



PRIDE@WORK

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
and Transgender Labor and our Allies.

Union Guide to Discussing LGBTQ People and Issues

As LGBTQ issues continue to be at the forefront of our national dialogue, it is important for union members and leaders to be able to discuss these topics effectively and non-offensively. This guide seeks to introduce the basic language and concepts inherent in any discussion of the LGBTQ experience in the workplace.

Pride at Work's Perspective

- We are pro-union and pro-equality. In keeping with the labor movement motto, “an injury to one is an injury to all,” we support a strong and progressive labor movement that promotes full equality and respect for LGBTQ workers and their families.
- Unions have a moral and legal obligation to their members to provide fair representation, which includes representing LGBTQ union members and their unique issues equally.
- Unions have a proud track record of standing up for civil, human, and women’s rights, and union organizing continues to be one of the most effective ways for the LGBTQ community and all workers to fight discrimination, poverty, and income inequality.

The Basics

LGBT/LGBTQ – Stands for **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer**. The order and letters included can vary, but LGBTQ is considered standard.

Lesbian – a woman whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions are to other women.

Gay – a man whose primary romantic, emotional, physical, and sexual attractions are to other men. The term is also sometimes used generically to describe sexual orientation regardless of gender.

Bisexual – a person who has significant romantic, emotional, physical, and/or sexual attractions to members of both sexes. The frequency, intensity, or quality of attraction is not necessarily directed toward both sexes equally.

Transgender – a broad term that applies to people who live all or substantial portions of their lives expressing a sense of gender that differs from the sex and gender role they were assigned to at birth. It includes transsexuals, people who feel their biological sex fails to reflect their true gender, and people who refuse to identify with any gender. "Trans" is a prefix that signifies over, beyond, or on the other side. Combined with gender, it gives the idea of a gender spectrum, rather than a male vs. female dichotomy.

Questioning – a term for people who are unsure of their sexuality and still in the process of exploring and wish not to be labeled.

Queer: an umbrella term used by some in place of LGBTQ to be more inclusive (e.g. “The queer community crosses all demographic lines”). Also sometimes used as a term of identity (e.g. “I am a queer woman.”) which generally indicates an open-ended identity.

Use of the word “Queer” Opinions vary on the use of “queer” – it has historically been a slur, but some in the LGBTQ community have reclaimed it as their own. For broad public usage and in formal written materials, and especially for allies, “LGBT” or “LGBTQ” are more appropriate.

