

BINDER

PROGRAM

DETAILED IMPACT REPORT

July 2022



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

TransFolk of WA is based on the lands of the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation. We acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded, this land always was and always will be Aboriginal Boodjar (land). We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

WELLBEING NOTE

This report includes quotes and statistics on the themes of dysphoria, mental health, self-harm and suicide. There are no graphic details. Take care whilst reading and know that it's ok skip sections or ask for support if the report brings up big feelings for you.

SUMMARY

Our Binder Program provides free binders to those who would otherwise be unable to buy one.

A binder is a tight top that helps to flatten the appearance of the chest. Wearing one can make some trans and non-binary people feel much more comfortable with their body. It can have a huge positive impact on their mental health and even help some people get out of the house and participate in life more.

This report provides information on the program for the 2021-2022 financial year. It features stories, quotes, and statistics from people that the program has supported. The report highlights the clear need for this binder program and details the impact it has had.

"Since getting the binder from TransFolk of WA I haven't been back into the psych ward and I've had more confidence in what I do, I can dress up and go out feeling confident."

What did it feel like receiving a binder from us?

"It felt like I was finally myself. There have been a couple times when people thought I was an actual boy and it made me so happy."

"[The binder] has changed my day-to-day life immensely and helped me be a lot more confident."

"[A binder] will help with the body dysphoria, every time I see a glimpse of my chest in the mirror or someone points it out it makes me want to break down. It's a daily struggle."

"Getting a binder would mean I would be able to feel less gender dysphoria, be happier with my body, and overall it would positively impact my mental health. Because of my chest and gender dysphoria I do self harm, and I feel like if I get a binder I will be able to stay clean of self harm."

"[A binder] will allow me to feel comfortable and safe with my body. It will allow me to become more confident and to be more comfortable in my transition."

THE PROGRAM

WHAT ARE BINDERS?

Many trans masculine, gender diverse and non-binary people use tight tops called 'binders' to help flatten their chest and make them feel more comfortable in their body.

Wearing a binder can be a source of gender euphoria; helping folks feel confident, at home and authentic.

Binders are an essential item for many trans, gender diverse and non-binary people – but many folks can't afford them and end up using unsafe binding methods.



HOW DOES IT WORK?

Our Binder Program provides free binders to those who would otherwise be unable to buy one.

We know how hard it can be to afford a binder and so this program makes sure folks have access to a free or low-cost binder. To fund this program, we rely on donations and small grants.

Eligibility criteria

- Live in Western Australia
- Currently experiencing financial hardship
- Need a binder

The registration process is kept simple with an online form that provides links to information about safe binding, collects contact details and chest measurements, and includes one yes/no question asking about financial hardship. To maintain people's dignity, no invasive questions or means testing processes are used.

There are optional survey questions at the end of the registration form that help us to understand the impact of the program.

THE LAST YEAR

127 binders were given to people in need.

All eligible registrations were sent a binder.

In total there were 155 registrations to the program, of which 82% were eligible. The other 18% of registrations were from people outside of Western Australia, people who weren't experiencing financial hardship or people who couldn't be contacted to complete missing information.

MARCH - JUNE 2022

During 2021 it was very difficult to get binders because of global supply chain issues. Due to this, we waited until our stock arrived before opening for registrations. So, during the 2021-22 year, the program opened in March 2022.

COVID19

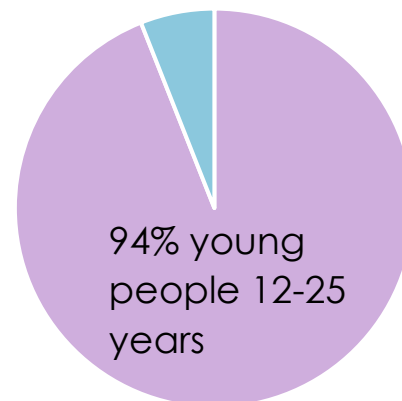
Due to a COVID19 outbreak, all binders were posted to folks rather than offering in-person collection. The supply chain issues were also due to the impact of COVID19 around the world.

