



Glossary

There are many different identities that fall under the TGNC umbrella, and many terms used by TGNC people to describe themselves and their communities. Many TGNC people consider their gender identity to be fluid, and may change the way they identify over time. In addition, terminology itself changes over time. Keep in mind that definitions can vary greatly across communities and individuals, and that it is best to give all patients an opportunity to provide information on how they identify when seeking care. Here are some terms related to the experience of those who are TGNC; some are names of gender identities, while others describe elements of gender.

Agender (adj.)

Describes a person who identifies as having no gender.

Bigender (adj.)

Describes a person whose gender identity is a combination of two genders.

Cisgender (adj.)

A person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth match (i.e., a person who is not transgender).

Gender affirming surgery (GAS) (noun)

Surgeries used to modify one's body to conform more with one's gender identity.

Gender binary (noun)

The idea that there are only two genders, male and female, and that a person must strictly fit into one category or the other.

Gender dysphoria (noun)

Distress experienced by some individuals whose gender identity does not correspond with their assigned sex at birth. Manifests itself as clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) includes gender dysphoria as a diagnosis.

Gender expression (noun)

The way a person acts, dresses, speaks, and behaves. This can be feminine, masculine, a combination of the two, or neither. Gender expression does not have to match assigned sex at birth or gender identity.

Gender fluid (adj.)

Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed. A person who is gender fluid may always feel like a mix of the two traditional genders, but may feel more one gender at some times, and another gender at other times.

Gender identity (noun)

A person's internal sense of being a man/male, woman/female, both, neither, or another gender.

Gender non-conforming (adj.)

Describes a gender expression that differs from a given society's norms for males and females.

Gender role (noun)

A set of societal norms dictating what types of behaviors are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for a person based on their actual or perceived sex.

Genderqueer (adj.)

Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary. Other terms for people whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary include gender variant, gender expansive, etc. Sometimes written as gender queer.

Non-binary (adj.)

Describes a person whose gender identity falls outside the traditional gender binary. Sometimes abbreviated to NB or “enby.” Some people identify as “non-binary,” while others identify with another non-binary gender identity, such as genderqueer, gender fluid, or agender.

Pangender (adj.)

Describes a person whose gender identity is comprised of many genders.

Questioning (adj.)

Describes an individual who is unsure about or is exploring their own sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Sex assigned at birth (noun)

The sex (male or female) given to a child at birth. Most often this is based on the child’s external anatomy. Also referred to as “assigned sex at birth.”

Trans man/transgender man/female-to-male (FTM) (noun)

A transgender person whose sex assigned at birth was female and whose gender identity is male. Some may use these terms to describe themselves, while some will just use the term “man.”

Trans woman/transgender woman/male-to-female (MTF) (noun)

A transgender person whose sex assigned at birth was male and whose gender identity is female. Some may use these terms to describe themselves, while some will just use the term “female.”

Transfeminine/Trans feminine (adj.)

Describes a person who was assigned male at birth, and who identifies with femininity to a greater extent than with masculinity.

Transgender (adj.)

Describes a person whose gender identity and assigned sex at birth do not match. Also used to include gender identities outside of male and female. Sometimes abbreviated as trans.

Transition (noun)

For transgender people, this refers to the process of coming to recognize, accept, and express one’s gender identity. Most often, this refers to the period when a person makes social, legal, and/or medical changes, such as changing their clothing, name, sex designation and using medical interventions. Sometimes referred to as gender affirmation process.

Transmasculine/Trans masculine (adj.)

Describes a person who was assigned female at birth, and who identifies with masculinity to a greater extent than with femininity.

Transphobia (noun)

The fear of, discrimination against, or hatred of transgender or gender non-conforming people or those who are perceived as such.

Transsexual (adj.)

Sometimes used in medical literature or by some transgender people to describe those who have transitioned through medical interventions. Avoid using this term to describe transgender people unless they identify themselves as such, as it is largely outdated.

Two-Spirit (adj.)

A modern term connecting LGBT Native American and American Indian people with their cultures and tradition.

TERMS TO AVOID:

The following terms are considered offensive by most and should not be used: she-male, he-she, tranny, “real” woman, “real” man, transgendered, and “a transgender.”