Handshake

BEYOND PRIDE

Guide to Hiring LGBTQ+ Early Talent

Introduction

While the cultural embrace of Pride every June represents positive momentum toward acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community, employers have an obligation to do more than change corporate logos to rainbow colors for a month. Pride represents a fight for recognition and equality that doesn't disappear at the end of the rainbow.

LGBTQ+ hiring and allyship is yearlong.

Engaging LGBTQ+ early talent means embracing inclusive and equitable practices to hire, support, and retain these individuals. Recognizing and understanding the lived experiences of LGBTQ+ candidates and employees can set your company apart—and make it clear that your brand is doing more than just jumping on the annual Pride bandwagon.

Building a culture of acceptance and diversity isn't just the right thing to do; it's also good business. In this **"Beyond Pride: Guide to Hiring LGBTQ+ Early Talent,"** we provide some context for the cultural and legal landscape around gender and sexual orientation, share demographics and relevant statistics, and provide replicable tactics to ensure that your workplace recruits LGBTQ+ candidates with the authenticity and intention that Gen Z wants.

LGBTQ+ Visibility in the Workplace

Current Demographics

A recent Gallup poll estimates that 5.6% of the US population identifies as LGBTQ+, though the actual figure is likely higher (because it is self-reported, this data is notoriously unreliable). And nearly 16% of Gen Z adults—a group known for breaking away from binary notions of gender and sexuality—identify as LGBTQ+.

Pride draws a lot of attention to the LGBTQ+ community, but individuals are not always "out"—especially in places with more religious and conservative social structures. Recent data suggests that as many as 46% are not "out" at work. The fact is that no matter where they live, LGBTQ+ individuals may not feel safe or welcome. And this feeling can persist at any company.
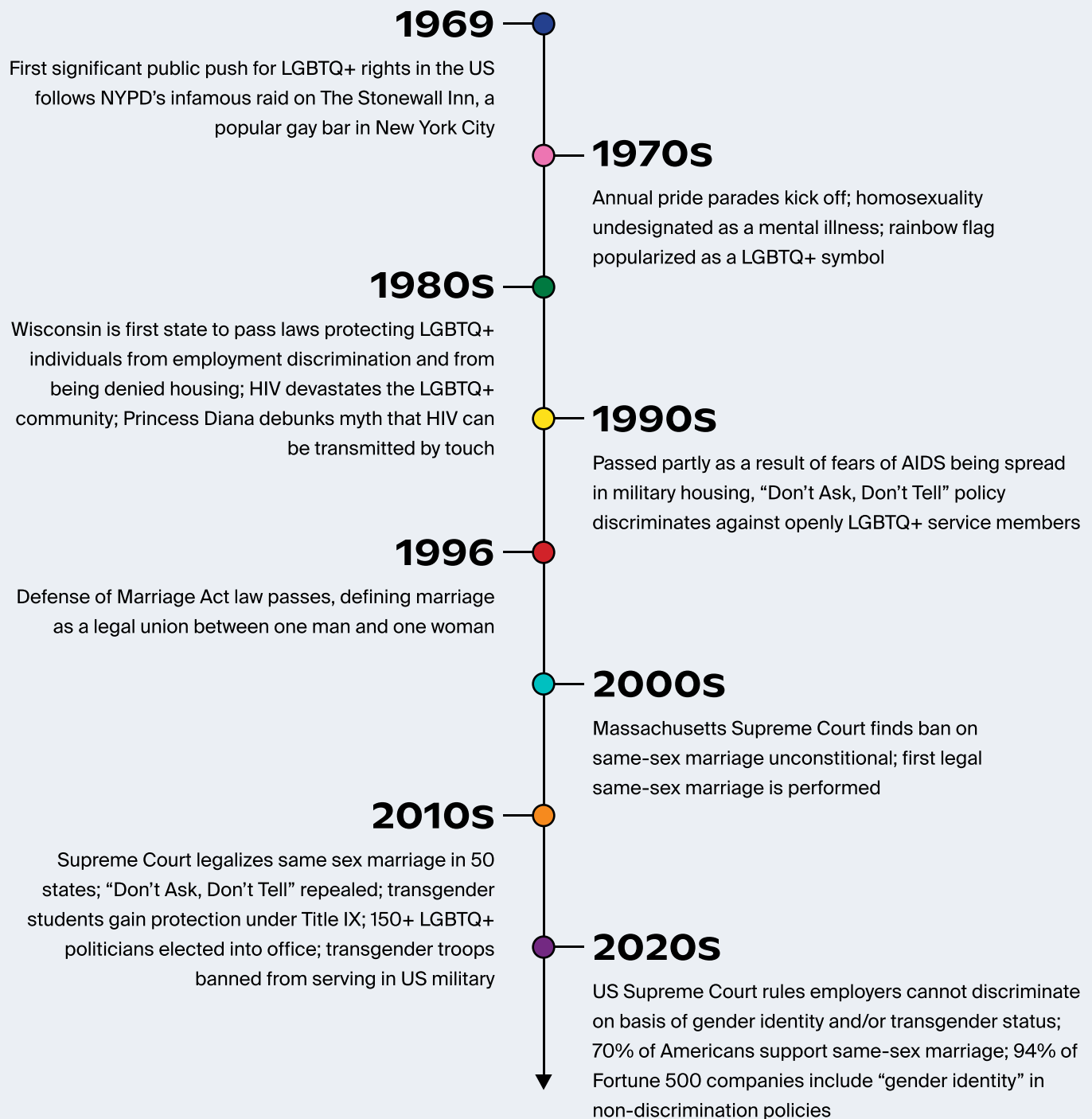
One reason for this could be that 59% of non-LGBTQ employees believe it is "unprofessional" to discuss sexual orientation or gender identity in the workplace. In general, LGBTQ+ employees fear discrimination in the workplace, and this can be especially true for early talent who don't yet know "the rules" of workplace interaction–which the COVID-19 pandemic may have made even more ambiguous.

