

Public Knowledge, Views, Perceptions and Attitudes towards HIV and People with HIV in Europe

– Combined Results of an HIV Public Opinion Survey Conducted in 11 European Countries

Konstantinos Protopapas^{* 1,2}, Johanna Brännström^{3, 4, 5}, Katharine Darling⁶, Matthias Egger⁷, Charalambos Gogos^{1,8}, Thomas Grabinger⁹, Katharina Grabmeier-Pfistershammer¹⁰, Tomas Groh¹¹, David Haerry¹², Darina Hederova¹³, David Jackson-Perry¹⁴, David Jilich^{15,16}, Sophie Kerkhove¹⁷, Pia Kivelä¹⁸, Thierry Martin¹⁹, Ellen Moseholm^{20,21}, Corinna Oberle⁹, Mina Psychogiou^{1,22}, Lubomir Sojak²⁴, Susanne von Stockenström²⁵, Alexander Zoufaly²⁶, Ioannis Katsarolis²⁷

¹Hellenic Society for the Study and Control of AIDS ²HIV Clinic ⁴Department of Internal Medicine, ATTIKON University General Hospital, Chaidari, Athens, Greece ³Department of Infectious Diseases, Södersjukhuset, Stockholm; Sweden ⁴Department of Clinical Science and Education, Karolinska Institute, Södersjukhuset Stockholm, Sweden ⁵Department of Medicine Huddinge, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden, ⁶Independant medical writer, Lausanne, Switzerland, ⁷Gilead Sciences GesmbH, Vienna, Austria ⁸Department of Internal Medicine and Infectious Diseases, Metropolitan General Hospital, Athens, Greece ⁹Gilead Sciences Switzerland Sàrl, Zug, Switzerland ¹⁰Medical University Vienna, Department of Dermatology, Vienna, Austria ¹¹Gilead Sciences, Prague, Czech Republic ¹²Positive Council Switzerland, Bern, Switzerland ¹³Gilead Sciences Slovakia, Bratislava, Slovakia ¹⁴Infectious Diseases Service, Lausanne University Hospital, Lausanne, Switzerland ¹⁵Department of Infectious Diseases, Bulovka University Hospital, Prague, Czech Republic ¹⁶1st, 2nd and 3rd Medical Faculty, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic ¹⁷Gilead Sciences BeLux, Diegem, Belgium ¹⁸Department of Infectious Diseases, Helsinki University Hospital, Finland ¹⁹Plateforme Prévention Sida, Brussels, Belgium ²⁰Department of Infectious Diseases, Copenhagen University Hospital, Hvidovre, Denmark ²¹Department of Clinical Medicine, Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, University of Copenhagen; Denmark ²²Medical School, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece ²⁴Department of Infectology and Geographical Medicine, Academic L. Derer's University Hospital Bratislava, Slovakia, ²⁵Gilead Sciences Sweden ²⁵Department of Medicine 4, Klinik Favoriten, Vienna, Austria ²⁶Faculty of Medicine, Sigmund Freud University, Vienna, Austria ²⁷Gilead Sciences Hellas and Cyprus, Paleo Faliro, Greece



Transparency declaration

- In each country the project was organized and funded by Gilead Sciences

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Background

- People with HIV on effective antiretroviral therapy achieving and maintaining undetectable viral load cannot sexually transmit the virus (**U=U**; undetectable equals untransmittable).¹
- **U=U** is supported by major guidelines worldwide.²⁻⁴
- **U=U** has the power to reduce HIV-associated stigma.
- Stigma is a significant barrier impacting early diagnosis, retention in care or access to specialized services, and negatively impacts quality of life for people with HIV.
- Limited public knowledge and awareness regarding HIV may result in ongoing stigmatization of people with HIV, which may negatively impact health outcomes.

