

2SLGBTQ+ Resource

Building Welcoming Sport Environments



Using sport to create safe, inclusive spaces for the 2SLGBTQ+ community to feel welcome and engaged is critical.

This resource is designed to establish an understanding of the issues facing 2SLGBTQ+ communities and offer recommendations to sport leaders on how to create more inclusive environments for individuals, regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation or gender expression.

Understanding the Data

Given Canadian society includes a wide diaspora of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals and communities, it's important to recognize that these identities are also represented across all levels of sport.

As a sport leader, you have a duty of care to foster an environment in which all participants can thrive. This is only possible when participants feel a sense of safety, belonging, and comfort to show up as their full selves.

Sport can have a powerful impact on reversing the mental health statistics within this population. Currently:



1.3 million

of the Canadian population
aged 15 years and older,
reported being part of the
2SLGBTQ+ population



3 in 10

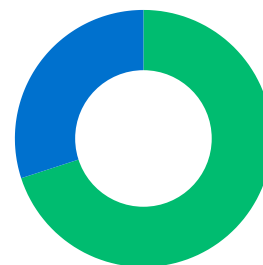
2SLGBTQ+ people reported their
mental health to be fair or poor.
Compared with fewer than 1 in
10 non-2SLGBTQ+ individuals



Broad 2SLGBTQ+ Statistics

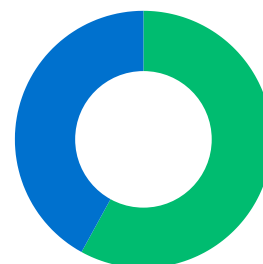
1. According to a 2023 Statistics Canada survey, Canadian sport is perceived as an unsafe place for many 2SLGBTQI+ identifying participants:
 - The prevalence of self-reported unfair treatment, racism, or discrimination in community sports was higher among members of 2SLGBTQI+ communities (21%), the racialized population (12%), and people who reported having a disability (9%).
 - 1 in 2 non-binary youth in Canada who have avoided joining an organized team sport have done so because of teammates and coaches.
2. Demers and Michon (2018) confirmed that 30 per cent of heterosexual athletes, 42 per cent of 2SLGBTQI+ athletes, and 87 per cent of trans athletes experienced at least one homophobic or transphobic episode. (Figure 1)
 - The most frequent forms of LGBT-phobia that were reported were verbal insults, disparagement, and offensive remarks. Despite these statistics, SIRC research also showed that 97% of heterosexual athletes report being very comfortable or comfortable with having 2SLGBTQI+ teammates

Figure 1: Athletes who have experienced at least one homophobic or transphobic episode



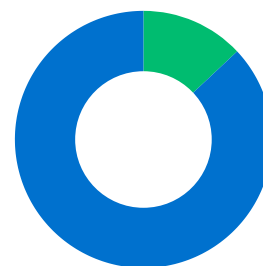
30%

Heterosexual athletes



42%

LGB athletes



87%

Trans athletes

Transgender & Non-Binary Statistics

According to the 2025 Canadian Census, transgender and non-binary individuals represent 0.33% of the population. When considered against the number of Canadians who participate in sport, the number of transgender and non-binary individuals who are likely to participate in sport is very low. Regardless, it is important to ensure everyone who wants to play can.



Despite limited studies available on transgender participation in sport, it's critical to start from a data-informed perspective in order to make participant-centred decisions. Emerging research from Dr. Guylaine Demers at the University of Laval indicates:

- Monitoring of athletes taking hormone replacement after puberty shows:
 - Bone growth effects caused by testosterone production during male puberty are retained
 - That transgender women and men have strength & endurance levels that are in the average range of non-transgender athletes, after one year of treatment.
 - After one year of estrogen, transgender women show hormone levels in line with those of non-transgender women.
 - Transgender men who take testosterone experience an increase in strength almost immediately.
 - There is no reason to exclude transgender women who have undergone hormone replacement therapy from competing in the female category of sport.
 - Although the average man has higher testosterone levels than women, there is an overlap. Testosterone levels say nothing about how much the body uses. Therefore, measuring testosterone levels alone is not useful.
 - The six markers of sex can vary from one individual to another, which gives rise to a wide variety of combinations. Sex as a continuum is an important consideration that is not currently included in most sport policy.
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Communication & Decision Making

