



# LGBTQIA+

## Style Guide

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# Introduction

The National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) is the largest organization of Latinx journalists in the United States, and is dedicated to the recognition and professional advancement of Hispanics in the media. NAHJ's mission is to increase the number of Latinx professionals in newsrooms and to advocate for fair representation of Latinx people. The organization was founded in April of 1984 as a national united voice for all Hispanic journalists. NAHJ has members who work in the news industry, as well as journalism students, educators and allies.

NLGJA - The Association of LGBTQ+ Journalists brings together journalists, professionals, educators and students who work in the media and who promote the inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex and asexual (LGBTQIA+) communities.

NAHJ and NLGJA promote their members' professional development in the sensitive, respectful and dignified coverage of LGBTQIA+ issues.

This style manual includes words and phrases common in these communities.

This second version of the style manual was updated by NAHJ's LGBTQIA+ Committee - David Cordero Mercado, Luis Joel Méndez González, Lygia Navarro, Marissa Sasso, Andrés Martínez, Alander Arocha, Cristela Guerra y Julian Berger. La primera versión estuvo a cargo de Jorge Amaro, Victoria M. Rodríguez-Roldán, Jesús Chávez, Eileen Truax, Andrés H. Martínez, Adam K. Pawlus and Alberto Mendoza.

This version was translated by Adam Rhodes, Andrés Martínez, Julian Berger, Lygia Navarro and Belen Dumont.

# General guidelines for covering LGBTQIA+ communities

## ***Using trans people's pronouns***

It is best practice to ask everyone for their preferred pronouns. Be conscious that the person's pronouns may not coincide with their name or physical appearance. Don't assume that the person is trans, and don't include that detail unless it is relevant to the story.

## ***"Impartiality" in reporting***

It is common for journalists, under the argument of "impartiality," to include in news reports the opinion of people who are opposed to equality between LGBTQIA+ people and their heterosexual and gender-binary peers. However, including the opinion of people who are opposed to the dignity and equality of a group of people only perpetuates myths and stigmas. If including their statements it is important to explain for readers why such statements are not true or valid by utilizing research and data.

## ***Mention of the sexual orientation or gender identity of a source***

Only mention the sexual orientation or gender identity of a source when it is strictly necessary. For example, in stories about overcoming hardships, about human rights or about advances in medicine.

## ***Respect goes beyond the newsroom***

It is important that we as journalists not only respect LGBTQIA+ communities in our work, but also in any public space, especially on social media. Avoid discriminatory comments, disrespectful attitudes, or offensive "opinions" about people of different gender identities and sexual orientations.

## ***In covering hate crimes***

Avoid repeating, in the writing and editing of news, stigmatizing references from police officials directed at people from LGBTQIA+ communities. Keep in mind that if the police overlook or erroneously describe the gender identity or sexual orientation of a crime victim, the authorities could rule out charging a suspect with a hate crime during the case's investigation. As part of your reporting work, contact and interview LGBTQIA+ community leaders in the region where the crime occurred. When writing, respect the gender identity of the victim and anyone else involved. Do not use direct quotes with language that is disrespectful of the victim's gender identity.

## ***When we cover legislation related to LGBTQIA+ communities***

In reporting on bills and other legislative initiatives, make sure to not repeat incorrect terms and concepts used in reference to people and issues from LGBTQIA+ communities. Learning the correct definitions is essential for avoiding distorting information and for providing context in stories. In addition, it is recommended to identify and corroborate the reliability of sources that cite the proposed legislation, the elected officials pushing it, and any groups or citizens who appear at public hearings. In terms of sources, we are referring to studies, research, statistics, laws, books, articles and publications, among others.

## ***Dignity and respect to our siblings***

When reporting on survivors of a gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans person who has died, list the deceased person's partner in an order equivalent to that of the husband or wife of a heterosexual decedent.

# Terminology

## A

### **AGENDER**

A person who does not identify with any gender. Agender is not the same as nonbinary. View nonbinary; sex assigned at birth.

