

Relevant words for communities with diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, relationships, families, and cultures when using health services

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1 Introduction

This resource is for Patients/Clients at the intersection of multiple identities in relation to diverse sexual orientation, genders, bodies, and cultures and for Health Professionals working with these communities. These groups need the right words and terms to communicate with each other.

There are three acronyms used in this document. LGBTIQ+ refers to individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual and the + is to be inclusive to others (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTIQ+ Staff Collective 2023). SOGIESC is used to describe Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics. This term is used in policy and human rights and anti-discrimination law (Australian Human Rights Commission 2020). The final is CALD – Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (Multicultural NSW 2022).

The resource is mainly for the following groups:

- a. **People of diverse sexualities, genders, bodies, families, relationships, and cultures.**
- b. **Health Interpreters working with LGBTIQ+ CALD communities.**
- c. **Clinicians and administrators working in healthcare.**
- d. **For health services producing translated materials**

This resource does not contain slang and street names as they may be harmful to people with diverse SOGIESC. We note, however, that people use words differently and assign individual meanings to certain words (Hanckel 2022). Where SOGIESC communities use other terms, service providers should follow their lead.

This resource is in alphabetical order. The term is in the first column and definition in the second column. The resource is (a) not exhaustive and (b) words, definitions or translations may change.

The resource is mainly a ‘soft copy’ so it can be updated. If you have a suggestion for updating a definition, please email MulticulturalHealth@health.nsw.gov.au

The resource should be used with a training program, such as Coming In: Working with people who have diverse sexualities genders, bodies, families and relationships with refugee or asylum-seeking experiences (NSW STARTTS 2023).

Thank you to all CALD and LGBTIQ+ services and community members for your time and passion. Thank you to all Health Professionals interested in improving healthcare spaces. The Professional Translators who worked on this resource have done thoughtful and innovative work.

Arabic speaking translators /interpreters involved in the project were Bakri Gabir, Zoya Jammal, Fadia Shounda, Josephine Elias, Vivian Antoun, Chamoun Salameh Bechara and Nizar Shammu. The work was checked by Adrian Mouhajer and Bernard Saliba. Elliot (Haizhi) Luo, Tzu-Hsuan Juan and Tingting Chen worked together on the Simplified Chinese translation and this was checked by Kevin Dong and Jessica Luo.

The resource was developed by NSW STARTTS LGBTIQ+ Project – Walk on Walk Strong and Multicultural Health WSLHD in consultation with the following services: Rainbow Families, Twenty10, Rainbodhi, Western Sydney University, NSW Ministry of Health, University of Sydney, Settlement Services International, Aids Council of NSW

(CALD Gay Men’s Group, Transhub and Alcohol and Drugs), LGBTIQ Health Australia, Western Sydney Migrant Resource Centre, Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, Western Sydney Local Health District Services (Priority Populations Executive, Consumer Partnerships, Sexual Health, Women’s and Newborn Health, Youth Health and Youth Council) and the Gender Centre.

2 Cancer

Term	Definition
Breast/Chest Cancer	The growth of abnormal breast tissue starting in the milk making tissue that can spread to other organs in the body (Jean Hailes 2023)
Bowel Cancer	Bowel cancer develops from the inner lining of the bowel. It usually starts with growths called polyps, which may become cancer if undetected. Depending on where cancer begins, bowel cancer can be called colon or rectal cancer (Cancer Council 2021)
Cervical Screening Test	A test to check the cervix for the presence of human papillomavirus virus (Jean Hailes 2023)
Endometriosis	When the tissue that lines the uterus grows outside the uterus, usually in the ovaries, fallopian tubes or the intestines (Healthdirect 2020)
Prostate Cancer	When abnormal cells in the prostate gland grow in an uncontrolled way, forming a tumour (Cancer Council 2021)
Testicular Cancer	Cancer of the testicle, where the most common symptom is a painless swelling or lump in the testicle or a change in size or shape (Cancer Council 2021)

3 Family, Community and Palliative and Emergency Care

Term	Definition
Chosen Family	People that have a close relationship and are considered family. This relationship may replace or exist along with biological family.

