

# Gender & Sexuality Terminology Glossary

Produced by the K-State LGBT Resource Center

This glossary was written to help give people the words and meanings to help make conversations easier and more accessible. Please note that each person who uses any of these terms does so in a unique way (especially terms that are used in the context of an identity label). If you do not understand the context in which a person is using one of these terms, it is always appropriate to ask.

*Please note that this is not an all-encompassing glossary of terms.*

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**Ace** – Someone who identifies as Asexual.

**Agender** – A person without gender. An agender individual’s body does not necessarily correspond with their lack of gender identity. [**Related Terms:** neutrois, genderless, gender neutral]

**AIDS** (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome) - A chronic, potentially life-threatening condition caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). By damaging your immune system, HIV interferes with your body’s ability to fight the organisms that cause disease.

**Ally** – **1.** Someone who confronts heterosexism, anti- LGBTQIA biases, heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others **2.** Has concern for the well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\*, intersex, queer, and other similarly identified people **3.** Believes that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia are social justice issues.

**Androgyne** – A person appearing and/or identifying as neither man nor woman. Some androgyne individuals may present in a gender neutral or androgynous way.

**Aromantic** – A person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others.

**Asexual** – A person who does not experience sexual attraction. They may or may not experience emotional, physical, or romantic attraction. Asexuality differs from celibacy in that it is a sexual orientation, not a choice. People who are asexual may call themselves “ace.”

**Assigned at Birth** – This term illustrates that an individual’s sex (and subsequently gender in early life) was assigned without involving the person whose sex was being assigned. Commonly seen as “Female Assigned At Birth” (FAAB or AFAB) and “Male Assigned At Birth” (MAAB or AMAB). DFAB (Designated female at birth) or DMAB may also be used.

**Bathroom Bill** – A type of transphobic legislation that seeks to require individuals to use the bathroom that matches their sex assigned at birth, regardless of gender. Proponents of these bills have invented and spread false narratives that transgender women are dangerous/predatory and should not be allowed to use the women’s bathroom.

**Binding** – The process of flattening one’s breasts to have a more masculine or flat appearing chest. A commercial binder or medical grade tape should be used. Using saran wrap, ace bandages, and other types of tape is not safe.

**Biphobia** – The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of bisexuals, which is often times related to the current binary standard. Biphobia can be seen within the LGBTQIA community, as well as in general society.

**Bisexual** – A person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to people of their own gender as well as other genders, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, or to the same degree.

**Bottom Surgery** – Surgery on the genitals designed to create a body in harmony with a person’s gender identity. [**Related Terms:** Gender Confirming Surgery, Sexual Reassignment Surgery]

**Cisgender** – Someone whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with their sex assigned at birth.

**Cisgender Privilege** – The set of privileges conferred to people who are believed to be Cisgender. (**Examples:** having one’s personal pronouns correctly used, no harassment in public restrooms, no denial of expected access to health care, etc.)

**Cis-Normativity** – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is cisgender and that cisgender persons identities are more normal, valid, and worthy of respect than transgender people’s identities.

**Closeted** - Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed/began living as their sexual orientation or gender identity. (A trans woman living as a woman who chooses not to disclose her trans status is not closeted)

**Cis-Sexism** – A pervasive and institutionalized system that “others” transgender people and treats their needs and identities as less important than those of cisgender people.

**Coming Out** – **1.** The process of accepting one’s own sexuality, gender identity, or status as an intersex person (to “come out” to oneself). **2.** The process of sharing one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.). **3.** A life-long process for individuals in the LGBTQIA community.

**Conversion Therapy** – Psychological interventions which attempt to make an individual stop being LGBTQA. Conversion therapy is ineffective, dangerous, and illegal in some states.

**Demiromantic** – A person who does not experience romantic attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone.

**Demisexual** – A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection with someone.

**Discrimination** – Prejudice + power. It occurs when members of a more powerful social group behave unjustly or cruelly to members of a less powerful social group. Discrimination can take many forms, including both individual acts of hatred or injustice and institutional denials of privileges normally accorded to other groups. Ongoing discrimination creates a climate of oppression for the affected group.

