

# Trends in Proportions of HIV reported by Risk Exposure Category

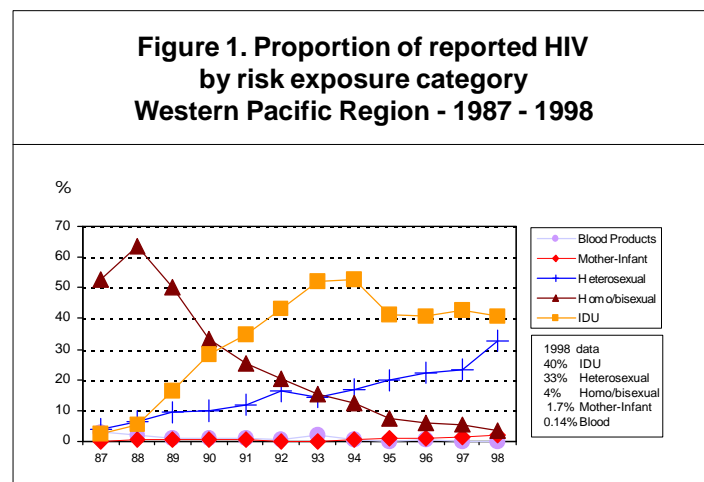
Figure 1 shows the trends in cases of HIV infection reported by risk exposure. It will be appreciated that these are proportions, not absolute numbers. The changes in the number of cases in any one category will affect the proportion of cases in the other categories.

In 1987/88, when the HIV epidemic began to emerge in the Region, most cases of HIV infection were to be found in homosexual and bisexual men in Australia and New Zealand. Although the numbers were small they represented just over 50% of reported cases of HIV infection.

Thereafter the proportion of reported HIV cases due to men having sex with men fell. By 1989 it was clear that in some parts of the

Region, HIV infections among injecting drug users were a major concern. The proportion of reported HIV infections due to the sharing of injecting equipment among injecting drug users escalated between 1989 and 1993. This increase in the number of reported cases probably reflects the way HIV can spread rapidly among injecting drug users. Also, drug users are frequently arrested and undergo mandatory HIV testing. Therefore, a disproportionate number of infected drug users could have been identified relative to the other risk-exposure categories. The proportion of reported HIV infections due to drug use levelled off between 1993 and 1997. This is probably due to the epidemic reaching a plateau in many drug using populations, and the increasing number of people reported to be infected by heterosexual intercourse.

From 1987 to now, the proportion of cases reported to be infected through heterosexual sex appears lower than the proportion of infections resulting from shared injecting equipment. But the heterosexual cases are increasing steadily, reaching 33% of reported HIV cases in 1998. This is due to an increase in HIV infection through heterosexual transmission in Cambodia, China, Japan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Korea, Singapore, and Viet Nam. This rise in the proportion of people infected through heterosexual intercourse should concern us all.



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