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LITERATURE REVIEW & PRACTICE SCAN

Housing Need & Homelessness Amongst Gender-Diverse People in Canada

A Preliminary Portrait

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WOMENSHOMELESSNESS.CA

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Acknowledgement

The authors would like to acknowledge and recognize that Canada is a settler colonial state on Turtle Island, which for generations has been governed and inhabited by Indigenous Peoples practicing traditional ways of doing, knowing, and being. This report acknowledges that the current homelessness crisis, disproportionately impacting Indigenous Peoples, is a direct result of colonial and patriarchal policies that have dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their lands and homes, and commodified land and housing as profitable assets leading to the concentration of wealth with a privileged few.

This project is led by the Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network, which is situated in Tkaronto (Toronto, ON), the traditional and unceded territory of many First Nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the Anishinaabeg, the Chippewa, the Hodinöhsö:ni', and the Huron-Wendat. Tkaronto is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. We also acknowledge that Tkaronto is located within the lands protected by the Dish With One Spoon wampum agreement, and is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, and the Williams Treaties signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

Acknowledgement

First, we would like to thank all of the lived experts who participated in this project and shared their insights, expertise, and analysis. Their priorities and wisdom has guided this work, and this work is dedicated to all Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people across the country who do not have access to adequate housing. We would specifically like to thank Nat Pace, Charlotte Hunter, and Jodi Gray and for their contributions to this report and our understandings of complex issues facing Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people.

We would also like to thank the team at the Office of the Federal Housing for commissioning and supporting this work, and for your commitment to advancing the right to housing for gender-diverse communities.

INTRODUCTION

Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people in Canada face egregious barriers to adequate housing and, as a result, often suffer extremely poor housing conditions.[1] Research consistently demonstrates the severe discrimination, exclusion, and oppression these populations face within the housing system and beyond, and the unbelievable harm caused by these systems.[2] Despite this, there remains significant gaps in knowledge and research with respect to the causes, conditions, trajectories, and solutions to housing need and homelessness amongst gender-diverse people. These gaps in understanding significantly impede progress for securing the right to housing for gender-diverse populations – a right recently secured in federal legislation under the *National Housing Strategy Act* (NHSA, 2019).

In order to better understand avenues for advancing the right to housing for gender-diverse people in Canada, it is critical we assess the state of knowledge with respect to the housing challenges faced by these populations. This *Literature Review & Practice Scan* responds to this need, providing a preliminary portrait of some of these issues. While non-exhaustive, this report identifies key themes and insights that can aid in the development of a roadmap for rights-based action and change in the area of housing.

The findings of our research revealed a significant and emerging body of knowledge on experiences of discrimination, exclusion, and violence resulting in housing need and homelessness for Two-Spirit, transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people in Canada. As a result, this report specifically focuses on structural and systemic discrimination on the basis of gender for these communities. This report should be read alongside our Research Brief, which offers a statistical portrait of these issues as well.[3]

The Right to Housing for Gender-Diverse People: Advancing Human Rights in the Context of Systemic Violence

While Canada has precedent-setting legislation through which to claim the right to housing and address systemic rights violations (*National Housing Strategy Act*), there

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[1] The literature cited throughout this scan builds a portrait of these housing barriers and lived experiences: for examples, see James, J., Bauer, G., Peck, R., Brennan, D., & Nussbaum, N., (2018). Legal Problems Facing Trans People in Ontario. HIV & AIDS Legal Clinic Ontario. (1(1). https://www.halco.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/TransFJ-Report2018Sept-EN.pdf; Schwan, K., Versteegh, A., Perri, M., Caplan, R., Baig, K., Dej, E., Jenkinson, J., Brais, H., Eiboff, F., & Pahlevan Chaleshtari, T. (2020). The State of Women's Housing Need & Homelessness in Canada: A Literature Review. Hache, A., Nelson, A., Kratochvil, E., & Malenfant, J. (Eds). Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness Press.

[2] See: Elver, D. (2022). *2SLGBTQIA+ Housing Needs and Challenges*. Ottawa, ON: CMHC.; Ontario Human Rights Commission. (2008). "Housing discrimination and the individual." *Right at Home: Report on the consultation on human rights and rental housing in Ontario*. Toronto, ON: OHRC; Abramovich, A. (2013). "No Fixed Address: Young, Queer, and Restless." In Gaetz, S., O'Grady, B., Buccieri, K., Karabanow, J., & Marsolais, A. (Eds.), *Youth Homelessness in Canada: Implications for Policy and Practice*. Toronto: Canadian Homelessness Research Network Press.

[3] See Nelson, A., Malenfant, J., & Schwan, K. (2023). *Research Brief on Housing Need & Homelessness amongst Gender-Diverse People in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network.

are hurdles to mobilizing these legal tools for gender-diverse people. Historically, the formal legal system[4] and processes to address exclusion and discrimination within service-providing organizations have profoundly failed to bring justice to gender-diverse people,[5] leaving many understandably wary of engaging with systemic processes.[6] Furthermore, many gender-diverse people have been violently victimized by state apparatuses[7] – including being over-surveilled,[8] criminalized,[9] punished,[10] and blamed for bringing concerns forward.[11]

Where does the right to housing fit into this constellation of abuse and exploitation? In relation to this history, we ask: ***How can NHSA mechanisms be a tool for positive change and healing, rather than another system that wounds gender-diverse people and further neglects queer people?***

One challenge that we, as authors, have faced in the creation of this report is balancing of our hope and desire to find tools that can make a material difference in the lives of our peers and communities, with the knowledge that we are operating within a broken and violent system, and that human rights frameworks hold complicity within colonial and genocidal structures.

In navigating these questions, we have come to believe that human rights mechanisms are one imperfect tool in the justice toolbox – representing one potential legal pathway forward. There are other forms of justice and accountability that are also significant in concert with human rights mechanisms, including mutual aid and other community-held, community-driven solutions, that come from an abolitionist stance, that start with Indigenous autonomy and sovereignty, and that start with queer people and queer movements. That is the context within which we cite human rights frameworks here. We are not suggesting we opt for one at the expense of others, but rather that one could potentially serve as a powerful tool for opening up space where we can reinvigorate the others.

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[4] James et al., 2018.
[5] See Toronto Shelter Network (2020). Transforming the Emergency Homelessness System: Two Spirited, Trans, Nonbinary and gender-diverse Safety in Shelters Project. Toronto Shelter Network.
[6] England, E. (2022): 'Homelessness is a queer experience.': utopianism and mutual aid as survival strategies for homeless trans people, *Housing Studies*
[7] Spade, D. (2015). Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, & The Limits of the Law. *Duke University Press.*
[8] Beauchamp, T. (2014). Surveillance. *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2, 208-210.
[9] Yarbrough, D. (2021). The carceral production of transgender poverty: How racialized gender policing deprives transgender women of housing and safety. *Punishment & Society* 0(0), 1-21.
[10] Grant, J.M.,, Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling. (2011). Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.
[11] See Toronto Shelter Network, 2020; James et al., 2018, p. 9.

We hope that our work can contribute to demonstrating the change-making potential and viable legal efficacy of the tools presented within the *NHSA*. Tangible action is needed, premised on meaningful engagement with impacted communities, and clear implementation of recommendations that would concretely change the lived realities of gender-diverse people experiencing right to housing violations.

The process of realizing the right to housing for gender-diverse people must be guided by Two-Spirit, trans, genderqueer, and nonbinary people with lived experience – as leaders, advocates, and knowledge-holders within their communities. Gender-diverse people who are entangled in the housing and homelessness systems are intimately aware of the gaps in these systems, but their concerns tend to be dismissed or are rarely translated into action that enacts meaningful changes to a harmful system. Organizations and those working in the housing or homelessness sectors may wish to address these gaps, but are unclear about whose responsibility it is to lead these changes. This dampening effect is exacerbated by denial at decision-making levels of the depth and chronicity of systemic trans- queer- and homophobia,[12] and a deep misunderstanding of gender-diverse people's lives, experiences, desires, and needs.[13] Gender-diverse people are rarely engaged at tables when conversations that hold implications for their communities take place,[14] the invalidation and denial of gender-diverse people's agency and autonomy is normalized through policy and practice within the current housing regime. Despite this, gender-diverse people find ways to wrestle back agency and power by forging their own communities, families, and spaces in the midst of an increasingly hostile housing landscape.[15]

Positioning Ourselves

As a research team, we begin our work on topics of housing, queered and gendered violence, and systemic failures through our own lived experiences. Some of our individual experiences share similarities with others on this research team, with the gender-diverse people whose experiences of right to housing violations are outlined here, and with the people who may read and engage with this Literature and Practice Scan. Other experiences that have brought us to this table might not be shared by others. We are writing this Scan as individuals embedded within a deeply violent system, with full recognition that this summary only begins to expose the surface of harm and exploitation that shapes gender-diverse peoples' experiences within the housing system. We are tired. We are angry. And still, we have immense privilege to be situated as researchers putting together this compilation of literature, and we hope to

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[12] Spade, 2015.
[13] Furman, E., Paula Barata, Ciann Wilson & Tiyondah Fante-Coleman (2017) "It's a gap in awareness": Exploring service provision for LGBTQ2S survivors of intimate partner violence in Ontario, Canada. Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 29:4, 362-377
[14] Rampersad, M., Mallon, A., Gold, M. Armstrong, A., Blair, J. Vaccaro, M., Schwan, K., Allan, K. & Paradis, E. (2021). *This is Not Home*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness.
[15] Lima, V. (2021). From housing crisis to housing justice: Towards a radical right to a home. *Urban Studies* 58(16) 3282-3298.

continue to work with communities we belong to, as well as those we act in solidarity with. We write this review with the knowledge that talking about the issues gender-diverse people face has, for a long time, supplanted action and meaningful change.

