



**COUNTING
OURSELVES**



**Te Ngākau
Kahukura**



Counting Ourselves: the Aotearoa New Zealand Trans & Non-Binary Health Survey is a large community based study, that most people completed online.

It took place between June and September 2018 and was completed by 1,178 trans and non-binary people aged 14 or over who were living in Aotearoa. Our first community report was published in 2019.

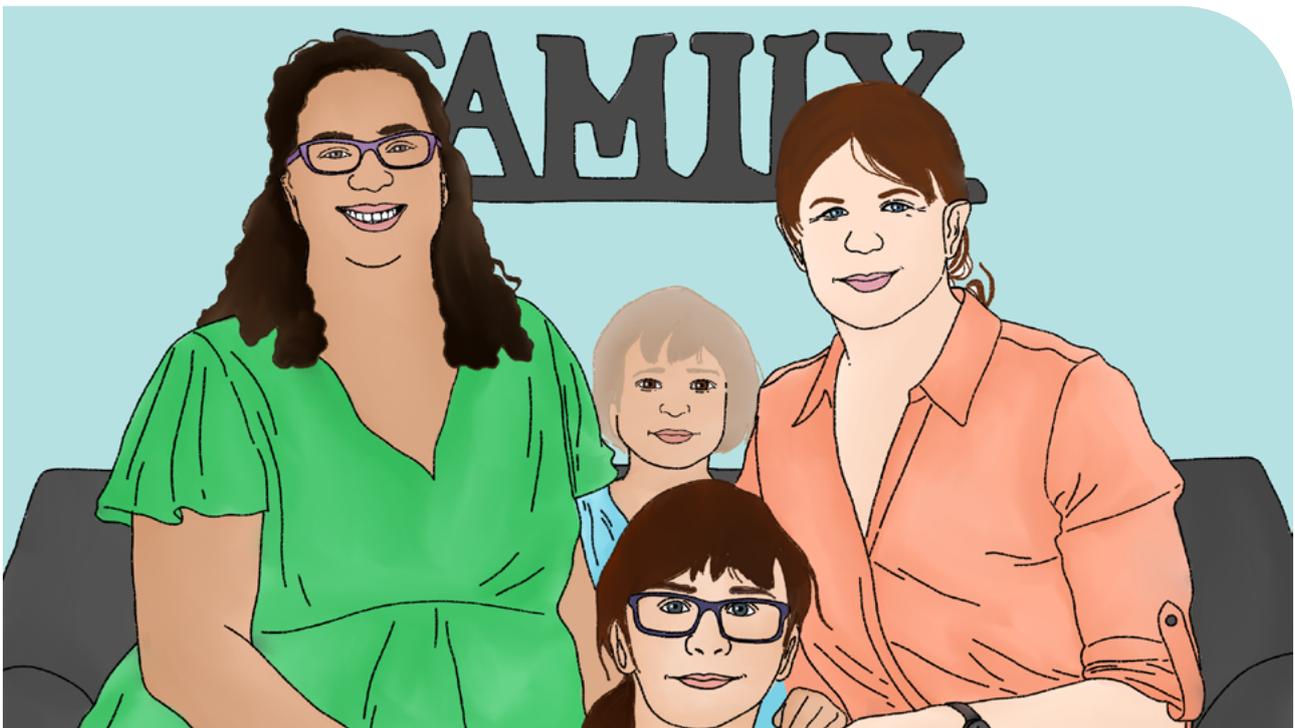
For this fact sheet, *Counting Ourselves* partnered with *Te Ngākau Kahukura*.

Te Ngākau Kahukura is a national initiative that works to make Aotearoa a place where rainbow people grow up feeling safe, valued and like they belong in the places where they live, learn and access healthcare and social support.

As part of this, we want to make sure that whānau and friends are able to support the trans and non-binary young people in their lives.

Listening To and Supporting Trans & Non-Binary Young People

What we can learn from the *Counting Ourselves* 2018 survey data



Illustrations: Huriiana Kopeke-Te Aho

This factsheet

This factsheet focuses specifically on trans and non-binary young people, and how we, as whānau and friends, can support the young people in our lives to grow up with a sense of belonging and safety.

A lot of what we hear about trans and non-binary young people focuses on the discrimination and exclusion they face, and the problems that emerge because of this like mental distress, substance use and homelessness.

With this factsheet, we've looked instead at what *Counting Ourselves* tells us about how trans and non-binary young people are taking pride in who they are, supporting each other, and receiving support from family, friends and at school. We've also offered some suggestions about how you can help.

Most of all, we want to emphasise the importance of privacy, autonomy and self-determination.

