

Gender Identities Glossary

– McKinsey & Company

Many people in the workplace refrain from talking about the transgender experience because they don't have the vocabulary. The Human Rights Campaign has published a glossary that includes terminology for conversing about gender identity.

Gender identity

One's innermost concept of self as male, female, a blend of both, or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Transgender

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, et cetera.

Cisgender

A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with the identity typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gender nonconforming

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. While many also identify as transgender, not all gender-nonconforming people do.

Nonbinary

An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Nonbinary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all nonbinary people do. Nonbinary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer, or gender fluid.

Genderqueer

Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as genderqueer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside those categories.

Gender fluid

A person who does not identify with a single fixed gender or has a fluid or unfixed gender identity.

Gender expansive

A person with a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the binary gender system. Often used as an umbrella term when referring to young people still exploring the possibilities of their gender expression and/or gender identity.

Gender expression

External appearance of one's gender identity, usually expressed through behavior, clothing, body characteristics, or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender dysphoria

Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify.

Gender transition

The process by which some people strive to more closely align their internal knowledge of gender with its outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo physical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions.