



Research and Recommendations on Gender-Inclusive Washrooms and Changerooms



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**Provost's Action Group on
Gender and Sexual Diversity**

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Executive summary

There is substantial evidence that the exclusive provision of gendered washrooms and changerooms (e.g., washrooms exclusively designated for use by women or men), as well as changerooms without privacy options, can cause anxiety, harassment, and facility/activity avoidance for many groups of users. Research has shown that this is not only the case for many transgender and/or gender non-conforming (GNC) people but also for a wide range of people including but not limited to: women; lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people; young people; and people with disabilities. For this reason, gender-neutral facilities and inclusive upgrades to gendered facilities are rapidly becoming standard in post-secondary education and other sectors. This shift increases ease of access, security, and privacy for many people within the Queen's University community.

“At Queen's, there have been some updates to individual buildings, such as gender-neutral signage on existing single-stall washrooms, but such updates are isolated and are not keeping pace with the needs of University staff, faculty, students and visitors.”

Queen's has had a Gender-Neutral Washrooms Policy since 2012, which puts it ahead insofar as an environmental scan of 22 other Ontario universities (findings featured in this report and visualized in the Appendix) reveals that only 8 have similar publicly available policies. The scope of the Queen's policy is limited, however, to new construction and major renovations, and its implementation is uneven. There have been some updates to individual buildings, such as gender-neutral signage on existing single-stall washrooms, but such updates are isolated and are not keeping pace with the needs of University staff, faculty, students and visitors.

This report leverages research findings and emerging best practices to propose a way forward for Queen's to develop inclusive facilities. A practical approach to applying inclusive design would incorporate both short- and long-term shifts: **short-term 'accommodations'** would implement small, immediate changes to meet the needs of the local community regarding privacy and safety while the institution works towards **long-term updates** that would result in at least one-third of all campus washrooms and changerooms being fully gender-neutral.

Short-term accommodations include updating all remaining gendered single-stall facilities to gender-neutral spaces; making menstrual products and disposal bins available in all gendered and gender-neutral washrooms; and installing use-based signage that emphasizes the amenities of a facility rather than the identity of the user. Gendered changerooms that currently have shared locker rooms and shower areas should incorporate curtains or similar barriers to strategically increase privacy options for various users, including but not limited to transgender and/or GNC users. Lastly, educational campaigns should accompany these changes.

Long-term updates include new builds, major renovations, and—critically—upgrading existing facilities regardless of whether a building is undergoing a major renovation. Multi-stall facilities can be converted to inclusive gender-neutral facilities through the provision of fully private stalls with walls and lockable doors. In washrooms that already have partially stalled areas, a cost-effective update would be lengthening the walls and doors already in place to fully enclose the area. All campus changerooms can be converted to gender-neutral formats by including private changing stalls and showers alongside a shared all-gender locker area. Access to common athletic and recreation facilities should not require passing through a gendered changeroom.

The report concludes with three interlocking recommendations:

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- 1. Implement the short-term and long-term measures described in this report**
 - 2. Create a structure and process to guide implementation**
 - 3. Update the Gender-Neutral Washrooms Policy**
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As Queen's University follows suit with other Ontario universities and international institutions in the adoption of gender-neutral facilities, the research-based strategies outlined in this report will directly support the local Queen's community and situate the university as a leading example in movements towards inclusion.

Introduction

This report outlines the challenges posed by the exclusive provision of gendered facilities (e.g., washrooms designated for use by only women or only men), discusses the increasing move towards gender-neutral facilities, and provides research-based recommendations for creating and/or converting existing facilities to reflect inclusive design (e.g., design that accounts for a variety of users in both gendered and gender-neutral facilities). This report will focus on the inclusion of transgender and gender non-conforming individuals¹ while also acknowledging the impacts of exclusionary, gendered facilities on multiple populations: cisgender² and transgender men, cisgender and transgender women, LGBTQ+ people, young people, people with disabilities, and social groups with people of multiple genders, among others. Through a comprehensive review of scholarly literature, trade magazines, and architectural design guidelines related to washroom and changeroom design, this report advocates for the development of inclusive facilities through new and/or updated signage standards, stall design, and amenity-provision, and through the development of educational material and institutional policies. This report also summarizes the findings of an environmental scan focused on the presence (or lack) of gender-neutral facilities within 22 Ontario universities. Using this information, this report suggests short- and long-term strategies to develop more inclusive facilities on the Queen's University campus.

Key terms

In this document, the term **'gender-neutral'** applies to washrooms or changerooms that can be used by persons of any gender (man, woman, non-binary, etc.). In contrast, the term **'gendered'** applies to washrooms or changerooms that are designated as exclusive to one gender (usually either men or women). Gender-neutral facilities are most often single-stalled. **'Single-stall'** denotes a single room with a locking door, toilet, sink and disposal area that is designed for a single user. In contrast, **'multi-stall'** facilities often include a series of smaller, sectioned-off areas; examples include a

series of private toilet stalls with a shared sink area or a changeroom with private changing stalls, private showers, and a shared locker space. Multi-stall facilities are usually gendered, but they need not be.

A note on 'inclusive design'

Gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms are rapidly becoming an industry standard across multiple public institutions. This practice is often linked to principles of **'universal' design** that seek to standardize equal access for all users. Universal design aims to provide a consistent experience to all users while prioritizing safety, privacy, and accessibility; these goals are achieved, in part, by removing barriers to access based on individual identity (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; Barkowsky et al., 2019; Dick-Agnew, 2017; Entro, 2016; HCMA Architecture + Design, 2018).

“This report advocates for 'inclusive' design. Inclusive design seeks to improve privacy, safety, and accessibility while also supporting the option of both gendered and gender-neutral facilities.”

With guidance from principles of universal design, this report advocates for **'inclusive' design**. Inclusive design seeks to improve privacy, safety, and accessibility while also supporting the option of both gendered *and* gender-neutral facilities. Notably, inclusive design accounts for the potential presence of transgender and gender non-conforming (GNC) users in *all* public washrooms and changerooms. This report outlines a research-based rationale for providing robust gender-neutral options while adapting all facilities—including gendered ones—to a more inclusive design standard. This report includes detailed instructions on short- and long-term strategies for the adoption of inclusive design. These strategies focus not only on layout and structure of the facilities themselves, but also on institutional policies, codes of conduct, and user-/community-focused education.

Both universal and inclusive design standards operate in contrast to **'exclusionary'** or **'exclusive' design**. In this report, exclusionary design references facilities that do not prioritize safety, privacy, and accessibility for their users. Exclusionary design is often gendered but can appear in any setting. For

1. In this report, the term 'transgender individuals' includes those who are trans, transsexual, non-binary, genderqueer, and/or otherwise non-cisgender. 'Gender non-conforming individuals' are those whose gender identity and/or presentation does not conform to normative gender expectations; gender non-conforming individuals may or may not be transgender.

2. In this report, the term 'cisgender' refers to individuals whose gender identity is congruent with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Impacts of gendered washrooms and changerooms

example, a gender-neutral washroom or changeroom may officially permit access to all genders but fail to incorporate a design that is accessible for people with disabilities, people who menstruate, people who are pregnant, people of all sizes, parents or caregivers, and so on. By contrast, gendered facilities may immediately seem exclusionary as they literally are designed to exclude users outside a specific gender—but can still incorporate inclusive design standards that make the space more accessible overall. It is worth noting that, while it is important to adapt gendered wash-rooms and changerooms to an inclusive model, these facilities must be provided alongside robust gender-neutral options in order for an institution to responsibly serve all users.

This report recommends that between one third and one half of all washrooms become gender-neutral and that all changerooms become gender-neutral. Achieving this goal can take a significant amount of time and funds. In order to immediately improve the inclusivity of current facilities, this report also recommends a series of short-term accommodations. These recommendations include the conversion of all single-stall facilities to gender-neutral spaces. As is demonstrated in the following review, these short- and long-term strategies are necessary to combat the negative impacts of exclusionary facilities.

