



HIV/AIDS

AND

THE CARIBBEAN

Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands

What We Know...

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that today there are 850,000–950,000 HIV-positive people living in the United States, more than at any other time in the epidemic. An estimated 180,000–280,000 HIV-positive individuals do not know they are infected, and therefore are not benefiting from HIV care and treatment, and may also be unknowingly transmitting the virus. An additional 250,000 people living with HIV who are aware of their status may not be getting the care they need or prevention support to help them protect their partners. Altogether, roughly half of all people living with HIV in the United States are untested, untreated, or both.¹

Caribbean*

- Official estimates show that, as of December 1999, there were 360,000 adults and children living with HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean. By the end of 2000, that number had grown to an estimated 390,000. Due to reporting challenges, however, the real number could be closer to 500,000.²
- According to latest data, in the English-speaking Caribbean, HIV/AIDS is now the **leading** cause of death among men between the **ages of 15 and 44**.³
- Among adult women in the English-speaking Caribbean, HIV/AIDS rates are climbing. The latest data show **35 percent** of HIV-positive adults were women.⁴

U.S. Virgin Islands

- By June 2000, approximately **1 out of every 300** persons was estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. This is a minimum estimate because there may be persons with HIV who were not aware of their HIV infection status.
- By June 2000, the primary mode of HIV transmission in the U.S. Virgin Islands, as in the rest of the Caribbean, was through heterosexual contact.⁵

Puerto Rico

- As of December 2001, Puerto Rico ranked among the top 10 U.S. states or territories with the highest cumulative AIDS cases among residents.⁶
- In Puerto Rico, injection drug use was reported as the leading mode of transmission through June 2000. The number of persons who reported HIV infection through injection drug use was more than twice that of the second leading mode of HIV transmission — heterosexual contact.⁵

Let's Take Action!

To address the HIV/AIDS health crisis in the Caribbean, we must confront major challenges including:

- The lack of standardized HIV testing in the region;
- Underreporting of HIV/AIDS;
- Limited or no access to voluntary and/or confidential HIV counseling and testing; and
- Providing services in a socially and economically diverse community.

* The Caribbean includes islands in the Caribbean Sea and the mainland countries of Belize, Guyana, and Suriname.

¹ Fleming, R.L., et al., "HIV Prevalence in the United States, 2000," 9th Annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, Feb. 24–28, 2002, Seattle, WA, Abstract 11.

² UNAIDS, *HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean Fact Sheet* (Feb. 2001).

³ UNAIDS, *AIDS Epidemic Update* (Dec. 2000).

⁴ The World Bank, *HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean: Issues and Options* (June 2000).

⁵ Based upon TLCA consultation with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mar. 2001.

⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report 2001*, Vol. 13, No. 2.

HIV/AIDS infection rates in the Caribbean are among the highest in the world second only to that of sub-Saharan Africa. Know the facts, and join us in the fight against HIV/AIDS!

For more information on HIV/AIDS and the Caribbean, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands contact the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-458-5231 or on the Internet at www.cdcnpin.org.

