

**SEXUAL AND GENDER  
DIVERSITY IN POST-  
SECONDARY EDUCATION:**  
LGBTQ+ Students Interview Series Report

SUMMER 2019 CAPSTONE | LINDA CABRAL

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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The author would like to acknowledge and thank all those who took the time to share their perspectives and experiences by participating in OUSA's 2018 Interview Series. Interviews were organized, set up, and conducted in 2018 by Martyna Siekanowicz.

## **ABOUT OUSA**

OUSA represents the interests of approximately 150,000 professional and undergraduate, full-time and part-time university students at eight institutions across Ontario. Our vision is for an accessible, affordable, accountable, and high quality post-secondary education in Ontario. To achieve this vision, we've come together to develop solutions to challenges facing higher education, build broad consensus for our policy options, and lobby government to implement them.

## **RECOMMENDED CITATION**

Cabral, Linda. *Sexual and Gender Diversity in Post-Secondary education: LGBTQ+ Students Interview Series*. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2019.

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## TERMINOLOGY AND LANGUAGE USE

The use of language is significant, as how one is addressed can be used to validate or dismiss a person's identity and/or lived experience. Definitions and terms of sexual and gender identity and expression are fluid, community-based, and subject to change. The definitions were in part derived from *The 519* glossary terms, as well as other community glossary pools.<sup>1</sup> Some terms, such as Queer, have different meanings dependent on an individual's life experiences, which is due to the historical significance of those terms. Additionally, in a recent community-based research study, Two Spirit participants defined the importance of writing "Two Spirit" before and distinct from the initialism of LGBTQ+.<sup>2</sup> In order to respect the significance of this change, this report uses "Two Spirit and LGBTQ+" throughout, and "LGBTQ+" when referencing questions asked to participants.

The definitions below, while not an exhaustive list, are included to help guide the reader's understanding of the research and findings.

### CIS/CISGENDER

Cisgender is a term used to explain when a person's gender identity is in line with or "matches" the sex they were assigned at birth. Cis can also be used as a prefix to an assortment of words to refer to the alignment of gender identity and assigned-at-birth sex status, including cisnormativity, cis-male, and cis-female.

### LGBTQ+

Initialism that stands for "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans\*, Queer, and more", used to incorporate all identities under the umbrella. This is the main initialism used in this report; however, other popular initialism exists (e.g. LGBT, GLBT, 2SLGBTQQIA).

### MSM/WSW

A man who has sex with men/a woman who has sex with women. For the purposes of this report, discussion of the LGBTQ+ community will also include MSM/WSW to incorporate all same-gender relations – but it is important to note that MSM/WSW do not necessarily identify within the community.

### MICROAGGRESSIONS

Verbal, behavioural, or environmental comments or jokes, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial stereotypes and/or insults toward any group.

### MATURE STUDENT

A student is considered a single independent student if two conditions are met. First, both of the following must be true: they are not currently married or in a common-law relationship, and they do not have dependent children. Second, at least one of the following must apply: they have been out of school for 6 or more years at the start of their study period; for at least 12 consecutive months, on 2 or more occasions, they were a student at a high school or post-secondary school; both of their parents are deceased; they are a current Crown ward or were a Crown ward prior to age 18; they are currently receiving a Continued Care and Support for Youth program allowance from the Children's Aid Society. A student is considered a sole-support parent if they have a dependent child or children living with them full-time during their study period and they are single, separated, divorced, or widowed.

<sup>1</sup>The 519. Glossary. Retrieved from: <https://www.the519.org/education-training/glossary>

<sup>2</sup>Suzanne Mills, Michelle Dion, Daniel Thompson, Christ Borst, & James Diemert, Mapping the Void: Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ Experiences in Hamilton (McMaster University, The AIDS Network, June 11, 2019).

## PASSING

This is the privilege given to a person who is believed to be a member of a dominant group (i.e., non-trans, cisgender, white, non-disabled, etc).

## TRANSGENDER

Umbrella term that describes individuals with diverse gender identities and/or gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in their society.

“Trans\*” can refer – but is not limited – to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross-dressers, or gender non-conforming (gender variant, non-binary, or gender-queer). Trans identities include people whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex. Trans people may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments, such as hormone therapy and a range of surgical procedures, to mediate their gender dysphoria.

## TWO SPIRIT

Used by some Indigenous people and cultures to refer to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and feminine spirit, and is used to describe their sexual, gender, and/or spiritual identity. It has been used as an umbrella term that includes same-sex attraction and varying gender identities and expressions. It is a term for and by Indigenous groups, and its name creation is rooted in decolonization. However, it is important to note that different Indigenous communities or individuals may have a different definition or meaning attributed to the term. For some, the term Two Spirit describes a societal and spiritual role that certain people played within traditional societies; they were often mediators, keepers of certain ceremonies; they transcended accepted roles of men and women and filled a role as an established middle gender.

