

# LGBTQIA + Glossary

## *Note about the LGBTQIA+ Glossary*

The LGBTQIA+ Glossary is created, maintained, and updated by staff at Gavilan Community College. This resource is designed to help individuals better understand the language commonly used within the LGBTQIA+ community. Please note that the inclusion of a term in this glossary does not imply endorsement by Gavilan College. We are simply compiling terms that may evolve and shift in usage over time.

The definitions provided here are not necessarily universal. This glossary offers a deeper, though not exhaustive, understanding of the meanings behind these terms. It's always good practice to ask someone directly about the meaning of a term, especially when they use it to describe their own identity. Ultimately, it is essential that individuals define themselves and their identities on their own terms.

This glossary also includes terms such as ableism and disability, which may not be directly related to sexuality or gender identities. However, these terms are important to recognize as part of our broader mission to challenge all forms of oppression that affect the diverse, intersectional identities within our community.

We understand that many sub-communities within the LGBTQIA+ community have their own rich and nuanced lexicons, which we cannot fully capture in this document. Therefore, we have selected a core set of key terms. If you have a term that you believe should be added or revised, please send your suggestion to the [lgbtq@gavilan.edu](mailto:lgbtq@gavilan.edu) email. All submissions will be thoughtfully considered for future updates.

Thank you.

## Navigate by Letter Here:

[A](#)   [B](#)   [C](#)   [D](#)   [E](#)   [F](#)   [G](#)   [H](#)   [I](#)   [J](#)   [K](#)   [L](#)   [M](#)

[O](#)   [P](#)   [Q](#)   [R](#)   [S](#)   [T](#)   [U](#)   [V](#)   [W](#)   [X](#)   [Y](#)   [Z](#)

## A

**Ability:** The skill or means to do something. It can change over time and varies among individuals. Disabilities don't limit people unless society makes assumptions that ignore these differences and variations among individuals' abilities.

**Ableism:** The system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses disabled people, including those with mental, cognitive, emotional, or physical differences, through attitudes, actions, or policies.

**AFAB:** Assigned Female at Birth (AFAB) refers to those assigned female at birth, often used by transgender, non-binary, or intersex individuals. While AFAB and AMAB can describe certain experiences, they are not identities typically. Referring to a trans man as AFAB erases his identity as a man. It's best to use a person's requested pronouns and self-description.

**Ageism:** The system of prejudice and discrimination that marginalizes people based on age. It includes stereotypes about youth versus older age and policies that exclude or subordinate older individuals. Ageism can also affect younger people, who may be stereotyped as incapable of making important decisions.

**Agender:** An identity under the non-binary and trans+ umbrella. Some agender people feel they have no gender, while others see agender as their gender identity. It can overlap with being gender neutral or having a neutral gender identity.

**Allistic:** An adjective used to describe someone who is not autistic.

**Allosexism:** The system of discrimination that oppresses asexual people, based on the assumption that everyone should experience physical attraction.

**Allosexual:** a sexual orientation generally characterized by experiencing a desire for partnered intimacy or physical attraction, in contrast to asexuality.

**Ally:** Being an individual who supports and advocates for a group other than one's own, typically marginalized or oppressed groups.

*Look at “External Resources” on the Website to Learn More About Allyship and Brief Overview of Struggles for Individuals of the LGBTQ Community*

**AMAB:** Assigned Male at Birth (AMAB) refers to those assigned male at birth, often used by transgender, non-binary, or intersex individuals. While AFAB and AMAB can describe certain experiences, they are not identities typically. Referring to a trans female as AMAB erases their identity as a female. It's best to use a person's requested self-description and pronouns.

**Androgyne:** A person whose gender is a mix of masculine and feminine traits or somewhere between the two.

**Aromantic/Aro:** Typically defined by not feeling romantic attraction or a desire for romance. Aromantic (Aro) individuals can feel fulfilled by friendships or other non-romantic relationships. Aromanticism exists on an indistinguishable scale. This orientation can also be identified with a sexual orientation such as lesbian, asexual, etc.

