

The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States

March 2004

The first cases of what would later become known as AIDS were reported in the United States in June of 1981¹ Since that time, almost 1.5 million people in the U.S. have been infected with HIV, including more than 500,000 who have already died and another 850,000–950,000 who are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS.^{2,3}

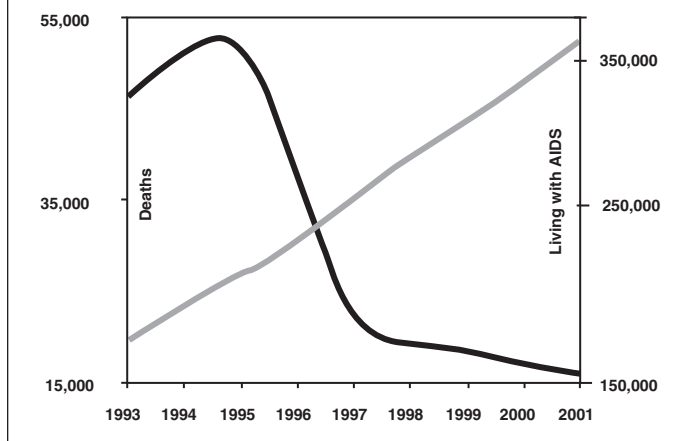
Advances in the treatment of HIV disease have substantially reduced AIDS-related mortality and extended the lives of many, leading to increasing numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. (see Figure 1). New treatments, however, are not a cure and do not benefit all people with HIV. It is estimated that 42% to 59% of people living with HIV/AIDS are not in regular HIV care, and as many as one-third of those infected with HIV do not know they are positive.² In addition, some groups have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS and there are signs that HIV infections may be on the rise among some populations.

this could reflect an increase in the number of people being tested, the CDC believes it is more likely to reflect increases in new HIV infections in these states.⁶

Key Trends and Current Cases

- AIDS cases have been reported in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. dependencies, possessions, and associated nations. Ten states account for 72% of all reported cases (see Figure 2).³ The AIDS case rate per 100,000 population is a measure of the epidemic's impact standardized to population size. The ranking of states by AIDS case rate varies from the ranking of states by cumulative reported cases (see Figure 2).³
- AIDS cases have been concentrated largely in urban areas. Most people with AIDS reside in U.S. metropolitan areas (with 500,000 or more population) at time of diagnosis (82% in 2001 and 85% during 1981–2001).⁷ Ten U.S. metropolitan areas account for 42% of all reported cases.⁴
- By region, the Northeast had the highest AIDS case rate per 100,000 in 2002 (20.1 per 100,000), followed by the South (18.0), West (10.3), and Midwest (7.2).^{3,8} The South had the greatest estimated numbers of people living with AIDS and AIDS cases diagnosed in 2002, followed by the Northeast, West, and Midwest.³

Figure 1: Estimated Deaths Among Persons with AIDS & Estimated Number of People Living with AIDS, 1993–2001⁴



Snapshot of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there were over 886,000 cases of AIDS diagnosed in the U.S. through 2002, including 42,136 diagnosed in 2002 alone.³
- An estimated 501,669 deaths among people with AIDS had occurred by the end of 2002.³
- Of the 850,000–950,000 people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., over 384,000 are estimated to be living with AIDS, the most advanced form of HIV disease.^{2,3}
- Each year, an estimated 40,000 new HIV infections occur in the U.S.⁵
- All states are moving to reporting HIV cases (in addition to AIDS cases), to provide a fuller picture of trends in the epidemic. Recent analyses indicate a potential rise in new HIV infections, at least among some populations. A CDC study of 29 states found that HIV diagnoses increased between 1999–2002. While

Figure 2: Cumulative Reported AIDS Cases (1981–2002) & AIDS Case Rate Per 100,000 Population (2002) Top Ten States³

| Top 10 States | AIDS Cases (1981–2002) | Top 10 States | AIDS Case Rate (2002) |
|-------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| New York | 155,755 | District of Columbia | 162.4 |
| California | 128,064 | Virgin Islands | 47.0 |
| Florida | 90,233 | New York | 34.8 |
| Texas | 59,772 | Maryland | 34.0 |
| New Jersey | 45,237 | Florida | 30.3 |
| Illinois | 28,426 | Puerto Rico | 29.5 |
| Pennsylvania | 28,136 | Louisiana | 26.0 |
| Puerto Rico | 27,242 | Delaware | 23.9 |
| Georgia | 26,008 | South Carolina | 20.3 |
| Maryland | 25,358 | Connecticut | 17.9 |
| Subtotal | 614,231 | Subtotal | N/A |
| U.S. Total | 859,000 | U.S. Case Rate | 15.0 |

