

Global AIDS Monitoring 2018: Ukraine

Summary

Epidemiological background Ukraine bears the second-largest HIV epidemic in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. With the estimated 240,750 PLHIV in 2018 (Spectrum) Ukraine registered 3,448 AIDS related deaths and 15,787 newly diagnosed HIV cases.

Ukraine's HIV epidemic is mixed, with around 0.9-1% of the general population living with HIV and significantly higher HIV prevalence among certain population groups. The epidemic is concentrated in key populations with prevalence of 22.6% among PWID, 5.2% among sex workers (SW), and 7.5% among men who have sex with men (MSM) (IBBS 2017). When the epidemic began in Ukraine, it mainly affected people – predominantly men – who inject drugs. But since 2008, sexual transmission of HIV has been driving the epidemic, with sexual partners of people from key populations particularly at risk. Among 15,787 newly diagnosed HIV cases 75.4% accounts for sexual and 24% for parenteral mode of transmission.

Ukraine's HIV epidemic remains geographically concentrated in seven administrative regions, six of which are located in the South and East account for ~50% of the estimated cases but represent only 31% of the country's population.

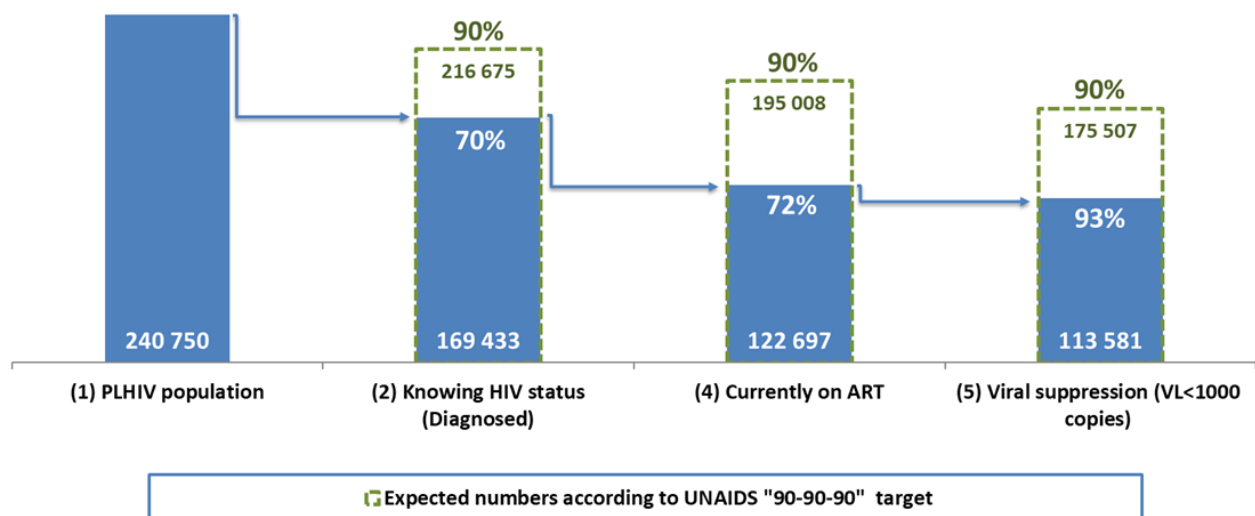
Government and civil society have generally been proactive in responding to HIV and there has been some success in rolling out antiretroviral treatment (ART) and harm reduction programmes. Recent gains are being threatened by unrest in the regions of Donetsk, Luhansk and Crimea which continues to impact on access to services.

Up to 3.1 million people have been directly affected by the conflict, while 1.36 million are internally displaced. Risk of ART interruption; disruption of harm reduction services, preventing mother-to-child transmission services and paediatric treatment; sexual violence, are all undermining the impact of Ukraine's national HIV response in these areas, which were already disproportionately affected by the epidemic.

