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Health and Wellbeing Inequities within Aotearoa's Rainbow Communities:
Environmental Scan and Recommendations
2024

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Contents

Purpose of the Info Pack

Globally, members of rainbow communities have reported materially higher rates of negative mental health outcomes. The causes for this identified in academic scholarship are exhaustive. Amongst others, key factors include: alienation, rejection, need for support, marginalisation, depression, and connectedness.

In 2018, when the "Counting Ourselves" study investigated the health and wellbeing of non-binary and trans individuals, they found that five of every seven participants above the age of fifteen reported high rates of psychological distress [1]. Furthermore, Oranga Tamariki's 2020 "Just Sayin'" survey recorded high rates of self-reported poor mental health amongst rainbow youth. More than half, 532 people, of the surveyed population assessed their mental health to be "poor" or just "fair" [2].

It is clear that New Zealand is no exception to the global trend of poor mental health in rainbow communities, this info pack aims to provide a shortlist of viable recommendations advocating for changes that can be made to improve the experiences and wellbeing of rainbow individuals in Aotearoa.

This report is a collaborative effort by Ignite Consultants Wellington and the Foundation for Equity and Research New Zealand (FERNZ) to provide and identify some of the challenges faced by rainbow communities. We have also provided a number of recommendations which provide a direction as to how some of these challenges that need to be overcome - in line with FERNZ's mission to work in partnership with communities to identify and address inequities and to advocate for minority groups to promote a full realisation of rights for all citizens.

[1] Veale et al., *Counting Ourselves*, IV.
[2] Oranga Tamariki, *Just Sayin*, 3.

Acknowledgements

This info pack was created and developed by volunteer consultants from Ignite Consultants Wellington over 9 weeks in Trimester One, 2024.

Ignite consultants are a student-led organisation who partner students with socially-conscious organisations, to help create an impact in the community.

We would like to thank The Foundation for Equity and Research New Zealand (FERNZ) for allowing us the opportunity to collaborate and work on this project.

We acknowledge that some of the information within this info pack can be upsetting to readers, so please proceed with caution. If you or someone you know is experiencing discrimination based on their identity, please reach out to support services.

For disclosures and support please reach out to:

1737
call or free text 1737 any time to talk to a trained counsellor.

LIFELINE
call 0800 543 354
free text HELP to 4357 to talk to a trained counsellor.

OutLine
An all-ages rainbow mental health organisation providing support for the rainbow community, their friends, whānau, and those questioning.
Call 0800 688 5463 any evening from 6-9pm,
or email them at info@outline.org.nz

To discuss content of this info pack contact FERNZ by emailing at info@fernz.org.nz

Limitations and Positionality Statement

This report will delve into the challenges faced by rainbow communities. These challenges are sensitive and deeply personal for many people. Therefore, we collectively feel it is important for the parties involved in the creation of this info pack to acknowledge our limitations, and for readers to understand our limitations in scope and perspective.

The authors of this report are undergraduate university students. We are novice researchers, therefore, this provides a high level overview considering an array of scholarship, utilising peer-reviewed literature, clinical observations and other material to support recommendations made throughout.

While we endeavour to offer valuable suggestions and insights for the creation of a more progressive and equitable environment, it is important for readers to approach this scope of the info pack and recognise that not all strategies may be universally applicable. Furthermore, despite the severity of the issues canvassed, statements should not be read as absolutes. Therefore, readers should approach these ideas keeping in mind the scope of this info pack, and recognise the perspectives and experiences within rainbow communities vary widely.

We must acknowledge that the research conducted for this paper will not encompass the full range of experiences within the rainbow community. We have relied on a variety of current information that may not be representative of all individuals across diverse demographics, geographic locations and cultural backgrounds. The findings and conclusions of this research are context-dependent and may not be applicable to all educational environments or institutional settings. Factors such as regional differences in policies, cultural attitudes towards rainbow individuals, and variations in available resources can significantly impact the relevance and generalisability of the findings.

Finally, the absence of an action plan limits the practical applicability of the research findings, as recommendations for intervention or policy changes are not provided. Again, readers should interpret the findings within the context of the info pack's scope, and recognise the need for further research and contextual analysis. To then inform targeted interventions and support strategies for rainbow communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Defining Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

Aotearoa's rainbow communities encompass an ever-growing class of individuals; capturing the various identities of gender, sex, and sexuality. Our broad definition will also seek to elucidate the intersections and relationships these identities may have with the many diverse cultures present in Aotearoa.

Throughout this info pack, we use Rainbow Communities as an umbrella term to describe people whose sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and/or sex characteristics differ from binary norms.

Sexual Orientation:
An individual's sexual orientation makes reference to who that individual is attracted to (sexually, romantically, and emotionally) and exists on a spectrum. An individual's sexual orientation does not necessarily encompass or influence an individual's behaviour [1].

Gender Identity, Expression, and Fluidity:
"One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman" famously writes Simone de Beauvoir [2]. In this sense, gender identity is often expressed and refers to how individuals present themselves to the rest of the world.

For some people, their gender is something which remains consistent throughout their lives. For others, their gender is fluid, changing over time. Some people don't identify with a particular gender while others question their gender identity.

Transgender (Trans) and Gender Diverse:
The term transgender refers to a person whose gender differs from their sex assigned at birth. Identifying as transgender does not limit to the binaries of male and female. The umbrella term gender diverse encompasses anyone who presents through fluid gender identities, such as non-binary, Takatāpui and Fa'afafine [3].

Disclosing one's rainbow identity
Disclosing one's rainbow identity is often referred to as "coming out". Similarly, being open about one's rainbow identity may be referred to as being "out". Rainbow people may choose to not disclose their rainbow identity, for reasons such as not wanting to be labelled, not feeling comfortable with being "out", or not thinking it needs to be talked about. Conversely, rainbow people may choose to "come out" for reasons such as the ability to be more authentic or to have the freedom to talk about their life, partner, or community [4].

[1] American Psychological Association, "Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity."
[2] Beauvoir and Rowbotham, The Second Sex, 1.
[3] Moseson et al., "The Imperative for Transgender and Gender Nonbinary Inclusion."
[4] Rainbow Tick, The New Zealand Workplace Rainbow Inclusion Survey.

Defining Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

Cisgender:
Cisgender individuals are those who do not identify as transgender or gender diverse. Their gender aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth [5].

Intersex and Variations of Sex Characteristics (VSC) :
These are umbrella terms used to describe a range of sex characteristics which may not fit within a medically-minded sex binary. While some intersex individuals may also identify as trans, being intersex and being transgender are different things [6].

Pronouns:
Pronouns are words that replace names when referring to people. Common examples include she/her/hers, he/him/his, and they/them/theirs, among others. Using they/them/theirs for a single person is grammatically correct. In Te Reo Māori, the third person pronoun 'ia' is used for individuals of any gender [7].

Gender and Sex Distinction:
The term sex in this context refers to the sex assigned to a person at birth. Whereas, gender is a socially constructed term which refers to one's expression of identity. Gender expression goes beyond traditional Western binaries of 'man' and 'woman', to include cultural gender identities like Takatāpui and Fa'afafine.

New Zealand's Historical Context: Takatāpui and Pasifika Rainbow Identities:
It is important to recognise Aotearoa's historical context and the effect colonisation had on Rainbow Communities. Colonisation imposed traditional Western norms and gender binaries, which affected Māori and Pasifika people who identified as Takatāpui (Māori gender diverse) and Fa'afafine (Pasifika third gender) [8]. Through the ongoing process of decolonisation within Aotearoa, it is important that we acknowledge and understand Māori and Pasifika Rainbow identities.