### **ALLY**

A person who doesn't identify with any of the identities under the LGBTQIA+ umbrella but who supports the community and its struggles.

### **ANDROGYNOUS**

A person who rejects the model of binaryness and expresses their gender through appearances and behaviors that aren't associated with perceived gender stereotypes. Avoid describing certain features with this term as androgynous unless used by themselves.

### **AREPERA**

A word used in various Latin American countries to refer to a lesbian. Do not use it. See "dyke."

### **ASEXUAL**

The sexual orientation of a person who does not feel sexual attraction to other people, but who can have affectionate or romantic relationships. This does not necessarily mean that they cannot become sexually aroused, react to sexual stimuli or have sex. It is the term that represents the "A" in the acronym used to refer to communities of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and other non-heteronormative identified people.

### **ASSIGNED SEX AT BIRTH**

Refers to the label a medical professional gives to a baby when they are born based on the child's external anatomy, without taking into consideration the later development of the child's gender identity.

## B

### **BIPHOBIA**

Is a term that refers to the fear, hate, discrimination or aversion of bisexuality or people who are bisexual. Look at Bisexual.

### **BISEXUAL**

Refers to a person who can feel sexual or romantic attraction towards people of multiple genders, which can include male, female and people outside of the gender binary.

This term represents the "B" in the acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersexual, asexual, and other non-heteronormative identities communities.

### **BREAST BINDING**

The process of binding the breasts to compress, minimize them, or hide their size to manage or reduce gender dysphoria. See gender dysphoria.



## C

### **CISGENDER**

A term for people whose gender identity corresponds with the sex they were assigned at birth.

### **CIVIL MARRIAGE**

Refers to the recognition of civil marriage as a right to same-sex couples. It is a contract that is presented before civil authorities and governed by rules laid down by public authorities. It should not be confused with religious marriage. See marriage, equal marriage, civil union.

### **CIVIL UNION**

A legally-recognized arrangement between two people, similar to marriage, created to provide state-level legal recognition for same-sex couples.

### **COMING OUT**

A metaphor for revealing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity to others.

### **CONJUGAL CEREMONY**

A formal gathering, similar to a wedding, that recognizes the commitment of unity between two people of the same sex. Look at Marriage; Civil Marriage; Egalitarian Marriage.

### **CONVERSION THERAPY**

Dangerous and discredited practices that claim to change a person's sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression. Even though some states have banned the practice, many others have no restrictions implemented.

### **"CROSS-DRESSER"**

An English term that is used to refer to a person who generally dresses in a way that is associated with members of the opposite sex. This is not necessarily related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. It is not a synonym of transgender or someone who is transitioning. Considered offensive and inaccurate when referring to trans people, unless they specifically use the term for themselves. Look at Transvestite; Transformist; Transgender.

### **"CRUISING"**

Visiting public places where there may be opportunities to meet potential sexual partners. This phenomenon is not exclusive to gay individuals.

## D

### **DEAD NAME**

The name assigned to a person at birth, generally not used after a gender transition, regardless of whether the transition includes gender reassignment surgery or whether the person has completed a name change for their identification documents.

### **DOMESTIC PARTNER**

Two companions who are not married. A domestic couple can be made up of people of opposite sexes or the same sex. They may receive some of the same benefits provided to marriages when they register in certain countries, states or cities. The term is typically used in connection with legal and insurance policy matters. See couple, gay/lesbian relationships.

### **“DON’T ASK, DON’T TELL”**

An abbreviated phrase that refers to the military regulation “Don’t ask, don’t tell, don’t pursue” that was established in 1993 for gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals who serve in the armed forces. In agreement with this regulation, military policies don’t ask enlisted individuals about their sexual orientation, enlisted individuals don’t talk about their orientation with others, and military authorities do not investigate rumors about members’ sexual orientation. The expression is acceptable in news titles but the use of the entire phrase in published texts should facilitate a more balanced understanding.

### **“DOWN LOW”**

In English, this term is used to refer to men who have sex with other men discreetly—often while maintaining relationships with women—without identifying as gay or bisexual. The abbreviation “DL” is also used. Use this term with caution as the person may not generally identify as such.

