SDSU | Research Support Services

Gender, Gender Identity, and Gender Inclusivity

Gender is often defined as a social construct that refers to various roles, rights, and responsibilities of men and women. However, gender is not divided along the binary lines of "man" and "woman". A person's **gender identity** is not restricted to being either a man or a woman—some people do not identify with any gender, while others identify with multiple genders. Gender is a spectrum onto which an unfixed number of gender identities fall.

The following 7 terms define some of the more widely known gender identities:

1. **Agender:**

   An agender person does not have a gender, though the body of an agender person does not always correspond with their lack of gender identity. They can be frequently unconcerned about their physical sex but may strive to appear androgynous. Some people may also use the term 'gender neutral'.

2. **Cisgender:**

   A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with those typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth. Many people identify as cisgender; it is a common gender in society, but it should not be assumed.

3. **Genderfluid:**

   A genderfluid person does not identify as male or female but rather as one or the other depending on the day. Individuals who are genderfluid may express one gender through clothing or interests one day and then identify as another the next.

4. **Genderqueer:**

These individuals may identify as male or female, as between or beyond genders, or as a mix of the two. These people frequently question gender stereotypes and the male- female binary system. Genderqueer is another term for someone open about their sexual orientation and is similar to the term 'non-binary'.

5. **Intersex:**

Intersex refers to a group of medical conditions in which a person is born with chromosomes, genitalia, and/or secondary sexual characteristics that contradict the traditional definition of a male or female body. Individuals are not always aware of their condition, but it is an identity that some choose to share.

6. **Gender nonconforming:**

A term which refers to a person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society. A gender non-conforming person chooses to not conform to gender-based stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

7. **Transgender (trans man, trans woman, or trans person):**

Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth, including but not limited to transmen, transwomen, intersex people, genderqueer people, and gender non-conforming people. Transgender people can be straight, gay, bisexual, or of any other sexual orientation.

Research Support Services
Division of Research and Innovation
5250 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1933
Tel: 619/594-5938
Email: RSS@sdsu.edu

Gender-Inclusive Language and
Preferred Pronouns

Gender inclusivity means speaking and writing in a way that does not discriminate against a particular sex, social gender or gender identity, and does not perpetuate gender stereotypes.

A **preferred pronoun** is a third-person pronoun by which an individual wishes to be referred to in order to indicate their gender identity.

The more commonly used and gendered pronouns are **she/her/hers** and **he/him/his**.

These sets of pronouns are grammatically **feminine** and **masculine pronouns** in the English language, respectively. However, many people avoid using these labels as **not everyone who uses he/him/his feels "masculine"**, and **not everyone who uses she/her/hers feels "feminine".**

Some commonly used **gender-neutral pronouns** are **they/them/theirs**.

Some people use **more than one set of pronouns**. This can be denoted as "they/she" or "they/them/theirs and she/her/hers". When someone uses multiple sets of pronouns, it could mean that they are okay with either one being used, or that they accept both, but have a preference towards the one that is listed first.

Examples:

The following are examples of ways to ask about social identities. This list is not exhaustive, and each example has limitations. Researchers must carefully consider the complexities of the social identities participants will be asked to disclose, and carefully consider the cultural context in which the research is being conducted. These considerations will impact how the following questions should be framed.

Researchers should strive to create a gender-inclusive environment by including questions about participants' preferred pronouns in screening questionnaires, surveys, and interviews. Understanding and using participants' preferred pronouns demonstrates respect for persons and promotes autonomy.

Research Support Services
Division of Research and Innovation
5250 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1933
Tel: 619/594-5938
Email: RSS@sdsu.edu

SDSU | Research Support
Services

Example A: *What is your gender identity? Please leave blank if you prefer not to say:_____*

Example B: How do you identify your gender? Check all that apply:

    Man
    Woman
    Non-Binary
    Genderfluid
    Genderqueer
    Prefer to self-describe:_____
    Prefer not to say

(Include only if relevant to the research question):
Do you identify as transgender?

    Yes
    No
    Prefer not to say

Example C: What pronouns should be used to refer to you? Check all that apply:

    She/her/hers
    He/him/his
    They/them/theirs
    Ze/zir/zirs or Ze/hir/hirs
    No pronouns—use my name
    Prefer to self-describe:_____
    Prefer not to say

Research Support Services
Division of Research and Innovation
5250 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1933
Tel: 619/594-5938
Email: RSS@sdsu.edu

SDSU | Research Support Services

References:

Allarakha, S. (2022, February 2). *What are the 72 other genders? Gender Identity List & Child Awareness.* MedicineNet. Retrieved July 20, 2022.

Frequently asked questions about transgender people. National Center for Transgender Equality. (2020, September 4). Retrieved July 20, 2022.

Main Page. (2022, March 2). Nonbinary Wiki, . Retrieved July 20, 2022.

PFLAG. (2022, June). *PFLAG National Glossary of Terms.* Retrieved July 20, 2022.

Shuvo Ghosh, M. D. (2022, February 4*). Gender identity: Definitions, development of gender identity - usual patterns, development of gender identity - unusual patterns.* Retrieved July 22, 2022.

United Nations. (n.d.). Gender-inclusive communication. United Nations. Retrieved May 26, 2023.

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. LGBTQ+ Resource Center. (n.d.). Retrieved May 26, 2023.

Research Support Services
Division of Research and Innovation
5250 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1933
Tel: 619/594-5938
Email: RSS@sdsu.edu