Our identity refers to the qualities, traits, and characteristics that define who we are. It is made up of multiple different features, which we call the aspects of our identity.

Aspects of identity examples include our gender, ethnicity, personality, religion, values, and hobbies. Each aspect helps to make up who we are, and make us unique individuals.
While some elements of our identities we’re born with (such as our sex and physical appearance), others we can choose (such as our hobbies and profession).

Aspects Of Identity

1. Gender

   Your gender is your culturally assigned or self-identified association with characteristics including man (masculine), woman (feminine), and transgender.

   Gender is a cultural identity marker that is often ascribed at birth as a binary connected to your biological sex. People of the male sex (biologically) are gendered as men and predicted to be masculine (culturally); people of the female sex (biologically) are gendered as women and predicted to be feminine (culturally).

   In western societies, gender was traditionally seen as a binary of male and female. However, as I explore in my types of genders article, there are over 80 different gender identities across the world’s diverse cultures. For example, Polynesians have a recognized third gender known as Fakaleiti and Southern Italy has a gender called Femminiello.

2. Sex
Your sex is a biological classification related to your reproductive organs. In western society, we see these as the male and female sexes.

Your sex is closely associated with your ability to reproduce. A biological man and a biological woman can reproduce through copulation, which has been a central rationale for the predominance of heterosexual relationship couplings (a biological man with a biological woman) for millennia.

This does not negate the fact that homosexual relationships have also been a minority, but ever-present, way to form relationships throughout history.

Furthermore, sex and gender have recently been increasingly disconnected as aspects of identity. People born biologically male may identify as being of the feminine gender, or even agendered (not identifying with any gender).

Nevertheless, it remains the case that the vast majority of people born biologically male (sex) will identify as men (gender), and people born biologically female (sex) will identify as women (gender).

3. Race

Race refers to your biological association with groups of humans with shared characteristics such as skin pigmentation and facial features.

Common racial groups include Caucasians, Hispanics, Asians, Black-Africans, and Pacific Islanders. Each group has shared genetic characteristics that can, often, make them identifiable at sight. Most predominant among these is skin
pigmentation, although bone structure, nose shape, and other features also play a part.

Race is distinct from ethnicity because ethnicity is a cultural marker related to traditions of your ancestors, whereas race is biological (this acts in a similar way to the sex-gender relationship).

4. Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the traditions of your ancestors. Examples of ethnicities include African-American, Latino, Cajun (French-Americans), and Kurdish (Middle-East).

Ethnicity is a cultural marker that encompasses cultural features such as your traditional rites and rituals, values and beliefs, dances, accents, slang, religious preferences, and cooking styles.

In some cases, ethnicity and race overlap significantly, whereas in others, multiple groups of the same race may have different ethnicities (for example, the Roma and Irish are both Caucasian but ethnically distinct).

Furthermore, multiple ethnicities may exist within the same country. Myanmar, for example, is known for its many different ethnic groupings. Similarly, the Tamils and Sinhalese share the same cultural homeland of Sri Lanka.

5. Social Class
Your social class refers to both your socioeconomic status and the traditions and subcultural practices of the people who share that status. Common social classes include working-class, middle-class, and upper-class.

The working class, for example, are a group of people who are the proletariat (they are the laborers and blue collar workers) of a society. They tend to be less educated than the other classes, earn less money on average, and exchange their labor for an hourly wage or salary.

They have also historically supported left-wing and socialist political parties and unions that advocate for control of capitalist excesses and fairer distribution of wealth.

The working classes of Britain are a good case in point because they have their own cultural dispositions, such as their own dialects, fashions, and musical preferences (punk rock, for example). They may also be, on average, more likely to participate in low culture activities.

The upper class, on the other hand, are the owners of capital, meaning they’re less likely to work for an hourly wage but instead live off capital dividends (although many are still in white-collar jobs). They are also more likely to participate in high culture activities such as live theater and sports like polo.

6. Ability And Disability
Ability and disability also feature as aspects of our identities. Examples include people who are wheelchair-bound, suffer from chronic fatigue, or suffer from depression.

