Heterogeneous endocrine cell composition defines human islet functional phenotypes

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SUMMARY

Phenotyping and genotyping initiatives within the Integrated Islet Distribution Program (IIDP), the largest source of human islets for research in the U.S., provide standardized assessment of islet preparations distributed to researchers, enabling the integration of multiple data types. Data from islets of the first 299 organ donors without diabetes, analyzed using this pipeline, highlights substantial heterogeneity in islet cell composition associated with hormone secretory traits, sex, reported race and ethnicity, genetically predicted ancestry, and genetic risk for type 2 diabetes (T2D). While α and β cell composition influenced insulin and glucagon secretory traits, the abundance of δ cells showed the strongest association with insulin secretion and was also associated with the genetic risk score (GRS) for T2D. These findings have important implications for understanding mechanisms underlying diabetes heterogeneity and islet dysfunction and may provide insight into strategies for personalized medicine and β cell replacement therapy.

KEYWORDS

INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus impacts over 11% of Americans and is the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S., with an estimated economic cost of over $413 billion annually[1,2]. Type 1 diabetes (T1D) accounts for 5-10% of all diabetes cases and results from autoimmune-mediated destruction and loss of the insulin-producing β cells, whereas type 2 diabetes (T2D), the most prevalent diabetes form, is characterized by β cell dysfunction and peripheral insulin resistance. While the etiologies of T1D and T2D are largely distinct, both forms require loss and/or dysfunction of pancreatic β cells, have a strong genetic component, and are heterogeneous regarding disease pathophysiology, progression, and response to therapeutic interventions [3–7]. Increasingly, data from clinical cohorts, tissues derived from human organ donors and mouse models highlight a role for impaired function of other islet cell subtypes, including α cells and δ abnormalities in diabetes pathophysiology[8–18]. Murine models have advanced our understanding of disease pathophysiology; however, there are critical differences in the function and architecture of murine and human pancreatic islets necessitating the comprehensive study of human islets to translate basic science research findings[19–25].

The Integrated Islet Distribution Program (IIDP), formerly the Islet Cell Resource[26], has served as the main source of human islets for research within the U.S., with nearly 300 million islets supplied for use in more than 600 unique studies to date (https://iidp.coh.org/). Located at City of Hope (Duarte, CA) and funded by the National Institutes of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) with targeted programmatic funding from Breakthrough T1D (formerly JDRF), the IIDP's mission is to distribute high-quality human islets to the diabetes research community to support basic science and translational research. The IIDP subcontracts with a group of expert islet isolation centers at institutions across the country, who procure donated pancreata from their local Organ Procurement Organizations (OPOs). Rigorous protocols are followed to isolate the islets while maximizing the yield, viability and purity. An automated algorithm developed by the IIDP ensures fair and equitable islet distribution, matching the islet offers to awaiting researchers who have subscribed to receive islets and other non-islet biospecimens from the IIDP[27,28].

In response to the NIH's call to enhance rigor, reproducibility, and transparency in biomedical research, the IIDP initiated the Human Islet Phenotyping Program (HIPP) at Vanderbilt University Medical Center and the Human Islet Genotyping Initiative (HIGI) Program at Stanford University to provide systematic phenotypic and genotypic assessment of IIDP-supported human islet preparations (**Extended Data Figure 1**)[29]. This workflow comprehensively evaluates islet morphology, purity, and viability (**Extended Data Figure 2**). For

the first time, it also assesses islet cell composition and concurrently examines the *in vitro* β and

α cell function[12,30–35]. It also generates the genetic risk scores (GRS) for T1D and T2D while

predicting genetic ancestry across a diverse group of organ donors in the U.S. (see **Figure 1A**).

This centralized approach reduces redundancy and provides cost savings to investigators to

accelerate the speed of scientific discoveries made using these islets. Importantly, the IIDP

provides this rich integrated islet data generated by the HIPP and HIGI for researchers to

explore via the online IIDP Research Data Repository (RDR). Here, we present an analysis of

the first 299 IIDP-supported islet preparations from donors without a clinical diagnosis of

diabetes analyzed using the HIPP and HIGI pipelines. Our integrated analysis of this dataset

highlights marked heterogeneity in islet secretory traits and points to a previously

underappreciated heterogeneity in islet cell composition. We found that the heterogeneity

concerning three primary endocrine cell types, α, β, and δ cells, is associated not only with islet

hormone secretion traits but also with sex, reported race and ethnicity, genetically predicted

ancestry, and T2D GRS. While α and β cell composition influenced insulin and glucagon

secretory traits, most notably, the abundance of a relatively small δ cell population showed the

strongest association with insulin and glucagon secretion traits. Delta cell composition was also

associated with the T2D GRS. These findings have important implications for understanding the

mechanisms underlying personalized signatures—whether genetic, functional, or architectural—

that predispose individuals to diabetes. Additionally, they may influence the progression and

treatment outcomes of the disease, as well as inform β cell replacement therapy using human

islets for transplantation.

RESULTS

We present an analysis of the first release of 299 human islet preparations from donors without

diabetes, for which all relevant donor information was available (**Figure 1B**). This dataset was

derived from a diverse pool of donors with respect to reported race, ethnicity, age, and BMI.

Islets from male donors were overrepresented in the dataset (62%), which is reflective of overall

trends in available islets and organ donors in the U.S.[36]. The distribution of reported race or

ethnicity differed between male and female donors (p = 0.014), where the dataset included a

higher percentage of female donors that were reported Black or African American (15% vs. 5%,

p = 0.006). A higher percentage of male donors were Hispanic or Latino, though this difference

was not statistically significant). In 90% of the human islet preparations for which genotyping

data was available, the genetic ancestry of the donor was predicted (n = 268; **Figure 1C**).

Overall, there was a high concordance between reported race or ethnicity and primary predicted

genetic ancestry within the two datasets (κ= 0.867, p < 0.001). Similar to the larger dataset,

there was a lower percentage of male donors with primary African ancestry (2.5% vs. 16%, p =

0.0002) and a higher proportion of male donors with Admixed American ancestry (38.5% vs.

22%, p = 0.009).

Demographic features were similar in the group of donors where genetic ancestry was

predicted (**Figure 1B-C**). There were no significant differences in age, BMI, or HbA1c between

male and female donors by Wilson rank sum test. The mean age of male and female donors

was 43 (range 15 – 68 years) and 46 years (range 20 – 65 years), and BMI averaged 29 kg/m^2

in both male (range 13.7 – 46.8 kg/m^2) in female donors (range 17.6 – 47.6 kg/m^2). The mean

HbA1c of male and female donors was 5.4% (range 4 – 6.3%) and 5.3% (range 4.3 – 6.4%). Of

note, this dataset includes islets from donors within a normal HbA1c range, defined by the

American Diabetes Association as <5.7% (n = 223, mean ± SD: 5.2 ± 0.3, range 4.0 – 5.6), as

well as a subset of islets from donors with an HbA1c ≥ 5.7% (n = 76, mean ± SD: 5.9 ± 0.2,

range 5.7 – 6.4). Together, these data form a powerful dataset to understand population-based

differences in human islet phenotype.

Islet processing traits associated with islet purity and viability

IIDP-affiliated islet isolation centers identify, process donor pancreata, and distribute human islet

preparations for phenotypic assessment by the HIPP, genotypic assessment by the HIGI, and

scientific investigation by researchers (**Supplemental File 1**). The IIDP RDR includes data on

islet purity and viability, which are measured by islet isolation centers and made available to

researchers at broadcast (i.e., prior to distribution, at the time the islets are offered to

investigators). The post-shipment islet purity and viability is assessed by the HIPP on the day of

arrival. The RDR also includes data related to islet processing, including organ cold ischemia

duration, pre-shipment culture time, and transit time. The current dataset included human islet

preparations from five islet isolation centers: Scharp-Lacy Research Institute (n = 113),

Southern California Islet Cell Resource Center (n = 94), University of Miami Diabetes Research

Institute (n = 30), University of Pennsylvania Islet Transplant Center (n = 21), and the University

of Wisconsin Human Islet Core (n = 35). Pre-shipment culture time averaged 57.5 hours (range

8 – 237 hours), and the average transit time to the HIPP was 25 hours (range 10 – 102 hours).

The mean islet purity measured by the HIPP was 73% (range 15 – 95%), and the mean

dispersed islet cell viability was 76% (range 43 – 93%). Islet transit time and dispersed cell

viability were positively correlated (Spearman r =0.2, unadjusted p-value (p_{unadj}) = 0.001,

Extended Data Figure 3). The HIPP assessment of islet purity did not show an association with

cold ischemia duration, pre-shipment culture time, or islet transit time.

