



# LGBTQ2+

## Terms Reference

### and Media Style Guide

October 2021

# Introduction

This terminology reference guide was created both to assist people in understanding basic LGBTQ2+ terminology and to be a reference for writers seeking to write sensitively about LGBTQ2+ people and the issues affecting them.

The escalation of hateful rhetoric over the “trans debate” in the United States and the UK is a painful reminder of why language and media representation matter. Despite the equality gains made in recent decades, LGBTQ2+ people still do not have equal rights, and politicians promote fear and hatred of trans and non-binary people by “debating” their existence and pushing legislation aimed at banning them from public spaces and public life.

A lot of this hatred is caused by lack of exposure to LGBTQ2+ people and ignorance about their experience, which is why writing about LGBTQ2+ experiences is so critical. But it’s equally important that we write about LGBTQ2+ people in a way that doesn’t perpetuate harmful stereotypes that are used to justify violence against LGBTQ2+ people.

This guide was created for people in Canada and the United States, and may not reflect the preferences and identities of queer people outside of those countries. As with any type of language, terms change and shift over time as our understanding grows and evolves. It’s likely that some of the language in this guide will fall out of favor in the future which is why the later sections of this guide go beyond terms and definitions by explaining harmful LGBTQ2+ narratives and demonstrating how they cause harm.

This guide is not exhaustive, and should not be used to police the language that people use to describe themselves and their experiences. It is intended only to assist people in understanding what language is most respectful when describing people who experience marginalizations that they do not share.

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# About Us

Founded as Waterloo Region's first-ever LGBTQ2+ community space, SPECTRUM is an organization that serves, affirms, and supports the well-being of LGBTQ2+ individuals in Waterloo Region and the broader community through peer support, community partnerships, education and training, resources, and events.

SPECTRUM offers more than 20 different groups and activities each month, including: transgender peer support groups, games nights, SPECTRUM Prime for LGBTQ2+ adults 55+, and Rainbow Multicultural Connect.

Other SPECTRUM services and resources include: mental health counselling for LGBTQ2+ adults, LGBTQ2+ Legal Aid Clinic The TransNAV GPS Directory, a monthly calendar of LGBTQ2+ events, Rainbow Pages directory of LGBTQ2+ friendly businesses and organizations, and more!

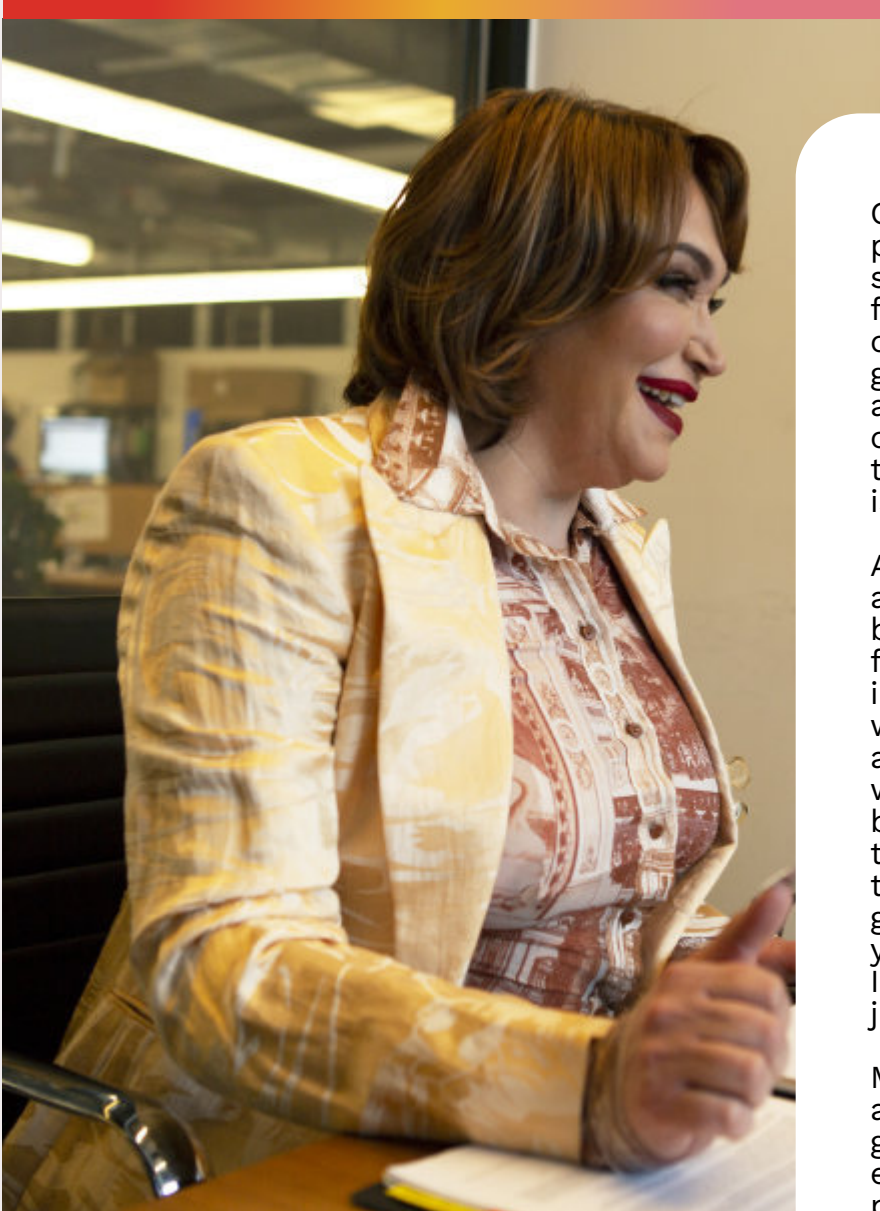
**As a registered charity, SPECTRUM's depends on support from the community.**

To learn more about SPECTRUM and the work we do, visit [ourspectrum.com](https://ourspectrum.com) or visit [ourspectrum.com/donate/](https://ourspectrum.com/donate/) to donate.



# 101 Topics

*Gender and sexuality, terms to use, terms to avoid,  
specific usage, dos and don'ts*



Gender identity refers to a person's internal sense of self and the gender they feel like inside, which may or may not align with the gender they were assigned at birth. Sexuality, on the other hand, refers to the types of people someone is attracted to.

At birth, doctors usually assign infants one of two binary genders: male or female. This overlooks intersex people (people whose biology is ambiguous) and people with genders outside the binary. Cultures around the world have had traditions of non-binary gender for thousands of years, of which Two-Spirit Indigenous Canadians are just one example.