### **DRAG**

The performance, which often includes costume, of heightened or extreme expressions of gender identity, whether that is masculine, feminine or other identities.. See Transformist; “Drag king”; “Drag queen.”

### **DRAG KING**

A term that refers to an artistic representation of transformation in which a person represents or interprets a masculine personality that is exaggerated or dramatic to entertain and express their talent. Look at “Drag”; “Drag queen”; Transformist.

### **DRAG QUEEN**

A term that refers to an artistic representation of transformation in which a person represents or interprets a feminine personality with exaggeration or drama to entertain and express their talent. Look at “Drag”; “Drag king”; Transformist.

### **“DYKE”**

Originally, this was a derogatory term towards lesbians who have a masculine appearance. Ultimately, some lesbians use this term with positive connotations. Precaution - This term continues to be extremely offensive when used as an epithet. Look at Tortillera/torta; Arepera; Marimacha; Pata.

## E

### **EFFEMINATE**

In the heteronormative context, a man whose gender presentation (features, mannerisms or behavior) is socially considered more feminine. This is unrelated to his sexual orientation and gender identity. This term is usually used pejoratively.

### **EX-GAY**

A term that refers to a religious and conservative movement that promotes the discredited idea that people can change their sexual orientation to heterosexuality. Look at Conversion therapy.

## F

### **FAMILY**

The correct term to identify families with LGBTQ+ fathers and/or mothers. Only identify the orientation of those fathers/mothers when it's historically relevant, such as denouncing discrimination, hate crimes, or increasing visibility of LGBTQIA+ communities. Do not use the term "homosexual/gay families." Mention the genetic relationship or the type of conception only when it is relevant.

### **FEMME**

Is a description of feminine gender expression of an LGBTQIA+ person. Any person of any gender identity or sexual orientation can describe their gender expression as femme, although this term was used for queer communities to describe effeminate people as well as to defy the stereotypes assigned to lesbians.

FEMALE-TO-MALE (FTM), MALE-TO-FEMALE (MTF)

Common but generally outdated term used to describe a trans person based on their assigned sex at birth.

## G

### **GAY**

An adjective that is commonly used as an equivalent term to "homosexual" that refers to a man who feels sexual attraction and affection towards other men. This term represents the "G" in the acronym that refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersexual, asexual and other non-heteronormative identities communities. Avoid using this as a noun. To refer to a woman who feels sexual attraction and affection towards other women, it is preferred to use "lesbian." To include both identities, use "gay and lesbian people". When there is a lack of space for longer titles it is acceptable to use "LGBTQIA+" to describe both groups. Look at Lesbian.

### **GENDER**

Is used to refer to characteristics that have been socially and culturally identified as "masculine" and "feminine" in the context of heteronormativity, typically based on a sex assigned at birth. Such traits are historically assigned to one sex or another. These attitudes can be generally attributed to how someone dresses, walks, talks, thinks, feels, and has relationships. A person can be agender, androgynous or non-binary. Look at Agender; Androgyny; Non-binary.



### **GENDER AFFIRMATION**

The process through which a person recognizes, accepts and expresses their gender identity. This can include gender affirming surgeries, hormone therapy, mental health services and/or changing one's legal identity, as well as social changes like coming out or using a different name/pronouns. Providers of gender affirming care support a person's gender identity without trying to change or "fix" them. Do not use the phrase "sex change." See conversion therapy; gender affirming surgery; transgender; transsexual.

### **GENDER EXPANSIVE**

A person with a wider range of gender identity and expression outside of binary ideas of gender. It can also be used when a person is still exploring their gender identity or expression.

### **GENDER IDENTITY**

This term refers to how a person feels internally about their gender and, sometimes, how they express their gender through their behavior and appearance.

### **GENDER DYSPHORIA**

Refers to a profound sensation of discomfort or affliction that can happen when a person's gender identity does not correlate or differs from their sex assigned at birth or their physical sex characteristics. It can also refer to the discomfort experienced when one is misgendered.