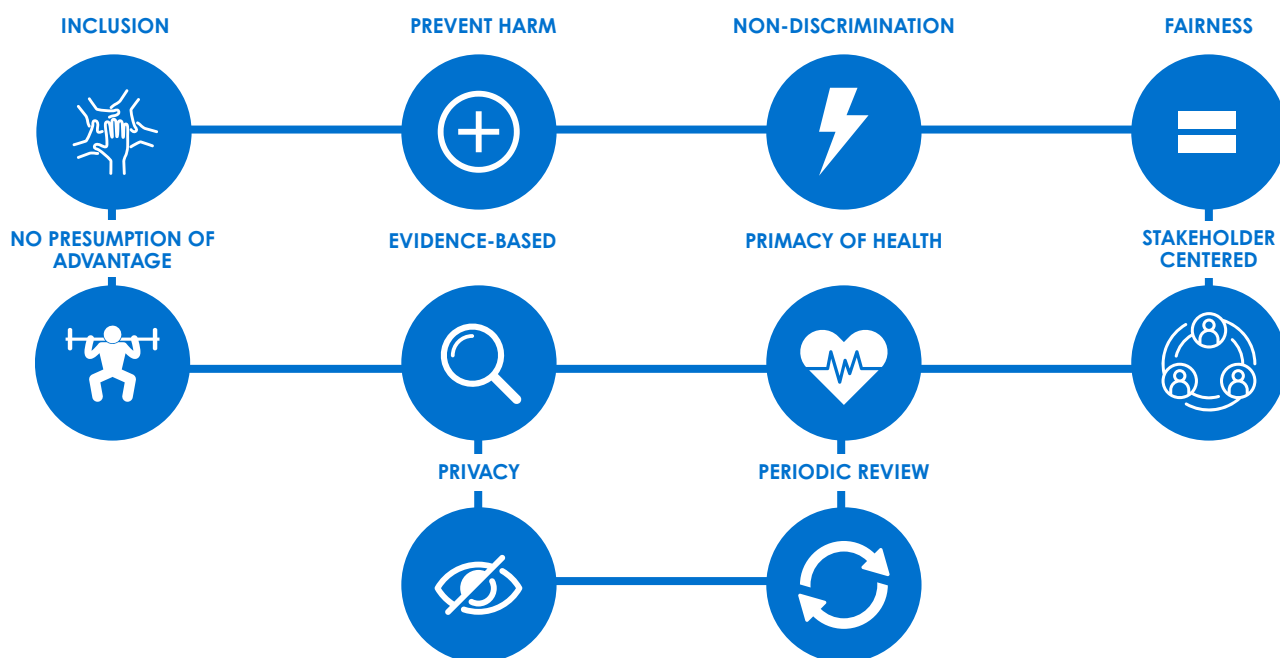
While the data provides a strong rationale for inclusion on its own, it is important to clearly communicate the values of your organization and take actions that ensure positive, safe, experience for all participants so everyone can show up as their authentic self. Language is an important place to start when building positive sport environments. Incorporating inclusive language into your organization's website, promotional material, and messaging can have a huge impact on the willingness of 2SLGBTQ+ individuals to engage. Equipping coaches and staff with the language they need to reinforce the values of the organization is also critical.



Language evolves rapidly, so being current is also important when modeling best practices. It's critical to see language as a tool for empowerment that can bolster a sense of belonging for equity seeking groups from diverse lived experiences. Having a basic understanding of the key terms can make an important difference. For further guidance, consult the Government of Canada's Inclusive Writing Guide.

