



# THRIVING On Campus

## The Experiences of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ Students

*Thriving On Campus* is an Ontario-wide campus climate study for 2SLGBTQ+ university students. The project explored students' experiences, perceptions, wellbeing, and academic success. Nearly 3900 2SLGBTQ+ students participated in an online survey and 50 students participated in follow-up interviews. Surveys were administered in Winter 2019 and interviews took place from Fall 2019 to Summer 2020. For more information about the study and those who participated, please see "Study Overview and Participants' Demographics."

### **This report presents:**

- Insights about the complex experiences of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students related to various aspects of student life.
- Information about the importance of campus safety and its effects on BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students' belonging, mental health, and academic development.
- Recommendations for campuses to consider as they work to foster the inclusion and thriving of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students.

**Please note:** Because it is not possible to randomly sample 2SLGBTQ+ university students in Ontario, we cannot know with certainty if our findings represent the population of 2SLGBTQ+ students at Ontario universities. However, given the size and diversity of our survey and interview samples, our findings offer important insights to support policies and programs that are responsive to the needs, strengths, and experiences of 2SLGBTQ+ students, including BIPOC students. Given the survey's cross-sectional design, reported statistical relationships between variables reflect correlation and do not meet the criteria of cause-and-effect.

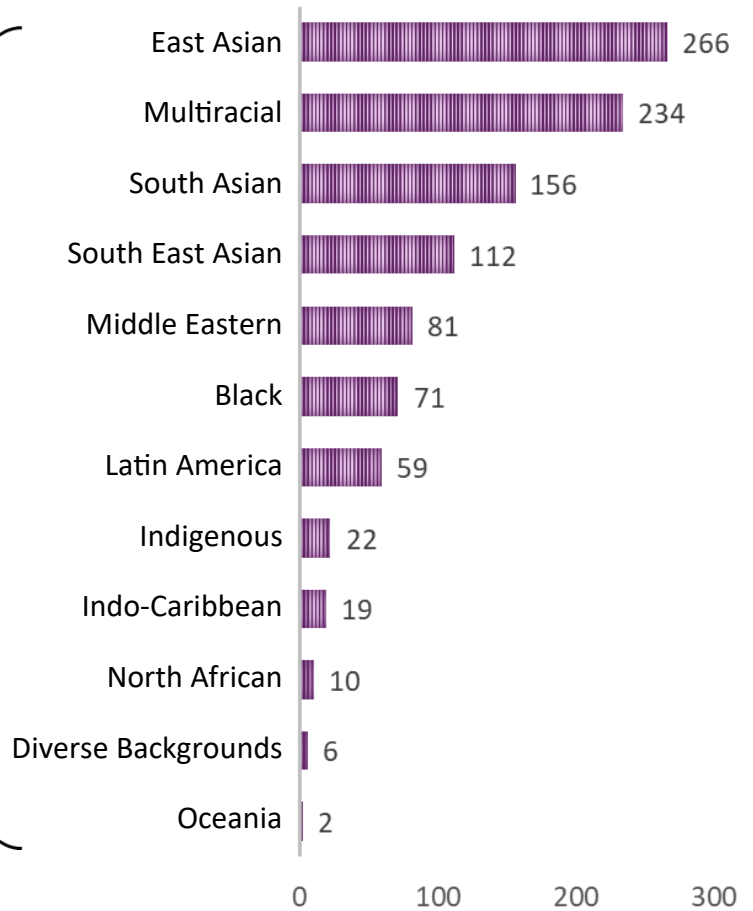
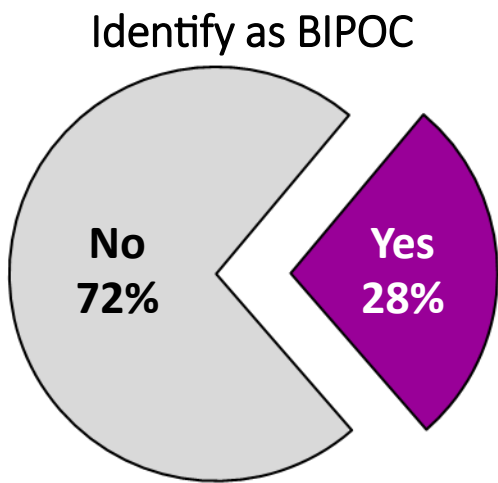
# Demographics of BIPOC Survey Participants

## Racial Diversity

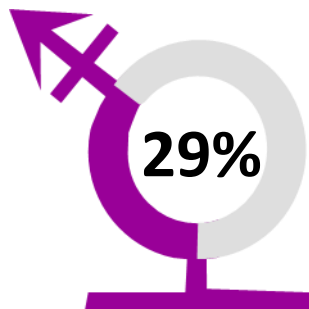
The graph below shows the diverse range of racial identifications amongst BIPOC survey participants ( $N = 1052$ ), with the largest group being students identifying as East Asian.

Among survey participants, those who reported an Indigenous identity included First Nations (status and

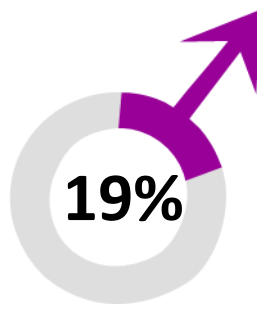
non-status), Métis, and Inuit, as well as respondents identifying as Indigenous from Chinchaysuyo, Peru, and Ni-Vanuatu.



