

Literature Reviews on Housing Needs: LGBTQ2+ Community, 2019

The goal of Canada's new National Housing Strategy (NHS) is to ensure Canadians across the country have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. In order to understand the needs of some populations in vulnerable situations, CMHC has conducted research about the challenges and barriers that they experience, as well as any solutions successfully implemented in Canada.

Project Overview

CMHC commissioned a literature review examining the diverse needs of the LGBTQ2+ community in order to inform NHS programs. The literature search focused on Canada, but researchers extended the search to international sources where relevant. This review covers the following key elements:

- identified housing needs (housing features, home supports, locational features, other needs specific to each group) and the extent to which these needs are met/unmet;
- challenges and barriers in accessing suitable housing;
- intersectionality with other identities (e.g., race, gender, age, family status, Indigeneity, health, location); and
- the potential and proven solutions for meeting housing needs.

About CMHC Research Insights

Research insights are summaries of our research reports.

These insights:

- identify a housing research issue, gap or need
- provide an overview of the research project undertaken to address it
- present major findings of the research

The research presented in this series explore the areas of Housing Need, Housing Finance, Housing Supply and Outcomes of the National Housing Strategy.

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Key Findings

Key barriers, needs, and solutions to housing related to LGBTQ2+ groups depend on the local community, the proximity to available administrative and social support, and the architectural features of housing:

- A. In the housing sector, the LGBTQ2+ community is more vulnerable to incidents of transphobia, homophobia, and biphobia;**
- The literature suggests that relationships between LGBTQ2+ individuals and housing and homelessness agencies is better in Canada than in the U.S. Yet in Canada, many community members do not feel safe disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation with staff or other clients due to continued incidents of transphobia, homophobia, and biphobia. Because LGBTQ2+ individuals do not feel comfortable accessing these services, they are more likely to return to, or continue to deal with, abusive settings, sleeping outside, or to trade sex for shelter.
 - Studies conducted in three major U.S. cities found that housing providers were less likely to make an appointment with same-sex couples, told them about fewer rental units than they told heterosexual individuals about, and quoted higher rents.
 - Similarly, transgender individuals were told about fewer units than cisgender individuals.
 - LGBTQ2+ individuals face land lord discrimination, harassment and violence from other tenants.
 - Family-based violence has displaced many youth from stable homes, and LGBTQ2+ seniors are more likely to have limited financial means, be socially isolated and lonely, and to lack support from family, friends, or partners.
 - The presence of a wider LGBTQ2+ community and LGBTQ2+-specific supports can provide safety and security as well as inclusive public spaces.
 - Solutions that have worked best include creating and defining safe spaces at all levels of government. For example, the Government of Alberta's LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness Working Group recently developed LGBTQ2S Youth Housing and Shelter Guidelines.

- B. For people escaping violence, there are fewer support services** available to them (i.e. no emergency shelter for victims of same-sex partner violence, shelters segregate by binary gender).
- In shelters, community, or assisted living facilities, staff need to be aware of and trained to adequately respond to the various challenges that LGBTQ2+ members face, like family conflict, gender-based bullying, coming to terms with sex and gender identity or sexual preference.
 - Trans and 2 spirited individuals face limited gender choices in legal documentation; and service professionals do not have appropriate training (i.e. intake forms and professional orientations that support pronoun choice).
 - Specific security supports need to be available that are trained in the history of LGBTQ2+ individuals.
 - In Ontario and Québec, some long-term care facilities have implemented policies that include training for staff. Egale Youth OUTreach and Rainbow Railroad, two support centers in Toronto, have been engaged in helping LGBTQ2+ refugees from Syria and its neighboring countries find housing, receive trauma counselling, learn English, and receive job training.

- C. A residence's or shelter's physical features can be a barrier as well** (e.g., washroom facilities that are not separated by gender, inaccessible entrances for those with physical disabilities).
- For members of LGBTQ2+ communities, precarious housing does not provide a safe place to rest or bathe; with no fixed address to provide employers, some individuals who are in vulnerable situations turn to precarious or fringe work. There is little opportunity to escape this cycle of precarious housing and precarious work.
 - Some housing agencies in Ontario already have inclusive LGBTQ2+ policies and practices in place. These include, for example, having intake forms that allow for non-binary gender options, gender-neutral washrooms, having pride flags on office doors.