Most people's gender aligns with their assigned gender and they experience attraction to people of the "opposite" binary gender. The physical and emotional violence experienced by people with stigmatized genders and sexualities keeps many people silent, which



# What does the ... in

# LGBTQQIP2SAA

# ...mean?

**AFAB (assigned female at birth):** when they were born, the doctor said “it’s a girl!”

**Lesbian:** a woman who is attracted to women

**Trans(gender):** someone whose biology does not align with the gender they were assigned at birth

**Intersex:** someone whose biology has both male and female traits, or whose biology is ambiguous

**2 (Two)-Spirit:** a culture-specific gender identity coming from some Indigenous Canadian traditions

**Bisexual:** people attracted to more than one gender (but possibly not all genders)

**Queer:** historically used as an insult, reclaimed by some as a positive term meaning anyone who is not cis or straight (see page 14)

**Ace (asexual):** someone who doesn’t experience sexual attraction and may or may not experience other kinds of attraction

**Agender:** someone who does not have a gender

**AMAB (assigned male at birth):** when they were born, the doctor said “it’s a boy!”

**Gay:** a man who is attracted to men. Also used more generally referring to people who are not cisgender or straight.

**Cis(gender):** someone whose biology aligns with the gender they were assigned at birth

**Non-Binary:** someone with any gender outside the binary of man or woman

**LGBTQ2+:** a shortened form of the initialism that reflects all other identities not included in the shortened version

**Pansexual:** someone whose attraction is not dependent on gender

**Questioning:** someone who is unsure or questioning their gender or sexuality

**Aro(mantic):** someone who doesn’t experience romantic attraction and may or may not experience other kinds of attraction


**Ally:** someone who is not LGBTQ2+ but supports and advocates for LGBTQ2+ people





# Terms to Use


## Attraction

There are five types of attraction. People who are *allosexual* (people not on the asexual spectrum) typically experience multiple types of attraction at the same time:

 **Sexual:** the desire to have sex with someone

 **Sensual:** the desire to have physical contact like hugs or handholding with someone

 **Romantic:** the desire to have a romantic relationship with someone

 **Platonic:** the desire to have a platonic attraction with someone

 **Aesthetic:** getting pleasure from someone's appearance,

## (Sexual) Orientation

*separate from gender identity. Orientation refers to the types of people that someone is attracted to.*

## Gender...

**Identity:** a person's internal sense of self and the gender they feel like inside

**Expression:** how someone expresses their gender identity to the world

**Binary:** the classification of all humans into one of two fixed genders

**Dysphoria:** distress caused by the difference between one's sex assigned at birth and one's gender identity

**Euphoria:** the joy and validation of being seen as one's true gender

**Nonconforming:** someone whose appearance or behaviour doesn't conform to traditional gender norms (not a synonym for non-binary)

## Biological Sex

a rough category made up of a number of factors including chromosomes, genitalia, hormones, and internal reproductive organs – which do not define gender.

## Misgender

either intentionally or unintentionally using incorrect pronouns or otherwise referring to someone with language that does not correctly reflect their gender.

## Culture-specific gender

a gender identity specific to a certain cultural group.

## ***Non-Binary***

an umbrella term meaning any person with a gender that is outside the binary of man or woman

***Agender / Neutrois:*** someone who does not have a gender

***Bigender:*** someone with two genders that may or may not occur simultaneously

***Demiboy / Demigirl:*** someone who partially but not completely identifies with a binary gender.

***Genderfluid:*** someone whose gender identity changes over time

***Genderqueer:*** an identity that is becoming less common, referring to anyone whose gender is queer or the queering of gender

***Masc / femme:*** terms used to refer to people whose expression

## ***Out...***

***Coming Out:*** acknowledgement and/or disclosure of a marginalized gender or sexual orientation

***Outing:*** disclosing someone's gender identity or sexual orientation without their consent

***Out:*** someone who describes themselves as LGBTQ2+ in their personal and/or professional life

***Not Out:*** someone who is

## ***Transition***

the process of changing one's gender presentation to better align with their gender identity, which may or may not include medical treatment like surgeries or hormones.

## ***Deadname***

using a trans or non-binary person's birth name without their consent. Deadnaming can be accidental, but is often used to intentionally shame or dismiss a person's gender identity.

## ***Misgender***

either intentionally or unintentionally using incorrect pronouns or otherwise referring to someone with language that does not correctly reflect their gender.





# Forms of Discrimination

**Cissexism:** Discrimination against trans and non-binary people

**Homophobia:** hatred, fear, or disgust of people who aren't straight

**Biphobia / Panphobia:** mistrust or disgust of people who are Bisexual / Pansexual

**Transphobia:** hatred, fear, or disgust of people who are transgender

**Transmisogynoir:** The intersection of transmisogyny and antiblackness, referring to the marginalization experienced by Black trans women and transfeminine people.

**Heterosexism:** Discrimination against people who aren't straight

**Non-binaryphobia:** hatred, fear or disgust of people with genders beyond the binary

**Queerphobia:** hatred, fear, or disgust of people whose gender or sexuality does not easily fit existing labels

**Transmisogyny:** The intersection of misogyny and transphobia. It includes the combination of misogyny, sexism, transphobia, and sexism that is experienced by trans women and transfeminine people.

**TERF:** An acronym that stands for Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist, and refers to people who engage in hate-driven anti-trans activism. (See TERF, page 19)



# Terms to Avoid

**Biologically male/female or male/female-bodied:** these terms overly simplify the complex biology of sex and focus the conversation on a person's genitals rather than their identity. (See page 19)

**Closeted:** this is an outdated term. Say instead that someone is *not out* or *not public*

**Gay / Homosexual / Trans Agenda:** these terms are rhetoric used by anti-LGBTQ2+ extremists to stir up hatred toward LGBTQ2+ who engage in advocacy for equal rights. (See page 19)

**Hermaphrodite:** an offensive outdated term referring to someone who is transgender or intersex. Do not use.

**Gay / Homosexual / Trans Lifestyle:** rhetoric used to stir up hatred toward LGBTQ2+ people. Just as there is no straight lifestyle, there is no one gay or trans lifestyle.

**Preferred Pronouns:** implies that pronouns are merely a preference that can be disregarded. Refer instead simply to someone's pronouns.

**Opposite sex/gender:** saying that someone is the opposite sex is binary centric language that implies that the only two possible combinations of gender are same and opposite, which erases non-binary people.

