
Creating LGBTQ2S Inclusive, Affirming, and Safe PiT Counts

Dr. Alex Abramovich (2018)



camh

This resource focuses on collecting gender identity and sexual orientation data through Point-in-Time Counts, and is meant to support communities conduct counts that are LGBTQ2S inclusive, competent, and affirming. For more information about conducting a Point-in-Time Count, refer to the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness' Point-in-Time Count Toolkit.

Why is this important?

There is a significant need for data that can help us better understand and address homelessness among the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and 2-Spirit (LGBTQ2S) population. The second Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Coordinated Point-in-Time (PiT) Count, Everyone Counts 2018 marks significant progress towards that objective. For the first time, we will have national-level data on the percentage of LGBTQ2S people experiencing homelessness.

The 2018 Coordinated Count was held in March and April 2018, with over 60 communities participating. The primary purpose of the PiT Count is to enumerate the number of people experiencing homelessness across Canada and to better understand who is experiencing homelessness and what their needs are, as well as to help communities measure their progress in reducing homelessness.

As per the [Guide To PiT Counts](#) in Canada, all communities participating in the 2018 Coordinated Count were required to survey people experiencing homelessness in their community, using the Core Screening Questions. The Core Screening questions cover information such as demographics, pathways into homelessness and service needs. These standardized questions allow for better data comparison between communities, but more importantly, national-level analysis.¹

Since the first Coordinated Count in 2016, HPS and the [National PiT Count Working Group](#) have made improvements to the Core Questions. This year, all participating communities were required to include questions about sexual orientation and gender identity. Communities participating in the [Ontario Service Manager Enumeration](#) were also required to collect information on sexual orientation and gender identity.

About the Core Questions on sexual orientation and gender identity

These questions were developed in consultation with the National PiT Count Working Group, the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, and Dr. Alex Abramovich. For more information, refer to the [HPS Guide to PiT Counts in Canada](#).

What gender do you identify with? [Show list]

- ▶ Male/Man
- ▶ Female/Woman
- ▶ Two Spirit
- ▶ Trans Male/Trans Man
- ▶ Trans Female/Trans Woman
- ▶ Genderqueer/Gender Non-Conforming
- ▶ Not listed: [insert answer]
- ▶ Don't know
- ▶ Decline to answer

How do you describe your sexual orientation, for example straight, gay, lesbian? [Show list]

- ▶ Straight/Heterosexual
- ▶ Gay
- ▶ Lesbian
- ▶ Bisexual
- ▶ Two Spirit
- ▶ Questioning
- ▶ Queer
- ▶ Not listed: [insert answer]
- ▶ Don't know
- ▶ Decline to answer

Improved data collection will help inform the scope of the problem, which we still do not fully understand nationally. [LGBTQ2S people are more likely](#) to experience [homelessness, poverty, discrimination, and stigma](#), leading to high rates and increased risk of [mental health issues](#), including anxiety, depression, suicide, substance use, and physical and sexual exploitation. While [research](#) in this area has expanded in recent years, still LGBTQ2S people are frequently not included or considered in program design, survey and research tools, and there continues to be minimal investigation into these issues (e.g. LGBTQ2S youth and young adult homelessness in rural communities).

Historically, only a handful of communities have included sexual orientation and gender identity questions with a diverse and inclusive range of identities, on their PiT Count surveys. Further, survey design errors, such as grouping transgender people under the label sexual minority, have made it difficult to differentiate between gender identity and sexual orientation. While gender identity and sexual orientation overlap, they are not the same. This underscores the importance of careful survey design and consultation with people who identify as LGBTQ2S.

The changes to the 2018 Coordinated Count methodology are significant. People need to see themselves reflected in the questions that are asked. When we don't ask inclusive questions, we erase people. There are hazards associated with not asking inclusive questions, including that we continue to underestimate the prevalence of LGBTQ2S people experiencing homelessness.

As a result, it becomes increasingly difficult to confirm crucial characteristics of this population and to secure necessary increases in funding, or to build a policy case for the delivery of more targeted services. By including sexual orientation and gender identity questions in our enumeration efforts, we will build a more accurate snapshot of who is experiencing homelessness and accessing services across Canada, leading to new and informative data on an under researched issue. Further, communities can use this data at a local level to improve systems of care for LGBTQ2S people experiencing homelessness.

