



TRaX MID-STUDY NEWSLETTER

HI THERE,

WELCOME TO THE FIRST TRaX NEWSLETTER.

First and foremost, we want to thank you for being a part of the TraX study. You're receiving this because you are one of 3,593 people who have enrolled in the TraX study. Your contribution to our study is immeasurable. Together you have completed over 72,936 weekly surveys and we are eager to share what we have learned from you and update you on some key developments related to mpox.

As of today, we have made significant strides in understanding how to prevent mpox. Keep reading to learn more about our progress, our next steps, and how your involvement continues to make a difference in this critical scientific endeavour.

General mpox update¹

Since May 2022, there have been 145 confirmed mpox cases in Australia. In Australia and globally, some recent mpox cases have been reported in people who had received two vaccine doses, or who had previously had mpox. While these infections are of some concern, they are not cause for alarm and a small number of cases are to be expected given we know the vaccine is not 100% effective.

Between 1 January 2022 and 5 September 2023, 89,752 confirmed cases of mpox have been reported globally. From May 2022, a large number of these cases were being reported in countries that had no history of mpox transmission. We are continuing to see small outbreaks in other parts of the world. These small outbreaks could affect Australia, particularly given many Australians' love of travel. However, recent outbreaks in Europe and North America were mostly small, suggesting the ongoing efficacy of mpox vaccination.

The latest on mpox vaccines

While research indicates that two doses of the mpox vaccine are over 85% effective, they do not guarantee 100% protection. However, the vaccines used for mpox are also very effective in reducing the severity of major symptoms. Researchers are currently considering whether booster shots should be given to increase vaccine effectiveness.

If you haven't had your second dose, we strongly urge all participants to have two doses to have optimum protection levels and, in the unlikely event you contract mpox, to reduce the severity of symptoms.

What you need to know about mpox symptoms

Mpox symptoms can include a rash or lesions, swollen lymph nodes, fever, headache, muscle aches, joint or back pain, chills, and extreme exhaustion. Symptoms generally appear 5 to 21 days after exposure. If symptoms appear after you've recently returned from overseas (in South-East Asia, Western Pacific Region, including Japan, South Korea, Thailand and China) or have been in contact with a confirmed case, you should seek medical advice immediately.

1. † Mpox Outbreak 2022–23: Global Trends. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2023. Available online: https://worldhealthorg.shinyapps.io/mpox_global/ (last cited: 8 September 2023).

TRAX

TRACKING OUR COMMUNITIES' RESPONSES TO THE MPOX OUTBREAK



TraX is going to *continue* tracking mpox in Australia

The TraX study is a unique study globally as we began collecting data before the rollout of vaccines in Australia. This put TraX in an ideal position to guide how Australia responds to an mpox outbreak. With small outbreaks continuing to occur globally, we recently decided to continue collecting weekly data. As cases of mpox have also been reported in people who are fully vaccinated or have had a previous mpox infection, continuing to collect data remains important.

What we've found, so far

The TraX study was launched on 24 September 2022. Up to September 2023, 3,593 people from across Australia have participated in the study, with most participants (**83.9%**) living in New South Wales. The majority of participants identified as cis male (**94.3%**) or trans male (**0.6%**), and most participants identified as gay (**85.7%**). Recent outbreaks have primarily affected gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men. However, we opened participation to all people, regardless of gender or sexuality, to also assess potential mpox cases in other populations.

In total, 11 participants reported having had a previous mpox infection before joining the study. No new mpox infections have been reported throughout the study period. At the beginning of the study, **22.2%** of participants reported being unvaccinated, **50.2%** had received one dose, and **27.6%** had received two vaccine doses. As of 2 July 2023, only **9.4%** of participants reported being unvaccinated, **11.1%** had received only one dose, and **79.5%** had received two vaccine doses.

The high rates of vaccine uptake are an impressive example of how our communities respond to health threats and, alongside international efforts, likely played a key role in preventing a major mpox outbreak in Australia during World Pride. We were excited to be able to share these findings at the International AIDS Society Conference in Brisbane in July.

THANK YOU FROM THE STUDY TEAM

TraX was set up in an incredibly short amount of time. The success of the study so far is in-part due to the collective efforts of people working across research, government, and community sectors.

Most of all, though, the study's success has been due to the commitment of TraX participants who have generously responded to the weekly surveys. You have played a crucial role in guiding Australia's response to mpox.



TRAX@UNSW.EDU.AU | TRAXSTUDY.ORG.AU | HREC NUMBER: HC220592

TWITTER.COM/TRAXSTUDY FACEBOOK.COM/TRAXSTUDY