

Better care for transgender youth

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A fact sheet on ways to improve the wellbeing of transgender youth in New Zealand has been developed at the University of Auckland.

A study team from the University's Adolescent Health Research Group, has put forward recommendations, together with young people, about the care transgender young people receive at the hands of their communities and schools.

These are based on the results from the nationally representative New Zealand Adolescent Health Survey (Youth'12) of more than 8,500 young people.

Researchers from the University of Auckland collaborated with members of Rainbow Youth's peer support group for gender variant youth, 'Star*', to come up with the recommendations in the fact sheet entitled, Youth '12: Fact Sheet about Transgender Young People".

About four out of every 100 students reported in the survey, that they were either transgender (1.2 percent) or that they were not sure of their gender (2.5 percent).

The key findings of the study outlined in the fact sheet include statistics showing that 40 percent of transgender students had significant depressive symptoms and nearly half had self-harmed in the previous 12 months.

"Other findings showed that almost one in five transgender students had

experienced bullying at school on a weekly basis – this was nearly five times higher than the proportion of students who were non-transgender," says Dr Terryann Clark (principal investigator for the Youth'12 study).

Despite the significant challenges faced by many transgender students, they contribute positively to society with nearly half working as volunteers in their communities.

Key recommendations

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.

More information: The complete research paper is available online: [download.journals.elsevierhealth.com/S0140370114000753.pdf](https://www.elsevier.com/locate/S0140370114000753)

Provided by University of Auckland

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