[5] Moseson et al., "The Imperative for Transgender and Gender Nonbinary Inclusion."
[6] Hegarty, "The Psychology of People with Variable Sex Characteristics/Intersex."
[7] Te Ngākau Kahukura, "Pronouns."
[8] Rituparna et al. Mental Health and Wellbeing for Young People from Intersectional Identity Groups: Inequity for Māori, Pacific, Rainbow Young People, and those with a Disabling Condition.

Education and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

For many in rainbow communities, education can be challenging as students may face discrimination or bullying due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Some rainbow students may feel uncomfortable being themselves as they worry about how other students will treat them. The education sector lacks effective policies and resources to support rainbow students with heterosexual and cisgender identities treated as norms in education with rainbow identities being othered.

Young people in Aotearoa face the highest rates of bullying out of any OECD country, with rainbow students facing the highest rates of bullying, this has been investigated in various studies [1]. The 2021 Identify Survey, surveyed rainbow students between the ages of 14 and 26 and found that 37% of rainbow students had faced bullying or discrimination in the last year, and one in five Trans students were bullied weekly [2]. Students faced bullying in various forms, from verbal and physical harassment to social exclusion and cyberbullying. Over half of rainbow students in the survey facing bullying reported the bullying and discrimination they faced was based to their rainbow identity.

Being subject to high rates of bullying means that rainbow students are more likely to experience adverse mental health outcomes. These manifest in forms of increased anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation. These poor mental health outcomes have a negative effect on rainbow student's academic performance. The 2019 GLSEN survey found that students who were frequently bullied had lower levels of achievement in assessments compared to those who did not face bullying [3]. Furthermore, students facing bullying and discrimination on a regular basis in school are more likely to miss school due to safety concerns, and mental health impacts causing many rainbow students from feeling excluded from accessing education. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive anti-bullying policies, advocacy for increased awareness about the challenges rainbow students are facing in schools, more inclusive education, and the training of educators to teach rainbow inclusive topics.

Fostering a safe place in schools for rainbow students is crucial for their emotional, psychological, and academic well-being. When rainbow students feel secure and accepted, they are more likely to attend school regularly, engage actively in learning, and perform better academically. Fostering a supportive environment through the recommendations as discussed below will help reduce the risks of bullying, discrimination, and associated mental health issues as aforementioned. By creating a safe space, schools can nurture a positive atmosphere where every student feels safe, recognised, and empowered to reach their full potential in education.

[1] InsideOUT, Ending rainbow focused bullying and discrimination, 6.
[2] The Identify Survey 2021.
[3] GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network), The National School Climate Survey.

Healthcare and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

An accessible and functioning healthcare system is necessary for ensuring positive health and wellbeing outcomes. Regretfully, the Rainbow community has been systemically denied meaningful access to an institution that can adequately meet their healthcare needs.

There are many factors contributing to this great challenge. "*Counting Ourselves*", an anonymous health survey designed by and for trans and non-binary people living in Aotearoa New Zealand' considered reasons given for why a broad range of healthcare services had not been accessed [1].

Although not required by all rainbow individuals, services considered included
- Hair removal,
- Counselling support / mental health services,
- Gender affirming hormones,
- Chest reconstruction / breast augmentation surgeries,
- Facial feminisation / tracheal shave,
- Voice therapy,
- Orchiectomy / hysterectomy,
- Genital reconstruction.

This consideration spanned a reasonable range which covered surgical procedures and non-invasive measures, as well as physical and mental services.

The two most prominent reasons for not accessing these services were that individuals did not know where to go for them or were priced out of the procedures. Surgical services presented concerns with the knowledge of doctors, confidence in the services provided, and accessibility to services in Aotearoa. Particularly for therapeutic services like counselling and voice therapy, there were increased concerns about discrimination based on being trans or non-binary and being unfamiliar with the procedures.

The study also reflected on the experiences of individuals when they did choose to access healthcare services. In many cases, the services rendered by healthcare professionals were considered inadequate. Particularly of note is that only 46% of all participants reported that their GPs always used their correct name, only 41% used their correct pronouns, and only 55% felt that they were treated the same as other non-rainbow patients when discussing needs not related to gender-affirming care [2].
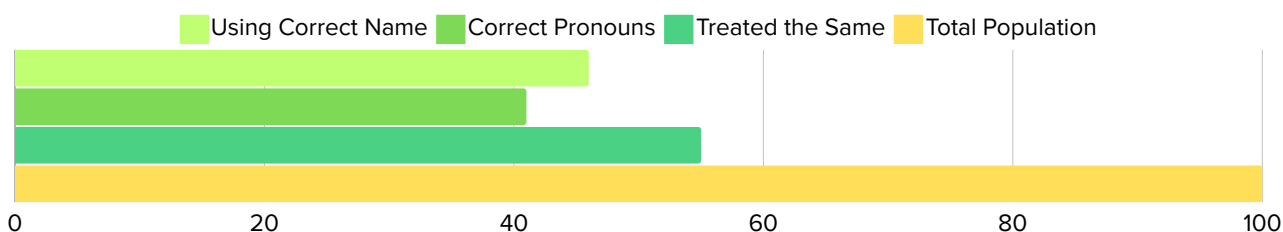
[1] Veale et al., Counting Ourselves, IV.
[2] Veale et al., Counting Ourselves, 39

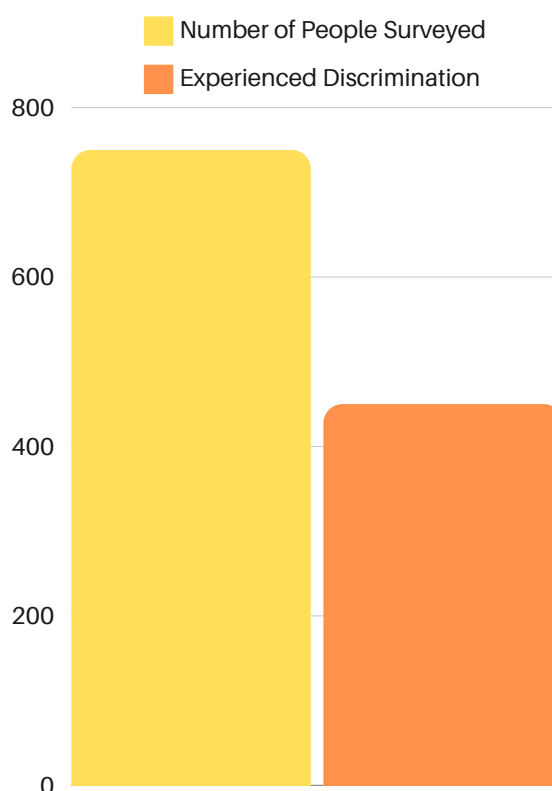# Healthcare and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

Experiences of Transgender Individuals in Healthcare

Legend: Using Correct Name · Correct Pronouns · Treated the Same · Total Population

The Manalagi project, which surveyed 750 members of Pacific Rainbow community ultimately concluded that "sixty percent of people surveyed encountered discrimination in the form of racism, homophobia, or transphobia when seeking healthcare" [3].

A limitation to this area is that most research in New Zealand focuses on the experiences of individuals with alternative gender identities, with little research on the healthcare experiences and outcomes of those with alternative sexual identities. However, international studies have generally concluded that a material degree of homophobia exists within healthcare in places like the United States, Brazil [4], Turkey [5] and more. Research conducted by "Honour Project Aotearoa" emphasised the gruelling combination of homophobia and racism faced by Takatāpui youth throughout their lives, but within healthcare especially [6].

Manalagi Project- Pacific Rainbow community study

Legend: Number of People Surveyed · Experienced Discrimination

Many of the problems experienced by members of rainbow communities within Aotearoa's healthcare system are deeply entrenched in heteronormative and cisgender norms. Challenges that can be more directly addressed include financial access to healthcare, knowledge that certain services may be provided at certain venues, and increased transparency in the provision of services. Challenges that may require long term efforts to amend may include the prevailing attitudes and outlooks of healthcare professionals and restoring the confidence of rainbow individuals in the healthcare institution.

