

OCEANIA

An estimated 35 000 people in Oceania are living with HIV. In 2004, although less than 700 people are believed to have died of AIDS, about 5000 are thought to have become newly infected with HIV. In 2004 there were 7100 women living with HIV in the region.

- The annual number of new HIV diagnoses in Australia has gradually increased from 650 in 1998 to about 800 in 2002. A growing share of those diagnoses was in people who had become infected in the previous year—which suggests that the increase in new diagnoses could be linked to a revival of unsafe sex.
- As is the case in New Zealand, HIV transmission in Australia continues to be mainly through sex between men, which accounted for more than 85% of new HIV diagnoses from 1997 to 2002. Injecting drug use was responsible for about 4% and heterosexual intercourse for 8.5% of newly acquired infections in that period.
- The per capita rates of HIV diagnoses among indigenous people in Australia since 1993 have been similar to those in non-indigenous people. But higher proportions of diagnoses have been among women and have been associated with injecting drug use.
- At least half the estimated 14 000 people living with HIV in Australia are receiving antiretroviral therapy, reflecting both the age of the Australian epidemic and extensive treatment access.
- Papua New Guinea, which shares an island with one of Indonesia's worst-affected provinces, Papua, has the highest prevalence of HIV infection in Oceania. Roughly 16 000 people of the adult population of about 2.5 million were living with HIV at the end of 2003.
- In Papua New Guinea, more than twice as many young women (aged 15–24 years) as men have been diagnosed with HIV. In 2003, for the first time, more HIV infections were detected in women than in men.
- HIV-infection levels appear to be low in other parts of Oceania, but the data are extremely limited. On remote islands, seafarers and their partners appear to be most at risk and high rates of sexually transmitted infections are being detected.
- Once HIV makes its way into the tiny populations of island nations in Oceania, diffuse epidemics are likely to follow. Prevention strategies that reduce and treat sexually transmitted infections and that quickly bolster AIDS knowledge among the general population are urgently needed.

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