When you're supporting a trans or non-binary young person, follow their lead.

Talk to them about what support they want, and what information you can share with anyone else in your whānau, at school or in any other contexts.

Families support their trans and non-binary children in many different ways

If you have trans or non-binary young people in your whānau, your love and support can make a big difference to their wellbeing.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

Most young people had family members who told them they respected or supported them (72%) and used their correct name (67%). Almost half of young people (47%) said that a family member had stood up for them.

Almost half of trans and non-binary youth (45%) had family members do research to learn how to best support them and 19% had family members who helped them to change their name or gender on their identity documents. Youth were more likely to receive all these forms of support than older *Counting Ourselves* participants.

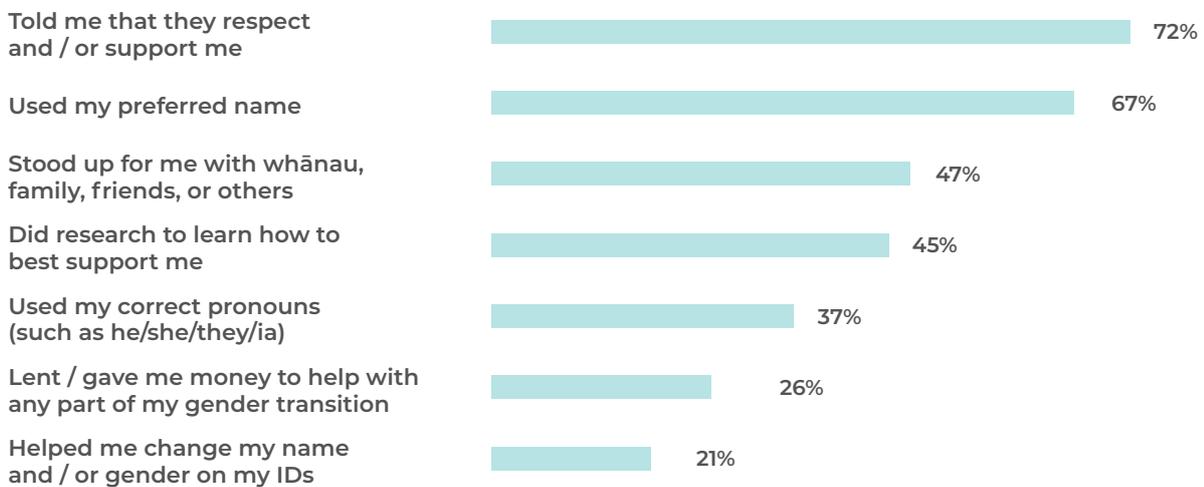
More detailed analysis of the *Counting Ourselves* data for all participants found that having support from friends and family was linked to better outcomes across all mental health measures.¹

Participants' comments

"I came out to friends before family members and for the most part my friends have been extremely supportive and willing to learn and be open about my experiences..."

"It is difficult to be open about things with my parents but that is changing, particularly with my dad, and I know they both support me 100%." (Youth, trans man)

Did any of your family members you grew up with (e.g. mother, father, sisters, brothers, etc) do any of these things to support you?



Out of youth participants whose whānau / family knew they were trans or non-binary

How you can help

Express your unconditional love, even if you don't fully understand this stuff, and make sure others in your whānau are respectful.

Offer practical support with things like changing identity documents, accessing healthcare or communicating with the wider whānau.

Learn more about being a supportive family: www.be-there.nz

¹ Tan, K. K. H., Treharne, G. J., Ellis, S. J., Schmidt, J. M., & Veale, J. F. (2021). Enacted stigma experiences and protective factors are strongly associated with mental health outcomes of transgender people in Aotearoa / New Zealand. *International Journal of Transgender Health, 22*(3), 269-280. DOI: 10.1080/15532739.2020.1819504

Many Māori participants felt strongly connected to their culture

For all rangatahi Māori, connection with culture is a source of wellbeing. Trans and non-binary rangatahi can sometimes feel more of a disconnect when people around them don't understand how trans identities fit into their culture.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

Almost half of Māori youth participants (47%) agreed that they had a strong sense of belonging to their ethnic background.

Participants' comments

"There is plenty of space in a traditional Māori context for gender diversity, and I have always felt seen, understood and more comfortable in a Māori setting, at least so far as gender is concerned." (Adult, Māori trans man)

"It's been [through] getting involved with an LGBTI+ kapa haka group that I've finally found the confidence to start trying to better engage with my (Māori) heritage." (Adult, Māori trans man)

How you can help

Share stories about takatāpui and trans tūpuna if you know them.

Find supportive ways to talk to the wider whānau and hapū about gender diversity on the marae, so no-one has to navigate these conversations alone.

