

Northern Territory AIDS/STD Program Surveillance Update

Department of Health and Community Services, Vol. 4 No 2,
Jul-Sep 2003 & Oct-Dec 2003

This report presents quarterly statistics for all sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and blood borne viruses (BBVs) in the Northern Territory (NT) during the periods July to September and October to December 2003. Data for this report is sourced from the Northern Territory Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System (NTNDSS), the centralised database of NT wide notifications and the AIDS/STD Program's HIV and AIDS databases.

1. Aims of the report

The aim of the report is to provide up to date information that can be used by service providers to assess the current level of infection within their district. Regular reports seek to raise the awareness of all service providers about the high rates of preventable and largely, readily curable infections and assist clinicians to plan targeted interventions.

2. Format

The report is divided into bacterial sexually transmissible infections (gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas) and blood borne viruses (hepatitis C and human immunodeficiency virus). Donovanosis is presented separately to the bacterial STIs purely due to the small numbers. The Urban / Rural presentation of data relates specifically to the Alice Springs and Darwin districts only. This is included to provide a clearer map of disease trends in the two districts where most STIs are diagnosed in the NT.

3. Limitations to the report

This update does not provide data on complications of sexually transmitted infections such as pelvic inflammatory disease, epididymo-orchitis or infertility which are not notifiable. The data reported here does not represent the result of systematic population screening in the NT rather, the detection of disease in individuals who present to their health care practitioner for testing – usually as a result of symptoms, as a contact for a case, or with concerns about risk behaviour. It is known that the amount of testing, particularly for screening of asymptomatic persons, varies enormously between regions and different population groups. STI testing data in the NT is currently being collated with a view to including this data in the surveillance reports.

Indigenous status is recorded on the NTNDSS as Aboriginal and TSI, not Aboriginal or TSI or not stated / unknown. Other ethnic groups are not routinely identified on pathology forms and hence, not available for reporting.

4. Quarterly Notifications

The comments below relate specifically to the cases and rates of infection for the quarters covered by this report in comparison to the same period in the last or previous years.

4.1 Genital Chlamydia

There were 836 (827 per 100 000 pop) cases of genital chlamydia notified in the NT between June and December 2003. This compares to 642 and 769 for the same reporting periods in 2001 and 2002 respectively. The majority of cases were diagnosed in females (63%) and

Aboriginal people (66%). Young Territorians aged 15 to 24 accounted for 57% of all chlamydia cases notified in this reporting period.

Chlamydia cases by 5-year age group were highest at 252 (3346 per 100 000 pop) in the 15 to 19 year age group. Rates in this group have climbed consistently in every reporting period and have more than doubled since the first surveillance report was published in 2000.

Alice Springs district reported 336 chlamydia cases (1668 per 100 000 pop), representing a 20% increase on cases recorded in the same period in 2002 and 5% more than 2001. For the first time since the surveillance report began, there were more cases of chlamydia than gonorrhoea diagnosed in Alice Springs as a result of the slight reduction in gonorrhoea notifications and an increase in cases of chlamydia.

4.2 Gonorrhoea

A total of 672 cases of gonorrhoea (665 per 100 000 pop) were notified to the NTNDSS in the 6 months to December 2003 representing a 7.9% reduction from the same time 2002, and 9.5% less than the number of cases recorded in 2001. There were 57 cases of gonorrhoea recorded in non-Aboriginal people in this reporting period compared to 108 and 83 in the same period in 2002 and 2001 respectively. Whilst the overall number of gonorrhoea cases reported in the NT in this 6-month period is less than those reported in previous years, the proportion of cases recorded in people aged 15-19 has increased from 27.1% in 2001 to 32.9% in 2003.

Alice Springs district detected the bulk of the gonorrhoea cases for this reporting period (47%). This has been a consistent trend in previous years however, gonorrhoea cases reported in Alice Springs decreased by 35% between July and December 2001 to the same period in 2002, and have remained stable between 2002 and 2003.

4.3 Syphilis

Syphilis notifications totalled 146 (144 per 100 000 pop) for the 6 months to December 2003. This reflects a 28% reduction from the same period in 2002 and 36% less than the 2001 figure. The trend of males and females being equally represented in the notifications continues and as for gonorrhoea and chlamydia, young adults aged 15 to 24 account for the greatest number of syphilis diagnoses.

4.4 Trichomonas

The trichomonas cases have remained static for the July to December 2002 and 2003 periods. Trichomonas is not routinely tested for when an individual presents for an STI screen in the NT. Infections are consistently reported almost exclusively in Aboriginal females because males are very rarely tested.

4.5 Donovanosis

There were 2 cases of donovanosis diagnosed in Aboriginal men in the last half of 2003. This compares to 7 and 2 in the same respective time periods for 2001 and 2002.

4.6 Hepatitis C

There were 115 new diagnoses of Hepatitis C (113 per 100 000 pop) made in this reporting period. Notifications for the same time in 2001 and 2002 were 110 and 115 respectively. Demographic characteristics of cases remained consistent with previous years, with a majority being male (61%) and non-Aboriginal (61%).

Hepatitis C cases continue to be diagnosed in middle-aged adults more frequently than in younger people. The proportion of HCV cases detected in individuals aged less than 30 has remained constant at 28 – 30 percent of total cases in July to December of the previous 3 years.

