

Social

Determinants

of Health:

A trans cultural perspective

Experiences of trans women living with HIV in Canada: findings from a national community-based participatory research project

TWIRI

Trans Women HIV Research Initiative



Social Determinants of Health: A trans cultural perspective

STUDY OVERVIEW

A large body of research focuses on trans women's access to HIV prevention, yet little research focuses on their experiences of health and well-being post-diagnosis. Social factors have key implications on health:

- Simply administering medical treatment is often insufficient to improve health
- Poverty, gender inequity, and a multitude of other factors have a major impact on women's vulnerability to health problems and (in)ability to access care and support
- Trans women have a much higher risk of HIV due to social and structural issues

Gaps in the literature: Experiences of trans women living with HIV:

- Little is known about how these social and structural inequities are experienced by trans women living with HIV, particularly in a Canadian context
- We conducted a preliminary analysis looking at the social determinants of health for trans women participating in a large cohort of women living with HIV in Canada

Study Design

This analysis draws on data from a longitudinal, community-based research project called the Canadian HIV Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health Cohort Study (CHIWOS). The study includes 1422 individuals living with HIV living in Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia, including 52 trans women.

Study Objective

To compare cis and trans women in CHIWOS across sociodemographic factors (age, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, education), key social determinants of health (income, employment, housing and food security, social exclusion, and access to HIV-related care), and health and mental health outcomes (CD4 count, viral load, depressive and post-traumatic stress symptoms).

Methods of Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means; frequencies). Compared factors between cis (n=1357) and trans (n=52) women participating in CHIWOS using chi-square and ANOVA.

Access to the Social Determinants of Health for trans women with HIV

The social determinants of health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, including: income, education, food and housing, and inclusion. Studies show that trans people experience deprivations across the social determinants of health due to unjust policies and practices that increase discrimination and limit their access to opportunities. However, little is known about the experiences of trans women with HIV with respect to the social determinants of health.

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

- Mean age: 41 years
- 56.9% identify as heterosexual
- 82.7% have a high school or higher education
- 79.2% are single/separated/widowed/divorced
- 35.8% of women are Indigenous, and 35.8% White/Caucasian, 20.8% Other ethnicity, 7.5% Black
- 71.7% were born in Canada
- 73.1% living with HIV for 6+ years

Characteristics of trans women in CHIWOS (n= 52)

MENTAL HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

- 44.2% have depressive symptoms
- 44.2% have post-traumatic stress symptoms

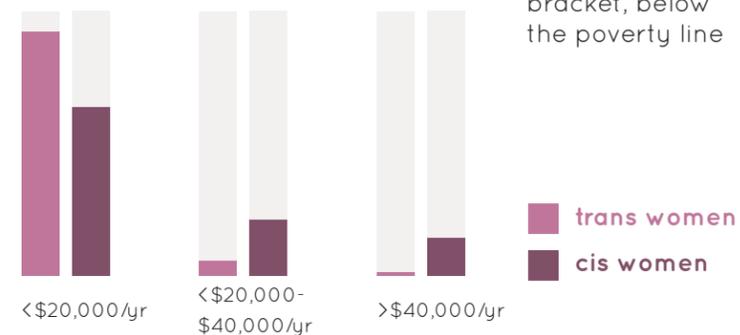
HEALTH CHARACTERISTICS

- 67.9% currently on ARVs
- 76.6% undetectable viral load
- 32.1% have been diagnosed with Hepatitis C
- 9.4% have been diagnosed with Hepatitis B

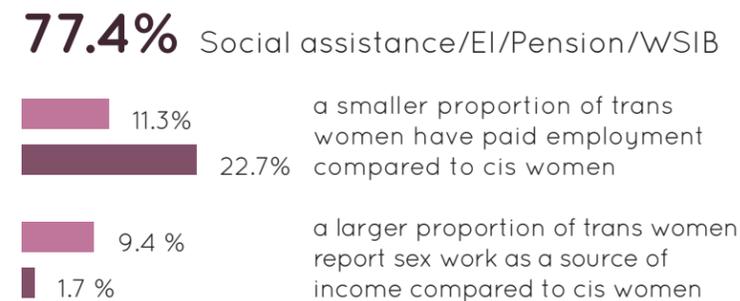
INCOME



Most trans women are living in the lowest income bracket, below the poverty line



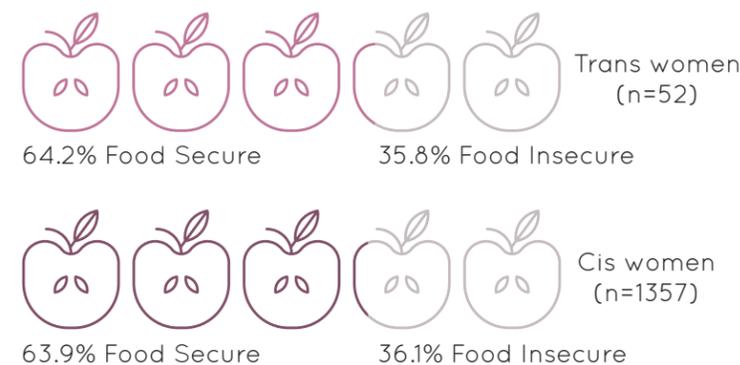
Main sources of income:



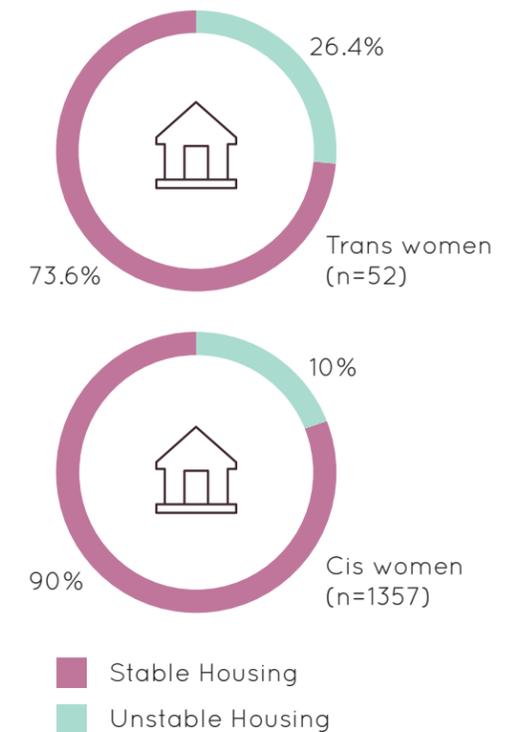
a smaller proportion of trans women have paid employment compared to cis women

a larger proportion of trans women report sex work as a source of income compared to cis women

FOOD SECURITY



HOUSING STABILITY



SOCIAL EXCLUSION



87.8% of trans women experienced violence in childhood vs 68.0% of cis women

Among trans women specifically...

84.1% report being made fun of or called names for their trans identity or experience sometimes or many times

88.6% report hearing that trans people are not normal sometimes or many times

81.8% report being fetishized sexually because they are trans sometimes or many times

DEFINITIONS

Transgender (trans): An umbrella term referring to people with diverse gender identities and expressions that may differ from stereotypical gender norms.

Cisgender (cis): This is when someone's gender identity aligns with their sex assigned at birth.

TRANS-SPECIFIC & GENERAL HEALTHCARE



68.1% of women currently taking hormones



55.3% of women have a family doctor other than their HIV doctor

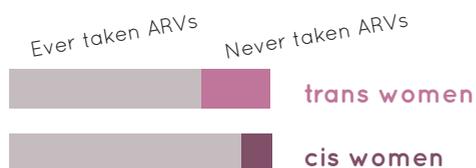


38.3% of women report that their HIV **doctor has not discussed** potential interactions between hormones and HIV medication



Most women report being comfortable or very comfortable discussing trans-specific healthcare needs with their family doctor (92.3%) and HIV doctor (86.5%)

HIV-RELATED HEALTHCARE



8.2% of trans women have never accessed HIV-related care vs 2.5% of cis women

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DATA

Trans women with HIV...

- Are predominantly living in poverty
- Experience very high rates of violence in childhood and adulthood
- Experience social isolation and transphobia
- Experience less access to HIV-related care compared to cis women with HIV
- Have a need to access many different types of services in addition to HIV care, including: trans-specific, mental health, substance use, and social determinants of health services (e.g. income/employment)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure all staff and healthcare providers are trained about trans inclusion
- Include trans people in developing educational and training materials, from development to implementation
- Consult with the community; include a diverse group of trans people and engage them on advisory boards, working groups, etc.
- Include trans people in all levels of trans healthcare decisions, including development of programs, delivery of programs, and management of programs
- Educate yourself on trans specific issues, such as drug interactions between hormone therapy and antiretrovirals, and share this knowledge with colleagues
- Engage with local community services and agencies and keep their resources on-hand and available for patients
- Adopt a trauma and violence-aware form of care
- Provide opportunities for patients to receive or find peer-to-peer support

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Persad, Y., Lacombe-Duncan, A., Bauer, G., Logie, C. H., Kaida, A., de Pokomandy, A., Butler-Burke, N., O'Brien, N., & Loutfy, M., on behalf of the CHIWOS Research Team. (2017, October). Social determinants of health among trans women with HIV in Canada: Results of a national community-based cohort study. Poster accepted for presentation at the Canadian Professional Association for Transgender Health Conference 2017: Transforming the Landscape of Transgender Health and Wellness, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.