

# A statistical portrait of Canada's diverse LGBTQ2+ communities

Released at 8:30 a.m. Eastern time in *The Daily*, Tuesday, June 15, 2021

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Pride Season brings together members of diverse communities who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, Two-Spirit, or those who identify with another non-binary gender or minority sexual identity (LGBTQ2+) and allies in celebrating one of Canada's greatest strengths that is diversity and inclusion. To mark Pride Season, we are painting a demographic and social profile of Canada's diverse LGBTQ2+ communities based on published analyses. Much of the data in this release focus on LGB Canadians (lesbian, gay, bisexual), since Statistics Canada has been collecting detailed information on these communities since 2003.

## Canada's LGBTQ2+ communities are one million strong

Canada is home to approximately one million people who are LGBTQ2+, accounting for 4% of the total population aged 15 and older in 2018.

Although much has been accomplished since the beginning of the new millennium, including the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2005, and protecting gender expression and identity in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* and the *Criminal Code* in 2017, concerns remain, given the spike in hate crimes targeting LGBTQ2+ Canadians in 2019.

## Almost one-third of LGBTQ2+ Canadians are under 25 years old

Combined data from the 2015 to 2018 cycles of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) found that one-quarter of Canada's LGB population were gay men (255,100), while 1 in 7 are gay or lesbian women (150,600). Bisexual women (332,000) outnumbered bisexual men (161,200) by a margin of 2 to 1.

According to the 2018 [Survey on Safety in Public and Private Spaces](#), approximately 75,000 Canadians were trans or non-binary, representing 0.24% of the Canadian population aged 15 and older.

Youth aged 15 to 24 comprised just under a third (30%) of the LGBTQ2+ population in 2018, compared with 14% of the non-LGBTQ2+ population. At the other end of the spectrum, 7% of LGBTQ2+ Canadians were aged 65 or older, compared with 21% of non-LGBTQ2+ Canadians.

## One-third of all same sex couples were married in 2016

Since 2001, the number of same sex couples in Canada has grown considerably. Over a period of 10 years from 2006 to 2016, it increased by 60.7%. By comparison, the number of opposite sex couples increased by 9.6% from 2006 to 2016. This increase may be reflective, at least in part, of growing awareness and acceptance of sexual diversity in Canada.

Overall, there were 72,880 same-sex couples in Canada in 2016, representing 0.9% of all couples at the time of the 2016 Census. One third (33.4%) of all [Same-sex couples in Canada in 2016](#) were married and two-thirds were living common-law.

Half of all same-sex couples in Canada were living in Toronto, Montréal, Vancouver and Ottawa–Gatineau.

About 1 in 8 same-sex couples (12.0%) had children living with them in 2016, compared with about half of opposite-sex couples.

The 2021 Census of Population includes, for the first time, a question on gender in addition to a question on sex at birth. This two-step approach will allow Statistics Canada to have reliable data on the trans population, including the gender non-binary population, and to help address information gaps about gender diversity in Canada. With the introduction of gender in the 2021 Census, Statistics Canada will be able to identify, for the first time, trans or non-binary-gender couples, which will allow us to provide a more complete picture of the growing diversity of Canadian families.



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## LGBTQ2+ Canadians may be more economically vulnerable during the pandemic

While the pandemic has been difficult for all Canadians, [LGBTQ2+ Canadians may be more at risk](#) from the economic fallout. In May 2021, the employment level of Canadian youth aged 15 to 24 remains furthest from February 2020 levels for both women (-14.5%) and men (-7.8%). Given the high proportion of young people among the LGBTQ2+ population, it is likely that LGBTQ2+ Canadians may be disproportionately affected by job loss during the pandemic.

LGBTQ2+ Canadians may also have fewer resources to fall back on. For example, in 2018, two-fifths of LGBTQ2+ Canadians (41%) had a total personal income of less than \$20,000 per year, compared with one-quarter of their non-LGBTQ2+ counterparts (26%). The average personal incomes of LGBTQ2+ income earners were also significantly lower (\$39,000) than those of non-LGBTQ2+ people (\$54,000) in Canada.

The income difference between the LGBTQ2+ and non-LGBTQ2+ Canadians may be attributed, in part, to the LGBTQ2+ population being younger, and a higher share of this population being enrolled in school, CEGEP, college or university (24% compared with 13% among the non-LGBTQ2+ population), reducing their potential earnings while in school.

In 2018, one-third (33%) of LGBTQ2+ Canadians found it difficult or very difficult to meet their needs in terms of transportation, housing, food, clothing, participation in some social activities and other necessary expenses, compared with just over one-quarter (27%) of non-LGBTQ2+ Canadians. LGBTQ2+ Canadians were also less likely to be able to handle sudden, unforeseen expenses of \$500 than non-LGBTQ2+ Canadians (11% versus 7%).

Given that many LGBTQ2+ Canadians had lower incomes, were having difficulties meeting their financial obligations, and would have difficulties handling unexpected expenses prior to the pandemic, they may be particularly vulnerable financially if they lost employment because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic, LGBTQ2+ Canadians (27%) were twice as likely as their non-LGBTQ2+ counterparts (13%) to have [experienced some type of homelessness](#) or housing insecurity in their lifetime. Previous research has also shown that rejection from the parental household increases the risk of homelessness among LGBTQ2+ youth, suggesting the family home may not be a safety net for LGBTQ2+ youths if they lose access to housing. Approximately one-third of LGBTQ2+ youth aged 15 to 24 (35%) were living outside their parents' homes in 2018 compared with one-quarter of non-LGBTQ2+ youth (24%).

## Concerns remain in terms of acceptance, mental health and well-being

According to the 2018 Survey on Safety in Public and Private Spaces, LGB+ Canadians (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and Canadians whose sexual orientation is not heterosexual) were more likely to report being violently victimized in their lifetime and to have experienced inappropriate behaviours in public and online than non-sexual minority Canadians.

For example, police reported 263 [hate crimes](#) targeting sexual orientation in 2019, up 41% from a year earlier and the highest number of hate crimes targeting sexual orientation since 2009. Nearly 9 in 10 (88%) of these crimes specifically targeted the gay and lesbian community, while the remainder comprised incidents targeting bisexual people (2%), people with other sexual orientations, such as asexual, pansexual or other non-heterosexual orientations (6%), and people whose sexual orientation was unknown (4%).

Violent crimes accounted for more than half (53%) of hate crimes targeting sexual orientation. By comparison, just over one-quarter (27%) of hate crimes targeting religion and just over half (52%) of hate crimes targeting race or ethnicity were violent.

In 2018, [sexual minority](#) Canadians were twice as likely as heterosexual Canadians to report experiencing inappropriate behaviours in public (57% versus 22%), online (37% versus 15%) or at work (44% versus 22%) over the previous 12 months.

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Overall, sexual-minority Canadians were more likely than heterosexual Canadians to report that they consider their [mental health](#) to be poor or fair (32% versus 11%). They were also more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes (40% versus 15%) and to have been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder (41% versus 16%).

Transgender Canadians were also more likely to report their mental health as poor or fair than their cisgender counterparts, and also more likely to have seriously contemplated suicide in their lifetimes. They were also more likely than cisgender Canadians to have been diagnosed with a mood or anxiety disorder. A recent [crowdsourcing survey](#) found that gender-diverse participants (that is, participants who did not report their gender as exclusively female or male) were almost 3 times more likely than male participants to report that they had experienced discrimination during the pandemic.

## More to come

Statistics Canada will be releasing information about LGBTQ2+ communities over the course of the next year. A portrait of the trans and non-binary populations will be presented with the initial release of 2021 Census data on sex at birth and gender. Additional analysis on the trans and non-binary populations will be forthcoming once all census variables are released. In addition, an article on the growing diversity of couples in Canada will be published in the families, households and marital status Census release.

Statistics Canada will also be releasing a series of four articles using the CCHS over the course of 2021 and early 2022 to highlight the characteristics of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual population on the following themes: family and household characteristics, linguistic and ethnocultural diversity, education and labour.

### Note to readers

*The language related to LGBTQ2+ communities is rapidly evolving and terminology may shift over time, vary by context, and mean different things to different people. LGBTQ2 is the official acronym used by the Government of Canada across its programs and policies. At Statistics Canada, the LGBTQ2+ acronym is used to reflect the broad scope of gender and sexual identities that exist in society.*

*The acronym LGBTQ2+ used in this release includes lesbian, gay, bisexual, or another minority sexual identity such as asexual or pansexual, as well as minority gender identity (trans and non-binary identities like genderqueer, gender fluid, pangender or agender).*

### Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number [3901](#).

For more information, or to enquire about the concepts, methods or data quality of this release, contact us (toll-free 1-800-263-1136; 514-283-8300; [STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.infostats-infostats.STATCAN@canada.ca)) or Media Relations (613-951-4636; [STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca](mailto:STATCAN.mediahotline-ligneinfomedias.STATCAN@canada.ca)).