Sexual orientation and gender identity questions are essential because they represent important aspects of people's lives and in many cases they are directly linked to people's pathways into and out of homelessness. People have intersectional identities, which must be considered and included in PiT counts and in every attempt to understand and end homelessness

It takes months for communities to prepare for counts, by recruiting and training volunteers, formalizing plans for the day of the count, and building partnerships. Building partnerships and engaging community members and key organizations is a fundamental component of preparing for the count. Community engagement and partnerships help participating communities raise awareness, obtain feedback, and build community support.

Participating communities are highly encouraged to prioritize populations that are disproportionately represented amongst those experiencing homelessness, including Indigenous Peoples, youth and the LGBTQ2S population. Accurate data on the prevalence of LGBTQ2S youth and adult homelessness in Canada are lacking for numerous reasons, including challenges collecting this data. It has been known for over two decades that LGBTQ2S youth are overrepresented amongst the homeless youth population across Canada, making up 25-40% of youth experiencing homelessness, while approximately only 5-10% of the overall youth population identifies as LGBTQ2S. It is well documented that although LGBTQ2S youth are overrepresented in the homeless youth population, they are underrepresented in housing programs and shelters, due to widespread homophobia and transphobia, discrimination, violence, and stigma, adding to the difficulties measuring prevalence rates.

Some LGBTQ2S-identifying individuals may be reluctant to participate in counts, due to safety issues, discrimination, and stigma. Fortunately, by building strong partnerships with LGBTQ2S organizations, PiT Count Coordinators can create an environment where LGBTQ2S people experiencing homelessness feel safe and encouraged to participate.



Locating LGBTQ2S Partners in your Community

There are different ways to locate LGBTQ2S partners in your community and different types of partnerships. Like many population-based services, LGBTQ2S community centres and organizations often operate out of larger cities. Therefore, not all participating communities will have access to LGBTQ2S organizations; however, the communities that do are strongly encouraged to partner with them.

There are other partnership options for communities that do not have access to LGBTQ2S-specific agencies. Some of these options include: partnering with agencies that are known to be LGBTQ2S competent, inclusive, and safe (e.g. agencies that LGBTQ2S individuals tend to frequent, or agencies that operate a weekly or bi-weekly program for LGBTQ2S individuals), or partnering with an agency that has openly out LGBTQ2S staff or staff who have expertise in this area. An alternative to partnering with agencies that serve people experiencing homelessness is to partner with individuals. For example, partnering with researchers who have expertise in the area of LGBTQ2S youth and/or adult homelessness, or partnering with people who have lived experience (e.g. LGBTQ2S people who have experienced homelessness in your community).



Working Together to Build an Inclusive Count

It is important to maintain strong partnerships with LGBTQ2S agencies, community leaders, and people with lived experience throughout your count. Consult with your partners on how they can best contribute. Here are some ideas:

Planning

- ▶ Agencies that serve LGBTQ2S youth and/or adults experiencing homelessness can help you recruit people with lived experience to provide feedback on your PiT Count survey; identify outdoor locations, services, and agencies where LGBTQ2S people can be surveyed; and provide input on volunteer training.
- ▶ If you are conducting a Service Count, agencies that serve LGBTQ2S populations may be willing to conduct surveys during the count. This is especially useful if your count focuses on hidden homelessness and/or youth.
- ▶ Encourage your partners to widely circulate your call for volunteers. Including volunteers who openly identify as LGBTQ2S may help respondents feel safer answering questions honestly regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. Volunteers who identify as LGBTQ2S may also be more familiar with the response options provided for these questions.

Implementation

- ▶ Seek input from your partners on how to train volunteers to conduct the survey respectfully and effectively. Volunteer training is a good opportunity to teach volunteers about the unique causes and consequences of LGBTQ2S homelessness and why these questions are so important. Ideally, your LGBTQ2S partners will be willing to lead the training with you.
- ▶ It is recommended that you provide PiT Count participants with resource cards that include a list of services available in your community. Consult with your partners to determine whether there are any LGBTQ2S specific or inclusive and competent programs and services that could be included. If there are no local services available, ask your partners about online resources.

Reporting

- ▶ When reporting the results of your count, it is critical that the correct language and terms are used to describe gender identity and sexual orientation. The language you use must be precise. Ask your partners to review a draft of your PiT Count report, and any other communication materials, to check for accuracy. They may also be able to help you contextualize the results.



