IDENTIFY

Diversity Counts

Identify Survey

Community and Advocacy Report

This document has been shortened for Sport New Zealand audiences.

Key Findings

Demographics

- Though larger cities were well-represented, participants were from all regions of Aotearoa New Zealand, demonstrating that rainbow accessibility and support is needed nationwide
- Participants' rates of material deprivation in this sample were significantly higher compared to the general population, highlighting the need to recognise the intersectionality of poverty and deprivation for rainbow young people
  - Our results mirror representative findings from Stats NZ (2022) highlighting that younger rainbow people, as well as trans and non-binary people of all ages, generally have lower incomes than older and cisgender peers

Secondary Education

- Our findings emphasise that rainbow young people are present in all types of secondary education settings. There is no school type that does not have rainbow students
- Nearly all students had disclosed their rainbow identities to someone at school, yet most also reported rainbow-based microaggressions at school and almost one third had experienced bullying
- Most schools had rainbow diversity groups or queer-straight alliances and displayed pro-rainbow messages
- However, the majority of rainbow students said that they did not feel belonging and supported at school
  - One in eight students said they felt unsafe or very unsafe at school as a rainbow young person.
- Infrastructural deficits included a lack of gender-neutral bathrooms or uniforms/dress codes, reported by half of the participants

It is promising to see that many schools are making an effort to improve the accessibility, support, and belonging of rainbow students; however, these results demonstrate that there is more to be done. Moreover, for schools that are making minimal effort, there is a clear message that they need to be more proactive in providing safe learning environments for rainbow students.

Tertiary and Post-Secondary Education

- Most tertiary and post-secondary students reported that their learning environments were fair, supportive, and inclusive

    > Almost two thirds of students had someone at their place of study that they trusted to talk to about rainbow issues

- However, one in six students reported feeling unsafe in their place of study in the last 12 months

    > Almost three in five students had experienced some form of microaggression

    > One in ten had been harassed in the last 12 months

        » Most cases were not reported because students felt it would not make a difference or make the situation worse

    > A notable number of students had been outed by a staff member without their consent

Additional support is needed to improve rainbow experiences in tertiary and post-secondary spaces, including professional development, effective harassment policies and processes, and targeted campaigns and programmes to address everyday *cisheteronormativity* in these institutions.

Employment and Work

- One in five of the *Identify* cohort were not in secondary or tertiary education

    > However, only three quarters of these participants were in paid employment, demonstrating a higher rate of unemployment than in the general populationParticipants were employed in all industry sectors, though employment was concentrated in health, service, government, and hospitality

- A majority of participants reported they could be themselves at work and that their workplace was supportive of rainbow employees

    > However, two thirds of participants reported not disclosing their rainbow identity to someone at their place of work because they were worried they would be treated unfairly

    > One in ten had been fired or forced to quit a job because of their rainbow identity

    > Almost half of participants heard derogatory expressions towards rainbow people at work

- Almost one in five reported being harassed at work in the past year
  - › 30% of harassment was due to their diverse sexuality
  - › 20% was due to being, or being perceived as trans or non-binary

While there is some effort to make workplaces rainbow-friendly, additional training, development and anti-discrimination mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that rainbow workers' rights are protected.

Emotional Wellbeing and Healthcare

- Three quarters of the Identify participants had poor levels of wellbeing, and in the last year:
  - › Over half had engaged in self-harm
  - › Almost two thirds had thought about killing themselves
  - › Almost one third had made a plan to kill themselves
  - › One in ten had attempted suicide
- A small but notable proportion of participants had experienced conversion therapy
- One in six participants had not been able to access healthcare when they needed it
- Almost one in ten participants had been treated unfairly by a healthcare professional because of their rainbow identity
- Two in five trans or non-binary participants had accessed at least one type of gender-affirming medication
  - › Participants were overwhelmingly positive about the impacts of taking gender-affirming medication
  - › Of those who wanted gender-affirming medication, a very high proportion reported not being able to access these medications

Deficits in rainbow wellbeing are alarming, with high rates of distress among rainbow young people. Problems with healthcare provision are apparent, including fair treatment and basic rainbow competency by some healthcare professionals. Recent policy changes around conversion practices are important. There is a clear indication that accessible gender-affirming care is beneficial for trans and non-binary young people and that unnecessary barriers to care exist and should be removed.

Family, Whānau, and Friends

- Four out of five participants reported someone in their family/whānau was aware of their rainbow identity

  > About three quarters of those participants said they had someone in their family/whānau who they could openly talk with about their rainbow identity

    » Seven in ten said at least one family/whānau member had expressed respect or support for them

    » A quarter had done research on how to support them or stood up for them

    » About half of trans or non-binary participants reported that at least one family/whānau member used their correct name or pronouns

  > However:

    » A quarter of participants' family/whānau members had talked about rainbow people in a negative way

    » Two in five had pretended their rainbow identity was not real

    » One in five reported a family member had rejected or distanced themselves from them

    » Two in five trans and non-binary participants had been intentionally misgendered by a family/whānau member

