



U.S. Agency for
International
Development

Bureau for
Global Health

COUNTRY PROFILE

HIV/AIDS

GUATEMALA

Guatemala's HIV/AIDS epidemic is growing especially among high prevalence populations, such as men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers. Transmission rates are higher in urban areas and along the major transportation corridors.

The Guatemalan epidemic is spread primarily through sexual activity, which accounts for 93 percent of all AIDS cases. In the last three years, no cases have been infected through blood or blood products (cumulative 1.72 percent). Mother-to-child transmission accounts for 4.46 percent of all cases. According to a 2001/2002 Ministry of Health multicentric study, there are no reported cases of injecting drug user infections.

The Central American HIV/AIDS Prevention Project estimated 44,754 Guatemalans between 15 and 49 years of age were living with HIV/AIDS as of 2001. UNAIDS estimates this number may be closer to 67,000 in the general population of more than 11.6 million people, yielding an adult infection rate of 1.0 percent.

According to a 2002 Ministry of Health report, a cumulative of 4,891 AIDS cases had been officially reported by November 2002, but experts predict underreporting could be as high as 50 percent. Although the first case of AIDS was identified in 1984, 47 percent of all cases to date were reported during the last three years. The country's AIDS case rate in 2002 was 42 per 100,000 people. However, it was nearly twice that in the most affected geographic areas.

The number of cases in women has increased in recent years to 1,292 (26 percent of all reported cases). A 2001/2002 Ministry of Health multicentric study reported the male and female ratio at 2.46/1 in 2001. According to a 2002 Ministry of Health report, 203 children under 14 years of age have been diagnosed with AIDS.

Estimated number people living with HIV/AIDS (2001)	67,000
Total Population (2001)	11,687,000
Adult HIV Prevalence (2001)	0.4 %
HIV-1 Seroprevalence in Urban Areas:	
Population most at risk:	
Commercial sex workers	4.7 %
Men who have sex with men	11.5%
Population not at risk:	
Pregnant women	0.4%

Source: MOH surveillance system



Map of Guatemala: PCL Map Collection, University of Texas

NATIONAL RESPONSE

The Government of Guatemala's political commitment to addressing HIV/AIDS is embodied in its health code, which assigns the Ministry of Health the responsibility for evaluating and supervising HIV/AIDS/STI prevention and control efforts, with cooperation from various sectors. A law declaring HIV/AIDS/STI a problem of "national urgency" designated 5 million quetzales (approximately US \$640,000) for the national HIV/AIDS/STI program. This law also contains provisions to protect the human rights of people living with

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HIV/AIDS, and requires the Ministry of Education to integrate HIV/AIDS/STI information into school curricula, beginning in the fifth grade.

The government has taken steps during the past several years to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic. A National Strategic Plan was produced for 1999–2003. An external evaluation midway through the implementation cycle led to revisions to the plan for 2002–2003. The revised plan has five strategic objectives:

- Improve coordination and involvement of other institutions;
- Strengthen the surveillance system;
- Strengthen training and education about HIV/AIDS;
- Promote prevention; and
- Improve treatment, care, and support of persons living with HIV/AIDS.

A social development law approved in 2001 guarantees access to reproductive health information, education, and services, including prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

Specific Ministry of Health activities include:

- Creating a national unit to provide care for people living with HIV/AIDS. The principal functions of this unit are to:
 - Initiate mother-to-child transmission prevention programs that provide diagnostic testing;
 - Standardize diagnostic systems;
 - Provide antiretroviral therapy;
 - Offer outpatient services; and
 - Implement information, education, and communication campaigns.
- Strengthening the HIV/AIDS surveillance system to assess the magnitude and patterns of HIV/AIDS and plan for appropriate prevention and care interventions.
- Creating a commission to improve the quality and availability of antiretrovirals at the lowest possible cost. The commission is working with other sectoral institutions, including the Social Security Institute, to increase the availability of antiretrovirals for people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Supporting organizations of people living with HIV/AIDS. These national organizations actively participate in Guatemala's HIV/AIDS strategic planning process. Several nongovernmental organizations provide HIV/AIDS services, including prevention, counseling and testing, and palliative treatment.

USAID SUPPORT

USAID/Guatemala has a relatively short history of bilateral involvement in HIV/AIDS. It began bilateral support in July 2001 and has obligated \$999,000 to date to strengthen the Ministry of Health's surveillance system for HIV/AIDS, and to carry out a male module on sexual behaviors as part of the 2002 National Maternal Child Health Survey.

The Mission recently designed a new program to begin in 2003 and continue through the new strategy period 2004–2008. This program emphasizes prevention among high prevalence populations, specifically commercial sex workers, men who have sex with men, and people living with HIV/AIDS, and links nongovernmental organizations and the Ministry of Health in mutually collaborative ways. Nongovernmental organizations will concentrate on expanding outreach to high prevalence populations in the capital and to other high prevalence departments. The Ministry of Health will improve and expand its sexually transmitted infection treatment and voluntary counseling and testing services to receive individuals referred by nongovernmental organizations and to attract more commercial sex workers and men who have sex with men to use the services.

The USAID/Guatemala Central American Regional Program has supported HIV/AIDS activities since 1997 and allocated \$3.7 million for regional HIV/AIDS activities in 2001. Some of these funds were used to support activities in Guatemala. The most important of these were:

- Condom social marketing;
- Behavior change communication in high-risk populations;
- Technical assistance to strengthen local capacity to participate in policy and advocacy activities; and
- Strengthening nongovernmental organizations to reach youth, maids, commercial sex workers, female factory workers, and the military.

Capacity building

The USAID regional program works to strengthen the capacity of Central American organizations to deliver HIV/AIDS services and information through training and targeted technical assistance. The program facilitates the exchange of experiences, information, skills, and resources across countries and provides assistance for strategic alliance building and proactive information dissemination for advocacy and policy dialogue.

Condoms

USAID/Guatemala provides no-logo condoms that are distributed through the Ministry of Health, Social Security, and the private sector. The condom social marketing component of the regional program emphasizes behavior change in at-risk populations and improved condom access and availability through affordable pricing and distribution through multiple channels and outlets.

Monitoring and evaluation

In 2001, USAID/Guatemala, through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, assisted the Ministry of Health to establish a national HIV/AIDS surveillance system to measure the effect of national prevention and mitigation programs. Specific aspects of the surveillance system include case reporting, diagnostic algorithms, sentinel surveillance, and special studies.

Important Links and Contacts

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USAID HIV/AIDS Web site, Guatemala:
http://www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/countries/lac/guatemala.html

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For more information, see www.usaid.gov/pop/aids or www.synergyaids.com.

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