

InsideOUT Terminology Handout

Sex, Gender, Sexuality & Other Key Terms



Sex



Endosex

A person who possesses sex characteristics (ie. genitals, gonads) that would have them classified as male or female at birth.

Intersex

An umbrella term used to describe *differences in sex traits or reproductive anatomy*. People are sometimes born with these differences, or they may develop in puberty. There are many different ways these *diversities in genitalia, hormones, internal anatomy or chromosomes* show up; there are up to 40 different intersex variations. Another umbrella term used to describe intersex is 'variations in sex characteristics' (VSC) or in medical environments 'differences in sex development' (DSD).

While the word intersex describes a range of natural body variations, many people will not identify with this or other related terminologies or even know about them. Many of the language that has evolved to describe sex diversity has been informed by medicalised and legal western concepts and later reclaimed by activist communities.

Sex

Refers to how a person's **body** is *classified* based on genitals, chromosomes, gonads etc. People often conflate sex and gender.

Gender



Agender

An identity that means '*without*' *gender*. Individuals who identify this way relate to being a person who has an internal sense of being neither male nor female, nor some other particular gender.

Bigender

A bigender person can be any two genders at the same time, or go back and forth between the two. Some bigender people use different names and/or pronouns for each gender.

Cisgender

A term used to describe someone whose **gender** '*aligns with*' the **sex** they were assigned at birth. For example, a person who was assigned female at birth and identifies as a girl, woman, or wahine.

Drag

The act of *dressing* in gendered (often exaggerated) clothing as part of a performance. This performance *does not* necessarily indicate a person's sexuality, gender identity or sex, however, for many, this can be an integral part of their identity.

Gender

How we identify and describe ourselves based on the roles, expectations and assumptions we are socialised into. We are assigned/designated a gender at birth based on our sex characteristics, but not everyone's gender aligns with the one they were assigned. Gender is understood differently across cultures and throughout history.

Gender Diverse

Usually used as an **umbrella term** for a diverse range of gender identities, including culturally specific ones. This term especially relates to those whose gender identities are situated outside of the binary of men and women, but who may not use the term 'transgender' or 'trans' to describe themselves, although it can also encompass those who do.

Gender expression

How a person expresses their sense of gender through their clothes, mannerisms, voice, and other forms of expression. Gender expression does not always align with a person's gender identity, e.g. a cisgender man might wear typically 'feminine' clothing.

Genderfluid

Describes a person whose gender identity is not fixed, and may change over time. They may feel like a mix of both man and woman, and may feel more masculine on some days and more feminine on others, or a combination of both or neither. The frequency of this depends on the individual.

In The Manner Of A Woman

FA'AFAFINE (SAMOA)

MAHU (TAHITI/HAWAII)

VAKA SE LEWA LEWA (FIJI)

PALOPA (PAPUA NEW GUINEA)

AKAVA'INE (COOK ISLANDS)

FAKALEITI/LEITI (TONGA)

FAKAFIFINE (NIUE)

PINAPINAAINE/BINABINAAINE (TUVALU & KIRIBATI)

RAE RAE (TAHITI)

HAKA HUAHINE (TOKELAU)

Terms that some Pasifika people may use to describe their *gender*.

These terms do not have a Western equivalent, but are usually translated to mean '**in the manner of a woman**.' Their meanings are best understood ***within their cultural context*** and may mean something different to each individual.

In The Manner Of A Man

FA'ATAMA/FA'AFATAMA (SAMOA)

MĀHŪKĀNE (HAWAII)

BINABINAMANE (KIRIBATI)

Terms that some Pasifika people may use to describe their *gender*.

These terms do not have a Western equivalent, but are usually translated to mean '**in the manner of a man**.' Their meanings are best understood ***within their cultural context*** and may mean something different to each individual.

Non-binary

An *umbrella term* used to encompass people who may or may not identify with being **transgender**, and their gender may not fit into a **binary of man or woman**. Can also be used as an individual gender identity.

Tāhine

Tāhine is a relatively new Māori term, roughly translating as non-binary (a portmanteau of 'tāne' and 'wahine'). This term has been used more broadly, so could be used to describe a transgender woman, a transgender man, or a non-binary or genderfluid trans person.

