



The Trans PULSE Canada project collected survey data from 2873 trans and non-binary people in 2019. This report presents results from the first national all-ages data on health and well-being among trans and non-binary people in Canada, as well as the first quantitative data for some provinces. Results highlight that despite high levels of education and access to primary health care providers, participants faced under-employment and unmet healthcare needs.

HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE ACCESS FOR TRANS & NON-BINARY PEOPLE IN CANADA

National, Provincial, and Territorial Results

Background

Despite Canada's universal health care system, transgender (trans) and non-binary people experience challenges in accessing primary, emergency, and gender-affirming health care.¹⁻⁶ Earlier research has documented health concerns, as well as clear associations between these health challenges and social marginalization.⁷⁻⁸ To date, national community survey data have been available only for youth,⁹ and all-ages data only in Ontario.¹ Ontario data are now nearly a decade old, leaving all provinces and territories without any recent all-ages community statistics on trans and non-binary health.

Because most health care in Canada is organized through provincial systems and policies, comparisons across provinces and territories are important in identifying variation in health and health care access.

Trans PULSE Canada

Over a 10-week period in 2019, the Trans PULSE Canada research team collected survey data from 2873 trans and non-binary people age 14 years or older and living in Canada. Participants were able to complete the full survey, or a 10-minute short form containing key items, in English or French online, on paper, via telephone (with or without a language

interpreter), or on a tablet with a Peer Research Associate in major cities. All data for this report come from survey questions that were included on both the full and short-form surveys.

Interpretation

Although Trans PULSE Canada used multiple approaches to make the survey accessible, it was not possible to conduct a random sample of the trans and non-binary population. Therefore, results cannot be assumed to represent true population demographics. For instance, that 9% of participants were aged 50+, does not mean exactly 9% of all trans and non-binary people in Canada are aged 50+. Tables 1 and 2 show how trans and non-binary participants responded to survey questions for the national sample, and within each province. Results for Canada also include a 95% confidence interval, which indicates precision by showing a range of plausible values since we were not able to survey every trans and non-binary person in Canada. Because the total sample is large (n=2873), the confidence interval will be narrow. When a sample is smaller, for example, the n=36 respondents in Newfoundland and Labrador, confidence intervals get larger, and our estimate of the true population value is less precise. Because of this, what might look like an extreme difference from one province to another may, in reality, be due to random variation. We encourage readers to consider this when comparing results across provinces. For this reason, we focus on national results in the text of this report.

When interpreting the results for Ontario, it may be tempting to compare to the results of Ontario's original Trans PULSE survey in 2009-2010. However, these two projects used different sampling methods and survey instruments, and it is impossible to say what might have caused "changes" from 2009-2010 to 2019 using only the descriptive results in this report. We plan on publishing results across the two studies, and ask readers to hold off making comparisons until these are released.

Socio-demographics

Table 1 displays basic socio-demographics of our sample; more detailed statistics will be presented in nine additional reports. Trans and non-binary respondents tended to be younger, with 13% aged 14-19, and 22% aged 20-24. Those aged 25-34 made up 37% of the sample, and 20% were aged 35-49. 9% were aged 50+. When asked to choose a single gender label that fit them best, a quarter of respondents identified as men/boys and women/girls, respectively, and just under half as non-binary. 2% of respondents specified Indigenous or other cultural gender identities, including Two-Spirit. Trans and non-binary Canadians reported a diverse range of sexual orientations, with over half of respondents checking that they identify as queer, and one third checking pansexual and bisexual, respectively. Lesbian and gay were checked by 15% and 13%, and 8% checked straight or heterosexual. Just over half of respondents were currently in a relationship or multiple relationships, while just under half were not.

Around 1 in 10 participants were Indigenous. Racialized people (those who identified as, or were perceived or treated as a person of colour) made up 14% of the sample, while 86% were not racialized. Newcomers who came to Canada within the past 5 years made up 3% of the sample, while 9% of respondents had come to Canada more than 5 years ago. Most respondents (88%) were born in Canada.

Trans and non-binary people were distributed across all provinces and territories similarly to the Canadian population. Based on postal code or forward sortation area, 6% currently lived in an area classified as rural or small town while 94% lived in an area classified as non-rural (e.g. urban, or suburban).

Respondents reported a range of disability-related identities. 43% of trans and non-binary people identified as a psychiatric survivor, mad, or person with mental illness. 30% identified as neurodivergent, and 19% identified as disabled or living with a disability.