Mobilizing Results

- ▶ Use the results of your count to improve your community's response to LGBTQ2S homelessness. Solicit ideas from your partners on how they might be willing to contribute. For example, they may be willing to facilitate LGBTQ2S cultural competency training for agencies in your community working with people experiencing homelessness; or they may be willing to create a working group on LGBTQ2S youth and/or adult homelessness to develop and mobilize community-based solutions.
- ▶ Working with your partners after the count to share and mobilize results can lead to opportunities to collaboratively respond to certain findings. For example, your partners may be willing to respond to the overrepresentation of LGBTQ2S youth experiencing homelessness in your community by opening up a weekly drop-in for LGBTQ2S youth.

Building strong partnerships with LGBTQ2S organizations and/or communities can help maximize response rates, help LGBTQ2S individuals feel safe coming out, and respond to survey questions openly and honestly. Incorporating LGBTQ2S community input and expertise prior, during, and after the PiT Count is also encouraged as a way to create an inclusive and effective count. Engaging community and building LGBTQ2S partnerships communicates your organization's commitment to an LGBTQ2S inclusive, competent, and safe count.

Volunteer Training

PiT count coordinators and volunteers require adequate training in order to collect accurate data and maximize response rates. Training is meant to prepare and support volunteers for an effective PiT count, as well as educate them on issues regarding homelessness. Volunteers are typically trained prior to the day of the count and/or on the day of the count.

It has been recommended that training be no longer than 2 hours and training provided on the evening of the count be no longer than 90 minutes. There is a wide-range of content that can be covered during volunteer training; however, the type of training administered is ultimately up to PiT count coordinators and community partners. More information about volunteer training can be found in the [Point-in-Time Count Toolkit](#).

Partnerships with community organizations and experts are highly recommended for effective training experiences, as well as to reach training goals. It is absolutely essential that volunteers receive appropriate training regarding working with disproportionately represented populations, including LGBTQ2S individuals, Indigenous Peoples, and youth. Coordinators are encouraged to work with community partners to develop training plans and strategies.

It is expected that all volunteers will receive sufficient training regarding asking SOGI questions in a sensitive manner. Volunteers should also have an understanding of why these questions are included, and what the response options mean. A glossary of terms can be found on the [Community Workspace on Homelessness](#), which can be shared with volunteers.

The SOGI questions have been developed to be inclusive and represent a diverse range of identity categories. Respondents are more likely to respond honestly about their sexual orientation and gender identity if they see themselves reflected in the questions and options provided.

Respondents should be able to see themselves reflected in the questions that are asked in PiT counts, so that they feel included and so that we collect accurate data that represents the identities of respondents in each community. However, when we do not provide sufficient identity category options to questions, but rather include options such as “other”, we end up othering and erasing people and we do not collect accurate data. There have been too many missed opportunities to collect inclusive data. This year’s PiT count presents an important and exciting opportunity to collect data that has not been previously collected.

Most LGBTQ2S community centres and organizations offer LGBTQ2S competency training, which can be easily arranged for volunteers prior to the day of the count. This type of training increases awareness and understanding of sexual orientation and gender identity, and provides comprehensive understanding of terminology, barriers and challenges accessing services, and how to ask questions in a sensitive manner.

How to ask SOGI questions in a sensitive manner

Every respondent should be asked the same questions, including the SOGI questions, regardless of whether or not they are perceived by the questioner/volunteer to identify as LGBTQ2S. It is not possible to determine a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity by the way they look, dress, or by the sound of their voice, therefore, these questions should never be skipped or answered by the volunteer conducting the survey.

There are different ways that volunteers can present and ask these questions. In every case, it should be made clear that respondents will self-identify their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Volunteers will likely read out survey questions and options, including the SOGI questions, to respondents; however, respondents should also be given the option to view the questions themselves. One way to do this is for volunteers to read out the SOGI questions and options and to ask respondents if they would like to have a closer look at the questions and options and answer them directly or if they would like the volunteer to read out the questions and options again.

If respondents appear confused by the questions or options provided, volunteers can say something along the lines:

“You may notice that there are more options provided here than on other forms. Before we only listed ‘male’ and ‘female’ on our forms and it did not capture everyone’s gender identity, therefore, we have added options so that more people are able to select how they identify.”

