



Canada's first

Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan

...Building our future, with pride



Government
of Canada

Gouvernement
du Canada

Canada 

The mandate of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) is to advance equality with respect to sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression through the inclusion of people of all genders, including women, in Canada's economic, social, and political life.

The Department for Women and Gender Equality works to uphold its mandate to advance gender equality by performing a central coordination function within the Government of Canada by developing and implementing policies, providing major funding of grants and contributions, delivering programs, investing in research, and providing advice to achieve equality for people of all genders, including women.

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Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan... Building our future, with pride.

ISBN for PDF: SW21-188/2022E-PDF

978-0-660-44602-8

ISBN for Paper: SW21-188/2022E

978-0-660-44603-5

This publication is available in French

Le premier plan d'action fédéral 2ELGBTQI+ au Canada... Bâtir notre avenir avec fierté.

ISBN pour PDF : SW21-188/2022F-PDF

978-0-660-44604-2

ISBN pour Papier : SW21-188/2022F

978-0-660-44605-9

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Message from the Prime Minister



Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau

Credit: Privy Council Office

For the first time in Canadian history, the federal government is presenting a Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and additional sexually and gender diverse people (2SLGBTQI+) Action Plan. It is my hope that with the measures laid out in this whole-of-government approach, we will achieve a future where everyone in Canada is truly free to be who they are and love who they love.

The promise of Canada is a place where no matter who you are, where you come from, or what situation you were born into, you have every opportunity to live your life to its fullest potential. That promise

makes our country such a great place to live and it's the reason so many people from around the world choose to come to Canada for a new life.

Unfortunately, that hasn't always been the case, and in many ways, there is still a lot of work to do. For decades, the Canadian government failed 2SLGBTQI+ people by criminalizing their identities, censoring and undermining their communities, and denying them equal opportunity.

We have taken historic action to build a better, more inclusive future. In 2017, on behalf of the Government of Canada, I delivered a formal apology in the House of Commons for the systemic oppression, rejection, and criminalization of Canadians identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and Two-Spirit. The government passed legislation that provides Canadians with explicit protection from discrimination, hate speech, and hate crimes on the basis of gender identity or expression. We expunged and destroyed criminal records for people convicted of consensual sexual activity with same-sex partners. We funded organizations that serve and advocate for 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians. Earlier this year, we also banned so-called conversion therapy, a cruel, harmful, and degrading practice that has caused lasting pain and trauma for Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

And Health Canada recently approved Canadian Blood Services' submission to stop the blood donor deferral period for men who have sex with men.

This Action Plan was developed with community leaders, researchers, and organizations. It speaks to the concerns of diverse members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities across the country and lays the foundation to continue working with partners to ensure everyone can feel safe and be themselves. It's a promise to continue supporting community organizations serving and advocating for 2SLGBTQI+ people, including within Indigenous, Black, and racialized communities, to continue advancing and strengthening 2SLGBTQI+ rights both at home and around the world, and to

continue improving our understanding of the challenges 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians face to inform future initiatives.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Action Plan. Canada gets a little bit stronger every day that we choose to embrace and to celebrate who we are, in all our uniqueness. We are a diverse nation enriched by the lives, experiences, and contributions of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Let us celebrate all the communities that make Canada such a diverse country, and work together to build a better future we can all be proud of.

Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau delivers an apology on behalf of the Canadian government to members of Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ communities at the House of Commons, November 28, 2017

Credit: Adam Scotti (Prime Minister's Office)



Message from the Minister



The Honourable Marci Ien, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Youth

Credit: Hannaan Hassan

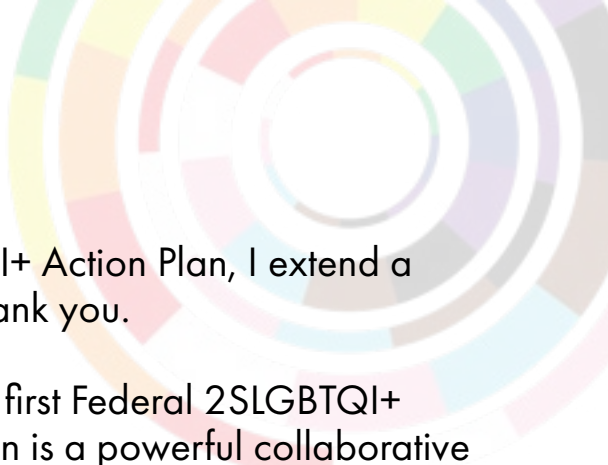
When I ran for office, I made a commitment to amplifying the voices of diverse communities – no matter what their background was, where they were from, or who they love. Taking the time to listen and honour the lived experiences of people who don't often see themselves reflected in positions of power was part of my career as a broadcast journalist and is part of my Ministerial mandate today. From Toronto's historic Gay Village to Vancouver's Davie Street, 2SLGBTQI+ communities have made a trailblazing impact in Canada and beyond. Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan is a testament to

the 2SLGBTQI+ community's resilience and grassroots activism.

This activism doesn't only belong in large cities or in gay villages. We need to keep working to make sure that every person in Canada can fully participate in all spheres of society, including all 2SLGBTQI+ communities from coast to coast to coast. To achieve this, we've collaborated and consulted with 2SLGBTQI+ organizations, stakeholders, and community leaders to improve human rights and developed inclusive federal policies, programs, and laws based on that feedback. We do this because putting lived experience first is the right thing to do.

It is well-known that 2SLGBTQI+ people continue to face significant challenges – including negative mental health impacts, underemployment, homelessness, harassment, bullying, and violence. These challenges are further amplified for people with intersecting lived experiences, including Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities, Black and racialized 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and 2SLGBTQI+ people with disabilities.

This is not new news to anyone, and it is exactly why our government stepped up through concrete actions to right these wrongs.



In 2017, the Prime Minister delivered a formal apology to survivors of the LGBT Purge and LGBTQ2 communities in Canada more broadly for their historically unjust treatment. This apology helped create a foundation for healing and progress. That same year, the Government of Canada created the LGBTQ2 Secretariat to further promote equality for 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians, protect their rights, and address discrimination against them.

This plan honours and recognizes the historic and ongoing roles that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and civil society organizations play in advocating for the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people and in building safer and more resilient communities through decades of protest and activism. To all the community members, organizations, friends, and allies who contributed to the development of our first-ever Federal

2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, I extend a sincere thank you.

Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan is a powerful collaborative effort that will help chart our path toward building a more inclusive country. The very first of its kind for the Government of Canada, this Action Plan presents a suite of measures that seek to advance equality and protect hard-earned rights, while also tackling discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

While this is a historical first, I can assure you that the work does not end here – we will continue to engage with 2SLGBTQI+ community leaders to make sure we're building a Canada for everyone.

Marci Ien
Minister for Women and
Gender Equality and Youth



Note on Acronyms

2SLGBTQI+ terminology and acronyms are continuously evolving. In 2016, the Government of Canada began using the term 'LGBTQ2.' The term was applied to the name of the LGBTQ2 Secretariat, the LGBTQ2 Community Capacity Fund, and LGBTQ2 Projects Fund, among other initiatives. LGBTI is often used in an international context. 2SLGBTQQIA+ is the acronym adopted by the 2SLGBTQQIA+ Committee, which contributed to the 2021 *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and the 2SLGBTQQIA+ People National Action Plan*.

During the engagement process, 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada called for the acronym used by the Government of Canada to be updated. The Government of Canada will adopt and encourage the use of 2SLGBTQI+ as a more inclusive term. This includes changing the name of the LGBTQ2 Secretariat to the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat, which is the title used throughout this Action Plan.

2SLGBTQI+

2S at the front, recognizes Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

L Lesbian

G Gay

B Bisexual

T Transgender

Q Queer

I Intersex, considers sex characteristics beyond sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

+ is inclusive of people who identify as part of sexual and gender diverse communities, who use additional terminologies.

Other 2SLGBTQI+ terms and acronyms

A glossary of 2SLGBTQI+ terms and acronyms is available on [Canada.ca](https://www.canada.ca).

Note: the evolution of language within communities may inform future evolutions of this acronym.



Introduction

The 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan will advance rights and equality for Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and additional sexually and gender diverse people in Canada.

The Action Plan takes a holistic approach to addressing the substantial and persisting inequities faced by 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and communities. It was developed based on the experiences, evidence and voices of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and stakeholders through an extensive engagement process. The Government of Canada received input from 25,636 survey respondents, 102 written submissions, and over 100 participants across seven roundtable discussions, who generously shared their lived experiences, knowledge and expertise.

The Action Plan seeks to address and prevent discrimination and stigma based on sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity and expression from emerging or worsening for future 2SLGBTQI+ generations. It will do so by prioritizing community action and by coordinating the Government's work to advance 2SLGBTQI+ issues across federal departments and agencies in a holistic, whole-of-government approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of the types of inequities facing communities.

Guided by this approach, the Action Plan focuses on the following priority areas over the next five years:

- 1. Prioritize and sustain 2SLGBTQI+ community action**
- 2. Continue to advance and strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ rights at home and abroad**
- 3. Support Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence**
- 4. Engage everyone in Canada in fostering a 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive future**
- 5. Strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ data and evidence-based policy making**
- 6. Embed 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the work of the Government of Canada**

Achieving full equality and improving overall outcomes for 2SLGBTQI+ communities will require sustained efforts across all levels of government, industries and society.

The Action Plan is an evergreen document that builds on progress the Government of Canada has already made and will continue to guide the Government of Canada's work into the future.



