



Speak Up #4intersex: How to Speak the Language on Social Media

Terms to Know and Use

LGBTQIA vs LGBTQiA: the “I” is generally used in the acronym, though keep in mind some intersex individuals are not in favor of being a part. This is why some groups use the small “i.”

Interphobia/Intersexphobia: typically refers to policies that discriminate against intersex people.

IGM: Intersex Genital Mutilation

Terms to AVOID!

Intersexual/intersexed: these terms are dated, and misleading because intersex is not a verb or a sexuality. (“Intersexual” sounds like a person who is only attracted to intersex people!)

DSD: Stands for “difference of sex development,” or negatively, “disorder of sex development.” Some groups use this term, and some reject it as medicalizing. It is controversial, and we much prefer the term “intersex.”

Hermaphrodite: an outdated and offensive word, still used in medical literature today. Some intersex people have reclaimed the word, but you should never use it to refer to others without first asking their permission.

“Both Sexes”: using language like “born with sex traits of both” can cause confusion, and implies that there are only two possible, binary combinations of sex traits. More in the language section!

Speak Up #4intersex: Points to Emphasize

1. There is no one way to be intersex. Emphasize our differences. There are so many different ways that sex traits can develop. Officially, there are over 30 different intersex variations. Every intersex person's experience is shaped by their overlapping identities, including where they grew up and their family background. There is no universal intersex experience. Many of us have experienced shame, stigma, and non-consensual surgery, though not all of us have. Listen to individuals telling their stories.

2. We face medical violence. Intersex issues are fundamentally human rights issues. Intersex existence can be dangerous. The medical system often views us as something to be erased or corrected by cutting or modifying our bodies. This practice is rooted in homophobic and heteronormative social enforcement, evolved from false theories in the 1950s.

3. We often experience discrimination in the same way that other sex and gender

minorities do. While laws exist that *should* protect intersex people against harmful surgeries, they aren't being applied to us due to lack of awareness. Despite prohibitions against sex discrimination and female genital mutilation, US federal or state law has rarely been used to protect intersex infants, although that is changing. Legal protections for intersex people in the workplace have yet to be tested.

4. Not all intersex people are LGBT. Some intersex people do not want to be included in the acronym. Intersex issues stand uniquely on their own, though the shame and stigma we face for our differences gives us a lot in common with other LGBT groups. Historically, lesbian, gay, and transgender identities were all classified as pathologized mental disorders. All of us have suffered because of the medical industry's enforcement of heteronormativity on our bodies and minds. Most intersex organizations do include the letter "I" in the LGBTQIA acronym.

Inclusive Language Is Everything: Avoid Coming off as Insensitive or Sensational

Intersex people can have any gender identity and sexual orientation.

Instead of	Say	Because
“Biological sex” or “Biological gender”	Sex traits	People are born with sex traits, including chromosomes, genitals, and reproductive organs, but these may not line up neatly into what most people think of as one “biological sex.” Gender is social and cultural. Someone’s gender may not correspond to what others expect based on their bodily sex traits, although society commonly ties sex and gender together.
“Born with ambiguous gender” or “ambiguous genitalia”	“Born with genitalia outside of the typical male/female binary”	Genitals do not determine gender, and we can never tell for sure what someone’s gender will be by how they look when they are born. It’s all up to the individual to determine!
“Born both a man and a woman”	“Born intersex” or “born with different sex traits”	With most people’s binary understanding of sex, this could imply a person was born with two sets of genitalia, which is not possible. It also assumes being a man or a woman depends on sex traits at birth (and implies these are the only two options!).
“Female/Male Chromosomes”	XX/XY chromosomes	Call parts what they are without gendering them. Many people who are women have XX chromosomes, and many don’t. Some people with XX chromosomes don’t have a female gender identity. Intersex people can also have chromosome patterns that are not XX or XY.
“Female/Male Genitalia”	Vagina/Penis (... if you really need to be talking about someone’s genitals in the first place)	Body parts don’t have genders. You wouldn’t say “male arm” or “female arm,” so why name any other parts this way? Remember that intersex and transgender people can have sex traits often associated with a different gender.
“Born a Boy/Girl”	Assigned male or female at birth	Babies are assigned a gender based on what their genitals look like. Those assignments might not always be accurate once the child grows up.
“Both sexes/genders”	Multiple sexes/genders	There are more than two genders, and many combinations of sex traits.
“What it’s like to be intersex”	“My intersex experience”	No two intersex experiences are alike! Avoid generalizing as much as possible.

Intersex Hashtag Recommendations in Order

Tag	Notes	Instagram Posts 2018
#intersex	The most important hashtag, the word itself. Reduce the amount of spam, porn, and triggering medical noise by using this tag for selfies and quality, relevant intersex content	495,000
#4intersex	interACT's 2018 campaign	-
#lgbtqia	Acronym including the letter "I" is best!	6,268,289
#lgbt	Though the shortest acronym is the most popular	19,280,000
#pride	Sometimes specific to pride festivities in month of June	10,900,000
#intersexy	Great for selfies by intersex individuals!	750
#StopIGM	Stands for "Stop Intersex Genital Mutilation"	400
#IntersexStories	Started by intersex activist Pidgeon	300
#IntersexStoriesNotSurgeries		70
#IntersexIsBeautiful		300