

Discrimination and Community Integration Experienced by 2SLGBTQ+ in Perth-Huron

Community Report

2025

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Summary

Individuals with 2SLGBTQ+¹ identities often experience increased discrimination, and do not feel included within rural communities. Additionally, 2SLGBTQ+ in rural communities face unique barriers when trying to access different services, such as health care, education, and mental health support. This research focuses on 2SLGBTQ+ people who have a recent connection with Perth and/or Huron Counties, to better understand their lived experiences while trying to access service provisions.

The report identifies five key recommendations which service providers within the region, including municipal government workers, can take to better support 2SLGBTQ+ identities:

1. Prioritize safe spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.
2. Prioritize 2SLGBTQ+ social opportunities which are accessible and available yearly.
3. Pride symbols should be made visible within organizations and community spaces.
4. Ensure inclusive and meaningful practices across community organizations.
5. Prioritize training and education about 2SLGBTQ+ identities.

Introduction

In a 2023 report, United Way Perth-Huron's Social Research and Planning Council (SRPC) found that there was little information about 2SLGBTQ+ populations in the area. A gap in research and understanding of 2SLGBTQ+ populations has been documented within rural counties across the world (Nic Giolla et al., 2022). Because large portions of Perth and Huron Counties are rural, more research is needed to better understand the experiences and needs of their 2SLGBTQ+ populations.

There has been a rise in hate towards 2SLGBTQ+ identities in other parts of the world, making this an important topic to understand within Perth and Huron Counties. Service providers and municipal leaders would also benefit from understanding how 2SLGBTQ+ people living and working across the counties experience discrimination, and to what degree they feel like they are included in the community. Individuals who hold other identity markers (e.g., race, ability, immigration status) are at an increased risk of hate-directed speech and action.

University of Guelph researchers in the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development (SEDRD), in partnership with the SRPC and the Community Engaged Scholarship Institute (CESI), were interested in understanding how 2SLGBTQ+ individuals experienced service provision in Perth and Huron Counties, and how service providers could support individuals across their 2SLGBTQ+ identities.

¹ 2SLGBTQ+ refers to: Two-spirit, straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, plus other gender and sexual minorities

The research had four primary objectives:

1. To review research from other communities in order to understand potential barriers that 2SLGBTQ+ people experience in rural areas and to identify potential gaps in understanding.
2. To explore if 2SLGBTQ+ people in Huron and/or Perth Counties are facing unfair treatment, and to understand if they feel welcome within the community and community organizations.
3. To better understand 2SLGBTQ+ lived experiences and support needs in Perth and Huron Counties.
4. To create and share recommendations with local service providers to better support 2SLGBTQ+ people in Perth and Huron Counties.

Full analysis of the data can be found in a [**Master's thesis**](#) submitted to the University of Guelph Rural Planning and Development Program, and in a [**final report**](#) which will be available on the CESI website in late 2025.

Context

Most of Perth and Huron Counties are considered to be rural, with only a handful of urban spaces. To better understand how individuals across Perth and Huron Counties might be experiencing service provision, it is important to consider existing academic literature around rurality and 2SLGBTQ+ identities. A member of the research team conducted a scan of the existing literature to meet the first objective of the research.

Overall, research suggests that 2SLGBTQ+ people living in rural Canada often do not feel like they are accepted within the community, and they experience higher levels of discrimination (Hulko & Hoavanes; Nic Giolla et al., 2022). There is also a perception that rural areas are less accepting of 2SLGBTQ+ identities. While this may or may not be true in every rural area, research suggests that the perception often means that 2SLGBTQ+ people hide their gender and/or sexual identities (e.g., Charest et al., 2023; Thompson, 2023).²

Researchers across studies agree that there needs to be more information about the availability of inclusive service provision, and that organizations need to better understand 2SLGBTQ+ people's experiences with these services (see, for example, Reynish et al., 2023). Because 2SLGBTQ+ people in rural areas face unique challenges, it is especially important to make sure that there are specific service provisions in place to support their needs (Logie & Lys, 2015).

² Gender identity refers to how much we align with "woman-ness" or "man-ness." This includes how we behave and act; and the roles that we take on. One's gender identity can be different than the sex that they were defined at birth. Sexual identity refers to who we are sexually attracted to. For example, if you are not sexually attracted to any gender, you may identify as "asexual" or "ace."

Research Design

The research team used a mixed-methods approach which incorporated a variety of different methods, including qualitative (interviews, working groups, etc.) and quantitative (closed-question surveys) data collection. To meet the research objectives, the following methods were used:

- **Online surveys:** Participants were asked open- and close-ended questions about their experiences of discrimination, and their sense of community and integration. Service providers were additionally asked about their experience in serving 2SLGBTQ+ populations (Research Objective 2).
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Individuals who completed the survey were invited to take part in interviews about their experiences and needs of accessing service provisions in Perth and/or Huron Counties (Research Objective 3).
- **Participatory Workshop:** Participants took part in a three-phase workshop which aimed to create recommendations around what was needed to create social community and reduce discrimination in Perth and Huron Counties (Research Objectives 3 and 4).

See Figures 1-3.

