



Young People Attracted to the Same Sex or Both Sexes

This fact sheet presents selected findings on the health and wellbeing of secondary school students who are attracted to the same sex or to both sexes. It is based on the Youth'07 survey of the health and wellbeing of 9,107 New Zealand secondary school students that was undertaken in 2007. Some comparisons are also made with results from the previous survey in 2001.

The survey results show that in many areas of their lives, students attracted to the same sex or to both sexes face greater challenges and show concerning disparities compared to students attracted to the opposite sex. But the results also show that despite these challenges and disparities, the majority of students attracted to the same sex or both sexes are resilient, happy and healthy.

- About one in twenty of all secondary school students in New Zealand are attracted to the same sex or both sexes.
- Many of the students attracted to the same sex or both sexes indicated that they were aware of their same-sex attraction by the time they started secondary school, but most of them (69% in 2001 and 60% in 2007) had not spoken openly about this to their family or friends – i.e. they had not come out.

Family and Whānau

- The majority of students attracted to the same sex or both sexes indicated that their parents cared a lot about them.
- However, less than a quarter (23% in 2001 and 24% in 2007) could easily talk to their family about their sexuality, and their family relationships were, on average, less positive than those of students attracted to the opposite sex.

School and Friends

- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes were generally positive about school, but less so than students attracted to the opposite sex.
- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes had a more difficult time at school – they were three times as likely to be bullied every week at school compared to students attracted to the opposite sex.
- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes were equally likely as those attracted to the opposite sex to have friends who care about them.

Mental Health

- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes reported much higher rates of depression and self-harm compared to students attracted to the opposite sex.
- 20% of students attracted to the same sex or both sexes reported making a suicide attempt within the previous year – 5 times higher than the proportion of students attracted to the opposite sex (4%).

Sexual Health

- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes were more likely to have had sex or to be currently sexually active compared to students attracted to the opposite sex.
- Many of the students attracted to the same sex or both sexes who were sexually active did not practise safe sex – of the males less than half had used a condom the last time they had sex.

Accessing Healthcare

- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes reported greater difficulties than students attracted to the opposite sex in accessing healthcare, especially for sexual, reproductive and emotional health.
- Students attracted to the same sex or both sexes were more likely than those attracted to the opposite sex to seek help for an emotional worry, but they also experienced greater difficulty accessing this help.

These results from the Youth'07 survey provide some insight into the challenges faced by young people who are attracted to the same sex or both sexes. After the release of the full report on young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes, Rainbow Youth and The New Zealand AIDS Foundation sought feedback from numerous individuals and organisations. The feedback made clear that young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes represent just part of the spectrum of sexual and gender diversity.

The following recommendations are thus not only for young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes, but more broadly for all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, fa'afafine, and takataapui identities, as well as everyone in between and not sure. In an attempt to capture this diversity, the reclaimed term queer is used. This word is used by many groups, but it is also appreciated that it is not the preferred term for everybody.

Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to break down the barriers and improve the situation of all queer young people:

- Take action to improve access to high quality youth groups, organisations and resources that are specifically tailored to the needs of queer young people.
- Initiate specific measures aimed at developing school environments and an education system that support and celebrate the sexuality and gender diversity of every student.
- Encourage whānau to celebrate and support their queer whānau members.
- Do more to ensure access to and use of professional health and care services for all queer young people.

Useful links

Online forum, information and resources for queer youth, and educators (Aotearoa)
www.curious.org.nz

Advocacy and Support for GLBT Youth (Auckland)
www.rainbowyouth.org.nz

GLBT Telephone Counselling, Advice and Referral (Aotearoa)
www.outlinenz.com

New Zealand Aids Foundation
www.nzaf.org.nz

Based on the report: Rossen, F.V., Lucassen, M.F.G., Denny, S. & Robinson, E. (2009). *Youth'07: The health and wellbeing of secondary school students in New Zealand: Results for young people attracted to the same sex or both sexes*. Auckland. The University of Auckland.

For more information on these results and others from the Youth2000 surveys go to publications at www.youth2000.ac.nz



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