

## Gender, Sexual Orientation and Other Relevant Terms

*This glossary is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every word and term used in conversations about gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Because of the way language works, some of these words and terms will continue to evolve and new ones will be created. Even so, it is necessary to have a shared vocabulary that provides basic working definitions to facilitate fruitful dialogue and understanding. Please note that identities are deeply personal and while the descriptions provided here are intended to be as inclusive as possible, a person may define some terms differently.*

**Androgyne/Androgynous/Androgyny:** 1) Someone who reflects an appearance that is both masculine and feminine, or who appears to be neither or both a boy and a girl, whether intentionally or unintentionally; 2) A person whose identity is between the two "traditional" (binary) genders; or 3) A person who rejects gender roles/socially prescribed gender expression entirely. (*See also* Gender Non-Conforming).

**Agender:** A gender identity that involves the lack of feelings associated with man-ness or woman-ness.

**Ally:** A person of one social identity group (e.g., heterosexual, cisgender) who actively stands up in support of members of another group. Typically, but not always, a member of a dominant group allying for a member or members of a targeted group (e.g., a man advocating for equal pay for women).

**Aromantic:** Experiencing little or no romantic attraction to other people. Aromanticism exists on a continuum.

**Asexual:** Experiencing little or no sexual attraction to other people. In usage, may refer to a person who is not sexually active. This may be persistent or fluctuating. Sometimes referred to as "ACE". Asexuality exists on a continuum.

**Bias:** An inclination or preference, especially one that interferes with impartial judgment. Can be negative or positive (affinity bias), conscious or unconscious (aka implicit).

**Binding/Binder:** Binders are used by individuals, typically female-bodied, to give the outward appearance of a flat chest (called "binding"). A binder may be specially designed for this purpose, a sport's bra, or some other item (e.g., Ace bandage).

**Biphobia:** The fear, intolerance, or hatred of people who are bisexual.

**Bigender/Dual Gender:** A person who possesses and expresses a distinctly masculine persona and a distinctly feminine persona. Is comfortable in and enjoys presenting in both gender roles either simultaneously or alternately. (*See also* Genderfluid).

**Bisexual/Bisexual+:** Historically this identity label referred to a person who is attracted to both men and women. However, the evolution of our understanding of gender identity has influenced the way sexual orientation is described such that "bisexual" generally refers to a person who experiences non-monosexual attraction (i.e., attracted to more than one gender).

**Cisgender:** Not transgender. Refers to the condition of having a gender identity that is consistent with sex assigned at birth (e.g., someone assigned female at birth who identifies as a woman).

**Cisnormativity:** The belief that being cisgender is normal. This belief feeds into a system of oppression that privileges cisgender individuals and denies equality to transgender people.

**Cissexism:** The assumption that all people are cisgender. Because this assumption is so

deeply ingrained in our society through socialization, many people say and do things that are cissexist without realizing it or intending to.

**Code-switching:** The act of altering one's appearance and/or behavior in some way to become similar to the dominant group, usually to avoid discrimination or even violence. For example, a gay man who “acts straight” (e.g., voice, gestures, language) in settings where being perceived as gay is risky.

**Dead name:** The name given to a transgender person at birth but is no longer used. It is usually offensive to ask a person for their dead name as it can be triggering.

**Demisexual:** A person who does not experience sexual attraction to someone until a greater, often emotional, bond is formed.

**Discrimination:** Actions, based on conscious or unconscious prejudice, that favor one group over others in the provision of goods, services, or opportunities.

**Diversity:** The wide variety of shared and different personal and group characteristics among human beings.

**Dominant Culture:** The cultural values, beliefs, and practices that are assumed to be the most common and influential within a given society. With respect to sex, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, the dominant cultures are male, man/masculine, cisgender, and heterosexual, respectively. Dominant is considered “normal” and anything else is “abnormal”.

**Drag Queen/King:** A man or woman dressed as the opposite gender, usually for the purpose of performance or entertainment. Many times overdone or outrageous and may present a “stereotyped” portrayal of gender. The person may or may not be transgender.

**Dyke/Dike:** A pejorative term used to oppress masculine, androgynous women and lesbians. Since its origin it has been reclaimed by many in the lesbian community. It is typically offensive for a person who does not identify as a dyke to use the term.

**Faggot:** A pejorative term used to oppress gay, bi, or trans men. Since its origin it has been reclaimed by some men and used as a source of pride/term of endearment. It is typically offensive for a person who does not identify as a gay man to use the term.

**Female-bodied:** A person who was assigned female at birth. No longer used widely, has been replaced with AFAB – assigned female at birth. Saying someone is “female” bodied can be triggering because they may not identify with their body as “female”.

