



Intersex: What you need to know

Intersex people are born with variations in sex characteristics, such as chromosomes, hormones, gonads, or anatomy, that do not fit typical ideas of male or female. Intersex is a natural part of human diversity. Some intersex people identify as women, men, non-binary, or in other ways, just like everyone else. Many intersex people face stigma, harmful medical practices, and exclusion, particularly in healthcare, sports, and legal systems.



Respectful ways to refer to intersex people

People who are intersex describe themselves in many different ways. Some may describe themselves as intersex, others as having a Variation in Sex Characteristics (VSC), or by their specific diagnosis. It is important to be respectful and mirror the language each person uses for themselves.



Key issues

Unnecessary medical interventions are still done on intersex children without freely given, informed consent in Canada and across the globe. Interventions on intersex people, other than the rare occasions they are needed for life-saving reasons, should be consented to and desired. Additionally, intersex people who are also Indigenous, racialized, disabled, or otherwise marginalized, experience multiple barriers and overlapping forms of discrimination. These intersecting barriers can limit access to care, support, representation, and autonomy.



What we can do as union members

Support rights and bodily autonomy

- Advocate to end non-consensual and medically unnecessary interventions on intersex children and adults and support bodily autonomy.

Strengthen workplace inclusion

- Ensure intersex people are included in equity and human rights work. Affirm that intersex women are women.

Improve benefits and supports

- Advocate for inclusive health benefits, including mental health and fertility care.

Challenge myths and misinformation

- Speak out against harmful and inaccurate media coverage.
- Respect people's privacy—no one should be forced to disclose if they are intersex.

Support inclusion beyond the workplace

- Support having the option for birth certificates issued without sex markers and fair participation and inclusion in sport.