

Non-Binary Gender Factsheet

Because my identity is not legally recognised or protected, I have to choose between the emotional distress of not disclosing my identity (which makes me physically ill), or risking being disbelieved and insulted if I do disclose (which triggers self-harm).

Definition

- *Non-binary gender*, and *genderqueer*, are umbrella terms used to describe all people who do not experience themselves as being male or female (i.e. within the gender binary).
- Non-binary people fall under the wider definition of *transgender* given that they have not remained in the gender they were assigned at birth.

I have been mocked by a group of hospital staff out on their cigarette break while I waited to be picked up from A&E – e.g. ‘What is that?’ ‘Is that a man or a woman?’ pointing and laughing.

Extent

- According to official statistics, the proportion of the UK population who define as non-binary when given a choice between male, female and another option is 0.4%, which is 1 in 250 people (Titman, 2014).
- Around a quarter to a third of trans people identify in some way outside the gender binary.
- Joel et al. (2014) found that, in a general population, over a third of people said that they were to some extent the ‘other’ gender, ‘both genders’ and/or ‘neither gender’.
- YouGov found that 19% of people disagreed with the statement ‘you are either a woman or a man’ and a further 7% were not sure. A subsequent poll found around 20% of people placed themselves between the poles of ‘100% male’ and ‘100% female’ although the results of this have not been officially reported yet.
- Globally many cultures recognise more than two genders (Herdt, 1993). As with sexuality, in western cultures it seems that binary categories (male/female, gay/straight) have been imposed on a human experience which is not binary.

I have no protection of my gender identity in the workplace, and am constantly misgendered. This has made me depressed to the point of being suicidal. Recently I didn’t get a job because they asked intrusive questions about my gender. I have no legal protection.

Research Evidence

- McNeil et al. (2012) found that those who identify as non-binary and/or express themselves in ways that challenge binary gender face similarly high levels of mental health difficulties to trans people generally.
- Harrison et al. (2012) found that over 40% of non-binary people had attempted suicide at some point, a third had experienced physical assault, and a sixth sexual assault based on their gender.

Seeing the discomfort and anger when people address me initially as “sir” and then switch to “madam” because of my ambiguous appearance. That anger could easily turn physical and I would be very vulnerable. This makes me feel unsafe. Because my identity is not legally recognised or protected, I’m not confident that the police would help me.

Specific Detriments

A recent survey of 79 non-binary people in the UK through the *Beyond the Binary* online magazine found that the vast majority reporting feeling uncomfortable (100%) and unsafe (94%) being non-binary in the UK.

Respondents reported the following key specific detriments involved in being non-binary (percentages in brackets refer to the proportion of people who explicitly mentioned each detriment):

- Inability to access education, work, housing, or healthcare without misgendering oneself (54%).
- Inability to have gender recorded correctly on medical, legal, educational, and other records (41%).
- Hospitals, prisons, care-homes and other institutions failing to recognise gender accurately (38%).
- Lack of accessible public facilities (toilets, changing rooms, sports facilities, etc.) (32%).
- Facing constant misgendering by others in relation to pronouns, titles, and everyday terms (32%).
- Everyday harassment, discrimination and hate-crime, leading to feeling very unsafe (25%).
- Inability to access many NHS trans healthcare services due to lack of non-binary provision (21%).
- Feeling forced to present as male/female to be accepted, access work and make a living (18%).
- Intense school and/or workplace bullying due to gender expression (13%).

- Being labelled as 'difficult', 'dangerous' or 'unprofessional' when being open about gender, and the negative impact of this on employment, salary, childcare and/or accessing services (6%).
- Being forbidden in school or work settings from presenting as non-binary -no legal recourse (4%).

These issues clearly had a profound impact on mental and physical health. It was widely felt that lack of visibility in media and wider culture was a key reason why it was very difficult to be open with friends, family, neighbours, and colleagues, and why there was a lack of support and resources available

Police repeatedly ignored my description of a hate crime as "transphobic" as I don't match their idea of what a trans person looks like.

I feel unsafe at work. I'm deeply anxious for nine hours a day. The effect on my mental health is severe on bad dysphoria days.

Doctor doesn't acknowledge my non binary identity and will not refer me to a GIC.

There's complete lack of provision in the UK. I have no legal protection in the workplace, while others on the gender spectrum do. As a result I don't feel able to be out in my civil service job.

Key Policy Implications

- **Legal Recognition:** Moving towards a situation where non-binary people can have their gender recorded accurately on all official documents, and all censuses and surveys include options for non-binary gender.
- **Health:** Ensuring that trans healthcare is equally accessible to non-binary and binary trans people, and that those referring to gender services (GPs and other medical professionals) are fully aware of non-binary gender. Improving access to psychological services (and practitioner awareness) in relation to non-binary people given the toll that living in a highly binary culture takes on mental health.
- **Education:** Education at all levels about the diversity of gender experiences. Addressing any aspects of education that require people to adhere to a gender binary.
- **Criminal Justice:** Recording and addressing hate-crime and harassment of non-binary people, and ensuring that police are well-trained in this area.
- **Immigration:** Ensuring that immigration services are aware of non-binary gender and the fact that other genders may be recognised in the countries of original of refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Culture, Media and Sport:** Improving the visibility of non-binary gender, and ensuring that all public facilities are accessible to non-binary people.

Just trying to have the correct title and gender recorded is a daily struggle. Accessing gendered spaces such as dressing rooms, toilets, etc. is exceptionally dangerous and frequently requires you to misgender yourself in order to gain access to what you need.

The material in this factsheet is drawn from the *Beyond the Binary* survey and from:

- Richards, C. Bouman, W., & Barker, M. J. (Eds.) (2016). *Genderqueer and Non-Binary Genders*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Barker, M. J. & Richards, C. (2015). Further genders. In C. Richards & M. Barker (Eds.) *Handbook of the Psychology of Sexuality and Gender*. pp.166-182. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harrison, J., Grant, J., & Herman, J. L. (2012). *A gender not listed here: Genderqueers, gender rebels, and otherwise in the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Los Angeles, CA: eScholarship, University of California.
- Herdt, G. H. (1993). *Third sex, third gender: Beyond sexual dimorphism in culture and history*. Zone Books New York.
- Joel, D., Tarrasch, R., Berman, Z., Mukamel, M., & Ziv, E. (2013). Queering gender: Studying gender identity in 'normative' individuals. *Psychology & Sexuality*, 5(4), 291-321.
- McNeil, J., Bailey, L., Ellis, S., Morton, J., & Regan, M. (2012). *Trans mental health study 2012*. www.scottishtrans.org.
- Richards, C., Bouman, W. P., Seal, L., Barker, M. J., Nieder, T. O., & T'Sjoen, G. (2016). Non-binary or genderqueer genders. *International Review of Psychiatry*.
- Titman, N. (2014). *How many people in the United Kingdom are nonbinary?* www.practicalandrogyny.com
- TMW (2014). *Understanding non-binary people: A guide for the media*. www.transmediawatch.org/Documents/non_binary.pdf.

There's no support for non-binary people at my school, and all the information I have about myself is what I've found on the internet. I find it difficult to socialise with my friends because I feel like I have a big secret that I can't let anyone know about, in case they turn on me and attack me for it.