

Transitioning Employers:

A survey of policies and practices for trans inclusive workplaces



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Authors:

Bretton Fosbrook
Postdoctoral Fellow
Institute for Gender and the Economy

Sarah Kaplan
Director
Institute for Gender and the Economy

Jade Pichette
Manager of Programs
Pride at Work Canada



The Institute for Gender at the Economy (GATE) at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management is a research centre that promotes an understanding of gender inequalities and how they can be remedied—by people of all genders—in the world of business and, more broadly, in the economy. GATE uses rigorous research to change the conversation on gender equality.

www.gendereconomy.org

Report: www.gendereconomy.org/transitioning-employers

Pride at Work Canada is the leading national not-for-profit confronting gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation inclusion in Canadian workplaces. Through dialogue, education and leadership, we empower organizations to foster a workplace culture that recognizes LGBTQ2+ employees as an important part of a diverse workforce.

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Support from the community

"Trans and gender-diverse representation in Canadian workplaces is crucial in building inclusive and equitable hiring practices and setting anti-oppressive precedent in our workplaces. This representation elevates and amplifies valuable voices from the margins, brings unique perspectives, is a measure of social accessibility, and allows for people to see themselves reflected in positions of influence and power which can bolster self-esteem, mental health, and general well-being. Diverse hiring practice is a critical aspect in social determinants of health; access to job security, fair employment practices, and economic safety should be provided to all regardless of gender identity."

– Carmel Farahbakhsh, Support and Advocacy Coordinator, The Youth Project [Halifax, NS]

"Trans people are present and must be respected in all workplaces. Unfortunately, even today, transphobia prevents true inclusion. In order to ensure a more just and inclusive society, it is important to raise awareness of gender diversity in the work world. Furthermore, experience has shown that employees follow the direction of the company with regard to the inclusion of a trans employee. It is therefore crucial that management sets an example by its behavior and that it puts in place measures to promote the inclusion of trans people from the time they are hired and for the duration of their employment."


– Laurent Breault, General Manager, Fondation Émergence [Montreal, QC]

"The 519 has been serving LGBTQ2S communities for over 40 years. As a hub for LGBTQ2S communities, we recognize that great strides have been made for equality of LGBTQ2S communities, but we also know that this progress has not been applied systemically and equitably. Many of the conversations that were taking place 10 years ago around much needed systemic change to support trans, 2-spirit, and non-binary communities was focused on the most basic needs such as access to employment, housing, and healthcare. It is important to note that many of these conversations continue today with little change. While important change has occurred—such as addition of gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds in human rights legislation across Canada, a growing tide of banning conversion therapy, and securing the right to marry—the ground realities continue to lag, especially for those living at the intersections of marginalized identities."

– Jacq Hixon-Vulpe, Senior Consultant, Special Projects, The 519 [Toronto, ON]


"Since 2009, the Centre for Sexuality has been supporting businesses and organizations to implement transgender and gender diverse inclusive policies and practices. Through our years of experience, we have witnessed an immensely positive social impact within organizations that have committed to creating safer and inclusive workplaces. When staff are able to show up authentically, we see increased staff cohesion, collaboration, and improved communication, all of which has resulted in increased creativity and innovation. Organizations that are actively working towards inclusion are sending the message that transgender and gender diverse staff's mental health and wellbeing are valid and important, which leads to happier and healthier employees."

– Pam Krause, President and CEO, Center for Sexuality [Calgary, AB]




"Skipping Stone Foundation supports numerous transgender and gender diverse individuals throughout Alberta. Through our work, we see first hand that the inclusion of transgender and gender diverse individuals in Canadian workplaces continues to be a significant and challenging obstacle. Worse yet, because of lack of representation and in many cases, lack of policies, transgender and gender diverse individuals feel forced to leave their employment to pursue their authentic identity safely. This knowledge drives one of our fundamental values, which is to empower through education, compassion, and illuminating the unique strengths, skills, and talents of others. We are continually fighting for change through delivering transformative training to Canadian employers to break down negative stereotypes and perceptions, which we believe can create space for the gender diverse community. We believe that through this, we will establish more representation within Canadian employers, thereby removing the barriers that exist."

– Lindsay Peace, Executive Director, Co-Founder, Skipping Stone Foundation [Calgary, AB]



"Trans people are skilled, knowledgeable and passionate people. The idea of "employing trans people" is often one that promotes this idea of employers providing a service to a group of marginalized people—when really, employing trans people is bringing so much to your workplace, business or company. As trans people, we walk through the world differently and often, just by existing, we end up gaining skills that employers are always looking for. Because of the barriers we're faced with every day and the communities we're apart of, trans and non-binary people are experts in critical thinking, problem-solving, navigating stressful situations, and in collaboration. I always tell employers that hiring trans people is, yes, a step towards an inclusive workplace, but it also means you're hiring somebody who is hard-working, doesn't give up, and who will bring perspectives that will help your company do better."

– Jacq Brasseur, Executive Director, UR Pride Centre for Sexuality & Gender Diversity [Regina, SK]



"It's not only the trans-employees that suffer from work environments that are not trans-inclusive, but all employees and the workplace itself. Workplace discrimination can lead individuals to experience health implications, loss of productivity, and a lack of feeling safe at work. Further, the workplace can suffer from a loss of revenue, higher staff turnover, and a loss of reputation. With comprehensive policies to accommodate and assist trans employees, employers can not only foster a culture of caring and support in the workplace, but all employees are more likely to experience a positive work life, which in turn can increase productivity and dedication. Foresight and careful thought in policy-making before these policies are needed will only pay off in the long run and increase a workplace's reputation as being a 2SLGBTQ+ inclusive environment."

– Craig Gibb, Program and Education Manager, Rainbow Resource Centre [Winnipeg, MB]

A letter from the Commissioner of the Canadian Human Rights Commission

Research is a key foundation of human rights progress. It strengthens our knowledge and it allows us to discover where we can and must do better. And putting new knowledge into practice is how we will build a better future together—to ensure Canada remains a world leader in human rights and equality.

I am pleased to see this new report, “Transitioning Employers: A survey of policies and practices for trans inclusive workplaces.” This research provides examples of how businesses can go beyond the basics to ensure the full inclusion of trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming employees.

The practices encouraged in this research will assist businesses in meeting both the letter of the law and the spirit of equality which underpins all human rights legislation across Canada. This research also provides insight and concrete ways to contribute to both the 2011 United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and the 2017 UN Standards of Conduct, which urge businesses to provide better support and a positive environment so that LGBTQ2SI employees can work with dignity and without stigma. Combined with emerging research on lived experiences such as the 2020 Trans PULSE Canada project, employers can now better understand why progress is critically needed, and the steps required to make a real, positive, and lasting difference in the lives and work of trans, non-binary, and gender non-conforming employees.

During this period when our country is facing challenges and finding new ways to do business, it is not a time to lower business commitment to human rights. As we all reset, this is the time to press forward together for human rights and innovate for equality.

I encourage all employers both large and small, to invest in the policies and practices outlined in this report. Important steps such as issuing clear executive leadership support and putting in place ongoing training on gender identity and expression and unconscious bias, can bring economic and human rights benefits to employees, businesses, the economy, and our nation.

And trans rights are human rights—in workplaces, in Canada, and across the world.

Marie-Claude Landry Ad.E.

Executive summary

In 2019, Pride at Work Canada and the Institute for Gender and the Economy at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management partnered to undertake the first Canadian study dedicated to understanding workplace policies and practices for supporting trans and gender non-conforming people—meaning individuals whose gender identity, or personal experience of gender, differs from their sex assigned at birth.¹ We surveyed 69 organizations in Pride at Work Canada's membership network (a 58% response rate of all members contacted at the time of the survey), which is made up of organizations who are committed to LGBTQ2+ inclusion. These organizations collectively employ more than 700,000 people across Canada.

The aim of the study was to document the policies and practices for supporting trans and gender non-conforming people applied by Canada's large employers. Because all respondents are partners of Pride at Work Canada, we believe the results here represent a best-case scenario as non-partners and non-respondents are likely to have fewer gender-inclusive practices.

