

# Exploring good practice use of inclusive group identity labels to represent people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships

## BACKGROUND

This paper presents the most up-to-date research on emerging practices in terminology use, thereby offering an essential resource to organisations wishing to remain in touch with the communities they serve. Due to the lack of primary research into the preferences of people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships, this paper does not offer recommendations on which terms to use. Instead, it aims to foster and inform conversations about what terms are most appropriate to use and when.

The use of respectful, identity-affirming language is fundamental to building inclusive societies where people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships enjoy the same health outcomes as the wider population. When language is inaccurate and exclusionary, it undermines social cohesion, health, and wellbeing. Experiences of social exclusion are common among LGBTIQ+ people, with the recent *Private Lives 3* (2020) report in Australia finding that 39% of LGBTIQ+ people report social exclusion as one of the main types of heterosexist discrimination they have encountered.<sup>1</sup>

Use of incorrect and inappropriate language contributes to exclusion, stigma, and experiences of discrimination, which are all associated with poor health outcomes.<sup>2</sup> Stigma can be internalised, which affects a person's self-perception, negatively impacts resilience and mental health, and contributes to suicidality.<sup>3</sup> Experiences of stigma and discrimination, including through misgendering and encountering stigmatising language, lead to lower engagement with healthcare and other services, which leads to negative health outcomes and causes psychological distress.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, using language that is accurate and inclusive promotes social cohesion, builds stronger communities, and reduces stigma. This supports improvements in mental and physical health and wellbeing and increases resilience.<sup>5</sup> Studies suggest that it has direct positive effects on wellbeing, with the recent Australian study *Writing Themselves In 4* (2021) finding that being affirmed by others, largely through language and comments affirming gender and sexuality, contributed to making young LGBTIQ+ people feel good about themselves.<sup>6</sup>

To be as inclusive and respectful as possible, we should use the preferred identity label of each person and group we are referring to. However, it is often necessary to combine diverse groups into one label. This allows organisations to signal that they deliver specialist services to these groups, and that the services are safe and inclusive spaces free from discrimination and stigma based on sex, gender, sexuality, and relationships.

Group identity labels can be empowering when they are accurate and identity-confirming because they

enable community-building and shared efforts for advocacy. Using group identity labels also enables people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships to communicate their solidarity and pride in their communities and identities.<sup>7</sup> However, identity labels and terminology can be disempowering when they are inaccurate, restrictive, or exclusionary. Additionally, when identity labels are restrictive, they can cause people to feel as though they need to fit themselves into specific categories.<sup>8</sup> Language that describes people who belong to a specific social group can also reinforce societal misconceptions about what is “normal”.

Grouping diverse identities under one label is inherently complex and raises questions about which identities should be grouped together and what terminology is most inclusive and respectful of the diversity within each group. Adding complexity to the issue is that language is often a site of struggle and negotiation, meaning that it shifts over time. Terminology that was once in wide use can quickly become outdated.<sup>9</sup>

## DETERMINING THE IDENTITIES AND EXPERIENCES THAT NEED TO BE INCLUDED WITHIN A GROUP IDENTITY LABEL

Before exploring good practice group identity labels to refer to diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships, we need to consider what identities and experiences should be grouped together under one label. This section of the paper explores the spectrum of diversities that are commonly grouped together.

### GENDER DIVERSITY

Gender diversity refers to gender identities that are not within binary categories of male and female or masculine and feminine. It also refers to identities that are not cisgender – that is, those who identify with a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth. There are many different people who identify as gender diverse, including people who are trans, agender, gender fluid, and gender questioning, as well as two-spirit people, brotherboys, and sistergirls.

### DIVERSITY IN SEXUALITY

Diversity in sexuality refers to identities associated with sexual orientation that are not heterosexual. This includes people who are attracted to people of the same gender (are lesbian or gay), are attracted to more than one gender (are bisexual or pansexual), or who are asexual or demisexual. It also includes people who are questioning their sexuality.