References

1. WHO. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/360860/9789240055179-eng.pdf> (accessed Sept 12, 2025)
2. DHHS. <https://clinicalinfo.hiv.gov/sites/default/files/guidelines/documents/adult-adolescent-arv/guidelines-adult-adolescent-arv.pdf> (accessed Sept 12, 2025);
3. IAS. <https://www.iasociety.org/ias-statement/ias-statement-uu-putting-science-action> (accessed Sept 12, 2025);
4. EACS guidelines v.12.1, Oct 2024 <https://www.eacsociety.org/guidelines/eacs-guidelines/> (accessed Sept 12, 2025)



Purpose

- To assess knowledge, views, perceptions, and attitudes towards HIV and people with HIV across Europe, with a specific focus on U=U.



Methods

- HIV public opinion surveys in 11 European countries (2021-2024)
- Computed-assisted telephone (T) and/or web (W) interviews
- Participants (≥ 18 years) were recruited by panel institutes, providing representative population surveys and ensuring quota sampling by gender, age, residence in each country

Country	Sample (N)	Type of survey	Year of survey	Country population in year of survey (millions) *
Austria (AT)	1,000	W	2023	9,13
Belgium (BE)	1,000	W	2024	11,87
Switzerland (CH)	1,015	W	2023	8,89
Cyprus (CY)	809	T/W	2024	1,36
Czech Republic (CZ)	1,000	W	2024	10,86
Denmark (DK)	1,001	W	2023	5,95
Greece (EL)	1,954	T	2021	10,57
Finland (FI)	1,000	W	2023	5,58
Norway (NO)	1,000	W	2023	5,52
Sweden (SE)	1,000	W	2023	10,54
Slovakia (SK)	1,000	W	2024	5,43

Surveys were conducted by Metron Analysis (EL, CY), Ipsos Healthcare (CZ, SK) and Medupha (AT, BE, CH, DK, FI, NO, SE)

*Country population reference <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/world-development-indicators/> World Bank indicators accessed on Sept 12, 2025



Methods

- A Social Distance Index (SDI) was calculated based on answers to 8 questions about regular social activities
- Respondent's answers were grouped in three categories:
 - **High social distance** “Do not mind” in up to 2 statements
 - **Medium social distance** “Do not mind” in 3 to 5 statements
 - **Low social distance** “Do not mind” in more than 5 statements

Would you personally mind to

1. Live next door to
2. Sit next to
3. Give a job to
4. Lend something to
5. Rent your house to
6. Start a relationship with
7. Get married with
8. Have a sexual relationship with

a person with HIV?

Note: SDI was not calculated for CH,CY and EL due to differences in the list of interaction parameters compared to the other countries