[3] Thomsen, et al., The Malanagi Survey Community Report.
[4] Alencar Albuquerque et al., "Access to Health Services by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Persons."
[5] Mert-Karadas, et al, "Predictors of Health Professional Students' Attitudes toward LGBTI Individuals."
[6] Pihama et al., Honour Project Aotearoa.

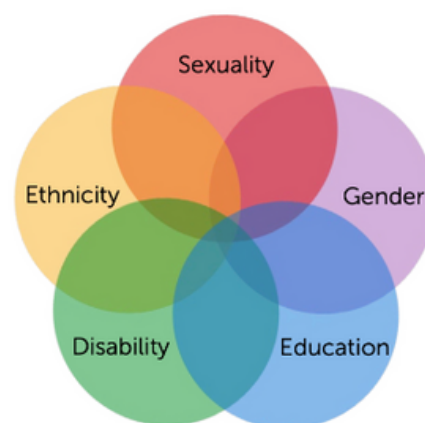# Intersectionality and Rainbow communities in New Zealand

Intersectionality is an important area to consider when addressing health and wellbeing outcomes for rainbow communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. Intersectionality is the way in which different areas of a person's identity intersect/overlap with systems of inequality [1]. These identity factors can include, but is not limited to, a person's;

- ethnicity/culture
- socioeconomic status
- rural/urban living
- gender identity
- sexual-orientation
- disabilities

All of these aspects of a person's identity impact their outcome from interacting with system structures in Aotearoa.

In this report, we are focusing on systems of health and wellbeing, which can include healthcare providers, education, justice, workplace as well as general environments. Intersectionality provides an understanding that not all lived experiences are the same and that there are complexities within the dynamic of system structures and identities. However, this does not mean that anyone's lived experience are more or less valid - intersectionality helps us understand that there are some privileges tied to identity that someone else may not experience.

Intersectionality helps to understand the complexities associated with addressing inequities within the rainbow community. It suggests the difficulties that someone may face in receiving the support they need to lead fulfilled lives with rainbow-affirming care and health. By addressing inequities through an intersectional framework, we can effectively work to improve health and well-being outcomes for rainbow communities in Aotearoa.

[2]

[1] Hill Collins, P. (2019). Intersectionality as critical social theory. Duke University Press
[2] Rainbow Mental Health, "Supporting Aotearoa's Rainbow People: A Practical Guide for Mental Health Professionals"

Intersectionality and Rainbow communities in New Zealand

Intersectionality is critical when addressing health and wellbeing outcomes because every person has a different lived experience interacting with these systems of health and wellbeing.

An example of Intersectionality through the framework of rainbow health and wellbeing is, a cisgendered gay man, who comes from a high socioeconomic status and lives in an urban area. Compared with a Takatāpui person, who lives rurally and has a lower socio-economic status.

By breaking these down, we can see that Takatāpui Māori gender diversity is much less understood and represented than gay sexual orientation. A higher socio-economic status allows for possible private healthcare and more accessibility, compared to someone from a low socio-economic background, who might not be able to afford health and well-being needs. A person who lives in an urban area has more access through more healthcare provider options and public transport, compared to someone who lives in a rural setting.

All of these elements, both social and environmental, create a diverse interaction between rainbow people and health systems. Therefore, we cannot homogenise all rainbow communities into one group assuming that all experiences with health and well-being are the same.

Workplace and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

Although progress has been made to make workplaces more inclusive, rainbow people may still face discrimination in both overt and subtle forms. There remains a need for better workplace accommodations for rainbow individuals.

In 2020, Rainbow Tick reported through a survey looking into workplace inclusion in organisations that were either Rainbow Tick certified or seeking the certification [1]. In this sense, the report may not be truly representative of employers as a whole, but nonetheless presents some interesting findings.

Firstly, the report indicated a tendency for cisgender heterosexual employees to overrate their organisations' attempts to further rainbow inclusion when compared to the ratings of their rainbow peers. Other statistics in this vein also indicate that while efforts to encourage rainbow inclusion generally have a positive effect, they are less beneficial to rainbow employees than they appear to non-rainbow employees.

Percentages of respondents who believe the following things:
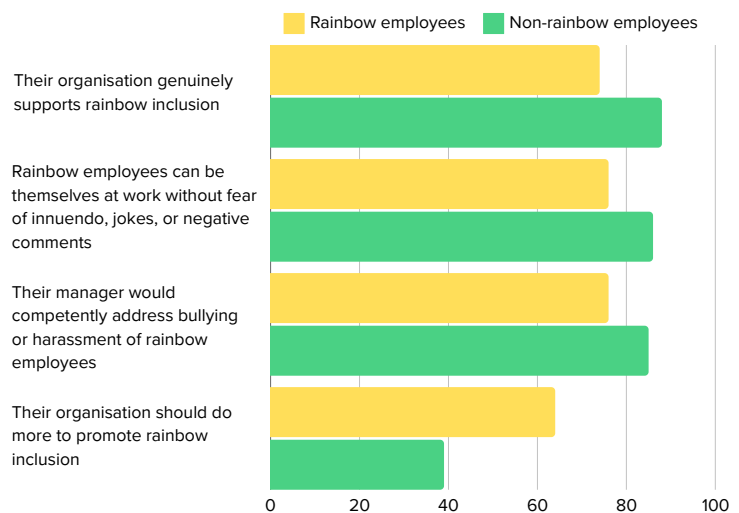
Rainbow Tick, *The New Zealand Workplace Rainbow Inclusion Survey*

Secondly, although the demographics overlap, the experiences of transgender and gender diverse employees tended to be worse than those of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual employees. Transgender and gender diverse employees were much less comfortable being "out" at work. Additionally, they were much more likely to have considered leaving their current workplace due to rainbow-related workplace discrimination and less likely to have confidence in their manager to address these behaviours. This variation in experiences between the sexuality and gender identity components of the rainbow community demonstrates the importance of not homogenising the rainbow community.

Thirdly, the survey found that both rainbow and non-rainbow employees showed low responses to negative comments, jokes or bullying in relation to rainbow individuals. When aware of these behaviours, about two fifths of both rainbow and non-rainbow employees did not respond to these behaviours, while less than half of them called out or challenged the behaviour.

[1] Rainbow Tick, *The New Zealand Workplace Rainbow Inclusion Survey*.

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Workplace and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

Considering these findings are drawn from a subset of organisations with or seeking a Rainbow Tick certification, the workplace experiences of rainbow people elsewhere are unclear. There is limited research on rainbow experiences in the wider workforce – this could be an avenue for potential future research.

Rainbow employees, especially transgender and gender diverse employees may be at a greater risk of hiring discrimination. There are only a handful of studies that have sought to understand rainbow people's hiring experiences. The 'Counting Ourselves' survey provides insight as to the experiences of transgender and gender diverse individuals as relating to employment and the workplace [2].

One statistic of note is that while almost four fifths of the surveyed population reported their coworkers as being 'mostly supportive', only one fifth reported that they felt as though they were being treated fairly in the past 12 months. This shows that, although rainbow people may be supported, this does not necessarily transfer into equal outcomes.

Unconscious bias also presents a significant barrier to an enjoyable workplace environment for rainbow individuals. Somebody with entrenched unconscious biases may consciously oppose discrimination against rainbow individuals but may unknowingly discriminate or otherwise negatively impact their experiences through microaggressions and relative ignorance. Unconscious bias may show up in recruitment, where employers may select a candidate based on perceived "culture fit" [3]. This bias results in employers and colleagues favouring those who are similar to them – a class of individuals that often excludes those from the rainbow community.

To this end: an British study conducted in 2015 found that job applications between two individuals with similar CVs and résumé's, the individual who listed a membership of a gay and lesbian union was less likely to be invited to an interview than one who listed membership of a human rights union [4].

