

The HIV/AIDS Epidemic South Africa

July 2008

Home to more than 5 million people living with HIV/AIDS, South Africa is one of the countries hardest hit by the AIDS epidemic.^{1,2,3} South Africa's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (the percent of people living with HIV/AIDS) is among the highest in the world, although recently prevalence rates have begun to stabilize.^{1,2,3} The epidemic has already had a profound impact on many aspects of South African society and is projected to affect the country's demographic structure and its economic, education, and health sectors if more is not done to stem its tide.^{1,2,4} As a middle-income country⁵ of significant political and economic importance in the African continent, the future course of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa will have broader implications for Africa overall.

The Government of South Africa first established the National AIDS Coordinating Committee of South Africa (NACOSA) in 1992 and created the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) in 2000.^{6,7} In March 2007, the government released a new five year plan to address the epidemic: *HIV and AIDS and STI Strategic Plan for South Africa 2007–2011*, designed to guide the country's multisectoral response to HIV/AIDS.² Comprehensive policies and programs are in place and significant resources, mainly domestic and in the form of external aid, have been committed to address the epidemic in South Africa, yet many challenges remain.⁷ In addition, new threats in the country, such as the emergence of extensively drug resistant tuberculosis (XDR-TB) and high rates of HIV/TB co-infection, may further complicate the response to HIV.^{8,9}

Figure 1: Top 20 Countries by HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rate, Sub-Saharan Africa, 2007^{1,10}

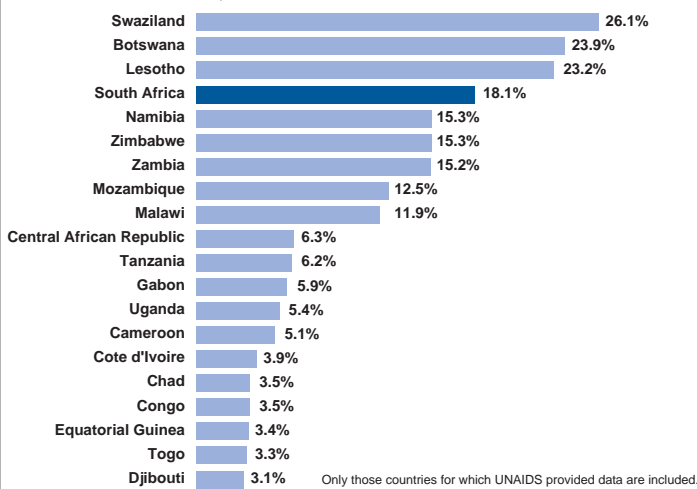
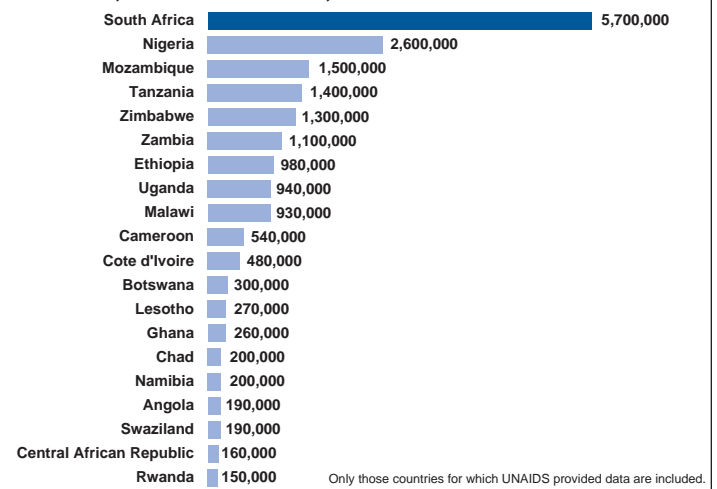


Figure 2: Top 20 Countries by Number of People Living with HIV/AIDS, Sub-Saharan Africa, 2007¹



Overview

- The first case of HIV/AIDS in South Africa was reported in 1982.¹¹
- South Africa had an estimated 5.7 million people living with HIV/AIDS in 2007, the highest number of any country in the world.¹
- The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate¹⁰ in South Africa is 18.1%, significantly higher than the rate in sub-Saharan Africa (5.0%) and globally (0.8%).¹
- In 2007, an estimated 350,000 South Africans died of HIV/AIDS.¹ AIDS has been cited as the major cause of premature deaths in the country—AIDS-related deaths are estimated to have accounted for nearly half of all deaths in 2006 and overall death rates, from all causes, have increased by about 80% largely due to HIV/AIDS.^{2,3}
- HIV is spread primarily through heterosexual sex in South Africa.^{1,2}

Populations and Regions Affected

- Women account for over half (59%) of adults aged 15 and over estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa.¹
- Young South Africans have been particularly affected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa, especially young women.^{1,2,3,12} Among young South Africans aged 15–24, young women are significantly more likely to be HIV-infected than young men.^{1,2,3} Young women aged 25–29 have the highest rates of infection in the country.²
- In 2007, 280,000 children under the age of 15 in South Africa were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS and there were more than one million AIDS orphans.^{1,13}
- There is significant variation in the epidemic's impact by region, with the highest rates occurring in KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga, and the lowest in the Western Cape and Northern Cape.^{2,3,14}

Other Key Data

- *Concern about HIV/AIDS and Other Epidemics:* South Africans are concerned about HIV/AIDS. More than eight in ten (88%) say that HIV/AIDS and other epidemics are a "very big" problem in their country and nine in ten (91%) South Africans say that HIV/AIDS is a bigger problem in their country today than it was 5 years ago.¹⁵ South African youth also express concern about HIV/AIDS.^{12,16} Six in ten named HIV/AIDS as the most important issue facing young people in the country in a recent survey; six in ten also were very concerned about becoming infected with HIV in the next 10 years.¹⁶