## DIVERSITY IN SEX CHARACTERISTICS AND BODIES

Diversity in sex characteristics and bodies is often represented by the word intersex, and individuals who have diversity in sex characteristics are people with an intersex variation. The term intersex refers to a spectrum or umbrella rather than describing a universal and homogenous experience or identity. It includes many varied kinds of bodies, experiences, and identities. A person is considered to have an intersex variation when their biological characteristics, including hormones, chromosomes, and sexual and reproductive organs, do not conform to social understandings of what constitutes a male or female body. Importantly, intersex variations are a matter of biological characteristics, not gender identity. Some people with intersex variations do not identify as intersex. Additionally, people with intersex variations may only discover later in life that they have an intersex variation.

The word intersex is itself a subject of debate. For some groups, other ways of speaking, including the phrase "people with an intersex variation" and the terms "bodily diversity" and "diversity in sex characteristics" are considered more appropriate. For instance, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) prefers to use "variations of sex characteristics" because it helps to collect more reliable data about people with intersex variations. It also avoids the harmful misconception that people with intersex variations are neither male nor female.<sup>10</sup> The ABS's "Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables," which sets the standards for best-practice language use in data collection, was supported by Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA).<sup>11</sup> That said, IHRA offers the following definition of intersex variations: "Intersex people have innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies, and that create risks or experiences of stigma, discrimination, and harm."<sup>12</sup>

## DIVERSITY IN RELATIONSHIPS AND ROMANTIC ORIENTATION

Diversity in relationships refers to people who are in relationships that are consensually non-monogamous or polyamorous, with more than two people in a relationship with one another. People who are in diverse relationships can include those who are in polyamorous, polygynous, or polyandrous relationships. People in diverse relationships sometimes identify as being a part of the queer community, but they are as diverse as those in monogamous relationships. For example, they may be gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, intersex, gender diverse, asexual, heterosexual, and cis-gender.

Diversity in romantic orientation is a category distinct from sexuality. It connects to specific orientations and desires for romantic attachments outside of or as distinct from a

person's sexual orientation. For example, a person who is asexual might still (though will not necessarily) desire a romantic partner or partners. These identities include people who desire romantic attachments to those of the same gender, more than one gender (biromantic, panromantic, and polyromantic), and those who are aromantic, grey-romantic, or demiromantic.<sup>13</sup>

Excluding mention of romantic orientation risks conflating romantic and sexual orientation, and it can contribute to stigma around the identities of those who have diverse romantic orientations. Romantic orientation is severely understudied due to the assumption that a person's sexual orientation is the same as their romantic orientation.<sup>14</sup>

People in diverse relationships and of diverse romantic orientations face stigma and discrimination as a consequence of the policing of social norms related to monogamy, with research showing that negative perceptions of people in diverse or consensually non-monogamous relationships were common and that people in diverse relationships faced being dehumanised.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, studies have also found that people in consensually non-monogamous relationships develop positive social identities around this aspect of their lives. Given the way that Western culture strongly favours strict monogamy, such identities are both individually and politically important in terms of building positive self-regard and generating resistance to discrimination.<sup>16</sup>

People who are in non-monogamous relationships face many barriers to accessing services and healthcare, including stigma and the lack of providers capable of delivering appropriate and inclusive care.<sup>17</sup> As a consequence, people in diverse relationships might avoid seeking services or healthcare and might experience poor health outcomes.

The majority of terms and initialisms used to refer to people of diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics do not include reference to diversity in relationships or romantic orientation, and there are arguments both for and against their inclusion. On the one hand, a high proportion of those who are in consensually non-monogamous relationships are LGBTIQ+ people.<sup>18</sup> This indicates that serving the needs of those in consensually non-monogamous relationships is likely to also serve LGBTIQ+ people. On the other hand, the needs and service preferences of people in diverse relationships and people with diverse romantic orientations are currently not well-researched or understood, and as such, LGBTIQ+-specific services may not be equipped to provide appropriate, relevant, or high-quality services to these groups. In these cases, it would not be appropriate to promote a service as inclusive of people in diverse relationships and/or people with diverse romantic orientations. Targeted research is required to understand the unique needs of these people and how these needs might intersect with those of LGBTIQ+ people. Acknowledging these forms of diversity is a first step to remedying this gap in knowledge.

