

GLOSSARY

Here's a quick reference for some of the most commonly used terms in the transgender community. Remember that people defy labels and not everyone will fit into a definition, label or box, no matter how large we make it.



ableism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits able-bodied people over people with disabilities.

biological sex, sex: a term used historically and within the medical field to refer to the chromosomal, hormonal and anatomical characteristics that are used to classify an individual as female or male.

classism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits people who have wealth and power.

crossdresser: a person who, on occasion, wears clothing associated with another sex, but who does not necessarily desire to change his or her sex. Many crossdressers identify as heterosexual but can have any sexual orientation.

drag king / drag queen: a performer who wears the clothing associated with another sex, often involving the presentation of exaggerated, stereotypical gender characteristics. The performance of gender by drag queens (males in drag) or drag kings (females in drag) may be art, entertainment and/or parody.

FTM (female to male), transgender man: terms used to identify a person who was assigned the female sex at birth but who identifies as male.

gender: a set of social, psychological and emotional traits, often influenced by societal expectations, that classify an individual as feminine, masculine, androgynous or other.

gender binary: the concept that everyone must be one of two genders: man or woman.

gender expression: The outward manifestation of internal gender identity, through clothing, hairstyle, mannerisms and other characteristics.

gender identity: the inner sense of being a man, a woman, both or neither. Gender identity usually aligns with a person's sex, but sometimes does not.

gender dysphoria: an intense, persistent discomfort resulting from the awareness that the sex assigned at birth and the resulting gender role expectations are inappropriate. Some consider gender dysphoria to be a symptom of Gender Identity Disorder, a health condition recognized by the American Psychiatric Association. Many transgender people do not experience gender dysphoria.

genderqueer: a term used by some people who may or may not identify as transgender, but who identify their gender as somewhere on the continuum beyond the binary male/female gender system.

gender-nonconforming: behaving in a way that does not match social stereotypes about female or male gender, usually through dress or physical appearance.

gender role: the social expectation of how an individual should act, think and feel, based upon the sex assigned at birth.

gender transition: the social, psychological and medical process of transitioning from one gender to another. Gender transition is an individualized process and does not involve the same steps for everyone. After gender transition, some people identify simply as men or women.

hormone therapy: administration of hormones and hormonal agents to develop characteristics of a different gender or to block the development of unwanted gender characteristics. Hormone therapy is part of many people's gender transitions and is safest when prescribed and monitored by a health care professional.

intersex: a health condition, often present at birth, involving anatomy or physiology that differs from societal expectations of male and female. Intersex conditions can affect the genitals, the chromosomes and/or other body structures. People with intersex conditions should not be assumed to be transgender.

MTF (male to female), transgender

woman: terms used to identify a person who was assigned the male sex at birth but who identifies as female.

oppression: the acts and effects of domination of certain groups in society over others, caused by the combination of prejudice and power. Systems of oppression include racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia.

post-op, pre-op, non-op: terms used to identify a transgender person's surgical status. Use of these terms is often considered insulting and offensive. Surgical status is almost never relevant information for anyone except a transgender person's medical providers.

privilege: social and institutional advantages that dominant groups receive and others do not. Privilege is often invisible to those who have it.

racism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits white people over people of color.

sex reassignment surgery (SRS): any one of a variety of surgeries involved in the process of transition from one gender to another. Many transgender people will not undergo SRS for health or financial reasons, or because it is not medically necessary for them.

sexism: a system of institutionalized practices and individual actions that benefits men over women.

transgender or trans: an umbrella term used to describe those who challenge social gender norms, including genderqueer people, gender-nonconforming people, transsexuals, crossdressers and so on. People must self-identify as transgender in order for the term to be appropriately used to describe them.

transphobia: the irrational fear of those who challenge gender stereotypes, often expressed as discrimination, harassment and violence.

transsexual: a person who experiences intense, persistent, long-term discomfort with their body and self-image due to the awareness that their assigned sex is inappropriate. Transsexuals may take steps to change their body, gender role and gender expression to align them with their gender identity.