



# Transgender and Non-Binary Identities

An introduction to trans and  
non-binary people

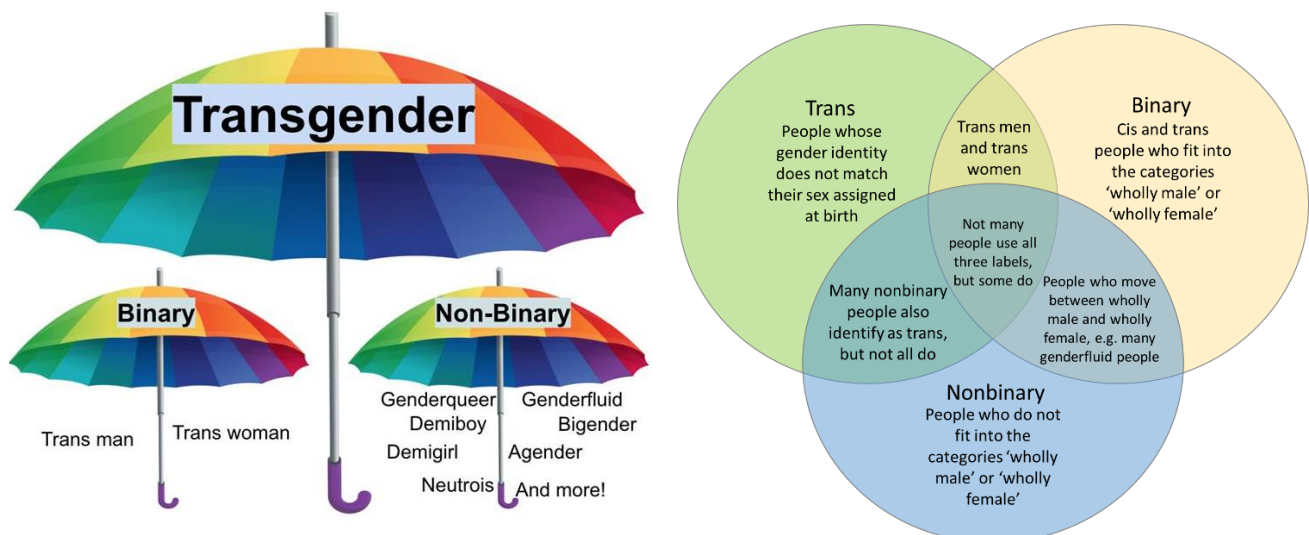


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## Who are trans and non-binary people?

**Transgender** (often shortened to **trans**) is an umbrella term (see image below) for all people whose gender is not the same as or does not sit comfortably with the one they were assigned at birth. This document will use trans to mean all trans and non-binary people.

**Non-binary** is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity doesn't sit comfortably with 'man' or 'woman'. Non-binary identities are varied and can include people who identify with some aspects of 'man' and/or 'woman', while others reject them entirely. For example, non-binary people may feel only partially male or female, they may move between male and female, they may feel like a totally different gender, or they may have no gender at all. Non-binary people are often included under the trans umbrella, but not all non-binary people use the label trans. The Venn diagram below shows the overlap between binary (male and female only), non-binary, and trans labels.



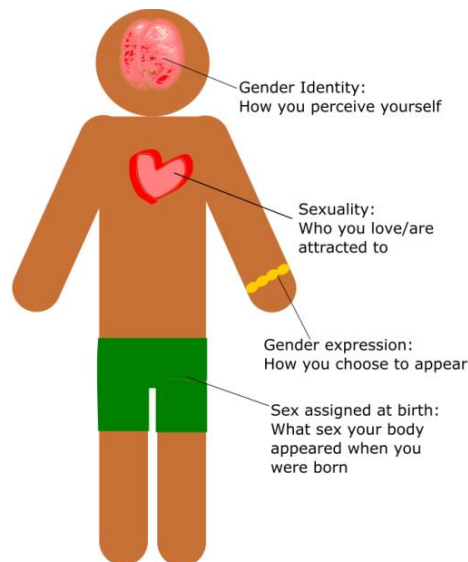
[Umbrella image credit: 'transgender teen survival guide', from tumblr.com](#)

## What's the difference between sex, gender and sexuality?

To understand what makes someone trans this it is important to know the difference between sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexuality:

- Your **sex** is usually determined by what physical characteristics your body has. For example, when a midwife holds up a new born baby and declares "it's a boy!" she is saying the baby has the physical characteristics used to determine that their sex is male. In most cultures, this child is therefore assigned the **gender** of male. The terms to describe assigned gender are often abbreviated to **AMAB** (assigned male at birth) and **AFAB** (assigned female at birth).
- Your **gender identity** is your own innate sense of your **gender**, and is sometimes referred to as just 'gender'. People who are **cisgender** (often shortened to 'cis') have a gender identity

that matches the gender they were assigned at birth. For example a baby who is assigned female (AFAB) and then continues to perceive themselves as a woman is cisgender. **Transgender** people have a gender identity which does not match the gender they were assigned at birth. For example a baby who is assigned female at birth who grows up to perceive themselves as a man is transgender.