Learn more about how trans and non-binary people have always belonged in Te Ao Māori: www.takatapui.nz

Friends were an important source of support

Friendships are a huge part of young people's lives. Trans and non-binary people often find understanding and recognition among peers their own age, who might have more understanding about gender diversity than older generations.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

Most youth (83%) had a friend or friends that they can talk to about anything. More than half of youth participants (56%) reported that their friends cared about them a lot.

Participants' comments

"My family has only just become properly supportive of my transition in the last four months, however, I have had friends who have been completely supportive of me and my transition ever since I started questioning my gender." (Youth, trans man)

"My friends are literally the best people in the world. We've been through hell together and I trust them with my life." (Youth, non-binary)

"I'm out to my friends and they use my pronouns. They're all queer and I love them." (Youth, non-binary)

How you can help

Keep honest and supportive lines of communication open so they can tell you about what's going on with their friends.

Appreciate the ways that their friends are there for them.

Offer your practical help with things like transport so they can spend time with friends.

Most secondary school students had a safe space to meet other trans and non-binary students

Going to a supportive school can make a huge difference for young people's ability to learn, make friends and feel like they belong in their community.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

More than half of student participants had support from most or all of their classmates. All had at least one supportive classmate.

Most students (80%) agreed that their current school provides a safe space for trans and non-binary students to meet each other. Almost three-quarters of students (72%) said that their school allowed them to bring a partner of any gender to school balls or formals.

Just over half (52%) said their school provides the option for trans and non-binary students to change their name on school records.

Participants' comments

"At the start of the year, several of my teachers asked us to write down our preferred name and pronouns for them."
(Youth, non-binary)

How you can help

Listen to their experiences and help advocate for change if it's needed.

Ask them if they would like you to offer volunteer time to support diversity groups or pride events in school.

Get support with making your school more inclusive: www.insideout.org.nz/for-schools

Many young people can access health information they need

When young people want to access gender-affirming healthcare - medical treatment to affirm their gender - it is medically necessary and can be life saving. In Aotearoa there are often gaps and delays in trans and non-binary people getting the healthcare they need.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

Three quarters of young people (75%) said that their doctor was good or very good at involving them in decisions about their healthcare, including discussing treatment options. Three in five young people also said that their healthcare providers knew most or almost everything about trans and non-binary healthcare.

Participants' comments

"Having top surgery has given me newfound freedom in moving and exercise which has significantly improved my mental wellbeing."
(Youth, trans man)

How you can help

Listen to what they need and follow their lead - everyone's journey is different.

If they want it, help them access gender-affirming healthcare - this might not be as straightforward as you expect and you might need to advocate.

Find information about gender-affirming healthcare:
www.tengakaukahukura.nz/gender-affirming-healthcare

Most participants socialised with or felt connected to other trans and non-binary people

Meeting other people who have shared experiences or a similar identity can be really validating. Friendship and peer support from other trans and non-binary people can help young people feel seen and understood.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

Over three-quarters of young people (77%) socialised with other trans and non-binary people online and over two-thirds (71%) did so in person.

More than three out of five young people (64%) agreed that they felt connected to other trans or non-binary people, and to the broader Rainbow community (68%).

More than half of young people (54%) agreed they had spent a lot of time providing support to other trans and non-binary people. One-third of youth (34%) socialised with other trans and non-binary people through support groups.

Participants' comments

"I feel very connected to the trans community in Wellington through volunteer work, it's important to me that young trans folk never have to deal with any of the internalised issues that held me back from coming out for so long." (Adult, trans woman)

How you can help

Help them make connections with community through support services, online groups and events.

Have conversations with them about how they might want to be involved with their communities.

Find community and peer support organisations: www.tengakaukahukura.nz/rainbow-organisations

Most participants felt proud to be trans or non-binary

Being trans or non-binary, and having a positive sense of being accepted and loved in that identity, can be a source of pride, joy and wellbeing.

In the first *Counting Ourselves* survey:

Most young people (63%) agreed with the statement, "I feel proud to be a trans or non-binary person."

Four out of five young people (79%) also had trans or non-binary people that they admired or looked up to.

Participants' comments

"Being trans is a part of me, a big part, but only a part." (Youth, trans woman)

"I feel like I'm a part of a community for the first time in my life." (Older adult, trans woman)

How you can help

Notice and appreciate the great things about being trans or non-binary.

Listen to what people tell you about their gender, and make sure you're using the name and language that's right for them.

Be open to your own learning and reflection processes - make space for not knowing things and for things changing over time, for you and for them.



Illustrations: Hurliana Kopeke-Te Aho



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