



# National LGBTQI2S Action Plan Executive Summary



# Egale

Founded in 1986, Egale is Canada's national LGBTQI2S human rights organization. Egale works to improve the lives of LGBTQI2S people in Canada and to enhance the global response to LGBTQI2S issues by informing public policy, inspiring cultural change, and promoting human rights and inclusion through research, education, awareness and legal advocacy. Egale's vision is a Canada, and ultimately a world without homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, and all other forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias.

**Egale Canada** has updated our existing National LGBTQI2S Action Plan for the Federal Government. The Action Plan addresses areas of concern and improvement for the broader LGBTQI2S community. The updates to the Action Plan were developed as a result of community input from Egale's national IDENTITY conference that took place in May 2018.

The recommended actions present many opportunities for Canada to improve on areas such as data collection, healthcare, racism, Indigenous relations, accessibility, homelessness, justice reform, discrimination (federal, institutional and social), gender equity, and poverty reduction, specifically speaking to LGBTQI2S people's experience across government and social systems.

The National LGBTQI2S Action Plan has been updated in January, 2020 as a result of community input and will continue to be developed as such. If you have a recommendation to put forward, please contact us at **info@egale.ca**

For references and to access the full National LGBTQI2S Action Plan please visit:  
[Egale.ca/NationalActionPlan](https://egale.ca/NationalActionPlan)



# Executive Summary

Following the 2019 federal election, Egale Canada has updated the National LGBTQI2S Action Plan for the Federal Government to ensure actions are brought forward for the inclusion of LGBTQI2S people. This 'LGBTQI2S Action Plan' explains how we must advance the rights of LGBTQI2S people both at home and abroad, and improve inclusion across all public services.

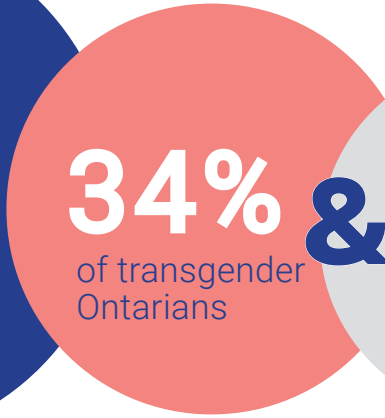
The National LGBTQI2S Action Plan addresses 12 priority areas across government that impact LGBTQI2S people. Along with each priority area, there are tangible action items for the government to prioritize as it moves into planning for the next 2-4 years. The action items contained in this plan are the result of extensive literature reviews, assessments of current policy and legislation, and findings from Egale's national research studies along with outcomes from our national IDENTITY conference. The plan presents opportunities for the Canadian government to improve on areas such as data collection, healthcare, racism, Indigenous relations, accessibility, homelessness, justice reform, discrimination (federal, institutional and social), gender equity, and poverty reduction, specifically speaking to LGBTQI2S people's experience across the board.

There are persisting social inequities that continue to exist for LGBTQI2S people in Canada, indicating that current federal supports are insufficient, as is the Federal Government's inaction concerning legislative reform. Within this executive summary, each of the priority areas are presented with the action items needed to create a more inclusive Canada for LGBTQI2S people. We are also calling on the Federal Government to establish an LGBTQI2S action plan implementation fund of \$12 million over two years. This funding will be allocated accordingly to enable civil society organizations to facilitate and deliver projects that respond to the action items in this plan.

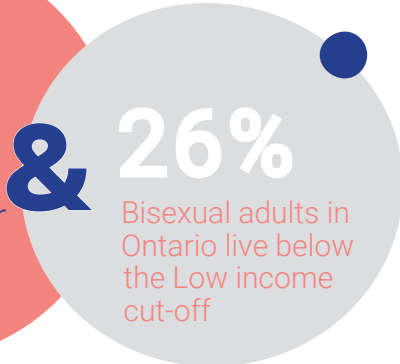
# Statistics



(Egale Canada, 2012)



(Bauer, Travers, Scanlon, & Coleman, 2012)