Domestic Partner A gender-neutral word for spouse, lover, significant other, boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, de-factor etc (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)

Person to contact (as opposed to next of kin) Contact person for the wishes or health of another person

Polyamory People who are in or open to multiple relationships at the same time (UCDavis 2020)

4 Identities

Term	Definition
Asexual	Asexuality is a sexual orientation. It's what someone feels, not what someone does. Asexuality is a very broad spectrum and does not necessarily imply a lack of libido or sex drive (ACON Pride Training 2023)
Assigned female at birth	Abbreviation used is AFAB (Gender Centre 2023)
Androgynous	Someone who reflects an appearance that is both masculine and feminine, or who appears to be neither or both a male and a female (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Assigned male at birth	Abbreviation used is AMAB (Gender Centre 2023)
Biological/sex characteristics	Genetic, hormonal, and anatomical characteristics of bodies, which medical science defines as the basis for distinguishing the sex of bodies as male or female.
Bi-Sexual (+)	Someone who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to people of the same gender and people of different genders. This can include non-binary genders (ACON Pride Training 2023)
Brotherboy	A term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people who have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community. Brotherboys have a strong sense of their cultural identity (ACON TransHub 2021)
Cisgender	A term used to describe people who identify their gender as the same as what was presumed for them at birth (male or female).

'Cis' is a Latin term meaning 'on the same side as (ACON TransHub 2021)

Coming In / Inviting In	Rather than making a public declaration, coming in involves telling a trusted person or people about your diverse SOGIESC in the understanding that they will hold this knowledge safely (Hammoud-Beckett 2007)
Closeted, or 'in the closet'	Being secretive about one's gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or sex characteristics. Many LGBTIQ+ people are in a spectrum between fully closeted and fully out (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTIQ+ Staff Collective 2023)
Coming out	To become open about one's sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics with oneself and with others. This is an ongoing process (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTIQ+ Staff Collective 2023)
Cross - dresser	An older term that replaced the offensive word "transvestite." While anyone may wear clothes associated with a different sex, the term cross-dresser is typically used to refer to men who occasionally wear clothes, makeup, and accessories culturally associated with women, but who do not wish to transition and present as a woman at all times. It is a form of gender expression and not done for entertainment purposes. Cross-dresser does not describe men who perform in drag as drag queens. Transgender women are not cross-dressers and should never be referred to as such (GLAAD 2023)
Endosex	A word used to describe people who do not have an intersex variation.
Gay	A person whose gender is male, whose emotional, romantic and sexual attraction is toward other people whose gender identity is male. Gay may also be used as an umbrella term for people in same-sex relationships (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTIQ+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender	One's sense of self as masculine, feminine, neither or both regardless of external and internal genitalia. (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTIQ+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender Binary	The way people are strictly categorised into masculine and feminine gender roles, expressions, and identities based on their sex as assigned at birth. It oversimplifies the complexity of gender, sex, sexuality, and sex characteristics (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTIQ+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender Conformity	When your gender identity and biological sex match. For example, a male who is masculine and identifies as a man

Gender diverse	Used as an umbrella term for people who are gender nonconforming, gender queer, gender neutral, third gender, or whose gender identity and/or gender expression does not accord with binary norms or in other ways (Penn State Student Affairs 2022)
Gender expression	A person's way of communicating culturally defined traits of masculinity or femininity (or both, or neither, or another gender) externally through physical appearance, mannerisms, ways of speaking, and behavioural patterns in interactions with others (Yogyakarta Principles 2017)
Gender Identity	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 and other expressions of gender including dress, speech, and mannerisms (United Nations for Human Rights 1996-2022)
Genderqueer	Genderqueer people may identify as being both a man and a woman (either at one time or different times), a mixture of both, or neither man nor woman. This term is related to gender identity. Genderqueer people may or may not identify themselves as being transgender (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender Questioning	Refers to the process whereby an individual comes to question the usefulness or validity of their current assigned sex and/or the gender expectations (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender Role	Societies commonly have norms regarding how males and females should behave (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender Stereotypes	Gender stereotypes are what is expected of members of each biological sex. For example, the stereotype for males being tall and muscular (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Gender non-conforming	Displaying gender traits that are not normatively associated with their biological sex. "Feminine" behaviour or appearance in a male is gender-variant as is "masculine" behaviour or appearance a female (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Heterosexual (Het)	A person whose emotional, romantic and sexual attraction is towards people of a different gender to themselves.

