



December 21, 2023

Hon. Janet Brewster
MLA, Iqaluit-Sinaa
Legislative Assembly of Nunavut
926 Sivumugiaq Street
Iqaluit, NU
X0A 3H0

RE: Oral Question - 624-6(2) MLA Brewster HEA Child Sexual Abuse

Dear Ms. Brewster,

During Oral Question Period on October 31, 2023, you asked a series of questions related to child sexual abuse. This letter will address the questions you asked on that date.

By using MediTech, The Department of Health is capable of pulling positive STI data by age category, but this would only serve as a proxy or speculation for childhood sexual assault. Health does not link allegations of sexual assault with lab results unless the linked data could support clinical/public health follow-up or treatment.

Data

Background

The Community Health Service Reports (previously on paper, now fully electronic and contained within MediTech) are a place that Health could query for information related to child sexual abuse.

There are a few (ICD-10) codes which could be relevant to this request (this is an example, not an exhaustive list):

- T74.2 (maltreatment syndromes, sexual abuse)
- Y05 (sexual assault by bodily force, includes; rape/attempted, sodomy/attempted)
- Z61.4 (problems related to negative life events in childhood; problems related to alleged sexual abuse of child by person within primary support group)
- Z61.5 (problems related to negative life events in childhood; problems related to alleged sexual abuse of child by person outside primary support group)

Health has not done an internal report on these codes in the past. There are options for doing should that be determined as a next step in the work. In order to do so, Health would need to refine the basic variables such as the time frame, codes of interest, delivery timeline, etc. The information would be tracked within the general surveillance activities of Health related to health service reports, and more specific queries could be discussed internally within Health or between an individual and Health should that be necessary.

Considerations

- Running the report with these codes, does not speak to overall rates.
- As with any specialized report, there would be a number of disclaimers around the analysis and interpretation.
- Depending on the parameters this would take some time.

During session, it was explained that Health was working on a status report regarding STIs. The report was already public at that time, as it had been published on September 8/23 in all languages.

The COVID-19 pandemic likely affected the demand for and access to public health services such as testing, which possibly underlies the drops in STI rates during 2020-21.

Nunavut Summary of Syphilis in 2019-2021:

- Syphilis used to be very rare in Nunavut, but the outbreak that began in 2012 continues to date.
- In 2019, the highest rate of infection was seen among the 20-24 age group, followed by the 25-29 age group. Roughly 51% of new infections were females.
- In Nunavut, the number of new infections per 1,000 persons were between 3-2 in 2019 and 2-1 during 2020-21.
- In Canada, the number of new infections per 1,000 persons were between 0-1 in both 2019 and 2020-21.

Nunavut Summary of Gonorrhea in 2019-2021:

- Gonorrhea is the second most commonly reported STI.
- In 2019, the highest rate of infection was seen among the 20-24 age group. Age groups 15-19 and 25-29 had comparable rates. Roughly 60% of new infections were females.
- In Nunavut, the number of new infections per 1,000 persons were 19, 22, and 13 during 2019-2021 respectively, compared to 17 new infections in 2018.

Nunavut Summary of Chlamydia in 2019-2021:

- Chlamydia continues to be the most commonly reported STI.
- In 2019, high rates of infection were seen among the 20-24 age group, followed by the 15-19 age group. Roughly 67% of new infections were females.

- The overall rate of reported infections is nearly 2 times higher in females as compared to males. This may be partly due to females being more likely to be affected by the complications of untreated infections and prenatal screening contributing to a greater chance of detection and treatment of infection among younger females.
- In Nunavut, the number of new infections per 1,000 persons were 34, 33, and 28 during 2019-2021 respectively.
- In Canada, the number of new infections per 1,000 persons was between 0-5 during 2019-2021.

Thank you for your continued questions and concerns for the safety our most vulnerable.

Matna,



Hon. John Main
Minister of Health

cc: Megan Hunt, Deputy Minister of Health
Regular Members

Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI) in Nunavut, 2011-2021



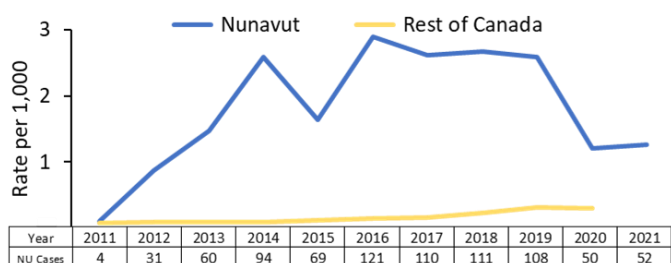
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 Building Nunavut Together
 Nunavut liuqatigiingniq
 Bâtir le Nunavut ensemble

Sexual health is an important part of overall health and well-being. Sexually Transmitted Diseases or Infections spread through person-to-person sexual contact. They are often preventable and treatable, although they can cause serious health issues. This report provides overall trends of common STIs in Nunavut from 2011-2021 with a focus on 2019-21. **The COVID-19 pandemic likely affected the demand for and access to public health services such as testing, which possibly underlies the drops in STI rates during 2020-21.**

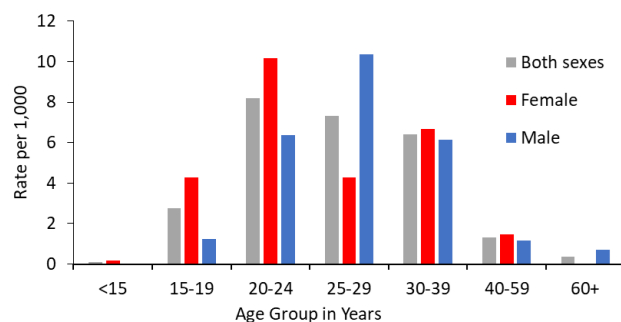
SYPHILIS

Syphilis is a bacterial infection and has been on the rise throughout Canada. Although many may not show symptoms, some people who are infected can develop sores around the genitals or a body rash. Without treatment, it can cause serious damage to the heart, brain, and other organs, and can lead to death. Syphilis can also be passed from an infected pregnant woman to her baby during pregnancy or at delivery, causing “congenital syphilis” in babies. An infection can be detected by a blood test and be treated with an appropriate antibiotic.

Rates¹ of Syphilis in Nunavut vs Rest of Canada



2019 Syphilis Rates² in Nunavut by Age and Sex



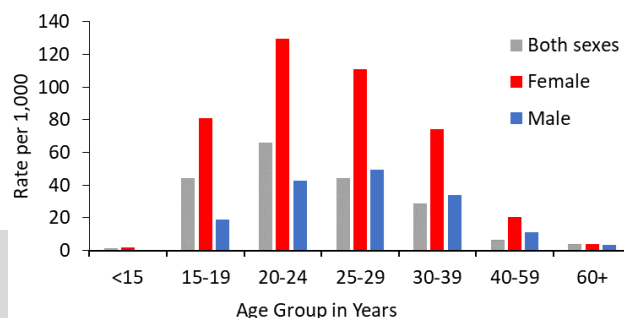
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- Number of new infections per 1,000 persons were between 3-2 in 2019 and 2-1 during 2020-21.¹

GONORRHEA

Gonorrhea is a bacterial infection. Gonorrhea has similar symptoms and long-term health effects as chlamydia. Often people cannot tell if they have gonorrhea but can still pass on the infection to others. An infection can be detected by a urine test and be treated with an appropriate antibiotic.

2019 Gonorrhea Rates² in Nunavut by Age and Sex



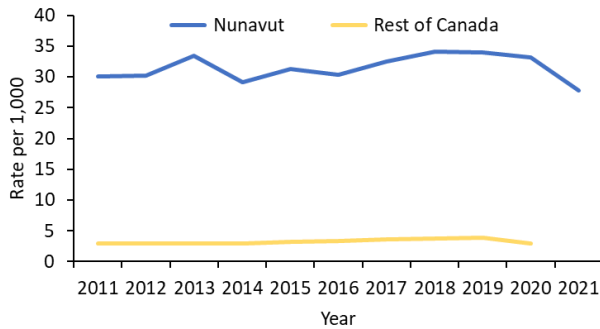
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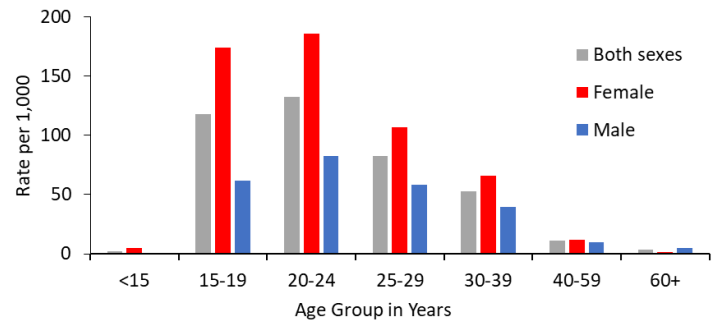
CHLAMYDIA

Chlamydia is a bacterial infection. Many people with chlamydia do not show any symptoms but can still pass the infection on to others. Some people may have unusual discharge, burning when urinating (“peeing”), and pain during sexual activity. Without treatment, it can cause serious long-term health problems such as lower abdominal pain, testicular pain, infertility and sterility (unable to have children). An infection can be detected by a urine test and be treated with an appropriate antibiotic.

Rates¹ of Chlamydia in Nunavut vs Rest of Canada



2019 Chlamydia Rates² in Nunavut by Age and Sex



Nunavut Summary in 2019-2021:

- Chlamydia continues to be the most commonly reported STI.
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- The overall rate of reported infections is nearly 2 times higher in females as compared to males. This may be partly due to females being more likely to be affected by the complications of untreated infections and prenatal screening contributing to a greater chance of detection and treatment of infection among younger females.
- Number of new infections per 1,000 persons were 34, 33, and 28 during 2019-2021 respectively.¹

National Summary of STIs:

- New diagnoses of all 3 STIs are on the rise across Canada.
- Chlamydia is the most commonly reported STI in Canada followed by gonorrhoea and syphilis.
- Antimicrobial resistance in gonorrhoea remains an important public health concern.
- Increased rates of syphilis in females have led to increased rates of congenital syphilis.
- From 2011 to 2019, the rates of chlamydia, gonorrhoea, and infectious syphilis have increased by 26%, 171% and 389% respectively.³

I Respect Myself

- Protect yourself and others; but most importantly respect yourself and your body.
- Use a condom when you have anal, oral or vaginal sex to reduce the risk of getting or spreading STIs.
- Get a free test at your Community Health Centre, if you:
 - have symptoms
 - think you had unprotected sex or had sex while drunk or high
 - start a new relationship, or don't know your partner's sexual history
- Get tested regularly, every 3-6 months, if you or your partner have more than one sexual partner.
- For more information, visit www.irespectmyself.ca, ask your Community Health Representative, or go to your local health centre or public health.

¹ Age-standardized to 2011 Canadian population.

² Crude rates in Nunavut in 2018

³ [Chlamydia, gonorrhoea and infectious syphilis in Canada: 2020](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/communicable-diseases/sexual-health/chlamydia-gonorrhoea-and-infectious-syphilis-in-canada-2020)