Alex is a white settler nonbinary person, of Ukrainian, Irish, and Scottish heritage. Alex grew up experiencing family poverty in southern Alberta, which led to persistent visible and hidden homelessness as a young person and as an adult, and being apprehended into the child welfare system. They have survived violence in different forms, and live with chronic disabilities – some that are, in complex ways, linked to these experiences of violence. Alex is a PhD Candidate at Western University, and lives in London, Ontario on lands connected with Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak and Attawandaron Nations.

Jayne is a white settler, of French, Scottish, and Cree ancestry, from Kapuskasing, Ontario. They are a queer, gender non-conforming person with lived experience of homelessness and housing precarity. They enter this work as someone with different experiences of barriers and access in housing, (mental) healthcare, and education systems across so-called Canada, as well as gendered experiences of violence. They currently work as a researcher and educator at McGill University in Tio'tiá:ke.

Kaitlin is a cisgender, heterosexual, and white settler of Irish and German heritage. Kaitlin comes from a middle-class background without experiences of homelessness. She has experienced sexual violence, and began working on issues of gendered violence and homelessness in direct response to her sister's experiences. Kaitlin has her PhD in Social Work and is the Executive Director of the [Women's National Housing & Homelessness Network](#). She resides on the traditional and unceded territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation of the Anishinaabek Peoples, governed by the Between the Lakes Treaty No. 3, colonially known as Guelph, ON.

Mickey is a TwoSpirit, genderqueer person from London, Ontario, of white, Haudenosaunee and Mi'kmaw descent. They have worked as a researcher with non-profit and academic organizations across so-called Canada, and have lived experience of homelessness.

We share these experiences as a way of mapping our multiple and varied relationships to this work. Each of us cares deeply about doing justice with our words and our actions, and we want it to be known that our histories, experiences, and identities impact how we undertake our work. We have made these experiences legible here because this Brief also contains the experiences of others – the authors we cite, and the words of gender-diverse people who have been surveyed and interviewed. We are not

innocent from the dynamics of violent structures – we are implicated. It is important that our intentions and identities are (at least partially) known as we weave our own thoughts and reflections into this work, and we shape the potential future outcomes this work could hold.

METHODOLOGY

This literature review consists of a preliminary scan of key reports, grey literature, and peer-reviewed research literature pertaining to Two-Spirit, transgender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse people's experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness in Canada and beyond. Many of the sources for this literature reviews were compiled over several years by members of the Office of the Federal Housing Advocate, in addition to literature sought out by the authors of this report.[16] During the process of preparing this report, the authors reviewed these sources, identified key themes, and identified intersections between these findings and the human right to housing.

Our literature review is further supplemented by a scan of promising practices and programs from across Canada and around the world. While many existing programs are in their nascency, they provide a roadmap for where and how positive transformative practice is possible in Canada. In addition to these practice and program scans, the research team conducted three expert interviews with gender-diverse service providers and community advocates, some of whom have lived experience of housing need and homelessness. The interviewees were selected given their expertise at the intersection of housing, frontline service provision or policy, and gender diversity. Our team developed a qualitative interview guide designed to provide a unique and novel contribution to existing literature on these issues, with interviewees "filling in the gaps" we were identifying within the literature. The interviews were one hour in length, and covered a range of topics, including barriers to housing for gender-diverse people in Canada, organizational barriers to addressing the needs of gender-diverse service users, and tools or practices that are most promising in terms of meeting the needs of gender-diverse communities. Interviewees were compensated for their time. Learnings from these three interviews are put into conversation with our review of academic and grey literature, promising practices and programs, and data from the *This is Not Home* study.[17] The triangulation of these data sources enabled us to develop a preliminary portrait of the housing challenges, and housing rights violations, experienced by gender-diverse persons in Canada.

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[16] The authors of this review would like to thank the OFHA team for their support of this preliminary guiding document.
[17] Rampersad, M., Mallon, A., Gold, M. Armstrong, A., Blair, J. Vaccaro, M., Schwan, K., Allan, K. & Paradis, E. (2021). *This is Not Home*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. The This is Not Home study is based in 6 low-barrier drop-ins serving multiply marginalized women and trans, Two-Spirit, and non-binary persons across Canada, led by Aoife Mallon and Sistering (Toronto, ON) and Dr. Emily Paradis.

HOUSING NEED & HOUSING INEQUITIES

> "In Canadian society, women, girls, and gender diverse peoples experience unique inequities and discrimination on the basis of gender, contributing to vulnerability to housing need and homelessness for some. […] At a societal level, gender-based inequities are well documented and persuasively linked to housing challenges."
>
> - *WNHHN, 2020, p.70-71*[18]

The level of discrimination and exclusion is not well understood. A judge in a family law case, they don't have a box to tick off that says "this parent is transgender" - there are systemic exclusions, grey areas that if you are one historically oppressed group, then that exclusion is even larger. If you are doubly oppressed by two historically oppressions, then you are even more likely for the system to turn into a bad deal for you.
-Interview respondent

Across the housing system, gender-diverse people experience significant barriers in accessing safe, affordable housing that, overall, is adequate in meeting their needs.[19] The reasons for this are many. On the one hand, a lack of specifically allocated resources[20] and an absence of anti-oppressive/trans inclusive training[21] compound the inequities gender-diverse people face in navigating the highly exclusive housing system. On the other hand, the depth of harassment, abuse, and discrimination[22] gender-diverse people experience in these spaces makes interactions with systems oppressive and, at times, dangerous.[23] As the Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan 2022 outlines in its context for action: "Transgender individuals are over one and a half times more likely to have experienced violent victimization in their lifetime than cisgender individuals."[24]

Borne out in survey data on housing and homelessness amongst women and gender-diverse people collected by the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network, the end result of compounding systemic failure and structural violence is that, housing conditions are substantially worse for

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[18] Schwan et al., 2020, p. 70-71.
[19] CMHC, 2022. 2SLGBTQIA+ Housing Needs and Challenges. https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/blog/2022/2slgbtqia-housing-needs-challenges
[20] Abramovich, A. (2012). No Safe Place to Go - LGBTQ Youth Homelessness in Canada: Reviewing the Literature. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth* 4(1), 29-51.
[21] For example, as outlined in Tesch, B. (2020). Best Practices in Shelter Provision *In* Transgender Intimate Partner Violence. Messinger, A.M. & Guadalupe-Diaz, X.L. (Eds.). New York: New York University Press. 202-223.
[22] Ecker, J. Tim Aubry & John Sylvestre (2022) Experiences of LGBTQ Adults Who Have Accessed Emergency Shelters in a Large Urban City in Canada, *Social Work in Public Health*, 37:2, 168-185.
[23] Pyne, J. (2011). Unsuitable Bodies: Trans People and Cisnormativity in Shelter Spaces. *Canadian Social Work Review* 28(1), 129-137.
[24] Women and Gender Equality Canada (2022). *Canada's first Federal 2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan... Building our future, with pride*. WAGE Canada, p. 14.

transgender, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people across almost every metric (e.g., affordability, habitability, etc.).[25] Although the depth of the systemic violence that gender-diverse people face is apparent to trans communities and amongst gender-responsive advocacy spaces,[26] these experiences are met with institutional erasure.[27] In TRANS*forming* JUSTICE, a 2018 report on legal problems facing trans people in Ontario, this erasure was named as a key barrier for trans people, with the authors explaining: "erasure includes both passive and active processes that create or maintain the invisibility of trans people or trans experience and results in systems without policies or plans for trans inclusion."[28]

One clear factor in the institutional erasure of trans people and experiences is the lack of specific, clear, and valid data available on this community, particularly acute for Indigenous and racialized gender-diverse people.[29] In a 2019 House of Commons Report, experts expressed concern with the sample sizes of Statistics Canada surveys impeding the ability to conduct intersectional analyses on the data collected. The report contributors suggested that a possible mitigating practice could be *over*sampling gender and sexual minorities to allow for a robust, representative sample that would hold more value for performing gender-responsive analysis.[30] Currently, there is greater documentation of health problems and health data available on the experiences of gay and bisexual men who have sex with men than for lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people.[31]

The multiple, intersecting forms of violence and exclusion that are downloaded onto gender-diverse people represent a pattern – one that is individual in appearance but systemic in nature. Seeking justice through individual legal challenges has not brought the broad, systemic change that is necessary to unsettle the legacies of homo- and transphobia that shape the lives of gender-diverse communities.[32]

Where these injustices intersect with housing, they represent a denial of the human right to housing.[33] In 2019, Canada passed the *National Housing Strategy Act*, which