This groundbreaking survey dedicated to gender-inclusive workplace policies and practices in Canada shows that while a substantial portion of organizations surveyed have anti-discrimination

policies and training that includes gender identity and gender expression, only a fraction of these organizations have broader inclusion policies aimed at providing equitable professional opportunities for trans and gender non-conforming people. Because trans and gender non-conforming people experience stigma and stereotypes about how men and women ought to look, they will not have access to or even seek employment in prominent organizations unless those organizations take deliberate steps towards inclusion.² This is especially true for people who have gender expressions that do not conform to norms about the physical appearance of men and women, and for those who have experienced multiple forms of discrimination, such as ableism, racism, and sexism in addition to transphobia.³

The survey found that individual accommodations for employees based upon gender identity and gender expression protections do not adequately address the effects of institutionalized stigma, which negatively influence everyday workplace interactions and present barriers to hiring for trans and gender non-conforming people. The report shows how organizations can invest in building a future where all people, including all trans and gender non-conforming individuals, have safe and affirming workplaces.

The aim of the study was to document the policies and practices for supporting trans and gender non-conforming people applied by Canada's large employers.



Background: Why should organizations be invested in gender-inclusive practices and policies?

Due to decades of activism, changing public awareness, and rising visibility, there have been dramatic changes in workplace recognition of people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions. Many organizational diversity initiatives now explicitly identify inclusion of trans and gender non-conforming people as part of their mandate. However, workplace discrimination, harassment, and violence continue to be pressing issues facing many trans and gender non-conforming people, especially those who face barriers based on multiple aspects of their identity such as race, socioeconomic status or ability.

In Canada, all provincially, territorially, and federally regulated employers are required to comply with human rights codes that prevent discrimination based on gender identity, and—with the exception of Saskatchewan and North West Territories—also gender expression. The Canadian Human Rights Act is federal legislation that protects employees and potential employees in federally regulated industries and First Nations from harassment and discrimination. Human rights codes identify numerous prohibited grounds for discrimination, including race, national or ethnic

disability, and religion. Gender identity and gender expression have been included as protected grounds as of 2017 for federally regulated industries, and for Ontario, Manitoba and Nova Scotia as early as 2012.⁴

For many organizations, especially those in federally regulated industries, employment equity guidelines provide one pathway to providing inclusive and equitable work environments for all employees. These guidelines require employers to engage in proactive employment practices to increase the representation of the four protected groups: women, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities. Some organizations have identified trans people as people belonging to an additional sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) minority group for which they apply similar proactive policies.



Understanding discrimination based upon gender identity and gender expression

Every person has a gender identity and gender expression, not just trans or gender non-conforming people. The term “cisgender” represents those people for whom their gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth. Because many people’s assumptions as well as institutional norms and practices are based on cisgender identity being the default, many trans and gender non-conforming people face discrimination because of prejudice based upon their gender identity or gender expression.

Assumptions that there are only two genders—and that people’s gender aligns with their sex assigned at birth—can result in institutional discrimination where policies, procedures, and programs assume that everyone is cisgender.

In interpersonal interactions, trans and gender nonconforming people can face many forms of discrimination including (1) assumptions about one’s gender that come from a judgment based on physical appearance about whether a person belongs in the sex categories male or female; (2) direct, indirect or subtle negative action, such as slurs, the use of the wrong pronoun, inappropriate questions, or being excluded from gendered spaces, and (3) physical and sexual harassment.

Intersecting factors that lead a person to experience discrimination based upon more than one code ground—such as race as well as gender identity—exacerbate these experiences.⁵

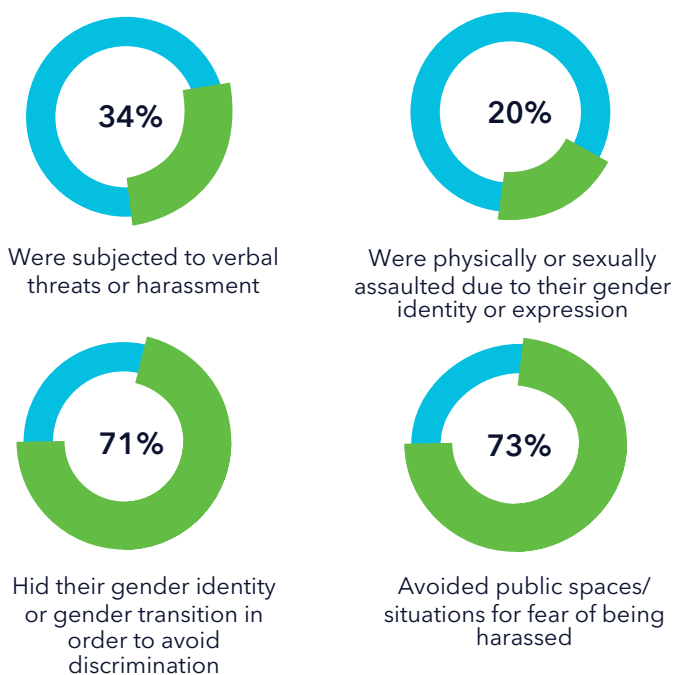
Trans and gender non-conforming people experience poor employment outcomes

Despite these recent changes in legal protections and increasing public acceptance, trans and gender non-conforming people face disproportionate experiences of stigma, discrimination, and violence simply because of their gender identity or gender expression. Structural barriers—including inadequate access to trans-affirming healthcare, housing discrimination, bullying and isolation, and lack of social support from family due to identity stigma—threaten employment stability for trans and gender non-conforming employees.⁶

According to the 2010 Trans PULSE survey of trans and gender non-conforming people in Ontario, 34% reported being subjected to verbal threats or harassment, 20% reported being physically or sexually assaulted due to their gender identity or gender expression, 71% hid their gender identity to avoid discrimination, and 73% reported avoiding public spaces or situations for fear of being harassed or 'outed' as trans.⁷

Anti-Trans Discrimination Remains Pervasive

Of the 433 trans and gender non-conforming people surveyed in the Trans Pulse research project...



Social exclusion and discrimination have had systemic impacts on the economic and employment outcomes of gender-diverse people. According to Trans PULSE, in Ontario 50% of trans and nonbinary people surveyed earned \$15,000 or less per year, even though 71% had some form of post-secondary education.⁸ The unemployment rate for trans and nonbinary people was 20%, which is more than double the provincial average. More recent data from the 2015 US Transgender Discrimination Survey found that 30% of trans and nonbinary people reported experiencing harassment, mistreatment or discrimination on the job during the previous year.⁹

Many trans people, especially trans people of colour, are not working in traditional workplace environments. A 2015 US-based study from the National Center for Transgender Equality found only 35% of the more than 27,000 surveyed were employed full-time by a single employer.¹⁰ Those who are employed by major employers may choose not to disclose their identities for fear of losing their jobs or missing out on advancement opportunities.

Source: Bauer, G., Nussbaum, N., Travers, R., Munro, L., Pyne, J., Redman, N., Scanlon, K. and Travers, R., (2011). We've got work to do: workplace discrimination and employment challenges for trans people in Ontario. Trans PULSE e-Bulletin, 2(1), pp.1-3.

Black and Indigenous trans people are more likely to face harassment, violence, and poverty

Black trans people face higher rates of poverty, with 34% living in extreme poverty compared to 9% of non-trans Black people.¹¹ Black trans women face the highest levels of fatal violence within the LGBTQ2+ community.¹² In Ontario, 47% of Indigenous trans people surveyed in the 2010 Ontario Trans PULSE study were living in poverty, while 34% were homeless or underhoused.¹³

In many organizations, diversity mandates may focus on one aspect of disadvantage or another: for example, they will have employee resource groups for women, LGBTQ2+ or black employees. These initiatives may not effectively address the challenges for individuals who face discrimination based on multiple aspects of their identity—such as black trans women who deal with

the interconnections of racism, transphobia, and sexism.

Studies show that trans and gender non-conforming people are being excluded from economic opportunity by systems and structures that block their access. Prior research has documented the often poor economic outcomes for trans and gender non-conforming people. The “Transitioning Employers” study by Pride at Work Canada and the Institute for Gender and the Economy complements these insights with understandings of what employers are doing to improve those outcomes. By surveying employers, we can evaluate whether they are complying with current mandates for accommodation and whether they are driving inclusion of trans and gender non-conforming people in their organizations.



Survey approach: assessing performance relative to best practices

To develop the survey, we analyzed the (somewhat limited) academic research on organizational practices for trans inclusion and existing practical guides produced by community organizations and governments to identify policies or processes that organizations could pursue to be more inclusive.¹⁴ These practices fall into two broad categories: **basic accommodations** and **fully inclusive practices**.