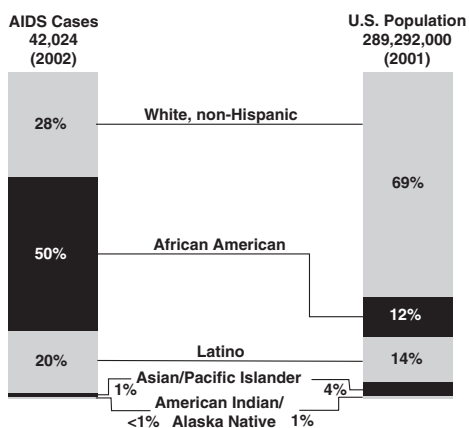
- Treatment advances have led to dramatic declines in HIV-related deaths, including a decline of approximately 70% between 1995 and 2002.⁹ However, the rate of decline has slowed in recent years, and was 2% between 2001 and 2002.¹⁰ HIV remains the 5th leading cause of death among Americans ages 25 to 44, but is down from #1 in 1995.^{9,11}
- Treatment advances have also delayed the progression of HIV to AIDS, leading to a decrease in new AIDS cases. But these declines appear to have ended, and AIDS diagnoses increased for the first time in several years between 2001 and 2002 (a 2% increase).³

- Sexual transmission and injection drug use (IDU) are the primary modes of HIV transmission. Almost half (48%) of all adult/adolescent AIDS diagnoses have been linked to sex between men and 27% to injection drug use. Fifteen percent have been linked to heterosexual sex, and 7% to men who have sex with men and inject drugs. Injection drug use also indirectly accounts for HIV transmission among the partners and children of injection drug users.³
- Estimates of new AIDS diagnoses among adults/adolescents indicate that 30% are attributable to heterosexual sex and 40% to sex between men. Approximately one-quarter (24%) are due directly to injection drug use.³

Impact on Racial and Ethnic Minority Americans

- Racial and ethnic minorities have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic, and minority Americans now represent the majority of new AIDS cases, Americans living with AIDS, and deaths among persons with AIDS in the U.S.³
- Although African Americans and Latinos represent 12% and 14% of the U.S. population respectively, they accounted for 50% and 20% of new AIDS diagnoses in 2002^{3,12} (see Figure 3). The majority of new HIV infections are estimated to be among African Americans (54%) and 19% among Latinos.⁵

Figure 3: Estimated AIDS Diagnoses (2002) & U.S. Population (2001) by Race/Ethnicity^{3,12}



- African Americans have the highest AIDS case rates of any racial/ethnic group, followed by Latinos, American Indian/Alaska Natives, whites, and Asian/Pacific Islanders.³
- In 2001, HIV was the 3rd leading cause of death among African Americans between the ages of 25 and 34 and the 6th leading cause of death for Latinos and for whites in this age group. It ranks higher among some subpopulations within these groups—for example, HIV was the leading cause of death for African American women in this age group.¹⁰

Impact on Women and Young People

- Women account for a growing proportion of new AIDS cases, rising from 7% in 1986 to about a quarter (26%) of AIDS cases reported in the most recent period.^{3,13} More than two-thirds (68%) of estimated new AIDS diagnoses among women are due to heterosexual contact and 29% to injection drug use.³
- Women of color are particularly affected. African American women account for 64% of estimated new HIV infections among women and Latinas account for 18%.⁵
- Young adults and teens also continue to be at risk. At least one-half of all new HIV infections are estimated to be among those under the age of 25. Most young people are infected through sex.¹⁴

- Among young people, young women and young minority Americans have been particularly affected. In 2001, teen girls represented more than half (56%) of reported HIV cases among those aged 13–19. Young African Americans represented 61% of new AIDS cases among 13–19 years olds and Latinos represented 21% in this age group.¹⁵
- Due to the availability of treatments that dramatically reduce the risk of transmission during pregnancy, the perinatal transmission rate in the U.S. has significantly declined.¹⁶

Impact on Men Who Have Sex with Men

- Despite declines in HIV infection rates among men who have sex with men (MSM) since the early years of the epidemic, they continue to be at high risk for infection, accounting for 55% of estimated new AIDS diagnoses among men in 2002.³ Recent data indicate that risk behavior continues and that MSM are at significantly greater risk for HIV infection than other groups in the U.S.^{17,18}
- Younger MSM and MSM of color are at particularly high risk. A recent CDC study in 6 cities found that HIV incidence and prevalence were already quite high among MSM ages 23–29, particularly African American and Latino MSM.¹⁷

The U.S. Government Response

- In FY 2004, U.S. federal funding for HIV/AIDS is expected to total \$18.5 billion. Of this, 59% will go to care, 16% to research, 9% to cash and housing assistance, 5% to prevention, and 10% to combating the international epidemic.¹⁹
- Some of the key programs that provide health insurance coverage, care, and support to people with HIV/AIDS in the U.S. are Medicaid, Medicare, and the Ryan White CARE Act.¹⁹ A variety of federally and state-supported prevention services are provided by state and local health departments and community planning groups.

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