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[25] Schwan, K., Vaccaro, M., Reid, L., Ali, N., & Baig, K. (2021). *The Pan-Canadian Women's Housing & Homelessness Survey*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Observatory on Homelessness. See also Nelson, A., Malenfant, J., & Schwan, K. *Research Brief - Housing Need & Homelessness Amongst Gender-Diverse People in Canada*. Toronto, ON: WNHHN.
[26] England, 2022.
[27] For a compilation of community responses to institutional erasure, see Scott, E-J. (2018). The Museum of Transology: Protesting the Erasure of Trancestry. *Prejudice and Pride. Sandell, R., Lennon, R., & Smith, M. Eds.*
[28] James et al., 2018, p. 6.
[29] Gleisberg, A. I., Pacha, K., Chang, S., Erickson-Schroth, L., Johnson, K., & Luz Hernandez, S. (2022). Surveying trans and nonbinary communities: Research methodologies, accountability, and ethics with the Trans Bodies, Trans Selves Survey (2nd edition). *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity.*
[30] Casey, B. (2019). *The Health Of LGBTQIA2 Communities In Canada: Report of the Standing Committee on Health*. House of Commons. The Health of LGBTQIA2 Communities in Canada (ourcommons.ca), p. 24.
[31] Casey, 2019, p. 24.
[32] Davis, M., & Wertz, K. (2010). When laws are not enough: study of the economy health of transgender people and the need for multidisciplinary approach to economic justice. *Seattle Journal for Social Justice, 8(2),* 467-496.
[33] Davis, M., & Wertz, K. (2010).

provides a legal framework through which systemic change can be advanced for impacted communities. The NHSA legislation includes accountability and access-to-justice mechanisms, including the creation of panels to review community submissions of human rights claims, and the appointment of a Federal Housing Advocate to provide oversight and guidance on implementing review panel recommendations. As described by the National Right to Housing Network, "adequate housing is a fundamental human right, as stated in the NHSA legislation and international law. As such, all people are entitled to adequate housing (i.e., secure, affordable, accessible, habitable, culturally adequate, and well-located housing with necessary infrastructure) to live a life of dignity, well-being, and opportunity."[34]

From a lack of formal training on trans inclusion and anti-oppressive practices, to the discouraging state of reporting mechanisms for addressing transphobia, the forces that invisibilize gender-diverse lived realities make responding to the housing needs of this community more challenging. Fighting against a system that is steeped in gaslighting tactics[35] – trying to convince you that the nature of your experiences is something other than what it is – is exhausting. Nonetheless, the NHSA legislation provides a new tool and opportunity in the fight to secure the right to housing for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people across Canada.

Experiences of Discrimination in the Housing System and Beyond
The TRANS*forming* JUSTICE study reported that amongst trans participants with justiciable legal issues, discrimination was the most common: "43% of survey respondents reported experiences of discrimination within the three-year timeframe versus 5.3% of the general population in Canada."[36] Discrimination is inextricably linked to homelessness and housing insecurity for gender-diverse people – as such, housing can be a fraught experience across one's life. Homelessness for many begins when they are forced to leave home as youth, as a result of coming out.[37] As articulated in a 2022 article by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation: "Many experts believe the reason for 2SLGBTQIA+ homelessness is discrimination. First at home, then from society when trying to do things like access suitable housing [...] Once alone and on the streets, [youth] face additional discrimination finding work, accessing education and securing a safe place to live."[38] As adults, patterns of housing precarity continue for

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[34] National RIght to Housing Network (2022). Canada appoints the long-awaited Federal Housing Advocate amid a worsening housing crisis. NRHN.
[35] McKinnon, R. (2017). Gaslighting as epistemic injustice. *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice.* Routledge.
[36] James et al., 2018, p. 9.
[37] Elver, 2022.
[38] Elver, 2022.

gender-diverse people, while they navigate a rigidly binaric and cis-heteronormative housing system.[39]

While seeking housing, gender-diverse people may face additional barriers in the form of discrimination from landlords, neighbours, or other tenants,[40] which contributes to their disproportionate experience of homelessness and housing precarity.[41] As one interview respondent shared:

> **We have people coming saying they applied for literally hundreds of housing opportunities and didn't get any of them, and no one can come out and say explicitly it's because you're trans but obviously it is.**
> -Interview Respondent

> "Safe housing—is a big umbrella. There's so many people out there that won't rent to trans people, and I guess that's all wrapped up also with the job market, and finding decent jobs for trans people, so that they can afford decent housing, it's all wrapped up together, under that transphobia umbrella. Myself I lived in a building, a suite in a house, the landlord was transphobic, I transitioned while I was there. [The organization I work with] opened a co-op for their employees and I moved in there, so I'm in safe housing now, but I didn't feel safe when I transitioned."

This is as much the case in the rental housing market as it is in other housing contexts. Even for those who secure housing, the environment in which they live can be unsafe or untenable.[42] A 2008 report exploring the right to housing from the Ontario Human Rights Commission indicated that "people who are transgendered may be exposed to stereotypes, harassment or demeaning comments. These can affect their experience in accessing housing and may result in the outright denial of a rental application…Transgendered people may be exposed to comments or conduct that *poison their environment and undermine their dignity during tenancy*."[43] Little has changed since the time of this report's publication, nearly two decades ago, demonstrating the long-standing nature of this issue. As these forms of discrimination which can lead to a lack of safety and housing stability are often insidious, or operate outside of official housing policy or practice, they can constitute hidden barriers for gender-diverse people.[44] These issues compound for gender-diverse peoples who are multiply marginalized.[45]

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[39]Ecker, J. (2017). LGBTQ2S Adult Housing Needs Assessment. Final Report for DayBreak Non-Profit Housing.
[40] Esses, D. (2009). Afraid to be myself, even at home: transgender cause of action under the fair housing act. *Columbia Journal of Law and Social Problems, 42(4),* 465-510.
[41] Ecker, J. (2017)
[42] Wagman, M., M. Melissa Foushee Keller & Stacey Jay Cavaliere (2016) What does it mean to be a successful adult? Exploring perceptions of the transition into adulthood among LGBTQ emerging adults in a community-based service context, Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 28:2, 140-158.
[43] OHCR, 2008.
[44] Davis, M., & Wertz, K. (2010).
[45] M. Paz Galupo & Jaymie Campbell Orphanidys (2022) Transgender Black, Indigenous, and People of Color: Intersections of Oppression, *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 23:1-2, 1-4

> **For me the biggest issue - for multiply marginalized persons, like Indigenous sex workers, non-binary Indigenous children…it's those hidden ways in which obtaining housing, having housing, and these threats of eviction, of being bumped down the waiting list, being in social housing and having rent raises, those kinds of threats are unknown to my mother, who has lived [in her home] for 40 years after paying her mortgage.**
> -Interview Respondent

This reality is also borne out in a recent Report from researchers at Trans PULSE Canada, based on quantitative survey data from 2,873 trans and non-binary people. One of the key findings of this report highlights that, "Housing barriers manifested not only in lived experiences but also in anticipation of mistreatment. Half of participants anticipated discrimination in obtaining housing 'because of who they are.'"[46] Previous experiences of discrimination, and ongoing systemic neglect and violence, manifest as some of these invisibilized barriers to housing for gender-diverse people. The TPC Report also offers important contributions in disaggregated, population-specific data, shedding light on the compounding nature of intersectional experiences in terms of housing outcomes for gender-diverse communities. Their findings include specific insights into housing experiences of Black, Indigenous, and racialized gender-diverse people, as well as findings that shed light on disability and housing for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people.

Much of this discrimination is covert, and discrimination and transphobia may be dismissed. Insidious discrimination may be difficult to prove,[47] meaning that justice for those who have faced discrimination is infrequently delivered. As one interview respondent highlighted, the multiple ways that systems can be weaponized, or do violence to, multiply marginalized individuals is often invisible to those for whom the system operates smoothly or as intended. As a result, changes to the system to support gender-diverse peoples can be slow, non-existent, or fall solely on the shoulders of those most impacted by injustices.[48]

Despite this, the literature emphasizes that gender-diverse people are easily able to identify discriminatory experiences they have faced and readily point out the systemic and structural nature of the cisheterosexism they have survived.[49] Two-Spirit and

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[46] Li, L., Valorozo-Jones, C., Scheim, A., & Bauer, G. (2023). Housing Barriers Among Two-Spirit, Trans and Non-Binary Adults in Canada. Trans PULSE Canada. p. 8.
[47] James et al., 2018, p. 9.
[48] Davis, M., & Wertz, K. (2010).
[49] For example, see Cruz, C. (2014). LGBTQ Street Youth Doing Resistance in Infrapolitical Worlds. *In* Youth Resistance and Theories of Change., Tuck, E. & Wang., Y. (Eds). 209-218.

gender-diverse people who are Indigenous often link their experiences to colonization,[50] and Black and other racialized gender-diverse people describe the queer and trans-phobia they face as amplified by deep and pervasive racism.[51] This development of a critical vocabulary to describe systemic oppression[52] is a necessary tool of queer survival and resistance. Being able to "name" forces of oppression, violence, exclusion, and discrimination is an important step in systems transformation for marginalized people, and a key reason why impacted communities must be meaningfully involved in decisions that concern them. Interview respondents warned against addressing these intersecting forms of discrimination through "creating more boxes to check," and advocating holistically for the intersecting needs and complex experiences of gender-diverse peoples navigating multiple forms of violence within systems, including housing.

