

Public Awareness of AIDS in the Federal Republic of Germany 2004

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour
relating to protection against AIDS

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

Summary

April 2005



**Bundeszentrale
für
gesundheitliche
Aufklärung**

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Preliminary note

Since the mid-1980s, the AIDS prevention campaign has been informing the population of the Federal Republic of Germany about the disease AIDS and the associated infection risks, particularly providing education regarding the fact that people should protect themselves against infection with HIV, and ways of doing so.

The impact of this AIDS prevention campaign on knowledge, attitudes and behaviour relating to HIV and AIDS has been studied by the Federal Centre for Health Prevention (BZgA) since 1987 by means of the long-term study entitled "Public Awareness of AIDS", which comprises annual, nationwide surveys conducted among the general public over the age of 16 in the Federal Republic of Germany.

These representative surveys examine

- The extent to which the campaign's various prevention measures reach the public,
- Whether the level of knowledge necessary for AIDS prevention continues to be maintained,
- The extent to which people protect themselves against sexual transmission of the virus by using condoms, especially those people who are of particular importance in the context of AIDS prevention, such as 16 to 44 year-old singles,
- Whether people with HIV and AIDS are isolated in the attitudes of the public, or rather regarded as people needing attention and help.

The present Summary contains the central results of the latest survey, which was completed at the end of 2004. Key indicators are presented as medium or long-term trends, such as those relating to the reach of the campaign media, knowledge of when there is a risk or no risk of an HIV infection, protective intentions and protective behaviour, as well as willingness to help people with HIV and AIDS.

A detailed report (in German only) on the results can be requested from the Federal Centre for Health Education or downloaded from the Internet.

Details of the study: Goals and methods

Goals:	Evaluation of the AIDS prevention campaign via 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 over-sixteen population in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1987 (including the new Federal Länder since 1994).																								
Data collection mode:	Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI)																								
Sample selection:	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: 2,328 cases).																								
Sample size:	<table><tr><td>Total:</td><td>3,601</td></tr><tr><td>Western Germany:</td><td>2,970</td></tr><tr><td>Eastern Germany:</td><td>631</td></tr><tr><td>Men:</td><td>1,770</td></tr><tr><td>Women:</td><td>1,831</td></tr><tr><td>Singles under 45 years of age:</td><td>1,034</td></tr><tr><td>Men:</td><td>584</td></tr><tr><td>Women:</td><td>450</td></tr><tr><td>16 to 29 year-olds:</td><td>933</td></tr><tr><td>Men:</td><td>475</td></tr><tr><td>Women:</td><td>458</td></tr><tr><td>16 to 20 year-olds:</td><td>329</td></tr></table>	Total:	3,601	Western Germany:	2,970	Eastern Germany:	631	Men:	1,770	Women:	1,831	Singles under 45 years of age:	1,034	Men:	584	Women:	450	16 to 29 year-olds:	933	Men:	475	Women:	458	16 to 20 year-olds:	329
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Survey period:	September 2004 to December 2004																								
Field work and statistical analysis:	forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen mbH, Berlin/Dortmund																								
Concept development, analysis and reporting:	Federal Centre for Health Education, Cologne, Section 2-25, Gerhard Christiansen and Jürgen Töppich																								

Information behaviour

The repeat surveys of the "Public Awareness of AIDS" study regularly examine information behaviour regarding AIDS. This makes it possible to observe the extent to which the various AIDS prevention media reach the German public over the course of time. The percentage reached is examined both in reference to the last 12 months and also in reference to the more recent period of the last three months.

The reaches of the mass-media forms of AIDS prevention are compiled in Table 1. These media are the posters of the "*mach's mit*" campaign ("join in campaign"), with its colourful condom motifs, and the TV spots, as well as the cinema spots, radio spots and advertisements in newspapers, journals or illustrated magazines.

The greatest reach is recorded for the "*mach's mit*" posters, which have been perceived by 75 percent of the over-sixteen general public of any year. One or more TV spots have been seen by 69 percent.

Table 1 Mass-media AIDS prevention: current reaches

In percent

General public over the age of 16

People having contact with:		In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	On some occasion in the past
"mach's mit" posters	2001	50	69	80
	2002	51	71	82
	2003	53	72	84
	2004	55	75	85
TV spots	2001	43	64	89
	2002	44	70	90
	2003	44	69	91
	2004	43	69	89
Advertisements in newspapers and illustrated magazines	2001	39	58	81
	2002	40	61	83
	2003	41	62	84
	2004	38	60	83
AIDS prevention radio spots	2001	17	28	35
	2002	21	32	39
	2003	27	38	45
	2004	26	39	44
AIDS prevention cinema spots	2001	12	23	46
	2002	11	24	51
	2003	11	24	51
	2004	13	27	54

Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by
forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

In the years since 2001, there has been a slight increase in utilisation of the "mach's mit" posters and the cinema spots, while the percentage of users of radio spots containing AIDS prevention has risen substantially during this period. Thus, the development of the reach of mass-media AIDS prevention in recent years differs clearly from that in the period before 2001, when a constant decline in the utilisation of AIDS prevention had been recorded for several years.

