

Takatāpui & Rainbow community groups

"I most definitely want to meet rainbow people of all ages." NZ European/Pākehā gay man, 65-69 years

"I opt to help as a volunteer [community group] because I'm needed and appreciated more there than attending LGBT+ support groups. Most in those groups are way younger than me." Māori bisexual trans woman, 75-79 years

"I live in a part of the country where there are very few opportunities to socialise with other gay people, then it becomes a matter of age... if you're not in their age group, they really can't be bothered." NZ European/Pākehā gay man, 75-79 years

"I recently returned from [overseas], during COVID, where I had a moderately active social life including mixing in the queer community. Since returning I have become very isolated and apart from apps which are ineffective for older people I have no direct contact with the queer community in [city]. I feel very disassociated from them." NZ European/Pākehā gay man, 65-69 years

"I yearn to meet with people like me but don't know where to find them." NZ European/Pākehā non-binary person, 65-69 years



One in four elders (25%) do not socialise with others in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities – but most really want to!

We need to provide opportunities for intergenerational spaces

Takatāpui, Pasifika and ethnic Rainbow people (younger than elders) believe that older people are less valued and respected inside western cultural norms, including white-dominated Rainbow community spaces. Many elders experience ageism or invisibility within Rainbow communities; and many want the opportunity for more intergenerational connection with other Takatāpui and Rainbow people. Elders who answered our survey were significantly more disconnected, and felt less belonging, to Takatāpui and Rainbow communities than to other people their own age.

We need to know our whakapapa – there is not one (white) story

Many elders do not feel the history of activism and experience of Takatāpui and Rainbow people is well understood by younger people, including the specific histories of Takatāpui, Pasifika and ethnic Rainbow communities. With so many elders in our communities wanting more connection, there are enormous opportunities to correct this, by uplifting diverse elder voices, particularly outside our larger cities. These histories should include storytelling about events that impact today's community dynamics, such as the dominance of white cultural values, Takatāpui, Pasifika and ethnic Rainbow histories, and the specific experiences of people living with HIV, bisexual, trans and intersex people.

We need specific groups and activities relevant for Takatāpui and Rainbow older people

Elders cannot find community or activities aimed at them – not only from social services, but inside Takatāpui and Rainbow communities. This is likely to reflect who is involved in Takatāpui and Rainbow community groups at voluntary, paid and governance levels, and may require groups to actively seek more engagement with elders. How do you communicate with your community? If it is only online, elders say it does not work for them. What kind of language and promotion do you use? If your community group does not actively invite in Takatāpui and Rainbow elders, you are only likely to be serving the needs of younger people.

We need social change and advocacy work that doesn't end at thirty

Many Takatāpui and Rainbow community groups are actively involved in important social change and advocacy work in their communities, including workforce training and policy development. However, one size does not fit all when it comes to age (or anything else). We need these social change efforts to highlight the needs and experiences of Takatāpui and Rainbow elders, as well as young people. This is particularly relevant in terms of training in mental health, healthcare, housing and social services, and will require the guidance and meaningful inclusion of Takatāpui and Rainbow elders. Training also needs to be specific and relevant to local contexts, including iwi and rohe contexts.

"Between 1986 and 1998 I lost 44 NZ age peer friends – incl my partner of 22 years – and 38 died of HIV-AIDS related illnesses." Another ethnicity, gay man, 75-79 years

"As I get older I find younger rainbow forget all the hard work already done on behalf of the LGBTQI+ community. I tend to socialise with lots of different groups and feel ignored if at a rainbow event." NZ European/Pākehā lesbian woman, 65-69 years

"As an older lesbian, in the 21st century I feel very assured about coming out. This was not the case in the 1950s, 60s or 1970s." Pasifika lesbian woman, 70-74 years

"Reception in "rainbow" community has sometimes been worse than in straight community. Verbal abuse for being bi by lesbians and gay men within last ten years. Verbal and online abuse for not being cisgender in last five years." NZ European/Pākehā bisexual non-binary person, 60-64 years

