

## Risk behaviours and insufficient awareness: this is why AIDS is spreading

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**The highest rate of HIV infection is in Lombardy, immediately after Lazio.** This is the situation described by the **Ministry of Health**, after reading the cases recorded in 2015. **The rate in Lombardy was 8.2 for every 100,000 people, compared with 8.5 in Lazio.** **The number of foreigners in Lombardy greatly affected the final count.**

In 2015, **3444 new diagnoses of HIV infection** (691 in Lombardy) were reported throughout the country, equivalent to 5.7 new cases of HIV infection for every 100,000 people. In Europe, **Italy is 13th in terms of the incidence of new HIV diagnoses**, a slight fall compared to three years before. In the same year, however, **789 new cases of AIDS** were diagnosed, equivalent to 1.4 new cases for every 100,000 people.

**The average age is 39 years for men, and 36 years for women.** The highest incidence was seen among people aged **25-29 years** (15.4 new cases for every 100,000 people).

In 2015, the majority of new diagnoses of HIV infection could be attributed to **unprotected sex**, which represented **85.5%** of all reports (heterosexuals 44.9%, MSM 40.6%). In recent years, however, there has been a **slight decrease in the number of new diagnoses** of HIV infection for all transmission methods, **except for homosexual men.**

Of the new diagnoses of HIV infection, **32.4%** had undergone HIV testing for **HIV-related symptoms**, **27.6%** had followed **unspecified risk behaviour**, and **13.2%** were discovered during checks for another disease.

In the same period, 28.8% of the people diagnosed as HIV positive were foreign nationals. In 2015, the incidence was **4.3 new cases for every 100,000 Italian residents**, and **18.9 new cases for every 100,000 foreign residents**. Among foreigners, the higher percentage of cases in heterosexual women (36.9%), and among Italians, in MSM (48.1%).

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“The phenomenon is growing steadily, and occurs without any awareness of it,” said a worried **Professor Paolo Grossi, Director of the Infectious Diseases Clinic at Varese Hospital**. Risk behaviours continue without the perception of risk. “And this is why infections are on the increase, because **there is no perception of infection, no precautions are taken and no subsequent checks are in place.**”

At the local level, the prevention network is being reorganised; since **the closure of the Clinic for Sexually Transmitted Diseases**, where it was possible to undergo testing and examinations anonymously, the health network has told people to go to the STD clinic in Como. “Lombardy Region is reviewing this prevention network, which may be up and running again in 2018,” assured Grossi.

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