to modify their appearance and those who do not.

Transphobia—Fear or hatred of transgender people; transphobia is manifested in a number of ways, including violence, harassment, and discrimination.