

Like any community, the LGBT world is full of terminology, phrases, slang, acronyms and abbreviations – and it's not always obvious what something means at first glance.

A

Agender

A person who doesn't identify as having any gender – male, female or otherwise.

AIDS aka HIV/AIDS+

Human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) – a spectrum of conditions caused by infection with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

The AIDS stage of illness is defined either by having a CD4+ T cell count below 200 cells per μL or experiencing specific diseases in association with an HIV infection, like pneumocystis pneumonia, cachexia (“wasting syndrome”) and oesophageal candidiasis.

AIDS crisis or AIDS epidemic

Beginning in 1981, the period of several years over which HIV/AIDS spread rapidly among the gay community. Thousands of gay people lost their lives to AIDS-related illness during the 1980s, at a time when the condition was under-researched and considered untreatable.

Allosexual

A person who has sexual interest directed at people other than themselves, often used in asexual discourse. Not to be confused with the Canadian French *allosexuel* – which means LGBT, or trans or non-heterosexual.

Ally

A person who does not identify with a community or group (such as a subset of the **LGBT** community) but publicly supports that group.

Anal aka Anal sex

Sexual activity involving the penetration of the anus. Often used to describe anal penetration with the penis with partners of any sex.

Aromantic

A person who experiences little or no romantic attraction to others. Not to be confused with asexual.

Assigned sex

The sex with which a person is assigned at birth, which usually corresponds to the gender identity you were raised with or assumed to have. Preferred by many in the trans community to terms like “genetic”, “biological” or “birth” gender, which suggest that a trans person’s gender identity is less valid than a cis person’s.

Asexual

A person who has limited or no sexual feelings or desires.

B

Baby Gay

A gay, lesbian or bisexual person who has recently come to identify as such, or is newly out.

Batty, Batty boy or Batty man

A West Indian slur for a gay man.

Bareback aka BB

Sexual activity, especially sexual penetration, without the use of a condom. Usually referring to anal sex between men.

Bear

In gay circles, a man who is hairy and/or has facial hair, and a cuddly body. Contrasted with **twink**. See also: **Grindr Tribes**

Beard

A person of a different sex who is used by a gay person – usually a man – as a fake heterosexual partner to hide their sexuality.

Bigender

A person who experiences exactly two genders. These gender identities can be experienced either simultaneously or not. The two identities can be male and female, but could also include non-binary gender identities.

Binding

Tight wrapping of the chest with special clothes to minimise the size or appearance of breasts. Bandages, elastic and cloth can also be used, but can be damaging.

Birth gender

Sometimes used by transgender people to refer to their gender prior to **transitioning**.

Bisexual

A person who is romantically or sexually attracted to people of multiple genders.

Biphobia

Prejudice or discrimination against bisexual people.

Bi erasure

The tendency to ignore the existence of bisexual people or bisexuality itself in society.

Blood ban

A policy implemented in many countries during the AIDS crisis that specifically prevents men who have sex with men from donating blood, due to risk of HIV contamination. Often criticised by campaigners who contend that it does not reflect advances in modern screening technology.

Some countries have relaxed the policy in recent years to introduce a **deferral period** that allows gay men to donate blood if they abstain from sex for a period of time, most commonly one year.

Bottom

During gay anal sex, the person who “receives” or is penetrated. More broadly it can refer to a more passive partner – either during sex or in reference to a wider relationship. Contrasts with the top.

Bottom surgery

Gender confirmation surgery relating to the bottom of the body, specifically the genitals.

Previously called genital reassignment surgery or genital reconstruction surgery.

Bugger or Buggery

Usually meaning **anal sex** or someone who has anal sex. Sometimes a legal term, used at

varying times and in various jurisdictions to mean either anal or oral sex by a man with a man or a woman, or vaginal intercourse by a person with an animal.

Bull Dyke

A sometimes offensive term to describe a masculine lesbian.

Butch

A lesbian person whose appearance and behaviour are seen as traditionally masculine.

C

Camp

A term used to describe someone with an eccentric, theatrical and effeminate manner. Often used to describe flamboyant gay men.

