

# Young People, Gender and Substance Use

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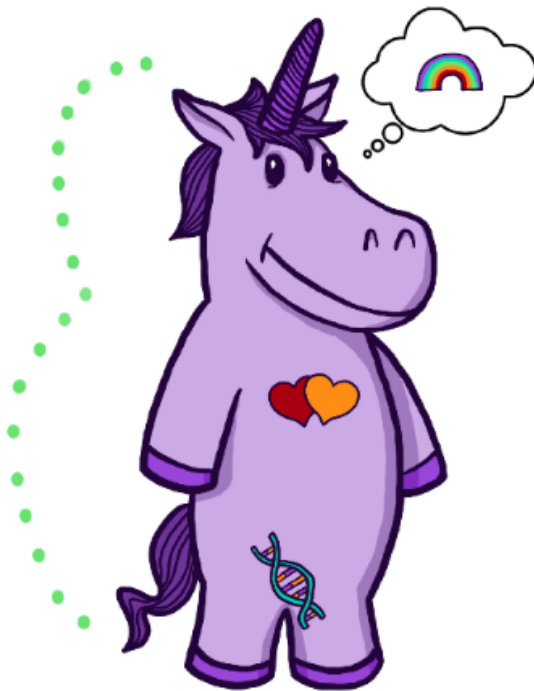
# Overview

- \* 1 Gender and gender diversity
  - \* Terminology; prevalence
- \* 2 Substance use in TGD young people
  - \* Prevalence; risk factors
- \* 3 What might help mitigate TGD young people's risk for substance use?
  - \* Affirmative care; access to services

# Gender, Sex and Sexuality

## The Gender Unicorn

Graphic by:  
**TSER**  
Trans Student Educational Resources




 Gender Identity



 Female/Woman/Girl  
Male/Man/Boy  
Other Gender(s)

 Gender Expression

 Feminine  
Masculine  
Other

 Sex Assigned at Birth

Female      Male      Other/Intersex

 Physically Attracted to

 Women  
Men  
Other Gender(s)

 Emotionally Attracted to

 Women  
Men  
Other Gender(s)

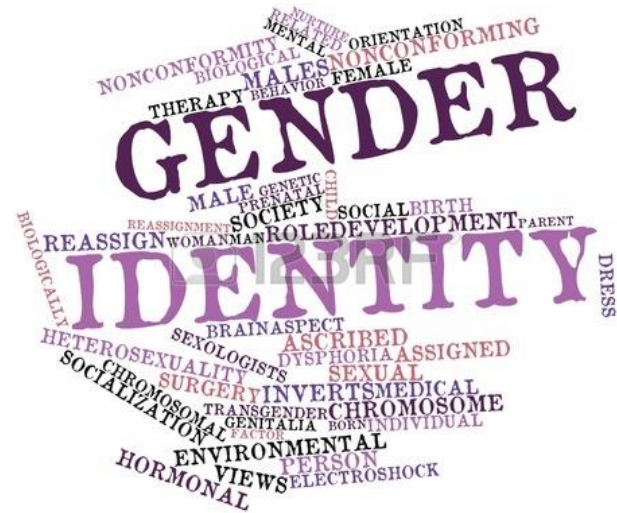
To learn more, go to:  
[www.transstudent.org/gender](http://www.transstudent.org/gender)

Design by Landyn Pan and Anna Moore

# Gender Diversity

There are many ways for people experience their gender as different from their birth-assigned sex

- \* Transgender
- \* Non-binary
- \* Gender Fluid
- \* Gender Queer
- \* Agender
- \* Etc.



# Cross Cultural Gender Diversity

- \* Two Spirit – Native North Americans
- \* Sistergirls and Brotherboys – Australia
- \* Kathoey – Thailand
- \* Hijra – India
- \* Mak Nyah – Malaysia
- \* Chukchi – Siberia
- \* Fa'afafine – Samoa



# Gender Diversity in Childhood and Adolescence

Many children start developing a sense of their gender at 2-3 years old and may express it through:

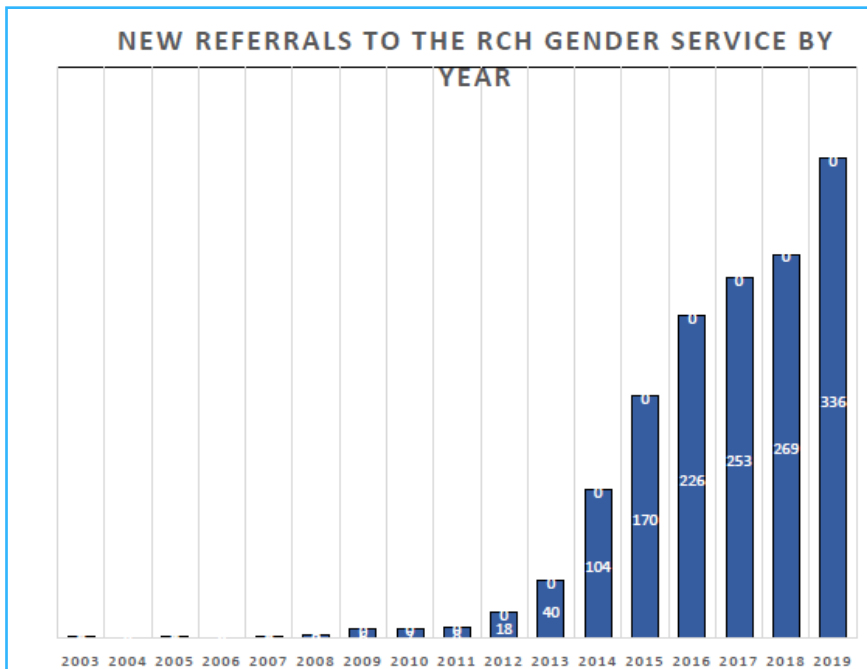
- \* Name, clothes and hairstyle preferences
- \* Toys and gendered role play
- \* Proclaiming: “I am a girl / boy!”
- \* For some TGD youth, it takes longer to start questioning and/or expressing their gender
- \* Experimenting with gender roles is normal – not necessarily a sign of gender diversity

# Prevalence Estimates

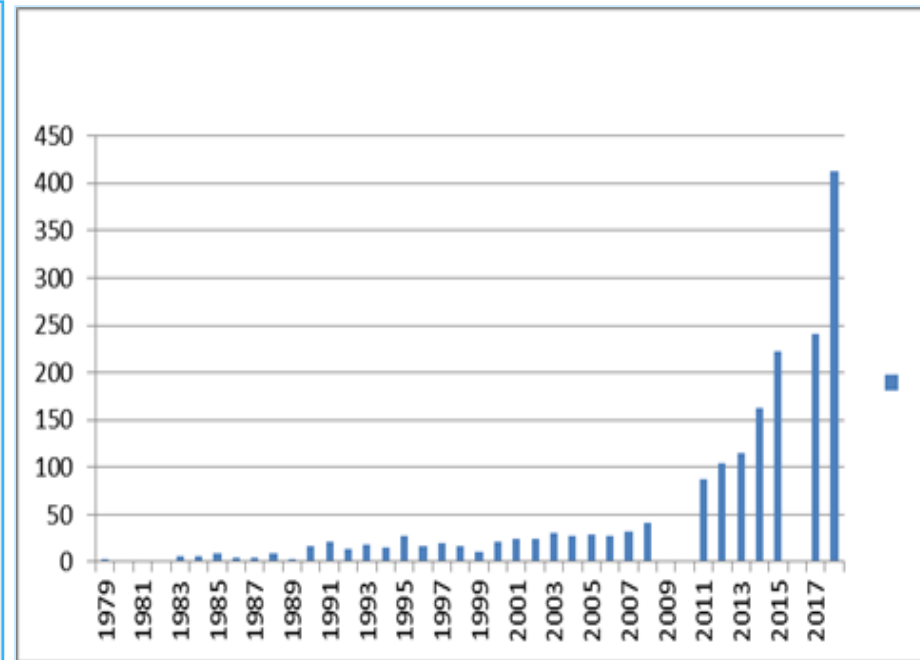
- \* RCH estimates 1.2% of Australian school children (about 45,000) are transgender
- \* Gender diverse youth may make up 5 to 12% of birth assigned females and 2 to 6% of birth assigned males
- \* Increasing referrals:
  - \* RCH: 473 new referrals in 2020
  - \* MGC: 487 new referrals in 2020

# Increasing Referrals

Royal Children's Hospital  
Gender Service 2003-2019



Monash Health Gender Clinic  
1979-2018





# Health Disparities

Compared to cisgender peers, TGD people experience:

- \* Higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance use, self-harm and suicidality (Newcomb et al., 2020)
- \* Higher rates of chronic health conditions, and problems related to HIV/AIDS and substance use (Hughes et al., 2021)
- \* Higher rates of unsheltered homelessness, and associated health and safety challenges (Strauss et al., 2017)

