

Tracking the Progress 2022:

National HIV Strategy



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The years for comparison in this report are from the end of 2016 to the end of 2021 unless focus is given to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, where the years for comparison are 2016 to 2019, and from 2019 to 2021.

Sources of data are provided in the data dashboard on the Kirby data site.

Acknowledgement is given to the many contributors helping report progress against the National HIV Strategy. The full list of contributors can be found on the Acknowledgement page of the Kirby data site.

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Tracking the Progress 2022: National HIV Strategy

The goals of the Eighth National HIV Strategy are to:

1. Virtually eliminate HIV transmission in Australia within the life of this Strategy
2. Sustain the virtual elimination of HIV transmission among people who inject drugs, among sex workers and from mother to child
3. Reduce mortality and morbidity related to HIV
4. Eliminate the negative impact of stigma, discrimination, and legal and human rights issues on people's health
5. Minimise the personal and social impact of HIV

The National HIV Strategy has nine targets that provide specific focus for the efforts made towards achieving the goals of this Strategy. Each target has corresponding indicators that measure progress towards attaining the target. The full list of the targets and their indicators are listed in Appendix i.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in restrictions of access to healthcare, including testing and treatment. These restrictions likely impacted on progress against many indicators between 2019 and 2021. For this reason, the years for comparison in this report are from 2017 to 2021, and where appropriate, 2017 to 2019 and 2019 to 2021.

Target 1

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Increase the proportion of people with HIV (in all priority populations) who are diagnosed to 95%

- Between 2017 and 2021, the estimated proportion of people who were living and diagnosed with HIV increased from 88% to 91%. Despite the increase, more work is required to meet the target of 95% of people living with HIV (PLHIV) being diagnosed.
- The proportion of gay and bisexual participants in the Gay Community Periodic Survey (GCPS) who reported being tested for HIV at least once in the previous 12 months increased from 66.8% in 2017 to 74.3% in 2019. Between 2019 and 2021 this proportion declined from 74.3% to 66.3%. The decline in the proportion reporting testing between 2019 and 2021 is likely due to a decrease in testing rates related to the COVID-19 pandemic. By comparison, the proportion of participants tested at least three times in the previous 12 months increased from 32.9% in 2017 to be 50.9% in 2019 then declined to 47.6% in 2021.
- Among participants in the Australian Needle and Syringe Program Survey (ANSPS), the proportion of people who inject drugs who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months remained stable between 2017 and 2019 (range 49.7%-48.7%). Between 2019 and 2021, this proportion declined from 48.7% to 37.8%.
- From 2017 to 2021, among gay and bisexual men attending clinics participating in the Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance (ACCESS), the proportion who had been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months remained stable, between 85.4% (in 2019) and 87.8% (in 2017). In 2021, this proportion was 86.3%
- Among female sex workers attending sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion who had been tested for HIV in the previous 12 declined from 86.4% in 2017 to 81.6% in 2021.
- Among heterosexuals aged from 16 to 29 years attending clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion who had been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months increased by from 45.0% in 2016 to 49.9% in 2021.
- In the same period, among people who inject drugs attending sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion who had been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months declined from 73.8% 2017 to 67.4% in 2021.
- CD4+ T-cell count at HIV diagnosis can indicate how long a person has had HIV before being diagnosed. Late HIV diagnosis is defined as a CD4+ cell count of less than 350 cells/ μ L at diagnosis where there is no evidence of recent infection. Among HIV notifications attributed to male-to-male sex, the proportion diagnosed late increased from 29.3% in 2017 to 42.8% in 2021. Among HIV notifications attributed to heterosexual sex, the proportion diagnosed late increased from 46.4% in 2017 to 61.7% in 2021. For full data and breakdowns by all exposure classifications, please see the [Kirby data site](#).
- Among participants of the GCPS, the self-reported HIV prevalence among gay and bisexual men increased from 7.3% in 2016 to 9.2% in 2021.
- Among participants in the ANSPS, between 2017 and 2021, the laboratory confirmed HIV prevalence was low (between 1.5% and 2.5%) and was 1.5% in 2021.
- *Data relating to **Indicator 1i: Prevalence of HIV among people in custodial settings** are in development and will be presented in future reporting.*