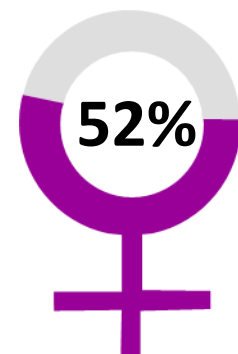
## Gender Diversity



BIPOC trans



BIPOC cisgender man

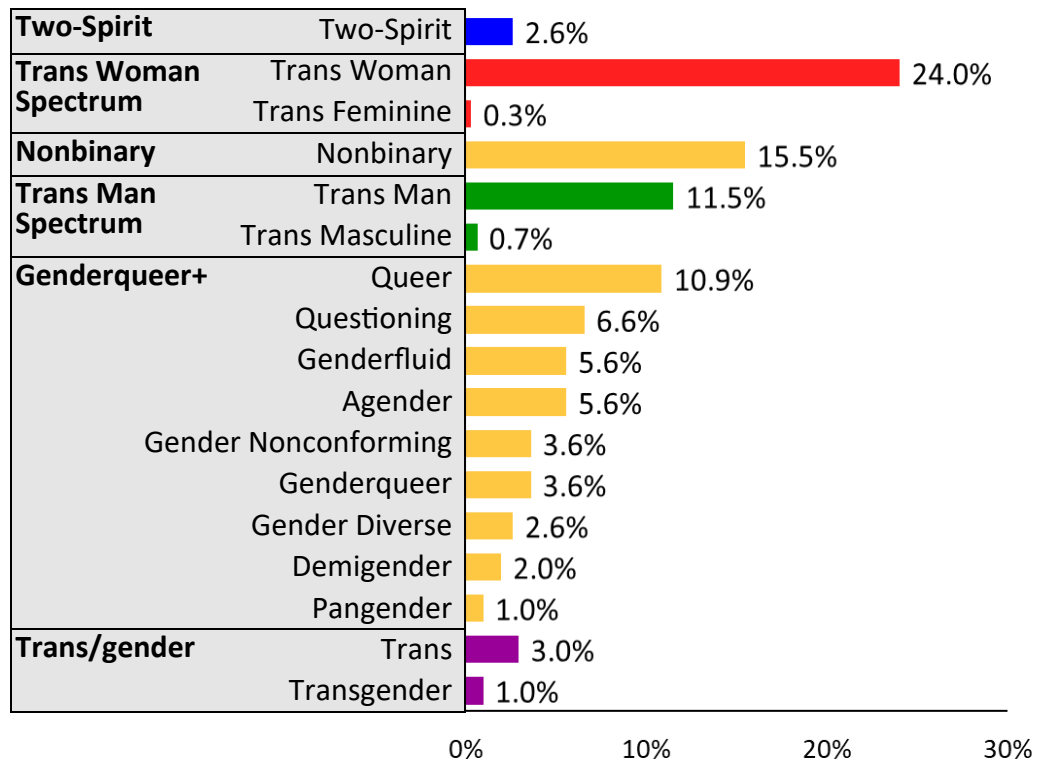


BIPOC cisgender woman

## Gender Diversity (con't)

Trans BIPOC students represented various trans communities, with the largest group being students identifying along the trans woman spectrum.

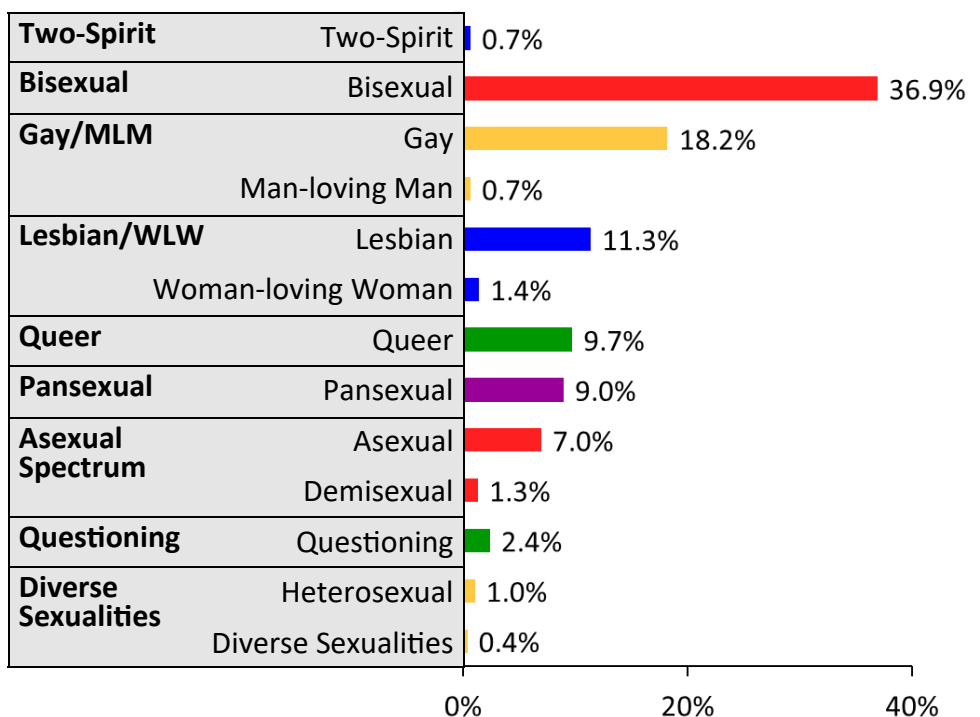
**Gender Identities of BIPOC Trans Participants (N = 304)**



## Sexual Identity Diversity

BIPOC students represented various sexual identities with the largest group being students identifying as bisexual.

**Sexual Identities of BIPOC Participants (N = 1049)**



## Additional Demographics of Survey Participants

- 36% STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) students
- 21% social sciences students
- 86% undergraduate students
- 95% full-time students
- 21% qualified for free tuition\*

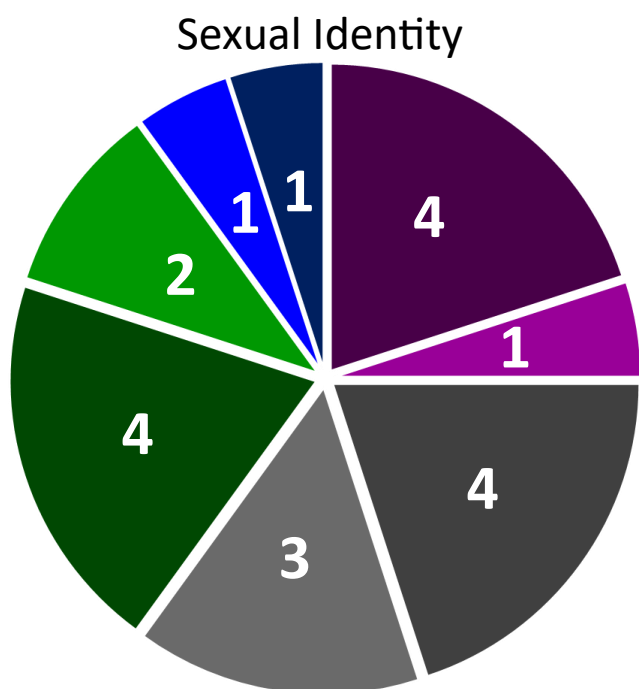
- 21% the first students in their families to attend university
- 65% have one or more disabilities or conditions affecting their experiences as a student
- 15% received learning accommodations at their school

\* At the time of the study the provincial government's OSAP provided free tuition for students from low-income families.

