

Gender Distress & Gender Positivity

Experiences of Trans & Non-Binary Youth Under Age 16 in Clinical Care

What is GENDER DISTRESS?

Gender distress are the feelings of distress that youth can experience related to their gender not aligning with the sex they were assigned at birth. These feelings of distress can also be known as *gender dysphoria*, but gender dysphoria is a specific clinical diagnosis. Here we are talking about measuring the distress-related symptoms of gender dysphoria, but without making a diagnostic assessment, so we have labelled it "gender distress."

Trans and non-binary youth can experience gender distress related to their **social life** (e.g., *avoiding social situations where they can't express their gender; being hurt by being called the wrong name/pronouns; being expected to behave like their gender assigned at birth*).

Trans and non-binary youth can also experience gender distress related to **their body** (e.g., *wishing they were born in a different body; distress over periods/erections; disliking breasts/ facial hair; disliking voice, not trusting what their body will do with age*).

We developed a measure to assess the gender distress-related symptoms in youth, including those who do not identify within the gender binary. The measure has a total score, and two subscales: Gender Distress – Social, and Gender Distress - Body.

[Find The Full Measure Here¹](#)

What is GENDER POSITIVITY?

Gender positivity are the positive feelings (such as pride, validation, and enjoyment) youth can experience related to their gender. Gender positivity (or feeling positive about your gender) is not the opposite of distress, and *low gender distress* does not necessarily mean that youth feel positively about their gender.

Trans and non-binary youth can experience positivity related to their **social life** (e.g., *feel accomplishment in expressing gender; feeling validated when treated like their gender in public; being happy that they are seen on the outside for who they are on the inside*).

Trans and non-binary youth can also experience positivity related to **their body** (e.g., *feeling accomplishment in expressing gender; feeling validated when treated like their gender in public; being happy that they are seen on the outside for who they are on the inside*).

We developed a measure to assess the positive feelings youth experienced related to their gender, applicable to trans and non-binary youth. The measure has a total score, and two subscales: Gender Positivity – Social, and Gender Positivity - Body.

[Find The Full Measure Here²](#)

At The Time Of Their First Medical Appointment At Clinic, How Were Youth Feeling?



What are these graphs?

A box-and-whisker plot lets us compare gender distress and positivity across groups. Half a group is above and half below the middle line (median), the 'x' is the average (mean), and the ends of the boxes show the 25th and 75th percentiles. Gender distress and gender positivity scores can range from 1 (low) to 5 (high).

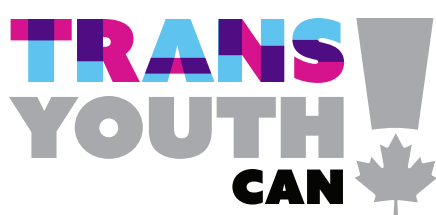
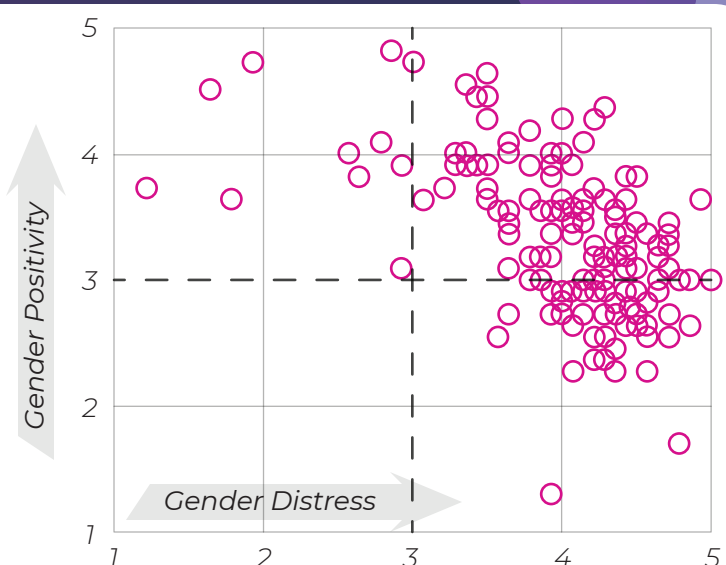
HIGHER gender distress was found to be associated with...

- Older age at first medical appointment at clinic
- Transmasculine youth (compared to transfeminine youth)

Gender positivity was not found to be associated with youth's age or gender.

Positivity is not the lack of distress, and distress is not the lack of positivity.

We found most youth were high on BOTH gender positivity and gender distress.



Who are the participants in this study?

There are 174 youth and 160 parents/caregivers participating in the Trans Youth CAN! study. Youth aged 15 or younger and who had reached puberty were recruited at their first appointment after referral for blockers or hormones at one of 10 medical clinics across Canada (Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, London, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Halifax). Youth could also invite one parent or caregiver to participate. This data was collected between September 2017 and June 2019.

1 - <https://bit.ly/3dUj8w9>

2 - <https://bit.ly/2SRkFVA>



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Want to learn more about this project? Click here to go to our project website: www.transyouthcan.ca