THE LGBTQ2S+ Work & Inclusion Study brings together unions, worker centres, and LGBTQ2S+ people in Sudbury and Windsor to investigate the experiences of LGBTQ2S+ workers.
Snapshot of LGBTQ2S+ workers

In 2018, 677 people, 408 from Sudbury and 269 from Windsor, completed an e-survey about their experiences at work and in the community. The age of survey participants ranged from 16 to 69, and young people were particularly well represented (54.9% of participants under the age of 30). 14.5% of the sample identified as racialized non-white, and 12.6% identified as Indigenous.

LGBTQ2S+ spaces and comfort

Although nearly half of participants reported being ‘out’ in most areas of their social lives, participants who were racialized as non-white reported much lower rates of being out in the community, with only 24.1% out in all or most settings.

Additionally, while LGBTQ2S+ spaces are important areas for developing community, not everyone reported feeling comfortable in these environments. In addition to regional differences, Indigenous and racialized people reported feeling less comfortable than those who identified as white, and only 59.82% of all participants felt comfortable all or most of the time—highlighting the need for broader inclusivity.

For more information about the project, next steps and results, contact: lgbtqwrk@mcmaster.ca or Dr. Suzanne Mills, McMaster University smills@mcmaster.ca | workinclusion.wordpress.com
People reported high rates of discrimination from other employees, with racialized workers, as well as non-binary, and transgender people, reporting higher rates than white people and cis-gendered people, respectively.

Workers also left jobs due to racist and unsupportive environments at work. Indeed, 22.22% of racialized respondents reported leaving work due to racism, and 26.83% of transgender respondents reported leaving a job because it was not a positive environment for LGBTQ2S+ employees.

What is more, nearly half of workers in the private sector and over a quarter of workers in the public sector reported changing their appearance, dress, mannerisms, or behaviour at work to ‘fit in’. 38.6% of survey participants were members of a union. Indigenous people were less likely to be unionized than other respondents.

Rates of being ‘out’ at work were similar for both regions. Most workers were not out to their boss or supervisor.

Of union members with an opinion, 59.79% said that the union mostly or completely protected them from discrimination, although only 47% said they would go to their union if they were experiencing discrimination at work.
Health

Almost three-quarters of participants indicated that they had experienced a mental health issue related to work during the past year.

The most commonly reported mental health issues related to work were anxiety, depression, and panic attacks. More than half of the participants said they had experienced anxiety related to work in the past year.

Substance use

Almost half of participants used some type of substance specifically to cope with work. Alcohol, cannabis, and tobacco were unsurprisingly the most commonly used substances, but more than 5% of participants were using benzodiazepines—a form of tranquilizer that becomes dangerous when mixed with alcohol or other substances.

People were more likely to use substances if their workplace did not support their gender identity or sexuality.

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