



Digital Health Literacy for Women: Closing the Gap

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Talking about HIV



Where?



When?



Reach?



Evolution?



**Problems?
Old? New?**



**Solutions?
Old? New?**

The Role of Advocacy

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➤ HEALTH LITERACY IS SO MUCH MORE. ⚡

Health Equality vs. Health Equity and the Social/Political
Determinants of Health Barriers



EQUALITY

- Same
- Equal
- Not always appropriate



Treating everyone the same
does not remove barriers.



Health
Literacy
is so much
more

than just
reading,
writing and
math.



HealthSpeak



EQUITY

- Unique
- Just
- Meets needs



Removing barriers so everyone
can reach their full health potential.

SOCIAL / POLITICAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH BARRIERS



Education



Income &
Poverty



Housing &
Neighborhood



Healthcare
Access



Discrimination
& Racism



Transportation



Policies &
Systems



Language &
Communication

HEALTH LITERACY EMPOWERS BETTER HEALTH

“

Health literacy refers to people's ability to **access**, **understand**, **evaluate**, and **use** health information and services to make decisions that promote and maintain health and well-being.”

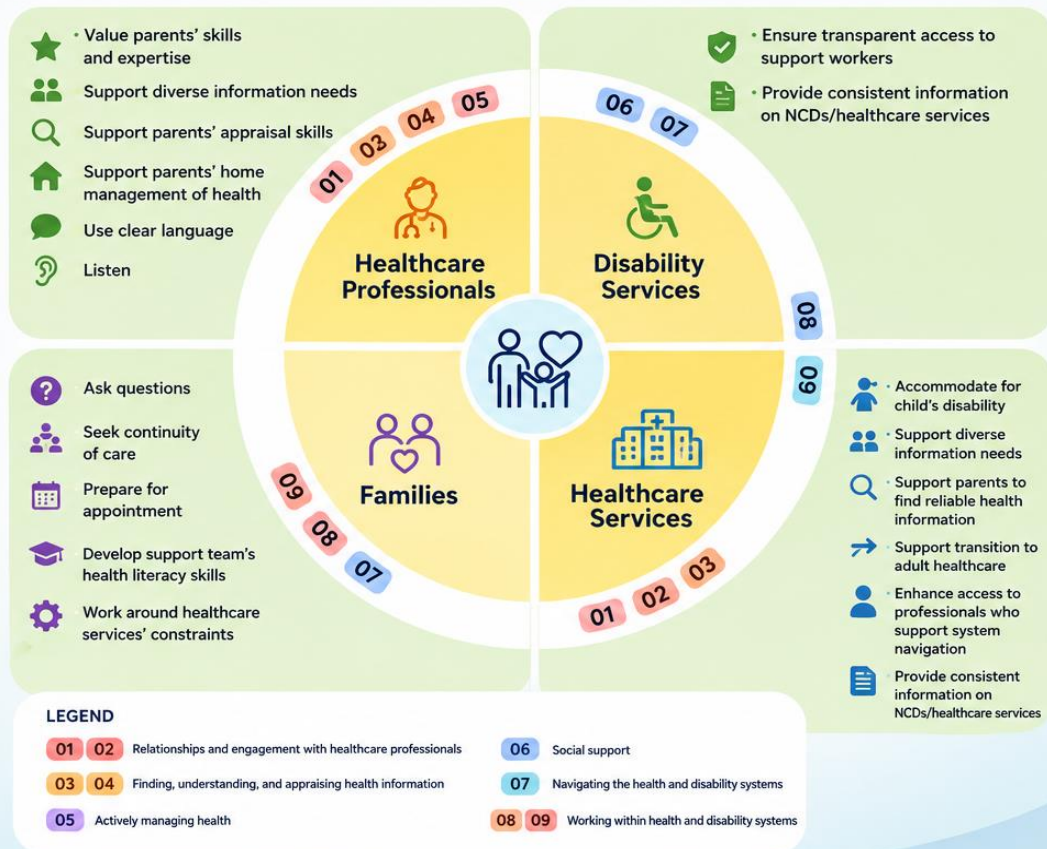
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WHO, 2025



Health literacy benefits individuals, families, communities and health systems.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT HEALTH LITERACY



Better health literacy leads to better **decisions**, better **care** and better **health** for all.



