

North America and Western and Central Europe

Latest epidemiological data

- In 2008, 55 000 [36 000–61 000] new HIV infections occurred in North America and 30 000 [23 000–35 000] new HIV infections occurred in Western and Central Europe.
- Progress in reducing the number of new HIV infections has stalled in high-income countries. Between 2000 and 2007, the rate of newly reported cases of HIV infection in Europe nearly doubled.
- In the **United States of America**, the annual number of new HIV infections has remained relatively stable since the early 1990s, although the annual number of new HIV infections in 2006 (56 300) was 40% higher than previously estimated.
- In **Canada**, estimates suggest that annual HIV incidence may have increased between 2002 and 2005.
- National epidemics in North America and Western and Central Europe are concentrated among key populations at higher risk, especially men who have sex with men, injecting drug users and immigrants. Within these regions, the rates of new HIV infections appear to be highest in the **USA** and **Portugal**.
- Evidence indicates that the number of new HIV infections among men who have sex with men has increased over the past decade in high-income countries, while rates of new infections among injecting drug users have fallen.
- Although African-Americans represent 12% of the population in the **USA**, they accounted for 46% of HIV prevalence and 45% of new HIV infections in 2006.
- Men outnumber women in both HIV prevalence and incidence by more than 2:1 in North America and Western and Central Europe. In the **USA**, males accounted for 73% of new HIV infections in 2006.
- Due to widespread access to antiretroviral therapy in high-income countries, the number of AIDS-related deaths has dropped considerably. In the **USA** in 2007, the number of AIDS-related deaths was 69% lower than in 1994. In **Switzerland**, the drop in AIDS-related deaths has been even sharper, dropping from more than 600 in 1995 to less than 50 in 2008.
- Early HIV diagnosis remains a challenge in high-income countries. In the **USA**, 21% of people living with HIV, and 27% in **Canada**, are unaware of their HIV status. For Europe as a whole, between 15% and 38% of HIV-positive people are diagnosed late.
- In **France**, the **USA** and the **United Kingdom**, people with heterosexually acquired HIV infection are most likely to be diagnosed late in the course of infection.

Key regional dynamics

- Sex between men represents the dominant mode of transmission in North America and the European Union. In the **USA**, the rate of new HIV infections among men who have sex with men has steadily increased since the early 1990s, rising by more than 50%

between 1991–1993 and 2003–2006. In the **United Kingdom**, HIV cases among men who have sex with men rose by 74% between 2000 and 2007. In Europe overall, the number rose by 39% between 2003 and 2007.

- While heterosexual HIV transmission accounted for 29% of newly diagnosed cases of HIV infection in Western Europe, it represented a majority (53%) of new HIV diagnoses in Central Europe.
- The number of injecting drug users infected with HIV has dramatically declined since the beginning of the epidemic. In the **USA**, 30 000 injecting drug users became infected annually with HIV in 1984–1986, compared with fewer than 10 000 in 2006. In Western and Central Europe, injecting drug users represented 8% and 13%, respectively, of new HIV diagnoses.
- In **Switzerland**, where injecting drug use accounted for the majority of HIV infections in the late 1980s, in 2008 it only accounted for 4% of new cases. Similarly, injecting drug users represented 5% of new infections in the **Netherlands**.
- In Europe, mother-to-child HIV transmission has been virtually eliminated due to the availability of HIV prevention services for pregnant women.
- In North America, HIV incidence among infants has declined. In Canada, the infection rate fell from 22% in 1997 to 3% in 2006. In New York City, the number of infants with HIV dropped from 370 in 1992 to 20 in 2005.

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