

Adapted from our previous resource, *The ABC's of LGBTQIA+*

This guide is presented with the acknowledgment that terms are fluid, not all terms are acceptable or preferable to those whom they seek to describe, and the immense breadth of LGBTQIA+ terminology cannot be fully addressed here.

Sources:

Native Justice Coalitions' Two Spirit Program, 2021
https://www.nativejustice.org/twospirit

Kimberlé Crenshaw's "The Urgency of Intersectionality", 2016
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o

More Light Presbyterian's "Common LGBTQ+ "Definitions" and Terms", 2018
https://mlp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/LGBTQ_Terminology_101.pdf

Rev. Stacey Midge's "LGBTQUIAWhat? The ABC's of Sexuality", 2012

The Safe Zone Project's "LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Glossary of Terms" & "Vocabulary Extravaganza"
https://thesafezoneproject.com/resources/vocabulary/
https://thesafezoneproject.com/activities/vocab-extravaganza/

For the sake of clarity, this vocab guide starts by explaining the components of identity that all people have.
In some settings, you may hear or see the acronym **SOGIE**, which stands for **S**exual **O**rientation, **G**ender **I**dentity and **E**xpression.

Sex Assigned at Birth: the label a medical professional and/or a newborn's parents define the baby's gender at birth by. This is most often Male (leading to an 'M' on the birth certificate) or Female (an 'F'). A baby may also have the letter 'X' indicated on their birth certificate in some states.
See: Page 3, Sexes; AMAB, AFAB, Intersex

Gender Identity: a person's sense of self as a gender, such as male, female, some combination of both, neither, etc. Most people develop a gender identity that corresponds to their biological sex, but many do not. Some societies have third-gender categories.
See: Page 3, Gender Identities; Cisgender, Transgender, Non-Binary

Gender Expression: "refers to the way an individual demonstrates their gender (often based on traditional gender roles) through appearance, dress, mannerisms, speech patterns, and social interactions. Gender expression may change over time and from day-to-day and may or may not conform to an individual's gender identity" (More Light Presbyterians, 2018).
See: Page 4, Gender Expressions

Sexual Orientation: the way a person identifies their own sexual attraction to people of the same or another sex/gender identity. *This may be experienced with or without matching to a person's Romantic Orientation.*
See: Page 5, Orientations; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Heterosexual, and Asexual.

Romantic Orientation: the way a person identifies their own romantic attraction to people of the same or another sex/gender identity. *This may be experienced with or without matching to a person's Sexual Orientation.*
See: Page 5, Orientations

