

EDUCATOR RESOURCE—SEX, GENDER, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Agender: people who identify as not having a gender or being genderless. They can exist outside of the gender binary, be gender non-conforming, and/or identify as trans.

Androgynous or Androgyne: people whose gender expression and/or identity is between, across (both), or outside of the binary and/or does not conform to gender norms.

Aromantic: a person who generally does not feel romantic attraction or desire to any group of people, either within or outside of a relationship.

Asexual or Ace: a person who generally does not feel sexual attraction or desire to any group of people, either within or outside of a relationship.

Bisexual or Bi: a person who is attracted to more than one gender.

Bicurious: a person who may not identify as bisexual or bi but is open to or curious about having sexual and/or romantic relationships with someone whose gender differs from their usual attraction.

Biphobia: a range of negative attitudes, feelings, and fears towards bisexual people or bisexuality, which may include negative stereotyping or denial of the existence of bisexuality.

Cisgender: people whose gender identity and assigned sex are the same (e.g., someone who was assigned male at birth and identifies as a man).

Cissexism: systemic or individual behaviours, assumptions, and rules that grant preferential treatment to cisgender people.

Closeted: a figure of speech used to describe a person who is keeping their sexual orientation and/or gender identity a secret from others. It is often used in a derogatory or disempowering way (someone who believes they know others' sexual orientations better than the person themselves).

Coming out: a figure of speech that refers to communicating your sexual orientation and/or gender identity to yourself and others.

Demiromantic: a person who only feels romantic attraction to people with whom a close emotional bond has been formed.

Demisexual: a person who only feels sexual attraction to people with whom a close emotional bond has been formed.

Femmephobia: the fear, aversion, hatred, and de-valuing of anything and anyone that is considered feminine, regardless of gender identity.

Gay: a person who is primarily attracted to people of the same gender. Although it can be used for any gender, it is most often used for men who are attracted to men.

Gender expression: how a person publicly presents their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as how someone dresses, wears their hair, if they use make-up, their body language, and their voice.

Gender identity: refers to an internal sense or awareness that all people have. For most, it can be described as a kind of “man-ness” or “woman-ness.” But gender is not limited to two; it is not binary.

Gender creative and Gender Independent: terms often used to describe children who do not conform to binary constructions of gender. Children who are gender creative or gender independent may or may not grow up to identify as transgender.

Gender fluid: a term to describe someone who moves between binary constructions of gender and whose gender identity and expressions vary over time.

Gender non-binary and Gender queer: umbrella terms used to describe someone whose gender identity does not conform to the socially constructed gender binary.

Gray-asexual: a person who experiences sexual attraction but either not very often or only to a minimal extent.

Gray-romantic: a person who experiences romantic attraction but either not very often or only to a minimal extent.

Heterosexism: behaviors, assumptions, and rules that grant preferential treatment to heterosexual people. Heterosexism reinforces the idea that heterosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than homosexuality or queerness and/or ignores the existence of homosexuality or queerness.

Heterosexual: a clinical term for people who are attracted to people of a different gender, often referred to as “straight.”

Homophobia: the systemic and individual oppression of people whose sexual orientation does not conform to heterosexuality (and/or of people perceived to be LGBTQ+). This includes a range of negative attitudes and feelings such as prejudice, fear, discrimination, harassment, and bias towards people whose sexual orientation does not conform to (or is not perceived to conform to) heterosexuality.

Homosexual: a clinical term for people who are attracted to the same gender. Some people find this term offensive because it was historically used to describe queerness as a disease that could be cured.

Lesbian: a person who is primarily attracted to people of the same gender. It is most often used for women who are attracted to other women.

LGBTQ+: the acronym includes gender identities as well as identities related to sexual orientation. Fully spelled out the LGBTQ+ acronym contains lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, with the plus indicating more identities such as asexual, intersex, pansexual, two spirit, and questioning.

Monoromantic: a person who has romantic feelings for one gender.

Monosexism: behaviors, assumptions, or rules that grant preferential treatment to monosexual people. Monosexism reinforces the idea that monosexuality is somehow better or more “right” than bisexuality or pansexuality and/or ignores the existence of bisexuality and pansexuality.

Monosexual: refers to people who are sexually attracted to one gender.

