

Public Awareness of AIDS in the Federal Republic of Germany 2008

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour
relating to protection against AIDS

A repeat survey by the
Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), Cologne

Summary

May 2009

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Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, the AIDS education campaign entitled "Don't give AIDS a chance" has been informing the population of the Federal Republic of Germany about the disease AIDS and other infection risks (www.gib-aids-keine-chance.de).

The principal goal of the campaign is to prevent the further spread of HIV and AIDS. To do so, it is first necessary to achieve a high level of information among the public regarding infection risks, non-risks and possibilities for protection in relation to HIV/AIDS and other STDs, and to maintain this level in the long term. The second objective of the campaign is to help encourage both the motivation to use protection and protective behaviour in risky sexual situations. The third essential concern is to create and stabilise a social climate that is opposed to the stigmatisation and isolation of people with HIV and AIDS.

Since 1987, the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) has been conducting an annual survey entitled "Public Awareness of AIDS" to examine whether and to what extent these goals are being achieved.

The individual issues investigated are as follows:

- How the perception of HIV and AIDS by the public is changing,
- Whether HIV and AIDS are still perceived as being a threat to health,
- Whether and to what extent the public is reached by the campaign's various education measures and makes use of the information offerings,
- Whether the level of the knowledge necessary for AIDS prevention is being maintained,
- The extent to which people protect themselves against the HI virus by using condoms - particularly including groups of the population that demonstrate relatively risk sexual behaviour, such as 16 to 44 year-old singles or people having several sex partners, and
- Whether people with HIV and AIDS are isolated in the population, or regarded as people in need of attention and assistance.

The present Summary contains the most important results of the repeat survey conducted at the end of 2008. Key indicators are presented in the form of trends.

Details of the study: Goals and methods

Goals: Evaluation of the AIDS education campaign by means of a long-term study of the changes in information and communication behaviour, and in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour in relation to AIDS

Study method: Annual representative surveys of the population over the age of 16 in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1987 (including the new Federal Länder since 1994)

Data acquisition method: Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI)

Selection procedure: Multi-stage random sample (based on the ADM telephone sample system, random selection of persons in the household); disproportionately stratified sampling plan as regards age (16 to 44 year-olds: 5,978 cases)

Sample size:

	n	%	%
	unweighted	unweighted	weighted
Total	7,001	100	100
Western Germany	5,904	84	83
Eastern Germany	1,097	16	17
Men	3,044	45	48
Women	3,957	55	52
Singles under the age of 45	3,426	49	21
Men	1,709	50	55
Women	1,717	50	45
16 to 20 year-olds	2,006	29	8

Survey period: October to December 2008

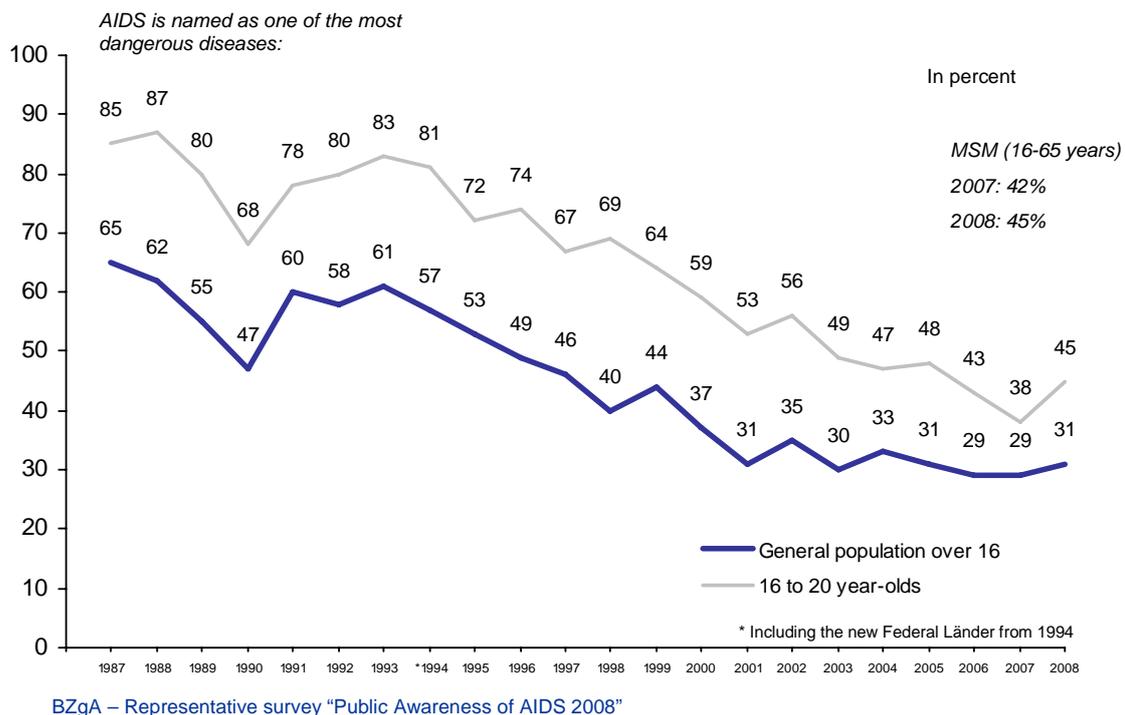
Data acquisition: forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen mbH, Berlin/Dortmund

Concept development, analysis, reporting: Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA), Cologne, Section 2-25, Dr. Ursula von Rügen and Jürgen Töppich

Perception of the disease AIDS by the public

How firmly the subject of HIV and AIDS is still rooted in the public's awareness is regularly examined by means of the open question as to which diseases the public perceive as being the most dangerous. The importance of AIDS in the public's awareness has been subject to major changes since the end of the 1980s. On the whole, there has been a substantial decline in the perception of AIDS as being one of the most dangerous diseases.

