MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
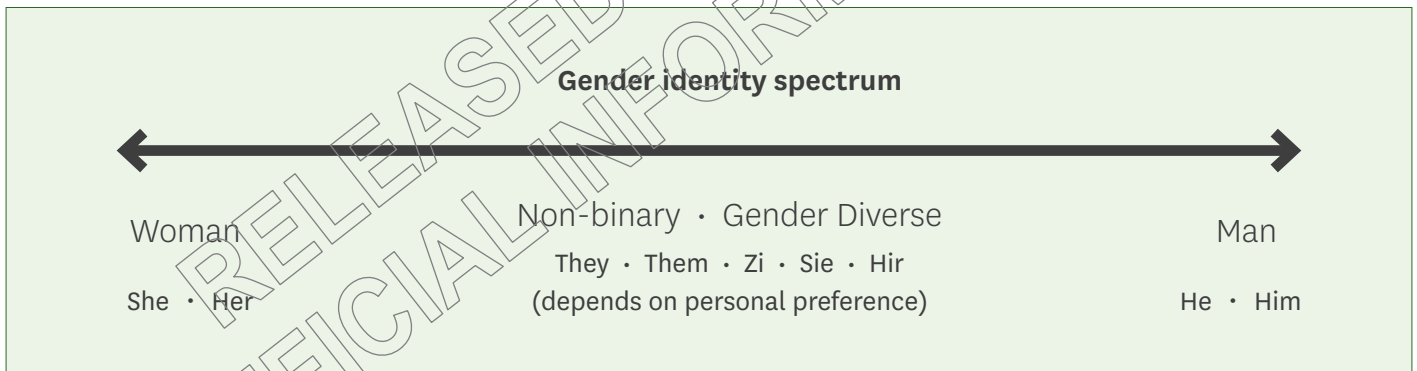TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

Gender identity

Gender identity is a person's own sense of identification as male, female, neither, both, or somewhere in between.

Gender identity has more attention now than it ever has. More people are identifying with a gender other than 'male' or 'female'. This might sound like a recent development, but in some cultures gender diversity has traditionally been acknowledged and celebrated.

Binary and non-binary genders

Gender identity spectrum

Woman

She · Her

Non-binary · Gender Diverse

They · Them · Zi · Sie · Hir
(depends on personal preference)

Man

He · Him

The above diagram shows the gender identity spectrum, with man and woman on each end with their respective pronouns. The middle of the spectrum represents gender diverse identities with pronouns people may want to use, and there may be others. Some people sit outside of the spectrum altogether.

What you can do

There are some ways to make our engagements with clients positive, respectful and inclusive.

Here are some things to consider when interacting with clients:

· ask what name/title your client uses
· ask what pronoun they prefer (eg: she/he/they/zhe/xe)
· don't use their former name (or "dead name") as it can be hurtful and embarrassing and can create anxiety.

Other ways to be respectful and inclusive

- **Be an ally** – When you hear someone use the wrong pronouns for a friend, colleague or client, you can gently correct them eg "I understand Jo likes to be referred to as they or them". Part of being a good ally to trans and non-binary people is helping other people get pronouns right.
- **Respect pronouns** – Feel free to ask which pronouns someone uses. Then use that pronoun and encourage others to do so.
- **Normalise pronouns** – A great way to do this is including your pronouns in email signatures or on social media bios. This helps to normalise the idea that people shouldn't just assume they can tell someone's pronoun based on the traditional gendering of a name.
- **Make an effort** – The only way to get better at using non-binary pronouns is to step outside of your comfort zone. Forget what you think you know about grammar and make an effort to respect identities by using non-binary pronouns.
- **Practise** – The only way not to get flustered using non-binary pronouns is to practise, practise, practise!
- **Apologise** – Mistakes happen. When you misgender someone say you are sorry, and fix your language moving forward. Don't make a big deal about your mistake and force the trans or non-binary person to spend a lot of time and energy consoling you for misgendering them.
- **Non-binary greetings** – Instead of saying "ladies" to a group of people, try to incorporate language that isn't gendered like "folks".
- **Keep it appropriate** – Don't ask trans and non-binary people about their genitals, surgical status or sex lives. If you wouldn't ask a cisgender person, don't ask a trans or non-binary person either.

Glossary

- **Gender diverse** – a term that describes a range of gender identities, including non-binary, transgender and culturally specific identities such as tangata ira tane and whakawahine (Māori), fa'afafine (Samoa) and fakaleiti (Tonga).
- **Non-binary** – a description of a gender identity that is neither male nor female.
- **Transgender** – a person whose gender identity differs from that which was assigned at birth. Transgender people sometimes identify with a binary gender like male or female, and other people identify as gender diverse.
- **Pronouns** – a word that refers to either the people talking (I or you) or someone or something that is being talked about (like she, it, them, and this). Gender pronouns (he/she/they/ze etc) specifically refer to people that you are talking about.
- **LGBTIQA+** – a term often used to describe people who identify as having a minority sexuality/sexual orientation, gender, gender expression and sex characteristics. The acronym stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and other non-binary and non-heterosexual identities not listed.
- **Cisgender (cis)** – a term used to describe people whose sex assigned at birth aligns with their gender identity i.e. people who are not transgender or non-binary.