

UM Pride
LGBT(+) NETWORK 



ALLY TRAINING



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[/'alɪ/] *noun*

An **LGBT+ ally** is a heterosexual and/or cisgender person who supports and accepts equal civil rights, gender equality, and LGBTQIA+ social movements, challenging what they perceive as homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

Allyship:

- is sustainable
- is not only a 'phase'
- is dynamic and changes as you change
- means you know when to act and when not to

Remember: It's okay to make mistakes.

Knowing the Difference between Sex Assigned at Birth, Gender, Gender Expression, and Sexuality

1. Sex Assigned at Birth

Sex is a set of **biological characteristics**.

For example:

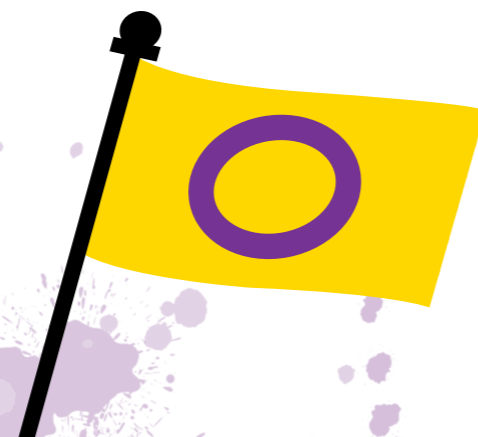
- external & internal sex organs
- chromosomes
- hormones (produced by the human body)

Sex assigned at birth usually refers to just the external organs, and people are put into two categories: male or female.

Intersex

Intersex describes someone whose sex characteristics do not fall into just one of the female / male categories.

Sex is thus not necessarily binary.



2. Gender

Gender refers to **one's own perception and experience of themselves** as a woman, a man, something in between, both, neither, or something completely different.

Cisgender ('Cis')

Cis is an adjective to describe people whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity overlap.

Transgender ('Trans')

Trans is an adjective to describe people whose sex assigned at birth and gender identity do not, or only partially, overlap.

Non-binary Genders

People who feel that their gender identity does not (strictly) fall into either one of the woman / man categories. These gender identities include non-binary, genderqueer, genderfluid, agender, ... and many more.



3. Gender Expression

Gender expression refers to **how a person expresses their gender** through clothing, hairstyle, body language, name and pronouns. You cannot infer someone's gender from their gender expression.

It can be used to communicate to others what gender you want to be perceived as, but **gender identity and gender expression are two separate concepts.**

As such, they can but do not always overlap:

- A non-binary person wearing a dress is non-binary.
- A woman wearing a dress is a woman.
- A man wearing a dress is a man.

Remember that this does not mean that a trans woman wearing a dress is "just a man in a dress", but rather that one's gender expression is not dependent on one's gender.

4. Sexuality

Sexuality refers to **physical (sexual) and/or emotional (romantic) attraction.**

When talking about sexuality, we refer to gender, not sex assigned at birth. It implies both the gender of the person you're attracted to *and* your own gender.



Gay

A man who is attracted to other men.
(Women who are attracted to women may also choose to label themselves as gay.)

Lesbian

A woman who is attracted to other women.

Bisexual ('Bi')

A person who is attracted to two or more genders.

Pansexual ('Pan')

A person who is attracted to someone regardless of their gender.

Asexual ('Ace'):

A person who experiences little to no sexual attraction.

Aromantic ('Aro'):

A person who experiences little to no romantic attraction.

Queer

This term is generally accepted within the community and is used as a way for people in the LGBTQIA+ community to describe themselves. People who are not in the LGBTQIA+ community can use it, but since it has been used as a slur in the past, you have to be mindful in case someone does not want you to use it for them.

Appropriate / Inappropriate Questions and Reactions

Appropriate and inappropriate questions and reactions to have when someone discloses their (trans) gender identity to you. (This is commonly referred to as “coming out” in the queer community.)

Generally **appropriate** reactions and questions are those that relate to your present and/or future interactions with the person disclosing their gender identity to you. You want to make sure that you respect their identity.

