

RAINBOWYOUTH

# Gender and Sexuality 101- Working Safely with Rainbow People



Introductions

Sex, gender, and sexuality 101

What's happening in healthcare?

What do trans people want you to know?

What do queer people want you to know?

What can you shift in your practice?

# Gender and sexuality 101

← identity →

Man

Woman

← attraction →

Men

Women

← expression →

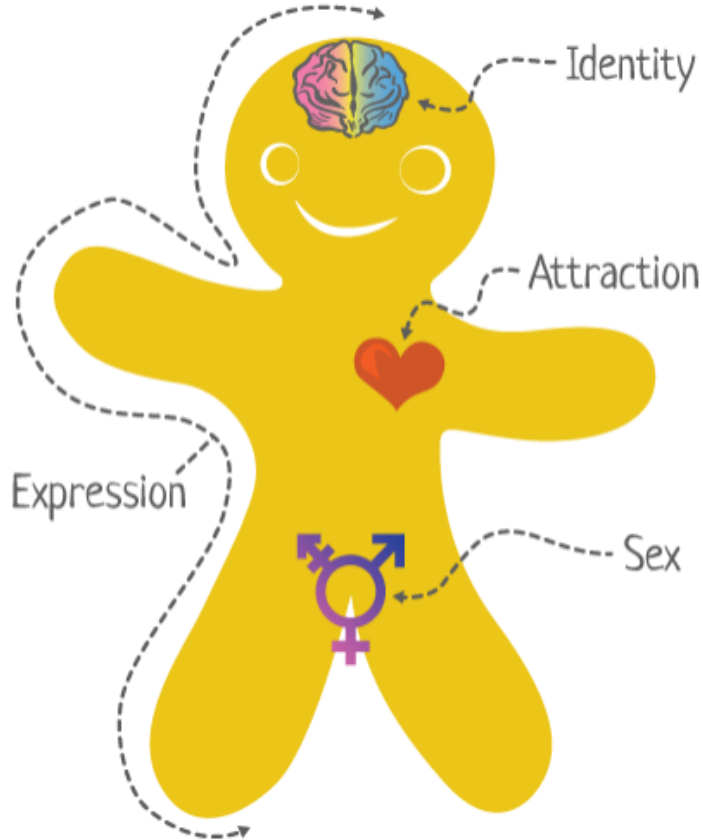
Masculine

Feminine

← sex →

Male

Female



Identity

▶ Male, female, genderqueer, bi-gender, non-binary

Attraction

▶ Lesbian, bisexual, queer, gay, pansexual, asexual, aromantic

Expression

Sex

▶ Male, female, intersex

▶ Feminine, masculine, androgynous

# CULTURAL UNDERSTANDINGS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY

## In Māori culture

**Takatāpui** is a traditional Māori term that means 'intimate companion of the same sex'. It has been reclaimed to embrace all Māori who identify with diverse sexes, genders and sexualities such as whakawāhine (trans women), tangata ira tāne (trans men), lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. These are often grouped under the term 'rainbow communities'. We know that before colonisation takatāpui were celebrated members of the whānau.

## In the Pacific Islands

Within the Pacific there are many terms that exist that represent someone's identity as well as their culture and community. Some of the terms that are used by trans women (or 'third sex' people) include: **Fa'afafine** (Samoa, American Samoa and Tokelau), **Fakaleiti or Leiti** (Tonga), **Fakafifine** (Niue), **Akava'ine** (Cook Islands), **Mahu** (Tahiti and Hawaii), **Vakasalewalewa** (Fiji), **Palopa** (Papua New Guinea). These terms have wider meanings that are best understood within their cultural context.

# Understanding people who are transgender or gender diverse

Transgender and gender diverse are umbrella terms for people whose gender is different from their assigned sex at birth. Some trans people may disclose this as part of their identity - this is usually termed AMAB or AFAB.

