

Asia

Latest epidemiological trends

- In Asia, an estimated 4.7 million [3.8 million–5.5 million] people were living with HIV in 2008.
- The number of new HIV infections decreased from 400 000 in 2001 [310 000–480 000] to 350 000 [270 000–410 000] in 2008.
- In 2008, an estimated 330 000 [260 000–400 000] people died of AIDS-related illnesses. While the annual number of deaths in South and South-East Asia in 2008 was approximately 12% lower than the mortality peak in 2004, the rate of HIV-related mortality in East Asia continues to increase.
- Asia, home to 60% of the world's population, is second only to sub-Saharan Africa in terms of people living with HIV. **India** accounts for roughly half of Asia's HIV prevalence.
- With the exception of **Thailand**, every country in Asia has an adult HIV prevalence of less than 1%.
- While the regional epidemic appears to be stable overall, HIV prevalence is increasing in some parts of the region, such as **Bangladesh** and **Pakistan**.
- In certain states in **India** (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu), HIV prevalence among 15–24-year-old women attending antenatal clinics declined by 54% between 2000 and 2007.
- The proportion of women living with HIV in the region rose from 19% in 2000 to 35% in 2008. In **India**, women accounted for an estimated 39% of prevalence in 2007.
- The regional picture regarding treatment scale-up is mixed. As of December 2008, 37% of those in Asia needing antiretroviral therapy were receiving it. This represents a sevenfold increase in treatment access in five years.
- There is an urgent need in the region to improve HIV testing services. In **China**, fewer than one in three people living with HIV have been diagnosed.

Key regional dynamics

- Although Asia's epidemic has long been concentrated in specific populations, namely sex workers and their clients, men who have sex with men and injecting drug users, it is steadily expanding into lower-risk populations through transmission to the sexual partners of those most at risk.
- In **China**, where transmission was mainly driven by injecting drug use, heterosexual transmission has now become the main mode of HIV transmission.
- In many Asian countries, sex workers are at an extremely high risk of HIV infection. In **Myanmar**, more than 18% of female sex workers are infected with HIV. In **China**, 60% of female sex workers do not consistently use condoms with their clients.
- Male sex workers are also at high risk of infection. In **Indonesia**, HIV prevalence is nearly three times higher among male sex workers (20.3%) than among female sex workers (7.1%).

- More than 4.5 million Asians inject drugs. With an estimated 2.4 million drug injectors, **China** is estimated to have the world's largest population of injecting drug users. In the **Islamic Republic of Iran** there are an estimated 70 000 to 300 000 injecting drug users, while in **Pakistan** the number ranges from 54 000 to 870 000.
- Several countries have taken steps to introduce programmes to prevent new infections among injecting drug users. **Indonesia** revised its national AIDS strategy in 2007 to include harm reduction and a new ruling was issued by the judicial court, prioritizing drug rehabilitation over imprisonment of drug users. Harm reduction programmes have also been implemented in **China** and **India**.
- Men who have sex with men in Asia face nearly one in five odds of being infected with HIV. High levels of HIV among men who have sex with men have been reported in **Myanmar** (29.3%), **Bangkok** (30.7%), Chongqing, **China** (12.5%), southern **India** (between 7.6% and 18.1%) and **Indonesia** (5.2%).

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