- D. Data measuring the LGBTQ2+ community is sparse,** and there are multiple definitions.

- The NHS Glossary of Common Terms, for example, defines the LGBTQ2+ community as “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit and other gender-nonconforming people.”
- Outside of the NHS, however, definitions are self-voiced and are multiple, which can pose a challenge when identifying measures for these genders and identities.
- Some data sources estimate the LGBTQ2+ population to be 5% to 10% of the overall Canadian population.
- However, Statistics Canada does not provide choices for those along the gender spectrum, and there is a well-documented reluctance among members of the LGBTQ2+ population to self-identify.

Fast Facts

Canadian Human Rights Act added sexual orientation in 1996; gender identity and gender expression were added to the Act in 2017.

Implications for the Housing Industry

Provide LGBTQ2+ relevant training to administrative support, service providers, property owner associations, real estate boards, and security personnel.

Allow preferred names and pronouns in all administrative and legal documents, alongside legal names.

Create an LGBTQ2+ tenant forum where residents can provide feedback on policy.

Ensure communal spaces (including online spaces) are safe for LGBTQ2+ community members.

Use caution when citing or making decisions based on demographic information.

For Further Reading

Developing socially inclusive affordable housing, 2020

https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/publications_3/69693_w_acc.pdf

Looking at affordable housing through a gender lens: a survey of housing professionals and practitioners, 2018

https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/publications/research_insight/69454_w_acc.pdf

Queer scapes: patterns and processes of gay male and lesbian spatialisation in Vancouver, B.C., 1995

https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/scholarship_2/hq_76_3_c22_v32_1995.pdf

Housing discrimination in Canada: the state of knowledge, 2002

https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/research_5/housing_discrimination_in_canada.pdf

A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQS Youth Homelessness, 2015

https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/housing_organizations3/abramovich-report.pdf

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Full Report

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https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/research_6/2021031800869747-rrliterature-revlgbtq2-communitiesv1.pdf

This report is part of a series on *Housing Needs Literature Reviews*. In this series, we examine the housing needs for various populations to inform National Housing Strategy programs.

- Racialized Individuals and Communities
- Veterans
- LGBTQ2+ Communities
- Developmental Disabilities
- Newcomers and Refugees
- Youth Exiting Care

Our goal is to uncover the challenges and barriers they experience, as well as any solutions successfully implemented in Canada.

Glossary*

Biphobia

Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval of bisexuality. Biphobia can manifest in numerous ways, such as verbally, emotionally, and through physical attacks.

Cisgender

Denotes a person whose gender identity matches with their body and sex assigned at birth.

Gender-normative

Refers to people conforming to what is considered culturally appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour.

Heteronormative

The worldview that heterosexuality is the “normal” sexual orientation, and that female and male gender roles are fixed.

Homophobia

Feelings of rage, hate, or disapproval of homosexuality. Homophobia can manifest in numerous ways, such as verbal, emotional, and physical attacks.

LGBTQ2+

Acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, and 2-spirit people.

Transgender

An umbrella term used to denote people whose gender identity does not match with the sex they were assigned at birth. This term can encompass those who identify as transsexual, genderqueer, cross-dresser, and whose gender identities challenge gender norms.

Transphobia

Feelings of rage, hate, and disapproval towards transgender people or people who are gender-nonconforming. Transphobia can manifest in numerous ways, such as verbal, emotional, and physical attacks.

Two-Spirit (2S)

This term is culturally specific to the North American Indigenous community and refers to queer Indigenous people who identify with both a male and female spirit. This term is not exclusive to gender identity, and can also refer to sexual orientation.

Youth Serving Organization

A public organization that provides services to young people who are vulnerable and in need of additional supports. Youth serving organizations are expected to create safe environments for youth, where young people can access services and supports in a non-discriminatory manner. Each youth serving organization has a specific mandate, and this determines the range of services they provide to youth, including the age range they serve.

* Source: *A Focused Response to Prevent and End LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness* (Abramovich, 2015)
https://eppdscrmssa01.blob.core.windows.net/cmhcprodcontainer/sf/project/archive/housing_organizations3/abramovich-report.pdf

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