

Terms to Know when Communicating with and About Trans and Nonbinary Individuals

A small survey was conducted of a sample of self-identified LGBT+ students at WMU to find out which terms students would like instructors to be familiar with and which terms they would encourage instructors to avoid.

All of the following information and more can be found online at www.hrc.org and www.glsen.org. List compiled by WMU student Hannah Powless.

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.

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

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.

Sex- A term typically referring to the characterization of female, male, or intersex at birth based on the appearance of the genitals. One's gender is not dependent solely on sex assigned at birth.

Pronouns- Correct pronoun usage is very important to trans individuals. Some trans individuals may use binary pronouns such as he/him or she/her, while others may use non-binary pronouns such as they/them or ze/zir.

Nonbinary- an umbrella term used to define anyone who identifies as a gender other than exclusively male or female

Genderqueer- Genderqueer individuals typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity. People who identify as "genderqueer"

may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

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.

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

Note

- Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Terms to Avoid- According to LGBT+ Students at WMU

Transsexual- While older generations of trans individuals may identify with this label, a majority of younger trans individuals do not use this language to refer to themselves.

Transgendered- An "-ed" suffix adds unnecessary length to the word and can cause tense confusion and grammatical errors.

Example:

Correct:

- Janet Mock is a transgender woman.
- Janet Mock is transgender.

Incorrect:

- Janet Mock is transgendered.
- Janet Mock is a transgender.

ftm or mtf- These terms are used to say female to male or male to female transgender. It is best to avoid using these abbreviations because they focus a person's history instead of focusing on and affirming their current identity.