Most people accessing the program are young people.

AGE RANGE

The program has no age limits and is open to anyone who fits the eligibility criteria. Ages ranged from 12-37 years old. The most common age was 16.

The vast majority of people who access the program are young people 12-25 years old (94%). With 56% 12-17 years old and 38% 18-25 years old.



LOCATION

88% from Perth metro area.

12% from regional WA.

THE BINDERS

We stocked Amor Binders racerback binders. This brand is Australian made, ethically produced and the binders are sensory friendly. For sizes 5XL and 6XL we ordered full-chest racerback binders.

FUNDING

This program relies on donations and small grants. For the first time, a staff member was paid to manage this program thanks to a Lotterywest grant.

THE NEED

SURVEY COHORT

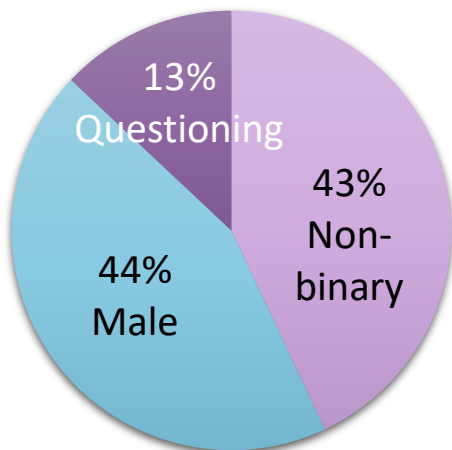
As part of the registration process, there were optional survey questions that people could complete to help us gauge the impact of the program.

72% or 93 of the eligible registrations opted to complete the addition questions.

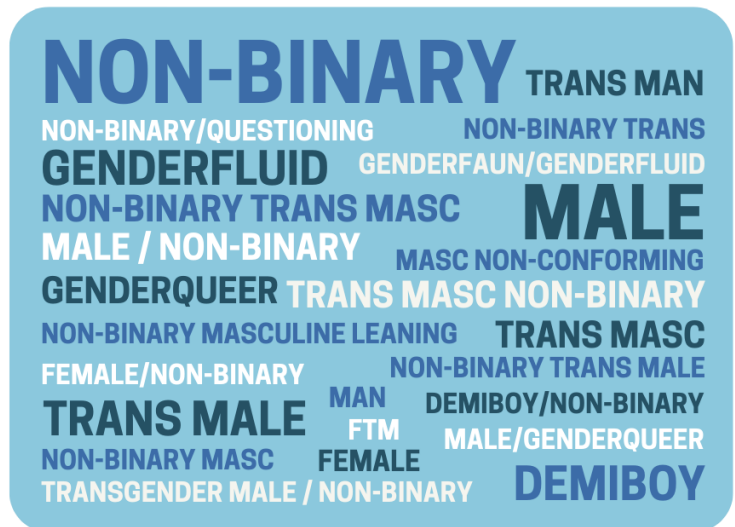
The age range for the survey was the same as for the program registrations.

GENDER

People were asked to describe their gender and select which gender category best fit.



