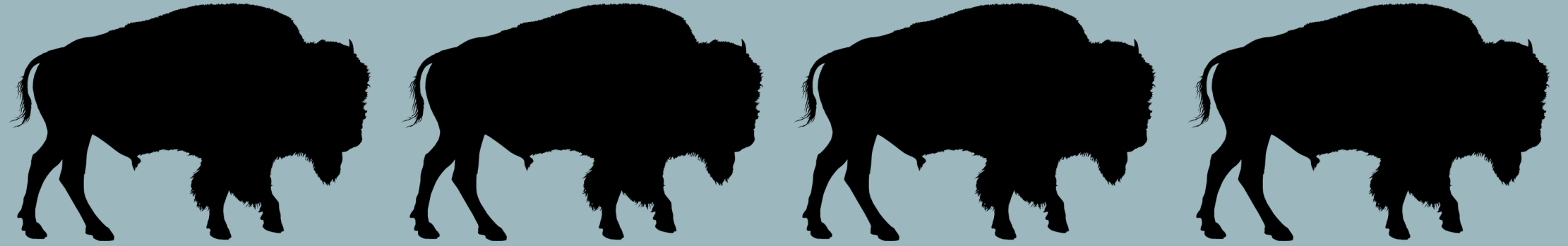




**A National Strategy to End the Syndemic of
HIV, STIs, and Viral Hepatitis and its Impact on Indigenous
Communities**

**Native American LifeLines (Baltimore/ Boston)
Kerry Hawk Lessard, MAA**

Fast Facts



Baltimore:

- AI/AN = 0.2% of total population (~27k)
- younger population compared with NHW
- Diverse tribal population
- Significant opioid use behaviors
- High rates of poverty & homelessness
- Low employment, educational attainment

Data collection practices are really ... something else.