WHY THIS MATTERS

| Imagine this situation:

A woman receives an HIV diagnosis.

What does she do first?



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What Is Digital Health Literacy?

Digital Health Literacy means **the ability to:**



Access health information



Understand health information



Evaluate credibility



Apply information to make health decisions

Without these skills,
information becomes
misinformation.

With these skills, information
becomes empowerment.



What Is Digital Health Literacy?

Research shows that digital health literacy is essential for navigating health information on social media platforms such as TikTok.

Review Articles



TikTok and digital health literacy: A systematic review

Margaret Kristin Merga 

School of Education, University of Notre Dame, Australia

IFLA Journal
1–12

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HIV Stigma and Communication

Stigma remains a major barrier to care



Patients may fear disclosure or discrimination



Respectful communication improves engagement



HIV and Misinformation



HIV can be identified by appearance



HIV only affects certain groups



HIV means you cannot have children



HIV treatment is ineffective



Undetectable people can still transmit HIV



HIV has a cure



People with HIV should not have sex



HIV is transmitted through toilet seats or toilet paper



You can get HIV from mosquitoes or insect bites



You can get HIV from sharing food, drinks, or utensils



HIV affects only certain groups of people



If you look healthy, you can't have HIV



People with HIV cannot work, study, or lead normal lives

These myths continue Create fear, stigma and delayed testing.



Social Media: Problem or Solution?

Social media can spread:

- misinformation
- fear
- conspiracy theories

But it can also spread:

- education
- empowerment
- peer support
- hope

The difference is health literacy.

The question is not:
“Should women use social media
for health information?”

The real question is:
“How do we help women identify
trustworthy information?”



Why social media Matters?

 **Over 5 billion people use social media worldwide (> 60% of the global pp)**

 **The average 2 hours and 20 minutes per day on social media**

 **Short video content is currently the fastest-growing type of content online**

 **Health information is one of the most searched topics on social media**

 **1 in 3 people say social media influences their health decisions, including**
testing, prevention, and treatment information.



Why social media Matters?



HIV



STIs



Contraception



Fertility



Menopause



Mental health



Average Video Watch Time



TikTok

- Critical attention window: **first 3–10 seconds**
- Average watch time:
 - Short videos ($\leq 30s$): **70 –100% retention possible**
 - 30–60s videos: **40 –70% retention**



Instagram (Reels)

- Attention capture: **5–8 seconds**
- Average retention: **30–60% of total video length**
- Optimal video length: **7–15 seconds**



Key Insight (especially for health content)

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The first 3–5 seconds determine whether people keep watching



Ideal format:

- **10 – 30 seconds total length**
- Key message delivered **immediately**



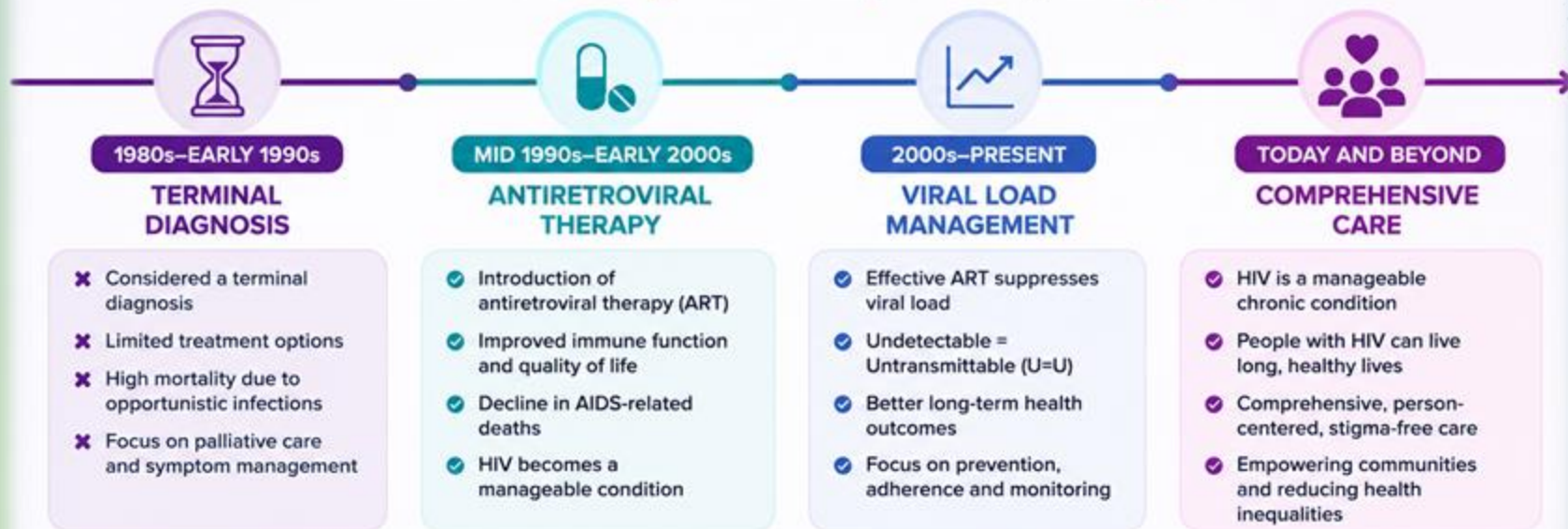
Visual repetition + captions improve retention



Emotional content (e.g., myths vs facts) performs better

EVOLUTION OF HIV CARE

From a Terminal Diagnosis to Comprehensive, Lifelong Care



**A COMPREHENSIVE
APPROACH IS
ESSENTIAL**



Medical care
beyond viral
suppression



Psychosocial
support for
mental health



Person-centered
holistic
approach



HIV CARE HAS TRANSFORMED. Science, compassion and comprehensive care help people with HIV thrive. **THE FUTURE IS HOPE.**



MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM (MDT)

TOGETHER FOR COMPREHENSIVE HIV CARE



Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) is a collaborative approach in healthcare where professionals from various disciplines work together to provide comprehensive patient care.



ID SPECIALIST

HIV expertise and treatment management



PRIMARY CARE PHYSICIAN

Overall health management and coordination



MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Emotional well-being and mental health support



CLINICAL PHARMACIST

Medication management, adherence and interactions



NURSE

Care, education and ongoing support



SOCIAL WORKER

Resources, counseling and social support



CASE MANAGERS

Care coordination and service navigation



NUTRITIONISTS

Nutritional guidance for overall health



PEER NAVIGATORS

Peer support, guidance and empowerment



INFORMATION SHARING

Provides education on HIV management and self-care



Share knowledge



Empower patients



Build understanding



Support self-care



COLLABORATIVE BENEFITS



Integrated medical management



Comprehensive care coordination



Improved patient outcomes



Collaborative care planning



COLLABORATIVE IMPACT



Seamless medication management



Patient-centered education



Improved adherence and outcomes



Patient-centered approach



WHY IT MATTERS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV



MULTIFACETED CHALLENGES

HIV affects physical health, mental health, social stability, and quality of life.



INTERCONNECTED NEEDS

Medical, psychological, social, and emotional requirements overlap and interact.



HOLISTIC APPROACH

Addressing the whole person rather than just treating specific symptoms or conditions.



IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Research shows MDTs lead to better health outcomes and quality of life for PLWH.

