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May 6, 2021

Dear Division of HIV and STD Programs Colleagues:

On April 13, 2021, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released its 2019 Annual Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Surveillance Report which can be accessed at (<https://www.cdc.gov/std/statistics/2019/default.htm>). The national report showed that the number of reported STDs reached an all-time high with a combined 2.6 million cases of chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis reported. The highest increase was observed in cases of syphilis among newborns which has quadrupled in the United States over the last 5 years. The inaugural Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) National Strategic Plan, released in 2020, has set forth five high-level goals to develop, improve, and bring to scale STD prevention and control programs over the next five years. These goals include:

1. Preventing new STDs through increased awareness, expansion of high-quality programs, improving Human Papilloma Virus vaccination coverage, and increasing the public health and health care capacity to prevent STDs.
2. Improving health by expanding high-quality STI prevention in communities most impacted by STDs and increasing the capacity to identify, diagnose and provide care and treatment for persons with STDs.
3. Accelerating progress in STD research, technology and innovation in vaccines, preventive strategies, diagnostic technologies, and therapeutic agents.
4. Reducing health inequities by addressing stigma and discrimination, expanding culturally competent and linguistically appropriate STD programs, and addressing social determinants of health and co-occurring conditions among those most vulnerable to disease.
5. Achieving a coordinated STD response by addressing the syndemics of STDs, HIV, viral hepatitis, and substance abuse disorders in STD programs; improving the quality, timeliness, and use of STD data, and improving systems for measuring, monitoring, evaluating, reporting, and disseminating progress.

The Los Angeles County (LAC) Department of Public Health's Division of HIV and STD Programs (DHSP) has prepared a STD snapshot highlighting key findings from STD case surveillance data reported to DHSP through the end of 2019. Similar to the trends outlined in the CDC report, LAC showed increases in the number of syphilis and chlamydia cases in 2019. In LAC, syphilis cases among infants reached its highest level in 2019, reflecting a 1,300% increase since 2012 when congenital syphilis cases were at a nadir. Conversely, gonorrhea cases have plateaued after a peak in 2018, reflecting a difference from the national trend.

Disparities in STD disease persist across age, gender, and racial/ethnic groups in LAC, underscoring the need for STD programs to address the barriers that prevent the most at-risk communities from accessing the services needed to improve health. This includes improved access to sex-positive and culturally appropriate programs that provide integrated services for persons with low health literacy, persons who are unstably housed or experiencing homelessness, persons with substance use disorders, and persons experiencing poverty. To reverse the STD epidemic, LAC Public Health will continue to focus the STD response on four priorities that aim to strengthen policy efforts and intensify screening, treatment, and awareness, particularly for at-risk populations.

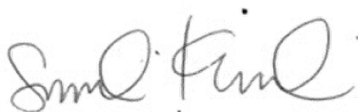
1. Improve early detection of cases through testing of at-risk populations.
2. Interrupt disease transmission through the appropriate treatment of cases and their partners.
3. Educate consumers and community to raise awareness of STDs.
4. Create effective policies to impact health care provider behavior.

For your reference, LAC's 2019 STD snapshot is attached and can be accessed on the DHSP website at: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dhsp/Reports.htm>.

Sincerely,



Mario J. Pérez, MPH
Director



Sonali Kulkarni, MD, MPH
Medical Director



Andrea Kim, PhD, MPH
Chief of HIV and STD Surveillance

Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Los Angeles County, 2019¹

(excludes Long Beach and Pasadena)