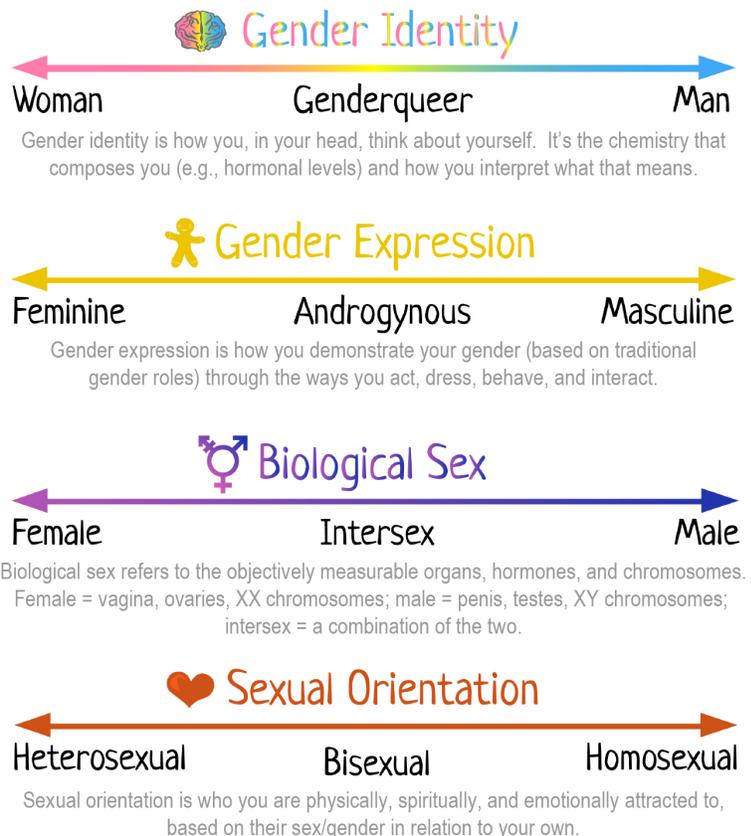
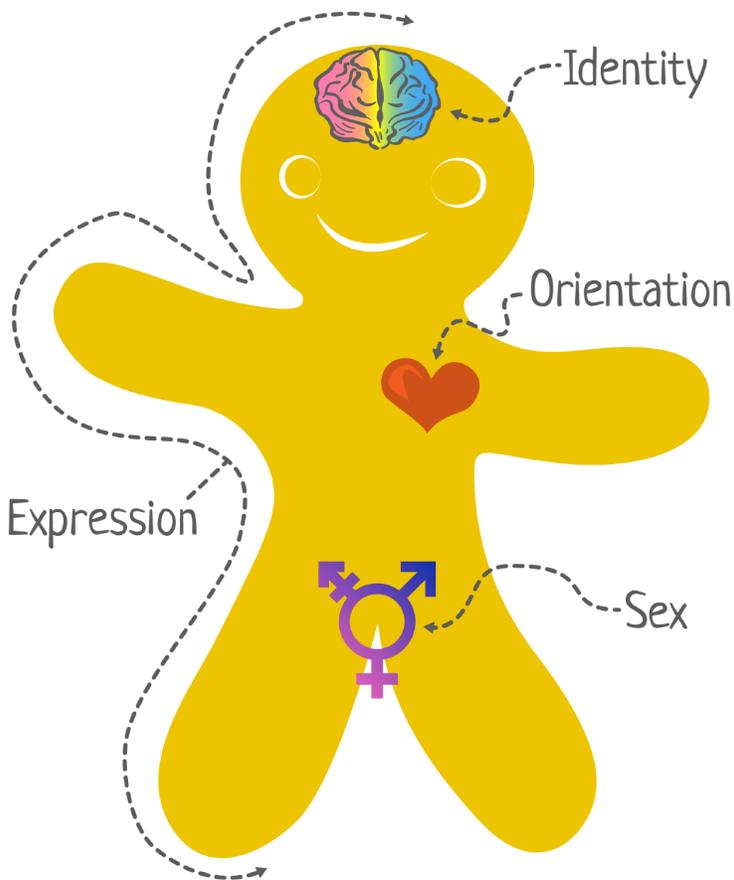
What is an ally?

An ally is any heterosexual (“straight”) person who opposes heterosexism and homophobia and supports LGBTQ individuals and causes.

Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Biological Sex

As the graphic below illustrates, sexual orientation, biological sex, gender identity, and gender expression are separate and distinct parts of your identity. Understanding these concepts is key to understanding LGBTQ issues and priorities.

The Genderbread Person



Sexual orientation: Everyone has a sexual orientation, even if we haven't thought about it. Your sexual orientation is simply how we describe physical and emotional attraction between two people. Heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual are examples.

What is Gender?

Gender is not the same as sex. Sex refers to the biological differences between women and men. Gender refers to the different social roles that define women and men in a specific cultural context. Your gender is assigned at birth based on those attributes. Gender identities and roles vary greatly in different societies and cultures. Age, race, and class are major factors that determine our gender roles. Over a lifetime, these roles can be fluid.

Biological sex: Your DNA and physical anatomy make up your biological sex. Male, female, and intersex are the terms used to describe one's biological sex.

Gender identity: A person's innate sense of gender – how one thinks of one's own gender. For most of us, our biological sex and gender identity are not in conflict.

Gender expression: The way in which a person presents their gender – the outward way one's gender identity is expressed.

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. "Trans" is shorthand for "transgender." (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus "transgender people" is appropriate but "transgenders" is often viewed as disrespectful.) In the same vein, "transgendered" is also not an appropriate term. The converse term is cisgender.

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person who is comfortable with the gender identity and expression they were assigned due to their physical attributes. The converse term is transgender.

About Homophobia

Homophobia is negative feelings, attitudes, actions or behaviors towards anyone who is lesbian, gay, bisexual, etc. - or perceived to be any of these. Institutionalized homophobia refers to homophobic laws, policies, and positions taken by social and governmental institutions.

