

HIV & AIDS – New Zealand

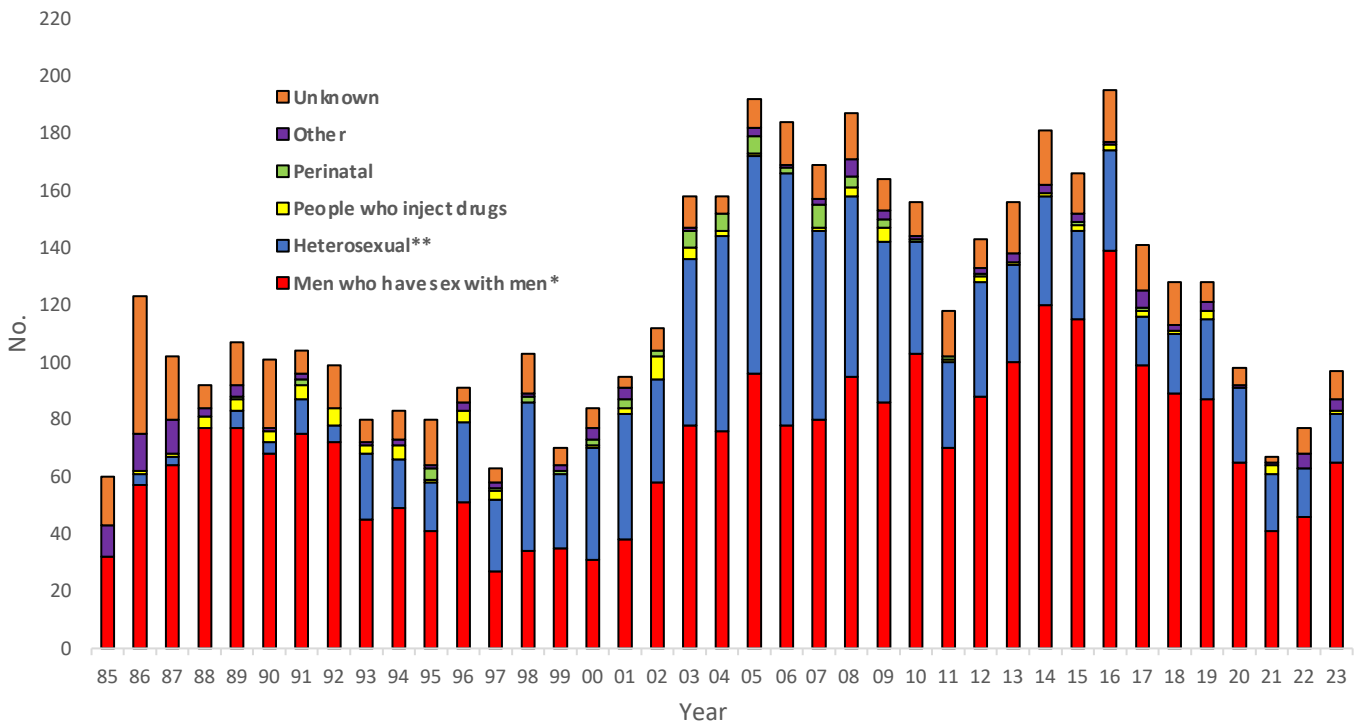


Figure 1. Number of people diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand by year of diagnosis and means of acquisition of HIV

*Includes MSM & people who inject drugs (PWID) **Includes Heterosexual & PWID

People diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand in 2023

In 2023, 97 people (82 men, 14 women, and one transgender woman) were diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand.

Of the 97 diagnosed, 65 (67%) were men who have sex with men (MSM), 17 (18%) had acquired HIV through heterosexual contact, and for the remaining 15 (15%) the means of acquisition was reported as other or unknown. Ethnic groups represented were: European (29%), Asian (25%), Māori (20%), Pacific Peoples (12%), Latin American (7%), and African (5%).

The total number diagnosed in 2023 (n=97) is higher than the previous two years (2021 and 2022) but is lower than the annual average of 138 over the five years prior to that (2016-2020) (Figure 1).

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

In 2023, 65 MSM were diagnosed in New Zealand, of whom 43 had acquired HIV locally, 17 overseas, and for five people the place of acquisition was unknown (Figure 2).