> **The National Housing Strategy has these priority populations: Indigenous people, homeless people, women and children fleeing violence, etc. And the way the funding is allocated is to these groups in specific ways, and creates funding silos and assumes that these groups are mutually exclusive, and forces competition at the local level, where non-profit housing providers have to compete with each other….we need to realize these groups are not mutually exclusive, and these boundaries are not helpful.**

Unfortunately, when gender-diverse people seek justice or redress for the discrimination they have faced, they are unlikely to experience a positive or satisfactory outcome. This is true across the formal justice system,[53] as well as in informal, organization-level reporting mechanisms.[54] Beyond having unsatisfying results, reporting discrimination is equally likely to hold negative repercussions for gender-diverse people.[55] Literature suggests that gender-diverse people may experience deepening social isolation after making a report, gaslighting from peers and staff who may not be aware of the presence of queer- and transphobia (or that they are implicated in its perpetuation),[56] and even being blamed or punished themselves in the wake of an experience of discrimination–gender-diverse and trans people report instances of gaslighting when they bring forward

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[50] Greensmith, C. & Giwa, S., & Wolfe, P. (2013). Challenging Settler Colonialism in Contemporary Queer Politics. *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 37(2), 129-148.

[51] Lenning, E., Brightman, S. & Buist, C.L. The Trifecta of Violence: A Socio-Historical Comparison of Lynching and Violence Against Transgender Women. *Crit Crim* 29, 151–172 (2021)

[52] Yuekang Li, Vanessa D. Fabbre & Eleni Gaveras (2022) Authenticated social capital: conceptualising power, resistance and well-being in the lives of transgender older adults, Culture, Health & Sexuality.

[53] Davis, M., & Wertz, K. (2010).

[54] James et al., 2018, p. 4.

[55] For example, see Halliwell, S.D. et al., (2022). A Critical Discourse Analysis of an Australian Incarcerated Trans Woman's Letters of Complain and Self-Advocacy. *Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology* 50(2), 208-232.

[56] See Anderson, M.A. (2011). Implicit Inclusion is Not Enough: Effectiveness of Gender Neutral Housing Policies on Inclusion of Transgender Students. *Ohio State University.;* James et al, 2018, p. 9.; Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 23-24.

experiences of homo- and transphobia.[57] As a [Toronto Shelter Network Report](#) from 2020 outlined, in a binary coded and cisnormative system, gender-diverse people are invisibilized when they are forced to "choose between being misgendered to access support or acknowledgement of their experiences, or refusing to be misgendered and then denied support or seen as 'appropriative' or even 'antagonistic.'"[58]

> **People won't come out and say "We're not hiring you because you're trans" but there's always someone "better" for the job, that's a huge issue and I don't know how to get around that issue.**
> -Interview Respondent

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[57] McKinnon, R. (2017).
[58] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 23.

EXCLUSION WITHIN THE HOMELESSNESS SECTOR & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

Discrimination & Exclusion in the Shelter System

While many gender-diverse people avoid the homelessness shelter system, it is important to understand the complexities of homelessness for this group, both inside and outside the formal shelter system.[59] This binaric-coded homelessness-serving system[60] holds direct and indirect implications for gender-diverse people who must access it for survival. As Alex Abramovich states, shelters operate as spaces of "normalized oppression" for 2SLGBTQIA+ people, causing many to avoid it altogether.[61] The culture of exclusion and oppression that exists in shelter spaces parallels the currents of harm that shape gender-diverse

> **There is a lot of invisible homeless [in northern Ontario], but it feels like – as long as it's kept hidden enough, its assumed that there is no problem..if you ask folks in [my community], "where are all the homeless people?" They would say there probably isn't anyone.**
> -Interview Respondent

experiences in the housing system more broadly: the shelter system is scaffolded by binaric understandings of gender.[62] This binaric-coded homeless-serving system holds direct and indirect implications for gender-diverse people who must access it for survival.

In 2021, the Women's National Housing and Homelessness Network conducted a survey of over 500 women, girls, and gender-diverse people, presenting several striking themes in relation to gender-diverse experiences. A key barrier from this survey is that shelters are operating over capacity: the most common reason a gender-diverse person cited being turned away from a shelter was due to the service being full. When unable to access a bed, many respondents expressed that they would sleep outside. Other respondents cited staying with other people, including in unsafe or violent situations, or engaging in survival sex. This reality is further complicated for gender-diverse people living in rural, remote, and northern locales where formal services are even more limited. Interview respondents further emphasized the invisibility and urgency of rural and remote homelessness for gender-diverse people in Canada, with Two-Spirit, trans,

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[59] Pyne, (2011).
[60] Kattari, S. et al. (2016). Policing Gender Through Housing and Employment Discrimination: Comparison of Discrimination of Transgender and Cisgender LGBQ Individuals. *Journal of the Society for Social Work and Research.* 7(3).
[61] Abramovich, 2013, p. 2.
[62] Abramovich, A. (2016). Preventing, Reducing and Ending LGBTQ2S Youth Homelessness: The Need for Targeted Strategies. *Social Inclusion* 4(4), 86-96.

and non-binary people often leaving their communities in order to access (often limited) trans-inclusive services in urban centres.

> **It's the insidious ways that housing is used as a weapon in the lives of trans and gender-diverse people.**
> -Interview Respondent

With shelters being understaffed and over-capacity due to both the economic/employment pressures stemming from the pandemic,[63] and exaggerated demand from the escalating housing crisis,[64] the system is often unable to meet gender-diverse people's needs when they arise.

Inability to meet the needs of gender-diverse people is compounded when those needs intersect with other identities and experiences of marginalization, and cross-cuts interactions across all public systems.[65] For example, the Toronto Shelter Network Report demonstrates that "gender diverse clients, especially those who are black and/or transmasculine, and/or are 'non-passing' transfeminine individuals experience heightened surveillance, bullying, discrimination, harassment, punishment, service restrictions/refusal and police intervention."[66] The report goes on to say, poignantly: "Against this backdrop, *it is understandable that many gender diverse people are hesitant to access services,* and why some prefer to stay on the street, in emotionally abusive situations or in encampments."[67]

Discrimination is also pervasive in interactions with professionals whose work intersects with shelter and homelessness systems, in part because of the lack of resources and training in organizations serving those experiencing homelessness.[68] Police violence and criminalization is heightened due to a lack of training around de-escalation skills for shelter staff, so when situations escalate, they often result in police intervention.[69] This trend holds serious negative implications for gender-diverse people– particularly those who are also Black or Indigenous – who are disproportionately more likely to have conflict escalate to police involvement, even when they are the victim.[70]

Further, spaces and laws designed to address and support survivors of Intimate Partner Violence are often heavily gendered in alignment with a gender binary, leaving many

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[63] Babondo, J., Woodmass K. & Graham, J.R. (2022). COVID-19 and the Homelessness Support Sector: Perspectives on a Small Community's Early Response to a Public Health Crisis. *International Journal on Homelessness* 2(1), 105-120.
[64] CMHC. Examining escalating house prices in large Canadian metropolitan centres.; Schwan et al. (2022) The Crisis Ends with Us: Request for a Review into the Systemic Denial of the Equal Right to Housing of Women and Gender-Diverse People in Canada. WNHHN.
[65] Standing Committee on Health, (2019) The Health of LGBTQIA2 Communities in Canada.
[66] Toronto Shelter Network., 2020, p. 5.
[67] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 5. Emphasis ours.
[68] Tesch, B. (2020). Best Practices in Shelter Provision.
[69] Yarbrough, D. (2021)
[70] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 14.

gender-diverse service-seekers either implicitly or implicitly unwelcome.[71] This may present itself in the invisibilization of trans people within narrow, binary legal and policy constructs,[72] or the lack of understanding of the needs of gender-diverse people as they navigate spectrums of gender identity and presentation over time. Policies, practices, and structures that aim to protect women, even as we see increasing shifts to trans-inclusivity, may be harmful if they fail to adapt practices in ongoing ways, or address narrow understandings of gender.

Organizational Shifts needed across the Homelessness, Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence, and Violence Against Women Sectors

One driver of change and challenge lies within organizational practice. In the context of the legal system, the TRANS*forming* JUSTICE Report suggests: "Trans peoples' experiences of legal problems are largely undocumented, and little information is available about what legal service providers need in order to improve their services for trans clients."[73] Trans people's experiences are even more scarcely documented within the shelter system, given both the inaccessibility and risk of reporting negative experiences. Again, from the TRANS*forming* JUSTICE Report:

> "Reports about the shelter system were especially problematic, with several focus-group and interview participants speaking about experiences of physical, verbal, and sexual assault by other residents. After reporting these incidents to staff, participants spoke about being removed from facilities, being blamed for the assaults, and experiencing increased isolation … There were no focus-group or interview participants who, having reported a housing-related justiciable issue, *also reported a positive resolution.*"[74]

Lack of sufficient and well-resourced mechanisms for reporting experiences of harassment, discrimination, violence[75] and abuse is one facet of organizational practice that, in effect, denies gender-diverse people justice and resolution to concerns for their dignity, wellbeing and safety.

