

# Rainbow terminology

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This list contains words related to sex characteristics, gender and sexuality and their common definitions. These terms describe who rainbow communities are, and things that rainbow people do or experience. We recognise that language is constantly changing, and words can mean different things to each person and community who uses them. Because of this, this alphabetical list is designed to be used as a reference guide.

## **Agender**

A term describing someone who has an internal sense of being without gender.

## **Ally**

A person belonging to a majority group who advocates for members of a minoritised group. For example, an ally to rainbow people is a straight and cisgender person who supports and advocates for rainbow people's rights.

## **Aromantic, Aro**

A term describing 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, or sexual attraction. This identity exists on a spectrum, with people experiencing different degrees of romantic attraction.

## **Asexual, Ace**

A term describing a person who experiences little to no sexual attraction. Asexual people may lack interest or desire for sexual relationships or activity, and may or may not engage in sexual activity. Asexual people may experience other forms of attraction, such as platonic, spiritual or romantic attraction. This identity exists on a spectrum, with people experiencing different degrees of sexual attraction.

## **Bigender**

A term describing a person who experiences two or multiple genders at once. These may include binary genders such as man or woman as well as other genders. Some bigender people use different names and/or pronouns for each gender.

## **Biphobia**

Discrimination against bisexual people or bisexuality, and anyone attracted to multiple genders including pansexual people. This may include negative stereotyping or denying the existence of bisexual people. Biphobia can be perpetuated by people who identify either within or outside of rainbow communities.

## **Bisexual, Bi**

Attraction to two genders, more than one gender, or attraction to one's own gender and other(s). How someone experiences and describes/defines their bisexuality varies from person-to-person.

## **Butch**

A reclaimed term describing a person whose gender expression and/or identity, behaviour, and traits can be described as masculine. The term is often used in relation to femme, describing feminine expression, identity, and traits among lesbian and queer women.

## **Cisgender, Cis**

Describes someone whose gender is the same as the gender that was assumed for them when they were born (i.e. not trans or non-binary).

## **Cisheteronormativity**

A set of cultural beliefs and assertions that everyone is both cisgender (their gender is the same as that they were assumed at birth) and heterosexual (exclusively attracted to a person of a different gender to their own). This is seen, for example, in the dominant assumption about parenting in Western nuclear family structures, is that there are two parents who are both cisgender and in a heterosexual relationship.

## **Cisnormativity**

A set of cultural beliefs and assertions that a person's gender always aligns with their sex assigned at birth, and that there are two fixed genders. These beliefs position cisgender people and bodies as the 'norm', while inferring that trans, non-binary or gender-diverse people are not as normal or 'natural' as cisgender people.

## **Coming out**

The process of a person disclosing their gender, sexuality, or sex characteristics. While often used to describe the period or process of first telling others about 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, and it can look and feel different for everyone. For example, some people choose not to come out in certain situations for their own safety, or the collective wellbeing of their whānau.

## **Deadname, Deadnaming**

A name that a trans or non-binary person was given, usually at birth, but that they no longer use. Deadnaming is when someone calls a person by their deadname, birth name or old name. Similar to being *misgendered*, being deadnamed can be a distressing experience for trans and non-binary people who have changed their name. This is often because their deadname can act as a reminder of their gender assigned at birth, instead of recognising their current gender. Deadnaming can happen intentionally or accidentally.

## **Demiboy**

A person who is partially, but not fully, a boy or man. Some people describe their gender as partly a boy or man, and partly another gender.

## **Demigirl**

A person who is partially, but not fully, a girl or woman. Some people describe their gender as partly a girl or woman, and partly another gender.

## **Demisexual**

A term describing someone who only experiences sexual attraction towards people with whom they have a specific bond/connection.

## **Drag**

An activity or artform in which someone performs gender. This may be a heightened or exaggerated form of the person's own gender, or a different gender entirely. For example, a man may perform womanhood as a drag queen.

