

Terms and Definitions

Everyone uses different language for themselves. And every culture has a variety of terms for sex and gender. This list is mainly based on words used by white-dominated culture, including academic institutions, in the United States.

- **Sex** – Refers to biological and physiological characteristics. Sex is often defined as “female” and “male.”
- **Gender** – Socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes. Gender is often defined as “feminine” and “masculine” and uses words like “boy” or “girl,” “man” and “woman.”
- **Assigned sex** – What a doctor determines to be your physical sex at birth. Sometimes known as Designated Sex at Birth. Abbreviated as AFAB, AMAB (assigned female at birth, assigned male at birth).
- **Gender identity** – Your internal sense of self; how you relate to your gender(s).
- **Sexual orientation** – Your identity in relation to who you’re attracted to. Sexual orientation and gender identity are DISTINCT components of a person’s identity.
- **Gender expression** – How you express your gender(s) to other people.

Transgender – Having a gender identity that is not commonly considered to match a person’s assigned sex. Transgender is an umbrella term for a range of people, behaviors, expressions, and identities that challenge the gender system. “Trans” means “to cross over.”

Transsexual: A person who identifies with the gender different than the sex assigned at birth and desires to access or has accessed medical transition, e.g. hormone therapy, surgical procedures. Originally used as a medical term and often used by older generations. Transsexualism is still used as a medical diagnosis.

Trans: Shortened form of transgender and/or transsexual; often used as an umbrella term for multiples identities on the trans spectrum.

Transmasculine: A term often used in trans communities to refer to people assigned female at birth (AFAB) who present and/or identify within the masculine spectrum.

Transfeminine: A term often used in trans communities to refer to people assigned male at birth (AMAB) who present and/or identify within the feminine spectrum.

Genderqueer – Having a gender identity that is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders, in terms of expression and/or identity.

Cisgender – Having a gender identity that is commonly considered to match a person’s assigned sex. “Cis” as a prefix means “to stay on the same side.”

Cross-dressing: To present through clothing and/or accessories commonly considered not to match someone’s assigned sex. Some people identify their gender as a cross-dresser, while others consider cross-dressing to be expression only.

Cross-living: Transgender people who live part-time in their gender identity and part time as the gender congruent with their sex assigned at birth. Sometimes cross-living is chosen for safety.

Gender dysphoria: Medical diagnosis to describe a range of transgender identities; often attributed to incongruence of gender identity and physical sex.

Hormone replacement therapy/HRT: therapy involving cross-sex hormones that affect secondary sex characteristics (e.g. body fat, hair growth, voice tone)

Sex reassignment surgeries/SRS or Gender confirming surgeries: A variety of procedures that may alter form and function of body parts, e.g. "top surgery" is a procedure some transmasculine people may access to remove chest tissue and reconstruct the chest.

Puberty suppressant/puberty blockers: Medical treatment that delays the onset of puberty; this medication acts as a pause button and can be used to treat transgender children and pubescent youth as they determine their gender identity.

WPATH/ICATH/Endocrine Society: Different standards of care used by medical and mental healthcare professionals to treat transgender people.

Ag/aggressive: Term appearing in communities of color to describe someone assigned female at birth who may identify or present as masculine.

Two-spirit: "Two Spirit is a term in the English Language that attempts to incorporate and honor the hundreds of ancient, respectful, Native Language terms that were used for thousands of years within Tribal societies. Two Spirit is used to denote people who traditionally have special roles within Native American communities, cultures, and ceremonial life. "Two Spirit" expresses the concept of balance within an individual."**

Third gender: Term used to describe someone who identifies as neither a man or woman, but something else, used within multiple cultural contexts around the world.

Transphobia: Bias against transgender and gender non-conforming people which appears in a variety of ways through laws, policies, and through daily interactions.

Transmisogyny – The unique intersection of transphobia and misogyny that trans feminine spectrum people encounter. Includes transphobia that is applied to trans women and not trans men as well as misogyny that is applied to trans women and not cis women.

Oppression – The combination of prejudice and power which creates a system that discriminates against some groups and benefits other groups. Examples of these systems include racism, sexism, transphobia/cissexism, heterosexism, ableism, classism, and ageism. These systems enable some groups to exert control over target groups by limiting their rights, freedom, and access to basic resources such as health care, education, employment, and housing.

Sources:

- *Tobi Hill-Meyer* <http://nodesignation.wordpress.com/definitions/>
- *Bridge 13 Training* developed by SMYRC (Sexual Minority Youth Resource Center) <http://www.pdxqcenter.org/programs/youth-programs/smyrc/>
- ***Tribal Equity Toolkit 2.0*, <https://graduate.lclark.edu/live/files/15810-tribal-equity-toolkit-20>