

Facts about... HIV/AIDS in young people age 15-29

Summary: Young people age 15-29 comprise about 31% of people diagnosed with HIV in King County, including 2% adolescents 15-19 years old, 10% age 20-24, and 19% age 25-29. Since 1995, an average of four teens and 30 young adults were diagnosed with HIV each year. The majority of infections among young people were in men who have sex with men (MSM). Compared with young adults, however, HIV-infected teens 15-19 years old were more likely to be female and/or to acquire infection heterosexually and less likely to be men who have sex with men. Young MSM have high levels of risky sexual behavior, and about seven percent of 18-29 year old MSM are HIV-infected.

Population:

- The Washington Office of Financial Management population estimates 2006 King County residents include 113,597 who are age 15-19, 135,059 age 20-24, and 148,468 age 25-29.
- Public Health estimates the King County population of gay or bisexual men is about 6% of the male population, or 3,500 age 15-19, 4,000 age 20-24, and 4,500 age 25-29.

Status and trends in HIV/AIDS cases (Table 1):

- As of June 2008, 6,283 King County residents are living with HIV or AIDS and reported to Public Health – Seattle & King County. At the time of diagnosis of HIV infection, 2% were 15-19 years old, 10% were 20-24 years old, and 19% were 25-29 years old.
- Among people 15-19 years old when diagnosed with HIV, 45% were MSM, 30% injected drugs including 20% who were MSM who also injected drugs, 20% had heterosexual risk, and 4% were infected from blood products received before screening began in 1985.
- MSM make up 45% of those diagnosed with HIV at age 15-19, 66% of those diagnosed at age 20-24, and 72% of those diagnosed at age 25-29.
- The average number of King County residents diagnosed with HIV each year is 4 who are age 15-19, 30 age 20-24, and 50 age 25-29.

Table 1: King County residents presumed living with HIV, by age at diagnosis (June 2008)

	15-19 years	20-24 years	25-29 years
Sex			
Male	73%	87%	89%
Female	27%	13%	11%
Race/Ethnicity			
White	70%	63%	69%
African American	14%	17%	15%
Hispanic	11%	12%	11%
Asian & Pacific Islander	4%	4%	4%
Native American	1%	2%	1%
Multi Race	1%	2%	1%
Exposure Category			
Male-male sex	45%	66%	72%
Injection drug (IDU)	10%	5%	3%
Male-male/IDU	20%	11%	10%
Heterosexual sex	20%	12%	9%
Transfusion or hemophilia	4%	1%	<1%
Undetermined/other	2%	5%	5%
Total Cases	111	643	1,168

HIV prevalence of people currently living with HIV (Table 2): As the population living with HIV gets older, the current age of those living with HIV shifts further from the age at diagnosis described above.

- King County residents currently living with HIV as of June 2008 include 14 who are 15-19 years old, 81 who are 20-24 years old, and 307 age 25-29.
- About 0.01% of teens in King County age 15-19, 0.06% of young adults age 20-24, and 0.2% of adults age 25-29 are infected with HIV. This six-fold increased infection rate by 20-24 years of age demonstrates the importance of prevention during the years when young adults become sexually active.
- Several surveys have been conducted to determine HIV prevalence (percentage of people currently infected with HIV) in several specific populations in King County. Each survey and data source listed below has unique features, and results cannot be extrapolated to the general population. Overall these surveys confirm lower prevalence among the youngest age groups, and higher prevalence among MSM.

Table 2: HIV prevalence surveys among youth (1985-2008)

Source of data	Population	Age (yrs.)	HIV+/ No. tested	% HIV+
Young Men's Survey, 1997-1998	MSM recruited at venues	15-18 19-22	1/111 7/257	1.0% 2.7%
Young Men's Survey, 1998-2000	MSM recruited at venues	23-29	22/462	4.8%
National HIV Behavioral Surveillance 2008	MSM recruited at venues	18 - 29	10/144	6.9%
National HIV Behavioral Surveillance 2007	Heterosexuals recruited at venues	18-29	0/236	0%
Military Recruitment Centers ¹ , 1985-2001	Military recruits	<20 20-24	2/24,111 9/13,641	<0.1% 0.1%
Unlinked STD Clinic Survey, 2001-2004 Females and men who have sex with women only	STI testing	<20 20-29	0/295 5/2,314	0.0% 0.2%
Drug Users Intervention Trial, 2002-2004	Female IDU MSM-IDU Non-MSM IDU	15-30 15-30 15-30	0/185 10/51 5/353	0.0% 20.0% 0.5%
PHSKC HIV test sites, 2006-2008	HIV/STD & family planning clients	13-19 20-24	11/2,970 91/6,294	0.4% 1.4%

¹ King, Snohomish and Island counties

Risk behaviors in young gay males:

- The Seattle-area Young Men's Survey in 1997-2000 showed that of MSM who had anal sex in the past six months, 53% of 15-18 year olds had sex without a condom compared to 64% of 19-22 year olds and 62% of 23-29 year olds.
- In the 2008 Seattle-area NHBS-MSM2 study, 31% of 18-29 year old participants reported unprotected anal sex with a male partner of opposite or unknown HIV status.

Other sexually transmitted infections:

- Diagnosis of a sexually transmitted infection (STI) indicates unsafe sexual behavior. The presence of an STI also increases the risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV. Young people continue to have the highest rates of STIs. In King County, the 2007 chlamydia rate was 1,415 per 100,000 for 15-19 year olds, four times the rate among 30-34 year olds (343 per 100,000).