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HIV Testing Surveillance—2007 Annual Report

The report presents information on trends in HIV testing patterns in Victoria from the Victorian Laboratory Network for Surveillance of HIV Testing. The network consists of 25 collaborating laboratories in Victoria who conduct diagnostic HIV testing.

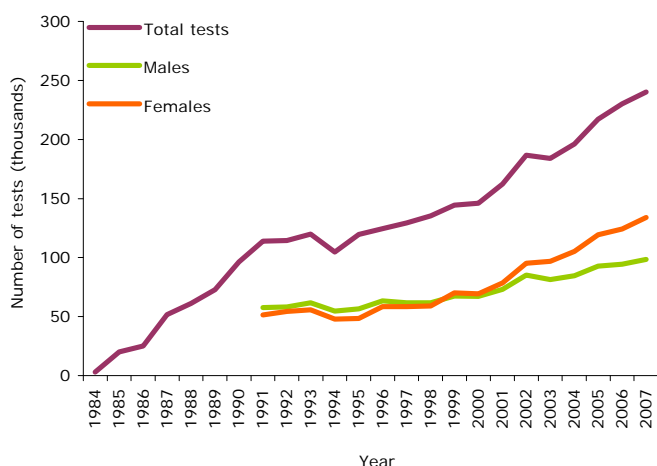
HIV testing trends, 1984-2007

Number of tests, by sex

Between 1984 and 2007 2,998,645 HIV antibody tests were conducted at diagnostic laboratories in Victoria. The number of tests increased from 2,879 in 1984 to 240,264 in 2007 (Figure 1) — the highest annual number for Victoria since the implementation of testing reporting in 1984.

The sex of individuals tested for HIV has been available since 1991. Since then, among the 96 per cent where sex was reported, about half were male (n=1,219,537; 48 per cent). Females numbered 1,326,320 (52 per cent). A greater proportion of tests were conducted in males between 1991 and 1998 (52 per cent) compared to 1999 to 2007 (45 per cent) (Figure 1).

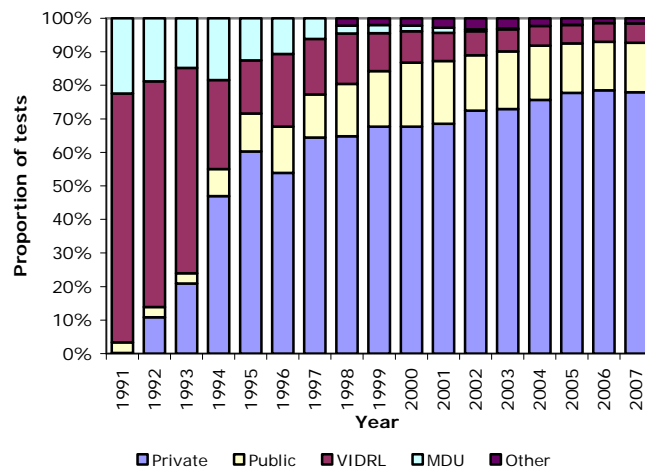
Figure 1. Number of annual HIV tests, by sex, Victoria, 1984-2007



Number of tests, by laboratory

In the 1980's all HIV serological tests were performed by the state reference laboratory, Microbiological Diagnostic Unit, the Royal Melbourne, and the Alfred Hospital. Since 1991 the proportion of testing done by private laboratories has increased substantially. In 2007, private laboratories conducted 78 per cent of all HIV tests in Victoria (Figure 2) 87 per cent of these tests were carried out in three of the private laboratories.

Figure 2. Proportion of tests performed by different categories of laboratories, Victoria, 1991-2007



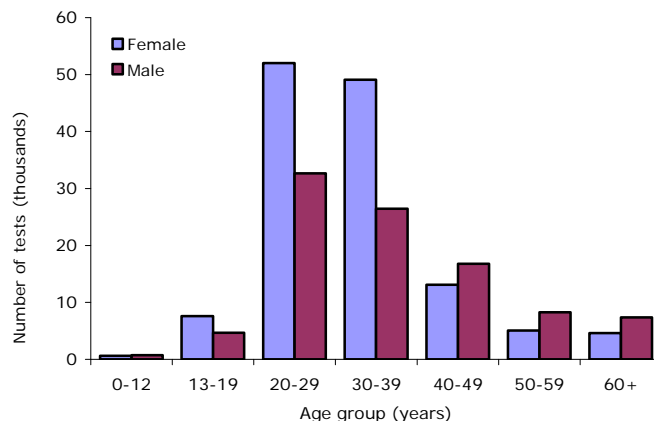
*VIDRL – State Reference Laboratory, Public – Public Pathology Laboratories, Private – Private Pathology Laboratories, Other includes military (until 2005) and IVF laboratories, MDU – Microbiological Diagnostic Unit