# Illicit drug use and TGD people

**Table 21: Age-standardised prevalence of illicit drug use in the last 12 months, by identification**

Substance	Category of identification					
	Australian population	Entire trans sample	AFAB non-binary	Trans Men	Trans women	AMAB non-binary
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Cannabis</b>	10.1	25.5	30.0	40.3	24.0	18.9
<b>Ecstasy</b>	3.1	6.7	17.2	10.0	4.7	7.3
<b>Meth/amphetamine</b>	2.2	7.6	15.2	9.4	7.3	5.7
<b>Cocaine</b>	2.3	4.0	3.0	10.4	2.5	4.8
<b>Any illicit drug<sup>k</sup></b>	14.7	28.5	36.8	42.0	26.4	21.2

*Source: The First Australian Trans Mental Health Study, Hyde et al., 2013*

# Substance Use and TGD Youth

Compared to cisgender peers, TGD young people are:

- \* 2-4 times as likely to use substances (Day et al., 2017)
- \* Likely to initiate substance use at a younger age (Day et al., 2017)

Potential risks:

- \* Impact on brain development, decision-making and risk-taking
- \* Physical and mental health outcomes:
  - \* Overdose, drug dependence, sleep disorders, mood disorders, severe mental illness, lung & heart disease etc.
- \* Social outcomes:
  - \* School absenteeism, social isolation, involvement in criminal justice system, unemployment, homelessness etc.

# Risk Factors, Drivers and Vulnerabilities

## Minority stress

- \* 87% of TGD young people report having experienced transphobia in Australia (Couch et al., 2007)
    - \* Systemic oppression, discrimination, harassment, violence
    - \* Rejection by peers & family, lack of social connection
  - \* Internalised transphobia
    - \* Shame, identity concealment, expectations of rejection, anxiety and vigilance about prejudice
- Substances can be a mechanism to cope with minority stress

# Risk Factors, Drivers and Vulnerabilities

## Social and cultural norms

- \* Clubbing / bars more central to social life among LGBTQI+ communities → substances accessible and normalised

## Barriers to health care

- \* Discrimination, humiliation or misunderstanding from medical providers leads to avoiding care (Jaffee et al., 2016)
- \* Divisions in services for mental health and substance use

# How to Mitigate Risk?

- \* Promoting social engagement, inclusivity and education
  - \* Students in schools with LGBTQ organisations less likely to use substances (Poteat et al., 2012)
- \* Involving & educating parents
  - \* Parent connectedness plays an important role in preventing and decreasing substance use in TGD young people (Gower et al., 2018)
- \* Improved access to health care
  - \* Education for health professionals
  - \* Affirming care and environments



# Gender-Affirming Care

- \* Addressing clients
  - \* Introduce yourself with your pronouns and ask for your patient's
  - \* Respect preferences in professional communication
- \* Address gender identity only when it is related to client's concerns or necessary for appropriate care
- \* Affirming environments
  - \* Accessible toilets
  - \* Display gender diverse imagery



# Referral Options

- \* **AOD support at Thorne Harbour Health**

<https://thorneharbour.org/lgbti-health/alcohol-and-other-drug-services-aod/>



- \* **QHealth at Merri Health**

<https://www.merrihealth.org.au/services/mental-health/lgbtiqa-health-alcohol-and-drugs-2/>



**Merri Health**

- \* **YSAS** <https://ysas.org.au/>



- \* **Uniting Care AOD Services**

<https://www.unitingvictas.org.au/services/alcohol-other-drugs/>



- \* **Headspace** <https://headspace.org.au/>



- \* **Rainbow Door** <https://www.rainbowdoor.org.au/>





# Referral Options

- \* **The RCH Gender Service**

<https://www.rch.org.au/adolescent-medicine/gender-service/>



- \* **The Monash Health Gender Clinic**

<https://monashhealth.org/services/gender-clinic/>



- \* **AusPATH Providers**

<https://auspath.org.au/providers/#VIC>



# Questions?

## Gender Clinic Contacts:

Website: <https://monashhealth.org/services/gender-clinic/>

Dr Jaco Erasmus, Head of Gender Clinic [Jaco.Erasmus@monashhealth.org](mailto:Jaco.Erasmus@monashhealth.org) (Weds & Fri)

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Molly Zalakos, Helen Ross & Sanjana Chandra, Administration [genderclinic@monashhealth.org](mailto:genderclinic@monashhealth.org)

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