

LGBTQI+

Terminology

LGBTQI+ acronym

LGBTQI+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex. The plus sign symbolises many other identities included under the LGBTQI+ umbrella, such as asexual (A). The acronym LGBTQI+ is used to refer to a broad community of people who have been historically marginalised due to their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics.

Sex – a person's physical characteristics

This refers to the physical characteristics that a person has (organs, chromosomes and hormones). Although it has been historically understood as binary (male/female), it is not. Based on sex characteristics, we can differentiate male, female and intersex people.

Intersex refers to a person who has one or more sex characteristics (genetic, hormonal and/or physical sex characteristics) that fall outside the binary male/female.

Gender Identity – who a person is

Gender Identity refers to the way a person feels and thinks about themselves as: a man, a woman, or an alternative gender (non-binary, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, genderfluid, etc.) Since gender identity is internal, a person's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Cisgender: A person whose gender identity matches the gender associated with their sex at birth.

Transgender: A person whose gender identity is different to the gender associated with their sex at birth. Remember – trans or transgender are adjectives: trans person/man/woman.

Non binary: A person whose gender identity does not fit into the categories of boy/man or girl/woman. Some people may use other labels such as gender queer or gender fluid. Note: For some people whose gender identity falls outside the binary, such as gender fluid, their gender identity is not fixed and it can change over time.



Gender refers to the characteristics that a society associates with being a man or boy and with being a woman or girl. Gender is a social construct, therefore it can be mean different things for different societies and it can change over time.

Gender Expression refers to how a person presents their gender. This can include appearance, name, pronouns and/or social behaviour.

Sexual Orientation – to whom a person is attracted to

The concept of sexual orientation refers to whom a person is attracted to emotionally and/or sexually.

Lesbian / Gay: Someone who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of the same gender. Historically the word gay has been used to define men who are attracted to other men and the word lesbian has been used to describe women who are attracted to other women. However, non-binary people may also use these labels to define their sexual orientation.

Bisexual / Pansexual / Queer

Bisexual: A person who is sexually/and or romantically attracted to people of more than one gender.

Pansexual: A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of all gender identities.

Note : Some people may use the word queer to refer to their gender identity as well as a way to express a sexual orientation that is not heterosexual/straight.

Heterosexual / Straight: Someone who is emotionally and sexually attracted to people of the opposite gender.

Asexual / Aromantic: Asexual (or “ace” for short) refers to a person who does not experience sexual attraction to others whilst Aromantic refers to a person who does not experience romantic/emotional attraction to others. People may identify with both or with one and not the other.

Coming Out refers to process of discovering one’s LGBTQI+ identity and sharing this with others. It’s the right of the LGBTQI+ person to decide when to come out. Disclosing a person’s LGBTQI+ identity – voluntarily or involuntarily –is referred to as “outing”.

Heteronormativity: The assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and that heterosexuality is “the norm”. This can lead to the invisibility and stigmatisation of other sexual orientations.

Homophobia / Biphobia: Negative attitudes and feelings towards people who are, or who are thought to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or any other sexual orientation other than heterosexual.

Transphobia: Negative attitudes, feelings and discrimination towards people who are, or who are thought to be transgender.