The workplace experiences of rainbow individuals in Aotearoa have not yet been rigorously investigated academically. However, it is clear nonetheless that from mitigating unconscious biases, to better calibrating non-rainbow perceptions with reality there is much that can be done to improve rainbow experiences in the workplace.

[2] Veale et al., *Counting Courselves.*
[3] Carnahan and Moore, "Actively Addressing Unconscious Bias in Recruiting".
[4] Nick Drydakis, "Sexual orientation discrimination in the United Kingdom's labour market: A field experiment".

Disability and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

Before sharing our findings on disabled people who identify as being a part of the rainbow community, it is essential to note that the overlap between disabilities and with those within the rainbow community is not widely studied; however, this info pack will still aim to touch on this demographic even with the limited resources available. We also want to make it apparent that our recommendations aim to form a place of advocating for disability rights and not viewing disabilities as something that needs to be fixed.

Another thing to note, similarly to the wide range of identities that can fall under the rainbow umbrella, as shown on page 6, this is also the case for what is considered disability. Disabilities in this context include those that affect a person's vision, movement, thinking, remembering, learning, communication, hearing, mental health, and social relationships [1]. We also intend to include neurodivergence under the umbrella of disabilities which are considered to be a neurological condition resulting from standard variations in the human genome. [2] These can include Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia and Tourette Syndrome. [3]

When scratching the surface to understand some of the unique problems faced by disabled and   rainbow people, it was apparent that a lack of accessibility and awareness of these identities could often hinder their quality of life. Rainbow events may be entirely inaccessible for the disabled and individuals who would want to attend. An article by Ari Kerssens, a blind person within the community, brought this to attention. In one area of the article, they express how isolating it felt to attend a pride parade when the lighting was dark. They expressed struggling to be able to see what everyone else was enjoying, coupled with experiencing sensory overload from the music and laughter that surrounded them [4]. Experiences like this could also ring true for other individuals within the rainbow community. For pride parades and events, navigating areas may be limited for those who use mobility aides, leaving them unable to access the festivities other individuals engage in. It is often misconstrued that showing pride is synonymous with loudness, but what Kerssens experienced with the abundance of voices and music could also be challenging to someone with sensory sensitivities or sensory processing disorders.

In the same article, Kerssens states, "blind people are just as capable as sighted people- but the inaccessibility of the world around us makes it much harder to be present within it. The same applies to all disabilities! Disability is not inherent within a

[1] Rainbow Mental Health, "Supporting Aotearoa's Rainbow People: A Practical Guide for Mental Health Professionals"
[2] Disabled World, "What Is: Neurodiversity, , Neurotypical"
[3] University of Auckland, "Neurodivergence at work: Advice on neurodivergence for managers and staff"
[4] Ari Kerssens, "Pride & Prejudice: Are queer spaces accessible?"

Disability and Rainbow Communities in New Zealand

person. It is created when a person's experience of the world around them is limited by how that world; digital, physical, informational or cultural- has been made. It's a cycle. Access barriers lead to a lack of presence." [5] This applies to addressing inaccessibility in rainbow spaces, as well as another problem that's still common today. That is how disabled people may be infantilised or dismissed within their identities. These demographics are often overlooked in discussions of rainbow identities and assume that they're uninterested in sex and relationships or that they are heterosexual and fit within the gender binary. This often leads to a lack of sex education being taught for these individuals or an increased risk of being taken advantage of.

The risk of being taken advantage of, if this demographic felt safe, or if they had access to necessary resources to help them also came up an overwhelming amount when it comes to analysing research that surveyed disabled rainbow people. In 2022, the Universities of Auckland and Waikato released a report on their Identify Survey, which focused on Rainbow organisations considering various identity markers. The survey reported on the findings of its rainbow and disabled participants, and the results in terms of safety are as follows: In regards to feeling safe as a rainbow person at school, 21% of disabled students report feeling unsafe as compared to their non-disabled counterparts which only made up 11%. Another finding was that of the 37% of rainbow students who experienced bullying within the twelve months of the survey, 19% reported that their disability or illness was a reason for said bullying. And in regards to life at home, 84% of non-disabled rainbow students reported feeling safe at home, whereas only 64% of disabled students felt safe. [6] Some responses were taken from the participants concerning their safety, and topics such as having homophobic relatives or needing to rely on family due to a disability were contributing factors to the lack of feeling safe.

Other surveys focusing on the safety of disabled rainbow people were also found. Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence by Sandra Dickson would go on to expand on the topic of the safety of disabled people further by bringing attention to how, within sexual encounters and relationships, disabled rainbow people could be vulnerable to experiencing abuse [7]. The survey took information like sexuality, ethnicity, and disabilities and had participants share the type of abuse or unwanted sexual behaviour being received, behaviours from the perpetrator, and how it impacted the respondent. When gathering the information, I also made a note to report if the

[5] Ari Kerssens, "Pride & Prejudice: Are queer spaces accessible?"
[6] Office for Disability Issues, "Release of Identify Survey helps us to understand Rainbow young people in Aotearoa New Zealand"
[7] Sandra Dickson, "Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence"
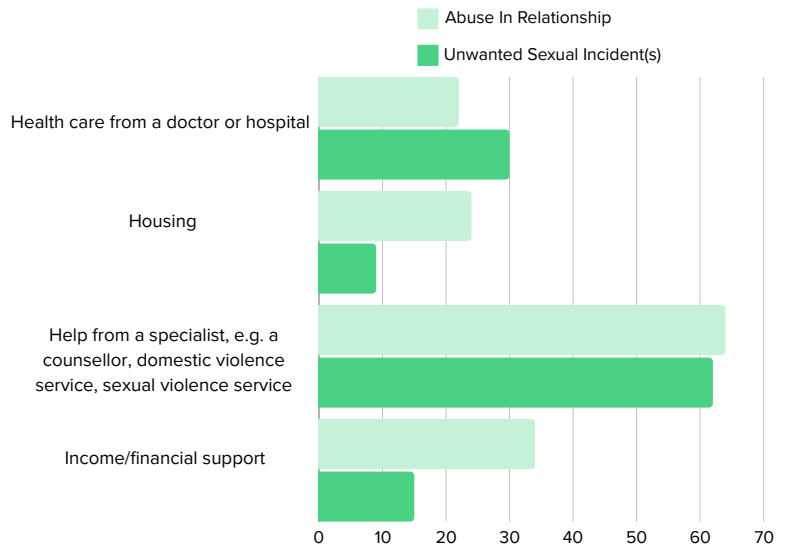
Disability and Rainbow communities in New Zealand

participants needed help and if they sought it out or not, and I am going to bring attention to these findings specifically.

The charts show and highlight why a disabled person in this context may have needed help; however, they are touched on more in the participant anecdotes. The significant deterrents were as follows. Some sexual violence agencies were dismissive about disability accommodations or weren't able to provide them, not issues validated when seeking help, professionals did not understand the complexities of rainbow identities, or individuals simply didn't see their identities reflected in the media, so it wasn't apparent that services could be applied to their unique situation. [8]

Did you need help, whether or not you sought help?

