Rainbow Communities

Feedback has been collated from community-led reports and previous publicly available community engagement activity across government and NZ Police. We have pulled the feedback into one place to identity themes that have helped inform the Standing Together Against Hate series and greater NZ Police work.

The community feedback has been grouped into the following themes: Identity, Engagement, Government, Law and Protection, Support, Data, and Communications and Media.

What we heard from Rainbow communities about 'Identity'

"Belonging and visibility is crucial in a world that pretends we do not exist. We are not objects, we are living breathing people to be treated with dignity and respect in our society, family, work and health system."

"Being trans is a part of me, a big part, but only a part."

"Being trans isn't something that in itself causes mental distress or harm. It's how the world around you treats you for being trans that does the harm."

Key themes

The rainbow communities are diverse and changing. Different rainbow communities are at different stages in their journey, and within that individuals have their own journeys.

Rainbow experiences are strongly linked to how society treats them.

Accessibility to public places is challenged.

Communities learn to manage their own expectations on what it means to 'fit in'

An accepting environment results in better outcomes.

Past experiences continue to impact how individuals connect with, and express, their rainbow identity.

"We leave it up to others to decide we don't confirm or deny. Though some younger gay couples we have known have been very angry with us for 'letting the side down'."

"While most poor treatment was from outside Takatāpui and Rainbow communities, some participants talked about tensions inside communities, including not feeling like their contributions as older community members were respected by younger Takatāpui and Rainbow people."

"I am out everywhere. I feel a responsibility to be as publicly "out" as I can be to make things easier for the next generation."

What we heard from Rainbow communities about

'Engagement'

Prioritise ongoing high trust relationships with communities.
Strengthen government's commitment and build relationships and trust with LGBTQIA+ communities.
Consistent engagement between government and LGBTQIA+ communities beyond strategy development.

"Government needs to talk to the right people to get the right feedback"

"Words like participation: we're not even at the starting line yet, unlike other groups that are further ahead." (Intersex)

Key themes

Call out to engage more broadly and deliberately with diverse rainbow communities.

Some in the rainbow community feel over consulted and over researched, others are happy to continue to build trust, and some are happy to finally be invited to the table, even if the topics don't reflect their priorities

Our participants also highlighted the importance of collaboration with ethnic LGBTQIA+ groups and individuals. They noted that Police usually only consult with city-based LGBTQIA+ organisations, which often cater towards a Eurocentric population. As a result of this, valuable insights about alternative LGBTQIA+ experiences, such as ethnic LGBTQIA+ experiences, are missed out and therefore not integrated into Police insights.

"Transformational rather than transactional approaches to work – we cannot do transformational work if it is transactional. This highlights relational dynamics as key to doing transformational work."

What we heard from Rainbow communities about

'Government'

"It's hard for rainbow communities to feel heard by government when people with hateful and transphobic views continue to be employed and platformed."

"Many of the most urgent changes needed contain an element of cultural change – something we have seen previous governments improve with both legislative and broader leadership – for example, in response to drink-driving."

"I wish there was somewhere that actually explained all this shit, letting us know what is available and how." (Trans youth)

Key themes

Lack faith in government systems.

Cost is a significant barrier to access government services.

Siloed approaches to address discrimination will have a limited impact – holistic approaches and culture shifts are needed.

While services might be available on paper, they are inconsistent and not easily, if at all, accessible.

Government processes are arduous, ineffective, and unclear.

"I strongly believe that people who are not well educated or who speak English as a second language would find the process virtually impossible without help."

"Money is a huge aspect for transgender people and it can directly affect one's mental health as it costs quite a lot to be able to be 'passing' in everyday life, and even being accepted by the LGBTQIA+ community."

Strategy needs to acknowledge and address both historic and current discrimination against transgender, intersex, and LGBTQIA+ communities from government policy and practice.

If they are going to make psychological assessment compulsory, it should be provided at no cost.

What we heard from Rainbow communities about
'Law & Protection'

"Many ethnic trans persons have been in situations with the police where the police look at them confusedly, evidently not understanding the vulnerabilities of trans people."

Dealing with the police (19%) and seeking healthcare (18%) were also both avoided by just under one in five older Takatāpui and Rainbow people. These are not optional extras, but basic services people access because they need them.

