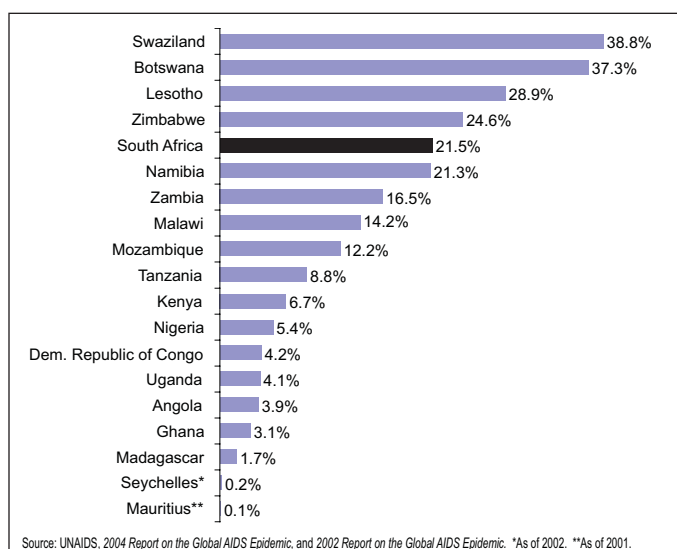


### The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in South Africa

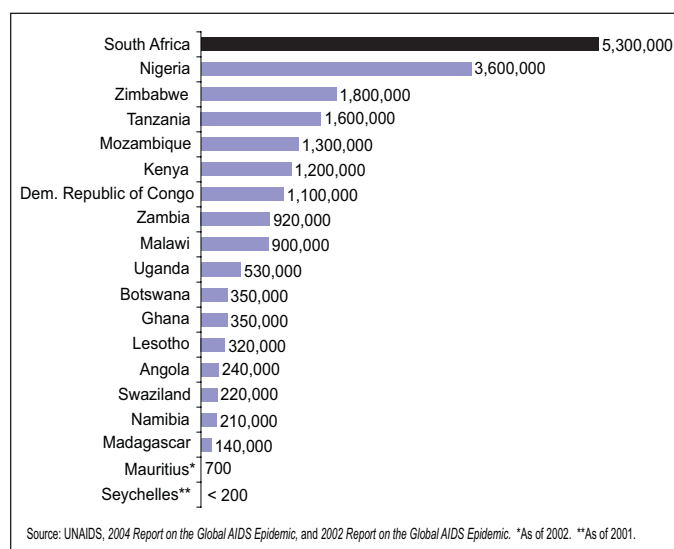
October 2005

South Africa has the highest number of people estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in the world (5.3 million as of the end of 2003) and is one of the countries hardest hit by the epidemic.<sup>1,2</sup> South Africa's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (the percent of people living with the disease) is much higher than that of the sub-Saharan African region overall,<sup>1</sup> and although prevalence rates have begun to stabilize, the South African Government's most recent surveillance study indicates that prevalence may still be on the rise.<sup>3</sup> The epidemic has already had a profound impact on many aspects of South African society and is projected to affect the country's economic, education, and health sectors if more is not done to stem its tide.<sup>4,5</sup> As a middle-income country of significant political and economic importance in the African continent,<sup>6,7</sup> the future course of South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic will have broader implications for Africa overall. The Government of South Africa established the National AIDS Coordinating Committee of South Africa (NACOSA) in 1992 and created the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) in 2000. The country's *HIV/AIDS/STD Strategic Plan for South Africa: 2000–2005* is currently being implemented.<sup>2,8,9,10</sup>

**Figure 1: Percent of Adults Estimated to Be Living with HIV/AIDS (end 2003)**



**Figure 2: Number of People Estimated to be Living with HIV/AIDS (end 2003)**



### Overview

- The first case of HIV/AIDS in South Africa was reported in 1982.<sup>11</sup>
- South Africa has the highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world, an estimated 5.3 million as of the end of 2003.<sup>1</sup> The South African government estimates that between 5.7 and 6.2 million people were living with HIV/AIDS in 2004.<sup>3</sup>
- The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate<sup>12</sup> in South Africa is 21.5%, compared to 7.5% in sub-Saharan Africa and 1.1% globally.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2003, an estimated 370,000 South Africans died of HIV/AIDS,<sup>1</sup> which was the leading cause of death in almost all South African provinces.<sup>13</sup> HIV/AIDS is also the leading cause of death among South African children under age five.<sup>14</sup>
- HIV is spread primarily through heterosexual sex in South Africa.<sup>15</sup>

