

North America, Western and Central Europe

Overview

- There were around 2 million people living with HIV in North America, Western and Central Europe in 2005 and 65,000 people were newly infected with the virus.
- Widespread access to antiretroviral therapy kept the numbers of AIDS-related deaths relatively low (around 30,000) in 2005.
- AIDS responses are not matching the shifts in the epidemics in North America, Western and Central Europe and there is an urgent need for improved HIV prevention, diagnosis and treatment services for immigrants and migrants, ethnic minority groups and men who have sex with men.

Country developments

- The number of people living with HIV in the **United States** has reached its highest level ever with 1.2 million people living with the virus in 2005 and national adult HIV prevalence at 0.6%.
- Widespread access to antiretroviral therapy in the **United States** has kept the number of AIDS related deaths relatively low (around 16,000 in 2005). However, early gains on the prevention front have not been sustained and the number of new, recorded cases of HIV has varied only slightly since the late 1990's. Half of all HIV infections diagnosed in 2004 were in men who have sex with men, and several studies have reported evidence of resurgent risk behaviour in this group.
- More women are becoming infected in the **United States**. One in four women newly diagnosed with HIV in 2003 had been infected while injecting drugs. AIDS is the leading cause of death among African American women aged 25-34 years (78% of whom were infected through heterosexual transmission).
- African Americans make up just over 12% of the population in the **USA** and account for 50% of all new HIV diagnoses, African Americans are half as likely to be receiving antiretroviral therapy compared with other population groups.
- **Canada's** epidemic is much smaller and new annual HIV infections have remained at around 2,500 since 2002. Unprotected sex between men remains the main mode of transmission (43% of new diagnoses in the first six months of 2005), and more women are being infected. In 2004, women accounted for 27% of new diagnoses compared to just over 10% in 1995.
- **Canada's** epidemic is having a disproportionate impact on aboriginal people. Although they represent only 3% of the population, they comprise 5%-8% of new HIV infections.
- In **Western** and **Central Europe** there were an estimated 720,000 people living with HIV in 2005. The main mode of transmission in several countries is heterosexual intercourse.
- In the **United Kingdom**, annual, new HIV diagnoses have doubled since 2000, reaching around 7,700 in 2005. This increase is mostly attributed to heterosexual transmission

with more than three quarters (77%) of new infections being contracted in high-prevalence countries.

- Unsafe sex between men remains an important factor in the **UK**'s epidemic, contributing about one-third of new HIV infections and studies show that high risk sexual behaviour among this group has not decreased.
- In **Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany** and **Sweden**, at least one-third of HIV infections attributable to heterosexual intercourse were probably acquired abroad – mostly in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Currently, around half (49%) of all new HIV infections in **Germany** are attributable to unsafe sex between men compared to just over one-third (37%) in 2001.
- In 2005, there were 140,000 people living with HIV in Spain. The introduction of methadone treatment and needle-exchange programmes in **Spain** in the 1990s has markedly decreased the number of HIV infections among injecting drug users.
- In **Portugal** there were an estimated 32,000 people living with HIV in 2005. In 2004, the 2,400 new diagnoses among injecting drug users in **Portugal** were less than half the number in 2000.
- Annual HIV cases in **Poland** have been increasing steadily since 2001, and in 2005 there were an estimated 25,000 people living with HIV. Unprotected sex–heterosexual and between men—is the main cause of this increase.

Contact

Dominique De Santis | UNAIDS Geneva | tel. +41 22 791 4509 | desantis@unhcr.org

Sophie Barton-Knott | UNAIDS Geneva | tel. +41 22 791 1697 | bartonknotts@unhcr.org