LGBTQIA+ GLOSSARY

Knowing the right language to use is important, especially when you're talking about identity.

To help you with a few of the many words used to describe LGBTQIA+ identities, here's an introductory glossary for LGBTQIA+ vocabulary!

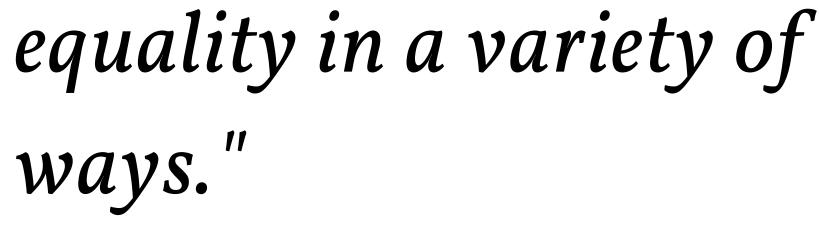We also encourage you to share these resources with your colleagues and friends.

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ally noun

\ ˈa-ˌlī \

"A person who is not LGBTQ but shows support for LGBTQ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 16, 2020

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asexual adjective

\ (ˌ)ā-ˈsek-sh(ə-)wəl \

"The lack of a sexual attraction or desire for other people." People who are asexual may still be romantically attracted to others. "Asexual" is often shortened to "ace."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 16, 2020

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biphobia

noun

"Prejudice, fear or hatred directed toward bisexual people."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 16, 2020

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bisexual adjective

\ (ˌ)bī-ˈsek-sh(ə-)wəl \

"A term that describes someone who is attracted to both men and women, or to more than one gender identity."

SOURCE

The Trevor Project, "Glossary: Key Terms"
n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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cisgender adjective

\ (ˌ)sis-ˈjen-dər \

"A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 15, 2020

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closeted adjective

\ ˈklä-zə-təd \

"Describes an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 15, 2020

coming out

verb

"The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms" n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

gay adjective

\ ˈgā \

"In the past, only men who are attracted to men have used the word "gay." Now, it is common for "gay" to be used by anyone who is attracted to their same sex or gender."

SOURCE

The Trevor Project, "Glossary: Key Terms"
n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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gender noun

\ 'jen-dər \

"An idea created by society (A.K.A. a social construct) that tells us what certain genders are "supposed" to be like, based on a group of emotional, behavioral and cultural characteristics (like how we express our feelings or how we dress)."

SOURCE

The Trevor Project, "Glossary: Key Terms"
n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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genderfluid adjective

"[A] gender identity label often used by people whose sense of self in relation to gender changes from time-to-time. The time frame might be over the course of many months, days, shorter, or longer, but the consistent experience is one of change."

SOURCE

It's Pronounced Metrosexual, "Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions," n.d. Accessed June 16, 2020

gender identity noun

"One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 16, 2020

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gender non-conforming
adjective

"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."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 16, 2020

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homophobia noun

\ ˌhō-mə-ˈfō-bē-ə \

"The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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intersex adjective

\ ˈin-tər-ˌseks \

"Describes a condition in which a person is born with a sex that doesn't fit the typical definitions of female or male due to genetic, hormonal or anatomical differences."

SOURCE

The Trevor Project, "Glossary: Key Terms" n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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lesbian adjective

\ 'lez-bē-ən \

Describes "[a] woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms" n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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L•G•B•T•Q•+

"[S]horthand/umbrella term for...folks who have a non-normative (or queer) gender or sexuality, there are many different initialisms people prefer; LGBTQ is Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Queer and/or Questioning (sometimes people add a '+' at the end in an effort to be more inclusive)."

SOURCE

It's Pronounced Metrosexual, "Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions," n.d. Accessed June 11, 2020

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non-binary *adjective*

\ ˌnän-ˈbī-nə-rē \

"An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 15, 2020

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pansexual adjective

\ ˌpan-ˈsek-sh(ə-)wəl \

"[A] person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction for members of all gender identities/expressions. Often shortened to 'pan.'"

SOURCE

It's Pronounced Metrosexual,
"Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary
Definitions," n.d. Accessed June 11, 2020

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queer adjective

\ 'kwir \

"[A]n umbrella term to describe individuals who don't identify as straight and/or cisgender [someone whose gender does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth]." While the noun form is often considered a derogatory slur, "queer" as a descriptor has been reclaimed by many as a word of empowerment and is widely acceptable.

As with all terms, please respect individual wishes regarding the non-use of this word.

SOURCE

It's Pronounced Metrosexual, "Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary Definitions," n.d. Accessed June 11, 2020

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questioning adjective

\ ˈkwes-chə-niŋ \

"A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity."

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sex assigned at birth

noun

"The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth, most often based on the child's external anatomy. This is also referred to as 'assigned sex at birth.'"

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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sexual orientation
noun

"Describes a person's physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to another person. Everyone has a sexual orientation."

SOURCE

The Trevor Project, "Glossary: Key Terms" n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity/Expression (S.O.G.I.E.)

Everyone has a sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, which is summarized by the term SOGIE. This term applies to everyone, including those who identify as cisgender or heterosexual. SOGIE-minority identities are those that are typically included in LGBTQ+ or queer definitions.

transgender adjective

\ tran(t)s-ˈjen-dər \

"An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 13, 2020

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transitioning

"The social, legal, and/or medical process a trans* person may go through to make their gender identity fit their gender expression, presentation, or sex. This word means many different things to different people, and a person doesn't have to experience all or any of these common transitioning elements to identify as their true gender."

SOURCE

The Trevor Project, "Glossary: Key Terms" n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

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transphobia noun

\ ˌtran(t)s-ˈfō-bē-ə \

"The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people."

SOURCE

The Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," n.d. Accessed June 18, 2020

two-spirit noun

"[A]n umbrella term traditionally within Native American communities to recognize individuals who possess qualities or fulfill roles of both feminine and masculine genders."

SOURCE

It's Pronounced Metrosexual,
"Comprehensive* List of LGBTQ+ Vocabulary
Definitions," n.d. Accessed June 11, 2020

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