The exclusive provision of gendered washrooms and changerooms has frequently been recognized as a risk to the safety and well-being of transgender and/or gender non-conforming individuals. That said, the provision of exclusively gendered facilities can result in adverse effects for multiple populations, including men, women, LGBTQ+ people, young people, people with disabilities, and social groups that contain people of multiple genders. As demonstrated across multiple academic studies, industry publications, and design guidelines, the move toward facilities that feature inclusive gendered options as well as robust gender-neutral options can improve safety, privacy, and ease of access for all those who use public washrooms and changerooms. Rather than attempt a comprehensive review of all populations impacted by non-inclusive design, this report will mainly focus on material related to transgender and/or GNC people. Nonetheless, this review recognizes how gender, sexuality, disability, race, class, and related social categories are often connected. As such, this report will provide an overview of the myriad impacts of exclusionary facilities and outline options for remediating washrooms and changerooms at Queen's University.

Impacts on transgender and/or gender non-conforming people

Gendered washrooms and changerooms are frequently sites of anxiety, harassment, discrimination for transgender and/or GNC people. In 2011, the American National Transgender Discrimination Survey found that transgender and/or gender non-conforming students at the secondary and post-secondary level reported high rates of harassment, bullying, and assault in school washrooms (Grant et al., 2011). This same study found that 26% of respondents had experienced outright denial of access to facilities that match their gender identity. Similarly, another USA-based survey (James et al., 2016) found that transgender and/or gender non-conforming respondents had high rates of avoidance and harassment when attempting to access gendered facilities. Nearly one-quarter of respondents stated that they had been directly confronted about whether they were in the “wrong restroom” over the past year, with one in ten reporting overt denial of access to public facilities (James et al., 2016, p. 225). Twelve percent of respondents also reported verbal harassment, physical attack, and/or sexual assault when attempting to access a washroom within the past year.

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Both national surveys demonstrated that race and geography shapes and compounds the harassment experienced by transgender and/or gender non-conforming individuals. The National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Grant et al., 2011) found that racialized individuals—especially self-identified “multiracial” respondents—overall experienced higher rates of facilities-related harassment and assault than their white counterparts; these experiences of discrimination were also higher among respondents living in the southern USA (p. 35). The 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey similarly found that racialized respondents were most frequently targeted for harassment and abuse when attempting to access a washroom or changeroom; such instances were also most often reported among respondents who were undocumented, those working in “underground economies” (such as sex work), and those who self-reported that “others could always or usually tell they were transgender without being told” (James et al., 2015, p. 227). Both studies included Indigenous people among their review of racialized groups, and both found that transgender and/or GNC Indigenous people were among the most highly harassed and abused when attempting to access washrooms or changerooms.

The National Transgender Discrimination Survey (Grant et al., 2011) found that 22% of respondents with experience of workplace discrimination had experienced the explicit refusal of washroom access while at work. The researchers in this study speculate on a connection between workplace discrimination and the high rates of unemployment/underemployment among transgender and/or GNC people. This speculation may provide context for why many transgender and GNC individuals necessarily participate in underground economies. Similar studies have demonstrated the potential long-term, negative impacts of systematic denial to gendered facilities.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, transgender and/or gender non-conforming individuals often elect to avoid gendered facilities altogether (James et al., 2016; Laidlaw, 2020; Scheim, Bauer, & Pyne, 2014). In a survey of transgender and/or GNC young people aged 13 to 20 (Weinhardt et al., 2017), respondents indicated that their use of gendered spaces—including washrooms and changerooms—varied day-to-day based on personal assessments of comfort and safety. This same study found that the chronic stress of navigating gendered facilities can lead to long-term negative mental health outcomes. Transgender people have been found to

reduce their food or liquid intake to limit the need for washrooms, a strategy that has been linked to increased rates of urinary tract infections and kidney problems (James et al., 2015). Chronic avoidance of gendered changing facilities can also make accessing gyms or public recreation areas practically impossible, as many buildings require passing through gendered changerooms before accessing a common athletic area like a swimming pool (Weinhardt et al., 2017). The long-term impacts of being denied washroom and

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changeroom access can include mental distress and physical illness (Grant et al., 2011; Seelman, 2016). Many individuals experiencing this stress will retreat from public spaces even further, leaving school and/or losing their employment; these impacts may provide some explanation for the correlation among transgender and/or gender non-conforming people who have been denied access to public facilities and have experienced heightened rates of homelessness, incarceration, and suicidality (Grant et al., 2011; Seelman, 2016). As with the research above, it is also necessary to consider the overlapping impacts of racism, geography, poverty, and participation in underground economies when considering the long-term personal and social impacts of systematic discrimination towards transgender and/or GNC individuals.

Whereas much of this literature is based in the USA, the Trans PULSE Project surveyed more than 400 Ontario-based transgender people over the age of 16 (Scheim, Bauer, & Pyne, 2014) and yielded similar findings. Over two-thirds of respondents reported avoiding public spaces due to concerns over harassment and exclusion; washrooms were identified as respondents’ most commonly avoided spaces. As such, the researchers clearly state that there is an urgent need for “private, gender-neutral public washroom facilities” (p. 3).

A survey of transgender and/or gender non-conforming post-secondary students in Ontario found that approximately half

of the respondents avoided using campus washrooms due to fear of harassment, being perceived as trans, or being “outed” (Laidlaw, 2020, p. 277). Approximately the same number reported past negative experiences in campus washrooms. The majority of respondents preferred to use gender-neutral facilities, with more than half choosing to travel across campus for access to such spaces. This number remained high among disabled transgender and/or gender non-conforming individuals, 30% of whom were willing to travel to use a safe and inclusive washroom. When surveyed on whether there was a need for more “gender-neutral (or single-stall) washrooms on campus,” the response was unanimous: 100% of respondents indicated the need for an increase in gender-neutral washrooms (Laidlaw, 2020, p. 278).

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These results were replicated in another study of post-secondary transgender and/or GNC students, and the lack of access to safe, inclusive, gender-neutral facilities was placed as the highest priority among all survey respondents (Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2019). Multiple studies before and following these examples have found that transgender and/or gender non-conforming people prioritize equitable access to gender-neutral facilities as a foremost point of concern, followed closely by the need for more inclusive anti-discrimination policies (Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2019; Grant et al., 2011; James et al., 2015; Laidlaw, 2020).

While there are many challenges faced by transgender and/or gender non-conforming populations, safe and accessible gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms remain a consistent priority. Nevertheless, many transgender and/or gender non-conforming people may choose to use gendered washrooms and changerooms (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017). In exclusionary environments, accessing gendered facilities may be a necessity for personal safety. Even in settings that offer gender-neutral options, transgender and/or gender

non-conforming people may choose to use gendered facilities in an attempt to avoid being singled out or recognized as different. A mandate that states or implies gender-neutral options are ‘for’ transgender and/or gender non-conforming individuals often results in further discomfort and isolation. **Overall, transgender and/or gender non-conforming people should never be restricted to using only gendered nor only gender-neutral options when both are available; rather, an inclusive approach to facilities design must support transgender and/or gender non-conforming people making the choices that best suit their needs for safety, privacy, and self-identification** (Pirics, 2017; Porta, 2017). When provided with *inclusive* facilities, the option of either gender-neutral and/or gendered options can provide transgender and/or gender non-conforming people with opportunities for positive experiences of embodiment and affirmation of their identities (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017).

Impacts on men

Gendered washrooms and changerooms are clearly a point of tension for many transgender and/or gender non-conforming people, but these are not the only individuals impacted by exclusionary facilities. Many men—cisgender and transgender alike—may find the exclusive option of gendered facilities to be restrictive, uncomfortable, or even unsafe. Male-designated washrooms are often spaces where one’s manhood is strictly policed (Faktor, 2011). Relatedly, male-designated changerooms can be stressful places where men feel pressured to perform a certain kind of masculinity, often defined through disrespectful comments or behaviour towards people perceived as being women, non-heterosexual, and/or transgender (Leahy, 2020; Roper & Halloran, 2007). Within this atmosphere, the pressure to be perceived as appropriately male can become overwhelming, particularly when combined with a lack of privacy.

