MONTANA
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE
EPIDEMIOLOGY

Montana Syphilis Surveillance Snapshot, 2024

Montana Quick Facts

Syphilis is a genital ulcerative sexually transmitted infection caused by the bacterium Treponema pallidum and many of the signs and symptoms of illness are indistinguishable from those of other diseases. Syphilis can be divided into stages for the purposes of treatment and follow-up. Patients with early stages of syphilis (primary and secondary) represent recent infection and pose an increased risk of transmission to others.

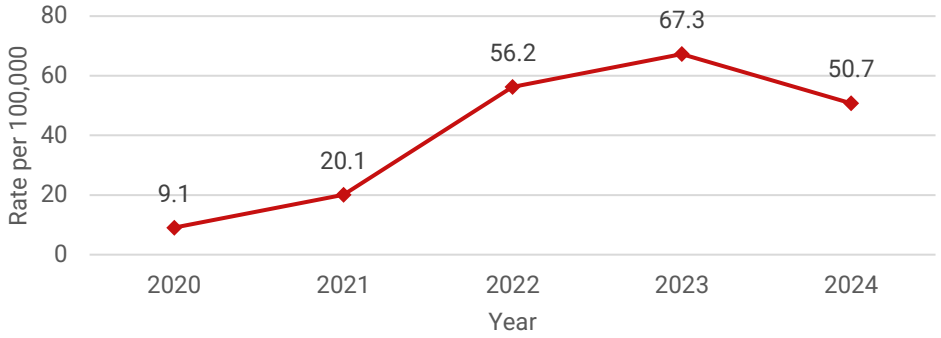
In 2024:

- ✓ The number of all stages of syphilis decreased 25% from 2023 and 2024.
- ✓ Over half of new cases were in females (53%). Two-thirds of those cases were in women of reporoductive age (15-44 years).
- ✓ Of the syphilis cases in which a risk assessment was completed, the share of people who reported being heterosexual and at high-risk, which refers to sexual activities that increase the the risk of STIs or other health complications, doubled from 20% in 2019 to 40% in 2024.

Summary

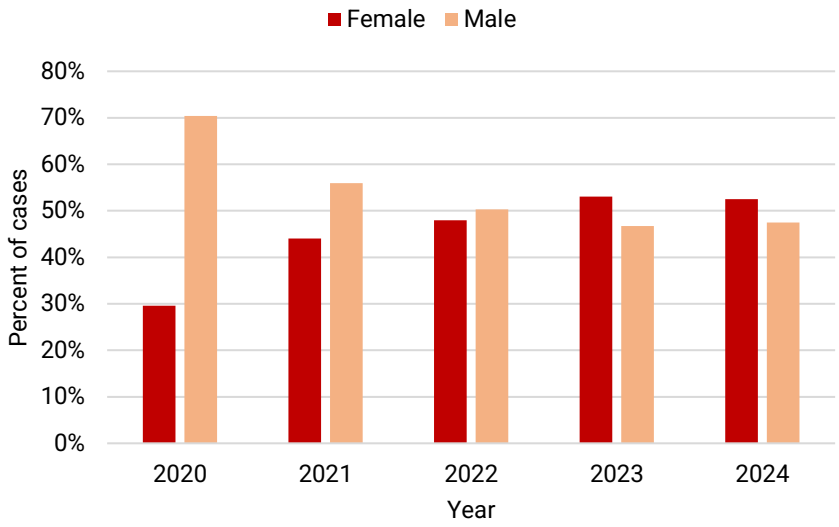
In 2024, there were 577 cases of syphilis reported in Montana and, of those, 189 (33%) were primary and secondary cases. The number of cases dramatically increased from 116 in 2019 to 762 in 2023, representing a 397% increase. The rate of syphilis cases per 100,000 population in Montana increased from 10.8 in 2019 to 67.3 in 2023 (Figure 1). Similarly, the syphilis rate in the U.S. was 55.9 cases per 100,000 in 2024. The case rate reported in 2024 was a 25% change decrease from the previous year.