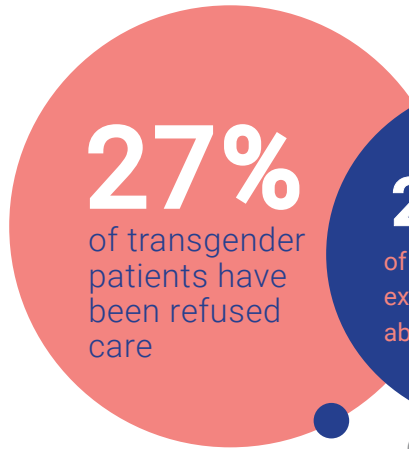
(Bauer et al., 2012)

## Poverty

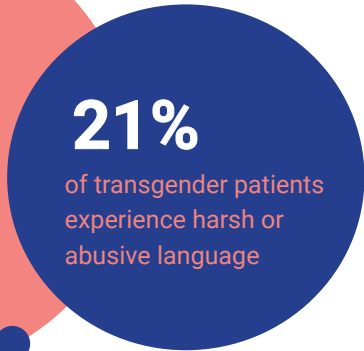
LGBTQI2S communities experience the largest gaps in housing access and income equality.

## Healthcare

LGBTQI2S Canadians experience stigma and discrimination within the healthcare system.



(Rossman, Salamanca & Macapagal, 2017)



(Rossman, Salamanca & Macapagal, 2017)



(Bauer et al., 2012)

## Employment

LGBTQI2S people continue to experience discrimination in the workplace or the workforce. This remains especially true for transgender people in Canada.

# Action Items

- 1 Healthcare
- 2 Mental Health
- 3 Poverty Reduction
- 4 Housing & Homelessness
- 5 Employment Access
- 6 Education
- 7 Sports Inclusion
- 8 Seniors
- 9 Justice Reform
- 10 Intersex Rights
- 11 Asylum System Reform
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# Health Care

LGBTQI2S people in Canada experience stigma and discrimination within the healthcare system, which has led to significant health inequities. From the work we do at Egale, we know this discrimination is often the result of both insufficient and/or lack of training for health professionals as well as a number of other barriers, including access to coverage for gender-affirming transitions.

LGBTQI2S people have led a long battle against medicalization and pathologisation – where the medical system and categorization of sexual difference or gender diversity have caused an immense amount of harm. Improving the health, safety, and wellbeing of LGBTQI2S persons is an essential component of improving population health across Canada.



21%

21% of transgender & 10% of LGB patients experience harsh or abusive language while receiving care. 8% of LGB / 27% of transgender patients have been refused care.

(Rossman, Salamanca & Macapagal, 2017)



60%

Over 60% of healthcare providers reported having never received training for cultural competence regarding trans populations.

(Gahagan & Subirana-Malaret, 2018)



50%

Over 50% of healthcare providers reported having never received training for cultural competence in relation to LGBQ populations.

(Gahagan & Subirana-Malaret, 2018)

# HEALTHCARE

## 1

1. **Implement** a universal, national gender affirming healthcare strategy to support trans and gender diverse communities across Canada, including a commitment to care that is:
  - a. Competent, transparent, and accessible within a reasonable time period;
  - b. Accessible without a mental health diagnosis of gender dysphoria;
  - c. Comprehensive in covering all gender-affirming care expenses.
2. **Immediately** dismantle the discriminatory practices related to blood donation, anonymous sperm donation, and tissue donation for men who have sex with men (MSM) and trans people.
3. **Provide** federal support to supplement the severe financial deficits present in provincial disability support programs.
4. **Incorporate** measures that help to assess, integrate, and provide funding for the healthcare needs of LGBTQI2S people within the New Health Accord.
5. **Allocate** specific funding within the New Health Accord towards services that attend to the mental health needs of diverse LGBTQI2S people across the country.
6. **Implement** a national pharmacare program that provides access to PEP and PreP for all populations, including newcomers who access healthcare through the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP).
7. **Meaningfully** engage LGTBQI2S persons with disabilities to develop and implement national accessibility policies and programming leading to the development of a National Disabilities Act.
8. **Collect** essential data for LGBTQI2S health inclusion by offering a range of gender identity options in the upcoming census, Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the General Social Survey (GSS).



# Mental Health

LGBTQI2S people experience a greater prevalence of mental health issues related to life stress and discrimination. This issue is even further exacerbated for diverse groups within the LGBTQI2S community who experience unique and differing rates of mental health issues based on their particular or intersecting identities.

