

Acronyms & Definitions

This list is adapted from TheSafeZoneProject.com

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 plea 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 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 action on in support and respect. Someone who confronts heterosexism, anti-LGBTQ+ biases, heterosexual and cisgender privilege in themselves and others; believes that heterosexism, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia are social justice issues.

ANDROGYNY (androgynous) 1 noun : a gender expression that has elements of both masculinity and femininity; 2adj. : occasionally used in place of “intersex” to describe a person with both female and male anatomy, generally in the form “androgynous.”

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

AROMANTIC 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.”

BICURIOS adj. : a curiosity toward experiencing attraction to people of the same gender (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(s). 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. Sometimes 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 claimed as an affirmative identity label.

CISGENDER adj. : a gender description for when someone's sex assigned at birth and gender identity correspond in the expected way (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth, and identifies as a man). The word cisgender can also be shortened to "cis."

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

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). Individuals may be closeted in some situations and not others. Being "in the closet" is not a measure of legitimacy for someone's identity, their identity is still valid.

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

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

CROSS-DRESSING verb : wearing clothes commonly associated with another gender within a particular society.

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 (hyper-) masculinity theatrically.

DRAG QUEEN noun : someone who performs (hyper-) femininity theatrically.

DSG abbrev. : shorthand for Diverse Sexualities and Genders, umbrella term for folx in the LGBTQ+ community.

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.

FEMININE/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 don't necessarily identify as women or men. Feminine-of-center individuals may also identify as "femme," "submissive," "transfeminine," etc.; masculine-of-center individuals may also often identify as "butch," "stud," "aggressive," "boi," "transmasculine," etc.

FEMININE/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 (e.g., man and woman, bi and straight, etc.).

FOLX noun : umbrella term for people that avoids gender associations such as "guys" or "dudes". That "x" retains the traditional pronunciation of "folks" but opens the term to be more inclusive.

FtM/F2M; MtF/M2F abbrev. : 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 idea that there are only two genders (male/female) and that every person is one of those two.

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. : a gender identity best described as a dynamic mix of boy and girl. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more man some days, and more woman other days.

GENDER IDENTITY noun : the internal perception of one's gender, and how they identify, 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 PRONOUNS noun : Often referred to as "preferred gender pronouns" or "PGPs". Many suggest removing the "preferred," because it indicates flexibility and/or the power for the speaker to decide which pronouns to use for someone else. Often used during introductions, using inclusive pronouns and providing the option to indicate pronouns is becoming more common as a standard practice.

GENDER NEUTROIS adj. : see agender.

GENDER NON-COMFORMING 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/GENDER STRAIGHT 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 non-binary 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-dressing, etc).

GSM abbrev. : shorthand for Gender and Sexual Minorities, umbrella term for folk in the LGBTQ+ community.

GYNESEXUAL/GYNEPHILIC 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 sexual/romantic orientations. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexual/romantic orientations: 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 sexual/romantic orientations invisible.

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

HOMOPHOBIA 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+ folk. 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 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), but these terms are now outdated and derogatory.

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

LGBTQ+ abbrev. : shorthand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, + (the plus sign is inclusive of all sexual/romantic orientations and gender identities other than the first four of the acronym).

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

OMNISEXUAL adj. a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for all genders. Often shorted to "omni".

OUTING verb : involuntary or unwanted disclosure of another person's sexual/romantic orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

PANSEXUAL adj. : a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction to others without regard to gender. 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 LGBTQ+ 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 many communities, it is not embraced or used by all LGBTQ+ people. The term "queer" is often used interchangeably with the acronym "LGBTQ+" (e.g., "queer people" instead of "LGBTQ people").

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

QPOC/QTPOC abbrev. : acronyms 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 adj. : sometimes used by some members of the African-American or Black community to express a non-straight sexual/romantic orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. Sometimes shorted to "SGL".

SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH abbrev. : a phrase used to intentionally recognize a person's assigned sex (not gender or 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. Sometimes shortened to "SAAB".

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 noun : used by some medical professionals to refer to a group of surgical options that alter a person's biological sex. "Gender confirmation surgery" is considered by many to be a more affirming term. In most cases, one or multiple surgeries are required to achieve legal recognition of gender variance. Some refer to different surgical procedures as "top" surgery and "bottom" surgery to discuss what type of surgery they are having.

SKOLIOSEXUAL adj. : being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to some genderqueer, transgender, trans*, and/or non-binary people.

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 supernatural (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/or 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 gender. A more colloquial term for the word heterosexual.

STUD noun : most commonly used to indicate a Black or Latinx, masculine, lesbian/queer woman. Also known as 'butch' or 'aggressive'.

TGNC abbrev. : shorthand for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming, umbrella term for folx in the LGBTQ+ community.

THIRD GENDER noun : 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 surgery for the construction of a male-type chest or breast augmentation for a female-type 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 non-binary identities, as well as transgender men (transmen) and transgender women (transwomen).

TRANSGENDER 1 adj. : a gender description for someone who has transitioned (or is transitioning) from living as one gender to another. 2 adj. : an umbrella term for anyone whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not correspond in the expected way (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 trans* 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).

TRANSMAN/TRANSWOMAN noun : a man/woman who was assigned a 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 (i.e., -man, -woman). Also referred to as men and women (though some/many trans people prefer to keep the prefix “trans-” in their identity label).

TRANSPHOBIA noun : the fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of trans* people, the trans* community, or gender ambiguity. Transphobia can be seen within the LGBTQ+ 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.

TWO-SPIRIT noun : is an umbrella term traditionally within Native American communities to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both feminine and masculine genders.

WOMXN noun : a spelling of "women" that is a more inclusive, progressive term that intends to shed light on the prejudice, discrimination, and institutional barriers womxn have faced, but to also show that womxn are not the extension of men, inclusive of transwomen.

ZE/ZIR noun: pronouns that are gender-inclusive and are used 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.