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Full report available at www.countingourselves.nz/.

Trans and non-binary lives at risk: new report highlights healthcare gaps and high levels of violence in New Zealand

A major new report reveals significant healthcare inequities and high levels of violence and discrimination against trans and non-binary people in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Waikato-led study also highlights alarming rates of psychological distress and suicidality within these communities.

The [Counting Ourselves](#) survey report, released today, is based on responses from 2,631 participants and outlines persistent challenges and minimal progress since their first survey in 2018.

“Physical and sexual violence was a common experience for many trans and non-binary people,” said [Dr Jaimie Veale](#), Principal Investigator and Senior Lecturer in Psychology at the University of Waikato.

Over the past four years, 19% of participants received threats of physical violence due to being trans and non-binary. More than two in five reported attempted or forced sexual intercourse, over double the general population rate, including more often than women overall. Discrimination also remained widespread, exacerbated by hostile social media environments.

“Participants feared discrimination or violence at school, work, while playing sports, and in many public spaces, simply for being trans or non-binary,” said Mr Jack Byrne, Co-principal Investigator and honorary research fellow at the University of Waikato.

More than half felt unsafe using public transportation at night - more than double the rate of women in the general population, and 43% frequently avoided public bathrooms, up from 33% in 2018.

Trans and non-binary individuals continued to face significant mental health inequities. More than three-quarters (77%) reported high or very high psychological distress - up from 71% in 2018 and six times the general population rate (12%). In the past year, 53% had seriously considered suicide, while 10% had attempted it.

“These figures highlight the urgent need to address discrimination and violence, protect and support those experiencing conversion practices, and fund accessible, safe, and inclusive mental health services,” Dr Veale said.

More participants also felt proud to be trans or non-binary and connected to other trans and non-binary people.

“Trans and non-binary people are supporting each other through really hard times, but not everyone has that access to community support, especially outside main cities,” Mr Byrne said. “Structural change is urgently needed to ensure that trans and non-binary people are not left to navigate misinformation, discrimination, and violence alone.”

Unmet need for gender affirming healthcare remains high, including for hormones and surgeries. Many participants faced no access to surgeries or long wait times.

“This lack of access can negatively impact mental health. The public health system must provide timely gender affirming healthcare, no matter where someone lives in Aotearoa,” said Dr Veale.

The *Counting Ourselves* team also released a factsheet highlighting where Māori were impacted more by the challenges covered in the full community report. Most Māori respondents (87%) were proud of their cultural and gender identities. Despite strong cultural pride, Māori participants reported higher rates of negative experiences with family members, homelessness, conversion practices, physical and sexual violence, and suicidality than the overall sample.

One survey participant shared, “My takatāpuitanga has helped me better understand and love myself. Knowing that shame and fear around queer and trans identities is inherited from a colonial legacy has helped me connect better with my own spirituality and embrace a way of being that was passed down from my ancestors”.

Ahi Wi-Hongi (Ngāpuhi, Ngāti Maniapoto), Executive Director of Gender Minorities Aotearoa and Associate Investigator, emphasised the need for urgent action.

“The findings make it clear that significant changes are needed across multiple areas to improve the health and well-being of trans people in Aotearoa, including those who are non-binary,” Wi-Hongi said.

“This includes targeted support for Māori trans people, their whānau, and service providers.”

The full report includes 13 detailed recommendations for addressing these issues.

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