



Canada's source for  
HIV and hepatitis C  
information

La source canadienne  
de renseignements sur  
le VIH et l'hépatite C

From *HIV in Canada: A primer for service providers*

## Indigenous people

### Key Points

- There were an estimated 1,400,685 Indigenous people in Canada in 2011.
- Indigenous people were 2.7 times more likely to get HIV than people of other ethnicities in Canada in 2014.
- Indigenous people accounted for an estimated 11% of new HIV infections in 2014.
- HIV incidence may have decreased slightly in Indigenous people since 2011.
- Injection drug use is an important risk factor for HIV transmission among Indigenous people.
- Indigenous people accounted for an estimated 9% of all Canadians living with HIV in 2014.
- Five percent of Indigenous people are HIV positive (based on a pilot A-Track site in Regina).

There were an estimated 1,400,685 Indigenous people in Canada in 2011. This accounts for 4.3% of the Canadian population.

Indigenous people in Canada are 2.7 times more likely to get HIV than people of other ethnicities in Canada. According to national 2014 estimates, there were 18.2 new HIV infections for every 100,000 Indigenous people in Canada. This compares to only 6.7 new HIV infections for every 100,000 people of other ethnicities in Canada.

An estimated 278 new infections occurred in Indigenous people in 2014 (11% of new HIV infections). HIV incidence may have decreased slightly in Indigenous populations since 2011, when an estimated 349 new HIV infections occurred.

Injection drug use is an important risk factor for HIV transmission within the Indigenous community. In 2014, an estimated 45% of new HIV infections among Indigenous people were attributed to injection drug use; an estimated 40% were attributed to heterosexual contact; an estimated 10% were attributed to sex between men; and an estimated 4% were attributed to sex between men or injection drug use (in men who reported engaging in both behaviours). We can tell from these numbers that the epidemic among Indigenous people in Canada is very different than among non-Indigenous people.

An estimated 6,850 Indigenous people were living with HIV at the end of 2014, accounting for 9% of HIV infections in Canada (prevalence). IndigenousIndigenousIndigenousIndigenousIndigenous

Caution should be used, however, when drawing conclusions from the numbers reported for Indigenous peoples. An adequate description of the HIV epidemic among Indigenous people in Canada requires accurate and complete access to ethnicity data. Ethnicity data are not available for all provinces and territories. As a result, only data from certain

provinces and territories (all but Ontario and Quebec) are used when examining HIV diagnoses data on Indigenous people.

A-Track collects dried blood spot samples to test for HIV (2012). Five percent of Indigenous people enrolled in the study tested positive for HIV. Interestingly, only 56% of participants, who tested positive for HIV, were aware of their status. It should be noted that this A-Track data is from only one pilot site in Regina and may not represent all Indigenous people in Canada.

According to A-Track, among those who self-reported they were HIV positive, 87% reported being under the care of a doctor for their HIV and 67% reported ever taking prescribed drugs for their HIV.

In Canada, Indigenous populations are very diverse, with communities that reflect variations in historical backgrounds, language and cultural traditions. These communities are disproportionately affected by many social,

economic and cultural factors ([determinants of health](#)) that increase their vulnerability to HIV infection.

## Resources

[The epidemiology of HIV in Canada](#) – CATIE fact sheet

[Summary: Estimates of HIV Incidence, Prevalence and Proportion Undiagnosed in Canada, 2014](#) – Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC)

[HIV/AIDS Epi Updates Chapter 8: HIV/AIDS among Aboriginal people in Canada](#) – PHAC

[HIV/AIDS in Canada](#) – CATIE infographic

[People living with HIV in Canada](#) – CATIE infographic

[New HIV infections in Canada](#) – CATIE infographic

[Where is HIV hitting hardest?](#) – CATIE infographic

[HIV in Canada](#) – PHAC infographic

## Sources

1. Statistics Canada. *Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit* . 2013. Available at: <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>
2. Public Health Agency of Canada. *Summary: Estimates of HIV Incidence, Prevalence and Proportion Undiagnosed in Canada, 2014*. Ottawa: Surveillance and Epidemiology Division, Professional Guidelines and Public Health Practice Division, Centre for Communicable Diseases and Infection Control, PHAC; 2015. Available at: <http://www.catie.ca/en/resources/summary-estimates-hiv-incidence-prevalence-and-proportion-undiagnosed-canada-2014>
3. Public Health Agency of Canada. *HIV in Canada: Surveillance summary tables, 2014–2015* . 5. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/hiv-in-canada-surveillance-summary-tables-2014-2015.html>
4. Public Health Agency of Canada. *Summary of key findings from the A-Track pilot survey (2011–2012)* . Available at: <http://www.catie.ca/en/resources/summary-key-findings-track-pilot-survey-conducted-regina-saskatchewan>

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Decisions about particular medical treatments should always be made in consultation with a qualified medical practitioner knowledgeable about HIV- and hepatitis C-related illness and the treatments in question.

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