

AIDS – New Zealand

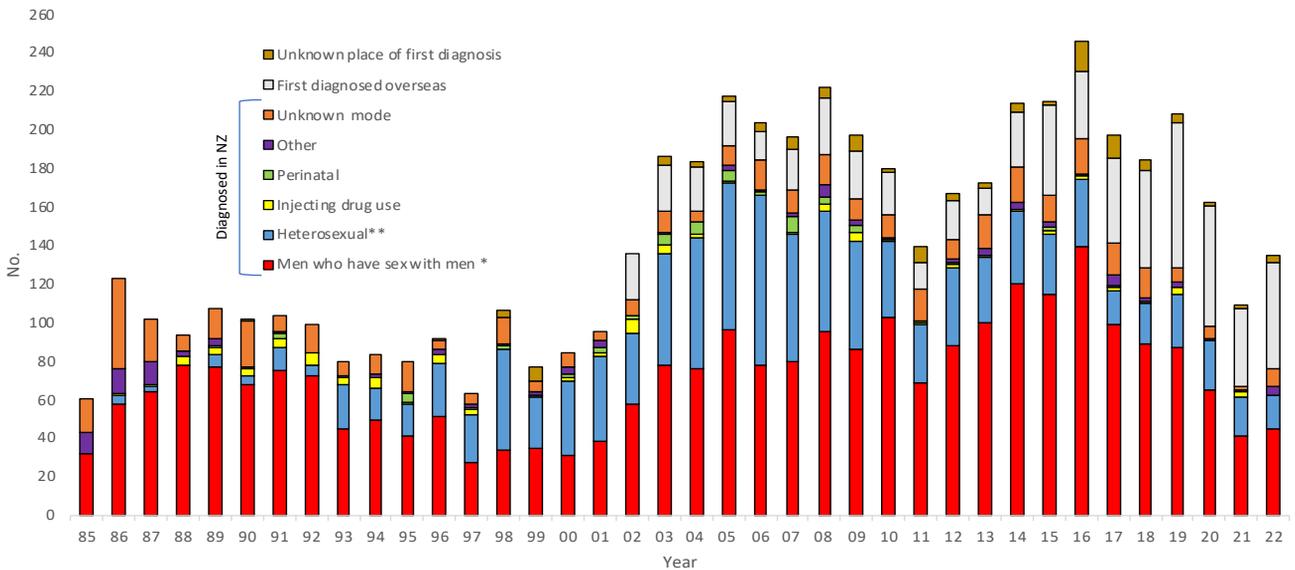


Figure 1. Number of people diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand by year of diagnosis and means of acquisition of HIV and, since 2002, the number of people first diagnosed overseas. (Infection may have occurred a number of years prior to diagnosis) *Includes MSM & injecting drug use (IDU) **Includes Heterosexual & IDU

HIV and AIDS notification data in New Zealand will soon be available for viewing on a dashboard via the AIDS Epidemiology Group website: www.otago.ac.nz/aidsepigroup

HIV notifications in 2022

In 2022, a total of 135 people (109 men, 20 women and six transgender women) were notified with HIV in New Zealand, of whom 76 were first diagnosed in New Zealand, 55 had previously been diagnosed overseas, and for four people the place of first diagnosis was unknown.

Of the 135, 80 were men who have sex with men (MSM), 27 people (16 women, 11 men) had acquired HIV through heterosexual contact, one through perinatal transmission and nine through other means. For the remaining 18 people the means of acquisition was unknown or this information has not yet been received.

The total number notified in 2022 (n=135) represents a slight increase on 2021 (n=109) – mainly due to the increased number previously diagnosed overseas. The number first diagnosed in New Zealand is similar to 2021 and, with the exception of 2021, is the lowest number diagnosed since 2000 (Figure 1).

Of the 76 first diagnosed in New Zealand in 2022, 45 (59%) were MSM, 17 (22%) heterosexual men and women, and for 14 (18%) the means of acquisition was reported as other or unknown – four of whom were transgender women. Different ethnic groups were represented: European (39%), Asian (28%), Māori (17%), Pacific Peoples (9%), African (3%), and Latin American (4%).

HIV diagnoses among gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM)

In 2022, of the 80 MSM notified, 45 were first diagnosed in New Zealand, and 35 had previously been diagnosed overseas.

Figure 2 shows the place of acquisition of HIV for MSM diagnosed in New Zealand. The number of MSM in 2022 who acquired HIV locally (n=34) increased slightly after the continued decline since the peak in 2016 (n=97). Despite this slight increase, with the exception of 2021, it is the lowest number of locally acquired infections since 2002. Nine MSM were reported in 2022 to have acquired HIV overseas which was similar to the number in the previous two years, but a decline from the annual average of 26 over the five years from 2015 to 2019.

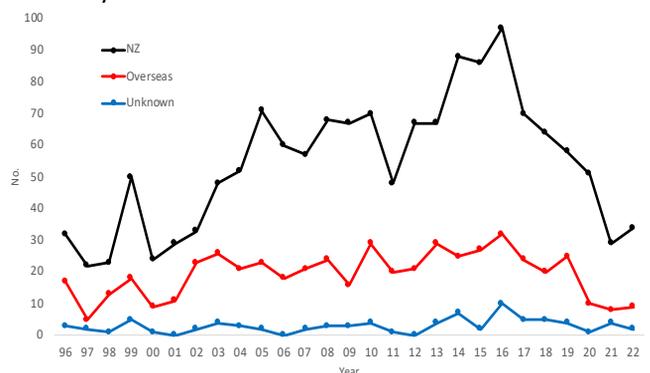


Figure 2. Place of acquisition of HIV of MSM first diagnosed in New Zealand

To give an indication of the stage of HIV infection at diagnosis we report the initial CD4 lymphocyte count of the 34 MSM with NZ-acquired HIV diagnosed in 2022. Ten (29%) had a CD4 count more than 500 cells/mm³ indicating they were diagnosed within about 14 months following infection, five (15%) had a CD4 count between 350-499, 18 (53%) less than 350 indicating longer periods between infection and diagnosis, and for one (3%) person the initial CD4 count information was unavailable. Of the 18 with a low CD4 count, just over half (56%) were aged 50 or more at the time of diagnosis.

Of all 45 MSM diagnosed in New Zealand in 2022:

- 19 (42%) were European, 13 (29%) Asian, six (13%) Māori, three (7%) Pacific Peoples, and four (9%) Latin American or African ethnicity.
- 18 (40%) were living in the greater Auckland region, eight (18%) in the lower North Island, four (9%) in other parts of the North Island, and seven (16%) in the South Island. For three (7%) men, although diagnosed in New Zealand, their usual place of residence was overseas, and for five (11%) men their region of residence was New Zealand but not stated where, or was unknown.
- The age range at diagnosis was 18-86 years; 13 (29%) were aged less than 30 years, 11 (24%) aged 30-39 years, 7 (16%) aged 40-49 years, and 14 (31%) aged 50 or more. Infection may have occurred at a younger age than when it was diagnosed.

Of the 35 MSM notified in 2022 who were first diagnosed overseas:

- 11 (31%) were European, nine (26%) Asian, five (14%) African, five (14%) Latin American, three (9%) Māori, and two (6%) for whom the ethnicity was not reported.

HIV diagnoses among people with heterosexually acquired HIV

In 2022, there were 27 people notified with HIV who had acquired HIV heterosexually. Of these 27, 17 were first diagnosed in New Zealand and 10 had previously been diagnosed overseas.

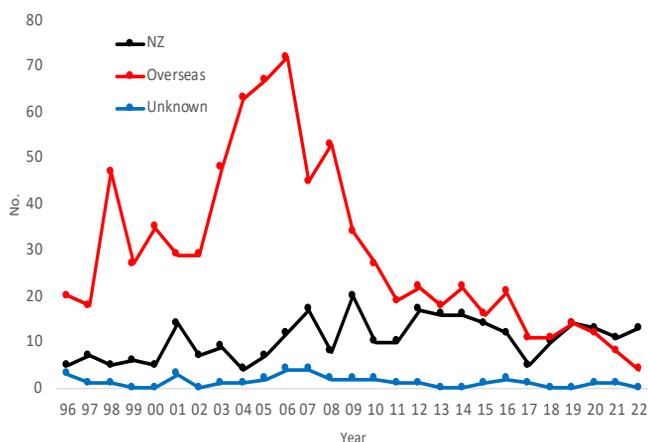


Figure 3. Place of acquisition of HIV of people first diagnosed in New Zealand with heterosexually acquired HIV

Of the 17 people diagnosed in New Zealand whose HIV was heterosexually acquired:

- Nine (53%) were women and eight (47%) men.
- Eight (47%) were European, four (24%) Māori, four (24%) Asian, and one (6%) of other ethnicity.
- The age range at diagnosis was 26-70 years; 10 (59%) were aged less than 40 years, five (29%) aged 40-49 years, and two (12%) aged 50 or more. Infection may have occurred at a younger age than when it was diagnosed.

Figure 3 shows the place of acquisition of HIV for heterosexual men and women first diagnosed in New Zealand. The number acquired in New Zealand has stayed relatively stable over the past 10 years whereas the number who acquired HIV overseas has declined.

Of the 13 heterosexual men and women whose HIV was acquired in New Zealand in 2022, six (46%) had a CD4 count at the time of diagnosis of >500 cells/mm³, one (8%) between 350-499, and six (46%) <350.

