

# Transgender Terminology

**Cisgender:** A person who is gender-typical or non-transgender.

**Crossdresser:** A person who, regardless of motivation, wears clothes, makeup, etc. that are considered by the culture to be appropriate for another gender but not one's own (preferred term to "transvestite").

**Drag or In Drag:** Wearing clothes considered appropriate for someone of another gender.

**Drag King and Drag Queen:** A FTM crossdresser (typically a lesbian) and a MTF crossdresser (typically a gay man), respectively, who employ gender-marked clothing, makeup, and mannerisms for their own and other people's appreciation or for entertainment purposes.

**En Femme:** A term in the male crossdressing community for expressing a more "feminine" personality and displaying more "feminine" gender behavior while crossdressing.

**FTM:** A female-to-male transsexual, a transsexual man, a transman, a transguy, or a man with a trans past—individuals assigned female at birth who identify as male. Some transmen reject being seen as "FTM," arguing that they have always been male and are only making this identity visible to other people (instead, they may call themselves "MTM"). Other transmen feel that "FTM" and similar language reinforces an either/or gender system.

**Gender:** The social construction of masculinity and femininity in a specific culture. It involves gender assignment (the gender designation of someone at birth), gender roles (the expectations imposed on someone based on their gender), gender attribution (how others perceive someone's gender), gender expression (how someone presents their gender), and gender identity (how someone defines their gender).

**Gender Expression:** How one chooses to express one's gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, body characteristics, etc.

**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 Identity Disorder (GID):** The classification for transsexuality in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th Edition, Text Revision, 2001). Most transsexuals strongly object to being considered mentally ill, arguing that it is a completely inaccurate diagnosis

and serves to dehumanize and pathologize them. However, some transsexuals in countries such as Canada and Holland support GID being recognized as a mental disorder, because it enables them to have their gender reassignment surgeries covered by government health insurance (gender reassignment surgeries are rarely covered in the U.S.).

**Gender Reassignment Surgery (GRS):** Surgical procedures that change one's body to conform to one's gender identity. These procedures may include "top surgery" (breast augmentation or removal) and "bottom surgery" (altering genitals). For female-to-male transsexuals, GRS involves a bilateral mastectomy (chest reconstruction), panhysterectomy (removal of the ovaries and uterus), and sometimes a phalloplasty (construction of a penis) and scrotoplasty (formation of a scrotum) or a metoidioplasty (restructuring the clitoris). For male-to-female transsexuals, GRS consists of optional surgical breast implants and vaginoplasty (construction of a vagina). Additional surgeries might include a trachea shave (reducing the size of the Adam's apple), bone restructuring to feminize facial features, and hair transplants. Sometimes GRS is referred to as "gender confirming surgery," to recognize that one's gender does not change—it is only being made visible to others.

**Gender Variant or Gender Non-Conforming:** Alternative terms for transgender, meaning one who varies from traditional "masculine" and "feminine" gender roles.

**Genderqueer:** A term used by individuals, mostly transgender youth, who identify as neither female nor male, as both, or as somewhere in between. Genderqueers may transition partly, completely, or not all, and may dress and present exclusively as one gender, vary their presentation, or present androgynously. The one commonality between genderqueers is that they understand themselves in ways that challenge binary constructions of gender.

**Hir or Zir:** A non-gender specific pronoun used instead of "her" and "him."

**Intersex:** A person who is born with "sex chromosomes," external genitalia, or an internal reproductive system that is not considered "standard" for either male or female (preferred term to "hermaphrodite"). About one in 2,000 children, or five children per day in the United States, are born visibly intersex.

**MTF:** A male-to-female transsexual, a transsexual woman, a transwoman, a transgirl, or a woman with a trans past—individuals assigned male at birth who identify as female. Some transwomen reject being seen as "MTF," arguing that they have always been female and are only making this identity visible to other people (instead, they may call themselves "FTF"). Other transwomen feel that "MTF" and similar language reinforces an either/or gender system.

**Second Self:** A term in the male crossdressing community for an individual's alternative gender preference. Male crossdressers express their second self through wearing "feminine" clothing and expressing "feminine" characteristics.

**Sie or Ze:** A non-gender specific pronoun used instead of "she" and "he."

**Trannyfag:** A transgender community term for a transman who is attracted to biological men and/or other transmen.

**Trans or Transgender:** Most commonly used as an umbrella term for someone whose selfidentification or expression challenges traditional notions of "male" and "female." Transgender people include transsexuals, crossdressers, drag queens and kings, genderqueers, and others who cross traditional gender categories.

**Transitioning:** The period during which a person begins to live as their new gender. It may include changing one's name, taking hormones, having surgery, and altering legal documents.

**Transdyke:** A transgender community term for a transwoman who is attracted to biological women and/or other transwomen.

**Transphobia:** The fear, hatred, or intolerance of people who identify or are perceived as transgender.

**Transsexual:** A person whose gender identity is different from their assigned gender at birth. Transsexuals often undergo hormone treatments and gender reassignment surgeries to align their anatomy with their core identity, but not all desire or are able to do so.

**Two Spirit:** A Native American/First Nation term for people who blend the masculine and the feminine. It is commonly used to describe biological women who took on the roles and/or dress of men and biological men who took on the roles and/or dress of women in the past (preferred term to "berdache"). The term is also often used by contemporary LGBT Native American and First Nation people to describe themselves.

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