

Seniors & Older Adults

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 Seniors and Older Adults

- 2SLGBTQI seniors have been historically impacted by employment discrimination, particularly those in public service, military, and other sectors.¹
- 2SLGBTQI older adults face greater challenges in securing affordable and inclusive housing, with concerns around discrimination in long-term care homes.²
- 2SLGBTQI seniors are concerned about being forced back into the closet when entering long-term care homes.³
- 2SLGBTQI seniors frequently avoid healthcare settings due to fear of mistreatment and discrimination.⁴
- A significant portion of 2SLGBTQI seniors live alone, contributing to higher rates of social isolation.⁵
- Many 2SLGBTQI seniors are concerned about their ability to make end-of-life decisions with dignity, particularly regarding legal protections, power of attorney, and advance care planning.⁶
- Many 2SLGBTQI individuals lack traditional familial support structures, relying instead on chosen families and 2SLGBTQI community networks.⁷

1 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

2 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

3 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*.

4 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

5 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

6 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

7 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

Setting the Scene: Quick Data on 2SLGBTQI Seniors and Older Adults

- **17%** of people over 65 years old and almost **40%** of older adult renters live in unaffordable housing.⁸
- **37%** of 2SLGBTQI seniors surveyed are low income, contributing to financial insecurity and a heavy reliance on Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security.⁹

The 2SLGBTQI Connection to Seniors and Older Adults in Canada

2SLGBTQI seniors and older adults face unique challenges that are compounded on top of the general difficulties of aging. Historically, 2SLGBTQI seniors and older adults were impacted by employment discrimination, particularly in public service, military, and other sectors, which impacts their financial security and ability to access secure housing.¹⁰ This discrimination continues to impact their economic security in older age. Moving forward, barriers across housing, healthcare, and end-of-life wellbeing are significant concerns for 2SLGBTQI seniors and older adults, with many lacking inclusive care options or few care services that are 2SLGBTQI-inclusive. This brief highlights the many experiences 2SLGBTQI individuals have as seniors and older adults in Canada.

The following section offers an in-depth look at how specific electoral issues impact 2SLGBTQI older adults and seniors. In particular, we highlight 2SLGBTQI seniors' and older adults' diverse experiences in accessing healthcare and inclusive care, as well as the barriers and precarious situations they confront.

8 Pang and MacLennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

9 Pang and MacLennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

10 K.A. Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation: An Exploration of the Healthcare and Social Service Experiences and Needs of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Older Adults in Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), <https://egale.ca/awareness/aging-with-affirming/> [Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*].



Barriers and Precarious Situations

Employment and Economic Security: The past employment trajectories of trans and gender-diverse older adults were shaped by historical conditions of the pathologization and criminalization of 2SLGBTQI identities. This discrimination continues to affect 2SLGBTQI older adults, particularly trans and gender-diverse older adults, including their economic security in older age.¹¹ Multiple factors shape trans and gender-diverse older adults' jobs and careers, and employment is intricately related to their education and economic situations¹². In past employment, 2SLGBTQI older adults carefully navigated identity and being out at work, with 2SLGBTQI older adults experiencing both fear of being outed and discriminated against, as well as positive workplace experiences. 2SLGBTQI older adults who are actively seeking work at an older age face an added barrier of ageism.¹³

Housing: For older 2SLGBTQI individuals, access to secure and affordable housing remains a prevalent issue. 17% of people over 65 years old and almost 40% of older adult renters currently reside in unaffordable housing.¹⁴ Both older homeowners and renters face concerns with the rising cost of living and elevated housing costs, such as the ability to make rent. Some older 2SLGBTQI individuals even face the need to return to work to help meet their basic needs.¹⁵

11, 12, 13 K.A. Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation: An Exploration of the Healthcare and Social Service Experiences and Needs of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Older Adults in Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), <https://egale.ca/awareness/aging-with-affirming/> [Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*].

12 K.A. Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation: An Exploration of the Healthcare and Social Service Experiences and Needs of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Older Adults in Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), <https://egale.ca/awareness/aging-with-affirming/> [Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*].

13 K.A. Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation: An Exploration of the Healthcare and Social Service Experiences and Needs of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Older Adults in Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), <https://egale.ca/awareness/aging-with-affirming/> [Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*].

14 Pang and Maclennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*, at 28.

15 For more information on 2SLGBTQI communities' experiences with housing, please see our 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief on Housing and Homelessness.

Rural Versus Urban: Older 2SLGBTQI individuals are often faced with a choice to either prioritize affordability or healthcare access.¹⁶ While rural areas are often associated with lower housing costs compared to urban settings, many 2SLGBTQI older adults and seniors are forced to choose between residing in rural areas for financial reasons while risk losing access to family doctors and affirming care providers or to reside in urban centres with higher costs of living but greater healthcare access.

Social Connection and Disconnection: Social isolation and marginalization are major concerns for 2SLGBTQI seniors and older adults in Canada, particularly for those living with dementia or requiring long-term care. Many older 2SLGBTQI individuals have faced decades of discrimination, resulting in weaker social and familial support systems. As they age, these challenges are compounded by the loss of community and inadequate institutional support.¹⁷ Many 2SLGBTQI seniors and older adults have also lost connections with family, friends, and community over their lives, in some cases due to the rejection of their identities.