Fig. 1 Perception of the disease AIDS
General population over the age of 16 (16 to 20 year-olds)



When the study began in 1987, roughly two-thirds (65 percent) of the general population over the age of 16 rated AIDS as being one of the most dangerous diseases (Fig. 1). While the feeling of being threatened by the disease declined rapidly at the start, the perception of AIDS as a dangerous disease increased again in the early 1990s. Perception of the dangerous nature of AIDS has been declining steadily since 1993. In 2008, roughly one-third of the population (31 percent) considered AIDS to be one of the most dangerous diseases. In comparison, 64 percent named cancer, and 38 percent cardiovascular diseases, as being among the most dangerous diseases.

From the start of the survey, the disease AIDS has been perceived as being more dangerous by 16 to 20 year-old young people than by the population as a whole. In 1987, 85 percent of the respondents in this age group considered AIDS to be one of the most dangerous diseases of our day. The general perception of a threat has also been declining in this age group up to the present. In 2008, more young people (45 percent) again perceived AIDS as being one of the most dangerous diseases. Cancer is named equally often, whereas only 8 percent of the

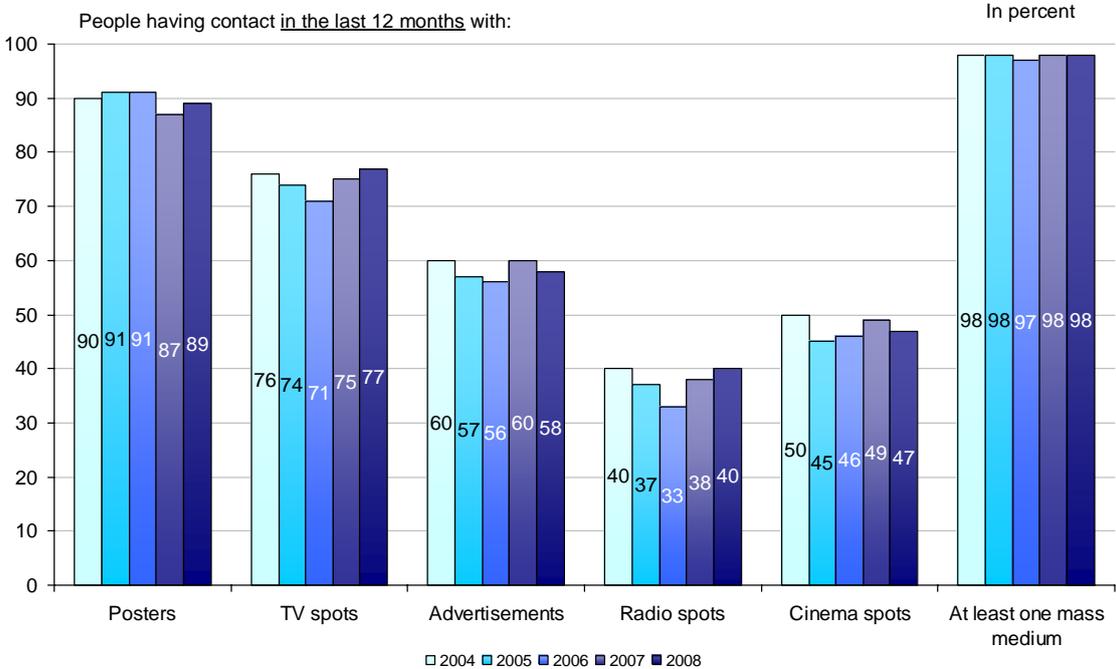
respondents in this age group consider cardiovascular diseases to be among the most dangerous diseases. As in the case of young people, 45 percent of men who have sex with men (MSM) also saw AIDS as being one of the most dangerous diseases in 2008.

Utilisation of media of the AIDS education campaign

One central goal of the "Don't give AIDS a chance" AIDS education campaign is to establish and maintain a high level of knowledge among the public regarding transmission risks and "non-risks". This presupposes that the public is extensively reached by the education measures. Thus, one of the essential concerns of the repeat "Public Awareness of AIDS" survey is the annual investigation of the extent to which the overall population in Germany, and specific subgroups of the population, are reached by the offerings of the AIDS education campaign. The study examines the question as to which media and measures are utilised by how many people.

In the "Public Awareness of AIDS" study, 16 to 44 year-old singles constitute a group whose lifestyle is characterised by seeking and choosing a partner and whose risk of contracting HIV and STIs is thus potentially higher. Figures 2 and 3 document the current media reach values for this important subgroup in HIV prevention.

