



LGBTQ+ Terminology Glossary

Last Updated 9/20/2024.

Hello! The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Queer + (LGBTQ+) community have many identities and various terms we use for ourselves. This glossary is a tool to help you understand some terms. But before we begin, we want to emphasize the following:

- Terms change overtime and can hold multiple meanings. Sometimes we use current language to describe identities that were not defined in the same way in the past. And words that are common today may change meaning overtime and be replaced with other terms.
- Not all terms will be in this glossary, but we will add more overtime.
- Focus on “I”-dentity. This is the concept that individuals get to decide how they use a term, even slurs, to describe themselves. Even if we would define the word differently or see the term as contradictory or offensive.
- Don’t get caught up on having to know every term. Just support anyone’s identity.
- Many words on this list are both identities and terms that been used as slurs against us. Some people do not wish to be called these words, so we recommend careful use of them to describe others. Many terms are reclaimed, taking the negative power the word has had and using it to show pride in that identity.
 - Some examples: Queer, Gay, Dyke, Faggot
- Some words are what we call Umbrella terms. These are words that cover a wide array of additional identities like Genderqueer falling under the term Trans.
- Many words have minor grammatical difference such as genderfluid vs gender-fluid. The term generally means the same thing, it may just be written differently depending on person, region, etc.
- When in doubt, ask! It’s better to make sure you understand then to be confused. An example of how to ask is: “I’d like to clarify, how are you defining ____ for yourself?”
 - Don’t ask random people how they identify and don’t tell other people the identities of others without permission.



We thank community glossaries such as The Human Rights Campaign and PFLAG for providing glossaries that have inspired this one. Reviewing other glossaries is a helpful way to get a variety of perspectives on the terms.

The use of Headings can help you find the terms faster if reviewing this document electronically.

Is there a word you'd like to see added? Have questions? Found a typo? Email us at lgbtq@wwu.edu. This document will be reviewed minimally on **a quarterly basis for updates**. Anyone, even outside of WWU, has permission to use this document. Thank you for using this tool, we hope it is helpful for you. -LGBTQ+ Western Team

If you need this document in an alternative format, please also email lgbtq@wwu.edu and we will work with you.

Update Log:

9/20/2024: We have a new section! We have added some Spanish terms in the new Spanish section. Additional languages will be added overtime. Please note that many languages, such as Spanish, use traditionally gendered grammatical structures. Some LGBTQ+ people, including linguists, are exploring ways to make these languages feel affirming by creating gender-inclusive and gender-neutral terms.



Glossary List

Accomplice (Accompliceship):

A person who goes a step beyond allyship. In social justice circles, the word accomplice is used in contrast with *ally* to emphasize the importance of standing with instead of for marginalized communities. Accomplices go a step further by using their privilege to actively work towards dismantling structures and systems of oppression to create equity. The word aims to stimulate critical thought around privilege while engaging in social justice work. An accomplice is willing to give up power to stand up for those facing marginalization.

Ally:

A person who supports, respects, and advocates for LGBTQ+ people and actively works to confront heterosexism, homo-, bi-, and transphobia in themselves and society.

Androgynous:

An identity or presentation of gender which is not perceived as exclusively masculine or feminine.

Aromantic:

A person who does not experience romantic attraction. Also referred to as “aro”

Asexual:

Someone who does not experience sexual attraction or lacks a desire for sex or sexual partners. Also referred to as “ace.”

Ace & Aro Umbrellas:

The use of ace/asexual or aro/aromantic as an umbrella for other forms of asexuality or aromantic identities such as demisexuality or demigirl.

Agender:

Someone who does not experience a sense of gender for themselves and usually does not intend to express any gender through their appearance, clothing, etc.



Bi erasure:

The experience of someone's [bisexual](#) identity being erased because they are in a relationship with one gender. Example: A bisexual man being assumed heterosexual because he is dating a woman. His bi identity doesn't go away just because of his current relationship.

Binary:

An individual who fits into the gender binary.

See [Gender Binary](#)

Biphobia:

Intolerance of bisexual (and similar) identities. This occurs both within heterosexual and LGBTQ+ communities. Often shows up as bi erasure, intolerance, and discomfort.

