



Global HIV Transformed

In a blog post titled “[How PEPFAR Transformed the Global HIV Epidemic](#),” HIV.gov lauds the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, which recently turned 20. Here is an edited excerpt.

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A new analysis from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reveals that the number of people receiving HIV treatment through PEPFAR has increased 300 times in under 20 years, from 2004 to 2022. The number of people receiving HIV antiretroviral therapy through PEPFAR increased from just 66,500 in 2004, the year after PEPFAR was launched, to more than 20 million in 2022. These report findings are published in Vital Signs.

The proportion of people receiving HIV treatment through PEPFAR with a detectable viral load who then tested as virally suppressed increased from 80% to 95% between 2015 and 2022, the report notes. Viral suppression refers to people with HIV who have their virus under control thanks to treatment. This prevents transmission of HIV to sexual partners and helps reduce the risk of transmission from mothers to children.

“PEPFAR’s efforts have dramatically altered the course of the global HIV epidemic,” said CDC chief medical officer Debra Houry, MD, MPH. “We must continue to build on this momentum if we are to eliminate HIV as a global public health threat by 2030. These investments are saving lives and creating a safer world for us all.”

As a key implementing agency of PEPFAR, the CDC works with partners in more than 50 countries to improve methods for finding, treating and preventing HIV. The CDC supports more than 10,000 labs or testing sites worldwide, providing lifesaving treatment to people with HIV around the world and designing and enhancing surveillance systems to enable countries to understand which geographic areas require urgent HIV-related services.

Researchers also analyzed findings from large CDC-supported household surveys in six African countries severely affected by HIV and found increases in population viral load suppression rates between 2015 and 2021. These surveys showed that population viral load suppression rates improved in Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. These improvements ranged from a 13% increase in Lesotho to a 19% increase in Malawi.

Under PEPFAR’s current five-year strategy, the United States aims to eliminate HIV as a global public health threat by 2030 while strengthening public health systems worldwide. The latest data in this Vital Signs report show that PEPFAR’s programs are placing the world on the path to

achieving this goal and validate that efforts over the past 20 years have transformed the global HIV epidemic.

The study also reveals that, since its inception, PEPFAR has helped countries effectively respond to their HIV epidemics and strengthened their public health systems, which helps keep the world safe from other global health threats.

Despite these tremendous achievements, several groups still lag behind—likely due to health inequities fueled by many factors, including stigma and discrimination.

To eliminate HIV as a public health threat by 2030, as outlined by PEPFAR’s five-year strategy, the global health community must:

- Sustain efforts and investments: Continue to be unrelenting in efforts to build on these achievements or risk reversing decades of progress.
- Advance health equity: Address health inequities head-on.
- Strengthen health systems: Continue to bolster and use PEPFAR platforms to strengthen global health security.
- Build transformative partnerships: Collaborate and harness the shared commitment to end the global HIV epidemic.