**Sex change / reassignment:** an outdated term referring to surgical procedures used for medical transition. Refer instead to gender confirming surgery.

**Stealth / passing:** some trans people use these terms among themselves, but should never be used when writing about trans people. If you must, refer to someone as visibly trans or not visibly trans.

**Transgenderism:** rhetoric used to stir up hatred toward trans people. Being trans is an identity, not a belief.

**Womxn:** an alternate spelling of "women" popularized in 2010. However, it is now considered an offensive term as it implies that trans women aren't women and that AFAB non-binary people are women.

**TIM (trans-identified-male) / TIF (trans-identified-female):** offensive terms used to delegitimize trans gender identity

**Born a man / born a woman:** Gender is a social construct. People aren't born men or women, they are born infants.

**Enby:** A term derived from the letters in the abbreviated form of "non-binary". Some non-binary people self-describe as "enby", while others feel it's infantilizing when imposed as a label from outside. Use if quoting someone who refers to themselves as "enby" or "an enby", but never use to describe someone who has not identified themselves that way.

**FTM (female-to-male) / MTF (male-to-female):** this is an outdated term that should not be used because not all trans people have binary genders. Only use if you are quoting someone who is describing themselves and their own experiences.

**Gay marriage / married:** marriage equality is (for now) the law of the land. If you're not talking about the history of marriage equality or comparing straight marriage to gay marriage, then simply use the terms "marriage" or "married".

**Homosexual / Same-sex:** outdated terms that defines sexuality in terms of the gender binary. Use either Gay or Lesbian when referring to people with binary genders who are attracted to people of the same gender.

**Openly gay:** an outdated term. Say instead that someone is *out* or *public*.

**Pre-op(erative) / Post-op(erative):** outdated terms focusing on genitals and the status of someone's medical transition is a way of delegitimizing trans gender identity. Not all trans people can access medical transition, and not all trans people wish to fully transition. Similarly, some trans people choose some aspects of medical transition while refusing others.

**Rapid onset gender dysphoria:** a term used by TERFs and the "gender critical" movement to stir up panic about the "indoctrination" of children into the "trans lifestyle". (See page 19)

**Sexual preference:** implies that attraction is a choice that can be changed, rather than part of who someone is. Refer instead to sexual orientation.

**Transsexual:** an offensive outdated term for someone who is transgender that is nonetheless still used by some older trans people. Only use this word if you are quoting someone who is directly talking about their own experiences as a trans person.

# Specific Usage



- 1** *Trans is an adjective*, not a noun. Say that someone is “a trans person” or “a transgender person”, but never “a trans” or “a transgender”.
- 2** *Trans is a gender*, not a sexual orientation.
- 3** *Do not say “transgendered”*, because being trans is not a thing that happens to you it is who you are. Similarly, someone is cis or cisgender but never cisgendered.
- 4** Some younger trans people may sarcastically refer to themselves as “a tran” or a group as “some trans”. These jokes should never be told by someone who isn’t themselves trans.
- 5** *Gay and queer are adjectives*, not nouns. Say that someone is a gay person or a gay man, but never refer to “a gay” or “a queer” or “gays” or “queers”. Again, some younger queer people might jokingly refer to a group of themselves and their friends as a group of “queers”, but “queers” should never be used by someone who isn’t themselves queer.

# Dos and Don'ts

**DO** respect people's names and pronouns. Never deadname or misgender them, and if a source deadnames or misgenders someone, never print an uncorrected quote.















**DON'T** use slurs.

**DON'T** use words implying that LGBTQ2+ people are diseased, deviant, delusional, or otherwise mentally ill.

**DON'T** use words associating LGBTQ2+ people with: pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest

**DON'T** use terms referring to trans people, non-binary people, Pansexual people, or Bisexual people as inherently deceptive or inherently untrustworthy

## ***Don't say***

-  Women and trans women
-  People who consider themselves nonbinary
-  Identifies as (gender)
-  Her secret was revealed
-  Men and women
-  He or she
-  Had a sex change
-  Is biologically male / female
-  Sexual preference
-  Transman / transwoman
-  Sex change / sex reassignment
-  She wants to be called / she calls herself
-  Alex's preferred pronouns are...
-  Women with periods / breastfeeding

## ***Do say***

-  *Women / Women (cis and trans)*
-  *Nonbinary people*
-  *Is (gender)*
-  *Her history was publicized*
-  *People of all genders*
-  *They (see pronouns, page 15)*
-  *Transitioned*
-  *Was assigned male / female at birth*
-  *(Sexual) orientation*
-  *Trans man / trans woman*
-  *Gender confirming surgery*
-  *Her name is*
-  *Alex's pronouns are*
-  *People who menstruate / chestfeeding*



A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with short dark hair, wearing round gold-rimmed glasses and a large gold hoop earring. She is looking slightly to the left with a thoughtful expression. She is wearing a white t-shirt under a dark blue zip-up jacket. A gold chain necklace with a large, light-colored stone pendant is visible. The background is a blurred tree trunk. The overall lighting is soft and natural.

# 201 Topics

*Queer, Non-binary versus Trans, Bisexual and Pansexual,  
Pronouns, and TERFs*





# Is "queer" a slur?

## *History and reclamation*

Originally meaning “strange” or “peculiar”, the word “queer” began to be used as a slur against gay men and lesbians in the late 1800s. Beginning in the 1980s, activists began to reclaim the term as a deliberately provocative and radical label in response to homophobic violence and assimilationist pressure from within the gay rights movement. In the 1990s, activist group Queer Nation introduced slogans like “we’re here, we’re queer, get over it”.

In the 2000s, “queer” shifted to become an umbrella term for anyone with a non-normative experience of sexuality or gender. And in the past decade, “queer” has become an increasingly popular label for trans and non-binary people as a word that describes orientation without referencing binary gender.

## *So is “queer” a slur? No! And yes.*

For many LGBTQ2+ people, especially trans and non-binary people, “queer” is the only word they can use to describe their orientation and/or gender. However, there are LGBTQ2+ elders who have lived trauma with “queer” as a word associated with extreme violence. As with any label, we should be sensitive to how individuals identify and not describe someone as “queer” if that is a label that is traumatic for them.

However, it’s equally important not to police the language of LGBTQ2+ people who use “queer” to describe themselves as there is no other commonly understood word that can accurately describe or reflect the experiences of many non-binary people. Additionally, “queer” is an important term for those who know that they are not straight or cisgender but either don’t know how or are not comfortable describing their gender and orientation.

