

How to be a trans ally

A beginner's guide

Trans
rights
are
human
rights.

**Transgender, non-
binary and gender
diverse people are...**
**our classmates, our coworkers,
our neighbours and our friends.**

Millions of people across the world have a lived transgender experience, so the chances are you've met a transgender person, and you don't even know it.

2018 has been the best and worst year for trans people. Despite the political victories, greater trans representation in the media and new policies protecting trans rights advancing every day, trans people still face disproportionately higher rates of discrimination.

It's time for us—all of us—to become stronger, louder allies and create an inclusive and accepting society for all.

What does it mean to be transgender, non-binary and gender diverse?

The term **transgender** describes people whose gender identity is different than the identity they were assigned at birth.

The term **non-binary** describes people who don't identify as male or female, but rather as neither. These people live as both, either or neither gender.

The term **gender diverse** is an umbrella term that encompasses a range of different gender identities.

For more terms associated with gender identity, see the glossary at the back of this book.

The Australian Human Rights Commission estimates that

A large, stylized pink graphic consisting of the number '11' followed by a percentage sign '%'. The numbers and the percentage sign are rendered in a bold, sans-serif font.

of the Australian population have a lived diverse sexual orientation, sex or gender identity life experience in Australia.

Trigger warning: this page contains statistics regarding suicide and violence.

Mental Health.

In a 2016 study **The National LGBTI Health Alliance** estimated that 35% of trans people in Australia aged 18 and over have attempted suicide in their lifetime due to mistreatment from the wider community. Additionally, the Trans Pathways Report estimates that trans youth have symptoms of depression almost 10 times the rate of the Australian average for young people. The First Australian National Trans Mental Health Study 2013 found 20.9% of participants reported suicidal ideation or thoughts of self-harm on at least half of the days in the last 2 weeks. This compared with a 12-month prevalence of suicidal ideation (excluding self-harm) in the general Australian population of 2.3%.

Globally, people who are trans experience significantly higher rates of physical and non-physical violence than the broader population.

“The political climate of Australia is a pretty terrifying space. The media response to safe schools and marriage equality is so transphobic”

- RORY, VICTORIA

A large, bold, pink graphic of the number 71% is centered on the page. The numbers are thick and blocky, with a slight shadow effect. The percentage sign is also large and pink.

of trans and gender diverse people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives.

Housing.

Having a safe, stable place to live is one of life's necessities. Yet we know the trans community are disproportionately affected by housing instability or discrimination—such as being evicted from their homes or denied housing—because of their gender identity.

Homelessness is also a critical issue for transgender people; one in three trans people have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. Family rejection, discrimination and violence contribute to this disproportionately high rate of homelessness in the transgender community.

71% of transgender and gender diverse young people aged 14 - 21 don't live at home with family.

Trans people of colour.

Violence against trans people isn't just about being trans, it intersects with other types of discrimination too.

According to **The National LGBTI Health Alliance**, people who are transgender experience deeper and broader patterns of discrimination than the broader LGBTI population. Parts of the rainbow population experience intersecting and multi-layered minority stress related to other aspects of their identity.

For example, Brotherboys and Sistergirls may experience minority stress related to being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, as well as related to their sexuality, sex or gender.

Similarly, members of the LGBTI community living with disabilities may experience discrimination related to their disability as well as their gender identity.

4%

of transgender and gender diverse young people aged 14 - 25 identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

16%

of transgender and gender diverse young people living in Australia aged 14 - 25 were born outside of Australia.

20.2% of transgender and gender diverse people aged 18 and over were **born overseas**, and **5.5%** are from a **non-English speaking** background.

What is an ally?

An ally is someone who supports and advocates for the equal treatment of a community other than their own.

If you're not okay with the disproportionate challenges trans and non-binary people face, it's time to use your voice and actions and work towards being an ally. Allyship is also active and understanding this is an important part of being an ally. "Ally" is not a label you can give yourself, it is something you have to continually work towards.

How to be an ally?

Becoming an ally to people who are transgender and non-binary is an ongoing process.

Pronouns.

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

It is important to respect people's pronouns. You can't always know what someone's pronouns are by looking at them. Asking and correctly using someone's pronouns is one of the most basic ways to show your respect for their gender identity.

“It was quite a relief to finally have a term that described how I was feeling, but also to know there was a whole community of people who identified the same way.”

— MOMO, NSW

Tips for trans and non-binary allies.

The following are several tips that can be used as you work towards becoming a better ally. This list isn't exhaustive but will provide you with a starting place as you learn more about gender identities.

Don't tolerate disrespect

Whether it's hurtful language, remarks or jokes, call it out if it's inappropriate. Seek out other allies who will support you in this effort.

Respect pronouns

Not sure which pronouns someone uses? Just ask! Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so. It's okay if you make a mistake—just be sure to correct it and move on.

Be patient with those questioning their gender identity

A person who's questioning their gender identity might shift back and forth as they find out what pronoun works for them. Be kind and respectful—this includes being respectful of their names, pronouns and bodies.

Don't worry about what bathrooms people use

Recognise that gender diverse people may not match the signs on restroom doors. If there are no gender neutral bathrooms available, offer to accompany a gender diverse person to the bathroom in a buddy system.

Listen to trans and gender diverse voices

Listen with an open mind and heart to the experiences of gender diverse people—they're the experts on their own lives, and one of the most important parts of being an ally is listen, giving others the space to speak. It's also good to remember that every person who is transgender has a unique experience. One narrative doesn't fit all.

