

Youth

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 Youth in Canada

- Youth who are gender minorities are more likely to face negative treatment compared to those who are sexual minorities.¹
- 2SLGBTQI youth face equal or higher rates of dating violence compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers.²
- Across provinces such as Alberta and Saskatchewan, students face difficulties in acquiring affirming school experiences.³
- When implemented inclusively, sexual health and education help students learn about their diverse lived experiences and decrease levels of gender-based violence.⁴
- Positive supports and inclusive language help increase 2SLGBTQI students' feelings of safety and decrease negative mental health outcomes.⁵
- In Egale's report on [Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth](#), youth frequently emphasize emotional and material supports, acceptance, willingness to learn, and unconditional love as aspects of affirming adulthood.⁶
- 2SLGBTQI youth, face high levels of housing precarity.⁷

1 Wright et al., *Speak Out*.

2 Wright et al., *Speak Out*.

3 Egale Canada, "What's Happening in Alberta? Egale Explains" (2025), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/alberta/> [Egale Canada, "What's Happening in Alberta?"].

4 Wisdom2Action, "2SLGBT+ Youth & Gender Based Violence (GBV) Consultation."

5 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, at 15.

6 Noah Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/affirming-parents-lit-review/> [Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*].

7 The 519, "LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness in Canada," online: The 519 <https://www.the519.org/education-training/lgbtq2s-youth-homelessness-in-canada/>.

Setting the Scene: Quick Data on 2SLGBTQI Youth

In Egale's study [Speak Out](#),

- **78%** of youth surveyed prefer to receive support from someone who is 2SLGBTQI-identifying, but only **36%** have access to such services.⁸
- While **68%** of youth surveyed were open about their identity to people close to them, only **26%** were out to parents or **18%** out to siblings.⁹

In Egale's study [Still in Every Class in Every School](#),

- 2SLGBTQI students have heightened experiences of verbal harassment regarding their sexual orientation than their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts (**42%** versus **8%**).¹⁰
- **51%** of 2SLGBTQI students with experiences of harassment have never reported harassment to school staff while **53%** never reported it to a parent or guardian.¹¹

- Youth are reluctant to involve authorities if experiencing harm or violence, with **96%** of 2SLGBTQI youth surveyed not wanting an intervention from school or police authorities.¹²
- Only **48%** of Canadians [surveyed by Canseco](#) support "sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)-inclusive education."^{13,14}
- According to Wisdom2Action, **70%** of trans youth experience sexual harassment and **over one-third** experience violence or threats of violence in the past year.¹⁵
- According to [Homeless Hub](#), **25%** of homeless youth identify as 2SLGBTQI, despite making up only **5-10%** of the youth population.¹⁶

8 Wright et al., *Speak Out*, at 22.

9 Wright et al., *Speak Out*, at 14.

10 Tracey Peter, Christopher P. Campbell and Catherine Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the Second Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2021), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/still-in-every-class/> at 12 [Peter, Campbell, and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*].

11 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*.

12 Wright et al., *Speak Out*, at 20.

13 SOGI-inclusive education is defined as education that is attentive to sexual orientation and gender identity and attempts to move away solely from experiences that are cis and heteronormative.

14 Mario Canseco, "Canadians question effect of proposed sexual education policies," *SOGI Canada 2024* (12 July 2024), online: <https://researchco.ca/2024/07/12/sogi-canada-2024/>.

15 Wisdom2Action, "2SLGBT+ Youth & Gender Based Violence (GBV) Consultation."

16 Homeless Hub, "2SLGBTQ+", online: <https://homelesshub.ca/collection/population-groups/2slgbtq/>. [Homeless Hub, "2SLGBTQ+"].

The 2SLGBTQI Connection to Youth

2SLGBTQI youth in Canada face unique and significant challenges across all aspects of society, such as education, healthcare, and housing. For instance, 2SLGBTQI youth experience higher rates of discrimination, harassment, and violence compared to their heterosexual and cisgender peers.¹⁷ For trans youth in Canada, they report experiencing very high levels of sexual harassment, while over one-third have faced physical violence or threats.¹⁸ These experiences contribute to poor mental health outcomes, including increased rates of anxiety, depression, and social isolation.¹⁹ However, 2SLGBTQI youth also represent a dynamic and diverse demographic, full of potential. This brief highlights the many experiences 2SLGBTQI youth have in Canada, both good and bad.