**Asexual/Asexuality/Ace:** Asexuality is a broad spectrum of sexual orientations defined by feeling little to no physical attraction or desire for partnered intimacy. It's different from celibacy, which is the intentional choice to avoid intimacy despite physical desire. Some asexual people still have sex and experience varying levels of physical attraction. Asexuality can look different for different people, and someone who doesn't feel physical attraction might still feel other types of attraction, like romantic, physical, or emotional. These types of attraction don't always match up with each other. For example, someone could be physically attracted to all genders but only emotionally or romantically attracted to one specific gender.

**Autism:** a neurological variation that can look different for each person, with a wide range of experiences. Common traits include repetitive behaviors and differences in social interaction, communication, and relationships. For some people, their gender identity is closely connected to their experience as an autistic person.

## **B**

**Bigender:** Embodying two genders, or displaying traits typically associated with feminine and masculine roles. This embodiment fluctuates; an individual may identify as both simultaneously and at different times. It's considered an expression of the nonbinary scale.

**Binder/Binding:** A compression undergarment designed to minimize the appearance of the chest, typically worn in a similar way to a sports bra. The practice of wearing such a garment is known as binding, which may be done regularly, even daily. Binding is often used to influence how others perceive a person's physical sex characteristics and can also serve as a form of gender expression.

**Bisexual:** A person whose primary physical and emotional attraction is to people of the same gender, other genders, or all genders. This attraction doesn't need to be equally distributed,

meaning the individual may not experience the same level of interest in all the genders they are attracted to. Some people use pansexual and bisexual terms interchangeably.

**Body Image:** How a person feels, thinks, and acts about their body. Our attitudes toward our own bodies and other's bodies are influenced by factors like community, family, culture, media, and personal experiences.

## C

**Cisgender:** Refers to a person whose gender identity or expression aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth. The prefix “cis-” means “on the side of,” and the term is often used to highlight the privilege that cisgendered people have compared to transgender people.

**Cisnormativity:** The attitudes and beliefs that assume gender is strictly binary (only male or female), ignoring non-binary genders, and expecting everyone to align with societal norms for gender expression and identity. It often combines with heteronormativity, reinforcing societal expectations around gender and sexuality. For example, someone assigned male at birth (AMAB) typically has the expectation of 1) have a body considered “male” by society, 2) identify as a male or man, 3) express themselves in a masculine way, 4) be attracted to females, and 5) be in a heterosexual, monogamous relationship. [See heteronormativity.](#)

**Cissexism/Genderism:** System of discrimination and exclusion based on the belief that there are only two genders, and that gender is inherently tied to one's assigned sex at birth. This system oppresses people whose gender expression or gender doesn't fit within cisnormative expectations. Cisgender people hold privilege as the dominant group, while gender non-conforming, transgender, etc. are marginalized and oppressed.

**Coming Out:** A process of choosing to share one's sexual orientation or gender identity with others. It's a personal journey that looks different for everyone, with no “right” or “wrong” way to do it. The term “coming out” can also apply to revealing other personal aspects that may be stigmatized. Related terms include “being out,” which means openly expressing one's sexual orientation or gender identity, and “outing,” which refers to revealing someone else's identity without their consent. Choosing not to share one's LGBTQ+ identity publicly is a personal decision, and there's no obligation for anyone to “come out” if they don't feel inclined to. It's perfectly valid to simply be, without any public declaration. The choice is up to the person. When someone doesn't share their identity openly, it's sometimes referred to as “in the closet”

[Look at “External Resources” on the Website for Coming Out Resources](#)

**Culture:** A set of beliefs, customs, values, perceptions, and norms learned and shared by a group of people. It shapes how an individual or group interprets the world around them and provides them with a framework for how they live.

## D

**Deadname/Deadnaming:** A name that a nonbinary or transgender person no longer uses, typically the name assigned at birth. When someone refers to an individual by their deadname, whether intentionally or not, it's called deadnaming. Deadnaming is considered disrespectful and harmful.