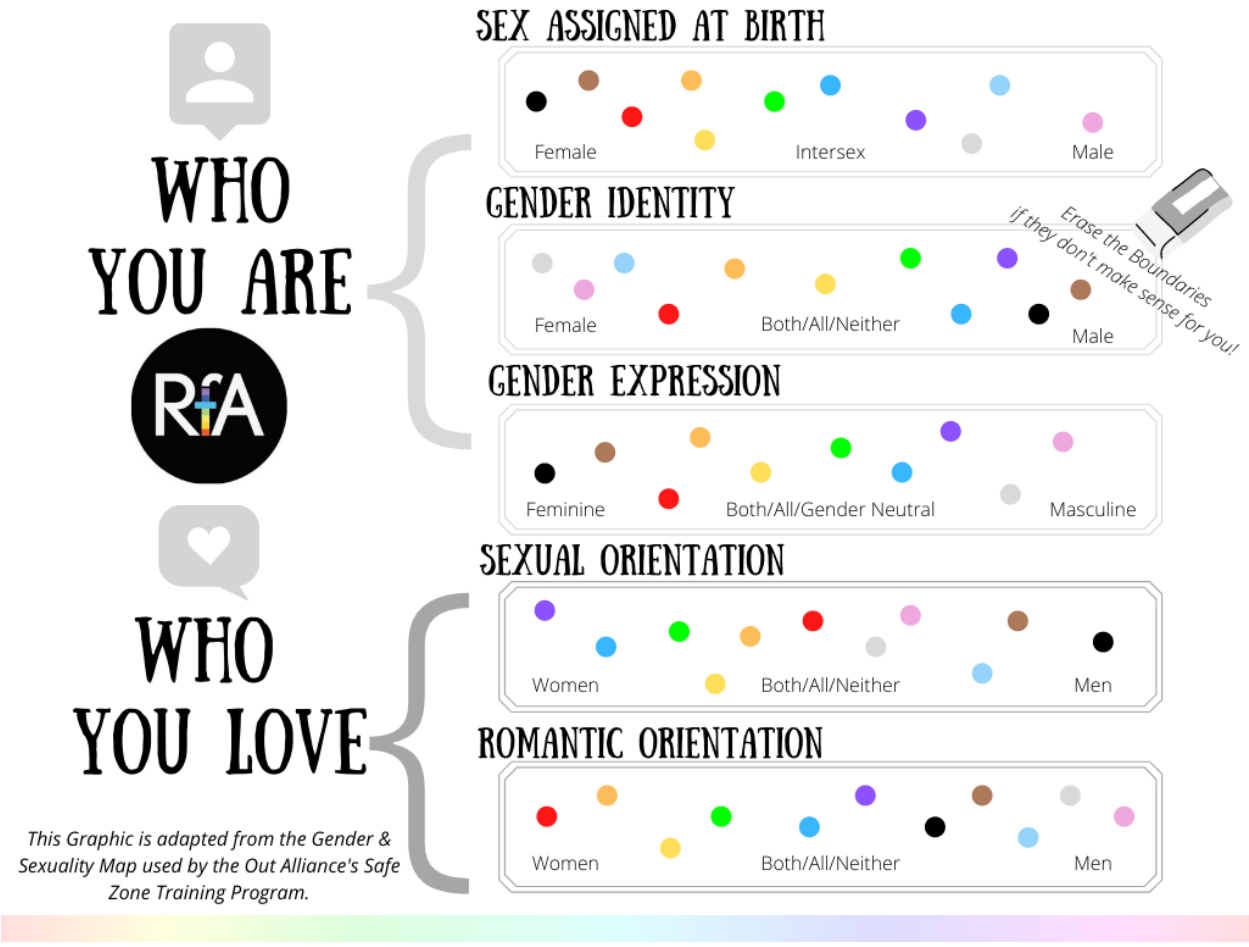
For related terms that are not themselves identities, See: Page 6, Additional Terms to Know

For outdated terms shared for reference and redirection, See: Page 8, Outdated Terms

To understand many of the terms to follow, first it's important to note that, in Western culture, we operate under a Gender Binary.

Binary (Gender): the belief or practice (conscious or unconscious) that gender and sexuality are a two-part system (men and women/ male and female). The binary doesn't allow space for individuals who identify outside of those groups; it is important to note that the cultural standard is binary, making life for non-binary individuals difficult.

We– and people who are LGBTQIA+-- regard the existing gender binary as points on a spectrum, illuminating the unlimited possibilities of our differences regardless of our identity. This tool illustrates just some of the places a person may land on the spectrum of each component of identity.



Always reflect the language someone uses to describe themselves, rather than assigning labels– it's different for everyone!

SEXES

Assigned male at birth (AMAB)/Assigned female at birth (AFAB)/ Assigned gender: The gender a person's parents or guardians present them as at birth (most often based on the reproductive anatomy one is born with).

FAAB/ MAAB: Female Assigned At Birth/ Male Assigned At Birth. See: Assigned male or female at birth/ Assigned gender.

Intersex: a general term for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with reproductive/sexual anatomy that does not fit the typical definitions of male or female.

GENDER IDENTITIES

Agender: "a self-identifying term meaning "without gender." People who identify as agender may describe themselves as having no gender identity at all, a neutral gender, or a gender which is not definable" (More Light Presbyterians, 2018).

Cisgender: referred to in short by the Latin root "Cis" meaning "on the same side as", someone who feels comfortable with the gender identity and gender expression expectations assigned to them based on their physical sex; the opposite of Transgender.

FTM/F2M: abbreviation for female-to-male transgender person. See: Transgender

Genderfluid: Someone whose gender identity and/or expression are changing/mutable depending on mutable personal factors.

