



Cocktails & Conversations - “Let’s Talk About Sex”: The Experiences of Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ People in Calgary Accessing Healthcare & Perceptions of Gender and Sexuality Identity

In January 2025, [Black Pride YYC](#) in collaboration with the Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC) hosted a “Cocktails & Conversation” community health consultation and social event in Calgary, Alberta. Black Pride YYC is a non-profit organization that offers programs and a platform for the voices of Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals in Calgary to be supported, represented, and celebrated. This event was created by Black Pride YYC specifically for Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ people in the Calgary area to connect, socialize among the community, and discuss important health issues in a safe and welcoming environment.

The event included a presentation addressing healthcare access issues for Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ people, followed by a networking session where participants enjoyed snacks and beverages while socializing. This was followed by an open forum where attendees could ask questions and share their thoughts about access to healthcare, gender and sexual identity, and future initiatives to support Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ people in Calgary. The session concluded with a survey to gather participant input and their reflections on the topics presented.

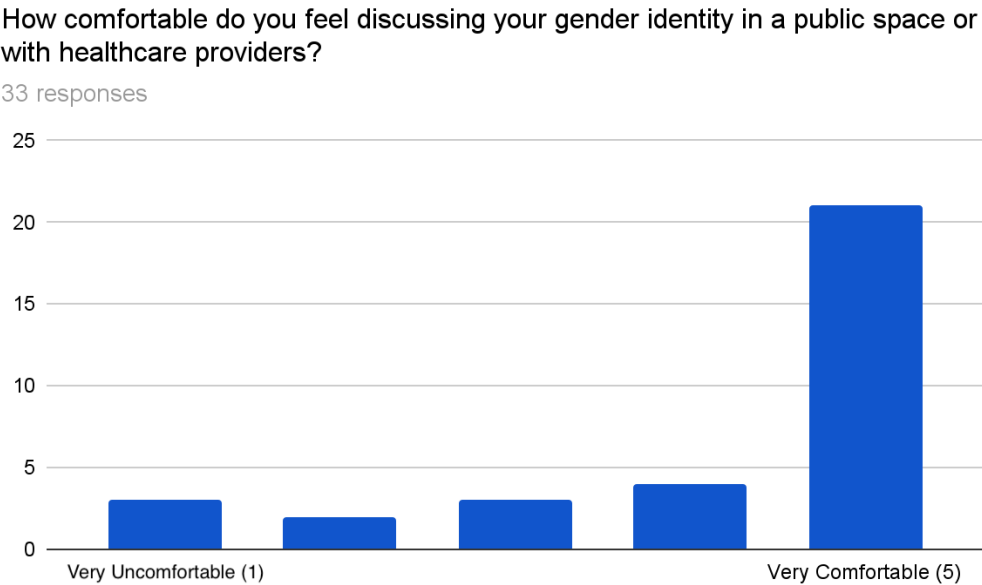
The primary goal of data collection through in-person surveys was to inform healthcare providers and community-based organizations about the experiences of Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ people when accessing healthcare, social programs, and services in Calgary, as well as improving access and quality of service. A total of **33 responses** were collected from participants, shedding light on their experiences, challenges, and areas for improvement within the community.

Gender Identity and Expression

1. How comfortable do you feel discussing your gender identity in a public space or with healthcare providers?

Key Data:

- The majority (21 respondents) felt very comfortable (5/5) discussing their gender identity in public or with healthcare providers.
- However, 8 respondents rated their comfort level as 3 or lower, indicating discomfort and potential barriers in open discussions.



Analysis:

The presence of individuals who feel uneasy suggests a need for continued advocacy, education, and the expansion of culturally competent and gender-affirming services. Ensuring that all Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals feel safe and respected in public and healthcare settings should remain a crucial goal for community organizations and service providers.

2. Have you ever felt pressured to conform to traditional gender norms in your personal or professional life?

Key Data:

