

POPULATION FACT SHEET: AUGUST 2010

MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN

Since the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the United States, AIDS incidence has been highest among men who have sex with men (MSM) than any other population. Despite changes in the demographics of the epidemic, MSM continue to account for the largest proportion of new AIDS cases each year, most of which are among MSM of color, who face extraordinary barriers to HIV prevention services, counseling and testing, and care.^{1,2}

SURVEILLANCE

- MSM account for an estimated 2 percent of the U.S. population⁴ but 47 percent of AIDS diagnoses.¹
- MSM are the only risk group in the U.S. in which the annual number of new HIV infections is increasing.³
- The rate of new HIV diagnoses among MSM is more than 44 times that of other men and more than 40 times that of women.⁴
- MSM account for more than one-half of all new HIV infections each year.³
- In 2008,* an estimated 28,137 men were diagnosed with AIDS in the United States. MSM was the HIV transmission category in 64 percent of those cases.⁵

Critical Issues

HIV prevalence among MSM places this population at greater risk for infection with each sexual encounter.³ This is especially true for MSM of color, particularly Black MSM, as HIV incidence is most highly disproportionate in these communities.⁴

MSM also suffer disproportionate rates of sexually transmitted infections which can increase susceptibility to HIV and further complicate HIV care.³

In a five-city Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study on MSM, 25 percent of participants tested positive for HIV. Approximately one-half (48 percent) of the HIV-positive MSM (among whom young Black MSM were disproportionately represented) were unaware of their status.⁶ MSM, especially younger men, may underestimate their personal risk and make inaccurate assumptions about their partner's HIV status. For young, Black MSM, partnering with older Black men (among whom HIV prevalence is high) can also lead to increased risk.⁷

In one study on prevention targeting Black MSM, respondents called this population "hidden" because of a lack of "gay-affirming" venues in the community or a fear of being "out" in public.² In addition, many minority MSM identify with their racial identity more than their sexual identity; thus, messages aimed at the gay community often do not reach them.⁷

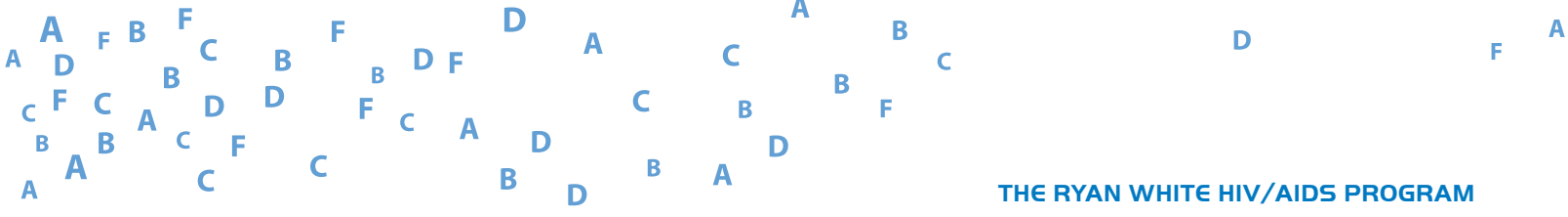
The phenomenon of Black men on the "down low" has garnered much attention in recent years. CDC studies, however, have found that a small proportion of the overall Black male population engages in bisexual activity and that other risk factors are much more prevalent in HIV transmission among the Black community.⁸

THE RESPONSE OF THE HIV/AIDS BUREAU

Health care agencies funded through the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program have undertaken many different strategies to engage and retain MSM in HIV/AIDS care. Overall, these pro-

* The most recent year for which data are available.





grams seek to deliver high-quality, nonjudgmental services to help MSM acknowledge their risk, get tested, and stay in care over time.

HAB has funded a Special Projects of National Significance initiative, Outreach, Care, and Prevention to Engage HIV Seropositive Young MSM of Color, to identify techniques that work for MSM infected with HIV/AIDS. (For more information, see

hab.hrsa.gov/special/ocp_index.htm). In addition, Ryan White HIV/AIDS Program grantees are also making efforts to bring MSM into care in the earliest stages of disease. And Part A and B grantees are striving to achieve greater involvement of MSM of color in the community planning process.

To search for population-specific technical assistance materials, see HRSA's www.careacttarget.org.

NOTES

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *HIV Surveillance Report*, 2008. 2010;20. Table 4b.
- ² National Alliance of State and Territorial AIDS Directors. *Findings from targeted interviews on HIV prevention activities directed toward Black men who have sex with men*. 2008. Available at: www.nastad.org/Docs/highlight/2008521_NASTAD%20Black%20MSM%20Issue%20Brief%20No.%203.pdf Accessed April 10, 2010.
- ³ CDC. *HIV and AIDS among gay and bisexual men*. Fact sheet. August 2009. Available at: www.cdc.gov/NCHHSTP/newsroom/docs/FastFacts-MSM-FINAL508COMP.pdf. Accessed May 17, 2010.
- ⁴ CDC. *CDC analysis provides new look at disproportionate impact of HIV and syphilis among U.S. gay and bisexual men*. Press release. March 10, 2010. Available at: www.cdc.gov/nchhstp/newsroom/msmpressrelease.html. Accessed April 25, 2010.
- ⁵ CDC. *HIV Surveillance Report*, 2008. 2010;20. Table 2b.
- ⁶ CDC. HIV prevalence, unrecognized infection, and HIV testing among MSM—Five U.S. cities, June 2004–April 2005. *MMWR*. 2005;54:597-601.
- ⁷ Clarke-Tasker VA, Wutoh AK, Mohammed T. HIV risk behaviors in African American males. *Assoc Black Nurs Faculty J*. 2005;16:56-9.
- ⁸ National Public Radio. *Myth: HIV/AIDS rate among Black women traced to “down low” Black men*. October 28, 2009. Available at www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?StoryID=114237523. Accessed July 30, 2010.

This publication lists non-Federal resources to provide additional information. The views and content in those resources have not been formally approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Listing of the resources is not an endorsement by HHS or its components.