

THE GENDER BINARY

Gender (also known as gender identity) is an internal sense of self, who you feel you are, and can only be known by each individual person. When talking about genders, binary genders are male and female, and non-binary genders are any genders that are not just male or female, or aren't male or female at all.

GENDER NON-BINARY

Non-binary (also spelled non binary and nonbinary) is an umbrella term for gender identities that sit outside of, across, or between binary genders. Non-binary is sometimes shortened to NB or enby, but these terms should only be used if directed the person. Someone who identifies as non-binary might feel like a distinct gender that is not male or female, a mix of genders, or like they have no gender at all. Non-binary people are in-credibly diverse and may use many words to describe their personal experience of gender, such as gender nonconforming, genderqueer, gender-fluid, trans feminine, trans masculine, gender-neutral, agender, bigender, etc. Transgender people may identify as non-binary, or they may identify as female, as male, or as trans. Though there are many kinds of nonbinary identities, some people use only the term 'non-binary' to describe their gender. There are many ways (and no wrong way) to be non-binary. There is no wrong way to be non-binary as everyone's gender is valid and personal to them.

GENDER EXPRESSION

'Gender expression' or 'gender presentation' refers to how we express our gender externally to others, through our clothes, hair, make-up and many other choices or behaviours. Gender expression or presentation for non-binary people may be flexible, change day-to-day, or in different contexts. This flexibility does not make somebody any less non-binary.

SEXUALITY

A non-binary person may be bisexual, gay, pansexual, asexual, straight or any other sexuality that they feel describes them. Like other aspects of a person's life, gender identity, gender expression and sexuality may evolve or change during their lifespan.

SEX AND SEX CHARACTERISTICS

Gender is different to sex, which is assigned to a baby at birth and recorded on their birth certificate. Sex is a legal category that is assigned based on alignment with a binary configuration of body parts - sex is not an innate quality or status our bodies have. Gender isn't determined by these attributes, and neither is sexuality. Sex characteristics are the body parts and characteristics that are used to assign the legal category of sex, including genitals, other reproductive organs, hormones, chromosomes and more. An intersex person is born with innate variations of sex characteristics that do not fit medical and social norms for binary sex.. People born with intersex variations may be any gender, including trans and cis women and men, and non-binary people. Check out this factsheet for more information on intersex people.

CISGENDER

A person whose gender corresponds with their sex assigned at birth can be referred to as cisgender. For example, a baby presumed to be female at birth whose gender is a woman is a cisgender woman. The term cisgender is a way of highlighting that there is not 'normal' and 'other' gender. Everyone has a gender, however if you fit into one of society's default categories, then you probably haven't had to think about it too much before.

NON-BINARY PEOPLE

**A QLIFE GUIDE
FOR COMMUNITY
WORKERS,
SERVICE
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NON-BINARY PEOPLE

GENDER AS A SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

If someone's gender does not correspond to their original sex marker, they may have to work harder to define their place in society. This is due to the widespread social conditioning that says there are two genders, and each gender should behave in certain ways. Gender norms and stereotypes can limit people's self-expression and be harmful or exclusionary. People should be able to make choices on what they wear, choose as a career, and do in life, independent of their gender.

Non-binary genders have historically been recognised by cultures and societies around the world. For example, including Indigenous communities in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have recognised people beyond the gender binary since before Western colonisation. Brotherboys and sistergirls may be non-binary. Third genders, including nonbinary, are also recognised in some Pacific cultures.

PRONOUNS

Pronouns are words used to describe someone in place of their name, for example she/her or he/him, which are gendered pronouns and imply 'female' or 'male' gender. Non-binary people may use these pronouns, or they may use gender-neutral pronouns such as they/them or other pronouns such as xe/xim or ze/zim which are known as neopronouns. An example of they/them as a singular pronoun is: "My friend said they are running a little late, so I'll just order food for them". There are many gender-neutral pro-nouns, so it is best to just ask politely and not make assumptions. You can say "My pronouns are _____, what are your pronouns?". Titles such as 'Miss, Mr, Mrs and Ms' also indicate gender. 'Mx' is a gender-neutral title that some non-binary people use. Some non-binary people may change their name from the one given to them at birth, to a different name.

MISGENDERING

Misgendering is when someone uses the wrong title, pronoun, or name about or towards a person. This may happen by mistake, don't make a big deal about it, just correct yourself and move on. Using the correct pronoun, title and name is a way to show respect. Using new words may feel uncomfortable at first, however with practice it will become habit. Correctly gendering someone is not about political correctness, it's about creating safety and inclusion for everyone.

GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

Using gender-neutral language is another way to promote respect and inclusion for the non-binary community. Adjusting gendered phrases such as "hey ladies" to "hey every-one" or "thank you sir" to a simple "thank you" makes language more inclusive. Often gendered terms are not actually necessary. When they are, practice using 'they/them' in-stead of 'he/she' to create space for what you may not know about someone. This shows you have awareness of the diversity of gender, and care about including people.

FACILITIES

Gendered facilities, such as restrooms or locker rooms, can create uncomfortable or unsafe circumstances for non-binary people. Having only female or male facilities forces non-binary people to choose a gendered space that does not fit them. This can put people at risk of experiencing discrimination or harm. Best practice is providing all-gender bathrooms which include all amenities e.g. sanitary bins, to promote access for every-body.

INCLUSION

People face discrimination not because how they exist is wrong or bad, but because society has deemed it outside of an acceptable or default category. This may cause people to be discriminated against on intersecting grounds of sex characteristics, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, indigeneity, race, nationality, religion, ability, age, health, appearance, or many other distinctions. Understanding how society is constructed to perpetuate discrimination through language, policies, and media representation helps us to understand experiences different to our own, and barriers we may not see.

Supporting, affirming, and celebrating non-binary genders the same way other people are supported to celebrate their gender makes for an inclusive, diverse, and beautiful world.

HOW TO BE A GOOD ALLY

- Remember, you don't have to understand things to show respect.
- Take some time to research things yourself, rather than relying on others to teach you.
- Try not to make assumptions about gender identity, sexuality, or any other personal things.
- Practice using gender-neutral language.
- Politely ask for someone's pronoun and share yours as well.
- Use the correct name, title, and pronoun/s that people have told you.
- Acknowledge mistakes, apologise, and quickly move on when using the wrong pronoun.
- Advocate for inclusive and non-binary friendly spaces and policies.
- Don't ask about things that aren't relevant – sex assigned at birth, surgery, birth name etc.
- Every person is unique. Keep an open, curious, and respectful outlook.

INTERNATIONAL NON-BINARY PEOPLE'S DAY

14 July is International Non-Binary Peoples Day! We celebrate those who are non-binary, the rich diversity of gender and celebrate people who do not fit into a binary gender.

Check out the following resource for more information: www.lgbtiqhealth.org.au/international_non_binary_people_s_day

RESOURCES

qlife.org.au/resources/gguides

minus18.org.au/articles/i-just-came-out-as-non-binary-here-s-what-that-means

www.minus18.org.au/articles/what-are-pronouns-and-why-are-they-important

qc.org.au/2spirits

transequality.org/issues/resources/understanding-non-binary-people-how-to-be-respectful-and-supportive

ihra.org.au/identities/

ihra.org.au/17680/intersex-characteristics-not-gender-identity/

twenty10.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Twenty10s-Guide-to-Trans-at-School.pdf



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