

2SLGBTQ+ Language Card

Language is dynamic, shifting and changing over time. These definitions are not meant to be understood as exhaustive, absolute, exact, or static.

Think of these definitions as approximations that may be used differently by various people and communities. This exercise is a starting place; there are many more terms in existence than we have space for. There are terms specific to diasporic cultures, and Indigenous communities within Canada as well as terms commonly used outside of Canada that we have not included here.

It is important to respect how someone self-identifies and use the language they use to describe themselves.

Queer A term that has been used as an insult, which has been reclaimed and used proudly. For many it also signifies resistance to the idea that there are binary genders and sexualities. Is sometimes used as an umbrella term for the 2SLBGTQ community.

Two-Spirit A Western term used by many Indigenous communities on Turtle Island (Canada & US) to describe Indigenous people with diverse gender identities, expressions and roles, and diverse sexual orientations. Two Spirit people were healers, mediators, and warriors, considered sacred and highly-revered by their communities. One of the devastating impacts of colonization was the theft and attempted erasure of this way of being in Indigenous societies.

Asexual A person who does not experience sexual attraction. Unlike celibacy, which is a choice to abstain from sexual activity, this term refers to an intrinsic part of identity.

Bisexual A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender, though not necessarily at the same time.

Demisexual A person who does not experience sexual attraction unless they form an emotional and/or romantic bond with the person first. This can bond can be formed with any or all genders.

Gay A man who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to men. Can also refer to women, though some women prefer other terms such as 'lesbian' or 'queer.' Sometimes used as an umbrella term for the 2SLBGTQ community.

Lesbian A woman who is emotionally, physically, spiritually and/or sexually attracted to women.

Pansexual An individual who is attracted to and may form relationships with any or all genders.

Gender Identity A person's internal experience of their gender. That is, their sense of being a man, woman, both, neither, and/or somewhere along a spectrum.

Gender Expression How a person expresses or presents their gender. Can include things like dress, voice, make-up, hair, jewelry, etc.

Cisgender Someone who identifies as the sex they were assigned at birth. It is recommended to use this term instead of saying 'bio', 'real', or 'genetic,' as these suggest that trans people's gender identities are less authentic or natural.

Trans Often used as an umbrella terms to capture various identities such as transgender, transsexual, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and more.

Non-binary Someone who identifies outside the gender binary of male/masculine and female/feminine, refers to people who are both, neither, in-between, and/or without reference to male/female, masculine/feminine.

Transgender Someone who does not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth and who may or may not transition socially (name, pronouns, legal gender markers), physically (hair, clothes, binding, tucking etc.), or access medical means of transition (hormones, surgery).

Transsexual A term that was used more frequently in the past to describe those who do not identify with the sex they were assigned at birth and who may or may not access medical means of transition.

Trans feminine An umbrella term to describe trans people who identify on a feminine spectrum.

Trans masculine An umbrella term to describe trans people who identify on a masculine spectrum.

Gender fluid Someone whose gender identity(ies) may shift over time, and/or according to context and situation

Gender non-conforming Societal expectations regarding gender. This term may apply to some (but not all) cisgender people and some (but not all) trans people, including non-binary and genderqueer people.

Intersex An umbrella term used to describe those who are born with reproductive and/or sex characteristics that do not seem to fit within typical medical definitions of 'male' and 'female.'

More 2SLGBTQ+ Language

Heterosexism A system of attitudes, biases, and discrimination in favor of heterosexual sexuality and relationships. The assumption that everyone is, or should be, heterosexual and that heterosexuality is inherently superior to queerness. It also refers to organizational discrimination against people who are not heterosexual, or against behaviours not stereotypically heterosexual.

Cissexism The assumption that all people are cisgender, and that cisgender people are ‘normal’ and trans people are ‘abnormal,’ as well as normative assumptions about bodies (all women have vaginas, someone with a penis is male).

Cisnormative A system of attitudes, bias and discrimination in favour of cisgender people that marginalizes and renders invisible trans people and treats their needs and identities as less important than those of cisgender people, who are considered to exist within social normalcy.

Misgender To refer to someone (especially a trans person) by using a word, like a pronoun or form of address (i.e. sir, ma’am), that does not correctly reflect the gender with which they identify. The act of misgendering can be done intentionally and with malice, or with ignorance; both are considered harmful and can be a source of trauma.

Homophobia Negative attitudes, discrimination, erasure, and violence towards lesbian, bisexual, gay, and queer people at individual and systemic levels. Can also be a form of gender-based discrimination (e.g., feminine men are often presumed gay and discriminated against for not aligning with expectations of what it means to be a heterosexual man).

Biphobia Prejudice and discrimination against bisexual people. Can include erasure of bisexual identity, or the belief that bisexuality is not real, or temporary.

Transphobia Negative attitudes, feelings and an aversion towards trans people. This can take the form of disparaging jokes, rejection, exclusion, denial of services, employment discrimination, name-calling and violence.

Transmisogyny Combinations of transphobia and misogyny directed towards trans women and other transfeminine people at individual and systemic levels.

Misogynoir Combinations of misogyny and racism directed at women and transfeminine people of colour at individual and systemic levels.

Transmisogynoir Combinations of anti-Black racism, transphobia, and misogyny directed specifically at Black trans women and Black transfeminine people at individual and systemic levels.

Gender
binary

Gender
non-conforming

Gender Inclusive Pronouns			
Subject	Object	Pronoun	Pronunciation
she	her	her	as it looks
he	him	his	as it looks
they	them	theirs	as it looks
ze	hir	hirs	zhee, here, heres
ze	zir	zirs	zhee, zhere, zheres
xe	xem	xyr	zhee, zhem, zhere

How to use
Gender Inclusive
pronouns



they/them/theirs

They went downstairs in the morning.
I made **them** breakfast. **They** poured **themselves** coffee.
They enjoyed **their** meal.

ze/zir/zirs

Ze went downstairs in the morning.
I made **hir** breakfast. **Ze** poured **hirs** coffee.
Ze enjoyed **hir** meal.

This work was adapted from the glossaries developed for the Building Competence, Building Capacity: 2SLGBTQ+ Competent Trauma-Informed Care research project, supported through the Public Health Agency of Canada’s Preventing Gender-Based Violence: the Health Perspective Investment.

Card design: Maggie Bain, University of Guelph, Twitter @maggsbain