Many TERFs and “gender critical” people do not like the term “queer”, because it is too inclusive of the types of people (trans and non-binary people) that they most want to exclude. They will often try to shut down conversations in which queer people talk about their experiences and issues by saying “queer is a slur”, but this should be recognized as a tactic designed to encourage intra-community fighting and further the erasure of trans and non-





# Pronouns

If someone tells you their correct pronouns, always use those pronouns to refer to them, even (and especially!) when they're not around. And if someone uses incorrect pronouns to refer to someone, briefly correct them. ("Aspen uses they"). Further, always use those pronouns, even if you are telling a story about a trans person from before they changed their name and/or pronouns.

However, respecting someone's pronouns goes beyond using the correct pronouns when someone tells you which pronouns they use. Respect for pronouns also requires not making assumptions about someone's gender identity based on how they look.

For trans and non-binary people, getting misgendered is a painful reminder that many people do not perceive them the way they want to be perceived. Additionally, it is extremely anxiety-provoking, as intentional misgendering can sometimes be a warning for an escalation to emotional or physical violence. So how can you respect the pronouns of someone you don't know?

1. Never gender strangers! If you need to talk about someone whose gender you don't know, use "they" or "that person". If you need descriptors, stick to non-gendered aspects of their appearance, like "that tall person in the red hat" or "that older person with the purple scarf".
2. If you are having a short interaction with someone, as in providing customer service to someone, avoid gendered forms of address like "sir" or "ma'am". If you need to hand off an interaction to someone else, say that "this person" needs assistance rather than "this gentleman" or "this lady".
3. Lastly, if you are addressing a group of people, avoid using terms that have a blanket

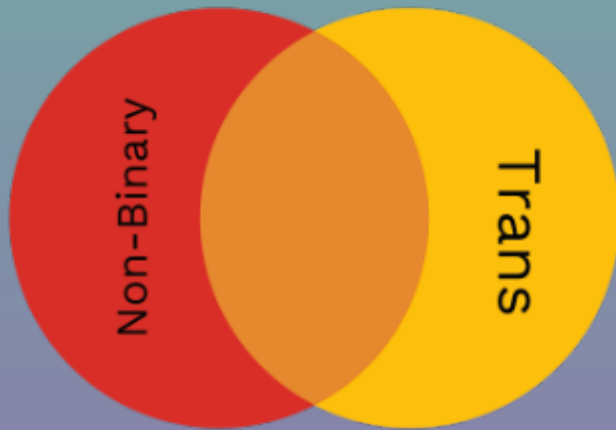
## *Singular "they"*

People who are uncomfortable using non-gendered language to refer to someone often complain that singular "they" is cumbersome or inconvenient. However, these complaints overlook the fact that we use singular "they" all the time without thinking about it, such as: "someone left their cell phone on the table" "we'll hang on to it in case they come back for it."

There are also those who complain that singular "they" is grammatically incorrect. However, use of singular "they" dates back to the 1300s and was used by celebrated writers like William Shakespeare and Emily Dickenson. Further, use of singular "they" goes back much further than singular "you"; "you" didn't replace "thee", "thy", and "thou" until the late 1600s.

Often, however, people who seriously argue against use of singular they have a deeper discomfort with trans and non-binary people.

# Non-binary v. Trans



“Non-binary” as a gender identity has only started to gain visibility in the last ten years. Often, people who are just learning about gender beyond the binary ask “what is the difference between non-binary and transgender?”. Because “non-binary” is a very broad umbrella term for anyone with a gender that isn’t man or woman, we can make some broad statements about this topic, but there is no one definition that is true for everyone.

1. Non-binary and transgender are two identities with large areas of overlap, but not all non-binary people identify as transgender and many trans people do not identify as non-binary. Further, some non-binary people would say that they are neither transgender nor cisgender.
2. Non-binary people may identify as trans because no one is assigned non-binary at birth and coming out as non-binary often comes with a degree of social transition or a shift in one’s gender expression.
3. You do not have to have dysphoria to be trans (not all trans people do), but **some non-binary people experience dysphoria and choose to pursue some aspects of medical transition. Many of those people identify as both non-binary and transgender.**

## *Additional things to know*

1. *Non-binary isn’t “a new thing”* invented on “Tumblr” or “TikTok”. The North American gender binary is a product of white supremacist colonialism, and cultures around the world have had traditions of non-binary gender for thousands of years, of which Two-Spirit Indigenous Canadians are just one example. Additional examples include *Hijra* (Indian), *X-Gender* (Japanese), and *Māhū* (Polynesian).
2. *You don’t have to look androgynous to be non-binary.* Non-binary people can be AFAB, AMAB, or Intersex, and can have any gender expression imaginable.
3. *Non-binary or nonbinary?* Both are correct.







## ***Two-Spirit / 2-Spirit***

Two-Spirit is an umbrella term referring to a constellation of nation-specific traditions of gender and sexuality common to many Indigenous peoples. According to the Two-Spirit Society of Denver:

*“Two-Spirit refers to another gender role believed to be common among most, if not all, first peoples of Turtle Island (North America), one that had a proper and accepted place within native societies. This acceptance was rooted in the spiritual teachings that say all life is sacred.”*

This term was introduced as a way for Indigenous people to find common ground and to educate people about modern applications of traditional teachings. Among nations that have Two-Spirit traditions, Two-Spirit people have historically been held in high regard and are often considered to have sacred and specific roles.

The term Two-Spirit is a recognition that European colonizers enforced the use of language and a culture that was homophobic, binary-centric, and misogynistic. The growth of Two-Spirit as an identity represents a reclamation of pre-colonial traditions of gender and sexuality.

Both because of the special and sometimes sacred role of Two-Spirit people in Indigenous nations and because of the role settler-descended people have played in stripping Indigenous people of their language, customs, and culture, it is never appropriate for a non-Indigenous person to describe themselves as Two-Spirit.

# Bi(sexual) / Pan(sexual)

Bisexual gained popularity as a label in the 80s and 90s as a way for people who felt attraction to multiple genders to describe their experiences. Pansexual is a relatively newer label growing in popularity that describes attraction to multiple genders. While there are areas where these identities overlap, there are also some important differences.

**Bisexual:** In the 80s and 90s, Bisexual meant someone who was attracted to men and women. However, with growing recognition of non-binary people, the definition has shifted to mean either “attraction to my own gender and another gender” or “attraction to some but definitely not all genders”.