Neutrois: people who identify as gender neutral. They may see themselves as fitting under the gender non-binary and/or trans umbrellas.

Outing (someone): when someone reveals another person's sexual orientation or gender identity to an individual or group, often without the person's consent or approval. Not to be confused with "coming out."

Pansexual: a person who experiences sexual, romantic, physical, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to members of all gender identities/expressions.

Polyamorous: a person who desires intimate partnerships with more than one person. This identity can take many different forms and can include people who identify across various sexual orientations.

Polyromantic: a person who is romantically attracted to multiple genders.

Polysexual: a person who is sexually attracted to multiple genders. This term can have different meanings to different people and often positions itself as different from bisexuality, pansexuality, and polyamory.

Queer: an umbrella term to describe many different kinds of sexual orientations. Queer was historically used as a derogatory term for people who either were or were perceived to be LGBTQ+. In recent years, it has been reclaimed by some people within the LGBTQ+ community as a way of self-identifying and as a political statement against the oppression to which they have been subjected.

Queer platonic or QP: refers to a very intimate friendship. It describes a kind of partnership that does not fit the traditional romantic coupling but can nonetheless be intense, emotionally intimate, and even romantically intimate.

Questioning: for some, the process of exploring and discovering their sexual orientation.

Romantic orientation: refers to the ways that people can experience romantic and emotional attractions. These may be separate from or connected to sexual and/or physical attraction. Sexual orientation and romantic orientation are not necessarily distinct identities; they are interrelated.

Sexuality: is an integral part of being human. It is a complex set of personal, social, and spiritual experiences that go beyond sexual activity. In other words, sexuality is not just about what our body does and what we do with our bodies, it is how thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles, and relationships are experienced and expressed (WHO, 2006a).

Sexual expression: refers to the variety of ways a person expresses their sexuality, including the kinds of sexual activities they like to participate in. It is not the same as sexual orientation; someone may identify as heterosexual and express their sexuality in ways interpreted by others as queer.

Sexual orientation: refers to a person's emotional, romantic, and/or physical, and/or sexual attraction to others. Sexuality is complex and attraction can manifest very differently for different people. Categories are commonly used to understand our attractions, though are by no means inclusive of the vast variety of expressions that make up human sexuality.

Third/3rd gender: an umbrella term used to describe people who exist outside of the gender binary. For some people it means the construction of a new gender.

Transgender: people whose gender identity and assigned sex are different. Transgender like all gender identities is internal and not something you can tell or determine in others.

Trans: an umbrella term to describe people whose gender identity and assigned sex are different. It can be used for a range of identities and experiences; every community and individual may define trans differently. Trans is a term that someone chooses to describe their own identity. It is not something you can tell or determine in others.

Trans-feminine: someone who identifies as transgender and feminine.

Trans-masculine: someone who identifies as transgender and masculine.

Transphobia: the systemic and individual oppression of people whose gender identity and gender expression do not conform to cisgender identities. This includes a range of negative attitudes and feelings such as prejudice, fear, discrimination, harassment, and bias towards transgender people and gender non-binary, gender creative, and gender non-conforming people.

Transmisogyny: the intersection of transphobia and misogyny. It is misogyny directed at trans women, trans people, and gender non-conforming feminine people. This includes a range of negative attitudes and feelings such as prejudice, fear, discrimination, harassment, and bias towards trans and gender non-conforming people who either identify as women and/or identify as femme/feminine. Transmisogyny comes from outside and within the LGBTQ+ community.

Two spirit (or 2 spirit): is a term used by some Indigenous people to self-identify. It is an Indigenous specific term that can only be used by Indigenous people to identify themselves. While the term itself is Anishinaabe based, it has been taken up by different Indigenous nations to describe complex experiences and identities as well as cultural roles and responsibilities. Two spirit can sometimes refer to sexual orientation and at other times to gender identity, depending on the individual and/or their particular nation. It can also describe roles and responsibilities specific to different Indigenous nations that may or may not be tied to sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Like any other term that people use to self-identify, do not assume that just because someone is Indigenous and identifies as LGBTQ+, that they will use the term two spirit to identify themselves. (For more information about the term two spirit and two spirit identities, visit www.nativeyouthsexualhealth.com/supportcircle.html).