

## THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IN THE U.S.

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Recent advances in treatment have resulted in significant progress in the fight against HIV/AIDS. When detected early, these treatments can delay the onset of AIDS and related opportunistic infections for people with HIV. For those already living with AIDS, the new drugs can lengthen and improve their quality of life. As a result, more Americans are living with HIV/AIDS than ever before. However, AIDS remains a real threat to the nation's public health, especially for young people, women, and minorities who account for growing proportions of new AIDS cases. Following is an overview of trends in the epidemic and the current profile of AIDS in America today:

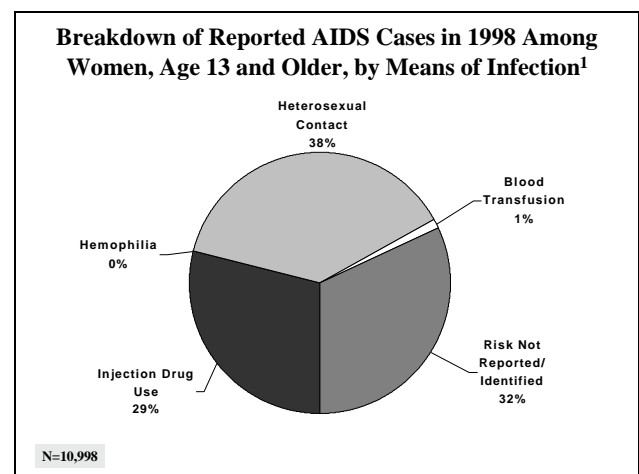
- More than 688,000 AIDS cases have been reported in the US and 410,800 Americans have died from AIDS since the beginning of the epidemic.<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 650,000 to 900,000 Americans are *living with HIV*—approximately 1 in 300 people of all ages. Of these, over 270,000 Americans are estimated to be *living with AIDS*.<sup>1,2</sup>
- About 25% of all people now *living with HIV* became infected when they were teenagers.<sup>3</sup>
- The estimated number of new HIV infections occurring each year in the US has stabilized in recent years at approximately 41,000. As many as half are estimated to be among people under the age of 25, and as many as one quarter among young people under the age of 22.<sup>4,5</sup>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that as many as 1 in 3 people with HIV do not know they are infected.<sup>2</sup>
- New treatments have lengthened the lives of people with AIDS. Between 1997 and 1998, the number of people estimated to be *living with AIDS* increased by 12% (from approximately 241,000 to 270,000). Although trend data are not available for the number of people *living with HIV*, the new treatments are enabling an increasing number of people with HIV also to live longer and healthier lives.<sup>1,9</sup>
- The proportion of AIDS cases among women continues to rise. Women represented 23% of new cases in 1998, compared to only 5% in 1982 and 11% in 1990.<sup>1,10,11</sup>
- AIDS has been increasingly impacting people of color. African Americans represented 45% of new AIDS cases in 1998 compared to 23% of cases in 1982 and 30% of cases in 1990. By 1996, African Americans accounted for more AIDS diagnoses annually than whites. Latinos accounted for 20% of new AIDS cases in 1998 compared to 12% in 1982 and 17% in 1990.<sup>1,9,10,11</sup>
- The number of babies born with HIV has decreased significantly over the last several years due to the availability of treatment that dramatically reduces the chances of HIV transmission during pregnancy (from about 1 in 4 to 1 in 12).<sup>1,12,13</sup>

### Trends in the Epidemic

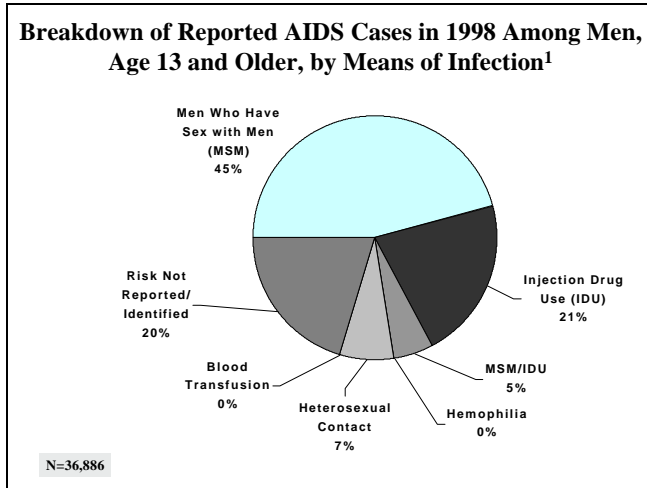
- Due primarily to advances in treatment for HIV, the number of AIDS-related deaths in the US in 1997 (the most recent year for which data are available) was only about half that of 1996 (16,685 compared to 31,130, a decline of 46%).<sup>6</sup>
- Between 1996 and 1997, the age-adjusted death rate, (which accounts for changes in the age distribution of the population) due to AIDS decreased by 47%, the lowest rate since 1987 (11.1 per 100,000 people in 1996 compared to 5.9 in 1997).<sup>6</sup>
- In 1997, AIDS was the 14<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death among Americans of all ages, down from 8<sup>th</sup> in 1996.<sup>6</sup>
- Among people aged 25-44, for whom AIDS was the leading cause of death in 1995 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading cause of death in 1996, AIDS fell to the 5<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in 1997.<sup>6,7</sup>
- AIDS remains the leading cause of death among African American males and the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause among African American females in the 25-44 age group.<sup>8</sup>

