

One in every 268 Californians has HIV or AIDS (Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).^{1,4} The California Department of Health estimates that at the end of 2009 (last data available), nearly 111,000 Californians were living with either HIV (39,000 cases) or AIDS (72,000 cases). In 2009, 5,380 people were newly diagnosed with HIV.⁴

The disease disproportionately impacts minorities. California's Black population has a much higher prevalence than other groups.* Latinos have the greatest share of new infections among racial groups. Men are also disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in California.

This brief provides an overview of HIV/AIDS in California. It includes a short description of what the virus and syndrome are and which groups are being most severely impacted by the spread of HIV/AIDS.

HIV AND AIDS

HIV is a virus that can lead to AIDS. Those infected with HIV often shows no symptoms until the disease has progressed to AIDS. HIV is transmitted through bodily fluids, but cannot be transmitted through casual contact. Most commonly, HIV is transmitted through sexual contact. It may be transmitted through blood-to-blood contact, such as needle sharing or accidental needle sticks in a healthcare setting. It may also be transmitted during pregnancy or birth from mother to child. It cannot be transmitted through casual contact such as hugging, playing sports or touching something that was touched by someone infected with HIV.²

PREVALENCE AND INFECTION RATES BY RACE/ETHNICITY

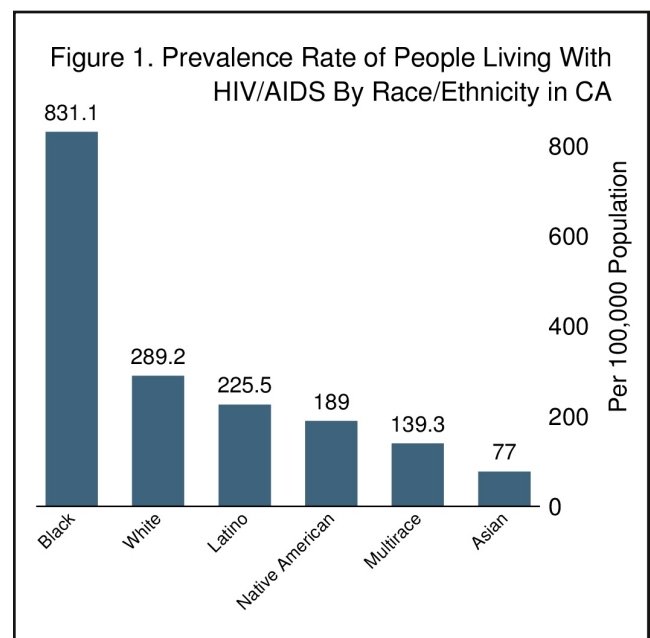
While all groups in California are affected by HIV/AIDS, some experience disproportionate impacts

*Prevalence measures the number of people infected with HIV/AIDS in a group in comparison to the number of people that make up the group as a whole.

from the virus. In California, Latinos make up the largest proportion of new HIV/AIDS cases (38.1 percent of all new cases). However, prevalence amongst Blacks is significantly higher than all other groups.⁴

Amongst Blacks in California, prevalence is significantly higher than Whites, the group with the next highest rate (831.1 per 100,000 versus 269.2 per 100,000 for Whites). See Figure 1. The rate of new diagnoses was five times higher among Blacks than Whites. The difference is more pronounced by gender. Black men were three times as likely as White men to be diagnosed with HIV or AIDS, while Black women were infected 11 times more often than White women. Compared to national figures, however, California has a lower infection rate among Blacks (831.1 per 100,000 in CA versus 1,715 per 100,000 nationally).^{3,4}

Although Latinos in California make up the largest number of new cases, the infection rate per 100,000 Latinos is lower in California than nationally (14.5 new cases per 100,000 versus 22.8 per 100,000 nationally).⁴



Of all people living with HIV/AIDS, Whites still make up the largest racial group. Approximately 46 percent of all people living with HIV/AIDS in California are White, 31 percent are Latino, 18 percent are Black and other races constitute 5 percent.⁴

In California, only Whites have a higher new infection rate than nationally (11.4 per 100,000 versus 7.2 per 100,000). All minority racial groups have lower new infection rates in California than they do nationally.⁴

GENDER AND AIDS IN CA

Nearly 87 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases in California are men.¹ This is much greater than the percentage of male cases nationally (76.2 percent).³ The prevalence rate amongst men is nearly seven times higher than that of women (467.3 per 100,000 versus 63.3 per 100,000).^{1,4}

Like HIV/AIDS cases in the entire population, women's infection rates differ by racial group. Black women account for over one third of all HIV/AIDS cases among women in California. The prevalence rate among Black women is nine times higher than that of White women (365.8 per 100,000 versus 39.1 per 100,000).⁴ Latino women made up 37 percent of all new HIV/AIDS cases amongst women while Black women constitute 34.7 percent and White women account for 22.5 percent.⁴

Some studies suggest that the large disparity between Black and White infection rates can be almost wholly attributed to the disparity in incarceration rates between Black and White men.

HIV/AIDS AND INCARCERATED MEN

Approximately one in every seven people living with HIV/AIDS pass through prison or jail each year. While it is unclear how many people contract HIV in prison, high-risk behaviors among prisoners (e.g., unprotected sex, sharing needles for tattoos) present ample opportunity for contracting HIV in prison. Because Black men are incarcerated at rates far higher than other racial groups, this population has a greater risk of contracting HIV. Some studies suggest that the large disparity between Black and White infection rates can

be almost wholly attributed to the disparity in incarceration rates between Black and White men.⁵

MSM AND HIV/AIDS

Men who have sex with men (MSM) still make up the majority of people living with HIV/AIDS in California. The number of MSM living with HIV/AIDS in California is estimated to be 67,960 (65.5 percent of all cases). The number of MSM who are also intravenous drug users and have HIV/AIDS is estimated to be 8,504 (8.2 percent of all living cases).⁴ The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among MSM is unknown as the population of MSM is unknown.

CITATIONS

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