Reconciliation and the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities



Vancouver, B.C., Canada – July 1, 2021: Vocalists perform in reflection of the Canadian Residential School System.

Credit: Blake Elliott

The Government of Canada is working to advance reconciliation and renew relationships with Indigenous peoples, based on the recognition of rights, respect, cooperation and partnership. This includes reconciliation with Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

In a report that contributed to the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People Federal Pathway and National Action Plan*, the 2SLGBTQI+ Committee explains that Two-Spirit people existed and fulfilled vital roles in many Indigenous nations prior to contact with European settlers. The report highlights that over two-thirds of the approximately 200 Indigenous languages spoken in North America include different terms referring to individuals with identities and expressions outside the Western gender binary definitions. Critical roles in the communities fulfilled by Two-Spirit people included teachers, knowledge keepers, healers, herbalists, child minders, spiritual leaders, interpreters, mediators and artists.

As stated in the report, and attributed to Dr. Percy Lezard, the ‘closet’ was brought to Indigenous territories by European settlers. The report uses the term ‘gendercide’ to describe “the intentional elimination of Indigenous people who were perceived to be neither fully male nor fully female or expressed a unique third or other gender...”.

The report also highlights that “While there is no contestation about the resilience of 2SLGBTQI+ people, the level of violence, exclusion and erasure that our community members continue to experience is in need of immediate attention at multiple levels”.

The full report of the 2SLGBTQI+ Committee, including all of its recommendations, can be found on the *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and 2SLGBTQI+ People National Action Plan* [website](#).



GBA Plus: An intersectional approach

The Action Plan was developed using an intersectional approach, [Gender-Based Analysis Plus](#) (GBA Plus), which informed the community engagement process, the analysis of the results and the development of the Action Plan. ‘Intersectional’ refers to the “consideration of how multiple overlapping factors shape social, health and economic opportunities and outcomes for people, as well as barriers to accessing programs or services.”¹ GBA Plus leads to a better diagnostic of the problem, stronger solutions and nuanced strategies to reduce inequalities and address barriers faced by specific groups of people.

In this context, the intersectional approach taken to develop the Action Plan considered the disproportionate health, social and economic inequities experienced by some 2SLGBTQI+ communities, which are exacerbated by colonialism, systemic racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, as well as other interconnected factors that inhibit the inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canadian society. These intersecting systems of oppression also compound barriers to accessing the support needed to respond to impacts on health, economic and social outcomes at individual and community levels. It also considered the multiple identities and contextual factors of the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada.

Minority stress

Minority stress is one of the effects felt by 2SLGBTQI+ people resulting from discrimination and stigma in various aspects of their life. It is a form of stress experienced uniquely by minority groups, in addition to everyday life stressors that affect 2SLGBTQI+ and non-2SLGBTQI+ people alike.²

School-related stress


All youth face school-related stress, whether it is related to exams, deadlines or balancing extracurricular activities. A trans youth, however, might wake up in an unsupportive household, face interrogation from parents and siblings on their gender expression, experience gender dysphoria on the way to the bus stop, and face bullying from peers on the way to their locker. This youth might experience all these things before making it to the classroom. For 2SLGBTQI+ communities, experiences of discrimination are not unique, but are encountered across multiple aspects of life. These experiences shape the day-to-day realities of 2SLGBTQI+ people.



Key federal 2SLGBTQI+ milestones

The relationship between 2SLGBTQI+ communities and the federal government has historically been driven by activism and legal action to push for the progression of rights over the last 50 years. This led to the following legislative milestones:

- 1969** Decriminalization of gross indecency and buggery for consenting adults 21 years and older (Canada's first *Criminal Code* (1892) included offences prohibiting gross indecency and buggery [anal intercourse])
- 1977** *Immigration Act* amended, removing "homosexuals" from list of "inadmissible classes"
- 1992** End of Canadian Armed Forces restrictions regarding the service of "homosexuals"
- 1995** Supreme Court rules that "equality" *Charter* rights extend to sexual orientation
- 1996** *Canadian Human Rights Act* amended to include sexual orientation
- 2000** *Benefits and Obligations Act* extended to same-sex couples
- 2005** Legalization of same-sex marriage under *Civil Marriages Act*



In 2016, the Prime Minister appointed a Special Advisor on LGBTQ2 issues, and shortly thereafter, created what is now called the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat with the mandate to provide the federal government with pathways to address historical and ongoing injustices experienced by 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada. Since then, the Government of Canada has taken further steps toward building a safer and more inclusive country:

2017 *Canadian Human Rights Act* protects gender identity and gender expression

2017 Prime Minister's apology to LGBT Purge survivors and 2SLGBTQI+ communities

2018 Federal Court approved Final LGBT Purge Class Action Settlement Agreement

2018 *Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act* for eligible offences involving consensual same-sex sexual activity

2019 Repeal of anal intercourse, vagrancy and bawdy house offences

2019 Targeted programming for 2SLGBTQI+ communities announced, including Community Capacity Fund and advancing 2SLGBTQI+ rights globally through the Feminist International Assistance Policy

2021 Projects Fund announced

2022 *Act to Amend the Criminal Code (Conversion Therapy)* becomes law

2022 Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan launched



Context for action

Discrimination based on sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity and expression dates back to the country's earliest foundations, when settlers imposed European norms of gender and sexuality onto Two-Spirit peoples as tools of colonization.

Over the past 150+ years, systemic discrimination has taken many forms: pathologization, criminalization, imprisonment, rejection by family and friends, police raids of community spaces, lost livelihoods, the refusal of LGBTI immigrants, a ban on donating blood, physical violence and death.



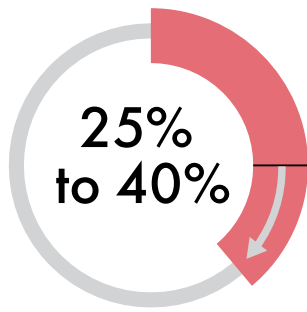
Marchers protesting Montreal police raids that targeted two gay bars in 1977, with 146 patrons arrested. Most charges were dropped, but only 5 years later. Some of the signs include messages like: "We are everywhere", "Lesbians are gay too", and "Young gay and proud!"

Courtesy of the Quebec Gay Archives

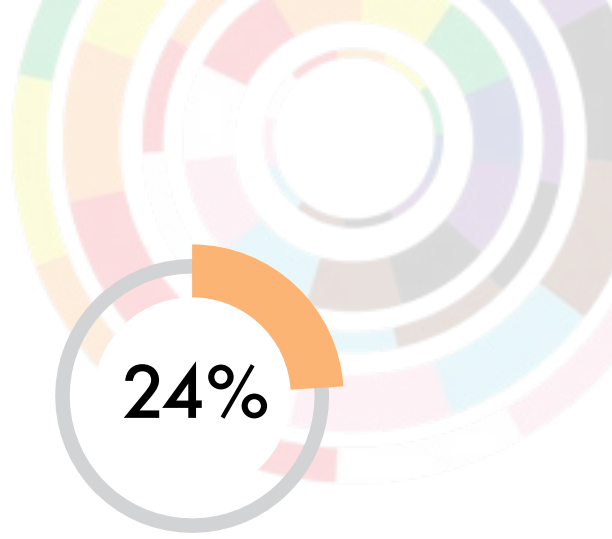
nation and harassment in what is now referred to as the LGBT Purge. Many were interrogated, followed, abused, and fired in accordance with policy and sanctioned practice.

Today, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals continue to experience stigma and discrimination, which are at the root of multiple inequities in areas such as health, safety, housing and employment. The types and levels of inequities that are experienced vary across 2SLGBTQI+ communities:

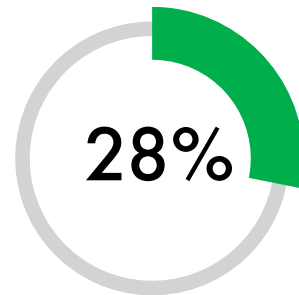
Federal workplaces were not immune to this discrimination. Between the 1950s and mid-1990s, 2SLGBTQI+ Canadian Armed Forces and Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) members, as well as 2SLGBTQI+ federal public servants, were subjected to systemic discrimi-



- 25% to 40% of **homeless youth** in Canada are 2SLGBTQI+ ³ and 64% of 2SLGBTQI+ students who participated in one study reported feeling unsafe at school.⁴
- Results from the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS) shows that community members were more than twice as likely as non-community members to have experienced some type of **homelessness or housing insecurity** since the age of 15 (27% vs. 13%, respectively).⁵ Statistics also show that seniors, racialized people and recent immigrants are more likely to experience housing challenges within these communities.
- 2SLGBTQI+ people are **more likely to live in poverty**. Intersecting factors, including Indigeneity, race, disability and immigration status, compound poverty among 2SLGBTQI+ individuals. In 2018, a significantly higher proportion of 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians (41%) had a total personal income of less than \$20,000 per year compared with their non-2SLGBTQI+ counterparts (26%). The average personal income of 2SLGBTQI+ income earners were also significantly lower (\$39,000) than those of non-2SLGBTQI+ (\$54,000) people in Canada.



- The 2019 Trans PULSE survey, which included trans and non-binary people in Canada, revealed that 24% of participants had an **annual income of less than \$15,000**.⁶



- 28% of **2SLGBTQI+ seniors** who participated in one study had fallen behind on rent or mortgage payments or needed to borrow money for housing costs within the past five years. ⁷
- LGB and other non-heterosexual individuals are nearly two times more likely to experience violence in their lifetime. According to the 2018 Survey of Safety in Public and Private Spaces (SSPPS), excluding experiences of intimate partner violence, 59% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and other non-heterosexual respondents had experienced **physical or sexual assault** since the age of 15, compared with 37% of heterosexual respondents. They were also **less likely than heterosexual people**



to report incidences to the police, even though they are more likely to have sustained an injury. Rates of assault were even higher against LGB and other non-heterosexual respondents who were also Indigenous or persons with disabilities.

- Compared to the general population, transgender and gender diverse people in Canada are more than five times more likely to attempt suicide and to have mental health issues. Further, 2SLGBTQI+ people are also more than two and a half times more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes and to have been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder compared to cisgender counterparts. Unmet health needs are also a significant issue, compounded by other factors, including geographic location. Research shows that individuals living in rural areas are the least likely to have access to specialist health services, to have a regular primary healthcare provider, and are more likely to have unmet healthcare needs. According

to the 2019 Trans PULSE survey, 12% of respondents avoided the emergency room in the previous year, and 45% reported having **unmet healthcare needs** within the same period.

Although Canada has made substantial gains in recent years toward improved equity and greater protections for 2SLGBTQI+ communities, it is clear that much work remains.

A phenomenon of 'going back into the closet' has emerged among 2SLGBTQI+ seniors in long-term care, where they do not disclose their identities out of fear of discrimination from care staff and other residents. This is even though many of today's 2SLGBTQI+ seniors are those who fought for 2SLGBTQI+ rights.



Building Canada's first federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan through community engagement (2020-2021)

Acknowledgements

The Government of Canada would like to thank all people who took part in the online survey, roundtables, meetings and provided written submissions. Your contributions and expertise have built a solid foundation for change.

Listening to 2SLGBTQI+ Communities

The Government of Canada recognizes the historic and ongoing roles that 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and civil society organizations play in advocating for the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ people, and in building safer and more resilient communities. The development of the Action Plan was informed by 2SLGBTQI+ people across the country.

25,636 survey respondents shared their experiences related to safety, health, housing and homelessness, employment, discrimination, stigma and resilience. **102 written submissions** were received from

organizations, and **seven roundtable discussions** took place where over 100 participants shared their lived experiences, knowledge and expertise. Multiple meetings were also held with 2SLGBTQI+ civil society organizations.

For an overview of what was heard during the engagement process, please consult **Annex 1: Summary of engagement findings and available Government of Canada initiatives**.

For a snapshot of the survey results, see [LGBTQ2 Action Plan Survey – Quick stats – Women and Gender Equality Canada](#).

Roundtable discussions included community leaders, academics/researchers, and individuals representing 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations, including many that were historically excluded from policy making processes.



Survey Demographics

Under 35



55% of respondents were below 35 years of age

Disabilities



27% identified as persons with disabilities;
of these 66% experienced mental-health related challenges

French



18% noted French was the first language learned at home and still spoken; and less than 1% noted an Indigenous language

Racialized



16% identified as a member of one or more racialized communities

Rural



10% lived in rural areas

Indigenous



6% identified as Indigenous

65+



4% were 65 and older

New federal 2SLGBTQI+ actions

While this Action Plan is not the first or last step taken toward 2SLGBTQI+ equality, it marks an important step toward addressing 2SLGBTQI+ issues. The path forward is forged in collaboration between the Government of Canada, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, organizations and individuals.

Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan is:

- **Community-focused**, to continue building relationships with 2SLGBTQI+ people and civil society to prioritize the needs, expertise and leadership of 2SLGBTQI+ voices.
- **Coordinated**, to bring together present and future federal action under a unified, whole-of-government approach to help improve the lives of 2SLGBTQI+ people.
- **Collaborative**, to continue to work with communities, researchers, leaders and federal partners to bring together multiple areas of expertise in a combined effort.
- **Holistic**, to build an understanding that the inequities facing communities are multi-faceted and interconnected.

The Action Plan prioritizes direct support for communities. Stakeholders indicated that direct support would enable the 2SLGBTQI+ community sector to continue its crucial work to serve and advocate for the needs of diverse communities. Direct support for communities addresses the unique capacity challenges facing some 2SLGBTQI+ community

organizations, particularly those serving underrepresented communities. These include Indigenous, Black and racialized 2SLGBTQI+ communities, who often face additional barriers in securing funding and support for their communities.

Through Budget 2022, the Government of Canada announced \$100 million over five years, starting in 2022-23, to support the implementation of the 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan and to support a fairer and more equal Canada for 2SLGBTQI+ people. This funding will be used to directly support communities and to address 2SLGBTQI+ issues going forward.

This Action Plan builds on the Government's efforts to construct positive, collaborative relationships with communities. It focuses on the following priority areas:

1. Prioritize and sustain 2SLGBTQI+ community action
2. Continue to advance and strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ rights at home and abroad
3. Support Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence
4. Engage everyone in Canada in fostering a 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive future
5. Strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ data and evidence-based policy making
6. Embed 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the work of the Government of Canada



A couple kisses with children on their shoulders in
Victoria, British Columbia
Credit: Marcia Fernandes

1: Prioritize and sustain 2SLGBTQI+ community action

Objective

Support the growth, sustainability and leadership of 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations in advocating for and serving the communities they represent.

Government of Canada actions

- **Provide up to \$40 million in new capacity-building grants and contributions for 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations:**

The Government of Canada will enhance Women and Gender Equality Canada's Community Capacity Fund, which was established in 2019 to address the discrimination and inequities faced by 2SLGBTQI+ communities by supporting initiatives that strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations. This includes building managerial capacity, ensuring long-term sustainability, increasing access to evidence, data, information, and knowledge sources, and amplifying sector capacity at large. To date, it has supported 77 organizations to establish formal networks, become legally constituted, develop strategic and financial plans, improve knowledge about

the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and improve leaders' technical skills so they can effectively run their organizations.

New capacity-building funding will allow community organizations to undertake this important work, prioritizing funding for 2SLGBTQI+ communities experiencing additional marginalization, such as Black, racialized and Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities, 2SLGBTQI+ persons with disabilities, seniors, youth, official language minority communities, and those living in rural communities.

- **Provide up to \$35 million in new projects grants and contributions funding for 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations:**

The Government of Canada will enhance Women and Gender Equality Canada's Projects Fund, which supports community-informed initiatives aimed at addressing specific barriers to 2SLGBTQI+ equality. Currently, the Projects Fund is supporting a range of projects to address discriminatory policies and practices, enhance support for 2SLGBTQI+ people and challenge harmful norms and attitudes.

New project funding will allow community organizations to undertake this important work, prioritizing funding for 2SLGBTQI+ communities experiencing additional marginalization, such as Black, racialized and Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities, 2SLGBTQI+ persons with disabilities, seniors, youth, official language minority communities, and those living in rural communities.



Gay couple Michael Stark, left, and partner Michael Leshner – Canada's first legally married same-sex couple in 2003
Credit: Michael Stuparyk

2: Continue to advance and strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ rights at home and abroad

Objective

To promote and continue strengthening the rights of 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada and abroad.

Government of Canada actions

- **Advance 2SLGBTQI+ equality through consultation on criminal law and policy:**
Building on the passage of Bill C-4, which criminalized conversion therapy in Canada, the Government of Canada will continue to ensure that Canadian justice policy protects the dignity and equality of 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians. Specifically, Justice Canada will launch a public consultation (starting in fall 2022) on three criminal law reform issues identified by 2SLGBTQI+ stakeholders as well as Parliamentary Committee recommendations:

- a) the criminalization of purely cosmetic surgeries on intersex children’s genitalia until they are mature enough to provide consent;
- b) limiting prosecutions of persons who fail to disclose their HIV status before otherwise consensual sexual activity;
- c) modernizing indecency-based offences.

- **Expand the expungement regime to add additional historically unjust 2SLGBTQI+ offences to the schedule of Bill C-66:**

The Government of Canada will expand Public Safety’s expungement regime to add additional historically unjust 2SLGBTQI+ offences to the schedule of Bill C-66, *Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act* (EHUCA) (2018).

- **Build on investments since 2019 for 2SLGBTQI+ projects abroad by continuing to work towards an annual investment of up to \$10 million annually, starting in 2025-2026:**

The Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada’s Feminist International Assistance Policy, will continue to invest in 2SLGBTQI+ projects abroad, and will invest up to \$10 million per year to advance human rights and improve socio-economic outcomes for 2SLGBTQI+ people in developing countries as of 2025-2026.

- **Renew Canada’s commitment to the global protection and promotion of 2SLGBTQI+ rights:**

The Government of Canada, through Global Affairs Canada, will recommit to the global protection and promotion of 2SLGBTQI+ rights through diplomacy and advocacy at multilateral, regional, bilateral, and international levels. This includes participation in the UN System, regional organizations, international coalitions, bilaterally and support to missions, and assistance to human rights defenders. Global Affairs Canada will also continue organizing mission-level initiatives that support 2SLGBTQI+ objectives.



Pride events are held annually across Canada to celebrate 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Love is Love, be proud.