The following section offers an in-depth look at how specific electoral issues impact 2SLGBTQI youth. In particular, this brief discusses the diverse experiences of 2SLGBTQI youth with safety, violence, and discrimination, opportunities for support and affirming school experiences, and access to sexual health education and mental health supports.



Safety, Violence, and Discrimination

Harmful Language: Many 2SLGBTQI youth face significant challenges in feeling safe in their communities. Youth experience discrimination based on their gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, or other intersecting identities, such as ethnicity and mental health status.²⁰ Despite increasing public awareness, many 2SLGBTQI youth experience homophobic, biphobic, or

17 Tracey Peter, Christopher P. Campbell and Catherine Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the Second Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2021), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/still-in-every-class/> at 12 [Peter, Campbell, and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*].

18 Wisdom2Action, "2SLGBT+ Youth & Gender Based Violence (GBV) Consultation" (2018), online: <https://www.wisdom2action.org/gbv/> [Wisdom2Action, "2SLGBT+ Youth & Gender Based Violence (GBV) Consultation"].

19 Noah Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/affirming-parents-lit-review/> [Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*].

20 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*.

transphobic language frequently, which is damaging to their mental health and understanding of community.²¹ This ongoing exposure to discrimination, verbal harm, or microaggressions can foster feelings of rejection and isolation. Additionally, youth who are gender minorities are more likely to face negative treatment compared to those who identify as sexual minorities, reflecting broader societal struggles with accepting gender diversity.

Harassment and Victimization: Experiences of discrimination are also found within schools. In fact, 42% of 2SLGBTQI students have heightened experiences of verbal harassment due to their sexual orientation or gender identity compared to only 8% of their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts.²² Additionally, 9% of 2SLGBTQI students have been physically harassed due to their sexual orientation or gender identity compared to 3% of their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts.²³ Trans students are the most likely to experience harassment and victimization at the hands of their peers.²⁴

Relationship Dynamics and Dating Violence: 2SLGBTQI youth relationships have high rates of dating violence, including emotional violence, controlling behaviors, and virtual violence through digital platforms.²⁵ Factors such as substance use and power imbalances contribute to the risk of dating violence, with marginalized youth, particularly those who are racialized or disabled, facing heightened vulnerabilities.

Youth Homelessness: 2SLGBTQI youth are significantly overrepresented among youth experiencing homelessness in Canada. According to Homeless Hub, 25% of homeless youth identify as 2SLGBTQI, despite making up only 5-10% of the youth population.²⁶ Some 2SLGBTQI youth become homeless because of family rejection of their identities, employment discrimination, and foster care involvement, especially for racialized youth. Many 2SLGBTQI youth also avoid shelters altogether due to fears of

21 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*.

22 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, at 12.

23 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, at 12.

24 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, at 12.

25 Wright et al., *Speak Out*, at 25.

26 Homeless Hub, "2SLGBTQ+".

discrimination or violence, resulting in youth who have experienced harm or violence not having a safe place to stay.

Ageism in the Workplace: 2SLGBTQI youth are frequently passed over for employment opportunities due to ageism, with trans individuals and trans youth particularly impacted.²⁷ As trans individuals are more likely to support themselves earlier in life due to a lack of family support, many begin working at very young ages and find that they are either not taken seriously or that their contributions are ignored. Additionally, trans people, particularly transmasculine individuals, are frequently assumed to be younger than they are due to the lack of appropriate prescribed hormones until adulthood.^{28,29}



Opportunities for Support

Seeking Help: Despite high rates of violent experiences, many 2SLGBTQI youth do not pursue formal support. According to Egale's *Speak Out* study, 61% of youth who experienced dating violence did not seek out help.³⁰ For those who did, informal networks like friends and chosen families were the most trusted sources of support. 2SLGBTQI youth frequently have a strong preference for acquiring help from 2SLGBTQI service providers but often face barriers in accessing them, particularly in rural or remote areas. Fear of being outed to family members, mistrust of authorities, and concerns regarding confidentiality also deter many 2SLGBTQI youth from seeking formal support systems.³¹

Affirming Caregivers: Affirming caregivers often play an essential advocacy role in schools, healthcare systems, and broader communities. Importantly, caregivers

27 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/> at 26-35 [Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*] at 32.

