

# WORDS MATTER

## GLOSSARY OF LGBTQIA+ TERMS



## **ABOUT THE GLOSSARY**

This glossary of terms is an educational tool that provides up-to-date and accurate definitions, dispels myths, and serves as a foundation for our ever-evolving understanding of identities and the language we use to convey them. We hope this tool is a helpful starting point for anyone looking to learn more about and better support our LGBTQIA+ community.

Identities are complex and the language we use to describe our lived experiences of gender and sexuality are constantly evolving. Language has different meanings depending on the context - historically, geographically, generationally, and culturally. This glossary aims to capture that diversity and nuance with the understanding that these words will continue to evolve. For more information and a deeper dive into the terminology, see the resources listed at the end of this document.

Please note that this glossary includes some terms that are considered offensive or derogatory, to better inform people why these words are not okay to use. It is important to acknowledge that some people may identify with terms that others consider offensive. It is best practice to ask someone how they identify and mirror their self-identified language rather than using labels interchangeably. This glossary was developed in collaboration with GenPride.

## **ABOUT AGEPRIDE**

AgePRIDE, part of University of Washington's Goldsen Institute, is designed to reach and serve LGBTQ+ elders, care partners, families, and other underserved communities. AgePRIDE develops, implements and evaluates an array of evidence-based services and interventions, including health promotion, social engagement, social services, and educational and cultural events. AgePRIDE works in community-based partnership to support a cultural affirming hub. Funded by King County, WA.

## **ABOUT GENPRIDE**

GenPride advocates for the unique needs of older LGBTQIA+ adults, offering innovative programs and services that promote well being and prevent social isolation. GenPride cultivates belonging through community connection and works to eliminate discrimination in all its forms.

Last updated 2/2/2022



**1 Agender**

A person who does not identify with any gender or who does not experience a gender identity.

**2 Androgynous**

Identifying or presenting as both masculine or feminine or neither masculine nor feminine. Often refers to one's outward gender expression, but occasionally used as an identity.

**3 Assigned gender/sex**

A gender/sex that is assigned at birth by anatomy/physical appearance as determined by medical personnel and reported on a birth certificate/legal document. Includes Female assigned at birth (FAAB) or AFAB, and Male assigned at birth (MAAB) or AMAB, meaning a person of any age and irrespective of current gender whose sex assignment at birth resulted in a declaration of "Male" or "Female."

**4 Bigendered**

An identity label that some people use to express the fact that they see themselves as some combination of woman and man and/or as moving back-and-forth between those two states.

(cont.) Having a mixture of both femininity and masculinity. Typically considered part of the nonbinary or trans umbrella, but individuals may or may not identify as trans or nonbinary.

**5 Binary**

Generally refers to the tendency to describe people or phenomena in terms of two mutually exclusive categories that supposedly exist in opposition to one another. For example, the misconception that gender must be either male or female. This gender binary is largely a product of dominant culture colonialism and many cultures have historically understood gender beyond the binary (see **Third Gender** or **2-spirit**).

**6 Biphobia**

The fear, dislike, or prejudice towards bisexual people. Often manifests as the denial that bisexuality is a real sexual identity as opposed to uncertainty or "not being able to make a choice" and several other negative stereotypes. Biphobia can be expressed in straight, lesbian, and gay communities.

**7 Bisexual/Bi**

Someone who is sexually attracted to more than one gender, but not necessarily all genders. Historically understood as being attracted to both men and women, the term has grown with society's expanding understanding of gender and its many manifestations beyond the binary. If a person says they are bisexual but have only been with a partner of only one gender, they are still bisexual.

**8 Cisgender**

A person whose gender identity aligns with their gender assigned at birth, i.e., a person who is not transgender. Often shortened to "cis" which is from Latin meaning "on the same side of." Keep in mind, cisgender is not the same as "biological sex" as cisgender individuals may be gender non-conforming.



