

Fewer HIV tests, cases identified in children at start of pandemic

July 18 2022



The number of HIV tests and cases identified among children aged 1 to

14 years decreased at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, according to research published in the July 15 issue of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

Ariana M. Traub, M.P.H., from the U.S. Agency for International Development in Washington, D.C., and colleagues examined changes in HIV testing and diagnoses among persons aged 1 to 14 years in 22 U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)-supported [countries](#) during Oct. 1, 2019, to Sept. 30, 2020, representing the two fiscal quarters before the COVID-19 pandemic (Q1 and Q2) and two quarters after the pandemic began (Q3 and Q4).

The researchers found that PEPFAR supported 4,312,343 HIV tests and identified 74,658 children living with HIV (CLHIV) during October 2019 to September 2020. A similar number of HIV tests was performed during Q1 and Q2, while the number decreased 40.1 percent from Q2 to Q3 and then increased 19.7 percent from Q3 to Q4. Among children aged 1 to 14 years, the number of HIV cases identified increased 7.4 percent from Q1 to Q2, decreased 29.4 percent from Q2 to Q3, and then increased 3.3 percent from Q3 to Q4. From Q1 to Q4, testing in outpatient departments decreased 21 percent, while testing from other strategies increased during the same period, including a 38 percent increase in mobile testing. Overall, 61.3 percent of the tests and 60.9 percent of cases were among [children](#) aged 5 to 14 years.

"These findings provide important information for countries and programs on the most effective [strategies](#) for identifying CLHIV during the COVID-19 pandemic," the authors write.

More information: Ariana M. Traub et al, Pediatric HIV Case Identification Across 22 PEPFAR-Supported Countries During the COVID-19 Pandemic, October 2019–September 2020, *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* (2022). [DOI](#):

[10.15585/mmwr.mm7128a2](https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7128a2)

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Citation: Fewer HIV tests, cases identified in children at start of pandemic (2022, July 18) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-07-hiv-cases-children-pandemic.html>

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