

# TRANS MEDIA GUIDE

A community-informed, inclusive guide  
for journalists, editors & content creators





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## Trans Media Guide

A community-informed, inclusive guide for journalists, editors & content creators

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***TGEU (Transgender Europe) is a trans-led non-profit  
for the rights and wellbeing of trans people.  
TGEU represents 215 member organisations across  
50 countries in Europe and Central Asia.***

*For more publications and important news on trans rights and wellbeing:*



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# FORE- WORD

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As we unveil this guide, it is essential to situate ourselves in the rich tapestry of human history that has long recognised and celebrated gender diversity. Our modern understanding of gender, often confined within the binary, stands in stark contrast to the fluid interpretations found across the globe, particularly in indigenous cultures, from Oceania to the Americas and Africa.

Pre-colonial histories from these regions paint a diverse landscape of gender identities. For instance, the two-spirit individuals among Indigenous cultures of North America bore witness to gender fluidity and the harmony it brought to their societies.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in Oceania, spanning across its numerous islands, narratives of gender diversity have been foundational. The fa'aafafine of Samoa stand as a testament to the resilience of nonbinary identities, even in the face of the immense evangelical onslaught that came with colonisation.<sup>2</sup>

Yet, colonisation and the imposition of Abrahamic religious beliefs led to the suppression of these rich gender diversities. As Gloria Wekker highlights in her seminal work, 'White Innocence', the aftereffects of colonial histories and their intersections with gender and sexuality persistently shape contemporary Dutch, and by extension Western, cultures.<sup>3</sup> The historical erasure was profound, driven by patriarchal constructs and often enforced through religious or state-sanctioned means. We cannot ignore the role of the media in this erasure, working as a tool of colonialism then, and still guiding views today. Despite these



systemic erasures, the enduring nature of nonbinary identities in indigenous cultures, like the fa'aafafine of Samoa, underscores the tenacity of these traditions.

The patriarchal, white, male dominant perspective that has come to be seen as the 'norm' in the West needs a thorough challenge. The inherent balance between male and female energies, and the limitless intermingling and fluidity so apparent in indigenous cultures, serves as evidence. It posits that discarding binary models can liberate minds, offering untold freedom, especially to women, who have been historically subjugated under these binary frameworks.

With this guide, we aim to show that a departure from rigid binary thinking creates space – space for the heart's true desires, for the soul's unfettered expression. By sharing this knowledge, we hope to embolden progressive, feminist journalists. May this guide empower you to advocate for equality, championing the cause with strength and conviction in your journalistic pursuits.

## **Dinah Bons**

*Dinah Bons is a Co-Chair on TGEU's Board, a trans politician, a Chair of ESWA, Trans United Europe, part of the Amsterdam-based H team, and an actor and creative strategist for Female Economy.*

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# INTRO- DUCTION

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The world's perspectives and hopes have shifted several times since TGEU's inaugural Guide for Journalists was released in 2015. The context that frames this is a global pandemic, political polarisation, imperialist war in Europe, environmental and economical crisis, and global rise of totalitarian and anti-equality backlash.

Amid all of this, we've seen incredible resilience from trans communities affected by isolation and violence, with a new generation of openly trans and nonbinary people, intersectional solidarity, gains in legal rights, and increased representation in the media. This is a remarkable testament to the ongoing advancement of human rights on the global stage.

There's still a tremendous amount of work to secure even basic human rights for a lot of trans and nonbinary people. Work that starts with debunking fear mongering, demands well-founded research, and ensures the general public learns about the real need to protect trans people from violence and discrimination.

We believe in the power of quality journalism as a truthful institution to counter propaganda and purposely misleading information, we believe in evidence-based factual knowledge, and human storytelling to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable groups of people at the frontier of human rights — trans rights.

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# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

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This guide is created for journalists, editors, and content creators. It includes collective knowledge on inclusive, trans- and nonbinary-informed journalism and representation. It contains five key parts:

1. **Cheat sheet: A quick checklist** – a summary of all the recommendations and can be used separately from this Guide.
2. **Practice** – a practical guide on how to cover stories about trans and nonbinary people, in an ethical and respectful manner. This part also contains references to reliable **sources of verified data and contact information** of the relevant activist communities and human rights organisations.
3. **Key themes** – introductory material into key issues that trans communities are dealing with.
4. **Myth busting** – an overview of dangerous myths that are often enhanced through the media based on misinformation. Real facts, based on evidence and data, are provided.
5. **The glossary** – key definitions adopted by civil organisations and trans-informed journalists.

*This guide brings together recommendations and knowledge from other publications and guidelines by civil organisations and associations. Of particular help and inspiration were guides from Trans Journalists Association, ILGA-Europe, GLAAD, Transgender Equality Network Ireland, TransInterQueer e.V, Trans Media Watch, and Transgender Network Switzerland. It was created in close collaboration with TGEU members. The perspectives of local trans activists and organisations are included to represent the voices of the community.*



# CHEAT SHEET: A QUICK CHECKLIST

## Interviewing & quoting

- Ask, don't assume! When in doubt about terms – kindly ask or check the glossary.
  - Talk to organisations that represent the community.
  - Mind and acknowledge the pronouns. Introduce yourself with pronouns when reaching out.
  - Always use the descriptive terms preferred by the individual.
  - No deadnaming and outing! Do not reveal previous names and genders of people without their consent.
  - Include and amplify trans voices with intersectional experiences and perspectives.
  - Get a comment from sources representing the community. Look for sources who are experts on the exact topic (i.e. trans healthcare providers for a story on trans-specific healthcare).
  - Quote check before publishing.
- 

