

What is NHBS?

NHBS is a public health survey funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and implemented locally by the Health Department. It monitors health and HIV-related risk behaviors among groups at risk for HIV exposure.

In 2018, NHBS interviewed 620 people who inject drugs (PWID) in Philadelphia. Participants were age 18 or older, lived in Philadelphia, reported injection drug use in the past 12 months, and consented to the survey. Responses were collected four days a week during the daytime in summer 2018 primarily at locations in South Philadelphia, North Philadelphia, and around the Kensington neighborhood.

Data from NHBS are used to inform HIV care and prevention activities by identifying the most common risk behaviors, disparities in access to services, and changes to these factors over time.

Who is in Philadelphia's PWID population?

Participant ages ranged from 19 to 69 with a mean age of 38 (Figure 1). Forty-five percent lived in Kensington followed by the Northeast (18%), South (15%), and North (11%) sections of the city.

Compared to the last NHBS survey among local PWID, conducted in 2015, a greater proportion of participants in 2018 were white (73% from 66%), HIV-positive (6% from 5%), ever were Hepatitis-C positive (61% from 57%), and age 30 or older (85% from 75%). A smaller proportion were living below poverty (79% from 84%) or uninsured (11% from 22%).

Sexual risk factors affecting PWID

- 20% of men and 36% of women reported 5+ sex partners in the last 12 months; 12% of men and 9% of women reported no sex partners.
- 48% of women and 18% of men reported exchanging sex for money, drugs, or other goods in the past 12 months. This was similar to 2015 (46% and 20%, respectively).
- 19% of sexually active men and 20% of sexually active women reported condom use during last sexual contact.
- At last sexual contact 32% of men and 24% of women had unprotected sex with a partner whose HIV status was unknown.
- 30% of men and 54% of women were tested for STIs other than HIV or Hepatitis-C in the past year.
 - STI testing decreased compared to 2015, when 36% of men and 62% of women reported an STI test in the previous year.

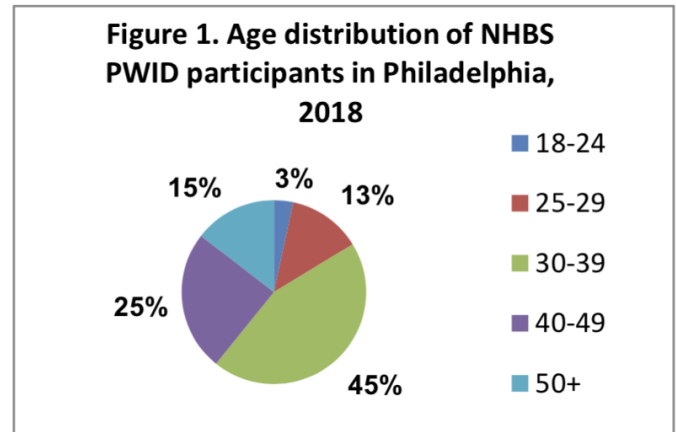


Table 1. Characteristics of PWID interviewed by NHBS, 2018

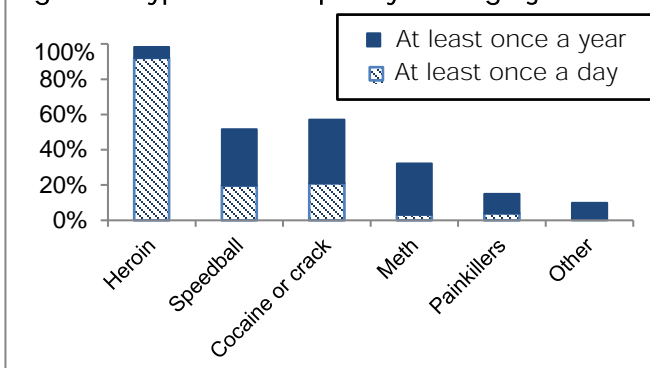
Gender	Percent
Male	68%
Female	32%
Race/Ethnicity	
White	73%
Black/African American	11%
Hispanic	14%
Sexual orientation	
Heterosexual or straight	85%
Bisexual	13%
Homosexual, gay, or lesbian	2%
Education	
Less than high school	26%
High school diploma/GED	49%
More than high school	25%
Employment	
Unemployed	69%
Disabled	17%
Employed	11%
Retired/Other	3%
Below Poverty level	79%
Homeless in Past Year	66%
Currently homeless	46%
Ever Incarcerated	86%
Incarcerated in past 12 months	43%
Insured at time of interview	89%
<i>Medicaid insured (of those insured)</i>	90%
Saw health provider in past 12 months	82%
<i>Offered HIV test by provider (of those seeing a health care provider)</i>	61%
HIV Positive	6%
HCV Status	
Ever HCV positive	61%

