

Decline in the number of people diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand

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The number of people being diagnosed with HIV in New Zealand continues to decline, figures released today by the University of Otago's AIDS Epidemiology Group show.

In 2021, of the 112 people notified with HIV, 67 were first diagnosed in New Zealand, 43 of whom were reported to have acquired HIV locally.

The number of people diagnosed in New Zealand (67) has continued to decline since the peak of 195 in 2016, and represents a 51% drop from the annual average of 137 during the previous five years (2016 to 2020).

The number diagnosed in New Zealand in 2021 is the lowest since the late 1990s.

AIDS Epidemiology Group leader Dr. Sue McAllister says the results are very encouraging.

"The decline is likely due to the combination prevention measures of condom use, access to pre-exposure prophylaxis, and early testing and treatment, as well as being impacted by the continued restrictions in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It will be important to continue monitoring these numbers as restrictions are lifted."

Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (MSM) are the group most affected by HIV in New Zealand. Of the 67 people diagnosed in New Zealand in 2021, 41 were MSM, 20 were heterosexually acquired (10 men and 10 women), and six people likely acquired HIV through injecting drug use.

"It is particularly encouraging to see the continued decline of MSM who were reported to have acquired HIV in New Zealand which was 43% less than the previous year and is the lowest [number](#) since 2001," Dr. McAllister says.

"We want to keep seeing this decline in the numbers, so it is important to

continue the emphasis on prevention, particularly as the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted."

In heterosexual men and women, the numbers remained small and relatively stable during the past 10 years. However, about half of these men and women are diagnosed with HIV late and have not had antiretroviral treatment to control progression of their [infection](#).

"It is important for people who consider they may have been at risk to be tested for HIV and other sexually transmissible infections, regardless of [sexual orientation](#), and for clinicians to recognize HIV as a possibility in people who present with compatible clinical signs."

A spokesperson from The Ministry of Health says the continued decline of HIV notifications in New Zealand is encouraging.

"With only 43 infections occurring within New Zealand in 2021 we are tracking well to meet international goals to eliminate local HIV transmission. Decreasing infections, particularly among men who have sex with men who live in New Zealand, is a great achievement towards achieving health equity.

"The sustained trend of decreasing HIV infection is only possible from dedicated and compassionate work from community organizations and clinicians to both prevent HIV infection and support people living with HIV."

Provided by University of Otago

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