Access to inclusive and affirming mental health services is crucial for LGBTQI2S communities in repairing the damages that come with years of systemic oppression and discrimination. The LGBTQI2S community requires dedicated, supportive, and affirming medical resources and structural supports – specifically resources that are dedicated to trauma-informed, anti-racist and anti-oppressive approaches to mental health care.



27x

Trans people who wish to medically transition, but have not yet begun, are 27 times more likely to attempt suicide or self-harm than those who have completed medical transition.

(Rossman, Salamanca & Macapagal, 2017)



75%

75% of trans adults have considered suicide and 43% have attempted suicide at some point in their lives.

(Rossman, Salamanca & Macapagal, 2017)

# Mental Health

## 2

1. **Allocate** funding to mental health services specific to diverse LGBTQI2S people across the country, with a focus on expanding services beyond major urban centers.
2. **Mandate** inclusion training for all regulated service providers to ensure that they have knowledge and resources to serve and respond to the needs of LGBTQI2S people.
3. **Develop** a National Harm Reduction Strategy with specific allocated funding that addresses the mental health and addiction needs of LGBTQI2S individuals.
4. **Incorporate** measures that support LGBTQI2S individuals living with mental illness and in the criminal justice system within the development of a National Harm Reduction Strategy.
5. **Ensure** that evaluation and data collection in the healthcare sector includes attraction, gender identity and gender expression as well as disaggregated data speaking to the intersections of identity.
6. **Follow the action** items solidified in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Report, work with community partners, scholars, and inquiry staff to develop programming to address the specific mental health needs of LGBTQI Indigenous People and Two Spirit people.

# Poverty Reduction

LGBTQI2S communities continue to experience some of the largest gaps in housing access and income equality measures, and available data representing the needs of LGBTQI2S people in Canada remains extremely limited.

Poverty reduction for LGBTQI2S people across the country requires attention in budgeting priorities and social assistance supports. A full systems evaluation is also required to understand the ways in which identity and barriers-to-access influence how LGBTQI2S people in Canada navigate the systems currently set in place to offer protection and support.

60%

Over 60% of healthcare providers reported having never received training for cultural competence regarding trans populations.

(Gahagan & Subirana-Malaret, 2018)

34%

34% of transgender adults in Ontario live below the Low income cut-off.

(Bauer et al., 2012)

26%

26% of Bisexual adults in Ontario live below the Low income cut-off.

(Bauer et al., 2012)

# Poverty Reduction

## 3

1. **Explore** where vulnerable members of the LGBTQI2S community experience gaps in support when switching from federal to provincial benefits as part of Canada's Poverty Reduction Strategy.
2. **Ensure** that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) works in partnership with agencies serving LGBTQI2S communities.
3. **Ensure** that LGBTQI2S people are able to access income supports without fear of discrimination, including support for families with children regardless of parental gender and/or marital status.
4. **Increase mechanisms** of federal income support to working age adults without children, such as the Canada Housing Benefit, that can work towards a basic income to enable LGBTQI2S people to afford basic needs.
5. **Ensure** that the National Food Policy contains a plan to address food insecurity among LGBTQI2S populations, including those living in poverty as well as those living in Indigenous and isolated, remote communities.

# Housing & Homelessness

Housing plays a vital role in any effort to build on inclusion and supports for LGBTQI2S people. Access to safe and affordable housing is a significant concern across LGBTQI2S populations and is particularly difficult for youth, older and ageing LGBTQI2S people. LGBTQI2S people experience homelessness at increased rates because of discrimination, and face this same discrimination when accessing services within the shelter system.

Additionally, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia remain prevalent within the rental housing market. Immediate action must be taken by the Federal Government's National Housing Strategy to include safe, permanent living solutions for homeless and/or precariously housed LGBTQI2S people.



45%

Between 25 - 45% of Canada's homeless youth population identify as LGBTQI2S.

(Egale Canada, 2012)



52%

52% of LGBTQI2S seniors in Canada fear being forced back into the closet upon entering residential care.

