

GLYS WNY Terminology Guide

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Please remember that language is limited in its ability to capture all human identities and experiences, so it is important to trust and respect any words that LGBTQ+ people use to describe their identities or orientations.

It is also important to ask people what terms they feel comfortable having others use for them. Some words used by LGBTQ+ people may have been used in a derogatory way at one point but have since been reclaimed.

This list is by no means exhaustive or inclusive of all terms and is meant to be a general guideline for appropriate and potentially offensive terms used in reference to the LGBTQ+ community.

General Terms to Know:

1. **LGBTQ+** | An acronym for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning/queer.” It is often used with the “plus” symbol or other letters to be inclusive of additional identities. The addition of the Q for queer is a more recently preferred version of the acronym as cultural opinions of the term queer focus increasingly on its positive, reclaimed definition (see *Queer*). The Q can also stand for questioning, referring to those who are still exploring their own sexuality and/or gender. The “+” represents those who are part of the community, but for whom LGBTQ does not accurately capture or reflect their identity.
2. **Gay** | A term used to describe people who are emotionally, romantically, and/or physically attracted to people of the same gender (e.g., gay man, gay people). In contemporary contexts, lesbian is often a preferred term for women, though many women use the term gay to describe themselves. People who are gay need not have had any sexual experience. Attraction and self-identification determines sexual orientation, not the gender or sexual orientation of one’s partner. The term should not be used as an umbrella term for LGBTQ+ people, e.g. “the gay community,” because it excludes other sexual orientations and genders. Avoid using gay in a disparaging manner, e.g. “that’s so gay,” as a synonym for bad.
3. **Gender binary** | The disproven concept that there are only two genders, male and female, and that everyone must be one or the other. Also often misused to assert that gender is biologically determined. This concept also reinforces the idea that men and women are opposites and have different roles in society.
4. **Sex assigned at birth** | The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy.

5. **Gender identity** | One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of 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. A person's deeply held core sense of self in relation to gender (see Gender). People become aware of their gender identity at many different stages of life, from as early as 18 months and into adulthood. According to Gender Spectrum, one study showed that "...the average age of self-realization for the child that they were transgender or non-binary was 7.9 years old, but the average age when they disclosed their understanding of their gender was 15.5 years old." Gender identity is a separate concept from sexuality and gender expression.
6. **Sexual orientation** | An inherent or immutable enduring sexual attraction to other people. A person's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity. You should never assume someone's sexual orientation based on the appearance of their partner(s).
7. **Asexual** | The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people.
8. **Queer** | Queer is an umbrella term that is used to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are not exclusively heterosexual and/or cisgender. Historically this term has been used as a slur, however it has been reclaimed by many members of the LGBTQ+ community. People who do not personally identify as queer should always ask before using the term.
9. **Trans (Transgender)** | An umbrella term for those whose gender identity and/or expression is different from social or cultural norms that are based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being trans does not imply any specific sexual orientation, and trans people may identify as straight, lesbian, bi, etc.
10. **Transition** | A series of processes that some transgender people may undergo in order to live more fully as their true gender. This typically includes social transition, such as changing name and pronouns, medical transition, which may include hormone therapy or gender affirming surgeries, and legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex on government identity documents. Trans people undergo some, all, or none of these processes.
11. **Non-binary** | Refers to people who do not subscribe to the gender binary. An adjective describing a person who does not identify with the normative gender binary of male or female. Non-binary people may identify with aspects of being both, neither, or completely outside the spectrum of male and female. Therefore, non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid. While some people may identify as non-binary and trans, some may not. many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. It can also be combined with other descriptors e.g. nonbinary woman or transmasculine nonbinary. It's important to trust and respect the words that nonbinary people use to describe their own genders and

experiences. Sometimes abbreviated as NB or Enby, the term NB has historically been used to mean non-Black, so those referring to non-binary people should avoid using NB.

12. **Intersex** | A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that is not correlated to the binary standards of either female or male. Sometimes an intersex person is assigned a female or male sex at birth through surgery, if external genitals are not obviously male or female. Intersex babies are always assigned a legal sex, but sometimes when they grow up, their gender doesn't match the sex selected for them.
13. **Cisgender (pronounced sis-gender)** | A term used to refer to an individual whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth. The prefix cis- comes from the Latin word for "on the same side as." People who are both cisgender and heterosexual are sometimes referred to as cishet (pronounced "cis-het") individuals. The term cisgender is not a slur. People who are not trans should avoid calling themselves "normal" and instead refer to themselves as cisgender or cis.
14. **Ally** | A term used to describe someone who is actively supportive of LGBTQ+ people. It encompasses straight and cisgender allies, as well as those within the LGBTQ+ community who support each other (e.g., a lesbian who is an ally to the bisexual community). "Ally" is not an identity, and allyship is an ongoing process of learning that requires active participation.