Another key to moving data into impact is how you lead with authenticity and curiosity in your approach to building inclusive environments. The five guiding principles listed below will help support you toward developing an action plan for your sport context:

1. **RESPECT** Model respectful interactions on and off the field
2. **SAFETY** Ensure that all athletes have access to a safe environment, in all aspects of emotional, physical, and psychological safety
3. **LEADERSHIP** listen to what your 2SLGBTQ+ members are saying, then lead with the participant in mind when designing programs or policy
4. **FAIRNESS** ensure decision, program access and policy are driven by the principles of equity to ensure all participants are included
5. **PRIVACY** Treat communication around gender and sexuality as each participant's story to tell





Positive Sport Environments in Action

Support the Physical Environment

The most supportive environments are those in which everyone has access to the spaces they need, in the way that they need them. This may mean separate facilities or safe shared spaces. Placing the participant's needs at the centre is key to taking successful action. The list of actions below provides guidance:

- Check ahead - every locker room offered should have private, enclosed changing areas, showers, and toilets available that can work for everyone.
- Provide options - participants may choose to use washrooms or change rooms that correspond with their gender identity, which also includes non-gendered facilities and single-use facilities wherever possible.
- Know before you go for away events - contact facilities ahead of time to ensure spaces are adequate for your participants. Consider participant privacy when inquiring, as not disclose unnecessarily. This is good practice.
- Travel prep - consult your athlete as to their preferred rooming arrangements during away competitions, options include;
 - Rooming athletes of the same gender identity together, provided there is reasonable and informed consent by both parties. It is essential to ensure that both athletes in a pairing feel safe and supported at all times.
 - Offer an athlete who may not feel comfortable rooming with a teammate the opportunity to bring a trusted chaperone or family member to room with them. Using the equity model, this solution will allow the athlete to participate fully, while maintaining the boundaries they need to feel safe.
- Create a comfortable environment - should your organization have jurisdiction over the signage used on washroom, shower, or locker room facilities, provide gender neutral signage on single-user washrooms to create a more inclusive environment. For example, single-user washroom signage has been updated in the City of Vancouver Buildings to reflect universal, function-based designation. Vancouver Park Board's Trans Working Group recommends that signage focuses on the function of the space, which reduces reliance on the English language and reduces gendered expectations.



- Build a participant-centered policy - while both International Federation Rules and available data are considerations when developing policy for transgender and 2SLGBTQ+ participation, it is important to consider the policy impact up to the level of a participant. Hormone-based therapy treatments may or may not have a place in high performance spaces, depending on the sport context, but these measures should be limited to participants in the WADA Testing Pool or Professional Sport. Sport participation falling below this threshold should remain open and inclusive whenever possible. A policy aligned to this approach will ensure that all participants feel welcome. Education and dialogue with coaches, parents, and athletes will help in reducing misconceptions and misinformation. It will help to support policy decisions. The data is clear. Given the limited numbers of Canadians identifying as non-binary or transgender, supporting policy that enables access to safe spaces to play will have a more profound impact on participation than taking a limiting approach.
- A 2016 settlement reached following the filing of a human rights complaint against Hockey Canada and Hockey Ontario included the creation of a trans inclusive dressing policy. The settlement recognizes the rights of trans youth to:
 - 'access all facilities and services in accordance of their self-identified gender identity and expression;
 - be addressed by their preferred names and pronouns; and
 - have privacy and confidentiality with respect to their gender identity.

Training

There are numerous trainings available to help you support 2SLGBTQI+ members in your community and beyond the world of sport.

All Youth Matter

In consultation with experts, viaSport has created a workshop specifically for coaches and programmers to help them create safe spaces for their participants, specifically youth who identify as 2SLGBTQI+. The training covers language and terminology as well as recommended actions to take when faced with issues concerning respect, safety, leadership, fairness, and privacy. Click here to learn more [All Youth Matter: Inclusion Training - viaSport](#)

Leading organizations in inclusion in Canada's sport sector also offer training for a variety of audiences:



Canadian Women & Sport

Leading the Way Webinars » Leading the Way can be facilitated virtually or viewed at any time: <https://womenandsport.ca/learningopportunities/lgbtqi2sinclusion-in-sport>

You Can Play

- You Can Play provides a number of speaking services for students, coaches, athletic departments, companies, international organizations, sports teams, academic conferences, and special events.
- You Can Play's speaking events and trainings can include powerful storytelling, 2SLGBTQI+ 101, interactive exercises, discussion on intersectional identities (such as race and gender), and a speaker Q&A.
- For more information: <https://www.youcanplay.org/>

QMUNITY

- Queer Competency Trainings » Queer Competency Trainings are experiential workshops to help you understand diversity and make your organization more inclusive for queer, trans, and Two-Spirit clients and staff. <https://qmunity.ca/>

