

RESOURCES

Practice Support Tool

LGBTQIA+ Glossary

Designed with  by



INTRODUCTION

In her book, *The Second Sex* (1949) Simone de Beauvoir tells us: “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman”. This quote reminds us that gender identity is not biologically determined, and individuals tend to assert themselves as the person they feel inside through the social context in which they are immersed (Bereni et al., 2012). It is therefore necessary to have the freedom to choose the vocabulary that represents us and is consistent with who we are.

Over time, the LGBT/LGBTQIA+/2SLGBTQ+ community has developed this vocabulary for the inclusion of all. As a counsellor, it can be very helpful to be familiar with this glossary to be able to speak the same language as the people we support. We believe that knowing and understanding these terms can create an open environment, promote equality and respect, and foster allyship with your client. It’s also one of the first steps to take as an ally of the community! On the other hand, we are aware that there are many words to learn, and it is possible to mistake the definitions. In any case, the idea here is not to know the entire vocabulary by heart, but rather to recognise the importance of the meaning of these words for the people we help and to know how to use the necessary tools, such as this LGBTQIA+ glossary, to understand the vocabulary as needed. In short, simply taking an interest, being willing to learn and equipping yourself with the right tools is a good start!!

Before we begin, the following information is based on the glossary of the Fédération nationale des enseignants et enseignantes du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN, 2017), the Glossary of Terms by the 519, a municipal organisation that advocates for LGBTQI+ rights, and the glossary created by the Fondation Émergence (2022), a non-profit organisation that fights against homophobia and transphobia. This glossary was also reviewed by [Ash Paré](#), a member of the LGBTQI+ community who is doing her Master's degree in social work at UQAM and who has relevant research experience on the subject (personal communication, 23 May 2022).

In addition, if you wish to deepen your knowledge on the subject with a glossary made by and for members of the LGBTQI+ community, you can refer to this book: [Des mots pour exister](#) written by the LGBT+ Family Coalition.

It is also important to note that the vocabulary changes often and quickly, this glossary is not exhaustive and the words and definitions in it are subject to change. Also, note that this vocabulary is intended for self-identification. This means that only the person themselves can determine the words that correspond to them. Thus, the vocabulary used for self-identification by each individual takes precedence over what is listed below.

To start, the first terms that need to be defined to understand the rest of the vocabulary are the following: **sex, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation and romantic orientation.**

Sex: A person's sex is assigned at birth based on the body's genitalia. The person may be male, female, or intersex, for example. This is the most common and comprehensible definition. However, a more nuanced definition comes from the work of [Judith Butler](#) (2002), a feminist philosopher and professor whose work focuses on gender: sex is a social, cultural, and political construction equivalent to gender.

Gender/Gender Identity: This term refers to a social construct used to categorise each person as male, female, non-binary or any other gender. It is a person's internal and individual experience of their gender. This identity can be the same as the sex assigned at birth or different from it. A person may feel that they are male, female, both, neither, or any other identity on the gender spectrum. A person may express this through the pronouns they use, their clothing, etc. They will be influenced by society's expectations according to their gender.

Sexual Orientation: This is the way a person feels about others in terms of sexual attraction. The people to which they feel sexually attracted. It can also be the complete or partial absence of sexual attraction.

Romantic/Emotional Orientation: This is the way a person feels about others on an emotional level. The people to which they feel romantically/emotionally attracted. It can also be the complete or partial absence of emotional attraction.

Through the above definitions, a broad vocabulary is formed to help individuals identify themselves and define their gender identity, sexual orientation and romantic orientation. However, it is important to bear in mind that the vocabulary used by individuals to self-identify takes precedence over what is listed below.

The Psylio Team 

GLOSSARY

- A -

Agender: A person who does not identify as female, male or any other gender. They identify as having no specific gender.

Allosexual: The opposite of asexuality. A person is allosexual when they do not identify as asexual or demisexual.

Ally: A person outside the sexual and gender diversity community who actively supports the rights, safety, inclusion, and equity of members of this community in order to create systemic change.

Androgynous: A person whose appearance can correspond to the characteristics of both binary genders (male and female), making it difficult to identify them physically according to either gender. Not to be confused with an intersex person for whom this difference has biological causes.