Figure 1. Basic Participant Demographics

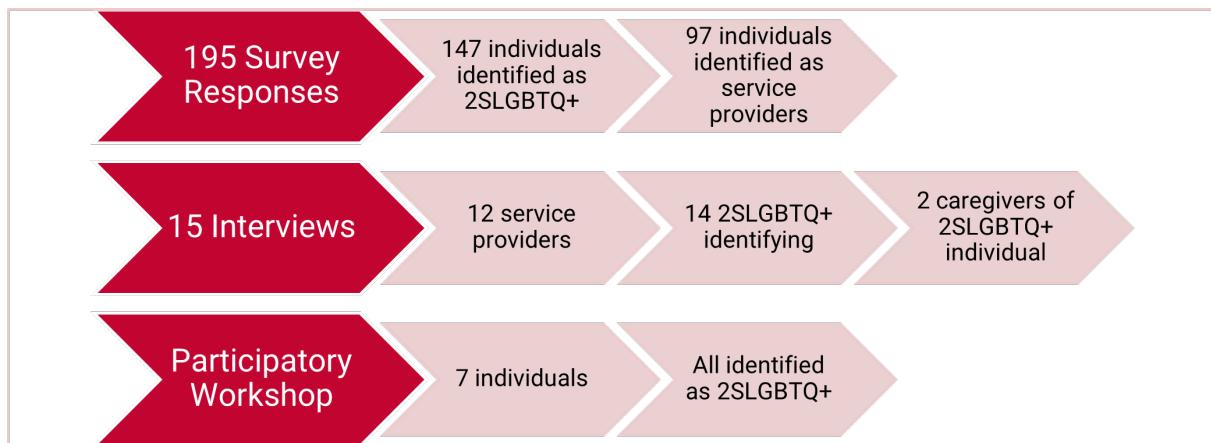


Figure 2. Survey Participant Demographics

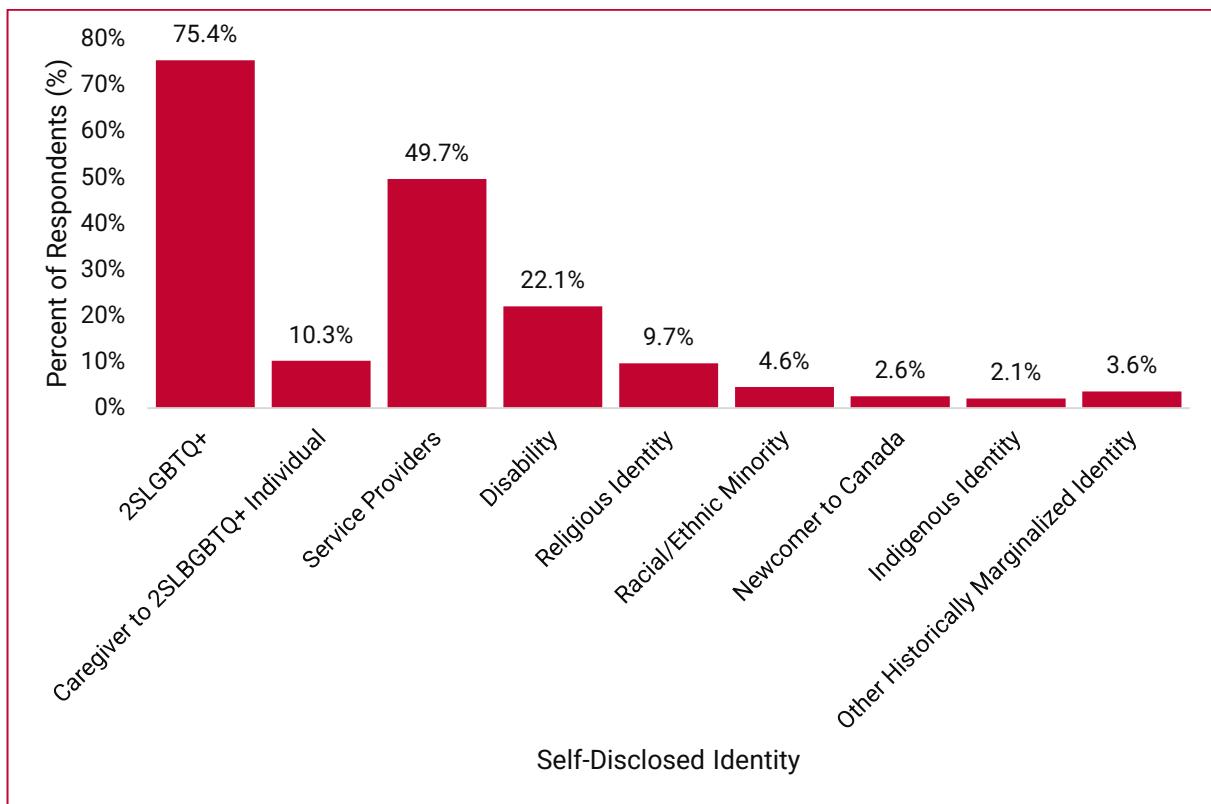
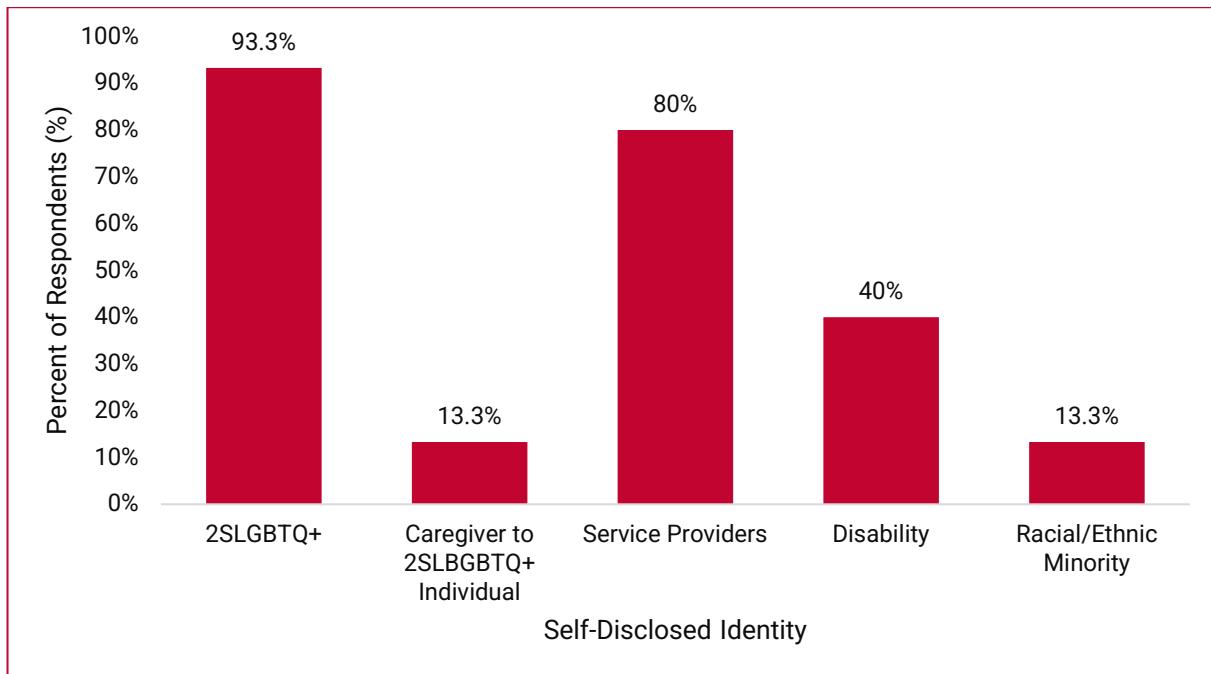


Figure 3. Interview Participant Demographics



Across methods, participants were 12 years and older and had lived, worked, or studied in Perth and/or Huron Counties within the past five years. Participants identified as 2SLGBTQ+, as a caregiver to a 2SLGBTQ+ individual, and/or as a service provider for Perth and/or Huron County.

Additionally, United Way Perth-Huron hosted **Community Walls** during the 2025 Huron County Pride Event in Goderich and the 2025 North Perth Pride Event in Listowel. Participants were asked to respond to the three following questions by writing, drawing, or doodling on the walls:³

1. How do we show up for 2SLGBTQ+ people year-round?
2. How do we create spaces where 2SLGBTQ+ joy can flourish?
3. How can we protect 2SLGBTQ+ people from harm?

