

# Epidemiology of HIV in the Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) Region

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# Presentation Highlights

1. HIV cases in Latin America continue to increase, reductions are seen in the Caribbean
2. The benefits of ART treatment are apparent
3. More needs to be done to advance prevention and to bolster public health systems

# The Latin American and Caribbean “Region”

## Caribbean (n=20 countries and 1 territory)

- Antigua & Barbuda
- Aruba
- Bahamas
- Barbados
- Cayman Islands
- Cuba
- Dominica
- Dominican Republic
- Grenada
- Guadeloupe
- Haiti
- Jamaica
- Martinique
- Puerto Rico
- Saint Barthélemy
- St. Kitts & Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad & Tobago
- Turks & Caicos Islands
- Virgin Islands

## Central & North America (n=8)

- Belize
- Costa Rica
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Mexico
- Nicaragua
- Panama

## South America (n=13)

- Argentina
- Bolivia
- Brazil
- Chile
- Colombia
- Ecuador
- French Guiana
- Guyana
- Paraguay
- Peru
- Suriname
- Uruguay
- Venezuela





# Basic Background

PAHO estimates that 2.5 million people living with HIV live in LAC among a population of 664 million



Photo by [charlesdeluvio](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**People living with HIV 2,600,000**

Lower estimate 2,400,000

Upper estimate 2,900,000

**New HIV infections 135,000**

Lower estimate 107,000

Upper estimate 171,000

**Adults (15+) living with HIV 2,300,000**

Lower estimate 2,000,000

Upper estimate 2,600,000

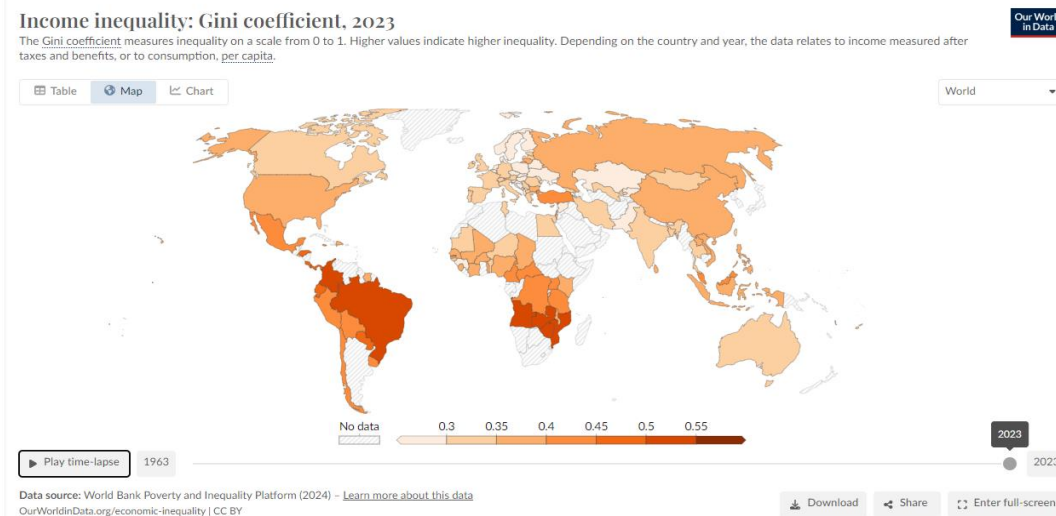
**AIDS-related deaths 35,000**

Lower estimate 25,500

Upper estimate 49,400

# Latin America and the Caribbean

- Forgotten region
  - Too middle income for much outside help
  - Despite high rates of inequality
- Most LAC countries provide ART via free public health systems and using local resources
  - LA is the most autonomous region in terms of HIV financing
  - Brazil led the way with universal treatment access and ART production/export
  - The Caribbean relies more heavily on external funding
- Despite vast expertise and substantial HIV research, adoption of innovations is slow

