

2022  
**STATE  
OF HIV  
STIGMA**



COMPASS  
INITIATIVE

# INTRODUCTION

Since 2020, GLAAD, in partnership with the Gilead COMPASS initiative, has been tracking the State of HIV Stigma in the United States, asking key questions each year about Americans' attitudes and knowledge of HIV, and the stigma that exists around the virus and people living with HIV. Our report this year reveals progress toward easing HIV stigma, through increasing knowledge, comfort, and greater understanding that HIV can be treated to the point of being undetectable and therefore untransmittable (U=U) and the importance of PrEP for prevention.

While the findings show progress made, they also show work to be done. The State of HIV Stigma study shows a majority of Americans believe stigma around HIV still exists, with nearly 90% agreeing.

**Nearly 9 out of 10 adults agree there is still stigma around HIV**



Nearly 90% say they are either knowledgeable, or feel they know a little about HIV. And, up to 43% of Americans are now comfortable interacting with people living with HIV in various scenarios, compared to 36% in 2020.

This greater comfort must continue to be paired with greater visibility of people living with HIV in the media, including the reality that they live long and healthy lives. GLAAD's most recent *Where We Are on TV 2021-2022* report showed that – despite an approximate 1.2 million people living with HIV in the US and despite GLAAD's challenge to Hollywood to introduce at least three new regular or recurring LGBTQ characters living with HIV each year in scripted primetime broadcast, cable or streaming shows – there were only two characters living with HIV on TV. This marks a decrease from the prior year's three characters, and a significant decrease from the nine characters two years ago.

Additionally, both those shows have since been canceled. It is no surprise, then, that in our State of HIV Stigma report this year only 31% of people said they've seen stories about people living with HIV in the media in the last 12 months.

There is ongoing fallout from stigma, including in the response to new public health crises emerging. GLAAD recently released a first-of-its-kind report titled *Invisible People to be Invisible People: A Retrospective Report on the Impacts of COVID-19 & HIV in the United States*, which brings an academic

and personal voice of impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had to-date on the fight to end the HIV epidemic, while also providing recommendations and needs from people at community based organizations (CBOs) who serve and support the community. Among the observed parallels between HIV and COVID-19 are those that relate to stigma, shame, and judgment; an initial lack of government response, lack of education about transmission, and changing messaging from leadership. All of this leads to further confusion, and stigma. We are now starting to see data showing how stigma, inadequate resources and lack of

comprehensive public health messaging set back the fight against HIV and delayed response to combat the monkeypox virus in vulnerable populations.

Advocating for people living with HIV and fighting to end HIV stigma has remained at the core of GLAAD's mission since our founding in 1985. By continuing to track attitudes about HIV, urging accurate representation and visibility in the media, and elevating accurate and inclusive information, we can end the HIV epidemic. This report is a milestone in that journey, and moves us closer to that goal.



**SARAH KATE ELLIS**  
President & CEO, GLAAD

# 2022 STATE OF HIV STIGMA STUDY

**Key Findings:** The findings track progress against HIV stigma, transmission and prevention of HIV, and attitudes and knowledge of people living with HIV in the United States.

[glaad.org/endhivstigma](http://glaad.org/endhivstigma)

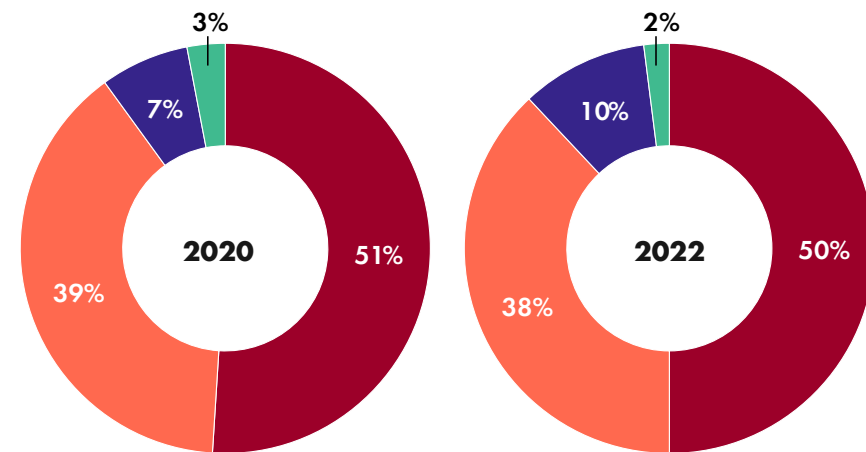
**Methodology:** The 2022 State of HIV Stigma Study was conducted through an online survey in February of 2022 among a sample of 2,536 U.S. adults, 18 years or over. The sample was sourced

and aggregated through CINT, who has the world's largest consumer network for digital survey-based research. Results from 2022 are compared to 2021, and 2020 if the same question was asked.

## Knowledge of HIV is stable

Half of Americans\* feel knowledgeable about the virus, and nearly 40% know a little about it. The numbers are stable since 2020.