The most common terms are transgender, trans feminine / trans woman, trans masculine / trans man, genderqueer, gender non-conforming, non-binary (nb), or agender. Please note though, that some people don't identify as being trans - they identify themselves as a man or a woman, and feel that it is othering to refer to them as transgender.

A good proportion of trans people are also queer!

# Understanding people who are transgender or gender diverse

## Gender Dysphoria / Gender Incongruence

The distress associated with the dissonance between someone's gender or sense of self, and their body. Many (but not all!) trans people experience this in a multitude of ways. Some people with dysphoria describe hating their body, or being unable to look in the mirror. Others describe it as a feeling of being out of place.

## Transitioning

The process of moving from being seen as your assumed gender (usually your sex assigned at birth) to their self-identified gender. This can include social, legal, and medical transitioning.

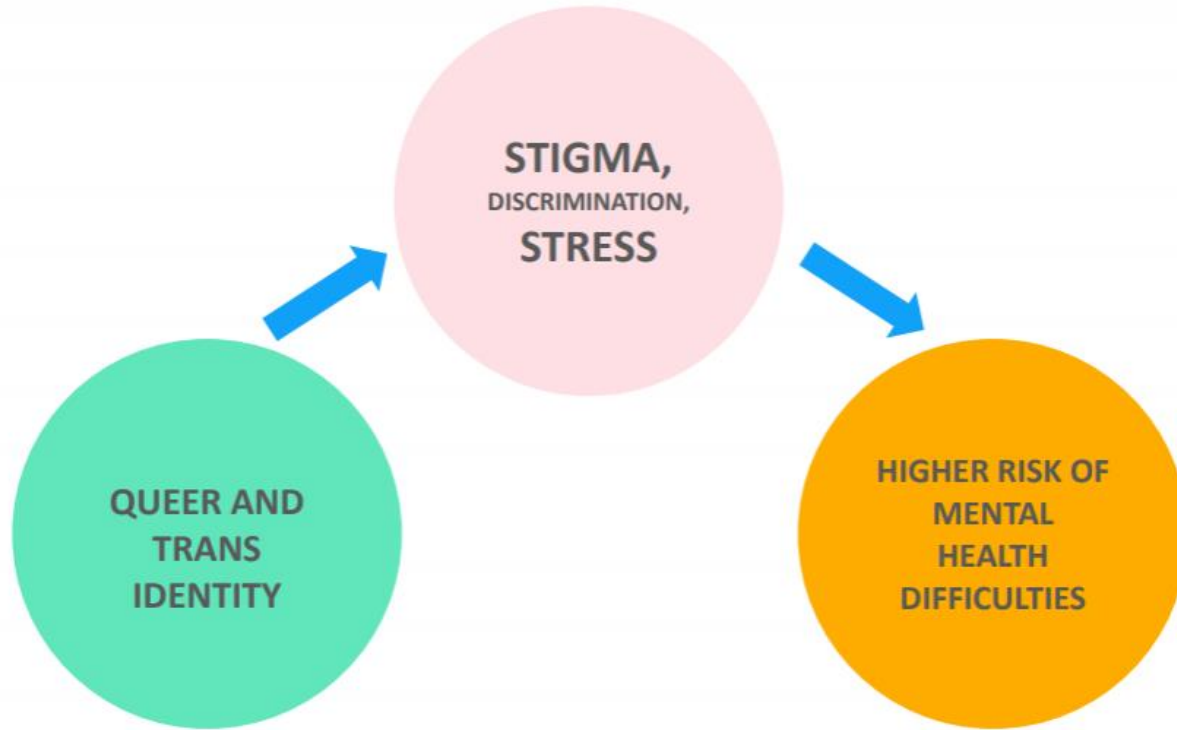
# Understanding queer identities

Queer is an umbrella term for people whose sexuality is not heterosexual. The most common terms within this umbrella are gay, lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, queer, asexual, and takatāpui.

Knowing someone's sexuality doesn't mean you know everything about their attractions or behaviours. It is important to know that identity doesn't always indicate sexual behaviours. This is why (for example) the term MSM is often used in research.

