



International Non-Binary People's Day

14th July 2021



It's what we do

Contents

Creating an inclusive culture starts with all of us role modelling inclusive behaviours and bringing 'endless inclusion' to life. This means being culturally aware and curious about our colleagues' differences. We've created this pack to increase your knowledge of and confidence in being inclusive of non-binary identities and communities.

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Why are we celebrating International Non-Binary People's Day?

This day has been marked since 2012 with the aim of providing visibility for and celebrating non-binary people.

In wider society, non-binary people deal with disproportionate rates of mental health issues, including attempted suicide, and experience high rates of physical and sexual assault.

It's important that we help to build a safer, kinder and fairer world for non-binary people.

If you are looking for support, here are some key organisations that could help:

LGBT Foundation: www.lgbt.foundation

LGBT Switchboard: www.switchboard.lgbt

Gendered Intelligence: www.genderedintelligence.co.uk

What does 'non-binary' mean?

If this information about non-binary identities is really new for you, that's ok! We all have to start somewhere. If you have questions after you've been through this pack, we have a Q&A drop-in session coming up and/or you can email inclusion@coop.co.uk with your questions.

Non-binary is a gender identity just like 'man' or 'woman'.

It is an umbrella term used to describe people who feel their gender cannot be defined within the margins of the gender binary: man or woman.

Some non-binary people identify as part of the trans community, some do not.

Identities that come under the non-binary umbrella include:

- Gender fluid
- Agender
- Gender neutral
- Genderqueer
- Gender Non-Conforming
- Androgynous
- Third Gender

Third Gender is a social category in cultures that recognise more than two genders, for people who define their gender beyond woman or man. Examples include:

- Hirja in India
- Muxe in Mexico
- Bakla in Philippines
- Māhū in Hawaii
- Khawaja Sira in Pakistan
- Two-spirit people in Native American culture.

Some 'third gender' societies may have four or more gender identities. Although non-binary identities may seem new to some people in Western countries, they have actually always existed.

What does being 'non-binary' look like?

The short answer is: **there is no one way to 'look' or 'behave' non-binary.**

Having a non-binary gender identity does not mean that somebody will present as gender-neutral.

When it comes to gender presentation (i.e. what clothes to wear, how to wear your hair, whether to wear make-up etc.) most non-binary people are invested in doing what feels comfortable and true to themselves, rather than attempting to follow any particular gender role, including trying to look 'gender-neutral'.

There is no right or wrong way to be non-binary.

Some non-binary people undergo medical transition (taking hormones and having gender affirming surgeries), or social transition ('coming-out', changing pronouns and changing name), and others do not.

All of these are completely individual choices based on what any one non-binary person personally feels they want to, need to, or must do in order to feel more comfortable and more like themselves.



Famous non-binary people

**Sam
Smith**

Singer and
songwriter

**Demi
Lovato**

Singer, songwriter
and actor

**Eddy
Izzard**

Comedian,
actor and writer

**Indya
Moore**

Actor and
model

**Elliot
Page**

Actor and
producer

**Jonathan
Van Ness**

Hairdresser
and television
personality

**Amandla
Stenberg**

Actor and
singer

**Asia Kate
Dillon**

Actor

**Angel
Haze**

Rapper and
singer

**Travis
Alabanza**

Performance
artist and writer

What are gender neutral pronouns?

We often talk about pronouns when discussing trans and non-binary identities, as what you call someone is a key way to respect and affirm their identity.

Pronouns are the words we use to describe someone in place of their name, such as she/her, he/him, they/them.

Non-binary people may use any of these pronouns, but often use the gender-neutral options such as they/them or ze/zir.

Trans women, like cis women, will typically use she/her pronouns and trans men, like cis men, will typically use he/him pronouns.

If you are unsure about someone's pronoun, you can ask them. You can also start this conversation by sharing your pronouns, for example "Hi, I'm George, I use he/him pronouns".

There are also gender-neutral prefixes, so rather than using Mr, Miss or Mrs, Non-binary people often use Mx.

Did you know...

'They' is a grammatically correct gender-neutral pronoun. It has been used as a gender-neutral pronoun by Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, and the Merriam-Webster dictionary

Dispelling myths

“Being ‘non-binary’ is just a new trend”

Non-binary people have been around in every society for all time. Many cultures across the world recognise third/non-binary genders.

The reason many people think it's 'new' is because they're only just seeing it be made visible in the mainstream, and that's only possible now because there is more awareness of trans and gender non-conforming identities. It's that increased visibility that makes it more possible for non-binary people to 'come-out' now.

