

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is a Class C Disease and must be reported to the state within five business days.

Gonorrhea is a very common sexually transmitted bacterial disease caused by the *Neisseria gonorrhoeae* organism.

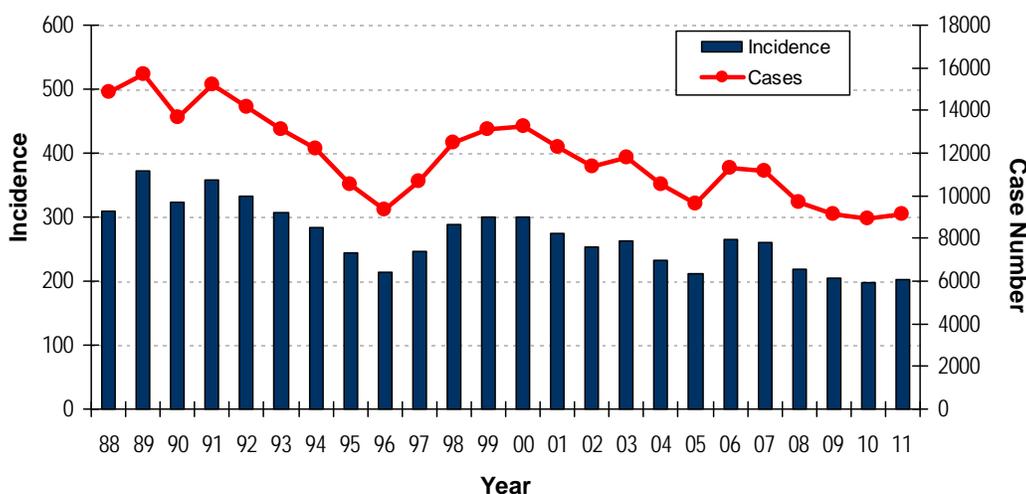
Ninety-five percent of males infected with gonorrhea become symptomatic with a purulent urethral discharge and dysuria within two to seven days after exposure. Infection in females results in the development of cervicitis, with 50% to 60% of cases being asymptomatic. About 20% of infected women develop uterine invasion with subsequent risk of infertility and ectopic pregnancy.

Because most infections in women are asymptomatic, reporting of gonorrhea in females depends on the effectiveness of screening programs. The proportion of total cases reported is estimated to be very low (approximately 10% to 30%). Reporting is heavily influenced by medical care provider participation in the reporting program. Reporting is better in areas with poorer populations who depend on public health providers. In general, reporting rates are considered to present a reasonable evaluation of the trends in gonorrheal infections.

Incidence

Reported rates of gonorrhea increased in Louisiana throughout the late 1990s, but have decreased since 2000. In 1999, the rates peaked at 300 cases per 100,000; in 2001 they dropped to 273 cases per 100,000 population, then continued to decrease to 202 per 100,000 population in 2011 (Figure 1). Despite these decreases, Louisiana has the highest rate of gonorrhea in the nation.

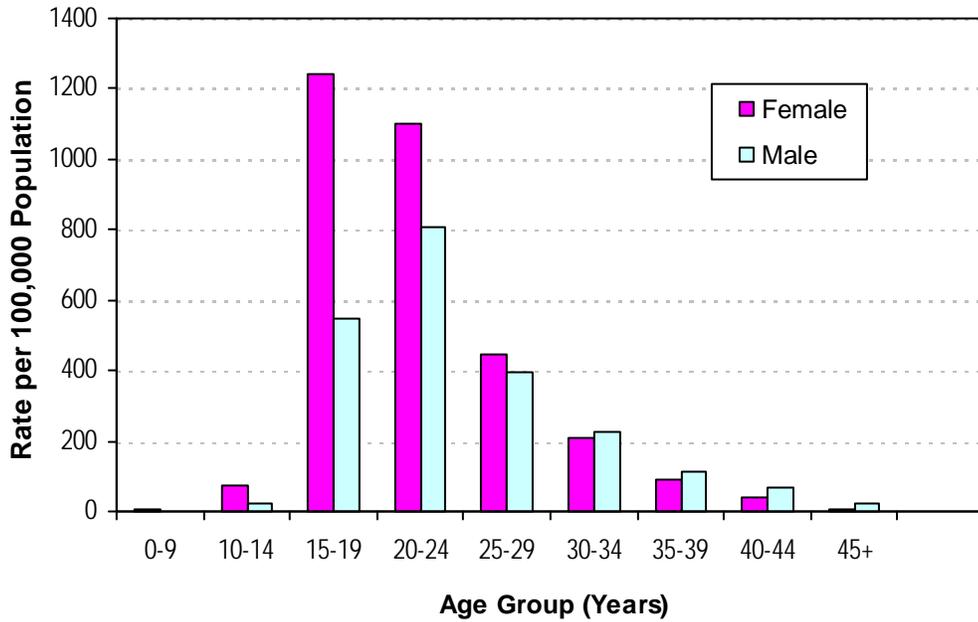
Figure 1: Gonorrhea incidence rates - Louisiana, 1988-2011



Louisiana's age and gender distribution are typical for gonorrhea, with peaks in the late teens