Chemsex

Sexual encounters fuelled by drugs, often methamphetamine (speed) or mephedrone (M-CAT).

Often referring to group sex, typically in gay or bisexual circles.

Cis aka Cisgender

A person whose gender identity corresponds with their assigned sex. Contrasting with trans.

Cishet

A person who is both cisgender and heterosexual.

Closet or closeted

A gay or bisexual person who has not yet **come out** is said to be “in the closet”. Often used offensively.

Coming out

When an LGBT person either identifies or comes to accept their own sexual orientation or gender identity, or the process of telling other people about their orientation or identity.

Contrast with **outing**.

Conversion Therapy

Attempts to change people's sexual orientation or gender identity in order to make them **heterosexual** or **cisgender**. Disavowed and considered an abusive practise by every global medical authority, but still often practised by faith groups and unlicensed therapists.

Cottaging

Gay men engaging in sex acts in a public toilet.

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994)

The UK Act of Parliament that lowered the age of consent for gay sex from 21 to 18 – still two years older than heterosexual sex.

Cross-dressing

Wearing clothes typically associated with another sex, for any reason.

Cruising

Looking for sex partners in public places, typically by gay men.

D

Daddy

An older man in a romantic or sexual relationship with another man. Often indicates the power structure in the relationship, where the older partner has a larger income or social power.

Deadname or to deadname

The birth name of someone who has changed their name – usually a **transgender** person, or the act of using that name. Deadnaming someone without their permission is highly offensive.

Demisexual

A person who isn't sexually attracted to anyone else unless they have formed a deep emotional or romantic connection with them.

DOMA aka The Defense of Marriage Act

The US law that defined marriage for federal purposes as the union of one man and one woman and thus prohibited married same-sex couples from collecting federal benefits – struck down after it was ruled unconstitutional and against the Fifth Amendment in June 2013.

Don't Ask, Don't Tell aka DADT

A 1994 law signed by President Bill Clinton preventing gay people from openly serving in the military. A cross-party compromise, DADT meant that openly gay, lesbian or bisexual people were barred, but military personnel were also banned from discriminating against or harassing closeted gay, bisexual or lesbian people. Repealed by President Barack Obama in September 2011.

Drag or Drag up

Clothing that is more conventionally worn by another sex, especially women's clothes worn by a man. These men are said to **drag up**.

Discreet

A term used by someone who is not out of the closet, but is seeking same-sex encounters

Drag Queen

A person, usually male, who dresses in clothing more conventionally worn by women and acts with exaggerated femininity and in feminine gender roles for entertainment or fashion.

Drag King

A person who dresses in clothing more conventionally worn by men acts with exaggerated masculinity and in masculine gender roles for entertainment or fashion. Less common than **Drag Queens**.

Dyke

An offensive slur for **lesbian** – often but not always a **butch** lesbian – which has been reclaimed by some members of the community.

E

Enby

Another term for **non-binary**.

ENDA

The **Employment Non-Discrimination Act** was a proposed federal law in the US that would have federally outlawed discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. First proposed by Democratic lawmakers in 1994, negotiations over ENDA legislation was stalled for more than two decades, until it was eventually withdrawn.

Equality Act

In the UK, this refers to the 2010 Equality Act passed by the Labour government, which provides LGBT people with protection from discrimination and ill-treatment.

In the US this refers to a proposed federal law that would outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The bill is supported by Democratic leaders but has been blocked indefinitely by Republicans.

F

Fag or Faggot

An extremely offensive slur used usually to describe gay men, and rarely also lesbians.

Fag hag

An offensive term for a woman who associates with gay or bisexual men.

Femme

A lesbian person whose appearance and behaviour are seen as traditionally feminine.

Flaming

A slang term for a gay person, generally a **camp** gay man.

Flamboyant

A person who is stylish, bold and eccentric, often applied to gay men.

Fluid

Sexual fluidity refers to a person changing their sexuality or sexual identity during their lifetime.

Friend of Dorothy

Slang for a gay man. The phrase dates back to when homosexual acts between men were illegal in America and therefore subtle euphemisms were frequently used.

