

Pediatricians' Attitudes and Beliefs towards Transgender Persons

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Background & Aims

- A recent US population based study showed that currently **2.7%** of children are self-defined as transgender or gender non-conforming.
- These children increasingly turn to pediatricians, seeking gender related information and care, making them key figures in the process.
- Almost one-third of transgender still report discrimination in medical settings.
- Physician stigma towards patients is associated with reduced intention to care.
- Little is known about physicians' attitudes towards transgender persons, and pediatricians' attitudes were not previously studied.
- We aimed to assess the attitudes and beliefs of pediatricians toward transgender people, and to identify subgroups that have increased risk to have negative attitudes.

Methods

The "Transgender Attitudes and Belief Scale (TABS)" questionnaire was distributed to pediatricians. It consists of 29 items, in 3 domains:

- Human values** - measuring acknowledgement of an individual's inherent values
- Interpersonal comfort** - measures the respondent's level of comfort in daily interactions with transgender people, reflecting interactions in the physician's clinic
- Sex or gender beliefs** - measures underlying beliefs that regard gender, reflecting stigma
- Responses on TABS are rated on a seven-point Likert scale, results were analyzed as "favorable" for each section if average was >6 points, and unfavorable for < 6 points.

Demographic details of: Birth country, religion, gender, seniority, and working place were collected.

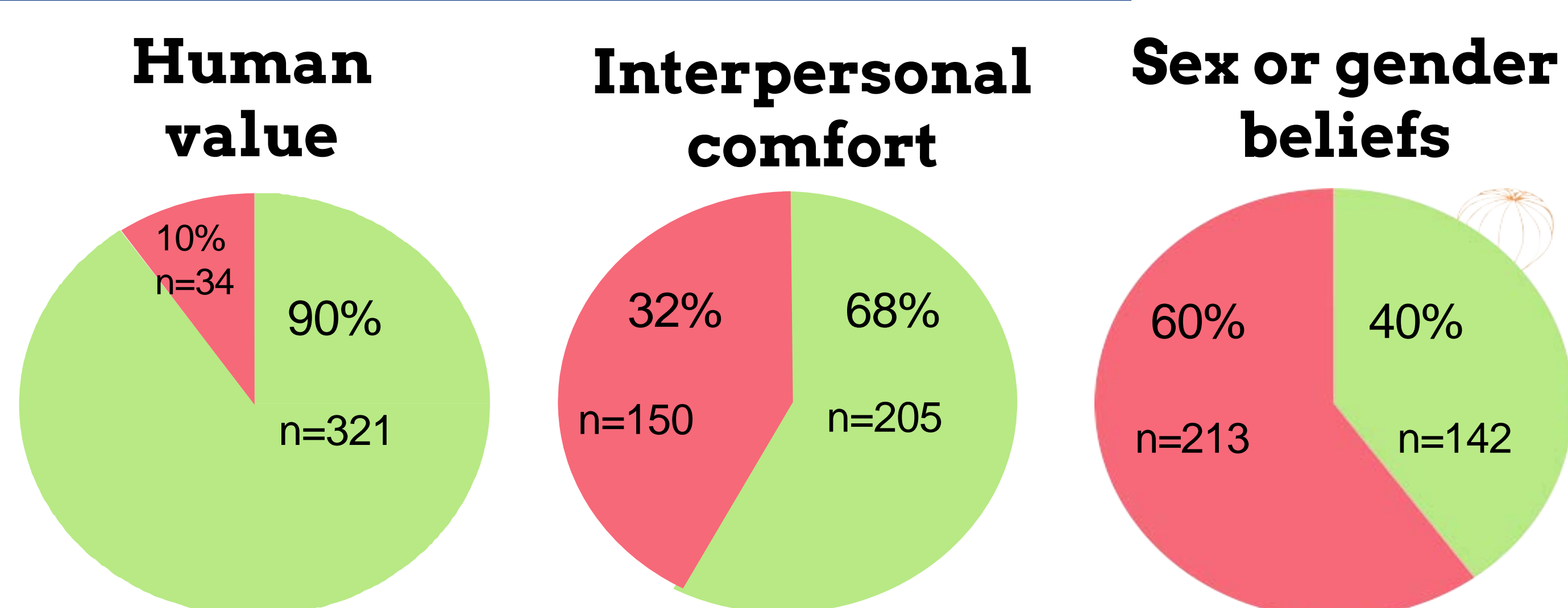
Birth countries were categorized according to the Transgender Europe organization TGEU to: "transrespect countries" (i.e. countries that endorse a number of legal, social, and medical rights for transgender persons) versus "transphobic countries" in order to assess the effect of cultural background on attitudes.