WORDS USED TO DESCRIBE GENDER

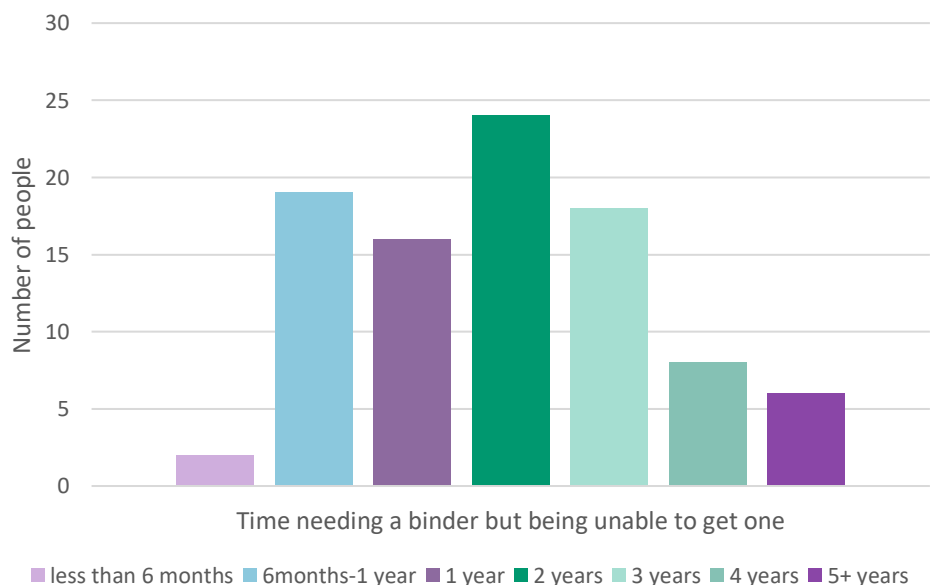


The bigger the font, the more people used that label.

TIME NEEDING A BINDER

Q: HOW LONG HAVE YOU WANTED A BINDER BUT BEEN UNABLE TO GET ONE?

60% of people had been unable to get a binder for 2 or more years.



REASONS FOR BINDING

Q: WHY DO YOU WANT TO WEAR A BINDER?

People gave descriptive responses to this question and some themes emerged.

- To get rid of gender dysphoria
- To feel comfortable in their body
- To be seen as their gender
- To look more masculine
- To improve their mental health
- To be able to leave the house
- To feel safe in public
- To be able to wear fitted clothes
- To safely bind and look after their body

Gender dysphoria is distress, discomfort or unease associated with someone's gender, body or how their gender is perceived by others.

"So that I can finally feel comfortable in my body and to be able to express how I feel on the inside."

"On the days that my chest dysphoria is really bad, I'm not able to leave the house unless I am wearing two sports bras and multiple layers. On regular dysphoria days it's just two sports bras. I know that this isn't safe in the long term and I want to be able to bind safely and feel comfortable in myself."

"I experience a lot of top dysphoria and have found a lot of joy and more harmony between my sense of self and physical presentation presenting with a flatter chest."

"I want to feel more comfortable with my body and not feel weird when looking in the mirror and seeing someone that doesn't feel like me, I want to feel happier with my body. I want to pass as masculine and not be seen as a girl."

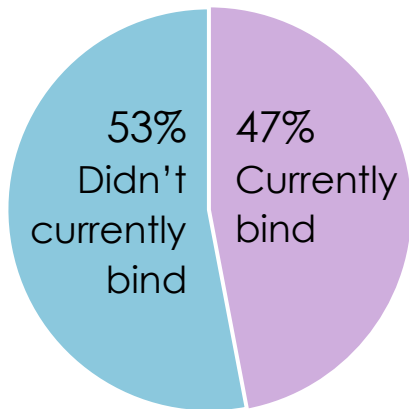
"It will help with the body dysphoria, every time I see a glimpse of my chest in the mirror or someone points it out it makes me want to break down. It's a daily struggle."

"To get rid of the feeling of hating my body so I can focus on other things in my life and not worrying about how I look or feel about my body."

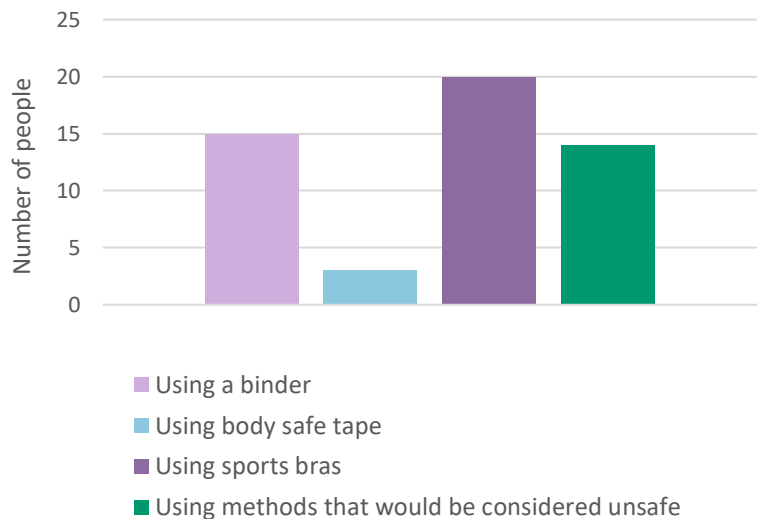
"I often have gender dysphoria and I bind in an unsafe way. I want a way to bind that is safe for my body, and hopefully I will get less gender dysphoria."