## Verified sources

- Dig into the topic, research, and find firm facts to rely on.
  - Check on reliable data sources.
  - Make sure that you are talking to the right person/organisation that represents the community.
  - Ask yourself: What are the intersecting identities of the people we engage with? Who is missing?
  - Fact check before publishing.
- 

## Ethical reporting

- Reflect on your role as a reporter or editor in the process of human rights development.
- Understand and acknowledge that no trans and nonbinary experience is the same, and that the trans community is very diverse.
- Avoid medicalising trans experiences. Trans identity is not dependent upon medical procedures.
- Is it necessary or appropriate to mention a trans person's medical history?
- Make sure you fully understand the meaning of each term you use and avoid offensive language or use of language.
- Avoid sensational angles and headlines. Use evidence-based information only.
- Don't take your assumptions for granted. Ask yourself: Did I critically reflect on how my biases, attitudes, and beliefs influence my opinions and actions?

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***PRACTICE***

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# VERIFIED SOURCES & CONTACTS

*TGEU is always available to provide firm data and community-sourced perspectives. Feel free to reach out to us at [comms@tgeu.org](mailto:comms@tgeu.org).*

## VERIFIED DATA

- **Trans Right Index & Map** by TGEU provides a comprehensive legal mapping of the rights of trans people in Europe and Central Asia, updated annually since 2013 for the International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) on 17 May.
- **Trans Health Map** by TGEU shows the availability and accessibility of trans-specific healthcare in the 27 EU Member States.
- **Trans Murder Monitoring** is a project by TGEU that systematically collects, monitors, and analyses reported killings of gender-diverse and trans people worldwide, updated annually since 2008 for the Trans Day of Remembrance (TDoR) on 20 November.
- **Rainbow Europe** by ILGA-Europe offers a comprehensive overview of the human rights of LGBTI people in Europe.
- **European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)** runs and analyses the biggest LGBTIQ people survey in Europe.
- **Resources for Media Professionals** is a collection of sources and useful information by GLAAD.
- **Trans Discrimination in Europe** is a report by TGEU on data on trans people from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency LGBTI II survey, the largest survey of LGBTI people in Europe.
- **'Intersections: Diving into the FRA LGBTI II Survey Data: Trans and non-binary briefing'** is a joint report by ILGA-Europe and TGEU looking at the impact of intersecting oppressions on trans experiences in the EU.
- **Standards of Care for Transgender and Gender Diverse People, Version 8 (SOC8)**, is a globally recognised guide to trans-specific healthcare.

## USEFUL CONTACTS

- **Local Trans Organisations in Europe & Central Asia** is a list of TGEU's trans-led or focused member organisations in Europe.
- **World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH)** is an association of healthcare professionals devoted to transgender health.
- **European Professional Association for Transgender Health (EPATH)** is an association of healthcare professionals in Europe devoted to transgender health.
- **Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE)** is an advocacy organisation working for justice and equality for trans, gender diverse, and intersex communities.
- **ILGA-Europe** works with over 700 LGBTI member organisations across Europe and Central Asia to advocate for political, legal, and social change.
- **Organisation Intersex International Europe (OII Europe)** is the umbrella organisation of European human rights based and intersex-led organisations.
- **Trans Journalists Association** promotes accurate, nuanced coverage of trans issues and communities in the media and supports gender-expansive journalists in their workplaces and careers.

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# INCLUSIVE STORYTELLING

## INCLUSIVITY BASICS

Many people still do not know a trans person.<sup>4</sup> This makes their lived realities easy to manipulate and leads to misconceptions. This might not be done out of ill-will, yet it is harmful and can bring trans people into very dangerous situations. Journalists have an extra responsibility and opportunity to actually shed lights on this.

**Report about trans, nonbinary, and gender diverse people as wholly belonging as part of society**, rather than as people on the outside, who you are observing. LGBTI people are minoritised groups within our societies, but they are not ‘the other’.<sup>5</sup>

***Use language in your story that everybody can understand and that gives everybody space.***

If being trans is not relevant to the story, and especially **if a person wants their trans identity to remain private, it should not be revealed.**

## TALK TO TRANS PEOPLE ABOUT TRANS PEOPLE

***Trans people are the experts on trans lives and experiences. Their voices should be centred in this coverage.***

When reporting a story about trans issues, trans people should be interviewed and quoted as **experts, not just subjects.**

Trans people are also often the leaders in research on trans communities. When covering trans issues, consider giving **priority to community-driven research.**

As with other experts, give the full name (if the person agrees to it) and any titles, (e.g. Dr.) as you would do for other experts, and state organisational affiliation (if any).

## HIRE TRANS JOURNALISTS

***Because of their lived experiences, trans reporters often have a much deeper and more nuanced understanding of trans issues and gender than even the best cis reporters.***

Trans journalists also have greater access to trans communities and can more easily gain the trust of trans sources, which will result in stronger coverage. Newsrooms must do better and prioritise diversity. It's necessary to include trans people in that diversity.

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## LOOK FOR NEW ANGLES

**Don't get sensational.** Have you thought that trans people suffering transphobia, for instance, may also be very active and resourceful in finding ways to fight back?

**Don't always look for the victim perspective when reporting on a difficult situation.** Of course you should represent how anti-LGBTI forces, for instance, affect the daily lives of trans and nonbinary people, but you should also provide a sense of people living their best lives, and/or taking positive action in the context.

