

National HIV Behavioral Surveillance System: Injecting Drug Users, Philadelphia 2015

Ongoing HIV Risk Behaviors in Metropolitan Philadelphia: Data from the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) System, Persons Who Inject Drugs (IDU4) in 2015

What is NHBS?

The Philadelphia Department of Public Health collaborated with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in conducting a behavioral surveillance system in the Philadelphia Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). NHBS employs standardized anonymous questionnaires and optional HIV and HCV testing to better understand trends in HIV prevalence and risk behaviors among three sub-populations at highest risk of HIV infection in the United States: men who have sex with men (MSM), persons who inject drugs (IDU), and high-risk heterosexuals (HET). Currently conducted annually in 22 MSAs in the United States, NHBS rotates between MSM, IDU, and HET populations in three year cycles. The overarching goal of NHBS is to help evaluate and direct local and national prevention efforts.

In 2015, the fourth cycle investigating PWID (IDU4) was conducted using respondent-driven sampling (RDS), a targeted sampling technique used to reach hidden populations. Survey participants are asked to recruit up to five peers in their social network until a sample size of at least 500 is reached. Data collection for the fourth IDU cycle was conducted between July and November 2015. Philadelphia previously participated in the IDU cycle in 2005 (IDU1), 2009 (IDU2) and 2012 (IDU3) and will participate again in the IDU cycle in 2018.

Who are the participants?

Eligible adults for the IDU4 cycle were at least 18 years of age, lived in the Philadelphia MSA, could complete the survey in Spanish or English, and reported injecting drugs in the preceding 12 months.

Of the 848 individuals screened, 662 (78%) were eligible and consented to the survey. Participants completed an anonymous survey interview and 662 (100%) consented to HIV testing. Population estimates using statistics from this sample are presented within this factsheet.

The age of the 662 eligible participants ranged from 19 to 70, with an average age of 37 (Figure 1). Demographic information is presented in Table 1. Philadelphia's IDU4 population is estimated to be 75% male, 24% female, and less than 1% transgender. The majority is white (65%), followed by Black (13%) and then Hispanic (20%).

Approximately 48% of the IDU4 population completed grade 12 or a GED equivalent. Only 11% are estimated to be employed either full- or part-time. Eighty-four percent of the IDU4 population lives below the poverty line and 68% are estimated to ever been homeless. Approximately 79% have health insurance and 73% have seen a health care provider in the preceding year. Twenty-six percent of participants reported a hospital emergency room as their usual source of care.

Figure 1. Estimated age distribution of IDU population Philadelphia IDU4 cycle, 2015

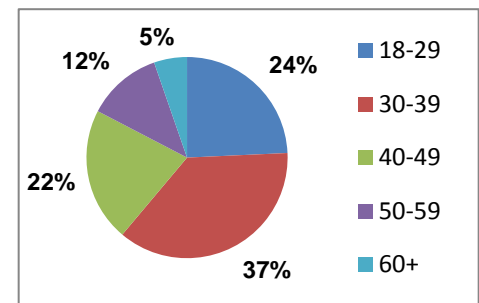


Table 1. Demographics IDU4 Population Estimates, 2015

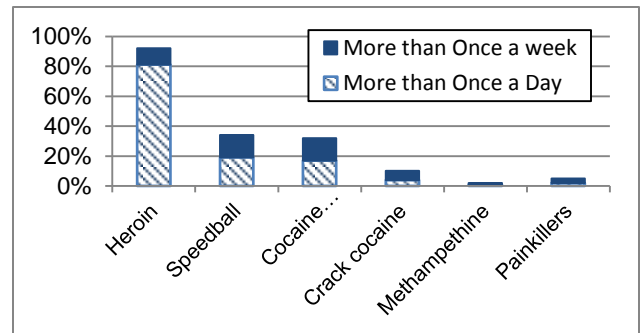
Race/Ethnicity	IDU Pop Est.
White	65%
Black/African American	13%
Hispanic	20%
Sexual orientation	
Heterosexual	86%
Bisexual	3%
Homosexual	11%
Marital status	
Never married	81%
Previously married	15%
Married	4%
Ever homeless	68%
Currently homeless (of those ever homeless)	(70%)
Education	
Less than high school	30%
High school diploma/GED	48%
More than high school	22%
Employment	
Unemployed	75%
Disabled	12%
Employed	11%
Retired/Other	2%
Poverty level	
Poverty	84%
Above poverty threshold	16%
Insured at time of interview	79%
Medicaid insured (of those insured)	(91%)
Saw health provider in past 12 months	73%
Offered HIV test by provider (of those seeing a health care provider)	(50%)
First injected drugs at 25 or younger	71%

