



Understanding LGBTIQ+ people



LGBTIQ+ refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse people, people with innate variations of sex characteristics, and people who identify as queer or who are questioning their sexual orientation or gender. The “+” recognises the diversity of sexual orientation, gender and variations of sex characteristics beyond those represented by the initials.

When people refer to the general population or the mainstream, this includes LGBTIQ+ people. LGBTIQ+ people live in all parts of society and have diverse lives, relationships and experiences. There is no single way of being LGBTIQ+.

People’s experiences of sexual orientation, gender and variations of sex characteristics are shaped by culture, age, geography, faith, disability, socioeconomic circumstances and many other factors. LGBTIQ+ people are part of all areas of society, including every profession, faith, political perspective and community, and live in cities, regional and remote areas across Australia.



Understanding the differences between Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer people.

What does 'lesbian' mean?



A lesbian is a woman who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction primarily to other women. Some women use other terms to describe their relationships and attractions.

What does 'gay' mean?



A gay man is a man who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction primarily to other men. Some men use other terms to describe their relationships and attractions.

What does 'bisexual' mean?



A bisexual person is someone of any gender who experiences romantic and/or sexual attraction to more than one gender. Some people who fit this description prefer terms such as queer or pansexual, which reflect attraction beyond two genders. Although the prefix "bi" refers to two, the term is widely used by people who are attracted to people of multiple genders.

Some people identify as asexual, meaning they experience little or no sexual attraction. Others may identify as aromantic, meaning they experience little or no romantic attraction. These identities are part of the diversity of sexual orientation.

What does 'trans' mean?



Trans and transgender are umbrella terms used to describe people whose gender is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender refers to a person's internal sense of being a woman, a man, non-binary, or another gender, and how this may be expressed.

Trans people have diverse experiences. Many live and identify simply as women or men. Others identify as non-binary or use other terms that reflect a gender that is not exclusively female or male. Some people describe their gender using the term trans, while others do not.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may use culturally specific terms such as sistingirl or brotherboy. In many cultures around the world, there are longstanding traditions that recognise more than two genders, and people may use language that reflects these cultural understandings.





What does 'queer' mean?



Queer is a term used by some people whose sexual orientation and/or gender is not heterosexual or cisgender. For some, queer is a broad and inclusive identity that does not fit within more specific labels.

The term has been used negatively in the past, and not everyone is comfortable using it. It is important to use this term only if a person chooses it for themselves.

The "Q" in LGBTIQ+ can also refer to questioning. A person who is questioning may be exploring or still working out their sexual orientation and/or gender. This can be an important part of understanding themselves and does not necessarily lead to a particular identity.

A note on language and diversity

Sexual orientation, gender and variations of sex characteristics are personal aspects of a person's life. The words people use to describe themselves may change over time and can vary across cultures, generations and contexts.

Language in this area continues to evolve, and no set of terms can capture the full diversity of people's experiences. The "+" in LGBTIQ+ recognises this diversity and the many identities and experiences that are not fully reflected in the initials.

Using respectful language and listening to how people describe themselves helps create inclusive and supportive environments.

What does 'intersex' mean?



People with innate variations of sex characteristics (sometimes referred to as intersex people) are born with physical sex characteristics, such as chromosomes, hormones or anatomy, that do not fit typical medical definitions of female or male bodies. These variations are natural and occur across the population.

Variations of sex characteristics relate to biological traits such as chromosomes, hormones and anatomy, and are not about gender. People with innate variations of sex characteristics have diverse genders and sexual orientation. Many identify simply as women or men, while others may identify as non-binary or use other terms that reflect their gender. These variations should not be described as a third gender.