Trans and non-binary people surveyed were highly educated, with roughly half having a college or

Table 1: Socio-demographics among trans and non-binary people in Canada, by province/territory

	Canada n=2873		BC n= 538	AB n= 536	SK n= 95	MB n= 78	ON n= 1012	QC n= 369	NB n= 75	PE n= 14	NS n= 103	NL n= 36	YT,NT,NU ^a n= 12
	%	95% CI	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Age													
14 - 19	13	12 - 14	10	18	16	10	11	11	13	0	19	19	17
20 - 24	22	20 - 23	19	23	28	21	21	26	20	14	21	28	8
25 - 34	37	35 - 39	35	36	39	41	36	41	40	50	36	39	25
35 - 49	20	18 - 21	24	18	12	22	21	15	20	29	15	11	42
50 - 64	8	7 - 9	9	5	5	6	9	5	7	7	9	3	8
65 +	1	0.7 - 1	3	0.6	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Gender													
Woman or girl	24	23 - 26	26	25	24	14	24	20	34	36	22	22	10
Man or boy	25	24 - 27	22	23	20	24	26	29	29	21	35	36	40
Indigenous or cultural gender	2	2 - 3	2	1	5	6	3	0.9	1	0	1	0	10
Non-binary or similar	48	46 - 50	49	51	51	57	47	50	36	43	42	42	40
Sexual orientation (check all that apply)^b													
Asexual	13	12 - 15	13	17	24	14	13	11	7	7	10	8	8
Bisexual	28	27 - 30	29	33	33	18	28	22	28	29	27	50	17
Gay	13	11 - 14	13	14	7	14	12	12	9	7	17	11	8
Lesbian	15	14 - 17	16	16	16	13	15	17	12	29	10	19	8
Pansexual	31	29 - 33	30	32	32	28	30	33	40	43	22	42	33
Queer	51	50 - 53	54	50	48	53	56	43	36	43	52	39	58
Straight or heterosexual	8	7 - 9	8	6	3	5	9	8	11	29	4	3	8
Two-Spirit	4	3 - 5	4	3	7	10	5	1	3	0	2	3	17
Unsure or questioning	9	8 - 10	10	9	13	14	8	8	11	0	6	8	0
Relationship status^c													
In a relationship(s)	53	51 - 55	55	53	44	70	53	49	49	33	62	44	60
Not in a relationship	47	45 - 49	45	47	56	30	47	51	51	67	38	56	40

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	%	95% CI	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Indigenous in Canada													
Indigenous in Canada	9	8 - 10	10	10	20	15	7	5	7	7	9	11	25
Not Indigenous in Canada	91	90 - 92	90	90	80	85	93	95	93	93	91	89	75
Racialization													
Racialized	14	13 - 15	13	13	15	15	19	9	8	0	5	0	42
Not racialized	86	85 - 87	87	87	85	85	81	91	92	100	95	100	58
Immigration history													
Newcomer (past 5 years)	3	3 - 4	6	2	0	1	3	4	3	0	2	0	0
Immigrant (non-newcomer)	9	8 - 10	14	6	5	1	10	6	5	14	5	3	9
Born in Canada	88	87 - 89	80	92	95	97	88	90	92	86	93	97	91
Urban / rural ^d													
Rural or small town	6	5 - 7	7	6	8	10	4	7	18	8	12	6	18
Not rural or small town	94	93 - 95	93	94	92	90	96	93	82	92	88	94	82
Disability identities (check all that apply) ^b													
Autistic	14	12 - 15	18	13	16	9	13	11	11	0	17	8	8
Blind	0.5	0.2 - 0.7	0.7	0.6	2	0	0.2	0.5	0	0	0	0	0
Crip	2	2 - 3	3	2	2	0	2	1	0	0	1	0	0
Deaf	1	0.6 - 1	1	0.8	0	1	0.7	1	1	0	3	0	0
Disabled or living with a disability	19	17 - 20	23	16	18	21	25	8	5	21	12	17	0
Chronic pain	21	19 - 22	26	20	22	19	22	14	17	7	18	19	33
Neurodivergent	30	29 - 32	33	32	32	33	31	25	21	7	21	31	17
Psychiatric survivor, mad, or person with mental illness	43	41 - 45	43	44	52	51	48	29	40	21	47	36	17
Other	7	6 - 7	9	8	9	4	6	4	3	0	4	8	0

