

# TRANS PATHWAYS SUMMARY



## What is *Trans Pathways*?



- **Trans Pathways** was a national online survey launched in 2016
- We asked about the mental health of Australian trans young people and their experiences with accessing services. There was also a survey for parents or guardians of trans young people.

## Who took part in *Trans Pathways*?



- **859** trans and gender diverse young people (aged 14-25 years)
  - **Sex assigned at birth:**
    - 74.4% assigned female at birth
    - 25.6% assigned male at birth
  - **Gender identity:**
    - 48.6% nonbinary
    - 29.7% male
    - 15% female
- **194** parents/guardians of trans young people
- Trans (or transgender) people identify as a gender that does not match the sex assigned to them at birth.



## What are the results of *Trans Pathways*?



### Mental health issues

- 4 out of 5 trans young people have ever self-harmed (79.7%)
  - This is compared to 10.9% of adolescents (12-17 years) in the Australian general population
- Almost 1 in 2 trans young people have ever attempted suicide (48.1%)
  - This is 20 times higher than adolescents (12-17 years) in the Australian general population
  - This is 14.6 times higher than adults (aged 16-85 years) in the Australian general population
- 3 in 4 trans young people have ever been diagnosed with depression (74.6%)
  - This is 10 times higher than adolescents (12-17 years) in the Australian general population
- 72.2% of trans young people have ever been diagnosed with anxiety
  - This is 10 times higher than adolescents (12-17 years) in the Australian general population
- 22.7% of trans young people had been diagnosed with an eating disorder
- 25.1% of trans young people had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder

### Risks for poor mental health

- 89% had experienced peer rejection and 74% had experienced bullying
- 78.9% had experienced issues with school, university or TAFE
- 68.9% had experienced discrimination
- 65.8% had experienced lack of family support
- 22% had experienced accommodation issues or homelessness.

## Protective factors

- Trans young people shared the strategies they use to feel better about themselves and improve their mental wellbeing.

**These include:** music and art, peers and friends, activism, social media and pets.

## Experiences with medical and mental health services

- **60.1%** have experienced feeling isolated from medical and mental health services
- **42.1%** of participants have reached out to a service provider who did not understand, respect or have previous experience with gender diverse people
  - Problems included:**
    - Lack of knowledge on trans issues
    - Not knowing how to help the trans young person or where to refer them
    - Transphobia
    - Telling the young person they were going through a phase
    - Being forced to repeat their story every time they saw a new clinician
    - Services that are trans-friendly are at capacity, have long waiting lists, and may be costly because they are private.

## Conclusion and next steps

Trans young people are at very high risk for mental health problems, self-harm and suicide. This can be improved by changing some of the risk factors identified in the survey, and developing interventions based on strengths and protective factors. Services are lacking and education is desperately needed.

**Recommendations for Government and health commissioners and service providers** are provided below.

## Recommendations and Guidelines



### Recommendations for Australian governments

- Increase funding for provision of and enhancement of gender services and research
- Promote and enact trans-inclusive public policies (for example, regarding access to gendered facilities)
- Trans-inclusive legislation and trans-inclusive data collection, particularly in population-based surveys such as the Census, to ensure recognition of Australian trans populations
- Provide better education on gender diversity and practical information on how to uphold the rights of trans people.



### Recommendations for medical and mental health services

- Increase funding for services for trans people (both adults and under 18s), to create services in areas where there are none, and expand services where they are at capacity
- Improve services where they are perceived to be sub-standard via enhanced education and upskilling of current service providers
- Ensure trans healthcare is affordable by expanding services and treatments covered by Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, and encourage private health insurance companies to include trans health needs in their coverage.



### Guidelines for schools, universities and TAFE

- Teachers and staff should seek out information on gender diversity and incorporate equitable practices into educational environments.



### Guidelines for parents

- Parents need to be supportive: young people who do not have the support of their parents are at greater risk of poor mental health
- Realise that your child may be exploring their gender identity and that this is okay – it is okay to reach out for support for yourself, and/or your child.

