

# Core Vocab

**Ally** - (noun; pronounced “al-lie”) a (typically straight- or cis-identified) person who supports and respects members of the LGBTQ community. While the word doesn’t necessitate action, we consider people to be active allies who take action upon this support and respect, this also indicates to others that you are an ally.

**Asexual** - (adj) having a lack of (or low level of) sexual attraction to others and/or a lack of interest or desire for sex or sexual partners. Asexuality exists on a spectrum from people who experience no sexual attraction or have any desire for sex to those who experience low levels and only after significant amounts of time, many of these different places on the spectrum have their own identity labels.

**Bisexual** - (adj) a person emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to male/men and females/women. Other individuals may use this to indicate an attraction to individuals who identify outside of the gender binary as well and may use bisexual as a way to indicate an interest in more than one gender or sex (i.e. men and genderqueer people).

**Cisgender** - (adj; pronounced “siss-jendur”) a person whose gender identity and biological sex assigned at birth align (e.g., man and assigned male at birth). A simple way to think about it is if a person is not transgender, they are cisgender. The word cisgender can also be shortened to “cis.”

**Coming Out** - (1) the process by which one accepts and/or comes to identify one’s own sexuality or gender identity (to “come out” to oneself). (2) The process by which one shares one’s sexuality or gender identity with others (to “come out” to friends, etc.).

**Gay** - (adj) (1) a term used to describe individuals who are primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex and/or gender. More commonly used when referring to males/men-identified ppl who are attracted to males/men-identified ppl, but can be applied to females/women-identified people as well. (2) An umbrella term used to refer to the queer community as a whole, or as an individual identity label for anyone who does not identify as heterosexual.

**Gender Expression** - (noun) the external display of one’s gender, through a combination of dress, demeanor, social behavior, and other factors, generally made sense of on scales of masculinity and femininity. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

**Gender Identity** - (noun) the internal perception of an one’s gender, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Common identity labels include man, woman, genderqueer, trans, and more.

**Gender-queer/Gender-fluid** - (adj) a gender identity label often used by people who do not identify with the binary of man/woman; or as an umbrella term for many gender non-conforming or non-binary identities.

**Heteronormativity** - (noun) the assumption, in individuals or in institutions, that everyone is heterosexual, and/or that heterosexuality is superior to all other sexualities. Leads to invisibility and stigmatizing of other sexualities. Often included in this concept is a level of gender normativity and gender roles, the assumption that individuals *should* identify as men and women, be masculine men and feminine women, and finally that men and women are a complimentary pair.

**Homophobia** - (noun) an umbrella term for a range of negative attitudes (e.g., fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure, or discomfort) that one may have towards members of LGBTQ community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as LGBTQ. **Homophobic** - (adj) a word used to describe an individual who harbors some elements of this range of negative attitudes towards gay people.

**Homosexual** - (adj) a [medical] term used to describe a person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender. This term is considered stigmatizing due to its history as a category of mental illness, and is discouraged for common use (use gay or lesbian instead).

**Intersex** - (adj) someone whose combination of chromosomes, gonads, hormones, internal sex organs, and genitals differs from the two expected patterns of male or female. In addition to “intersex.” Formerly known as hermaphrodite, but these terms are now considered outdated and derogatory.

**Lesbian** - (noun/adj) a term used to describe females/women-identified people attracted romantically, erotically, and/or emotionally to other females/women-identified people.

**LGBTQ+** - (adj) initialisms used as shorthand or umbrella terms for all folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer. **LGBTQ+** is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning.

**MSM / WSW** - (noun) initialisms for “men who have sex with men” and “women who have sex with women,” to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities (e.g., because a man is straight, it doesn’t mean he’s not having sex with men)

**Pansexual** - (adj) a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to “pan.”

**Queer** - (adj) used as an umbrella term to describe individuals who don’t identify as straight. Also used to describe people who have non-normative gender identity or as a political affiliation. Due to its historical use as a derogatory term, it is not embraced or used by all members of the LGBTQ community.

**Questioning** - (verb & adjective) an individual who or time when someone is unsure about or exploring their own sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Sexual Orientation** - (noun) the type of **sexual, romantic, emotional/spiritual attraction** one feels for others, often labeled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to (often mistakenly referred to as sexual preference)

**Sex** - (noun) a medical term used to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male or intersex. Often referred to as “physical sex,” “anatomical sex,” or specifically as “sex assigned [or designated] at birth.”

**Trans\*/Transgender/ FtM / MtF** - (adj) (1) An umbrella term covering a range of identities that transgress socially defined gender norms. Trans with an \* is often used to indicate that you are referring to the larger group nature of the term. (2) A person who lives as a member of a gender other than that expected based on anatomical sex.