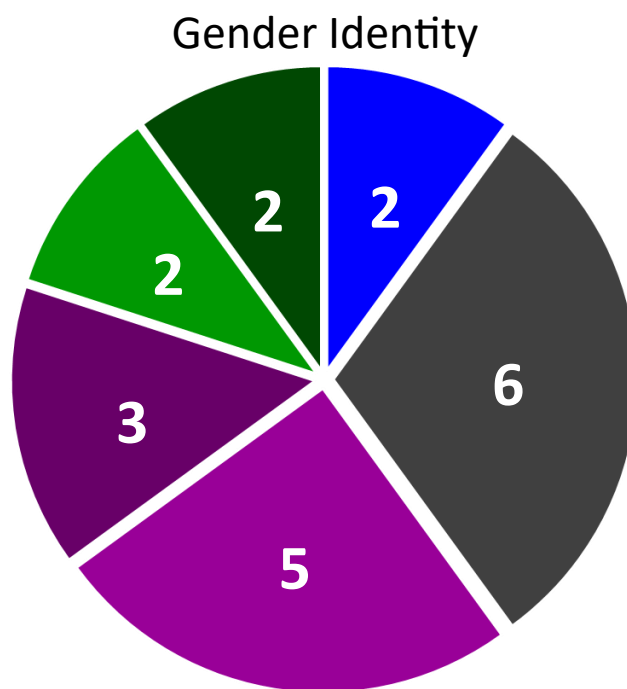
## Demographics of BIPOC Interview Participants

50 of the survey participants participated in follow-up interviews, 20 of whom were BIPOC; 5 of the BIPOC interviewees identified as Indigenous.

The charts below represent the demographic diversity of the 20 BIPOC interviewees. The pie graphs report the number of interview participants identifying with each identity/status.



- Asexual spectrum
- Bisexual
- Gay
- Pansexual
- Lesbian
- Queer
- Questioning
- Two-Spirit



- Cisgender man
- Cisgender woman
- Genderqueer+
- Nonbinary
- Trans spectrum
- Two-Spirit

# Envisioning Thriving on Campus: Creating Ideal Campuses for BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ Students

*Moving beyond basic survival and safety to truly grow and flourish*

Interview participants were invited to share how they understood what it means to thrive on campus and were asked to suggest ways that universities can promote thriving among diverse 2SLGBTQ+ students. Below we draw on the insights of the BIPOC interviewees.

## Holistic Support Toward Thriving

For BIPOC students, holistic support toward flourishing included feeling safe and able to express their full personhood beyond a specific identity (e.g., beyond being 2SLGBTQ+ or a student). Holistic support would require an integrated intersectional campus experience, including representation of diverse identities among faculty and staff, as well as students. These key components were seen as necessary for students to thrive—that is, to move beyond basic survival and safety to truly grow and flourish.

*“I always see things more holistically; like I think for me thriving is when all of my parts are in balance, like I’m not just doing great at my work, but I’m also physically healthy and I’m spiritually healthy.”*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, graduate student

*“When I think of thriving, I feel like that means growth; there has to be an active attempt to grow and encourage things.*

*It’s not about – it’s like when a flower’s thriving it’s because of the sunlight and it’s being watered everyday. It’s not you just plant a flower in the soil and then leave it. It needs to be cultivated so, that’s what I picture when you talk about thriving on campus. It’s not simply to just have queer students move on and call it a day. We need to have more queer professors and you know, we need to actively be inviting and encouraging to people and our perspectives. And that has to go from all across the spectrum, it has to be intersectional. And yeah, there just has to be that willingness to look towards the future.”*

– Mixed race, trans woman spectrum, queer/questioning, disabled, undergraduate student

## Acceptance & Inclusion

For BIPOC students, acceptance and inclusion would result from intersectional approaches embedded in all curricular activities and social opportunities for students. This would include discussions of gender and sexuality across all courses and all subjects. This intentional intersectional

approach would also involve social opportunities across campus spaces that are queer- and trans-friendly—not solely within 2SLGBTQ+ specific social groups. Participants discussed the importance of including the voices of diverse students in meaningful ways when making policies and in other decision-making processes. They also described the need for tangible/physical markers and representations of an inclusive campus environment; for example, the widespread use of inclusive language and easy access to gender-neutral washrooms across campus.

*“You got to listen to us. We have to be a part of the conversation and not just, you know, an ancillary sort of thing... So, in terms of like inclusion and what it would take to thrive on a campus, it all comes down to whether or not I’m actually included in the conversation around building policies and creating plans and having a say as to where the funding goes.”*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, asexual, disabled, graduate student

## Centering Racism & Intersectionality

Examining how BIPOC students describe ‘thriving on campus’ provides insight into how thriving can be advanced for BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students. As described above, students discussed wanting to be treated respectfully and included in conversations and decisions that impact their experiences, and wanting universities to see students

*“I need basic decency first. I need to be treated as a person and respected in all of my intersections. I need the racism to stop and the bigotry to stop before I can even get to like I’m no longer scared. Then we can talk about thriving.”*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, asexual, disabled, graduate student

holistically, with all their intersecting identities.

It is very important that discussions of BIPOC students’ experiences on campuses – experiences with feeling unsafe and excluded – are grounded in their own definitions of thriving, as this helps contextualize BIPOC students’ experiences in classrooms, connecting with peers and how they experience racism. We ask you to keep this in mind as you continue to read this report.

The following sections highlight both positive and negative experiences on campus. It is important to note that, embedded within all these interactions, are experiences of racism. The practice of having to be intentional and carve out safe places on campus where BIPOC students find community with each other reflects how they are excluded in campus spaces.

# Perceptions of Safety on Campus

Research suggests that feeling safe on campus is a critical factor influencing students' belonging, academics, and wellbeing. Therefore, using survey data we explored perceptions of safety on campus as 2SLGBTQ+ students among BIPOC students and compared their perceptions with white students' perceptions.