Takatāpui

A traditional Māori word that literally translated means '*intimate friend of the same sex*' It has since been embraced to encompass *all Maori who identify with diverse genders, sexes and sexualities*. Takatāpui denotes a spiritual and cultural connection to the past.

This term is best understood ***within its cultural context*** and may mean something different to each individual.

TANGATA IRA TANE (MĀORI)

A term that some Māori people may use to describe their *gender*. This term does not have a Western equivalent, but is usually translated to mean '**in the manner of a man.**'

Its meaning is best understood ***within its cultural context*** and may mean something different to each individual.

Transgender

A term used to describe someone whose **gender** '*does not align*' with the **sex** they were assigned at birth. For example, someone who was assigned as male at birth who identifies as a woman. The term transgender can apply both to those with a binary gender (man/woman) and those whose gender falls outside of a gender binary. However, not all non-binary or gender diverse people would describe themselves as transgender.

Trans woman

A transgender person who was *assigned male* at birth but *identifies* as a **woman**.

Trans man

A transgender person who was *assigned female* at birth but *identifies* as a **man**.

WHAKAWĀHINE (MĀORI)

A term that some Māori people may use to describe their *gender*. This term does not have a Western equivalent, but is usually translated to mean '**in the manner of a woman.**'

Its meaning is best understood ***within its cultural context*** and may mean something different to each individual.

Sexuality



Aromantic

Someone who experiences *little or no* **romantic attraction** and/or a *lack of interest* in forming **romantic relationships**. Aromantic people may experience other forms of attraction such as platonic, spiritual, sexual, aesthetic or mental attraction. This identity exists on a spectrum, with people experiencing different degrees of aromanticism.

Asexual

Someone who experiences *little to no* **sexual attraction** and/or *lacks interest or desire* for **sexual relationships or activity**. Asexual people may experience other forms of attraction, such as platonic, spiritual, romantic, aesthetic or mental attraction. This identity exists on a spectrum, with people experiencing different degrees of asexuality.

Bisexual

Commonly understood to mean ‘attracted to men and women’.

A more accurate and inclusive definition is a person who is **sexually attracted** to people of *more than one gender, or their own and other genders*. Bisexual people can have differing levels of attraction for different genders.

Demisexual

Someone who does *not experience* **sexual** or **physical attraction** to another person *until they have formed* an **emotional** or **romantic connection** with that person.

Gay

Someone who is **attracted** to the *same gender* as themselves. Gay is also commonly being used by young people as an *umbrella term* that encompasses **diverse sexualities**.

Homosexual

Someone who is *exclusively attracted* to those of the **same gender**. Can refer to someone who is gay or lesbian. While some do self-identify with this term, others report that they do not due to its history of being used in a clinical or negative way.

Heterosexual

A person who is *exclusively attracted* to people of a **different gender** than their own. Can refer to someone who is straight.

Lesbian

A woman or gender diverse person who is *exclusively attracted* to **women** and self-identifies as such. This term was often used as a political identifier and its definition has expanded over time.

Pansexual

Someone who is **attracted** to people *regardless of sex, gender or gender expression* or someone who is **attracted** to *all genders*.

Queer

A reclaimed word that is often used as an *umbrella term* encompassing **diverse sexuality and gender identities**. It can also be used as an individual identity for someone who is either not cisgender or not heterosexual, and is often preferred by people who desire a more fluid term to describe their gender or sexuality.

Takatāpui

A traditional Māori word that literally translated means ‘*intimate friend of the same sex*’ It has since been embraced to encompass *all Maori who identify* with **diverse sexes, genders and sexualities**. Takatāpui denotes a spiritual and cultural connection to the past.

This term is best understood *within its cultural context* and may mean something different to each individual.

Other Key Terms



Biphobia

Discrimination towards bisexual people or bisexuality. This may include negative stereotyping or denying the existence of bisexual people. Biphobia can come from people who identify either within or outside of rainbow communities.

Cisnormativity

A framework of understanding gender that privileges cisgender people, positing it as the ‘norm’, while marginalising people who aren’t cisgender. This includes inferring that those who are trans, non-binary or gender diverse are not as normal or ‘natural’ as cisgender people.

Coming out

The process through which a person discloses their gender, sexuality, or sex characteristics. Most people first come out to themselves before sharing this information with others. Coming out is a lifelong process for many rainbow people, rather than a one-off event.