Table 2 contains the reaches of media and information offerings providing more intensive information on HIV and AIDS: AIDS prevention brochures, information events and use of the Internet. It can be seen that the utilisation of brochures and information events has remained largely unchanged in recent years, whereas the Internet is gradually being increasingly used as a source of information on HIV and AIDS.

Table 2 Offerings of intensive AIDS prevention In percent
General public over the age of 16

		In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	On some occasion in the past
People having contact with AIDS prevention brochures	2001	7	23	54
	2002	8	21	52
	2003	7	22	56
	2004	7	20	53
People attending presentations or information events	2001	2	6	21
	2002	3	6	24
	2003	2	6	27
	2004	2	6	25
People obtaining information on AIDS from the Internet	2001	1	3	5
	2002	3	5	7
	2003	2	4	7
	2004	3	6	10

Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by
forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

The reach figures in the younger groups of the population are sometimes substantially higher than those for the general public as a whole. For instance, 93 percent of 16 to 29 year-olds perceived "mach's mit" posters in the past year (men: 93%; women: 92%). Cinema spots were seen by 51 percent (men: 56%; women: 45%). Information events offering AIDS prevention were attended in the past year by 19 percent of 16 to 29 year-olds (men: 17%; women: 20%), and 11 percent turned to the Internet for information on HIV and AIDS (men: 12%; women: 10%).

Interest in information on AIDS

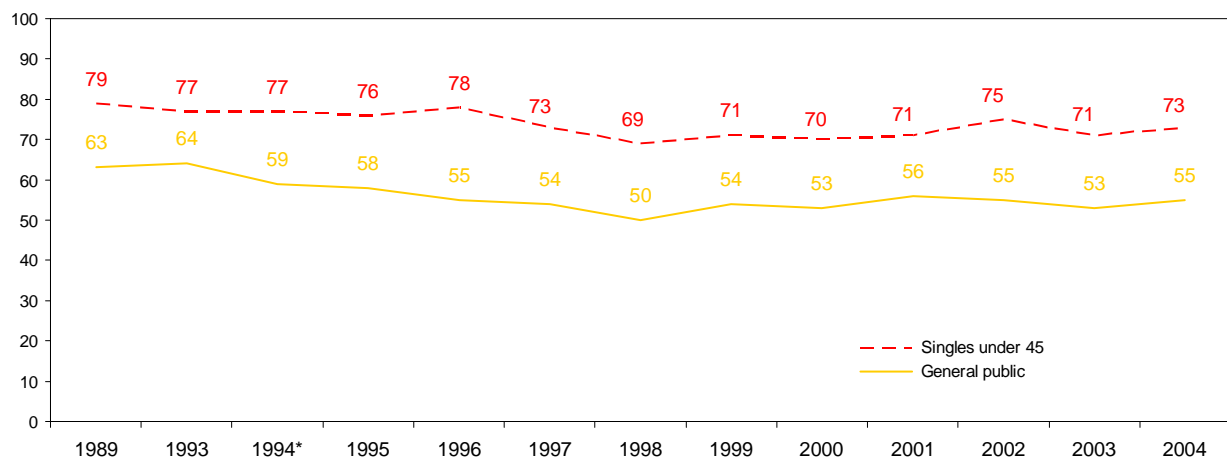
Even today, there is still substantial interest in information on AIDS among the public. This also applies to information on possibilities for protection against HIV infections. Above all, the groups of the population that still show relatively great interest are those that are of particular importance regarding the prevention of HIV infections. At the moment, for example, 73 percent of 16 to 44 year-old singles would like to continue receiving information on ways of protecting themselves against the HI virus in the future. Roughly half (55%) of the general public as a whole is interested in information on protection against AIDS.

There is also an interest in other AIDS-related topics. 85 percent of the general public would like to know something about medical research into the disease, while 65 percent would like information about the living situation of people with HIV and AIDS.

Fig. 1 Interest in information on protection against AIDS

In percent

People with some or great interest in the subject of protection against AIDS:



Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

Information level

Shortly after the start of the AIDS prevention campaign, the level of AIDS-related knowledge among the general public had reached very high figures, which have been maintained up to this day. Virtually the entire population possesses the basic knowledge necessary for protection against AIDS. For example, 100 percent see unprotected sex as involving a potential risk of infection. 99 percent are aware that intravenous drug use entails an infection risk, and 99 percent are likewise familiar with the general risk of blood-to-blood contact. Equally widespread is the knowledge that is a prerequisite for living together with people with HIV and AIDS: 98 percent see no risk of infection in shaking hands with an AIDS patient; 97 percent see no risk in sharing their workplace with people with HIV.