28 Rodomar et al., *Working for Change*, at 32.

29 For more information on 2SLGBTQI youth's experiences in the workplace, please see our 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief on Employment and Labour.

30 Wright et al., *Speak Out*, at 22.

31 Wright et al., *Speak Out*, at 21-22.

may challenge discriminatory practices, ensure equitable access to resources, and foster safe environments. To many 2SLGBTQI youth, the most meaningful supportive behaviors from adults include using correct names and pronouns, offering unconditional love, and being open to learn.³² Demonstrating consistent, affirming actions – both in private and public spaces – helps 2SLGBTQI youth feel validated and supported throughout their journey.

School Climate: 2SLGBTQI students' mental health and well-being are connected to their perceived school climate, such as the availability of staff support, the level of discrimination and harassment experienced, and feelings of safety.³³ For many 2SLGBTQI students who frequently experience harassment and homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic language, their sense of safety, wellbeing, academic achievement, and school attendance decreased.³⁴ However, student experiences vary greatly depending on the school, their educators, and the political climate.

Access to Healthcare: 2SLGBTQI individuals' access to healthcare is often hampered by long wait times. In Wells, Hardy, and Maine's study on Albertan trans and nonbinary youth, respondents emphasized an outsized concern around healthcare access due to excessive wait times for gender affirming care and mental health support. Youth cited that they were frequently on the wait lists for both services and that, even once they began to receive care at a clinic, "the wait times in between appointments or for referrals was distressing."^{35, 36} Similar issues are being experienced across the country.³⁷

32 Noah Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/affirming-parents-lit-review/> [Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*].

33 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, at 15.

34 Peter, Campbell and Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School*, at 14.

35 Wells, Hardy and Maine, *The lived experiences of trans and non-binary youth in Alberta. A qualitative research report*.

36 For more information on accessing healthcare and mental healthcare for 2SLGBTQI youth, please see our 2SLGBTQI Issues Brief on Healthcare and Mental Health.

37 Scheim, et al., Health care access among transgender and nonbinary people in Canada, 2019: a cross-sectional survey (2019), online: <https://www.cmajopen.ca/content/9/4/E1213>



Sexual Health Education

Quality: Across Canada, no safeguards exist to that ensure that 2SLGBTQI youth will receive sex education that is relevant to their experiences, bodies, and specific health needs.³⁸ For instance, for trans and nonbinary youth in Alberta, they view the province's current sexual health education as inadequate, limited in scope, and confined to binary and heteronormative understandings of health, sex, and reproduction.³⁹ While educators have the ability to make classroom discussions and content more inclusive, there is generally a lack of support for educators to offer inclusive, accurate, and relevant sexual education to students.⁴⁰ Sexual education is important as it ensures that youth in Canada make informed choices and is shown to dramatically improve the health of 2SLGBTQI individuals.⁴¹

Parental Support: Discussions of sexual orientation and gender identity in sexual health education are politically and socially contentious. In 2021, a study of 2,000 parents with children attending school in Canada saw 85% agreeing that schools should teach sexual education.⁴² However, when sexual health education becomes more inclusive, we see this number decrease. In June 2024, only 48% of Canadians surveyed support "SOGI-inclusive education."⁴³ Protests across Canada have erupted over "LGBTQ school policies" with some arguing that school is not a space to discuss sexuality or gender identity and rather, these choices should be up to parents.⁴⁴ Advocates for SOGI education warn that this education generates mutual understanding, openness, self-love, and respect for one another.

