

Introducing the Global Trans Research Evidence Map: Documenting research with transgender, gender non-binary, and other gender diverse individuals and communities*

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Summary Discussions of sex and gender in research do not always include the full diversity of gender identity and instead rely on cisgender conceptualizations of what it means to be male or female. In this study we document research with transgender, gender non-binary, and other gender diverse (trans) individuals and communities, with particular attention to study topic and study design.

1. Relevance

There is limited information about how transgender, gender non-binary, and other gender diverse (trans) people have been studied and represented by researchers. Because many people are not aware of the amount of research that has been conducted, this leads to misunderstandings and miscommunication. Such misunderstandings may be particularly troublesome if trans community members are unaware of research that can potentially inform questions they have about their lives.

2. Aims & Objectives

The objectives of this study were to: 1) map and describe trans research in the social sciences, sciences, humanities, health, education, and business with particular attention to study topic and study design, 2) identify evidence gaps and opportunities for more responsible research with trans individuals and communities, and 3) increase access to trans research for key stakeholders through the creation of a web-based evidence map.

3. Methods

A scoping review was designed informed by community consultations and pilot searches. Eligibility criteria were established to include all original research of any design, including trans people or their health information, and published in English in peer-reviewed journals. A complex search of 15 academic databases conducted in early 2015 resulted in 25,230 references after duplicates were removed.

4. Results

This data analysis highlights 690 trans-focused articles that met the screening criteria and were published between 2010 and 2014. The ten topics studied most frequently were: 1) therapeutics and surgeries; 2) gender identity and expression; 3) mental health; 4) biology and physiology; 5) discrimination and marginalization; 6) physical health; 7) sexual health, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs); 8) health and mental health services; 9) social support, relationships, and families; and 10) resilience, well-being, and quality-of-life. This map also highlights the relatively minor attention that has been paid to a number of study topics linked to the social determinants of health including: ethnicity, culture, race, and racialization; housing; income; employment; and space and place.

5. Conclusions

Who conducts research with trans people and how this research is carried out has implications for trans people and our health. Review results will increase awareness of existing trans research, identify evidence gaps, and have the potential to inform community responses to increasing research investigation.

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