

# TRANS IDENTITIES AND GENDER DIVERSITY AMONG YOUTH IN CANADA

## CONTEXT

Sexual and gender diversity has become increasingly socially accepted in Canada in recent years. Legislative and scientific advances indicate an increased recognition of the concept of gender identity as well as a gradual deconstruction of the "feminine/masculine" binary system. For example, since 2019, it is possible to choose the gender identifier 'X' on official Canadian documents. However, the realities of trans and gender non conforming youth remain unknown. The purpose of this report is to provide details on the gender diverse youth who responded to the "I stand out!" survey.



A glossary at the end of this report provides useful definitions of the various terms used.

## PORTRAIT

### Gender identity

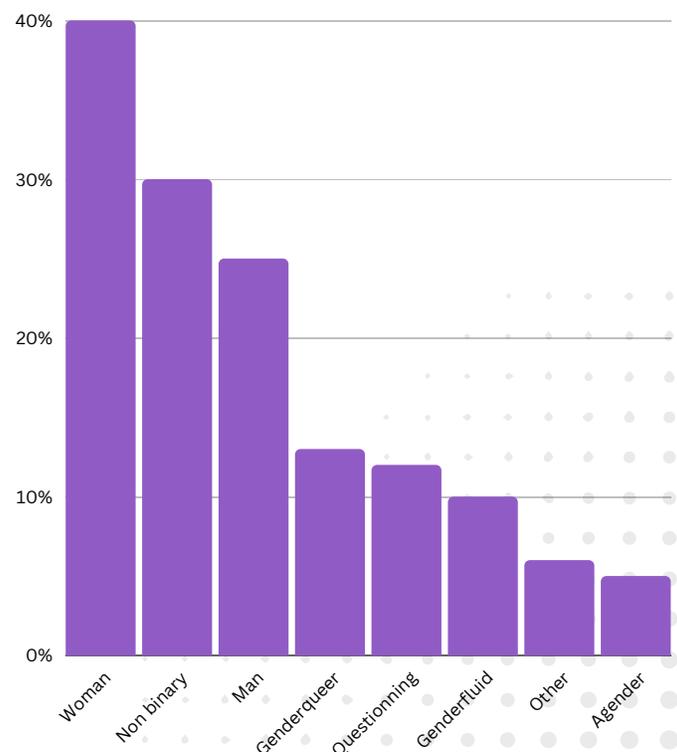
A survey question asked respondents to identify their gender identity from a list of seven options. In order of prevalence, youth described themselves with the following gender identities: woman, non-binary, man, genderqueer, questioning, genderfluid, and agender.

Youth could also write a gender identity not included in the proposed list. Over 100 terms were submitted. The most popular terms were transmasculine, demi-gender (demiboy or demigirl), and xenogender. The terms collected attest to the continual renewal of norms and vocabulary to describe gender.

### The "I stand out!" survey

"I stand out!" was an online survey that aimed to better understand the lived experiences of 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth aged 15-24 in Canada on a wide range of topics such as mental health experiences, substance use, stigma and resilience. It was developed in collaboration with members of the Jeunes chercheur.e.s queers program. Data was collected anonymously between November 2021 and January 2022. A total of 3,668 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth from across the country completed the survey.

