

# What is gender?



5 mins



**Objective:** To understand gender and the difference between sex and gender.

**Resources:** Challenging Stereotypes animation to show at the end if you wish.

## Activity

- Refer to or create your working agreement - set this out at the beginning to agree behaviour and language expectations (see Teacher Notes).
- Ask students to imagine a child has been born. They are told the sex of the child.
- Ask:
  - Are people told the gender of a child when it is born or is it just assumed that it will go in line with the sex of a child?
  - How much does (or should) gender matter when a child is born?
  - What do you think about this?
- Allow a few moments of discussion before explaining the differences. (We have added some definitions and links below for your reference).

## Definitions

- **Sex** refers to the biological aspects. The Collins Dictionary states: 'The sex of a person or animal is their characteristic of being either male or female.' So, a way in which 'people and animals are divided according to the function they have in producing young.' However, 'An intersex person has genitals or other sexual characteristics that do not clearly fit the usual definition for a male or female body.'
- **Gender** is harder to define. The Collins Dictionary states: 'Gender is the state of being male or female in relation to the social and cultural roles that are considered appropriate for men and women.' However we 'can use gender to refer to one of a range of identities that includes female, male, a combination of both, and neither.'
- **Trans** is a term Stonewall describe as: 'an umbrella term to describe people whose gender is not the same as, or does not sit comfortably with, the sex they were assigned at birth. Trans people may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms, including (but not limited to) transgender, cross dresser, non-binary, gender queer.'  
(Go to: [stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/supporting-trans-young-people](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/our-work/campaigns/supporting-trans-young-people) for more information)
- **Cisgender** is a term the Collins Dictionary defines as: 'a person whose gender identity corresponds to the assumed gender assigned to them at birth.'

## Useful links:

- World Health Organization's gender definitions: [euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions](https://euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/gender/gender-definitions)
- European Institute for Gender Equality's concepts and definitions: [eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/concepts-and-definitions](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/concepts-and-definitions)
- Stonewall's glossary of terms: [stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms](https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/faqs-and-glossary/glossary-terms)
- Stonewall Youth's page on gender identity: [youngstonewall.org.uk/lgbtq-info/gender-identity](https://youngstonewall.org.uk/lgbtq-info/gender-identity)