Sandra Dickson, "Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence"

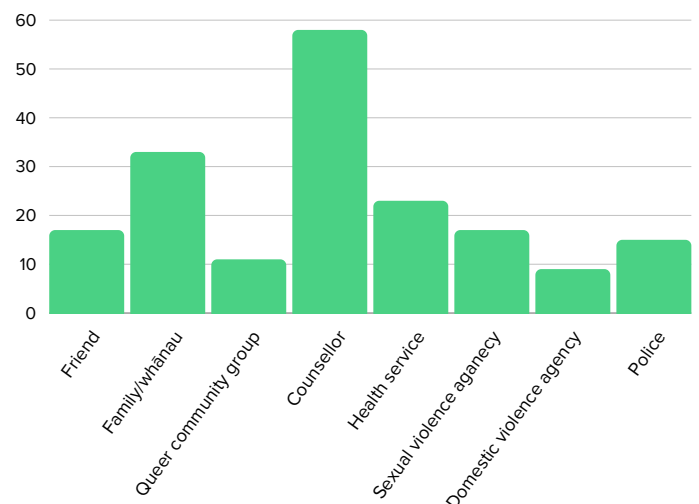### If you didn't seek help, why not?
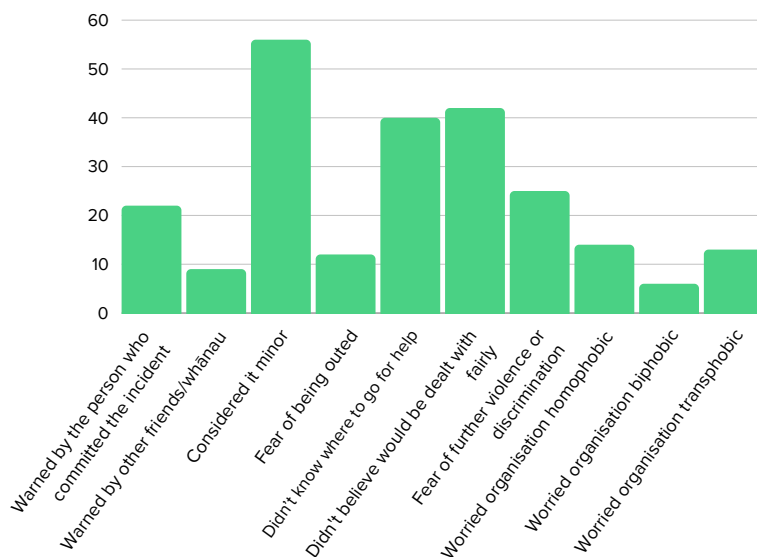
Actual Help Seeking

Sandra Dickson, "Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence"

[8] Sandra Dickson, "Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence"

Recommendations
Education

As previously discussed rainbow youth in Aotearoa face disproportionally high rates of bullying in schools compared to their non-rainbow identifying peers. These recommendations suggest strategies for creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for rainbow youth in New Zealand schools. Education is a vital tool for upskilling youth and educating to prevent stigma, prejudice, and harmful misunderstandings of rainbow communities. Making positive changes for better rainbow inclusivity in education may flow on to reduce the stigma rainbow individuals face in other areas of society.

Implement comprehensive anti-discrimination and anti-bullying policies that explicitly reference rainbow identity, and provide rainbow students with resources to seek help and support:

Implementing such policies in schools along with appropriate staff and wider faculty training is essential to address the bullying and discrimination rainbow youth face in schools. School staff need to establish support systems for their rainbow students within their schools, but also provide promote access to independent support services specifically for rainbow youth such as counselling and support services provided by InsideOUT. InsideOUT have valuable resources on this issue including Section 2.2 of *Creating rainbow-inclusive school policies and procedures* which provides checklists for schools to examine their policies and suggests policies to effectively address bullying faced by rainbow students [1].

Independent services outside of schools are important are some students may not feel comfortable reporting concerns or discussing issues within their school. The Ministry of Education and individual schools should work with rainbow focused support organisations like InsideOUT to establish safe anonymous reporting systems and clear procedures for addressing bullying and discriminatory behaviors [2]. Regular reviews and restructures of these policies would aid monitoring their effectiveness. This approach would aide in creating a safe, inclusive school environment for rainbow youth that actively addresses zero tolerance to bullying and discrimination.

[1] InsideOUT, Ending rainbow focused bullying and discrimination, 37.
[2] InsideOUT, Ending rainbow focused bullying and discrimination, 36.

Recommendations
Education

Advocating for the education of teachers and educators about supporting rainbow students and how to teach rainbow inclusive curriculum.

It would be beneficial to hold workshops and teacher education programs with a focus on how to create inclusive classroom spaces for rainbow students. This may include how to directly tackle discrimination and bullying of rainbow youth, but also education about how to teach rainbow inclusive content. For example education for teachers about the language that they use this their classrooms would be advantageous to avoid othering rainbow students or using discriminatory language as this only adds to the alienation of rainbow students from cisgender heterosexual norms.

There should be compulsory education of school staff about rainbow identities, including understanding and addressing unconscious biases they may hold, how to best to support their rainbow students, and creating inclusive classroom environments. Workshops can highlight the importance of the language teachers use and the importance of respecting students' chosen names and pronouns which reflect their gender identity. Children often reflect what they see and hear so educators need to be role models of respect and inclusivity to students learning from their example.

Advocate for the Ministry of Education to require schools to provide gender-neutral restrooms and locker rooms to accommodate transgender and nonbinary students:

The Ministry of Education's Sexuality Education Guidelines 2020 require schools to allow students to use the facilities that aligns with their gender identity. However, schools are not legally required to provide gender neutral facilities for students such as gender neutral bathrooms and changing rooms. This should be changed so that schools must provide gender neutral facilities as allowing students to use facilities aligning with their gender identity but only providing male and female faculties excludes non binary students. Providing gender neutral facilities would help prevent feelings of binary subjugation and bullying, allowing all students to use facilities that represent their identity and make them feel safer in school. The Ministry of Education states that schools should review their facilities to ensure they are providing a safe place for students [3]. Providing gender-neutral facilities would show a school's commitment to respecting all gender identities and promoting acceptance of all gender identities.

Recommendations
Education

Advocate for changes in curriculum to ensure all students are taught rainbow-inclusive curriculum with resource materials and lesson plans reflecting diverse identities and experiences.

To ensure all students feel recognised and valued it is of paramount importance that schools teach curriculum that is inclusive of diverse identities and experiences. Changes to curriculum should be made in collaboration with rainbow focused orginisations such as InsideOut who provide resources such as the "Making schools safer" resource. Section three of this discusses ways schools can design, implement, and review a rainbow inclusive curriculum [4]. Changes to curriculum can integrate further depth into topics related to sexual orientation and gender identity into class plans and related learning resources. Providing inclusive resources and fostering discussions about diversity helps move away from cisgender and heterosexual norms which lead to rainbow students feeling othered. Incorporating diversity into curriculum would help promote acceptance and understanding among students. By reflecting diverse identities in their educational materials, schools create a more inclusive environment that respects and values all students.

Rainbow inclusive curriculum should not only be incorporated in gender and sexuality health education, but rainbow inclusive resources should be used in all subjects to normalise rainbow identities and help rainbow students feel included. Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) is a core part of New Zealand school curriculum but schools are able to elect what content they teach and parents are able to pull their children out of lessons so some students may not be taught about rainbow identities through the RSE [5]. Without education about rainbow identities, rainbow identifying students will continue to face unacceptable discrimination and bullying.

[4] InsideOUT, Ending rainbow focused bullying and discrimination, 34
[5] Ministry of Education, Relationships and sexuality education.

Recommendations
Healthcare

The sheer breadth of the problem posed by the existing healthcare system is such that a single (or even several) recommendations would never be sufficient to amend it, nor would such wide sweeping change be possible in the short term. However, as with many things that seem insurmountable at first glance, efforts across a number of years may result in lasting change. Therefore, Ignite Consultants raises a combination of short and long term recommendations in hopes of someday resulting in a more accepting and tolerant healthcare system:

A More Efficient and Accessible Bureaucracy:
As previously discussed, one of the most prevalent problems faced by rainbow individuals in the healthcare system is a misunderstanding of what services are available and from where, and the closely related failure of the health sector to provide such services and make them known to rainbow individuals. This indicates a failure in the signalling mechanisms of supply and demand.