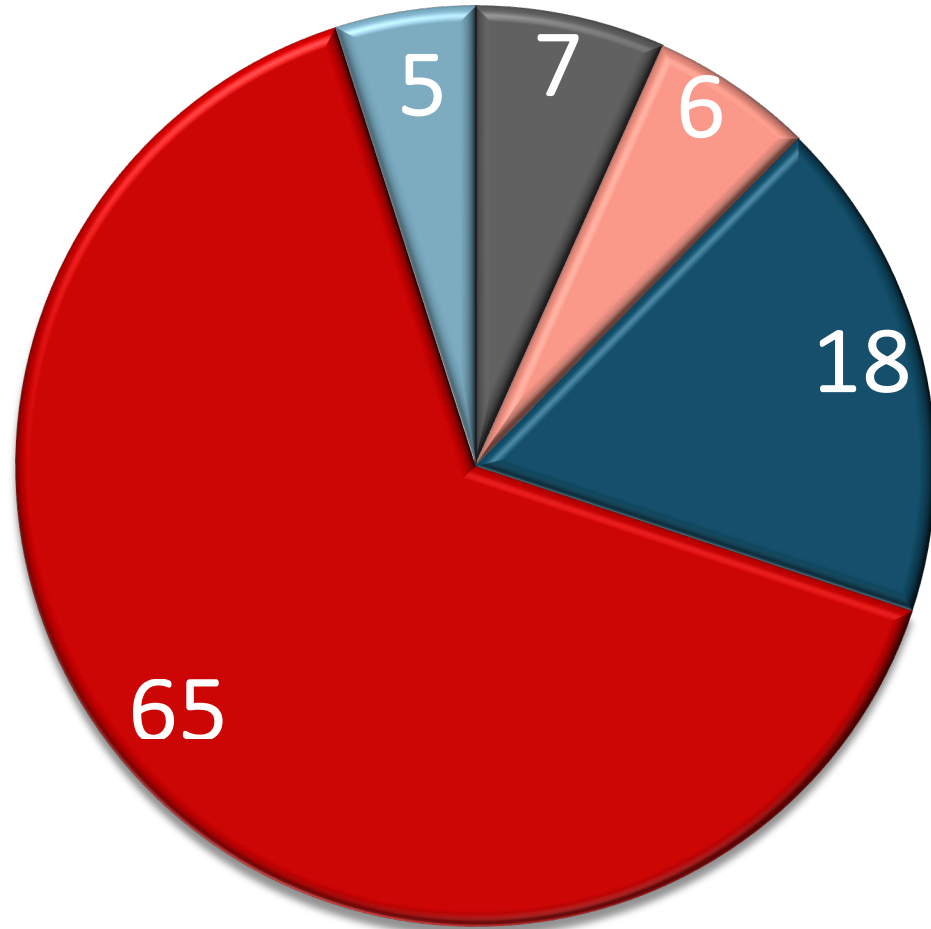
Results

- In total, **11,779** individuals
- **50.7%** female, **49.2%** male, **0.2%** diverse
- **75%** stated “well informed about health-related topics”
- **59%** stated “informed about HIV”