Fig. 2 Reaches of mass-media AIDS education
16 to 44 year-old singles



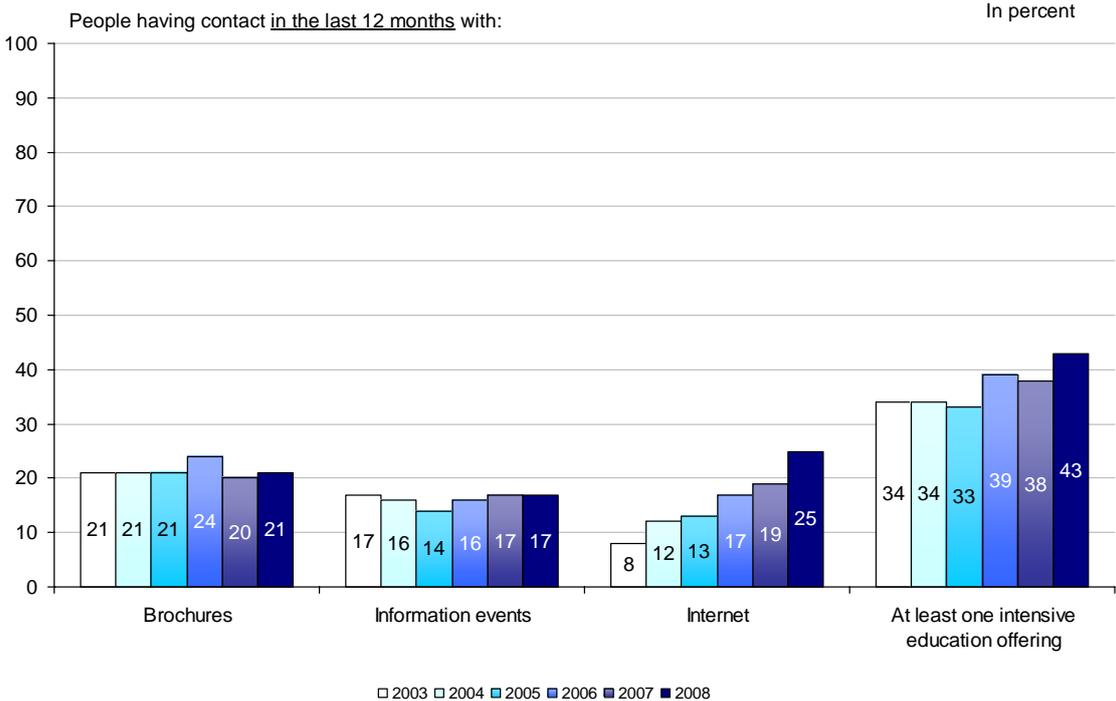
BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2008"

Figure 2 shows the reaches of the mass-media forms of AIDS education, i.e. the percentages of younger singles who perceived the campaign media in the period of the last 12 months. The media in question are the "mach's mit" ("join in") billboard posters (featuring vegetable and fruit condom motifs from 2006 to 2008), the TV spots, the cinema spots and the radio spots, as well as advertisements in newspapers, magazines or journals.

The "mach's mit" posters have the greatest reach of all the media. 89 percent of the 16 to 44 year-old singles saw them in the last 12 months before the survey. Second place in the reach rankings is taken by the TV spots: 77 percent can recall having seen one of these spots on one or more occasions in the last 12 months. The printed advertisements take third place with 58 percent, followed by the cinema spots with 47 percent and the radio spots with 40 percent.

On the whole, it can be demonstrated that, since 2003, virtually all 16 to 44 year-old singles have been reached to a stable degree by the mass-media elements of the campaign. In 2008, 98 stated that they had perceived at least one of the education media in question in the last 12 months.

Fig. 3 Reaches of intensive AIDS education
16 to 44 year-old singles



BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2008"

The offerings providing more intensive AIDS education encompass brochures, information events and information off the Internet. These media give people the opportunity to obtain more detailed and comprehensive information about AIDS. Since the study of these media calls for active, and thus more time-consuming, access, the reaches of these media are far smaller than those of the mass-media AIDS education measures.

The highest reaches with offerings of intensive AIDS education are nowadays achieved via the Internet. While just 8 percent of the 16 to 44 year-old singles had informed themselves about the subject of HIV and AIDS on the Internet in the past 12 months in 2003, the figure had risen to one-quarter (25 percent) in 2008. During the same period, one-fifth of the respondents in this group (21 percent) read HIV/AIDS education brochures, while 17 percent made use of AIDS prevention based on personal communication in the form of presentations and information events regarding HIV and AIDS. Utilisation of these opportunities for obtaining educational information on AIDS has remained at a roughly constant level in recent years.

