

Access to medical and mental health care for trans young people in Australia: findings from Trans Pathways

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ABOUT THE ARTIST: JASON

Jason Mitchell is a trans young person from Perth who is currently studying an Advanced Diploma of Graphic Design. Jason has kindly contributed the artwork that you will see throughout the pages of the *Trans Pathways* report.

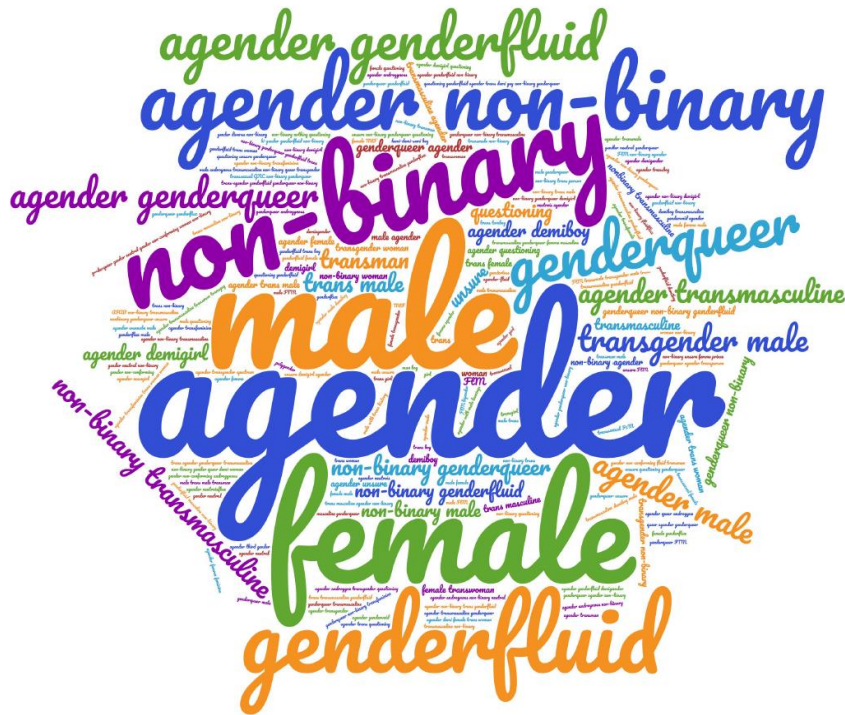


**CAGED
BY MY
DYSPHORIA**



Participants

- 859 trans and gender diverse young people



Gender identities



Sexual orientations

Putting it into perspective

Depression – 74.6%
Anxiety – 72.2%

These rates are about **10 times higher** than what is seen in adolescents in the general Australian population.

Self-harm – 79.7%

7 times higher than Young Minds Matter (aged 12-17)

Suicide attempt – 48.1%

20 times higher than Young Minds Matter (aged 12-17);
14.6 times higher than the general Australian population (aged 16-85)

Drivers of poor mental health

→ Why are there such high rates of mental health issues?

