

Gender Diversity in Australia 2011



A snapshot of contemporary aspirations,
challenges, and health issues

Report of survey results and analysis

Gender Diversity in Australia

A report on the aspirations, problems, health and life style of the gender diverse produced by TransGender Radio.

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Executive Summary

Background

In November 2011 TransGender Radio (TgR) conducted a comprehensive survey of their membership and received over 400 responses. This is the largest known response to a survey of gender diversity in Australia. The results provide a useful snap-shot of aspirations, challenges, health issues, and life styles among the gender diverse.

Terminology

Gender Diversity

Gender diversity refers to the personal experience of gender identities beyond biological and binary notions of male and female, man and woman. Gender diverse people include many different groups, including those with biological intersex, transsexual, transgender, androgynous, and cross dressers.

Binary gender / Intergender

Binary gender refers to the classification of gender into two distinct and disconnected types - binary male and binary female. A variety of terms, including intergender and gender queer, are used to describe those with gender identities that fall between these binary concepts.

Those falling outside the gender binary may think of themselves as¹:

- *both man and woman (bigender, pangender)*
- *neither man nor woman (genderless, agender)*
- *moving between genders (genderfluid)*
- *third gender or other-gendered; includes those who do not place a name to their gender*
- *having an overlap of, or blurred lines between, gender identity and sexual orientation*

TransGender Radio (TgR)

TransGender Radio (<http://www.tgr.net.au>) launched on-line in 1997, has grown steadily, both in numbers (currently over 700) and in the scope of its activities.

The aim of TgR is to foster understanding, awareness and friendship within the Australian/New Zealand gender diverse community.

Online, TgR hosts resources on many aspects of transgender life 'down-under' and a variety of tools to facilitate communication and networking amongst its members.

Offline, TgR organises or promote events for the community throughout Australia. This includes Australia's premier transgender weekend TransFormal each May in Katoomba.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intergender>

Quantifiers (e.g. Few, Many, Some, Most)

Throughout this report quantifiers have been used to improve readability. In the analysis sections the actual percentage is also quoted. The meaning of the quantifiers in the context of this report is as follows:

Percentage Population	<5%	10%	20%	35%	45%	55%	65%	80%	90%	>95%
Terms	<i>Several</i>	<i>A Few</i>	<i>Some</i>		<i>Half</i>			<i>Many</i>	<i>Most</i>	<i>Virtually All</i>
	<i>Minority</i>					<i>Majority</i>				

Survey Responses

The main findings of the survey are summarized below. In this section *quantifiers* are used to describe the responses. Follow the hyperlinks to the corresponding section of the survey analysis for further detail on percentages and responses.

Demographics

- **Responses:** There were 423 validated responses to the survey.
- **Birth sex:** *Virtually all* respondents were classified as male at birth.
- **Gender Identity:** *Many* respondents associated with a gender identity somewhere between the binary identities of male or female (inter-gender).
- **Age:** *Most* of the respondents were between 25 and 64 years old.
- **Residence:** Responses were received from every state and territory in Australia, and from a small number of TgR members in New Zealand.

Families and Relationships

- **Partners:** Just over half the respondents were currently in a relationship. Of these relationships, a *majority* of partners were reported as being tolerant or supportive of gender diversity.
- **Children:** A majority of respondents had children. The ratio of male to female births was below the national average .i.e. more girls than might be expected, however no significant variation was found.

Employment

- **Full & Part-time:** The reported levels of full-time and part-time employment in the survey population were comparable with national averages.
- **Unemployment:** Those identifying with a more feminine gender reported unemployment levels above the national averages.
- **Discrimination:** Frequently presenting gender diversity in public correlated with higher levels of unemployment.

Expressing Gender Identity

- **Keeping it secret:** *Some* of the respondents had elected to tell no one else about their gender diversity. Those who identified as inter-gender were much more likely to have told no one than those who identified as binary females.
- **Telling the family:** A quarter of the respondents had not shared their gender identity with their immediate family. This reluctance is possibly explained by the responses from another

quarter of the survey population who had, in the past, shared their gender identity with partners, but reported that they are now single.

- **Telling the doctor:** A *majority* of those surveyed had not told a General Practitioner (GP) about their gender diversity. One possible reason for this is a reported lack of understanding by GPs of the spectrum of gender needs - among those who had confided in their GP, less than *half* felt the GP had a good understanding of their issues.
- **Expressing gender identity:** Fewer than a quarter of those surveyed presented in public most, or all, of the time in a way that expressed their true gender identity.

Gender Journeys

- **Awareness:** A *majority* of those surveyed were aware of being “different” from early childhood.
- **Genetic origins:** A *few* respondents were able to identify a blood relative or relatives with perceived differences of gender identity.
- **Importance of appearance:** *Most* respondents rated physical appearance an important part of their gender expression.
- **Importance of appearance:** Just under a third of the survey population had taken medication or applied creams in attempt to match their appearance and their perceived gender identity, and a *few* had undergone surgery.
- **Use of hormones:** The use of prescription medicines (hormones) was reported to be widespread, with an occurrence rising to over three quarters of those identifying as binary female. Not all hormone use was prescribed by a doctor. Amongst those with more feminine genders (half of the survey population), one in five respondents had at some time self-administered hormones.
- **Surgical options:** The incidence of sex reassignment surgery (SRS²) in the survey population was low (4%), and was reported by less than a quarter of those identifying as binary females. A further 6% of the respondents expressed wishes for the future that are indicative of a possible desire to transition fully to present as a woman³.
- **Membership of other groups:** Despite increasing numbers of gender diversity support groups, less than a quarter of TgR respondents were members of other groups.

Attitudes and Acceptance

- **Attitude to being gender diverse:** *Many* of those surveyed felt positive or neutral about being gender diverse. *Several* respondents reported overwhelmingly negative feelings about being gender diverse.
- **Attitude of society:** The *majority* of respondents were concerned about societal intolerance of gender diversity. There was also overwhelming support for organisational lobbying to increase public understanding of gender diversity.
- **Attitude to gender presentation:** The survey population was overwhelmingly of the view that judgements about gender should be based on physical appearance rather than genital status.

² Sex reassignment surgery (initialized as SRS; also known as gender reassignment surgery, genital reconstruction surgery, sex affirmation surgery, sex realignment surgery or sex-change operation) is a term for the surgical procedures by which a person's physical appearance and function of their existing sexual characteristics are altered to resemble that of the other sex. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sex_reassignment_surgery

³ Transitioning is the process of changing one's gender presentation to accord with one's internal sense of one's gender. This process often involves SRS, and their new sex is "opposite" that of birth sex. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitioning_\(transgender\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transitioning_(transgender))

- **Attitude to labels:** The survey showed no agreement on the value of having an accepted ‘umbrella’ label to describe everyone in the gender diverse community. A *majority* considered that the gender diverse community should include those seeking sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and those who identify as intersex.

Negative experiences

- **In the last 12 months:** Almost a quarter of those surveyed considered that they had had a negative experience in society attributable to their gender diversity.
- **Reported incidents:** The majority of negative experiences occurred in the workplace. Specific experiences were reported in the following categories –
 - Workplace : 25 experiences
 - Medical Services: 13 experiences
 - Dealing with businesses: 10 experiences
 - Police: 8 experiences
 - Government: 3 experiences
- **Relationship to gender identity:** Negative incidents were reported from those with more feminine genders (half of the survey population). Only *half* of the reports were from respondents who identify as being binary female.

Aspirations

- Respondents were invited to nominate 3 wishes for the future. The four most frequently expressed desires were:
 - Acceptance by others
 - Changing physical appearance
 - Opportunities to express gender
 - Partners and relationships

About the Survey

Purpose and Scope

There have been few studies of the gender diverse community in Australia. Those that have been conducted have focussed predominantly on the health and legal issues of those transitioning from their birth sex⁴ or have a small survey population⁵. TgR by virtue of having validated email communication links with members, was in a position to consider presenting a survey to its diverse membership, which is widely dispersed across Australia and New Zealand. Importantly, the membership also includes many who live in remote regions. It was appreciated that the size, geographic distribution and authenticity of respondents offered a useful opportunity to collect data that has the potential to assist policy development; in particular, policies directed towards improving the health and wellbeing of a group that is largely without a public presence or a voice within the community. As this is first TgR Survey it was designed to capture predominantly baseline information, as well as to identify core measures likely to yield useful practical insights over time.

The purpose of the TgR Survey is

- to understand better the gender diverse community in Australia and New Zealand,
- to capture insights into the gender spectrum represented within TgR's membership, and
- to identify important issues of concern.

Design

The survey design included several unique features to reduce risks of bias within the data collected:

- **Avoiding labels:**

The gender spectrum is conventionally described by a range of labels including “Cross dresser”, “Gender Queer”, “Transsexual”, and “Transgender”. Unfortunately these labels do not have universally accepted definitions, and the definitions adopted by individuals or communities may overlap or differ.

To minimise risks arising from terminology, the survey designers implemented a term-neutral technique that allowed respondents to indicate quantitatively their position within the gender spectrum.

- **A snapshot in time:**

Reflecting society as a whole; the gender diverse community members also have many dreams and aspirations. Knowing that forward-looking data may risk obscuring important data about the present (or immediate past), the survey mostly targeted contemporary aspects of the

⁴ Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health & Society, 2007, *Tranznation: A report on the health and wellbeing of transgender people in Australia and New Zealand*. La Trobe University, Melbourne
⁵ *Gender Diversity in the ACT, A Survey of Trans Experiences*, Fiona David, Lesley Hyndal, Peter Hyndal, Judith Ion, Jennie Yates. *A Gender Agenda*. May 2011

respondent's lives, particularly items that may be usefully resurveyed over time.

- **Scope restricted to gender identity:**

The survey designers elected to assume that gender identity and sexual orientation are on independent axes, i.e. at any point within the gender spectrum a person can display a range of sexual responses. The scope of the survey was to explore gender diversity rather than sexual orientation and questions were restricted accordingly.

- **Reduce the number of mandatory questions:**

It was recognised that a proportion of survey questions could raise concerns about privacy. Out of respect for this concern, only two questions were deemed to be mandatory (sex at birth and true gender identity). Even though participation in the survey beyond this baseline was voluntary, most respondents answered all questions that they were presented.

Recruitment

At the time of conducting the survey in October 2011 there were 724 members of TgR. All had validated email addresses and all had revealed, at the time of joining TgR, why they considered themselves to be gender diverse. The open source survey tool, LimeSurvey⁶ was used to create the questionnaire. Importantly, the survey tool offered total anonymity to participants. This was achieved by the survey engine generating a unique key, which was emailed to all TgR members. All data provided by individual participants was permanently de-identified by the survey tool.

The survey was open for responses between October 16th and November 6th 2011. During this time 423 responses were received.

Limitations

The TgR membership population is not fully representative of gender diversity in Australia and New Zealand. The demographic details of participants confirmed this. In particular, virtually all the responses were from people born male. The TgR population is also, perhaps, under-representative of those transitioning to present as a woman and seeking sex reassignment surgery (SRS).

Presentation

The report that follows presents the responses and analysis of each section of the survey.

Where the author offers some additional interpretation or comments they are formatted in box text:

This introduces a narrative on the survey responses

⁶ <http://www.limesurvey.org/>

Gender Identity

True gender identity (GID)

True gender identity, in the context of this survey refers to the way the respondent feels internally about their gender. It is not necessarily the same as their current physical sex, nor their legal gender. In lieu of labels, the survey offered respondents an opportunity to choose from the following gradient options –

- Male (MMMM)
- Male - with some female aspects (FMMM)
- Both, with no sense of male or female predominance (FFMM)
- Female - with some male aspects (FFFFM)
- Female (FFFF)

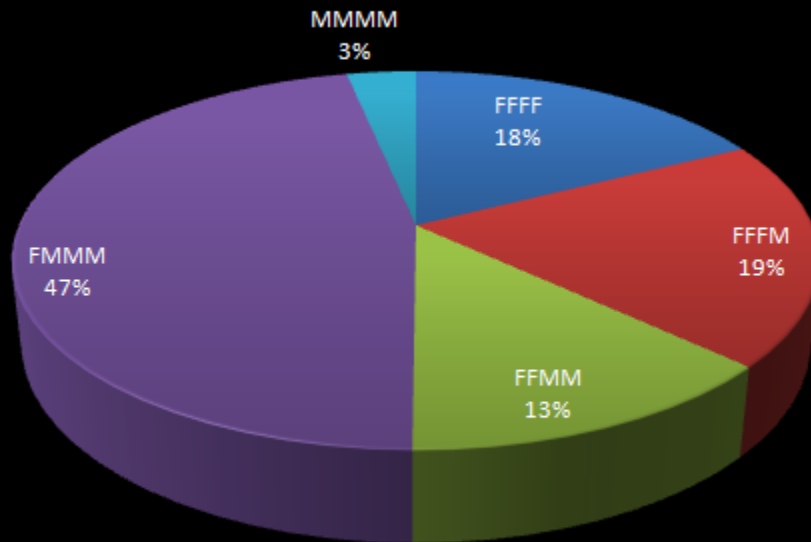
The following examples were given to the participants to help understand the options offered above and distinguish them from sex and sexual preference.

- Male (MMMM)
"I'm a man inside. I have a heterosexual preference for women"
"I'm a man inside, but to be honest I prefer men for my friends, in fact I have a steady boyfriend"
- Male - with some female aspects (FMMM)
"I'm a happily married man and feel comfortable as a man most of the time, but sometimes I feel the need to explore a softer, emotional, empathetic side to my personality and I put on a dress"
- Neither male nor female (FFMM)
"To be honest inside I feel as if I am both male and female. I can present as a man or a woman but don't feel totally comfortable with either. I have close relationships with both men and women"
- Female - with some male aspects (FFFFM)
"I'm a woman inside, but sometimes there is a bit of me that is male that I need to express - perhaps I'm just a bit of a tomboy as I like going to watch the footy"
- Female (FFFF)
"I'm a woman inside. I'm totally comfortable living as a woman. I have a steady girlfriend."

For the purpose of analysing the responses, these five categories were assigned a 4 letter code also shown above. In the following report the term **FFFF** should be interpreted always as meaning

"The population of respondents who identified their true gender identity as FFFF".

