

# Transgender: Frequently Asked Questions



- Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression differs from those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.
- Gender identity is a person's innate, deeply-felt psychological identification as a man, woman, or some other gender. Gender expression refers to the external manifestation of a person's gender identity.
- Gender identity or expression is different from sexual orientation. A person who is transgender may or may not be gay.
- Being transgender is not a mental disorder.

## What Does The Word "Transgender" Mean?

**Transgender** – or trans – is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity or expression is different from those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth (e.g., the sex listed on their birth certificate).

Conversely, **cisgender** – or cis – is the term used to describe people whose gender identity or expression aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

## What Is Gender Identity And Gender Expression?

**Gender identity** refers to a person's innate, deeply-felt psychological identification as a man, woman or some other gender. **Gender expression** refers to the external manifestation of a person's gender identity, which may or may not conform to socially-defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

## What Is The Difference Between Sex and Gender?

**Sex** refers to the designation of a person at birth as either "male" or "female" based on their anatomy (e.g. reproductive organs) and/or their biology (e.g. hormones).

**Gender** refers to the traditional or stereotypical roles, behaviors, activities and attributes that a given society consider appropriate for men and women.

## What Does It Mean To Transition?

Transitioning is the process some transgender people go through to begin living as the gender with which they identify, rather than the sex assigned to them at birth. This may or may not include hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery and other medical procedures.

## What Do The Initial FTM and MTF Stand For?

**FTM** stands for female-to-male and refers to someone who was designated female at birth but identifies and expresses himself as a man. Many FTM transgender people prefer the term "trans man" to describe themselves. **MTF** stands for male-to-female

and refers to someone who was designated male at birth but who identifies and expresses herself as a woman. Many MTF transgender people prefer the term "trans woman" to describe themselves.

## What Does It Mean To Be "Genderqueer?"

Genderqueer is an umbrella term for gender identities other than man and woman. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories. Use this term only when an individual self-identifies as "genderqueer."

## What Is Gender Nonconforming?

Gender nonconforming is a broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.



Wheeler

CONNECTICUT  
Clearinghouse

a program of the Connecticut Center  
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

800.232.4424 (phone)

860.793.9813 (fax)

[www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org)

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

## What Is The Difference Between Being Transgender And Being Gay?

Being transgender is about an individual's gender identity. Being gay is about an individual's sexual orientation, which is their attraction to people of the same gender, different genders or both. Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different things.

## Is There A Difference Between Cross-Dressing And Being Transgender?

Yes, cross-dressing refers to people who wear clothing and/or makeup and accessories that are not traditionally associated with their biological sex.

Many people who cross-dress are comfortable with their assigned sex and generally do not wish to change it. Cross-dressing is a form of gender expression that is not necessarily indicative of a person's gender identity or sexual orientation.

## Is Being Transgender A Mental Disorder?

No, but this remains a common stereotype about transgender people.

Transgender identity is not a mental illness that can be cured with treatment. Rather, transgender people often experience a persistent and authentic disconnect between the sex assigned to them at birth and their internal sense of who they are. This disconnect is referred to by medical professionals as "gender dysphoria" because it can cause undue pain and distress in the lives of transgender people.

In December 2012, the American Psychiatric Association announced the latest version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) would no longer include the term "gender identity disorder." The revised manual replaced "gender identity disorder" with the more neutral term "gender dysphoria."

## Do All People Who Transition Have Surgery?

No, many transgender people can successfully transition without surgery. Some have no desire to pursue surgeries or medical intervention. At the same time, many transgender people cannot afford or access medical treatment. It is important that civil rights and protections are extended to all transgender people equally, regardless of their medical histories. It's also critical to continue advocating for full access to health care coverage for transgender people.

## How Do I Know Which Pronoun To Use?

Transgender people should be identified with their preferred pronoun. Often this is the pronoun that corresponds to the gender with which they identify. Not sure? It's appropriate to respectfully ask their name and which pronouns they'd prefer. Some transgender people do not believe in a gender binary and prefer not to use pronouns typically associated with men (e.g. him) and women (e.g. her). Instead, they would prefer if people simply used their names or used a non-gendered pronoun such as "they" or "them."

## Can Someone Be Fired For Being Transgender?

There are states where there is no state law protecting transgender people from being fired for being who they are. In the 2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 47 percent of respondents reported experiencing a negative job outcome – such as being fired, not hired or denied promotion – because they were transgender or gender non-conforming.

Copyright 2020 Human Rights Campaign Foundation. All Rights Reserved. Reproduced with permission. Any further use without the express written consent of Human Rights Campaign Foundation is prohibited.

## Connecticut Resources

CT Department of Mental  
Health and Addiction Services  
[www.ct.gov/DMHAS](http://www.ct.gov/DMHAS)

True Colors

[www.ourtruecolors.org](http://www.ourtruecolors.org)  
860.232.0050

## National Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Addiction Services  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

Human Rights Campaign  
Foundation  
[www.hrc.org](http://www.hrc.org)

