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# THE URGENCY OF NOW



# AIDS AT A CROSSROADS

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# **THE URGENCY OF NOW**

# **AIDS AT A CROSSROADS**

REGIONAL PROFILE

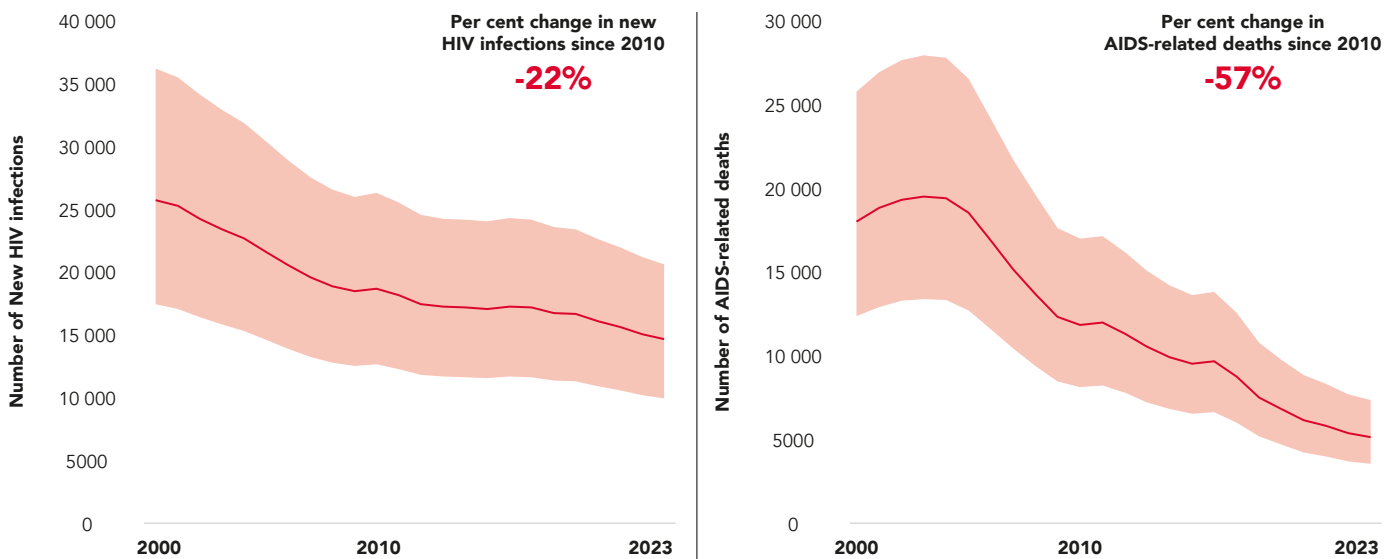
# CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean has made substantial progress against HIV since 2010, but there has been little change in the annual number of new HIV infections over the past five years. Numbers of new HIV infections have declined by 22% in the region since 2010 (Figure 4.1).

Almost 90% of new infections in the region in 2023 were in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica—with Haiti alone accounting for more than one third (38%) of new HIV infections. People from key populations and their sex partners continued to account for 47% of new infections in 2022 (Figure 4.2) (1). Numbers of AIDS-related deaths in the region have fallen by 57% since 2010, but a worrying increase has been reported in Belize, Cuba, Guyana and Suriname.

## Numbers of new HIV infections are going down, but not fast enough

Figure 4.1 Number of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths, Caribbean, 2000–2023



Source: UNAIDS epidemiological estimates, 2024 (<https://aidsinfo.unaids.org/>).



## 2023 DATA

- **22%** decrease in new HIV infections since 2010
- **57%** decrease in AIDS-related deaths since 2010
- People living with HIV: **340 000** [280 000–390 000]
- New HIV infections: **15 000** [9900–21 000]
- AIDS-related deaths: **5100** [3500–7400]

### Testing and treatment cascade (all ages):

- % of people living with HIV who know their status: **85 [63→98]**
- % of people living with HIV who are on treatment: **70 [52–85]**
- % of people living with HIV who are virally suppressed: **61 [51–71]**

### Financing of the HIV response:

- Resource availability for HIV: **US\$ 354 million** (domestic resources US\$ 134.4 million, international resources US\$ 224 million)

Treatment coverage has continued to expand: 85% [63→98%] of people living with HIV know their status, 70% [52–85%] of all people living with HIV are on treatment, and 61% [51–71%] of all people living with HIV were virally suppressed in 2023. The percentage of people living with HIV who were on treatment and virally suppressed rose from 79% [59–96%] in 2018 to 87% [64→98%] in 2023. Treatment coverage was 78% [56 - 94%] among women (aged 15+ years) and 65% [47 - 80%] among men (aged 15+ years). Late diagnosis of advanced HIV disease (AIDS) remains a significant challenge. Paediatric treatment coverage, at 39% [27–51%], was much lower than adult treatment coverage in 2023.

