



Bulletin No. 2

January 7, 1993

Alaskans' Knowledge and Attitude about AIDS and HIV

In January 1992, 502 Alaska adults (age 18 and over) were surveyed by telephone regarding their knowledge of AIDS, HIV transmission, and HIV testing. The survey included selected AIDS knowledge questions from the National Health Interview Survey conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics. The 1990 and 1992 Alaska surveys indicate that more Alaskans have accurate knowledge about HIV and AIDS than the national sample, and the 1992 survey indicates that Alaskans' knowledge about HIV and AIDS has increased since 1990.

Statement (Correct response is "true")	Percent responding "true"		
	AK 1992	AK 1990	US 1990 ¹
AIDS is an infectious disease caused by a virus, called HIV.	96.5	79.5	84
A person can be infected with HIV, the AIDS virus, and not have the disease AIDS.	89.3	86.2	82
A person with HIV, the AIDS virus, can pass it on to someone else during unprotected sexual intercourse.	98.4	99.0	96
There is a blood test that can detect if a person has been infected with the virus that causes AIDS.	95.5	94.2	79
Blood donations are now routinely tested in the U.S. for HIV, the AIDS virus.	91.6	88.9	68

Table 2 gives the responses to questions about HIV transmission by various forms of casual contact. More Alaskans answered correctly either "unlikely" (U) or "definitely not possible" (DNP) to statements about transmission of HIV through casual contact than did the national sample. While there is little change in the combined responses (U/DNP) from Alaskans between the 1990 and 1992 survey, there is considerable increase in the percentage of the more decisive response "definitely not possible" between the 1990 and 1992 surveys. This indicates a greater public acceptance of the scientific data that **HIV is not transmitted through casual contact**.

Type of Contact	% AK 1992*		% AK 1990*		% US 1990 ¹	
	U/DNP†	DNP†	U/DNP	DNP	U/DNP	DNP
Shaking hands, touching, or kissing on the cheek someone who has HIV	94.7	69.0	95.3	43.7	‡	‡
Working near with someone with HIV	93.3	59.7	91.5	35.0	84	35
Eating in a restaurant where the cook has HIV	82.9	39.5	83.9	25.9	66	20
Donating blood	81.4	49.2	81.2	35.6	n/a	n/a
Sharing plates, forks, or glasses with someone who has HIV	78.8	34.8	79.6	23.0	59	18
Being bitten by a mosquito or other insect	70.5	32.2	68.0	19.9	52	19

*Percent who answered correctly.

†Key: U/DNP = "Unlikely" or "Definitely not possible"

DNP = "Definitely not possible"

‡Question not included in the 1990 national survey report. In 1989, 85% of the national sample responded "unlikely" or "definitely not possible"; 35% said "definitely not possible".

¹AIDS Knowledge and Attitudes for October-December 1990: Provisional Data From the National Health Interview Survey, National Center for Health Statistics, No. 204, July 1, 1991.

(Survey conducted by Hellenenthal and Associates, Inc., Anchorage. Contributed by Penelope Cordes, Ph.D., Section of Epidemiology)