WHY COMMUNICATION MATTERS

Good communication improves health, builds trust, and strengthens communities.



PLAY A CRUCIAL ROLE

Communication is at the heart of every interaction and decision in health.



PREVENTION

Clear communication informs, educates and empowers people to make healthier choices.



CARE

Compassionate communication builds trust and supports people every step of the way.



HEALTH OUTCOMES

Better communication leads to better understanding, stronger engagement and improved health outcomes.



TREATMENT

Effective communication supports treatment adherence, shared decision-making and better results.



HEALTH OUTCOMES

Better communication leads to better understanding, stronger engagement and improved health outcomes.



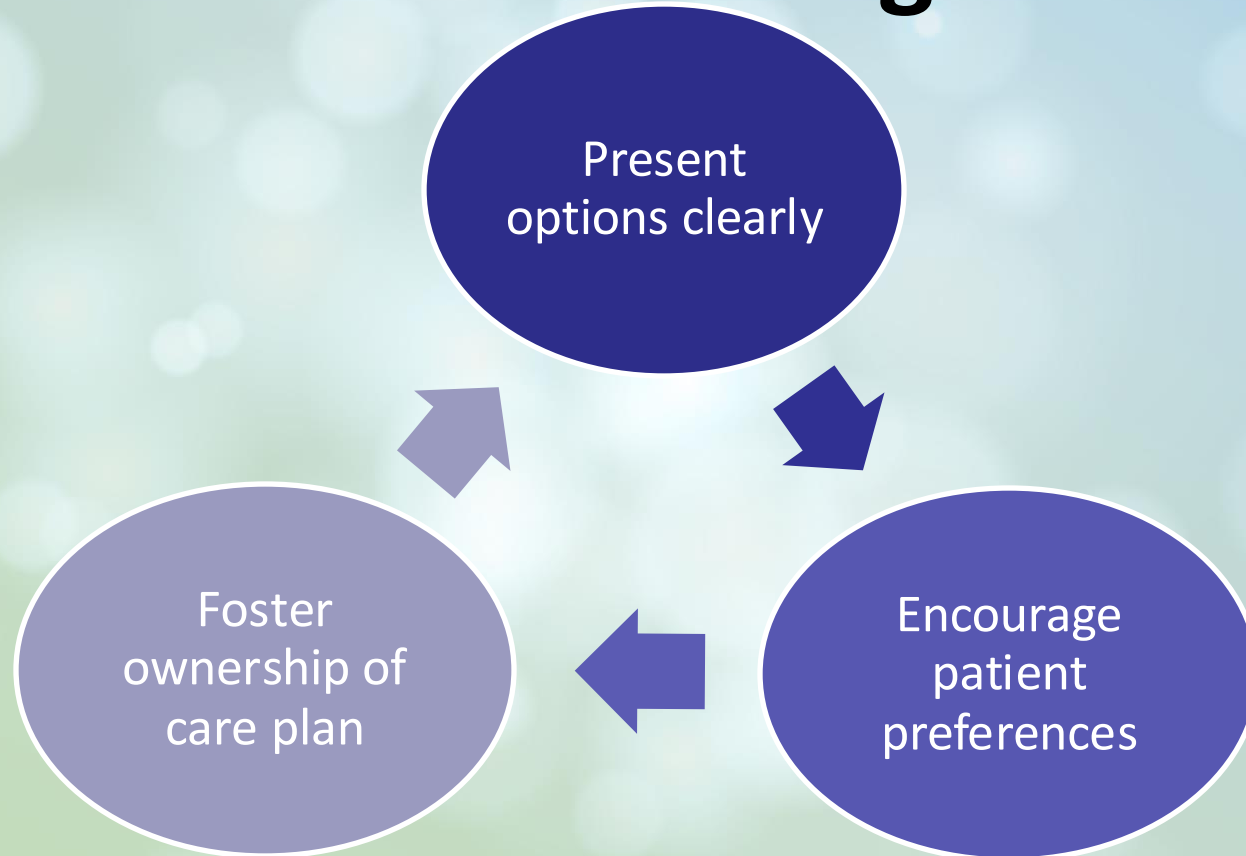
SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOR CHANGE COMMUNICATION

Drives awareness, changes norms and promotes healthy behaviors in communities.