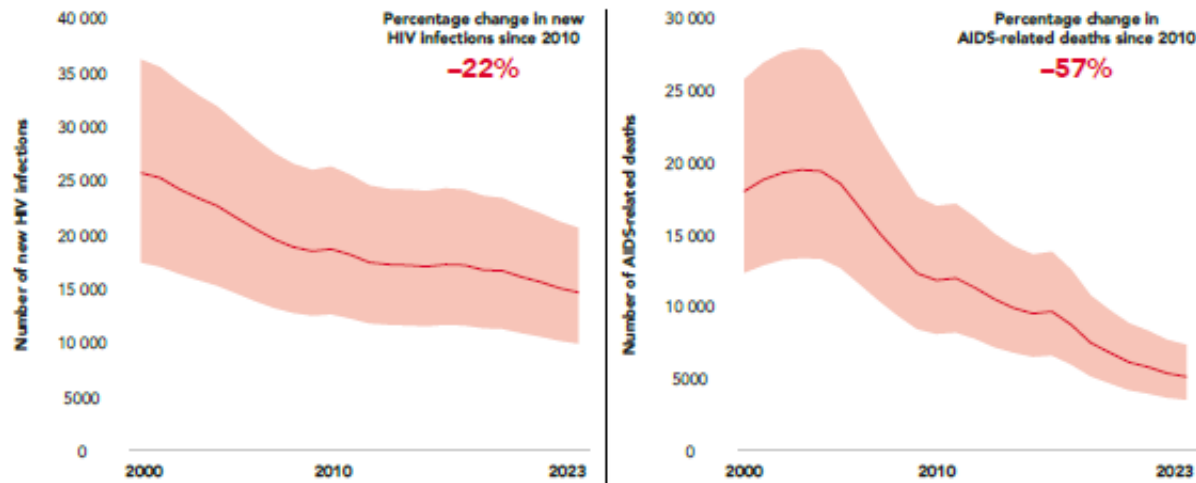


UNAIDS financial estimates, July, 2024 (<http://hivfinancial.unaids.org/hivfinancialdashboards.html>).

Perez-Brumer, A., Hill, D., & Parker, R. (2023). Latin America at the margins? Implications of the geographic and epistemic narrowing of 'global' health. *Global Public Health*, 19(1).

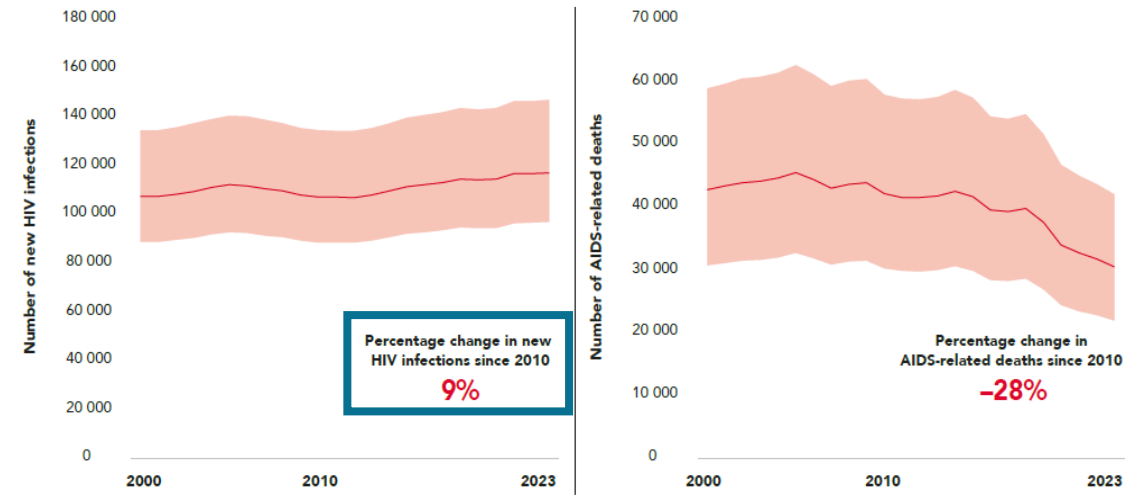
# LA: While AIDS-Related Deaths Have Decreased, New HIV Infections Have Not

Figure 11.1 Numbers of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, Caribbean, 2000–2023



Source: UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2024 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

Figure 14.1 Numbers of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, Latin America, 2000–2023