**Pansexual:** Pansexual originated as a term that wasn’t oriented in binary gender. While it originally meant “attraction to people of all genders”, it is now more commonly used to mean “attraction regardless of gender”.

## *Bisexual versus Pansexual*

While many Bisexual and Pansexual people are comfortable with these terms coexisting, there are also some who actively campaign against the “other” term. Some Pansexual people argue that Bisexual is a transphobic orientation that erases non-binary people, and that Pansexual is a more inclusive label for attraction to multiple genders. While some Bisexual people argue that Pansexual people are yet another group trying to erase Bisexuality as a valid identity and accuse Pansexual people of wanting to impose their identity on others.

**However.** Bisexual people are not inherently transphobic, and indeed many Bisexual people are themselves trans and/or non-binary. And Pansexual people are not inherently trying to erase Bisexual people by using a different label to describe themselves and their experiences. People should be free to describe themselves using the term that feels most genuine and comfortable for them.



## ***Bi and pan***

With the growing awareness of Asexuality, there are a growing number of people who experience non-sexual attraction to multiple genders who use either Bi or Pan to describe themselves. Ace people who experience romantic attraction may also refer to themselves as Biromantic or Panromantic.

# TERFs / “Gender critical feminists”

TERF stands for Trans Exclusive Radical Feminist, and refers to people calling themselves feminist who advocate for the exclusion of trans women from women’s spaces, advocate against transgender rights legislation, and promote hatred of trans people. While some TERFs own the label, others prefer to be called “gender critical”.

***TERF is not a slur.*** It’s an accurate description of a group of people with ***radical ideals*** who ***describe themselves as feminist*** and ***focus on the exclusion of trans people.***

Some have argued that conceding them the label of “feminist” is inaccurate, since feminism is focused on seeking equity for people of all marginalized genders. Alternative labels that have been suggested but not gained popular traction include: TEP (Trans Exclusive Person) and FART (Feminism-Appropriating Radical Transphobe).



# “Gender Critical” Ideology

## ***Core belief***

1. *There are only two biological sexes.*
2. *There are only two binary genders.*
3. *Only gender assigned at birth is real.*
4. *Trans people are violent sexual predators.*
5. *Affirming trans rights requires harming women.*

## ***Why it's wrong***

1. Biology is much more complex. It is more accurate to say that biological sex is determined by a constellation of factors that may or may not align with being assigned male or female. (See additional reading)
2. The heterosexist gender binary is a construct of white supremacist colonialism. Many non-white cultures have had vibrant non-binary / third gender traditions for thousands of years.
3. No it isn't.
4. No they're not.
5. No it doesn't.

## ***Extensions of those core beliefs:***

- *Cisgender men claim to be trans in order to assault women*
- *Trans bodies are disgusting, and women with penises especially are disgusting*
- *Being trans is a cult: Trans people are harming children by indoctrinating them, especially online and esp Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok*
- *Trans men and AFAB non-binary people are being “stolen” from women’s spaces and are “erasing” women. But also, trans men are “traitors” for “escaping” sexism and “choosing” patriarchy*
- *The trans suicide crisis is overstated and gender dysphoria is not as distressing as trans activists want you to believe*
- *There is no epidemic of violence against trans women*



# Dogwhistle Terminology

Just as dog whistles make sounds that are audible to dogs but are too high for human ears to detect, a dog whistle term or phrase is one that uses coded language to convey an ideological message to those “in the know” while sounding reasonable or unexceptional to everyone else. As with any hate-based movements, TERFs often use dog whistles to cloak their hatred of trans people in language designed to make their concerns sound reasonable.

***Gender critical***: a term preferred by many TERFs. However, their own definition of the gender critical movement as one “opposed to the ideology put forth by modern trans activists, especially the theory of gender identity or the medical affirmation model of treating gender dysphoria” shows that their only agenda is hatred of trans people.

***Natal woman / biological woman / the sexed body***: TERFs refuse to use the term cisgender, because they believe they are normal and trans people are abnormal.

***Sex is real / the importance of biological sex / woman as a biological class***: arguments that inaccurately represent the science of human biology to argue for the exclusion of trans women.

***Trans-identified / you can identify as anything you like***: phrases designed to sound welcoming while referencing their belief that trans gender identity is a dangerous delusion.

***Protect (women’s spaces / single-sex spaces / single-gender spaces)***: appeals to the common practice of establishing safe spaces for marginalized groups while also referencing the belief that trans women are violent sexual predators

***Woman is not a costume***: cloaks transphobia in the language of social justice by echoing the “culture is not a costume” campaign against racist Halloween costumes.

***Rapid onset gender dysphoria***: gives a medical-sounding name to the idea that trans people are harming children by indoctrinating them with “trans ideology” online.

***LGB or GLB / Same-sex attracted***: Uses slight variations on familiar terminology to sound LGBTQ2+ inclusive while tacitly referencing their rejection of trans and non-binary people.

***Trans activists / trans lobby***: a way to describe any trans person who objects to advocacy against the rights of trans people as a radical or extremist.

***Pro-Lesbian / Pro-woman***: a way to describe dedication to campaigning against the human rights of trans people as a positive form of activism.

**Queer is a slur**: an appeal to the violent origin of the term queer that ignores its reclamation as a way to silence non-binary people and people whose orientations can’t be described using other existing language. This phrase is used to police people who self-describe as queer when they talk about their lived experience of gender and sexuality.

# TERF Activism

*It's important to talk about TERF / "gender critical" activism, because the current hate-based campaigns against trans rights are recycling the rhetoric and tactics of campaigns against marriage equality and the decriminalization of homosexuality. What's at stake are the rights and lives of transgender people.*

*At the time of writing this guide (March 2021), there are more than 100 anti-trans bills on state legislative agendas in the United States, making it a record year for introduction of anti-trans legislation. Because these campaigns have spillover effects into other countries, here are some notable issues to be aware of include:*

## **Efforts to Protect Legal LGBTQ2+ Discrimination**

Gender identity and gender expression are protected grounds for discrimination in Canada, but half of Canadian provinces do not have bills outlawing conversion therapy<sup>1</sup>.

Looking outside of Canada, in addition to the current spate of anti-trans bills up for consideration, discrimination against trans people is still legal in the majority of states<sup>2</sup>.

In the UK, plans to drop the requirement for a medical diagnosis to change your gender on official documents were abandoned after transphobic backlash<sup>3</sup>. This is especially concerning given that transition-related care can take 3 or more years to access in the UK<sup>4</sup>.

