

Trans 101, glossary of trans words and how to use them.

Introduction

We say ‘transgender,’ or ‘trans’ as catch all terms for all gender minorities and people with diverse sex characteristics, including for example, intersex, transsexual, non-binary, and takataapui gender diverse people.

”Diverse” means there is much variety, while a ”Minority Group” is a category of people who are seen as different to the social majority, and are often discriminated against on that basis, or protected under anti-discrimination legislation.

Acknowledgements

Gender Minorities Aotearoa acknowledges that language is always evolving, thus some of the terms here will not fit with how people know themselves to be. This glossary is a 101 guide only, please see links at the bottom of our glossary web page for other glossaries and interpretations of gender language.

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Mae irawhiti, or mae irahuri.

Content begins.

Gender or Gender Identity (same same).

One's actual, internal sense of being male or female, neither of these, both, etc. In some circles, gender identity is falling out of favour, as one does not simply identify as a gender, but is that gender.

Transgender.

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is culturally typically associated with the gender/sex they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms or may simply use transgender. Some of those terms are defined below. Some people who fit this definition may not consider themselves to be under the transgender umbrella or transgender. Use the descriptive term preferred by the individual.

Many transgender people are prescribed hormones by their doctors to change their bodies. Some undergo surgery as well. But not all transgender people can or will want to take those steps, and a transgender identity is not dependent upon medical

procedures. The term transgender is not indicative of sexual orientation, hormonal makeup, physical anatomy, or how one is perceived in daily life.

Transsexual.

An older term coined by clinicians. Still preferred by some people who have changed or seek to change their bodies – this can involve hormone replacement therapy (HRT), genital reconstruction surgery (GRS), top surgery (removal of breasts), permanent facial and other hair removal, and/or other medical treatments.

In some circles, the term has started to fall out of favour due to its perceived focus on medical transition, however, those who prefer transsexual often see it as an important distinction due to the definitive experience of incongruity/dissonance/dysphoria with one's body, which is often the cause of specific medical needs.

Unlike transgender, transsexual is not an umbrella term. Many transgender people do not identify as transsexual and many transsexual people do not identify as transgender.

It is best to ask which term an individual prefers. If preferred, use as an adjective: for example transsexual woman, transsexual man, non-binary transsexual person.

Trans.

Trans is used as an abbreviation of either transgender or transsexual, or as an umbrella in the same way that transgender is used.

Trans*.

Some non-binary and other gender non-conforming people use trans* (with the asterisk, pronounced tran-star) to indicate that they're definitely not cis, but not necessarily a trans woman/man either.

Some use it as a broad umbrella of inclusivity. Others see trans* as unnecessary due to trans and transgender already existing as umbrella terms which capture all non-cis identities. In some areas trans* is gaining popularity while in others popularity is rapidly declining.

Cis, Cisgender and Cissexual.

Prefix or adjective that means not trans. Cisgender people identify more or less with the gender assigned to them at birth. In discussions regarding trans issues, one would

differentiate between women who are trans and women who aren't by saying trans women and cis women. Cis is not an insult, but a neutral descriptor – much like heterosexual is to homosexual.

Gender Expression or Presentation.

The physical expression of one's gender through clothing, hairstyle, voice, make up, body shape, etc. Most transgender people seek to make their gender expression (how they look) match their gender (who they are).

Sex.

The system for assignment and classification of people as male or female based on imprecise perceptions of their physical anatomy – generally the appearance of their external genitalia at birth. Sex is not fixed or immutable, and no single criterion (e.g. genitals, chromosomes, hormones, fertility) definitively describes one's bodily shape or configuration.

Sex characteristics.

Sex characteristics include external genitalia, gonads or reproductive organs and fertility, gametes, chromosomes, sex hormones. Secondary sex characteristics include breast development, patterns of hair growth such as facial hair and body hair, voice development, and may be said to include many other features of development based on sex characteristics. These can be natal or may change later, including through medical treatments.

The Sex Binary.

An incorrect system of viewing sex as consisting solely of two categories, termed male and female, with two sets of matching chromosomes, hormone levels, reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. The sex binary assumes that sex is immutable biological fact and asserts that no other possibilities or anatomy are believed to exist, or should be allowed to exist.