These results do not, however, mean that all options for disseminating preventive knowledge have been exhausted; after all, the level of information regarding specific items of knowledge in connection with HIV infection is comparatively low, although it is slowly spreading further among the general public. The fact that HIV can be transmitted even before the outbreak of full-blown AIDS was familiar to 75 percent in the year 2000, compared to 79 percent in 2004. The meaning of a positive result of the HIV antibody test was known to 70 percent in the year 2000, the figure for 2004 being 76 percent. The number of respondents saying that people infected with HIV can *not* be recognised by externally visible signs, rose from 67 percent in 2000 to 78 percent in 2004.

Table 3 Knowledge of transmission routes

In percent

General public over the age of 16

	1987	1988	2001	2002	2003	2004
People who say a risk of infection exists if ...						
You have unprotected sex with unknown partners	96	98	99	100	99	100
Blood from someone infected with HIV gets into an open wound	97	98	98	99	99	99
Someone takes heroin or similar drugs with a needle previously used by other drug addicts	-	-	98	99	99	99
People who say no risk of infection exists if ...						
You shake hands with an AIDS patient	95	96	97	97	97	98
You share a workplace with someone infected with HIV	94	94	95	96	96	97

Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

Protection against AIDS

The 2004 repeat survey indicates that the *willingness* to use condoms as protection against infection with HIV during sex is still very widespread. Thus, 93 percent of younger singles are currently willing to use condoms in new sexual relationships, if the partner so wishes.

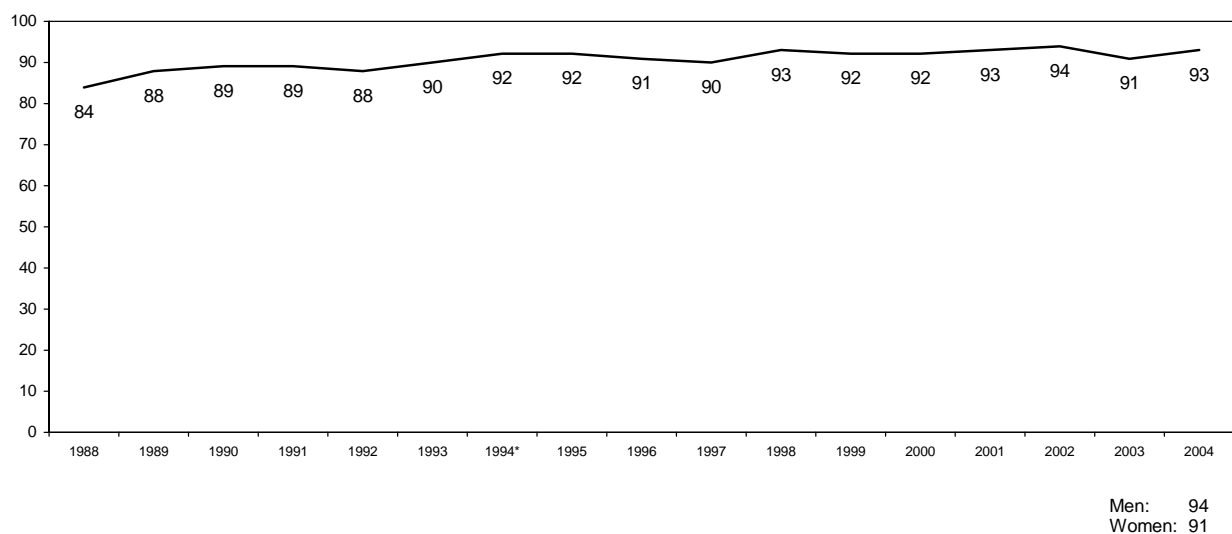
This general acceptance of protection against AIDS by means of condoms is supported by a number of positive attitudes towards the use of condoms. For instance, 95 percent of younger singles are convinced that they know how to use condoms properly, and 89 percent consider the common brand-name condoms to be so safe that they afford protection against an HIV infection.

The originally widespread emotional reservations regarding condoms are on the decline, albeit only slowly. In 2004, 88 percent said they had *no* physical aversion to condoms, and 67 percent did *not* find condoms emotionally disruptive.

