

Tracking the Progress 2023:

# **National HIV Strategy**



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# Tracking the Progress 2023: 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 eight 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.

# Preface

*This is the final report describing progress against indicators in the National Blood-borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Surveillance and Monitoring Plan 2018-2022. In this report, the years of reporting cover the lifetime of the strategies described in the Plan, from the end of 2017 to the end of 2022. During this period, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in restricted access to healthcare, including testing and treatment which impacted progress against many indicators. For this reason and where appropriate, the years for comparison are also from the end of 2017 to the end of 2019 and from the end of 2019 to the end of 2022.*

- 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](#).
- Decisions on whether the target has been met are based on:
  - a) Meeting the target when the target is specific (e.g. increase to 80% the proportion with hepatitis B who are diagnosed);
  - b) Based on previous year's modelling estimates;
  - c) A percentage absolute change of  $\geq 2\%$  for proportions when the target is not specific (e.g. increase treatment uptake or increase vaccination coverage); or
  - d) A relative change of  $\geq 5\%$  for number/notifications when the target is not specific (e.g. reduce incidence).

# 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 2022, the estimated proportion of people who were living and diagnosed with HIV increased from 90% to 93%. Despite the increase, the target of 95% of people living with HIV being diagnosed was not met over the lifetime of the strategy.
- 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 remained stable and was 70.9% in 2019. Between 2019 and 2022 this proportion declined from 70.9% to 57.2%, 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 41.6% in 2017 to 49.0% in 2019 then declined to 45.0% in 2022.
- 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 declined from 49.0% in 2017 to 43.1% in 2022.
- Among gay and bisexual men attending clinics participating in the Australian Collaboration for Coordinated Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance of Sexually Transmissible Infections and Blood Borne Viruses (ACCESS), the proportion tested for HIV in the previous 12 months declined from 88.3% in 2017 to 85.0% in 2022.
- In the same period, among female sex workers attending sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion who had been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months fluctuated between 82.9% and 87.3% and was 84.7% in 2022.
- Among heterosexuals aged between 16 and 29 years attending clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion tested for HIV in the previous 12 months increased from 45.7% in 2017 to 49.2% in 2022.
- In the same period, among people who inject drugs attending sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion tested for HIV in the previous 12 months fluctuated between 73.7% and 67.2% and was 71.0% in 2022.
- 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/ $\mu$ L at diagnosis where there is no evidence of recent infection (within the previous 12 months). Among HIV notifications attributed to male-to-male sex, the proportion diagnosed late increased from 27.9% in 2017 to 35.6% in 2022. Among HIV notifications attributed to heterosexual sex, the proportion diagnosed late increased from 44.8% in 2017 to 58.5% in 2022. 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 declined from 8.8% in 2017 to 6.6% in 2022.
- Among participants in the ANSPS, between 2017 and 2022, the laboratory confirmed HIV prevalence was low (between 1.5% and 2.5%) and was 2.1% in 2022.
- *Data relating to **Indicator 1i: Prevalence of HIV among people in custodial settings** were unavailable over the lifetime of the strategy.*

## Target 2

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

- Between 2017 and 2022, the estimated proportion of people diagnosed with HIV who were receiving antiretroviral treatment (ART) increased from 90% to 95%, meeting the 2022 target of 95%.
- Among participants in the GCPS, the proportion of HIV-positive men who reported receiving ART fluctuated between 2017 and 2022 (between 93.2% and 95.2%) and was 94.2% in 2022.

## Target 3

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

- Between 2017 and 2022, the estimated proportion of people living with HIV receiving treatment with a suppressed viral load (less than 200 copies of HIV per millilitre of blood) increased from 97% to 98%. The 95% target was met in all years from 2017 to 2022.
- 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 95.6% in 2022.
- 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 fluctuated between 2017 and 2022 (between 92.1% and 95.4%) and was 95.4% in 2022.
- Despite the target being met in 2022, fluctuations over the lifetime of the strategy mean that more work is required for the target to be consistently met among people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds as well as gay and bisexual men.
- Among people who use injection drugs, who were living with HIV, and attended sexual health clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion with a suppressed viral load fluctuated between 2017 and 2022 (between 82.4% and 92.3%) and was 90.7% in 2022. Over the lifetime of the strategy, this target was not met for people who use injection drugs.
- Fewer people among all priority populations listed under this target living with HIV attended clinics participating in ACCESS from 2020, meaning trends in data to 2022 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 2022 the HIV notification rate declined by 45% from 4.0 to 2.2 notifications per 100 000 population. Similar trends occurred among males and females. The considerable decline in HIV notification rates across this period are attributed to HIV treatment as prevention (TasP) and HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Further declines between 2019 and 2022 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 55% from 604 notifications in 2017 to 273 notifications in 2022. In the same period, the number of notifications attributed to heterosexual sex, declined by 30% (from 237 to 166 notifications) and the number of notifications attributed to injection drug use fluctuated (between 32 notifications and 9 notifications) with 18 notifications in 2022. 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 2022, the proportion of notifications attributed to male-to-male sex and classified as newly acquired declined from 38.4% to 36.3%. 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 over the lifetime of the strategy and was 0.00 per 100 person-years in 2022.
- *Data relating to Indicator 4.4d: Incidence of HIV among people who inject drugs were not available at the time of reporting.*

