

The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Zimbabwe

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Zimbabwe has almost two million people estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS (1.8 million as of the end of 2003), representing the third largest HIV/AIDS burden in sub-Saharan Africa.^{1,2} The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate (the percent of people living with the disease) in Zimbabwe is among the highest in the world,¹ although recent evidence suggests that prevalence may be starting to decline.³ The epidemic continues to pose significant development challenges to this low-income country, which faces additional complications including drought conditions, substantial internal migration and displacement, and other factors that exacerbate the epidemic's impact.^{2,4,5,6} The Government of Zimbabwe established a National AIDS Coordination Programme (NACP) in 1987. In 2000, the Government formed the National AIDS Council (NAC), and is currently developing its National AIDS Strategic Framework for 2005-2009.^{2,4}

Figure 1: Percent of Adults Estimated to be Living with HIV/AIDS, 2003

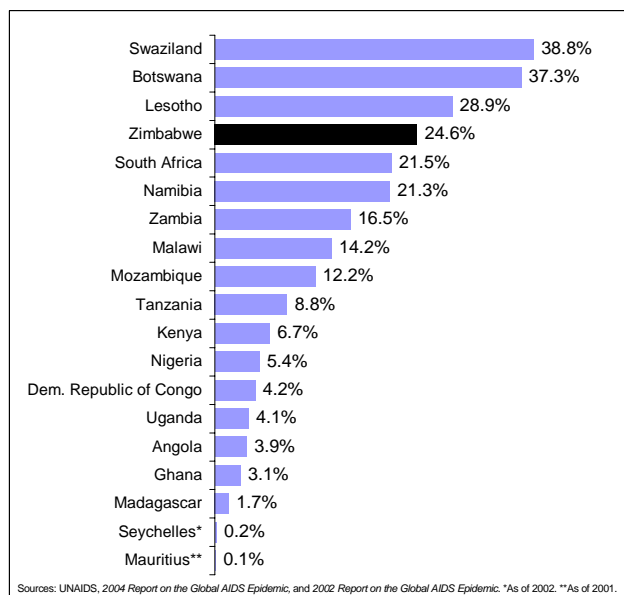
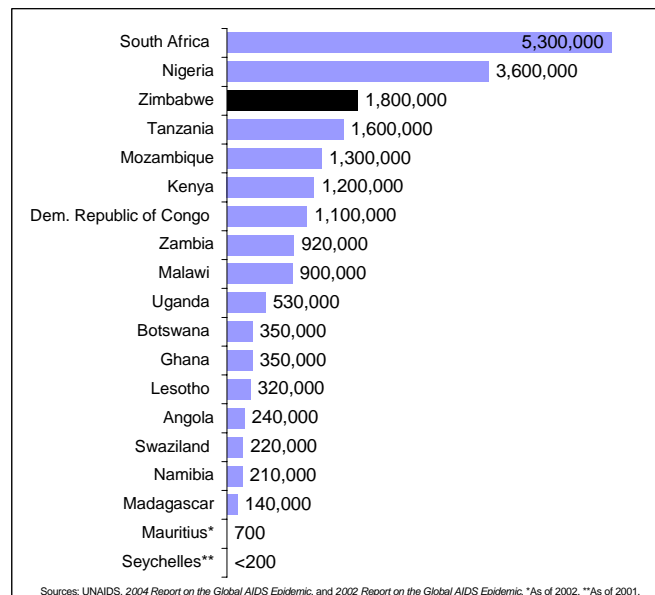


Figure 2: Number of People Estimated to be Living with HIV/AIDS, 2003



Overview

- The first case of AIDS in Zimbabwe was reported in 1985.^{7,8}
- Zimbabwe had an estimated 1.8 million people living with HIV/AIDS as of the end of 2003,¹ and there are approximately 200,000 new HIV infections annually in Zimbabwe.⁹
- The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate¹⁰ in Zimbabwe is 24.6%, or one in four adults, significantly higher than the prevalence rate of the sub-Saharan African region (7.5%) and the global rate (1.1%).^{1,11}
- In 2003, an estimated 170,000 Zimbabweans died of HIV/AIDS, and life expectancy at birth in Zimbabwe has fallen to 34 years in large part due to HIV/AIDS.^{1,12} Nine in ten deaths among Zimbabwean adults are due to HIV/AIDS.¹¹
- HIV is spread primarily through heterosexual sex in Zimbabwe.⁵

Populations and Regions Affected

- Women account for more than half (58%) of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe.¹ New HIV infections among women outnumber those among men in Zimbabwe.⁹
- Young women are especially hard hit by HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe.¹¹ Among young people ages 15-24, the estimated number of young women living with HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe was more than twice that of young men.¹³
- In 2003, 120,000 children¹⁴ in Zimbabwe were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS and there were an estimated 980,000 AIDS orphans.^{1,15}
- There is significant variation in the epidemic's impact across the country, with higher HIV prevalence rates occurring in urban, compared to rural, areas. HIV prevalence is also higher in mining and commercial farming areas, and in administrative centers.^{9,16}

