

Terms and Language Guide

Important Notes from RMN:

**A glossary of terms can be very helpful for equipping ourselves with some basic understanding of what someone means when they use a word. Some of these terms might be unknown to you. Let's remember that these terms do not define a person. In reading the glossary below, we must treat these terms with gentleness, and a holy and humble reverence. The way we relate to and understand these terms for ourselves, and with others is an evolving conversation. There are times when we must show a willingness to pivot into a new understanding, all with the desire to be loving and supportive to the human journey. Listen and respond to others as you practice and use these terms. That's one way you can show support and love to the LGBTQ+ community.*

***RMN most commonly uses LGBTQ+ as our acronym for posts, articles, etc. We understand and celebrate all people and the beautiful way you identify and express yourself, recognizing that not all identities are fully represented in word or by letter in this expression of our broad and fabulous community.*

****If you do not see how you identify in any of our resources, please reach out to us. We always want to do better and learn. This is a Google Document on purpose so we can add and evolve as we journey together. Please reach out to us by emailing our Resources Team: emily@rmnetwork.org.*

Some of our favorite Glossary and Term Resources:

1. [Human Rights Campaign](#)
2. [Safe Zone Project](#)
3. [PFLAG](#)

More information about Gender, Sex, and Human Sexuality:

Gender

Sex Assigned at Birth

The assignment and classification of people as male, female, intersex, or another sex based on a combination of anatomy, hormones, and chromosomes. It is important we don't simply use "sex" to describe people's identity, because gendered characteristics in

humans occur along a spectrum and because of its role in transphobia (sex doesn't always equal gender).

Gender Identity

One's innermost concept of self as man, woman, a blend of both or neither – how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be aligned with or different from their so-called 'sex' assigned at birth.

Gender Expansiveness

Transgender person: An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on 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. (Note: Transgender identity does not depend on medically transitioning through either hormone therapy or surgical interventions.)

Trans man: a person who was assigned female at birth but now embraces a male identity

FTM: acronym for female to male

Transmasculine/transmasc: an adjective that can refer to a trans man, or an adjective that can describe a non-binary person's masculine gender experience/expression

Trans woman: a person who was assigned male at birth but now embraces a female identity

MTF: acronym for male to female

Transfeminine/trans femme: an adjective that can refer to a trans woman, or an adjective that can refer to a non-binary person's feminine gender experience/expression

AFAB/AMAB: Acronyms meaning "assigned female/male at birth" (or DFAB/DMAB, "designated female/male at birth"). No one, whether cis or trans, gets to choose what sex they're assigned at birth. At the time of publication, this term is preferred to "biological male/female", "male/female bodied", "natal male/female", and "born male/female", all of which may be defamatory and/or inaccurate.

Transition: Altering one's birth sex is not a one-step procedure; it is a complex process that occurs over a long period of time. Transition includes some or all of the following personal, medical, and legal steps: telling one's family, friends, and co-workers; using a different name and new pronouns; dressing differently; changing one's name and/or designated "sex" on legal

documents; hormone therapy; and possibly (though not always) one or more types of surgery. The exact steps involved in transition vary from person to person. Some people will only complete some steps while others may complete more. Some who identify as trans may not transition. Please avoid the phrase “sex change.”

Cisgender person: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the social and cultural expectations typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. The abbreviation cis may also be used. Cis-hetero or cishet refers to a straight cisgender person.

Nonbinary person: Someone whose gender identity blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female.

FTX: A way to describe someone who is assigned female at birth and identifies as nonbinary/ genderqueer/ gender non-conforming/etc., and who may also be medically transitioning and/or presenting their gender in a way that is not in congruence with their assigned sex at birth. It is in the same family as the FTM and MTF labels, but provides nonbinary/ genderqueer/GNC/etc. folks space to identify themselves (and their transition) outside the aforementioned binary options.

MTX: A way to describe someone who is assigned male at birth and identifies as nonbinary/ genderqueer/ gender non-conforming/etc., and who may also be medically transitioning and/or presenting their gender in a way that is not in congruence with their assigned sex at birth.

Agender: Having no specific gender identity or having a gender identity that is neutral. Sometimes used interchangeably with gender neutral, genderless, or neutrois.

