

**The Rainbow Resource Centre** is a non-profit, community-based charitable organization that serves as the central agency offering support, information, counselling, referrals, library, and public awareness on issues related to sexual orientation, gender diversity, and anti-homophobia education.

### CONTACT US

**General Inquiries:** (204) 474.0212 Ext. 201  
info@rainbowresourcecentre.org  
fax: (204) 478.1160

**Peer Support Line:**  
284.5208 or 1.888.399.0005  
(Toll free in Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario)  
Monday to Friday: 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.  
(subject to volunteer availability)

**Counselling:** (204) 474.0212 Ext. 201  
info@rainbowresourcecentre.org

**Address:** 170 Scott Street  
Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L 0L3

**The Rainbow Resource Centre is open:**  
Monday 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm (for drop-in counselling only)  
Tuesday 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm  
Wednesday & Thursday 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm  
Friday 1:00 pm to 5:00 pm  
(closed weekends and statutory holidays)

Please visit our website:

[www.rainbowresourcecentre.org](http://www.rainbowresourcecentre.org)

**The Rainbow Resource Centre** envisions a society in which diverse sexual and gender identities are included, valued and celebrated as a result of our active commitment to promote and maintain dignity, human freedoms and human rights.

# Heterosexism

*For individuals who want to learn more*

## Heterosexism

Heterosexism is the assumption that heterosexuality is the social and cultural norm as well as the prejudiced belief that heterosexuals, or “straight” people, are socially and culturally superior to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit and queer (LGBTIQ) people.

### Heterocentrism

An (often subconscious) assumption that everyone is heterosexual, and the attitudes associated with that assumption.

### Heterosexual Privilege

Heterosexual privilege is an advantage automatically given to heterosexual persons simply because they are heterosexual. This is similar to the privileges Caucasian persons receive because of their race or men receive because they are male. A few examples of heterosexual privilege include being able to display simple affection in public without the fear of retaliation, violence, or harassment, children’s books only reflecting heterosexual parents; and only being able to find heterosexual wedding cards. Heterosexism can be both subtle and overt.

### What is Heteronormativity?

Heteronormativity is the cultural bias in favor of opposite-sex/gender relationships, to that of same-sex/gender relationships. Because opposite-sex/gender relationships are viewed as “normal” and same-sex/gender relationships are not, lesbian and gay relationships are subject to a heteronormative bias. Heteronormative bias is a bias that can be eliminated socially, culturally, and legally. Heteronormative biases include:

- The under representation of same-sex/gender couples in advertising and entertainment media
- Religious biases to not marry same-sex/gender couples
- Heterosexual persons freely discussing their intimate relationships without second guessing to disclose their partner’s name, gender or pronoun (he/she)

### How do you know if you are participating in heterosexism?

Heterosexism is like any other social prejudice, such as racism or sexism. If we don’t include and affirm lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit, and queer people in all aspects of our culture and society, and believing that heterosexuality is the only acceptable identity, then we are engaging in heterosexism.

## HOW DOES HETEROSEXISM AFFECT Everyone?

Heterosexism causes undue stress (even in ways we are not aware of) and can affect our personal choices. Being aware of this can help you cope in ways that are healthier and less damaging to our physical, emotional, sexual, psychological and spiritual well being.

**Heterosexism is everywhere – in every community, job industry, culture, age group, religion, and socioeconomic position.**

Places like schools and hospitals can act as a platform and springboard for heterosexist attitudes and beliefs. For example, schools treat the lives of non-heterosexuals as a “sensitive topic” and sexual and gender diversity is only discussed in health or guidance classes. Another example is giving out harsher punishment to a same-sex/gender couples violating the school ground rules while allowing a heterosexual couples to pass with an easier and more subtle disciplinary action for an equal or identical violation. Also, hospitals may limit patient visits only to “immediate family” i.e. relatives, and exclude same-sex/gender partners and may not be given the privileges that come with heterosexual relationships.

A more common example of heterosexism is assuming that everyone is straight. This often happens without even thinking about it such as asking a woman if she has a “boyfriend” or “husband” rather than a partner or significant other. The heterosexist assumption is that because she is female she would naturally be dating a male.

## HETEROSEXISM VS. HOMOPHOBIA

Heterosexism is the systemic bias which favours heterosexuals and heterosexuality. It has been encoded into and is a characteristic of the major social, cultural and economic institutions of our Western society. It stems from the idea that male and female roles, thoughts and expressions are separate and distinct. Like other systemic oppressions heterosexism falls within the spectrum of sexism, racism, classism, abilism and ageism to name a few.

Homophobia refers to the irrational fear, dislike, hatred, intolerance, and ignorance of homosexuality. In other words, any aversion to those that are not heterosexual. Although homophobia has always existed, it is only recently that we were able to give it a name, and have come to realize that it constitutes an unacceptable attitude in a diverse and civilized society.

To break it down, heterosexism is a systemic bias which leads to, intersects with and fuels homophobia (the aversion, or being against, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit and queer community).

## WHAT CAN I DO TO STOP HETEROSEXISM?

- Become aware of your own thoughts, prejudices and understanding of the LBTTQ community.
- Take a step towards unmasking inaccurate information and challenging stereotyped misconceptions about LBTTQ persons.
- Make an effort to help others better understand and truly challenge the misconceptions, myths, and assumption that exists towards LBTTQ people

### COMMUNITY RESOURCES:

#### Local Links:

**gAy&E:** gay social group that participates in Winnipeg’s arts, culture, and entertainment scene. For more info. email: [trazom@mts.net](mailto:trazom@mts.net)

**Klinic Community Health Centre  
24 Hour Crisis Line:**  
(204)786.8686 or 1.888.322.3019 (Toll free)  
TTY 784.4097  
[www.klinic.mb.ca](http://www.klinic.mb.ca)

**Men’s Resource Centre:**  
Intake phone line: (204) 956.9528 or  
1.866.672.3422 (Toll free)  
[www.elizabethhill.ca/mrc.html](http://www.elizabethhill.ca/mrc.html)

**RAY** (Resource Assistance for Youth):  
24 hour help line: 1.800.668.4663 [www.rayinc.ca](http://www.rayinc.ca)

**Nine Circles Community Health Centre:**  
(204) 940.6000 or 1.888.305.8627  
(Toll free in Manitoba)  
STI Info: (204) 945.2437 or Toll free  
1.800.782.2437  
[www.ninecircles.ca](http://www.ninecircles.ca)

**SERC** (Sexuality Education Resource Centre):  
(204) 982.7800 (Winnipeg)  
(204) 727.0417 (Brandon)  
The Facts of Life Line: (204) 947.9222 or  
Toll free 1.800.432.1957  
[www.serc.mb.ca](http://www.serc.mb.ca)

**Outwords Inc.** (local LBTTQ\* magazine):  
[www.outwords.ca](http://www.outwords.ca)

### National and International Links:

**Get It On:**  
[www.getiton.ca](http://www.getiton.ca)

**COLAGE** (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere):  
[www.colage.org](http://www.colage.org)

**Egale Canada:**  
[www.egale.ca](http://www.egale.ca)

**PFLAG Canada:**  
[www.pflagcanada.ca](http://www.pflagcanada.ca)

**GLSEN:**  
(Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network)  
[www.glsen.org](http://www.glsen.org)