List of Key Trans* Terms

Please read all terminology as refers to… That is: transgender refers to… Language is not exact and is always in motion. Also note, terminology within transgender and gender variant communities vary and have changed consistently over time; we call for awareness of language usage within particular communities.

**Gender binary:** A social classification that divides gender identity into masculine and feminine with expected gender roles, gender expressions, and characteristics for each one. The term also conveys the idea that there are only two genders; male/female or man/woman and that a person must be strictly gendered as either/or.

**Gender conforming:** A term used to describe a person who by nature or choice conforms to gender based expectations of society (see definition of cisgender).

**Gender cues:** What human beings use to attempt to tell the gender/sex of another person. Examples include hairstyle, gait, vocal inflection, body shape, facial hair, etc. Cues vary by culture and historical time period.

**Gender Identity:** An individual’s internal sense of being male, female, or something else. Since gender identity is internal, one’s gender identity is not necessarily visible to others.

**Gender Expression:** How a person represents or expresses one’s gender identity to others, often through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice or body characteristics.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term for individuals whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transsexuals, cross-dressers, androgynous people, genderqueers, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender is a broad term and is good for non-transgender people to use. “Trans” is shorthand for “transgender.”

**Cisgender:** A person identifying with or experiencing a gender the same as one's biological sex or that is affirmed by society, e.g. being both male-gendered & male-sexed

**Transgender Man or Transman:** A male identified person who might identify as transgender or transsexual. Sometimes this identity label is adopted to affirm one’s history with another gender. (see also “FTM”).

**Cisman:** A male identified person who does not identify as trans(gender); read as an analogy with transman,

**Transgender Woman or Transwoman:** A female identified person who might identify as transgender or transsexual. Sometimes this identity label is adopted to affirm one’s history with another gender. (see also “MTF”).

**Ciswoman:** A female identified person who does not identify as trans(gender); read as an analogy with transwoman.
**Transsexual:** A term for people whose gender identity is different from their assigned sex at birth. Often transsexual people alter or wish to alter their bodies through hormones or surgery in order to make it match their gender identity.

**Cissexual:** A person who does not identify as transsexual; read as an analogy with transsexual.

**Cross-dresser:** A term for people who dress in clothing traditionally or stereotypically worn by the other sex, but who generally have no intent to live full-time as the other gender.

**Transvestite:** A term for primarily heterosexual men who cross-dress for sexual excitement. This word is being used less and less due to its association with the DSM IV and psychological disorders—many consider this term derogatory.

**Queer:** A term used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual and, often also transgender, people. Some use queer as an alternative to “gay” in an effort to be more inclusive, since the term does not convey a sense of gender. Depending on the user, the term has either a derogatory or an affirming connotation, as many have sought to reclaim the term that was once widely used in a negative way.

**Genderqueer:** A term used by some individuals who identify as neither entirely male nor entirely female. Gender Non-conforming: A term for individuals whose gender expression is different from societal expectations related to gender.

**Bi-gendered:** One who has a significant gender identity that encompasses both genders, male and female. Some may feel that one side or the other is stronger, but both sides are there.

**Two-Spirit:** A contemporary pan-Indian word that encompasses alternative sexuality, alternative gender, and an integration of Native Spirituality. This term also includes what dominant discourse refers to as transgender and transsexual. Historically, in Native cultures, persons who were Two-Spirit were transgendered, but today they include categories mainstream North America calls gay, lesbian, and bisexual. Two-spirit identity affirms the interrelatedness of all aspects of identity, including sexuality, gender, culture, community, and spirituality. That is, the sexuality of two-spirit people cannot be considered as separate from the rest of an individual's identity. Two-spirit connects American Indians to their past by offering a link that had previously been severed by government policies and actions.

**Passing:** A term used by transgender people to mean that they are seen as the gender with which they self-identify. For example, a transgender man (born female) who most people see as a man.

**Sex Reassignment Surgery:** Surgical procedures that change one’s body to make it conform to a person’s gender identity. This may include “top surgery” (breast augmentation or removal) or “bottom surgery” (altering genitals). Contrary to popular belief, there is not one surgery; in fact there are many different surgeries. “Sex change surgery” is considered a derogatory term by many.
**FTM**: A person who transitions from “female-to-male,” meaning a person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies and lives as a male. Also known as a “transgender man.”

**MTF**: A person who transitions from “male-to-female,” meaning a person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies and lives as a female. Also known as a “transgender woman.”

**Sexual Orientation**: A term describing a person’s attraction to members of the same sex or different sex. Usually defined as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or heterosexual.

**Transition**: The period and/or the process during which a person begins to live and/or change appearance to be more congruent with their gender identity or to be in harmony with their preferred gender expression. Can include social, medical, and legal steps that help the person achieve the greatest level of comfort with their body, gender, and social roles. These steps could include pronoun and name changes, gender expression changes, counseling, hormone therapy, various surgical procedures, and legal document changes (birth certificates, driver’s licenses, etc.). All of this is dependent upon the person, their resources, and often the laws of the state in which they reside.

**Transphobia**: Hatred or fear of gender variance among people and gender variant expression

**Intersex**: A term used for people who are born with external genitalia, chromosomes, or internal reproductive systems that are not traditionally associated with either a “standard” male or female.

**Drag Queen**: generally used to accurately refer to men who dress as women (often celebrity women) for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events. It is also used as slang, sometimes in a derogatory manner, to refer to all transgender women.

**Drag King**: used to refer to women who dress as men for the purpose of entertaining others at bars, clubs, or other events.

**They, them, ze, hir, hirs, hiself, squi, squir**: gender non-specific pronouns sometimes preferred by individuals instead of pronouns that are specifically gendered male or female. There are many versions of gender non-specific pronouns currently in use.

Many of these terms were taken from joint publications with The Task Force.