4.7 Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Two new diagnoses of HIV were made in non-Aboriginal residents in the second half of 2003. One case was a female reporting heterosexual activity as the primary risk factor and the other was a bisexual male. Both new cases were aged over 35 years and were diagnosed in Darwin. Neither case could be confirmed as a newly acquired infection (i.e evidence of a negative test or seroconversion illness in the previous 12 months).

4.8 Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS)

There were 2 males and a female diagnosed with AIDS in this reporting period. All cases were in non-Aboriginal people. These are the first AIDS cases to be diagnosed in the second half of the year since 2000 and the most for any one reporting period since the same year.

5. Consumer response

The NT AIDS/STD Program is very interested in readers' responses to this report. Please forward any comments or suggestions to:

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All data in this report are provisional and subject to future revision.

This report is downloadable in PDF format from the Department of Health and Community Services website: <http://www.health.nt.gov.au/>

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1. Sexually transmissible infections (STIs)

Table 1.1 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory, July-September 2003 and October-December 2003

NT Total	Gonorrhoea		Chlamydia		Syphilis		Trichomonas	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
<i>Quarter</i>								
Jul-Sep 2003	328	649.5	398	788.2	83	164.4	128	253.5
Oct-Dec 2003	344	681.2	438	867.4	63	124.8	171	338.6
Jul-Dec 2003	672	665.4	836	827.8	146	144.6	299	296.1

¹ Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 1.1 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory, July-December 2003

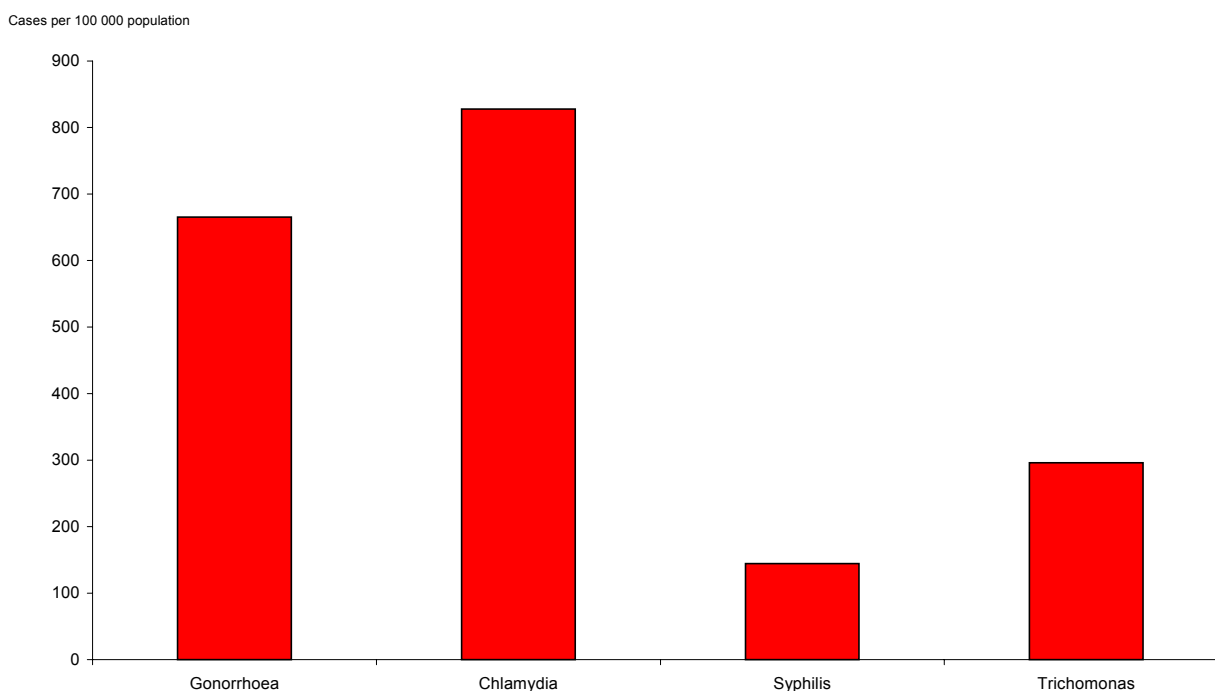


Table 1.2 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by gender, July-September 2003 and October-December 2003

Gender	Gonorrhoea		Chlamydia		Syphilis		Trichomonas	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
Males								
Jul-Sep 2003	166	626.9	142	536.3	40	151.1	1	3.8
Oct-Dec 2003	171	645.8	162	611.8	32	120.9	1	3.8
Total	337	636.4	304	574.1	72	136.0	2	3.8
Females								
Jul-Sep 2003	162	674.5	256	1065.8	43	179.0	127	528.7
Oct-Dec 2003	173	720.3	275	1144.9	31	129.1	170	707.8
Total	335	697.4	531	1105.4	74	154.0	297	618.3
Not stated								
Jul-Sep 2003								
Oct-Dec 2003			1					
Total			1					

¹ Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 1.2 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by gender, July-December 2003