# COMMON-USE TERMS AND THEIR COMPLEXITIES

## INITIALISMS

There are a number of initialisms in use in Australia that seek to represent people of diverse sexualities, genders, and bodies. Notably, none of them include diversity of relationships or romantic orientations.\* The most common of these are LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex), LGBTIQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer or questioning), and LGBTIQA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer or questioning, and asexual), which are explored further below. The plus symbol is used to signify that there are additional identities not captured in the initialism, such as non-binary, gender diverse, asexual, pansexual, gender-fluid, and agender. While this is intended to increase inclusivity, the plus symbol is sometimes considered an offensive omission of those identities deemed not important enough to warrant a letter themselves, creating a hierarchy in which some groups get a letter and others do not.<sup>19</sup>

There is a tension between the need for the term to be brief and easy to use and the need for it to be truly inclusive. To be truly inclusive, it would need to include mention of people who are non-binary, gender diverse, asexual, pansexual, gender-fluid, and agender, among many others. Additionally, if the initialism is to capture relationship and romantic orientation diversity, it would need to include additional terms such as polyamorous. As one writer puts it: "The letters in the initialism I identify with are valuable. They are dear to me, helping to give formal specificity to my identity."<sup>20</sup> Increasing the initialism to include more letters makes it longer, but avoids excluding some groups.

The existence of different variations leads to some confusion over which is the correct or most inclusive initialism to use. Some organisations and institutions oscillate between terms, and others, such as the Australian Government, approve multiple terms for use, including LGBTI and LGBTIQ+.<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, because government funding bodies use different terminology, community organisations often need to use multiple versions of the initialism to align with funding agreement requirements. As a result, it is not uncommon for organisations to use more than one term.

The use of the initialism is just as important as the letters it includes. Some uses of the initialism refer to the LGBTIQ+ "community". This denotes a single community whose interests and outlooks are largely similar, which does not reflect the many identities, experiences, and viewpoints of the people it refers to.<sup>22</sup> For that reason, it is better to use the plural term "communities", which recognises the diversity captured within the initialism.

## LGBTI

LGBTI was among the first initialisms used in Australia to refer to people of diverse sexualities, genders, and bodies. Notably, the term does not include queer. Queer remains a controversial term, as it was historically used as a pejorative term for LGBTIQ+ people, and some – particularly older people – have negative experiences and memories associated with its use.<sup>23</sup>

However, many younger people have consciously reclaimed the word to be a term for positive self-identification. It has become an umbrella term for a wide range of identity categories, building strong community identification across the LGBTIQ+ initialism.

Organisations such as LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (formerly the LGBTI Health Alliance) have made a conscious move from LGBTI to LGBTIQ+ to ensure their name represents the communities their members are working with, and adding the Q and the + increases the inclusivity of their name.

## Sample of Australian organisations that use LGBTI

- > Australian Government
- > Australian Human Rights Commission (which also uses GLBTI)
- > Living Proud (formerly Gay & Lesbian Community Services of WA Inc.)
- > Northern Territory AIDS and Hepatitis Council Inc.
- > Qlife
- > Queensland Council for LGBTI Health (formerly Queensland AIDS Council)
- > Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council)
- > Western Australian Government
- > Working it Out

\* Variations of LGBTIQ+: • LGBT • GLBT • LGBTI • LGBTIQ • LGBTIQA+ • LGBTQIA • LGBTQIAA+ • LGBTQ2 • LGBTTIQ2SA • QUILTBAG (queer and questioning, unsure, intersex, lesbian, transgender and two-spirit, bisexual, asexual and aromantic, and gay and genderqueer) • LGGBTTQQAAPP (lesbian, gay, genderqueer, bisexual, bigender, transgender, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, agender, pansexual, and polyamorous)

## LGBTIQ+

LGBTIQ+ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and queer, although some usage of the term replaces queer with questioning or includes questioning in addition to queer. As discussed above, the plus symbol is used to signify that there are additional identities not captured in the initialism, such as non-binary, gender diverse, asexual, pansexual, gender-fluid, and agender. Some organisations and institutions, including Rainbow Health Victoria and the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS) at La Trobe University, use LGBTIQ without the plus. However, this is less common than LGBTIQ+.