What is your true gender identity?



Source: Q8 Sample Size: 423

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Half the respondents (47%) considered themselves male with some female aspects (**FMMM**). A much smaller proportion (21%) identified with the gender binary of totally female or totally male.

What are the implications of not identifying as male or female?

Only one in five (21%) respondents described their gender as being essentially male or female. The majority identified with a state somewhere in between the binary identities of male or female. This may be a useful insight for practitioners in medical, psychological and legal arenas, which commonly use binary gender frameworks based on pathways to “become a woman” or “become a man”.

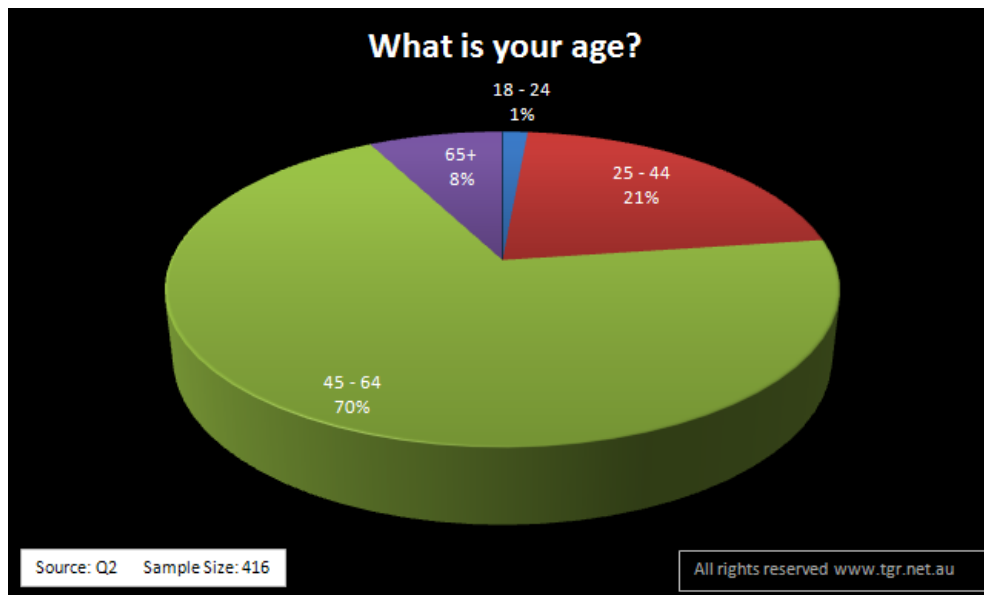
Survey Demographics

Birth Sex

Virtually all the respondents nominated that the sex recorded on their Birth Certificate was male.

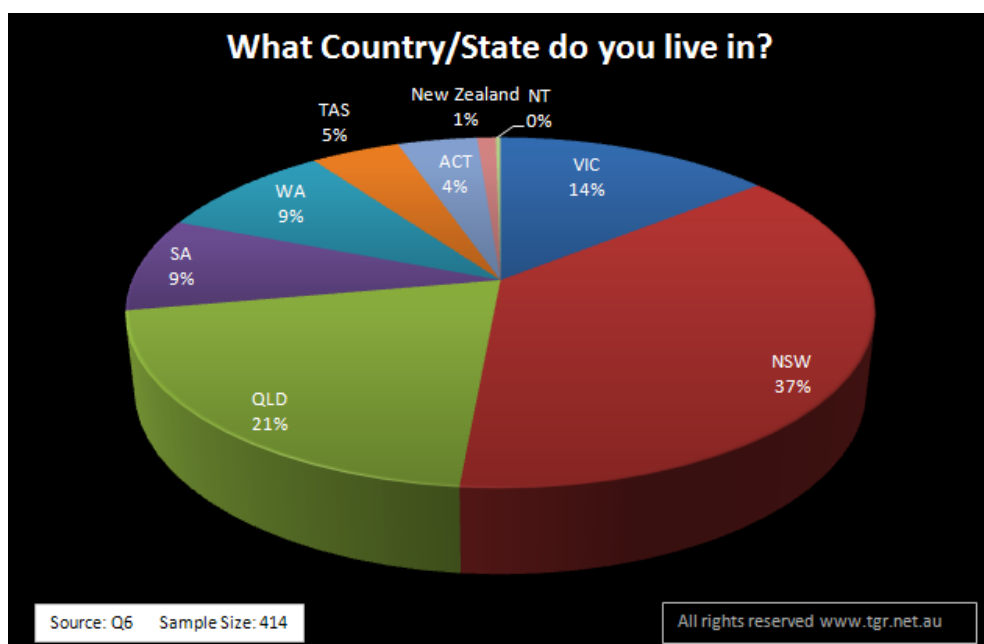
Age

The majority of the survey population (70%) was in the 45 – 64 age bracket. However 22% of the responses were from members under 44 years old.



Residence

Respondents were distributed across all Australian states and territories. There were also a small number of New Zealand respondents.

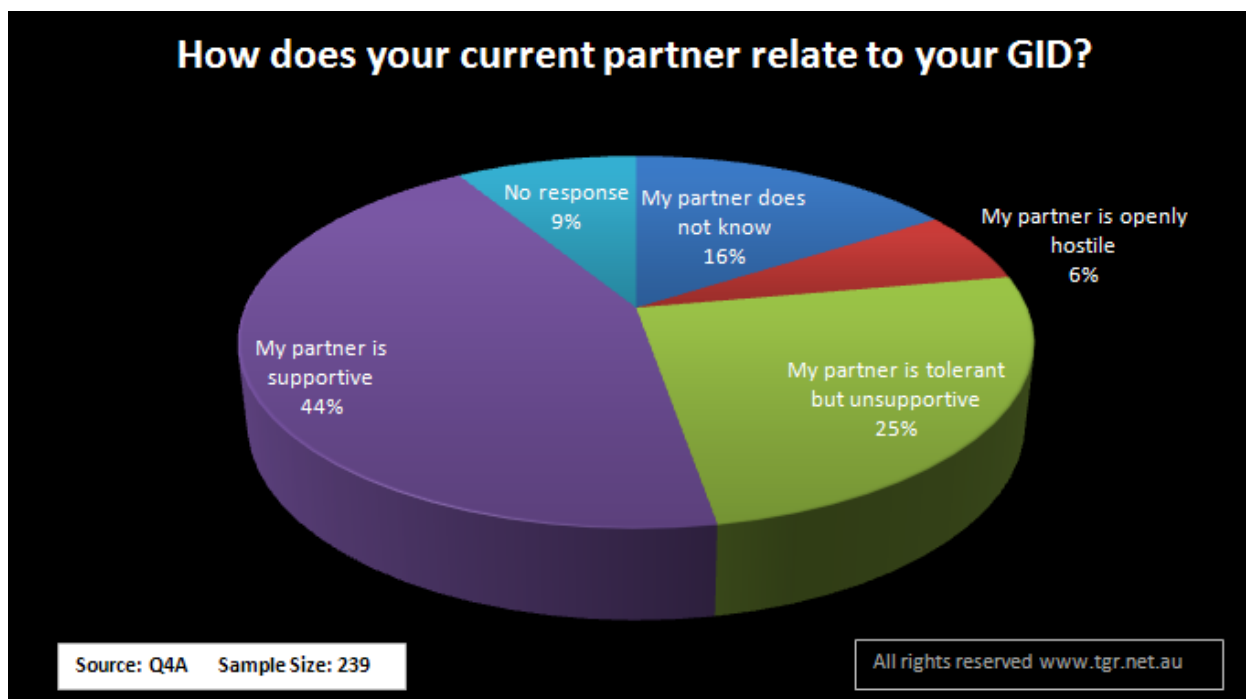


Families and Relationships

Partners

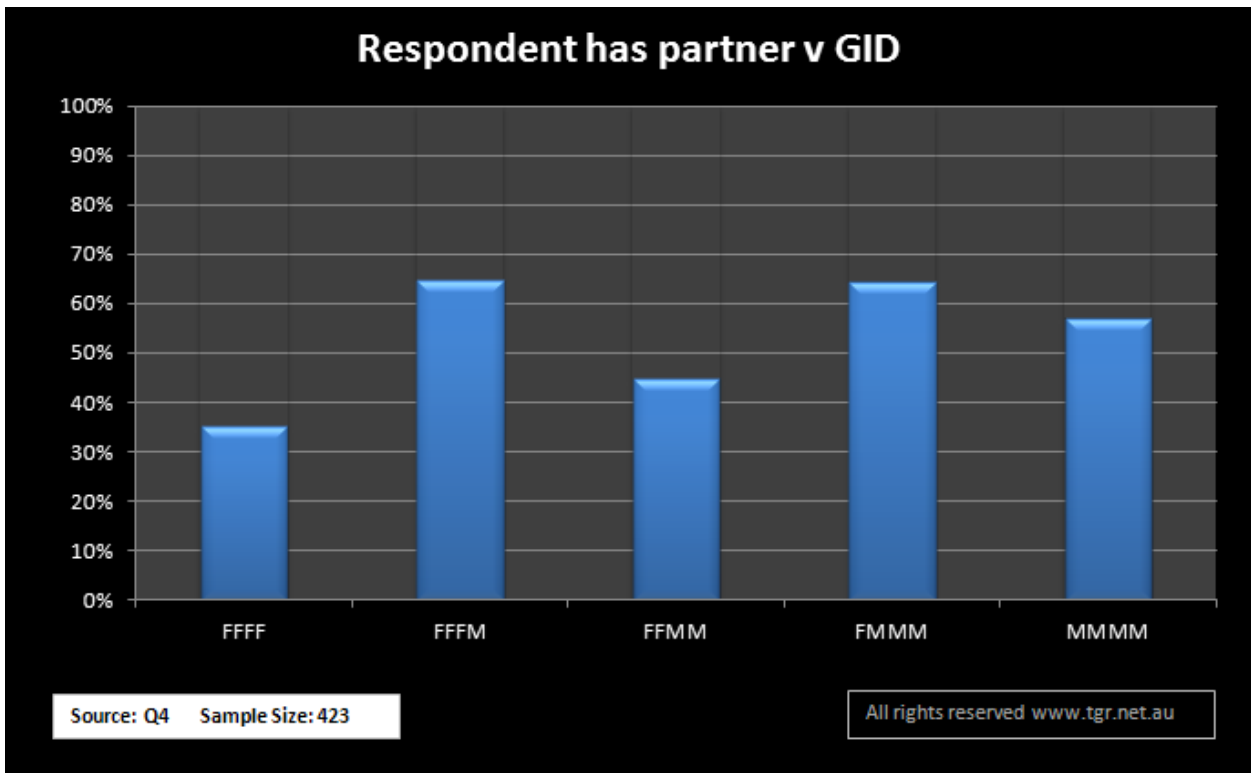
Respondents were asked to nominate if they had a legal or de-facto partner. The majority of the survey population reported that they had a partner (59%).

- A majority (69%) of those with a partner stated that their partner was tolerant or supportive of their gender diversity.
- A majority (64%) of those without a partner stated that they lived alone.



When the relationships were analysed by gender identity (GID), it appears that the **FFFF** population is the least likely to be in a legal or de-facto relationship; only a minority (35%) reported having a partner. For comparison, the 2006 Australian Census⁷ reported that 42% of males were in a legal or de-facto relationship.

⁷ Australia by Sex Male/Female (SEXP) and Social Marital Status (MDCP)



Children

A majority of respondents (65%) reported that they had one or more children. Of these children, 298 were recorded as female at birth and 297 male. The average ratio of male to female births across the entire survey population was 99.7 per 100. The sex ratio for all births registered in Australia⁸ generally fluctuates at around 105.5 male births per 100 female births. This difference is probably not statistically significant.

⁸ 3301.0 - Births, Australia, 2009

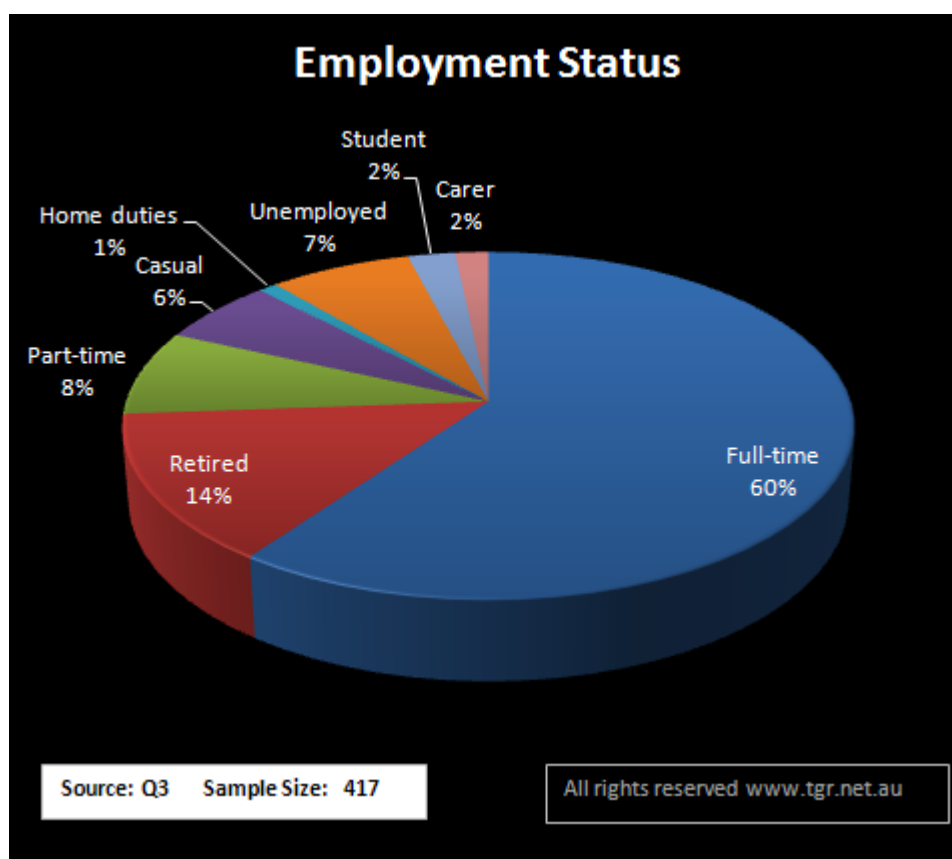
Employment

Respondents were asked to state their current employment status. The responses to this question are summarised below.

