

The experiences of trans and gender diverse people living with HIV in Australia

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Background:

There is limited representation of trans and gender diverse (TGD) people in existing research on people living with HIV. Our qualitative study investigated TGD HIV positive people's experiences of health systems, support services, identity and social connection to inform research and program development.

Methods:

This study reports on 13 semi-structured interviews with trans and gender diverse people living with HIV in Australia. Interviews were collected in 2025 online and at La Trobe University. We asked participants about their life experiences, identity, and interactions with healthcare and support services. Interviews were analysed with reflexive thematic analysis. The study also involved a community advisory group who contributed to the research design, recruitment, data collection tools, and interpretation of results.

Results:

Participants' gender and HIV status were interconnected in their everyday negotiations with identity, social interactions, and healthcare. Binary gender norms defined many of their interactions with HIV support spaces and clinical settings. Participants were frequently misgendered and noticed an absence of TGD people and perspectives in these spaces. Significantly, HIV status and gender identity deeply shaped the ways participants navigated identity, risk, prevention, healthcare, and relationships. While participants recognised the complex relationship between their identities, they also noted an absence of broader knowledge of the experiences of TGD people living with HIV and desired a greater sense of belonging with other TGD people living with HIV.

Conclusion:

Understanding the relationship between HIV status and gender identity is key to appropriately supporting TGD people living with HIV and improving the visibility and knowledge of the experiences of TGD people living with HIV in Australia. We recommend that research and support services improve understandings of the intersection of HIV status and TGD identity and support the representation of TGD people living with HIV in research, peer support settings, education and advocacy.

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