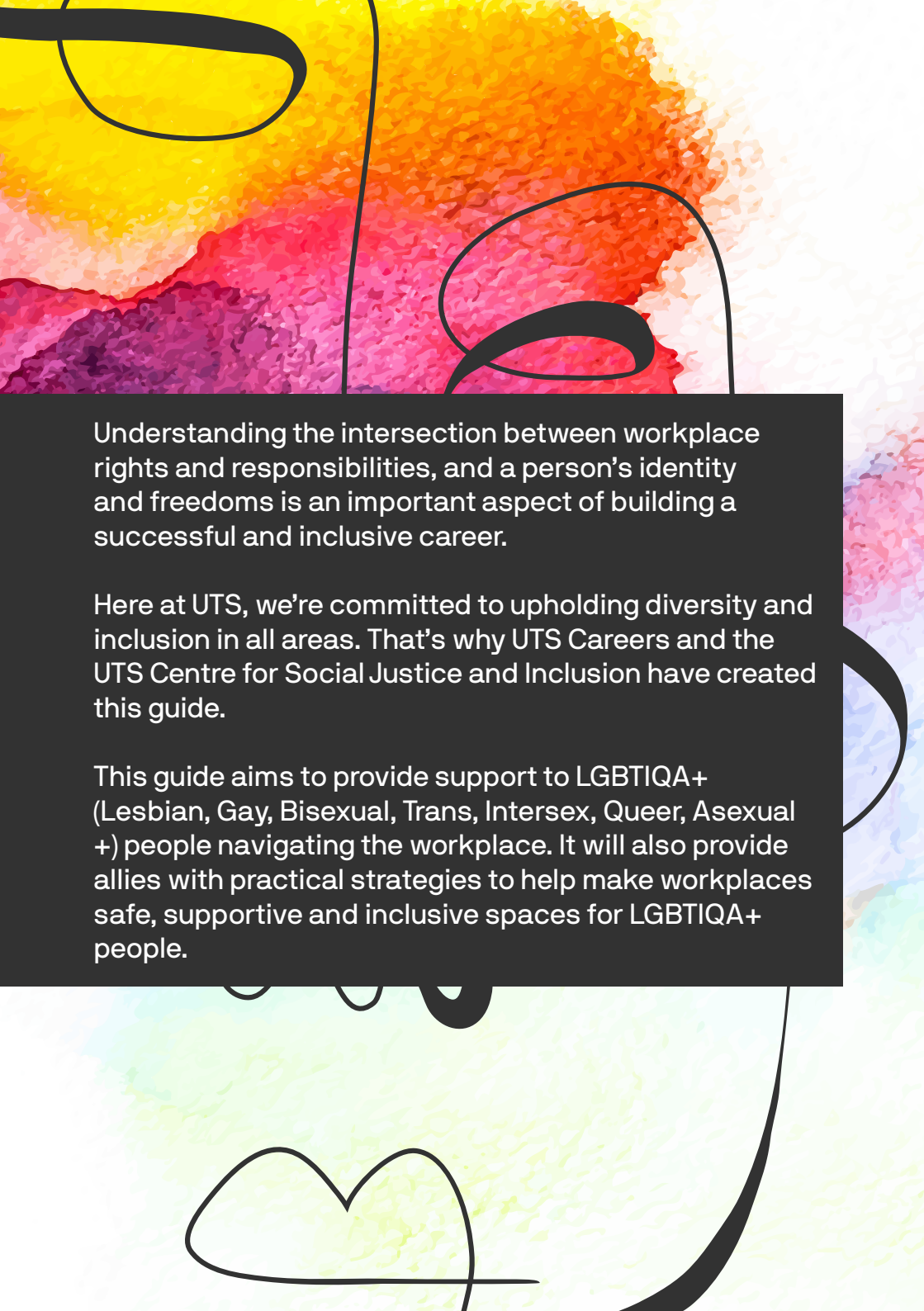




Diversity and your career

**Navigating the workforce
as an LGBTIQA+ person,
and how to be an ally to
LGBTIQA+ communities**



Understanding the intersection between workplace rights and responsibilities, and a person's identity and freedoms is an important aspect of building a successful and inclusive career.