The entirety of the research project underwent ethics review and was approved by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board (REB#24-04-009).

Experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ Population

Across all methods, many individuals talked about how they felt excluded from community life. They also described times where they either faced or witnessed discrimination based on their 2SLGBTQ+ identities. However, these feelings of community inclusion and integration changed based on participants' context, and not all discrimination was experienced equally. People living in more rural areas reported higher levels of discrimination, and lower levels of inclusion within the community.

These experiences of discrimination and social exclusion are expanded upon below.

Feelings of Social Inclusion and Integration

In interviews, over half of participants noted that local and social community was a necessary component of their lives. However, results from the survey suggest that many 2SLGBTQ+ people may not feel accepted within Perth and Huron Counties:

- 60.2% of 2SLGBTQ+ survey participants somewhat or strongly agreed with the statements "I feel like I belong" and "I feel accepted" in their community.
- 42.5% of 2SLGBTQ+ survey somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel safe" in their community.

Interview participants stated that local libraries were particularly welcoming. This was because libraries often had materials about different gender and sexual identities, and some libraries offered support groups. However, other organizations, such as healthcare providers, tended to

³ Participants were excluded from this report if they were under 12 years old, or had not lived, worked, or studied in the region in the past five years.

be less welcoming. Interview participants often stated that healthcare providers did not have the knowledge or training to support 2SLGBTQ+ care needs:

"The way that medical systems recognize sex is limiting [...] medical care has not been set up for trans experiences [...] If I'm not going to a specific, clear service that actually serves trans people and is educated on it, I'll be running into stuff that has not been made for me. I'll be running into services that were not prepared to accept a client like me." – Interview Participant

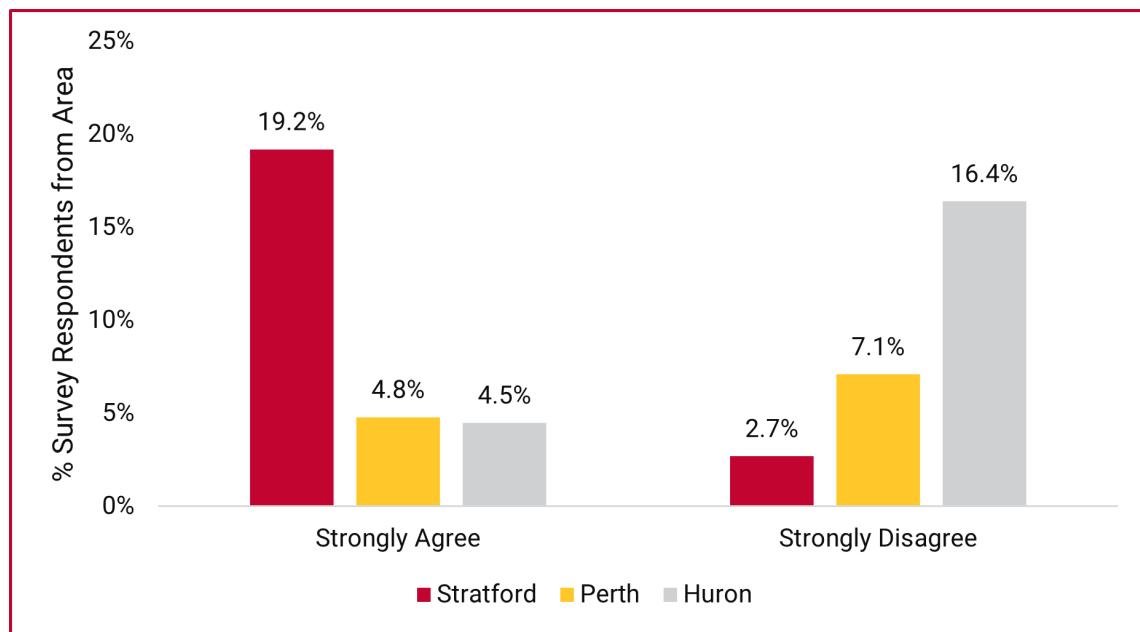
Feelings of belonging, acceptance, and safety varied widely across more urban areas and more rural areas.

When asked if they felt accepted in their community:⁴

- 19.2% of respondents (14 people) with connections to Stratford strongly agreed with the statement "I feel accepted" compared to 4.8% of respondents (2 people) in Perth County and 4.5% of respondents (3 people) in Huron County.
- Only 2.7% of respondents (2 people) with connections to Stratford strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel accepted" compared to 7.1% of respondents (3 people) in Perth County and 16.4% of respondents (11 people) in Huron County.

See Figure 4.

Figure 4. Survey Responses to the Question "I feel accepted" Separated by Region



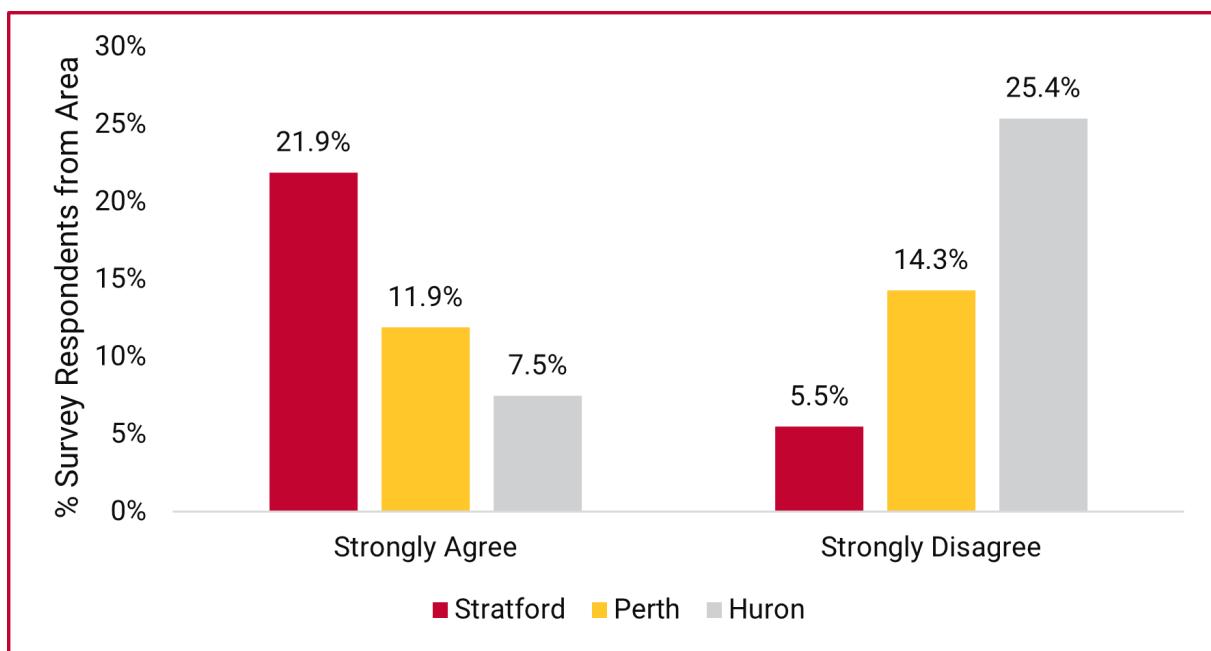
⁴ When data is broken out by region, Perth County does not include responses from Stratford. Given the more urban nature of Stratford, it is considered separately.