Aroace: A person who identifies as aromantic and asexual.

Aromantic: Individual who has little or no romantic/emotional attraction to other people (feelings like love, attachment, etc.)

Asexual: An individual who feels little or no sexual or physical attraction to other people. They may, however, feel romantic or emotional attraction.

- B -

Bicurious: A person who does not identify as bisexual, but sometimes has a sexual/emotional attraction to people of a different gender than they are usually attracted to.

Biphobia: Negative attitudes towards bisexual people and their community or their behaviours, leading to discrimination, harassment or violence.

Bisexual: An individual who is physically, sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of more than one gender.

- C -

Cisgender: An individual whose sex assigned at birth corresponds with their gender identity. For example, a person assigned female at birth who still identifies as female.

Cisgenderism/Cissexism: A system of oppression that considers cisgender people to be superior to trans people. For example, seeing trans people as "abnormal" and cisgender people as "normal".

Cisnormativity: This term refers to the fact that the majority of people in our society tend to believe that being cisgender is the norm. In other words, to assume that most people's gender identity corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth, as determined by the current health system within a cisnormative framework. This term primarily highlights the discrimination that trans people may experience.

Coming Out: It is the voluntary disclosure of one's sexual orientation/gender identity to others. It is important not to disclose this information to others without the consent of the person involved.

Cross Dresser: A person who takes on a gender identity and appearance other than their own, through clothing, hairstyles or other physical elements, but who does not identify with this gender. It is important to know that a person who displays an attribute associated with a gender other than their own is not necessarily cross-dressing. A man can wear a dress as a man, for example.

- D -

Dead Name: A name given at birth that does not correspond to a person's gender identity. It often refers to a trans or non-binary person's birth name, for example. Revealing or using this name without the person's consent is disrespectful and can be considered harassment in some cases.

Demiromantic: An individual who can almost only develop a romantic/emotional attraction to a person after having formed a bond/attachment with them. However, having a bond with someone does not necessarily mean that there will be a romantic attraction.

Demisexual: An individual who can almost only develop a sexual attraction to a person after having formed a bond/attachment with them. This could be a friendship or an emotional relationship, for example.

Discrimination: This refers to dividing people into groups and treating them differently based on their personal characteristics. Discrimination can lead to the exclusion of some people and prevent them from exercising certain rights.

Dominant Group: This refers to a group of people in society or in a particular context who are considered to have more power, privilege and influence than other groups of people.

Drag King/Drag Queen: A person who puts on artistic/humorous performances through an often-stereotypical character with exaggerated gender characteristics. These individuals may identify with any of the gender identities or sexual orientations by assuming the appearance of a character of their choice. For example, a person identifying as a woman may perform as a drag queen (female character) and a person identifying as a man may perform as a drag king (male character).

- F -

Fluid (Gender Fluid): A person who identifies as having a gender identity that fluctuates across gender identities. Their gender identity is not fixed or definitive.

- G -

Gay: An individual who identifies as male and is sexually and/or romantically attracted to men. The term is also used more broadly to refer to anyone who is attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender Affirmation Surgery/Gender Confirmation Surgery (old term): Medical surgery/treatment that aligns a person's body with their gender identity. These treatments are sometimes used by trans people if they so desire. However, not all trans people feel the need for it.

Gender Binarity: The social division of our society into two exclusive genders for individuals: men and women. This division does not consider intersex, trans, fluid, non-binary people, etc. A gender continuum would be more inclusive.

Gender Dysphoria: Significant distress that often manifests itself as anxiety, symptoms of depression and irritability due to the discrepancy between the characteristics of the gender/sex assigned at birth and the person's gender identity. Gender dysphoria is one of the diagnoses that can be made when the person experiences distress, for an extended period, and their ability to function is affected due to this discrepancy. The focus is on the distress and not on the discrepancy between the assigned sex and gender identity.

Gender Expression: The way in which a person expresses their gender identity publicly. This may include how they behave, do their hair, apply make-up, dress, etc. The person will also express their gender through the name and pronoun with which they associate themselves. It is important to note that gender expression and gender identity are two different things.