Here at UTS, we're committed to upholding diversity and inclusion in all areas. That's why UTS Careers and the UTS Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion have created this guide.

This guide aims to provide support to LGBTIQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual +) people navigating the workplace. It will also provide allies with practical strategies to help make workplaces safe, supportive and inclusive spaces for LGBTIQ+ people.

Table of contents

This guide will explore challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals, as well as strategies to help resolve these issues, concerns and barriers. It also outlines ways that people outside of the community can provide support and allyship to their colleagues, and practices for creating a more diverse, inclusive, safe and supportive workplace that allows LGBTIQ+ people to thrive.

Entering the workplace as a LGBTIQ+ person or ally	01
Challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace	02-04
How to create an inclusive workplace	05-07
Being an ally in the workplace	08
Know your rights	09
Resources	10
UTS support services	11
Glossary	12-15

Entering the workplace as an LGBTIQ+ person or ally

For members of the LGBTIQ+ community, entering the workforce can be fraught, with many people concerned that their sexuality or gender identity could negatively affect their work and professional relationships.

Regardless of whether you identify as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community or not, being aware of the intricacies involved in navigating workplace interactions, practices and policies can help you be both a better colleague and advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights at work and beyond.

Challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ people in the workplace

While Australian workplaces have made great strides in working towards creating inclusive work environments, there are many subtle and overt challenges that LGBTIQ+ people often face in attaining employment.

As an ally, knowing some of the issues that affect LGBTIQ+ employees can help you call out negative behaviour or practices, such as discrimination and prejudice.

Understanding systemic barriers and forms of discrimination can also empower LGBTIQ+ people to speak out when they are the target of discrimination.

Homophobia

Prejudice, fear, discomfort, mistrust, and discrimination towards members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Research shows that only about one third of LGBTIQ+ people are out to everyone they work with. This can not only impact work performance, but can also have more long lasting consequences. Those who were not out reported to be twice as likely to feel depressed or anxious compared to other employees. They were also almost half as likely to feel satisfied at work.

Homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia can be expressed in subtle ways in the workplace, such as:

- purposefully excluding LGBTIQ+ colleagues from conversation
- offensive jokes
- denying an employee a promotion based on their sexuality, gender identity or gender expression
- addressing an LGBTIQ+ colleague using harmful slurs.

Heteronormativity

The belief that heterosexuality (being “straight”) is the expected and only acceptable form of sexuality.

Heteronormativity at work can be damaging in a variety of ways. For example:

- a gender nonconforming person being called into HR for not adhering to the dress code determined by their assigned biological sex
- not having access to a gender-neutral bathroom at work
- where there is a pervasive assumption that everyone is heterosexual, non-heterosexual employees may feel pressured to either come out or hide their identity.

Erasure

The cultural practice of ignoring or excluding LGBTIQ+ people and their existence in certain spaces.

Queer erasure is extremely prevalent in workplaces, especially as many LGBTIQ+ people choose not to come out at work. This can be demoralising for LGBTIQ+ people, and lead to a feeling of hostility at work.

Purposeful erasure could include things like:

- refusal to use preferred pronouns
- referring to a bisexual colleague as straight because they are with an opposite sex partner.

Micro-aggressions

Everyday verbal and non-verbal encounters of subtle discrimination.

Because they are often subtle, micro-aggressions in the workplace can leave the recipient feeling confused and hurt, but afraid to speak up.