Figure 1. Syphilis cases per 100,000 population, Montana, 2020-2024



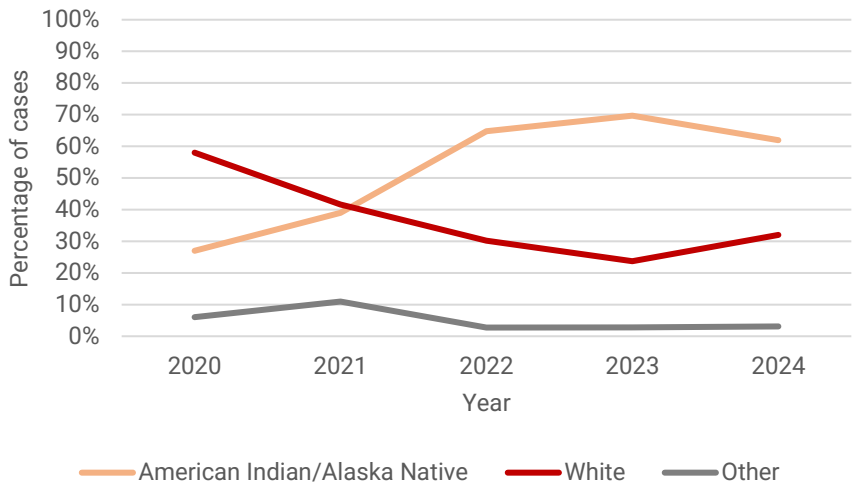
In Montana, the percentage of syphilis cases (all stages) has shifted from a disease primarily diagnosed in males in 2020 (70%) to over half (53%) being diagnosed in females in 2024 (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Percentage of syphilis cases by sex, Montana, 2020-2024



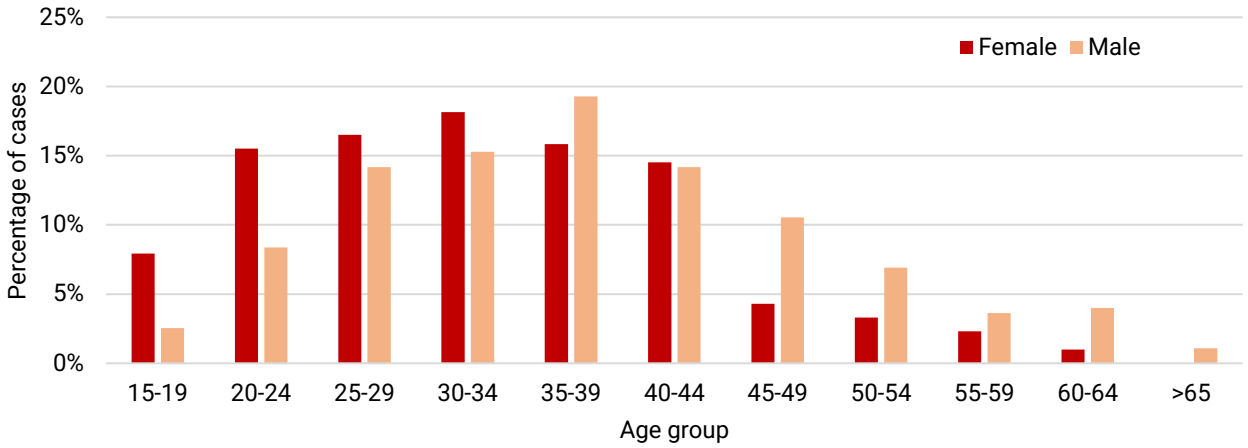
More than other STIs, syphilis cases were significantly higher among the American Indian population in Montana compared to other Montanans. While comprising 6.6% of the Montana population, 62% of syphilis cases in Montana were reported among American Indians in 2024 (Figure 3). Disparities in syphilis rates by race are not explained by differences in sexual behaviors, but may rather reflect access to sexual health care.[1]

Figure 3. Percentage of syphilis cases by race, Montana, 2020-2024



In 2024, the average age of all syphilis cases was 35 years old. Females with syphilis tended to be younger than males (33 years compared to 37 years), and did not differ by stage of disease.

Figure 4. Percentage of syphilis cases by age group and sex, Montana, 2024



[1]Henriquez PS, Heimesaat MM. Ethnic disparities in prevalence and screening rates of sexually transmitted infections. Eur J Microbiol Immunol (Bp). 2025 Oct 3;15(3):164-171

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In Montana, the stage of syphilis differs by sex. In 2024, 28% of females were diagnosed with non-primary and non-secondary syphilis compared to 19% of males (Table 1). The percentage of primary and secondary syphilis was higher in males than females.

Table 1. Percentage of syphilis cases by stage of disease and sex, Montana, 2024

	Number and percentage of male cases (N=275)		Number and percentage of female cases (N=302)	
Syphilis, early non-primary, non-secondary	51	19%	84	28%
Syphilis, primary and secondary	99	36%	90	30%
Syphilis, unknown duration or late	125	45%	128	42%

Congenital Syphilis

In the last five years (2020-2024), Montana has had a dramatic increase in congenital syphilis cases, from 2 cases in 2020 to 19 cases in 2023, and decreasing slightly in 2024 to 16 cases. (Table 2). The American Indian population was disproportionately impacted by cases of congenital syphilis with 79% of all cases during the 2020-2024 time period. Given what is known about disparities in syphilis rates by race and ethnicity, it is likely the observed disparities in congenital syphilis cases by race in Montana may also reflect maternal access to care or to prenatal care.[2]

Table 2. Number of congenital syphilis cases, Montana, 2020-2024

Year	Number of cases
2020	2
2021	8
2022	16
2023	19
2024	16

Geography

In 2024, the largest percentage of syphilis cases were reported in Yellowstone County (27%), Roosevelt County (21%), Cascade County (8%), and Flathead County (7%). Understanding the number of cases by county provides insight into public health staffing needs for disease follow-up, case investigations and partner services.

