

Beebe Healthcare
Margaret H. Rollins School of Nursing
N102 – Nursing Care of Adults

Common Gender Identity Terms

Cisgender

Those who identify and present as the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, a baby born with a vulva is categorized a girl. If she also sees herself as a girl throughout her life, she is considered cisgender. In its simplest terms, cisgender describes someone who is not transgender.

Cross-Dresser (sometimes shortened to CD)

A person — typically a straight-identified, cisgender man — who sometimes wears clothing associated with the opposite sex in order to have fun, entertain, gain emotional satisfaction, for sexual enjoyment, or to make a political statement about gender roles.

Drag King

A female performer who exaggerates male behaviors and dress for the purposes of entertainment at bars, clubs, or events. Some drag kings might identify as transgender.

Drag Queen

A male performer who exaggerates female behaviors and dress for the purposes of entertainment at bars, clubs, or events. Some drag queens might identify as transgender.

Gender Dysphoria

A diagnosis, often used by psychologists and doctors, to describe the distress, unhappiness, and anxiety that transgender people may feel about the mismatch between their bodies and their gender identity. A person may be formally diagnosed with gender dysphoria in order to receive medical treatment to help them transition.

Psychologists used to call this “gender identity disorder.” However, the mismatch between a person’s body and gender identity isn’t in itself a mental illness (but it can cause emotional distress), so the term was changed to reflect that.

Gender expression

The outward manifestation of a person’s gender, which may or may not reflect their inner gender identity based on traditional expectations. Gender expression incorporates how a person carries themselves, their dress, accessories, grooming, voice/speech patterns and conversational mannerisms, and physical characteristics.

Gender Fluidity

The flexibility of gender expressions and identities that may change over time or even from day to day. A gender fluid person may feel male on some days, female on others, both male and female, or neither. A gender fluid person might also identify as genderqueer.

Gender nonconforming

When a person's gender expression doesn't fit inside traditional male or female categories (sometimes called the gender binary).

Gender non-binary

When a person's gender identity doesn't fit inside traditional male or female categories (sometimes called the gender binary).

Genderqueer

A term for people who don't identify as a man or a woman or whose identity lies outside the traditional gender binary of male and female. Some people use genderqueer, gender nonconforming, and non-binary interchangeably, but others don't. Genderqueer has a political history, so many use the term to identify their gender as non-normative in some way. For example, someone could identify as both cisgender female and genderqueer.

Intersex

A general term used for a variety of conditions in which a person is born with a reproductive or sexual anatomy that doesn't fit the typical definitions of female or male. Sometimes a female or male gender is assigned to an intersex person at birth through surgery, if external genitals are not obviously male or female. Intersex babies are always assigned a legal gender, but sometimes when they grow up, they don't identify with the gender selected for them. Some intersex people are transgender, but intersex does not necessarily mean transgender.

Transgender (sometimes shortened to Trans or Trans*)

A general term used to describe someone whose gender expression/gender identity are different than the sex assigned at birth. Some people put an asterisk on the end of trans* to expand the word to include all people with nonconforming gender identities and expressions.

Transgender Man (sometimes Trans Man, Female-to-Male, F to M, F2M, or FTM)

A person whose sex assignment at birth was female but whose gender identity is male. These identities can also refer to someone who was surgically assigned female at birth, in the case of intersex people, but whose gender identity is male. Many trans men identify simply as men.

Transgender Woman (sometimes Trans Woman, Male-to-Female, MTF, M2F)

A person whose sex assignment at birth was male but whose gender identity is female. These identities can also refer to someone who was surgically assigned male at birth, in the case

of intersex people, but whose gender identity is female. Many trans women identify simply as women.

Resources

American Psychiatric Association. (2020). *What is gender dysphoria?*

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gender-dysphoria/what-is-gender-dysphoria>

Planned Parenthood. (2022). *Transgender identity terms and labels.*

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/sexual-orientation-gender/trans-and-gender-nonconforming-identities/transgender-identity-terms-and-labels>