



**THE PRIDE JUSTICE RESOURCE CENTER**  
The National Resource Center on Justice-Involved LGBTQ2S+ Youth



It is important to stay current on the language and terms used by the communities we work with. Language and terms in the LGBTQ2S+ community evolve as the identity spectrum is further explored and understood. It is vital to ask people what terms they use to describe their own sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

## **Glossary of Terms**

**Ableism** - A type of oppression that benefits able-bodied people and oppresses people with disabilities (7).

**Agender** - An individual who does not identify with a particular gender (7).

**Ally** - A person who supports and advocates for LGBTQ2S+ social movements, equal civil rights, and gender equality. An ally may also challenge fear and discrimination in all its forms (3).

**Androgynous** - A gender expression that has a mix of masculine and feminine elements or maybe without masculine or feminine traits (7).

**Anti-Gay Bias** - Aversion or discrimination against individuals who are not heterosexual or those who are associated with anyone who advocates for LGBTQ2S+. This is often referred to as homophobia (7).

**Anti-Transgender Bias** - Hatred, discrimination, or aversion to transgender, gender diverse, or gender nonconforming people, people perceived to be as such, or those associated with persons who are transgender, gender diverse, or gender nonconforming. This could be referred to as transphobia (7).

**Asexual** - Also known as “ace”, these individuals do not experience sexual attraction, but may experience other forms of attraction such as intellectual or emotional. Asexual people may identify as bisexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, straight, and many more (7).

**Bigender** - This term is used to describe someone who has two genders. For example, a combination of man, woman, and/or other gender identities (4).

**Bisexual** - A person who is attracted to people of their own genders as well as other genders (7).

**Chosen Family** - People who support an LGBTQ2S+ person. Though they may not be biologically related, these supporters will often fill the role of the biological family if an LGBTQ+ person’s family is not supportive of them (5).



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Chosen Name - A name selected by a person that differs from the name they were given at birth. This helps affirm a person's gender identity and/or gender expression (4).

Cisgender - A term for people whose gender identity matches with that assigned for their assigned sex at birth. Someone who does not identify as transgender or non-binary (4).

Cisgender Privilege - The implicit and explicit privileges exercised by cisgender people. These privileges include, but are not limited to, the ability to use public restrooms without fear of verbal abuse, physical intimidation, or arrest. The privileges also encompass freedom from questions about one's anatomy (often by strangers), and the freedom from frequent misgendering. Cisgender people also enjoy a presumed "validity" as a man/woman/human and this validity is not based on surgical procedures or how well one "passes" as a man/woman/human, etc (7).

Classism - A type of oppression that benefits people with high and middle socioeconomic status and oppresses people with lower socioeconomic status (7).

Coming Out - The personal process of communicating one's sexual orientation or gender identity to oneself and/or individuals in one's life; often incorrectly thought of to be a one-time event, this is a lifelong and sometimes daily process (7).

Cross Dress - To cross-dress is to wear clothing most often associated (in one's culture and historical timeframe) with people of another gender (7).

Diverse SOGIE - A more inclusive term to describe all people who identify as having diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and/or Gender Expression (7).

Drag Queen/Drag King - Someone who dresses and performs as another gender for entertainment purposes. Often embodies a theatrical or exaggerated version of masculinity or femininity; does not necessarily self-identify as transgender (7).

Feminine - A term used to describe the socially constructed and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of women (7).

Gay - This term is used to describe a man who is attracted to another man. Gay can be used by women who are attracted to other women (7).

Gay-Straight Alliance/Gender Sexuality Alliance (GSA) - Formal organization of LGBTQ2S+ and straight people in support of the dignity and rights of LGBTQ2S+ people. These alliances are developed in the context of creating change in educational institutions and environments (7).

Gender Dysphoria - A state of severe distress or unhappiness caused by the feeling that one's gender identity does not match one's sex as registered at birth (5).



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**Gender Expression** - The ways in which an individual communicates their gender to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, etc. Gender expression is not an indication of gender identity or sexual orientation- a person can express one gender and identify with another. A concept that gender exists beyond a simple man/woman binary model, but instead exists on a continuum. Some individuals may fall towards more masculine or feminine aspects whereas others can fluidly move along the spectrum or exist on the spectrum entirely (7; 1; 5).

