

## 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. *N. gonorrhoeae* infects the mucous membranes of the reproductive tract, including the cervix, uterus, and fallopian tubes in women, and the urethra in both men and women. It can also infect the mucous membranes of the mouth, throat, eyes, and rectum.

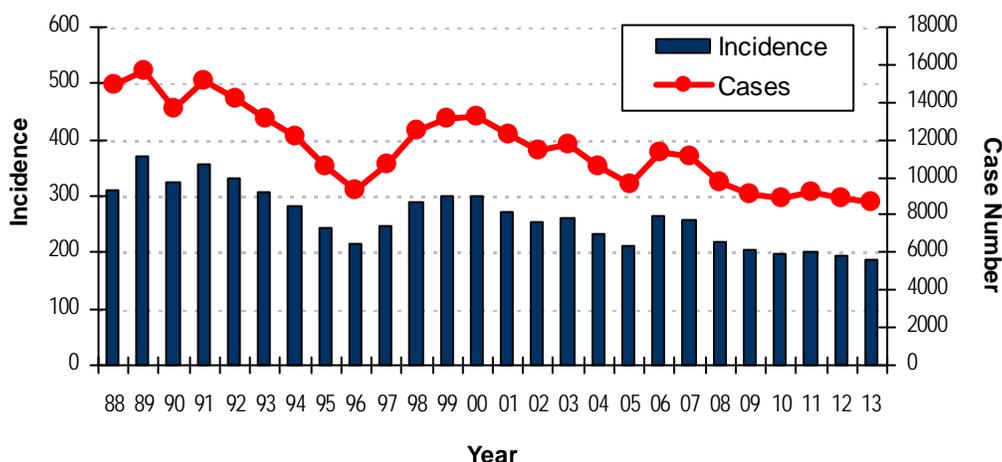
Ninety-five percent of males infected with gonorrhea become symptomatic with dysuria or a white, yellow, or green urethral discharge within one to 14 days after exposure. If cases develop epididymitis, men with gonorrhea may also have testicular or scrotal pain. Infection in females results in the development of cervicitis, with 50% to 60% of cases being asymptomatic. When symptoms do occur in women, they can be mild and mistaken for bladder or vaginal infections. Initial symptoms in women include dysuria, increased vaginal discharge, or vaginal bleeding between periods. In women, gonorrhea can spread into the uterus or fallopian tubes and cause pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can lead to internal abscesses and chronic pelvic pain. About 20% of infected women develop PID with subsequent risk of infertility and ectopic pregnancy. Rectal infection in both men and women can include discharge, anal itching, soreness, bleeding, or painful bowel movements, but can be asymptomatic. Pharyngeal infection can cause a sore throat, but is also usually asymptomatic.

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. 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. 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).

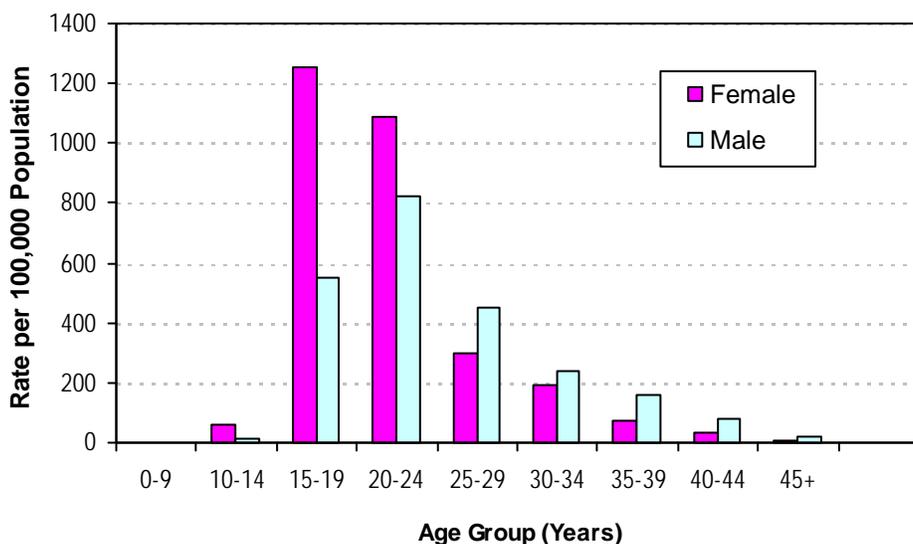
**Figure 1:** Gonorrhea incidence rates - Louisiana, 1988-2013



The rate decreased nearly 3%, from 192.8 cases per 100,000 in 2012 to 187.4 per 100,000 in 2013. Despite these decreases, Louisiana lead the nation in the highest rates of gonorrhea in 2013.

