Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, & Gender Expression

Sex, Gender and Sexuality have been and continue to be viewed in terms of binaries: male/female, gay/straight, man/woman. Using these categorizations to classify people in legal, medical and political environments simplifies the lived experiences of members of our society. Due to greater social acceptance of non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities, our language is developing to accurately represent the experiences of people. Before listing definitions of this language, it is important to note that gender identity is separate from sexual or romantic orientation, and non-binary people and trans people have a variety of sexual orientations, just as cisgender people do.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of these definitions.¹ ²

**Note:** First and foremost, ask and let individuals identify themselves and mirror their language.

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**Queer/ LGBTQIA2S+:** an umbrella term to describe individuals who do not identify as straight and/or cisgender and/or fit into the male/female binary definitions of sex. In the past, queer has been used as a derogatory term. Some people from the LGBTQIA2S+ community have reclaimed it for themselves, but it is not used or embraced by all LGBTQIA2S+ people.

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**SEX**

The classification of a person at birth as male or female or intersex. Infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy.

**Female:** a person with primary sex characteristics of XX chromosomes in the cell nuclei and a vagina, uterus and ovaries. The production of estrogen develops secondary female sex characteristics in adolescence.

**Male:** a person with primary sex characteristics of XY chromosomes in the cell nuclei and a penis and testes. The production of testosterone develops secondary male sex characteristics in adolescence.

**Intersex:** an umbrella term for people with primary and/or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit the strict male/female binary. There are many possible differences in genitalia, hormones, internal anatomy, or chromosomes, compared to the usual two ways that human bodies develop.
SEXUAL ORIENTATION
An enduring pattern of romantic or sexual attraction or a combination of these towards people.

### Sexual Attraction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asexual</strong></td>
<td>A term used to describe someone who does not experience sexual attraction toward individuals of any gender. This does not exclude them from experiencing various types and levels of romantic attraction.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Bisexual</strong></td>
<td>A person attracted to members of their own gender as well as those of another gender.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Heterosexual</strong></td>
<td>This sexual preference means that an individual feels attraction on an emotional, romantic or sexual level to people of the opposite sex.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Homosexual</strong></td>
<td>Person primarily emotionally, physically, and/or sexually attracted to members of the same sex/gender.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gay</strong></td>
<td>An individual who identifies as a man who is physically, romantically and emotionally attracted to other people who identify as men; or, an umbrella term for any person attracted to the same sex or gender.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lesbian</strong></td>
<td>An individual who identifies as a woman who is physically, romantically and emotionally attracted to other people who identify as women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pansexual</strong></td>
<td>Someone who is pansexual is attracted to any sex or gender. This means that a pansexual person might feel equally attracted on an emotional, romantic, sexual, or affective level to people of any sexual orientation or gender identity.</td>
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### Romantic Attraction

A capacity that evokes the desire to engage in romantic intimate behavior, experienced in varying degrees. Romantic orientation is on a spectrum. Romantic and sexual attraction are different. One can experience both, neither or one without the other. All of the identities defined below do not necessarily experience sexual attraction to the sex/genders they are attracted to. Conversely, one can feel sexual attraction without feeling romantic attraction, or be somewhere on the spectrum of both.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who experiences little or no romantic attraction.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Biromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who is romantically attracted to both sexes or genders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heteroromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who is romantically attracted to a member of the opposite sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homoromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who is romantically attracted to a member of the same sex.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Panromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person whose romantic attractions are not influenced by sex or gender identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Polyromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who is romantically attracted to all or many genders or gender expressions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Greyromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who identifies as being somewhere between asemantic and experiencing romantic attraction. For example, some greyromantic people only sometimes experience romantic attraction but most of the time don’t; some experience romantic attraction, but not strongly enough to want to act on it; and some experience romantic attraction but only under very limited and specific circumstances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demiromantic</strong></td>
<td>A person who does not experience a romantic attraction unless they have formed a strong emotional bond. A demiromantic person may or may not experience sexual attraction.</td>
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</table>
### GENDER IDENTITY

A person’s innermost concept of self as man, woman, a blend of both, or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. Gender identity can be the same or different from one’s sex assigned at birth.

**Agender**: A term for people whose gender identity and expression does not align with man, woman, or any other gender. A similar term used by some is gender-neutral.

**Androgy nous**: Identifying and/or presenting as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

**Bigender**: Someone whose gender identity encompasses both man and woman. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are present.

**Cisgender**: A term used to describe someone whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Gender Binary**: The gender binary is a system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two identities and sexes, man and woman or male and female.

**Genderfluid**: A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender, and expresses a fluid or unfixed gender identity. One’s expression of identity is likely to shift and change depending on context.

**Gender non-conforming**: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

**Gender questioning**: A person who may be processing, questioning, or exploring how they want to express their gender identity.

**Genderqueer**: A term for people who reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as genderqueer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside these categories.

**Non-binary**: An umbrella term for gender identities that are outside the gender binary of woman/man. Non-binary identities are not associated with a specific gender expression such as androgyny. People have a wide variety of gender expressions. Some non-binary people are going through medical or legal transition with surgery, hormones and legal name change. There is no specific look, way or path to be non-binary.

**Transgender**: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural and social expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Two-spirit**: A term that refers to historical and current First Nations people whose individual spirits were a blend of male and female. This term has been reclaimed by some in Native American LGBTQI2A+S+ communities to honor their heritage and provide an alternative to the Western labels of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.
**Gender Expression**

The external/public appearance or presentation of a person’s gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, hair, make-up, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined masculine or feminine behaviors and characteristics. A person’s name and pronouns are also possible ways for people to express their gender. All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways.

**Feminine:** A feminine person expresses their gender in a way typically associated with women.

**Masculine:** A masculine person expresses their gender in a way typically associated with men.

**Androgynous:** An androgynous person has a gender expression that isn’t distinctly “masculine” or “feminine”.

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**DISCRIMINATORY & TRANSITION ASSOCIATED TERMS**

**Dead name:** How some transgender people refer to their given name at birth.

**Gender dysphoria:** Clinically defined as significant and durational distress caused when a person’s gender assigned at birth is not the same as the gender with which they identify.

**Misgender:** Referring to or addressing someone using words and pronouns that do not correctly reflect the gender with which that person identifies.

**Passing:** A term used by transgender people which means that they are perceived by others as the gender with which they self-identify.

**Transitioning:** The social, legal, and/or medical process a person may go through to live outwardly as the gender with which they identify, rather than the gender they were assigned at birth. Transitioning can include some or all of the following: telling loved ones and co-workers, using a different name and pronouns, dressing differently, changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents, hormone therapy, and possibly one or more types of surgery.