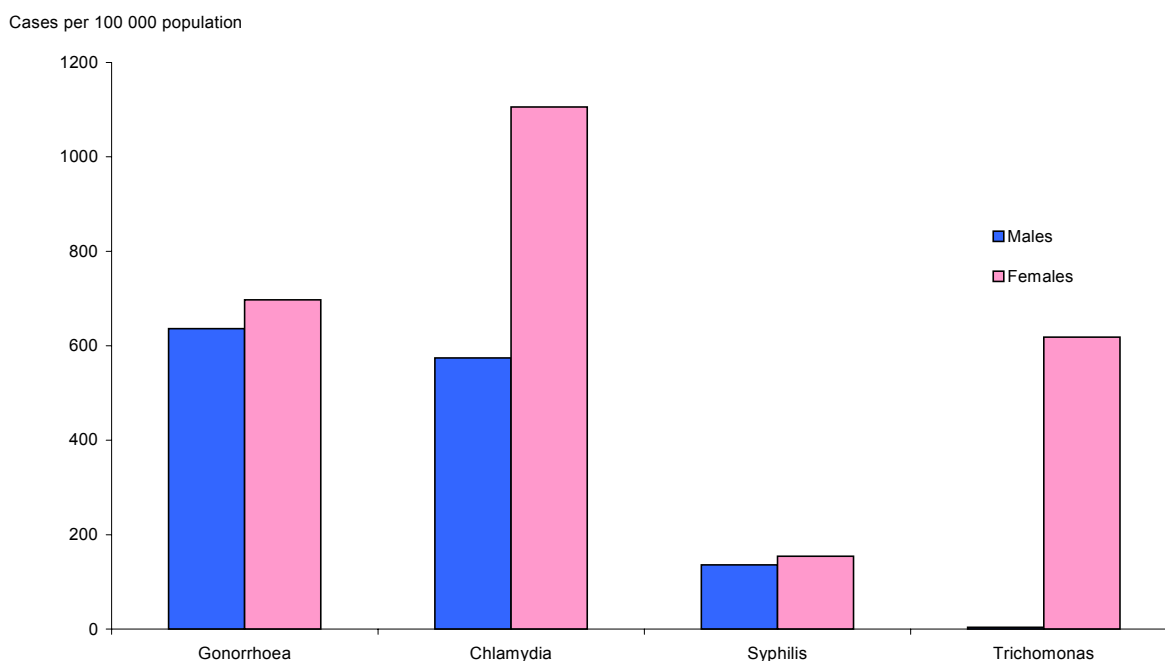


Table 1.3 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by Indigenous status, July-September 2003 and October-December 2003

Indigenous Status	Gonorrhoea		Chlamydia		Syphilis		Trichomonas	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
<i>Aboriginal</i>								
Jul-Sep 2003	294	2054.7	262	1831.0	80	559.1	118	824.7
Oct-Dec 2003	286	1998.7	290	2026.7	55	384.4	159	1111.2
Total	580	2026.7	552	1928.9	135	471.7	277	967.9
<i>non-Aboriginal</i>								
Jul-Sep 2003	13	35.9	103	284.6	1	2.8	3	8.3
Oct-Dec 2003	44	121.6	121	334.4	7	19.3	9	24.9
Total	57	78.8	224	309.5	8	11.1	12	16.6
<i>Unknown I/S</i>								
Jul-Sep 2003	21		33		2		7	
Oct-Dec 2003	14		27		1		3	
Total	35		60		3		10	

1 Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 1.3 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by Indigenous status, July-December 2003

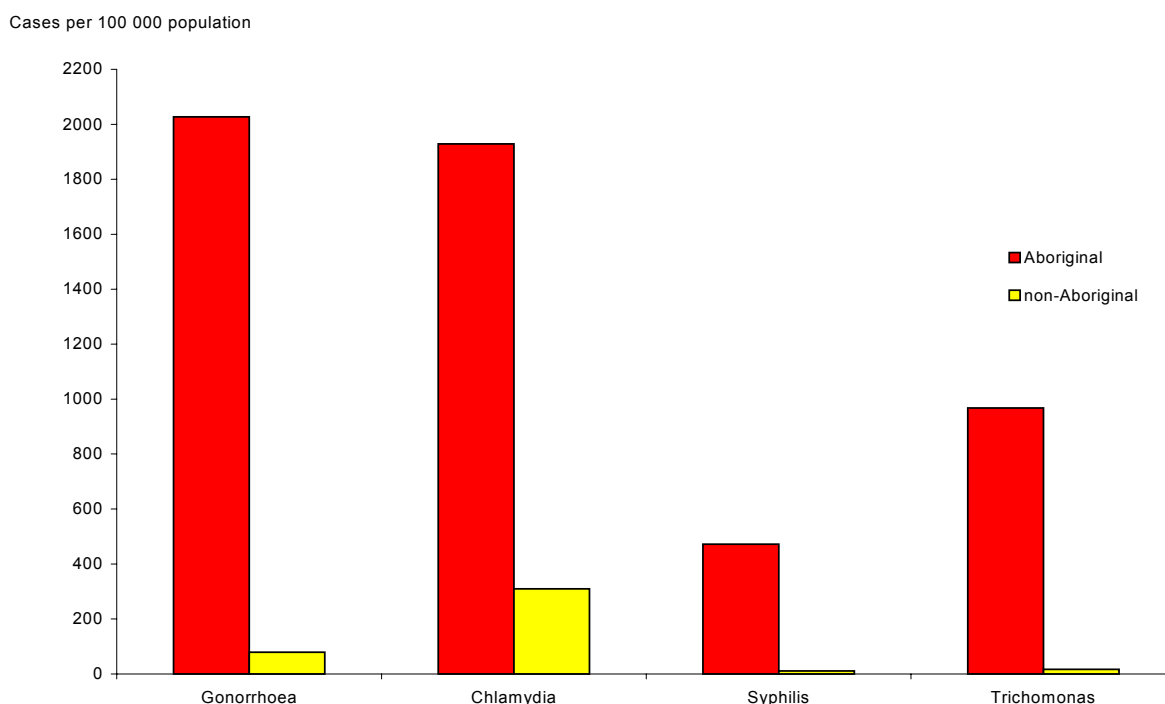


Table 1.4 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by district, July-September 2003 and October-December 2003