HIV testing characteristics, 2007

Number of tests, by age group and sex

In 2007, sex was reported in 97 per cent of records. Among these records, 134,035 (52 per cent) were females, and 98,399 (48 per cent) were males. Among the 96 per cent of records where date of birth was reported, 37 per cent of tests were in people aged 20 to 29 years, and a further 33 per cent were in people aged 30 to 39 years (Figure 3). The median age of females tested for HIV in 2007 was 30 years compared to 33 years for males.

Figure 3. Total HIV tests, by age and sex, Victoria



Number of tests, by 'reason for test'

In 2007, the reason for having an HIV test was recorded in 20 per cent (n=47,346) or records (Table 1). The most common reason reported was antenatal screening (28 per cent), followed by insurance screening (13 per cent). Among females, antenatal screening was the main reason (52 per cent of records) for test, while for males insurance screening was the main reason (26 per cent). However, these results may be biased due to the large number of records where 'reason for the test' was missing.

Table 1. HIV tests by reason for test and sex, Victoria, 2007 (cases where reason was unknown are excluded)

Reason for test	Male		Female		Total*	
	n	per cent	n	per cent	n	per cent
Antenatal	0	0.0	13346	51.3	13346	28.2
Dialysis screening	89	0.5	53	0.2	142	0.3
Donation screening	1446	7.9	1223	4.7	2680	5.7
Immigration	280	1.5	183	0.7	464	1.0
Insurance screening	4705	25.7	1355	5.2	6062	12.8
IVF	488	2.7	590	2.3	4806	10.2
Occupational screening	1243	6.8	1869	7.2	2354	5.0
Other reason	5807	31.8	3698	14.2	9578	20.2
Prison screening	250	1.4	147	0.6	401	0.8
Sex/drugs exposure risk	2975	16.3	2908	11.2	5895	12.5
Surgical screening	952	5.2	598	2.3	1550	3.3
Symptomatic	40	0.2	28	0.1	68	0.1
Total	18275	100.0	25998	100.0	47346	100.0

*Includes cases where sex was unknown

Conclusion

Testing is an important component of HIV prevention. Earlier diagnosis and treatment facilitates prevention of transmission through increased awareness. The Victorian Laboratory Network for Surveillance of HIV Testing showed that the number of tests conducted annually on males and females in Victoria is increasing.

The increased testing observed among females most likely relates to increased incorporation of HIV into the standard antenatal screening in Australia. Further information related to universal antenatal HIV screening can be found at the following website:

http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/185_04_210806/gil10451_fm.html

The continued increase of testing in males is encouraging considering about 80 per cent of HIV infections diagnosed each year is among men who have sex with men in Victoria. As the sex of the person's sexual partner is not available from laboratories, the Victorian Laboratory Network is unable to monitor testing specifically in this risk group.

A Victorian Primary Care Network for Sentinel Surveillance of HIV implemented in April 2006 complements the existing Victorian Laboratory Network. The HIV Network provides a testing denominator for men who have sex with men who visit the clinics in the system and is a collaborative project between the Burnet Institute, DHS, VIDRL, Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, numerous primary health care service and laboratories. The latest reports can be found at:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/surveillance/descriptive_reports

Acknowledgments

The collation of HIV testing data would have not been possible without the collaboration of private and public laboratories in Victoria. In particular our thanks to the Alfred Hospital, Analytical Reference Laboratory, Austin Health, Bendigo Hospital Pathology Services, Dorevitch Pathology, Eastern Health Pathology, General Diagnostic Laboratory, Goulburn Valley Health, Gribbles Pathology, Melbourne pathology services, Microbiological Diagnostic Unit (Melbourne University), Monash IVF, Monash Medical Centre (Southern Health), Pathcare, Royal Melbourne Hospital, Royal Women's Hospital Pathology Services, Royal Children's Hospital, St John of God Pathology, St Vincent's Public Hospital Department of Pathology and Victorian Infectious Diseases Reference Laboratory.

Further information

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Report produced by the Burnet Institute on behalf of the Victorian Department of Human Services.

Reports are available at:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/surveillance/annual_reports