Egale Corporate Training

- Egale offers private, public, and not-for-profit sector organizations reliable, high-quality training and development for professional, management, and organizational development on both a local and national scale.
- Grounded in anti-racism and anti-oppression principles and practices, the Egale training & facilitation includes an evidence-based, intersectional, systemic, organizational, and human rights-based approach to training design and delivery in 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion.
- For more information, visit: <https://egale.ca/resources/#category=resources>

Show your values

Having visible signage can be a simple yet powerful way to indicate your organization's support. Canadian Women & Sport's Leading the Way manual explains why such demonstrations are important:



"Display signs visibly demonstrating acceptance of those who are 2SLGBT and indicate that you are an ally...Posting a Positive Space sign on your clipboard, laptop or office door is a powerful signal to those who are 2SLGBT that they need not worry about your acceptance."

Participating in Pride Activities

- The Canadian Olympic Committee marches in Pride Parades across the country in tandem with You Can Play, professional sport organizations, and amateur sport representatives
- To get involved in Vancouver's Pride parade

Share Information

Getting involved with 2SLGBTQ+ organizations, following campaigns, or sharing information from reputable sources are great ways to act.

You Can Play: <https://www.youcanplay.org/>

- You Can Play works to guarantee that athletes are given a fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, and only by what they contribute to the sport or their team's success.

TransAthlete: <https://www.transathlete.com/>

- TransAthlete is a resource, created by Chris Mosier, a transgender tri-athlete from the United States of America, where information about trans inclusion in sport at various levels of play is collated.

Set Travel Guidelines

Traveling can be stressful for individuals for many reasons, but there are ways to mitigate risk and reduce harm by creating an open dialogue with a focus on equity before departure. For example, some participants may require specific rooming arrangements to get the best sleep possible. Please see below an excerpt from "Travel Guidelines to Help Protect Children in Sport", created by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection and the Coaching Association of Canada for guidance.



- Allow the parent/ guardian to provide any specific needs that a person may have with regards to rooming with anyone.
- If anyone has any specific needs about whom they shouldn't room with, provide an opportunity for them to share this information.
- Create a statement - from the sport organization or coach, about gender diversity and inclusivity would be useful, such as "Inclusion and safety of all athletes are taken seriously. We aim to ensure that people are roomed with those with whom they feel comfortable and safe. We welcome anyone to provide any details, specifications, as well as suggestions about whom they feel most comfortable. This is particularly important if they do not identify as the same gender as those with whom it is safe for them to share space."

By creating a space where people feel comfortable expressing themselves in ways that align with their gender identity, expression, and or sexual orientation, engaging in conversations that share personal information may occur. For instance, a member in the sporting community may come out or disclose a safe sport-related incident.

Someone who identifies as 2SLGBTQI+ is not required to come out. If someone does, there is no one right way, and it can be unique to the individual. By being proactive in creating a space where someone feels comfortable, we can become better allies and make sport better for everyone involved. Here are some tips:

- Respond by thanking them for sharing openly with you — it often takes a lot of courage for anyone to come out. It shows that they trust you.
- Instead of deciding for them where that information goes, ask them what they would like you to do with the information. Provide some examples for them to make an informed decision.
- ONLY ask for more information that will be relevant to how you can support them. Do not expect them to educate you on everything.

In the case that someone does come out to you, here is a more in-depth guide that shares best practices on how to respond and things to consider.



If you are navigating a safe sport-related incident, there are [guidelines](#) and policies in place to support you. Until the time the BC Independent Complaint Mechanism is operational, each Designated Sport Organization has to use its own process to manage reports about concerns and complaints. Please review the policies of your governing body. If you are trying to figure out what to do if you have witnessed or experienced inappropriate behavior, the [Flag Tool](#) is available. It is an anonymous, online, interactive quiz that shares tips and resources based on the scenario you provide.

In the case that you witness inappropriate behaviour, and are unsure how to intervene safely, [Right to Be's 5Ds](#) Bystander Intervention just might be for you.

Conclusion

This resource is intended to provide a better understanding of the ways sport leaders can create more inclusive sport. The result of creating a safe sport environment allows individuals to thrive by showing up as themselves, fostering a sense of community, empowerment, and acknowledgment of worth beyond physical performance. All aspects are important in making sport better for our community.