When asked if they felt they belonged in their community:

- 21.9% of respondents (16 people) with connections to Stratford strongly agreed with the statement "I feel I belong" compared to 11.9% of respondents (5 people) in Perth County and 7.5% of respondents (5 people) in Huron County.
- Only 5.5% of respondents (4 people) with connections to Stratford strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel I belong" compared to 14.3% of respondents (6 people) in Perth County and 25.4% of respondents (17 people) in Huron County.

See Figure 5.

Figure 5. Survey Responses to the Question "I feel I belong" Separated by Region

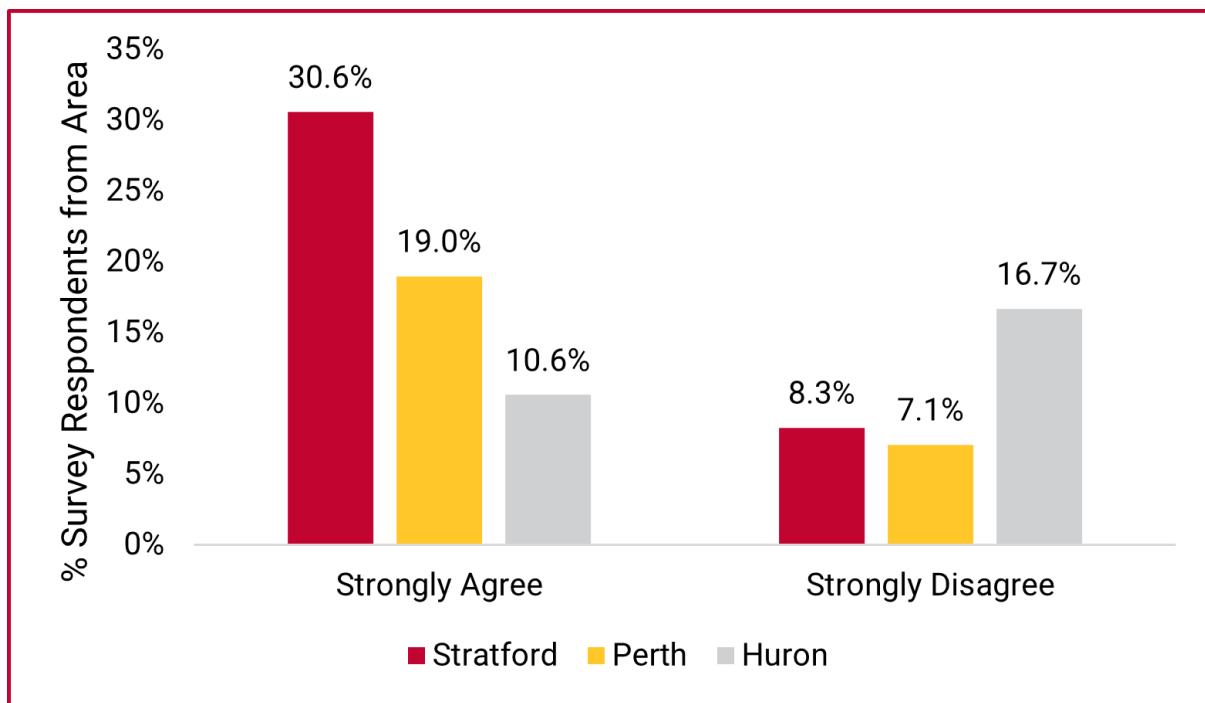


When asked if they felt they felt safe in their community:

- 30.6% of respondents (22 people) with connections to Stratford strongly agreed with the statement "I feel safe" compared to 19% of respondents (8 people) in Perth County and 10.6% of respondents (7 people) in Huron County.
- Only 8.3% of respondents (6 people) with connections to Stratford strongly disagreed with the statement "I feel safe" compared to 7.1% of respondents (3 people) in Perth County and 16.7% of respondents (11 people) in Huron County.

See Figure 6.

Figure 6. Survey Responses to the Question “I feel safe” Separated by Region



Feelings of belonging and acceptance also varied across other social identities. For example:

- 28.9% of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals with a disability strongly disagreed with the statement “I feel I belong.” On the other hand, only 11.4% of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals who did not identify as disabled strongly disagreed with the statement “I feel I belong.”
- 66.7% of Newcomers to Canada disagreed with the statement “I feel I belong.” On the other hand, only 24.3% of Canadian-born participants disagreed with the statement “I feel I belong.”

Across the participatory workshop, interviews, and surveys, participants stated that they often did not feel safe within the physical community or on local online spaces such as community Facebook groups. Participatory workshop members attributed this, in part, to the rise of hate groups and hate speech within the region, and noted frustration with local community leaders' silence around hate-based and discriminatory speech:

“A lot of [2SLGBTQ+ people] aren’t loud, and a lot of them are concerned about being seen [...] because] they don’t feel safe. They don’t feel confident enough.” – Survey Respondent

Participants often noted that they did not feel like their identities were accepted within their community, and that they could not express themselves due to discriminatory cultures within their Huron or Perth County community. A lack of visible acceptance of 2SLGBTQ+ identities was also a barrier:

“Isolation and the queer community is a real thing, and making sure service providers really understand and internalize it. That it’s not enough for the police just to go, ‘Oh we’re sorry that your business [was] vandalized or that there’s protesters showing up to your march.” – Participatory Workshop Member

68 survey participants indicated that they had left or were considering leaving the county, with the majority (58.6%) from Huron County. While some reasons for leaving appeared to be outside of the respondent's 2SLGBTQ+ identity (for example, leaving for job/education), five commonly cited reasons for wanting to leave were:

- No sense of belonging in the region (42.6%);
- Inability to express their 2SLGBTQ+ identities (41.2%);
- Not enough 2SLGBTQ+ People (39.7%);
- Not enough services for 2SLGBTQ+ people (36.8%);
- Did not feel safe (30.9%).

Members in surveys and interviews indicated that they would sometimes go online to find spaces where they felt visible (e.g., support/peer groups, google searches); however, local social media often felt hostile towards 2SLGBTQ+ identities.

Participatory workshop members noted that isolation and lack of visibility affected how service providers reacted to 2SLGBTQ+ concerns as well. Across methods, participants stated that there needed to be more visibility of safe 2SLGBTQ+ spaces, including flags, signs, and/or other signals of inclusivity.