**Cover the stories of trans people and the events happening to them when it's not bad news: there are so many positive developments, led by advocacy and activism!<sup>5</sup>**



*"There is a disturbing tendency to sensationalise the transgender community. Production teams sometimes compensate prominent transgender individuals to appear on their programmes, resulting in the blurring of ethical boundaries. Journalists often address interviewees using incorrect names or neglecting relevant context, steering conversations towards explicit content. However, these discussions fail to address the intricacies of sex work, including issues of exploitation versus autonomy, challenges, or potential resolutions. The primary aim becomes creating a spectacle for entertainment, leading to a detrimental portrayal within the media landscape."*

**Beka Gabadadze**

TEMIDA, TGEU Member

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# NAMES & PRONOUNS

**The simple rule: respect the individual's wishes** around how they are portrayed. Ask them what name and pronouns to use, or would like to be used in the media, as for safety reasons, this might differ. If it is not possible to ask (for example, when writing about hate crimes) seek out accurate information from trans community members or other sources. If no information is to be found, please avoid using *gendered language*.

**Never reveal or use a trans person's birth name (deadname)** without their explicit consent. You might assume that a person's real name is the one given at birth, however this is problematic for many reasons, including the fact that it does not respect a trans person's privacy and might put them in danger.

## GENDER-NEUTRAL PRONOUNS

**Some trans people might not use gendered pronouns**, he/him or she/her, and might use gender neutral pronouns, like singular they/them.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, some trans people might not use gendered honorifics like Mr., Ms., or Mrs., but the neutral Mx. (pronounced mix). When in doubt, ask what pronouns and honorifics a person uses.

**Not all nonbinary people use they/them pronouns** — many use he/him, she/her, or neopronouns. Using gender-neutral pronouns to refer to a person who only uses masculine or feminine pronouns is inaccurate and often insensitive. Likewise, not all people who use he/him are men, and not all people who use she/her are women. Take care to use the appropriate pronouns for everyone in news coverage and reporting interactions.

**A neopronoun is a gender-neutral third-person singular English pronoun that is not they/them.** Examples include ze/hir, xe/xer, and ey/em. While some trans people use neopronouns in addition to more common pronouns like they/them, it is not appropriate to automatically substitute they/them in place of neopronouns. If unsure of a neopronoun's spelling or usage, ask; there are variations between similar-sounding neopronouns (ze/zir versus ze/hir).

**There is never a reason to explain the use of standard they/them, he/him, or she/her in a story.** When a source uses less common pronouns, it's acceptable to have a quick, appositive phrase explaining them: *Taylor, who uses ze/hir pronouns, attended the event.*<sup>7</sup>

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# FACTS & OPINIONS

## HOW TO AVOID MISINFORMATION

**Make sure that you are talking to the right person/organisation.** If you're looking for personal comments, check activists' backgrounds before assuming they are experts or represent the collective. It is increasingly common to find organisations that are designed to resemble legitimate human rights groups, such as crisis pregnancy centres, while working to oppose those movements. Check to see if an organisation is working with similar groups to see if they are legitimate.

Additionally, although it is important to include trans sources when covering trans issues, be sure to **make sure your source is an expert.** Don't include comments from individuals who claim to represent the community's interests, but who have no history of activism or pedigree, and are speaking only from a personal perspective, even if they have a large social media follower base.

See the list of credible sources in the [Verified sources & contacts](#) section.

## HOW TO SPEAK WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS

When you reach out, make sure you **introduce yourself, the media you work with, and the angle of the story.** Activists face threats on a regular basis. You should provide enough information for them to be able to research you, so they know they can trust you. Include your pronouns in your introduction to help create a safe and comfortable space.

Activists usually do a lot of work with little resources, **especially during a crisis, which is when journalists or broadcasters are more eager to reach out to them.** In these moments, be sensitive to the fact that their capacity is probably more reduced than usual.

Bear in mind that when LGBTI people talk publicly about their experiences, they are oftenly speaking intimately about a part of their identities. This **puts them in a vulnerable position and at a potential risk of discrimination** in the future.

When interviewing a trans source, ask what pronouns they want published. Some sources may request that you use different pronouns for publication than in person. Respect this request. **It can be a matter of safety.**<sup>7</sup>



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## HOW TO FACT CHECK

When looking for data to corroborate a story there are many places to start. **Trans and broader LGBTI and human rights organisations**, as well as organisations like the Council of Europe,<sup>8</sup> the European Commission,<sup>9</sup> and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights,<sup>10</sup> have published research on trans people. Don't discount getting in touch with local organisations, and always get back to those you've interviewed to fact-check their quotes that are going to be used in the story.

## HEADLINES

It is often necessary to save space and simplify, but headlines can ruin a story. Online news gives the additional benefit of allowing for longer headlines. Sensational headlines, which use phrases like 'sex change', 'born a man', 'became a man', should be avoided.

### SENSATIONAL HEADLINES TO AVOID

#### ***Kathleen Stock: 'No Matter What I Say, to Trans People I'll Always Be a Villain'***

Scapegoats trans people, and paints them as a monolith.

#### ***We're Being Pressured into Sex by Some Trans Women***

This is factually wrong, as evidenced by the fact that the publisher, the BBC, found it violated their "editorial rules on accuracy for not making clear the statistical invalidity of the Get the L Out poll and for the title misleadingly suggesting that the article focused on pressure from trans women."<sup>11</sup>

#### ***A Third of Britons Don't Know that Transgender Women Were Born Male***

Rather than highlighting that a third of Britons don't know what transgender means, this title relies on sensationalising trans bodies as an oddity.

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## ***How Trans Ideology Came for Therapy***

Trans is not an ideology, it is an identity, with a movement to increase the rights of trans people.

