HIV in Specific Populations

HIV and Latinos

Latinos in the United States are a diverse population that includes people of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central American and South American origin. Collectively, Latino communities have been hit hard by the HIV epidemic.

While they make up about 20% of the U.S. population, Latinos accounted for 34% of the roughly 39,000 new HIV cases diagnosed in 2024, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Only African Americans have a higher rate of new HIV diagnoses, at 39%. Although new diagnoses among Latino people rose over the past half decade, they appear to have stabilized. Over a quarter (27%) of the nearly 1.2 million U.S. residents living with diagnosed HIV are Latino, although this varies from city to city.

Men who have sex with men account for the largest proportion of new diagnoses among Latino people. Latinos made up the biggest share of new cases among gay and bisexual men ages 25 and older (40%), though Black men predominated among those ages 13 to 24 (47%). New HIV cases among Latino men who have sex with men are highest in the South and West. Among the nearly 8,000 women diagnosed with HIV that year, 22% were Latina. Nearly a third (30%) of children diagnosed in 2024 were Latino.

HIV Prevention

Despite having a higher rate of HIV acquisition, Latino people are less likely than their non-Hispanic white peers to use pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Along with using condoms and not sharing drug injection equipment, PrEP is a highly effective tool for preventing HIV.

There are two approved PrEP pills, Truvada (tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/emtricitabine) and Descovy (tenofovir alafenamide/emtricitabine). Both are usually taken once daily, though Truvada can also be used “on demand” before and after sex. There are also two long-acting injectable PrEP options, Apretude (cabotegravir), administered by a health care provider every two months, and Yeztugo (lenacapavir), administered once every six months.

HIV Care and Treatment

An estimated that five out of six Latinos living with HIV have been tested and know their status. However, a recent study found that just over half of Latino people in four high-prevalence cities had ever been tested. HIV testing is important because people who know they are positive can

start antiretroviral treatment, which both halts disease progression and prevents HIV transmission because people with an undetectable viral load do not transmit the virus through sex.

According to the CDC, 86% of Latinos diagnosed with HIV in 2024 were linked to care within one month, and 75% achieve viral suppression within six months—higher rates than most other racial and ethnic groups. However, among all Latino people living with diagnosed HIV (not just those newly diagnosed), the viral suppression rate falls to 68%.

Antiretroviral treatment is equally effective for Latino people, but they are less likely than non-Hispanic white people to receive adequate health care. Reasons include lower average income and education levels, lack of health insurance, discrimination, stigma and distrust of the health care system. In addition, Latinos are more likely to have other health conditions that can complicate care, such as obesity, diabetes and fatty liver disease.

Latinos are a diverse population, and HIV care indicators differ based on whether they were born in the United States, whether their preferred language is English or Spanish and whether or not immigrants are legal residents. Given the Trump administration's ongoing crackdown on immigrants, undocumented people are less likely to seek medical care and other services.

Many AIDS organizations offer services specifically for Latino people at risk for or living with HIV. In addition, many clinics and hospitals have Spanish-speaking staff or can provide translators to help patients communicate. Don't hesitate to ask for this kind of help if you need it.

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