Gender identities reported by respondents

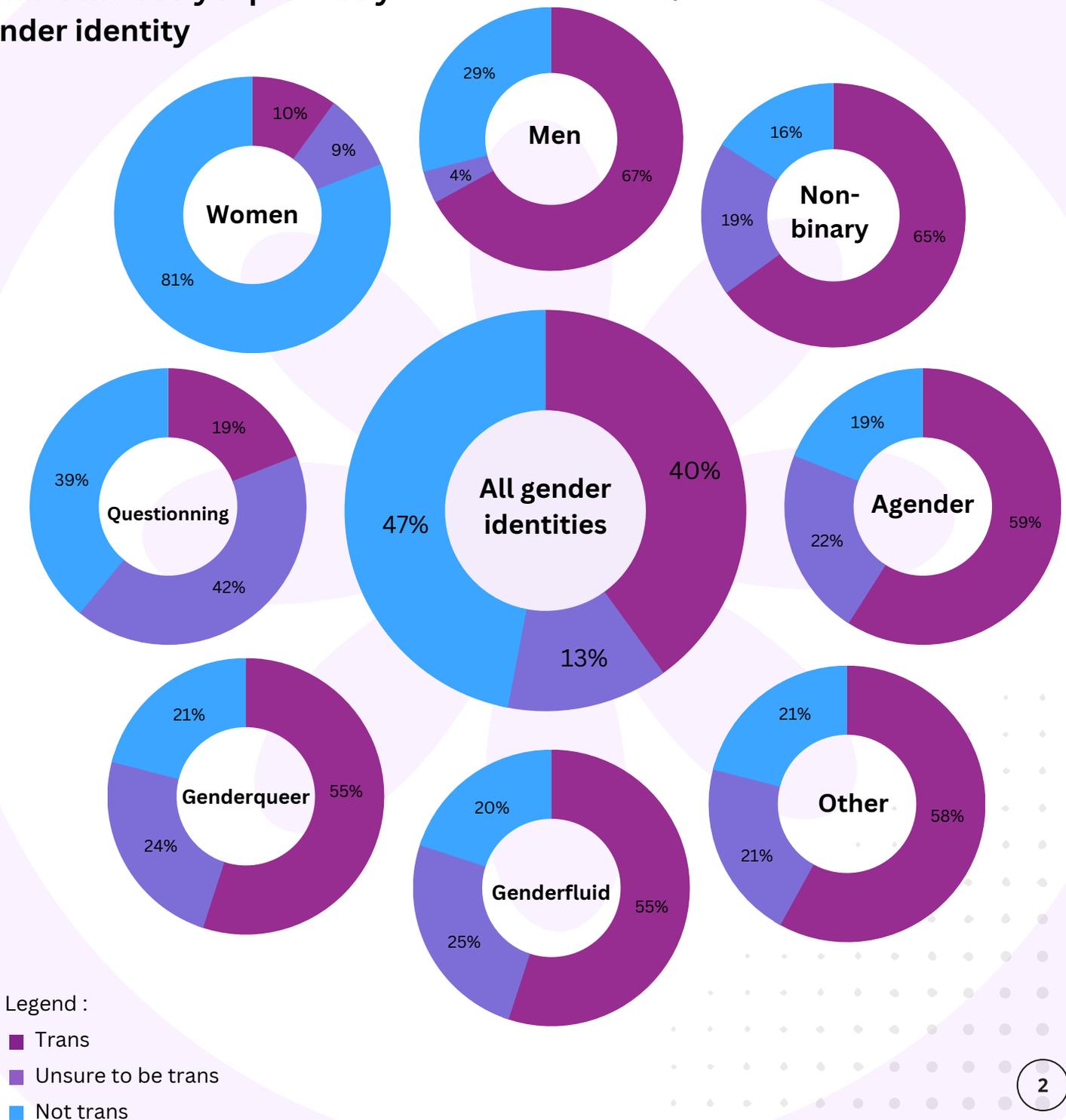


## Gender modality

A question asked participants about their gender modality, "Do you consider yourself to be a transgender or trans person?" This question was preceded by an explanation of the terms "trans" and "transgender." It stated that some people use these terms to describe that their gender identity is different from the sex/gender they were assigned at birth or that they have made or are making a gender transition.

Of all the youth who responded to the question, 40% considered themselves to be trans and 13% were unsure if they were trans. The proportions of "trans / unsure to be trans / not trans » varied across reported gender identities.

### Gender modality reported by gender identity

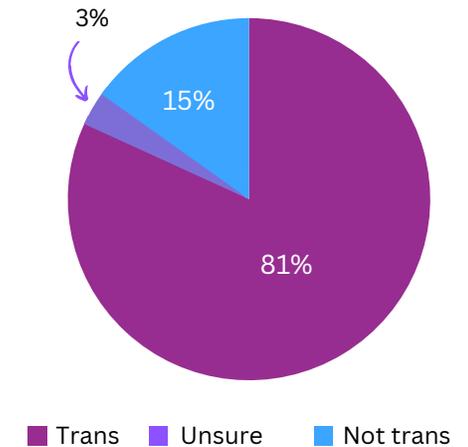


## Intersexuality

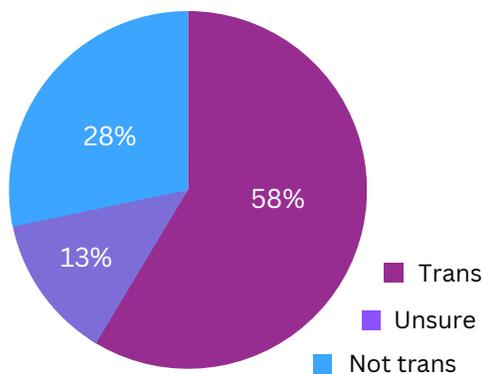
A survey question asked youth about their intersex status: "Were you born with a variation in your sex characteristics?". This question was preceded by an explanation about the term "intersex". It stated that intersex is a generic term used to describe people born with a variation in sex characteristics (including genitalia, gonads, and chromosomes) that do not fit the binary norms of male or female bodies.

