

Public Awareness of AIDS in the Federal Republic of Germany 2007

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour
relating to protection against AIDS

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

Summary

May 2008

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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 the associated infection risks. It tells people that and how they can protect themselves against infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Information offerings based on mass and personal communication have been specifically geared to different groups of the population since 1987.

The principal goals of the campaign are to prevent the further spread of HIV and to create and stabilise a social climate that opposes 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 the public is reached by the campaign's various education measures and makes use of the information offerings,
- Whether the social climate in the population is characterised by acceptance of people with HIV and AIDS, or whether there are detectable tendencies towards their isolation,
- Whether the level of knowledge required for AIDS prevention continues to be maintained, and
- The extent to which people protect themselves against the HI virus by using condoms, especially population groups demonstrating relatively risky sexual behaviour, such as 16 to 44 year-old singles.

The present Summary contains the most important results of the latest survey, which was completed at the end of 2007. Key indicators are presented as medium or long-term 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 | 7,000 | 100 | 100 |
| Western Germany | 5,876 | 84 | 83 |
| Eastern Germany | 1,124 | 16 | 17 |
| Men | 3,112 | 45 | 48 |
| Women | 3,888 | 55 | 52 |
| Singles under the age of 45 | 3,334 | 48 | 21 |
| Men | 1,704 | 55 | 24 |
| Women | 1,630 | 42 | 17 |
| 16 to 20 year-olds | 1,997 | 29 | 7 |

Survey period: September 2007 to December 2007

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

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

Utilisation of media of the AIDS education campaign

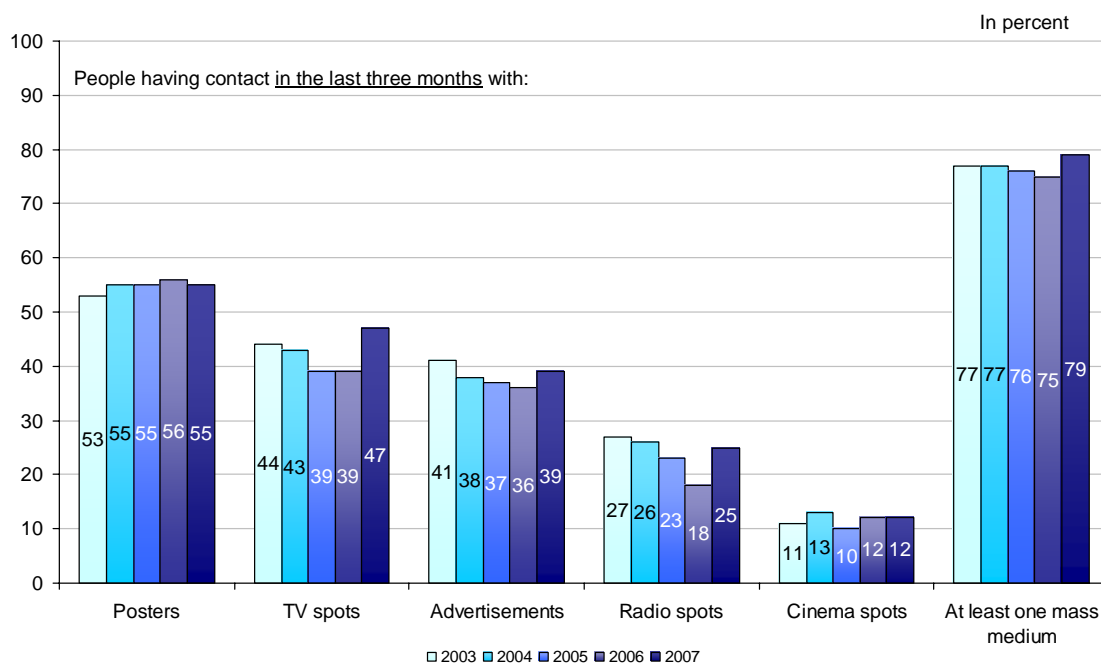
One central task of the "Public Awareness of AIDS" study is to examine the extent to which the various AIDS prevention media reach the German public.

This section deals with the reaches of the mass-media forms of AIDS education, referred to the last three months (Figure 1) and the last year (Figure 2). The media in question are the posters of the "mach's mit" ("join in") campaign, TV, cinema and radio spots, as well as advertisements in newspapers, journals or magazines.

The greatest reach is recorded for the "mach's mit" posters. 55 percent of the general population over the age of 16 perceived them within the three months prior to the survey (70 percent in the last 12 months). TV spots were seen by 47 percent in the last three months and 67 percent in the course of the past year. Advertisements succeeded in reaching 39 percent of the population in the last three months and 58 percent in the past year. 25 percent heard radio spots within the last three months (35 percent in the past year) and 12 percent saw education spots in the cinema (25 percent in the past year).

A total of 91 percent of the population in Germany was reached by at least one of these education media in the course of the 12 months preceding the survey, the figure for the last three months being 79 percent. This clearly shows that a major portion of the population was also reached very recently.

