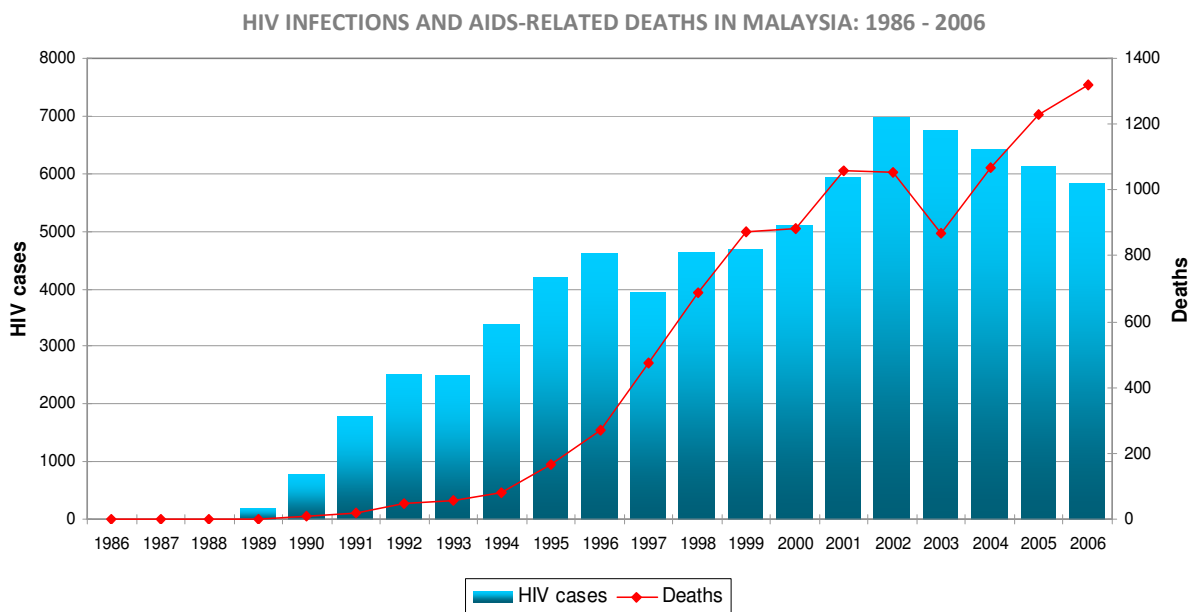


HIV AND AIDS IN MALAYSIA

Background

- The first case of HIV infection diagnosed in Malaysia was reported in 1986.
- According to Ministry of Health (MOH) statistics as at end December 2008:
 - 84,630 people have tested HIV-positive in Malaysia since 1986
 - 11,234 people have died of AIDS since 1988
 - An average of 10 cases reported each day in 2008
- Low levels of understanding and misconception that HIV and AIDS relates only to certain “high-risk” groups leads some people to continue to practice unsafe behaviours and deny the need to undergo a HIV test. As such, it is widely accepted that the actual figures could be 2-3 times the official number of infections, which means there is a possibility that 1 in every 125 people in Malaysia is HIV-positive.
- WHO classifies Malaysia as having a concentrated HIV epidemic as prevalence is less than 1% in the general population.



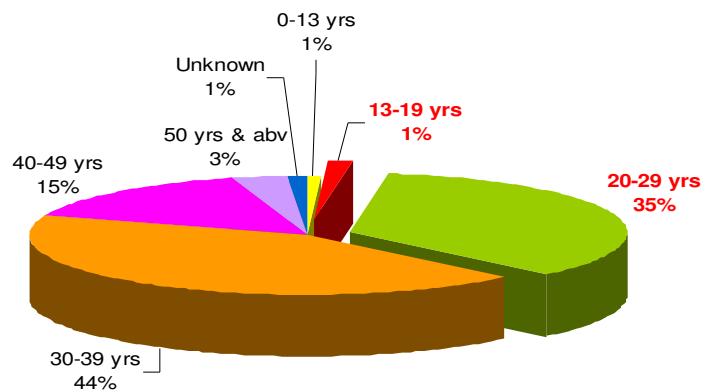
Modes of HIV Transmission

- The epidemic in Malaysia is dominated by [injecting drug users](#), mainly male who make up about 73% of all cases of HIV and AIDS.
- In 2006, the National Drug Agency reported that 300,241 drug users were recorded for 1988 – 2006, approximately 1.1% of Malaysia’s population. 2006 MOH statistics revealed that 55,534 of the detected 180,000 injecting drug users in the country had already been infected with HIV.
- Although drug use appears to be the main mode of transmission fueling the epidemic in Malaysia, recent data show that [heterosexual transmission](#) is on the rise, with newly diagnosed cases increasing from 5% in 1990 to 27% of new reported cases in 2008.

HIV AND AIDS IN MALAYSIA

Girls, Women and HIV

- The proportion of women reported with HIV has increased dramatically in the last decade :
 - In 1990, women made up 1% of new reported infections that year, while in 1996, only 4% of new reported infections were amongst women and girls. The number tripled by end 2008 where women accounted for 19% of new reported infections.
 - According to MOH, 1 in 6 new reported cases in 2008 was a woman as compared to 1 in 86 cases in 1990.
 - More **housewives** are testing HIV-positive than sex workers in Malaysia. The rate is between four to five times more than sex workers.
- One factor in this rise may be the increased coverage and accessibility of HIV testing for women.



Children

- According to MOH statistics, children below the age of 13 made up for 1.3 of new infections in 2008. 0.92% of total reported cases. The low numbers of children infected with HIV can be attributed to the Government's **Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission** program initiated in 1988.
- Under the program, women found to be HIV-positive are given post-test counselling and free anti-retroviral treatment. Pregnant women who are HIV-positive are given drugs throughout the antenatal and intra-partum period. They are also eligible for free Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART) from the Government.
- Infants are given drugs for the first 6 weeks of life. The HIV antibody test is done on infants at regular intervals until they are confirmed negative at 2 years of age.

Teens and Young People

- MOH data reveal that 2% of new infections in 2008 was amongst those 13 – 19 years old, while another 25% were amongst young adults between the ages of 20 – 29 years old.
- Because of **denial to test**, most people who report HIV-positive before the age of 30 were in all likelihood infected in their twenties and sometimes even during their teens due the length of time for HIV to weaken the immune system and for opportunistic infections to occur.

HIV AND AIDS IN MALAYSIA

MALAYSIA'S RESPONSE

Government's Prevention and Control Objectives

- to prevent HIV transmission and to control its spread
- to reduce the morbidity and suffering associated with the infection
- to mobilise Government and Non-Governmental resources to achieve the above objectives
- to promote and enhance international collaboration and cooperation

Government Policies on HIV and AIDS

- Notification of HIV / AIDS / Death
- Partner Notification
- Screening For HIV
- Testing
- Treatment for HIV and AIDS
- Provision of Medical Care and Counseling Services
- Contact Tracing
- Universal Precaution
- Health Education

National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS 2006-2010

- The Government's Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, developed with support from UNICEF, aims to reduce the number of HIV infections amongst:
 - young people aged 15-24 years old
 - women and adults aged 25-49 years old
 - injecting drug users
 - infants born to HIV-positive mothers
 - marginalised populations (sex workers, transsexuals and men who have sex with men (MSM)).
- The Plan also aims to increase the survival and quality of life of those living with HIV and AIDS.
- Its six main strategies are:
 1. Strengthening Leadership and Advocacy
 2. Training and Capacity Enhancement
 3. Reducing HIV vulnerability among Injecting Drug Users (IDUs) and their Partners
 4. Reducing HIV vulnerability among Women, Young people and Children
 5. Reducing HIV vulnerability among marginalised and vulnerable groups
 6. Improving Access to Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support

HIV AND AIDS IN MALAYSIA

Screening

- AIDS was gazetted as a notifiable disease in 1985. Under the Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases Act 1988, all forms of HIV infections must be notified to the nearest district health authority.
- The detection of HIV infection in Malaysia may be affected by the policy on HIV screening which requires testing for 9 groups:
 1. Women receiving antenatal care in Government facilities
 2. Blood donors
 3. Migrant workers
 4. Inmates of rehabilitation centres
 5. Prison inmates with high risk behaviours (drug users, drug dealers, sex workers)
 6. Confirmed TB cases
 7. Cases with Sexually Transmitted Infections
 8. Patients with suspected clinical symptoms
 9. Traced contacts of HIV infected persons
 10. Muslims couples intending to get married
- The MOH acknowledges the significant limitations of current surveillance systems. There are plans to improve both sero- and behavioural surveillance.

Safe Blood

- A safe blood program was proposed in early 1986.
- By 2003, 52 designated screening centres in all general hospitals and most district hospitals throughout the country routinely screen all donated blood for HIV.

Prevention of Mother to Child Program

- The PMCT program was initiated by the MOH in 1998.
- HIV testing is carried out on all women attending Government antenatal clinics.
- Although not a universal practice, private practitioners are encouraged to carry out HIV testing on antenatal patients using private facilities.
- Women found to be HIV-positive through the Government program are given post-test counselling and free anti-retroviral treatment.
- Drugs are given throughout the antenatal and intra-partum period.
- Infants are given drugs for the first 6 weeks of life. The HIV antibody test is done on infants at regular intervals until they are confirmed negative at 2 years of age.
- Follow-up is carried out on HIV-positive mothers who are also advised not to breastfeed their infants.

HIV AND AIDS IN MALAYSIA

HIV Management at Primary Health Care Centres

- The program was initiated by the MOH in 2000 with 30 clinics.
- Currently, there are some 250 clinics throughout the country.
- Activities include risk assessment, voluntary counseling and testing, medical examination, prophylaxis as well as referrals and follow-ups.

Harm Reduction Program

- The Government introduced a harm reduction program in 2006 in response to the rising numbers of HIV cases amongst Injecting Drug Users.
- The harm reduction program has three pillars:
 - **Supply reduction:** Law enforcement
 - **Harm reduction:** drug substitution therapy using methadone; distribution of free needles and condoms, outreach services and counseling
 - **Demand reduction:** Youth education and abstinence related programs
- The Harm Reduction Working Group (MAC) has conducted training workshops for police, anti-narcotic officers, and outreach workers.
- The pilot program targets to involve 12,000 drug users in 2008 at 12 introducing and drop-in-centres as well 62 outreach points. NGOs are engaged to support the program. The program aims to save 90,000 Malaysians in the next 10 years from being infected with HIV.

Treatment

- The Government provides FREE Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapy (HAART), including CD4 and viral load tests to 5 groups :
 1. HIV-positive children
 2. Persons who acquire infection in Malaysia through contaminated blood and blood products
 3. Health care workers infected through occupational exposure
 4. Women who are detected to be HIV-positive through the MOH antenatal surveillance program and who undergo the MOH PMCT program.
 5. Civil Servants
- Other PLWAs who do not fall into the categories but who fulfil the medical criteria for HAART get are eligible for free first line treatment.
- For those who cannot go on first line treatment, they get two ARVs sponsored by the Government. This initiative has reduced the costs of treatment to the patient by approximately 85% - 90%.
- Malaysia has been able to expand its treatment sponsorship through the use of generic ARVs and 3-in-1 ARVs.