## ***Womb Transplants Mean Pregnancy for Biological Men ‘In Next 10 Years’***

This article quickly turns to focus on trans women, after naming them ‘biological men’. Replacing this phrase with ‘trans women’ would be more respectful and truer to the content of the article.

### **HEADLINES THAT GET IT RIGHT OR ALMOST RIGHT**

## ***How the UK’s Metal Scene Became a Haven for Trans People***

A headline that is not sensational, and uses respectful terms.

## ***Journalist Juliet Jacques on How UK Media Is Trying to ‘Crush’ Trans People: ‘We’re Not in Control’***

Highlights the topic and makes clear the trans voices are cited in an article about trans issues.

## ***Transgender Kids Have Good Mental Health When Allowed To Be Themselves***

Clear, informative, and uses respectful language without fear mongering.

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## ***‘It’s Kind of Like Putting on Armour’: How Clothing Can Spark Euphoria for Transgender People***

A headline that is not sensational, while focusing on something positive, although it misses the diversity of experience a bit.

## ***As Anti-Trans Bills Target Prisoners, Some Warn of a ‘Canary in the Coal Mine’***

Brings an intersectional focus, while highlighting the issue.

## ***British Rowing: Transgender Women Banned From Competing in Female Category***

This title states the facts, without adding subjective spin.



*“The most impactful stories highlight shared challenges, barriers, and oppressions. Trans people and people of colour both experience housing insecurity; trans people and low-income families both suffer worse healthcare. Building these connections into reporting gets us out of an ‘us and them’ narrative and into an appeal to shared values and experiences.”*

***Cleo Madeleine***  
*Gendered Intelligence, TGEU Member*

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## ILLUSTRATING THE STORY

Once the story is finished and ready to be published, one of the major challenges that remains is how to illustrate it with photos or images. As a simple guideline, it is most often unnecessary to show before or after photos of a trans person.

- Cliché images that portray superficial ideas of trans people should also be avoided. These are those photos which focus on trans women dressing up, putting on make-up, close up shots of high heels, and a person looking at the mirror.
- Do not use images of drag queens at pride, or images that focus on markers that someone may be trans, such as a five o'clock shadow.
- Only use images of trans sex workers if the story is about trans sex workers.
- Also avoid using photos of famous trans people when illustrating stories which are not about them.
- Similarly avoid using photos of trans characters in films, if the article is not about the film.

***Photos of trans activists in their life, at work, at a trans march, or of the transgender flag can be used.***

Source: Unsplash





Source: The Gender Spectrum Collection



Source: The Gender Spectrum Collection



Source: Unsplash



Source: Unsplash



Source: Unsplash



Source: Unsplash

The Gender Spectrum Collection is a free images project to help media outlets better show transgender and non-binary people in ways that go beyond clichés.

Also read:

1. Empowering photos and videos of the LGBTI movement must be sourced ethically, too. Here's why
2. The Gender Spectrum Collection guidelines

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# KEY THEMES: ISSUES FACING THE COMMUNITY

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## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

***Many trans people face problems in daily life because the legal gender on their official identity documents do not match their gender identity.***

**Legal gender recognition (LGR)** – official procedures to change a person’s gender marker in official registries and documents, such as birth certificates, ID cards, passports, or drivers’ licences. In some countries, it’s impossible to have your gender recognised by law. In other countries, the procedure is often long, difficult, and humiliating.

These problems, however, are not simply administrative, but can become a repeated source of harassment, unfounded suspicion, and even violence. That is why trans people (and some intersex people) need official procedures to adapt their name and/or gender marker on IDs

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and in key registries (legal gender recognition). These should be quick, transparent, and accessible administrative processes, based on the person's self-determined gender identity – commonly referred to as self-determination or self-id. With this many trans people are better able to live their lives with dignity.

Legal gender recognition is not an additional or luxury right, but for many trans people **the door opener to access their basic human rights, such as education, jobs, housing, healthcare, ability to travel, and the right to vote and participate in society.** In most countries in Europe it was necessary for trans people to be sterilised, maintain a diagnosis of mental illness, and get divorced (if married) – often against the express wishes of the person.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, even in countries where changing one's gender marker is possible, **there are rarely options for nonbinary or intersex trans people who's genders are not reflected by binary options.**

**Quick, transparent, and accessible legal gender recognition procedures that are based on self-determination are essential for a country to uphold its human rights obligations,** as confirmed by the EU Commission,<sup>9</sup> the EU Parliament,<sup>13</sup> the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe,<sup>14</sup> and the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner.<sup>15</sup> Today, there are still 11 countries with forced sterilisation requirements and 19 countries with forced divorce in Europe and Central Asia.<sup>12</sup> While it might only concern a minority in society, legal gender recognition is an important component of a functioning and healthy democratic society.

### Things to consider:

- How does legal gender recognition in your country compare to the laws from other countries within the region? If your country allows for legal gender recognition, is it based in self-determination, or does it still require a mental health diagnosis?
- Is there an option for a third gender marker or no gender marker for nonbinary and intersex people?
- Is there the intention to change the legal gender recognition procedure in the near future, if no, why not?
- Who are the activists, and/or organisations who are lobbying for changes in the law? Why do they want these changes?
- Who are actors lobbying against legal gender recognition or laws based in self-determination and what is their motivation? Have fears and risks alleged to be related to reforms materialised in other countries?
- Who are the activists and/or organisations who have successfully lobbied for

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legal change? What are their next challenges?

- Why is it important to the trans community that legal gender recognition is accessible? Why is it important to be able to legally self-determine one's gender?
- What countries have changed their law for the better, and how has this changed things for the trans community?
- How has a lack of transparent and accessible gender recognition legislation affected the day to day lives of trans people? Or How has the change in procedure affected the day to day lives of trans people?
- Is legal gender recognition equally accessible to minors, migrants, and incarcerated people? If not, what is the impact?