Of the youth who responded to the question, 183 (5%) identified themselves as intersex and 271 (8%) were unsure. A large majority of intersex people (81%) also identified as trans.

## Gender modality reported by intersex youth



## Gender modality reported by Two-Spirit youth

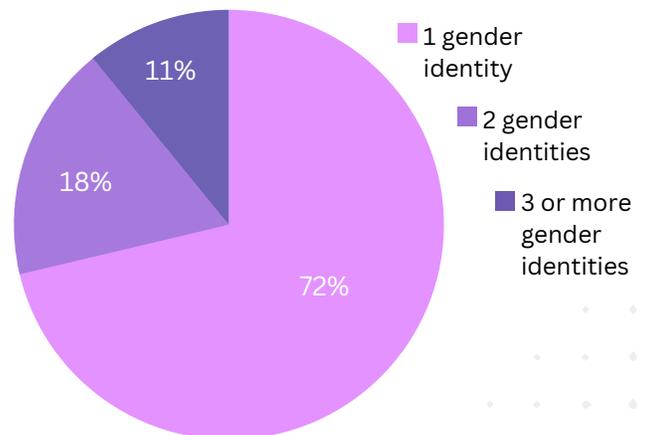


## Two-Spirit Identities

Those who identified themselves as Indigenous were given the opportunity to indicate whether they were Two-Spirit or not.

Among the 327 Indigenous youth who responded to this question, 83 (25%) reported being Two-Spirit and 90 (28%) did not know. A majority of Two-Spirit youth (58%) also identified as trans.

## Number of gender identitie(s) reported by all youth



## Gender identity combinations

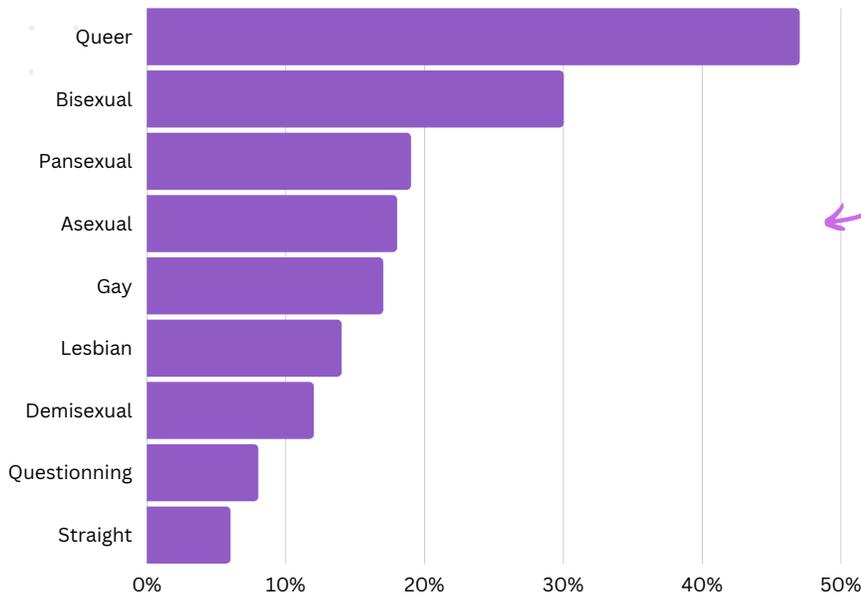
Of the participants who provided information about their gender identity(ies), the majority (72%) reported only one gender identity. A considerable proportion of youth, however, reported two or more gender identities at the same time.

Women and men were the most likely to report a single gender identity (77% and 71%, respectively). More than half of genderqueer, agender, and genderfluid people also identified as non-binary (56%, 55%, and 51%, respectively). Those questioning their gender identity also selected mostly female (39%) or non-binary (34%) identities.

## Sexual orientation

Bisexual and queer were the most common sexual orientation among the respondents. However, compared to other groups, agender people identified less with bisexuality (22% vs. 33% on average) and more with asexuality (38% vs. 16% on average). In addition, a queer sexual orientation was most popular among genderqueer people (61%) and least popular among trans men (28%) and trans women (20%).

