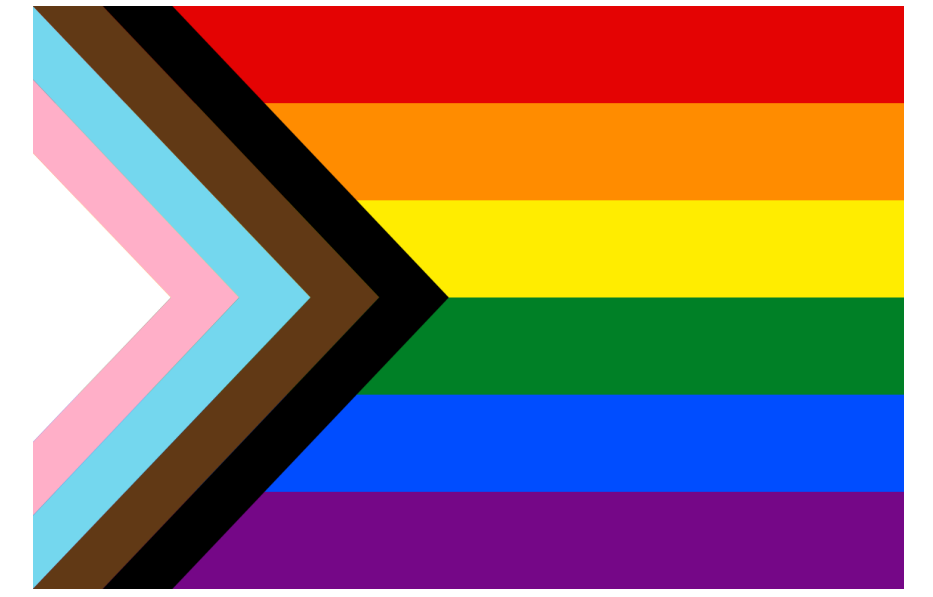


Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Addiction and Mental Health

The LGBTQ2S+ community is diverse and there are many ways that people self-identify.

What is sexual orientation?

- Describes a person's emotional and/or sexual attraction to others.
- Gender identity and sexual orientation are NOT the same thing.
- Sexual orientation can be fluid and may change over time.



What is gender identity and gender expression?

This section highlights key terms (note that it is not an exhaustive list).

Gender Identity Personal sense of one's gender. Unlike gender expression, gender identity is not visible to others.

Gender Expression Refers to the way a person communicates their gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, language, pronouns or body characteristics.

Transgender People whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Non-binary Gender identity, behaviours, and appearance of a person moves along a gender spectrum and/or challenges gender restrictions and norms.

Queer A reclaimed term used by some people who identify as sexual and/or gender diverse and also used as a positive, inclusive term to describe communities and social movements.

LGBTQ2S+ Stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Two-Spirit. The 'plus' symbol includes other groups.

Did you know?

~4% of Canadians aged 15 and older are LGBTQ2S+.

~0.3% of Canadians are transgender or non-binary.

Alberta has the **4th** highest number of transgender and non-binary Canadians.

The number of transgender and non-binary people in Alberta is approximately **12,480**.