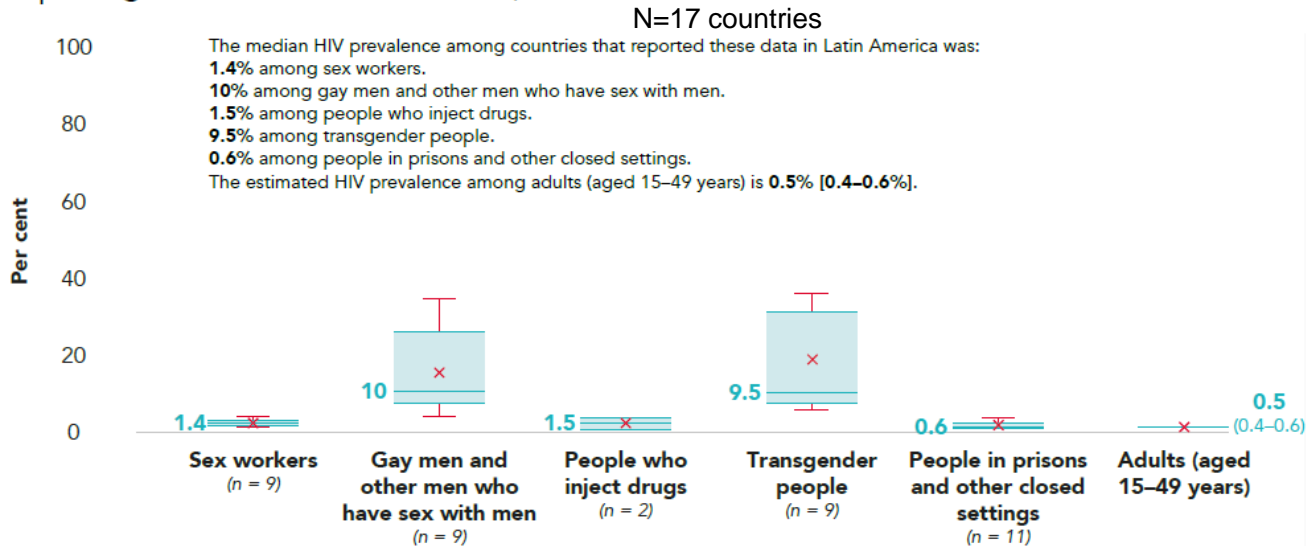


Source: UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2024 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

- In our recent sero-incidence study, annualized HIV incidence rate in Brazil: 2.62% (95% CI: 1.78–3.43); Peru: 6.69% (95% CI: 4.62–8.69)

# Vulnerability to HIV Remains Highly Concentrated Among Specific Groups

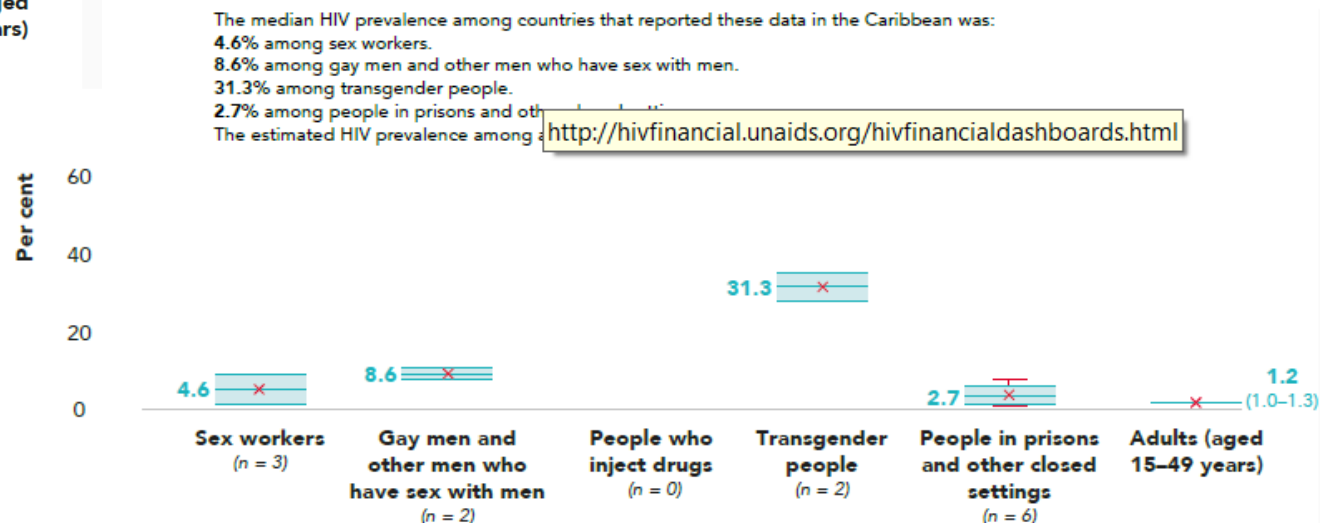
**Figure 14.4** HIV prevalence among people from key populations compared with adults (aged reporting countries in Latin America, 2019–2023 N=17 countries



- Although not included here, prevalence among some indigenous groups is also estimated to be >1%

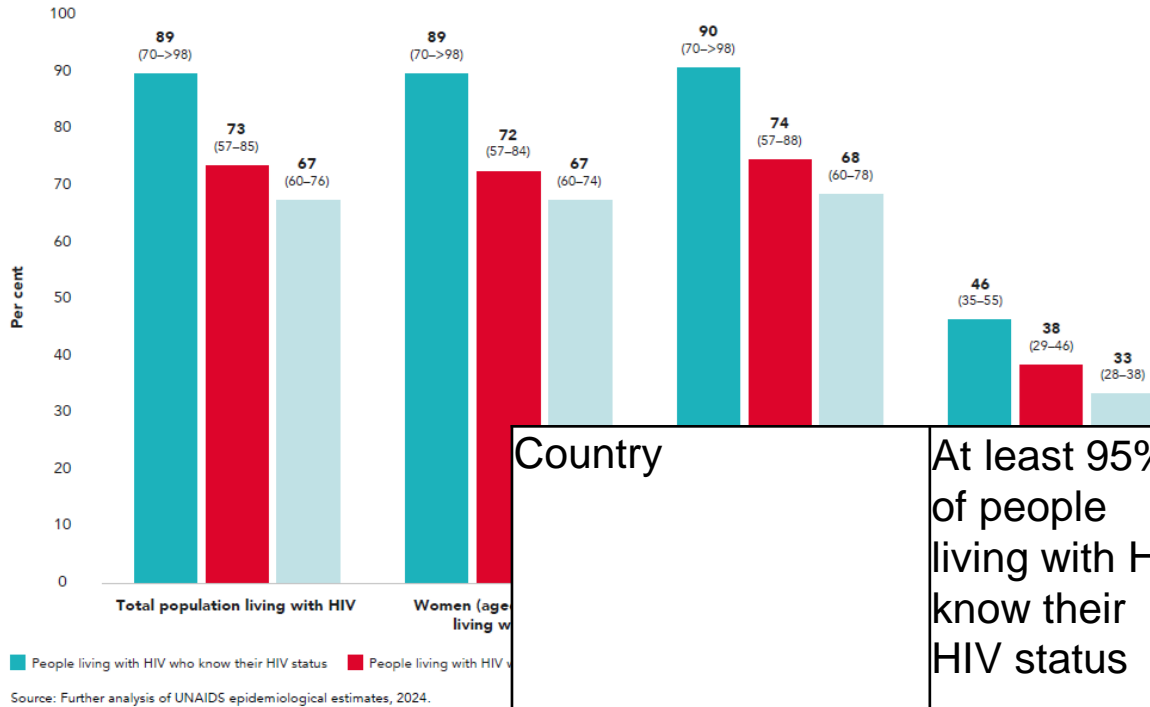
- Higher prevalence among adults, sex workers, transgender people, and incarcerated individuals in the Caribbean

**Figure 11.4** HIV prevalence among people from key populations compared with adults (aged reporting countries in the Caribbean, 2019–2023 N=16 countries