Results

Characteristics of the study cohort

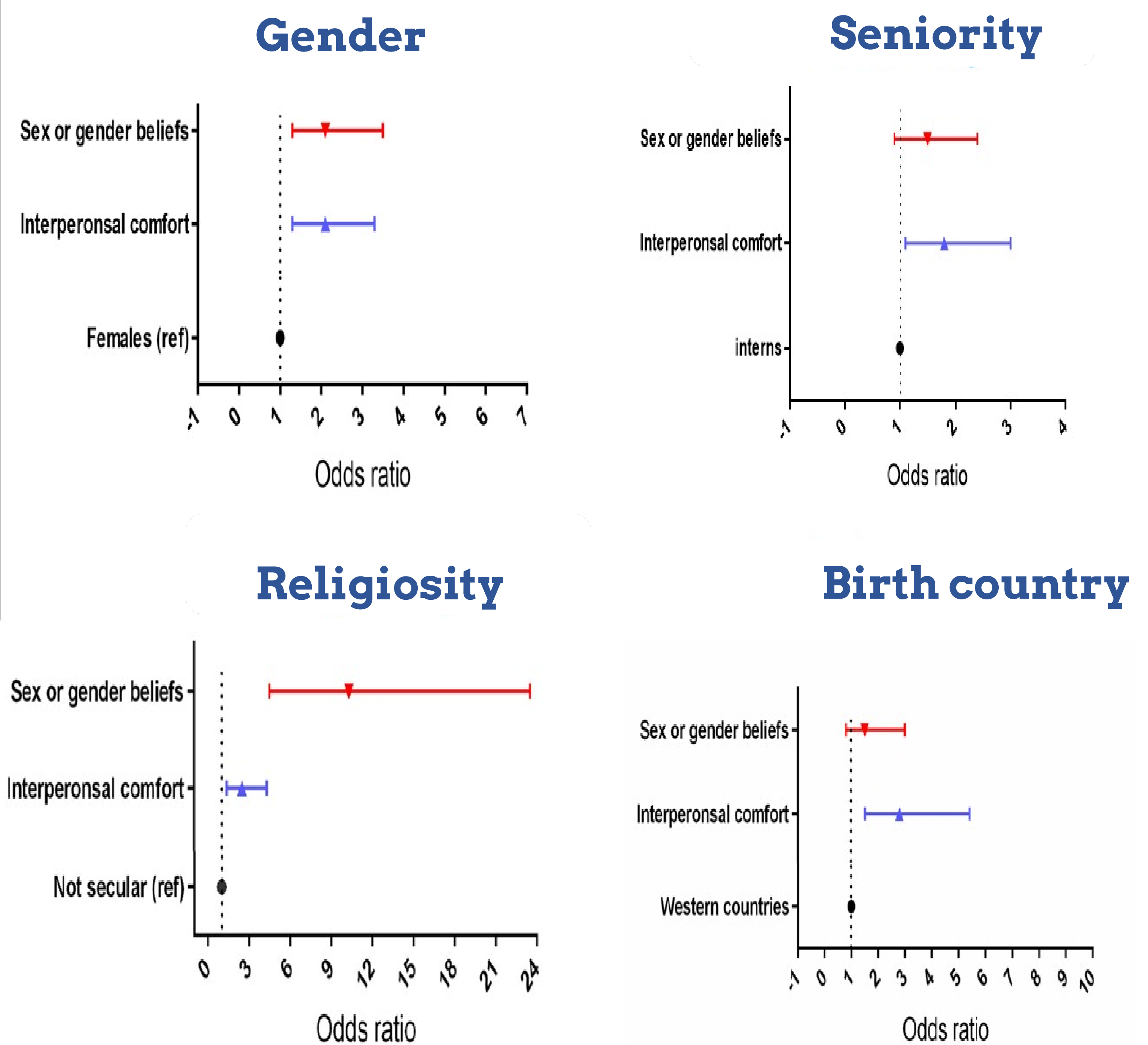
The study cohort comprised 355 pediatricians:
 62% females, 37% males & 0.005% others
 75% were born in transrespect countries
 77% defined themselves as secular
 37% were interns, all worked in hospitals
 56% of senior pediatricians worked mainly in hospitals, 44% mainly in community practice clinics

Distribution of pediatricians by favourable and unfavourable scores in each domain



Green- Favorable, Red - Unfavorable

Who were the pediatricians that scored unfavorably?



The **red line** marks the odds ratio for unfavorable response in multi variant analysis for the sex and gender beliefs domain, demonstrating unfavorable results for males, and religious pediatricians.

The **blue line** marks the odds ratio for unfavorable response in multi variant analysis for the interpersonal comfort domain demonstrating unfavorable results for males, religious, seniors, and pediatricians born in transphobic countries.

Conclusions

- Pediatricians almost unanimously acknowledge the universal human value of transgender.
- One-third of pediatricians do not feel comfortable interacting with transgender persons.
- Two-thirds of the pediatricians scored in the middle or low tertile for the sex or gender beliefs domain, meaning they expressed stigma towards transgender people.
- Male, religious, seniors, and pediatricians born in "transphobic" countries were less comfortable interacting with transgender patients than their counterparts.
- Religious pediatricians were 10 times more likely to show stigmatizing attitudes than seculars, and males twice as females.
- One third of the pediatrician cohort have stigmatizing beliefs despite having positive interpersonal comfort with transgender people, suggesting their patients may be oblivious to discrimination towards them.
- This pattern was typical in younger physicians and those born in transrespect countries.

*Acknowledgments: Mrs Efrat Landau