



Ethnic and Gender Identity at 12 Years Old

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Introduction

The Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy 2019 guides the national focus on young people, setting out goals of reducing child poverty, preventing family harm, targeting racism and discrimination, and achieving equitable outcomes in the education, social and health sectors (1,2). Although associations with ethnicity and gender are well known, research and policy tend to treat these constructs as static and independent, rather than intersecting and developing across the life course and always in relation to a range of structural and social factors. Therefore, how ethnic and gender identities are measured and understood has important implications for the actions we take as a country to achieve equity.

Ethnicity and gender as constructs have traditionally been heavily influenced by a Western, Eurocentric worldview and described in binary terms (e.g. us/them, male/female) (3). In our analysis, and in line with international research, we recognise a more inclusive approach to identity, understanding that many people and cultures view ethnicity and gender as multi-dimensional, fluid, changeable, and with a spectrum of experiences. In particular, mātauranga Māori highlights and honours the existence of fluid and broader spectrums and identities related to gender (3). These realities have their parallels in the Pacific, Africa, America and Asia (4).



Key findings on Ethnic and Gender Identity at 12 Years Old

- At 12-years of age, the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort was very rich in ethnic and cultural diversity.
- Identification with multiple ethnicities was common – one third of young people at age 12 identified with more than one ethnicity.
- Overall, young people showed a strong sense of cultural connection and belonging, reporting that they feel ‘good’, ‘happy’ and ‘proud’ about their ethnic identity. Results were similar for Māori, Pacific, Asian, Middle Eastern/Latin American/African (MELAA) and ‘Other’ ethnic groups; and slightly weaker for the European group.
- The *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort was rich in gender diversity at age 12 years, with more diversity among those designated female at birth. Transgender and non-binary people were present in all the major ethnic groups in the study, emphasising that trans and non-binary young people are part of all ethnic communities.
- The ways that trans boys and girls, cisgender boys and girls, and young people with non-binary identities experience and express their gender show some differences. It is important to understand the gender diversity that exists, as well as how this diversity is obscured with analyses that only focus on sex differences.
- Use of the enhanced ethnicity, sex and gender data that we have collected can enable additional analyses to improve understandings and equity for a wider range of young people.
- The choice and type of ethnicity, sex and gender data used in statistical analysis requires careful consideration of equity, deficit-framing, inclusion and possible methodological bias and limitations.

Key Concepts

Ethnic identification

Ethnicity is a complex, multi-faceted and fluid construct which can be understood in different ways and can vary over time.

How ethnicity is framed and measured requires careful consideration (5,6). A nuanced understanding of the differences between ethnic identification (which ethnic group(s) one identifies with) and ethnic identity (how one thinks about their ethnic group(s)) is important to understand child development and equity of outcomes. This knowledge is needed for addressing persistent ethnic inequities across a host of health and social outcomes, and to ensure the government can meet equity targets for young people and families in Aotearoa New Zealand.

In addition, the multi-dimensional nature of ethnic identity requires careful consideration. Overly broad analytical decisions about how responses to the Census ethnicity question are categorised—or decisions based on outdated understandings of identity—can obscure the needs of communities who have distinct histories, contexts and migration experiences. Accurate conceptualisation and measurement of ethnicity is critical for meeting our shared commitments under Te Tiriti o Waitangi (5,7).



Gender and sex

Gender and sex, though seemingly simple everyday concepts, are, in reality, complex and distinct social constructs that influence social, health and many other outcomes in multiple ways (8,9). In this report, 'sex' refers to a set of biological attributes that are associated with physiological features including chromosomes, gene expression, hormone function and reproductive/sexual anatomy (9). 'Gender' refers to the identities, norms, and expression of behaviours and roles that are associated with people who identify as girls/women, boys/men, non-binary or who have a different gender identity. Gender includes how a person identifies their gender, as well as how they express their gender. A person's gender expression may or may not match their gender identity, and a person's gender identity may differ from the gender designated to them by their sex assigned at birth. 'Trans' is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity differs from the one they were designated at birth; however, some non-binary people may not identify as trans themselves. Non-binary refers to people who do not identify with binary gender identities. Some non-binary people may have a gender fluid, bigender, agender, or otherwise expansive identity outside of the (trans)man/woman binary. Cisgender refers to people who identify with the gender they were designated at birth.



As with ethnicity, how sex and gender are conceptualised influences how they are measured, tracked and monitored by the government. For instance, emerging evidence suggests that outcomes for the same phenomenon are different when the analysis is conducted by gender rather than sex (10). In addition, rapidly expanding research is highlighting the need to recognise and understand transgender and non-binary young people's unique experiences (11,12,13). Trans and non-binary experiences have been hidden by analyses that use sex-differences or binary definitions of gender. Careful inclusive analysis and measurement is therefore critical to avoid incorrect conclusions that obscure the nuances in experiences for a diverse range of identities (14,9).

What *Growing Up in New Zealand* adds

Growing Up in New Zealand provides a vital opportunity to consider the development of ethnic and gender identity for children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand, and how these change over time. In this topic, we will highlight how young people self-describe their ethnic and gender identity at age 12. We will also present young peoples' sense of cultural connectedness and belonging to their ethnic group(s).

We will explore the following questions:

1. How does the *Growing Up in New Zealand* 12Y cohort identify themselves with respect to ethnicity?
2. How do young people describe their connection to, and participation with, their ethnic groups and cultures?
3. How does the *Growing Up in New Zealand* 12Y cohort identify themselves with respect to gender identity?

How does the Growing Up in New Zealand 12Y cohort identify themselves with respect to ethnicity?

Ethnic groups

Overall, 4500 young people living in Aotearoa participated in the 12-year data collection wave, with the majority answering the Census ethnicity question ‘Which ethnic group or groups do you belong to?’ ($n = 4371$, 97.1%). Most young people in *Growing Up in New Zealand* selected European ethnic groups ($n = 3424$, 78.3%), with the majority reporting New Zealand European ($n = 3365$, 77.0%), followed by British and Irish ($n = 133$, 3.0%), Dutch ($n = 37$, 0.9%), German ($n = 28$, 0.6%), Australian ($n = 22$, 0.5%) and South Slav ($n = 13$, 0.3%). Other European groups included Italian, Polish and Greek. All counts are shown in Table 1.

Almost one-quarter of young people ($n = 979$, 22.4%) identified as Māori.

A total of 728 (16.7%) young people selected Pacific groups, with Samoan ($n = 345$, 7.9%), Tongan ($n = 228$, 5.2%) and Cook Islands Māori ($n = 180$, 4.1%) being the most frequently reported groups, followed by Niuean ($n = 92$, 2.1%) and Fijian ($n = 49$, 1.1%). Other Pacific groups, such as Tokelauan, were also mentioned ($n = 35$, 0.8%).

A total of 646 (14.8%) young people reported Asian ethnic groups, with Indian ($n = 252$, 5.8%) and Chinese ($n = 246$, 5.6%) being the most frequently selected. Further Asian ethnic groups reported include Filipino ($n = 48$, 1.1%), Vietnamese ($n = 12$, 0.3%), Other Southeast Asian ($n = 40$, 0.9%), Sri Lankan ($n = 23$, 0.5%), Japanese ($n = 20$, 0.5%), Korean ($n = 14$, 0.3%) and Other Asian ($n = 31$, 0.7%).

