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. 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.

**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.
- 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.
- 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.
  - Deaths among African Americans with AIDS remained fairly stable between 1999 and 2003, but declined by 18% among whites over this period.

**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%).
- African American women accounted for two-thirds (67%) of new AIDS cases among women in 2003; white women accounted for 15% and Latinas 16%.
- 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. A similar impact can be seen among African American children.

**Transmission**

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

**Figure 1: Estimated AIDS Diagnoses & U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2003**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>AIDS Cases</th>
<th>U.S. Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>43,171</td>
<td>290,809,777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Case Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>75.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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).10

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).10

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.11

African American women are more likely to report that they have talked to a community leader, and public health practitioners. Addressing our nation’s epidemic, including policymakers, the media, the health care community, and the general public. The Foundation is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries.

Concern About HIV/AIDS18

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 those involved in addressing our nation’s epidemic, including policymakers, community leaders, and public health practitioners.

References

3. Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding. Total AIDS diagnoses in 2003 include persons of unknown race or multiple races.
4. U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Population for the United States, Regions and Divisions: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003. Population estimates do not include U.S. dependents, possessions, and associated nations. May not total 100% due to rounding; persons who reported more than one race were included in multiple categories.
5. Estimates includes cases among those 13 years of age and older. Estimates do not include U.S. dependents, possessions, and associated nations, and cases of unknown race.
8. CDC, Data Request, January 2005.
12. CDC, Data Request, November 2004.
13. Estimates do not include U.S. dependents, possessions, and associated nations, and cases of unknown race.

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.

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