Fig. 2 Acceptance of condoms in new sexual contacts

In percent

Singles under the age of 45



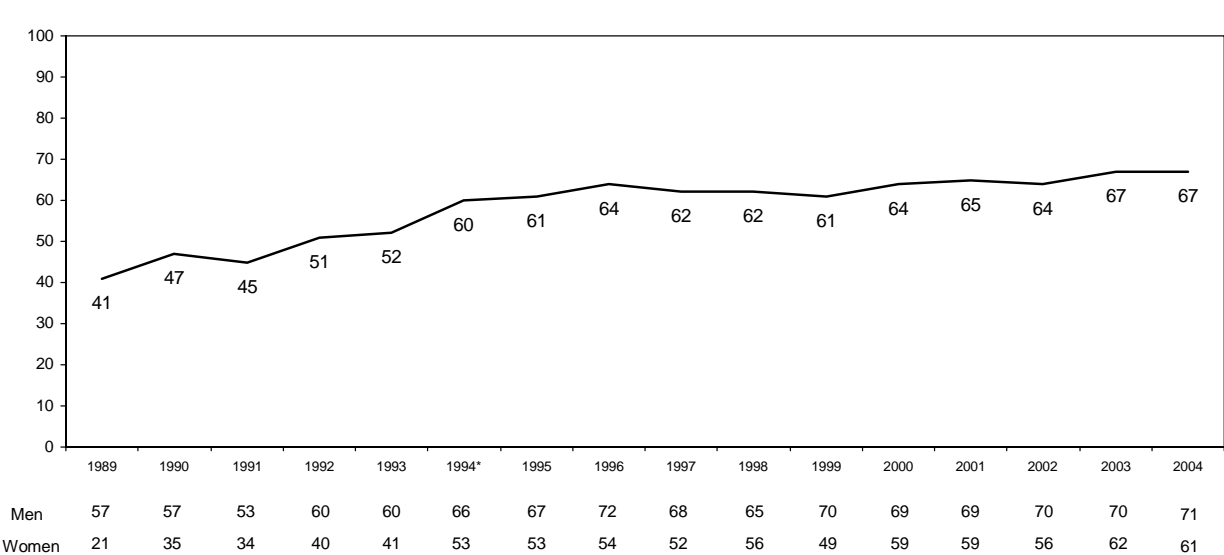
Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

These attitudes contribute to two-thirds (67%) of younger singles having condoms at home or with them, thereby indicating that they are willing to protect themselves.

Observed over the long term, a substantial total increase of 26 percentage points in condom possession can be noted since 1989. However, the greater part of this increase already occurred between 1989 and the mid-Nineties. The figure for this indicator has continued to rise since that time, but only very slowly.

The change in the availability of condoms among younger single women is worthy of note: in 1989, 21 percent said they had condoms at home or with them. The corresponding figure among men was 57 percent, making a difference of 36 percentage points between men and women. In 2004, more than half (61%) of younger single women had condoms available, the gap in relation to men being 10 percentage points.

Fig. 3 Condom possession as an intention to protect In percent
Singles under the age of 45

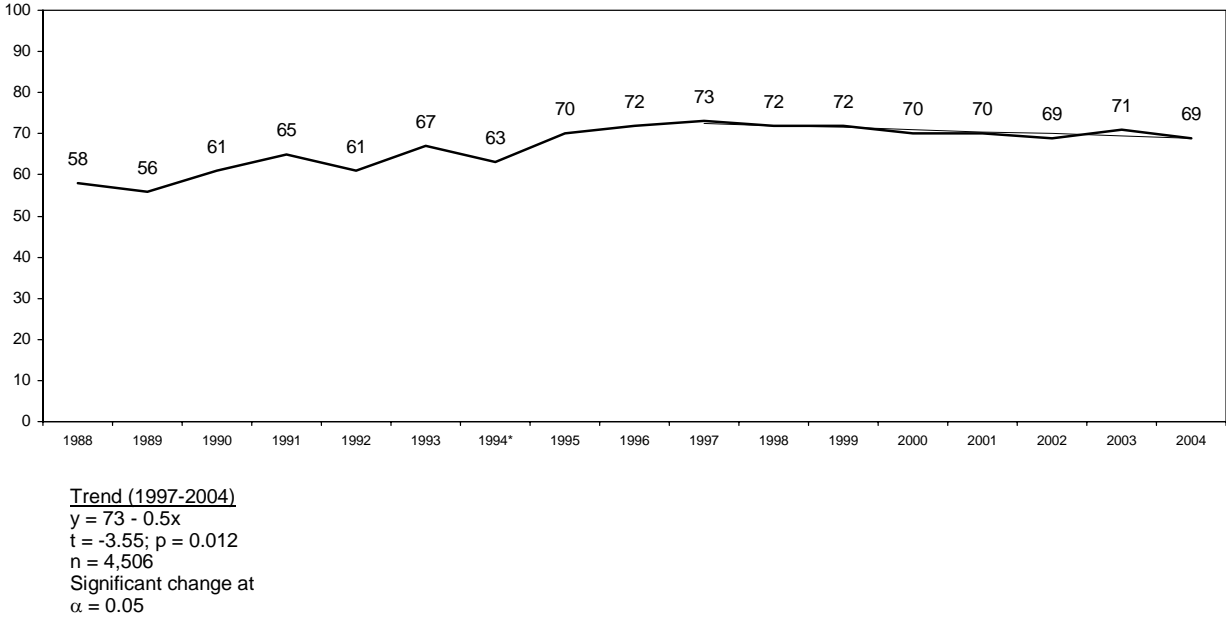


Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

The actual use of condoms is, however, no longer increasing. Following its rapid spread among the sub-groups demonstrating potentially more risky lifestyles in the period before 1996, some indicators currently show signs of a declining trend regarding the use of condoms, although it is still at a relatively high level.

