

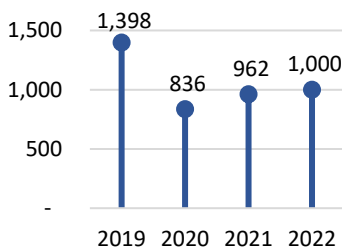


## Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic

In 2019, Montana tracked more than 9,000 communicable disease cases. In 2021, Montana tracked more than 125,913 communicable disease cases, with the majority being COVID-19 investigations. Increased public health follow-up related to COVID-19 cases impacted access to HIV testing, medical care, case ascertainment, and partner service activities at the state and local level.

During the pandemic, the number of HIV-related labs uploaded into the Montana Infectious Disease Information System (MIDIS) decreased 40% from 2019 to 2020. The number of labs increased from 2020-2022 but are still 28% lower than pre-pandemic levels. This may indicate a disruption of HIV-related health care, including persons diagnosed with HIV.

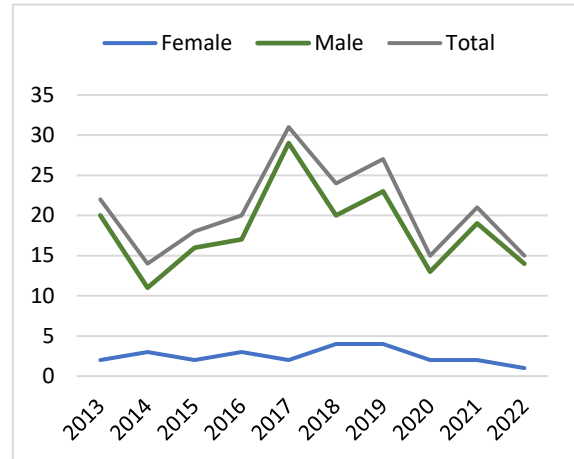
### Number of HIV-related labs uploaded into MIDIS, Montana, 2019 to 2022\*



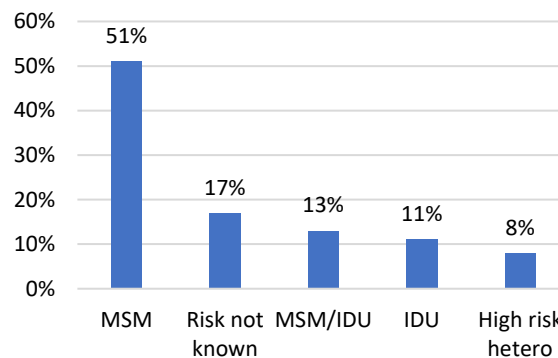
\*HIV-related labs refer to any lab result that may indicate HIV infection, including tests for HIV screening, diagnosis, viral load, CD4, viral load and genetic sequencing.

**Trend.** In 2022, 15 newly diagnosed HIV cases were reported in Montana (Figure 1). Four new HIV cases were diagnosed with AIDS at the same time, indicating that there remains a need for recognition of risk factors and early testing. The decrease in new infections in 2020 may reflect the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on HIV screening. While the number of diagnoses increased in 2021, the number decreased in 2022 and remains lower than pre-pandemic levels.

**Figure 1. Number of new HIV diagnoses, Montana, 2013-2022**



**Figure 2. Percentage of new HIV diagnoses by exposure category, Montana, 2018-2022**



**Exposure Category.** Men who reported male-to-male sexual contact (MSM) were the population most affected by HIV in Montana (Figure 2). Twenty-four percent of new cases reported injecting drug use (IDU) as at least one transmission category.

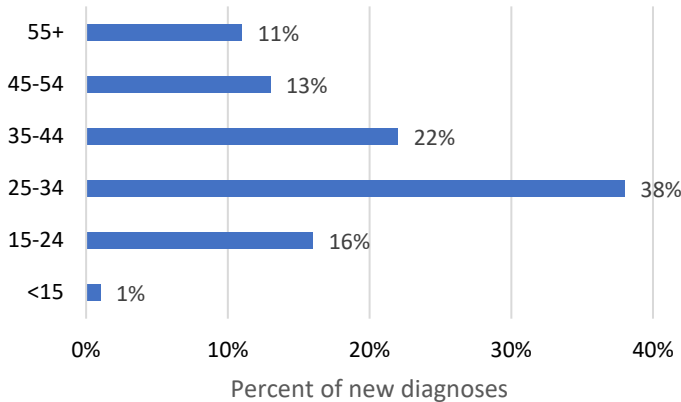
**Race and Ethnicity.** Most (79%) Montana HIV cases were among white Montanans (Table 1). HIV infection does not disproportionately impact the American Indian population in Montana. During the 2018-2022 period, 5% of new diagnoses were among American Indian Montanans. The US Census reports that American Indians make up 6.2% of the Montana population (2020).

