

WHAT THE DATA TELL US: Projections for the HIV epidemic in the Middle East and North Africa in 2030

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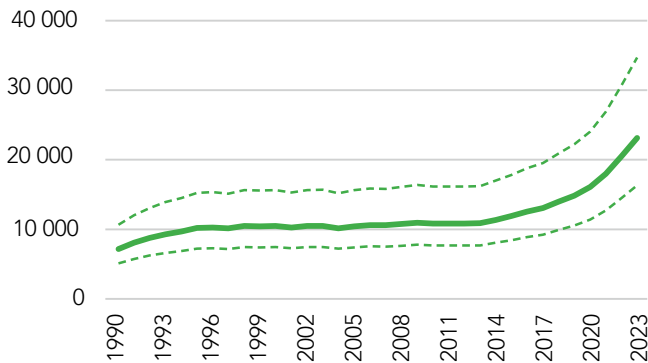
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Where are we now?

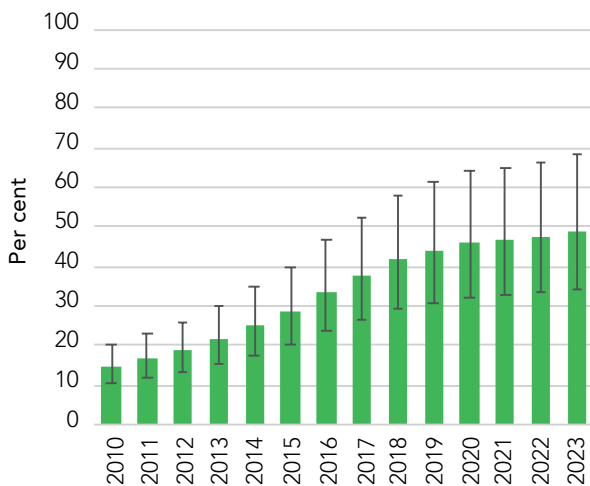
Estimated number of new HIV infections, 1990–2023



New HIV infections are increasing substantially in the Middle East and North Africa, amounting to an estimated 23 000 (16 000–35 000) in 2023, a 116% increase from 2010. Antiretroviral treatment coverage among people living with HIV reached only 49% (34–68%) in 2023, far below the treatment targets set for 2025.¹

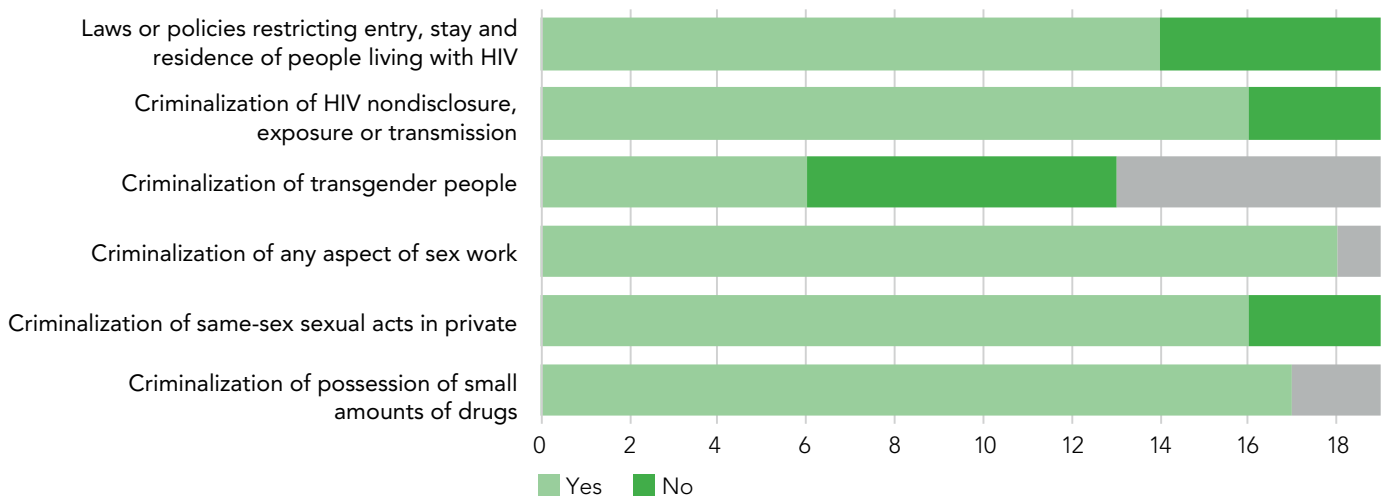
Out of 19 countries in the region, 18 still criminalize sex work, 17 criminalize possession of small amounts of drugs, 16 criminalize same-sex sexual acts, 6 criminalize transgender people, 16 criminalize HIV non-disclosure, exposure or transmission based on either HIV-specific or general criminal laws, and 14 have laws or policies restricting the entry, stay and residence of people living with HIV. These persisting discriminatory and punitive laws expose key populations and vulnerable communities, including migrants and refugees to stigma, discrimination and violence and lead to poor health outcomes. In Morocco, 13% of sex workers, 26% of gay men and other men who have sex with men in Lebanon and 23% said they experienced stigma and discrimination in the past six months.

