Chronic Hepatitis C in California
2015 Executive Summary

In 2015, the burden of notifiable chronic hepatitis C in California was substantial and increasing when compared to the prior four years.¹ In this summary, we describe changes in chronic hepatitis C burden over time, including demographic and geographic characteristics of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases, to inform efforts to reduce viral hepatitis transmission, and limit the progression and implications of viral hepatitis-related liver disease.

With 33,748 newly reported cases² of chronic hepatitis C in 2015, and 32,897 newly reported cases of chronic hepatitis C in 2014, California ranked first among all states that published their surveillance data.³,⁴

SUMMARY

From 1994 to 2015, 597,861 chronic hepatitis C cases were newly reported to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH). In 2015, CDPH received 33,748 new reports of chronic hepatitis C infections. The rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection in California increased 5.5 percent between 2011 and 2015, from 81.9 to 86.4 per 100,000 population. Chronic hepatitis C remained one of the most frequently reported communicable diseases in California. Important disparities in the gender, age, racial, and geographic distribution of chronic hepatitis C infections persisted.

Surveillance data for 2015 show a growing percentage of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California are due to recent transmission. Although people born during 1945-1965 ("baby boomers") had the highest rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection in 2015 and made up more than half of newly reported cases, young adults ages 20-29 years—who are more likely to have been recently infected—composed an increasing proportion of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases from 2007 to 2015. Rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection among adults under 30 years are increasing: from 2007 to 2015, rates increased 40 percent among males ages 15-19, 55 percent among males ages 20-29, and 37 percent among females ages 20-29. White, African American/Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native

¹ Tables: https://archive.cdph.ca.gov/programs/pages/viralhepatitisdata.aspx
² A person who is being reported to CDPH for the first time and who meets the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)/Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) case definition for chronic hepatitis C. For more information, see Technical Notes.
³ Thirty-four states gave the CDC permission to publish their 2014 chronic hepatitis C case data
⁴ Chronic Hepatitis C: https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/statistics/2014surveillance/index.htm#tabs-1170600-3
persons in the general population remained disproportionately affected by chronic hepatitis C in 2015. Geographically, the rate of newly reported chronic HCV infections was highest in the northern and central regions of California, as well as in several Bay Area jurisdictions.

Nearly 9 percent of all newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California were reported from state prisons in 2015. Among those incarcerated in state prisons between 2011 and 2015, the rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection decreased substantially in older age groups, declining 32 percent and 44 percent among males ages 40-49 and 50-59, respectively. Among young adults, rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection increased 66 percent and 20 percent among males ages 20-29 and 30-39 years, respectively. Notably, the median age of persons with newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection in state prisons decreased 6 years between 2011 and 2015, from 40 to 34. Hispanic/Latino and White persons in state prisons remained disproportionately affected by chronic hepatitis C compared with African Americans.

**KEY FINDINGS: CHRONIC HEPATITIS C IN CALIFORNIA (INCLUDING STATE PRISONS)**

**Overall**

- In 2015, CDPH received 33,748 new reports of chronic hepatitis C infections. The rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection increased 5.5 percent since 2011, from 81.9 to 86.4 per 100,000 population.
- From 1994 to 2015, 597,861 chronic hepatitis C cases were newly reported to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH).

**By Gender**

- From 2011 to 2015, 65 percent of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California were among males, and males had approximately twice the rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection of females.

**By Age**

- More than half (52 percent) of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California in 2015 were among persons born during the years 1945-1965.
- In 2015, persons ages 50-59 years and 60 years and older—age groups including the baby boomer cohort—had the highest rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infections among all age groups, and rates among males were nearly double rates among females in the same age groups.
- In 2015, the age distribution of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases continued to show an increasingly bimodal distribution since 2007, with young persons—particularly males ages 20-29 years—composing a higher proportion of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infections (from 4.6 percent in 2007 to 9.4 percent in 2015).
From 2007 to 2015, rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection increased among males ages 15-19 (from 8.3 to 11.7 per 100,000; an increase of 40 percent), 20-29 (from 68.5 to 106.3 per 100,000; an increase of 55 percent), and 60 years and older (from 133.7 to 179.5 per 100,000; an increase of 34 percent). Rates also increased among females ages 20-29 years (from 34.6 to 47.4 per 100,000; an increase of 37 percent) and 60 years and older (from 79.6 to 93.2 per 100,000; an increase of 17 percent).