For transgender and/or gender non-conforming individuals using male-designated facilities, such spaces are often stressful and potentially dangerous. For instance, transgender men may risk exposure or being ‘outed’ while attempting to access a facility congruent with their gender identity (Johnston, 2016). Such issues are exacerbated when the facilities in question do not have walled stalls or—in the case of changerooms—private changing areas and showers (Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017). Similarly, transgender and/or

gender non-conforming people who menstruate often find male-designated facilities difficult to navigate due to a frequent lack of menstruation-related products and few locations for easy disposal and/or cleaning of said products (Frank, 2020). Relatedly, male-designated facilities frequently fail to address the needs of people who are pregnant.

Users of male-designated facilities may go so far as to harm themselves or others in order to prove their manhood (Herriot, Burns, & Yeung, 2018). This is a chronic issue among many men—including cisgender men—as **gendered changerrooms can quickly become sites for ‘hazing’ rituals among male athletes that incorporate practices of emotional, physical, and sexual abuse** (Fogel & Quinlan, 2020). Such instances of violence can have serious, long-term medical and psychological consequences for the victims and costly lawsuits for the institutions where these transgressions take place. In this way, many men may share the experiences of transgender and/or GNC people more broadly, as washrooms and changerrooms become spaces of stress, harassment, exclusion, and abuse.

Impacts on women

Exclusionary, female-designated washrooms and changerrooms are often sites of stress as well. Users of female-designated spaces often experience increased wait times and overall usage frequency in comparison to male-designated facilities (Bovens & Marcoci, 2020; Moen, Westlie, & Skille, 2018; Qiu, 2018). Female-designated washroom design also frequently fails to account for the needs of pregnant people and people who menstruate, most but not all of whom are women (Frank, 2020; Greed, 2016).

Washrooms have also been named as spaces of insecurity among women who are concerned about sexual violence (Hartigan, 2020; Quinlan, Clarke, & Horsely, 2009).

Transgender women in particular are systemically excluded from female-designated spaces such as washrooms and changerrooms (Faktor, 2011; Grant, et al., 2011; Herriot, Burns, & Yeung, 2018; James et al., 2015; Laidlaw, 2020; Seelman, 2016). This discrimination is often articulated as a concern that the presence of transgender women is necessarily dangerous for other women (Laidlaw, 2020). In reality, research has demonstrated that transgender women are much more frequently the victims of violence and harassment in day-to-day life—including when they are attempting to access

washrooms and changerrooms (Faktor, 2011; Grant, et al., 2011; Herriot, Burns, & Yeung, 2018; James et al., 2015; Seelman, 2016). Transgender women are often unsafe when accessing male-designated spaces yet systemically excluded from female-designated facilities. While one solution may be to increase the gender-neutral options for washrooms and changerrooms, any insistence on transgender women using *only* gender-neutral facilities when female-designated spaces are available is merely another form of exclusion.

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Due to unmet needs regarding consistent access, safety, and sanitation, many women may simply choose to avoid public washrooms entirely (Greed, 2016; Hartigan, 2020). Regarding changerrooms, **many users of female-designated facilities also experience heightened stress, anxiety, and body insecurity when using facilities with open showers and shared changing areas** (Clark, 2011; Couturier, Chepko, & Coughlin, 2007; Moen, Westlie, & Skille, 2018). The changerroom remains a site of particular distress among disabled, racialized, aged, and/or queer women (Clark, 2011). As a result of these issues, many scholars have recommended a move towards completely gender-neutral washrooms and changerrooms (Laidlaw, 2020).

Gender-neutral washrooms and changerrooms are a point of contention for many feminist scholars. Setting aside anti-transgender arguments, it is worthwhile to consider competing equity concerns. For example, gendered facilities may be considered a necessity on the grounds of culture or religion; for example, Muslim women who veil may need access to spaces without men to adjust or remove their veil (Roy, 2016). While this need for privacy may be met by a gender-neutral, single-stall option—provided a mirror is included therein—the provision of only single-user facilities may decrease opportunities for the interpersonal socializing that can take place within female-designated spaces. In addition, some transgender people have reported that access to gendered spaces—such as women’s washrooms or changerrooms—can be a gender-affirming experience so long as they are welcomed and affirmed in their gender

identities (Herrick et al., 2020; Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017). While the provision of gender-neutral spaces remains a necessity, larger buildings can likely accommodate a variety of facilities—including gendered options—so long as all are designed in an inclusive manner. Inclusive design explicitly recognizes and vocally supports the access needs of transgender and/or GNC women within all gendered and gender-neutral spaces.

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Impacts on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer people

Considering the strict pressure to perform the ‘correct’ kind of gender in public facilities, it may come as no surprise that **many gay, lesbian, bisexual and queer populations report harassment and hostility within in male- and female-designated wash-rooms and changerooms** (Cavanagh, 2011; Leahy, 2020; Roper & Halloran, 2007; Shaw, 2013). For instance, a survey of bisexual and lesbian women with experience as student athletes reported a discriminatory changeroom culture, which was defined by interpersonal surveillance, internalized pressure to conform to heterosexual standards, overt anti-gay comments, and homophobic graffiti (Shaw, 2013). Studies on the attitudes of male student athletes have also shown homophobia to be commonplace within the change-room atmosphere (Roper & Halloran, 2007). Transgender and/or gender non-conforming people who also identify as queer may feel alienated from their peers on levels related to both gender and sexuality.

Inclusive design can address many of the concerns among LGBTQ+ people as they navigate washrooms and changerooms. Both gendered and gender-neutral facilities can be designed with an emphasis on privacy and safety for lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, transgender and/or gender non-conforming people. Long-term inclusion practices should also incorporate policies and codes of conduct that welcome and protect all users (Barkowsky et al., 2019; Goldberg, 2019; Leahy, 2020). Finally, through the option of single-stall

facilities and private changing spaces, the need for self-regulation can be more appropriately placed on cisgender and/or heterosexual users with discriminatory beliefs and behaviours – if such individuals truly wish to avoid interaction with LGBTQ+ people, they can use a private stall (Cunningham, Buzuvis, & Mosier, 2017).

Impacts on young people

Among young people, washrooms and changerooms can be spaces to escape from adult supervision and socialize with peers (Kjaran, 2019). However, young people are also able to recognize that gendered facilities are frequently unwelcoming to LGBTQ+ populations (Kjaran, 2019; Murchison et al., 2019; Porta et al., 2018). **A survey of transgender and/or GNC middle- and high-school students showed a correlation between restricted washroom and changeroom access and higher rates of sexual assault** (Murchison et al., 2019). In the case of this survey, ‘restricted access’ is defined as the requirement for transgender and/or GNC people to use a gendered facility that does not align with their gender identity and/or an overall lack of access to gender-neutral facilities.

Restrictive policies that limit access to washrooms and changerooms can be indications of a hostile school environment more broadly (Murchison et al., 2019). The connection between gender-neutral facilities and an overall safer environment is corroborated by a 2014–2015 survey (Porta et al., 2018) conducted among lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer and questioning youth aged 14–19 in the USA and Canada. Respondents indicated that inclusive washrooms are not only a practical point of access but also a broader symbol of inclusive institutions. Cisgender and transgender alike, respondents emphasized that the presence of a gender-neutral, inclusive washroom made them feel welcome and safe; particularly when this was not a washroom designated specifically “for trans people or gender diverse youth” but was instead an option for any user (p. 111).

Impacts on people with disabilities

The provision of exclusively gendered facilities can pose practical barriers for disabled populations, the elderly, social groups containing people of multiple genders, and populations already experiencing systemic marginalization from public spaces (Faktor, 2011; Heath Fogg Davis, 2018; Poggiali & Margolin, 2019). Female- and male-designated facilities may

be inequitably maintained, inconsistent in their level of accessibility standards, and/or located at opposite ends of a building or even on separate floors. As a result, the provision of exclusively gendered facilities can decrease the capacity for individual users to select a facility that meets their needs for accessibility, cleanliness, and/or convenience in terms of location (Poggiali & Margolin, 2019).