Bisexual:

Someone who experiences attraction to people with the same gender as them and people with different genders. Not limited to just *cis* identities.

Blending:

A term used to describe the experience of a trans person's ability to be externally perceived as the gender they identify with. The term is seen as less stigmatizing than [passing](#) because it doesn't invoke pass/fail language.

Bottom Surgery:

[Gender affirming surgery](#) performed on an individual's reproductive system. Not all trans people undergo bottom surgery to transition. Surgery does not define gender. See also: [Top Surgery](#)

Cisgender:

A person whose gender identity matches with their *sex assigned at birth*. Often referred to as "cis"



Cissexism:

A system of biases, attitudes, assumptions, and discrimination which favors cisgender identities and the gender binary that is expressed both through institutional policies and interpersonal actions. The belief that cisgender identity is not only normative, but superior to other genders.

Closeted:

Someone who will not or cannot disclose their sexuality, romantic attraction, gender identity, or other usually invisible identities. May be out to some select people but closeted to others.

Coming Out:

The ongoing process of sharing one's sexuality, romantic attraction, or gender identity with others.

Demi-:

When a person does not experience their identity unless a specific experience or strong connection occurs

Demigender:

Someone who generally does not feel a gender identity but may have moments when their gender becomes salient. Including demiboy, demigirl, and others.

Demisexual:

A person who does not experience sexual attraction until a strong emotional connection has been formed. Typically, does not experience arousal or other sexual attraction to strangers, celebrities, etc.

Deadname:

To refer to a person by their previous name they no longer use. Do not ask people for their deadname. Sometimes people may have socially changed names but not legally.



Enby:

Pronounced N.B. An abbreviation for non-binary. This was chosen over the term spelled “NB” to avoid confusion for NB meaning non-Black people of color.

F2M or FTM:

Stands for female-to-male. An older term not used much currently to describe an individual who transitioned from female to male. Now usually referred to as a transman.

Gay:

Synonymous for same-sex attraction. Primarily used to define men attracted to men. Though many people use it for any umbrella term for people who are not heterosexual.

Gender:

A social construct defining how people express their inner self and outward appearance. The gender identity structure has been used to reaffirm cissexism in society.

Gender Affirming Care (GAC):

The holistic wellness support for people seeking services that help affirm their gender identity. There are many things that fall under GAC such as: hormone replacement therapy, counseling, legal name changes, gender affirming surgery, and medical services like hair removal.

Gender Affirming Surgery:

The surgery used to help an individual’s body to better align with their gender identity and expression. May be referred to as gender reassignment, gender confirmation, or sex reassignment surgery.

Gender Binary:

The belief that gender is limited to cisgender men and cisgender women. Often ignoring non-binary identities and participating in transphobic actions or beliefs.



Gender Dysphoria:

Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same with which they identify. This term replaced Gender Identity Disorder. Some people may experience a moment or situation that makes them feel dysphoric. This distress is often ongoing, and impacts social, occupational, and other areas of a person's life. Gender Affirming Care is designed to address gender dysphoria. Not all people who identify as trans or non-binary may feel the level of dysphoria that is formally diagnosed, but it doesn't mean they won't ever feel the pain of misgendering, deadnaming, or other forms of harm against trans and gender-expansive folks.

Gender-expansive:

A person with a wider and generally more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender systems. Often this term is an umbrella term, especially when referring to younger people still exploring and defining their gender identities and expression.

Gender Expression:

How someone portrays their gender identity through external characteristics such as clothing, behavior, speech patterns and social interactions. These are generally what fall under societal expectations of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. Cultures have different forms of gender expression and may be influenced by religion, politics, personal safety, etc. Someone's gender expression may not always match their gender identity until they feel safe to express that publicly.

Gender-fluid:

A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender and has a fluid, or unfixed, gender identity.

Gender nonconforming:

Someone whose gender expression and/or gender identity does not align with typical expectations of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny.



Graysexual:

An identity somewhere in the “gray area” between sexual and asexual, someone who occasionally has sexual attraction in rare and usually specific circumstances.

