



NYC Vital Signs

HIV Testing in New York City

Nearly 4,000 New Yorkers were diagnosed with HIV in 2006, and more than one quarter of these adults also had AIDS when diagnosed. Since people live with HIV for an average of 10 years before developing AIDS, a concurrent HIV and AIDS diagnosis suggests that a patient was unaware of his or her HIV infection for many years.

People living with HIV need to know their status long before they develop AIDS. Not only does awareness lead to better care, but HIV-positive people who know their status reduce their risk behaviors by

about half, thereby reducing the spread of HIV infection. An HIV test is the only way to learn one's HIV status. The Health Department encourages all New Yorkers to get tested for HIV.

This report presents new information on past-year HIV testing in New York City (NYC). It examines testing rates by borough and high-risk groups, and investigates which patients are more likely to have a doctor recommend an HIV test. Based on these findings, recommendations for increasing HIV testing are featured on page four.

Too few New Yorkers are being tested for HIV

- In 2006, 59 per 100,000 adults ages 18 and older were diagnosed with HIV. The diagnosis rate is highest among blacks (127/100,000), followed by Hispanics (69/100,000), whites (28/100,000) and Asians (11/100,000).
- Past-year HIV testing has increased steadily since 2005 when less than one quarter of New Yorkers were tested (23%), rising to 27% in 2006 and 29% in 2007.
- Men were slightly less likely than women to get tested (27% vs. 30%).
- Both whites (17%) and Asians (19%) were less likely to have had an HIV test than blacks (40%) and Hispanics (39%).
- New Yorkers with high incomes were less likely to have had an HIV test than those with low incomes (23% vs. 35%).
- Only 26% of married or partnered adults were tested, while 31% of those never married and 36% of those no longer married got an HIV test in the past year.

Past-year HIV testing among NYC adults

	Percent
Total	29
Sex	
Male	27
Female	30
Race/Ethnicity	
White	17
Black	40
Hispanic	39
Asian/Pacific Islander	19
Other	37
Income (% of federal poverty level)	
Low (less than 200%)	35
Middle (200%–399%)	30
High (400% or more)	23
Marital Status	
Never married	31
Married/partnered	26
Divorced/separated/widowed	36

This report is based on data from the 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2007 New York City Community Health Survey (NYC CHS), a telephone survey conducted annually by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). Unless otherwise specified, data presented were collected in 2007. The CHS samples approximately 10,000 adults ages 18 and older from all five NYC boroughs. For full survey details, visit nyc.gov/health/survey. HIV diagnosis data are from the HIV Epidemiology and Field Services Program, NYC DOHMH, and were reported by September 30, 2007.

HIV testing varies by NYC neighborhood of residence

- Residents in the South Bronx, East and Central Harlem, and North and Central Brooklyn have the highest HIV death rates in the city. Adults in these neighborhoods were more likely to get tested for HIV than adults in the rest of their respective borough, but in total, more than half of adults in these neighborhoods (56%) had not been tested in the past year.
- Staten Island adults were least likely to get tested for HIV (17%), while those living in the Bronx were most likely to be tested (40%).

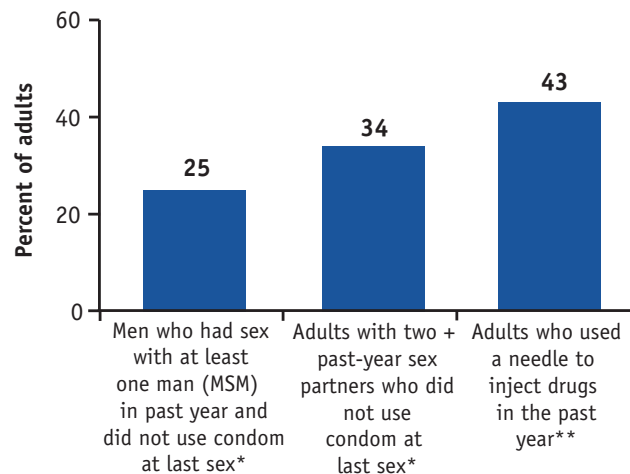
Past-year HIV testing among adults by NYC residence



Less than half of New Yorkers at high risk for HIV are getting tested

- In NYC, the majority of adults reporting behaviors that place them at high risk for getting HIV did not get tested for HIV in the past year.
- Only one third of men who had sex with men (MSM) in the past year had a recent HIV test (35%). MSM who did not use a condom at last sex reported even lower levels of being tested (25%).
- Among all adults who reported multiple sex partners and did not use a condom at last sex, only one in three (34%) got tested in the past year.
- Among New Yorkers who inject non-prescribed drugs, only 43% had an HIV test in the past year.

Past-year HIV testing among high-risk groups



* CHS 2003-05-06

** CHS 2003

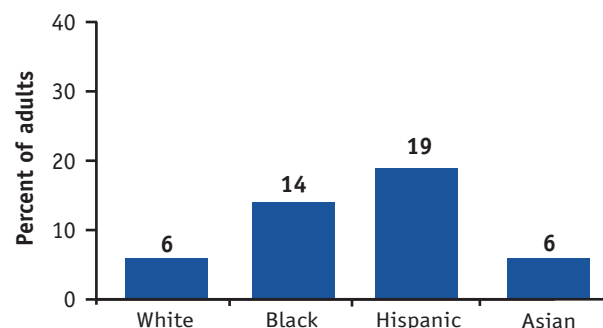
Although still low, HIV testing is more common among adults with poor mental health. Adults who report psychological distress are more likely than other adults to have had an HIV test in the past year (33% vs. 24%).* These findings could reflect either higher rates of HIV testing among those with poor mental health or higher rates of psychological distress among adults recently diagnosed with HIV/AIDS.

* CHS 2003-05-06; Kessler's K6 Scale of six questions about mood

Only one in eight adults received HIV-test recommendations from their doctors

- Overall, only 12% of New Yorkers received a doctor's recommendation to get an HIV test in the past year. However, more than three-quarters (78%) of those who received a recommendation and were tested in the past year said they got their test as a result of the doctor's advice.
- Black (14%) and Hispanic (19%) adults were slightly more likely to report that their doctor recommended an HIV test than white (6%) and Asian (6%) adults.
- While HIV test recommendations were uncommon across the city, Bronx residents were more likely to get a doctor's recommendation to get tested (18%) than those living in Brooklyn (10%), Manhattan (13%), Queens (9%) and Staten Island (6%).

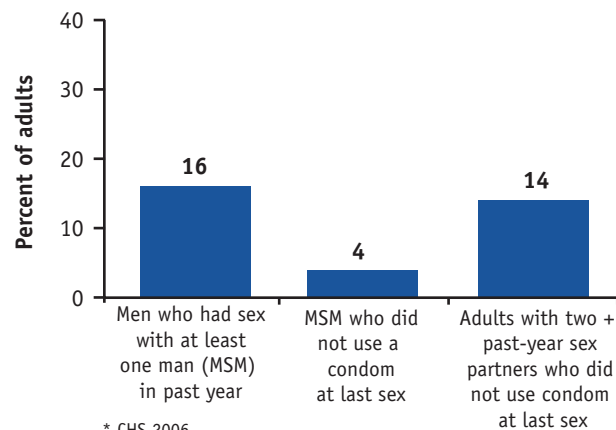
Past-year doctor recommendations for HIV testing by race/ethnicity



Doctors are rarely recommending HIV testing for high-risk adults

- Among men who had sex with at least one man (MSM) in the past year, 16% reported that a doctor told them to get an HIV test.
- Less than 5% of MSM who did not use a condom at last sex received a doctor's recommendation to get tested.
- Among adults with multiple sex partners who did not use a condom at last sex, only 14% were told by their doctor to get an HIV test.

Past-year doctor recommendations for HIV testing among high-risk groups*



Rapid HIV Testing. With conventional HIV tests, patients must return for the test results approximately two weeks after testing. In contrast, rapid testing requires only 10 to 20 minutes of processing time and thus allows patients to receive pretest and post-test counseling, results and any medical referrals all in one office visit. In 2006, 51% said they would use a rapid HIV test, if it were available. In 2007, nearly one in five of those tested in the past year (20%) reported that their test results were available on the same day.

Recommendations

All New Yorkers should know their HIV status and protect themselves and others from acquiring HIV.

- Having one partner in a mutually exclusive relationship is the best protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
- Use condoms every time you have sex. Free NYC condoms are available by calling 311. If you and your partner are monogamous, get tested before having unprotected sex.
- Avoid alcohol and drugs when you have sex. Being drunk or high makes it hard to remember to use condoms, which puts you at greater risk of getting HIV.
- If you have ever been sexually active or injected drugs (even once), you should be tested for HIV. If you are at high risk for HIV, you should be tested at least once a year.
- If you have HIV/AIDS, get treated (see box) and use condoms to protect yourself and others.

Health care professionals should recommend HIV testing to all patients.

- Recommend that all your patients ages 18 to 64 get tested for HIV, regardless of risk. Teenagers and older adults at risk for HIV should also be tested. If they have HIV, just knowing their status can cut their risky behavior by half. If HIV tests are not offered in your office, give patients information on where to get tested (see box).
- Screen patients for risky sexual and drug use behaviors, and make appropriate referrals.
- Patients with high-risk sexual or injection drug experiences should be tested at least once a year. Encourage retesting if there is a risk behavior change, such as a new sex partner.
- Recommend rapid HIV testing to patients, when possible, to increase the likelihood that patients will learn their test results.

HIV Testing and Treatment. Free and confidential (or anonymous) rapid HIV testing is offered at all Health Department STD clinics. Services are available six days a week to anyone age 12 or older without parental consent or notification, provided the individual has the capacity to consent. No proof of citizenship or health insurance is required. The test results are available at the time of the clinic visit and are reviewed with patients by a doctor or counselor. Positive rapid HIV test results require confirmatory testing. Clinic staff will link HIV+ patients to follow-up care and help with partner notification. Needle exchange and syringe access are also available. Call 311 or visit <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std2.shtml> to find a clinic near you.

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