"I find it difficult to join in with groups due to anxiety. Most of my life was religiously based and it is hard to discuss things with others as I have not had the exposure to other rainbow groups as I only came out a few years ago." Māori gay man, 65-69 years

"I recently came out to a colleague/close friend after 12 years. She hasn't spoken to me since. This only replicates why I am reluctant to be openly out. My past has taught me it's not safe to be gay :(" NZ European/Pākehā lesbian woman, 55-59 years

"I moved away from the lesbian community a long time ago then moved cities and don't know how to reconnect." Māori lesbian woman, 70-74 years



We heard from 424 Takatāpui and Rainbow elders via a confidential online survey, and we interviewed 11 elders in depth. We also held six focus groups with tangata whenua, Pasifika and ethnic Takatāpui and Rainbow people and service providers. You can read the full report, Uplifting Takatāpui and Rainbow Elder Voices: Tukua kia tū takitahi ngā whetū o te rangi and listen to the 16 interview podcasts at [Hohou Te Rongo Kahukura](#) or [Rainbow Hub Waikato](#).

Central and local government, funders, and policy makers

“Unfortunately some people still exhibit biases toward Takatāpui people. It is up to us, society and the communities we work and live in to support change to happen.” Māori lesbian Takatāpui person, 65–69 years

“Acknowledge there have always been mixed gender/sexuality. I have heard more than once that it wasn’t known about in our younger years.” NZ European/Pākehā gay man, 80+ years

“It’s tough being Māori, female, and ‘mature.’” Māori lesbian woman, 65–69 years

“Although the situation is much better than it was when I realised my sexuality (when my life was threatened), I still think people in NZ in general are very homophobic especially in smaller towns.” NZ European/Pākehā gay man, 70–74 years

“I’ve been forced out of [club] and [club] for being trans.” Māori bisexual trans person, 75–79 years

“I do not feel safe telling people what I was put thru all tho I mention it to [people] about 3 months ago in one ear and out the other I would not bring it up again.” NZ European/Pākehā, bisexual man, 65–69 years

“I am concerned about how I will be treated if I cannot look after myself. I do not trust my family at all. I do not want to rely on my friends as I don’t consider that I should be a burden on them.” NZ European/Pākehā lesbian trans woman, 65–69 years

“I lived with queer bashing as a youngster and put up with a lot of verbal abuse as a younger adult.” Pasifika gay man, 55–59 years

“I was an only child and ran away from home after parents sent me for shock treatment. Circa 19[xx].” NZ European/Pākehā lesbian woman, 80+ years

Include Takatāpui and Rainbow elders in older persons’ strategies

Existing older person’s strategies do not adequately include Takatāpui and Rainbow older people, or the historical and contemporary discrimination which they have experienced. This means specific needs will fail to be met. Inclusion in older person’s strategies must be guided by Takatāpui and Rainbow elders and needs identified in this research.

Mistreatment continues today for Takatāpui and Rainbow elders, and it’s more common for bisexual, disabled and Māori, Pasifika and ethnic elders and especially trans and non-binary elders. Half of trans and non-binary elders (49%) said they had been verbally or physically abused on the street or in a public place in the last two years.

Mistreatment and fear of mistreatment leads to Takatāpui and Rainbow elders avoiding all kinds of social situations. One in five elders (22%) avoid social support groups for older people.

Include Takatāpui and Rainbow elders in service planning for older people

The planning and funding of services for older people must move to require meaningful inclusion of Takatāpui and Rainbow elders which recognises historical and contemporary experiences of mistreatment and discrimination. At a basic level, this involves expecting services for older people to engage in training and service development. It also includes funders recognising that many Takatāpui and Rainbow elders will not share their sexuality or gender identity unless they feel safe, which means their needs are often invisible to services. Funders must help services shift to become safe places for Takatāpui and Rainbow people to share who they are.