Among singles under the age of 45, there is a slight decline in the percentage who always, often or occasionally use condoms during sexual contacts. Although the change in the number of condom users from 73 percent in 1997 to 69 percent in 2004 is only four percentage points, it must nevertheless be interpreted as a statistically significant, continuously declining trend.

Fig. 4 Condom use: always, often or occasionally In percent
 Singles under the age of 45 with sexual contacts in the past year



Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

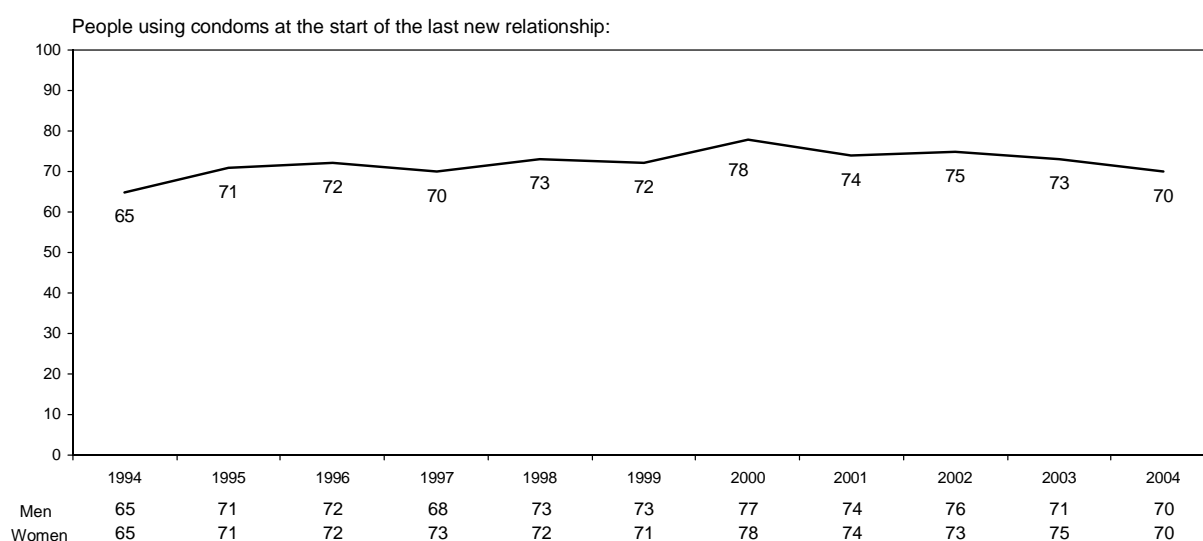
Among people having several sex partners in the past year, there has likewise been a decline in recent years in the number who always, often or occasionally use condoms: from 83 percent in 2001 to 77 percent in 2004.

There has been an even sharper drop in condom use at the start of new sexual relationships. Of those who met a new partner in the past 12 months, 70 percent currently use a condom in this situation. This figure was still 8 percentage points higher in 2000, reaching a level of 78 percent.

