

Harassment & Violence Against 2SLGBTQIA+ Populations at Work: Microaggressions as a Form of Gender-Based Violence



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Introduction

What does being
Two-Spirit, Lesbian,
Gay, Bisexual, Trans,
Queer, Intersex,
Asexual, Plus
(2SLGBTQIA+) have to
do with work?



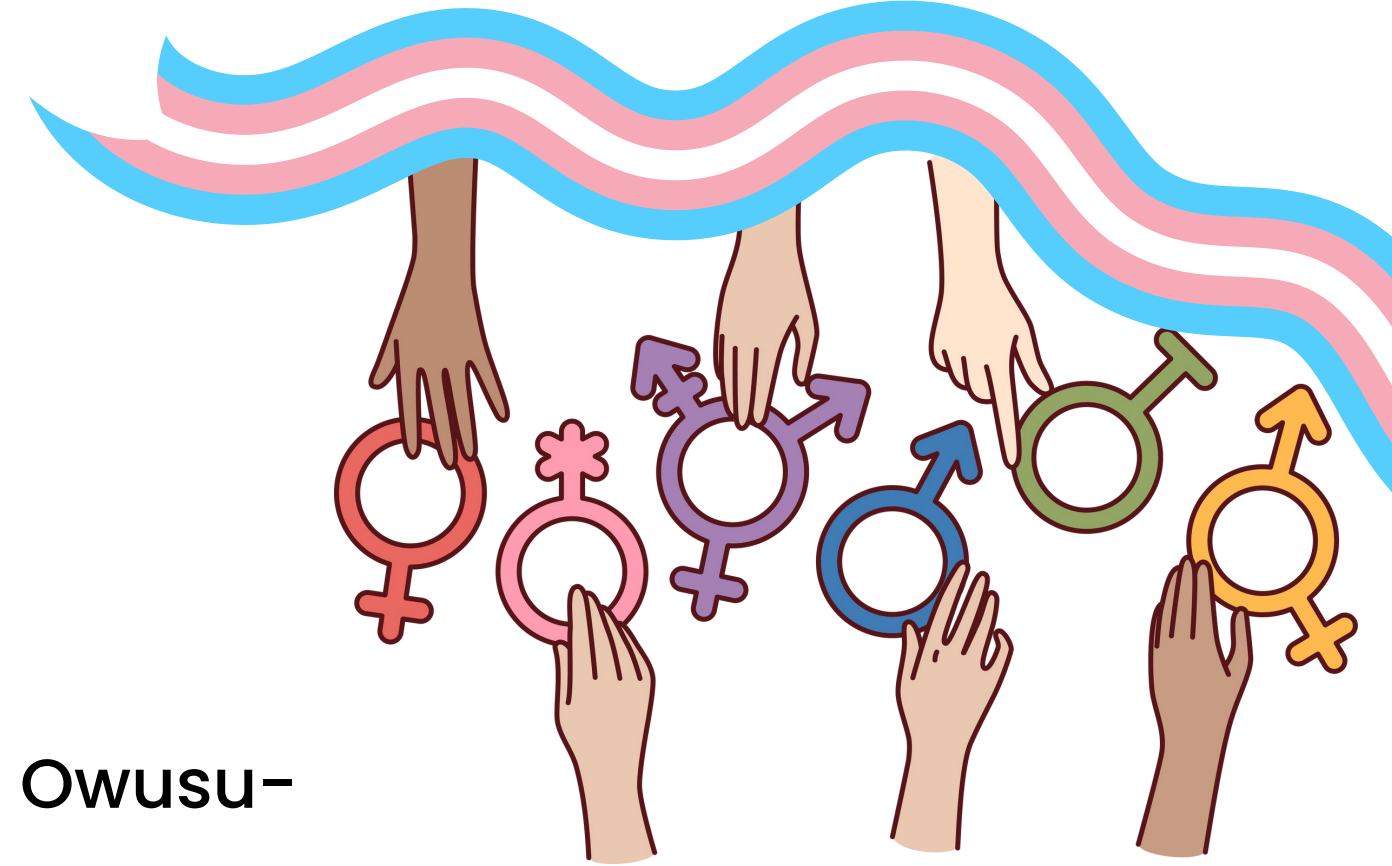
Objectives



- Understand how microaggressions contribute to 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals experiences of GBV at work.
- Historical framing of IPV/GBV in Canada.
- Briefly examine legal frameworks addressing harassment and violence at work.
- Define microaggressions as a form of GBV experienced by 2SLGBTQIA+ workers.
- Discuss their impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Explore research findings on 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences at work.
- Identify strategies to build relationships and create safer, more inclusive, work environments.