In a scenario where a client needs further clarification, the glossary can be referred to, however, volunteers should have an understanding of what the different terms mean.

It is also important for volunteers to be aware that people can change or add to their responses to questions at different points throughout the survey. For example, the respondent might feel more comfortable speaking with a volunteer by the end of the survey and may wish to go back to the SOGI questions and alter their original responses.



SOGI Questions: Do's & Don'ts

Do

- ▶ Give volunteers time to review and practice the survey;
- ▶ Provide the SOGI glossary at training;
- ▶ Allow volunteers to ask questions and raise concerns;
- ▶ Prepare to reassign volunteers to other roles if they are unwilling to ask the survey as designed.

Don't

- ▶ Assume that LGBTQ2S volunteers will automatically know the meaning of SOGI terms;
- ▶ Make assumptions about a person's sexual orientation based on their gender identity or make assumptions about a person's gender identity based on their sexual orientation;
- ▶ Ever ask anyone “Have you had the surgery” or any other questions related to their transition, including whether or not they are on hormones, when they came out, etc.
- ▶ Try to relate to volunteers or respondents when they come out as LGBTQ2S (e.g. “My cousin is trans”, “My best friend is gay”).

Responding to volunteer questions and comments

The count may be the first time that some volunteers have seen, asked or answered SOGI questions. As a result, volunteers may have questions or concerns that they would like to address prior to the count. Fortunately, the PiT count provides an opportunity to explain the importance of collecting this data.

Here are a few questions and statements you may hear from your volunteers:

Why did you include these response options?

The SOGI questions were developed in consultation with the [National PiT Count Working Group](#), the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, and Dr. Alex Abramovich. The questions have also been tested with people experiencing homelessness. While it is not possible to have an exhaustive list of SOGI response options, it is absolutely crucial that people see their identities reflected in the response options and for those who don't, volunteers will write in responses that are not listed. Respondents should be encouraged to self- identify as they choose.

The SOGI questions are too personal or invasive.

A number of the PiT count questions are personal, including those about experiences of homelessness, service needs and sources of income. These questions, including the SOGI questions, are designed to better understand homelessness so we may create lasting solutions. All questions on the survey should be asked neutrally and respectfully and responses should remain confidential. Participants should be reminded that their participation is voluntary and they can skip questions or terminate the survey at any time. The SOGI questions are by no means invasive, but rather inclusive. They are meant to include more people, who would otherwise not be counted.

Why is this information important?

It is estimated that there is a significant overrepresentation of LGBTQ2S youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. However, since SOGI questions have been mostly left out of data collection efforts, we do not have a reliable estimate of how many LGBTQ2S individuals are experiencing homelessness across Canada. As a result, many homeless-serving programs and systems are not designed to meet the needs of the LGBTQ2S population. We need to collect accurate data if we are to uphold our commitment to ending homelessness in Canada. Improved data collection will help fill large gaps in knowledge and provide us with important information about who is experiencing homelessness across Canada.

Online LGBTQ2S Cultural Competency Tools

- ▶ LGBTQ2S cultural competency training: https://cancer-network.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/best_practices.pdf
- ▶ LGBTQ2S cultural competency toolkit: <https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/resources/lgbt-toolkit-for-creating-culturally-competent-care-for-lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-persons/>
- ▶ LGBTQ2S cultural competency: http://www.refugeesinpa.org/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_246593.pdf
- ▶ LGBTQ2S Toolkit: <http://lgbtq2stoolkit.learningcommunity.ca>
- ▶ LGBTQ2S Youth Alberta Housing and Shelter Guidelines: <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/LGBTQ2S-youth-housing-and-shelter-guidelines.pdf>
- ▶ Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit: <http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/trans-inclusion-matters/creating-authentic-spaces>

Reporting and Mobilizing Results

Once the surveys have been completed and collected from shelters and survey teams, and the results have been calculated and analyzed, it is time for reporting and mobilizing of results. For more information on analysing and mobilizing your results, refer to [The Point-in- Time Count Toolkit](#).



Reporting SOGI Data

When reporting SOGI data, remember that language is important and we must be mindful of the terminology that we use to report our results with.

Do

- ▶ Use the term “sexual orientation” when reporting sexual orientation results. Do not use “sexual preference” or “choice” when reporting sexual orientation.
- ▶ Use the term “gender identity” when reporting gender identity results.