Homosexual	A person whose emotional, romantic and sexual attraction is towards people of the same gender as themselves. In some contexts, this term may be considered derogatory.
Insertive Partner (Top)	Refers to the partner inserting the penis in anal sex (LGBTQIA Health USA 2020)
Intersectionality	The ways in which different aspects of a person's identity (such as gender, sexuality, race, ability, etc.) can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation (ACON Pride Training 2023)
Intersex / People with innate variations of sex characteristics	People who are born with anatomical, chromosomal and hormonal characteristics that are different from medical and conventional expectations of female and male bodies. There are at least 40 known variations. Intersex is not a sexual orientation or a gender identity (NSW Health 2023)
Lesbian	A person whose gender identity is woman, whose primary emotional, romantic and sexual attraction is towards other people who are woman.
Men who have sex with men	A term that does not assume people's sexual orientations. Cis or Trans Men that have sex with Cis or Trans Men
Nonbinary	This is an umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary (ACON TransHub 2021)
Pansexual	People who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to people across the spectrums of sexes and genders. Gender and sex are insignificant or irrelevant in determining whether they will be sexually or romantically attracted to others (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Pronouns	A pronoun is a word used to reference someone in the third person, e.g., his/her/they. Typically, pronouns are either singular or plural. Some languages, like English, Arabic and Spanish, have gendered pronouns (ACON Pride Training 2023)
Queer	An umbrella term for people of all kinds of sexual and gender diversities, and sometimes used to imply a more radical perspective. 'Queering' may also be used to refer to acts outside of sexual and gender diversity issues, where a binary or norm is challenged. Queer has also been used as a slur, predominantly against gay men, and still understood as a slur by some gay men. For this reason, the term queer is avoided except where people use it to self-identify (Organisation for Refuge, Asylum & Migration 2016).
Receptive partner (Bottom)	Refers to the partner receiving the penis in anal sex (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2016)

Sexual orientation	A person's capacity for profound emotional, affectional, and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender, or the same gender or more than one gender (Yogyakarta Principles 2017)
Sistergirl	A term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community. Including looking after children and family. Many Sistergirls live a traditional lifestyle and have strong cultural backgrounds (ACON TransHub 2021)
Switch	Someone who switches between roles in a relationship or sexual activity (Hubbard 2022)
Transgender (Trans)/ Gender Diverse	A person who feels and identifies themselves in a different gender than assigned to them at birth. They may express their identity differently to that expected of the gender role assigned to them at birth. Trans/transgender persons often identify themselves in ways that are locally, socially, culturally, religiously, or spiritually defined (Asia Pacific Transgender Network 2023)
Trans man	A person who was assigned female at birth but identifies as male, regardless of how they express their gender identity/if at all (ACON TransHub 2021)
Trans woman	A person who was assigned male at birth but identifies as female, regardless of how they express their gender identity/if at all (ACON TransHub 2021)
Women who have sex with women	A term that does not assume people's sexual orientations. Cis or Trans Women that have sex with Cis or Trans Women

5 Suffering, Stigma, Discrimination and Trauma

Term	Definition
Cisnormative/cisnormativity	Assumes that everyone is cisgender, and that people will continue to identify with the gender they were assigned at birth. Cisnormativity erases the existence of trans people (ACON Pride Training 2023)