**Drag** – The performance of one or multiple genders theatrically. **Drag King** – A person who performs masculinity theatrically. **Drag Queen** – A person who performs femininity theatrically.

**Equality Act** – A bill in the US Congress that, if passed, would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to include prohibitions on the discrimination based on gender identity or sexual identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, federal funding credit, public education, and the jury system. The Equality Act passed in the House of Representative on March 13, 2019 and is awaiting a hearing by the Senate. There are currently no federal laws that prohibit discrimination against LGBTQA+ people on the basis of gender identity and/or sexual identity. Only 21 states and DC have comprehensive laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity and/or sexual identity.

**Femme** – An individual of any assigned sex or gender identity who identifies with femininity as dictated by traditional gender roles.

**FTM** – Abbreviation for a female-to-male transgender person. This term reflects the direction of gender transition. Some prefer the term *MTM* (Male to Male) to underscore the fact that though they were assigned female at birth, they never identified as female. Not all trans men and trans masc individuals identify with this term. [**Related terms:** transgender man, trans man]

**Gay** – 1. Used in some cultural settings to represent men who are attracted to men in a romantic, erotic and/or emotional sense. Not all men who engage in same gender sexual behavior identify as gay, and as such this label should be used with caution. 2. An umbrella term for sexual orientations that fall outside of straight/heterosexual.

**Gay Panic Defense** – Justification of homophobic violence, usually used to support other defenses. An individual may defend their behavior as justifiable or excusable if it is framed as a response to the perceived threat unwanted homosexual advances

**Gender** – A socially constructed system of classifications that ascribes qualities of masculinity and femininity to people. Gender characteristic can change over time and vary between cultures.

**Gender** – A complex system of roles, expressions, identities, performances, and more that are given gendered meaning by a society and usually assigned to people based on the appearance of their sex characteristics at birth. How gender is embodied and defined varies from culture to culture and from person to person.

**Gender Binary** – The idea that there are only two genders – man or woman – and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or. [**See also:** Identity Sphere]

**Gender Confirming Surgery** – Medical surgeries used to modify one's body to be more congruent with one's gender identity. Also known as 'Sex Reassignment Surgery,' especially within the medical community. In most states, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender status. (this is not true anymore for all documents, it changed in 2010)

**Gender Dysphoria** – Discomfort or distress caused by one's assigned sex and the desire to change the characteristics that are the source. Dysphoria may be related to physical and/or social characteristics.

**Gender Expression** – How one presents oneself and one's gender to the world via dress, mannerisms, hairstyle, facial hair etc. This may or may not coincide with or indicate one's gender identity. Many utilize gender expression in an attempt to determine the gender/sex of another individual. However, a person's gender expression may not always match their gender identity.

**Gender-fluid** - A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender; of or relating to a person having or expressing a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

**Gender Identity** – A person's sense of self as masculine, feminine, both, or neither - how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Non-Conforming** – A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

**Gender Normative** – A person who by nature or by choice conforms to gender based expectations of society. Behaviors can also be categorized as gender normative.

**Gender Neutral** – not designated for or having the characteristics of a particular gender(s)

**Gender Oppression** - The societal, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege Cisgender and subordinate and disparage transgender or gender non-conforming people.

**Gender, Sexual/Sexuality, & Romantic Minorities (GSRM)** – Umbrella term for individuals who are not heterosexual, heteroromantic, and/or cisgender

**Genderqueer** – An individual whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. Sometimes this includes a political agenda to challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system. Genderqueer individuals may or may not pursue any physical changes, such as hormonal or surgical intervention, and may not identify as trans\*.

**Grey Ace** – Someone who identifies as part of the asexual community but does not identify as completely asexual. This differs from demisexuality in that being demisexual is a specific orientation and a gray ace is used as a catch all for any unspecified identity under the Ace umbrella.

**Heteronormativity** – The assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality, bisexuality, and other sexual orientations.

**Heterosexual** – Men who experience sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to women, and vice versa. Also known as 'straight.'

**Heterosexism** – Prejudice against individuals and groups who display non-heterosexual behaviors or identities, combined with the majority power to impose such prejudice. Usually used to the advantage of the group in power. Any attitude, action, or practice – backed by institutional power – that subordinates people because of their sexual orientation.

