

LGBTIQ2S Glossary of Terms

The following definitions are intended to provide common language, answer questions and provide clarification on terminology and themes related to LGBTQ identities and experiences. This is not an exhaustive list but instead provides some basic terminology to support an introduction to related topics.

General Terms

Gender: a system that operates in a social context to classify people, often based on their assigned sex. In many contexts this takes the form of a binary classification of either ‘man’ or ‘woman’; in other contexts, this includes a broader spectrum.

Sex/Gender Binary: the notion that there are only two possible sexes (male/female) and genders (man/woman), and that they are opposite, distinct and uniform categories. This view also asserts that gender is determined by sex.

LGBTIQ2S: An acronym for “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Transsexual, Intersex, Queer, Questioning, Two Spirit” people. This acronym is often used as an umbrella term to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to gender and attraction. This acronym takes many forms and can include: LGBPTTIQQ2sAAS+.

Ally: someone who believes in the dignity and respect of all people and takes action by supporting and/or advocating with groups experiencing social injustice. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they are supporting (e.g., a heterosexual person can act as an ally for gay people and communities; a cisgender lesbian can act as an ally for trans people and communities).

Ontario Human Rights Code: sets out legal rights and obligations that protect all individuals across the province from discrimination based on protected grounds.

Protected Grounds: are categories of social identity or experience that have historically been the basis for disproportionate levels of disadvantage and discrimination. The grounds protected in the Ontario Human Rights Code are listed here:

Age, Ancestry, Colour, Race, Citizenship, Ethnic origin, Place of Origin, Creed, Disability, Family Status, Marital Status (including single status), Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Receipt of Public Assistance (in housing only), Record of Offences (in employment only), Sex (including pregnancy and breastfeeding), Sexual Orientation

Discrimination happens when a person experiences negative treatment or impact because of an actual or perceived connection to one of the grounds that are protected under the Code. Discrimination may be intentional or not. It may be direct and obvious or subtle and hidden, but harmful just the same. Discrimination can occur between

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individuals or it can be systemic and embedded in organizational rules, policies and practices in ways that look neutral on the surface but exclude and negatively impact certain individuals or groups of people.

Harassment is a form of discrimination. It can include conduct, gestures or comments which are insulting, intimidating, humiliating, hurtful, malicious, degrading or otherwise offensive to an individual or group of individuals. Harassment creates a hostile or intimidating environment for work or sports activities and negatively affects performance or work conditions. The harassment may or may not be sexual in nature. Some forms of harassment can become a criminal matter.

Four Components of Human Identity



Assigned Sex: The classification of a person as male, female or intersex based on biological characteristics, including chromosomes, hormones, external genitalia and reproductive organs.



Gender Identity: A person's internal and individual experience of gender. This could include an internal sense of being a man, woman, both, neither or another gender entirely. A person's gender may or may not correspond with social expectations associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.



Gender Expression: The way a person presents and communicates gender. Gender can be expressed through, clothing, speech, body language, hairstyle, voice and/or the emphasis or de-emphasis of bodily characteristics or behaviours, which are often associated with masculinity and femininity. The ways in which gender is expressed are culturally specific and may change over time.



Attraction: The classification of a person's potential for attraction to other people, often based on their sex and/or gender. Attraction is often referred to as sexual orientation.

Terms Associated with Assigned Sex

Intersex: Refers to individuals for whom chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics combine in a variety of ways that fall outside of medical and social classifications of male and female

Dyadic Male: A person who was easily categorized as male at birth due to the presence of the following biological characteristics: external penis, external testes, high levels of testosterone, and XY chromosomes.

Dyadic Female: A person who was easily categorized as female at birth due to the presence of the following biological characteristics: external vagina, internal uterus/ovaries, high levels of estrogen, and XX chromosomes.

Terms Associated with Gender Identity

Cisgender: A person who identifies with the gender that is associated with the sex they were assigned at birth, in line with dominant social expectations.

Transgender: A person who does not identify, either fully or in part, with the gender associated with the sex assigned to them at birth according to dominant social expectations. It is often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities.

Trans Umbrella: The term trans is frequently used as an umbrella term for a variety of other terms, including transgender, transsexual and can also refer to terms like genderqueer, agender, bigender, Two Spirit, etc. Some people may identify with these or other specific terms, but not with the term trans. Similarly, some people may identify as trans, but not with other terms under the trans umbrella. At their simplest, each of these terms has commonalities with the term trans, and yet they are all unique in their specific reference to the context of, and specific relationships between, conceptions of gender identity and assigned sex.



The existence of a diversity of terms is important when discussing trans identities simply because there is quite a lot of variation in the lived experience and identities of individuals who may identify, or be described, as trans.

FtM: is an abbreviation for female-to-male. FtM refers to a transgender person who was assigned female at birth, whose gender identity is that of a man. This person would also be known as a transman.

MtF: an abbreviation for male-to-female. It refers to a transgender person who was assigned male at birth, and whose gender identity is that of a woman. This person would also be known as a transwoman.

Transsexual: This term is most frequently associated with movement from one side of the gender binary to the other with strong feelings for the need to transition medically. For some people, this is a stigmatizing term because of its historical association with mental illness, and the implication that a person's gender identity is not valid unless they medically transition. It is important to note that someone may still identify with the label of transsexual without medical intervention.

Gender Non-Binary: Someone whose gender is non-binary, might identify with elements of both man *and* woman, with another gender entirely, or perhaps with no gender at all. Some examples of non-binary gender identities that exist both on and off this spectrum include agender, bi-gender, polygender, and genderqueer.

