



U.S. Agency for International Development

Bureau for Global Health

COUNTRY PROFILE

HIV/AIDS

UKRAINE

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is spreading rapidly in Ukraine. UNAIDS estimates that in 2001, approximately 250,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS. Some estimates are higher; Ukrainian health officials believe some 500,000 people were living with HIV/AIDS in 2002. If effective actions are not taken, projection models suggest that adult prevalence could reach 4.9 percent, and the number of cases could exceed 1.4 million by the end of the decade.

Estimated Number of Adults and Children Living with HIV/AIDS (end 2001)	250,000
Total Population (2001)	49,112,000
Adult HIV Prevalence (end 2001)	1%
HIV-1 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas	
Population at high risk (i.e., sex workers and clients, patients seeking treatment for a sexually transmitted infection, or others with known risk factors)	1.8%
Population at low risk (i.e., pregnant women, blood donors, or others with no known risk factors)	0.2%

Sources: UNAIDS, U.S. Census Bureau

HIV/AIDS remains largely concentrated among marginalized and vulnerable populations, but is beginning to spread to the larger population. All regions are now affected, although prevalence rates in the south and east are about three times higher than those in the rest of the country. The majority of those infected are young people.

The leading cause of HIV transmission remains injecting drug use, although the proportion of infections attributed to this mode of transmission declined from 84 percent in 1997 to 57 percent in 2001. Prevalence among injecting drug users in six cities in 1999 and 2000 ranged from 18 percent to 64 percent. A 1999 survey among female sex workers in the city of Donetsk showed a prevalence of 13 percent. Heterosexual transmission and mother-to-child transmission both increased considerably. Although prevalence among pregnant women is still low overall, it increased from 0.12 percent to 0.22 percent between 1998 and 2001.

High levels of stigma and discrimination contribute to the epidemic. Vulnerable populations have relatively limited access to health services and information; despite the epidemic's explosive growth among injecting drug users, for example, current prevention and treatment programs cover only about 15 percent of that population. Other factors contributing to the rapid spread of HIV in Ukraine include a large-scale syphilis epidemic that began in the early 1990s (along with high rates of other sexually transmitted infections), high rates of commercial sex, sex for survival among the urban poor, and low condom use by sex workers and their clients.



Map of Ukraine: PCL Map Collection, University of Texas

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National Response

The response of the government of Ukraine to HIV/AIDS involves a range of agencies, laws, policies, and practices. A National AIDS Committee was established in 1992, but was dissolved in 1998 because of budget disputes. In 1999, the government created the National Coordinating Council on the Prevention of AIDS Disease, headed by a vice prime minister, with the Ministry of Health responsible for coordination and management. Some regions of Ukraine initiated their own HIV prevention efforts; in 1999, the national government mandated that all regions have HIV prevention programs.

In 2001, the Ukraine Cabinet of Ministers approved a new HIV/AIDS Control Program for 2001–2003, the goals of which were to prevent further spread of HIV, to develop capacity to treat infected individuals, and to provide social support and counseling to those living with HIV/AIDS. Some of the essential principles of the program include:

- Access to preventive services for all, particularly those at greatest risk;
- Consideration of HIV/AIDS as a social and health priority;
- Protection against stigma;
- Provision of medical and social care for those with HIV infection;
- Voluntary and anonymous testing; and
- Involvement of nongovernmental organizations and charities in HIV/AIDS programs.

The generally favorable legal and policy environment has not necessarily translated into effective action at the local level. The government of Ukraine treats HIV/AIDS primarily as a medical issue, and prevention activities have been funded largely by international organizations. Although pretest and posttest counseling is mandated, training is inadequate and little or no monitoring of these services exists. Because HIV testing is limited to government facilities, those at greatest risk for infection are not being reached because marginalized populations are least likely to use government facilities. Stigma against persons living with HIV/AIDS by the medical profession is a large barrier to information and service access.

USAID Support

In 2002, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) allocated \$1.3 million to HIV/AIDS activities in Ukraine, a slight decrease from the \$1.5 million allocation in 2001, but a substantial increase over the 2000 allocation of \$0.5 million. USAID's primary focus is to build the capacity of nongovernmental organizations to conduct HIV prevention activities.

USAID and the European Union jointly support the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Awareness Program. As part of this effort, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance established an office in Kiev in 2002. In just a short time, Alliance/Ukraine has become a leader in information dissemination, analysis, coordination, and in policy-dialogue promotion. Its National HIV/AIDS Clearinghouse disseminates best practices and provides information on consultant resources and current HIV/AIDS data through its Website, newsletters, directories, and policy briefings. Alliance/Ukraine offers workshops, training, and technical support to 25 Ukrainian nongovernmental organizations that work with high-risk populations and HIV/AIDS issues in general.

In September 2000, USAID funded a multiyear project to assist the Counterpart Alliance for Partnership to strengthen the capacity of selected nongovernmental health organizations in Ukraine and Belarus to deliver effective health services, including services to prevent HIV and sexually transmitted infections. In particular, the project focuses on supporting organizations that work with injecting drug users and sex workers.

Other HIV/AIDS capacity-building efforts include support for a project to strengthen the advocacy skills of nongovernmental organizations working to defend and promote the rights of persons living with HIV/AIDS, and for a demonstration project in Odessa on preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

In 2002, USAID declared Ukraine to be one of 23 countries to receive priority attention for HIV/AIDS activities because of the escalating epidemic and its potential to cause significant economic, political, and social problems. To maximize the effect of limited resources, the USAID/Ukraine strategy during the 2003–2007 period will be to build on existing

successful efforts to create strong nongovernmental organizations, focusing on high-priority local areas and three primary sets of activities:

- Improved planning, coordination, delivery, and management of HIV/AIDS information and services;
- Adoption of improved policies and service delivery practices; and
- Increased knowledge of effective approaches.

In addition, USAID will work with national and community leaders to strengthen laws and policies and to apply them at the local level.

For More Information

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USAID HIV/AIDS Website, Ukraine:

http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/Countries/eande/ukraine.html

U.S. Embassy Website:

http://usinfo.usemb.kiev.ua/main_eng.html

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For more information, see www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids or www.synergyaids.com.

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