

## Trans and Non-Binary Definitions

### What do we mean by Trans and Non-binary?

This resource is designed to help GMB members, reps and activists learn more about the language trans and non-binary people may use.

Language that different people prefer can vary. A term one person uses may be offensive to another and vice versa. Some of these definitions are debated and people must be able to choose their own identities for themselves. It is all personal choice, and respecting people's choice of language is key to being respectful.

### Trans

- Trans is an umbrella term that includes, but is not limited to, transgender, transsexual, non-binary, gender-fluid, genderqueer etc.
- When a baby is born, their sex is registered based on whether they have male or female genitalia (with some exceptions for intersex people). Some people as they grow up will feel that they identify as having a different gender to their sex as observed at birth.
- Someone whose gender identity differs from their biological sex will often identify themselves as trans.
- Some people's gender identity may not fit into a strict male or female category which means they may identify as non-binary.

### Non-binary


- Non-binary is an umbrella term for gender identities that are outside the gender 'binary' (two parts) of male/female and man/woman.

- Non-binary gender identities can fall under the transgender umbrella, as many non-binary people identify with a gender that is different from the sex they were assigned at birth. However, not all non-binary people will identify as trans while others will.

## **Sex**

- Sex is a medical categorisation and construct based on biological characteristics used to label people as male or female, such as X and Y chromosomes, internal and external sex organs, or hormone levels.
- A lot of people think that the only sexes are male or female – but everyone has their own unique body and hormone levels. These factors combine to affect us in different ways.
- Some people are born intersex, which is a general term used for a variety of conditions where a person is born with biological characteristics (such as hormones, chromosomes, reproductive or sexual anatomy) that don't seem to fit the typical definitions of male or female.
- It is rarely appropriate to ask someone what their sex is or about their genitalia or anatomy.

## **Gender**


- Your gender identity is how you identify and present yourself – for example as a boy/man, as a girl/woman, or as a gender-diverse person
  - Gender is not about what reproductive or sexual anatomy you were born with, but how you feel about yourself.
  - Individuals should be free to present their gender in different ways and their gender identity may be fluid and can change throughout their life as they explore their identity.
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- Just because a person does not conform to societal stereotypes concerning gender does not mean that they identify as trans or that they are exploring their gender identity. Having an interest in activities or personal styles that are perceived as being 'male' or 'female' should never lead to an assumption that a person's gender does not align with their sex registered at birth.

## **Pronouns**

- Pronouns are nouns that are used to refer to people. For example, 'he/him/his', 'she/her/hers', or 'they/their/theirs', amongst others.
- Some people say that they find using 'they/their/theirs' for a single person to be confusing. However, this is accepted usage in the English language. 'They/their/theirs' can be simply used to refer to a person who uses this pronoun instead of 'he/him/his' or 'she/her/hers'.
- A person's pronouns may change
- If you're unsure what pronouns to use for someone, the best thing to do is politely ask, perhaps in private. Using the wrong pronoun by mistake can be an uncomfortable situation - but just say sorry, move on, and remember the correct pronoun to use in future.

## **Sexual Orientation**

- Your sexual orientation relates to who you may (or may not) be sexually and/or romantically attracted to.
  - Sexual orientation is a spectrum which includes lesbian/gay, bisexual, heterosexual, asexual, pansexual as well as many others.
  - Sexual orientation is not related to gender identity. Someone who is trans or non-binary could identify as heterosexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, asexual or any other sexual orientation.
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## Transphobia

- Prejudice towards, unfair treatment of, or the dislike or hatred of trans people, which in turn gives rise to discrimination and harassment against them, all fall under the description of transphobia.
- Transphobia has no one single or simple example- it is complex and can include a range of behaviours and arguments. These may include refusing to use correct pronouns or shutting trans people out of certain spaces because of the fact they are trans.
- Transphobia stops trans people from living openly and comfortably as themselves, and creates barriers for trans people in society, including in the workplace.

## Further definitions

**AFAB:** The most frequently used shorthand to designate sex assigned at birth, in this case 'Assigned Female at Birth'

**Agender:** Refers to people who don't identify themselves with any particular gender. This can mean being genderless, lacking gender, or having a null gender. However, people may also use agender to mean identifying as gender-neutral or having an undefinable gender

**AMAB:** The most frequently used shorthand to designate sex assigned at birth, in this case 'Assigned Male at Birth'

**Aromantic:** An aromantic (or 'aro') person experiences little to no romantic attraction towards others and has little or no desire to form romantic relationships. Aromanticism is a spectrum of identities that ranges from romantic attraction in certain circumstances or with certain people, to occasional romantic attraction, to no romantic desire at all

**Asexual:** People who identify as asexual describe experiencing little or no sexual attraction or desire, either in general or towards others. Asexuality is a broad spectrum of identities that ranges from sexual attraction in certain

circumstances or with certain people, to occasional sexual attraction, to none at all. Often abbreviated as 'ace'.

