

Women and HIV/AIDS in Ontario

Fact Sheet 2011

What is the nature of the HIV epidemic in Ontario?

In 2009, there were an estimated 27,420 people living with HIV in Ontario, of which 5,080 (18%) were women¹. Men who have sex with men (MSM) accounted for 55% of the total number of people living with HIV in Ontario in 2009, people from HIV-endemic countries (primarily African, Caribbean and Black)² accounted for 19%, heterosexuals accounted for 16%, and injection drug users accounted for 7%. In the same year, there were an estimated 1,535 people newly infected with HIV, of which 395 (26%) were women.

What is the nature of the HIV epidemic among women in Ontario?

The nature of the epidemic among women in Ontario is such that it affects mainly African, Caribbean and Black women, injection drug using women and women who engage in high risk sexual activity with men from Ontario's priority at-risk populations.

How is the 'heterosexual' category used in the epidemiology, defined?

The 'heterosexual' category referred to in the epidemiology below, is comprised of women who engage in high risk sexual activity with men from Ontario's priority at-risk populations (i.e. injection drug using men, African, Caribbean and Black men, and/or MSM) as well as some women who were not accurately captured in data tracking. In Ontario's epidemic, a sexual bridge between MSM and women becoming infected with HIV is very rare.

Why using Ontario-specific data in your work is important

Use of national HIV-related data when speaking to clients/stakeholders about your local HIV epidemic can be misleading and presents inaccuracies; the epidemic differs from region to region across Canada, as well as across the globe. Please use the Ontario-specific data provided in this fact sheet, and contact your local health unit(s) for up-to-date HIV-related data for your area.

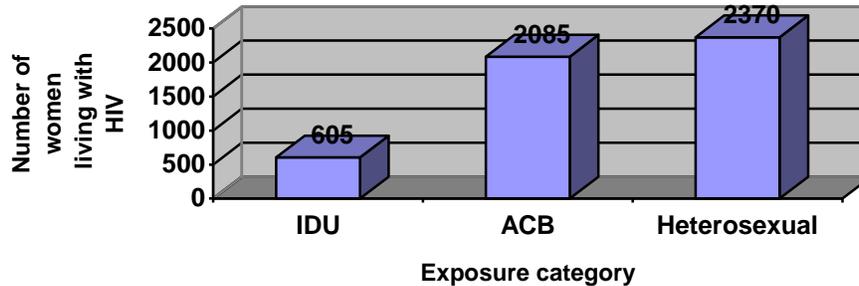
¹ The data used does not distinguish between cis-women and trans-women, but we can assume that both populations are represented in the data.

² This includes African, Caribbean and Black people who were both born in HIV-endemic countries and born in Canada.

Prevalence

Prevalence is the total number of people infected with HIV at a certain point in time, which therefore tells us *how many people are living with HIV*.

Modeled HIV prevalence by exposure category for women, Ontario 2009

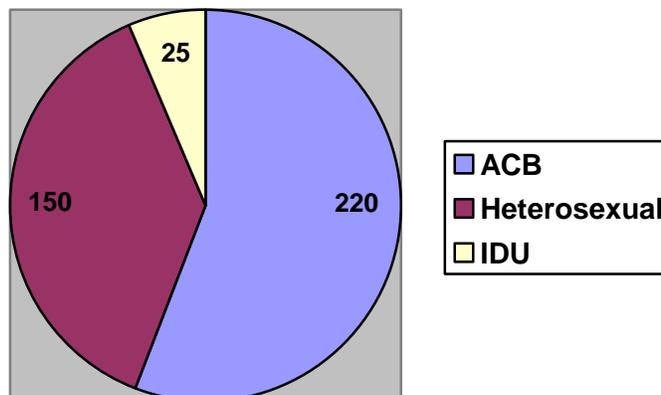


It is estimated that there were 5,080 women living with HIV in Ontario in 2009, which represents 18% of all people living with HIV in Ontario at that time. Of those, women who engaged in high risk sexual activity with men from Ontario’s priority at-risk populations (heterosexual) represented 47% (2,370), African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) women represented 41% (2,085), and injection drug using women (IDU) represented 12% (605).

Incidence

Incidence is the number of new HIV infections in a defined period of time, which therefore tells us *how many people are getting HIV*. Incidence does not refer to how many people are being diagnosed with HIV.

Modeled HIV incidence by exposure category for women, Ontario 2009



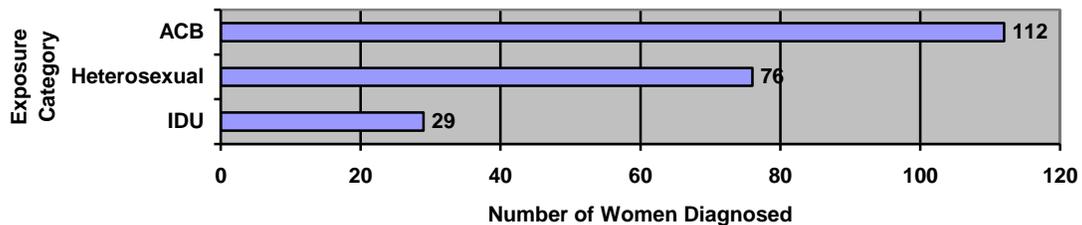
AIDS Bureau, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

It is estimated that there were 395 new infections in women in Ontario in 2009, which represents 26% of all new infections in that year. Of those, African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) women represented 56% (220) of new infections, women who engaged in high risk sexual activity with men from Ontario's priority at-risk populations (heterosexual) represented 38% (150), and injection drug using women (IDU) represented 6% (25).