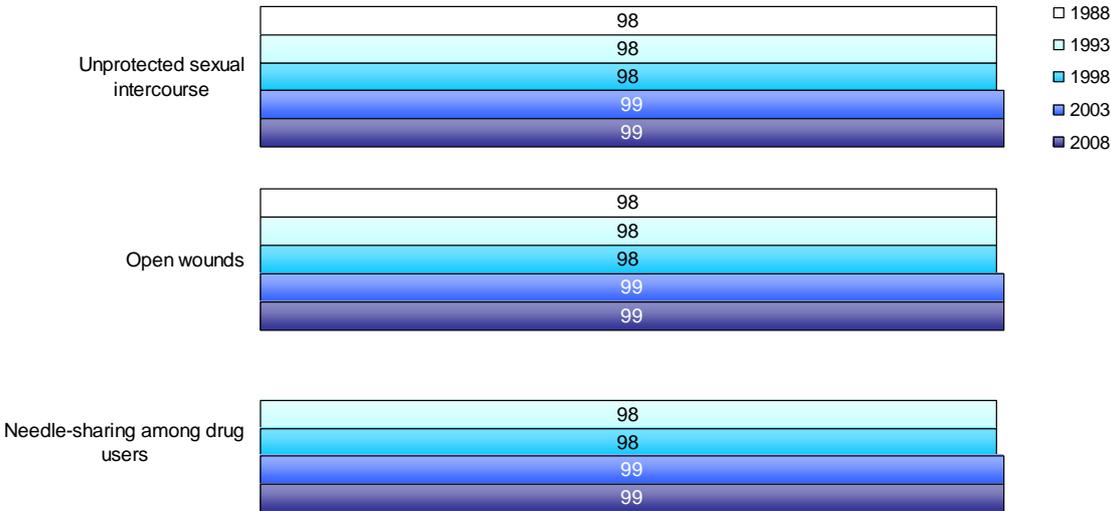
In 2008, roughly half of the target subgroup of 16 to 44 year-old singles had, referred to the last 12 months, had contact with at least one medium for more intensive study of the subject of HIV and AIDS (brochures, information events or Internet). In this context, the increase in recent years is exclusively attributable to the Internet.

Knowledge regarding HIV and AIDS

Knowledge as regards risky situations, and also the transmission routes of the HI virus, is a fundamental prerequisite for personal protective behaviour. Since the very beginning of AIDS education, almost the entire population in Germany has had the basic knowledge required for protection against HIV and AIDS, i.e. that a risk of infection exists in the event of unprotected sexual contacts, "needle-sharing" and blood-to-blood contact.

Fig. 4 Knowledge of how HIV is transmitted
General population over the age of 16

In percent



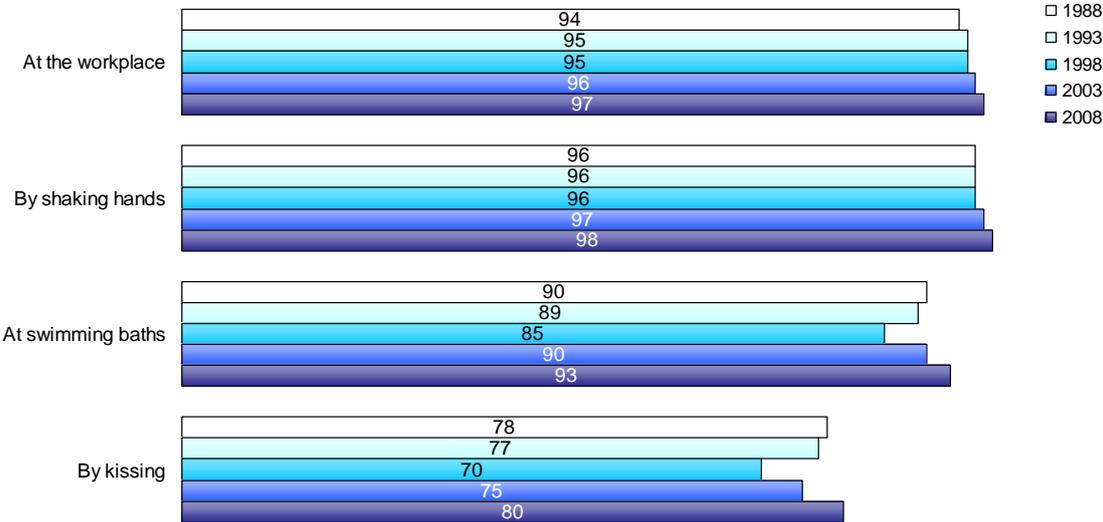
BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2008"

Certainty regarding the situations in which there is no risk of infection is an important prerequisite for living together with people with HIV and AIDS in society. This knowledge, too, is very widespread. Today, 97 percent of the population over the age of 16 know that skin contact with people with HIV does not pose a threat of infection and that there is no health risk in sharing a workplace with people with HIV. Swimming baths are somewhat less often ruled out as a possible source of HIV infection. The level of knowledge of the public regarding how HIV is not transmitted has continued to increase in recent years.

Fig. 5 Knowledge of how HIV is not transmitted

General population over the age of 16

In percent



BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2008”