In Australia, Liberal MP Kevin Andrews claimed in February of 2021 that a draft bill allowing for religious discrimination against LGBTQ2+ people was set to be presented before parliament "soon"<sup>5</sup>.

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1. [No Conversion Canada](#)
  2. [Transgender Law Center](#)
  3. [The Guardian](#), 2020
  4. [BBC](#), 2020
  5. [Qnews](#), 2020
  6. [UCLA](#), 2018
  7. [CNN](#), 2021
  8. [ESPN](#), 2019
  9. [HRC](#)
  10. [LGBT Stonewall Study Report](#), 2021
  11. [Canada Research Chairs](#), 2019
  12. [Katelyn Burns for Them.](#), 2018
  13. [BBC](#), 2019
  14. [NBC News](#), 2020



## ***Bathroom Bills / Sports Bills***

Bathroom bills are laws or statutes that restrict access to public toilets by sex assigned at birth in order to force transgender people to use bathrooms designated for their “true gender” or not at all. Proponents of these bills argue that they are necessary for the protection of women and children. Bathroom bills do not make bathrooms safer for cisgender people, and they do make bathrooms less safe for gender non-conforming cisgender people<sup>6</sup>.

In 2021, some states also started passing legislation banning trans children from playing on sports teams according to their true gender. Tennessee, Mississippi, and Arkansas were the first three states to pass such bills<sup>7</sup>, although such laws are being considered in several more states. Proponents say the bills are necessary to protect womens’ sports, but there are very few cases of trans girls playing womens’ sports. Additionally, there has been at least one case (Mack Beggs, Texas) of a transgender boy being forced to compete as a girl<sup>8</sup>, which is counterproductive to the stated goal of this type of legislation.

Ultimately, the goal of bathroom and sports bills is to legislate trans people out of public life by making it too unsafe for them to exist in public spaces.

## ***Conversion “therapy”***

(Also known as SOGIECE - Sexual orientation and gender identity and expression change efforts) There is no credible scientific evidence that you can change a person’s orientation or gender<sup>9</sup> and a wealth of evidence that conversion “therapy” has devastating long term effects on those who go through it. In a recent study, nearly half (47%) of trans and non-binary people who experienced conversion “therapy” attempted suicide, compared to 26% of conversion “therapy” survivors overall<sup>10</sup>.

In 2019, it was estimated that 698,000 LGBTQ2+ adults in Canada had experienced conversion therapy, including 350,000 who had experienced it as adolescents<sup>11</sup>.

In Canada, it was estimated in 2019 that more than 20,000 Canadians have experienced conversion therapy. However, the real figure is likely much higher, as conversion therapy has never been formally tracked or criminalized in Canada.

## ***J.K. Rowling***

J.K. Rowling has had problems with liking and following popular transphobes online as far back as 2018<sup>12</sup>. Prior to 2019, she blamed likes of transphobic tweets on things like “holding her phone in correctly”, but in December of 2019 she tweeted her support for Maya Forstater who had been fired for transphobic tweets. Forstater lost her case suing her employer for declining to renew her contract because the judge ruled that her views were “not worthy of respect in a democratic society”. But J.K. Rowling tweeted #IStandWithMaya, saying “sex is real”<sup>13</sup>.

Rowling doubled down on her transphobia over the next several months, and in June 2020 published a 3000+ word essay defending her views by saying that she was “worried” about the “new trans activism” and that she needed to “speak up”. Thirteen days later, Republican Senator James Lankford quoted her essay while blocking a vote on an LGBTQ2+ civil rights bill<sup>14</sup>.





# 301 Topics



***Writing stories about trans,  
non-binary, Bi, and Pan  
people***





## TITLE IMAGE

*Suspendisse fermentum faucibus felis. Praesent pharetra. In consequat felis in tellus. In mi enim, rhoncus ullamcorper, sagittis at, placerat eget, mauris. Suspendisse auctor erat at ipsum. Aliquam vitae tortor id massa tincidunt eleifend.*

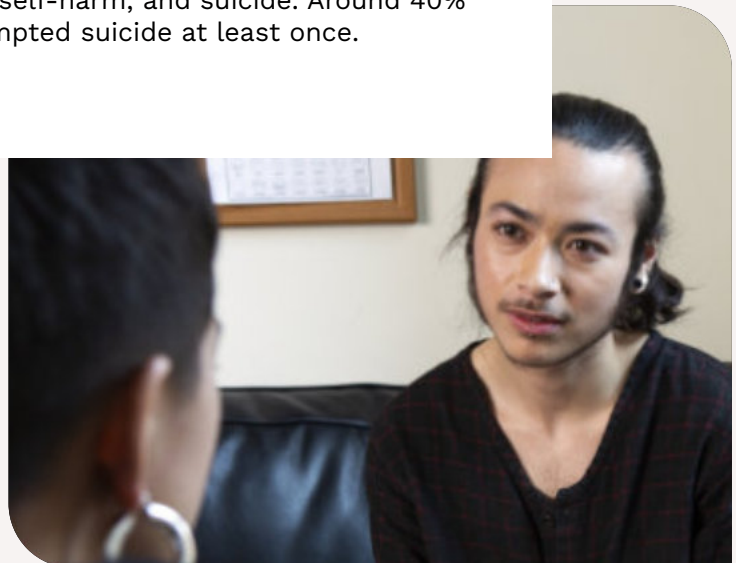
## Choose your stories with care

The stories you choose to tell are just as important as the language you use to tell those stories. When rhetoric used by a popular transphobic media figure is quoted in blocking legal protections for LGBTQ2+ people, it only highlights the responsibility of writers, bloggers, and journalists to not perpetuate harm by choosing how they frame stories with care.

Trans, non-binary, Bi, and Pan people experience some of the most severe effects of minority stress as LGBTQ2+ people. Suicide rates are the highest for trans and non-binary people, but Bi and Pan people still experience mental health problems and attempt suicide at much higher rates than Gay men and Lesbians. As such, here is some additional guidance on how to respectfully write about people from those particularly marginalized segments of the LGBTQ2+ population.

