Perceptions of HIV within the general public

Alex Sparrowhawk
Terrence Higgins Trust

#ItsNotOver
HIV stigma is...

- a barrier to public health
- a major cause of discrimination
- fuelled by misinformation and fear
- difficult to measure and often explained in anecdotal terms
Quantifying stigma

- Aimed to measure how widespread myths about HIV are within the general public - and to then use this data to create opportunities for myth busting on World AIDS Day 2016
Why does the general public matter?

- Often neglected – no major public campaigns since the tombstones
- Public attitudes have a major impact on emotional wellbeing of people living with HIV through professional, social and personal interactions
- Everyone is a member of the public – including dentists, journalists, care home staff, faith leaders etc.
Method

- YouGov omnibus – credible and independent
- Surveyed 2,030 adults across Great Britain
- Representative sample
- Multiple choice questions
- Emailed to YouGov panellists
Question 1

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“There is currently a HIV epidemic in the UK”

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know
Question 2

Through which, if any, of the following ways do you think HIV can be passed from one person to another?

- Kissing someone who is HIV positive
- Having sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive
- Sharing cups, plates and cutlery with someone who is HIV positive
- Using the same toilet seat as someone who is HIV positive
- Sharing towels with someone who is HIV positive
- Sharing needles with someone who is HIV positive
- Having oral sex with someone who is HIV positive
- Using the same toothbrush as someone who is HIV positive
- Using the same scissors and clippers as someone who is HIV positive (e.g. at the hairdressers, barbers etc.)
- None of these
Question 3

For the following question, please think about people living with HIV who are receiving effective treatment... Which, if any, of the following do you think is possible for them to do? (Please select all that apply)

- Have children without passing on the virus
- Have sex without passing on the virus
- Live into old age
- Work in healthcare
- Give blood
- Get life insurance
- Travel overseas without entry restrictions due to their health
- Breastfeed
- None of these
Results – general public

- Nearly a third (30%) believe that sharing a toothbrush with someone who is HIV positive can pass on the virus
- One in five (20%) believe that HIV can be transmitted by kissing
- 1 in 10 think that HIV can be transmitted by sharing scissors or clippers at the hairdressers
- The plates/cups (6%), towels (6%) and toilet seat (4%) myths were lower – but still around 1 in 20
Results – general public 2

- 29% were aware that people on effective treatment can have children without passing on HIV
- 58% believed people with HIV can live into old age
- 39% said they were aware that people with HIV can have sex without passing on the virus, if they are on effective treatment
Results – general public 3

- Only **16%** per cent **agreed** that there was currently an HIV epidemic in the UK.
- The **majority** (53%) **disagreed**.
- **31%** said ‘don’t know’
## Comparisons: Gay and bisexual men

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>General public</th>
<th>Gay and bisexual men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kissing someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing cups, plates and cutlery with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same toilet seat as someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing towels with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing needles with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having oral sex with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same toothbrush as someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same scissors and clippers as someone who is HIV positive (e.g. at the hairdressers, barbers etc.)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Comparisons: Gay and bisexual men 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>General public</th>
<th>Gay and bisexual men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Have children without passing on HIV</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have sex without passing on HIV</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live into old age</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in healthcare (e.g. nurse, doctor etc.)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give blood</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get life insurance</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel overseas without entry restrictions due to their health</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breastfeed</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of these</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparisons: Gay and bisexual men 3

“There is currently a HIV epidemic in the UK”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General public</th>
<th>Gay and bisexual men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly agree</strong></td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tend to agree</strong></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tend to disagree</strong></td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strongly disagree</strong></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don't know</strong></td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net: Agree</strong></td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Net: Disagree</strong></td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>25-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kissing someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having sex without a condom with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing cups, plates and cutlery with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same toilet seat as someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing towels with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing needles with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having oral sex with someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same toothbrush as someone who is HIV positive</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using the same scissors and clippers as someone who is HIV positive (e.g. at the hairdressers, barbers etc.)</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Age and stigma

• Under 24s and over 55s most likely to believe myths
• Young people also most likely to agree there is currently an HIV epidemic
Regional variations

- No variation by region overall
- Transmission myths still widespread in London despite higher HIV prevalence
- People in London were more likely to be aware that people living with HIV can have children (36% compared to national average of 29%) and can have sex without passing on the virus (47% compared to 39% overall)
- Londoners most likely to agree there was currently an HIV epidemic (22% compared to 16% overall).
Commentary

• Myths about transmission through saliva commonly seen in the 1980s are still embedded within the public
• Public not fully aware of how far HIV has come in terms of impact of treatment – e.g. old age, children, undetectable
• Majority of public doesn’t consider HIV epidemic as ongoing
• Combination of stigma and complacency – no recent public point of reference since the tombstone campaign
• Myths still high among high prevalence communities
• Stigma around HIV won’t go away until we address this lack of knowledge. More must be done to engage general public and bring them up to date
MYTH BUSTING You CAN’T catch it from a toothbrush or kissing – and being HIV positive ISN’T a death sentence, say the experts

Despite all the medical advances around HIV and AIDS, societal understanding seems to have regressed.

BY PETER LLOYD | 1st December 2016, 3:28 pm

THERE have been huge gains made in the medical fight against HIV and AIDS.

But public perceptions of the disease are still mirror those seen in the 1980s, experts at the sexual health charity, Terrence Higgins Trust warned.

World Aids Day: Five common HIV myths busted as bosses warn myths from the 80s endure

HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, and weakens a person’s ability to fight infections and disease. On World Aids Day, charity bosses have warned inaccurate myths from the 1980s are still enduring in British culture.

By OLIVIA LERCH
PUBLISHED: 09:38, Thu, Dec 1, 2016 | UPDATED: 12:44, Thu, Dec 1, 2016

SHARE f TWEET
Sharing the results

30% believe that HIV can be transmitted by sharing a toothbrush

**FACT:** HIV cannot be passed on this way

[YouGov survey of 2030 GB adults, October 2016]

#ItsNotOver

Only 58% believe that people with HIV can live into old age

**FACT:** We’re now seeing the first generation of people growing old with HIV

[YouGov survey of 2030 GB adults, October 2016]

#ItsNotOver

1 in 5 think that HIV can be transmitted by kissing

**FACT:** HIV cannot be passed on this way

[YouGov survey of 2030 GB adults, October 2016]

#ItsNotOver

Only 16% agree that there is currently an HIV epidemic in the UK

**FACT:** The HIV epidemic is not over - but with your help, it could be

[YouGov survey of 2030 GB adults, October 2016]

#ItsNotOver
To summarise…

The bad news

- There are still large numbers of the population who believe that HIV is passed on through saliva, that the epidemic has gone away, and that HIV prevents you from living a long and full life.
- This is even the case in high prevalence communities

The good news

- There is appetite for myth busting in the press and social media
- Every time we hear a myth, this is an opportunity to put it right
- We have robust proof the need for increased education efforts with the general public
Thank you.

Any questions?