Fig. 5 Condom use at the start of new relationships

In percent

Respondents with new sexual relationships in the past 12 months



Significant change in 2004 compared to 2000 at $\alpha = 0.05$

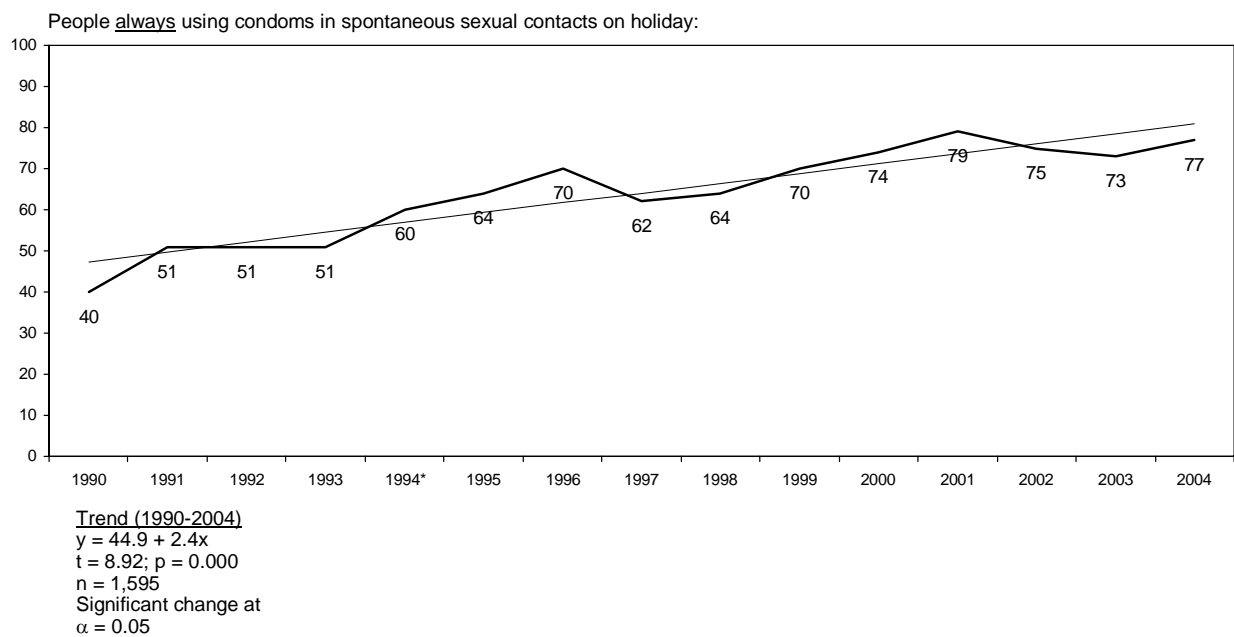
Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

However, there are currently no signs of a downward trend regarding the use of condoms in particularly risky situations. This applies, for example, to sexual contacts with unknown partners while on holiday. Three-quarters (77%) of those having contacts of this kind in the last three years *always* used condoms at the time. The figure in the 2003 repeat survey was 73 percent.

So, a long-standing trend again continued in 2004. Since 1990, the number of people always using condoms during sexual contacts with unknown partners on holiday has risen from 40 percent to the current figure of 77 percent. Despite the occasionally pronounced scatter of the individual values, the trend curve for this indicator displays a linear rise averaging 2.4 percentage points per year.

A similar development can also be seen as regards a further indicator for condom use in risky situations. During spontaneous sexual contacts with unknown partners, the number of people always using condoms in this situation increased from 47 percent in 2003 to 55 percent in 2004, this again marking a continuation of a steady trend towards regular use of condoms in risky situations.

Fig. 6 Regular condom use In percent
 Respondents with sexual contacts with unknown partners on holiday



Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

Perception of AIDS as a disease

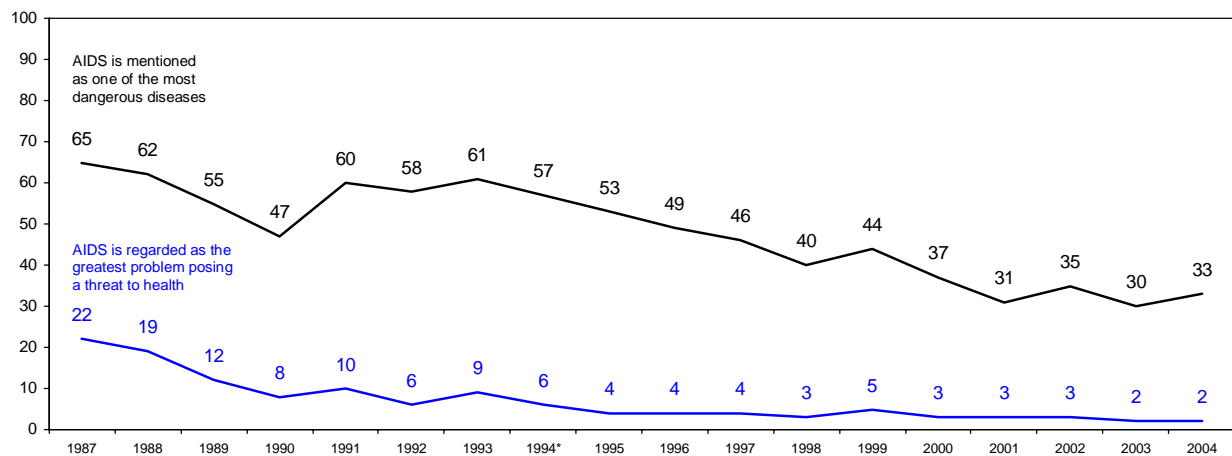
The trend in protective behaviour can be observed against the background of a major change in the significance of AIDS in the public's awareness.

At the end of the 1980s, two-thirds of the general population over the age of 16 regarded AIDS as one of the most dangerous diseases. From 1993 onwards, fewer and fewer people held this view from year to year. Since 2000, one-third has considered AIDS to be one of the most dangerous diseases (for comparison: 59 percent mention cancer).