Islet secretory function is highly heterogeneous amongst donors

A dynamic perifusion system was used to investigate simultaneously β and α cell

hormone secretion in response to both physiologic and pharmacologic stimuli with co-

stimulatory and opposing effects on insulin and glucagon secretion. This included basal glucose

(5.6 mM), high glucose (16.7 mM), high glucose with isobutylmethylxanthine (IBMX), low

glucose (1.7 mM) with adrenaline (Ad), and potassium chloride (KCl). On average, high glucose

led to a 7.9-fold increase in stimulated insulin secretion and inhibited glucagon secretion by 0.4-

fold on average compared to basal glucose. In contrast, low glucose with adrenaline led to the

opposite effect, reducing insulin secretion by approximately 0.2-fold and increasing glucagon

secretion by 5.1-fold compared to basal glucose. Exposure to IBMX, a phosphodiesterase

inhibitor that increases intracellular cAMP levels, potentiated glucose-stimulated insulin

secretion (14-fold) and stimulated glucagon secretion (6.5-fold) compared to basal glucose

level. Additionally, KCl-induced membrane depolarization potently stimulated both insulin and

glucagon secretion by approximately 31- and 11-fold on average, respectively (**Figure 2A-B**).

To understand how biological variables and islet processing features impacted hormone

secretion across donors, we derived 11 insulin and 9 glucagon secretion traits from the

respective hormone secretion traces (**Figure 2C-D**). For each human islet preparation, we

derived the following secretion traits from each insulin trace: basal insulin secretion, glucose-

stimulated 1st phase secretion (G 16.7 1st area under the curve; AUC), glucose-stimulated 2nd

phase secretion (G 16.7 2nd phase secretion), overall glucose-stimulated insulin secretion (G

16.7 AUC), the glucose stimulation index (SI; G 16.7 SI), cAMP-potentiated insulin secretion (G

16.7 + IBMX 100 AUC), cAMP-potentiated SI (G 16.7 + IBMX 100 SI), response to low glucose

plus adrenaline (G 1.7 + Ad 1 AUC), low glucose plus adrenaline inhibition index (II; G 1.7 + Ad

1 II), KCl-mediated insulin secretion (KCl 20 AUC), and KCl stimulation index (KCl 20 SI). We

also derived the following secretory traits from each glucagon trace: basal secretion, glucose-

inhibited glucagon secretion (G 16.7 AUC), glucose inhibition index (G 16.7 II), cAMP-

potentiated glucagon secretion (G 16.7 + IBMX 100), cAMP-potentiated SI (G 16.7 + IBMX 100

SI), low glucose plus adrenaline-induced secretion (G 1.7 + Ad 1 AUC), low glucose plus

adrenaline SI (G 1.7 + Ad 1 SI), KCl-mediated secretion (KCl 20 AUC), and the KCl stimulation

index (KCl 20 SI). These data highlight the marked heterogeneity in responses, with the

distribution of values shown for the total dataset and separately by sex and reported race and

ethnicity or primary predicted ancestry in **Extended Data Tables 1-4**. Spearman correlation

analyses revealed a significant correlation between donor age, sex, HbA1c, and BMI with

multiple secretory traits (**Extended Data Figure 3**). Basal insulin secretion was positively

correlated with HbA1c (r = 0.14, p_{unadj} = 0.02) and BMI (r = 0.14, p_{unadj} = 0.02). Age was

negatively correlated with cAMP-potentiated insulin secretion (r = -0.15, p_{unadj} = 0.01) and the

glucose stimulation index (r = -0.12, p_{unadj} = 0.047). The glucose stimulation index also was

negatively correlated with sex (r = -0.12, p_{unadj} = 0.04), BMI (r = -0.14, p_{unadj} =0.02), and HbA1c (r

= -0.14, p_{unadj} = 0.02). Additionally, HbA1c was positively correlated with cAMP-potentiated (r =

0.16, p_{unadj} = 0.005) and KCl-mediated glucagon secretion (r = 0.12, p_{unadj} = 0.04).

In multivariable models adjusting for donor age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, reported race or

ethnicity, and islet isolation center, both pre-shipment culture time and islet transit time were

significantly associated with multiple insulin and glucagon secretion traits (**Extended Data

Figure 4A-B**). Given this, we added pre-shipment culture time and islet transit time into future

multivariable regression models as additional covariates unless otherwise stated (8 covariates

total). Of note, islet purity was associated with 3 islet functional traits; however, these data were

unavailable for all observations for inclusion as a covariate in the regression model.

To remove potential confounding effects of other demographic and processing variables,

we next explored associations between donor traits and secretory traits in multivariable

analyses controlling for the other seven covariates. In these analyses, donor BMI was

significantly associated with glucagon secretory traits (**Extended Data Figure 4D**). Specifically,

BMI was negatively associated with basal (regression coefficient, b = -0.20, p = 0.005) and KCl-

mediated depolarization of glucagon secretion (b = -0.17, p = 0.03) and positively associated

with glucose-mediated glucagon inhibition (b = 0.15, p = 0.03; **Extended Data Figure 4D**).

Donor age, sex, and reported race or ethnicity were associated with multiple secretory traits

prior to, but not after adjusting for multiple comparisons (**Figure 3-4, Extended Data Figure 4E-

F**). Interestingly, we found no differences in insulin or glucagon secretion between donors with

HbA1c < 5.7% (n = 223) and those with HbA1c ≥ 5.7% (n = 76) (**Extended Data Figure 4C-D**).

For the human islet preparations for which genotyping data were available, we explored

relationships between predicted genetic ancestry and islet function. We found that the

relationships between primary predicted genetic ancestry and secretion were similar to those

observed between reported race or ethnicity and insulin secretion. In addition, genetic ancestry

had a statistically significant effect on basal insulin secretion (**Extended Data Figure 4E,

Extended Data Figure 5A**).

Islet composition strongly influences hormone secretory response

Next, we explored associations between islet function, morphology (i.e., diameter, area,

perimeter), composition, and hormone content (**Figure 5**). Interestingly, in both Spearman

correlation and multivariable analyses, islet composition was highly associated with multiple

secretion traits, especially insulin secretion (**Figure 5A-B, Extended Data Figure 3**). A higher

percentage of β cells was associated with an increase in glucose-stimulated (b = 0.23, p = 2.31

x 10^{-4}), cAMP-potentiated (b = 0.35, p = 1.18 x 10^{-8}), and depolarization-mediated insulin

secretion (b = 0.30, p = 1.16 x 10^{-6}). These secretory traits were negatively associated with the

percentage of islet α and δ cells. Additionally, the percentage of δ cells within the islets was

negatively associated with the glucose stimulation index (b = -0.13, p = 0.02) and inhibition

index of insulin secretion in response to low glucose and adrenaline (b = -0.19, p = $1.76x10^{-3}$).

These associations were marked by relatively large effect sizes, as evidenced by the absolute

value of the scaled regression coefficient (0.13 – 0.35).

Regarding the glucagon secretion traits, the percentage of α cells was positively

associated with an increase in basal glucagon secretion (b = 0.18, p = 3.42 x10^{-3}) and total

glucagon secreted in response to low glucose with adrenaline (b = 0.21, p = 3.42 x10^{-3}), while

the percentage of β cells was negatively associated with these two traits (**Figure 5B**).

Additionally, the percentage of α cells was negatively associated with the glucagon stimulation

indices in response to both low glucose with adrenaline (b =-0.17, p = 1.58 x10^{-2}) and KCl (b = -

0.18, p = 9.28 x10^{-3}), while the opposite was true for their association with the percentage of δ

cells.

Alternative analyses adjusting for population structure using the first five principal

components explaining genetic ancestry as covariates, where available, yielded similar results

(**Extended Data Figure 6**). Although a few associations were lost in these analyses, partially

due to the reduced sample size, these analyses also revealed associations between the

percentage of islet δ cells and the cAMP-potentiated glucagon stimulation index (b = 0.16, p =

2.05 x10^{-2}) and the glucagon secreted in response to low glucose and epinephrine (b = -0.20, p

= 8.31 x10^{-3}) in **Extended Data Figure 6B**.

As expected, β and α cell composition were strongly associated with insulin and

glucagon content, respectively (**Figure 5C, Extended Data Figure 3, Extended Data Figure

6C**). However, associations between hormone content were more striking for glucagon

secretion traits than insulin secretion traits after controlling for the eight covariates and adjusting

for multiple comparisons (**Figure 5A-B**). Glucagon content was strongly associated with multiple

glucagon secretion traits (**Figure 5B, Extended Data Figure 6B**), including basal glucagon

secretion (b = 0.40, p =1.13 x10^{-13}) and total glucagon secreted in response to all four

secretagogues; further, these associations were marked by relatively large effect sizes (0.21 –
0.42).

In contrast to the impact of islet composition and hormone content, we found no
association between morphological traits (diameter, area, perimeter) of islets purified by hand-
picking that underwent dynamic perifusion and any insulin or glucagon secretion traits (**Figure
5A-B**). Similar results were found when examining the relationship between the morphology-
related traits of the islet preparation as a whole and islet functional traits (**Figure 5A-B**).