LGBTIQ+ is currently the most commonly used term to refer to people of diverse sexualities, genders, and bodies in Australia, with the initialism being used by a range of both federal and state government departments, mainstream health services, and most importantly since they are led by LGBTIQ+ people themselves, peer-led services.

In some instances, particularly in the international development space, the order of the letters is different: LGBTIQI+. Placing the “I” for intersex at the end emphasises the unique concerns and advocacy efforts of people with an intersex variation, as discussed in more detail below. Ordering the letters in this way would better align with international practice.

### Sample of Australian organisations that use LGBTIQ (+)

- > ACT Government, including the Office for LGBTIQ+ Affairs and the LGBTIQ+ Ministerial Advisory Council
- > Australian Government
- > Diverse Voices
- > Diversity Council Australia
- > Equality Australia
- > Human Rights Law Centre
- > LGBTIQ+ Health Australia (formerly the National LGBTI Health Alliance)
- > Meridian (formerly the AIDS Action Council of the ACT)
- > Queensland Government
- > South Australian Government
- > South Australia Rainbow Advocacy Alliance
- > Tasmanian Government
- > The Pinnacle Foundation
- > The Queer Society
- > Victoria Government (both with and without the +)
- > WA AIDS Council's Freedom Centre

## LGBTIQA+

Increasingly, organisations are adding an “A” for asexual to the LGBTIQ+ or LGBTQI+ initialisms. The most straightforward definition of asexual is a person who experiences no sexual attraction; however, there are many variations within this group (see the glossary for more information).

There is a strong argument for adding asexuality to the initialism as asexual people also experience discrimination, oppression, and violence on the basis of their sexuality and romantic orientation.<sup>24</sup> A recent study undertaken by ACT Aces found that 34.1% of asexual people who responded to the survey reported feeling excluded from LGBTIQ+ spaces,<sup>25</sup> which compounds their experiences of discrimination, oppression, and violence. Adding an A to the initialism may well be a first stride to rectifying this.

Meridian (formerly the AIDS Action Council of the ACT) is increasingly using LGBTIQA+ over LGBTIQ+ in response to feedback from their LGBTIQA+ service user reference group. However, complicating this issue is that Meridian receives funding from the ACT Government, which uses LGBTIQ+. As a result, Meridian – like many other organisations – uses different terms for different audiences.

### Sample of Australian organisations that use LGBTIQA+/LGBTQIA+

- > ACT Aces
- > Australian Institute of Family Studies
- > Capital Health Network (Canberra's Primary Health Network)
- > Goulburn Valley Pride Inc.
- > Meridian (formerly the AIDS Action Council of the ACT) (emerging practice)
- > Pride Foundation Australia
- > Rainbow Network
- > Reach Out
- > Switchboard
- > Twenty10
- > Victorian Pride Lobby

## LGBTQ

While the “I” in the LGBTIQ+ initialism is welcomed by some people with an intersex variation, others disagree with its inclusion or do not feel meaningfully included in LGBTIQ+ communities.<sup>26</sup> This is because intersex variations relate to bodies and biology rather than gender or sexual

orientation. Intersex is often confused with the meaning of trans or gender diverse, but having an intersex variation does not mean that a person will be trans or gender diverse.<sup>27</sup> Similarly, people with an intersex variation may or may not be in heterosexual relationships, so individual people with an intersex variation may not identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, or any other sexual orientation covered under the initialism. Furthermore, the LGBTIQ+ banner is not always capable of representing the advocacy needs of people with an intersex variation. For instance, people with an intersex variation reject the medicalisation and pathologisation of their bodies and identities. They also fight against non-consensual medical interventions, often performed early in life, aimed at making bodies conform to social perceptions of what constitutes a female or male body.<sup>28</sup> These causes may not be taken up more broadly among LGBTIQ+ communities.