As has been noted by Hartigan (2020), women with mobility limitations or other disabilities can find public washrooms difficult to navigate. Hartigan situates this concern alongside the broader limits of access to public facilities experienced by women. Hartigan found that women with disabilities expressed frequent concerns around when and where they might be able to locate an accessible facility. Health concerns such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), Crohn's Disease, a compromised immune system, or general anxiety can make using shared facilities especially stressful (Hartigan, 2020).

Many disabled individuals thus go out of their way to access single-stall and/or gender-neutral facilities (Hartigan, 2020; Laidlaw, 2020), even if they are

transgender men or women.

“Following the rollout of gender-neutral, universal changerooms at the University of British Columbia, a campus survey revealed a preference for the gender-neutral changeroom among 81.25% of all respondents.”

Relatedly, Clark (2020) has noted the pressure on women to have “healthy” looking bodies, a concept that often stands in as code for being thin, feminine, and non-disabled (p. 65). In the context of open changerooms without private stalls or showers, people whose bodies are not seen to be healthy are subject to public scrutiny (Clark, 2020). Following the rollout of gender-neutral, universal changerooms at the University of British Columbia, a campus survey revealed a preference for the gender-neutral changeroom among 81.25% of all respondents (Barkowsky et al., 2019). This report noted that many individuals struggling with “body image or self-esteem” preferred the option of increased privacy when changing (p. 11). As found by these researchers, **the option of personal privacy increased the overall likelihood of whether an individual would engage in physical activity at campus facilities, subsequently impacting their longer-term relationships with health and wellbeing.**

Impacts on social groups containing people of multiple genders

The provision of exclusively gendered facilities can also be a challenge for pairs or groups of people seeking to access the same building together. Faktor (2011) notes that family units such as mother and son or father and daughter often struggle to find inclusive washroom facilities, resulting in scenarios where “the child is too old to accompany a parent of a different gender into a public restroom, but still young enough to be vulnerable without supervision” (p. 15). A similar dilemma is often found among disabled populations and/or elders who require a care provider of a different gender; Faktor provides the example of long-term heterosexual couples wherein one partner acts as a primary caregiver for another during the later part of their lives. When faced with only gendered options for washrooms and changerooms, these pairs and groups face a difficult conundrum.

Summary of impacts

As discussed above, the provision of exclusively gendered facilities can be a barrier to access and overall wellbeing. This the case not only for transgender and/or GNC populations, but also for men, women, sexual minorities, young people, people with disabilities, and social groups containing people of multiple genders. As discussed further below, there is an urgent need for public washrooms and changerooms to be “reimagined and redesigned” in order to “respond to changing notions of accessibility and to better address the systems of power that condition access to, and experiences within, these spaces” (Laidlaw, 2020, p. 286). Nonetheless, **the move towards more inclusive facilities does not necessarily mean the end of gendered facilities.** Gendered facilities can be a necessity among individuals who may have religious or cultural need for gendered spaces (Roy, 2016). Gendered changerooms can also be sites for bonding among athletes and team-members (Cunningham, Buzuvis, & Mosier, 2018; Beggs, 2017), including transgender men and transgender women. Among young people, gendered washrooms and changerooms can be spaces to escape from adult supervision and socialize with peers (Kjaran, 2019). As such, **it is worth considering whether needs for privacy and socialization can be met through an approach to facilities design that recognizes the importance of equitable, gender-neutral facilities while also improving the inclusivity of gendered spaces.**

Adapting to inclusive design

Over the last decade, there has been a broad shift towards design standards that increase ease of access, privacy, and overall inclusion of previously underrecognized populations (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; Barkowsky et al., 2019; Dick-Agnew, 2017; Entro, 2016; HCMA Architecture + Design, 2018). The exclusive provision of gendered washrooms and changerooms is recognized as being emblematic of problematic and outdated building design. Newly built and upgraded facilities are transitioning to more inclusive models that meet the needs of all users (Kollie, 2017; Steinbach, 2017; Petrillo, 2020; Vence, 2021a, 2021b). Having reviewed findings from scholarly research on gender, changerooms and washrooms, this section of the report summarizes recommendations from architecture and related trade publications, including design guidelines.

“The exclusive provision of gendered washrooms and changerooms is recognized as being emblematic of problematic and outdated building design.”

Gender-neutral facilities as a new international standard

Gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms allow for greater movement and ease of access, especially among crowds. Robust gender-neutral options allow users to easily select a facility that is clean, accessible, and safe for its user (Faktor, 2011; Poggiali & Margolin, 2019). In 2019, the Australian Human Rights Commission (2019) released guidelines for gender diversity and sport, recommending that all athletic facilities adopt the “principals of universal design” in their washrooms, showers, and changerooms; specific recommendations from these guidelines include the provision of gender-neutral options and increasing privacy within shared spaces using curtains, dividers, and/or stalls (AHRC, 2019, p. 40). Organizations such as the YMCA in Canada and the USA have developed similar guidelines and policies as they adapt to more inclusive, accessible, gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms (Hightower, 2019; YMCA, 2018). **Gender-neutral facilities have also been adopted across multiple secondary and post-secondary educational institutions** (Government of Nova Scotia, 2014; Stanford University, 2017; Trans Focus Consulting, 2020; UC Santa Cruz, 2016). Cities including Vancouver and Toronto

have begun to incorporate inclusive, gender-neutral design standards for all public facilities within their own mandates (City of Toronto, 2021; City of Vancouver, 2016).

As the move towards inclusive design becomes more certain, practical schematics have been created to assist with efficient and cost-effective facilities updates; of these, the American-based Stalled! project is perhaps the best-known. Stalled! (n.d.) was initiated by a group of activists and researchers who created an open-source web database (www.stalled.online). This online resource provides specific details on the creation of gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms, including single-stall and multi-stall facilities. Stalled! offers instructions on how to apply a “low-budget retrofit” to existing washrooms and changerooms, allowing for immediate adaptation to inclusive design. The Stalled! resource also includes guidance on inclusive signage and examples of their design specifications. Recently, the creators of Stalled! have collaborated with the International Plumbing Code (IPC) to develop code-specific recommendations for gender-neutral, inclusive facilities, scheduled to appear in the forthcoming 2021 IPC (Garbow, 2020b; Laidlaw, 2020; The National Center for Transgender Equality, 2019). This update to the IPC is crucial, as many local building codes do not account for the presence of gender-neutral facilities. As noted by Laidlaw (2020), the *Ontario Building Code* “makes no mention of multi-user gender-neutral washrooms” but instead mandates a certain number of gendered washrooms per building occupancy (p. 283). As a result, many Ontario organizations navigate this lack of policy by creating an equal number of multi-stall gender-neutral facilities, as this maintains an even split in terms of gendered access. HCMA Architecture + Design’s (2018) analysis of the provincial *Building Code* in British Columbia shows the same recommendation: as long as there is equal access to gender-neutral washrooms, a facility is not considered to have violated the Code.

Detailed guidance on inclusive design

Gender-neutral washrooms ideally provide a safe and welcoming environment for all users. These spaces should never be mandatory or exclusive to transgender and/or GNC individuals. While many transgender and/or GNC populations support the presence of gender-neutral options, individuals may still choose to use gendered washrooms and changerooms for a variety of personal reasons (Barkowsky et al., 2019; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2019; Laidlaw, 2020;

Oakleaf & Richmond, 2017; Pirics, 2017; Porta et al., 2018; Seelman, 2016). **An inclusive approach to facilities design recognizes the potential presence of transgender and/or GNC people in all facilities, including those which are designated for men, for women, or are gender neutral. Additionally, as discussed above, many cisgender people may also benefit from inclusive facility options, as they offer increased ease of access and personal privacy.** As institutions begin to adopt inclusive design standards, it is important to consider both short- and long-term strategies to incorporate the principles of inclusive design in gendered and gender-neutral facilities alike.

“Mirrors in all stalled areas allow for management of one’s own appearance, an accommodation particularly important for individuals requiring privacy from other genders during this activity, such as Muslim women who veil.”

