



# TERMINOLOGY RELATED TO TRANSGENDER AND GENDER NON-CONFORMING IDENTITY

(See also ADL's [Definitions Related to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity](#) for additional vocabulary.)

**BISEXUAL:** A person who is emotionally, physically and/or romantically attracted to some people of more than one gender.

**CISGENDER:** A term for when someone's gender identity/expression matches the gender they were assigned at birth.

**FTM/MTF:** **FTM** refers to a person who transitions from "female-to-male," meaning a person who was assigned female at birth but identifies and lives as a male. **MTF** refers to a person who transitions from "male-to-female," meaning a person who was assigned male at birth but identifies and lives as a female.

**GAY:** A person who is emotionally, physically and/or romantically attracted to some other people of the same gender. Can be used to refer to people of all genders, though it is used most commonly to refer to males. Some women and girls choose not to identify as gay, but as lesbian.

**GENDER:** The socially-defined "rules" and roles for men and women in a society. The attitudes, customs and values associated with gender are socially constructed; however, individuals develop their gender identities in two primary ways: through an innate sense of their own identity and through their life experiences and interactions with others. Dominant western society generally defines gender as a binary system—men and women—but many cultures define gender as more fluid and existing along a continuum.

**GENDER BINARY:** The idea that sex and gender are two distinct, opposite and disconnected categories—male and female.

**GENDER EXPRESSION:** Refers to the ways in which people externally communicate their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, haircut, voice and emphasizing, de-emphasizing or changing their bodies' characteristics. Gender expression is not an indicator of sexual orientation.

**GENDER IDENTITY:** How an individual identifies in terms of their gender. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

**GENDER NON-CONFORMING:** A person who doesn't adhere to societal pressures to conform to gender norms and roles.

**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 seem to fit the typical definitions of female or male.

**LESBIAN:** A woman who is emotionally, physically and/or romantically attracted to some other women.

**QUEER:** An umbrella term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Some use as an alternative to “LGBT” in an effort to be more inclusive. Depending on the user, the term has either a derogatory or an affirming connotation, as many within the LGBT community have sought to reclaim the term that was once widely used in a negative way.

**QUESTIONING:** Refers to people who are in the process of understanding and exploring their sexual orientation or gender identity. They are often seeking information and support during this stage of their identity development.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** Determined by one’s emotional, physical and/or romantic attractions. Categories of sexual orientation include, but are not limited to, **gay, lesbian** (attracted to some members of the same gender), **bisexual** (attracted to some members of more than one gender) and **heterosexual** (attracted to some members of another gender).

**TRANS\*:** An umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum.

**TRANSGENDER:** An umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.

**TRANSSEXUAL:** An older term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth who seek to transition from male to female or female to male. Many do not prefer this term because it is thought to sound overly clinical.

**TRANSITION:** The process when a person begins living as the gender with which they identify rather than the gender they were assigned at birth, which often may include changing one’s first name and dressing and grooming differently. Transitioning may or may not also include medical and legal aspects, including taking hormones, having surgery or changing identity documents (e.g. driver’s license) to reflect one’s gender identity. Transitioning is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a period of time.

**TWO-SPIRIT:** A contemporary term that references historical multiple-gender traditions in many First Nations cultures. Many Native/First Nations people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or gender non-conforming identify as Two-Spirit; in many Nations, being Two-Spirit carries both great respect and additional commitments and responsibilities to one’s community.