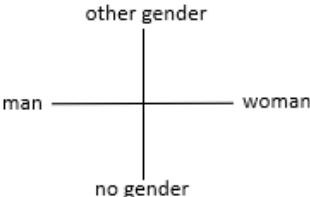

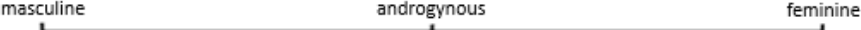

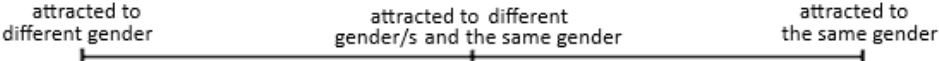
- **Gender expression** is how you outwardly express your gender, within the context of societal expectations of gender. For example, through your behaviour, mannerisms, hobbies and clothing. Someone who was assigned male at birth and perceives themselves as a man (cisgender) may present in a typically female way, for example wearing dresses and makeup. This doesn't mean they identify as trans. They may describe themselves as **gender non-conforming**, which means their gender expression is not typical of their gender identity.
- **Sexuality** is who you are attracted to. For example, if you like to date men or women.

Sex, gender identity, gender expression and sexuality are all separate, and you can have any combination of them:

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*Our cultural expectation is that people whose sex is male will have the gender identity of man, be masculine, and be attracted to a different gender (that is: women). But a person whose sex is male could be attracted to men (gay man), or could have a gender identity of woman (transgender), or could have a feminine gender expression (may wear typically 'female' clothes). The table below gives you the opportunity to see the many ways these characteristics can be combined, as well as how they are separate from each other. There are as many combinations as there are people in the world!*

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Sex 	
Gender Identity 	
Gender Expression 	
Sexuality 	

**The above table is a simplified overview; there are many more resources which explore this topic in greater detail – please see the ‘resources’ section of this document for more information.**

Some trans people will undergo social and/or medical transition. **Social transition** may include changing their name, changing the pronouns they use, and changing the way they dress. **Medical transition** may include taking hormones or having surgery in order to align their body’s characteristics (sex) with their gender.

Some trans people will only do one of these kinds of transition, and some won’t do either. Neither of these types of transition are required for someone to be trans; all that is required is that they do not perceive themselves as the gender they were assigned at birth.

It is estimated that 0.6% of the population are trans, which is 400,000 people in the UK alone.

### [What about intersex people?](#)

**Intersex** people are people whose sex (not gender) does not fit into the categories of male or female. This might be discovered at birth or later in life. Many intersex people do not discover they

are intersex until puberty or when they try to conceive, and some may not ever find out. Being intersex is different to being transgender - transgender people have a gender identity which is different to their gender assigned at birth, whereas intersex people have a sex that isn't clearly either male or female. A small number of intersex people are also transgender but the two labels are not related to each other.

### What does being trans feel like?

Trans people have a gender identity which does not match the gender they were assigned at birth, based on their sex. However, many cisgender people find it difficult to separate their gender identity from their sex. This can make it difficult for cis people to understand trans people's experiences.

#### **This exercise might help you find the difference between sex and gender identity:**

If you are a man, imagine you woke up tomorrow and looked like a woman. Everyone around you calls you Miss and Ma'am, they use she/her pronouns, and their behaviour towards you makes it clear they think you are a woman. This might be interesting for a little while, but eventually it would become a very uncomfortable experience, and you may decide to alter your appearance and behaviour to get people to treat you like a man again. If you are a woman, do the same exercise imagining that you woke up tomorrow and looked like a man.

Hopefully this has given you a little insight into what it feels like to be trans, and has shown you that being trans is not a choice. Just as cis people do not choose to perceive themselves as the gender they were assigned at birth, trans people do not choose to perceive themselves as a gender different to the one they were assigned at birth.

### How to support trans and non-binary colleagues

Nobody is expected to become an expert on trans issues, and everyone makes mistakes sometimes. All that is expected is that you are working with the best intentions, being respectful, and are open to learning if you do make a mistake.

### Names, pronouns and titles

Trans people will often use a different name, title, and pronouns after they **come out** ('coming out' in this context is telling people you are trans). If someone asks you to use a different name or different pronouns for them, do your best to remember this and put it into practice (*see University Guidance section 3.4*). If you aren't sure what name or pronouns to use you can privately ask the person. Don't bring up the person's previous name or pronouns, or what you would have guessed

their pronouns were. If you accidentally use the wrong name or pronoun, apologise briefly then move on. If you make a fuss when apologising this could make the trans person feel worse.

