

SOGIE Terms Desk Aid

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression

SOGIE terms are fluid and subject to change. These definitions are expected to be revisited as needed. Definitions listed below are based on current best practices.

SOGIE An acronym for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Everyone has a sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

LGBTQ An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and/or questioning. It denotes a community or coalition of people with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations not limited to those specified in the acronym itself.

Sex A combination of biological and physiological characteristics, including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external organs, and secondary sex characteristics (e.g., facial hair) used by medical professionals to classify someone as male, female, or intersex.

Female A term describing people born with, usually: XX chromosomes, higher levels of estrogen and progesterone relative to other hormones, and organs including ovaries, uterus, clitoris, and vulva.

Male A term describing people born with, usually: XY chromosomes, higher levels of testosterone relative to other hormones, and organs including testicles, prostate, penis, and scrotum.

Intersex A term describing people born with variations of internal/external sex anatomy and hormones resulting in bodies that cannot be medically classified as the typical male/female.

Sexual Orientation

Refers to a person's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to persons of the same and/or different sex.

Asexual Refers to a person who does not experience sexual attraction to other people.

Bisexual Refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to both men/males and women/females.

Gay Refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to people of the same sex.

Lesbian Refers to a woman who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to other women.

Pansexual Not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity.

Questioning Refers to people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Queer A fluid label someone uses to self-identify as outside of the societal norms in regards to sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, acknowledging difference(s) without specifying which SOGIE category or categories the difference(s) occur(s) within.

Straight/Heterosexual Refers to a person who is emotionally, romantically, and sexually attracted to people of the opposite sex.

Gender Identity

A term used to describe a person's internal sense of themselves as a man/male, a woman/female, no gender, or another gender, regardless of anatomy.

Cisgender A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Transgender An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation.

Gender Non-Conforming (GNC) A broad term referring to people who do not conform to the traditional expectations of their gender identity, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Sometimes called gender expansive.

Two-Spirit An umbrella term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe gender-variant individuals.

Pronouns How people refer to themselves and how they prefer to be referred to in terms of gender. Examples of pronouns include "she/her/hers," "he/him/his," "they/them/theirs," and "ze/zir/zes."

Gender Expression External appearance of a person's gender, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender Roles Societal expectations of how people should act, think, look, dress, sound, and/or feel based upon the gender corresponding with their sex assigned at birth. Gender roles often change over time.

Additional Terms

Outing The act of declaring someone's perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity. A person "comes out" when they disclose their sexual orientation or gender identity to someone else.

Gender Dysphoria A medical diagnosis used to describe clinically significant distress when a person's assigned sex at birth is not the same as the one with which they identify. *Not all transgender people experience gender dysphoria.*

Gender Neutral A term that describes something (usually a space, such as a bathroom, or clothing) that is not segregated by sex/gender.