



# Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences

## Massachusetts HIV/AIDS Epidemiologic Profile: Data as of 2/1/2021 Population Report: Transgender Individuals

### **Suggested citation:**

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Infectious Disease and Laboratory Sciences. Massachusetts HIV/AIDS Epidemiologic Profile: Data as of 2/1/2021, Population Report: Transgender Individuals, <https://www.mass.gov/lists/hivaids-epidemiologic-profiles> Published March 2022. Accessed [date].

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<https://www.mass.gov/lists/infectious-disease-data-reports-and-requests>

### **Slide sets for HIV/AIDS Epidemiologic Profile Reports**

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/hivaids-epidemiologic-profiles>

# TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and sex assigned at birth do not align based on traditional expectations. Transgender can also describe people whose gender identities do not exist within a gender binary structure; e.g., people who are non-binary or gender fluid, though not all of these individuals identify as transgender. Transgender woman describes a person assigned male at birth who currently identifies as a woman. Transgender man describes a person assigned female at birth who currently identifies as a man.

While questions about gender identity are often missing from national population assessments such as the US Census, Massachusetts has been a leader in adding these questions to local surveys. The Massachusetts Youth Violence Prevention Programs began collecting transgender-inclusive gender identity in 2005, as did the Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Office of HIV/AIDS in 2007. The MDPH HIV/AIDS Surveillance Program began collecting transgender-inclusive gender identity in 2009. In 2013, the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (MYRBS), Youth Health Survey (YHS), and MDPH Bureau of Substance Addiction Services also began collecting transgender-inclusive gender identity.

These surveys, surveillance systems, and programmatic data systems provide important opportunities to monitor population health and the specific impacts of policies (e.g., marriage equality, universal health care access, anti-bullying legislation, extension of nondiscrimination protections to transgender individuals) and other macro-level changes and interventions on population health and health inequities.

N=15\*

new HIV diagnoses from 2017–2019 were among transgender individuals

N=128\*

transgender individuals were living with HIV infection in MA as of 12/31/2019

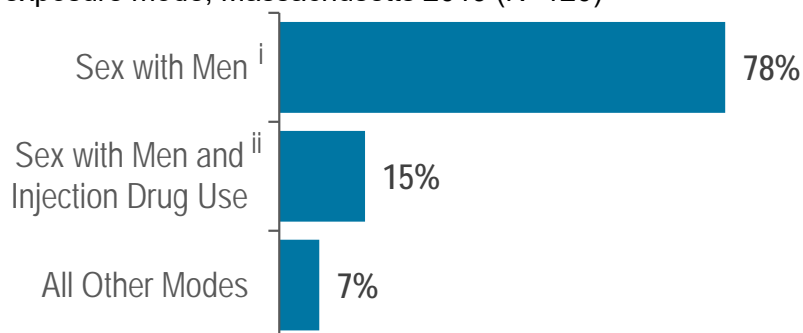
\* Reported numbers among transgender individuals are likely to be underestimates due to underreporting of current gender.

Transgender individuals comprised **1%** of all new HIV diagnoses from 2017 to 2019 and **1%** of all persons living with HIV infection in Massachusetts as of December 31, 2019.

The following data presentations include transgender women only due to small numbers among transgender men.

## EXPOSURE MODE

**FIGURE 1.** Transgender women living with HIV infection by exposure mode, Massachusetts 2019 (N=120)



- Sex with men<sup>i</sup> was the exposure mode for the majority (78%) of transgender women reported to be living with HIV infection. By comparison, male-to-male sex was the leading exposure mode for all persons living with HIV infection at 40%.