To feel a sense of belonging within a community, inclusive and available service provision is necessary. Survey participants identified the following needs in each region:

1. **Health Care Providers with knowledge and expertise around caring for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals:** Over 70% of respondents identified this gap in service provision, across each of the counties.
2. **One on one counseling:** Over 60% of respondents identified this gap in service provision, across each of the counties.
3. **Support and/or Peer Groups:** Over 70% of respondents from Perth and Huron County, and 63.9% of respondents from Stratford, identified this gap in service provision.

Additionally, survey participants who were service providers identified the following barriers to supporting 2SLGBTQ+ populations in the area:

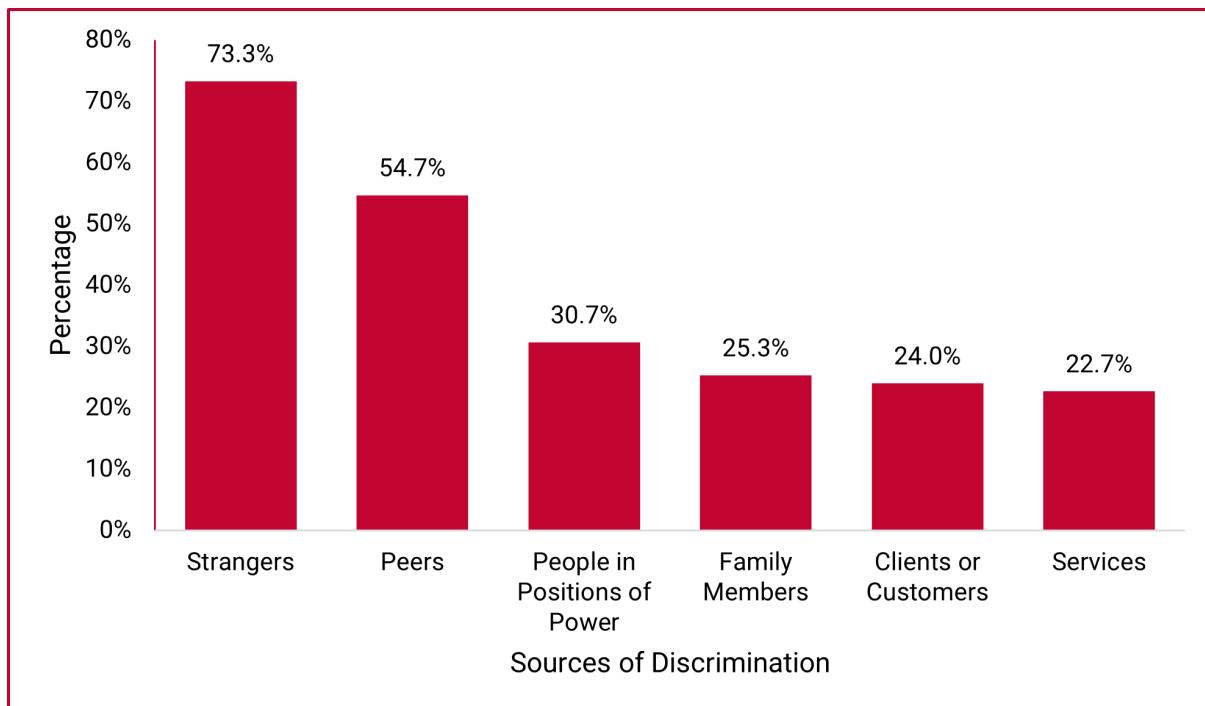
- Not enough information about the needs of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals (60%);
- Insufficient training or expertise in identity affirming care (42.2%);
- Resistance from colleagues or peers (42.2%);
- Financial constraints (37.8%);
- Transportation barriers (33.3%);

- Lack of support from organizational leadership (17.8%); and
- Lack of support from board of directors (13.3%).

Experiences and Accounts of Discrimination

Three quarters of survey participants (75.4%) stated that they had witnessed discrimination based on a 2SLGBTQ+ identity in the past five years. Over half (52.8%) of 2SLGBTQ+ survey participants had experienced discrimination directly. For all survey respondents who had experienced direct discrimination (75 in total), individuals were most likely to experience discrimination from strangers or peers; followed by people in positions of power and family members. See Figure 7.

Figure 7. Who Survey Respondents Experienced Discrimination From



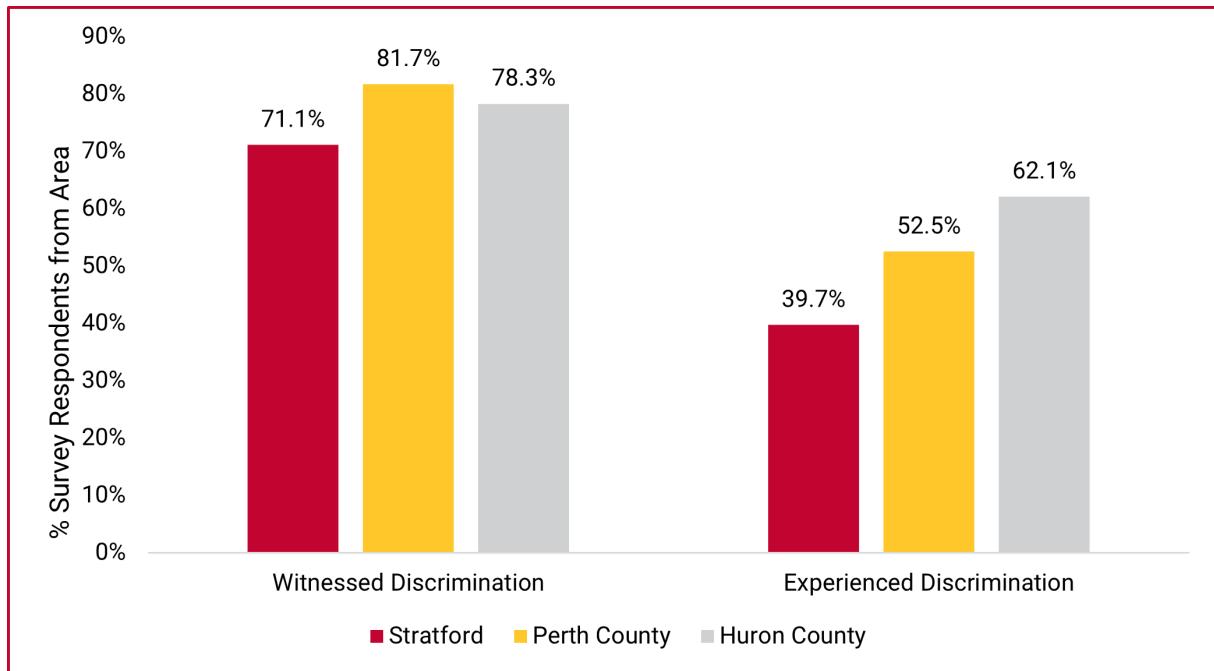
Accounts of discrimination were similar across counties; however, members of Huron County were more likely to experience discrimination than Perth County and Stratford:

- 71.1% of respondents (69 people) with connections to Stratford had witnessed discrimination based on a 2SLGBTQ+ identity, while 39.7% (29 people) had experienced discrimination directly.
- 81.7% of respondents (49 people) in Perth County had witnessed discrimination based on a 2SLGBTQ+ identity, while 52.5% (22 people) had experienced discrimination directly.

