

A HISTORY OF HIV SURVIVAL IN THE UK

Treatment for HIV has radically improved since the beginning of the epidemic in 1981. HIV-infected people in the UK are now surviving for decades, rather than months or years.
By Janna Lawrence.

EVOLUTION OF HIV CARE

HIV attacks and depletes the immune system of CD4⁺ T cells. If infection is left untreated, it can progress to a point where previously harmless microbes become deadly infections, a condition we now know well as AIDS. In the early days of the HIV epidemic, most patients had progressed to AIDS by the time of diagnosis. Medicine could do no more than treat or limit opportunistic infection, and most patients died within a year or two. Today, most patients are diagnosed and begin treatment long before the virus has time to ravage their body's defence system. And thanks to the development of dozens of new drugs that suppress viral replication, people infected with HIV can live a long life.

YEARS LIVED AFTER TREATMENT STARTS

Data are for a person starting treatment in their 30s (excluding the 1981 data point).



IDENTIFYING HIV

People with HIV can only benefit from the advances in the treatment of HIV if they are identified and begin receiving drugs. In 2014, 17% of people living with HIV in the UK remain undiagnosed. The most affected groups of people are men who have sex with men (MSM) and black African men and women.

