

AFRICA

Sub-Saharan Africa has just over 10% of the world's population, but is home to more than 60% of all people living with HIV—some 25.4 million. In 2004, an estimated 3.1 million people in the region became newly infected, while 2.3 million died of AIDS. Among young people aged 15–24 years, an estimated 6.9% of women and 2.2% of men were living with HIV at the end of 2004.

- Adult HIV prevalence has been roughly stable in recent years. But stabilization does not necessarily mean the epidemic is slowing. On the contrary, it can disguise the worst phases of an epidemic—when roughly equally large numbers of people are being newly infected with HIV and are dying of AIDS.
- Across the region, women are disproportionately affected by HIV. Women and girls make up almost 57% of adults living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Overall, three quarters of all women with HIV worldwide live in this region.
- On average, there are 13 women living with HIV for every 10 infected men and the gap continues to grow. In most countries, women are being infected with HIV at earlier ages than men.
- Young women (aged 15-24) are bearing the brunt of new infections in sub-Saharan Africa. Recent population-based studies suggest that there are on average 36 young women living with HIV, for every 10 young men.
- Southern Africa remains the worst affected subregion in the world with South Africa having the highest number of people living with HIV in the world. An estimated 5.3 million people were living with HIV end-2003 in South Africa—2.9 million of them women. Unfortunately, there is no sign yet of a decline in the epidemic.
- Life expectancy at birth has dropped below 40 years in nine African countries—Botswana, Central African Republic, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. All are severely affected by AIDS. In Zimbabwe, life expectancy at birth was 34 years in 2003, compared with 52 years in 1990.
- Some countries in East Africa, such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Uganda, show signs of declines in HIV infection levels. The steepest drop has been in Uganda, where national prevalence fell from 13% in the early 1990s to 4.1% by end-2003.
- However, it is much too early to claim that these recent declines herald a definitive reversal in these countries' epidemics and, furthermore, the need for treatment, care and support will continue to increase for years to come.
- Although varying in scale and intensity, the epidemics in West Africa appear to have stabilized in most countries. Overall, HIV prevalence is lowest in the Sahel countries and highest in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Nigeria—the latter

having the third-largest number of people living with HIV in the world (after South Africa and India).

- Nigeria's 2003 HIV sentinel survey put national HIV prevalence at 5%, a rise from the 1.8% found in 1991, but roughly level with the 5.4% recorded in 1999.
- Côte d'Ivoire has continued to report the highest level of HIV prevalence in West Africa since the beginning of the epidemic—although prevalence in the capital Abidjan in 2002 was the lowest it had been in five years, at 6.4% compared with 13% in 1999.
- National adult HIV prevalence in Togo has stayed roughly steady at around 4%. In the two countries flanking it—Benin and Ghana —HIV prevalence is in the 2% to 4% range with little change noted over time.
- Serious epidemics are underway in Central Africa, with Cameroon and the Central African Republic worst-affected.
- In the Congo, meanwhile, national adult prevalence has edged below 5%—with new estimates putting it at 4.2% with southern parts of the country remaining the worst-affected.

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