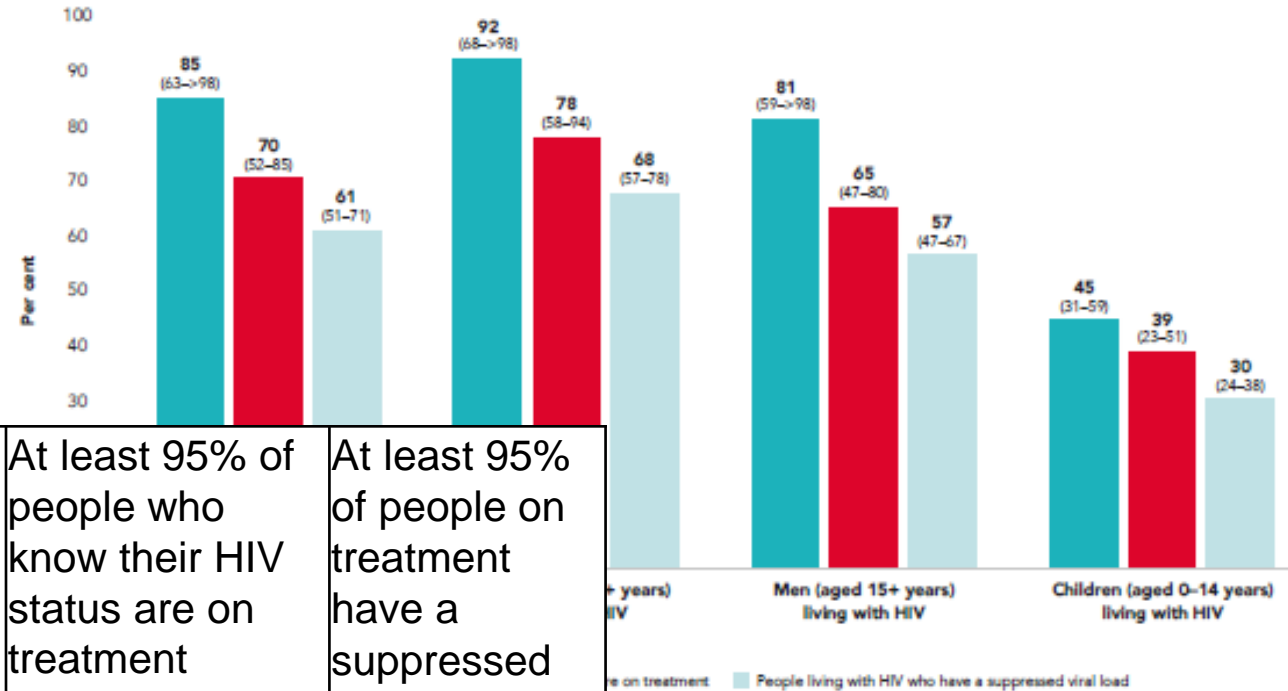


# Progress to ART Cascade and 95-95-95

**Figure 14.5** HIV testing and treatment cascade, by age and sex, Latin America, 2023



**Figure 11.5** HIV testing and treatment cascade, by age and sex, Caribbean, 2023



Country	At least 95% of people living with HIV know their HIV status	At least 95% of people who know their HIV status are on treatment	At least 95% of people on treatment have a suppressed viral load
Brazil	96%	82%	95%
Peru	91%	91%	---
Barbados	90%	74%	93%
Guatemala	86%	83%	92%

