

## Gender identity myths and facts

***Myth: Young people are not old enough to know their gender identity.***

**Fact:** Because of greater awareness about gender and transgender issues, more and more young people are becoming empowered to express their identity at young ages.

***Myth: Young people are identifying as transgender just to be trendy.***

**Fact:** Identifying as transgender brings with it challenges and often discrimination. It is not something people do to be cool. Like in many other areas of life, some students may be exploring their gender expression and the labels they use to describe themselves. Such exploration is a normal part of adolescent development.

***Myth: Transgender young people deceive others about what their “true” gender is.***

**Fact:** Transgender people are not deceiving other by expressing their gender identity. For example, when a student transitions from male to female, she is expressing her true self to the world. She deserves to be recognised and respected like any other girl should be.

***Myth: Transgender and non-conforming students are actually gay.***

**Fact:** Sexual orientation and gender identity are different. A person’s sexual orientation is related to whether the person is romantically attracted to men, women or both. Gender identity, on the other hand, is about the person’s own internal identification as male, female, or a gender in between male and female. Just like non-transgender people, transgender people can be of any sexual orientation.

***Myth: All transgender young people will eventually take hormones and have sex reassignment surgery.***

**Fact:** Some transgender people take hormones and/or have surgery. However, for a number of reasons, many transgender people do not take either of these steps. Some feel comfortable with their bodies the way they are. For others, hormones and surgery are inaccessible because they may be too expensive.

***Myth: Transgender women are not “real” women and transgender men are not “real” men.***

**Fact:** People’s “true” gender is not defined by the sex they were assigned at birth. Our true gender is based on our gender identity. When a person who is transgender expresses an identity different from the one they were assigned at birth, the gender they are expressing is their “real” gender.

***Myth: It’s OK to make fun of girls who are too masculine and boys who are too effeminate because that is just harmless teasing.***

**Fact:** Teasing is never harmless, particularly regarding gender stereotypes. Gender non-conforming young people are often clear about their gender identity. Their appearance or expression may seem confusing, but that is only because it doesn’t fit into stereotypes we have about gender.

Reproduced from Beyond the Binary: A Tool Kit for Gender Identity Activism in Schools, p 6. A publication of: Gay-Straight Alliance Network/Tides Center, Transgender Law Center and National Center for Lesbian Rights, [www.gsanetwork.org/beyondthebinary/btbonline.pdf](http://www.gsanetwork.org/beyondthebinary/btbonline.pdf).