



Dictionary of Terms

Assigned Sex— A person's *legal-sex* assigned at birth based on the appearance of their external genitals at birth. For most people this is a useful way to assign a newborn's sex.

Brain Sex— (also called **innate sex**) A person's innate sex. Brain sex develops as a biological process just like other sexually differentiated features of the human body; such as gonads and external genitalia.

FTM— (sometimes written as **FtM, F2M etc**) An abbreviation of the term *Female-To-Male* transsexual. FTM distinguishes the experience of males raised as females from that of females raised as males (MTF). This term is losing popularity as it is seen by many to deny the fact that the individual (notwithstanding physical appearance at birth) was always male.

Others accept the term as referring to the individual's public transition from female to male, ie. the shift in perception of others despite the consistent male sense of self.

Gender— Often, it is assumed that gender has the same meaning as sex but this is incorrect.

Gender refers to the social expression of sex. It is usually assumed (and generally accepted in our culture) that there are two genders, masculine and feminine, reflecting the binary of male and female.

Some people dispute the notion that there are only two genders, in fact many people think of gender as a spectrum or continuum. Many believe that all people possess both masculine and feminine attributes in varying degrees. Since gender is often confused with sex, certain types of gender expression are seen as 'natural', but gender expression is particular to cultures and times.

Gender Binary— The classification of people into two categories: 'male' or 'female' - hence the gender-binary (binary meaning *two*).

Gender Dysphoria— 'Dysphoria' is a medical term and means 'intense discomfort'.

'Gender dysphoria' has been applied to everyone from cross-dressers, transgender people and men and women with the medical condition of *transsexualism*.

Some people who experience 'gender dysphoria' have the physical condition that is called *transsexualism*.

Not all people with 'gender dysphoria' have the physical condition *transsexualism*.

Gender Identity— A person's innate deeply felt psychological identification as male or female. For most people this matches their physical body.

Intersex— A range of congenital conditions (naturally occurring and existing at birth) where there is an ambiguity of, or discordance between, sexually differentiated parts of a person's body. Some **intersex** conditions are apparent at birth, others are discovered later in life, perhaps at puberty or when infertility is experienced.

Many experts in scientific research, medicine and law consider *transsexualism* to be an intersex condition, because of the incongruity between the sex of the brain and the sex of the rest of the body.

Legal Sex— (also called **Legal Identity**) A person's legal-sex is evidenced by their "Birth Certificate", a legal identity document and recorded in the legal record of *Births, Deaths and Marriages*.

Generally, this is a useful way to assign a newborn's sex.

For men and women who experience *transsexualism*, this assignment of legal-sex means they are always assigned the opposite legal-sex at birth.

Sex— Based on biological characteristics, such as chromosomes, genitalia, reproductive organs and the structure and chemistry of the brain. Secondary sexual characteristics include the distribution of body and facial hair, voice pitch and fat distribution.

It is usually assumed that there are two sexes, male and female. However, natural human variation includes people

who are born with a combination of both male and female characteristics (see **intersex**).

Sex Affirmation— (**Sex reassignment**) Rehabilitative hormone therapy and surgical procedures undertaken to transform the rest of the body to match the sex of the brain, to the fullest extent possible (replaces the misleading term "sex change").

Standards of Care— A set of guidelines, which assist medical practitioners to provide care and treatment to people. The *Standards of Care for Gender Identity Disorders* were developed and regularly updated and revised by the *Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association*. Also called 'Harry Benjamin Standards'.

Transgender— (**tg**) An experience of gender when the individual has a core sense of gender which is neither or both genders and often crosses the traditional gender binary construct entirely. Hence the term **transgender**.

Transgender people reject the traditional notion of two static genders, instead recognising multiple genders. They consider that while some people have the one gender their whole life, others change genders over time, and/or identify as having multiple genders at the same time. Transgender people usually have a personally constructed sense of gender and use a variety of terms to describe themselves.

The term transgender has crept into usage as an umbrella term to encompass many diverse conditions and identities, including transsexualism and other recognised intersex conditions, as well as behaviours which explore gender such as cross dressing and "drag" performance.

Some individuals prefer to use the word transgender in place of transsexual, or they might speak of the symptom gender dysphoria instead. This may be because they are more comfortable referring to their experience in a more general way, or perhaps because they seek to avoid any perceived stigma attached to the term transsexualism.

Many at the forefront of social, medical and legal education and reform consider this umbrella usage counterproductive.

The terms transsexual and transgender are not interchangeable. They mean different things, which is particularly significant in medical and legal contexts.

Transsexualism— (**ts**) One of the many possible biological variations in human sexual formation.

A condition that exists in someone who at birth has chromosomes, reproductive organs and genitals which appear to be typically of one sex, but whose brain proves to be of the other sex.

People with transsexualism are simply male or simply female - even though their body doesn't correspond to that sex development. People who have transsexualism wish to live and be perceived by their society according to the sex they know themselves to be, rather than the sex they were assumed to be at birth.

They desire a physical appearance, which reflects their true sex, and to these ends most want to rehabilitate their bodies through hormonal and surgical treatments.

Transsexualism is a treatable physical condition, not a psychological one.

Transition— The process whereby an individual undergoes social and physical change (via *social, medical and legal* steps) to bring his body and public presentation into harmony with his innate sex or brain sex, achieving comfort with his body and social roles.

Transition also includes adjustment by family members, friends and workmates.