**Demiromantic:** An individual may only feel romantic attraction on a level of little to no capacity until a strong emotional connection is formed with someone. Demiromantic people can identify with any sexuality or gender identity.

**Demisexual:** A sexual orientation where someone feels physical attraction only after forming a strong emotional connection with another person. Demisexual's rarely experience physical attraction in comparison to the general population, and some may have little to no interest in physical relations, especially initially. Demisexual is considered part of the asexual spectrum.

**Disability/(Dis)ability/Dis/ability:** A social construct that refers to any limitation or inability to perform an activity in the way or within the range considered "typical" for a human being, based on environments that are designed for and by those considered a "typical" or dominant individual

**Discrimination:** Inequitable actions carried out by members of a dominant group, or its representatives, that harm or disadvantage members of a minoritized or marginalized group

**Drag/Drag King/Drag Queen:** The theatrical performance of one or more genders through clothing and styling that typically differs from one's usual presentation. Drag queens normally perform in feminine attire, while drag kings typically perform in masculine attire. Both performances are typically more theatrical. Drag is a form of gender expression and is not an indicator of their gender identity. Those who perform in drag may not identify as transgender and can have any sexual orientation.

## E

**Emotional Attraction:** A form of attraction characterized by the desire to form close emotional bonds such as sharing, confiding, trusting, or mutual reliance with another person. This type of attraction can range in intensity. It is sometimes confused with romantic, spiritual, or sexual attraction, though it is distinct from each.

**Ethnicity:** A social construct that categorizes people into smaller social groups based on characteristics like values, behaviors, group membership, history, economic and political interests, and ancestral geographical origins.

## G

**Gay:** An emotional and sexual orientation towards people of the same gender. Also known as homosexual. This term can be used as an umbrella term depending on the person.

**Gender:** A social construct used to classify individuals as a man, woman, or another identity. It's distinct from the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender Affirming:** Encompasses actions, medical care, language, and other practices that support and validate someone's gender identity and expression. For example, gender-affirming surgery is a procedure that alters an individual's appearance to align with their gender identity.

**Gender Dysphoria:** Describes the experience of discomfort or distress when a person's gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth or their gender identity. This term is also used in clinical settings to refer to individuals who feel discomfort with the sex assigned to them at birth.

**Gender Expression/Expressive:** Gender expression refers to how a person presents themselves through aspects like clothing, physical characteristics (such as body hair, voice, and breasts), and behaviors. Society often categorizes these expressions as 'masculine,' 'feminine,' or 'androgynous.' However, individuals can express their gender in many different ways and may use terms beyond these labels to describe their unique gender expression(s).

**Gender Fluid/Genderfluid:** A person whose gender identity and expression can shift, either within or outside of societal gender expectations. This includes moving fluidly between two or more genders.

**Gender Identity:** A person's understanding and internal perception of their own gender identity, such as being trans, genderqueer, a woman, a man, or another identity. This may or may not align with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.

**Gender Neutral:** Refers to anything that is not associated with a specific gender. For example, gender-neutral language avoids using binary male or female terms, and gender-neutral restrooms are accessible to individuals of any gender expression or identity.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** An adjective used to describe people who do not conform to societal expectations of typical gender expressions or roles. This term is more commonly associated with gender expression (how one behaves, acts, and presents themselves) rather than gender identity (one's internal sense of self).

## H

**Heteronormativity:** Heteronormativity refers to attitudes and behaviors that wrongly assume everyone is heterosexual or that being heterosexual is the “normal” or “default.” It also assumes that individuals will conform to societal expectations around romantic and physical attraction. This concept often intersects with cisnormativity, shaping the societal norms around how people are expected to behave. For instance, someone assigned male at birth is typically expected to: 1) possess a body recognized as “male” by mainstream culture, 2) identify as a boy or man, 3) exhibit traits considered masculine and fulfill roles associated with males, 4) to be attracted to females physically and romantically, and 5) form a monogamous relationship with a someone assigned female at birth.