Islet composition is influenced by sex, reported race/ethnicity, and predicted genetic
ancestry
Given the strong association between islet composition and hormone secretion, we analyzed
relationships between islet composition and donor characteristics. On average, analyzed islets
were composed of 58% β cells (range 25 – 92%), 34% α cells (range 3 – 68%), and 8% δ cells
(range 1 – 19%). Similar to islet hormone secretion, there was significant donor-to-donor
heterogeneity in islet endocrine cell composition (**Figure 6A**). Donor sex and reported race or
ethnicity, and genetic ancestry had a global effect on the percentage of islet β and α cells in
multivariable models incorporating the other seven covariates (**Figure 6B-D**). Specifically,
female sex was associated with a higher percentage of α cells and a lower percentage of β cells
(**Figure 6B**). We observed a statistically significant global effect of reported race or ethnicity on
the percentage of β cells (p = 0.003) and α cells (p = 0.003). Additonally, individuals reported
as Asian in comparison to White (**Figure 6C**), as well as those with predicted East Asian in
comparison to European predicted ancestry (**Figure 6D**), had a higher percentage of β cells (p
= 0.0007 and p =0.0001, respectively) and a lower percentage of α cells (p = 0.0007 and p =
0.0001, respectively). There was a global effect of genetic ancestry on the percentage of β cells
(p = 0.0004) and α cells (p = 0.0004) (**Extended Data Figure 7B**). We observed no significant
effect of donor age, BMI, HbA1c, isolation center, pre-shipment culture time or islet transit time
on islet composition in multivariable analyses (**Extended Data Figure 7A-B**).

We next investigated associations between islet hormone content, donor demographics,
and islet processing traits (**Figure 6E-L, Extended Data Figure 7C-D**). We found a global effect
of genetic ancestry on the insulin content (p = 0.0451). Additionally, individuals with predicted
East Asian ancestry compared to those with European ancestry had higher insulin content (p =
0.0048) (**Figure 6H**). Insulin content was positively associated with donor age (b = 0.14, p =
0.0496) and negatively associated with transit time (b = -0.15, p = 0.03) in multivariable models
controlling for the other seven covariates (**Extended Data Figure 7C-D**). Additionally, there was

a global effect of genetic ancestry on insulin content (p = 0.045, **Extended Data Figure 7D**). In

contrast, we found no associations between insulin content and donor sex, reported race or

ethnicity, BMI, HbA1c, or isolation center in similar multivariable analyses (**Figure 6F-G;**

Extended Data Figure 7C-D). Finally, female sex was associated with a higher glucagon

content (**Figure 6J)** and there was a global effect of sex on glucagon content (p = 0.015;

Extended Data Figure 7D), but no other associations were noted between glucagon content

and other demographic or processing traits in multivariable models (**Figure 6K-L; Extended**

Data Figure 7C-D). In analyses adjusting for population structure using the first five principal

components explaining genetic ancestry, female sex was also associated with a slight increase

in δ cell percentage (p = 0.049) (**Extended Data Figure 7E**), whereas there was no effect of

sex on glucagon content (**Extended Data Figure 7F**).

Genetic risk for diabetes is associated with islet composition

Both T1D and T2D GWAS signals map to loci associated with islet-enriched genes and their

regulatory elements[6,37]. Furthermore, diabetes risk alleles have been associated with *in viv*o

measures of islet function in participants without diabetes and linked to worsened islet function

in those with T1D[38–40]. Thus, we were interested in determining how genetic risk for diabetes

influenced *in vitro* hormone secretion, content, and islet composition in our study. In the current

release of human islet preparations where donor genotyping data were available (n = 268), we

generated T1D and T2D GRS, utilizing 67 and 338 single-nucleotide variants, respectively,

based on previously published models[7,41]. Using these data, we investigated whether genetic

risk for diabetes predicted any observed differences in islet function, composition, or hormone

content in our dataset of human islet preparations from donors without diabetes. We further

investigated the role of "process-specific" partitioned genetic risk scores previously published

from clustering of intermediate traits to delineate heterogeneity in polygenic risk[42]. We

incorporated either the complete or partitioned GRS into multivariable models that included the

following as covariates with or without HbA1c: donor age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, isolation center,

pre-shipment culture time, islet transit time, and the first five principal components explaining

genetic ancestry (**Figure 7A-B; Extended Data Figure 8**). Interestingly, the T2D GRS was

positively associated with the percentage of islet δ cells with HbA1c covariate (b = 0.17, p =

0.019; **Figure 7B,** *top*) or without HbA1c covariate (b = 0.17, p = 0.016; **Figure 7B,** *bottom*). At

the same time, δ cells strongly influenced the islet hormone secretory traits (**Figure 5;**

Extended Data Figure 6), especially those of β cells, suggesting that HbA1c does not mediate

these associations. We detected no additional significant associations between T1D and T2D

GRS and either hormone secretion or content when including HbA1c covariate in our analysis

(**Extended Data Figure 8A-B**). In contrast, excluding HbA1c as a covariate not only detected a

significant association between the T2D GRS and the percentage of islet δ cells (**Figure 7B**,

bottom) but also revealed a significant positive association between the T2D GRS and glucagon

content (**Extended Data Figure 8D**). Individual data points for associations of % δ cells and

T2D GRS are shown in **Extended Data Figure 9A.**

To further establish whether the underlying transcripts at T2D GWAS signals captured

within the T2D GRS were enriched in δ cells, we analyzed 87,505 islet cells (1877 δ cells) from

44 donors without diabetes using single-cell RNA sequencing data from the Human Pancreas

Analysis Program (HPAP)[43–46] (**Figure 7C-G**). Since the precise effector transcript remains

unknown for many T2D GWAS signals, we used the proximal gene to evaluate the polygenic

contributions of the 338 GRS variants (**Figure 7E** and **Extended Data Figure 9B**). Our analysis

demonstrated that several T2D GRS candidate genes are strongly upregulated in δ cells

(**Figure 7F**, significant genes highlighted in blue). Furthermore, we showed that the T2D GRS is

highly enriched for genes that are strongly expressed in δ cells (**Figure 7G**, with significant

genes highlighted in blue, and **Extended Data Figure 9C**).

DISCUSSION

Islet physiology is disrupted in both T1D and T2D. The pathways and cell-cell

communications that underlie islet dysfunction in diabetes are poorly understood, yet they may

have important implications in treatment strategies employing both pharmacologic agents and

islet or β cell replacement therapy. Recent emphasis on precision medicine approaches coupled

with increased utilization of single-cell technologies has highlighted an important role for

heterogeneity in diabetes classification, treatment, and molecular phenotypes[47–51]. To

understand how biological variation in humans impacts islet function and diabetes risk, we

generated this research resource from islets distributed through the NIH-funded IIDP. These

islets underwent pre-shipment assessment at one of five islet isolation centers followed by

centralized phenotyping and genotyping through the HIPP and HIGI programs. A strength of our

study is the inclusion of islets from a diverse group of U.S. organ donors with over 40% of

donors having a reported race or ethnicity other than White, non-Hispanic or Latino/a. The IIDP-

HIPP-HIGI workflow has enabled investigation for associations between inherent donor

characteristics, islet composition, genetic risk scores for T1D and T2D, and multiple insulin and

glucagon secretory traits. Our data can be accessed through the IIDP RDR, where researchers

can view and interrogate the dataset used for this analysis and propose their own unique

questions related to human islet biology using the larger RDR dataset. Images presented in this

report are available on the open-access Pancreatlas™ platform[52], which supports interactive

exploration of full-resolution islet imaging data.

Our phenotyping workflow includes an assessment of islet purity and viability, insulin and

glucagon secretion measured in a dynamic perifusion system, and a quantitative assessment of

islet composition in a sample of islets distinct from the islet aliquot used for perifusion. Studies

of the human pancreas suggest a greater than four-fold variation in β cell mass amongst

individuals without diabetes[53]. Not surprisingly, we observed a wide range of β cell secretory

responses to glucose, IBMX, and KCl, in line with previous reports [54–56]. While clinical studies

suggest that glucose tolerance declines with age, whether β cell function declines with age

independently of changes in insulin resistance and weight in individuals who maintain normal

glucose tolerance is not clear[57,58]. Similarly, the impact of donor age on insulin secretion *in vitro*

has been mixed in previous reports, with studies finding either no effect or a negative impact of

age on glucose-stimulated insulin secretion[55,59–62]. In addition, many studies report an effect of

BMI on multiple insulin secretory traits, while others have found no correlation[54,55,61,63]. In the

current study, Spearman correlation analyses revealed a significant positive relationship

between BMI and basal insulin secretion and a negative relationship between either BMI or age

and the glucose stimulation index. However, we detected no significant association between any

donor trait and insulin secretion in multivariable regression models adjusting for 7 other donor

and islet processing-related covariates. Our studies differ from these previous studies in that we

included a larger sample size of donors and controlled for multiple potentially confounding

demographic and islet processing features, which we and others have shown to impact *in vitro*

secretory responses[55,61,64].

In contrast to the weak effects of donor demographics on insulin secretion, islet

composition exhibited strong and consistent associations with insulin secretory traits in both

Spearman correlation and multivariable analyses. Consistent with observed heterogeneity in

hormone secretory responses, islet composition was highly heterogeneous amongst islet

preparations, with an approximately 4, 22, and 19-fold variation in the percentages of β, α, and

δ cells, respectively. β cell composition or a higher percentage of β cells was associated with

increased glucose-stimulated, cAMP-potentiated, and depolarization-mediated insulin secretion.