Practices for inclusion of trans and gender nonconforming employees

Basic accommodations

- Policy on non-discrimination protections
- Protocols for assisting employees with transitioning
- Protocols for changes to names and identity markers
- Health coverage for medically necessary care
- Gender-inclusive facilities, forms, dress codes
- Privacy protections for data collection
- Harassment and complaints policies

Fully inclusive practices

- Executive leadership support
- Employee training on gender identity and gender expression
- Inclusive recruiting practices
- Onboarding training on gender identity
- Employee resource groups
- Targeted mentorship and allyship
- Diversity and inclusion managers with a trans inclusion mandate
- Networking with community organizations to develop insight and expertise

In the following sections, we highlight the results of our survey of 69 major employers, showing that while organizations are making progress on providing basic accommodations, there are still substantial gaps in implementing practices that would make workplaces more inclusive. Employers are not yet maximizing opportunities for trans and gender non-conforming people to be hired, to advance, and to flourish. The full survey and results by question are available in the appendix.

Survey results: Basic accommodations

Our survey of 69 employers in Canada shows they are making changes in order to comply with their legal obligations to provide workplaces that are free from discrimination based upon gender identity and gender expression. It is again worth noting that these survey results are a best-case scenario because the survey participants were already partners in the Pride at Work Canada network and therefore committed to advancing LGBTQ2+ inclusion, and, further, were the organizations within that network who agreed to respond to the survey. That is, we expect that these results are high relative to all of Canadian employers.

A majority of those surveyed do provide at least some accommodations to their trans and gender non-conforming employees through anti-discrimination policies, more inclusive language, processes for changing records, inclusive and flexible dress codes, guaranteeing washroom access based upon gender identity, and offering trans-inclusive health benefits.

Organizations are making changes to comply with anti-discrimination legal obligations

Since 2017, organizations have made changes to comply with their legal obligations to not discriminate against trans and gender non-conforming people in their organizations. This begins with the inclusion of anti-discrimination protections based upon gender identity and gender expression in company policies. Of the organizations surveyed in 2019, 62% have included such provisions. This is an increase from a separate

2017 survey by Pride at Work Canada which found 50% of surveyed partners included the provisions.¹⁵ The implication, however, is that 38% of respondents still do not have explicit gender identity and gender expression anti-discrimination policies despite the fact that these protections are legally mandated. These results vary by industry, with the education sector having the highest compliance (80%) and professional services (50%), and public sector and health care (45%) having the lowest. Consumer packaged goods and finance and insurance fall in between at 70%.

Codifying anti-discrimination policies is a good starting point, but to be effective, these policies must be communicated to employees and contractors of organizations. For those 62% of organizations that do have explicit policies, managers are not consistently communicating these policies to potential or new employees. Only 50% of respondents with anti-discrimination policies identify gender identity and gender expression as protected grounds in job advertisements. During onboarding, 65% of respondents with policies provided them to their new employees. For new hires, 29% of the organizations with policies go over the human rights protections during the on-boarding process.

Even though the majority of organizations have formal policies for their employees, when it comes to contractor and supplier procurement contracts only 19% of respondents affirmed protections based upon gender identity and gender expression.

Protocols for assisting employees with transitioning, including changes to names and identity markers

The Ontario Human Rights Commission recommends that organizations put in place gender transition guidelines in order to comply with the legal obligation to provide accommodations based upon gender identity and gender expression. **Even if an organization does not know of any trans employees in their organization, it does not mean that they do not exist.** Providing formal policies in case an employee wishes to publicly transition at the organization can ensure the transitioning employee, managers and staff feel supported and know what to expect. The policies should state expectations of the employee, managers, and coworkers, and identify related policies on anti-discrimination, confidentiality, and individual accommodation.¹⁶ Not all trans or gender non-conforming people may wish to transition medically, and some may prefer to only change their name or their pronouns. Having flexible policies in place will help to signal to employees that they will be supported.

Best practice suggests that it is useful to have a written transition plan that includes a process for notifying the employee's co-workers and managers to assist in the process, but only 39% of those surveyed have such a tool. Organizations wishing to develop such a protocol can benefit from

LGBTQ2+ community organizations such as the 519 who produce resource toolkits developed and vetted by trans people (see appendix for a list of selected resources).

Many trans and gender non-conforming people change their names or gender markers to align with their gender identity. Trans and gender non-conforming individuals who are consistently misgendered can suffer negative psychological impacts, including feeling stigmatized, having a reduced sense of worth, and anxiety and depression.¹⁷ Formalizing and distributing policies are ways for organizations to signal to employees that they will be supportive of their process

Because it is burdensome to assure these changes are made across all administrative locations, organizational assistance can alleviate stress at work for transitioning employees. However, our survey suggests that only 51% of respondents have a personnel process to amend gender markers. Of these, 63% have staff trained to handle these requests and 51% have the process written and accessible to employees. In addition, 33% of those who have a process require employees to provide proof of a legal name change to amend their information. Obtaining a legal name change can be create a barrier for many people because it is an expensive process with many bureaucratic hurdles.

Being referred to with the proper pronouns is a mark of basic respect.

It's something that many cis people take for granted, but many trans people cannot. When I'm at work, I want to focus on succeeding in my job, and being repeatedly misgendered at work interferes with that by making me feel out of place, uncomfortable, and on edge. It's a painful reminder of the dissonance between the way I see myself and the way cis people see me. Having to consider how best to politely correct colleagues who misgender me, without damaging my working relationship with them, takes energy that I would rather use for my actual work."

—trans communications professional, Ottawa, ON



Health coverage for transitioning employees

While surveyed organizations have health coverage for many gender affirming procedures, most do not cover all medically necessary procedures. Three-quarters of the organizations surveyed have health coverage that include some trans and gender non-conforming employee needs. Benefits include time off for transition-related medical procedures (75%); mental health counseling (81%); and hormone therapy (79%).

Of the organizations with health benefits, only 13% have coverage for medical or surgical procedures outside of the basic provincial coverage such as chest contouring or electrolysis. This means that a majority of trans or gender non-conforming employees must pay out of pocket for procedures deemed medically necessary in the Standards of Care published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH).¹⁸

Gender inclusive facilities, forms and dress codes

All-gender washrooms: It is important to provide safe and respectful access to washrooms for people based upon their gender identity. Washrooms have often been a place where trans and gender non-conforming people face harassment or outright exclusion. In addition to allowing trans and gender non-conforming people to use the washroom according to their

gender identity, it is also advisable to have available a single occupancy all-gender washroom to accommodate everyone. Of the surveyed organizations, 74% have at least one all-gender washroom, and 66% have more than one all-gender washroom. However, many organizations noted that these accommodations may only exist at headquarters or main offices leading many employees in non-headquarters locations to be without access.

Gender inclusive washroom signage, on all washrooms including multi-stall men's and women's washrooms, can signal to trans and gender non-conforming people that they are seen and supported by the organization, especially if someone challenges their right to use the washroom of their choice. Yet only 46% of survey respondents have signage that is inclusive of all genders.

Inclusive language: Organizations often use gendered language without intentionally understanding that they are doing so. Speakers use "ladies and gentlemen" to address an audience, and company letters use gendered salutations. More often than not, the use of gendered language that refers to men and women is historical, and is not connected to a legitimate organizational goal.¹⁹ The problem with using gendered language unintentionally, especially when this language is used for sex-segregated washrooms or company forms, is that this segregation can be discriminatory because it provides an opportunity for other people to make judgments about someone's gender identity.²⁰

Auditing the use of gender information on forms, in websites and brochures as well as all internal data and employee systems such as payroll, human resources, information technology, and security is an essential first step for organizations seeking to be more gender-inclusive. Indeed, 65% of the organizations surveyed have conducted some form of a gender audit—either internally or with the help of a consultant—of their forms and applications to ensure gender information is requested only when necessary. On the other hand, only 45% of those surveyed had gender-inclusive dress codes or uniform policies.

One way of removing the stigma of misgendering people is to have a standard in which everyone displays their pronouns. We found, however, that only 33% of organizations surveyed have a standard for including pronouns in email signatures and only 13% had a practice of listing pronouns on customer-facing nametags.



Data collection and privacy

Many organizations surveyed stated that they did not believe they have any trans people in their work environment. However, some trans people do not publicly disclose their gender identity for fear of discrimination or negative employment outcomes. Specific policies or workplace cultures may also prevent trans people from joining or staying in an organization. Over 75% of respondents in the 2015 US Transgender Discrimination Survey took steps to avoid mistreatment at work, such as hiding or delaying their gender transition or quitting their job.²¹

Adequately analyzing underrepresentation is complicated by the fact that trans and nonbinary people are not represented in most datasets.²² This leaves gaps in the data on the population and in workplace estimates of trans people, a knowledge gap which subsequently impacts the effectiveness of hiring targets in recruitment and employment equity initiatives. More robust data on trans people is important to make visible an often-overlooked community.²³ At the same time, collecting data from people in vulnerable situations has risks and may increase vulnerability. These risks must be weighed against the benefits of data collection and mitigated in the data collection process.