- Knowledgeable
- Know a little
- Heard term, don't know much
- Not aware of HIV

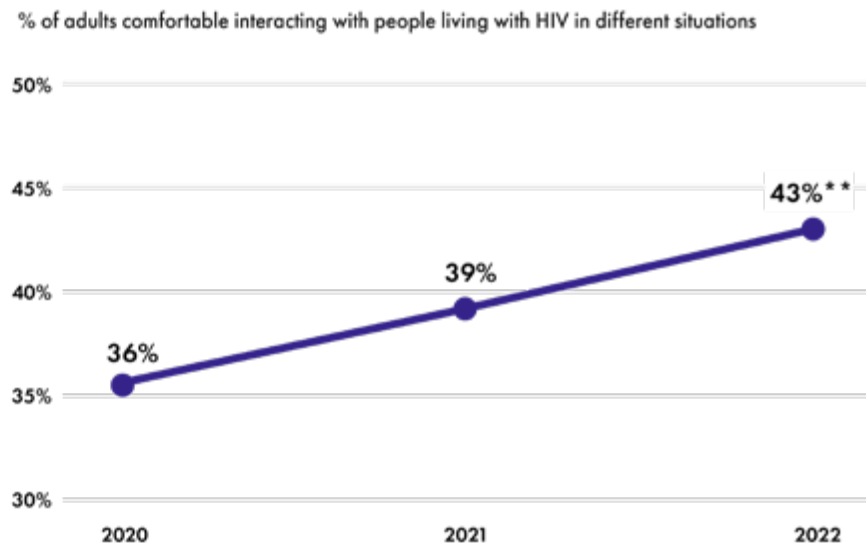


\*Percent of total national adults.

## Greater comfort interacting with people living with HIV (PLWH)

The percentage of Americans that are comfortable interacting with people living with HIV has increased steadily since 2020.

\*\*Statistically significant at 90% confidence.



## Increased understanding of PrEP benefits in preventing HIV

Pre-Exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) is one of the best approaches to HIV prevention. In our recently released *Invisible People to Invisible People: A Retrospective Report on the Impacts of COVID-19 & HIV in the United States* we detail the mixed results in how the pandemic impacted HIV prevention services due to traditional in-person delivery services being upended by the pandemic. Today, 2 out of 3 American's agree that there are medications to protect someone from contracting HIV. Ensuring funding to keep PrEP free or low cost is a long-term need in the fight to end HIV.

% of adults who agree that medications exist today, when taken correctly, can protect someone from contracting HIV

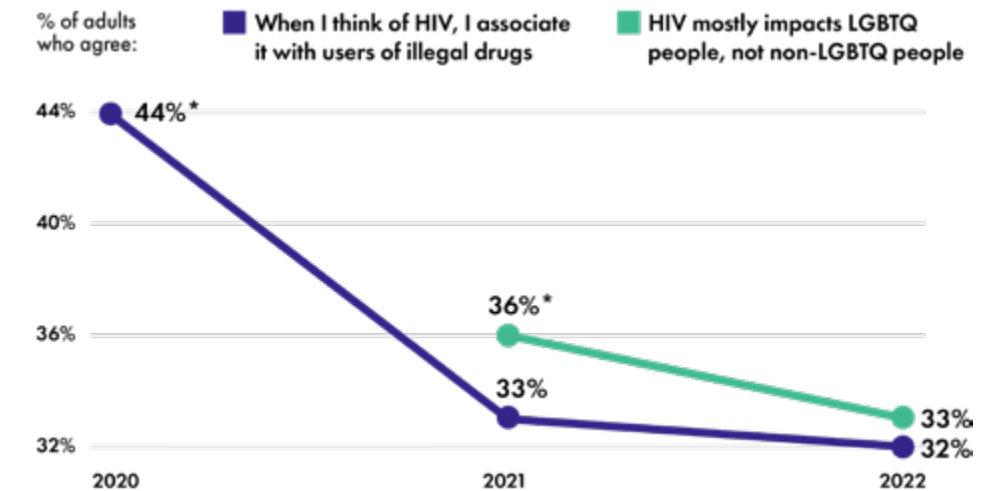


Statement not asked in 2020. \*Statistically significant at 90% confidence.

## Decrease in belief that "only certain groups of people can get HIV"

There has been steady decreases in key stigma measures – that HIV only effects certain groups of people. Today, only 32% of American's associate HIV with users of illegal drugs, and only 33% believe HIV mostly impacts LGBTQ people.

\*Statistically significant at 95% confidence.



## There is not enough visibility of people living with HIV in media

Less than 1 in 3 Americans say they've seen stories about people living with HIV in the media in the last 12 months. This lack of visibility can lead to continued harmful stereotypes and stigma.

% of adults who agree:

I've seen stories about people living with HIV in the media in the last 12 months



There is still a stigma around HIV



## Growing understanding of U=U

Viral load is a key determinant of HIV transmission, and today nearly half of Americans agree that people living with HIV who are on proper medications cannot transmit the virus.

% of adults who agree people living with HIV who are on proper medications cannot transmit the virus



Statement not asked in 2020. \*Statistically significant at 95% confidence.

GLAAD rewrites the script for LGBTQ acceptance. As a dynamic media force, GLAAD tackles tough issues to shape the narrative and provoke dialogue that leads to cultural change. GLAAD protects all that has been accomplished and creates a world where everyone can live the life they love.

Gilead provided grant funding but had no input in the development of this report.

[glaad.org/endhivstigma](https://glaad.org/endhivstigma)

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