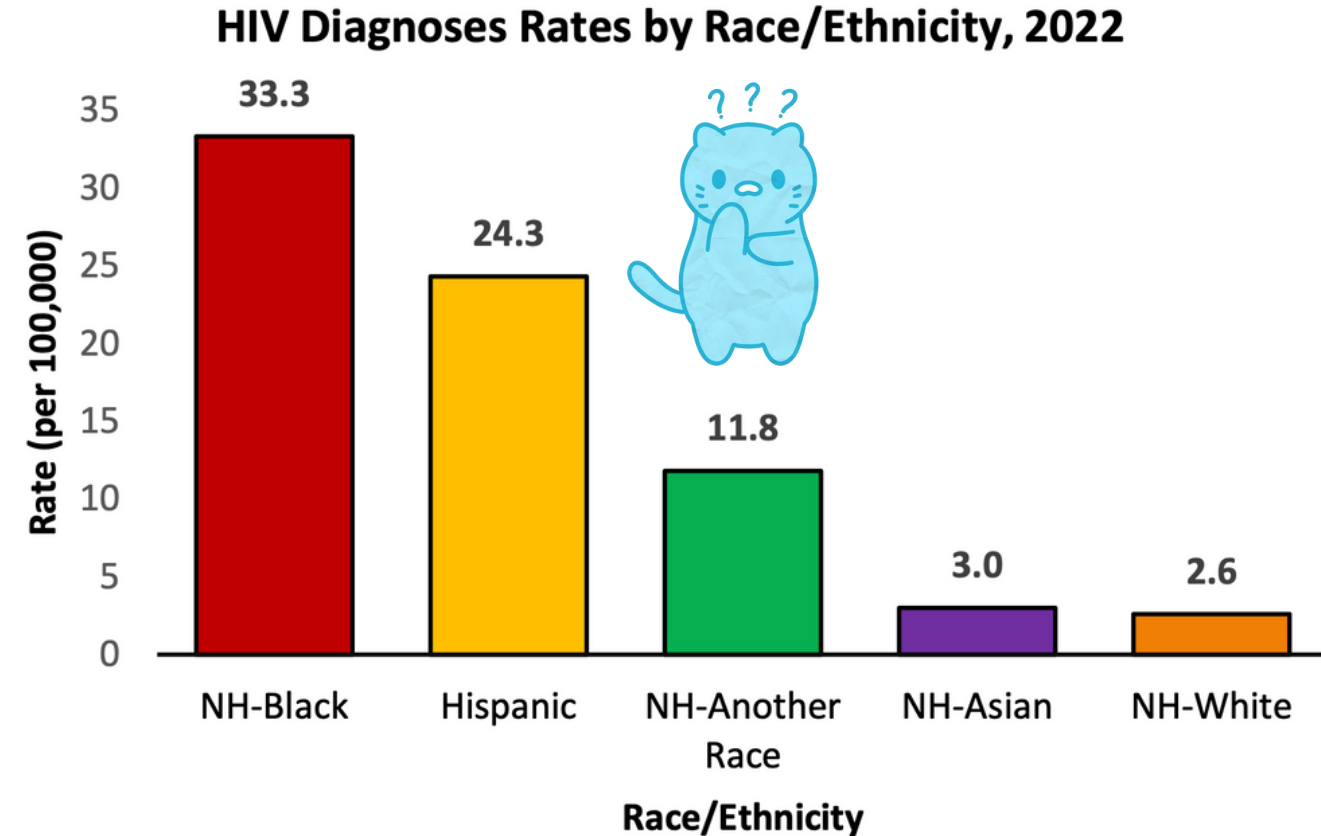


HIV BY RACE/ETHNICITY IN MARYLAND, 2022

DATA REPORTED THROUGH JUNE 30, 2023

New HIV Diagnoses in Maryland

- Of the 751 reported new HIV diagnoses in 2022 in Maryland, 70.3% were among NH-Black people, and 17.2% were Hispanic people.
- AIDS diagnosis rates in 2022 were up to 11 times higher among NH-Black people (17.7 per 100,000) as compared to people of other races.
- Of Marylanders living with HIV, Hispanic people have the highest estimated number that remain undiagnosed (16.1%), as of 2021.



Syndemics: Merrill Singer

" ... the concentration and deleterious interaction of two or more diseases or other health conditions in a population, especially as a consequence of social inequity and the unjust exercise of power, syndemics appear to have played an important role in human disease history." (Singer, 2009, xiv-xv)

Core concepts:

- Disease concentration**
- disease interaction**
- underlying social forces**

Historical & Intergenerational Trauma

“the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences,” (Brave Heart, 2008).

“the loss of language and culture that has left so many Aboriginal people bereft of their unique place in the world. It is these disorientations and their psychosocial correlates ... that the term [historical trauma] was intended to capture,” (Gone, 2009).

HIV/Hepatitis C/ STIs

CSAP: Johnson, et al. (2007,2008)

Don't Forget About Us Objectives:

- **Deliver HIV/ HCV/ STI prevention services to Urban AI/ AN in Baltimore**
- **Ensure interventions must be culturally-grounded**
- **Use SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) to:**
 - **Assess needs of target population**
 - **Build capacity to address needs**
 - **Develop strategic plan**
 - **Implements effective programs, policies, and practices**
 - **Evaluate process and outcomes**

HIV/Hepatitis C/ STIs

CSAP: Johnson, et al.

(2007,2008)

Risk Factors:

- **community disintegration**
- **shame, & stigma**
- **urban lifestyle & peer influences**
- **socioeconomic disadvantage**



Disconnection, Invisibility, & Lateral Violence as SDOH



"I think if I'd had stronger culture, we would've lived differently."

"We would be better if we had those values. We would be stronger as a community."

"They say we ain't Indian and it makes you feel real bad."

Historical Trauma

Health Demoting Behaviors

**Poor Health Outcomes
(Individual & Community)**



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cultur

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**“To be effective, HIV/AIDS prevention programs ... that can be adapted to individual tribal cultures and beliefs are critically important.”
(CDC, 2008)**

Prevention models created by and for Indigenous peoples promote community wellness in ways consistent with our core values and thus are more sustainable than the imposition of Western practices rooted in trauma.

Cultural Grounding, Cultural Humility

- **identifies impacts of settler colonialism**
- **rejects lateral violence, anti-Blackness, & homophobia/transphobia**
- **promotes cultural reconnection without judgement**





**Culture is healing.
Culture is
prevention.**

AL HALL

EXIT

← EXIT



Final Thoughts

- **Our healers have always been part of our communities.**
- **Let community members lead.**
- **Vet partners - remember the value of your social capital.**
- **Prioritize local Native culture.**
- **FIRMLY REJECT LATERAL VIOLENCE & ANTI-BLACKNESS**
- **Be a safe person, a safe organization.**



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