Credit: Jon Babulic Photography



A culturally specific identity, “Two-Spirit” is used by some Indigenous people to indicate a person whose gender identity, spiritual identity and/or sexual orientation comprises both male and female spirits. Pictured: a potato dance takes place at the 2018 East Coast Two-Spirit Gathering in New York State. Photo provided by Gabe Calderón (they/them)

3: Support Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence


Objective

Support the resilience and resurgence of Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Government of Canada actions

- **Deliver capacity-building and projects grants and contributions funding for Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations:**

The Government of Canada will prioritize community organizations serving Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ people as part of its Community Capacity and Projects funds.

- 
- **Adopt and encourage the use of the more inclusive term and acronym 2SLGBTQI+ in the Government of Canada:**

In response to community call, the Government of Canada will adopt and encourage the general use of the more inclusive term and acronym 2SLGBTQI+ and change the name of the LGBTQ2 Secretariat accordingly. The “2S” acronym at the front recognizes Two-Spirit people as the first 2SLGBTQI+ communities and foregrounds their experiences as part of the Government’s mandate on Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.

- **Support Indigenous resilience and resurgence within a new federal interdepartmental governance structure on 2SLGBTQI+ issues:**

The Government of Canada will implement a new federal interdepartmental governance structure on 2SLGBTQI+ issues (as outlined later under priority area #6), led by Women and Gender Equality Canada, which will include a senior-level interdepartmental table with a mandate to further Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence throughout Government of Canada initiatives.

- **Create a dedicated Two-Spirit Senior Advisor position within the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat at Women and Gender Equality Canada:**

The Government of Canada will hire a Two-Spirit Senior Advisor within the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat to provide advice on unique issues facing Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities, as well as work with partners throughout the federal government and with Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities and organizations. The Senior Advisor will inform policies and programs that impact Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities, including supporting the development and implementation of 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan initiatives.



Sometimes, demonstrating your pride means showing your true colors.
Pictured: couple holding hands, wearing Pride-themed sweat bands.
Credit: Andriy Popov

4: Engage everyone in Canada in fostering a 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive future

Objective

To raise awareness and improve understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and issues.

Government of Canada actions

- **Provide up to \$5.6 million to enhance inclusion and break down stigma and discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ communities through an awareness campaign:**
The Government of Canada will enhance inclusion and break down underlying and long-standing stigma and discrimination against 2SLGBTQI+ communities through a multi-pronged Awareness Campaign, led by Women and Gender Equality Canada. The design of the awareness campaign will be done in collaboration with 2SLGBTQI+ communities to reflect their realities and needs.



Enhanced data on the realities of 2SLGBTQI+ communities will help shape federal policies that can provide support on important issues.

5: Strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ data and evidence-based policy making

Objective

To improve data collection, analysis, research and knowledge on 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada.

Government of Canada actions

- Provide up to \$7.7 million to support new community-led research, and to conduct new data collection and research to inform future 2SLGBTQI+ initiatives:

The Government of Canada will build a solid foundation for future action on 2SLGBTQI+ issues by supporting, through Women and Gender Equality Canada:

- community-led policy research;



- national data collection through a new survey;
- the collection of data on the effectiveness of initiatives to advance 2SLGBTQI+ equality in Canada.

While there is sufficient data to demonstrate long-standing and persisting issues facing 2SLGBTQI+ communities, a key challenge is the lack of data at the national level, systematically collected and disaggregated for sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and additional intersecting factors of exclusion. The enhanced data will build on existing research and evidence-building activities to improve and better target federal interventions to address those issues most important to communities (e.g. health, employment and homelessness).

- **Increase understanding of barriers experienced by 2SLGBTQI+ seniors ageing in place:**

The Government of Canada will undertake a research study, through Employment and Social Development Canada, on the challenges and barriers experienced by 2SLGBTQI+ seniors ageing in place, particularly the financial, psychosocial, housing, medical, and legal barriers that prevent them from successfully doing so.

- **Identify a pathway for an updated Government of Canada Gender Results Framework that aligns with equity goals for 2SLGBTQI+ communities:**

The Government of Canada remains committed to upholding a decision-making process that considers the impacts of policies, programs, and legislation on all Canadians in a budgetary context, as enshrined in the *Canadian Gender Budgeting Act*. To do that, the Government uses the Gender Results Framework (GRF) – a whole-of-government tool that identifies gender equality priorities and goals with matching indicators to track developments toward these goals. Women and Gender Equality Canada, working with the Department of Finance and Statistics Canada, will identify a pathway for enhancing Canada’s Gender Results Framework (GRF), so that it better reflects the realities of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and better equips Canada to track progress toward achieving 2SLGBTQI+ equality in Canada and around the world. It will also ensure that 2SLGBTQI+ equality is considered in the decision-making process.



Canadian Armed Forces members march in the 2018 Toronto Pride Parade.
Credit: Shawn Goldberg

6: Embed 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the work of the Government of Canada

Objective

To strengthen mechanisms to advance 2SLGBTQI+ issues and ensure coordinated Government of Canada responses to community priorities.

Government of Canada actions

- **Provide up to \$11.7 million to stabilize and expand funding for the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat:**

The Government of Canada will expand and stabilize the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat at Women and Gender Equality Canada, under its new title as the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat, to oversee and enable the implementation of the 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, enable its ongoing work across the federal government to support initiatives led by other government departments that intersect with 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and facilitate public engagement and stakeholder relations activities throughout the implementation of the Action Plan.



- **Implement a new federal interdepartmental governance structure on 2SLGBTQI+ issues:**

The Government of Canada will implement two senior-level interdepartmental governance tables to foreground 2SLGBTQI+ policy issues, both led by Women and Gender Equality Canada. One table will focus on issues facing 2SLGBTQI+ communities writ large, and a second table will focus specifically on the unique issues impacting Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities in support of Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ resilience and resurgence. These tables will help to coordinate the Government of Canada's work to advance on 2SLGBTQI+ issues and advance work on the Action Plan, notably by strengthening interdepartmental collaboration and embedding 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the work of the Government of Canada.

- **Strengthen 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion in federal workplaces and continue acting on the history of the LGBT Purge:**

The Government of Canada will lead by example, as the largest employer in Canada, to continue building and maintaining 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive federal workplaces, and ensure that nothing akin to the LGBT Purge happens again. This includes:

a) Continue to emerge from the LGBT Purge: Canadian Armed Forces, Royal Canadian Mounted Police and the Federal Public Service, in collaboration with the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat, will continue to implement remaining initiatives from the LGBT Purge Class Action Settlement Agreement.

b) Further 2SLGBTQI+ diversity and inclusion within the Government of Canada: The Treasury Board Secretariat (Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer) will lead efforts to further 2SLGBTQI+ diversity and inclusion within the Government of Canada by ensuring the Centre for Diversity and Inclusion's future initiatives are informed by 2SLGBTQI+ federal employee networks, stakeholders and by the 2021 LGBT Purge Report, "Emerging from the Purge: The State of LGBTQI2S Inclusion in the Federal Workplace and Recommendations for Improvement".

c) Fostering a respectful, inclusive and diverse Defence Team: As part of the response to the Emerging From the Purge Report, the Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence are reviewing and updating training resources, increasing awareness and understanding of inclusive language, continuing to define departmental benchmarks, supporting the monitoring of activities, and working in collaboration with 2SLGBTQI+ communities to support 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion.

d) Support employee-led Pride

initiatives: The Government of Canada will continue to encourage employee-led work such as the Positive Space Initiative and Public Service Pride Network, which are key to nurturing a 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive workplace through awareness-raising and learning – and providing sources of peer support and community connections for 2SLGBTQI+ federal employees.

- **Implement a new 2SLGBTQI+ Community and Government of Canada Partnership Committee on next steps:**

In partnership with 2SLGBTQI+ communities, the Government of Canada will implement a new Community Partnership Committee. Co-led by the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat and community stakeholders, the Committee will provide a structured and regular opportunity for communities to inform the implementation

of the Action Plan and inform future actions. Starting in the fall of 2022, the 2SLGBTQI+ Secretariat will work with community representatives to develop and establish the Committee's Terms of Reference, including membership, and agenda-setting approach. The Minister of Women and Gender Equality and Youth would engage with the Partnership Committee, as appropriate.

- **Formally engage Provinces and Territories in advancing 2SLGBTQI+ equity evenly across Canada:**

Beginning with the Federal/Provincial/Territorial table for the Status of Women, the Government of Canada will help advance 2SLGBTQI+ equality by committing to meaningful engagement with provincial, territorial, and municipal partners on matters of importance for 2SLGBTQI+ communities falling within jurisdictional authorities of other levels of government.



Next Steps... An ongoing commitment to action

This Action Plan is an important step in a series of recent milestones that seek to strengthen inclusion and achieve equality for 2SLGBTQI+ communities. However, it is not the last step.

Real change takes a sustained commitment over many years. It requires dedication and support, in collaboration with 2SLGBTQI+ communities, by those inside and outside the federal government.

The Government of Canada acknowledges the contributions of those across other levels of government, sectors and society who are already working to end discrimination

and improve outcomes for 2SLGBTQI+ communities. It recognizes the leadership and work of 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations in advocating for and meeting the needs of the diversity of communities they represent.

The Government of Canada calls on all Canadians, through their actions, to stand with 2SLGBTQI+ communities by helping to end systemic discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, sex characteristics, gender identity and expression. A diverse and inclusive Canada where 2SLGBTQI+ people are celebrated and can fully participate as their true selves is a stronger one.



18 nuances de gai is a Montréal installation that covered a pedestrian section of Sainte-Catherine street, in the Village, between 2017 and 2019. Designed by architect Claude Cormier, it was made up of 180,000 multicolored balls.