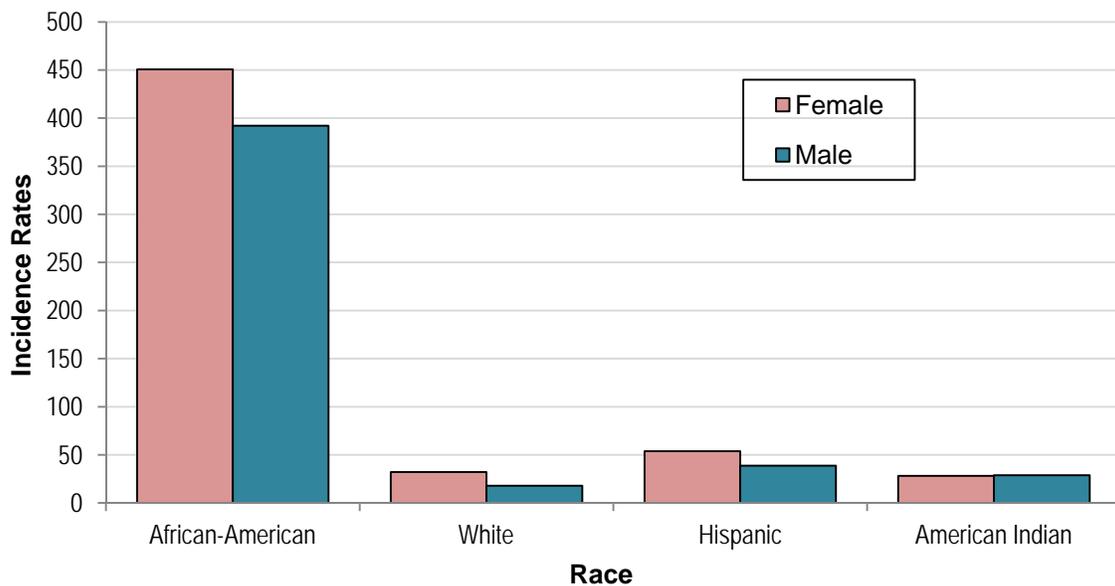
and early twenties and shows a gradual decrease in the older age groups. The increase in female cases occurs at a younger age than the increase seen in males (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Gonorrhea incidence rates by gender and age - Louisiana, 2011



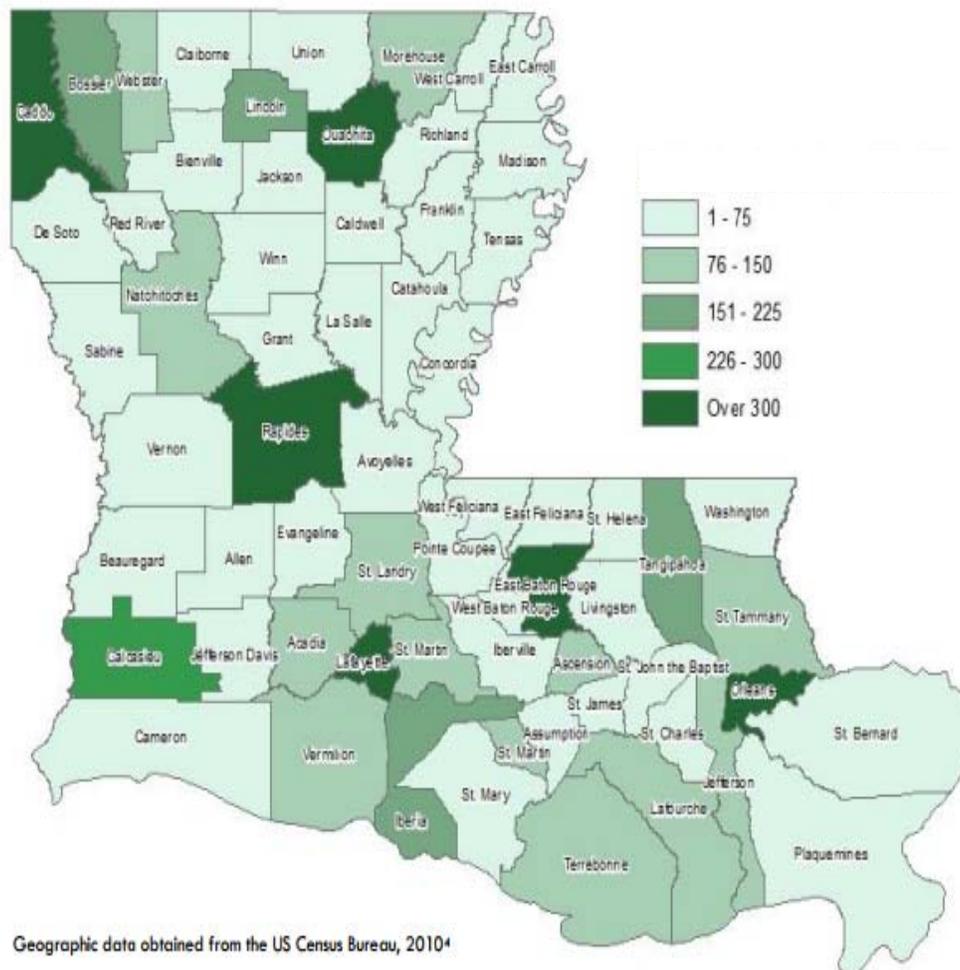
African-Americans are disproportionately affected by gonorrhea, reaching a peak incidence of 2,355 cases per 100,000 population in the 20 to 24 year old age group. This rate is over 13 times higher than the rate in Whites (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Gonorrhea incidence rates by race and sex - Louisiana, 2011



A geographical representation shows a distribution with high rates in a number of parishes with large urban populations (Figure 4). The regions with the highest rates of gonorrhea in 2011 were near New Orleans, Shreveport, and Monroe.

Figure 4: Gonorrhea incidence rates per 100,000 by parish - Louisiana, 2011



Prevalence Rates

The prevalence of gonococcal infection is most effectively determined in Louisiana through test positivity rates among women aged 15 to 24 years, screened at family planning clinics throughout the state. A statewide prevalence of 2.6% was reported among those screened in 2006. Only two states in the nation have rates above 5%. Prevalence among 16 to 24 year old women entering the National Job Training Program was 7.1% in 2006, an increase from 2005 (4.4%).