

Glossary of terms utilised in the GLBTI community

Adapted from the LGBTQ Webpage at Johns Hopkins University

Bisexual: a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to both men and women.

Coming out: the process of disclosing one's sexual orientation or gender identity to others. Because most people in our society are presumed to be heterosexual, coming out is not a discrete event, but a lifelong process. Heterosexual family members or allies of GLBTI persons also experience "coming out" when they disclose to others that they have friends or relatives who are GLBTI.

Gay: a person whose emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions are primarily for individuals of the same sex, typically in reference to men. In some contexts, this is still used as a general term for gay men and lesbians.

Gender expression: a person's expression of his or her gender identity (see below), including characteristics and behaviours such as appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions.

Gender identity: a person's internal, deeply felt sense of being male or female, or something other, or in-between. Everyone has a gender identity.

Gender-nonconforming: having or being perceived to have gender characteristics and/or behaviours that do not conform to traditional or societal expectations. Gender nonconforming people may or may not identify as GLBTI.

Genderqueer: a term of self-identification for people who do not identify with the restrictive and binary terms that have traditionally described gender identity (for instance, male or female only). Also see *gender-nonconforming*, *queer*, and *transgender*.

Heteronormativity: a belief system that assumes heterosexuality is normal and that all people are heterosexual.

Heterosexism: a belief system that assumes that heterosexuality is inherently preferable and superior to other forms of sexual orientation.

Heterosexual: a person whose emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions are primarily for individuals of a different sex, often also referred to as straight.

Homophobia: fear, hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against: homosexuality, GLBTI people, individuals perceived as GLBTI, and people associated with GLBTI people.

Homosexual: a term used to refer to a person based on his or her same-sex sexual orientation, identity, or behaviour. Many GLBTI people prefer not to use this term—especially as a noun—because of its historically negative use by the medical establishment.

Intersex: a term used to refer to an individual born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that does not conform exclusively to male or female norms in terms of physiological sex (this may include variations of genetics, genital or reproductive structures, or hormones). According to the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA)—an organization that advocates and educates about intersex concerns—about one in
Hodges, C. (2013). Working with GLBTI young people. In A. Bruun & P. Mitchell (Eds.) YouthAOD Toolbox.
www.youthaodtoolbox.org.au. Melbourne: YSAS.

every 2,000 children is born intersex. Many intersex people prefer this term to the historically negative term *hermaphrodite*. An intersex person may or may not identify as GLBTI.

Lesbian: a woman whose emotional, romantic, and sexual attractions are primarily for other women.

Queer: an historically derogatory term for a gay man, lesbian, or gender-nonconforming person. The term has been widely re-claimed, especially by younger GLBTI people, as a positive social and political identity. It is sometimes used as an inclusive, or umbrella, term for all GLBTI people. More recently, *queer* has become common as a term of self-identification for people who do not identify with the restrictive and binary terms that have traditionally described sexual orientation (for instance, gay, lesbian, or bisexual only). Some GLBTI community members still find *queer* an offensive or problematic term. Also see *genderqueer*.

Questioning: an active process in which a person explores his or her own sexual orientation and/or gender identity and questions the cultural assumptions that he or she is heterosexual and/or gender-conforming. Many GLBTI people go through this process before “coming out.” Not all people who question their identities end up self-identifying as GLBTI.

Sexual orientation: a term describing a person’s emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction, whether it is for members of the same sex or a different sex. More appropriate than “sexual preference.” A person’s sexual orientation may or may not dictate the person’s sexual behaviour or actions.

Straight: A term often used to identify a person as heterosexual.

Transgender: an umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender expression is nonconforming and/or whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. This term can include transsexuals, genderqueers, cross-dressers, and others whose gender expression varies from traditional gender norms.

Transphobia: fear, hatred of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people or people who are gender-nonconforming.

Transsexual: a term for someone who transitions from one physical sex to another in order to bring his or her body more in line with his or her innate sense of gender identity. It includes those who were born male but whose gender identity is female, and those who were born female but whose gender identity is male, as well as people who may not clearly identify as either male or female. Transsexual people have the same range of gender identities and gender expression as non-transsexual people. Many transsexual people refer to themselves as transgender.