

These terms are debated, this therefore is intended as a guide to support discussion and understanding.

Definitions – sexual orientation and gender identity

Sexual Orientation

A person's emotional, romantic and or sexual attraction to another person

Gender Identity

A person's internal sense of their own gender, whether male, female, or something else

Sex

Either of the two main categories (male and female) assigned to a person on the basis of primary sex characteristics (genitalia) and reproductive functions. Sometimes used interchangeably with 'gender' to mean 'male' or 'female'

Homosexual

This might be considered a more medical term used to describe someone who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

Bisexual

Refers to a person who has an emotional and/or sexual orientation towards more than one gender

Trans

An umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. May encompass one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross dresser, non-binary, gender queer

Questioning

The process of exploring your own sexual orientation and/or gender identity

Queer

In the past a derogatory term for LGBT individuals. The term has now been reclaimed by LGBT young people in particular who don't identify with traditional categories around gender identity and sexual orientation, but is still viewed to be derogatory by some.

A cisgender person

Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people.

Non-binary

An umbrella term for a person who does not identify as male or female

Gender Variant

This is usually used in relation to children or young people for someone who does not conform to the gender roles and behaviours assigned to them at birth.

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Intersex

A term used to describe a person who may have the biological attributes of both sexes or whose biological attributes do not fit with societal assumptions about what constitutes male or female. Can identify as male, female, or non-binary.

A transsexual person

Used in the past as a more medical term (similarly to homosexual) to refer to someone who transitioned to live in the 'opposite' gender to the one assigned at birth. This term is still used by some although many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

Gender dysphoria

Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Pronoun

Words we use to refer to people's gender in conversation - for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as they / their and ze / zir

Transitioning

The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify as. Each person's will involve different things. For some this involves medical intervention, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. It also might involve things like telling friends and family, dressing differently and changing official documents.

Gender reassignment

Another way of describing a person's transition. To undergo this usually means to undergo some sort of medical intervention, but it can also mean changing names, pronouns, dressing differently and living in your self-identified gender. It is a characteristic that is protected in the Equality Act 2010.

Coming out

When a person first tells someone/others about their identity as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans

Further information on language and concepts:

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/glossary-terms>

<https://www.gires.org.uk/index.php/terminology>

<https://www.genderbread.org/>