2025 VINEGAR HILL CENSUS →



Gender Minorities Aotearoa and camp Not a Cult, with thanks to Queen Rhys and everyone who helped.

Cover photo by Calum Bennachie.

Dedicated to Tim Vincent.

About this report

The 2025 Vinegar Hill Census survey was carried out in December 2025 - January 2026.

It was run by camp Not a Cult, in collaboration with Gender Minorities Aotearoa and with support from Queen Rhys and her royal court.

We used paper survey forms, which were handed out by volunteers and at The Palace, where people could also return their completed forms.

In total, 98 people took the survey - thank you!!
That's 6 more than our last (2023) VH census.

30% of the survey participants arrived before Christmas, 5 arrived on Christmas day, and 15 on Boxing day.

47 arrived in the days after boxing day and before NYE, and we got no responses from anyone arriving on NYE.

Here's what participants told us.



Gender

36.7%	Women (n=36)
40.8%	Men (n=40)
30.6%	Nonbinary (n=30)
4%	Something else (n=4)

Everyone answered this question. Some people had more than one word for their gender, so our total is over 100%. Our biggest overlap between categories was 7 nonbinary women. 42% said they were transgender or unsure.

Orientation

Lots of people had more than one orientation - 96 people wrote 155 sexualities - an average of 1.5 sexualities each.

18%	Lesbian	**20%**	Pansexual
40%	Queer	**11%**	Takatāpui
28%	Gay	**4%**	Demi
29%	Bisexual	**8%**	Ace

1% of participants were heterosexual.

Ethnicity

Lots of people also had more than one ethnicity.

VH census 2025		Stats NZ census 2023	
92%	Pākehā	68%	Pākehā
24%	Māori	18%	Māori
2%	Asian	17%	Asian
2%	Pacific peoples	9%	Pacific peoples
13%	Something else	2%	MELAA

Where we're from

Of regions with more than 1 respondent, here is where we came from:

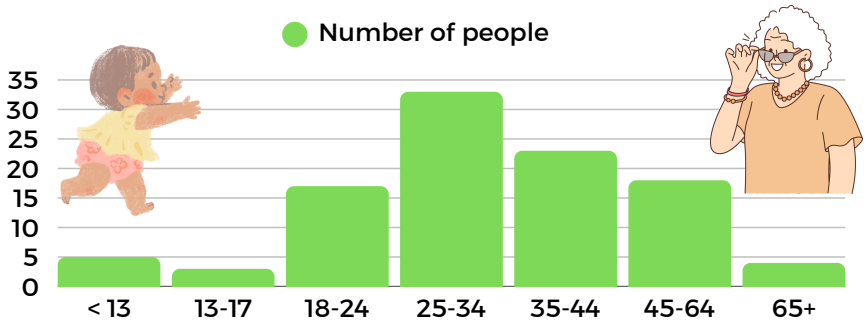


48%	Wellington	11%	Auckland
18%	Manawatū-Whanganui	6%	Bay of Plenty
6%	Waikato	3%	Taranaki

4% came from overseas. Folks lived urban (52%) suburban (44%), or rural (9%). Some lived in more than 1 place, so our total is >100%

Age

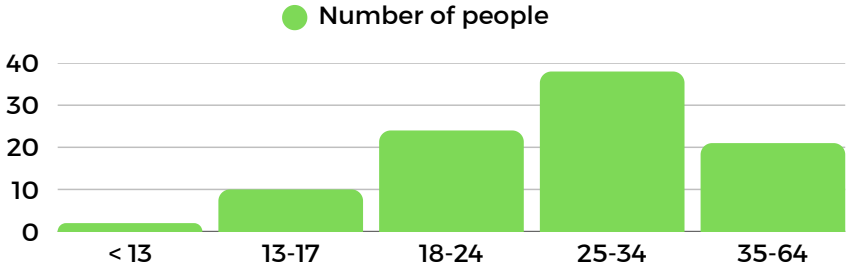
Roughly matching the median age of rainbow people in Aotearoa, our biggest groups were in their 20s and 30s.



Disability

34% of participants said “yes,” they were disabled. 13% of our total participants added “ADHD,” the highest write-in answer out of anything in the whole survey. 4% said they had EDS (Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome). The medical estimate for the general population is 0.04%, but rainbow communities seem to have much higher rates.