## **Endosex**

A person who is born without variations of sex characteristics, whose body aligns with normative medical understandings of a male or female body (ie. not intersex).

## **Femme**

A term describing gender, expression or identity that is aligned with femininity but not necessarily womanhood or typical gender roles. People of any gender can be femme. Femme is often closely associated with queer experiences and expressions of gender.

## **Gay**

A term describing someone who is attracted to people of the same gender as themselves. Gay is also commonly being used by young people as an umbrella term that encompasses a diverse range of sexualities.

## **Gender**

How a person understands and describes their inner self and their experience and role within their social and cultural context. We are assumed to be a particular gender at birth based on our sex characteristics, but not everyone's gender is the same as that which was assumed. Gender is understood differently across cultures and throughout history.

## **Gender affirmation**

See ***Transitioning***

## **Gender-affirming healthcare**

An umbrella term encompassing healthcare and medical procedures that trans and non-binary people may undergo to affirm their gender and alleviate gender dysphoria. This can include (but is not limited to) taking puberty blockers, gender-affirming hormones, psychosocial support, or having gender-affirming surgery.

## **Gender-diverse**

An umbrella term used to collectively describe a diverse range of genders that exist outside of being cisgender, including transgender, non-binary, and culturally specific genders. This term is useful when describing a population or a group, and allows non-cisgender people to discuss collective experiences of gender diversity.

## **Gender dysphoria**

The disconnect, discomfort or distress experienced as a result of a person's perceived gender not aligning with their self-determined 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 or deadnamed). The discomfort that 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 euphoria**

The positive feelings experienced when a person's perceived and actual gender are aligned and they are able to exist, be recognised as, and participate in life as their actual gender.

## **Gender expression**

How a person expresses their sense of gender through their clothes, mannerisms, voice, pronouns, and other forms of expression. A person's gender expression does not always align with their gender identity – sometimes as a part of self-expression, and sometimes out of safety or protection from being discriminated against.

## **Gender marker, Sex marker**

The letter or word representing a person's gender or sex (ie. M, F, X) recorded on their official identity documents such as birth certificates and passports.

## **Genderfluid**

A term describing a person or people whose gender is varied, dynamic, and may change over time.

## **Genderqueer**

A person whose gender is "queer". This is experienced and described in many different ways, such as describing one's gender in ways that defy existing categories or labels.

## **Homophobia**

Prejudice against or dislike of people attracted to those of the same gender (e.g., gay or lesbian). This can also impact and affect those who are attracted to their own gender as well as others (e.g., bisexual or pansexual people). This may include negative stereotyping or denying the existence of gay and lesbian people, verbal or physical harassment, or microaggressions such as saying 'that's so gay'.

## **Homosexual**

A term describing someone who is exclusively attracted to people of the same gender. The term can refer to someone who is gay or lesbian. While some people do self-identify with this term, others do not because of its history of being used in a clinical or negative way.

## **Heteronormativity**

A set of cultural beliefs and assumptions that centre heterosexuality as the 'norm', while inferring that all other sexualities or forms of queerness are not as 'normal' or 'natural' as being heterosexual. This can look like assuming people are straight/heterosexual, or 'othering' people of different sexualities.

## **Heterosexual, Straight**

A person who is exclusively attracted to people of a different gender than their own.

## **Hinehi, Hinehua**

Māori terms that Māori people may use to describe their feminine gender. These terms do not have a Pākehā or western equivalent, but are best understood within their cultural context and may mean something different to each individual. See also **Whakawahine**.

## **Internalised homo/bi/trans/interphobia**

When people accept or hold negative thoughts and feelings about being trans, queer or intersex, based on external messages and norms that suggest being this

way is 'wrong'. Examples of internalised phobias include a person experiencing shame around their own transness that prevents them from being open about who they are, or a person fearing that they might be perceived as gay. Anyone, both within and outside of rainbow communities, can experience internalised phobias. People can hold this stigma with or without being aware of it.

