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# Conversion Therapy in Canada

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For the Public Understanding of Sexual and  
Gender Minority Youth



## What is “Conversion Therapy”?

- Any attempt to fix, repair, suppress, or change a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- Treatments have ranged from electro-shock therapy, chemical castration, and lobotomy
- 1980s & 90s: Exodus and the Ex-Gay movement

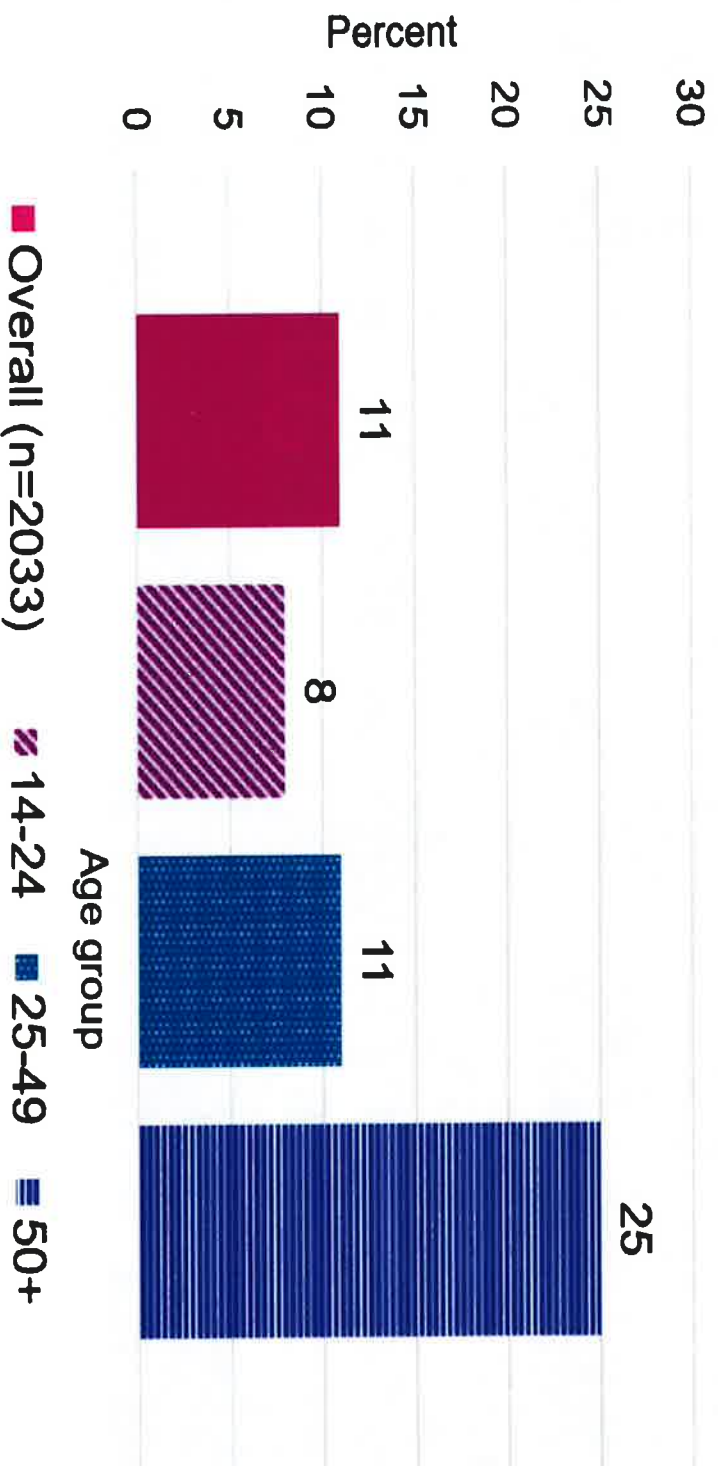
## **Modern Conversion Therapy**

- Modern forms of conversion therapy are often more subtle and referred to as sexual orientation or gender identity and expression (SOGIECE) change efforts
- Current practices and tactics include aversion therapy, regressive/gender role play, extreme fasting, isolation, and even exorcism
- **At the root of conversion therapy is the misguided belief that LGBTQ2 people are disordered, sinful, immoral, and pathological**

## Research

- Canadian research estimates that 47,000 sexual minority men have experienced conversion therapy
- Conversion therapy is also known to target trans and gender non-conforming individuals by discouraging or impairing gender-affirmative care or treatment

What proportion of transgender and non-binary people in Canada have undergone “conversion therapy” in an attempt to make them cisgender?



Citation: The Trans PULSE Canada Team. QuickStat #1 - Conversion Therapy. 2019-12-20. Available from: <https://transpulsecanada.ca/research-type/quickstats/>

There is no credible scientific research that supports the efficacy of conversion therapy.

## **Key Requirements for Legislation**

- Includes a comprehensive definition
- Applies to all persons, groups, or services (including professionals, unlicensed practitioners, non-profit, religious/faitth, charitable organizations, and businesses)
- Applies to all ages (minors, vulnerable persons, and adults)
- Restricts all forms of advertising and promotion (including by electronic means)
- Provides significant consequences for violations such as fines and/or imprisonment
- Identifies appropriate mechanisms for investigation, reporting, and any statues of limitations

# Supportive Practices

- Inclusive counselling, supports, and programs that positively explore identity and development and seek to address societal stigma, discrimination and prejudice, rather than supports or services with the deliberate intention of trying to change, deny, or suppress a person's identity or attractions
- Affirming spiritual, religious, and cultural activities, rather than focusing on trying to convince or coerce people to deny core aspects of identity or to change who they are or whom they love to gain support and acceptance
- Supporting families and communities to learn accepting, rather than rejecting behaviours by challenging myths, misinformation, and stereotypes about LGBTQ2 people
- Providing gender affirmative counselling and care, rather than denying, restricting, or erasing trans and gender diverse identities
- Support for social, legal, and medical transitioning as part of appropriate models of care



## Concluding Perspective

- Conversion therapy is nothing more than a **dangerous lie** that has caused untold damage to countless individuals, and in some cases has resulted in vulnerable young people taking their own lives
- When communities allow these harmful practices to knowingly occur, they are hurting LGBTQ2 people and **violating international human rights law**
- Given its false premise and fraudulent nature, conversion therapy is **clearly a pressing public health and safety issue** and governments are right to prohibit its practice by all necessary means within their power

## **Listen to Survivors**

“I was studying to be a minister at my Church when they found out that I was struggling with my sexuality. For three months, I had to go to a counsellor 4 to 5 times a week and read countless books about how evil it was to be gay. They even put an app on my phone to monitor my activities.

Later they put me through many prayers of exorcism to ‘deliver’ me from my so-called demons. It was endless. I was shunned and ostracized. They constantly told me that I needed to love God more and more and more. It just made me feel helpless and broken. As a result, I ended up getting married to a woman to help cover up my secret identity as a gay man. I figured if I couldn’t beat them, I needed to join them to make it stop. I loved her and couldn’t keep it up anymore.

Eventually, I ended up divorced, with kids. Kids whom I loved deeply and dearly. Now thankfully, after a long journey, I am an openly proud gay man. But the damage has been done, and there have been unspeakable consequences that I will pay for the rest of my life because of conversion therapy.”

# Questions?

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