

The questions below were asked anonymously during the event 'What do I call you? A conversation on pronouns' using Wooclap. Co-organiser Margot Cramwinckel (they/them) answers them to the best of their ability.

Are you ever afraid that putting pronouns on your CV would negatively impact chances for a job?

I think there are a lot of words on your CV that can trigger prejudices in people and negatively impact your chances for a job. This is also unfortunately well-known for e.g. gender and name discrimination. In the specific case of pronouns, I would not be afraid to put them on your CV. This is perhaps a bit of a personal response, but in my opinion, if an employer judges you stating your pronouns on your CV negatively, this might not be the kind of employer you want.

Is it useful to introduce yourself with your pronouns?

Yes, particularly if everyone does this as a common courtesy, because it normalises people introducing themselves with their name and pronouns. This is useful, because it makes people with a less standard gender expression stand out less when they introduce themselves with or write down their pronouns.

I don't feel comfortable announcing my pronouns, and don't want to ask others in case they are also unsure and it makes them uncomfortable. Is there a way of supporting people that want to clarify their pronouns without pressuring those that don't?

A very nice question that really underscores the intricacies and how everyone's personal preference and stage in their journey is different. In the classroom for instance, this could perhaps be done with an anonymous optional question in a start-of-course survey. In the workplace, it depends on the specifics, but sometimes a safe one-on-one conversation might suffice. Additionally, in general a more open question can be to ask someone "how do I address you?" ("hoe spreek ik jou aan?") – the person asked can then answer in whichever way they interpret the question (pronouns, title, just their name..) If you are unsure about what pronouns you yourself want to use, you might also experiment with using a combination of different ones. It's not like you have to pick a set and then stick to it your whole life. For instance, I went from stating "she/they*" to "they/she" (preferred pronoun in front), to now the "they/them" that I am most comfortable with.

*she/they: short for she/her; they/them

Do you have any advice on how to announce a pronoun change in the workplace?

I would advise to first announce this in your own small sub-team and try to work up from there. In general, it might be more comfortable to tell people in smaller groups or individually rather than in a very large group. And it might be good to be explicit to the group you announce to first whether you would appreciate if they would "spread the

word” (when relevant) or whether you would prefer to tell others in-person yourself. Adding your pronouns to your online presences (website, staff page, email signature, social media accounts, etc.) can be a good addition to this, to get the word out.

Should I tell someone my pronouns, wait for them to ask, or wait until they make a mistake?

This is a struggle which I very much recognize. For me personally, it fully depends on the space I am in. When in a queer/LGBTQIA+ space, it is often common practice to introduce yourself with your pronouns or to ask others for them. In other situations however, it might not be so easy to do that. One way that can be helpful is by adding your pronouns to your online presences (website, staff page, email signature, social media accounts, etc.). A related piece of good advice is to speak up as an ally when you hear someone else being misgendered. They might be tired of, and/or anxious about, repeatedly doing this for themselves. But whatever you do, always take care not to linger on a mistake for too long as that just draws unwanted attention to the person.

If someone is using the incorrect pronouns for a third person, should I correct them? What if they have not shared their pronouns or I’m not sure?

This nicely follows up with the question above: yes please – but only if you are 100% sure about that person’s pronouns because they have shared them with you, and you know they are okay with sharing their pronouns with other people.

Do you know resources for people who would like to do some more soul-searching about this topic? Are there resources to train a brain that was brought up in a very gender-binary environment to be more flexible when it comes to pronouns?

First of all, give yourself some time. For some people, adjusting to new language (and concepts) just comes more naturally than to others. But also, to both questions, please have a look at the resources here: <https://ywog.sites.uu.nl/2023/04/06/what-do-i-call-you-a-recap/>

How should one handle people who are very passionate and unforgiving about their and others’ pronouns?

First of all, it might be good to give those passionate unforgiving people a bit of slack, because their passion might come from a (potentially long) personal history with bad experiences and/or hardships. That said, I would recommend to always briefly apologize when you happen to use the incorrect pronouns, but not linger on it, and continue with the conversation.

Would there be a possibility to include a pronouns assignment in the BKO and SKO training modules?

We would love to organise a follow-up meeting just about this topic. If you are interested in organising this with us, please let us know!

Some countries issue passports with X option for sex, I feel it's so weird our hr-system can't accommodate that. Passport is legal status, so currently we can't even register a person's legal sex correctly.. anyway, I guess it's being worked on...

I agree that it's weird, but hopefully will be changed sooner rather than later.

Why is it common to announce one's pronouns in pairs of two?

Wouldn't she, he or they be enough?

Sometimes it's even done in pairs of three! This can be useful to show how these pronouns are grammatically conjugated, useful for non-native speakers and for people that are less familiar with using pronouns other than he/him and she/her. This is especially the case for neopronouns (pronouns other than "she", "he", "they", "one" and "it").

If a person uses she/they or he/they pronouns, does that mean I can use them interchangeably?

Yes! She/they means a person uses both she/her and they/them pronouns. Similarly, he/they means a person uses both he/him and they/them pronouns. Some people like to put the pronouns in order of preference, but this is not necessarily the case.