Deadname	A term used by some trans or gender diverse people to describe the name they were given and known by prior to confirming their gender
Extortion	A form of intimidation, persecution, and torture with the aim of getting something by force or threat. Many people who seek sanctuary based on their SOGIESC have experienced extortion.
Heteronormativity	The societal view that heterosexual relationships are the only natural and normal expression of sexual orientation and relationships (ACON Pride Training 2023)
Heterosexism	The belief that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that other types of sexualities or gender identities are unhealthy, unnatural and a threat to society (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Homophobia	Refers to negative beliefs, prejudices, stereotypes, and fears that exist towards people with diverse sexualities (ACON Pride Training 2023)
Invisible minority	A group whose minority status is not always immediately visible, such as some disabled people and LGBTQIA+ people. This lack of visibility may make organising for rights difficult (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Minority stress	People living with stigma and discrimination because of their SOGIESC may live with specific societal, interpersonal, and internalised stigma and stress (Australian Human Rights Commission 2020)
Misgendering	Referring to someone by words or language that is not affirming for them, such as using a former name or pronoun, or making assumptions about their appearance (ACON TransHub 2021)
Outing	When someone discloses information about another's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or sex characteristics without their knowledge or consent.
Phobia	Fear, hatred, or discomfort with people who are of (or perceived to be of) diverse sexual orientations, transgender or gender diverse people, or intersex people, often manifesting as discrimination, harassment, vilification, or violence. Homophobia and transphobia are referred to most commonly, but variations of other orientations also exist. These individual terms reflect the specific challenges, stereotypes, or discrimination people in different groups of the LGBTQIA+ community experience (Yogyakarta Principles 2017)

Racism	Judgement of a person or community according white-normative standards, rules, and stereotypes (Pallotta-Chiarolli, Sudarto & Tang 2021)
Sexism/Misogyny	Discrimination against all women (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)

6 Partner violence

Term	Definition
Domestic violence	Violent, abusive, or intimidating behaviour carried out by an adult against a partner or former partner to control and dominate the person and their family members including children (WSLHD 2023)
Rape/Sexual Assault	Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual behaviour that makes you feel threatened, scared or uncomfortable. Sexual assault is a crime (WSLHD 2023)

7 Physical Health

Term	Definition
Cervix	The entrance to the uterus (womb) from the vagina (Jean Hailes 2023)
Menstruation /Menstruating person (Period, Bleeding)	The uterus produces blood and fluid roughly each month from puberty to till menopause, when the ovaries no longer produce eggs (American Sexual Health Association 2021)
Penis	The penis is a sexual organ, through which semen may be passed. Also used to urinate.

Testicles	The testicles produce sperm and testosterone and are located inside the scrotum (American Sexual Health Association 2021)
Vagina	The vagina is the canal between the uterus and outside of the body. It is both a sexual organ and part of the internal reproductive system. Trans and Gender Diverse people may use other words to describe their genitals (Cleveland Clinic 2022)
Vulva	The vulva is the area surrounding the opening of the vagina. It includes the labia (or vaginal lips) and clitoris (Marie Stopes South Africa 2020)

8 Pregnancy, Birth, and Infant Feeding

Term	Definition
Birthing Person/Mother	The person giving birth to a baby
Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, Nursing	These words are to be used interchangeably, using the terminology that a person/family uses for themselves (McHenry-koenen 2019, Richards 2023)
Caesarean	A surgical procedure to deliver a baby through a cut in the abdomen and uterus (Pregnancy, Birth, Baby 2019)
Co-feeding	When family members are involved in nursing/breastfeeding a child (Richards 2023)
Co-parent/partner	A person parenting with the birthing parent. The term partner can also be used instead of or interchangeably with co parent.
Human Milk Feeding	A term that describes feeding an infant or child with human milk no matter the method used including breast, supplemental at the breast feeder, cup, spoon, or bottle (McHenry-koenen 2019, Richards 2023)
Infertility	Not achieving pregnancy after six to twelve months for multiple reasons.
In vitro fertilisation (IVF)	Fertility treatment where a human egg is fertilised with sperm in a laboratory (Pregnancy, Birth & Baby 2023)

