

Knowledge and perceived impact of HIV-related laws among people living with HIV in Australia

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Background: HIV-related legal frameworks form part of the broader context in which people living with HIV (PLHIV) navigate disclosure, sex, and relationships. This study examines levels of legal knowledge and perceptions of how these laws relate to disclosure, stigma, sexual behaviour, and sexual wellbeing.

Methods: Data were drawn from *HIV FUTURES 11* (2024–26, $n=706$), a national cross-sectional survey of PLHIV in Australia. Newly introduced questions surveyed participants about their confidence in knowing their obligations and rights regarding disclosure and sex, and about their perceptions of the impact of HIV-related laws on sexual behaviour and enjoyment. Descriptive analyses were conducted.

Results: Almost all participants (95.3%) agreed with the statement, '*I understand my obligations about preventing HIV transmission to sex partners*'; and three-quarters (76.4%) agreed with the statement, '*I understand my rights in terms of when I'm required to disclose my HIV status to others*'. Regarding perceptions of the broader impacts of HIV-related laws, around one-third (35.2%) agreed that, '*Laws related to HIV make it difficult to be open and honest about my HIV status*'. Nearly half (47.6%) agreed that, '*Current laws have a negative impact on what others think about people living with HIV*'. A third (35.7%) agreed with the statement, '*I avoid sex, or limit the type of sex I have, due to concerns about laws regarding HIV and disclosure*'. A quarter (24.1%) agreed that, '*Current laws related to HIV affect my enjoyment of sex*'.

Conclusion: Most PLHIV reported strong perceived understanding of laws related to HIV disclosure and transmission. However, many also perceived these laws as shaping stigma and constraining sexual openness, behaviour, and enjoyment. These findings highlight the importance of addressing how legal frameworks are understood and experienced, including through clear, accessible communication and community-informed approaches that reduce uncertainty and minimise unintended impacts on wellbeing.

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