Include Takatāpui and Rainbow elders in service planning for elder abuse

The planning and funding of elder abuse responses must be responsive to the specific needs of Takatāpui and Rainbow elders, including disconnection from families and whānau; social isolation; and fears or experiences of negative responses when disclosing sexuality or gender identity. Screening tools must address specific risk factors for Takatāpui and Rainbow elders, including neglect and institutional policies or practices which cause harm or disregard their rights in terms of culture, sexuality and gender.

Include the needs of elders in funding for Takatāpui and Rainbow communities

Older people feel invisible in Takatāpui and Rainbow community groups and activities. A need for intergenerational spaces inside Takatāpui and Rainbow communities that allow connections across age was particularly voiced by Māori, Pasifika and ethnic people. Funders need to recognise and value projects and activities that move beyond work focused only on young people. This includes funding for training for health, mental health and social services providers, who must know how to work with Takatāpui and Rainbow people across the lifespan.



3 out of 4

Takatāpui and Rainbow elders have been treated badly because of their sexuality (74%)



2 out of 3

trans and non-binary elders have been treated badly because they are trans (67%)



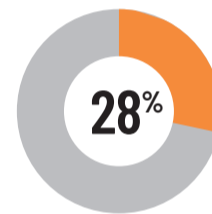
Half

of Māori, Pasifika and ethnic elders have been treated badly because of their race/ethnicity (47%)

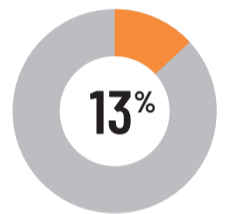


4 out of 5

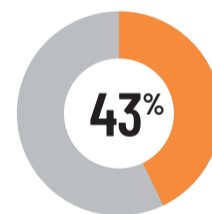
elders living with HIV have been treated badly because of their HIV status (83%)



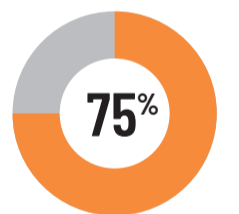
Māori, Pasifika and ethnic elders are more likely to avoid faith communities



Disabled elders are more likely to avoid trying to get home care or support services at home



Bisexual elders are more likely to avoid seeking healthcare



Trans and non-binary elders are more likely to avoid being on the street or in a public place



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Older persons, family and whānau services meeting the needs of older people

Most Takatāpui and Rainbow elders (57%) do not share their sexuality at community groups and services for older people, because they worry about how they will be treated. More than one in ten Takatāpui and Rainbow elders (11%) do not share their identity with anyone – this is even higher for Māori, Pasifika and ethnic elders (16%) and bisexual elders (30%).

"I never ever felt safe until I attended counselling at [agency], I still find it hard to identify as my true self." Māori gay man, 65-69 years

"I don't really go to community groups and services for older people yet, but I am nervous about a retirement home one day." NZ European/Pākehā straight trans man, 55-59 years

"Many of my lesbian community feel that retirement homes would not be open to lesbians and their partners." Another ethnicity, lesbian woman, 65-69 years

"Ending up in a rest home with transphobic staff who won't recognise me as being a woman." NZ European/Pākehā trans woman, 65-69 years

"I am concerned that I may need to consider a retirement village or eldercare at some stage and am worried that I will be forced back into the closet as a result. I expect that this might come about as a result of attitudes of fellow residents as much as management. It concerns me that I may become dependent on people who could be prejudiced and judge me." NZ European/Pākehā gay man, 75-79 years

"Low level disrespect in one of the homes my partner was in but disturbing all the same." NZ European/Pākehā, bisexual woman, 75-79 years

Don't make assumptions and be explicit about inclusion

Takatāpui and Rainbow older people need to know they will be able to safely share who they are in services and programmes for older people. This requires a shift in the practice of assumptions about sexuality and gender, as many elders are not out. Services need to make it clear they serve Takatāpui and Rainbow people in their websites and promotional material.

