

Useful terminology

LGBTQ+, what does it mean?

- L = Lesbian:** A woman who has a romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women
- G = Gay:** A man who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to other men (Note: some women prefer to identify as a gay woman rather than a lesbian)
- B = Bisexual/Bi:** A person who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to both men and women
- T = Transgender/Trans:** An umbrella term for people whose gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth
- Q = Questioning:** Someone who is unsure of their sexual orientation
- & Queer:** A reappropriated word for people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender, particularly used by younger LGBTQ+ people
- + =** Any other identity that is not heterosexual and/or cisgender

A note on the word queer

Please be mindful that the word queer, whilst recently reappropriated, has for many years been an insult used to bully and attack LGBTQ+ people. This means that it can provoke a negative reaction if used by someone who is not LGBTQ+. For some, it is a word that evokes freedom and individuality, for others it brings up memories of abuse. A good rule of thumb is to only refer to someone as queer if they have specifically told you that they identify as such.

Useful terminology

Gender vs sex

Whilst the transgender community faces a lot of the same issues as the LGB community, they also face a lot of additional barriers and fears. In the same vein, people who are not trans often don't have the words to ask questions and understand. The following should help you to have the vocabulary to have these conversations in a respectful way.

Sex: A biological designation assigned at birth based upon visible reproductive organs; typically male, or female

Intersex: Where someone has a combination of both male and female reproductive organs

AFAB & AMAB: Assigned male/female at birth

Gender: A social construct built around the sexes. The most common examples of genders are boy/man and girl/woman.

Transgender/trans: Where someone's gender does not match the sex they were assigned at birth

Cisgender/Cis: Where someone's gender does align with the sex they were assigned at birth

Non-binary: Someone whose gender is neither wholly man, nor woman, rather a mixture of both

Agender: Someone who does not fall into any gender

Pronouns: Words we use in conversation to refer to a third person - for example, 'he' or 'she'. Some people may prefer others to refer to them in gender neutral language and use pronouns such as 'they/their' or 'ze/zir'.



More on pronouns

Pronouns are words that are used to stand in for a noun. In English, when using them to describe people, we have masculine, feminine, and neutral pronouns. Examples of masculine pronouns are he, him, and his; feminine pronouns are she, her, hers; and neutral are they, them and theirs. We are all familiar with how to use the masculine and feminine pronouns, but the neutral ones have caused some confusion.

Neutral pronouns are often used to describe groups, for example: "My team have done really well this period, they smashed all their targets." But they can also be used for individuals. This is often the case when someone's gender isn't known. An example of this is: "I have a new candidate coming in to register today. They are due in at 12:30." The use of single-person gender-neutral pronouns is nothing new, in fact the Oxford English Dictionary traces its first use back to 1375. Some people, including many non-binary people, prefer to use gender-neutral pronouns.

A blue circle graphic containing the text "Sharing pronouns".

Sharing pronouns

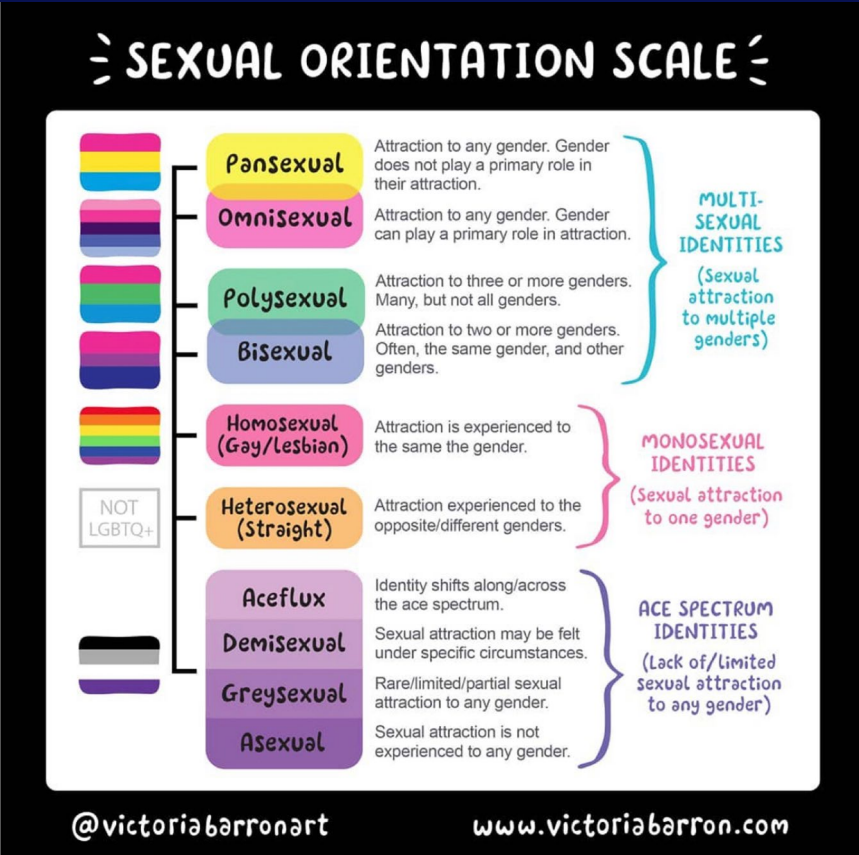
You can't have missed people sharing their pronouns in LinkedIn bios, on email signatures, and on video captions. Often, these will be the pronouns that you would expect. So, why do they share them? In the 2021 trans lives survey, carried out by Transactual, 63% of participants reported experiencing transphobia while seeking employment, and 80% of non-binary people reported having experienced transphobia from colleagues. Sharing your pronouns as a cisgender person gives a clear message to trans people that they are safe to be themselves at Reed. It also allows them to make the choice as to whether they feel safe enough to share theirs in a non-confrontational way.



Other identities

There are many other sexual orientations that can fall under the + in LGBTQ+. Some people are sexually attracted to one gender, some are sexually attracted to multiple genders, and some are sexually attracted to no genders.

What is important is that no one identity is more valid than the others, simply more common. It wouldn't be appropriate to ask a cisgender co-member what their reproductive organs are like, and likewise it isn't appropriate to ask a trans co-member, candidate, or client whether they have had any surgery, even if well meant.



Queer-identifying artist Victoria Barron gives an excellent breakdown of this sexuality scale in this picture.

If you are interested in finding out more about different identities, then please do visit Victoria's website or Instagram.