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	%	95% CI	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%

Education (age ≥ 25) ^e

< High school	4	3 - 5	6	3	2	6	3	5	0	0	5	0	11
High school diploma	8	7 - 9	7	11	11	15	5	12	6	0	13	5	0
Some college or university	22	20 - 23	20	22	32	21	21	27	22	25	13	16	11
College or university degree	48	46 - 50	48	55	47	40	46	40	54	67	62	58	56
Grad/professional degree	19	17 - 20	20	10	8	19	25	16	18	8	7	21	22

Employment situation (age ≥ 25) ^{c,e}

Permanent full-time	43	41 - 46	46	44	35	48	42	40	58	30	43	28	38
Employed, not permanent full-time	35	32 - 37	32	33	37	33	38	33	24	40	29	33	50
Not employed or on leave	16	14 - 18	15	16	27	15	13	20	13	30	24	28	0
Not employed and student or retired	6	5 - 8	6	6	2	4	7	6	5	0	4	11	13

Personal annual income (past year, age ≥ 25) ^e

None	2	1 - 2	2	2	2	0	2	0.4	0	0	0	0	0
< \$15,000	24	22 - 26	21	18	34	24	25	29	24	33	27	26	11
\$15,000 - \$29,000	24	22 - 26	25	22	13	28	22	29	24	25	34	58	11
\$30,000 - \$49,000	22	20 - 24	23	27	21	22	20	24	18	8	21	0	22
\$50,000 - \$79,000	17	16 - 19	17	20	17	19	18	10	24	8	11	16	44
\$80,000 +	11	10 - 13	12	11	13	7	13	7	8	25	7	0	11

Low-income household (past year, age ≥ 25) ^e

Low income household	40	38 - 42	39	33	35	41	41	46	31	42	53	63	22
Non-low-income household	60	58 - 62	61	67	65	59	59	54	69	58	47	37	78

a Provinces/regions in column order: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut.

b Participants could select more than one option, so total will be more than 100%.

c These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.

d Rural and small town includes participants who reported a postal code or forward sortation area for a town or municipality with a population size under 10,000

e Education, employment situation, personal annual income, and low-income household are reported here for those age 25 and older; additional data on student status and other factors will be reported in our youth report.

Table 2: Health and well-being among trans and non-binary people in Canada, by province/territory

	Canada n=2873		BC n= 538	AB n= 536	SK n= 95	MB n= 78	ON n=1012	QC n= 369	NB n= 75	PE n= 14	NS n= 103	NL n= 36	YT,NT,NU ^a n= 12
	%	95% CI	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Has primary health care provider^b													
Yes	81	79 - 82	80	80	82	77	86	73	74	79	77	91	56
No	19	18 - 21	20	20	18	23	14	27	26	21	23	9	44
Unmet health care need(s) (past year)^b													
Unmet need(s)	45	43 - 47	46	45	38	42	42	44	64	64	52	38	60
No unmet need	55	53 - 57	54	55	62	58	58	56	36	36	48	62	40
Avoided emergency room (past year)^b													
Yes	12	10 - 13	11	12	7	17	12	9	19	14	13	9	0
No	67	65 - 69	69	63	61	67	69	63	64	50	78	68	90
Never needed ER care	21	20 - 23	20	25	32	16	19	27	17	36	10	24	10
Gender-affirming medical care status^b													
Had all needed care	26	24 - 27	25	20	20	19	25	41	22	33	22	9	44
In the process of completing	32	30 - 34	38	31	31	41	32	18	37	50	42	32	22
Planning, but not begun	15	13 - 16	12	20	16	14	14	13	16	8	13	18	11
Not planning	12	10 - 13	10	11	14	13	12	16	10	0	15	6	11
Unsure if going to seek care	16	15 - 18	14	18	20	13	18	13	16	8	9	35	11
Self-rated health													
Excellent or very good	37	35 - 39	35	38	39	36	36	43	28	43	36	21	40
Good	36	34 - 38	35	34	41	39	35	38	42	50	36	53	60
Fair or poor	27	25 - 29	30	28	20	24	28	19	30	7	28	26	0
Self-rated mental health^b													
Excellent or very good	16	15 - 18	19	16	20	7	15	18	11	18	16	6	10
Good	28	27 - 30	27	24	22	31	30	30	40	27	27	39	60
Fair or poor	56	54 - 57	55	61	59	62	54	52	48	55	56	55	30
Considered suicide (past year)^b													
Yes	31	29 - 33	28	33	32	38	31	32	27	25	36	45	20
No	69	67 - 71	72	67	68	62	69	68	73	75	64	55	80

