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My Story: Why Do My Partner and I Have to Come Out While Apartment Hunting?

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7 minute read



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My partner and I have been dating for a while now, and we've decided to take the next step and move in together.

Apartment hunting is difficult enough as it is, but being queer adds so many extra layers, especially when you're moving in to a one-bedroom and don't even have the option to hide that you're a couple. Lately, some of the questions that have been clouding

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my brain include: when, where, how (and why?!) do you have to come out to your landlord?

Sometimes, it feels like there's no right answer. Either you come out early and risk not having access to that home in a market that's competitive enough as it is. Or, you do it later — and risk putting yourself in danger in your own space.

**“I want to find more than just an
apartment – I want to find
somewhere that we feel safe to
build a home together.”**

My past experience apartment hunting as a queer couple

This isn't the first time I've moved in with a partner. When I had just finished university, I moved in with the person I was dating at the time. I was young and I really didn't know what to expect. It hadn't even crossed my mind that being in an LGBTQ2S+ relationship could serve as a challenge for me while apartment hunting.

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I quickly came to realize that I was very, *very* wrong. Being in a queer relationship – with both of us femme-presenting – complicated everything. Immediately, we were faced with questions like, “Wait – you’re *both* going to live here?” and “How are you going to fit two beds in a one-bedroom?”

Just as we were reaching our wit’s end, we were driving through the bustling streets of London, Ontario when we saw a sign advertising a one-bedroom for rent. The front door was open, so we just walked right in. Both of us were giddy with excitement when the doorway opened to a beautiful second-floor apartment in an old building full of character featuring big bay windows and crown moulding.

I thought it was pretty clear that we were a queer couple looking to find our first apartment together, but once again I was very, *very* wrong. We signed the lease and moved in without my landlord having the faintest suspicion that we were two queer women. That was all fine until a couple of months into the lease, when he started showing up to the place and offering to buy us another bed so that we “didn’t have to share” or to move us in to one of his other (much grimmer) two-bedroom apartments.

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Anyway, I’ve learned a lot since then and now that I’m moving into a place with someone so full of care and love, I want to find more than just an apartment – I want to find somewhere that we feel safe to build a home together.



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My partner's experience with landlords as a queer person

While this is the first time my partner's moved in with someone that they're dating, they've had their own struggles with housing as a queer person.

My partner – who identifies as non-binary and uses they/them pronouns – has experienced issues with landlords around their gender expression time and time again.



“Every time you let it slide, that’s a feeling of defeat, I think”

“It’s been an an issue with landlords in the past,” they told me. “I’m non-binary, and tend to send my emails to my landlord with my preferred name, which I’ve adopted as an affirmation of my gender. My landlord refuses to acknowledge me by my preferred name, and it hasn’t felt hostile, but it’s just been a casual erasure.”

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It’s not just about respect, but there’s also that added layer of wanting to be seen by the people around you. They explain that when they’re misgendered, “every time you let it slide, that’s a feeling of defeat, I think.”

“I’ve even been weary with putting a Pride flag outside of my house. At my old house, I wanted to put one outside and all I could think about was, ‘Oh, my landlord is going to see that. Is that going to affect how she talks to me?’”

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This brought a question to the front of my mind: where can we live where we can reconcile our identities and our safety?



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Discussing where we want to move

First things first, when we sat down to have a chat about what we wanted our future to look like, we knew we had to talk about logistics: where do we want to live now, and does that align with where we eventually want to settle down?

**“Ultimately, we’ve decided that –
based on where we’re at right now –**

it's worth sacrificing nature for safety and acceptance”

As two young queer people, we thrive in the city, but both my partner and I have always been drawn to nature. We've talked about moving out of the city one day – I don't think either of us are the kind of people that can live somewhere without a lot of greenspace long-term – but moving out of the city means moving into a small town. And moving into a small town makes this process even more dangerous for a queer couple.

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Where most couples might ask questions like “do we want to live close to the water?” or “where can we find enough outdoor space?” queer couples are faced with questions like “can we hold hands in the street?” or “would I be safe walking through the city in the clothes that make me feel most comfortable in my gender expression?”



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“Being in a city is one thing, but we have dreams of moving to a seaside, beautiful remote village,” my partner said to me through laughter. “Having to not only be faced with explaining something like gender or sexuality to every single person in the town, but then to be met with any kind of hostility or fear. I had never thought about how difficult that’s really going to be until recently.”

Ultimately, we’ve decided that – based on where we’re at right now – it’s worth sacrificing nature for safety and acceptance. So, we’re staying in Toronto, with the hope that one day we’ll be able to find the right place to truly build a home.

Navigating apartment viewings

We’ve set up a few apartment viewings, but we haven’t followed through on any of them. Every time I get ready to leave all I can think about is the blank stares and confused faces of landlord after landlord last time around. So (naturally) I’ve been staying up stewing over whether I’d rather to risk hiding that we were in a relationship and having to deal with the emotional repercussions of that, or if it would be better to be denied housing over our innate identities.