- 9 Cisnormativity, cis assumption**  
Related concepts that enable trans erasure and invisibility. “Cisnormativity” describes a societal mindset wherein cis/cisgender/cissexual are presumed to be the norm, and which enables people to not consider trans people, experiences, and issues.
- 10 Closeted**  
When a gender or sexual minority is not out or open to others about that aspect of their identity, they are often described as being “in the closet” or as “closeted.” It is a personal decision to be “out” of the closet, and many LGBTQ+ people in long term care settings return to the closet because the environment is not safe for them to be out.
- 11 Coming out**  
Refers to the process of sharing one’s gender or sexual minority status with other people, perhaps for the first time. The phrase may imply that one is “coming out” into their own gender or sexual minority community, or that they are “coming out” of the closet to the predominantly straight general
- (cont.) public. It is an ongoing, lifelong process as individuals make daily choices to reveal or conceal their personal identities.
- 12 Drag**  
A person who dresses in a gender’s traditional clothing with a gender expression often overly dramatized for theatrical effect or to emphasize or exaggerate stereotypical gender characteristics such as a drag Queen or drag King. Can also refer to dress or gender expression socially required, expected, accepted and respected as appropriate for an individual but doesn’t fit the individual’s personal gender expression. As in e.g. “In high school panty hose and dresses were required dress, so I was in drag during all 4 years of attendance.”
- 13 Dyke**  
A queer woman. For some, it is a reclaimed word of empowerment, and is considered offensive by others. While some people assume the word “dyke” is synonymous with lesbian, the former is also embraced by many bisexual- and queer-identified women,
- (cont.) as well as some genderqueer individuals. Some people within the community may self-identify using this term, but you should never refer to someone as a dyke.
- 14 Femme**  
A descriptor for a queer person whose outward gender expression is reflective of traditional feminine characteristics. Not all women are femme, and one does not have to identify as a woman to be femme.
- 15 Gay**  
A person who is physically and/or emotionally attracted to people of the same sex or gender, usually refers to men, however, it sometimes refers to women or the LGBTQ+ community as a whole.
- 16 Gender**  
Identities or social classes that are generally organized around some or all of the following facets: a person’s assigned gender/sex or legal sex; their physical sex or sex embodiment; the gender/sex with which they identify (i.e., gender identity) or live as (i.e., lived sex); their gender expression and/or gender role.



- 17 Gender confirmation surgeries**  
Any number of surgical procedures conducted to obtain the physical characteristics that match a person's gender identity. Formerly referred to as "sex reassignment surgery." It is generally considered rude/invasive/objectifying for other people to ask about or to non-consensually divulge such information. There is no requirement for medical intervention (hormones/medication) or surgical intervention to identify as transgender/non-binary.
- 18 Gender dysphoria**  
Clinical term from the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) for distress caused by identifying as a gender that does not align with one's sex assigned at birth. Later changed to Gender Identity Disorder in subsequent DSM publications.
- 19 Gender euphoria**  
A psychological state which consists of comfort or even joy when thinking about one's true gender identity. It is the opposite of gender dysphoria.
- 20 Gender expansive**  
An alternative umbrella label considered a more positive way of describing a variation or non-conformity with dominant-culture and societal norms. Gender expression: refers to aspects of one's behaviors, mannerisms, interests, hairstyles, personal adornment, makeup and styles of dress that are generally considered to be feminine, masculine, or some combination thereof.
- 21 Gender identity**  
The gender with which one identifies. A person's internal, deeply held sense of who they know themselves to be—emotionally and mentally how they think of themselves. For transgender people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Most people have a gender identity of man or woman (or boy or girl). For some people, their gender identity does not fit neatly into one of those two choices (see non-binary and/or genderqueer). Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.
- 22 Gender non-conforming**  
Sometimes abbreviated as GNC, refers to people or behaviors that defy societal gender norms and expectations. It is sometimes used as an alternative umbrella label for transgender or gender-variant people, especially when describing children (who may behave in a gender non-conforming manner, but who do not yet understand themselves as being trans or as having a specific gender identity. Someone who is gender non-conforming isn't necessarily trans.
- 23 Heteronormativity**  
A societal mindset in which heterosexual people, experiences, and desires are presumed to be the norm, thus ignoring, silencing, or making invisible lesbian, gay, bisexual, and asexual people and their perspectives. Often heteronormativity is used in an even broader way to include binary gender norms that people are expected to conform to and assumptions about how relationships and families should be organized (e.g., monogamous pairings, nuclear families).



**24 Homophobia**

Often literally read as a “fear of” or “aversion to” people who are homosexual. Describes the belief or assumption that same-sex or same-sex gender attraction is inferior to, or not as legitimate as, heterosexuality and often manifesting as negative attitudes and stereotypes, microaggressions, discrimination, and violence.

**25 Homosexual**

Sexual attraction to people of one’s own sex or gender. A person who is romantically and sexually attracted to people of their own sex or gender. Some people may identify with the term, while others consider it an outdated clinical term that is offensive.

**26 Implicit bias**

The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases are activated involuntarily and often without an individual’s awareness or intentional control. It is incumbent upon each individual to question and explore their own biases.

(cont.) We all have these biases which are often at play in everyday interactions, assumptions, communications and relationships.

**27 Intersex**

A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy or gendered physical characteristics that don’t fit the physiological sex assigned at birth: male. This can involve additional or missing reproductive organs, hormones, genitals, chromosomes, or a combination of those. Intersexed individuals used to be called “hermaphrodite,” a term now considered outdated/antiquated and derogatory.

**28 Lesbian**

Term for gay women, including cisgender and trans women, or non-binary people who are sexually/romantically attracted to women.