Able-bodied people tend not to think about this as a part of their identities because it’s taken for granted. However, people suffering from physical and mental disabilities may find that their disability becomes a master status, meaning it’s a central feature of their sense of self.

This aspect of identity may also act as a source of discrimination for many, who find it harder to find employment due to employer prejudice and struggle to navigate public spaces due to the fact they are not inclusively constructed.

7. Profession

Your profession is often a central feature of your identity because it’s what you do for most of your days.

It’s also seen as a fast social status signifier to let others know where you sit on the social hierarchy.

People who aren’t in a profession yet may identify with a student or retired, which similarly act as central identity features related to ‘whether you’re in work’.

Examples of professions include teacher, doctor, lawyer, plumber, bricklayer, and economist.
In today’s world, people often don’t stay in the same profession for their whole lives. Thus, this aspect of identity may shift over time.

8. Relationship Status

Your relationship status is an aspect of identity that is often displayed on social media profiles and apps. It helps single people to identify potential dates.

Your relationship status may be single, in a relationship, engaged, married, or even divorced.

As with your profession, this may change over time. However, most people hope to enter a loving relationship for the rest of their lives!

In the past, a relationship status had important implications in society. For example, married women were often expected to quit their job to be a homemaker. In other societies, people may have been in polygamous or open relationships.

9. Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation refers to the types of people you are romantically attracted to. It could include homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, or asexual.

Homosexual people are attracted to people of the same sex as them; heterosexual people are attracted to people of the opposite sex; bisexual people
are attracted to either sex; and asexual people do not experience romantic attraction.

To this day, most people identify as heterosexual. While in the past, homosexuality was considered abnormal and shameful, today it is widely accepted as a welcome and healthy way to live your life. This is reflected in the fact that most western countries endorse gay marriage these days.

10. Religion

Many people place their religion at the center of their personal identity. This is because it forms the foundation for their values and hope in humanity and an afterlife.

Before the industrial revolution, religion was an extremely important unifying feature in societies. Nearly everyone would identify with a religion and attend their place of worship each week.

These days, religion as a central identity feature is in decline. However, most countries still have 50% or more of the nation identifying with a religion and placing it as at least an important feature of who they are and their sense of self.

11. Family

When asked what’s most important to you and your life, your family may be the first thing you say. Your sense of who you are is often
Similarly, one of the first things people like to find in a future boyfriend or girlfriend is that they have “family values”. This helps show their sense of loyalty, ability to love deeply, and the idea that they commit themselves to the people around them.

Things you can ask about your family values include: what your role in your family is; what your family traditions are, and if you follow them; how important living close to your family is; and how important it is for you to have children of your own.

12. Values And Beliefs

Your personal values and beliefs are likely central aspects of your identity. A person may, for example, self-identify as a humanitarian, a conservative, or someone who values honesty above all else.

Values and beliefs are often connected to other core aspects of your identity, such as your religion or political affiliations. This is because values come from somewhere. It may be that you grew up poor, so you value social justice; or that your parents crawled their way out of poverty so you value hard work above all else.

People’s values and beliefs are identity features that change over time as well. Your life experiences may change what you consider to be most important about
a person. You may also change religious affiliations or have an epiphany that changes how you think about humanity.

13. Citizenship And Nationality

Since the 16th Century, nationality has become a predominant macro-level marker of your sense of self.

Scholar Benedict Anderson called national identities “imagined communities” – groups of people who have never met but feel a sense of common identity.

Brands are usually very good appealing to this aspect of identity. They will promote nationalism in their brands in order to get people to purchase their products. Similarly, when you travel, your nationality becomes a dominant identity marker.

14. Hobbies

We often gravitate to people who share our hobbies. In the world of the internet, we can even find people who share our obscure hobbies from across the other side of the world.

Hobbies are usually a secondary identity marker. They’re social identities because they are based on social interaction. This is distinct from cultural identities which are generally culture-based, such as gender and race which are social constructs.
Examples of hobbies that you may orient your identity around include playing sports, playing chess, reading, cooking, and hiking.