This system is oppressive, and is a cause of marginalisation for people who do not fit within the sex binary, including many trans and intersex people.

A.F.A.B. and A.M.A.B. (sometimes C.A.F.A.B. and C.A.M.A.B.).

Acronyms meaning assigned female at birth or assigned male at birth. When

the 'C' is added, it stands for 'coercively'.

In cases when it's necessary to refer to the birth-assigned sex of a trans person, this is the best way to do it.

The Gender Binary.

Similar to the sex binary, the gender binary is an incorrect system of viewing gender as consisting solely of two categories, termed male and female, in which no other possibilities for gender or anatomy are believed to exist. Gender is not fixed or immutable, and no physical criterion (e.g. genitals, chromosomes, hormones) defines one's gender. Gender is experiential, and only the person themselves can define their gender. The gender binary system is oppressive, and is a cause of marginalisation for people who do not fit within the gender binary.

Trans Woman.

Trans woman refers to a woman who was assigned male at birth.

She may or may not be identified by others as trans, and may or may not identify herself as trans. It is grammatically and definitionally correct to include a space between trans and woman.

Trans Man.

Trans man refers to a man who was assigned female at birth.

He may or may not be identified by others as trans, and may or may not identify himself as trans. It is grammatically and definitionally correct to include a space between trans and man.

Binary.

Used as an adjective to describe the binary genders female/woman/girl or male/man/boy.

Non-Binary.

Preferred umbrella term for all genders other than female/woman/girl or male/man/boy. Use as an adjective (e.g. Elsa is a binary trans woman and Jesse is non-binary).

Transition.

Transitioning from being seen as one's birth assigned gender to one's actual gender. Transition generally initially includes social elements such as changing one's clothes, hair, name (socially and maybe legally), changing the gender marker on one's legal documents, binding breasts or wearing breast forms, etc. It may also include medical treatments such as laser hair

removal, hormone replacement therapy, or various surgeries.

There is no wrong way to transition, and no singular right way.

Sexual Orientation.

A person's enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to others. Gender identity and sexual orientation are not the same.

Trans people can be heterosexual, gay, lesbian, pansexual, queer, etc. just like anyone else. For example, a trans woman who is primarily attracted to other women may identify as lesbian.

Asexual Orientation.

A person's enduring physical, romantic, emotional and/or spiritual attraction to others.

An asexual person is not primarily

motivated by sexual drive and sexual attractions, though they may experience sexual attraction in some circumstances or have sexual

relationships for a vast number of different reasons other than primary sexual attraction.

Bisexual.

Currently being redefined by bisexual rights activists to mean that one is

attracted to both their own gender, as well as other genders. This better reflects the experience of many bisexual people (rather than simply attracted to binary men and binary women).

In common use, most bisexual people identify as being attracted to men

and women. Some bisexual rights activists say this interpretation is 'biphobia', or stigma against bisexuals, erasing their attraction to non-binary people. However, as it is bisexuals themselves who commonly identify as being attracted to men and women, this is an ongoing topic of debate.

Bisexuality is believed by some to be the most common sexual orientation, more common than heterosexuality. This is due to pervasive instances of people identifying as heterosexual at times but bisexual when safe to do so.

Pansexual.

Pansexual means being open to attraction to people of any gender, and inherently, explicitly includes transgender and non-binary genders.

Some pansexuals experience attractions based on characteristics other than gender. Some experience gender as a primary part of their attractions, but they have these attractions to people of all genders. Pansexual does not necessarily mean without preference.

In the time when 'bisexual' was broadly understood to mean "attraction to both males and females", those who wanted to acknowledge being attracted also to non-binary people, or whose own gender was non-binary or trans, coined the term pansexual.

Note:

There is some conflict between pansexual and bisexual activists. While some texts will say that pansexual is under 'the bisexual umbrella' or 'part of the bisexual community', others will say bisexual comes under the broader 'pansexual umbrella'.

Some bisexual rights activists claim that pansexual is a biphobic identity that erases their non-binary attraction. Some pansexual rights activists claim that this position assumes pansexuality is not a legitimate sexual orientation, and is thus panphobic.

Be cautious when discussing pansexual and bisexual in relation to one another.

Heteroflexible or Homoflexible.

