



# Youth'12: Fact Sheet about Transgender Young People

This fact sheet presents selected findings on the health and wellbeing of secondary school students who identified as transgender. It is based on the Youth'12 health and wellbeing survey of 8,500 New Zealand secondary school students undertaken in 2012.

The word 'transgender' means different things to different people. It is generally regarded as an umbrella term, used to refer to people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth differ. In Youth'12 someone was defined as being transgender if they were "a girl who feels like she should have been a boy, or a boy who feels like he should have been a girl (e.g., Trans, Queen, Fa'afafine, Whakawahine, Tangata ira Tane, Genderqueer)".

The survey results showed that in many ways students who reported being transgender faced considerable discrimination and mistreatment. There were also concerning health and wellbeing disparities when transgender students were compared to students who identified as being non-transgender.

## Mental Health

- Approximately 40% of transgender students had significant depressive symptoms and nearly half had self-harmed in the previous 12 months.
- One in five transgender students had attempted suicide in the last year.

## Accessing Healthcare

- Nearly 40% of transgender students had been unable to access healthcare when they needed it.

## School

- Nearly one in five transgender students had experienced bullying at school on a weekly (or more frequent) basis – this was nearly 5 times higher than the proportion of students who were non-transgender.
- More than half of transgender students were afraid someone at school would hurt or bother them.



- Approximately 4 out of every 100 students reported that they were either transgender (1.2%) or that they were not sure of their gender (2.5%).
- Approximately half of the transgender students had wondered about being transgender before the age of 12, but only a third (34.8%) had disclosed that they were transgender to someone close to them. This is fairly similar to the proportion of same/both sex attracted students who had come out in relation to their sexual attractions in New Zealand in 2007.
- Transgender students were generous and giving members of their communities, in that over 40% did activities to help others at school and nearly half worked as volunteers.

# Family and Whanau

- About three-quarters of transgender students reported that they had at least one parent who cared about them a lot, and the majority thought that their family got along.

After the Youth'12 paper on transgender secondary school students became available online, feedback on this paper was sought from transgender youth. In particular, feedback from Rainbow YOUTH's 'Star\*' group (for transgender and gender diverse young people) formed the basis of the recommendations for this fact sheet.

## Recommendations

Any recommendations in relation to transgender youth (and other gender diverse young people) need to be made based on an understanding that the issues these youth face are best understood in terms of minority stress. Specifically, it is the minority stress expressed by discrimination and violence towards transgender students that leads to the associated negative health outcomes. Furthermore, it is not the responsibility of transgender young people to delay their transition<sup>1</sup> for fear of hostility or mistreatment, but it is

the responsibility of everyone to create safe and nurturing environments so that gender diverse young people (which include intersex youth) can flourish. Schools, communities and families should celebrate and support their transgender members and learn more about their unique needs (e.g. by reading some of the resources cited below).

Practical steps need to be taken to ensure inclusive environments are made and special attention is required in relation to ensuring:

- School changing rooms are safe environments.
- Sports teams allow for gender diversity.
- Formal written records reflect the gender identity of students.
- School uniforms/dress codes are inclusive of transgender students.

One practical change all schools can make is by providing at least one unisex toilet to gender diverse students.

## Useful links

- Rainbow YOUTH <http://www.rainbowyouth.org.nz/> for information about the 'Star\*' group (and other helpful resources).
- OUTLineNZ 0800 OUTLINE (6885463) offers toll-free phone counselling and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people <http://www.outline.org.nz/>.
- Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender-Nonconforming People, Version 7 [http://www.wpath.org/uploaded\\_files/140/files/IJT%20SOC,%20V7.pdf](http://www.wpath.org/uploaded_files/140/files/IJT%20SOC,%20V7.pdf)
- Refuge Restroom (which seeks to provide safe restroom access for transgender, intersex, and gender nonconforming individuals) <http://www.refugerestrooms.org/>
- Trans people: facts & information from the Human Rights Commission <http://www.hrc.co.nz/human-rights-environment/action-on-the-transgender-inquiry/resources/trans-people-facts-information/>
- Gender is not a uniform <http://safeschoolscoalitionvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Resource-Booklet.pdf> a resource from the Safe Schools Coalition Victoria

**This fact sheet is based on the following open access paper:**

Clark, T. C., Lucassen, M. F. G., Bullen, P., Denny, S. J., Fleming, T. M., Robinson, E. M., & Rossen, F. V. (2014). The health and well-being of transgender high school students: Results from the New Zealand Adolescent Health Survey (Youth'12). *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 55, 93-99.

<http://download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/pdfs/journals/1054-139X/PIIS1054139X13007532.pdf>

<sup>1</sup> Steps taken by transgender people to live in their gender identity. These steps include hormone therapy and/or surgeries.

