

# How transitioning leads to better mental health – and job satisfaction

September 27 2017, by Nick Drydakis

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Credit: AI-generated image ([disclaimer](#))

In the EU and the US there is a growing number of trans people who are beginning to change their outward appearances to reflect their gender identity. This physical change might, but does not always, involve medical treatment. Either way, the effects are overwhelmingly positive.

Transitioning improves trans people's [mental health](#). [New research](#) I've carried out found that a positive attitude toward life, the ability to cope with stress and optimism about the future are all boosted by transitioning. These factors all shape one's mental health status.

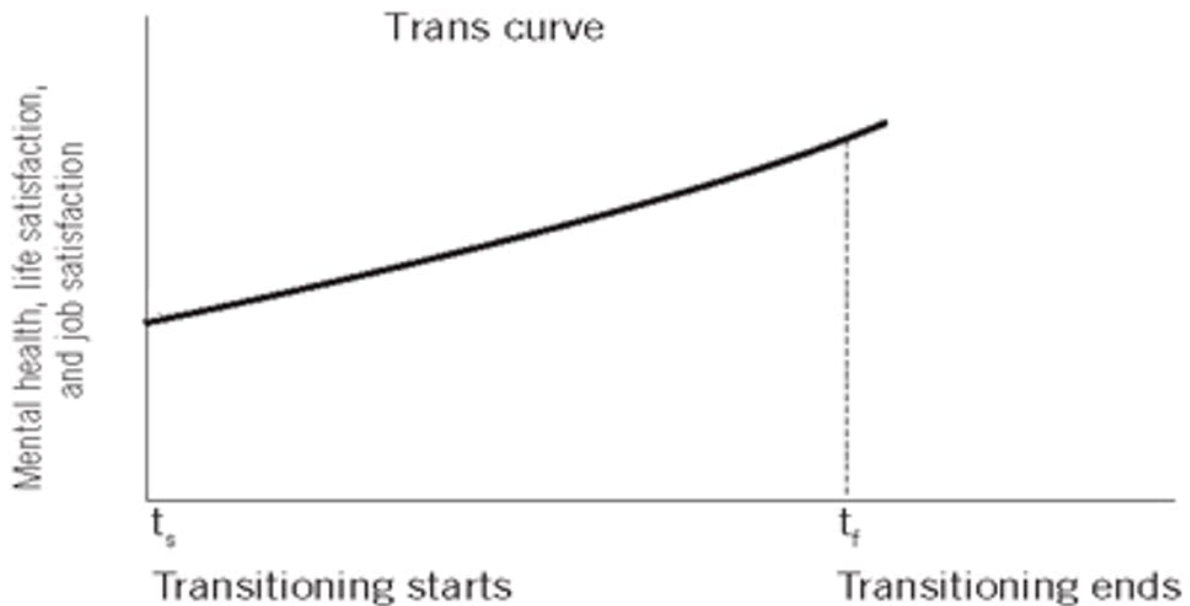
What's more, I also found that transitioning is related to greater job and life satisfaction. People's happiness with their appearance, body shape and self-esteem were all increased when they transitioned. It led to better communication and negotiation skills, better self-organisation, and a more innovative, constructive approach to problem-solving. These factors all shape job satisfaction.

This can be seen in what I call the [Trans Curve](#). It presents the gains in mental health and life and job satisfaction as people change their outward appearance to match their [gender identity](#).

Similarly, a [review](#) that looks at 38 international studies on trans people indicates that levels of psychopathology and psychiatric disorders reduce with transitioning and, in many cases, reach average levels.

Unfortunately, however, [myths about transition regrets](#) proliferate. Misrepresentation of scientific results on transitioning creates a biased environment against trans people. Although the vast majority of studies find that transitioning improves quality of life, information is regularly fabricated advocating against transition-related care.

This misrepresentation of research into transitioning can even enhance transphobia, where trans people face prejudice. At least 858 transphobic hate crimes were recorded by UK police during 2015-16. And between 2008 and 2016 the [number of murders of trans people](#) globally increased by 96%. Trans people also experience higher poverty [than the general population](#). Trans people often feel that they are citizens who are not allowed to be themselves and practice their authentic identity.



Credit: Nick Drydakis, CC BY-ND

## Work issues

Not having to stress about hiding your true identity allows trans employees [to focus and enjoy their work more](#). Traits such as optimism, happiness and self-esteem enhanced by transitioning can enable trans employees to overcome challenges at work and to perceive their job as more fulfilling and satisfying. A positive mood might induce trans people to spend more of their time on more creative tasks, thereby improving their performance.

There is also [research suggesting that](#) workplace colleagues report that their trans co-workers are more productive, more approachable and more gregarious after transition. As well as being good for productivity,

this may also promote more genuine and satisfactory relationships with colleagues, which is good for the workplace.

Nonetheless, trans people still face a number of issues in the world of work. [EU surveys](#) demonstrate that more than a third of trans people are discriminated against because of being trans when looking for a job (37%), and a quarter (27%) reported discrimination at work. The biased climate in relation to trans people pervades multiple facets of life, including education, healthcare and access to credit. As a result, trans people's integration and well-being suffer.

In order for trans people to have better access to job vacancies, to cope smoothly in employment and to [integrate into society](#), they should be able to change their sex on government ID documents without having to undergo sex reassignment surgery. This policy would minimise employment and societal exclusion for those who are not keen, ready, or financially able to undergo such a surgical procedure.

Based on the UK Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals from gender reassignment discrimination, people do not need to have undergone surgery to change from their birth sex to their preferred gender. Theresa May backed this up by telling [Pink News](#) that: "Law must be changed to help trans people change their gender without medical checks."

Bias against trans people could be prevented if legal protections and inclusive workplace practices were in place. Firms should not refuse to hire and promote trans people. Nor should they refuse to step in if colleagues or customers are harassing an employee for being trans (as suggested by [government guides](#) on the issue), let alone fire trans people for being themselves. Firms should also make it clear that it is unacceptable for managers, colleagues and customers to act in a biased manner, as this behaviour reflects on the company.

As well as being an important issue of equality and fairness, an active trans population enjoying equal treatment in the labour market will better serve their workplaces and help build the wider economy.

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