Gender Non-Conforming: "A self-identifying term which refers to individuals or groups who queer or problematize the hegemonic notions of sex, gender and desire in a given society. Genderqueer people possess identities which fall outside of the widely accepted sexual binary" (More Light Presbyterians, 2018).

MTF/M2F: abbreviation for male-to-female transgender person. See: Transgender

Non-Binary: "A self-identifying term used to describe a person who feels they do not fit within the traditional [Western] male/female binaries of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation" (More Light Presbyterians, 2018). You may hear individuals of this identity referred to as NB, or "enby" instead of "boy/girl" or "woman/man", i.e. "enbyfriend" or "a scholarly enby".

Queer: a term used by some to describe their sexual identity, gender identity or gender expression when other terms are inadequate. In the past, this term has been considered offensive and some LGBT people still consider it so, while others have come to prefer it; typically a term meaning that one's gender or sexual identities/expressions are contrary to the binary or gender norms.

Questioning: people who are unsure about their sexual or gender identities.

Third Gender: a person who does not identify with man or woman, but views themselves as another gender. Many cultures recognize more than two genders, and this term may mean different things to different people who use it.

Trans: an umbrella term used by many to encompass the wide array of possible gender identities/expressions. These include Transgender, but may also include any gender expression that doesn't fit the binary or societally expected gender norms.

Transgender: people whose gender identity does not correspond to their biological sex/ the gender they were assigned at birth. Transgender persons may or may not alter their physical characteristics or gender expression through medication, surgery, or other means to align their physical appearance with their identity as they deem necessary; the opposite of Cisgender.

Two Spirit: Indigenous people who identify as dual or multiple genders according to non-colonial tradition and understandings that may differ between tribes. This term has sacred meaning to Native communities. "Two-Spirit is an umbrella pan-Native American term its describes gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. Some Two-Spirit's may align with colonial LGBTQ+ identities while others may not" (Native Justice Coalition, 2021).

GENDER EXPRESSIONS

Androgynous: a person of any gender identity or sex whose gender expression is not either masculine or feminine. Terms like "genderfluid", "gender non-conforming", "non-binary", or "Two Spirit" may be preferred.
See: Gender Identities; Gender Non-Conforming, Genderfluid, Non-Binary, Two Spirit

Femme: a feminine expressing person of any gender or sex.
Masc: a masculine expressing person of any gender or sex.

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ORIENTATIONS

Ally: a person who supports and advocates for the rights of a group that they don't personally belong to. In this context– someone who does not identify as LGBTQIA+, but takes action to support and advocate for LGBTQIA+ people.

Androsexual/Androphilic: being primarily sexually, romantically and/or emotionally attracted to men, males, and/or masculinity.

Asexual/Nonsexual: a person who does not experience sexual attraction and/or have interest in sex.

Aromantic: a person who does not experience romantic attraction and/or have interest in romantic relationships.

Bisexual: a person who is attracted to both men and women, not necessarily exclusively.

Gay: a person who is attracted only to members of the same sex. Most commonly used for male identified individuals who are attracted to other male identified people; "lesbian" is usually the preferred term for women who are attracted to women. Other terms including "Same Gender Loving" may be preferred.
See: Same Gender Loving

Gynesexual/Gynephilic: being primarily sexually, romantically, and/or emotionally attracted to women, females, and/or femininity.

Heterosexual/Straight: a person who is only attracted to members of the opposite sex.

Homosexual: a person who is only attracted to members of the same sex.

Lesbian: a female-identified individual who is only attracted to other female identified people, transgender or cisgender women.
See: Same Gender Loving

Pansexual: Using the Latin root ‘Pan’, which means ‘All’, a person who is attracted to people of all gender identities and expressions. This does not mean they are attracted to all people.

Queer: a term used by some to describe their sexual identity, gender identity or gender expression when other terms are inadequate. In the past, this term has been considered offensive and some LGBT people still consider it so, while others have come to prefer it; typically a term meaning that one’s gender or sexual identities/expressions are contrary to the binary or gender norms.