Credit: Dav Himbt



Annex 1: Summary of engagement findings and available Government of Canada initiatives

This annex provides a summary of what was heard during the 2020-21 community engagement process to inform the 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan. Alongside these findings are some of the initiatives that the Government of Canada is currently pursuing to contribute to a more diverse, inclusive and equal country, and that are available to 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

- The engagement process underscored key issues in six themes:
 - 1) Safety and justice
 - 2) Employment and the workplace
 - 3) Health and wellbeing
 - 4) Housing and homelessness
 - 5) Global protection and promotion of 2SLGBTQI+ rights
 - 6) Stigma, isolation and resilience.

1) Safety and justice

- 2SLGBTQI+ relations with police and justice institutions are tense, affected by previous criminalization and over surveillance. Engagement participants indicated that the disproportionate number of 2SLGBTQI+ people with criminal records creates barriers to stable employment, fuels stigma and harms health and wellbeing.
- There is a need for more information on the barriers that prevent 2SLGBTQI+ individuals from reporting hate crimes, the impacts of hate crimes and fear of violence due to day-to-day considerations around dress and public affection.
- There is broad concern for communities' safety. Over half of respondents to the national survey did not always feel safe being affectionate with their partner(s) in public.
- Many 2SLGBTQI+ people reported being afraid to work in the open. Only 46% of employed respondents reported feeling comfortable sharing information about their sexual orientation in the workplace.
- Respondents who are gay were more likely to report concern for their public safety. Approximately half of all pansexual, queer and Two-Spirit respondents always or often considered their personal safety risks, when deciding how to dress or appear in public.
- 2SLGBTQI+ communities have historically faced criminalization and persecution by police and other justice-related institutions.

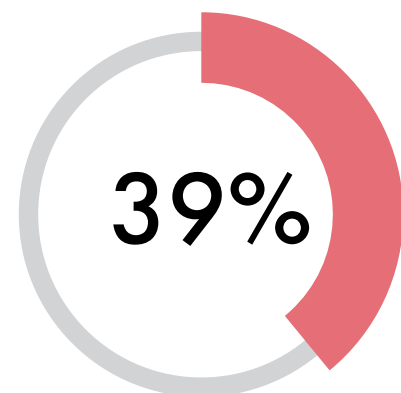


This has eroded trust and has strained relationships with police and the legal system. Respondents noted that many who experienced violence did not report it, primarily because they did not think it would make a difference.

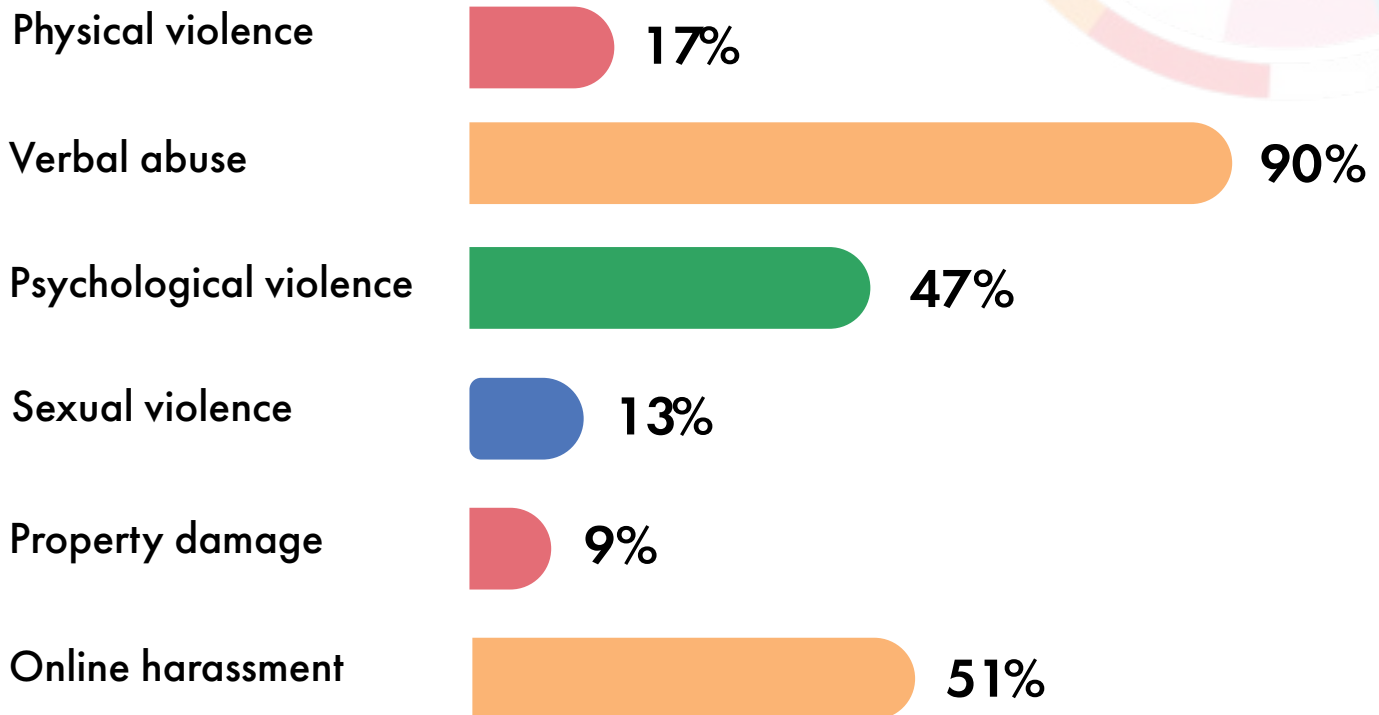
- There is support for the legislation banning conversion therapy, making it illegal to subject adults or children to any practice meant to change their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- At the time of engagement, the former Bill C-6, *An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (conversion therapy)* had been adopted by the House of Commons, but died on the Order Paper when the 2021 federal election was called. The legislation was reintroduced as Bill C-4 and came into force on January 7, 2022. In addition to expressing support for legislation banning conversion therapy, engagement participants stressed the need to help those who have already been harmed by such practices.
- There is a need to protect and advance the rights of intersex people, emphasizing the importance of consultation with intersex communities. Participants spoke of the negative impacts of stigma and corrective surgeries on intersex mental health. They also expressed frustration at the apparent refusal of the healthcare system to provide intersex people with access to aspects of their medical histories, especially surgeries performed on children who did not consent to such procedures.

- Criminalization of sex work, drug use and possession, and HIV non disclosure have had a negative impact on 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Such criminalization disproportionately affects 2SLGBTQI+ people, who often incur criminal records as a result. This creates barriers to finding stable employment, increases and maintains stigma against 2SLGBTQI+ people, enables discrimination and violence toward people living with HIV, increases risk for those engaging in sex work and using drugs, and discourages people from seeking testing or treatment for HIV.
- There are gaps in the *Expungement of Historically Unjust Convictions Act*, which was passed in 2018 to allow individuals to apply to permanently destroy or remove the records of convictions for eligible offences involving consensual sexual activity between same-sex partners that would be lawful today.

Survey respondents overall who had encountered violence or discrimination



The most common forms of violence and discrimination reported by those who experienced them were:



“It’s not enough to stop future harms [such as those related to conversion therapy]. It’s also important to address the needs of those who’ve suffered harm.” – Participant

“The prevailing view is that intersex people are broken and can only be fixed by medical intervention...while not all intersex people identify as queer, all are subjected to the basic abuse of [their] human rights, autonomy, and the development of a self-image free from sexual stigma.” – Participant



Key current and ongoing initiatives

Since the coming into force of the new legislative amendment to the *Criminal Code*, **the Government of Canada, through the Victims Fund, has invested over \$900K to support victims and survivors of conversion therapy** through Public Legal Education and Information organizations and other relevant non-governmental organizations to support the development of materials about the new *Criminal Code* conversion therapy offences. Justice Canada will support community-based research to understand the experiences, as well as to identify and support needs of conversion therapy survivors.

Bill C-5, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (passed third reading in the House of Commons in June 2022) proposes among other things, to encourage early diversion, including referrals to treatment programs in appropriate cases, for simple drug possession.

The Government of Canada has committed to introduce legislation to combat serious forms of harmful online content to protect Canadians, including vulnerable 2SLGBTQI+ people and communities, and hold social media platforms and other online services accountable for the content they host, including by strengthening the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) and the *Criminal Code* to more effectively combat online hate and reintroduce measures to strengthen hate speech provisions, including the re-enactment of former Section 13 of the CHRA.

Correctional Service of Canada will continue to **increase its internal capacity to meet the specific needs of Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ offenders** through a series of ongoing measures to build awareness, improve access to education and information, and encourage the consideration and implementation of alternative interventions.

The Parole Board of Canada will support 2SLGBTQI+ offenders and victims throughout the conditional release decision-making process through training for Board members and employees to enhance awareness of issues affecting 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and through expanded, targeted outreach and engagement with 2SLGBTQI+ offenders, victims, and community organizations.


The **Commissioner's Directive on Gender Diverse Offenders** is an overarching policy that provides direction for staff to ensure gender diverse offenders' needs are met in ways that respect their human rights and ensure their safety and dignity as well as the safety of others in institutions and in the community. This policy is the result of extensive consultations with a wide array of stakeholders, experts, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and organizations.

To support evidence-based policymaking and program development, the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) continues to pursue **research projects on the current gender diverse offender population** and its engagement with a wide array of stakeholders, experts, members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community and incarcerated persons.