Some trans and non-binary people use **pronouns** you may not be familiar with. The pronouns that everyone recognises, 'he' and 'she', are gendered (he=man, she=woman), and some people prefer to use pronouns that are not gendered, such as '**they**', which is a **gender-neutral pronoun**. For example, "Alex wasn't at work today, they've crashed their car and injured their knee." For some people using 'they' as a singular term can feel a little strange, but it is something you will already be doing in normal language when you don't know someone's gender. For example, "Somebody has dropped their jacket, they've left it on the floor. I'll put it on the bench so it's easy for them to find."

There are a range of other pronouns that people might use, including **ze** ("Ze hurt zir knee"), and **hir** ("Hir hurt hir knee"). If you aren't sure how to use unfamiliar pronouns a quick internet search or conversation with your local E&I representative will answer your questions.

Some trans people use titles that may be new to you. For example, instead of Mr or Mrs, they might use **Mx** (pronounced 'mix'), which is a **gender neutral title**. If you see this written on a document, it's not a typo! Other people choose not to use a title at all and go only by their name. If you're writing a letter to someone who does not use a title, or whose title you do not know, you could start it 'Dear Alex Smith' instead of 'Dear Mrs Smith'.

### [Can I ask questions? \(See University Guidance section 2\)](#)

Curiosity is natural and can be a way of showing support or an eagerness to learn. However not all questions will be welcome. It is important to remember that while you might only ask one or two polite questions, trans people will be asked very similar questions on a regular basis by almost everyone who knows they're trans. This can quickly become tiring, which is why it is important to try and educate yourself through other means, such as the websites in the resources section of this guide, rather than asking the trans person. This doesn't mean you can't ask any questions, but it is something to bear in mind when deciding whether to ask something that you could learn another way.

If you aren't sure whether a question is appropriate, imagine that someone is asking you the question. If you would be uncomfortable answering it, don't ask it. For example, questions about whether a colleague has or will undergo surgery or hormone treatments are almost always inappropriate unless there is a specific reason you need to know.

## Dos and Don'ts (See University Guidance section 2)

### Do:

- Respect your colleague's privacy! Asking questions about what their name used to be, questions about their biology, or what gender they were assigned at birth is very rude.
- Challenge people you witness using discriminatory language or behaviour **if you feel safe and able to**, and report it to a manager.
- You could also include your pronouns when introducing yourself to someone new, for example "Hello I'm Joseph, my pronouns are he/him".
- You could also include your pronouns in your email signature (e.g. "My pronouns are: he / him / his"). This is helpful because it means trans and non-binary staff aren't 'outed' by being the only people who have their pronouns in their signature. It's also very helpful for you because it clarifies what pronouns you'd like people to use.

### Don't:

- Ask a trans colleague to educate you on things you could learn elsewhere. If you aren't sure how to talk about trans issues, avoid the topic until you can do your own research.
- Discuss a colleague's transition behind their back.
- Treat a trans colleague any differently to other colleagues.
- Assume someone's pronouns. It is always best to ask what someone's pronouns are rather than try to guess.
- Split work-based groups based on gender. Asking all the men to do one activity and the women to do another excludes non-binary people, and means that binary trans people have to decide which group you expect them to fall into.
- Be transphobic. Some examples of transphobia: "Is that a man or a woman?" "She used to be such a handsome man" "Have you had the surgery?" "She'd look more like a woman if she wore a dress."

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This is a living document and has been produced in close collaboration with LGBTQ+ staff.

We would like to hear from you if you feel you are not represented in this document and should be, or if you feel that anything in this document is misrepresenting you or our community.

Please contact your local E&I\* representative or Tom Shillito (T.D.Shillito@leeds.ac.uk) if this is the case.

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## Resources

- [University of Leeds – Trans equality policy statement](#)
- [University of Leeds – Guidance to support trans staff and students](#)
- [University of Leeds – Equality & Inclusion representatives\\*](#)
- [University of Leeds – Equality Policy Unit](#)
- [Advance HE - trans support in higher education](#)
- [TransEDU – Resources for trans staff and students in higher education, their tutors and employers](#)
- [Trans Leeds - a trans organisation based in Leeds](#)
- [Depend – Support and information to the cis friends, relatives and colleagues of a trans person](#)
- [The Beaumont Society – the largest transgender support group in the UK](#)
- [GenderTrust – information and support regarding gender identity and trans issues](#)
- [GIRES – an organisation working to improve the lives of trans and non-binary people, their friends, families and colleagues](#)
- [Press For Change](#) – The UK’s leading experts in transgender law
- [Stonewall](#) provide information and support for everyone in the LGBT+ community (see their [campaign for trans equality](#) and [truth about trans webpage](#), relevant to trans and cis people.)