Age participants first came to Vinegar Hill



Who we came with

73%	Friend/s	**42%**	Partner/s
10%	Whānau	**4%**	Child/ren
2%	Parent/guardian/s	**14%**	Alone



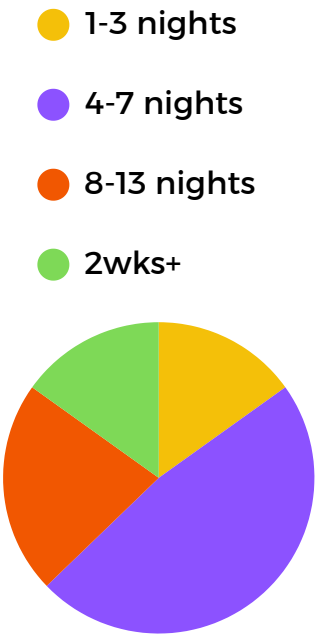
As one person said this year,
"You're never alone at the hill."

How long we stayed

There was a really good spread of how long people stay, with most people staying for up to one week, quite a few staying up to two weeks, and 15% staying 2 weeks or longer. Only 2 people making a single-day visit filled out our census.

There were:
13 people staying 1-3 nights
41 people staying 4-7 nights
19 people staying 8-13 nights
13 people staying 14+ nights

The longest stay was 22 nights.



How we spent our time

People love doing lots of different things at Vinegar Hill.

93%		Unplug and unwind →
89%		Enjoy nature →
89%		See friends →
75%		Make new friends →
68%		Swimming →
64%		Events →
52%		Dancing →
48%		Parties →

People also said they liked to spend time:

Drinking (55%), weed (32%), hanging out at Ryan's social space (30%), using other drugs (27%), cruising or having hookups (20%), community sports (19%) and using the adult's only maze (17%). Other mentions: hanging out with kids, dogs, fire, and learning.

What do you love most about coming to Vinegar Hill?

These are just a handful of quotes from answers to this question. We picked ones that represented the main themes.

- *“Swimming in the river. Sitting by the fire. Meeting new people. Relaxing away from the difficulties of regular life. Being my Queer best with no limits. <3 ”*
- *“Relaxing, unwinding and being part of a wider collective community who are respectful + loving and accepting.”*
- *“Slutting around with my pack o' sluts”*
- *“Meeting new people and learning about them, time outside, time with friends”*
- *“Spending time with my friends, swimming in the awa, feeling like I can truly be myself ”*
- *“Meeting new people making memories and catching up with people who I now consider whanau.”*
- *“Relaxing, eating and drinking and talking to my friends”*
- *“Dancing/Camping/Sunning/Getting high/Being with whanau to replenish my soul”*

Favourite events

Everyone loved lots of events.
These were the top 10 amongst participants.

First		NYE Party
2nd		Markets
3rd		Drag events
4th		Dance / circuit parties
5th		Fashion of the Field
6th		Mad Hatters' high tea
7th		Bingo/bingay
8th		Craft events
9th		Lube wrestling
10th		Queen's cocktail party

Other popular events included the gay quiz, softball, and game night.

What could be better?



The thing that the most people disliked or thought could be improved was (drum-roll please): dramas/politics/conflicts.



The next highest was the toilets - in particular wanting more portaloos by the entrance. This was our highest ranked issue in the 2023 VH census.



Following that was people who wanted *"Less straights (the bad straights, the good straights are okay)."* Controversial!

Other issues people raised included a need for drug safety checking, complaints about the weather, a few people raised issues with AI use at camp, theft, and problem weeds.











What is Vinegar Hill to you?

To round it off, survey participants told us what Vinegar Hill is to them:



“It's an experience for sure - one that rejuvenates my soul, the people here are my family.”



“Building long life friendships, being part of a fun loving family, respecting each others values and uniqueness.”



“fun, chaotic, silly.”



“Gay.”



“Why did I ever go to city house parties? There's a river here. Literally a river. And you can go in it. In the river. Transsexually.”



“Sunshine Rain Wind Friends Campfires Dogs River Cooking Love xxx ”



“Wonderful. I had an amazing time and made some fantastic friends.”

"Community, A feeling of being truely at home. Exciting, putting myself out of my comfort zone. Exploring nature and new people, exploring sexuality and being introduced to new ideas in a safe respectful way"

"Such a lovely time to be immersed in the queer community, to take part in an event with a cool tradition and history. There's something for everyone here. Very grateful for the existence of this camp "

Vinegar Hill is a camping area on the Rangitikei river, within the Putai Ngahere reserve in the Manawatū – Whanganui region, just north of Hunterville.

Each year from mid December to early January, over the Christmas and New Year holidays, gay, lesbian, transgender, and rainbow folks and their friends and whānau gather for camping and D.I.Y. community events.

It is not a commercial 'event', but simply a gathering of community at a camp ground.



Website: vinegarhillcamp.com