The number of MSM in 2023 with locally-acquired HIV (n=43) increased from the previous two years but continues to be lower than the preceding years and the decline since the peak in 2016 (n=97) has been sustained. The 17 MSM with overseas acquired HIV was also higher than in the previous three years, but a decline from the annual average of 26 over the five years prior to that (2015 to 2019).

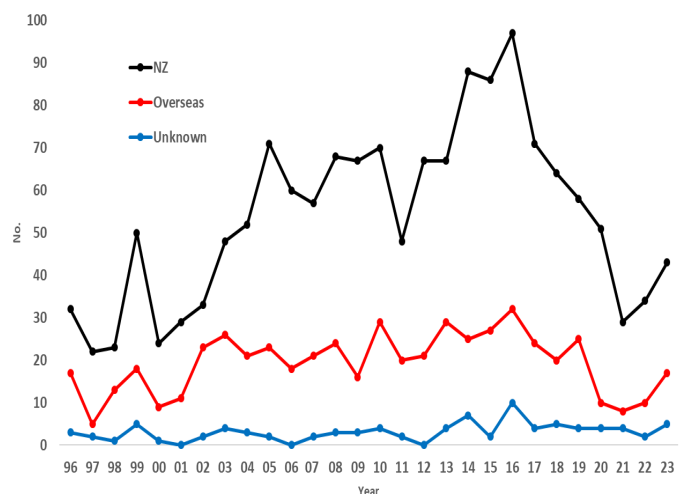


Figure 2. Place of acquisition of HIV of MSM first diagnosed in New Zealand

To give an indication of the stage of HIV infection at diagnosis we report the initial CD4 lymphocyte count of the 43 MSM with locally-acquired HIV diagnosed in 2023. Nineteen (44%) had a CD4 count more than 500 cells/mm³ indicating they were diagnosed within about 14 months following infection, six (14%) had a CD4 count between 350-499, 15 (35%) less than 350 indicating they were diagnosed late, and for three (7%) people the initial CD4 count information was unavailable.

Of all 65 MSM diagnosed in New Zealand in 2023:

- 19 (29%) were European, 15 (23%) Asian, 13 (20%) Māori, 10 (15%) Pacific Peoples, and eight (12%) Latin American or African ethnicity.
- 25 (38%) were living in the greater Auckland region, 11 (17%) in the lower North Island, nine (14%) in other parts of the North Island, and six (9%) in the South Island. For 14 (22%) men their region of residence was New Zealand but not stated where, or was unknown.
- The age range at diagnosis was 19-75 years; 29 (45%) were aged less than 30 years, 21 (32%) aged 30-39 years, six (9%) aged 40-49 years, and nine (14%) aged 50 or more. Infection may have occurred at a younger age than when it was diagnosed.

HIV diagnoses among people with heterosexually acquired HIV

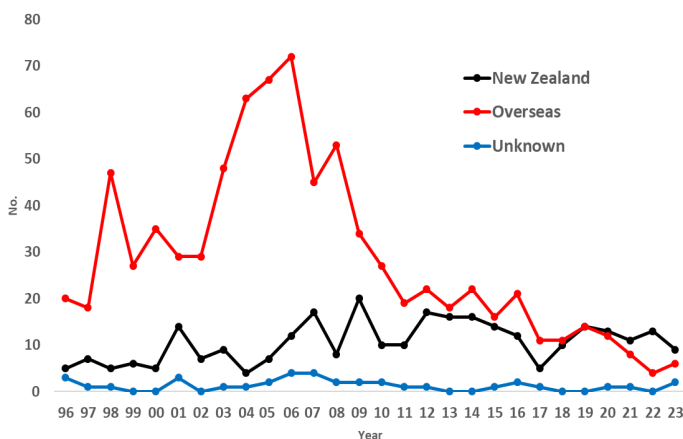


Figure 3. Place of acquisition of HIV of people first diagnosed in New Zealand with heterosexually acquired HIV

In 2023, there were 17 (10 women and 7 men) people first diagnosed in New Zealand whose HIV was heterosexually acquired. Of these 17 people:

- Eight (47%) were European, four (24%) Māori, and the remaining five (29%) were of other African and Asian ethnicities.
- The age range at diagnosis was 20-71 years; nine (53%) were aged less than 40 years, and eight (47%) aged 40 or more. Infection may have occurred at a younger age than when it was diagnosed.