Treatment coverage, 2010–2023



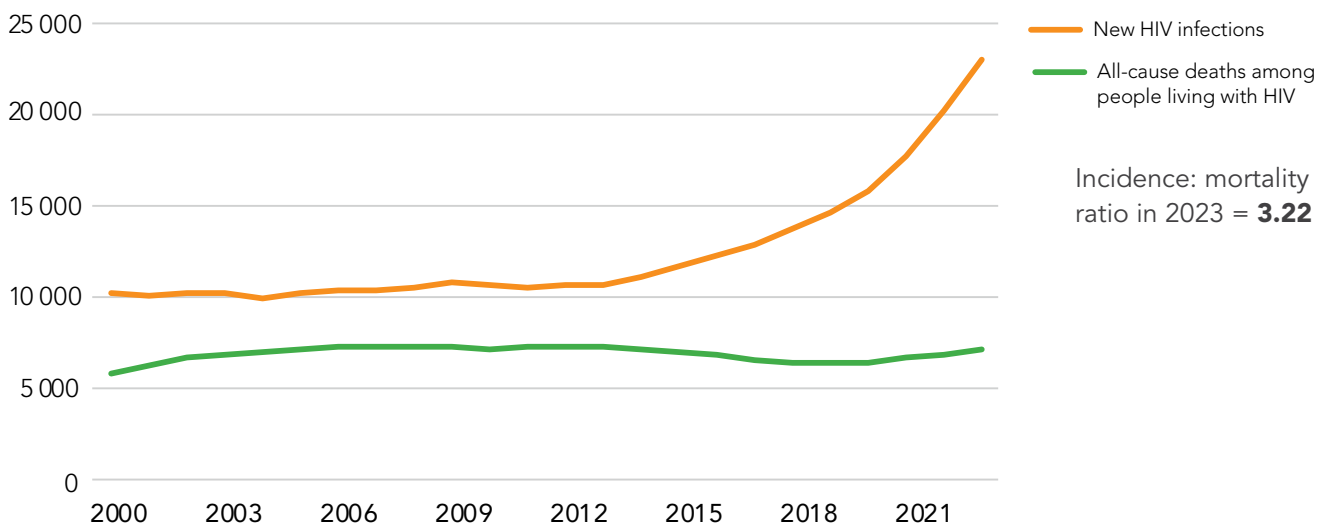
¹ Note: the 2025 targets are for 95% of people living with HIV to know their HIV status, 95% of these people to be receiving HIV treatment, and 95% of these people to have viral suppression. For further explanation see https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/progress-towards-95-95-95_en.pdf

Countries with HIV-related discriminatory and punitive laws, 2024



What factors might contribute to epidemic control?