Specifically, we examined students' perceptions of 2SLGBTQ+ safety on campus in terms of (1) not worrying about being mistreated because of their trans identity and/or sexual identity, and (2) feeling safe being open about their trans identity and/or sexual identity (see textbox for more information about the scales). Questions concerning trans identity were asked only to

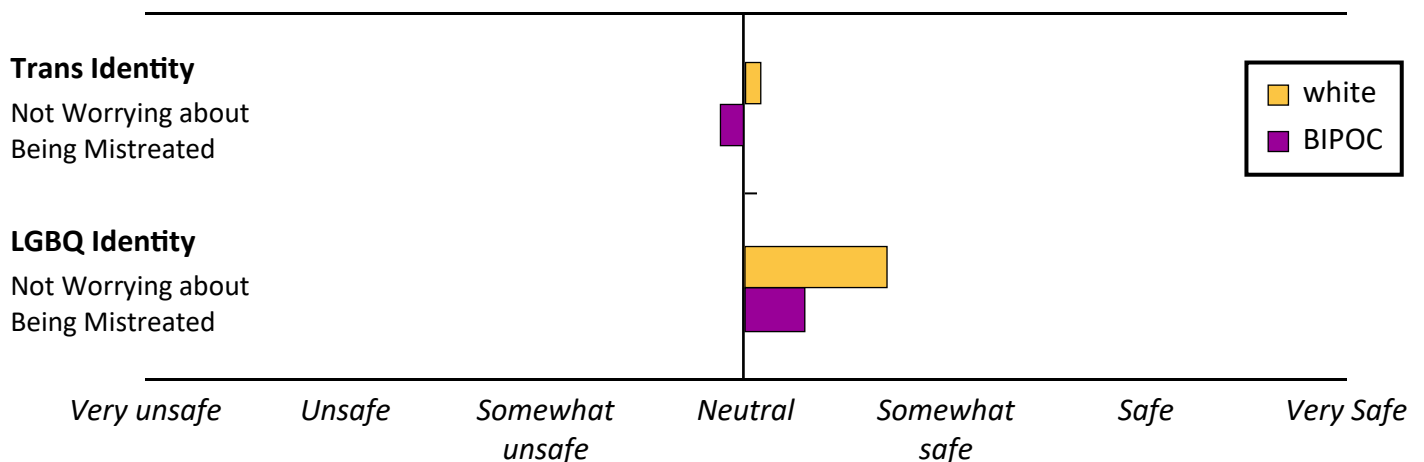
students who identified as part of the trans community.

In the following graphs, we present the average scores for both BIPOC students and white students. Differences between the groups' scores were statistically significant unless otherwise noted.

## Feeling Safe: Not Worrying about Mistreatment

*Trans Identity:* BIPOC students' score fell just below "neutral" and white students' score fell just above "neutral," suggesting that BIPOC trans students felt less safe on campus than white trans students in terms of not worrying about being mistreated due to their trans identity. Please note, however, that the difference between their scores was not statistically significant.

### Feeling Safe: Not Worrying about Mistreatment



### The Safety Scales

*Not worrying about being mistreated* – feeling personally safe in terms of not worrying about being discriminated against (e.g., stared at/whispered about, verbally assaulted/threatened) on campus as an individual because of their trans/LGBQ identity.

*Feeling safe being open about 2SLGBTQ identity* – feeling personally safe to be open and not hide their trans/LGBQ identity on campus.

*LGBQ Identity:* The scores for both BIPOC and white students fell between “neutral” and “somewhat safe” regarding not worrying about being mistreated because of their LGBQ identity. Further, BIPOC students felt significantly less safe than their white peers did.

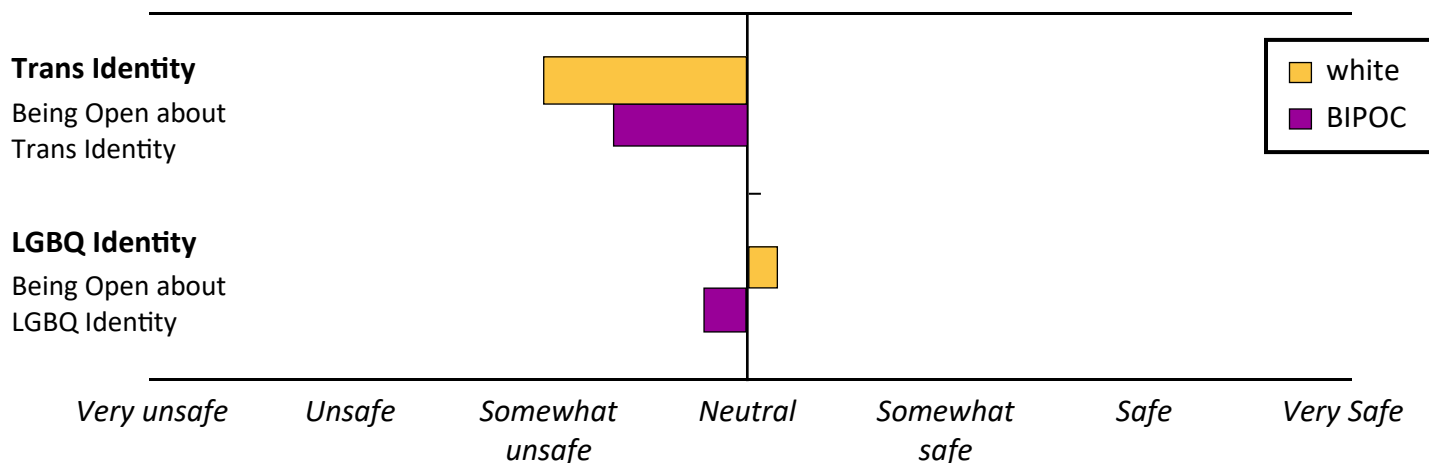
**Feeling Safe: Being Open about 2SLGBTQ+ Identity**

*Trans Identity:* The scores for both BIPOC and white trans students indicated that students in each group generally felt “slightly

unsafe” in terms of being open on campus about their trans identity, with white students tending to feel significantly less safe than BIPOC students.

*LGBQ Identity:* BIPOC students felt significantly less safe than white students in terms of being open on campus about their LGBQ identity. The score for BIPOC students fell between “neutral” and “slightly unsafe,” whereas white students’ score fell between “neutral” and “slightly safe.”

**Feeling Safe: Being Open about 2SLGBTQ+ Identity**





# Campus Safety & Belonging Matter

Being safe on campus is essential to BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students thriving.

Feeling unsafe on campus negatively affects BIPOC students' belonging, academic development and wellbeing. The more BIPOC students reported feeling unsafe on campus due to their trans identity or sexuality the lower their sense of belonging on campus.

