



# A glossary: Defining transgender terms

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The language used to describe the experience of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals is evolving rapidly—and there continues to be disagreement about it. Still, with that caveat, here are key concepts as defined by the task force that developed APA's "Guidelines for Psychological Practice With Transgender and Gender Nonconforming People."

**Cisgender:** Used to describe an individual whose gender identity and gender expression align with the sex assigned at birth.

**Gender binary:** The classification of gender into two discrete categories of male and female.

**Gender dysphoria:** Discomfort or distress related to an incongruence between an individual's gender identity and the gender assigned at birth.

**Gender expression:** Clothing, physical appearance and other external presentations and behaviors that express aspects of gender identity or role.

**Gender identity:** An internal sense of being male, female or something else, which may or may not correspond to an individual's sex assigned at birth or sex characteristics.

**Gender nonconforming:** Describes an individual whose gender identity or gender expression differs from the gender norms associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Genderqueer:** Describes an individual whose gender identity doesn't align with a binary understanding of gender, including those who think of themselves as both male and female, neither, moving between genders, a third gender or outside of gender altogether.

**Trans-affirmative:** Being aware of, respectful and supportive of the needs of transgender and gender-nonconforming individuals.

**Transgender:** An umbrella term encompassing those whose gender identities or gender roles differ from those typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Transition:** The process of shifting toward a gender role different from that assigned at birth, which can include social transition, such as new names, pronouns and clothing, and medical transition, such as hormone therapy or surgery.

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