**Heterosexuality:** A sexual orientation where an individual experiences physical attraction to people of a gender different from their own. Also commonly referred to as straight which usually used to describe a man attracted to women and vice-versa.

## I

**Intersex:** An inclusive term used to describe a variety of natural bodily differences that don’t conform to traditional definitions of biological male or females. Intersex variations can include, but are not limited to, differences in chromosomal makeup, hormone levels, and both external and internal physical traits. Many visibly intersex individuals have faced harmful medical interventions during infancy and early childhood, where doctors have altered their bodies to fit into societal expectations of a “normal” appearance. However, some outdated and stigmatizing terms—such as “hermaphrodite”—are still misused. This particular term is inaccurate and should not be used to describe an intersex individual or the community as a whole.

## L

**Lesbian:** Typically, a person who identifies as a woman and whose primary physical and romantic attraction is toward individuals of the same gender. However, some nonbinary individuals also identify as lesbians, due to a level of connection to womanhood and their primary attraction to woman. The gender expression of individuals who identify as lesbians is diverse and does not necessarily align with traditional notions of femininity or masculinity. A lesbian's expression may lean masculine, feminine, or be more gender-neutral, independently of her sexual identity. There are more specific terms that some lesbians use to positively self-identify based on their expression—though historically, some of these terms have also been used as slurs or in derogatory ways.

**LGBTQIA+:** An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual, with the “+” symbol representing all other identities not included in the acronym. It is commonly used as an umbrella term to refer to the broader community as whole.

**Lived Name:** A name, often a first name, that a person chooses to use instead of their legal name. There are various reasons someone might use a lived name, including affirming their gender identity, especially for trans and nonbinary individuals. The term “preferred name” implies that using someone’s chosen name is optional, which can contribute to the practice of deadnaming. [See Deadname/deadnaming.](#)

## M

**Micro-aggressions:** Brief and often subtle actions, whether intentional or not, that convey negative, hostile, or derogatory messages about marginalized identities. These behaviors can harm by invalidating someone’s identity and reinforcing stereotypes. Examples including telling a person of color they speak “good English” or using “gay” to describe something negatively.

**Misgendering:** Attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect or does not match their gender identity. This can happen when using pronouns, gendered (e.g., “Hello ladies!”), or assuming someone’s gender without knowing how they identify (e.g., “Since we’re all men in this room, we all know...”).

**MLM:** An abbreviation for men who love men, encompassing gay men as well as men who are attracted to men and individuals of other genders.

**Monogamy:** Being in a relationship with only one intimate partner at a time.

**Monosexual:** Individuals who experience romantic, physical, or affectionate attraction to only one gender. The most recognized forms of monosexuality are identifying as gay or straight.

**Multisexual:** An umbrella term used to describe attraction to more than one gender. It can include sexual orientations such as bisexual, omnisexual, polysexual, and others. While some people use these terms interchangeably, for others, the subtle distinctions between them are significant

**Mx:** A gender-neutral honorific that falls outside the traditional gender binary (e.g., Mrs., Ms., Mr., etc.).

## N

**Neopronouns:** Gender-neutral pronouns like ze/zir or ey/em, which are used as alternatives to more traditional pronouns such as they/them.

**Neurodiversity:** Neurodiversity refers to the natural and valuable differences in the ways the human mind functions. These differences can include conditions such as autism, attention



deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyspraxia, dyslexia, Tourette Syndrome, and others. Like other human traits like race, gender, culture, or sexuality, there is no “right” or “wrong” form of diversity. The societal structures that influence others forms of diversity also affect neurodivergent individuals. Neurodiversity is not something that needs to be cured or adjusted to fit a societal norm; instead, we should embrace different ways of communication and self-expression and create supportive environments that enable neurodivergent people to thrive ([Neurocosmopolitanism, The National Symposium on Neurodiversity](#))

**Neurodivergent:** Neurodivergent, often shortened to ND, refers to having a brain that functions in ways that significantly differ from the dominant societal standards of what is considered “normal.” A person whose neurocognitive functioning diverges from societal norms in several ways. ([Neurocosmopolitanism](#))