The number acquired in New Zealand has stayed relatively stable over the past 10 years whereas the number who acquired HIV overseas has declined (Figure 3).

Of the nine men and women whose HIV was acquired heterosexually in New Zealand in 2023, six (67%) had a CD4 count at the time of diagnosis of >500 cells/mm³ indicating they were diagnosed within about 14 months following infection, one (11%) between 350-499, and two (22%) <350 indicating they were diagnosed late.

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. In 2023, three people indicated injecting drug use as a possible means of infection, of whom, two had acquired HIV in New Zealand.

Children infected through perinatal transmission

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

Between 1998-2023, there have been 215 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 2023 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.

Notifications in 2023 of people with HIV first diagnosed overseas

In 2023, there were also 123 people (102 men and 21 women) notified with HIV who had been first diagnosed overseas, and for 14 people the place of first diagnosis was unknown or the information is awaiting. The majority of the 123 people diagnosed overseas were either MSM (52%), or heterosexual men and women (24%). Ethnic groups represented were: Asian (33%), Latin American (24%), African (23%), European (12%), Māori (2%), and Pacific Peoples (2%).

The number first diagnosed overseas represents a significant increase from earlier years (Figure 4).

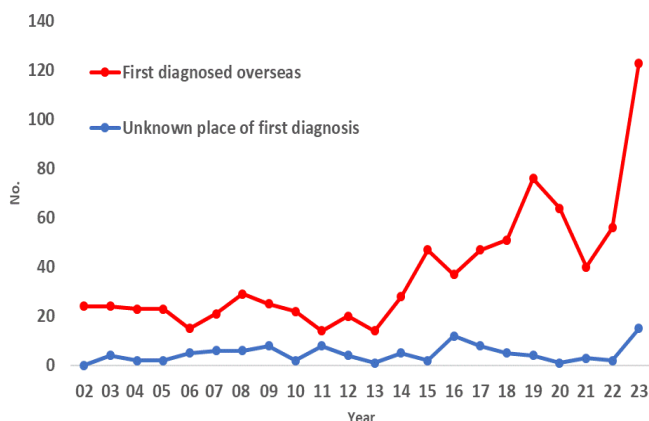


Figure 4. Notifications of people with HIV first diagnosed overseas

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 3272 people receiving subsidised antiretroviral therapy (ART) at the end of June 2023.

AIDS diagnoses

Fourteen people (nine men and five women), were diagnosed with AIDS in 2023 (Figure 5). Of these, seven (50%) were men who acquired HIV through sex with men, five (36%) were heterosexually acquired, and the means of acquisition was other or unknown for two (14%) people.

Six (43%) were European, four Māori (29%), and the remaining four (29%) were of other ethnicities. Eleven (79%) 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.

Six deaths from AIDS were reported in 2023 (Figure 5). It is possible, however, that this number could rise due to delayed reports.

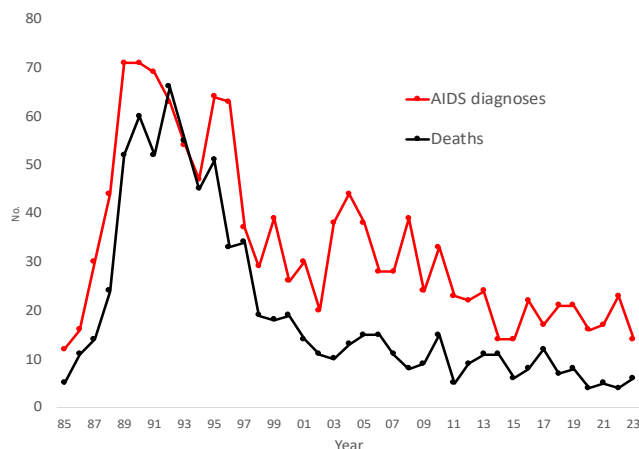


Figure 5. Annual number of diagnoses of AIDS and deaths among people notified with AIDS (The number of notifications and deaths for 2023 are expected to rise due to delayed reports)

Summary of trends of HIV in New Zealand

HIV diagnoses

The trend in the number of people first diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand, and those who are reported to have acquired HIV in New Zealand, particularly amongst MSM, continues to decline. This is despite the number in 2023 being slightly higher than in the previous two years which were likely affected by less transmission due to COVID-19 physical distancing measures and more limited testing access.