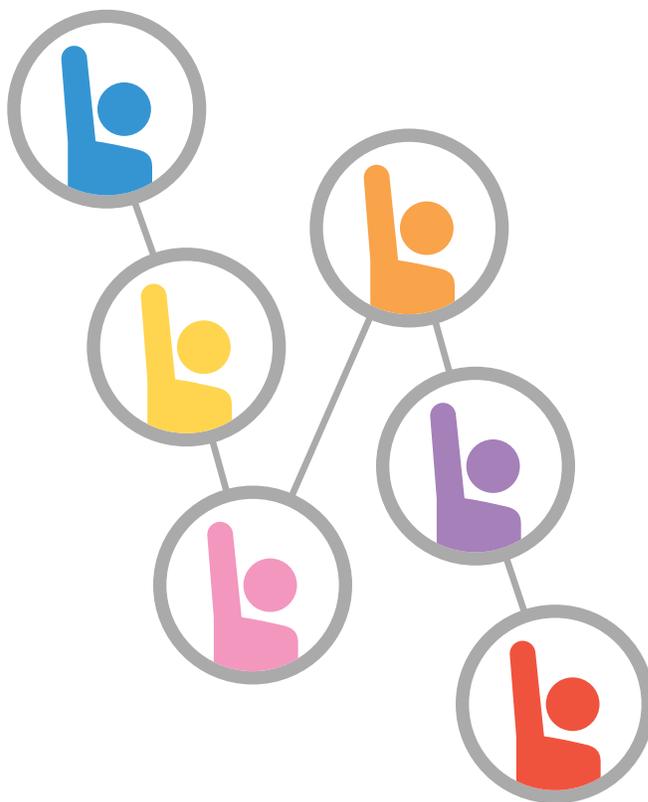


Don't

- ▶ Do not refer to transgender individuals as “a transgender” or “transgendered”, say “[X number of] transgender people/individuals”.
- ▶ Try to avoid terms such as “other” when referring to respondents who do not identify as heterosexual and/or cisgender.³
- ▶ Do not use the term “queer” as an umbrella term that includes transgender individuals, or as an umbrella term when referring to LGBTQ2S respondents.
- ▶ Do not use the term “gender expansive”⁴ as an umbrella term that includes transgender individuals, or as an umbrella term when referring to respondents who did not select male or female as their gender identity.

When reporting your results, it is important to remember that sexual orientation and gender identity data are not the same and should not be conflated. Gender identity refers to how an individual identifies their gender (e.g. male, female, genderqueer, gender fluid, transgender, etc.) and sexual orientation refers to how an individual identifies whom they are sexually and romantically attracted to (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, etc.). For example, transgender individuals do not necessarily identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual, and may identify as heterosexual.

However, sexual orientation and gender identity responses can be combined for the purpose of reporting the overall breakdown of LGBTQ2S respondents (e.g. 30% of youth respondents under the age of 26 years identified as LGBTQ2S).



Collapsing Categories

A thorough list of response options were provided for the SOGI questions for a variety of reasons, primarily to be as inclusive as possible, but also to be able to identify any patterns or differences amongst the different categories and to allow for a much richer analysis than dividing respondents into LGBTQ2S and non-LGBTQ2S categories.

This also provides an important opportunity to discover community and national level trends.

Sexual orientation and gender identity responses can be collapsed into categories, depending on the size of the community and how many individuals responded to the survey.

Gender Identity question responses can be collapsed into the following categories:

- ▶ Male
- ▶ Female
- ▶ Trans women
 - MTF
- ▶ Trans men
 - FTM
- ▶ Gender expansive
 - Genderqueer/
Gender non-conforming
 - Gender fluid
 - Two-Spirit
 - Non-binary
 - Androgynous

OR

- ▶ Transgender
 - Trans woman (MTF)
 - Trans man (FTM)
- ▶ Gender Expansive
 - Genderqueer/
Gender non-conforming
 - Gender fluid
 - Two-Spirit
 - Non-binary
 - Androgynous
- ▶ Cisgender
 - Cisgender man
 - Cisgender woman

Sexual Orientation question responses can be collapsed into the following categories:

- ▶ Sexual orientation labels that are not defined by the gender identity of potential partners or one's own gender identity, such as bisexual, queer, asexual, pansexual, two-spirit
- ▶ Gay and lesbian
- ▶ Heterosexual/straight

OR

- ▶ Heterosexual/straight
- ▶ Non-heterosexual
 - Lesbian
 - Gay
 - Bisexual
 - Queer
 - Two-Spirit
 - Pansexual

What to Look for in the Data

Overrepresentation

- ▶ Who is overrepresented in the data?
- ▶ Is there an overrepresentation of transgender and/or gender expansive individuals? Are transgender men or transgender women overrepresented?
- ▶ Is there an overrepresentation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, queer, questioning, pansexual, and/or asexual individuals?
- ▶ Is there an overrepresentation of LGBTQ2S individuals?