Examples include:

- ***“You’re trans? Wow I would have had no idea, you totally pass!”***
This implies that the ultimate goal is to appear cisgender, and that trans people who don’t conform to gender normative appearance have failed.
- ***“You’re gay? I should introduce you to my gay friend!”***
You wouldn’t set up a straight friend with another random friend, just because they’re also straight. This micro-aggression can make LGBTIQ+ people feel like their sexuality is perceived as the most important aspect of their identity.
- ***“Hey Sarah. Oh, you’re Tom now. Ugh it’s so hard to remember.”***
Calling someone by their past name or wrong pronoun and framing it as their problem shows that you don’t respect their identity. Instead, you are placing blame on that person for inconveniencing you. This behaviour is both disrespectful and hurtful.

Misgendering

Referring to someone by incorrect pronouns, prefixes or gendered words.

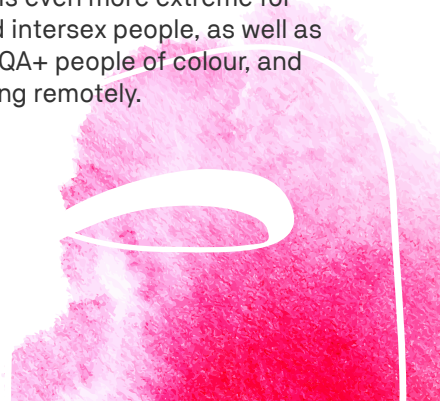
Deliberately using incorrect pronouns, such as referring to a trans colleague by the pronouns they used before transitioning, or refusing to use they/them/ theirs pronouns when requested, is damaging. At best, it can make your colleague uncomfortable, and at worst it could be considered a form of workplace harassment.

Mental health

Research shows that the mental health of LGBTIQ+ people is significantly poorer than the general population. LGBTIQ+ Australians are:

- twice as likely to have symptoms for, and be diagnosed with, a mental health condition
- five times as likely to attempt suicide in their lifetime.

This gap is even more extreme for trans and intersex people, as well as for LGBTIQ+ people of colour, and those living remotely.



How to create an inclusive workplace

Entering the workforce – be it for the first time, after an absence, or simply upon changing jobs – can be a difficult process to navigate as a member of the LGBTIQ+ community.

On a professional level, different businesses and places of work have varied support structures and resources in place for diverse employees. Some are highly supportive and offer a range of personal, social, legal and health resources their employees can access. Others may have limited or no specific systems in place, outside of the mandatory state and federal laws that apply to them.

What can I do?

When entering a new role, it's important you prioritise your safety and wellbeing. You should also familiarise yourself with your rights under Australian law, as well as the protections you have in your workplace.

Remember, you are not required to disclose your gender identity or sexuality if you do not wish to.

As a possible source of information, you can contact your employer's HR department to find out how they support LGBTIQ+ employees. You may also find these details in your contract or as part of your onboarding into the role.

What can my employer do?

There are a number of simple things you could encourage your employer to do to help foster a safe and inclusive working environment. Some examples are included below.

- **Inclusive leave arrangements**
Making personal leave inclusive of gender affirmation surgery, and incorporating both chosen and biological families into carer's leave helps to create an environment in which employees feel supported in their workplace.
- **Option for gender-neutral honorifics**
The option of using Mx (pronounced 'mix' or sometimes 'mux') in place of more common binary honorifics such as Mr, Mrs, Miss etc. provides employees and other stakeholders a gender-

neutral option when referring to someone who is nonbinary, or whose gender identity is not defined by the male/female binary.

- **Access to all gender bathrooms**
The inclusion of all gender bathrooms at a workplace provides a safe and welcoming space for visitors and employees who don't identify with traditional binary genders (male and female). It also provides an option for those who have had negative experiences with single-gender bathrooms because of their gender expression.
- **Provide training for staff**
Providing workplace training for staff on being an ally, unconscious bias and understanding the challenges faced by the LGBTIQ+ community is a great way to help combat prejudice and ignorance in the workplace.
- **More common use of pronouns**
Small practices, such as everyone including their pronouns in email signatures, can help de-stigmatise different pronoun usage and prevent misunderstandings. Example of an email signature using pronouns:
John Smith
(Pronouns: he/him)
Solicitor – Lincoln Lawyers

Conflict resolution and de-escalation tips

Your safety must be the number one priority when attempting to de-escalate any conflict you might have at work.