While islet isolation severs vascular and neuronal connections, the autonomy of the islet as a

mini-organ is well preserved after isolation, as demonstrated by the persistence of paracrine

interactions and electrical coupling that modulate islet cell-cell communication within islets[65].

Strikingly, although δ cells comprised a relatively low percentage of islet endocrine cell

composition, a higher percentage of δ cells negatively impacted most insulin secretion traits.

This finding is notable given a recent report showing that δ cells regulate the glycemic set point

in healthy mice and that ablation of the δ cell population leads to blood glucose lowering and

increased insulin secretion[66]. In multivariate analysis, we queried factors associated with T1D

and T2D GRS, identifying a positive association between the percentage of islet δ cells and the

T2D GRS. Of the 303 candidate genes that map to the 338 variants reflected in the T2D GRS,

181 of 303 (60%) genes were expressed (mean of normalized counts > 0.01) in δ cells. Notable

genes identified in this analysis include the transcription factor *HHEX*, which has previously

been shown to play an essential role in δ cell differentiation, with loss of *HHEX* leading to a

reduced number of δ cells, reduced islet somatostatin secretion, and increased insulin

secretion[67]. We identified δ cell expression of other notable genes with resolved effector

transcript status, including *DGKB*[4] and *GLP1R*[68,69], which have been associated with glycemia

and insulin secretory phenotypes in human studies.

Multiple glucagon secretory traits were associated with islet composition; however, we

found even stronger associations between glucagon content and total glucagon secreted in

response to all secretagogues used in this study. Interestingly, this same relationship was not

observed between insulin content and insulin secretory responses. One study comparing

murine β and α cells noted faster rates of glucagon granule exocytosis, larger readily releasable

pools, and a higher rate of refilling of these pools after depletion in α cells[70]. Therefore, it is

possible that these same mechanisms are at play in human islets and could explain differences

in the association between hormone content and secretion between β and α cells.

Our observations on the impact of islet composition on secretory traits raise an important

question of whether differences in cell composition are influenced by donor demographics

and/or genetics. Interestingly, we found a global effect of sex and reported race or ethnicity on

the percentage of islet β and α cells. Here, female donors had a higher percentage of α cells,

and donors reported as Asian exhibited a higher percentage of β cells. We note the relatively

small number of donors reported as Asian in the dataset, highlighting a need to confirm this

observation with larger sample sizes. Remarkably, a high T2D GRS was positively associated

with the percentage of islet δ cells, which was consistent with the finding that δ cell composition

negatively impacted most insulin secretion traits, highlighting the inhibitory potential of δ cell-

secreted factors, including somatostatin. Together, these data suggest that, in some individuals,

a genetic predisposition to having more δ cells may impact insulin secretory capacity and

glycemic setpoints, making one more susceptible to the development of T2D. This is further

supported by the structural basis for δ cell paracrine regulation in pancreatic islets[71]. However,

the mechanisms by which genetic variation associated with altered T2D risk influences δ cell

composition are unknown. Recent studies have utilized the abundance of known endocrine

marker proteins to infer associations with gene and protein expression[56,64]; however, this is the

first time to our knowledge that direct quantitative assessment of islet composition has been

compared to hormone secretion.

In summary, this study has identified important relationships between donor

demographics, genetics, islet processing, islet composition, hormone content, function, using

human islet preparations from donors without diabetes. Given their impact on human islet

function, these factors should be considered in interpreting future human islet studies. Further,

they may have implications in strategies for β cell replacement therapy[72–74]. For example, in

2022 the FDA approved Lantidra[75], the first allogeneic pancreatic islet cellular therapy made

from deceased donor pancreatic cells for the treatment of T1D to ameliorate problematic

hypoglycemia with glucocorticoid-free immunosuppression[76]. Release criteria for islet grafts

have historically included measures of glucose-stimulated insulin secretion, which predicts

metabolic outcomes of human islet transplantation[77]. Our data highlight the impact of cell-cell

interactions on islet function and suggest that islet composition may provide valuable insight into

graft function post-transplant. Similarly, we expect that integrating these findings from 299

donors without diabetes with datasets generated using the same phenotyping and genotyping

pipelines for islets from individuals with T1D and T2D, such as those generated by the Human

Pancreas Analysis Program (HPAP)[43,46] will inform our understanding of diabetes

pathophysiology and lead to the design of new therapies and disease prevention.

There are limitations of our analysis that should be acknowledged. First, our analysis

was performed on islets isolated from the pancreas of organ donors following brain or

circulatory death. Because the pancreas cannot be safely biopsied in living individuals, the

analysis of post-mortem tissue remains an important caveat for most human islet research.

While we evaluated the impact of donor demographic features and technical features of the

isolation, we did not evaluate the impact of the reported cause of death on islet function or

viability. There is some data to suggest that islet secretory function varies by category of

reported cause of death (i.e., trauma, cerebrovascular, or cardiovascular)[78]. However, autopsy

studies indicate that clinical assessment of the cause of death is prone to error in an estimated

13-38% of cases[79]. Further, whilst we examined factors impacting glucose-stimulated islet

responses in detail, we did not investigate responses to other nutrients, such as fatty acids or

amino acids, which also display significant donor-to-donor heterogeneity, as highlighted by a

recent report from Kolic et al.[56]. Finally, while this study is currently the largest of its type, we

had multiple observations that were nominally significant, supporting the need for larger studies

and expanded sample sizes. The diverse IIDP-HIPP-HIGI datasets represent a valuable and

continuously growing resource for the islet biology community, which can be used to generate

new scientific hypotheses and guide mechanistic studies of human islets. Future studies should

leverage this rich dataset to link islet secretory characteristics and composition with multi-omic

assessment and test these relationships in cohorts of donors, including controls and those with

pre-diabetes and diabetes, especially to understand cell-specific contributions to diabetes risk

and disease pathophysiology.

RESOURCE AVAILABILITY

Lead contact

Further information and requests for resources and reagents should be directed to and will be

fulfilled by the lead contact, Marcela Brissova, PhD (marcela.brissova@vumc.org). Requests for

access to genetic data should be directed to Anna L. Gloyn, DPhil (agloyn@stanford.edu).

Materials availability

This study did not generate new, unique reagents.

Data and code availability

Data from the first release of 299 de-identified human islet preparations reported in this paper is

available in **Supplemental File 2.** The genetic risk scores and predicted ancestry for each

donor and the larger integrated dataset hosted are available for download from the IIDP

Research Data Repository. For more information on available datasets and how to access,

visit https://iidp.coh.org/Resources-Offered/Research-Data-Repository. Genotyping data were

deposited in the European Genome Phenome Archive (EGA) under accession number

EGAS50000000697 and are available through a data access agreement. All original code is

publicly available as of the date of publication. Code related to the generation of statistical

models is available at https://github.com/hakmook/HIPP_project. Code associated with the

prediction of genetic ancestry is available at https://github.com/gloynlab/GeneticAncestry. Any

additional information required to reanalyze the data reported in this paper is available from

either Dr. Brissova or Dr. Gloyn (genetic data) upon request.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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and K.A.; Visualization: Y.D.P., S.A.S., H.S., and D.C.S.; Writing – original draft: Y.D.P., C.E.M.,
A.L.G., and M.B.; Writing – review & editing: all authors.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

A.L.G's spouse is an employee of Genentech and holds stock options in Roche.

FIGURE LEGENDS

Figure 1. Integration of phenotyping and genotyping assessment of a diverse set of IIDP-derived human islet preparations. (**A**) Schematic illustrating the human islet phenotyping and genotyping pipelines utilized by the HIPP and HIGI. The HIPP performs analysis of islet morphology, purity, viability, histology, and function; the remaining sample is archived in a biorepository for additional analyses. The HIGI receives a non-islet tissue sample and isolates DNA to sequence for genetic ancestry prediction and calculation of genetic risk scores for type 1 and type 2 diabetes. (**B**) Descriptive statistics of donor demographics by sex and reported race or ethnicity (n = 299). Values are reported as mean ± standard deviation, followed by the range. (**C**) Descriptive statistics of donor demographics by sex and primary predicted ancestry (n = 268). Values are reported as mean ± standard deviation, followed by the range. **p < 0.01 vs. male donors; ***p < 0.001 vs. male donors.

Figure 2. Islet secretory function is highly heterogeneous amongst donors. Average (**A**) insulin and (**B**) glucagon secretion from donor islets normalized to islet equivalents (IEQs). Data are displayed as mean ± 95% confidence interval (n = 299). (**C**) Schematic and tables describing insulin and (**D**) glucagon secretion traits derived from individual islet secretion traces. Descriptive statistics by sex and reported race/ethnicity are provided in **Extended Data Tables 1 and 2**. G – Glucose (mM); IBMX – isobutylmethylxanthine (µM); A – adrenaline (µM); KCl – potassium chloride (mM).