Organizational structures and practices can have significant impacts when they shift to consider trans-inclusivity.[76] However, interviewees suggested that there are ongoing barriers to meaningfully structuring organization change, including the need for robust training for staff. Training must be made available in accessible and ongoing ways for staff, many of whom may be working with limited capacity or resources.[77] Further, this

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[71] Lyons, T. et al. (2016). Experiences of Trans Women and Two-Spirit Persons Accessing Women-Specific Health and Housing Services in a Downtown Neighborhood of Vancouver, Canada. *LGBT Health* 3(5), 373-378.
[72] Pyne, (2011).
[73] James et al., p. 4.
[74] James et al., p. 13.
[75] Esses, D. (2019).
[76] Yuekang Li, Fabbre & Gaveras (2022).
[77] Mottet, L. & Ohle, J. (2006) Transitioning Our Shelters: Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People, Journal of Poverty, 10:2, 77-101

training should be created, delivered, and continuously revisited by Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people themselves in order to speak to the experiences and ongoing realities these communities face. This is Not Home data suggests that moves to undertake trans-inclusive training or shifts to practice in shelters and low-barrier services were often framed within a broader recognition of social justice principles, and linked to anti-oppression, harm reduction, and trauma-informed work. Participants suggested that these broader shifts, such as the use of trauma-informed practices, could at times directly promote trans inclusion or safer spaces for gender-diverse people using services. However, it is important to ensure that these separate efforts, which may also contribute to trans-inclusivity, are not conflated with specific organization policies and practices to address unique barriers for Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary people. Participants emphasized that increasing participant and peer involvement in governance and hiring practices, as well as hiring more Two-Spirit, trans and non-binary staff would support organizational shifts towards trans inclusivity.

If there can't be more housing, a shelter, where trans people are safe is necessary. I would rather see the housing, but a shelter where trans people are safe would be excellent. -Interview Respondent

One interview participant highlighted the potential for research to illuminate what is working in these unique services, and how it might be implemented in other communities. However, she also cautioned against research that dehumanizes and harms trans people, and the harmful legacy that research has had in these communities. In regards to the Aoki-Ross House, she shared:

"I think, first of all, our building would make a great research project, to show how it's working, how it's set up, what's happened in the building since it   opened, and use that as a blueprint for more housing. [...] Trans people have been the subject of so much research, and I'm very careful about what research I'll let in the house, because I don't want people feeling like they're guinea pigs and they need to educate everybody else on what it means to be trans, or anything."

She also highlighted the need for research to understand the complex realities of trans people's lives in relation to their housing, asking how traumas that are factors of internal and external forces shape the housing trajectories of gender-diverse people. Across interviews and literature, it is clear that research may serve an important role in illuminating best practices and pathways to housing justice for Two-Spirit, trans, and gender-diverse people.

Overall, shelter workers from This is Not a Home focus groups, as well as interview participants in this study, emphasized the need to better resource organizations with

training, material funds, and space to house community members. Often, organizations were struggling to keep enough staff to run basic services, and COVID-19 further aggravated these limitations. This must also attend to the multiplicity that gender expression, identity, and needs present for people. Throughout the literature and interviews, safe, accessible, and permanent 2SLGBTQ+ housing options and spaces were often framed as a good option for many trans people (so that people who would feel safer in a trans only space would have access to that), but not at the expense of revamping and reducing the capacity of co-ed or gender-specific spaces. Ultimately, funding is necessary for getting trans people into safe, permanent housing in the communities of their choice, rather than expanding or over-relying on institutional housing for gender-diverse people.

For Indigenous gender-diverse people, one interview respondent highlighted the importance of connecting with place in the wake of centuries of colonial policies, practices, and actions to disconnect Indigenous communities from their land. She referenced that this may be a unique process for each individual, but finding programs that are rooted in the land were particularly effective in supporting healing, wellness, and housing stability. She highlighted the need for flexible, no-barrier transitional housing to help address the multiple issues facing Two-Spirit and Indigenous trans people outside of urban centre. As she explained, "no-barrier transitional housing for all. That's what I needed, and didn't have." This must be understood within broader understandings of Indigenous self-determination, practices of individual nations and communities, and the Land Back movement. In both Indigenous and non-Indigenous services, trainings that trace the connection between European values, colonization, and the enforcement of rigid gender binaries and expectations can foster inclusivity, and highlight the long-standing ways that trans people have been part of Indigenous communities for time immemorial.

> **I have seen nothing work universally with Indigenous people other than re-connecting with place. Not necessarily abandoning everything they know and growing out their hair tomorrow - but finding self-understanding through place… Coming home for me was not intentional, but it has been incredibly healing in so many different domains.**
> **-** Interview Respondent

All interview participants referenced the need for better training, more resources, funding, and support, as well as greater understanding of the intersecting needs of gender-diverse people facing housing precarity within the homelessness sector. However, each also emphasized that more housing – housing that is safe, secure, stable, and appropriate – was the ideal outcome of work to better support trans people. Despite attention to the housing needs of Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary peoples, the current housing system (as well as intersecting health, legal, criminal justice, and social

systems) are currently organized in ways that harm many gender-diverse people. Participants emphasized that while work must be done to change these systems, organizations and individuals can employ leading practices to facilitate harm reduction for those who have no choice but to navigate them.

Interview participants and staff respondents in the This is Not Home study also suggested that work must be done to ensure trans-inclusive policies and commitments are taken up and understood by staff, including managers and boards. The Toronto Shelter Network Report on transforming the shelter system similarly recommends that all staff, clients, and volunteers receive trans-inclusive training, emphasizing that opportunities to take comprehensive training is commonly limited to full-time, permanent frontline shelter staff.[78] The adoption of trans-inclusive statements, for example, may be a step towards ensuring Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people feel safe accessing a service at the right time, but staff must understand and enact these policies in their everyday practice, taking care to understand the actual needs of gender-diverse participants. This may include reflecting on practices which are not intended to be transphobic but are as such. Importantly, this must be decided on by those with lived experience of transphobia, rather than management or staff. The possible disconnect between organizational policies on trans-inclusion and everyday practices is particularly impactful for Two-Spirit people, with available research suggesting that Two-Spirit people may not use or feel safe within non-Indigenous service settings. The Toronto Shelter Network Report highlights a similar trend, stating: "while the phrase two spirit or '2S' is frequently added to the LGBTQ+ acronym, indigenous gender diverse inclusion and cultural sensitivity continues to be lacking." [79] Data collected in literature review, interviews, and focus groups suggest the need to ensure trans-inclusive policies reflect the unique needs of Two-Spirit people.

> **You can say "we're trans-inclusive," and accept trans people into a program, and sometimes it's the other people who are using that program who are the issue.**
> -Interview Respondent

Training for staff may also require training for participants themselves, or tools for staff to employ in educating participants using services.[80] Staff shared that participants' own discriminatory views toward Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people remained a barrier to truly creating trans-inclusive spaces, echoing research suggesting that peer-to-peer discrimination can lead to exclusion for gender-diverse people.[81]

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[78]Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 14.
[79] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 14.
[80] Mottet, L. & Ohle, J. (2006).
[81] Brais, H. & Maurer, K. (2022). Inside the Open Door: Considerations of Inclusivity Among Women Accessing an Open Door Housing Service in Canada. *International Journal on Homelessness* 2(1): 121-135.

Staff also suggested that creating and implementing core values related to trans-inclusiveness within an organization could "impose" those values on people using services, as well as educate members of the broader community – modeling how to shift discourses and practice. Similar to constraints and strains experienced by staff, who may be feeling overworked or exhausted, participants were seen as more likely to learn about trans-inclusivity if they were well enough to do so. Shelter staff expressed that everyday crises often took precedence over education on the use of trans-inclusive language and practice. These barriers were particularly present when supporting older service users and staff, who may be more resistant to shifts toward trans-inclusion, especially regarding terms that referenced gender-fluidity or disrupted gender binaries. Existing trans-inclusive education within the sector often reinforced notions of gender binaries, and lacked a focus on intersections of identities (including race, culturally specific gender identities and experiences, neurodiversity, and mental health).[82] In imagining a better way forward, participants in the This is Not Home study expressed the following:

- Mental health supports are needed to ensure staff and participants are well enough to benefit from training and education was a key point of enacting shifting policies. Further, staff suggested that
- Trans-inclusive training should be provided to all organizational staff, not only those dealing directly with participants, including the Board of Directors, cleaners, security, and contract or temporary staff.[83]
- Training should be practical to the everyday work of staff, and not theoretical, as well as updated to include relevant community knowledge, especially on language use.

One interview participant highlighted the need to use language that did not exclude particular people from services:

> We have the "women's" housing sector, which I think really needs to pivot and broaden its mandate to include all forms of gender-responsive housing. So we can say, "housing/programs designated for women," but not everyone there is actually a woman…We're all speaking the same language in terms of we need to include all people facing gender oppression to do what we're trying to do here, and if we say we are going to only support cis women, you're further marginalizing a very marginalized group already – trans people.

