



Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Expression Glossary of Terms

The Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity (CoE LGBTQ+ BHE) has created this glossary of terms related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) as a resource for behavioral health practitioners to better understand language commonly used in LGBTQ+ communities. This list is not exhaustive, and we encourage professionals to gain a broader foundation on language by watching our foundational webinars *Sexual Orientation & Behavioral Health 101* and *Gender Identity, Expression & Behavioral Health 101*, available at: <https://lgbtqequality.org/learn/>. It should also be noted that people use terms in different ways, and the best practice is always to honor language an individual uses to identify themselves.

Agender: A gender identity that describes a person who does not identify with any particular gender or who identifies without gender.

Allosexual: A term that describes people who feels sexual attraction towards other people. Allosexual people may or may not experience romantic attraction and/or engage in romantic relationships.

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

Androgynous: A gender expression that embodies masculine and feminine elements.

Anti-gay bias: Hatred, discrimination, or aversion to lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) people, people perceived to be LGB, or those associated with people who are LGB. Often referred to as “homophobia.”

Anti-transgender bias: Hatred, discrimination, or aversion to transgender, gender variant, or gender diverse people, people perceived to be as such, or those associated with persons who are transgender, gender variant, or gender diverse. Often referred to as “transphobia.”

Aromantic: A term that describes people who experience little or no romantic desire or attraction. Aromantic people may or may not experience sexual attraction and/or engage in sexual relationships.

Asexual: A sexual orientation that describes people who experience little or no sexual desire or attraction. Asexual people may or may not experience romantic attraction and/or engage in romantic relationships. This term may be used solely to describe a person’s sexual orientation or serve as a modifier (for example, someone who does not experience sexual attraction but experiences romantic attraction exclusively to women may identify as an asexual lesbian). The term “ace” is often used as shorthand.

Bi+/Bisexual+: An umbrella term that describes people who experience any kind of attraction to more than one gender.



Bisexual: A sexual orientation that describes a person who is attracted to people of their own gender as well as other genders.

Cisgender: A term that describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth 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. These privileges include, but are not limited to, the ability to use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, or arrest. The privileges also encompass freedom from questions about one's anatomy (often by strangers) and the 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.

Cross dress: To wear clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of another gender. Cross dressing is not an indication of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Deadname: As a noun, this word describes the name that a trans person was given at birth that they no longer go by. As a verb, this word describes the act of calling a trans person by a name that they no longer go by.

Diverse SOGIE: A more inclusive term that describes all people who identify as having diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and/or Gender Expression (SOGIE).

Drag queen/drag king: A person who dresses and performs as another gender for entertainment purposes, often embodying a theatrical or exaggerated version of masculinity or femininity. Performing drag is not an indication of a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Endosex: A person whose sex characteristics align with normative medical and social ideas of their sex assigned at birth.

Feminine: A gender expression that embodies the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of women.

Gay: A sexual orientation most commonly used to describe men who are exclusively attracted to other men. This term may also be used by people of any gender who are attracted to people of their same gender.

Gay-Straight Alliance/Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA): Formal organization of LGBTQ+ and straight/cisgender 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-affirming care (GAC): An array of services that affirm a person’s gender identity, including but not limited to hormone replacement therapy, puberty blockers, surgery, affirming mental health care, and social affirmation.

Gender dysphoria: The complex and nuanced psychological, physical, and emotional suffering emerging in response to the internal and external (e.g., social/societal) experiences which highlight a disconnection between one’s internal understanding of self and one’s external presentation of self.

Gender euphoria: A range of positive feelings including, but not limited to comfort, confidence, certainty, satisfaction, and joy in response to numerous gender-affirming experiences.

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

Gender fluid: A gender identity that describes 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 may identify differently from situation to situation or day to day.

Gender identity: One’s internal, personal sense of their gender or lack thereof. Gender identity is best represented as a spectrum and an individual may move around this spectrum throughout their life. Examples of gender identities include but are not limited to man, woman, two-spirit, agender, and nonbinary.

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: A gender expression that does not conform to the expectations of society and culture. Also referred to as gender variant, gender diverse, or gender creative.

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

Genderqueer/Gender Queer: An umbrella term used that describes a person whose gender identity falls out of the binary of man/woman.

Heteronormativity: The dominant notion that everyone is straight (or should be) and that being straight is superior, better, and preferred.