A total of 73 (1.7%) young people identified with groups described by Statistics New Zealand as ‘Middle Eastern/Latin American/African’ (MELAA). Of these, 25 (0.6%) indicated Middle Eastern ethnic groups including Iranian/Persian, Israeli/Jewish, Arab, Egyptian, Lebanese, Palestinian, Turkish and Jordanian. Latin American groups were specified by 29 (0.7%) of the young people including Mexican, Brazilian, Chilean, Argentinian, Peruvian and Colombian. African ethnic groups were mentioned by 19 (0.4%) young people including Zimbabwean, Nigerian, Jamaican, African American, Somali and Ethiopian.

Of the young people who answered this question, 78 (1.8%) selected other ethnicities, including New Zealander ($n = 39$, 0.9%), Other South African ($n = 33$, 0.8%), Indigenous American ($n < 10$, < 0.3%) and Mauritian ($n < 10$, < 0.3%).

Table 1. Ethnicities identified by young people at 12-years of age.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent
European	3424	78.3
New Zealand European	3365	77.0
British and Irish	133	3.0
Dutch	37	0.9
German	28	0.6
Australian	22	0.5
South Slav	13	0.3
Other European	104	2.4
Māori	979	22.4
Pacific	728	16.7
Samoan	345	7.9
Tongan	228	5.2
Cook Islands Māori	180	4.1
Niuean	92	2.1
Fijian	49	1.1
Other Pacific Peoples	35	0.8
Asian	646	14.8
Indian	252	5.8
Chinese	246	5.6
Filipino	48	1.1
Other Southeast Asian	40	0.9
Sri Lankan	23	0.5
Japanese	20	0.5
Korean	14	0.3
Vietnamese	12	0.3
Other Asian	31	0.7
MELAA	73	1.7
Middle Eastern	25	0.6
Latin American	29	0.7
African	19	0.4
Other	78	1.8
New Zealander	39	0.9
Other South African	33	0.8
Indigenous American	<10	<0.3
Mauritian	<10	<0.3

Note. Participants who reported more than one ethnic group are counted in each group they reported. This means that the total ethnic group count is greater than the total number of participants.

Classification of multiple ethnicities

'Total response' grouping was chosen as the classification method for management and analysis of multiple ethnicity data in this report. This means that young people were counted in each of the ethnic groups they report, and the total count of these groups can exceed the total number of participants (e.g. a young person who identifies as both Māori and Pacific was classified in both the Māori and Pacific ethnic groups). Using this method for the European group would create significant overlap between groups due to the high number of young people who identify with this ethnicity and reduce our ability to make useful comparisons. For this reason, we use 'Sole European' as a comparison group in our reporting, which includes children who only identified with one or more European ethnicity.

Ethnicity responses were aggregated into broad ethnic groupings¹ referred to in the following subsections as:

- Māori ($n = 979$, 22.4%)
- Pacific ($n = 728$, 16.7%)
- Asian ($n = 646$, 14.8%)
- MELAA ($n = 73$, 1.7%)
- Other ($n = 78$, 1.8%)
- Sole European ($n = 2268$, 51.9%).



Multiple ethnic identifications

Thirty percent of young people identified with an ethnicity that was part of more than one broad ethnic grouping (i.e. Māori, Pacific, Asian, MELAA, Other, European) at age 12-years, with 1128 (25.8%) identifying within two ethnic groupings and 204 (4.7%) within three or more ethnic groupings.

The most common combinations of ethnicities were Māori/European ($n = 525$, 12.0%), followed by Asian/European ($n = 212$, 4.9%), Pacific/European ($n = 166$, $n = 3.8$), Māori/Pacific/European ($n = 120$, 2.7%), Māori/Pacific ($n = 93$, 2.1%) and MELAA/European ($n = 35$, 0.8%).

¹According to Level 1 ethnic groupings in Statistics New Zealand's (2005) Statistical Standard for Ethnicity (15).



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How do young people describe their connection to, and participation with, their ethnic groups and cultures?

How good one feels about their ethnic group is positively associated with life satisfaction (16), quality of life (17), self-confidence, purpose in life (18) and self-esteem (19). Feeling a strong sense of cultural connectedness also provides a range of psychological benefits, including the promotion of socio-emotional development (20). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Prof Sir Mason Durie described Māori cultural identity as a critical prerequisite for health and wellbeing (21).

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) was developed to assess ethnic identity based on factors that describe one's sense of belonging and exploration of identity – factors that are relevant across a range of ethnic groups (19). In the 12Y DCW, young people were asked how much they agree or disagree with 12 MEIM statements regarding their ethnic and cultural identity, the responses to which are presented for Māori and the sole European group in **Figures 1 and 2**. Data for each of the major ethnic groupings reported in this topic can be found in [Supplementary material](#).

Overall, young people in *Growing Up in New Zealand* reported feeling good about their ethnic identity. For example, 87% of rangatahi Māori agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'I am happy to be part of the group I belong to' and 83% agreed or strongly agreed with 'I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background'. Furthermore, 76% of rangatahi Māori agreed or strongly agreed to the statement 'I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group'. Similar findings were observed for young people of Pacific, Asian, MELAA and Other ethnic groups, while the proportion of affirmative responses to these statements were slightly lower for the sole European group.

Although young people tended to respond positively to the MEIM items, there were two exceptions. First, the proportion of young people who agreed and disagreed to the third item ('I think a lot how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership') was similar; a finding that was observed across all ethnic groups. Second, responses to the last item ('I am active in organisations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group') was more equally distributed than for other statements; another finding that was observed across all ethnic groups. Although the exact reasons for the different patterns of responses to these items are not known, it may be due to the more ambiguous framing of these statements compared with other MEIM items. It is also noteworthy that the conceptualisation of the items may generally represent different contexts and practical settings for the young people.