They further explained that it could be alienating to shift organizational policy stances toward trans-exclusivity – particularly within a broader mandate to value and listen to lived experience – if those with lived expertise were the ones expressing resistance to

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[82] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 16.
[83] This finding is further reflected in Toronto Shelter Network, 2020.

broadening mandates to include serving all women or including non-binary people. They described this work as a "tricky thing," but one that is ultimately aligned with serving those in highest need of housing and social support.

One tangible change that data and literature suggests is amending requirements that participants provide official identification documents and names,[84] which may lead Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary participants to avoid using services and rely instead on low-barrier programs that do ask for I.D. (but also may not meet their unique needs). Further, shelter intake and referrals remain organized around a male/female binary,[85] and may lead to incorrect assumptions about where a person wants to stay and feels safe. Staff undertaking intakes and referrals would also benefit from education and training, including regarding safety practices relating to gender diversity. This may include the use of different pronouns or names, the implications of a participant being "out," and using different identifiers for clients in different spaces.[86] Intake forms should be structured with care to ensure that Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary participants are not outed while attempting to access services.

While trans-inclusivity in organizational practices may be deemed important, there remains confusion and a lack of action on who is responsible for leading these changes, both within organizations and the housing and homelessness sectors broadly. Upper management in shelters, for example, may be unaware or unwilling to acknowledge how pervasive and severe transphobic practices are. Transphobic experiences may be seen as less significant due to underreporting, staff ignorance, and inaccessible complaint procedures.[87] This results in a lack of confidence from both staff and participants that reporting

Add more than one token trans person, let them build a community.
- Interview Respondent

incidents of transphobia will change the violence, harassment, and discrimination they face, and leads to further underutilization of reporting mechanisms. Staff and participants may also be hesitant to report in order to not "rock the boat." As a result, the gap between experiences of transphobia and reporting may be significant, and the likelihood may be low that positive outcomes will result from reporting.

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[84] Shelton, J. (2015). Transgender youth homelessness: Understanding programmatic barriers through the lens of cisgenderism, *Children and Youth Services Review;* Toronto Shelter Network, 2020; Mottet, L., & Ohle, J. (2003). Transitioning Our Shelters: A Guide to Making Homeless Shelters Safe for Transgender People. New York: The National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute.
59, 10-18.
[85] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020.
[86] Begun, S & Kattari, S.K. (2016) Conforming for survival: Associations between transgender visual conformity/passing and homelessness experiences, Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 28:1, 54-66
[87] Abramovich, 2013.

Highlighting and Learning from Lived Experience in Organizational Shifts towards Trans-Inclusivity

It is clear that resources and supports must be dedicated to ensuring that gender-diverse people with lived expertise are able to lead changes in services and shelters, with responsibility for implementing these changes in practice falling across all roles within the sector, including allies. Interview respondents, all of whom brought their own lived experiences as gender-diverse people in their organizations, highlighted the need to support ongoing learnings from people with lived expertise. One respondent emphasized that she would be hiring people with lived experience in future positions to bolster the effectiveness of programing in a trans-supportive housing program. Respondents also highlighted the need for a diversity of lived experience, including those with experience of drug use and those with experience of incarceration, as well as other voices which are often excluded from discussions of organizational and policy change. Hiring staff with lived experience should follow broader attempts to build community, eschewing individual, tokenized positions for building strong networks with diverse experiences at the table.[88] Lived experiences of multiple forms of marginalization and the connections between transphobia and structures of colonization, were also highlighted in interviews.

While the importance of lived expertise to developing effective responses to housing precarity in interviews, interviewees also emphasized there must also be an understanding of the disproportionate labour gender-diverse people are expected to do in these contexts, with these community members often taking on work of educating and advocating. When Two-Spirit, trans, and nonbinary staff are hired, they are often saddled with having to educate others, with little additional resources or recognition. Gender-diverse staff may feel they need to shoulder the burden of creating educational content and shifting organizational practices, and contend with the additional labour of convincing colleagues that these are integral and urgent changes to make. As outlined in the 2020 Toronto Shelter Network Report, in some cases, gender-diverse staff may face reprisal or punishment for not taking on roles of formal/informal educator on trans-inclusivity, and face expectations of outing themselves in different roles in order to take on educational labour.[89] Cisgender staff may be sympathetic to barriers facing gender-diverse staff and participants, but significant knowledge gaps may prevent action.[90]

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[88] England, E. (2022).
[89] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 22.
[90] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 4.

> **Trans people walk a fine line between when it is worth asserting your identity and when you choose to keep your head down…it's constant trade-offs between your authenticity and your safety, a shitty reality we have to deal with.**
>
> -Interview Respondent

Further, while gender-diverse staff may have more expansive knowledge to contribute to efforts to cultivate trans-inclusivity, they are often hired into low-wage, frontline roles rather than upper management or governance.[91] Given the tendency for organizations to offer training to more senior, full-time, or permanent staff, this may compound the pressure for gender-diverse staff to mobilize their own experiences to supplement the lack of training afforded to their cisgender, part-time/temporary colleagues. While the Toronto Shelter Network Report suggests trans-masculine people may hold more higher-level positions,[92] they also reported regular misgendering, often feeling like it was "just part of the job" despite feeling frustrated by persistent experiences of trans-exclusivity. Robust resources to support relational connections between Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary participants, peers, and communities may be a promising way to address the emotional and educational labour that facilitate organizational changes and leadership by those most impacted by transphobic policies and practices in achieving trans-inclusive shifts.
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Recommendations for Physical Infrastructural Changes to Support Trans Inclusion and Safety within Shelters

Though gender-diverse people may rely less on the formal shelter system than their cisgender counterparts, work must be done to ensure that when they do access shelter spaces, the potential for harm and risk in those experiences is minimized.[93] In the absence of dedicated 2SLGBTQ+ shelters, improvements to the physical infrastructure and overall privacy within co-ed and gender-segregated shelter spaces would greatly increase the perceived and real safety of gender-diverse service users. In the 2020 Toronto Shelter Network Report, recommendations highlight the particular importance of private sleeping spaces, shower facilities, and bathrooms:

- "91% of respondents said a dedicated 2SLGBTQ+ shelter was an absolute necessity
- 91% said private or semi-private sleeping spaces were an absolute necessity
- 91% said privacy and safety of bathroom and shower spaces were an absolute necessity"[94]

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[91] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 11.
[92] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 11.
[93] Mottet, L. & Ohle, J. (2006)
[94] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 20-21.

In the absence of resources and a dearth of suitable spaces, it is absolutely vital that gender-diverse people are able to exercise as much agency as possible over their living conditions. For example, the Toronto Shelter Network report highlights that the ability to select one's roommates is crucial in a shared sleeping layout. As outlined in a deeply impactful report on the experiences of trans-masculine experiences of homelessness in Toronto, poignantly named "Invisible Men,"[95] it was highlighted that single-occupancy, private rooms are important for trans people who desire private sleeping space. However, the report also highlights the concern that shelters are disincentivized to have empty rooms or beds on standby in case someone needs them, as this may hold implications for their operational funding.

While many shelters may lack the resources to equip their space with fully private bathrooms, showers, and sleeping quarters, the Toronto Shelter Network report found that providing gender-diverse people access to bathrooms and showers at different times than the general shelter population could serve as a potential short-term solution, in addition to small but powerful changes such as equipping all bathrooms with menstrual product disposal bins.[96]

On a more immediate level, equipping shelters with pride flags, pronoun pins, and safe space stickers could serve as a small gesture of inclusivity. Importantly, these items that signal queer inclusion and safety could also open gender-diverse people up to more harm, if they are not matched with systemic change: these are meaningless gestures without deeper consideration for creating an inclusive space that is responsive to gender-diverse needs.

While important, changes to physical space and practice made in the shelter system must not be at the expense of expanding and prioritizing access to permanent housing solutions. As the Toronto Shelter Network study found, "Ninety-one percent (91%) of clients thought there should be more emphasis within the homelessness system on transitional, low income, subsidized and supportive housing, with 82% considering it an absolute necessity."[97]

Gender-diverse people need access to a variety of housing options to meet their individual needs – there is not one type of housing that works for all gender-diverse individuals and communities equally, and deeper investment is needed in all types of housing along the continuum. This includes market and non-market permanent housing

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[95] Dénommé-Welch, S., Pyne, J., & Scanlon, K. (2008). *Invisible Men: FTMs and Homelessness in Toronto.* Toronto, ON: The Wellesley Institute.
[96] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 20.
[97] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 21.

(i.e. social, public, and cooperative housing), as well as permanent supportive housing. Permanent supportive housing is one potential option for people who desire it, but a diversity of housing options is necessary for gender-diverse people to live with dignity in the community of their choice, and allow them to safely access services in a non-coercive context.

