



Glossary of key terms

Language around gender diversity is constantly changing and varies over time and in different countries. Here are some terms that are frequently used:

Terms that are relevant to gender diversity & expressions

Assigned female at birth / AFAB

A person who was thought to be female by medical professionals, parents or carers when at birth. Their birth certificate recorded their sex as female, and they are likely to have been raised as a girl.

Assigned male at birth / AMAB

A person who was thought to be male by medical professionals, parents or carers at birth. Their birth certificate recorded their sex as male, and they are likely to have been raised as a boy.

Binary

Relating to or consisting of two things, in which everything is either one thing or the other. Regarding gender, the binaries are male and female, while non-binary describes (1) any other gender that is not wholly male or female, (2) genders that are a combination, or (3) neither female nor male.

Brotherboy

A First Nations Australian (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) term typically used to describe masculine-spirited people who were assigned female at birth. Brotherboys take on traditional male social and ceremonial roles within the community and have a strong sense of cultural identity.

See also: [Sistergirl](#)

Chosen name / Current name / Preferred name

A term used to delineate between the name a person uses in society and their legal name (e.g., the name recorded on their identity documents), if these are different.

Cisgender

A term for someone whose gender identity aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth (i.e. someone who is not trans or gender diverse)

Coming out / Disclosing

The process of beginning to share one's sexuality or gender with others. Coming out is a recurring process of deciding if, when, and who a person would like to come out to. More recently, the language of "inviting in" is sometimes preferred.

See: [inviting in](#)

Gender

"Gender" is a set of characteristics and norms (certain behaviours, roles, and physical appearance) we use to categorise people. Gender is a social construct that varies across time and culture. Western culture has traditionally recognised only two genders, male and female, but many people now view gender as a spectrum, with many identities and ways to express it. Gender is an internal part of our identity and personally defined by each individual alone.

Gender affirmation (experience)

When the gender a person knows themselves to be internally is acknowledged by themselves and others. This could be through their own gender expression (wearing clothing typically worn by a person of their gender identity), through the actions of another person (someone using their chosen name and pronouns), or through healthcare and medical treatment.

Gender affirmation (transition)

The personal process/es undertaken by gender diverse people to live as their defined gender and have this recognised by others. Processes can involve personal, social, medical and legal changes. Every journey is different and may involve one or more these elements. This is sometimes referred to as gender transition.

Gender diverse

An umbrella term to describe people who do not conform to others' norms or expectations about males and females.

Gender dysphoria

Feelings of discomfort or distress about one's physical body in people who are gender diverse. It occurs when a person feels that their physical features (e.g. chest) do not align with a typical body for someone of the gender they feel internally or they experience certain events (e.g. wearing gendered clothing that doesn't fit with their sense of their gender identity).

Some gender diverse children experience dysphoria early on, and some are not affected by it much at all. For many, dysphoria doesn't become significantly distressing until the start of puberty – when the body begins to develop secondary sex characteristics – which can highlight and intensify the discrepancy felt between the child's body and their identity.

See also: [gender euphoria](#)

Gender questioning

Can be used to describe a person who is unsure which gender, if any, they identify with or who hasn't yet settled on a gender identity.

Inviting in

The process of beginning to share one's sexuality or gender with others. It involves deciding if, when and who to invite in. This is a more recent alternative to 'coming out'.

See: [Coming out / Disclosing](#)

Non-binary / NB / Enby

An umbrella term for any gender identity along the spectrum between the 'female' and 'male' binaries. It can describe people who don't identify exclusively as a woman or a man, those who identify as both, or who do not identify with a gender at all. Non-binary can also describe a person's gender expression, when they present themselves in any combination of feminine and masculine, or neither.

Queer

An umbrella term for people who identify with diverse genders and sexualities. Queer may also be used by an individual as their primary label for their sexuality or gender identity. The term has historically been used as a slur but has been positively reclaimed by the LGBTQA+ community.

Questioning

A description for people who are in the process of exploring their sexuality and/or gender identity.