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	%	95% CI	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Attempted suicide (past year)^b													
Yes	6	5 - 6	6	6	7	2	5	5	5	8	9	6	0
No	94	94 - 95	94	94	93	98	95	95	95	92	91	94	100
Experienced violence or harassment (past 5 years, check all that apply)^{b, c}													
Verbal harassment	68	66 - 70	69	71	65	71	69	60	71	33	74	75	67
Physical intimidation or threats	37	35 - 39	37	38	38	53	37	33	39	25	33	50	22
Physical violence	16	15 - 18	15	16	18	26	16	16	19	0	23	16	33
Sexual harassment	42	40 - 44	39	46	43	50	44	39	31	25	41	41	44
Sexual assault	26	24 - 28	23	27	29	39	25	27	31	8	30	25	33
Avoided public spaces for fear of harassment or outing (past 5 years, check all that apply)^{b, d}													
No avoidance	16	14 - 17	15	14	15	21	15	21	15	0	18	9	11
1 or 2 types of spaces	20	19 - 22	23	17	14	16	20	25	12	25	20	25	22
3 or more types of spaces	64	62 - 66	62	69	71	63	64	53	73	75	62	66	67
Housing security^b													
Secure	90	89 - 91	91	88	86	87	90	93	85	83	87	91	100
Insecure ^e	10	9 - 11	9	12	14	13	10	7	15	17	13	9	0
Household food security (past year)^b													
Always had enough to eat	85	84 - 86	88	85	79	77	85	84	87	92	79	84	90
Sometimes did not have enough	12	10 - 13	9	12	20	21	11	12	13	8	19	13	10
Often did not have enough	3	3 - 4	3	3	1	2	4	4	0	0	2	3	0

a Provinces/regions in column order: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland & Labrador, Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut.

b These variables were missing for 10% of respondents or more.

c Participants could select more than one option, so total will be more than 100%.

d Of 14 spaces given as options in survey (e.g., public washrooms, schools, being out on the land, public transit).

e Includes living in shelters, motels or boarding houses, temporarily with partners/friends/family, on the street, in a car, or in an abandoned building.

university degree. 43% were employed on a permanent full-time basis, while 35% were employed but not permanent full-time, and 16% were on leave or not employed. Despite high levels of education, half of respondents aged ≥ 25 had a personal income of less than \$30,000/year, and 40% were living in a low-income household.

Health and well-being

Table 2 shows that while 81% of respondents had a primary health care provider, 45% reported having 1 or more unmet healthcare needs in the past year. Because they were trans or non-binary, 12% had avoided going to the emergency room in the past year, despite needing care.

Most trans and non-binary respondents were in the process of completing, or had already had all the gender-affirming medical care that they needed. 12% were not planning on seeking gender-affirming medical care.

Most respondents rated their current health as good, very good, or excellent, and 27% rated their health as fair or poor. When asked about current mental health, 56% rated their mental health as fair or poor. 1 in 3 had considered suicide in the past year, and 1 in 20 reported attempting suicide in the past year.

Trans and non-binary people in Canada experienced high rates of transphobic violence and harassment. In the past 5 years, most had experienced verbal harassment related to being trans or non-binary, and 16% and 26% had experienced physical and sexual assault, respectively. When presented with a list of 14 types of public spaces, 64% reported avoiding 3 or more of those spaces for fear of being harassed or outed. Only 16% did not avoid any of the public spaces.

Most respondents had a secure place to live, while 10% reported an insecure housing situation such as couch surfing, or living in shelters, motels, cars, or on the street. 85% of those surveyed were living in households where they always had enough to eat, but 3% often did not have enough.

Conclusion

Trans and non-binary people of all ages are living across Canada, in large cities and remote villages. These results show a diverse range of identities and experiences, and present the very first all-ages data from trans and non-binary people in several provinces. This report will serve as a foundation for further exploration of factors driving health inequities across provinces, and across intersecting groups within the larger trans and non-binary population.

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This is Report no. 1 in a series of 10 reports that will be produced by this project. These include this national report, and 9 priority population reports.

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