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Myth #9: Transgender people make up a third gender

By German Lopez | @germanlopez | german.lopez@vox.com | Updated Nov 14, 2018, 4:09pm EST

Part of **Transgender people: 10 common myths**

Most transgender people explicitly identify as male or female. They aren't part of a third gender — they are, by all intents and purposes, men and women.

Emily Prince, a trans woman in Alexandria, Virginia, recently struggled with this misconception about trans people's gender identity while signing up for a therapy program. "The first line of the form asked for sex with three options: male, female, and

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transgender,” she said. “Right there, we already have an issue. I’m a woman. I’m not some third sex. There are some non-binary people who don’t fit into male or female, but you don’t describe all trans people in that way.”

As Prince alluded, some people — such as gender nonconforming, genderqueer, and nonbinary communities — may identify outside the traditional boundaries of male or female. Although these forms of identity and expression are often associated with sexual orientation — think stereotypes of flamboyant gay men or butch lesbians — they’re not intertwined.

Gender nonconforming people don’t express their gender in a way society expects them to. Some gender nonconforming people might be androgynous, meaning they don’t readily exhibit traits that can easily identify them as men or women. Men who exhibit feminine traits and women who express masculine characteristics may also identify as gender nonconforming.

Genderqueer and nonbinary people generally don’t identify or express as men or women, sometimes borrowing gender roles and traits outside society’s typical expectations and other times taking elements from both

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masculinity and femininity. Androgynous people can also fall into this category if they identify their gender as neither male nor female. (There are **nuanced differences** between the terms genderqueer and nonbinary, although they're fairly similar and often used interchangeably.)

"Some people just don't think the term 'male' or 'female' fits for them," Mara Keisling, a trans woman and executive director of the **National Center for Transgender Equality**, said.

Sometimes there is an overlap between transgender, gender nonconforming, genderqueer, and nonbinary communities. People might identify with all, some, or none of these concepts, even if they exhibit traits attributed to these three forms of identity and expression. There are **dozens** of ways people identify and express themselves, so these three concepts fall far short of the full realm of possibilities.

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