If a company wishes to collect gender data, they should ensure that there is a legitimate business rationale for asking, as well as a plan for confidentially collecting and storing the information. In our survey, more than 60% of organizations are collecting data on gender identity and gender expression, though most do not connect the collection of these data to a business rationale or diversity strategy.

When collecting gender data, some useful practices include: asking employees for their gender, not sex; allowing at least a third option other than the binary male/female whenever asking for gender; asking for this information only when needed; removing gender markers from employee forms and ID cards or other records unless they are specifically needed; and ensuring that records are only accessible by those who need to know. When organizations are transparent

about the reasons for asking about gender—for example, to build a diversity and inclusion strategy—then employees will be more likely to comply. This means establishing a clear connection to the business strategy before asking about an employee's gender.

Though all surveyed organizations stated they had a general privacy policy, only 33% of respondents have a privacy policy that ensures the non-disclosure of employee data related to gender identity, sex marker, and former names. When capturing organizational data, it is best to ask whether it is necessary to collect gender or sex data. If these data are necessary, then it can be helpful to state directly why the information is necessary and affirm the organization's commitment to privacy.

Harassment and complaints policies

Despite organizational efforts to improve inclusion of trans and gender nonconforming people, there may be occasions in which harassment or bullying takes place. All of the companies surveyed affirmed that they have a written document outlining how to file a complaint for those who do experience harassment, and 78% have outlined the disciplinary procedures for offenders. However, we know that it is often difficult for employees to make a complaint. While 64% of those surveyed do offer a formal support role for a complainant as they navigate the complaints process, 36% do not. Further, because of vulnerabilities around disclosure of private information such as prior names or sex markers, those in organizational support roles should be specifically trained to handle discrimination and harassment complaints involving trans and gender nonconforming people.

In summary, especially since the changes in human rights codes in 2017, major employers are increasingly putting in place accommodations for trans and gender non-conforming people. At the same time there is room for improvement even in basic accommodations, and as outlined in the next section, in creating fully inclusive organizations.

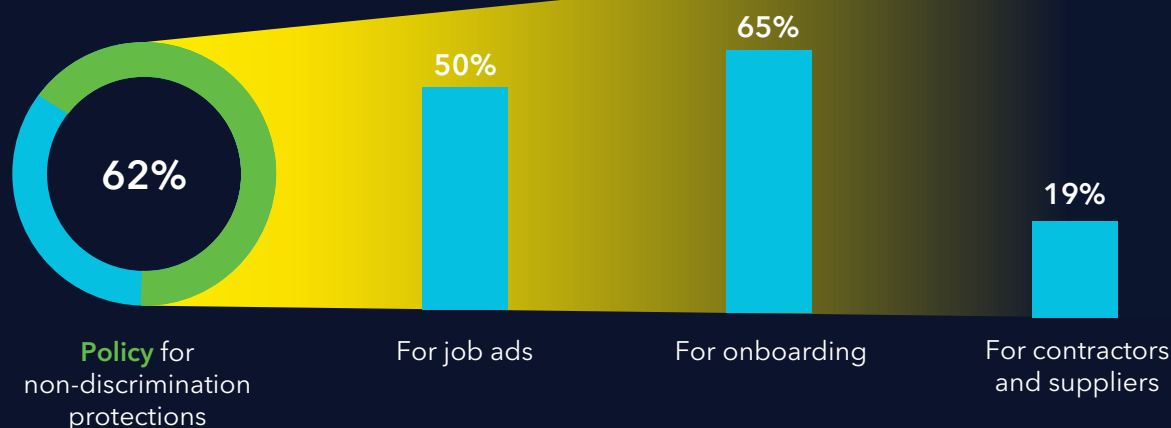
Transitioning Employers:

Survey results for **basic accommodations**

Are employers providing basic accommodations for transgender workers?

Large Canadian workplaces are making progress on supporting transitions and creating supportive structures.

Companies are increasingly making basic accommodations for trans and gender non-conforming employees



Supporting Transitions



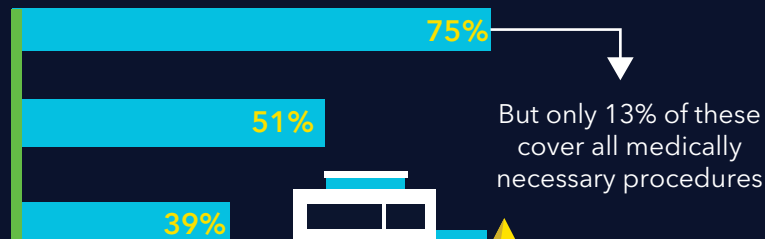
Health coverage



Protocols for changes in names and identity markers



Protocols for assisting employees in transition



Supportive Facilities, Forms, and Dress Codes



All gender washroom



Reviews of gendered language in forms



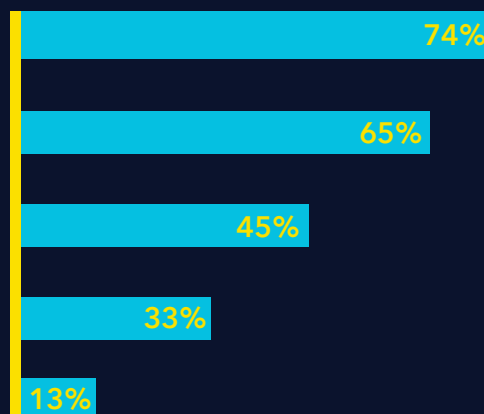
Gender-inclusive dress code



Pronouns in emails



Pronouns in customer-facing name tags



Survey results: Moving beyond accommodation to inclusion

Accommodation efforts are good place to begin for an organization starting to think about their gender-diverse employees, but they may not adequately address the stigma about what it means to be a person who is trans or to counteract stereotypes about how 'men' and 'women' ought to look. This stigma impacts everything from workplace culture to the hiring pipeline.

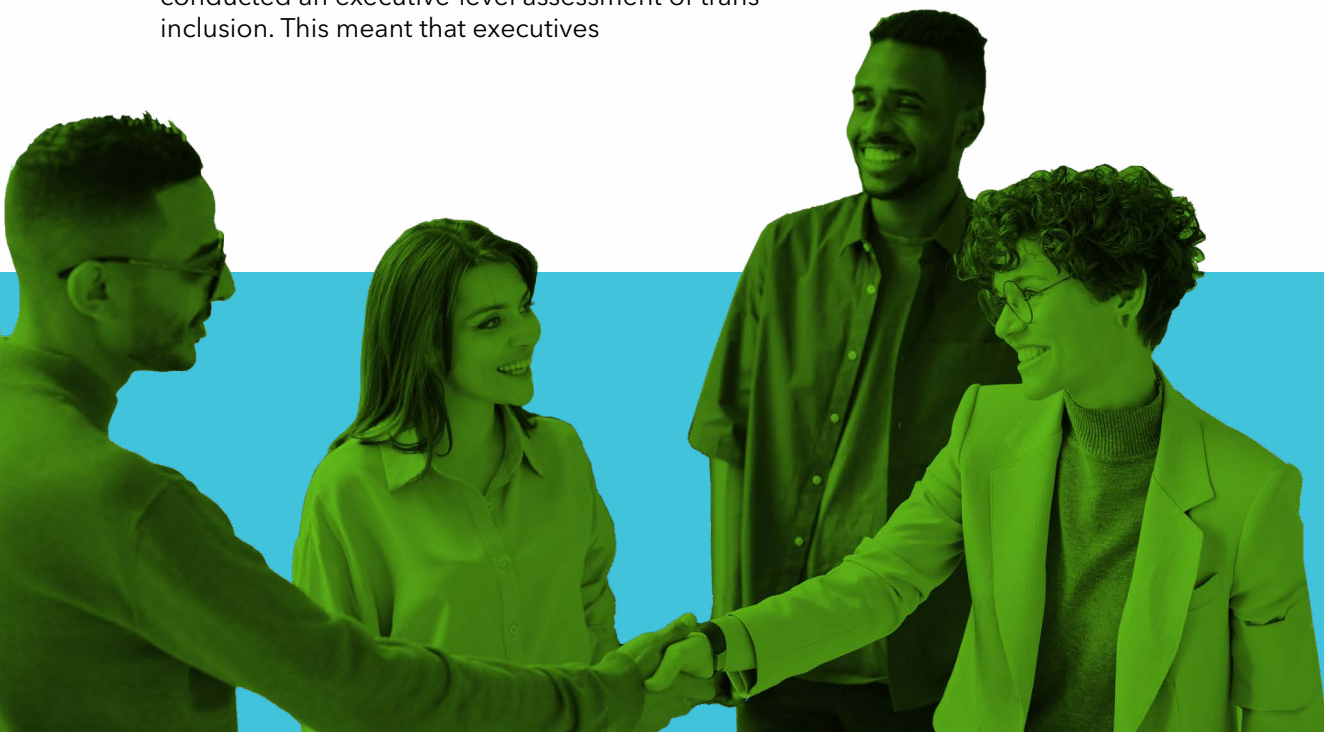
Our survey finds that while participating organizations are making progress on their legal obligations to employees in their organizations, policies and practices aimed at providing equitable professional opportunities for trans and gender non-conforming people are lacking. This matters because trans and gender non-conforming people—who experience marginalization because of their gender identity or gender expression—will continue to remain underrepresented in large organizations without additional support. Creating gender-inclusive organizations begins with workplace culture, and requires executive leadership support and inclusive training, recruiting, onboarding and mentorship as well as investment in other resources such as employee resource groups and diversity and inclusion managers.

