

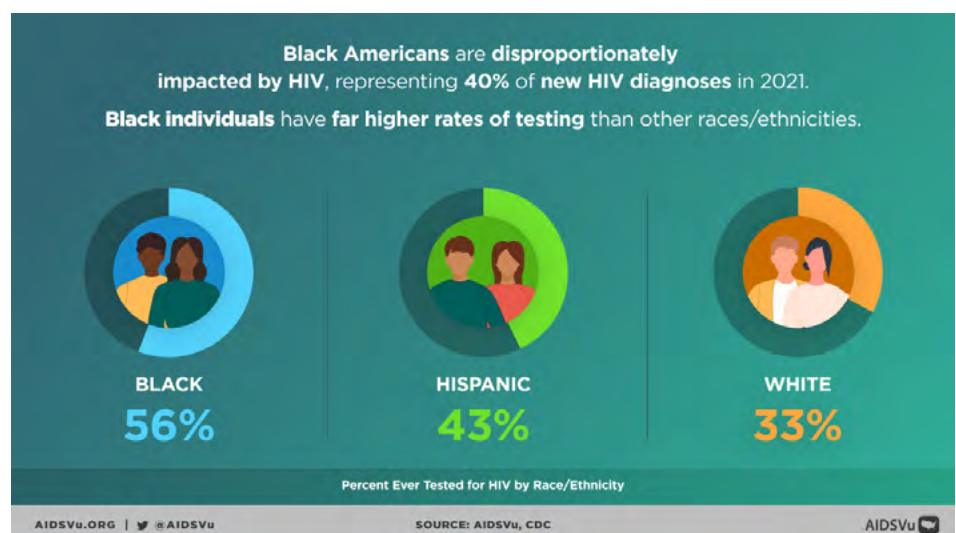
Perspectives on Faith-Based HIV Outreach and Engagement for Black Communities

Faith-based communities are a voice for civil rights and social justice. They are a safe space for people who are disadvantaged and make a positive impact to eliminate stigma in their communities.

Faith leaders are important in addressing public health issues, including HIV prevention, treatment, and education. They are trusted, powerful influences in the community. Faith communities and faith-based organizations together can help reduce stigma by giving accurate information and supporting individuals living with HIV.

Disparities in Communities of Color

According to PRRI data from 2022, more than seven in ten Black Americans (71%) are Christian, a slight decrease from 79% in 2013. Black Americans are notably more likely than Americans in general to say that religion is the most important thing in their lives (28% vs. 15%), and this percentage is notably higher among Black Christians (36%). Black Americans are also disproportionately impacted by HIV and represent 40% of new HIV diagnoses.



Impact of Stigma on Faith Communities

Stigma is the negative attitudes, beliefs, or feelings directed at individuals or communities because of HIV status, race, or sexual orientation that can lead to discrimination or social isolation.

HIV stigma can create barriers to education and prevention efforts. It can lead to fear and silence. False beliefs about the transmission of HIV and moral judgments about those living with the virus can lead to depression, shame, secrecy, mental health challenges, and avoidance of testing or treatment.

Faith communities can welcome open discussions about HIV to encourage people to seek care or support.

Breaking Barriers in Good Faith

Lack of access to healthcare or insurance, poverty, and cultural barriers contribute to higher rates of HIV in communities of color as well. It is important to increase the faith community's knowledge of HIV, break stereotypes, and reduce stigma. Elevate open conversations about sensitive topics, like condoms and sexual identity. Uplift community members who may feel isolated. Be strong and compassionate to create fellowship within the congregation.

- » **Use Inclusive Language.** Use terms that are respectful and non-stigmatizing. Create a community that addresses others with compassion.
- » **Keep it Clear and Simple.** Avoid jargon and explain concepts in easy-to-understand language.
- » **Create Space for Faith Integration.** Collaborate with intention. Build an equitable, culturally responsive, whole-person approach to your work. Create a supportive environment that prioritizes the needs of the community. Incorporate faith principles and messages of love, hope, and healing
- » **Provide Resources.** Convene regular meetings of diverse, interfaith communities to discuss HIV/AIDS. Have materials on hand or resources ready for sharing.
- » **Educate the Community.** Education transforms prejudice, stigma, and shame into understanding and empathy. It nurtures hope and fosters compassion, creating a path toward healing through fellowship and community support. Education stops prejudice, stigma, or shame. It grows hope and compassion. Education promises healing through fellowship.
- » **Spread the Love.** HIV care and prevention works! With simple daily treatment options, individuals can live in good health and faith. Advances in medicine allow people living with HIV to lead long, healthy lives. Those who are not living with HIV can use preventive measures, like PrEP, to protect themselves from infection. We have come so far!



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The Effi Barry Training Institute, led by HealthHIV, provides training and technical assistance to support current and prospective HAHSTA grantees and community-based organizations in implementing fee-for-service business models; basic HIV service competencies; advanced skills in health care systems; data and health informatics; high-impact prevention programs; and emerging evidence-based or informed approaches through a series of group trainings, boot camps, community forums, and individual consultation.

This project is funded wholly, or in part, by the Government of the District of Columbia, Department of Health, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Administration (HAHSTA).

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