Full-Time	Part-time	Seeking employment	Participation rate
60%	13%	7%	80%

The corresponding statistics for the male workforce in Australia in the 2006 Census⁹ were:

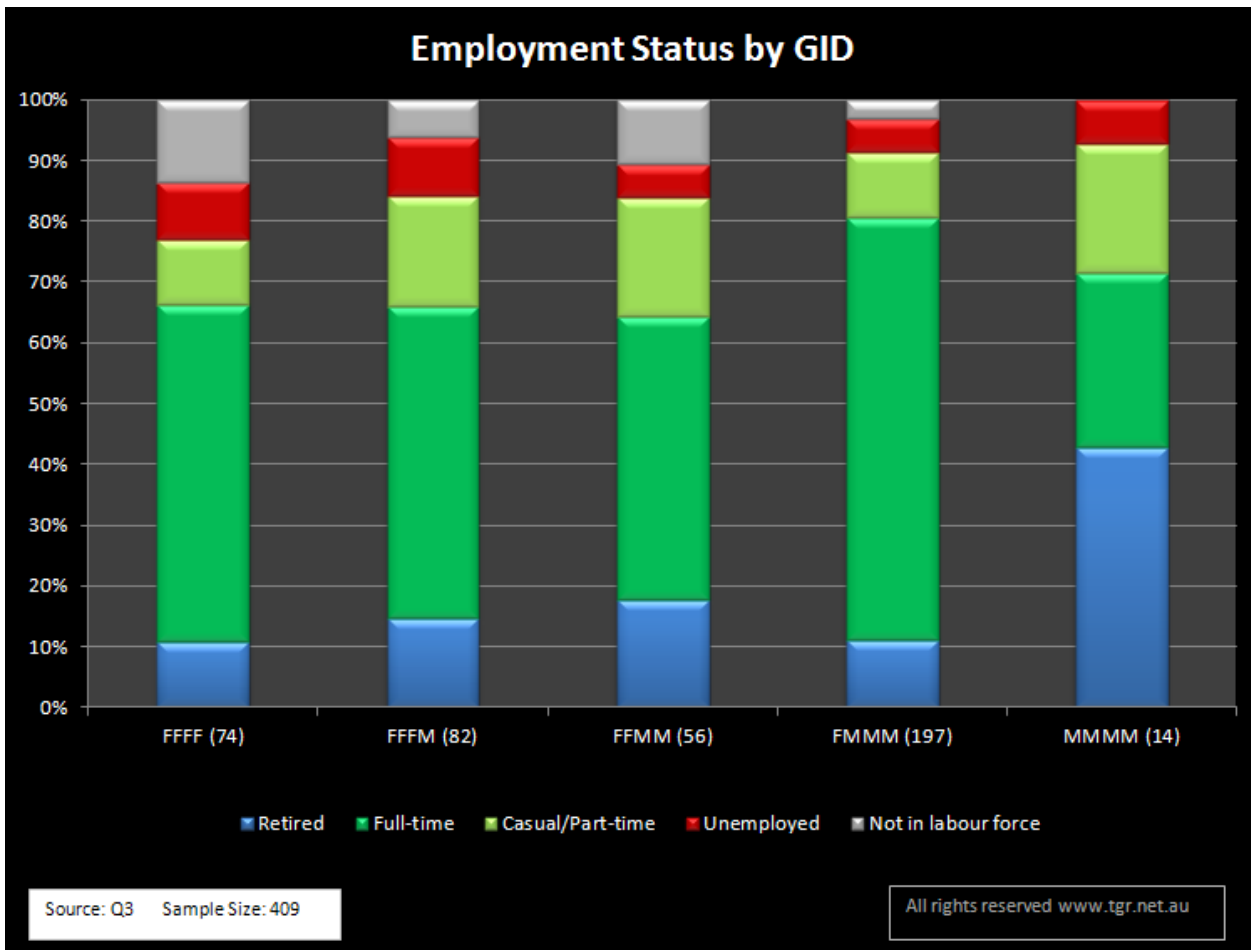
Full-Time	Part-time	Seeking employment	Participation rate
48%	11%	3.5%	62.5%



The participation rate (the percentage of the population actively employed or seeking employment) varied across the gender spectrum from 71% (**FFMM**) to 86% (**FMMM**).

- The **FMMM** population was significantly more likely to be in full-time employment (70%).
- Those identifying as **FFFF** and **FFFM** shared the highest unemployment rates (9 - 10%).
- The **MMMM** survey population was small, and had a high proportion of retirees.

⁹ Cat 2068.0 – 2006 Labour force status by sex



Do gender diverse people find it harder to get employment?

The answer to this question depends on how we look at the survey data.

If we focus on employment rates, then the gender diverse community compares favourably with national averages with 73% on average having full or part-time jobs.

However if we look at unemployment (those looking for work who can't find jobs) then the picture is different. The gender diverse community experiences significantly higher unemployment – particularly at the more feminine end of the gender spectrum where the reported unemployment rate was close to 10%.

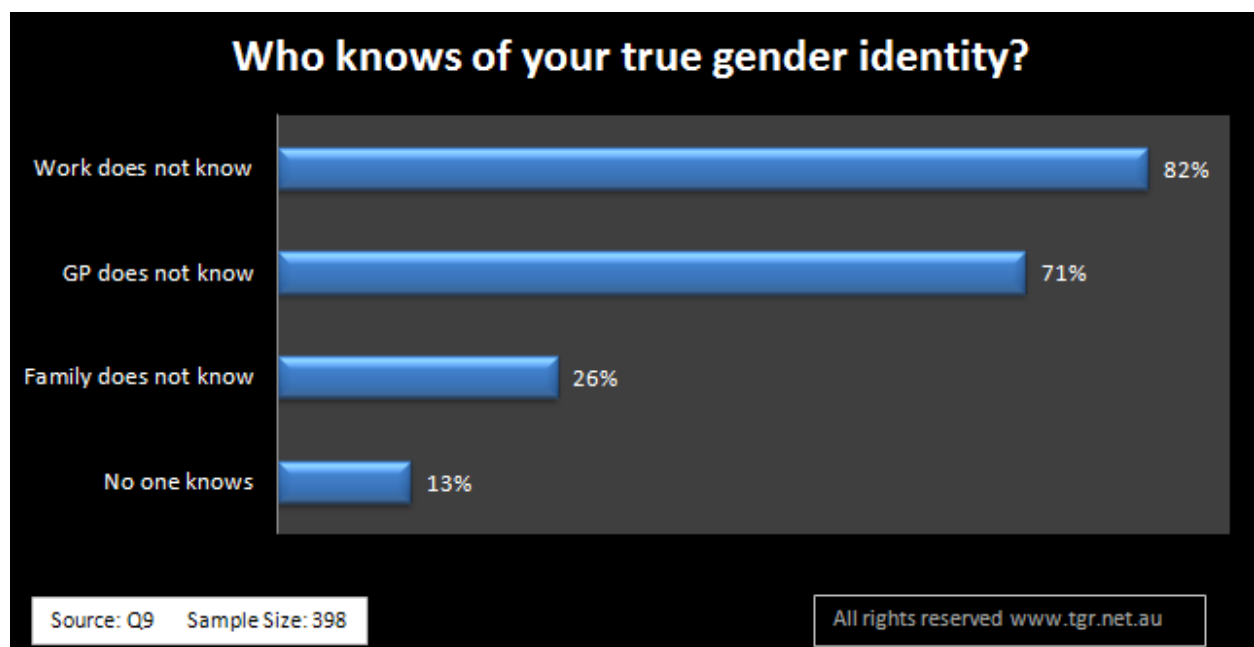
Expressing Gender Identity

This section explores how participants indicate and express their true gender identity.

Telling others

Participants were asked to nominate who knows (or has known) of their true gender identity.

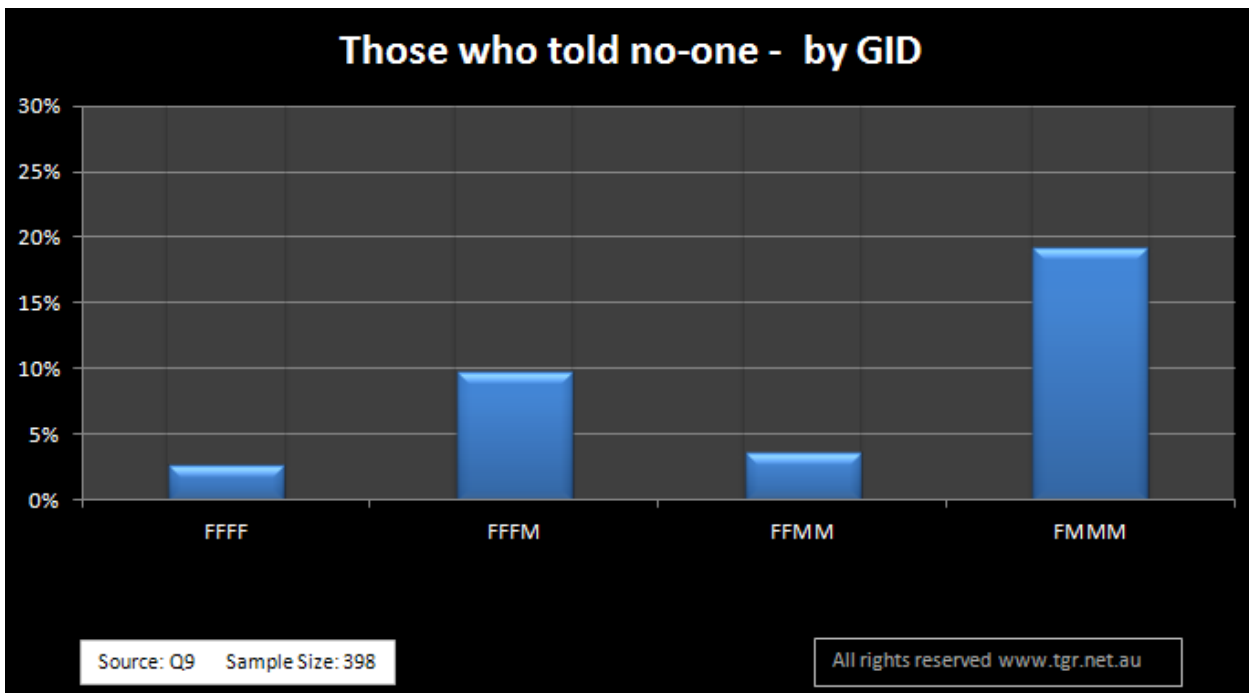
- A few respondents (13%) had not told anyone about their gender identity (neither their family nor friends).
- A quarter (26%) had told others (for instance friends) but not anyone in their family.
- Just under 3/4 of the respondents (71%) had not shared their gender identity with their General Practitioner.
- Many respondents (82%) had not revealed their gender identity to work colleagues.



Keeping it secret

A few respondents (13%) hadn't told anyone about their **GID**. Analysis suggests that those identifying as **FFFF** were less likely to keep their **GID** secret (<3%) than those identifying as **FFFM** (10%).

The **FMMM** population, which represents 47% of respondents, was characterised by a much higher proportion of closeted respondents with over 19% indicating that they had told no-one.



Why do gender diverse people elect to keep their gender identity secret?

Those who identify with a mostly male gender (**FMMM**) have the least to hide from society, but the survey indicates that one in five elects to keep their true gender identity a secret. At the opposite end of the gender spectrum, those identifying as female (**FFFF**) have a clear “story” to tell society about their feminine feelings, and most share this with others.

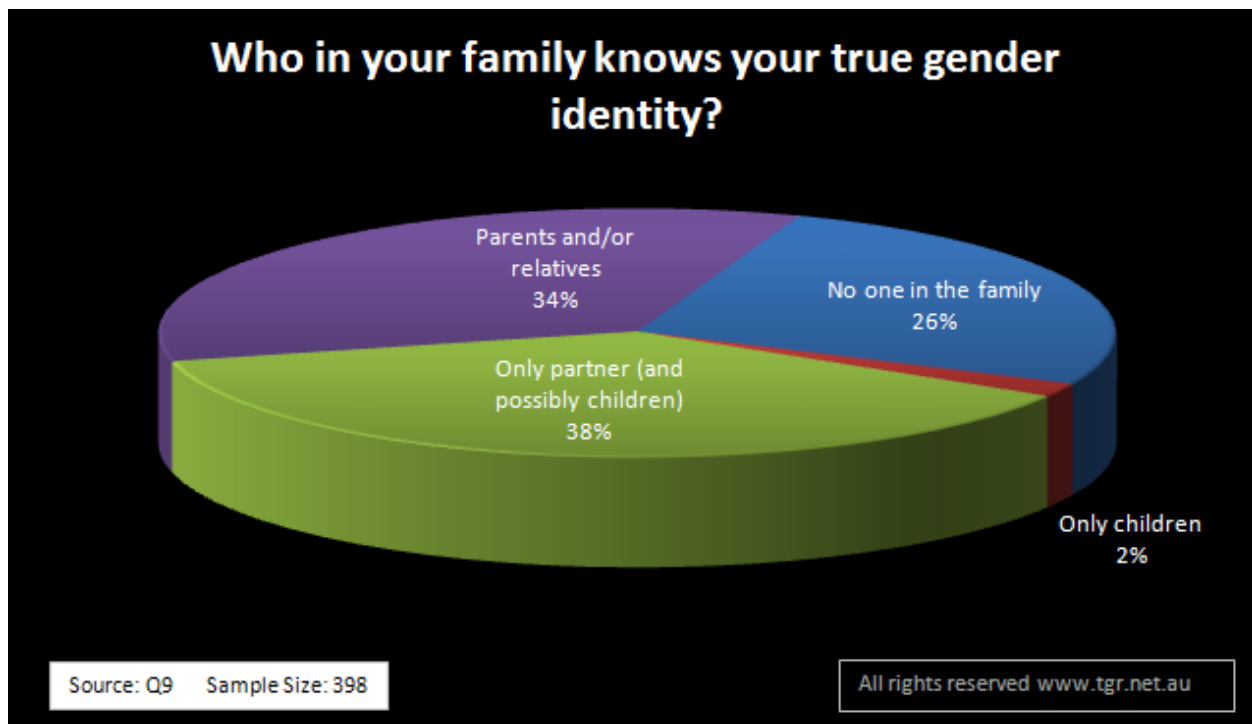
The contrast between the **FFFF** and **FFFM** populations also points to the difficulty of coming out if you don't have a simple message to tell others. Although their preferred gender identity is very different from their born sex, a tenth of the **FFFM** population reported that they were closeted.

