



Visualized Data on Stigma

Sexual behavior stigma affects HIV outcomes.

August 12, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

Aiming to track and reduce the stigmas that act as a barrier to HIV prevention, treatment and care—as well as a hindrance to better overall health outcomes—the interactive HIV data tool [AIDSVu](#) recently added a new online feature, the Stigma Dashboard, that offers visualized stigma-related data. Currently, the dashboard tracks sexual behavior stigma in Georgia, New York and Maryland. Specifically, it includes data on men who have sex with men in those states. Additional data and geographic areas will be incorporated in future phases.

Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health researchers Amrita Rao, PhD, and Stefan Baral, MD, created the Stigma Dashboard to showcase progress to eliminating stigmas across different geographic regions in a tangible way.

Stigma comes in many forms and can negatively affect the way people living with and at risk for HIV interact with medical professionals and adhere to HIV treatment. It can also deter HIV-negative individuals from accessing prevention tools, such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP).

What's more, many types of stigma can affect a person's well-being and engagement in care. Racism, homophobia, transphobia and HIV stigma are but a few examples.

“Stigma is a central underpinning as to why somebody is at risk for being homeless and why a gay man may be at risk for HIV and beyond,” Baral told AIDSVu. “It's like you can follow this pathway along why some folks have worse addictions, why some folks have more dependencies and so on—it's that stigmas have manifested in different ways.”

He continued: “We are trying to [measure] stigma in a very nuanced way—through anticipated stigma, perceptions of stigma, enacted stigma, intersectional stigmas and beyond. We want to understand the drivers that worsen health outcomes among certain communities structurally and then provide insights into how to respond to them.”

Researchers used qualitative survey data from cisgender gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men throughout the United States. The dashboard provides information on stigma from family, anticipated health care stigma and general social stigma.

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