

GLOBAL REPORT

FACT SHEET

Sub-Saharan Africa

HIV epidemics in the region are stable or declining

- In sub-Saharan Africa, the number of people newly infected with HIV fell from 2.2 million [1.9 million–2.4 million] people in 2001 to 1.8 million [1.6 million–2.0 million] in 2009.
- In 22 countries of sub-Saharan Africa, the HIV incidence rate declined by more than 25% between 2001 and 2009.
- Among the five countries in sub-Saharan Africa with the largest HIV epidemics, four—Ethiopia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe—reduced new HIV infections by more than 25% between 2001 and 2009, while Nigeria’s HIV epidemic stabilized.
- National HIV prevalence in Kenya fell from about 14% in the mid-1990s to 5% in 2006. Since 2001, HIV prevalence in Uganda has stabilized between 6.5% and 7%. In Rwanda, HIV prevalence has been approximately 3% since 2005.
- HIV prevalence in West and Central Africa remained relatively low in 2009, at or under 2% in 12 countries.

AIDS-related deaths are declining in the region

- In 2009, nearly 37% [34%–40%] of adults and children in sub-Saharan Africa who were medically eligible for antiretroviral therapy received it, compared to just 2% seven years earlier.
- Treatment scale-up is saving lives: between 2004 and 2009, AIDS-related deaths decreased by 20% in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In Botswana, where treatment coverage exceeds 90%, the estimated annual number of AIDS-related deaths fell from 18 000 [15 000–22 000] in 2002 to 9100 [2400–19 000] in 2009—a decrease of about 50%.
- Between 2002 and 2007, AIDS-related deaths in Kenya fell by 29%. In rural Malawi, the provision of antiretroviral therapy has been linked to a 10% drop in adult mortality between 2004 and 2008.

HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths are declining among children

- In southern Africa, the number of children under 15 who became newly infected with HIV fell from 190 000 in 2004 to 130 000 in 2009—a 32% reduction.
- In 2009, 54% of pregnant women living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa received antiretroviral drugs to prevent transmission of HIV to their children—up from 15% in 2005.
- In Botswana, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland, coverage of antiretrovirals for preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV reached more than 80%.
- Between 2004 and 2009, AIDS-related deaths among children in southern Africa declined by 26%, from 120 000 [88 000–150 000] to 90 000 [61 000–110 000].

UNAIDS’ vision: Zero new HIV infections. Zero discrimination. Zero AIDS-related deaths.

- South Africa is one of the few countries in the world where maternal and child mortality has increased since the 1990s. AIDS is the largest cause of maternal mortality in South Africa and accounts for 35% of deaths in children under 5.

Sub-Saharan Africa continues to bear a disproportionate share of the global HIV burden

- An estimated 22.5 million [20.9 million–24.2 million] people living with HIV resided in sub-Saharan Africa in 2009, representing 68% of the global HIV burden.
- About 34% of all people living with HIV resided in the 10 countries of southern Africa in 2009.¹
- With an estimated 5.6 million [5.4 million–5.8 million] HIV-positive people, South Africa continues to have the world's largest HIV epidemic.
- Swaziland has the highest adult HIV prevalence in the world: an estimated 25.9% [24.9%–27.0%] of people in the country were living with HIV in 2009.

Women are disproportionately impacted by HIV

- The vulnerability of women and girls to HIV remains particularly high in sub-Saharan Africa; about 76% of all HIV-positive women in the world live in this region.
- In nearly all countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the majority of people living with HIV are women, especially girls and women aged 15-24. In South Africa, HIV prevalence among women aged 20-24 is approximately 21%, compared to about 7% among men in the same age range.
- In Lesotho, nearly 8% of young women aged 15-19 are living with HIV, compared to about 3% of their male counterparts.
- The most recent prevalence data show that 13 women in sub-Saharan Africa become infected with HIV for every 10 men.

Heterosexual sex remains the dominant mode of HIV transmission

- The vast majority of people in sub-Saharan Africa continue to be infected with HIV through unprotected heterosexual intercourse and onward transmission of HIV to infants.
- Urban data in Zambia suggests that 60% of people newly infected through heterosexual transmission acquired HIV within marriage or cohabitation, compared to 50%–65% in Swaziland, 35%– 62% in Lesotho and 44% in Kenya.
- Research in 12 countries in eastern and southern Africa found a high HIV prevalence among discordant couples (where one partner is living with HIV), ranging from 36% to 85%.

Key populations play a key role in the region's HIV epidemics

- Paid sex is an important factor in HIV epidemics in Western, Central and East Africa. An estimated 32% of new HIV infections in Ghana, 14% in Kenya and 10% Uganda are linked to sex work.

¹ Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

- Recent studies show high levels of HIV infection among men who have sex with men. In Cape Town, South Africa, and Mombasa, Kenya, more than 40% of the adult population of men who have sex with men is living with HIV.
- Studies conducted in Botswana, Malawi, and Namibia found that 34% of men who have sex with men were married to women, and a total of 54% reported having sex with both men and women in the previous six months.
- Injecting drug use is the main mode of HIV transmission in Mauritius and an important factor in the HIV epidemics of several countries in the region, including Kenya, Zanzibar and Tanzania.

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