Telling the family

The respondents were asked to nominate which family members they had told.

The responses show that:

- A quarter (26%) had not told anyone in their family
- Two thirds (66%) had not told relatives outside their immediate family (e.g. Parents and Siblings).



- A quarter (26%) of the survey population had told a partner of their gender identity but no longer reported having a partner. Though it cannot be concluded that the reason they no longer have a partner is attributable to sharing their gender identity, it seems likely that this may be a cause.
- As reported earlier, at least 16% of the survey population had a current partner who was unaware of their gender diversity.

Why are gender diverse people reluctant to tell their partner when partners are in general supportive?

Responses to an earlier question indicated that only 6% of partners were openly hostile to gender diversity, but at least 16% of the survey population had chosen not to tell their partner. An insight into the reason for this may be offered by the significant number of responses from people who had shared and were now without partners. It is possible that the reason why partners appear to be so supportive is that many who were hostile have terminated the relationship.

Telling the doctor

A large proportion of those surveyed (71%) had not told their general practitioner (GP) about their gender diversity. The responses indicate that the **FFFF** population is the most likely to have shared their identity with their doctor; 70% of the responses in this category indicated that their GP was aware. In contrast only a small proportion (5%) of the **FMMM** population had shared their gender identity in this way.

The engagement of GPs with the respondents is an issue that was explored in a supplementary question. Respondents were asked to nominate how well they felt their GP understood their gender needs. The responses from those who had told their GP shows:

- The majority (66%) of those identifying as **FFFF** had found their doctor had *some* or a *good understanding* of their gender needs.
- Engagement with doctors amongst the **FMMM** population was low. However, amongst those who had told their GP just 20% considered their doctor had *some understanding*. And no one rated their doctor's understanding as *good*.
- The understanding by doctors of the gender needs of the **FFFF**, **FFFM** and **FFMM** populations was reported as being similar; with, in all cases, less than 40% having a *good understanding*.

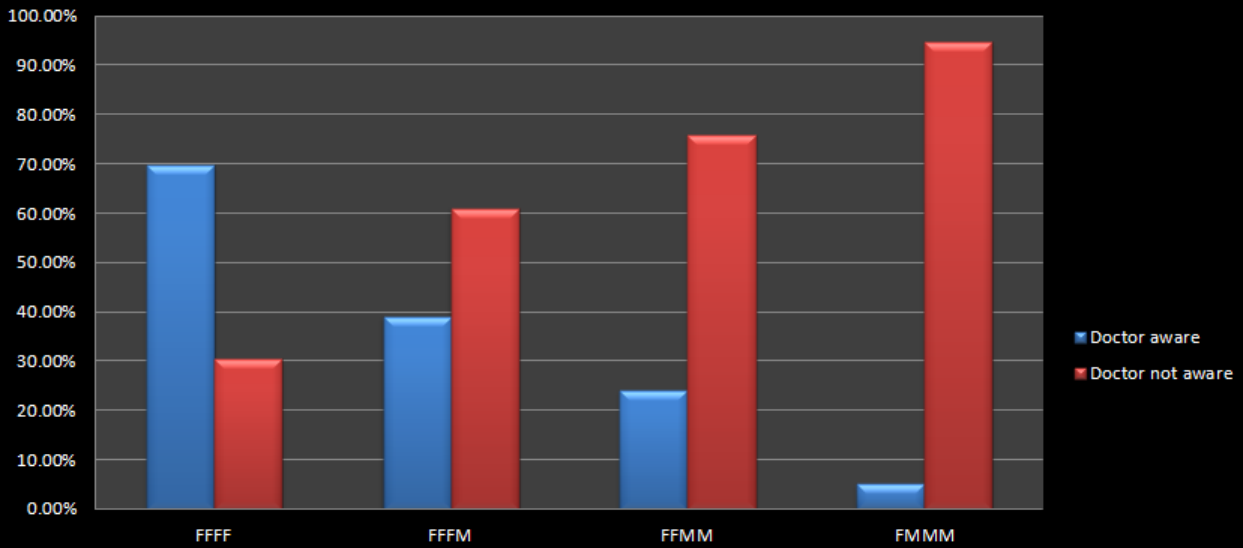
Why are the Gender Diverse reluctant to tell their GP?

Those whose gender journey involves sexual reassignment surgery following established medical pathways are most likely to tell their doctor. It is not surprising therefore to find that those who identify as female (**FFFF**) are most likely to have confided in their GP. As we move along the gender spectrum towards male, the proportion of respondents confiding in their GP drops rapidly. A significant proportion of the gender diverse population have not told their GP; and as a result, they are potentially not receiving the best medical and psychological care.

It is possible that many gender diverse people avoid telling their doctor because of a fear the GP will not understand. This is suggested by the low levels of understanding reported in the survey – with less than 40% of GPs being rated as having a good understanding of the issues involved.

On the other hand, with so few participants confiding in their doctor, there is little opportunity for GPs to gain first-hand experience in the domain.

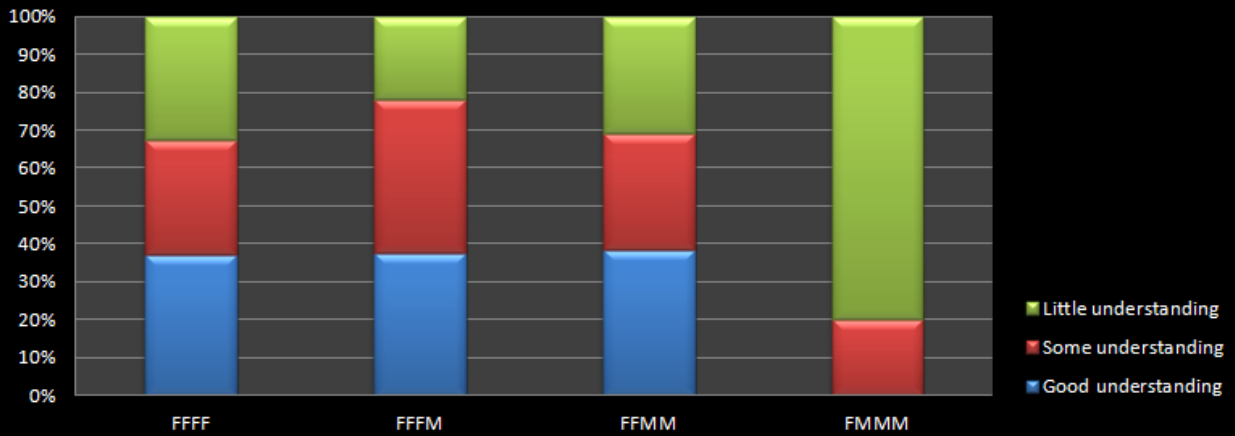
Awareness of GP v GID



Source: Q9 Sample Size: 393

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Understanding of GP v Respondent GID



Source: Q9A Sample Size: 101

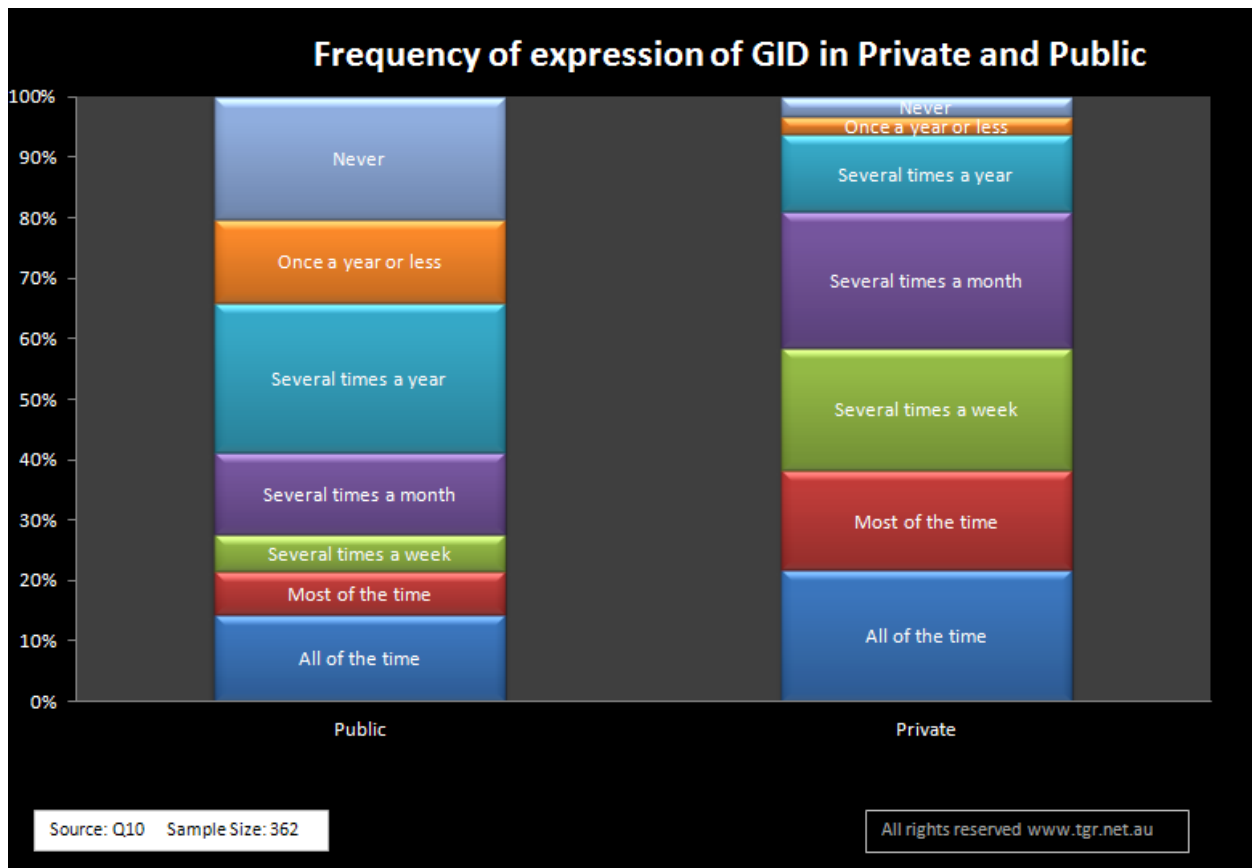
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Expression of gender identity

The survey participants were asked how frequently they expressed their gender diversity, either privately or in public. Awareness of the spectrum of gender identities prompted questions to be designed so that respondents could select from a gradient of gender expression options. Participants were asked how often their public and private expression was true to their stated gender identity.

Respondents, as expected, indicated a higher frequency of private expression.

- Over 38% reported that they express their preferred gender identity in private most or all of the time
- Fewer respondents (22%) reported that they express their preferred gender identity in public most or all of the time

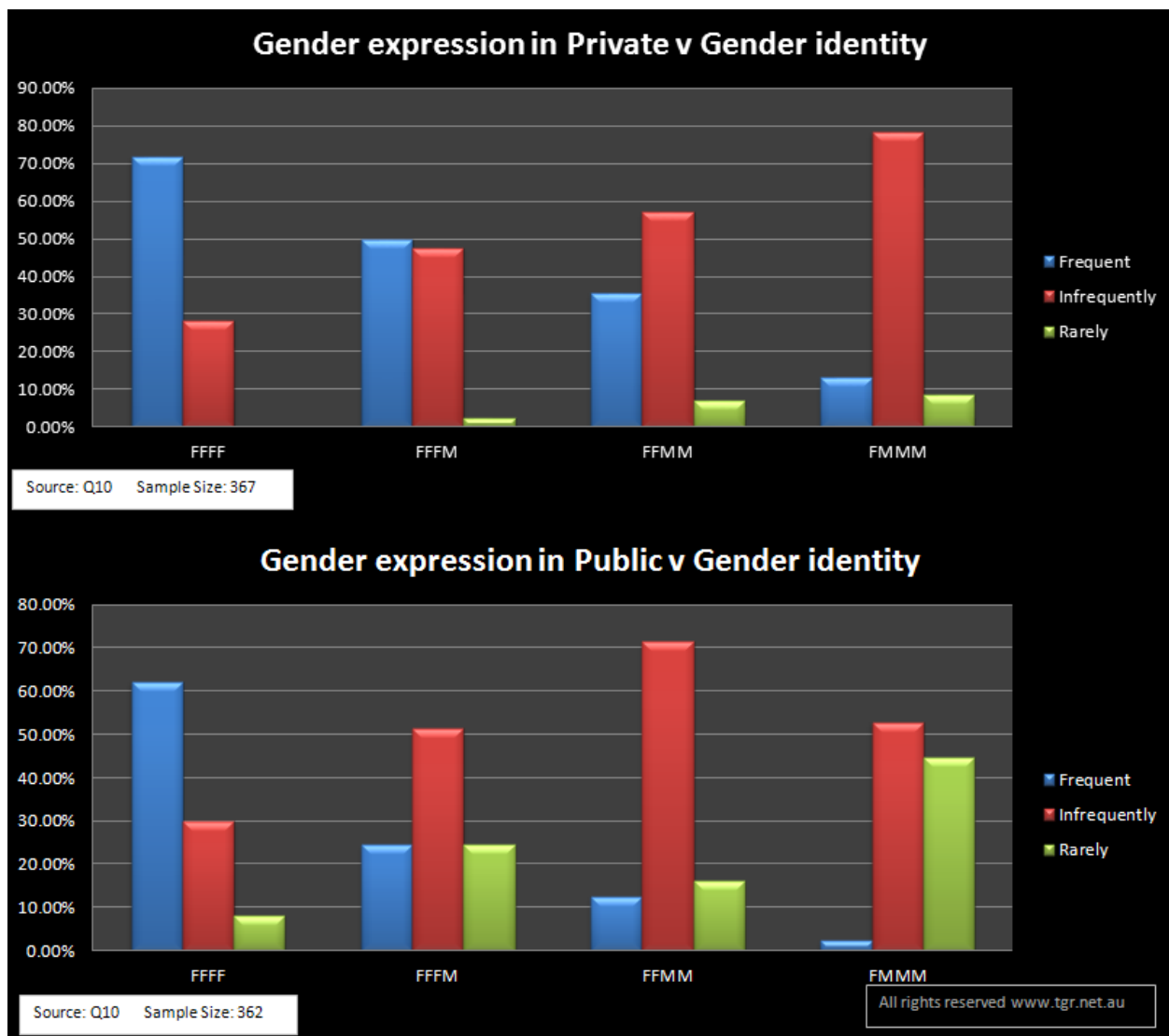


Respondents who indicated they expressed their preferred gender identity in public most of the time were asked if there were any specific occasions when they hid their true gender identity. Answers given included:

- “I work as a male”
- “Best described as androgynous at work, albeit my clothes are almost totally female. “
- “Mum lives interstate but when I visit I tone it down for her. “
- “Just at work sometime if i go out and don't have time to get ready“
- “I don't present my feminine persona at work or at pubs/clubs etc “
- “When I am knowingly going to new crowd I sometimes dress androgynously“
- “Visiting parent and brother“
- “When requested by my partner, when visiting my mother“
- “I'm not officially out at work. “
- “Visiting one set of relatives. “
- “The day before electrolysis. “

To further understand patterns of gender expression across various populations the responses were mapped as follows:

All of the time & Most of the time => Frequently
 Never & Once a year or less => Rarely
 All other responses => Infrequently



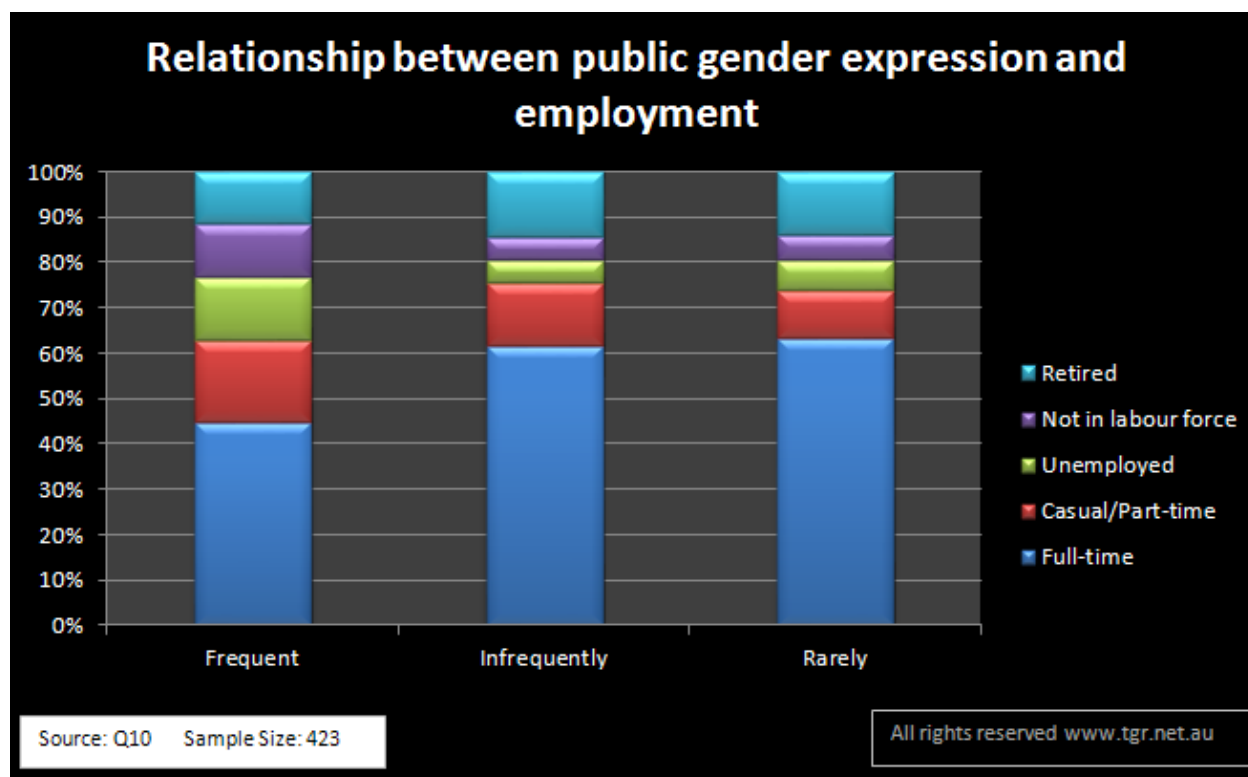
Using this simplified mapping the responses show a consistent trend from **FM MM** (characterized by infrequent expression in private) through to **FFFF** (characterized by frequent expression in public). Some other noteworthy aspects of the responses are:

- Although the **FFFF** population is most likely to express their preferred gender frequently in public, a significant proportion (38%) indicated that they did so only infrequently or rarely. Even more surprisingly 28% of this gender population only expressed their preferred gender infrequently in private.
- The **FFFM** and **FFMM** populations show a strong bias towards infrequent expression in public. This is particularly marked in the **FFMM** population where over 70% of the respondents indicated they infrequently expressed their preferred gender.
- A majority of the **FM MM** population (78%) indicated that they infrequently express their preferred gender in private.

Is Gender Diversity something to hide?

Although those identifying with a binary female gender were more likely to express their preferred gender frequently in public, there were many (38%) in this population who were unable to achieve this. Across the gender spectrum, the responses show a significant proportion of all those surveyed are unable to express their preferred gender in public. Many are similarly constrained in private.

The unemployment rate for those who express their GID frequently in public (All or most of the time) was over 14% compared to 5% for those who present less frequently. This same group had a lower overall full-time/ part-time employment rate (63%).



Are gender diverse people discriminated against in the work place?

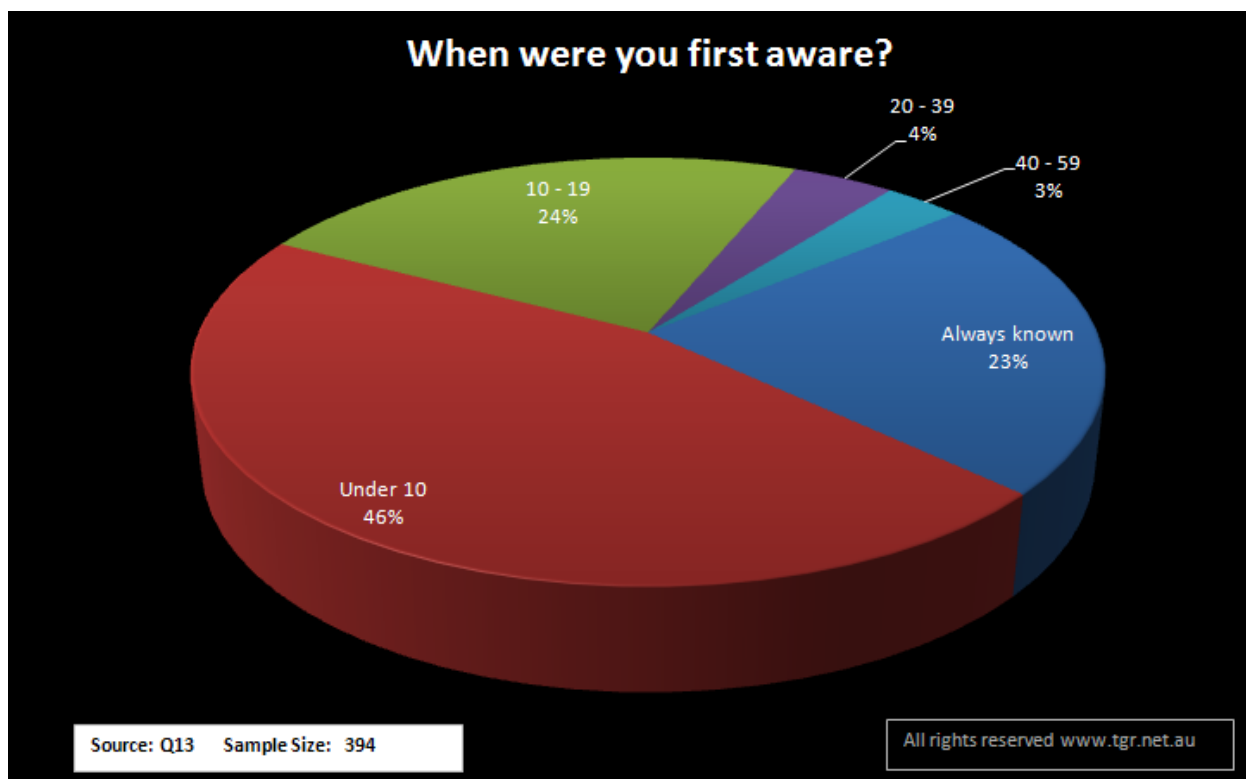
The survey reveals a strong negative association between frequent public gender expression and the rate of unemployment.

Gender Journeys

This section of the survey explores the gender journeys described by respondents.

Becoming aware

Survey participants were asked when they first became aware that they were ‘different’ from others in a way that they now attribute to their gender diversity. The majority of the survey population (69%) has been aware of their differences from early childhood. A small proportion, however, (7%) became aware of their diversity in adult life.



Is Gender Diversity a choice?

The survey responses confirm in this population that gender diversity is not an adopted elective lifestyle.

Gender diversity in the family

The survey explored if gender diversity “runs in the family”. Participants were asked if they had any blood relatives who were either:

- a) born male and present with feminine attributes, or
- b) born female and present with male attributes

A few (8%) respondents identified at least one blood relative that they had perceived to be “different” in this way.

Of the 25 respondents who were aware of likely gender identity issues amongst blood relatives, 4 have relatives who have had gender reassignment, 3 of whom are first degree relatives (parent or sibling). One respondent reported having a mother who has completed gender reassignment surgery, and also a daughter with some male attributes. Two respondents have siblings who have completed gender reassignment.

A total of 8 were aware of gender identity issues among siblings, one of whom was also aware of similar issues in a nephew. Two other respondents were aware of at least two other close relatives with gender identity issues.

Four of the 25 with a known family history were aware that one of their own children also had issues with gender identity. Five were aware of gender identity issues among uncles (4) and a nephew, while a further 7 were aware of cousins with attributes strongly suggestive of gender diversity. The most distant known relative known to have a gender identity issue was a cousin, once removed, who had completed gender reassignment surgery.

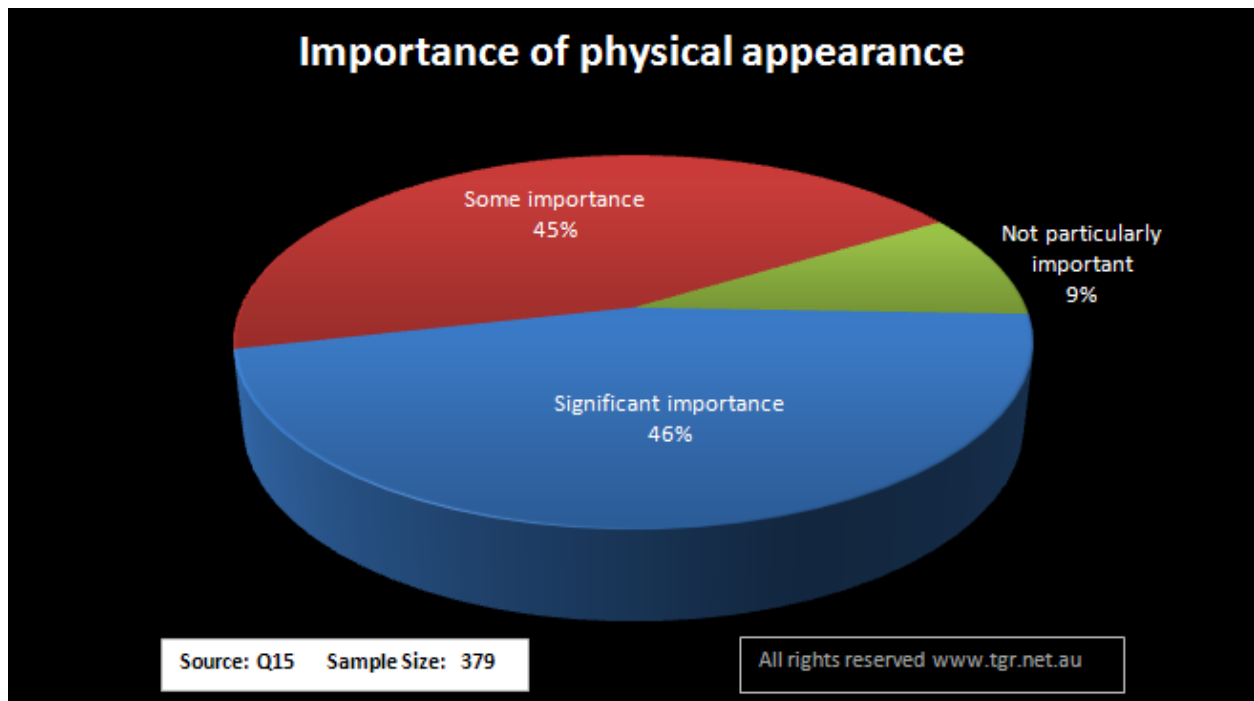
Does Gender Diversity ‘run in the family’?