Historical Framing of IPV/GBV In Canada



Then: (1970's & 1980's IPV Framework)

- "Helpless, battered woman" vs. "Controlling, abusive man"
- Shaped public consciousness & response strategies (Ham, Owusu-Akyeeah, and Byard-Peek, 2022).

Now: Ongoing Impact

- Marginalizes survivors outside cis-het norms.
- Affects workplace hiring & inclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ populations in the work.

Connection to GBV at Work:

- This limited understanding still influences workplace policies, often failing to recognize the unique experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

Provincial Occupational Health & Safety Acts

- Not all provincial/territorial Occupational Health & Safety Acts (OHSAs) explicitly mention gender-based violence (GBV).
 - Most include provisions on workplace violence, harassment, & psychological safety, which can cover:
 - Homophobic & transphobic comments
 - Microaggressions
- Ontario's OHSA Definition [Subsection 1(1)]:
 - Workplace Harassment & Violence:
 - *"Engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome,"* including sexual harassment.



Federal Legislation



Key changes were made for federally regulated workplaces (2021):

- Harassment and violence are recognized as occupational health and safety issues
- Employers are legally obligated to act

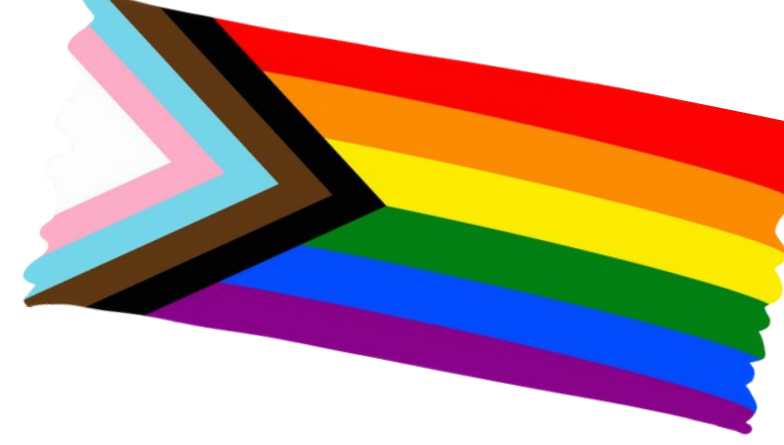
Primary Aims of the Changes:

- early intervention
- timely & effective responses
- support for affected people

Federal Definition of Harassment & Violence: (Gov. of Canada, 2021):

- “any action, conduct or comment, including of a sexual nature, that can reasonably be expected to cause offence, humiliation, or other physical or psychological injury or illness to an employee, including any prescribed action, conduct or comment”

2SLGBTQIA+ Employment Experiences



International Labour Organization Report “Inclusion of LGBTIQ+ Persons in the World of Work (ILO, 2022):

- Discrimination, exclusion, violence, and harassment are faced by LGBTIQ+ workers across sectors.

Federal Action Plan Survey (2SLGBTQI+ Action Plan Survey, 2023):

- 25,636 2SLGBTQIA+ respondents shared their employment experiences.

Hiring Concerns in Non-2SLGBTQIA+ Workplaces:

- 37% feared disclosing sexual orientation would harm hiring chances.
- 43% felt sharing gender identity would reduce hiring prospects.
 - 47% of Two-Spirit respondents shared this concern.
- Transgender women were the most likely to fear hiring discrimination.

Workplace Comfort

Sexual Orientation

- 46% of employed respondents, felt comfortable sharing information about their sexual orientation.
- Asexual (26%) and bisexual (21%) respondents were less comfortable compared to other groups.
- 47% of white respondents felt comfortable, compared to 35% of South Asian and East Asian respondents.
- 30% of Black respondents were not comfortable, compared to 12% of white respondents.

Gender Identity

- 59% of respondents were comfortable sharing information about their gender identity.
- Gender diverse (35%) and non-binary/agender (29%) of respondents were less comfortable.
- 63% of East Asian and 61% of Latin American respondents felt comfortable, compared to 51% of South Asian and Southeast Asian respondents.

