

# Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity

## Push and Pull Factors for Transgender Migration to Aotearoa/New Zealand

### Summary

Current research has primarily drawn on the push–pull theory to explain factors and circumstances that influence global human migration. Within Aotearoa/New Zealand however, the push–pull factors that influence transgender and nonbinary people’s migration are still poorly understood. Drawing on this gap, we employed the 2022 Counting Ourselves survey data to examine overseas-born transgender people’s migration intentions to Aotearoa, stratified by demographic differences including country of origin, length of stay, and immigration status. A sample of 576 overseas-born transgender people aged 14 and above were included in the survey ( $M=29.58$ ,  $SD=12.23$ ). Participants from the Global South, recent migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and those with a temporary visa or newly secured residency described greater acceptance of their trans identities and promising socioeconomic opportunities as primary pull factors for migrating to Aotearoa, while citing threats to their safety as push factors for leaving their home countries. Situating these findings within the current context of Aotearoa/New Zealand—specifically persistent concerns related to migrant welfare, exploitation, and racism—we emphasize the need for more culturally responsive policies and support systems to protect trans migrants who relocate to Aotearoa with hopes of a better, safer future.

### ***Public Significance Statement***

Trans participants who independently chose to migrate were drawn by the country’s reputation for embracing trans identities and offering greater openness around gender. Furthermore, escalating threats in their home countries acted as a push factor. Participants who migrated to Aotearoa for trans-related reasons were more likely to be from a Global South country, hold a temporary visa, or be newly arrived. Our findings challenge the migrant paradox hypothesis and call for greater culturally safe consideration in health care, employment, and government policies for trans migrants who call Aotearoa home.