### Populations and Regions Affected

- Women account for over half (57%) of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa.<sup>1</sup>
- Young people have been particularly affected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa, especially young women.<sup>16</sup> Among young people, ages 15–24, the estimated number of young women living with HIV/AIDS was more than twice that of young men.<sup>17</sup> Young women between the ages of 25 and 34 have the highest rates of infection among women.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2003, 230,000 children<sup>18</sup> in South Africa were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS and there were an estimated 1.1 million AIDS orphans.<sup>1,19</sup>
- There is significant variation in the epidemic's impact by region, with the highest rates occurring in KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng, and the lowest in the Western Cape, Northern Cape and Limpopo.<sup>3</sup>

### Other Key Data

- *Concern about HIV/AIDS and other epidemics:* South Africans are concerned about HIV/AIDS. More than nine in ten (96%) say that HIV/AIDS and other epidemics are a "very big" problem in their country. Over four-fifths (90%) of South Africans feel that HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases are the greatest threat to the world.<sup>20</sup> South African youth are also concerned about HIV/AIDS.<sup>16</sup>
- *Knowledge of HIV/AIDS:* Studies have found that general awareness of HIV/AIDS in South Africa is high.<sup>16,21</sup> For example, among youth ages 15–24, almost all youth surveyed had heard of HIV/AIDS and most could name at least one HIV prevention method.<sup>16</sup>
- *Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):* Although the Government of South Africa has begun to scale up access to ART through its national "Comprehensive HIV/AIDS Care, Management and Treatment Plan",<sup>2</sup> access to this treatment is still limited in South Africa.

With over 800,000 people in need of ART, South Africa has the highest estimated unmet need for ART in the world. As of June 2005, an estimated 97,000–138,000 people were receiving ART (10–14% of those in need). Although there is still a high unmet need for ART in South Africa, it does have the highest number of people on treatment among the 20 countries with the greatest unmet need for ART and the South African Government's budget allocation for ART scale up is the largest of any low- or middle-income country.<sup>22</sup>

- *Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV*: In February 2002, the South African government initiated a national pilot program to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. The pilot program, which included 18 sites, is currently being evaluated to help inform the Government's efforts to scale-up access to these services.<sup>23</sup> PMTCT services are now available at over 2,000 health sites nationwide—among the largest PMTCT programs in the world.<sup>24</sup>

### International Support/Major Donors

- A number of donor governments provide funding and other support to address South Africa's HIV/AIDS epidemic including: the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Australia, Germany and the European Union.<sup>2,8</sup> South Africa is one of the 15 focus countries of the United States Government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).<sup>25</sup> U.S. bilateral aid for South Africa was \$89.3 million in FY2004; this amount is expected to increase to \$148.2 million in FY2005.<sup>26</sup> The U.S. also provides support for HIV/AIDS efforts around the world through its contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (The Global Fund).
- The Global Fund has approved four HIV/AIDS grants (including HIV/TB grants) in South Africa.<sup>27</sup>
- UNAIDS and the UN Family support a variety of HIV/AIDS activities in South Africa.<sup>2,4,8</sup>

**Table 1: HIV/AIDS in South Africa**<sup>1,17,22</sup>

Indicator	South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
Estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS, 2003	5.3 million	25 million	37.8 million
Percent of adult population estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2003	21.5%	7.5%	1.1%
Estimated number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS, 2003	370,000	2.2 million	2.9 million
Women as percent of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2003	57%	57%	48%
Percent of young women, ages 15–24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2001	20.5–30.8%	8.9%	1.4%
Percent of young men, ages 15–24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2001	8.5–12.8%	4.4%	0.8%
Estimated number of AIDS orphans, 2003	1.1 million	12.1 million	15 million
Number of people estimated to be receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART), June 2005	97,000–138,000	500,000	970,000
Number of people estimated to be in need of ART, June 2005	866,000	4.7 million	6.5 million

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