Figure 3. Islet secretion traits by sex. Violin plots comparing (**A**) insulin and (**B**) glucagon secretion traits between female (n = 115) and male (n = 184) donors. The solid line in each violin plot depicts the median, and the dotted lines represent the 1st and 3rd quartiles. Global P-value is based on the F-test while controlling for the seven covariates (age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, islet isolation center, pre-shipment culture time, and islet transit time) and adjusting for multiple comparisons. Comparisons where the unadjusted p-value (p_{unadj}) was significant are noted in italics.

Figure 4. Islet secretion traits by reported race or ethnicity. Violin plots comparing (**A**) insulin and (**B**) glucagon secretion traits by reported race or ethnicity (n = 12 Asian, n = 26 Black or African American, n = 86 Hispanic or Latino/a, n = 175 White). The solid line in each violin plot depicts the median, and the dotted lines represent the 1st and 3rd quartiles. Global p-value is based on the F-test while controlling for the seven covariates (age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, islet isolation center, pre-shipment culture time, and islet transit time) and adjusting for multiple

comparisons. Comparisons where the unadjusted p-value (p_{unadj}) was significant are noted in
italics.

Figure 5. Islet composition and hormone content are associated with multiple islet
secretory traits. (**A-B**) Heatmaps depicting regression coefficients of each morphologic
variable for islets that underwent perifusion (n = 186), islet composition variable (n = 299), and
total islet insulin and glucagon content (n = 299) after being incorporated into multivariable
regression models controlling for age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, islet isolation center, reported race or
ethnicity, pre-shipment culture time, and islet transit time for each (**A**) insulin or (**B**) glucagon
secretion trait. (**C**) Heatmaps depicting regression coefficients of each islet composition variable
after being incorporated into multivariable regression models for total insulin or glucagon
content after adjusting for the eight covariates (n = 299). Adjusted p-values are indicated where
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, and ***p < 0.001. Comparisons where the unadjusted p-value (p_{unadj}) was
significant are noted in italics.

Figure 6. Islet composition and hormone content are highly variable and influenced by
donor sex and ancestry. (**A**) Representative images of collagen gel-embedded islets and
associated quantification of islet composition. Each point represents the average % β, % α, and
% δ cells per donor (n = 299). Violin plots comparing islet composition by (**B**) donor sex, (**C**)
reported race or ethnicity, and (**D**) predicted primary genetic ancestry. (**E**) Islet insulin content
normalized to IEQ (n = 299). Violin plots comparing islet insulin content by (**F**) donor sex, (**G**)
reported race or ethnicity, and (**H**) predicted primary genetic ancestry. (**F**) Islet glucagon content
normalized to IEQ (n = 299). Violin plots comparing islet glucagon content by (**J**) donor sex, (**K**)
reported race or ethnicity, and (**L**) predicted primary genetic ancestry. Donor sex: n = 115
female, n = 184 male. Reported race or ethnicity: n = 12 Asian, n = 26 Black or African
American, n = 86 Hispanic or Latino/a, n = 175 White. Primary predicted genetic ancestry: n =
86 Admixed American, n = 21 African, n = 11 East Asian, n = 150 European. Adjusted global p-
values are indicated where *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. For sex, reported race or
ethnicity, and genetic ancestry, the global adjusted p-value is based on the F-test while
controlling for the other seven covariates. INS – insulin; GCG – glucagon; SST – somatostatin.

Figure 7. Pancreatic islet δ cell composition is associated with a genetic risk score for
type 2 diabetes derived from genome-wide association studies. (**A-B**) Heatmaps depicting
coefficients of the GRS for (**A**) T1D and (**B**) T2D, along with partitioned GRS variables after
being incorporated into multivariable regression models for each secretion trait, hormone
content, and islet composition variable (n = 268). Each model included the following covariates:

donor age, sex, BMI, islet isolation center, pre-shipment culture time, islet transit time, and the

first five principal components explaining primary genetic ancestry, with the HbA1c covariate

(*top*) or without HbA1c covariate (*bottom*). "T1D GRS" encompasses the genetic risk for T1D

(67 total variants). "HLA DR/DQ" represents the sum of T1D risk at HLA-DR/DQ haplotypes.

"HLA Class 1" and "HLA Class 2" represent the sum of T1D risk at HLA class 1 and 2 alleles,

respectively, excluding HLA DR/DQ haplotypes. "Non-HLA" represents the sum of T1D risk from

variants outside the HLA region, genome-wide. "T2D GRS" encompasses genetic risk for T2D

(338 total variants). "Beta Cell," "Proinsulin," "Obesity," "Lipodystrophy," and "Liver/Lipid"

represent partitioned T2D GRS clusters encoding the related variants. Adjusted p-values are

indicated where *p < 0.05. Comparisons where the unadjusted p-value (p_{unadj}) was significant

are noted in italics. (**C**) Clustering of the HPAP single-cell RNA-seq data from 44 HPAP donors

without diabetes. (**D**) The number of cells of each type included in the analysis, including 1877 δ

cells. (**E**) The number of genes that were differentially expressed, with three different thresholds

for expression, in δ cells. (**F**) A dot plot showing T2D GRS genes that are differentially

expressed in δ cells (significant genes are shown in blue). (**G**) A heat map illustrating T2D GRS

genes that are differentially expressed in δ cells (significant genes are shown in blue).

 EXTENDED DATA FIGURE AND TABLE LEGENDS

Extended Data Figure 1, related to Figure 1. Schematic of multimodal data integration by
phenotyping and genotyping pipelines within Integrated Islet Distribution Program (IIDP) and
data deposition in Resource Data Repository (RDR).

Extended Data Figure 2, related to Figure 1. Example HIPP procedures. (**A**) Representative
images of a human islet preparation stained with dithizone (DTZ) to delineate islet versus non-
islet tissue. Using the Count and Measure function in cellSens, images of DTZ-stained islets
were utilized to quantify the total islet equivalents (IEQs), purity, and islet morphology. Tissue
depicted in red on the image mark-up indicates positively identified islet tissue, while green
marks non-islet tissue. (**B**) Representative images of handpicked islets pre- and post-perifusion.
The red color on the image markup indicated positively identified islet tissue by the Count and
Measure function in cellSens. The scale bar is 500 µm.

Extended Data Table 1, related to Figure 2. Insulin secretion is highly heterogeneous
amongst donors. Descriptive statistics of the eleven insulin secretion traits by donor sex and
reported race or ethnicity. Data are displayed as mean ± SD, followed by the range.

Extended Data Table 2, related to Figure 2. Glucagon secretion is highly heterogeneous
amongst donors. Descriptive statistics of the nine glucagon secretion traits by donor sex and
reported race or ethnicity. Data are displayed as mean ± SD, followed by the range.

Extended Data Table 3, related to Figure 2. Distribution of insulin secretion traits is
similar in n = 268 subset. Descriptive statistics of the eleven insulin secretion traits by donor
sex and genetic ancestry. Data are displayed as mean ± SD, followed by the range.

Extended Data Table 4, related to Figure 2. Distribution of glucagon secretion traits is
similar in n = 268 subset. Descriptive statistics of the nine glucagon secretion traits by donor
sex and genetic ancestry. Data are displayed as mean ± SD, followed by the range.

Extended Data Figure 3, related to Figure 2. Relationship between donor demographics,
islet processing, islet morphology, and functional traits. Heatmap of Spearman r correlation
coefficients between the indicated variables in the corresponding labeled row and column. For
donor sex, the male was coded as 0 and female as 1. *p < 0.05; †p < 0.01; ‡p < 0.001. All p-
values are unadjusted.

Extended Data Figure 4, related to Figures 3 and 4. Donor and islet processing traits
correlate with islet function. (**A-B**) Heatmaps depicting regression coefficients of each islet

processing trait after being incorporated into multivariable regression models for each (**A**) insulin

and (**B**) glucagon secretion trait. Each model included the following covariates: age, sex,

reported race or ethnicity, BMI, HbA1c, and islet isolation center. Pre-shipment culture time and

islet transit time were included as additional covariates for all subsequent models, unless noted

otherwise. (**C-D**) Heatmaps depicting regression coefficients of donor age, BMI, and

prediabetes status after being incorporated into multivariable regression models for each (**C**)

insulin and (**D**) glucagon secretion trait while controlling for the other seven final covariates.

Adjusted p-values are indicated where *$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, and **$p < 0.001$. For associations

that are significant prior to adjusting to multiple comparisons, the unadjusted p-value is noted in

italics. (**E-F**) Tables summarizing the global adjusted P-value when comparing differences by

donor sex, reported race or ethnicity, genetic ancestry, and isolation center for each (**E**) insulin

and (**F**) glucagon secretion trait. The global adjusted p-value is based on the F-test while

controlling for the other seven covariates. Analyses involving genetic ancestry controlled for all

covariates except reported race or ethnicity. n.s. indicates an insignificant global adjusted p-

value and unadjusted p-value. For results that were significant prior to adjusting to multiple

comparisons, the unadjusted p-value is noted in italics. n = 299 for all analyses except those

involving islet purity (n = 269), elevated HbA1c (n = 76 elevated HbA1c, n = 223 normal HbA1c),

and genetic ancestry (n = 268).

Extended Data Figure 5, related to Figure 4. Islet secretion traits by genetic ancestry.