- 78.3% of respondents (65 people) in Huron County had witnessed discrimination based on a 2SLGBTQ+ identity, while 62.1% (41 people) had experienced discrimination directly.

See Figure 8.

Figure 8. Survey Respondents Accounts of Discrimination due to 2SLGBTQ+ Identity, Separated out by Geographical Area



Discrimination occurred in many forms, including clear and deliberate discrimination such as verbal harassment and slur words, and more subtle forms of discrimination such as side comments. More subtle discrimination, according to interview and workshop participants, was likely due to a lack of understanding and/or education about the needs and experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals.

“Obviously there is the real, very real issue of homophobia in smaller communities. Not that you can't find homophobia in big cities as well, but I think the very present undercurrent of very casual homophobia in rural communities. Even from people who aren't deliberately being cruel, they're not going around throwing slurs at people- that does happen, I don't want to just diminish the experiences of people who have been gay bashed in this county - but even more predominant is this just... lack of knowledge and understanding.” – Interview Participant

Discrimination also occurred at organizational and municipal levels. For example, both interview and workshop participants spoke about political decisions not to fly the Pride Flag:

"Considering how many of them are like, what if we just didn't have Pride Flags? [...] maybe council needs to be aware how hurtful it is when we continuously hear community members coming up and saying exactly that." – Participatory Workshop Member

Across methods, participants highlighted evidence of organized hate groups active within the Perth and Huron regions. These groups often had vocal presences at school board meetings, and actively participated in local discourse, including on social media:

"I don't trust posting things online [...] somebody took a screenshot of [an advertisement] and posted it on this other web page that got really nasty, threatening, and hate speech [...] I am very careful about how I advertise, which means essentially, I don't" – Interview Participant

Survey respondents' gender identities were likely to influence how they experienced discrimination. For example:

- 45.7% of cisgender⁵ individuals reported experiencing direct discrimination. On the other hand, 64.2% of individuals with other gender identities, such as trans men/women and/or gender-queer individuals, reported experiencing direct discrimination.
- 7.1% of cisgender individuals reported experiencing discrimination almost every day. On the other hand, 17.6% of individuals with other gender identities reported experiencing discrimination almost every day.

Interview participants noted that trans identities were especially targeted within Perth and Huron Counties. This discrimination, according to participants, was directly related to their transgender identity:

"Trans people specifically are especially being attacked and especially being targeted, whether it's just online or in real life, that is where I have seen the most and worst of the discrimination." – Interview Participant

Other social identities also played a role. For example, if a survey respondent identified as having a disability, they were more likely to report that they have experienced direct discrimination than those who didn't (73.7% to 45.2%).

Experiences of Joy

While participants spoke about their barriers within Perth and Huron Counties, they also expressed the importance of joy. 'Queer Joy' is a well-established concept in 2SLGBTQ+

⁵ Cisgender refers to when a gender identity matches sex assigned at birth. For example, if an individual was assigned "girl" at birth and identifies as a woman, they would be considered cisgender. Transgender refers to people whose gender identities do not match their sex assigned at birth.

research, and refers to resistance to discriminatory practices through a centring of joy. Queer joy is built on a sense of community, self-expression, and pride in one's identity.

Workshop and interview participants spoke about how joy could be leveraged as an act of resistance against discriminatory norms. Participants talked about a range of joyful activities, such as drag performance, social movements, and being able to live authentically instead of hiding their gender and/or sexual identity:

"I would just reiterate the importance of reclaiming resistance [...] joy, queer joy as a form of resistance and being proud of that." – Interview Participant

As one working group member noted, "by celebrating yourself and finding joy, you are participating in resistance." One community wall participant identified the importance of "disco every day" in celebrating the gender and sexual experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals. Participants noted that third spaces – or neutral community spaces beyond the home or workplace (in person or online) – were vital to the fostering of Queer Joy.

What Can Service Providers Do?

This report considers three different pathways in which meaningful change can occur at the local level. Bringing together recommendations across each pathway, the report then provides five actionable recommendations that can be taken by service providers, inclusive of municipal governmental officials in Perth and Huron Counties.