**Feminism:** The advocacy of women’s rights based on the equality of the sexes.

**FTM/F2M/F to M:** Abbreviation for a person who was assigned female at birth (AFAB) but identifies as male and transitioned to a masculine appearance that is consistent with their gender identity. Some, but not all FTM's undergo medical procedures (hormones, surgery).

**Gay:** Originally described a man who is sexually attracted to men. Today, the term is also used by others to indicate a non-heterosexual orientation.

**Gender:** Socially/culturally established concepts of masculinity and femininity often framed as a binary system (“boy” or “girl”, “man” or “woman”); the socially ‘appropriate’ qualities accompanying biological sex. Frequently, but erroneously, used interchangeably with “sex”. Because it is a social construct, what it means to be a man or woman is defined by a specific time and place.

**Gender Affirming Surgery:** Surgical procedures associated with altering the genitals or secondary sex characteristics to be consistent with a person’s gender identity. What was formerly referred to as a “sex change” (an outdated and often considered offensive term).

**Gendered:** Having a distinct association with being masculine and/or feminine, boy or girl, man or woman, or a combination of both.

**Gender Bending:** Dressing or behaving in such a way as to question the traditional feminine or masculine qualities assigned to physical appearance and/or behavior.

**Gender Binary:** The idea that there are only two genders: man and woman. This idea is challenged by individuals who identify as non-binary (e.g., genderqueer, bigender, gender fluid) and agender.

**Gender Dysphoria:** The distress that a person experiences when the sex they were assigned at birth (by way of anatomy) does not match their gender identity. A person may experience various degrees of dysphoria with respect to different parts of their anatomy. For example, a person who was assigned female at birth may experience dysphoria with their breasts and voice but not genitalia.

**Gender Identity:** A person's perception of having a gender. It may or may not correspond with sex assigned at birth or the gender binary.

**Gender Non-Conforming:** An individual or identity characterized by traits that do not conform to conventional gendered behavior, expression, or gender roles.

**Gender Pronouns:** The pronouns that a person prefers and reflects their gender identity (e.g., she/her/hers; they/them/theirs; he/him/his). A variety of gender-neutral pronouns exist, but most commonly encountered is they/them/theirs.

**Genderfluid:** A gender identity characterized by fluctuation between masculine/feminine/other (gender expression) and/or man-ness/woman-ness/other (gender identity). Some gender fluid people experience shifts on a frequent basis (within a day), others may go long periods of time.

**Genderqueer:** A person who does not subscribe to conventional gender distinctions, but identifies with neither, both, or a combination of genders. A non-binary gender identity. May use gender-neutral pronouns.

**Heterosexism:** The presumption that everyone is, and should be, heterosexual.

**Heterosexual:** A person who is attracted to members of the opposite sex.

**Homophobia:** The fear, intolerance, or hatred of homosexuality and other non-heterosexual identities.

**Homosexual:** A person who is attracted to members of the same sex. Outdated term, other identity labels may be preferred (e.g., gay, lesbian, queer).

**Hermaphrodite:** A clinical term that refers to an individual possessing the reproductive organs or secondary sex characteristics of both sexes. (Not a preferred identity term for humans. *See:* Intersex)

**Heteronormativity:** The belief that heterosexuality, predicated on the gender binary, is the default, preferred, or normal mode of sexual orientation. It assumes that sexual and marital relations are most fitting between people of opposite sex.

**Intergender:** Someone whose gender identity is between genders and/or a combination of gender identities and expressions.

**Intersex:** 1) A person who does not fit the biological criteria for male or female (e.g., male with 2 X chromosomes); 2) A person with both ovarian and testicular tissue; or 3) A person with two ovaries or two testes, but ambiguous external genitalia.

**Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social identities such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage. People hold multiple identities

that intersect in complex ways.

**Latinx:** A gender-neutral version of Latino or Latina that refers to a person of Latin American origin or descent.

**Lesbian:** A woman who is attracted to other women.

**LGBTQ:** Acronym encompassing diverse groups of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer populations, and allies and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer alliances/associations. The acronym has evolved over time and there is debate about which one is most inclusive. There is the cumbersome LGBTQQIAAP (with 2<sup>nd</sup> Q = questioning, I = intersex, A = asexual, A = allies, and P = pansexual). Most commonly encountered is LGBTQ, but LGBTQ+ is increasing in usage because it is most inclusive.

**Male-bodied:** A person who was assigned male at birth. No longer used widely, has been replaced with AMAB – assigned male at birth. Saying someone is “male” bodied can be triggering because they may not identify with their body as “male”.

