

Transphobia and Cisgenderism

Summary of a small-scale survey and interviews looking into understandings of transphobia and cisgenderism at Loughborough University and beyond.

Research Overview

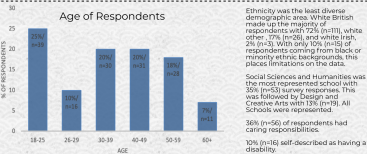
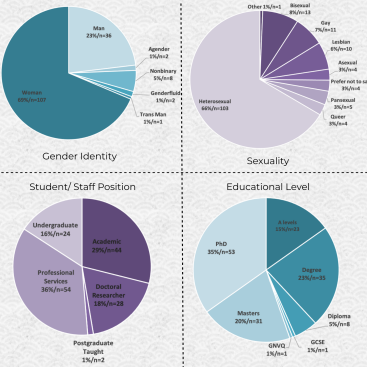
This research aims to understand how transphobia and cisgenderism are understood and experienced, particularly at Loughborough University. Cisgenderism refers to the systemic de-legitimation of self-declared sex and gender identities. In contrast to transphobia which implies individual fear or intolerance, cisgenderism focuses on systemic and ideological manifestations of, and justifications for, prejudice against all non-cisgender people.

Via online surveys and follow-up interviews with staff and students at the University, we explore how everyday discrimination against transgender and nonbinary people is understood, experienced and enacted. In so doing, we will be better placed to challenge and change those exclusionary practices.

The data was collected between 02 April 2020 and 22 July 2020.

Survey Demographics

Total Survey Respondents: N=155



Results

Transphobia

People generally understand transphobia to refer to the 'hatred or violence' against transgender people.

"Transphobia refers to anti-transgender phobias or people who identify as a gender that does not match their biological sex. This can frequently be linked to discrimination and violence against those individuals."

"I haven't heard of transphobia before. I'm starting from the fact - not that I'm prejudiced against people who identify as transgender."

Cisgenderism

Cisgenderism is less widely recognised however there is some recognition and many expressed the benefits of the concept once defined.

"Based on the terms 'gyn' (woman) and 'manc' (man), I'd assume it meant equality and poor treatment based on someone's level of being 'correct'."

"Systemic and subtle, perpetuation of non-transgender people and the de-legitimation of people's own gender identities."

"I think sometimes it's good to ask and what does people think against the more but to show it what I think that's always a good addition to the discussion."

Transphobia and Cisgenderism at Lboro

28% have seen transphobia at Loughborough University.

32% have seen cisgenderism at Loughborough University.

"It is always difficult to be gender diverse but I think Loughborough is more tolerant than other surroundings."

"Colleagues have made private remarks that I consider transphobic."

"I'm very rarely if at all, but there is a lot of experienced progressive people here but I would say there is discrimination. For example, colleagues are terrible at using my correct pronouns."

Language Use

Language use is important

Non-cisgender respondents describe the importance of using the correct pronouns and names. It is also clear that the other view occurs.

"When people get my pronouns wrong I try to be forgiving. I have to ask myself, 'How well do you know me?', 'How exposed to this are you?', 'How old are you?', 'Have I told you before?'. So, I try to be quite forgiving but it really does matter."

People are apprehensive

Many cisgender respondents stated that they feel unsure or anxious about how to use inclusive language, and fear or embarrassment about getting it wrong. Many also expressed a desire to be better educated on inclusive language use.

"I try to be mindful of this but feel embarrassed in that I might inadvertently get it wrong."

It's OK to ask

The vast majority of participants, cisgender and non-cisgender, expressed a desire to be more open and respectful conversation about language use and identities.

"Get the language right and the only way to do that is by asking. I don't know where people got the idea that you can't ask someone. I think knowing that would help a lot."

How can we reduce Cisgenderism at the University?

If pronoun introductions and the use of pronouns on initial sign-ups are a norm then more people will feel comfortable expressing their own and using other people's correct pronouns.

Not all toilets need to be gender-neutral and it's impractical to change all of them, but gender-neutral toilets should be readily available to all staff and students from non-workspaces. This must not be done at the expense of accessible disabled toilets.

Widespread training is important because the majority of reports of discrimination at Lboro stemmed from people's ignorance rather than overt discrimination. Training can also empower people to feel comfortable and confident using inclusive language - something cisgender people expressed concern about.

Do not just aim for the absence of prejudice, but for active support:

- promote events
- create safe spaces
- educate on the topic and the gender-nonconforming staff and students.