

HIV and children



2023 GLOBAL AIDS UPDATE FACTSHEET

Globally, between 2000 and 2022, numbers of new HIV infections among children (aged 0–14 years) fell by 75%. Progress has stagnated, however, with only very limited gains in the past five years. Globally, 42% of vertical HIV transmission occurred during breastfeeding in 2022. More progress is needed to retain women on treatment for their own and their children's health.

Data suggest that almost half of new infections among children were due to their mothers not receiving antiretroviral therapy during pregnancy or breastfeeding. A further 21% were due to mothers seroconverting during pregnancy or breastfeeding.

The gap between coverage of adult and child treatment has grown since 2010. Although 82% of pregnant women living with HIV and 77% of adults (aged 15 years and older) were receiving antiretroviral therapy overall in 2022, only 57% of children were accessing treatment (Figure 1). Treatment coverage of children is well short of the global target of 95% in all regions.

Currently, around the world, a child (aged 0–14 years) dies from AIDS-related causes every six minutes. In 2022, 62% of the children living with HIV who were not on treatment were aged 5–14 years.

HIV services	A total of 73 countries recommend dolutegravir-based regimens for children living with HIV as of July 2022. Early infant diagnosis by age two months is behind optimal levels, especially in western and central Africa.
Sexual and reproductive health services	Integrated antenatal and postnatal care and HIV services need to be more accessible and convenient, especially for adolescent girls and women who are stigmatized and marginalized or require parental consent to access services.
Stigma and discrimination	Stigma, discrimination, punitive laws and policies, violence, and entrenched societal and gender inequalities hinder access to care for women, adolescents and children. In 37 of 53 countries with available data, more than 25% of women aged 15–49 years think children living with HIV should not be allowed to go to school with children who are HIV-negative. In 31 of 43 countries with available data, this was also reported by more than 25% of men aged 15–49 years (population-based surveys, 2018–2022).

2022 global data – children (aged 0–14 years)

Children living with HIV:

1 500 000 [1 200 000–2 100 000]

New HIV infections among children:

130 000 [90 000–210 000]

Children living with HIV but not on treatment:

660 000

AIDS-related deaths among children:

84 000 [56 000–120 000]

58% decrease in new HIV infections among children since 2010

64% decrease in AIDS-related deaths among children since 2010

16 million children (aged 0–14 years) were currently alive and HIV-free in 2022 but were exposed to HIV at birth and were at risk of diminished health outcomes (1)

Testing and treatment cascade, children

% of children living with HIV who know their status:

63 [49–86]

% of children living with HIV who are on treatment:

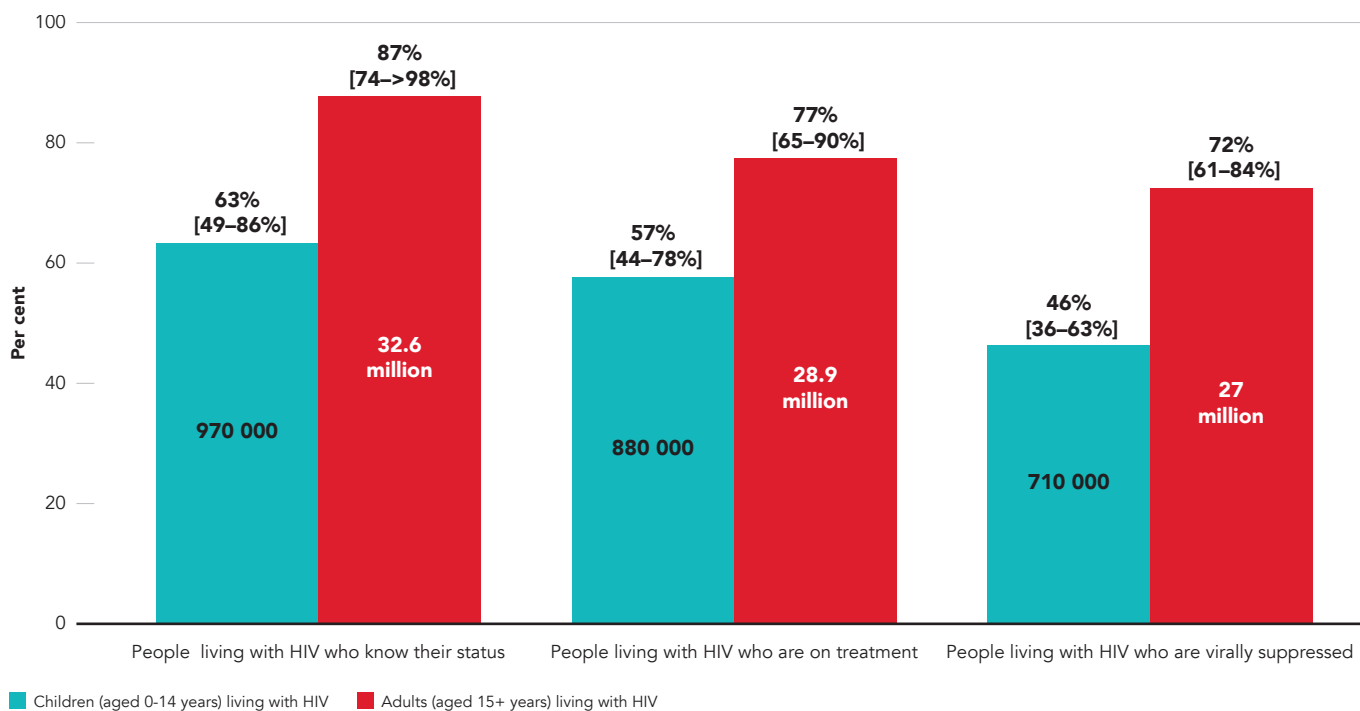
57 [44–78]