- **71%** agreed that “HIV is no longer fatal but a manageable chronic condition”



“Have you ever been tested for HIV?”

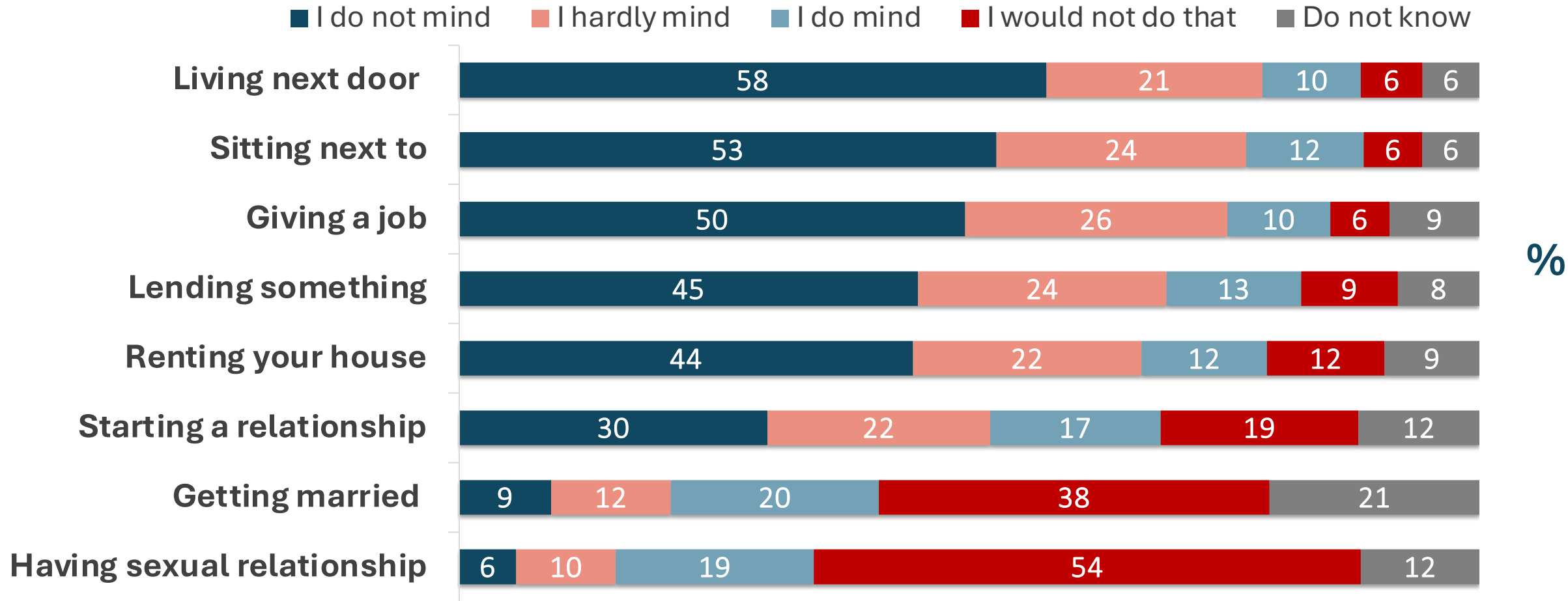
- Yes within the last 2 years
- Yes 2-5 years ago
- Yes 5+ years ago
- No
- Did not respond



