

Be the Source

Real Experiences.
Better Conversations.
Stronger Workplaces.

Inclusive Washroom Design: a range of options for diverse needs

For some people, using a workplace washroom can be stressful or feel unsafe. This might mean worrying that you don't belong, that your needs won't be accommodated, or that you'll be questioned or challenged simply for using the washroom you need.

This is a reality for some employees. Two-Spirit, transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse people often face these barriers, and similar experiences can also affect employees with needs related to disability, health, culture, religion, or past traumatic experiences.

Inclusive washroom design recognizes that no single type of washroom meets everyone's needs. Providing a range of options supports dignity, privacy, accessibility, safety, and choice across a wide range of needs. Supporting access to workplace washrooms that meet diverse needs aligns with the principles of dignity, respect, inclusion, and non-discrimination reflected in the [Canadian Human Rights Act](#) and the Values and [Ethics Code for the Public Sector](#).

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I want to spend my energy doing my job, not worrying about whether using the washroom will become a situation.

— Anonymous federal employee



What to know



People want the same basic things from a workplace washroom: A space they can use comfortably, without unnecessary attention or barriers



A range of options supports choice and meets different needs: You may see terms such as all-gender, universal, or accessible, as well as layouts such as single-user or multi-user washrooms. These terms describe different aspects of a space and may overlap. If you want to understand the differences, see the [GCworkplace Accessibility and Inclusivity Guide](#).



Single-user options work for some but not all: Not all 2SLGBTQIA+ employees will choose single-user options, and many other employees may choose them. Inclusive washroom design is not about one group. It is about making spaces work for more people.



How people treat each other matters as much as design: Design alone does not create an inclusive environment. How spaces are used and shared also influences whether people can access washrooms without being questioned or singled out.

From our community's history

Workplace washrooms have changed over time to better meet the needs of employees. One example is the requirement introduced in 2023 for federally regulated employers to provide menstrual products in workplace washrooms, recognizing that people who menstruate may include cisgender women, transgender men, non-binary people, intersex people, and others.

Everyday actions that make a difference



Respect individual choice: Don't make assumptions about who "belongs" in a specific space.



Use washrooms respectfully: Inclusive design is for everyone, but some people may rely on them as their safest or most accessible option. Respect privacy, be mindful of others who may be waiting to use it after you and use shared spaces with consideration.



Understand rights and available resources: Everyone has the right to access workplace washrooms with dignity, safety and respect. Harassment and discrimination are unacceptable. If you have experienced barriers, have questions, concerns, or need support, workplace resources are available to help.



As a trans person with a physical disability, it feels like I can spend a lot of time looking for a washroom that I can use. Innovative solutions, that take people's needs into account, make all the difference. Inclusion doesn't have to involve extensive or expensive renovations, creative people working together to make it work can be more than enough.

— Anonymous federal employee

Be an Ally

Inform yourself and learn by seeking evidence-informed sources and listening to people sharing their lived experiences. You can also counter misinformation with accurate information, and if you witness harassment or exclusion, make use of appropriate workplace support mechanisms to raise concerns.

Need support?

If you have questions, concerns, or need support, reach out to the person or workplace resource you feel most appropriate for your situation, such as your manager, the ombuds office, union representative (if applicable), your organization's Employee Assistance Program or Pride Network.

Learn more:

[Be the Source:](#) Explore the collection to get the facts, and support informed workplace conversations.

[Guide for Two-Spirit, Transgender, Non-Binary, and Gender-Diverse Employees](#)

[All-gender toilets in federally regulated workplaces - Canada.ca](#)

[Harassment and violence - Canada.ca](#)

[Room for Everyone: Resources for Creating Inclusive Washrooms - Egale Canada](#)