**Table 1. Percentage of new HIV diagnoses by race and ethnicity, Montana, 2018-2022**

White, Non-Hispanic	79%
Hispanic, any race	9%
American Indian, Non-Hispanic	5%
Black/African American, Non-Hispanic	2%
Other, Non-Hispanic	5%



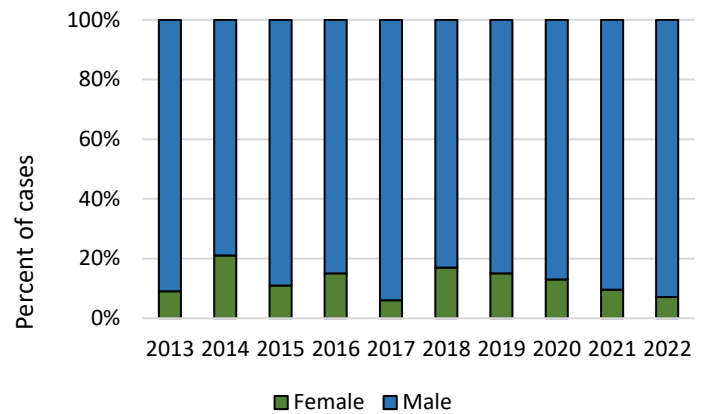
**Figure 3. Percentage of new HIV diagnoses by age group, Montana, 2018-2022**



**Age.** More than one-third of persons diagnosed with HIV in Montana (38%) were aged between 25 and 34 years (Figure 3). Similarly, in the United States, 37% of persons diagnosed with HIV were in the same age group (25-34 years) in 2020.

**Sex at Birth.** In Montana, most new HIV diagnoses were among men, accounting for over 90% of cases in 2022 (Figure 4). During the 2013-2022 period, an average of 12% of new HIV cases were diagnosed among women.

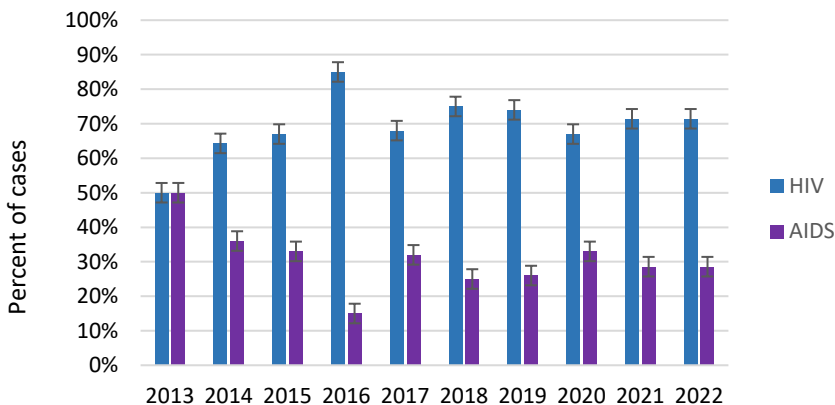
**Figure 4. Percentage of new HIV diagnoses by sex at birth, Montana, 2013-2022**



### New Diagnoses by Disease Stage.

Persons who have stage 3 disease (AIDS) at the time of their HIV diagnosis indicate a delayed diagnosis of HIV infection and associated treatment. From 2013 to 2016, there was a significant decrease in the number of persons with AIDS at the time of their diagnosis from 50% to 16%, respectively (Figure 5). Beginning in 2017, sustained progress on increasing the early diagnosis of HIV has not been demonstrated. In 2022, 29% of persons had AIDS at the time of their HIV diagnosis.

**Figure 5. Percentage of new HIV diagnoses by disease stage, Montana, 2013-2022**



**HIV Care and Viral Suppression.** Rapid treatment of HIV disease and viral suppression are two key strategies of the plan to end the HIV epidemic. In Montana:

- **90.5%** of new HIV cases had a viral load lab within 30 days of initial diagnosis (2021)
- **81%** of new HIV cases had a CD4 lab within 30 days of initial diagnosis (2021)

Persons living with HIV/AIDS who are virally suppressed cannot transmit HIV through sexual contact. In Montana in 2022, 76% of persons living with HIV/AIDS are documented as being in care and, of those, 95% achieved viral suppression (viral load <200 copies).\*

\*Being in care is defined as having at least one HIV-related lab within the past 12 months





**Persons Living with HIV/AIDS.** As of December 31, 2022, 1,860 cumulative cases of HIV infection have been reported to the DPHHS since 1985 when the Department began collecting HIV data. Of those cases, 855 (46%) were Montana residents at the time of their diagnosis and 54% moved to Montana after being diagnosed in another jurisdiction. Of the total cases reported to DPHHS, more than 32% persons are known to have died from any cause. Table 2 describes characteristics of the 817 people currently living with HIV/AIDS in Montana as of December 2022.

