

THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

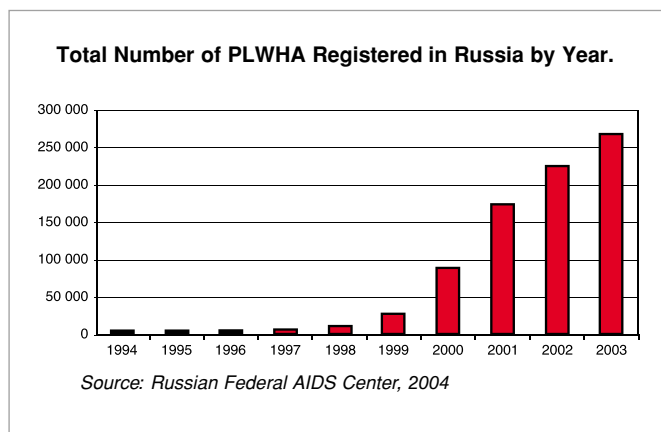
September 2004

Key Trends and Outlook:

Status

- According to the Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development, approximately 290,000 people were registered as living with HIV in Russia as of mid-July 2004. This figure includes 9,154 children.
- Most experts agree that the actual number of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) is higher. The estimates range from 800,000 (Russian Federal AIDS Center; UNAIDS) to 1.5 million (US National Intelligence Council, Eberstadt, Feshbach) Russian residents. This represents 1 to 2 percent of Russia's adult population.
- 99% of all registered cases of HIV in Russia were identified in the last five years; 65% have been reported in the last three years:

Figure 1: Dynamics of the HIV Epidemic



- Almost all people living with HIV/AIDS are of the most economically and reproductively active age; more than 70% of all people living with HIV/AIDS in Russia are young men aged 15–39.
- The HIV epidemic is spreading rapidly beyond high-risk groups of injecting drug users, sex workers, and men who have sex with men (MSM) into the general (non-drug using, heterosexual) population. In 2000, 96% of new HIV infections were attributed to injecting drug use. In 2002, only 76% of new HIV cases were ascribed to drug use (Russian Federal AIDS Center). Meanwhile, transmission through heterosex-

ual transmission rose from 3% in 2000 to over 12% in 2002 (Russian Ministry of Health and Social Development).

- According to official data from the Russian Federal AIDS Center, about 2,761 children were born to HIV-positive mothers in 2002, representing an increase of more than 144% over 2001. In 2003 this figure grew to 3,111 children. This is yet another indication that the epidemic has spread more widely into the general population.
- HIV has been officially registered in virtually all Russian regions. However, 70% of all registered cases are concentrated in the 10 most developed and populated regions.

Figure 2: Russian Regions with the Largest Number of Reported HIV Cases, 1987–2003

Top 10 Regions	Number of Cases
Moscow & Moscow region	42,763
St Petersburg & Leningrad region	29,269
Sverdlovsk region	22,597
Samara region	19,618
Irkutsk region	16,245
Chelyabinsk region	12,845
Orenburg region	11,587
Tyumen region	6,290
Kemerovo region	5,931
Saratov region	5,849

Projections for 2025*:

Mild Scenario (epidemic peaks at 2% prevalence by 2025 — a rate which many argue Russia has reached and surpassed):

- 5 million HIV cases;
- 3.4 million deaths from AIDS (average of 200,000 deaths per year, or nearly 17,000 deaths per month, starting in 2010);
- Life expectancy falls to 69 years;
- Working-age population is reduced by 15%.



Intermediate Scenario (epidemic peaks at 6% prevalence rate by 2025):

- 11 million HIV cases;
- 8.7 million deaths from AIDS (average of 510,000 deaths per year, or nearly 43,000 deaths per month, starting in 2010);
- Life expectancy falls to 62 years;
- Working-age population is reduced by 18%.

Severe Scenario (epidemic peaks at 10% prevalence rate by 2025):

- Over 19 million HIV cases;
- 12 million deaths from AIDS (average of 705,000 deaths per year, or nearly 60,000 deaths per month, starting in 2010);
- Life expectancy falls to 56 years;
- Working-age population is reduced by over 20%.

**Estimates based on research of Dr. Nicholas Eberstadt, Foreign Affairs, November–December 2002.*

Long-term Implications of the Epidemic:

Defense:

- Growing epidemic is likely to exert a negative impact on combat readiness of Russia's armed forces. Demographers and defense analysts indicate that by 2020 the country may only be able to field 600,000 — 700,000 conscripts (currently, the armed forces total about 1.1 million servicemen).
- During the last several draft campaigns, over 40% of all draftees were rejected due to inadequate mental or physical health. HIV/AIDS will cause additional strain on Russia's ability to field a sufficient army.
- Growing problems with recruitment and retainment may jeopardize Russia's efforts to fight terrorism and stem the inflow of drugs and illegal migrants across its southern borders.
- Further drop in the quality of Russian recruits calls into question the government's ability to complete defense and security reforms recently launched by President Putin.

Demographics:

- The Russian government's optimistic projections warn that by 2050, the country's population will fall by 30 percent from 143.6 million to 101.3 million.
- The worst-case scenario predicts that Russian population could drop to 77.2 million, a reduction of nearly 50 percent.
- The likely impact of HIV/AIDS is not factored into these projections. The growing burden of HIV/AIDS, which

disproportionately affects young men, is likely to hasten the rapid population decline.

Economy:

- Negative impact on the size and health of the labor force (people aged 15–30 account for over 80% of all infections).
- The epidemic is likely to exert a strong negative impact on productivity (increased sick leave, related medical conditions, reduced ability to perform, depression, anxiety of PLWHA and their family members and caregivers).
- According to the World Bank, if current HIV transmission trends persist, by 2010 Russia's GDP can be 4% lower than it would be in the absence of the virus; by 2020, the loss could rise to over 10%.
- Based on current prices for anti-retroviral AIDS treatment and official rates of infection, by the end of 2008, Russia will have to spend over 36 billion rubles (over \$1.2 billion) per year just to treat HIV/AIDS patients. In 2004, the Russian federal budget for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS is just \$4 million.
- HIV will limit Russia's economic prospects as resources are diverted to fund treatment and care for the sick. In the absence of a growing epidemic, these resources could otherwise be used to fuel economic growth and increase the nation's savings rate.
- As Russia races to catch up to major economies in Europe and North America, even minor reductions in productivity and rates of growth will reduce the ability of Russia's economy to compete with those in other industrialized nations.

The Government Response:

- The total amount of federal and regional funding available for 2002–2006 is \$97 million. Areas which require additional funding include preventive interventions targeted at high-risk groups and young people; combination treatment with antiretroviral drugs, and research and development.
- The World Bank has allocated a 5-year loan for a project to fight TB and HIV, with \$48 million earmarked for HIV/AIDS. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria has recently approved two grants, one for \$89 million (prevention) and one for \$120 million (treatment). The rapid success of negotiations between international donors and the federal government point to Russia's increased willingness to deal with this issue at both international and local levels.
- International support will have to be matched by national efforts to reform and modernize Russia's healthcare system, including training more health staff capable of prescribing antiretroviral drugs and treating HIV/AIDS patients.

