



# LGBT CULTURAL COMPETENCY TERMINOLOGY

## Orientation Related Terms

**Sexual Orientation** - *The internal experience that determines whether we are physically and emotionally attracted to men, to women, to both, or neither (asexual).*

**Asexual** – Lack of sexual attraction to anyone or low or absent interest in sexual activity

**Biphobia** - Discomfort or negative response toward bisexual people

**Bisexual/Bisexuality/Bi** - A person who feels love, affection, and sexual attraction regardless of gender

**Demisexual/Demisexuality** - A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form a strong emotional connection

**Down-low** – A slang term that refers to men who have sex with men (MSM) but are either closeted or do not identify as gay. Most often associated with and has its origins in African American culture in the US

**Gay Man/Homosexual** - A man who feels love, affection, and sexual attraction toward men

**Heterosexism** - Institutional policies and interpersonal actions that assume heterosexuality is normative and ignores other orientations; the belief that heterosexuality is superior to other orientations

**Heterosexual/Heterosexuality/Straight** - A person who feels love, affection, and sexual attraction to persons of a different gender

**Homophobia** - Discomfort or negative response toward gay and lesbian people and/or of same sex attraction or behavior in the self or others

**Lesbian/Homosexual** - A woman who feels love, affection and sexual attraction toward women

**Men who have Sex with Men (MSM)** – Also: males who have sex with males (MSM); a clinical term that refers to men who engage in sexual activity with other men, whether they identify as gay, bisexual, or neither.

**Omnisexual/Pansexual** – A person who feels love, affection and sexual attraction regardless of their gender identity or biological sex. Thus, pansexuality includes potential attraction to people (such as transgender individuals) who do not fit into the gender binary of male/female.

**Pomosexual** - A person who avoids sexual orientation labels (not the same as asexual)

**Same Gender Loving (SGL)** – A term coined for African American use by Cleo Manago in the early 1990s; a description for homosexuals, particularly in the African-American community; often used by those who prefer to distance themselves from terms associated with "white-dominated" LGB communities

**Two-spirit** - American Indians who fulfill one of many mixed gender roles found traditionally among many American Indian and Canadian First Nations indigenous groups

**Questioning** - A person who is unsure of their sexuality or same-sex-loving feelings

## Gender Related Terms

**Gender Identity** - *Internal sense of being male, female, or something in between (Gender is considered a continuum and not strictly binary concept.) Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others*

**Cisgender** – Someone whose gender identity and assigned biological sex are not in conflict; non-transgender



## LGBT CULTURAL COMPETENCY TERMINOLOGY (cont'd)

**Gender Binarism** - Belief that there are two, and only two, genders and everyone must be classified as a member of one gender or the other. Any exception to the two genders is not to be taken seriously.

**Gender Binary** - The idea that human gender exists in two forms: masculine and feminine. Also describes a society that divides people into male and female gender roles, gender identities and attributes

**Gender Expression** - How one represents/expresses their gender identity to others, a combination of behavior, dress, hairstyles, voice, body characteristics or other gender-related behaviors

**Genderqueer** - A gender identity other than man and woman; may think of themselves as being both male and female, as being neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside the gender binary

**Gender Role** - The accepted behaviors, thoughts, and emotions of a specific gender based upon the views of a particular society or culture

**Real Life Experience** - Refers to the period of time in which some transsexual people live full time outwardly expressing their gender identity; many medical protocols require this prior to SRS

**Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS)** - Surgical procedures that alter one's body to better conform to a person's gender identity; sex reassignment surgery comprises many different procedures

**Transgender** - Umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression, or behavior is different from that typically associated with their assigned sex at birth (includes but not limited to transsexual people, cross dressers, androgynous people, bi-gendered, two-spirit, genderqueer, gender fluid and gender non-conforming people)

**Transitioning** - The process of moving toward full time expression of one's gender identity; typically includes undergoing physical changes through hormones and/or sex reassignment surgery

**Transphobia** - Discomfort or negative response toward transgender individuals and other people who are gender nonconforming

**Transsexual** – Shorthand for a person diagnosed with transexualism, a medical label for the condition when a person's assigned biological sex doesn't match their internal gender identity. Often, transsexual people alter or wish to alter their bodies through hormones or surgery in order to match their gender identity. Commonly used terms: Female to Male (FTM); Male to Female (MTF)

**Transvestite/Cross Dressing/Drag Queen/Drag King** - A person who dresses, either full time or part time, in clothing traditionally associated with the opposite sex. For example, Drag queens/kings are usually lesbian, gay or bisexual and sometimes cross dress for social occasions.

