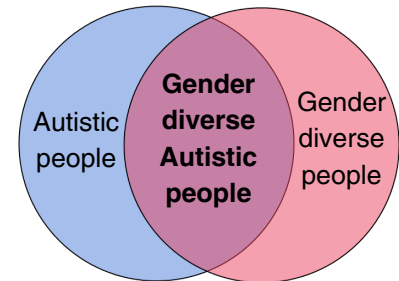


# Gender Diversity Beyond the Binary

## Why is Understanding Gender Diversity Important to Supporting Autistic Persons?

Providing meaningful support to persons with Autism requires getting to know the whole person. This includes not just their diagnosis, but all the elements of a person's identity that makes them unique, including their gender identity and gender expression. Research has consistently shown that Autism and gender diversity often intersect in meaningful ways (Hillier et al., 2019; Mallipeddi & VanDaalen 2022; Khudiakova & Chasteen, 2022).

This makes understanding and embracing gender diversity crucial to being able to provide truly personalized and meaningful support.



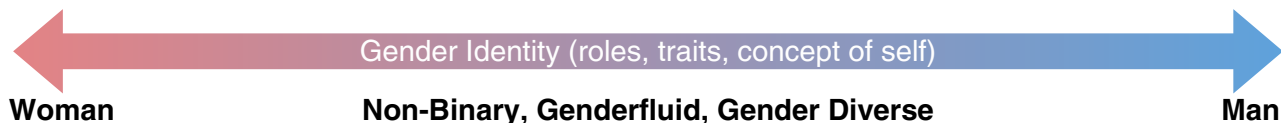
## Seeing Beyond the Binary

To understand gender diversity, it's necessary to recognize that binary views that classify a person as either "male" or "female" are a profound oversimplification. The reality is that gender identity, gender expression, and even a person's sex assigned at birth all exist on a dynamic continuum – one that includes far more than just these binary labels and definitions.

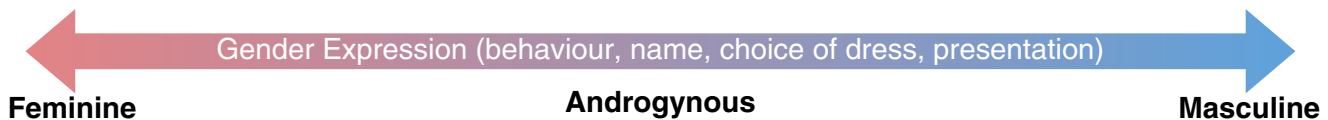
**Assigned Sex:** While the majority of individuals are assigned male or female at birth based on their external anatomy, many intersex persons are born each year who have both male and female traits, including anatomy and chromosomes.



**Gender Identity:** Similarly, a person's gender identity, which is separate from their sex assigned at birth and represents the subjective experience of feeling like a man, a woman, both, or neither, also exist on a continuum. For many their gender identity will match their sex assigned at birth, though this is not the case for transgender and other gender-diverse persons.



**Gender Expression:** Finally, how a person expresses their gender also exists on a continuum ranging from more masculine to more feminine, with *most* people falling somewhere in between (e.g., a person who identifies as a woman may choose to wear a suit or shave their head, while a person who identifies as a man may grow their hair long or paint their nails).



Remember: Binary concepts of gender fail to capture the complexity and diversity that exists within all persons, and therefore exclude many people who live outside of this binary. Moving beyond these rigid categories allows us to see people for who they truly are, not just how society has defined them. Making space for gender diversity is just one more way in which we can allow Autistic persons of any age to be their true and authentic selves.

Hillier, A., Gallop, N., Mendes, E., Tellez, D., Buckingham, A., Nizami, A., & OToole, D. (2019). LGBTQ + and autism spectrum disorder: Experiences and challenges. *International journal of transgender health*, 21(1), 98–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15532739.2019.1594484>

Khudiakova, V., & Chasteen, A. L. (2022). The experiences of stigmatization and discrimination in autistic people of different genders and sexualities. *J Interpers Relat Intergroup Relat Identity*, 15(10.33921).

Mallipeddi, N. V., & VanDaalen, R. A. (2022). Intersectionality Within Critical Autism Studies: A Narrative Review. *Autism in adulthood : challenges and management*, 4(4), 281–289. <https://doi.org/10.1089/aut.2021.0014>

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