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HIV Testing Surveillance—2005 Annual Report

Testing for HIV first became available in Victoria in 1984, and in 2005 there were 31 laboratories authorised to conduct HIV testing. Of these 31 labs, 28 labs conduct diagnostic testing and therefore report the total number of tests and demographic information on all people having a HIV test to the Burnet Institute each quarter. Information reported includes; date of test, date of birth, gender, postcode, and where possible reason for test, personal risk category, and test history.

The Burnet Institute manages HIV surveillance on behalf of the Victorian Government Department of Human Services (DHS).

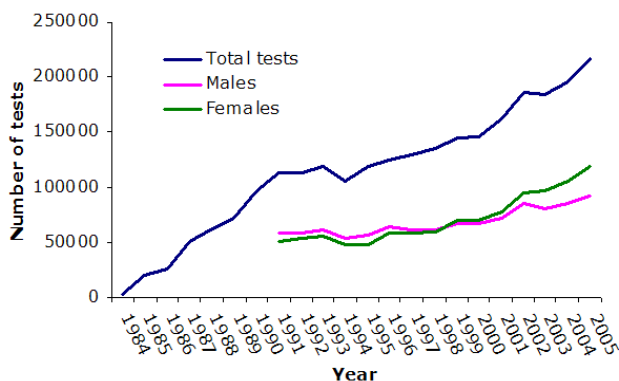
HIV testing trends, 1984–2005

Number of tests by sex

Between 1984 and 2005 there were 2,508,417 records of HIV antibody tests performed in Victoria. In this time period, the number of tests performed per year increased from 2,879 in 1984 to 217,116 in 2005 (Figure 1).

The gender of individuals tested for HIV has been available since 1991 and was reported for 88 per cent of tests in this time period. Of those where gender was known, 49 per cent (n=1,026,735) were male and 51 per cent (n=1,067,990) were female. Between 1991 and 1998 a greater proportion of tests were conducted in males than in females, however since 1999 more HIV tests have been conducted among females in Victoria (Figure 1).

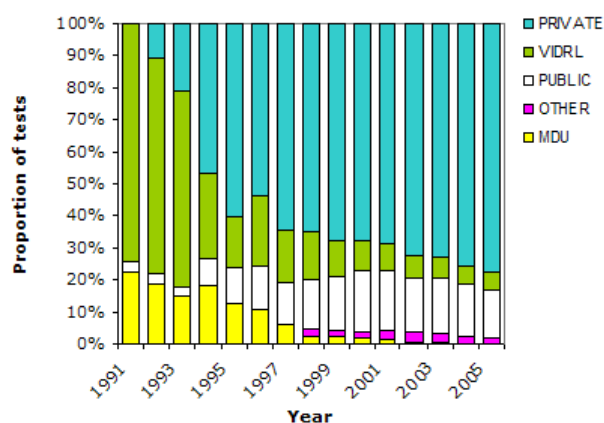
Figure 1. Number of annual HIV tests, by sex Victoria, 1984–2005



Number of tests by laboratory, 1984–2005

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, with these labs conducting 78 per cent of all HIV tests in Victoria in 2005 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Proportion of tests performed by different categories of laboratories*, 1991–2004



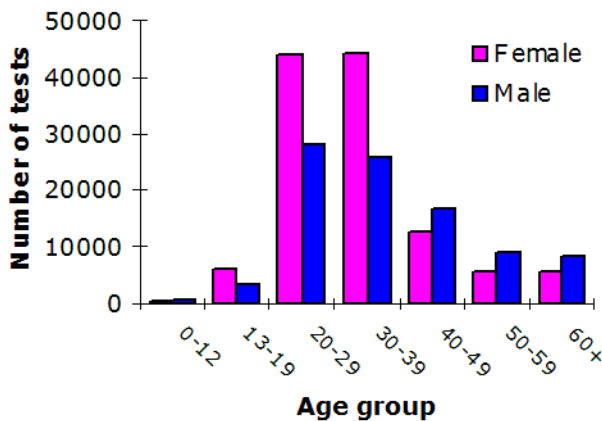
*VIDRL – State Reference Laboratory, PUBLIC – Public Pathology Laboratories, PRIVATE – Private Pathology Laboratories, OTHER includes military and IVF laboratories, MDU – Microbiological Diagnostic Unit.

HIV testing characteristics, 2005

Number of tests by age group and sex

In 2005, 217,116 HIV tests were reported to the Burnet Institute by laboratories, the highest annual number for Victoria since the implementation of testing in 1984. Of these, gender was reported for 98 per cent of which 119,293 (56 per cent) were among females, and 92,852 (44 per cent) were among males. In 2005, date of birth was reported for 98 per cent of tests. Of these, 34 per cent of tests were conducted among individuals aged 20 to 29 years, and a further 33 per cent were in people aged 30 to 39 years (Figure 3). The mean age of females tested for HIV in 2004 was 33 years compared to 37 years for males.

Figure 3. Total HIV tests, by age and sex, 2005 (n= 217,166)



Number of tests, by 'reason for test', 2005

In 2005, the reason for having a HIV test was recorded for only 69,593 (33 per cent) of records (Table 1). The most common reason reported was immigration screening (23 per cent), followed by antenatal screening (19 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, 2005 (Unknowns excluded)

Reason for test	Females		Males		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Immigration	7,433	20	8,346	26	15,779	23
Antenatal	13,544	36	-	-	13,544	19
Insurance screening	2,150	6	7,001	22	9,151	13
Sex/drugs exposure risk	3,607	10	3,887	12	7,494	11
Occupational screening	3,416	9	3,562	11	6,978	10
Donation screening	2,282	6	2,435	8	4,717	7
Surgical screening	572	2	1,070	3	1,642	2
IVF	427	1	333	1	760	1
Prison screening	151	<1	122	<1	273	<1
Dialysis screening	71	<1	150	<1	221	<1
Symptomatic	48	<1	50	<1	98	<1
Other reason	3,662	10	5,274	16	8,936	13
Total	37,363	100	32,230	100	69,593	100

Conclusions

- Testing is an important component of HIV awareness and prevention and HIV testing has increased substantially in Victoria since 1984.
- The increased testing observed among females most likely relates to increased incorporation of HIV into the standard antenatal screening in Australia.
- Annual HIV testing among males has increased substantially in Victoria over the past two decades, which is a good outcome considering the major risk group for HIV in Victoria is men who have sex with men (MSM). However as many laboratories are unable to report information on sexual orientation it is difficult to determine how much of the testing has occurred among MSM.
- In March 2006, with funding from DHS, the Burnet Institute in collaboration with DHS, VIDRL, and the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre implemented a linked HIV sentinel surveillance system at medical clinics that see a high case load of MSM. The system will provide a testing denominator and diagnoses rate for MSM seen at the clinics and therefore compliment the results obtained from the existing HIV testing surveillance.

Further Information

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Reports are available at:

http://www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/diseases/gr_sti.htm