

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

Non-Binary Gender Terms

Gender Binary:

The idea that gender is strictly an either/or option of male/men/masculine or female/woman/feminine based on sex assigned at birth, rather than a continuum or spectrum of gender identities and expressions. The gender binary is often considered to be limiting and problematic for all people, and especially for those who do not fit neatly into the either/or categories.

Non-Binary:

A continuum or spectrum of gender identities and expressions, often based on the rejection of the gender binary's assumption that gender is strictly an either/or option of male/men/masculine or female/woman/feminine based on sex assigned at birth.

Agender:

A person who does not identify as having a gender identity that can be categorized as male or female, and sometimes indicates identifying as not having a gender identity.

Bigender:

A person who experiences gender identity as two genders at the same time, or whose gender identity may vary between two genders. These may be masculine and feminine, or could also include non-binary identities.

Genderfluid:

A person whose gender identity or expression shifts between masculine and feminine, or across this spectrum.

Genderqueer:

A person whose gender identity is neither male nor female, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders.

Pangender:

A person who identifies as all genders.

Two Spirit:

A term used by Native and Indigenous People to indicate that they embody both a masculine and a feminine spirit. Is sometimes also used to describe Native Peoples of diverse sexual orientations, and has nuanced meanings in different indigenous sub-cultures.



What about pronouns?

Some people who have non-binary gender identities refer to themselves using pronouns that are gender-neutral, or that do not have binary assumptions about gender built in. Gender-neutral pronouns include "they/them/theirs" or "ze/hir/hirs." There are many other pronouns people may use. It is appropriate, respectful, and necessary to use the pronouns each individual person finds most affirming (which is also true of cisgender people). If you are unsure, observe the pronouns a person and those close to them use. Or, if necessary, ask them politely.