

# Homosexuality

Homosexuality is romantic attraction or sexual attraction between members of the same sex or gender.

Along with bisexuality and heterosexuality, homosexuality is one of the three main categories of sexual orientation within the heterosexual–homosexual continuum. There is no consensus among scientists about why a person develops a particular sexual orientation; however, biologically-based theories for the cause of sexual orientation are favored by experts, which point to genetic factors, the early uterine environment, or both in combination. There is no substantive evidence which suggests parenting or early childhood experiences play a role when it comes to sexual orientation. While some hold the view that homosexual activity is "unnatural" or "dysfunctional", research has shown that homosexuality is an example of a normal and natural variation in human. Most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation. There is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation.

The most common terms for homosexual people are lesbian for females and gay for males, though gay is also used to refer generally to both homosexual males and females. The number of people who identify as gay or lesbian and the proportion of people who have same-sex sexual experiences are difficult for researchers to estimate reliably for a variety of reasons, including many gay people not openly identifying as such due to homophobia and heterosexist discrimination. Homosexual behavior has also been documented and is observed in many non-human animal species.

Since the end of the 19th century, there has been a global movement towards increased visibility, recognition, and legal rights for homosexual people, including the rights to marriage and civil unions, adoption and parenting, employment, military service, equal access to health care, and the introduction of anti-bullying legislation to protect gay minors.



SYMBOL

## History

The first known appearance of homosexual in print is found in an 1869 German pamphlet by the novelist Karl-Maria Kertbeny, published anonymously, arguing against a Prussian anti-sodomy law. In 1886, Krafft-Ebing used the terms homosexual and heterosexual in his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Krafft-Ebing's book was so popular among both laymen and doctors that the terms "heterosexual" and "homosexual" became the most widely accepted terms for sexual orientation. As such, the current use of the term has its roots in the broader 19th-century tradition of personality taxonomy.

In cultures influenced by Abrahamic religions, the law and the church established sodomy as a transgression against divine law or a crime against nature. The condemnation of anal sex

between males, however, predates Christian belief. In ancient Greece they said it was unnatural.

Many historical figures, including Socrates, Lord Byron, Edward II, and Hadrian, have had terms such as gay or bisexual applied to them; some scholars, such as Michel Foucault, have regarded this as risking the anachronistic introduction of a contemporary construction of sexuality foreign to their times; though others challenge this.

## Etymology

Many modern style guides in the U.S. recommend against using homosexual as a noun, instead using gay man or lesbian.

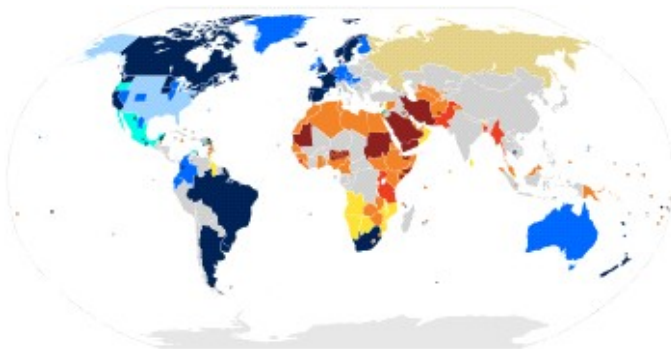
In the context of sexuality, lesbian refers only to female homosexuality and gay refers only to male homosexuality. The word "lesbian" is derived from the name of the Greek island Lesbos, where the poet Sappho wrote largely about her emotional relationships with young women.

Although early writers also used the adjective homosexual to refer to any single-sex context (such as an all-girls school), today the term is used exclusively in reference to sexual attraction, activity, and orientation. The term homosocial is now used to describe single-sex contexts that are not specifically sexual. There is also a word referring to same-sex love, homophilia.

Pejorative terms in English include queer, faggot, fairy, poof, and homo.

## Legality

Most nations do not prohibit consensual sex between unrelated persons above the local age of consent. Some jurisdictions further recognize identical rights, protections, and privileges for the family structures of same-sex couples, including marriage. Some nations mandate that all individuals restrict themselves to heterosexual relationships; that is, in some jurisdictions homosexual activity is illegal. Offenders can face the death penalty in some fundamentalist Muslim areas such as Iran and parts of Nigeria. There are, however, often significant differences between official policy and real-world enforcement.



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| <b>Homosexuality legal</b><br><a href="#">Same-sex marriage</a> | <b>Homosexuality<br/>criminalized/restricted</b> |
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| Other type of partnership (or unregistered cohabitation)                    | Restrictions on freedom of expression |
| Marriages from other jurisdictions recognized                               | Unenforced penalty                    |
| Limited federal recognition of marriage in states without same-sex marriage | Imprisonment                          |
| Same-sex unions not recognized  | Up to life in prison                  |
|   | Death penalty                         |