

AIDS deaths down a third since 2010: UN

July 16 2019



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HIV-related deaths last year fell to around 770,000—some 33 percent lower than in 2010—the United Nations said Tuesday, but warned that global efforts to eradicate the disease were stalling as funding dries up.

An estimated 37.9 million people now live with HIV—and a record 23.3

million of those have access to some [antiretroviral therapy](#) (ART), UNAIDS said in its [annual report](#).

Highlighting the enormous progress made since the height of the AIDS epidemic in the mid-1990s, the report showed that the number people dying from the disease fell from 800,000 in 2017 to 770,000 last year.

The figure was down by more than a third from 2010, when there were 1.2 million AIDS-related deaths.

But it also exposed weaknesses in the world's fight against AIDS.

While AIDS-related deaths in Africa, the continent most affected by the epidemic, have plummeted this decade, Eastern Europe has seen the death toll rise 5 percent and the Middle East and North Africa 9 percent.

Year-on-year, those same regions saw a 29-percent and 10-percent rise in new infections, respectively.

"We urgently need increased [political leadership](#) to end AIDS," said Gunilla Carlsson, UNAIDS executive director.

"Ending AIDS is possible if we focus on people not diseases... and take a [human rights](#)-based approach to reaching people most affected by HIV."

Decades of research have yet to yield a cure or vaccine for the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which has infected almost 80 million people and killed more than 35 million since the early 1980s.

The UN said that more than half of new HIV infections globally come from "key populations"—[intravenous drug users](#), gay men, transgender

people, sex workers and prisoners.

Despite this, the report said that under 50 percent of these at-risk populations were reached by HIV prevention services in more than half of countries.

Peter Ghys, UNAIDS strategic information director, said that the 16-percent reduction in new infections since 2010 was way behind the global aim of a 75-percent fall by next year.

"Incident reductions are just too slow to reach the target that has been set out," he told journalists.

Funding gap

Another vulnerable group is children, with more than 160,000 new HIV infections last year.

That is 41 percent lower than in 2010, but far off the mark countries set themselves of no more than 40,000 new cases worldwide each year by 2018.

There remains a pronounced disparity in new [infection](#) rates among young men and women, with young women 60 percent more likely to pick up HIV than young men of the same age.

The report also warned that a lack of political will coupled with decreasing finance risked undermining the progress made so far.

Last year \$19 billion (17 billion euros) was made available for AIDS response, more than \$7 billion short of the estimated \$26.2 billion needed by 2020.

Ghys said the funding drop was a result of "small reductions by different donor countries".

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Citation: AIDS deaths down a third since 2010: UN (2019, July 16) retrieved 14 July 2023 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-aids-deaths.html>

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