District	Gonorrhoea		Chlamydia		Syphilis		Trichomonas	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
Darwin								
Jul-Sep 2003	76	250.1	150	493.6	13	42.8	40	131.6
Oct-Dec 2003	90	296.1	155	510.0	17	55.9	33	108.6
Total	166	273.1	305	501.8	30	49.4	73	120.1
Katherine								
Jul-Sep 2003	42	891.0	37	784.9	15	318.2	10	212.1
Oct-Dec 2003	47	997.0	59	1251.6	3	63.6	11	233.3
Total	89	943.9	96	1018.1	18	190.9	21	222.7
East Arnhem								
Jul-Sep 2003	24	684.2	26	741.2	4	114.0	13	370.6
Oct-Dec 2003	39	1111.7	39	1111.7	3	85.5	23	655.6
Total	63	897.8	65	926.3	7	99.8	36	513.0
Barkly								
Jul-Sep 2003	19	1046.8	18	991.7	1	55.1	4	220.4
Oct-Dec 2003	18	991.7	16	881.5	2	110.2	4	220.4
Total	37	1019.3	34	936.6	3	82.6	8	220.4
Alice Springs								
Jul-Sep 2003	167	1658.7	167	1658.7	50	496.6	61	605.9
Oct-Dec 2003	150	1489.9	169	1678.6	38	377.4	100	993.2
Total	317	1574.3	336	1668.7	88	437.0	161	799.6

¹ Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 1.4 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by district, July-December 2003

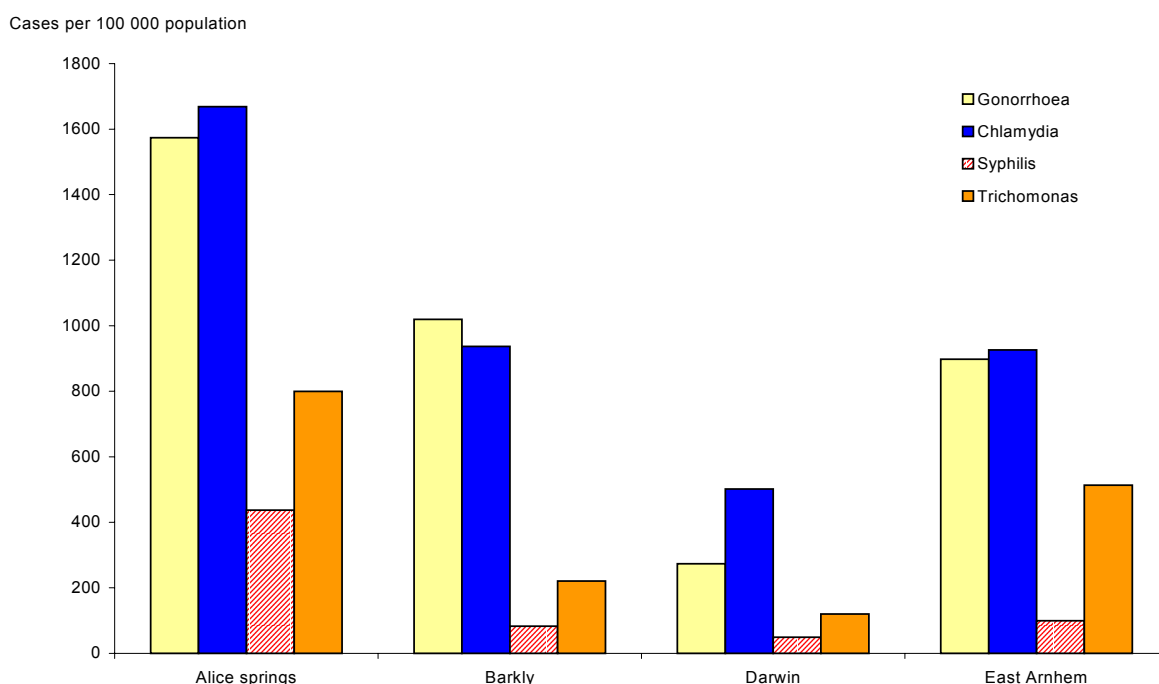
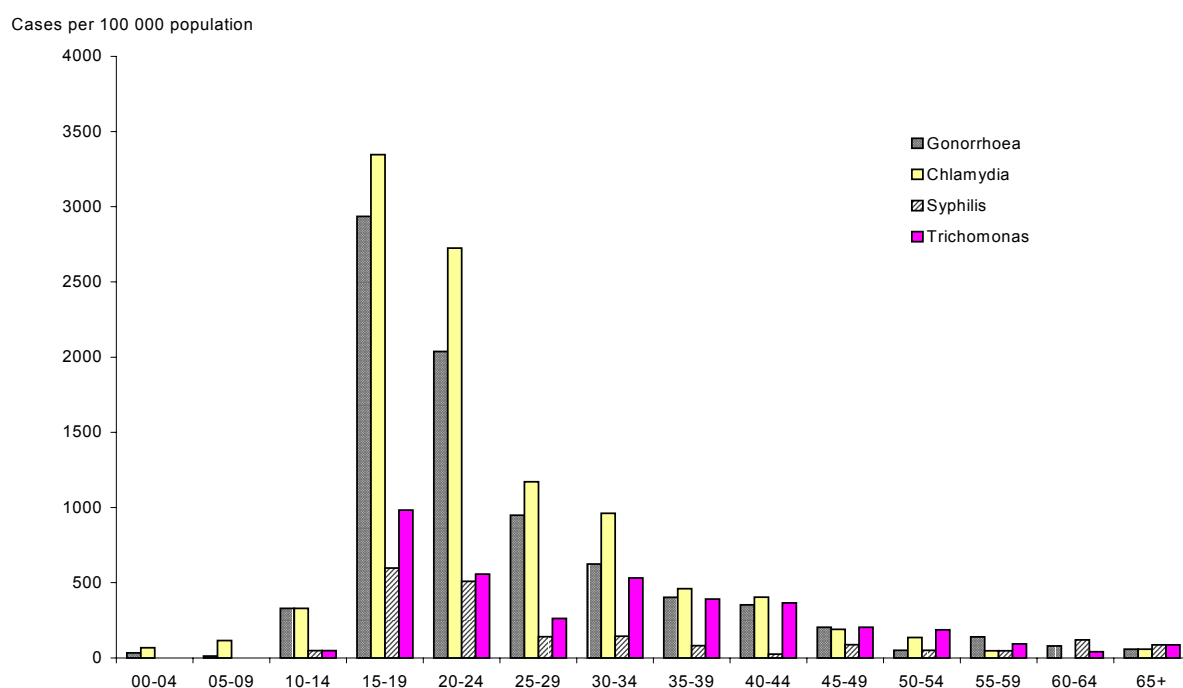


