

## Our glossary

Our glossary will guide you through a list of ILGA-Europe's most commonly used phrases and acronyms.

By defining how and when we use particular terms, we hope to clear away any misunderstandings and make the jobs of LGBTI activists, journalists, policy makers, students and researchers easier.

Language is a living thing and its usage changes over time. ILGA-Europe will review the glossary regularly so please get in touch with our Communications Team if you have any comments or suggestions for terms we should include: [info@ilga-europe.org](mailto:info@ilga-europe.org).

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## A

**Automatic co-parent recognition:** covers when children born to same-sex couples are not facing any barriers in order to be recognised legally from birth to their parents.

## B

**Biphobia:** the fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance or/and hatred toward bisexuality and bisexual people.

**Bisexual:** when a person is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to persons of more than one gender.

## C

**Civil union:** see *Registered partnership*.

**Cisgender:** A term that refers to a person who does not identify as trans.

**Cohabitation rights:** two persons living together at the same physical address can, in some European countries (and regions), make a legal agreement on some practical matters (which vary from country to country). The rights emanating out of cohabitation are limited.

**Coming-out:** the process of revealing the identification of a lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex person.

**“Conversion therapy”:** Any sustained effort to modify a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, based upon the assumption that a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is a mental disorder and should be changed. It’s recommended to use this term in “”.

## D

**Depathologisation:** The recognition that no sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression is an illness. Depathologisation allows trans people to access trans specific healthcare without a mental health assessment or diagnosis.

**Different-sex relationship:** a relationship containing people of two different sexes. This term is preferred instead of opposite-sex, as ‘opposite’ is based on the incorrect assumption that there are only two possible sexes and that they are immutable.

**Discrimination:** unequal or unfair treatment which can be based on a range of grounds, such as age, ethnic background, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity. Can be divided into four different types of discrimination, which all can lead to victimisation and harassment:

- *Direct discrimination:* where a person is treated less favourably than others on grounds of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.
- *Indirect discrimination:* where an apparently neutral provision or practice would put people of particular sexual orientation or gender identity at a disadvantage compared to others.
- *Multiple discrimination:* discrimination based on more than one ground.
- *Experienced discrimination:* also called subjective discrimination, is the experience of being discriminated against. Experienced discrimination does not necessarily entail discrimination in the legal sense.

## G

**Gay:** refers to a person who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to people of the same gender. It traditionally refers to men, but other people who are attracted to the same gender or multiple genders may also define themselves as gay.

**Gender:** refers to a social construct which places cultural and social expectations on individuals based on their assigned sex.

**Gender expression:** refers to people's manifestation of their gender identity to others, by for instance, dress, speech and mannerisms. People's gender expression may or may not match their gender identity/identities, or the gender they were assigned at birth.

**Gender identity:** refers to each person's deeply felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex assigned at birth, including the personal sense of the body (which may involve, if freely chosen, modification of bodily appearance or function by medical, surgical or other means) and other expressions of gender, including dress, speech and mannerisms. Some people's gender identity falls outside the gender binary, and related norms.

**Gender non-conforming:** Refers to gender expressions other than male or female.

**Gender reassignment:** This is an outdated term to refer to the process of medical transition. It comes from the 2018 CJEU decision on a change of gender and retirement pension case and is used to legally describe medical transition in the context of the EU. (See *Transition*)

**Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS):** Medical term and outdated term for surgeries taking place in the frame of Transition-Related healthcare.

## H

**Harassment:** any act or conduct that is unwelcome to the victim, which could be regarded in relation to the victim's sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and/or as offensive, humiliating or intimidating. It can include spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material.

**Hate crime:** offences that are motivated by hate or by bias against a particular group of people. This could be based on gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age or disability. Also called bias crime.

**Hate speech:** refers to public expressions which spread, incite, promote or justify hatred, discrimination or hostility towards minorities.

**Heteronormativity:** refers to the set of beliefs and practices that consider gender to be an absolute, unquestionable binary, and therefore describe and reinforce heterosexuality as a norm.

It implies that people's gender, sex and sex characteristics are by nature and should always be aligned, and therefore heterosexuality is the only conceivable sexuality and the only way of being 'normal'.

**Heterosexual:** Refers to a person who identifies as man who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted only to people who identify as women. It also refers to a person who identifies as woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted only to people who identify as men.

**Homophobia:** fear, unreasonable anger, intolerance or/and hatred directed towards homosexuality.

**Homosexual:** People are classified as homosexual on the basis of their gender and the gender of their sexual partner(s). When the partner's gender is the same as the individual's, then the person is categorised as homosexual. It is recommended to use the terms lesbian and gay men instead of homosexual people. The terms lesbian and gay are being considered neutral and positive, and the focus is on the identity instead of being sexualised or pathologised.

**Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT):** It refers to hormone therapy that can be taken as part of transition-related medical care or intersex-specific healthcare.

## I

**Intersex:** intersex individuals are born with sex characteristics (sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal structure and/or levels and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit the typical definition of male or female. The term "intersex" is an umbrella term for the spectrum of variations of sex characteristics that naturally occur within the human species. The term intersex acknowledges the fact that physically, sex is a spectrum and that people with variations of sex characteristics other than male or female exist.

## L

**Legal gender recognition:** A process whereby a trans and/or intersex person's gender is recognised in law, or the achievement of the process.

**Lesbian:** a woman who is sexually and/or emotionally attracted to women.

**LGBTI:** Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people.

## M

**Marriage equality:** where national marriage legislation also includes same-sex couples – e.g. gender neutral reference to the spouses. Sometimes media outlets and decision makers incorrectly refer to the extension of existing marriage legislation to same-sex couples as 'gay marriage'. What they really mean is marriage equality; no country has created a marriage law specifically for same-sex couples.

## N

**Non-binary:** Refers to gender identities other than male or female.

## O

**Out:** being openly gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans or intersex

## P

**Pansexual:** When a person is emotionally and/or sexually attracted to people regardless of their gender.

**Pride events:** Pride events and marches are annual demonstrations against LGBTIphobia and in favour of LGBTI

rights that take place around the world.

## Q

**Queer:** previously used as a derogatory term to refer to LGBTI individuals in the English language, queer has been reclaimed by people who identify beyond traditional gender categories and heteronormative social norms. However, depending on the context, some people may still find it offensive. Also refers to queer theory, an academic field that challenges heteronormative social norms concerning gender and sexuality.

## R

**Registered partnership:** a legal recognition of relationships; not always with the same rights and/or benefits as marriage – synonymous with a civil union or civil partnership.

## S

**Same-sex marriage:** the term same-sex marriage does not exist in reality. There is no country which has a specific marriage law solely for same-sex couples. The right term is marriage equality, as the aim is to open marriage laws to same-sex couples to give them the same rights as different-sex couples. See *marriage equality*.

**Same-sex relationships or couples:** covers relationships or couples consisting of two people of the same sex.

**Second parent adoption:** where a same-sex partner is allowed to adopt their partner's biological child(ren).

**Sex:** The classification of a person as male or female. Sex is assigned at birth and written on a birth certificate, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy and on a binary vision of sex which excludes intersex people.

A person's sex, however, is actually a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics.

**Sex characteristics:** A term that refers to a person's chromosomes, anatomy, hormonal structure and reproductive organs. OII Europe and its member organisations recommend protecting intersex individuals by including sex characteristics as a protected ground in anti-discrimination legislation. This is because many of the issues that intersex people face are not covered by existing laws that only refer to sexual orientation and gender identity.

This is seen as being a more inclusive term than 'intersex status' by many intersex activists, as it refers to a spectrum of possible characteristics instead of a single homogenous status or experience of being intersex.

**Sexual orientation:** refers to each person's capacity for profound affection, emotional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender.

**Successive adoption:** where a same-sex partner is allowed to adopt their partner's adopted child.

**Surrogacy:** an arrangement in which a woman carries and delivers a child for another couple or for another person.

## T

**Trans:** Is an inclusive umbrella term referring to people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differ from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth.

It may include, but is not limited to: people who identify as transsexual, transgender, transvestite/cross-dressing, androgyne, polygender, genderqueer, agender, gender variant, gender non-conforming, or with any other gender identity and/or expression which does not meet the societal and cultural expectations placed on gender identity.

**Transgender:** See *Trans*.

**Transition:** Refers to a series of steps people may take to live in the gender they identify with. A person's transition can be social and/or medical. Steps may include: coming out to family, friends and colleagues; dressing and acting according to one's gender; changing one's name and/or sex/gender on legal documents; medical treatments including hormone therapies and possibly one or more types of surgery.

**Transition-Related Healthcare (TRHC):** (previously referred to as gender reassignment surgery (GRS), gender-affirming surgery/healthcare (GAS or GAH)): Medical interventions, including hormone therapies, surgeries, and others, to bring the primary and secondary sex characteristics of a person's body into alignment with their internal self-perception.

**Transphobia:** Refers to negative cultural and personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes and behaviours based on prejudice, disgust, fear and/or hatred of trans people or against variations of gender identity and gender expression.

## V

**Victimisation:** a specific term describing discrimination that a person suffers because they have made a complaint or been a witness in another person's complaint.