Target 2

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Increase the proportion of people diagnosed with HIV on treatment to 95%

- Between 2017 and 2021, the estimated proportion of people diagnosed with HIV who were receiving antiretroviral treatment (ART) remained stable and was 92% in 2021. Greater access to treatment across all priority populations is required to meet the target of 95%.
- Among participants in the GCPS, the proportion of HIV positive men who reported receiving ART declined from 92.1% in 2017 to 83.1% in 2021.

Target 3

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Increase the proportion of people on treatment with an undetectable viral load to 95%

- Between 2017 and 2021, the estimated proportion of PLHIV receiving treatment with a suppressed viral load (less than 200 copies of HIV per millilitre of blood) increased from 97% in 2017 to 98% in 2021. The 95% target was met in all years from 2017 to 2021.
- Among gay and bisexual men living with HIV and attending clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion with a suppressed viral load remained stable between 2017 and 2021 (between 93.6% and 95.2%) and was 94.4% in 2021.
- Among people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds living with HIV (classified using country of birth) and attending clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion with a suppressed viral load remained stable between 2017 and 2021 (between 93.4% and 95.2%) and was 94.4% in 2021.
- Among people who use injection drugs living with HIV and attending sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion with a suppressed viral load declined to 87.1% in 2017 to 83.3% in 2019 and the increased to 96.7% in 2021.
- Fewer people among all priority populations listed under this target living with HIV attended clinics participating in ACCESS from 2020 and trends in data to 2021 should be interpreted with caution.

Target 4

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Reduce the incidence of HIV transmissions in men who have sex with men and other priority populations

- Between 2017 and 2021 the HIV notification rate declined by 44% from 4.0 to 2.2 notifications per 100 000 population. Similar trends occurred among males and females. Declines between 2019 and 2021 are likely attributable in part to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on healthcare access and testing, and travel.
- The number of HIV notifications attributed to male-to-male sex declined by 46% from 610 notifications in 2017 to 332 notifications in 2021. In the same period, the number of notifications attributed to heterosexual sex, declined by 38% (from 237 to 148 notifications) and the number of notifications attributed to injection drug use declined by 72% (from 32 notifications to 9 notifications). A full breakdown of the number of notifications by exposure classifications can be found on the [Kirby data site](#).
- Changes in the proportion of HIV notifications classified as newly acquired (clinical evidence of HIV acquisition within the previous 12 months) may be influenced by changes in HIV incidence but can also be influenced by changes in HIV testing patterns. Between 2017 and 2021, the proportion of notifications attributed to male-to-male sex and classified as newly acquired declined from 35.3% in 2017 to 24.7% in 2021. Similar declines were seen across all exposure classifications. A full breakdown by exposure classification can be found on the [Kirby data site](#).
- Among female sex workers attending sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, HIV incidence remained low and was 0.01 per 100 person-years in 2021.
- *Data relating to **Indicator 4.4d: Incidence of HIV among people who inject drugs** were not available at the time of reporting. Future reporting will include data relating to this indicator.*

Target 5

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Sustain the virtual elimination of HIV among sex workers, among people who inject drugs and HIV transmission from mother to child through the maintenance of effective prevention programs

- Between 2016 and 2020 the number of infants who acquire HIV through perinatal transmission reported to the Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit remained low. In 2020 and 2021, there were two and one case of perinatal HIV transmission, respectively.
- Of infants born to women living with HIV, the proportion who were diagnosed with HIV was 4.3% in 2018, 2.1% in 2019 and 0% for 2017, 2020, and 2021. It should be noted that the number of perinatal HIV exposures reported to the APSU may be under reported and caution should be applied in the interpretation of these figures.