Gender Norms: Society's expectations of a particular gender in terms of behaviour, characteristics, roles, activities, etc. When a person does not fit into what society considers normal, they may experience stigma. For example, a woman who does not want children or a man who likes to wear make-up.

Gender Plurality: An expression that encompasses the diversity of genders. All the possible gender identities and gender expressions.

Gender Reading or "Being Read": This is a term generally used in the trans community or among people of gender plurality (e.g., non-binary). This term indicates that a trans person who wanted to "pass" as cisgender in a certain context, was "read" or "clocked" and therefore identified as trans despite this.

Gender Spectrum: Gender identity continuum that contrasts with gender binarity (male or female). The continuum allows people to identify anywhere and in any way that corresponds to their gender identity.

Graysexual: A person whose sexual orientation falls between asexuality and sexuality. This means that their experience of sexual attraction is fluid. For example, sometimes they may feel no sexual desire and other times, some amount of sexual desire.

- H -

Heteronormativity: This term refers to the fact that most people in our society tend to believe that being heterosexual is the norm. The assumption that most people are heterosexual highlights, among other things, that society is more suited to heterosexuality than to other sexual orientations. It also highlights the discrimination that sexually diverse people may experience.

Heterosexism: The system of oppression that considers heterosexual people to be superior to people of other sexual orientations. For example, viewing homosexual people as 'abnormal' and heterosexual people as 'normal'. This results in several forms of discrimination, both voluntary and involuntary, against homosexuals, bisexuals, etc.

Heterosexual: An individual who is physically/sexually/romantically attracted to people of a gender other than their own.

Homoparental Family: A couple or polycule of the same gender identity caring for at least one child.

Homophobia/homoantagonism: Negative attitudes towards homosexual people and their communities or their behaviour, leading to discrimination, harassment or violence.

Homosexual: A person who is physically/sexually/romantically attracted to people of the same gender. This term, however, comes from the medical/psychiatric community and is therefore controversial. We suggest that it be replaced, when appropriate, by a more accurate and open term such as "queer".

- I -

Internalised homophobia/homoantagonism: When a homosexual person internalises the negative stereotypes that the dominant group projects on them. They may come to believe that they are inferior. Several consequences accompany internalised homophobia: self loathing, self-concealment, feelings of inferiority, resignation, powerlessness, isolation, stigmatisation of other queer people, etc.

Intersex: An individual who is born with genetic characteristics (organs, hormones, etc.) that correspond to more than one sex. These individuals are often assigned one of the two sexes at birth, but this does not reflect their gender identity (the way they feel inside). It is also possible that the sex they are assigned does match their gender identity.

Intersectionality: This term was proposed by Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw and refers to how one's identity (ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic class, etc.) intersects and informs different forms of discrimination, oppression or domination. We often refer to the intersection of racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, etc. This concept allows us to better understand the reality of people who experience discrimination in a more complex way, such as the sexism that a trans woman may experience in relation to other cisgender women, or the racism that a black homosexual man may experience differently from black heterosexual men.

- L -

Lesbian: An individual who generally identifies as a woman and who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to women.

Lesbophobia: Negative attitudes towards lesbian people and their community or their behaviour, leading to discrimination, harassment or violence. It is the specific oppression at the intersection of sexism and homophobia/queerphobia, i.e., the oppression that comes with being a woman in addition to the oppression of being a non-heterosexual person.

LGBTQ+/LGBTQIA+/LGBTQIA2S+: An acronym representing all communities of sexual and gender diversity. It is used to refer to all communities comprehensively. There are several variations of the acronym, as it is constantly evolving. Each letter represents a community: lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer or questioning, intersex, asexual or agender, two-spirited, and all other communities that are part of the sexual and gender diversity community.

- M -

Misgendering: Communicating, intentionally or unintentionally, with a person by attributing a gender that does not correspond to them by using the wrong first name, pronoun or gender mention.

Misogyny: This refers to the contempt/denigration of people who identify as women and towards female characteristics.

- N -

Neo-Pronouns: Alternative pronouns that are often used by gender-diverse people. Ze, hir, ey, em are some examples.

Non-binary: An individual who does not identify with either of the binary genders (male or female), as encouraged by society's norms. This term is in opposition to the view that there are only two genders.