FTM or F2M

Sometimes considered offensive. An outdated term for transgender people who have transitioned from female to male.

G

Gay

Homosexual. Can be used for men and women, but often used by men to distinguish from lesbian.

Gay Icon

A gay icon is someone embraced by the LGBT community as a shared figure of admiration and inspiration.

Gay cure therapy

Attempts to change people's sexual orientation or gender identity in order to make them **heterosexual** or **cisgender**. Disavowed and considered an abusive practise by every global medical authority, but still often practised by faith groups and unlicensed therapists.

Geek

See **Grindr Tribes**. As in non-LGBT discourse, a "nerdy" or intellectual character.

Gender-neutral

Suitable for all genders – male, female or other. Can refer to words and expressions, but also objects and services.

Gender-neutral bathrooms aka Gender-neutral toilets

As above, but specifically referring to toilets or bathrooms. A hot topic in the US, where conservatives oppose their introduction.

Gender confirmation surgery or previously **Gender reassignment surgery**

The surgical procedure(s) by which a **transgender** person's physical appearance and function of their existing sexual characteristics are altered to resemble that socially associated with their identified gender. It can include **top surgery** and/or **bottom surgery**. Previously called genital reconstruction surgery, gender-affirming surgery, or more controversially, "sex realignment surgery", "sex reassignment" or "sex change".

Gender dysphoria

The discomfort felt when a person's **assigned sex** does not match with their **gender identity**. A diagnosis of gender dysphoria is often required before a trans person can access any form of medical transition. Also known as Gender Identity Disorder, previously known as transsexualism or transgenderism.

Gender identity or **Gender**

A person's internal sense of self as it relates to masculinity or femininity.

Gender marker

The 'M', 'F' or 'X' that shows your gender on identity documents such as passports and driving licences.

Gender non-conforming or **GNC**

A person or act that defies transitional expectations of their gender or **assigned sex**.

Gender Recognition Act

A 2004 law in the UK that allowed transgender people to gain legal recognition in their new gender, provided they are over 18 and have undergone medical treatment. Considered outdated by transgender campaigners, who have called for the law to be updated.

Gender Recognition Certificate or GRC

A Gender Recognition Certificate is a UK document that recognises a transgender person has legally changed their gender, affording them full legal protection as their desired gender.

Gender X

A term used to refer to a gender other than male or female. Sometimes used on official documents, international passport standards allow for the use of a 'Gender X' signifier for use by intersex and transgender people, though few countries have adopted this.

Genderqueer

An identity that does not feature the gender binary, involving combinations of masculinity or femininity. See also: **non-binary**.

Genderfluid

A person who does not identify themselves as having a fixed gender.

GRID or Gay-related immune deficiency or Gay cancer

Outdated terms for **AIDS**, used to suggest that sexual orientation was the cause of the then-terminal illness.

Grindr

A social networking app for gay and bisexual men – often seen as a hook-up app.

Grindr Tribes

12 different categories **Grindr** users can self-identify as, and also filter searches by.

See: **Bear, Clean-**

Cut, Daddy, Discreet, Geek, Jock, Leather, Otter, Poz, Rugged, Trans and Twink

GROWLr

A social networking app aimed at **bears**.

H

H&H

High and Horny – an abbreviation used in the chemsex scene and on some gay dating apps

(see **Grindr, Scruff, Hornet, GROWLr**).

HER

An app for lesbian, bisexual, non-binary and queer people for dating, making friends, reading content, finding out about local events and chat.

Heterosexual

A person who is romantically or sexually attracted to someone of a different sex.

Heteroflexible

AKA “mostly straight” – a person whose sexuality is primarily heterosexual but experiences minimal homosexual activity. Distinguished slightly from bisexuality.

Hornet

A gay social network that claims to enable gay men to connect in “meaningful” ways.

HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus – a virus that damages the cells in your immune system and weakens your ability to fight everyday infections and disease. Transmitted by the transfer of blood, pre-ejaculate, semen, vaginal fluids, or breast milk. Anal sex is the highest-risk sexual behaviour for HIV transmission.