**Heterosexual Privilege** – Those benefits derived automatically by being heterosexual or being perceived as heterosexual that are denied to homosexual and bisexual people. Also, the benefits homosexual and bisexual people receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying homosexual or bisexual identity.

**H.I.V.** (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) - A virus that attacks cells in the immune system, which is our body's natural defense against illness. The virus destroys a type of white blood cell in the immune system called a T-helper cell, and makes copies of itself inside these cells. T-helper cells are also referred to as CD4 cells. H.I.V. can be transmitted through sexual contact, sharing needles, childbirth, and chestfeeding.

**HIV-phobia** – The irrational fear or hatred of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

**Homophobia** – The irrational fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as non-heterosexual, including the fear of being read as part of the “gay” community. Homophobic behavior can range from telling gay jokes, to verbal abuse, to acts of physical violence.

**Homoromantic** – Someone who has romantic feelings for members of the same sex or gender.

**Homosexual** – An out of date term for a person who is primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex. Many people view this term as offensive in that it is excessively clinical and sexualizes members of the LGBTQIA community.

**Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)** – The use of exogenous sex hormones as part of gender transition. Hormones may be injected, applied as a gel, or taken orally as pills. Transmasculine individuals may take testosterone while transfeminine individuals may take estrogen, progesterone, and/or spironolactone (a testosterone blocker)

**Identity Sphere** – The idea that gender identities and expressions do not fit on a linear scale, but rather on a sphere that allows room for all expression without weighting any one expression as better than another.

**In the Closet** – Refers to a homosexual, bisexual, trans person or intersex person who will not or cannot disclose their sex, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender identity to their friends, family, co-workers, or society. An intersex person may be closeted due to ignorance about their status since standard medical practice is to “correct,” whenever possible, intersex conditions early in childhood and to hide the medical history from the patient. There are varying degrees of being “in the closet.” For example, a person can be out in their social life, but in the closet at work, or with their family.

**Injustice** – violation of what is right or fair or the violation of another person’s rights

**Institutional Oppression** – Arrangements of a society used to benefit one group at the expense of another through the use of language, media, education, religion, economics, etc.

**Internalized Oppression** – The process by which a member of an oppressed group comes to accept and live out the inaccurate stereotypes applied to the oppressed group.

**Intersectionality** – an understanding of oppression that acknowledges the unique ways that individuals may experience oppression based on their unique combination of minoritized identities. This term was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in order to describe the experiences of black women auto workers.

**Intersex Person(s)** – An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations that do not meet the typical definitions of biologically male or female. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, and in others, they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all. Non-intersex people can be described as endosex.

**Justice** – righteous fairness which can only be achieved through the removal of systemic prejudices and barriers

**Latinx** – Gender inclusive term to describe individuals of Latin American descent as an alternative to Hispanic or Latino/a. Not all members of this demographic identify with this term.

**Lawrence v. Texas** - a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the Court ruled that American laws prohibiting private homosexual activity between consenting adults are unconstitutional. The Court reaffirmed the concept of a "right to privacy" that earlier cases, such as *Roe v. Wade*, had found the U.S. Constitution provides, even though it is not explicitly enumerated. The Court based its ruling on the notions of personal autonomy to define one's own relationships and of American traditions of non-interference with private sexual decisions between consenting adults.

**Lesbian** – Women who experience sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to other women.

**LGBTQIA** – A common abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual community. The acronym is used as an umbrella term when talking about non heterosexual and non-cisgender identities, and does not always reflect members of the community. Sometimes the "A" is used to reference Allies and the "Q" is used to reference Questioning people. (Variations of this abbreviation;

**Marriage Equality** – The goal of legalizing gay marriage. This was achieved in the United States through a 2015 Supreme Court decision. Not all members of the LGBTQIA community see this as beneficial to improving their access to civil rights and equitable life chances.

**Microaggression** – 1. A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority) 2. Behavior or speech that is characterized by such comments or actions

**Misgendering** – Refers to the experience of being labeled by others as a gender other than one that a person identifies with.