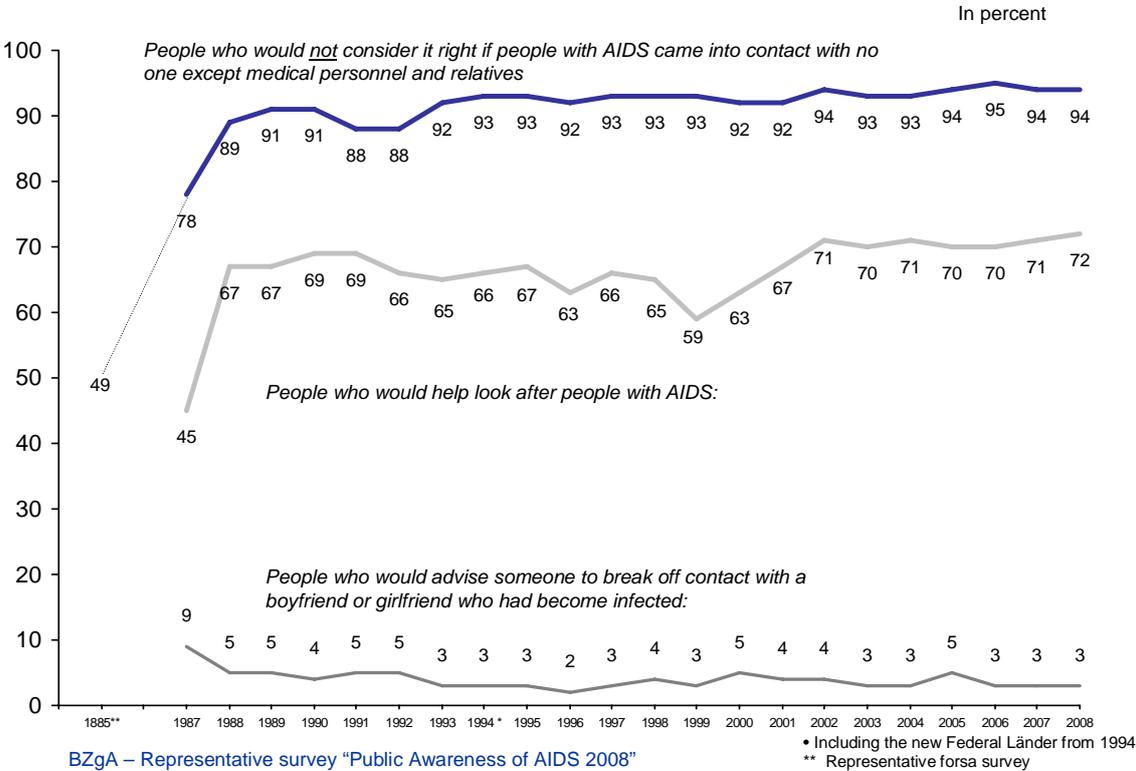
Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS

Based on a high level of knowledge in the population, it is a central concern of the national "Don't give AIDS a chance" education campaign to create a social climate that is opposed to stigmatisation and isolation, and to promote willingness to demonstrate social support for people with HIV and AIDS.

Before the AIDS education campaign began in 1985, only about one-half of the general population over the age of 16 in the then Federal Republic was of the opinion that it would be wrong to allow people with AIDS or HIV to come into contact with no one except medical personnel or relatives.

Fig. 6 Attitude towards people with HIV and AIDS

General population over the age of 16



Following the start of the AIDS education campaign, the attitude against isolating people with HIV and AIDS demonstrated rapid consolidation: 89 percent of the general population already rejected the isolation of AIDS patients in 1988; the figure was rising to 93 percent in 1994. The public's attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS have continued to remain stable since then. In 2008, 94 percent of the general population rejected the isolation of AIDS patients, and only very few (3 percent) would advise their friends to break off contact with people with HIV and AIDS.

There was a comparatively low level of willingness to help people with HIV and AIDS at the start of the education campaign. In 1987, 45 percent said they were willing to help look after people infected with HIV; almost as many (42 percent) did not want to help. Once the AIDS education campaign had informed the public about how an HI virus infection can be

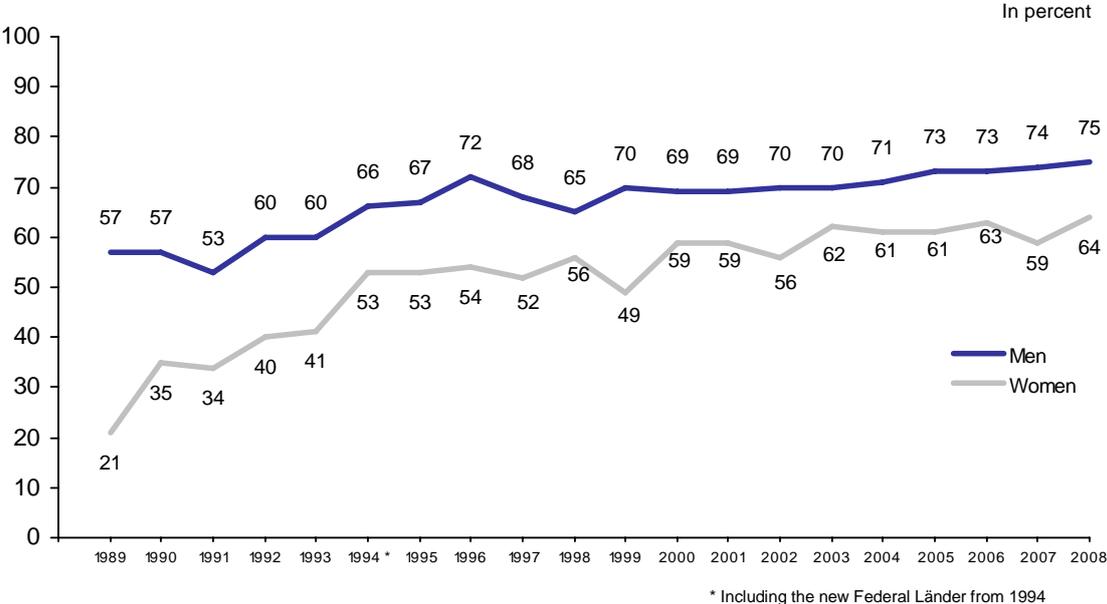
contracted, and how it can not, willingness to help increased to 67 percent by 1988 and continued to rise to 69 percent up to 1991. Willingness to help declined slightly in the years that followed, possibly because the subject of AIDS became less present in the public eye. In 1999, 59 percent still expressed a willingness to help. This downward trend was brought to a halt and reversed in recent years: the number of people willing to help climbed to 71 percent in 2002, and is currently in the region of 72 percent.