AVOID	USE
-transgenders -a transgender Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, "Tony is a transgender," or "The parade included many transgenders."	-transgender people -person who identifies as transgender Examples: "Lila is a person who identifies as transgender." "There were many transgender people performing."
-transgendered The "-ed" not only adds confusion and grammatical errors, but also implies it is a state of being rather than an identity. For example we wouldn't say "gayed" or "lesbianed," therefore we would not "transgendered."	-trans -transgender (see additional terms above)

<p>-sex change -pre-op -post-op</p> <p>Referring to any type of operation can suggest that a person must have surgery, and does not recognize the different aspects of transitioning that may take place. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.</p>	<p>-transition</p> <p>This term includes all types of transitions such as medical and social. Many individuals choose not to, or are unable to, transition for a wide range of reasons. It also recognizes that a person's gender identity is not dictated by anyone but that person themselves.</p>
<p>-biologically male or female -genetically male or female -born a man or a woman</p> <p>These terms do not recognize the complexity of a person's sex and also invalidate the existence of intersex people. They also invalidate those whose gender identity is different from the one they were assigned at birth.</p>	<p>-assigned male at birth (AMAB) -assigned female at birth (AFAB)</p> <p>We use these terms instead as they take into account that sex is usually assigned or determined by appearance and is not related to gender identity.</p>
<p>-bathroom bill</p> <p>A term created and used by far-right extremists to oppose nondiscrimination laws that protect transgender people. The term is geared to incite fear and panic at the thought of encountering transgender people in public restrooms.</p>	<p>Simply refer to the name or number of the law/ordinance instead.</p>
<p>-sexual preference</p> <p>The term "sexual preference" is typically used to suggest that being lesbian, gay or bisexual is a choice. It also implies that it is a condition and can be "cured."</p>	<p>-sexual orientation or orientation</p> <p>Sexual orientation is the accurate description of an individual's enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction to members of the same and/or opposite sex and is inclusive of identities gay, straight, bisexual.</p>
<p>-homosexual</p> <p>Because of the clinical history of the word "homosexual," it is aggressively used by anti-gay extremists to suggest that gay people are somehow diseased or psychologically/emotionally disordered – notions discredited by the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association in the 1970s.</p>	<p>- gay person/people - gay man - lesbian</p>

<p>-homosexual agenda</p> <p>Notions of a so-called "homosexual agenda" are rhetorical inventions of anti-gay extremists seeking to create a climate of fear by portraying the pursuit of equal opportunity for LGBTQ+ people as sinister.</p>	<p>-an accurate description of the specific issue like "inclusion in existing non-discrimination laws"</p> <p>LGBTQ+ people are motivated by the same hopes, concerns and desires as many other people, like earning a living, being safe in their communities, and serving their country. Their commitment to equality is one they share with many allies and advocates who are not LGBTQ+.</p>
<p>-homosexual relationship</p> <p>-homosexual couple</p> <p>-homosexual or gay/lesbian sex</p> <p>Identifying a same-sex couple as "a homosexual couple," characterizing their relationship as "a homosexual relationship," or identifying their intimacy as "homosexual sex" is extremely offensive and should be avoided. These constructions are frequently used by anti-gay extremists to denigrate gay people, couples and relationships.</p>	<p>-relationship</p> <p>-couple</p> <p>-sex</p> <p>Use the same terms as you would to describe any type of romantic or sexual intimacy.</p>
<p>-the gays</p> <p>This term has been used to marginalize all LGBTQ+ into one group and does not recognize the vast diversity of identifies with the community.</p>	<p>-LGBTQ+ people</p> <p>-people who identify as gay, lesbian, ect.</p> <p>These terms recognize that one's LGBTQ+ is very personal and only part of their overall sense of self.</p>

Sources: Human Rights Campaign, Planned Parenthood, GLAAD. PFLAG

1. <https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
2. <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/lgbtq>
3. <https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>
4. <https://www.glaad.org/reference/offensive>
5. <https://pflag.org/glossary>

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