**“I feel like I have this mindset
where – by default – I want our
relationship to be ambiguous
because that’s what feels safest in
any circumstance”**

Together, we’ve started perusing Facebook Marketplace in quintessential Gen Z fashion. My partner has always been very attuned to my emotions and knows exactly what I need before I even have to articulate it, so in the midst of my anxieties around house-hunting, they’ve taken the lead on the search.

“I started becoming aware of [being queer] being a consideration when I started messaging landlords on Facebook Marketplace, which is where we usually look, because when I was asking about making viewings I was being really careful with my language,” they explain. “Do I want to say ‘I’m coming with my partner’ or ‘I’m coming with the person I would want to live with?’ Do I want to identify in the outset of the message that we’re a queer couple?”

It feels pretty clear to me that part of this comes down to class. I’m grateful for the life we’ve been able to build together and we’re both very privileged in that sense, but I can’t help but think about how – if we could simply afford a two-bedroom apartment instead of just a one-bedroom – this wouldn’t be a problem for us.

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I'm in the middle of a lease as it is, so something we're talking about is having them move into my current apartment.

At first, that seemed like the perfect solution. No introduction? No awkward conversation. But as we draw closer to the day that we're hoping they'll be able to move in, we're once again conflicted over a few questions.

Do we tell my landlord that my partner will be moving in? I'm a quite an anxious person and I love to follow a process, so the idea of trying to hide something as big as having a second person in my apartment puts me at unease. There's another, much deeper layer to this: keeping my partner's name off of the lease means that they wouldn't have access to secure housing, which is already difficult to find as a queer person. Hiding that my partner is moving in and not having them on the lease could put them at risk by leaving their tenant's rights in a grey area.

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See also: [Renters have rights: 3 things to know before you sign the lease - by province.](#)

On the other hand, what happens if I speak to my landlord and they find a way to say no, or even find an excuse to evict us.

“I feel like I have this mindset where – by default – I want our relationship to be ambiguous because that’s what feels safest in any circumstance, which sucks as a queer person who’s newly out and excited about taking up space,” my partner adds.

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“Through that shift and through these trials, I’ve found a home in connection – in feeling grounded by the people that I love and the people who love me in return”



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Reconciling with the concerns

Although all of these fears can feel pretty overwhelming to both of us sometimes, but in those moments, my partner is always there to bring me comfort and remind me that we are full and whole in ourselves and in our relationship. Having difficulty accessing housing will never take away from that.

As cheesy as it sounds, the biggest lesson that I've learned is that home doesn't have to be a physical space. No matter who you are or what you do, the comfort you find in your house can always be disrupted, but the comfort you find in a person or feeling will always stay with you

Through that shift and through these trials, I've found a home in connection – in feeling grounded by the people that I love and the people who love me in return – and I don't think that I could ever dream of anything more fulfilling.



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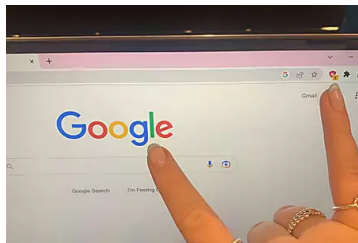
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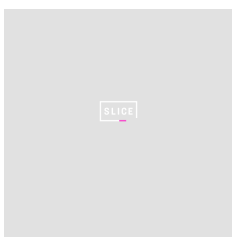


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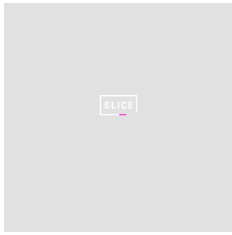
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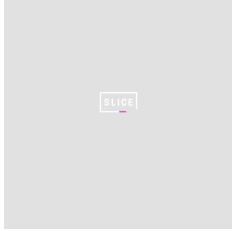
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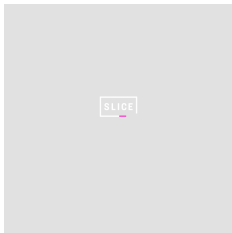
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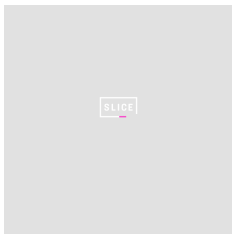
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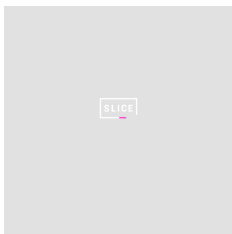
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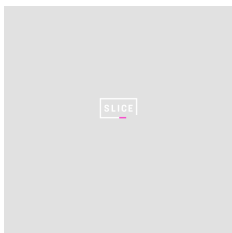
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