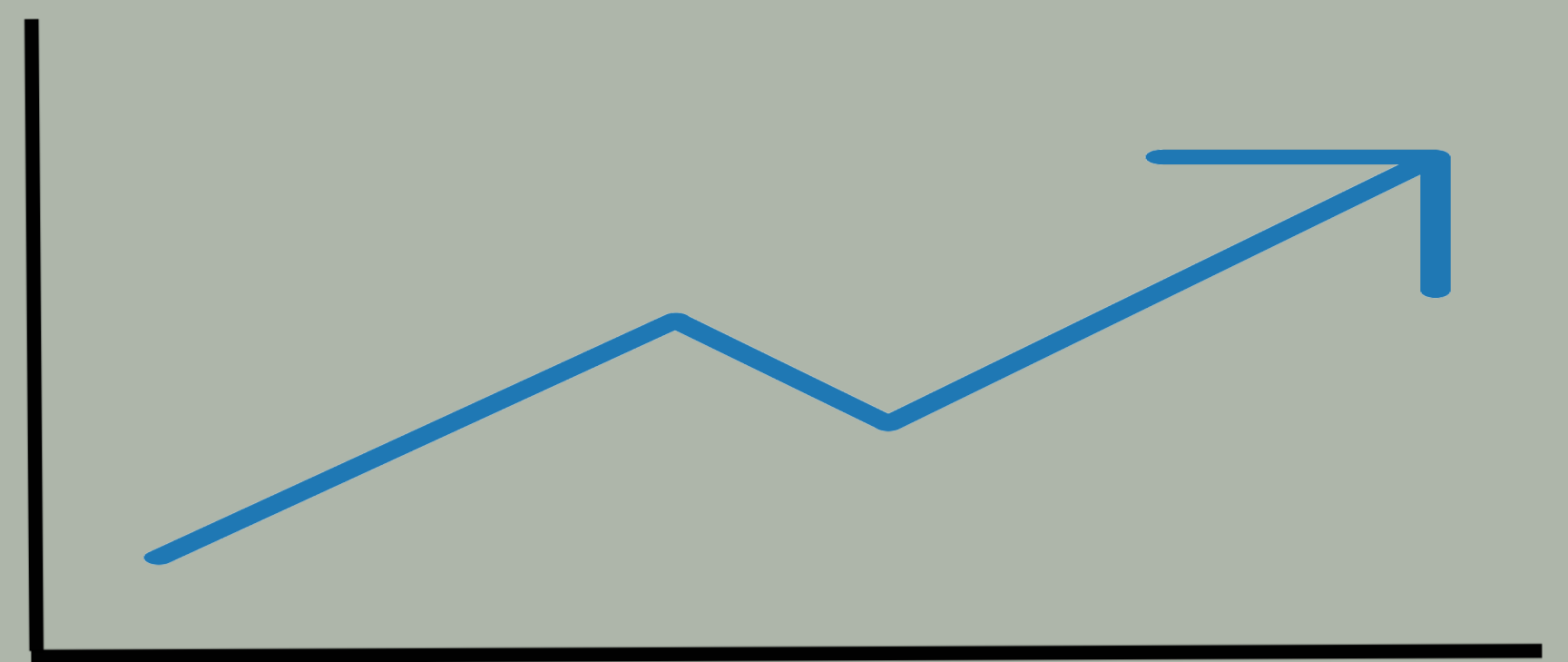


Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) reach epidemic levels in California.



- In 2021, the number of reported cases was:
 - 31,357 for syphilis (all stages) - 287% more than 10 years ago
 - 90,890 for gonorrhea - 169% more than 10 years ago
 - 190,806 for chlamydia - 13% more than 10 years ago
- In 2021, STI morbidity increased from the previous year. Total syphilis and gonorrhea rates surpassed their pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels while the overall chlamydia rate remains lower. Morbidity remains high among all genders throughout California. Disparities in STI rates persisted throughout the state, with the highest rates among young people (aged 15-24 years), African-Americans, and gay and bisexual men and other persons who have male to male sexual contact (GBMMSC). Increases in the rates of STIs are driven in part by adverse social determinants of health. Some people diagnosed with STIs have experienced substance use, incarceration, the exchange of sex for money/housing/other resources, poverty, homelessness, and disparities in access to healthcare.

- Syphilis continues to be a major public health problem in California.
- Persons with syphilis might have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all and be unaware of their infection, so syphilis testing is essential. If untreated, syphilis can spread to other parts of the body including the eyes, brain, nervous system, and heart. **This can lead to blindness, hearing loss, changes in mental state, or even death.**

- Persons with syphilis were predominantly male, with most male cases among GBMMSC.



