

Changes to gender beliefs needed to tackle trans and gender diverse prejudice, says study

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Negative attitudes towards the trans and gender diverse (TGD) community are affected by people's fundamental beliefs regarding gender, according to new Nottingham Trent University (NTU) research which recommends that anti-prejudice education be targeted at these views.

TGD describes people who experience an incongruence between the

gender they were assigned at birth and their gender identity, which may be in or outside the gender binary of male or female. It is estimated that there are 600,000 TGD people living in the UK.

The two-part study involved more than 530 cisgender men and women and aimed to discover how they felt about gender and whether threats to their own masculinity or femininity would impact their attitudes toward the TGD population.

It is the first research to examine the UK population for [gender differences](#) in attitudes towards TGD people while accounting for traditional gender norm adherence and essentialist gender beliefs. No other research has also linked this with whether threatening masculinity or femininity would influence the endorsement of the traditional binary gender system.

The first part of the study measured participants' adherence to the traditional ways they think men and women should behave, their attitudes and beliefs toward the TGD community, and their beliefs about how gender is viewed and accepted by society.

Findings showed that men display more negative attitudes towards TGD people and show less positive gender and sex beliefs than women. Adherence to traditional gender behavior and holding the belief that gender cannot be changed also predicted poorer attitudes towards TGD people and less positive gender and sex beliefs.

The second part of the study examined whether threatening men's and women's traditional gender identity would influence their attitudes towards TGD people and their endorsement of the traditional binary [gender identity](#). Two groups filled out questionnaires and purposely received scores which suggested they had lower masculinity or femininity. A [control group](#) received non-threatening feedback and

served as a suitable baseline to assess whether threatening cisgender men and women's traditional gender identities had any effect.

In contrast to previous research findings in other countries, such as China and Poland, it was found that following a masculinity threat, cisgender men did not show significantly more negative attitudes toward TGD people or less positive gender and sex beliefs.

Cisgender women also showed no difference in their attitudes towards the TGD community or their gender and sex beliefs following a femininity threat.

Dr. Beth Jones, Senior Lecturer in Health and Social Psychology at NTU's School of Social Sciences, said, "Home Office figures show that in 2021, there were 2,630 [hate crimes](#) against TGD people reported in England, although this number is likely to be much higher given the reluctance to report crimes to the police.

"Our research aims to understand why this negativity exists when trends actually demonstrate that the TGD community, or at least those in the community who are able to live authentically, is growing."

"We found the belief that gender is natural and cannot be changed, along with traditional beliefs about men and women's [gender](#) roles were associated with more negative attitudes towards TGD people—suggesting that this could be root cause of some of the TGD opposition we still see in society."

Co-researcher and NTU Ph.D. candidate, Liam Cahill, added, "Current interventions which aim to tackle prejudice do not address 'readiness to change' and take a one-size fits all approach. We recommend that they should be tailored to specific groups, such as those who have especially negative attitudes due to their fundamental beliefs, to enhance their

effectiveness. These findings can be used to inform future initiatives aimed at making society a more welcoming and inclusive place for everyone."

The findings are published in the journal *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*.

More information: Bethany A. Jones et al, Gender, traditional gender ideology, gender essentialist beliefs, and masculinity threat as determinants of attitudes toward trans and gender diverse people in a U.K. sample., *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity* (2023). [DOI: 10.1037/sgd0000658](https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000658)

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