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Attitudes, Awareness and Behaviours Surrounding 2SLGBTQI+ Communities in Canada

Executive Summary

Prepared for Women and Gender Equality Canada

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Ce rapport est aussi disponible en français

Canada 

Attitudes, Awareness and Behaviours Surrounding 2SLGBTQI+ Communities in Canada

Final Report

Prepared for the Women and Gender Equality Canada by Abacus Data

March 2023

Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) commissioned Abacus Data to conduct a public opinion research survey to understand Canadians' attitudes, awareness, and behaviours surrounding 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada. A total of 3,400 Canadians were surveyed using an online panel to reflect the Canadian population, including an oversample of self-identified Indigenous people, those who self-identified as part of a 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and regional oversamples. The online survey was conducted between March 8 and 20, 2023.

Cette publication est aussi disponible en français sous le titre: Attitudes, sensibilisation et comportements à l'égard des communautés 2ELGBTQI+ du Canada.

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Research Purpose

Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) wants to understand current awareness, attitudes, and behaviours towards 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada. This includes the current level of awareness and understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada, including perceptions of discrimination and stigma. The results of this survey will be used to help better inform outreach, marketing, and communications strategies for a 2SLGBTQI+ public awareness campaign as part of the 2SLGBTQI+ Federal Action Plan.

1.2. Research Objectives

The overall objectives of the research are to:

- Measure familiarity, knowledge, and attitudes toward 2SLGBTQI+ communities
- Evaluate level of prejudice, biases, stigma, and acceptance towards 2SLGBTQI+ communities, and
- Understand sentiment and interest in public campaigns to address stigma directed at these communities.

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1.1. Quantitative Research

The online quantitative survey was conducted between March 8 and March 20, 2023. A total of 3,400 surveys were completed across Canada using an online panel. In addition to provincial oversamples, an additional 350 people who self-identified as part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and 100 self-identified Indigenous people were surveyed. The data was then weighted accordingly to match Canada's population by age, region, and sex assigned at birth and to weigh the oversamples of Indigenous and 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

Sub-group analyses and rounding

In addition to descriptive analysis, an analysis was undertaken to establish any differences in views based on personal demographic characteristics such as location, gender identity, age, and self-identification as a member of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Where appropriate analysis of differences based on allyship, values and attitudes (such as trust) were also undertaken.

Please note that due to rounding, in some cases it may appear that merged categories collapsed together are different by a percentage point from when they are presented individually, and totals may not add up to 100%.

1.4. Contract value

The total contract value for the project was \$60,359.52 including applicable taxes.

1.5. Statement of Political Neutrality

I hereby certify as a representative of Abacus Data that the deliverables fully comply with the Government of Canada political neutrality requirements outlined in the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada and Procedures for Planning and Contracting Public Opinion Research. Specifically, the deliverables do not include information on electoral voting intentions, political party preferences, standings with the electorate or ratings of the performance of a political party or its leaders.



Richard Jenkins, Ph.D., CAIP

1.6. Note to Readers

This report includes information on stigma and discrimination faced by 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada, as well as other equity-seeking groups. Please be aware that this report explores myths, stigma, stereotypes as well as the experiences of those who identify as part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Some of the topics explored within this report may be deeply upsetting and triggering. You are encouraged to take the necessary steps to protect your well-being.

1.7. Summary of Findings

Attitudes, Beliefs and Values

A majority of Canadians (57%) think Canada's culture and values are heading in the right direction. In addition, sixty per cent believe the equal treatment of 2SLGBTQI+ communities are also heading in the right direction. About one in four (25%) reject the idea that Canada is moving in the right direction when it comes to the equal treatment of 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

An even larger majority of Canadians strongly or somewhat agree (73%) that Canada is an equitable place to live. This majority are even more likely to think it is an equitable place for people like themselves (83%) to live. Canada is also viewed as a good place to live for equity-seeking groups (78%). The belief that Canada is a good place for equity-seeking groups aligns with the feeling shared by three-quarters of Canadians (78%) that diversity is one of Canada's best qualities. The value of diversity is something that clearly resonates in our collective consciousness.

That said, some Canadians hold views that reflect a distrust and wariness with the current state of Canada's culture. For example, 62% are concerned about the values children are learning and 61 per cent agree that important information about the Government of Canada is being hidden from the public. In addition, almost half (52%) are concerned about the loss of liberties and freedoms in Canada, and 40 per cent think protecting the rights of some means taking them away from others.

Equity, Stigma and Harassment

A third of Canadians (30%) think Canada is doing a very good or excellent job ensuring that 2SLGBTQI+ communities are treated equally. Almost the same per cent of respondents (31%) rate the performance as fair or poor.

Notably, Canada's performance in treating 2SLGBTQI+ communities equitably is seen to be on par with that of faith-based communities and Black communities in Canada. Treatment of 2SLGBTQI+ communities is seen to be worse than the treatment of newcomer and immigrant communities and of women. Notably, the performance on providing equity for Indigenous people is particularly low (54% fair or poor).

