Aging Transgender Adults in Massachusetts: Social Stress, Mental Health, and Physical Health Indicators

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Disclosures

NO CONFLICTS OF INTEREST TO DISCLOSE.
Aging Transgender Adults

- Trans* → gender identity differs from assigned birth sex

- Exact prevalence is unknown – U.S. estimates vary from 0.1 to 0.5%
  
  Conron et al. 2012; Gates, (2011)

- Estimates → over one-million transgender people over 50 in U.S.
  
  Witten, (2003)
Age-Related Stressors & Health

Aging adults face:

- Onset of chronic health conditions
- Economic constraints
- Decreased mobility
- Reduced or altered social connectivity
- Age related discrimination
  - Cardiovascular responses to stress
  - Risk of mortality
  - Psychological distress
  - Reduced self-care & physical activity
  - Decreased desire to live

(Levy et al., 2000a,b; Pascoe et al., 2009; Yuan, 2007; Sánchez et al., 2009; Scott et al., 2011)
Aging transgender adults may also experience gender-related stressors:

- Discrimination in everyday settings → Poor mental health
  - Employment
  - Housing
  - Healthcare → Barriers to care

- Lack/loss of family or social support

(White Hughto et al., 2015; Fredriksen-Goldsen et al., 2014; Kattari & Hasche, 2015)
Research on Age vs. Gender-Related Discrimination

- **Multiple disadvantaged statuses** may be vulnerable to discrimination and poor health (Grollman, 2014)

- **Limited research** on age-related discrimination among aging transgender adults

- Research needed to **inform interventions**:
  - Reduce discrimination
  - Improve the health of aging transgender adults
Raise your voice for our health
Share your stories with Project VOICE
Voicing Our Individual and Community Experiences

The Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition and Fenway Health seeks transgender adult volunteers in Massachusetts to take part in an online survey on stress and health.

YOU MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO PARTICIPATE IF YOU:
- Are transgender or gender non-conforming
- Are age 18 years or older
- Live or have lived in Massachusetts in the past year

The purpose of this needs assessment is to gain a deeper understanding of the health of transgender adult communities in Massachusetts, and to specifically understand the social stressors that influence health and wellbeing across the life course of transgender people.

Participants have the chance to be entered into a raffle with over $500 in gift cards and prizes, including an iPad.
Study Purpose

[1] Describe the sociodemographic, discrimination experiences, social support systems, and mental and physical health of aging transgender individuals in MA.

[2] Explore the distribution of reasons attributed to everyday discrimination experiences, including age & gender.

[3] Evaluate whether number of discrimination experiences predict recent physical and emotional health symptoms, after adjustment for known protective factors (social support) and potential confounders (age and gender).
Methods: Analytic Sample

- 452 in the Voice sample
  - 391 Excluded who were under age 50
  - 61 Transgender adults age 50 and older
Measures

- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Assigned sex at birth
- Gender identity
- Employment
- Annual income
- Relationship status
- Social Support
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
Primary Predictor: Everyday Discrimination

**Everyday discrimination - past 12 months**

Responses 0 = “never” to 4 = “very often”:

- You have been treated with less courtesy than other people
- You have been called names or insulted
- You have been threatened or harassed
- People have acted as if they are judging you negatively

**Discrimination Attributions**

- Age
- Gender identity
- Race
- Weight
- Income

(Krieger et al., 2005; Taylor et al., 2004; Williams et al., 1997)
Outcomes: Recent Stress Responses

**Physical Stress Response** (yes/no)

*Experienced physical symptoms* *(headache, upset stomach, tensing of muscles, or a pounding heart) due to discrimination in past 30 days*

**Emotional Stress Response** (yes/no)

*Felt emotionally upset (e.g., sad, or frustrated) due to discrimination in the past 30 days*
Age & Race

**Age**
- 50-54: 30%
- 55-59: 34%
- 60-64: 26%
- 65-69: 7%
- 70-75: 3%

**Race**
- White, Not Hispanic: 79%
- Black, Not Hispanic: 3%
- Hispanic: 5%
- Multiracial: 7%
- Other Race, Non-Hispanic: 3%

