



What We've Heard So Far

Launching the Queer Identity & Housing Research Project

SEPTEMBER 2023

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WHAT OUR PROJECT IS ABOUT

There is evidence that people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ may experience more and different barriers to housing compared to the non-queer population. This is not just a question of housing security or being housed or unhoused, but also of being able to fully express one's identity and thrive.

SRDC is working on a new research study with the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness and Mentor Canada about housing among 2SLGBTQ+ adults. The research study is funded by the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The research study is exploring how access to tailored resources, programs, and services can influence a 2SLGBTQ+ person's housing journey and experience throughout the course of their life (a 'life course' approach). In this research, we plan to map and compare the housing experiences of queer folks, some of whom live in communities with many services, and others who live in communities with few services (which we are referring to as either high- or low-resource communities). The goal of our research is to make recommendations about how best to ensure more queer people experience holistic, thriving housing throughout their lives.

It is important our research study be done in a collaborative, inclusive way. We will be engaging advisors with a variety of perspectives to guide the research project from start to finish.

WHO WE TALKED TO

To launch our research project, we began by talking to people across Canada, to hear their perspectives about our initial research plans. In July and August 2023, our SRDC research team had meetings with a total of 16 individuals, including:

- 2 people who identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and have lived experience of being unhoused
- 2 people working in policy positions at Infrastructure Canada
- 1 researcher with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- 2 leading researchers in the areas of 2SLGBTQ+ homelessness and housing
- 4 Executive Directors/Directors of service-providing organizations, including a long-term care home, a youth shelter, an Indigenous affordable housing provider, and a 2SLGBTQ+ non-profit

- 1 member of the Board of Directors at a co-operative housing initiative
- 4 front-line service providers, including 1 who identifies as 2SLGBTQ+

WHAT WE TALKED ABOUT

These meetings, which lasted about 30-60 minutes, focused on the following points of discussion:

- **Research questions:** the extent to which people considered our current research questions to be relevant, resonant, and pressing.
- **Methods/approach:** the extent to which people considered our proposed research methods/approach to be appropriate and feasible.
- **High- and low-resource communities/contexts:** how people think about the idea of including both high- and low-resource communities in our research and what these terms mean.
- **Existing work:** the existing research and real-world programs that people consider important for our team to be aware of and learn from.
- **Advisory committee plans:** the best ways to continue engage people in an advisory role as we move forward with the research project.

WHAT WE HEARD

Thriving in Housing

In our discussions, we engaged with the idea of ‘thriving in housing’ and what that might look like for 2SLGBTQ+ adults. We heard that thriving in housing encompasses issues of health care, affordability, social-emotional safety, physical safety, healthy living conditions, the importance of choice and personal agency, authentic self-expression and living openly and freely, and opportunities to connect with (chosen) community. We heard that ‘housing’ or ‘home’ may reference a building, an organization, a community, a neighbourhood, or proximity to other people, places, and resources.

To create the conditions for thriving in housing, queer folks need more than just symbolic gestures, although these are important. We heard that ongoing, meaningful awareness, training,

and inclusion practices are needed. We also heard about the notion of intergenerational justice, and the Indigenous concept of Seven Generations – in this context, how today's policy decisions will impact generations of queer folks to come.

The Most Pressing Needs

The people we spoke to told us about some of the most pressing needs of 2SLGBTQ+ adults related to issues of housing insecurity and homelessness. On a basic level, we heard that many 2SLGBTQ+ adults are focused on survival, safety, acceptance, and sense of community/social connection in the face of intolerance, hostility, violence, and misinformation.

We heard that 2SLGBTQ+ folks often face frequent transitions in their housing over their life course. We heard that early adulthood can be a difficult period for 2SLGBTQ+ folks to navigate, particularly for youth leaving care, and many young adults would benefit from 'bridge' housing options. Older 2SLGBTQ+ adults have pressing needs related to end-of-life considerations, wills, and medical directives, and being 'out' in spaces like long-term care, which tend not to acknowledge or address gender or sexual orientation, instead being heteronormative and often treating older adults as asexual.

We heard about the lack of funding and resources for queer-serving organizations, and the discrimination and exclusion facing queer folks who try to access mainstream services (e.g., shelter policies may exclude people who are gender diverse or trans; being unhoused interferes with ability to transition/pursue gender-affirming care). In the rental market, we heard about the effects of rising rent, renovictions, and discrimination from landlords and neighbours, and a lack of protection for 2SLGBTQ+ tenants from the Landlord and Tenant Board.