### Sexual orientation reported by trans youth



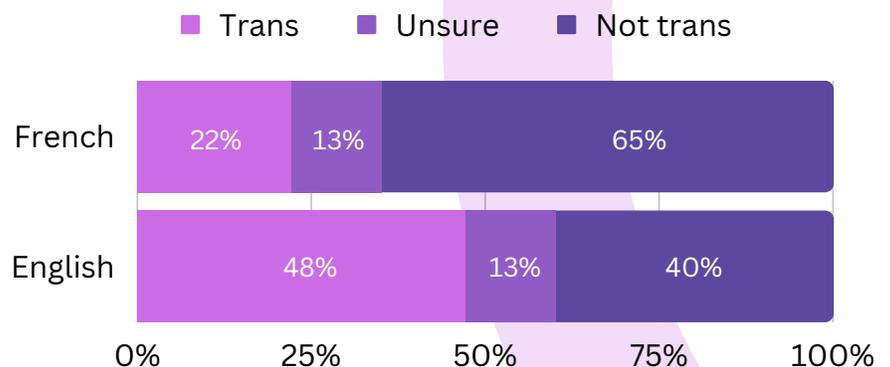
In terms of gender modality, queer and bisexual sexual orientations were most reported by youth identifying as trans.

## Language

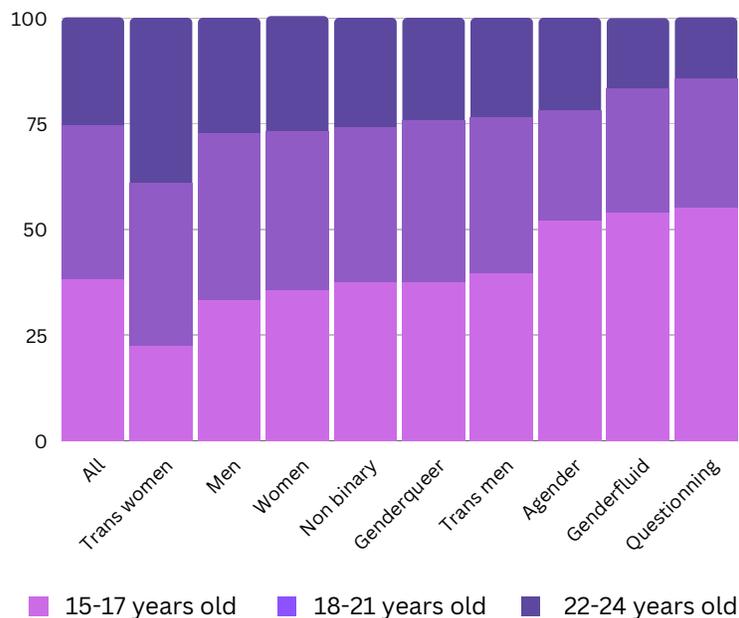
The gender identities "non-binary" and "man" were more commonly reported by youth who responded to the survey in English (34% vs. 21% and 29% vs. 16% respectively). The gender identity "woman" was more commonly reported by youth who completed the survey in French (56% vs. 34%).

In terms of gender modality, youth who responded to the survey in English were more likely to report being trans than youth who responded in French.

### Gender modality reported by all youth by language of survey response



## Gender identities reported by all youth by age group



## Age

In our sample, the age groups 15-17 and 18-21 accounted for 40% and 37% of respondents, respectively. The age demographics with the fewer respondents was the 22-24 year olds (26%).

Trans women were overrepresented among the oldest respondents, those aged 18-21 and 22-24. The proportion of respondents identifying as man, woman (all gender modalities), non-binary, or genderqueer followed the general trend. Finally, younger respondents were more likely to use the terms genderfluid or agender or to question their gender identity.

## Why this matters

The data presented in this report highlights how diverse the realities of 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth are in terms of gender identity and modality. For example, a considerable proportion of respondents identified with two or more gender identities which inform us about the flexibility and fluidity of gendered experiences among youth. Taking into account the diversity of gendered experiences among 2S/LGBTQIA+ youth is critical in developing appropriate services, programs and policies for this population. Decision-makers, health professionals, family members of 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals, and the general public have the power and responsibility to learn about these issues in order to help create safe, inclusive, and fulfilling spaces for everyone.

While we recognize that representing the complexity of gendered experiences with survey data can be tricky, we are hopeful that this report will stimulate reflexions on gender diversity.