Heterosexual/Straight:

An individual who experiences attraction to another gender that is considered “opposite” on the gender binary. Typically, this means men attracted to women or women attracted to men. This still includes attraction to transmen or transwomen; it is not limited to attraction to genitalia. Straight was coined from the phrase “to go straight.” We recommend seeing it as someone whose sexuality goes “straight across” to the other side of the traditional gender binary. Some do not like the word straight as it implies that non-heterosexual people are crooked.

Heteronormativity:

The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities.

Heterosexism:

A system of biases, attitudes, assumptions, and discrimination which favors heterosexuality and heteroromantic relationships that is expressed both through institutional policies and interpersonal actions. The belief that cisgender identity is not only normative, but superior to other genders.

Homosexual:

The clinical word for gay person. Not a common self-identifier for gay and lesbian people because of the pathologizing nature of the term.

Homophobia:

Intolerance, fear, and hatred people with same sex attraction and relationships and actions that may be perceived as same sex attraction.



Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):

A gender affirming care treatment for trans people to medically transition. Taking testosterone can grow more facial/body hair, deepen voices, and other masculinizing experiences. Take estrogen may result in breast growth and other physical changes that are feminizing experiences. Not all trans people seek HRT. This process involves an informed consent approach with various appointments with medical professionals. In WA, HRT access does typically does **not** require a letter from a counselor.

Intersex:

Someone born with male, female, or non-gender-specific genitalia. May identify as any gender. An outdated term that should not be used is “hermaphrodite” which should only be used by someone who wants to use that term for themselves or for the scientific use of the term for non-humans.

Kink:

A term often used to describe sexual practices that go outside of traditional conventions. Going further, many in the kink community view the term as an identity and orientation—one that is immutable and fixed from within—rather than a practice or behavior. In sexual contexts, kink is something to help with arousal but doesn’t always need to be present, while a fetish is something that someone must have to achieve arousal.

Lesbian:

A woman attracted to other women. Like gay, has some variations to describe subcultures of lesbian identity based on gender expression and other characteristics. Examples: lipstick lesbian, butch, dyke.

LGBTQ+:

The most common abbreviation for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer (and more) community. May be seen with extra letters such as I for intersex or P for pansexual. Other initialisms include GSM (Gender and Sexual Minorities) and QUILTBAG (Queer/questioning, Undecided, Intersex, Lesbian, Trans, Bisexual, Asexual, and Gay).



Lived Name:

The affirming name someone uses after transitioning. This lived name may change, but it is the current name they use for affirmation and deadnames should not be used.

Misgender:

To refer to a person by the wrong gender, including using the wrong pronouns. Can happen to anyone regardless of their identity but tends to happen more to trans and nonbinary people.

M2F or MTF:

Male-to-female, a person who is transitioning or has transitioned from male to female. Essentially, a trans woman.

MLM/Men Loving Men:

A person who identifies as a man who loves men. Often used in communities of color. This term can summarize various experiences for men's sexuality that aren't limited to gay such as bisexual, pansexual, and other same gender loving men. Pronounced M-L-M.

MSM/Men who have sex with Men:

An abbreviation often used in clinical spaces to refer to men who have sex with men. This is commonly used to refer to sexual encounter's men have with other men that isn't limited to sexuality. For example, some men who identify as straight may still have sex with men in some capacities.

Mx:

An honorific that is gender neutral, pronounced like the word *Mix*

Non-binary:

A gender identity that falls outside the gender binary. Often an umbrella term to describe genderqueer, agender, and many other variations of gender. Some use the term as the description because their gender is so beyond the binary there isn't an easy-to-understand term for how they see their personal gender.



Pansexual:

A person who can be attracted to other people regardless of their gender identities. Many pansexual (also called pan) people aim to reject the gender binary.

Passing:

A term used by the transgender community to describe a person who is seen by others as the gender they identify with. This can be very affirming. However, the language unintentionally implies that people who do not “pass” are failing. People do not need to pass or blend to have a valid gender identity. However, people who pass or blend are less likely to be deadnamed or misgendered.

Polyamory:

A form of consensual non-monogamy. The practice of having more than one romantic or sexual partner simultaneously.

Pronouns:

The language people use to refer to others without saying their name. These pronouns typically are associated with a person’s gender identity. Some people don’t use any pronouns, some people use a mixed set, and some use all pronouns. Neopronouns are the less common pronouns that tend to be gender neutral, but that will vary per person.