Target 6

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Increase the proportion of eligible people who are on PrEP, in combination with STI prevention and testing, to 75%

- Pre-exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) is the use of antiretroviral treatment by HIV-negative people to reduce their risk of acquiring HIV. PrEP became available to eligible individuals through the Australian Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) on 1 April 2018. Between the end of July (Quarter 3) 2018 and the end of December (Quarter 4) 2021, the cumulative number of people with one or more PBS-subsidised PrEP prescriptions increased from 6521 to 49 416.
- Among non-HIV-positive participants of the GCPS:
 - the proportion who reported being aware, eligible and who reported using PrEP in the previous 6 months increased from 2.4% in 2016 to 20.1% in 2021. This proportion does not include those who were ineligible for PrEP through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.
 - among the men who reported using PrEP, the proportion who also received an STI test in the previous 12 months remained close to 100% for all years, 2016 to 2020, but declined to 90.3% in 2021.
 - of the men who reported engaging in condomless anal intercourse with casual male partners in the previous six months, the proportion who reported using PrEP increased from 4.5% in 2016 to 34.0% in 2021.
- Between 2016 and 2019, among gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and attended clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion who had at least one STI test in the previous 12 months remained stable between 2017 (94.7%) and 2019 (93.8%) but declined to 90.2% in 2021. By comparison, the proportion who had at least three STI tests increased from 50.9% in 2017 to 59.6% in 2019, then declined to 47.3% in 2021.
- Among participants in the ANSPS, between 2017 and 2021 the proportion of people who inject drugs that reported re-using another person's used needle and syringe in the previous month remained fluctuated between 15.8% and 18.3% and was 17.6% in 2021.
- *Data relating to **Indicator 6b: Proportion of the eligible population receiving PBS-subsidised PrEP in the previous 12 months** was not available at the time of reporting. Future reporting will include data relating to this indicator.*

Target 7

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75% of people with HIV
report good quality of life

- Among participants of the HIV Futures study, using a four-point scale, the proportion of PLHIV reporting their general health status and general well-being to be excellent or good was 51% in 2019, down from 60% in 2016. More work is required to reach the target of 75% of PLHIV reporting good quality of life.

Target 8

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Reduce by 75% the reported experience of stigma among people with HIV, and expression of stigma, in relation to HIV status

- As reported in **Stigma snapshot: Health care workers 2022:**
 - Among health care workers, 37% reported expressing any stigma towards PLHIV because of their HIV status in the last 12 months in 2021, up from 23% in 2018.
- As reported in **Stigma snapshot: General Public 2022:**
 - Among members of the public surveyed in 2021, 50% reported that they would express stigma or discrimination towards PLHIV, up from 30% reported in 2018, but similar to 50% reported in 2017.
- As reported in the **Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour 2019 HIV and STIs in Australia:**
 - Among PLHIV surveyed in 2018, 56% reported experiencing any stigma in the last 12 months compared with 74% in 2016.
 - Among health care workers surveyed in 2018, 44% reported witnessing any stigma towards PLHIV in the last 12 months.
- As reported in the **Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour 2021 HIV and STIs in Australia:**
 - Among gay and bisexual men surveyed in 2020, 74% reported any stigma in relation to their sexual orientation in the last 12 months.
 - Among members of the public surveyed in 2020, 30% reported that they would express stigma or discrimination towards PLHIV.