% of children living with HIV who are virally suppressed:

46 [36–63]

Globally, in 2022, only 57% of children living with HIV received antiretroviral therapy, compared with 77% of adults living with HIV, well short of the global target of 95% treatment coverage

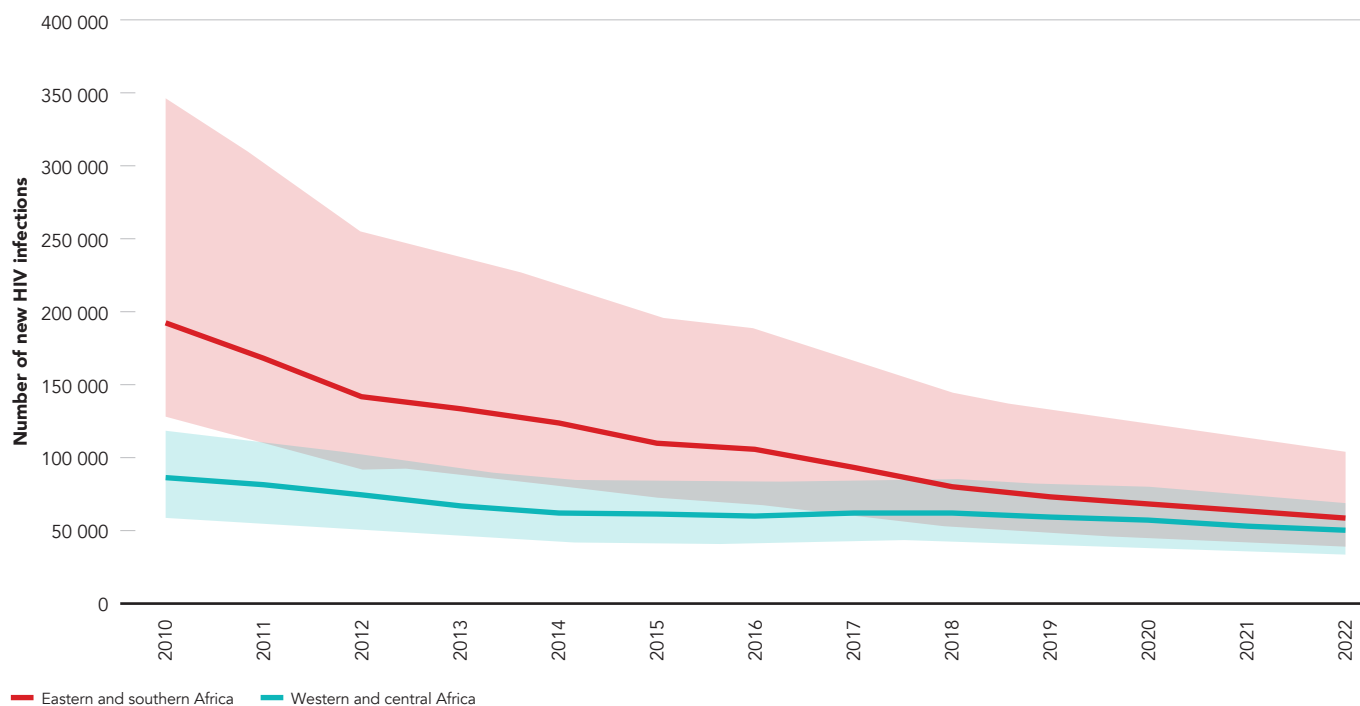
Figure 1 HIV testing and treatment cascade, children (aged 0–14 years) compared to adults (aged 15+ years), global, 2022



Source: UNAIDS special analysis of epidemiological estimates, 2023.