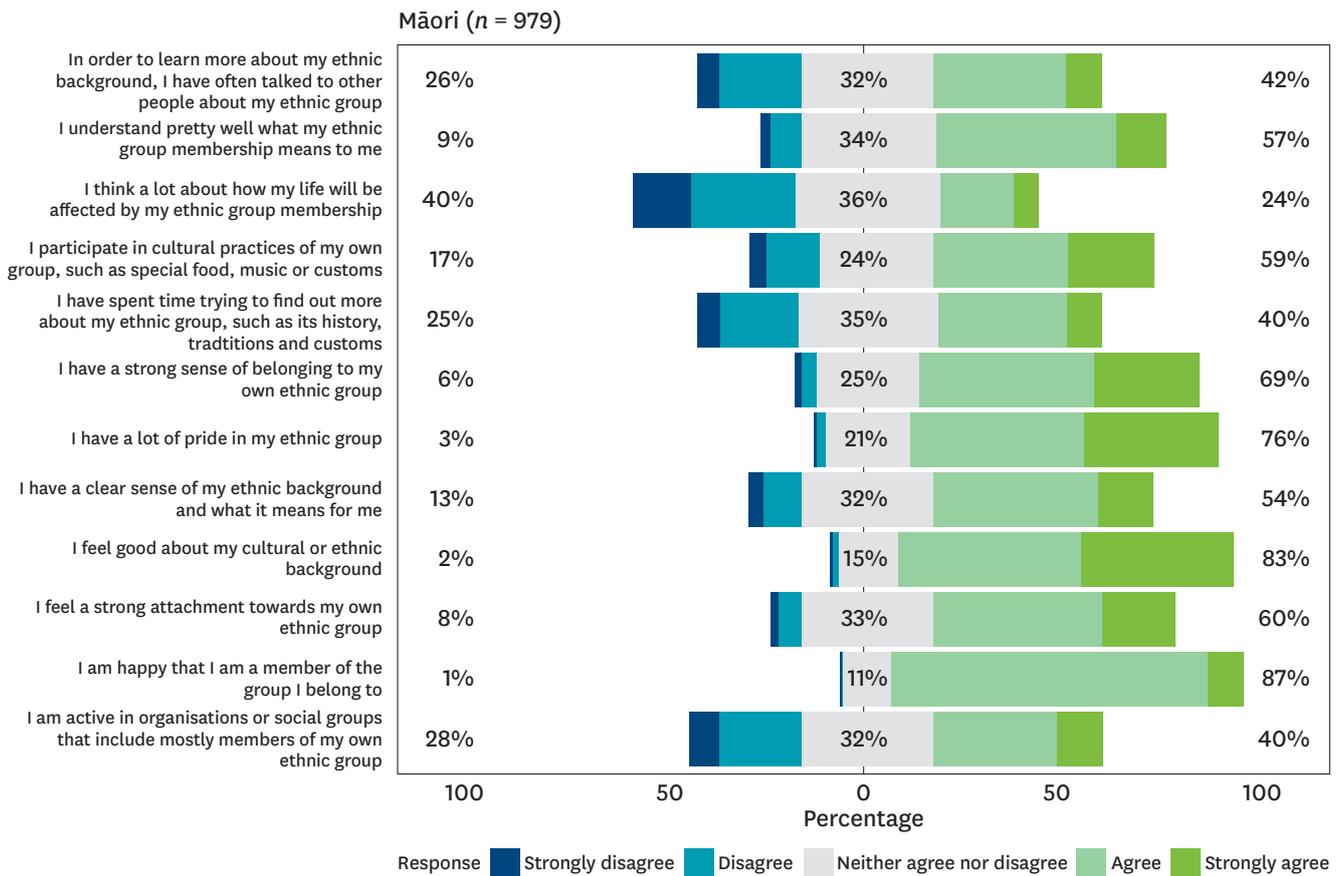


Figure 1. Self-reported ethnic and cultural connection at age 12Y for Māori (total response).

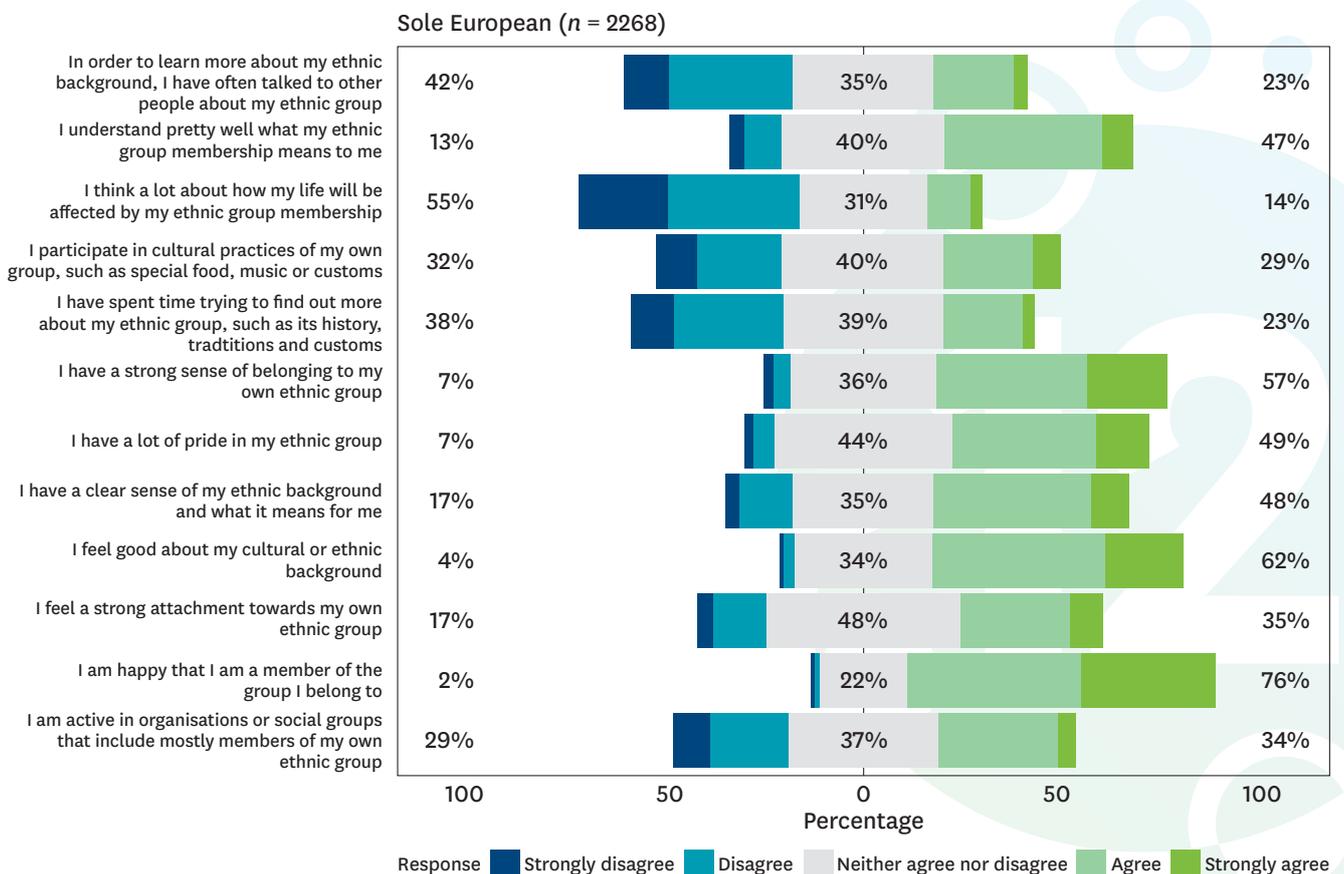


Figure 2. Self-reported ethnic and cultural connection at age 12Y for sole European

How does the Growing Up in New Zealand 12Y cohort identify themselves with respect to gender?

A range of questions explored gender identity and expression in the 12Y DCW; some questions explored gender using a single scale (unipolar) that ranged from masculine to feminine, and others explored gender with two scales (dual/multipolar) to identify the strength of masculine and feminine identity and expression for each participant.