**Marginalized:** Excluded, ignored, or relegated to the outer edge of a group, society, community, etc.

**Medical Transition:** The procedure(s) a transgender person undertakes to transform their body to align more closely with their gender identity. Some individuals undergo surgeries, others only take hormones. The effects of hormones vary by individual and birth sex. Surgeries, if performed, are usually multi-staged and require revision(s). There is typically no single “sex-change operation” that magically transforms an individual. Hormones take many months to masculinize/feminize the body (*See Gender Affirming Surgery*).

**Metropolitan:** A metropolitan heterosexual man who is meticulous about his grooming and appearance, typically spending a significant amount of money and time shopping to maintain his appearance.

**Microaggressions:** Commonplace, interpersonally communicated, “othering” messages related to a person’s perceived marginalized status.

**MTF/M2F/M to F:** Abbreviation for a person who was assigned male at birth (AMAB) but identifies as female and transitioned to a feminine appearance that is consistent with their gender identity. Some, but not all MTF's undergo medical procedures (hormones, surgery).

**MTM/FTF:** A transgender individual who has medically transitioned and feels their birth sex was never an identity to which they could relate. In other words, a person with a birth sex of female may have lived as female for many years, but never identified as a woman. Instead she always identified as male and transitioned to become outwardly visible as male. The social identity of female (FTM) to male is an inappropriate description of their experience with gender.

**Misogyny:** Hatred of women.

**Non-binary:** A gender identity that does not fit within the traditional binary model of genders/gender identities (i.e., boy or girl, man or woman). A person with a non-binary gender identity (e.g., “they are non-binary”).

**Pangender:** Someone whose gender identity is comprised of all or many gender identities and expressions.

**Panromantic:** Romantic attraction to people of all gender identities and biological sexes.

**Pansexual:** Sexual attraction to people of all gender identities and biological sexes. The concept of pansexuality deliberately rejects the gender binary and derives its origin from the transgender movement.

**Passing:** A transgender person who medically or socially transitions “passes” when they

begin to be recognized as their correct gender. For example, a person who was assigned male at birth and transitions to have their outward appearance/body match their gender identity begins passing when other people stop misgendering her as a man. Passing is therefore about how a trans person is perceived in public and is context dependent. *NOTE: not all trans people have the goal of passing and this is a controversial issue for some people who believe the goal should be acceptance, not meeting socially prescribed standards of gender expression.*

**Passing Privilege:** There is variation in the degree to which medically and/or socially transitioned people are recognized as their correct gender (i.e., passing) and this comes with various, context dependent, levels of privilege. Often, transwomen have difficulty passing and are thus denied passing privilege because many hormonally masculinized traits are difficult, if not impossible, to reverse without surgical intervention (e.g., hand size, jaw line, hair loss). People who, as a result of transitioning, do not have other people question their gender are considered to have passing privilege.

**PFLAG:** Founded in 1973, PFLAG (formerly Parents and Friends of Lesbians And Gays) is the nation's largest family and ally organization with over 400 chapters and 200,000 members.

**PGPs:** Abbreviation for "preferred gender pronouns". Most people have stopped using "preferred" because it indicates flexibility (which is true for some, but not all, people) and/or the power for the speaker to decide which pronouns to use for someone else. Best practice is to ask for "gender pronouns" or just "pronouns".

**Polyamory:** The practice of having multiple open, honest love relationships or having the capacity for such.

**Polyromantic:** The romantic attraction to many, but not all, genders. Romantic attraction to more than 2 genders or up to all genders besides one (all would be panromantic).

**Polysexual:** The sexual attraction to many, but not all, genders. Sexual attraction to more than 2 genders or up to all genders besides one (all would be pansexual).

**Prejudice:** Learned pre-judgment about a person or group of people; usually indicating negative bias.

**Privilege:** A right, license, or exemption from duty or liability granted as a special benefit, advantage, or favor. In the context of systematic oppression, privilege is unearned and granted only on the basis of perceived membership to a social identity group.

**Queer:** An umbrella term that can refer to anyone who transgresses society's view of gender, gender expression, sexuality, or the status quo in general. The definitional indeterminacy of the word Queer, its elasticity, is one of its constituent characteristics: "A zone of possibilities." A term that was oppressively used by heterosexuals as an insult and has in recent years been reclaimed by *some* members of the LGBTQ community. Note: some LGBT individuals find the word offensive and some queer-identified people may be offended if non-queer people use the term.