Condom possession as an intention to use protection

Willingness to use condoms as a means of protection against an HIV infection is expressed in the availability of condoms. This availability presupposes that condoms are purchased, and thus the intention to use condoms in an intimate situation.

Of the singles under the age of 45, 75 percent of the men and 64 percent of the women surveyed in 2008 said they currently had condoms at home or on their person. There has been a substantial increase in condom possession since this question was asked for the first time in 1989. This trend is particularly pronounced among women.

Fig. 7 Condom possession as an intention to use protection
Singles under the age of 45



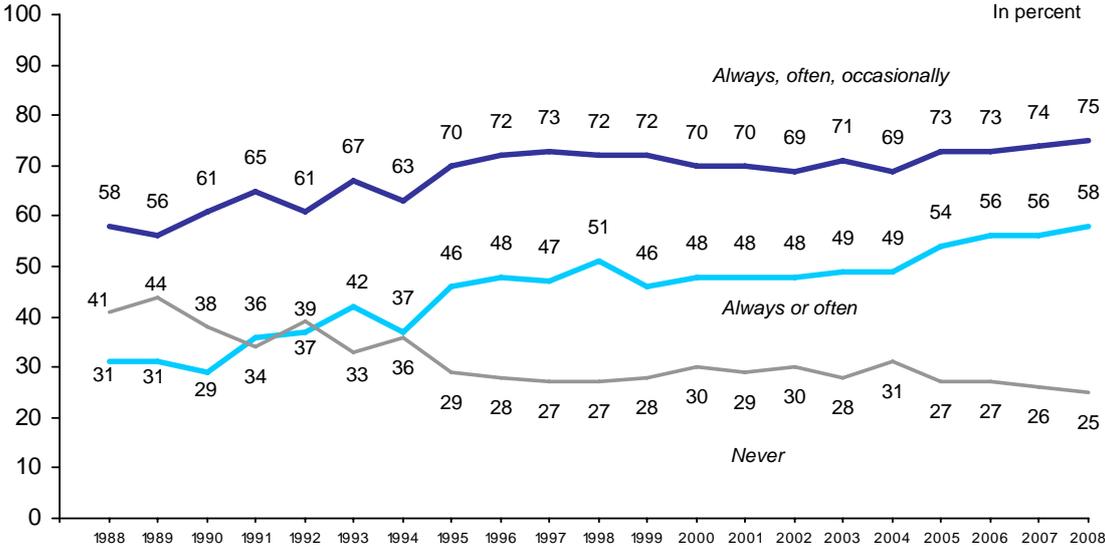
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While one-fifth (21 percent) of the women interviewed in 1989 said they had condoms at home or on their person, the 2008 figure of 64 percent reveals that there were roughly three times more women who at least had the intention to use condoms for protection in risky situations. 57 percent of the male respondents had condoms available in 1989, compared to 75 percent in 2008. Thus, an essential prerequisite for condom use reached its highest values to date in 2008.

Protective behaviour

Not only have the prerequisites for using condoms for protection in risky situations developed positively since the start of AIDS education, the actual use of condoms has also spread substantially in the population of the Federal Republic of Germany since the AIDS education campaign began.

Fig. 8 Condom use among singles under the age of 45
having sexual contacts in the past year



* Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

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In 1988, for example, 58 percent of the respondents in the sexually active group of singles under the age of 45 used condoms. In 2008, this figure rose to 75 percent, and thus the highest level to date. In particular, following a period of stagnation, regular condom use (always or often) has been steadily rising again since 2004: from 49 percent to 58 percent in 2008, the highest level ever since the study began. The number of sexually active people with no steady

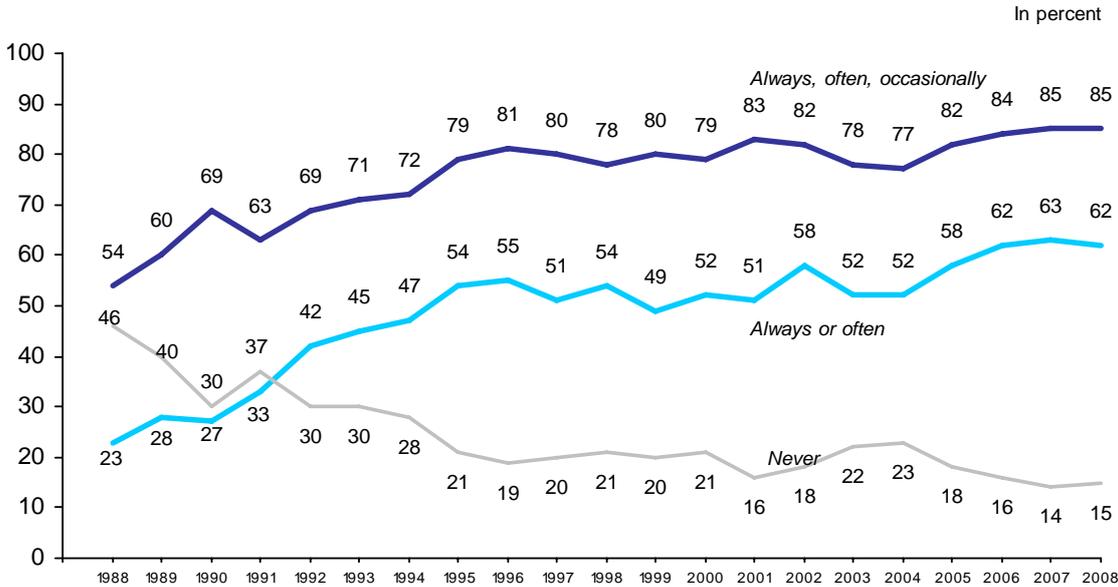
partner who never used condoms during sexual intercourse in the recent past, declined from 41 percent in 1988 to 25 percent in 2008.

