

CARIBBEAN

HIV in the Caribbean Region

The Caribbean is a region of sovereign states and territories located in around the Caribbean Sea. UNAIDS estimates that there are approximately 230,000 people living with HIV (PLWH) in the Region.¹ While three-quarters of the infections are resident to the two countries with the largest populations, Haiti and the Dominican Republic, some 35,000 PLWH live in the rest of the Region. Based on the most recent UNAIDS estimates, adult HIV prevalence rates of countries of the region range from unknown to 3.2 %. (Table 1)

Table 1: Adult HIV Prevalence Rates, Caribbean

Country ²	HIV Prevalence ³
Antigua and Barbuda	unknown
The Bahamas	3.2%
Barbados	0.8%
Belize	1.4%
Dominica	unknown
Grenada	unknown
Jamaica	1.7%
Trinidad and Tobago	1.4%
St. Kitts and Nevis	unknown
St. Lucia	unknown
St. Vincent & Grenadines	unknown
Suriname	1.1%
Country ⁴	
Dominican Republic	0.7%
Guyana	1.3%
Haiti	2.1%
Region Average	1.0%

The main route of HIV transmission in the Region is assumed to be heterosexual sex, likely associated with commercial sex.¹ Among female sex workers (FSW), HIV prevalence rates have been assessed at: 4% in the Dominican Republic, 9% in Jamaica, and 27% in Guyana.¹ Little research has been conducted among men who have sex with men (MSM), but some data suggest that up to 12% of reported HIV infections in the Caribbean are from unprotected sex between men.⁵ A study in Trinidad and Tobago found HIV prevalence of 20% among MSM, 25% of whom reported also having sex with women;⁶ an HIV prevalence of 32% was found among MSM in Jamaica.¹

Surveillance Data: A Regional Priority

A data-driven profile of the HIV epidemic is one of the public health priorities for countries in the Caribbean Region. National public health officials seek to understand drivers of their HIV epidemic, identify populations at greater risk for HIV, and be in a position to address the ongoing impact of the disease. Many countries are also interested in expanding their ability to monitor disease progression and clinical or programmatic outcomes through case monitoring, linkage to care and routine data analysis. To meet these data needs, countries of the Region are looking to implement second generation surveillance.

¹ UNAIDS Report on the Global Epidemic (2012)

² Countries supported by CDC Caribbean Regional Office

³ Among Adults, ages 15 to 49.

⁴ Countries supported by CDC In-Country Office

⁵ Caribbean Technical Expert Group (2004); Inciardi (2005)

⁶ Lee et.al., 2006

NASTAD in the Caribbean

NASTAD has been working with partner governments in the Caribbean Region for more than 10 years in focal areas related to leadership and management of national HIV programs, and quality collection and use of strategic information. Much focus has been on the development and reinforcement of two types of surveillance systems.

- Biological and Behavioral Surveillance

NASTAD has been involved in behavioral surveillance in the U.S. since 2002 when states began National HIV Behavioral Surveillance (NHBS) to monitor behaviors that put people at risk for HIV. In the Caribbean, NASTAD has shared and helped to adapt this methodology to the local needs and resources. Priority has been placed on understanding and engaging with the populations at greatest risk for HIV to be surveyed, and developing survey tools to best address data needs and service gaps.

- Case-based Surveillance

NASTAD has been a part of the evolving HIV surveillance system in the U.S. for 25 years. Leveraging knowledge and experience in data collection, data management, systems development, and data use, NASTAD has worked with public health leaders in the Region to evaluate and expand their systems to respond to key public health questions.

NASTAD is helping to ensure improved HIV-related strategic information in the Region by supporting capacity building and the development of integrated, second generation HIV surveillance systems that provide data about populations with or at higher-risk for HIV, including rates of HIV, knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to HIV, health seeking behavior, use of care and treatment resources, and size of the population. NASTAD's goal in this work is to determine how to grow surveillance with existing resources in each country, and to triangulate surveillance data with other available data sources. Work is underway in several countries in the region, and will continue through 2014.

This publication was supported by CoAg 1U2GPS001617 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



To date, NASTAD's focus has been on the following key activities:

Strategic Systems Planning

Using U.S. and international experience, NASTAD works with the local government to define the strategic information needs, to assess available resources, and to map viable and impactful systems that build on the strengths of current systems.

Knowledge Transfer for Sustainability

NASTAD participates as an invited partner to bring technical expertise, and support for development and implementation. In the Caribbean, all work is planned and put into action in close collaboration with the local Ministry of Health. NASTAD is committed to local sustainability and indigenous expertise, and works to ensure both through clearly defined training, targeted technical assistance, and side-by-side applied capacity building.

Training & Operational Support for Local Design and Ownership

To support knowledge transfer and capacity building, NASTAD provides formal and informal training related to HIV/AIDS surveillance, case-based surveillance, behavioral surveillance, and community engagement. Following data collection, NASTAD extends this to include training and support for data analysis, data presentation and summarization, and the use of data for program planning and decision making.

Legacy Product and Tool Development

Case-based and Bio-behavioral Surveillance related:

- Training curricula
- Planning and implementation guides
- Standard Operations Manuals
- Data collection tools
- Databases
- Summary data reports