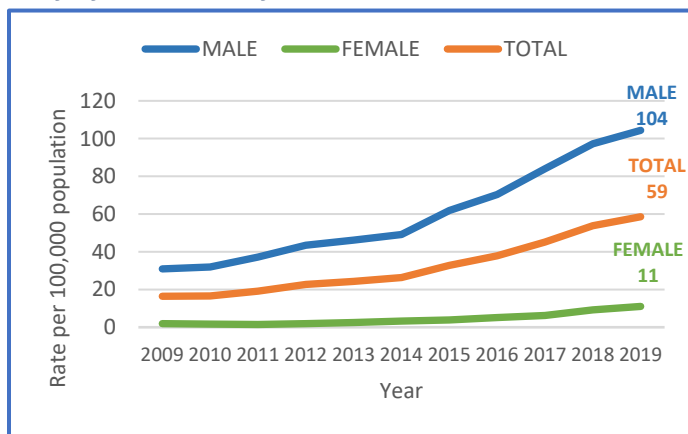
Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) continue to rise in Los Angeles County (LAC). In 2019, there were a total of 98,427 cases of STDs reported to the LAC Department of Public Health. The majority of reported cases (66%) were chlamydia followed by gonorrhea (25%) and syphilis (9%). Sixty-five percent of the syphilis cases were early syphilis.² Data do not include Long Beach and Pasadena due to reporting delays.

Early Syphilis

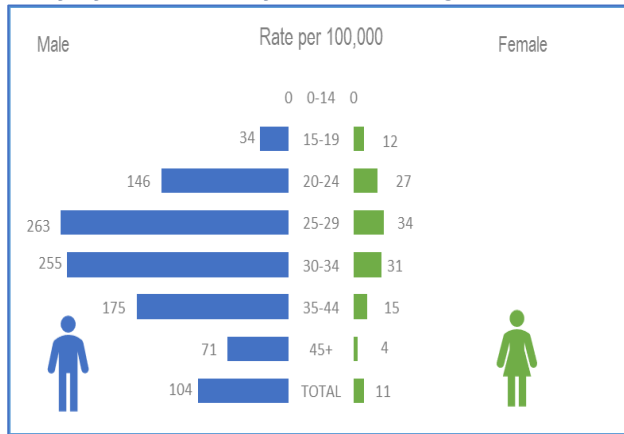
*Syphilis is a sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacteria, *Treponema pallidum* and is a known risk factor for HIV. While it is the least prevalent of the reportable STDs, if untreated, it can cause significant health issues including damage to the brain, nerves, eyes, or heart. Early syphilis includes the infectious stages of syphilis infection.*

In 2019, 5,643 early syphilis cases were reported to LAC with a rate of 59 per 100,000, reflecting a 9% rate increase compared with the 2018 rate. In 2019, early syphilis among males occurred at 9.5 times the rate as that of females; however, from 2018 to 2019, there was a lower relative increase in early syphilis rates among males (7%) compared to females (20%). Transgender individuals represented 2.5% of the early syphilis cases.³ Among both males and females, rates were highest among persons aged 25-29 years. By race, rates were highest among Pacific Islanders (141 per 100,000) and African Americans (135 per 100,000).

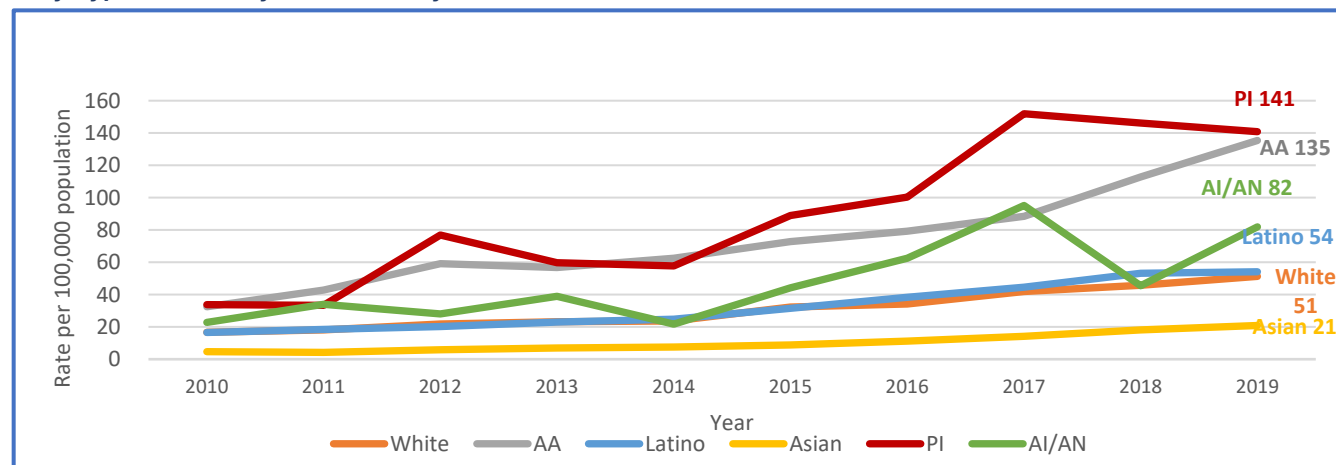
Early Syphilis Rates by Gender, 2010-2019



Early Syphilis Rates by Gender and Age Group, 2019



Early Syphilis Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2010-2019



¹ Data are provisional and subject to change due to reporting delays. Data do not include Long Beach and Pasadena. This document will be updated to include these jurisdictions when data become available.

² Early syphilis includes all cases staged as primary, secondary, or early non-primary, non-secondary (previously early latent). Note that syphilis rates are unstable for PI (2010-2011, 2013-2014) and AI/AN (2010-2016) due to small numbers.

³ Male-to-female transgender individuals represented 2.4%, 0.6% and 0.2% of the early syphilis, gonorrhea, and chlamydia cases, respectively.

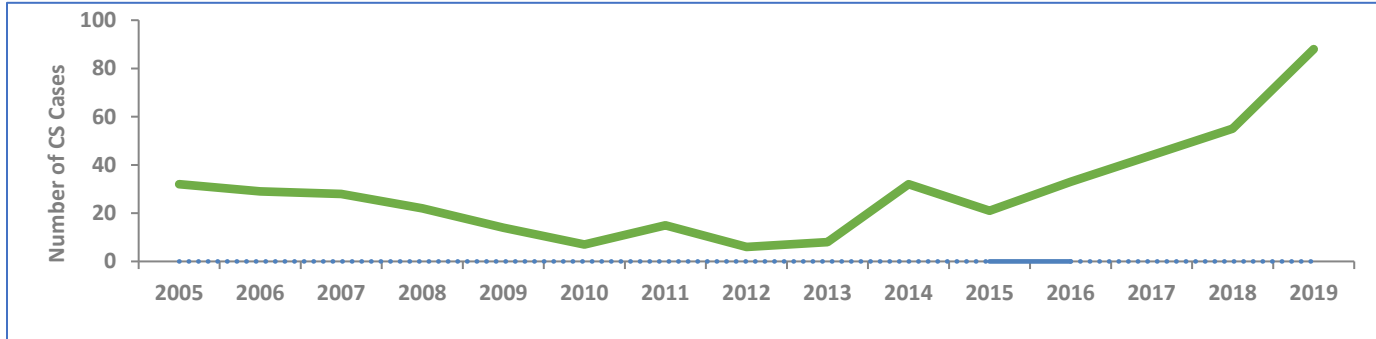
Sources: LAC Division of HIV and STD Programs; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Congenital Syphilis

Congenital syphilis is a multi-system infection caused by the bacteria, *Treponema pallidum*, in a fetus or infant, passed during pregnancy. It can cause preterm birth, miscarriage or stillbirth. It can also lead to serious birth defects.

In 2019, the number of congenital syphilis cases continued to rise (N=88) with an increase of 60% since 2018. Since 2012, the number of reported congenital syphilis cases has increased over 1,300%. Latinx (57%) females represented the majority of mothers of infants with congenital syphilis.