Regular condom use is developing similarly among single men and single women under the age of 45, and is slightly more common among the men than among the women. 61 percent of the single men under the age of 45 nowadays regularly use condoms, as compared to 54 percent of the single women.

Following a decline in the period from 2001 to 2004, condom use among respondents who had several sex partners in the last 12 months has risen considerably again and has been maintaining the highest figure to date (85 percent) since 2007.

The percentage of people who used condoms regularly (often or always) reached a level of 62 percent in 2008. In this subgroup of persons displaying potentially risky sexual behaviour, the percentage of people who had never used condoms during sexual intercourse in the recent past declined substantially over the entire period covered by the study, from 46 percent in 1988 to 15 percent in 2008.

Fig. 9 Condom use among respondents having several sex partners in the past year

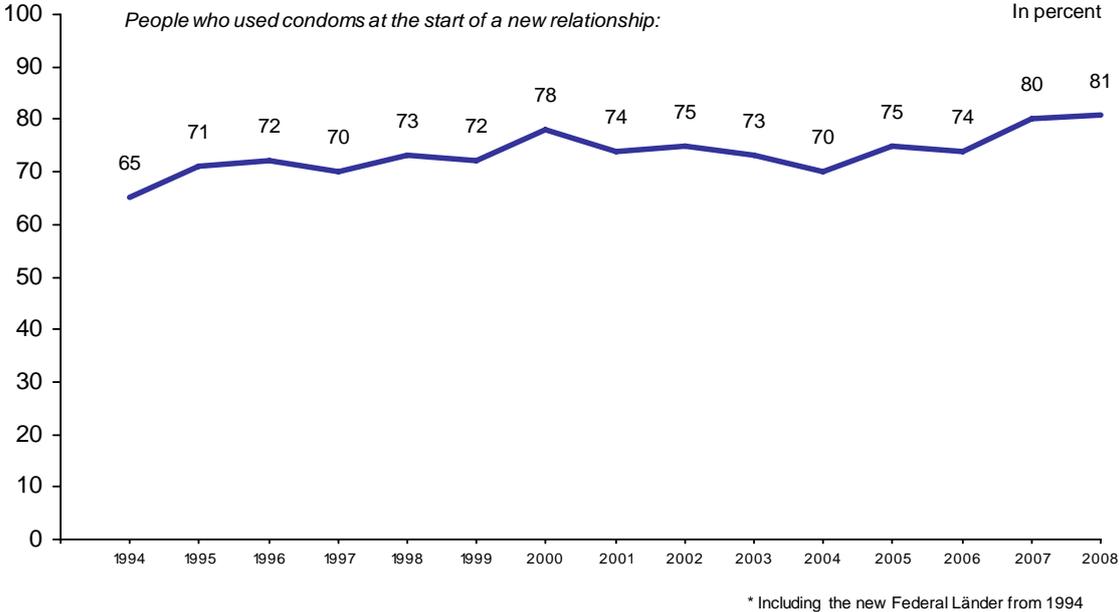


* Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

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Condom use at the start of a new relationship has also become more widespread - to roughly the same extent among women and men. Following a decline in condom use in the period from 2000 to 2004, a marked increase has been seen again in recent years. In 2008, for example, 81 percent of the respondents who had started a new sexual relationship in the 12 months preceding the survey, and thus the highest percentage to date, said they had used condoms at the start of this new relationship.

Fig. 10 Condom use at the start of new relationships
 Respondents with new sexual relationships in the past year