(Egale Canada, 2018)

# 4

## Housing and Homelessness

1. **Allocate** specific funding for targeted housing and housing-related services for vulnerable populations including LGBTQI2S youth and seniors, and ensure that these services are accessible and inclusive of the diverse needs within the community.
2. **Ensure** that services for those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity are inclusive and affirming for LGBTQI2S people across all sectors through policy development and training of staff in shelters, transitional housing, drop-in services, social housing and rent-g geared-to-income (RGI)/affordable housing.
3. **Meaningfully consult** with LGBTQI2S stakeholders and organizations throughout the process of revising the Homelessness Partnering Strategy in order to be inclusive of LGBTQI2S communities and address their needs.
4. **Continue to develop** Canada's National Housing Strategy and allocate targeted funding for policy, programming, and training development that is specific to LGBTQI2S communities. This strategy should emphasize the needs of LGBTQI2S youth and seniors, LGBTQI2S communities of colour, Two Spirit and LGBTQI Indigenous communities, LGBTQI2S persons with disabilities and LGBTQI newcomers and asylum seekers.

# Employment Access

LGBTQI2S people continue to experience discrimination in the workplace and barriers to access the workforce. This remains especially true for trans, non-binary, gender-diverse and Two Spirit people. Despite Bill C-16's amendments to the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Criminal Code to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds for discrimination, it is of great concern that sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression are not currently included in the Federal Employment Equity Act.

It is essential that federal and provincial governments consider how systemic barriers to access gender-affirming documentation affects LGBTQI2S people's ability to navigate other gender-affirming documentation like transcripts, insurance forms, and banking information.

**49%**

49% of trans people polled in Ontario earn less than \$15,000/year

(Bauer et al., 2012)

**34%**

34% of trans people live in poverty below low income cut-off, despite that over 70% have completed at least some college or university education.

(Bauer et al., 2012)

**75%**

75% of trans people have no government-issued ID that reflects their lived gender.

(Bauer et al., 2015)

# 5

## Employment Access

1. **Increase** the labour force participation of underrepresented groups, in which the Federal Government must:
  - a. **Develop** a comprehensive national implementation strategy for Bill C-16 that targets funding for the development of comprehensive and inclusive policies, programs, and training around gender identity and expression;
  - b. **Provide** support and funding to organizations looking to develop trans inclusive policies and programming in workplaces.
2. **Include** sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds in the federal **Employment Equity Act**, and collect data that is inclusive of LGBTQI2S communities that accurately reflects the lived employment realities of LGBTQI2S people across the country.
3. **Earmark** targeted social assistance funding to subsidize the income of trans and gender diverse employees who experience employment disruption while they are recovering from gender affirming procedures.
4. **Provide** incentives for employers to establish LGBTQI2S-focused Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), which play an important role in creating safer spaces in organizations for LGBTQI2S people and advocating for changes in organizational policies and practices.



# Education

Schools, colleges and universities across Canada continue to be rife with violence and with that also comes homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination. Providing national support in gender diversity and equity trainings and policy implementation can help to remove the barriers and concerns that educators across the country have about providing safe, informed support to students.

National and provincial supports and frameworks are needed to facilitate improvements in LGBTQI2S equity, inclusion, access, and knowledge for educational institutions across Canada. Education and curriculum that affirms LGBTQI2S identities and experiences has an immense effect on feelings of youth safety and providing positive representation. The Federal Government has a role in ensuring that this affirming work is supported and upheld across all provinces.



49%

Nearly half (49%) of educators reported hearing homo-negative comments at least weekly in their school.

(Taylor, Peter, McMinn, Elliatt, Beldom, Ferry, Gross, Paquin & Schachter, 2011)



64%

64% of LGBTQI2S students reported feeling unsafe at school.

(Tayler et al., 2011)

\*Egale is conducting our Second National Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in schools.

# Education

## 6

1. **Ensure** that First Nations children on reserves receive a quality education. In partnership with national Two Spirit organizations, the Federal Government should take the lead in developing curriculum to ensure that the government's historical role in persecuting Canada's LGBTQI2S communities is included.
2. **This commitment** should include endowing a fund to develop such material and other educational projects that generate awareness of historical injustices faced by Canada's LGBTQI2S communities, and address the impacts of colonization on Two Spirit culture and identities.
3. **Work** with provincial governments to ensure LGBTQI2S inclusion at all levels of the K-12 educational curriculum as well as post secondary institutions, particularly:
  - a. **Ensure** that lesson plans and school curriculum across disciplines and grade levels meaningfully integrate learning objectives that affirm and reflect LGBTQI2S identities and experiences and challenge unconscious biases and discriminatory behaviours, practices and systems.
  - b. **Ensure** protection (explicitly) for LGBTQI2S students and educators in school policies and codes of conduct with clear definitions of harassment and discrimination based on attraction, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. Clear protocols for filing complaints or grievances, and outlines for conciliatory measures should be created, as well as federally protected guidelines for sexual health and physical education that reflect Canada's diversity of families and family structures, sexuality, and gender identity.

