

Employment & Labour

A 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief for Federal Elections



Egale





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About Egale Canada

Egale is Canada's leading organization for 2SLGBTQI people and issues. We improve and save lives through research, education, awareness, and by advocating for human rights and equality in Canada and around the world.

Our work helps create societies and systems that reflect the universal truth that all persons are equal and none is other.

About this Document

Every electoral issue is a 2SLGBTQI issue. When heading to the polls, it is essential that 2SLGBTQI experiences are considered and understood. To bolster awareness on 2SLGBTQI issues and experiences ahead of the upcoming federal election, Egale Canada developed a series of briefs that each delve into how electoral issues affect 2SLGBTQI communities in diverse yet intersecting ways across the country. In mobilizing knowledge to support civic engagement, each brief aims to empower 2SLGBTQI communities and allies to step forward and *Vote with Pride*.

Key Takeaways: 2SLGBTQI Employment and Labour

- 2SLGBTQI individuals in Canada, particularly Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary (2STNB) people, face a high prevalence of discrimination, humiliating behaviour, and psychological harms in their place of work.¹
- 2SLGBTQI people are overrepresented in low-wage and precarious employment.²
- 2SLGBTQI individuals are susceptible to hiring discrimination.³
- Two Spirit, trans, and nonbinary (2STNB) individuals report higher rates of unemployment than the average population due to unjust hiring and firing practices, job loss due to the pandemic, and voluntarily leaving a place of work due to discrimination.⁴

Setting the Scene: Quick Data on 2SLGBTQI Employment and Labour

In Egale's [Working for Change](#) report:

- **72%** of 2STNB individuals experienced workplace discrimination and **49%** left their job due to not feeling accepted in the workplace.⁵
- **19%** of 2STNB people felt wrongly fired due to their identity.⁶
- **74%** of 2STNB individuals hid or minimized aspects of their identity half, most, or all of the time when job seeking.⁷
- **43%** of 2STNB people experienced underemployment.⁸
- **46%** of 2STNB individuals experienced unemployment since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.⁹

1 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 26–35.

2 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 8.

3 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 8.

4 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*.

5 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 26–35.

6 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 35.

7 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 66.

8 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 54.

9 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 47.

The 2SLGBTQI Connection to Employment and Labour in Canada

2SLGBTQI individuals in Canada frequently experience discrimination, harmful practices, and harassment in the workplace. Coupled with higher rates of participation in low-wage and precarious employment, 2SLGBTQI individuals face significant disadvantages in acquiring secure employment and financial stability. This brief highlights how 2SLGBTQI individuals navigate employment and labour in Canada.

The following section offers an in-depth look at how the electoral issue of employment and labour impact 2SLGBTQI individuals. In particular, this brief discusses 2SLGBTQI individuals' diverse experiences with working conditions, barriers to employment, and precarious labour situations.



Working Conditions

Harassment and Discrimination: Discrimination and harassment in the workplace are common experiences for 2SLGBTQI individuals. Experiences of less favourable working conditions include a high prevalence of discrimination and humiliating behaviour that sometimes forces 2SLGBTQI people to leave their jobs. In an Egale survey, 72% of 2STNB participants had experienced workplace discrimination and 49% left their job due to not feeling accepted in the workplace.¹⁰

Overrepresentation in Precarious Work Positions: Across the country, temporary work is growing at 3x the speed of permanent work, meaning that more and more individuals are taking part in financially unstable work.¹¹ Precarious work often leads to greater economic instability and poor mental health outcomes from not having access to mental healthcare or knowing when your next pay cheque is coming in.

¹⁰ Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 26–35.

¹¹ Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 49.

For 2SLGBTQI individuals, particularly 2STNB people, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and job loss, they are entering precarious work positions at a high rate.¹²

Unjust Layoffs: Some 2SLGBTQI individuals report that disclosing their gender identity, sexual orientation, or sex characteristics was linked to frequent layoffs. Many 2SLGBTQI individuals had experiences with accidentally disclosing their identity to an employer and facing imminent layoffs. In an Egale study, 19% of participants disclosed feeling that they were wrongfully fired due to their identity.¹³

Unequal Treatment: In 2022, Statistics Canada reported that for employed workers, heterosexual men on average earn more than women of any sexual orientation as well compared to gay and bisexual men.¹⁴ For bisexual women, they face “the most severe income disparities.”¹⁵ Gay and lesbian workers are also less likely compared to their straight coworkers to receive benefits including pension and paid sick leave.¹⁶



Barriers

Physical and Mental Health: 2SLGBTQI individuals are frequently exposed to harmful workplace stressors, such as hidden and overt discrimination based on their identity. For 2STNB individuals in cis-male dominated workplaces and industries, experiences with negative mental health outcomes due to rampant stereotypes, stigma, and exclusion are prevalent.¹⁷ 2SLGBTQI individuals are often met with a lack of safety in their workplace and concerns about revealing their identity over potential harm.¹⁸

12 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 8.

