Homelessness, HIV Vulnerability, and PrEP Willingness Among Young Transgender Women in Lima, Peru

Dalla Lana School of Public Health

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BACKGROUND

- **Transgender women** globally continue to face a **high burden of HIV**, within national and international contexts of transphobia, structural discrimination, targeted stigma and violence[1]
- In Peru, the estimated prevalence of HIV among transgender women is 21-30%, compared to 0.2-0.3% in the general population[2,3]
- **There have been no decreases in the incidence of HIV among transgender women in Peru over the past 15 years, despite substantial advancements in HIV prevention**
- **Housing is vital to HIV prevention and treatment**: homelessness can decrease access to medical care while also increasing vulnerability through increased sex work, substance use, poor mental health, and violence[4,5]
- There is very limited **global research on homelessness among transgender youth and adults**, though studies in North America have found high rates of homelessness among transgender youth[6]

The purpose of this analysis was to investigate:

1. *The proportion of young transgender women experiencing homelessness*
2. *The associations between homelessness, HIV-related vulnerability, and willingness to use PrEP*

METHODS



- **211 young transgender women aged 16-24** were recruited through peer workers to participate in a biobehavioural survey and biological testing
- 156 participants completed **testing for HIV, syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and hepatitis B**
- We used **Poisson regression with robust standard errors** to estimate the association between past experiences of homelessness and HIV-related outcomes, adjusting for potential confounding by age and education.
- **PrEP-related outcomes** were only modelled among participants who were not living with HIV.

3 in 10 young transgender women in Lima have experienced homelessness.

HIV prevention and treatment programs for young transgender women must address past and on-going experiences of homelessness.

RESULTS

- The **median age** of participants was 23 year (IQR: 21-24)
- 27% of participants had **not completed secondary school** and 45% reported an **average monthly income of 500 S/. or less (~130 USD)**
- 45% of participants were born in Lima, 45% in other regions of Peru, and 8% of participants were from other countries (primarily Venezuela)

64 participants (31%) reported ever being homeless.
12 participants (6%) had been recently homeless (past 3 months).



Participants reported varying current housing locations:

- Own apartment or room (36%)
- With family (27%)
- With friends (9%)
- Shared housing with other transgender women (13%)
- With a sexual or romantic partner (13%)
- Other (2%)

The overall prevalence of HIV among young transgender women was 42%.

Among the 68 participants testing positive for HIV, 19% had been recently homeless (past 3 months).

Only 12 participants reported ever using PrEP.

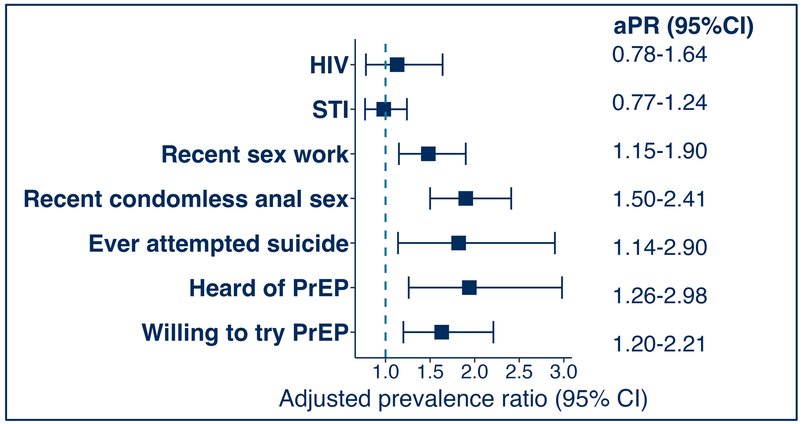

Figure 1: Association between past homelessness and HIV outcomes

Compared to those who had never been homeless**, previously homeless young transgender women** were more likely to report:

- **physical violence** (60% vs 37%, p<0.01)
- **sexual violence** (46% vs 16%, p<0.01)
- **intimate partner violence** (38% vs 18%, p<0.01)

CONCLUSIONS

- The prevalence of homelessness is high among young transgender women (aged 16-24) in Lima
- Past experiences of homelessness can elevate ongoing HIV vulnerability (e.g., participation in sex work and condomless anal sex) as well as have severe negative impacts on mental health
- Young transgender women who have experienced homelessness are interested in and willing to use HIV prevention tools such as PrEP: services need to meet this need and interest

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