

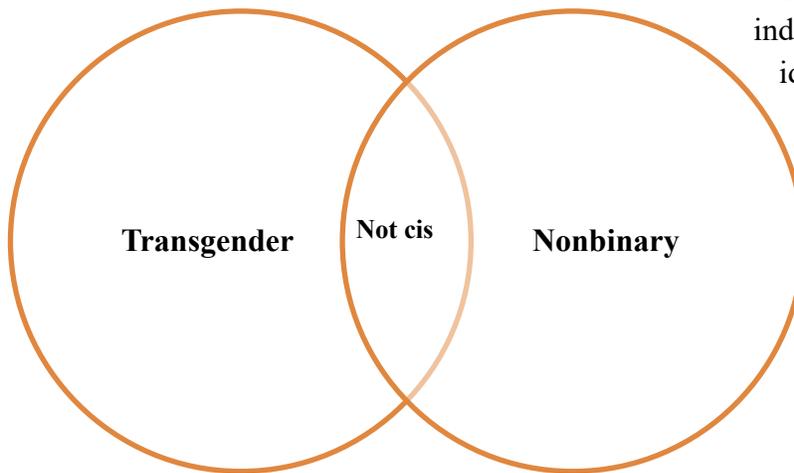
LGBTQ+ Terminology: Gender and Gender Identity

Language surrounding gender and gender identity can often be complicated because every person has a unique relationship to their gender. This handout will serve as a quick reference for the most common scenarios when writing about transgender and nonbinary individuals. As with writing about any group of people, it is important to use respectful and well-informed rhetoric.

Definitions

- Transgender (trans): A person who does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Cisgender (cis): A person who does identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Nonbinary (enby, NB): A person whose gender falls outside the gender binary of male or female.
- Transsexual or Transexual: An older term that has the same definition as *transgender*.
- Transgender man (trans man): A transgender individual whose gender aligns with being a binary male.
- Transmasculine (trans masc): A description for a transgender or nonbinary individual whose gender is affiliated with being more masculine, but not necessarily a binary male.
- Transgender woman (trans woman): A transgender individual whose gender aligns with being a binary female.
- Transfeminine (trans femme): A description for a transgender or nonbinary individual whose gender is affiliated with being more feminine, but not necessarily a binary female.
- Gender dysphoria: A feeling of discomfort or distress that may occur in people whose gender differs from the sex they were assigned at birth.
- Gender euphoria: A feeling of joy or happiness that may occur in people when their gender is in alignment with how they dress, behave, or are treated.

Transgender and Nonbinary



With a topic as personal and individualized as gender and gender identity, there is often no universal way to describe the nuance of being transgender or nonbinary. Regardless of anything else, *transgender* and *nonbinary* overlap in one crucial area: **people who are transgender or nonbinary are not cis.**

Outdated Language

It is important to note that some terms are now considered outdated and incorrect.

- Transvestite: A crossdresser.
- Crossdresser: A “man in a woman’s clothes” or “woman in a man’s clothes,” which are incorrect phrases formerly used to refer to transgender people.
- Transsexual or Transexual: An older term that has the same definition as *transgender*.

The term *transsexual/transsexual* is frequently encountered with older transgender individuals who still use it to describe their gender. It is important to respect individual preference and refer to people as they want to and should be referred to. All three of these terms are commonly seen in texts about the LGBTQ+ community from the late 20th century.

Writing About Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals

Below are some of the most commonly encountered scenarios when referring to transgender and nonbinary people.

- Say: “[Person] is transgender” or “[Person] is nonbinary.”
 - *Not* “[Person] identifies as...”
 - *Not* “[Person] is transgendered.”

“Transgendered” is not a noun; the correct word is transgender. Additionally, people do not “identify as” transgender or nonbinary—they simply *are*. Therefore, we want to use the language that reflects this most accurately.

- Say: “[Person] transitioned.”
 - *Not* “[Person] transgendered.”
 - *Not* “[Person] changed genders.”

“Transgendered” is also not a verb. When we are describing the social or medical process of someone living as their correct gender, we use the word *transition*. This word can be used as a noun: “Their *transition* started six months ago.” Or it can be used as a verb: “She *transitioned* six months ago.” Furthermore, people do not change genders; we again want to use *transition* to describe the personal process of someone living as the correct gender.

- Say: “[Person]’s pronouns are...”
 - *Not* “[Person]’s preferred pronouns are...”

We do not have preferred pronouns; we have pronouns. Oftentimes, we ask transgender or nonbinary people for their “preferred pronouns,” but we ask cisgender people for their “pronouns.” This lack of consistency disrespects the validity of transgender and nonbinary people’s pronouns; it implies that they *prefer* these pronouns, but you can call them by whatever pronouns you want.

- Say: “[Person]’s gender is...”
 - *Not* “[Person]’s gender identity is...”

Similar to preferred pronouns, when we use “gender identity,” we suggest that someone only identifies as transgender or nonbinary when instead they simply *are* transgender or nonbinary.

Activity: Recognizing Definitions

Read the descriptions below carefully and identify which term or identity they are describing.

1. Someone who does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth.
2. An individual whose gender falls outside the gender binary.
3. A feeling of happiness that may occur when a person dresses in a way that aligns with their gender.
4. A transgender individual whose gender aligns with being a binary female.
5. A nonbinary individual whose gender aligns with being more masculine but not a binary male.

Answer Key for Activity

1. Transgender
2. Nonbinary
3. Gender euphoria
4. Transgender woman (trans woman)
5. Transmasculine (trans masc)

References

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