Agender: The prefix 'a' signals "lack of". This term may be used to refer to those persons who feel genderless or neutral in their gender identity

Polygender: Refers to someone whose gender identity encompasses multiple genders. The prefix "poly" means "many". Polygender people may identify with multiple genders simultaneously and can be several genders all at once. Or they may alternate between their varying gender identities depending on the day or week

Bigender: Refers to someone who identifies with two genders which can be man, woman, or non-binary. Some people describe being bigender, not as a 50/50 split, but that different aspects of their gender identity come forward in particular contexts.

Genderqueer: A person whose gender identity exists outside of the gender binary. For example, people who "blur" gender norms and may identify as either men, women, both, neither, or who may reject gender altogether.

Concepts Associated with Trans Identities and Experiences

Transition: Frequently discussions around trans identities are focused on the ways in which individuals may align elements of their identity and bodies with their gender identity. While many voices in popular culture may use the expression "sex change" to describe these processes, the term transition is much more appropriate, being preferred

and used by members of trans communities. Refers to a variety of social, medical and/or legal changes that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. For many trans individuals, pursuing some form of transition is essential to their overall health and wellbeing. This is evident in research data related to the impacts of transition on suicidal behaviour within trans communities. For instance, Ontario’s Trans Pulse study found that 27% of respondents who were planning, but had not yet begun, transition had attempted suicide within the last year, compared to only 1% of those who had transitioned medically (Bauer, Hammond, and Travers 2010). The potential elements of transition can be broken down into three categories. It’s important to note that none of these three categories are required steps as part of a process of transition. The transition process is a very personal one. Each individual trans person will decide the ways in which they may choose to transition, or not, depending on what is comfortable and accessible to them.

Pronouns

Using the correct pronouns at someone’s request, is a way of validating that we all have the right to live our truth, to share our truth, and to be granted safety, respect and dignity in doing so. This involves knowledge about personal pronoun options beyond she/her/hers for women and he/him/his, for men when referring to someone in the third person. Some people go by the non-binary, gender neutral pronoun set; they/ them/theirs. Over time, we have also seen the addition of other non-binary, gender neutral options.

Here is a handy chart that will help you go over and practice the most common personal pronoun sets, currently in use.

Masculine	Feminine	Non-Binary	Non-Binary	Non-Binary	Non-Binary
He	She	They	Ze/Zie	Ey	Xe
Him	Her	Them	Hir	Em	Xem
His	Hers	Theirs	Hirs	Eir	Xyr
Himself	Herself	Themself	Hirself	Emself	Xemself

Terms Associated with Gender Expression

Masculine: A word to describe a behaviour, trait, or style of expression that has cultural associations with ‘being a man’. These associations change over time, between cultures, and from person to person.

Feminine: A word to describe a behaviour, trait, or style of expression that has cultural associations with 'being a woman'. These associations change over time, between cultures, and from person to person.

Gender Non-Conforming: A term to describe anyone whose expression of gender may challenge society’s rigid understandings of what it means to “be a girl” or “be a boy,” or to be neither or to be both. Other related terms may include, gender variant, and gender diverse. It is important to point out that these labels reflect diversity in *gender expression*, not necessarily gender identity. Someone who is “gender non-conforming” can therefore be cisgender or transgender.

Androgynous: A word to describe a behaviour, trait, or style of expression that either blends both masculine and feminine forms of expression, or is culturally read as a gender-neutral.

Terms Associated with Attraction

Lesbian: A person who identifies as a woman and experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender.

Gay: A person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender. Gay can include individuals who identify as either men or women, or refer to those who identify as men only.

Straight: A person who experiences attraction people of a different sex and/or gender. Also known as “heterosexual”.

Pansexual: A person who experiences attraction to a diversity of sexes and/or genders.

Bisexual: A person who experiences attraction to both men and women.

Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction or who has little to no interest in sexual activity.

Terms Associated with Multiple Components of Human Identity

Two Spirit: an English umbrella term to reflect the many words used in different indigenous languages describing the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its interconnectedness to community and spirituality. The term seeks to restore traditional identities and roles that were actively buried by European Colonizers. Some indigenous people identify as Two-Spirit rather than, or in addition to identifying as LGBTQ

Queer: This term has a history of being used as a homophobic and transphobic slur but has been reclaimed by some LGBTQ communities as a term of pride and positive affirmation of diversity. It can be used to encompass a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender, and attraction or by an individual to reflect the interrelatedness of these aspects of their identity.

Questioning: an umbrella term that often reflects a process of reconciling three different pieces of information: 1) the feelings you have within yourself about the attraction(s) you experience and/or how you experience gender; 2) the language you have available to you to frame those feelings; and 3) the sense you have of how this will impact your interactions with other people in a social context.

Terms Associated with Discrimination on the Basis of Gender, Gender Identity and Gender Expression

Cisnormativity: a cultural and societal bias, often unconscious, that privileges cisgender identities and gender norms and ignores or underrepresents trans identities and/or gender diversity by assuming that all people are cisgender and will express their gender in a way that aligns with perceived gender norms.

Transphobia: fear and/or hatred of any defiance of perceived gender norms often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination, or acts of violence. Anyone who is trans and/or gender non-conforming (or perceived to be) can be the target of transphobia.

Homophobia: fear and/or hatred of homosexuality, often exhibited by name-calling, bullying, exclusion, prejudice, discrimination or acts of violence. Anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (or assumed to be), can be the target of homophobia.

Sexism: Bias and discrimination against females and/or women and/or femininity rooted in and justified by a social system in which males, men, and masculinity are thought to be inherently superior.