Source: UNAIDS. Latin America

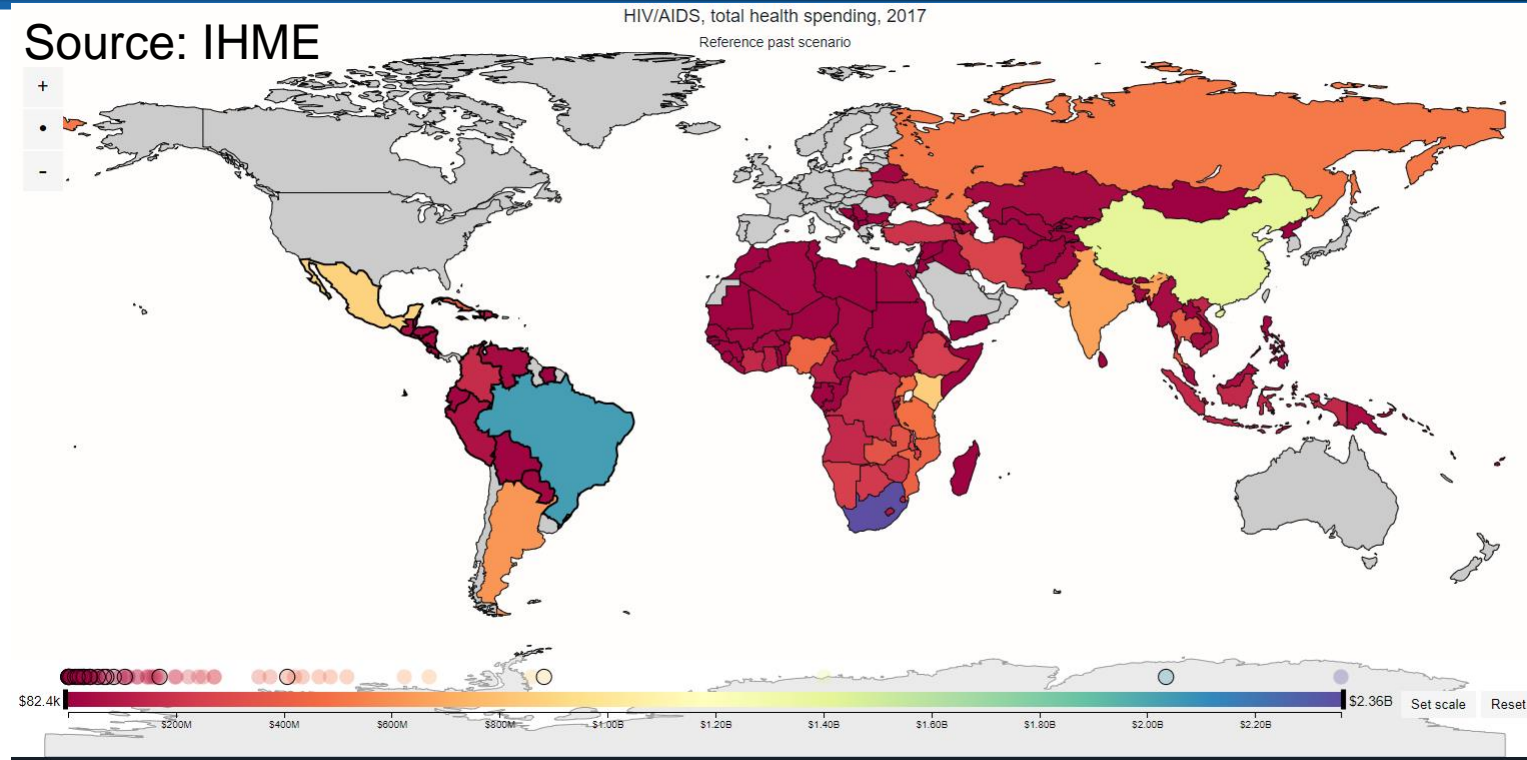


# Despite ART, Challenges to Treatment Remain

- PLHIV are living longer, a huge success of treatment
- However, too often PLHIV arrive to care late
  - Often arrive to care (or re-engage with care) once they have a CD4<200
- Adherence continues to be a challenge:
  - In a meta-analysis 70% (95% CI: 63–76) of PLHIV in LAC were adherent to ART
- These continuing challenges are hypothesized to be related to fear and stigma as well as bureaucratic health systems

# Health Systems

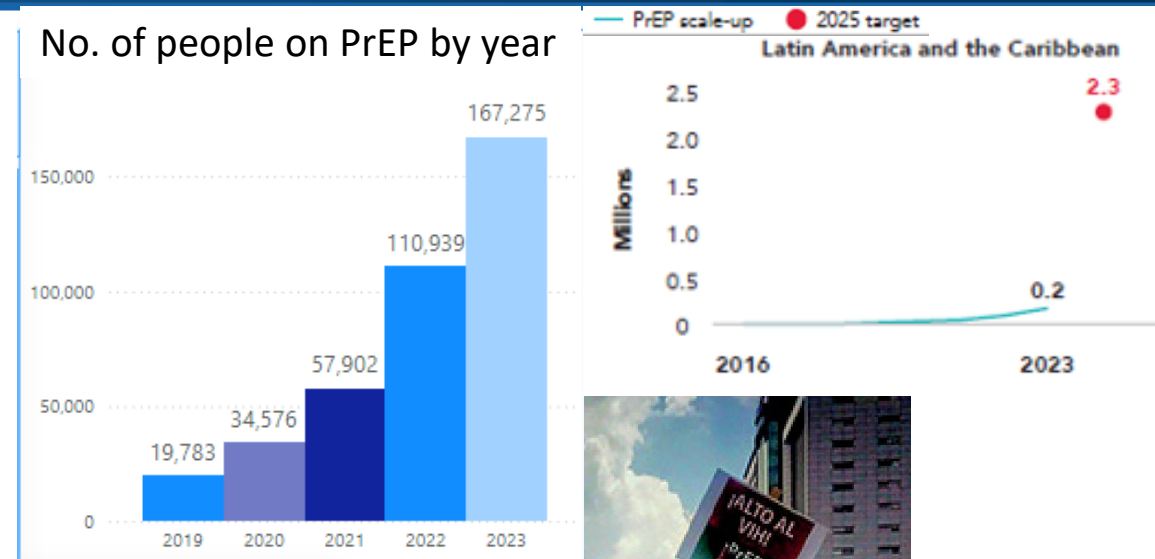
- HIV spending remains low across LAC, with the exception of Brazil and Mexico
- Research and innovation in HIV care and prevention are fast paced
  - Intervention/innovation adoption is slow, those that challenge the status quo are even slower



- Health spending in LAC will have to increase to address the burgeoning burden of chronic diseases, including HIV

# Combination Prevention

- LAC has not kept up with prevention strategies
  - Oral PrEP is beginning to enter the region
  - Brazil began to provide oral PrEP in their national health program in 2017 with others following
  - Over 65% of individuals receiving oral PrEP are in Brazil (110k), the next largest provider is Mexico with 14k+ users



