

Approved definitions*

Homosexual

"Someone who is physically and emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. The term "homosexual" has historically been used in hurtful ways, which is why many people now use other terms like lesbian, gay and bisexual."

Lesbian

"A woman who is physically and emotionally attracted to other women. This word is derived from "Lesbos", a Greek island home to Sappho, a poet and teacher who loved other women."

Gay

"[T]erm for someone with physical and emotional attraction to someone of the same gender. The term was used in the mid-1800s to mid-1900s to describe anyone engaging in any 'unconventional' sexual behaviour for the time (such as oral sex). 'Gay' can be used to talk about both men and women or more generally, the 'gay community', but it commonly refers to men."

Bisexual

"Someone who is attracted physically and emotionally to people of the same or different genders. Bisexual people are not necessarily attracted equally to men and women and not always attracted to both men and women at the same time. Bisexuality is often thought of as a "phase" on the way to coming out as gay or lesbian, but for many people, being bisexual is a life-long sexual identity."

Pansexual or Omnisexual

"A newer term for someone who is attracted physically and emotionally to another person regardless of gender or sex. This term is often used by those who wish to express their understanding and acceptance of trans and intersexed people. Also sometimes used by people wishing to express their openness to a broad range of sexual activities such as BDSM (Bondage, Discipline, Domination, Submission, Sadism, Masochism)."

Polysexual

"Someone who is attracted physically and emotionally to more than one gender or sex but does not want to identify as bisexual because it is rooted in the idea of two genders ("bi"- sexuality meaning "two")."

Queer

"An umbrella term for a social/intellectual/political movement that seeks to encompass a broad range of sexual identities, behaviours and expressions."

It is also a personal identity that has been 're-claimed' because queer has been historically used as a vicious insult. Sometimes it is used as a short form that includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and transgendered people."

LGBT

"A shortened acronym for 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered'. Sometimes you will see this as LBGT2Q to include 'lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual, transgendered, 2-spirited, queer'. This may appear in various combinations."

Calgary Sexual Health. (2017) Sexual orientation. Retrieved from <https://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/sexual-health-info/sexual-orientation/>

Gender Identity

"A person's self-identified sense of being male, female, neither or both; how we think about and express our gender."

An easy way to think of the difference between sex and gender is 'sex is between your legs and gender is between your ears:'"

Transgender

"A self-identifying term for someone whose gender identity or expression differs significantly from the gender they were assigned at birth."

Transgender is also a political umbrella term used to refer to everyone who crosses gender roles in one way or another including transsexuals, drag queens and transvestites."

Some people ("transgenderists") live in a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth but without wanting to change their genitalia."

Transsexual

"Someone whose gender identity is different from the biological sex that they were assigned at birth."

A transsexual person might change their physical sex by having surgery (known as Sex Reassignment Surgery or SRS), take hormones (testosterone or estrogens), do electrolysis and/or wear gender specific clothing."

This process of change is known as transitioning. Transsexuals may be referred to as female-to-male (FTM: a trans man) or male-to-female (MTF: a trans woman)."

Two-Spirited

"A First Nations term used in various ways by people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered or transsexual, or who literally embody both a male and female identity and perspective. This term particularly refers to gender."

Two-Spirited people had positive and elevated status among some Aboriginal nations prior to the arrival of Europeans."

Intersex

“Refers to people who are born with a combination of male and female anatomy. The term ‘hermaphrodite’ used to be used, but is now considered inappropriate and offensive.”

Calgary Sexual Health. (2017) Gender identity. Retrieved from <https://www.calgarysexualhealth.ca/sexual-health-info/gender-identity/>