- “Thank you for telling me!”
- “What name and pronouns do you want me to call you? Can I use this name and these pronouns to refer to you with other people?”
- “How do you relate to your gender identity? What do those labels mean to you?” *

* Note that even though these are polite ways to ask people about their gender, it might be an intrusive question, depending on how close you are with the person disclosing their gender identity.

Generally **inappropriate** questions are those relating to somebody’s body, bodily functions, and questions about their sex assigned at birth.

- “What is your “real” name?”

People asking this question usually want to know what someone’s birth name is. That information is not necessary for you to know.

- “What were you born as?” *

People asking this question usually want to inquire about a person’s sex assigned at birth. This is not something you need to know.

- “Do you have a menstrual cycle?” *
- “What surgeries did you have/do you plan to have?” *
- “How do you have sex?” **

* You can ask about someone’s sex assigned at birth and/or body/bodily functions if you are their doctor and this information is relevant. Phrase the question as “What is your sex assigned at birth?”, and not “What were you born as?”.

** You can ask how someone has sex if you are discussing sex, consent, or boundaries with a potential sex partner.

Appropriate and inappropriate questions and reactions to have when someone discloses their sexuality to you. (This is commonly referred to as “coming out” in the queer community.)

Generally **appropriate** reactions and questions depend on the context in which someone discloses their sexuality with you.

- “Thank you for sharing this with me!”

If someone casually mentions their significant other in a conversation, you do not need to comment on it. On the other hand, if someone is having a hard time or seems nervous telling you about their sexuality, then the above-mentioned example is an appropriate reaction.

Generally **inappropriate** reactions or questions include questioning the validity of someone’s sexuality, trying to assign gender roles to the people in a relationship, or only accepting people under your own conditions.

- “How can you be sure that you are gay/lesbian if you have never been with the “opposite gender”?”

This is a question that invalidates someone’s sexuality and assumes that you know more about that person’s sexuality than they do. Also, since gender is a spectrum, avoid using the term “opposite gender”, as it assumes that gender is binary.

- “Does being bi mean that you are actually gay/straight?”

For example: a bisexual woman currently dating another woman does not imply that she is actually a lesbian. A current relationship status does not change one’s sexuality.

- “Who is the (wo)man in the relationship?”

Queer relationships do not have to follow heterosexual gender roles to be valid. For example: if two men are in a relationship, it does not mean that one of them is “the woman”.

- “I don’t care that you are gay.”

Being gay can be a big part of someone’s identity and it might take a while to come to the realisation that they are gay. Saying that “you don’t care that they are gay” can feel like you are invalidating or minimising a part of their identity.

- “That is not the correct use of that label.”

Some people might have different definitions of a label, and it is not your place to tell someone else that they are using an incorrect label for themselves.

Pronouns

Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) refer to people that you are talking about. Correct use of pronouns shows that you respect people.

Someone's pronouns may change throughout time and at any time. Moreover, someone's pronouns can be a combination of two or more pronoun sets. For example:

- she/they ; she/her ; she/they/he ; he/they ; he/they/she

Usually people who have a combination of pronouns either have a preference for one of them, or they want others to use them interchangeably. If someone you know uses a combination of pronouns or introduces themselves with a combination of pronouns, you can always ask whether they have a preference.

Singular they/them

- can be someone's *pronouns*
- can be used to refer to a *generic person*
- can be used if someone's *gender is unknown*

Examples:

- Someone lost their key.
- The student has to sign up for their courses in period 1.
- When a student misses a tutorial meeting, they should hand in a catch-up assignment.

Most common pronouns in English

- **She/her** (She is working on her dissertation.)
- **He/him** (He is studying for his exam.)
- **They/them** (They have great taste, I love their jacket.)

Most common pronouns in Dutch

- **Zij/haar** (Zij werkt aan haar proefschrift.)
- **Hij/hem** (Hij studeert voor zijn tentamen.)
- **Hen/hun** (Hen heeft goede smaak, ik hou van hun jas.)
- **Die/diens** (Die heeft goede smaak, ik hou van diens jas.)

