

# Terminology

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The following terminology is a summary of the larger dictionary of terms provided by the Victoria & Albert Museum, London: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/info/lgbtq>

## Androgyne / Androgyny

A person appearing and/or identifying as neither male nor female, presenting a gender which is either mixed or neutral.

## Bisexual / Bisexuality

An individual who is sexually attracted to both men and women, or gives the impression of being so. The term also acts as a proper noun for this individual. A common misconception is that bisexuality means being equally attracted to both sexes – in fact, many people who state a distinct or exclusive preference for one sex over another, may still identify as bisexual. An alternative, less commonly used term, is ambisexual.

## Gay

An individual who is gay is sexually attracted to members of their own sex, or gives the impression of being so. The term also acts as a noun for the individual. Unlike lesbian, which always indicates the female, the term »gay« can indicate both men and women. This can be clarified by using it as a prefix, e.g. gay man/male, or gay woman/female. Some individuals who identify as gay may feel sexually attracted to and/or have relationships with members of the opposite sex but not identify as bisexual. The term »gay« as a sexual slang term first emerged in the late 1600s (a »gay woman« was a prostitute, a »gay fellow« a lothario), in addition to its general meaning, »colourful« or »happy«. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the term was appropriated by the homosexual community. By 1990 it was a widely accepted synonym for »homosexual«. The actual word is slightly problematic, as it is currently used as mildly pejorative (possibly not intentionally homophobic) slang (e.g. »That's so gay!«) to mean something is rubbish. When using the word »gay« it should be clearly used to avoid any such misunderstanding. If used in a historical context, i.e. in quotation (e.g. »gay house« = brothel) the meaning must be explicitly explained.

## Gender Identity

A person's sense of being masculine, feminine, or other gendered.

## Heterosexual

An individual who is heterosexual is solely attracted to members of the opposite sex. The term also acts as a proper noun for this individual. Some people who have same-sex experiences may identify as heterosexual rather than bisexual. Sometimes, to avoid adverse attention (i.e. homophobia), gay, bisexual, or lesbian individuals will identify themselves as heterosexual, or allow this to be assumed.

## Homoerotic

This term is usually applied to items where the portrayal of males is perceived as designed (intentionally or unintentionally) to sexually appeal to a gay and bisexual male audience. The creators can be either male or female, and not necessarily gay themselves. The term »homoerotic« implies an item has artistic or aesthetic qualities, though certain individuals (not necessarily homophobic, but from any culture or social group, and of any sexuality) might consider such items to be inartistic, lewd, pornographic, and/or otherwise offensive. The term »homoerotic« is almost never applied to the lesbian equivalent of such artwork, for which no single-word official term exists. The term female homoeroticism should be used very carefully as many portrayals of lesbian activity were, and still are, explicitly created for a heterosexual male audience. Depictions of male homosexual activity created by women for a female audience (e.g. Japanese yaoi comics or manga) also exist; again to label such work homoerotic may be problematic.

## Homophobia

The fear and/or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality. Homophobia can manifest at any level, ranging from mild discomfort around LGBTQ people, to avoidant tactics, to hate speech and acts of violence against gays & lesbians e.g. »queer-bashing« or active incitement of hatred against LGBTQ people. Some people who identify as homosexual or bisexual may have attitudes best described as homophobic towards certain sections of gay culture, or certain »types« of LGBTQ people. For example, some gay men may have lesbophobia, the fear or dislike of lesbians. Gay men and lesbians can also show biphobia or even heterophobia.

### **Homosexual**

An individual who is homosexual is sexually attracted to members of their own sex, or gives the impression of being so. The term also acts as a noun for the individual. The term can apply to both men and women, though it is usually used for gay men. The term can be qualified as male homosexuality, or female homosexuality. Same sex individuals seldom apply the term to themselves, generally preferring the terms gay or lesbian. This is because the term is problematic due to negative clinical associations. It is often used by homophobes to depersonalise and dehumanise gays and lesbians, without using more obviously derogatory terms. Cataloguers often innocently use this term in preference to what they perceive as more colloquial terms, such as ›gay‹. An alternative adjective is same-sex, as in ›same-sex relationship‹.

### **Intersexed Person / Intersex**

Someone whose sex a doctor has a difficult time categorizing as either male or female. A person whose combination of chromosomes, hormones, internal sex organs, gonads, and/or genitals differs from one of the two expected patterns. People with intersex conditions sometimes choose to live exclusively as one sex or the other, using clothing, social cues, genital surgery, and hormone replacement therapy to blend into the sex they identify with more closely. Some people who are intersex, such as some of those with androgen insensitivity syndrome, outwardly appear completely female or male already, without realizing they are intersex. Other kinds of intersex conditions are identified immediately at birth due to visible differences in genitalia.

### **Lesbian**

A woman who is sexually attracted to other women, or who gives the impression of being so. As a term, »lesbian« (or Lesbian) dates back to the early 18th century. By the 1870s it was known to refer to sexual orientation rather than to Sappho and the Lesbos islanders. Until the early 20th century, lesbian and Sapphist were used interchangeably.

### **Trans**

An abbreviation that is sometimes used to refer to a gender variant person. This use allows a person to state a gender variant identity without having to disclose hormonal or surgical status/intentions. This term is sometimes used to refer to the gender variant community as a whole and can be written also with an asterisk to make a wider umbrella term, trans\*. Transgender of, relating to, or being a person who identifies with or expresses a gender identity that differs from the one which corresponds to the person's sex at birth. Transgender can also be defined as a person who lives as a member of a gender not necessarily based on anatomical sex. Sexual orientation varies and is not dependent on gender identity.

### **Transsexual**

A person who identifies psychologically as a gender/sex other than the one to which they were assigned at birth. Transsexuals often wish to transform their bodies hormonally and surgically to match their inner sense of gender/sex.

### **Queer**

An umbrella term which embraces a spectrum of sexual preferences, orientations, and habits of the not-exclusively-heterosexual-and-monogamous majority. Queer can include lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, intersex persons, the radical sex communities, and many other sexually transgressive people. It is a reclaimed word that was formerly used solely as a slur or term of abuse until the 1980s, but has now been semantically overturned by LGBT persons who use it as a term of defiant pride.