- Overall, participants reported a strong sense of connection to friends

  > Nine in ten had a friend they could talk to about anything

  > One in five had taken time out to support a fellow rainbow friend

  > Most participants said their friends cared about them a lot

    » Only a small minority reported their friends didn't care about them at all

  > Likewise, three in five participants thought it would be easy or somewhat easy to ask a friend or family member for a place to stay

    » Only 6% reported they would not ask anyone

- Just over one third of participants felt comfortable or very comfortable in their cultural and ethnic communities

  > One in five were uncomfortable or very uncomfortable

  > Takatāpui/Māori participants reported a range of ways they could engage with te ao Māori

While most participants had disclosed their rainbow identities to at least one person in their family/whānau, there was variation in the degree of support that was reported. However, there was a generally strong sense of connection to friends, which indicates that rainbow communities are good at building 'chosen family'. The data suggests that some family/whānau members can be better in supporting rainbow young people, and work is required to support better belonging for some rainbow young people in their ethnic and cultural communities.

Home and Living Environment

- Most participants lived with parent/s or caregiver/s and a quarter lived with flatmates
  - > Overall, there was a greater awareness of rainbow identities among flatmates, friends and partners who participants lived with than parents, grandparents, or aunts/uncles
- Three quarters of the Identify cohort felt very safe or safe in their current living situation
  - > Around one in 20 reported feeling unsafe or very unsafe
  - > One in eight had previously moved towns/cities to feel safer as a rainbow person
- One in ten participants had experienced homelessness
  - > In most situations, homelessness was experienced before the age of 18

High rates of homelessness among rainbow young people, compared to the general population, are a serious concern and require immediate attention. Moreover, the number of rainbow participants who felt unsafe or very unsafe in their living situations is concerning. Ensuring rainbow young people have safe alternatives to unsafe places to live is a priority. The data suggests that information and resources might be useful for families/whānau, so that they are more aware of rainbow issues and can better support their rangatahi.

Connection to Community

- Most participants reported a strong connection to their rainbow identity and rainbow people
- Most participants also reported that they were regularly involved in a range of activities in their communities

- One in ten participants reported they were religious

    > A quarter of religious participants reported that their religious communities respected them as a rainbow person

    > Almost two in five said that members did not respect them as a rainbow person

- Two in five participants reported they were spiritual

    > Two in five spiritual participants reported that their spiritual community respected them as a rainbow person

    > Only one in 20 said that members did not respect them as a rainbow person

Rainbow people's strong sense of community and involvement in rewarding activities, as well as their support of peers, is strongly evident. However, this is not a substitute for offering resources and support, which young people are entitled to. For rainbow people with religious or spiritual beliefs, efforts are needed to ensure their communities do not disrespect or mistreat them.

Future Hopes

- Common themes among participants' hopes for the future included:

    > Better access to rainbow-affirming healthcare and support services

    > Rainbow topics to be taught in schools

    > Equality and equity for rainbow communities

    > That rainbow communities are taken seriously

    > Intersectional approaches to equity

    > Acceptance from family/whānau

    > Safety in disclosing rainbow identity and in living environments

    > More positive media representation of rainbow identities

    > Acceptance in religious communities

In the face of often-pervasive prejudice and discrimination, rainbow young people are still optimistic for a future that supports and uplifts rainbow communities. Participants shared a range of ideas to enable these positive futures, including institutional changes in health, education, employment, and the media, as well as increased awareness and support from peers, family/ whānau, their religious and ethnic communities, and broader society.

Recommendations

The recommendations presented here address *some* of the overarching themes. More comprehensive summaries and specific recommendations are presented at the conclusion of each chapter.

- The positive findings around young people's pride in their identities; their ability to find some supports in at least one key developmental context of whānau, home, education, employment, community and healthcare contexts; and their willingness to provide support to others, both politically, as well as interpersonally, must be celebrated and enhanced

- The challenges facing these young people must also be recognised, including the common finding that a sizeable number of young people reported harassment, aggression, and exclusion, in one or more of their key developmental contexts of whānau, home, education, employment, community and healthcare settings

- Coordinated planning and action by government, civil society, and the education, health, social and community sectors, is urgently required to track and improve the experiences of young people in these domains

- Takatāpui/Māori rainbow young people face additional challenges and prejudices compared to Pākehā rainbow young people; Te Tiriti o Waitangi highlights the necessity to enhance takatāpui wellbeing to fulfil all the Crown's obligations of ōritetanga and tino rangatiratanga for rangatahi Māori

- Trans, non-binary, and disabled participants reported extremely concerning disparities and any work done to address rainbow young people's wellbeing must specifically address and centre their needs

- Pacific and Asian participants were identified as facing some specific challenges compared to Pākehā and European participants, emphasising the importance of recognising ethnicity and racism in policy and practice

- Intersex young people's needs require further exploration and reflect a critical gap in the research to date

- The high levels of mental health distress that were reported reflect broad exposure to prejudice, discrimination and structural disadvantage compounded by foregone – or inadequate – healthcare provision, including *gender-affirming healthcare*

- If we are to see widescale improvement in wellbeing and thriving for rainbow young people, a comprehensive and integrated intersectional response to address the disparities young rainbow people face across family/whānau, home, education, employment, community and healthcare contexts is needed