"I felt they wouldn't think the abuse I was going through was bad enough and I didn't know where to look." (Non-binary, youth)

Key themes

Rights are unclear and ineffective in helping communities access support.

When there are rights protecting medical procedures above the needs of communities, trust in the rights there to protect them i s further hindered.

Past interactions with Police / Justice lead to lack of confidence in reporting, and a perception that they will not receive appropriate responses.

Those who are part of multiple minority communities face compounding issues with Police / Justice.

"I wish there was a law that clearly said what protections trans people are entitled to."

"An easier way to report discrimination when it begins, rather than waiting until it escalates."

"My past interactions with the police (I was mocked for being trans)...have led me to avoid them...I have opted not to call the police in situations where I probably should have."

"language ... has been used as a weapon against them by other groups."

'Support Services'

"One rainbow elder went to a grief support service which was focused on young people and did not offer relevant support. It was also hostile to the elder sharing their identity. Another lesbian elder went to a support service, where she was told that she could attend, but she shouldn't 'cruise' the other women at the service."

The ethnic service providers focus group highlighted that ethnic community services serve many, many different communities. This includes clients from places where culture and religion are very strong, so the needs of ethnic Rainbow people of all ages can be sensitive and difficult to meet.

Key themes

Access and availability to community, health, and cosmetic services a priority focus for rainbow communities.

When 'good' support services are received it has a significant positive impact on communities.

Individual experiences are reliant on the availability, understanding and attitude of those providing the service.

Make it easier for people to understand what is available to them, and how to navigate the different processes.

Community led initiatives are the best places to provide support, but they need to be better supported themselves. Conflation between LGBTQIA+ identity and mental illness contributes to barriers accessing necessary support services.

"Being able to have counselling … These things counter shame, and shame is the big killer in our community imho [in my humble opinion]."

'Pasifika service providers: If your material doesn't advertise that you support rainbow communities, they will not come through your door.'

"Pronoun inclusion and appropriate form design help. No visible cues in spaces like posters or rainbow flags doesn't help."

Sometimes places such as Rape Crisis don't make clear whether their service is trans or non-binary inclusive.

What we heard from Rainbow communities about 'Data'

"It is vital that we have accurate and reliable statistics on who we are, where we are, and how well we are."

"I will change my gender on my driver licence, as the last time I was pulled over the police officer thought that I had presented someone else's ID until I explained that I am transgender."
(Trans man, adult)

Key themes

Lack of consistent processes and approaches to how data regarding rainbow identities is collected.

This can lead to inconsistencies in what is acceptable for identification purposes, and impacts day to day interactions, travel, and interactions with Police.

The processes around changing your identity information is inconsistent and ineffective, and results in discriminatory behaviours.

Better data about the rainbow communities will lead to better visibility and result in greater accountability on government to deliver to the communities.

Responsibility is on the community to be visible in this data and to participate.

"I am 61 years of age and transitioned over 20 years ago. I have been fortunate and never experienced any significant discrimination, due more to luck than anything else. Others have not been so blessed. To begin eliminating discrimination we as a community must know ourselves. Wherever you are on the spectrum, fill out this survey as a first step to true equality."

"We can no longer be left behind, being counted is OUR collective responsibility. Being counted will no longer give anyone an excuse to make US invisible."

'Communications & Media'

"I used to feel quite fraught after I re-transitioned... I now consider myself part of the community but also not part of the community, gender non-confirming but not trans, but also not cis... I did lose people years ago when I re-transitioned... and I know that stories like mine get used in really unhelpful ways."

"I've seen how transgender people can be deliberately misrepresented in the media, or used by the media to generate controversy and therefore sell papers/drive more traffic to websites etc."

Key themes

Lack of clear information about the issues that are impacting the rainbow communities.

A lack of clear information about what their rights are, especially when dealing with Police and the Justice system.

Narratives in the media can deliberately misrepresent the communities, with some reflecting how they don't want their experiences to be used in a negative way.

Lack of representation of diversity within the rainbow communities, and a perpetuation of harmful stereotypes.

"Simultaneously, a few participants have shared that social media could be used to advocate for ethnic LGBT+ communities."

Most participants shared that the invisibility, erasure and misrepresentation of stories and experiences of LGBT+ South Asians by the mainstream media is frustrating.

"I have no idea what my rights are as a trans person when dealing with the police or prisons."