Sex

Sex is a biological concept that relates to an individual's physical characteristics and features. This includes chromosomes, hormones and reproductive anatomy. A person's sex may align with male or female or a person can have intersex variations. Sex markers are assigned on birth certificates when a medical professional has examined these characteristics at birth.

Sex assigned at birth

The sex a baby is classified as by medical professionals at birth, according to the child's primary sex characteristics.

See also: [Gender assigned at birth](#)

Sexuality

The part of a person's identity that relates to their patterns of sexual and romantic attraction to others. Examples are heterosexual/straight (when a woman is attracted to a man, and vice versa), gay/homosexual (when a woman is attracted to other women or a man is attracted to other men), bisexual (when a person is attracted to more than one gender), pansexual (attraction to people of all genders), and asexual (not feeling physically attracted to any other person). Gender diverse people can be any sexuality, as can cisgender people.

Sistergirl

A First Nations Australian (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples) term typically used to describe feminine-spirited people who were assigned male at birth. Sistergirls take on traditional female social and ceremonial roles within the community and have a strong sense of cultural identity.

Social transition

The process by which a person changes their gender expression to better match their gender identity. This can include changes to their name and pronouns, their clothing, hair and personal styling.

Stealth / Going stealth / Being stealth

When a gender diverse person who lives as their affirmed gender chooses not to disclose that they are gender diverse to others (e.g. friends, family, or colleagues).

Transgender / Trans

A term for someone whose gender identity does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. People who identify as transgender (trans) may have a binary gender (identify as female or male), or may be non-binary. Being trans is one way of being gender diverse, but not all gender diverse people identify as transgender.

See also: [Gender diverse](#)

Transitioning

A range of processes that some trans people may go through in order to affirm their gender. Transition may be social, such as changing name, pronouns, and clothing; medical transition, which may include hormone therapy and/or gender-affirming surgeries; and/or legal transition, which may include changing legal name and sex/gender on government identity documents. Trans people may choose to undergo some, all, or none of these processes.

Transphobia

Negative feelings, actions or attitudes against people who are trans or gender diverse. It can show up in many ways such as discrimination, rejection, ridicule or aggression.

Trans boy / male / man / T-Boy

A term to describe someone who was assigned female at birth who identifies as a boy / male / man.

Trans-femme / Transfemme

A term to describe someone assigned male at birth who presents themselves in a more feminine way.

Trans girl / woman / female / T-Girl

A term to describe someone who was assigned male at birth who identifies as a girl / female / woman.

Trans-masc / Transmasc

A term to describe someone assigned female at birth who presents themselves in a more masculine way.

Two-spirit

A term from First Nations Peoples in America and Canada, typically used to refer to a person who has a both 'female' and 'male' spirit. It includes significant cultural and spiritual meanings. The term has been adopted by and is used in Australia, especially in First Nations Communities.

Other terms relevant to gender diversity

Agender / Gender neutral

A term to describe someone who doesn't identify with either a male or female gender, or any other gender. They might describe themselves as 'without gender'.

Ally

A person who is actively supportive of LGBTQA+ people. Ally usually refers to those who do not identify as being a member of the LGBTQA+ community themselves, although some people in the LGBTQA+ community may be an ally to another part of the community (e.g. someone who identifies as gay may be an ally to the trans community).

Birth assignment / Birth presumption

The gender that medical professionals, parents or carers attribute to a baby at birth, according to the child's primary sex characteristics.

See also: [Sex assigned at birth](#)

Blockers

See: [Puberty blockers](#)

Body Dysmorphia / Body Dysmorphic Disorder (diagnosis)

A disorder characterised by constant worrying over a perceived or slight defect in a person's appearance. It is different from gender dysphoria.

See also: [Gender dysphoria](#)

Chosen family / Family of choice / Found family

A term used to refer to people in an individual's life who actively fulfil the role of a support system, regardless of blood or marriage. Chosen family is distinct from an individual's family of origin (whether their birth family or the family they were raised within). Chosen families often play a significant role in the lives of LGBTQA+ individuals due to experiences of family violence or rejection from families of origin.

See also: [Family of origin](#)

Cisnormativity

The assumption that everyone identifies as the gender they were assigned at birth (i.e. everyone is cisgender).