The majority of young people ($n = 4478$, 99.5%) answered the unipolar question ‘Thinking about who you are, do you see yourself as a boy, a girl, or somewhere in between?’. The response options were on a unipolar spectrum: Boy; Mostly boy; Somewhere in the middle; Mostly a girl; Girl; I don’t know. Most 12-year-olds selected ‘Boy’ (46.2%) followed by ‘Girl’ (37.8%), while 15.0% selected ‘Mostly a boy’, ‘Somewhere in the middle’, or ‘Mostly a girl’. Just over 1% of young people selected ‘I don’t know’ (1.1%) in response to this question.

Table 2 shows the distribution of unipolar gender identity by sex assigned at birth and ethnicity in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort. The majority of young people assigned male at birth reported that their gender was ‘Boy’ or ‘Mostly a boy’ (97.9%). Similarly, a large proportion of young people assigned female at birth selected ‘Girl’ or ‘Mostly a girl’ (90.1%). When we compared responses between sex assigned at birth groups, we found a much higher proportion of young people assigned female at birth said their gender identity was ‘Somewhere in the middle’ ‘Mostly a boy’ or ‘Boy’ (8.2%), compared to those assigned male at birth who said they were ‘Somewhere in the middle’, ‘Mostly a girl’ or ‘Girl’ (1.5%). Overall, the distribution of unipolar gender was similar across ethnic groups, emphasising that trans and non-binary young people are part of all ethnic communities.

Table 2. Unipolar gender identity by sex assigned at birth and ethnicity

Thinking about who you are, do you see yourself as a boy, a girl, or somewhere in between? n (row %)						
	Boy	Mostly a boy	Somewhere in the middle	Mostly a girl	Girl	I don’t know
Overall	2067 (46.2%)	185 (4.1%)	174 (3.9%)	312 (7.0%)	1692 (37.8%)	48 (1.1%)
Sex						
Male	2054 (90.4%)	171 (7.5%)	17 (0.8%)	<10 (<0.3%)	<10 (<0.3%)	14 (<0.3%)
Female	12 (0.5%)	14 (0.6%)	157 (7.1%)	305 (13.8%)	1682 (76.3%)	34 (1.5%)
Ethnicity						
Māori	441 (45.2%)	37 (3.8%)	54 (5.5%)	77 (7.9%)	358 (36.7%)	<10 (<0.3%)
Pacific	313 (43.1%)	55 (7.6%)	35 (4.8%)	59 (8.1%)	254 (35.0%)	10 (1.4%)
Asian	288 (44.6%)	36 (5.6%)	27 (4.2%)	54 (8.4%)	233 (36.1%)	<10 (<0.3%)
MELAA	29 (39.7%)	<10 (<0.3%)	<10 (<0.3%)	<10 (<0.3%)	33 (45.2%)	<10 (<0.3%)
Other	34 (43.6%)	<10 (<0.3%)	<10 (<0.3%)	10 (12.8%)	26 (33.3%)	<10 (<0.3%)
Sole European	1070 (47.3%)	74 (3.3%)	68 (3.0%)	129 (5.7%)	899 (39.7%)	23 (1.0%)

Note: Child ethnicity data were classified as total Māori, total Pacific, total Asian, total MELAA, total ‘Other’ and sole European. The ‘total response’ classification system allows for individuals to be counted in all of the groups that have identified with.

Gender and sex categorisations used in this topic

The response options to the unipolar gender question produce a range of analytic categories for gender and sex-based analyses. The selection of an appropriate analytic category depends on the topic and the objectives of the analysis, and each categorisation emphasises distinct elements and produces different sample sizes, and therefore different results, for the analytic categories. Three categories were created for this report:

- **Sex** is determined by the sex assigned to the participants at birth: male; female. Sex is an appropriate categorisation where biological factors and processes *related to sex-differences* are relevant to the topic/question. It is important to note that this categorisation does not conclusively demonstrate gender differences, because trans and non-binary participants are included in sex categories that do not align with their gender.
- **Gender** is determined by responses to the unipolar gender identity question that emphasise either end of the gender binary: 'Boy' and 'Mostly a boy' are included in the 'Boy' category, and 'Girl' and 'Mostly a girl' in the 'Girl' category. This recognises that the young people are framing themselves as largely gendered in a particular direction. Young people who select 'Somewhere in the middle' or 'I don't know' in response to this question are coded as non-binary or unsure of their gender. It is important to note that this categorisation includes trans boys and girls, as well as some young people who may be non-binary (e.g. 'Mostly a girl/boy'), alongside cisgender boys and girls in the binary gender categories. As such this categorisation is appropriate where binary gender is relevant to the topic/question but is not appropriate for exploring the impacts of cisgenderism or transphobia.
- **Trans-Non-binary/Cisgender** is determined by responses to the unipolar gender identity question and the sex assigned at birth categorisation. 'Mostly a boy', 'Somewhere in the middle', 'Mostly a girl', as well as 'I don't know' are emphasising the non-binary middle of the spectrum and are included in this categorisation as non-binary², while 'Boy' and 'Girl' are coded as cisgender. However, participants who report a gender that differs from their sex assigned at birth (e.g. a participant who is assigned female at birth but selects 'Boy' or 'Mostly a boy' as gender) are included in the trans category. This categorisation is appropriate where cisgenderism and transphobia may be relevant to the topic/question. It is important to note that the level of gender disaggregation used in analyses will determine whether differences for trans boys and trans girls can be compared with non-binary and gender-questioning participants, within the trans umbrella.
 - **Cisgender girls** are determined by the 'Girl' response to the unipolar gender identity question, and female for the sex assigned at birth item.
 - **Cisgender boys** are determined by the 'Boy' responses to the unipolar gender identity question, and male for the sex assigned at birth item.
 - **Trans girls** are determined by the 'Girl' or 'Mostly a girl' responses to the unipolar gender identity question, and male for the sex assigned at birth item.
 - **Trans boys** are determined by the 'Boy' or 'Mostly a boy' responses to the unipolar gender identity question, and female for the sex assigned at birth item.
 - **Non-binary** determined by a 'Mostly a girl' response and 'Female' for the sex assigned at birth item; a 'Mostly a boy' response and 'Male' for the sex assigned at birth item; or, 'Somewhere in the middle' or 'I don't know' responses irrespective of sex assigned at birth.

²This difference in categorisation explains the size difference of the nonbinary/unsure group in the Gender categorisation compared to the Trans-Non-binary/Cisgender categorisation.



How do young people describe their gender identity and expression?

Six questions were adapted from the Perceived Similarity to Gender Groups Measure (22) to explore the intersection of gender identity and expression in relation to expected and accepted definitions of masculinity and femininity (a dual/multipolar measure). This approach enables participants to report nuances in their gender identity and expression beyond simply masculine, feminine or non-binary, to include androgenous (high in both masculine and feminine scores) and agender (low in both masculine and feminine scores) identities and expressions.

The multipolar gender items in the 12Y DCW were:

- ‘How similar do you feel like boys’;
- ‘How similar do you feel like girls’;
- ‘How much do you like to do the same things as boys’;
- ‘How much do you like the same things as girls?’, and;
- ‘How much do you act like boys; How much do you act like girls?’.