Don't assume you can tell if someone is transgender

Transgender, non-binary and gender diverse people don't all look a certain way, and many may not appear to be trans or non-binary. You should not pressure someone you know into disclosing if they're gender diverse. If they want you to know, they'll tell you. It's important you know their pronouns, so you can refer to them correctly, but other than that, you should not need more information.

Be careful about confidentiality, disclosure and outing

If someone has shared their gender identity with you, don't tell others. Not only is this an invasion of privacy, it can also have devastating consequences in a world that can be intolerant of gender differences.

Use gender-neutral language

Our everyday words and phrases are often gendered unnecessarily. By using terms like "hi guys" or addressing a group with "welcome ladies and gentlemen", we assume genders and exclude people. Consider using gender inclusive language

like "hi friends" or "welcome folks" instead. Instead of "brother/sister" use "sibling" and instead of "boyfriend/girlfriend" use "partner".

Learning and unlearning

Most of us have grown up with ideas about what are the 'right' ways to be a man or a woman. We've been taught to think of this strict gender binary as natural, when in fact, there are lots of different gender identities and ways that people can express them.

Your journey as an ally means questioning and unlearning many of these ideas about gender that you take for granted as natural and being open to different concepts which embrace and include gender diversity.

Keep it appropriate

Don't ask trans people about their genitals, surgical status or sex lives. Bottom line: if you wouldn't ask a cisgender person, don't ask a trans person either!

Glossary.

Cisgender (non-transgender)

Cisgender or cis is used to describe people whose gender identity is in alignment with the sex assigned to them at birth. Cis means 'in alignment with' or 'on the same side'.

The prefixes cis and trans work together as umbrella terms to classify all gender identities, so no identity is normalised.

Gender

The social classification of people as masculine and/or feminine. Whereas sex is an externally assigned classification, gender is something that becomes evident in a social context.

Gender Confirming / Affirming Surgery

Refers to surgical alteration of anatomy to affirm one's gender identity. This is only one of many routes of transition. Whether for financial, medical or social reasons, many trans people do not opt for surgery. This term is also evolving and some activists refer to surgeries as 'assisted puberty'.

Gender Diverse

For many years, trans has been used as an umbrella term to describe people with gender identities or presentations that differed from what was expected. However, gender diverse is being used increasingly as a substitute for trans, to acknowledge the linguistic and cultural limitations of trans as a word to describe all gendered ways of being.

Gender Expression

Characteristics and behaviors that may be perceived as masculine or feminine, such as appearance, clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, speech patterns and social interactions.

Gender Identity

A person's deeply held internal sense of being male or female or some other gender, regardless of the sex they were assigned at birth. The ability to determine someone's gender identity rests with the individual.

LGBTQIA+

The umbrella abbreviation for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, Intersex, A-Sexual and + community. The + represents that gender definitions are fluid and subject to change, and that those questioning are welcome in the community.

Non-Binary

Some people don't identify as male or female, but rather as neither or as a combination.

These people live as both, either or neither gender. These folks may identify as non-binary or genderqueer and may ask others to refer to them with the pronoun they/them/theirs or xe/xim/xir (pronounced ze, zim, zeer), or faer or hir.

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc.) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.

Transgender (non-cisgender)

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Transgender is a broad and respectful term that is generally the most appropriate term to use. Trans is also acceptable.

Transgender Man and Transgender Woman

Use these terms to refer to how a person identifies and lives today. For example, someone assigned male at birth who identifies as a woman is a transgender woman.

Transition/Gender Transition

The period during which a person begins to live to be consistent with their gender identity. There is no one way to transition. Transition may involve 'coming out' by telling family, friends or coworkers, using a different name, changing pronouns (she/he/they), changing clothing or appearance, and/ or accessing medical treatment such as counseling, hormone therapy or different types of surgery; however, none of these steps are required.

Transphobia

An irrational fear or hatred of trans people. This is often expressed in the form of harassment, violence, targeted misinformation, institutionalised discrimination and murder.

Resources

The Australian Human Rights Commission

The Commission was established in 1986 by an act of the federal Parliament. They are an independent statutory organisation and report to the federal Parliament through the Attorney-General. The Australian Human Rights Commission leads the promotion and the protection of human rights in Australia.

humanrights.gov.au/search/Transgender

The National LGBTI Health Alliance

The National LGBTI Health Alliance is the national peak health organisation in Australia for organisations and individuals that provide health-related programs, services and research focused on LGBTI peoples and other sexuality, gender, and bodily diverse people and communities. They aim to end discrimination and stigma by improving the health outcomes of LGBTI peoples through policy, advocacy, representation, research evidence, and capacity building.

lgbtihealth.org.au/

Transcend

Transcend was founded in 2012 by Rebekah Robertson. It is a grassroots, unfunded support network and was the first parent led peer support network for the families of transgender children in Australia.

www.transcendsupport.com.au

Trans Pathways Report by Telethon

Kids Institute was the first research study conducted on this scale. The report indicated that mental health problems are common in trans populations, and that these are primarily caused by factors external to the individual. In addition, the report focuses on how to bridge the gap in knowledge and research to support trans young people to overcome social inequality

www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/brain--behaviour/trans-pathwayreport-web.pdf



#TransRights**Now**

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Australian Human Rights Commission

Minus18

National Centre for Transgender Equality

The National LGBTI Health Alliance

Some of the tips for trans and non-binary allies were adapted from the trans@MIT Action Tips for Allies of Trans People resource, available at web.mit.edu/trans.

Glossary terms are from the National Center for Transgender Equality, InsideOUT, Rainbow Youth and Transgender History: The Roots of Today's Revolution, 2017 by Susan Stryker.