



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 this knowledge 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 person who does not identify with any particular gender or who identifies without gender.

Ally: A person or organization that actively aligns and uses their resources to support individuals and communities with a specific 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 has both 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.”

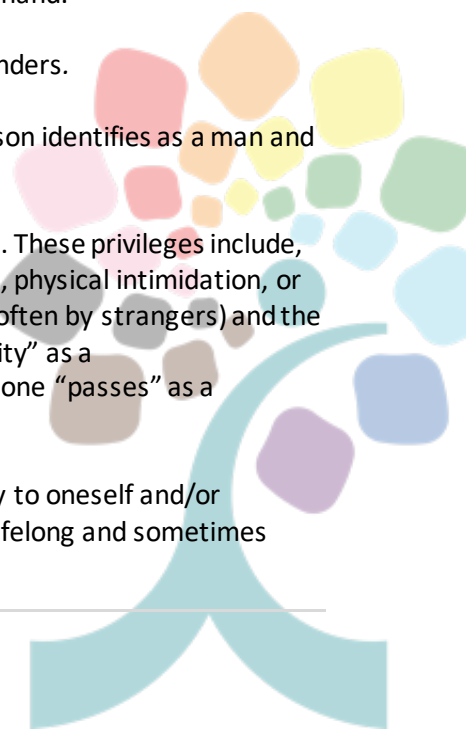
Asexual: A person who does not have sexual desire or attraction. Many asexual people experience romantic attraction and engage in romantic relationships. The term “ace” is often used as shorthand.

Bisexual: A person who is attracted to people of their own gender as well as other genders.

Cisgender: 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.

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

Drag queen/drag king: Someone who dresses and performs as another gender for entertainment purposes. Often embodies a theatrical or exaggerated version of masculinity or femininity; does not necessarily self-identify as transgender.

Feminine: A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of women.

Gay: A term used to describe a man who is 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 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: 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 in fact may identify differently from situation to situation.

Gender identity: One's internal, personal sense of their gender. Gender identity is best represented as a spectrum and an individual may move around this spectrum. Some terms that are associated with this spectrum are man, woman, gender fluid, genderqueer, trans, transgender, and two-spirit, although these are not the only terms. Some individuals may identify as both man and woman, neither man nor woman, or 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: Expressing gender and/or having gender characteristics that do 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 some people use to describe themselves when their experience of their gender identity falls out of the binary of male or female.



Heterosexism: A dominant notion that everyone is heterosexual (or should be) and that heterosexuality is superior, better, and preferred.

Heterosexual: Feeling romantic, emotional, and sexual attraction to a person(s) of the opposite gender with which one identifies; sometimes referred to as being straight.

Heterosexual privilege: The privileges that heterosexual people have because of heterosexism. Being heterosexual 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.

Homosexual: Feeling romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to people of the same gender with which one identifies. This term is considered stigmatizing by many due to its history of being categorized as a mental illness. 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 to describe 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 constructed to describe variations of sex characteristics. This could include mixed chromosomes, elements of both 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 vagina and testes.

Lesbian: A term used to describe a woman who is attracted to other women.

Masculine: A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of men.

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; may be partial (that is, out to some people and not to others).

Outed: When someone accidentally or deliberately reveals another person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity, usually without permission.

Pansexual: A person who is attracted to people regardless of sex, gender identity, or gender expression.





Queer: Historically, this was a derogatory slang term used to identify people with diverse SOGIE. It is now a term that some people with diverse SOGIE are reclaiming and embracing as a symbol of pride that represents all individuals who fall outside of the gender and sexual orientation “norms.” It should be noted that it is not acceptable for someone who does not have diverse SOGIE to call someone queer unless the person indicates that is their preferred identity language.

Questioning: Describes a person who may be unsure of one's sexual orientation or gender identity or may be processing or wondering about it.

Romantic attraction: Describes an attraction to another person wherein a person desires intimate romantic behavior, such as dating or having a relationship. Distinct from sexual attraction.

Same gender loving (SGL): A term created by the Black and African American SOGIE diverse community and used by some people of color who see 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms more connected to a white lesbian or gay identity.

Sex assigned at birth: The sex assigned at birth by a doctor; based on physical anatomy and hormones. Designations include male, female, or intersex and is also referred to as “assigned sex at birth.”

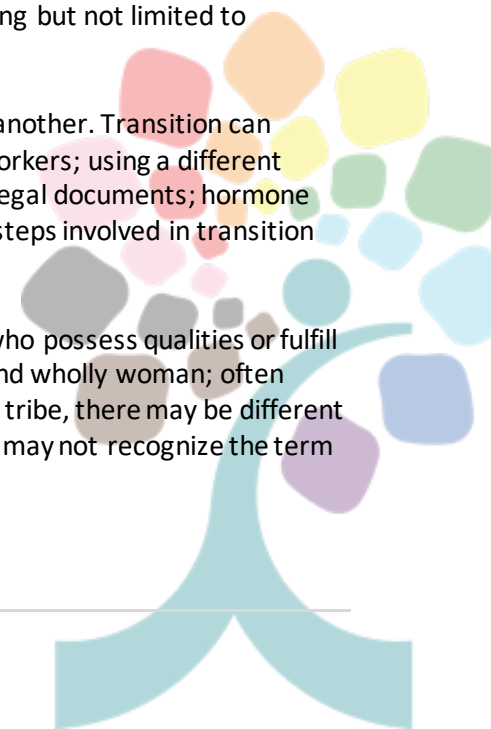
Sexism: Discrimination and unfair treatment based on sex or gender in which advantage is usually afforded to men and not women.

Sexual orientation: Describes the emotional, romantic, and/or physical feelings of attraction-usually over a period of time; it is distinct from sexual behavior.

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender 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 to describe 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 different name and new 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 both genders; 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.





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