Similar to bisexual or pansexual, but with a stated heterosexual or homosexual preference respectively.

Heteroflexible indicates that one is primarily interested in heterosexual relationships but is “flexible” when it comes to sexual activities.

Homoflexible, indicates that one is primarily interested in homosexual relationships but is “flexible” when it comes to sexual activities.

Chaser.

A person who sees trans people (usually trans women) as inherently sexual, and sexually objectifies them. As opposed to someone who simply is predominantly attracted to trans women; a chaser

does not view trans women respectfully as whole people with humanity and agency, but rather as players in a sexual fantasy.

Heteronormative or Heteronormativity.

This refers to the deeply held institutional belief that relationships between heterosexual masculine cis men and heterosexual feminine cis women are normal/natural/right, while all other relationships are viewed as abnormal/inferior/wrong. It refers to systems and society being structured around this assumption.

Queer.

Broadly used to indicate that one rejects heteronormativity and is not heterosexual – though sometimes queer is also used by heterosexual transgender people.

Queer is inherently political; rejecting enforced heterosexual narratives, and rejecting assimilationist homonormative respectability politics that reinforce them. In more simple terms, queer rejects "we're just like you" as the reason LGBTI+ people should have rights.

The term "Queer" was originally a slur reclaimed by Black, trans, disabled, HIV+, and other more marginalised rainbow people (particularly people of colour) who could not and did not assimilate into mainstream white gay culture that heterosexuals found more palatable.

'Queer' was a response to white gay, lesbian, and bisexual people who didn't respect them, and were happy to throw their rights under the bus to distance themselves from "the radical queers"

as "the respectable ones".

Queer is sometimes used as an umbrella term to mean LGBTI+, or 'not heterosexual and/or not cisgender', though many queer people reject this. Because of the non-heterosexual connotation, many heterosexual trans people do not like to be called queer and may see this as being misgendered and called homosexual.

The word queer has long been used as a slur, so although it is commonly reclaimed, be a little cautious with its use.

Genderqueer.

Similar to queer, but more specific to rejecting binary genders.

Those who identify as genderqueer may identify as neither male nor female, may see themselves as outside of or in between the binary gender boxes,

or may simply feel restricted by gender labels. Some genderqueer people do identify within the binary (e.g. "genderqueer woman"), but reject the conventions and expectations associated with that gender.

Sexqueer.

A rejection of labeling one's physical body as female or male. Being sexqueer is not indicative of one's current anatomy, birth assignment, or birth anatomy, and should definitely not be confused with intersex. (next page)

Intersex.

Describes a range of conditions where person has a variation of sex characteristics from birth (as opposed to through taking hormones or having surgeries). Variations of sex characteristics means their sex characteristics are ambiguous in the context of the male/female sex binary.

A person may not know they have an intersex condition until they reach puberty and their body changes differently than expected, however most people who are diagnosed with an intersex condition were diagnosed at birth.

When an intersex infant is born with ambiguous external genitalia, parents and clinicians typically assign them a binary sex and perform surgical operations to conform the infant's body to that assignment.

This practice is oppressive and is increasingly recognised as unethical and abusive; as intersex adults are speaking out against having been made to undergo potentially harmful medical procedures which they did not consent to.

Being intersex does not necessarily imply anything regarding one's gender, anatomy, orientation, or trans status.

Cross-dresser.

Most commonly used to describe someone who primarily identifies with their birth assigned gender, but enjoys dressing as other genders.

Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression and for many, this is an integral part of their identity. Cross dressing is not necessarily tied to erotic activity, nor is it indicative of one's sexual orientation.

Do NOT use this term to describe someone unless they self identify with this word.

Queens, Drag Queens, Drag Kings, Drag.

Drag queens and drag kings are cross-dressing performers who take on stylised, exaggerated gender presentations for show. For many, this is also an integral part of their identity.

Historically, before the term "transsexual" was coined in the 1970's, the term drag queen or simply 'Queen'

referred to trans women, whereas men who cross dressed as women exclusively for performance were called 'butch queens'. Many older trans women in New Zealand still prefer the term Queen, however others may see this as an insult. Use with extreme caution, and always follow the trans person's lead.

Gender Fluid, bigender.