Appendix

National HIV Strategy

Indicator	Data source
Target 1 Increase the proportion of people with HIV (in all priority populations) who are diagnosed to 95%.	
1a Proportion of people living with HIV who are diagnosed.	Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney
1b Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have been tested for HIV 1 time or more in the previous 12 months.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
1c Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have been tested for HIV 3 times or more in the previous 12 months.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
1d Proportion of people who inject drugs who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months.	Australian Needle Syringe Program Survey
1e Proportion of gbsm who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months attending a health service participating in the ACCESS network	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
1f Proportion of fsw who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months attending a health service participating in the ACCESS network	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
1g Proportion of pwid who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months attending a health service participating in the ACCESS network	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
1h Proportion of heterosexuals aged 16-29 who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months attending a health service participating in the ACCESS network	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
1i Proportion of new HIV diagnoses determined to be late (CD4 count<350 cell/ μ L) by exposure category.	State and territory health authorities
1j Self-reported HIV prevalence among gay and bisexual men.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
1k Prevalence of HIV among people who inject drugs.	Australian Needle Syringe Program Survey
1i Prevalence of HIV among people in custodial settings.	National Prison Entrants' Blood Borne Virus Survey (NPEBBVS)
Target 2 Increase the proportion of people diagnosed with HIV on treatment to 95%.	
2a Proportion of people living with diagnosed HIV who are receiving ART.	Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney
2b Proportion of HIV positive gay and bisexual men receiving ART.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys

Appendix

National HIV Strategy		
	Indicator	Data source
Target 3	Increase the proportion of those on treatment with an undetectable viral load to 95%.	
	3a Proportion of people receiving antiretroviral treatment for HIV infection whose viral load is less than 200 copies/mL.	Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney
	3b Proportion of gay and bisexual men receiving antiretroviral treatment for HIV infection whose viral load is less than 200 copies/mL.	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
	3c Proportion of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds receiving antiretroviral treatment for HIV infection whose viral load is less than 200 copies/mL.	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
	3d Proportion of people who inject drugs receiving antiretroviral treatment for HIV infection whose viral load is less than 200 copies/mL.	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
Target 4	Reduce the incidence of HIV transmissions in men who have sex with men.	
	4a Annual notification rate of new HIV diagnoses.	State and territory health authorities
	4b Number of HIV notifications by exposure category.	State and territory health authorities
	4c Incidence of recent HIV infection among HIV diagnoses by exposure category.	State and territory health authorities
	4d Incidence of HIV among people who inject drugs.	Not yet reported
	4e Incidence of HIV among female sex workers.	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
Target 5	Sustain the virtual elimination of HIV among sex workers, among people who inject drugs and from mother to child through the maintenance of effective prevention programs.	
	5a Incidence of HIV among people who inject drugs.	Not yet reported
	5b Incidence of HIV among female sex workers.	ACCESS (Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance)
	5c HIV transmission to newborns perinatally exposed to HIV.	Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit

Appendix

National HIV Strategy		
Indicator		Data source
Target 6	Increase the proportion of eligible people who are on PrEP, in combination with STI prevention and testing to 75%.	
6a	Number of people with one or more PBS-subsidised PrEP prescriptions in the previous 12 months.	Monitoring HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis in Australia
6b	Proportion of the eligible population receiving PBS-subsidised PrEP in the previous 12 months.	Not yet reported
6c	Proportion of non-HIV-positive gay men who have received PrEP in the previous 12 months.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
6d	Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and had at least 1 STI tests.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
6e	Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and had 3 or more STI tests	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
6f	Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and have had an STI test	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
6g	Proportion of gay men who have engaged in condomless anal intercourse with casual male partners in the previous six months who have received PrEP	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
6h	Proportion of people who inject drugs who report re-use of someone else's needle and syringe in the previous month	Australian Needle Syringe Program Survey
Target 7	75% of people with HIV report good quality of life.	
7a	Proportion of people with HIV who report their general health status and their general well-being to be excellent or good.	HIV Futures
Target 8	Reduce by 75% the reported experience of stigma among people with HIV, and expression of stigma, in relation to HIV status.	
8a	Proportion of surveyed people living with HIV who report experiencing any stigma or discrimination in relation to their HIV status in the last 12 months.	Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour
8b	Proportion of surveyed men who have sex with men who report experiencing any stigma or discrimination in relation to their sexual orientation in the last 12 months.	Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour
8c	Proportion of health care workers expressing stigma or discrimination towards clients living with HIV.	Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour
8d	Proportion of the Australian public who report they would express stigma or discrimination towards people living with HIV.	Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour