NATIONAL CENTER FOR HIV, VIRAL HEPATITIS, STD, AND TB PREVENTION

HIV Testing Pre- and Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Among Persons who Inject Drugs – 19 Cities, 2018-2022

Rebecca B. Hershow, PhD[1], Dita Broz, PhD[1], Lyssa Faucher, MPH[1], Johanna Chapin-Bardales, PhD[1]; for the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance Study Group
[1]Division of HIV Prevention, National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, GA, USA

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BACKGROUND

- HIV testing decreased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic among persons who inject drugs (PWID).
- There is limited understanding of how changes in HIV testing pre- and post-pandemic affected different sub-groups of PWID.
- Using data from CDC's National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) from 2018 and 2022, we assessed changes in past-year HIV testing among PWID overall and by sociodemographic and health care characteristics.

METHODS

- In 2018 and 2022, NHBS conducted biobehavioral surveys among PWID using respondent-driven sampling (RDS).
- Using log-linked Poisson regression models clustered on recruitment chain and adjusted for city and network size to account for RDS, we estimated the change in prevalence of past-year HIV testing between 2018 and 2022 overall and by sociodemographic and health care characteristics.
- Analyses were conducted among participants who did not self-report HIV-positive and did not have missing HIV testing data.

RESULTS

- Of participants (n=9,211 in 2018; n=6,161 in 2022), past-year HIV testing decreased from 55.1% in 2018 to 45.3% in 2022 (Figure).
- HIV testing significantly decreased over time across nearly all sub-groups, with large decreases among participants aged 18-29 years, participants living in the Midwest and West, and those who experienced homelessness, had been incarcerated, or did not visit a health care provider in the past year.

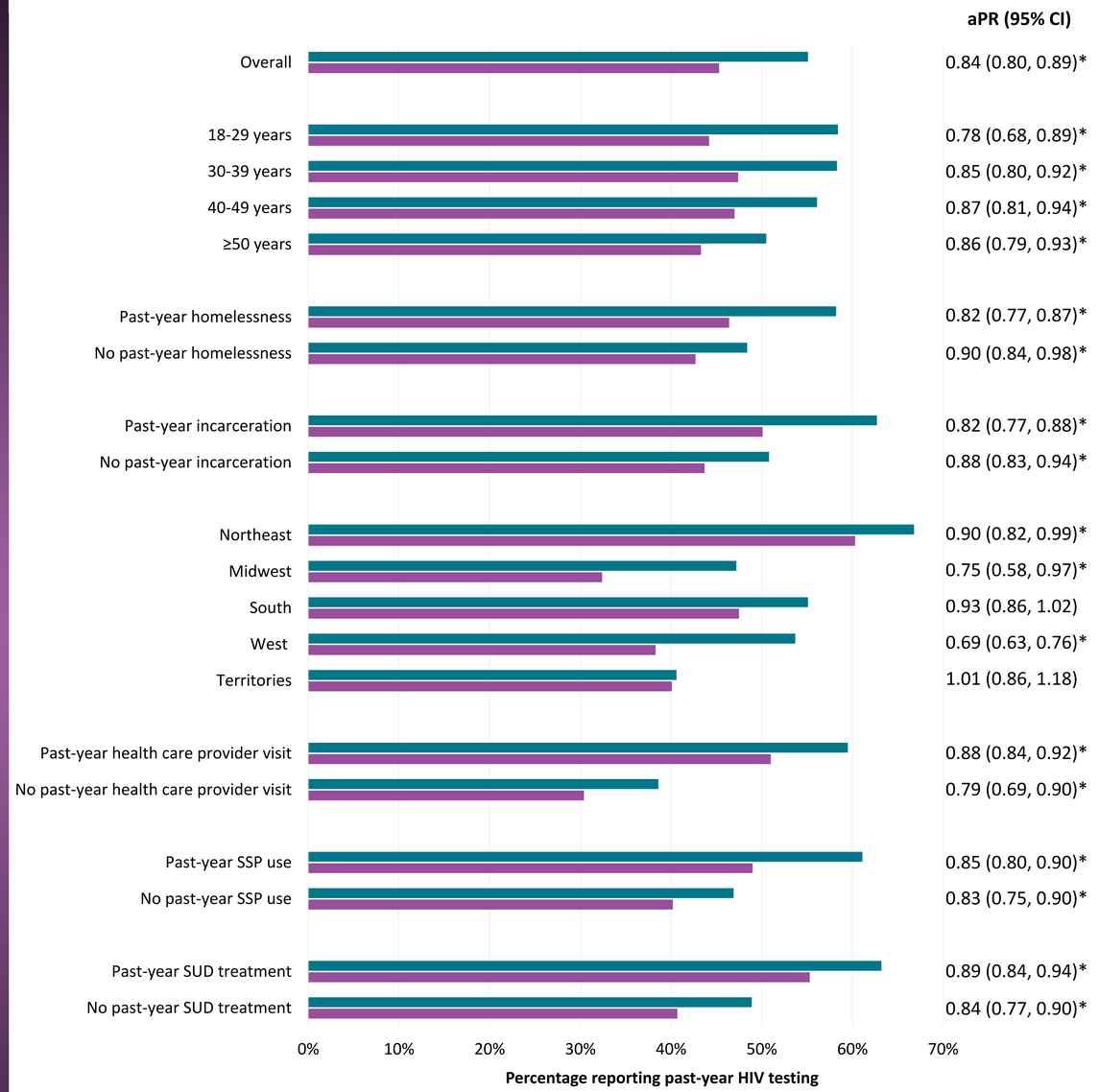
CONCLUSIONS

- HIV testing decreased post-COVID-19 pandemic among PWID overall and in nearly all demographic and health care use groups assessed.
- HIV testing decreased among PWID accessing and not accessing medical and harm reduction services.
- Efforts are needed to better engage PWID, especially young PWID and PWID experiencing homelessness, in services and ensure those services are resourced to offer routine opt-out HIV screening.
- These results can inform efforts to improve HIV testing for PWID and increase access to HIV prevention and treatment.

HIV testing among sub-groups of PWID decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

To reach PWID, HIV testing should be integrated across medical and harm reduction services and community-based testing should be expanded.

Figure. Changes in past-year HIV testing overall and by selected characteristics, 2018 and 2022



Abbreviations: aPR = adjusted prevalence ratio; SSP = syringe services program; SUD = substance use disorder. *p<0.05

CONTACT INFO

Rebecca Hershow, PhD
qdt8@cdc.gov