# Sports Inclusion

LGBTQI2S people in Canada experience barriers to participation in both formal and informal sporting organizations and opportunities. The benefits of participating in sporting communities are countless and serve to potentially offset the heightened physical and mental health issues experienced by LGBTQI2S people.

Research consistently confirms the numerous and growing physical and social benefits that sports offer: physical activity has long-term health benefits that include stress and anxiety reduction, cardiovascular benefits, and improvements in self esteem and confidence. It is essential that the Government address barriers to inclusion in sports and recreation for LGBTQI2S people.



30%

Heterosexual Athletes

67%

LGB Athletes

85%

Trans Athletes

**experience at least one homophobic episode.**

(Demers, 2017)

# Sports Inclusion

## 7

1. **Administer funding** and support for the creation of a National Sports Inclusion Task Force to act as a formal coalition to end LGBTQI2S bias in sport at the recreational, community, national and professional level.
2. **Include** LGBTQI2S people in the National Code of Conduct to Eliminate Harassment, Abuse and Discrimination in Sport, using definitions of terms that describe the identities and experiences of the LGBTQI2S community including the explicit use of the words gender, gender expression and attraction as prohibited grounds of discrimination.
3. **Work with** the LGBTQI2S community to develop and deliver training materials focused on creating safer and more inclusive sport spaces and facilities, geared to coaches, athletes, spectators and sport enthusiasts at any level.
4. **Ensure** the official development of an LGBTQI2S assessment tool to address harassment, abuse and discrimination, to monitor, keep accountable and track LGBTQI2S-phobic incidents.
5. **Appoint** an LGBTQI2S representative to the Centre for Sport and Human Rights advisory council.
6. **Appoint** LGBTQI2S representation to the national Sport Canada body to represent the LGBTQI2S community in order to develop, implement and monitor a LGBTQI2S equity strategy for sport in Canada.
7. **Appoint** an LGBTQI2S representative to the national Gender Equity working group.
8. **Implement** nation-wide sport policies to prohibit abuse, harassment and discrimination based on gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation. All national sport organizations must have strong policies that foster inclusion and ensure opportunity and accessibility for all to participate, including LGBTQI2S people.

# Seniors

Seniors are the fastest growing demographic in Canada. LGBTQI2S seniors lived through an immense amount of systemic and interpersonal discrimination, with partial decriminalization happening a mere 50 years ago. The lingering effects of social and cultural exclusion and systemic violence impact the ability of LGBTQI2S seniors to navigate social programming, healthcare systems, and long-term care.

LGBTQI2S seniors continue to face barriers across the board, including mental health, social isolation, housing and homelessness, and more. Perhaps most important, is the need for national scale research to help identify the unique struggles of this demographic. It is imperative that the government take action to include and account for the unique adversities facing LGBTQI2S seniors across all sectors.



42%

42% of LGBT older people are very or extremely concerned that they will outlive the money they have saved for retirement, as compared to 25% of non-LGBT older people.

(SAGE, 2014)



50%

50% of service users feared that they would lose the respect of their service providers should they come out.

(Daley, MacDonnell & St. Pierre, 2016)

\*Egale is currently undertaking a national LGBTQI2S Seniors research project to further identify gaps and needs.

# Seniors

## 8

1. **Collaborate** with local organizations serving LGBTQI2S seniors in order to ensure they are able to access the range of federal benefits they are entitled to such as OAS (Old Age Security) and GIS (Guaranteed Income Supplement), as part of the federal commitment to provide increased support to the Community Volunteer Income Tax Program.
2. **Fund programs** that provide cultural competency training to care providers about issues specifically faced by LGBTQI2S seniors living with dementia, as part of the federal commitment to improve ways to address dementia.
3. **Dedicate** funds to the creation of LGBTQI2S-centered long-term care facilities, as well as models of cooperative housing that specifically include LGBTQI2S seniors, as part of the prioritization of seniors as part of the National Housing Strategy.
4. **Support** further research to evaluate the needs of LGBTQI2S seniors.
5. **Increase** funding for LGBTQI2S seniors advocacy groups.
6. **Support** low income seniors and link with existing local LGBTQI2S-friendly organizations with outreach and support for programs such as access to LGBTQI2S friendly home care, end of life planning, cultural competency training for service providers, and financial and legal support. This can coincide with the federal commitment to work with the provinces and territories in the coordination of programs.