An inclusive approach to facilities design supports ease of access to private, gender-neutral facilities for all users. Inclusive design supports the provision of a mirror in each facility stall. Mirrors in all stalled areas allow for management of one’s own appearance, an accommodation particularly important for individuals requiring privacy from other genders during this activity, such as Muslim women who veil (Roy, 2016; Laidlaw, 2020). All mirrors should be placed at a strategic angle to accommodate wheelchair users and other disabled users (Broyer, 2020) as, overall, inclusive design needs to consider accessibility standards for disabled people as well (Poggiali & Margolin, 2019). Gendered and gender-neutral inclusive facilities should provide options for wide stalls that can accommodate users of all sizes, users with mobility aids, and multiple individuals at once, such as caregivers and care-receivers. Paper dispensers, toilet design, and other amenities in inclusive facilities should also accommodate larger body types, including pregnant people, and wherever possible, inclusive facilities should provide a changing table (Frank, 2020; Greed, 2016). An inclusive approach to facilities design should also provide ungendered menstrual products and easy sites for their disposal, such as small bins in each private stall (Frank, 2020). Menstrual products and related materials should be designed in a manner that is not gendered or coded as feminine, with reflection that not all people who menstruate are women and not all women menstruate.

“This report recommends that institutions convert at least one-third of all washrooms to gender-neutral spaces.”

As part of easing access for all users—including disabled individuals and social groups with people of multiple genders—inclusive facilities need to prioritize the strategic placement of single- and/or multi-stall gender-neutral facilities across all floors within all buildings of the institution and/or organization(s) in question (Hartigan, 2020; Laidlaw, 2020; Poggiali & Margolin, 2019). Guided by the research of Faktor (2011), this report recommends that institutions **convert at least one-third of all washrooms to gender-neutral spaces.** In the short-term, all single-stall facilities can be converted through a simple signage update (Bovens, 2020; Davis, 2018). Multi-stall facilities may need more renovations to improve the overall privacy; for instance, a multi-stall washroom may need to add barriers around urinals or remove such amenities entirely, depending on the spatial capacity and needs of the local community. In the long-term, robust gender-neutral options can be achieved through a combination of retrofitting, renovations, and new builds. New facilities should be built alongside the upgrading of existing facilities through the application of inclusive design standards such as those outlined in Stalled! (n.d.).

Following the recommendations of the University of British Columbia (Barkowsky et al., 2019) and the Australian Human Rights Commission (2019), this report advises that **an inclusive approach to facilities design should plan for all public changerooms to become gender-neutral.** In the short term, steps towards inclusion can take the form of single-stall, gender-neutral changing options and increased privacy in multi-stall facilities through the provision of privacy curtains or similar partitions in changing areas and showers. In the long term, changing facilities should be redeveloped to become entirely gender-neutral through the provision of private changing stalls and private showers, shared locker space, and spaces for entry to recreation facilities that do not pass through changerooms at all.

The distinction in strategy for washrooms versus changerooms is designed with large-scale institutions in mind. Generally speaking, large institutions have a greater ratio of washrooms to changerooms. As a result, a wider variety of options can be provided for washrooms, while changerooms are best converted to a completely inclusive,

gender-neutral model. These guidelines may need to be adapted for smaller institutions and organizations where the ratio of such spaces is more even.

Short term: Steps towards inclusion can take the form of single-stall, gender-neutral changing options and increased privacy in multi-stall facilities through the provision of privacy curtains or similar partitions in changing areas and showers.

Long term: Changing facilities should be redeveloped to become entirely gender-neutral through the provision of private changing stalls and private showers, shared locker space, and spaces for entry to recreation facilities that do not pass through changerooms at all.

Inclusive signage standards

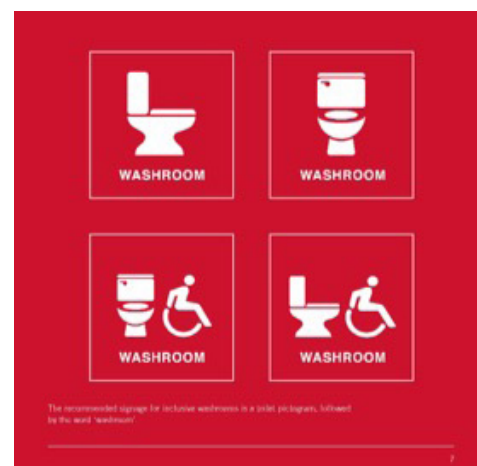
Signage for inclusive facilities should be clear, direct, and easy to understand. Working with the Canadian Signage Association, the architecture firm Entro (2016) has provided clear diagrams of recommended washroom signage for gender-neutral facilities. As shown below in Figure 1, **inclusive signage—especially gender-neutral signage—should avoid the use of identity-based icons. Instead, Entro recommends a use-focused diagram that explains exactly what amenities are available within the washroom or changeroom.** According to Entro, gender-neutral washrooms can most often be indicated through a simple pictogram of a toilet placed along with the word “washroom” (p. 7), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Incorrect (Identity-Based) Bathroom Signage for Gender-Neutral Washrooms



Note: Sourced from Entro (2016, p. 4) signage standards, these identity-based designs for gender-neutral washroom signage are to be avoided.

Figure 2: Correct (Use-Based) Bathroom Signage for Gender-Neutral Washrooms



Note: Sourced from Entro (2016, p. 7), these designs for gender-neutral washroom signage focus on the usage of space rather than the identity of the user.

As displayed in Figures 1 and 2, the move away from identity-focused signage reflects an emphasis on *use-based* content. An inclusive approach to signage design supports users in making informed choices about whether the facility provides what they need. This recommendation remains consistent across scholarly studies, trade literature, and design guidelines (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; Barkowsky et al., 2019; City of Vancouver, 2016; Garbow, 2020a; Goldberg, Beemyn, & Smith, 2019; Heckle, 2016; Kwun, 2018; Stalled!, n.d.; Stanford University, 2017; Trans Focus Consulting, 2020; YMCA, 2018). This use-based signage should be applied to all gender-neutral facilities. In the case of gendered facilities, an identity-based image or phrase may be necessary to indicate the intended use of the space; wherever possible, the signage for gender-designated facilities should also communicate the amenities available (such as a toilet or changing table). Examples of this approach can be found in the signage standards of Ryerson University (2019), featured in Figure 3.

Using an environmental scan of 22 Ontario universities, this

further below, several institutions have also opted to include informational posters and/or codes of conduct posted proximately to all gendered and gender-neutral facilities. An update to facility signage should ideally be accompanied by broader policy updates and educational campaigns to explain these new features to the public.

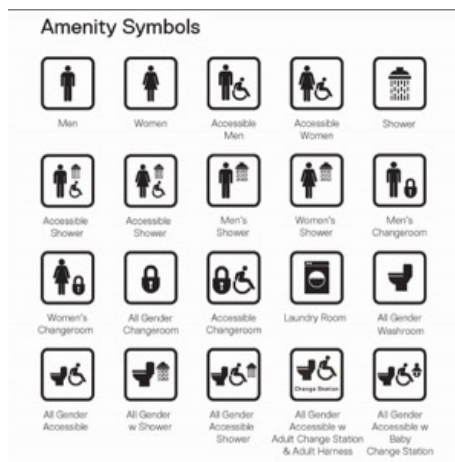
Inclusive policy updates and educational campaigns

The shift toward inclusive design can clearly benefit all users. However, this shift should also incorporate an update to internal-facing policies, educational materials, and related documents as the updating institution works to explain and support the upgrades to its facilities. **Institutions adopting inclusive design should develop and/or revisit existing non-discrimination policies to ensure transgender and/or GNC individuals are appropriately protected** (Goldberg, 2019; Leahy, 2020). In an educational setting, it is important to include inclusive updates to curriculum to include transgender and/or GNC-specific educational content (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017).

At least one review of contemporary institutional upgrades towards gender-neutral facility options found that educational materials and policy updates are often an afterthought or overlooked entirely (Bartholomaeus & Riggs, 2017). An ideal upgrade to inclusive design would incorporate a robust signage standard; a clear policy on inclusive practices; and a strong web-presence with easily accessible educational material and resources. Current codes of conduct and related educational information should be posted within both gender-neutral and gendered facilities, indicating the institutional shift towards greater inclusion (Barkowsky et al., 2019). All public-facing policies should be made easily accessible and explained with clear, direct language. Ideally, the move towards inclusive design incorporates ongoing educational campaigns for both internal staff and the broader community.