N=11,665



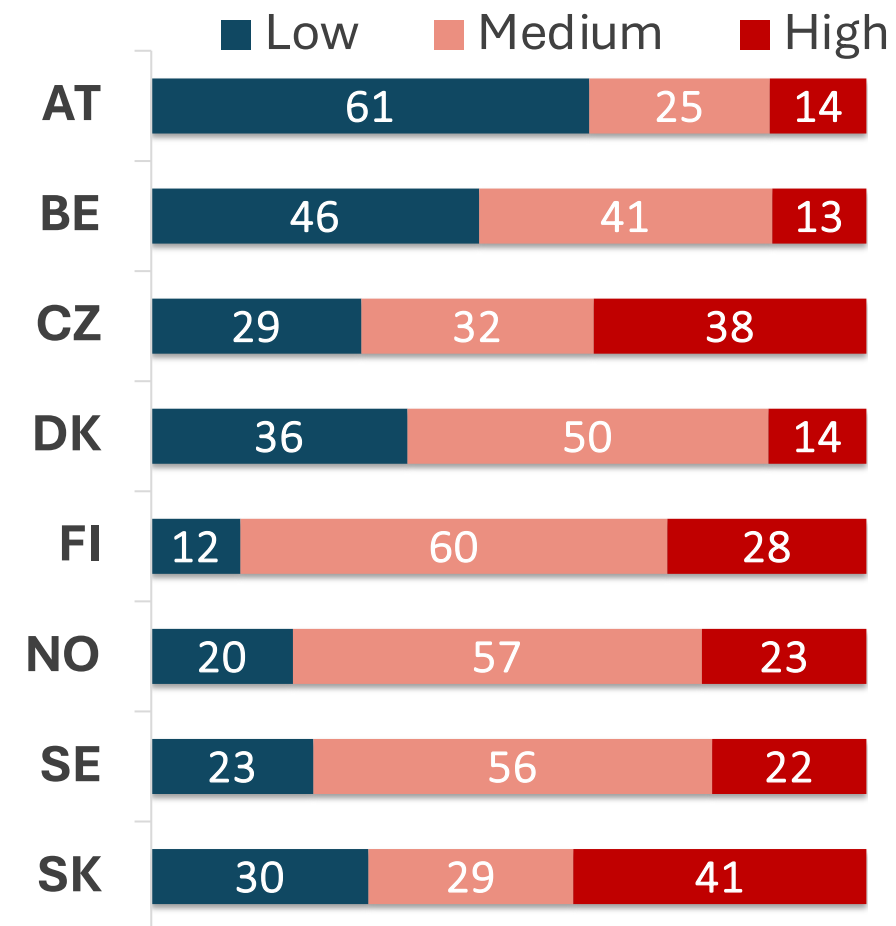
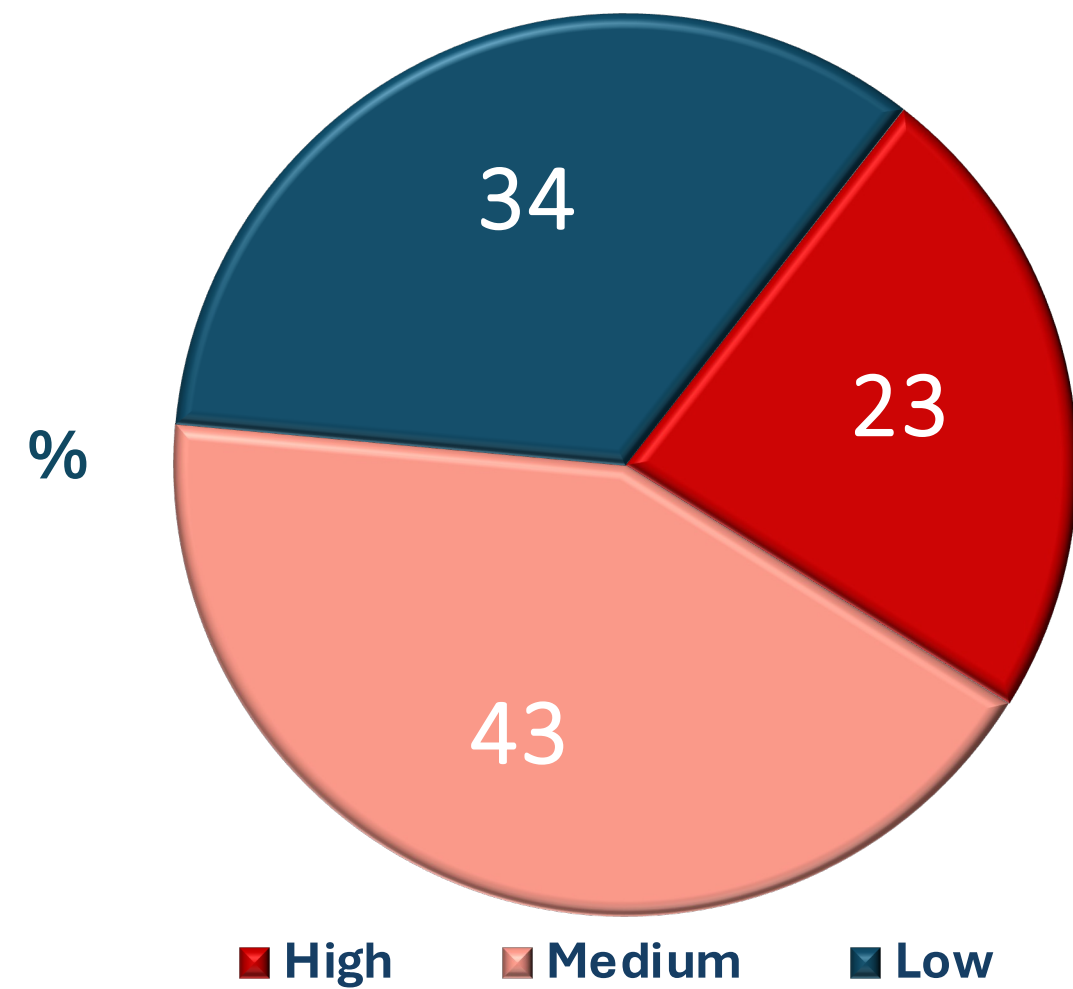
“Would you personally mind doing the following with a person with HIV?”



