

Transgender Myths & Facts



TRANSGENDER ALLIES GROUP

Transgender Myths and Facts

Myth: Transgender people are confused

Fact: Transgender people are no more and no less confused than most people. Gender is a much more complicated issue than most people are aware, and sorting through gender differences can be challenging. But by the time someone is ready to come out as transgender, they have thought long and hard and are generally secure in their feelings.

Myth: Being transgender is a “choice.”

Fact: Being transgender is no more a choice than being gay or straight, having brown eyes or blue, or being left- or right-handed. The choice is deciding whether or not to live your life honestly with yourself and others.

Myth: Transgender people are really gay.

Fact: Gender identity and sexual orientation are two different subjects. Some transgender people are lesbian, gay or bisexual in their sexual orientation, and some are straight.

Myth: Transgender people are sinners.

Fact: Many transgender people are people of faith. While some find hostility in their churches, synagogues, mosques or worshipping communities, still others are embraced by their spiritual peers. The number of transgender-friendly places of worship is large and growing.

Myth: Transgender people can't have families.

Fact: Whether they come out before a relationship or while in one, countless transgender people find love and happiness that makes them a better partner and parent.

Myth: Transgender people can be cured.

Fact: There is no “cure” for transgender people, although some do try to repress it. The most reputable medical and psychotherapeutic groups say you should not try to keep from expressing your true gender identity. Instead, they say to focus on ways to come to an understanding of yourself and share your life openly with those you love.

Myth: All transgender people have surgery.

Fact: Many transgender people have no desire to pursue surgeries or medical intervention. At the same time, many transgender people cannot afford medical treatment or have no access to it. Considering these truths, it's important that civil rights are afforded to all transgender people equally, regardless of their medical histories.

Myth: There are more male-to-female transgender people than female-to-male transgender people.

Fact: There are no reputable statistics on how many transgender people there are in the world, nor on how many people identify as male-to-female or female-to-male. But even the best estimates show there are more or less equal numbers of MTF and FTM transgender people.

Myth: Transgender people are mentally disturbed.

Fact: Transgenderism is not a disorder. Some individuals do feel an emotional distress that can result from “a marked incongruence between one’s experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender.” Not all transgender people have dysphoria – they may or may not seek changes through hormones or surgery, but whatever path they know they must take, they do so without a sense of dysphoria. For other transgender individuals, there is a range of how intense the experience of dysphoria can be – from a mild to highly intense experience of distress. This distress can be similar to anxiety or depression. Often the distress alleviates with treatment – which is finding a way to be congruent (through a range of means) with one’s internal experience of gender.

Myth: Transgender surgery is experimental.

Fact: Gender Reassignment Surgery can be considered medically necessary and is appropriate for many, but not all, transgender persons. The procedure is considered routine and performed on thousands every year. Additionally, the Standards of Care specifically state: Sex Reassignment is Effective and Medically Indicated in Severe Gender Dysphoria. In persons diagnosed with transsexualism or profound Gender Dysphoria, sex reassignment surgery, along with hormone therapy and real-life experience, is a treatment that has proven to be effective. Such a therapeutic regimen, when prescribed or recommended by qualified practitioners, is medically indicated and medically necessary. Sex reassignment is not “experimental,” “investigational,” “elective,” “cosmetic,” or optional in any meaningful sense. It constitutes very effective and appropriate treatment for transgenderism.

Myth: Transgender people are radical liberals with crazy ideas.

Fact: Transgender people come from all political and religious backgrounds.

Many trans people just want to lead their lives as part of “mainstream” society and be accepted and not condemned by their families, churches, governments and communities. Other trans people feel very strongly about changing the system that has oppressed them and adopt more radical beliefs about the gender system. They wish to live outside of traditional social norms and not be deemed “freaks” because of it. As

with the all societies, Transgender people are diverse. Each will make a unique decision about the life they want to lead.

Myth: Transgender people hate their bodies.

Fact: This is a very common myth. It does make sense that a person who identifies as a woman might be uncomfortable in her male body, and vice versa. And some transgender people are uncomfortable and want to alter their bodies. Others choose to live with their bodies as they are. Neither choice means that this person hates themselves. On the contrary, a transgender person can love themselves through the whole process of transitioning. Each person's relationship with their body is unique and we should support every transgender person in doing what works for them.

Myth: Transgender people perform drag shows.

Fact: The majority of gender performance is done by non-trans people. It's just a performance. It's not about real people. Drag Queens and Drag Kings "do drag" for theatrical, comedic, and at times, political purposes. They do it for their art and they do it with you, the viewer, in mind. When a trans woman wears women's clothing or a trans man wears men's clothing, they are not doing drag. Nor are they cross-dressing. They are just wearing their clothes.

Myth: You can tell someone is transgender just by looking at them.

Fact: This is a myth meant to make us believe that transgender people are all crazy freaks. The truth is, transgender people have bodies just like ours. And they may display them in very traditional ways. Some pass very well, others don't.

Myth: Transgender people aren't "real" men or women.

Fact: This is probably the most hurtful myth of all. It tells us that transgender people are somehow less human because of their gender identification. It is proof that they do not have a place in proper society. It is hateful and unacceptable.

Everyone should have the right to be men and women, regardless of sex category or anything else.

There are many ways to be human.

Myth: Transgender people are weird.

Fact: When someone is unlike anything we have seen or known, we think, that's weird. It's okay to have that thought. It's human nature. But it's important to understand that your perception of what's "weird" is based on your experiences and your culture. Many cultures think that living outside the gender binary (two-gender system) is perfectly normal.

Transgender people are integrated into mainstream society and may even be held in high esteem.

Myth: Transgender kids should live as their born gender, not experienced gender, until they are old enough to decide for themselves.

Fact: Many kids express cross-gender behaviors or preferences, and often that is a part of growing up and figuring out how to be themselves when they experience social gender roles that don't fit them – a boy who likes doing hair, and girl who likes playing football. Some kids with cross-gender behavior are congruently gendered and heterosexual. Some are congruently gendered and gay or lesbian. However, some kids are transgender, and early support makes a significant difference for these kids. Allowing kids who are transgender to live as their experienced gender can greatly improve their sense of well-being and their development. For parents and loved ones who don't know what to do, there is help for sorting through the options and choices for kids and teens who are transgender.

This document was prepared by TAG, as a tool to promote discussion of authenticity, truth, and health for Transgender people. It borrows liberally from multiple sources (with permission), including those of the Human Rights Campaign (HRC). More information can be found at hrc.org.