BINDING HISTORY

Q: DO YOU CURRENTLY BIND YOUR CHEST?



Binding Methods



We asked about people's binding history. 44 people or 47% were currently binding their chest. Of the people who were currently binding their chest, 20 people or 45% were using sports bras, 15 people or 34% were using a binder, 14 people or 32% were using methods that would be considered unsafe, and 3 people or 7% were using body safe tape.

100% of the people binding unsafely were young people (12-25 years old). 71% of the people binding unsafely were 12-17 years old.

Q: ANY COMMENTS ABOUT WHY YOU NEED A BINDER EVEN THOUGH YOU CURRENTLY BIND YOUR CHEST?

"My binders I use currently are worn to the point where there is absolutely no compression, they're pretty much useless now."

"I don't want to hurt my body in any way that is unchangeable, so I want to get a binder, so it is safer and better for my health."

"I find sport bras don't offer the same flatness as a binder would."

"Sport bras aren't doing what I need."

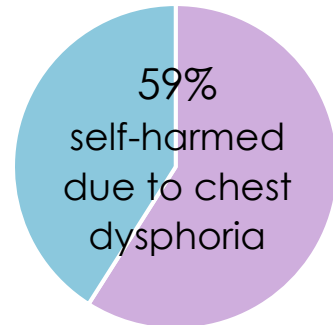
"My current method is unsafe."

"I have an old binder but it's got holes and has stretched a lot."

POOR MENTAL HEALTH

Dysphoria and not having access to gender affirming products, can negatively affect people's mental health.

In the last 12 months, 59% of people had intentionally physically hurt themselves due to dysphoria or distress related to their chest.



The survey asked people to consider the following statements in the below table and chose how often they were true over the last 3 months (never, frequently or all the time).

To make the data easier to interpret, the table combines 'frequently' and 'all the time'. For example, 99% of people said they worry frequently or all the time that people are looking at their chest.

In the last 3 months:	Frequently or all the time
I worry that people are looking at my chest	99%
My mental health suffers because of my chest.	99%
I get misgendered because of my chest.	98%
I avoid exercise because of my chest.	90%
I avoid shopping/buying clothing because of my chest.	89%
I participate in life less than others because of my chest.	84%
I avoid leaving the house because of my chest.	77%
I avoid seeking medical care because of my chest.	48%

IMPACT

The binder program has a big impact on people's lives. The registration survey asked some questions about impact and people were sent an optional follow-up survey a few months after receiving a binder.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

ANTICIPATED MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS OF RECEIVING A BINDER

99% of people believed receiving a binder would significantly improve their mental health.

- 97% of people believed receiving a binder would decrease the dysphoria they experience.
- 97% of people believed receiving a binder would make them feel more comfortable in their skin.
- 89% of people believed receiving a binder would boost their self-confidence.
- 69% of people believed receiving a binder would help them participate in more social activities.



Q: WHAT SORT OF IMPACT DO YOU THINK HAVING A BINDER WILL HAVE ON YOUR MENTAL HEALTH?

"I think having a binder would allow me to feel more like I own my body and like it is mine rather than what people usually see which I feel like is not me."

"A binder will definitely improve my self confidence and will make it easier to socialise in public, as well as help with depression. Giving me more hope to keep going on with life."