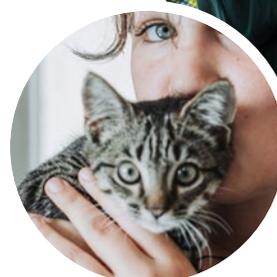
The response options ranged from: Not at all; A little bit; A medium amount; Pretty much; A lot. **Figures 3-8** present the distribution of responses to these questions for Female, Girl/Mostly girl, Cisgender girls, Transgender girls and Non-binary participants. The graphs for young people who identified as Male, Boy/Mostly boy, Cisgender boys and Transgender boys can be found in Supplemental Materials.

At 12 years of age, males, boys in the Gender categorisation, and cisgender boys, were much more likely to say they feel a lot or pretty much similar to boys, like the same things as boys, and act like boys. Females, girls in the Gender categorisation, and cisgender girls, were also more likely to say they feel similar to girls, like the same things as girls, and act like girls. Generally, this pattern was stronger for the male assigned at birth and boy groups compared to the female assigned at birth and girl groups.

Although similar in overall direction as the cisgender participants, trans boys and trans girls groups had more variation in these gender measures compared to those assigned male or female at birth and cisgender participants, but much less variation than participants classified as non-binary or unsure of their gender. These data highlight that trans boys and girls report more expansiveness in their gender identity and expression than cisgender participants, demonstrating less normative forms of binary gender than cisgender participants.

Young people classified as non-binary or unsure of their gender in both the Gender and Trans-Non-binary/Cisgender categorisations had distributions of responses that were more evenly distributed, with relatively few reporting that they either feel or act a lot like a boy or a girl.

These findings highlight the significant richness of gender expression and identity in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort, demonstrating distinct and important categories beyond the often-used groups of males and females. The findings emphasise the importance of considering the choice and type of sex and gender categorisations carefully, especially as sex-based analyses obscure the experiences of a large proportion of trans and non-binary young people.



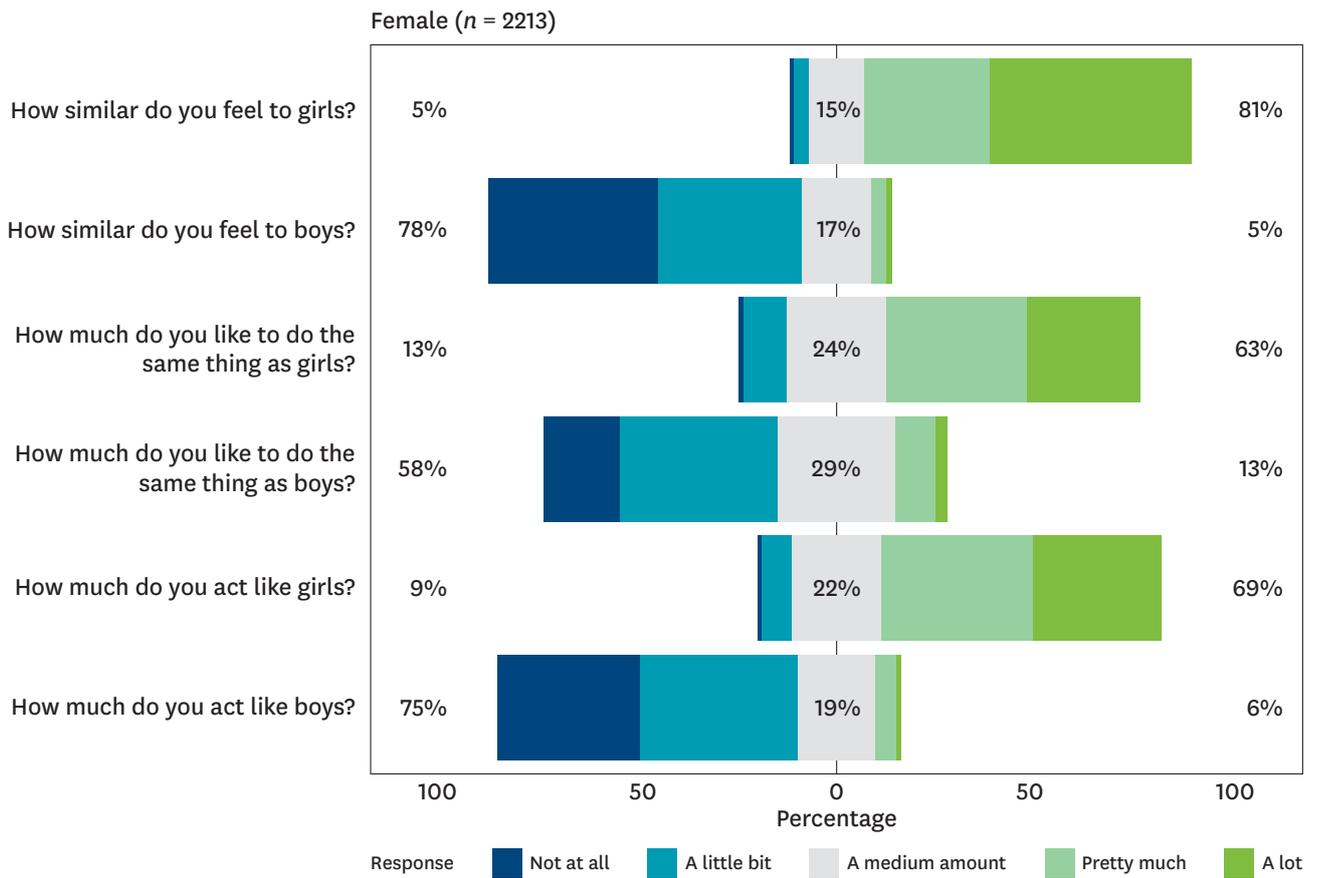


Figure 3. Multipolar gender identity and expression for Female in the Sex categorisation