Diagnosis

Diagnosis is the detection of HIV in someone's blood through HIV testing, which determines that they are HIV positive.

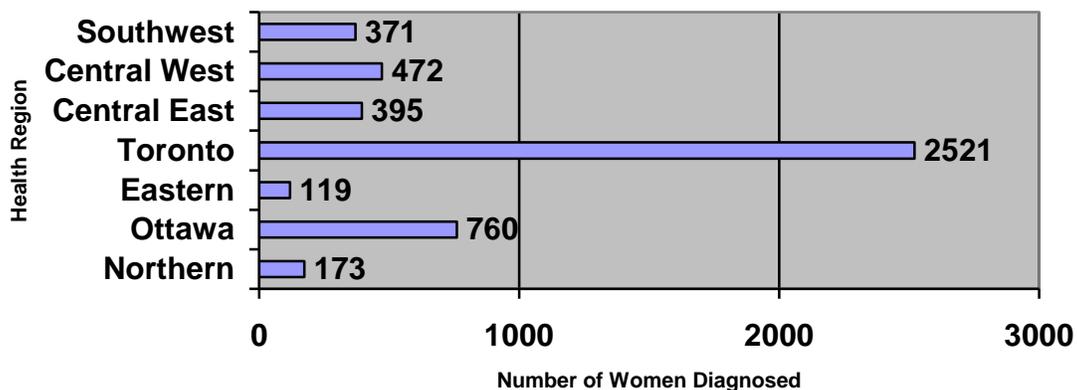
**HIV diagnoses (adjusted) by exposure category in women, Ontario
2009**



In 2009, 232 women were diagnosed with HIV, which represents 23% of all people diagnosed in Ontario during that year. Of those, African, Caribbean and Black (ACB) women represented 48% (112) of new diagnoses, women who engaged in high risk sexual activity with men from Ontario's priority at-risk populations (heterosexual) represented 33% (76), and injection drug using women represented 12% (29).

HIV diagnoses by health region, 1985 to 2009

**Number of HIV diagnoses (adjusted) among women by health region,
Ontario, 1985 to 2009**



Ages of women being diagnosed with HIV (2009)

- 3.2% of women who were diagnosed with HIV in Ontario in 2009 were between the ages of 15 and 19;
- 4.5% were between the ages of 20 and 24;
- 19.8% were between the ages of 25 and 29;
- 19.8% were between the ages of 30 and 34;
- 17.1% were between the ages of 35 and 39;
- 15.3% were between the ages of 40 and 44;
- 9.9% were between the ages of 45 and 49; and
- 2.7% were between the ages of 50 and 54.

HIV Testing

- In 2009, 220,610 women tested for HIV (not including pregnant women), representing 53.2% of all HIV tests, where sex was indicated, in Ontario for that year;
- In 2009, there were an additional 147,995 pregnant women who were tested for HIV, which means that 97.6% of all pregnant women in Ontario in 2009 were tested for HIV;
- Of those 147,995 pregnant women tested, 30 tested HIV positive, however some were previously known to be HIV positive;
- It is estimated that 3 HIV infected infants were born to mothers who were HIV positive in 2009.

How were women in Ontario being reached by the front-line in 2010/11?

- 4,468 women accessed HIV/AIDS support services, which represents 33% of all people accessing support services;
- 161 trans clients accessed HIV/AIDS support services, the majority of which were trans women;
- Additionally, 11,589 women received IDU outreach services, and 9,186 women used IDU in-service programs.

Where do these numbers come from?

This fact sheet uses epidemiology from the *Report on HIV/AIDS in Ontario 2009*, which is based on data from a variety of sources that is compiled and modelled by Dr. Robert Remis, Director of the Ontario HIV Epidemiologic Monitoring Unit at the University of Toronto, and his team. The Unit's epidemiology can be accessed here - <http://www.ohemu.utoronto.ca/>.

Additionally, the AIDS Bureau and the Ontario and Nunavut Regional Office of the Public Health Agency of Canada collaboratively produce the annual Ontario Community HIV and AIDS Reporting Tool (OCHART) report, *The View from the Front Lines*. This report is based on data and information provided twice a year by the community-based HIV/AIDS programs funded by both the AIDS Bureau and the Ontario and Nunavut Regional Office, and can be accessed here – https://www.ochart.ca/documents/Resources_Reports.htm.