

AIDS and its diffusion in the world

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As far as we know, in the history of humanity, the AIDS epidemic seems to be the most serious phenomenon.

After the first diagnoses, which were indicated around the year 1981, it is estimated that there have been around 20 million deaths due to AIDS and that around 38 million individuals, at the end of 2003, were living with HIV/AIDS infections, which are in rapid penetration in many countries. In some of these, it seems that actions intended for the functioning of forms of intensive prevention have had some success, such as, for example, in Uganda, Thailand and Cambodia.

The incidence of these diseases is the highest in the youngest ages. The estimates indicate that especially in young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years, half of new infections contracted in the world are registered. It is calculated that every day, in this age group, there are around 6,000 cases of infection.

Tables 1 and 2 list information from the 4th World Report ⁽¹⁾ of UNAIDS published in 2004.

Table.1 Young people and adults that have contracted HIV ^(a) and that were still alive in the world population at the end of the year 2003, and the percentage of cases in the populations of the various countries calculated at mid-2003.

Zone (2)	Young people and adults	Percentage
North America	1,000,000	0.3
Latin America	1,600,000	0.3
Caribbean	430,000	1.3
North Africa and the Middle East	480,000	0.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	25,000,000	3.8
East Asia and the Pacific	900,000	0.06
Southern and Southeastern Asia	6,500,000	3.5
Western Europe	580,000	1.5
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	1,300,000	4.3
Oceania	32,000	0.1
Total	37,800,000	0.6

(a) These estimates include all of the people infected with HIV and those which have or have not presented symptoms of AIDS.

The value of the relationship between the number of people living with HIV between the ages of 15-49 years and the population which is found in that country at the same age is significant. Again, for the year 2003, these relationships are reported in Table.2, limited to the countries that, faced

with a worldwide average equal to 1.1 percent, show more serious situations.

It is estimated that more than half of the people infected in the world in the age group between 15-49 years are females.

Table.2 The proportion of the population between the ages of 15 and 49 years infected with HIV ^(b) and alive in 2003 of the total population of the same age group. The countries are listed in decreasing order of incidence and values ≥ 5 percent.

Country	Living with HIV Adults (15-49)	Incidence in the population (15-49)
Swaziland	200,000	38.8
Botswana	330,000	37.3
Lesotho	300,000	28.9
Zimbabwe	1,600,000	24.6
South Africa	5,100,000	21.5
Namibia	200,000	21.3
Zambia	830,000	16.5
Malawi	810,000	14.2
Central African Rep.	240,000	13.5
Mozambique	1,200,000	12.2
Tanzanian Rep.	1,500,000	8.8
Gabon	45,000	8.1
Ivory Coast	530,000	7.0
Cameroon	520,000	6.9
Kenya	1,100,000	6.7
Burundi	220,000	6.0
Liberia	96,000	5.9
Haiti	260,000	5.6
Nigeria	3,300,000	5.4
Rwanda	230,000	5.1
Total	18,611,000	

(b) V. note (a) in Tab.1.

From the 20 countries indicated in Table.2, one observes that the adults in the age group of 15-49 years, infected with HIV and alive in 2003, represent 48.9 percent of all similar cases in the world, among young people and adults in Table.1. These countries, with the exception of Haiti, are all part of Sub-Saharan Africa.

For Italy, the Report indicates an estimate of 140,000 (67,000 – 220,000) young people and adults that could have contracted HIV and were alive at the end of 2003.

The Higher Institute of Health ⁽³⁾ has indicated that between 1982 and 31 December 2003, 52836 cases of AIDS were reported, of which 41056 were in males and 11780 were in females.

Other information supplied by the same source and for the same year, 2003:

- the average age at diagnosis is 34 years for men and 32 years for women;
- 110-130000 people are living with HIV/AIDS;
- new cases of AIDS reported during the year were 1275. In 2002 they were 1698 and, since 1982, a peak of 5651 was observed in 1995;
- those still living with AIDS were 19,000;
- the highest number of new AIDS cases was recorded in Lombardy with 348 (3.94 per 100,000 inhabitants), Lazio with 190 (3.65), Emilia-Romagna with 144 (3.83) and the region with the lowest number of cases was Molise with 2 cases (0.62);
- the Italian regions with the highest numbers of AIDS cases reported in the past 21 years are Lombardy (15934), Lazio (6932) and Emilia-Romagna (5129), etc.

(1) UNAIDS (2004), "2004-Rapport sur l'épidémie mondiale du SIDA", Geneve, Switzerland.

(2) Countries that UNAIDS has included in various zones that can be observed in the comparative tables in the 2004 Report. Regarding the data in these Tables, one must consider that they are found within a field of variation that is fairly broad, thus indicating the degree of uncertainty of the estimate. For example, for the Sub-Saharan countries in Africa the Report indicates 25,000,000 (23,100,00 – 27,900,000) cases (Tab. 1), believing that the most realistic number would be 25 million but noting, at the same time, that this number could be found between 23.1 and 27.9 million. In the Summary Table of the Report, and in the following Tables, estimated values and the inferior and superior limits of the plausible field of variability are reported.

(3) Report by the COA (Centro Operativo Aids) of the Higher Institute of Health of the Italian Health Ministry.