



Methodology Report

Kaiser Family Foundation/Princeton Survey Research Associates International

AIDS at 21: Media Coverage of the HIV Epidemic 1981-2002



Methodology

Media sources were selected to present a meaningful assessment of content presented by news outlets widely available to the public. Selections were made on both a geographic and a demographic basis, as well as diversity of ownership.

Print sources

Sources chosen: *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, and *USA Today* were selected to represent publications most likely to be circulated among policy makers and the public on a nationwide basis. *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Miami Herald*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle* were selected to provide an examination of how coverage might or might not have differed between and among distinct metropolitan areas that were particularly hard-hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. *The London Times* was selected to provide a contrast between U.S. news media and a non-U.S. publication. (Note: unless otherwise noted, all findings included here are based on U.S. media sources only.)

Quantification and Sampling: Assessment began by quantifying the articles that appeared in each publication from January 1, 1981 through December 31, 2002. The LEXIS-NEXIS database was used to quantify coverage for all publications except *The Wall Street Journal*, for which the Dow Jones DataBase was utilized, and *The Miami Herald*, which was accessed via the DIALOG database.

Search Language: Search language was designed to cast the widest net possible re: capturing pertinent stories. Within NEXIS, the preliminary sample for each newspaper was established on the same day in September 2002. These searches encompassed the January 1, 1981 – August 31, 2002 timeframe. In May, 2003, a supplemental search was conducted to capture stories that appeared between September 1 and December 31, 2002. The following search language was utilized:

SUBJECT("AIDS & HIV") OR Hlead((gay and cancer or sarcoma or virus or immun! Or pneumocystis or cytomegalovirus or lymphadenopathy) or (homosexual and cancer or sarcoma or virus or immun! or pneumocystis or cytomegalovirus or lymphadenopathy) or (Kaposi!) or (Karposi!) or ALLCAPS(plural(AIDS) or HIV)

For *The London Times*, additional searches were run, to account for the different use of capitalization in referring to HIV/AIDS. The language for these additional searches was:

SUBJECT("AIDS & HIV") OR Hlead((gay and cancer or sarcoma or virus or immun! Or pneumocystis or cytomegalovirus or lymphadenopathy) or (homosexual and cancer or sarcoma or virus or immun! or pneumocystis or cytomegalovirus or lymphadenopathy) or (Kaposi!) or (Karposi!) or (plural(AIDS) or HIV)

This language captured all stories where any of the designated search terms was in the headline or lead percentage of the article; and all stories indexed by NEXIS via any of the search terms. Comparable language was used to search the *Wall Street Journal* and *Miami Herald* databases in February 2003 to establish the respective totals for those publications. Their respective search terms were:

Miami Herald/Dialog: *(ns=GHIV OR (HLP=(AIDS or HIV)))*

Wall Street Journal/Factiva: *S(HIV or AIDS)/LP, TI, DE*

The New York Times, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* were accessible via electronic database searches for the complete timeframe. The *San Francisco Chronicle* is also included for the entire 1981-2002 study period, via a combination of NEXIS searches and the paper's in-house archives. Other papers were phased-in based on availability as follows: *The Miami Herald* (1983); *The London Times* (1985); *Los Angeles Times* (1985); *USA Today* (1989).

In order to reach the project target that 90% of all cases be drawn from print sources, a stratified sampling plan was implemented. Because the amount of coverage was limited during earliest part of the study's timeframe, and the number of searchable newspapers was limited, ALL stories available during that period (1981-1984) were selected for full coding. During peak years of coverage (1985-2000), sample was constructed by selecting every 7th story within each newspaper. For the remaining years (2001-2002), story selection was returned to total-universe levels, and all stories for all newspapers were selected.

Screening and Inclusion: Newspaper stories were first screened for inclusion. False drops, letters to the editor, news digests, etc. were removed from the sample. Each case was then examined to determine whether or not HIV/AIDS topics and issues were prominently featured within the story. When necessary, coders used the following rule to make those decisions: If 50% or more of the article was direct reporting on HIV/AIDS topics, that story was included/fully coded; OR if 33% of the article PLUS the headline (not the sub headline) was direct reporting on HIV/AIDS topic, that story was included/fully coded.

The resulting newspaper sample totaled 8,783 stories, including 8,173 stories from U.S. newspapers and 610 stories from The London Times.

Broadcast sources

Quantification and Sampling: Broadcast news stories from ABC World News Tonight, CBS Evening News, and NBC Nightly News were acquired from the Vanderbilt University Television News Archives. To review all stories that appeared January 1, 1981 - December 31, 2002, the Vanderbilt Archives were searched for all stories where the index monograph included the terms "HIV" or "AIDS". Supplemental searches were applied to the 1981-1984 database, utilizing the following additional search terms: "gay and cancer", "gay and virus", "homosexual and cancer", "homosexual and virus", "Kaposi", "pneumocystis", "cytomegalovirus" or "lymphadenopathy". This resulted in a total universe of 2,522 stories. Because network news programs produce a relatively small number of stories as compared to their newspaper counterparts, a higher percentage of stories were selected for the sample. With an established target of 10% of the projects total sample to be drawn from broadcast sources, ALL stories available during the earliest part of the study's timeframe, (1981-1984) were selected. To construct the sample for the remaining years (1985-2002), every 3rd story was selected.

Screening and Inclusion: After viewing by senior staff, false hits were eliminated using the established inclusion rule.

The resulting network news sample totaled 882 stories.

Weighting and Data Analysis

Prior to data analysis, cases representing the 1985-2000 sample were weighted in order to bring those years up to full value in the dataset. The analysis cited in this report is based on the weighted dataset.

Intercoder reliability

Intercoder reliability measures the extent to which coders, operating autonomously, code or classify the same story in the same way. Intercoder reliability tests were performed throughout this study, with senior staff acting as the control coder; no significant differences were found to exist on a recurring basis. Selected stories were double-coded in their entirety, and overall intercoder reliability exceeded 85% for all variables.



The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation

2400 Sand Hill Road

Menlo Park, CA 94025

Phone: (650) 854-9400 Fax: (650) 854-4800

Washington Office:

1330 G Street, NW

Washington, DC 20005

Phone: (202) 347-5270 Fax: (202) 347-5274

www.kff.org

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