

Understanding The Perspectives of Gender-Diverse Youth Who Live With Chronic Pain To Improve Equity and Access to Care



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INTRODUCTION

Gender-diverse youth have higher risk of physical and mental health conditions compared to cisgender youth, and face barriers to accessing care. Little is known about how gender-diverse youth experience chronic pain. There may be unique aspects of the experience of gender-diverse youth that impact pain, such as minority stress and gender-affirming treatments.

METHODS

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with youth (n=16 to date) who identify as gender-diverse and live with chronic pain, inquiring about experiences of accessing pain care, conceptualization of the relationship between gender and pain, and priorities for future research. Interviewer was a white, cisgender female psychologist-researcher.

Research was co-designed with a patient partner with lived experience, and in consultation with key partner organizations: PainBC, Trans Care BC, and Solutions for Kids in Pain.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS & RECOMMENDATION

Preliminary themes and illustrative quotes are presented below.

Gender-diverse youth face unique stressors and circumstances in managing their pain, but these experiences are one part of considering the whole person.

Basic principles of respect, dignity, and creating safe and accessible environments are critical.

We are a subset of subsets. We are a minority of minorities. So there are so many things that overlap and go into our identities. – A007

Youth identity is complex, and encompasses more than their gender identity and chronic pain.

When I had to like, “fit in”, I had to... I’m still actively noticing my pain and wanting to vocalize it, but I don’t, because that’s not what society wants of me if I want to be, like, if I want to be a boy. – A004

Adopting gender role norms relating to pain can be an important part of affirming gender identity.

[Need for] more gender-neutral washrooms that are accessible for disabled people (...) Asking pronouns in medical appointments (...) Mostly very simple things that have an easy fix (...) Recently I have been to many medical appointments and so far the only person that really asked for my pronouns was my therapist. – A005

I didn’t like going to the doctor, it was really anxiety-inducing for me (...) anyone having to examine my body, I didn’t like that at all. – A001

Gender-diverse youth experience unique stressors, and supportive, affirming environments provide a critical buffer.

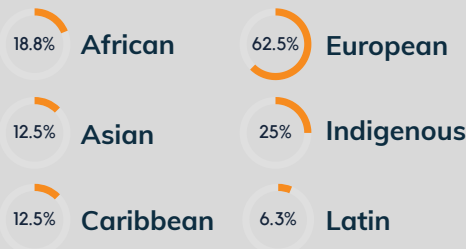
Age

Total sample = 16 youth
Range = 14-18 years of age
Mean age = 16 years
Standard deviation = 1.46

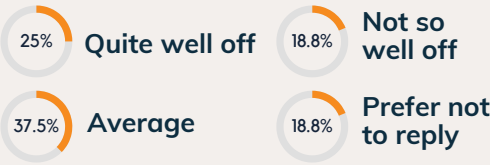
Gender Identities Represented[§]

Agender
Androgynous
Demi-boy
Gender fluid
Male
Non-binary
Queer or genderqueer
Trans female
Trans male or trans masculine

Ethnicity



Family Socio-economic Status



Type of Chronic Pain[§]

Abdominal
Dermatological
Headache/Migraine
Musculoskeletal
Other

Co-occurring Conditions[§]

Psychiatric
(e.g. anxiety, depression, PTSD)
Neurodevelopmental
(e.g. ADHD)
Medical
(e.g. neurological, orthopedic)

§Only reported here if self-disclosed during the interview.

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K.E. Boerner was supported by a fellowship from the Canadian Child Health Clinician Scientist Program, and this work was generously funded by the Society of Pediatric Psychology and the BC Children’s Hospital Research Institute.

