

## Latin America

### Latest epidemiological trends

- New HIV infections in 2008 totalled an estimated 170 000 [150 000–200 000], bringing to 2 million [1.8 million–2.2 million] the number of people living with HIV in Latin America. An estimated 77 000 [66 000–89 000] people died of AIDS-related illnesses last year.
- According to the latest data, the epidemic in Latin America remains stable. With a regional HIV prevalence of 0.6%, Latin America is primarily home to low-level and concentrated epidemics.
- The number of HIV infections among men is significantly higher than among women in the region, due in large part to the prominence of sexual transmission between men. In **Peru**, the number of male AIDS cases reported in 2008 was nearly three times higher than the number among females.
- Even though the HIV epidemic throughout the region is heavily concentrated among men who have sex with men, sex workers and injecting drug users, only a small fraction of HIV prevention programmes focus on these populations. In recent years, however, **Mexico** has increased funding for prevention services focused on men who have sex with men.
- Antiretroviral coverage in Latin America is above the global average (at 54% in 2008) and in general is higher in South America than in Central America.

### Key regional dynamics

- Men who have sex with men account for the largest share of HIV infections in Latin America. They have a one in three chance of becoming infected with HIV.
- HIV prevalence rates among men who have sex with men range from 7.9% in **El Salvador** to 25.6% in **Mexico**. In **Peru**, 55% of new HIV infections were among men who have sex with men.
- An estimated 29% of the more than 2 million Latin Americans who inject drugs are infected with HIV.
- Epidemics among injecting drug users in the region seem to be concentrated in the Southern Cone of South America and in the northern part of Mexico, along the US border.
- Six countries in the region provide various components of harm reduction, although opioid substitution therapy is not widely available.
- The percentage of the female population engaged in sex work in Latin America varies from 0.2% to 1.5%. In **Peru**, 44% of men report having had sex with a sex worker in the past.
- Surveys in Central America have detected HIV prevalence among female sex workers of 4.3% in **Guatemala** and 3.2% in **El Salvador**. In **Argentina**, HIV prevalence seems to be significantly higher among male sex workers (22.8%) than among female sex workers (1.8%).

- Emerging evidence suggests that HIV prevention programmes may be having an impact among sex workers in Latin America. In recent surveys, female sex workers in Santiago, **Chile**, **El Salvador**, **Honduras**, and **Guatemala** reported significant condom use with clients, leading to a drop in HIV infections.
- Although heterosexual transmission of HIV outside sex work remains limited in Latin America, the risk of further infection exists. More than one in five men who have sex with men (22%) surveyed in five Central American countries reported having sex with both men and women.
- In **Peru**, the female sexual partners of men who have sex with men account for 6% of new HIV infections.
- As epidemics mature, the extent of heterosexual HIV transmission often increases. In **Peru**, various forms of heterosexual transmission make up 43% of new HIV infections.
- The HIV burden appears to be growing among women in Central America and among indigenous populations.

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