



LGBTIQA+

What do the letters mean?

Bodies, gender & gender identities

Cisgender/cis: a term used to describe people whose gender corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender: refers to the socially constructed and hierarchical categories assigned to individuals based on their apparent sex at birth. While other genders are recognised in some cultures, in Western society, people are expected to conform to one of two gender roles matching their apparent sex; for example, male = man/masculine and female = woman/feminine.

Gender norms define how we should dress, act/behave, and the appropriate roles and positions of privilege we have in society (e.g. the power relationships between men and women). Failing to adhere to the norms associated with one's gender can result in ridicule, intimidation and even violence.

Many people do not fit into these narrowly defined and rigid gender norms. Some women may feel masculine, some men may feel more feminine and some people may not feel either, or may reject gender altogether (see [Gender identity](#)).

Gender binary: the spectrum-based classification of gender into the two categories of either man or woman based on biological sex (see [Sex](#)).

Gender identity: refers to an inner sense of oneself as man, woman, masculine, feminine, neither, both, or moving around between or outside of the gender binary.

Gender pronouns: these refer to how a person chooses to publicly express their gender identity using a pronoun, whether it is a gender-specific or a gender-neutral pronoun. This can include the more traditional he or she, as well as gender-neutral pronouns such as they, their, ze, hir and others (see [Transgender/Trans/Gender diverse](#)).



Genderqueer/Non-binary gender: a term used to describe gender identity that does not conform to traditional gender norms and may be expressed as other than woman or man, including gender neutral and androgynous.

Gender questioning: not necessarily an identity but sometimes used in reference to a person who is unsure which gender, if any, they identify with.

Intersex: an umbrella term that refers to individuals who have anatomical, chromosomal and hormonal characteristics that differ from medical and conventional understandings of male and female bodies. Intersex people may be 'neither wholly female nor wholly male; a combination of female and male; or neither female nor male' (Sex Discrimination Amendment Act (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) 2013 (Cth)). Intersex people may identify as either men, women or non-binary (see [Genderqueer/Non-binary gender](#)).

Sex: a person's sex is made up of anatomical, chromosomal and hormonal characteristics. Sex is classified as either male or female at birth based on a person's external anatomical features. However, sex is not always straightforward as some people may be born with an intersex variation, and anatomical and hormonal characteristics can change over a lifespan.

Sistergirl/Brotherboy: terms used for gender diverse people within some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities. Sistergirls and Brotherboys have distinct cultural identities and roles. Sistergirls are Indigenous people who were classified male at birth but live their lives as women, including taking on traditional cultural female practices. Brotherboys are Indigenous people who were classified as female at birth but who have a male spirit.

Transgender/Trans/Gender diverse: umbrella terms used to refer to people whose assigned sex at birth does not match their internal gender identity, regardless of whether their internal gender identity is outside the gender binary or within it. Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may identify as non-binary, that is: they may not identify exclusively as either gender; they may identify as both genders, they may identify as neither gender; they may move around freely in between the gender binary; or they may reject the idea of gender altogether.



Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may choose to live their lives with or without modifying their body, dress or legal status, and with or without medical treatment and surgery. Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may use a variety of terms to describe themselves including but not limited to: man, woman, transwoman, transman, transguy, trans masculine, trans feminine, tranz, gender-diverse, gender-queer, gender-non-conforming, non-binary, poly gendered, pan gendered and many more.

Transgender/trans or gender diverse people have the same range of sexual orientations as the rest of the population. Transgender/trans or gender diverse people's sexuality is referred to in reference to their gender identity, rather than their sex. For example, a woman may identify as lesbian whether she was assigned female at birth or male.

Transgender/trans or gender diverse people may also use a variety of different pronouns including he, she, they, hu, fae, ey, ze, zir and hir. Using incorrect pronouns to refer to or describe transgender/trans or gender diverse people is disrespectful and can be harmful (see [Misgendering](#) under 'Societal attitudes/issues' below).

Sexual orientations

Aromantic/aro: refers to individuals who do not experience romantic attraction. Aromantic individuals may or may not identify as asexual.

Asexual/ace: a sexual orientation that reflects little to no sexual attraction, either within or outside relationships. People who identify as asexual can still experience romantic attraction across the sexuality continuum. While asexual people do not experience sexual attraction, this does not necessarily imply a lack of libido or sex drive.

Bisexual: an individual who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the same gender and people of another gender. Bisexuality does not necessarily assume there are only two genders.

Gay: an individual who identifies as a man and is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other people who identify as men. The term gay can also be used in relation to women who are sexually and romantically attracted to other women.



Heterosexual: an individual who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to the opposite gender.

Lesbian: an individual who identifies as a woman and is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other people who identify as women.

Pansexual: an individual whose sexual and/or romantic attraction to others is not restricted by gender. A pansexual may be sexually and/or romantically attracted to any person, regardless of their gender identity.

Queer: a term used to describe a range of sexual orientations and gender identities. Although once used as a derogatory term, the term queer now encapsulates political ideas of resistance to heteronormativity and homonormativity and is often used as an umbrella term to describe the full range of LGBTIQ+ identities.

Sexual orientation: refers to an individual's sexual and romantic attraction to another person. This can include, but is not limited to, heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and asexual. It is important to note, however, that these are just a handful of sexual identifications – the reality is that there are an infinite number of ways in which someone might define their sexuality. Further, people can identify with a sexuality or sexual orientation regardless of their sexual or romantic experiences. Some people may identify as sexually fluid; that is, their sexuality is not fixed to any one identity.

Societal attitudes/issues

Cisnormativity: assumes that everyone is cisgendered and that all people will continue to identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Cisnormativity erases the existence of transgender/trans and gender diverse people.

Heteronormativity: the view that heterosexual relationships are the only natural, normal and legitimate expressions of sexuality and relationships, and that other sexualities or gender identities are unnatural and a threat to society.

Heterosexism: describes a social system that privileges heteronormative beliefs, values and practice. Heterosexism provides the social backdrop for homophobic and transphobic prejudices, violence and discrimination against people with non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities and intersex varieties



Homonormativity: a term that describes the privileging of certain people or relationships within the queer community (usually cisgendered, white, gay men). This term also refers to the assumption that LGBTIQ+ people will conform to mainstream, heterosexual culture; for example, by adopting the idea that marriage and monogamy are natural and normal.

Homophobia and biphobia: refer to negative beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes that exist about people who are not heterosexual.

Misgendering: an occurrence where a person is described or addressed using language that does not match their gender identity. This can include the incorrect use of pronouns (she/he/they), familial titles (father, sister, uncle) and, at times, other words that traditionally have gendered applications (pretty, handsome, etc.). It is best to ask a person, at a relevant moment, what words they like to use.

Transphobia: refers to negative beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes that exist about transgender/trans and gender diverse people.

Conclusion

There is significant difference within LGBTIQ+ communities. Understanding LGBTIQ+ terminology and using language that is inclusive demonstrates respect and recognition for how people describe their own genders, bodies and relationships. Inclusive language also makes people feel welcome in organisations including schools, workplaces and services. It is worth noting that considerable debate around language and terminology can exist within and outside LGBTIQ+ communities.

Thank you to [Working it Out](#) for this information.