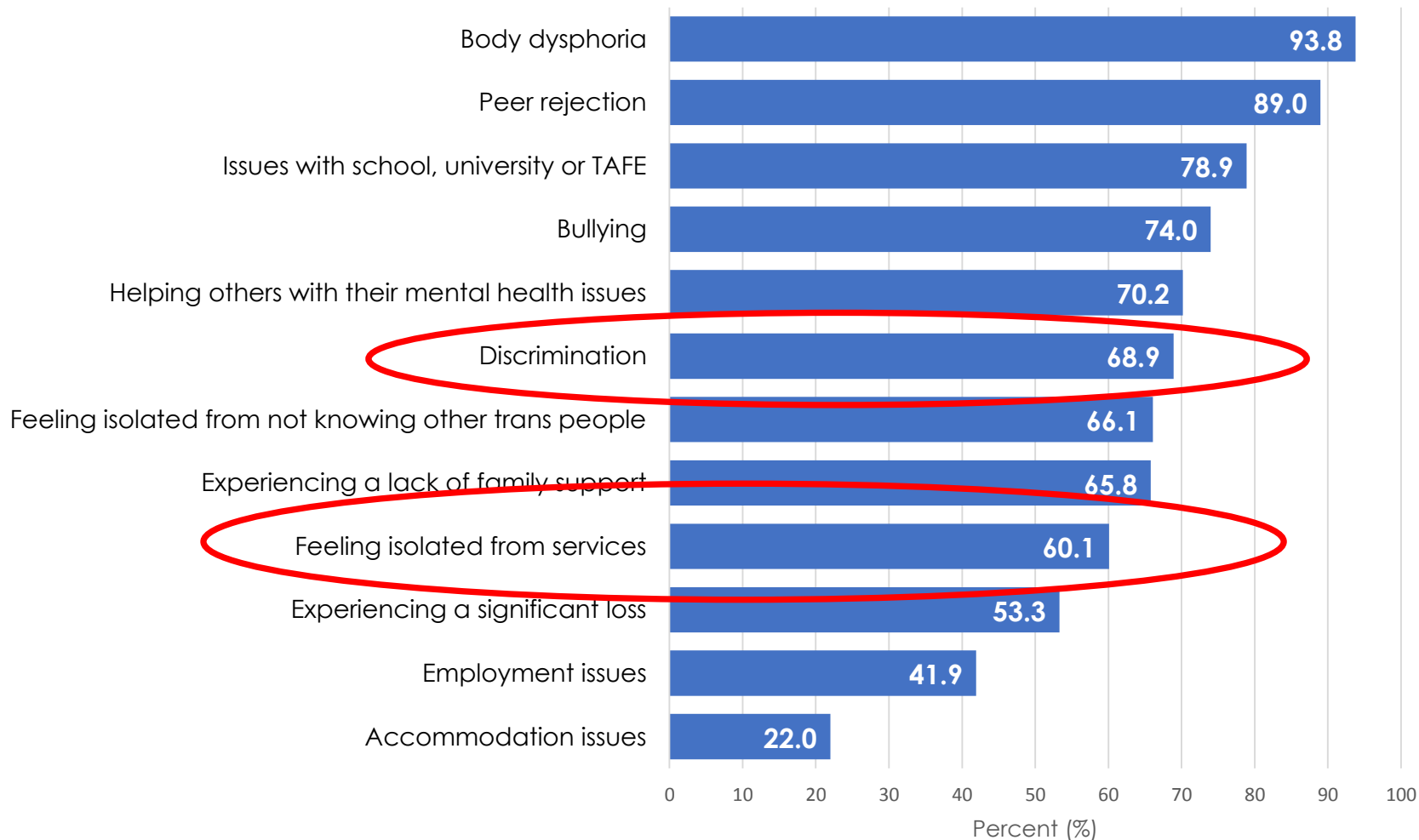
Mental health issues are **not** because of someone's gender identity, they are due to how gender diversity is treated in our society.



To me, **it's not the fact that I'm trans that caused problems.** It's that general society doesn't accept trans people. I'm not anxious in public because I'm trans – I'm anxious in public because people tend to be threatened by people like me. I'm not depressed because I'm trans – I'm depressed because general society excludes people like me from support.

[Male, 22]

Drivers of poor mental health



Lifetime exposure of potential drivers of poor mental health (N=691)

Service isolation

- **60.1%** of participants have experienced feeling isolated from medical and mental health services and *have higher rates of:*
 - self-harming
 - suicidal thoughts
 - suicide attempts
 - diagnoses of PTSD and anxiety

than those who did not experience feeling isolated from medical and mental health services.





Experiences of services

- Services asked about **in relation to mental health and/or medical reasons related to their gender identity**
 - General practitioners (GPs)
 - Psychiatry services
 - Therapy and counselling services
 - Mental health inpatient services
 - Medical transitioning services
- **42.1%** of trans young people have reached out to a service provider who did not understand, respect or have previous experience with gender diverse people.

General practitioners (GPs)

- GPs were the most common service for trans young people to access regarding their gender identity (**65.2%**).



- **57.4% satisfied** with service received
- **19.7% dissatisfied** with service received

GP experiences

- Mixed reports of whether GP was understanding, knowledgeable or open-minded
- Participants often felt they needed to educate the GP on trans issues
- Some were told they were going through a phase
- Trans-friendly GPs have long waiting lists

The first two GP's I visited were completely arrogant and refused to help someone in my "condition". **They refused to help me** as I was just looking for attention, and this phase would soon stop.

[Female, 17]

I felt our GP is kind and understanding and helps in the best way they can. I feel there is probably not enough information out there for GPs. **Our GP was unsure about where to send us for assistance** hence we have ended up going privately to the psychiatrist/psychologist and endocrinologist.

