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HEADLINE: [WATCH] Why do transgender people, gay and bisexual men have a higher chance of getting HIV?

Blurb:

Men who have sex with men have a [28 times](#) higher chance of [getting HIV](#) through sex than heterosexual men. And transgender women's odds of getting HIV via sex is [14 times higher](#) than non-transgender women. We break down why.

Bullets:

- Men who have sex with men have a [28 times](#) higher chance of [getting HIV](#) through sex than heterosexual men.
- Transgender women's odds of getting HIV via sex is [14 times higher](#) than non-transgender women.
- Why? It's easier to get HIV from anal than vaginal sex, and punitive laws and discrimination against these population groups make HIV spread.
- We break down the reasons in this short video, which is the second in our five-part video series on key populations (groups of people who have a higher risk of contracting HIV). [View the first video](#).

Byline

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SCRIPT:

Men who have sex with men have a [28 times](#) higher chance of [getting HIV](#) through sex than heterosexual men.

Transgender women's odds of getting HIV via sex is [14 times higher](#) than non-transgender women.

[Transgender women](#) are women whose identity was thought to be male when they were born.

[Transgender men](#) — men whose identity was thought to be female when they were born — have less of a chance of getting HIV through sex than transgender women but a [6.8% higher](#) risk than the general population.

Here are 5 reasons why.

1. Type of sex

It is [much easier](#) to get HIV through unprotected anal than vaginal sex.

That's because the [rectum's lining is thin](#) and can easily allow HIV to enter someone's body.

The [rectum is the portion](#) of the digestive tract above the anus where stool is held before it passes.

Studies show [men who have sex](#) with men and [transgender women](#) have frequent anal sex and therefore have a higher chance of contracting HIV.

Receptive anal sex (a bottom partner) is especially risky.

[Research shows it's about 17 times](#) easier to get HIV from unprotected receptive anal than receptive vaginal sex.

2. Lack of access to health services

Many people, including health workers, judge men who have sex with men and transgender folks.

It makes it difficult for them to get helped at clinics.

South African researchers, for example, found that [about half of men who have sex with men and transgender people who use government clinics in the Eastern Cape](#) get turned away.

This means they can't get tested for HIV or get HIV prevention medication, condoms or treatment.

If taken correctly, [HIV prevention pills](#) and [injections](#) can virtually wipe out someone's chances of contracting the virus through sex.

If an HIV-positive person is on antiretroviral treatment and takes it regularly, their chances of transmitting the virus through sex, are [close to zero](#).

3. Punitive laws

South Africa's Constitution guarantees all the right to choose our sexual or gender identity.

But in some countries it's illegal to be gay or transgender.

Take Uganda, for example. In May, the country's president [signed an anti-homosexuality Bill into law](#).

Gay people can be imprisoned for life or get the death penalty.

People living in such countries are scared of getting arrested, so they often avoid clinics and hospitals because they're concerned health workers will discover their sexuality and call the police.

Research in 10 African countries found that men who have sex with men who lived in countries that criminalised same-sex sexual activities, [were twice as likely to be infected with HIV](#) compared to countries where it was legal.

This increased to [eight times more likely](#) in countries with extremely strict laws such as Uganda.

4. Lack of employment

Because some employers discriminate against transgender folks, it's often hard for them to find jobs.

One study shows transgender people are [twice as likely](#) to be unemployed as non-transgender people.

Especially for transgender women, [sex work is sometimes the only way to put food on the table](#).

Clients are often [violent and abusive](#), which makes it hard for sex workers to insist on condoms.

This increases transgender sex workers' risk of getting HIV.

5. The trauma of discrimination

Living in a world where society discriminates against you is traumatising.

Mental health services are expensive and scarce in the state sector.

As a result, people sometimes [turn to coping mechanisms such as substance use](#), which increases their chances of getting HIV because it can [lead to risky sex](#).

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