Executive leadership support

As with all diversity and inclusion initiatives, organizational change starts at the top of the organization. Of organizations surveyed, 22% have conducted an executive-level assessment of trans inclusion. This meant that executives

were taking a leadership role on trans inclusion efforts. Having senior leaders involved in inclusion efforts helps to prevent diversity blowback and builds uptake among other employees.²⁴ This leadership provides role models for the rest of the organization. Where executives have taken a leadership role in trans inclusion efforts, Pride at Work Canada has often found that it was based in a personal story of a child, family member, or close friend who was trans or gender-diverse that led to their dedication. Organizations cannot rely exclusively, however, on leaders who have experiences with trans and gender non-conforming family members. True inclusion will require leaders of all backgrounds to take a stance.

Changing workplace culture is a challenge for large employers. It includes training, community outreach, concrete policy changes, and building opportunities for trans and gender non-conforming staff to bring their whole selves to work. This can happen through the work of employee resource groups, community events, or just by having their pronouns, name, gender expression, and identity respected and valued. Like all diversity and inclusion work, however, this cultural change must come from the top. Senior leaders can set an example that inclusion of trans and gender non-conforming staff is part of the organization's values.



Training on gender identity and gender expression

Organizations can create a gender-inclusive environment by ensuring employees—from managers to HR decision-makers and staff—have specific training and resources to help them navigate their own learning on gender identity and gender expression. Top managers, for example, has different training needs than HR or customer service representatives. For many organizations, staff training is a key component of diversity and inclusion efforts. Three-quarters of organizations surveyed have offered some form of training that includes information on gender identity and gender expression, though there was substantial variation in how many employees were addressed by the training.


Training, when done well, helps to build understanding, and gives those who want to be inclusive the tools they need to create a gender-inclusive environment. Only 46% of survey respondents offered training for executives on gender identity and gender expression. For those organizations that did offer some form of training, it comprised a mix of in person training by individual trans consultants or in-house staff, in-house e-learning training, and the e-learning training module provided by Pride at Work Canada.

Different training approaches can work for different organizations based on their organizational culture, size, and how geographically dispersed they are. E-learning training that can be completed by all managers within their busy schedules avoids the challenge of competing schedules and disparate locations that often is the drawback of in-person training. In-person training can be more effective because it creates an opportunity

for dialogue, but it can also have blowback or negative impacts on trans and gender-diverse employees who can become “othered” by the process of focusing on their concerns. Successful training engages employees who would like to make inclusive changes but who do not have the tools, and connects any trans inclusion initiative to organizational priorities so employees understand the applicability of the training. Showing employees practical examples about how trans inclusion can apply to changes in HR systems, better customer service, or updates on policies, for example, can help bring the ideas to life.

For diversity training to be effective at creating a more inclusive culture, it must be ongoing, long-term, and connected to measurable organizational initiatives.²⁵ Even in the instances where diversity training alone is not effective at fixing systemic problems, it can help to create awareness and spark conversations about prejudice and discrimination.²⁶ Currently, 41% of organizations with training on gender identity and expression have had follow up or longer term training.

Most (90%) of organizations hired an external consultant for training on gender diversity. This makes sense because consultants can bring in knowledge to the organization that the organization may not have itself. However, one caution is that the training will be most effective if it is connected to measurable company outcomes. We find that only 59% of organizations with training had an evaluation measure for the training. In addition, 75% of respondents who offered training made it optional. This is consistent with best practice which indicates that mandatory diversity training can backfire.²⁷ However, organizations need to create contexts where people are interested in taking part in optional training.



For diversity training to be effective at creating a more inclusive culture, it must be ongoing, long-term, and connected to measurable organizational outcomes.

Inclusive recruiting practices

Because of historical underrepresentation and systematic barriers to employment, organizations will need to engage in proactive efforts to recruit trans employees. Most organizations surveyed had some form of employment equity program aimed at increased representation of the four groups designated by the Human Rights Code, however, only 19% of organizations surveyed had an employment equity program that included trans and gender non-conforming individuals. Of these organizations, 62% have disaggregated data specific to gender identity and trans status, to ensure the representation of trans people as well as gender minorities.

Specific programs to recruit trans or gender non-conforming employees exist at 13% of the organizations. This is important because research shows that candidates who are identified as trans on their resume are significantly less likely than cisgender people to receive a call back about a job application.²⁸

Trans people may be excluded by organizations because they may have irregular resumes, non-traditional education or gaps in employment, due to factors such as family conflict. Trans and gender non-conforming youth who are kicked out or leave their homes due to violence or harassment because of their gender identity face homelessness and/or incarceration and lack economic resources.²⁹ This means that organizations serious about trans inclusion will need to make accommodations for the systemic discrimination of trans people. Note that background checks are particularly fraught for trans people. Some trans people may not be able to list previous employment or education for fear of outing themselves to their new employer.

// Background checks are often harmful for trans people

because they reveal that someone is transgender whether they want this information released, or not. Because we know that trans people face more incidents of unemployment and violence in the workplace, background checks have great potential to be harmful and even in some cases fatal to trans people.”

—trans finance professional,
Toronto, ON



Targeted mentorship and allyship

Only 17% of organizations surveyed have offered a mentorship program to support trans and gender non-conforming employees once they are hired. Some programs focus on allyship in which people who are not members of a marginalized group work to address the inequities that are experienced by that group. Of survey respondents, 67% offered initiatives to encourage employees to act as allies to their trans and gender non-conforming coworkers. These initiatives are important as they can provide tools to cisgender employees who wish to be supportive, but do not know how to make inclusive changes nor where to access resources to do so. The most effective allyship programs require those who are designated allies or champions to go through training focused on gender identity and gender expression. They also provide a visual signifier that the employee is an ally (for example a trans flag or rainbow lanyard, a sticker, or a button). Best practice suggests it is important also to evaluate the effectiveness of the allyship program and for allyship programs to be promoted from the top of the organization by senior leaders.

Employee resource groups

To become truly gender-inclusive, organizations will need to focus on creating safe and affirming workplaces for trans and gender non-conforming people. Many large employers are committed to diversity, inclusion and creating a sense of belonging for all of their employees and potential employees, including transgender and gender non-conforming people, but often feel lost as to what steps to take. Trans inclusion is rarely seen as an organizational priority. Trans inclusion is often delegated to LGBTQ2+ employee resource groups who may not have the expertise, fiscal support, or ability to make broad reaching organizational changes to policy and practices.

Employee resource groups, inclusion councils, or affinity groups can help create a gender-inclusive environment. The majority of employee resource groups that were tasked with trans inclusion are those focused on LGBTQ2+ communities overall. Of organizations we surveyed, 74% had an employee resource group that included trans and gender non-conforming employees. However, many respondents noted that there were no trans individuals, to their knowledge, in their group; and 96% of trans-inclusive employee resource groups were part of a broader LGBTQ2+ employee resource group. There is a risk in always combining trans inclusion efforts with inclusion focused on sexual orientation. While some needs of the lesbian, gay and bisexual community may overlap with interests of the trans and gender non-conforming community, many concerns are distinct.

The survey also revealed a disparity in access to the employee resource groups, as only 41% of the companies with employee resource groups had local chapters in different company locations. As a result many trans and gender-diverse employees do not have local access to employee resource groups that could help build a sense of belonging in their employer and provide a source of feedback for further trans and gender diverse inclusion initiatives.