Heterosexual: A sexual orientation that describes a person who feels romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to people of a different gender. Historically used as an antonym for “homosexual,” this term is discouraged from use.



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

Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT): The use of feminizing or masculinizing hormone treatment to align a person's secondary sex characteristics with their gender identity.

Homosexual: A sexual orientation that describes a person who feels romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to people of the same gender. This term is considered stigmatizing by many due to its history of being categorized as a mental illness and is discouraged from use unless an individual uses it to self-identify.

Intersectionality: A term coined in 1989 by civil rights activist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw that describes the unique types of oppression and discrimination experienced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities in categories such as gender identity, race, class, ability, or sexual orientation. These overlapping systems of oppression interact and contribute to multiple forms of discrimination and systematic social inequality.

Intersex: An umbrella term that describes people with variations in sex characteristics. This could include mixed chromosomes, elements of male and female reproductive systems, or genitalia that do not appear clearly male or clearly female at birth (for example, a baby born with a vulva and testes).

Lesbian: A sexual orientation most commonly used to describe women who are exclusively attracted to other women but may also be used by people of other genders.

Masculine: A gender expression that embodies socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of men.

Misgender: The act of referring to a person, either deliberately or accidentally, using pronouns or other gendered terms (e.g., ma'am, sir) that do not align with that person's gender identity.

Monosexism: Refers to stigma, prejudice, and discrimination directed at people who are attracted to more than one gender.

Monosexuality: An umbrella terms that describes people who experience attraction to one gender only. A monosexual person may identify as straight, lesbian, or gay. It is important to note, however, that lesbian and gay are not exclusively monosexual identities.

Nonbinary: An umbrella term for gender identities that are outside of the gender binary, meaning not exclusively either boy/girl or man/woman. Nonbinary individuals may have more than one gender, not identify with a gender, or something else altogether.

Out: Openly acknowledging one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity to oneself and/or others; may be partial (that is, out to some people but not to others).



Outed/outing: The act of accidentally or deliberately revealing another person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity without permission.

Pansexual: A sexual orientation that describes people who are attracted to others regardless of sex, gender identity, or gender expression.

Queer: A term that describes an individual or a community that falls outside of gender and sexual “norms.” Historically used as a derogatory slang term, it is now being reclaimed and embraced by some people as a symbol of pride. Because of its history, this term should not be used to describe a person unless they give you permission to do so.

Questioning: A term that describes a person who is in the process of exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Romantic attraction: A term that describes an attraction to another person wherein a person desires intimate romantic behavior, such as dating or having a relationship. Romantic attraction is distinct from sexual attraction.

Same gender loving (SGL): A term that describes sexual orientation created and used by Black and African American people who see “gay” and “lesbian” as terms connected to whiteness.

Sex assigned at birth: The sex assigned at birth by a doctor based most often on a person’s physical anatomy. Designations include male, female, or intersex and is also referred to as “assigned sex at birth.” Sex assigned at birth is not an indication of gender identity or gender expression.

Sexism: Discrimination and unfair treatment based on sex or gender in which advantage is usually afforded to men.

Sexual attraction: Describes an attraction to another person wherein a person desires intimate sexual behavior. Sexual attraction is distinct from romantic attraction.

Sexual orientation: One’s internal, personal sense of who they are or are not sexually attracted to. Examples of sexual orientations include but are not limited to gay, straight, bisexual, pansexual, lesbian, queer, and asexual.

Straight: A sexual orientation that describes women who are exclusively attracted to men and men who are exclusively attracted to women.

Transgender: An umbrella term used that describes people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under this umbrella may describe their gender identity using one or more of a wide variety of terms – including but not limited to transgender. The term “trans” is often used as shorthand.



Transition: A term used that describes the process of moving from one sex/gender to another. Transition can include personal, medical, and legal steps like telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a new name and pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition are up to the person transitioning.

Two-Spirit: A term used by some Native American people to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of men and women; often considered part man and part woman or wholly man and wholly woman; often revered as natural peace makers as well as healers and shamans. Depending on the tribe, there may be different definitions. Some tribes consider Two-Spirit a term similar to diverse SOGIE. Others may not recognize the term at all.

Funding for the Center of Excellence on LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Equity was made possible by Grant No. 1 H79 FG000583-01 from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, SAMHSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.



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