Shared Decision-Making

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Communication and Engagement in the HIV Care Journey

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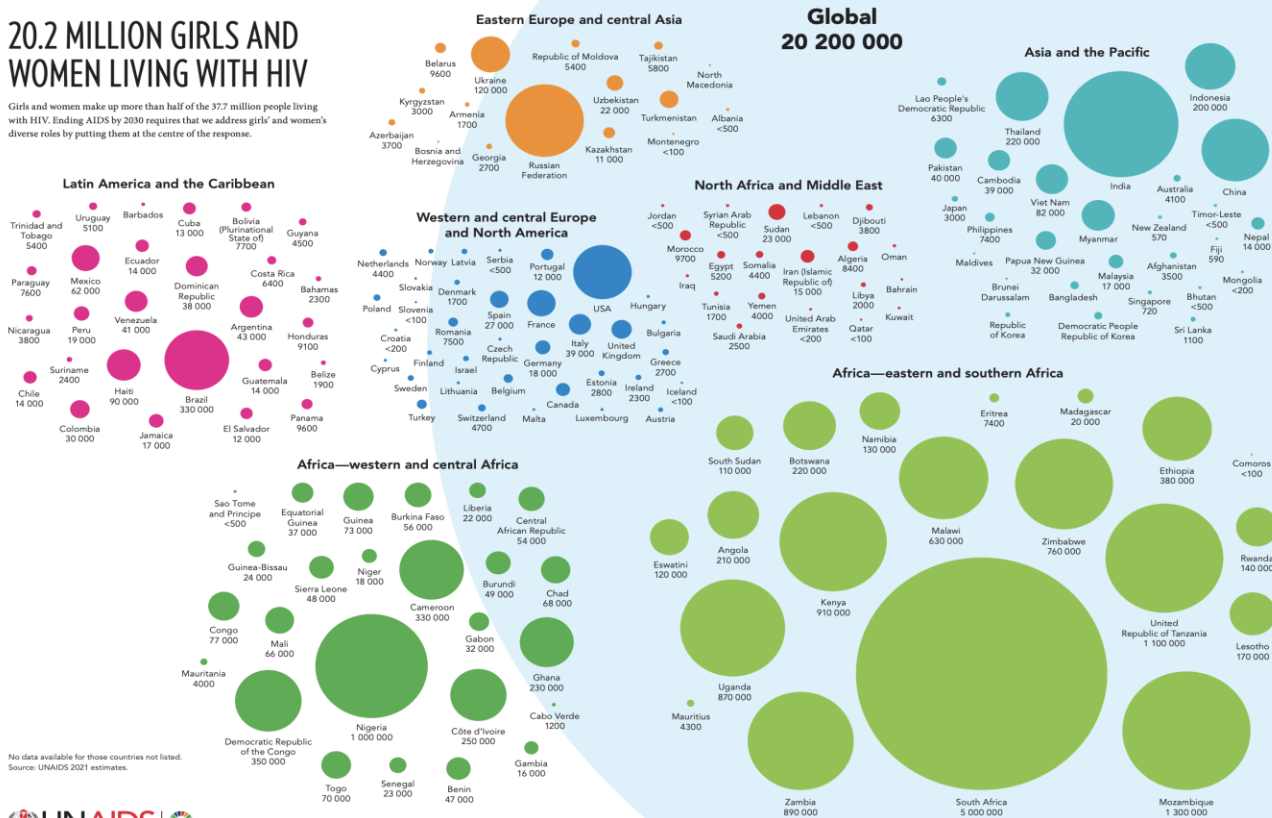
Women Are Left Behind?