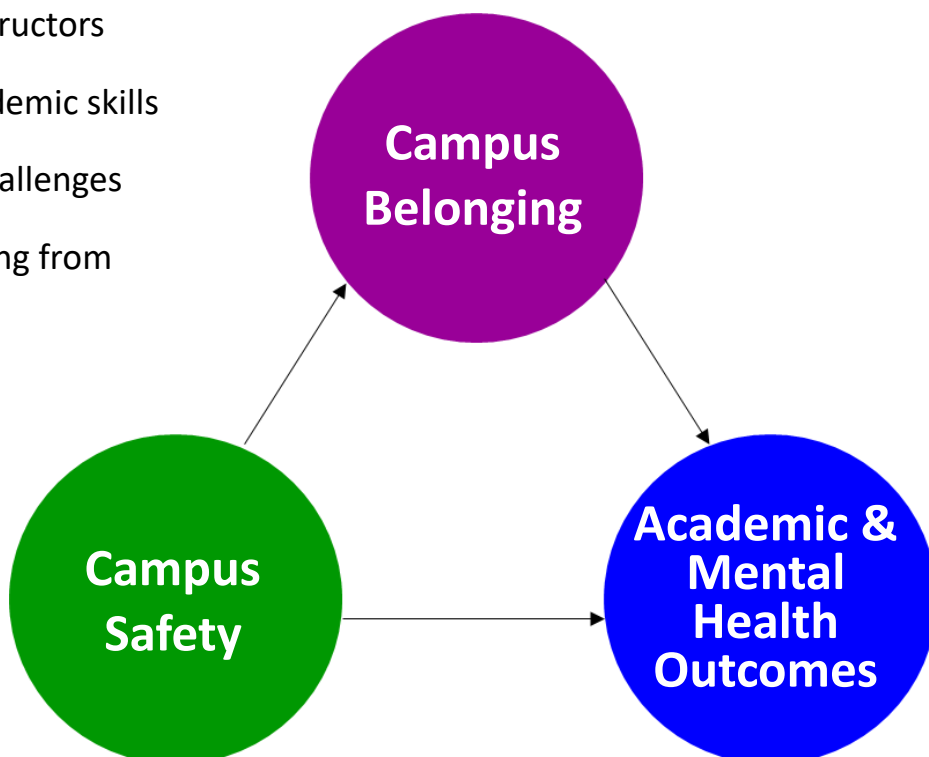
Feeling unsafe on campus and lacking a sense of belonging on campus were associated with negative academic and mental health outcomes, such as:

- Lower personal satisfaction with their academic experience and development
- Lower perceived academic and professional support from instructors
- Lower confidence in their academic skills
- Higher academic stress and challenges
- Higher frequency of disengaging from their academics

*“Thriving means to do more than just survive, more than just go through the motions every day. It means to actually be engaged and wanting to improve and continue, and just wanting to grow. And as an LGBTQ student, thriving would mean to be normal. It would mean that, you know, at least in my case, not be scared of my peers and professors.”*

– Indigenous, intersex woman, bisexual, undergraduate student

- Lower likelihood to want to reattend their university again (if they were to do it over again)
- Higher stress and psychological distress
- Lower positive mental health



# Academics

The interviews explored students' experiences on campus, including what 'an average day,' 'a good or great day,' and 'a bad day' entailed and times in which they felt they belonged and did not belong. In their responses, students talked about experiences in their academics, which we discuss below. Consistent with the theme of 'thriving on campus,' we start by presenting findings about students' experiences of inclusion in these contexts. We then turn to findings about being excluded, which will need to be addressed by universities to foster thriving among BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students.

## Academic & Curricular Inclusion

Students recalled feeling proud, visible, and affirmed when their diverse identities were represented in class discussions and course content, and they had the opportunity to learn about issues affecting them. This helped them to become more confident in themselves and their ideas. BIPOC students especially emphasized these points when they were taught by racialized instructors, explaining that having a respectful space to share their experiences and opinions were significant positive moments in their experiences.

*"I also had a Trinidadian professor who in her class on race and racialization, I worked on a group project talking about ... how queer stays white. And I had the*

*opportunity to share some of my personal experiences with the class and she made it very, very safe, welcoming – not welcoming but [a] respectful environment. And you know I connected with other racialized LGBTQ people in the classroom who came up to me after and said, "I'm so grateful that you talked about that," you know. And it was a very different experience because for the first time I felt like we were not censured. And it was fantastic"*

– Caribbean, cisgender woman, lesbian, disabled, undergraduate student

It is important to note that being affirmed in one's identity was not limited to gender, sexual orientation or race; rather, it was the intersections of all experiences. For example, a Two-Spirit student stated they felt affirmed by their course content,

*"[the course included] Everything. That holistic experience, poverty, and domestic violence; like we had people that work in prisons, all of that kind of guest lecturers and stuff... I was like, "wow, I've been [in] handcuffs, like I know exactly all these stories." So, I think that class in particular made me feel like all of those identities in the intersectionality of it, were present and celebrated more than anything else."*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, graduate student

In talking about course content, some participants noted the value of learning about topics that addressed their experiences. One participant shared:

*"I was reading Simone de Beauvoir ...and we were reading the ethics of the ambiguity. And then it drives like oppression in general and how it – it's like a social systematic system that kind of just perpetuates oppression as if it is a factual thing when it is not. So I was reading about that, I'm like "That's a really interesting view." And I do identify with a lot of the things [de Beauvoir] is saying ... it impacted how I view gender and treatment of LGBTQI+ community. ...So I'm like more firm on my stance, "I have critical thinking skills."*

– Chinese, nonbinary, pansexual, undergraduate student

*they get very militant about it, and defensive. I actually had a couple of professors who deliberately do it every time ... I've actually had one start to use the right pronouns, catch themselves, and then switch to the wrong pronouns. Yet another reason why I don't really interact with teachers or peers or anything, because that one [being misgendered] happens a lot. So, yeah, those are bad days, but they happen often enough they could almost be normal."*

– Indigenous, intersex woman, bisexual, undergraduate student

*"In classes sometimes I do feel that [not connecting with peers in class], but I don't know if that's related to just the like racial identity or if it's also being pansexual. Yeah, it's hard to differentiate sometimes...definitely more subtle."*

– Mixed race, woman, pansexual, undergraduate student


## Academic & Curricular Exclusion

Often when talking about "a bad day" on campus and not belonging, students discussed overhearing trans/homophobic comments in class that were not addressed by instructors. Many students explained that these comments from their peers made the class feel less safe. Unfortunately, instructors and professors also made students feel unsafe. For example, one Indigenous student discussed being intentionally misgendered by their professors. She explains,

*"There's teachers who will see me with my hand up or ask me a question, and I answer, and then – you know how they recap to the class what the person said, right – they will deliberately look at me, use the wrong pronouns despite the fact that I have corrected them a hundred times. And if I do bother to correct them,*

Other students discussed course content and some professors teaching harmful topics. One student stated that their professor assigned a short story that included the 'n-word,' thus many students used that word in their essays and conversations in class.

