

HIV/AIDS

AND LATINOS IN THE UNITED STATES

Latinos in the United States are disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Latinos account for a large percent of AIDS cases relative to their overall representation in the U.S. population.¹ Latinos represent the second highest case rate of HIV/AIDS in the nation.²

HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC

United States

- Of the 1.2 million people in the U.S. affected by HIV/AIDS, approximately 200,000 are Latino.³
- Although Latinos comprise only 14% of the U.S. population, they account for 19% of the AIDS cases diagnosed in 2006.⁴ Their HIV infection rate is 10 times higher than the U.S. national rate.⁵
- In 2005, HIV/AIDS was the 4th leading cause of death for Latino men and women aged 35-44.⁶
- The AIDS case rate per 100,000 among Latinos is 20.8, the second highest among racial ethnic groups in the U.S.⁷
- Although Latino males have an AIDS case rate of 31.3 per 100,000, more than 3 times greater than Latinas (9.5), Latinas are disproportionately affected in comparison to other female racial/ethnic groups. Latinas have an AIDS case rate 5 times greater than white women (1.9).⁸
- Young adult Latinos age 20-24 are also disproportionately impacted by the epidemic. In 2005, they accounted for 22% of the new AIDS diagnoses reported among young adults, but represented only 18% of the U.S. young adult population.⁹
- HIV/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%).¹⁰

California

- In 2006, Latinos represented 36% of the population in California and 34% of newly diagnosed cases of AIDS. Approximately 70% of Latinos living with AIDS are of Mexican descent.¹¹
- California attracts 28% of all Mexican immigrants in the U.S., most with dependents across the border, as urban day laborers in service or commercial industries.³

IMMIGRATION AND HIV

- Factors such as poor working and living conditions, barriers to health care, low access to public health education, and propensity to engage in more risky behavior when they are in the U.S, place Latino immigrants at higher risk for HIV infection.¹²
- Surveys show that immigrants have low levels of condom knowledge and use, and high participation in prostitution and male-to-male sexual contact.¹³ Additionally, nearly half of HIV positive Mexican immigrants reported having shared needles for the injection of illicit drugs, antibiotics, or vitamins.
- Immigrants often pass through communities along the U.S.-Mexico border where approximately one-third of residents live below poverty levels, under unsanitary conditions, and lack public health assistance resulting in high rates of infectious diseases such as HIV.¹⁴
- One-fourth of the AIDS cases in Mexico are among persons who have spent prolonged periods in the U.S. AIDS statistics in Mexico point toward the ruralization of the disease connected with the migration of men from rural region in Mexico to the U.S.¹⁵
- Areas in Mexico with the highest rates of migration to the U.S. are most affected by HIV/AIDS, suggesting that immigrants who are at higher risk of contracting the disease while in the U.S are likely to be transmitting it when they return to Mexico.¹⁶
- Immigrants have high rates of poverty and a lack of an adequate education that places them at higher risk for HIV infection. The median income of an agricultural worker is \$6,250 compared to the U.S median of \$42,000.¹⁷ The median education attainment for immigrants is the 6th grade.¹⁸
- Immigrants have high rates of being uninsured and low levels of health care utilization, which can deter both testing and treatment of HIV/AIDS. In 2000, 85% of migrant workers were uninsured versus 37% of people nationwide in the U.S. Only 20% of migrant workers reported seeking healthcare in the last two years and only 42% of pregnant migrant women sought prenatal care in the first trimester compared to 76% of the U.S population.¹⁹

CHALLENGES

- The rates of sexually transmitted diseases, which can increase the chances of contracting HIV, are higher for Latinos. Chlamydia infection rates are 3 times higher among Latinos than whites. Rates of gonorrhea and syphilis infection are 2 times higher in Latinos than whites.²⁰
- Latinos were more likely to report postponing medical care due to factors such as lack of transportation. Latinos were also more likely than whites to delay care after HIV diagnosis.²¹
- Latinos tend to be tested for HIV later in their illness. They are more likely than whites to have an AIDS-defining illness at the time of diagnosis or within a year of diagnosis.²²
- Increased acculturation to the U.S. can positively impact Latinos through accepted ways of communication about sexual issues and negatively, through increased engagement in high-risk behavior.²³

POLICY OPPORTUNITIES

As the largest and fastest growing ethnic minority group in the U.S., it is of increased importance that the nation addresses the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on the Latino community.

With increasing travel between Mexico and the U.S, we need to better understand the increased vulnerability to HIV infection incurred through the process of migration, and its impact on home communities in both the U.S. and in Mexico.

Investment in the research of risk and resiliency factors contributing to prevention and acquisition of HIV infection among immigrants, in addition to the creation of a bi-national HIV surveillance program will be the beginning steps to address the growing epidemic. Furthermore, immigrants should be provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate HIV/AIDS education, prevention, and treatment. Given that the U.S. and Mexico are jointly impacted by the epidemic, both nations should continue to work together to ensure that these goals are met.

OCTOBER 2008

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Acknowledgements

This fact sheet was updated with the support of Vicki Tran, UCLA School of Public Health and Veronica Garcia, Health Initiative of the Americas. Layout and