



“Inclusive language evolves over time. As leaders and allies we must evolve with it. We can exclude (even unintentionally) or we can include people through the words that we use. We help to empower and create an environment of belonging through language. Words are powerful. Let’s use them wisely.” – Lin Surch, CEO Beyond Gender

LGBTQ+ Terminology

Affirmed gender (*noun*): The gender by which one identifies. A person’s innate gender. Gender can be fluid, or it may not be. A person’s affirmed gender may or may not be the gender a person was assigned at birth.

Agender (*adj.*): A person who identifies as agender does not identify with any gender. Sometimes known as “without gender”

Ally (*noun*): A person who may not necessarily identify as LGBTQ+ (or who may) but one who stands with and advocates for LGBTQ inclusion.

Androgynous (*adj.*): Often used to describe someone who expresses themselves as neither distinguishably masculine or feminine, or a combination of both.

Asexual (*adj.*): Used to describe people who do not experience sexual attraction or do not have a desire for sex. Some asexual people experience romantic and/or emotional attractions, sometimes across the entire spectrum of sexual orientation. Also known as: *ace*, or the *ace community*. Asexuality differs from celibacy, which refers to ‘abstaining’ from sex.

Assigned sex (*noun*): The sex that is assigned to an infant at birth based on the child's visible physical characteristics/body. May correspond with a child's *assigned gender* and *assumed gender*.

Binary (*noun*): Something that contains two opposing parts; binary systems are often used to assume, despite the existence of a spectrum of diversity. Gender (i.e. man/woman) and sex (i.e. male/female) are examples of binary systems.

Biological sex (*noun*): A medical classification that refers to anatomical, physiological, genetic or physical attributes that determine if a person is assigned male, female or intersex at birth. Biological sex is often confused or interchanged with the term "gender," which encompasses gender identity, and is not necessarily determined by biological sex.

Bisexual, Bi (*adj.*): A person emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Cisgender (*adj.*): A term used to describe when a person's gender identity matches the social expectations for their sex assigned at birth; sometimes referred to as different to transgender.

Cissexism (*noun*): A system of discrimination and/or exclusion that segregates, others or oppresses people whose gender identity and/or gender expression falls outside of the binary. This system is founded on the belief that there are, and should be, only two genders, that are assumed to be tied to a person's assigned sex.

Coming out (*verb*): The process or experience of the acknowledgment and recognition of one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity (to ones' self and to others).

Demisexual (*adj.*): Used to describe someone who feels sexual attraction only to people with whom they have a strong emotional bond.

Gay (*adj.*): Used to describe people (often, but not exclusively, men) whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex and/or gender identity. (cis or trans)

Gender (*noun*): A set of social, physical, psychological and emotional traits, that classify an individual as man, woman, trans, non-binary, gender fluid etc. Words and qualities ascribed to these traits vary across cultures. Gender can make up part of a person's personal and social identity. It refers to the way a person experiences their gender. It is personal. It is innate. It may be fluid, or it may not be, for an individual.

Gender expression (*noun*): External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through mannerisms, clothing, hair style and/or voice etc. The way in which one expressed their gender.

Gender-fluid (*adj.*): A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender and whose identification and presentation may shift, whether within or outside of the male/female binary.

Gender identity (*noun*): One's innermost feeling of maleness, femaleness, a blend of both or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender neutral (*adj.*): Not gendered, usually operating outside the male/female binary. Can refer to language (e.g., pronouns), spaces (e.g., bathrooms) or identities.

Gender nonconforming (*adj.*): 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.

Heteronormativity (*noun*): Coined by social critic Michael Warner, the term refers to a societal assumption of a binary system across sexuality and gender. One that sometimes suggests there are only two distinct sexes; 2) that male and female functions and characteristics are distinctly different; and 3) that traits such as attraction as it corresponds to anatomy.

Heterosexism (*noun*): The assumption that sexuality between people of different sexes is normal, standard, superior or universal while other sexual orientations are substandard, inferior, abnormal, marginal or invalid.

Heterosexual (*adj.*): Used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to people of the opposite sex.

Heterosexual/cisgender privilege (*noun*): Refers to societal advantages that heterosexual people and cisgender people have solely because of these 'common' identities. This can include things as simple as safely holding hands with a romantic partner in public or having safe access to public bathrooms. This can also include systemic privileges such as the right to legally donate blood, to adopt children without facing possible rejection because of one's sexual orientation, or to play organized sports with others of the same gender identity (as some examples)

Homophobia* (*noun*): A fear or hostility toward lesbian, gay and/or bisexual people, often expressed as discrimination, harassment, vilification and/or exclusion.

Intersex (*adj.*): An umbrella term describing people born with reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or a chromosome variation that are not classified as typically male or female, but may rather be a combination of both, or neither.

Lesbian (*adj.*): Used to describe a woman whose enduring physical, romantic and/or emotional attraction is to other women. (cis or trans)

LGBTQ (*noun*): An acronym for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer." Less often, the Q stands for "questioning." Acronyms like LGBTQIA also include the intersex and asexual communities, while acronyms like LGBTQ attempt to be inclusive of and envelop an entire community of people who hold identities that are not cisgender and/or heterosexual.

Misgender (*verb*): To refer to someone in a way that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify, such as refusing to use a person's affirmed pronouns or name.

Nonbinary (*adj.*): An umbrella term that refers to individuals who identify with and may exhibit a boundless range of identities that can exist beyond a spectrum of or between male and female.

Pansexual (*adj.*): Used to describe people who have the potential for emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to people of any gender identity, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. ³³ The term *panromantic* may refer to a person who feels these emotional and romantic attractions, but identifies as asexual.

Affirmed pronouns (*adj.*): The pronoun or set of pronouns that an individual personally uses and goes by, and therefore would like others to use when talking to or about that individual. Can include

variations of he/him/his, she/her/hers, they/their/theirs, among others. *Recommended replacement: "Your pronouns, my pronouns, their pronouns, etc."*

Queer (*adj.*): Once a pejorative term, a term reclaimed and used by some within academic circles and the LGBTQ community to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that are not exclusively heterosexual and/or cisgender.

Questioning (*adj.*): A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sexual orientation (*noun*): An inherent or immutable emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people; oftentimes used to signify the gender identity (or identities) to which a person is most attracted. 36

Transgender (*adj.*): An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. 37 Not all trans people undergo transition. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual or something else. Also, *trans*.

Transitioning (*verb*): A process during which some people transition to align their gender identity with their gender expression and experience. This includes *socially transitioning*, during which a person may change their pronouns, the name they are to be called or the way they dress to be socially recognized as their affirmed gender. This includes *legal transitioning*, which may involve an official name change and modified IDs and birth certificates. A person may *physically transition*, during which a person may undergo medical interventions (or not). Transgender and nonbinary people transition in various ways to various degrees; self-identification alone is enough to validate one's gender identity.

For more information on LGBTQ+ workplace inclusion, interfaith workplace inclusion, building psychological safety, resilience and belonging please contact Beyond Gender.

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