Eleven of the 17 countries or territories globally validated for eliminating vertical transmission of both HIV and syphilis are in the Caribbean region,<sup>1</sup> showcasing the impact of strong political commitment, person-centred service provision, health system strengthening, public–private collaboration, community engagement, and addressing human rights and gender in health services.

There has been a marked shift towards decriminalization of same-sex relations, led by strong activism across the region. Since 2010, six countries<sup>2</sup> have decriminalized same-sex sexual intercourse, but it remains criminalized in five countries. Court decisions on the constitutionality of these laws are pending in three countries,<sup>3</sup> and various procedural grounds have affected rulings in other countries.<sup>4</sup> Sex work remains criminalized in 14 of 16 countries, and possession of small amounts of drugs is criminalized in all 16 countries. Belize has repealed the criminalization of HIV transmission, nondisclosure or exposure, but some countries still maintain such counterproductive legal provisions.<sup>5</sup>

1 Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Bermuda, Cayman Islands, Cuba, Dominica, Jamaica, Montserrat, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saint Kitts and Nevis.

2 Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago.

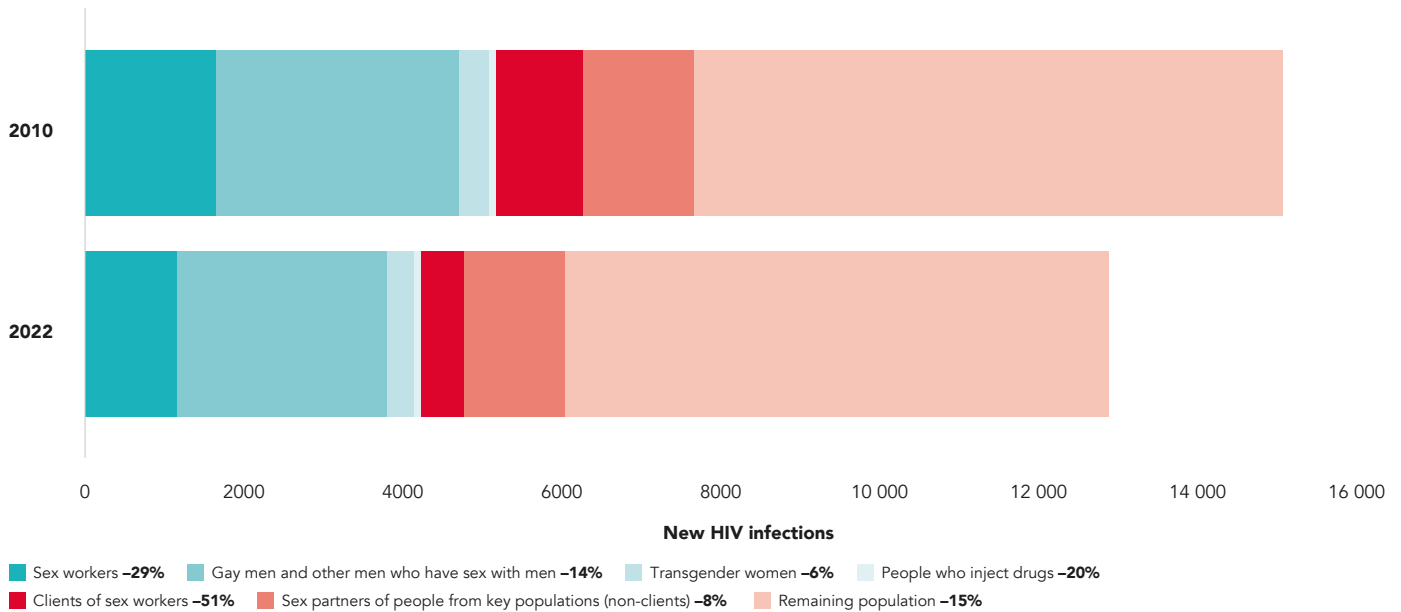
3 Grenada, Saint Lucia, and a decision by the State on an appeal of the 2018 Trinidad and Tobago ruling pending.

4 Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

5 Bahamas, Saint Lucia.

People from key populations accounts for 47% of new HIV infections

Figure 4.2 Distribution of new HIV infections and percent change among adults, the Caribbean, 2010 and 2022



Source: Korenromp EL, Sabin K, Stover J, Brown T, Johnson LF, Martin-Hughes R, et al. New HIV infections among key populations and their partners in 2010 and 2022, by world region: a multisources estimation. *J Acquir Immune Defic Syndr.* 2024;95(15):e34–e45. doi:10.1097/QAI.0000000000003340.