In an effort to understand the current state of inclusive facilities design, this report has conducted an environmental scan of universities across Ontario. The data gathered and analyzed through this scan can provide guidance for Queen's University as the institution moves towards more inclusive practices overall. The following section details the findings of this research.

Figure 3: Ryerson University's Amenity Symbols



Note: Sourced from Ryerson University (2019, p. 10), these pictograms feature multiple gendered and gender-neutral options to communicate campus amenities.

Multiple signage standards make note that all public facilities information should be provided both through simple pictograms and accompanying braille (Ryerson University, 2019; The 519, 2015; UC Santa Cruz, 2016). As discussed

Environmental scan of Ontario universities

Using an environmental scan of 22 Ontario universities, this report examines the presence of gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms, along with related practices towards transgender and/or GNC inclusion. Using a content analysis approach, the data collected during this scan was coded for reoccurring themes. The coded data was then analyzed using the research-based standards established above in this report. The following summary outlines the findings of this scan and a preliminary analysis.

Specific points of focus for this environmental scan included gender-neutral washrooms, gender-neutral changerooms, posted statements of inclusion/educational posters, permanent signage, university webpages related to inclusive facilities, apps/maps of facilities on campus, and the presence of university policy, guidelines, and/or signage standards related to gender-neutral facilities. The content collected for this scan was gathered using web searches and a review of institutional material and third-party articles (such as news media).³ The collection process for this environmental scan was limited to material that could be found through public-facing content. This approach was reflective of the general layperson's level of accessibility to university information on campus facilities to reflect what a prospective or existing student looking into their institution may find when seeking out gender-neutral facilities on their campus.

Presence of gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms

The environmental scan found that **nearly all of the listed Ontario universities had gender-neutral washrooms on campus, a total of 21 out of 22**. While the exact number, design, and informational signage for these facilities may vary, the overwhelming presence of gender-neutral washrooms is consistent with the research findings of this report, as many institutions are adopting new standards of inclusion. Future studies may be needed on this topic to assess the quality of washroom design and placement on each campus.

In contrast to the large presence of gender-neutral washrooms, **only 10 of the 22 surveyed universities had evidence of**

gender-neutral changerooms. This information does not indicate that the remaining 12 universities do not have gender-neutral changerooms; rather, the environmental scan only demonstrates that this information is not easily located in a review of the universities' public-facing content. While it is not possible at this time to concretely know why there is such a disparity between washrooms and changerooms, it is worth noting that gender-neutral changerooms were exclusively found in universities that already had gender-neutral washrooms. With this correlation in mind, it is possible that gender-neutral changerooms are generally brought into consideration during or after institutional movements towards gender-neutral washrooms on campus. In addition, as mentioned earlier in this report, large institutions—such as universities—tend to have more washrooms than changerooms. Changerooms are also more often multi-stalled or fully open-concept, a format that requires renovation when converting to an inclusive, gender-neutral design.

Signage and statements

Of the 22 Ontario universities surveyed in this environmental scan, 15 were found to have use-based signage for gender-neutral facilities. The discrepancy between this statistic and the previously stated 21 instances of gender-neutral washrooms indicates an inconsistency in signage across universities. Despite the presence of independent signage guidelines, such as those presented by Entro (2016), this scan found a variety of images and terminology used to communicate the presence of gender-neutral facilities, including "Gender Neutral," "All-Gender," and "Washroom." Examples of these images are included below in Figures 5, 6, and 7, respectively. For the purposes of this scan, facilities that communicated the presence of a "Washroom" with no indication of the internal amenities were not counted as providing use-based signage. Signage such as Figure 7, which indicates a gender-neutral space but does not provide information on the contents within said space, were grouped alongside those that had no public record of their gender-neutral signage and/or no stated gender-neutral facilities.

3. This scan centred on information that could be gathered from a distance, in reflection of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and related restrictions on travel/in-person research.

Figure 5: "Gender Neutral" Sign at the University of Guelph



Note: Sourced from the University of Guelph's website, found in their instructional document on "Gender Neutral Bathrooms" (2020).

Figure 6: "All Gender" Sign at Trent University



Note: Sourced from Trent University's online list of "Gender Inclusive Restrooms" (n.d.).

Figure 7: "Washroom" Sign at Brock University



Note: Sourced from *The Brock News* (Brock University, 2014). This signage may have been updated following the release of Brock University's "Transgender Inclusion Guide" (2019), but any public images of new signage were not found at the time of this environmental scan.

Evidence of posted statements regarding the inclusion of transgender and/or GNC individuals were found in only 7 of the universities surveyed in this scan. Of these, all but one (Queen's University) provided gender-neutral facilities with use-based signage. This correlation may suggest broader efforts towards institutional practices of inclusivity, a speculation corroborated by the presence of public-facing policy on inclusive washrooms at all but one (Wilfred Laurier) of these same 7 universities. The posted statements of inclusion also varied greatly across universities, both in design and content. Overall, **the discrepancy between universities with gender-neutral facilities and those with posted statements suggests that many institutions have not yet and/or are still the process of developing robust practices for inclusion of transgender and/or GNC people.**



Figure 8: Educational Washroom Signs

Note: Sourced from Ryerson University (2019, p. 31), these posters demonstrate the inclusion of “trans*” individuals in all campus washrooms and changerooms.

Examples of a robust signage standard can be found in the documents of Ryerson University (2019), McMaster University (2018), and The University of Toronto Mississauga Campus (n.d.). As shown in Figure 3, Ryerson’s 2019 policy is communicated clearly on both gendered and gender-neutral signage. The pictograms are clear, specific, and outline the amenities (e.g., toilet, urinal) available within a signed facility. Ryerson’s signs are also accompanied by educational, permanent posters that indicate their policies on inclusion, as demonstrated in Figure 8.

Ryerson University’s (2019) educational posters are designed to appear in all gendered washrooms and changerooms. For example, in female-designated spaces, the poster explains, “This is a women’s washroom. Everyone who identifies as a woman and/or trans* person may use this space. At Ryerson, we respect everyone’s right to choose the washroom appropriate for them. For more information, visit ryerson.ca/equity/washrooms” (p. 31). The use of “trans*” with asterisk directs the reader towards a fine-print section that explicitly includes transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, non-binary, genderqueer and/or gender-diverse individuals.

“Multiple universities used a webpage to share their broader project plans and initiatives to improve overall inclusion for transgender and/or GNC individuals at the university.”

Webpages and maps

Among the 22 universities scanned for this report, 17 hosted specific webpages with content related to their inclusive, gender-neutral washrooms and/or changerooms. Among this list, some offered a short summary of facilities available on campus, whereas others offered more robust information. Multiple universities used a webpage to share their broader project plans and initiatives to improve overall inclusion for transgender and/or GNC individuals at the university. This information is crucial, particularly to students and/or outsiders to the university seeking to navigate the campus.

The University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM) campus provides a useful example of a clear and accessible web presence (n.d.). Their website on gender-neutral washrooms includes a detailed statement on the importance of such spaces and lists the locations of gender-neutral facilities across campus. This webpage also includes updates on the UTM campaign for gender-neutral facilities and provides contact information for their Equity and Diversity office. UTM serves as a strong example of how inclusion campaigns can use websites to provide updates and resources after the official launch of an inclusion campaign.

The presence of dedicated webpages for inclusion projects allowed for a broader range of information and educational content. This often took the form of sections answering “frequently asked questions” or links to institutional policies.

However, among the webpages surveyed for this scan, **some appeared to be incomplete and/or neglected since their original creation, sporting broken links, outdated information, and/or content that remains listed as “coming soon.”** The gap in information left by these errors indicates the importance of ongoing maintenance for projects and web content that is related to inclusion. Without upkeep, the efforts put into these careful campaigns become inaccessible to the general public and lose their capacity for impact.

Of the universities scanned, 18 had posted lists and/or maps of gender-neutral washrooms across campus. This number is notable, as it exceeds the amount of university webpages related to inclusive facilities. The University of Windsor was an exceptional case, as this institution has no clear webpage with information on inclusive and/or gender-neutral facilities but does provide a detailed list of gender-neutral washroom locations across campus. This list-based format appeared on other university sites, though some preferred to present the locations of gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms in map format; some universities also provided an interactive app that can be downloaded to a smartphone.