The Parole Board of Canada has implemented **operational changes to capture offender gender considerations and ensure that they are respected** in the decision-making process.

The **Digital Citizen Initiative (DCI)** supports democracy and social cohesion in Canada by providing time-limited financial assistance to enhance and/or support efforts to counter online disinformation and other online harms and threats that affect equity-deserving groups, including 2SLGBTQI+ Canadians.

Girls and 2SLGBTQI+ youth often face disproportionate bullying and cyberbullying victimization. The **Initiative to Prevent Bullying and Cyberbullying**, funded in Budget 2018 through the *It's Time: Canada's Strategy to Prevent and Address Gender-Based Violence* (federal GBV Strategy), includes an awareness campaign, direct-intervention programs, and research components to prevent and address bullying and cyberbullying behaviours.



Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada and Women and Gender Equality Canada are collaborating to ensure that **the 2021 MMIWG and 2SLGBTQI+ Federal Pathway and National Action Plan and the 2021 National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence** are complementary and in alignment. This collaboration includes a working group specific to Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities. The MMIWG and 2SLGBTQI+ **Federal Pathway and National Action Plan** includes a committee specific to Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ issues and priorities, which hosts focused virtual discussions. Women and Gender Equality Canada's National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence ensures that the needs of Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities are represented. In addition, Budget 2021 included **\$55 million over five years to bolster the capacity of Indigenous women and Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ organizations** to provide gender-based violence prevention programs aimed at addressing the root causes of violence against Indigenous women, girls, and Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ people.



2) Employment and workplace

- The National Survey provided the following insights into the employment situations of respondents:

- Approximately half were employed full-time;
- 11% were employed part-time;
- 14% were students;
- 7% were unemployed and currently seeking work;
- 6% were self-employed; and,
- 5% were retired.

- Discrimination, harassment, and exclusion remain a prevalent issue in the workplace for 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada. Discrimination they experienced during the hiring process is a substantial barrier to obtaining employment opportunities.
- Those who did experience workplace harassment did not report it, in fear of reprisal or because they believed that their concerns would not be taken seriously. Just over one quarter of survey respondents reported that they had experienced harassment in the workplace due to their sexual orientation, and more than one fifth experienced harassment in the workplace due to their gender identity within the five years preceding the survey.
- The issue of harassment due to their sexual orientation is higher for Two-Spirit people (42%), and almost half of transgender

respondents experienced harassment in the workplace due to their gender identity.

- Some respondents to the national survey reported that they conceal their identities in the workplace altogether.
- Less than half of employed respondents reported feeling comfortable sharing information about their sexual orientation in the workplace.
- Participating organizations called for 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion as a new Employment Equity group to address ongoing discrimination.

“Recognizing the importance of inclusive employment, the federal government should dedicate the resources and funding necessary to establish the federal public service as a model for 2SLGBTQI+ inclusion”. – Participant

Key current and ongoing initiatives

In July 2021, the Government announced the creation of an [Employment Equity Act Review Task Force](#), to conduct **a review of the Employment Equity Act (EEA)**. In its review, the *Employment Equity Act* Task Force will study various work-related issues dealing with equity, diversity, and inclusion in federally regulated

workplaces, and will look at opportunities to redefine and expand equity groups.

The Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP)

is a whole of government plan that will reduce poverty, promote employment and inclusion of persons with disabilities, and focus on actions to change attitudes and culture. To this end, the plan will include an employment strategy for persons with disabilities, build on the *Accessible Canada Act* goal of reaching a barrier-free Canada by 2040, a new Canadian Disability Benefit, and a modern approach to access to federal disability programs and benefits. The plan will take an intersectional approach grounded in human rights that will involve persons with disabilities from diverse communities, including the 2SLGBTQ+ community, in its development and implementation.

The Government of Canada is working to further diversity and inclusion in federal workplaces, including through the **Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer at Treasury Board Secretariat**. Treasury Board Secretariat also works to **promote Positive Space Initiative training modules**, has added **demographic questions on sexual orientation and gender identity in the Public Service Employee Survey (PSES)**, and undertakes programs and initiatives to improve 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion in the public service.

Two open, competitive calls for proposals were launched for the second cycle of Accessible Canada funding (2022-24) for two streams: National AccessAbility Week (NAAW) and Accessible Canada Partnerships (Partnerships) stream. For both streams, there was a focus on awareness raising and expansion of reach of projects to persons with disabilities in underrepresented communities,

including 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, and increasing the impact of successful projects within underrepresented communities. This leads to increasing capacity and enhancing leadership within the disability community for taking action to remove existing barriers.

Budget 2021 invested \$298M over three years in the new **Skills for Success (SFS) program**. The program will help approximately 90,000 Canadians to improve their foundational and transferable skills to better prepare for, get and keep a job and adapt and succeed at work. While SFS applies to all jobs across the labour market, programs are particularly focused on populations with difficulty accessing and remaining attached to the labour market. The program is undertaking **research on the foundational and transferable skills needs of 2SLGBTQ+ communities**, which will help SFS to better address those needs moving forward.

The Women's Employment Readiness (WER) Pilot Program is a \$50M, two-year pilot that funds organizations to provide and test pre-employment and skills development for multi-barriered women, as well as testing models to improve employer inclusivity. **Women from 2SLGBTQ+ communities are one of the WER's four target groups.**

Results will be used to inform systemic changes to skills and employment programs to improve access and outcomes, including for women from 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

Through the **Tri-Agency Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan**, the federal granting agencies are advancing measures to promote 2SLGBTQ+ researchers and trainees who are specifically recognized as an underrepresented group in the research ecosystem.



The **Guide to Supporting Gender Diversity in the Workplace at Health Canada**

provides basic information on gender identity, guidance on addressing daily challenges, and resources designed to create a welcoming work for the internal 2SLGBTQI+ community. The Guide was released in January 2021 in response to the Clerk's Call to Action, and to support the creation of a more inclusive work environment.

The **Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP)**

is a partnership between the Government of Canada, Black-led business organizations, and financial institutions that seeks to provide Black Entrepreneurs with improved access to ecosystem supports at the national and regional levels, loan capital, and improve and enhance data on Black entrepreneurship. While the BEP is not specifically aimed at

2SLGBTQI+ communities, it was designed to ensure that marginalized communities, including 2SLGBTQI+ communities, had full access to the programming and resources.

The **Federal Tourism Growth Strategy** supports the growth of 2SLGBTQI+ tourism and addresses demand for inclusive tourism experiences. Eligible 2SLGBTQI+ businesses can leverage the Tourism Relief Fund to support COVID-19 recovery and further develop the 2SLGBTQI+ travel market. Budget 2022 announced that the Minister of Tourism will work with the tourism industry, including those with 2SLGBTQI+ perspectives, provincial and territorial counterparts, and Indigenous tourism operators to develop a new post-pandemic Federal Tourism Growth Strategy that positions Canada as a destination economy for decades to come.

3) Health and wellbeing

- 81% of respondents to the survey reported having a primary care provider (i.e., family doctor or nurse practitioner). However, only 15% of total survey respondents reported having access to 2SLGBTQI+ specific mental health services.
- Two-Spirit and transgender respondents were most likely to report discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender (or both) in the health-care system.
- There are significant inequities in physical and mental health outcomes for 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada compared to their non-2SLGBTQI+ counterparts. There are also additional barriers when trying to access the healthcare services and resources needed to address them.
- Participants indicated that health disparities between 2SLGBTQI+ people are linked to historical discrimination, which has led to a lack of trust in the health system and other social services. This is made worse for communities facing additional forms of discrimination.
- Two-Spirit and transgender respondents to the Action Plan national survey were most likely to report discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender (or both) in the health care system.
- In total, about one third of Two-Spirit respondents, racialized respondents, and respondents with disabilities to the

Action Plan national survey reported that they experienced discrimination or were treated unfairly based on their sexual orientation within the health care system during the last five years.

- Participants also noted the lack of awareness and sensitivity of healthcare professionals when it came to providing care adapted to the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ people. Only 15% of respondents had access to 2SLGBTQI+ -specific mental health services whether or not they needed it, and 17% of respondents reported having no access to mental health services at all.
- 2SLGBTQI+ populations experience inequitable outcomes across a range of health indicators such as higher rates of poor mental health, suicidal ideation, and attempts, sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI), and chronic disease, among others.

Key current and ongoing initiatives

Several federal departments and agencies have already implemented initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of 2SLGBTQI+ people in Canada. This includes the three Health Portfolio partners (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Health Canada, and the Public Health Agency of Canada) and federal departments providing health services to specific populations.

The existing initiatives listed below have laid a solid foundation. The first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan provides a mechanism through



which departments and agencies working on health and wellness will enhance collaboration and coordination across the federal government.

The Government of Canada **Five-Year Action Plan on Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections (STBBI)** (2019-2024) describes the role of 10 federal departments in accelerating prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. The seven priorities from the STBBI Action Plan include commitments that dovetail with the federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan, such as moving toward truth and reconciliation, and addressing stigma and discrimination—which includes supporting enabling environments (policies, laws).

On April 28, 2022, Health Canada authorized a submission from Canadian Blood Services to eliminate the three-month blanket donor deferral period for all sexually active men who have sex with men, and to instead screen donors of all sexual orientations and gender identities for high-risk sexual behaviours.

