



Frequently Asked Questions

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 gender 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 gender assigned to them at birth.

What’s the difference between sex and gender?

Sex refers to the identity given to given to them at birth, most often based on their external anatomy. This is typically male or female when it is assigned to them by doctors, parents and medical professionals. Sex refers to a set of biological attributes in humans and animals. It is primarily associated with physical and physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone levels and function, and reproductive/sexual anatomy.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender diverse people. It influences how people perceive themselves and each other, how they act and interact, and the distribution of power and resources in society.

What does it mean to transition?

Transitioning is the time period during which a person begins to live according to their gender identity, rather than the gender they were assigned at birth. While not all transgender people transition, a great many do at some point in their lives. Gender transition may include changing appearance, name, identification documents, hormone therapy and/or surgery.

What is gender non-conforming?

This is an umbrella term referring to people who do not identify in a way that conforms to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category. Some gender non-conforming people identify as non-binary, genderqueer, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender or other identities that reflect their personal experience.

What’s the difference between being transgender and being gay?

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



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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 gender 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. 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 gender 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 anxiety and distress in the lives of transgender people.

What is gender dysphoria?

Gender dysphoria is a medical term that refers to the psychological distress a person may feel when their gender is misaligned with their sex assigned at birth. Some may experience it as an acute pain, while others may experience it as an overarching sense of unease. Although many transgender and non-binary people experience gender dysphoria, it is not a necessary requirement to identify as transgender or non-binary.

How do I know which pronouns to use?

When referring to a transgender person you should always use their chosen name and/or pronouns. If you are unsure about what pronouns to use, it's appropriate to respectfully ask their name and which pronouns they'd prefer.

Can someone be fired for being transgender?

No. In 2020 the Supreme Court (*Bostock v. Clayton County*) ruled that discrimination in employment is illegal. Transgender people are protected from discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Unfortunately, discrimination is still a problem. In the 2015 National Transgender Survey, found that 30 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.

Additionally, there are no state-wide legal protections from other forms of discrimination including in education, housing, or public accommodation in 27 states.