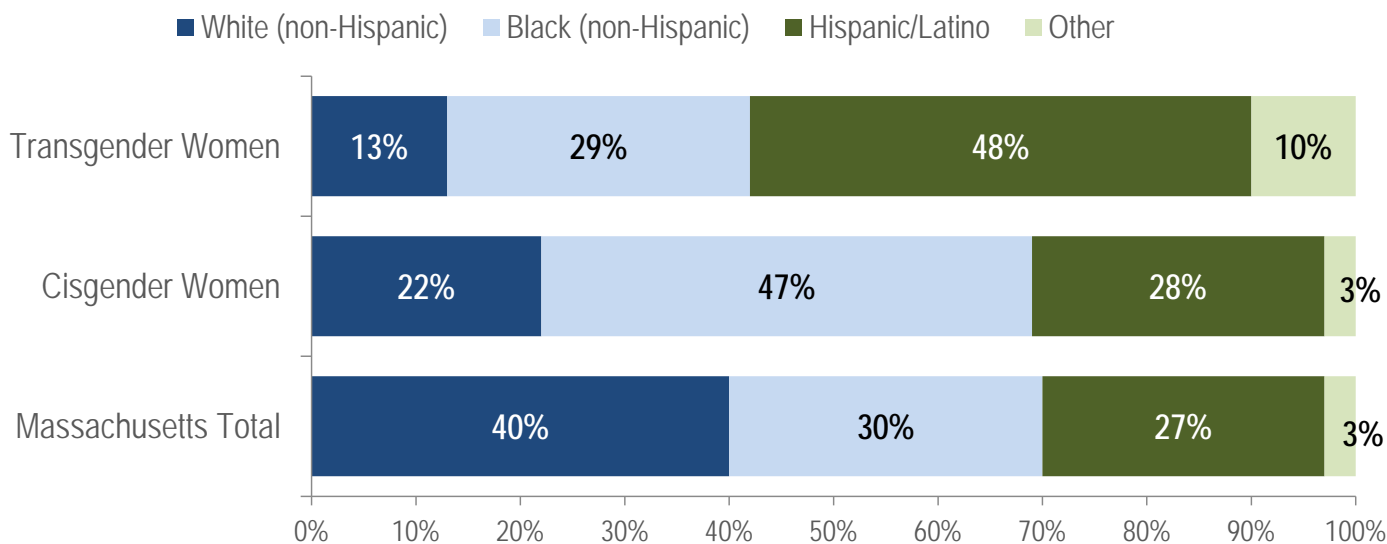
<sup>i</sup> Note: For the purposes of categorizing sexual risk in transgender women reporting sex with men only, this exposure mode category is reported on this fact sheet as “sex with men”. For the purposes of official reporting in the MA HIV/AIDS Surveillance System and to CDC, exposure mode for transgender women is based on sex assigned at birth and therefore would be reported as male-to-male sex.

<sup>ii</sup> Note: For the purposes of categorizing sexual risk in transgender women reporting both sex with men and injection drug use, this exposure mode category is reported on this fact sheet as “sex with men and injection drug use”. For the purposes of official reporting in the MA HIV/AIDS Surveillance System and to CDC, exposure mode for transgender women is based on sex assigned at birth and therefore would be reported as male-to-male sex/injection drug use.

# TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

## RACE/ETHNICITY

**FIGURE 2.** Persons living with HIV infection on December 31, 2019 by race/ethnicity: transgender women (N=120), cisgender women (N=6,670), and Massachusetts total (N=23,291)

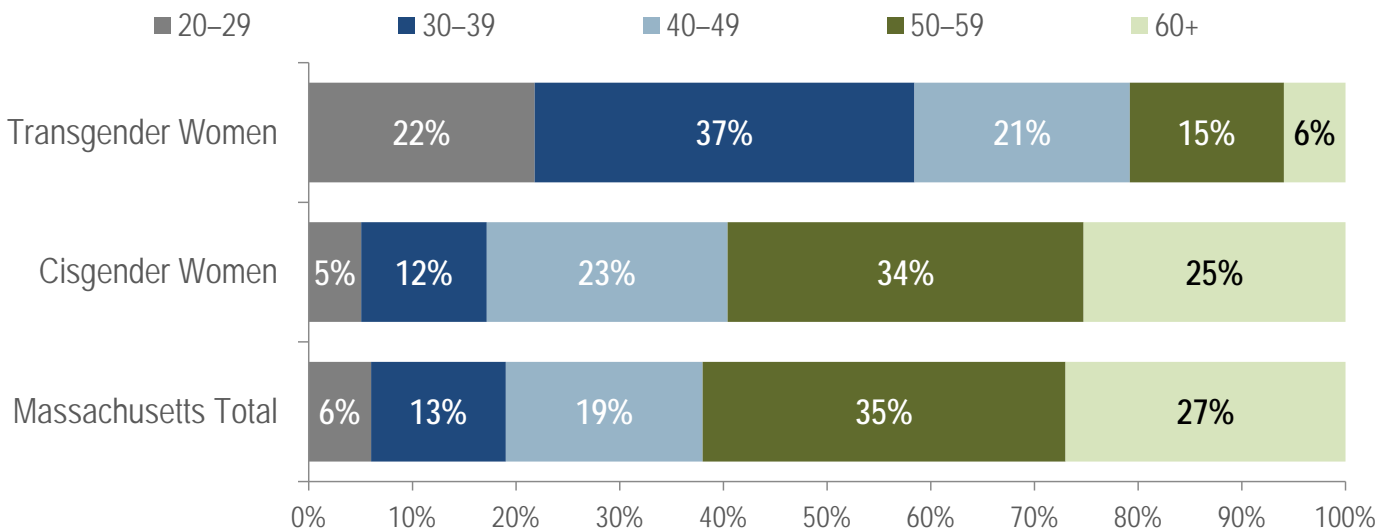


### KEY FACT

- Forty-eight percent of transgender women living with HIV infection were Hispanic/Latina, compared to 28% of cisgender women and 27% of all persons living with HIV infection.