### **GENDER EXPRESSION**

The way a person acts, dresses, speaks, and composes themselves to communicate the gender they identify with. Gender expression is fluid and does not necessarily correspond with their sex assigned at birth. It is not the same as gender identity. Look at Gender identity.

### **GENDER AFFIRMING**

The process, typically involving surgical procedures and/or hormone treatment, that a transgender person undertakes to alter their sexual and/or physical characteristics, to match their gender identity.

### **GENDER NONCONFORMING (GNC)**

Term used to refer to a person who does not stick to binary gender norms or stereotypes imposed on them based on their sex assigned at birth. It is not a synonym for non-binary. There can be cisgender people that self-identify as gender nonconforming.

### **GENDERQUEER**

Fluid and changing identity that exists between binary categories of man and woman. It is similar but not the same to nonbinary.



# H

## **HETERONORMATIVITY**

The expectation, belief, or stereotype that all people are or should be heterosexual or that it is the only natural, normal, or acceptable condition. This relates to a social, political, or economic regime enforced by the patriarchy.

## **HETEROSEXISM**

The presumption that heterosexuality is universal and/or superior to homosexuality. Also – prejudice, favoritism or discrimination based on presumption.

## **“HOMO”**

A pejorative term for a homosexual person. Only use this term when it is absolutely necessary.

## **HOMOPHOBIA**

Fear, hate, or an aversion to homosexuality, gays, and lesbians. Look at Biphobia; Transphobia.

## **HOMOSEXUAL**

As a noun, a person who is attracted to people of the same sex. As an adjective, it refers to or relates to a sexual and intimate attraction towards someone of the same sex. It is recommended to use in medical contexts and references to sexual acts. See gay, lesbian.

## **HUSBAND**

The term for a man who is in a committed relationship or legally married to their partner. The couple does not need to be legally married. It is best to ask which term the person prefers to use. Look at Partner.

# I

## **INTERSEX (ADJECTIVE)**

When the reproductive organs and genitals of a person do not develop according to what is considered stereotypically feminine and masculine. Generally, the parents and medical professionals determine the sex of an infant or they intervene with surgeries and treatments. There are social movements driven by intersex people seeking to end this practice. It is the term that represents the “I” in the acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and other non-heteronormative identities.

## **IN THE CLOSET**

A term that refers to a person who maintains their sexual orientation or gender identity as a secret. Look at Coming out of the closet.

## **INTRAGENDER VIOLENCE**

Violence or abuse within same-sex relationships.

## J

### **JOTERIA**

A term used among the Latinx LGBTQIA+ community that means friendship and trust between each other. It is used with positive connotations and reflects the pride of being LGBTQIA+, contradicting society through art, activism, politics, literature and spiritual activities.

### **JOTO**

Derogatory term used in Latin America for gay men, but lately some people use it with positive connotations. Caution - it is still extremely offensive when used.

## L

### **LESBIAN**

Refers to a woman who feels a sexual and emotional attraction towards another woman. It is the term that represents the "L" in the acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and other non-heteronormative identities.

### **LIFESTYLE**

A derogative or incorrect term used to describe the sexual orientation or gender identity of a person who is a part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Look at Sexual orientation; Sexual preferences.

### **LGBTQIA+**

These are the acronyms that stand for "lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and other non-heteronormative identities." The letter Q is also placed at the end of the LGBT to refer to a person who explores her sexual orientation or gender identity.

## M

### **MARRIAGE EQUALITY**

People who advocate for the right to marry seek the legal rights and obligations of marriage, not anything less of it. Often, the most neutral way to refer to the topic is to avoid any adjectives that modify the word "marriage." In situations where it is necessary to use a distinction, "same-sex marriage" may be used in articles. When a short description is needed, it is preferable to use "same-sex marriage" because it is broader and more accurate than "gay marriage." See civil union, domestic couples, gay/lesbian relationships.

### **MISGENDERING**

A form of transphobia that consists of addressing trans people by the wrong gender and/or pronouns. This can happen accidentally when a person's gender is assumed based on their appearance or name.