### **Interphobia**

Discrimination against 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.

### **Intersex, variations of sex characteristics (VSC)**

The term intersex is used to describe a person born with natural variations of sex characteristics such as chromosomes, reproductive anatomy, genitals, and hormones. People are sometimes born with these variations, or they may develop during puberty. There are up to 40 different intersex variations. Though the word intersex describes a range of natural body variations, many people will not identify with, or know, this term or related terms. In medical environments, variations in sex characteristics are known as 'differences in sex development' (DSD), though this terminology is widely critiqued by intersex activists for pathologising natural bodily development.

### **Irahuhua**

A word in te reo Māori for gender diversity.

### **Lesbian**

Describes women who are exclusively or primarily attracted to women. As many lesbians throughout time have had complex relationships with gender, the term can be used in an expansive way, allowing space for non-binary lesbians, masculine lesbians and lesbians who engage with and affirm their gender in many ways.

### **LGBTQIA+**

An acronym that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, and more diverse sexualities, genders, and sex characteristics. It is used

in a similar way to *rainbow*, but is often critiqued for centring Western understandings of gender, sex, and sexuality.

### **Microaggression**

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**

The act of referring to a person as a gender they are not, such as through using the 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 distressing, traumatic, and endanger a person's mental health.

### **MVPFAFF+**

An acronym developed by Phylesha Brown-Acton used to encompass the diverse gender and sexuality expressions and roles across Pacific cultures. The acronym stands for mahu, vakasalewa, palopa, fa'afafine, akava'ine, fakaleiti (leiti), fakafifine, and more. Their meanings are best understood within their cultural context and may mean something different to each person. The following terms do not have a Western equivalent, but are loosely translated to mean '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/Binapinaaine (Tuvalu & Kiribati)
- Rae rae (Tahiti)
- Haka huahine (Tokelau)



These terms are loosely translated to mean 'in the manner of a man':

- Fa'atama/Fa'afatama, 'Rogers' (Samoa)
- Māhūkāne (Hawai'i)
- Binabinamane (Kiribati)

### **Non-binary, enby**

Describes people whose gender is outside of the 'binary' of man/woman. May be used to describe a person's gender or as an umbrella term for a number of genders that are not binary. As non-binary people have a gender that is different from what was assumed at birth, they fall under the umbrella of 'trans', though not every non-binary person will use this term to describe themselves. Non-binary may be shortened to NB/nb/n-b. The term "enby" is used by some, but not all, non-binary people.

### **Outing**

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

### **Pansexual**

Describes people who are attracted to people of all genders, any gender, or regardless of gender. How someone experiences and describes or defines their pansexuality varies from person-to-person.

### **Pronouns**

Words used to refer to a person or persons in place of names. You, I, he, she, they are all examples of pronouns. In English, third-person singular pronouns (he/him/his, she/her/hers) have gendered associations. Culturally it is considered important to use the correct pronouns (referring to men and boys with he/him/his pronouns and referring to women and girls with she/her/hers pronouns). It is important that respect is extended to trans people by using the pronouns that are correct for them. This may mean using 'they/them/theirs' pronouns as a singular, or using other, newer pronouns. In some languages, such as te reo Māori, pronouns are gender-neutral (e.g. ia, tōna, tāna). Some people use their name instead of pronouns, or neopronouns that are less commonly known such as ze/hir/hirs.

## **Queer**

A reclaimed term that indicates that a person is not straight or cisgender without providing a strict definition or requiring a person to describe themselves using straight/cisgender frameworks.

## **Queerphobia**

Discrimination against 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, transphobia and interphobia.

## **Questioning**

The process of exploring one's gender or sexuality. Questioning, exploring or considering one's gender or sexuality is normal, healthy and helpful for everyone.