Harassment at Work



Sexual Orientation

- 26% experienced harassment due to their sexual orientation.
- Two-Spirit (42%) and Queer (31%) were most likely to experience harassment.
- 36% from “Racialized: Other Groups” experienced harassment, followed by Indigenous (35%) and Black (31%) respondents.
- Respondents with disabilities (34%) were more likely to experience harassment than those without disabilities (23%).
- Common forms of harassment: microaggressions (92%), verbal slurs (57%), and sexual harassment (28%).
- Common reasons for not reporting harassment: fear of not being taken seriously (40%), fear of reprisal (26%), and addressing the issue informally (30%).

Gender Identity

- 22% experienced harassment due to their gender identity.
- 47% of transgender men and 45% of transgender women experienced harassment.
- 32% of respondents from “Racialized: Other Groups” experienced harassment, followed by Black (31%), Indigenous (30%), and white and racialized respondents (30%).
- Common forms of harassment: microaggressions (94%), verbal slurs (51%), and sexual harassment (28%).
- Common reasons for not reporting harassment: fear of not being taken seriously (42%), fear of reprisal (26%), and addressing the issue informally (29%).

Impact on 2SLGBTQIA+ Staff



Psychological
stress

Reduced job
satisfaction

Lower
productivity

Higher turnover
rates

Microaggressions in the Context of Harassment & Violence



What are Microaggressions: subtle and often unintentional actions or comments that reinforce stereotypes and perpetuate discrimination against marginalized groups (Nadal et al., 2016;).

Microaggressions as a Form of GBV in the Workplace

Culture & Power Dynamics at Work:

- Societal norms shape interactions at work, often reinforcing exclusionary practices.

Microaggressions Reinforce Structural Discrimination:

- Can create uncomfortable or hostile work environments for 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.
- Repeated microaggressions lead to emotional distress, lower job satisfaction, decreased productivity, and higher turnover rates (2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan Survey, 2023).

Root Causes:

- **Cisnormativity:** the assumption that being cisgender is the norm, invalidating or denying the existence of other gender identities.
- **Heteronormativity:** the assumption that heterosexuality is the default or norm, marginalizing, diverse, sexual orientations

Impact: A cisnormative and heterosexist workplace climate reinforces systemic exclusion of 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

Why This Matters:

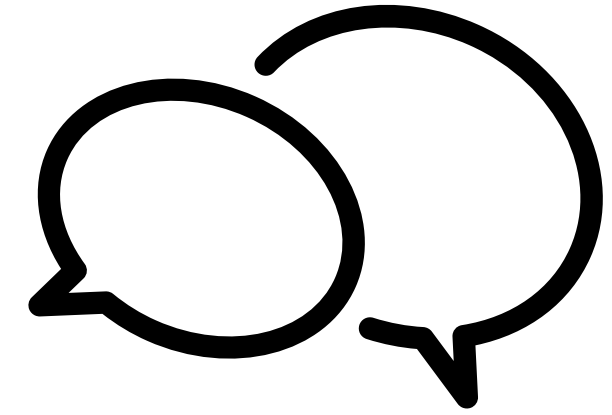
- Micro aggressions are a form of GBV addressing workplace culture is key to building safe and inclusive work environments.

Seven variations of universally experienced 2SLGBTQIA+ microaggressions:



1. Offensive heterosexist verbiage
2. Support of only heteronormative/cis-normative behaviours;
3. Assumption of a singular 2SLGBTQIA+ experience
4. Exoticization
5. Disapproval of 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences
6. Denial of societal heterosexism/cissexism
7. Speculation of sexual pathology/abnormality

