



EMBRACING EQUITY

**REFLECTING ON
EQUITY FOR LGBTQ+
PEOPLE AND
COMMUNITIES**

When we conducted our Equity Audit at Dufferin County, one group we found to be experiencing inequities were LGBQ+ staff. Among their concerns, these staff noted that they:

- Felt excluded from key-decision making processes
- Did not feel safe to be their true selves or “out” at work for fear of bullying
- Worried about lack of career growth and advancement opportunities
- Were concerned about how “culture fit” deepened their exclusion

Further research revealed that these were common issues for LGBQ+ folks in other organizations and in broader Canadian society.



A PICTURE OF INEQUITY

Many groups that have been marginalized experience specific and unique forms of discrimination within organizations. For LGBQ+ communities, common inequities include:

INCOME INEQUALITY

LGBQ+ people are more likely to be underemployed or unemployed and the lack of income contributes to additional challenges with housing and food security.

Employment disparities are even greater among trans populations who face some of the highest rates of unemployment.

According to the SRDC, heterosexual men, on average, earn \$55,959 per annum. By comparison, gay men earn \$50,822; lesbian women, \$44,740; bisexual men, \$31,766; and bisexual women, \$25,290.

When LGBQ+ people hold other marginalized identities, these challenges are deepened. For example, racialized LGBQ+ individuals face higher unemployment rates and lower income (compared to their non-racialized peers).

DISCRIMINATION

LGBQ+ Canadians are more likely to report being the victims of violent crimes in their lifetime. They also experienced more inappropriate behaviours online, in public, and at work.

Transgender and non-binary people are more likely to experience unwanted sexual behaviours in the workplace compared to their cisgender peers (69% vs 23%).

LGBQ+ people experience microaggressions both in and out of the workplace, including stereotypes, misgendering, refusal to use preferred pronouns, describing queer identities as a choice or lifestyle, and dismissing the legitimacy of queer relationships.

INCOME INEQUALITY

Microaggressions and discrimination in the workplace and other public spaces takes a considerable toll on LGBQ+ people's mental health.

LGBQ+ and trans Canadians are more likely to report "poor" mental health compared to heterosexual peers (32% vs. 11%).

Mood and anxiety disorder diagnoses are more common among LGBQ+ Canadians compared to heterosexual Canadians (41% vs. 16%).


As with income inequality, LGBQ+ people with other marginalized identities (e.g., gender, race, and ethnicity) are more likely to face physical and mental health disparities.


**Please note that the County of Dufferin separates the T (Transgender) from the LGBQ+ acronym to acknowledge the distinction between gender identity and sexuality, as well as centre trans experiences when discussing those communities as a way to combat their erasure in the broader LGBQ+ movement*


AVOIDING QUEERPHOBIA


Queerphobia (discrimination against LGBTQ+ folks, including homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia) is a product of long-standing systemic oppression of queer and trans communities. Whether consciously or not, we may find ourselves or those around us wrangling with discriminatory beliefs about LGBTQ+ and trans communities. Here are some DOs and DON'Ts to help you avoid queerphobic behaviours and beliefs:


DON'T...


 Assume someone's gender or preferred pronouns

 "Out" LGBTQ+ or trans people in the workplace or community


 Ask invasive questions about people's gender or sexual identity


 Use your relationships with queer people to excuse queerphobic behaviour


 Use slurs or derogatory terms of LGBTQ+ people


 Treat LGBTQ+ peers or colleagues differently because of their identity


INSTEAD...


 Introduce yourself by sharing your name and preferred pronouns and allow others to respond with theirs. Be sure to make note of and use people's preferred pronouns in conversations with and about them.

 Keep any information you may know or learn about a queer person's gender or sexual identity private and allow them the choice to share with others if and when they feel comfortable and safe.

 Respect that everyone, including LGBTQ+ and trans people, is entitled to privacy about their personal lives, relationships, and bodies.

 If you have unintentionally done something to hurt or offend a LGBTQ+ or trans person, take ownership of your actions, apologize sincerely, and commit to doing better in the future.

 Educate yourself on the appropriate language and terminology to describe LGBTQ+ and trans people, communities, and issues. Remember that language, especially around equity, is constantly evolving, so be adaptable if you learn a term you use is now outdated.

 Recognize that a person's gender or sexual identity is a part of who they are and does not determine their skill, competency, or personality.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO MANAGE YOUR DISCOMFORT

Once we can accept and embrace our discomfort about equity, we can begin to manage it. After all, the only way out of discomfort is through it.

- Respecting and using people's preferred pronouns
- Educating yourself on the experiences of LGBTQ+, trans, and non-binary folks
- Advocating for LGBTQ+ and trans inclusion in workplaces, communities, and other public spaces
- Speaking up when you witness homophobia, biphobia, queerphobia, and transphobia

