

HIV and transgender people



Transgender people are disproportionately affected by HIV. In 2022 HIV prevalence among transgender people was 14 times higher than among adults (15-49)¹.

HIV prevention coverage (receiving at least two prevention services) among transgender people was below the 2025 targets of 95% in all regions. Recent country reports indicate that coverage of transgender people during the past 3 months ranged from 27.9% (in eastern and southern Africa, one reporting country) to 77.7% (in Latin America, two reporting countries).

Criminalization of transgender people, stigma and discrimination, and violence based on gender identity remain significant barriers to achieving social justice and equality for transgender people, and to ensuring health for all through access and uptake of HIV services. Transgender people—especially transgender women—are at increased risk of HIV infection. Structural factors, including transphobia, result in discrimination, limited work opportunities, reduced access to health-care services, legal barriers and mental health challenges. These factors influence behavioural risk factors, including condomless sex, unsafe transactional sex, and sharing needles for hormone injections, leading to the substantial inequalities in HIV outcomes.

In numbers

Global median HIV prevalence among transgender people is 10.3% (32 reporting countries), ranging from 0% to 58.0%. For the four countries that also reported sex disaggregation, there is a big disparity, with transgender men reporting a median of 1.0% HIV prevalence and transgender women 8.3%.

Antiretroviral therapy coverage is low among transgender people, with a global median of 44.1% (16 reporting countries), ranging from 7.3% and 100%.

A median of 29% of transgender people reported having experienced physical or sexual violence in the past 12 months (11 reporting countries), ranging from 14.2% to 91%.

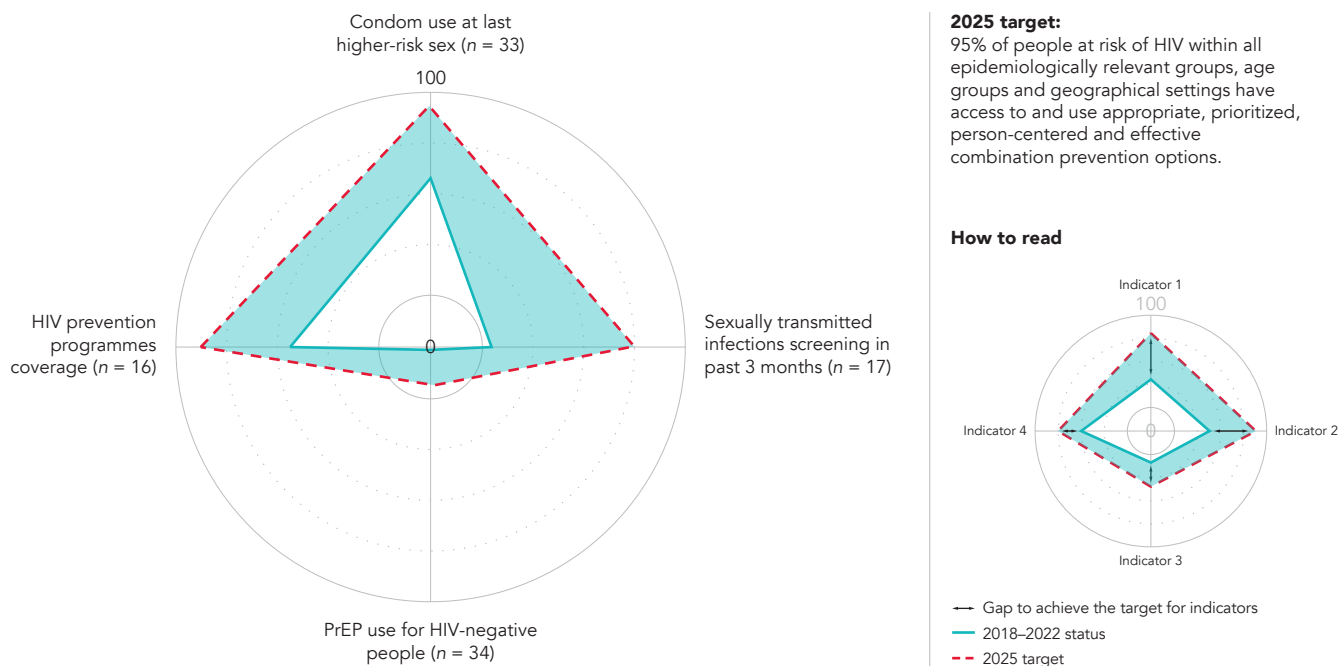
Transgender people remain invisible and unrecognized in many countries. Sixty-one countries have ever reported transgender population size estimates. Of these, only 17 refer to national estimates derived by probabilistic methods within the past five years.

