

LGBTQIA

Why LGBTQIA+?

“LGBT” is one of the most commonly used acronyms, and so shows up in far more searches. However, it’s far from comprehensive and excludes a number of identities: as such, we use “LGBTQIA+” to promote active inclusion.

For alternatives, MOGAI (Minority orientations, gender alignments and identities) is rapidly gaining recognition, and quiltbag is a popular term in the community.

Some basic terms:

Queer: an umbrella term, or an identity in its own right – it can refer to gender or sexuality or both.

NOTE: due to its use as a slur, this word should not be used to define others, unless they have explicitly stated it is okay.

Questioning/unsure/undecided: someone still questioning their gender identity and/or sexuality.

Some people may question if they are straight or not, or if they are transgender, whilst others may be certain that they are transgender and/or non-heterosexual, but may not be certain where exactly under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella their identity lies. Many young people may question their gender or sexuality, and it is important that their identities – fixed or not – are treated as valid and not as ‘just a phase’.

Gay: someone solely attracted to people of the same gender as themselves.

Whilst typically applied to men, the term can be used by/about anyone who is solely attracted to people of the same gender as themselves.

Lesbian: a woman who is solely attracted to other women.

In addition to homophobia, many lesbians find themselves the targets of what has been termed ‘lesbophobia’: an intersection of misogyny, sexism and homophobia. This includes resentment and harassment over being unavailable to men, sexual objectification and being seen as titillation, and in some cases even ‘corrective’ rape.

Bisexual: someone attracted to people of more than one gender.

Pansexual: someone attracted to people of all genders.

There is some overlap between bi and pan and many people identify as both.

There is a common fallacy that bisexual means ‘attracted to men and women’ – as a whole, this is not the case, though it may apply to an individual’s attraction. Robyn Och’s definition is widely accepted: “same and other genders”. Whilst ‘bi’ CAN mean a person is only attracted to two genders, it is important to note that this does not automatically mean the two binary genders.

Non-monosexual (people attracted to people of more than one gender) people can struggle to find a space in LGB communities, as bi/panphobia can lead to discrimination on both sides.

Asexual: someone not sexually attracted to others.

Aromantic: someone not romantically attracted to others.

Some asexuals may identify as homoromantic, heteroromantic, biromantic or panromantic, indicating their romantic attractions. Others may identify as aromantic; conversely, someone may identify as [x]sexual whilst being aromantic: having no romantic attraction to others. Others may experience grey-asexuality, where they rarely experience sexual attraction to other people; some may experience demisexuality, where sexual attraction is only felt if there is an existing emotional bond.

Asexuality does not necessarily mean celibate: it is a descriptor of a sexual orientation, not of behaviours.

Intersex: someone born with characteristics which are considered both typically male and typically female.

Gender is assigned at birth typically based on what genitalia a person has. However, what doctors consider typically male or female has a number of other characteristics, including karyotype (containing genetic coding; considered the ‘sex chromosomes’ and typically – though not always – being XX or XY); genital and reproductive systems arrangement, including gametes (whether someone produces sperm or ova); natural hormone levels, which control many secondary sex characteristics such as weight distribution, breast tissue growth, body and facial hair, and muscle mass.

Someone who is intersex has a mix of characteristics which don’t fit the typical definitions of male and female. These characteristics may be evident at birth or become so later in life, at puberty or when trying to conceive. For some, the characteristics may not be evident at all.

Transgender: someone who does not identify as the gender they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual as a term is now usually considered outdated and should be avoided.

Trans = across from

Cis = on the same side

So transgender = does not identify as the same gender as was assigned at birth

Cisgender = identifies as the same gender as was assigned at birth

Can be binary (male or female) or non-binary (neither male nor female, or both).

Non-binary: a person who does not identify as (solely) male or female. It can be an umbrella term, or an identity in its own right.

Some common non-binary terms (this is by no means an exhaustive list):

- Androgyne** Androgynous gender, which may be neutral, mixed or something else
- Agender** Being genderless, or without gender; lacking in gendered traits
- Genderqueer** A non-binary gender, which expresses sitting outside societal gender norms
- Demiboy/
Demigirl** Feeling partially of one gender (male or female) and partially of some other sort of gender
- Bigender** Experiencing two different gender identities, either at the same time, or moving between the two
- Neutrois** A neutral gender identity, often lacking in gendered traits
- Genderfluid** Moving between two or more different gender identities
- Pangender** Identifying as all gender

Further information: <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>