

TERMINOLOGY

Please note that English is a fluid language in which terms, definitions and meanings change over time, culture, political climate, and geography. The following serves as working definitions that provide an initial foundation of understanding.

ALLY: A person who supports the civil and human rights, and gender equality and equity of sexual and gender minorities. Allies proactively challenge homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, heterosexism and other forms of systemic and individual oppression.

ASEXUAL: Considered as an attraction whereby a person generally does not experience sexual attraction or personal interest to engage in sexual expressions. Asexuality is distinct from abstaining from sexual activity, celibacy or lower/lack of sexual desire due to stress, illness or injury. Some asexual people do however engage in sexual activity to please romantic partners or who desire to have children. A 2004 study in the Journal of Sex Research indicated the prevalence of asexuality at 1%.

AROMANTIC: Considered as an attraction whereby a person generally does not experience romantic attraction or personal interest to engage in romantic expressions. This is a spectrum and some aromantic people do however engage in romance to please partners. This is also separate from asexuality.

ATTRACTION: Attraction is a person's emotional, physical, intimate, romantic and/or sexual attraction to others. Categories of attraction include heterosexual/straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and asexual.

BISEXUAL: An individual who is attracted to more than one gender

CISGENDER: Cisgender refers to mean "not transgender". The prefix cis- means "on this side of" or "not across". Cisgender originated as a way to shift the focus off of a marginalized group, by defining not only the minority group but also the majority. Prior to 1995, there was no standard term used to describe non-transgender people without the use of negative prefixes while still avoiding terms like "normal", "real", "born" or "genetic" (women or men).

"COMING OUT"/DISCLOSURE: "Coming out" is a process of embracing and disclosing one's attraction and/or gender identity. This process generally occurs on three levels: personal (with oneself), private (family and friends), and public (at work or in the community at large).



GAY: A man who has an attraction to other men. May have origins around 12th century in England, from the Old French 'gai'. (Some lesbians also use it to self identify instead)

GENDER: Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women. Gender may be seen as a fluid idea in which it shifts and changes rather than being something rigid.

GENDER IDENTITY: The internal, deep-seated and psychological sense of being a gendered person. This includes: man, woman, transgender, non-binary, agender, gender fluid, pan-gender, genderqueer, Two-Spirit, etc. It could be all, none or a combination of these and others.

GENDER EXPRESSION: How a person express and communicates their gender to others: clothing and dress codes, hair styles, mannerisms, way of speaking, roles we take in interactions, etc. Gender expression can be seen on a spectrum that includes femininity, masculinity and androgyny with most individuals expressing a combination of masculine and feminine qualities at the same time. Gender expression can vary for an individual from day to day or in different situations. Some people are comfortable with a wider range of gender expression than others.

GENDER NON-CONFORMING/GENDER DIVERSE: Refers to those identities and expressions of gender that do not conform to the dominant gender norms of a particular culture. The term is deliberately broad, encompassing such identities and expressions such as, butch, queen, sissy, travesti, hijra or tomboy.

GENDER QUEER: An individual who does not prescribe to any one particular gender or attraction.

HETEROSEXISM: A bias towards, and assumption of, heterosexuality. Often subtle, but nonetheless pervasive, heterosexism implies the expectation that live heterosexually and operate within engrained gender role stereotypes. Heterosexism is also the belief in the superiority of heterosexuality. Those that do not live or subscribe to this "norm" are viewed as deviant, radicals and threats to the very fabric of a community or society.

HOMOPHOBIA/BIPHOBIA/LESBOPHOBIA/TRANSPHOBIA: The negative attitudes and behaviours against, or cultural and social aversions toward individuals who identify or are perceived as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit, or queer. Harassment, bullying, violence, discrimination, isolation are some forms of such phobias.

"INVISIBLY TRANS"/STEALTH: Being "invisibly trans" or stealth, in regard to gender identity, refers to a person's ability to be regarded as the sex or gender with which they identify, or with which they physically present. Typically, being invisibly trans or stealth involves a mixture of physical gender cues (for example, hair style or clothing) as well as certain behavioral attributes that tend to be culturally associated with a particular gender. Being invisibly trans comes with more privilege and safety than those who are visibly trans.



LESBIAN: A woman who has an attraction to other women. The term lesbian is derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos.

OPPRESSION: Oppression is the systematic, institutionalized, and socially condoned (elite sanctioned) mistreatment of a group in society by another group or by people acting as agents of the society as a whole.

PANSEXUAL: Pansexual is described as the capacity of attraction irrespective of gender (man, woman, transgender, etc.)

PRONOUNS: A personal pronoun refers to a specific person. Some common pronouns are she/her, he/him, they/them, ze/hir, xe/xir, etc. Using a person's pronouns is a sign of respect and acknowledgement of their identity.

QUEER: Historically was used as a negative, pejorative, homophobic slur meaning: 'strange,' 'unusual,' 'something suspicious or not quite right', or 'someone who exhibits socially inappropriate behavior.' Today queer has been reclaimed by many as an inclusive, unifying, sociopolitical umbrella term for people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, genderqueer and/or those whose sexual identity or activities are perceived outside the mainstream.

QUESTIONING: Refers to people who are uncertain about their attraction and/or gender identity. They are often seeking information and support during this stage of their identity development.

SEX ASSIGNED AT BIRTH: A person's combination of chromosomes, hormones, and gonads. Most of the time, these combinations result in individuals being assigned female or male at birth. When combinations of chromosomes, hormones, and gonads present outside of typical formations of male or female, the individual may be considered intersex.

TRANSGENDER/TRANS: An umbrella term that represents many individuals that cross, challenge and transcend traditional definitions of male and female including: transmen (Assigned Female at Birth), transwomen (Assigned Female at Birth), genderqueer people, and Two-Spirit individuals. A transgender individual's attraction varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

TWO-SPIRIT: An English term to describe the ancient teachings of First Nations people who embodied the spirits of male and female. Two-Spirit people were looked upon as a third gender in many cases and in almost all cultures they were honored and revered. Two-Spirit people were often the visionaries, the healers and medicine people. Colonization reinforced homophobia amongst many tribes and tarnished the honor of what it meant to be Two-Spirit. Today, the term Two-Spirit is being reclaimed as Sacred; it also encompasses individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

