



TRANSGENDER 101 WORKSHOP: SELECTED GLOSSARY OF TERMS

The terminology below has been selected from various non-profit organizations to help present you with definitions for common words used when discussing the LGBTQIA2S+ community. A full list of reference websites for the sources of this terminology can be found at the end of the list. The numbers in parenthesis behind every definition denote which sites in the reference list contributed to the definition presented.

LGBTQIA2S+: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and Two-Spirit with a "+" sign to recognize the limitless sexual orientations and gender identities used by members of the community. Examples of terms represented by the "+" include: pansexual, omnisexual, gender fluid, non-binary, all sexually and gender diverse people, and many more terms. (3, 4)

Agender: Describes a person who identifies as having no gender, or who does not experience gender as a primary identity component. Agender is different from nonbinary because many nonbinary people do experience gender.

Ally: A term generally relating to individuals who support marginalized groups. In the LGBTQ+ community, this term is used to describe an individual who is supportive of LGBTQ+ individuals and the community, either personally or as an advocate. Allies include both heterosexual and cisgender people who advocate for equality in partnership with LGBTQ+ people, as well as people within the LGBTQ+ community who advocate for others in the community. "Ally" is not an identity, and allyship is an ongoing process of learning that includes action. (5)

Binding: Wrapping the chest tightly to create the appearance of a flatter chest. The most common way for people to bind is by wearing an undergarment called a binder. People may use other materials to bind such as cloth strips or bandages. (4) *Note from facilitators of workshop: It can be unsafe to bind with other materials than a binder and can cause permanent damage to the body if done incorrectly.*

Binary: Any system that classifies something into two distinct states. (4)

Bisexual: A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one gender, though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual. (3)

Cisgender: People whose gender identity and gender expression align with their assigned sex at birth (i.e., the sex listed on their birth certificates). Cisgender is a newer term that some people prefer when writing and speaking about transgender and non-transgender people, with the non-transgender people being referred to as "cisgender". In this manner, a transgender person is not singled out as being different or not normal. The term cisgender is derived from the Latin preposition cis, which means "on this side of," and is the antonym of trans, which means "across" or "beyond." Cisgender can be shortened to cis. (1, 4, 5)



Cisnormativity: The assumption that everyone is cisgender and that being cisgender is superior to all other genders. This includes the often implicitly held idea that being cisgender is the norm and that other genders are “different” or “abnormal.” Cisnormativity puts pressure on people to conform to binary notions of gender expression and gender identity. Cisnormativity can manifest as cissexism, the biased belief that cisgender identity is the superior gender identity. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can perpetuate cisnormativity and cissexism, and thus marginalize transgender and gender diverse people and communities. (4, 5)

Coming Out: For LGBTQ+ people, coming out is the process of self-identifying and self-acceptance that entails the sharing of their identity with others. Sometimes referred to as disclosing. Individuals often recognize a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/gender-expansive, or queer identity within themselves first, and then might choose to reveal it to others. There are many different degrees of being out, and coming out is a lifelong process. Coming out can be an incredibly personal and transformative experience. It is critical to respect where each person is within their process of self-identification, and up to each person, individually, to decide if and when and to whom to come out or disclose. (5)

Deadname: The harmful practice of calling a transgender or gender diverse person by their name assigned at birth, instead of the name they use and want to be called (also known as their chosen or affirmed name). Deadnaming is a form of misgendering. Avoid this practice, as it can cause trauma, stress, embarrassment, and even danger. Some may prefer the terms birth name, given name, or old name. (4, 5)

Gay: A sexual orientation describing people who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to people of the same gender identity as themselves. Men, women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves. (3)

Gender: Broadly, gender is a set of socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate related to a person’s assigned sex. Can refer to the traditional or stereotypical behavioral differences between genders, as defined by the culture in which they live, in terms of, among others things, their gender expressions, the careers they pursue, and their duties within a family. (1, 5)

Gender affirmation: An umbrella term for the range of actions that transgender and gender diverse people may undertake to live in greater alignment with their gender identity and/or gender expression, and thus thrive as their authentic selves. A person may affirm their gender identity or expression through social, legal, medical, or surgical means. What gender affirmation looks like for every individual is unique and based on what is personally affirming, what feels safe to do, and what is accessible and available. (4)

