

# HIV Primary Transmission Risk by Age

## Why Is This Important?

Understanding risks helps us understand how HIV is spread in the community.

Risks are self-reported. Primary risk is the risk behavior most likely to be responsible for HIV transmission.

Age influences human behavior, especially sexuality and lifestyle. Attitudes towards risk and disease prevention that are influenced by age may increase risk for HIV transmission.

Adolescents who contract HIV may be vulnerable socially and economically. A growing body of research reveals a link between violence and young people's risk for HIV.<sup>2</sup> In 2009, the [Saskatoon Enhanced Street Youth Study](#) found that 5% (one in 20) of street-involved youth were HIV positive. Discomfort and stigma were the second most frequently reported barriers to youth accessing health services, after location of service.<sup>3</sup>

References: [About the Data](#)

## What Is Being Done?

[Saskatchewan HIV Collaborative](#)

[Positive Living Program](#)

[Westside Clinic](#)

[Front Line](#)

## To Learn More:

Chief Medical Health Officer's [Call to Action](#)

[Maggie's Story](#): A personal story of HIV and the sex trade in our Region.

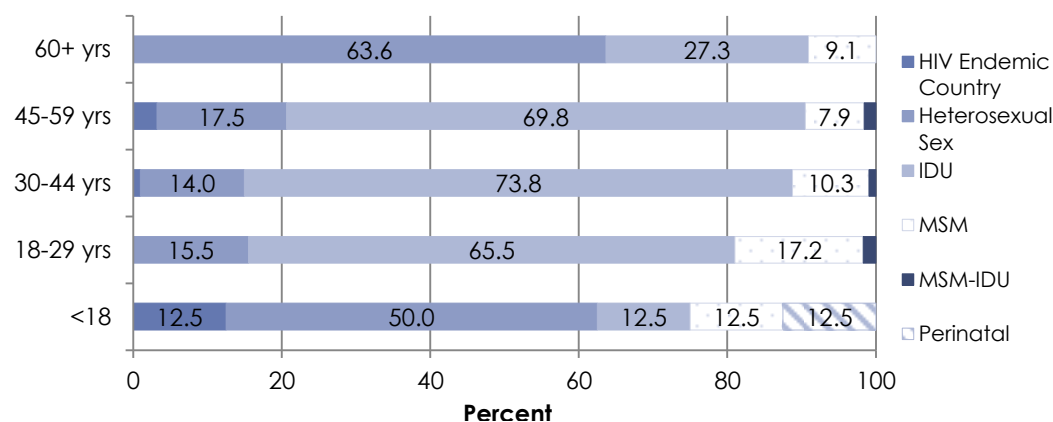
[Front Line – Diagnosis Stigma](#)

## Highlights

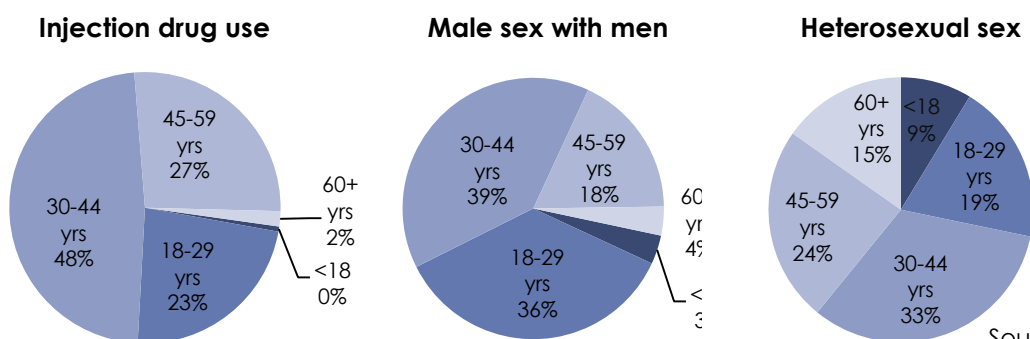
### Risks for HIV transmission change with age.

- HIV rates for both males and females are highest among 25 to 29 year-old females and 40 to 59 year old males ([HIV by Gender and Age Group](#)).
- Of the 248 HIV cases reported since 2011, injection drug use (IDU) was the most common primary HIV transmission risk for all age groups except 60+ years and <18 years (*Figure 1*). See [HIV Primary Transmission Risk](#) and [Other HIV Transmission Risks](#).
- Among children under 18 years, 12.5% reported injection drug use as the primary risk, 50% heterosexual sex, 12.5% MSM and 12.5% perinatal transmission (*Figure 1*). IDU risk has decreased in this age-group and heterosexual sex transmission has increased.
- Among individuals whose primary risk was injection drug use, more than three quarters were over the age of 30 when first diagnosed (*Figure 2*).
- Among individuals whose primary risk was male sex with men, 61% were men over 30 years (*Figure 2*).
- Among individuals whose primary risk was heterosexual sex, the distribution was more evenly distributed among age groups (*Figure 2*), underscoring that unprotected sex is a risk at all ages. Sixty-five percent of persons whose primary risk was heterosexual sex were male (*not shown*).
- Since 2006, 16 cases of HIV have been reported in children younger than 18 years of age; 2 were infants and the remainder were adolescents aged 12 to 17 years (see [Pediatric HIV](#)).

**Figure 1: Age Group by Primary HIV Transmission Risk, Saskatoon Health Region, 2011 to 2015**



**Figure 2: Top HIV Primary Risk by Age Group, Saskatoon Health Region, 2011 to 2015**



Source: iPHIS