

Latinos and HIV/AIDS

May 2008

Latinos in the United States continue to be affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, accounting for a greater proportion of AIDS cases than their representation in the U.S. population overall, and the second highest AIDS case rate in the nation, by race/ethnicity.¹ The epidemic has had a disproportionate impact on Latinas and young adults, and the impact of HIV/AIDS among Latinos varies across the country and by place of birth.^{1,2} Moreover, studies have shown that Latinos with HIV/AIDS may face additional barriers to accessing care than their white counterparts.^{3,4,5} Today, there are approximately 1.2 million people living with HIV/AIDS in the U.S., including about 200,000 Latinos.⁶ 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.

- The number of deaths among Latinos with AIDS remained stable between 2002 and 2006 while both Blacks and whites experienced significant decreases.¹

Figure 2: AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population, by Race/Ethnicity for Adults/Adolescents, 2006^{1,9}

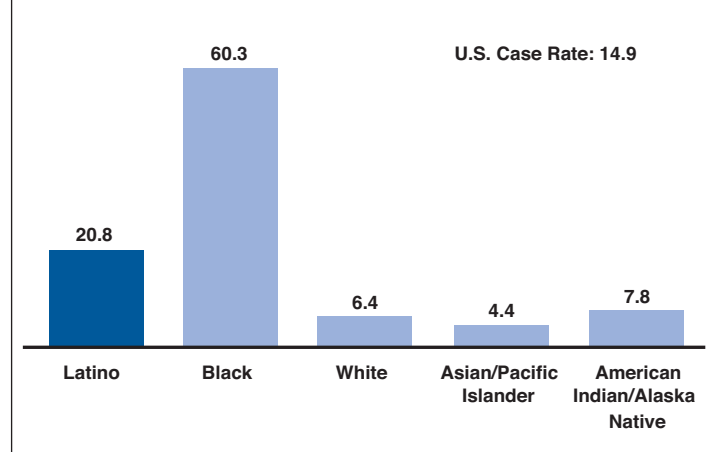
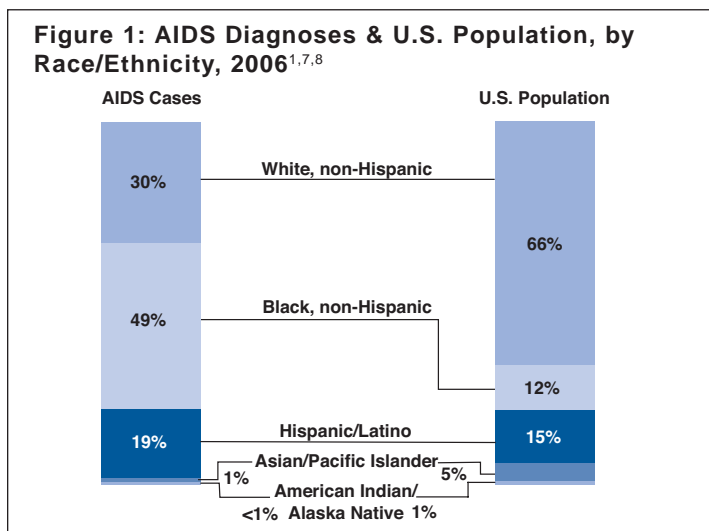


Figure 1: AIDS Diagnoses & U.S. Population, by Race/Ethnicity, 2006^{1,7,8}



Snapshot of the Epidemic

- Although Latinos represent approximately 15% of the U.S. population,⁸ they account for 19% of the AIDS cases diagnosed in 2006 (Figure 1).^{1,7}
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 among Latino adults/adolescents was the second highest of any racial/ethnic group in the U.S. in 2006—more than 3 times that of whites, but about one-third that of Blacks (Figure 2).^{1,9}
- HIV was the 6th leading cause of death for Latino men and 5th for Latinas, aged 25–44, in 2004.¹⁰ HIV death rates per 100,000 among those aged 25–44, were higher among Latinos (9.3 for men and 3.1 for Latinas) than whites, although they were highest for Blacks in 2004.¹¹

Key Trends and Current Cases

- Latinos account for a growing share of AIDS diagnoses over the course of the epidemic, rising from 15% in 1985 to 19% in 2006; in recent years, this share has remained relatively stable.^{1,12}
- 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 27% between 2002 and 2006, compared to a 19% increase among whites.¹