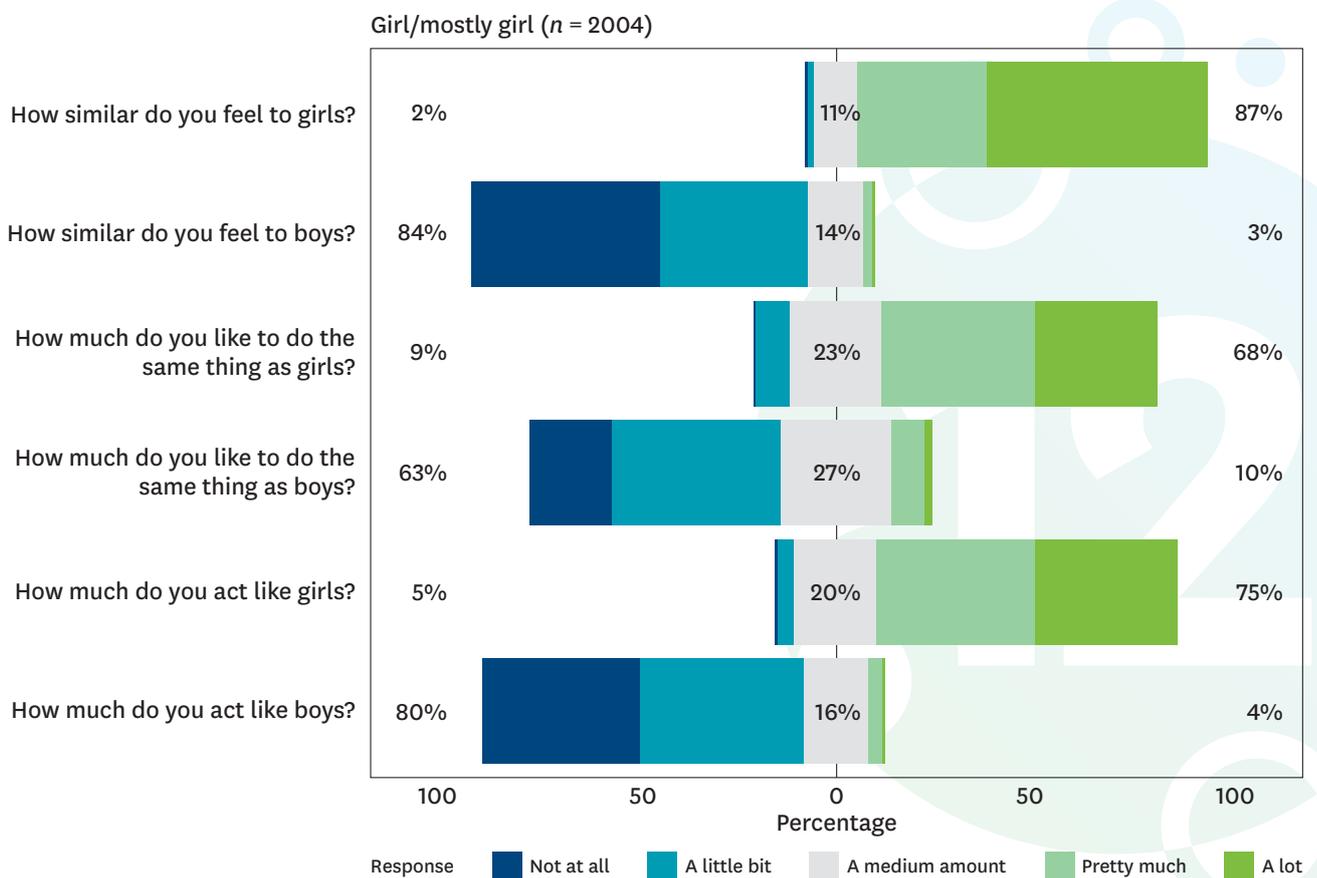


Figure 4. Multipolar gender identity and expression for Girl/Mostly girl in the Gender categorisation

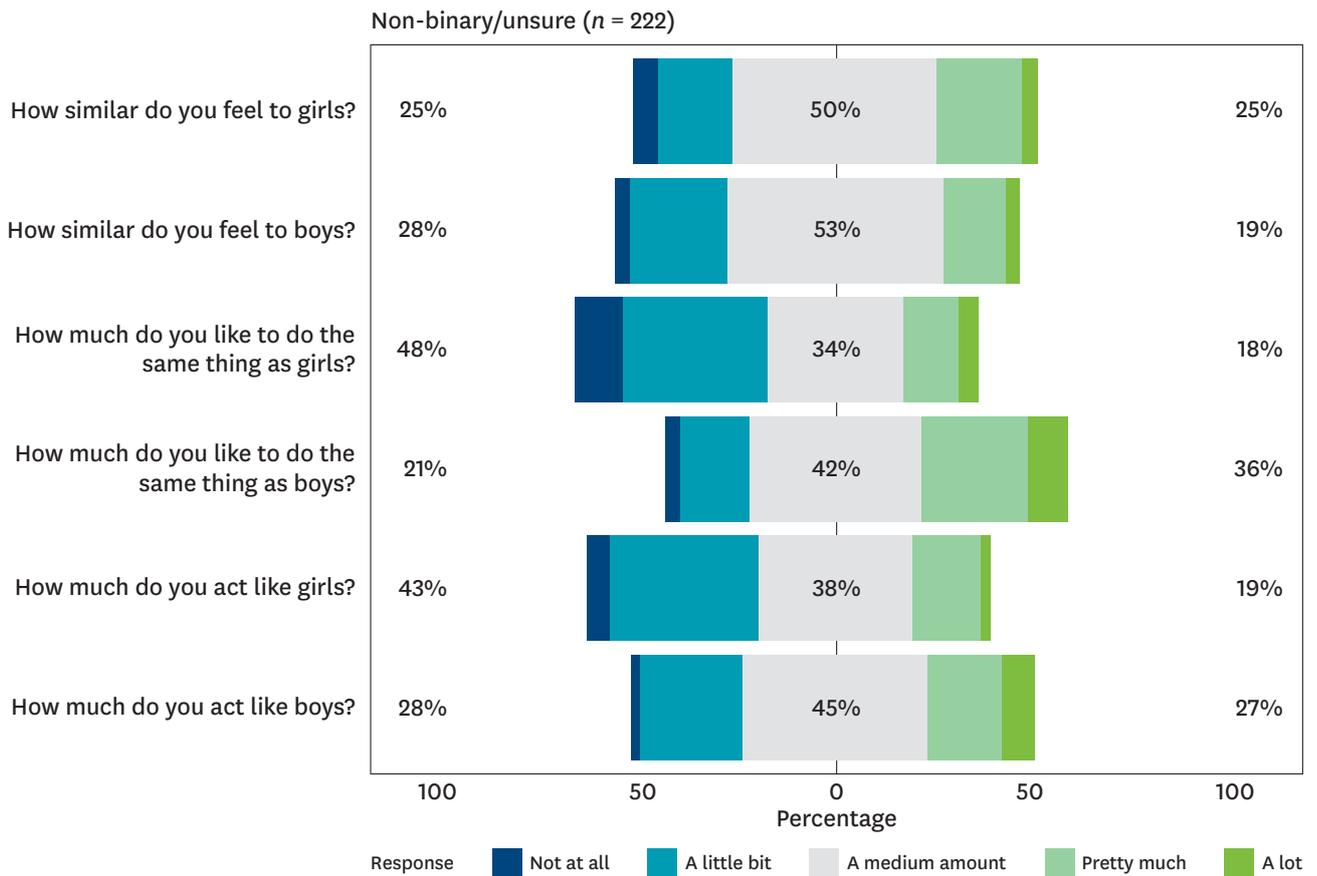


Figure 5. Multipolar gender identity and expression for Non-binary/Unsure participants in the Gender categorisation