**Neurotypical:** Neurotypical, commonly abbreviated as NT, refers to having a style of neurocognitive functioning that aligns with the dominant societal standards of what is considered “normal.” The term can be used as either an adjective (e.g., “They’re neurotypical”) or a noun (e.g., “They’re a neurotypical”). ([Neurocosmopolitanism](#))

**Non binary/Nonbinary/Non-binary:** A gender identity and experience that encompasses a wide range of expressions and ways of being, moving beyond the male/female gender binary. It may involve actively resisting binary gender expectations or intentionally creating new, unrestricted understandings of self in the world. For some individuals who identify as non-binary, there may be overlap with other concepts and identities, such as gender-expansive or gender non-conforming.

## O

**Outing:** Sharing someone’s sexual orientation or gender identity without their permission—known as outing—can seriously impact their well-being. Regardless of whether it’s intentional or accidental, outing breaches personal privacy and can heighten the risk of harm, including physical violence, housing insecurity, substance use, and suicidal thoughts or behavior. ([Why We Need To Stop Outing...](#))

**Omnigender:** Encompassing all genders and is specifically used to challenge the idea of only two genders.

**Oppression:** Occurs when one social group, either knowingly or unknowingly, takes advantage of another social group for its own gain.

**Individual Level:** A person’s beliefs or behaviors, whether intentional or unintentional, that contribute to the continuation of oppressive actions and attitudes.

**Institutional Level:** Institutions like family, government, industry, education, and religion have policies and practices that can reinforce systems of oppression.

**Societal/Cultural Level:** Community norms that sustain both implicit and explicit values, connecting institutions and individuals; social norms regarding what is valued, accepted, or desirable provide justification for systemic oppression at both the individual and institutional levels.

**Orientation:** Orientation refers to an individual's attraction or lack of attraction to others. It can be fluid, and people use various labels to describe their orientation. Some, but not all, types of attraction or orientation include romantic, physical, sensual, aesthetic, intellectual, and platonic.

## P

**Pansexual (Pan), Omnisexual (Omni):** Terms used to describe individuals who experience romantic, physical, or affectional attraction to people of all genders, identities, sexes, and expressions. This may overlap with bisexuality and polysexuality (which should not be confused with polyamory).

**Passing:** When a trans individual is perceived as, or “passes” as, a cisgender man or woman. Passing is often thought of as a form of privilege, and the concept can also put unrealistic or unwanted expectations on trans/nonbinary folks to confirm to cisnormativity. Passing can also refer to gay/lesbian/queer people being regarded as straight. Historically, passing was often necessary as a form of safety for LGBTQ+ individuals.

**Polyamorous:** Refers to the practice of engaging in, or being open to, multiple consensual and emotionally connected relationships at the same time. Many who identify as polyamorous view it as a valid relationship orientation. The term is also often used to broadly describe ethical, consensual, and caring forms of non-monogamous relationships.

**Privilege:** A set of unearned advantages granted to individuals who belong to a particular social group. The concept originates from W.E.B. Du Bois' work on the "psychological wage," highlighting white people's sense of superiority over Black people. Peggy McIntosh, as a white woman, wrote about privilege and created an inventory of unearned privileges she experienced in everyday life due to her whiteness.

**Pronouns:** Linguistic tools used to refer to someone in the third person. Examples are she/her/hers, they/them/theirs, ze/hir/hirs, and he/him/his. In English and some other languages, pronouns have been tied to gender and are a common area of misgendering (attributing a gender to someone that is incorrect.)

*[Look at “External Resources” on the Website for More Information about Pronouns](#)*

**QPOC/QTPOC/QTBIPOC:** Queer People of Color (QPOC); Queer Trans People of Color (QTPOC); Queer Trans Black Indigenous People of Color (QTBIPOC). These terms are often

used to highlight how intersectional identities can lead to complex and overlapping systems and experiences of oppression.