This lack of visibility can pose challenges for employers who want to authentically message their intended audiences, and demonstrate openness and inclusion.

69%
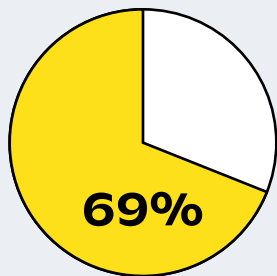
According to Handshake's Network Trends Report on Gender, Equity, and Gen Z, 69% of non-binary students say they are likely to miss out on career opportunities due to personal, innate characteristics, such as gender, gender expression, or race and ethnicity (compared to 43% of all students).

Abridged History of LGBTQ+ Rights in the US

1969

First significant public push for LGBTQ+ rights in the US follows NYPD's infamous raid on The Stonewall Inn, a popular gay bar in New York City

1970s

Annual pride parades kick off; homosexuality undesignated as a mental illness; rainbow flag popularized as a LGBTQ+ symbol

1980s

Wisconsin is first state to pass laws protecting LGBTQ+ individuals from employment discrimination and from being denied housing; HIV devastates the LGBTQ+ community; Princess Diana debunks myth that HIV can be transmitted by touch

1990s

Passed partly as a result of fears of AIDS being spread in military housing, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy discriminates against openly LGBTQ+ service members

1996

Defense of Marriage Act law passes, defining marriage as a legal union between one man and one woman

2000s

Massachusetts Supreme Court finds ban on same-sex marriage unconstitional; first legal same-sex marriage is performed

2010s

Supreme Court legalizes same sex marriage in 50 states; "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" repealed; transgender students gain protection under Title IX; 150+ LGBTQ+ politicians elected into office; transgender troops banned from serving in US military

2020s

US Supreme Court rules employers cannot discriminate on basis of gender identity and/or transgender status; 70% of Americans support same-sex marriage; 94% of Fortune 500 companies include "gender identity" in non-discrimination policies

Insights Into the LGBTQ+ Candidate Experience

The workplace typically mirrors society at large—with a heteronormative and hierarchical distribution of privilege. That's why employers must be proactive and explicit in their commitment to LGBTQ+ candidates.

LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to feel comfortable and empowered as students than as employees. In the workplace, young LGBTQ+ talent may worry how they will be perceived by older generations and a new group of people they're meeting.