HIV/AIDS see **AIDS**

Homosexual

A person who is romantically or sexually attracted to someone of the same sex.

Homoromantic

A person who is romantically attracted to someone of the same sex, but not necessarily sexually attracted.

Hunk

A muscular, handsome gay man.

I

Intersectionality

The idea that each of the elements of someone's identity (such as gender identity, sexuality, ethnicity, disability, and class) overlap. These elements affect a person's experience in society simultaneously, either with **privileges** or discrimination. For example, a white working-class person may simultaneously not be discriminated against due to their ethnicity but may face disadvantages due to their class.

Intersex

A person who is born with variations in sex characteristics including chromosomes, gonads, sex hormones, or genitals that don't fit the typical "male" or "female" definitions.

J

Jack'd

An app that describes itself as "the most diverse and authentic" app for gay, bisexual and curious guys to connect, chat, share, and meet.

K

Kinsey Scale

A tool developed in 1948 to describe sexual orientation. The scale runs from 0 (exclusively heterosexual) to 6 (exclusively homosexual.)

L

Legal gender

Your gender as seen by the government and put on identity documents such as passports and driving licences. See also: **Gender marker**.

Lesbian

A homosexual woman.

LGBT

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans.

LGBT History Month

A month celebrating **LGBT** people, history and culture. Marked in February in the UK and June in the US.

LGBT+

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans, plus other identities considered to fall under this umbrella.

LGBTQIA

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex and Asexual.

LGBTQIAP2

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual and Two-Spirit.

Lipstick lesbian

A synonym for **femme** – a lesbian person whose appearance and behaviour are seen as traditionally feminine.

M

Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013

The Act of Parliament that legalised the marriage of same-sex couples in England and Wales. It also covered the law regarding gender change by married people and civil partners.

Marriage

The legally or formally recognised union of two people as partners in a personal relationship. In some countries such legally-recognised union is limited to a man and a woman, though others recognise same-sex or pansexual unions.

Masc (men)

A gay man who is perceived or perceives themselves to be “masculine”. Sometimes used to describe gay men who don’t have observable traits, attributes, or interests generally associated with gay men. See **passing**.

Masc (women)

A lesbian woman who is deemed to have “masculine” characteristics. See **butch**.

Masc4Masc or Masc for Masc

Masc men who seek other masc men for romantic or sexual relationships.

Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act

The US law signed by President Barack Obama that allows the federal government to pursue hate crime charges in cases relating to sexual orientation and gender identity, in cases where there is no state law outlawing hate crimes

Medical transition

The parts of a **transgender** person’s transition that change their body. This can include hormonal and or surgical transitioning. Not a necessary requirement for a person to identify as trans. See also **social transition**.

Mephedrone aka Meph aka M-CAT aka meow-meow

A synthetic drug (4-methyl methcathinone (4-MMC) or 4-methyl ephedrone) sometimes used in **chemsex**.

Metrosexual

A heterosexual man who enjoys interests traditionally associated with women or gay men, such as shopping or fashion.

Misgendering

The act of referring to someone as the wrong gender, often by using the wrong **pronouns**.

Similar to **deadnaming**.

MLM

Acronym for men loving man, an umbrella term for men of any orientation who feel romantic or sexual attraction to other men.

Monogamy

Being in an exclusive relationship with one other person.

MSM

Men who have sex with men, who do not necessarily identify as gay, homosexual or bisexual.

MTF or M2F

Sometimes considered offensive. An outdated term for transgender people who have transitioned from male to female.

Muscle Mary

An especially and noticeably muscular gay man.

Mx

A **gender neutral** alternative to Mr/Mrs/Miss.

N

Non-binary

A person with a gender identity that is not exclusively male or female. See also: **Gender queer** and **enby**.

O

Otter

A man who is especially hairy, but is smaller in frame and weighs considerably less than a **bear**.

Outing or to out

When someone's sexual orientation or gender identity is revealed without their consent.

P

Pansexual

A person who is not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity. Sometimes referred to as 'hearts not parts'.

