

ABORTION CARE INCLUDES TRANS AND GENDER NON-BINARY PEOPLE

HISTORY

In their 1970 open letter, "[Re: Abortion Strategy](#)", the Vancouver Women's Caucus outlined the objectives and political strategies of the Abortion Caravan. They declared: "We see the demand for the right to control our own bodies as a necessary part of the fight for the control of our own lives." Fifty years later, their words still ring true: an affirmation that bodily autonomy and self-determination are central to any discussion of abortion. By extension, any discussion of abortion should also reflect the experiences of trans and gender non-binary (TGNB) people.

[Cisgender women](#), like TGNB people, share the experience of gender-based oppression, which include barriers to bodily autonomy and self-determination. Abortion is a key issue in the contemporary movement to achieve rights and recognition for TGNB people, and TGNB people have long been central to the reproductive rights movements, as activists and people who have abortions. Still, their presence was and sometimes remains acknowledged in activist circles, akin to how abortion was always recognized as a central health equity issue for TGNB people. It essential to develop inclusive principles in abortion care and activism, since the benefits accrue to all people who face unwanted pregnancy.



PHOTO CREDIT: [Diana Meredith](#)

CURRENT ISSUES

Like cisgender women, TGNB people access abortion, and they face multiple barriers when they do. Because abortion is time-sensitive, TGNB people often tolerate abortion care that ignores or erases their identity (e.g., providers who use the wrong pronouns or gender their body parts as "female"). Some TGNB people even present as cisgender women to receive abortion care.

Language and representation also contribute to erasure and exclusion when TGNB people access services. Abortion is generally referred a "women's issue," facilities are often called "women's health clinics", and staff and providers sometimes make assumptions about the words people use for their body parts. Bathroom facilities tend to be gendered in abortion clinics, and images of cisgender women are generally used in waiting rooms and informational material.

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TGNB people also face discrimination and marginalization within feminist movements, which is rooted in longstanding division around recognizing shared experiences of oppression based on gender. [Arguments against the explicit inclusion of TGNB people in abortion advocacy](#) claim that gender-inclusive language erases the experience of cisgender women. However, while such arguments do not concretely enhance access for cisgender women, they do contribute to barriers to accessing gender-affirming abortion care and transphobia within feminist communities – all which create a hostile environment that increases the vulnerability and invisibility of TGNB people.



PHOTO CREDIT:
[The Gender Spectrum Collection](#)

OUR DEMANDS

- Abortion clinics should engage in an ongoing evaluation of their services, including providing opportunities for TGNB people to provide timely and anonymous feedback. They should update intake forms to provide space for clients to indicate preferred pronouns and their name (if different from that used in official identification).
- Abortion providers should receive mandatory and ongoing medical training that includes issues relevant to TGNB people
- Feminist movements should use gender-inclusive language when discussing abortion.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

- Refer to abortion as an issue that is relevant to all people who can become pregnant by using [inclusive language](#) (e.g., “cisgender women and TGNB people”).
- If you work in healthcare, encourage your workplace to engage in self-reflection and evaluate the gender-inclusivity of your informational materials, bathroom signage, intake forms, clinic policies, and the gender diversity of your staffing. Normalize opportunities for clients to share their gender pronouns and ask people about which words they use to describe their body parts.

LEARN MORE

- Jones, Rachel K., Elizabeth Witwer, and Jenna Jerman. 2020. “[Transgender Abortion Patients and the Provision of Transgender-specific Care at Non-hospital Facilities that Provide Abortions](#)”. *Contraception: X* 2: 1-2.
- Lowik, A.J. 2017-19. “[Trans Inclusive Abortion Services: A Manual for Providers on Operationalizing Trans-inclusive Policies and Practices in an Abortion Setting](#)”. Manual has been adapted for all provinces, the Yukon, Canada, and the United States.