By Race/Ethnicity

- White, African American/Black, and American Indian/Alaska Native persons in California continued to be disproportionately affected by chronic hepatitis C in 2015: Whites represented 40 percent of the general population in California, but 60 percent of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases; African Americans/Blacks represented 6 percent of the general population in California, but 12 percent of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases; and American Indian/Alaska Natives were 0.5 percent of the general population but 1.2 percent of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases.
- In 2015, Hispanics/Latinos and Asian Pacific Islanders (APIs) were underrepresented among chronic hepatitis C cases in California. Hispanics/Latinos were nearly 40 percent of the general population, but only 24 percent of reported chronic hepatitis C cases, and APIs were 14 percent of the state population, but only 3.1 percent of reported chronic hepatitis C cases.
- From 2011 to 2015, the proportion of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases who were Hispanic/Latino decreased from 30 to 24 percent, and the proportion of reported cases who were White increased from 53 to 60 percent.

By Geography

- Among local health jurisdictions with population ≥100,000 (urban jurisdictions), Humboldt county had the highest rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California in 2015, followed by San Mateo, San Francisco, Berkeley City, and Santa Cruz counties. The top five jurisdictions had higher rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection than the statewide rate, as did Solano, Marin, Sacramento, Shasta, Kern, Long Beach City, Sonoma, Los Angeles, Napa, and Yolo counties. Together, the top five local health jurisdictions with population ≥100,000 accounted for 9 percent (n=3,155) of all newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in 2015.
- Among local health jurisdictions with population <100,000 (rural jurisdictions), Lassen and Del Norte counties had the highest rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection in California in 2015, followed by Siskiyou, Modoc, and Mariposa counties. These top five jurisdictions had higher rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection than the statewide rate, as did Trinity, Lake, Plumas, Mendocino, Tuolumne, Yuba, and Mono counties. Together, the top five local jurisdictions with population
<100,000 accounted for less than 1 percent (n=298) of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in 2015.

- From 2011 to 2015, notable increases in rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection occurred in rural and urban jurisdictions in California. Rural jurisdictions include Lassen (478 percent), Modoc (118 percent), Mariposa (41 percent), Trinity (84 percent), Lake (30 percent), Plumas (63 percent), and Tuolumne (80 percent) counties. Urban jurisdictions include Humboldt (49 percent), San Mateo (228 percent), Berkeley City (95 percent), Santa Cruz (27 percent), Solano (132 percent), and Marin (205 percent) counties.

**KEY FINDINGS: CHRONIC HEPATITIS C IN CALIFORNIA STATE PRISONS**

**Overall**

- In 2015, CDPH received 3,060 new reports of chronic hepatitis C infections in state prison facilities. The rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection in state prisons decreased 5 percent since 2011, from 2,774.9 to 2,631.2 per 100,000 population.
- Nearly 9 percent of all newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California in 2015 were reported from state prisons.
- From 1994 to 2015, 70,538 chronic hepatitis C cases in California prisons were newly reported to CDPH.

**By Gender**

- From 2011 to 2015, the vast majority (97 percent) of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California state prisons were among males, which roughly corresponded to the gender distribution of people incarcerated in California state prisons.

**By Age**

- In 2015, 14 percent of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in California state prisons were among persons born during the years 1945-1965; in contrast, more than half (55 percent) of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases were among persons born in 1980 or later years.
- Males ages 20-39 years incarcerated in state prisons composed nearly one-third (32 percent) of all cases reported among males in their age group statewide in 2015.
- Whereas males ages 50-59 years had the highest rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C in state prisons in 2011, in 2014-2015, males ages 20-29 had the highest rate of newly reported chronic hepatitis C among persons incarcerated in state prisons.
- Among males ages 40-49 incarcerated in state prisons, rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases decreased 32 percent between 2011 and 2015, from 3,003.2 to 2,050.0
per 100,000 population. Rates decreased 44 percent among males ages 50-59 incarcerated in state prisons, from 3,234.9 to 1,819.0 per 100,000 population.

- Among males ages 20-29 incarcerated in state prisons, rates of newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection increased 66 percent between 2011 and 2015, from 2,294.8 to 3,796.8 per 100,000 population. Rates increased 20 percent among males ages 30-39 incarcerated in state prisons, from 2,438.7 to 2,932.8 per 100,000 population.
- Statewide, the median age of persons with newly reported chronic hepatitis C infection in state prisons decreased 6 years between 2011 and 2015, from 40 to 34.

By Race/Ethnicity

- In 2015, Hispanic/Latino and White persons continued to be disproportionately affected by chronic hepatitis C in state prisons. Hispanics/Latinos represented 43 percent of the population in state prisons, but 54 percent of reported chronic hepatitis C cases, and Whites represented 24 percent of the population in state prisons, but 37 percent of reported chronic hepatitis C cases. In contrast, African Americans/Blacks were underrepresented among chronic hepatitis C cases in state prisons, making up 30 percent of the state prison population, but only 7 percent of reported chronic hepatitis C cases.
- From 2011 to 2015, the proportion of newly reported chronic hepatitis C cases in state prisons who were Hispanic/Latino increased from 44 percent to 54 percent, while the proportion of newly reported hepatitis C cases in state prisons who were African American decreased from 11 percent to 7 percent.