Common 2SLGBTQIA+ Microaggressions at Work



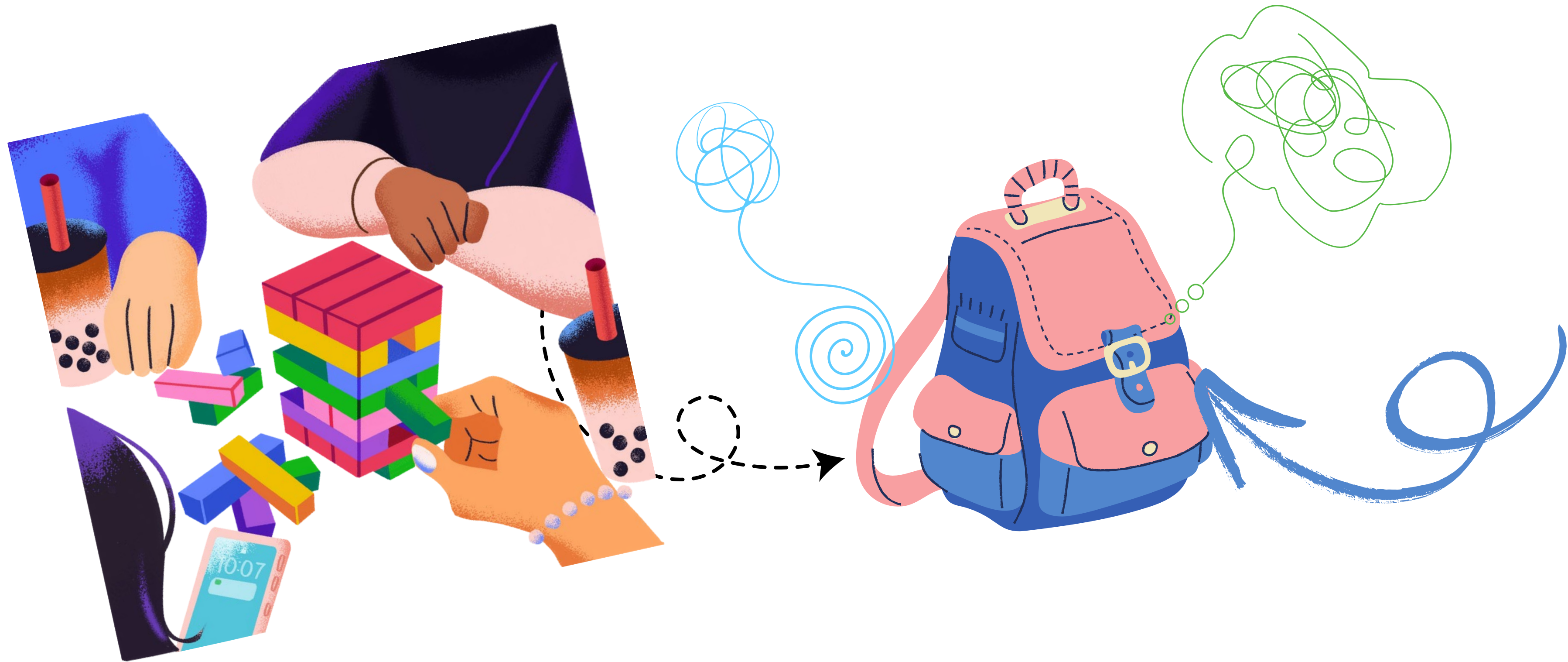
- Assumptions about identity.
- Invalidating or dismissing someone's identity.
- Dismissing experiences of discrimination with “That doesn’t happen here” or “you’ are being too sensitive.
- Claiming everyone's, a little gay or labels don't matter, which invalidates lived experiences.
- Leaving 2SLGBTQIA+ topics out of diversity and inclusion initiatives or leaving out intersecting identities that often compound harmful experiences.
- Not including gender neutral restrooms, or policies that support trans and non-binary employees.
- Stereotyping or tokenizing 2SLGBTQIA+ employees or coworkers, expecting them to provide the needed education.
- Inappropriate curiosity or comments about a coworker’s transition or relationships.
- Making jokes about being gay, bisexual, or trans e.g. “That’s so gay” or “I identify as a walrus or helicopter”.
- Making comments like “it's okay you can just use that washroom, we are all safe.”
- Asking questions like “Who’s the man in your relationship?”
- Misgendering without correction.

Not all Microgressions are Verbal

- Exclusionary body language like nonverbally signalling that someone is not welcome.
- Facial expressions of disapproval
- Invasive staring (suggests judgment, or discomfort with someone's appearance, gender expression, or relationships)
- Ignoring or dismissing contributions
- Purposefully stepping back or recoiling when a 2SLGBTQIA+ person enters your space.
- Silent resistance: projecting an unwillingness to try to be inclusive and use inclusive language.
- Not representing 2SLGBTQIA+ populations in IPV/GBV materials or spaces



Trauma



Expanding Our Understanding of Gendered Violence

- Including 2SLGBTQIA+ experiences in discussions of IPV and GBV enhances—not diminishes—existing understandings.
- We can acknowledge that violence is deeply gendered:
 - men are the primary perpetrators and while men can experience violence, women, trans, and non-binary individuals face the highest rates.
- Intersectionality matters:
 - Indigenous, racialized, and disabled individuals face the greatest risk of IPV and GBV.
 - They are especially vulnerable to extreme forms of violence.