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Drug-related Risk Behaviors

- 88% injected more than once a day, 97% inject more than once per week.
- In the past 12 months:
 - 37% always used a new sterile needle, 39% most of the time, 16% about half the time, 8% rarely.
 - 62% used works (e.g. cookers, cottons, or water) after at least one other person.
 - 43% used drugs divided up with a used syringe.
 - 31% reported no unsafe injection behaviors; 20% reported only having unsafe injection behaviors
- 75% reported non-injection drug use.
- Of those who reported sharing needles or works, only 44% and 46% knew their last injecting partner's HIV and HCV status, respectively.
- 47% reported being hooked on painkillers prior to their first injection.

Figure 2. Types and frequency of drugs injected IDU4 Population Estimates, 2015



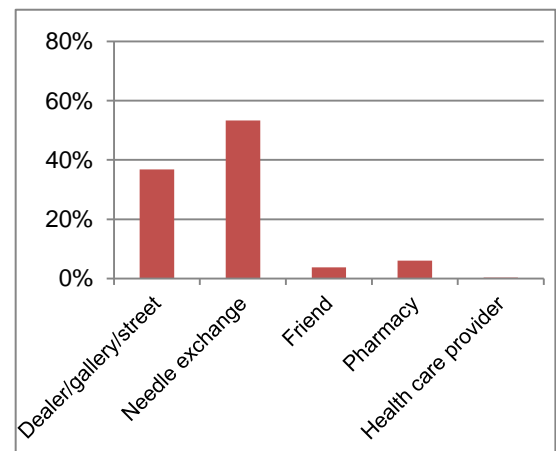
Sexual Risk Behaviors

- 25% of men and 43% of women reported 5+ sex partners in the preceding 12 months, 12% of men and 5% women reported no sexual partners.
- 75% of female and 31% of male participants received or exchanged sex for money, drugs, or other goods in the past 12 months.
- Of those sexually active in the last year:
 - 2% of men and 24% of women reported always using a condom in the last 12 months.
 - 60% of men and 70% of women had unprotected sex with a partner whose HIV status was unknown.

What prevention services are IDU accessing in Philadelphia?

- In the past 12 months:
 - 52% reported the needle exchange program as their most common source of new sterile needles.
 - 78% received free injection kits (cotton, water, cookers), 90% from needle exchange programs.
 - 39% received free condoms, 68% from a needle exchange program, 24% from an HIV/AIDS focused community organization, and 11% from a health center or clinic.
- Within the last 12 months, it is estimated that:
 - 50% participated in a drug treatment program.
 - 35% tried to participate in a drug treatment program but were unable to.
- Only 16% spoke to a counselor about HIV prevention in the last 12 months. Of the participants who received counseling, 46% received services from a needle exchange program and 28% from a drug or alcohol treatment program.

Figure 3. Reported most common sources of new sterile needles over the last 12 months, IDU4 Population Estimates



Self-reported HIV/HCV Status and Testing

An estimated 92% of the IDU4 population received an HIV test in their lifetime but only 55% of the sample reported having an HIV test in the past 12 months and 7% reported never obtaining results for the most recent test. Of those not tested for HIV in the past 12 months, the most commonly reported barrier to testing was fear of a positive result.

2.7% (n=18) of the IDU4 sample self-reported as HIV-positive. At the time of interview, partner services had been previously offered to 61% (11/18) of the self-reported HIV positive participants and utilized by 90% of those offered the services. All but one (17/18) reported seeing a health care provider for HIV care. Of the 662 participants tested for HIV following the survey, 4.8% (n=32) were HIV positive. The 32 HIV-infected participants include the 18 self-reported positives (32%) and 14 new positives (44%).

Fifty-seven percent reported being informed by a provider that they had hepatitis C. 81% (n=539) tested HCV antibody positive and 15% (n=101) tested HCV antibody negative. Confirmatory testing was not provided by the NHBS staff. All antibody positives were referred to providers for confirmatory testing.

For more information on NHBS, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/hiv/statistics/systems/nhbs/>