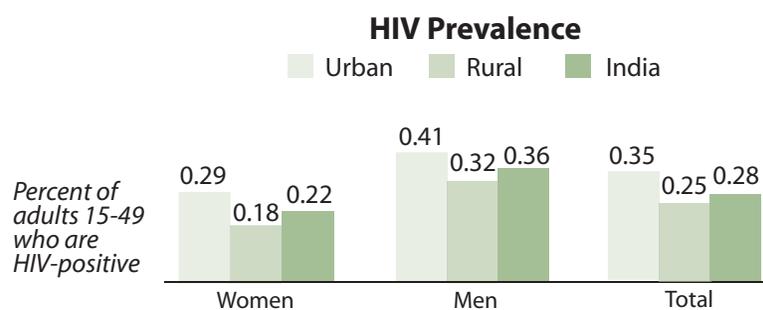


NFHS-3 Sheds New Light on HIV Prevalence

Scientific evidence from India's National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) has provided new insights into the extent of India's HIV epidemic. NFHS-3 included HIV testing on a representative sample of more than 100,000 women and men nationwide.

- The national HIV prevalence rate is 0.28 percent.
- The HIV prevalence rate among men, 0.36 percent, is 64 percent higher than the rate among women, 0.22 percent. For both men and women, HIV prevalence is highest in the age group 30 to 34. HIV is 40 percent higher in urban than in rural areas.



- Much higher HIV prevalence rates are found for men who have more lifetime sexual partners and for men who visit female sex workers.
- In addition to the national HIV estimates, NFHS-3 calculated HIV prevalence for Uttar Pradesh and for 5 of the 6 states that have been designated by the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) as high HIV prevalence states. In the 5 HIV prevalence states, infection rates varied from 1.13 percent in Manipur and 0.97 percent in Andhra Pradesh to 0.34 percent in Tamil Nadu. The estimate for Uttar Pradesh, a low prevalence state, is only 0.07 percent.
- The HIV prevalence estimates from NFHS-3 have spurred the Government of India and international agencies to reduce the official estimate of persons living with HIV to 2.47 million, down from the earlier official estimate of 5.2 million. This change will also have a major impact on the global estimate of persons living with HIV.
- Previous HIV estimates from the Government of India were based largely on the sentinel surveillance system, which relies on regular HIV testing of subgroups within the population, such as pregnant women attending government antenatal clinics and patients visiting sexually transmitted disease clinics. The new national estimates take into multiple sources of information: the third National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3), the government's expanded sentinel surveillance system, and targeted surveys of groups that have a high risk of getting HIV.

- Only 3 percent of women and 4 percent of men have ever been tested for HIV (prior to the NFHS-3 survey), and some who were previously tested did not get the results of the test. Even among adults who tested positive for HIV in NFHS-3, only 12 percent had been previously tested for HIV. Therefore, a large majority of HIV positive persons do not know their HIV status and they could be unknowingly spreading the virus.

The Indian Public is Not Well Informed about HIV/AIDS

- Only 61 percent of women and 84 percent of men ages 15-49 have heard of AIDS. Awareness has increased markedly since NFHS-2 in 1998-99 but still remains low among some groups. For example, just 30 percent of women with no education have heard about AIDS.
- Men have much more information about preventing HIV/AIDS than women. About 7 in 10 men know each of the three ABC prevention methods—abstinence, being faithful, and condoms—compared with only 4 in 10 women.
- Misconceptions about HIV/AIDS are common. Only 38 percent of women and 61 percent of men know that a healthy-looking person can be infected with HIV. About two-thirds of women and half of men mistakenly believe that mosquito bites can transmit the virus.

For more information on HIV-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour, please see chapter 11 of the NFHS-3 final report. For HIV prevalence, see chapter 12.