### **MONOSEXISM**

Refers to the social structure that operates under the assumption that all people are heterosexual or homosexual. It discriminates or erases all those who are not, such as bisexuals.

### **MSM**

Acronym that refers to "men who have sex with men." This term is used generally in communities of color to describe men who have sex discreetly with other men while having sexual relations with women. It is also commonly used in scientific or medical communities. It is not a synonym of "bisexual." See "down low (DL)."

## M

### NONBINARY

The adjective used by people who construct or manifest their gender identity or gender expression outside of the binary categories of male and female.

## O

### OMNISEXUAL

A person who is attracted to all people of genders and sexes. Unlike pansexuals, they recognize the gender of their potential partner.

### OPENLY GAY/LESBIAN/BISEXUAL

As a qualifier, “openly” is in general not relevant; its use should be limited to cases in which public knowledge of an individual’s sexual orientation is relevant. Examples - Harvey Milk was the first openly gay city supervisor of San Francisco. “Openly” is the appropriate term, instead of qualifiers like “declaredly,” “admittedly,” “confessedly” or “practicing.”

### OUTING

The act of disclosing an LGBTQIA+ person’s sexual orientation or gender identity without that person’s consent.

## P

### PANSEXUAL

A person who feels an emotional, sexual or romantic attraction to someone regardless of the person’s gender. Unlike omnisexual, a pansexual person does not take into account the gender of their potential partner.

### PARTNER

A common term for a person who is in a relationship with people of the same sex. See gay/lesbian relationships.

### PATO

Derogatory term used in several Latin American countries to refer to gay men. Avoid using it. See “Dyke.”

### PINK TRIANGLE

The badge that gay men had to wear on their uniforms in the Nazi concentration camps during the Second World War, to distinguish them from other prisoners. Since the 1980s, the symbol has been reclaimed by various LGBTQIA+ groups as a positive symbol of self-identity and sometimes is included in the rainbow flag. See also rainbow flag.

### POLYSEXUAL

Refers to a person who feels sexual, affective and romantic interest towards more than one gender, but not necessarily all. It is not the same as pansexual or omnisexual.

### POLYAMORY/POLYAMOROUS

Describes the person who maintains more than one intimate and emotional relationship at the same time, with the full knowledge of all the people involved.

### **PREJUDICE-BASED VIOLENCE**

Act of violence against a member of the LGBTQIA+ community which shows evidence of prejudice based on sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, race, religion, disability or ethnicity.

### **PRIDE (DAY AND/OR PARADE)**

The term refers to a sense of self-affirmation felt by many LGBTQIA+ people. It also alludes to the celebrations commemorating the Stonewall Inn protests of June 28, 1969, in New York. See Stonewall.

### **PUTO**

Spanish word for male prostitute, used derogatorily to refer to gay men. Do not use.

## **Q**

### **QPOC/QTPOC**

Acronyms that stand for queer people of color or queer trans people of color .

### **QUEEN**

A term, originally derogatory, used to refer to a flamboyant or effeminate man, but now accepted by many as a type of self-identification.

### **QUEER**

A term, originally derogatory, used to refer to anyone not heterosexual and/or cisgender. It is increasingly used as an umbrella term for all members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The term also represents the “Q” in the acronym, LGBTQIA+.

### **QUESTIONING**

A person in the process of exploring and discovering their sexual orientation, gender identity and/or their gender expression. Questioning people can be of any age, as questioning often happens later in life.

## **R**

### **RAINBOW FLAG**

A symbol of pride among LGBTQIA+ communities, created in San Francisco by the artist and activist Gilbert Baker in the late 1970s. The flag is composed of six horizontal lines of the same width—each one with a designated color in the order of red, orange, yellow, green, blue and purple—which represent the diversity of LGBTQIA+ communities.

## S

### **SAME-SEX MARRIAGE**

Refers to marriage between people of the same sex, legally or socially recognizes a marriage formed by partners of the same sex and allows the protection of the rights of homosexual couples. See marriage, civil marriage, civil union.