15. Skills

You may be identified by your skills, especially if you are a particularly skilled person.

For example, your skills as a painter may mean that you identify as a painter; or, if you are a skilled gardener, you may refer to yourself as a gardener. Similarly, your friends may primarily relate to you as a person of a particular skill and call upon you whenever your skills are in demand.

16. Ancestry

You may primarily identify yourself based upon who your ancestors are, such as if you are of a particularly strong lineage.

For example, many elites from Europe may be very proud that they are the descendants of kings and queens, which may even allow them to hold a noble title such as ‘lady’ or ‘dutchess’.

In the new world, people may take great pride in being descendants of a famous person, a person who came to the United States on the Mayflower, or a person who came to Australia as a convict. Other people from nations like the United States, Canada, and Australia may also be proud to be descendants of first nations peoples.
17. Physical Appearance

Sadly, physical appearance remains a feature of your identity. Society may think differently of you based upon how you look, and similarly, you may think differently of yourself.

Historically, different physical appearances have been believed as attractive. In medieval France, plump women were considered attractive because it was a sign of affluence. Similarly, in China, women with tiny feet were considered attractive.

Thus, your identity as ‘pretty’, ‘ugly’, ‘beautiful’, etc. is socially constructed. Nevertheless, it may impact your life and how much you’re privileged or discriminated against.

18. Birth Order

Many studies have attempted to understand the relationship between birth order and personal identity.

For example, this study looked at the stereotype that first-borns are considered high achieving and conscientious, while later-born siblings are seen as rebellious and liberal.

However, other studies have strenuously argued that birth orders have no effect on success in life.
Regardless of whether there are objectively identifiable effects on birth order and variables such as success or personality, people may perceive their birth order to be an important part of their identity. For example, they may strongly identify as a “little brother” or “big sister”.

19. Languages Spoken

Your language is central to your identity. It impacts a lot of your life choices and even the way you think.

For example, if you are bilingual and speak both Spanish and English, you’ll be able to communicate with two separate cultural groups.

Similarly, the accent you have is a huge part of your identity. The minute you start talking, a person might be able to identify you as a person from Boston, or England, or South Africa.

20. Caste Status

Caste status was an ascribed identity that was prevalent in centuries past. It refers to the designation of people into groups based on family and ethnicity.

Generally, caste groups were expected to take up only the professions of your caste. For example, in Sri Lanka, there were fisherman castes where a child born into the caste must take their parents’ profession, and would be unemployable elsewhere.
You may also be expected to only marry within your caste.

A caste status example is the caste system of India, which was based on a certain branch and interpretation of Hinduism.

21. Political Views

Increasingly, people are placing their political tribe at the center of their sense of self. A person may, for example, identify as a democrat or a republican in the United States.

This aspect of identity often comes to the fore when someone brings their boyfriend home to see their father. The father might try to scope out the son's politics to see if he's good enough for the daughter or if his core values are not acceptable to him.

This is exacerbated by media polarization that has drawn people to far-left and far-right political positions in recent years, causing hatred of people who identify with a political party that is not the right 'tribe'.

22. Personality

Your personality refers to your temperament and attitude. Some people have grumpy personalities, while others might be jovial.

Similarly, some people might be very open and welcoming while others are slow to warm-up to others and naturally suspicious.
Our personalities can be stable over time, such as when someone is a perpetual extravert or introvert. However, personalities can also change depending on the social context.

For example, around friends you might be very talkative and open, whereas around strangers you might be very quiet and shy.

See Also: 65 Personal Identity Examples

Conclusion

There are countless aspects of a person’s identity. Each aspect impacts both your perception of self and other people’s perceptions of you. Your identity impacts you whether it’s a small and nuanced aspect (like how shy you are) or large and definitive (like your race or sex).

Identity is also connected to your success in life, to one extent or another. For example, women have for millennia been discriminated against in patriarchal societies, which has limited what they can do in their lives.

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