Shelter usage

- ▶ Did transgender and/or gender expansive individuals use shelters in past year or not?
- ▶ Did lesbian, gay, bisexual, two-spirit, queer, questioning, pansexual, and/or asexual individuals use shelters in past year or not?

Patterns or Trends (more likely for larger communities)

- ▶ Are there any noticeable patterns or trends in the data amongst LGBTQ2S respondents?
- ▶ Are there any patterns in where LGBTQ2S individuals were surveyed on the night of the count (sheltered or unsheltered locations)? For example, were the majority of transgender individuals surveyed in unsheltered locations? Were the majority of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals surveyed in sheltered locations?
- ▶ Are there any noticeable differences or patterns amongst transgender men and transgender women?
- ▶ Are there any noticeable differences or patterns amongst youth and adult respondents with regards to sexual orientation and gender identity?

It is possible that the results for SOGI questions will be significantly low or indicate that there were no LGBTQ2S respondents in some communities. There are different reasons that this may occur, including:

- ▶ respondents did not feel safe or comfortable coming out,
- ▶ some people have multiple identities and some people's identities are fluid, so they may have selected male or female because that is how they identified or felt safe identifying on that particular day,
- ▶ some transgender individuals may also identify as female or male and may have decided not to select 'transgender' and,
- ▶ some respondents may not have understood the question.

Measurement error should also be considered. One way to avoid these types of measurement errors and to more accurately identify transgender individuals in PiT counts and on surveys is to use a two-step approach to measure both assigned sex at birth and gender identity. The two-step approach is designed to identify transgender individuals who may otherwise not be captured when administering a single-item gender identity question. By asking the two-step question, transgender individuals are identified in two different ways, including if the individual selects "transgender" as their gender identity, and if the individual selects different responses for current gender identity and sex assigned at birth.

For example, utilizing a two-step approach involves asking the following question:

1) What sex were you assigned at birth, on your original birth certificate?

- ▶ Male
- ▶ Female

2) How do you describe your current gender identity?

- ▶ Male
- ▶ Female
- ▶ Trans male (Female-to-Male)
- ▶ Trans female (Male-to-Female)
- ▶ Gender non-binary
- ▶ Two-Spirit
- ▶ Different identity than listed (please state):

Mobilizing Results

Participating communities/PiT Count leaders are highly encouraged to go back to their community partners and community members to share their results and discuss whether the results are reflective of their experiences. Sharing results with community partners and community members provides an important opportunity for feedback and discussion and may help participating communities report and mobilize results in a more reflective manner.

This is also a good time to have a look at all intake and case management forms and any other organizational forms and questionnaires that collect client information, to ensure that questions are LGBTQ2S inclusive and that everyone can see themselves reflected in the response options provided.

If we do not ask SOGI questions and report and mobilize results, we continue to underestimate the prevalence of LGBTQ2S people experiencing homelessness in Canada and we perpetuate the erasure of LGBTQ2S individuals.

Including SOGI questions on PiT Count surveys, intake forms, and all institutional forms that collect important information will provide a more accurate snapshot of who is experiencing homelessness and accessing services across Canada, leading to better data and improved service delivery. For example, [The City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment](#) 2013, included question for the first time on LGBTQ identity. Their results confirmed that 21% of youth surveyed in the shelter system identified as LGBTQ. These findings, along with recent research, and the work of an LGBTQ working group helped provide the City of Toronto with the necessary evidence they required in order to respond to this issue, resulting in the City allocating funds to open two transitional housing programs for LGBTQ2S youth. The first of the two programs, also known as Canada's first [LGBTQ2S youth transitional housing program](#), [YMCA Spratt House](#), opened in February 2016 and serves 25 young people between 16-24 years. The second LGBTQ2S housing program will be operated by Egale Canada Human Rights Trust.

