



Fact Sheet 2:

UK STATISTICS

Last updated: November 2006

Estimated number of people living with HIV	63,500
HIV cases diagnosed in 2005	7,450¹

It is estimated that there are now 63,500 individuals currently living with HIV in the UK, over a third of whom (20,100) are unaware of their condition. HIV rates continue to climb. Newly diagnosed cases reported for 2005 stand at 7,450. There is a continuing epidemic among the homosexual community and men having sex with men, accounting for approximately 2,356, or 32%, of new diagnoses in 2005, the highest figure reported. Diagnoses remain higher amongst the heterosexual community, although there was a slight reduction on 2004 figures, with 4,049 cases in 2005, or 54% of diagnoses. The majority of which were probably acquired outside the UK, particularly in Africa. Injecting drug use (IDU) transmission remains low, accounting for about 156 new diagnoses in 2005. However prevalence of HIV in injecting drug users outside London rose from 0.6% in 2004 to 1.2% in 2005. Mother to child transmission also remains low at around 100 cases a year, thanks to routine antenatal testing meaning 95% of women were diagnosed before delivery. In 2005 one in every 450 women giving birth in England and Scotland was HIV-infected.

Brief History

AIDS was first identified in the UK in the early 1980s. During the early years of the UK epidemic, HIV infections were concentrated in three groups: men in the gay community and men having sex with men, injecting drug users (IDUs) and those receiving blood products, such as transfusions.

In the mid-1980s, the introduction of needle exchange programmes decreased the frequency in IDUs and heat treatments to kill the virus in blood products did the same for those receiving blood products. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, an aggressive public awareness campaign launched by the UK Government resulted in a decline in the number of cases reported each year, however the epidemic still simmered below the surface.

The introduction of anti-retroviral therapy, medications designed to prevent the progression to AIDS, dramatically decreased the number of AIDS-related deaths. Accordingly, the number of HIV cases continued to rise, while the death rate plummeted. AIDS-related deaths fell from 1,236 in 1996 to 395 in 1998 – approximately a 70 per cent drop. The figures since 1998 show a levelling off of this trend with around 400 deaths per year.

Despite these advancements in medical technology, HIV diagnoses have again begun to increase. These increases parallel increases in other sexually transmitted infections

¹ *A Complex Picture: HIV and other Sexually Transmitted Infections in the United Kingdom: 2006* (London: Health Protection Agency Centre for Infections. November 2006)

(STIs) and unintended pregnancies across the UK. Unless safer sex messages are heeded, the UK could again see an increasing level of HIV transmission.

Who is affected by HIV?

Anyone can be infected with HIV, but some communities have been more affected than others.

The UK gay community and other men having sex with men have been the group most affected. Recent sharp rises in STIs among gay men have given rise to concern that high risk sexual behaviour amongst gay men is increasing.

There has also been an increase in the number of heterosexuals becoming infected by HIV reported in the UK. Since 1999 the number of new HIV diagnoses acquired heterosexually has been higher than the number of people diagnosed through sex between men. The majority of these cases – about 80 per cent – are thought to have been acquired abroad, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

Infections among IDUs have remained relatively low in recent years. Recently there has been a rise in sharing of injecting equipment, there has been an increase in Hepatitis C and other blood borne viruses and prevalence of HIV amongst IDUs has increased.

Further information: Health Protection Agency, www.hpa.org.uk

The National AIDS Trust (NAT) is the UK's leading independent policy and campaigning voice on HIV and AIDS.

We develop policies and campaign to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS, and improve the quality of life of people affected by HIV, both in the UK and internationally.

We aim to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS, ensure people living with HIV have access to treatment and care, and eradicate HIV-related stigma and discrimination.

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