

# First ever state-level primary and secondary syphilis report shows highest cases among MSM

November 2 2017, by Melva Robertson

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Researchers from Emory's Rollins School of Public Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released the first ever report of state-level rates of primary and secondary (P&S) syphilis by race/ethnicity among men who have sex with men (MSM). Findings show that black MSM have higher P&S syphilis rates than white MSM with the highest impacted states in the south.

P&S syphilis rates have seen an increase across many states and regions with rates of syphilis higher among MSM when compared to women and men who have sex with women only.

Jeremy Grey, epidemiologist and lead researcher, established the model to estimate race/ethnicity-specific MSM population denominators as well as geographic patterns in P&S syphilis rates by race.

In addition to non-Hispanic, black MSM syphilis disparities, results also showed that while the P&S syphilis epidemic among white MSM is similar in the West, South, and Northeast, the rates of reported P&S syphilis among black MSM are higher in specific southern states such as Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina.

"Our findings are important because case counts alone indicate a greater number of cases reported among non-Hispanic white MSM," explains Grey. "Population estimates – and the resulting rates we can calculate –

allow us to examine the relative burden of diseases, rather than comparing reported diagnoses. This emphasizes the need of ensuring complete and accurate surveillance data collection and novel approaches to estimating rate denominators to drive data-based [public health](#) planning."

The complete study is available in the November 1 edition of *JAIDS*.

**More information:** Jeremy A. Grey et al. Rates of Primary and Secondary Syphilis Among White and Black Non-Hispanic Men Who Have Sex With Men, United States, 2014, *JAIDS Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes* (2017). [DOI: 10.1097/QAI.0000000000001508](#)

Provided by Emory University

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