**For more information:**

1. [Self-determination models in Europe Practical experiences \(TGEU, 2022\)](#)
2. [Legal Gender Recognition in Europe Toolkit \(TGEU, 2017\)](#)
3. [Trans Rights Index & Map in Europe & Central Asia](#)
4. [10 years of Trans Rights in Europe](#)

## **DEPATHOLOGISATION & HEALTHCARE**

***Physical and mental health are key parts of human wellbeing, in this context trans people are no different from other populations. Just like others, they require an individualised and holistic approach to healthcare.***

Writing about health in relation to trans people should not be limited to covering surgeries or hormone replacement therapy – there are many issues which affect trans people accessing healthcare (sexual and reproductive healthcare, HIV treatment, cancer treatment, etc.).

One main issue is that being trans is treated as a mental illness by many countries (pathologisation), even though the WHO updated the ICD-11 (the eleventh revision of the International Classification of Diseases) in 2019 to depathologise transgender identities.<sup>16</sup> Depathologisation refers to removing requirements for a mental health diagnosis to access



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legal gender recognition or trans-specific healthcare. Nearly all European countries still rely on a pathologised model to access trans-specific healthcare.<sup>12</sup>

**Trans people also face discrimination when accessing healthcare.** Many trans people avoid doctors because they fear discrimination, lack health insurance or economic means, and/or do not know where to turn.<sup>17</sup> Some (but not all!) trans people might wish to access trans-specific healthcare, including hormonal, surgical, psychological, or other medical treatment.

**Access to healthcare for trans minors is often even more difficult,** and hotly debated. However, more international organisations are asserting that the desires and wellbeing of the child should be prioritised. The Standards of Care for Trans and Gender-Diverse People, Version 8 (SOC8), notes that children should be active in decision-making around their healthcare.<sup>18</sup> This publication also highlights the importance of access to puberty-blockers to alleviate distress associated with a changing body and to give the child time to make decisions around healthcare.

When reporting, it's also important to be aware that not all trans children have supportive parents. **Reporting the opinions of the parent without consulting the child can be traumatic for the child and lead to misreporting.**

#### Things to consider:

- Is it necessary or appropriate to mention a trans person's medical history or ask them about it? Would similar information about a cisgender person's health or body be relevant to the story?
- What are the obstacles which trans people face in accessing general health care?
- If you are reporting on trans youth, what steps have you taken to ensure that a trans youth perspective is included?
- What are the standards of trans-specific healthcare in your country? Are these accessible?
- What are the effects of listing trans identities as a mental illness?
- Which countries ignore the World Health Organisation's International Classification of Diseases when granting legal gender recognition or defining trans-specific healthcare protocols?

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For more information:

1. [Trans Health Map 2022 by TGEU](#)
2. [TGEU on the new Standards of Care 8 for trans and gender-diverse people](#)
3. [TGEU on rollbacks in trans-specific healthcare for youth](#)

## TRANSPHOBIC HATE CRIMES & DISCRIMINATION

*A transphobic hate crime is a crime or incident in which an aggressor is motivated by prejudice, hostility, or hatred toward persons who transgress or do not conform to the aggressor's gender expectations and norms. Individuals whose lived gender identity or gender expression differs from the gender role assigned to them at birth are particularly affected by hate crimes.*

Trans people in many parts of the world have for a long time been victims of serious, repetitive, and **underreported gender-based violence**, including beatings, mutilation, rape, murder, and other forms of disrespect and maltreatment. Between 2008 and September 2022, TGEU research documented 4,369 reported killings of gender-diverse and trans people in 82 countries, including 188 in 21 European countries.<sup>19</sup> However, given misreporting and the fact that many trans people cannot or do not access legal gender recognition, these numbers are likely below the actual number of trans and gender-diverse people killed.

Furthermore, trans people are still **disproportionately affected by discrimination in all areas of life, for example in healthcare, education, employment, public transportation or access to goods and services.**<sup>17</sup> Discrimination and hate crimes have a deep impact not only on the victim, but on the whole group or community. Being discriminated against or harassed because of being trans affects a person's quality of life.

Reporting on murders and hate crimes can often re-traumatise the community, affecting an even wider population. Newsrooms often use information pulled from police records.<sup>20</sup> More often than not, this leads to publishing deadnames and misgendering the victim. While verified data can be difficult to obtain in these cases, keep an eye out for language in police reports that might indicate someone is trans, even if they haven't legally changed their name or gender marker, such as phrases like 'man in a dress'.<sup>20</sup> In these cases, **community sources are**

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often the best way to learn the name and pronouns a person was using, but keep in mind the community is grieving.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, crimes committed by trans people often become sensational stories that focus on the person's trans identity, rather than the crime. In these cases, consider how the story would be covered if the perpetrator was cis.



*“If the trans person talked about cannot be reached for objective reasons, it is best to check with local trans communities and groups on how a subject is reported on, or even how a foreign article is translated.*

*Local input matters – some terminology is not the same in all languages and there is a risk of using harmful language if not asking for feedback from local trans groups.”*

**Ari Kajtezović**  
TGEU Member

#### Things to consider:

- Are there protections that make it illegal to discriminate against a person because of their gender identity or gender expression in your country?
- How does explicit protection of trans people affect their daily lives?
- Are there any unsolved cases of discrimination in healthcare, employment, education, access to public services?
- Has the systematic recording of discrimination helped to improve the situation for trans people?
- Do the police and local governments have their own methods of reporting hate crime?
- In the case of murder, have you verified the name, pronouns, and gender of a person outside of police reports?
- How is the trans community affected by trans hate crimes?