"My dysphoria plays a big part in being confident enough to leave the house. If I am able to bind I will feel even just a bit more confident to go out."

"It will improve my mental health due to me being able to look myself in the mirror and be proud of my own body."

"My anxiety over people looking at my chest will be less/easier to manage."

Q: WHAT WOULD IT MEAN TO YOU TO RECEIVE A BINDER THROUGH THIS PROGRAM?

"It would mean looking in the mirror and seeing the real me."

"So much good, I would be empowered to exist more comfortably in a world that doesn't favour gender diverse people."

"That I can safely and happily be me."

"Getting a binder would mean I would be able to feel less gender dysphoria, be happier with my body, and overall it would positively impact my mental health. Because of my chest and gender dysphoria I do self harm, and I feel like if I get d a binder I will be able to stay clean of self harm."

"Wearing a binder will make me feel like all of the men I get gender envy from, just wearing a shirt and feeling free would be amazing."

"It will allow me to feel comfortable and safe with my body. It will allow me to become more confident and to be more comfortable in my transition."

"I'd be able to get a binder without choosing between it and food."

"It would be incredibly helpful in my journey forward. And hopefully someday soon I can donate it or money to other young trans people."

"It would mean that I could go out and be myself. Like the outside of body would match how I feel on the inside. Even just being at home, I would feel more comfortable in my own skin."

"It means I'm not alone, that people care about how I feel even if I have to hide from others."

"It could be the difference between my next birthday and a funeral."

"It would mean so much, I would know I have support, and that I can finally be myself."

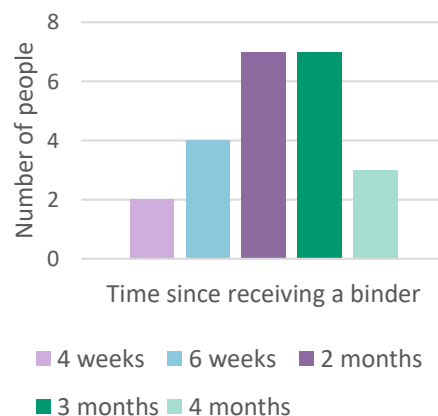
FOLLOW UP SURVEY

People were sent a voluntary follow-up survey asking about binding and feedback. 91 people were eligible for the second survey and 24 people completed it (26%).

The next sections in this report will use data from the follow up survey.

TIME SINCE RECEIVING A BINDER

Most people completing the survey had received their binder 2-3 months prior. Ideally the survey is completed 3 months after receiving a binder from the program. Due to the impacts of covid delaying the program opening, and needing information for this report, the time since receiving a binder was reduced to a minimum of 1 month.



RECEIVING A BINDER

Q: WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE WHEN YOU FIRST RECEIVED A BINDER FROM US?

"Absolute relief and validation. Wearing it for the first time was life changing, seeing myself reflected in the mirror."

"I was so happy to have something that made me feel like I was in the right body for once, it made me feel safe."

"I wasn't sure it was real, it felt like a dream and when I opened it and out it on the joy and euphoria I felt was so immense, I almost cried from happiness."

"It felt like I was finally myself. There have been a couple times when people thought I was an actual boy and it made me so happy."

"So validating!! I was so ecstatic when it arrived and I wore it immediately."

"Very surreal, first time I tried it on I was nervous and didn't wear it for a few days, but when I did, I felt so good!!"

"I cried happy tears I was so excited and happy."

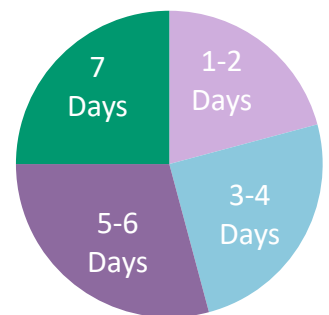
IMPACTS OF HAVING A BINDER

96% of people said having a binder has improved their mental health.

