

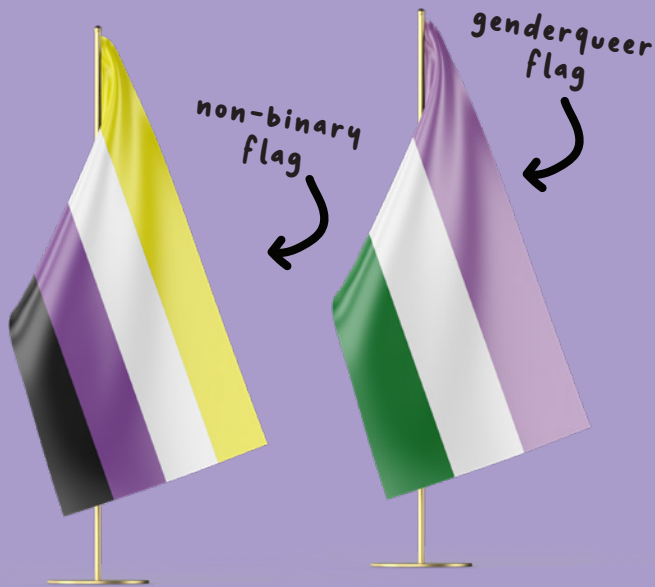
**Non-binary** gender refers to a gender that falls outside of the gender binary in our society.

In a Western, Anglo-Saxon context, this gender binary includes boys and girls. When a person identifies as outside of this gender binary, they might choose to refer to themselves as **non-binary**.


Non-binary is often used as an umbrella term. Some non-binary people identify as transgender, and others do not.

*(We have another pamphlet about transgender identities!)*

In many Indigenous contexts, there isn't a gender binary, or the gender system already recognizes genders outside of boys and girls. This is why some Indigenous people reject the term "non-binary", and might instead choose to use terms in their own language or a term like Two-Spirit or Indigiqueer.



### CHECK US OUT ONLINE

 @northernmosaicnetwork

 Northern Mosaic Network

[www.northernmosaic.net](http://www.northernmosaic.net)

### TALK TO US

Northern Mosaic Network

867-444-7295

[admin@northernmosaic.net](mailto:admin@northernmosaic.net)

### VISIT US

Suite 213 - 5112 52nd Street

Yellowknife, NT

X1A 1T6

### SEND US MAIL

PO Box 1751, STN Main

Yellowknife, NT

X1A 2P3

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Women and Gender  
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité  
des genres Canada



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# all about **NON-BINARY IDENTITIES**

## THE NON-BINARY UMBRELLA

Non-binary genders are vast. Some people consider non-binary to be a gender identity, while others consider it to be a gender modality.

*(To learn more about “gender identity”, “gender modality” or other components of gender, check out our All About Trans identities brochure!)*

In the same way that we can consider boy (*man*) or girl (*woman*) as under a “binary gender” umbrella. There are multiple different ways that a non-binary person may identify.

Some of these terms include genderqueer, genderfluid, bigender, trigender, pangender, agender, and more.

While all of these words may seem overwhelming and unnecessary, it’s important to recognize that each individual person may feel a different connection to different terms, based on the unique experience they might represent.

## NON-BINARY VS. GENDER NON-CONFORMING

Sometimes, people make reference to somebody who is **gender non-conforming**. It can be easy to assume that this is the same thing as non-binary, but a gender non-conforming person is not necessarily non-binary!

Gender conformity refers to a situation where a person conforms to the typical understanding of what a “man” or a “woman” is supposed to look, sound or act like. If a person behaves or looks differently than what people might assume they should be based on their gender, they could be gender non-conforming.

This means, for example, that a man who wears nail polish or a woman who mostly wears masculine clothing, could be gender non-conforming even though they don’t identify as non-binary.

## NON-BINARY FAQs

### Isn’t non-binary just something that’s made up?

If you go back far enough, you’ll find that lot of the way that we organize our social and cultural norms are made up.

Non-binary genders have existed throughout history and across different societies as far back as anthropologists and sociologists have studied the world.

### How can you tell if a person is non-binary?

There is no way to tell if a person is non-binary, other than them telling you that they are. Non-binary people can look and sound all sorts of ways, so it’s important not to make assumptions.

### Some non-binary people tell me they use the pronouns “they/them”, isn’t that a plural pronoun?

Some people (including people who aren’t non-binary) might use “they/them” as a personal pronoun. While this pronoun is generally thought of as a plural pronoun, it has actually been used to reference a single, unidentified person for a long a time.

However, even if that wasn’t the case, sometimes words evolve, and that’s okay!

### Do non-binary people transition?

Some non-binary people might choose to undergo a transition. Sometimes, this might look like a social transition, where they go by a different name or start wearing different clothes. Sometimes, this might be a medical transition, where they take medicine to change how their body produces hormones.

Some non-binary people never undergo transition. No matter what choice they make, a non-binary person is still non-binary.

## AM I NON-BINARY?

The important thing to remember is that you don’t have to use certain words to describe yourself just because that’s the “box” that you fit into. That being said, here are some things that might apply to you if you’re part of the non-binary community:

- you get really anxious or frustrated when people refer to you as the gender you were assigned at birth, but it also doesn’t feel right when they call you another gender
- you don’t feel like you’re a man or a woman
- you feel good when people can’t tell if you’re a man or a woman

**If you are a non-binary person in the NWT looking for support or community, reach out to us.**

## BINARISM & NON-BINARY ERASURE

**Binarism** generally refers to any practice of perceiving any given situation as only having two options (binaries). When discussing gender, binarism is often used to describe the experiences of non-binary people whereby they are erased, discounted or stigmatized.

**Non-binary erasure** is a term used to describe the ways in which non-binary people aren’t included or are treated as though they don’t exist.

Non-binary people are often disbelieved by others, being told that they are “actually” a man or a woman, and that non-binary identity is not real. Non-binary erasure can also happen in conversations or spaces for trans people, where all trans people are assumed to identify as either men or women.

**If you are looking to learn more about trans identity, transitioning, transphobia or cissexism, talk to us about our workshops!**