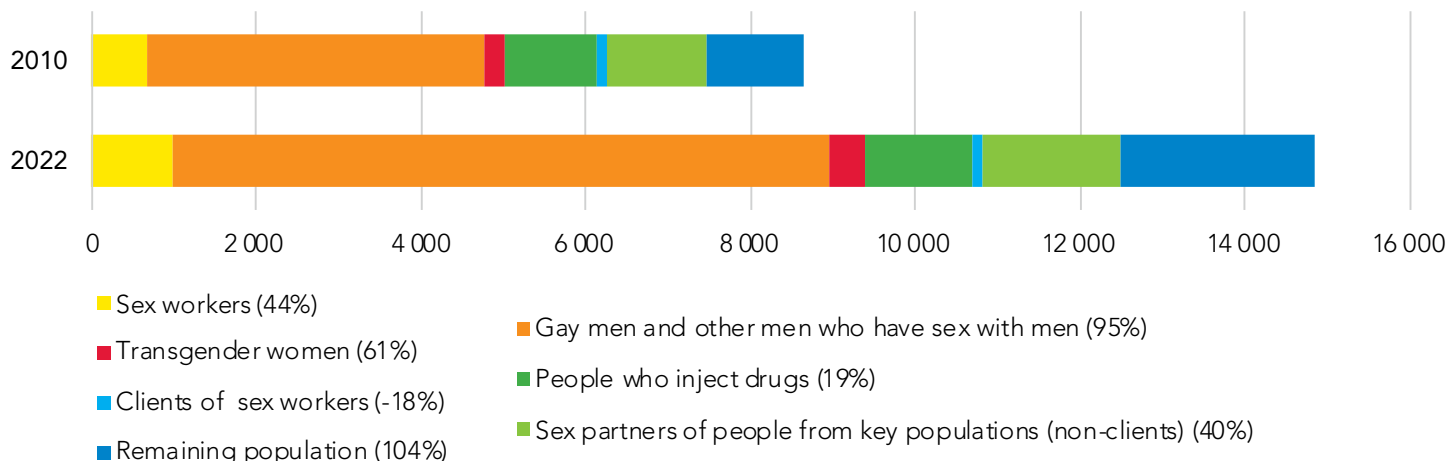
Estimated HIV incidence to mortality ratio, 2000–2023



The estimated incidence:mortality ratio (IMR) of 3.22, which is notably above the benchmark of 1, indicates that the population of people living with HIV in the region is still increasing, with new infections significantly outpacing AIDS-related deaths. This underscores the importance of scaling up and sustaining prevention interventions, including ensuring that people living with HIV receive treatment. Once the IMR falls below 1, the size of the population living with HIV will decrease, contracting the epidemic and lowering the costs of antiretroviral therapy and services. An incidence:mortality ratio can reach the goal of being lower than one if mortality is very high. For this reason the incidence:mortality ratio should be interpreted with caution when treatment coverage (which determines mortality) is low as is the case in this region.²

Prevention interventions are particularly important among people from key populations and their sex partners, who in 2022 accounted for an estimated 84% of new HIV infections in the region. Gay men and other men who have sex with men in particular, experienced steep increases in numbers of new HIV infections, with a 95% increase between 2010 and 2023.

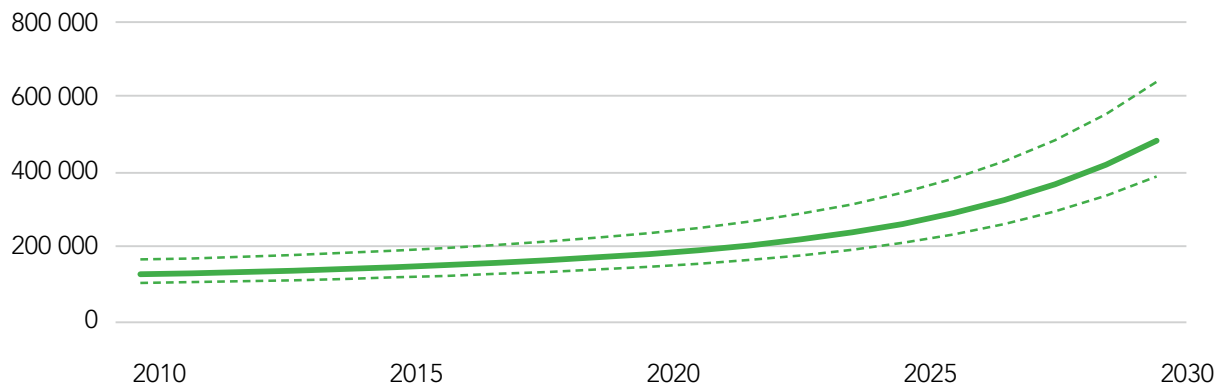
Distribution of new HIV infections among adults, and percentage change from 2010 to 2022



