

# Transsexual people are frequently victims of aggression and discrimination

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The process of gender reassignment in transsexual individuals is complex. A new study analyses the characteristics of this collective as well as the psychological adjustment they must undergo during the process. Of the sample studied, 81.75% suffered from some type of physical aggression during their lifetime, 31.16% perceived discrimination in the workplace and 22.84% attempted suicide at least once.

Sticking to the general definition, transsexuality is the attainment, by an individual, of the physical characteristics of the opposite sex by means of surgery or hormone therapy. But the process of gender reassignment is much more complicated than that.

"The transgender population demanding treatment frequently presents psychological difficulties, chiefly when beginning treatment", explains José Guzmán Parra to Sinc, a researcher at the Mental Health Unit of the Málaga Regional University Hospital.

Guzmán Parra is one of the authors of a new study, published in *The Archives of Sexual Behavior*, the objective of which was to identify some socio-demographic and psychological characteristics of transgender individuals.

"This population frequently deals with heavy stress—known as minority stress—due to the regular episodes of discrimination that affect them, including physical and verbal aggression", adds the researcher.

In addition, there is the presentiment of discrimination that is produced or the internalised attitudes of rejection and social isolation resulting from failure to adapt to the situation. "Nevertheless -continues Guzmán Parra- satisfactory improvement in quality of life and mental health is generally achieved with the gender reassignment treatment".

The transgender population studied (197 individuals of both genders) was attended at the hospital in Málaga for their treatment. An interview was conducted and standardised questionnaires were used concerning depression (BDI), social anxiety (SAD) and personality disorders (SCID-II-PQ).

According to the results, 81.75% received some type of physical aggression during their lifetime and 31.16% perceived discrimination in the workplace. "It seems that female transsexuals have greater difficulties integrating, as they have higher unemployment, a lower level of education and more frequently carry out activities related to prostitution", points out the expert.

Additionally, out of the total sample, 16.24% met the criteria for depression, 25.89% met the criteria for social anxiety and 22.84% had attempted suicide at least once during their lifetime. The factor that was most closely associated with symptoms of depression was the lack of integration in the workplace.

## **Optimising the intervention aimed at this collective**

Transsexuality is when a person experiences a gender identity that is different from the one determined by their body at birth. In September 2015 a joint statement was published by the organisms of the United Nations, urging that the violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex individuals be put to an end.

However, despite the legal and social progress that has taken place in recent years, this population continues to suffer from high levels of discrimination. The new study suggests that greater social and labour integration can have a positive impact on the health and quality of life of these individuals.

"Understanding the social and psychological difficulties that they face may help to design better interventions and prevent the causes of these difficulties", concludes Guzmán Parra.

**More information:** José Guzmán-Parra et al. Sociodemographic Characteristics and Psychological Adjustment Among Transsexuals in Spain, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* (2015). [DOI: 10.1007/s10508-015-0557-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0557-6)

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