

# Access to healthcare by Transgender and Gender Non-conforming individuals: preliminary evidence from a cross-sectional study

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## Introduction/Summary

- Transgender and gender nonconforming individuals (TGNC) face multiple barriers to healthcare, due to stigma, inadequate healthcare services and poorly trained healthcare professionals.
- Available data on TGNC is scarce, especially in the Italian context, and mainly regards TGNC with HIV (2,3).
- The aim of this study was to understand how this group faces discrimination in the healthcare setting and to evaluate the specific needs of TGNC to help reduce the gap and increase retention-in-care.

## Study Design & Methods

- An online survey has been conducted in March 2024 among TGNC.
- The 1<sup>st</sup> section of the survey collected epidemiological and socio-economic data.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> section investigated the experienced discrimination in healthcare settings;
- The 3<sup>rd</sup> section examined access to healthcare, with a particular focus on trans-care specific services.

Characteristic	Value
Age (mean)	27,7
Sex assigned at birth, N (%)	
Male	19 (30,6%)
Female	20 (64,5%)
Prefer not to say	21 (3,2%)
Gender Identity, N (%)	
Trans woman	15 (24,6%)
Trans Man	30 (49,2%)
Genderqueer	13 (21,3%)
Other	2 (3,3%)
Ethnicity, N (%)	
White	59 (96,7%)
Mix	1 (1,6%)
Asian	1 (1,6%)
Education, N (%)	
Less than High School Diploma	7 (11,5%)
High School Diploma	32 (52,5%)
University Degree	22 (36,1%)
Sexual Orientation, N (%)	
Heterosexual	17 (27,9%)
Homosexual	31 (50,8%)
Bi/Pansexual	10 (16,4%)
Asexual	2 (3,3%)
Other	1 (1,6%)
Country of birth, N (%)	
Italy	59 (96,7%)
USA	1 (1,6%)
Brazil	1 (1,6%)
Work Status, N (%)	
Student	17 (27,9%)
Worker	31 (50,8%)
Looking for employment	10 (10,64%)
NEET	2 (3,3%)
Retired	1 (1,6%)

## Results - Demographics

As of 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, **61 subjects** took part to the study (Table 1).

- 24% identify as trans women, 49% as trans men, 21% as non-binary and 3% as other.
- The majority identifies as bi/pansexual (62%), 16.4% as heterosexual and 13% as homosexual.
- The majority are white (97%), born in Italy (97%) and employed (51%); the average age is 27 years.

## Results – Discrimination and Health Care

Discriminated for being TGNC by the HC personnel	
Yes	31 (51%)
No	30 (49%)
Fear of booking a medical consult	
Yes	33 (54%)
No	28 (46%)
Misgendered during a medical consult	
Yes	50 (82%)
No	11 (18%)
Affirmations based on stereotypes about TG people during medical consult	
Yes	22 (36%)
No	39 (64%)
Invasive and unnecessary questions	
Yes	22 (36%)
No	39 (64%)
Gender identity has been questioned	
Yes	31 (51%)
No	30 (49%)
Assistance denied for being TGNC	
Yes	3 (5%)
No	58 (95%)
Experienced aggressive behaviour for being	
Yes	7 (11%)
No	54 (89%)
Verbally assaulted for being TGNC	
Yes	4 (7%)
No	57 (93%)

- More than half of the responders have felt discriminated at least once during a medical consultation (51%) or avoided seeking for healthcare assistance due to fear of discrimination (54%);
- 82% reported being addressed with the wrong pronouns, 36% were asked intrusive questions about their gender identity, and 51% of the responders stated their gender identity was questioned at least once by a healthcare provider.
- For 70% of the responders, their family doctor is poorly or not prepared at all on trans-specific healthcare issues.

## Results – Gender affirming care

- Around 66% of the sample reported having started their gender affirmation journey.
- 31% never had an **endocrinology** consultation due to costs or difficulty in accessing the service,
- Among the participants who had an endocrinologic evaluation, 33% had to wait at least 3 months to get the first appointment.
- 46% of the participants do not have access to gender-affirming hormone therapy (GAHT) but are interested in it.
- 30% reported being interested in **gender-affirming surgery** but face financial constraints, while 11% would not know how to start the procedure in order to access to this service.

## Results – Sexual Health

- The majority of the sample had one (39%) or 0 (44%) sexual intercourse in the last 6 months.
- 46% of the sample do not know what PrEP is.
- Only 41% of the responders have ever done an STI screening, the majority (80%) as a regular check-up; among people who have never done it, 69% do not think to be at risk of STI, 14% would not know where to do it.
- 57% of the sample has never done an HIV test, the majority (62,5%) because they do not consider themselves at risk of contracting the virus.

## Conclusion

- Our survey highlights the inadequate consideration of TGNC by healthcare assistance services: physicians are perceived as not sufficiently trained from both a scientific and social perspective, and the health system do not fully cover TGNC needs.
- More data is needed to fully understand the health gap that TGNC face, in order to design targeted public health policies aiming to improve trans-care services.

## References

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