Gender-affirming healthcare

An umbrella term encompassing transition-related healthcare and medical procedures which some (but not all) trans and non-binary people undergo to affirm their gender. This can include taking puberty blockers, gender-affirming hormones, or having gender-affirming surgery.

Gender dysphoria

The disconnect between a person's body and their gender. Everyone experiences dysphoria differently, but dysphoria can often cause distress, anxiety, depression, or trauma. These feelings are influenced by social factors too, such as the disconnect between how a person sees themselves and how others see their gender (e.g., being misgendered). The discomfort dysphoria can cause can be so intense that it can interfere with a person's ability to function in normal life, such as at school, work, or during social activities. Gender dysphoria, or gender incongruence, are also medical diagnoses which trans people are sometimes required to get before accessing gender-affirming healthcare. This requirement, however, is becoming rarer as best practice guidelines change in efforts to depathologise gender diversity.

Gender euphoria

The positive feelings associated with the alignment of the way a trans person sees their own gender and body, and how others see their gender. The opposite of gender dysphoria.

Heteronormativity

A framework of understanding sexuality that privileges heterosexuality, positing it as the 'norm', while marginalising all other sexualities or forms of non-heterosexual behaviour and inferring that they are 'abnormal'. This can look like assuming that people are straight/heterosexual, or othering people of different sexualities through such things as referring to 'the gay lifestyle'.

Homophobia

Discrimination towards gay or lesbian people, and people of other diverse sexualities. This may include negative stereotyping or denying the existence of gay and lesbian people, verbal or physical harassment, or microaggressions such as ‘that’s so gay’.

Interphobia

Discrimination towards intersex people, or those with variations in sex characteristics. This may include making negative remarks about a person’s sex characteristics such as body hair or chest. Interphobia also exists in medical institutions through performing non-consensual cosmetic ‘normalising’ surgeries on intersex infants and young people.

LGBTQIA+

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and more diverse sexualities and genders. It is used in a similar way to ‘rainbow’, but is often critiqued for centring Pākehā/Eurocentric understandings of gender and sexuality.

Microaggressions

An indirect or subtle form of discrimination, such as a comment or action, which typically concerns members of a marginalised group such as ethnic, gender, or sexuality minorities. Microaggressions are usually unintentional but can still cause harm or reinforce hurtful stereotypes.

Misgendering

Referring to a person as a gender they are not, such as through using a person’s birth name, pronouns, or gendered language such as ‘ma’am’ or ‘sir’. Misgendering is sometimes accidental, but can also be done on purpose to ‘out’ a trans person or invalidate their gender. Prolonged misgendering is a form of abuse, especially if it is done by multiple people. It can be highly distressing, endanger trans people’s mental health and wellbeing, and cause trauma.

Outing

The process through which a person discloses someone else’s rainbow identity without their permission. Outing someone can put their safety at risk and can have negative effects on the person’s employment, education, housing, and family situations.

Pronouns

Words referring to someone in the third person. Common pronouns include she/her/hers, he/him/his, they/them/theirs. In some languages such as te reo Māori, pronouns are gender-neutral (e.g. ia). Some people prefer that people use their name instead of pronouns, or neopronouns that are less commonly known such as ze/hir/hirs.

Queerphobia

Discrimination towards queer people. Queerphobia may include negative stereotyping or denying the existence of queer people, or verbal or physical harassment. The term is sometimes used as an umbrella term to encompass homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

Questioning

A term describing a person who is exploring their gender or sexuality.

Rainbow

An umbrella term, like LGBTQIA+, describing people of diverse sexualities, genders, and variations in sex characteristics.

Sexual orientation

A person's sexual identity, behaviour, and attraction in relation to the gender or genders they are attracted to. Sexual orientation and gender are different things. The term sexuality can also be used to describe a person's sexual orientation.

Transitioning

Steps taken over time by trans and non-binary people to affirm their gender. Transitioning may include social, medical, and legal processes such as using a different name and pronouns, dressing in affirming clothes, changing one's name and/or sex marker on legal documents, hormone therapy, puberty blockers and a range of gender-affirming surgeries. Everybody's transition looks and feels different.

Transphobia

Discrimination towards trans and gender diverse people. This includes negative stereotyping or denying the existence of trans, non-binary, and gender diverse people, verbal or physical harassment, or microaggressions e.g., someone telling a trans man, 'but you were so much prettier when you were a girl'.