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Drug – related risk behaviors

- 89% inject more than once a day, 48% inject more than four times per day, and 16% inject eight or more times per day. Figure 2 shows the frequency of injection by type of drug.*
- In the past 12 months:
 - 31% **always** used a new sterile needle, 47% did so **most of the time**, 19% did so about **half the time**, and 3% did so **rarely**.
 - 59% used works (e.g. cookers, cottons, or water) after at least one other person.
 - 31% shared syringes to divide drugs. This was significantly lower than in 2015, when 44% did so.
- Of those who report sharing needles or works, 54% and 57% knew their last injecting partner's HIV and HCV status, respectively.
- 81% report non-injection drug use in the past 12 months.
 - Non-injection crack use was reported by 56% of all PWID, followed by non-injection downers (52%), marijuana (50%), heroin (33%), powdered cocaine (32%), painkillers (30%), and meth (29%).

Figure 2. Types and frequency of drug injection

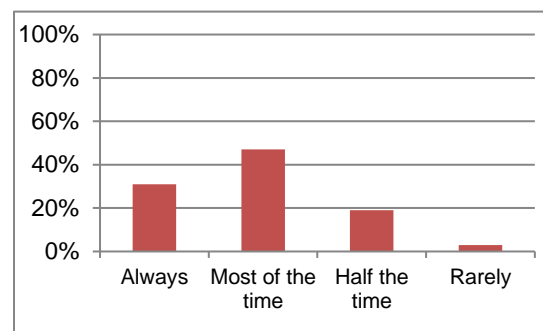


*Exact number of daily injections was added to the survey after data collection began (N=423).

What prevention services are PWID accessing?

- In the past 12 months:
 - 75% received some or all new sterile needles from a syringe service program (SSP). In 2015, it was 73%.
 - 88% received free injection kits (cotton, water, cookers), of which 82% received them from SSPs.
 - 58% received free condoms; 36% reported obtaining free condoms from a SSP.
 - 54% participated in a drug treatment program.
 - 67% received medication assisted treatment (MAT) for opioids.
- 96% of PWID would consider using a supervised injection site if one were to open.
- 38% spoke to a counselor about HIV prevention in the last 12 months.
- Among HIV negative PWID, 41% were aware of PrEP, 11% have discussed PrEP with their health care provider in the past 12 months, and 3% used PrEP in the past 12 months.
 - PrEP awareness among PWID has increased significantly since 2015, when only 12% of HIV negative PWID reported having heard of PrEP.

Figure 3. Frequency of sterile needle use over the last 12 months



Self-reported HIV and HCV status and testing

- Lifetime testing for HIV was high among PWID in Philadelphia (96%).
 - 72% of HIV negative PWID had an HIV test in the past 12 months.
 - Of those not tested for HIV in the past 12 months, nearly half (46%) had no particular reason for not getting tested, 30% were afraid to find out that they had HIV, and 14% believed they were at low risk for HIV infection.
 - 6% of PWID interviewed were HIV positive, and half of those were newly diagnosed by NHBS staff.
- Among those who were HIV positive and aware of their status prior to the survey (N=20), 45% reported being offered partner services. and 89% of those offered partner services used the service. Nearly all (90%) reported seeing a health care provider for HIV care.
- Lifetime testing for HCV was high among PWID in Philadelphia (91%). Among those tested, a doctor's office, clinic, or health center was the most common location for last HCV test (24%), followed by a drug or alcohol treatment program (22%), jail, prison, or detention center (17%), hospital (16%) and syringe exchange program (14%).
- Among PWID who ever tested positive for HCV (61%):
 - 52% reported being told about their HCV infection in the last 5 years, and 31% reported being told about their HCV infection more than 10 years ago.
 - Only 18% of those with a previous HCV diagnosis ever took medicine to treat their HCV infection.

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