- O -

Open Relationship: A couple who decides, by mutual, free and voluntary agreement not to be exclusive to each other in terms of their sexual relationship.

Outing: Disclosing a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity in a public way without their consent or against their will. Doing so is disrespectful and can have serious consequences.

- P -

Pansexual: An individual who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to a person regardless of gender identity. They can be attracted to all genders, non-binary people, men, genderfluid people, etc.

Passing: This is a term mostly used in the trans community or among people of gender plurality (e.g., non-binary) people. It indicates that a trans person is identified as a cisgender person, male or female, in a certain context by those present. In this case, the trans person uses certain characteristics such as physical appearance and behaviour to be seen as cisgender. The person may wish to "pass" as a cisgender man or woman in one setting (e.g., at work), but be seen as trans in other settings (e.g., with friends).

Polyamory: A type of romantic and/or sexual relationship involving more than two people in. Consent, respect and communication are central to these relationships.

Polycule: A group of people who are in a relationship, often romantic and/or sexual, but who do not define themselves as a couple. The term often refers to polyamorous relationships.

Polygamy: A type of relationship involving a man who is in a relationship with several women (polygyny) or a woman who is in a relationship with several men (polyandry). The difference with a polyamorous relationship is that the individuals are all in a relationship with one person (the man or woman) but are not in a relationship with each other.

Privilege: Power, rights, opportunities, access and advantages that a person possesses but hasn't done anything more than others to obtain. These privileges are often associated with the dominant group in society. This results in imbalance and injustice for minority groups.

- Q -

Queer/Genderqueer: An individual who does not adhere to the binary model of sexual orientation (heterosexuality or homosexuality) or who does not wish to be labelled according to their gender identity and/or sexual orientation. However, the term "queer" is more often used to represent sexuality than gender. The term can also be used as a synonym for "altersex". Nevertheless, it is important to be conscious of an individual's personal identification, as many people who do not adhere to the binary model and do not want to be labelled, do not identify with the term queer.

Questioning: A person who is exploring and/or questioning their gender identity/sexual orientation.

- S -

Self-Identification: How a person defines their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sex Positivity: Promotion of sexual diversity and safe sex for all. Sex positivity encourages a culture of consent, the importance of sex education and safe sex awareness.

Stealth: A term commonly used in the trans community or among people of gender plurality (e.g., non-binary). It indicates when a trans person "passes" in certain contexts to conceal their trans identity. People often do this in transphobic environments where it is not safe to display their real identity. They may also "go stealth" when they do not wish to reveal their real identity in certain contexts such as work or school.

- T -

They/Them: The most common pronoun used by non-binary, genderfluid, etc. people. It can also be used to refer to a person whose gender is unknown. However, it does not suit all people who do not identify with a specific gender. This is why it's important to ask the person about their preferred pronouns.

Trans Man: A person assigned female at birth who identifies as male.

Trans Woman: A person assigned male at birth who identifies as female.

Trans/Transgender/Transsexual (old term to avoid): An individual who identifies with a gender that differs from their assigned sex at birth. It should be noted that the person does not need to have undergone a physical or hormonal transition to identify as trans. Some of these terms may be offensive, so it is important to know the person's gender identity before assigning any of these terms. For example, "transsexual" is an outdated psychiatric term to avoid, as it can be seen as a microaggression. "Trans" is often the preferred term for referring to both individuals and the community.

Transition: The process of legal, medical, hormonal, social and/or physical changes that trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity.

Transparent Family: A couple or a polycule that cares for at least one child and has at least one parent that identifies as a trans person.

Transphobia/Transantagonism: Negative attitudes towards trans people and their communities or their behaviours, leading to discrimination, harassment or violence.

Two-spirit: The definition often refers to an Indigenous person in North America who identifies as having two spirits, one more feminine and one more masculine. This term is often used to describe their spiritual, sexual and gender identity. However, the term does not necessarily refer to gender or sexual orientation. In fact, it depends on how the person uses it. The term is often used to challenge Western binary notions and allows the person to express their sexual/gender identity in Western language. Their sexual/gender identity may be better described by a term in their own language.

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