# Stigma and Discrimination

- HIV-related stigma in LAC remains dauntingly high
- Intersectional stigma influences many of the groups who remain at increased vulnerability to HIV - homophobia and transphobia remain
- HIV-related stigma is higher in LAC than in sub-Saharan Africa: in LAC fear/stigma motivates individuals to engage in safer sexual practices to avoid the risk of HIV
- For cisgender women living with HIV, they are doubly at fault as HIV is something 'other' that they should not have
- Stigma is understood to influence HIV prevention, care seeking and adherence, more anti-stigma intervention is needed



Experiences of discrimination and proportion of these experiences of discrimination associated with HIV, by population group in Peru

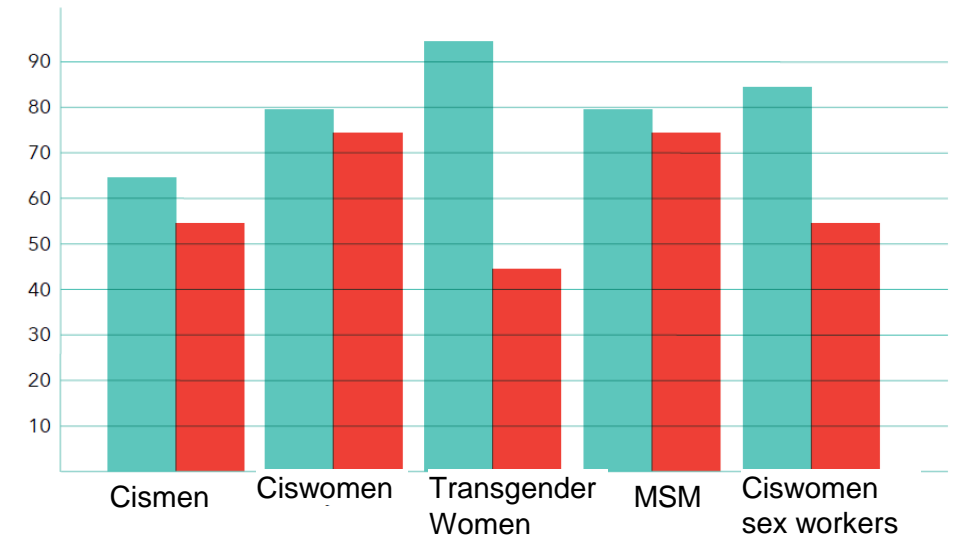


Figura 3: Experiencias de discriminación y proporción de estas experiencias de discriminación asociadas al VIH, según el grupo poblacional

Discrimination  
Discrimination due to HIV

Billings, KR. et. al. HIV stigma beliefs in context: Country and regional variation in the effects of instrumental stigma beliefs on protective sexual behaviors in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Southern Africa. SSM, Volume 269, 2021, 113565.

Celeste-Villalvir A, et. al. Exploring gender differences in HIV-related stigma and social support in a low-resource setting: A qualitative study in the Dominican Republic. PLoS One. 2023 Aug 24;18(8):e0290228 PMID: PMC10449144.

Smith MK, et. al. Combating HIV stigma in low- and middle-income healthcare settings: a scoping review. J Int AIDS Soc. 2020 Aug;23(8):e25553. PMID: 32844580; PMID: PMC7448195.

Informe Final. Índice de Estigma y Discriminación hacia las personas con VIH en Perú. 2018. <https://www.stigmaindex.org/country-reports/#/m/PE>

- U=U is a powerful tool for HIV prevention
- Linking this concept to clinical care and prevention has not been sufficiently leveraged

