



CPRI
SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR TEAM
Promoting Safety and Sexual Health

Glossary of Terms

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Sexual Orientation – a term for the emotional, physical, romantic, sexual and spiritual attraction or affection for another person. Examples include heterosexuality, bisexuality and homosexuality.

Homosexual – a term to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same gender. Most people prefer to not use this label, preferring to use other terms, such as “same sex attracted, gay or lesbian.”

Heterosexual – term used to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the opposite gender. Heterosexual people are often referred to as “straight.”

Bisexual – a word describing a person whose sexual orientation is directed towards men and women, though not necessarily at the same time

Gay – a word to describe a person whose primary sexual orientation is to members of the same gender or who identifies as a member of the gay community. The word can refer to men and women, although many women prefer the term “lesbian.”

Lesbian – a word to describe a female whose primary sexual orientation is to other women or who identifies as a member of the lesbian community.

Queer – traditionally, a derogatory and offensive term for LGBT people. Many LGBT people have reclaimed this word and use it proudly to describe their identity. Some transsexual and trans-gendered people identify as queers, others do not.

Fag – a word traditionally used as a derogatory term for gay men. Many men have reclaimed this word and others, and use them proudly to describe their identity.

Dyke – a word traditionally used as a derogatory term for lesbians. Many women have reclaimed this word and others, and use them proudly to describe their identity.

Polysexual – sexual orientation that does not limit affection, romance or sexual attraction to any one gender or sex, and which further recognizes there are more than just two sexes.

Asexual – a word describing a person who is not sexually and/or romantically active, or not sexually and/or romantically attracted to other persons.

Autosexual – a word describing a person whose significant sexual involvement is with oneself or a person who prefers masturbation over partnered sex.

Gender Identity – a person's own identification of being male, female or inter-sexed; masculine, feminine or trans-gendered or transsexual. Gender identity most often corresponds with one's anatomical gender, but sometimes a person's gender identity doesn't directly correspond to their anatomy. Trans-gendered people use many terms to describe their gender identities, including: pre-op transsexual, post-op transsexual, non-op transsexual, trans-genderist, cross-dresser, transvestite, trans-gendered, two-spirit, intersexed, hermaphrodite, fem male, gender blender, butch, manly women, diesel dyke, sex radical, androgynist, female impersonator, male impersonator, drag king, drag queen, etc.

Intersex – a person who has some mixture of male and female genetic and/or physical sex characteristics. Formerly called "hermaphrodites." Many intersexed people consider themselves to be part of the Trans community.

Trans-Gendered – a person whose gender identity from his or her biological sex, regardless of the status of surgical and hormonal gender reassignment processes. Often used as an umbrella term to include transsexuals, trans-genderists, transvestites (cross-dressers), two-spirit, intersexed and trans-gendered people.

Transsexual – a term for a person who has an intense long-term experience of being the sex opposite to his or her birth-assigned sex and typically pursues a medical and legal transformation to become the other sex. There are trans-men (female-to-male transsexuals) and trans-women (male-to-female transsexuals). Transsexual people may undergo a number of procedures to their body and public identity in line with their self-image, including sex hormone therapy, electrolysis treatments, sex re-assignment surgeries and legal changes of name and sex status.

Two-Spirit – an English term coined to reflect specific cultural words used by First Nation and other indigenous peoples for individuals in their cultures who are gay or lesbian, are trans-gendered or transsexual, or have multiple gender identities. The term reflects an effort by First Nations and other indigenous communities to distinguish their concepts of gender and sexuality from those of Western LGBT communities.

Genderqueer – a very recent term coined by young people who experience a very fluid sense of both their gender identity and their sexual orientation, and who do not want to be constrained by absolute or static conceptualizations

Homophobia – irrational fear, hatred, prejudice or negative attitudes toward homosexuality and people who are gay or lesbian. Homophobia can take overt and covert, as well as subtle and extreme, forms. Homophobia includes behaviours such as jokes, name-calling, exclusion, gay bashing, etc.

Bi-Phobia – irrational fear or dislike of bisexuals (and also intersexed people). Bisexuals may experience stigmatization by heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men.

Trans-Phobia - irrational fear or dislike of transsexual and trans-gendered people.

Heterosexism – the assumption expressed overtly and/or covertly, that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay and bisexual people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. It is often a form of oppression which reinforces silence and invisibility for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Genderism – the belief that the binary construct of gender, in which there are only two genders (male and female), is the most normal, natural and preferred way of viewing gender identity. This binary construct does not include or allow for people to be intersex, trans-gendered, transsexual, or genderqueer.

Heterosexual Privilege – the unrecognized and assumed privileges that people have if they are heterosexual. Examples of heterosexual privilege include: holding hands or kissing in public without fearing threat, not questioning the normality of your sexual orientation, raising children without fears of state intervention or worries that your children will experience discrimination because of your heterosexuality.

Internalized Homophobia – the fear and self-hatred of one's own sexual orientation that occurs for many lesbians and gay men as a result of heterosexism and homophobia. Once lesbians and gay men realize that they belong to a group of people that is often despised and rejected in our society, many internalize and incorporate this stigmatization and fear or hate themselves.

Coming Out – the process in which LGBT people acknowledge and disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity, or in which transsexual or trans-gendered people acknowledge and disclose their gender identity, to themselves and others. Coming out is thought to be an ongoing process. People who are "closeted" or "in the closet" hide the fact that they are LGBT. Some people "come out of the closet" in some situations (e.g. with other gay friends) and not in others (e.g. at work).

Family of Choice/Chosen Family – the circle of friends, partners, companions and perhaps ex-partners with which many LGBTTTIQ people surround themselves. This group provides the support, validation, and sense of belonging that is often unavailable from the person's family of origin.