



# SOGIECE: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity or Expression Change Efforts



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**[www.stopconversionpractices.ca](http://www.stopconversionpractices.ca)**

A Knowledge Centre created by and with survivors of conversion practices, for all who are working to support survivors and end these harmful practices in Canada

The Community-Based Research Centre  
in partnership with No Conversion Canada (2023)

***“When I’ve heard the term SOGIECE, I’ve always assumed this to be formal change efforts in psychotherapy or religious counselling settings. What I’ve learned, however, is that SOGIECE can also be subtle and insidious and just as intentional and targeted as formalized methods.”***

In addition to conversion practices there are other ways in which people are pressured to change, deny, suppress, or lead a person to doubt their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

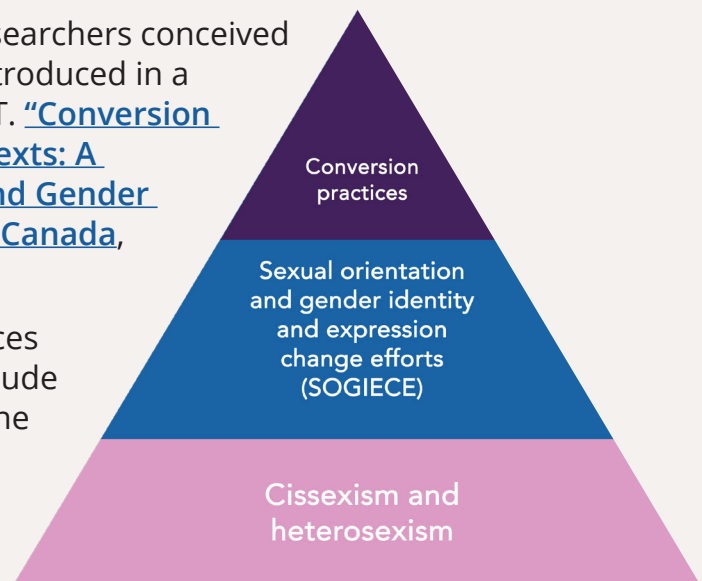
These subtle or blatant pressures or messages — which can be just as harmful as conversion practices — are known as **SOGIECE**. They include formal and structured “conversion practices” as well as unstructured and informal practices, messages, or pressures.

Many 2S/LGBTQIA+ people who do not identify as survivors of conversion practices, will have experienced these types of change efforts throughout their lives. A 2022 Quebec study ([Blais M.](#)) sampled 3,261 lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and Two-Spirit persons aged 18 years and older, and found **25% of respondents experienced SOGIECE**.

## The SOGIECE Pyramid

In 2020, several Canadian survivors and researchers conceived of a [SOGIECE Pyramid](#). The concept was introduced in a paper: Kinitz D.J., Goodyear T., and Salway T. [“Conversion Therapy” Experiences in Their Social Contexts: A Qualitative Study of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity and Expression Change Efforts in Canada](#), (The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry, 2021)

At the top of the pyramid are formal practices known as **conversion practices**. These include faith-based, structured group retreats, online programs, and/or one-on-one counselling; and healthcare-based, structured talk therapy, (gender exploratory therapy, and/or one-on-one counselling).



In the middle of the pyramid, we find **SOGIECE** which includes subtle or blatant faith-based, unstructured, and informal conversation, pressures, and messages.

SOGIECE includes many ways and situations in which queer, trans, and Two-Spirit people experience harmful pressure to suppress their authentic selves. Parents, caregivers, family, friends, peers, and others in society at large, engage in subtle or blatant messages or pressures that range from violent attacks, verbal and physical harassment, to denial of access to gender-affirming care, and persistent nudges or pressures expressed by others, where they are encouraged to try something heteronormative like dating someone of the opposite gender, or something cis-normative like wearing clothes typically attributed to a gender aligned with the sex assigned at birth.

SOGIECE also includes pressures and messages that are silently internalised in religious settings. These include tasks and rituals (e.g., prayer, study of religious texts, exorcisms), believing negative statements that being 2S/LGBTQIA+ is irreconcilable with faith or religious beliefs, and being taught that God rejects you and that you are going to hell.

***“I wasn’t part of a change ministry [conversion practice] but my family and home church all believed they were the only/best option for me. I never followed through and joined a program, but the same messages were conveyed in countless ways through my friends and church programs.”***

Pressures are also experienced within the 2S/LGBTQIA+ community. For example, when bisexual people are teased or pressured to 'choose' or 'pick a side,' or the transphobic anxiety some people feel about 'losing' lesbians and gays who come out as trans or non-binary, or refusing to include trans people in groups or activities.

Conversion practices and change efforts are enabled and condoned by widespread **heterosexism and cissexism** in contemporary societies, including in Canada.

When we understand change efforts in this way, we recognize that many in the queer, trans, and Two-Spirit communities have experienced harm as a result of consistent ongoing pressures and messages that target our sexual and/or gender identity and expression.

Social and health policy responses should account for the visible and invisible ways that SOGIECE operates in order to effectively promote safety, equity, and health for sexually diverse and gender-diverse people.

***For additional information** about SOGIECE see the Research section at [Stop Conversion Practices](http://www.stopconversionpractices.ca).*

**Read more about the who, what, why, where, and how of conversion practices and access a variety of supports and resources at [www.stopconversionpractices.ca](http://www.stopconversionpractices.ca)**



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