Queer:

Often a word to describe the experience of sexuality or gender outside the typical hetero- and cis- normative identities and expressions. Used a shorthand, or an umbrella term, for the entire LGBTQ+ community. Historically also a derogatory term. Be mindful of how someone feels about this term when using it to avoid harm, simultaneously, not wishing for others to use this term to describe themselves or the community can also be problematic and erasing the identities of those who use the term.

Questioning:

Someone exploring their sexuality, gender identity, or anything under the romantic, sexual, gender, umbrella including exploring polyamory.



Romantic Attraction:

An attraction or affinity for someone focused on desire for intimate interpersonal behavior (flirting, dating, marriage, etc.). This is experienced in varying degrees (such as aromantic being none, and others feeling a spectrum of attraction). It is not the same as sexual attraction, but many people have romantic and sexual attractions for the same people and genders.

Sex:

Generally, more of a medical term referring to the chromosomal, hormonal, and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female, male, or intersex. May be referred to as “biological sex,” “anatomical sex”, sex assigned at birth, etc.

Sexuality/ Sexual Orientation:

An individual’s sense of their sexual/romantic/emotional attraction towards others. Sexual orientation is less used now, and sexuality is more common. It is fine to use either term.

Sex Assigned at Birth:

The sex (and usually gender) declared for an infant when born based usually on their genitals, sometimes including chromosomes. This may result in people’s gender not matching what was assigned to them at birth. Typically, people are assigned male, female, or intersex.

Same-Gender Loving:

A person who loves the same gender as them. This is commonly used in Black and Latine communities instead of the typical lesbian, gay, bi, etc. terms.

Trans:

The umbrella term for someone whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth. Trans is used to encapsulate various other non-cis identities such as genderqueer, non-binary, etc.



Top Surgery:

A [gender affirming surgery](#) performed on an individual's chest/breasts such as chest reduction or removal or an increase in chest size using saline or silicone. See also: [Bottom Surgery](#)

Transfeminine:

A person who transitions to being a trans person with more feminine traits. Also called transfem.

Transgender:

A person whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth and is transitioning or has transitioned to an affirming gender. Encapsulates all forms of transitioning, including changing names, socially known as trans or by their new identity, changing gender presentation, having surgery, going through hormone replacement therapy or other gender affirming care.

Trans for Trans/T4T:

A trans person seeking or in a relationship with other trans people. This is often a gender affirming relationship since all parties have personal trans identity experiences.

Transmisogynoir:

A form of misogyny intersecting with trans women/femme and Black identities.

Transmisogyny:

The discrimination against trans women, focusing the intersectional experience of trans and women identities.

Transmasculine:

A person who transitions to being a trans person with more masculine traits. Also called trans masc.

Transmedicalism:

A belief that trans people need to experience the stress of gender dysphoria to be legitimately trans and treated through medical interventions. This belief is exclusive to the



many trans and nonbinary people who do not seek gender affirming surgery or hormone replacement therapy but still identify within the trans umbrella.

Transitioning:

The process someone goes through to align their physical characteristics, name, pronouns, and gender expression to align with their gender identity. May include, but doesn't require, hormone replacement therapy, gender affirming surgery, or other procedures. This process includes holistic gender affirming care.

Transphobia:

Irrational fear of, discrimination against, or intolerance of trans/transgender people, the trans community, and gender ambiguity generally.

Two Spirit:

A term used by some Native communities to describe a unique gender and sexuality that some native people have. Not all LGBTQ+ Native people are two-spirit, and not all of them use LGBTQ+ terminology shared elsewhere in this document. Some people use more specific terms for their tribe or community and may not identify as two-spirit.

Voguing:

A stylized, modern, street-style dance originating in New York City ballrooms culture, primarily Harlem and the Bronx. Vogue was created by Black and Latine LGBTQ+ people inspired by ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics and poses from the Vogue magazine. Received mainstream, and sometimes appropriated, attention especially after Madonna's song "Vogue".

