

HANDBOOK

A Toolkit for Local Electeds Climate Action

2SLGBTQ+ Homelessness

A part of the [Climate Justice Councillor Handbook](#)



Stay tuned for the up-to-date version of this resource!

This document is undergoing fact checks and updates... you will be able to access the new version in September 2025.

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The Harsh Reality: 2SLGBTQ+ Homelessness in Canada

Housing and homelessness remains a primary concern for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, in particular 2SLGBTQ+ youth, Two Spirit and LGBTQI Indigenous communities, 2SLGBTQ+ persons with disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ communities of colour. Additionally, public spaces, including shelter systems and service agencies lack awareness and knowledge of, as well as policy and programming that speaks to, the unique experiences and needs of 2SLGBTQ+ communities and, more specifically, trans and gender diverse communities.

For over 2 decades, [limited Canadian research has indicated that 2SLGBTQ+ youth](#) are disproportionately represented among youth experiencing homelessness. However, they are often underrepresented in shelters and housing programs due to safety, violence, and discrimination.

24-40% of homeless youth in Canada identify as 2SLGBTQ+, although that percentage is estimated to be much higher. For example, within the City of Toronto shelter system, 2SLGBTQ+ have twice the occupancy rate as all other youth combined (City of Toronto, 2013). 2SLGBTQ+ youth have difficulty finding shelters where they feel safe, as they experience high rates of discrimination and violence. Barriers in housing and education also prevent 2SLGBTQ+ youth from accessing services and support.

Importantly, intersecting identities of race, class, and Indigeneity increase the likelihood that queer youth experience homelessness.

2SLGBTQ+ older adults also experience unique challenges to accessing housing as they age, as they face **physical, economic, and social barriers to inclusion in long-term care settings.**

Although required by provincial/territorial human rights legislation, shelter systems and service agencies are often not inclusive to the experiences of queer, trans, gender diverse, intersex, and Two Spirit users.

Among the most vulnerable populations for climate change-related phenomena are those without stable housing. **See our [Housing Security Handbook section](#) to learn more.**

The LGBTQI+ community experiencing homelessness are right in the line of fire of the climate crisis. Specifically, the homeless population is at greater risk of heat exhaustion, hypothermia, and injury due to the greater variability in temperature that we have seen over the last 30 years. Additionally, the surge of natural disasters, such as wildfires, droughts, floods, combined with a prolonged hurricane season, have heightened the pressures that come with living in impoverished and low-income areas. Therefore, members of the LGBTQ+ community in Canada are experiencing the devastating effects of climate change first-hand, **yet systemic underreporting of the queer experience actively contributes to the erasure of these perspectives within climate activism and decision-making spaces.**

LGBTQ2S YOUTH HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

40,000

YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS
IN CANADA

6,000-7,000 PER NIGHT

[25-40%]
HOMELESS YOUTH IN CANADA
IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ2S

There are no recent national studies that have measured and specifically focused on LGBTQ2S youth homelessness. Since this data remains limited, this graphic shares statistics from a Toronto-based count.

20%
HOMELESS
POPULATION
= YOUTH

HOMELESS YOUTH IN TORONTO

2,000 PER NIGHT

[21% →]
YOUTH IN TORONTO SHELTERS
IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ2S

LGBTQ2S youth are **overrepresented**
in the homeless youth population,
but underrepresented in shelters.

9 EMERGENCY YOUTH SHELTERS



= 381

**5 TRANSITIONAL YOUTH
HOUSING PROGRAMS**



= 137

LGBTQ2S youth have difficulty
finding shelters where they
feel safe and respected; they
experience high rates
of discrimination and
violence in shelters.