**Gender Fluid** - A person whose gender identity may continually change throughout their lifetime. These individuals may not feel confined within the socially and culturally expected gender roles and in fact, may identify differently from situation to situation (7).

**Gender Identity** - An internal, personal sense of gender. Gender identity is best represented as a spectrum and a person could move around this spectrum. Terms in this spectrum include man, woman, gender fluid, genderqueer, trans, transgender, and Two-Spirit, but gender identity is not limited to these terms. Some people could identify as both man and woman, neither man nor woman, or non-binary (7).

**Gender Neutral** - Clothing, styles, activities, spaces, etc., that a society or culture considers appropriate for anyone, irrespective of gender; anything that carries with it no particular gender associations (7).

**Gender Nonconforming** - Expressing gender and/or having gender characteristics that do not conform to the expectations of society and culture. This is also known as gender variant, gender diverse, or gender creative (7).

**Gender Role** - Socially or culturally determined sets of attitudes and behaviors that are expected of a person based on their assigned sex at birth or perceived sex (7).

**Genderism** - A type of oppression that benefits cisgender individuals and oppresses transgender and gender-nonconforming people. This can happen in the form of transphobia, bias, and discrimination toward transgender and gender-nonconforming people (7).

**Genderqueer** - This term is used by some people to describe themselves when their experience of their gender identity falls out of the binary male or female (7).

**Heteronormativity** - Describes the social, cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that intentionally or unintentionally assume that heterosexual and cisgender experiences and identities are normative or universal. This assumption is fundamentally embedded in, and legitimizes, social and legal institutions that devalue, marginalize, and discriminate against people who deviate from its normative principle. (6).

**Heterosexism** - Oppression that benefits straight/heterosexual people and oppresses LGBTQ2S+ people. Heterosexism may take the form of homophobia or biphobia, bias, and discrimination towards LGBTQ2S+ people (7).



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Heterosexual - Feeling romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to a person(s) of the opposite gender with which one identifies; sometimes referred to as being straight (7).

Heterosexual Privilege - Privileges heterosexual/straight people have because of heterosexism. People who are straight have privileges that may be explicit or implicit such as the right to marry, adopt children, be a foster parent, fair employment, etc (7).

Homosexual - A person who is primarily emotionally, spiritually, physically, and/or sexually attracted toward persons of the same gender. Some LGBTQ2S+ elders self-identify with this term. However, based on a pathologizing and oppressive history, it is widely considered outdated and is not widely used (6).

Intersectionality - A term coined in 1989 by civil rights activist and legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe the unique types of oppression and discrimination experienced by individuals with multiple marginalized identities, in categories such as gender identity, race, class, ability, or sexual orientation, for example. These overlapping systems of oppression interact and contribute to multiple forms of discrimination and systematic social inequality (7).

Intersex - A general term used to refer to people whose bodies defy a collective understanding of sex as a simple male/female binary. Intersex continues to be widely accepted as an umbrella term referring to biological diversity affecting sexual and reproductive anatomy (6).

Lesbian - A term to describe a woman who is attracted to other women (7).

LGBTQ2S+ - An acronym that stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Genderqueer, and Two-Spirit. There are many variations of this acronym. A plus sign is used to recognize that there are limitless identities within the community (2).

Masculine - This describes the socially and culturally specific gender behaviors expected of men (7).

Misgender - To refer to someone using a word, pronoun, or name that does not correctly reflect their gender identity. To accidentally misgender someone can be understandable, but it should be corrected quickly. This is also known as deadname, and it may include using the name given to a trans individual at birth that they no longer use (3).

Nonbinary - A gender identity that specifically rejects the notion of binary gender. The term can sometimes be used interchangeably with genderqueer (6).