Simply including an I in the initialism does not make a service inclusive to people with an intersex variation; a service must be inclusive in practice. In an attempt to be inclusive, services may include the letter despite the fact that they are not genuinely equipped to respond to the needs of people with an intersex variation. Describing services, programs, activities, and groups that are not actually intersex-inclusive in meaningful practice is harmful; it exposes people with intersex variations to discrimination and exclusion.<sup>29</sup>

In research settings, IHRA have advocated that research studies that claim to be about LGBTIQ+ populations but do not meaningfully engage people with an intersex variation misrepresent the experiences of people with an intersex variation:

If your LGBTI data do not contain a representative or statistically significant number of intersex people, then they are not "LGBTI" data; they are more likely "LGBT" data. Framing non-inclusive research as "LGBTI" research can have negative consequences for intersex populations, including misrepresentation.<sup>30</sup>

As a result of evolving discussions and practices, ACON has made a conscious decision to remove the I from LGBTIQ+, noting:

ACON is proud to affirm the Darlington Statement... We're here to be a good intersex ally by raising the visibility of intersex community priorities, as articulated in the Darlington Statement, and deferring to intersex-led organisations such as Intersex Peer Support Australia (IPSA) and Intersex Human Rights Australia (IHRA). We encourage intersex people, their families, allies and clinicians to contact IPSA for direct peer support and IHRA for training, education and policy advice. These organisations are intersex-led and ACON will always defer to them rather than seek to speak on behalf of.<sup>31</sup>

There is only one organisation delivering services to the community with a peer-worker who is a person with an intersex variation – A Gender Agenda. Other organisations that use initialisms that include an I may need to consider whether they are delivering inclusive, competent, and informed services to people with intersex variations or if they are misrepresenting their organisation by using the letter. The risk of removing it is that people with intersex variations might then feel excluded from these services, which is particularly problematic given there are few targeted services for people with an intersex variation. There is also an argument that by using an I, organisations can continue to hold themselves accountable for delivering inclusive, competent, and informed services to people with an intersex variation.

### **Sample of Australian organisations that use LGBTQ (+)**

- > ACON
- > LGBTQ+ Rainbow Families

## ALTERNATIVES TO THE LGBTIQ+ INITIALISM

Using an initialism is by nature reductive. It will never be fully representative of the diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships that exist. As such, alternatives to the LGBTIQ+ initialism have been proposed, reflecting the shifting nature of language and the importance of remaining in touch with community preferences.

Some of these are already in common use, while others are emerging. These include:

- > DGSS (diverse genders, sexes, and sexualities)
- > GSM (gender and sexual minorities)
- > GSRM (gender, sexual, and romantic minorities)
- > GSD (gender and sexual diversity)
- > GSRD (gender, sexual, and romantic diversity)
- > MOGAI (minority/marginalised orientations, gender alignments, and intersex)
- > MOGII (marginalised orientations, gender identities, and intersex)
- > MOGI (marginalised orientations, genders, and intersex)

Some of these alternatives are explored in more detail below. While they may be more inclusive than an initialism that names specific identities, they also run the risk of exclusion in other ways.

### SOGIE OR SOGIESC

SOGIE stands for sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. It is sometimes expanded to SOGIESC: sexual orientation and gender identity and expression and sex characteristics. In this iteration, it is inclusive of people with intersex variations.<sup>32</sup> It is a term that emerges in contexts in the Global South and may be more recognisable there than LGBTIQ+.<sup>33</sup> It is also an international norm that is often used in legal terminology, including by the Australian Government.

This alternative has two key drawbacks. Firstly, it denies people the opportunity to have their identities named and recognised. Secondly, it could in theory encompass all people, including heterosexual and cisgender people, since they also have sexual orientations and gender identities. This creates confusion about which specific social and identity groups the term refers to.

### GSM AND GSD

GSM stands for gender and sexual minorities. While it offers a broader term, it emphasises exclusion and marginalisation, something organisations and government departments often advise against in their style guides.<sup>34</sup>

GSD stands for gender and sexual diversity. Unlike GSM, this term avoids labelling groups primarily in terms of their minority status, and it could be more flexible as an inclusive term than an initialism such as LGBTIQ+. However, this initialism does not encompass diversity in bodies or relationships and excludes people with an intersex variation.<sup>35</sup>

### PEOPLE OF DIVERSE SEXUALITIES, GENDERS, BODIES, AND RELATIONSHIPS

People of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships is not yet widely used; however, there is a strong case for this to change. This is because it is more inclusive of communities not explicitly given a letter in LGBTIQ+, such as people in diverse relationships.