These are non-binary gender identities that indicate shifting between different genders or presentations. They are similarly used by those who feel they have both male and female sides to their personalities, such as some drag queens, some drag kings, and some cross-dressers. Do not confuse these terms with Two-Spirit - a gender identity specific to certain Native American and First Nations cultures.

Neutrois and Agender.

One who feels neutral in their gender or who rejects the influence of gender on their person. Sometimes the term 'nongendered' is used similarly.

Identifying as neutrois or agender is

not indicative of one's anatomy, birth assignment, or pronoun use, and can be used in conjunction with another gender

signifier, for example neutrois woman.

Androgyne.

A person who feels both masculine and feminine, or who has a gender expression with both masculine and feminine characteristics. Again, only use this term if it is the person's own self identification.

Femme.

An identity or presentation of non-heteronormative, reclaimed, queer femininity. Femme can be an adjective (he's a femme boy), a verb (she loves to femme up), or a noun (they're a femme).

Although commonly associated with feminine lesbian/queer women, it's used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one also identifies as a woman.

Butch.

An identity or presentation of non-heteronormative, reclaimed, queer

masculinity. Butch can be an adjective (she's a butch woman), a verb (he went home to butch up), or a noun (they identify as a butch).

Although commonly associated with masculine queer/lesbian women, it's used by many to describe a distinct gender identity and/or expression, and does not necessarily imply that one also identifies as a woman.

Gender Dysphoria.

Clinical term referring to dissonance between one's assigned gender and/or one's body, and one's personal sense of self. Prior to the DSM-V, the term "gender identity disorder" was used, but that was removed as it often led to gender variance being stigmatised and misdiagnosed as a pathological condition.

'Gender Dysphoria' is now similarly being moved away from, in favor of 'Gender Incongruence'.

Transphobia.

Fear, discomfort, distrust, or hatred directed towards trans people or trans concepts. This word is used similarly to homophobia, etc. Some transphobia is based in ideas about naturalness, realness, and misconceptions around scientific fact or biology.

Some transphobia is based in religious ideologies. Some transphobia is based on ideas of gender oppression revolving around reproductive capacity (gender essentialism). There are many factors which contribute to transphobia.

Transmisogyny.

The combination of misogyny, or hatred of women, with transphobia. A key aspect is the double bind – trans

women are presumed to embody the worst of "masculinity" - sexually aggressive or predatory, violent, and domineering, when that is convenient for those who would mistreat them, but are also treated with the worst of misogyny – as objects to be used, without

agency, hypersexualised, as though their existence is too seductive, and as though they are over emotional and irrational - when that is convenient for those who would mistreat them.

The result of this stigma is discrimination and violence (including intimate partner and sexual violence), at much higher rates than women in the general population.

In a patriarchal society it is seen as a threat to masculinity and to the power of men when people who could have been men reject manhood in favor of a lower status position – womanhood. As such, trans women are often treated with abjection, or transmisogyny, both

interpersonally and structurally.

It is also in the best interest of those who would mistreat trans women to ensure that society sees trans women in this way, so there are dedicated anti-trans extremists manufacturing misinformation constantly.

T.E.R.F.

Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism, or 'Fundamentalist Feminism', is a small but very vocal sub section of 'Radical Feminism'. Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism is generally focused on removing human rights, legal protections, access to medical treatments, and supportive social environments for transgender people. Their core belief is biological essentialism - the incorrect idea that biology is fixed and unchangeable, and supercedes culture, social influences, and everything else. They believe that to be classified as a woman, one must have the biology from birth which would enable them to bear children. This contradicts their other claims that 'woman' is an experience of oppression under patriarchy, which by definition would include trans women.

Fundamentalist feminists also tend to be anti-sex worker's rights, anti-kink, anti-vaccination, anti-pharmaceuticals, and may be anti-contraceptives and anti-choice in relation to abortion.

Fundamentalist feminists have strong links to primitivism, “back to nature”, fundamentalist western family values, and sometimes fundamentalist religious views.

While not all anti-trans extremists are TERFs, all TERFs are anti-trans extremists, which is our preferred terminology.

Cissexism and Cissupremacy.

Bias in favor of cis people over trans people, or beliefs that cis people are inherently superior to trans, more real, more natural, etc. This often refers to systems which advantage cis people over trans people or unconscious systems of thought, rather than transphobic individuals

Passing.