Furthermore, only few people (2%) now see AIDS as being one of the greatest problems posing a particular threat to the health of the German population. This notion of AIDS being a threat was also much more common at the end of the 1980s than today. At that time, almost one-quarter (22%) of the population was of this opinion.

Fig. 7 Perception of AIDS as a disease
General public over the age of 16

In percent

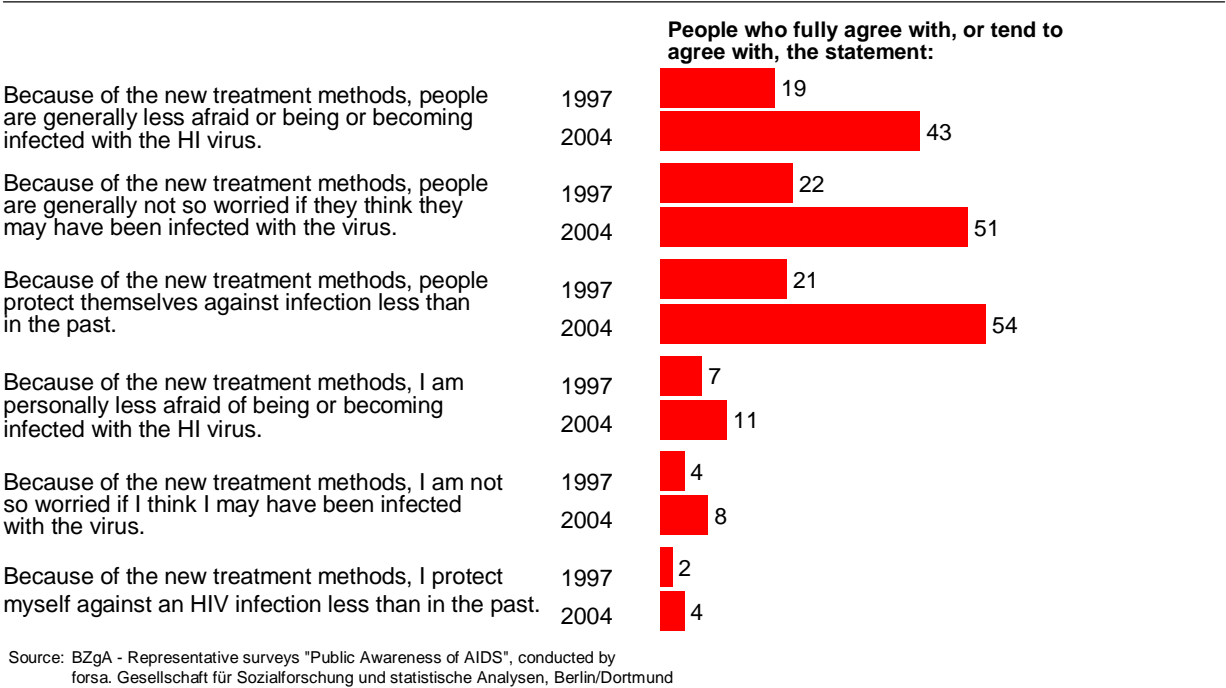


Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

The AIDS therapies available today are often regarded as one possible cause of such a marked decline in the general feeling that the disease AIDS constitutes a threat. At present, 29 percent of the general public have heard that therapeutic measures are possible in the event of an HIV infection. The existence of AIDS therapies makes those who are aware of them increasingly suspect that concerns and fears about AIDS among the public are dwindling; and a growing number of people are also of the opinion that less worry leads to less care being taken when it comes to protection against AIDS. In 1997, for example, when new AIDS therapies were included in the survey for the first time, 21 percent agreed with the statement: "People protect themselves less against infection because of the new treatment methods". This agreement has risen to 54 percent by 2004.

When it comes to their own person, far fewer (of the informed) see AIDS therapies as having an influence. However, there is a gradual increase in the number who are less worried. For instance, the number of people who are less afraid of an infection because of the new treatment methods, has risen from 7 percent in the year 1997 to 11 percent in 2004. Currently, 4 percent say they protect themselves less, as opposed to 2 percent in 1997.

Fig. 8 Impact of AIDS therapies: Perception of protective behaviour In percent
 Basis: Persons who have heard of the new therapies (2004: n = 1,077)



Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS

The general attitude towards people with HIV and AIDS is characterised both by a low level of stigmatising and isolating attitudes, and by great willingness to provide social support and assistance.

In 2004, 71 percent of the general public over the age of 16 were willing to help people with HIV and AIDS. The AIDS prevention campaign played a significant role in the development of this climate of willingness to help. In 1987, at the start of the campaign, 45 percent said they were willing to help look after people infected with HIV. There was a very rapid increase in this willingness to help once the AIDS prevention campaign began to provide information on how people can become infected with the HI virus and how they can not. The 1990s saw a slight decline in the percentage of people willing to help. This downward trend was brought to a halt in the past few years.

