



The Rise of the ‘Performative Male:’ How Young Men are Experimenting with Masculinity Online

Jillian Sunderland, University of Toronto

Across **TikTok** and **university campuses**, young men are rewriting what masculinity looks like today, sometimes with matcha lattes, **Labubus**, film cameras and thrifted tote bags.

At **Toronto Metropolitan University**, a “performative male” contest recently drew a sizeable crowd by poking fun at this new TikTok archetype of masculinity. The “performative man” is a new Gen Z term describing young men who deliberately craft a soft, sensitive, emotionally aware aesthetic, signalling the rejection of “toxic masculinity.”

At “performative male” contests, participants compete for laughs and for women’s attention by reciting poetry, showing off thrifted fashion or handing out feminine hygiene products to show they’re one of the “good” guys.