Some people's sexuality might stay the same their whole life, and for others it may change and go back and forth along the continuum.

# What is happening for rainbow people in Aotearoa?





# What are we seeing in healthcare?

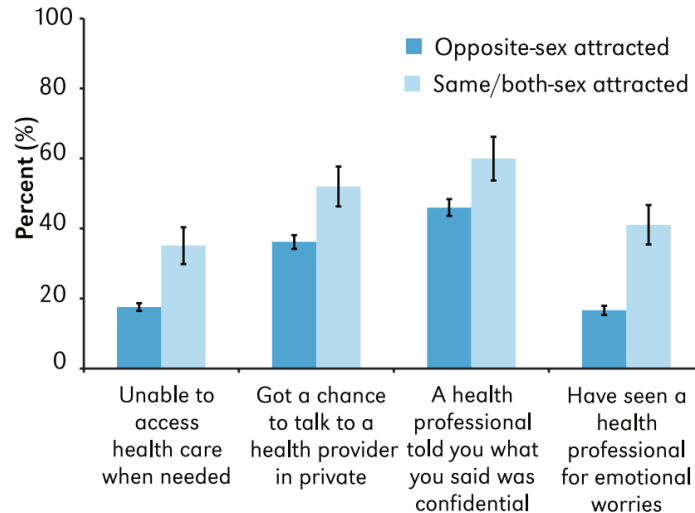
From Counting Ourselves:

- High levels of trans people wanting but not being able to access gender-affirming healthcare. This unmet need ranged from 19% for hormone treatment through to 67% of trans men wanting chest reconstruction surgery.
- 17% reported they had experienced reparative therapy: that is, a professional had tried to stop them from being trans or non-binary.
- 36% of participants had avoided seeing a doctor because they were worried about disrespect or mistreatment as a trans or non-binary person.
- 2 out of 5 participants had not visited a GP because of cost within the last 12 months.

# What are we seeing in healthcare?

From Youth '12:

- queer students are almost 2x more likely to have long-term health problems
- Over 40% of trans young people were unable to access healthcare when they needed it




# So, what do trans people want professionals to know?

Language:

Use the same terms a client uses to describe themselves


Ask for, and respect, people's pronouns and preferred names

If you get it wrong, apologise and move on



Kia ora,  
I use he/him  
pronouns.  
What pronouns  
do you use?

How do you like to  
be referred to?



"Our linguistic choices are crucial, particularly as minorities. That's kind of how we relate to the world, by choosing certain words to describe us, our behaviours, our histories, whatever. It's really important to honour pronouns and names - if I call myself transgender, don't call me a transsexual. Our word choices are deliberate and I don't like seeing other people mess with those."

# What do trans people want you to know?

*I am very dysphoric about questions related to my genitals and breasts, [so] I am afraid to receive essential tests such as smears and mammograms. I also do not want to be treated like a woman.* (Trans man, youth)

*As a very visibly female profiled trans woman with all my official [female] IDs. . . I got called 'a man' by the technician operating the mammogram machine.* (Trans woman, older adult)