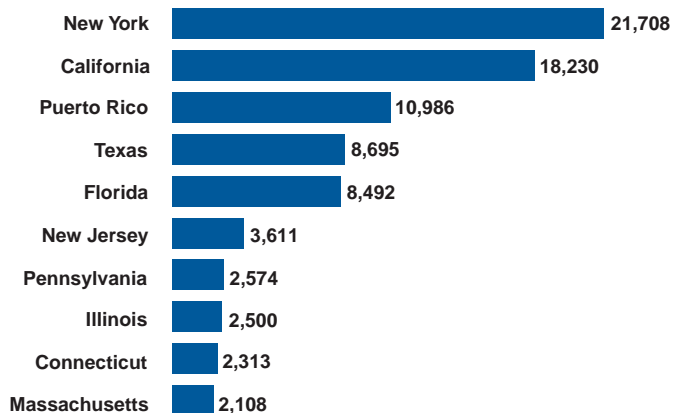
Women and Young People

- Among women, Latinas account for 16% of new AIDS cases in 2006; Black women account for 66% and white women account for 17%.^{1,7,9}
- Latinas represent 22% of AIDS cases diagnosed among all Latinos (men and women combined) in 2006; by comparison, white women represent 15% of cases among whites, and Black women represent 36% of cases diagnosed among Blacks.^{1,9}
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 among Latinas (9.5) is 5 times higher than the case rate for white women (1.9).^{1,9}
- Latino teens, aged 13–19, accounted for 17% of AIDS cases among teens, the same as their proportion of the U.S. teen population in 2005.² Latinos aged 20–24 accounted for 22% of new AIDS reported among young adults, but represented 18% of U.S. young adults, in 2005.²

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, white men are more likely to have been infected this way. Heterosexual transmission and injection drug use account for a greater share of infections among Latino men than white men.^{1,13}
- 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 and for women overall. White women are somewhat more likely to have been infected through injection drug use than Latinas.^{1,13}
- Studies have found high HIV/AIDS prevalence among Latino men who have sex with men (MSM).¹⁴ A study in 5 major U.S. cities found that 17% of Latino MSM in the study were infected with HIV. Prevalence among white MSM was 21% and among Black MSM, 46%, the highest of any group.¹⁵ Knowledge of HIV status among those already infected is also very low.¹⁴

Figure 3: Number of Latinos Estimated to be Living with AIDS: Top 10 States/Areas, 2006¹⁶



Geography

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

- AIDS case rates per 100,000 among Latinos are highest in the eastern part of the U.S., particularly in the Northeast.¹⁶ The Northeast also has the greatest proportion of Latinos estimated to be living with AIDS (36% in 2006) and new AIDS cases among Latinos (31%).^{16,17}
- AIDS prevalence among Latinos is clustered in a handful of states, with 10 states accounting for 88% of Latinos estimated to be living with AIDS in 2006. New York, California, and Puerto Rico top the list (Figure 3). Ten states also account for the majority of newly reported AIDS cases among Latinos (84% in 2006).^{16,17}
- AIDS cases among Latinos vary by place of birth. Latinos born in the U.S. accounted for 34% of estimated AIDS cases among Latinos in 2006, followed by Latinos born in Puerto Rico (17%) and Mexico (17%).^{1,18} HIV transmission patterns among Latinos also vary by place of birth.¹

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.³ In addition, HCSUS found that Latinos were more likely to report postponing medical care due to factors such as lack of transportation.⁴ Latinos were also more likely than whites to delay care after HIV diagnosis.⁵

Health Insurance

Having health insurance, either public or private, improves access to care. Insurance coverage of those with HIV/AIDS varies by race/ethnicity, as it does for the U.S. population overall.

- 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%).¹⁹
- Insurance status also varies at the time of HIV diagnosis. Analysis of data from 25 states between 1994 and 2000 found that Latinos were less likely than whites to have private coverage and more likely to be covered by Medicaid at the time of their HIV diagnosis. A third of Latinos were uninsured at the time of their diagnosis, higher than other groups.²⁰

HIV Testing

- Among the U.S. population overall, Latinos are more likely than whites to report ever having been tested for HIV (54% compared to 45%).²¹
- Among those who are HIV positive, CDC data indicate that more than one in four Latinos (42%) were tested for HIV late in their illness—that is, diagnosed with AIDS within one year of testing positive (in those states/areas with HIV name reporting); by comparison, 38% of Blacks and 35% of whites were tested late.¹

Concern About HIV/AIDS

- A recent survey found that Latinos express concern about HIV/AIDS. Nearly a quarter of Latinos named it as the most urgent health problem facing the nation, ranked second after cancer. More Latinos believe the U.S. is making progress on the domestic epidemic (39%) than losing ground (30%), as do whites; by contrast, Black Americans are more likely to say the U.S. is losing ground.²¹
- Almost half (46%) of Latinos say they think AIDS is a more urgent problem in their community than it was a few years ago compared to 15% of whites. Although 31% of Latinos say they are personally very concerned about becoming infected with HIV, this proportion has declined since the mid-1990's.²¹

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