Healthcare and Inclusive Care

Healthcare: Many 2SLGBTQI older adults experience barriers related to accessing, or trying to access, healthcare services. Barriers include finding care providers and navigating healthcare systems, disclosure-related decisions, and healthcare encounters that had gone well or could be significantly improved. For individuals in Egale's *Aging and Living Well* study, they had varying healthcare needs and lived with a range of chronic conditions including arthritis, cancer, depression, HIV, and respiratory illnesses for which they sought care.¹⁸ They also had various perspectives on health and wellbeing, and what they needed to live well.

16 Pang and MacLennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*.

17 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*.

18 Pang and MacLennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada*

Lack of 2SLGBTQI-Inclusive Care Options: Few long-term or dementia care services are explicitly 2SLGBTQI-inclusive, leaving individuals without affirming care environments. For instance, many long-term care facilities often do not recognize gender diversity.¹⁹ Many 2SLGBTQI seniors fear discrimination in long-term care homes, where heterosexual and cisnormative attitudes dominate. Some older 2SLGBTQI individuals avoid care homes altogether, opting to remain at home with little to no formal support.²⁰

Re-Closeting and Fear of Mistreatment: Some 2SLGBTQI seniors feel pressured to go back into the closet to avoid discrimination from staff and other residents. When out, many 2SLGBTQI seniors experience being misgendered or have their same-sex relationships ignored in healthcare settings. Additionally, some individuals have experienced scenarios where their partners are not recognized as their primary caregivers, leading to their exclusion in medical decision-making processes.²¹

Lack of Provider Training and Awareness: Many healthcare providers lack training on how to address the specific needs of 2SLGBTQI seniors, such as technical knowledge on gender-affirming care.²² For instance, few dementia care programs incorporate inclusive language, gender-affirming care practices, or awareness of historical trauma affecting 2SLGBTQI older adults. As a result, many dementia patients are left without the proper and inclusive care they need.²³

Historical Discrimination and Mistrust of Institutions: Many trans and gender-diverse (TGD) older adults have faced lifelong systemic discrimination, including arrests due to their gender expression and forced interactions with social services. Past mistreatment has led to mistrust in policing, healthcare, and social systems – directly affecting TGD older adults' willingness to seek care.²⁴

19 Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*.

20 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*.

21 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*.

22 Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*.

23 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*.

24 Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation*.

Dementia: Grappling with dementia diagnoses and the changes that dementia causes to an individual and their relationships are staggering.²⁵ Living with dementia can lead to a loss of identity, with some individuals struggling to maintain their gender and sexual identity as cognitive decline progresses. In Egale’s study on 2SLGBTQI individual’s experiences with dementia, many individuals in Canada “drew parallels between the changes they experience while coming into living with dementia and the relationship changes that many 2SLGBTQI people have experienced in response to coming out about their sexual and/or gender identity.”²⁶ As a result, 2SLGBTQI-inclusive care for dementia patients is all the more relevant and necessary.

Egale Canada’s 2SLGBTQI Seniors and Older Adults Related Research

- Ashley Flanagan and Celeste Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia: Enhancing Support for 2SLGBTQI People Living with Dementia and their Primary Unpaid Carers* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2022), <https://egale.ca/egale-in-action/2SLGBTQI-dementia-care/#report>.
- Ashley Flanagan and Celeste Pang, *2SLGBTQI2S People Living with Dementia and their Unpaid Caregivers Across Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada and the National Institute of Ageing, 2020), <https://egale.ca/awareness/dementia-literature/>.
- K.A. Kenney et al., *Aging with Affirmation: An Exploration of the Healthcare and Social Service Experiences and Needs of Transgender and Gender-Diverse Older Adults in Canada* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), <https://egale.ca/awareness/aging-with-affirming/>.
- Celeste Pang and Ellie MacLennan, *Aging and Living Well Among 2SLGBTQI Older Adults in Canada: Findings from a National Study* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2023), <https://egale.ca/awareness/alw/>.

25 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*.

26 Flanagan and Pang, *Coming Out and Coming in to Living with Dementia*, at 7.

- Celeste Pang and Krista James, *Dementia & Advance Care Planning: Context and Considerations for 2SLGBTQI Communities* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2022), <https://egale.ca/awareness/dementia-advanced-care-planning-session-new-horizons-brief/>.
- Celeste Pang, Brittany Jakubiec, and Melanie Schambach, *Fostering Dialogues: An Arts-based Action Research Project Imagining Futures of Community-Based Care with Homecare Personal Support Workers and LGBTQI Older Adults* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2023), <https://egale.ca/awareness/fostering-dialogues-report-mural/>.
- Celeste Pang and Raeann Rideout, *Elder Abuse & Financial Abuse: Context and Considerations for 2SLGBTQI Communities* (Toronto: Egale Canada and Elder Abuse Prevention Ontario, 2022), <https://egale.ca/awareness/elder-abuse-session-new-horizons-brief/>.
- Andrea Sterling et al, *Housing Challenges, Barriers, and Realities Among 2SLGBTQI People in Canada: A Literature Review* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2024), <https://egale.ca/awareness/housing-lit-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/>


This brief uses the acronym 2SLGBTQI, however the primary research cited does not reflect the experiences of Two Spirit individuals. Studies indicate that Two Spirit individuals face similar, if not greater, barriers than other LGBTQI people. [Learn more.](#)

Egale

@egalecanada



 egale.ca

 (416) 964-7887

 Suite 217-120 Carlton Street,
Toronto, ON. M5A 4K2