Table 1.5 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by five-year age group, July-December 2003

Age group	Gonorrhoea		Chlamydia		Syphilis		Trichomonas	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
<i>Jul-Dec 2003</i>								
00-04	3	34.2	6	68.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
05-09	1	11.5	10	115.4	0	0.0	0	0.0
10-14	27	329.0	27	329.0	4	48.7	4	48.7
15-19	221	2934.9	252	3346.6	45	597.6	74	982.7
20-24	172	2037.2	230	2724.2	43	509.3	47	556.7
25-29	94	948.7	116	1170.8	14	141.3	26	262.4
30-34	61	624.2	94	961.8	14	143.3	52	532.1
35-39	35	402.0	40	459.4	7	80.4	34	390.5
40-44	28	352.8	32	403.2	2	25.2	29	365.4
45-49	14	204.1	13	189.5	6	87.5	14	204.1
50-54	3	50.9	8	135.7	3	50.9	11	186.5
55-59	6	139.2	2	46.4	2	46.4	4	92.8
60-64	2	80.2	0	0.0	3	120.3	1	40.1
65+	2	57.2	2	57.2	3	85.8	3	85.8
Unknown	3		4		0		0	
Total	672	665.4	836	827.8	146	145	299	296.1

¹ Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 1.5 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia, syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by five-year age group, July-December 2003