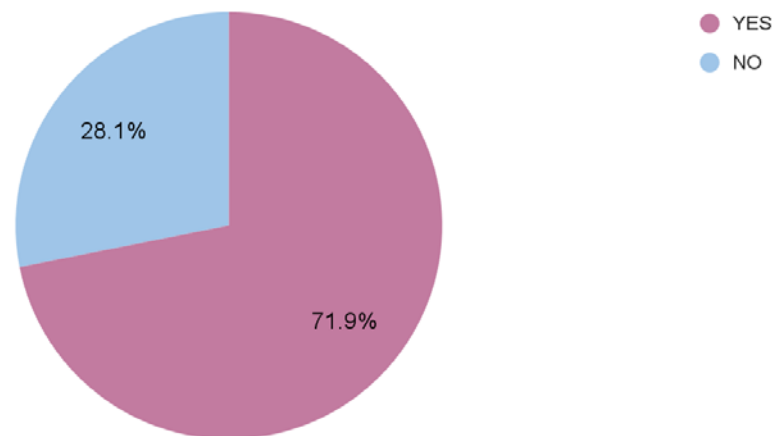
- 23 respondents (over 70%) reported feeling pressured to conform to traditional gender norms in personal or professional settings.
- 9 respondents (over 25%) did not experience this pressure.

Analysis:

This reflects the deep-rooted influence of gender roles that continue to shape how individuals are perceived and treated. While some respondents did not experience this pressure, the overwhelming majority indicates a need for more inclusive environments that allow Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals to express their gender identity authentically without fear of judgment or consequence.

Have you ever felt pressured to conform to traditional gender norms in your personal or professional life?

33 Responses



3. What challenges have you faced when expressing your gender identity authentically?

Key Data:

- Many respondents shared significant challenges in expressing their gender identity authentically, often facing societal and familial pressure to conform to traditional norms. Common struggles included misgendering, discrimination, and exclusion from social and religious spaces.
- Many reported being subjected to bullying, derogatory remarks, and even threats or violence. Cultural expectations around gender presentation, particularly in regions like Nigeria, further intensified these difficulties.
- Respondents also highlighted struggles with personal expression, such as dressing in ways that align with their identity while fearing judgment or safety risks.

Analysis:

These experiences highlight the urgent need for greater education, acceptance, and protections for 2S/LGBTQIA+ people.

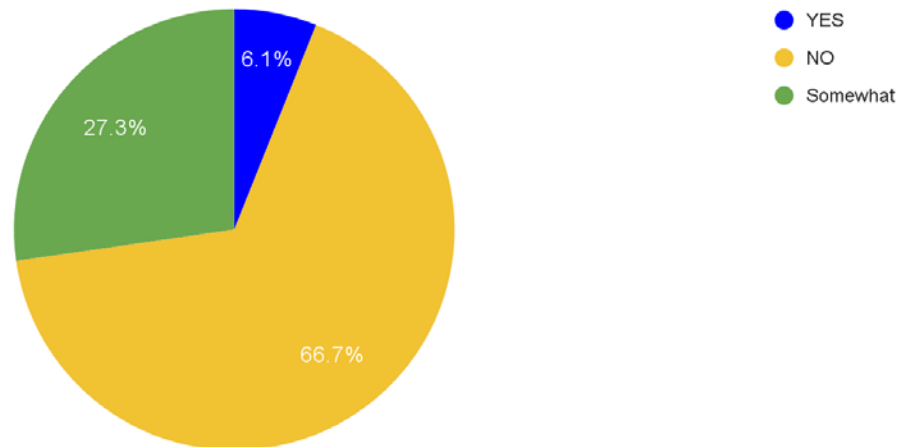
Sex vs. Gender

4. Do you feel there's enough public awareness about the difference between sex and gender?

Key Data:

- Only 2 respondents (6%) believed there was sufficient public awareness.
- 22 respondents (67%) disagreed, indicating a strong need for education.

Do you feel there's enough public awareness about the difference between sex and gender?
33 Responses



Analysis:

The responses highlight a significant gap in public understanding of the difference between sex and gender. This indicates the need for more educational initiatives, community discussions, and policy efforts to increase awareness and foster a more inclusive and informed society.

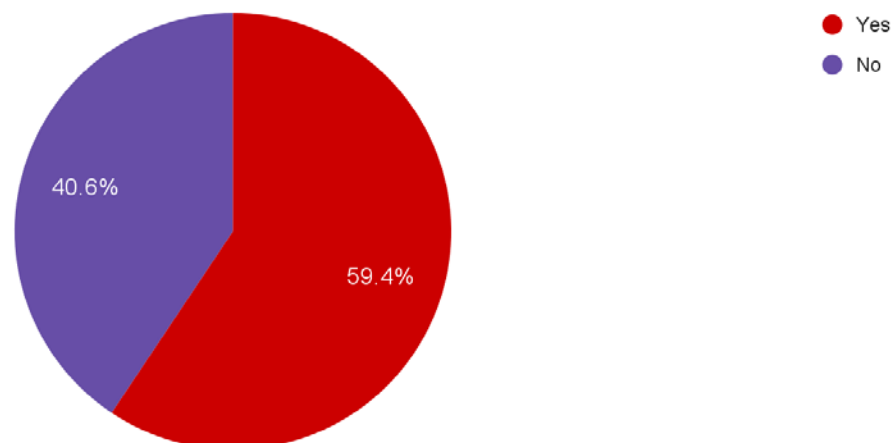
5. Have you experienced situations where assumptions about your biological sex affects how you were treated?

