

# Increasing syphilis cases in New Zealand: why we are worried

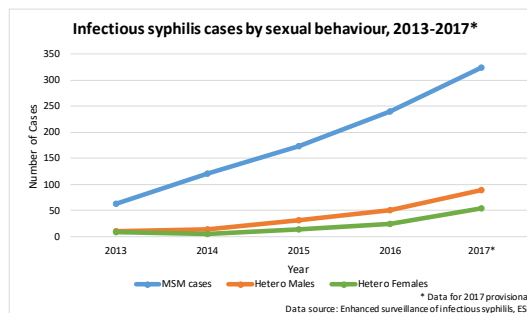
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## Background

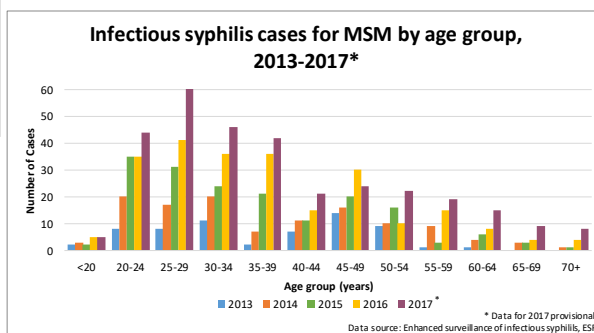
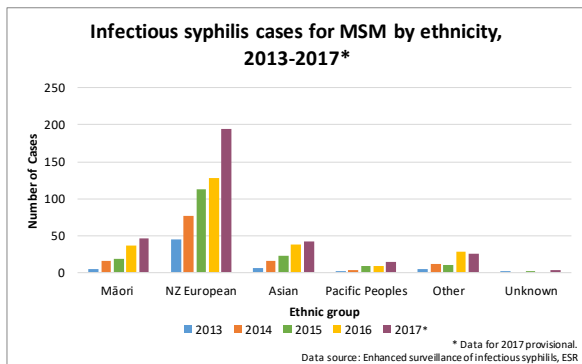
- Infectious syphilis incidence has been on the rise in New Zealand since 2012.
- Initially the increase appeared to be confined to men who have sex with men (MSM) but the age groups and sexual behaviour of those affected have been changing in recent years.
- Data reported by Sexual Health Clinics to ESR's enhanced surveillance for infectious syphilis for 2013-2017 were analysed with a focus on the risk factors for MSM and heterosexuals. (Heterosexual data will be presented separately in the Symposium: Rises in gonorrhoea and syphilis among heterosexual populations)
- Data has been collected for congenital syphilis cases since 2017, including retrospectively.
- Ministry of Health and sector stakeholders developing an Action Plan.



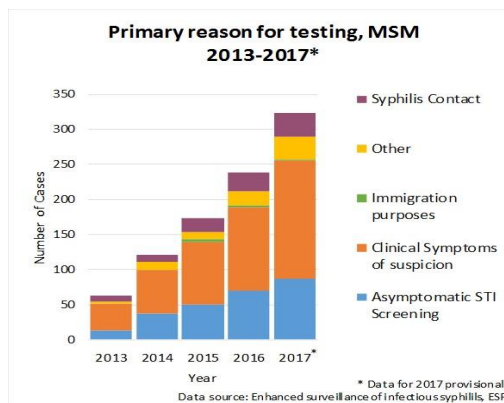
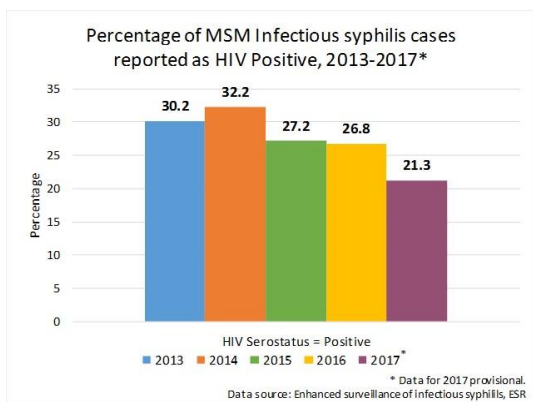
**Congenital syphilis cases reported to ESR 2008 – 2018\* (updated 30/10/2018)**

Year	Outcome	Case classification	Gestation	Mother's age (yrs)
2011-2012	Stillbirth	Confirmed		
2016	Stillbirth	Confirmed	22/40	23
2017	Stillbirth	Confirmed	29/40	22
2017	Stillbirth	Confirmed	27/40	16
2017	Live birth	Confirmed	37/40	35
2017	Live birth	Probable	28/40	34
2018	Live birth	Confirmed	37/40	19
2018	Stillbirth	Suspected	24+2/40	23
2018	Stillbirth	Confirmed	32/40	27
2018	Live birth	Confirmed	34+4/40	32

## MSM cases by ethnicity and age group



## MSM cases – HIV positivity, primary reason for testing



## Summary

- Increasing cases reported in recent years
- Age groups and sexual behaviour of those affected have been changing
- MSM remain the group most affected but steady increase in cases diagnosed in heterosexual males and females and increasing cases of congenital syphilis
- For MSM, increase in cases seen across most ethnic groups, with NZ European having proportionately, a greater increase
- Shift to younger age groups among MSM cases, especially to those aged between 20 and 39 years
- Decreasing proportion of MSM cases that are reported as HIV positive over past 5 years
- Highest proportion of cases were tested because of clinical symptoms, followed by asymptomatic screening.

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