


Today, the term **lesbian** generally refers to people who are not men who are attracted to other people who are not men. This term has a rich history, and this history has led to a wide range of understandings and connections to the term.


Some of the ways that different people understand this term:

- Lesbian might be used to refer to any woman who has an attraction to other women.
- Lesbian might be used to refer to women who are exclusively attracted to other women.
- Lesbian might be used to refer to non-men who are attracted to other non-men.



CHECK US OUT ONLINE

 @northernmosaicnetwork

 Northern Mosaic Network
www.northernmosaic.net

TALK TO US

Northern Mosaic Network
867-444-7295
admin@northernmosaic.net

VISIT US

Suite 213 - 5112 52nd Street
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 1T6

SEND US MAIL

PO Box 1751, STN Main
Yellowknife, NT
X1A 2P3



NORTHERN
MOSAIC
NETWORK

all about **LESBIAN & SAPPHIC IDENTITIES**

We acknowledge the generous support of the Government of Canada for the redevelopment of our educational resources and materials.



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada



Developed by Jacq Brasseur, with support from
Catherine Currie following consultation with
2SLGBTQIPA+ Northerners in 2021/2022.

LESBIAN & SAPPHIC HISTORY

The term **lesbian** originates in relation to Sappho, the Ancient Greek poet who came from the Isle of Lesbos. Sappho was often referred to as the Lesbian poet, referencing where she was born. Sappho wrote a lot of poetry which included women who loved other women.

Originally, the term was used to refer to people who lived in Lesbos, however eventually came to refer to the most famous lesbian poet. This is also why you might hear terms like **sapphic** to describe women who love other women.

Historically, the term lesbian was used to refer to any woman who had relationships with other women.

As gender and sexually diverse communities have evolved in their understanding of gendered categories and experiences, lesbian and sapphic communities have evolved as well.

While there are often intra-community arguments or discussions about what is or is not a legitimate understanding of a certain term, the people participating in those conversations should be the people who are impacted by them directly. This means that if you don't identify as a lesbian or as part of the sapphic community, it can be helpful to just listen to these discussions instead of participating in them.

LESBIAN COMMUNITY FAQs

Can people who aren't women be lesbians?

Lesbian is a term with a rich history and connection to womanhood. This is why it's generally not appropriate for people who don't have lived experiences of womanhood to identify this way.

Some non-binary people identify as lesbians because of their deep affinity and connection to lesbianism and lesbian culture. Some trans men might also identify as or with lesbian communities because of their pre-transition experiences.

Are all lesbians masculine?

Being a lesbian doesn't require a person to look a certain way or express themselves in a masculine way.

Some lesbians who are more masculine might identify as *butch*. Some Black lesbians who are more masculine might also identify as *studs*.

This is an example of how a person's cultural community might impact how they experience lesbianism.

Can sexual orientation be changed?

Efforts to change people's sexual orientation have overwhelmingly been debunked by modern science.

While there are many organizations or groups that claim to be able to change a person's sexual orientation, there is no evidence that this is actually true or possible.

AM I A LESBIAN?

The important thing to remember is that you don't have to use certain words to describe yourself just because that's the "box" that you fit into. That being said, here are some things that might apply to you if you're part of the lesbian community:

- you are a woman and you find yourself attracted to other women
- you're a non-binary person and you find yourself attracted to women and other non-binary people
- you're a woman or non-binary person and want to have romantic or physical partnerships with others who are non-binary or women

If you are a lesbian or sapphic person in the NWT looking for support or community, reach out to us.

HOMOPHOBIA & LESBOPHOBIA

Homophobia is generally defined as a fear, hatred, mistreatment of, or negative attitudes towards people who are not straight, because of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation.

Lesbophobia refers to the compounded experience of homophobia and misogyny. Lesbophobia is generally defined as a fear, hatred, mistreatment of, or negative attitudes towards women (or those perceived as women) who are not straight, because of their sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation.

If you are looking to learn more about lesbian identity, sexuality or lesbophobia, talk to us about our workshops!