

Fact sheet

Source: 2007 AIDS epidemic update—regional summary

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Regional overview

- The HIV epidemics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia are concentrated mainly among people who inject drugs, sex workers, their respective sexual partners and, to a lesser extent, men who have sex with men. Of the new HIV cases reported in 2006, for which there was information on the mode of transmission, 62% were attributed to injecting drug use and 37% to unprotected sex between men and women. Less than 1% of new HIV diagnoses across the region were among men who have sex with men, although the real extent to which sex between men features in some of the region's epidemics is unknown.
- Nearly 90% of newly reported HIV diagnoses in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2006 were in the **Russian Federation** and **Ukraine**.
- Elsewhere, the annual numbers of newly reported HIV diagnoses are also rising in **Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Tajikistan** and **Uzbekistan**, which now has the largest epidemic in Central Asia.
- About 40% of newly registered HIV cases in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2006 were among women. In the **Russian Federation** and **Ukraine**, about two thirds of the growing number of HIV cases among women is thought to be attributed directly or indirectly (women infected by a sexual partner who injects drugs) to injecting drug use.
- Efforts to introduce and, in some instances, scale up harm-reduction programmes in this region continue to progress. In the **Russian Federation**, more than 50 needle- and syringe-exchange projects were operating in 2007, and in **Kazakhstan**, a nationwide programme of more than 120 harm-reduction sites has been in place since 2005. Some countries have introduced pilot projects for treatment with opioid substitutes, including **Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova** and **Uzbekistan**.

Country data and trends

- The HIV epidemic in the **Russian Federation** continues to grow, though not as rapidly as in the late 1990s, and is concentrated largely in the country's urban and industrial centres. Nearly 60% of HIV cases reported to date have been in 10 major cities and regions, including the cities of Saint Petersburg and Moscow.
- Injecting drug use remains the main mode of HIV transmission in the **Russian Federation**. Of the newly registered HIV cases in 2006, where the mode of transmission was known, two thirds (66%) were because of injecting drug use and about one third (32%) to unprotected heterosexual intercourse. Women comprised about 44% of newly registered HIV cases in 2006.

- In 2006, less than 1% of newly registered HIV cases in the **Russian Federation**—in which the mode of transmission was known—were attributed to unsafe sex between men. This figure possibly underestimates the extent to which HIV has been transmitted among men who have sex with men, as recent research has revealed significant risk-taking that can increase the chances of acquiring HIV, such as infrequent condom use and injecting drug use.
- **Ukraine** has the highest adult HIV prevalence of any country in Europe or Central Asia—annual HIV diagnoses have more than doubled since 2001. Injecting drug use remains the main mode of HIV transmission in **Ukraine**, with the number of people who inject drugs newly diagnosed with HIV increasing from 3964 in 2001 to 7127 in 2006. In the first half of 2007, 3639 new HIV infections were reported among injecting drug users, representing the largest increase among any population in Ukraine.
- **Ukraine** has taken substantial steps to limit HIV transmission from mothers to children. In 2006, 95% of all pregnant women were tested for HIV, and 93% of HIV-positive women who gave birth had been receiving antiretroviral prophylaxis to prevent HIV transmission during pregnancy and delivery.
- The largest HIV epidemic in Central Asia is in **Uzbekistan**, and it is likely to continue to grow given reports of the high level of injecting drug use and sex with non-regular partners. The number of newly reported HIV diagnoses rose exponentially between 1999 and 2003, from 28 to 1836. Since then, the number of newly reported HIV infections has grown at a slower pace, reaching 2205 in 2006.
- People who inject drugs account for two thirds of new, reported HIV infections in **Kazakhstan** in 2006. The HIV epidemics in **Kyrgyzstan** and **Tajikistan** are also largely centred on injecting drug use. Only two cases of HIV have been officially reported in **Turkmenistan**, and little is known about the potential for HIV transmission there.
- The HIV epidemic in **Belarus** appears to have stabilized, with the annual number of newly reported HIV diagnoses varying only slightly since 2003, between 713 and 778. Most HIV infections are being reported in and around urban areas, such as the capital of Minsk, and largely among people who inject drugs. More women are also becoming affected by HIV. In wide-scale HIV testing in 2006, 80% of new HIV cases in women were attributed to unsafe sex, up from about 56% in 2003.
- Newly reported HIV cases in the **Republic of Moldova** have more than doubled since 2003, totalling 621 in 2006. Nearly 60% of which were attributed to unprotected sex.

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