

Latin America

Overview

- There was a total number of 1.6 million people living with HIV in Latin America in 2005 and around 140,000 people became newly infected with the virus.
- Around 32,000 children under the age of 15 were living with HIV in 2005 and AIDS claimed some 59,000 lives.
- Around 294,000 people were receiving antiretroviral therapy in Latin America at the end of 2005 – representing 73% of the estimated 404,000 people in need of treatment.
- In several Latin American countries, high levels of HIV infection (between 2% and 28%) are being found in men who have sex with men. However, in many countries HIV transmission between female sex workers and their clients is another significant factor in the spread of HIV. As the epidemics mature, increasing numbers of women are being infected.

Country developments

- **Brazil** is home to more than one-third of the total number of people living with HIV in Latin America (620,000 adults and children) and national HIV prevalence was 0.5% in 2005.
- HIV infections related to unsafe injecting drug use are declining in several **Brazilian** cities and treatment access is widespread. Around 170,000 of the 209,000 people in need of antiretroviral therapy were receiving it in 2005, including 30,000 injecting drug users.
- However, more young people are having sex at earlier ages and with more partners, at least one in three (36%) **Brazilians** surveyed aged 15-24 said they were sexually active before their 15th birthday.
- There were and estimated 130,000 people living with HIV in **Argentina** in 2005 and adult HIV prevalence was at 0.6% in 2005. Injecting drug use and unprotected sex between men are the main drivers of **Argentina's** epidemic, almost one in two injecting drug users (44%) tested in Buenos Aires were found to be HIV-positive and infection levels of 7%-15% have been recorded among men who have sex with men. Prisoners in major urban jails are among the worst affected population groups. In 2004, between 17% and 28% of prisoners surveyed in Buenos Aires province were found to be infected with HIV.
- Sex between men is a driving factor in the HIV epidemics of **Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador** and **Peru** and high levels of HIV prevalence among men who have sex with men have been found in Santa Cruz, **Bolivia** (24%), Quito Pichincha and Guayaquil Guayas, **Ecuador** (17% and 23% respectively) and Lima, **Peru** (23%).
- In **Colombia** there were around 160,000 people living with HIV in 2005. HIV infection levels as high as 20% among men who have sex with men have been found in Bogota yet only 1% of female sex workers were infected. However, women are increasingly

becoming infected by male partners who also have sex with other men; among women testing HIV-positive at projects aimed at preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, 72% were in stable relationships.

- **Honduras** is one of the worst affected regions, with national HIV prevalence at 1.5% and 63,000 people living with the virus at the end of 2005. AIDS is the leading cause of death for **Honduran** women. Paid sex and sex between men are driving the epidemic in **Honduras**. One in 12 female sex workers tested HIV-positive in the capital Tegucigalpa and prevalence of 8% and 16% has been found both there and in San Pedro Sula respectively, among men who have sex with men.
- The situation is similar in **Guatemala** where there are 61,000 people living with HIV and national adult prevalence stands at 0.9%. HIV prevalence of 15% has been found among street-based sex workers and 12% of men who have sex with men were found to be infected with HIV in Guatemala City.
- An intense epidemic is underway in Belize with national adult HIV prevalence at 2.5% in 2005. Sex between men is a hidden but powerful factor not only in **Belize's** epidemic but also in the epidemics of **El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Panama**.
- Although adult HIV prevalence remains low in **Mexico** (0.3%), an estimated 180,000 people were living with HIV in 2005 – as many as two thirds of them were men who are believed to have been infected during sex with other men. There are signs that heterosexual transmission of HIV is increasing as more women are infected by their partners who also have sex with men.

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