A third of Canadian adults (32%) believe the stigma faced by 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada is at least a very big or big problem. Over half (53%), however, say this stigma is a small or very small problem. Canadians believe the stigma faced by the following groups is a bigger concern than that faced by 2SLGBTQI+ communities in Canada: Indigenous people (49%), people with low-income (50%), people with disabilities (37%), Black communities (37%), and racialized communities (37%).

Canadians understand that memberships in more than one group can exacerbate stigma. For example, 65 per cent agree that Indigenous 2SLGBTQI+ people and communities are more at risk of experiencing violence than the general population.

Familiarity With and Understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ Issues

Seven in ten Canadians (72%) are familiar with the term "2SLGBTQI+". When asked about their familiarity with the specific letters, there is widespread awareness of 'L' (76%), 'G' (74%), and 'B' (73%). Fewer are familiar with 'I' (35%), '2S' (36%) and '+' (37%).

Familiarity with the letters carries over to familiarity with what it means to identify with one of the communities. Canadians are most familiar with what it means to be Lesbian (88%), Gay (87%), Bisexual (84%) and Trans (80%). Just over a third (36%) of Canadian adults say they are familiar with what it means to be Intersex or Two-Spirit.

Knowledge and understanding of 2SLGBTQI+ communities likely reflect exposure to some extent.

- Just over two in five (41%) Canadians say they know someone in their life who is part of a 2SLGBTQI+ community or communities.
- Aside from personal relationships, over two in five (43%) Canadians say they have had exposure to issues that 2SLGBTQI+ communities face in the media. Media treatment is more likely to be seen as positive (30%) than negative (18%).

Comfort with 2SLGBTQI+ Communities

Canadians are generally comfortable being around those who are part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Comfort is higher being around those with a different sexual orientation (76%) than around individuals who are Trans (66%) and those whose gender identity is not solely man or woman (62%).

Comfort is a little lower when presented with specific cases. For example, 60 per cent say they are comfortable when people dress or appear in public in ways that are overtly 2SLGBTQI+ and 58 per cent say they are comfortable with public performances by drag artists.

Perhaps reflecting this, half of survey respondents (53%) support 2SLGBTQI+ events (e.g., Pride events) in their community.

Nevertheless, only 15 per cent are non-supporters of 2SLGBTQI+ communities. One in three are either strong and active supporters (14%) or strong supporters (20%) of 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Another third (35%) consider themselves generally supportive of 2SLGBTQI+ communities and issues but don't feel strongly about it.

Beliefs and Misinformation about 2SLGBTQI+ Communities

Two-thirds (65%) of Canadian adults believe 2SLGBTQI+ people face less stigma and discrimination compared to 10 years ago. This hopeful view no doubt informs the perceptions of how much inequality and stigma the communities face now.

Many Canadians hold misconceptions about 2SLGBTQI+ people and communities. For example, only half (53%) think that being part of the 2SLGBTQI+ communities is not a choice, and over a third (38%) think people can be influenced or groomed into being part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities. There are also many who believe that 2SLGBTQI+ people are more likely to live in big cities (51%) or have a middle- or upper-class lifestyle (30%).

Level and Type of Stigma Experienced by 2SLGBTQI+ Communities

Many Canadians believe stigma persists, particularly for certain communities within the wider 2SLGBTQI+ communities. Among the different identities, over half of Canadians (55%) believe individuals who are Trans face a lot or quite a bit of stigma in their daily lives in Canada. Many (13%) are not sure. Many also think people belonging to the following communities face stigma: Queer (40%), Gay (39%), Intersex (36%), Lesbian (34%), Two-Spirit (33%) and Bisexual (31%).

The top five types of stigma that Canadians perceive these communities to face are: being shunned by family (57%), being verbally harassed or threatened (52%), feeling like others don't understand them (50%), being physically harassed or threatened (49%), and being harassed or threatened online (48%). For those who perceive stigma, the top drivers of stigma are people being threatened by something they don't understand (27%), people not feeling comfortable with people who are different (25%), and people believing that being part of 2SLGBTQI+ communities is unnatural (24%).

Learning More about 2SLGBTQI+ Communities

Just under half (46%) of Canadian adults are either very interested or somewhat interested in learning more about issues being faced by 2SLGBTQI+ communities.

There is also broad support for campaigns from the federal government, including awareness campaigns.

- 66 per cent of Canadian adults are supportive of federal funding for awareness workshops and training for professionals who provide services to 2SLGBTQI+ communities. 21 per cent oppose and 12 per cent are unsure.
- 53 per cent are supportive of adding 2SLGBTQI+ topics into education curricula. 33 per cent oppose and 14 per cent are unsure.
- 51 per cent are in favour of financial support for 2SLGBTQI+ community organizations. 33 per cent oppose and 17 per cent are indifferent.