

Alarming levels of suicidal behavior and stigma and its impact in the quality of life of HIV-positive gay men and other men who have sex with men

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- *No relationships to disclose*

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The stages of suicidal behavior

**Ideation:**  
Thinking about, considering or planning an attempt

**Attempt:**  
Non-fatal self-directed potentially injurious behavior with any intent to die as a result of the behavior

**Completed Suicide**

Source: CDC, 2010

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### Suicide: A global public health concern

Globally	USA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Over 800,000 suicide deaths each year                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 11.4 suicide deaths per 100,000 population</li> <li>– One suicide death every 40 seconds</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for 15-29 year-olds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Over 41,000 suicide deaths each year                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 12.1 suicide deaths per 100,000 population</li> <li>– One suicide death every 13 minutes</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for all ages                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for 15-34 year-olds</li> </ul> </li> <li>➤ \$51 billion in combined medical and work loss costs</li> </ul>

Source: CDC, 2015; WHO, 2012

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### Suicidal behavior in USA

- Ideation
9.3 million adults (3.9%) reported having suicidal thoughts in 2014
- Plan
2.7 million people (1.1%) planned a suicide attempt
- Attempt
1.3 million adults (0.6%) attempted suicide

Source: CDC, 2015

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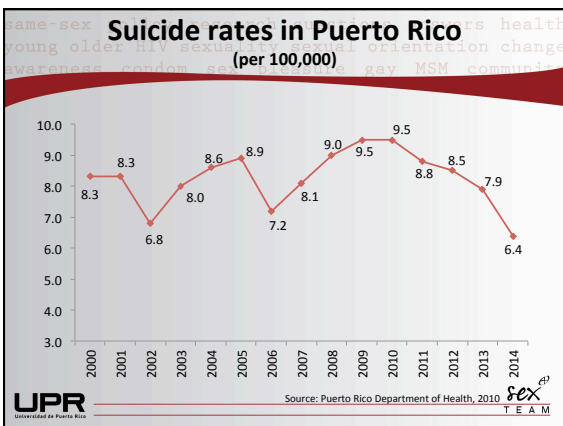
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**Suicidal behavior in Puerto Rico**

- A sample of Puerto Ricans in Miami
  - 16.1% had history of suicide attempt
- A sample of patients receiving HIV/AIDS therapy in a university-related institution
  - 17.6% had history of suicide attempt
- An STI/HIV treatment clinic-based sample
  - HIV-positive: 23.4% vs. HIV-negative: 19.0%

UPR Universidad de Puerto Rico Source: Akin, et al., 2008; Jovet-Toledo et al., 2014; Quintana-Ortiz, 2008 **sex** TEAM

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**What is stigma?**

“An attribute that is deeply discrediting within a particular social interaction.”

Diseases associated with the highest degree of stigma:

- Disease bearer is perceived as responsible
- Disease is perceived as contagious and not well understood
- Disease is degenerative and incurable
- Disease or its symptoms are not concealable and perceived as ugly or upsetting

UPR Universidad de Puerto Rico Source: E. Goffman, 1963; Herek, 1999; Sontag, 1989 **sex** TEAM

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**How is stigma experienced?**

**Perceived**

- Fear of discrimination
- Perception of being discriminated against

**Enacted**

- Actual discrimination
- Unacceptability

UPR Universidad de Puerto Rico Source: E. Goffman, 1963; Herek, 1999; Sontag, 1989 **sex** TEAM

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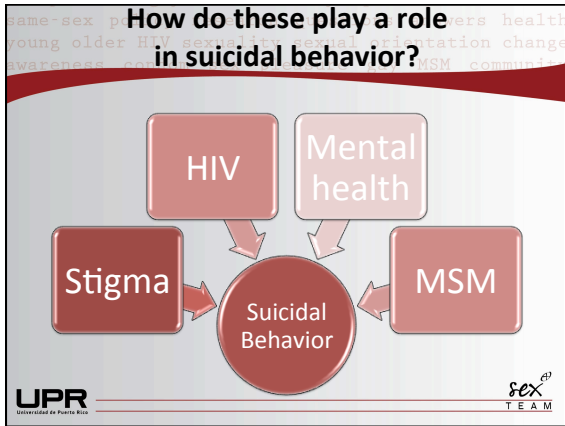
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- The interconnection of risk factors**
- People living with HIV are more likely than the general population to develop depression
    - Often associated to stigma, discrimination and isolation
    - May impact the ability to follow treatment for HIV/AIDS, quality of life and lifespan
  - High rates of suicide among vulnerable groups who experience discrimination
    - LGBT
    - HIV-positive individuals
- UPR Universidad de Puerto Rico Source: National Institute of Mental Health, 2011 *sex*<sup>es</sup> TEAM