Regarding gender-neutral changerooms, once again these facilities appeared as an afterthought—only 8 universities provided information on their locations through online maps or lists. Some webpages stated that the location or access code for changerooms had to be acquired upon request to an administrative office of the university. None of the universities who posed this barrier to access provided an explanation of their reasoning within their online content.

Institutional policies

Stated policies on inclusive, gender-neutral washrooms and/or changerooms took a variety of formats across the 22 Ontario universities scanned. Some offered distinct documents specifically regarding their washroom and/or changeroom campaigns, others had one or two lines on the topic within otherwise-unrelated documents, and several only had plain-language policy statements posted to public webpages with no detailed institutional documents available. All such formats were counted for this review; even so, only 8 universities had any public-facing policies related to gender-neutral washrooms, and even fewer—5 in total—had public-facing policies on gender-neutral changerooms.

“Only 8 universities had any public-facing policies related to gender-neutral washrooms, and even fewer—5 in total—had public-facing policies on gender-neutral changerooms.”

McMaster University’s (2018) “Trans Inclusion” resource document stands as a strong example of public-facing educational material. This online resource hosts an overview of the school’s design standards, including signage and schematic designs. The guide also outlines the resources and support systems for transgender students at McMaster, including a step-by-step guide for name and/or gender marker updates within the student record system (McMaster, 2018, p. 11). A similar “Transgender-Inclusion Guide” has been posted online by Brock University (2019). The document from Brock includes an outline of policies, signage standards, on-campus resources, and off-campus support for trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit students and staff.

The lack of public-facing university policies on inclusive, gender-neutral facilities might be indicative of broader inaccessibility of institutional policy to external viewers. This lack could also be a sign that many Ontario universities—even those with gender-neutral facilities—have yet to broadly incorporate the inclusion of transgender and/or GNC individuals into their official policies. As demonstrated by the research reviewed earlier in this report, it is essential for the development of gender-neutral facilities to be paired with policies and related institution-wide efforts towards inclusion. The data collected in this scan demonstrates that many Ontario universities have taken initial steps towards inclusive practices but still have room to grow.

Queen’s University in comparison with other Southern Ontario institutions

While universities such as Ryerson, McMaster, and UTM all provide useful examples of inclusive design within educational settings, the vast majority of post-secondary institutions across Canada and the USA do not provide fully inclusive facilities. In the case of Queen’s University, publicly available information suggests that this institution is among many Ontario universities taking initial steps towards inclusive campus facilities, including gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms. Nonetheless, efforts can be made to improve

and streamline this process. Overall, Queen's needs to develop consistent standards for inclusive facilities, including appropriate signage, and adopt related policies.

Queen's University has multiple single-stall washrooms across campus. To find a gender-neutral washroom at Queen's, one could consult The Alma Mater Society's "Gender Neutral Bathrooms Master List" (Queen's University, n.d.) posted online in PDF format or download the iOS mobile application (Gaudreau, 2018). The Queen's University Athletics and Recreation (2021) webpage includes mention of a "family change room" that is "available upon request," though details of where to make this request are not provided on the website. Taken together, this information suggests that **Queen's is well on its way to providing clear information on the location of gender-neutral washrooms but needs to list more details on where and how to access gender-neutral campus changerooms. In addition, based on publicly available online information, there is no evidence of posted statements on inclusion in any Queen's facilities.**

The Gender Studies Department of Queen's University also opened a new gender-neutral washroom, as shown in Figure 9 (Queen's University, 2019). A comparison of the gender-neutral sign that is present on the new Gender Studies

Figure 9: Queen's University Gender Neutral Washroom in Gender Studies



Note: Sourced from the Queen's University Gender Studies Department website. This image was taken at the ribbon-cutting for a gender neutral washroom.

Figure 10: Queen's University Gender Neutral Washroom in JDUC



Note: Sourced from an article in the Queen's Journal by Dan Vena (2014). This image depicts a single-stall bathroom with a text-based sign that reads "washroom."

washroom (Queen's University, 2019) and that of another gender-neutral washroom, located in the John Deutsch University Centre (JDUC) and featured in the Queen's Journal (Vena, 2014) and shown below in Figure 10. The contrast between these facilities indicates a lack of consistent signage standards. The former image shows a gender-neutral washroom sign with female- and male-designated pictograms alongside an icon to indicate wheelchair accessibility, followed by the word "Washroom." The JDUC washroom provides a text-based sign with only the word "Washroom." Neither of these signs are consistent with the recommendations of this report for use-based signage, nor do they include braille. **A new signage standard is likely necessary as Queen's continues to develop new gender-neutral washrooms and changerooms across campus.**

Publicly available records indicate that Queen's University adopted a Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy in 2012, passed by the Vice-Principal's Operations Committee. This policy states that "at least one gender neutral washroom (or change room with shower, where appropriate, as in residences and athletic facilities) on every floor (where washrooms exist) of every new constructed or significantly renovated building on campus" (p. 3). **While this policy demonstrates an important step in movement towards inclusion at Queen's, it does not reflect the one-third (minimum) to two-thirds (maximum) ratio for gender-neutral to gendered facilities recommended by this report. In addition, this policy is limited by its scope: new construction and major renovation. It does not incorporate short-term accommodations to meet the immediate needs of the campus community.**

Short- and long-term application of inclusive design at Queen's

This report has demonstrated the clear need for inclusive washroom and changeroom design in higher education and beyond. To accomplish this change within new and upgrading facilities at Queen's, focus must remain on overall public safety, personal privacy, and ease of access. **A practical approach to applying inclusive design would incorporate a short-term "accommodation model" to implement small, immediate changes that will meet the needs of the local community regarding privacy and safety while the institution works towards long-term updates to design and policy** (Laidlaw, 2020). Institutions adopting inclusive facilities design should also develop a clear timeline for updating the current and future facilities to this new standard. A suitable end goal is the building and/or conversion of at least one-third of existing gendered facilities to an inclusive, gender-neutral format (Faktor, 2011).

Short-term, immediate changes should include updating all remaining gendered single-stall facilities to gender-neutral spaces; use-based signage that emphasizes the amenities of a facility rather than the identity of the user; and, wherever possible, braille (Cunningham, Buzuvis, & Mosier, 2017; Entro, 2016; Ryerson University, 2019; McMaster University, 2018; Stanford University, 2017; UC Santa Cruz, 2016). Gendered changerooms that currently have shared locker rooms and shower areas should incorporate curtains or similar barriers to strategically increase privacy options for various users, including but not limited to transgender and/or GNC users (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; Meyer & Keenan, 2018; Moen, Westlie, & Skille, 2018; Toronto District School Board, 2011; Trans Focus Consulting, 2020). Wherever possible, short-term changes should also provide menstrual products and disposal bins in both gendered and gender-neutral facilities alike (Frank, 2020). Statements on inclusion should be developed and posted in all facilities. Policies and plans for inclusion should begin development.

Long-term changes should ensure that at least one-third of all campus washrooms are gender-neutral. This can be accomplished through new builds and by retrofitting multi-stall facilities. Multi-stall facilities can be converted to inclusive gender-neutral facilities through the provision of fully private stalls with walls and lockable doors (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; Faktor, 2011; Cunningham, Buzuvis, & Mosier, 2017; Davis, 2018; Barkowsky, Roberts, Stewart, & Zelembaba, 2019; Frank, 2020; Laidlaw, 2020). In

washrooms that already have partially stalled areas, a cost-effective update can include the lengthening of walls and doors already in place (City of Toronto, 2021; Government of Nova Scotia, 2014; HCMA Architecture + Design, 2018; Orr, et al., 2015; Stanford University, 2017; Trans Focus Consulting, 2020; Stalled!, n.d.; UC Santa Cruz, 2016).

“Long-term changes should ensure that at least one-third of all campus washrooms are gender-neutral.”

