Transgender health: Disparities and protective factors

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Stigma
- Enacted
- Anticipated
- Internalized

Mental health
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Suicidal ideation

Behavioral health
- Healthcare avoidance
- Substance use
- Lower levels of treatment adherence

Health outcomes
- Reduced access to health care
- Health disparities
- Higher rates of HIV, lower rates of viral suppression
Intersectional stigma

Macro (structural)

Meso (community)

Micro (intra/interpersonal)

- Transphobia
- Racism
- Health-related stigma
- Sexism and gender discrimination
- Underground economy work stigma

Protective Coping
- Resilience
- Social/familial/Teacher support
- Access to transition-related services

Avoidant Coping
- Isolation
- Substance use
- Avoidance of health care or support services

Bowleg & Bauer, 2016
The murder of black transgender women is becoming a crisis

Petula Dvorak

June 17, 2019
Gender affirmation

• an interpersonal, interactive process whereby a person receives social recognition and support for their gender identity and expression
  • can also include medical processes, such as transition-related health care, and legal processes, such as changing one’s gender marker on legal documents.
Model of Gender Affirmation

“Identity Threat”

Sevelius, 2013
Enacted stigma

• Violence
  • Physical assault (53% lifetime, 13% past year)
  • Sexual assault (47% lifetime, 10% past year)

• Harassment
  • Verbal (54%, past year)

• Employment “mistreatment” (30% in past year)

• Family violence and rejection
  • Physical violence from family member (10% past year)
  • Being kicked out of the family home (8% ever)
Negative experiences among those with supportive and unsupportive families

- Experienced homelessness: 27% of respondents whose families were supportive, 45% of those whose families were unsupportive.
- Attempted suicide: 37% of respondents whose families were supportive, 54% of those whose families were unsupportive.
- Currently experiencing serious psychological distress: 31% of respondents whose families were supportive, 50% of those whose families were unsupportive.

From the U.S. Transgender Survey (USTS, 2015)
Psychological Distress

- Suicidal ideation
- Depression
- Self-harm
- Suicide attempt

USTS, 2015; MN Student Survey, 2013; NIMH, 2018
Self-Reported Physical and Mental Health of Gender Nonconforming Transgender Adults in the United States.

Streed CG Jr¹, McCarthy EP², Haas JS³.

Retrospective analysis of the 2014-2016 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Outcomes</th>
<th>Gender nonconforming transgender adults (n=450), n (%)³</th>
<th>Gender-binary transgender adults (n=1779) n (%)³</th>
<th>p (gender nonconforming vs. gender-binary transgender adults)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor or fair health</td>
<td>133 (30.3)</td>
<td>454 (20.2)</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions</td>
<td>111 (27.6)</td>
<td>323 (19.3)</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitation in any way</td>
<td>132 (36.3)</td>
<td>404 (20.1)</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Participants were college students from the Center for Collegiate Mental Health's 2012-2016 database, N=3,568 (892 identified outside the gender binary).

Compared to binary-identified cis and trans people, genderqueer participants reported higher levels of:

- harassment
- sexual abuse
- traumatic events
- anxiety
- depression
- psychological distress
- self-harm and suicidality (nearly 50% had attempted suicide)
Substance use as coping strategy

• In a 3-year prospective study of 230 transgender women in NYC:
  • ‘Gender abuse’ (enacted stigma) was found to be associated with substance use, and heavily mediated by depressive symptoms. (Nuttbrock et al, 2014)

• In a study of 292 young transgender women in San Francisco:
  • 69% reported recent drug use
  • Those with a history of gender-related discrimination and/or PTSD were almost twice as likely to use drugs
  • Those reporting psychological distress had higher odds of using multiple heavy drugs (Rowe et al, 2015)
Trans adults use illicit drugs at 3 times the rate of cis adults in the US.

Trans youth use illicit drugs at 2.5 to 4 times the rate of cis youth.

(USTS, 2015; Johns et al, 2019)
Figure 7.38: Substance use in the past month among respondents currently working in the underground economy

- Binge drinking in past month: 49% in USTS currently working in underground economy, 26% in USTS not currently working in underground economy, 27% in U.S. population (NSDUH)
- Current marijuana use: 60% in USTS currently working in underground economy
- Current nonmedical prescription drug use: 24% in USTS currently working in underground economy, 8% in USTS not currently working in underground economy, 2% in U.S. population (NSDUH)
- Current illicit drug use (not including marijuana or prescription drug use): 26% in USTS currently working in underground economy, 6% in USTS not currently working in underground economy, 2% in U.S. population (NSDUH)
- Current illicit drug use, marijuana, or prescription drug use: 26% in USTS currently working in underground economy, 3% in USTS not currently working in underground economy, N/A in U.S. population (NSDUH)
- Current illicit drug use, marijuana, and/or nonmedical prescription drug use: 68% in USTS currently working in underground economy, 28% in USTS not currently working in underground economy, 10% in U.S. population (NSDUH)
Resilience / Protective Factors

Stigma

Social support

Social Oppression

Psychological distress
Reduced self-care
Risk behavior

Poor health outcomes

Structural resources

Gender affirmation

- Stigma

- Protective Factors

- Better health outcomes
Social support: Family → Stigma → Psychological distress

Gower et al, 2018
Bockting et al. 2013
Social support: Trans community & peers

Stigma

Psychological distress
Gender affirmation: medical/social

Stigma

Psychological distress
Figure 7.24: Currently experiencing serious psychological distress
YEARS SINCE BEGAN TRANSITIONING (%)

- Overall: 39%
- 0 to 1 year: 41%
- 2 to 5 years: 38%
- 6 to 10 years: 31%
- 10 years or more: 24%
Conclusions

• Due to stigma, trans and gender diverse youth and adults experience poorer health outcomes than their cisgender peers.
  • *Intersectional stigma* influences who is most severely impacted

• Protective/resilience factors and potential points of intervention include:
  • Social support from peers, family, and trans community
  • Access to gender affirming healthcare
  • Structural resources: housing, employment, education
  • Internal resources: identity pride, coping
References