Other Key Data

- **Knowledge of HIV/AIDS:** Studies have found that general awareness of HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe is relatively high.⁵ For example, among young people ages 15-24, almost three fourths (74%) of young women and 83% of young men knew that a healthy looking person could be infected with HIV.¹
- **Access to Antiretroviral Therapy (ART):** Access to ART is quite limited in Zimbabwe. With over 300,000 people in need of ART, Zimbabwe is among the 20 countries identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) as having the highest unmet need for ART. As of June 2005, an estimated 9,500-16,000 people were receiving ART in Zimbabwe (3-5% of those in need).¹⁷

International Support/Major Donors

- A number of donor governments provide funding and other support to address Zimbabwe's HIV/AIDS epidemic, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the European Union.^{4,18} The U.S. Government provides bilateral assistance to Zimbabwe for its HIV/AIDS activities, although Zimbabwe is not one of the 15 focus countries of the United States' President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).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 has approved one HIV/AIDS grant in Zimbabwe.²⁰
- UNAIDS and the UN Family support a variety of HIV/AIDS activities in Zimbabwe.^{2,4}

Table 1: HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe^{1,13,17}

Indicator	Zimbabwe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Global
Estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS, 2003	1.8 million	25 million	37.8 million
Percent of adult population estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2003	24.6%	7.5%	1.1%
Estimated number of deaths due to HIV/AIDS, 2003	170,000	2.2 million	2.9 million
Women as percent of adults estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2003	58%	57%	48%
Percent of young women, ages 15-24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2001	26.4 – 39.6%	8.9%	1.4%
Percent of young men, ages 15-24, estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, 2001	9.9 – 14.9%	4.4%	0.8%
Estimated number of AIDS orphans, 2003	980,000	12.1 million	15 million
Number of people estimated to be receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART), June 2005	9,500 – 16,000	500,000	970,000
Number of people estimated to be in need of ART, June 2005	308,000	4.7 million	6.5 million

Key Sources/Websites

- Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Health and Child Welfare: www.mohcw.gov.zw/
- Zimbabwe National AIDS Council (NAC): www.nac.co.zw/²¹
- Zimbabwe AIDS Network (ZAN): www.zan.co.zw/
- Women and AIDS Support Network (WASN): www.wasn.org.zw/
- Southern African Network of AIDS Service Organisations (SANASO): www.sanaso.org.zw/country-networks.htm#zimbabwe
- UNAIDS Zimbabwe Country Page www.unaids.org/en/geographical+area/by+country/zimbabwe.asp
- UNAIDS Zimbabwe: www.unaids.org.zw/
- World Health Organization, Zimbabwe Country Page: www.who.int/countries/zwe/en/

References

- ¹ UNAIDS, *2004 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*, July 2004.
- ² UNAIDS Zimbabwe Country Page: www.unaids.org/en/geographical+area/by+country/zimbabwe.asp.
- ³ UNAIDS Zimbabwe. "Declining HIV Prevalence and Incidence Trends": www.unaids.org.zw/.
- ⁴ UNAIDS, *UNAIDS at Country Level: Progress Report*, 2004.
- ⁵ Central Statistical Office [Zimbabwe] and Macro International, Inc. *Zimbabwe Demographic and Health Survey 1999*, 2000.
- ⁶ World Bank, "Country Classification: Country Groups": www.worldbank.org/data/countryclass/classgroups.htm#Low_income.
- ⁷ Government of Zimbabwe, Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, "Strategic Plan: 2002-2006", 2002.
- ⁸ Mapenzauswa, S., *Reuters NewsMedia*, "Zimbabwe Holds First National Meeting on AIDS Crisis", June 15, 2004.
- ⁹ WHO, "Zimbabwe: Summary Country Profile for HIV/AIDS Treatment Scale-Up", June 2005.
- ¹⁰ Among adults ages 15-49.
- ¹¹ USAID, "Health Profile: Zimbabwe – HIV/AIDS", December 2004.
- ¹² UNAIDS, "Africa Fact Sheet", March 2005.
- ¹³ UNAIDS, *Youth and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*, 2002.
- ¹⁴ Under age 15.
- ¹⁵ Ages 0-17, living in 2003.
- ¹⁶ UNAIDS/WHO, "Zimbabwe: Epidemiological Fact Sheet on HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections – 2004 Update": www.unaids.org/html/pub/publications/fact-sheets01/zimbabwe_en_pdf.pdf.
- ¹⁷ WHO, *Progress on Global Access to HIV Antiretroviral Therapy*, June 2005.
- ¹⁸ UNAIDS Zimbabwe, "Bilateral Donors": www.unaids.org.zw/bilateral_donor.htm.
- ¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator: www.state.gov/s/gac.
- ²⁰ The Global Fund: www.theglobalfund.org.
- ²¹ Website under development.