Violin plots comparing (**A**) insulin and (**B**) glucagon secretion traits by primary predicted genetic

ancestry (n = 86 Admixed American, n = 21 African, n = 11 East Asian, n =150 European). The

solid line in each violin plot depicts the median, and the dotted lines represent the 1st and 3rd

quartiles. *$p < 0.05$ after adjusting for multiple comparisons. Comparisons where the unadjusted

p-value (p_{unadj}) was significant are noted in italics. Global p-value is based on the F-test while

controlling for the seven covariates (donor age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, islet isolation center, pre-

shipment culture time, and islet transit time).

Extended Data Figure 6, Related to Figure 5. Islet composition and hormone content are

associated with multiple islet secretory traits after adjusting for population structure

using the first five principal components explaining genetic ancestry. (**A-B**) Heatmaps

depicting regression coefficients of each morphologic variable for islets that underwent

perifusion (n = 186), islet composition variable (n = 268), and total islet insulin and glucagon

content (n = 268) after being incorporated into multivariable regression models controlling for

age, sex, BMI, HbA1C, islet isolation center, islet transit time, pre-shipment culture time and the

first 5 principial components explaining genetic ancestry for each (**A**) insulin or (**B**) glucagon

secretion trait. (**C**) Heatmaps depicting regression coefficients of each islet composition variable

after being incorporated into multivariable regression models for total insulin or glucagon

content after adjusting for the eight covariates (n = 268). Adjusted p-values are indicated where

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$, and ***$p < 0.001$. Comparisons where the unadjusted p-value (p_{unadj}) was

significant are noted in italics.

Extended Data Figure 7, related to Figure 6. Correlation between donor demographics

and islet processing variables with islet composition and hormone content. (**A**) Heatmaps

depicting regression coefficients of donor and islet processing variables when incorporated into

multivariable regression models with an islet composition variable (% β, α, or δ cells) as the

outcome variable. For models related to islet processing traits, the following covariates were

included: donor age, sex, reported race or ethnicity, BMI, HbA1c, and islet isolation center. For

donor traits, pre-shipment culture time and islet transit time were also included as covariates.

For associations that are significant before adjusting for multiple comparisons, the unadjusted p-

value is noted in italics. (**B**) Table summarizing the global adjusted p-value when comparing

differences by isolation center for each composition variable. The global adjusted p-value is

based on the F-test while controlling for the other seven covariates listed in **A**. (**C**) Heatmaps

depicting regression coefficients of donor and islet processing variables when incorporating into

multivariable regression models, insulin and glucagon content. For models related to islet

processing traits, the following covariates were included: age, sex, reported race or ethnicity,

BMI, HbA1c, and islet isolation center. For donor traits, pre-shipment culture time and islet

transit time were also included as covariates. Adjusted p-values are indicated where *$p < 0.05$.

(**D**) Table summarizing the global adjusted p-value when comparing differences by isolation

center for hormone content. The global adjusted p-value is based on the F-test while controlling

for the other seven covariates listed in **C**. (**E-F**) Violin plots comparing islet composition (**E**) and

glucagon content (**F**) by donor sex when adjusted for population structure, including seven

covariates: age, sex, BMI, HbA1c, islet isolation center, islet transit time, pre-shipment culture

time, plus 1st five principal components explaining genetic ancestry. Global adjusted p-values

based on the F-test while controlling for the other twelve covariates are indicated where *$p <$

0.05. For analyses including genetic ancestry as a covariate, n = 268; otherwise, n = 299 for all

other analyses.

Extended Data Figure 8, related to Figure 7. Associations between T1D and T2D GRSs

and islet function and hormone content, including and disregarding HbA1c. (**A-B**)

Heatmaps depicting coefficients of the GRS for (**A**) T1D and (**B**) T2D along with partitioned GRS
variables after being incorporated into multivariable regression models for each secretion,
hormone content, and islet composition variable (n = 268). Each model included the following
covariates: donor age, sex, BMI, islet isolation center, pre-shipment culture time, islet transit
time, and the first five principal components explaining primary genetic ancestry. Adjusted p-
values are indicated where $*p < 0.05$. For associations that are significant before changing to
multiple comparisons, the unadjusted p-value is noted in italics.

Extended Data Figure 9, related to Figure 7. Mapping predicted T2D GWAS effector
transcripts in islet δ cells. (**A**) Visualization of % δ cell composition in islets vs. T2D GRS. The
data were used for associations of % δ cells and T2D GRS after adjusting for the following
covariates: donor age, sex, BMI, islet isolation center, pre-shipment culture time, islet transit
time, and the first five principal components explaining primary genetic ancestry, with or without
HbA1c. (**B**) Number of signals included in the T2D GRS that map to an individual gene. Some
genes have more than one signal; therefore, 338 variants were mapped to 303 genes. (**C**)
Enrichment of T2D GRS for genes strongly expressed in δ cells.

METHODS

EXPERIMENTAL MODEL AND STUDY PARTICIPANT DETAILS

Primary human islet isolation
Human islet preparations from cadaveric organ donors (n = 299) were isolated from five
affiliated islet isolation centers across the U.S and distributed to the Human Islet Phenotyping
Program through the IIDP from 2016-2024. Donor demographic information is detailed in **Figure**
1. De-identified human pancreatic specimens do not qualify as human subjects research under
the Vanderbilt or the Stanford Institutional Review Boards. All assays were performed on the
day of islet arrival. Islet preparations included in this manuscript (n = 299) were isolated from
five IIDP-affiliated isolation centers: Scharp-Lacy (n = 113), Southern California Islet Cell
Resource Center (n = 94), University of Miami (n = 30), University of Pennsylvania Islet
Transplant Center (n = 27), and the University of Wisconsin Human Islet Core (n = 35).

METHOD DETAILS

All human islet preparations were assessed according to standardized protocols established by
the HIPP and HIGI of the IIDP and are publicly available at https://iidp.coh.org/SOPs. All HIPP-

related assessments are conducted on the day of arrival. Methods are briefly summarized
below.

Islet purity and morphology

A representative sample of the unpicked human islet preparation was prepared by combining a
320 µL aliquot of islet preparation and 680 µL CMRL medium. The representative sample was
stained with 50 µL of 1 mg/mL dithizone/DMSO/PBS (DTZ; Sigma, catalog #D5130) for 1-2 min
at room temperature. After adding 1 mL of CMRL medium, brightfield and darkfield images of
stained islets were captured at 10X magnification. Islet (stained) and non-islet (unstained) area
was determined using the Count and Measure function in cellSens (Olympus). Islet purity was
calculated as the following:

$$Islet\ Purity\ (\%) = \frac{Total\ islet\ tissue\ area}{Total\ islet\ tissue\ area + Total\ non-islet\ tissue\ area} \times 100$$

Using the Count and Measure function in cellSens, morphological characteristics of each
islet were also determined, including average islet radius, diameter, perimeter, and area.
Measurements were performed in triplicate to ensure accuracy.

Islet viability

Qualitative assessment of islet viability upon arrival to the HIPP was performed using
fluorescein diacetate (FDA) and propidium iodide (PI). In brief, 400 µL of well-mixed total islet
suspension was added to a cell culture dish, and 10 µL of PI (Sigma Aldrich, catalog # P4170)
and 10 µL of FDA (Sigma Aldrich, catalog # F-7378) were added to the islet suspension in
succession. The plate was incubated in the dark for 15 mins, and the preparation was imaged
immediately using an Olympus SZX12 stereomicroscope system. Multiple fields of view were
captured from two replicates per donor to ensure that FDA/PI staining was visualized in 50-100
islets per preparation.

Additionally, a quantitative assessment of islet viability upon arrival to the HIPP was
performed using trypan blue dye. Two aliquots of ~100 handpicked islets were prepared in 1.5
mL tubes and washed three times using 2 mM EDTA/PBS via centrifugation at 200 rcf for 1 min
at 4 °C. Islets were dispersed into a single cell suspension using Accutase (Innovative Cell
Technologies, Inc, catalog # AT-104) and triturated at a slow speed for 10 minutes using an
electronic multichannel pipet with tips. The reaction was quenched with CMRL-1066 media
containing 10% FBS, 2 mM L-glutamine, and 1% penicillin/streptomycin, and cells were washed
twice via centrifugation at 500 rcf for 3 mins at 4 °C. The cell pellet was resuspended in 50-75
µL of CMRL-1066 medium by gently flicking the tube. Next, 10 µL of the cell suspension was

transferred to a new 1.5 mL tube and mixed with 10 μL Trypan Blue dye (Invitrogen, catalog #

T10282). The cell chamber slide was loaded with 10 μL of the mixture in each compartment,

and cell counts were acquired using the Countess II cell counter following instrument guidelines.

Cell counts were repeated for the second aliquot of handpicked islets. Reported viability

represents the average percentage of viable cells for duplicates of purified islets based on two

cell counts per aliquot.

