National Transgender HIV Testing Day 2023

Transgender people make up about 2% of new HIV cases. Here's why that's a disproportionate rate and why trans folk are more vulnerable.

April 18, 2023 By Trent Straube

Tuesday, April 18, marks National Transgender HIV Testing Day 2023, referred to as #TransHIV and #NTHTD on social media. The transgender community is disproportionately affected by HIV, and the annual awareness day offers a chance not only to encourage HIV testing but also to highlight the unique challenges faced by transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

About 1 million people in the United States identify as transgender, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The nation's total population is slightly over 334 million. In other words, about 0.3% of the population is transgender. And yet in 2019, trans people accounted for about 2% of new HIV cases—671 out of 34,800 diagnoses. (Overall, about 1.2 million people have HIV in the United States, and the CDC estimates that 13% of them don't know their positive status.)

To find awareness campaigns and events in your area, search #TransHIV and #NTHTD on social media. Several sample posts are embedded in this story.

National Transgender HIV Testing Day (#NTHTD) is observed to recognize the importance of routine HIV testing and continued focus on HIV prevention and treatment efforts among #transgender and gender #nonbinary people.

.#LGBTQIA #NJLGBT #NJPCC #NJPrideChamber

#LGBTNewJersey pic.twitter.com/XjNxH0DcbE

— New Jersey Pride Chamber of Commerce (@NJPrideChamber) April 18, 2023

Young people and transgender women of color are more likely to be impacted by HIV. In 2020, a CDC survey of transgender women living in seven U.S. cities found that 80% of trans women newly diagnosed with HIV were Latina or Black. Among all trans people newly diagnosed with HIV, 50% were people ages 25 to 34, and 28% were a ages 13 to 24.

@NHMAmd webinar tomorrow! #NTHTD #Transgender #HIV #IDtwitter https://t.co/LdmNWA2DPn

— American Academy of HIV Medicine (@aahivmcomm) April 17, 2023

Today is National Transgender HIV Testing Day, a day to address the impact of #HIV on #transgender and #nonbinary people. When we reduce HIV stigma and promote testing, prevention, and treatment, we can help #StopHIVTogether. https://t.co/Z7jqwRnTTr #NTHTD pic.twitter.com/wqGdPtb5KE

— PA Diane Bruessow (@orpheusgrrl) April 18, 2023

AIDSVu.org, which creates infographics and interactive maps based on HIV data, sheds light on several of the key issues influencing these higher HIV rates. AIDVu.org writes:

> “Transgender people often experience stigma, discrimination, and transphobia, which can adversely impact health care outcomes. This can be exacerbated by a lack of gender-sensitive care, which can discourage Transgender people from seeking or continuing healthcare. Many transgender people also face barriers to healthcare coverage; the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program reported that 21% of transgender clients did not have health insurance coverage in 2021. Furthermore, retention of care rates for transgender males (72%) and transgender females (76%) were lower compared to cisgender males (78%) and females (81%).
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> “Discrimination, stigma and transphobia also contribute to financial insecurity and other challenges for transgender men and women. The Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program found that 21% of transgender clients lived in temporary or unstable housing. Additionally, 74% of transgender clients lived at or below the federal poverty level.”

The CDC notes that “unmet surgical needs and not being on hormones were significantly associated with HIV treatment interruptions. Similarly, another study found that hormone use lowered odds of not being on HIV treatment.”

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by Project Inspect (@projectinspect)

Among transgender people with diagnosed HIV, about 67% were virally suppressed. This is about the same rate as other people with diagnosed HIV, according to the CDC, which added that “more work is needed to increase these rates.”

Maintaining an undetectable viral load—which is another way of saying “viral suppression”—is important because it halts disease progression, meaning that people with an undetectable viral load live longer and healthier lives. What’s more, they don’t transmit the virus sexually, a fact often referred to as Undetectable Equals Untransmittable, or U=U.

> We’re proud to be working with @DrHenSays to end HIV-related stigma so that everyone feels safe and confident accessing HIV testing, treatment and care ???? #NTHTD https://t.co/AftFzQTe9T
>
> — Elton John AIDS Foundation (@ejaf) April 18, 2023

To learn more about other HIV awareness days, including a calendar you can download and print, visit “2023 HIV/AIDS Awareness Days.”

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