

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV STIGMA INDEX – ALL PARTICIPANTS

Preferred presentation type: Research-based oral presentation

Key Words: Stigma and Discrimination, Health promotion, Community Development, Public Health, Community Engagement, Priority Populations,

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Background: People living with HIV often face stigma and discrimination. This can impact on their emotional, mental, social, and physical wellbeing as well as the uptake of HIV testing, disclosure, engagement in care, and uptake of and adherence to treatment.

The study aimed to identify stigma and discrimination among people living with HIV in Aotearoa, identify areas for future programming, care, and support, and to have a baseline to monitor change over time.

Methods: This cross-sectional quantitative survey used the international 'People living with HIV Stigma Index. The Meaningful Involvement of People living with HIV was at the core of the research. Twelve people living with HIV, of different ethnicities and gender, interviewed 188 people living with HIV using an in-person, side-by-side interview technique.

Results: A comprehensive report which includes significant recommendations for advocacy and a baseline to compare future stigma and discrimination research. Findings included:

- 75% of participants reported experiencing stigma and discrimination; 35% within the last 12 months.
- 43% reported experiencing a mental health condition in the past 12 months.
- 30% percent felt ashamed, guilty, worthless, or dirty because they have HIV.
- 23% of participants diagnosed in Aotearoa in the last 10 years, reported testing was without their knowledge, without consent or under pressure.
- 70% expressed difficulty in telling others or hiding their HIV.
- Disclosure in the workplace was particularly low.

Conclusion: HIV related stigma and discrimination continues to be experienced and a barrier to achieving wellbeing for people living with HIV in Aotearoa. This requires meaningful consideration and engagement by Government and all key stakeholder groups. Future iterations of the Stigma Index must be further tailored to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, and incorporate mātauranga Māori knowledge in the design and delivery of the research, in order to uphold Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

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