**Binary:** Something being made up of two things or parts – hence 'gender binary'

**Biphobia:** The fear or dislike of someone who identifies or is perceived as bisexual

**Bisexual:** Refers to a person who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards people of the same gender as themselves, and people of different genders

**Cisgender person:** Someone whose gender identity is the same as the sex they were registered with at birth. Non-trans is also used by some people

**Coming out:** When a person tells someone/others about their LGBT+ identity. Coming out is a continual process and will happen in multiple scenarios with multiple different people across someone's lifetime. People may be out in certain circumstances, but not others, and it is best not to assume that someone is out.

**Gay:** Generally, refers to a man who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards men. It is also a generic term for lesbian and gay sexual orientation – some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian

**Gender:** Often expressed in terms of masculinity and femininity, gender is largely culturally determined and is assumed from the sex registered at birth

**Gender diverse:** An umbrella term for a person who does not identify as a man or woman

**Gender dysphoria:** Used to describe when a person experiences discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between their sex registered at birth and their gender identity. This is also the clinical diagnosis for someone who doesn't feel comfortable with the sex they were registered with at birth. Not all trans people experience gender dysphoria

**Gender fluid:** Moving between different gender identities or expressions at different times or in different situations

**Gender identity:** A person's internal sense of their own gender, whether man, woman, or something else (see non-binary)

**Gender questioning:** The process of exploring one's own gender identity

**Gender reassignment:** A term used to refer to anyone who is proposing to undergo, is currently undergoing, or has undergone a process (or part of a process) of journeying away from their sex assigned at birth and their assumed gender identity. This can include many different aspects of transition that may or may not be medical or social, and every trans person's experience is different. Gender reassignment is a characteristic that is protected under the Equality Act 2010. An Employment Tribunal in 2020 ruled that this includes protection of non-binary and gender-diverse people<sup>1</sup>.

**Gender stereotypes:** The ways that we expect people to behave in society according to their gender, or what is commonly accepted as 'normal' for someone of that gender.

**Gender variant:** Someone who does not conform to the gender roles and behaviours often assigned to their sex. This is usually used in relation to children or young people

**Homophobia:** The fear or dislike of someone who identifies or is perceived as lesbian or gay

**Homosexual:** This term is used to describe someone who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards someone of the same gender. While some people like this term, there is a general feeling of medicalisation around the use of the word 'homosexual'. The term 'gay' is now more generally used.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.lambchambers.co.uk/latest-news/taylor-v-jaguar-land-rover-limited/>

**Intersex:** A term that may be used by people whose physical/biological sex characteristics differ from the 'typical' male or female patterns. They may have some male and some female characteristics or have sex characteristics that fall outside typical male or female ranges. Intersex is an umbrella term used to describe a wide range of different traits

**Lesbian:** Refers to a woman who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards women. Some women define themselves as gay rather than lesbian

**LGBT:** The acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans. This may be extended with the addition of Q, I and + (Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and the '+' representing the embracing/inclusion of other identities)

**Outed:** When a lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans person's sexual orientation or gender identity is disclosed to someone else without their consent. This can be extremely distressing and sometimes dangerous

**Pansexual:** Refers to a person who has an emotional, romantic and/or sexual orientation towards people of all genders

**Passing:** The ability to present in accordance with your gender identity, and to be accepted as that gender through compliance with cultural expectations and norms. This term should only be used by the person in question and should never be used as an insult. There is no right way to be trans and everyone's gender identity and expression is personal to and right for them

**Queer:** In the past, a derogatory term for LGBT+ individuals. The term has now been reclaimed by some LGBT+ people, particularly younger people, who don't identify with traditional categories of gender identity and sexual orientation. It is still viewed to be derogatory by some

**Transitioning:** The steps a trans person may take to live in the gender they identify as. Each person's transition will involve different things. For some this can involve a medical transition, such as hormone therapy and surgeries, but not all trans people want or are able to have this. A social transition involves things such as telling friends and family, dressing

differently and changing official documents. A gender recognition certificate is needed for a recognised legal transition (legal gender is determined by a birth certificate or a gender recognition certificate).

**Trans man:** A term used to describe someone who is registered female at birth but identifies and lives as a man. Another term used less often is FtM, an abbreviation for female-to-male

**Trans woman:** A term used to describe someone who is registered male at birth but identifies and lives as a woman. Another term used less often is MtF, an abbreviation for male-to-female

**Transsexual:** This was used in the past as a more medical term (similarly to homosexual) to refer to someone who transitioned to live in the 'opposite' gender to the sex registered at birth. This term is used in the Equality Act 2010 and while still used and preferred by some, many people prefer the term trans or transgender.