HIV Service Cascade for PLHIV, 2018

In 2017, Ukraine committed to the UNAIDS 90-90-90 Fast-Track targets. Progress as of the end of 2018 was that 70% of people living with HIV were aware of their status (169,433 people), of whom 72% were on treatment. Of those on treatment, 93% were virally suppressed. Overall, this equates to 51% of all people living with HIV in Ukraine on treatment (122,697 people) and 47% being virally suppressed.

Cross-sectional HIV cascade: Ukraine, 2018



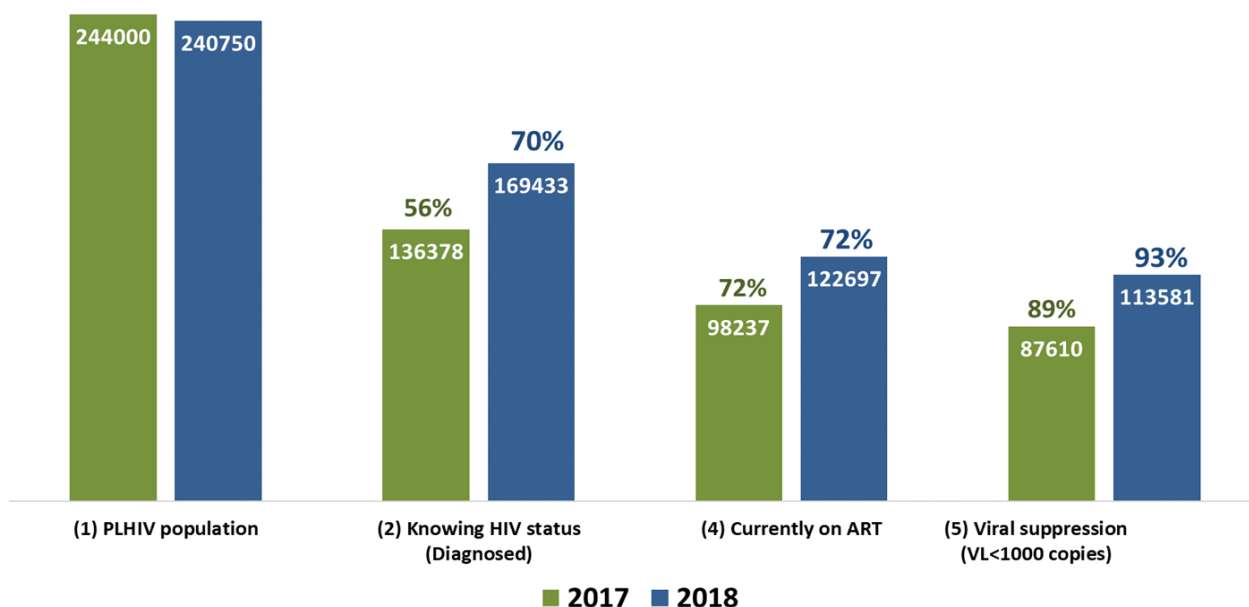
This data is from whole territory of Ukraine (government-controlled and nongovernment-controlled territories). The data was collected from the official statistical reports for 25 regions of Ukraine (government-

controlled territory), and from programme report of All-Ukrainian Network of PLWH, who has the Global Fund funded project on non-government-controlled territories of Ukraine.

The number of PLHIV receiving ART at nongovernment-controlled territories is 20265. It includes 6,501 people on ART in AR Crimea, 1,406 in the city of Sevastopol, and 10,616 in nongovernment-controlled territories of Donetsk and 1,742 in Luhansk oblasts.

Compared to the 2017, Ukraine managed to achieve a substantial success in reaching the goals of 90-90-90 in 2018. The greatest success is achieved in the effectiveness of HIV treatment (third 90). In 2018 93% of people on ART were virally suppressed (compared to 89% in 2017). This equates to 47.2% being virally suppressed of all people living with HIV in Ukraine (compared to only 35.9% in 2017).