## AGE

**FIGURE 3.** Persons living with HIV infection on December 31, 2019 by age (years): transgender women (N=120), cisgender women (N=6,670), and Massachusetts total (N=23,291)



Ages 0-19 not shown due to small numbers.

### KEY FACT

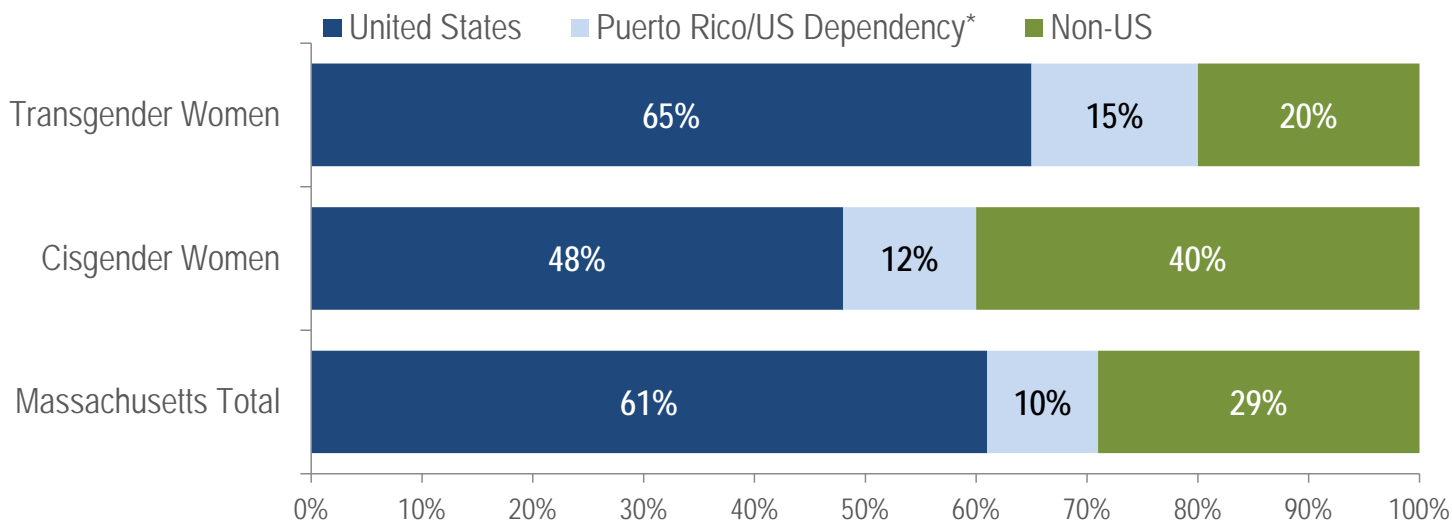
- The majority of transgender women living with HIV infection in Massachusetts were under 40 years old. A total of 59% of transgender women were ages 20–39 years old as of December 31, 2019, compared to 17% of cisgender<sup>i</sup> women and 19% of all persons living with HIV infection in Massachusetts.

<sup>i</sup> Cisgender describes a person whose gender identity aligns with their assigned sex at birth, based on traditional expectations (e.g., a person assigned female sex at birth whose gender identity is woman/female)

# TRANSGENDER INDIVIDUALS

## PLACE OF BIRTH

**FIGURE 4.** Persons living with HIV infection on December 31, 2019 by place of birth: transgender women (N=120), cisgender women (N=6,670), and Massachusetts total (N=23,291)

