

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Latest epidemiological trends

- The estimated number of adults and children living with HIV in Eastern Europe and Central Asia rose to 1.5 million [1.4 million–1.7 million] in 2008, a 66% increase from 900 000 [800 000-1.1 million] in 2001.
- HIV prevalence in the region is on the rise, with severe and growing epidemics in the **Ukraine** and the **Russian Federation**. With an adult HIV prevalence of 1.6% [1.1-2.0%] in 2007, Ukraine has the highest prevalence in all of Europe.
- Three countries in the region (Estonia, Russian Federation and Ukraine) have HIV prevalence that exceeds 1%.
- A number of countries have expanded access to antiretroviral therapy, although treatment coverage remains quite low. By December 2008, 22% of adults in need of treatment were receiving it—less than the global average for low- and middle-income countries (42%).
- Evidence suggests that injecting drug users, the population most at risk of HIV infection in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, are often the least likely to receive antiretroviral therapy.
- High HIV prevalence among injecting drug users has been reported in **Ukraine** (38.5–50.3%) and the **Russian Federation** (37%).
- Although HIV prevention coverage for injecting drug users remains low in the region, scattered progress has been reported in expanding harm reduction services. In **Estonia**, the number of sterile syringes distributed through harm reduction programmes per injecting drug users doubled, reaching 112.

Key regional dynamics

- Injecting drug use remains the primary mode of HIV transmission in the region. With increasing transmission among the sexual partners of drug users, many countries in the region are experiencing a transition from an epidemic concentrated among injecting drug users to one that is increasingly characterized by significant sexual transmission.
- Use of contaminated drug injecting equipment was the source of 57% of newly diagnosed HIV infections in Eastern Europe in 2007. An estimated 3.7 million people currently inject drugs in the region, and roughly one in four are believed to be HIV-infected.
- In Eastern Europe, heterosexual transmission was the source of 42% of newly diagnosed HIV infections in 2007.
- The common overlap between sex work and injecting drug use further facilitates the spread of HIV in the region. In the **Russian Federation**, studies indicate that more than 30% of sex workers have injected drugs. In **Ukraine**, HIV prevalence among sex workers ranges from 13.6% to 31.0%.

- HIV transmission between men who have sex with men accounts for a small share of new infections in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In 2007, sex between men accounted for only 0.4% of newly diagnosed HIV infections in Eastern Europe.
- However, HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men is 5.3% in **Georgia**, 6% in the **Russian Federation** and 10–23% in **Ukraine**.
- One of the biggest achievements in the AIDS response in the region has been the high coverage of services to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. In December 2008, the coverage of services to prevent mother-to-child transmission exceeded 90% in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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