One solution to this problem would be the maintenance of better health records for rainbow individuals. As of June 2023, a third 'non-binary' gender marker was added to birth certificates, which is a great start to these ends. If the bureaucracy further made a concerted attempt to capture the quantity of demand for a given health service (be it surgery or therapy, or anything else), a public effort may be made to increase the supply of these services to better match demand. If properly advertised within rainbow communities, these efforts would go a long way to increasing rainbow involvement, improving rainbow health outcomes, and enhancing a general understanding of the specific healthcare needs of the rainbow community [1].

Continuing Professional Development and Rainbow Inclusiveness:
As with many of the problems faced by the rainbow community, education is a natural solution. The average age of registered doctors in Aotearoa in 2023 was 52 [2], which perhaps may speak to how rainbow individuals rarely feel that the health sector is well catered for them. Although age is not determinant of social attitude, it may indicate a desire to retain outdated services grounded in heteronormative and cisgender norms. While the NZMSA and NZMA are committed to improving education for the upcoming generation of doctors and healthcare professionals, there are also steps that can be taken now to better accommodate for the rainbow community [3].

[1] Veale et al., Counting Ourselves, 113.
[2] The New Zealand Medical Council, The New Zealand Medical Workforce in 2023, 54.
[3] Elizabeth, "Rainbow Community Faces Discrimination, Inequities in Healthcare."

Recommendations
Healthcare

Like most professions in New Zealand, medical professionals practicing under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act are often obliged by their respective regulators to demonstrate continuing professional development in their recertification process. The specifics of this development vary, but often involve peer review, further medical education, auditing to measure outcomes and more. Our recommendation would be to include a requirement education regarding rainbow health needs and outcomes to this programme. Such education could take the form of formal learning or community involvement. Either could result in gradual but substantive change in the health sector.

Demystifying the Unknown:
The rainbow community generally has relatively little confidence in the health sector. Between practices like conversion therapy, historically subpar outcomes, and the lived experiences of individuals and those they are close to it is not difficult to see why rainbow individuals may hesitate to engage with the health sector. Transparency would go a long way to solve this problem. Another problem historically faced by the rainbow community is the marginalisation of rainbow individuals, leading to 'minority stress', which is particularly difficult in a profession that is already demanding [4].

A community-minded solution to both these issues would be to encourage interactions between the rainbow youth and the smaller communities they form with medical practitioners. In doing so, individuals who distrust or lack confidence in the healthcare system can learn more about what goes on behind closed doors, engendering confidence in medical processes and the practitioners involved. Equally, medical professionals involved are afforded additional opportunities to connect with the rainbow community, hopefully restoring a sense of belonging and alleviating some of problems tied to the minority stress felt within their roles.

[4] Ross et al., "An Exploration of the Experiences of Physical Therapists Who Identify as LGBTQIA+.", 8.

Recommendations
Intersectionality

Rainbow Specific Online Mental Health Services:

A recommendation Ignite Consultants have for FERNZ is increasing the scope of research for online mental health services, specific to the needs of Rainbow Communities. Particularly focussing on how pre-existing services can become more engaged with rainbow communities and rangatahi (youth). An example is SPARX, an online cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) service for youth experiencing mental health needs [1]. This research was conducted to explore the engagement results with the modules, based on gender and mental health severity.

BASELINE DEPRESSION OF RESEARCH

These are the percentage results of a baseline depression assessment (PHQ-A: Patient Health Questionnaire-modified for Adolescents; SD: standard deviation) for the SPARX programme. The severity of depression is from left to right, right being high mental health needs.
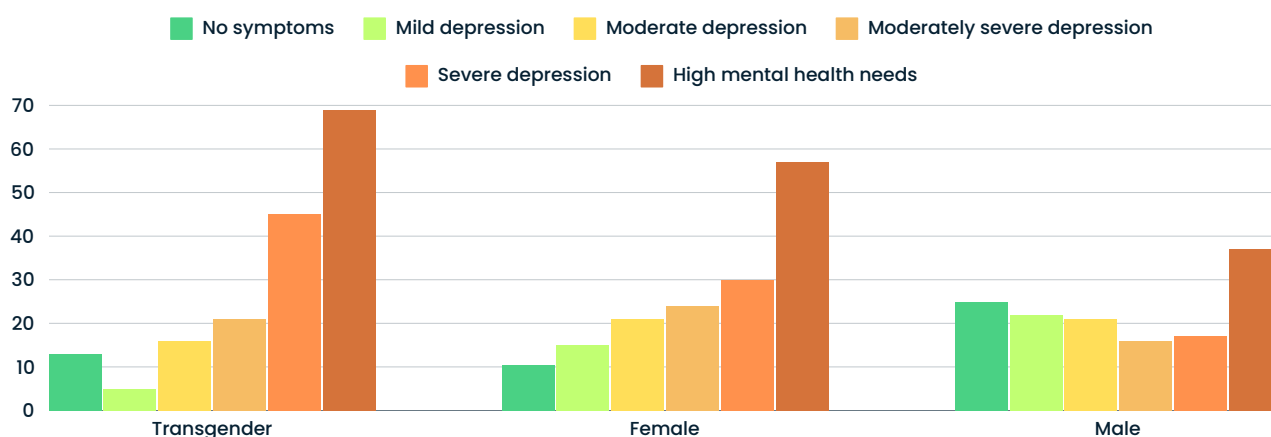
The engagement on this website was primarily cis-gendered youth, with lower engagement from transgender youth who used this service. Due to the incompleteness of the modules by transgender youth, it is clear that this service is not targeted at rainbow health, even though their mental health severity is much higher than cisgendered youth. As such, Ignite recommends supporting this research into effective online CBT services and the development of directed mental health engagement for rainbow communities. This further research can lead to more rainbow specific mental health services, providing intervention to improve the health and wellbeing of rainbow communities.

[1] Lucassen et al., 2021, 874

Recommendations
Intersectionality

**The Re-Establishment of Te Aka Whai Ora:**

Ignite consultants recommends FERNZ to advocate for the re-establishment of Te Aka Whai Ora (the Māori Health Authority). Māori specific services break down intersectional barriers to health and gender-affirming care for Takatāpui and other Māori rainbow individuals. Statistics of suicide rates from the confirmed Māori victims show that Māori suicide is much higher than non-Māori [2]. While te Aka Whai Ora was running, rates of Māori people receiving healthcare improved substantially, effectively leading to better health and well-being outcomes [3].

Though it is important to consider external factors to suicide rates for Māori Rainbow Communities, it is vital to have accessible healthcare to improve inequities existing for marginalised communities in Aotearoa.

This service has improved Māori life expectancy and interactions between Māori and healthcare providers [4]. Signifying this agency's positive impact on Māori people's health and well-being, and the importance of breaking down intersecting barriers to health. Te Aka Whai Ora was a step toward the ongoing process of decolonising health practices within Aotearoa. Therefore, Ignite recommends FERNZ to take action in advising for the re-establishment through government network and connections. Along with this we recommend FERNZ to conduct more research into how beneficial Te Aka Whai Ora was, and the alternative outcome for Māori Rainbow health without this agency.

