

# Understanding knowledge and attitudes regarding HIV amongst secondary care healthcare professionals: A national survey

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## Background

- Recent data demonstrate stigma and misconceptions about HIV remain common among healthcare professionals (HCPs).<sup>1,2</sup>
- The 2022 Positive Voices survey<sup>3</sup> suggested 1 in 17 (5.8%) people living with HIV reported having not been treated well in the prior year in healthcare settings due to their HIV status. 1 in 14 (7.2%) had avoided accessing healthcare services and 1 in 7 (13.7%) had worried about being treated differently.
- We sought to explore knowledge and attitudes about HIV amongst UK HCPs working in non-HIV/sexual health settings to identify areas for education and training.

## Methods

- A national, online survey was deployed in November 2023.
- This unvalidated 17-item survey was developed in collaboration with UK HIV clinicians, researchers and Gilead Sciences, and conducted as market research with Opinium research.
- Email, social media, journal advertisements and in person meetings were used to engage HCPs nationally by a faculty of healthcare professionals, and Gilead Sciences.
- Descriptive analysis of outcomes are presented.
- Supplementary data, including regional breakdowns are available via the QR code below (scan or click)

## Results

- Between 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024, 323 survey responses were received, 53% from nurses, and 66% from HCPs with over 10 years' experience
- Many doctors (51%) and nurses (47%) had over 20 years' experience their roles

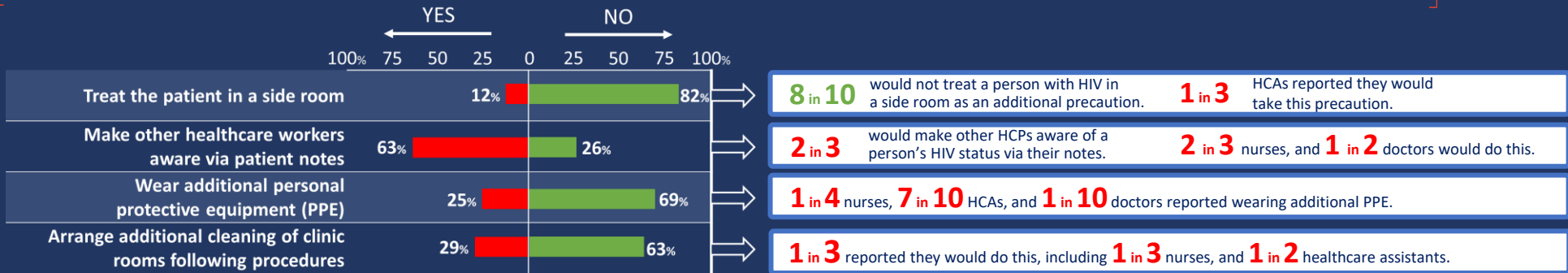
HCP type; % (n)	53% (170)	Nurse
	15% (49)	Doctor
	14% (44)	Allied HCP
	5% (16)	Healthcare assistant (HCA)
	2% (8)	Pharmacist
	11% (36)	Other/prefer not to say

Experience in current role; % (n)	43% (138)	>20 years
	24% (76)	10-20 years
	14% (46)	5-10 years
	14% (46)	Up to 5 years
	3% (11)	Current Student

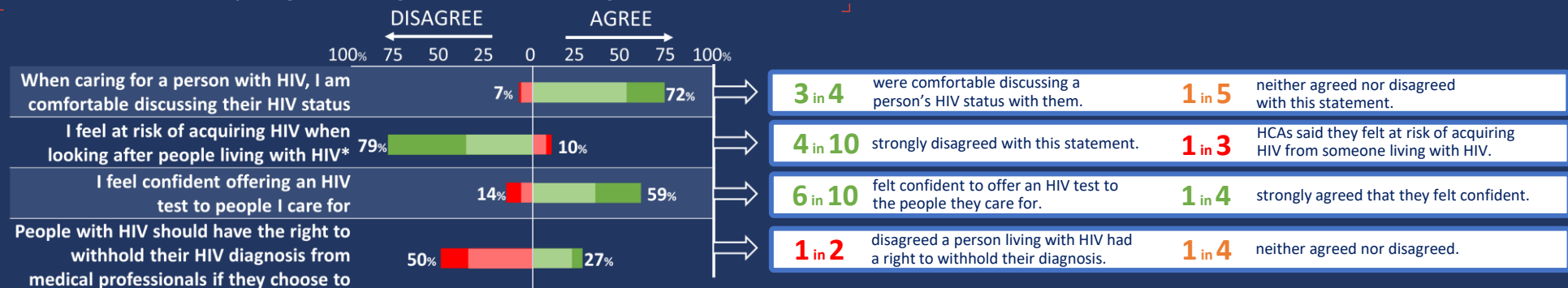
Region; % (n)	33% (108)	Wales
	22% (70)	Northern Ireland
	17% (54)	London
	10% (32)	South of England
	7% (21)	Scotland
	6% (19)	North of England
	4% (13)	Midlands