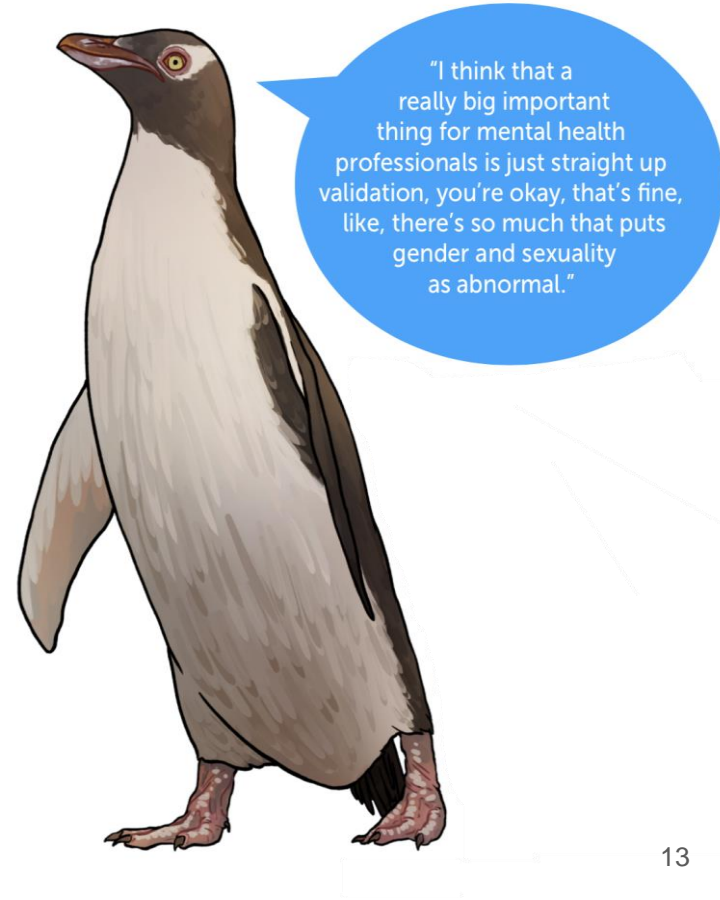
For trans clients, use non-gendered language when talking about their body

- Chest instead of breasts
- People with uteruses instead of women
- People who have been socialised as boys/men instead of boys/men

# So, what do trans people want medical professionals to know?

## Disclosures:

Some rainbow people internalise negative societal attitudes about sex, sexuality, and gender diversity, and feel shame and loathing about their own identity. Those with internalised negative attitudes may reject their identity, or want to change it. Here, it's important that health professionals maintain their affirmative stance and support the client to explore where their negative attitudes might have come from.



# So, what do queer people want medical professionals to know?

Language:

Use the same terms a client uses to describe themselves

Use expansive language when talking about sexual partners

Do you have a partner, or partners?

Can you tell me about the important relationships in your life?



## So, what do queer people want medical professionals to know?

Multiple gender attraction:

People that are bisexual aren't any more promiscuous or attention-seeking than any other sexuality

If someone is in a same-sex or opposite-sex relationship, don't assume that they haven't dated other genders

The mental health disparities experienced by rainbow people tend to be exacerbated among multiple gender attracted people. Researchers attribute this to widespread invisibility, biphobia, and non-acceptance from both gay and straight communities.

## So, what do queer people want medical professionals to know?

Asexuality:

Isn't the same thing as celibacy

Many asexual people are in romantic relationship and may also identify as queer and/or gender diverse

Some asexual people have sex

Don't pathologise or misunderstand asexuality as a disorder



# What can we do to create a welcoming space?

- Expansive language that doesn't assume identity or narrow their experiences.
  - referring to anyone using gender neutral language or a person's name until we hear more about them or learn the pronouns they prefer
- Sharing and checking pronouns
  - A great rainbow-friendly practice is to share our own pronouns when we introduce ourselves and ask our clients what pronouns they use
- Accessible spaces and forms
  - Having at least one accessible all-gender or gender-neutral bathroom that anyone can use
  - Forms ask about gender in an inclusive way

## Some examples: language!

Alright young lady, nice to meet you!

I want to talk about sexual health - do you have a girlfriend?

Are you sure you can't be pregnant?

Your name's Eric? You don't look like an Eric!

What words would you use to describe your sex, sexual orientation, and gender?

How might your own identities or views impact on your work with rainbow clients?

What messages have you been given over the course of your life about biological sex, sexual orientation, and gender? This might be from formal education, family, friends, the media, religious teachings, or society more broadly.

How comfortable do you currently feel working with rainbow people? What do you need to do to increase your confidence and knowledge?

Has any information in this session surprised you so far? What has been new, and what did you already know?

# What can you do to shift your practice?

In your own work, what can you do

- As an organisation?
- As individuals?