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**Methodology**

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# sexplora

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Methods	Interview domains
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Structured computer-assisted interviews in STI/HIV treatment clinics in San Juan metropolitan area (San Juan, PR).</li> <li>➤ Eligibility criteria:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- At least 16 years old male</li> <li>- Diagnosed with HIV</li> <li>- Sexually active (12 months) with another man (MSM)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Sociodemographic characteristics</li> <li>➤ HIV-related information</li> <li>➤ Suicidal behavior</li> <li>➤ Stigma and mental health measures</li> </ul>

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condom sex pleasure gay MSM community equality male same-sex policy research questions answers health young older HIV sexual orientation change awareness condom sex pleasure gay MSM community equality male female same-sex policy research questions answers health young older HIV sexual orientation change awareness condom sex pleasure gay MSM community equality

# Results

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## Sample description (n=149)

 38.8 years old (9.6 YLWHIV)	 67% homosexual
 41% high school or less	 80% lifetime drug use
 55% exclusively unemployed	 31% history of sex work
 73% income less than \$20,000 23% no income	 31% history of incarceration
	 62% have a regular partner

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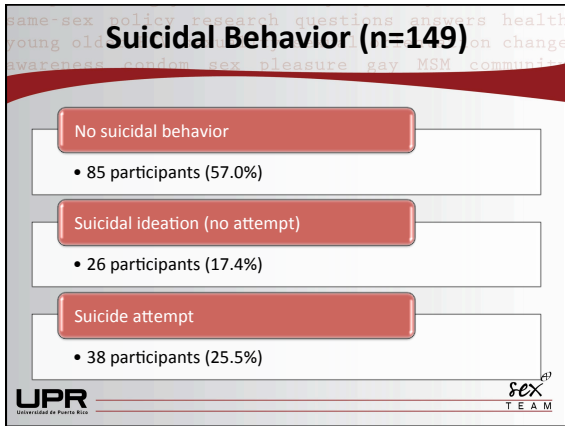
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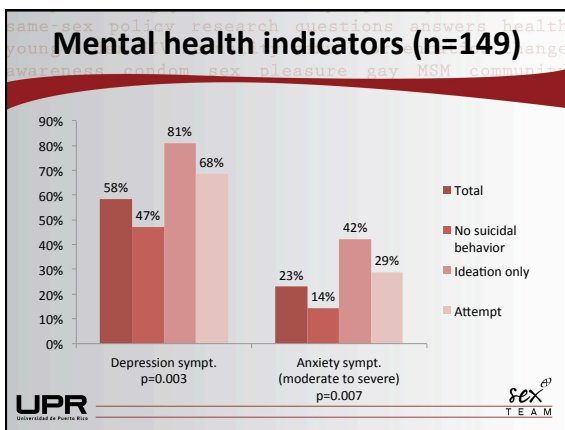
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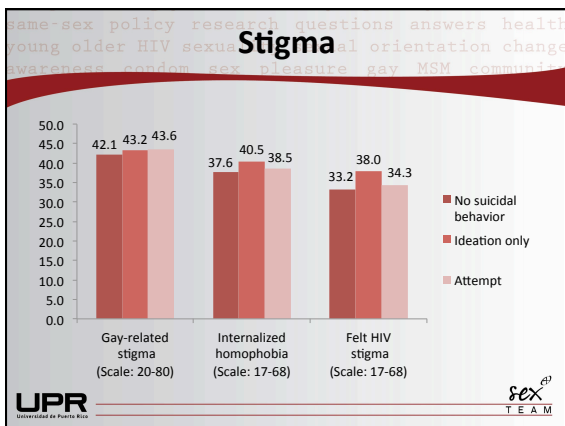
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### Quality of Life Measures

	No suicidal behavior	Ideation only	Attempt	p-value
Overall function	78.1	57.5	72.7	0.001
Life satisfaction	81.3	62.5	70.7	0.002
Health worries	77.0	57.9	73.8	0.010
Financial worries	52.4	50.0	43.0	0.334
Medicine worries	88.5	70.6	81.0	0.003
HIV mastery	75.9	70.7	82.2	0.367
Disclosure worries	58.8	51.1	68.8	0.047
Provider trust	80.7	76.3	76.3	0.867
Sexual function	89.9	80.3	73.3	0.001

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## Conclusions & Discussion

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- ### Conclusions
- High levels of suicidal behavior and depression were observed.
    - Higher than other studies with similar sample
  - Stigma was present throughout the sample
    - May have contributed to the absence of association with suicidal behavior
  - Suicidal behavior was associated with mental health symptomatology and poor quality of life.
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### Discussion

- There is a serious need for:
  - mental health services
  - individual and structural interventions that will reduce stigma and its consequences
  - public policy aiming at reducing stigmatizing practices at a systemic level
- People who reported suicidal ideation may have unmet needs

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### Next steps

- Continue the study of stigma, HIV, and its interconnection as risk factors for suicidal behavior.
  - Impact of suicidal ideation on health
- Explore protective factors such as resiliency and social support.
- Future research should focus on the specific mental health needs of HIV+MSM.

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### Acknowledgements

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- the participants of the study
- Community partners
- the undergraduate and graduate research assistants who collaborated in data collection.

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**¡Gracias!**

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