People who inject drugs (PWID)

The number of people diagnosed with HIV whose likely means of infection was reported as injecting drug use has remained low (Figure 4). In 2022, two people were reported as having acquired HIV through either injecting drug use or heterosexual sex, and one man through either injecting drug use or sex with a man. Of these three people, all had acquired HIV in New Zealand.

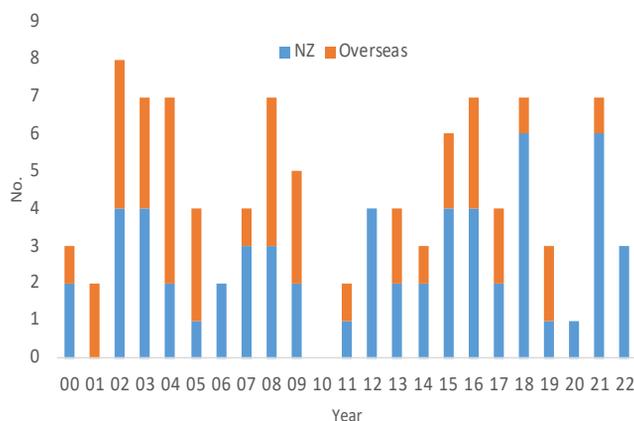


Figure 4. Place of acquisition of people diagnosed in New Zealand who reported injecting drug use

Children infected through mother-to-child transmission

Since 2007, there have been no children with perinatally-acquired HIV born in New Zealand.

Between 1998-2022, there have been 209 births to women known to have HIV prior to delivery in New Zealand. None of these children have acquired HIV. However, for children born more recently in 2022 it is too soon to be sure about this as acquired HIV cannot be definitively ruled out until a child is over one year old.

The number of people living with HIV in New Zealand

The number of individuals living with diagnosed HIV in New Zealand will be less than the total ever found to be infected because of deaths from AIDS and non-AIDS related causes and the unknown number who have gone overseas.

Data from PHARMAC, New Zealand's pharmaceutical management agency, show that there were 3033 people receiving subsidised antiretroviral therapy (ART) at the end of June 2022.

AIDS diagnoses

Eighteen people (14 men, three women, and one transgender), were diagnosed with AIDS in 2022 (Figure 5). Of these, eight (44%) were men who acquired HIV through sex with men, five (28%) were heterosexually acquired, one (5%) through injecting drug use, and the means of acquisition was other or unknown for four (22%) people.

Five (28%) were European, six (33%) Asian, three Māori (17%), three (17%) Pacific Peoples, and one (5%) was of other ethnicity. Thirteen (72%) had their AIDS diagnosis

within three months of being diagnosed with HIV and would not have had the opportunity for antiretroviral treatment to control progression of their HIV infection.

Two deaths from AIDS were reported in 2022 (Figure 5). It is possible, however, that this number could rise due to delayed reports.

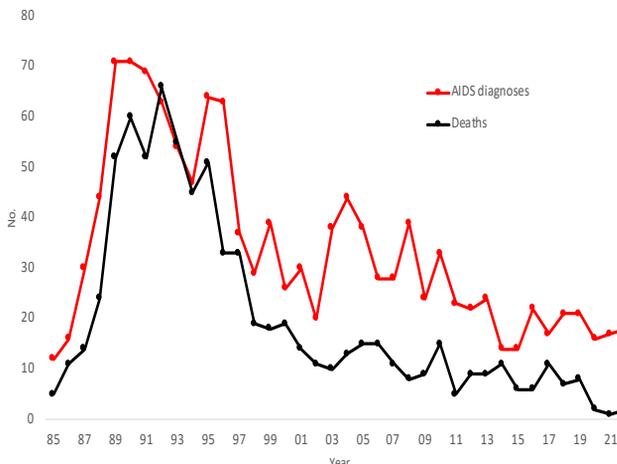


Figure 5. Annual number of diagnoses of AIDS and deaths among people notified with AIDS (The number of notifications and deaths for 2022 are expected to rise due to delayed reports)

Summary of trends of HIV in New Zealand

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM)

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men continue to be the most affected by HIV infection in New Zealand, accounting for 64% of all locally acquired HIV diagnoses in 2022.

The number of MSM who acquired HIV in New Zealand in 2022 has increased only slightly from 2021 which was the lowest number reported in twenty years and will, in part, have been affected by less transmission due to COVID-19 physical distancing measures and more limited testing access. It is therefore encouraging that the number has not greatly increased since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions.

The age range of MSM diagnosed in New Zealand was from 18 to 86 years, and included MSM of all ethnicities, showing the importance of delivering prevention efforts to people of all ages and ethnicities and ensuring testing services are non-judgemental and culturally safe. Prevention efforts include:

- Condom use
- Increasing uptake and adherence to PrEP
- Regular HIV testing and rapid linkage to care to enable viral suppression for best clinical outcomes and prevention of ongoing transmission
- Testing for other sexually transmitted infections

Heterosexual men and women

The number of heterosexual men and women diagnosed with locally acquired HIV continues to remain stable with an average of 12 people per year over the past 10 years. The number of heterosexual people who acquired HIV overseas has declined.