*"Like the character's only mentioned as the n\*gger in the story, right? And people like in their essays were writing the n\*gger did this and I was "like you can't write that in your essay. That's not – that's what they refer to him as. That's not what you call the character." That's insane to me that that's the label you would use in your essay, right? ...And so, our prof was addressing it ... she had a*



*little discussion, but people didn't participate. And I just felt like that really highlights how the university curriculum isn't tailored to be inclusive of the experience of Black students. This old white lady [the professor] was telling me some long-ass story about how she's part of some network of profs to do some – to be inclusive, whatever. And I was, then why did you choose the short story? I was like, what's wrong with you?"*

– Black, cisgender man, gay,  
undergraduate student

# Experiences of Finding Community

The interviews explored students' experiences of community on campus, that is experiences of support and belonging. The interviews also invited students to talk experiences with the campus spaces, including 2SLGBTQ+ spaces such as student clubs and resource centres. The findings presented below include ones that align with the thriving theme as well as ones that address students' challenges finding community and facing exclusion.

## Creating & Finding Community

BIPOC students explained how important it was for *them* to create community on campus, which includes their friends and faculty allies. For some students, these communities were created through a shared 2SLGBTQ+ identity, a shared racial identity, or the intersections of these identities. For example, one participant noted that connecting with other racialized 2SLGBTQ+ students was when they felt supported as well as having a queer professor.

*"I don't know. I mean, there wasn't much affirmation. I would say just interacting with the other queer brown students that I knew, in my program was probably like one of the only affirmations and then one of my professors was queer, and so we were able to kind of click on that."*

– Indian, cisgender woman, queer, undergraduate student

Another participant described how, after class, a group of other trans and nonbinary students spontaneously approached them. When talking about their experiences with this newly found community, they mentioned the support and safety the group offered:

*"We all stick together, and we all have each other's backs. So, that was kind of an encouraging moment [when other trans and nonbinary students approached] where it shows that you know, these groups just – there's just this kind of instinct ... for us to support each other. I feel like when you know this about people and you have this [identity] in common, it's much easier for you to let your guard down. Usually when I'm talking to new people who are ... not queer and stuff, I usually have to – I usually do have to speak with my guard up a little, sometimes [I'm] not always willing to disclose things about me at first... So, there's a that level of implicit trust [when having a shared identity] that just really strengthens a relationship right off the bat."*

– Mixed race, trans woman spectrum, queer/questioning, undergraduate student

Finding support for their intersecting identities was challenging for some participants. One Indigenous participant explained that their Indigeneity was not affirmed by their classmates, and their 'queer side' was not affirmed by their professors.

*“Not as much [discrimination] from the queer side but definitely on the racial side .... So, for the queer side, it wasn’t really the students that were the problem. It was more the faculty.”*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, asexual, disabled, graduate student

*“So, I wish I could change it. I wish I started a war or a riot and especially what happened this summer at the [name of university] with that Black student getting arrested on campus for two hours for no reason for skateboarding on campus ...And in the video where you see he’s being arrested, white students are skateboarding by. ... all that happening shows the climate at [name of university]. Doesn’t feel safe.”*

– Black, cisgender man, gay, undergraduate student

## Belonging & Social Spaces

Social spaces on campus where BIPOC students felt they belonged were described as welcoming, inviting, and inclusive to all students. For instance, students highlighted having access to support when needed. One student described such support as “a very nice security blanket.” However, many BIPOC students discussed how they felt the climate of their campus was not inclusive, including being impacted by events that *others* experienced, such as racially motivated discrimination.

Many BIPOC students explained how they felt the climate of their campus was not inclusive. One student explained,

*“I think it was more the general atmosphere, because in first year, the topic of sexuality just never came up because it was all assumed... that everyone was just straight. So, it didn’t really feel very welcoming because it didn’t feel like they would be OK with it.”*

– Mixed race, agender, demisexual, undergraduate student

Another participant mentioned the treatment of another Black student by campus police impacted his feelings of safety on campus. He explained,

When explaining their perceptions of the campus climate, many BIPOC students recounted how the community *they created or found* made them feel safe and/or supported. One student stated they did not feel safe on campus except for a specific space – a campus coffee/convenience shop in this case.

*“Yeah. I’ve never felt like a super strong sense of belonging on campus necessarily. But ... where I am at my most content, at least like self-doubting ... we have this coffee shop/convenience store on campus called [name of shop], and the folks there are super chill. I’m pretty sure quite a couple of them are LGBT as well and generally the crowd there is a pretty decent chill crowd of folks”*

– Latin American, nonbinary, lesbian, undergraduate student

There were many factors external to campus that impacted BIPOC students as well. Some of these factors included political events happening in their home country: for

example, one Brazilian student stated,

*“We had elections last year, and it was just terrible. So, when I found out who our new president was ... I had a breakdown. I was like, “No this can't be happening.” That was very stressful.”*

– Brazilian, cisgender woman, lesbian, undergraduate student

## 2SLGBTQ+ Student Campus Centres & Groups

The majority of BIPOC student interviewees (17 of the 20) said they were on campuses with 2SLGBTQ+ student centers or groups. However, engagement in these spaces by BIPOC students was low, with them rarely or never participating. Of the students who did attend, the experiences primarily fell within two categories, one involving affirmation and connection with peers, and the other involving subtle discrimination related to the whiteness of the space.

This student commented on how they benefitted from the 2SLGBTQ+ centre on their campus:

*“[The centre on my campus] I don't know if this is too vague, but it was fun. It was nice to be with people who liked the same things, liked the same shows and, they could understand the same jokes. And that was so great because, sometimes I tell a [LGBTQ-related] joke that none of my friends understand. I just feel comfortable I guess”*

– Brazilian, cisgender woman, lesbian, undergraduate student

Some students benefitted from having an 2SLGBTQ+ campus centre even though they had not attended events. One participant explained they were told about 2SLGBTQ+ specific support groups on campus from their counsellor. They stated,

*“I didn't end up going to that meeting, but I found that knowing that there's a service that's dedicated to helping the community is, you know, I appreciate that.”*

– Chinese, nonbinary, pansexual, undergraduate student

In contrast, other students described their experiences within campus 2SLGBTQ+ centres and groups as uncomfortable because the space was predominantly comprised of white students, which made some BIPOC students feel like they did not belong. For example, one student stated they were suspicious of how eager their white peers were to talk to them.

*“I hate to say it, but like the Pride group at [my university] is like 99% white people. And I don't want to sound rude, but they're exactly what one would expect. They're just too much... It does make me feel a little bit like they are delighted to have me there to diversify them. ... the way people crowded around me when I know I'm not, I'm not a very interesting person to talk to ... So, it makes me suspicious every time people go out of their way to continue talking to me. So I didn't feel excluded, but yeah that was that part of the pride group that*

*sort of made it difficult for me to fully feel comfortable with them.”*

– Latin American, nonbinary, lesbian, undergraduate student

One reason for the lack of BIPOC student participation in 2SLGBTQ+ campus centres might be related to the location of some of these spaces. Some students mentioned that their campus centre was located close to campus police, which presented a barrier to them accessing the space.