Use of green infers what is considered a positive/correct agreement with the question, and red a potential negative/incorrect response. Where colour graduations are provided, depending on the question, darker green/red reflect strong agreement/disagreement with the statement or certainty it is true/false, with lighter green/red that the respondent agreed/disagreed, or that they feel the statement to be true/false.

## When a person in your care is living with HIV, which of the following additional precautions, if any, would you take to protect yourself or other staff?

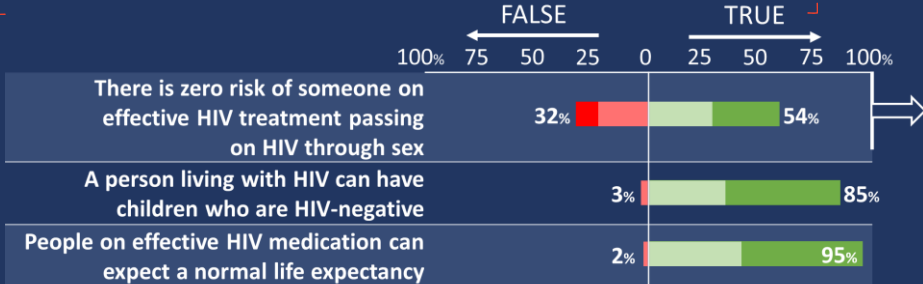


## How much, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements about HIV?



\* Note that green is used here for disagreement to represent the positive/correct response to the question

## Do you think the following statements about HIV are true or false?



## Belief in the U=U statement:

- 5 in 10 agreed this was true with 1 in 4 being certain the statement was true.
- 73% of doctors and 56% of nurses believed this was true.
- 1 in 3 thought the statement to be false, with 1 in 10 felt certain this was false.

## All healthcare workers should receive training so they know up-to-date information on HIV in the UK today:

- 98% of respondents supported this statement (79% strongly supported)

## How confident, if at all, are you in your knowledge and understanding of the medical conditions that should always prompt an HIV test?

- 45% reported they would be confident of these (13% very confident), with 49% being not confident (14% not at all confident).
- 84% of doctors were very/fairly confident, compared to 40% of nurses.

## Limitations and challenges

- The questionnaire was unvalidated, but may represent a more person first and positive approach to asking about knowledge and attitudes than the WHO recommended questions.<sup>4</sup>
- HCP input into development and distribution came from a broad UK geography, which may reflect positive uptake in areas such as Wales and Northern Ireland.
- Whilst we did not have direct community input into its development, the survey was endorsed by 6 UK community organisations.
- Low response; reasons may include distribution methods & a similar ECDC/EACS survey<sup>5</sup> as well as other surveys competing for HCO's and HCP's time.
- Effective comparisons based on role, experience, or region were not possible due to the lower than expected response rates.
- Respondents may be those with greater awareness of HIV, and so this may represent a more informed knowledge and understanding among HCPs outside of HIV.

## Conclusions

- Although questions yielded largely correct responses, there are clear areas for education and training, for example a third of respondents did not agree with the well-established zero risk of sexual transmission for people on suppressive treatment.
- Responses related to infection control indicate a need for clear, evidence-based occupational guidance.
- These results suggest that a national response to educate all HCPs is needed and would be accepted in order to better support people living with HIV.

References: (1) Shongwe M, et al. BHIVA conference 2020, Abstract O06; (2) Vaughan, E Elena. (2023). <https://doi.org/10.13025/ccsj-8336>. (3) Aghalizu A et al. UK Health Security Agency, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hiv-positive-voices-survey>. (4) Nyblade L et al. J Int AIDS Soc. 2013 Nov 13;16(3 Suppl 2):18718. (5) European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) and the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS), <https://www.eacsociety.org/activities/eacs-ecdc-stigma-survey/>. Accessed March 2024

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