Being read is the gender one wishes to be read as (usually used in a binary cisgender context). The term ‘passing’ is falling out of fashion as it is seen to imply that one should desire to look cisgender.

Bottom Surgery, SRS, or GRS.

Bottom surgery, Sexual Reconstruction Surgery (SRS) or Genital Reconstruction Surgery (GRS), refer to several different types of gender affirmation or transition related surgical procedures which alter the patients genitalia.

These terms are preferred over “sex change operation” or anything with “reassignment.” Not all transgender people choose to or can afford to have GRS.

Overemphasising the importance of GRS to the transition or affirmation process should be avoided.

Te Reo Māori:

NB: Te reo Māori words are more correctly spelled with a macron (Māori) rather than a double letter (Maaori). However, as many of our resources are online, and using macrons online can be problematic, we sometimes use double letters instead of macrons. It is more important that you pronounce the long 'ā' sound, than it is that you use a macron. It is OK to use double letters if you can't use macrons.

Takataapui, or Takatāpui.

Takatāpui refers to Māori who are not heterosexual and/or not cisgender.

It is used both as a gender identity (similar to transgender), as an attraction or sexual orientation (similar to lesbian, gay, bi, or pansexual). It is also used as an umbrella term for all

non-heterosexual and/or non-cisgender Māori people (similar to 'Rainbow Community').

Takatāpui – Rainbow Māori.

Often used to roughly mean "rainbow person" or "rainbow community", in a similar way to LGBTQI+.

Some say it is specific to Māori, others use it for all LGBTQI+ people broadly, as simply te reo Māori for rainbow people.

Māori culture has traditionally included and celebrated people of all genders, and their relationships to people of any gender. Māori culture includes all Māori people.

Despite Aotearoa becoming a British colony in 1840, and the resulting laws and value systems being hostile to takatāpui both historically and today; tikanga Māori continues to awhi and embrace takatāpui whānau.

At it's core, takatāpui is a Māori concept that sits within Māori culture, with it's own history and wairua, one very different to terms such as LGBTQI+.

There is no direct English translation, but these are some whakāro or ideas for thought.

Takataapui – Māori Genders.

Takataapui is used more specifically for Māori genders, including those on the next page.

Takataapui is often used as a gender of it's self – Māori transgender not-otherwise-specified. Some also use takatāpui to refer to non-Māori who are transgender and/or intersex.

Takatāpui – Attractions, Relationships, or Sexual Orientations. It is also used to refer to **wahine moe wahine** (women who sleep with women), **tāne moe tāne** (men who sleep with men).

A takatāpui person may fit the definitions or behaviours of a lesbian, pansexual, gay, bisexual, asexual, transgender, or intersex person, (etc.), but may not identify with western concepts or English words for these.

Tāhine, or ira tāhūrua-kore.

Mixed gender, non-binary, or transgender not-otherwise-specified. Outside of the binary.

Whakawahine.

Trans woman, or to become a woman.

Tangata ira wahine.

Trans woman, or with the spirit or gender of woman.

Whakatāne.

Trans man, or to become a man.

Tangata ira tāne.

Trans man, or with the spirit or gender of man.

Whakaputa ā-ira.

Gender expression.

Whakamana ira.

Gender affirming, or to have pride in ones gender.

Tuakiri ā-ira.

Gender identity.

Tīrengi ā-ira.

Gender dysphoria or anxiety.

Tikanga ā-ira whānui.

Gender norms.

Rerekētanga āhuatanga ā-ira.

Variations of sex characteristics.

Irawhiti.

Transgender, or gender that changes, transfers, or crosses over.

Irapūmau.

Cisgender, or permanent fixed gender.

Irakore.

Agender, or no gender.

Irakē.

GenderQueer, or different gender.

Irahuhua.

Gender diverse.

Huri ā-ira.

Gender fluidity.

Irahuri.

Gender fluid, or to turn, change, or move gender. Sometimes this can also mean transgender..

Mae irawhiti, or Mae irahuri.

Anti-trans, or transphobia.

NB: Many of these words are new; takatāpui, whakawahine, and whakatāne are older words, tāhine was coined in 2014, and many of the others were developed in 2019.

[Content ends.]

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