Questions that LGBTQ candidates might have as they approach their internship/job search and explore opportunities at your company include:

- How do I know if a company is safe for me during the interview process?
- Will I be able to gauge whether I can show up in the workplace as my full self?
- How do I vet employers to determine if I would be fully valued for who I am?
- Should I/how should I share this part of myself with my colleagues?
- What can do I as a LGBTQ+ ally to show my support at this company?

"As an LGBTQ+ woman, I look to leadership in hopes that someone with my identity was able to climb to the top of the ladder. I'd like to know I am represented in the group of individuals making important company decisions. LGBTQ+ candidates want to know a potential employer is implementing concrete strategies to promote a space where LGBTQ+ candidates will apply, build a career, and get promoted."

—Maddi, Account Executive at Handshake

As Handshake's Network Trends Report on Gender, Equity, and Gen Z indicated, **about half of students surveyed said they would leave a job if it didn't meet their expectations for social justice or equity**. Many under age 35 expect employers to invest in and actively hire and cultivate a more inclusive and diverse workforce.

Gen Z Job Seeker Survey Insights

60%+ of respondents "always" or "usually" research diversity in employers' leadership"

31% of non-binary individuals would reach out to employers about opportunities even if they don't meet all job posting requirements, compared to 43% of women and 49% of men

65.7% of non-binary individuals look for women in leadership roles before applying for a job

Source: Handshake Network Trends Report: Gender, Equity, and Gen Z

Not only that, they also expect companies to take action against discrimination and to help underrepresented groups advance. The majority of students on Handshake are more likely to choose a company with a demonstrated commitment to a diverse, inclusive, and/or equitable workforce.

To give their full selves at work, LGBTQ+ individuals must feel valued. If for whatever reason they don't feel comfortable during the interview process, students will question if your company is right for them.
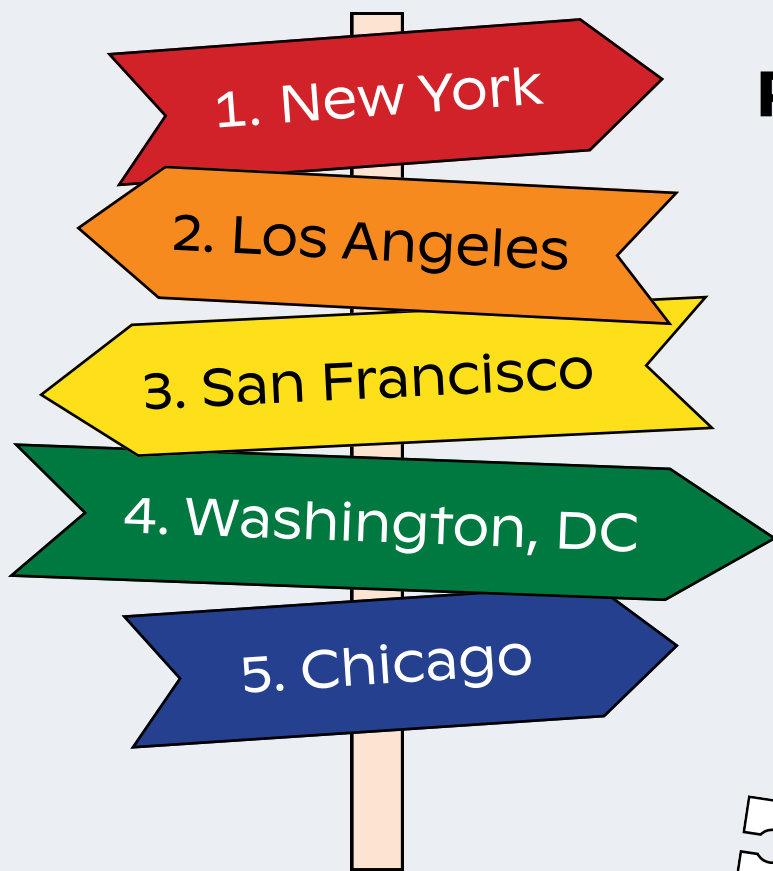
Popular Location Preferences for LGBTQ+ Talent and Allies