Questioning: people who are unsure about their sexual or gender identities.

Same Gender Loving: “A self-identifying term, often used by communities of color, referring to people who are attracted to other people of the same gender” (More Light Presbyterians, 2018).

ADDITIONAL TERMS TO KNOW

Biphobia: fear of or anxiety about bisexual persons.

Cissexism: the explicit and implicit biases that stem from the assumption that all or most people are, or should be cisgender.
See: Cisgender

Closeted / “In the Closet”: people who choose to keep their sexual or gender identities a secret from some or all people.

Coming Out: the process of acknowledging one’s sexual and/or gender identities to other people.

Down Low: typically referring to men who identify as straight but who secretly have sex with men. Down low (or DL) originated in, and is most commonly used by, communities of color.

Gender Dysphoria: Persistent unease and discomfort that one’s assigned gender does not match one’s gender identity.

Heteronormativity: the assumption that everyone is or should be heterosexual, leading to biased behavior and systems.

Heterosexism: the explicit and implicit biases that stem from the attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid or acceptable sexual identity.

Homophobia: an umbrella term to describe negative attitudes toward LGBTQIA+ people, or fear of being perceived as LGBTQIA+.

Intersectionality: a lens to look at discrimination with that regards the often overlapping systems of disadvantage based on race, religion, age, ability, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc.. The overlaps may affect a person belonging to several categories simultaneously differently than if they only belonged to one category. To learn more, see Kimberlé Crenshaw discuss Intersectionality here.

Inviting In: a term coined by Black Same Gender Loving people, this is a reframing of how someone communicates part of their identity to another that gives the power back to the person choosing to share.

LGBTQ+/LGBTQIA+: initialism for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer/Questioning (sometimes with the added categories of Intersex and Asexual, the plus representing other identities).

MSM/WSW: men who have sex with men or women who have sex with women, to distinguish sexual behaviors from sexual identities: because a man is straight, it doesn't mean he's not having sex with men. Often used in the field of HIV/Aids education, prevention, and treatment.

Openly Gay / Lesbian / Bisexual / Transgender/ Queer: people who publicly acknowledge their sexual or gender identities.

Outing: the act of revealing an LGBTQ person's sexual and/or gender identities without that person's consent.

Pronouns: a word that functions as a noun/ describes a person either within or outside a conversation. One may prefer various pronouns to describe themselves. Examples: he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/them. Many additional pronouns, called neopronouns, exist as well. Note: they/their/them, while typically plural, may be the preferred singular pronouns for an individual who does not identify with "he" or "she" pronouns.
To practice using new pronouns, visit https://www.practicewithpronouns.com

Polyamory (polyamorous): refers to the practice of, desire for, or orientation toward having ethical, honest, and consensual non-monogamous relationships (i.e. relationships that may include multiple partners). Often shortened to "poly."

Transition: "the period of time in which a person lives into the gender role which is in accordance with their internal gender identity. This can, but does not always, include alterations to one's body through the use of hormones or surgery [*Medical transition*]" (More Light Presbyterians, 2018).

> *Social transition* refers to when an individual is using their new name and pronouns with others, and may be expressing their gender differently in public.
> *Legal transition* refers to the changing of the name and gender marker on a person's legal documents, and again, is not something all transgender individuals do. To learn more about this process and fees charged by states, visit: https://translifeline.org/resource/id-change-library/

Transphobia: fear of or anxiety about transgender persons.

QTPOC: Abbreviation for queer and trans people of color.

OUTDATED TERMS

Chosen/Preferred Pronouns: this wording has been used to undercut the validity of a person's pronouns by calling it a choice or a preference. Pronouns are just pronouns!
See: Pronouns

Hermaphrodite: an out-of-date and offensive term for an intersex person.
See: Intersex

Transsexual: used to refer to people who have undergone medical transition, this was once the preferred term for people who are transgender, and still is for some, especially trans elders. This is also the term for the experience that may be found in academic and medical writing. Usage has stopped due to the incorrect insinuation that a trans person must undergo surgery as well as the inappropriate questions and conversations that pop up in conversation around this term.
See: Transgender