RMIT University uses a similar phrase: individuals of “diverse genders, sexes, and sexualities” or DGSS communities as an abbreviation.<sup>36</sup> While the initialism DGSS is briefer, it names diversity in sex characteristics or bodies as “sex.” The term sex can have connotations of a binary, into which bodies are made to fit, which does not adequately capture diversity in bodies.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, terminology that refers to bodies has a clear advantage.

There is an emerging trend of organisations using language such as “diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships”; “diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics”; “diverse sexes, genders, and sexualities”; and “diverse genders and sexualities” alongside their chosen initialism. For example, Meridian is increasingly using “diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships”; ACON uses “diverse sexualities and genders”; and the Northern Territory Government uses “sexuality and gender diverse”. This approach enables organisations and institutions to communicate that they are speaking to or representing the diversity of their audience, while also maintaining the ability to succinctly refer to this diversity using an initialism.

# 4

## CONCLUSION

How we group and refer to people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships is an important issue for government and community organisations working toward reducing the gap in health outcomes between LGBTIQ+ people and the wider population. It is also key to creating community inclusion and cohesion.

Debates around which term or initialism to use when referring to groups based on their sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships are productive discussions that enable shared community building and meaning making. When language is inaccurate and exclusionary, it undermines social cohesion, health, and wellbeing.

There is no research available into the preferences of people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships. This is a notable gap as good practice should be driven by the voices of the people that organisations wish to represent. Meridian (formerly the AIDS Action Council of the ACT) is undertaking research to address this gap. In the meantime, the use of the term LGBTIQ+ would be in step with many organisations around Australia, including peer-based organisations serving LGBTIQ+ communities. However, also using a term like “people of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, and relationships” where possible could demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion beyond what is denoted in the LGBTIQ+ initialism.

There is also a strong case for embracing flexibility when it comes to the terms we use. Not all terms are appropriate for all programs and services. Attempting to catch all the diversity that exists within our communities in a single term may actually be contributing to exclusionary practices rather than reducing them.



# GLOSSARY

This glossary offers working definitions of terms used in this paper. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive index of key terms related to gender, sexuality, bodily, relationship, and romantic orientation diversity. Language is a productive though often conflicted space for negotiating meaning. It evolves rapidly as people seek to find ways of speaking that more accurately, inclusively, or usefully describe their experiences and identities. This means that it is not always possible to produce definitions that encompass the many perspectives, understandings, and ways of using and defining terms that emerge through ongoing discussions about identity. However, the process of creating these definitions has been informed by good practice inclusive language guidelines as well as conversations and research currently being conducted around diversity and inclusion.

## SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation refers to a person's attraction (emotional, psychological, physical, and/or sexual) to another person.

## ASEXUAL (OR ACE)

A person who experiences little or no sexual attraction to other people. It can also be used as an umbrella term for a spectrum of sexual attraction that includes people who experience sexual attraction when they feel strong emotional bonds with a person (demisexual) and people who feel sexual attraction on a very occasional basis (grey-asexual). Some asexual people may enjoy sex, some may be repulsed by sex, and others may be indifferent to it. A person who is asexual may still have romantic attractions and desire and seek out romantic relationships.

## BISEXUAL

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to more than one gender. This may include attraction to people beyond the gender binary such as trans and non-binary people.

## GAY

A person who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people who have the same gender. It is often used to refer specifically to a man who is attracted to other men, but some same-gender attracted women also use it. As with the definition of lesbian, the definition of gay continues to evolve to capture the diversity of identities and experiences represented by the term, and definitions increasingly include man-identifying/woman-identifying and non-binary people who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the same gender and identify as gay.

## LESBIAN

Often defined as a woman that is sexually and/or romantically attracted to other women. However, language continues to evolve to capture the diversity of identities and experiences represented by the term lesbian, and definitions increasingly include woman-identifying and non-binary people who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the same gender and identify as lesbian.

## PANSEXUAL

A person sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of all genders, or for whom gender is not a determining or excluding factor in the people they are attracted to.

## QUEER

An umbrella term used to describe a range of sexual orientations and gender identities. Queer was historically used as a derogatory term for LGBTIQ+ people. However, many younger people have consciously reclaimed the word to be a term for positive self-identification.