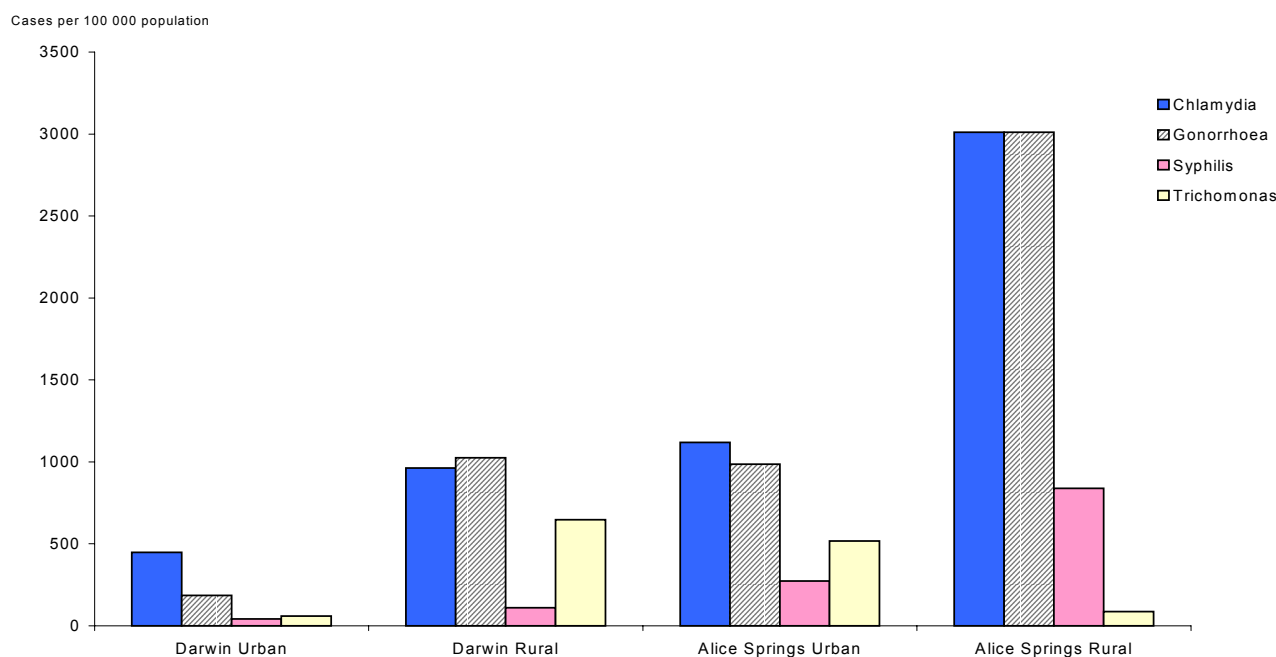
2. Urban and Rural Burden of Disease

Table 2.1 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by urban and rural split by district, July-September and October-December 2003

District	Chlamydia		Gonorrhoea		Syphilis		Trichomonas	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
Darwin Urban								
Jul-Sep 2003	118	433.5	40	146.9	10	36.7	16	58.8
Oct-Dec 2003	126	462.9	61	224.1	13	47.8	16	58.8
Total	244	448.2	101	185.5	23	42.2	32	58.8
Darwin Rural								
Jul-Sep 2003	32	1009.8	36	1136.0	3	94.7	24	757.3
Oct-Dec 2003	29	915.1	29	915.1	4	126.2	17	536.4
Total	61	962.3	65	1025.4	7	110.4	41	646.8
Alice Springs Urban								
Jul-Sep 2003	79	1105.7	71	993.7	18	251.9	33	461.9
Oct-Dec 2003	81	1133.7	70	979.7	21	293.9	41	573.8
Total	160	1119.7	141	986.7	39	272.9	74	517.8
Alice Springs Rural[#]								
Jul-Sep 2003	88	3010.6	96	3284.3	32	1094.8	28	957.9
Oct-Dec 2003	88	3010.6	80	2736.9	17	581.6	59	2018.5
Total	176	3010.6	176	3010.6	49	838.2	87	1488.2

¹ Cases per 100,000 population [#]Excludes SA communities which may be notified under Alice Springs District

Figure 2.1 Gonorrhoea, chlamydia syphilis and trichomonas rates in the Northern Territory by Urban and Rural split by district, July-December 2003

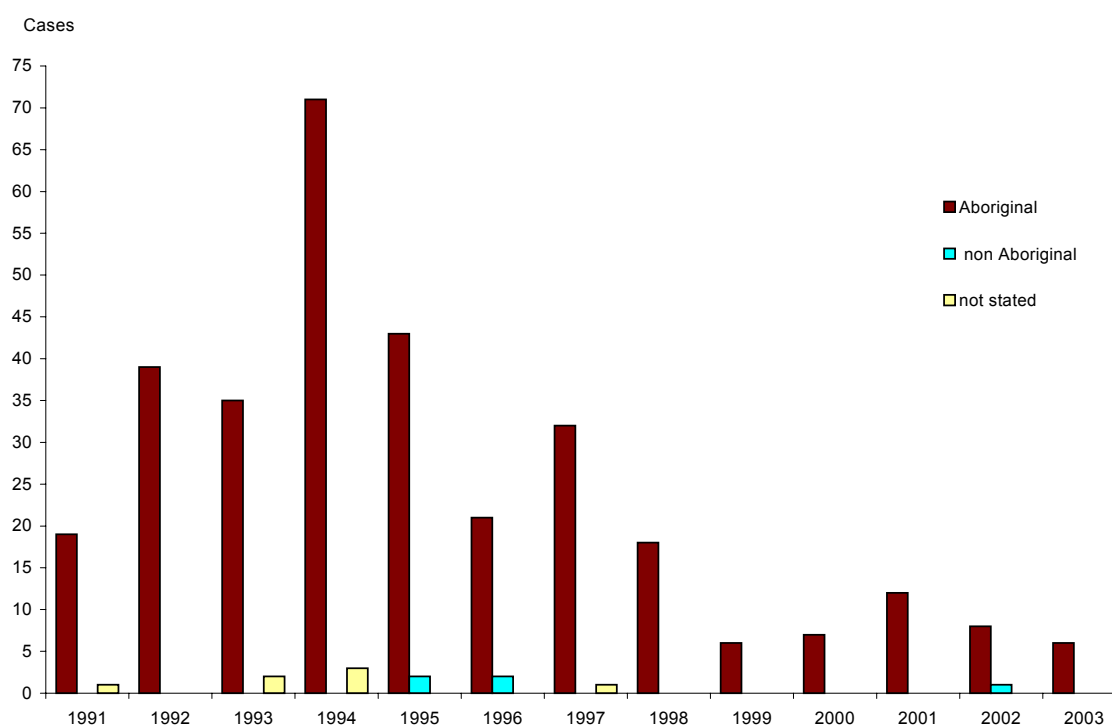


3. Donovanosis

Table 3.1 Number of cases of donovanosis diagnosed during the last two quarters of 2003 by gender, indigenous status, age and district.