*“I went once [to the 2SLGBTQ+ centre], it’s weird, I don’t like their office...their office is on the fourth floor of a building where the first floor is campus police. ... it makes us feel ... surveilled I guess, I don’t know, it sounds a bit paranoid ... but yeah ... it’s like sharing spaces with people who enforced the opposite — people who have put themselves in adversarial situations with LGBTQ+ students in the past and probably, but still happily do it ... is like, yeah it doesn’t feel safe basically.”*

– Mixed race, genderqueer, queer, disabled, graduate student

For this student, not being able to connect with the 2SLGBTQ+ campus centre was particularly disappointing because they also did not feel safe connecting with the broader 2SLGBTQ+ community off-campus. They stated that being racialized in Toronto during the time where there was a serial killer, primarily targeting racialized gay men,<sup>1</sup> was particularly challenging and impacted their ability to connect with the local 2SLGBTQ+ community. They stated,

*“There was a lot of weirdness with the ... serial killer, so it took me a while to actually like go out in queer spaces ... just because that was a scary time for that.”*

– Mixed race, genderqueer, queer, disabled, graduate student

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<sup>1</sup> Wahab, A. (2021). When the closet is the grave: A critical review of the Bruce McArthur case. *Sexualities*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607211000193>



# Recommendations for Ideal Campuses

Between the time the survey and interviews were conducted, and this report was created, there has been significant awareness brought towards systemic racism and oppression as a result of the Black Lives Matter Protests of 2020; the discovery and continuous investigation of mass graves at residential school grounds starting in the summer of 2021 with the discovery of the remains of 215 Indigenous children at Kamloops Residential School with over 1800 confirmed or suspected unmarked graves found since; and the rise of anti-Asian racism.<sup>2-4</sup> These larger societal events have had significant impacts on BIPOC students, staff, instructors, and professors.

As demonstrated by the experiences of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students who shared their experiences through *Thriving On Campus*, universities are not traditionally nor currently structured to deal with these impacts or provide supports for healing. While the impact of larger societal events was not reflected in the *Thriving* data, it is important to highlight that BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ feel the effects of these events and require support and recognition of these larger stressors.

In exploring interviewees' visions for a thriving and inclusive campus, they were asked to suggest ways to realize their visions. Drawing on these suggestions, we offer recommendations for universities to consider in creating inclusive campuses for BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students — campuses in which they can thrive and flourish.

## Resources & Supports

Students called for more resources and supports, such as mental health counsellors and academic counsellors. Participants cited issues with current supports such as long waitlists, rushed appointments, and a hetero/cisnormative focus. While expanding services to improve access was described as important, students also highlighted the need to attend to intersectionality in student services — BIPOC students want to be able to access services that take a holistic approach to wellbeing and are inclusive of race, gender, sexuality, and spirituality.

Having instructors, tutors, counsellors and student services staff who share their identities was important. One graduate student teaching assistant pointed out,

*“I didn’t find that I would send students over to health services for counselling, because when you have a white counsellor and you have to explain 400 years of colonization before we even get to my problems.”*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, graduate student

The need for leaders in 2SLGBTQ+ spaces to have training specific to Indigeneity and Two-Spirit experience was also recommended.

Students wanted more variety in 2SLGBTQ+ events and spaces beyond just one club/group on campus, and better integration of 2SLGBTQ+ issues into broader campus-wide events. One student said, “Pride Week is amazing, but the rest of the year you don't

hear anything” (Chinese, nonbinary, pansexual, undergraduate student). Reflecting the need to extend support for 2SLGBTQ+ students beyond 2SLGBTQ+ events, they also called for more gender-neutral bathrooms.

A unique concern was raised about graduate student resources, which tend to be focused on careers or “adult life” and do not include holistic supports.

*“If you’re grad students, you’re studying and you’re working... It’s like this entire pressure to not have a life outside of academia.”*

– Mixed race, genderqueer, queer, disabled, graduate student

## Training on 2SLGBTQ+ Awareness

Cultivating the conditions in which 2SLGBTQ+ students can thrive must include increased education among faculty, staff, and students. Students raised concerns about facing racism and trans/homophobia from their professors, highlighting the need for faculty education in 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion. Reflecting on their ideal campus, one student imagined what it might be like to get to a point where no one made assumptions about each other’s pronouns; as a first step, they expressed a desire for professors and fellow students to ask about and respect pronouns.

Better faculty education was identified as a strategy that could potentially increase the sensitivity with which 2SLGBTQ+ issues are handled in the curriculum. It could also create a more comfortable environment in

which 2SLGBTQ+ students could talk about their lives. Beyond formal education and training, one student suggested the inclusion of events or workshops which could function as both entertainment and education (e.g., 2SLGBTQ+ comedy events) for faculty, staff, and students.

## Visibility, Representation, & Leadership

The visibility of 2SLGBTQ+ students, organizations and events was raised as an important avenue for change; beyond one-off flyers for events or a single on-campus space, participants expressed a need for more fulsome representation on their campuses. Especially for large campuses, having one 2SLGBTQ+ student organization in one physical location was noted as insufficient. Offering more opportunities for students to lead and create groups and events was a suggested strategy. As one student said, universities need to

*“...try and create a space where queer and Black students feel as if they have a platform.”*

– Black, cisgender man, gay, undergraduate student

Representation of Black, People of Colour, Indigenous, and 2SLGBTQ+ identities among faculty and staff was also flagged as important in terms of students seeing themselves represented and to counter the domination of “cis white culture” on campuses.

