

“It has never seemed relevant” - Trans and Gender Diverse Australian’s responses to HIV.

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Background:

Despite being recognised as a key population at risk for HIV, there is a paucity of research dedicated to trans and gender diverse (TGD) people within the HIV response. Positive Life NSW and The Gender Centre conducted a TGD needs assessment in collaboration with TGD community members to identify the healthcare and social needs of TGD people living with HIV (PLHIV) or at risk of acquiring HIV.

Methods:

Between June and September 2019, n=699 respondents were recruited through social media for a national online anonymous survey, with TGD people central to its development and implementation. The survey asked open and closed questions about demographics, access and experience of healthcare settings, gender affirming hormones and surgery experience, sexual health literacy, mental health, housing, employment, discrimination, and preferred TGD-specific future research directions.

Results:

Participants included trans men (21.5%), trans women (40.3%), gender diverse people assigned female at birth (22.2%) and assigned male at birth (16%). 2.8% were PLHIV and 13.8% were HIV unknown. While many respondents showed literacy in HIV awareness, 9.1% of participants reported no HIV screening in six or more years, while 40.1% reported never undertaking HIV screening. Half of all respondents (54.8%) were aware of Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) and Post Exposure Prophylaxis, and only 3.3% were taking PrEP. Respondents identified numerous HIV testing and care barriers, and gaps in knowledge potentially contributed to low rates of HIV awareness and screening among these respondents. Participants reported significant concerns about stigma and discrimination in healthcare settings.

Conclusion:

Findings showed HIV risk awareness and HIV testing was low. TGD people require targeted resources and communication about HIV. Respondents felt safe and comfortable discussing sexual health within trans-inclusive clinics, with peer workers/clinicians knowledgeable of TGD medical care and sexuality, non-judgmental and respectful. The survey results will be used to develop educational resources.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

Nothing to declare.
