

FROM 
BORDERS TO
BELONGING

**EMPLOYMENT
IN CANADA**

AN INFORMATION GUIDE

for LGBTQI Refugee Newcomers
sponsored through the Rainbow
Refugee Assistance Partnership.



Finding work is a high priority for newcomers. Getting a job that earns a living, matches your qualifications and interests is one of the biggest challenges of settling in Canada. All newcomers face challenges finding work, and you will face some distinct challenges as an LGBTQI+ newcomer.

During your first year in Canada you will have a monthly income while you settle. You can use this time to explore employment opportunities, develop language and other work skills, and search for a job. Your sponsors will help connect you with information and resources.

You can begin talking with your sponsors about work as part of planning your arrival and settlement. What kinds of work have you done? What skills do you enjoy using? What skills do you want to develop?

EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

Our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and provincial laws require employers to treat employees fairly. Your right to equal opportunity and treatment is protected by labour laws when you are looking for work and as an employee.

In Canada, provincial and federal labour laws are designed to protect employees and employers. These laws set minimum salaries, health and safety standards, hours of work, parental leave and annual paid vacations, and they provide protection for children.

Employers have a duty to provide a workplace that is safe and inclusive. Employers must prevent and address workplace discrimination or harassment based on sex, age, race, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity.



EMPLOYMENT EQUITY

Many employers in Canada have employment equity programs in place to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. These programs may include targeted recruitment, mentorship, and other supports in the workplace.

Employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to employees who have specific needs related to their gender identity or sexual orientation. For example, this may include providing access to gender-neutral washrooms, allowing employees to use their preferred name and pronouns, or providing time off for medical appointments related to gender affirming care.

Employers also have a duty to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities. For example, ensuring rooms are accessible for wheelchair use. Employers are required to accommodate differences in religious practices in the workplace. For example, allowing days off for religious holidays or a quiet room for prayers.

NEWCOMERS' EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND CHALLENGES

Employers are eager to recruit good employees, and many employers are very open to hiring newcomers. That said, newcomers face racism and discrimination when they are looking for work. Some employers prioritize "Canadian experience." Newcomers in trades or professions that are regulated may not have their credentials recognized.

For many newcomers, the first job in Canada may not be the most satisfying. It may take time to build your qualifications and gain Canadian experience before finding the job you really want. It is common for newcomers to take a "survival" job while they work on language skills, volunteer or taking additional training

2SLGBTQI+ EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES

Acceptance and inclusion of 2SLGBTQI+ people in workplaces has greatly improved in recent years; Many companies are more vocal than ever about their support for 2SLGBTQI+ rights. They fly rainbow flags, post signs in store windows, and participate in Pride parades.

That doesn't always mean they have all made workplaces completely welcoming.

Many LGBTQI+ working Canadians still feel like their peers treat them differently or do not fully include them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. 2SLGBTQI+ workers are more likely to leave jobs or avoid certain types of jobs because they do not feel welcome or safe. Research suggests people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities make less money than their cisgender and heterosexual counterparts. Some may be choosing a pay cut in order to work for an employer where they feel safe and welcome.

Transgender and gender-diverse people may face misgendering, harassment, or unfair treatment. Some employers may not know about their obligations to use correct pronouns and names. Many workplaces do not yet have facilities like gender-neutral washrooms.

2SLGBTQI+ workers may face discrimination, harassment, or bullying in workplaces. Even though employers have a duty to act to prevent and stop harassment, making a complaint can be difficult.

Pride at Work has created a useful guide, *Know Your Rights: A Guide for LGBTQ2+ Employees*. View the guide at: www.prideatwork.ca/know-your-rights.

BEING OUT OR OPEN AS LGBTQI+ AT WORK

There are many ways to be 2SLGBTQI+ at work. Being out about your sexual orientation and gender identity at work is your decision to make.

Some workers choose not to come out to their colleagues or employer. Some may choose not to come out because they feel their life is private. Some do not come out because they are worried about negative consequences. For newcomers and people of colour, workplaces may not feel safe enough to also come out as LGBTQI+.

Some workers choose to be open with some of their co-workers. For example, they are out to their peers, but not to their managers or boss. Some may be out to peers and supervisors but not to the people they supervise.

Some workers choose to be out to everyone.

Many organizations have 2SLGBTQI+ employee groups. These groups can provide helpful guidance about coming out at work.



HOW SPONSORS SUPPORT YOUR EMPLOYMENT

Your sponsors will support your job search and employment in a number of ways.

1. **They will help you apply for a Social Insurance Number.**
You will need a SIN to work legally, to pay taxes, and receive government benefits.
2. **Connect you with local employment services and resources where you can:**
 - explore your interests and work opportunities in your area
 - enhance your workplace language skills—these can include classes, libraries, and testing services.
 - learn about working in Canada; these can be bridging to work, internships, mentorships or volunteering opportunities.
 - verify that the education, training, and job experience you obtained in another country are equivalent to standards established for Canadian workers
 - get help searching for work, preparing a resume and cover letter, and also preparing you for job interviews.
 - explore whether starting a small business is right for you
3. **Your sponsors can support you in your job search by:**
 - Discussing job leads with you
 - Introducing you to people in your work area that they know
 - Helping you practice for job interviews
 - Helping you make arrangements for child care before interviews or taking a job if needed

Your sponsors can help you learn about your rights as a member of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at work.

Your sponsors can help you think about how open about your sexual orientation or gender identity you want to be at work. How do you introduce yourself in job interviews?

What information do you share about yourself in job interviews? With your employer? With your co-workers?

Before you take a job, your sponsors will connect you with resources where you can learn:

- provincial and federal labour laws
- what Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan

If you face discrimination or harassment at work, you can tell your sponsors, and they will help connect you with resources and support. If you continue to need income support after your first year, sponsors will explain financial support programs to people in need and connect you with resources to apply.



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