Here are a few strategies you could employ to help resolve conflict in the workplace.

- Find a mutually beneficial time for both you and the person you have conflict with to meet in a place where you won't be disturbed.
- Use specific examples of behaviour you have an issue with, focusing on the problem and not the person's personality or identity.
Eg. "When you said _____, I felt _____."
- Listen to the other person and when they are finished speaking, rephrase what they have said in your own words to make sure you understand, asking questions to clarify if necessary.
Eg. "So what I think you're saying is that _____"
- Ask them if they agree with your assessment, and modify until you reach a mutual understanding.
- Identify key areas of conflict, and develop a plan to resolve them.
Eg. "In the future, it would be great if _____"

You may also request that your workplace provide you with a mediator, if you are uncomfortable having this conversation alone with the other person.

If you don't feel able to do this, or if the complaint concerns unlawful behaviour like assault, corruption, or discrimination, you can make a complaint to HR, a manager, or another person with authority.

If you are an ally, you may find yourself in a position to help address issues of conflict or discrimination against your LGBTIQ+ colleagues. While the above points will also apply, it's also important to keep the following in mind:

- If you witness discrimination, be sure to approach your LGBTIQ+ colleague to ask how they would like to handle the situation before stepping in – these issues are often complex and can escalate if not handled appropriately.
- If requested, you may offer to provide support to your LGBTIQ+ colleague – this could be taking on the emotional labour of speaking with the other party on your colleague's behalf, providing information or resources to combat ignorance, or accompanying them to a meeting with the other party.
- Be sure to check in with your LGBTIQ+ colleague to see if they need support in approaching management or HR, if the situation calls for it.

'Coming out' vs. 'inviting in' at work

'Coming out' looks different for everyone and is often a very iterative process. Some examples are:

- telling colleagues outright about your sexuality
- asking colleagues to use your preferred pronouns
- bringing your partner to a work event.

Some people are even questioning the idea of 'coming out', and instead refer to the process as 'inviting in' people you want included in these aspects of your life.

As an ally, if you are 'invited in' to an LGBTIQ+ colleague's life, this probably means they feel safe and welcome enough to share information. Be sure to act respectfully when granted such an inclusion.

Remember, you are not obliged to reveal your sexuality or gender identity at work if you do not wish to do so.



Being an ally in the workplace

A workplace ally is first and foremost a source of support for their LGBTIQ+ colleagues. There are many things you can do to look out for gender, sexuality, or bodily diverse people at work.

Below are just a few of the actions you can take.

- Be an active ally and call out discrimination or prejudice, even when it seems inconvenient or uncomfortable, or when you don't think there are any LGBTIQ+ people around.
- Safely and respectfully challenge colleagues, policies, or structures if they are marginalising, exclusionary, or harmful to LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Actively challenge your own assumptions, stereotypes, and biases, even if they're unconscious. A great way to start this could be by taking an [Implicit Bias Test](#) to recognise some of your unconscious biases.
- Listen to, learn from, and collaborate with LGBTIQ+ colleagues to improve and diversify your workplace culture.
- Amplify the voices of your LGBTIQ+ colleagues rather than speaking for them. This also means respecting confidentiality and choosing to step back if that's what your colleague needs.
- Know the law and keep up-to-date with relevant resources.

More information about being an ally can be found on the [UTS Ally program website](#).

Know your rights

There are a number of legislated acts that protect LGBTIQ+ employees from harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

Australia has both federal and state laws that cover discrimination, some of which are listed below.