#### For more information:

1. [TGEU's Trans Murder Monitoring project](#)
2. [TGEU's Anti-Trans Violence research](#)
3. [A Brief Guide to Monitoring Anti-Trans Violence](#)

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# INTERSECTIONAL EXPERIENCES

*Intersectionality is the way in which different types of discrimination (unfair treatment because of a person's sex, race, etc.) are connected to and affect each other.*

Intersectionality shows us that social identities work on multiple levels, resulting in unique experiences, opportunities, and barriers for each person. Therefore, discrimination cannot be reduced to only one part of an identity – each oppression is dependent on and shapes the other.

**Intersectionality is at the heart of not only the trans rights movement, but also the broader LGBTI movement.**

This is a movement largely started by trans women of colour, who were also sex workers, Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera. However, this is not just historical. Intersectional struggles, and activists at the intersection of multiple identities, are still driving the movement in many ways. But, this is often not reflected in the media, where white, able-bodied trans people are still often cited as sources, giving little space to the nuanced understanding and issues that trans people can face.



*Sylvia Ray Rivera, Marsha P. Johnson at City Hall rally for gay rights; Photo by Diana Davies*

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Trans and nonbinary people with multiple and intersecting forms of marginalisation, such as trans people of colour or trans people with disabilities, experience disproportionately more discrimination and violence.<sup>19</sup> They also have lower socioeconomic status and life satisfaction than more privileged trans people. In particular, **disabled, racialised, and intersex trans people all consistently reported higher rates of discrimination, violence, and life challenges than trans respondents overall.**<sup>17</sup>

Nothing is static, privilege and disadvantage are fluid and influenced by our social positioning and location. For example, a black cis man enjoys a certain level of privilege in predominantly black communities, but once that person migrates to predominantly white communities they automatically go down their privilege ladder due to racism.



*“It’s essential that the media has fair and proportional representation for the communities in which we live, it should be intersectional, inclusive, and most importantly be written by and include the voices of the unheard.”*

**Saskhia Menendez**  
TGEU Member

#### Things to consider:

- Are you considering the intersecting experiences of trans people when covering their stories? Who is missing?
- Are the voices of trans communities who are further marginalised, such as trans women of colour, refugees, and asylum seekers, trans sex workers, trans people with disabilities, youth, and seniors included and centred?
- Are marginalised trans communities tokenised or put at risk by a potentially-hostile public eye?
- Are those who face intersectional marginalisation in our community not patronised?

#### For more information:

1. [Intersections: Diving into the FRA LGBTI II Survey Data: Trans and non-binary briefing \(ILGA-Europe, TGEU, 2023\)](#)

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# MYTH BUSTING: MEDIA BIASES

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## MYTH 1: BEING TRANS IS A TREND

*“Trans identities are a trend, and people do it just to be trendy.”*

**Facts:**

- Trans people are not a trend or phenomenon, but human individuals.
- Trans people have existed in all times and cultures.
- Trans people in pre-colonial societies are well documented, with many of these genders continuing today.<sup>22</sup>
- In relatively recent times, with growing visibility and advancements of the rights of trans people, trans people have also become increasingly exposed to violence and discrimination.<sup>23</sup>
- It is well-documented that the Vatican invented the concept of ‘gender ideology’ as an empty signifier to consolidate opposition to progressive developments in society.<sup>24</sup>

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## MYTH 2: ONLY PEOPLE WHO MEDICALLY TRANSITION ARE TRANS

*“The only real trans people are the ones who have had ‘surgery.’”*

### Facts:

- Trans people are people whose gender identity differs from their sex assigned at birth.
- Many trans people decide to modify their bodies, and many trans people don't.<sup>10</sup>
- There are many reasons why a trans person would not seek surgeries, including cost, physical or medical limitations, lack of a support system.<sup>17</sup>
- Additionally, some trans people just don't want to modify their body in any way. This does not make them less trans.

## MYTH 3: TRANS PEOPLE ARE ERASING (LEGAL PROTECTIONS FOR) WOMEN

*“Trans people and discussions about their rights (e.g., legal gender recognition) are erasing women and weakening the fight for women's rights.”*

### Facts:

- Gender equality is important to trans people, and they have no desire to erase women.<sup>25</sup>
- Some trans people are women themselves.
- Trans people are not erasing women (or men) by existing and accessing legal gender recognition.<sup>25</sup>
- On the contrary: protecting trans people's rights to self-determination is in line with everyone's rights to decide over their own identity and their own body.<sup>25</sup>
- Trans rights and women's rights are aligned on the right for bodily autonomy.<sup>26</sup>

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## MYTH 4: TRANS WOMEN ARE A THREAT IN WOMEN'S SPACES

*“If trans women are allowed to enter single-sex spaces (such as shelters and bathrooms), women will be exposed to predators.”*

### Facts:

- Trans women are women. All women, including trans women, should be protected from violence against them.
- Trans women face higher rates of violence than cis women,<sup>23</sup> violence that is overwhelmingly perpetrated by cis men.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, cis men should be the target of protection policies.<sup>28</sup>
- Excluding trans women leaves them vulnerable, and does not address the root of the problem.<sup>28</sup> Rather, it worsens it by exposing a particularly vulnerable group of women to structural exclusion.