**Monogamy** – having sexual and/or romantic relationships with a single partner and not engaging in sexual and/or romantic behaviors with others

**Monosexual** – Attracted to one gender. May be used for individuals who identify as straight, heterosexual, gay, lesbian, etc.

**MTF** – Abbreviation for a male-to-female transgender person. This term reflects the direction of gender transition. Some people prefer the term FTF (female to female) to underscore the fact that though they were assigned male at birth, they never identified as male. Not all trans women and trans feminine people identify with this acronym. [Related terms: transgender woman, trans woman]

**Non-Binary** - An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. [Related terms: “Enby”] “NB” stands for Non Black (as in non-black people of color) and communities of color have requested that it not be used for nonbinary <http://www.anamardoll.com/2018/02/storify-why-i-use-enby-and-not-nb.html>

**Non-Monosexual** – Attracted to more than one gender. May be used for individuals who identify as fluid, bisexual, pansexual, etc.

**Neutrois** – A person who identifies as being neither a man nor woman and wants to medically transition to have an androgynous appearance. This differs from androgyne, in that an androgyne sees themselves as a mix of two genders, while neutrois individual sees themselves as not having a gender. [Similar terms: genderless, agender, or non-gendered.] <https://nonbinary.miraheze.org/wiki/Neutrois>

**Obergefell v. Hodges** – The 2015 landmark civil rights case in which the US Supreme Court held that marriage is a fundamental right guaranteed by the Due Process Clause and the Equal Protection Clause of the US Constitution. This decision rendered Section II of the Defense of Marriage Act unenforceable. States were now required to recognize marriages performed in other states. This case overturned Baker v. Nelson and found that against same-gender marriage were unconstitutional.

**Oppression** – The systematic subjugation of a group of people by another group with access to social power, the result of which benefits one group over the other and is maintained by social beliefs and practices.

**Outing** – When someone discloses information about another’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their knowledge and/or consent. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety or religious or family situations.

**Panromantic** – Someone who has romantic feelings for a person regardless of their sex or gender.

**Pansexual** – A person who has the potential to be attracted to all or many gender identities and expressions.

**Passing** – Describes a person's ability to be accepted as their preferred gender/sex or to be seen as heterosexual.

**Polyamory** – Refers to having honest, non-monogamous relationships with multiple partners and can include: open relationships, polyfidelity (which involves multiple romantic relationships with sexual contact restricted to those), and sub-relationships (which denote distinguishing between a 'primary' relationship or relationships and various 'secondary' relationships).

**Prejudice** – A conscious or unconscious negative belief about a whole group of people and its individual members. Anyone can be prejudiced toward another individual or group.

**Pride** – 1. A positive, affirmed, and/or celebratory feeling about one's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or intersex status. 2. A community celebration of the LGBTIA community. These events are often held in June, as the historic Stonewall Riots occurred in June.

**Privilege** – A system that operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels and gives unearned advantages, favors, and benefits to members of dominate groups at the expense of other groups.

**QPOC/QTPOC** – Queer people of color/queer and trans people of color. These individuals experience additional forms of oppression due to their intersecting identities and may encounter racism within the LGBTQIA community. QTPOC organizations and events seek to intentionally center and advocate for these individuals.

**Queer** – 1. An umbrella term which includes lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, trans\* people, intersex persons, radical sex communities, and many other sexually transgressive communities. 2. This term is sometimes used as a sexual orientation label or gender identity label used to denote a non-heterosexual or cisgender identity without have to define specifics. 3. A reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur but that has been reclaimed by some folks in the LGBTQIA community. Nevertheless, a sizable percentage of people to whom this term might apply still hold 'queer' to be a hateful insult, and its use by heterosexual people is often considered offensive.

**Questioning** – An individual who is unsure of and/or exploring their gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

**Same Gender Loving (SGL)** – A term originating within communities of color used to express same gender attraction. Note that it is often used as an alternative to words that do not culturally affirm the history of people of African descent.

**Sex** – 1. A collection of physical characteristics, including gonads, chromosomes, external organs, internal organs, secondary sex characteristics, and hormone levels that are related directly or indirectly to sexual reproduction. Sex is usually assigned at birth as male or female based on external genitalia. Individuals who do not conform to a male or female biological sex category are described as intersex. 2. The erotic. Sexual acts involving one or more individuals.