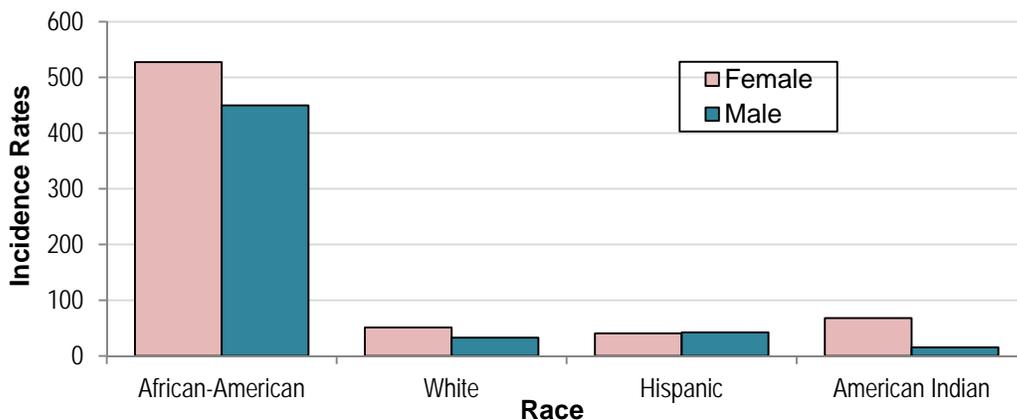
In 2013, the U.S. male gonorrhea rate was higher than the female rate. However, in Louisiana, the female gonorrhea rate of 211.5 per 100,000 females was 28% greater than the male rate of 165.3 per 100,000. The highest age specific rate in 2013 was among 15 to 29-year old females, followed by 20 to 24-year old females. The majority of new diagnoses occur in persons between the ages of 15 to 24 years of age (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Gonorrhea incidence rates by gender and age - Louisiana, 2013



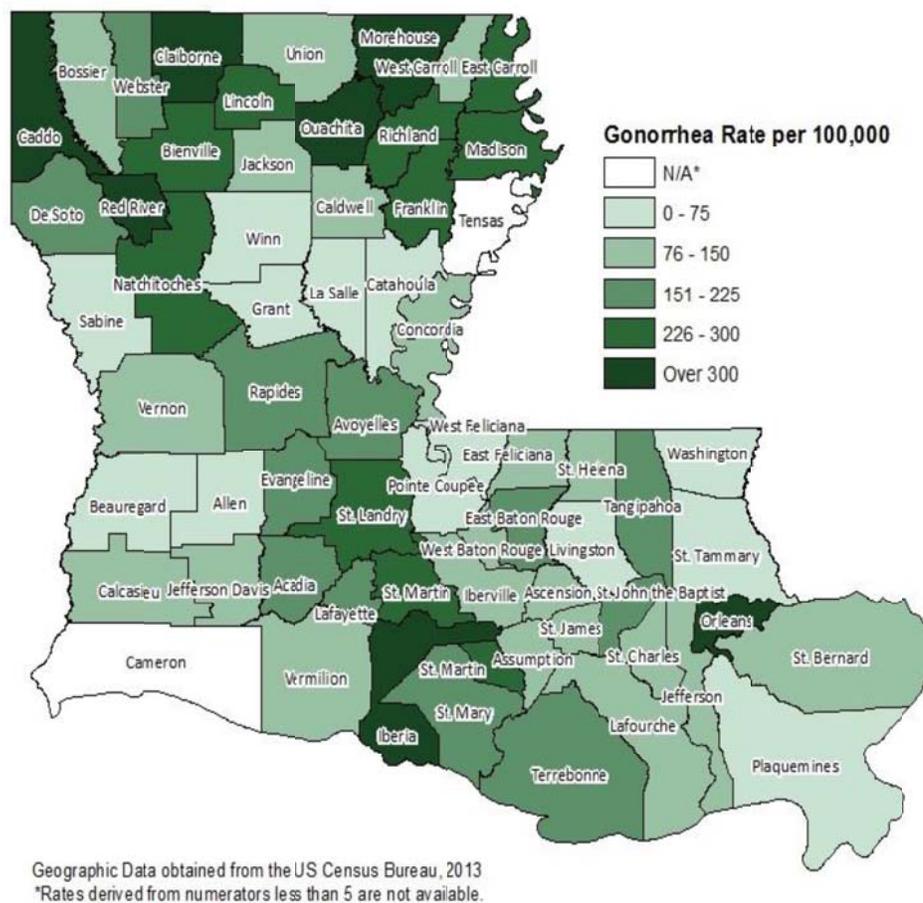
African-Americans are disproportionately affected by gonorrhea, reaching a peak incidence of 7,267 cases, making up 85.5% of the total cases diagnosed with gonorrhea in Louisiana in 2013. This rate is nearly 12 times higher than the rate in Whites, which was 1,140 cases, making up 13.4% of the total cases diagnosed with gonorrhea in Louisiana in 2013. Of the gonorrhea cases in 2013, 84% of females and 96% of males with reported race were Black. Rates of gonorrhea in females were higher than males among Blacks, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Whites (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Gonorrhea incidence rates by race and sex - Louisiana, 2013



A geographical representation shows a distribution with high rates in a number of parishes with large urban populations (Figure 4). In 2013, there were persons diagnosed with gonorrhea in all 64 parishes. A total of seven parishes had a gonorrhea case rate greater than 300 per 100,000 (Orleans, Iberia, Caddo, Claiborne, Red River, Morehouse, and Ouachita), down from 11 in 2012.

**Figure 4:** Gonorrhea incidence rates per 100,000 by parish - Louisiana, 2013



## 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%).