### Current Profile of New AIDS Cases

- Although the majority of new AIDS cases among adults (age 13 and over) in 1998 continued to be among men (77%), almost one quarter (23%) were among women (36,886 and 10,998 cases respectively). Among the youngest in this group, women accounted for an even higher proportion of AIDS cases reported in 1998, including about half (51%) of 13-19 year olds with AIDS and 40% of 20-24 year olds.<sup>1</sup>



- Women are most likely to be infected with HIV through heterosexual contact, which accounted for 38% of AIDS cases among women in 1998 (4,125 cases). Of these cases, 29% (1,212 cases) were due to heterosexual contact with an injection drug user.<sup>1</sup>
- Men are most likely to be infected through sex with other men, which accounted for almost half of new AIDS cases among adult men (45% or 16,642 cases in 1998). Injection drug use accounted for one fifth (21% or 7,869 cases) of new cases.<sup>1</sup>



- African Americans and Latinos have been disproportionately impacted by HIV/AIDS. Although African Americans represent only 12% of the US population, they represented 45% of new AIDS cases in 1998. Similarly, Latinos represented 20% of new AIDS cases although they only represent 11% of the US population.<sup>1,14</sup>

**New AIDS Cases Reported in 1998 and Population Distribution by Race/Ethnicity, All Ages<sup>1,14</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	Number of New AIDS Cases	Percent of New AIDS Cases	Percent of Population
White, non Hispanic	16,116	34%	73%
Black, non Hispanic	21,752	45%	12%
Hispanic	9,650	20%	11%
Asian/Pacific Islander	390	< 1%	4%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	147	< 1%	<1%
TOTAL	48,055	100%	100%

Note: Cases do not include those reported for whom race/ethnicity was unknown.

- Women of all races/ethnicities are most likely to become infected with HIV through heterosexual contact (38% of white women, 36% of African American women, and 44% of Latinas in 1998).<sup>1</sup>
- Men of all races/ethnicities are most likely to be infected through sex with other men (65% of white men, 31% African American men, and 36% Latino men). Injection drug use accounts for a greater proportion of cases among Latino (29%) and African American men (27%) than white men (11%).<sup>1</sup>

**References**

- <sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1998). *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, Year-End Edition, US HIV and AIDS Cases Reported Through December 1998*, 10 (2).
- <sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1999). *Statistical Projections/Trends*, May 13. <[www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv\\_aids/hivinfo/vfax/260210.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchstp/hiv_aids/hivinfo/vfax/260210.htm)>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://hivinsite.ucsf.edu>, Kirby, Douglas (1997). *The AIDS Knowledge Base: HIV Prevention Among Adolescents*, November.
- <sup>4</sup> Holmberg SD (1996). The Estimated Prevalence and Incidence of HIV in 96 large U.S. Metropolitan Areas. *American Journal of Public Health*, 86 (5).
- <sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1998). *CDC Facts: Adolescents and HIV/AIDS*, March.
- <sup>6</sup> National Center for Health Statistics (1998). Births and Deaths: Preliminary Data for 1997. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 47(4).
- <sup>7</sup> National Center for Health Statistics (1998). AIDS Falls from Top Ten Causes of Death; Teen Births, Infant Mortality, Homicide All Decline. Press Release, October 7, 1998.
- <sup>8</sup> National Center for Health Statistics. Deaths and Death Rates for 15 Leading Causes of Death in Specified Age Groups by Race and Sex, United States, 1997. Data Request, March 1999.
- <sup>9</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1998). *Trends in the HIV and AIDS Epidemic, 1998*.
- <sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1982). *Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS), Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (PCP), and Other Opportunistic Infections (OI): Cases Reported to CDC as of June 15, 1982. First Report*.
- <sup>11</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (1990). *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, Year-end Edition, US AIDS Cases Reported Through December 1990*.
- <sup>12</sup> Institute of Medicine (1998). *Reducing the Odds: Preventing Perinatal Transmission of HIV* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences/Institute of Medicine).
- <sup>13</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV Infection and AIDS: Are You At Risk?*
- <sup>14</sup> US Bureau of the Census (1998). *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1998* (118<sup>th</sup> edition). Washington, DC. Middle Series Estimates.