The **Pan-Canadian Framework for Action on Sexually Transmitted and Blood Borne Infections (STBBI)** provides a common vision to guide the STBBI response. It includes a focus on key populations most affected by STBBI, including gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, and transgender and non-binary people. Its guiding principles include cultural relevance, human rights, health equity, and the meaningful engagement of people living with HIV and viral hepatitis and key populations.

On March 24, 2022, Health Canada authorized a submission from Héma-Québec to move away from the three-month plasma donor deferral period for all sexually active

men who have sex with men, and to instead screen donors of all sexual orientations and gender identities for high-risk sexual behaviours.

Health Canada is working to address the systemic racism and discrimination in Canada's health systems, including as by Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ peoples. Specifically, through existing program authorities, Health Canada is:

- a) investing in systems-level, community-supported projects that address racism and discrimination perpetrated against racialized and marginalized populations, including Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ peoples; and
- b) building capacity within racialized and marginalized communities and/or organizations that serve these populations to enable them to meaningfully engage on their health priorities and perspectives, so that they are adequately considered by health-decision makers. This will include enhancing considerations of the needs of Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Indigenous Services Canada is supporting initiatives to improve access to high quality and culturally safe health services, with a focus on those who are disproportionately impacted by anti-Indigenous racism, including 2SLGBTQI+ people. In particular, the **Cultural Safety Partnership Fund** supports Indigenous-led community and regional initiatives that aim to strengthen cultural safety and to address anti-Indigenous racism and systemic barriers in health systems, including those faced by Two-Spirit and Indigiqueer people. In addition, distinctions-based funding is being provided to regional and grassroots organizations that serve

marginalized groups, including 2SLGBTQI+ people, and work toward improving access to culturally safe health services.

Public Health Agency of Canada's **Promoting Health Equity: Mental Health of Black Canadians Fund – Black LGBTQI+ Canadians** is a program focused on generating new evidence on culturally focused programs and interventions that address the unique mental health determinants and needs of Black LGBTQI+ Canadians.

Health Canada's **Sexual and Reproductive Health Fund** is a three-year initiative (2021-2024) to improve access to sexual and reproductive health-care support and services and provide evidence-based information for underserved and disenfranchised populations, particularly 2SLGBTQI+, racialized, Indigenous and youth populations.

The **Pride Guide** is a SOGIE resource developed by youth under the Public Health Agency of Canada's youth public health promotion policy mandate. The objective is to provide youth the opportunity to identify their priorities for **creating supportive school environments for 2SLGBTQI+ youth** and to provide advice to their peers in creating successful gender and sexual alliance groups within their schools.

The **HIV and Hepatitis C Community Action Fund** provides \$26.4M per year ongoing to support the community-based response to STBBI in 10 key populations, including projects focused on gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men, and transgender and non-binary people.

The **Atlas Institute for Veterans and Families** continues to expand reach of

government and non-government services tailored to meet the needs of those released military members who are facing mental health issues, including 2SLGBTQI+ veterans.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Catalyst and Support grants for Community-led Research on 2SLGBTQI+ Wellness aim to generate evidence inform the implementation and scale-up of community-based interventions to improve health and wellness for 2SLGBTQI+ communities from an intersectional perspective.

The **CIHR Indigenous Gender and Wellness Initiative** is supporting Indigenous-led research related to gender and wellness, including research to improve wellness of Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ individuals and communities.

Preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV): The Health Perspective provides funding for projects that prevent GBV, and its impacts, from a health perspective. The initiative funds a series of 2SLGBTQI+-specific projects focused on preventing dating violence among teens, fostering healthy relationships, and equipping providers to use trauma- and violence-informed approaches in response to GBV.

CIHR and WAGE are supporting the **National Women's Health Research Initiative** (NWHRI). This initiative, inclusive of women, girls and gender-diverse people (including, but not limited to, Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, gender fluid, agender and intersex people), will transform health research and practice in Canada by producing and implementing a community-based approach through an intersectional lens, committed to the principles of equity, diversity, inclusivity and Indigenous rights.



Canada's national dementia strategy

includes **a specific focus on 2SLGBTQI+** as a population that faces barriers to equitable care. Programs under the strategy are encouraged to support 2SLGBTQI+focused projects. For example, the Dementia Community Investment (DCI) has provided funding to Egale Canada for a community-based project to advance the integration, optimization, and promotion of inclusive approaches for 2SLGBTQI+ people living with dementia and their caregivers.

4) Housing and homelessness

- Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ people face unique challenges across multiple engagement themes. Participants communicated that due to a lack of housing and services on reserve, Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ people migrate to cities, where they struggle to find housing or employment and acceptance – a cycle rooted in colonization.
- Six percent of respondents to the Action Plan national survey said that their housing stability (the stability of their housing situation or their ability to access stable housing) over the last five years had been impacted by discrimination based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation. Seven percent of respondents reported an impact due to discrimination based on their real or perceived gender identity.
- The percentage of respondents who said that such discrimination had an impact on their housing security varied by their population group and Indigenous identity, their age, and their disability status.
- Younger respondents were more likely than respondents from other groups to report that their housing stability had been impacted by discrimination due to their sexual orientation and/or their gender identity.
- Eight percent of respondents aged 18-24 and 25-34 reported that discrimination based on their sexual orientation had impacted their housing security, and 10% of respondents aged 16-17 and 18-24 reported that their housing security had been impacted by discrimination due to their gender identity.
- Data on the discrimination experienced by young people is particularly relevant, given the absence of data on youth homelessness, and the fact that we know that young people are particularly vulnerable to identity-based family conflict, which can lead to homelessness.
- Regarding 2SLGBTQI+ youth, organizations cited data that 2SLGBTQI+ youth account for 25-40% of youth homelessness in Canada; however, many 2SLGBTQI+ youth chose to avoid shelters due to violence, discrimination, and exclusion, which results in a lack of access to safe and affirming services.
- Many participants remarked that services, whether in care homes, shelters, or immigrant welcome centres, are not set up to be 2SLGBTQI+ friendly, and services are disjointed. Also, many immigrant and refugee settlement organizations, already stretched thin, lack the capacity to offer 2SLGBTQI+ -specific housing programs, or the tools to create safe and inclusive spaces.



“... we need to value seniors. 2SLGBTQI+ seniors have the same right to safe housing as anyone else, and that includes housing for them specifically. Many seniors fought for the rights now enjoyed by younger 2SLGBTQI+ folks but find themselves in unsafe situations where they need to re-closet themselves.” – Participant

“It’s hard to stay in a place where you’re discriminated against on the basis of who you are.” – Participant


“When your choices are to sleep in a park or in a shelter where you’ll be ridiculed for your identity, there is no safe choice.” – Participant

“Housing is a fundamental human right but it’s not the end point. There’s also a need for counselling and other mental health services, safe injection sites, and help with addictions... Giving people support to use drugs safely is not effective when they have no home, no skills to get a job, and in most cases, no ability to even do something such as complete their census form.” – Participant

Key current and ongoing initiatives

The **National Housing Strategy (NHS)** is a 10-year, over \$72 billion plan that will give more Canadians a place to call home. It seeks to ensure that all Canadians have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. The NHS supports the most vulnerable Canadians, including 2SLGBTQI+, women and children fleeing domestic violence, seniors, Indigenous peoples, those experiencing homelessness, persons with disabilities, those dealing with mental health and addiction issues, veterans, young adults, racialized groups including Black Canadians, and recent immigrants and refugees. Organizations and projects supporting 2SLGBTQI+ communities have received housing-related funding through NHS initiatives.

Reaching Home: Canada’s Homelessness Strategy is a community-based program, which supports the goals of the NHS, and helps the most vulnerable Canadians in maintaining safe, stable and affordable housing. Under Reaching Home, the Government of Canada works with communities to develop and deliver community plans and projects based on data with clear outcomes. This outcomes-based approach keeps the decision-making process at the local level and gives communities greater flexibility to address local priorities, including homelessness prevention, and deliver programs designed to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, including 2SLGBTQI+ communities.



The **Nationally Coordinated Point-in-time (PiT) Count of Homelessness in Canadian Communities** is a community-level measure of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness that includes a survey with questions on gender and sexual identity, developed in consultation with stakeholders. Results can be used to identify homelessness trends among people who identify as 2SLGBTQI+. Findings from the third nationally coordinated PiT Count—which is taking place between March 2020 and October 2022—are expected in spring 2023.

Canada's Youth Policy supports addressing issues of youth homelessness, housing affordability, and the intersections of more vulnerable and marginalized identities of youth as it relates to these issues. **Canada's first State of Youth Report** also references youth access to housing, the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ youth, and other intersecting issues.



5) Global protection and promotion of 2SLGBTQI+ rights

- Participants urged the Government of Canada to further advance its efforts to assist 2SLGBTQI+ people and communities around the world. This includes setting a higher overall target for global funding and introducing an improved policy framework to guide it.
- Engagement participants also saw a role for Canada to be more proactive in its international obligations by working more closely with civil society to respond to the needs of 2SLGBTQI+ persons globally and during critical situations. For engagement participants, this included supporting 2SLGBTQI+ refugees through measures such as working on a pathway to include 2SLGBTQI+ persons in the refugee stream for humanitarian workers, journalists, and human rights defenders, as well as ensuring that the unique experiences of 2SLGBTQI+ refugees are given due consideration in refugee related processes, including irregular migration, which participants explained disproportionately and negatively impacts 2SLGBTQI+ refugees.

