

# Transgender Terminology

## Sex vs. Gender

Sex refers to attributes that characterize biological maleness and femaleness. In humans, the best known attributes that constitute biological sex include the sex-determining genes, the sex chromosomes, internal reproductive structures, the external genitalia, and secondary sexual characteristics—features that tend to appear during puberty, especially those that distinguish the sexes. Gender refers to the psychological, behavioral, or cultural characteristics associated with maleness and femaleness.

## Gender Binary

This is a term referring to how society puts people into an either/or category of boy/girl. Some find this concept confining because many characteristics of maleness and femaleness overlap each other and very few people completely fit the stereotyped typical 100% feminine or 100% masculine (see Gender Role).

## Gender Role

Gender role refers to behaviors, attitudes, and personality traits that a society, in a given socio-cultural context or historical period, designates as masculine or feminine, or that is more typical of a male or female social role. These vary across and even within cultures.

## Sex Role

A sex role is distinct from a gender role in that it identifies a function or role that is unique and exclusive to a particular biological sex, as opposed to a social role generally assigned to or expected of one sex or another. An example of a sex role would be gestating, giving birth to, or breast-feeding a child. As much as a biological male may wish to give birth to a child, it's not physically possible. An example of a gender role may be financial provider or cook; while it may be more common or expected in a given culture for a male to be a financial provider, in many cases a woman may be the financial provider in the home.

## Gender Identity

Gender identity refers to a person's self-experienced or self-perceived basic sense of relative maleness (masculinity) or femaleness (femininity).

## **Gender Expression**

Gender expression refers to the way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture; for example, through masculine or feminine behaviors, clothing, hair, communication patterns, and interests. A person's gender expression may or may not be consistent with socially prescribed gender roles, and may or may not reflect his or her gender identity.

## **Gender Variance**

Gender variance refers to the behavior, appearance, or identity of persons who cross, transcend, or do not conform to culturally defined norms for persons of their biological sex.

## **Gender Non-Conforming**

This refers to a person who does not conform to society's expected ways of 'being' a man or woman. An example could include a woman who chooses to become a truck driver but does not see herself as a man, and this could also include a young boy who wants to play dolls with the girls and experiences himself as more female than male. A gender nonconforming person may or may not feel distressed over his or her birth sex and may be non-conforming to a large or small degree.

## **Gender Dysphoria**

Gender dysphoria is a discomfort characterized by a feeling of incongruence between one's chromosomal or natal sex and one's internal sense of gender. It is also the new official diagnostic category in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) and does not inherently denote a disorder as the DSM-IV-TR did with its diagnostic category of Gender Identity Disorder (GID). The experience of gender incongruence and resulting gender dysphoria may take many forms and, thus, is considered to be a multicategory concept, and the DSM-5 acknowledges the wide variation of gender-variant conditions.

## **Gender Identity Disorder**

Gender Identity Disorder (GID) was a psychiatric diagnosis of gender incongruence first defined in the DSM-III. Its principal diagnostic criteria were gender dysphoria and strong and persistent cross-gender identification, resulting in clinically significant distress or impairment in social or occupational functioning. While it is no longer an official diagnostic category, because it was the diagnostic category that framed the research questions for over 30 years, it is still occasionally heard or seen in literature on this topic.

## Transgender

Transgender is a popular cultural term typically used as an umbrella term for many different identities. People who identify transgender have a gender identity and/or gender expression that does not line up with their biological sex. It's also important to understand, however, that "transgender" is a cultural identity construct and not all people who are gender variant or who experience gender dysphoria identify as transgender, so its employment as an umbrella term, as oppose to an identity construct within the larger umbrella of gender variance, is somewhat problematic.

## Cross-Dressing

Dressing up as another gender, usually the opposite gender. A man might wear a dress, wig, and makeup, or he might just wear female undergarments that only he knows about. A woman might attempt to look completely masculine in hair cut, clothing, and demeanor, or she might just prefer some masculine clothing items. (See also: gender expression.)

## Androgynous

Being neither distinctly male or female in the way one dresses and acts. This may or may not refer to a third gender. A person can appear androgynous and be neither gender dysphoric or experience same-sex attraction, or they may appear androgynous and experience one or both.

## Gender Queer

An informal, colloquial term referring to the experience of not neatly fitting into the package of male, female, or transgender. Sometimes this term has a political undertone inferring that the person is deliberately and openly disavowing themselves from society's ideas of the gender binary which they find to be restrictive or prejudiced. This person probably would describe themselves as the "third gender" or as "gender fluid." (See also: Gender Non-Conforming)

## Gender Fluid

This term refers to the experience that some describe as floating between the genders, and can change from day to day or year to year. A person might experience feeling very feminine and in sync with feminine norms, and then through life experiences might align more with a feeling of being aligned with more masculine norms. This person would not necessarily self-identify as "transgender" because sometimes he or she does not experience being transgender at all.

## **Intersex Conditions or Disorders/Differences of Sex Development (DSDs)**

An intersex condition—now usually referred to as disorders (or differences) of sexual development or DSDs—is when a person is born with some atypical biological characteristics that are both male and female. This can manifest itself in ambiguous genitalia, development of secondary sex characteristics that are inconsistent with genitalia, atypical chromosomes (i.e., XXY or XYY), or in other ways are different from the typical development of male or female. Gender dysphoria may occur in individuals with a DSD, and some Intersex individuals may identify as transgender, but transgendered and intersex individuals are typically seen as being in separate categories to take actions aligned with the will of our Heavenly Father. In section 38.7.7 of the Handbook, under the heading "Individuals Whose Sex at Birth is Not Clear," the Church counsels that "special compassion and wisdom are required when youth or adults who were born with sexual ambiguity experience emotional conflict regarding the gender decisions made in infancy of childhood and the gender with which they identify" and says that questions should be directed to the Office of the First Presidency.