# Justice Reform

Justice is one of the longest standing mechanisms that exists to advance rights and take steps toward improving inclusion, especially for LGBTQI2S people. The Federal Government is obliged to ensure that the human rights of LGBTQI2S persons are protected on a national level.

Although there is potential for this portion of the action plan to be vast, we have chosen to focus on a few key priorities areas including HIV/AIDS, sex work, hate crimes, intersex rights, cyber bullying, environmental justice, and gender-based violence. Egale Canada maintains the position that federalism must not constitute a barrier to human rights protection in Canada.



53%

53% of crimes targeting sexual orientation were violent violations, compared to 47% of hate crimes targeting ethnicity and 24% targeting religion.

(Armstrong, 2019)



2x

LGB youth are more than twice as likely to experience online harassment than their straight peers.

(Statistics Canada, 2016)

# Justice Reform

## 9

1. **Reform** of the Criminal Code provisions and prosecutorial practices, to make the criminal justice system more equitable. This should include:
  - (a) **Implement** a nationwide ban on conversion therapy in Canada, and any other practice by the health care system or religious community that intends to change someone's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.
  - (b) **Repeal** of sex work laws that harm workers.
  - (c) **Amend** the exception under the genital mutilation law to proscribe the ongoing harmful mutilation of intersex babies.
  - (d) **Add** intersex status to the protections of the Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code.
  - (e) **Restrict** the prosecution of HIV non-disclosure cases under aggravated sexual assault.
2. **Include** a range of gender identity options in the upcoming census and within the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) and the General Social Survey (GSS), including non-binary options.
3. **Provide** funds for programs that specifically address violence experienced by vulnerable members of the LGBTQI2S community, especially racialized and disabled trans and gender diverse communities.
4. **Review** recommendations put forward by the independent investigation into missing persons led by Honourable Judge Gloria Epstein (forthcoming, January 2021) and implement the recommendations on a national scale.
5. **Develop** an action plan to train police, prosecutors and judicial officials, about the LGBTQI2S community's needs in order to address the lingering, toxic effect of criminalization of LGBTQI2S people, as part of the Federal Government commitment to ensure effective gender and culturally sensitive training policies for federal front-line law enforcement officers.
6. **Prioritize** research and program development in the areas of cyberbullying and online harassment as a part of the government's commitment to Gender Based Violence prevention, with the intentional inclusion of information about LGBTQI2S people's experiences of violence online.
7. **Ensure** that ministers responsible for emergency management will work collaboratively with LGBTQI2S organizations and communities to develop an inventory of emergency management capability in LGBTQI2S communities across Canada, advocating for provinces to include LGBTQI2S people in their safety planning.



# Intersex Rights

Intersex people in Canada continue to face human rights violations. Surgeries on intersex children have been condemned by major human rights groups such as the United Nations, Physicians for Human Rights, and Human Rights Watch, as well as every intersex-led organization in the world.

It is unacceptable that the Canadian government continues failing to fulfill its treaty body obligations under international law, especially concerning the UN CAT (Convention Against Torture).



**30-80%**

Between 30 and 80%  
of intersex children  
undergo up to five  
irreversible surgeries.

(Fausto Sterling, 2000)

# Intersex Rights

10

1. **Align** the criminal code of Canada with its treaty body obligations under the UN CAT; prevent and prohibit all non-consensual, cosmetic, surgeries on intersex children.
2. **Ensure** section 7 Charter protection to all intersex persons in Canada.
3. **Amend** Subsection 268(3) to include IGM (intersex genital mutilation) as aggravated assault under the criminal code in order to provide legal redress to victims of IGM.
4. **Amend** Subsection 268(3) to include standards of informed consent at par with the Malta model, wherein:
  - a. “It shall be unlawful for medical practitioners or other professionals to conduct any sex assignment treatment and, or surgical intervention on the sex characteristics of a minor which treatment and, or intervention can be deferred until the person to be treated can provide informed consent”
  - b. The Malta model, keeping with its treaty body obligations under UN CAT, gives the agency to grant informed consent to the individual in question itself.
5. **Provide** PHAC (Public Health Agency of Canada) and Health Canada access to:
  - a. Provincial records for all paediatric data on the surgical management of intersex children;
  - b. Data to the current implementation of pre-natal screening and termination for intersex fetuses.
6. **Anonymize** data to ensure availability for secondary research purposes on frequencies and adherence to standards relating to intersex surgeries.