Among the 25 who reported that they were aware of a family history:

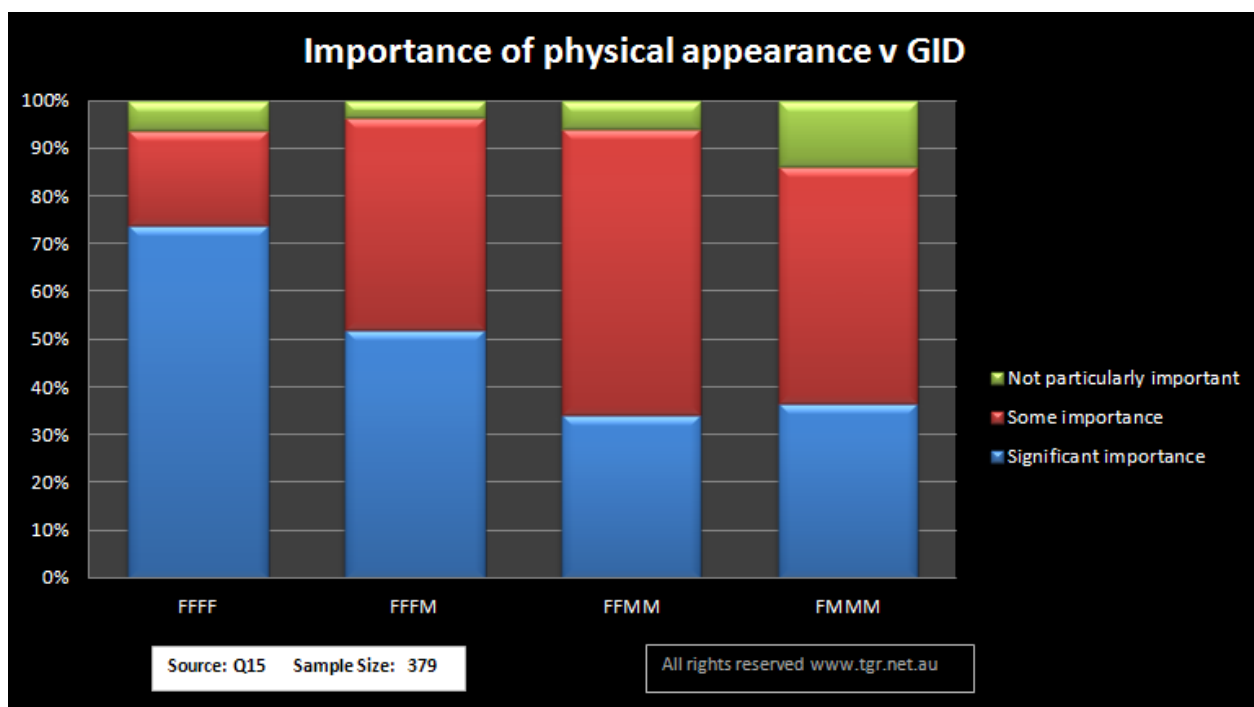
- 12 share 50% of their genes with the other person with a gender identity issue as a result of common descent (i.e. parent/ child; or siblings);
- 5 have 25% of their genes in common (i.e. uncle; or nephew);
- 7 shared 12.5% of their genes (first cousins);
- 1 shared 6.25% of genes (first cousin, once removed).

Importance of appearance

The survey asked respondents to rate how their physical appearance affects their sense of gender expression. Of those who responded to this question, only 9% felt that their appearance was not particularly important.



Physical appearance is considered important across all the gender identity categories. Respondents in the **FFFF** population were however more likely (74%) to consider their appearance to be of significant importance.



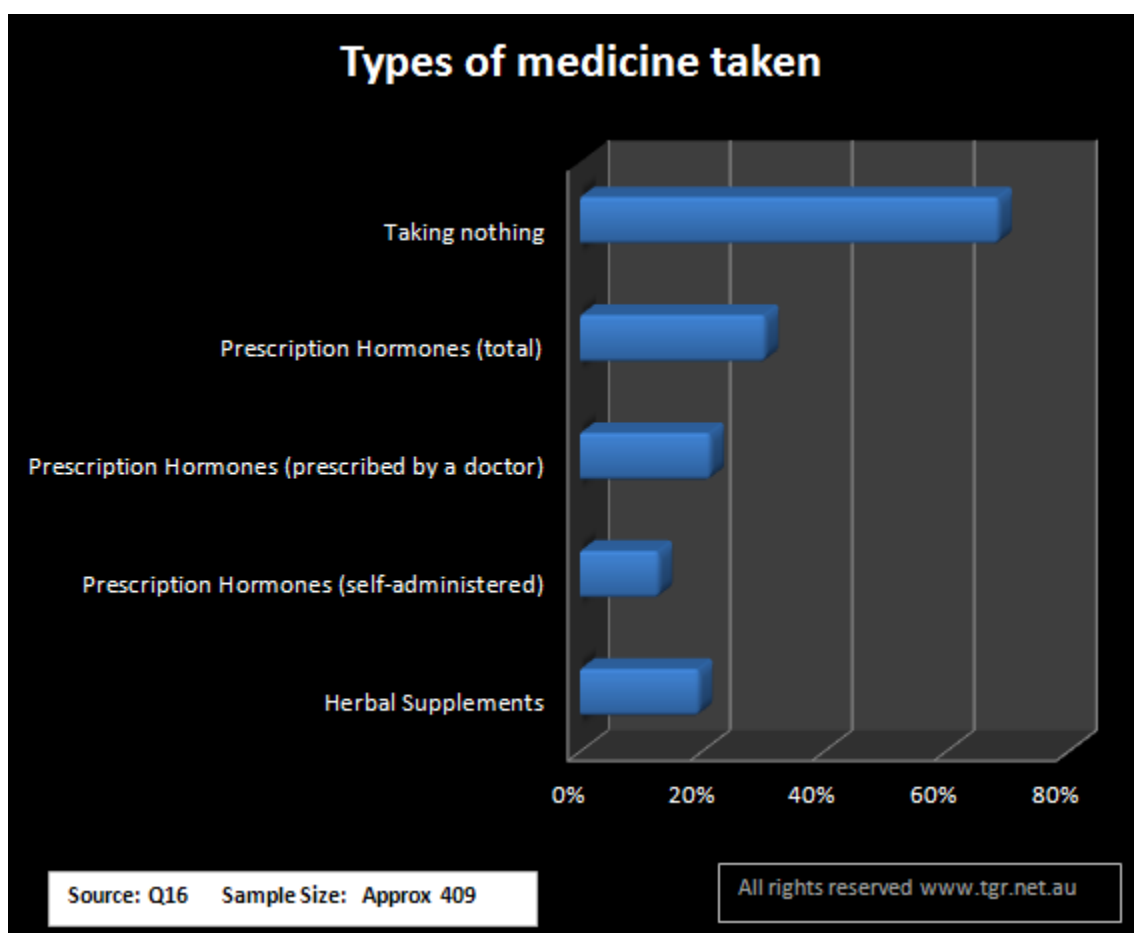
Merging physical and perceived gender identities:

Taking medicine / herbal supplements

The survey asked respondents if they had ever taken or applied anything to assist with their perception of their preferred gender identity.

The responses indicate that:

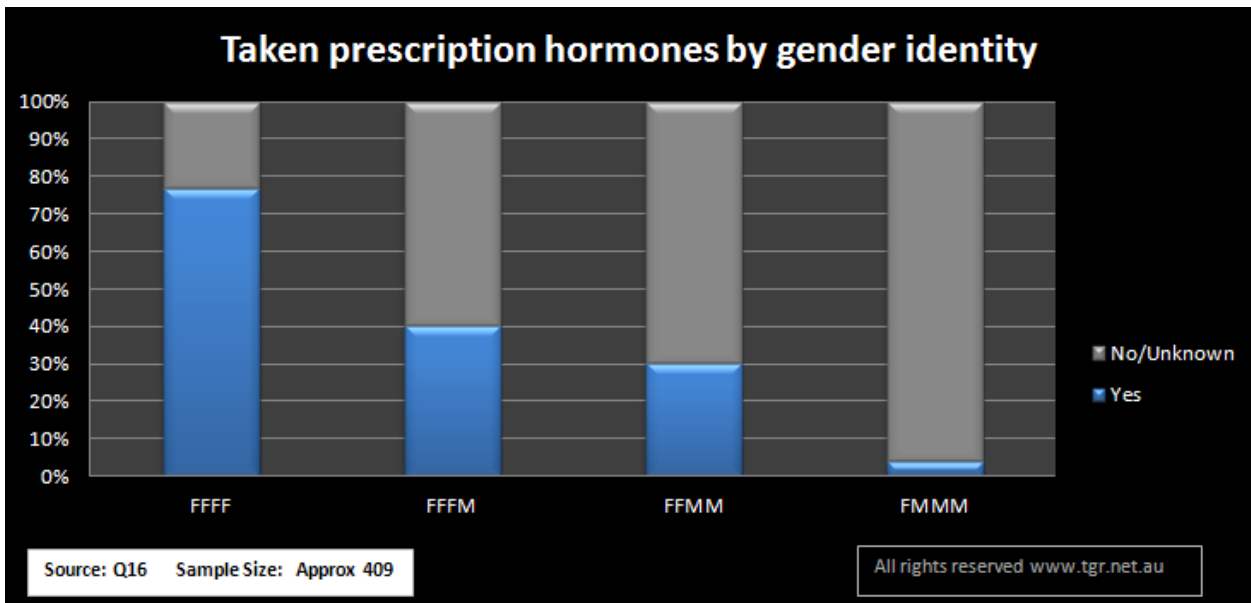
- Nearly a third of the population (31%) had at some time used medicines or herbal supplements with the objective of more closely aligning their physical and psychological states with their gender identity.
- One in five (20%) had tried using herbal supplements
- A larger percentage (30%) had used prescription hormones
- Significantly, 13% (49 respondents) at some time had self-administered prescription hormones which were not prescribed by a doctor.



Sub-analysis of these data revealed that the incidence of administering substances intended to alter gender appearance rose from a low of 13% in the **FMMM** population to 82% in the **FFFF** population.

The incidence in the survey population of prescription hormone administration (prescribed or self-administered) displayed a more striking trend as shown below:

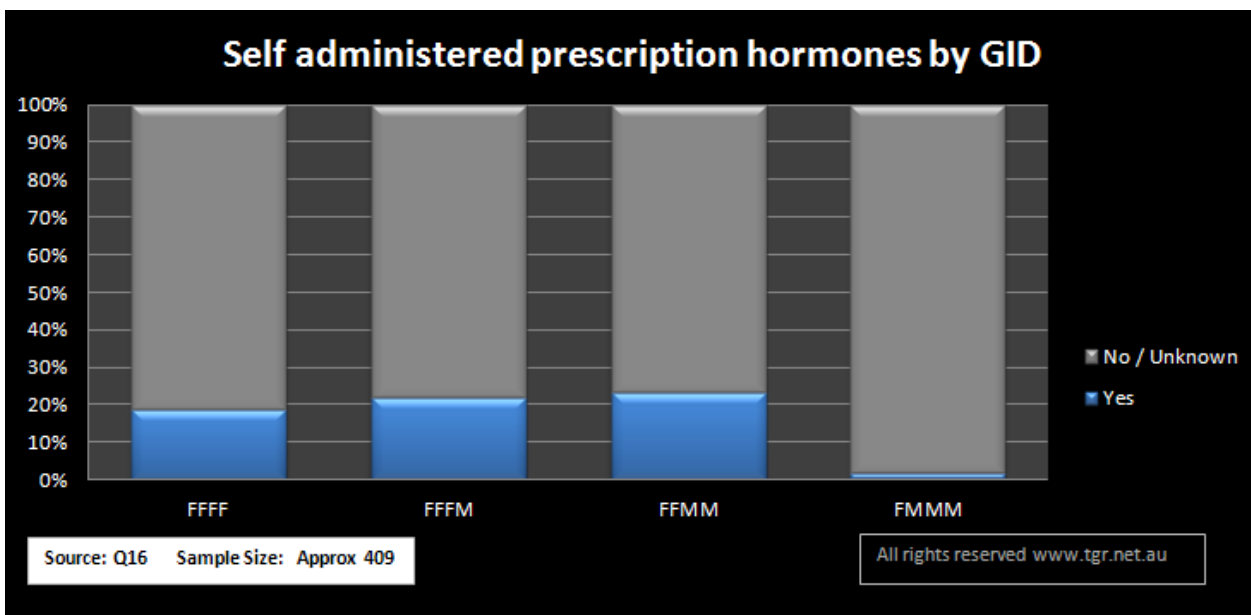
GID	Prescription hormone usage
FFFF	77%
FFFM	40%
FFMM	30%
FMMM	4%
MMMM	n/a



Incidence of prescription hormone use

Over three quarters of the **FFFF** population (77%) have taken prescription hormones. This possibly reflects both an increasing concern amongst the **FFFF** population about their appearance, and, in those who are transitioning, the pre-requisite of HRT for sexual reassignment surgery (SRS).

The survey responses point to the significant use of self-administered hormones in the **FFFF**, **FFFM**, and **FFMM** populations. One in five respondents in these three populations has self-administered at some time.



Self-administering hormones and herbal supplements

The survey indicates that many in the survey population elect to self-treat for the physical and psychological issues arising from gender diversity by self-administering hormones and herbal supplements.

These data reveal important points for future discussion:

1. What are the underlying reasons for self-administration?
2. What are the benefits and health risks associated with self-administration of hormones?
3. What are the benefits and risks associated with the use of herbal supplements?