Gender binary: A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations. (3)



Gender dysphoria: Distress experienced by some people whose gender identity does not align with their sex assigned at birth based on societal expectations; or distress experienced when a person's gender identity and/or gender expression is not affirmed. The degree and severity of gender dysphoria is highly variable among transgender and gender diverse people. (4) *Note from facilitators of workshop: Not all transgender people experience this.*

Gender euphoria: A euphoric feeling often experienced when one's gender is recognized and respected by others, when one's body aligns with one's gender, or when one expresses themselves in accordance with their gender. Focusing on gender euphoria instead of gender dysphoria shifts focus towards the positive aspects of being transgender or gender expansive. (5) *Note from facilitators of workshop: Not all transgender people experience this.*

Gender expression: External manifestations of gender, which may or may not conform to the socially-defined behaviors and external characteristics that are commonly referred to as either masculine or feminine. These behaviors and characteristics are expressed through a person's name, pronouns, clothing, carriage (movement), grooming, hairstyles, jewelry, mannerisms, physical characteristics, social interactions, speech patterns (voice), and/or behavior. Societies classify these external cues as masculine and feminine, although what is considered masculine or feminine changes over time and varies by culture. For example, in some cultures men wear long hair as a sign of masculinity. Cultural and historical contexts influence how people interpret and express gender identity. The expression of gender may be conscious or subconscious and may or may not reflect their gender identity or sexual orientation. (1, 2, 4, 5)

Gender fluid: Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of more than one gender, but may feel more aligned with a certain gender some of the time, another gender at other times, both genders sometimes, and sometimes no gender at all. (4)

Gender identity: A person's innate, deeply-felt psychological identification as a man, woman, or something else, which may or may not correspond to the person's external body or assigned sex at birth. (1)

Gender nonconforming: A term used to describe people whose gender expression differs from conventional expectations of masculinity and femininity and differs from that which was assigned at birth, but may be more complex, fluid, multifaceted, or otherwise less clearly defined than a transgender person. Please note that many cisgender people have gender expressions that are gender non-conforming. Simply having a non-conforming gender expression does not make someone trans or nonbinary. Nor are all transgender people gender non-conforming. Many transgender people have gender expressions that are conventionally masculine or feminine. Do not describe someone as gender non-conforming simply because they happen to be a transgender person. May also be abbreviated as GNC. (2, 6)



Genderqueer: This term is generally used in two ways: (1) as an umbrella term that includes all people whose gender varies from the traditional norm, akin to the use of the word “queer” to refer to people whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual only; or (2) to describe a subset of individuals who are born anatomically female or male, but feel their gender identity is neither female or male. (1)

Heteronormativity: Heteronormativity is the assumption that everyone is heterosexual, or that being heterosexual is the only "normal" sexual orientation. Heteronormative social systems incentivize conforming to the behavior and appearance of heterosexuality. Heteronormativity can manifest as heterosexism, the biased belief that heterosexual identity is the only valid sexual orientation. Individuals, communities, policies, and institutions can perpetuate heteronormativity and heterosexism, and thus marginalize queer people and communities. (4)

Heterosexual: A sexual orientation that describes women who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to men, and men who are primarily emotionally and physically attracted to women. (4)

Intersex: A spectrum of conditions involving anomalies of the sex chromosomes, gonads, reproductive ducts, and/or genitalia. The most traditional definition of intersex refers to individuals born with both male and female genitalia, or genitalia that are not clearly male or female. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations. Variations may involve sex chromosomes, external genitalia, gonads, hormone production, hormone responsiveness, and/or internal reproductive organs, and may be identified prenatally, at birth, during puberty, or later in life. Some people with an intersex variation choose to label their gender identity as intersex. People with intersex variations are typically assigned a female or male sex at birth; in a few jurisdictions, an infant may be assigned intersex at birth. This condition is sometimes not identified until puberty, when the person either fails to develop certain expected secondary sex characteristics, or develops characteristics that were not expected. An intersex person can be of any gender identity and can also be of any sexual orientation and any romantic orientation. (1, 3, 4, 5)