## **Rainbow**

An umbrella term, like LGBTQIA+, describing people of diverse sexualities, genders, and variations of sex characteristics. This term is sometimes used in place of LGBTQIA+ in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **Sex**

Refers to how a person's body is classified based on characteristics such as genitals, hormones, chromosomes, and gonads. People often conflate sex and gender, or wrongly assume that a person's sex always determines their gender.

## **Sex assigned at birth (SAAB), Sex designated at birth (SDAB)**

A phrase used to recognise a person's sex assigned/designated based on their external anatomy at birth. The phrase acknowledges that a person's assigned/designated sex may be different from their actual gender or sex. For example, the term AMAB means assigned male at birth, and DMAB means designated male at birth.

## **Sexuality, Sexual orientation**

A term referring to the gender or genders that a person is attracted to. A person's sexuality may also describe the type of or amount of attraction that that person

feels. While specific sexuality-related terms are often dependent on the gender of the people involved, sexuality and gender are different concepts.

### **Straight**

See *Heterosexual*

### **Tāhine**

A relatively new term used by some Māori to describe their gender, loosely translating to non-binary (a portmanteau of ‘tāne’ and ‘wahine’). This term is used broadly so it can be used to describe a transgender woman, a transgender man, or a non-binary or genderfluid person.

### **Taihemarua**

A word in te reo Māori for intersex.

### **Takatāpui**

A Māori word that traditionally means ‘intimate friend of the same sex’. It has since been embraced to encompass tāngata Māori who identify with diverse genders, sexualities or variations of sex characteristics and choose to use this kupu. Takatāpui denotes a spiritual and cultural connection to the past. It is best understood within its cultural context and may mean something different to each person.

### **Tangata ira tāne**

A term that some Māori people use to describe their masculine gender. This term does not have a Western equivalent, but is loosely translated to mean ‘in the manner of a man.’ It is best understood within its cultural context and may mean something different to each person.

### **Trans man, trans boy**

A man/ or boy who was assumed to be a girl at birth.

### **Trans woman, trans girl**

A woman or girl who was assumed to be a boy at birth.

### **Transfeminine**

A term describing a trans person who was assumed to be a boy at birth but identifies or expresses themselves towards the feminine end of the gender

spectrum.

### **Transgender, Trans**

Someone whose gender is not the same as what was assumed at birth (e.g., a person who was assumed to be a boy at birth but is actually a girl, non-binary, etc.). This term includes people with binary (man, woman) and non-binary (genderfluid, genderqueer) genders. Not all people with this experience will use the term trans to describe themselves.

Someone whose gender is not the same as what was assumed at birth. This term includes people with binary and non-binary genders.

### **Transitioning, Gender affirmation**

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 or gender affirmation looks and feels different. While the term gender affirmation is mostly used in relation to trans people, everyone, including cisgender people, can and do affirm their gender in many ways.

### **Transmasculine**

A term describing a trans person who was assumed to be a girl at birth but identifies, or expresses themselves, towards the masculine end of the gender spectrum.

### **Transmisogyny**

The intersection of transphobia (prejudice against trans people) and misogyny (oppression of women and femininity) that largely impacts trans women and transfeminine people. An example of transmisogyny is when a trans woman's gender is at once questioned or delegitimised, and at the same time their femininity is sexualised. People who are affected by both transphobia and misogyny experience these types of oppression at the same time, which can compound the harmful effects on their wellbeing.

### **Transphobia**

Prejudice against or dislike of trans people. Transphobia can also be directed at people regardless of whether they are trans, who are seen to not conform to traditional binary gender norms. Transphobia may include (but is not limited to) negative stereotyping of trans people (e.g., ideas about gender diversity being a threat or deviant), denying the existence of trans people, or verbal or physical harassment.

### **Whakawāhine**

A term in te reo Māori that some Māori people may use to describe their feminine gender. This term does not have a Pākehā or western equivalent, but is usually translated to mean ‘in the manner of a woman.’ It is best understood within its cultural context and may mean something different to each individual.