Progress towards achieving goals 90-90-90. Comparison 2017-2018

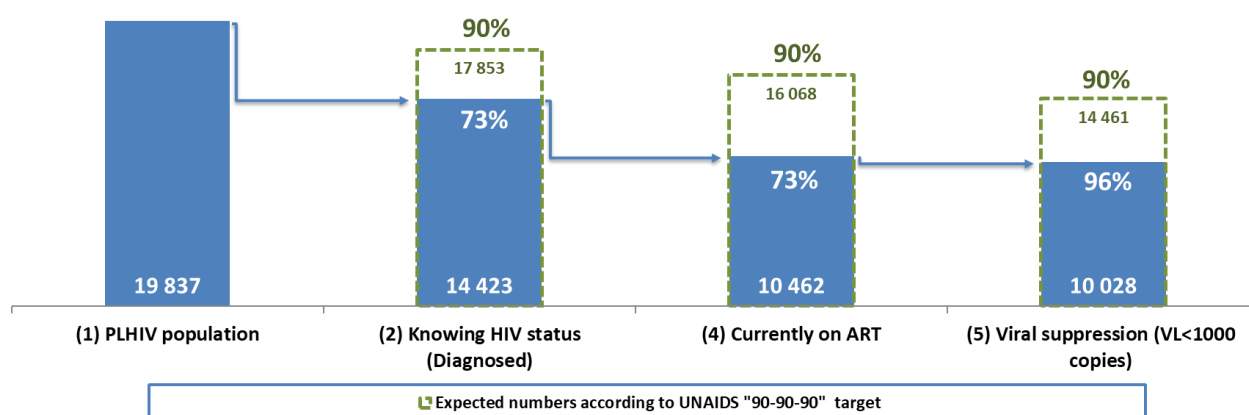


Fast Track Cities

Kyiv (2016) and Odessa (2017) signed the Paris Declaration on Fast Track Cities initiative.

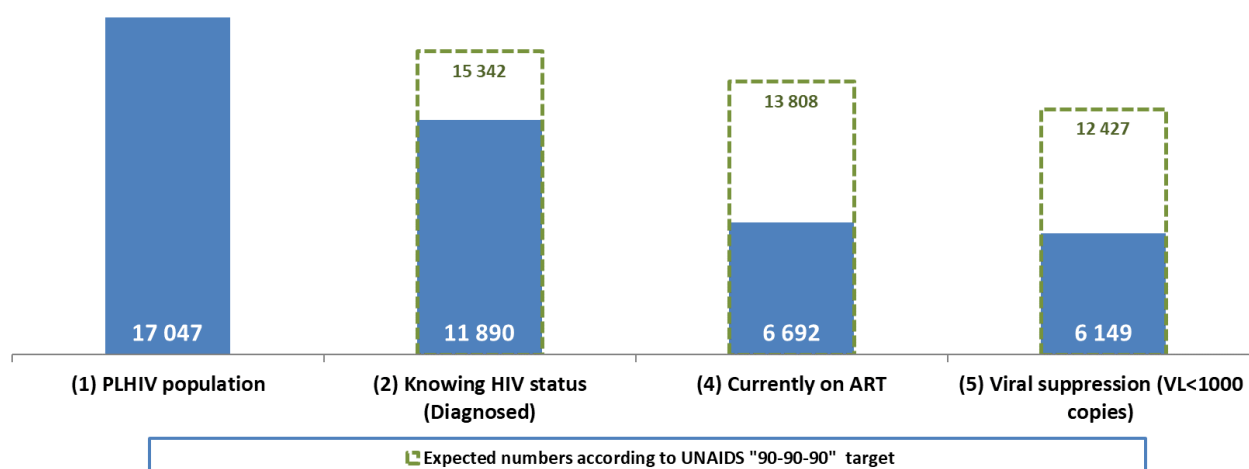
In the city of Kyiv, progress as of the end of 2018 there was 73% of people living with HIV were aware of their status (14,433 people), of whom 73% were on treatment. Of those on treatment, 96% were virally suppressed. Overall, this equates to 53% of all people living with HIV in Kyiv on treatment (10,028 people) and 51% being virally suppressed.