PROMISING PRACTICES & PROGRAMS: DOMESTIC AND GLOBAL

Research literature, interviewees, and focus group participants all emphasized the urgent need for housing services that are inclusive of and targetted to trans, non-binary, and Two-Spirit communities. Across Canada and around the world there are a limited number of promising examples of what this can look like, with further research and evaluation needed to assess efficacy, scalability, and housing outcomes. While these promising examples are making tangible and positive impacts, there still remains a crisis-level need for more robust programming specifically for gender-diverse people. This need is particularly salient for communities of gender-diverse people with intersecting lived realities and identities. The MMIWG Calls for Justice include, for example, Call 18.25:

> "We call upon all governments to build safe spaces for people who need help and who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, which includes access to safe, dedicated 2SLGBTQQIA shelters and housing, dedicated beds in shelters for trans and non-binary individuals, and 2SLGBTQQIA-specific support services for 2SLGBTQQIA individuals in housing and shelter spaces."[98]

The scarcity of these kinds of safe and supportive services means that existing spaces are operating above capacity, leaving many 2SLGBTQQIA people in communities across Canada with unmet needs. In this section, we highlight some international and domestic examples of promising programs and practices that support gender-diverse people experiencing housing need and homelessness.

2SLGBTQIA+ Housing Organizations serving Gender-Diverse Youth in Canada

Across Canada there are an emerging number of housing programs and services which aim to support gender-diverse youth. These often fall under umbrella services for all 2SLGBTQIA+ young people, but represent promising practices for trans-inclusivity and the inclusion of gender-diverse persons in youth housing support more broadly. These are some leading programs in the sector:

> **Friends of Ruby Home, Toronto, Ontario:** Friends of Ruby Home is a transitional house for 2SLGBTQIA+ young people aged 16-29. The house provides case management for young people to connect to necessary services and transitional supports when they are experiencing housing need and other crises. Named after a friendly golden retriever, Friends of Ruby was founded by

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[98]National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019). Calls for Justice, in: *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.* p. 217.

EGALE Canada to address the findings of the "Not under my roof" study outlining the unique challenges faced by 2SLGBTQIA+ young people.

YMCA Sprott House, Toronto, Ontario: YMCA Sprott House first opened its doors in September 2007 and is one of the first 2SLGBTQ+ transitional housing programs for youth in Canada. YMCA Sprott House provides one year of supported residential living for up to 25 young people between the ages of 16 to 24.

Aura, Calgary, Alberta: Aura follows a housing first model for youth, aged 14-24, serving 2SLGBTQIA+ youth who may experience or are experiencing homelessness. Aura provides young people with skill training and wellness supports, while utilizing gender-affirming approaches. Young people are connected with host homes that celebrate their gender identities, in efforts to provide alternatives to entering the homeless shelter system.

Pride Home, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Pride Home, operated by OutSaskatoon, has served 2SLGBTQIA+ youth since 2017, providing housing where youth in Saskatoon can be connected to services and receive gender-affirming housing supports. Pride Home was founded in response to research highlighting the overrepresentation of 2SLGBTQIA+ youth in populations experiencing homelessness.

LGBTQ2S+ RainCity Housing First for Youth Program, Vancouver, British Columbia: RainCity's Housing First Program provides housing for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth experiencing homelessness aged 18-24, as well as connections to healthcare, skills, community and services. This program places an emphasis on building community and innovative approaches to addressing homelessness for queer and trans youth.

Housing for Two-Spirit, Trans, Non-Binary, and Gender-Diverse Adults in Canada

> **I see a lot of LGBTQ shelters for youth, and I get why–like, they've been cancelled by their family, but we're not just young people…a lot of the programs I do see that are very open and inclusive are for people under 25, and I'm 27 now. So I've been cut off from all the queer programming.**
> -Interview Respondent

There is a significant dearth of housing supports and programs for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse adults in Canada.[99] While youth-specific services are imperative, one interview participant pointed out that gender-affirming and LGBTQ programs often have age cut-offs that limit the options available for gender-diverse adults. Interviews, focus groups, and a review of the literature indicate the importance of expanding these housing programs for gender-diverse adults across Canada. One important promising practice that has emerged in Canada is Aoki-Ross House:

> **Aoki-Ross House, run by Atira on behalf of the city of Vancouver, British-Columbia**: The Aoki-Ross House was purchased by the City of Vancouver in 2019, and opened its doors for trans, gender-diverse, and Two-Spirit adults in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in early 2021. The House provides 23 single rooms, including for those recovering from gender-affirming surgery. Led by gender-diverse staff, Aoki-Ross House is currently working on facilitating connections for residents with health and mental healthcare, in addition to housing. The Aoki-Ross House is one of the few services that is specifically for adult trans, gender-diverse and Two-Spirit people, and is providing an example for organizations in other urban Canadian centres hoping to provide similar support.

> **Even without the resources we need we're making the house work. There's a lot of pride in the house, in that it opened in the first place, I've seen people come off of the streets and really change a lot in the last year, because they have housing, because they have safe housing. I saw someone who was on the streets for 30 years, and they came off the streets and in the past year, they have a job as a support worker, with a housing company on the DTES, they've changed 360 degrees, their drug use is down, they're responsibly holding a job, making themselves better, gaining self esteem and pride in themselves in the past year…This as a program needs to be expanded and needs to become the norm instead of the exception.**
> -Interview Respondent

Canadian Organizations that are Expanding their Mandate to include Two-Spirit, Trans, and Gender-Diverse Communities

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[99] Lyons, T. et al. (2016).

Attempts to reckon with the rigid gender binaries inherent in much of the shelter and homelessness systems often fall onto organizations that serve "women," with participants in focus groups and interviews emphasizing that there has been a growing shift within organizational mandates to serve women *and* gender-diverse people. The intention to make systems more responsive to gender has complex effects. While on the one hand, organizations that have historically served "women" under their mandate may be more adept in the context of anti-oppressive, trauma-informed, and feminist praxis, their strong bias towards creating spaces that privilege cisgender women can be experienced as negative, unwelcoming, and exclusionary by gender-diverse staff and service-users.

> **People make a lot of assumptions about where trans people ought to be—like we need to expand women's services because that's where they ought to be, because that's where they feel safe…Some programs might be open to "women identified" people, I hear that a lot, they'll take trans women but not transmasculine people. We knew a transmasculine person who went into a service for men, and loved it, because he was seen as one of the guys. I see discussion of transinclusivity in women's shelters and stuff like this, what about male shelters? Is there room for transmasculine people in those?**
> -Interview respondent

As the [Toronto Shelter Network](#) (2022) report highlights:

> "All transmasculine and nonbinary AFAB[100] service providers reported experiencing coercive feminization, with feminine-perceived AFAB nonbinary staff being viewed and treated as 'woman-lite,' thus facing all the barriers of misogyny and expectations of emotional labour that cisgender women face, in addition to the transphobia of being consistently misgendered and having their genders erased."[101]

The term "coercive feminization" is both conceptually and practically significant in helping demonstrate the "exclusive inclusion" of gender diversity in traditionally cis-women-centric spaces. The term refers to the

> "negative attitudes, expressed through ongoing-historical erasure, control, cultural hate, individual and state violence, and discrimination directed toward

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[100] AFAB is an acronym for Assigned Female at Birth. AFAB is a shorthand way to "describe a person who is or was thought to be female based on their body at their birth" (Cambridge Dictionary, N.D.: https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/afab). Similarly, AMAB refers to Assigned Male at Birth, and AGAB refers to someone's Assigned Gender at Birth.Typically, these terms connote or are primarily applied to someone who does not identify with their gender at birth

[101] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 22.

trans men and AFAB nonbinary people. The specific intersection of misogyny and transness while not being a woman. This phrase provides a much needed addition to "women and femmes" as it does not require the coercively feminized person to identify as "femme" (which is frequently misgendering)."[102]

While there remain significant barriers to ensuring practice matches these gender-inclusive mandates (including training of staff and educational initiatives for other service users), there are a number of examples of organizations who have expanded their mandate to serve both women and gender-diverse people. These include two organizations highlighted by those we interviewed:

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS): CAEFS is a network of 24 member societies across Canada serving women who are criminalized. In 2015, CAEFS added trans-inclusivity to their mandate, serving women and gender-diverse people who have been criminalized. CAEFS's work includes combating exclusion, and supporting member societies who provide housing, as well as understanding how the right to housing can be assured for criminalized women and gender-diverse people in ways that better serve trans, non-binary, and 2S communities.

Keepers of the Circle, Temiskaming & Kirkland Lake. Keepers of the Circle provides educational training programs to women, 2S, and gender-diverse First Nations and Métis people in the area, including those who want to enter the trades. Keepers of the Circle is operated by the Temiskaming Native Women's Support Group, and one interview participant highlighted the ways it has increasingly supported, and been led by, gender-diverse community members. The organization is grounded in Anishnaabe teachings and values, and serves as a hub for Indigenous women, 2S people, and their families in the area.

International Promising Practices Supporting Trans, Non-Binary and Gender-Diverse People

Policy and advocacy landscapes differ across international contexts with regards to how gender-diverse people are able to access services or are assured safe housing. Unfortunately, many of the same barriers we find within so-called Canada are mirrored or amplified in other geographical contexts. Programming which may hold lessons for structuring diverse ways to support Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people across housing and social services include:

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[102] Toronto Shelter Network, 2020, p. 29. The TSN report attributes the term "coercive feminization" to Faelix Kayn, 2014.