See also: [cisgender](#)

Deadname / Former name

The original name given at birth to a gender diverse person, which is no longer used after starting gender-affirmation or transition. [q]

Deadnaming / Misnaming

Intentionally or unintentionally referring to a gender diverse person by their original name, instead of using their chosen name.

Family of origin / Birth family

The immediate family (biological or adoptive) of a person from birth. This term is typically used by an LGBTQA+ person when their family of origin is not affirming of their gender and/or sexuality.

Femme / Femme-presenting

A person of any gender identity who presents themselves in a more feminine way.

Female to Male / FTM / F2M

A person's gender assigned at birth and their gender identity. Use of these terms is starting to drop, as society increasingly views trans people as affirming who they already knew they were, as opposed to changing their gender.

Gender-affirming care / Gender-affirming healthcare

A model of health care that is non-judgemental and respectful of a person's gender identity, and that honours and supports an individual's unique needs and autonomy in relation to their gender. Gender-affirming care may include care for someone's physical, mental and social health needs.

Gender-Affirming Hormonal Therapy / GAHT

See: [Hormone replacement therapy](#)

Gender assigned at birth / Assigned gender at birth

The gender that medical professionals, parents or carers expected when a person was born, due to the child's primary sex characteristics[s]. The child is usually expected to continue living in this gender, taking on its roles, characteristics and behaviours as they grow.

See also: [Sex assigned at birth](#)

Gender binary

The view that gender consists of only male or female, with no allowance for experiences outside of or in between these two concepts.

Gender diversity

The complete spectrum of gender identity and expression within humanity. It includes cisgender, transgender, agender and non-binary people. The term can also be used as an umbrella term to describe the section of humanity that is gender diverse.

Gender euphoria

The experience of contentment, comfort and celebration a gender diverse person feels when they are affirmed as their gender identity.

Gender expression

The way in which someone's gender is expressed externally to others, for example, through name, behaviour, hairstyle, clothing, or voice. Gender expression and gender identity [u]are separate constructs that may or may not align. A person's gender expression may or may not conform to others' norms and expectations typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender fluid

A term to describe people whose experience of gender is not fixed, and instead changes over time.

Gender identity

Gender identity is how someone experiences their gender. It is a person's internal sense of themselves as male, female, a blend of both or neither. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender incongruence

A marked and persistent incongruence (the state of being not suitable or not fitting well) between a person's gender assigned at birth and their gender identity.

Gender neutral (categorisation)

Avoidance of differentiation or specification based on gender, for example, gender neutral language (e.g., pronouns, titles) or spaces (e.g., bathrooms).

Gender queer

An umbrella term for a person who is gender expansive, fluid, questioning, non-conforming or anything else.

Hormone replacement therapy / HRT

The process of taking cross sex hormones (such as testosterone[v] or oestrogen), and/or taking medication that prevents the production of naturally-occurring hormones in your body. Traditionally used for women experiencing menopause, HRT is now a standard treatment for gender affirmation.

Internalised transphobia

The discomfort or negative attitudes that a person may experience after internalising society's expectations about gender norms. Trans and gender diverse people often experience rejection, stigma and discrimination, which may cause them to internalise negative attitudes about their identity.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality refers to the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. These aspects can include their gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status and health status.

Legal gender marker

The classified record of a person's sex, listed on a birth certificate, drivers licence, passport etc. The sex a child is assigned at birth is usually recorded as an F ('female') or an M ('male') on their birth certificate.

Legal name / Birth name

The name given to a person at the time of their birth, and listed on their birth certificate.

LGBT / LGBTQA+ / LGBTIQP / LGBTQPIA+SB etc

A unifying umbrella acronym referring to people who are not exclusively heterosexual or cisgender such as people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, asexual or agender.

Note: Transforming Families uses the term LGBTQA+. We have chosen to not include the I that represents the intersex community. We are neither an authority on intersex variations or the matters important to people living with them.

Medical transition

The process by which a person changes their physical sex characteristics via hormonal intervention and/or surgery to more closely align with their gender identity.

