

## Poverty is a Queer & Trans issue

British Columbia has the highest poverty rate in Canada, but is one of the last provinces without a poverty reduction plan. Queer and trans people face a high level of poverty and marginalization, yet these communities have previously not been included in initiatives trying to address poverty. This factsheet and the accompanying video is the start of addressing this and making the issue visible.





### FAMILY REJECTION & HOUSING ISSUES

Young queer and trans people who experience homophobia and transphobia within their families or in foster care are often kicked out or forced to leave. They are then faced with various housing issues, such as homelessness and lack of adequate queer and trans friendly shelters.

*“When I came out to my father, he screamed at me saying ‘is that the reason you have done everything wrong?’”*




*“I woke up with a note on me the day I actually left, and it said ‘if you are staying, then smarten up, if you’re not, then get out by 10 AM’, so I picked up my stuff and left”*

#### **1 in 4 queer and trans youth in BC are forced out of their homes due to severe family conflict.**

-  Among homeless youth in BC, 1 in 3 females and 1 in 10 males self identify as queer, trans or questioning.
-  Within this group, people of color and aboriginal people fare worse.
-  Queer and trans youth are twice as likely to live in unstable housing (moving three or more times in the past year)
-  29% of trans people often report being turned away when trying to access shelters, and 22% report being assaulted by residents and staff.

### HEALTH & WELL BEING

Queer and trans poverty and homelessness is associated with increases in substance abuse, mental health disorder, sexual abuse and other forms of violence. Queer and trans people who are already part of a marginalized population are often worst affected.

-  The risk of suicide among trans and queer youth is 14 times higher.
-  Queer or trans homeless youth are 3 times more likely to engage in survival sex.
-  1 in 5 of trans people have experienced physical or sexual assault due to their identity, and 1 in 3 have been subjected to verbal threats and harassments.

-  **Food insecurity: queer and trans youth are up to 5 times more likely to go to bed hungry at night because of no food in the house.**

*“In fear of losing my place, [they] convinced me to sleep with them. And I was scared I was going to lose the place if I said anything about it. So that happened a couple of times. Everything kind of just built up at once and I got so overwhelmed...”*



*Under the Rainbow* is a short documentary that highlights the root causes of queer and trans poverty in British Columbia. Directed by Dave Shortt & produced by the BC Poverty Reduction Coalition. Visit [bcpovertyreduction.ca/lgbtq](http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/lgbtq) to view the film.



## BARRIERS

Queer and trans people experience stigma and discrimination throughout their lives, and this discrimination is often embedded in the structure of organizations and social institutions.

☀ Trans people face high levels of violence, discrimination and harassment when looking for stable employment or housing and in accessing health or social services.

☀ **Trans and non-gender confirming people have double the unemployment rate as the general population, and 1 in 5 have been refused houses or apartments because of their gender identity or expression.**

☀ There is a shortage of youth shelters and housing programs with supportive services that cater particularly to queer, trans and questioning youth because their existence and specific needs are not acknowledged.

“There wasn’t really a lot of resources that I knew out there for queer people and I started to find them along the way. There needs to be more education out there, especially for the adults

## LONG-TERM EFFECTS

The experiences of family rejection, health issues, stigma and discrimination, and social exclusion can have a variety of negative consequences and spiraling effects that impact adulthood.

☀ Queer and trans people who experienced family rejection as adolescents, face high levels of depression, drug use and attempted suicide.

☀ Accumulated experiences of stigma, violence and discrimination increase internalized homophobia and are associated with poor mental and physical health throughout their lives.

☀ **Queer and trans people are over represented among low income Canadians; for example, in Ontario 71% of trans people have at least some college or university education, yet about 50% are living on \$15,000 or less a year.**

“My hope is to get a system in place, that keeps youth from identifying with street culture, and a short term intervention that gives them a different long term outcome

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Providing supportive environments and understanding the diversities that exist within queer and trans communities are key to curbing these negative consequences, promoting positive wellbeing and reducing homelessness and long-term poverty. Incorporating the following solutions has the potential to change a society currently plagued by homophobia and transphobia, normalized violence, exclusion and discrimination.

☀ Address homelessness: build more social housing, provide shelters and housing programs with supportive services for queer and trans people, and increase supportive housing for people with mental health issues.

☀ Better address the needs of queer and trans people of color and aboriginal people.

☀ Build data and knowledge on queer and trans communities in B.C.

☀ Provide access to safe and necessary healthcare for queer & trans people.

☀ Implement policies that combat discrimination within social institutions.

☀ Increase the minimum wage in BC and index it to inflation so it keeps up with the cost of living.

### Success!

The Vancouver School Board’s updated policy on queer and transgender students includes some critical measures to ensure safety and inclusion for these students. Policies such as this can have a long lasting impact on queer and trans poverty.



**BC has the highest poverty rate in Canada, but is one of the last provinces without a poverty reduction plan. We need a plan that includes queer and trans communities. Take action at [bcpovertyreduction.ca](http://bcpovertyreduction.ca)**



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For a full list of references, visit [povertyreduction.ca/lgbtq](http://povertyreduction.ca/lgbtq)

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