Islet function in a dynamic perifusion system

Islet function was assessed via dynamic perifusion. On the day islets were received, half of the

islet shipment (1000-5000 islet equivalents (IEQs)) was plated in a 10-cm non-tissue culture

treated dish and cultured in CMRL-1066 plus 10% FBS media at 37 °C and 5% CO_2 for 2 hours

prior to perifusion. Under microscope guidance, 267-300 IEQs were handpicked, islet size and

count were recorded, and high-resolution brightfield and darkfield images were captured at 10x

magnification. All islets were then transferred to a clear Eppendorf tube for loading into the

perifusion chamber, fractions were collected at 1 mL/min, and secretagogues were changed at

predetermined fractions. The following secretagogues were used for these perifusion studies:

5.6 mM glucose (baseline media; G 5.6), 16.7 mM glucose (G 16.7), 16.7 mM glucose with 100

μM isobutylmethylxanthine (IBMX; G 16.7 + IBMX 100), 1.7 mM glucose with 1 μM adrenaline

(G 1.7 + Ad 1), and 5.6 mM glucose with 20 mM KCl (G 5.6 + KCl 20). All secretagogues were

prepared in a perifusion medium containing 3.2 g $NaHCO_3$, 0.58 g L-glutamine, 0.11 g sodium

pyruvate, 1.11 g HEPES, 1 bottle DMEM, 1 g RIA-grade BSA, and 70 mg ascorbate in 1 L ultra-

purified water. The perifusion medium was filtered and de-gassed prior to preparation of

secretagogues.

After retrieving islets from the perifusion chamber and placing them into a 60-mm non-

treated culture dish, the IEQ of the retrieved islets was determined and islets were centrifuged

for 3 min at 200 rcf at room temperature. Islet hormone extracts were prepared by incubating

the retrieved islet pellet in 200 μL of fresh acid ethanol (50 μL 5N HCl + 5.5 mL 95% ethanol) for

24 hours. Samples were then spun at 3000 rcf for 5 min, aliquoted to 2 mL screwcap tubes, and

stored at -80 °C until further processing.

Insulin concentration in perifusates and islet extracts was measured via ELISA (2020 –

present; Human Insulin ELISA Kit, Mercodia, catalog # 10-1113-10) or RIA (Human Insulin-

Specific RIA, Millipore catalog # HI-14K). In the same samples, glucagon was also measured

via ELISA or RIA (2021 – present: Quantikine Glucagon ELISA Kit, R&D Systems catalog #

DGCG0; 2020 – 2021: HTRF Glucagon Detection Kit, Cisbio catalog #62CGLPEH; prior to

2020: Glucagon RIA, Millipore catalog #GL-32K). For each assay, standards and quality

controls were measured in duplicates, and perifusate and islet extract samples were measured

in duplicates (RIA) or single point (ELISA). Secreted insulin and glucagon concentrations were

normalized to IEQs and expressed as ng/100 IEQs/min. Alternatively, secreted insulin and

glucagon concentrations were normalized to their respective total hormone content and

expressed as %content/min.

Islet composition

To assess islet composition and acinar cell components, an aliquot of the human islet

preparation was immobilized in a collagen I gel, embedded, and sectioned for histologic

analysis. An aliquot containing approximately 500 IEQs of the human islet preparation was

transferred into a 1.5 mL tube and washed three times in 1X PBS via centrifugation at 200 *xg* for

3 min. After removing the supernatant, 150 µL of collagen I working solution (563 µL collagen I

stock, 167 µL ultrapurified H_2O, 200 µL 5X DMEM, 20 µL HEPES, and 50 µL $NaHCO_3$) was

added to the islet pellet and the mixture was transferred into a well in the center of a 96-well

plate. The plate was incubated at 37 °C for 1.5 hours to allow the gel to solidify, then fixed on ice

for 15 min, filling the well with cold 4% paraformaldehyde/PBS. After the brief fixation, the

paraformaldehyde solution was removed and, using a 28 G needle, the gel was loosened from

the sides of the well and transferred with a spatula into a 12-well plate containing cold 4%

paraformaldehyde/PBS. The gel was fixed for an additional 45 min, shaking on ice, before being

washed three times with 1X PBS for 20 min shaking on ice, transferring the gel to a new well

containing fresh 1X PBS for each wash. Following an overnight incubation in 30% sucrose/1X

PBS, the collagen I gel was embedded into cryomolds containing OCT, imaged, and flash frozen

on dry ice. Islet gels were stored at -80 °C until sectioning.

Following sectioning of collagen gels, immunofluorescence staining of islets was

performed. In brief, 8-µm islet cryosections were allowed to thaw at room temperature and air-

dried for 30 mins. Sections were washed with 1X PBS 3 times for 5 mins to remove the OCT,

permeabilized with 0.2% Triton for 15 mins at room temperature, and washed 3 times in 1X

PBS. Sections were blocked with 5% normal donkey serum in 1X PBS at room temperature for

90 mins in a humidified chamber, then incubated overnight at 4 °C in a humidified chamber with

primary antibodies diluted in 0.1% Triton-X-100/1% BSA/1X PBS. Primary antibodies included:

C-peptide (rat, Developmental Studies Hybridoma Bank, GN-ID4, RRID:AB_2631151, 1:100),

Glucagon (mouse, Abcam, ab10988, RRID:AB_297642, 1:250), Glucagon (rabbit, Cell Signaling

Technology, 2760S, RRID:AB_659831, 1:100), Somatostatin (goat, Santa Cruz Biotechnology,

sc-7819, RRID:AB_2302603, 1:500), and HPX1 (mouse, Novus Biologicals, NBP1-18951,

RRID:AB_1625456, 1:100). Sections were washed with 1X PBS 3 times for 10 mins each, then

incubated for 1.5 hours at room temperature in a humidified chamber with secondary antibodies

diluted in 0.1% Triton/1% BSA/1X PBS. Secondary antibodies were purchased from Jackson

ImmunoResearch: Rat IgG-Cy2 (donkey, 712-225-150, RRID:AB_2340673, 1:500), Rat IgG-

Cy5 (donkey, 712-175-150, RRID:AB_2340671, 1:200), Mouse IgG-Cy3 (donkey, 715-165-150,

RRID:AB_2340813, 1:500), Rabbit IgG-Cy5 (donkey, 711-175-152, RRID:AB_2340607, 1:200),

Goat IgG-Cy5 (donkey, 705-175-147, RRID:AB_2340415, 1:200), and Mouse IgG-Cy3 (donkey,

715-165-150, RRID:AB_2340813, 1:500). Sections were counterstained with 1:25,000

DAPI/PBS for 10 mins at room temperature, then washed 3 times for 15 mins each in 1X PBS.

Sections were mounted with SlowFade Gold mounting medium, and islet sections were imaged

using a high-resolution whole slide scanning system (ScanScope FL, Aperio/Leica) connected

to a web-based digital slide repository powered by eSlide Manager and housed in the Vanderbilt

University Medical Center Data Center. A quantitative assessment of islet cell composition and

endocrine/acinar cell compartments was performed using a tissue classifier algorithm (Halo™,

Indica Labs) to analyze 50-100 islets per labeling experiment. Images presented herein are

deposited in the publicly available Pancreatlas™ platform[52], which allows the exploration of full-

resolution islet imaging data in an interactive manner

(https://pancreatlas.org/datasets/853/explore).

Genetic analysis

DNA on 246/299 donors included in this release was isolated from human islet donor acinar

tissue at Vanderbilt using the Wizard Genomic DNA Purification Kit (Promega, catalog # A1120).

Quantification and quality assessment was performed using the Genomic DNA ScreenTape

assay. DNA was normalized to 50 ng/μL prior to shipment to the HIGI for further analysis. For 30

samples no acinar tissue was available. For 9 of these, DNA was extracted from FPPE sections

at Stanford using the Zymo QuickDNA FFPE Extraction Kit. For the remaining 23 donors DNA

was isolated from acinar tissue at Stanford using the DNAExtraction (Qiagen

DNeasyBlood&TissueKit, catalog # 69504).

Prior to genotyping all DNA samples were re-quantified using both the Nanodrop and

Qubit platforms. Samples containing less than 500 ng total DNA were speed-vacuumed and

concentrated prior to genotyping. All samples were genotyped using the Illumina Infinium

Omni2.5Exome V1.5 array with ~2.6 million single nucleotide variant (SNV) sites measured.