[2]McDonald R, O'Callaghan K, Torrone E, Barbee L, Grey J, Jackson D, Woodworth K, Olsen E, Ludovic J, Mayes N, Chen S, Wingard R, Johnson Jones M, Drame F, Bachmann L, Romaguera R, Mena L. Vital Signs: Missed Opportunities for Preventing Congenital Syphilis - United States, 2022.

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Due to the disproportionate impact of syphilis on the American Indian population in Montana, many counties with tribal jurisdictions also saw a high number of cases. (Figure 6). While Yellowstone County has the highest percentage of cases, the syphilis rate per 100,000 population was higher in Roosevelt County (1,144 per 100,000), Cascade County (54 per 100,000) and Flathead County (40 per 100,000) when compared to Yellowstone County (92 per 100,000). Broad screening efforts among American Indian communities seeking services at Indian Health Service and tribal clinics have the benefit of identifying cases and may have contributed to the higher reported syphilis incidence in this population[1].

Figure 5. Number of syphilis cases (all stages) by county, Montana, 2024

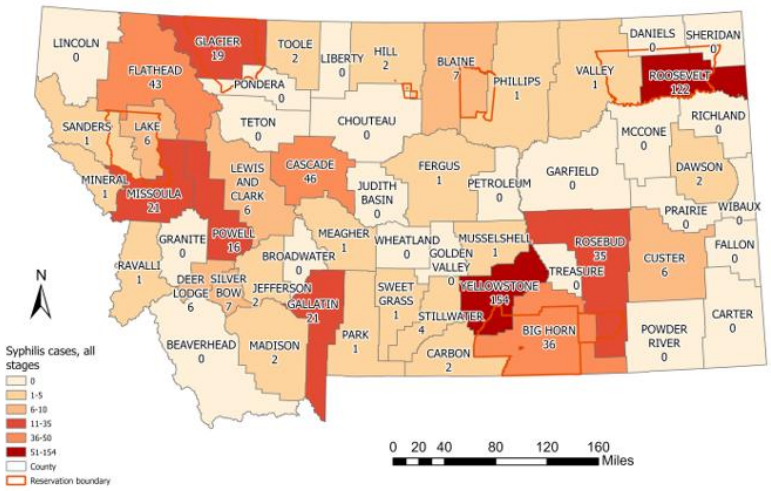
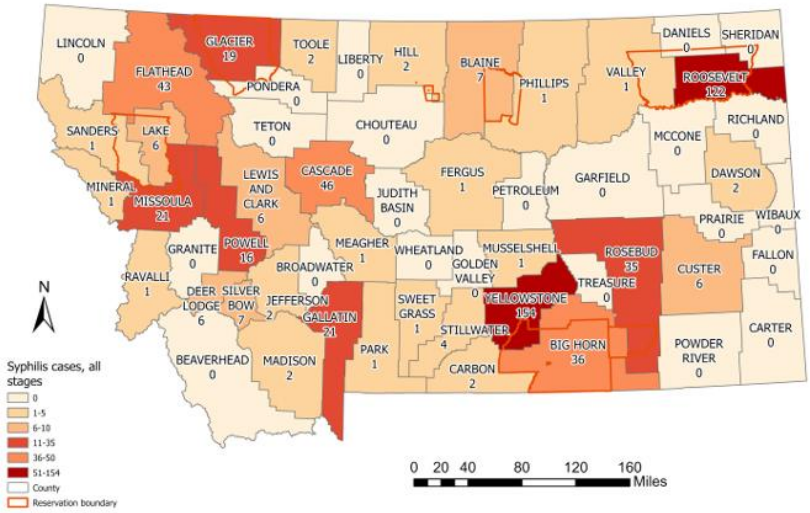


Figure 6. Number of syphilis cases (all stages) per 100,000 population, by county, Montana, 2024



For more information or any questions, please contact: Montana STI/HIV/Viral Hepatitis Section, 1400 E. Broadway, Helena, MT 59620 **Phone:** 406-444-3565 | **Fax:** 406-444-6842 | **Website:** https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/hivstd

Data Source: Montana Infectious Disease Information System