

# Suicidal thoughts and attempts among HIV-positive trans women in Trans Amigas study, São Paulo, Brazil

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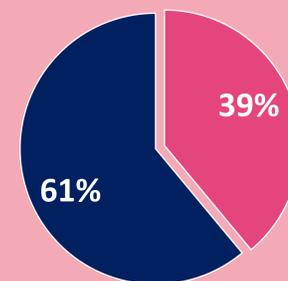
**Background:** Transgender women living with HIV face a complex set of psychosocial challenges in access and adherence to HIV care, including multiple stigmas. In general, trans people report high rates of mental health concerns, such as depression, resulting in increased levels of suicidal ideation compared to the cisgender population. This study aims to investigate the prevalence of suicidal thoughts and attempts, and associated factors among HIV-positive trans women in the TransAmigas study.

**Methods:** TransAmigas was a randomized pilot study of a 9-month peer-navigation intervention anchored in the Gender Affirmation Model, specifically developed for the trans population. Between May and December 2018, interviewer-administered questionnaires were applied to 113 HIV positive, 18+ transgender women upon study entry. Bivariate and multivariate Poisson regression models were employed to analyze lifetime suicidal attempt association with transphobic violence experiences, mental health, substance use and sociodemographic variables, such as unstable housing, that is defined as living on the street, in a shelter or at work. This analysis includes 109/113 participants who responded to questions regarding living situation. For this preliminary analysis, 4 participants gave answers that were not classified.

**Results:** The majority of participants reported previous suicidal thoughts 69 (61.1%), while 45 (39.8%) reported previous attempted suicide, and 13 (11.5%) attempted suicide in the previous 12 months. In a multivariate model adjusted for age, ethnicity, education and income, having suffered transphobic sexual violence (adjusted Prevalence Ratio [aPR] 1.75; CI95% 1.09 - 2.80) and unstable housing (aPR 2.09; CI95% 1.29 - 3.36) were associated with having attempted suicide at least once in their lifetime. Self evaluation of mental health and illicit substance use were not significantly associated with the outcome. Among ethnicity categories, being parda had a protective effect on the outcome when compared with white participants (aPR 0.52).

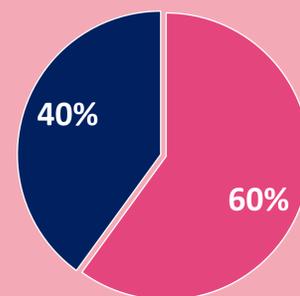
**Suicidality is a relevant health problem among transgender people and investigating risk factors of suicide in HIV positive transgender women may inform the development of preventative interventions**

Lifetime suicidal thoughts

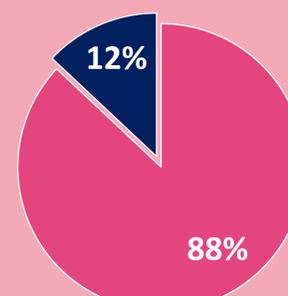


■ No ■ Yes

Lifetime suicide attempts



Suicide attempts in the last year



Multivariate correlates of lifetime suicidal attempt among HIV-positive trans women. Trans Amigas study, São Paulo, Brazil, 2018-2019. (n =109)

	Suicidal attempt (lifetime)		aPR	CI95%	p-value
	No (%)	Yes (%)			
<b>Age</b>					
18-25	15 (65.2)	8 (34.8)	1	-	-
25-34	29 (58.0)	21 (42.0)	1.22	0.72 - 2.09	0.46
35 or +	24 (60.0)	16 (40.0)	2.14	1.15 - 3.98	0.02
<b>Ethnicity</b>					
White	19 (52.8)	17 (47.2)	1	-	-
Black	6 (46.1)	7 (53.9)	1.38	0.78 - 2.42	0.27
Parida	37 (68.5)	17 (31.5)	0.5	0.32 - 0.87	0.01
Other	6 (60.00)	4 (40.00)	0.94	0.40 - 2.19	0.89
<b>Education (years)</b>					
<12	46 (63.0)	27 (36.9)	1	-	-
>=12	22 (55.0)	18 (45.0)	1.14	0.72 - 1.80	0.59
<b>Unstable Housing</b>					
No	54 (64.3)	30 (35.7)	1	-	-
Yes	14 (48.3)	15 (51.7)	2.09	1.29 - 3.36	>0.01
<b>Ever experienced sexual violence for being trans</b>					
No	43 (69.4)	19 (30.6)	1	-	-
Yes	25 (49.0)	26 (51.0)	1.75	1.09 - 2.80	0.02
<b>Income (in monthly minimum wages [MMW])</b>					
Below 1 MMW	21 (50.0)	21 (50.0)	1	-	-
1-2 MMW	21 (67.7)	10 (32.3)	0.61	0.34 - 1.08	0.09
More than 2 MMW	26 (65.0)	14 (35.0)	0.91	0.50 - 1.66	0.76



**Conclusions:** This study documents high rates of suicidal ideation and attempts among transgender women living with HIV. The association of suicidality with sexual violence and housing instability underscores the importance of addressing structural factors in health interventions with transgender women living with HIV.

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