Genotyping data underwent quality control by filtering of SNVs with excess missing genotypes

(>2%), filtering of SNVs that do not conform to Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium (p<1x10^-6), and

removal of samples with either excess missing genotypes (>3%) or discordant genetic vs

recorded sex. For donor samples with excess missing genotypes, 10 μm-thick formalin-fixed

paraffin-embedded pancreas tissue slides were requested from IIDP. DNA was extracted using

the Zymo QuickDNA FFPE Extraction Kit and quantified by Nanodrop and Qubit. Samples were

then restored using the Infinium HD FFPE Restore Protocol and then re-genotyped. Since FFPE

samples have considerable DNA degradation, if these samples did not pass restoration, thicker

20 um FFPE slides were shipped from IIDP and DNA was extracted and sent for restoration and

genotyping. For samples that had discordant sex, an XY PCR was performed on the original

sample and an additional donor sample from IIDP (10-μm thick formalin-fixed paraffin-

embedded pancreas tissue slides). Genotyping results from the 270 donors passing QC

coordinates were then aligned to the positive strand on genome build GRCh38 and the data

imputed against the TOPMed R3 reference panel. After quality control and imputation, 69.4

million high-quality SNVs (R2 > 0.3) and 269 samples were available for analysis. Genetic risk

scores (GRS) for T1D and T2D were generated from previously published models using 67 and

338 SNVs respectively[7,41]. T2D partitioned genetic risk scores (pGRS) were generated using 94

SNVs with predetermined weights from a previous soft-clustering[42]. Genetic ancestry was

determined using a random forest classifier trained on the first 20 principal components of the

1000 Genomes reference panel (https://github.com/gloynlab/GeneticAncestry).

Differentiational expression of predicted T2D effector transcripts in δ cells

Re-processed scRNA-seq data for islets of organ donors without diabetes were downloaded

from PanKbase (https://pankbase-data-v1.s3.us-west-

2.amazonaws.com/analysis_resources/single_cell_objects/min.cells0.01pct_min.features5pct_r

mDoublets_harmony_data.Rds). The dataset included 87,505 islet cells (1877 δ cells) from 44

donors, https://zenodo.org/records/15588240, and is available for the lookup on Pancreatlas

https://pancreatlas.org/datasets/1138/explore/omics/17. Additional lookup data for δ gene

expression in human islets from donors without diabetes is available here

https://powersbrissovalab.shinyapps.io/scRNAseq-Islets/. The variants (N = 338) in the

calculation of the genetic risk score were mapped to the closest genes (N = 303) using

BEDTools with the gene annotation from Ensembl (v112). The number of expressed genes in

islets and δ cells was estimated by applying multiple thresholds, 0.001, 0.01, and 0.1, on the

mean normalized counts across all genes and δ cells only, respectively. Differential gene

expression analysis between the δ cells and the rest of the cells, and each of the other cell

types, on the closest genes was performed using the Wilcoxon rank-sum method in the scanpy

package (v1.10.4), with p values adjusted by the Benjamini-Hochberg method. Significant genes

(padj < 0.05) that are upregulated in δ cells (logfoldchanges > 0, higher expression in δ cells

than in other types of cells) and expressed in at least 20% of δ cells are visualized in dot plot

showing mean gene expression and fraction of cells, ordered by descending logfoldchanges,

and heatmap showing effect size (logfoldchanges), with the marker gene of δ cells (SST)

included for reference. The blue color in **Figure 7F-G** highlights genes with a fold change

greater than 2 when comparing δ cells with the remaining cells. A Fisher test was performed to

check if there is an enrichment of the closest genes in the differentially expressed genes

between δ cells and other cell types.

QUANTIFICATION AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

Hormone secretion traits

Using the insulin and glucagon secretion traces normalized to IEQ, eleven insulin secretion

traits and nine glucagon secretion traits were defined and calculated as illustrated in **Figure 2C-**

D.

Statistical analysis

To determine demographic, islet processing, and morphologic variables associated with

differences in islet secretory function, we first performed Spearman correlation analyses. For

variables with a statistically significant association with islet secretory traits, we utilized

multivariable regression models to examine the relationship among the explanatory variables

and the outcome variable of interest. For each model, we controlled for the following potential

confounders, unless otherwise noted: donor age, sex, BMI, isolation center, HbA1c, reported

race or ethnicity, pre-shipment culture time, and transit time. A statistically significant regression

coefficient for the explanatory variable (p-value < 0.05) denoted a significant association. Given

multiple p-values, we adjusted for the false discovery rate (FDR) at 0.05 to control for multiple

comparisons.

Similarly, to explore potential differences based on prediabetes status or sex, we used

multivariable regression models. In these models, an indicator variable (0 for normal, 1 for pre-

diabetes participants; 0 for male, 1 for female) acted as the explanatory variable. For

prediabetes-related associations, we controlled for all eight of the aforementioned potential

confounders except HbA1c. For sex-related associations, we controlled all potential

confounders except donor sex. The significance of the regression coefficient (b) for the group

indicator (p-value < 0.05) indicated a notable difference in the outcome variable between the

two groups.

To ensure comparability of regression coefficients across models, we normalized the

outcome variables and all continuous explanatory variables, including covariates. This

normalization involved centering the variables by subtracting their mean and scaling them by

their standard deviation. However, this procedure was not applied to categorical covariates in

the model, such as center, self-reported ancestry, and sex. Statistical analyses were all

performed using R Statistical Software version 4.3.0 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing,

Vienna, Austria) and GraphPad Prism version 10.

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A

B

N = 299

Sex: ▮ Female ▮ Male

Reported race or ethnicity:
▮ Asian
▮ Black or African American
▮ Hispanic or Latino/a
▮ White

Reported race or ethnicity	Female (38%)				Male (62%)			
	% (N)	Age (yr)	BMI (kg/m^2)	HbA1C (%)	% (N)	Age (yr)	BMI (kg/m^2)	HbA1C (%)
Asian	3% (4)	49 ± 6 (43 – 57)	28.5 ± 4.8 (23.2 – 32.9)	5.5 ± 0.17 (5.3 – 5.6)	4% (8)	49 ± 13 (31 – 66)	26.5 ± 3.0 (21.6 – 29.9)	5.4 ± 0.33 (5.0 – 5.9)
Black or African American	15%** (17)	48 ± 14 (20 – 65)	30.6 ± 7.2 (18.2 – 47.6)	5.5 ± 0.42 (4.5 – 6.2)	5% (9)	47 ± 9 (37 – 62)	30.7 ± 6.9 (25.0 – 46.8)	5.5 ± 0.36 (5.0 – 6.1)
Hispanic or Latino/a	23% (26)	44 ± 12 (24 – 64)	30.0 ± 4.4 (22.9 – 38.7)	5.4 ± 0.42 (4.3 – 6.0)	33% (60)	40 ± 13 (15 – 62)	29.3 ± 4.7 (18.2 – 39.5)	5.5 ± 0.34 (4.5 – 6.1)
White	59% (68)	46 ± 10 (21 – 65)	28.9 ± 6.2 (17.6 – 45.5)	5.3 ± 0.43 (4.4 – 6.4)	58% (107)	45 ± 12 (17 – 68)	28.6 ± 4.8 (13.7 –40.7)	5.3 ± 0.39 (4.0 – 6.3)
Combined	38% (115)	46 ± 11 (20 – 65)	29.4 ± 5.9 (17.6 – 47.6)	5.3 ± 0.42 (4.3 – 6.4)	62% (184)	43 ± 13 (15 – 68)	28.8 ± 4.9 (13.7 – 46.8)	5.4 ± 0.37 (4.0 – 6.3)

Values reported as mean ± SD (range)

C

N = 268

Sex: ▮ Female ▮ Male

Primary predicted ancestry:
▮ East Asian
▮ African
▮ Admixed American
▮ European

Primary predicted ancestry	Female (40%)				Male (60%)			
	% (N)	Age (yr)	BMI (kg/m^2)	HbA1C (%)	% (N)	Age (yr)	BMI (kg/m^2)	HbA1C (%)
East Asian	5% (5)	48.2 ± 4 (43 – 57)	29.0 ± 4.3 (23.2 – 32.9)	5.4 ± 0.2 (5.2 – 5.6)	4% (6)	51.3 ± 15 (31 – 66)	25.9 ± 3.3 (21.6 – 29.9)	5.5 ± 0.3 (5.1 – 5.9)
African	16%*** (17)	48.5 ± 14 (20 – 65)	30.6 ± 7.2 (18.2 – 47.6)	5.5 ± 0.4 (4.5 – 6.2)	2.5% (4)	46.5 ± 9 (37 – 58)	32.4 ± 9.8 (25 – 46.8)	5.7 ± 0.4 (5.1 – 6.1)
Admixed American	22%** (24)	44.9 ± 12 (24 – 61)	29.6 ± 4.7 (22 – 38.7)	5.4 ± 0.4 (4.3 – 5.9)	38.5% (62)	39.6 ± 13 (15 – 62)	29.4 ± 4.8 (18.2 – 40)	5.4 ± 0.3 (4.5 – 6.1)
European	57% (61)	46.4 ± 10 (21 – 65)	28.9 ± 6.4 (17.6 – 45.5)	5.3 ± 0.4 (4.4 – 6.4)	55% (89)	46.0 ± 12 (18 – 68)	28.4 ± 5.0 (13.7 – 40.7)	5.3 ± 0.4 (4.0 – 6.3)
Combined	40% (107)	46 ± 11 (20 – 65)	29.4 ± 6.1 (17.6 – 47.6)	5.4 ± 0.42 (4.3 – 6.4)	60% (161)	44 ± 13 (15 – 68)	28.8 ± 5.0 (13.7 – 46.8)	5.4 ± 0.37 (4.0 – 6.3)

Values reported as mean ± SD (range)

G 16.7 2nd AUC was calculated by subtracting the G 16.7 1st AUC from the total G 16.7 AUC.

n = 12 Asian, *n* = 26 Black or African American, *n* = 86 Hispanic or Latino/a, *n* = 175 White

Figure 5