Students expressed a strong desire for

2SLGBTQ+ students to be represented in elected roles and committees on campus involved in policymaking. Several students felt that intersectional representation at various levels of campus governance would lead to changes that would benefit students who are most marginalized and that without it, university plans, including inclusion plans, would not reflect their experiences. One participant noted:

*“people who have my [Indigenous, gender, sexuality, disability] intersections... [need to be] included in the conversation around building policies and creating plans and having a say to where funding goes... [without intersectional representation you would have] a very exclusive inclusion plan.”*

– Indigenous, Two-Spirit, asexual, disabled, graduate student

## Systemic Reform: From Purse Strings to Pedagogy

Students offered a wealth of ideas for how to improve their campus experiences, many of which require systemic reforms. Wanting to see themselves represented within curriculum – beyond classes that are specific to gender and sexuality – was a common theme among interviewees. They provided examples for how queerness, Indigeneity, and Blackness could be integrated into their courses, with one student saying there is a need to,

*“...create a space where the stories we’re reading and the work that we’re working on, the examples we’re using and the sort*

*of content and studies that we’re learning about are more catered to a queer Black experience.”*

– Black, cisgender man, gay, undergraduate student


Reflecting on universities as colonial institutions that are capitalist in nature, some students described how the resulting learning environments are not conducive to learning for *all* students, feeling as if profits took precedence over student success and wellbeing. As one student said,

*“It’s not an environment meant for students to succeed. It’s an environment for the best. The people who are – who have the most advantages to get ahead. And being queer and Black is not an advantage in this space.”*

– Black, cisgender man, gay, undergraduate student

An Indigenous student shared that their ideal campus is one that “flips the table on colonization” (Two-Spirit, asexual, disabled, graduate student). To centre decolonization, they envisioned a campus where students can do their degrees on the land, have their various learning styles respected, and can learn from Elders who don’t necessarily have PhDs.

When imagining ideal campuses, students also pointed to financial need, for example, not having to worry about rent or tuition would change the ways that students could engage on campus. One student discussed the need for more grants for 2SLGBTQ+ students that recognize the value they bring to their campuses.



Students also described unique challenges related to commuting (e.g., trying to fit all their classes into fewer days, not being on-campus at times when events and meetings are typically offered). One student said free tuition would dramatically change the way they could engage on campus, enabling them to live on or nearby campus (Chinese, nonbinary, pansexual, undergraduate student).

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<sup>2</sup> Lee, M., & Parkhill, M. (2022, January 25). *Where searched for remains are happening at former residential school sites*. CTV News. <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/where-searches-for-remains-are-happening-at-former-residential-school-sites-1.5754222>.

<sup>3</sup> Li, A. (2021, July 6). *Anti-Asian racism is more than a trending topic*. The Walrus. <https://thewalrus.ca/anti-asian-racism-is-more-than-a-trending-topic/>.

<sup>4</sup> Taylor, D. B. (2021, November 15). *George Floyd protests: A timeline*. The New York Times. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html>.

# Developing This Community Report

## Key Terms

**2SLGBTQ+:** When *Thriving On Campus* began, we used the acronym LGBTQ2S+ to reflect the sexual and gender diversities of students throughout the province. We included “2S” to make visible the identities of Indigenous Two-Spirit students in relation to sexuality and/or gender identity. Now, in recognition of the lands we live, study, and work on, and to support decolonization, we use “2SLGBTQ+.”

**Two-Spirit:** “A contemporary pan-Indigenous term used by some Indigenous LGBTQQIA+ people that honours male/female, and other gendered or non-gendered spirits, as well as spiritual and cultural expressions. The term may also be used interchangeably to express one’s sexuality, gender, and spirituality as separate terms for each or together as an interrelated identity that captures the wholeness of their gender and sexuality with their spirituality.”<sup>5</sup>

**Note:** Other than Two-Spirit, the survey used Western terms for gender identity and sexual identity. To be as inclusive as possible, students who use identity terms other than those listed could specify the term they use if they selected the option, “my gender [sexual identity] is not represented on this list. My gender identity [sexual identity] is: \_\_\_\_\_.” No students who selected this option provided non-Western terms for either gender identity or sexual identity.

Race/Ethnocultural Background	% Identify as People of Colour
Black	98.7
Southeast Asian	98.2
South Asian	95.3
East Asian	88.0
Middle Eastern & North African	70.4
Latin American	55.0
Diverse races	52.0

## Identifying BIPOC Students

The survey included two questions related to race. The first question asked participants about their race/ethnocultural background and participants were able to select multiple options if they identified with mixed heritage. The second question asked participants if they identified as a Person of Colour.

Using responses from the first question, participants were considered BIPOC if they selected any option other than white. Those who selected white as well as another option/options were considered BIPOC if they said they identified as a person of colour to the second question. Participants who did not specify their race/ethnocultural background but identified as a person of

colour in the second question were also considered BIPOC.

Among the 1,052 BIPOC students identified following these steps, 933 (88.7%) identified as People of Colour (based on responses to question 2).

## Why Use the Grouping of BIPOC

The working group discussed the strengths and weaknesses of using ethnocultural/race identification versus self-identifying as a Person of Colour to identify BIPOC students for the report. Conversations surrounded racial identity development, respecting participants' responses, and reflections on how a lack of self-identification does not remove oneself from systemic barriers and oppression related to race.

The working group decided to aggregate participants into BIPOC as described above, concluding that a lack of self-identification does not remove a person from systemic racism. This approach ensured that all participants who would have faced systemic barriers and oppression based on their race/ethnicity were included in the BIPOC group featured in this report.


## BIPOC Working Group Process

This report was created by the BIPOC Community Report working group in collaboration with the study's principal investigator and data analysts. Working group members identified as BIPOC and/or

2SLGBTQ+ and represented undergraduate and graduate students, campus-based service providers, and faculty. The group met between June 2021 and November 2021.

To ensure that all working group members were able to meaningfully participate in developing the report, attention was given to members' experiences and group process, as well as addressing power dynamics in decision-making. The stories and experiences that emerged from the data embodied members of the working group's own experiences and, at times, led to emotional exhaustion. Feelings of both comfort and discomfort arose from ensuring that decisions were made by group consensus so that the presentation of the data stayed true to the experiences of the study's participants. Pertinent concerns were discussed by the full team and from these conversations a safe and trustworthy environment was created. Through this process, working group members were able to make informed decisions and share their ideas, questions, critiques, and recommendations. The working group took great care to ensure the data presented in this report reflects the complex experiences shared by BIPOC students in the survey and interviews.

Though *Thriving On Campus* is guided by principles of intersectionality, the study focused on campus climate in relation to gender and sexuality. As a result, outside of demographic questions, the survey and interviews did not specifically include questions related to BIPOC experiences such as asking about experiences of racism.



However, in the follow-up interviews, some BIPOC participants shared their experiences with racism on campus. We have drawn on these valuable insights in this community report.

To further understand the experiences of BIPOC 2SLGBTQ+ students, it is important that future research specifically address experiences of racism on campuses, both interpersonally and within university systems.

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<sup>5</sup> Lezard, P., Prefontaine, Z., Cederwall, D., Sparrow, C., Maracle, S., Beck, & McLeod, A. (2020). *2SLGBTQQA+ Sub-Working Group, MMIWG2SLGBTQQA+ National Action Plan: Final Report*. The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (NIMMIWG). <https://mmiwg2splus-nationalactionplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2SLGBTQQA-Report-Final.pdf>



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