

## Terms: Gender Identity

This is an evolving resource compiled by [John Bennett](#).

The list that follows is not intended to be all inclusive, and terms may have different meaning and context among various groups. Comments, suggestions, and/or additional terms are welcome.

Terms	Definitions
<b>Agender</b>	An umbrella term encompassing many different genders of people who commonly do not have a gender and/or have a gender that they describe as neutral. Many agender people are trans. As a new and quickly-evolving term, it is best you ask how someone defines agender for themselves.
<b>AFAB and AMAB</b>	Acronyms meaning “assigned female/male at birth” (also designated female/male at birth or female/male assigned at birth). No one, whether cis or trans, gets to choose what sex they are assigned at birth. This term is preferred to “biological male/female”, “male/female bodied”, “natal male/female”, and “born male/female” which are inaccurate.
<b>Ally</b>	Someone who advocates and supports a community other than their own. Allies are not part of the communities they help. A person should not self-identify as an ally but show that they are one through action.
<b>Asexual</b>	The lack of a sexual attraction, and one identifying with this orientation. This may be used as an umbrella term for other emotional attractions such as demisexual.
<b>Bigender</b>	Refers to those who identify as two genders. Can also identify as multigender (identifying as two or more genders). This term should not be confused with Two-Spirit, which is specifically associated with Native American and First Nations cultures.
<b>Biological Sex</b>	Determined at birth by primary sexual characteristics, identifying someone as male, female, intersex (having indeterminate primary sexual characteristics; once called hermaphroditism but that term is out of favor now).
<b>Binary</b>	A system only encompassing two options. This term is also used as an adjective to describe the genders female/male or woman/man. Since the binary genders are the only ones recognized by society as being legitimate, they enjoy an unfairly privileged status.

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Bisexuality</b>	An umbrella term for people who experience sexual and/or emotional attraction to more than one gender. See also: pansexual and queer.
<b>Cisgender/cis</b>	A state of being in which one's gender identity align with one's biological sex as determined at birth. Term for someone who exclusively identifies as their sex assigned at birth. The term cisgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Derived from the Latin word meaning "on the same side". In discussions regarding trans issues, one would differentiate between women who are trans, and women who aren't, by saying trans women and cis women. Cis is not a made-up word or slur. Note that cisgender does not have an "ed" at the end.
<b>Cissexism</b>	Systemic prejudice in the favor of cisgender people.
<b>Drag</b>	Exaggerated, theatrical, and/or performative presentation that usually plays with gender. Although most commonly used to refer to crossdressing performers (drag queens and drag kings), anyone of any gender can do any form of drag. Doing drag does not necessarily have anything to do with one's sex assigned at birth, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
<b>Gender Expression/Presentation</b>	The physical manifestation of one's gender identity through clothing, hairstyle, voice, body shape, etc. (typically referred to as masculine or feminine). Many transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender identity (who they are), rather than their sex assigned at birth. Someone with a gender nonconforming gender expression may or may not be transgender.
<b>Gender Fluidity or Gender Emergent</b>	The idea that gender is not binary but "fluid" between or among various gender identities, and that one's sense of their gender identity is in an emergent state... "emerging" over time.
<b>Gender Identity</b>	A person's internal sense of themselves as a certain gender: girl/woman, boy/man, etc., irrespective of their biological sex. One's internal sense of being male, female, neither of these, both, or other gender(s). For transgender people, their sex assigned at birth and their gender identity are not necessarily the same.