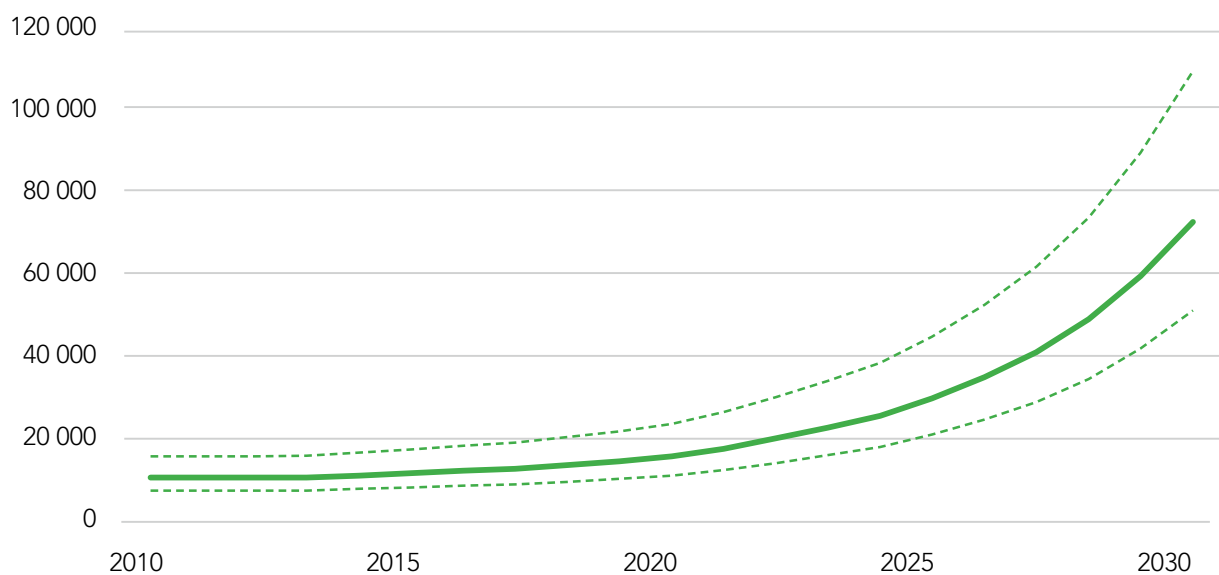
2 See: Ghys PD, Williams BG, Over M, Hallett TB, Godfrey-Faussett P (2018) Epidemiological metrics and benchmarks for a transition in the HIV epidemic. PLoS Med 15(10): e1002678. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002678>

What is projected to happen in the future without acceleration of treatment and prevention coverage?