N=11,665



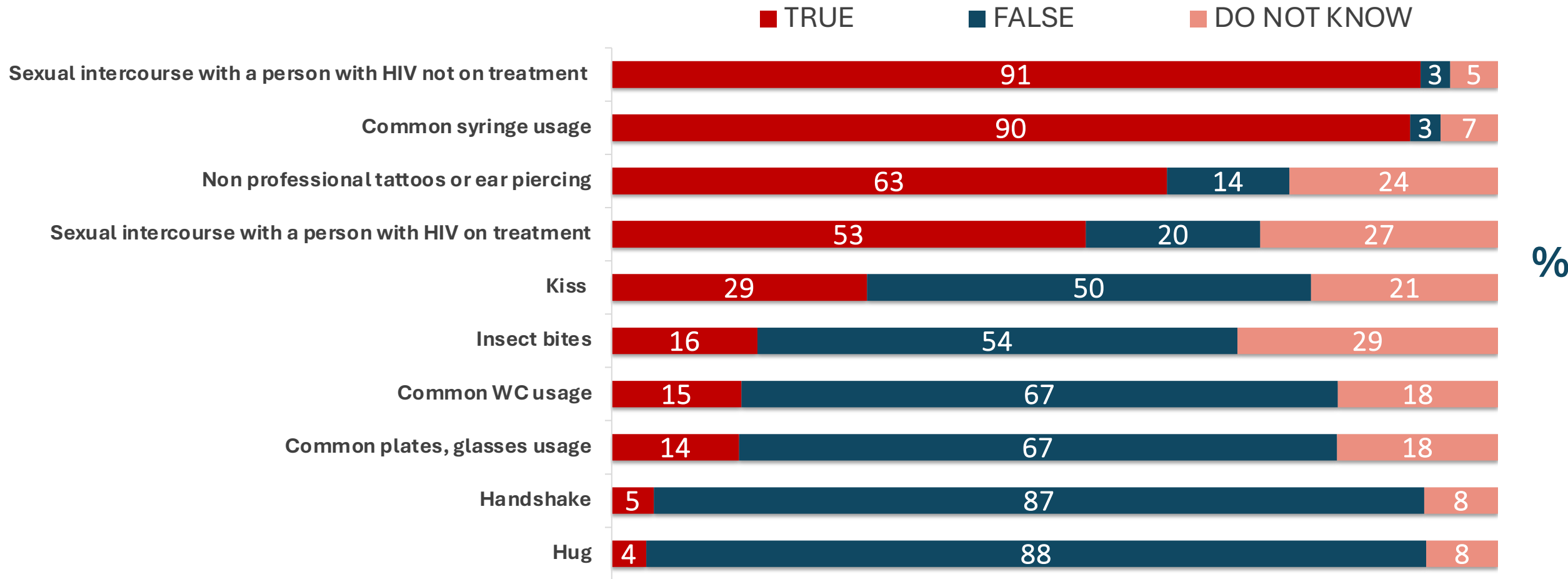
Social distancing



Note: SDI was not calculated for CH, CY and EL due to differences in the list of interaction parameters compared to the other countries



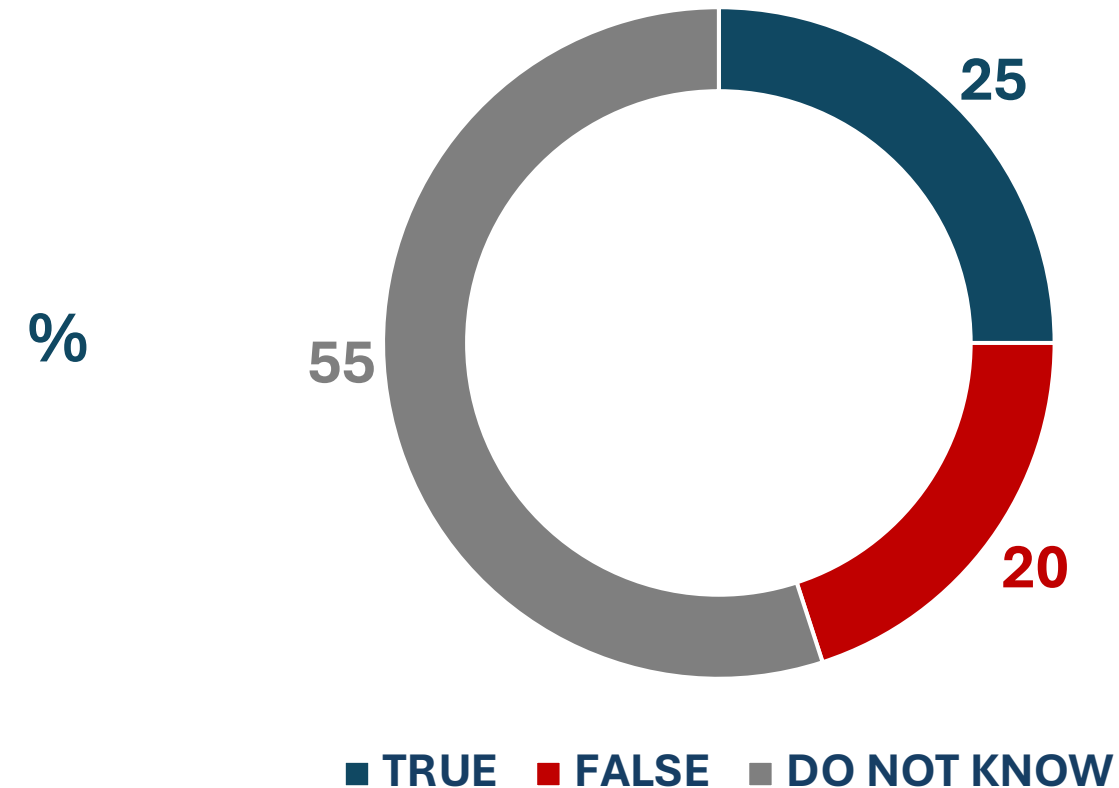
“In which of the following ways can HIV be transmitted?”



