

## Exploring the Mental Health Experiences of Intersex Individuals

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### “Intersex”

Refers to biological traits that, and people who, do not fit typical definitions of male or female embodiment.



### Introduction

- The purpose of our research is to contribute to greater understanding about the lived experiences of people who identify as intersex.
- We seek to expand the conversation about the mental health experiences of intersex individuals by reviewing social media platforms aimed at supporting this population.
- We predict to observe common mental health themes shared by intersex individuals & their community.

### Method

- The research team utilized a Critical Theory, Feminist Theory, and Gender Affirmative Model framework.
- The team conducted a content analysis of the most recent 125 posts and comments across three social media sites.
  - 75 posts were observed from two public social media sites: 50 posts from *Reddit.com* & 25 posts from *Susan’s Place* (an open forum transgender website).
  - 50 posts were observed from a private intersex Facebook group (with access granted)
- The team was split into three groups of two, each assigned one social media site.
- The team applied Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) to analyze the data to categorize the posts and comments into six distinct mental health themes, as determined by pre-existing research.
  - When applicable, post and comments were assigned to more than one theme.

“...when I began asking questions...my family... all ran for the hills and will no longer have any contact with me.” (Other)



“I didn't find out until grad school that what I had was considered intersex...” (Secrecy & Concealment)

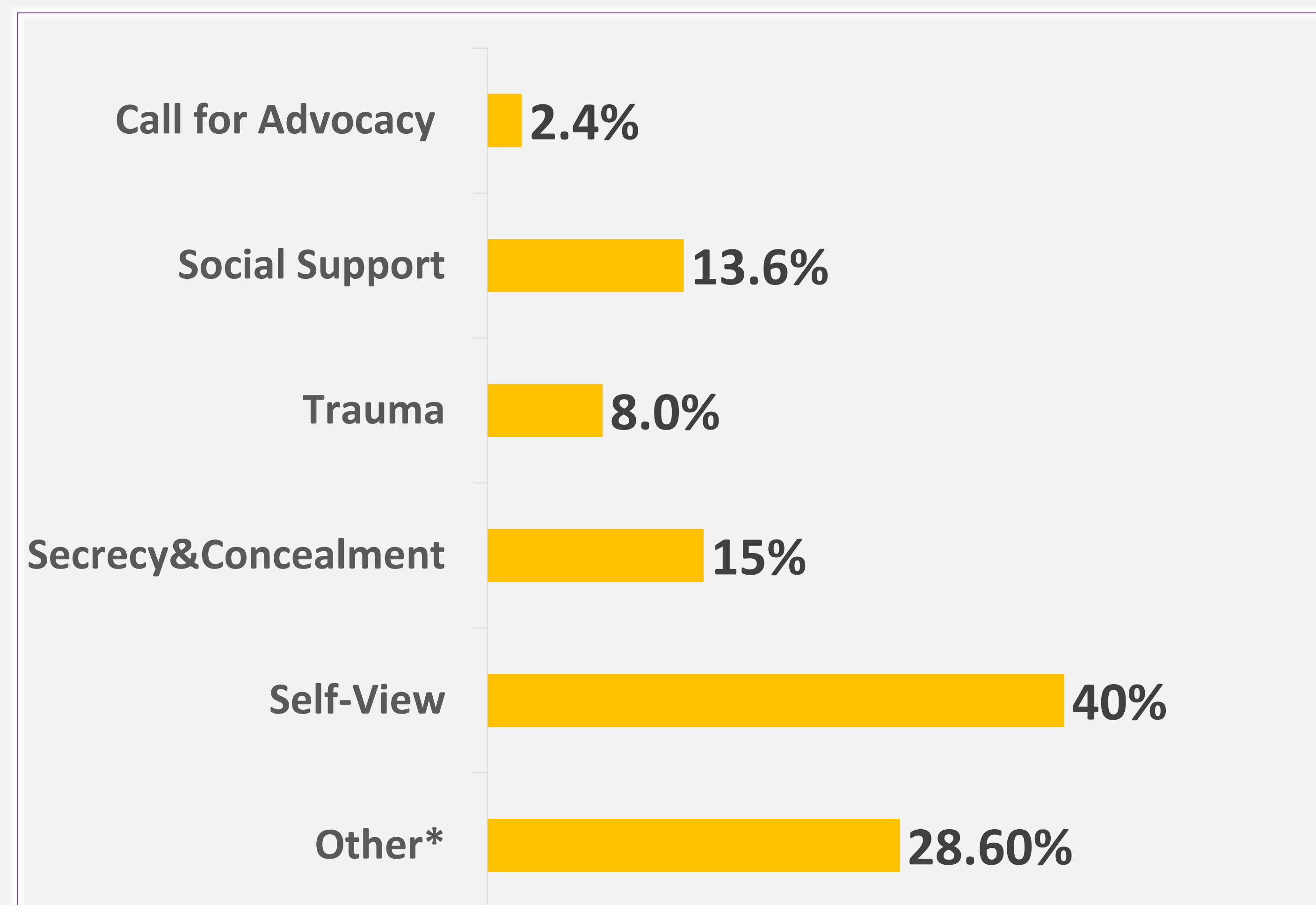
“I am an intersex person... in regards to clothing, something is always off.” (Self-view)

“...they just hugged me and said 'you thought that was gonna' change how we look at you?' NO!...” (Social Support)

“... we're still lacking the most basic rights we need.” (Other)

### Results

Percentage of posts and comments that addressed each mental health theme:



“Other” themes included: Group Identity(28.6%), Impact of Language(32.7%), Health Care Experiences (53%), and Social Stigma(8.2%)

### Discussion

- Out of the total number of posts and comments, the most frequently coded theme emerged as self-view at 40%. Across the support forums, individuals expressed confusion around their intersex identity, gender identity, gender presentation, body, and body parts. This may stem from social stigma, a lack of support, and misinformation about intersex conditions.
- The high prevalence of posts and comments relating to both medical incompetence and the importance of language suggests a need for greater sensitivity and increased competence among healthcare professionals.
- The low percentages of posts and comments relating to trauma may be due to a lack of social support or the prevalence of secrecy and concealment. Posts about trauma were only found in the private Facebook group, possibly indicating more trust within the context of a private forum.
- A lack of posts or comments calling for advocacy may indicate that online support groups are not a preferred platform for intersex individuals to seek support, alliances, or public policy. Perhaps advocacy is more frequently discussed on platforms that speak to the public rather than only the intersex community.
- To better understand the mental health experiences of the intersex community, future research is suggested.

### Resources



### References:

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