Diversity and inclusion managers

Employee resource groups cannot bear the brunt of trans inclusion alone. Diversity and inclusion managers also need to see trans inclusion as part of their mandate. Many of the diversity and inclusion managers surveyed had not identified trans inclusion as a core part of their mandate and and felt that they lacked the skills to do so. For trans inclusion to be effect, those with diversity and inclusion responsibilities will need to take on gender identity and gender expression as a core part of their mandate—distinct from their mandate on inclusion regarding sexual orientation—in order to make actionable changes on trans inclusion. Important resources for tools and approaches to inclusion can come from consultation with organizations such as Pride at Work Canada, other trans inclusion professionals, and training.

In our survey, 45% of respondents have appointed a trans or gender non-conforming employee as a diversity representative for their organization. These appointees were often the only known trans person in the organization or one of only a handful that survey respondents could count out. Singling out the few known trans people in the organization to take a lead on diversity and inclusion has both pros and cons. On the positive side, it highlights these people as role models and brings their lived experience into the development of diversity and inclusion practices. On the more problematic side, it risks tokenizing that person and reducing them only to their gender identity and not to the whole person that they are.

When I'm asked to present, I often ask why people are interested in hearing me speak. If the first thing they say is that I'm trans, I know that they don't care about my actual work or experience and more that they are trying to check a box. I'm proudly trans, but that isn't the only part of me, and I don't want to tell my personal story. I've done it way too many times, nothing is gained by telling it again."

—trans education professional, Toronto, ON

Tokenization and the price of visibility



Some organizations are making concerted attempts to increase the inclusion of trans and gender nonconforming employees. Because there are so few “out” trans workers, the few that are identified are increasingly often celebrated internally and externally and put in visible positions as diversity representatives of the organization. While these efforts may be well-intentioned and may increase the visibility of trans inclusion issues, this approach risks tokenizing these individuals.

Tokenization—a term developed in the 1970s by Rosabeth Moss Kanter³⁰ to describe the holding up of individuals from minority groups as representatives for the entire group—comes with professional opportunities as well as costs. Often these few individuals are called upon to speak on behalf of all trans people or even for all types of underrepresented groups in the organization. As a result, trans individuals who are tokenized may experience stress and tension as they are forced to confront and address prejudices and stereotypes.

Organizational networking for inclusion

Many organizations signal their interest in being inclusive of trans and gender nonconforming people by participating in annual Pride events and other public LGBTQ2+ inclusion events. Symbolic actions are important, as shown by the Pride at Work Canada study “Hiring Across All Spectrums,” potential job seekers ranked involvement in a Pride parade as one of the lowest priorities in terms of features desired in an employer.³¹ More important would be specific networking and recruiting outreach.

Among survey respondents, 86% had been part of LGBTQ+ networking events with community organizations such as Pride at Work Canada,

however only 3% of those events were specific to trans and gender non-conforming people’s inclusion. Trans job seekers and employees need to see their employers being involved in inclusion events focused explicitly on trans and gender non-conforming inclusion.

In summary, when we examine what organizations are doing to move beyond accommodation and towards inclusion, most organizations surveyed are still on their path to creating fully inclusive organizations, often blocked by lack of information, resources and skills.

Transitioning Employers:

Survey results for inclusive practices

Only **22%** of surveyed companies have senior executive leadership focused on trans inclusion

Are employers moving beyond basic accommodations to create truly inclusive cultures for transgender workers?

Large Canadian workplaces are still at the early stages of creating transgender-inclusive practices.

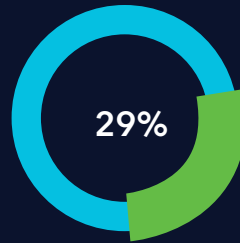


Recruiting and Training Support

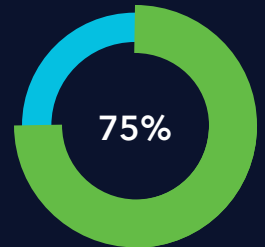
Employers offering:



Inclusive recruiting for trans and gender non-conforming people



Onboarding training on gender identity



Employee training on gender identity (only 41% offer training regularly)

Organizational Support

Companies provide these supports...



Organizational community networking to support trans and gender non-conforming inclusion initiatives



Employee resource groups



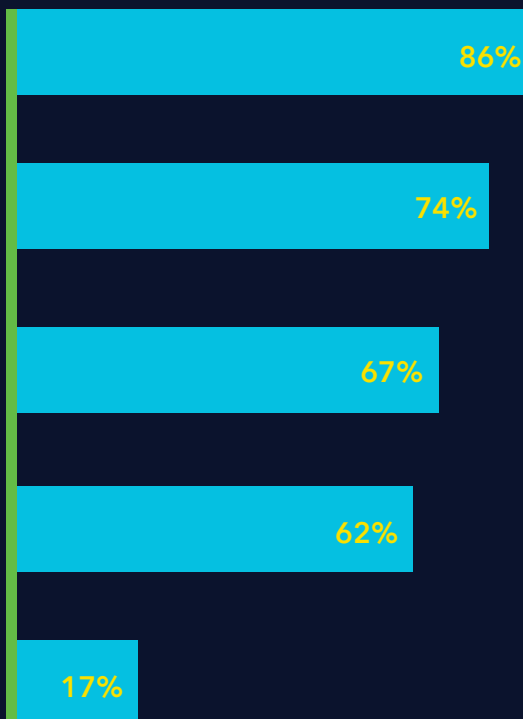
Encourage employees to be allies



Diversity and inclusion manager with mandate to address trans and gender non-conforming staff



Platform for matching trans employees with mentors



...but most of these initiatives combine trans and gender non-conforming employees under the broader **LGBTQ+** umbrella

Conclusion: Inclusion for the 21st century

There is good reason to applaud the increased focus on policies and practices meant to support trans and gender non-conforming people in large organizations in Canada. Changing legislative protections, public awareness, rising visibility, and activism both outside and inside organizations have focused attention to inclusion of trans and gender non-conforming people.

Yet, there is more work to do to create inclusive and equitable workplaces for all Canadians regardless of gender identity. This is especially true for trans and gender non-conforming people facing barriers due to multiple aspects of their identity. **Organizations have the opportunity to continue to create accommodations for their current employees, as well as invest in building and extending the employment pipelines for trans and gender non-conforming people in order to create gender-inclusive organizations.** This begins with creating a workplace culture that is safe and affirming for all.

Endnotes

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Methodology

With funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the Institute for Gender and the Economy collaborated with Pride at Work Canada to administer a survey of policies and practices to support trans and gender non-conforming people between September and November 2019. Pride at Work Canada sent recruitment emails in English and French to the 120 organizations in their membership network at the time of the survey (at the time of publication of this report, membership had increased to over 125 members). They also called many member organizations and promoted the survey at Pride at Work public events. In the end, 69 large organizations (each with more than 500 employees) across sectors and provinces opted-in to the survey, a 58% response rate. Many of those who declined to participate indicated that they were not far enough along in their journey towards transgender inclusion to be able to address the questions in the survey.

