

VULNERABLE GROUPS IN THE UK

With a partner, read through this information about key populations in the UK who are most vulnerable to HIV.

- How would you use this information to help decide who the target group for your campaign should be? Why?
- How can you present some of this information alongside the interviews you have watched to communicate the impact of HIV on certain key populations?

Men who have sex with men (MSM)

Men who have sex with men remain the group most vulnerable to becoming HIV-positive in the UK. As of the end of June 2009, 45,947 men who have sex with men have been diagnosed with HIV in the UK.

Heterosexuals

Until 1998, men who have sex with men formed the main exposure category for new HIV diagnoses. However in 1999, heterosexually acquired HIV became the largest category and has continued to be so ever since.

Injecting-drug users

Sharing drug-injecting equipment such as needles and syringes is another way of passing on HIV. Injecting-drug users are another group at risk of passing on HIV. The proportion of HIV infections acquired through injecting drug use has been much smaller in the UK than in many other European countries. By the end of June 2009, 5,083 people had acquired HIV through injecting drug use.

Black Africans

Africans in the UK are diagnosed with HIV at a far higher rate than other ethnic groups, having comparable number of diagnoses to white people, despite being a far smaller percentage of the overall population.

The number of black Africans being seen for HIV care has increased nearly seven-fold between 1998 and 2007 to over 20,600. Over three quarters of children under the age of 15 living with HIV are black African and the majority of these children attend school.

Black Caribbeans

In 2008 there were 1780 black Caribbeans diagnosed as living with HIV and accessing HIV care. However, the number of black Caribbean people living with HIV in the UK is unknown as there are not statistics for the number that are undiagnosed.

Prisoners

Many prisoners are at risk, not only because of injecting drug use prior to prison but also because of the risks of transmissions within prison, such as sharing needles and unprotected sex.

<http://www.nat.org.uk/Information-and-Resources/Prisons.aspx>

UK prisons do not offer clean needles to allow prisoners who are injecting drugs to protect themselves against HIV, and access to condoms in prisons is variable and often poor.

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Children born to HIV-positive pregnant women

A total of 9,874 children born in the UK to HIV positive pregnant women have been reported by the end of June 2009. Of these, 847 have been diagnosed with HIV.

The number of children born in the UK to HIV-positive pregnant women more than doubled from 124 in 1994 to 254 during 1999 and then quadrupled to 1,260 during 2007. However, the proportion of such HIV-positive babies has fallen sharply since the widespread introduction of antiretroviral therapy and other interventions, which can dramatically cut the chances of HIV transmission from mother to child.

Sex workers

In general, sex workers are more vulnerable to HIV because they have a higher number of sexual partners. In some parts of the world the prevalence of HIV among sex workers is significantly higher than in the general population. However, this is not the case in the UK.

Over 40s

A 2011 HIV conference in Rome heard Britain had the second highest rate of female infection in Europe in all age groups. The number of women with HIV is increasing and 32% of cases in Britain are now female, with at least 27,000 having the disease.

<http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/top-stories/2011/07/20/brits-over-50-on-hiv-alert-115875-23282979/>