## For more information

Qollab : [qollab@espum.umontreal.ca](mailto:qollab@espum.umontreal.ca)  
 Élie Tremblay : [elie.tremblay@umontreal.ca](mailto:elie.tremblay@umontreal.ca)  
 Guillaume Tardif : [tardif.guillaume@courrier.uqam.ca](mailto:tardif.guillaume@courrier.uqam.ca)

## What we need to do about it

Since most of the prejudice and discrimination against 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals stems from a lack of knowledge of their realities, it is important to make these experiences known. To put an end to the exclusion of 2S/LGBTQIA+ people, it is critical to learn about their history, understand the vocabulary they use to define themselves and to listen to their experiences.

To quote this report : Tardif, G., Tremblay, E., Rhanim, A., Pozzo Di Borgo, A. et Ferlatte, O. (2022). Trans identities and gender diversity among youth in Canada, Qollab.



## APPENDIX

### Glossary of terms

The definitions in the glossary below are taken from Drouin's (2022) "Des mots pour exister : nommer les identités, les familles et les réalités LGBT" (translation was done by Qollab's team). These definitions serve to inform readers on the terminology used throughout this report. Because the realities of 2S/LGBTQIA+ people are changing and evolving, the proposed definitions should be interpreted as indicative only; individuals may adopt different definitions (in whole or in part) than those that are present here.

**Gender modality** : «... refers to the relationship between a person's gender identity and the gender identity assigned to them at birth. When related to gender identity, the words cis and trans are gender modalities».

- **Cis or cisgender person** : «...refers to a person who has the same gender identity as assigned at birth ».
- **Trans or transgender person**: «...refers to a person who has a gender identity different from that assigned at birth ».

**Gender identity** : «...refers to the intimate, profound and personal sense of belonging to a gendered social group (...) A person's gender identity is independent of his or her sex/gender assigned at birth, gender expression, sexual orientation...»

- **Agender** : «...refers to a person who does not identify with any gender or whose gender identity has no specific meaning ».
- **Demi-gender**
  - **Demi-boy** : «...refers to a person who partially identifies as a man/boy ».
  - **Demi-girl** : «...refers to a person who partially identifies as a woman/girl ».
- **Genderfluid** : «...refers to a person whose gender identity changes over time or varies with context».
- **Genderqueer** : «...refers to a person who identify as queer in terms of gender identity. This gender identity can have a political dimension and is used by people who do not conform to binary gender norms ».
- **Non binary** : «...refers to a person who does not identify exclusively as woman or man ».
- **Transfeminine person** : «...refers to a trans person who is assigned a man at birth and who identifies (...) with femininity [in whole or in part] ».
- **Transmasculine person** : «...refers to a trans person who is assigned a woman at birth and who identifies (...) with masculinity [in whole or in part] ».
- **Xenogender** : «...refers to a person who defines their gender outside of all concepts of masculinity or femininity while not being genderless or gender neutral ».

**Sexual identity** : «...refers to belonging to a sex category (intersex, male, female, etc.). As an identity dimension, a person's identity may differ from his or her anatomical sex or sex assigned at birth... [Gender identity refers to] how [the person] develops a sense of belonging to a category of people based on a common experiential experience... in relation to how his or her body is gendered ».

- **Intersex person** : «...refers to a person born with primary and/or secondary sex characteristics that do not fit into binary, normative medical categories of what is considered "male" or "female" and may be apparent at birth, become apparent at puberty, or never be visible...»

**Sexual orientation** : «...refers to the physical and sexual attraction or lack thereof that a person feels towards other people, regardless of their gender ».

- **Lesbian** : «...refers to an identity, political or otherwise, adopted by some women and non-binary people and constructed from a sexual and/or romantic attraction to other women ».
- **Gay** : «...most often refers to a man who is sexually attracted to other men».
- **Bisexual** : « in a gender binary perspective, (...) refers to a person who feels attraction to people of both genders (male/female). However, many bisexual people define their physical and sexual attraction outside of the binary model ».
- **Queer** : « The word queer does not have a unique and fixed definition. It takes its meaning in its strategic and contextual opposition to the different norms in force in a society ».

### Indigenous realities

- **Two-spirit**: «...refers to identities that are social, cultural and spiritual in nature and that relates to the plurality of Indigenous sexual orientations and traditional gender identities. Two-spirit identities belong to First Nations, Inuit and Métis people and communities».

Drouin, M.-P., & Tadros, K. (2022). *Des mots pour exister : nommer les identités, les familles et les réalités LGBT*. Coalition des familles LGBT.