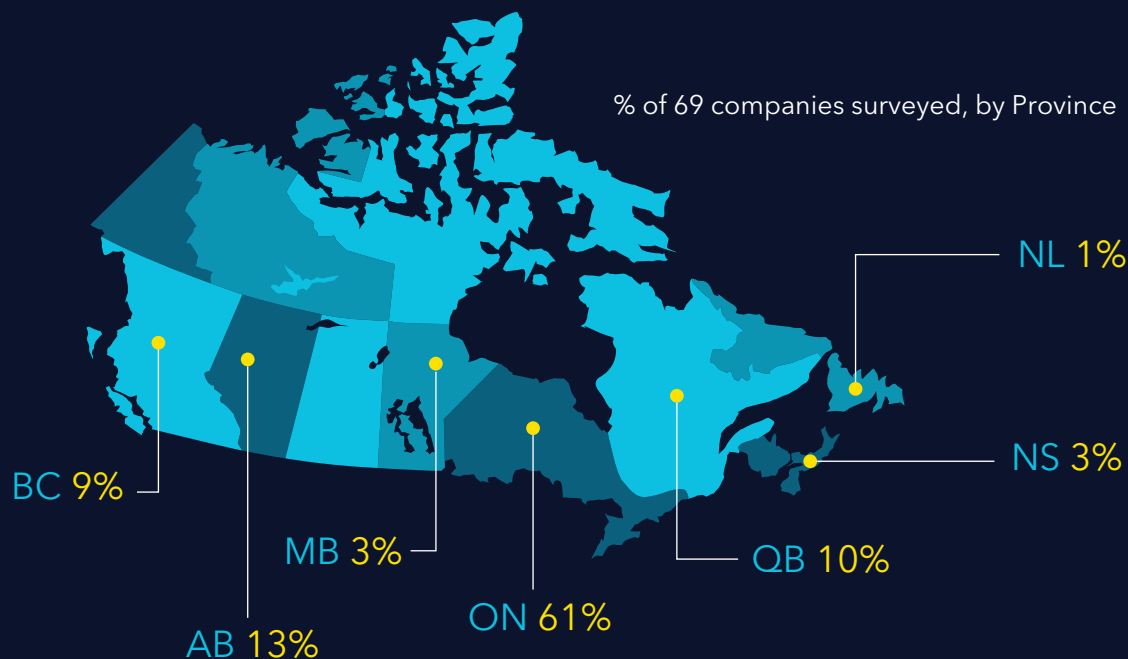
The telephone survey format was developed based on best practices for organizational surveys of employment practices from organizational sociologists studying workplace inequality.³² The background review of the literature brought together insights from sociologists of organizations and inequality who have investigated practices and policies of diversity together with research from legal scholars who have investigated the emergence of policies targeting trans people.³³ To develop the survey questions, we conducted an environmental scan of best practices guides on trans inclusion. Based on the 15 guides we identified, we developed a 70 question survey. Survey questions were pretested and validated with 4 human resource leaders in 4 non-member organizations in Canada. The survey was conducted in either English or French at the preference of the respondent. Anonymous quotes in the report were made by the survey respondents during the telephone interviews.

Participating organizations were mainly large organizations (over 500 employees) and were headquartered across seven Canadian provinces—British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador. There was no participation from companies headquartered in the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Saskatchewan, Nunavut, Prince Edward Island, or New Brunswick, though many of the surveyed organizations had operations in these provinces and territories.

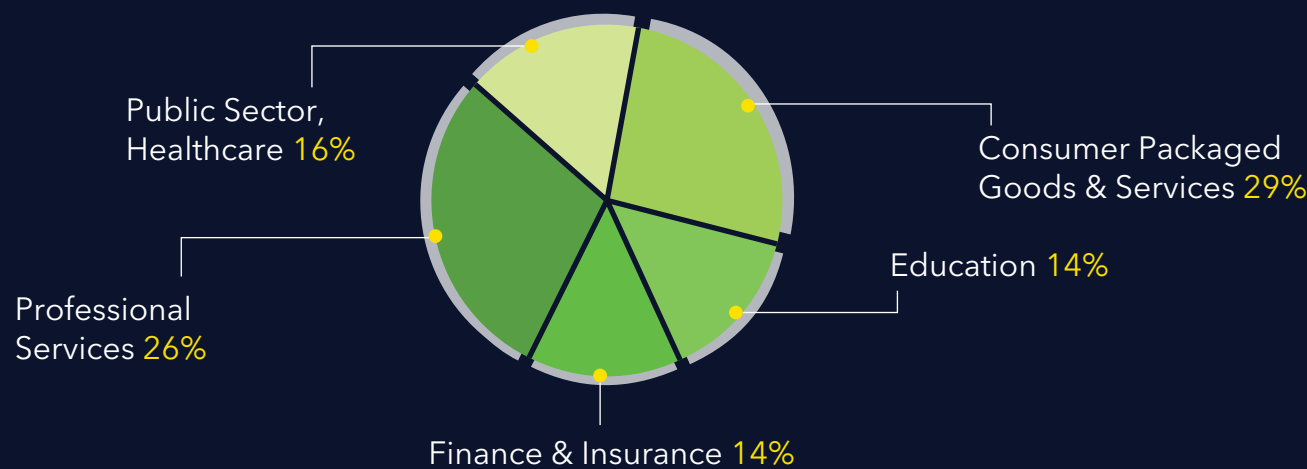
The survey covered a diverse range of industries including consumer packaged goods and services, education, finance and insurance, professional services, the public sector, and healthcare.

In the initial email, organizations were asked to identify the person in the company who knew the most about the policies to support trans and gender non-conforming people. Survey respondents were Diversity & Inclusion leaders, HR professionals, or other employees who were often involved with their company's LGBTQ2+ Employee Resource Groups.

Percent of surveyed companies by location of headquarters



Percent of surveyed companies by primary industry



Number of survey respondents by role



Question	Responses =yes	Percent out of 69 respondents	Of which (% of those who responded yes to main question)
BASIC ACCOMMODATIONS			
Policy on non-discrimination protections			
Have you ever had a policy that included affirming non-discrimination protection on the basis of gender-identity and gender expression?	43	62%	
• Is the policy written?	41	59%	95%
• Is the policy reviewed annually?	24	35%	56%
• Included in your job advertisements?	12	17%	50%
• Given to new employees during onboarding?	28	41%	65%
• Posted on your company website?	19	28%	44%
• Posted in the physical office?	11	16%	26%
• Included in contractors and suppliers or procurement documents?	13	19%	19%
Protocols for assisting employees with transitioning			
Have you ever had a written transition plan template to assist transitioning employees at work?	27	39%	
• Was the protocol produced to support an existing employee who was transitioning?	14	20%	52%
• Was the protocol developed with input from LGBT+ community organizations or their resource toolkits like the 519?	22	32%	81%
• Did the template include a plan for notifying employee's co-workers and managers?	26	38%	96%
Protocols for changes to names and identity markers			
Have you ever had a personnel process to amend identifying information and records to reflect an employee's chosen name and gender markers?	35	51%	
• Are human resources staff trained on handling gender marker and name change requests?	22	32%	63%
• Does the employee need proof of legal name change to amend their information?	11	16%	31%
• Is the process written and accessible by employees?	20	29%	57%
Health coverage			
Have you ever had health coverage for transgender and gender-nonconforming employee needs?	52	75%	
• Does the coverage include time-off for transition-related medical procedures?	39	57%	75%
• Does the coverage include therapy?	42	61%	81%
• Does the coverage include hormones prescriptions?	41	59%	79%
• Does the coverage include medical procedures beyond provincial coverage, like chest contouring and electrolysis?	7	10%	13%
Gender-inclusive facilities, forms, dress codes			
Have you ever had an all-gender bathroom?	51	74%	
Have you ever have more than one all-gender bathroom?	46	67%	
Have you ever had bathroom signs that are inclusive of all genders?	32	46%	
Have you ever had a gender-inclusive dress code or uniform policy?	31	45%	
Have you ever reviewed the gendered language usage in company documents and communications such as on your website and brochures?	45	65%	
Have you ever reviewed your forms and application to ensure they only ask for gender information when necessary?	45	65%	
Have you ever had a standard that included listing pronouns on email signatures?	23	33%	
Have you ever had a practice of listing pronouns on customer-facing nametags?	9	13%	

Question	Responses =yes	Percent out of 69 respondents	Of which (% of those who responded yes to main question)
Privacy protections for data collection			
Have you ever collected anonymized employee equity data on gender identity and expression?	42	61%	
Have you ever had privacy measures to ensure non-disclosure of trans employees' data, including former names or trans status?	23	33%	
Harassment and complaints policies			
Have you ever had a written document outlining how to file a complaint available to employees facing issues like workplace harassment?	69	100%	
Have you ever had a written document outlining the disciplinary procedures for employees related to workplace harassments?	54	78%	
Does the complaints procedure provide for a formal support role for the complainant as they navigate the complaints process?	44	64%	
FULLY INCLUSIVE PRACTICES			
Executive leadership support			
Have you ever had an assessment of the organization's capacity to welcome trans and gender nonconforming employees in which top executives take a leadership role?	15	22%	
Employee training on gender identity			
Have you ever had training that included information on diversity of gender identity and gender expression?	52	75%	
• Was the training in-person?	41	59%	79%
• Was the training online?	30	43%	43%
• Was there training for executives?	32	46%	46%
• Was the training for all employees?	39	57%	75%
• Have you ever hired external trans or gender non-conforming trainers for workplace training?	35	51%	90%
• Was the training required?	13	19%	33%
• Was there an evaluation measure?	23	33%	59%
• Was this training repeated annually?	16	23%	41%
Inclusive recruiting practices			
Have you ever had an employment equity program that includes trans and gender nonconforming individuals? (engage in proactive employment practices to increase the representation of four designated groups)	13	19%	
• Is this group disaggregated from LGBT employee equity categories?	8	12%	62%
Have you ever had job postings that encourage for trans and gender nonconforming individuals to apply?	9	13%	
Have you ever had signage to indicate you are a trans and gender nonconforming inclusive employer at recruitment opportunities?	15	22%	
Have you ever had a program to recruit trans or gender nonconforming individuals?	9	13%	
Onboarding training on gender identity			
Have you ever had a training that included information on diversity of gender identity and gender expression for all onboarded employees?	20	29%	
• Was the training in-person?	9	13%	45%
• Was the training online?	11	16%	55%
• Did an external consultant provide the training?	5	7%	25%

