

PRESS RELEASE

UNAIDS reports that more than 10% of adults living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries are aged 50 and over

Shifting demographics of the AIDS epidemic demands a new focus to reach people above the age of 50—a population currently underserved by HIV services.

GENEVA, 1 November 2013—The United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has released a supplement to the 2013 *UNAIDS Report on the global AIDS epidemic* focused on the issue HIV and aging.

The supplement reveals that out of the global total of 35.3 million [32.2 million – 38.8 million] people living with HIV, an estimated 3.6 million [3.2 million–3.9 million] are people aged 50 years or older. The majority—2.9 million [2.6 million–3.1 million]—are in low- and middle-income countries where the percentage of adults living with HIV who are 50 years or older is now above 10%. The supplement also reveals that in high-income countries almost one-third of adults living with HIV are 50 years or older.

“People 50 years and above are frequently being missed by HIV services,” said Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director. “This is costing lives. Much more attention needs to be given to their specific needs and to integrating HIV services into other health services which people 50 years and over may already have access to.”

The “aging” of the HIV epidemic is due to three main factors: the success of antiretroviral therapy in prolonging the lives of people living with HIV, decreasing HIV incidence among younger adults—shifting the disease burden to older ages, and that people aged 50 and above are engaging in risk taking behaviour such as unprotected sex and injecting drug use which are leading to new HIV infections.

The supplement highlights that HIV prevention services, including HIV testing, tailored to the needs of people aged 50 and above, are essential and that these services should also reflect the needs of key populations in this age group. The supplement also outlines the importance of timely initiation of antiretroviral therapy as the immune system weakens with age.

The supplement concludes that HIV responses therefore need to adapt to this important demographic trend. It also underlines the need to integrate HIV services for people over the age of 50 with other health screening services available to this age group.

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UNAIDS

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) leads and inspires the world to achieve its shared vision of zero new HIV infections, zero discrimination and zero AIDS-related deaths. UNAIDS unites the efforts of 11 UN organizations—UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, UN Women, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank—and works closely with global and national partners to maximize results for the AIDS response. Learn more at unaids.org and connect with us on Facebook and Twitter.