[Mother of a 20-year-old female]

Psychiatry services

- **43%** had accessed a psychiatrist in relation to their gender identity
 - 36.4% saw a private psychiatrist
 - 21.1% saw a public psychiatrist
 - 20.4% had tried both



- **42.5% satisfied** with service received



- **31.7% dissatisfied** with service received

Psychiatrist experiences

Negative experiences of psychiatrists were more common than positive ones.

- Misgendering
- Gate-keeping
- Not acknowledging of non-binary identities
- Lack of trans knowledge and trans friendly services
- “Proving I was trans enough”
- Expensive for ongoing support

I've been to many different people to talk to and to see if they could help over the years and **90% of them just made me feel worse.**
[Female, 21]

It was a pointless exercise of being forced to hand over money and jump through hoops **just to get a letter saying I am trans enough** to medically transition. [Female, 25]



IT'S okay
TO medically
TRANSITION

Medical transitioning services

35.4% had accessed medical transitions services in relation to their gender identity



66.9% satisfied with service received once accessed



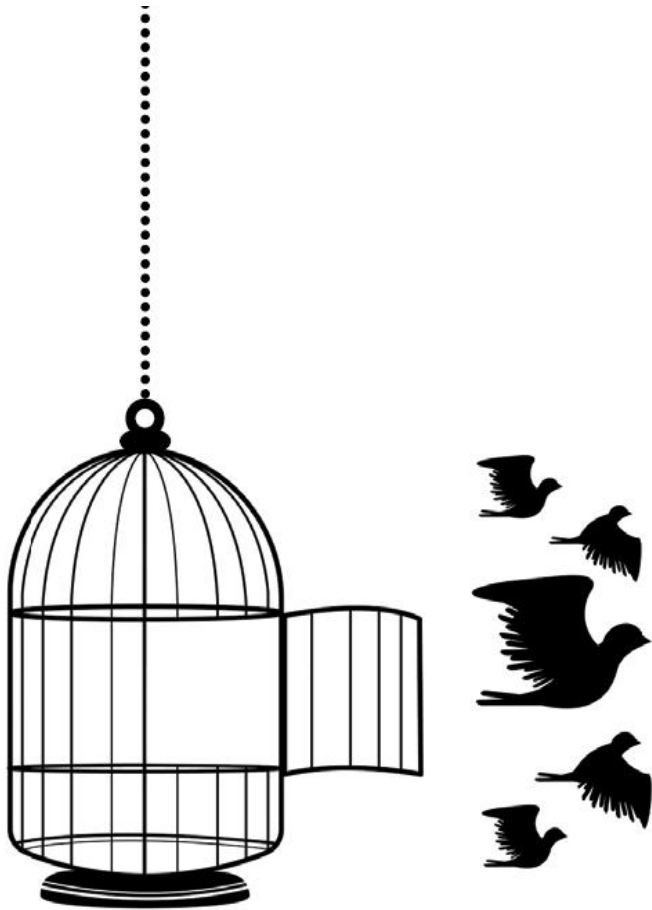
16.1% dissatisfied with service received once accessed

**TRANSITIONING
IS NOT ALWAYS**



BINARY FTM OR MTF

Recommendations



1. **Increase funding for services** for trans people (both adults and under 18s)
2. **Improve services** where they are perceived to be sub-standard
3. **Ensure enhanced accessibility** to gender-affirming intervention
4. **Training and education** of health professionals is essential

We're beautiful people with guts of steel and hearts of gold. We stand up for our people, we take others under our wing, **we don't forget our history, and we fight to change it.**

[Non-binary/androgynous, 19]

No need to adhere to gendered beauty standards, I can just be ambiguously cute.

[Non-binary, 18]



What's **great** about being trans?

Oh my gosh YAAS! **There are so many aspects of our culture that I can understand that outsiders can't**, I don't feel restricted by the "binary gender" view. I get the experience of gender euphoria which doesn't seem to exist with cis people!

[Agender, 22]

Personally I feel that being trans and experiencing the struggles that come with it **have made me more tolerant and caring to others overall**; including those who are not gender diverse but experience other hardships in life.

[Genderfluid/non-binary, 17]

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Australian Professional Association for Trans Health Conference



AusPATH
PERTH 2019

24–26 October 2019, The Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Perth, WA
Myth busting: Sorting fact from fiction in trans healthcare

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