Projections of numbers of people living with HIV by 2030

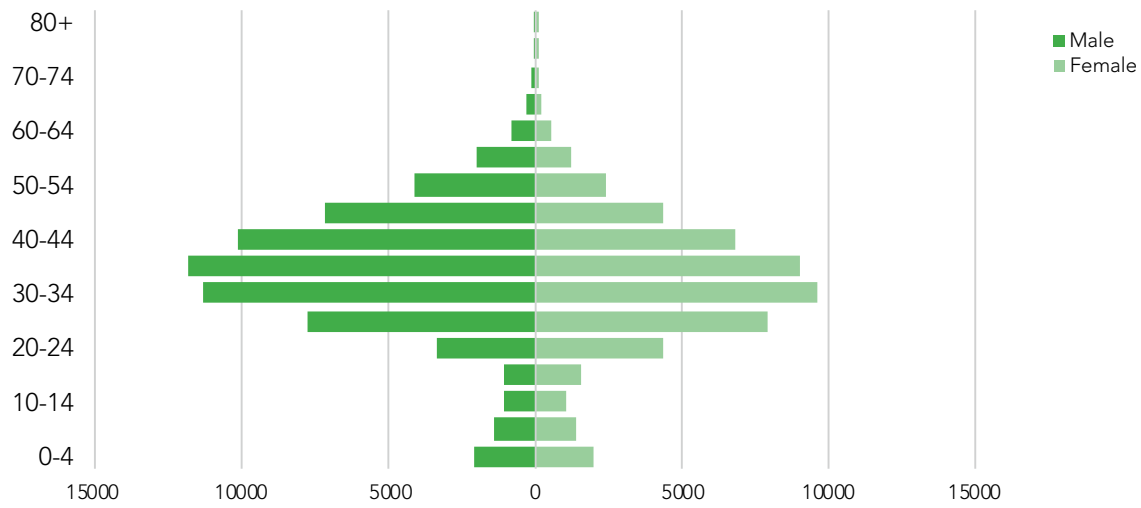


Projections of numbers of new HIV infections by 2030

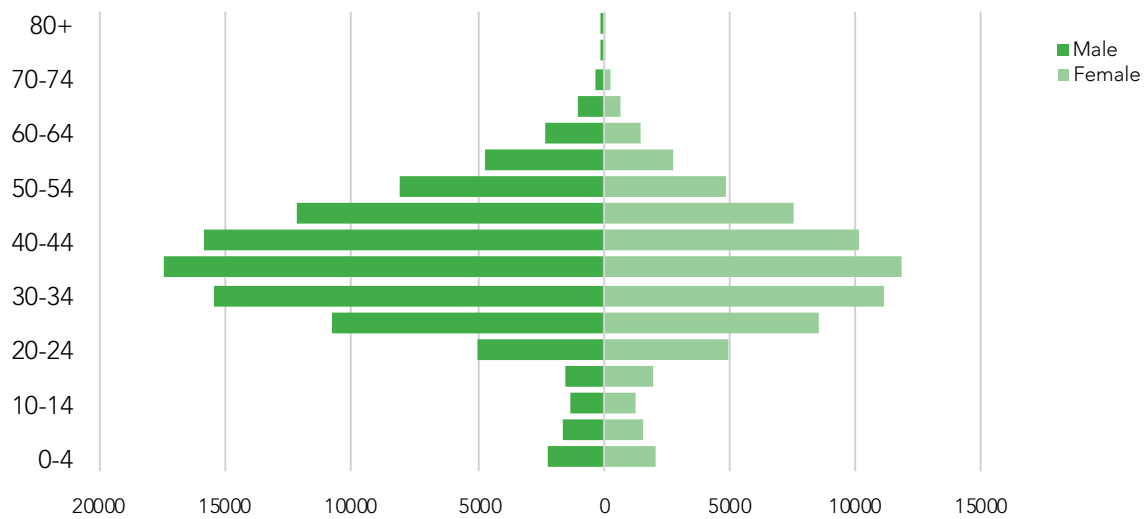


By 2030, without accelerated scale-up of prevention and treatment coverage there may be an estimated 74 000 new HIV infections and 480 000 people living with HIV in the Middle East and North Africa. The majority age group of people living with HIV is projected to remain those aged 20–49 years. This age group accounted for 80% of people living with HIV in 2010, 77% in 2020, and is projected to account for 78% in 2030. Gender disparity is projected to become increasingly pronounced, with boys and men accounting for 55% of all people living with HIV in 2010, rising to 58% in 2020, and further increasing to 62% in 2030.

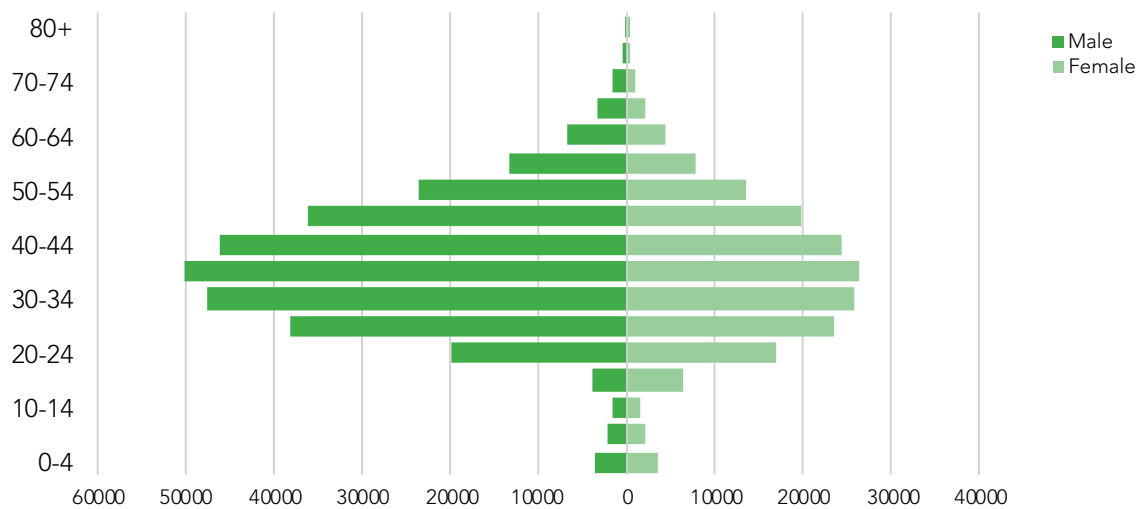
Age distribution of people living with HIV, 2010



Age distribution of people living with HIV, 2020



Age distribution of people living with HIV, 2030



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