We heard that housing precarity intersects with specific issues of food insecurity, transportation, mental health, substance use, sexual violence, poverty, and employment discrimination. Further, people talked broadly about the pervasive, underlying implications of late-stage capitalism, including the commodification of housing and the relationship between work and housing.

Intersectionality was also at the forefront of this discussion, with several people speaking about the multiple levels of discrimination a 2SLGBTQ+ individual might experience, including racism and ableism. We heard that programs and places that silo people and services can be harmful for queer folks with intersectional identities.

Promising Practices and Ideas

The people we spoke with drew our attention to a range of the recent promising practices and ideas about how to address the housing barriers facing 2SLGBTQ+ adults. We heard about the

importance of adopting a ‘no wrong door approach,’ intervening across the lifespan, and tackling issues at both individual and structural levels – supporting individuals through their experiences, while also deconstructing discriminatory systems. We heard about innovative initiatives and ideas like queer long-term living situations, queer co-ops, homesteading, communal living, queer enclaves/neighbourhoods/village models, and rural retreats. Several of the people we spoke to told us about intergenerational spaces and programming that connect older adults to youth in some way, including some promising initiatives established abroad in Europe, showing ‘the art of the possible.’

We compiled an informal list of resources and specific organizations doing important work in this space, as identified by the people we spoke to, in [Appendix A](#).

WHAT COMES NEXT

In addition to this initial round of engagement with prospective advisors, our team has also completed a brief literature review of the existing research on homelessness and housing insecurity among 2SLGBTQ+ adults. We are now taking time to refine our research plans based on what we have heard and learned so far.

Next, we will be identifying two communities in which to focus our research. In selecting these two communities, we will again be turning to advisors for guidance and direction. Once communities are selected, we will be creating systems maps outlining the local services and resources available to 2SLGBTQ+ adults in each community. Then, we will prepare to conduct qualitative interviews with local community housing stakeholders, decision makers, and 2SLGBTQ+ identified adults.

We always welcome questions, or input on our research project. Connect with our Project Manager, Heather Smith Fowler, at hsmithfowler@srcdc.org

APPENDIX A: INFORMAL LIST OF RESOURCES, ORGANIZATIONS

Pan-Canadian

- [TransPulse Project](#)
- [Women and Gender Equality Canada \(WAGE\) has a 2SLGBTQ+ working group](#)
- Centre for Newcomers (e.g., Rainbow Railroad)
- The Office of the Federal Housing Advocate – Canadian Human Rights Commission's literature review & practice scan on [Housing Need & Homelessness Amongst Gender-Diverse People in Canada](#)

Nova Scotia

- Schools Plus program (Yarmouth)
- Tri-County Women's Centre (Yarmouth)
- Pride Place in Halifax is developing a community centre with funding from the United Church of Canada
- Wabanake Two-Spirit Alliance is developing a Two-Spirit housing community in Nova Scotia

New Brunswick

- Micro homes in Fredericton
- Common Friend NB

Québec

- Fondation Émergence: Formation, outils et charte de la bientraitance – [Pour que vieillir soit gai, Charte de la bientraitance](#)
- [Projet 10](#)

- [La Débrouille: housing for cis and trans women victims of intimate partner violence](#)
- [Research Project: Logement social et ses effets](#)

Ontario

- Abiwin Coop
- [Fudger House](#) Nursing Home (Toronto)
- AURA Housed Home
- YMCA Toronto's [Sprout House](#), 2SLGBTQIA+ transitional housing programs for youth

Manitoba

- Rainbow Resource Centre in Winnipeg

Saskatchewan

- Queer Seniors of Saskatchewan Association – produced a needs assessment/community report with the University of Saskatchewan
- Saskatoon 55+ Co-op for queer folks
- OUTSaskatoon's [Pride Home](#), Canada's first 2SLGBTQIA+ long-term group home for youth
- Métis Nation Saskatchewan – grants for first-time home buyers, renovation grants for accessibility
- Camponi Housing rent geared to income (Saskatoon)
- Quint Housing (Saskatoon)

Alberta

- SHARP Foundation: AISH (Alberta disability assistance)/intersectionality
- Calgary Outlink

- Skipping Stone (trans youth and transgender identities)
- Alberta Community Council on HIV Membership
- [The ALEX](#)
- 2SLGBTQ+ Collective of Calgary-based organizations meeting bimonthly (includes survivors of DV, newcomers)
- Support Services at SafeLink Alberta (housing for queer folks who are HIV+)

British Columbia

- RainCity: 2SLGBTQ youth housing (Vancouver)

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