Key Data:

- More than 50% of respondents reported experiencing differential treatment based on assumptions about their biological sex.

Have you experienced situations where assumptions about your biological sex affected how you were treated?

33 Responses



Analysis:

These assumptions can influence interactions in healthcare, workplaces, and social settings, often leading to misgendering, exclusion, or discomfort. This reinforces the need for broader education on gender identity and expression, as well as the importance of creating spaces where individuals are seen and respected beyond binary classifications.

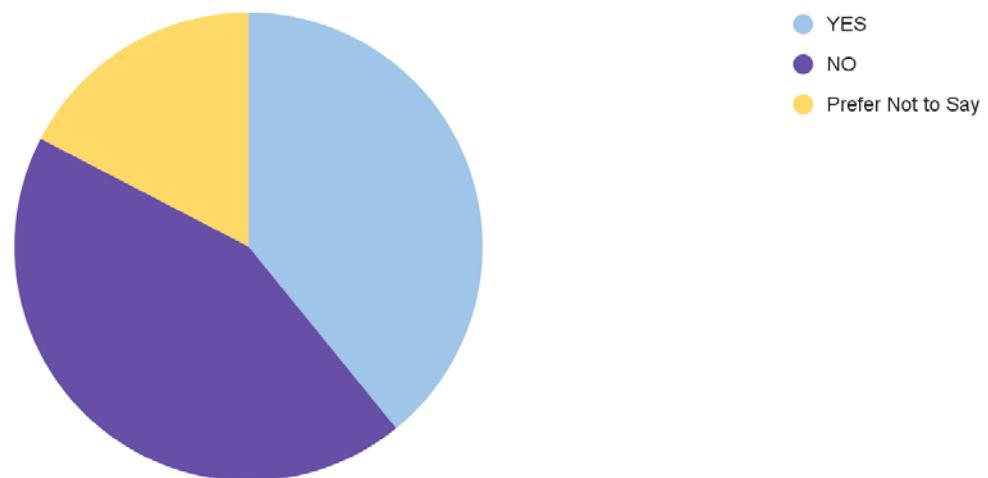
6. Have you faced or witnessed discrimination due to being non-binary or intersex?

Key Data:

- The majority of respondents indicated that they had not personally experienced or witnessed discrimination.
- However, a significant portion (over 20%) of respondents reported facing discrimination firsthand, highlighting ongoing societal challenges for gender-diverse individuals. While the remaining 12% of respondents chose not to disclose, this could indicate discomfort, fear of stigma, or uncertainty about how to categorize their experiences.

Have you faced or witnessed discrimination due to being non-binary or intersex?

33 Responses



Analysis:

While some have not personally encountered discrimination, the presence of those who preferred not to disclose suggests that stigma and fear may prevent open discussion. This indicates a need for safer spaces, stronger protections, and greater advocacy to address and reduce discrimination against gender-diverse individuals.

7. What myths or false information have you heard about non-binary or intersex people?

Key Data:

- Common misconceptions included beliefs that non-binary individuals are “confused,” “mentally ill,” or “attention-seeking.”
- Some respondents had encountered religious and cultural narratives that framed non-binary and intersex identities as “evil,” “cursed,” or “diabolical.”

Analysis:

The misconceptions reflect deep-rooted stigma and misinformation surrounding non-binary and intersex identities, often fueled by societal, cultural, and religious biases. The responses emphasize the urgent need for education, awareness campaigns, and advocacy efforts to challenge these false beliefs, promote accurate information, and foster greater acceptance of diverse gender and sexual identities.



8. What resources or support would make navigating the world as a non-binary or intersex person easier?

Key Data:

- Respondents emphasized the need for more educational materials, community support groups, and visibility initiatives.

Analysis:

The responses highlight the crucial role of education, community, and visibility in creating a more inclusive society for non-binary and intersex individuals. Access to accurate information can challenge misconceptions.