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20.2 MILLION GIRLS AND WOMEN LIVING WITH HIV

Girls and women make up more than half of the 37.7 million people living with HIV. Ending AIDS by 2030 requires that we address girls' and women's diverse roles by putting them at the centre of the response.





Why Women Are Still Left Behind



Gender inequalities



Lower confidence in discussing sexual health



HIV-related stigma



Cultural expectations



Caregiver responsibilities



Information overload online



Many women are exposed to health content every day but struggle to identify what is trustworthy.



Project **ACOLHER** *(welcome)*

A portuguese national initiative by SPLS – Portuguese Society for Health Literacy

Led by Prof. Cristina Vaz de Almeida (president of SPLS)



ACOLHER

Um programa para migrantes e refugiados

SOCIEDADE PORTUGUESA
DE LITERACIA EM SAÚDE

Apoiar Cuidar Ouvir Ligar Humanizar Empoderar

Community Health and Screening for
Refugees and Migrants

**Support • Care • Listen • Connect •
Humanize • Empower**

Core Message “ACOLHER is not only about treating illness, but
empowering people to live with dignity, health, and hope.”



Approach & Values

- Inclusive, human-centered, culturally sensitive care
- Promotes health literacy and empowerment
- Builds trust between communities and health systems
- Promote health access and literacy
- Provide screenings and early detection of health problems
- Encourage inclusion and empowerment through education
- Focus on refugees, migrants, and socially vulnerable adults





My Experience as an HIV Influencer



@enfcatarinaexplica

My goal is simple:

Turn complex HIV information into understandable, actionable knowledge.

Topics include:

- ✓ HIV prevention
- ✓ U=U (Undetectable = Untransmittable)
- ✓ PrEP
- ✓ HIV treatment
- ✓ stigma reduction
- ✓ sexual health

Every video is an opportunity to transform fear into understanding.

Real Questions Women Ask Online

? “Can I breastfeed?”

? “Can I become pregnant?”

? “Can I date someone if I have HIV?”

? “Can HIV be cured?”

? “Can I tell my employer?”

? What will my life be like from now on?

? Do I need to have a separate plate?

? I’m pregnant.
Will I have to abort to prevent infecting my baby?

? If I’m going to get sick, wouldn’t it be better to end my life now?

? Will I have to quit my job because of this?

? Can people tell that I have HIV just by looking at me?

? Can I get HIV from hugging or kissing?

? Can I still have a normal sex life?

They are questions about identity, relationships and future life.

The 5 Cs of Communication

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Clarity

- Message is clear and easy to understand.
- Avoid jargon, ambiguity or overly complex language.

Conciseness

- Keep communication brief and to the point.
- Eliminate unnecessary words.

Coherence

- Message is logical and structured.
- Flows in a way that is easy to follow.
- Present it step-by-step: *testing* → *diagnosis* → *treatment* → *follow-up*

Courtesy

- Be polite and respectful.
- Considerate audience's perspectives and emotions.

Correctness

- Accurate information, proper grammar and appropriate language.
- Enhance credibility and avoid misunderstandings.



People- Centered Communication

UNDERSTAND PEOPLE VALUES AND BELIEFS



CONSIDER SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT



ENCOURAGE SHARED DECISION-MAKING



SUPPORT PEOPLE AUTONOMY

Sharing Knowledge, Saving Lives



Tudo bem?

Enf. Catarina ▾
@catarinaestevessantos

388 A seguir 26,1 mil Seguidores 153 mil Gostos

Enf. Esp. Saúde Mental OE 45239
Falar sobre VIH salva vidas
Sem medo. Sem tabus. Sem desinformação.
Indetetável = Intransmissível
Aprende aqui
<https://www.instagram.com/enfcatarina...>

Dilema 2
Homem tem e mulher não tem

167,3 mil

Relação com todos

135,9 mil

Nova era
Medicação injectável

114,4 mil

Para a vida toda

43,8 mil

Risco para o bebé?