Congenital Syphilis Cases, 2005-2019

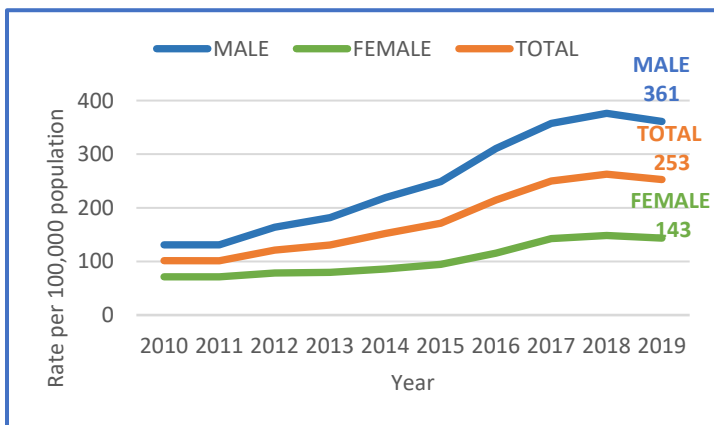


Gonorrhea

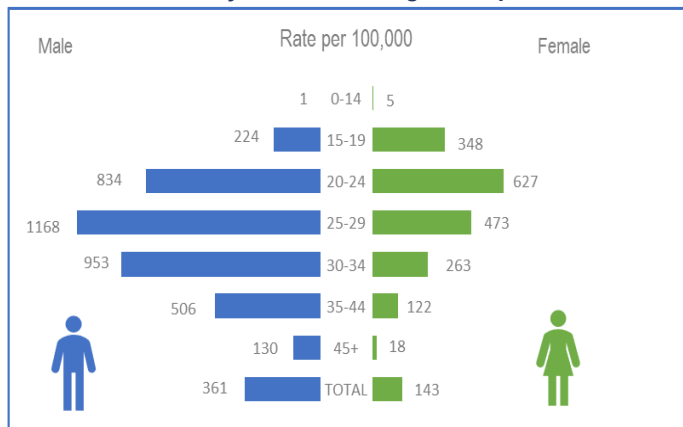
Gonorrhea is one of the most commonly reported sexually transmitted infections. It can cause infection in the genitals, rectum, and throat. If untreated, gonorrhea can cause serious health problems including infertility for men and women. It may also increase the chances of getting HIV. Though gonorrhea is treatable, it has progressively developed resistance to the antibiotic drugs prescribed for treatment.

In 2019, 24,342 gonorrhea cases were reported to LAC with a rate of 253 per 100,000, reflecting a 4% rate decrease compared with the 2018 rate. Among males, gonorrhea rates were 2.5 times higher than among females in 2018. Male gonorrhea rates decreased 4% and female rates decreased 3% since 2018 with rates highest among males 25-29 years and females 20-24 years. Transgender individuals represented 0.7% of the gonorrhea cases.³ By race, African Americans had rates (666 per 100,000) 3.9 times higher than Whites (171 per 100,000).