HIV services	Almost 4 in 5 transgender people globally either had taken an HIV test and received the results in the past 12 months or had previously tested positive for HIV (34 reporting countries).
Laws and policies	As of June 2023, at least 20 countries had punitive laws that criminalized transgender people (1). ² In many countries, transgender people are targeted by laws that criminalize same-sex sexual conduct. Transgender rights were strengthened in at least two countries. Spain passed a new law to depathologize gender diversity and allow for legal change of gender without surgery. Kuwait repealed a law criminalizing the imitation of the opposite sex. At the same time, however, a number of countries have introduced anti-gender legislation or seen rights protections diminished.
Stigma and discrimination	A median of 72.0% of transgender people (5 reporting countries) say they have experienced stigma and discrimination in the past 6 months. A median of 14.4% of transgender people report avoiding using health-care services due to stigma and discrimination in the past 12 months (12 reporting countries).
Violence	A median of 29.0% of transgender people experienced violence in the past 12 months (11 reporting countries).
Sexual and reproductive health and rights services and gender-affirming care	Transgender people have unique sexual and reproductive health needs, but they face transphobia and poor awareness and lack of training for health-workers, which often render crucial health services unapproachable. Health-care systems fail to include reproductive justice and basic sexual and reproductive health and rights services for transgender people (2).

¹ Unless otherwise specified, the source for all quantitative data is UNAIDS Global AIDS Monitoring, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>) or UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

² For additional sources, see references in Laws and Policies scorecard figures in applicable regional factsheets.

Figure 1 Gap to achieve the combination prevention targets among transgender people, by intervention, global, 2018–2022



Source: UNAIDS Global AIDS Monitoring, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>); UNAIDS special analysis, 2023.

Notes: *n* = number of countries reporting. HIV prevention programmes coverage refers to people from key populations who reported receiving at least two prevention services in the past three months. Possible prevention services received include condoms and lubricants, counselling on condom use and safer sex and testing for sexually transmitted infections.

Condom use at last high-risk sex does not take into account those taking pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and therefore can be underestimated.

PrEP targets were calculated based on the number of people who would most benefit from PrEP use—those with greatest vulnerability to HIV exposure within each key population. Reported numbers of users of PrEP include all users regardless of vulnerability.

Figure 2 Experience of sexual and or physical violence, stigma and discrimination, and avoidance of health care among transgender people, reporting countries, 2018–2022



Source: UNAIDS Global AIDS Monitoring, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

Note: *n* = number of countries reporting.

References

- 1 UNAIDS National Commitments and Policy Instrument 2017–2022. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (<http://lawsandpolicies.unaids.org/>).
- 2 Arnall LG, *Kapilashrami A, Sampson M. Visualizing patterns and gaps in transgender sexual and reproductive health: a bibliometric and content analysis of literature (1990–2020). *Int J Transgender Health*. 2021;doi:10.1080/26895269.2021.1997691.

For additional information and data on HIV and transgender people see:

2023 global AIDS update report

2023 global AIDS update regional factsheets

UNAIDS Key Populations Atlas

HIV and transgender and other gender-diverse people — Human rights fact sheet series 2021