Quarter	Gender	Indigenous status	Age group	District notified
<i>Jul-Sep</i>	Male	Aboriginal	30-34	Alice Springs
<i>Oct-Dec</i>	Male	Aboriginal	45-49	Katherine
<i>Jul-Dec 2003</i>	Total =2			

Figure 3.1 Donovanosis cases in the NT by year and indigenous status



4. Hepatitis C

Figure 4.1 Percentage of hepatitis C cases in the Northern Territory by gender, July-December 2003

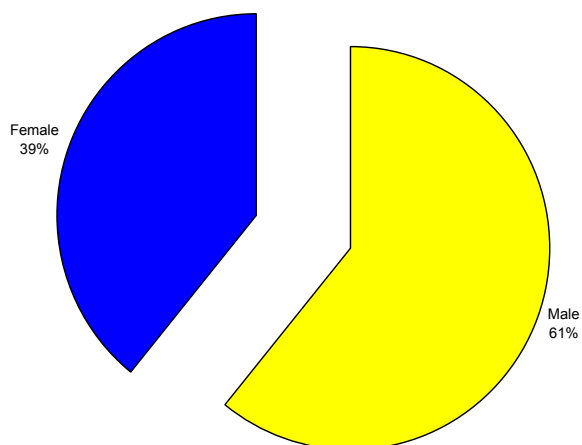


Figure 4.2 Percentage of hepatitis C cases in the Northern Territory by indigenous status, July-December 2003

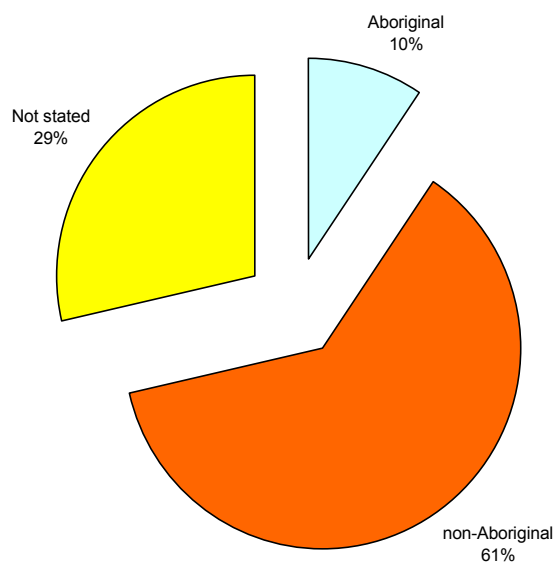


Table 4.1 Hepatitis C in the Northern Territory by district and gender, July-September 2003 and October-December 2003

Gender	Darwin		Katherine		East Arnhem		Barkly		Alice Springs	
	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹	Cases	Rate ¹
Jul-Sep 2003										
Male	32	200.1	0	0.0	1	54.4	0	0.0	1	19.5
Female	15	104.2	1	46.5	0	0.0	1	117.2	4	80.9
Oct-Dec 2003										
Male	30	187.6	3	117.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	58.5
Female	18	125.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	234.5	4	80.9
Jul-Dec 2003	95	156	4	42.4	1	14.3	3	82.6	12	59.6

¹ Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 4.3 Hepatitis C in the Northern Territory by district, July-December 2003