Microaggression

Subtle, indirect or unintentional verbal and non-verbal behaviours which position one group of people as inferior to the dominant group. Examples may be insults, tone of voice, joking, inappropriate questions, body language or being excluded from social events. Microaggressions have also been referred to as “death by a thousand cuts”.

Misgendering

To misgender is to accidentally or deliberately refer to a trans person using a pronoun that does not reflect that person's gender identity.

MTF / M2F / Male to female

A person's gender assigned at birth and their gender identity. Use of these terms is starting to drop, as society increasingly views trans people as affirming who they already knew they were, as opposed to changing their gender.

Mx.

A title used before a surname or full name to refer to a person of unspecified or non-binary gender.

Neurodiverse / Neurodivergent

A term to describe people on the autism spectrum, and/or who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, or other patterns of thought or behaviour that are neurologically atypical.

Oestrogen / E / Feminising hormone therapy

Oestrogen is the primary 'female' hormone. It is used in gender-affirming hormone treatment to stimulate physical and emotional changes in the body that may help people feel and appear more feminine.

Outed

When a person's gender identity or sexuality is disclosed without the person's permission. Outing a person can cause distress and sometimes safety concerns.

Presumed female at birth / PFAB

See: [Assigned female at birth](#)

Presumed gender at birth / PGAB / Gender presumed at birth

See: [Gender assigned at birth](#)

Presumed male at birth / PMAB

See: [Assigned male at birth](#)

Primary sex characteristics

The physical parts of the human body, present at birth, that are related to sex and reproduction. These are the external and internal genitalia. The primary sex characteristics are used to categorise a child at birth as 'female' or 'male'.

Pronouns / Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are used in place of a person's name when referring to or about them. The most common pronouns are 'she/her', typically used by people with female / feminine and 'he/him', typically used by people with male / masculine gender identities. People can use one fixed set of pronouns, mixed or multiple pronouns (like 'he/they'), or change their pronouns over time.

Puberty blockers / Blockers / Puberty suppressants

Medication used before, at, or after the onset of puberty to stop a person's body from producing the hormones responsible for the development of secondary sex characteristics[z]. Research shows that puberty can intensify gender dysphoria[aa] and gender-affirming care, including puberty blockers[ab], can relieve this distress. They are used primarily to withhold the development of the body until the child is mature enough to determine whether they would like to continue their gender affirmation or not. If the young person stops taking the blockers, natural puberty will either start or continue.

See also: [Gender dysphoria](#)

Rapid onset gender dysphoria

The term “rapid-onset gender dysphoria” is not a recognised diagnosis. It originated in one academic journal article to suggest that young people could be misled into identifying as trans or gender diverse by the internet, social media or their peers. The paper was based on parent reporting with parents recruited with a heavy bias and didn’t collect data from children, adolescents or clinicians. It has faced critique from academics and experts. The term “gender dysphoria[ad]” is a recognised diagnosis.

Secondary sex characteristics

The physical parts of the human body related to sex and reproduction, that develop during puberty. These are the external characteristics often associated with the ‘female’ sex like the development of breast tissue; or the ‘male’ sex like growth of facial hair and deepening of the voice. Many gender diverse young people are distressed at the development of these characteristics in their body, which can highlight its misalignment with their innate sense of gender.

See also: [Sex](#)

Sex / Sex characteristics

The physical parts of the human body that are related to sex and reproduction. Sex is comprised of the primary sex characteristics[af] present at birth, and secondary sex characteristics[ag] which develop during puberty. A person’s sex and their gender are two different things, and not necessarily linked.

See also: [Primary sex characteristics](#) and [Secondary sex characteristics](#)

Testosterone / T

Testosterone is the primary ‘male’ hormone. It is used in gender-affirming hormone treatment to stimulate physical and emotional changes in the body that may help people feel and appear more masculine.

Tanner Stages

The scale of sexual maturation used in healthcare settings to describe the developmental stages of puberty.

They / Them (pronouns)

The gender-neutral pronoun 'they/them' has been used in the English language since the fourteenth century. More recently, they/them pronouns are used by trans and non-binary people. They/them is a good option to use when referring to a person whose pronouns you do not know and are unable to ask.

See also: [Pronouns](#)