Passing (gender)

A **transgender** person's ability to be considered at a glance to be either a cisgender man or a cisgender woman.

Passing (sexuality) aka Straight passing

A gay or bisexual person who is considered by some at a glance to be heterosexual.

PEP or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis

A method of preventing HIV infection that involves a short course of the drugs used to treat HIV, taken very soon after a person may have been exposed to the virus.

PoC

Acronym for people of colour.

Poof or Poofster

An offensive term for a gay man, though some in the community have sought to reclaim it.

Polari

Slang, especially used by gay men in England when homosexuality was illegal. A mix of Italian, Romani, London slang, backslang, rhyming slang, sailor slang, and thieves' cant also used at times by actors, showmen, professional wrestlers, merchant navy sailors, criminals and prostitutes.

Polyamorous

A person who has open sexual or romantic relationships with more than one person at a time.

Post-op

A term for a **transgender** person who has had **gender confirmation surgery**.

Power Bottom

Power bottom has several meanings. Including a bottom who can "power through" and have sex for a long time. It can also refer to a bottom who acts in a more "active", demanding or commanding role during sex.

Poz

Slang for 'positive' meaning someone who has **HIV**.

Pre-op

A term to refer to a **transgender** person who has not had **gender confirmation surgery**.

PrEP or **Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis**

A method of preventing HIV infection whereby people who do not have HIV but who are at substantial risk of contracting it, by taking a pill every day.

Pride or **Gay Pride**

A positive stance against discrimination and violence toward **LGBT** people to promote their self-affirmation, dignity and equality rights. Pride events, marches and parades are held around the year and globally to celebrate this stance.

Privilege

The social advantages a person has due to certain social characteristics. Examples include white privilege and straight privilege. See also: **intersectionality**.

Pronouns

A word that takes the place of a name when referring to someone. These can be gendered, such as he or she, or gender-neutral such as they or **ze**.

Q

QTIPOC

An acronym for Queer and trans people of colour.

Queen

An often pejorative slur for a gay man, especially one deemed to be feminine. It has been reclaimed by some in the community.

Quasiplatonic aka **queerplatonic**

A queerplatonic (or quasiplatonic) relationship is a relationship that is not romantic or sexual

but has a level of commitment considered to be similar to a romantic relationship and stronger than friendship.

Queer

Originally a derogatory slur towards gay men. It has since been reclaimed by many members of the LGBT community as a self-affirming self-descriptive umbrella term.

Questioning

A process of exploration by people who may be unsure, still exploring, and concerned about applying a label to their sexuality or gender identity.

R

S

Same-Sex Attraction or SSA

A term generally used by practitioners and advocates of **conversion therapy**, who believe homosexuality is a symptom of a medical condition. Usually offensive. See **pathologization**

Sex change

An outdated, usually offensive, term for **gender confirmation surgery**.

Scissoring

Genital-to-genital contact in lesbian sex, which can be done in various positions.

Scruff

A gay app men – for chat, dating, and social networking.

Section 28

Clause 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 said that schools must not “intentionally promote

homosexuality or publish material with the intention of promoting homosexuality” or “promote the teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship”. Repealed in Scotland in 2000 and in England and Wales in 2003.

Sexual Offences Act (1967)

The Act of Parliament that decriminalised homosexual acts in private between two men over the age of 21.

Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act (2000)

The Act of Parliament that equalised the age of consent for gay sex at 16.

Sexual Offences Act (2003)

The Act of Parliament that completely decriminalised group homosexual sex.

Sexual orientation

A person’s sexual identity in relation to the gender to which they are attracted – preferred to the outdated “sexual preference”, which appears to suggest conscious choice.

Serodiscordant aka magnetic aka mixed-couple

A serodiscordant relationship is one in which one partner is infected by HIV and the other is not

Shemale

A highly offensive and outdated term for a **transgender** person. Occasionally used by drag queens.

Side

A gay man who does not enjoy engaging in penetrative anal sex. Contrast with **top** and **bottom**

Skoliosexual

A person who is sexually or romantically attracted to non-binary people, or those who do not identify as cisgender.

