

Your Guide to Understanding LGBTQIA2S+ Definitions

With terminology evolving over time, it can be hard to keep up and understand the changing scope of language, including LGBTQIAS+ terms. We have put together a guide using trusted resources to learn more about acronyms and definitions across the spectrum. This is not a comprehensive or exhaustive list but aims to provide a quick resource to help understand better and provide resources to dig deeper and learn more.

This post is a tool that can be used to help understand the changing language used to ensure that we communicate and address each person with respect. It is important that we continue to ask people what terms they use to describe their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression before assuming or assigning them a label.

General Terms

First, let's talk about general terms used frequently in media, the news, and increasingly in business and governments.

Gender: A system that operates in a social context to classify people, often based on their assigned sex. This can be a broad spectrum and include more than the binary classifications of man or woman.

Ally: Someone who believes in and supports the dignity and respect of all people. An ally does not identify as a member of the group they support but takes action or advocates for groups experiencing social injustice.

Protected Grounds: Categories of social identities or experiences that have historically been the basis of discrimination, harassment, and disadvantages. These can include (but are not limited to):

- Age, ancestry, race, citizenship, marital or family status, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and disability or criminal records

Discrimination: when someone experiences negative treatment or impacts because of an actual or perceived connection to a group protected under various codes, such as sexual identity or race. Discrimination can be intentional or not, but harmful regardless of intent. Discrimination can occur at many levels, from an individual basis to systemic and embedded systems in our public and private institutions, policies, and practices. These can look neutral on the surface but exclude and negatively affect certain individuals or groups.

Harassment: It is a form of discrimination that includes (not limited to) gestures, words, or actions that are insulting, intimidating, hurtful, malicious, degrading, humiliating, or

otherwise offensive to a person or a group of people. Harassment creates hostility and can create an uncomfortable, hostile, or even intimidating environment and can happen in many situations and places, such as work, sports leagues, or school, that negatively impact the person's performance, emotional security, happiness, and the conditions they work, play, or live in. Harassment can be sexual in nature or not, and some forms of harassment can lead to criminal charges.

Terms Associated with Gender Identity

Cisgender: A person who identifies with the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth, in line with dominant social expectations

Transgender: A person who does not identify, either fully or partially, with the gender associated with the sex they were assigned at birth, in line with dominant social expectations. This term is often used as an umbrella term to represent a wide range of gender identities.

Trans Umbrella: The term trans is frequently used as a "catch-all" for many terms, including transgender, genderqueer, agender, Two Spirit, etc. Some people may identify with these or specific terms but not with the term trans. Some people may also identify with trans but not with other terms under the umbrella. While these terms share commonalities with the term trans, they are also unique in their reference of specific relationships between the concept of gender identity and assigned sex.

FtM: This means female-to-male and refers to a transgender person who was assigned female at birth and whose gender identity is that of a man.

MtF: This means male-to-female and refers to a transgender person who was assigned male at birth and whose gender identity is that of a woman.

Gender Non-Binary: Someone who identifies as non-binary may identify with elements of both man and woman, with another gender, or no gender at all. Some examples include agender, bi-gender, and genderqueer.

Agender: May be used to refer to those who feel genderless or neutral in their gender identity.

Polygender: Refers to someone whose gender identity encompasses multiple genders simultaneously and can be several genders at once. This can also mean that a person alternates between genders depending on the time or different contexts.

Bigender: Refers to someone who identifies with two genders. Some people describe being non-gender not as an "even split" but that different aspects of their gender identity come forward in different contexts.

Genderqueer: A person whose gender exists outside of the gender binary. People who “blur” gender norms may identify as woman, man, both, neither, or who may reject gender altogether.

Terms Associated with Trans Experiences

Transition: Refers to a variety of social, medical, and legal changes that some, but not all, trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity.

Pronouns: Using the correct pronouns at someone’s request is important to communicate with respect and dignity and to consider everyone’s right to safety and truth. Below are some common pronouns in use, but remember, this list can evolve as language progresses.

- **Masculine:** He, Him, His, Himself
- **Feminine:** She, Her, Hers, Herself
- **Non–binary:**
 - They, Them, Theirs, Themselves
 - Ze/Zie, Hir, Hirs, Hirself
 - Ey, Em, Eir, Emself
 - Xe, Xem, Xyr, Xemself

What Does LGBTQIA2S+ Stand For?

As the widely used and well-known acronym, LBGTQIAS+ has evolved to ensure inclusivity across all spectrums of identity and will continue to change as we progress. We also recognize that some organizations may use the acronym 2SLGBTQ+ instead, though the definitions remain the same.

(L) Lesbian: A person who identifies as a woman and experiences attraction to the same sex and/or gender

(G) Gay: A person who experiences attraction to people of the same sex and/or gender. Gay can include people who identify as either men or women and refer to those who identify as men only.

(B) Bisexual: A person who experiences attraction to both men and women.

(T) Transgender: A person whose gender identity does not correspond with the gender and/or sex assigned at birth.

(Q) Queer and/or Questioning: This term has a history of being used as a derogatory, homophobic, and transphobic slur but has been reclaimed by some LGTBQIA2S+

communities as a term of pride and positivity, and diversity. It is used to encourage a broad spectrum of identities related to sex, gender, and attraction.

(I) Intersex: Refers to individuals for whom chromosomal, hormonal, or anatomical sex characteristics combine in a variety of ways that fall outside of medical and social classifications of male and female.

(A) Asexual: A person who does not experience sexual attraction or has little or no interest in sexual activity.

(2S) Two-Spirit: An English umbrella term to reflect the many words used in different Indigenous languages describing the fluid and diverse nature of gender and attraction and its interconnectedness to community and spirituality.

(+) Plus: The plus symbol is intended as an all-encompassing representation of sexual orientations and gender identities. This can also include (but is not limited to):

Pansexual: A person who experiences attraction to a diversity of sexes and/or genders.

Demisexual: Often referred to as Demi, this term describes someone who can only experience sexual attraction after an emotional bond has been formed. This bond does not have to be romantic in nature.

Summary

Gender, sexual, and attraction identities are complex, and this list is a start to learning more. As language continues to grow as societies progress and understand more, definitions and acceptable terms may change to ensure a world of inclusivity, safety, and belonging.

Source: <https://www.insti.com/lgbtqia2s-definitions-guide/>