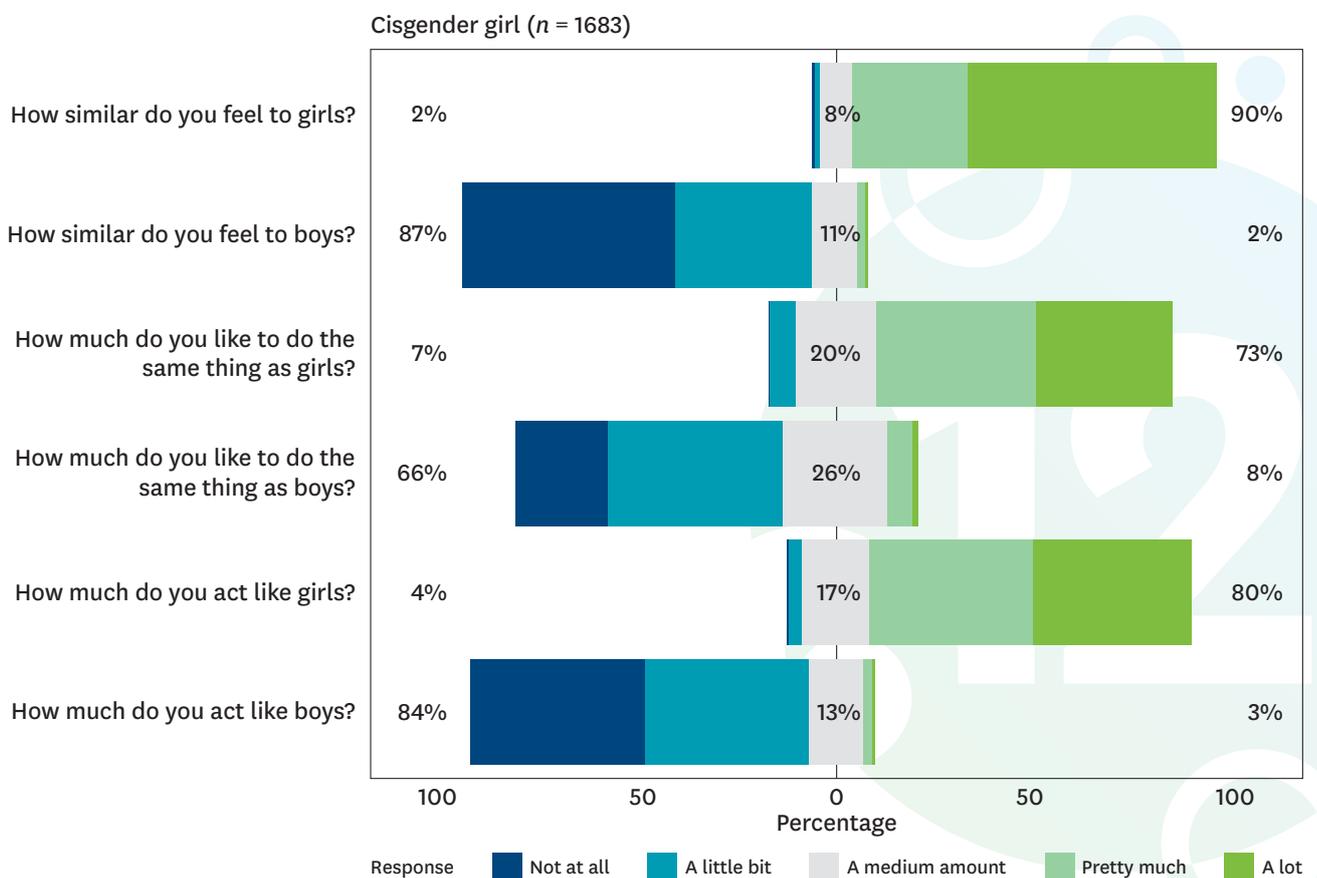


Figure 6. Multipolar gender identity and expression for Cisgender Girls in the Trans-Non-binary/Cisgender categorisation

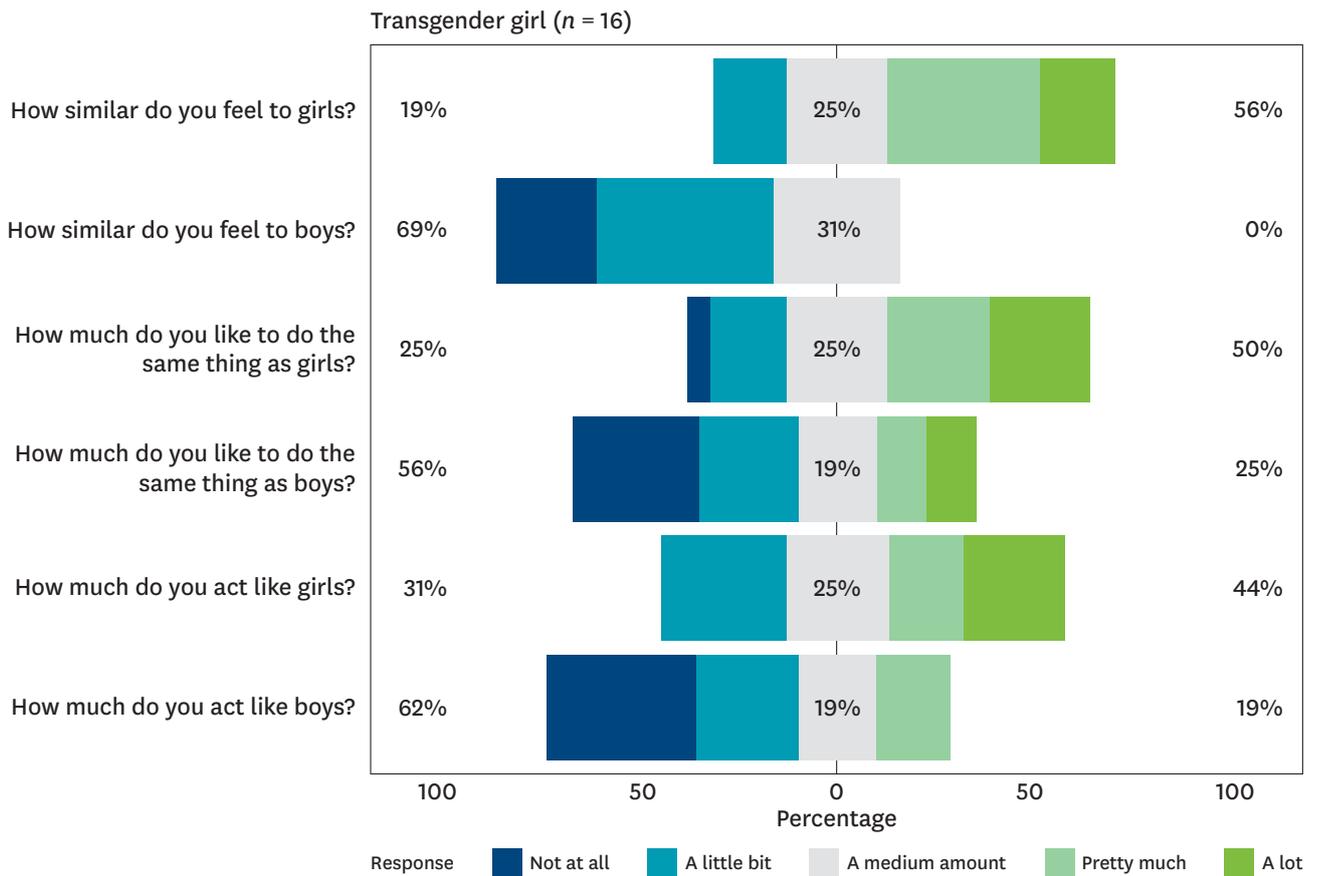


Figure 7. Multipolar gender identity and expression for Transgender Girls in the Trans-Non-binary/Cisgender categorisation.