Oppression - Systems of power and privilege, based on bias, which benefit some social groups over others. Oppression can 1) take many forms, including ideological, institutional, interpersonal, and internalized; 2) be intentional and unintentional; 3) be conscious and unconscious; and, 4) be visible and invisible. Oppression prevents oppressed groups and individuals from being free and equal. Many people face oppression based on more than one of their identities, creating a unique complexity of challenges and resilience (7).



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**Out** - This describes someone who openly self-identifies as LGBTQ2S+ in their private, public, and/or professional lives. There are many states of being out. A person can choose to be out to only themselves, close friends, or everyone. Transgender individuals may choose this term to disclose (5).

**Outing** - To share another person's sexual orientation or gender identity deliberately or accidentally without their explicit consent. This is disrespectful and may present a danger for many LGBTQ2+ individuals (5).

**Pansexual** - Someone who is attracted to people regardless of sex, gender identity, or gender expression (7).

**Pronouns** - These are words used to refer to a person by something other than their name. Common pronouns include they/them, he/him, and she/her. Neopronouns are pronouns created to be specifically gendered neutral, including xe/xem, ze/zir, and fae/faer. For people who use pronouns (not all people do) they are not preferred, they are essential (5).

**Queer** - A term used by some LGBTQ2S+ people to describe themselves and/or their community. Reclaimed from its earlier negative use--and valued by some for its defiance--the term is also considered by some to be inclusive of the entire community and by others who find it to be an appropriate term to describe their more fluid identities. Traditionally a negative or pejorative term for people who are LGBTQ2S+, some people within the community dislike the term. Due to its varying meanings, use this word only when self-identifying or quoting an individual who self-identifies as queer (i.e., "My cousin identifies as queer" or "My cousin is a queer person") (7).

**Questioning** - Individuals who are currently exploring their own sexual orientation, gender identities, and/or their gender expression are said to be "questioning" (3).

**Racism** - Oppression that benefits white people and oppresses people of color. Not all people of color face racism the same way. Racism can depend greatly on culture, skin tone, location, and many other factors (7).

**Romantic Attraction** - Attraction to another person wherein a person desires intimate romantic behavior including dating or having a relationship. This is different from sexual attraction (7).

**Same Gender Loving** - A term created by the Black and African-American SOGIE diverse community and used by some people of color who see 'gay' and 'lesbian' as terms more connected to a white lesbian or gay identity (7).

**Sex Assigned at Birth** - An infant is assigned a gender at birth based on a medical provider's perception of the person's bodily characteristics such as genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, etc. as male, female, or intersex (3).

**Sexism** - Oppression that benefits male-identified people and oppressed female-identified people (7).

**Sexual Orientation** - An enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction or non-attraction to other people. Sexual orientation can be fluid (1).



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SOGIE - An acronym that stands for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

Stealth - Someone who, after beginning their transition and living as their preferred genders, does not readily tell others about their pasts, specifically their birth-assigned genders. Others may be open about their trans statuses (4).

Straight - Feeling romantic, emotional, and/or sexual attraction to a person(s) of the opposite gender with which one identifies; often used synonymously with heterosexual (7).

Third Gender - Someone in a gender category not recognized in the Western binary. Ex: Native American two-spirit people, hijra in India, kathoey in Thailand, and travestis in Brazil. This recognizes that people's identities are specific to their culture (4).

Transgender - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. People under this umbrella term would describe their gender identity using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including but not limited to transgender. "Trans" is often used as a shorthand (7).

Transition - The process through which some transgender people change their gender expression to more closely resemble how they view their gender identity (3).

Transsexual - An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth. It often refers to those who physically change their body, so it matches their gender identity. Many trans people do not identify with it, as it is largely outdated and inaccurately conflates the nature of trans identity with the obligation to undergo sex reassignment surgery (7).

Transphobia - A fear of, hatred of, or discomfort with people who are transgender or otherwise gender non-conforming (4).

Two-Spirit - Encompasses sexual, cultural, gender, and spiritual identities in some Indigenous and Native American communities. Two-Spirit refers to a person who has both a male and female essence or spirit. This term should not be used to identify non-indigenous people (5).





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Funding for this glossary was provided by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice (15PJDP-22-GK-03104-TITL). Points of view or opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the contributor(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

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