Some possible factors that may lead to self-administration, with consequent risks, are:

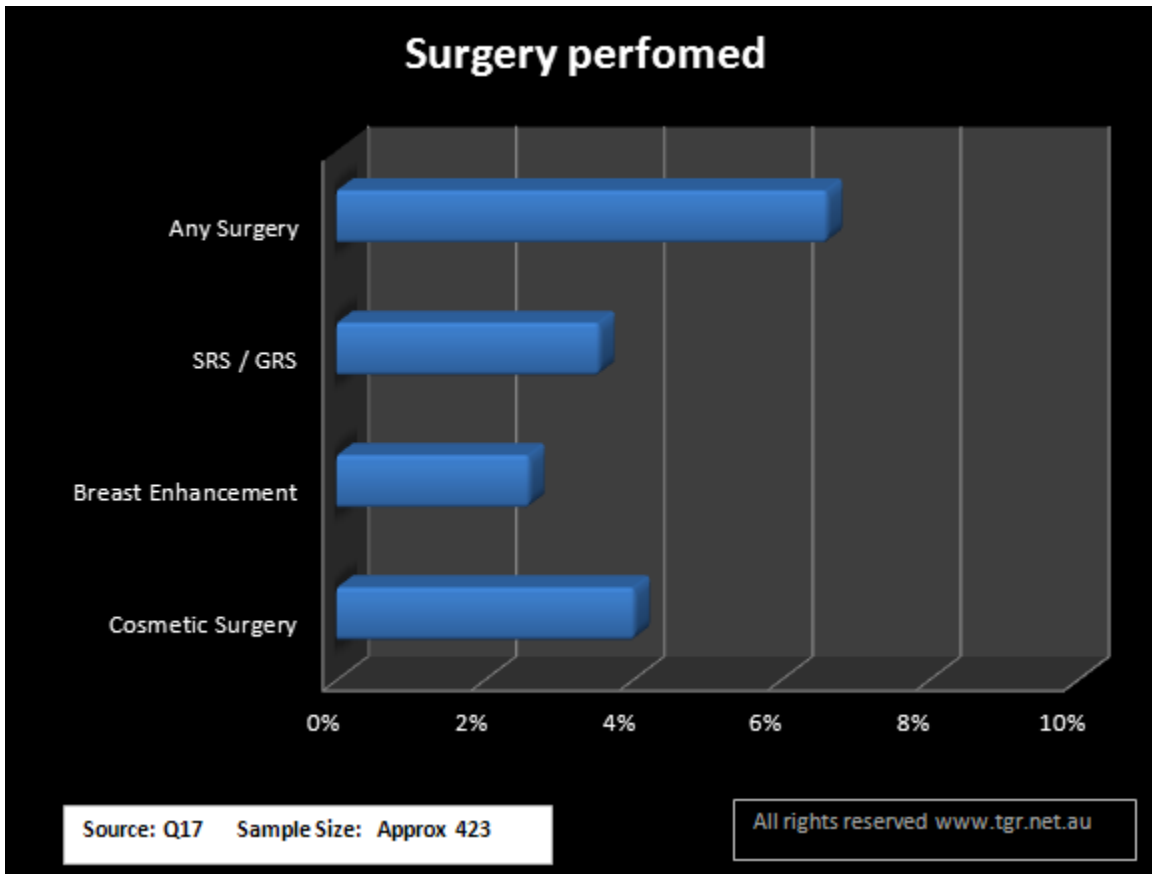
- the perceived lack of understanding by GPs of gender issues, and
- an established prescribing pathway that recommends prescribing hormones only to those looking to transition from their birth sex.

Surgical options

The survey asked respondents to indicate if they had undergone any surgery to align their physical appearance with their gender identity. The positive responses to this question were relatively low with only 7% describing one or more surgical procedures.

The incidence of sex reassignment surgery (SRS) was 16% in the FFFF population.

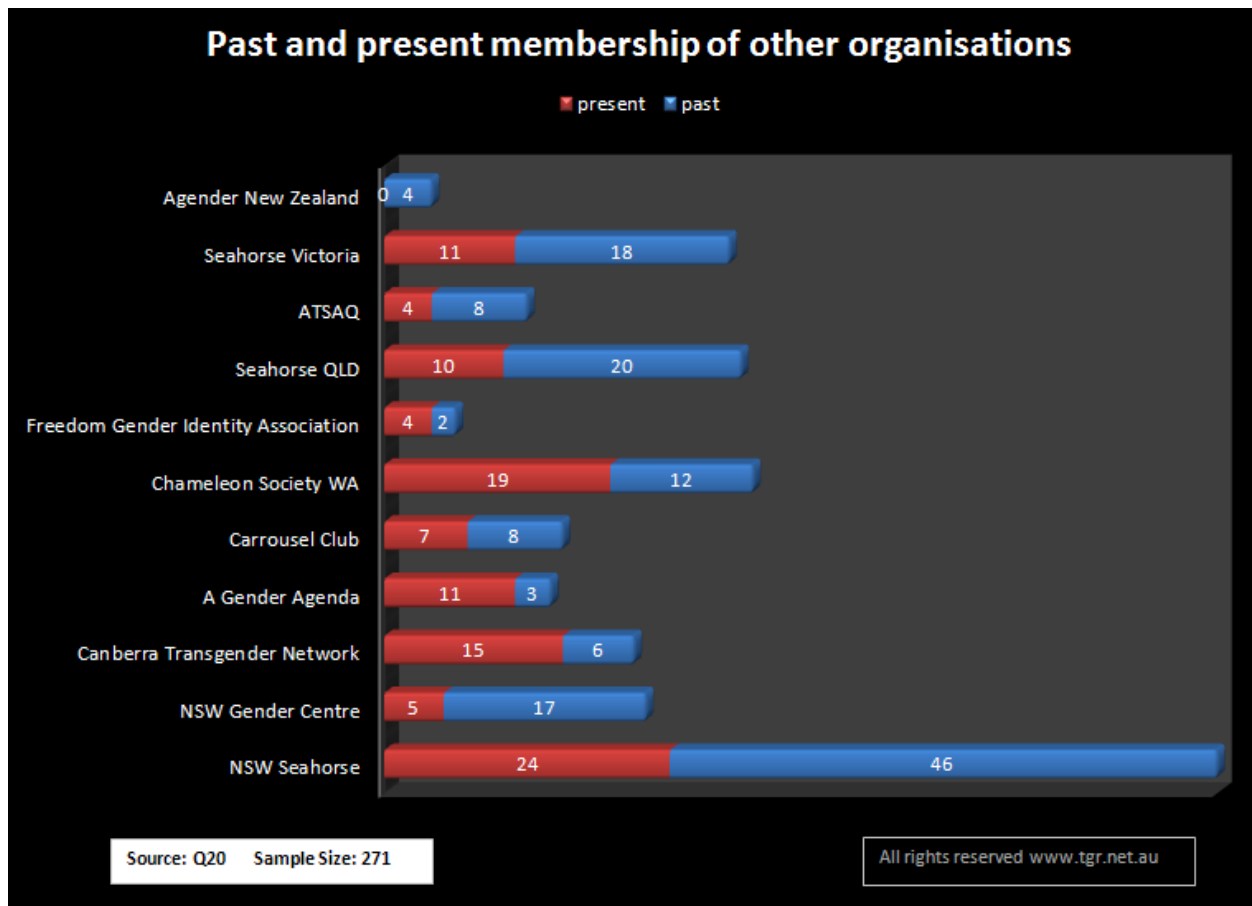
Surprisingly, some of those who reported that they had undertaken SRS did not identify as binary females. Among those who responded to say they had completed SRS 80% identified as FFFF.



Membership of other groups and organisations

Participants were asked to list past and present involvement with other groups and organisations that serve the gender diverse community.

Less than a quarter of the respondents (22%) were currently a member of another group or organisation (see below for details).



The Seahorse Society of NSW and the Chameleon Society (WA) had the largest number of present members in the survey population.

The Seahorse Society of NSW also had, by a significant margin, the most number of past members in the survey population, followed by Seahorse Queensland and Seahorse Victoria.

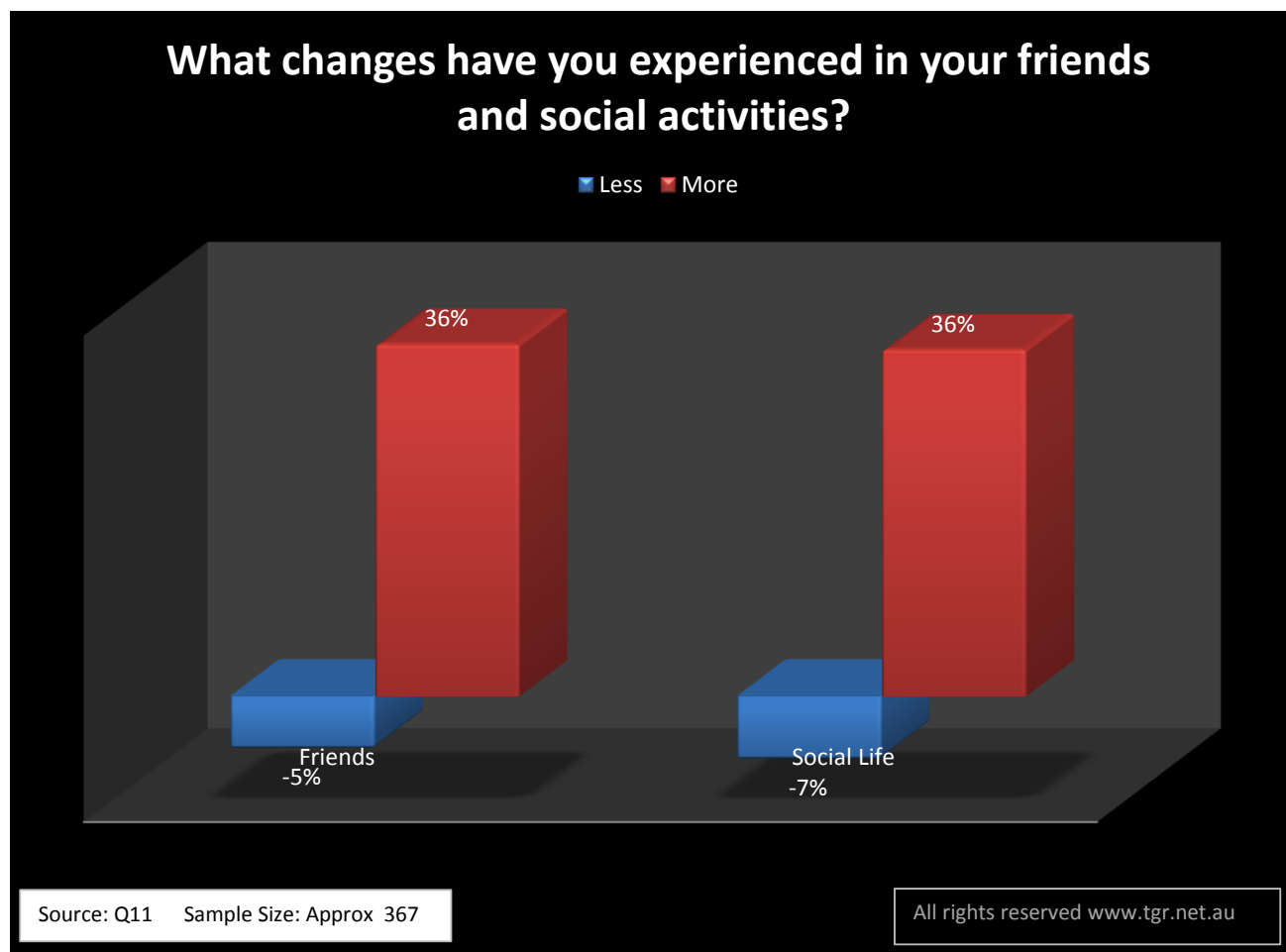
Attitudes and Acceptance

This section of the survey explored respondents' views on societal acceptance of their gender diversity.

Attitude to being Gender Diverse

Respondents were asked to identify what changes (if any) had occurred as a result of revealing their gender diversity in public, and also how they felt about being part of the gender diverse community.

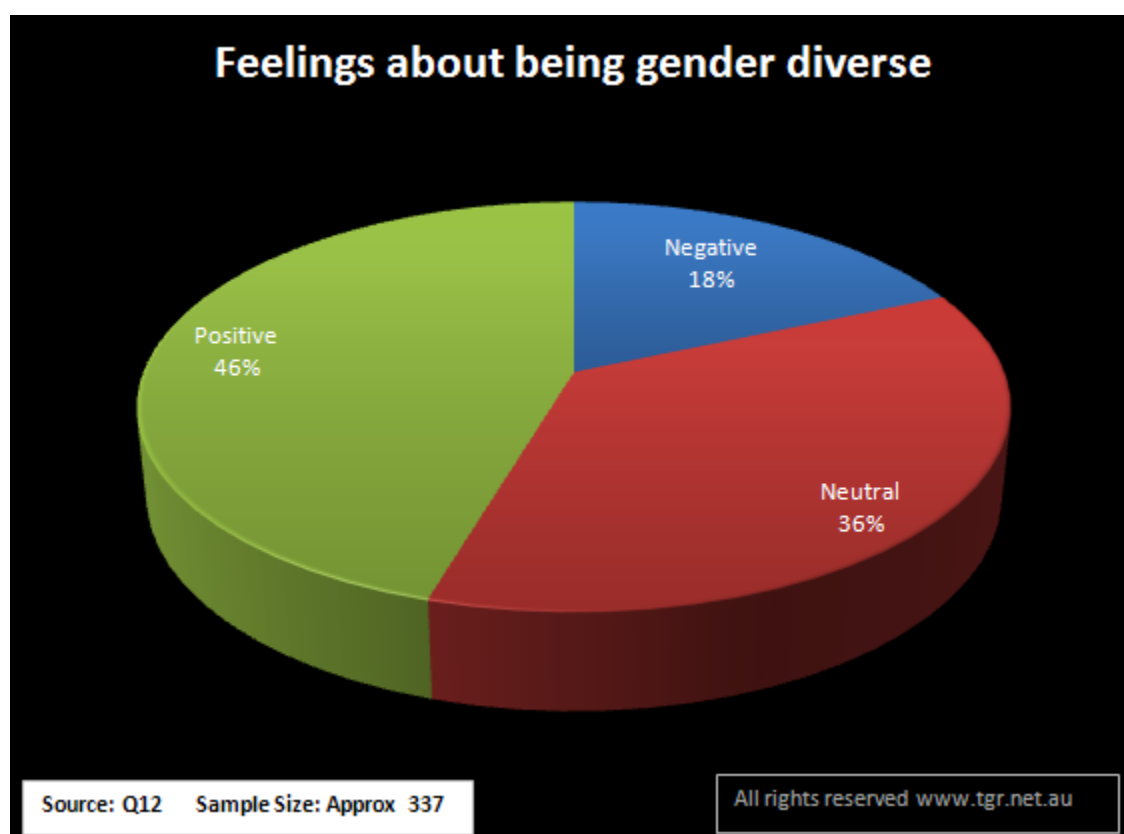
Over a third of the respondents (36%) felt that their friendships and social life had improved.



