

Gender 101

Agender: A term that describes a person who does not identify with any gender.

Bigender: A gender identity that encompasses two genders, whether at the same time or at different times. These two may be male and female, or they may be either male or female plus a third, non-binary gender.

Cisgender: A term that describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts and appreciates their sexual orientation or gender identity and begins to share that with others.

Gender: A person's internal sense of self as male, female, both or neither (gender identity), as well as one's outward presentation and behaviors (gender expression). Gender norms vary among cultures and over time.

Gender-Expansive: An umbrella term used for individuals that broaden their own culture's commonly held definitions of gender, including expectations for its expression, identities, roles, and/or other perceived gender norms. Gender-expansive individuals include those with transgender and non-binary identities, as well as those whose gender in some way is seen to be stretching society's notions of gender.

Gender Expression: How a person expresses their gender through outward presentation and behavior. This includes, for example, a person's clothing, hairstyle, body language, and mannerisms.

Gender Fluid: People who have a gender or genders that change. Gender fluid people move between genders, experiencing their gender as something dynamic and changing, rather than static.

Gender Identity: An internal, deeply felt sense of being male, female, a blend of both or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same as or different from their sex assigned at birth..

Gender Spectrum: The broad range along which people identify and express themselves as gendered beings or not.

Genderqueer: People that typically reject the binary categories of gender, embracing a fluidity of gender identity. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender Transition: The process by which some people strive to more closely align their outward identity with the gender they know themselves to be. To affirm their gender identity, people may go through different types of transitions.

- **Social transition:** This can include a name change, change in pronouns, and/or change in gender expression (appearance, clothes, or hairstyle).
- **Legal transition:** The process of updating identity documents, such as birth certificates and driver's licenses, to reflect a person's authentic gender and name.
- **Medical transition:** For adolescents in the early stages of puberty, this may include the use of puberty blockers to pause puberty. Medical supports may also include gender affirming hormones to foster secondary sex characteristics such as (such as breasts, facial hair, and Adam's apples) that are aligned with the teens gender identity. Some adults may undergo gender affirmation surgeries.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning. Additions to this acronym can include A, for "asexual" or "ally," and I, for "intersex." The plus sign signifies there are additional identities that we want to recognize.

Non-binary: An umbrella term for gender identities that are not necessarily boy/man or girl/woman. People who identify their gender as non-binary may feel they have more than one gender, don't identify with a specific gender, or something else altogether.

Outing: Exposing someone's sexual orientation or gender identity to others without their permission.

Pangender: A non-binary gender defined as being more than one gender. A pangender person may consider themselves a member of all genders.

Queer: A term some people use to identify themselves with a flexible and inclusive view of gender and/or sexuality. It is also used interchangeably with LGBTQ to describe a group of people such as "queer youth." It is also seen in academic fields, such as queer studies or queer theory. Historically it has been used as a negative term for LGBTQ people. Some people still find the term offensive while some embrace the term as an identity.

Sexual Orientation: Describes a person's emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. Some examples of sexual orientations are gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual or pansexual.

Sex Assigned at Birth: This is generally determined by external genitalia at birth—female, male or intersex.

Transgender or Trans: A term used to describe people who identify as a different gender from the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation; transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Transphobia: The fear or hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people.

Two-Spirit: An umbrella term indexing various indigenous gender identities in North America.

**Please keep in mind that language around gender and sexual orientation is continually evolving, thus compelling us to be ongoing learners. This list has been compiled with resources from Welcoming Schools and Gender Spectrum as of February 2018.*