Lesbian: A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves. (3)

Non-binary: An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid. Often abbreviated as NB or enby. (3, 4)

Packing: the placing of a penile prosthesis in one's underwear, giving both an outward appearance as well as reducing gender dysphoria. (7)



Pansexual: Refers to a person whose emotional, romantic and/or physical attraction is to people inclusive of all genders. People who are pansexual need not have had any sexual experience: It is the attraction and self-identification that determine the orientation. (5)

Passing: With sexuality, the act of presenting as straight. With gender, the act of presenting as cisgender or gender-typical, which is generally accomplished through conforming to gender roles. People may try to pass in anti-LGBTQ+ environments to ensure their safety. People who pass as straight or cis have the choice to either talk about their LGBTQ+ experience or to “fit in” to a cis- and hetero-normative world. Passing is not required for LGBTQ+ people to deserve respect and love. (5)

Queer: A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement. Due to its varying meanings, use this word only when self-identifying or quoting an individual who self-identifies as queer (i.e., “My cousin identifies as queer” or “My cousin is a queer person”). (3, 5)

Questioning: Describes those who are in a process of discovery and exploration about their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or a combination thereof. Questioning people can be of any age, so for many reasons, this may happen later in life. Questioning is a profoundly important process, and one that does not imply that an individual is choosing to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer. (5)

Romantic identity: Romantic identity refer to an individual’s pattern of romantic attraction based on a person's gender(s) regardless of one's sexual orientation. Romantic identities and sexual orientations are not mutually exclusive. For some people, they are the same (i.e. they are pansexual and panromantic), while they may be completely different for other people (i.e. they are asexual and biromantic). (5)

Sex assigned at birth: The categorization of an infant as female, male, or intersex, based on the appearance of the infant's genitalia and/or sex chromosomes. (4)

Sexual orientation: A person’s enduring physical, romantic, emotional, and/or spiritual attraction to another person or to no people. May be lesbian, gay, heterosexual, bisexual, pansexual, polysexual, or asexual. Sexual orientation is distinct from sex, gender identity, and gender expression. A person’s sexual orientation should not be assumed based on the perceived sex of that person’s partner(s). For example, a man who identifies himself as heterosexual may have sexual relationships with men and women. While sexual activity involves the choices one makes regarding behavior, one’s sexual activity does not define one’s sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is part of the human condition, and all people have one. Typically, it is attraction that helps determine orientation. (1, 5)



Stealth: A term used to describe transgender or gender-expansive individuals who do not disclose their gender identity in their public or private lives (or certain aspects of their public and private lives). For example, a person might go stealth in a job interview. The risk or fear of being “outed” may be very distressing to a person. Some people who considered themselves transgender prior to transition believe that after they transition they are no longer transgender and, therefore, no longer have anything to reveal. Many people believe the information about their medical treatments and surgeries is private and does not need to be divulged any more than anyone else divulges their medical histories to others who is living stealth. Increasingly considered offensive by some, as to them it implies an element of deception. Some use the phrase maintaining privacy instead, while others use both terms interchangeably. Additionally, passing is an alternative term which, for some, has fewer negative connotations. (1, 5)

Trans feminine: Term to describe gender nonconforming or nonbinary persons, based on the directionality of their gender identity. Describes a person who was assigned male at birth and identifies with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity. Often abbreviated to transfem or transfemme. (4, 5, 6)

Transgender: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from their assigned sex at birth (i.e., the sex listed on their birth certificates) and is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc. Transgender people may or may not decide to alter their bodies hormonally and/or surgically to match their gender identity. This word is also used as an umbrella term to describe groups of people who transcend conventional expectations of gender identity or expression--such groups include, but are not limited to, people who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, gender variant, gender diverse, and androgynous. Often shortened to trans, from the Latin prefix for “on a different side as.” “Trans” is often considered more inclusive than transgender because it includes transgender, transsexual, transmasc, transfem, and those who simply use the word trans. Some groups define the term more broadly (e.g., by including intersex people) while other people define it more narrowly (e.g., by excluding “true transsexuals”). (1, 3, 5)

