

## Redefining Gender

- **Affirming Pronouns:** Refers to the most respectful and accurate pronouns for a person, as defined by that person. This is also sometimes referred to as “preferred gender pronouns,” although this phrasing is increasingly outdated. To ascertain someone’s affirming pronouns, ask: “What are your pronouns?”
- **Agender:** Describes a person who does not identify as having a gender identity that can be categorized as man or woman or who identifies as not having a gender identity.
- **Androgynous:** A combination of masculine and feminine traits or a nontraditional gender expression.
- **Bigender:** A person who experiences gender identity as two genders at the same time or whose gender identity may vary between two genders. These may be masculine and feminine or could include nonbinary identities.
- **Cisgender** (pronounced sis-gender): A term to describe a person whose gender identity matches the biological sex the person was assigned at birth. (It is sometimes abbreviated as “cis.”)
- **Deadnaming:** Having people use the name a trans person was given at birth instead of the chosen name.
- **Gender Binary:** The idea that gender is strictly an either-or option of male/man/masculine or female/woman/feminine based on sex assigned at birth, rather than a continuum or spectrum of gender identities and expressions. The gender binary is considered to be limiting and problematic for those who do not fit neatly into the either-or categories.
- **Gender Conforming:** A person whose gender expression is consistent with the cultural norms expected for that gender. According to these norms, boys and men are or should be masculine, and girls and women should be feminine. Not all cisgender people are gender conforming, and not all transgender people are gender nonconforming. (For example, a transgender woman may have a very feminine gender expression.)
- **Gender Dysphoria:** The formal diagnosis in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5<sup>th</sup> edition (DSM 5), used by psychologists and physicians to indicate that a person meets the diagnostic criteria to engage in medical transition. The inclusion of gender dysphoria is controversial in transgender communities because it implies that being transgender is a mental illness rather than a valid identity. But because a formal diagnosis is generally required in order to receive or provide treatment in the United States, it does enable access to medical care for some people who wouldn’t ordinarily be eligible to receive it.
- **Gender Expression:** A person’s outward gender presentation, usually comprising personal style, clothing, hairstyle, makeup, jewelry, vocal inflection, and body language. Gender expression is typically categorized as masculine, feminine, or nonbinary. Gender expression can be congruent with a person’s gender identity or not.
- **Genderfluid:** Someone whose gender identity or expression shifts between man/masculine and woman/feminine or falls somewhere along this spectrum.
- **Gender Identity:** A person’s deep-seated, internal sense of who they are as a gendered being: the gender with which they identify themselves.

- **Gender Marker:** The designation (male, female, or another) that appears on a person's official records, such as a birth certificate or driver's license. The gender marker on a transgender person's documents is their sex assigned at birth unless they legally change it, in parts of the world that allow it.
- **Gender Nonconforming:** A person whose gender expression is perceived as being inconsistent with cultural norms expected for that gender. Specifically, boys or men are not "masculine enough" or are feminine, while girls or women are not "feminine enough" or are masculine. Not all transgender people are gender nonconforming, and not all gender-nonconforming people identify as transgender. Cisgender people may also be gender nonconforming. Gender nonconformity is often inaccurately confused with sexual orientation.
- **Genderqueer:** Someone whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders.
- **Intersex:** A category that describes a person with a disorder of sexual development (DSD), a reproductive, genetic, genital, or hormonal configuration that results in a body that often can't easily be categorized as male or female. Intersex is frequently confused with transgender, but the two are completely distinct. A more familiar term, hermaphrodite, is considered outdated and offensive.
- **LGBTQ:** An acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or questioning individuals and communities. LGBTQ is not a synonym for "nonheterosexual," as that incorrectly implies that transgender is a sexual orientation.
- **Medical Transition:** A long-term series of medical interventions that utilize hormonal treatments and/or surgical interventions to change a person's body to be more congruent with their gender identity. Medical transition is the approved medical treatment for Gender Dysphoria.
- **Nonbinary:** A spectrum of gender identities and expressions, often based on the rejection of the gender binary's assumption that gender is strictly an either-or option of male/man/masculine or female/woman/feminine based on sex assigned at birth. Words that people may use to express their nonbinary gender identities include "agender," "bigender," "genderqueer," "genderfluid," and "pangender."
- **Pronouns:** Affirming pronouns are the most respectful and accurate pronouns for a person as defined by that person. It's best to ask which pronouns a person uses. In addition to the familiar "he," "she," and "they," nongendered pronouns include "zie" and "per."
- **Puberty Suppression:** A medical process that pauses the hormonal changes that activate puberty in young adolescents. The result is a purposeful delay of the development of secondary sexual characteristics (such as breast growth, testicular enlargement, facial hair, body fat redistribution, voice changes). Suppression allows more time to make decisions about hormonal interventions and can prevent the increased dysphoria that often accompanies puberty for transgender youth.
- **Queer:** An umbrella term for a range of people who are not heterosexual and/or cisgender. It has been historically used as a slur; some have reclaimed it as affirming, while others still consider it derogatory.
- **Same-Gender Loving:** A label sometimes used by members of the African-American/Black community to express an alternative sexual orientation without relying on terms and symbols of European descent. The term emerged in the early 1990s with the intention of offering Black women who love women and Black men who love men a voice—a way of identifying and being that resonated with the uniqueness of Black culture. (Sometimes abbreviated "SGL.")

- **Sex Assigned at Birth:** The determination of a person’s sex based on the visual appearance of the genitals at birth. The sex someone is labeled at birth.
- **Sexual Orientation:** A person’s feelings of attraction toward other people. A person may be attracted to people of the same sex, of the opposite sex, of both sexes, or without reference to sex or gender. Some people do not experience sexual attraction and may identify as asexual. Sexual orientation is about attraction to other people (external), while gender identity is a deep-seated sense of self (internal).
- **Social Transition:** A transgender person’s process of creating a life that is congruent with their gender identity, which often includes asking others to use a name, pronouns, and gender that is more congruent with their gender identity. It also may involve a person changing their gender expression to match their gender identity.
- **Transgender:** Sometimes abbreviated as “trans,” this is an adjective used to describe a person whose gender identity is incongruent with (or does not “match”) the biological sex they were assigned at birth. “Transgender” serves an umbrella term to refer to the full range and diversity of identities within transgender communities because it currently is the most widely used and recognized term.
- **Transgender Men and Boys:** People who identify as male, but were assigned female at birth. Also sometimes referred to as trans men.
- **Transgender Women and Girls:** People who identify as female, but were assigned male at birth. Also sometimes referred to as trans women.
- **Transsexual:** This is an older term that has been used to refer to a transgender person who has had hormonal or surgical interventions to change their body to be more aligned with their gender identity than with the sex that they were assigned at birth. It is still used as an identity label by some, but “transgender” has generally become the term of choice. (You should not use this term for people unless they use it for themselves first.)
- **Two Spirit:** A term used by Native and Indigenous Peoples to indicate that they embody both a masculine and a feminine spirit. Is sometimes also used to describe Native People of diverse sexual orientations and has nuanced meanings in various indigenous subcultures.

Adapted from E. R. Green and L. M. Maurer, 2015, Teaching Transgender Toolkit: A Facilitator’s Guide to Increasing Knowledge, Decreasing Prejudice & Building Skills. Ithaca, NY: Planned Parenthood of the Southern Finger Lakes. Reprinted in National Geographic, “Gender Evolution,” January, 2017.