Bigender: Having two distinct gender identities or expressions, either simultaneously, at different times, or in different situations.

Genderfluid: Moving between two or more gender identities or expressions.

Genderqueer: A catch-all term for individuals with non-binary gender identities.

Gender Expression: External presentation of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, haircut, or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Femme: Feminine identified person of any gender/sex.

Boi: A person assigned female at birth who expresses or presents themselves in a culturally/stereotypically masculine, particularly boyish way. Also, one who enjoys being perceived as a young man and intentionally identifies with being perceived as a “boy”

Masculine of Center: A term originating within communities of color describing people whose gender identity or expression falls towards the masculine end of the gender spectrum; includes a wide range of terms such as butch, stud, aggressive/AG, dom, macha, tomboi, trans masculine, etc.

Butch/Stud: A person who identifies themselves as masculine, whether it be physically, mentally or emotionally. 'Butch' is sometimes used as a derogatory term for lesbians, but it can also be claimed as an affirmative identity label.

Intersex person: A person born with sex organs, genetic coding and/or secondary sex characteristics which are a blend of typically male and female physical traits. "Intersex" refers to people who are born with any of a range of sex characteristics that may not fit a doctor's notions of binary "male" or "female" bodies. Variations may appear in a person's chromosomes, genitals, or internal organs such as testes or ovaries. Some intersex traits are identified at birth, while others may not be discovered until puberty or later in life. An intersex person may or may not personally identify with their assigned gender. "The most thorough existing research finds intersex people to constitute an estimated 1.7% of the population."

Sexuality

Sexual Identity: This term is not widely used, but it refers to the socially influenced self-understanding/labeling of one's self.

Sexual Orientation: The presence or absence of an inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people. There are several types of orientations:

Asexual: describes a person who experiences little or no sexual attraction or desire for other people

Lesbian: describes a woman or woman-aligned person who is emotionally, romantically and/or sexually attracted to other women.

Gay: describes a person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender OR a man/male-aligned person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other men

Bisexual: describes a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree.

Pansexual: describes someone who has the potential for emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to people of any gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way, or to the same degree. Overlaps with bisexuality.

Demisexual: describes a person who only experiences sexual attraction to people with whom a close emotional connection has been formed. Considered to be along the spectrum of asexuality.

Queer: describes a person who is not straight and/or cisgender. The term began as a slur, but has been partially reclaimed and it used as a catch-all identifier by some in the LGBTQ+ community. Others find it offensive. Note: Should only ever be used as an adjective, never as a noun.

Did you notice the terms were divided into two distinct categories? It's common for people to equate gender identity with sexual orientation, but they are not the same.

Remember: language is dynamic and politicized, as well as deeply personal. As various cultures keep evolving so too does language, rendering the above terms obsolete or even offensive. So don't take correction personally, instead embrace the opportunity to flex your curiosity and humility.

Sources

Trans Student Educational Resources. "Definitions." <http://www.transstudent.org/>, n.d. <http://transstudent.org/gender/>

Human Rights Campaign. "Glossary of Terms." HRC.org, n.d. Accessed July 2, 2020. dictionary.com

<https://standwithtrans.org/glossary-of-terms/>

<https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

<https://transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive>

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/lgbtq-definitions-gender-sexuality-terms>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-does-it-mean-to-be-non-binary-or-have-non-binary-gender-4172702#types-of-non-binary-gender>

Human Rights Campaign. "Glossary of Terms." HRC.org, n.d. Accessed July 2, 2020.

Definition from https://www.mvc.edu/files/Allies_Terminology.pdf

<https://lgbt.williams.edu/resources/terms/>

<https://interactadvocates.org/intersex-definitions/>

<https://www.intersexequality.com/how-common-is-intersex-in-humans/>

David G. Myers, *Psychology*, 10th Edition (New York: Worth Publishers, 2013)

Human Rights Campaign. "Glossary of Terms." HRC.org, n.d. Accessed July 2, 2020.

Harman, B.T. "Relational Guide Parents of Newly Out LGBTQ+ People." Q Christian Fellowship, n.d. <https://www.qchristian.org/guides/parents>.