Trans man: Generally, refers to someone who was identified female at birth but who identifies and portrays his gender as male. People will often use this term after taking some steps to express their gender as male, or after medically transitioning. Some, but not all, transmen make physical changes through hormones or surgery. Some may prefer to simply be called men, without any modifier. Use the term the person uses to describe their gender. (1, 2)

Trans masculine: Term to describe gender nonconforming or nonbinary persons, based on the directionality of their gender identity. A person whose gender identity is man/male and who was assigned female sex at birth. Often abbreviated to transmasc. (4, 5, 6)

Transsexual: A more clinical term which had historically been used to describe those transgender people who sought medical intervention (hormones, surgery) for gender



affirmation. Term is less commonly used in present day, and is hotly debated, and it is not certain whether people will use or reject this term. For some, it is disliked in the same way “homosexual” has become disfavored. Many people find both transsexual and homosexual pejorative. However some individuals and communities maintain a strong and affirmative connection to this term. It is safer to not use this term unless you are sure that it is a term that the person is comfortable with. (1, 6)

Trans woman: Generally, refers to someone who was identified male at birth but who identifies and portrays her gender as female. People will often use this term after taking some steps to express their gender as female, or after medically transitioning. Some, but not all, transwomen make physical changes through hormones or surgery. Some may prefer to simply be called women, without any modifier. Use the term the person uses to describe their gender. (1, 2)

Transition/Transitioning: Transition is the process a person undertakes to bring their gender expression and/or their body into alignment with their gender identity. It is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time and the exact steps involved in transition will vary from person to person. Transition can include:

- Social transition – Telling family, friends, and co-workers, using a different name, using different pronouns, dressing differently, starting or stopping wearing make-up and jewelry, etc.
- Legal transition – Changing your name and/or sex marker on documents like a driver’s license, passport, Social Security record, bank accounts, etc.
- Medical transition – Hormone replacement therapy and/or one or more surgical procedures.

Transgender people may choose to undergo some, all or none of these processes. The validity of an individual’s gender identity does not depend on any social, legal, and/or medical transition; the self-identification itself is what validates the gender identity. Some people find the word “transition” offensive and prefer terms such as “gender affirmation” or “process of gender affirmation”. Many individuals choose not to or are unable to transition for a wide range of reasons both within and beyond their control. (1, 2, 3, 5)

Tucking: allows a visibly smooth crotch contour. In this practice, the testicles (if present) are moved into the inguinal canal, and moving the penis and scrotum posteriorly in the perineal region. Tight fitting underwear, or a special undergarment known as a gaffe is then worn to maintain this alignment. In some cases, adhesive or even duct tape may be used. In addition to local skin effects, this practice could result in urinary trauma or infections, as well as testicular complaints. (7)

Two-Spirit: According to the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board [NPAIHB], a term used within some American Indian (AI) and Alaska Native (AN) communities to refer to a person who identifies as having both a male and a female essence or spirit. This term also represents the self-identity description used by many Native American gay men who do not identify as cross-gendered or transgender. The term, created in 1990 by a group of AI/AN activists at an



annual Native LGBTQ conference, encompasses sexual, cultural, gender, and spiritual identities, and provides unifying, positive, and encouraging language that emphasizes reconnecting to tribal traditions. Abbreviated as 2S. Non-indigenous people should not use this term. (1, 4, 5)

WEBSITES DEFINITIONS WERE SOURCED FROM:

- 1. Fenway Health Glossary of Gender and Transgender Terms:**
https://fenwayhealth.org/documents/medical/transgender-resources/Handout_7-C_Glossary_of_Gender_and_Transgender_Terms_fi.pdf
- 2. GLAAD Glossary of Terms:** <https://glaad.org/reference/trans-terms/>
- 3. Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Glossary of Terms:**
<https://www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms>
- 4. National LGBTQIA+ Health Education Center Glossary of Terms:**
<https://www.lgbtqihealtheducation.org/glossary/>
- 5. PFLAG National Glossary:** <https://pflag.org/glossary/>
- 6. UCSF Terminology & Definitions:** <https://transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/terminology>
- 7. UCSF Binding, Packing & Tucking:** <https://transcare.ucsf.edu/guidelines/binding-packing-and-tucking>