

CONCEPT  
EXPLAINER

WHAT IS

# Heteronormativity

swipe



# Heteronormativity refers

to the common assumption or idea that heterosexual relationships and binary gender identities – being either male or female – are the norm. It reflects a narrow view of gender and relationships and promotes traditional expectations about gender roles and family structures.



# These assumptions

can exclude people whose identities or relationships don't fit this model, including transgender people, single parents, same-sex couples, co-parents, and those who choose not to have children. This can create often unintentional, but avoidable, barriers to healthcare and other support services.



## These ideas can have

practical consequences.

For example, in healthcare, practitioners may assume patients are heterosexual/straight and cisgender, which can limit the access to and effectiveness of advice, screenings, or treatments. More broadly, these assumptions can create pressure to conform, limiting how people live their lives and contributing to anxiety, negative self-image, and difficulties expressing emotions.



## To address this,

it is important to use inclusive, more gender-neutral language, avoiding assumptions about people's identities or family situations, and making sure services are designed to be accessible to all. Challenging these norms helps people express themselves more freely and supports a more inclusive society that better meets diverse needs.



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# Thanks for reading

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