N=11,665



People with HIV who are well treated and have undetectable virus in their blood cannot transmit the virus to their partners



More likely to agree with U=U

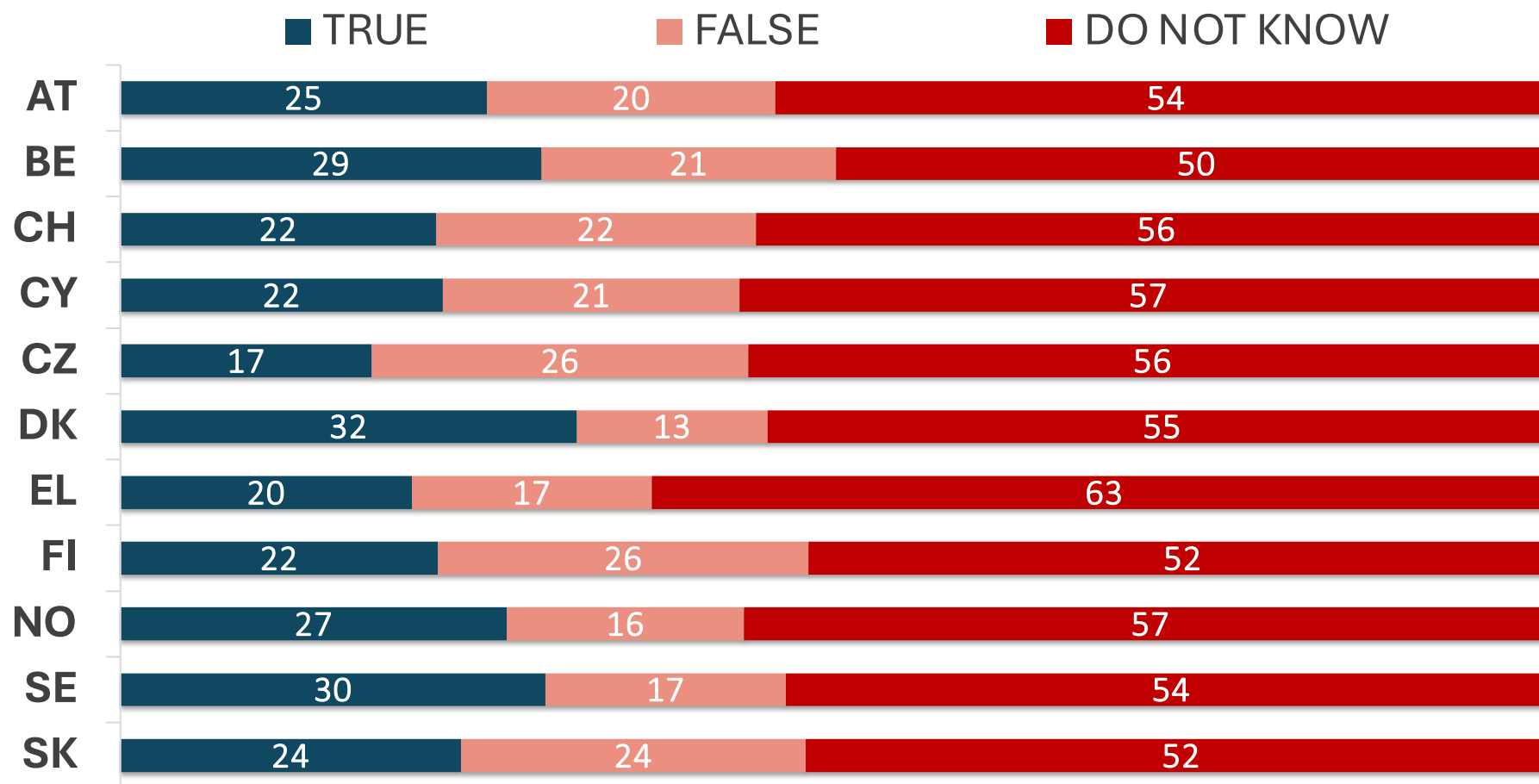
- Younger ages (18-39)
- Students
- Higher education
- High level of info for HIV
- Those who have ever been tested for HIV