1. New York
2. Los Angeles
3. San Francisco
4. Washington, DC
5. Chicago

Popular LGBTQ+ Student Organizations on Handshake

1. GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCE
2. OSTEM (OUT IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS)
3. GENDER AND SEXUALITY ALLIANCE
4. QUEER STUDENT UNION
5. RAINBOW ALLIANCE

Gauging Your LGBTQ+ Inclusion Barometer

Once a year, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) publishes their <u>Corporate Equality Index</u>, a benchmarking tool on policies, practices, resources, and benefits for LGBTQ+ employees that gives distinction to "Best Places to Work for LGBTQ Equality." In order for employers to earn top ratings, they must take concrete steps toward establishing and implementing inclusive policies and initiatives according to three criteria categories:

- Workforce protections
- Inclusive benefits
- Inclusive culture & corporate social responsibility

Handshake Premium partner, Procter & Gamble (P&G), embodies an organization that lives up to its values. For nine years in a row, P&G has received a perfect score on HRC's Corporate Equality Index. And although they've built an inclusive culture and commitment to all groups, they've written the playbook on engaging with LGBTQ+ students early on in the recruitment process. Learn more on the next page.

Brief Overview of Common LGBTQ+ Pride Flags

TRADITIONAL

TRANSGENDER

NON-BINARY

PROGRESS

COMPANY:

Procter and Gamble

SUCCESS STORY:

"This is Love" Virtual Event

CHALLENGE:

For Cincinnati-based Procter & Gamble (P&G), one of the barriers they face in recruiting LGBTQ+ talent is competition from companies in cities with stronger perceived equity within the LGBTQ+ community like Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco. To raise awareness around their culture and their city as welcoming places for LGBTQ+ early talent, they knew they needed to go beyond Pride.

RESEARCH:

"This Is Love" was the culmination of a broader campaign to build awareness within the LGBTQ+ community of what P&G is doing as a company to support and advance LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly from a talent acquisition standpoint. When developing the idea for the "This Is Love" virtual event and its accompanying marketing campaign, **over 80% of those working on the project were active in the LGBTQ+ community**.

THE INSIGHTS-DRIVEN THEME OF THE EVENT WAS:

"Love yourself, love others, and
be able to receive love."

EVENT:

The team was intentional and placed an emphasis on social listening throughout the process. As a result, they turned their insights into authentic conversations—a live virtual event that featured a dialogue between four speakers in the LGBTQ+ community who've made strides in their respective fields.

The event featured Shelly McNamara, P&G Chief Equality & Inclusion Officer, and Brent Miller, P&G Senior Director for Global LGBTQ+ Equality. They shared their experience bringing visibility to P&G's efforts toward <u>current employees</u>, the local community, and their future workforce. Reggie Harris, board chair for Equality Ohio, shared his efforts on bringing inclusion and visibility to the LGBTQ+ community in Cincinatti. The event was emceed by <u>Megan Mitchell</u>, a well-known Cincinnati news anchor, LGBTQ+ icon, and TikTok influencer.

"When doing these kinds of events, it's important to include both an internal company and external community perspective. When you only have P&Gers talking about the work culture, you're only sharing one part of the story. It's important to ensure you have multiple perspectives involved in your effort to address the key barriers you share. By zooming out and making the conversation about the local LGBTQ+ community as a whole and P&G as a part of that community, candidates began to see themselves fitting in."

—Danny Combs, Senior Employer Branding & Initiative Leader at P&G

The virtual "This Is Love" event on Handshake was P&G's most engaging: when candidates logged in, they began introducing themselves over chat, demonstrating clear appetite for these opportunities to connect with the community.

For P&G, it was important to source members of the LGBTQ+ community and be inclusive toward allies, too. With Handshake Premium they found those key Segments, sent personalized messages, and **drove 677 registrants to their virtual event**. Before hitting "send" on their Campaigns, their messaging was reviewed by members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community, ensuring their outreach to students didn't miss the mark.

Upon conclusion of the event, P&G opened job requisitions early so that they could see who from this event applied. Two weeks in, they received over **500 applications from this virtual event**!

The team's ability to reach the right students on Handshake in a personal way and create open space for dialogue were reasons "This is Love" achieved success beyond the initial goals they set out to achieve.