Cross-sectional HIV cascade: Kyiv, 2018



In the city of Odesa, progress as of the end of 2018 there was 70% of people living with HIV were aware of their status (11,890 people), of whom 56% were on treatment. Of those on treatment, 92% were virally suppressed. Overall, this equates to 39% of all people living with HIV in Odesa on treatment (6,692 people) and 36% being virally suppressed.

Cross-sectional HIV cascade: Odesa, 2018



Key affected populations and HIV in Ukraine

It is estimated that 1.4% of the adult population inject drugs. This equates to approximately 350,300 people, of whom 75% are men and 25% are women. In 2018, injecting drug use accounted for around 24% of all new register HIV infections in Ukraine (3,776 people). HIV prevalence among people who inject drugs was estimated at 22.6% (IBBS 2017). In 2018, 59% of people who inject drugs were estimated to be able to access HIV prevention services.

In 2018, there were an estimated 86,600 female sex workers in Ukraine, with an HIV prevalence of 5.2%. In 2018, 49% of sex workers were estimated to have access to HIV prevention services

Recent estimates suggest that there are around 179,400 men who have sex with men in Ukraine. The HIV prevalence in this group was estimated at 7.5%. In 2018, 25% of men who have sex with men were estimated to have access to HIV prevention services.

In 2018 HIV prevention services for transgender were launched within GFATM supported project with national wide coverage of 1,049 people.

Prisoners are another group at particular risk of HIV. The HIV prevalence in prisons is officially estimated at 3.3%, In 2018, 83% of prisoners living with HIV were receiving ART (3,200 people).

HIV testing and counselling (HTC) in Ukraine

In 2018, 2.4 million people received HIV testing and counselling (HTC). Although this equated to 5.8% of Ukraine's population, more than 51% of those tested were pregnant women and blood donors. Usage of rapid tests (RT) is increasing annually; the number of persons tested with RT in 2018 accounted of one fifth of the total number of persons received HTS — 26,0%, excluding blood donors and pregnant women— 40,3%.

The statistics shows that people are often diagnosed at a late stage of infection. Ukraine is dealing with this challenge through the intensification of HIV testing. In 2018 there was launched a large-scale project to accelerate HIV / AIDS efforts - HealthLink, which covered 12 regions of Ukraine, where the burden of the epidemic is the highest.

There were developed new protocols for HIV testing and treatment, which comply with the current WHO guidelines. The HIV testing algorithm was changed, involving primary care physicians for testing, Now HIV screening test is included into the basic primary health care package.

Various approaches are being implemented to increase HIV testing uptake. Ukraine implements assisted HIV self-testing for key population groups.

PEPFAR funded project “ACCESS PRO” is working on Implementation and dissemination of effective models and approaches for the identification of people who live with HIV (testing on the basis of non-specialized medical institutions, testing partners of people who have been diagnosed with HIV) and involving them in treatment. The project is also piloting the implementation of the index HIV testing model.

HIV prevention programmes in Ukraine

Ukraine which adopted public health approach to counter epidemics is developing a new unified HIV/TB/Hepatitis strategy up to 2030 with Fast Track targets. The strategy takes a patient-oriented, combination approach that focuses on prevention programmes targeted at key populations while expanding access to treatment. Ukraine uses ambitious global targets for its national strategy. Methodological framework is developed to facilitate the Process of transition of HIV prevention and care&support services from GFATM to domestic funding.