N=11,665



Based on your knowledge or experience, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the statement

People with HIV who are well treated and have undetectable virus in their blood cannot transmit the virus to their partners

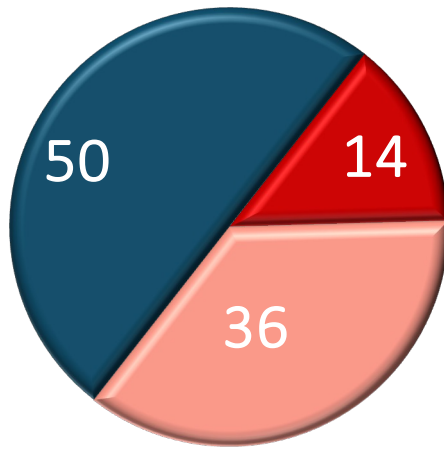


N=11,665

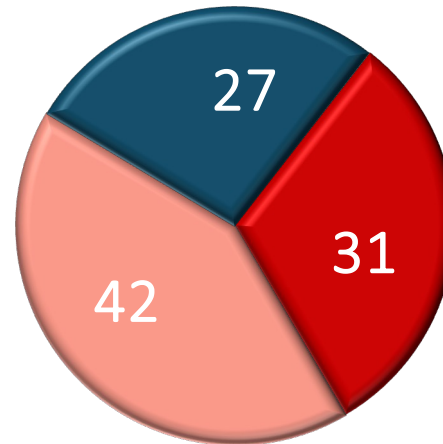


Social distancing and U=U

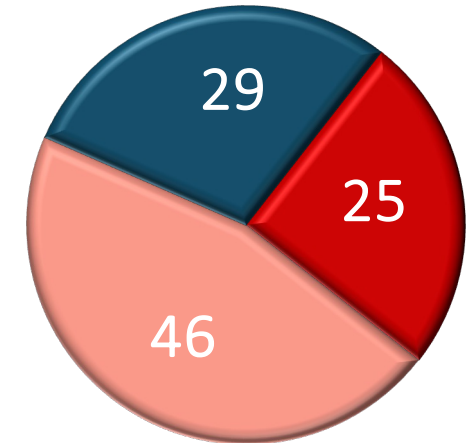
Social distancing among those who believe that U=U is true



Social distancing among those who believe that U=U is false



Social distancing among those who do not know whether U=U is true or false



%

Lower acceptance of U=U was associated with higher social distancing



Limitations

- National data collection at different periods of time (from 2021 to 2024) using different approaches (web-based questionnaires versus telephone interviews and/or combined approaches).
- Questionnaires had to be culturally and linguistically adapted.
- Potential influence of socially desirable responding, which may have introduced a bias toward more favourable outcomes.



Conclusions

- To our knowledge, this is the first population-based HIV survey encompassing the answers from more than **11,000** individuals from **11** European countries.
- Across the 11 European countries
 - **25%** agreed with U=U
 - **20%** did not agree with U=U
 - **55%** did not know anything about U=U
 - U=U acceptance was negatively associated with social distancing
- Misperceptions about transmission and stigmatizing attitudes were observed.
- Tailored awareness campaigns are needed to spread U=U and help combat societal HIV stigma.