**Sexual Orientation** – The desire for intimate emotional and/or sexual relationships with people of the same gender, another gender, or multiple genders (or the absence of this desire).

**Sexuality** – Refers to a person's exploration of sexual behaviors, practices and identities in the social world.

**Stereotype** – A preconceived or oversimplified generalization about an entire group of people without regard for their individual differences. Some stereotypes can be positive. However, they can have a negative impact, simply because they involve broad generalizations that ignore individual realities.

**Stonewall Riots** – On June 28, 1969, New York City Police attempted a routine raid on the Stonewall Inn, a working-class gay and lesbian bar in New York's Greenwich Village. Unexpectedly, the patrons resisted, and the incident escalated into a riot that continued for several days. Many people attribute this event as the catalyst for the American Gay Liberation Movement. It is often left out that the more frequent patrons of this bar were trans women, drag queens and butch lesbians.

**Straight** – Another term for heterosexual.

**TGNC** – Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming. Usually used to describe people with a shared experience, rather than a shared identity.

**Top Surgery** – This term usually refers to surgery for the construction of a male-type chest, but may also refer to breast augmentation.

**Trans\*** – An abbreviation that is used to refer to a transgender/transsexual/gender queer/ gender non-conforming person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the whole gender non-conforming community that might include (but is not limited to) transgender, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderf\*ck, transsexual, agender, third gender, two- spirit, bigender, trans man, trans woman, gender non-conforming, masculine of center, and gender questioning.

**Transfeminine** – 1. A term used to describe those who were assigned male at birth, but identify as more female than male. 2. Those who identify as transfeminine, as opposed to simply as MTF or a woman, trans or otherwise, often place themselves feminine of center. That is, they identify more closely with femaleness than maleness, and generally

desire a physical appearance that reflects this identification, but do not identify as wholly female or as a woman. It should be noted that transfeminine is not a descriptor of gender expression but of identity. Transfeminine people do not necessarily have to be stereotypically feminine in their interests or even presentation.

**Transgender** – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

**Transition** – This term is primarily used to refer to the process a **person** undergoes when changing their bodily appearance either to be more congruent with the gender/sex with which they identify and/or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression.

**Transmasculine** – 1. A term used to describe those who were assigned female at birth, but identify as more male than female. 2. Those who identify as transmasculine, as opposed to simply as FTM or a man identify more closely with maleness than femaleness, and generally desire a physical appearance that reflects this identification, but do not identify as wholly male or as a man. It should be noted that transmasculine is not a descriptor of gender expression but of identity. Transmasculine people do not necessarily have to be stereotypically masculine in their interests or even presentation.

**Trans Man** – An identity label sometimes adopted by female to male trans people to signify that they are men while still affirming their transgender history.

**Trans Panic Defense** – Justification of transphobic violence. An individual may defend their behavior as justifiable or out of their control if it is framed as a response to finding out an individual was transgender (most commonly used by cisgender men who react violently to transgender women to whom they were sexually attracted)

**Trans Woman** – An identity label sometimes adopted by male to female trans people to signify that they are women while still affirming their transgender history.

**TWoC** – Transgender Women of Color.

**Transphobia** – The irrational hatred of those who are transgender or gender non-conforming, sometimes expressed through violent and sometimes deadly means.

**Two-Spirit** – A person who identifies as having both masculine and feminine spirits and is used by some Indigenous people to describe their sexual, gender, or spiritual identity.

**United States v. Windsor** – The 2013 landmark US Supreme Court civil rights case concerning same-sex marriage. The Court held that Section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which denied federal recognition of same-sex marriages, was a violation of the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment.

**XTX** – A response by trans folks who reject the terms FTM and MTF, claiming that they were always their gender identity, regardless of birth assigned sex. Sometimes using XTF and XTM to describe their gender.

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The contributions of this terminology sheet were sourced resources from the following organizations:

The Asexuality Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), GLAAD, HRC, Lambda Legal, Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, Wikipedia, and members/students from Kansas State University LGBT Resource Center, Trans Task Force, and LGBTQ+ Faculty Staff Alliance.