HAVING A BINDER HAS:

- Decreased the dysphoria I experience (96%)
- Boosted my self-confidence (92%)
- Helped me experience gender euphoria (92%)
- Made me feel more comfortable in my body (83%)
- Helped me feel better about myself (83%)
- Made it easier for me to look in the mirror or see my reflection (79%)
- Helped me leave the house more often (63%)
- Helped me get misgendered less (50%)
- Helped me participate in more social activities (50%)
- Helped me go to school more often (38%)
- Helped me do more physical activity (21%)

NUMBER OF DAYS PER WEEK THEY WEAR A BINDER



"Since getting the binder from TransFolk of WA I haven't been back into the psych ward and I've had more confidence in what I do, I can dress up and go out feeling confident."

WHEN I WEAR MY BINDER:

"I feel at home in my body."

"I feel more confident and less self-conscious of my body dysphoria."

"I can do more things and experience more things I enjoy instead of hiding in a hoodie all the time."

"I feel comfortable to go out and meet people in the world and not be afraid of my chest."

"I feel like I fit in with other men."

"Feel lighter and more grounded in my body."

GENDER EUPHORIA

Gender euphoria is the experience of feeling great about you, your body, and your gender. 92% of people experienced gender euphoria from wearing a binder. With 45% experiencing it most of the time, 36% experiencing it occasionally, and 18% experiencing it every time they wore their binder.

Q: WHAT DOES GENDER EUPHORIA FEEL LIKE?

"It feels like me, like I'm finally right, like I'm finally myself and can fit in."

"It feels like looking at your reflection and recognising yourself."

"Like people see me for me, how I see myself. It's light and floaty."

"It just makes me feel warm and happy to look in the mirror."

"Feels like I'm safe instead of feeling like a fraud in my own body."

"It feels nice to look into the mirror and feel handsome, it's like feeling happy and good about my body."

"It makes me feel powerful and it's very freeing."

"Like I belong in my skin, like I'm on top of the world and nothing can stop me."

Q: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT YOUR APPEARANCE WHEN YOU WEAR A BINDER?

92% of people said they feel better about their appearance when wearing a binder.

"So much better like I look like me and people can see that instead of someone else."

"I feel like I'm on the right track in my transition knowing I'm doing everything I can to help my dysphoria."

"It boosts my confidence so much, occasionally I just go out shirtless only wearing my binder and it makes me feel so masculine."

"I feel better, I like how my clothes fit more."

WHAT HAS IT MEANT

Q: WHAT HAS IT MEANT TO YOU TO RECEIVE A BINDER THROUGH THIS PROGRAM?

"It has changed my day-to-day life immensely and helped me be a lot more confident."

"A lot, it lets me, and so many others know that we aren't alone, and there are people looking out for us."

"My life."

"I feel like I'm living more authentically and proudly non-binary as a result. It means so much. I will be wearing it more often than I have been once I am well enough to go out more often due to my disabilities. It does help me get out more at least mentally."

"It meant a lot to me, it meant I finally had something that actually fits me properly and does an adequate job of actually binding my chest and I was over the moon."

"Honestly, so much. I wasn't in a position where I could afford one and was using kinaesthetic tape to bind, which left me with skin irritation. This is so much better."

"It has meant the world to me since for a while money has been non-existent in my life."

"I can walk into the world without feeling like everybody is looking at my chest that I don't want to be there."

"Really a lot. I don't have a lot of money to my name and experience dysphoria every time I go out, getting a binder through this program was such an amazing opportunity!"

"It's meant the world to me, I honestly had never been happier in my life and I've had some pretty happy moments."

PROGRAM FEEDBACK

HOW DID IT GO?

- **100%** rated the program overall as 'excellent'
- **100%** said the registration process was easy or very easy
- **100%** said they would recommend the program to others
- **100%** said they were provided with enough information about binding
- **88%** feel more confident about accessing a binder in the future

"The program is amazing and the process is easy, thank you!!"

"This is life changing thank you."

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Q: IF THE PROGRAM COULD PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION OR RESOURCES, WHAT WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN?

83% were interested in receiving information about stretches and movements to support their body whilst binding.