For more info on creating virtual events that move the needle on LGBTQ+ hiring, contact us.

How to Recruit & Support LGBTQ+ Early Talent

These actions can help your company evolve toward being an authentically LGBTQ-friendly environment, allowing LGBTQ+ employees and allies to bring their whole selves to work. If you are doing some of these already, you're on the right track.

Holistically audit your brand

Take an honest look at where your company stands on LGBTQ+ inclusion and set intentions for where you'd like to be. Are there barriers in reaching this community due to your geographic location? What are broader LGBTQ+ social issues you should be sensitive to? Are LGBTQ+ employees currently involved with your company's recruiting efforts? Consider how attractive your brand may be to LGBTQ+ early talent.

Do a social listening tour

Engage in dialogue with LGBTQ+ employees and allies about the barriers they've had to navigate as job seekers and in the workplace. Since coming out at work can be particularly challenging for early talent, this group may have sensitivities that you are unaware of–such as the feeling of being an "only." LGBTQ+ allies may have the best of intentions, yet still be unaware of their blindspots. Conduct outreach to LGBTQ+ community-based organizations and employees in your LGBTQ+ ERG. Your findings can inform how you structure targeted events and messaging to LGBTQ+ candidates.

Establish LGBTQ+ inclusion benchmarks

Include LGBTQ+ employees in all levels of decision making as you evolve policies and practices. You can look at <u>HRC's Best Places to Work for LGBTQ Equality</u> to get a sense of where your company may be strong, and where there are areas for development. You don't have to implement all of your LGBTQ+ equity initiatives at once, but ensure these employees are brought along in the process.

Broaden your LGBTQ+ outreach

On Handshake, employers can start by reaching out to candidates who've self-identified through membership with an LGBTQ+ organization at their school. You may need to reach out and enlist the help of career services, which can help you navigate the various student organizations and their names.

You might learn, for example, that Safe Space is Morehouse College's sexuality and gender diverse collective. Or that PRISM is Smith College's organization for queer and trans students of color. There are also school-agnostic organizations like Reaching Out MBA (ROMBA), which hosts events for LBGTQ+ business students. Or Out Leadership, which hosts global summits.

Diversity and inclusion is about **adding more voices and perspectives** to make better decisions, providing solutions that **resonate with the community**, and **driving your mission forward**. For more info, download Handshake's report on <u>Diversity & Inclusion: The Ultimate Guide for HR & Recruiting</u>.

Lean into virtual events & fairs for increased accessibility

Extrapolating Handshake data indicating that virtual career events are <u>viewed positively by students from underrepresented groups</u> that traditionally face explicit and implicit bias, creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ candidates will help them see during the recruiting stage that they can expect the same as employees.

To these students, personal virtual interactions represent a step up from the traditional screening process, where LGBTQ+ candidates may have insecurities about how they will be perceived by recruiters in person.

Remember, there are parts of people's identities that are not apparent. Invite employees from your LGBTQ+ ERG, and from across the company and your local community to speak about their unique experiences with candidates (see Procter & Gamble's success story in this guide for best practices).

Re-examine job descriptions

One good anti-bias tactic for the LGBTQ+ community is to use a tool to evaluate job descriptions for gender-inclusive language. Employers that attended Handshake's 2021 Find Your Next conference recommended tools like Textio—which manages language patterns—to help in this area. When posting job openings, be explicit that individuals of all gender identities and orientations are encouraged to apply.

Update your vocabulary

The ability to be addressed in a way that reflects one's identity is fundamental to respectful communication—a foundation of the professionalism that we hope to foster for students seeking their careers on our platform. All gender identities and pronouns should have an equal weight of importance, yet only 18% of recruiters ask for a candidate's preferred pronouns. Making this small adjustment to your process can signal to a candidate that your company is an inclusive place. Examine your everyday communication and hold your team accountable to adjustments.

INSTEAD OF	TRY
guys/ladies	folks
mother/father	parent
salesman/woman	salesperson
freshman	first year
chairman/woman	chairperson
transgendered	transgender
husband/wife	spouse/partner

Institute mentorship

LGBTQ+ candidates can benefit from connecting with employees in a LGBTQ+ ERG, or LGBTQ+ alumni, or Ambassadors from their school to gain comfort that your company is a place they want to work. Accountability and sponsorship need to be bottom up and top down so that LGBTQ+ employees are participating and benefiting from it.