Trauma - Informed 2SLGBTQIA+ Allyship

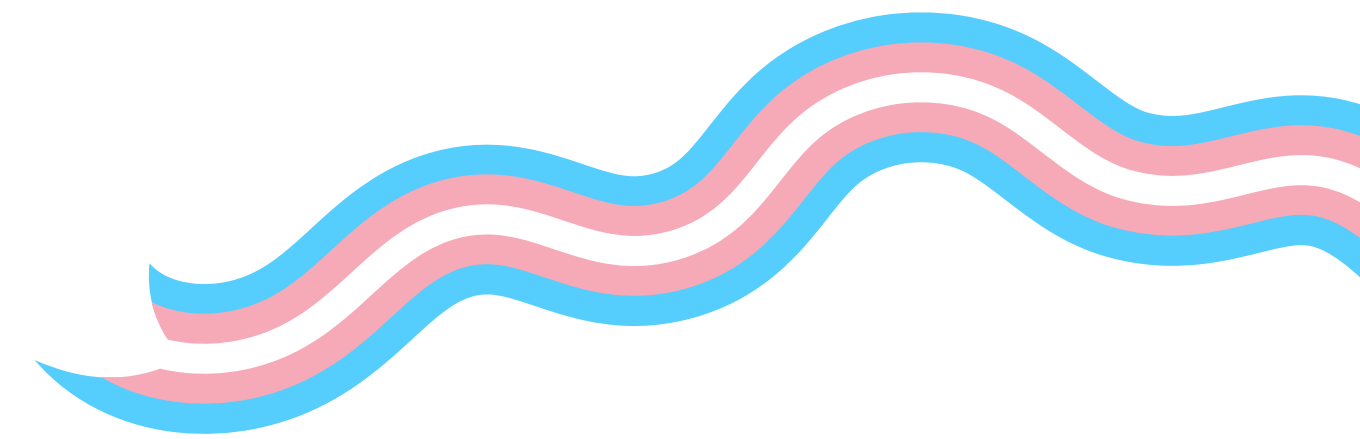
- Recognize that queer and trans Survivor face additional barriers at work, including misgendering, denial of experiences, and assumptions about relationships.
- Acknowledge that IPV/GBV services historically excluded 2SLGBTQIA+ survivors and workers due to binary, heteronormative understandings of violence.
- Address the historical mistrust of queer and trans communities toward IPV/GBV organizations, and the need for intentional rebuilding of trust.
- Work alongside 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in ways that are affirming rather than tokenizing or performative.



Strengthen Core Principles of Trauma

- Informed 2SLGBTQIA+ Allyship at Work

- **Safety:** Ensure that 2SLGBTQIA+ employees feel emotionally, psychologically, and physically safe at work.
- **Trust & Transparency:** Foster open communication, confidentiality, and equitable workplace policies.
- **Empowerment & Choice:** Respect the autonomy of 2SLGBTQIA+ employees by supporting their leadership, decision-making power, and ability to express their identities openly without fear of retaliation.
- **Cultural Awareness:** emphasize and commit to continuous learning, addressing workplace biases, and amplifying 2SLGBTQIA+ voices in decision-making processes.
- **Intersectionality:** Recognize that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals experience compounded discrimination based on race, disability, class, immigration status, and other social locations.
- **Active Allyship:** encourage all employees or coworkers, and especially allies to speak up against discrimination, microaggressions, and harmful stereotypes.



Key Takeaways

- Historical framings of IPV/GBV have been exclusionary of 2SLGBTQIA+ populations in both service provision and work opportunities.
- Legal protections exist at both the federal and provincial levels, yet 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals continue to face systematic inequities in the labour market.
- Microaggressions against 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals at work are a form of gender-based violence and impact mental health and employment outcomes.
- The structural barriers that 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals facing society, also exist in the GBV sector, limiting our inclusion in the work.
- We can apply our trauma informed skills to practice meaningful 2SLGBTQIA+ allyship by actively challenging anti-2SLGBTQIA+ microaggressions, discrimination, and violence at work.
- key contributors to positive experiences include inclusive leadership, committed allies, and 2SLGBTQIA+ specific policies and programs.



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Questions

