



Understanding Homelessness Amongst Gender Diverse People in Canada: A Human Rights Approach

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Our team:

This work includes reports written by Alex Nelson, Jayne Malenfant, Kaitlin Schwan, and Mickey Watchorn

Our team is made up primarily of gender diverse people with lived experience of housing precarity, and we are thankful to other Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary people with lived experience of navigating housing rights violations and service provision who shared insights with us





Housing Need & Homelessness amongst Two-Spirit, Trans, and Non-Binary People in Canada

- Commissioned by the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate
- Based on interviews with Two-Spirit, Trans, and Non-binary people with lived experience, frontline staff and data from a pan-Canadian housing survey of Women and gender diverse people

Methodology

Scoping literature review and analysis

Qualitative interviews & focus groups with lived experts, community-based advocates, & service-providers

National Quantitative Survey – 61 participants in WNHHN Pan-Canadian Survey

Terminology:

While we use the terms “gender-diverse” broadly, or reference Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people in this project, we recognize that there are a myriad of identities that may not be reflected in these terms.

For all Two-Spirit, transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, and other gender-diverse people, a more nuanced understanding of gender in policy and programmatic responses to housing rights violations would change the frame through which decisions about their lives and communities are produced.



Themes & Human Rights Concerns

1. Right to **equality & non-discrimination**
2. Right to **security of tenure**
3. Right to **affordability** and **habitability** in housing

• **Poverty, Violence and Trauma over the Lifecourse**

Key Statistics from the WNHHN Survey

- 84% of gender-diverse participants identified as being a survivor of trauma and abuse
- 21% of gender-diverse participants identified as having experienced sex trafficking
- 84% of gender-diverse participants didn't have full-time or part-time employment
- In order to make ends meet in their most recent housing situation, 41% of gender-diverse people had cut back on necessities and 39% had borrowed money or went into debt.

Inadequate Housing Conditions

Key Statistics from the WNHHN Survey

- 44% of gender-diverse participants reported having to move out of their housing due to problems with the condition of the housing (e.g., bedbugs, no heat, etc.)
- 69% of gender-diverse people reported being unable to find or maintain housing due to affordability issues
- 41% reported feeling unsafe in their place or their neighbourhood

Discrimination and Exclusion in Housing Systems

Key Statistics from the WNHHN Survey

- 26% of gender-diverse people have lost their housing due to discrimination and/or harassment
- 43% reported experiencing discrimination from landlords and/or property managers on the basis of gender
- 41% reported having experiences of discrimination and/or judgment from staff at homeless shelters and/or drop-ins

Public Systems Failures

Key Statistics from the WNHHN Survey

- 19% of gender-diverse people were more likely to indicate the healthcare system contributed to their housing and homelessness
- Almost a third of gender-diverse people indicated the education system contributed to their housing instability and homelessness (28%), almost three times more than cisgender women (10%)
- A third of gender-diverse people indicated the criminal justice system contributed to their housing instability and homelessness (33%), almost double that of cisgender women (18%)
- Gender-diverse participants were significantly more likely to have child welfare system involvement as a child (43%) compared to cisgender women (26%)
- 56% of gender-diverse participants reported encounters with the criminal justice system

Security of Tenure:

Key Statistics from the WNHHN Pan-Canadian Survey

- 46% of gender-diverse people lost their most recent housing due to a breakup
- 43% of gender-diverse people lost their most recent housing because they were told to leave by someone they live with
- Gender-diverse people were twice as likely to report being unable to access legal support with regards to their housing situation (51%) compared to cisgender women (24%)

Experiences of Homelessness

Key Statistics from the WNHHN Survey

- 43% of gender-diverse participants experienced homelessness before the age of 16 (more than double cisgender women)
- Gender-diverse people were significantly more likely to be unable to access a shelter bed when they needed one (56%) than cisgendered women (34%)
- Gender-diverse participants were more likely to sleep in a public place (e.g. vehicle, transit station, abandoned building etc.) than cisgender women experiencing homelessness (43% vs. 26%), and almost a third reporting residing in a tent, encampment, or self-built shelter in the last year (31%).
- Over half of gender-diverse respondents had spend more than 6 months homeless in the last year (51%)

There is a lot of invisible homeless [in northern Ontario], but it feels like – as long as it's kept hidden enough, its assumed that there is no problem..if you ask folks in [my community], “where are all the homeless people?” They would say there probably isn't anyone.

-Interview Respondent

Trans people walk a fine line between when it is worth asserting your identity and when you choose to keep your head down...it's constant trade-offs between your authenticity and your safety, a shitty reality we have to deal with.

-Interview Respondent

I have seen nothing work universally with Indigenous people other than re-connecting with place. Not necessarily abandoning everything they know and growing out their hair tomorrow - but finding self-understanding through place... Coming home for me was not intentional, but it has been incredibly healing in so many different domains.

-Interview Respondent

Invisible Labour & Hidden Homelessness: Experiences of Multiply Marginalized People

For me the biggest issue - for multiply marginalized persons, like Indigenous sex workers, non-binary Indigenous children...it's those hidden ways in which obtaining housing, having housing, and these threats of eviction, of being bumped down the waiting list, being in social housing and having rent raises, those kinds of threats are unknown to my mother, who has lived [in her home] for 40 years after paying her mortgage.

-Interview respondent



JANUARY 2023

RESEARCH BRIEF

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A Preliminary Portrait

Alex Nelson, Jayne Malenfant, & Kaitlin Schwan

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LITERATURE REVIEW & PRACTICE SCAN

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