Key current and ongoing initiatives

Canadian missions abroad continue to organize and complete initiatives that focus on amplifying (raising awareness) Canada's position on 2SLGBTQI+ rights

in addition to more targeted approaches such as advocating for audiences to take action in support of Canada's position. In terms of advocacy initiatives that advanced the "Rights of LGBTI Persons", there were 297 activities in 2020-21 and 408 activities in 2021-22 carried out by Canada's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Service around the world. Many of these activities are supported by the **Post Initiative Fund (PIF)** and the **Mission Cultural Fund (MCF)**.

The Government of Canada continues to provide assistance to 2SLGBTQI+ refugees through the **Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership** at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which was established in 2011 to increase awareness among Canadian sponsors of the unique needs of 2SLGBTQI+ refugees, and to strengthen overall sponsorship for those persecuted on the basis of SOGIE. Using existing authorities from Operation Afghan Safe Haven. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has committed to amending the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership to include provisions to resettle an additional 150 Afghan 2SLGBTQI+ refugees under this partnership until December 2024.

The **Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI)** annually funds over 600 projects in countries eligible for official development assistance. These projects focus on human rights, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in all their diversity, democracy and governance, peace and security, and climate action and economic growth. Approximately 50 projects per year focus on 2SLGBTQI+ issues.

2SLGBTQI+ International Assistance allocates dedicated funding, in the context of Canada's *Feminist International Assistance*

Policy, to promote human rights and improve socio-economic outcomes for 2SLGBTQI+ people in developing countries. Global Affairs Canada will continue to work with civil society to ensure the meaningful inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ persons in its international assistance efforts.

Several IRCC measures are designed to support 2SLGBTQI+ refugees and newcomers, including a departmental sex and gender client identifier policy that respects non-binary gender identity and expression. The policy sets out how a client's sex or gender information should be collected, recorded, and displayed in the administration of IRCC's programs. In

addition, the department uses an inclusive interpretation of "parent" that recognizes the differential treatment 2SLGBTQI+ families experience.

Settlement and Resettlement Programs support service delivery to newcomers to help them integrate into Canadian communities. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada currently funds approximately ten service provider organizations (SPOs) that have specialized 2SLGBTQI+ supports in addition to the many organizations across the country that offer resources and referrals to local 2SLGBTQI+ organizations.



6) Stigma, isolation and resilience

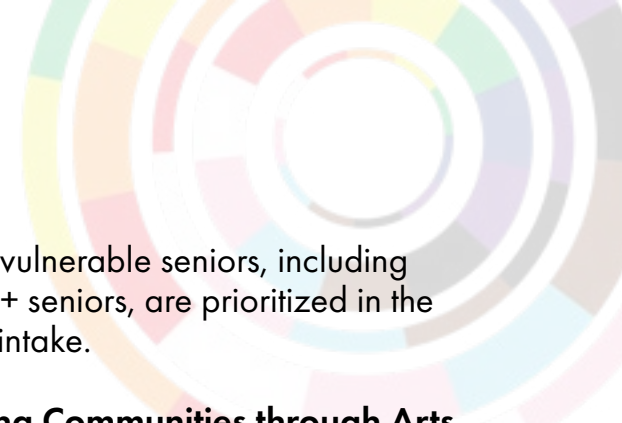
- Participants described how isolation, sometimes a product of stigma and discrimination, affects so many 2SLGBTQI+ people. In rural, northern, or remote communities, due to poor internet connectivity and transportation challenges, it is especially difficult for 2SLGBTQI+ people to find each other and form communities of support.
- Participants report taking strength mostly from friendships, chosen family and life partners.
- Participants also shared that building resilience and leadership in youth and community is critical.
- Despite confidence in their capacity to bounce back, participants stressed the overriding importance of the work by 2SLGBTQI+ communities toward awareness, justice, and equity.
- Engagement results demonstrated that 2SLGBTQI+ communities who face additional forms of discrimination, such as racism, ableism and ageism, experience disproportionate inequities and additional barriers when trying to access support.
- Participants also noted that additional community support/resources are required. For example, engagement findings demonstrated that community organizations are already performing essential work

in combatting stigma and isolation and building resilience among their community members, but that the amount of work they do in this regard is limited by financial resources.

- Many organizations reported that they struggle to operate, relying on volunteers and project-by-project funding. They seek long-term, operational funding, and adoption of a 2SLGBTQI+ lens to all federal government funding. Small and rural organizations face funding models that privilege large and urban organizations. One organizational representative expressed that: “We are always in survival mode.”
- Participants saw the value of the LGBT2Q Secretariat as a node for community contact within the federal government, calling for its permanent funding and enhanced role as change agent within the federal government.
- Engagement participants expressed support for and welcomed Women and Gender Equality Canada’s Community Capacity Fund and the Projects Fund, however, many asked that they be extended to fund core operations and multi-year projects.

Key current and ongoing initiatives

In 2019, Women and Gender Equality Canada introduced **the Community Capacity Fund**, the first targeted programs to support the capacity needs of 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations. Its objective is



to build stronger capacity and networks of 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations to advance 2SLGBTQI+ equity across Canada. Since its implementation, it has delivered funding to 77 organizational recipients, and early in 2022, the Government of Canada announced that it would be extending funding to existing recipients for an additional year.

Budget 2021 announced \$15 million for Women and Gender Equality Canada to launch a new **Projects Fund**, with the objective of supporting community-informed projects that will address key issues facing 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada's **Supporting Indigenous women's organizations and Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ Organizations Program** provides organizations with long-term project funding to engage at the grassroots level so they can advance their voices within all levels of government and support real and meaningful systemic change in Canada.

Employment and Social Development Canada's **Age Well at Home Initiative** funds seniors-serving organizations to provide practical support to vulnerable seniors in their communities such as meals, housekeeping and yard work to help them stay in their homes and communities as long as possible. The initiative supports projects that specifically target low-income and otherwise vulnerable seniors, including 2SLGBTQI+ seniors.

The **New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP)** helps ensure that seniors can benefit from, and contribute to, the quality of life in their community by providing funding to a range of seniors-serving organizations who support seniors' social inclusion. Projects

that target vulnerable seniors, including 2SLGBTQI+ seniors, are prioritized in the Program's intake.

The **Building Communities through Arts and Heritage Program** supports 2SLGBTQI+ communities by funding 2SLGBTQI+ events, including 2SLGBTQI+ pride events, which serve to eliminate social barriers, increase social participation and expression of identity, and promote tolerance and inclusion.

In 2018, the Government of Canada released its **policy direction on sex and gender information practises** for the Government of Canada, in order to improve information and data collection, use and display practises for people who are transgender, non-binary and Two-Spirit.

Canada is the first country to collect and publish census data on transgender and non-binary people. Released in April 2022, data from the 2021 Census offer new insights into the diversity of our nation, showing that 1 in 300 people in Canada aged 15 and older living in a private household in May 2021 were either transgender or non-binary

Budget 2021 included \$172 million over five years and \$36.3 million ongoing for a **Disaggregated Data Action Plan**. Statistics Canada's Disaggregated Data Plan (DDAP) seeks to collect and disseminate data and research which emphasizes intersectionality and highlights the most disaggregated data possible. The DDAP prioritizes the collection of disaggregated data on Indigenous peoples, gender (women, men, non-binary persons), visible minorities, and persons with disabilities. Where relevant and possible, disaggregation will extend to other considerations, including sexual orientation.



Canada's New Anti-Racism Strategy:

The Federal Anti-Racism Secretariat will be working across government to socialize a series of anti-racism tools to assist federal departments and institutions to embed intersectional anti-racism considerations in all business lines. The Federal Secretariat will work, through Global Affairs Canada, with foreign allies to embed intersectional racial equity considerations at a multilateral level, notably through the North American Partnership for Racial Equity and Inclusion. The new strategy will fund community-based projects that address different systemic racism and racial discrimination from an intersectional perspective.

The **Social Development Partnerships Program** (Children and Families) works with not-for-profit organizations to improve life outcomes of vulnerable populations. The current focus of the program is to support projects that improve the social inclusion of vulnerable children and youth, and the financial empowerment of low-income people.

2SLGBTQI+ community organizations have received funding from this program over the last several years to support a range of community activities.

Sport Canada's Community Sport for All Initiative seeks to remove barriers and increase sport participation rates for underrepresented populations. Funded proposals will work with community-based groups on activities to address barriers to participation in sport, particularly among the following: Black Canadians, Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and new Canadians.

Sport Canada's Innovation Initiative funds eligible organizations to test approaches and to look at innovative ways of addressing challenges related to the participation and retention of underserved populations in sport. In 2022-23, as part of the Community Sport for All Initiative, the priority populations are Black Canadians, Indigenous peoples, 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and new Canadians.

The Government of Canada is committed to applying Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) in decision-making to ensure that policies and programs are responsive to and inclusive of diverse needs, and consider impacts on diverse groups of people. GBA Plus is a process for identifying who is impacted by an issue; how they are impacted; how intersecting factors, such as gender identity, sexual orientation, sex, race, ethnicity, disability, age, geography, language, religion, education, and economic status, as well as systemic discrimination, such as homophobia, transphobia, and biphobia, shape experiences, outcomes, and access to programs or services; and how initiatives need to be tailored to meet the needs of diverse groups of people.

Women and Gender Equality Canada continues to work with federal departments to strengthen the application of GBA Plus to decision-making, to ensure that initiatives contribute to 2SLGBTQI+ equality and that no one is left behind.

Endnotes

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