WLM/Women who love Women:

Women who love Women encompasses all women who have sexual, romantic, or emotional attraction to other women. Including women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, etc. This term has been used generally as a unifying term rather than lesbian to be more inclusive.

WSW/ Women who have Sex with Women



A usually clinical abbreviation for women who have sex with women. This term better captures all women of any sexuality who have sex with women, since not everyone may identify within the LGBTQ+ community but still have had sexual interactions with other women.

Spanish Guide

There are many terms that don't have a perfect English-to-Spanish translation (and vice versa). And like all languages, there are colloquial, regional, and other variant sayings.

Aliando/aliada/aliade

-An LGBTQ+ Ally. Ex: "Yo soy un aliado"

Asexuado

[Agender](#)

Cisgenero

[Cisgender.](#)

De ambiente (adjective)

-Part of the queer community. Literally meaning "of the environment". A term used to refer to relation to the queer community. This can refer to people or a location.

género fluido

[Gender fluid](#)

Hombre trans:

[Trans man or transmasculine](#)

Latine:

Pronounced la·'ti-ne A recent gender-neutral term for the larger Latino/Latina community to be more inclusive. Replaces Latinx, which is difficult to say in both Spanish and English. When referring to a group of people with various genders (or unknown genders) Latine is the most appropriate. However, if you are speaking about people who identify as men or women, the use of the term Latino and Latina are most appropriate. This



word was created by LGBTQIA+, non-binary, and feminist communities in Spanish speaking countries.

Mujer trans:

Trans woman or transfeminine

No binario

Non-binary

Transgénero

Transgender, trans.



Pronouns Guide

Pronouns have so much information, we thought a separate section could be helpful. Neopronouns are estimated to be used by 4% of LGBTQ+ youth (Trevor Project). Using the proper pronouns for people is affirming.

Subject: ____ enjoys spending time in the LGBTQ+ Lounge.

Object: They encouraged ____ to audition for the annual drag show.

Possessive: ____ favorite artist is Chappel Roan.

Possessive Pronoun: The LGBTQ+ Western hat is ____.

Reflexive: (Subject) is proud of ____.

Pronoun Use Table

Subject	Object	Possessive	Possessive Pronoun	Reflexive
Ae	Aer	Aer	Aers	Aerself
E/ey	Em	Eir	Eirs	Eirself
Fae	Faer	Faer	Faers	Faeself
He	Him	His	His	Himself
Per	Per	Pers	Pers	Perself
She	Her	Her	Hers	Herself
They	Them	Their	Theirs	Themself
Ve	Ver	Vis	Vis	Verself
Ze/zie	Hir (pronounced like "here")	Hir	Hirs	Hirself

There are many more neopronouns than represented in this table.

If you meet someone who uses pronouns you are not used to saying, commit to practicing them in writing and verbally to make it easier. For example, if someone used ze/hir/hirs



pronouns, you could say to yourself: Ze enjoys walks in the Sehome Arboretum. Hir favorite ice cream flavor is Chocolate. Hir is proud of himself for getting an A on hir last test.

Terms to Avoid

Defamatory Language: As mentioned above, there are many terms that have origins in defamatory and oppressive language. Individuals will refer to themselves as these terms sometimes and have the right to use that term.

Exclusive Gendered Language: Terms like “you guys” are rooted in a masculine-centric language. While some people have no problem with these phrases, others may feel harmed by it. So using inclusive language like “you all”, “folks”, “everyone” are more inclusive. Similar phrases are “ladies and gentlemen” and the assumption of using honorifics like mr, miss, etc. without knowing the person’s gender.

Transgendered Trans identities are adjectives, not nouns.

Problematic: Melanie is transgendered or a transgender

Solution: Melaine is a transgender (or trans) woman.

Same applies to cisgender.

Sexual Preference or Lifestyle Choice: These phrases suggest LGBTQ+ people are just choosing their identity, which has been used to imply that someone can be cured of their sexuality or gender. Even if people do choose their identity, we shouldn’t use that harmful language.

Conclusion

Thank you for using this glossary. Remember to honor whatever term someone uses and know that these terms are flexible. Our definitions are not the only use of these term. The language may change overtime, so ask respectful questions or look up information to learn more about the terms. You can always contact us with questions at lgbtq@wwu.edu.