- **Knowledge of HIV/AIDS:** Studies have found that general awareness of HIV/AIDS in South Africa is high.^{12,16} Most young South Africans (aged 15–24) are knowledgeable about key aspects of HIV prevention and treatment, but small shares of youth still hold misconceptions about some key aspects of the epidemic.¹⁶ Many South African youth say they would like more information about HIV/AIDS.¹⁶
- **Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):** The Government of South Africa is scaling up access to ART and will continue to do so over the next few years as the country implements its 2007–2011 Strategic Plan.² The country already has the largest number of people on ART in the world, but with an estimated 1.7 million people in need of ART, South Africa also has one of the highest unmet needs for antiretroviral therapy in the world. However, progress has been made. As of the end of 2007, an estimated 460,000 people were receiving ART.¹⁷
- **Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission (PMTCT) of HIV:** In September 2001, the South African government initiated a national program to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV. By 2005, PMTCT services were available at thousands of health sites nationwide, making the program among the largest PMTCT programs in the world.¹⁸ Between 2006 and 2007, the government of South Africa reported that the number of PMTCT sites increased during the year.⁷ The percentage of HIV positive pregnant women who received antiretrovirals to reduce the possibility of transmitting HIV to their infants has also increased over time, reaching 57% in 2007.¹⁷

Financing HIV/AIDS: Domestic and International Support

- Domestically, the HIV/AIDS response is primarily financed through the national health budget. In 2007, the budget for national HIV/AIDS programs was estimated to be R3.4 billion (approximately \$480 million USD).⁷
- A number of donor governments also 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.^{6,7} South Africa is one of the 15 focus countries of the United States Government's President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). PEPFAR funding for South Africa was \$397.8 million in FY2007.¹⁹ 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 to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has approved 5 HIV/AIDS grants (including HIV/TB grants) in South Africa, totaling \$228.7 million in approved funding.²⁰
- UNAIDS and the UN Family support a variety of HIV/AIDS activities in South Africa.^{6,21}

Indicator ^{1,17}	South Africa	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
Estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS, 2007	5.7 million	22 million	33 million
Percent of adult population estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2007 ¹⁰	18.1%	5.0%	0.8%
Estimated number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS, 2007	350,000	1.5 million	2.0 million
Women as percent of adults (15+) estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2007	59%	59%	50%
Percent of young women, aged 15–24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2007	12.7%	3.2%	0.6%
Percent of young men, aged 15–24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2007	4.0%	1.1%	0.4%
Estimated number of AIDS orphans, 2007 ¹³	1.4 million	11.6 million	15.0 million
Number of people estimated to be receiving ART, end 2007	460,000	2.1 million	3.0 million
Number of people estimated to be in need of ART, 2007	1.7 million	7.0 million	9.7 million

Additional Resources/Websites

- UNAIDS, South Africa Country Page: http://www.unaids.org/en/CountryResponses/Countries/south_africa.asp
- Government of South Africa, Department of Health: <http://www.doh.gov.za/>
- Government of South Africa, National HIV/AIDS and TB Unit, National Department of Health: <http://www.doh.gov.za/aids/index.html>
- Broadcast HIV Africa: www.broadcasthivafrica.org

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- 4 Abt Associates, *The Impending Catastrophe, A Resource Book On The Emerging HIV/AIDS Epidemic in South Africa*; 2000.
- 5 World Bank, "Country Classification: Country Groups": http://www.worldbank.org/data/countryclass/classgroups.htm#Upper_middle_income.
- 6 UNAIDS, *UNAIDS at Country Level: Progress Report*; 2004.
- 7 Republic of South Africa, Department of Health, *Progress Report on Declaration of Commitment on HIV and AIDS*, Prepared for United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV and AIDS, Reporting Period: January 2006–December 2007; 2008
- 8 WHO, Emergence of XDR-TB: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/notes/2006/np23/en/index.html>.
- 9 Kaiser Family Foundation, www.globalhealthfacts.org.
- 10 Among those between the ages of 15 and 49.
- 11 UNAIDS/WHO, "South Africa: Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections – 2004 Update."

- 12 Pettifor A, et al., *HIV and Sexual Behaviour among Young South Africans: A National Survey of 15–24 Year-Olds*; April 2004.
- 13 Aged 0–17, living in 2007, who have lost one or both parents to AIDS.
- 14 UNAIDS/WHO, *Summary Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV and AIDS*; July 2008.
- 15 Kaiser Family Foundation and Pew Global Attitudes Project, "A Global Look at Public Perceptions of Health Problems, Priorities, and Donors: The Kaiser/PEW Global Health Survey"; December 2007.
- 16 Kaiser Family Foundation and South African Broadcasting Corporation, *Young South Africans, Broadcast Media, and HIV/AIDS Awareness: Results of a National Survey*; March 2007.
- 17 WHO/UNAIDS/UNICEF, *Towards Universal Access: Scaling Up Priority HIV/AIDS Interventions in the Health Sector, Progress Report*; June 2008.
- 18 Thom A, "Many Challenges for Pregnant HIV Mothers Programme"; August 10, 2005. <http://www.health-e.org.za/news/article.php?uid=20031289>.
- 19 United States Government, State Department, Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator, "2007 Country Profile: South Africa"; 2007.
- 20 The Global Fund: www.theglobalfund.org.
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