

SEXUAL ORIENTATION and GENDER IDENTITY (SOGI) Glossary of Terms

Asexual:

A person who is not sexually attracted to any gender or sex, or only experiences attraction in certain circumstances and to certain degrees. Asexual people may still be romantically attracted to people of a variety of genders and sexualities and have romantic, non- sexual relationships.

Bisexual:

A person who is attracted to both women and men.

Cisgender:

A person whose sense of personal gender corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gay:

A person who is attracted to someone of the same sex and/or gender as themselves. This word can be applied to all genders of relationships, but has primarily been used in reference to men.

Gender:

A socially constructed concept of identity based on roles, behaviours, activities, and presentation such as masculine, feminine, androgynous, etc.

Gender expression:

The ways a person presents their sense of gender to others (for example, through clothes, hairstyle, mannerisms, etc.).

Gender identity:

A person's internal sense of being a man, a woman, genderqueer etc. This is not the same thing as a person's biological sex, and may not be consistent with how they are perceived by others.

Gender nonconforming:

A term that often refers to those who express gender in ways that differ from societal expectations of the sex and gender assigned to them at birth.

Heteronormative:

A term to describe a world view that promotes heterosexuality as the normal and/or preferred sexual orientation.

Heterosexism:

A term used to describe discrimination or prejudice against homosexuals, bisexuals or other non-heterosexuals on the assumption that heterosexuality is the expected sexual orientation.

Homophobia:

The fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay or bisexual. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived sexual orientation.

Intersex:

Refers to people whose reproductive or sexual anatomy is not easily defined as male or female. There are variations in the ways someone can be intersex, ranging from having ambiguous genitalia to having mixture of XX and XY chromosomes. Intersex individuals have historically been mistreated in North American society (i.e. being forced to have “corrective” genital surgeries as infants). The term “Disorders or Differences of Sexual Development” is being used increasingly amongst medical professionals in reference to intersex conditions, however, this term has not been fully adopted by intersex communities at the time this policy is being written. The word hermaphrodite was historically used to describe intersex individuals, however, this term is considered highly offensive.

Lesbian:

A woman who is attracted to other women.

LGBTQQ+:

An acronym that in this case stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, Two-Spirit, and queer/questioning. There is a wide range of other terms often included in this acronym such as asexual, pansexual and intersex and this acronym tends to vary depending on the source. The plus sign (+) indicates the inclusion of all sexual and gender identities.

Perceived as LGBTQQ+:

Refers to someone who is treated as if they are LGBTQQ+ even if they do not identify as such.

Pronouns:

The words one uses to refer to themselves (e.g. he/him/his; she/her/hers; they/them/theirs; xe, xem, xyr, etc.)

Queer:

An umbrella term (often used in place of the LGBTQQ+ acronym) used to describe individuals who identify as being part of sexual and gender diverse communities (e.g. lesbian, gay, transgender).

Sex:

A biological classification based on physical attributes such as sex chromosomes, hormones, internal reproductive structures, and external genitalia. At birth, it is used to identify individuals as male or female. For those whose sex is not easily categorized as male or female see Intersex.

Sexual Orientation:

Refers to a person's attraction towards a particular gender or sex. Someone may identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, etc. It is important to remember that sexual orientation and gender identity are separate.

Trans (also Trans*, Transgender, Transsexual):

An umbrella term that can be used to describe people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what they were assigned at birth. Some trans people may choose to medically transition by taking hormones, having surgery. Some trans people may choose to socially transition by changing their name, clothing, hair, etc.

Transphobia:

Fear, ignorance and mistreatment of people who are, or are perceived to be, trans or gender nonconforming. This often leads to bias, discrimination, hatred, harassment and violation of the human rights of transgender or gender nonconforming people. Transphobic bullying can also be targeted against any individual, regardless of perceived gender expression.

Transition:

A term most commonly used to refer to someone transitioning from one gender to another. Transition often consists of a change in style of dress, selection of a new name, and a request that people use the correct pronoun when describing them. Transition may, but does not always, include medical care like hormone therapy, counseling, and/or surgery.

Two-Spirit:

Used by some North American Aboriginal groups to describe the embodiment of both masculine and feminine spirits. This identity is not limited to gender expression or sexuality, but encompasses them both while incorporating a spiritual element. It is a standalone identity, not an Aboriginal term for gay or lesbian.

(These definitions are adapted from Questions & Answers for Parents and Family Members of Gender Variant and Transgendered Youth (Vancouver School Board, 2011).

SD No. 40 (New Westminster)

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