## MYTH 5: CHILDREN ARE BEING FORCED TO TRANSITION

*“Children are being forced to medically transition (e.g. puberty blockers, hormones, or surgeries).”*

### Facts:

- No one should be subject to medical treatment against their wishes or without their fully informed consent.
- Children are not being forced to medically transition.<sup>29</sup> There is no reason for a family to force such a process.
- Quite the opposite, many children have a hard time having their gender identities and expressions seen, heard, understood, respected, and supported.<sup>30</sup>
- For all trans people, including trans children, informed consent is a central principle in transition-related medical care.<sup>18</sup>
- Scientific evidence proves that respecting a child's gender identity and expression contributes to their health and wellbeing.<sup>31</sup> Rejection of trans youth's gender identity and expression by their parents is also linked to long-lasting pain, trauma, and other health-related consequences (e.g., depression).<sup>32</sup>
- Puberty blockers, which are reversible, are a viable option to provide children (and parents) with more time to understand their gender and determine the correct course of future treatment.<sup>33</sup>





***Bust more myths with real facts and data: Trans Rights are Human Rights: Dismantling misconceptions about gender, gender identity, and the human rights of trans people.***

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# GLOSSARY

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***The terminology below can be used when covering trans and nonbinary stories. As a general rule, the wishes of the individual being described should be prioritised and respected. If you do not know how to refer to somebody, ask them.***

## **CULTURALLY SPECIFIC TERMS AND TRANSLATIONS**

*Be aware that not all terms translate easily, nor do all gender nonconforming identities fit under trans or nonbinary, especially terms with cultural significance. For example, transveti, originally a slur, is often translated as transgender woman.<sup>7</sup> This, however, ignores the deep political roots this term and identity has in Argentina and across Latin America. When reporting a story that references culturally specific terms, please consult an expert from that community.*

This list does not aim to be an exhaustive list of terminology used by the trans community. It was compiled by TGEU, with influence from:

- **Trans Journalists Association Glossary**
- **ILGA Europe Glossary**
- **GLAAD Glossary of Terms: LGBTQ**

It is also available and updated online at: [tgeu.org/glossary](https://tgeu.org/glossary).

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## CORE TERMS

**Gender** – traditionally refers to a social and cultural construct of being a man or a woman. However some people do not identify within the gender binary of man/woman. Gender exists independent from sex, and an individual's gender does not always correspond with the sex assigned at birth. (See: Gender Identity, Sex)

**Gender Expression** – the external manifestations of gender, expressed through a variety of externally perceptible indicators, such as a person's name, pronouns, clothing, behaviour, etc. Society identifies these cues as masculine or feminine, although what is considered masculine and feminine changes over time and varies by culture.

**Gender Identity** – a person's inner sense of their gender. For trans people, their own internal gender identity does not match the sex they were assigned at birth. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

**Nonbinary** – an umbrella term for genders other than man and woman. This is also a term for a specific gender. While nonbinary can be considered a trans identity, not everyone who is nonbinary considers themselves trans. Be aware that Indigenous communities and communities of colour have other words to describe gender variance. Sometimes these terms can be included in the nonbinary umbrella and sometimes they cannot. Always consult experts from these communities and the individuals you are reporting on in regard to this.

**Sex** – the classification of people as male or female. At birth infants are assigned a sex, usually based on the appearance of their external anatomy. However a person's sex, as defined by biology, is a combination of bodily characteristics including: chromosomes, hormones, internal and external reproductive organs, and secondary sex characteristics. People whose biological sex cannot be classified as either male or female are classified as intersex, however they may identify as intersex, male, female, trans, or other.

**Sexual Orientation** – an emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to other people. An individual's sexual orientation is independent of their gender identity. Being trans or nonbinary does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

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**Transgender/Trans** — an umbrella term that includes people who have a gender identity that is different from their gender assigned at birth and people who wish to portray their gender identity in a way that is different from expectations based on their gender assigned at birth. This can include, among many others, transsexual and transgender people, nonbinary people, transvestites, cross dressers, agender, multigender, genderqueer people, intersex, and gender diverse people who relate to or identify as any of the above.

## OTHER IMPORTANT TERMS

**AFAB/AMAB** — the acronyms for ‘assigned female at birth’ and ‘assigned male at birth’, respectively. Please consider if this information is necessary or relevant to the story before including it.

**Cisgender/Cis** — a term used to describe non-trans people. It is used in the same way as heterosexual is used to mean non-homosexual.

**‘Conversion Therapy’** — any sustained effort to modify a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression based on the assumption that a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is a mental disorder and should be changed. It’s recommended to use this term in quotation marks.

**Deadname** — a trans person’s given or former name that they no longer use, also often referred to as a ‘given name’ or ‘legal name’. There’s never a reason to publish someone’s deadname without express permission. Reporters should refrain from asking for this information unless it’s absolutely necessary for background checks or public records access. While deadname is usually a noun, it’s also used as a verb to refer to the act of using the wrong name for a trans person.

**Depathologisation (of trans identities)** — declassifying trans as psychologically abnormal. Trans identities were depathologised in the World Health Organisation’s International Classification of Diseases in 2019.

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**Detransition** – when a person who has already transitioned stops pursuing trans-specific healthcare or returns to live as their gender assigned at birth.<sup>34</sup> Trans people can have different transition paths. Some paths are non-linear or involve starting and stopping. A very small number of people transition and then decide to live again in their assigned gender – less than 1% of those who have surgery.<sup>27</sup>

**Gender Dysphoria** – discomfort or distress that is caused by a discrepancy between a person's gender identity and that person's sex assigned at birth (and the associated gender role and/or primary and secondary sex characteristics).<sup>35</sup> Gender dysphoria, though often linked to being trans, is not a requirement to be trans.