38 Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights, *The State of Sex-ed in Canada* (2020), online: https://www.actioncanadashr.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/8039_AC_StateofSexEd-2ndEd_F-Web_0.pdf at 80 [Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights, *The State of Sex-ed in Canada*].

39 Wells, Hardy & Maine, *The lived experiences of trans and non-binary youth in Alberta. A qualitative research report*, at 55.

40 Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights, *The State of Sex-ed in Canada*, at 5.

41 Action Canada for Sexual Health & Rights, *The State of Sex-ed in Canada*, at 81.

42 Jessica Wood, Alexander McKay, Jocelyn Wentland, & Sandra E. Byers, "Attitudes towards sexual health education in schools: A national survey of parents in Canada," (2021) 30:1 *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, online: <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjhs.2020-0049> at 39.

43 Canseco, "Canadians question effect of proposed sexual education policies."

44 Holly Cabrera, "Protesters gather in downtown Montreal over sex ed and LGBTQ rights," *CBC* (25 February 2025), online: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/september-20-lgbtq-rights-protest-1.6973255>

SOGI Education as an Intervention: In 2018, Wisdom2Action undertook a study on 2SLGBTQI experiences of gender-based violence in Canada. The study found that inclusive sexual health programs can help mitigate levels of gender-based violence.⁴⁵ With 70% of trans youth in Canada experiencing sexual harassment and over one-third experiencing violence or threats of violence, sharing humanizing knowledge on trans experiences through SOGI education can reduce stigma, discrimination, and violence.⁴⁶



Mental Health and Coming Out

Access to Information: One of the most critical needs for 2SLGBTQI youth is access to accurate and affirming information.⁴⁷ Many young people and their caregivers face challenges in finding trustworthy resources on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, and healthcare options. Youth often become the primary educators for their caregivers, which can create an emotional burden.⁴⁸

Social Isolation and Community Impact: 2SLGBTQI youth are at increased risk of social isolation, particularly if they lack affirming spaces or supportive networks. Feelings of loneliness can be compounded if caregivers and peers are unfamiliar with their experiences or unwilling to validate their identities.⁴⁹ Building community is crucial – connecting youth with peer groups, affirming organizations, and supportive adults can significantly improve their mental health and sense of belonging.

Coming Out: Coming out is an important process for many 2SLGBTQI people. For some, they may choose to come out when younger, while some may choose to come out as an older adult or not at all. For youth, they may experience anxiety, fear, or joy related to their identity as they navigate complex emotional landscapes.⁵⁰

45 Wisdom2Action, "2SLGBT+ Youth & Gender Based Violence (GBV) Consultation."

46 Wisdom2Action, "2SLGBT+ Youth & Gender Based Violence (GBV) Consultation."

47 Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*.

48 Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*.

49 Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth*.

50 Egale Canada, "How Do I Come Out?" (n.d.), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/coming-out-resource/>.

Egale Canada's 2SLGBTQI Youth Related Research

- Ariel Dela Cruz, *Playing 'Safe' and Troubling Youth: An Esports Literature Review* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2021), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/esports-literature-review/>.
- Ariel Dela Cruz, *What 2SLGBTQI Youth in Esports Want: Navigating Cyber Violence and Modes of Gaming Otherwise* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2021), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/esports-report/>.
- Noah Rodomar, *The Experiences and Challenges of Being an Affirming Caregiver for Sexual and Gender Minority Youth* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2025), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/affirming-parents-lit-review/>
- Noah Rodomar et al., *Working for Change: Understanding the Employment Experiences of Two Spirit, Trans, and Nonbinary People in Canada* (2024), Egale Canada, online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/wfc/>
- 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/>.
- Jessica Wright, et al., *Speak Out: Addressing 2SLGBTQ Youth Dating Violence* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2022), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/speak-out-addressing=2slgbtq-youth-dating-violence/>.
- Tracey Peter, Christopher P. Campbell and Catherine Taylor, *Still in Every Class in Every School: Final Report on the Second Climate Survey on Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia in Canadian Schools* (Toronto: Egale Canada, 2021), online: <https://egale.ca/awareness/still-in-every-class>

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