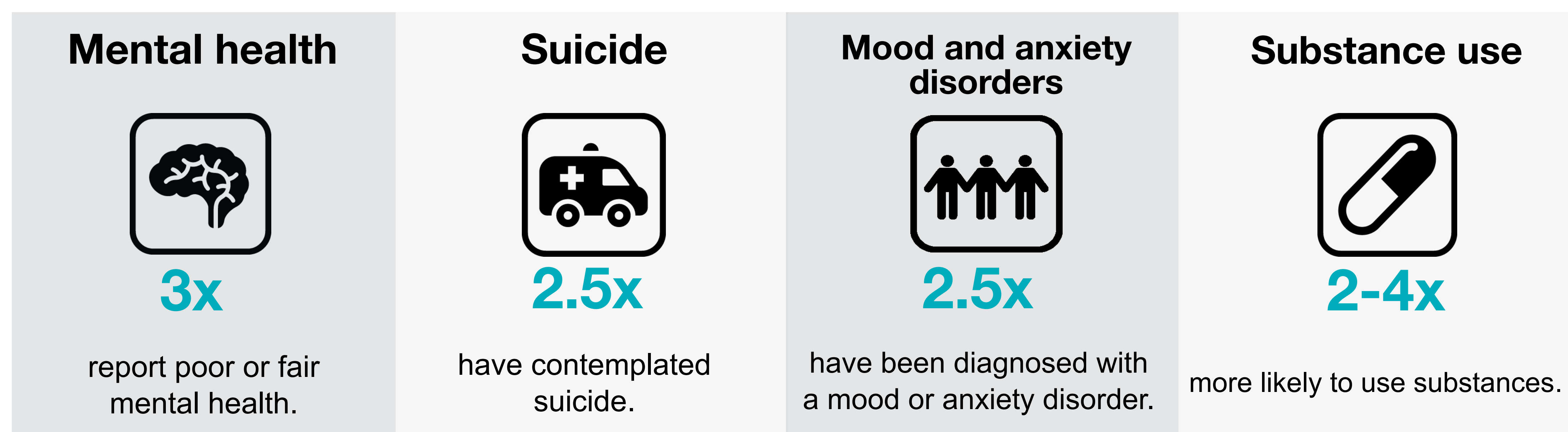
LGBTQ2S+ addiction and mental health (AMH) considerations

LGBTQ2S+ people face many different forms of **stigma**, **prejudice**, and **discrimination**. Factors that contribute to worse mental health and substance use outcomes include (but are not limited to):

- Denying LGBTQ2S+ people basic human rights, such as access to safe, inclusive, medical care, marriage equality, and the right to employment.
- Delaying mental health support due to past experiences, stigma, and/or discrimination by the health system, as well as reluctance to disclose gender identity or sexual orientation out of a concern for safety.
- Verbal harassment or sexual and physical assault, including hate crimes.
- Unstable living conditions, often due to family rejection. Around 25-40% of unhoused Canadian youth are LGBTQ2S+.

AMH in the LGBTQ2S+ community

Overall, LGBTQ2S+ people report worse mental health and more substance use than the general population.



LGBTQ2S+ youth are particularly affected by AMH concerns

- In one Canadian study LGBTQ2S+ youth had approximately **14 times** the risk of suicide and substance use disorder than their peers.

- **77%** of transgender respondents had considered suicide and **45%** had attempted suicide.

Unmet AMH care within the LGBTQ2S+ community

Transgender and sexual minority women in Canada are more likely to report an unmet mental healthcare need compared to heterosexual women identifying as the gender they were assigned at birth.



One study found that **58%** of Canadian LGBTQ2S+ youth reported an unmet AMH service need in the past year and faced barriers to care during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Implications for AMH practice

The following may help AMH professionals support LGBTQ2S+ people:

- Professional development and training on LGBTQ2S+ diversity.
- Using an affirmative and culturally competent and safe approach in practice.
- Ongoing awareness and consideration of spaces and practices to ensure LGBTQ2S+ safety and inclusion.
- Actively demonstrating inclusiveness and acceptance (e.g., sharing pronouns/wearing pins with pronouns, asking about gender and sexual identity, utilizing inclusive language on documents, using affirmed terms and pronouns, displaying LGBTQ2S+-specific content).
- Collaborating and/or connecting to agencies that provide LGBTQ2S+-specific services.



Resources

AHS Resources

[LGBTQ2S+ / Sexual and Gender Diversity](#)

COVID-19

[Impact of COVID-19 on the LGBTQI2S Community](#)

Suicide

[Sexual Minorities and Suicide Fact Sheet](#)

Policy Statements and Practice Documents

Canadian Psychiatric Association:

- [Policy and Position Statements](#)
- [Position Paper: Mental Health Care for People Who Identify as LGBTQ](#)

American Psychiatric Association:

- [APA Policy Statements on LGBT Concerns](#)
- [APA LGBT Resources and Publications](#)
- [Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons](#)

Youth

[LGBT Youth Line](#)

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