

# Reimbursed PrEP is not enough: what are the continuing barriers to PrEP accessibility in Italy?

## Lessons from community-led monitoring

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### Purpose

- PrEP reimbursability was adopted in Italy in May 2023, exclusively through clinical centers, and **no official data** on PrEP roll-out is available.
- Our community-led monitoring of existing PrEP services aimed to identify barriers to PrEP accessibility and scale-up.

### Method

- The community-based organization “Plus Roma” and the “PrEP in Italia” activists’ network, in 2019, 2021 and 2022, **mapped existing PrEP prescribing centers** (PPCs) in Italy and reached them with an online survey addressing PrEP user numbers, their demographics and the characteristics of PrEP services.
- Data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

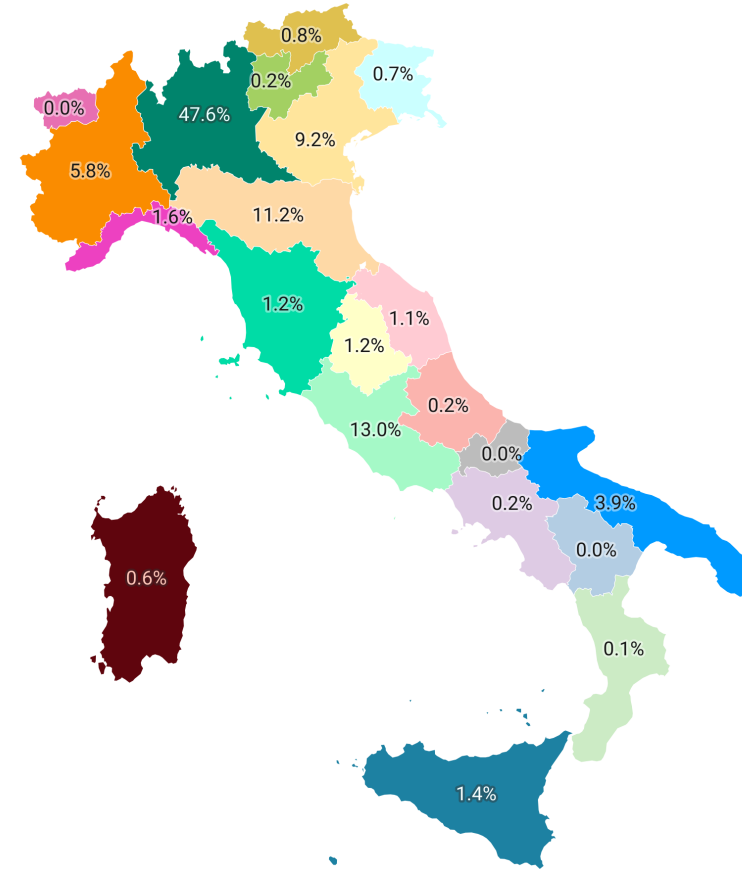
### Results

- From 2019 to 2022, the number of reported Italian PrEP users grew by **1186%**, with a stable distribution among key populations and continuing predominance of GBMSM (Table 1).
- In 2022 **66%** of reported PrEP users were followed in Northern Italy (Image 1).
- Mapped PPCs increased by **227%** from 2019 to 2022. PPCs response rate was **100%** in 2019, **50%** in 2021 and **65%** in 2022 (Table 2).
- In 2022, out of 72 PPCs mapped only two were community-based centers (CBCs). PrEP costed approximately **€60** per 30 tablets in pharmacies. **35%** of PPCs charged up to **€36** for visits. Mandatory blood panels and STI screenings reportedly costed up to **€150** (average of **€60**).

**Table 1: Reported number of PrEP users in Italy from 2019 to 2022, by year and key population**

YEAR	GBMSM	CIS HETERO MEN	CIS WOMEN	TRANS WOMEN	TRANS MEN	TOTAL
2019	484 (96.6%)	7 (1.4%)	4 (0.8%)	6 (1.2%)	0	501
2011	3447 (95.89%)	80 (2.22%)	22 (0.61%)	46 (1.28%)	0	3595 (+618% from 2019)
2022	6158 (95.56%)	148 (2.3%)	51 (0.8%)	86 (1.33%)	1 (0.01%)	6444 (+1186.22% from 2019)

**PrEP users grew by 1186% (2019-2022), but barriers remain: visits costs, regional disparity, lack of CBCs. Significant interventions are needed for scale-up.**



**Image 1: Reported Italian PrEP users in 2022, by region**

■ Abruzzo ■ Basilicata ■ Calabria ■ Campania ■ Emilia-Romagna ■ Friuli-Venezia Giulia ■ Lazio  
■ Liguria ■ Lombardia ■ Marche ■ Molise ■ Piemonte ■ Provincia Autonoma di Bolzano/Bozen  
■ Provincia Autonoma di Trento ■ Puglia ■ Sardegna ■ Sicilia ■ Toscana ■ Umbria ■ Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste ■ Veneto

### Conclusions

This research highlighted the barriers that should be addressed for increasing PrEP accessibility and coverage in Italy.

Only with the decision on PrEP reimbursability approved in May 2023 these barriers cannot be removed. Our suggested interventions include:

- **reimbursement for STI screenings** and visits;
- additional prescribing centers in Southern Italy and CBCs across the whole country;
- awareness-raising and **demand creation among heterosexual cisgender women and men.**

Also **PrEP reimbursement through CBCs** is needed, as it represents a crucial step to increase PrEP coverage among key populations. Continuing community-led monitoring of PrEP services will be key to assess progress in addressing the barriers identified.

**Table 2: Mapped Italian PrEP prescribing centers, by macroregions and survey response status**

		MAPPED	RESPONDED
2019	TOTAL	22	22 (100%)
	NORTHERN ITALY	8 (36.6%)	8 (36.6%)
	CENTRAL ITALY	12 (54.4%)	12 (54.4%)
	SOUTHERN ITALY	2 (9%)	2 (9%)
2021	TOTAL	56 (+154.54% from 2019)	28 (50%)
	NORTHERN ITALY	24 (42.86%)	13 (46.43%)
	CENTRAL ITALY	23 (41.07%)	11 (39.3%)
	SOUTHERN ITALY	9 (16.07%)	4 (14.27%)
2022	TOTAL	72 (+ 227.27% from 2019)	47 (65%)
	NORTHERN ITALY	28 (38.89%)	19 (40.4%)
	CENTRAL ITALY	27 (37.50%)	19 (40.4%)
	SOUTHERN ITALY	17 (23.61%)	9 (19.2%)