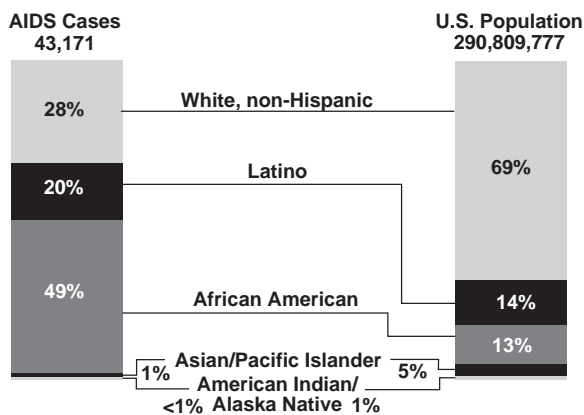


Latinos and HIV/AIDS

February 2005

Latinos in the United States have been disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They account for a greater proportion of AIDS cases and deaths among people with AIDS than their representation in the U.S. population overall.¹ The epidemic has also had a disproportionate impact on subgroups of Latinos including women and teens, and the impact of HIV/AIDS among Latinos varies across the country and by place of birth. Moreover, studies have shown that Latinos with HIV/AIDS may face additional barriers to accessing care than their white counterparts.²

Figure 1: Estimated AIDS Diagnoses & U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2003^{1,3,4}



Snapshot of the HIV/AIDS Epidemic

- Although Latinos represent approximately 14% of the U.S. population,⁴ they account for 19% of the 929,985 AIDS cases diagnosed since the start of the epidemic and 20% of the 43,171 cases diagnosed in 2003 alone (see Figure 1).¹
- Among the 33 areas that have had integrated HIV and AIDS case surveillance since at least 1999, Latinos account for 15% of HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed in 2003.¹ Between 2000 and 2003, the number of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses among Latinos increased by 14% in these areas.¹
- As of the end of 2003, there were 80,623 Latinos estimated to be living with AIDS, approximately one-fifth of all people estimated to be living with AIDS in the U.S.¹
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 population among Latino adults/adolescents was 3.7 times that of whites in 2003, but about one-third that of African Americans (See Figure 2).^{1,5}
- HIV was the 6th leading cause of death for Latinos and whites ages 25–34 in 2001, compared to the 3rd leading cause of death for African Americans in this age group.⁶

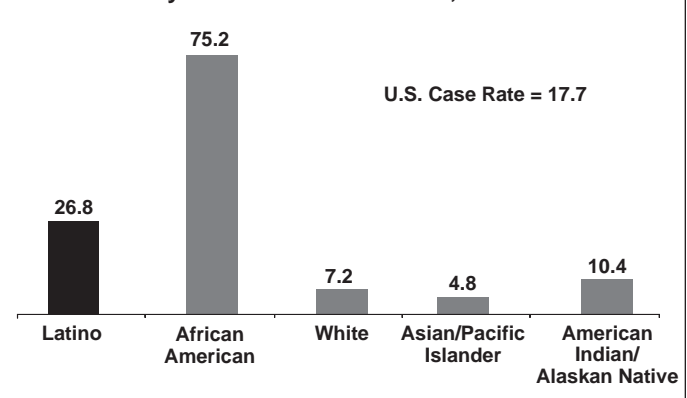
Key Trends and Current Cases

- The proportion of new AIDS diagnoses occurring among Latinos has grown over the course of the epidemic, rising from

15% in 1985 to 20% in 2003; in recent years, this share has remained relatively stable.⁷

- The number of Latinos living with AIDS has also increased over time, in part due to treatment advances but also to the epidemic's continued impact on Latinos. Estimated AIDS prevalence among Latinos increased by 32% between 1999 and 2003, compared to a 22% increase among whites.¹
- Although HIV treatment advances, coupled with prevention efforts, have also led to declines in new AIDS diagnoses and deaths, these declines appear to have ended for Latinos:
 - Between 1999 and 2003, AIDS diagnoses among Latinos increased by 8%, compared to a 3% decline among whites.¹
 - The number of estimated deaths among Latinos with AIDS increased by 17% between 1999 and 2003 compared to an 18% decline for whites.¹ Latinos are the only racial/ethnic group that experienced an increase in the number of deaths among persons with AIDS during this time.¹

Figure 2: AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population by Race/Ethnicity for Adults/Adolescents, 2003^{1,5}



Women and Young People

- Latinas accounted for a greater proportion of new AIDS cases among Latinos overall in 2003 (22%) than white women did among all whites (14%).^{1,5}
- Latinas accounted for 16% of new AIDS cases among women in 2003; African American women accounted for 67% and white women 15%.^{1,5}
- Although Latino teens (ages 13–19) represent only 16% of U.S. teenagers, they accounted for 20% of new AIDS cases reported among teens in 2002.⁸

