



National Black Justice Coalition

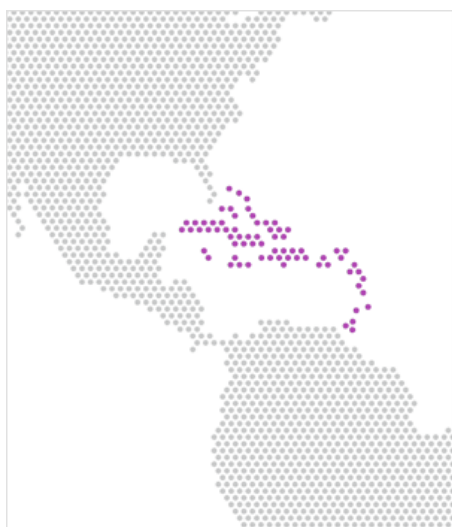
NBJC.org

Did you know that June 8th is Caribbean-American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (CAHAAD)? CAHAAD is an opportunity to increase conversations about and to support advocacy, testing, treatment, and support for Caribbean people impacted by HIV/AIDS.¹⁶

HERE'S WHAT WE KNOW:

The HIV/AIDS epidemic hit the Caribbean in the late 70s. By 2001, it had become the second-most affected region in the world with an estimated 420,000 people – more than two percent of the adult population – living with HIV, according to a UNAIDS/WHO report.¹⁷

An estimated 330,000 people in the Caribbean were living with HIV in 2019. This equates to an HIV prevalence of 1.1% in the Caribbean. In the same year, there were 13,000 new infections in the Caribbean, and 6,900 people died from AIDS-related illnesses in the region. There has been moderate progress made on both prevention and treatment in the Caribbean.¹⁸



Caribbean (2019)

330,000 people living with HIV

1.1% adult HIV prevalence (ages 15-49)

13,000 new HIV infections

6,900 AIDS-related deaths

63% adults on antiretroviral treatment*

44% children on antiretroviral treatment*

*All adults/children living with HIV

Source: UNAIDS Data 2020

1. The Caribbean is the second-most affected region in the world in terms of HIV prevalence rates.¹⁹
2. The Caribbean has higher HIV rates than any region outside of sub-Saharan Africa, though the epidemic is relatively small given population size.²⁰
3. The percentage of people in the Caribbean with suppressed viral loads is well below the global average.²¹
4. In 2011, 240,000 people in the Caribbean were living with HIV/AIDS.²²
5. In 2009, AIDS was the leading cause of death among people between the ages of 24 and 44 in the Caribbean.²³
6. Between 2010 and 2017, the annual number of new HIV infections among adults in the Caribbean declined by 18%.²⁴
7. The HIV infection rate in the Dominican Republic declined by 73%, and 50% in Haiti. (2012 UN Report)²⁵

¹⁶ Infographic link: <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>

¹⁷ http://data.unaids.org/publications/irc-pub06/epiupdate01_en.pdf

¹⁸ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>

¹⁹ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>

²⁰ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>

²¹ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>

²² https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacu642.pdf

²³ https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/pdacu642.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>

²⁵ <https://www.hiv.gov/blog/caribbean-american-hiv-aids-awareness-day-hiv-in-the-caribbean-region>

8. While we know that the disease has a disproportionate impact on Black Americans there are limitations to the data available on the HIV status of Caribbean-born immigrants living in the U.S. This data gap exists because epidemiological studies often incorporate Caribbean-Americans into the broader Black/African-American community.
9. Among Caribbean countries, 11 of 16 rely heavily on external funding. Additional barriers for people living with HIV in the Caribbean include stigma.²⁶
10. The HIV/AIDS epidemic is impacting Caribbean communities in unique ways; however, as is the case in the United States, HIV/AIDS rates are disproportionately high among men who have sex with men and sex workers.
 - a. In Jamaica, 10% of all new HIV infections reported in 2018 were among men who have sex with men. This is likely an underestimate given the approximately 30% HIV prevalence rate among men who have sex with men.²⁷
 - b. Of the 32,000 adults age 15 and over living with HIV in Jamaica, 12,000 were women.²⁸
 - c. HIV affects young women 1.2 to 3 times more than young males in the Bahamas and Barbados.²⁹
 - d. In 2016, Suriname had <500 new HIV infections and <200 AIDS-related deaths.

Let us not lose sight of the fact that these statistics represent diverse communities of Black people—siblings, parents, cousins, parents whose lives can be enhanced, and saved, if each of us do the work required to disrupt stigma and increase HIV/AIDS advocacy, prevention, treatment and support. There are unique things about the diversity of experiences within and across the Caribbean and differences in language, histories, and ways of making meaning should be considered when having conversations about sex, sexual pleasure, and sexual health.

All of this starts with YOU and we hope that you will find this toolkit useful to you in facilitating conversations and producing events designed to ensure reduce the negative impact of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean and in Caribbean American communities throughout the United States. Doing this work together is how we all get free!

In Love and Continued Struggle,



David J. Johns
Executive Director, The National Black Justice Coalition

²⁶ <https://www.avert.org/professionals/hiv-around-world/latin-america/overview>
²⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7679044/>
²⁸ <https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/jamaica>
²⁹ <https://www.hiv.gov/blog/caribbean-american-hiv-aids-awareness-day-hiv-in-the-caribbean-region>



Call To Action!

1. KNOW YOUR STATUS. Find a free testing site near you using the testing locator at www.nbjc.org. Use the [HIV prevention services locator](#) to find HIV prevention services using your zip code. We know that COVID has shifted the way we all move so consider taking a test at home (and having the necessary support to process any results).

- a. Testing Is Important & Possible From Home. Quarterly HIV testing should be continued for patient safety. Lab-only visits for assessment of HIV infection and other indicated tests for the provision of PrEP are preferred. When these are not available or feasible, CDC recommends considering two additional options.
- b. The first option is a [home specimen collection kit](#) for HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) tests, which is covered by most insurance plans and can be ordered by clinicians.

Specimen kits are mailed to your home and contain supplies to collect blood from a fingerstick or other appropriate method (e.g. self-collected swabs and urine). The kit is then mailed back to the lab with test results returned to the clinician who acts on results accordingly. This laboratory-conducted test is sensitive enough to detect recent HIV infection.

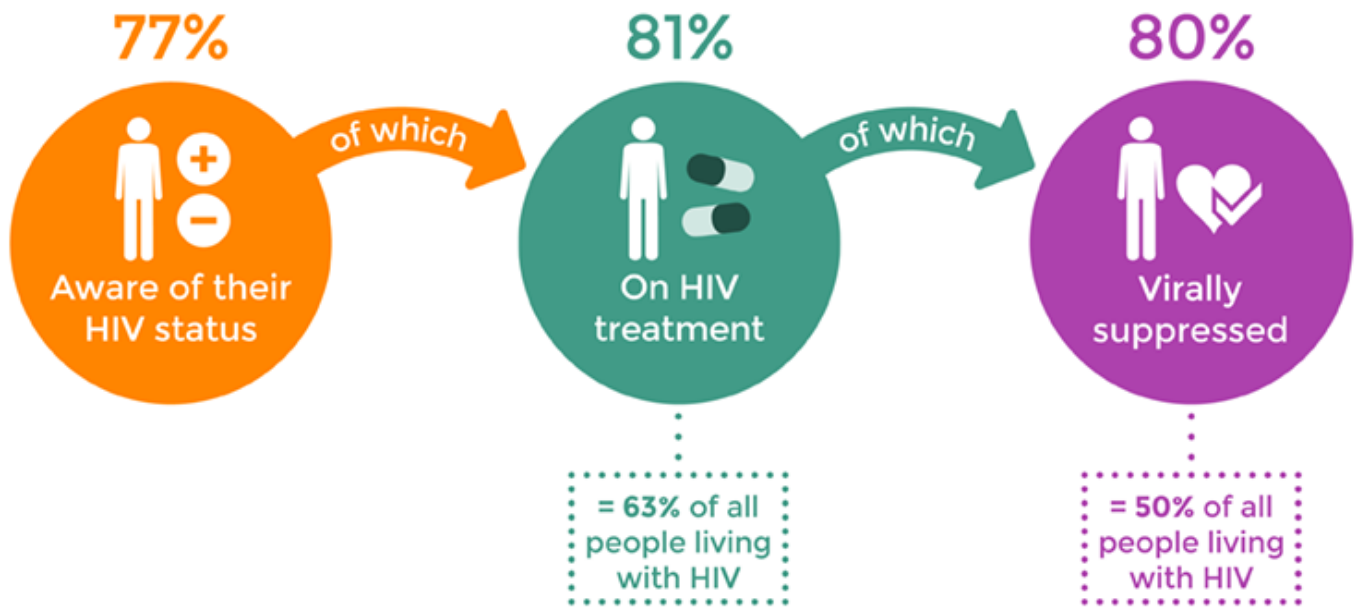
- c. The second option is self-testing via an oral swab-based test.

2. CONNECT TO CARE:

- a. If HIV negative, ensure you're engaging in practices to minimize risk. Consider a prescription for a 90-day supply of PrEP medication to minimize trips to the pharmacy and to facilitate PrEP adherence. Several programs are available to help provide affordable PrEP medication including Ready, Set, PrEP, a nationwide program that makes PrEP medications available at no cost to individuals who qualify and lack prescription drug coverage; state drug assistance programs; and Gilead's Medication Assistance Program (MAP), which assists eligible HIV-negative adults in the United States who require assistance paying for PrEP.
- b. The two main options for PrEP medications are Truvada and Descovy, which were FDA approved in 2004 and 2019, respectively. Because Truvada was approved so long ago, it may be cheaper as it has lost exclusivity, and other companies can now release generics of it. Both Descovy and Truvada have similar levels of efficacy, dosing regimens, and patterns of insurance coverage, though may have slightly different clinical trial data and populations. The key thing to note in this situation, is that for uninsured people, Truvada may be the better option, as it will soon be cheap and generic.
- c. If HIV positive, start HIV treatment (commonly antiretroviral therapy). Scientists and advocates in the LGBTQ+ community have made it so that this previously incurable disease is now treatable. Stay in care & keep the virus under control. Ask your doctor for more information.

3. DISRUPT STIGMA. Avoid using stigmatizing language or otherwise preventing conversation about HIV/AIDS and sexual health and wellness. You can do this in at least two powerful ways:

- a. Raise awareness: write an OpEd, blog post, or article to promote conversations about and action to raise HIV/AIDS awareness, advocacy, prevention and treatment in your community/communities using this year's NBHAAD theme "We're in this together." You could also record a video or post for Instagram, Facebook or any of the platforms used by your networks. Be sure to tag and share your article/video with @NBJCOntheMove so we can help amplify your message.
- b. Go Live. Share video and images of you and those you love talking about and taking steps to encourage positive, asset-based conversations about HIV/AIDS in Black communities. Broadcast live from your CAHAAD awareness day event.



Source: UNAIDS Data 2020

Avert www.avert.org

STIGMA KILLS.

Many people remain ignorant and fearful of HIV/AIDS, and myths about HIV and how it's transmitted persist throughout the Caribbean. For example, in Jamaica, 71% of people said they would not buy vegetables from a vendor who is living with HIV, as did 58% of people in Haiti and 49% of people in Dominican Republic.¹⁶ A number of Caribbean countries are showing addressing the stigma and discrimination experienced by key populations; are working to make condoms and other forms of prevention more accessible; and to treat related factors that may contribute to chances of testing positive for HIV/AIDS. These efforts can be accelerated by each of us doing our part to disrupt stigma and speak based using facts and asset-based language.

RESOURCES!

1. Use the activities included in the [NBJC Words Matter HIV toolkit](#) to facilitate conversation and engage in activities to reduce stigma and encourage fact based conversation.
2. Visit the CDC's resource page: [Caribbean-American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day: HIV in the Caribbean Region](#)
3. Host a screening and discussion of the [90-Days The Film](#). 90 Days explores a beautiful couple's relationship and their life altering decision after 90 days of dating--the themes presented in the film are universal and sure to spark discussion. Watch the film and then have a conversation about the themes reflected in the film and the feelings that emerged while watching.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MEDICAL & SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENTS, AS APPROPRIATE.

Medications such as Pre-exposure prophylaxis (or PrEP) and Post-exposure prophylaxis (or PEP) exist to aid in reducing the risk of becoming HIV positive.

PrEP

Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis is a daily pill one takes to lower their chances of getting infected. PrEP can stop HIV from taking hold and spreading throughout your body. It is most effective if used as prescribed and is much less effective when not taken consistently.

PEP

Post-Exposure Prophylaxis is utilized after being potentially exposed to HIV to prevent becoming infected and is an antiretroviral medicine (ART). PEP should be used only in emergency situations and must be started within 72 hours after a recent possible exposure to HIV. To obtain PrEP or PEP, contact your healthcare provider, an emergency room, or visit your local or state Health Department. If eligible, the Gilead Advancing Access® co-pay coupon card may help you save on your co-pays for PrEP and PEP. For more information visit: <https://www.gileadadvancingaccess.com/copay-coupon-card>.



DIGITAL RESOURCES (WE ENCOURAGE SHARING)

Make sure to use the following hashtags when sharing your information about HIV prevention

#NBJC Advocacy #CAHAAD #ActAgainstAIDS #PACT4HIV

1. [You Should Care About HIV/AIDS Day Because Black People Are Dying and We Don't Have To @TheRoot](#)
2. [Social and network factors \(not risky behavior\) may explain higher HIV infection rates for black men who have sex with men in the US](#)
3. [#GetTested: Recommendations for HIV Testing of Adults, Adolescents, and Pregnant Women](#)
4. [Here's How You Can #TalkToTheBabies If They Disclose Their HIV Status @theGrio](#)
5. [National Black Justice Coalition on How HIV/AIDS Affects Black Communities](#)
6. [How Can You Help Someone Who Has Been Newly Diagnosed with HIV?](#)



Whatever you do, in recognition of Caribbean-American HIV/AIDS Awareness Day do something to reduce stigma, facilitate testing, or otherwise ensure we address the impact that HIV/AIDS continues to have in Black communities throughout the Caribbean. We hope that this toolkit serves as a source of both inspiration and support. Thank you in advance for all that you will do.