- **'Sex Discrimination Amendment (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Status) Act 2013**

Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, intersex status, and marital or relationship status is unlawful. This means LGBTIQ+ people's access to services and recognition of sex in official documents is protected, and discrimination, harassment, or hostility at work or study is against the law.

- **Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender**

Individuals can identify and be recognised as a gender other than the one they were assigned at birth (including 'indeterminate' gender).

When information about sex or gender is being collected, there should be the option for X (Indeterminate/Intersex/Unspecified) gender, as well as for M (male) and F (female).

- **UTS Equity, Inclusion and Respect Policy**

This policy precludes members of the UTS community from 'any behaviour that could constitute bullying, harassment or vilification'.

Resources

Equality Project Policy Guide

Comprehensive overview on the current pressing issues facing LGBTIQ+ people in Australia. This is not just related to inclusive workplaces, but also other relevant issues like mental health, education, family violence, and LGBTIQ+ history.

Q Life

Anonymous support and referrals for LGBTIQ+ people who want to talk about various issues including sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.

Gender Centre

Information and resources for trans and gender-diverse people who live in NSW. The Gender Centre also provides a range of in-person services like counselling, accommodation, education, and needle exchange.

Twenty10

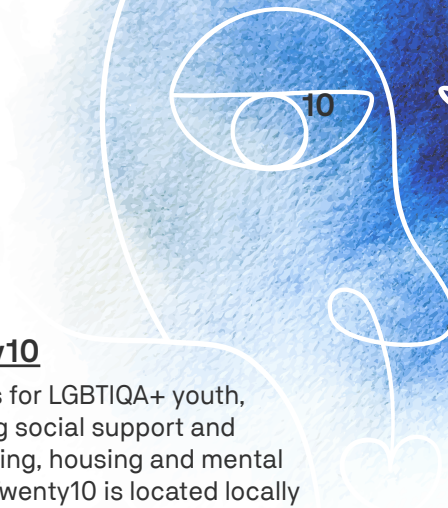
Services for LGBTIQ+ youth, including social support and counselling, housing and mental health. Twenty10 is located locally in Chippendale, and holds a range of events throughout the year to promote diversity and inclusion in Sydney.

Out For Australia

Mentors for emerging LGBTIQ+ professionals at the beginning of their careers. Their resources aim to support workplace issues, including resolving interpersonal problems at work, intersectionality, and the importance of inclusive language in the office.

ACON

ACON provides a range of services to LGBTIQ+ people, including sexual health (importantly, HIV prevention and support), mental health, safety and inclusion, and in-person meeting opportunities for those in NSW. ACON also recently launched TransHub - a new digital platform providing support to all trans and gender diverse Australians.



UTS support services

If you or someone you know needs advice or support regarding any of the issues this guide touched on, UTS offers a number of services that can help.

The Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion

If you ever need support at UTS relating to equity complaints (including conflicts relating to sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation), the Equity and Diversity Unit within the Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion is there to assist you.

You can contact them on 9514 1084 or at equity@uts.edu.au.

UTS Student Legal Service

Offering free legal advice to all students currently enrolled at UTS, the Student Legal Service can advise on a range of matters including employment.

You can contact them at studentlegalservice@uts.edu.au

UTS Counselling Service

As a UTS student, you have access to confidential counselling on a wide range of personal, psychological and study-related and administrative issues.

You can contact them on 9514 1177 or at student.services@uts.edu.au. Visit their website for further [contact information](#) and resources.

UTS Medical Service

The Health Service provides UTS students, alumni, staff and their families with friendly and confidential medical services.

You can contact them on 9514 1177. Visit their website for [more information](#).

