

# Fact sheet

Source: 2007 AIDS epidemic update—regional summary

## North America, Western and Central Europe

### Regional overview

- In these regions, the total number of people living with HIV continues to increase, in great part due to the life-prolonging effects of antiretroviral therapy, a relatively steady number of new HIV infections each year in North America and an increase in the number of new HIV diagnoses in Western Europe since 2002.
- In North America, unprotected sex between men accounted for the largest proportion of new HIV diagnoses in 2005: 53% in the **United States of America** and 45% in **Canada**.
- The HIV epidemics continue to disproportionately affect African Americans in the **United States** and Aboriginal persons in **Canada**.
- Heterosexual sex formed the largest proportion (42%) of HIV diagnoses in Western Europe in 2006. Less than one third (29%) were attributable to unsafe sex between men, while a diminishing proportion of diagnoses (6%) were reported in people who inject drugs. The majority of heterosexually transmitted HIV cases originated in countries with high prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa; within that group, more than 50% of HIV diagnoses were in women.
- Widespread access to effective antiretroviral treatment has helped the number of AIDS-related deaths in these regions to remain comparatively low.

### Country data and trends

- Unprotected sex between men remains the most common mode of HIV transmission in the **United States**. The annual number of new HIV diagnoses among men who have sex with men (including those who were also injecting drug users) increased from 17 699 in 2001 to 19 620 in 2005.
- In contrast, 80% of adult and adolescent women newly diagnosed with HIV in the same year acquired it during unprotected sex, often with male partners who had been infected through unsterile injecting equipment, paid sex or sex with other men, up from 75% in 2001.
- Nearly half (48%) of new HIV diagnoses were among African Americans and 18% among Hispanics (who represent 13% and 14% of the **United States** population, respectively).
- In 2007, more information became available on the effects of wider access to effective antiretroviral therapy in the **United States**. According to a six-state study, hospital admissions involving people with HIV fell by 44% between 2000 and 2004, and the average age of people with HIV admitted into hospital increased.

- At the end of 2005, there were an estimated 58 000 people living with HIV in **Canada**. Of concern is the estimate that at least one in four people living with HIV in the country are unaware they are infected.
- Although Aboriginal people in **Canada** account for just over 3% of the total population, they represent an estimated 7.5% of people living with HIV, as well as 9% of new HIV infections in 2005.
- The **United Kingdom** continues to have a large HIV epidemic, with newly diagnosed HIV infections more than doubling between 2001 and 2006, and men who have sex with men being most at risk of acquiring HIV within the country.
- Between 2002 and 2006, the number of HIV diagnoses among men who have sex with men almost doubled in **Germany** (where they rose by 87%), increased by three quarters (by 77%) in **Switzerland**, by two thirds (by 67%) in **Belgium**, and one third (by 31%) in the **United Kingdom**.
- HIV diagnoses in **Germany** increased by almost 50% between 2002 and 2006, and men who have sex with men comprised about 60% of the estimated 56 000 people who were living with HIV at the end of 2006. Unsafe sex between men accounted for 70% of HIV diagnoses in 2006.
- The numbers of new HIV diagnoses in people who inject drugs fell in several European countries between 2002 and 2006, most notably in **Denmark** (by 72%), **Italy** (by 42% in 2002–2005), the **Netherlands** (by 91%), **Portugal** (by 38%), **Spain** (by 38% in 2003–2005) and **Switzerland** (by 26%). Studies in the **Netherlands** and **Spain** point to harm reduction programmes as decreasing injecting drug use and the use of unsterile supplies.
- In many Central European countries, unprotected sex between men and women is the main mode of infection, including **Albania**, **Bosnia** and **Herzegovina**, **Bulgaria**, **Romania** and **Turkey**. Unsafe sex between men predominates in **Croatia**, the **Czech Republic**, **Hungary** and **Slovenia**.
- HIV infections in **Estonia** have declined from a peak of 1,474 in 2001 to 668 in 2006. Despite this sharp decrease, the country continues to have by far the highest rate of newly reported HIV diagnoses and the highest estimated adult national HIV prevalence (1.3%) in all of Europe.

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