



HIV/AIDS Today

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India

This week's edition of HIV/AIDS Today reviews the state of India's epidemic.

THE STATE OF THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IN INDIA

In 2006, an estimated 2.5 million people in India were living with HIV. Adult prevalence rates vary between states and regions in India from 0.07% in Uttar Pradesh to 1.13% in Manipur. The national adult HIV prevalence rate in India is 0.36%.ⁱ

The epidemic in India has been described more accurately as a "series of epidemics," referring to the fact that in some regions, most notably the south, the epidemic appears stable and even in recession in some instances. Prevalence among pregnant women has stabilized or declined in areas throughout India, but prevalence among sex workers, injecting drug users, and men who have sex with men has been increasing in a few states within the country.

Currently, HIV/AIDS is highly concentrated in the most industrialized regions of the country. Two-thirds of the HIV-infected population lives in six of India's 28 states. Within these industrialized regions, the rate of HIV/AIDS prevalence is nearly five times higher than in the rest of the country.

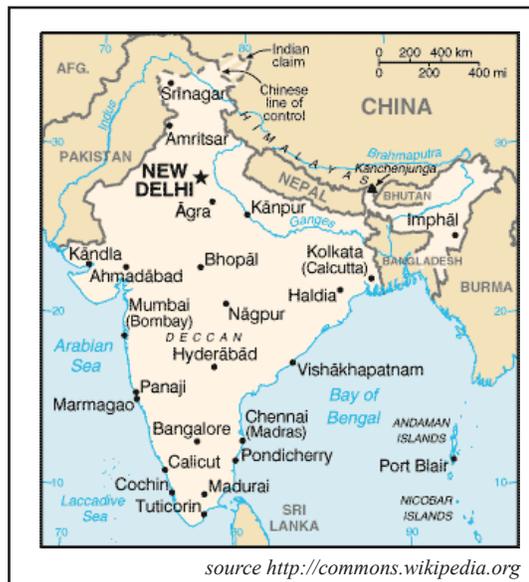
TRANSMISSION OF HIV/AIDS IN INDIA

The primary means of transmission of the HIV/AIDS virus in India is through unprotected heterosexual sex.

The percentages of female sex workers who are infected with the HIV/AIDS virus are high. In Mumbai, one of the most populous and heavily affected industrialized centers, 54% of sex workers are infected with HIV/AIDS. Other studies estimate a comparable HIV/AIDS prevalence among sex workers across the most afflicted regions

In the northeastern region of India, intravenous drug use remains the primary risk factor for the spread of HIV/AIDS. The Chennai region, considered to be fairly representative of the northeastern part of the country, reported an infection rate of 31% among intravenous drug users in a 2006 study. In Mumbai, a similar study found that 12% of intravenous drug users were infected with HIV/AIDS.

Men who have sex with men have higher rates of HIV than the total population. While the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is about 0.4% among adults in all of South and Southeast Asia, which includes India, prevalence among males who reported having sex with other males is roughly 6.8% in Chennai and 9.6% in Mumbai – both in northeastern India.



ENDNOTES

ⁱ The information included in this factsheet comes from the World Health Organization (WHO) and Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), *AIDS Epidemic Update* (Dec. 2007) (online at http://data.unaids.org/pub/EPISlides/2007/2007_epiupdate_en.pdf).