

Key Terms

Transgender	is an umbrella term that often describes individuals who do not identify fully or in part with their sex assigned sex at birth. As an umbrella term, it can often represent a wide range of gender identities. Recently, the term “transgender” has been used interchangeably with the shorter term “trans” – both are considered inclusive of anyone who is not cisgender (e.g., gender diverse, genderqueer, transsexual, Two Spirit, genderfluid, and nonbinary identities; some crossdressers may describe themselves as trans or nonbinary). “Transgender” and “trans” are adjectives/descriptors, meaning that they are not used as nouns (i.e., someone <i>is</i> transgender, they are not <i>a</i> transgender).
Cisgender	refers to anyone whose gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth.
Cissexism	refers to the automatic assumption that everyone is cisgender unless “visibly trans.”
Gender	in contrast to sex is a system of classification that typically refers to culturally recognized roles, norms, and expectations, often based on an assigned sex at birth and <i>socially</i> associated with being a man or a woman. Currently, gender is often considered to exist across a broader spectrum, not solely within the binary of being a man or woman.
Gender diversity	describes gender expression that may not correspond to one’s perceived sex/gender and/or one’s gender identity. In other words, gender diversity can be perceived externally by the outside world, internally by a person who believes they are gender diverse, or both. Gender diversity is also sometimes referred to as gender nonconformity, but the latter term is often considered outdated.
Gender dysphoria	is the discomfort or distress that some trans persons experience as a result of the discrepancy between their gender identity and sex assigned at birth, associated gender roles, and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics. In some circles, this experience may also be referred to as gender incongruence.
Gender expression	refers to the manner in which one expresses their gender to the world through social cues such as behaviour, clothing, and the use of accessories. Gender expression may or may not be related to an individual’s gender identity. For example, some crossdressers and drag performers may express gender as a performance in certain contexts, but otherwise live as their sex assigned at birth.
Gender identity	is a term that describes one’s individual identification with being a man, woman, or an alternative gender (e.g., nonbinary, genderqueer). Importantly, gender identity exists on a spectrum, meaning that some individuals may identify predominantly with being a man or woman, while others may not identify with either category. Some may also identify with a unique configuration of characteristics, roles, norms, and expectations associated with being both a man and woman. It is important to note that gender identity is fluid and can change. Not all individuals know their gender identity at a specific point in time; they may be in the process of exploring their gender identity, expression, and emotional/physical attraction.
Intersex	is a term used to describe persons who do not fit medical definitions of male or female – this may be due to variance in body parts, chromosomes, hormones, or any combination of these. While some intersex persons may be identified as intersex at birth, many will be assigned male or female at infancy, and then come to learn about their intersex condition(s) at a later time. The terms intersex and trans should never be used interchangeably. Although some intersex persons may not identify with their assigned sex at birth and may identify as trans, others may identify as cisgender, in that their gender identity may correspond with their assigned sex at birth.
Nonbinary identities	are trans identities that fall outside the woman/man binary. Examples of these identities include genderqueer, genderfluid, gender diverse, bigender, and agender.
Physical dysphoria	refers to the discomfort trans persons sometimes experience with the primary and/or secondary sex characteristics of their assigned sex, or their desire for the sex characteristics of their identified gender.

Sex	is a term often used to describe biological characteristics, including genitals, internal reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes, and other bodily attributes that classify individuals as male, female, or intersex. Almost all aspects of biological sex are changeable and not all bodies conform to the biological categories of male and female.
Sex assigned at birth	is a phrase used to refer to the classification of the sex of newborns based on an assessment of their external sexual organs. While an infant with a vulva will most often be assigned female at birth (the more accepted term when referring to “assigned female at birth” within trans communities is AFAB), an infant with a penis will usually be assigned male at birth (the more accepted term when referring to “assigned male at birth” within trans communities is AMAB).
Sexual orientation	though sometimes conflated with gender identity is a construct that describes one’s identity in relation to groups they are physically and/or emotionally attracted to. For instance, someone who identifies as a lesbian is often a woman (cis or trans) whose primary attraction is to other women.
Social dysphoria	refers to the incongruence a trans person experiences when they are perceived as, referred to, or interacted with as their assigned sex at birth. Social dysphoria is also used to describe a trans person’s desire for being recognized socially as their identified gender (Coleman et al., 2012). Not all trans persons have dysphoria, although experiences of both physical/body dysphoria and social dysphoria are common among trans persons (Coleman et al., 2012).
Transfeminine	is often used to describe trans persons who identify as women and/or have feminine identities. Although this term is often used to describe AMAB trans persons, including trans women and some nonbinary AMAB persons, it is important to note that not all AMAB trans persons identify as transfeminine.
Transmasculine	is often used to describe trans persons who identify as men and/or have masculine identities. Although this term is often used to describe AFAB trans persons, including trans men and some nonbinary AFAB persons, it is important to note that not all AFAB trans persons identify as transmasculine.
Transphobia	is a term that describes discrimination against trans persons because of their actual or perceived gender identity and/or their gender expression.
Transsexual	is a descriptor that some trans persons use who have changed their physical appearance to align more closely with their gender identity. Often, this term specifically refers to those who pursue such physical changes through medical interventions, such as hormone therapy and surgeries.
Two Spirit Identities	are descriptors used by gender and sexually diverse Indigenous persons. Two Spirit persons are often seen as persons who embody both male and female characteristics. While some Two Spirit persons identify as trans or under the trans umbrella, others do not.

Definitions adapted from: American Psychiatric Association (2013), Coleman et al. (2012) Davidson (2016), EGALÉ Canada (n.d.), Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (2015), PFLAG (n.d.), Planned Parenthood (2016), and World Health Organization (2018)

References:

- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Washington, DC: Author.
- Coleman, E., Bockting, W., Botzer, M., Cohen-Kettenis, P., DeCuypere, G., Feldman, J., ... Zucker, K. (2012). Standards of care for the health of transsexual, trans, and gender-nonconforming people, version 7. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 13(4), 165-232.
- Davidson, S. (2016). Gender inequality: Nonbinary trans people in the workplace. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 2(1), 1-12.
- EGALÉ Canada. (n.d.). *Glossary of terms*. Toronto, ON: Author. Retrieved from <https://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Egales-Glossary-of-Terms.pdf>
- Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres. (2015). *Supporting two-spirit and indigenous LGBTQIA youth in the Ontario child welfare system*. Toronto, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://ofifc.org/sites/default/files/content-files/2015-02-12%20MCYS%20LGBT2QQIA%20Resource%20Guide%20Submission%20-%20NYSHN%20OIFC.pdf>
- PFLAG. (n.d.). PFLAG National Glossary of Terms. Retrieved August 31, 2018, from <https://www.pflag.org/glossary>
- Planned Parenthood. (2016). *Trans and nonbinary youth inclusivity in sexual health: Guidelines for sexual health service providers and educators*. Toronto, ON: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ppt.on.ca/ppt/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Trans-and-nonbinary-youth-inclusivity-in-sexual-health-guidelines-FINAL.pdf>
- World Health Organization. (2018). *International statistical classification of diseases and related health problems* (11th ed.). Geneva, Switzerland: Author.

For more resources, visit:
www.translinknetwork.com