## TRANSGENDER TERMS TO AVOID

### PROBLEMATIC TERMS

**Problematic:** "transgenders," "a transgender"

**Preferred:** "transgender people," "a transgender person"

Transgender should be used as an adjective, not as a noun. Do not say, "Tony is a transgender," or "The parade included many transgenders." Instead say, "Tony is a transgender man," or "The parade included many transgender people."

**Problematic:** "transgendered"

**Preferred:** "transgender"

The adjective *transgender* should never have an extraneous "-ed" tacked onto the end. An "-ed" suffix



## LGBT CULTURAL COMPETENCY TERMINOLOGY (cont'd)

adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors. For example, it is grammatically incorrect to turn *transgender* into a participle, as it is an adjective, not a verb, and only verbs can be used as participles by adding an "-ed" suffix.

**Problematic: "sex change," "pre-operative," "post-operative"**

**Preferred: "transition"**

Referring to a sex change operation, or using terms such as pre- or post-operative, inaccurately suggests that one must have surgery in order to transition. Avoid overemphasizing surgery when discussing transgender people or the process of transition.

### DEFAMATORY TERMS

**Defamatory: "deceptive," "fooling," "pretending," "posing" or "masquerading"**

Gender identity is an integral part of a person's identity. Do not characterize transgender people as "deceptive," as "fooling" other people, or as "pretending" to be, "posing" or "masquerading" as a man or a woman. Such descriptions are defamatory and insulting.

**Defamatory: "she-male," "he-she," "it," "trannie," "tranny," "shim," "gender-bender"**

These words only serve to dehumanize transgender people and should not be used.

**Defamatory: "bathroom bill"**

A new term created and used by far-right extremists to oppose non-discrimination laws that protect transgender people. The term is geared to incite fear and panic at the thought of encountering transgender people in public restrooms. Use *non-discrimination law/ordinance* instead.

### Birth Sex Related Terms

**Assigned Sex/Biological Sex** - *The doctor-determined sex of a child as a boy or girl when a baby is born*

**Intersex** - A person who is born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems or other biological markers that are not traditionally associated with either a "standard" male or female

### Other Terms Used with Orientation, Gender, Birth Sex or General Terms

**Ally** - A non-LGBT person who actively supports the civil rights of LGBT people

**Coming Out** - An ongoing process of becoming aware of one's sexual orientation or gender identity, accepting it, acting on it and sharing it with others

**In the Closet** - Keeping one's sexual orientation or gender identity secret

**LGBT(IQQ)** - The most inclusive method to identify the "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender" community" (other letters stand for Intersex, Queer, Questioning)

**Partner** - A term commonly used to describe an LGBT's person's significant other/mate/spouse

**Passing** – When used by transgender people, it means being perceived as the gender with which one identifies. When used by LGB people, it means being perceived as heterosexual or "straight"

**Queer** – An inclusive, unifying umbrella term for people who are LGBTIQ, particularly used by teens and young adults. Historically, "queer" has been used as a derogatory word to demean LGBT people; it should not be used freely by non-queer people

## LGBT Symbols

							
Rainbow Flag	Pink Triangle	LAMBDA	Lesbian (L)	Gay (G)	Bisexual (B)	Trans (T)	Red Ribbon

## Major LGBT Celebrations

**Pride** (June is LGBT Pride month, but local Pride events are held all year – based on commemorating the Stonewall Riots in 1969)

**Day of Silence** (April of each year when LGBT and ally supporters do not speak out to symbolize their silence)

**National Coming Out Day** (October 11, also October is recognized as LGBT History Month and commemorates the anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights)

**Transgender Day of Remembrance** (November 20 - memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28th, 1998)

**World AIDS Day** (December 1 - opportunity for people worldwide to unite in the fight against HIV, show their support for people living with HIV and to commemorate people who have died.)

*Thanks to GLAAD for additional reference guidelines on transgender - <https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>*