

HIV/AIDS among African-American women in South Carolina

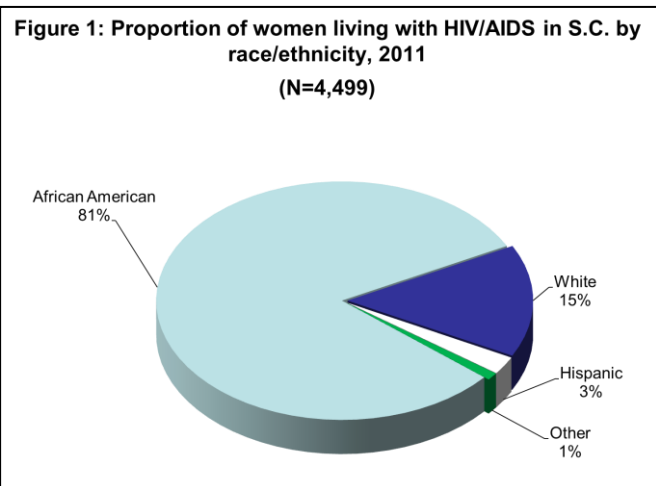
In the United States as well as in South Carolina, the HIV/AIDS epidemic disproportionately affects African-Americans compared with persons of other races and ethnicities.

In 2011, there were over 14,946 people reported to be living with HIV infection (including AIDS) in South Carolina. According to recent data, South Carolina ranked fourth in the country for the proportion (73 percent) of people living with AIDS who are African-American. There has been more than a 37 percent increase in the number of women living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2011 compared with the number living in 2001.

According to CDC, in 2008 (the most recent year for which data is available), HIV infection was the fourth leading cause of death among African-American women in the United States between the ages of 25-34 years and the third leading cause of death among African-American women between the ages of 35-44 years.

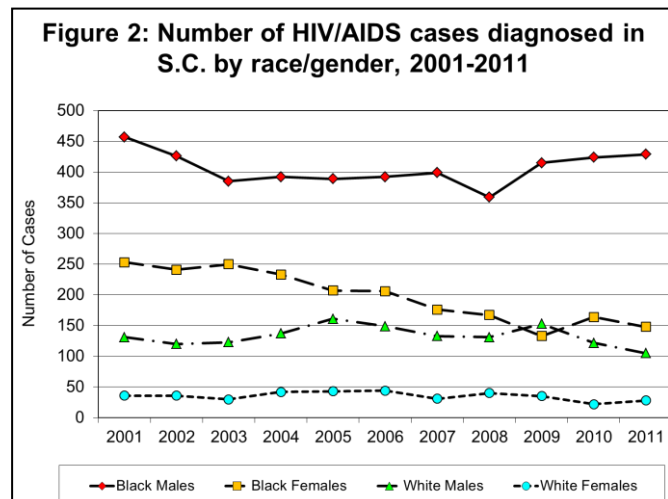
African-American Women living with HIV/AIDS in South Carolina

- In South Carolina, more than 4,499 women are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. More than eight out of 10 women with HIV are African-American (Figure 1).
- African-American women have a HIV/AIDS case rate 12 times greater than that of white women in South Carolina.
- In 2010, African-American women comprised 26 percent of people who died from AIDS in S.C.



The impact of HIV Infections

- The number of HIV/AIDS cases for African-American women has steadily decreased over the last ten years (Figure 2.).
- African-American women (who account for 15 percent of the state's population) comprised 20 percent of newly diagnosed cases in 2010/2011.
- Among women newly diagnosed with HIV/AIDS, 83 percent are African-American.
- This also impacts our children: the rate for perinatally acquired HIV is eight times higher among African-American women compared to white women.



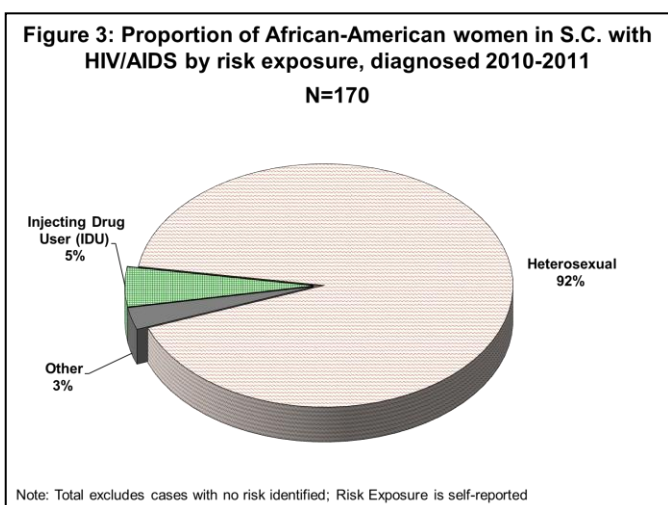
Who are the women at greatest risk for HIV?

Among women of all races, those who are sex workers or who use drugs are among the women at highest risk for HIV. Women crack users appear to be at especially high risk for HIV and other STDs. At risk are women whose sex partners are injection drug users, bisexual men or whose partners have a history of incarceration. Also the presence of some STDs greatly increases the likelihood of acquiring or transmitting HIV.

Women who may face drug and alcohol dependence, poverty or near-poverty, unstable or substandard housing and/or domestic abuse, often lack access to health care. Many are mothers and may face difficulties providing and caring for their children. All these struggles for daily survival make it unlikely that HIV prevention will be on the “front burner” of concern. The impact is particularly significant in rural areas of the state where there are fewer prevention and care providers, longer distances to travel for services, and fears of stigma and discrimination.

What puts African-American women at risk?

As with any other risk population, HIV risk depends not on who you are, but on your specific sexual and/or substance using behaviors and whether you have access to health care, health education and other prevention services. Among African-American women with reported risks, more than nine out of 10 women (92 percent) with HIV/AIDS had heterosexual exposure, and about five percent reported injecting drug use (Figure 3).



Know Your HIV/STD Status - Get Tested

- Knowing your HIV status is important for your health and the health of those you love. If your test is positive, it means you are infected with HIV.
- Get tested for other STDs if you are having unprotected sex. Having an STD can increase your risk for contracting HIV.
- Reduce your sexual risk behaviors. Commit to talk openly with your partner about not having sex until you both get tested for HIV and other STDs. Use a condom correctly every time you have sex. The fewer people you have sex with, the less likely you will become infected.

Get Involved, Address Stigma

- Break the silence about HIV and STDs in our communities by talking openly with your families, neighbors, and church members. This will help create a non-judgmental and supportive environment.

DHEC-Funded Programs

- **HIV Testing Initiatives:** Through the comprehensive HIV prevention program DHEC funds targeted testing to African-American women at high risk for having HIV. DHEC also supports HIV testing in all county public health departments which provide services to women and men being seen in the STD/HIV and family planning clinics.
- **WILLOW** (targets women living with HIV/AIDS): Group-level behavioral intervention which addresses cultural, social and religious factors that influence the behavior of black women with HIV/AIDS. Funding to communities prioritizes African-American women.
- **Healthy Relationships** (targets HIV positive men and women): Group-level behavioral intervention to develop skills and self-efficacy of persons living with HIV/AIDS, including African-American women.
- **SISTA** (targets African-American women): Group-level behavioral intervention which includes risk-reduction messages, skills training and decision-making activities.
- Ryan White HIV providers in the state offer HIV care services to all persons living with HIV/AIDS, including the more than 3,600 African-American women who are HIV positive in South Carolina.

For more information, call the S.C. AIDS/STD Hotline toll free at 1-800-322-AIDS