# Asylum System Reform

There has been a significant rise in refugee claims as well as asylum seekers to Canadian borders, including those who flee their country of origin because of violence and persecution related to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

LGBTQI asylum seekers who are fleeing persecution often face barriers to accessing safe environments and social support services.



The number of LGBTI refugees and asylum-seekers has risen, with most qualifying as 'members of a particular social group' under the 1951 Refugee Convention.

# Asylum System Reform

11

1. **Commit** to long-term investments and consistent funding that supports the ongoing support of refugees at all stages of the settlement process, including:
  - a. Crisis and ongoing trauma counselling;
  - b. Mental health counselling;
  - c. Housing support workers to help LGBTQI refugees find inclusive housing;
  - d. Subsidized legal support to aid LGBTQI refugees with legal issues, especially as it relates to their status in Canada; and
  - e. Settlement workers to help with comprehensive needs related to the settlement process.
2. **Develop and implement** a national, large-scale needs assessment to determine the needs of LGBTQI refugees that will empower these individuals and better support them throughout the settlement process with components that:
  - a. Collect and ethically store relevant, inclusive, and disaggregated data;
  - b. Inform decision makers and program design;
  - c. Establish meaningful evaluation parameters; and
  - d. Disseminate findings to community agencies and service providers.
3. **Make direct investments** into systems innovations and sustainability by:
  - a. Supporting the development of innovative ways to provide support (both in person as well as online) as well as different modalities of therapy such as somatic, online counselling, and peer support; and
  - b. Developing and implementing training for other community agencies and housing services to provide inclusive support so that staff are educated and familiar with practices when supporting LGBTQI refugees.
4. **Review and expand** the IFHP (Interim Federal Health Program) to include medical care directly relevant to LGBTQI2S people, such as hormone therapy and gender affirming surgery, making it available to asylum seeking gender minorities - a step that aligns with many provincial health policies to ensure gender affirming medical care is covered by government-issued health insurance.

# International Assistance

Globally, LGBTQI human rights are becoming increasingly prominent due to the advocacy efforts of civil society organizations, activists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), The Commonwealth Equality Network (TCEN) and through the actions of grassroots LGBTQI organizations around the world.

Canada's international assistance should mirror our national human rights values, policies, and priorities, while prioritizing the work of grassroots organizations. We should act in all respects with the recognition of colonial impacts on current policies that exist within, and beyond, commonwealth countries.



77

77 countries in the world criminalise same-sex relations and seven countries punish it with the death penalty.

(ILGA, 2019)



92%

92% of Commonwealth citizens live in jurisdictions where same-sex activity is a criminal offence. The majority of these countries draw upon colonial-era anti-sodomy laws.

(TCEN, 2019)

# International Assistance

12

1. **Provide** core funding to organizations globally that have equity practices and engage with marginalized communities, as their work demonstrates their ability to foster initiatives which prioritize the perspective of impacted communities.
2. **Ensure** LGBTQI issues are integrated into all areas of Canada's international and humanitarian strategies.
3. **Canada's international assistance** should scale back funding to homophobic and transphobic organizations as well as develop explicit terms of reference within policies to prohibit funded organizations from spreading homophobia and transphobia. This should be done through consultation with civil society organizations working in LGBTQI rights.
4. **Provide** evaluation and monitoring support to organizations by equipping them with the appropriate tools to ensure that indicators are relevant and meaningful to the impacted communities.
5. **Globally**, LGBTQI2S people continue to experience deeply embedded forms of discrimination and stigma, particularly within the healthcare system. Include LGBTQI2S people in their commitment to sexual health and reproductive health and rights overseas.
6. **Reinstate** the role of LGBTQI2S Special Advisor to the Prime Minister.

For references and to access the full National LGBTQI2S Action Plan please visit:

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