## ***Trans and non-binary issues***

- ***Access to Healthcare and Medical Discrimination***  
Trans people face tremendous difficulties in accessing transition-related care. There are many barriers, such as long wait times to see specialists or to receive funding for gender confirming surgeries. Additionally, many healthcare providers are ignorant of how to provide LGBTQ2+ inclusive care. This lack of knowledge leads to high rates of medical discrimination and hospital avoidance.
- ***Housing and Homelessness***  
It's estimated that 25-40% of the 40,000 homeless youth in Canada are LGBTQ2+ and conflict over their orientation or gender identity is the primary reason youth become homeless. However, there are no youth homelessness shelters for trans and non-binary youth, and existing shelters only offer binary-gendered spaces.
- ***Employment and Workplace Discrimination***  
Trans people are significantly more likely than cisgender people to have low income and are much more likely to have personal yearly income under \$20,000. Trans people also experience high rates of workplace discrimination as well as structural and systemic barriers that make it difficult for them to find supportive employment.
- ***Violence, Suicide, and Self-Harm***  
Trans people experience higher rates of harassment, violence, and sexual assault, but those who report such incidents to the police are less likely than cisgender people to have their complaints resolved. Trans people also experience extremely high levels of depression, self-harm, and suicide. Around 40% of trans people have attempted suicide at least once.





## Dos and don'ts

***DO Tell trans stories that aren't about coming out:*** coming out isn't the end of a trans person's struggles. Trans people face many issues like high rates of homelessness, suicide and self-harm, discrimination, and violence.

***DON'T focus on medical transition:*** unless the story is about the barriers trans people face in accessing transition-related care, don't write about the details of someone's medical transition. Just as it would be inappropriate to describe the genitals of a cisgender source, it's inappropriate to ask questions about a trans person's medical procedures.

***DON'T disclose birth names or use old pronouns:*** even when discussing events that happened before someone's transition, it is never appropriate to reveal someone's birth name or pronouns.

***If a source deadnames or misgenders someone in a story, DON'T use that quote without correcting it.***

***DON'T use before & after photos or stereotyped photos:*** Avoid reinforcing stereotypes with the photographs you use for your story. Pre-transition photos are often dysphoric and serve no purpose other than satisfying reader curiosity. Similarly, avoid showing photographs of a trans person performing stereotypically gendered activities, such as doing makeup for a trans woman or shaving for a trans man.

***DO Talk to trans experts about trans stories:*** trans people should always be your primary sources for stories about trans issues. Never write a story about a trans person that only uses cisgender sources.

***DON'T out your sources:*** If a source is not out publicly, never reveal their LGBTQ2+ identity in your story.



# Stories about Bi and Pan people

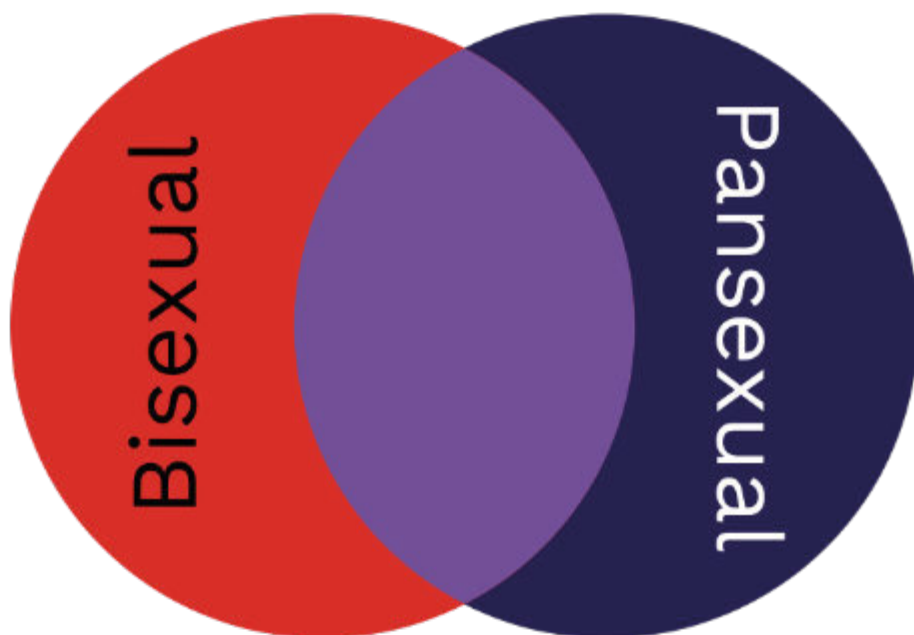
## ***BI / Pan Issues***

- ***Erasure and underrepresentation:*** although representation of gay men and lesbians has slowly improved and increased in recent decades, Bi and Pan people remain largely unrepresented. And when they are represented, they commonly reflect toxic stereotypes about Bi and Pan people.
- ***Less family and social support:*** Bi and Pan people are less likely to be out to their friends and family than gay men or lesbians, and are less likely to have the support of friends and family when they are out.
- ***Mistrust of Bi/Pan people as romantic partners:*** Because of toxic stereotypes, many gay men and lesbians believe that Bi and Pan people aren't "really" queer and refuse to consider them as romantic partners.
- ***Marginalization of Bi/Pan people in LGBTQ2+ spaces:*** Because Bi and Pan people can "pass" for straight, they are told that they are not "queer enough" for LGBTQ2+ spaces,

## ***Dos and Don'ts***

- ***Identify people correctly:*** If someone says they are Bi or Pan, don't identify them as gay, lesbian, or straight. Respect their identity by using the language they use to describe themselves.
- ***Bi/Pan is not a phase:*** Being attracted to multiple genders is not a phase and does not mean that someone is "on their way" to being exclusively attracted to people of their own gender.
- ***Relationship status does not change identity:*** A Bi man in a relationship with another man isn't gay, just as a Pan woman in a relationship with a man isn't straight. Their Bi or Pan identity is an inherent part of them that doesn't change with who they're dating.
- ***Passing is erasure, not privilege:*** Never write about a Bi/Pan person's relationship as "straight-appearing", and never describe a Bi/Pan person as "straight passing". The erasure of Bi and Pan people is emotional violence and is not a privilege.
- ***Bi people are not inherently dishonest:*** one common Bi/Panphobic stereotype is that people attracted to multiple genders can't be trusted, especially as romantic partners. There is nothing about someone's orientation that makes them either more or less trustworthy.
- ***Bi doesn't mean promiscuous:*** another common Bi/Panphobic stereotype is that people attracted to multiple genders are more promiscuous and/or

# What is the difference between Bi and Pan?



Bi and Pan are a venn diagram with a large area of overlap. People can use these terms to mean different things, but most commonly Bi people would say they experience attraction to multiple genders while Pansexual people would say they experience attraction *regardless of gender* or *despite gender*.