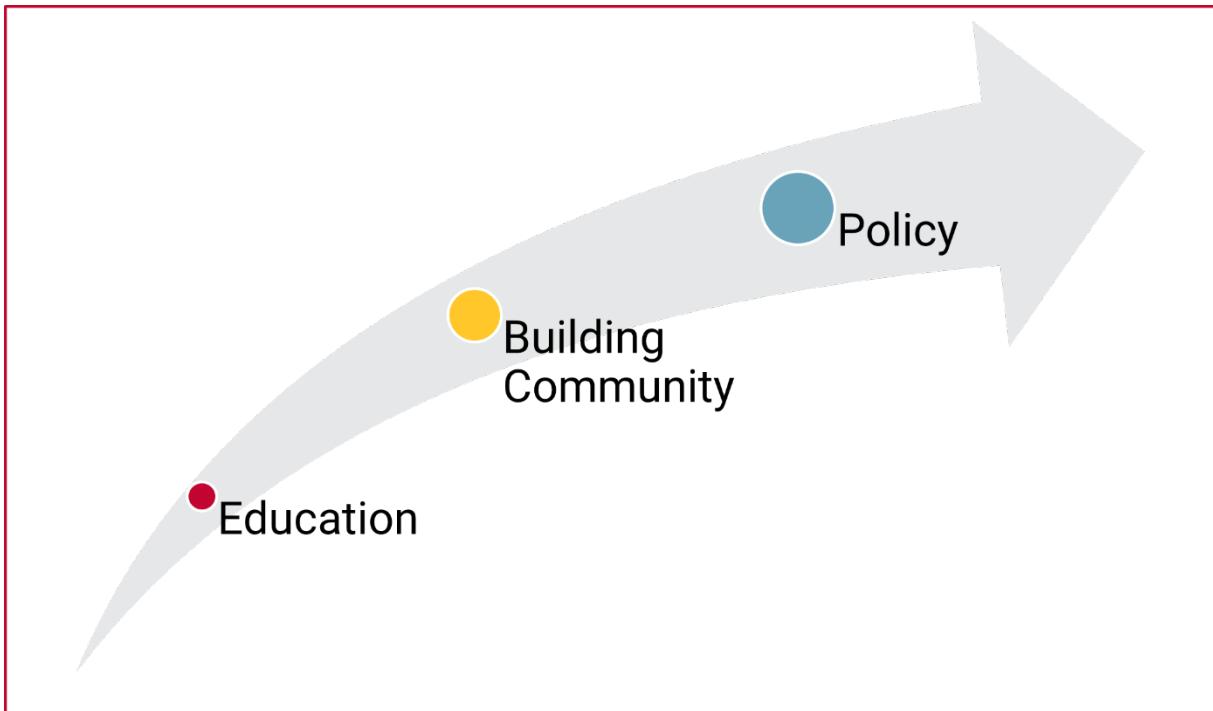
Connecting Intent with Action

Members of the participatory workshop stressed that organizations must commit towards change through education, community building, and policy pathways. All three are required for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals to feel like they are included within the community, and to reduce discrimination. These pathways include internal work, or work that happens at a personal level (e.g., fostering understanding and building community, learning about inclusive language) and external work, or work that happens at a community, organizational, and/or governmental level (e.g., advocacy work, policy creation). The pathways are expanded upon below.

- 1. Education:** Ways in which service providers can become educated around 2SLGBTQ+ issues in Perth and Huron Counties, including how to create and maintain inclusive environments within organizations.
- 2. Community-Building:** How organizations and community groups can create welcoming and inclusive spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ people.
- 3. Policy:** How those with the ability (e.g., organizational leaders, municipal government) can implement and enforce policies that protect 2SLGBTQ+ community members from harm and hold those who commit acts of discrimination accountable.

The visual created by the working group includes an arrow which connects all of the pathways together. See Figure 9. For change to be effective in improving 2SLGBTQ+ people's experiences in rural communities and with service provision, change must occur at each level.

Figure 9. Pathways to Change



Recommendations

Five recommendations are expanded on below, using both direct recommendations from participants and researcher-identified suggestions. These suggestions incorporate education, community-building, and local/organizational level policy recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Prioritize Safe Spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ Individuals

There is a need to create and maintain spaces where 2SLGBTQ+ identities feel safe within Perth and Huron counties. Participants across methods stressed that these spaces must be available year round, and not just during Pride Month.⁶ Safety should include, but is not limited to, spaces where people can explore and express their identities without feeling stigmatized or discriminated against. An example of a service provision that often provides safe spaces across counties were local libraries.

Service providers, including those working in the municipal government, can:

⁶ In Canada, Pride Month is June.

- Create and enforce policies which explicitly ban hate speech and/or discriminatory actions.
- Move funding and resources towards safe community spaces such as programming, peer groups, and/or resources which affirm 2SLGBTQ+ identities.
- Signal that programs and events are safe through signage, the use of Pride Flags, and other inclusive signals.

Recommendation 2: Prioritize 2SLGBTQ+ Inclusive Social Opportunities which are Accessible and Available Yearly

To combat experiences of discrimination and social isolation, organizations and community leaders should create social spaces where 2SLGBTQ+ communities can feel safe and included year round. These spaces can include, but are not limited to online peer groups, community events, and social gatherings.

Participants across all methods stated that service providers should offer different social opportunities across age group, other social identities, and interest.

Service providers, including those working in the municipal government, can:

- Host different events throughout the year, such as events geared towards older adults, sober events/parties, and board game nights.
- Create and fund community programming for 2SLGBTQ+ identities
- Support community members and service providers in learning more about 2SLGBTQ+ gender identities.
- Create and fund spaces which promote relationship-building for both adults and youth.

Recommendation 3: Pride Symbols Should be Made Visible within Organizations and Community Spaces

Because 2SLGBTQ+ individuals in Perth and Huron Counties often feel invisible, or like they cannot be true to themselves, organizations and community spaces should actively show symbols of support for the community.

Service providers, including those working in the municipal government, can:

- Make sure that 2SLGBTQ+ signage is visible in storefronts and across community settings. For example, municipal governments can fly the Pride Flag and invest in rainbow sidewalks.
- Educate and train staff to ensure that they understand why such signs of visibility are important.

Recommendation 4: Ensure Inclusive and Meaningful Practices across Community Organizations

Research, working group members, and contributors to the community wall all noted that service organizations across counties could improve on inclusive practices.

Service providers, including those working in the municipal government, can:

- Use identity-affirming and inclusive language in speech and in policy documents.
- Normalize asking for and identifying one's own pronouns.
- Create intake documents which use gender-inclusive language, especially in healthcare settings.
- Hire or re-hire Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) staff and establish clear policies around mandatory training for frontline and governmental workers.

Recommendation 5: Prioritize Training and Education About 2SLGBTQ+ Identities

Service providers should actively engage in both training and education which promotes understanding and knowledge of different identities, such as 2SLGBTQ+ identities. One framework that service providers can use is **cultural competency** which can help providers communicate with people from different backgrounds and better understand 2SLGBTQ+ community member needs.

Service providers, including those working in the municipal government, can:

- Create and/or offer training around identity-inclusive language within organizations.
- Offer professional development opportunities in the unique needs of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals, especially in areas such as health care.
- Provide spaces where community members and service providers can ask "bad questions in good faith." For example, education should be provided that allows individuals to ask genuine questions that they do not know the answer to.

Conclusion

This research confirms findings from other rural communities: members of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in Perth and Huron Counties report unique experiences of social isolation and high rates of discrimination. These experiences are context dependent, and individuals living in Huron County, as well as 2SLGBTQ+ individuals with disabilities and recent Newcomers to Canada, appear to be at heightened risk of discrimination and/or social exclusion. However, many participants expressed the importance of joy, and finding ways to experience joy within the community.

Importantly, this research signals the need for more inclusive service provision within Perth and Huron Counties, to include education about the unique barriers of the 2SLGBTQ+ community and the creation of inclusive organizational environments; intentional efforts to build safe community spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ individuals; and changes to governmental and organizational policy to prohibit explicit and hate-based discriminatory acts.