**Questioning:** A term used to refer to an individual who is uncertain of her/his sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Rainbow Flag:** The Rainbow Freedom Flag, containing 6 horizontal stripes (ROYGBP), was designed in 1978 by Gilbert Baker, at the request of Harvey Milk, to represent the great diversity of the LGBTQ community. It has been recognized by the International Flag Makers Association as the official flag of the LGBTQ civil rights movement. The new Philadelphia pride flag debuted in 2017 includes brown and black stripes to highlight LGBTQ people of color. The most recently adopted version of the

flag is known as the Progress Flag. Designed by Daniel Quasar in 2018 it features a chevron on the left side of the classic rainbow flag that includes black and brown stripes to represent LGBTQ+ people of color, along with the colors pink, light blue, and white, which are used on the Transgender Pride Flag.

**Safe Space:** Refers to an environment in which everyone feels comfortable in expressing themselves and participating fully, without fear of attack, ridicule or denial of experience.

**Same Gender Loving:** A term coined by activist Cleo Manago as a description for homosexuals, particularly in the African American community. SGL is an alternative to terms for homosexual identities (e.g., gay and lesbian) that can carry negative connotations to some people.

**Sapiosexual:** One who finds the contents of someone else's mind to be their most attractive attribute, above physical and/or other characteristics. The sexual orientation of a person who identifies as sapiosexual.

**Sex:** Binary biological classification of male or female (based on genetic or physiological features); as opposed to gender, which is socially defined (frequently, but erroneously, used interchangeably with "gender").

**Sexism:** Prejudiced thoughts and discriminatory actions based on difference in sex/gender; usually by men against women but can also involve women against other women.

**Sexual Orientation:** One's natural (not chosen) preference in sexual partners; predilection for homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, pansexuality, or other sexual identities.

**Social Transition:** The process of a transgender person altering how they socially present their gender. This may involve using different pronouns and minor or significant alteration of gender expression. Social transition may happen before or even without medical transition.

**Socialization:** The process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society.

**SOFFA:** Acronym for Significant Others, Friends, Families, and Allies of transgender individuals.

**Stealth:** This refers to a person who has socially and/or medically transitioned from their sex assigned at birth and does not disclose their past, presenting only as their true gender. Often this involves disassociating from people who know their history.

**Stereotype:** Blanket, rigid beliefs and expectations about members of certain groups that present an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment. They go beyond necessary and useful categorizations and generalizations in that they are typically negative, are based on little or misguided information, and are highly generalized.

**Third gender:** Someone whose gender identity is not man or woman, but some other gender outside of the binary.

**Tolerance:** Acceptance and open-mindedness to different practices, attitudes, and cultures; does not necessarily mean agreement with the differences.

**Trans-exclusionary Radical Feminism (TERF):** A group of feminists who claim that transwomen are not really women and thus exclude them from female-only spaces. The term "TERF" may be considered offensive by the women who subscribe to this idea.

**Transgender:** Appearing as, wishing to be considered as, or having undergone medical procedures to present in a way that is consistent with a non-cisgender person's

gender identity. Transgender is an umbrella term that can include\* transsexuals, cross dressers, drag kings/queens, masculine women, feminine men, and those who defy cultural gender norms. Note: a person is transgender, *not* transgendered. A transgender person may or may not experience gender dysphoria, *not* transgenderism. Not all transsexuals feel that they belong in the transgender umbrella. *\*Note: people with the identities listed above may or may not identify as transgender.*

**Transition:** The process a transgender individual undergoes to present/be recognized as the gender that is consistent with their gender identity. It may, but not necessarily, involve changes in outward appearance (e.g., clothing, hair style), hormones, and/or surgical interventions. (*See also* Medical Transition)

**Transman/Trans man:** A person who was assigned female at birth but developed the gender identity of “man”. Many, but not all, transmen undergo some sort of medical and social transition.

**Transmisogyny:** The intersection of transphobia and misogyny. Defined as the irrational fear of, aversion to, or discrimination against transgender people.

Transmisogyny is often directed at transwomen in particular.

**Transphobia:** Outward bias, disgust, or hatred against persons perceived to be transgender and/or transsexual.

**Transsexual:** A term that is waning in popularity (dubbed in 1923) and refers to a person who has medically transitioned from the sex they were assigned at birth to another sex, usually the opposite sex (i.e., FTM and MTF). Some transgender people who medically transition do not identify as transsexual. Some people who transition no longer identify as transgender or transsexual after undergoing gender-affirming medical procedures.

**Transwoman/Trans woman:** A person who was assigned male at birth but developed the gender identity of “woman”. Many, but not all, transwomen undergo some sort of medical and social transition.

**Two-spirit:** A term for Native American individuals who identify both as male and female. In western culture these individuals are identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered.

*Compiled by Dr. Leo Taylor 2020*

*Some of this resource was extracted and adapted from existing resources provided by the National Conference for Community and Justice, Oregon State University, Arizona State University – Intergroup Relations Center, and The National Center for Transgender Equality. Other content is original, from reputable online dictionaries, or a combination of the two.*