Intersectional Challenges

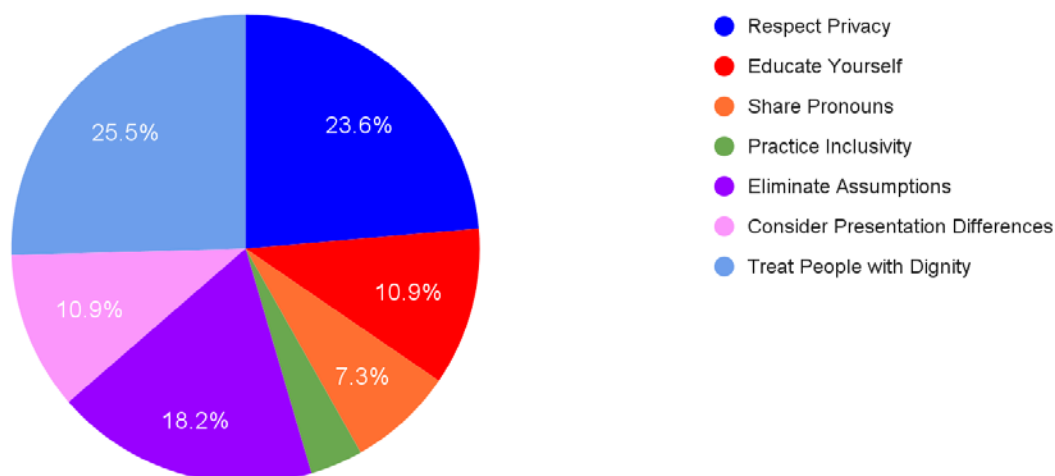
9. Which of the RESPECT principles do you feel is most commonly overlooked in your community?

Key Data:

- “Treat People with Dignity” (14 responses) and “Respect Privacy” (13 responses) were identified as the most neglected principles.

Which of the RESPECT principles do you feel is most commonly overlooked in your community?

33 Responses



Analysis:

The prevalence of overlooked principles like eliminating assumptions and considering presentation differences further emphasizes the need for cultural and social awareness. Addressing these gaps through education and community engagement can foster a more inclusive and respectful environment.

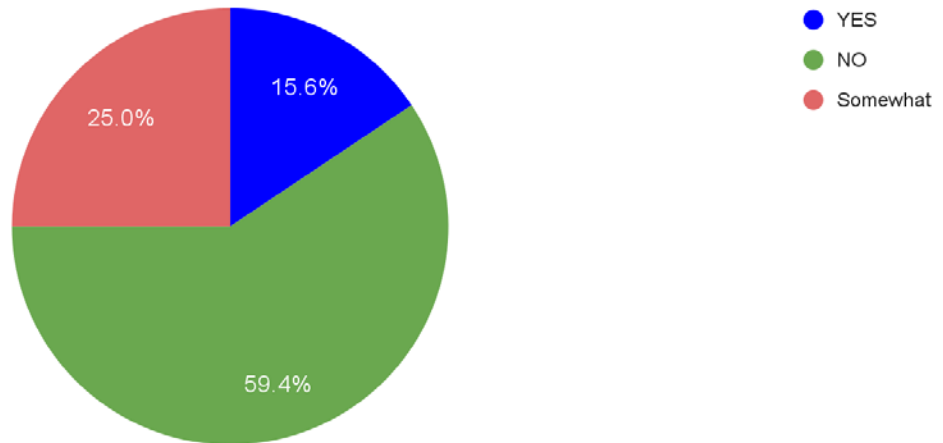
10. Do you believe healthcare and community services are equipped to support non-binary and intersex Black individuals?

Key Data:

- More than 50% of the respondents believed that healthcare and community services were not adequately equipped to support non-binary and intersex Black individuals.

Do you believe healthcare and community services are equipped to support non-binary and intersex Black individuals?

33 Responses



Analysis:

The responses show that these areas require urgent attention. The lack of culturally competent care for these specific health needs can intensify already existing health disparities.



Event Impressions & Future Recommendations

11. What topics or issues would you like to see addressed in future Cocktails & Conversations events?

Key Data:

- Top recommendations included partnering with healthcare providers for cultural competency training and organizing community awareness campaigns.

Analysis:

Respondents want more community organizations like Black Pride YYC to take an active role in bridging the gap between healthcare providers and marginalized communities, advocating for policy changes, and providing safe spaces for health discussions.

12. What actions can community-based organizations take to better support diverse gender identities and expressions?

Key Data:

- Mental health and wellness and navigating healthcare as a Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ individual were top areas of interest for future Cocktails & Conversations events.

