

# NON-BINARY

## RAINBOW DEFINITIONS



*To celebrate International Non-Binary Day in 2022, it's time to scrub up on our Rainbow Definitions and learn more about our Non-Binary Communities to support, inclusive and celebrate them.*

### Non-Binary Defined

Most people including most transgender people identify as either male or female. But some people don't neatly fit into the categories of "man" or "woman," or "male" or "female." For example, some people have a gender that blends elements of being a man or a woman, or a gender that is different than either male or female. Some people don't identify with any gender and some people's gender changes over time.

People whose gender is not male or female use many different terms to describe themselves, with **non-binary** being one of the most common. Other terms include **genderqueer**, **agender**, **bigender**, and more. None of these terms mean exactly the same thing – but all speak to an experience of gender that is not simply male or female.

### What is gender identity?

When you are born, you are assigned a sex – male, female, or indeterminate (intersex) – depending on the appearance of your external genitalia. You may feel that the sex you were assigned is correct. This is called being 'cisgender'. You may feel that the sex you were assigned is incorrect. This is called being 'transgender'.

Gender diversity refers to a diversity of genders in addition to cisgender people, and YES this includes non-binary people. Non-binary people fit under the umbrella term of Transgender - this is the T in the LGBTTQIA+ rainbow acronym.

### Non-Binary Pronouns

Different non-binary people may use different pronouns. Many non-binary people use "they" while others use "he" or "she," or a combination for example she/they and still others use other pronouns including 'ia' the Māori gender neutral pronoun in New Zealand. Asking whether someone should be referred to as "he," "she," "they," or another pronoun variation may feel awkward at first, but is one of the simplest and most important ways to show respect for someone's identity.

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## Basic Facts about Non-Binary People

**Non-binary people are nothing new and this is NOT a fad!** Non-binary people aren't confused about their gender identity or following a new fad – non-binary identities have been recognised for millennia by cultures and societies around the world.

Some, but not all, non-binary people undergo medical procedures to make their bodies more congruent with their gender identity. While not all non-binary people need medical care to live a fulfilling life, it's critical and even life-saving for some.

**Typically transgender people are not non-binary.** While some transgender people are non-binary, most transgender people have a gender identity that is either male or female/ man or women.

**Being non-binary is not the same thing as being intersex.** Intersex people have anatomy or genetic makeup that doesn't neatly fit typical 'boxes' of male and female. It's useful to remember that Non-binary people are usually not intersex: they're usually born with bodies that may fit typical definitions of male and female, but their innate gender identity is something other than male or female.

## How to Be Respectful and Supportive of Non-Binary People

**Use the name a person asks you to use.** This is one of the most critical aspects of being respectful of a non-binary person, as the name you may have been using may not reflect their gender identity. Don't ask someone what their old name was.

**Check your assumptions about people's gender.** You can't tell if someone is non-binary simply by looking at them, just like how you can't tell if someone is transgender just by how they look.

**If you're not sure what pronouns someone uses, ask and introduce yourself by using your pronouns first.**

**Understand that, for many non-binary people, figuring out which bathroom to use can be challenging.** For many non-binary people, using either the women's or the men's room might feel unsafe, because others may verbally harass them or even physically attack them. Non-binary people should be supported by being able to use the restroom that they believe they will be safest in.