

Transgender

What's the difference between “sex” and “gender”?

In common language the terms “sex” and “gender” are used interchangeably. However, it is very important to distinguish between them as they have quite different meanings. The term “sex” refers to a person’s biological or anatomical identity as male or female. The term “gender” is normally used to describe those personality characteristics and social roles society normally attributes to maleness or femaleness.

WHAT IS GENDER IDENTITY?

Gender identity refers to a person’s internal, deeply felt sense of being male or female, or something other in between. Because gender identity is internal and personally defined, it is not visible to others.

What does transgender mean?

TRANSGENDER is an inclusive, umbrella term used to describe the diversity of gender identity and expression for all people who do not conform to common ideas of gender roles. This includes:

TRANSSEXUAL is a medical term describing people whose gender and biological sex do not line up, and who often seek medical treatment to bring their body and gender identity into alignment. There are several terms used to commonly describe transsexual people, including MTF (*abbreviated term for male to female transsexual people*), FTM (*abbreviated term for female to male transsexual people*) and transman and transwoman (*common language terms used to describe FTM and MTF transsexual people*).

TRANSVESTITE is a term used to describe people who dress in clothes associated with their opposite sex, as defined by socially accepted norms, but still identify with their biological sex. An erotic transvestite is a person who gets sexually excited by the dressing. A social transvestite, however, simply feels more comfortable in such clothes.

INTERSEX people are born with chromosomal anomalies or ambiguous genitalia. Intersex infants are often assigned a gender and subjected to surgical procedures. Some intersex people develop gender identity issues.

BIGENDERED people have a gender identity that encompasses both genders - masculine and feminine.

The term transgender also includes people who express gender characteristics that don't correspond with the characteristics traditionally ascribed to the person's actual or presumed sex. This can include:

- Gender benders • Gender blenders • Drag queens • Drag kings • Butch women
- Effeminate men • Anyone who chooses, for whatever reason, to self-identify as transgender

In the broadest sense, transgender encompasses anyone whose identity or behaviour falls outside of stereotypical gender norms. That includes people who do not self-identify as transgender, but who are perceived as such by others and thus are subject to the same prejudice, discrimination and physical violence as those who actually identify with any of these categories.

What are the big issues for transgender people?

Like many lesbian, gay and bisexual people, transgender people must deal with a range of barriers and issues every day because they live their lives openly and honestly. There are also issues that overlap significantly in many areas with LGB issues. However, there are many issues that are unique to transgender people, as a group and also within the different identities that exist under the transgender umbrella. Coming to terms with your transgender identity is similar to the process that many LGB people experience in recognising and accepting their sexual identity. This includes:

- shame, fear and internalised homophobia and transphobia

- disclosure and coming out
- adjusting, adapting or not adapting to social pressures to conform
- fear of relationships or loss of relationships
- self-imposed limitations on expression or aspirations

Like many excluded groups, transgender people are often met with prejudice and discrimination when trying to engage in everyday activities. Renting accommodation, eating at restaurants and buying clothes can be unpleasant and threatening when coupled with the prospect, or the reality, of facing discrimination, abuse or violence. This includes:

- access to social services such as homelessness or rape crisis services

- hate crimes
- unemployment
- fear of repercussions of retaliation for expecting ordinary rights, such as speaking out in public
- the provision of services such as housing or education
- denial of access to public services such as public transport, shops, restaurants, bars etc
- abuse, humiliation, marginalisation and exclusion

ISSUES FOR TRANSEXUALS

Transsexual people experience very complex issues in a number of areas, including:

LEGAL ISSUES

- right to re-register sex (*for example on birth certificates*)
- marriage
- parenting (*adoption and custody*)
- protection from hate crimes

MEDICAL

- denial of medical treatment
- ridicule and mistreatment by healthcare providers

- inability to obtain hormone therapy or gender-reassignment surgeries because of where you live in the country
- healthcare providers having no information about available treatments or surgeries and no understanding of trans issues.

ISSUES FOR INTERSEX PEOPLE

Not all intersex people identify as transgender, but as a result of childhood genital surgery, many go on to develop gender identity issues. There are a number of key issues for intersex people:

- stigma and societies need to pigeon-hole people into categories of male or female
- unwanted genital surgery performed during childhood

WHAT IS TRANSPHOBIA?

Transphobia is the unrealistic or irrational fear and hatred of transgender people. Like all prejudices, it is based on negative stereotypes and misconceptions that are then used to justify and support hatred, discrimination, harassment, and violence toward people who are transgender. Transphobic attitudes and beliefs include:

- the belief that trans women are not “real women” because they have been raised and socialised as men
- the belief that trans men are not “real men” because they do not have, or were not born with a penis
- the belief that transsexual people are actually gay people in denial

- the assumption that transgender people are “sick” or that they are psychologically unstable
- when a transgender person is excluded from services, activities, discussions or decisions because it is felt that that person doesn’t “fit in”
- the refusal to recognise or acknowledge the true gender of a trans person and the continual insistence to refer to them by their former name

SEXISM AND GENDER-STEREOTYPING ARE THE ROOTS OF HOMOPHOBIA AND TRANSPHOBIA.

Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people is rooted in sexism and gender stereotyping.

FACT: there is a strong and consistent relationship between homophobia or anti-LGB prejudice and a desire to maintain traditional concepts about appropriate gender roles.

FACT: homophobia or anti-LGB prejudice is based on, and perpetuates the same stereotypes and oppressive practices that have long been used to deny equal opportunities to women and to keep men and women in their “proper” roles.

FACT: women and men who are perceived to deviate from traditional gender expectations are routinely stigmatised, abused or attacked as lesbian or gay, regardless of their actual sexual identity.

In society today, a person's gender expression is often mistakenly assumed to reveal that person's sexual identity (*e.g. men with "feminine" characteristics are often assumed to be gay, women with "masculine" characteristics are often assumed to be lesbian*). Transsexuals are often assumed to be lesbians or gay men who cannot accept their sexual identity and who, therefore undergo gender reassignment in order to hide or deny their true nature.

THESE STEREOTYPES ARE UNRELIABLE, UNTRUE, DAMAGING AND DANGEROUS.

WHY LGBT?

The struggle for civil rights for transgender people cannot be separated from the struggle to win freedom and equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

FACT: many transgender people are lesbian, gay or bisexual

FACT: many lesbian, gay or bisexual people are transgender

FACT: transgender people have always been present in the LGB community. Drag and butch-femme culture, as well as androgyny and gender-blending are hallmarks of transgender influence

FACT: lesbian, gay and bisexual people frequently challenge gender boundaries in their social (and often sexual) behaviour and are often victims of hate crimes because of their gender presentation.

Sandyford Transgender Support Group

Meets the 1st Thursday of every month from 7-9pm and the 3rd Saturday of every month from 12-2pm.

Sandyford Initiative
6 Sandyford Place
Sauchiehall Street
Glasgow
G3 7NB

Crosslynx

Offers support to transvestite and transsexual people. In addition to monthly meetings, they run a weekly helpline every Monday.

c/o SGLS
PO Box 38
Glasgow
G2 2QF
0141 847 0787
(Monday 7.30pm-9pm)

Transmen Scotland

Is a social and support group for transsexual men. They meet every month in the LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing in Edinburgh.

c/o LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing
9 Howe Street
Edinburgh
EH3 6TE

West Lothian Transgender Support Group

Offers a place for transvestite and transsexual people, their partners and families, to meet and talk about issues that may be of concern to them whilst having the chance to relax in a friendly and secure environment.

07808 564 626
(Monday - Thursday 6pm-9pm)
kira@westlothiantsg.co.uk
www.westlothiantsg.co.uk

LGBT Youth Scotland

Provides services and opportunities for LGBT young people (under 26) which empower them to make positive choices about their lives. They offer advice, safer sex supplies, volunteering opportunities and housing support and run a range of groups for young LGBT people.

John Cotton Centre
10 Sunnyside
Edinburgh EH7 5RA
0845 113 0005
(LGBT Youthline Tuesday 7.30pm-9pm)
info@lgbtyouth.org.uk
www.lgbtyouth.org.uk

Trans Alba

Offers support to transsexuals, their partners, families and friends.

21a High Street
Peniculk
EH26 0HZ
transalba@mail.com

Press for Change

Is a political lobbying and educational organisation, which campaigns to achieve equal civil rights and liberties for all transgender people in the UK, through legislation and social change.

BM Network
London
WC1N 3XX
letters@pfc.org.uk
www.pfc.org.uk

3G - Grampian Gender Group

Offers support and help to Transgender people living in the North East of Scotland.

07050 562 175 (Monday and Wednesday 7pm-9pm)
ggg_aberdeen@yahoo.co.uk
<http://members.tripod.co.uk/TriGs>

**Trans Forming Families:
Real Stories about
Transgendered Loved
Ones**

Mary Boenke

January 1999

Waterford Press

ISBN 0966327217

**Respect and Equality:
Transsexual and
Transgender Rights**

Stephen Whittle

2002

Cavendish Publishing

ISBN 1859417434

**Transgender Warriors:
Making History from Joan
of Arc to Denis Rodman**

Leslie Feinberg

1997 Beacon Press

ISBN 0807079413

**My Gender Workbook:
How to Become a Real
Man, a Real Woman, The
Real You, or Something
Else Entirely**

Kate Bornstein

1998 Routledge

ISBN 0415916739

**The White Book: The
Ultimate Guide to Living
as a Trans Man**

Stephen Whittle

FTM Network

Available from:

FTM Network

BM Network

London

WC1N 3XX

Lesbians Talk Transgender

Zachary I. Nataf

1996 Scarlet Pr;

ISBN: 1857270088



For more information and training on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues contact:

Beyond Barriers
11 Dixon Street
Glasgow
G1 4AL

t: 0141 574 0242

txt: 0141 574 0240

e: info@beyondbarriers.org.uk

w: www.beyondbarriers.org.uk