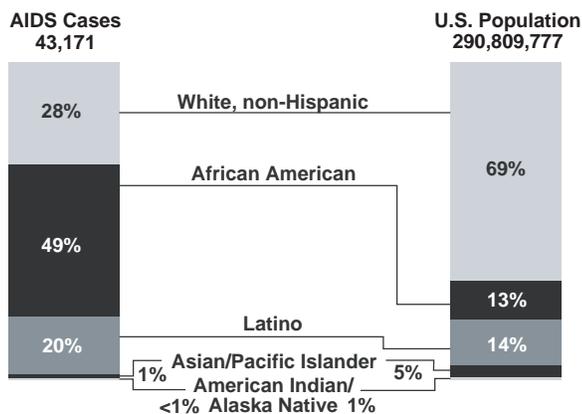


### African Americans and HIV/AIDS

February 2005

African Americans have been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS since the epidemic's beginning, and that disparity has deepened over time. African Americans account for more AIDS diagnoses, people estimated to be living with AIDS, and HIV-related deaths than any other racial/ethnic group in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> The epidemic has also had a disproportionate impact on subgroups of African Americans including women, youth, and men who have sex with men, and impact varies across the country. Moreover, African Americans with HIV/AIDS may face greater barriers to accessing care than their white counterparts.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 1: Estimated AIDS Diagnoses & U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2003**<sup>1,3,4</sup>



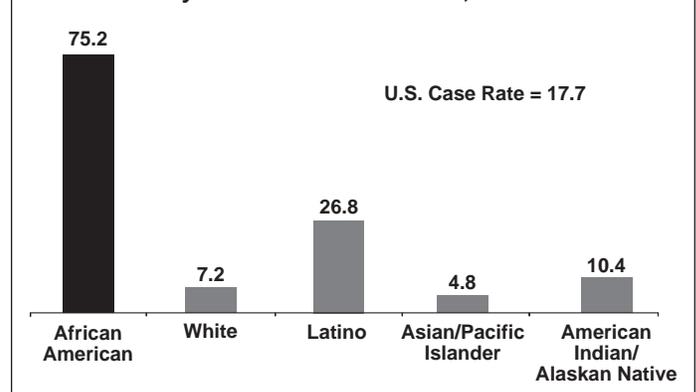
#### Snapshot of the Epidemic

- Although African Americans represent only 13% of the U.S. population,<sup>4</sup> they account for 40% of the 929,985 AIDS cases diagnosed since the start of the epidemic and approximately half (49%) of the 43,171 cases diagnosed in 2003 alone (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> They also account for half of new HIV/AIDS diagnoses in 2003 in the 33 areas that have had integrated HIV and AIDS case surveillance since at least 1999.<sup>1</sup>
- As of the end of 2003, an estimated 172,278 African Americans were living with AIDS, the highest number of any racial/ethnic group and 42% of the total.<sup>1</sup>
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 population among African American adults/adolescents was 10.4 times that of whites in 2003 (Figure 2).<sup>1,5</sup>
- African-Americans accounted for 56% of deaths due to HIV in 2002<sup>6</sup> and their survival time after an AIDS diagnosis is lower on average than it is for other racial/ethnic groups.<sup>1</sup>
- HIV was the third leading cause of death for African Americans, ages 25–34, in 2001, compared to the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death for whites and Latinos in this age group. It ranks higher for some subpopulations—HIV was the #1 cause of death for African American women ages 25–34 in 2001.<sup>7</sup>

#### Key Trends and Current Cases

- African Americans account for a growing share of AIDS diagnoses over time, rising from 25% of cases diagnosed in 1985 to 49% in 2003.<sup>8</sup>
- The number of African Americans living with AIDS has also increased over time, in part due to treatment advances but also to the epidemic's growing impact on African Americans. Estimated AIDS prevalence among African Americans increased by 37% between 1999 and 2003, compared to a 22% increase among whites.<sup>1</sup>
- Although treatment advances, coupled with prevention efforts, have also led to declines in new AIDS diagnoses and deaths in recent years, these declines were not as sharp for African Americans and appear to have ended:
  - Between 1999 and 2003, AIDS diagnoses among African Americans increased by 7%, compared to a 3% decline among whites.<sup>1</sup>
  - Deaths among African Americans with AIDS remained fairly stable between 1999 and 2003, but declined by 18% among whites over this period.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 2: AIDS Case Rate per 100,000 Population by Race/Ethnicity for Adults/Adolescents, 2003**<sup>1,5</sup>



#### Women and Young People

- African American women accounted for a greater proportion of new AIDS cases among African Americans overall in 2003 (36%) than white women did among all whites (14%).<sup>1,5</sup>
- African American women accounted for two-thirds (67%) of new AIDS cases among women in 2003; white women accounted for 15% and Latinas 16%.<sup>1,5</sup>
- Although African American teens (ages 13–19) represent only 15% of U.S. teenagers, they accounted for 65% of new AIDS cases reported among teens in 2002.<sup>9</sup> A similar impact can be seen among African American children.<sup>1</sup>

