National HIV Behavioral Surveillance Project

Transgender Women in Los Angeles County, 2019

National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) is a behavioral surveillance project that has been implemented nationwide each year since 2004 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help state and local health departments monitor HIV risk behaviors among groups at high risk for HIV infection. NHBS is designed to generate risk behavior and HIV prevalence estimates that are generalizable to the target population. In 2019, the Los Angeles County (LAC) Division of HIV and STD Programs conducted the first cycle of NHBS among transgender women. Respondent-driven sampling, a peer-referral sampling method, was used to recruit transgender women. Eligible participants had to: 1) be residents of LAC; 2) 18 years of age or older; 3) report a gender identity of woman or transgender woman; 4) have listed male or intersex gender at birth; and 5) be able to complete the interview in English or Spanish. Participants completed an interviewer-administered, anonymous, standardized questionnaire related to HIV-related behaviors. All participants were offered rapid HIV tests. All participants who accepted the rapid test received HIV counseling and referrals for social and medical services as needed.

1 in 3 participants tested positive for HIV

6 Initial Participants
1,473 Coupons Distributed
523 (36%) Coupons Returned
501 (96%) Interviews Completed
500 (100%) HIV Tests Completed

Some transgender women are affected by HIV more than others

52% Black/African American transgender women are living with HIV
30% Latinx/Hispanic transgender women are living with HIV
9% White transgender women are living with HIV

HIV Testing, Linkage to Care/Treatment & Viral Suppression

- 98% reported having been tested for HIV at least once in their lifetime.
- 85% reported testing for HIV within 12 months prior to interview.*
- Proportionally, **more Latinx transgender women** (87%) had been tested for HIV 12 months before interview compared to **Black transgender women** (80%).

80% of HIV positive participants were aware they have HIV
89% of those aware were on HIV treatment
77% of those on treatment were virally suppressed

* Excludes participants who were diagnosed with HIV in more than 12 months prior to the interview
Awareness of pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) was high among HIV-negative transgender women in LAC, but compared with other jurisdictions, PrEP use in LAC was low: 92% had heard of PrEP but only 27% had used PrEP.

Ongoing commitment and continuous improvement of medical care and support services that are trauma-informed and culturally competent are needed to effectively engage and address the specific needs of transgender populations.

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**Contextual factors and stressors experienced by transgender women in LAC**

- Living in poverty: 70%
- Anal sex without a condom: 57%
- Experiencing homelessness: 47%
- Unemployment: 42%
- Engaged in exchange sex: 35%
- Recent incarceration: 23%
- Methamphetamine use: 22%

**Hormone use for gender affirmation**

- **Currently taking hormones:** 68%
- **Current insurance covers hormone therapy:** 71%
- **Non-prescribed hormone use:** 14%

Types of hormones: pills (54%), shots/injection (51%), skin patch or cream (7%)

- 63% Transgender women in LAC reported having experienced verbal harassment because of their gender identity or presentation.
- 21% Transgender women in LAC reported having seriously thought about dying by suicide.
- 18% Transgender women in LAC reported having experienced sexual abuse.

**PrEP use varied by jurisdiction**

- % heard of PrEP
- % used PrEP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>PrEP use</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Orleans</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>92%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Philadelphia</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle</td>
<td>82%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- 23% in Atlanta, GA
- 27% in Los Angeles, CA
- 36% in New Orleans, LA
- 43% in New York, NY
- 34% in Philadelphia, PA
- 46% in San Francisco, CA
- 17% in Seattle, WA

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*In the 12 months before the NHBS interview*