

HIV and the Homeless

Texas Department of State Health Services HIV/STD Program

The Big Picture

Many people at risk of HIV experience homelessness. Those at risk of HIV infection sometimes have unstable housing situations that can lead in turn to further increased risk. The Texas Department of State Health Services sponsors a survey of persons at high risk for HIV called the National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) system. The survey collects information including sexual and drug use behaviors from three populations:

- Heterosexuals at increased risk of HIV infection (HET)
- Men who have sex with men (MSM)
- Persons who inject drugs (PWID)

DSHS conducted the Texas portion of the NHBS surveys in Dallas.

How Common is Homelessness in Those at Risk for HIV?

The NHBS found that of the three high risk populations surveyed in Dallas, PWID were most likely to report ever having been homeless (36%). Almost one in five MSM respondents reported ever being homeless (18%) while around one in seven HET respondents reported the same (14%).

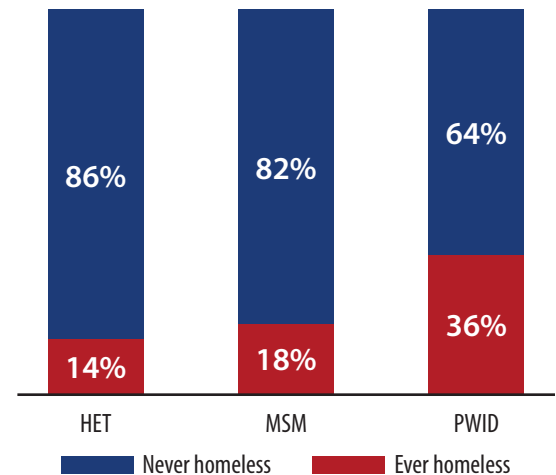
Of the three surveyed groups, MSM were most likely to have HIV. MSM respondents who had never been homeless were actually slightly more likely to be HIV-positive than those who reported ever having been homeless (32% vs. 28%). Among PWID, one percent of the never homeless and four percent of the ever homeless were HIV-positive. The HET survey only recruited HIV-negative participants.

What Sexual Risks are the Homeless Reporting?

Nearly all HET (97%) respondents reported unprotected sex in the past 12 months while just 62 percent of MSM reported the same. Many HET and MSM homeless respondents reported that they either had a different HIV status than their last sex partner or they didn't know their partner's status. More than 60 percent of HET respondents reported unprotected sex with a partner of either a different or unknown HIV status while 30 percent of MSM respondents reported the same.

HET and PWID were more likely to report their last sex partner was their main partner (around 60%) while 75 percent of MSM respondents reported their last sex partner to be a casual partner. There were no homeless respondents in any survey that had a recent sex partner who provided money, drugs or other resources in exchange for sex.

Reported Homelessness Status in HET, MSM and PWID



What About Drug and Alcohol Use by the Homeless?

All homeless PWID respondents injected drugs in the last 12 months. Most ever homeless respondents in all three surveys used non-injection drugs in the past 12 months. Two in five ever homeless PWID shared syringes and two in three also reported injection equipment sharing. Nearly half (47%) of ever homeless MSM respondents who injected drugs shared injection equipment.

The most common injected drugs used by PWID were heroin (95%), speedballs (63%), and crack or cocaine (47%). Injection drug use among MSM was much lower than for PWID with the most common injected drug used by MSM being meth (17%).

The most common non-injection drugs used by PWID respondents were marijuana (44%), crack (41%), and heroin (38%). The most common non-injection drugs used by MSM respondents were marijuana (61%), meth (48%), and crack (37%). The most common non-injection drugs used by HET respondents were marijuana (51%), crack (21%), and cocaine (20%).

MSM respondents were the most likely to report currently drinking alcohol (83%) and binge drinking (54%). Three in four HET respondents reported current drinking and 35% reported binge drinking while nearly two in three PWID reported current drinking and 31% binge drinking.

Who Makes Up the Homeless High-Risk Population?

Among the ever homeless respondents, PWID were relatively older than the other two groups. Most of the ever homeless participants in HET and PWID were black (81% and 68% respectively), while white participants were the most common ever homeless group in the MSM survey (44%). Half of homeless people in HET were female (49%), compared to one in four female homeless in PWID (27%).

In all three cycles, over one in three ever homeless respondents did not finish high school and about six out of seven homeless participants reported low income (<\$20,000 annually). About half of ever homeless HET participants had no current health insurance while over 60% of MSM and PWID were uninsured. Seven in ten homeless MSM and HET respondents were unemployed while almost nine in ten PWID surveyed reported the same.

The Homeless Report High Risk Factors for HIV

The NHBS Dallas surveys capture data on pattern and risk behaviors among those at risk for HIV and show the various increased risks for HIV transmission faced by those who have ever been homeless.

RESOURCES FOR HIV and the Homeless

Visit hivtest.org to find an HIV or STD testing site.

Call 211 or (800) CDC-INFO to find an HIV/STD service provider in Texas or locate other patient resources.

Test Texas HIV Coalition has provider resources for HIV testing at testtexashiv.org

The DSHS HIV/STD program provides data and statistics on HIV infection in Texas.

Visit

www.dshs.texas.gov/hivstd/reports for more information

DSHS TB/HIV/STD Section

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