Transmission

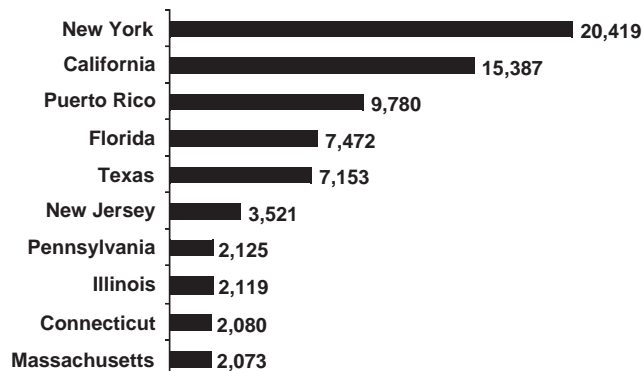
- HIV transmission patterns among Latino men vary from those of white men, although both groups are most likely to be infected through sex with other men. A greater proportion of white men are estimated to have been infected through sex with other men than Latino men: 72% of estimated AIDS

diagnoses among white men in 2002 were due to sex with other men compared to 50% of estimated diagnoses among Latino men.⁹ Injection drug use and heterosexual sex account for a greater share of new AIDS diagnoses among Latino men (28% and 17%, respectively), than among white men (12% and 6%, respectively).⁹

- Latinas are somewhat more likely to have been infected through heterosexual transmission than white women, although this is the most common transmission route for both groups (71% of AIDS diagnoses among Latinas in 2002 and 59% of diagnoses among white women).⁹ White women are somewhat more likely to have been infected through injection drug use than Latinas (38% of AIDS diagnoses among white women and 26% of AIDS diagnoses among Latinas in 2002).⁹
- Among men who have sex with men (MSM), Latinos have been particularly hard hit. A study in 6 major U.S. cities found that 14% of Latino MSM ages 23–29 were already infected with HIV, compared to 7% of white MSM. Knowledge of HIV status among those already infected was also very low.¹⁰

- The HCSUS study found that Latinos with HIV/AIDS were more likely to be publicly insured or uninsured than their white counterparts, with half relying on Medicaid compared to 32% of whites. Approximately one quarter of Latinos with HIV/AIDS (24%) were uninsured compared to 17% of whites. Latinos were also about half as likely to be privately insured than whites (23% compared to 44%).¹⁷
- CDC data indicate that Latinos diagnosed with HIV may be more likely to be tested late in their illness—that is, diagnosed with AIDS within one year of testing positive.^{18,19} Over a third (43%) of Latinos who tested positive in the 33 areas with HIV reporting received an AIDS diagnosis within one year, compared to 38% of African Americans and whites.¹
- Among the U.S. population overall, Latinos are more likely than whites to report ever having ever been tested for HIV (53% compared to 44%). However, these self-reporting rates may be overestimates, since 22% of Latinos assumed that the test was a routine part of an exam.²⁰

Figure 3: Number of Latinos Estimated to be Living with AIDS: Top 10 States/Areas, 2003¹¹



Geography

Although AIDS cases among Latinos have been reported throughout the country, the impact of the epidemic on Latinos is not uniformly distributed:

- Estimated AIDS prevalence among Latinos is clustered in a handful of states, with 10 states accounting for 89% of Latinos estimated to be living with AIDS in 2003 (Figure 3).¹¹ Ten states also account for the majority of newly reported AIDS cases among Latinos (88% in 2003).¹¹
- Over four in ten (43%) Latinos estimated to be living with AIDS are in the Northeast as are 37% of newly reported AIDS cases among Latinos in 2003.^{11,12}
- AIDS cases among Latinos vary by place of birth. Latinos born in the U.S. accounted for 43% of estimated AIDS cases among Latinos in 2003, followed by Latinos born in Puerto Rico (17%) and Mexico (17%).¹ HIV transmission patterns among Latinos also vary by place of birth.¹³

Access to and Use of the Health Care System

- The HIV Cost and Services Utilization Study (HCSUS), the only nationally representative study of people with HIV/AIDS receiving regular or ongoing medical care for HIV infection, found that Latinos fared more poorly on several important measures of access and quality, differences that diminished over time but were not completely eliminated.¹⁴ In addition, HCSUS found that Latinos were more likely to report postponing medical care due to factors such as lack of transportation.¹⁵ Latinos were also more likely than whites to delay care after HIV diagnosis.¹⁶

Concern About HIV/AIDS²¹

Latinos are concerned about HIV/AIDS: 31% name HIV/AIDS as the most urgent health problem facing the nation, ranked second after cancer, and Latinos are more likely to say they are personally concerned about becoming infected than whites. More Latinos believe the U.S. is making progress on the domestic epidemic (47%) than losing ground (30%), as do whites; by contrast, African Americans are more likely to say the U.S. is losing ground. Although 30% of Latinos say they are personally very concerned about becoming infected with HIV, this proportion has declined since the mid 1990's.

Conclusion

The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to exact a disproportionate toll on Latinos in the U.S., as reflected in incidence, prevalence and mortality trends over time. These trends present important challenges to policymakers, public health practitioners, and community leaders. As the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S., addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS in the Latino community takes on increased importance in efforts to improve the nation's health.

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