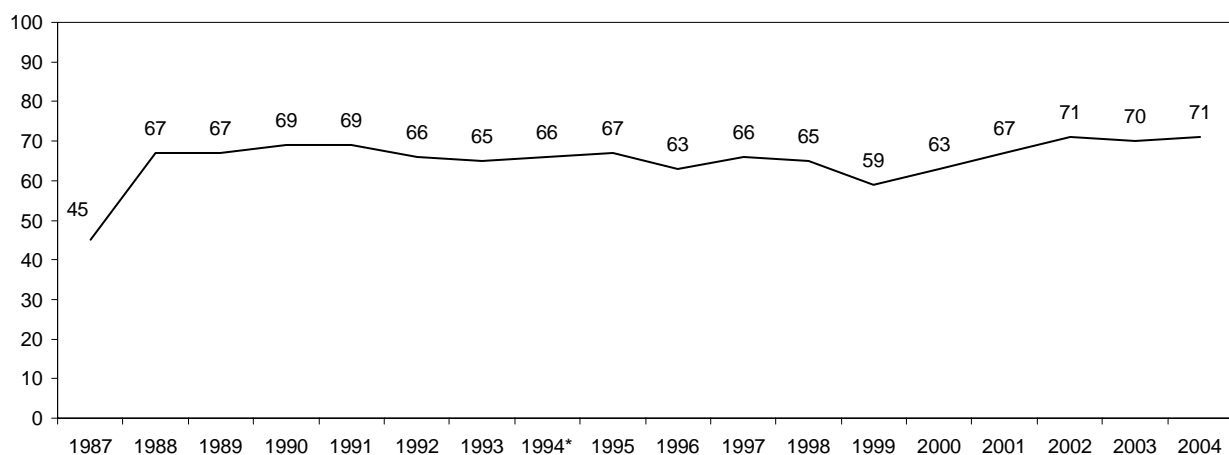
Only few people would be prepared to isolate people with HIV and AIDS. In 2004, 6 percent of the general public were of the opinion that AIDS patients should not come into contact with anyone, except medical staff or their relatives, whereas 93 percent rejected the isolation of people with AIDS.

Fig. 9 Willingness to help people with HIV or AIDS

In percent

General public over the age of 16

People who would help look after people with HIV and AIDS:



Source: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

Summary

The great majority of the population is reached by the AIDS prevention media, especially by the "mach's mit" posters and the TV spots, but also by the radio and cinema spots. After years of a steady decline in reach, the utilisation of AIDS prevention media has risen again slightly since 2001.

The population continues to display great interest in information relating to AIDS prevention. Younger (16 to 44 year-old) singles, in particular, would in future like to continue receiving information regarding how to protect themselves against infection with HIV.

Preventive knowledge and prevention-promoting attitudes towards HIV and AIDS are still widespread among almost the entire population.

Virtually the whole population possesses the basic knowledge necessary for protection against AIDS: substantially more than nine-tenths of the population know how people can become infected with HIV, and just as many are aware of the situations in which there is no infection risk.

The general attitude towards people with HIV and AIDS is characterised by the fact that almost everyone (93%) rejects the isolation of people with HIV and AIDS, and roughly three-quarters (71%) would be willing to help people with HIV and AIDS.

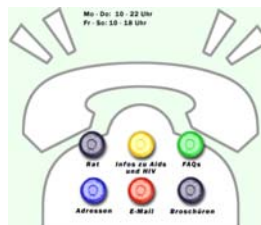
People are also still very willing to use condoms as protection against an HIV infection during sexual contacts: 93 percent of younger singles are willing to use condoms when entering into new sexual relationships. Also, two-thirds (67%) of younger singles have condoms at home or with them.

As regards actual condom use, a number of indicators are showing signs of a declining trend. For instance, the number of 16 to 44 year-old singles who always, often or occasionally use condoms has declined slightly (but to a statistically significant degree), from 73 percent in 1997 to 69 percent in 2004. Among people who began a new sexual relationship (in the past year), the number of condom users has declined from 78 percent in 2000 to 70 percent in 2004. However, there are no signs of a decline in condom use in particularly risky situations, e.g. in sexual contacts with unknown partners on holiday or in the event of spontaneous sexual contacts with unknown persons.

Protective behaviour is developing against the background of a tendency to view AIDS as less and less of a threat. While AIDS was regarded as one of the most dangerous diseases by two-thirds of the population over the age of 16 at the end of the 1980s, only one-third is currently of this opinion. The AIDS therapies available today are often regarded as one possible cause of the decline in the general feeling that the disease AIDS constitutes a threat. Their existence makes those who are informed about them increasingly suspect that concerns and fears about AIDS among the public are dwindling. Also, there is a gradual increase in the number of people who say they protect themselves less against infection with HIV because of the new treatment methods.



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