Include Takatāpui and Rainbow elders in meaningful ways

Meaningful inclusion moves beyond acknowledging Takatāpui and Rainbow older people exist, to developing relevant services and programmes; protections against discrimination inside services, from staff or other older people; training and upskilling staff and volunteer teams to provide mana enhancing responses that uplift the dignity of Takatāpui and Rainbow people; and reaching out to Takatāpui and Rainbow communities.

Develop the right relationships

Because of the specific needs and contexts of Takatāpui and Rainbow older people, connections with other services that can provide or connect elders to holistic hauora and wellbeing support is important, including Takatāpui, Pasifika and ethnic Rainbow community groups and services. Older persons services need to know how well other services in their communities treat Takatāpui and Rainbow older people. Hauora includes physical, mental, spiritual and emotional wellbeing, and promoting connection inside families, whānau and communities.

Provide mana enhancing aged-care services

Aged-care contexts, or any service offering more personal care when people are vulnerable, are particularly feared by Takatāpui and Rainbow elders. Support offered in these contexts must be tailored to the needs of Takatāpui and Rainbow elders, offering mana enhancing, dignified, respectful support. At a bare minimum, this requires staff guidance and training in Takatāpui and Rainbow communities and experiences, knowing how to refer to people respectfully, ensuring people may have ongoing connection to loved ones, including partners and chosen family and whānau, and ensuring people have the freedom to express their gender authentically. Aged-care contexts must establish practices that protect Takatāpui and Rainbow elders from discrimination from staff members, related services, and other residents or service users.

"Please think, absolutely every time, you meet an older person that you do not know their sexuality or gender history. You do not." NZ European/Pākehā lesbian woman, 70-74 years

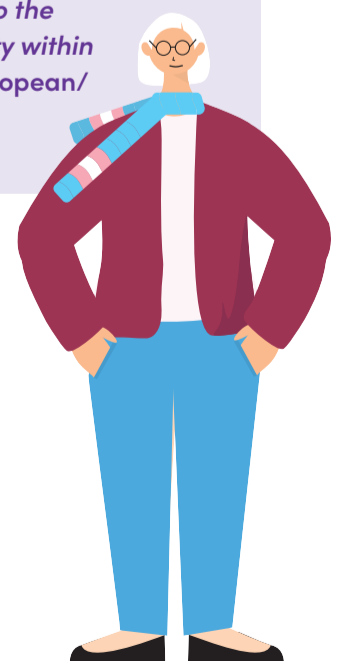
"No one who lives here in my home town knows anything about my life or should I say my personal or private life." Pasifika bisexual woman, 75-79 years

"I have never been in this situation before in my life, because I was married before...After my divorce I became very interested in my own sex but more curious than anything and then I met the woman I fell in love with." Pasifika bisexual woman, 75-79 years

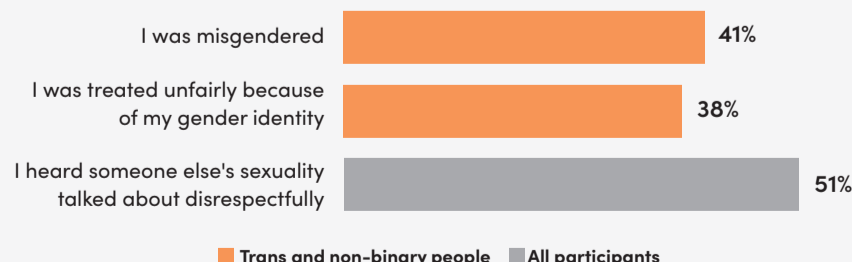
"Disrespectful comments can harm the person that hears them, even if not addressed directly." NZ European/Pākehā, bisexual non-binary person, 80+ years

"Give options for gender identity, including pronouns, ensure toilets facilities are labelled for all genders, not just female/male/women/men." Pasifika lesbian woman, 70-74 years

"Once others know about you it is amazing how many others come forward with links to the Rainbow Community within their family." NZ European/Pākehā, gay man, 65-69 years



Negative experiences in community groups and services for older people (n=215)



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