

Gender Variance –terms and definitions

NB: The following 4 terms are adjectives not nouns, i.e never say “a transgender”:

Transgender (trans for short) (never “transgendered”) – someone whose gender does not, either partially or fully, align with the gender they were assigned at birth (not everyone will use this term)

Transsexual – someone who has medically transitioned (but some prefer the term transgender)

Non-binary or genderqueer – somebody who identifies outside of the “gender binary” (other terms are agender, bigender, gender fluid, third gender, neutrois, androgyne, enby, non-binary butch, non-binary femme, non-binary trans man, non-binary trans woman, etc)

Trans* – some people self-identify as trans*, however it has become unpopular as an umbrella term

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Trans woman/ trans man (never transwoman/man) – how a person identifies, e.g. a trans man’s gender is male, he uses male pronouns and lives and identifies as a man

AFAB/AMAB (assigned female/male at birth) – the gender category a person was given when they were born. Avoids problematic terms like “biological male” or “female bodied”. NB: this is **not** an identity, so avoid saying things like “they are an AFAB trans person”

Gender identity – a person’s core experience of themselves in relation to sex/gender. NB: not all trans people relate to this term

Cisgender – the opposite of transgender, someone whose gender aligns with their assigned gender. Using this term avoids problematic ways of describing non-trans people

Gender variant/ gender non-conforming – someone who does not conform to their assigned gender but may or may not consider themselves or be considered trans (useful for children)

Personal Pronouns – if in doubt ask; not everyone’s appearance conforms to their gender. Many people use gender neutral pronouns, such as singular they/them/their, or others. It’s ok to use “they” if you’re unsure, but don’t use it if you know someone prefers he or she

Gender dysphoria – Medical diagnosis for the “clinically significant distress” trans people experience from the misalignment of their gender from that assigned to them. Many trans people prefer “gender incongruence”. Not all trans people experience dysphoria

Transition – the process of developing congruence with your gender. May or may not involve surgery, hormone replacement therapy, and changes to assist being correctly identified through clothes, speech, etc. NB: “sex change” is an inappropriate term, as is “used to be a man” or other inferences that someone’s gender was “created” by the transition.

Gender recognition certificate – a trans man or women’s gender can be legally recognised if they are over 18, have lived as their gender for 2 years and been diagnosed with gender dysphoria. Legal name change and change of title can take place at any time by deed poll

Crossdresser/ Freedresser – somebody who wears clothing that falls outside of what is expected for their gender. Some are trans, some are not. “Transvestite” is also used but decreasing in popularity

Drag queen/king – currently, someone who dresses as the opposite sex for performance purposes

Two Spirit – only Indigenous Americans may use this identity, which is not directly synonymous with trans. Many other cultures have their own words and ways of conceptualising gender, which do not neatly map onto our ways of speaking about it, some have been erased/stigmatised by colonisation

Please note: terminology shifts and evolves; some trans people will use words now seen as incorrect or even offensive, words mean different things to different individuals – no one, unified trans story