55,4 mil

Parte 2
Passam-se anos sem ter sintomas

55,4 mil



Enf. Catarina · 2024-12-7

O homem transmitir à mulher #endstigma
#fyp #viralontiktok #health #hiv #vih... mais



Enf. Catarina · 2025-9-9

A medicação pode perder eficácia se não for tomada corretamente. • Resistên... mais

Analise de vídeo

Visão geral **Espectadores** Engajamento

Idade

18 - 24	8.0%
25 - 34	25.0%
35 - 44	25.0%
45 - 54	21.0%
55+	21.0%

Localizações

Portugal	56.5%
Brasil	13.8%
Angola	13.6%
Moçambique	6.4%
Outro	4.1%
Reino Unido	1.4%
Suíça	1.2%
França	1.2%
Espanha	0.7%

Building Trust Online

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Women are more likely to trust health information when:

- ✓ it is clear
- ✓ it is relatable
- ✓ it uses simple language
- ✓ it comes from credible professionals
- ✓ it reflects their reality



As health professionals, our role is no longer only to provide information. Our role is to build trust.

Look, ma'am, I understand the social impact your videos have on society. I'm not a virus carrier, and I don't live with anyone who has it (not that I know of). But in my intimacy, I've developed such a strong prejudice that I feel terrible. Your videos are helping to end that within me. Thank you, and please keep sharing hope with those living with the virus and helping all of us take the right approach, because no one deserves to deal with a disease, and even more prejudice from ignorant people. I know that all forms of prejudice are a form of stupidity... I just lacked knowledge about the subject.



From Information to Action

Thank you so much... I'm doing something I've been putting off for many years...
I hope it's not too late.

Thank you!

Congratulations on your decision! For those who receive the diagnosis, it brings relief to the heart and clarity to the mind 😊

Digital health literacy is successful when women move from:



Information

Understanding

Confidence

Action

Examples:

- ✓ Getting tested
- ✓ Starting treatment
- ✓ Seeking support
- ✓ Reducing stigma
- ✓ Making informed decisions

How We Close the Gap

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Three priorities:

1

IMPROVE ACCESS

Make evidence-based information visible.

2

IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING

Use plain language and storytelling.

3

IMPROVE CRITICAL LITERACY

Teach women to ask:

“Communicating clearly helps people feel more involved in their care and increases the changes off following ththrough on their treatment plans.

All patients appreciate receinving information that is clear and easy to act on”

AHRQ
Health Literacy Universal
Precautions Toolkit

Third
Edition

Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit

<https://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/publications2/files/health-literacy-universal-precautions-toolkit-3rd-edition.pdf>

Brega AG, et al., eds. AHRQ Health Literacy Universal Precautions Toolkit, 3rd Edition. Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; August 2023. AHRQ Publication No. 23-0075.

The Future

Global HIV treatment and prevention targets for 2030



40 million people
on HIV treatment and
with viral suppression



20 million people
accessing antiretroviral
medicine-based HIV
prevention options

**All with stigma- and
discrimination-free care**



Digital health literacy is
not optional anymore.



It is a social determinant of health.



If women cannot evaluate online
health information, health
inequalities increase.



If women can access, understand
and use reliable information,
health outcomes improve.



Final Message



Every click is a **health decision**.



Every search is an **opportunity**.



Every video can **reduce stigma**.



Every woman deserves access to **trustworthy HIV information**.



**DIGITAL HEALTH LITERACY IS
NOT JUST ABOUT TECHNOLOGY.
IT IS ABOUT EMPOWERMENT.**

Thank you! 

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**AIDS IS
NOT
OVER**



@unaids

EHNN
European HIV Nursing Network



**Uniting
HIV Nurses In Europe**

**European HIV Nursing
Network (EHNN)**