**Queer:** An umbrella term used to describe gender, physical, or romantic orientations and identities that fall outside of societal norms. Historically, "queer" was used as a slur against the LGBTQ+ community. However, some people, mostly from the younger generation, have reclaimed the word and use it as a self-identification in opposition to assimilation, often celebrating not conforming to social norms. Some institutions even use the words "queer" for LGBTQ related educational courses. Not everyone who identifies as LGBTQIA uses "queer" to describe themselves, especially individuals from earlier generations who may avoid the term due to the historical derogatory use. For many individuals, it is often considered offensive when used by those who do not identify as LGBTQIA. If you do not identify within the community, context and the usage of the word as an adjective is incredibly relevant.

**Questioning:** The process of exploring one's own gender identity, gender expression, and/or sexual orientation. Some individuals may also use this term to describe their identity within the LGBTQIA community.

## R

**Race:** A social construct that categorizes people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance, ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, ethnic classification, and cultural history. These divisions are influenced by the social, economic, and political context of a society at a given time. (Racial Equity Resource Guide)

**Racism:** The systematic subordination of people from marginalized racial groups based on their physical appearance, ethnic or ancestral history, or cultural affiliation. Racism is considered a deeply ingrained, systemic issue perpetuated by members of the privileged racial group who hold dominant social power over others. Discrimination, prejudice, or xenophobia may be more fitting terms for describing individual acts of oppression. While these acts often stem from systemic racism, at the individual level, the power dynamics that enable racism are not present in the same way.

**Romantic Orientation:** Attraction or lack of attraction to others, specifically in relation to the expression or non-expression of love. It can be fluid, and people use various labels to describe their romantic orientation. This can be experienced in varied intensities. [See Orientation.](#)

## S

**Sex/Sex Assigned at Birth:** A medically constructed categorization, often assigned based on the appearance of the genitalia, either through ultrasound or at birth. Sex assigned at birth differs from gender identity, and sex is not always binary, as seen in Intersex individuals. See also [Intersex](#), [AFAB](#), and [AMAB](#).

**Sexism:** The cultural, institutional, and individual set of beliefs and practices that privilege men, subordinate women, and devalue ways of being associated with women.

**Sexuality:** The components of a person that encompass their biological sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual practices, and other related aspects of their identity.

**Sexual Orientation:** Sexual orientation refers to the capacity to feel emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction—or lack thereof—to other people. It can be fluid, and individuals use various labels to describe their sexual orientation. See also Orientation.

**Sizeism:** The pervasive system of discrimination and exclusion that oppresses people whose bodies society labels as "overweight," as well as people of short stature. Historically, fat people's bodies have been labeled as unhealthy, undesirable, and lazy, which perpetuates harmful narratives around health and healthy living. This form of oppression is referred to as fatphobia.

**Skoliosexual:** You may find yourself more frequently drawn to individuals whose gender identities differ from the traditional binary, and you tend to form emotional, romantic, or sexual connections with people who are transgender, non-binary, gender nonconforming, or otherwise identify outside of the cisgender experience.

**Social Identities:** Social identity groups are based on the physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals. These groups can be obvious and clear, or not always visible and unclear. Social identities are often self-claimed but can also be ascribed by others.

**Socialization:** The process by which societal norms shape various aspects of how members of a community live, including their thoughts, behaviors, and values. Socialization can reinforce assumptions or expectations that uphold systems of oppression, influencing how individuals interact with and perceive the world around them.

**Social Justice:** A goal and a process aimed at ensuring the equitable distribution of resources, where all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. It starts with the recognition that oppression and inequity exist and must be actively dismantled at all levels. ([Adams, Bell, & Griffin.](#))

**Socioeconomic Class:** Social group membership determined by a mix of factors like occupation, income, social standing within the community, and education. This includes elements such as group affiliations, community connections, and the way the community views the individual or family.