**Table 2. Characteristics of persons living with HIV/AIDS, Montana, 2022**

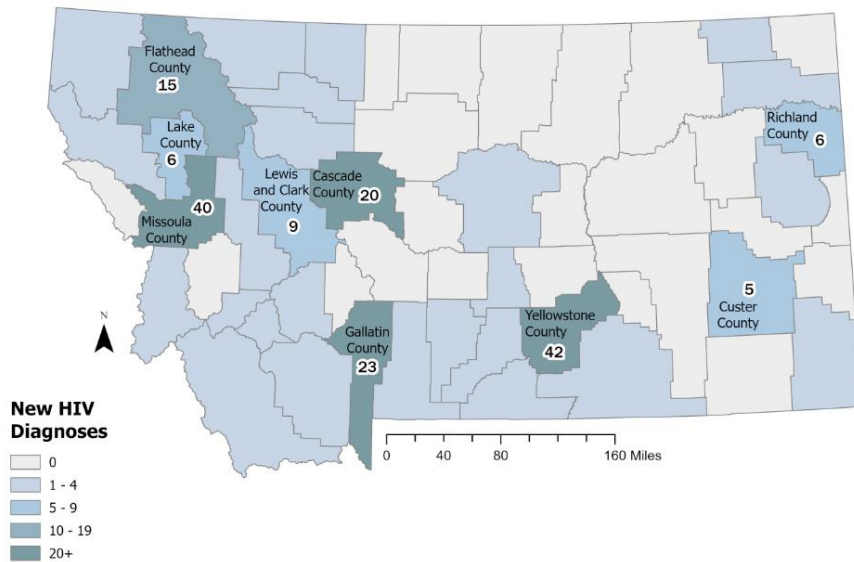
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Characteristic	Total	% of cases
Male	699	85.6%
Female	118	14.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Exposure Category</b>		
MSM	451	55.2%
Risk Not Specified	104	12.7%
MSM & Injecting drug Use	102	12.5%
High Risk Heterosexual Contact	78	9.5%
IDU	76	9.3%
Other*	6	0.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Age at HIV Diagnosis</b>		
Less than 13 years	1	0.1%
13-24 years	9	1.1%
25-34 years	112	13.7%
35-44 years	174	21.3%
45-54 years	172	21.1%
55 years and older	346	42.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Frequency missing = 3</i>		
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
White, Non-Hispanic	655	80.2%
American Indian, Non-Hispanic	31	3.8%
Hispanic, any race	56	6.9%
Other, Non-Hispanic	72	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>100%</b>
<i>Frequency missing = 3</i>		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>817</b>	<b>100%</b>

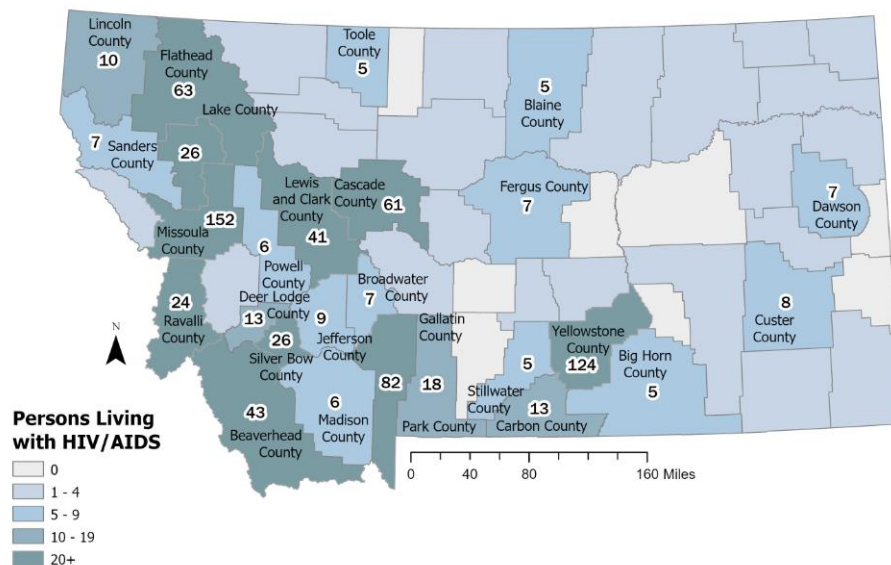
\*Includes transmission categories such as transfusion/transplant, mother with HIV, or hemophilia blood donation recipient.

**Geography.** Figure 6 shows the demographic distribution of new HIV diagnoses in Montana from 2013-2022. New cases are not evenly distributed among Montana's counties. Yellowstone (26%), Missoula (18%), Cascade (9%), Gallatin (9%) and Flathead (8%) counties accounted for more than 70% persons with new HIV diagnoses. Similarly, the number of persons living with HIV/AIDS is largely in the most populous Montana counties (Figure 7).

**Figure 6. New HIV diagnoses by county of residence, Montana, 2013- 2022**



**Figure 7. Persons living with stage 3 HIV (AIDS) by county of residence, Montana, 2022**



Data Sources: MT Electronic HIV/AIDS Reporting System  
Montana Infectious Disease Information System

For further information, please contact the:  
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