Among those with heterosexually acquired HIV in New Zealand in 2022, there continues to be a high proportion (46%) with a low CD4 count at the time of diagnosis who are considered to be a late diagnosis. It is therefore important for clinicians to test for HIV in people with compatible clinical features, even if there does not appear to be any apparent risk factors.

People who inject drugs

The number of people whose HIV was acquired through injecting drug use continues to be small in New Zealand with only three people being diagnosed in 2022 who reported acquiring HIV through either injecting drug use or sexual contact.

Table 1. Exposure category by time of diagnosis for people first diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand and by time of notification for people who were previously diagnosed overseas

	Exposure category	HIV notifications*							
		1985-2016		2017-2021		2022		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex									
Male	Male-to-male sex (MSM)	2598	56.3	564	65.6	77	57.0	3239	57.7
	MSM & injecting drug use	57	1.2	11	1.3	3	2.2	71	1.3
	Heterosexual contact	581	12.6	79	9.2	11	8.1	671	12
	Injecting drug use	76	1.6	10	1.2	0	0.0	86	1.5
	Blood product recipient	34	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	34	0.6
	Transfusion recipient ^a	15	0.3	2	0.2	0	0.0	17	0.3
	Perinatal	40	0.9	1	0.1	0	0.0	41	0.7
	Other	11	0.2	4	0.5	3	2.2	18	0.3
	Unknown	432	9.4	71	8.3	15	11.1	518	9.2
Female	Heterosexual contact	601	13.0	84	9.8	16	11.9	701	12.5
	Injecting drug use	14	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	0.2
	Transfusion recipient ^a	10	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	0.2
	Perinatal	20	0.4	3	0.3	1	0.7	24	0.4
	Other	20	0.4	1	0.1	0	0.0	21	0.4
	Unknown	68	1.5	18	2.1	3	2.2	89	1.6
Transgender^b	Total	21	0.5	12	1.4	6	4.4	39	0.7
Unknown	Transfusion recipient	5	0.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	0.1
	Unknown	13	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	13	0.2
TOTAL		4616	100.0	860	100.0	135	100.0	5611	100

* Includes people who have developed AIDS. HIV numbers are recorded by time of diagnosis for those reported through antibody testing and by time of first viral load for those who have initially been diagnosed overseas and not had an antibody test here. The date of initial diagnosis may have preceded the viral load date by months or years.

^a All people in this category, diagnosed since 1996, infection was acquired overseas.

^b More detailed information on transgender people has been obtained since 2017 from which time all but two identified as trans women

Table 2. Ethnicity* by time of diagnosis for people first diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand and by time of first notification for people who were previously diagnosed overseas

	Ethnicity	HIV notifications**							
		1996-2016		2017-2021		2022		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex									
Male	European	1713	47.9	355	41.3	40	29.6	2108	46.1
	Māori ^a	239	6.7	74	8.6	13	9.6	326	7.1
	Pacific Peoples	88	2.5	38	4.4	4	3.0	130	2.8
	African	270	7.6	18	2.1	10	7.4	298	6.5
	Asian	373	10.4	151	17.6	30	22.2	554	12.1
	Other	99	2.8	67	7.8	9	6.7	175	3.8
	Unknown	137	3.8	39	4.5	3	2.2	179	3.9
Female	European	137	3.8	31	3.6	5	3.7	173	3.8
	Māori ^a	29	0.8	9	1.0	2	1.5	40	0.9
	Pacific Peoples	35	1.0	7	0.8	2	1.5	44	1.0
	African	282	7.9	16	1.9	3	2.2	301	6.6
	Asian	126	3.5	35	4.1	3	2.2	164	3.6
	Other	13	0.4	2	0.2	2	1.5	17	0.4
	Unknown	21	0.6	6	0.7	3	2.2	30	0.7
Transgender^b	Total	14	0.4	12	1.4	6	4.4	32	0.7
Unknown		0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL		3576	100.0	860	100.0	135	100.0	4571	100.0

* Information on ethnicity of people diagnosed with HIV only collected since 1996.

** Includes people who have developed AIDS. HIV numbers are recorded by time of diagnosis for those reported through antibody testing and by time of first viral load for those who have initially been diagnosed overseas and not had an antibody test here. The date of initial diagnosis may have preceded the viral load date by months or years.

^a Includes people who identify as Māori and another ethnicity.

^b More detailed information on transgender people has been obtained since 2017 from which time all but two identified as trans women

For further information about the occurrence of HIV/AIDS in New Zealand, contact:
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