



HIV/AIDS Today

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The Caribbean

The Caribbean is second only to Sub-Saharan Africa in the percentage of the population living with HIV/AIDS. Today's HIV/AIDS factsheet discusses the transmission, prevention, care, and treatment of HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean.

THE STATE OF THE EPIDEMIC IN THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean has an estimated adult prevalence rate of 1.0%. In 2007, approximately 230,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean and there were approximately 17,000 new infections. In the same year, there were 11,000 deaths attributable to AIDS. For those between the ages of 25 and 44, AIDS is one of the region's leading causes of death.¹

The percent of adults living with HIV that are women has increased to 43% in 2007, up from 37% in 2001. Young women in the region are particularly vulnerable to infection, with infection rates two to six times higher than those of young men.

TRANSMISSION OF HIV/AIDS IN THE CARIBBEAN

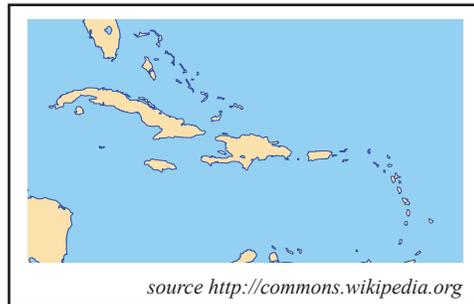
Heterosexual sex is the primary mode of HIV transmission in the Caribbean, with unprotected sex with commercial sex workers playing a significant role of the spread of the infection. In Guyana, the HIV prevalence of HIV prevalence among female sex workers is 31%.

The spread of the epidemic is exacerbated by the stigmatization of homosexuality in much of the Caribbean region. A 2005 study found that men who have sex with men account for an estimated 12% of reported HIV infections in the Caribbean.

Intravenous drug use plays a small role in spreading HIV/AIDS in the region overall, but is a leading cause of the spread of HIV in Bermuda and Puerto Rico.

HAITI

The Caribbean is home to Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, and the country most impacted by HIV/AIDS outside of Sub-Saharan Africa. The adult HIV/AIDS prevalence rate is 2.2%. Recent sentinel surveillance indicates that the prevalence rate may be stabilizing, and in the urban areas of Haiti there have been decreasing infection rates. In Port-au-Prince, for example, the prevalence rate among 15- to 44-year old women was 3% in 2005, down from 5.5% in 2000.



PREVENTION, CARE AND TREATMENT

Several countries in this region are showing signs of success in slowing the epidemic to a stable prevalence and new infection rate between 2001 and 2007. National responses to HIV/AIDS have been developed by most of the countries in the region, and there are indications of reduced risk behavior in Haiti.

However, access to prevention services and to treatment remain challenges in the Caribbean. A joint WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF progress report in April 2007 indicated that there were gaps in the availability of prevention services within the region. Similarly, outside of Cuba, Barbados, and Suriname, access to treatment is low.

ENDNOTES

¹ All information in this factsheet is from the World Health Organization and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *2007 AIDS Epidemic Update* (Dec. 2007) (online at data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007_epiupdate_en.pdf); and The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. *HIV/AIDS Policy Fact Sheet: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the Caribbean* (Nov. 2007) (online at http://www.kff.org/hivaids/upload/7505_04.pdf).