Special thanks given to the Community Advisory Committee

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Danielle Bettridge
Meineka Kulasinghe
Mark Nonkes



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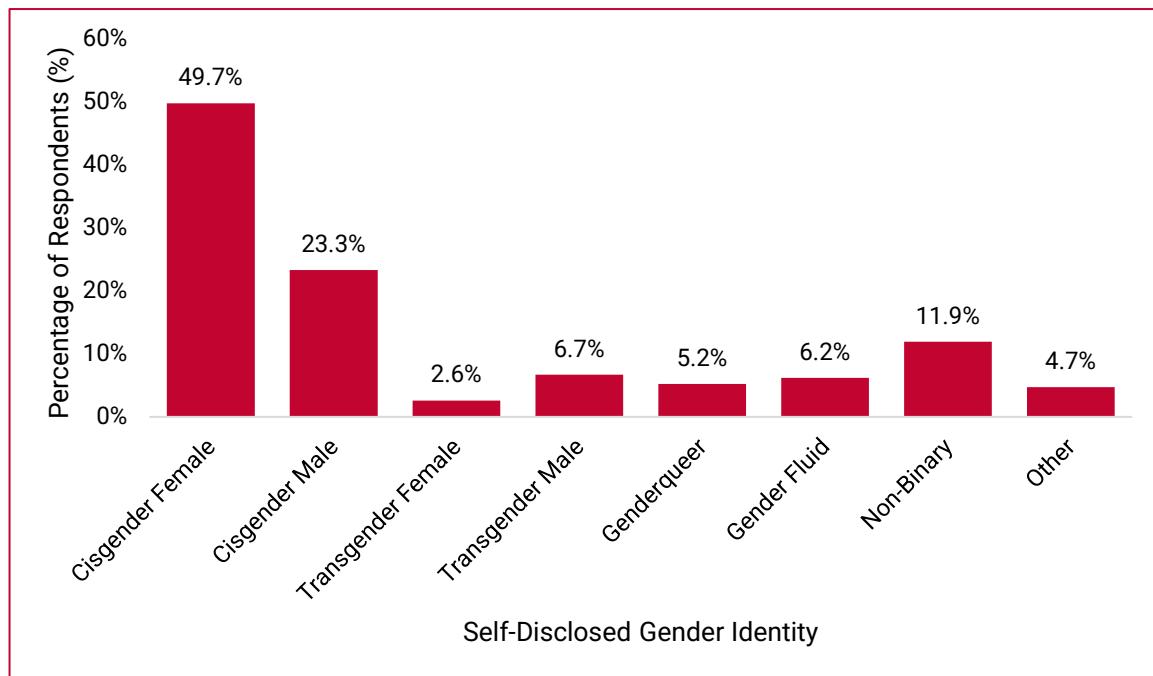
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Appendix A. Additional Demographic Information

Within the survey dissemination, researchers also collected information on participant's gender and sexual identities. Participants could choose more than one identity. See Figure A1.

Gender *identity* refers to how much a person identifies as a woman, man, or neither.

Figure A1. Survey Respondents Self-Disclosed Gender Identities



Cisgender means that a person's gender identity identifies with their sex assigned at birth. For example, a person who identifies as a cisgender female was assigned female at birth, and identifies as a woman/female.

Transgender means that a person's gender identity does not match the sex that they were assigned at birth.

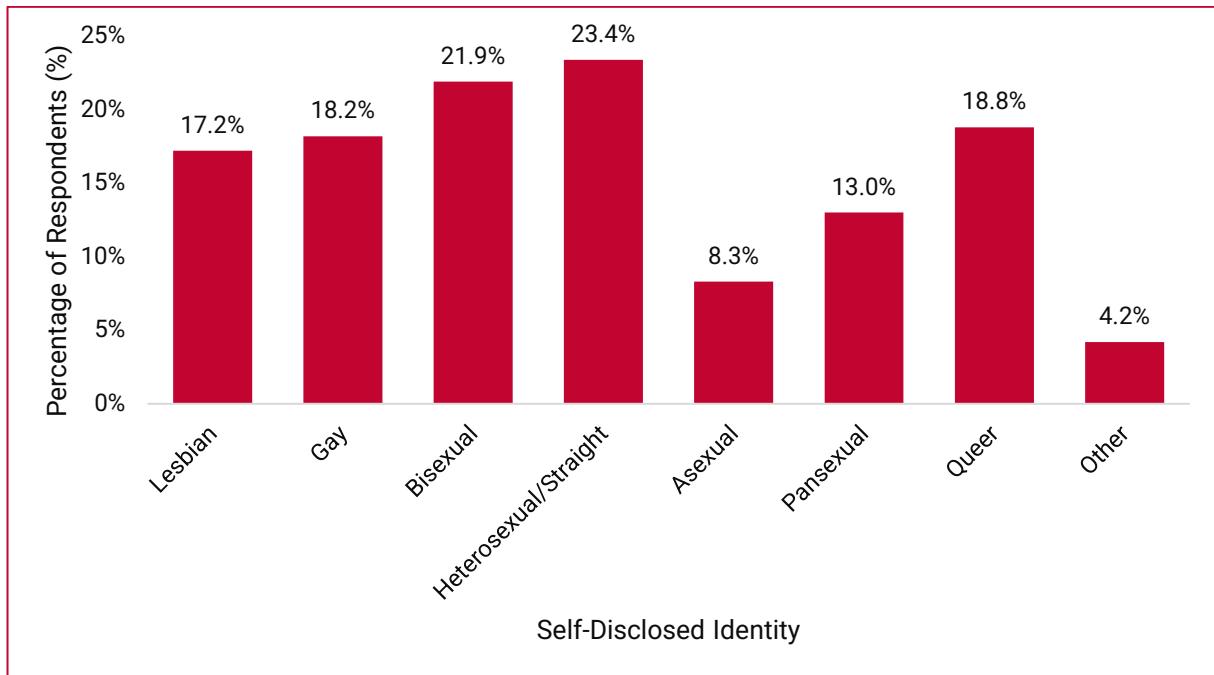
For example, a *transgender male/man* may refer to somebody who was assigned female at birth, but now identifies as a male/man. A *transgender female/woman* may refer to somebody who was assigned male at birth, but now identifies as a female/woman.

Genderqueer, genderfluid, or non-binary are all terms to represent people who do not fully identify as a woman or man.

Although no participants identified as *Two Spirit*, this term encompasses diverse Indigenous individuals who have a gender or sexual identity that falls outside Western conceptions of gender (Pruden & Salway, 2020).

Sexual identity refers to who a person is sexually attracted to. Terms related to each are defined below each demographic breakdown. See Figure A2.

Figure A2. Survey Respondents Self-Disclosed Sexual Identities



Lesbian and *gay* refer to individuals who are attracted (sexually, romantically, or otherwise) to people of the same gender. Identifying as *gay* can refer to either men or women, but identifying as *lesbian* is often used for women.

Bisexual refers to individuals who are sexually attracted to people of more than one gender (e.g., attracted to both men and women). *Pansexual* refers to individuals who are sexually attracted to people across the gender spectrum.

Heterosexual or *straight* refers to individuals who are sexually attracted to people of the opposite gender/sex.

Asexual refers to individuals who have limited to no sexual attraction to others, regardless of their gender.

Queer is a term that some people have embraced and reclaimed to signal that they hold a 2SLGBTQ+ identity.

To learn more about gender and sexual identities, please refer to:

<https://www.rainbowhealthontario.ca/2slgbtq-health/glossary/>