The practice of introducing oneself with gender pronouns online, in an email signature, or when speaking is gaining momentum with employers. See how Handshake helps students express their gender identity and pronouns authentically on our platform.

Take a stand all year round

Candidates won't have visibility into what is going on behind the scenes at a particular company, so don't be shy to talk about it in the press and/or social media. Donate to LGBTQ+ serving nonprofits and community organizations. Surface blog posts or social shares by LGBTQ+ individuals or about LGBTQ+ causes **not just in June but throughout the year and demonstrate your commitment to inclusion**.

Update documents like your employee handbook to state outright that your company is committed to equity and to holding leadership accountable for inclusivity. If you've revised your employee benefits packages to include same-sex partners, for example, make sure to announce it and talk about it in corporate communications as well as any recruiting activities and events.

Closing Thoughts

For individuals to bring their whole selves to work, they want to know that their coworkers understand where they are coming from and respect their backgrounds and preferences. As you march toward equity, keep an open mind and be empathetic to your LGBTQ+ colleagues who may be experiencing life very differently from you.

As we saw with P&G, active listening, intentional conversations, and community inclusion goes a long way in creating commonality, understanding, and connection. Because creating a workplace culture that is authentically inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community doesn't happen in one month—**relationships are built a little every day, and all year round**.

Abridged Glossary of LGBTQ+ Terminology

While this glossary is far from definitive, these are critical concepts for understanding and naming some lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals and their allies. Using language with intention is a best practice in reaching out to any targeted group, and checking yourself on every day words used in verbal and written communication both personally and professionally is a step toward reducing unintended negative impact.

CISGENDER

A term used to describe an individual whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.

COMING OUT

Voluntarily sharing one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity with others.

GENDER EXPRESSION

How someone shows their gender identity through social constructs like dress, behavior, pronouns, etc. and typically categorized as "masculine", "feminine", or "androgynous". Not necessarily connected to one's gender identity or sexuality, and can change over time or by circumstance.

GENDER IDENTITY

People's inner sense of self in relation to gender; may or may not correspond with the sex they were assigned at birth.

HETERONORMATIVITY

Assumption that people are straight and cisgender, and that other sexualities are inferior. Based on the concept that there are only two genders; can lead to misgendering.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Overlapping and interconnected systems of disadvantage or discrimination i.e. race, gender identity, sexual orientation, nationality, disability. LGBTQ+ individuals of color face additional barriers.

LGBTQ+

Acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning. The "+" stands for any other sexual or gender minority. Sometimes the acronym includes "I" for intersex and "A" for asexual.

MICROAGGRESSION

Casual, intentional or unintentional remark or action that shows prejudice toward an underrepresented group, i.e. excluding a trans person from guiding a training on how to support trans employees.

MISGENDERING

When a gender is applied to someone that is not aligned with their gender identity, such as through using gendered language (i.e. "guys/ladies").

NON-BINARY

A category for a fluid array of gender identities beyond the woman/man gender binary; also called genderqueer, gender fluid.

PASSING

Presenting as straight/cisgender to fit into a heteronormative culture where someone may feel unsafe if they are out.

PRONOUNS

Words one might like others to use instead of their name, such as "she/her/hers," "he/him/his," "they/them/theirs;" gives someone the opportunity to self-identify.

QUEER

Someone whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and/or whose identity is not cisgender; a word used to describe a spectrum of sexual and gender identities. Historically used negatively, but recently reclaimed as an inclusive term for the entire LGBTQ+ community or to capture a more fluid sense of identity.

QUESTIONING

When someone is unsure about or exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The "Q" at the end of LGBTQ+ can stand for "Queer" or "Questioning".

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Romantic, emotional, or sexual attraction to other people, independent of someone's gender identity.

TRANS

A term to describe someone's innate gender identity that doesn't necessarily correspond with their sex assigned at birth. Transgender people who medically transition identify as transsexual. "Trans" is a term inclusive of people who are transgender, transsexual, etc.