Question	Responses =yes	Percent out of 69 respondents	Of which (% of those who responded yes to main question)
Onboarding training on gender identity Have you ever had a training that included information on diversity of gender identity and gender expression for all onboarded employees?	20	29%	
• Was the training in-person?	9	13%	45%
• Was the training online?	11	16%	55%
• Did an external consultant provide the training?	5	7%	25%
Targeted mentorship and allyship Have you ever had a platform for connecting trans and gender nonconforming employees with mentors?	12	17%	
Have you ever had an initiative to encourage employees to act as allies to their trans and gender nonconforming coworkers?	46	67%	
Employee resource groups Have you had an employee resource group or committee that includes transgender and gender nonconforming employees?	51	74%	
• Is this part of broader LGB committee? /diversity committee?	49	71%	96%
• Does the ERG have local chapters in different cities or offices?	28	41%	55%
Diversity and inclusion managers with a transgender and gender nonconforming mandate Have you ever had trans or gender nonconforming employee be a diversity representative for the organization?	31	45%	
Have you ever had a manager whose duties include trans and gender nonconforming inclusion initiatives?	43	62%	
• Are the duties formalized as part of their job duties?	36	52%	84%
• Is this work done informally or outside of their job description?	24	35%	56%
Organizational networking for trans and gender nonconforming inclusion Have you ever participated in networking with community organizations about trans and gender nonconforming inclusion initiatives? (meet to form relationships for business or other purposes in formal or informal settings)	59	86%	
• Was this part of networking dedicated to trans and gender-nonconforming specific topics?	28	41%	47%
• Was this networking part of broader LGB/diversity initiative?	57	83%	97%

Glossary

Derived from the 2014 Ontario Human Rights Commissions' Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression:

The words people use to describe themselves and others are very important. The appropriate terms can affirm identities and challenge discriminatory attitudes. The inappropriate ones can disempower, demean and reinforce exclusion. While these terms and explanations are considered current and appropriate at the publication of this policy, their meaning and use can evolve and change over time. Generally, when in doubt, asking a person how they self-identify is the most respectful approach.

Sex: The classification of people as male, female or intersex. Sex is usually assigned at birth and is based on an assessment of a person's reproductive systems, hormones, chromosomes and other physical characteristics.

Sex and gender: Whereas "sex" is a person's physical characteristics, "gender" is about what it means to identify as a man, woman or something different in society. It is the expectations and stereotypes about behaviours, actions and roles linked to being a "man" or "woman." Social norms related to gender can vary depending on the culture and can change over time.

Gender binary: A social system whereby people are thought to have either one of two genders: man or woman. These genders are expected to correspond to birth sex: male or female. In the gender binary system, there is no room for interpretations, for living between genders, or for crossing the binary. The gender binary system is rigid and restrictive for many people who feel that their natal sex (sex they were labelled with at birth) does not match up with their gender or that their gender is fluid and not fixed.

Gender norms: The gender binary influences what society considers "normal" or acceptable behaviour, dress, appearances and roles for women and men. Gender norms are a prevailing force in everyday lives. Strength, action and dominance are stereotypically seen as "masculine" traits, while vulnerability, passivity and receptiveness are stereotypically seen as "feminine" traits. A woman expressing masculine traits may be stereotyped as overly "aggressive," while a man expressing "feminine" traits may be labeled as "weak." Gender norms can contribute to power imbalances and gender inequality in the home, at work and in communities

Gender identity: Each person's internal and individual experience of gender. It is a person's sense of being a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum. A person's gender identity may be the same as or different from their birth-assigned sex. For most people, their sex and gender identity align. For some, it does not. A person may be born male but identify as a woman, or born female but identify as a man. Other people may identify outside the categories of woman/man, or may see their gender identity as fluid and moving between different genders at different times in their life.

Gender expression: How a person publicly presents or expresses their gender. This can include behaviour and outward appearance such as dress, hair, make-up, body language and voice. A person's chosen name and pronoun are also common ways people express their gender. Others perceive a person's gender through these attributes. All people, regardless of their gender identity, have a gender expression and they may express it in any number of ways. For trans people, their chosen name, preferred pronoun and apparel are common ways they express their gender. People who are trans may also take medically supportive steps to align their body with their gender identity.

Trans or transgender: An umbrella term that describes people with diverse gender identities and gender expressions that do not conform to stereotypical ideas about what it means to be a girl/woman or boy/man in society. "Trans" can mean transcending beyond, existing between, or crossing over the gender spectrum. It includes but is not limited to people who identify as transgender, transsexual, cross dressers or gender non-conforming (gender variant or gender queer). "Trans" includes people whose gender identity is different from the gender associated with their birth-assigned sex. Trans people may or may not undergo medically supportive treatments, such as hormone therapy and a range of surgical procedures, to align their bodies with their internally felt gender identity. People who have transitioned from one gender to another may simply identify as female or male. Others may also identify as trans, as a trans woman or a trans man. Some people may identify as trans and not use the labels "female" or "male." Others may identify as existing between male and female or in different ways beyond the binary of male/female.

Gender non-conforming/gender variant/nonbinary/gender queer: Individuals who do not follow gender stereotypes based on the sex they were assigned at birth. They may identify and express themselves as “feminine men” or “masculine women” or as androgynous, outside of the categories “boy/man” and “girl/woman.” People who are gender non-conforming may or may not identify as trans.

Trans man and trans woman: A person whose sex assigned at birth is “female” and identifies as a man may also identify as a trans man (female-to-male FTM). A person whose sex assigned at birth is “male” and identifies as a woman may also identify as a trans woman (male-to-female MTF).

Transitioning: Refers to a host of activities that some trans people may pursue to affirm their gender identity. This may include changes to their name, sex designation, dress, the use of specific pronouns, and possibly medically supportive treatments such as hormone therapy, sex-reassignment surgery or other procedures. There is no checklist or average time for a transition process, and no universal goal or endpoint. Each person decides what meets their needs.

Cisgender and cisnormativity: Most people are “cisgender” (not trans); that is, their gender identity is in line with or “matches” the sex they were assigned at birth. Cisnormativity (“cis” meaning “the same as”) refers to the commonplace assumption that all people are cisgender and that everyone accepts this as “the norm.” The term is used to describe prejudice against trans people that is less overt or direct and more widespread or systemic in society, organizations and institutions. This form of systemic prejudice may even be unintentional and unrecognized by the people or organizations responsible.

For more information, please see: Ontario Human Rights Commission, “Policy on preventing discrimination because of gender identity and gender expression,” <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-preventing-discrimination-because-gender-identity-and-gender-expression>

Further Reading

Here are some guides for organizations interested in learning more about how they might better recruit, retain and support transgender and gender non-conforming people to their organizations.

“Support for Trans Employees: A Guide for Employees and Managers,” Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), May 2019, <https://www.tpsgc-pwgsc.gc.ca/apropos-about/guide-et-te-eng.html#s3>

“Creating Authentic Spaces: A Gender Identity and Gender Expression Toolkit to Support the Implementation of Institutional and Social Change,” The 519, last revision 6 August 2015, <http://www.the519.org/education-training/training-resources/our-resources/creating-authentic-spaces>

“Hiring Across All Spectrums: A Report on Broadening Opportunities for LGBTQ2+ Jobseekers,” Pride at Work Canada, 2018, <https://prideatwork.ca/hiring-across-spectrums/>

“Intégrer les personnes trans en milieu de travail,” Fondation Émergence, 2018, <https://www.fondationemergence.org/proallie>

Chaudhry, V. Varun, “TransForming Inclusion: An Organizational Guide,” Leeway Foundation, 2018, https://www.leeway.org/files/TransFormingInclusion_digital.pdf

Davis, H., 2018. “Building Gender-Inclusive Organizations: The Workbook,” <https://heathfoggdavis.com/building-gender-inclusive-organizations-the-workbook/>

“Model Transgender Employment Policy: negotiating for inclusive workplaces,” Transgender Law Center, last revision 2015, <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/resources/employment/modelpolicy>

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