Social transition

The part of a **transgender** person's transition seen by the people around them. This can feature **coming out**, changing a gender expression, name and pronouns.

Sodomite

An offensive Biblical term for a person who has **anal sex**, based on the story of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Sodomy

An outdated term for **anal sex**.

Stonewall (charity)

A lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights charity in the UK, named after the **Stonewall riots** at the **Stonewall Inn**.

Stonewall Inn

A gay bar in Greenwich Village in Lower Manhattan, NYC, and the site of the **Stonewall riots** of 1969.

Stonewall riots

A spontaneous, violent demonstration by members of the gay community against a police raid at the **Stonewall Inn**. Considered one of the most important events leading to the modern gay liberation movement in the US.

Straight

A heterosexual man or woman.

Straight-acting

A gay man who is considered to be heterosexual, often by adopting masculine traits. Contrast with **camp**.

Straightwashing

When people pretend a LGBT+ person is heterosexual. Most frequently used to describe media where a character in the source material was LGBT+ but is made heterosexual for the adaptation or remake.

T

TERF

Trans-exclusionary radical feminist. A feminist who does not believe that trans women are women.

Top

During anal sex, the person who “gives” or penetrates. More broadly it can refer to a more active partner – either during sex or in reference to a wider relationship. Contrasts with the bottom.

Top surgery

Gender confirmation surgery relating to the top half of the body – typically breast augmentation surgery for trans women, and bilateral mastectomy (“breast removal”) and male chest reconstruction for trans men.

Trans or Trans*

An abbreviation of **transgender**. Sometimes used as a broader umbrella term to refer to people with a non-cisgender **gender identity**.

Transgender

A person who has a gender identity or gender expression that differs from their assigned sex.

Transgendered

An incorrect term for a transgender person.

Transitioning

The process of a **transgender** person presenting themselves as their **gender identity**. This can include changing their appearance, name and **pronouns**. See also: **medical transition** and **social transition**.

Transphobia

Discrimination or hatred against **transgender** people.

Transsexual

A term that is considered offensive by some **transgender** people. Sometimes used to refer to transgender people who have already undergone **gender confirmation surgery**. Previously an accepted term for a person with a gender identity that is inconsistent with, or not culturally associated with, their assigned sex.

Transvestite

A person who dresses and acts in a style or manner traditionally associated with another sex.

Now seen as outdated and often a slur, and **cross-dresser** is more commonly used, though some trans people have reclaimed it.

T-slur or Tranny

A highly offensive term used against **transgender** people. Only marginally reclaimed.

Tribbing

Another term for **scissoring**.

Tucking

The practise of concealing a penis and testicles, practised by some trans women who have not undergone **gender confirmation surgery** as well as drag artists.

Two-Spirit

Not, as is often thought, an indigenous North American who happens to be LGBT. Instead, a modern term to describe LGB and gender-variant spiritual people. Referring less to a sexual or personal identity and more a sacred, spiritual and ceremonial role in the community.

Sometimes the outdated and offensive phrase “berdache” – coined by European settlers – is used.

Twink

In gay male circles, a young man (teens to early 20s) or one who looks younger than their age, who is typically attractive, lacking in body or facial hair and of a slim build. Contrasted with **bear**. See also: **Grindr Tribes**.

U

Undetectable

Refers to when a person with **HIV** is on antiretroviral treatment and has an undetectable amount of viruses in their blood for at least six months. This then means the person cannot pass on the virus.

V

Versatile or Verse

Refers to a sexual partner who can both give and receive **anal sex**. See also **top** and **bottom**.

W

WLW

Acronym for women loving woman, an umbrella term for women of any orientation who feel romantic or sexual attraction to other women.

Wolf

A man who is hairy like a **bear** or **otter**, but typically more muscular and “aggressive” than the latter.

Womyn or WBW

A term sometimes used by radical feminists to refer to **cisgender** women, and exclude **transgender** women. See also: **TERF**

Z

Ze

A gender neutral **pronoun** that is an alternative to he and she.