Restrictions on entry, stay and residence for people living with HIV and mandatory HIV testing for marriage, work and residence exist in several countries. Some countries have introduced protective laws against discrimination based on HIV status,<sup>6</sup> sexual orientation<sup>7</sup> or gender identity.<sup>8</sup>

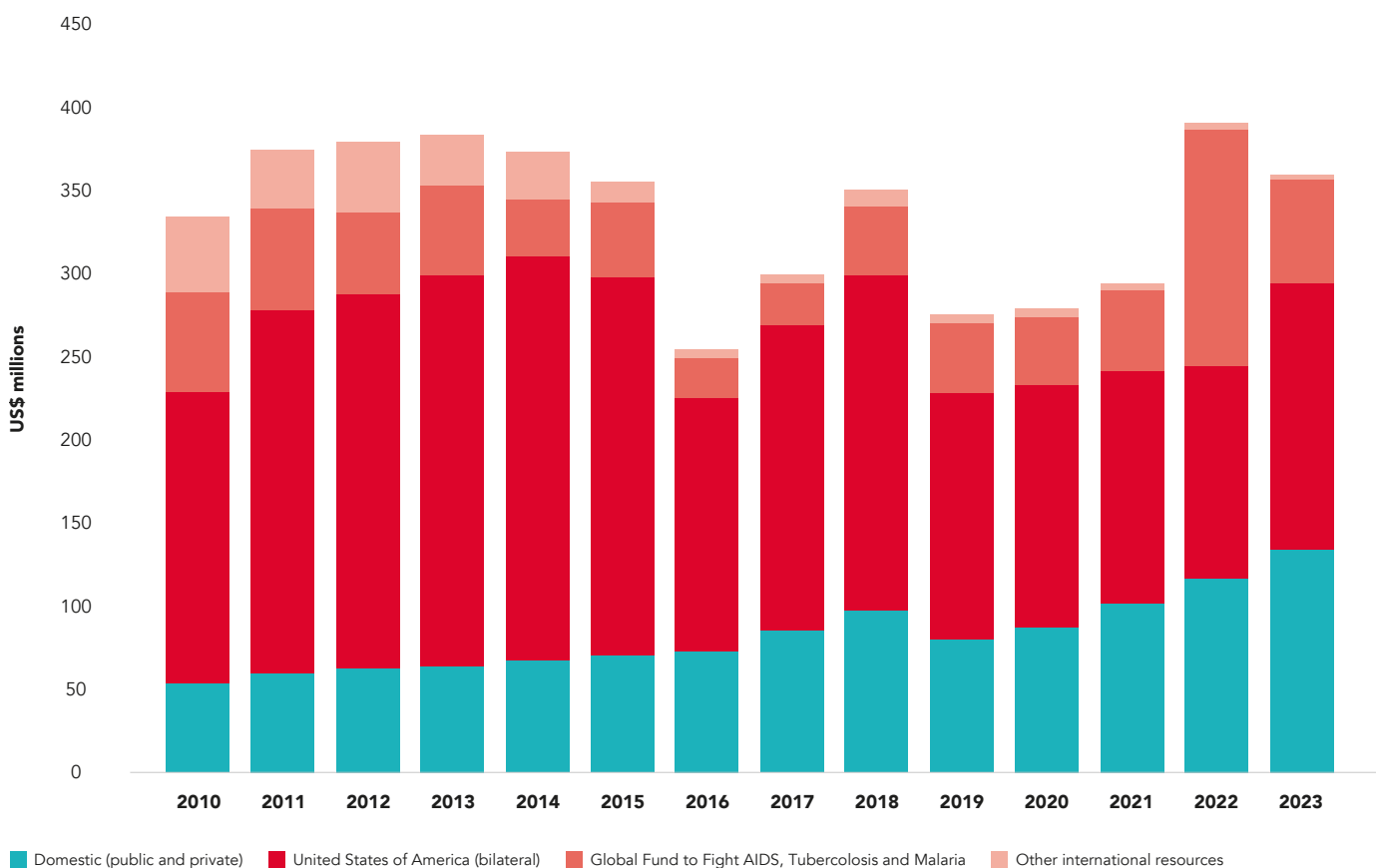
Funding available for HIV programmes in the Caribbean has risen by over 22% since 2021, due mainly to increases in allocations from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) and a 15% increase in domestic financing (Figure 4.3). The Caribbean is the region that proportionally relies the most on foreign donations globally, however, with more than 70% of its resources for the response depending on external aid. Most Caribbean countries are classified as upper-middle-income countries and may no longer be eligible for Global Fund resources, but there are significant differences between countries—for example, nearly 100% of the HIV response in Haiti is donor-funded. It is imperative to note that these countries carry high debt levels (2, 3), have seen a reduction in social and health public spending (4, 5) and face economic challenges compounded by political instability (6, 7) and the impact of climate change. These factors have widened inequality, increased poverty (8) and heightened food insecurity (9). Despite these challenges, domestic resources primarily fund HIV prevention programmes for people from key populations in the Caribbean, although donor contributions still account for 42% of funding for these programmes.

6 Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Suriname.  
 7 Barbados, Cuba, Saint Lucia.  
 8 Saint Lucia.

The economic pressures underscore the importance of sustained global solidarity and innovative funding strategies to support comprehensive HIV responses in the region.

## Sustainable resources are needed in the Caribbean

**Figure 4.3** Resource availability for HIV, Caribbean, 2010–2023



Source: UNAIDS financial estimates, July, 2024 (<http://hivfinancial.unaids.org/hivfinancialdashboards.html>).

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