

Middle-East and North Africa

Latest epidemiological data

- The limited information available for the Middle East and North Africa indicates that some 380 000 [280 000–510 000] people were living with HIV in 2007, including the estimated 40 000 [20 000–60 000] people who were newly infected last year.
- **Sudan** represents the bulk of the region's HIV epidemic, with an estimated 320 000 [220 000–440 000] people living with HIV.
- Although overall numbers of reported HIV cases in the region remain small, they have been increasing in several countries, partly due to expanded HIV testing efforts. One such example is **Algeria**, where the number of people living with HIV has nearly doubled between 2001 and 2007.

Primary sources of HIV transmission

- Varying combinations of risk factors are associated with the region's epidemic. Chief among them are unprotected paid sex and the use of contaminated drug injecting equipment.
- Unprotected heterosexual intercourse is the main factor in **Sudan's** epidemic, with national adult HIV prevalence estimated at 1.4% [1.0%–2.0%] in 2007.
- The **Islamic Republic of Iran** is home to a serious drug-related epidemic, with HIV prevalence of between 15% and 23% documented among men who inject drugs who make use of drop-in or drug-treatment services in Tehran.
- Exposure to contaminated drug injecting equipment is also the main route of HIV transmission in the **Libyan Arab Jamahiriya** and **Tunisia**, and it features in the epidemics of **Algeria**, **Morocco**, and the **Syrian Arab Republic**.
- Although socially stigmatized and officially censured throughout the region, unprotected sex between men is probably a factor in several of the region's epidemics.

Additional country data¹

- Uneven HIV surveillance systems pose challenges in determining the patterns and trends of the epidemics in many countries of this region. Information on people who inject drugs, sex workers and men who have sex with men remains limited.
- Two key factors could increase the epidemics in the region: possible HIV transmission from people who inject drugs into the broader population and the apparent increase in unprotected extramarital sex—reflected in high levels of other sexually transmitted infections in some countries.
- Most HIV infections in the region are occurring in men and in urban areas—except in **Sudan**, where a more generalized epidemic is under way. In some countries the

¹ From *Middle East and North Africa: AIDS epidemic update 2007, regional summary*

proportion of HIV-positive women is growing, as the epidemic spreads from mostly male injecting drug users and the clients of sex workers to their wives and girlfriends.

- In **Algeria** and **Morocco**, HIV prevalence well above the estimated adult national HIV prevalence has been found among female sex workers.
- A recent study in **Egypt** found that 6% of men who have sex with men were HIV-positive, as were 9% of the same group in a 2006 study in **Sudan's** Khartoum State. Almost half (42%) of the Egyptian men and more than half (56%) of the Sudanese men in those studies said that they had engaged in commercial sex. Yet condom use during paid sex was infrequent: about one in 10 (9%) men in the Egyptian study and fewer than half of those in the Sudanese study said that they had used protection the last time they bought sex.

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