



TRANSGENDER TERMINOLOGY

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Terminology within the transgender community varies and has changed over time so we recognize the need to be sensitive to usage within particular communities.

Transgender: A term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.” (Note: Transgender is correctly used as an adjective, not a noun, thus “transgender people” is appropriate but “transgenders” is often viewed as disrespectful.)

Transgender Man: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a man (see also “FTM”).

Transgender Woman: A term for a transgender individual who currently identifies as a woman (see also “MTF”).

Gender Identity: An individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

Gender Expression: How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

Transsexual: An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seeks to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.

Cross-dresser: A term for people who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender. The older term “transvestite” is considered derogatory by many in the United States.

Queer: A term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and, often also transgender, people. Some use queer as an alternative to “gay” in an effort to be more inclusive. Depending on the user, the term has either a derogatory or an affirming connotation, as many have sought to reclaim the term that was once widely used in a negative way.

Genderqueer: A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female.

Gender Non-conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

Bi-gendered: One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there.

Two-Spirit: A contemporary term that refers to the historical and current First Nations people whose individuals spirits were a blend of male and female spirits. This term has been reclaimed by some in Native American LGBT communities in order to honor their heritage and provide an alternative to the Western labels of gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.

FTM: A person who transitions from “female-to-male,” meaning a person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies and lives as a male. Also known as a “transgender man.”

MTF: A person who transitions from “male-to-female,” meaning a person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies and lives as a female. Also known as a “transgender woman.”

Sex Reassignment Surgery: Surgical procedures that change one’s body to better reflect a person’s gender identity. This may include different procedures, including those sometimes also referred to as “top surgery” (breast augmentation or removal) or “bottom surgery” (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. These surgeries are medically necessary for some people, however not all people want, need, or can have surgery as part of their transition. “Sex change surgery” is considered a derogatory term by many.

Sexual Orientation: A term describing a person’s attraction to members of the same sex and/or a different sex, usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, or asexual.

Transition: The time when a person begins to living as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often includes changing one’s first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, including taking hormones, having surgery, or changing identity documents (e.g. driver’s license, Social Security record) to reflect one’s gender identity. Medical and legal steps are often difficult for people to afford.

Intersex: A term used for people who are born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy and/or chromosome pattern that does not seem to fit typical definitions of male or female. Intersex conditions are also known as differences of sex development (DSD).

Drag Queen: Used to refer to male performers who dress as women for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. It is also sometimes used in a derogatory manner to refer to transgender women.

Drag King: Used to refer to female performers who dress as men for the purposes of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.