Analysis:

Future events should continue focusing on these critical health issues, offering safe spaces for Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals to discuss and seek support for their health and wellness.

13. How can allies contribute more effectively to creating safe spaces for gender-diverse individuals?

Key Data:

- Many respondents highlighted the need for government support in protecting individuals from discrimination, as well as the importance of self-education to better understand sexual and gender diversity. Listening to and respecting different cultural backgrounds were also seen as key steps toward inclusivity.
- They also pointed out practical actions such as using correct pronouns, attending queer community events, and amplifying awareness of gender and sexual diversity.

Analysis:

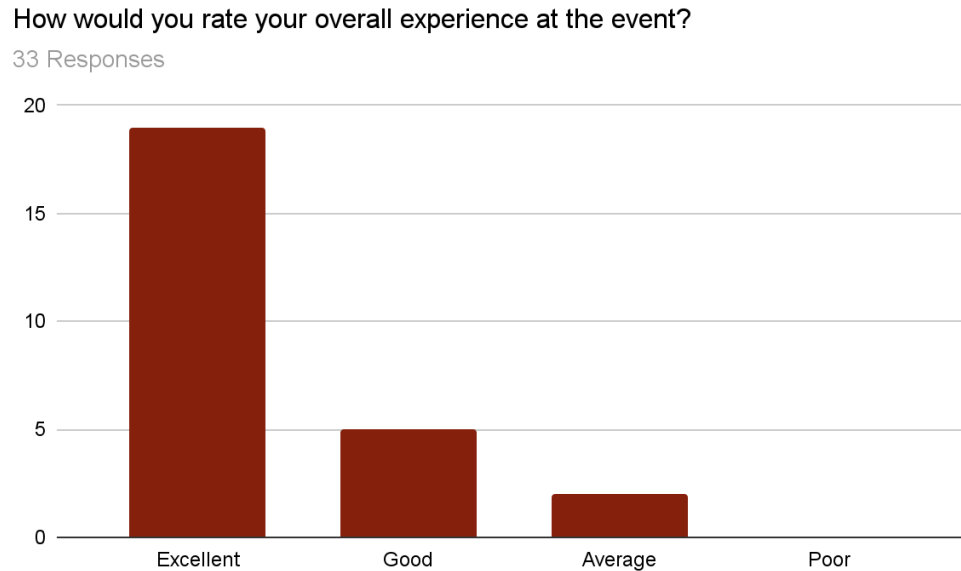
These responses emphasize the need for both systemic and individual efforts to foster inclusivity and acceptance. Government support for those facing discrimination is crucial, alongside increased public education and awareness initiatives.



14. How would you rate your overall experience at the Cocktails & Conversation event?

Key Data:

- Over 50% of the respondents rated their experience as **excellent**, indicating a strong positive reception.
- 15% of the respondents rated it as **good**, suggesting general satisfaction with the event.
- Over 5% rated it as **average**, while no respondents rated it as poor.



Analysis:

The overwhelmingly positive ratings highlight the event's success in delivering meaningful discussions and fostering a supportive environment.

15. Has attending the Cocktails & Conversation event had an impact on you in any ways you would like us to know about?

Key Data:

- Attending the Cocktails & Conversation event had a meaningful impact on many respondents, reinforcing their sense of community and self-expression. Some felt better equipped to navigate conversations about gender and sexual identity, whether with family or in broader social settings. Others expressed a newfound confidence in using correct pronouns, asking about identities rather than assuming, and embracing their own.

Analysis:

The appreciation for intergenerational representation suggests that queer spaces should continue to foster cross-generational dialogue, ensuring that knowledge and experiences are shared across different age groups.

Conclusion

The survey responses from the event underscore the urgent need for continued advocacy, education, and the expansion of culturally competent and affirming services for Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ individuals in Calgary. The need for greater understanding of gender and sexual diversity among healthcare providers and the general public is abundantly clear. Future initiatives should focus on creating inclusive spaces where Black 2S/LGBTQIA+ people feel safe to openly express their experiences and identify opportunities for the improvement of health-care and social services. Cross-generational dialogue is also essential in maintaining the shared wisdom and experiences of diverse communities to ensure that historical and contemporary perspectives are not disregarded. The event's success in promoting meaningful conversations and a supportive environment signals a positive step forward in advocating for systemic and policy changes, as well as the personal and community-driven efforts required to foster a more inclusive and informed society.



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