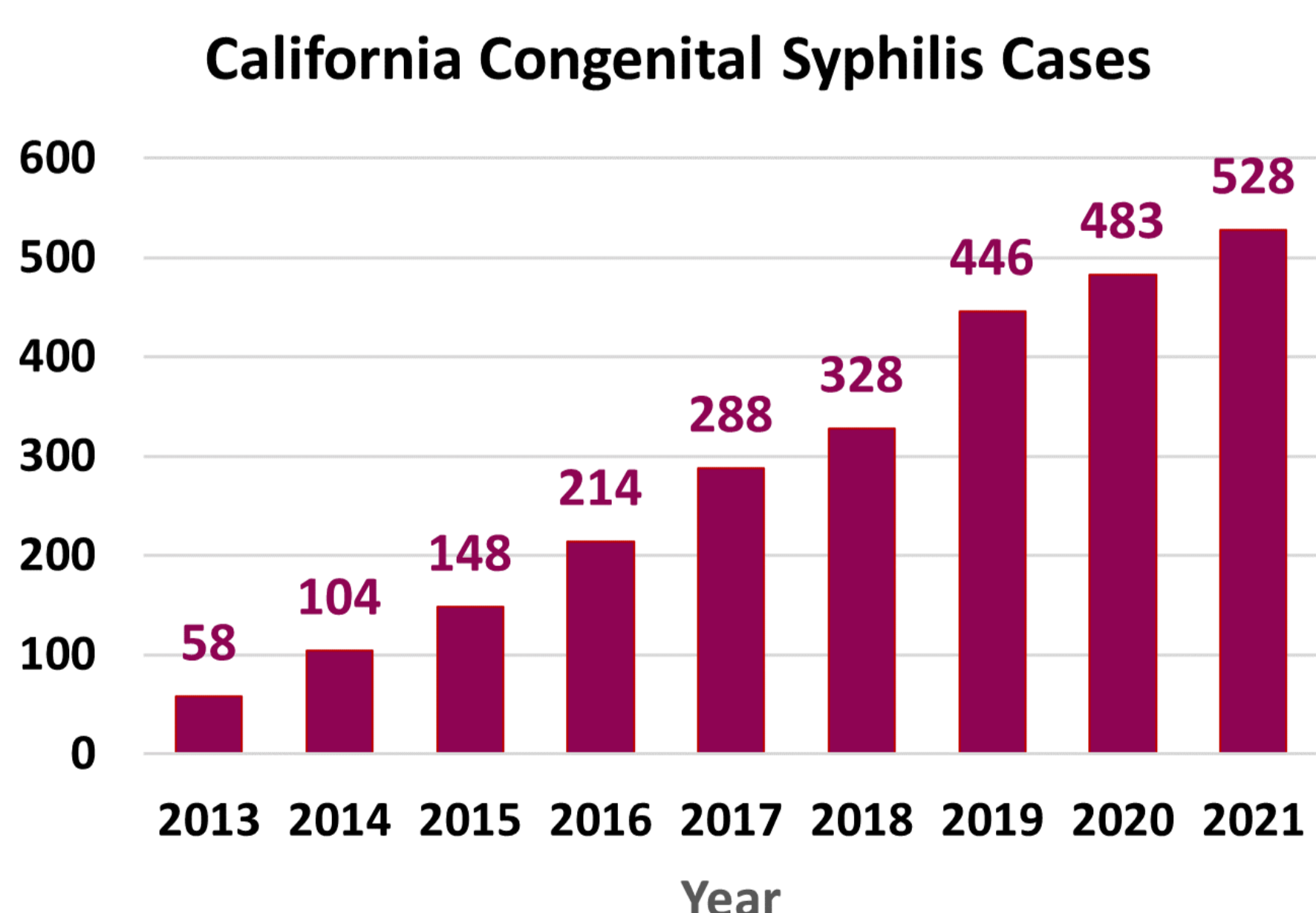
Nearly **8 out of 10** male early syphilis* cases were among GBMMSC in 2021.

- **In recent years, the greatest increases in syphilis morbidity were among females.** From 2012-2021, the total number of reported early syphilis* cases increased 1,113% among females compared to 161% among males. Cases of congenital syphilis, which occur when infection is transmitted from pregnant person to child during pregnancy, increased 1,500% over the same period.



In 2021, **17% of females** of childbearing age (15-44 years) diagnosed with syphilis (all stages) were pregnant.

- The number of infants born with congenital syphilis increased for the 9th year in a row.



- Congenital syphilis is preventable with testing and treatment during pregnancy.
- Congenital syphilis can cause **severe illness in babies including premature birth, low birth weight, birth defects, blindness, and hearing loss.** It can also lead to **stillbirth and infant death.**
- In 2021 alone, there were 49 infant stillbirths or neonatal deaths and 53 infants born with other symptoms or complications from syphilis.



*Early syphilis includes the primary, secondary, and early non-primary non-secondary stages of the infection.