New HIV infections among children have declined rapidly in eastern and southern Africa, but not quickly enough in western and central African countries

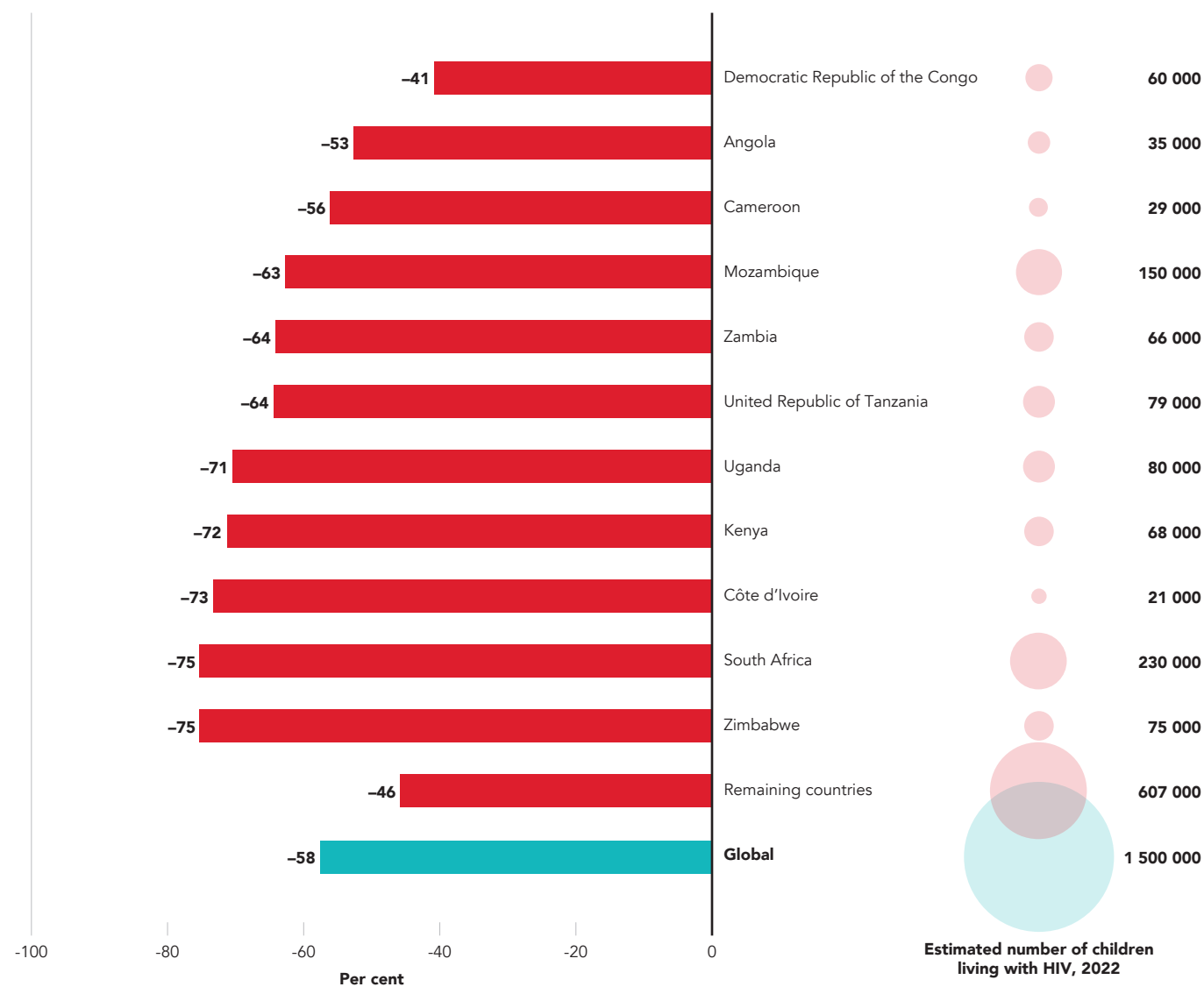
Figure 2 Number of new HIV infections among children (0–14 years), by region, 2010–2022



Source: UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

Some high HIV burden countries have reduced vertical infections by more than 70% since 2010, including Zimbabwe and South Africa

Figure 3 Change in number of new HIV infections among children (0–14 years), 2010–2022, and estimated number of children living with HIV, 2022, global and by selected countries



Source: UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2023 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).

Reference

- 1 Prendergast AJ, Evans C. Children who are HIV-exposed and uninfected: evidence for action. *AIDS*. 2023;37(2):205–215.

For additional information and data on children and HIV, see:

AIDSinfo

2023 global AIDS update report

The Global Alliance to End AIDS in Children by 2030