**Intersex** – individuals who are born with sex characteristics (sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal structure and/or levels and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit the typical definition of male or female.<sup>36</sup>

**Misgender** – the act of gendering someone incorrectly. This often involves using gendered words that are inappropriate or the wrong pronouns.

**Queer** – previously used as a derogatory term to refer to LGBTI people, queer has been reclaimed by people who identify beyond traditional gender categories and heteronormative social norms. However, depending on the context, some people may still find it offensive.

**Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminism (TERF)** – also known as 'Fundamentalist Feminism', is a small but loud sub section of radical feminism. A TERF is a trans exclusionary radical feminist who generally focuses on removing trans rights, legal protections, healthcare access, and supportive social environments. Its foundational framework is biological essentialism – the idea that biology supersedes culture and all other influences.

**Trans Woman** – a woman who is trans, or a woman who was not assigned female at birth, but whose gender identity is female. 'Trans woman' is two words – trans is an adjective used to describe woman. Making this one word is considered disrespectful and inaccurate as it implies a trans woman is not really a woman.

**Trans Feminine/Trans Femme** – a term that often refers to trans women and nonbinary trans people who have a more feminine gender than the one they were assigned at birth. This term, although inclusive of trans women, is not interchangeable with trans women.

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**Trans Man** – a man who is trans, or a man who was not assigned male at birth, but whose gender identity is male. ‘Trans man’ is two words – trans is an adjective used to describe man. Making this one word is considered disrespectful and inaccurate, as it implies a trans man is not really a man.

**Trans Masculine/Trans Masc** – a term that often refers to trans men and nonbinary trans people who have a more masculine gender than the one they were assigned at birth. This term, although inclusive of trans men, is not interchangeable with trans men.

**Transition** – the social, legal, and/or medical process of aligning one’s life with one’s gender. This can (but does not always) include changing one’s name and pronouns; altering dress, speech, and mannerisms; updating documents and legal registries; and seeking medical treatment to change physical characteristics. To come out as trans can be a part of, but is not the same as, transitioning. Transitioning is often described as a singular event, though many trans people also see it as an ongoing process.

**Trans-Specific Healthcare (TSHC)** [also/previously referred to as gender reassignment surgery (GRS), gender-affirming healthcare (GAH)] – medical interventions, including hormone therapies, surgeries, and others, to bring the primary and secondary sex characteristics of a person’s body into alignment with their internal self-perception.

**Transphobia** – a matrix of cultural and personal beliefs, opinions, attitudes and aggressive behaviours based on prejudice, disgust, fear, and/or hatred directed against individuals or groups who do not conform to, or who transgress societal gender expectations and norms. Transphobia particularly affects individuals whose lived gender identity or gender expression differs from the gender role assigned to them at birth, and it manifests itself in various ways, e.g., as direct physical violence, transphobic speech and insulting, discriminatory media coverage, and social exclusion. Transphobia also includes institutionalised forms of discrimination such as criminalisation, pathologisation, or stigmatisation of non-conforming gender identities and gender expressions.

**Transsexual** – a term that often refers to someone who has had or seeks trans-specific medical care. Once the dominant word to describe someone who wants or seeks gender-affirming medical treatment, this is now a more niche and intracommunity term. Some consider it outdated or offensive. It may be appropriate to include the word if quoting historical materials, or if someone self-describes in this manner.

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**Puberty Blockers** – a medicine that delays the effects of puberty. They can be prescribed for young trans people, or young people who are questioning their gender, to delay the development of secondary sex characteristics associated with sex hormones. Changes are not permanent, and treatment typically starts around 10 or 11, to give children (and parents) more time to decide on future treatment.

## TERMS TO AVOID

**Don't use these unless quoting a trans or nonbinary source!**

**'Biological Sex'** – common in scientific writing as a synonym for birth sex, natal sex, or assigned sex at birth. Outside of medical literature, 'assigned sex at birth' is preferable over 'biological sex'. Avoid using 'biological' in reference to people, rather than in broad references to the concept of biological sex. Noun phrases like biological men, biological males, biological women, or biological females are often used by anti-trans groups to invoke a person's assigned sex at birth as their 'real' gender, in contrast to their gender identity.

**'Gender Ideology'** – refers to an empty signifier to consolidate opposition to progressive developments in society.<sup>24</sup> Conservative movements have used this Vatican-coined term extensively in their efforts to undermine protections for women and LGBTI people.

**'Identifies as'** – just as a journalist would not write 'identifies as a man' or 'identifies as a woman' about a cisgender person, journalists should not write 'identifies as nonbinary' or 'identifies as trans' about a nonbinary or trans person. Simply state that someone is trans, nonbinary, a man, or woman, etc., unless directly quoting a trans source.

**Tranny, Shemale, Crossdresser, Hermaphrodite** – broadly considered slurs, although some people might use them to self-identify. Never use one of these terms unless the person specifically uses it in reference to themselves, and even then, use it with care, such as in a direct quote.

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**Transgendered/Transgenders** – ‘transgender’ is an adjective and should not be used as a noun or a verb. This is outdated and is widely considered offensive. Do not use it in copy.

**Post-Op/Pre-Op** – terms to describe whether a trans person has already undergone some or all gender-affirming surgeries (post-op) or not (pre-op). It’s important to remember that not all trans people will seek surgery, and trans people are trans regardless of whether or not they choose to medically transition in any way.

**Sex Change/Sex Swap/‘The Surgery’** – assumes that a trans person requires surgery to be considered trans, emphasises a gender binary (male/female).



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***TGEU is always available to provide firm data and community-sourced perspectives. Feel free to reach out to us at [comms@tgeu.org](mailto:comms@tgeu.org).***

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