Ukraine has been providing opioid substitution therapy (OST) on a relatively small scale since 2004. Since its inception, OST programming has been largely funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. However, in 2017, the Global Fund significantly reduced its financial support for Ukraine, and in 2018 the Ukrainian government took over full financial support of its OST programme, making it the largest of its kind in eastern Europe and central Asia. In 2018, the government committed to fund access to OST for over 11,385 people at 211 healthcare facilities.

Ukraine has been scaling up its needle and syringe programme (NSP) since 2012. National policy stipulates that NSP services should be free of charge and ‘low-threshold’, meaning that people are not required to meet specific criteria in order to receive injecting equipment. In 2018, there were 2,380 NSP sites in Ukraine across 27 regions. The people who inject drugs receive an average of 57 clean syringes per year a month. As 2017 Integrated Bio-Behavioural Survey (IBBS) among PWID in Ukraine suggests that 97% of respondents used sterile injecting equipment at last use we may assume that long lasting prevention national wide programme resulted in behaviour change of the most at-risk drug users, who purchase sterile syringes themselves additionally to prevention package.

Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). As of 2018, access to pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), a course of HIV drugs taken by HIV-negative people to reduce their risk of HIV infection, was limited to just 200 people in Ukraine. This includes a two-year pilot project (2017-2019) involving 100 men who have sex with men and transgender people. The project is implemented by International Charitable Foundation “Alliance for Public Health” and funded by PEPFAR. The pilot will potentially contribute to the development of a sustainable PrEP delivery model for these groups.

Preventing mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT). In 2018, based on the data from early HIV diagnostic rate of MTCT was 1.6% (38 HIV positive children). HIV testing coverage among pregnancy women is 99.5%; 60% of them had known their status before pregnancy. According to Option “B+” 96.2% of pregnant living with HIV were receiving three-component ART; 92.3% of them continue ART after childbirth. Almost all children, who were born by HIV-positive women, are covered by ARV prophylaxis (98.7%) and are bottle-fed (99.6%). In 2018, on a way towards validation of elimination of MTCT Ukraine created the National Task Force for validation of EMTCT and implemented the PMTCT database has begun for improving the quality of data on PMTCT.

Antiretroviral treatment (ART) availability in Ukraine

In 2018, 51% of all people living with HIV in Ukraine is on ART (122 697 people).

In 2015, Ukraine updated its ART guidelines to introduce Test and Start approach, with a specific focus on starting people from key population groups onto ART at any CD4 count and prioritising all people living with HIV with a CD4 count of less than 500.

Adherence to treatment is relatively high. In 2018, 85% of adults and children were known to be on ART 12 months after starting it.

2018 has been marked by widespread introduction of standardized ART regimens (which allows the doctor and patient to be prepared for the most common adverse reactions caused by ARV) and increase in proportion of the latest HIV treatment regimens with the use of Dolutegravir.

HIV and tuberculosis (TB) in Ukraine

The HIV/TB co-infection situation remains grave. In 2018, tuberculosis was the cause of around half (49%) of all AIDS-related deaths. The country also carries a high burden of TB and is ranked fourth in the world for multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB).

Ukraine has the highest rate of HIV/TB co-infection, and the second largest absolute number of incident cases in the region. In 2018, among 15,787 newly diagnosed HIV cases 22% (3480 people) accounts were co-infected with TB and 60,6% (9562 people) covered by TB prevention treatment.

Funding for HIV in Ukraine

Ukraine funds the majority of its HIV response domestically and has been increasing its investment significantly, year-on-year. In 2018, international funding for Ukraine's HIV response stood at US \$25.18 million, compared to domestic funding of US \$40.96 million.

Although Ukraine does not appear on the Global Fund's list of countries projected to transition from its support by 2025, Ukraine's funding request in 2017 included plans for the government to assume a greater share of the responsibility for providing services. In the Global Fund's new grant cycle, which began in January 2018, Ukraine plans to gradually transition Community-based HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care and Support Program (activities and procurements) from NGOs to the nationally run Public Health Centre by 20% in 2018, 50% in 2019 and 80% in 2020.