**Mean:** 57.7
**SD:** 5.8
Gender & Relationship Status

Gender Spectrum
- Trans Masculine / FTM Spectrum: 23%
- Trans Feminine / MTF Spectrum: 77%

Relationship Status
- Single: 62%
- In a relationship: 38%
Income & Employment

Income

- Under $35k: 53%
- 35K or more: 47%

Employment

- Employed: 44%
- Out of Work: 13%
- Homemaker: 12%
- Retired: 3%
- Unable to work: 13%
- Prefer not to answer: 5%

Legend:
- Blue: Employed
- Dark Gray: Out of Work
- Light Gray: Homemaker
- Light Blue: Retired
- Teal: Unable to work
- Purple: Prefer not to answer
Social Support & Connectedness

52% of the sample had a family that supported their trans identity/expression

4.2 ➔ Mean number of close friends (SD=3.3)
Chronic Physical Health Conditions

- High cholesterol: 34%
- Hypertension: 33%
- Arthritis: 30%
Current and Lifetime Mental Health Outcomes

- PTSD (Lifetime Diagnosis): 30%
- Anxiety (Lifetime Diagnosis): 39%
- Depression (Lifetime Diagnosis): 52%
- Currently receiving mental health treatment: 48%
Discrimination & Stress Responses

- Any public accommodation discrimination - Past 12 mo: 46%
- Discrimination in healthcare setting - Past 12 mo: 26%
- Emotional stress response - past 30 days: 30%
- Physical stress response - past 30 days: 53%
Mean Everyday Discrimination Scores by Attribute

Total (n=61; SD=3.9)

Age & Gender (n=15; SD=3.9)

Gender Only (n=28; SD=3.4)

Age Only (N=6; SD=4.2)

Other Reason (n=12; SD=3.2)

Referent

F Statistic = 4.41, p=0.007

Sum Score (Range 0-11)
## Association of Everyday Discrimination to Emotional Stress Response - Past 30 Days

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## Association of Everyday Discrimination to Physical Stress Response - Past 30 Days

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<td>Age</td>
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<td><strong>0.82-0.93</strong></td>
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Aging transgender adults in MA report chronic mental and physical health conditions.

Discrimination is common in everyday settings.

Those attributing discrimination to age and/or gender reported significantly higher mean everyday discrimination scores relative to those attributing discrimination to attributes other than age or gender.

Everyday discrimination associated with higher odds of emotional and physical stress responses.
Limitations and Strengths

Limitations
- Cross-sectional data
- Non-probability sample

Strengths
- Multi-sector, multi-disciplinary community engagement and partnerships
- State-wide data on hard to reach population
Additional research is needed to:

- Understand the effects of aging and transgender status on health
- Explore which aspects of social support can be leveraged to combat the effects of discrimination
- Develop interventions to promote the health and resilience in this vulnerable aging population
# Collaborators

## Co-Author

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sari Reisner, ScD, MA (Fenway &amp; Harvard)</th>
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## Mentor

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<th>John Pachankis, PhD (Yale)</th>
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## Community Partners

- Outreach Consultants: Lorelei and Maria Roman
- Community Partners: Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition: Jesse Bengenyi, Mason Dunn, Gunner Scott, Devyn Shea
- The Fenway Institute: Julia Coffey-Esquivel, Amaya Perez-Brumer, Angela Robertson, Nelisa Rash, Layla Stamper, Dana Pardee, Justice Williams, Anum Awan
- Boston Medical Center Health Care for the Homeless Program: Pam Klein, Rebecca Thal
- The Network/La Red: Tre’Andre Valentine
- AIDS Project Worcester: Jesse Pack
- Boston GLASS: Tharyn Grant
- Worcester State University: Laura Mizock

Photo Credit: MTPC

## Project VOICE Collaborators

- Emilia Dunham (Fenway & Brandeis)
- Katherine Heflin (Fenway & Harvard)
- Jesse Bengenyi (MTPC)
- Sean Cahill, PhD (Fenway & NYU)
Thank You!
Questions?

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