Pregnancy Being pregnant, carrying a baby inside your body

Relactation Re-starting a milk supply at any time after being pregnant (ABA 2020)

9 Sexual Health

Term	Definition
Blood Borne Virus	Viruses that some people carry in their blood, such as HIV/Aids and Hepatitis C
Chemsex	The use of drugs during sex
Chlamydia	A common STI. People sometimes report vaginal discharge and bleeding, pain during sex, redness and discharge from the penis and pain in the testicles although many people can be infected without any signs or symptoms (Healthdirect 2020)
Condom	Latex covers for the penis or the vulva designed to protect against pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections
Dental dams	A piece of latex that is commonly used as a barrier or protection method for STIs when performing oral sex on either the vulva or anus
Genital Warts	A common STI that can appear on the vagina, penis, anus and scrotum. They can be bumpy, flat and one or multiple warts can appear (Healthdirect 2020)
Gonorrhoea	An STI with symptoms including pain and discharge (from vagina or penis). Some people can be asymptomatic. Gonorrhoea can affect the urethra (the tube for urine), cervix, anus, throat, or eyes (Healthdirect 2020)
Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP)	A medication that is effective for HIV negative people, to avoid them contracting HIV infection.
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)	A group of bacteria and viruses normally transmitted through sexual contact

Syphilis	Usually spread through skin-to-skin contact during sexual activity. It can also be spread by direct contact with open sores on areas such as the lips, mouth, breasts, or genitals and sometimes through blood contact (Healthdirect 2020)
Unprotected sex	Sexual activity without protections/precautions against STIs (condom) or pregnancy
Vaginal infections	Infections of the vagina causing soreness, itchiness, and discharge. Some infections are STIs (see STIs), others include fungal infections (thrush) which can be more common during pregnancy, for people with diabetes or taking antibiotics (Wild 2021)

10 Trans Health or Gender affirming surgery/treatment

Term	Definition
Binding	The use of a crop top or binding tape to reduce the look of breast tissue.
Bottom surgery	Gender affirming surgery for removal of and creation of a vulva and vagina or penis.
Breast augmentation	The creation or enlargement of breasts for gender reaffirmation
Chest Muscularisation	The sculpting of the chest for gender affirmation
Gender Affirming and confirming practices	The social, medical, or legal practices to align with or affirm a person's gender (LGBTQIA Health USA 2020)
Gender Dysphoria	The distress or unease sometimes experienced from being misgendered and/or when someone's gender and body personally don't feel connected or congruent (ACON TransHub 2021)
Gender Euphoria	The experience of comfort, connection and celebration related to an internal sense of self and our gender (ACON TransHub 2021)
Hormone Therapy	Use of hormones to induce physical changes in the body

Non Op (Non operative)	A term used to describe transgender, transsexual or gender-variant individuals who have not attained and may not desire to attain gender reassignment surgery. For many individuals, self-identification and self-expression alone achieve harmony between one's body and one's gender identity (Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition 2005)
Penile construction/Phalloplasty	The construction of a penis
Post-op (Post operative)	A term used to describe transgender, transsexual or gender-nonconforming individuals who have completed gender reassignment surgery, and/or other surgeries to change their bodies to match their gender identity more closely (Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition 2005)
Pre op (Pre-operative)	A term used to describe transgender, transsexual or gender-nonconforming individuals who have not completed gender reassignment surgery but who desire to and are seeking that as an option (Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition 2005)
Top Surgery	The removal of breast tissue for gender affirmation
Transition	Moving to the gender identity that people wish to be, not the one they were assigned at birth (Rainbow Western, the Western Sydney University LGBTQIA+ Staff Collective 2023)
Tucking	Hiding the penis and testes by using methods like taping (Healthline 2018)
Vaginal construction/Vaginoplasty	The construction of a vaginal opening, including a vulva

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Multicultural Health

Email: WSLHD-MulticulturalHealth@health.nsw.gov.au

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