

# Young Trans Children Know Who They Are

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Since 2013, [Kristina Olson](#), a psychologist at the University of Washington, has been running [a large, long-term study](#) to track the health and well-being of transgender children—those who identify as a different gender from the one they were assigned at birth. Since the study’s launch, Olson has also heard from the parents of gender-nonconforming kids, who consistently defy gender stereotypes but have not socially transitioned. They might include boys who like wearing dresses or girls who play with trucks, but who have not, for example, changed the pronouns they use. Those parents asked whether their children could participate in the study. Olson agreed.

After a while, she realized that she had inadvertently recruited a sizable group of 85 gender-nonconforming participants, ages 3 to 12. And as she kept in touch with the families over the years, she learned that some of those children eventually transitioned. “Enough of them were doing it that we had this unique opportunity to look back at our data to see whether the kids who went on to transition were different to those who didn’t,” Olson says.

By studying the 85 gender-nonconforming children she recruited, [her team has now shown](#), in two separate ways, that those who go on to transition do so because they *already* have a strong sense of their identity.