

# Terminology: Gender and Sexuality

GLBTTI	Acronym for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and intersex; also seen as LGBT, LGBTI
Gay	The term <i>gay</i> is most often used to describe males that have same-sex feelings for men; another more clinical term used is <i>homosexual</i> . However, the term can also be used to describe lesbians. The term is also used to describe the <i>gay community</i> —a community that is defined by GLBTT members. The term can refer to people within the community, an actual physical area (most often in larger urban cities, such as Toronto) or designated businesses, places & areas, or a combination of any of the above.
Lesbian	The term <i>lesbian</i> is used to describe females that have same sex feelings for women. The term can also be used to describe the <i>lesbian community</i> —a community that is defined by lesbians. The term usually refers to <i>out</i> women that are active and visible as members of the lesbian community.
Bisexual	The term <i>bisexual</i> is used to describe individuals that have sexual attractions to both males and females.
Intersex	Previously referred to as hermaphrodite. One of many biological conditions where children are born with reproductive organs and/or chromosomes that are not exclusively male or female. Gender identity can vary from male to female – or anywhere in- between.
Transgender	The term <i>transgender</i> is most often used to describe individuals that feel that their biological sex and sexual identity are incongruent (i.e. born biologically male but identify in all other ways as female; born biologically female but identify in all other ways as male; this is usually termed transsexual). The term is really an umbrella term, though, that includes transsexuals, cross-dressers, drag queens and drag kings, gender outlaws, and all other individuals whose gender roles are ambiguous. This identification challenges traditional roles and rules around gender and sexuality. Transgendered people may be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual.

Transsexual	A term that is often used interchangeably these days with the more recently coined term 'transgender', to describe those who undertake a process to move from one biological 'sex' to another. This term often preferred by the medical fraternity and those who subscribe to the view that while it is possible to change the appearance of one's sex, it is not possible to change genders.
Dyke	The term <i>dyke</i> is used to describe some lesbians. The term was originally used in a negative context to stereotype and oppress lesbians as masculine women. The term has been reclaimed by many (but not all) lesbians as a positive label in describing self-confidence and independence in a woman. Its use by people outside the 'queer' community may be regarded as offensive; sensitivity in using labels is essential.
Fag / Faggot	The word <i>faggot</i> originally comes from Latin, meaning a bundle of sticks. Throughout history, when witches were burned this was done with faggots. During the inquisition, the term came to be applied to the bodies of GLBTT people that were used as kindling and burned along with witches. Overall, the term fag or faggot is used derogatorily as a slur against gay men. However, many men within the gay community have reclaimed the term as a word of pride & affection towards other gay men.
Ally	Some universities have an 'Ally' program. An <i>Ally</i> is an individual who has taken training around homophobia and heterosexism. Allies support and welcome GLBTT individuals and work towards making the University a more inclusive and safe place for GLBTT people, by being aware of the effects that homophobia and heterosexism can have on people. Allies create change by challenging and providing education around homophobia, heterosexism, stereotypes, and myths about GLBTT people. Allies are aware of GLBTT resources both on campus and off.
Queer	Originally a derogatory label used to refer to lesbian and gay people or to intimidate or offend heterosexuals. Many individuals who do not identify with any terms (gay, lesbian, straight, etc.) often will use the term "queer" to describe themselves and their sexual identity. Recently, this term has been reclaimed by <i>some</i> lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people as an inclusive and positive way to identify all people targeted by homophobia or heterosexism. Similarly, <i>some</i> lesbians and gays have reclaimed the terms <i>dyke</i> and <i>fag</i> for positive self-reference.
Straight	A common term for heterosexual.
Sexism	The societal/cultural, institutional and individual beliefs and practices that privilege men, subordinate women, and denigrate women-identified values.

Heterosexism	The belief in the inherent superiority of heterosexuality over other patterns of loving and thereby its right to dominance. This privileges heterosexuals in their relationships and oppresses gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgendered and two-spirited persons. Effectively it denigrates alternate sexuality and genders from the heterosexual dominant culture.
Heterosexual Assumption	The assumption/practice that heterosexuality is the norm and that everyone is heterosexual unless otherwise indicated. This assumption is an aspect of heterosexism and perpetuates its existence.
Heterosexual Privilege	The benefits that heterosexual people automatically have and that are denied lesbians and gay men in a heterosexist culture. Also, the benefits that lesbians, gay men and bisexuals receive as a result of claiming heterosexual identity or denying homosexual or bisexual identity. These benefits can include concrete recognition in areas such as legal rights, employment benefits and human rights legislation.
Homophobia	The fear of feelings of love for members of one's own sex and therefore the hatred of those feelings in others. (Lorde, Audre: Sister Outsider, Essays and Speeches, 1984) Homophobia is the ultimate weapon in reinforcing rigid sex-role conformity; sex-role conformity oppresses all females and limits male options. The negative feelings, attitudes and actions that some people have towards sexual minorities are often exhibited by prejudice, discrimination, harassment and acts of violence.
Oppression	The systematic subjugation of a disempowered social group by a group with access to social power. (Blumenfeld, Warren J.: Homophobia, How We All Pay the Price, 1992)
Coming Out	The process through which GLBTT individuals often go through in recognizing and accepting their identity as a person that is GLBTT; people that have reached a place in their life where they are comfortable / aware / have incorporated their sexuality/gender into their overall being are often individuals that are <i>out</i> . Being out often exists in different levels and meanings for different people. People may be "out" in some aspects of their lives, but not in others. <i>Coming out</i> is not a one-time event, but a lifelong process that happens over and over. GLBTT individuals make choices every day surrounding to whom, when and where they will come out. This process generally occurs on three levels: personal (with oneself), private (family and friends) and public (at work or in the community at large) People going through the coming out process often describe themselves as <i>being out</i> .

Outing	The public exposure of someone's sexuality without their knowledge or permission.
Closeted / In the Closet	The term <i>in the closet</i> refers to individuals that are not out. This is done for many reasons—to keep family, friends, employment, housing, and security. Often, GLBTT people are out in some aspects of their lives and closeted in others. The closet is meant to refer to the feeling of hiding, of being confined, of never fully being able to express yourself.

This information adapted with permission, from University of Manitoba Allies Website:  
<http://www.umanitoba.ca/equity/allies/index.html>

Accessed 16/07/03

**Websites where you may find further useful information.**

HREOC

[http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human\\_rights/gay\\_lesbian/](http://www.hreoc.gov.au/human_rights/gay_lesbian/)

The Source

<http://www.thesource.gov.au/lifestyle/index.htm>

Information Page from UC Davis

[http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/sexual\\_prejudice.html](http://psychology.ucdavis.edu/rainbow/html/sexual_prejudice.html)

Stop homophobia

<http://www.stophomophobia.org/index/home.htm>

Transgender Peer Support program

<http://www.atsaq.com.au/>