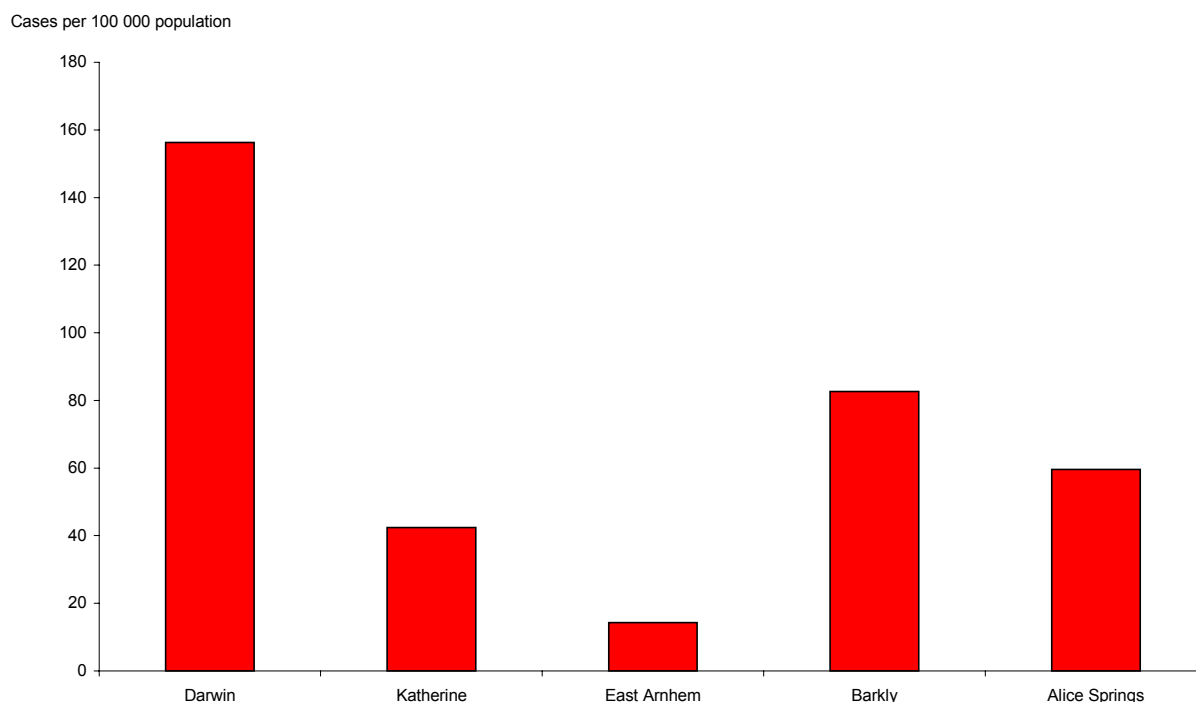
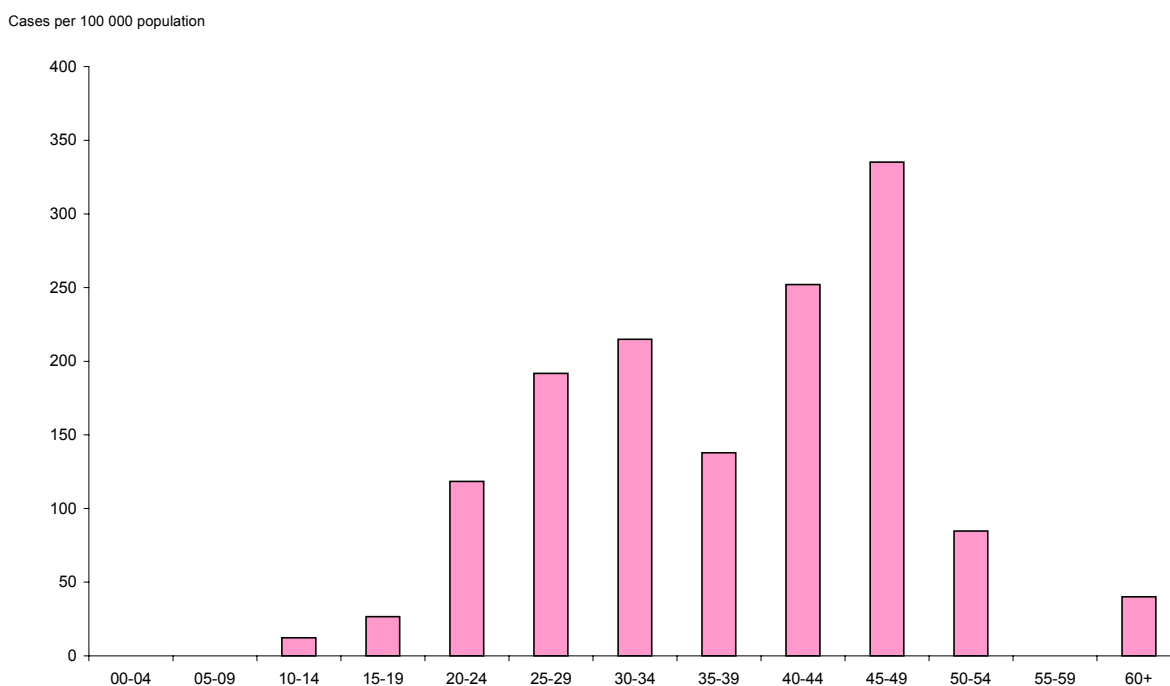


Table 4.2 Hepatitis C rates in the Northern Territory by five-year age group, July-December 2003

Hepatitis C		
Age Group	Cases	Rate ¹
<i>Jul-Dec 2003</i>		
00-04	0	0.0
05-09	0	0.0
10-14	1	12.2
15-19	2	26.6
20-24	10	118.4
25-29	19	191.8
30-34	21	214.9
35-39	12	137.8
40-44	20	252.0
45-49	23	335.2
50-54	5	84.8
55-59	0	0.0
60+	1	40.1
Unknown	1	
Total	115	113.8

¹ Cases per 100,000 population

Figure 4.4 Hepatitis C rates in the Northern Territory by five-year age group, July-December 2003



5. Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)

Table 5.1 Cases of HIV in NT residents* during the last two quarters of 2003 by gender, indigenous status, age group and mode of transmission

Quarter	Gender	Indigenous status	Age group	Mode of transmission
<i>Jul-Sep 2003</i>	Female	non Aboriginal	50-55	Heterosexual
<i>Oct-Dec 2003</i>	Male	non Aboriginal	35-39	MSM/ Bisexual
<i>Jul-Dec 2003</i> Total = 2 cases				

* Cases must have resided in the NT for >3months to be considered residents

Table 5.2 Annual number of cases of HIV by age group and gender, 1991–2003

Age Group	Female	Male	Total
<i>00-12</i>	0	1	1
<i>13-19</i>	0	0	0
<i>20-29</i>	6	10	16
<i>30-39</i>	2	30	32
<i>40-49</i>	3	17	20
<i>50-59</i>	2	9	11
<i>60+</i>	0	2	2
Total	13	69	82

Table 5.3 Cases of AIDS in NT residents* during the last two quarters of 2003 by gender, indigenous status, age group and AIDS defining illness

Quarter	Gender	Indigenous status	Age group	AIDS defining illness
<i>Jul-Sep 2003</i>	Female	non Aboriginal	50-54	Oesophageal candidiasis, HIV wasting
<i>Oct-Dec 2003</i>	Male	non Aboriginal	35-39	Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia
	Male	non Aboriginal	45-49	Mycobacterium Tuberculosis
<i>Jul-Dec 2003</i> Total = 3				

* Cases must have resided in the NT for >3months to be considered residents