Gonorrhea Rates by Gender, 2010-2019



Gonorrhea Rates by Gender and Age Group, 2019

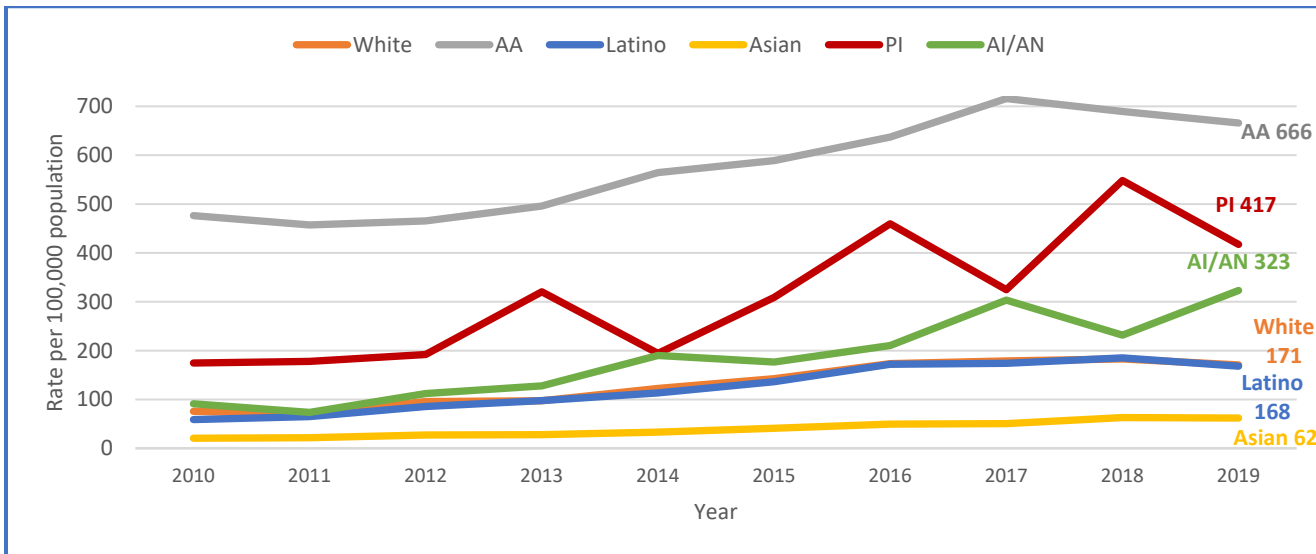


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² Early syphilis includes all cases staged as primary, secondary, or early non-primary, non-secondary (previously early latent).

³ Male-to-female transgender individuals represented 2.4%, 0.6% and 0.2% of the early syphilis, gonorrhea and chlamydia cases, respectively.

Gonorrhea Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 2010-2019

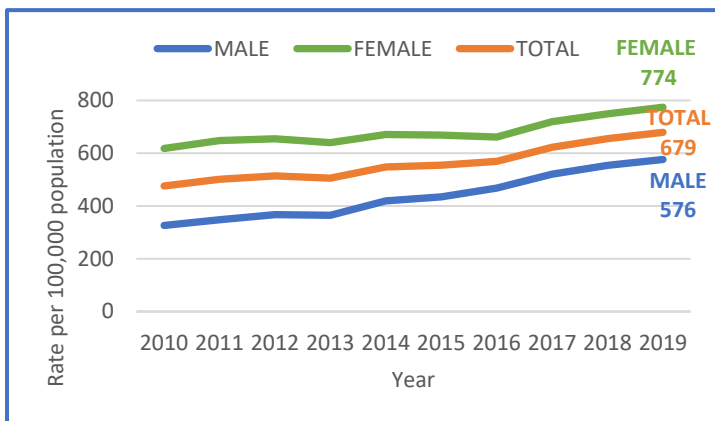


Chlamydia

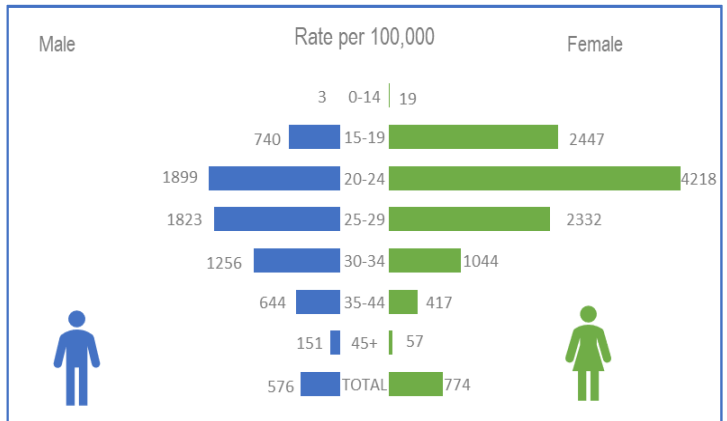
Chlamydia is the most commonly reported sexually transmitted infection and can be transmitted via vaginal, rectal or oral sex. If untreated, it can cause infertility in women.

In 2019, 65,431 chlamydia cases were reported to LAC with a rate of 679 per 100,000, reflecting a rate increase of 4% compared with the 2018 rate. Rates among males increased 4% while females increased 3% since 2018. Transgender individuals represented 0.2% of the chlamydia cases.³ Chlamydia was most prevalent among youth 15-29 years old. Due to changes in chlamydia reporting in the State of California in which providers are no longer required to report cases, race/ethnicity information are not complete for chlamydia cases and therefore case rates are not reported for race/ethnicity categories.

Chlamydia Rates by Gender, 2009-2019



Chlamydia Rates by Gender and Age Group, 2019



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