HIV notifications of people first diagnosed overseas

2023 saw the highest number of people notified with HIV who were first diagnosed overseas (n=123). These were people mostly from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. The majority (92%) had an undetectable viral load indicating they are on antiretroviral treatment and therefore cannot pass HIV on sexually.

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 80% of all locally acquired HIV diagnoses in 2023.

The number of MSM who acquired HIV in New Zealand in 2023 increased from the previous two years of 2021 and 2022, but continues to be less than the annual average of 68 over the five years prior to that (2016 to 2020), and the decline since the peak in 2016 (n=97) has been sustained.

The age range of MSM diagnosed in New Zealand was from 19 to 75 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.

Heterosexual men and women

The number of men and women first diagnosed and who acquired HIV heterosexually in New Zealand continues to remain stable with an average of 12 people per year over the past 10 years. The number of people diagnosed in New Zealand but who acquired HIV heterosexually overseas has declined.

In previous years amongst those with heterosexually acquired HIV in New Zealand there has been a high proportion of people with a low CD4 count at the time of diagnosis indicating a late diagnosis. In 2023, this proportion was lower (22% compared to average of 39% over the previous five years). Nevertheless, it is 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 (PWID)

There continues to be a very low number of people whose HIV was acquired through injecting drug use in New Zealand.

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

		HIV Infection*							
		1985-2017		2018-2022		2023		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex	Exposure category								
Male	Male-to-male sex (MSM)	2725	56.7	514	64.3	127	54.0	3366	57.6
	MSM & injecting drug use	59	1.2	12	1.5	2	0.9	73	1.2
	Heterosexual contact	593	12.3	78	9.8	24	10.2	695	11.9
	Injecting drug use	78	1.6	8	1.0	1	0.4	87	1.5
	Blood product recipient	33	0.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	33	0.6
	Transfusion recipient ^a	16	0.3	2	0.3	0	0.0	18	0.3
	Perinatal	40	0.8	1	0.1	3	1.3	44	0.8
	Other	13	0.3	5	0.6	3	1.3	21	0.4
	Unknown	452	9.4	67	8.4	37	15.7	556	9.5
Female	Heterosexual contact	615	12.8	87	10.9	24	10.2	726	12.4
	Injecting drug use	14	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	14	0.2
	Transfusion recipient ^a	11	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.4	12	0.2
	Perinatal	22	0.5	2	0.3	1	0.4	25	0.4
	Other	20	0.4	1	0.1	3	1.3	24	0.4
	Unknown	75	1.6	9	1.1	8	3.4	92	1.6
Transgender^b	Total	25	0.5	14	1.8	1	0.4	40	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		4809	100.0	800	100.0	235	100.0	5844	100.0

* 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 day 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

		HIV Infection**							
		1996-2017		2018-2022		2023		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sex	Ethnicity								
Male	European	1798	47.7	311	38.9	35	14.9	2144	44.6
	Māori ^a	248	6.6	79	9.9	18	7.7	345	7.2
	Pacific Islander	96	2.5	34	4.3	14	6.0	144	3.0
	African	276	7.3	22	2.8	23	9.8	321	6.7
	Asian	406	10.8	148	18.5	55	23.4	609	12.7
	MELA ^b	109	2.9	67	8.4	36	15.3	212	4.4
	Unknown	152	4.0	26	3.3	16	6.8	194	4.0
Female	European	141	3.7	32	4.0	8	3.4	181	3.8
	Māori ^a	31	0.8	9	1.1	3	1.3	43	0.9
	Pacific Islander	36	1.0	9	1.1	1	0.4	46	1.0
	African	284	7.5	17	2.1	10	4.3	311	6.5
	Asian	136	3.6	28	3.5	9	3.8	173	3.6
	MELA ^b	14	0.4	3	0.4	2	0.9	19	0.4
	Unknown	25	0.7	1	0.1	4	1.7	30	0.6
Transgender^c	Total	18	0.5	14	1.8	1	0.4	33	0.7
Unknown		0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL		3770	100.0	800	100.0	235	100.0	4805	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 MELA: Middle Eastern and Latin American

^c 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 or AIDS in New Zealand, contact:
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