## QUEER

Formerly – and by some currently – derogatory slang term used to identify LGBTQ+ people. Some members of the LGBTQ+ community have reclaimed and reinvented this term as a positive political identifier for sexual and gender minorities who are not heterosexual or are not cisgender, to be used when speaking about themselves. This term is also used by some members of the community, especially in academia, as an umbrella term.

## Sexual Attraction to More than One Gender Identity

*Note: These sexual orientations may broadly overlap, but since the definitions change per person or culture, the distinction matters to some people and is welcome and encouraged. Some people use them interchangeably and some do not.*

**BISEXUAL:** A person who is emotionally, physically, spiritually, and/or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender, though not necessarily at the same time.

**PANSEXUALITY:** Sexual, romantic, or emotional attraction toward people regardless of their sex or gender identity.

**POLYSEXUAL:** Physical, sexual, and/or emotional attraction to multiple, but not all, genders.

**OMNISEXUAL:** An individual who is attracted to persons of all genders and orientations – sexually, emotionally, and/or physically.

## INTRODUCTION

All students should be able to receive a post-secondary education if they are qualified and willing, but unfortunately there are still barriers that restrict access to higher education. OUSA's LGBTQ+ Student Interview Series was a qualitative research project conducted in the Fall of 2018 and was designed to gain an understanding of the opinions and experiences of Ontario university students who identify as Two Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Questioning, or other orientations or identities that do not conform to cisgender and heterosexual paradigms (Two Spirit and LGBTQ+), as well as gather more information on the experiences faced by LGBTQ+ students.

The findings from this interview series were intended to help guide authors of OUSA's policy on Sexual and Gender Diversity: LGBTQ+ Students, making evidence-based policy stances. The one-on-one interviews were also intended to identify any gaps that might exist in university services, programming, and supports, as well as overall campus culture, that can negatively impact university experiences for these students – or make access to post-secondary education more difficult. This research also highlights concerns with provincially facing issues for Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students. These students still face barriers on campus such as higher debt levels, threats of physical violence, and less targeted resources and programming. Findings suggest that while campus culture has shifted slightly positively, students still feel like they do not have an equal footing in and out of the classroom. Areas of concern for Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students include health and wellness, campus resources and spaces, university policies, university teaching staff, security and safety, provincial policies, and financial stability.

## METHODOLOGY

### MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- 1 What concerns, challenges, and disadvantages do LGBTQ+ students face?
- 2 How could the undergraduate experience of LGBTQ+ students be improved?

### DESIGN

This research consulted with students at OUSA's member institutions who identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community to gather information regarding "LGBTQ+ Student Experiences" at Ontario university campuses. A series of in-depth, one-on-one interviews (in-person and by phone) were conducted to gain first-hand accounts of challenges faced by some LGBTQ+ students on campus as well as potential solutions to address identified challenges. The information gathered from these interviews was and is intended to inform the 2019 Gender and Sexual Diversity: LGBTQ+ Students policy paper writing process as well as this research report.

The interview series was designed to answer the following guiding questions: What challenges and concerns do LGBTQ+ students face on campus?; How can the province act to address these concerns?; How can universities act to address these concerns?; What areas need the most improvement?; What policies or practices have been effective in supporting LGBTQ+ students?; How can OUSA better advocate for and work with LGBTQ+ students?.

A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants, whereby LGBTQ+ student representatives facilitated connections to current students by providing contact information for potential student participants. Potential participants were contacted directly by the researcher. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of participants, the student representatives who provided contact information for potential participants were not informed of which students were contacted or participated.

Throughout this report, participants are only identified by title, although in some cases it was also necessary to identify the institution they attended. This is only to refer to services, spaces, resources, or lack thereof at specific institutions.