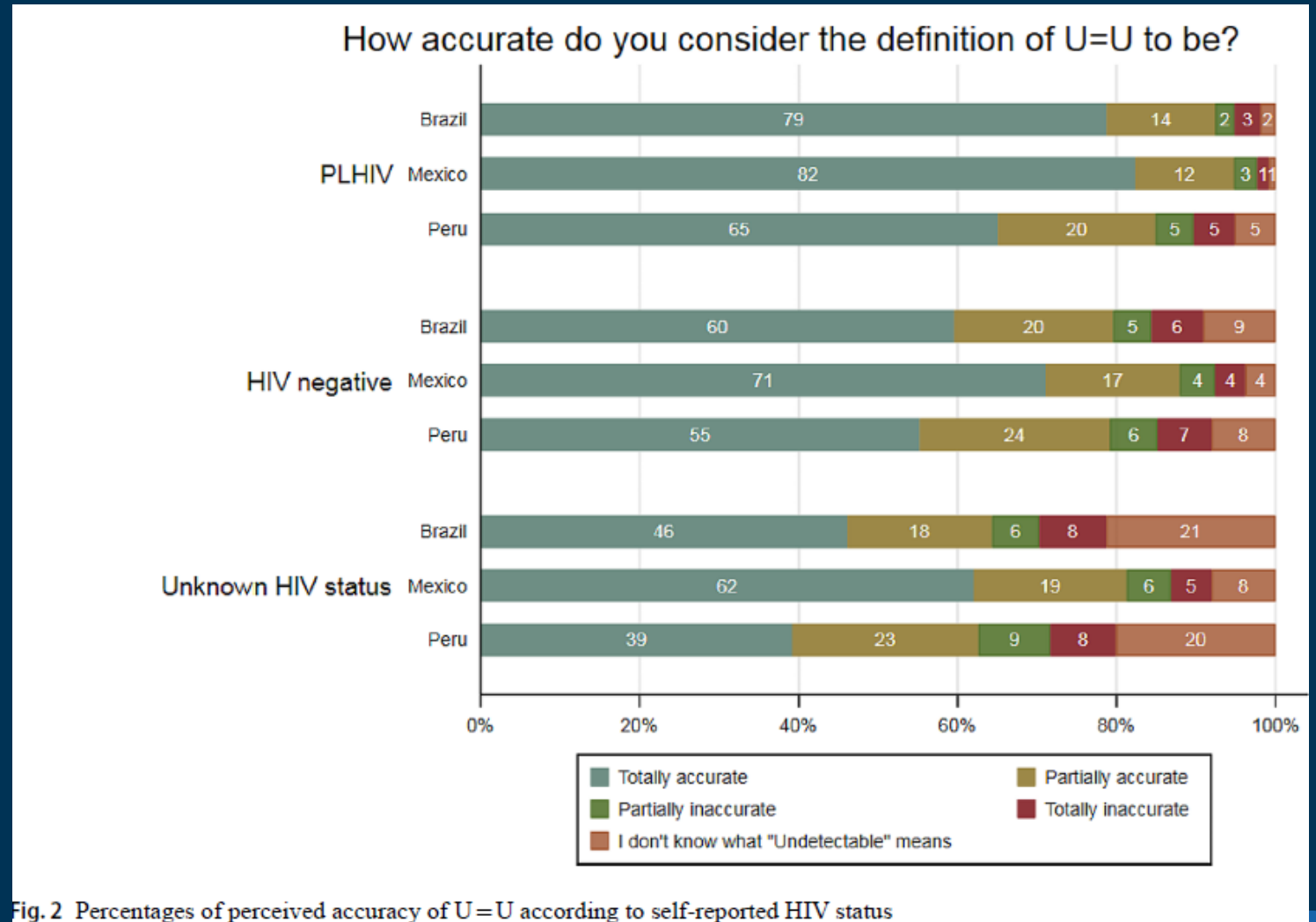


Fig. 2 Percentages of perceived accuracy of U=U according to self-reported HIV status

# Strength of Community



- Latin America has a history of substantial contributions to HIV research, including via HPTN 083, HPTN 052, IPrEX, ImPrEP and many other landmark studies
- This provides a wealth of expertise – we need to capitalize on this expertise to bolster treatment and prevention





By end of June 2024,  
there are more than  
**7.7 million**  
**Venezuelan**  
**refugees and**  
**displaced migrants**  
globally, with the vast  
majority – more than  
**6.6 million** – hosted  
in countries in Latin  
America and the  
Caribbean

Many PLHIV  
migrated due to  
stock outs in  
Venezuela with  
thousands of  
migrants currently  
receiving HIV care in  
Colombia and Peru

Chapter 3. Migration and Migrants: Regional Dimensions and Developments. Latin America And The Caribbean. World Migration Report. IOM.  
Wirtz AL., et al. HIV infection and engagement in the care continuum among migrants and refugees from Venezuela in Colombia:  
a cross-sectional, biobehavioural survey. *Lancet HIV*. 2023;10(7):e461-e471.  
R4V <https://www.r4v.info/es>

Huerta-Vera GS, Amarista MA, Mejía FA, Graña AB, Gonzalez-Lagos EV, Gotuzzo E. Clinical situation of Venezuelan migrants living with HIV in a hospital  
in Lima, Peru. *Int J STD AIDS*. 2021 Oct;32(12):1157-1164. PMID: PMC8593283.





# Wrap Up

- LAC's experience of HIV prevention and care is heterogeneous
- While public health systems have achieved benefits of ART treatment
- More needs to be done to advance prevention and to bolster public health systems
  - We should learn from community and leverage research expertise





# Thank you

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