**HOMO /
TRANS
PHOBIA
IN SHELTERS**



**LGBTQ2S SPECIFIC HOUSING
OPTIONS ARE AN ESSENTIAL
COMPONENT IN ADDRESSING
YOUTH HOMELESSNESS
AND MEETING THE NEEDS
OF LGBTQ2S YOUTH.**

Written by Dr. Alex Abramovich (2016) SOURCES: Abramovich, A. (2016). Young, Queer and Trans, Homeless, and Battered: A Critical Action Research Study of How Policy and Culture Create Oppressive Conditions for LGBTQ Youth in Toronto's Shelter System. University of Toronto; Gaetz, S., Donaldson, J., Richter, T., & Gulliver, T. (2013). The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press; City of Toronto (2013). Street Needs Assessment; Josephson, G. & Wright, A. (2000). Ottawa GLBT wellness project: Literature review and survey instruments. Gaetz, S., O'Grady, B., Kidd, S., & Schwan, K. (2016). Without a Home: The National Youth Homelessness Survey. Toronto: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

#ENDYOUTHHOMELESSNESS

INFOGRAPHIC DESIGN BY:
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Source:

<https://www.the519.org/education-training/lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness-in-canada/in-canada>

What Local Governments Across Canada Can Do to Combat/Alleviate 2SLGBTQ+ Homelessness

*Resource expertise level:  Green = beginner  Blue = intermediate
 Black = advanced  Double black = expert

***Climate Caucus has ranked the following initiatives from beginner to expert, based on Complexity to implement, Staff time & expertise, and Political capital. Please note, these rankings are our own best judgements.

◆ **Expand the collection of data on sexual orientation and gender identity in homeless populations**

◆ **Develop shelters and winter response strategies** specific to 2SLGBTQ+ people

 **Partner with organizations** to provide 2SLGBTQ-specific safe temporary shelters and housing, as well as permanent supportive housing;

- establish regular interagency dialogue among organizations whose work affects homelessness in your city to create awareness, increase communication, reduce duplication of services, and leverage possible partnership opportunities.

Examples:

- Check out [Canada's first LGBTQ2S transitional housing program \(YMCA's Sprott House in Toronto\)](#)
- Check out organizations that are actively conducting this research and providing these resources, like [End Homelessness Winnipeg](#) and [Homeless Hub](#)

 **Implement assistance programs for unhoused people**

- Can partner with organizations to do this - see [BC Housing, End Homelessness Winnipeg](#) and [Homeless Hub](#)

◆ **Develop a community of practice for your city's approach to Coordinated Access.**

- [Coordinated access](#) is a standardized, system-wide approach designed to meet the needs of diverse individuals and families experiencing or at imminent risk of homelessness. It triages and matches individuals and families with housing and services based on their current situation, their vulnerability and needs, and the support they currently receive.

◆ **Fund and form a Homelessness Emergency Response Committee or strategy**

- This strategy plans for and addresses emergent issues related to extreme weather, climate change, public health crises, and service disruptions such as building failures, construction and moves, among providers of essential homelessness services including mobile outreach, drop-ins, shelters and safe spaces.

Examples:

- Check out the [City of Richmond's Homelessness Strategy](#)
- Check out the [City of Burnaby's Housing and Homelessness Strategy](#)
- Check out [Everyone is Home: A Five-Year Plan to End Chronic and Episodic Homelessness in Regina](#)
- Check out [Medicine Hat's Plan to End Homelessness](#)

■ **Develop a community plan to end homelessness with a 2SLGBTQ+ lens**

Example:

- Check out [Saskatoon's Plan to End Homelessness](#)

■ **Create a [municipal heat response plan](#) for homeless populations.**

- The Plan could identify alert, response, and recovery phases, and the roles of stakeholders during each phase.
- Learn more [here](#) and [here](#) (for both urban & rural communities).

Read more about homelessness and local government initiatives in our [Homelessness section of our Climate Justice Handbook here.](#)

Additional Resources

- [Coming out means going homeless for some LGBTQ youth in Nova Scotia](#)
- [Recommendations and suggestions for how to prevent homelessness amongst LGBTQ2S young people in Canada and across the globe](#)
- [Understanding LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada](#)
- [The Homeless Hub](#)
- [LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada](#)
- [The Intersection of Environmentalism and the LGBTQ Community: Where Does Canada Stand](#)

Climate Caucus Resources:

[Climate Caucus Municipal Grants List](#) - detailed list of relevant municipal grants

[Policies and Resources Library](#) - list of motions, bylaws, council reports and briefing notes

Did you know Climate Caucus offers an “Ask Us Anything” service for elected officials in the network?

You could ask questions like “can you help me find this resource?” “Do you know of funding for X?” “Do you have examples of X policy language?” or “can you connect me with an expert in X?”

[Send us your questions here!](#)

