

Age and HIV in Oregon

Introduction

The number of newly diagnosed HIV cases in Oregon has declined in recent years. Apart from a peak in new diagnoses among 40–49-year-olds from 2011 through 2013, rates of new diagnoses by age group have decreased or remain unchanged from 2008 through 2017 (Figure 1).

Age and HIV in Oregon

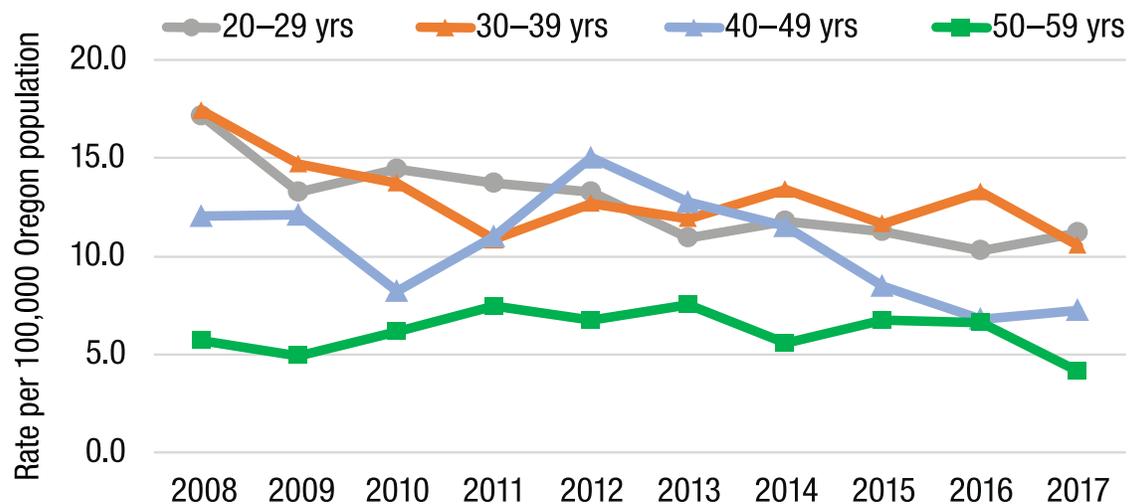
Although the total number of new infections in Oregon each year has not been increasing, people already living with HIV are living longer. Because of this positive development, the number of Oregonians aged ≥ 50 years and living with HIV continues to increase. The average age of people estimated to be living with HIV in Oregon at the end of 2017 was 49 years. However, this does not mean that more people are becoming newly HIV-infected after age 50. Most Oregonians aged ≥ 50 years and living with HIV were infected when they were much younger.

Long-term survivors in Oregon are typically defined by the number of years since diagnosis, which is a way to measure time exposed to the negative effects

Age and HIV facts at a glance

- The annual number of new HIV diagnoses among Oregon residents declined steadily during 2008–2017.
- Declines have been greatest among people aged 40–49 years.
- The rate of new HIV diagnoses in Oregon did not increase among any age group during 2008–2017.
- The average age at diagnosis was 38 years for both males and females during 2008–2017.
- The average age of people estimated to be living with HIV in Oregon at the end of 2017 was 49 years.

Figure 1 HIV infection among males by age at diagnosis, Oregon, 2008–2017



of the virus, exposure to HIV medications, and the physical and psychological burden of HIV.

- Sixty-five percent of living cases in Oregon might be considered long-term survivors.
 - » Twenty-five percent (1,875/7,577) were diagnosed in 1996 or earlier.
 - » Forty percent (3,020/7,557) were diagnosed more than 10 years ago (1997–2007).
 - » Sixty-two people (1% of those living with HIV) were diagnosed with HIV when they were younger than 13 years of age and still live in Oregon.

Recent trends (2008–2017)

An average of 45 HIV infections were diagnosed among people older than 50 years of age each year during 2008–2017 in Oregon. The average age at HIV diagnosis during 2008–2017 was 37.5 years for males and 38.1 for females. We rarely know the actual date that people contract HIV. However, infection can occur 10 or more years before diagnosis.

Some evidence suggests:

- Oregonians diagnosed between 40 and 54 years of age have been infected longer before diagnosis than younger people.
- Being diagnosed with AIDS within 12 months of HIV diagnosis was associated with increasing age (2008–2017).
- However, increasing age was associated with more rapid linkage to HIV-related health care within 30 days.
- When we look at the average first CD4 count* by age group over this period, we see that while younger age groups saw an increase

in average first CD4 count (2008–2017), we either saw no increase or even a decrease in the average first CD4 count among persons in age groups between 40 and 54 years of age. Efforts to intensify lifetime screening for HIV among people who had not been screened before or did not think of themselves at risk of HIV infection may explain these within-age-group decreases in average first CD4 count.

- HIV transmission continues to occur mostly by sexual contact regardless of age. Fifty-one percent of HIV infections diagnosed during 2008–2017 in people 50 years or older occurred in men who reported having had sex with men (MSM) (229/453). Another 6% (28/453) occurred among MSM who injected drugs.
- People aged 50 years or older do have some unique challenges that might increase their risk for infection if they are exposed. These include:
 - » Lower rates of condom use than younger people
 - » Less frequent testing for HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases than younger people
 - » Inaccurate perception of infection risk by individuals and their medical providers
 - » Similarity of some HIV symptoms to those of aging
 - » Reduced willingness to seek testing or advice about safe sex.

* CD4 cells (or CD4+T cells) are white blood cells that fight infections. HIV kills CD4 cells, leaving a person vulnerable to common infections. When the CD4 count drops below 200, a person is diagnosed with AIDS (a normal range for CD4 cells is approximately 500–1,500 cells/uL). The CD4 cell count usually increases with effective HIV treatment.

Epidemiologic resources:

Oregon Health Authority, HIV/AIDS epidemiology: <https://public.health.oregon.gov/DiseasesConditions/CommunicableDisease/DiseaseSurveillanceData/HIVData/Pages/index.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/hiv.

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact the Public Health Division at 971-673-0153 or 971-673-0372 for TTY. We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.