“Gender fluid people are just confused”

The first thing to say is that it's ok to be confused or uncertain about any of your identities, and to explore and re-name them if that feels right.

Secondly, our society has often tried to rely on binaries to make sense of gender and sexuality – man or woman, straight or gay – but the reality has always been that many people don't identify within the binary – bisexual people, pansexual people, non-binary people, gender fluid people. And their identities are just as valid, and no more confused than anyone else's. The confusion tends to come more from binary people trying to understand those identities, rather than with the non-binary people themselves.

Dispelling myths

“Using ‘they’ for an individual is grammatically incorrect”

The Oxford English Dictionary has traced the use of the singular ‘they’ back to 1375, and found it has been used by writers such as Shakespeare, Jane Austen and Oscar Wilde.

We also use ‘they’ when we don’t know someone’s name in everyday conversation all the time, e.g., we see someone walking along when their glove falls out of their pocket and say to our friend “oh look what they’ve dropped”.

“Non-binary people want to eradicate gender”

Many non-binary and binary people alike do feel oppressed by the rigid social rules around gender, but the aim for most is actually about having more options for gender, rather than getting rid of gender altogether.

The goal is for everyone to be able to use a gender identity that best reflects how they feel inside, rather than being forced to deny who they are in order to fit in.

Dispelling myths

“Non-binary people don’t medically transition”

This myth has come about because the medical services that traditionally provide gender-affirming medical treatments, like the NHS, have required trans people to transition from one binary gender to another and haven’t allowed people to access treatment if they are openly non-binary or gender-fluid.

However there has been some progress in this area more recently, and many non-binary people have been using private healthcare or services abroad to access the gender-affirming medical treatments they need. For non-binary people who experience gender dysphoria, access to medical transition can be life-saving.

“Being non-binary is the same as being intersex”

Being non-binary is about having a gender identity that doesn’t fit neatly into the binary genders: ‘man’ or ‘woman’. Whereas, being intersex is about being born with physical sex characteristics (such as hormones, genitals, reproductive systems) that don’t fit the binary expectations of ‘male’ or ‘female’ bodies.

Non-binary is a gender identity - which is your internal sense of your own gender. Intersex is a sex-assigned-at-birth - which is the classification based on sex characteristics - that a medical professional gives to your body when you’re born.

Top tips and takeaways

- Avoid assuming you know someone's gender identity or pronouns just by looking at them or hearing their voice.
- If you don't know someone's pronouns, just ask.
- Practise using 'they' when you're not yet aware of someone's pronouns
- If you notice someone has changed their name, is using a shortened or different version of their name, or has changed their pronouns, follow suit
- Don't ask inappropriate or invasive questions about someone's body or transition
- Even though the focus is often on the discrimination and oppression that non-binary people, and all minority groups, face, remember they are a whole person. Ask your non-binary colleague what they did at the weekend, whether they like football, what their favourite food is, just like you would anybody else.
- Remember, non-binary is a gender-identity only. All non-binary people, like all people, also have a sexual orientation, a race and ethnicity, an age, an experience of being disabled or not, a religion or not, and many other characteristics. So each non-binary person will have different experiences, which plays a part in the differing power and privilege they will hold.

What leaders can do to support their teams

- Add your pronouns to your email signature, to your LinkedIn profile, and any other public profiles to show your solidarity and inclusion of trans and non-binary people. [Click here for more information](#) on why this is important.
- Start a conversation with your team about non-binary inclusion - where can you make small and big changes to ensure everyone is welcome? Consider incorporating the top tips listed on the previous page.
- Choose gender-neutral language over binary gendered terms when talking generally, about a group or someone who's gender-identity you aren't aware of: 'partner' rather than 'husband/wife', 'child' rather than 'son/daughter', 'sibling' rather than 'brother/sister', 'they/them' rather than 'he/him/she/her', 'people' rather than 'men/women', 'team' rather than 'guys/girls'.
- Watch, listen and read to non-binary people talking about their experiences. Share with your team and your network what you have learnt. See opposite for some suggestions.

Nonbinary
Nonbinary
Wiki

**Talking
Non-binary
with
Fox Fisher**
YouTube

**What Does
It Mean to
Be Nonbinary
or Enby?**
verywellmind.com

**NB: My
non-binary
life**
BBC Sounds
download

**International Non-Binary
People's Day**