

AIDS IN JAPAN

According to UNAIDS, around 12,000 people in Japan are living with HIV, of which 24% are women. In 2003, fewer than 500 people died of AIDS-related illnesses. However, there is no time for complacency. HIV could spread rapidly throughout the country given the lack of awareness about the disease and the stigma surrounding HIV.

- In 2004, the main modes of HIV transmission among reported new infections were broken down as follows – 60% among men who have sex with men, 26% through heterosexual sex, 0.4% among injecting drug users and 0.1% due to mother to child transmission.
- In 2004, there were some 450 newly-reported HIV cases among Japanese men who had contracted their infection through sex with other men. That is an increase of 34% from 2003. Since 1999, there has been a rapid increase in the annual number of HIV infections attributed to male-to-male sex.
- According to the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, HIV prevalence among blood donors in 2004 rose steadily among male blood donors in the country, while staying relatively stable among women. This supports the evidence that HIV transmission is occurring mainly among men who have sex with men.
- In addition to testing in hospitals, the government has set up programmes in public health centres offering free, anonymous HIV testing. In 2004, 89,000 HIV tests were conducted at public health centres.
- The Japanese government is now revising its AIDS prevention guidelines to strengthen coordination between the central government, local government, and NGOs, including groups of people living with HIV. It also hopes to scale-up prevention and treatment programmes, focusing particularly on the rights of people living with HIV.

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