

SEX  OF OUR NATIONS



**LET'S
#TACKLEHIV
TOGETHER**



TACKLE  HIV

GARETH

Since announcing my sexuality and finding out I have HIV, I have learnt so much about people's acceptance of those who are different from them, about the virus and about how it affects those living with it.

As the Sex of our Nations report clearly demonstrates, awareness and understanding of different sexualities and HIV varies from country to country. HIV is still misunderstood and therefore stigma still exists. I have heard first-hand stories of how deeply this stigma and self-stigma affect people living with HIV and I am determined to change this. I am a proud gay man living with HIV and I am leading a full, normal and happy life. I am taking HIV treatment which is working and as such, I cannot pass HIV onto my partner. Science and medicine are so advanced now but public awareness and attitudes lag behind. I am choosing to Tackle HIV, for myself and everyone living with HIV.

Gareth Thomas, Wales and The British & Irish Lions CBE



40 YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES



HIV treatments have improved enormously – standard of care is now **one pill a day**.

HIV prevention options are available – **PrEP** (pre-exposure prophylaxis)

PRE-EXPOSURE

POST-EXPOSURE

and **PEP** (post-exposure prophylaxis) can be taken before and after sex respectively to reduce the risk of contracting the virus



Undetectable = Untransmittable (U=U)

U = U

– someone living with HIV and on effective treatment can't pass it on through sexual contact

TACKLE HIV SEX OF OUR NATIONS SURVEY

Since the first cases of HIV were identified 40 years ago, huge medical advances have meant that people with HIV can now live normal lives. In just a few decades, an HIV diagnosis has been transformed from a potential death sentence into a manageable long-term condition.¹

However, public knowledge and awareness of sexual health issues have not kept pace with scientific progress; people with HIV still face stigma and discrimination and many people are still unaware of how to protect their sexual health.

The Tackle HIV Sex of our Nations Survey² asked 6,000 adults in the six nations (England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France and Italy) about their attitudes towards sexuality, sexual health and HIV; the results highlight that, although great progress has been made in recent years to increase knowledge and understanding, misperceptions and myths continue to exist. Moreover, attitudes around sexual health issues vary from country to country, between cities and rural areas and among different age groups.

"There is still so much more that all of us need to do to make sure that we are providing people with up to date, relevant information that starts to destigmatise sex, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity and HIV."



Ian Green

Chief Executive, Terrence Higgins Trust, UK

SEXUALITY

The majority of people in the six nations are accepting and supportive of people who are gay or bisexual. Some countries appear more progressive than others but some level of prejudice exists in every country.

“Only 66% of people were accepting of sexuality and what that brought home to me was how much of a bubble those of us who work in sexual health and HIV exist in. If you asked this question to people who work in sexual health the figure would be much higher. Sometimes we lose sight of the fact that some of the things that we just take for granted might not be so accepted in the general population.”

 **Dr Nneka Nwokolo**
Honorary Consultant Physician in Sexual Health and HIV Medicine and Senior Global Medical Director at ViiV Healthcare, UK

“Young people are more accepting of those who are homosexual, transgender, non-binary or queer. Although times are changing, in general in Italy the situation is not easy for the LGBTQ community and

attitudes are very different in big cities compared to those in the countryside.”

 **Daniele Calzavara**
Checkpoint Milano, Italy

“It takes a long time to change the perception and the perspective of a nation. If you don't know a homosexual or bisexual person, it's not something that is normalised within your environment. Until more people are open about their sexuality we won't normalise it.”

 **James Bushe**
HIV advocate

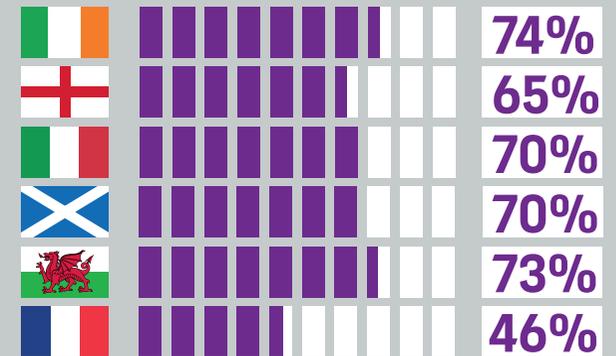
Heterosexual - Someone who is largely or exclusively romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of a different gender
Homosexual/Gay - Someone who is romantically and/or sexually attracted to people of the same gender
Bisexual - Someone who is romantically or sexually attracted to people of more than one gender
Trans - Anyone whose gender is not the same as the gender they were given when they were born
Non-binary - Someone who doesn't identify as either male or female
Queer - An umbrella term used by some to describe members of the LGBTQ+ community

66%

66% of people are completely accepting and supportive of people who are gay



People in Ireland were the most accepting of people who are gay



In France, **one in five** people (20%) said they were **not at all** accepting of people who are gay

63% of people are completely accepting and supportive of **bisexuality**

63%



1/2

Half of people asked (53%) said they would consider having an STI test but only 26% have previously had one

45% of people said they would consider having an HIV test but only 22% have previously had one

29% said they would not consider having an STI test as they do not think they are at risk



28% said they would not consider having an HIV test as they do not think they are at risk

ONE
— IN —
16

Around 1 in 16 people living with HIV in the UK are not aware they have the virus.³

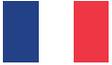


SEXUAL HEALTH

Attitudes to sexual health vary across the nations, but the vast majority (84%) of people say that their sexual health is a high or very priority for them. However, the results show that many are still reluctant to test themselves for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.

Anyone who is sexually active is potentially at risk of acquiring an STI or HIV, so it is important that everyone gets tested, whatever their sexuality or gender identity. Experts suggest that shame, stigma and fear of being judged may be barriers to testing.

"In France, access to screening has improved in the last few years and so it is quite easy to screen yourself for STIs and HIV. There is a general message that everyone should be screened at least once for HIV during their sexually active years. This message is understood quite well, but we can still do better."

 **Dr Alain Makinson**
Infectious Disease Consultant, Montpellier University Hospital, France

"These results show how much more we need to do to persuade people that testing for their sexual health is an important part of their healthcare, and we need make it easier for them to do it."



Lisa Power
Secretary, Fast Track Cardiff, Wales

"Sexual health screening tests should be as normal as getting a cholesterol check or any other standard health screening."



Ian Green
Chief Executive, Terrence Higgins Trust, UK

KNOWLEDGE OF HIV AND RISK

The survey highlighted that there is still a lot of misinformation and misunderstanding around HIV, particularly around how it is transmitted, how it is treated and who is at risk.

"There have been tremendous advances in treatment – people can have a normal life expectancy because we have really effective treatments which mean that people can't pass the virus on through sexual contact – but unfortunately this has not translated into big advances in awareness and understanding."

 **Dr Nneka Nwokolo**

Consultant Physician in Sexual Health and HIV Medicine and Senior Global Medical Director at ViiV Healthcare, UK

"The public perception of what someone looks like with HIV or AIDS is from 30 or 40 years ago – of people wasting away. Gareth and I ran a half marathon last year and both of us are living with HIV but we don't look like typical HIV patients from the 1980s. HIV

doesn't limit you in any way – the only limitations come from your own mind."

 **Becky Mitchell MBE**
HIV advocate

"It's safer to have a relationship with someone who has had their HIV diagnosed and is on treatment than it is to have sex with someone who doesn't know their status."

 **Lisa Power**
Secretary, Fast Track Cardiff, Wales

"Our focus on HIV and HIV prevention over many years has been very targeted. We've really zoomed in on the population groups that are disproportionately affected – gay men, people who inject drugs, transgender people, heterosexuals that come from countries where HIV is endemic. We haven't had any mass public health messaging for just the general population around HIV prevention, and because of that focus some people haven't received the messages at all. We need to remind the whole population that it's not who you are but what you do that provides the opportunity for HIV to be acquired or transmitted."

 **Susan Donlon**
HIV Ireland



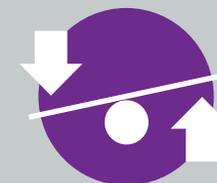
50%

50% don't think that heterosexual men are at risk of acquiring HIV

52%

52% don't think that heterosexual women are at risk of acquiring HIV

69% of people in France don't think heterosexual men or women are at risk of HIV



In 2020, 49% of new HIV diagnoses in England were in heterosexual people vs 45% in gay and bisexual men.

Only 22% of people know that if someone with HIV is on effective treatment they cannot pass it on to their sexual partner



46% of people in Ireland thought that if someone with HIV is on effective treatment they can still pass it on to their sexual partner



58%

58% of people said that if their partner was diagnosed with HIV they would (18%) or might (40%) end the relationship

Of the people who said they would end the relationship:

83% said they would be worried about contracting HIV themselves



26% said they would not be able to cope with their partner being sick or dying

14%

14% said they would be embarrassed if someone knew their partner had HIV



46%

46% would not tell any friends or family about their diagnosis



En & NI - 54%



Italy - 34%



France - 48%



Scotland - 46%



Ireland - 49%



Wales - 44%

Eliminating all forms of HIV-related stigma and discrimination is fundamental to achieving the global target of ending HIV/AIDS as a public health threat by 2030.⁶



HIV AND STIGMA

Many people living with HIV or at risk of HIV still face stigma and discrimination at work, with family and friends, in their community and even in healthcare settings.^{4,5} This undermines prevention, testing and treatment efforts. Educating people about HIV is the most effective tool for reducing stigma and improving the lives of those affected by the virus.

"You can't see HIV, you have to have a test - it's the only way you will know if you have it or not. There is very good treatment for it and people with HIV can live a really productive life. Stigma is what drives people underground - it prevents people from testing and it prevents people from talking about HIV."



Rebecca Mbeve

HIV advocate, Salamander Trust

"Many people in the general population don't know about U=U; this is a pity because this is one of the advances that makes disclosure more easy and reduces stigma. If people know that you are not infectious it

completely changes the perception of HIV."



Professor Antonella D'Arminio

Professor of Infectious Diseases, University of Milan, Italy

"There is still some shame associated with an HIV diagnosis. I didn't share my diagnosis in the early stages because of the stigma I placed on myself; I thought HIV would bring shame on my family but the biggest stigma of all for me was self-stigma."



James Bushe

HIV advocate

SUPPORT FROM THE RUGBY WORLD

"HIV is still misunderstood and because of that stigma still exists. We create barriers with our own lack of understanding. Gareth has shown the world that HIV need not be a barrier to anything."



Kenny Logan
Scotland

"The Sex of our Nations survey results show there's still a long way to go to stamp out the stigma still surrounding the HIV virus. We need to replace all of the incorrect beliefs people are holding onto with the realities. Look at Alfie, he leads a full and normal life and is an inspiration to so many."



Shane Williams MBE
Wales and The British & Irish Lions

"The Sex of our Nations Report shows that across the nations we have a long way to go to with our understanding, acceptance and tolerance of different people's sexualities and identities. Sport has an

important role to play in integration and inclusivity across the community."



Nolli Waterman
England

"Sport can serve as an intervention for public understanding and acceptance, reaching and inspiring individuals and communities to change their behaviour towards each other whatever their sexuality. We all love sport and should enjoy it together."



Matt Dawson MBE
England and The British & Irish Lions

The Sex of our Nations report has shown that public willingness to have tests for STIs and HIV is still very low, despite saying their sexual health is high priority, and this is largely due to stigma. We need to break the stigma so that testing for HIV can help us on the journey to end transmission.



Rory Best
Ireland and British & Irish Lions

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TOGETHER

SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

AGE: 18-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55+

TOTAL **6017** ♂ 2945 ♀ 3045 ♀ 27 967 1432 1454 982 1182

 **1001** ♂ 500 ♀ 500 ♀ 1 121 202 202 191 285

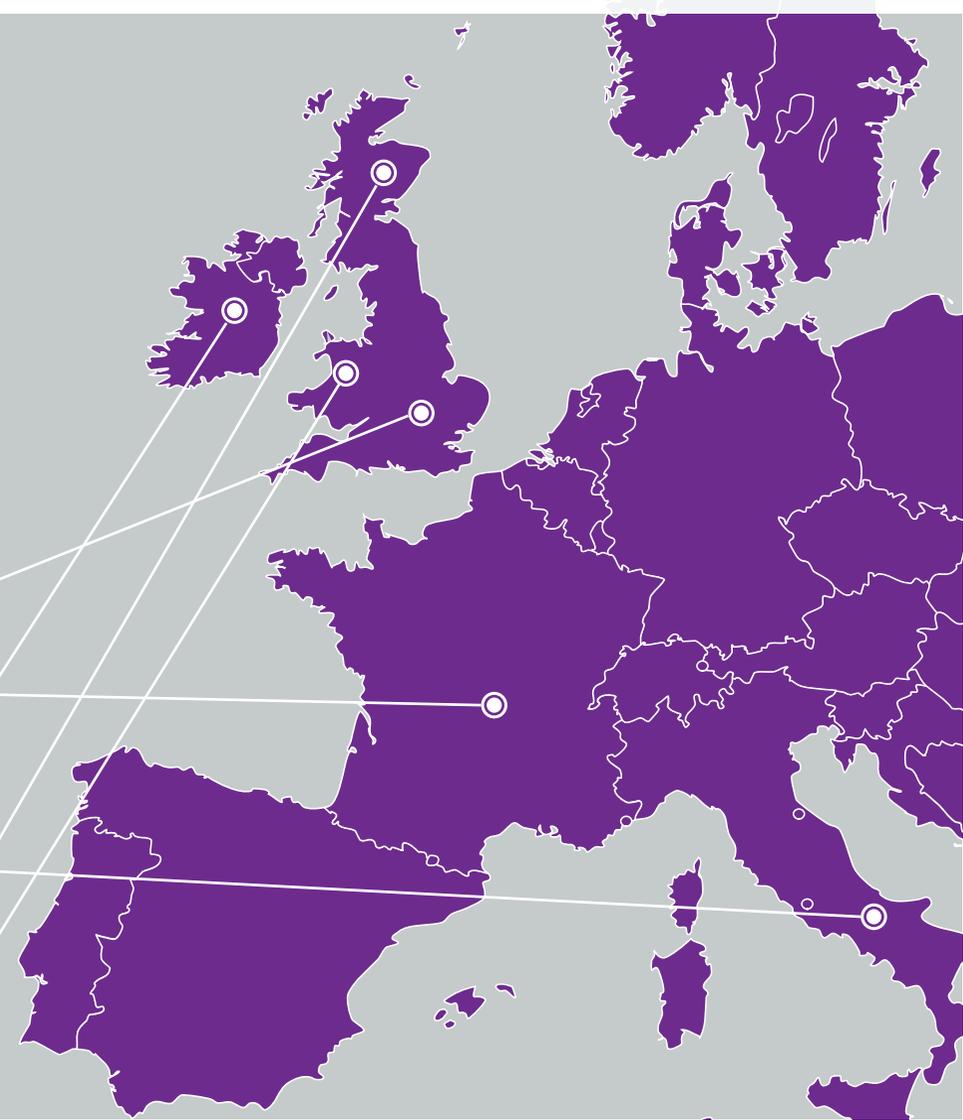
 **1003** ♂ 500 ♀ 500 ♀ 3 183 244 275 159 142

 **1002** ♂ 528 ♀ 465 ♀ 9 168 309 328 129 68

 **1007** ♂ 434 ♀ 566 ♀ 7 250 281 217 169 90

 **1002** ♂ 500 ♀ 500 ♀ 2 115 199 215 172 301

 **1002** ♂ 483 ♀ 514 ♀ 5 130 197 217 162 296





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Tackle HIV is led by Gareth Thomas in partnership with ViiV Healthcare and Terrence Higgins Trust. The campaign is funded by ViiV Healthcare.



TACKLE *HiV*