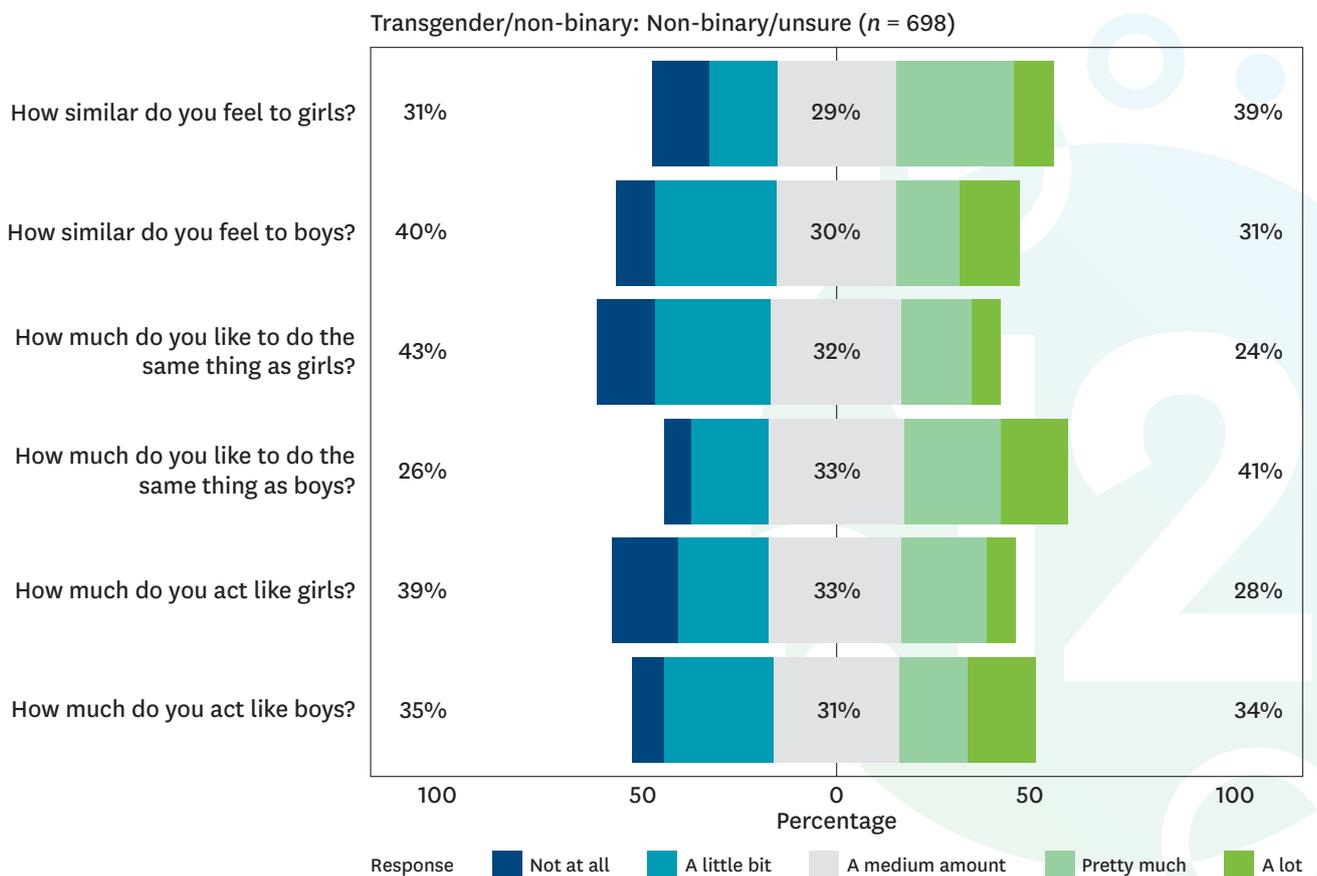


Figure 8. Multipolar gender identity and expression for Trans/Non-binary/Unsure participants in the Trans-Non-binary/Cisgender categorisation.

Relevance for policy and practice

Our findings describe the ethnic and gender diversity of the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort and thus of 12-year-olds in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ethnic and cultural richness of young people in Aotearoa New Zealand

Overall, young people felt good, happy and proud about their ethnic identity, with Māori, Pacific, Asian, MELAA and Other ethnic groups showing a strong sense of cultural connectedness. The slightly weaker result observed for the sole European group may reflect the normalisation of European social institutions and cultural practices in New Zealand society (23,24). Identification with multiple ethnicities was common, with one third of young people at age 12-years belonging to more than one ethnic grouping. Ethnic identity becomes more salient over adolescence due to social-cognitive maturity (25) therefore it will be important to see how ethnic identity and cultural connectedness develops for the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort over time.



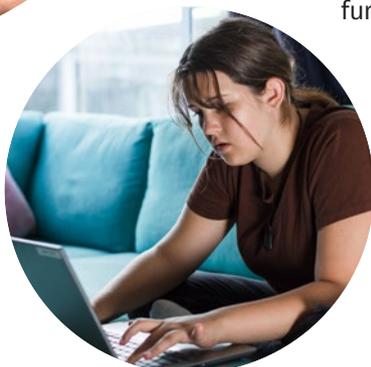
Diversity of young people's gender identity and expression

Diversity was also evident when we examined gender identity and expression in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* cohort. Generally, more diversity in self-reported gender identity and expression was reported by young people assigned female at birth compared to those assigned male at birth. Similarly, trans girls and trans boys, though significantly gendered in their responses, reported more variation than cisgender boys and girls. However, young people who were categorised as non-binary and unsure of their gender, reported the least gendered responses overall. Analyses of young people's data, including in the *Growing Up in New Zealand* study, must recognise the gendered variation that exists within the binary sex categories, and avoid conflating sex differences as gender differences.



Our findings highlight the need for a more critical and nuanced understanding of young people's identities in equity-focused research and policymaking in Aotearoa New Zealand

For example, decisions about how ethnic and gender identity are measured, and how responses are classified and analysed significantly influence what we see as important for child and youth wellbeing, and therefore how we respond. Disaggregation of ethnicity data, for example, ensures that the voices of young people who experience structural disadvantage are not subsumed by numerically larger groupings. Similarly, including questions that enable expression of more expansive gender identities is fundamental for monitoring functions across all government and non-governmental sectors, and for recognising and responding to trans and non-binary young people in all areas of policy and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Although our focus in this topic has been to highlight the importance of ethnic and gender identities and their development at 12-years, future research should also consider how multiple identities (e.g. ethnicity, gender, disability) interact and combine to shape wellbeing for young people in Aotearoa New Zealand.



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Growing Up in New Zealand

Now We Are Twelve

Life in early adolescence

Further Details

Supplementary material for this snapshot is available to download.

The introduction to the 12-year data collection wave and the methodology used to analyse the 12-year data can be downloaded as a PDF.

About the *Growing Up in New Zealand Now We Are Twelve* snapshot series

The Now We Are 12 Snapshots are accessible summaries of policy-relevant research findings from *Growing Up in New Zealand*, this country's largest longitudinal study of child health and wellbeing. Other snapshots in this series can be found [here](#). An [introduction](#) to the 12-year data collection wave and the [methodology](#) used to analyse the 12-year data can be downloaded as a PDF.

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