

LGBT FOUNDATION

# WHAT IS A WOMAN?



# THERE ARE AS MANY WAYS OF BEING A WOMAN AS THERE ARE WOMEN IN THE WORLD.

**There is so much that unites all women: our shared joys, our unique experiences, and the challenges we face in a patriarchal world.**

These are often increased and impacted by our other identities such as race, sexuality, and disabilities. We are all multifaceted people who go beyond a simple sentence summarising womanhood. A rigid, simplistic definition both limits and reduces our womanhood.



A woman is someone who identifies as a woman.

Many women are **cisgender** (often written as cis), and this means the gender they were assigned at birth matches their gender identity.

Some women are **transgender** (often written as trans), and this means that the gender they were assigned at birth didn't match their gender identity.



**CIS WOMEN AND TRANS WOMEN ARE WOMEN - IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.**

## WHY DO WE USE TERMS LIKE 'WOMEN AND PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE' AND 'WOMEN AND PREGNANT PEOPLE' RATHER THAN SIMPLY SAYING 'WOMEN'?

### Not everyone who experiences these things are women.

In the case of people who menstruate, not all cis women experience periods – they may have had a hysterectomy or other surgical interventions, or may be living with a condition that means they aren't menstruating. There are also people who menstruate who aren't women including some trans men and some non-binary people.

Similarly, not all women will go through pregnancy, and not everyone who experiences pregnancy is a woman – some trans men and non-binary people can and do get pregnant.

By using terms such as 'women and people who menstruate' or 'women and pregnant people', we don't isolate women who do not menstruate or experience pregnancy, and we include those who aren't women that do. Using more inclusive language doesn't exclude anyone. In coming together, women can all put our collective strength towards the shared challenges faced by women – navigating a patriarchal world that creates barriers around healthcare, education, and employment.



USING MORE INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE DOESN'T EXCLUDE ANYONE.

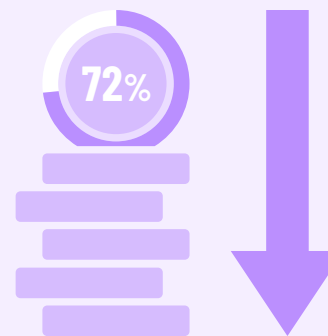
## WHAT ABOUT WOMEN'S SPACES? SHOULDN'T WE PROTECT THOSE?

### There is sometimes talk of women's spaces being 'under threat' and often this focuses on trans women accessing spaces.

Trans women are women, and can & should access the women's spaces that they need.

There are fewer and fewer spaces for LGBTQ+ women across the UK, both for support and for socialising.

The real threat to women's spaces comes from a **lack of funding**. In 2021, the Women's Resource Centre found that **72%** of women-centred organisations reported their income did not increase or it decreased, even though **80%** of the organisations saw an increase in demand for their services in the same period.



Women's spaces also need protecting from people who want to create divides among women.

A loud minority who claims to protect women's spaces wish to create arguments about who women's spaces are for, splintering women's groups when we should be supporting each other.

Every LGBTQ+ woman's experience is different, but there is so much more that unites us than divides us. The liberation that comes with learning more about who you are, the comfort in realising you are not alone and there are millions of women who feel just like you, **the fun to be found in your spaces and your communities are just some of the joyful things we share as LGBTQ+ women.**



## WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT WOMEN?



**Seek out works by a broad spectrum of women** – books, articles, podcasts, music, films and TV. Diversifying the art and entertainment you enjoy can really expand your world view and bring you an insight into other communities. Share these works with others to celebrate the works of women!



**If you're running a women's space open to all communities of women, put guidelines in place to make sure all women feel included** (see our Safer Spaces Policy for an example). If certain communities of women are missing from your space, explore what you can do to make it safer space for them.



**Listen to the voices of women on issues that affect them**, particularly when they talk about how their lives are impacted by other aspects of who they are. For example, Black LGBTQ+ women will have different experiences to white LGBTQ+ women, and disabled women will have different experiences to non-disabled women.



**Talk to your friends.** We don't all have knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a woman and how to include all women. Share what you've learnt and call someone in when you need to. Calling someone 'in' rather than calling someone 'out' assumes that a person simply doesn't know why their behaviour might be harmful. This way we can grow and learn together.



**Celebrate women!** Women have always and will always have an incredible impact on the world, and we deserve to celebrate ourselves and each other.



# WE EMPOWER LGBTQ+ PEOPLE TO REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL, EVERY DAY.

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