SUICIDE RATES 2013-2019

This graph depicts the suicide rates of confirmed Māori and non Māori people, from 2013-2019.
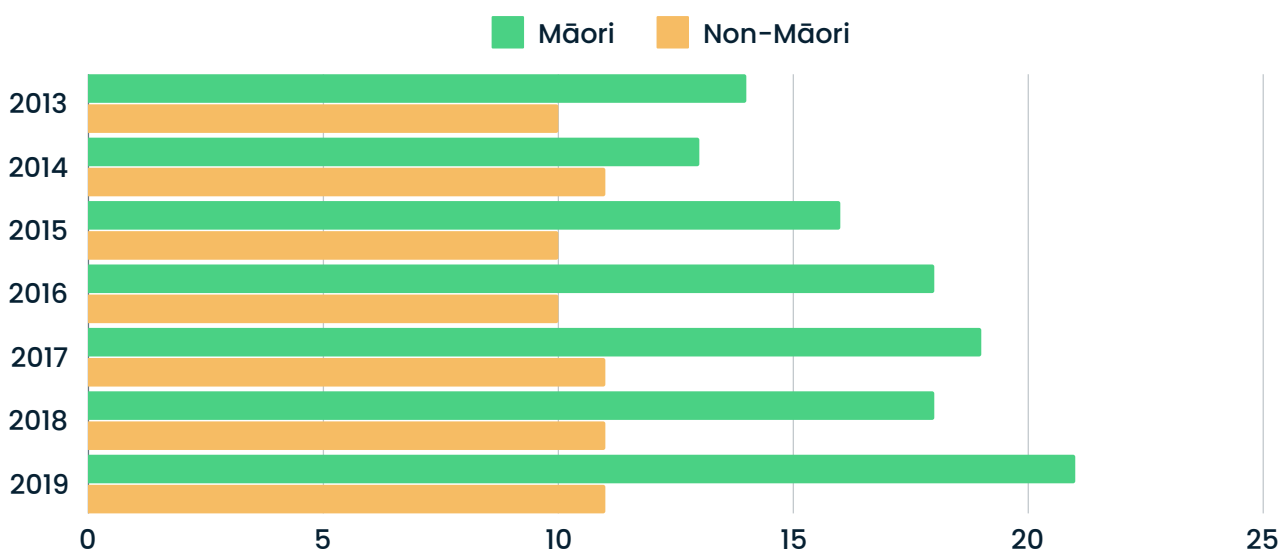
[2] Stats.govt.nz
[3] Association of Salaried Medical Specialists, 2023
[4] Association of Salaried Medical Specialists, 2023

Recommendations
Intersectionality

Supporting Online Wellbeing Services and Organisations:
Ignite consultants recommend FERNZ to work with groups to advocate and support Rainbow health and well-being access through online health services. The purpose of broadening access to rainbow health services is reducing spatial limitations for people experiencing location-based barriers, disability, and living situations. Along with limits to access, discrimination against rainbow people is prevalent among healthcare providers and can decrease engagement with health services for rainbow people.
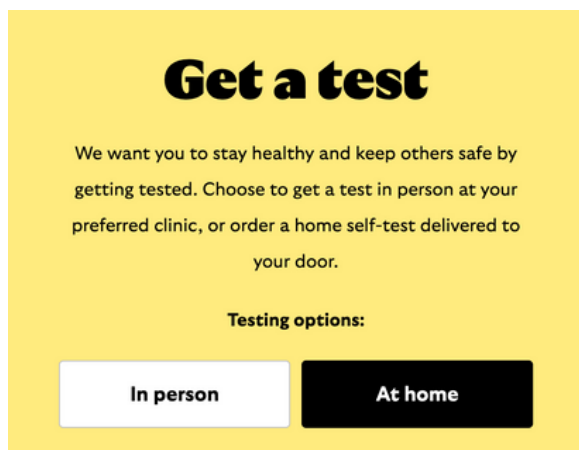
[5]

[6]

The Burnett Foundation is an example of an organisation breaking both barriers of living situations and discrimination. This is by supplying important healthcare for rainbow communities through online and delivery services. This service provides HIV STI self-testing kits, and protection (condoms, etc). This makes accessing rainbow-specific healthcare easier, judgement-free, and discretion as an option. Therefore, Ignite recommends FERNZ to work with and support local organisations like the Burnett Foundation, to improve the intersectional disparities for rural/urban living, and disability for Rainbow healthcare.

[5] Burnett Foundation, 2024. https://www.burnettfoundation.org.nz/get/get-a-test/
[6] Burnett Foundation, 2024. https://www.burnettfoundation.org.nz/get/get-free-condoms/

Recommendations

Intersectionality

Supporting Local Grassroots Rainbow Communities:
Ignite Consultants recommends FERNZ continue to support local groups making a meaningful impact on the social inclusion of rainbow communities. FERNZ could utilise the network of people and organisations they are connected with to help support these Rainbow grassroots organisations. By supporting local groups, FERNZ can break down the challenges of navigating a healthy life for Rainbow Communities within a heteronormative society.

FERNZ supporting local groups aiming to improve the social inclusion and wellbeing of Rainbow Communities can look like, donating to improve the reach, and services provided by grassroots collectives. Along with this, FERNZ could create a publication sharing different organisations aiming to support Rainbow people, as a resource for Rainbow Communities to refer to when seeking support. The pillar of social well-being encompasses how a person thrives through social aspects of their life. Therefore it is an important aspect of the wellbeing and overall health of Rainbow Communities.

Furthermore, Ignite also recommends FERNZ to create a framework for focussing on self-advocacy for Rainbow Communities. The areas encompassed by this will lead to Rainbow Communities having a resource to refer to on advocacy for their health and wellbeing. Along with this, the framework should be easy for anyone to understand, and visually stimulating. An example of a Māori model of health is Te Whare Tapa Whā that provides a visual representation of the four pillars of health [7]. By taking inspiration from this existing model, FERNZ's framework can address Rainbow health and wellbeing through advocacy.

Grassroots organisations aiming to create political change for Rainbow Communities. Ignite recommends FERNZ to create a pathway from grassroots to local policy, by amplifying Rainbow Communities political messages. This could be conducted through FERNZ's network of government agencies, by sharing Rainbow grassroots messages leading to advocacy of health and wellbeing for Rainbow Communities.

[7] Sir Mason Durie, 1984. Te whare Tapa Whā.

Recommendations
Workplace

People spend a large proportion of their lives at work. For rainbow individuals to spend so much time in an uninclusive work environment will surely wear on their mental health and wellbeing. Ignite consultants would propose the implementation of the following recommendations as steps towards a more inclusive and accepting workplace.

Education and an external report system to combat bullying and harrassment:
Rainbow employees have indicated that the most important behaviour for allies in the workplace is to call out inappropriate jokes and comments, and otherwise reporting bullying and harassment [1]. It can be 'exhausting and isolating' for rainbow individuals to personally call out such unpleasant behaviour.

Moreover, when a rainbow individual experiences a microaggression, they may be unsure as to whether they are misinterpreting the situation or if the offending individual had harmful intent. In these circumstances, they may fear that their concerns may be dismissed or that they may be seen as oversensitive [2].

Therefore, we recommend that FERNZ meet with workplaces to understand what policies and practices are in place. If the workplace's practices could be improved, FERNZ could connect these workplaces with organisations that provide workshops on calling out bullying and harassment, while encouraging these workplaces to take complaints seriously.

Additionally, since workplaces may continue to inadequately deal with these behaviours, we recommend that FERNZ set up an external reporting system for rainbow employees to use when their workplaces do not adequately address the problem.

Inclusive Language:
When meeting with workplaces we recommend that FERNZ assess whether the workplaces regularly use inclusive language. For example, employees should not assume someone's pronouns, since people's presentation may not reflect their gender identity. Similarly, gender-neutral language should be used by default [3]. Many participants in the Rainbow Tick report suggested that asking for pronouns would be beneficial. However, transgender and gender diverse employees may not be open about their identity [4]. Therefore, we recommend encouraging non-rainbow employees to share their own pronouns, rather than asking rainbow employees to share them when they might not feel comfortable doing so.

[1] Rainbow Tick, *The New Zealand Workplace Rainbow Inclusion Survey*.
[2] Bird et al., "Fostering an inclusive workplace for LGBTQIA+ people in radiology and radiation oncology".
[3] Bird et al., "Fostering an inclusive workplace for LGBTQIA+ people in radiology and radiation oncology".
[4] Bird et al., "Fostering an inclusive workplace for LGBTQIA+ people in radiology and radiation oncology".

Recommendations
Workplace

Unconscious bias training

Reducing unconscious bias is similar to breaking a bad habit, requiring more than simply changing one's conscious beliefs and values [5]. We recommend that FERNZ connect workplaces with organisations that provide workshops to educate employees about unconscious biases and train employees to reduce them. Joelle Emerson of Paradigm describes three strategies to reduce bias, based on a training that had long-term success: [6]

- Firstly, individuals should not be shamed for having unconscious biases, as this encourages defensive behaviour. Yet, employers should not normalise these biases. Research has indicated that telling individuals that biases are common can make them more biased. However, individuals often become less biased when told that most people try to overcome their biases.

- Secondly, the training should be focused on concrete workplace solutions rather than abstract psychological concepts. The lessons learned through practical exercises are more likely to be retained than if they were learned through academic lecturing.

- Thirdly, the training must involve specific concrete strategies to reduce bias, such as using structured interviews with consistent predetermined questions in recruitment.

Many methods of training to reduce unconscious bias have a significant short-term effect but decline in the long term. However, "prolonged everyday experiences" may have a more enduring effect [7]. Therefore, we recommend that FERNZ emphasise to workplaces that reducing bias is an ongoing process. Perhaps encouraging more rainbow visibility or more opportunities for collaboration in the workplace may reduce biases in the long term. We recommend that FERNZ regularly meet with these workplaces to evaluate the long-term effects of the training.

Educate workplaces about the benefits of diversity:

Embracing diversity and inclusion is not only a moral obligation, but also provides economic advantages. For example, a study found that firms with rainbow-friendly policies tend to be more profitable and have higher stock market valuations [8]. We recommend that FERNZ hold information sessions or meet with workplace leaders to share this information. This will provide a further incentive for workplaces to make efforts towards inclusion.

[5] Patricia Devine, "Stereotypes and prejudice: Their automatic and controlled components."
[6] Joelle Emerson, "Don't Give Up On Unconscious Bias Training - Make It Better."
[7] Lai et al., "Reducing implicit racial preferences: II. Intervention effectiveness over time."
[8] Fatmy et al., "Does lesbian and gay friendliness pay off? A new look at LGBT policies and firm performance."

Recommendations
Disability

The problems and injustices disabled people face has a lengthy history that's intertwined within the development of Aotearoa. The barriers widen when factoring in these barriers with the added layer of also being within the rainbow community. It is not lost on us that these systems have been at play for years, and one cannot simply make a change and expect all disparities to magically vanish. That being said, our hope is that these recommendations can be implemented in some form that will allow   and disabled rainbow people to feel more supported and included in the spaces they both seek out and occupy.

Prioritising Disabled People in Day-to-Day Life:
Incorporating more accessible options can not only increase the quality of life of those who are disabled but can also be used by everyone. Accessibility aids can range from many things, to name a few. When seeing if a rainbow person with limited mobility can access a hosted space, ensure ramps and doorways fit the accessibility guidelines. A ramp, for example, needs to be at least one metre wide with level landing areas on both ends and a gentle slope [1]. Making sure doorways and walls aren't too narrow is also a plus. Having capped events and monitoring crowd capacity can also be an excellent way to ensure a rainbow event remains accessible to a range of people. Less crowded spaces would allow visually impaired individuals to use their cane and those with mobility aids to move freely, limiting people with sensory sensitivities from becoming overwhelmed. If events must have a large number of people or music, consider supplying noise-cancelling headphones to those who may not be able to tolerate the sound and warnings about radio frequencies to keep individuals with a cochlear implant in mind. Accessibility for disabled rainbow people can also come in the form of ensuring that accessible stalls are not located in gendered bathrooms or simply kept gender-neutral. Aside from accessibility, It would also be an excellent advantage for healthcare practitioners to understand that disabled people may have more than one disability or an invisible disability. It should also be noted that disabled rainbow people must come out about their disability as well as their sexual or gender identity. Though this may be the case, it is also important not to overshadow one identity with another and assume that the reason a disabled person may be seeking help or support is in regards to their disability. [2]

Understanding that Disabled People are The Experts of Their Own Lives:
Becoming aware of self-fulfilling prophecies is a way rainbow spaces can stop themselves from being exclusionary to disabled people. On World Down Syndrome Day, a campaign called "Assume That I Can" was released by CoorDown. The video followed a repetitive structure where the main character repeated the same phrase with multiple variations. For example, "you assume that I cannot drink a Margarita, so you don't serve me a Margarita, so I don't drink a Margarita, your assumption becomes reality [3]. Other

[1] Whaikaha Ministry of Disabled People, "Modifying Your Home."
[2] Rainbow Mental Health, "Supporting Aotearoa's Rainbow People: A Practical Guide for Mental Health Professionals
[3] CoorDown, "ASSUME THAT I CAN | World down Syndrome Day 2024.

Recommendations
Disability

things replace the subject from living alone, learning complex topics in education, having sex, etc. This touches on the external limitations abled and neurotypical people can often put on these demographics. As stated in the overview section, if one assumes that and disabled people aren't interested in relationships, gender identity, or sexuality, then they're often cut off from receiving access to related resources and education. This can be combatted by challenging one's implicit bias; healthcare practitioners can go the extra mile by asking disabled people about their rainbow identities or sexual history to ensure they're receiving the care they require, or rainbow events can acknowledge that these demographics may want to attend events as well.

Inclusive Legislation and Services:
Along with doing one's part as an individual to make disabled people feel support, it is also necessary that organisations, agencies, services, and policies also do the same. If rainbow people who also identify as having a disability need help and resources from gender-affirming care, housing stability, domestic violence protection, or simply someone to talk to, it can be highly isolating when organisations being sought out either don't exist, don't acknowledge their existence, or make it hard to be found. Rainbow-disabled people deserve to know that the resources they seek out can address the unique set of issues they're facing and have employees who fully recognise them. Acknowledging this and minimising potential access issues like accessibility, information, or communication can allow these demographics to find the help they need.

It is also apparent that the addition of a disability may place limitations on whether someone's rainbow identity is being acknowledged or if they may be subject to unjust treatment from a caretaker. In these instances, it is a hopeful step that legislation will continue to advance and protect these demographics. For example, domestic violence legislation currently doesn't protect disabled people who are being abused by their caretakers [4]. Along with domestic violence limitations in regards to caretakers, it's also the case when responding to familial and sexual violence. Gender and sex are seen as binary and new established identities may not be taken as seriously. It is also the case that responders typically only expect violence to be perpetrated by someone deemed a male and there are limitations when someone that doesn't fit this binary is inflicting harm. [5] This is to say that relationships without a masculine-presenting figure may not be handled with the same care as a heteronormative one. We hope these policies and other exclusionary laws will expand to recognise the support and protection this demographic may potentially need.

[4] Sandra Dickson, "Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence"
[5] Sandra Dickson, "Responses from Disabled Sex, Sexuality, and Gender Diverse People: Building Rainbow Communities Free of Partner and Sexual Violence"

Conclusions

As a society, it is clear that we have a long way to go when it comes to the health and wellbeing of our rainbow communities. The recommendations that Ignite Consultants Wellington have put forward today for FERNZ will be the single step which begins this journey of a thousand miles.

In the workplace, we believe that much can be done for rainbow individuals to feel more included amongst their non-rainbow peers. With our inequitable healthcare system, we believe that healthcare professionals, rainbow individuals, and the allies and communities which surround them can come together to make our health sector more accessible and transparent. We also believe that a larger focus can be drawn to intersectionality and the nuances explored at the intersections of individuals' identities and cultures. It is imperative that we adjust aspects of education systems so that the more deep-seated prejudices of society can gradually change and rates of bullying can decrease. Finally, aiming to improve the challenges associated with members of rainbow communities in the disability space.

We hope this report informs your understanding of the inequities in health and wellbeing outcomes for Aotearoa's rainbow communities. Perhaps you are in a position where you can advocate to implement some of the recommendations proposed.

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