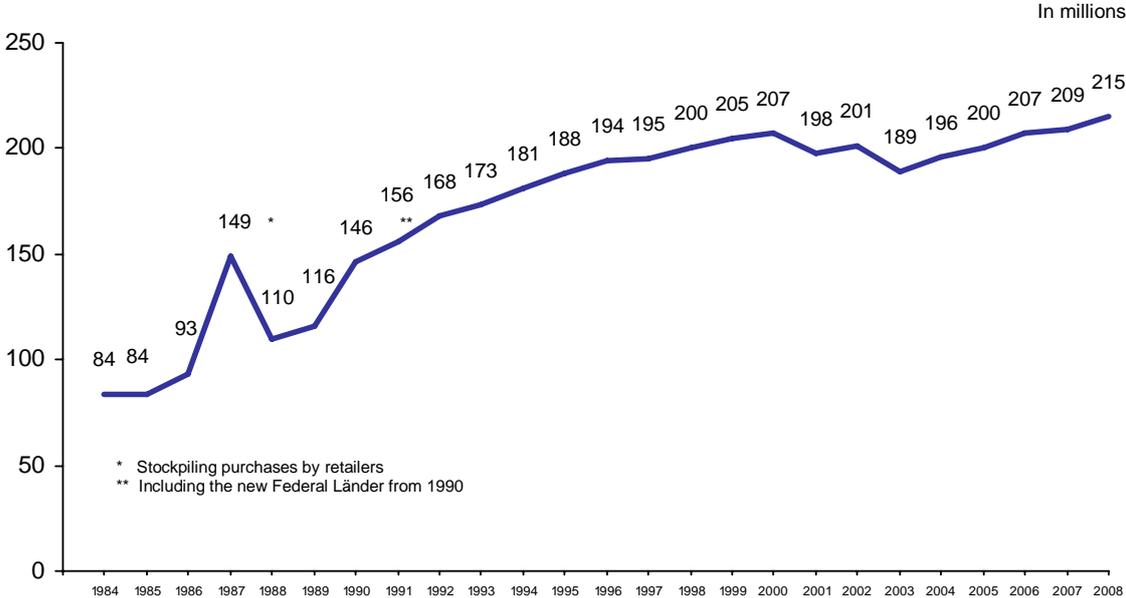


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The trend in condom availability and condom use is also reflected in external data, such as condom sales figures. The sales figures curve rose steeply after the start of the AIDS education campaign, reaching a first peak of 149 million in 1987, when retailers replenished their stocks in response to the growth in demand that emerged at the time.

After that, condom sales rose steadily until the year 2000, reaching a total of 207 million. Between 2001 and 2003, condom sales then declined to 189 million. However, the decline did not continue in 2004, and condom sales again began to rise slightly, first to 196 million in 2004, then further to 200 million in 2005 and most recently to a record sales figure of 215 million in 2008.

Fig. 11 Condom sales



Source: Deutsche Latex Forschungsgemeinschaft Kondome e.V.

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Summary

The principal goal of the "Don't give AIDS a chance" campaign is to prevent the further spread of HIV and AIDS. To do so, it is first necessary to achieve a high level of information among the public regarding infection risks, non-risks and possibilities for protection in relation to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections and diseases (STIs/STDs), and to maintain this level in the long term. Second, the campaign aims to create and stabilise a social climate that is opposed to stigmatisation and isolation of people with HIV and AIDS. The third target to be achieved with the help of the campaign is that of promoting the motivation to use protection and protective behaviour in risky sexual situations. The "Public Awareness of AIDS" study of the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) has been conducted annually since 1987 in order to determine whether and to what extent these goals are being reached.

Creating and maintaining a high level of knowledge among the public regarding transmission risks and "non-risks" presupposes that the population as a whole, and individual subgroups, are extensively reached by education measures based on mass communication and personal communication. One important target subgroup for AIDS education is younger singles, whose lifestyle is characterised by seeking and choosing a partner, and whose risk of contracting HIV and STIs is thus potentially higher.

89 percent of 16 to 44 year-old singles saw the billboard posters with the condom motifs in the last 12 months preceding the survey in 2008. Thus, the "mach's mit" posters have the greatest reach of all the mass AIDS education media. They are followed by the TV spots (77%), advertisements (58%), cinema spots (47%) and radio spots (40%).

Of the more intensive AIDS education offerings, the Internet nowadays has the greatest reach among 16 to 44 year-old singles, followed by brochures and information events. While the Internet was used as a source of information by just 8 percent in 2003, the figure had already risen to 25 percent in 2008. The utilisation of brochures (21%) and the attendance of information events (17%) remained at roughly the same level.

99 percent of the German population over the age of 16 have the basic knowledge necessary for protection against HIV and AIDS, i.e. that an infection risk exists in the event of unprotected sexual contacts, "needle-sharing" and blood-to-blood contact. Certainty as regards situations in which no infection risk exists (e.g. skin contact) is an important prerequisite for living together with people with HIV and AIDS in society. This knowledge is likewise very widespread (98 percent).

Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS have remained stable at a high level. In 2008, 94 percent of the general population rejected the isolation of AIDS patients. 72 percent were willing to help look after people with HIV, compared to 45 percent in 1987.

One important indicator of willingness to use condoms as protection against an HIV infection is the availability of condoms. Of the singles under the age of 45, 75 percent of the men and 64 percent of the women had condoms available in 2008. Particularly among women, there has been a marked increase in condom possession over the last two decades: while 21 percent of the women interviewed in 1989 said they had condoms at home or on their person, the figure had roughly tripled to 64 percent in 2008.

The development of protective behaviour among singles under the age of 45, and also among persons having several sex partners, makes it clear that, following a decline in condom use in the period from 2000 to 2004, growth can be seen again in recent years. 75 percent of the sexually active group of singles under the age of 45 used condoms in 2008 (2004: 69%).

Since 2004, regular condom use (always or often) in this group has increased from 49 percent to a figure of 58 percent in 2008. Condom use has also risen again among the respondents having several sex partners in the last 12 months, maintaining a level of 85 percent since 2007 (2004: 77%). The use of condoms at the start of a new relationship has likewise continued to spread. In 2008, 81 percent of the persons who had started a new sexual relationship in the 12 months prior to the survey used condoms at the beginning of this new relationship (2004: 70%). In 2008, 16 to 44 year-old single men and women used condoms to the greatest extent measured to date since the survey first began.

This development is reflected in the condom sales figures published by the Deutsche Latex Forschungsgemeinschaft Kondome e.V. (dlf). After condom sales dropped from 207 million in 2000 to 189 million in 2003, they began to rise again from 2004, reaching the record sales figure of 215 million in 2008.