**Spectrum:** A sliding scale. Elements of a person's identity, such as sexual orientation, gender expression, and gender identity can exist on a spectrum or beyond it. For instance, with sexual orientation, attraction to women, men, or individuals of other genders all exist on a different spectrum. A person might experience strong attraction to men, moderate attraction to women, and low attraction to people outside of this binary.

The term 'on the spectrum' is more frequently associated with identifying as part of the autism spectrum rather than relating to sexuality or gender. ([AutisticAdvocacy](#))

**Stereotype:** A broad assumption applied to all members of a cultural group, treating the group without considering individual differences. When we accept stereotypes, we often overlook traits that don't align with the stereotype, rationalize our perceptions to fit the stereotype, label those who don't conform as 'exceptions,' and look for ways to reinforce the expected traits.

## T

**Trans:** A broader and more inclusive term than 'transgender,' encompassing non-binary individuals and gender non-conforming.

**Trans Man:** Typically, a person assigned female at birth who identifies as male. This identity may be chosen to reflect both their lived in experiences as a transgender and their gender identity.

**Trans woman:** Typically, a person assigned male at birth who identifies as a female. This identity may be chosen to reflect their lived in experiences as a transgender individual and their gender identity.

**Transgender:** An adjective commonly used as an umbrella term, often shortened to 'trans.' Identifying as transgender, or trans, means that a person's internal understanding of their gender differs from cultural or conventional societal expectations based on the sex assigned to them at birth. While transgender may describe a woman assigned male at birth or a man assigned female at birth, it is an inclusive term that can also refer to individuals who identify outside the traditional binary of woman or man, such as genderqueer, agender, non-binary, multigender, genderfluid, or other gender identities.

**Transition:** Transitioning is the process of taking steps to live authentically according to one's true gender identity. It is a personal journey that varies for each individual and may or may not include medical interventions, such as hormone therapy or surgery. Some people may choose not to transition in certain ways for various reasons. The degree of a person's transition does not diminish or enhance the validity of their gender identity.

Transitioning can involve social changes, like adopting new pronouns or using a Lived Name that aligns with one's gender identity. It might also include altering one's physical appearance, such as changing clothing, hairstyle, or even pursuing medical transition through hormones or surgery. Transitioning can also extend to adjusting legal documents to reflect one's authentic self. Social transitioning refers to presenting oneself in a way that best affirms one's gender identity, which might involve sharing one's lived name and gender identity in social contexts.

**Two Spirit:** An umbrella term that encompasses both gender and sexuality within Indigenous Native American communities. Two-Spirit individuals often hold vital and respected roles in their communities, such as leaders and healers. While it can represent a combination of

masculinity and femininity, this is not the only meaning of the term. The understanding of 'Two-Spirit' varies, and the term may not resonate with everyone. 'Two-Spirit' is a cultural term specifically for those who identify as Indigenous Native American. Two-Spirit people have existed for centuries, however, the term only gained wider usage around 1990.

## U

**Undocumented:** People who are born outside of the country to which they immigrated, who do not have documentation that grants legal rights related to citizenship and/or residency.

## W

**WLW:** The abbreviation for Women who like Women includes individuals who identify as lesbians, pansexual, omnisexual, bisexual, or other similar identities. Some people prefer the term "sapphic" as it offers a more inclusive reference, especially for non-binary individuals.

**Womxn:** Some people use "womxn" with an "x" to reclaim the term and separate it from the "men" embedded in the conventional spelling of "women," aiming to promote inclusivity and empowerment.

## Z

**Ze/Zir:** This is an example of an alternate pronoun that exists outside of the traditional binary gender categories. Individuals who do not identify within that binary may choose to use gender-neutral pronouns. Common examples include *they/them* or *xe/xem*. [See Pronouns](#)

[\*Look at “External Resources” on the Website for More Information about Pronouns\*](#)

Definitions adapted from [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#), [UC Davis’ LGBTQIA Resource Center](#), [Teaching for diversity and social justice \(2nd ed.\)](#), [Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group](#), [The National Symposium on Neurodiversity](#), [The Safe Zone Project](#), and [Why We Need To Stop Outing](#). Last Updated 04/30/2025