

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Definitions

 hrc.org/resources/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-terminology-and-definitions

For a full list of definitions, read through HRC's [Glossary of Terms](#) | Visit HRC's [Coming Out Center](#) for more information and resources on living openly and authentically

Sexual orientation

An inherent or immutable enduring emotional, romantic or sexual attraction to other people.

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.

Gender expression

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

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, etc.

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. [Read more.](#)

Gender dysphoria

Clinically significant distress caused when a person's assigned birth gender is not the same as the one with which they identify. According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), the term – which replaces Gender Identity Disorder – "is intended to better characterize the experiences of affected children, adolescents, and adults."