The Ali Forney Center, U.S.A: The largest LGBT community centre helping LGBTQ homeless youth in New York City, the Ali Forney Center has been operating since 2002. Named for a non-binary youth who was a strong advocate for their peers, they engage with youth between the ages of 16 and 24 and see approximately 2000 youth each year. The Center operates a 24-hour drop-in and multiple residential sites, including trans-specific housing. The Center offers youth a safe place to exist and meet all their survival needs, access healthcare, and seek job training or placement opportunities. The Center also offers targeted services for trans youth such as access to HRT and trans-specific housing through a small residential unit. Their approach of "meeting every youth with sensitivity and respect" is an invaluable one, and is a useful model for other organizations serving communities who face discrimination and violence.

Open Doors Youth Services, Australia: Based in Brisbane, Open Doors Youth Services provides a hub through which to connect queer and gender-diverse young people, aged 12-24 to housing, social, and educational services, as well as gender-affirming care. In particular, they provide programming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sistergirls and Brotherboys, who are particularly impacted by intersecting experiences of discrimination in housing services.[103]

House of Tulip, U.S.A. Based in New Orleans, and led by community members, House of Tulip mobilizes a unique approach to advancing the right to housing for trans and gender-diverse people, connecting housing to surrounding social services. House of Tulip is based in a nonprofit/collective model that is focused on trans home and land ownership.

Despite some promising practices and programs, there remain limited housing-specific programs for gender-diverse peoples internationally, and fewer that serve those with multiply-marginalized identities, including Indigenous trans people who face disproportionate violence and harm from existing systems. The majority of international programs follow a narrow understanding of what trajectories toward housing stability look like, valuing narrow, colonial, and heteronormative notions of individualized pathways to housing stability.

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[103] Kerry, S.G. (2015). Sistergirls/Brotherboys:The Status of Indigenous Transgender Australians. *International Journal of Transgenderism.*15(3,4), 173-186.

GAPS IN RESEARCH

Paradoxically, while gender-diverse communities remain an over-researched population, large gaps in research and data continue to exist with respect to housing need and homelessness amongst Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people. This is due in part to the fact gender-diverse people have often been the *subjects* of research, rather than in positions to *lead* research about their communities. Gender-diverse lived experiences have not always fundamentally shaped research questions or priorities, which means that not all the existing literature offers the kinds of robust, community-informed contributions that will help realize the rights of gender-diverse people. In a 2019 article for the *Harm Reduction Journal*, Neufeld and colleagues describe similar practices of over-research in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES): "Too often, this research benefits researchers disproportionately and leaves communities like the DTES feeling exploited, misrepresented, and exhausted."[104] Our literature review and participant interviews reveal similar sentiments amongst gender-diverse people experiencing housing inequities across the country.

Data and research methodologies and decision-making have intersectional implications for inclusion and equity. For example, similar concerns are also outlined extensively in the *[National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#)* – exemplified by 2SLGBTQQIA-specific Call 18.3: "We call upon all governments, service providers, and those involved in research to change the way data is collected about 2SLGBTQQIA people to better reflect the presence of individuals and communities, and to improve the inclusion of 2SLGBTQQIA people in research, including 2SLGBTQQIA-led research."[105] This illuminates the issue of over-researched communities that are underserved by the research generated in their communities.

Issues with limited-utility research are also compounded for quantitative data collection, including in instances when data has not been disaggregated or by gender, race, or other community-specific factors. Data that is not disaggregated limits the utility of research for offering insight into the experiences of specific populations, and/or it may collapse or homogenize a wide variety of experiences. Gaps in data, and limitations to existing methodologies, mean that we are just beginning to understand violations of the right to housing violations experienced by gender-diverse communities in the Canadian context, and what policies, programs, and practices can best advance and support their human rights.

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[104] Neufeld, S.; Chapman, J.; Crier, N.; Marsh, S.; McLeod, J.; Deane, L. (2019). Research 101: A process for developing local guidelines for ethical research in heavily researched communities. *Harm Reduction Journal.* 16(41), p.2.
[105] National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. 2019. p. 214.

Based on this review of the literature and scan of promising practices, future areas of research should include:

1. National data on the scale and scope of housing need and homelessness experienced by Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people.

2. Development of a definition of housing need and homelessness that is reflective of the unique experiences of gender-diverse people and their human rights.

3. Culturally-grounded and land-based approaches to housing provision for Two-Spirit and gender-diverse Indigenous persons, in alignment with principles of self-determination and self-governance outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

4. Pathways to amplifying and supporting the 2SLGBTQQIA-specific Calls for Justice that have emerged from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

5. Human rights violations within public systems (e.g., criminal justice, child welfare) that create and perpetuate housing need and homelessness for gender-diverse populations, and effective approaches to addressing these violations.

6. Experiences of eviction and barriers to accessing legal supports and access to justice during evictions for gender-diverse populations, including in the event of relationship dissolution.

7. Housing need and homelessness resulting from compounding experiences of discrimination and exclusion faced by multiply-marginalized gender-diverse people, seeking to understand where/how/when/by whom interventions would be most effective.

8. The impact of the financialization of housing on gender-diverse households, and effective models for advancing security of tenure and preventing housing loss within financialized housing markets.

9. Best practices and models (domestically and internationally) for rights-based housing provision for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse persons

10. Experiences of hidden homelessness amongst Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse persons.

11. Community-held and lived experience-designed solutions for housing justice for Two-Spirit, trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse persons.

12. Shelter diversion for gender-diverse populations, including models such as Host Homes

While this is not an exhaustive list, these areas would provide critical knowledge on how to best support Two-Spirit, trans, gender-diverse, and non-binary communities to access stable and safe housing. It is integral that research be carried out in ways that do not further harm gender-diverse people, but in meaningful partnership with communities most impacted by housing insecurity and homelessness.

CONCLUSION

Across Canada, Two-Spirit, trans, nonbinary, and other gender-diverse people are experiencing crisis-level inequities in accessing their social and economic rights. These deep inequities are under-examined and often excluded from conversations about gendered access to the right to housing and other, interrelated rights. Even when the needs of gender-diverse people are included, it is often as an add-on or afterthought when discussing the experiences of cisgender women and girls. This frequent linkage of gender-diverse people's experiences to those of cisgender women contributes to the erasure and marginalization of those who may not identify as part of the category indicated by "women," and may experience this unwanted alignment with femininity or womanness as a negation of their identity. Ultimately, gender justice would involve a more robust analysis of and response to gender as a system of relationships, power dynamics, roles, and responsibilities that entangle people of all genders in important and distinct ways. A more comprehensive approach to taking up gender would also provide a critical foothold for examining the gendered impacts of housing precarity on vulnerable men (including trans masc people), whose needs and lived realities are frequently excluded from gender-based spaces.

The violations of the right to housing that gender-diverse people face are exacerbated by the dire lack of affordable housing in communities across Canada. Despite existing programs that, on their surface, claim to create the supply of housing that is so desperately needed, there is evidence that they will continue to fall short of meeting the needs of gender-diverse people without significant GBA+ and human-rights informed restructuring.[106] Federal investments under the National Housing Strategy, the Rental Construction Financing Initiative being a prime example, fail to meet the needs of low-income households or people living in core housing need: this is because they are not actually reflective of these households' capacity to pay.[107] In addition to gender-responsive policies, programs, and practices, there is a deep need to create a sufficient stock of housing that is affordable for gender-diverse people, while also upholding the human rights and inherent dignity of these communities. For housing to be truly adequate for gender-diverse people, it should provide a more robust sense of security and safety, and offer the ability to live without the pervasive threat of eviction, discrimination, over-surveillance and violence.

Advancing the right to housing for gender-diverse communities must include engaging people with lived experience of gender-based discrimination and homelessness in robust, ongoing, and meaningful ways. Engaging communities of lived experience is

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[106] Schwan & Ali. 2021.
[107] Schwan et al. 2022. P. 13.

more than a recommendation in creating more robust policy: it is a fundamental principle of realizing the right to housing. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing, Leilani Farha, outlines meaningful engagement of rights claimant communities as the third guideline in her thematic report on the implementation of the right to housing:

> The right to meaningful and effective participation is a core element of the right to housing and critical to dignity, the exercise of agency, autonomy and self-determination.[108]

In Farha's thematic report on rights-based housing strategies, transgender people are listed as a priority population to engage meaningfully in the process of claiming their right to housing – in recognition of the pressure and exclusion this community may face resulting from discrimination and marginalization.[109] It will be of utmost importance for governments to meaningfully engage gender-diverse communities in accordance with the highest standards of international and domestic human rights law. Across the literature, it was clear that gender-diverse people can clearly identify and articulate experiences of discriminatory treatment within housing systems. However, the mechanisms to access justice, and rectify experiences of harm, violence, exclusion, and discrimination, are in need of deeper consideration in order to be truly effective in assuring the right to housing for Two-Spirit, trans, and non-binary people in Canada.

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[108] UN Human Rights Council (2019), Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing: Guidelines on the Implementation of the Right to Housing. A/HRC/43/43, pg 6 http://www.unhousingrapp.org/user/pages/04.resources/A_HRC_43_43_E-2.pdf
[109] UN Human Rights Council (2018), Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing: Human Rights-Based National Housing Strategies. A/HRC/37/53, pg 11 http://www.unhousingrapp.org/user/pages/04.resources/Thematic-Report-1-Human-Rights-Based-National-Housing-Strategies.pdf