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HIV-1 is grouped phylogenetically into clades, which may impact rates of HIV-1 disease progression. Clade D infection in particular has been shown to be more pathogenic. Here we confirm in a Nairobi-based prospective female sex worker cohort (1985-2004) that Clade D ($n = 54$) is associated with a more rapid CD4 decline than clade A1 ($n = 150$, 20.6% vs 13.4% decline per year, 1.53-fold increase, $p = 0.015$). This was independent of protective HLA and country of origin ($p = 0.053$), which in turn were also independent predictors of the rate of CD4 decline ($p = 0.026$ and 0.005 , respectively). These data confirm that clade D is more pathogenic than clade A1. The precise reason for this difference is currently unclear, and requires further study. This is first study to demonstrate difference in HIV-1 disease progression between clades while controlling for protective HLA alleles.