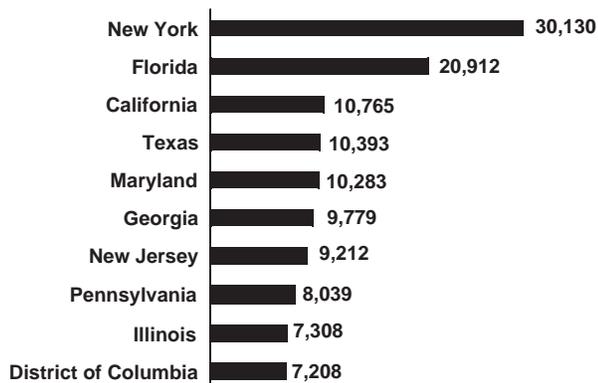
#### Transmission

- HIV transmission patterns among African American men vary from those of white men, although both groups are most likely to have

been infected through sex with other men: 43% of estimated AIDS diagnoses among African American men in 2002 were due to sex with men compared to 72% of estimated diagnoses among white men. Injection drug use and heterosexual sex account for a greater share of new AIDS diagnoses among African American men (28% and 22%, respectively), than among white men (12% and 6%, respectively).<sup>10</sup>

- African American women 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 (70% of AIDS diagnoses among African American women in 2002 and 59% of diagnoses among white women). White women are somewhat more likely to have been infected through injection drug use than African American women (38% of AIDS diagnoses among white women and 28% of diagnoses among African American women in 2002).<sup>10</sup>
- Among men who have sex with men (MSM), African Americans have been particularly hard hit. A study in 6 major U.S. cities found that almost a third (32%) of African American 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.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 3: Number of African Americans Estimated to be Living with AIDS: Top 10 States/Areas, 2003**<sup>12</sup>



### Geography

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

- AIDS case rates per 100,000 population for African Americans are highest in the eastern part of the U.S., particularly in the Northeast.<sup>5,12</sup>
- Over half (51%) of African Americans estimated to be living with AIDS and 55% of newly reported AIDS cases among African Americans in 2003 occurred in the South.<sup>12,13</sup>
- Estimated AIDS prevalence among African Americans is clustered in a handful of states, with 10 states accounting for 72% of African Americans estimated to be living with AIDS in 2003 (Figure 3).<sup>12</sup> Ten states also account for a majority of newly reported AIDS cases among African Americans (69% in 2003).<sup>12</sup>

### 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 African Americans fared more poorly on several important measures of access and quality than whites; these differences diminished over time but were not completely eliminated.<sup>14</sup> HCSUS also found that African Americans were more likely to report postponing medical care because they

lacked transportation, were too sick to go to the doctor, or had other competing needs.<sup>15</sup>

- According to HCSUS, African Americans with HIV/AIDS were more likely to be publicly insured or uninsured than their white counterparts, with over half (59%) relying on Medicaid compared to 32% of whites. About one fifth of African Americans with HIV/AIDS (22%) were uninsured compared to 17% of whites. African Americans were also much less likely to be privately insured than whites (14% compared to 44%).<sup>16</sup>
- CDC data indicate that over a third of African Americans with HIV diagnoses (38%) were tested for HIV late in their illness—that is, diagnosed with AIDS within one year of testing positive—in the 33 areas with HIV reporting; the same proportion of whites were tested late.<sup>1</sup>
- Among the U.S. population overall, African Americans are more likely than whites to report ever having been tested for HIV (67% compared to 44%). However, these self-reported testing rates may be overestimates, since 21% of African Americans assumed that the test was a routine part of an exam.<sup>17</sup>
- African Americans are more likely to report that they have talked to both their doctor and their partners about HIV than whites and Latinos. They are also more likely to say they need more information about HIV testing.<sup>17</sup>

### Concern About HIV/AIDS<sup>18</sup>

African Americans are concerned about HIV/AIDS, and are the only racial/ethnic group to name it as the number one health problem in the U.S. Most (56%) African Americans say the U.S. is “losing ground” on the domestic AIDS epidemic. Personal concern about becoming infected with HIV is also highest among African Americans, as is concern among African American parents about their children becoming infected. However, the proportion of African Americans saying they are personally very concerned about becoming infected has declined since the mid 1990’s.

### Conclusion

African Americans have been hard hit by HIV/AIDS and face the brunt of the epidemic’s impact in the U.S. today, as reflected in incidence, prevalence, and mortality trends over time. These trends present tremendous challenges to all of those involved in addressing our nation’s epidemic, including policymakers, community leaders, and public health practitioners.

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Prepared by Jennifer Kates and Alyssa Wilson Leggoe of the Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF). Additional copies of this publication (#6089-02) are available on the Kaiser Family Foundation’s website at [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org).

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