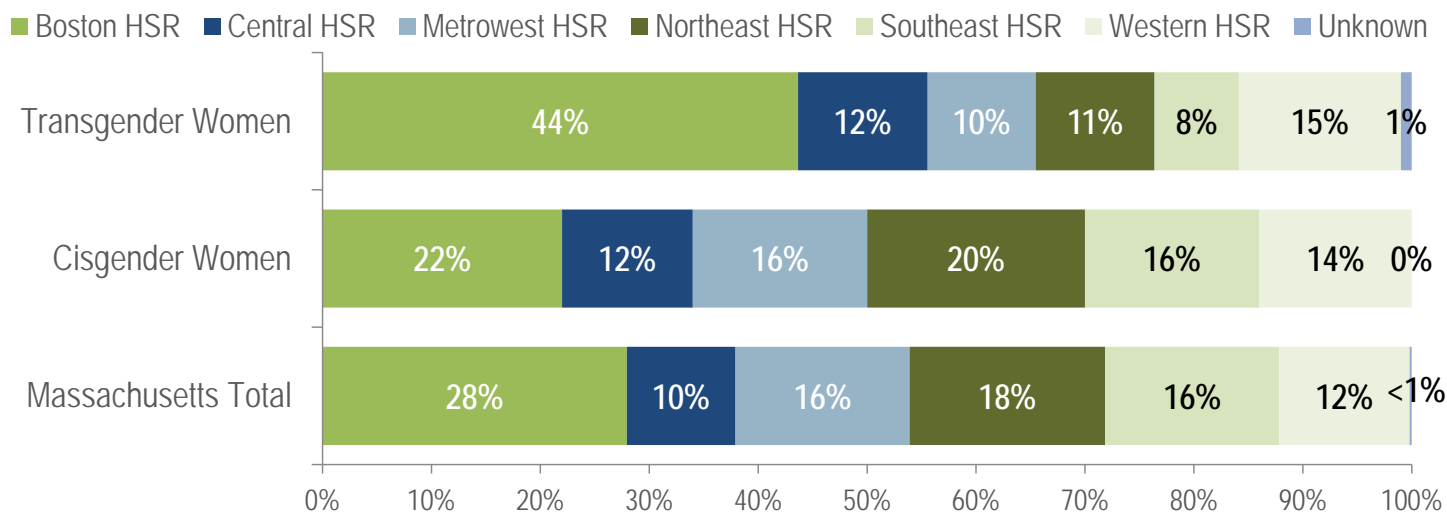


\*98% of individuals living with HIV infection on 12/31/19 who were born in a US dependency were born in Puerto Rico

- The distribution of place of birth among transgender women living with HIV infection on December 31, 2019 was more similar to that of all persons living with HIV infection (PLWH) in Massachusetts than cisgender women. Sixty-five percent of transgender women were born in the United States compared to 61% of all PLWH and 48% of cisgender women.

## AREA OF RESIDENCE

**FIGURE 5.** Persons living with HIV infection on December 31, 2019 by Health Service Region (HSR) of residence: transgender women (N=120), cisgender women (N=6,670), and Massachusetts total (N=23,291)



- Forty-four percent of transgender women reported to be living with HIV infection in Massachusetts on December 31, 2019 were living in the Boston HSR, compared to 22% of cisgender women and 28% of all persons living with HIV infection. A total of 15% of transgender women were living in the Western HSR, 12% in the Central HSR, 11% in the Northeast HSR, 10% in the Metrowest HSR, and 8% in the Southeast HSR.

## REPORTING OF TRANSGENDER IDENTITY

**Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS):** *A continuous anonymous telephone survey of adults ages 18 and older that collects data on a variety of health risk factors, preventive behaviors, chronic conditions, and emerging public health issues.*

- Reported rates of transgender identity in Massachusetts are consistent with national estimates. Among 11,313 adult respondents to the BRFSS from 2017 to 2019, 0.9% (95% Confidence Interval (CI)=0.6%–1.2%) identified as transgender. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reference an estimate of nearly one million transgender individuals in America. This equates to a current best estimate of 390 per 100,000 adults, or 0.4% of US adults identifying as transgender.‡

Data Source: Office of Data Management and Outcomes Assessment, Massachusetts Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). For more information, see: Health Survey Program, Office of Data Management and Outcomes Assessment, Massachusetts Department of Public Health. A Profile of Health Among Massachusetts Adults, 2019, Results from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, December 2020, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/a-profile-of-health-among-massachusetts-adults-2019/download>

‡CDC, HIV and Transgender People, April 2019, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/group/gender/transgender/index.html>  
Meerwijk EL, Sevelius JM. Transgender population size in the United States: a meta-regression of population-based probability samples. *Am J Public Health* 2017; 107(2):e1-e8, available at <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2016.303578>

**Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS):** *An anonymous survey of public high school students conducted every odd year that collects data on health-related behaviors that may threaten the health and safety of young people.*

- Among public high school enrolled respondents to the 2019 YRBS, 2.1% (95% CI=1.2%–3.0, n=2,160) identified as transgender.

Data Source for Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data: Office of Data Management and Outcomes Assessment, Department of Public Health and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. For more information, see <https://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/yrbs/>