13 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 35.

14 Statistics Canada, “Labour and economic characteristics of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people in Canada,” (2022), online: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/89-28-0001/2022001/article/00003-eng.htm>.

15 Egale Canada, “Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the Upcoming 2025 Federal Budget,” (2024), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/pre-budget-2025/>.

16 David Kinitz et al., “Job Quality and Precarious Employment among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Workers: A National Study,” *SSM-Population Health* 24 (December): 101535-35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2023.1010535>.

17 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*.

18 For more information on 2SLGBTQI communities’ experiences in the healthcare sector, please see our 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief on Healthcare and Mental Health.

Neglecting Treatment: Individuals with mental health conditions face an additional barrier in maintaining or acquiring employment. For some, mental health conditions or crises in response to depression, burnout, and social isolation greatly impact their ability to work consistently. However, due to economic and employment precarity, many 2SLGBTQI individuals are forced to choose to neglect their treatment to prioritize maintaining their job, only further exacerbating their symptoms.

Hiring Practices: 2SLGBTQI individuals are still susceptible to hiring discrimination. In today's labour market, individuals are responsible for presenting themselves in a way that an employer will deem as "employable". For individuals whose gender identity, sexuality, race, class, or ability does not align with "normative" expectations or behaviours that an employer may have, 2SLGBTQI individuals face an added stress to conform or risk not acquiring a job.¹⁹ Hiring practices continue to act in a heteronormative, binary, and settler-colonial way that create an additional barrier for 2SLGBTQI individuals to overcome to be employed.²⁰

Employment for 2SLGBTQI Seniors: 2SLGBTQI senior's past employment success was highly impacted by discrimination and the criminalization of 2SLGBTQI identities. For many, this means that 2SLGBTQI individuals were not able to excel in the workplace like their cisgender and heteronormative counterparts, continuing to affect 2SLGBTQI individuals' economic security today.²¹ For older 2SLGBTQI individuals in the workplace, they also experience fear of being outed at work as well as discrimination and ageism.²² With the growing cost-of-living crisis, many older 2SLGBTQI individuals find themselves seeking out part-time employment to help afford their basic needs, resulting in greater potential exposure to discrimination and harm.²³

19 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 75.

20 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 76.

21 C. Pang and E. Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among LGBTQI Older Adults in Canada: Findings from a National Study* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2023), <https://egale.ca/awareness/alw/>.

22 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 110.

23 For more information on 2SLGBTQI seniors and older adults' experiences, please see our 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief on 2SLGBTQI Seniors and Older Adults.



Precarious Situations

Unemployment: 2STNB individuals report higher rates of unemployment than the average population.²⁴ Reasons for higher levels of unemployment include unjust hiring and firing practices, job loss due to the pandemic, and voluntarily leaving a place of work due to discrimination. Some 2STNB individuals chose to stay unemployed to prioritize their recovery from surgeries or to allocate time to receiving mental health support. For 2STNB individuals, they do not have the space, freedom, or support from employers when transitioning – forcing them to choose between receiving care and employment security.

Financial Stability: Canada's 2SLGBTQI communities were disproportionately impacted financially by COVID-19, with 53% of 2SLGBTQI households affected by lay-offs or reduced hours as a result of the pandemic, compared to 39% overall Canadian households.²⁵ 2SLGBTQI individuals also face lower levels of financial confidence compared to their cisgender or heterosexual counterparts.²⁶

24 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 19.

25 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 3.

26 For more information on 2SLGBTQI communities' experiences with financial confidence, please see our 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief on the Economy and Affordability.

Egale Canada's Employment and Labour Related Research


- Noah Rodomar et al., *Working for Change: Understanding the Employment Experiences of Two Spirit, Trans, and Nonbinary People in Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2024), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/wfc/>.
- Egale Canada, *Sex Work in Canada: Research Brief* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2021), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/sex-work-brief/>
- Egale Canada, *LGBTQI2S Workplace Inclusion: Literature Review* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2020), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/workplace-literature-review/>
- Egale Canada, *Impact of COVID-19 on the LGBTQI2S Community: Second National Report* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2020), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/covid19-impact-report/>

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