Besides rating the influence of gender diversity on their friendships and social life, respondents were also invited to share other significant changes. Responses included:

- “Loss of some of my children “
- “A gain of a few friends and becoming more of a mentor for others“
- “Increase in personal confidence. “
- “Discrimination at work, loss of family“
- “A total loss of family members“
- “Stronger friendship with close friends“
- “Loss of work and social status“
- “Greater self-satisfaction“
- “Acceptance from someone special“
- “Only one friend lost. Most others very supportive. “
- “Some level of social isolation from things I used to always be invited to“
- “Lost friends after transition“
- “Different social activities than I used to have as male“
- “More out-going, less anxious“
- “Separation“
- “A chance to meet others like myself, wonderful! “

When asked about their feelings about being gender diverse, more respondents were positive (46%) than negative (18%). A few respondents (3%) reported both negative feelings about being gender diverse, and also indicated that it had also impacted negatively on their social life.



Commentary:

Those respondents who considered their gender diversity to be a negative aspect of their life may be at elevated risk of depression or perhaps suicidal thoughts.

For example, one respondent who identified as FFMM and has completed SRS expressed negative feelings about their gender diversity.

Attitudes

The survey participants were asked to consider a number of statements and indicate if they felt they agreed or disagreed with the view being put forward. *Note that it was not mandatory to answer this question, and those with no opinion, or no response were not included in the results below.*

Acceptance of gender diversity by society

Statement 1: The gender diverse community is generally accepted by society

AGREE: 83 DISAGREE: 272

Statement 2: Organisations and groups should actively lobby on behalf of the gender diverse community to change the attitude of society

AGREE: 317 DISAGREE: 20

Lobbying for change:

The responses to statement 2 is potentially distorted, as those who consider the gender diverse are accepted by society would not feel strongly that active lobbying to change attitudes would be necessary.

Attitudes to gender presentation

Statement 3: Society should accept a gender diverse person as female even if they still have male genitals

AGREE: 348 DISAGREE: 11

Statement 4: Gender diverse people should present as either male or female to gain acceptance in society

AGREE: 131 DISAGREE: 179

Attitudes to non-binary genders in public:

The responses to statements 3 and 4 show a possible contradiction. There is overwhelming support for the proposal that society should judge gender by visible presentation and not by genital state. However the opinion of the respondents was divided about whether presenting to society in non-binary genders will gain acceptance. Over three quarters of those who were against presenting a non-binary gender in public identified themselves with a non-binary gender!

Attitudes to labels

Statement 5: We need an accepted and understood 'umbrella' label to describe everyone in the gender diverse community

AGREE: 161 DISAGREE: 142

Is gender diverse just another umbrella label!

The confusion that exists within the gender diverse community over labels is reflected in the responses to this statement. Although labels have been adopted in the past (e.g. Transgender, Trans) they have neither achieved universal acceptance nor consistent definition. Opinion is split amongst the respondents as to whether labels are necessary to gain acceptance, or whether they hinder unification and acceptance of everyone by society.

Statement 6: People who identify as transsexual (seeking sexual reassignment) are different and should not be grouped with other gender diverse people

AGREE: 71 DISAGREE: 243

Statement 7: People who identify as intersex are different and should not be grouped with the gender diverse community

AGREE: 59 DISAGREE: 230

Statement 8: People who identify only as gay/lesbian are different and should not be grouped with the gender diverse community

AGREE: 151 DISAGREE: 160

Do the gender diverse belong in the GLBTIQ umbrella?

The last statements explored the perceived boundaries of the gender diverse community. The responses indicate a strong support for the inclusion of transsexual and intersex within the gender diverse umbrella. However opinions are divided about the merits of grouping sexual preference with gender identity.

Negative Experiences

Participants were asked if they had had any negative experiences in society during the previous 12 months which they attribute to their gender diversity.

Nearly a quarter of the respondents (23%) commented on adverse experiences attributable to perceived dissonance involving gender identity.

Reported incidents

Those with negative experiences were asked to describe them under a number of categories. Forty of the 98 respondents indicating negative experiences reported specific experiences as follows:

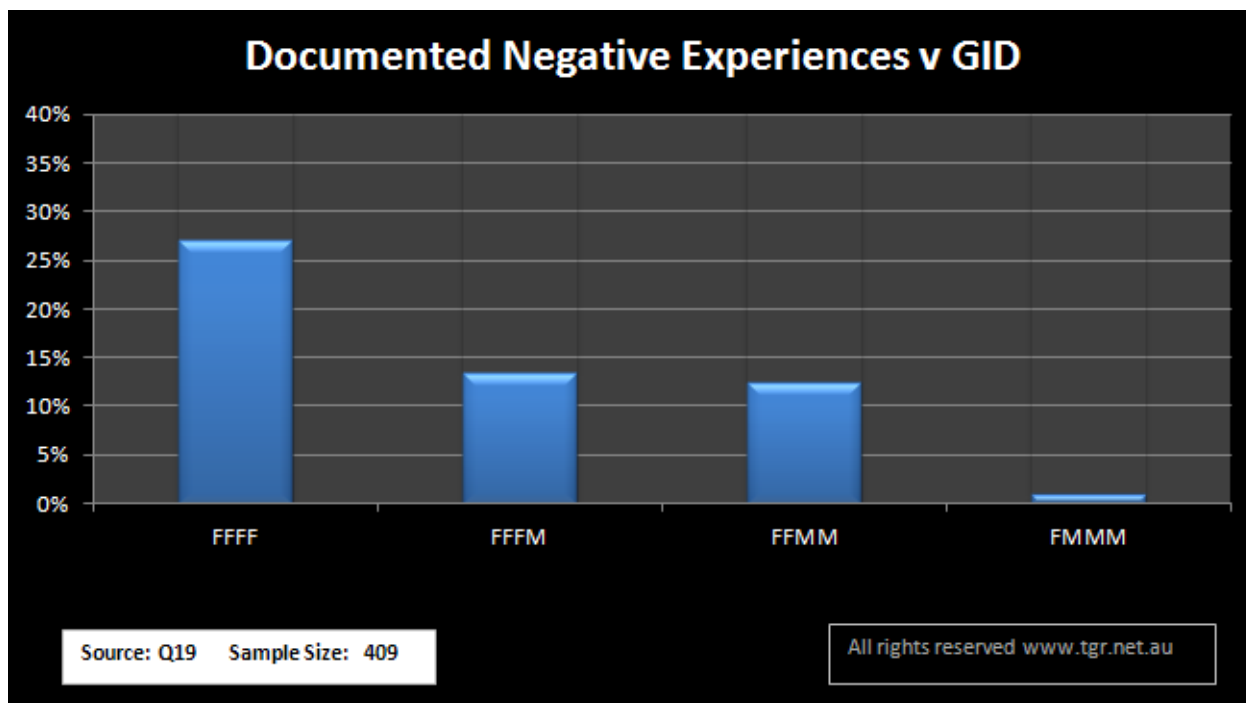
Category	Negative Experiences	Examples given
Medical Services	13	<p>"Verbal abuse"</p> <p>"Slow, and almost combative service from a gender clinic. "</p> <p>"Relief doctor was rude and treated (me with) no respect just like dirt. "</p> <p>"Medicare will NOT recognise my gender and address mail as MR instead of Ms. "</p> <p>"Looks"</p> <p>"An endocrinologist whose expectations are bizarre and challenging. "</p> <p>"GP thinks it is out there weird"</p>
Police	8	<p>"Police said I would never get a job as Transgender and that I should just live life as my birth role. "</p> <p>"Rudeness and suspicion"</p> <p>"Being told to give over ID & the like for no reason "</p> <p>"Failed to acknowledge my new gender"</p> <p>"They were rude to me and sniggered"</p>
Government (state & federal)	3	<p>"Centrelink"</p> <p>"Family Law Court judge"</p> <p>"Tax department "</p>
Dealing with businesses	10	<p>"They tend to make you feel different than other people. "</p> <p>"They laugh behind your back & seem to find it difficulty in looking you in the eye"</p> <p>"Pubs and clubs are not supportive. "</p> <p>"Some small shop owners can be extremely rude and discriminatory. "</p> <p>"Often ignored at shops"</p> <p>"Bank not allowing change of salutation/gender prefix on bank accounts"</p> <p>"Mainstream businesses/employees not knowing how to take me. "</p> <p>"On the phone they don't believe I'm who I say I am because of my male voice. "</p>
Workplace	25	<p>"Some wont talk to me"</p> <p>"Verbally and physically assaulted by male work colleague"</p> <p>"My boss knows, and chooses her moments to make negative comments"</p> <p>"With a few promising job prospect dialogue was immediately terminated "after revealing my being transgendered"</p> <p>"Discrimination at work in the highest degree! "</p> <p>"Innuendo and negative gossip, behind one' s back. "</p> <p>"Some ' ribbing from workmates"</p> <p>"Where I work people stay away from me"</p> <p>"I have been to over 150 interviews and I have the skills required and get shortlisted but I never get call backs and I can't get a job anywhere. "</p> <p>"My workmates saw my remains of my fingernail polish and was straight away labelled a fag (it hurt) "</p> <p>"Four or five instances verbal abuse (I work as a night shift taxi driver) about 50% outside taxi. "</p> <p>"People don't tolerate crossdressers. They are openly hostile. "</p>

Relationship to gender identity

The incidence of documented negative experiences varied between GID populations reflecting the frequency of gender expression in public. If we look again at the 23% of the survey population that had negative experiences then:

- Over a quarter of the **FFFF** population (27%) gave an example of a negative experience.
- Approximately 13% of the **FFFM** and **FFMM** populations had had negative experiences.

The graph below shows how the 23% with negative experiences are distributed across the gender spectrum.



Negative experiences in society and femininity

Negative experiences were reported from a wide range of the gender spectrum. Discrimination was not restricted to the **FFFF** population, even though this group presents most frequently in public; with the **FFFF** population experiencing less than half the reported incidents. The incidence of negative experiences did not correlate with the intention to change birth sex, nor was it correlated with the expression of preferred gender in public frequently.

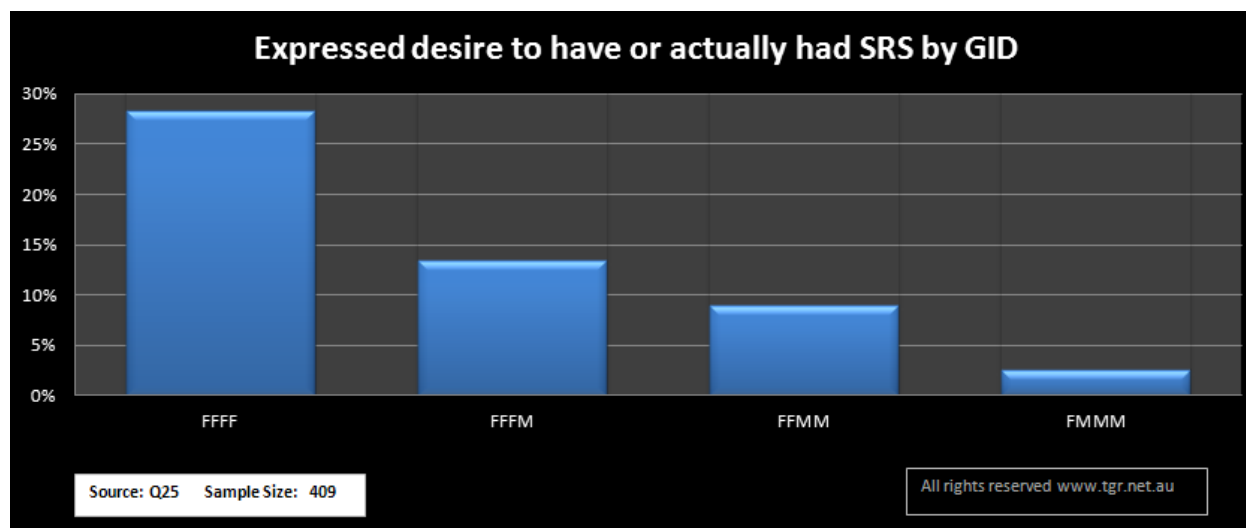
Aspirations

The final section of the survey gave the respondents a chance to nominate 3 wishes or dreams for the future. The results of this question are encapsulated in the word cloud on the front cover of the report.

The top ten themes in the responses were:

- Acceptance by others
- Changing physical appearance
- Opportunities to express gender
- Partners and Relationships
- Social opportunities
- Money
- Passing and appearance
- To be a woman (i.e. change birth sex)
- Work
- To go out in public

The wishes were also analysed in an attempt to determine which respondents were seeking to transition to present essentially as a woman in the future. This data was combined with the respondents who indicated that they had already undertaken SRS. The result indicates that approximately 10% of the survey population could be on a journey to change their birth sex. Of these, 28% currently identified as **FFFF**.



Conclusions

The TgR survey aimed to understand better the gender diverse community in Australia and New Zealand. The quantity and quality of the responses to this first survey exceeded the designers' expectations.

Although respondents were predominately born male, the survey has provided a snapshot of contemporary aspirations, challenges and health issues faced by the gender diverse. It also has yielded several important practical insights.

Key issues highlighted in the report include:

- **Inter-gender:** The widespread adoption of non-binary genders in the community and the implications of this for practitioners in medical, psychological and legal arenas.
- **Secrecy:** The extent to which many hide their preferred gender identity in public, and also in private
- **Employment:** Above average unemployment levels throughout the community, and evidence of discrimination against those who present their preferred gender identity in public.
- **Relationships:** Indications that revealing gender diversity to partners frequently leads to adverse outcomes.
- **Medical:** A reluctance to seek help from General Practitioners coupled with a reported lack of understanding.
- **Hormones:** A significant incidence of self-administering of prescription hormones and herbal supplements
- **Attitudes:** A lack of public acceptance of diversity which was reflected in reports of negative experiences widely across the gender spectrum.
- **Journeys:** Most who are seeking acceptance of their gender diversity are not seeking to change their born sex.

These insights from the survey present a range of practical challenges to contemporary legislative and medical frameworks.

They highlight a pressing need for reforms that more effectively accommodate the challenges and risks associated with gender diversity in Australia and New Zealand.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of those who have assisted in the design, implementation and analysis of this survey. And also thanks to the members of TgR for embracing the survey with such obvious enthusiasm.

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L.W. MBBS, FACRRM, DRCOG

A.S. MBBS, MD, FRACP, FRCPA

And many others.