



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*

Heterosexual transmission

Key Points

- Heterosexual transmission accounted for an estimated 33% of new HIV infections in 2016.
- Heterosexual transmission accounted for an estimated 33% of all Canadians with HIV in 2016 (prevalence).
- People from countries where HIV is endemic are over-represented in the Canadian HIV epidemic.

Heterosexual transmission occurs in people from both HIV-endemic countries and non-HIV-endemic countries in Canada. For the purpose of HIV surveillance, HIV-endemic countries are generally defined as those that have an adult prevalence of HIV that is 1% or greater and one of the following:

- 50% or more of HIV diagnoses are attributed to heterosexual transmission;
- the male-to-female ratio of people with HIV is 2:1 or less; or
- the HIV prevalence is 2% or greater among females receiving prenatal care.

Examples of regions where HIV is considered endemic include sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.

The 2016 estimates of HIV prevalence and incidence indicate that heterosexual exposure to HIV represents a substantial proportion of the HIV epidemic in Canada.

An estimated 719 new HIV infections (33% of all new infections in Canada) were attributed to heterosexual contact in 2016. This estimate includes an estimated 294 new infections (14%) attributed to heterosexual sex in people from a country where HIV is endemic and 425 (20%) new infections attributed to heterosexual sex in people from a country where HIV is not endemic. HIV incidence has increased in the heterosexual population in Canada since 2014. In 2014, the estimated number of new HIV infections attributed to heterosexual contact was 641.

People from HIV-endemic countries (residing in Canada) are over-represented in the HIV epidemic. This group accounted for an estimated 14% of new HIV infections in 2016 but only comprised 2.5% of Canada's population in 2011.

Heterosexual transmission accounted for an estimated 33% of all Canadians with HIV in 2016 (20,543 people). Of these, 9,438 people (15% of all people with HIV) were from a country where HIV is endemic (primarily countries in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean).

The epidemiological picture for people from countries where HIV is endemic includes transmission through heterosexual contact only and does not include people exposed to HIV through injection drug use or men who have sex with men who are from an HIV-endemic country.

The communities of people from countries where HIV is endemic are diverse, reflecting variations in historical backgrounds, language and cultural traditions. These communities are disproportionately affected by many social, economic and behavioural factors ([determinants of health](#)) that not only increase their vulnerability to HIV but may also act as barriers to accessing prevention, testing, treatment, and care and support programs.

Resources

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

[Summary: Estimates of HIV incidence, prevalence and Canada's progress on meeting the 90-90-90 HIV targets, 2016](#) – Public Health Agency of Canada

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

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

[HIV in Canada](#)  - PHAC infographic

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

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

Sources

Public Health Agency of Canada. *Summary: Estimates of HIV Incidence, Prevalence and Canada's Progress on Meeting the 90-90-90 HIV targets, 2016*. Public Health Agency of Canada, 2018. Available from: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/summary-estimates-hiv-incidence-prevalence-canadas-progress-90-90-90.html>

Produced By:



Canada's source for
HIV and hepatitis C
information

555 Richmond Street West, Suite 505, Box 1104
Toronto, Ontario M5V 3B1 Canada
Phone: 416.203.7122
Toll-free: 1.800.263.1638
Fax: 416.203.8284
www.catie.ca
Charitable registration number: 13225 8740 RR

Disclaimer

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.

CATIE provides information resources to help people living with HIV and/or hepatitis C who wish to manage their own health care in partnership with their care providers. Information accessed through or published or provided by CATIE, however, is not to be considered medical advice. We do not recommend or advocate particular treatments and we urge users to consult as broad a range of sources as possible. We strongly urge users to consult with a qualified medical practitioner prior to undertaking any decision, use or action of a medical nature.

CATIE endeavours to provide the most up-to-date and accurate information at the time of publication. However, information changes and users are encouraged to ensure they have the most current information. Users relying solely on this information do so entirely at their own risk. Neither CATIE nor any of its partners or funders, nor any of their employees, directors, officers or volunteers may be held liable for damages of any kind that may result from the use or misuse of any such information. Any opinions expressed herein or in any article or publication accessed or published or provided by CATIE may not reflect the policies or opinions of CATIE or any partners or funders.

Information on safer drug use is presented as a public health service to help people make healthier choices to reduce the spread of HIV, viral hepatitis and other infections. It is not intended to encourage or promote the use or possession of illegal drugs.

Permission to Reproduce

This document is copyrighted. It may be reprinted and distributed in its entirety for non-commercial purposes without prior permission, but permission must be obtained to edit its content. The following credit must appear on any reprint: *This information was provided by CATIE (the Canadian AIDS Treatment Information Exchange). For more information, contact CATIE at 1.800.263.1638.*

© CATIE

Production of this content has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada.

Available online at:
<https://www.catie.ca/en/hiv-canada/2/2-3/2-3-3>