Glossary

- Asexual** A person who does not experience sexual desire for people of any gender. Some asexual people experience romantic attraction, while others do not. Asexuality can be considered a spectrum, with some asexual people experiencing desire for varying types of intimacy.
- Bisexual** A person who is sexually or romantically attracted to both people of the same and other genders. Some bisexual people may be attracted to people regardless of their gender. Bisexual and pansexual are sometimes used interchangeably.
- Bodily diversity** The concept that bodies are not confined to a binary (male and female), all bodies are different and there are no set of features to define someone's identity. You can think here of people born with intersex variations ([see definition below](#)).
- Cisgender** The 'cis' in cisgender comes from a Latin word meaning 'on this side of' and is a term used for a person whose physical sex (assigned sex) and gender identity align. For example, someone who was assigned female at birth, goes by the pronouns 'she' and 'her' and feels aligned with the label of 'woman' would be a cisgender woman.
- Deadname (past name)** The name a trans person was given at birth, which they no longer use. A deadname could also be known as a past name, birth name or given name.
- Gay (Homosexual)** A person whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is towards people of the same gender. Traditionally this term was used by men/male identifying persons who were attracted to their same gender, although the definition has been used more broadly in recent years. Some women prefer to identify as lesbian instead.

- Gender expression** A person's choices in conveying a gendered appearance. This can include clothing, hairstyles, vocabulary and body language, and extend to gender affirming hormone therapy and surgical procedures.
- Gender identity** The internal experience and perception of one's gender, and how they label themselves. Gender identity can correlate with a person's assigned sex at birth or can differ from it.
- Gender norms** The societal and cultural expectations that exist for gender expression based on the sex a person is assigned at birth. These sets of expectations are deeply ingrained and affect behaviours and attitudes that are generally considered 'acceptable', such as the idea that boys like blue and girls like pink, men are doctors and women are nurses, women wear dresses and makeup while men wear trousers and have short hair, etc.
- Genderfluid** A person whose gender identification and presentation shifts, whether within or outside of societal, gender-based expectations.
- Heterosexual** A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.

Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia

Refers to the prejudice, fear, discomfort, mistrust, and discrimination felt and/or enacted towards members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

Homophobia refers to discrimination against those who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to those of the same gender.

Biphobia refers to discrimination against those who are sexually and/or romantically attracted to those of the same or other genders.

Transphobia is an umbrella term for a range of negative and violent attitudes (for example, fear, anger, intolerance, resentment, erasure or discomfort) that one may have towards members of the trans, non-binary and gender diverse community. The term can also connote a fear, disgust, or dislike of being perceived as anything other than cisgender.

Homosexual

See definition for '[Gay](#)'.

Intersex

People born with physical, hormonal or genetic features – such as reproductive organs, chromosomes, or hormonal patterns – that are more diverse than stereotypical binary 'male' or 'female' bodies.

Lesbian

A woman whose primary sexual and romantic attraction is towards people of their same gender. It is important to remember that sexuality is based off someone's gender identity rather than their assigned sex. For example, a trans woman can identify as a lesbian.

LGBTIQ+

An acronym for people who don't identify as exclusively heterosexual (straight) or cisgender. The letters stand for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual. The '+' represents others who are part of the broader community who may have a different orientation or identity.

Pansexual

An individual who is attracted to, and may form sexual and romantic relationships with, people of any gender.

Pronouns

Many people use pronouns that align with the sex they were assigned at birth, such as a woman using she/her/hers pronouns, or a man using he/him/his. Many other people don't identify as belonging to either end of this gender binary, and instead choose to use pronouns like they/them/theirs or others (such as zhe, zie, and hir).

Trans

A person whose internal knowledge of gender is different from conventional or mainstream cultural expectations based on the sex that person was assigned at birth. Trans is independent to sexuality and as such trans people may identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Queer

A term that has gained some popularity in the LGBTIQ+ community (particularly amongst younger generations), for those whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual and who may not identify exclusively with other labels (eg. gay, lesbian, bisexual etc.). It also works for those who prefer an identity that does not reference sex or gender.

In the past, queer has been used as a pejorative term. Although it has been reclaimed by some people in the community, it is not a universally accepted term and should be used respectfully.