# 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 2017 and 2022 there were four infants who acquired HIV through perinatal transmission, with one case in 2022.
- Of infants born to women living with HIV, the proportion who were diagnosed with HIV was 4.7% in 2018, 2.6% in 2019 and 4.3% in 2022, with 0% in the remaining years. It should be noted that the number of perinatal HIV exposures reported to the Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit may be under-reported and caution should be applied in the interpretation of these figures.
- *Data relating to **Indicator 5.5a: Incidence of HIV among people who inject drugs** were not available over the lifetime of the strategy. Data relating to **Indicator 5.5b: Incidence of HIV among female sex workers** are presented under Target 4.*



# 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 6520 to 62 632.
- 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 22.7% in 2022. This proportion does not include those who were ineligible for PrEP through the PBS.
- Among non-HIV-positive participants of the GCPS who reported using PrEP, the proportion who also received an STI test in the previous 12 months remained close to 100% for all years, 2017 to 2019, but declined to 92.7% in 2022.
- Of non-HIV positive participants of the GCPS 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 2017 to 33.9% in 2022.
- Between 2017 and 2019, among gay and bisexual men who received PrEP and attended clinics participating in ACCESS, the proportion who had at least one STI test in the previous 12 months declined from 93.8% to 89.9%. By comparison, the proportion who had at least three STI tests declined from 59.2% in 2017 to 40.0% in 2022.
- Among participants in the ANSPS, between 2017 and 2022 the proportion of people who injected drugs who reported re-using another person's used needle and syringe in the previous month fluctuated between 15.8% and 19.3% and was 19.3% in 2022.
- *Data relating to Indicator 6b: Proportion of the eligible population receiving PBS-subsidised PrEP in the previous 12 months were not available over the lifetime of the strategy.*

# 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 five-point scale, the proportion of people living with HIV rating their quality of life at three or higher was 71.8% in 2022, up from 63.1% in 2018. A score of 3 or higher is considered 'good' quality of life. Despite the increase in this proportion, this target was not met over the lifetime of the strategy.

# 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, 32% reported expressing any stigma towards people living with HIV because of their HIV status in the last 12 months in 2022, up from 23% in 2018.
- As reported in ***Stigma snapshot: General Public 2021:***
  - Among members of the public surveyed in 2021, 50% reported that they would express stigma or discrimination towards people living with HIV, up from 30% reported in 2018, but similar to 50% reported in 2017.
- As reported in the ***Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour 2022 HIV and STIs in Australia:***
  - Among people living with HIV surveyed in 2022, 37% reported experiencing any stigma in the last 12 months compared with 76% in 2016.
- 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 people living with HIV.

# Appendix

## National HIV Strategy

Indicator	Data source
<b>Target 1 Increase the proportion of people with HIV (in all priority populations) who are diagnosed to 95%.</b>	
<b>1a</b> Proportion of people living with HIV who are diagnosed.	Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney
<b>1b</b> 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
<b>1c</b> 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
<b>1d</b> Proportion of people who inject drugs who have been tested for HIV in the previous 12 months.	Australian Needle Syringe Program Survey
<b>1e</b> 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)
<b>1f</b> 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)
<b>1g</b> 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)
<b>1h</b> 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)
<b>1i</b> Proportion of new HIV diagnoses determined to be late (CD4 count<350 cell/ $\mu$ L) by exposure category.	State and territory health authorities
<b>1j</b> Self-reported HIV prevalence among gay and bisexual men.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
<b>1k</b> Prevalence of HIV among people who inject drugs.	Australian Needle Syringe Program Survey
<b>1i</b> Prevalence of HIV among people in custodial settings.	National Prison Entrants' Blood Borne Virus Survey (NPEBBVS)
<b>Target 2 Increase the proportion of people diagnosed with HIV on treatment to 95%.</b>	
<b>2a</b> Proportion of people living with diagnosed HIV who are receiving ART.	Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney
<b>2b</b> Proportion of HIV positive gay and bisexual men receiving ART.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys

# Appendix

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

# Appendix

## National HIV Strategy

Indicator	Data source
<b>Target 6 Increase the proportion of eligible people who are on PrEP, in combination with STI prevention and testing to 75%.</b>	
<b>6a</b> Number of people with one or more PBS-subsidised PrEP prescriptions in the previous 12 months.	Monitoring HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis in Australia
<b>6b</b> Proportion of the eligible population receiving PBS-subsidised PrEP in the previous 12 months.	Not yet reported
<b>6c</b> Proportion of non-HIV-positive gay men who have received PrEP in the previous 12 months.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
<b>6d</b> Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and had at least 1 STI tests.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
<b>6e</b> Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and had 3 or more STI tests.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
<b>6f</b> Proportion of gay and bisexual men who have received PrEP and have had an STI test.	Gay Community Periodic Surveys
<b>6g</b> 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
<b>6h</b> 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
<b>Target 7 75% of people with HIV report good quality of life.</b>	
<b>7a</b> Proportion of people with HIV who report their general health status and their general well-being to be excellent or good.	HIV Futures
<b>Target 8 Reduce by 75% the reported experience of stigma among people with HIV, and expression of stigma, in relation to HIV status.</b>	
<b>8a</b> 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
<b>8b</b> 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
<b>8c</b> Proportion of health care workers expressing stigma or discrimination towards clients living with HIV.	Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour
<b>8d</b> Proportion of the Australian public who report they would express stigma or discrimination towards people living with HIV.	Annual Report of Trends in Behaviour