



THE EVER EVOLVING GLOSSARY OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY TERMS



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Please note that language is always changing so this is a living glossary of terms that is updated regularly at genderspecialist.com

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Ever-Evolving Glossary of Gender & Sexuality Terms

advocate

1 *noun*: a person who actively works to end intolerance, educate others, and support social equity for a marginalized group. 2 *verb*: to actively support or be in favor of a particular cause, the action of working to end intolerance or educate others.

agender

adj.: a person with no (or very little) connection to the traditional system of gender, no personal alignment with the concepts of either man or woman, and/or someone who sees themselves as existing without gender. Sometimes called gender neutrois, gender-neutral, or genderless.

ally

/“al-lie”/ – *noun*: a (typically straight and/or cisgender) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. We consider people to be active allies who take meaningful actions to show this support and respect.

androgyny

/“an-jrah-jun-ee”/ (*androgynous*) – 1 *noun*: a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; 2 *adj.*: occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy, generally in the form “androgyne.”

androssexual/androphilic

adj.: being primarily sexually, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to men, males, and/or masculinity.

aromantic

/“ay-ro-man-tic”/ *adj.*: experiencing little or no romantic attraction to others and/or has a lack of interest in romantic relationships/behavior. Aromanticism exists on a continuum from people who experience no romantic attraction or have any desire for romantic activities, to those who experience low levels, or romantic attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different





places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see *demiromantic*). Sometimes abbreviated to “aro” (pronounced like “arrow”).

asexual

adj.: experiencing little or no sexual attraction to others and or a lack of interest in sexual relationships/behavior. Asexuality exists on a continuum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex, to those who experience low levels, or sexual attraction only under specific conditions. Many of these different places on the continuum have their own identity labels (see *demisexual*). Sometimes abbreviated to “ace.”

bicurious

adj.: a curiosity toward experiencing attraction to people of the same gender/sex (*similar to questioning*).

bigender

adj.: a person who fluctuates between traditionally “woman” and “man” gender-based behavior and identities, identifying with two genders (or sometimes identifying with either man or woman, as well as a third, different gender).

binder / binding

noun: an undergarment used to alter or reduce the appearance of one’s breasts (worn similarly to how one wears a sports bra). *binding – verb*: the (sometimes daily) process of wearing a binder. Binding is often used to change the way other’s read/perceive one’s anatomical sex characteristics, and/or as a form of gender expression.

biological sex

noun: a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as simply “sex,” “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned at birth.”

biphobia

noun: a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, invisibility, resentment, erasure, 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 straight society.

biphobic

adj.: a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward bisexual people.





bisexual

1 *noun & adj.*: a person who experiences attraction to some men and women. 2 *adj.*: a person who experiences attraction to some people of their gender and another gender. Bisexual attraction does not have to be equally split, or indicate a level of interest that is the same across the genders an individual may be attracted to. Can be shortened to “bi” (pronounced “bye”). Often used interchangeably with “pansexual”.

butch

noun & adj.: a person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally, or emotionally. ‘Butch’ is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but is also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

cisgender

/“siss-jendur”/ *adj.*: a gender description for when some- one’s sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond (e.g., someone who was assigned female at birth, and identifies as a woman). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

cis-het

/“siss-heht”/ *adj.*: a description for someone who is cisgender (see definition) and heterosexual.

cisnormativity

noun: the assumption, in individuals and in institutions, that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to trans* identities and people. Leads to invisibility of non-cisgender identities.

cissaviorism

noun: a cisgender mindset that transgender people need to be “helped” and “saved” instead of listened to. The actions may be taken as a results of a cis person’s misplaced guilt towards the way society treats trans people

cissexism

noun: behavior that grants preferential treatment to cisgender people, reinforces the idea that being cisgender is somehow better or more “right” than being transgender, and/or makes other genders invisible.

closeted

adj.: an individual who is not open to themselves or others about their (queer) sexuality or gender identity. This may be by choice and/or for other reasons such as fear for one’s safety, peer or family rejection, or disapproval and/or loss of housing, job, etc. Also known as being “in the closet.” When someone chooses to break this silence they “come out” of the closet. (see *coming out*)



**coming out**

1 *noun*: the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one's own sexuality or gender identity (to "come out" to oneself). 2 *verb*: the process by which one shares one's sexuality or gender identity with others.

constellation

noun: a way to describe the arrangement or structure of a polyamorous relationship.

cross-dresser

noun: someone who wears clothes of another gender.

demiromantic

adj.: little or no capacity to experience romantic attraction until a strong sexual connection is formed with someone, often within a sexual relationship.

demisexual

adj.: little or no capacity to experience sexual attraction until a strong romantic connection is formed with someone, often within a romantic relationship.

down low

adj.: typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by, communities of color.

drag king

noun: someone who performs masculinity theatrically.

drag queen

noun: someone who performs femininity theatrically.

dyke

noun: referring to a masculine-presenting lesbian. While often used derogatorily, it is also reclaimed affirmatively by some lesbians and gay women as a positive self-identity term.

emotional attraction

noun: a capacity that evokes the want to engage in emotionally intimate behavior (e.g., sharing, confiding, trusting, inter-depending), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.





fag(got)

noun: a derogatory term referring to a gay person, or someone perceived as queer. While often used derogatorily, it is also used reclaimed by some gay people (often gay men) as a positive in-group term.

feminine-of-center; masculine-of-center

adj.: a phrase that indicates a range in terms of gender identity and expression for people who present, understand themselves, and/or relate to others in a generally more feminine/masculine way, but doesn't necessarily identify as women or men. Feminine-of-center individuals may also identify as "femme," or "transfeminine," .; masculine-of-center individuals may also often identify as "butch," "stud," "boi," "transmasculine," etc.

feminine-presenting; masculine-presenting

adj.: a way to describe someone who expresses gender in a more feminine/masculine way. Often confused with feminine-of-center/masculine-of-center, which generally include a focus on identity as well as expression.

femme

noun & adj.: someone who identifies themselves as feminine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. Often used to refer to a feminine-presenting queer woman or people.

fluid(ity)

adj.: generally with another term attached, like gender-fluid or fluid sexuality, fluid(ity) describes an identity that may change or shift over time between or within the mix of the options available.

FtM / F2M; MtF / M2F

abbr.: female-to-male transgender person; male-to-female transgender person.

gay

1 *adj.:* experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of the same gender. Can be used to refer to men who are attracted to other men and women who are attracted to women. 2 *adj.:* an umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who is not straight (see *LGBTQ and queer*)

gender binary

noun: the socially constructed idea that there are only two genders and that every person is one of those two.





gender-expansive

adj: an umbrella term sometimes used to describe people who expand notions of gender expression and identity beyond perceived or expected societal gender norms.

gender expression

noun: the external display of one's gender, through a combination of clothing, grooming, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as "gender presentation."

gender fluid

adj: refers to someone who experiences fluctuations in their gender expression or gender identity, or both.

gender identity

noun: the internal perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don't align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Often conflated with biological sex, or sex assigned at birth.

gender neutrois

adj.: see *agender*

noun: the external display of one's gender, through a combination of clothing, grooming, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as "gender presentation."

gender non-conforming

1 *adj.:* a gender expression descriptor that indicates a non-traditional gender presentation (masculine woman or feminine man). 2 *adj.:* a gender identity label that indicates a person who identifies outside of the gender binary. Often abbreviated as "GNC."

gender normative

adj.: someone whose gender presentation, whether by nature or by choice, aligns with society's gender-based expectations.

genderqueer

1 *adj.:* a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. 2 *adj.:* an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or nonbinary identities (e.g., agender, bigender, genderfluid).





gender variant

adj.: someone who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society (e.g. transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer, cross-dresser, etc).

gynesexual / gynephilic

/“guy-nuh-seks-shu-uhl”/ adj.: being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to women, females, and/or femininity.

hermaphrodite

noun: an outdated medical term previously used to refer to someone who was born with some combination of typically-male and typically-female sex characteristics. It’s considered stigmatizing and inaccurate. See *intersex*.

heteronormativity

noun: the assumption, in individuals and/or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities: when learning a woman is married, asking her what her husband’s name is. Heteronormativity also leads us to assume that only masculine men and feminine women are straight.

heterosexism

noun: behavior that grants preferential treatment to heterosexual people, reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than queerness, and/or makes other sexualities invisible.

heterosexual/straight

adj.: experiencing attraction solely (or primarily) to some members of a different gender.

homophobia/homophobic

noun: an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have toward LGBTQ people. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. Homophobic *adj.:* a word used to describe actions, behaviors, or individuals who demonstrate elements of this range of negative attitudes toward LGBTQ people.

homosexual

adj. & noun: a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This [medical] term is considered stigmatizing (particularly as a noun) due to its history as a category of mental illness and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).





intersex

adj.: term for a combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals that differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. Formerly known as hermaphrodite (or hermaphroditic), these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

lesbian

noun & adj.: women who are primarily attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other women.

LGBTQ; GSM; DSG; TGNC

abbr. : shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (some- times people at a + at the end in an effort to be more inclusive); GSM is Gender and Sexual Minorities; DSG is Diverse Sexualities and Genders; TGNC is Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (sometimes you'll see "NB" added for non-binary). Other options include the initialisms GLBT, LGBT, or TLBG, or the acronym QUILTBAG (Queer [or Questioning] Undecided Intersex Lesbian Trans* Bisexual Asexual [or Al- lied] and Gay [or Genderqueer]). There is no "correct" or "official" initialism to represent everyone who is queer, or LGBTQ+. If you're unsure of which one to use, defer to your local community. When a "P" is included it usually means pansexual; an "I" generally represents intersex.

lipstick lesbian

noun: Usually refers to a lesbian with a feminine gender expression. Can be used in a positive or a derogatory way. Is sometimes also used to refer to a lesbian who is assumed to be (or passes for) straight.

metrosexual

adj.: a man with a strong aesthetic sense who spends more time, energy, or money on his appearance and grooming than is considered gender normative.

MSM / WSW

abbr. : men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women, to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities: because a man is straight, it doesn't mean he's not having sex with men. Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

Mx.

/ "mix" or "schwa" / *noun*: an honorific (e.g. Mr., Ms., Mrs., etc.) that is gender-neutral. It is often the option of choice for folks who do not identify within the gender binary: Mx. Smith is a great teacher.





nonbinary

adj.: a gender identity label used by some people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman. Alternatively spelled “non-binary.” Often abbreviated as “enby” or “enbie” (based on the pronunciation of N-B). (see *genderqueer*)

outing

verb: involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

pansexual

adj.: a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to “pan.”

passing

1 *adj. & verb:* trans people being accepted as, or able to “pass for,” a member of their self-identified gender identity (regardless of sex assigned at birth) without being identified as trans. 2 *adj.:* an LGBT/queer individual who is believed to be or perceived as straight.

polyamory / polyamorous

noun: refers to the practice of, desire for, or orientation toward having ethical, honest, and consensual non-monogamous relationships (i.e. relationships that may include multiple partners). Often shortened to “poly.”

queer

1 *adj.:* an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight and/or cisgender. 2 *noun:* a slur used to refer to someone who isn’t straight and/ or cisgender. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, and how it is still used as a slur in many communities, it is not embraced or used by all LGBTQ people. The term “queer” can often be used interchangeably with LGBTQ (e.g., “queer people” instead of “LGBTQ people”).

questioning

verb, adj.: an individual who or time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

QPOC / QTPOC

abbr.: initialisms that stand for queer people of color and queer and/or trans people of color.





romantic attraction

noun: a capacity that evokes the want to engage in romantic intimate behavior (e.g., dating, relationships, marriage), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

same-gender loving (SGL)

adj.: sometimes used by some members of the Black community to express a non-straight sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent.

sex assigned at birth (SAAB)

abbr. : a phrase used to intentionally recognize a person's assigned sex (not gender identity). Sometimes called "designated sex at birth" (DSAB) or "sex coercively assigned at birth" (SCAB), or specifically used as "assigned male at birth" (AMAB) or "assigned female at birth" (AFAB): Jenny was assigned male at birth, but identifies as a woman.

sexual attraction

noun: a capacity that evokes the want to engage in physically intimate behavior (e.g., kissing, touching, intercourse), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with romantic attraction, emotional attraction, and/or spiritual attraction.

sexual orientation

noun: the type of sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction one has the capacity to feel for some others, generally labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to. Often confused with sexual preference.

sexual preference

noun: the types of sexual intercourse, stimulation, and gratification one likes to receive and participate in. Generally when this term is used, it is being mistakenly interchanged with "sexual orientation," creating an illusion that one has a choice (or "preference") in who they are attracted to.

sex reassignment surgery (SRS)

noun: used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's biological sex. "Gender affirmation surgery" is considered by many to be a more affirming term. In many cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender. Some refer to different surgical procedures as "top" surgery and "bottom" surgery to discuss what type of surgery they are having without having to be more explicit.

skoliosexual

adj.: being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some genderqueer, transgender, transsexual, and/or nonbinary people.





social transition

adjective : is the social portion of a transition, in which a person may tell people about their gender identity, change their name or pronouns, and/or change elements of their gender expression or presentation.

spiritual attraction

noun: a capacity that evokes the want to engage in intimate behavior based on one's experience with, interpretation of, or belief in the super- natural (e.g., religious teachings, messages from a deity), experienced in varying degrees (from little-to-none, to intense). Often conflated with sexual attraction, romantic attraction, and/or emotional attraction.

stealth

adj.: a trans person who is not “out” as trans, and is perceived/known by others as cisgender.

straight

adj.: a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to some people who are not their same sex/gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

stud

noun: most commonly used to indicate a Black and Latinx masculine, lesbian/queer woman. Also known as ‘butch’.

third gender

noun: for a person who does not identify with either man or woman, but identifies with another gender. This gender category is used by societies that recognize three or more genders, both contemporary and historic, and is also a conceptual term meaning different things to different people who use it, as a way to move beyond the gender binary.

top surgery

noun: this term refers to the gender affirming procedure of surgery performed on the chest.

trans

adj.: an umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an asterisk is often used in written forms (not spoken) to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term, and specifically including nonbinary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (transwomen).

transgender

adj.: an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, but does not identify as a man).





transition / transitioning

noun, verb: referring to the process of a transgender person changing aspects of themselves (e.g., their appearance, name, pronouns, or making physical changes to their body) to be more congruent with the gender they know themselves to be (as opposed to the gender they lived as pre-transitioning). Some transition socially, medically, legally, or some combination thereof. Transition looks different for everyone!

transman; transwoman; transperson

noun: a person who was not assigned that gender via sex at birth, and transitioned (socially, medically, and/or legally) from that assignment to their gender identity, signified by the second part of the term. Also referred to as men and women (though some/ many trans people prefer to keep the prefix “trans-” in their identity label).

transmisia/transmisic

noun: is a systemized discrimination or antagonism directed against trans/nonbinary/genderqueer/agender persons. Transmisic - *adj.:* a word used to describe an individual who discriminates and antagonizes trans people (also called transantagonism)

transphobia/transphobic

noun: the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the queer community, as well as in general society. Transphobic *adj.:* a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes, thoughts, intents, towards trans* people.

transsexual

noun & adj. a person who identifies as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexual is not a term that is often used anymore but would be used to distinguish trans folks who had medically transitioned.

two-spirit

noun: refers to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit, and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender and/or spiritual identity. As an umbrella term it may encompass same-sex attraction and a wide variety of gender variance, including people who might be described in Western culture as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, gender queer, cross-dressers, or who have multiple gender identities. Two-spirit can also include relationships that could be considered poly.

ze / zir

/ “zee”, “zerr” or “zeer”/ neo-pronouns that are gender neutral and preferred by some trans* people. They replace “he” and “she” and “his” and “hers” respectively. Alternatively some people who are not comfortable/do not embrace he/she use the plural pronoun “they/their” as a gender neutral singular pronoun.



rebecca minor

gender specialist

Meet the author

Rebecca Minor, MSW, LICSW is a clinician and coach specializing in gender and sexuality.

As a Gender Specialist, Rebecca partners with trans and gender nonconforming youth through their journey of becoming their authentic selves, and is a guide to their parents in affirming it.

She helps parents, caregivers, and educators get comfortable with gender exploration so they can empower kids to live happy and healthy lives.



Programs & Resources for Parents, Caregivers and Educators:

- [How To Talk To Kids About Gender](#); Essentials for Parents, Caregivers, and Educators
- [Parent 1:1 or Group Coaching](#)
- [Blog Article: Aren't They Too Young To Know?](#)

Have questions?

hello@genderspecialist.com

Use code **AFFIRM** for 10% off of [How To Talk To Kids About Gender!](#)



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