

LGBTQ2S+ Terms

Sexual Orientation: the way a person feels toward people of a particular (or more than one) gender, both physically and emotionally.

Gender Identity: the way a person feels about their gender, including their body and the ways they feel they're expected to behave within that body. In other words, gender identity describes how you relate to your body as well as how you feel about the roles males and females are expected to play.

What's the difference between sex and gender?

Sex is a term that's usually used to talk about a person's biology, or what body parts are used to assign their gender at birth.

Gender is a term that's usually used to talk about how a person feels inside (e.g. if a person feels like a female, a male, neither, both or somewhere in between). The way a person's gender is expressed can involve things such as the name or pronoun they use (e.g. he, she, they, etc.).

What does LGBTQ2S+ stand for?

Sexual orientations and gender identities that aren't heterosexual or cisgender are often described by the acronym LGBTQ2S+. It stands for:

L - Lesbian:

a female-identified person who is physically and emotionally attracted to other females.

G - Gay:

a male-identified person who is physically and emotionally attracted to other males. Gay is also used as a broad term to describe people attracted to someone of the same gender.

B - Bisexual/Bi:

a person who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender and who identifies as bisexual (bi).

T - Transgender/Trans:

transgender (trans) is a term used by people who identify with a gender that is different from the gender they were assigned at birth. People whose gender identity falls outside of the gender binary (the idea that there are only two genders — male and female) may also call themselves trans. Since trans is a word used to describe identity, a person has to identify with the term (believe it's the best way to describe themselves) for it to be applicable. No one else can decide a person is or isn't trans. Other terms to describe gender identity that may be preferred by some people include genderqueer, gender fluid and androgynous.

Trans is not a sexual orientation — it's a gender identity. "T" (for transgender/trans) is grouped with the sexual orientations in LGBTQ2S+ for many reasons, including shared civil and human rights activism and similar experiences of discrimination.

Q - Queer:

queer is a broad term that includes all sexual orientations and gender identities within the LGBTQ2S+ community, including those who don't identify with any other identity in LGBTQ2S+. The term queer can be both positive and negative. Historically, queer was used as an insult, but it has been reclaimed by the LGBTQ2S+ community to self-identify in a positive way.

Q - Questioning:

some people may feel unsure about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. They may describe themselves as questioning. They may be questioning until they identify with a particular identity or continue to be questioning throughout their lives.

Two-Spirit (2 Spirit or 2S):

a person with both a feminine and a masculine spirit living in the same body. It's an important term within some Indigenous cultures and some Indigenous people use it to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or spiritual identity.



LGBTQ2S+ is only one of the acronyms used to describe the diverse communities of people who don't identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender.

Agender:

a person who doesn't identify with any gender, or identifies as being genderless. Their gender identity may live outside of the gender binary. Agender people may or may not identify as transgender (trans).

Ally:

an ally is a person who doesn't identify as a member of the LGBTQ2S+ community, but supports the rights and safety of those who do.

Androgynous (androgyn):

a person whose gender expression (e.g. clothing, hairstyle, etc.) doesn't fall into the gender binary, or falls somewhere in between male and female.

Aromantic (aro):

aromantic is a romantic orientation (who a person is emotionally attracted to). Aromantic describes a person who doesn't experience emotional attraction (feelings like love, connection, etc.) to others.

Asexual (ace):

a person who doesn't experience physical attraction to other people, but may still have emotional attraction to others.

Cisgender:

a person whose gender identity and gender expression match the gender they were assigned at birth.

Gender fluid:

a person whose gender identity and gender expression are not static, and can shift with time and/or circumstance.

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Genderqueer:

a person who identifies as neither, both or a mix of male and female. Individuals who identify as genderqueer may or may not also identify as trans.

Intersex:

intersex describes when a person is born with both male and female sex organs or other sexual characteristics. Some intersex individuals are assigned a gender at birth that they're raised as, which may or may not fit with how they view their gender identity.

Non-binary:

a person who doesn't accept a society that only acknowledges the gender binary of male and female and defines their gender outside of those norms. People who are non-binary may identify as having no gender, feel in between genders or have a gender that is not always the same. Individuals who identify as non-binary may or may not also identify as trans.

Pansexual (pan):

a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to members of all gender identities/gender expressions.

Polyamory:

a relationship style in which individuals have intimate relationships with more than one person at once. This happens with the full knowledge and consent of all partners involved.

Romantic orientation:

romantic orientation refers to how people are emotionally attracted to others (feelings like love, connection, etc.). A person's romantic orientation may be the same as, or different than, their sexual orientation.