Inclusive questions should not be reserved for PiT Counts but rather should be part of everyday practice in shelters, housing programs, and drop-in services. Asking inclusive questions and collecting SOGI data should occur on a regular basis because everyone counts and the questions that we ask matter.

Acknowledgments

Funded by the Government of Canada's Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The opinions and interpretations in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada. The author would like to thank Jesse Donaldson for reviewing and providing valued input on this module.

¹For results from the 2016 Coordinated PiT Count, refer to the [Homeless Partnering Strategy](#) website.

²For more information on Service Counts, refer to [The Point-in-Time Count Toolkit](#), page 26.

³Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity matches with their sex assigned at birth. For example, a cisgender woman is someone who was assigned female at birth who goes through life identifying as a woman.

⁴Gender-expansive refers to a wide range of gender identities and expressions that expand and broaden definitions of gender-normative identities and are neither 'male' nor 'female', including non-binary, genderqueer, and gender fluid.

Glossary on sexual diversity

Asexual

A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction to others, regardless of gender identity.

Bisexual

A term for someone who is sexually and romantically attracted to men and women.

Cisgender

A person whose gender identity matches with the sex they were assigned at birth (e.g. someone assigned female at birth who goes through life identifying as a woman).

Cisnormative

The assumption that all, or almost all, individuals are cisgender, unless otherwise specified.

Coming out

The process of coming to terms with one's sexual orientation and/or gender identity and disclosing it to others. Others typically assume heterosexuality and fixed gender states that fit into the binary of F and M, therefore, coming-out is an ongoing process.

FTM

A person who was assigned female at birth, but identifies as male. Also known as trans man or transgender man. FTM is the acronym for Female-to-Male.

Gay

A term used to describe a man who is sexually and romantically attracted to men. Some women who are attracted to women also use this term while others might prefer lesbian (see: Lesbian).

Gender expansive

An umbrella term sometimes used in place of “gender non-binary” or “gender non-conforming”, to describe individuals with gender identities and expressions that expand and broaden definitions of cisnormative and gender normative identities.

Gender fluid

Refers to a gender identity that varies and fluctuates over time. A person who identifies as gender fluid may have an identity that alternates between female, male, and any other gender identity.

Gender identity

Gender identity is a person's subjective experience of their own gender. It is a deep internal feeling of whether they are female, male, genderqueer, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or differ from the sex assigned to them at birth.

Gender non-binary

A term used to describe individuals who do not subscribe or conform to the gender binary. Gender non-binary is also used as an umbrella term for those who do not identify exclusively as female or male.

Gender normative

Refers to when people conform to what is considered culturally appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour.

Gender queer

A self-identity category/term used to describe individuals who do not subscribe or conform to the gender binary, but identify as neither, both, or a combination of male and female.

Heteronormative

The belief that heterosexuality is the 'normal' sexual orientation. Also refers to the belief that female and male gender roles are fixed.

Heterosexual

A term used to describe someone who is sexually and romantically attracted to people of the opposite sex or gender.

Lesbian

A term used to describe a woman who is sexually and romantically attracted to women.

LGBTQ2S

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and 2-spirit people.

MTF

A person who was assigned male at birth, but identifies as female. Also known as trans woman or transgender woman. MTF is the acronym for Male-to-Female.

Pansexual

When a person is sexually, romantically, and emotionally attracted to people of all gender identities and sexes.

Queer

A term that has been reclaimed by LGBTQ2S people as a self-identity for those who do not identify with binary terms that describe sexual, gender, and political identities.

Questioning

A term for people who are in the process of exploring or discovering their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sexual identity

How a person identifies whom they are sexually and romantically attracted to (e.g. lesbian, gay, bisexual, heterosexual, etc.)

Transgender

A term used to describe people whose gender identity does not match with the sex they were assigned at birth. Transgender is also used as an umbrella term and can encompass those who identify as genderqueer, gender fluid and whose gender identities challenge gender norms. Transgender is an adjective and should never be used as a noun, for example, instead of saying: “Chris is a transgender”, say: “Chris is a transgender person”; there is never a need to add an “-ed” at the end of “transgender”.

Two-Spirit

This term is culturally specific to people of Indigenous ancestry and refers to Indigenous people who identify with both a male and female spirit. This term is not exclusive to gender identity, and can also refer to sexual identity.