Because Pansexual is a comparatively newer term, many older Bisexual people (especially Gen X and above) feel equally comfortable with either Bisexual or Pansexual; Pansexual was not a label that was commonly used fifteen or twenty years ago, and older Bisexual people who feel that Pansexual resonates for them often still feel an emotional attachment to Bisexual as a way of describing themselves. As such, it's not uncommon for older Bisexual people to describe themselves as Bi / Pan. For younger people, it is more common to view the two labels as separate and distinct.

**It's okay for language to shift and evolve over time, and people should always be free to describe themselves using the term that feels most genuine and comfortable for them.**

# Polyam(ory)

Polyam is sometimes suggested as something that should fit under the LGBTQ2+ umbrella. There are strong arguments to be made both for and against including polyam, and the issue isn't straight-forward. So it's important to tread with care.

*Polyamory is the practice of having multiple sexual and/or romantic partners with the consent of everyone involved. While "poly" is the commonly recognized abbreviation for someone who practices polyamory, there has been a shift to the use of "polyam" in order to avoid erasure of Polynesian people who also refer to themselves as "Poly".*

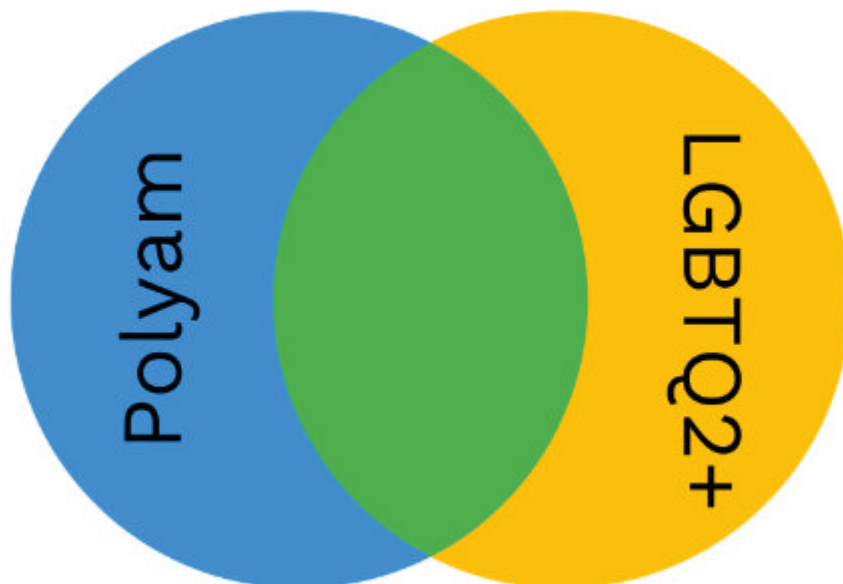
## *In looking at arguments against:*

- As with straight people, some LGBTQ2+ people practice non-monogamy while others are monogamous.
- Straight people can and do practice non-monogamy, and some feel uncomfortable appropriating an identity that they don't feel is theirs.
- Some people who practice non-monogamy see polyamory as a set of behaviours that they choose to engage in that isn't necessarily part of who they are.

## *In looking at arguments for:*

- Some people who practice non-monogamy see polyamory as something inextricable from their LGBTQ2+ identity/orientation. For these people, polyam is another orientation rather than a choice.
- Being open about being polyam carries many of the same risks, in that you can lose your job, your family, and even experience violence. For LGBTQ2+ people who practice polyamory, the risks of marginalization are amplified.
- Polyamory is fundamentally a rejection of patriarchal sexual politics.

Rather than coming down on one particular side of this argument, we recommend simply treading with care. Avoid reductive language, and remember that polyamory isn't necessarily queer and it isn't necessarily an orientation. But for those whose experiences of queerness are inseparable from being poly, the risks they face and marginalizations they experience are greater than those experienced by monogamous LGBTQ2+ people







# Drag

*With the massive popularity of shows like Ru Paul's Drag Race, which has aired 13 seasons and spawned more than 10 spin-off franchises in 7 countries, drag has become the elephant in the room. While drag is a quintessentially queer art form and some drag performers are trans, the visibility of drag performers is not and never should be confused with trans visibility.*

*While Ru Paul's Drag Race has provided gay representation, it has also perpetuated many racist and transphobic stereotypes. People of all genders perform drag, but the show focuses on cisgender gay men. (Some Drag Race contestants later do come out as trans or non-binary; there have only been two contestants who were out as trans at the time of their first season) Additionally, Black contestants are more likely to get "villain edits". Five seasons of the 18 main franchise seasons (Ru Paul's Drag Race and Ru Paul's Drag Race All Stars) have had Black winners, but 3 of those wins happened in just the last year.*

*It is fine to be a Drag Race fan and to enjoy drag performance! But Drag Race fans need to be aware that the show has many problematic elements. So when expressing your love for the show, always remember:*

- Never assume that someone loves Ru Paul's Drag Race because they are LGBTQ2+. Some LGBTQ2+ people, and especially some trans people, find Drag Race hurtful or triggering.*
- The experiences of trans women are not the same as cisgender gay men who dress up and perform as women.*

## Sources

- [Radical Copyeditor: Transgender Style Guide](#)
- [Trans Journalists Association Style Guide](#)
- [Queer Vegan: 12 Most Common Transphobic Dog Whistles](#)
- [GLAAD Media Reference Guide](#)

## Additional Reading

- [Sex Redefined: The Idea of 2 Sexes Is Overly Simplistic](#)
- [Gender and Pronouns in the Workplace](#)
- [A map of gender-diverse cultures](#)
- [No Conversion Canada: What is Conversion Therapy?](#)
- [Conversion Therapy in Canada](#)
- [Transgender Law Center: LGBTQ2+ Equality Map](#)
- [HRC: The Lies And Dangers Of Efforts To Change Sexual Orientation Or Gender Identity](#)
- [No link between trans-inclusive policies and bathroom safety, study finds](#)



Founded as Waterloo Region's first-ever LGBTQ2+ community space, SPECTRUM is an organization that serves, affirms, and supports the well-being of LGBTQ2+ individuals in Waterloo Region and the broader community through peer support, community partnerships, education and training, resources, and events. To learn more about SPECTRUM and the work we do, visit [ourspectrum.com](https://ourspectrum.com) or visit us at

[ourspectrum.com/donate/todonate](https://ourspectrum.com/donate/todonate).

*Written by Ash Kreider for SPECTRUM Waterloo Region, March 2021*