## QUESTIONING

A person who is in the process of questioning their sexuality and/or gender identity or who is trying to decide how to describe their identity.

## GENDER

Gender refers to the socially constructed categories assigned to individuals on the basis of their apparent sex at birth. Some cultures recognise multiple genders. However, in Western society people are expected to conform to one of two gender roles matching their apparent sex. For example, male = man/masculine and female = woman/feminine.<sup>38</sup>

### AGENDER

A person who does not identify as having a gender.

### CISGENDER

A person who identifies as the same gender they were assigned at birth.

### GENDER DIVERSE

An umbrella term that encompasses a diversity of gender identities used by people whose internal gender identity (based on their apparent sex) does not match the gender they were assigned at birth.

### GENDER FLUID

A person who has different gender identities at different times and does not have a fixed gender identity.

### GENDERQUEER

Genderqueer is sometimes used as an umbrella term encompassing gender identity and expression that is non-normative or non-binary. Queer is a word that is often used in contrast to normativity. Therefore, genderqueer suggests identities that question or reject gender normativity. A person who is genderqueer has a non-binary or non-normative gender identity.

### MISGENDERING

Misgendering occurs when someone is named or referred to using pronouns or other gendered forms of speech in a way that does not match their gender identity.

### NON-BINARY

Non-binary can refer to a variety of gender identities which do not conform to binary understandings of gender as being limited to masculine and feminine.

### SISTERGIRL/BROTHERBOY

Terms used within some Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities to describe people who are gender diverse. Brotherboy refers to a gender diverse person who has a male spirit and takes on male roles in the community. Sistergirl refers to a gender diverse person who has a female spirit and takes on female roles in the community.<sup>39</sup>

### TRANS

Trans is an umbrella term used to describe people who were assigned a gender at birth (based on their apparent sex) that does not match their gender identity.

## SEX AND BODILY DIVERSITY

### PEOPLE WITH INTERSEX VARIATIONS

People with an intersex variation are defined as having "innate sex characteristics that don't fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies, and that create risks or experiences of stigma, discrimination and harm."<sup>40</sup>

### SEX

Sex refers to the classification of a person's body, often at birth, based on medical and social norms relating to male and female bodies. People are often assigned as male or female at birth based on external features of their anatomy. Some people have sex characteristics that do not fit medical norms for male and female bodies (see definition of people with an intersex variation).

### SEX CHARACTERISTICS

Sex characteristics refer to biological features of a person's body, including chromosomes, genitals, gonads, hormones, and other reproductive anatomy, as well as secondary features that emerge from puberty.<sup>41</sup> A person's sex is made up of these characteristics.

## ROMANTIC ORIENTATIONS

Romantic orientation refers to romantic attraction, which can be separate from sexual orientation. One example is aromantic, which describes a person who does not experience romantic attraction or a desire to engage in romantic relationships. Aromantic is also used as a spectrum to describe varying degrees of romantic and sexual attraction that individuals might or might not feel. Identities on this spectrum include demiromantic (people who only develop romantic feelings for a person after they have cultivated a strong emotional bond with them) and grey-romantic (people who feel romantic attraction on a very occasional basis).

People of different romantic orientations may add prefixes that are similar to those added to sexual orientation to indicate the people they are romantically attracted to. For instance:

- > Biromantic
- > Panromantic
- > Homoromantic
- > Heteroromantic

## RELATIONSHIP DIVERSITY

### CONSENSUAL NON-MONOGRAMY

Consensual non-monogamy is sometimes referred to as polyamory. In consensual non-monogamy, one or more partners engage in non-monogamy with the full consent and knowledge of all the partners in the relationship. It is to be distinguished from cheating or other activities in which one or more partners has relationships or engages in sexual activities outside of the primary relationship, without the consent or the knowledge of the other partner(s).

### POLYAMORY

Polyamory is an umbrella term for many practices and relationships which lie outside of monogamous partnerships. Polyamory is sometimes referred to as consensual non-monogamy. Polyamory refers to relationships or practices in which there are more than two partners involved in the relationship. It may include practices of non-monogamy around sexual activities, romantic attachments, or both.

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