Pronouns and their conjugation in English/Dutch

She/her and Zij/haar

- She is → Zij is
- She has → Zij heeft

He/him and Hij/hem

- He is → Hij is
- He has → Hij heeft

They/them, Hen/hun and Die/diens

- They are → Hen/die is
- They have → Hen/die heeft

Create a safe space to share pronouns

Share your own pronouns during introductions

My name is ... and my pronouns are ...

I am ... and I use ... pronouns

Normalise sharing pronouns, but **do not** make it compulsory. This may force trans people to out themselves, or to misgender themselves.

Zoom / Canvas / Email

Zoom: Go to Zoom web portal > Profile > Choose how you would like to share your pronouns

Canvas: Account > Settings

Email: Add a signature with your pronouns

→ For Example: First Name + Last Name (she/her)

Neutral greetings for (unknown) recipients

Dear Name / Title / Reader / ...

Dear Colleague(s) / Students / All / Everyone / ...

What if I make mistakes?

It's okay to make mistakes, but mistakes are meant to be corrected.

Concrete action points:

- If you use the incorrect pronouns and/or name for someone, just say sorry, correct yourself and continue.
- You should also correct other people if they use incorrect pronouns/names for someone, whether or not the person who is misgendered is present. However, you should only do this if you know that the person wants to be referred to with that name/pronouns with everyone. Otherwise, you might disclose someone's gender identity to people they are not comfortable disclosing it to.



Sex & Gender in Research

Ask yourself:

Do you actually *need* information on sex / gender?

If so:

Do you need to know about their *gender identity* or their *sex assigned at birth*?

Should you ask about sex assigned at birth (SAAB) or gender identity (GI)?

Examples of when to ask for SAAB:

- menstrual cycles
- cancer screenings (e.g. prostate, uterus)
- sex chromosome specific factors
- muscle mass / development

Examples of when to ask for GI:

- attitudes
- test scores in schools/universities
- representation of / gender distribution in organisations, businesses, study programs, scientific fields, etc.
- when investigating cases of sexual assault
- when researching gender inequalities, e.g. research into wages and the wage gap

Important to remember:

- When including questions about SAAB, **do not** assume this implies a matching gender identity.
- Not everyone is assigned male or female at birth – include an intersex option and/or an option for people who want to leave an explanation.
- Software (like Qualtrics) allows for follow-up questions to specific answers, e.g., you can present questions about menstruation only to those who indicated having a female sex assigned at birth.
- When assessing gender identity: Include an open answer option, not only 'Prefer not to say'.
- Transgender is **not** the 'Third Gender Identity'. If you want to know whether someone identifies as trans, it is best to include this as a separate question.

Follow-up Resources

Projects / Organisations within the Netherlands

UM Pride

LGBT+ centred advocacy group open to anyone within Maastricht University irrespective of gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, position, or faculty.

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um/diversity-inclusivity/getting-involved/networks-staff-and-students/um-pride>

UM Diversity and Inclusivity Education and Social Safety

Webpage containing Resources, Tools, Workshops, and more guidance to become a better ally, provided by the D&I Office.

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/about-um/diversity-inclusivity/diversity-education-and-social-safety>

Treat It Queer

International non-profit foundation dedicated to health justice, with a particular focus on the queer community.

<https://www.treatitqueer.org>

Taaladvies.net

Advice regarding (gender) inclusive language in Dutch.

<https://taaladvies.net/taal-en-gender/>

Projects / Organisations around the Globe

Stonewall

Largest LGBTQ+ rights organisation in Europe, with campaigns driving positive change in public attitudes and public policy.

<https://www.stonewall.org.uk>

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)

International organisation committed to advancing human rights to all people, advocating for LGBTQ+ rights.

<https://ilga.org>

Transgender Europe (TGEU)

Network working to combat discrimination against trans people and supporting trans people rights.

<https://tgeu.org>

The Trevor Project

American nonprofit organisation focused on mental health and suicide prevention for LGBTQ+ youth.

<https://www.thetrevorproject.org>



A broader list of resources can be found on the D&I website.



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