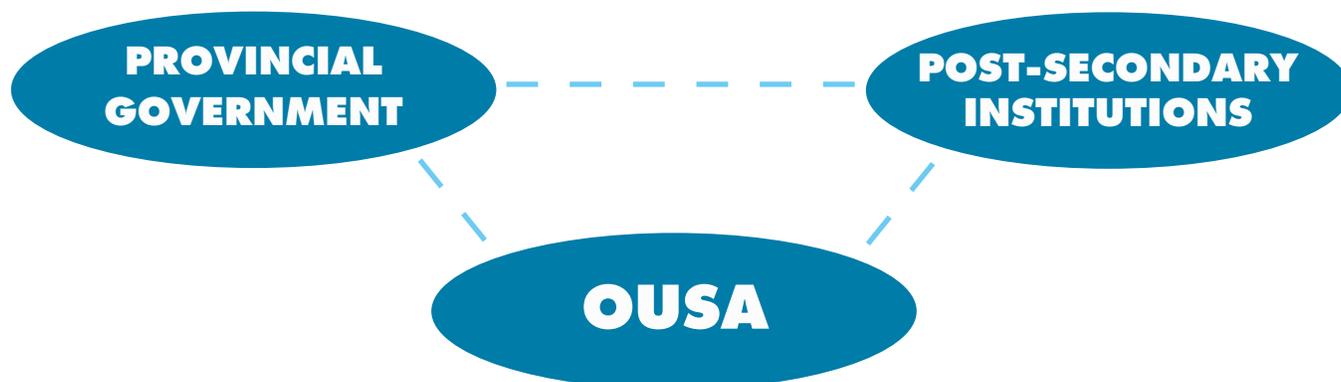
## LIMITATIONS

The nature of this research was such that there was no way to draw a representative, probability-based sample of students from which generalizable inferences could be drawn. The results presented in this report cannot be used to represent the attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives of students who did not participate in this interview series.

This includes a lack of representation from Indigenous communities, including those who identify as Two Spirited. To supplement this, North American (Turtle Island) research has been used to understand Two Spirit and Indigenous LGBTQ+ identities in regard to post-secondary education. The next iteration of Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ research conducted by OUSA will aim to create solutions that ensure more identities are given the chance to be involved.

However, it was not the intent of this research to produce generalizable results, but rather to provide insights to policy authors on the experiences of some LGBTQ+ students at OUSA's member institutions. As such, this research is useful to inform OUSA's policy writing process.

The interviews were advertised at OUSA member schools; however, one member school did not contribute. Moreover, due to changeover in staff, the report of this interview series was made and released by a different researcher and time than planned. To mitigate the effects of these changes, survey participants were informed of the changes and the researcher outlined their rights as participants again. As part of the informed consent process, participants had given permission for the OUSA research team to contact them regarding the research. In order to respect the confidentiality of participants, only the two members of the research team working on this project had access to participant information, in addition to the interviewer. As this research was aimed at getting a grasp of what LGBTQ+ students are saying across campuses in Ontario, these interviews still achieve the intended purpose despite the timeline change.



# RESULTS

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Thirteen students who identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community participated in the interview series, either in-person or over the phone. All students belonged to OUSA member schools, and all but one member school had a student participate. Participants were asked about their experiences at their university, both on campus and in the classroom, as well as their experiences accessing student resources and services. The researcher also asked participants about the challenges and concerns LGBTQ+ students face, and for recommendations or areas of improvement that the participants considered to be top priorities for their university.

While results are not meant to be generalized, it is important to note the range of participant identities. Any student from an OUSA member school with a sexual orientation or gender identity under the LGBTQ+ umbrella was eligible to participate in the interview series. Participants were given the option to self-identify their sexual and/or gender identities, or to state that they were part of the community without claiming a specific identity. Notably, while participants identified in a range of ways, all discussed an instance of homophobia directed at themselves or people they were close to. While most referred to verbal harassment, some disclosed experiencing physical harassment.

All participants were completing their bachelor's degree, except for one Master's student. Despite not being an undergraduate student, this student was included in the interview series because she spoke on her undergraduate experience. Out of all participants, two were mature students and one transferred programs halfway through their undergraduate degree.

Another important factor in understanding the experiences of LGBTQ+ students on campus was through the representation of how variable identities interact. For example, understanding how students experienced campus life was dependent on understanding the ways in which their trans\* identity, or their racial or ethnic identity, or their disabled identity interacted in different situations and settings.

## MAIN FINDINGS

Questions and corresponding student responses were categorized into three sections. The first section explored participants' general experience on campus and at their institutions, as well as in specific settings, such as in a classroom. The second section asked questions regarding the challenges and barriers faced by individuals as members of either their school community or the LGBTQ+ community as a whole. The third section asked participants to identify areas of improvement, whether at their home institution, provincially, or within OUSA. The responses provided by participants fell into six main themes: health and wellness, campus resources and spaces, university policies, university teaching staff, security and safety, and provincial policies.

Students expressed concerns about the presence of anti-LGBTQ+ groups and voices on campuses. Some participants expressed that these groups were active in the city or towns surrounding their university, but others mentioned that these groups or voices were also allowed on campuses. Additionally, community-based LGBTQ+ support groups and service providers face limitations in many university communities as they are often under-resourced and can be difficult to find for LGBTQ+ students.

Mature students mentioned that they felt the Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ community was now more public and that campuses had become more socially aware of issues. However, one mature student suggested that campus climate was shifting backwards and shared that they felt less comfortable on campus as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

Most students, eleven of the thirteen, felt that there was not enough being done throughout the year to promote LGBTQ+ events, histories, and voices. Many voiced concerns that because Pride Month is in the summer, most campus or city pride parades happen during times when students are unable to attend. Also, most participants said they wanted to see more educational opportunities and awareness campaigns on their campuses for students, faculty, and university staff.

Both students who identified as trans\* had many complaints about institutional policies. For example, the process for a trans\* student to change their name remains difficult and can be very stressful to navigate, especially as information is not easily accessible and each institution has different rules regarding documentation. Both trans\* students noted that not all their forms or outlets had their proper name.

Financial struggles were cited by a majority of participants, especially for mature and disabled LGBTQ+ students. One barrier cited was the fact that grant, loan, and private loan applications often require information or processes that can place LGBTQ+ students in a compromised position, such as the need for parent/guardian signatures on applications.

Many participants disclosed significant worries about Ontario's mandate for every publicly-assisted college and university to develop a free speech policy, as well as concerns about the changes to the K-12 sexual education curriculum.

## DISCUSSION

### HEALTH AND WELLNESS

The needs and experiences of Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ individuals are innately different than those of heterosexual, cisgender individuals. These include access to healthcare, likelihood of health complications, and the services they are more likely to use or not use. In particular, trans\* students often have the most difficulty navigating campus health and wellness clinics or clinics in the surrounding area.

Those with intersecting identities – for example, Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students of colour, or Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students with disabilities – have different health concerns and barriers. A significant barrier is access to healthcare, with 61% of Indigenous gender-diverse individuals having unmet healthcare needs.<sup>3</sup> With less equitable resources to healthcare, Indigenous individuals and others with **compounded identities** are not given the chance to thrive within their identity; they are also not given the chance to transition or come out safely and comfortably. Individuals deserve to feel comfortable with their doctor regardless of their sexual or gender diversity, and they deserve the same level of healthcare as their cisheterosexual counterparts.

**COMPOUNDED IDENTITIES**  
When two or more social and political marginalized identities that an individual possesses interact with a system or institution.

*Similar to intersectionality and triple oppression.*

<sup>3</sup> "Barriers to well-being for Aboriginal gender-diverse people: Results from the Trans PULSE Project in Ontario, Canada" - Ayden I. Scheim, Randy Jackson, Liz James, T. Sharp Dopler, Jake Pyne and Greta R. Bauer

Previous research conducted by StatsCan found that lesbians and bisexual women had high odds of not having a regular doctor, and bisexuals of both sexes were more likely to report having unmet health care needs.<sup>4</sup> All female-identifying participants mentioned issues related to healthcare. Women who were trans\* discussed issues directly related to their gender identity and expression, such as those related to surgery or hormones. Cisgender women expressed that they did not know how to address their sexuality when disclosing to healthcare professionals, such as through medical intake forms or communicating directly with their doctor. This supports the argument that WSW are less likely to have their healthcare needs met as they face barriers to providing complete and accurate information in a health-related setting.<sup>5</sup>

Cisgender male participants discussed healthcare access in reference to mental health needs and blood donation bans. In Canada, the waiting period for MSM to give blood is three months. One participant mentioned that their lack of ability to donate blood made them feel “dirty”.<sup>6</sup>

Trans\* students felt like they had less access to comprehensive healthcare, given that most campus clinics are not equipped or trained to understand trans\*-related health concerns, such as the needs of students who are transitioning. About 40% of trans\* individuals surveyed in Ontario have experienced discriminatory behaviour from a family doctor at least once.<sup>7</sup>

**“There has only been ONE doctor that is even capable or knowledgeable about transgender patients – and when I try to access these resources, for hormones for instance, I am uncomfortable saying outright ‘I am transgender, and I need hormones,’ for instance when they ask ‘What’s the appointment for’ in public. I had one doctor where they said ‘I’m sorry, I don’t know anything about transgender patients,’ and they had to refer me to the other doctor I originally wanted. I appreciate them being forward with me, but I do think it’s a little [suspicious] that of all the doctors they have, they only have ONE that’s capable of handling trans\* patients. What if that doctor retires? Or moves? That person cannot be the only resource.”**

**– Trans\* Student from Waterloo University**

Trans\* men, in particular, noted a lack of access to doctors and other health practitioners who were understanding of and educated in trans\*-related needs. Trans\* individuals who want to give blood and have had lower gender-affirming surgery are not allowed to donate blood for three months following the surgery. After three months, the trans\* donor is screened according to their affirmed gender. Trans\* individuals who have not had lower gender-affirming surgery are asked questions based on their sex assigned at birth.<sup>8</sup> One participant noted that they were uncomfortable being asked questions based on their sex assigned at birth and wanted more information on why this protocol exists. Many health practitioners are not educated on trans\* healthcare, and national blood services should do a more inclusive job of promoting information about trans\* donors and why the protocols exist.

<sup>4</sup> StatsCan. Health care use among gay, lesbian and bisexual Canadians. Retrieved from <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2008001/article/10532/5002598-eng.htm>

<sup>5</sup> StatsCan. Health care use among gay, lesbian and bisexual Canadians.

<sup>6</sup> Blood Canada, *Men who have sex with men*. Retrieved from <https://blood.ca/en/blood/am-i-eligible/men-who-have-sex-men#history>

<sup>7</sup> Bauer GR, Scheim AI, for the TransPULSE Project Team. Transgender People in Ontario, Canada: Statistics to Inform Human Rights Policy. London, ON. 1 June 2015.

<sup>8</sup> StatsCan. Health care use among gay, lesbian and bisexual Canadians.

## CAMPUS RESOURCES AND SPACES

Students use and participate in campus clubs and services to enhance their lives, and LGBTQ+ students are no different. However, Pride groups vary across campuses in terms of space allocation, funding, resources, and utilization. Some groups are considered clubs or services, and others are funded through their school or student association – but all trying to create a space where LGBTQ+ students can feel safe.

Almost all participants attended some form of summer orientation during their first year on campus, but only one participant spoke about LGBTQ+-related programming. The student, who attended Western University's Orientation Week, discussed his experience as such:

**“I went to the One Love Rally, and that was really good and inclusive, and I really did get the vibe I needed, especially since I was closeted then – so it was really important for me to attend that event to get to know the campus community and the resources. [One Love Rally] has changed a lot over the years, but back then we had a spoken word artist that spoke about race and being gay and talked about spaces that were not made for racialized students and individuals. We had someone talk about assault, and we had someone talk about being gay and in the military – which at the time was still the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy – talking about their experiences and how they overcame their challenges, and it was about accepting one another and talking to each other, how to reach out despite differences.”**

**- Student from Western University**

Other students said they wished their orientation programming had more LGBTQ+ events or at least more information on resources for LGBTQ+ students. Summer orientation programming at institutions is made to help first-year students transition into academic and campus life, and LGBTQ+-related programming can help LGBTQ+ students – closeted or not – find a community and the resources they need.

Most participants explained that their campus had an LGBTQ+-focused group, whether it was a club or a service, with some having physical locations on campuses and others not. Upon further research, all of OUSA's member schools have some form of Pride service, though some are promoted more than others.<sup>9</sup> However, some participants said they either did not know of any LGBTQ+ student resources or they did not feel comfortable accessing these resources. Most of these participants did not regularly use their LGBTQ+ services. Reasons included lack of privacy, not being accessible, and not having interesting programming. Some participants mentioned that if the space were in a more secluded area of their student building then they would be more likely to attend. One participant mentioned that, because of the physical barriers of the building with LGBTQ+ programming, they had to use an alternative route to access the space, which they did not feel comfortable with. Those whose schools did not have dedicated spaces mentioned that it should be a priority for their institution.

<sup>9</sup> MSU – Pride Community Centre; AMS – EQuIP; BUSU – Brock Pride; Trent – Trent Durham Pride; USC – Western Pride; SGA/ AGE – Pride Laurentian/ Fierté Laurentienne; WLUSU – Queer Spehere (Brantford Campus) & The Rainbow Centre (Waterloo Campus); WUSA – GLOW Centre

Ten of the thirteen participants noted that, because Pride Month is in the middle of summer, it is difficult to celebrate or participate in Pride parades, events, or programming through their campuses' pride centres. Some institutions hold Pride programming during the school year as an alternative to the summer pride programming, though none of the participants mentioned this. Lack of awareness might be caused by a lack of adequate information about their institutions' LGBTQ+ resources, especially since many participants mentioned that their institutions do not promote their Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ services.

## UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Many LGBTQ+ students are negatively impacted by their institution's policies. These policies, or sometimes lack thereof, hinder Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students' ability to access and continue post-secondary education. Examples include institutional policies on accommodation protocols, name changes, and appeals processes.

Participants, even those from the same institution, were divided on whether their institution's policies help Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students, especially trans\* students. Some students reported institutional policies supporting trans\* students, such as simple and easy name change processes; others reported that their institution's policies hindered their ability to navigate the university. These discrepancies highlight how each student has a unique experience interacting with their institution's policies.

TransPULSE, a research group focusing on trans\* health and related areas, found that 58% of trans\* students in Ontario could not get academic transcripts with their correct name or pronouns.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, two trans\* participants mentioned that while they have their name changed on class registration documents, they can only get their name changed on their transcript if it matches their legal name on their provincial identification. This means that trans\* students must overcome the additional barrier of legally changing their name in order to have their correct name recognized on their transcripts.

## UNIVERSITY TEACHING STAFF

Educators have a duty to create spaces that are conducive to learning, but they should also create spaces that are inclusive and holistic. Teaching staff at a post-secondary institution can include professors and teaching assistants, both of whom monitor and direct different types of learning. In a previous OUSA research report on LGBTQ+ students, participants mentioned that their classroom environments were often difficult to navigate when certain topics surrounding LGBTQ+ issues came up, specifically because of how teaching staff reacted or responded.<sup>11</sup>

In this interview series, many participants, specifically those in STEM-related courses, reported that they were made to feel uncomfortable because their professor(s) made comments or assumptions about their orientation or gender. Two participants discussed how STEM-related programs and classes are less likely to use inclusive language or denounce hate speech. Participants in social sciences or humanities programs were more likely to note that their professors were open and made their classroom experiences more comfortable.

<sup>10</sup> Bauer GR, Scheim AI, for the TransPULSE Project Team. Transgender People in Ontario, Canada: Statistics to Inform Human Rights Policy. London, ON. 1 June 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Rose, Zachary J. LGBTQ+ Student Experience Survey Report: LGBTQ+ students' experiences and attitudes at universities. Research Report. Toronto: Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, 2015.

LGBTQ+ students recommended that training on the use of inclusive language might be especially useful for educators (both faculty and teaching assistants). Twelve of the thirteen participants said that it was important for educators to use inclusive language, the same students also mentioned having at least one experience where teaching staff had used excluding language, whether it was outwardly homophobic or not. As OUSA's previous LGBTQ+ student survey recommended, teaching staff would benefit from more comprehensive training in inclusive language, safe space, and anti-oppression training; and, importantly, offering this training to teaching staff would benefit students as well.<sup>12</sup>

Many participants noted that teaching assistants often do not know how to facilitate inclusive class discussion. Teaching assistants may have difficulties managing student comments or statements that may be hateful or blatantly homophobic or transphobic, especially in courses that involve more debate or opinion, such as political science or sociology courses. One participant mentioned that their teaching assistant started the first tutorial by explaining that the classroom was not a space for hateful speech or discriminatory language, and that it had set a good tone for the rest of the tutorials – namely, that the student felt more comfortable knowing that the teaching assistant was an ally. Teaching assistants should follow this example and be trained to make their tutorials inclusive spaces.

## SECURITY AND SAFETY

Students deserve to attend school comfortably and safely – and feeling safe on campus and in their municipality helps students get a better education. Students cited both actual incidents of homophobia and transphobia or a perceived need for safety.

### ON-CAMPUS

All participants mentioned that gender neutral washrooms should be on every campus, while five participants noted that their campus does not have gender-neutral washrooms. The majority (57%) of trans\* Ontarians had avoided public washrooms due to safety fears.<sup>13</sup> When students do not have equitable access to washrooms, they can contract urinary tract infections (UTIs) and other types of pain related to holding out on washroom use. Transgender and gender-nonconforming students deserve to have access to gender-neutral and inclusive washroom spaces.

Comfort on campus, or perceived safety, is also important to students – especially those who spend a lot of their time on campus. If a student is uncomfortable with their campus culture, they may not feel safe enough to participate in more activities on campus and they may feel disconnected from their institution. When students face homophobia or transphobia – or any discrimination – they feel disengaged from their campus community.<sup>14</sup>

Participants mentioned campus security as a large area of concern, with one participant admitting that they did not trust campus police to help them in a dangerous situation or to respond to a hate crime associated with their identity. Another individual mentioned that they did not even know if their school's security service was an avenue they could use to pursue an investigation or response to the hate crimes they experienced.

<sup>12</sup> Rose. 2015.

<sup>13</sup> Bauer GR, Scheim AI. 2015.

<sup>14</sup> Mills, Dion, Thompson, Borst, & Diemert. 2019.

## OFF-CAMPUS

While not included in interviews for this report, there is a lot of research surrounding sexually- and/or gender-diverse Indigenous individuals and the hardships – which stem from colonization – that they face within their identity. Indigenous Two Spirit or trans\* individuals are more likely to experience violence due to their identity.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Indigenous Two Spirit and trans\* individuals are more likely to be unstably housed or homeless due to their gender identity.

**“You feel like you’re on *Glee* on campus, but then the city themselves is a different experience; there’s a lot of homophobia in the city. Never on campus, but always in the city. In the city I don’t act ‘all out’ and I take certain measures to be protective, especially in the downtown core – because I’ve found that it’s where a lot of homophobia happens. But campus itself is not problematic to that extent.”**

**- Student from Western University**

Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ individuals do not just have to worry about being discriminated against by family, but also by roommates. One participant said that having homophobic roommates resulted in unsafe living conditions, which eventually forced the participant to leave their home. Two other participants mentioned that, when looking for a roommate or student home, it is important to consider whether someone is a Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ ally.

Individuals who identify within the LGBTQ+ community represent between 25-40% of Canada’s homeless youth population, with 63% of these youth experiencing homelessness due to family conflict with their identity.<sup>16</sup> Among Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ Indigenous youth, 34% were experiencing homelessness or transient housing and 29% were food insecure.<sup>17</sup> Students who experience homelessness or food insecurity are less likely to do well in school and more likely to drop out (because their survival outweighs their need for education). However, institutions that have food banks and housing centers help students persevere, and this allows Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students to stay in school and focus on their academics.

Two participants mentioned that the municipality surrounding their institution had no LGBTQ+ public services or communities. For example, one participant noted that they would love to see an LGBTQ+ space that did not involve alcohol, such as a coffee shop or a programming center. The other participant mentioned that they wished their city had at least one LGBTQ+ bar, club, or public centre. Both explained that having LGBTQ+ public spaces and services would help LGBTQ+ students interact with their municipalities comfortably.

### PROVINCIAL POLICIES

While there are federal and provincial policies in place to protect LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination and bias, there are still worries about how certain provincial policies affect LGBTQ+ students.

<sup>15</sup> Scheim, Jackson, James, Dopler, Pyne and Bauer. Barriers to well-being for Aboriginal gender-diverse people: Results from the Trans PULSE Project, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Bucik, A., Ptolemy, A., Ali-Akow, C., Devonish, M. “Budgeting for Inclusion: Why Canada Needs to Include LGBTQI2S Communities in the Federal Budget of 2017.” Egale, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Bucik, A., Ptolemy, A., Ali-Akow, C., Devonish, M. Egale, 2017.

Seven participants mentioned their concerns about the Student Choice Initiative (SCI) being implemented in Ontario. Four participants mentioned that they worry that the SCI will defund LGBTQ+ services and spaces as well as other peer support spaces that are funded through ancillary fees. Two participants mentioned that they are concerned that even members of the LGBTQ+ community and allies may contribute to the defunding of these services and spaces if they prioritize saving money and opt-out of all non-essential ancillary fees. These spaces and clubs have been mentioned by all participants as helpful, informative, or just comforting to know they exist.

Three participants discussed concerns with the changes made to the K-12 Sexual Education curriculum. All trans\* participants said the changes to the curriculum promote trans\*-erasure and erase healthy conversations surrounding sexuality. Research confirms that teaching a fully comprehensive sexual education curriculum helps students feel comfortable with their bodily autonomy and encourages them to be more inclusive of other identities.<sup>18</sup>

Many participants, especially those who were trans\*, expressed fear over the free speech mandate that the provincial government gave to post-secondary institutions. The mandate requires that all post-secondary institutions have a policy surrounding restrictions of freedom of speech on campuses, and institutions who do not comply or have infractions will see a cut in their funding. Two participants mentioned that they were worried the mandate would restrict protesting rights and silence marginalized voices. This policy will be implemented throughout Ontario in the 2019-2020 school year, at which time the results and effects of it will begin to emerge.

**“[Trans\* students] want to be part of the conversation – for instance, they recently had this free speech matter; and it’s a little bit ridiculous, because by forcing all universities to have a free speech policy, I suspect it is going to land into some territory of forced speech or censorship. There are people asking what the element of hate speech means in these free speech policies – the term is ambiguous – what are the limits? They are trying to limit protesting, but protesting is a part of free speech as well. It’s what marginalized groups particularly use when we [are not] heard. The term “non-disruptive” is used in the policy, and it’s the most confusing word because protesting is disruptive in nature, even if you’re just sitting in a seat, it’s disruptive... I don’t think productive speech can come from these mandates.”**  
**- Trans\* student at Waterloo University**

## FINANCIAL STABILITY

Many students have debt from attending post-secondary, and Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students have expressed concerns over their financial stability. Research conducted by a private research firm, Forum Research Inc., found that those who self-identify with the Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ community were more likely to have greater student debt when leaving school. As well, students in the Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ community are more likely to have additional debt on top of their student debt.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Rubenstein, R., Sex Education: Funding Facts, Not Fear, 27 (1) 18, Health Matrix, 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Forum Research Inc. *Total Student Debt In Canada*. 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Forum Research Inc. 2019.

There is a large gap with financial security, with Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students having lower and less sustainable wages. Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ individuals are more likely to self-report initial salaries and raise potential as being less than heterosexuals of the same sex. As well, 50% of trans\* individuals in Ontario earn less than \$15,000/year, despite the fact that over 70% have completed at least some college or university education.<sup>21</sup> Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ individuals want to access post-secondary education but are stopped by financial barriers – both during and after post-secondary.

LGBTQ+ students worried about being able to afford to attend post-secondary institutions. Scholarships, loans, and private loan applications often require information or processes that can place Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students in a compromised position, such as the need for parent/guardian signatures on applications, as is the case in guarantor situations. With the newest changes to OSAP funding, Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students will likely continue to fall behind financially when continuing or considering their post-secondary education.

## CONCLUSION

The lived experiences of Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students showcase that both institutions and the provincial government must do more to protect them. Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students have voiced their concerns about their respective campuses, including financial worries and a lack of gender neutral washrooms. There are areas that these students are most concerned about, including health and wellness, campus resources and spaces, university policies, university teaching staff, security and safety, provincial policies, and financial stability. Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students deserve to have their voices heard and represented at their post-secondary institutions, both on campus and in academia as a whole. It is the responsibility of institutions to make changes to fix these concerns, but also the duty of the province to support these changes. While Two Spirit and LGBTQ+ students show resilience against barriers, the way campus climate and university policies are curated show that these marginalized students are an afterthought. Institutions and provincial governments must do better to protect these students. They must support programming and policies that help LGBTQ+ students succeed.

### In your opinion, what do you think are the biggest barriers or issues facing LGBTQ+ students on your campus today?

*Top 10 Mentioned Barrier or Issue*

Lack of Campus Services

Discriminatory University Policies

Unsafe Classroom Experiences

Lack of Gender Neutral Washrooms

Health Care Access

Financial Aid

Racism

Ableism

Mental Health Care Access

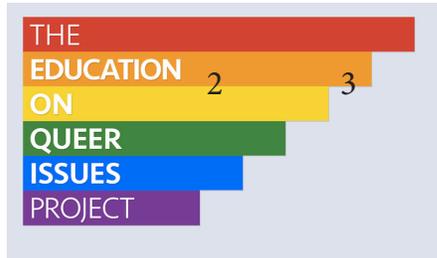
Training for Faculty & Teaching Assistant's

<sup>21</sup>. Bucik, A., Ptolemy, A., Ali-Akow, C., Devonish, M. Egale, 2017.



# LGBTQ2SI+ RESOURCES ON CAMPUSES

TALK TO SOMEONE, GET INFORMATION, AND LEARN



Queens University  
**Alma Mater Society**



Wilfred Laurier University  
(Waterloo Campus)  
**Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union**



Brock University  
**Brock University Student Union**



Wilfred Laurier University (Brantford Campus)  
**Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union**



McMaster University  
**McMaster Student Union**



For Sexual and Gender Diversity  
University of Waterloo  
**The Federation of Students**



Trent University Durham GTA  
**Trent Durham Student Association**



Laurentian University/ Université Laurentienne  
**Students' General Association**  
**Association Générale des Étudiants**

# MORE RESOURCES

TALK TO SOMEONE, GET INFORMATION, AND LEARN



LGBT YOUTHLINE

**PEER SUPPORT HOTLINE**

Service is open from 4:00-9:30 PM Sunday-Friday.

Call Toll-Free: **1.800.268.9688**

In the Toronto Area: **416.962.9688**

Text Them: **647.694.4275**

E-mail: [askus@youthline.ca](mailto:askus@youthline.ca)



TRANS LIFELINE

**PEER SUPPORT AND CRISIS HOTLINE**

Trans-led organization open 24/7.  
Call Toll-Free: **1-877-330-6366**



**PEER SUPPORT AND CRISIS HOTLINE**

Provides professional counselling, information, and referrals for post-secondary students in Ontario.

Call Toll-Free: **1-866-925-5454**



HOPE FOR WELLNESS HELP LINE

Offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada. Telephone and online counselling are available in English, French, Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut.

Call Toll-Free: **1-855-242-3310**



Rainbow Health Ontario  
Santé arc-en-ciel Ontario  
RAINBOW HEALTH ONTARIO

Promotes the health of Ontario's Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ communities and improve their access to services

# OUS A

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