All campus changerooms should be converted to a gender-neutral format, with private changing stalls and showers; changerooms can save space by building shared access to a gender-neutral locker space (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; YMCA, 2018). Access to common athletic and recreation facilities should not require passing through a gendered changeroom (Cunningham, Buzuvis, & Mosier, 2017).

In all facilities, each stall should include an appropriately angled mirror (Broyer, 2020; Laidlaw, 2020). In addition, all facilities should include freely available, non-gendered menstrual products and disposal containers (Frank, 2020). All facilities should also contain at least one wide stall that is accessible to people of all sizes, people with disabilities, and/or pairs of individuals such as caregivers and care-providers. As with the short-term approach, all facility renovations in the long-term should continue to incorporate inclusive signage standards (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2019; Barkowsky et al., 2019; City of Vancouver, 2016; Stanford University, 2017; Trans Focus Consulting, 2020; YMCA, 2018).

Finally, long-term updates should include the development, passing, and sharing of institutional policies, codes of conduct, and educational campaigns related to inclusion across the university. This information should be shared through a university webpage that answers common questions, tracks progress towards inclusion across the university, and is updated on a regular basis.

Recommendations

The present review of scholarly and trade literatures, along with the online environmental scan of Southern Ontario universities, supports the following recommendations for taking action at Queen's:

1. Implement the short-term and long-term measures described in this report

2. Create a structure and process to guide implementation

3. Update the Gender-Neutral Washrooms Policy

Each of these is fleshed out below.

1. Implement the short-term and long-term measures described in this report

The following list briefly summarizes the preceding section for ease of reference:

Short-term accommodations:

- 1.a • Adopt and implement an inclusive signage standard for all facilities.
 - 1.a.i - Follow guidelines for signage that communicates the amenities of facilities rather than the identity of users.
- 1.b • Convert remaining gendered single-stall facilities to gender-neutral spaces.
 - 1.b.i - Can be achieved with a simple signage update, in most cases.
- 1.c • Create private areas in shared changerrooms.
 - 1.c.i - Use curtains or similar barriers to allow private changing and showering.
- 1.d • Incorporate resources and educational material into all facilities.
 - 1.d.i - Add resources such as menstrual products and disposal bins to gendered and gender-neutral facilities.
 - 1.d.ii - Incorporate posters and related educational material to communicate the move towards new inclusion practices.

Long-term updates:

- 2.a • Convert at least one-third of all multi-stall washrooms across campus to gender-neutral spaces.
 - 2.a.i - Place strategically across the building(s) available, to support easy access at all levels at locations.
- 2.b • Convert remaining multi-stall gendered washrooms to an inclusive format.
 - 2.b.i - Recognize the presence of transgender and/or GNC people in all facilities.
 - 2.b.ii - Make all changerrooms gender neutral.
 - 2.b.iii - Include private stalls for changing and showering.
- 2.c • Adapt all washroom stalls to inclusive format.
 - 2.c.i - Lengthen walls; provide lockable doors.
 - 2.c.ii - Include a mirror, menstrual products, and a disposal bin in each stall.
 - 2.c.iii - Provide wide stalls to accommodate a variety body sizes, pregnant people, people with disabilities (including wheelchair users), and/or multiple users (such as a caregiver and care-receiver).
 - 2.c.iv - Provide changing tables within all facilities.
- 2.d • Update points of access.
 - 2.d.i - Provide a point of access for gym and recreation spaces that do not require passing through any gendered changerrooms.
- 2.e • Continue ongoing community education.
 - 2.e.i - Post statements and/or codes of conduct in all facility locations.
 - 2.e.ii - Mount educational campaign and associated webpage to inform all internal and external members of the organization about the move towards inclusivity.
 - 2.e.iii - Update materials on a regular basis.

2. Create a structure and process to guide short-term and long-term implementation

Implementing the short- and long-term changes in the previous section is a significant undertaking that requires both funding from and coordination among several units at Queen's. A key concern is prioritizing particular washrooms and changerooms for updates, both initially and on an ongoing basis, according to community needs and current facility conditions. One possible approach among many is a **yearly funding allocation** that is overseen by a **committee** that includes representation from PAGGAS (staff, faculty and student), Facilities, and other key units on campus. The work of allocation might begin with a **comprehensive audit** of all washrooms and changerooms on the Queen's main and west campuses, using a tool that reflects the evidence and best practices summarized in this report. The audit, combined with stakeholder feedback and other available data such as the Student Experience Survey, could inform the committee's yearly allocation.

The rationale for a separate yearly funding allocation is informed by the necessity of updating buildings on campus that are not slated for renovation. This is expanded upon in the next recommendation to update the Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy.

3. Update the Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy

While the current Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy was a landmark document in Canadian post-secondary education, it requires updating on several fronts: removing the policy's limitation to new builds or significant renovations; adding changerooms to the policy's scope; aligning with contemporary language use; and other updates as required in order to align with the short- and long-term measures included in this report and as supported by research.

First, **the scope of the Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy is limited in that it is only "applicable to major renovation and construction of buildings on campus."** This removes responsibility for funding washroom (and conceivably changeroom – see below) updates from general university budgets and instead situates responsibility within one-time capital projects. The vast majority of Queen's community members access older buildings and buildings that are not slated for renovation in the near future. As such, the policy's scope as it is limited to major renovation and construction is a significant barrier to necessary change. Further, the Facilities Department has been in conversation with our research team and is currently drafting a new Inclusion for the Built Environment Standard that aligns with many⁴ of the recommended measures in this report; the Standard would only apply to major renovations and new construction. As such, the Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy is best-suited to mandate changes on a wider scale, including in existing buildings that are not currently slated for renovation.

Second, **the current policy is limited to washrooms**, whereas the literature reviewed throughout this report clearly demonstrates the risk posed to transgender, GNC, and other populations by the provision of non-inclusive changerooms.

Third, the ongoing re-emergence of gender diversity into public life in Canada has been accompanied by shifts in the language used to describe how different people—whether transgender or cisgender—experience gender. For example, the term 'gender variant' is used in many places in the existing policy but is no longer in common usage. As policy ought to reflect experiences of the communities in which it is enacted, it is important to **update the terms and concepts used within the Gender-Neutral Washroom Policy**.

4. The research team has not seen a draft of the Standard and therefore cannot confirm final alignment. Facilities has shared information about its contents in writing by email and orally in meetings.

Each column indicates a best practice for inclusive washroom and/or changeroom design. The data in the table was retrieved from each university's public-facing online communications, and is current as of July 2021.

	Communications explicitly indicate the presence of gender-neutral washrooms on campus	Communications explicitly indicate the presence of gender-neutral changerooms on campus	Gender-neutral facilities signage is use-based (communicates amenities using images and/or text and/or braille)	Statements of inclusion statement and/or inclusive codes of conduct posted within washrooms and/or changeroom
Algoma				
Brock	✓	✓	✓	
Carleton	✓		✓	
Lakehead	✓			
Laurentian	✓	✓	✓	
McMaster	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nipissing	✓			✓
OCAD	✓		✓	
Ontario Tech	✓	✓		
Queen's	✓	✓		✓
Ryerson	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trent	✓		✓	
University of Guelph	✓	✓	✓	
University of Ottawa	✓		✓	
University of Toronto	✓		✓	
University of Toronto, Mississauga Campus	✓	✓	✓	
University of Toronto, Scarborough Campus	✓		✓	
University of Waterloo	✓	✓		
University of Windsor	✓			
Western	✓	✓	✓	✓
Wilfrid Laurier	✓		✓	✓
York	✓		✓	✓
Total (out of 22)	21	10	15	7

Appendix: Environmental Scan

	University webpages related to inclusive washrooms/changerooms	Map/list of all gender-neutral washrooms on campus	Map/list of all gender-neutral changerooms on campus	Public-facing policy with information on inclusive, gender-neutral washrooms	Public-facing policy with information on inclusive, gender-neutral changerooms
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓			
	✓	✓	✓		✓
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓		✓	
	✓	✓			
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓			
	✓	✓			
	✓	✓			
	✓	✓			
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	✓	✓			
		✓			
	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	✓	✓		✓	
	✓	✓	✓		
	17	18	8	8	5

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