**29 LGBTQIA+**

An acronym encompassing the diverse groups of lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex and asexual populations, allies/alliances/associations, and two-spirited. Generally, there is a + added at the end to include everyone who does not neatly fall under the other terms. Lifestyle: an inaccurate term used to describe the lives of LGBT people. There is no gay lifestyle, just as there is no straight or heterosexual lifestyle.

**30 Misgender, misgendering**

To refer to a person as, or consider them to be, a gender that they do not identify with. Often, misgendering is unintended. People who harbor transphobic beliefs or attitudes will often engage in purposeful acts of misgendering trans people, considered disrespectful, a micro-aggression at the least, or an act of violence at most.



**31 Non-binary**

A term used to describe people who feel their gender cannot be defined within the margins of gender binary. Instead, they understand their gender in a way that goes beyond simply identifying as either a man or woman. Some non-binary people may identify within trans communities and others may not. A few examples mentioned elsewhere in this glossary include people who are agender, bigender, genderqueer, genderfluid, gender non-conforming, gender expansive, and two-spirit. Increasingly used by States as a legal term to allow recognition of a third gender or sex on state-issued identity documents. See: **Birth sex/legal sex**.

**32 Outing**

publicly revealing to others the sexual or gender identity or orientation of someone other than yourself. Consent or permission is required but in it is often unnecessary information to divulge. It is a personal choice for someone to share their identity, and doing so without consent may cause harm to that person.

**33 Pansexual**

A term for sexual, romantic or emotional attraction regardless of the other person's sex, gender, or gender identity. Generally refers to individuals who are attracted to individuals because of who they are, not how they present.

**34 Pronouns**

The words you like others to use for you in place of your proper name. Some examples include "she/her," "he/him" or gender-neutral pronouns, such as "ze/hir," (pronounced: zee/heer) or "they/them." Some people use specific pronouns, any pronouns, or none at all.

**35 Queer**

Descriptive for people who fall outside of straight mainstream expectations and assumptions regarding sex, gender, and sexuality. A reclaimed word that has since become a widely accepted umbrella term for gender and sexual minorities/LGBTQ+ people. Some people self-identify with this term, but you should not refer to someone as queer unless they have requested you to do so.

**36 Sex/gender distinction**

The belief that sex and gender are two clearly separable things. In other words, trans/non-binary people can and do identify with any sexual identity—heterosexual, homosexual, pansexual, polyamorous, asexual, etc. Sexual orientation: an enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction to persons of the same, different, multiple genders, or none at all.

**37 SOGI**

Abbreviation for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

**38 Third gender, third sex**

A concept in which individuals are categorized, either by themselves, by their society, or by outsiders to their society, as not fitting into the Western ideas of binary gender and heteronormativity. Transgender/ Trans: an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.



- 39 Transgender/ Trans**  
An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth.
- 40 Transsexual**  
An older term referring primarily to binary trans people who fully transition or want to do so. Originating in the medical and psychological communities, it is sometimes considered outdated and overly focused on the medical aspects of transition. Some people identify with this word, however many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and prefer the term transgender.
- 41 Trans man**  
A person who was assigned female at birth and currently identifies as a man. A trans man is a man. Transition: the process of changing one's gender presentation and/or sex characteristics to affirm one's internal sense of gender identity. This may include social, emotional, or physical transition; transitioning may be an ongoing, lifelong process for some.
- 42 Transition**  
The process of changing one's gender presentation and/or sex characteristics to affirm one's internal sense of gender identity. This may include social, emotional, or physical transition; transitioning may be an ongoing, life-long process for some.
- 43 Trans-misogyny**  
The intersection of misogyny and transphobia, also used to describe violence and sexual assaults against trans women. Transphobia: an irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against people whose gender identities, appearances, or behaviors deviate from social norms.
- 44 Trans woman**  
A person assigned male at birth and currently identifies as a woman. A trans woman is a woman.
- 46 Two-spirit (2 Spirit)**  
A contemporary umbrella term for Native American/ First Nation gender roles that fall outside of, or are seen as some combination, of woman and man, recognizing that Indigenous cultures have had understandings of gender beyond the binary since

(cont.) before colonization, and that the process of colonialism has worked to erase this history. Two-spirit people may or may not identify as non-binary or transgender. This term should not be used by people who are not Indigenous.

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## **Addition Terminology Resources**

**Translanguage Primer**  
[translanguageprimer.org/primer](https://translanguageprimer.org/primer)

**Refinery29**  
[refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms#term-2jZSr-Tr2hmCUKQqw8MQq6g](https://refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms#term-2jZSr-Tr2hmCUKQqw8MQq6g)

**Glaad**  
[glaad.org/reference/transgender](https://glaad.org/reference/transgender)