### **SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIP**

A romantic or sexual relationship between two people of the same sex.

### **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Natural sexual attraction. It refers to the people we are attracted to and desire emotionally and sexually. Use this term instead of "sexual preference." Mention the orientation of an interviewee only when it is relevant to the story because it denounces discrimination, a hate crime or seeks to make LGBTQIA+ communities visible.

### **SEXUAL PREFERENCE**

Do not use it to refer to a person's sexual orientation because it implies that the person can choose who they are sexually or romantically attracted to. Use Sexual Orientation.

### **SODOMY**

A derogatory term to refer to consensual sex between males.

### **"SPECIAL RIGHTS"**

A politicized term that is used by people who oppose the civil rights of LGBTQIA+ people. It is preferred to not use this term. Alternative terms are: civil rights for the LGBTQIA+ community", "equal rights" or "LGBTQIA+ community rights".

### **STEREOTYPE**

A vague and unjust criticism, generally negative, about the characteristics, activities, qualities, or assigned roles of a social group and, in turn, of those individuals within those groups. Stereotypes in the context of the LGBTQIA+ community are related to the gender identity, sexual orientation, sexual practices, and/or state of health of those individuals. However, stereotypes can also intersect with other identities such as race and nationality, among others.

### **STIGMA**

The devaluation of people who are a part of certain groups or who have certain characteristics that are considered inferior, abnormal, different, immoral, or dangerous. In general, these can be associated with a social, cultural, or historical moment or place.

### **STONEWALL**

On June 28, 1969, protests lasted for several nights following a police raid at the Stonewall Inn tavern in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. Although it was not the first demonstration in defense of civil rights for the LGBTQIA+ community, Stonewall is today considered the cradle of the contemporary civil rights movement for LGBTQIA+ people.

### **STRAIGHT**

A person who is sexually, emotionally and romantically attracted to members of the opposite sex.

## T

### **TOMBOY (MARIMACHA)**

A word used in several Latin American countries to refer to a lesbian. Avoid using it. See “dyke.”

### **“TORTILLERA/TORTA”**

A Spanish derogatory term used in many Latin American countries to refer to a lesbian woman. Do not use.

### **TRANSFORMIST**

An artist who dresses and acts in a manner associated with people of the opposite sex. It is not a synonym for transexual or cross-dresser. See also drag; drag king/drag queen.

### **TRANSGENDER**

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender has nothing to do with sexual orientation. See also transgender; gender affirmation.

### **TRANSEXUAL**

It’s a term used to refer to a transgender person who has gone through gender affirming surgeries. However, it is outdated and old. Do not use it to describe a person unless it is the word they use to describe themselves. See also transgender; gender affirmation.

### **TRANSITION**

The process of aligning with one’s gender through any combination of surgery, hormone therapy, social presentation and/or legal identification. This can include changing names, pronouns or even updating legal documents.

### **TRANSPHOBIA**

Rejection of transgender or transsexual people. See also transgender; transsexual.

### **TRANSVESTITE**

Term used to refer to people who dress in clothing associated with the opposite gender. It has been employed in a derogatory way toward trans people and is not synonymous with transformism. This is a rather offensive term.

### **TWO-SPIRIT**

A person of the North American Indigenous community who possesses the feminine spirit and the masculine spirit. Some of these individuals self identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. You should not use this as a general term for all LGBTQIA+ North American Indigenous communities.



## U

### **URETHROPLASTY**

A gender-affirming surgery that creates the urethral canal for standing urination. Not all trans people rely on this surgical procedure to reaffirm their gender identity.

## V

### **VAGINECTOMY**

A gender-affirming surgery that removes the vagina.

### **VAGINOPLASTY**

A gender-affirming surgery that builds a vagina using penile tissue or colon tissue grafts.

### **VISIBILITY**

The quality or state of being visible in terms of representation in mass media and society.

## W

### **WIFE**

The acceptable term for a woman who is in a committed relationship or legally married to their partner. The couple does not have to be legally married. It is best to ask which term the person prefers to use. Look at Partner.

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**NAHJ**

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