Terms	Definitions
<b>The Gender Binary</b>	A system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two, opposite categories, termed “male and female”, in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. This system is oppressive to anyone who defies their sex assigned at birth, but particularly those who are gender-variant or do not fit neatly into one of the two standard categories.
<b>Gender Dysphoria</b>	Anxiety and/or discomfort regarding one’s sex assigned at birth.
<b>Gender Non-Conforming (GNC)</b>	An adjective for people who do not subscribe to societal expectations of typical gender expressions or roles. The term is more commonly used to refer to gender expression (how a person behaves, acts, and presents themselves to others) as opposed to gender identity (one’s internal sense of self).
<b>Genderqueer</b>	A self-identifying term chosen by persons who reject gender binaries (e.g., man/woman) in favor of a more fluid identity which blurs traditional gender norms and boundaries.
<b>Heteronormative / Heteronormativity</b>	Terms referring to the assumption that heterosexuality is the norm, which plays out in interpersonal interactions and society and furthers the marginalization of queer people.
<b>Heterosexism</b>	“The assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. Heterosexism excludes the needs, concerns, and life experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer people while it gives advantages to heterosexual people. Heterosexuality: A sexual orientation in which a person feels physically and emotionally attracted to people of a gender other than their own.” ( <a href="#">Center for Advancement of Teaching</a> )
<b>Intersex</b>	Describing a person with a less common combination of hormones, chromosomes, and anatomy that are used to assign sex at birth. There are many examples such as <a href="#">Klinefelter Syndrome</a> , <a href="#">Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome</a> , and <a href="#">Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia</a> . Parents and medical professionals usually coercively assign intersex infants a sex and have, in the past, been medically permitted to perform surgical operations to conform the infant’s genitalia to that assignment. This practice has become increasingly controversial as intersex adults speak out against the practice. The term <i>intersex</i> is <b>not</b> interchangeable with, or a synonym for, <i>transgender</i> (although some intersex people do identify as transgender).

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>LGBTQIAPP+</b>	A collection of identities short for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, aromantic, pansexual, polysexual (sometimes abbreviated to LGBT or LGBTQ+). Sometimes this acronym is replaced with “queer.”
<b>Pansexual</b>	Capable of being attracted to many/any gender(s). Sometimes the term omnisexual is used in the same manner. Pansexual is used more frequently as more people acknowledge that gender is not binary. Sometimes, the identity fails to recognize that one cannot know individuals with every existing gender identity.
<b>Passing / Blending / Assimilating</b>	Being perceived by others as a particular identity/gender or cisgender regardless how the individual in question identifies, e.g. passing as straight, passing as a cis woman, passing as a youth. This term has become controversial as “passing” can imply that one is not genuinely what they are passing as.
<b>Queer</b>	A term for people of marginalized gender identities and sexual orientations who are not cisgender and/or heterosexual. This term has a complicated history as a reclaimed slur. There is a lot of overlap between queer and trans identities, but not all queer people are trans and not all trans people are queer. The word queer is still sometimes used as a hateful slur, so although it has mostly been reclaimed, be careful with its use.
<b>Sex Assigned at Birth</b>	The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex assigned at birth often based on physical anatomy at birth and/or karyotyping.
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	A person’s physical, romantic, emotional, aesthetic, and/or other form of attraction to others. In Western cultures, gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same. Trans people can be straight, bisexual, lesbian, gay, asexual, pansexual, queer, etc. just like anyone else. For example, a trans woman who is exclusively attracted to other women would often identify as lesbian.
<b>Transgender/Trans</b>	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender is not indicative of gender expression, sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life. Note that transgender does not have an “ed” at the end.

<b>Terms</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
<b>Transition</b>	A person’s process of developing and assuming a gender expression to match their gender identity. Transition can include: coming out to one’s family, friends, and/or co-workers; changing one’s name and/or sex on legal documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) some form of surgery. It’s best not to assume how one transitions as it is different for everyone.
<b>Transsexual</b>	A deprecated term that is often considered pejorative similar to transgender in that it indicates a difference between one’s gender identity and sex assigned at birth. Transsexual often – though not always – implies hormonal/surgical transition from one binary gender (male or female) to the other. Unlike <i>transgender/trans</i> , <i>transsexual</i> is not an umbrella term, as many transgender people do not identify as transsexual. When speaking/writing about trans people, please avoid the word transsexual unless asked to use it by a transsexual person.

**Sources and Resources Include:**

Center for Advancement of Teaching, [A Guide to LGBTQIA+ Terminology](#). Temple University.  
[Moore, Rianna](#)  
[Trans Student Educational Resources](#)