Infectious syphilis and congenital syphilis in Canada*, 2021

11,268 cases of infectious syphilis† were reported in 2021, for a rate of 30 per 100,000 population.

Rate increased by 20% between 2020 and 2021 following a period of decreased access to STBBI services in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic ‡.

Number of cases and rates of infectious syphilis by sex in Canada, from 2017 to 2021

Nationally, 34% of cases were among females in 2021.

Compared to 2017, the 2021 infectious syphilis rate was 729% higher for females and 96% higher for males.

Cases among gbMSM*** represent 30% of total cases in 2021.

People aged 25 to 39 years old had the highest rate of infectious syphilis in 2021, but those less than 20 years old had the highest rate increase from 2017 to 2021.

Social and structural determinants of health and health inequities play a role in the inequitable occurrence of syphilis across different populations ††.

There were 96 CASES of confirmed early congenital syphilis‡ in 2021 compared to only 7 cases in 2017. An increase of 1271%.

Number of confirmed congenital syphilis cases and reported infectious syphilis rates among females aged 15-39 years in Canada, from 2017 to 2021

* Data were obtained directly from provinces and territories (PTs). Nine PTs submitted data for the full calendar year of 2021. Two PTs (PE and NL) did not provide any data and two PTs (NB and NS) provided partial counts; annual counts were estimated. Data for 2021 are preliminary.
† Infectious syphilis includes the primary, secondary and early latent (less than one year after infection) stages of infection, during which syphilis is transmissible. Early congenital syphilis is defined as a laboratory confirmation of infection with Treponema pallidum occurring within the first 2 years of birth. Case definitions for diseases under national surveillance. Can Comm Dis Rep 2000/02(3). Retrieved July 2022, from https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/syphilis/health-professionals/national-case-definition.html
***gbMSM: Gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men.
§ Small case counts in jurisdictions with small populations can result in large rates; as a result, rate changes should be interpreted with caution.