Transphobia and **Biphobia** refer to similar feelings, attitudes, and actions specifically directed towards transgender or bisexual people, respectively.

LGBTQ Economic Facts

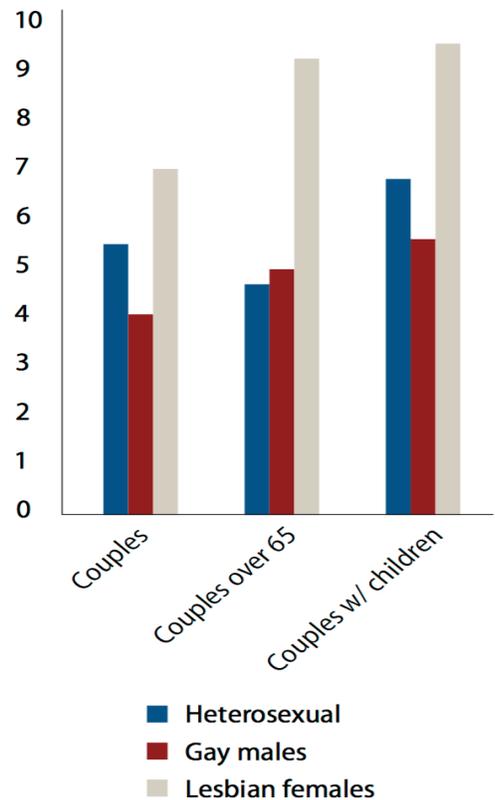
- Among women 18-44 years old, more than a quarter of bisexual women are poor

(29.4%) and more than 1 in 5 lesbians are in poverty (22.7%), a rate higher than the poverty rate among heterosexual women (21.1%).

- Similarly, a greater percentage of gay (20.5%) and bisexual men (25.9%) fell at or below the federal poverty line than heterosexual men (15.3%).
- For both women and men in the Gallup data, one in five LGBTQ people who live alone report an income at or below the poverty level. The poverty rate for heterosexual people living alone is lower.
- Children in same-sex couple households are almost twice as likely to be poor as in married different-sex couple households.
- African American children in gay male households have the highest poverty rate (52.3%) of any children in any household type, and the rate for African American children living with lesbian couples is 37.7%.
- Low levels of education tend to increase poverty more for women in same-sex couples than for men.
- Women in same-sex couples are more likely to be among the “working poor,” with higher poverty rates than for men in same-sex couples or different-sex married couples.
- Women in same-sex couples who have a disability are more likely to be poor.

Poverty amongst couples and families

Poverty rate



Graphic Source: Center for American Progress
Economic Data Source: Williams Institute

Additional Terms

Asexual: A sexual orientation characterized by a persistent lack of sexual attraction toward any gender.

Pansexual: A sexual orientation not limited in sexual choice with regard to biological sex, gender, or gender identity.

Gender non-conforming: Refers to people who do not follow other people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the female or male sex they were assigned at birth.

Transsexual: An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seeks to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.

Genderqueer: A term used to describe those who do not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions but identify with neither, both, or a combination of male and female genders.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex conditions are also known as differences of sex development (DSD).

Transvestite: An outdated term that refers to people who sometimes cross-dress, or dress in clothing typically associated with the opposite sex. Many cross-dressers are heterosexual and typically present themselves in a manner consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Cross-dresser: The appropriate term for someone who identifies in this way. Note that many people who identify as transgender do not identify as cross-dressers.

About Pride at Work

We are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender labor and our allies. UNION YES!

Pride at Work is a nonprofit organization and an officially recognized constituency group of the AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor & Congress of Industrial Organizations.) We organize support between the organized labor movement and the LGBTQ community for social and economic justice. In addition to our national Pride at Work office, we have chapters that organize at the state and local level around the country.

Our Mission

We seek full equality for LGBTQ workers in our workplaces and unions. We work towards creating a labor movement that cherishes diversity, encourages openness, and ensures safety and dignity. We aim to educate the LGBTQ community about the benefits of a union contract for LGBTQ working people and to build support and solidarity for the union movement in the LGBTQ community.

We organize in the spirit of the union movement's historic motto, "An Injury to One is An Injury to All." We oppose all forms of discrimination on the job and in our unions based on sex, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, race, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, religion or political views.