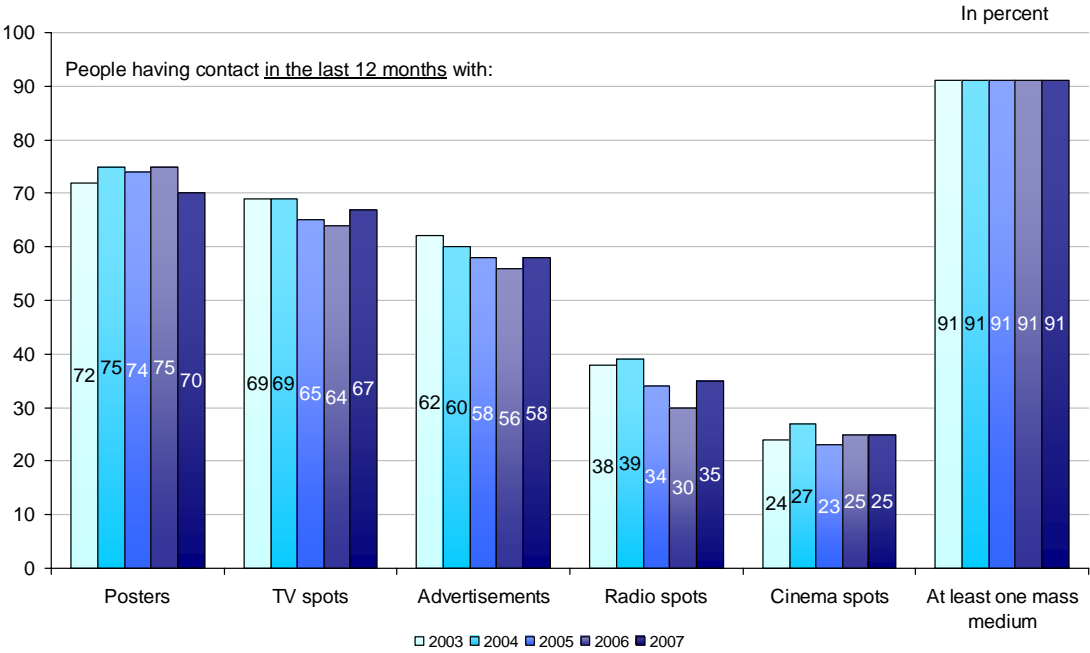
Figure 1: Reaches of mass-media AIDS education
General population over the age of 16



BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2007"

The reaches of the individual AIDS education media in the general population have varied only slightly during the past five years, the result of this being that the overall reach of mass-media AIDS education has remained stable. 91 percent of the population utilised at least one of the AIDS education media in the twelve months prior to the survey, this indicating that the subject of HIV/AIDS continues to be present in the public eye.

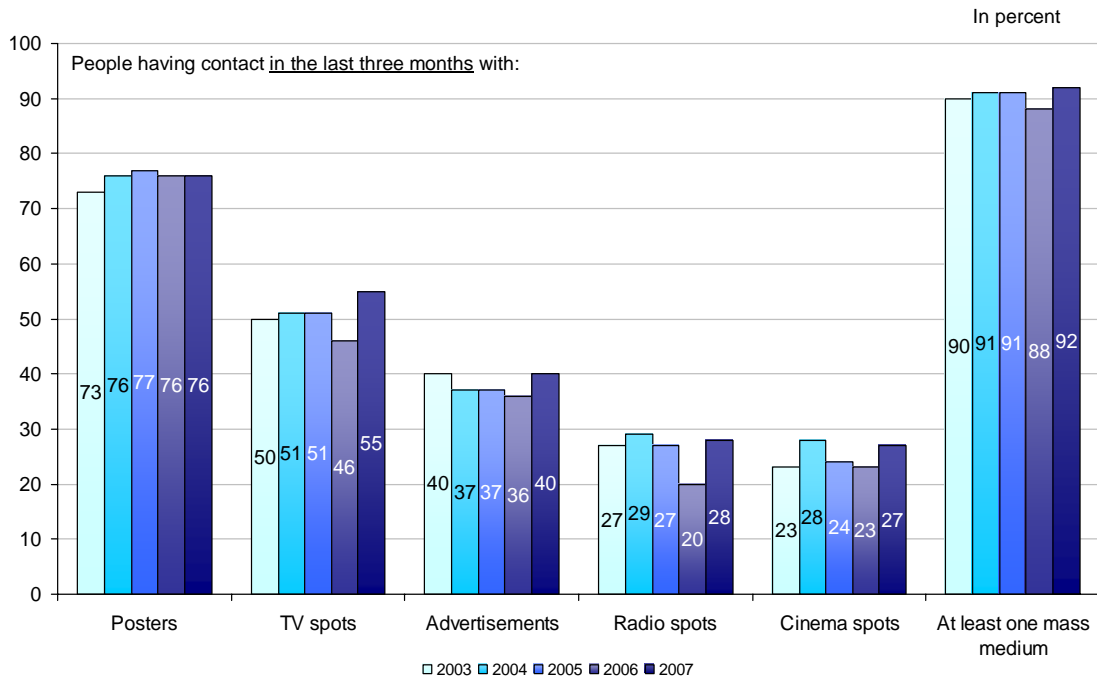
Figure 2: Reaches of mass-media AIDS education
 General population over the age of 16



BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2007”

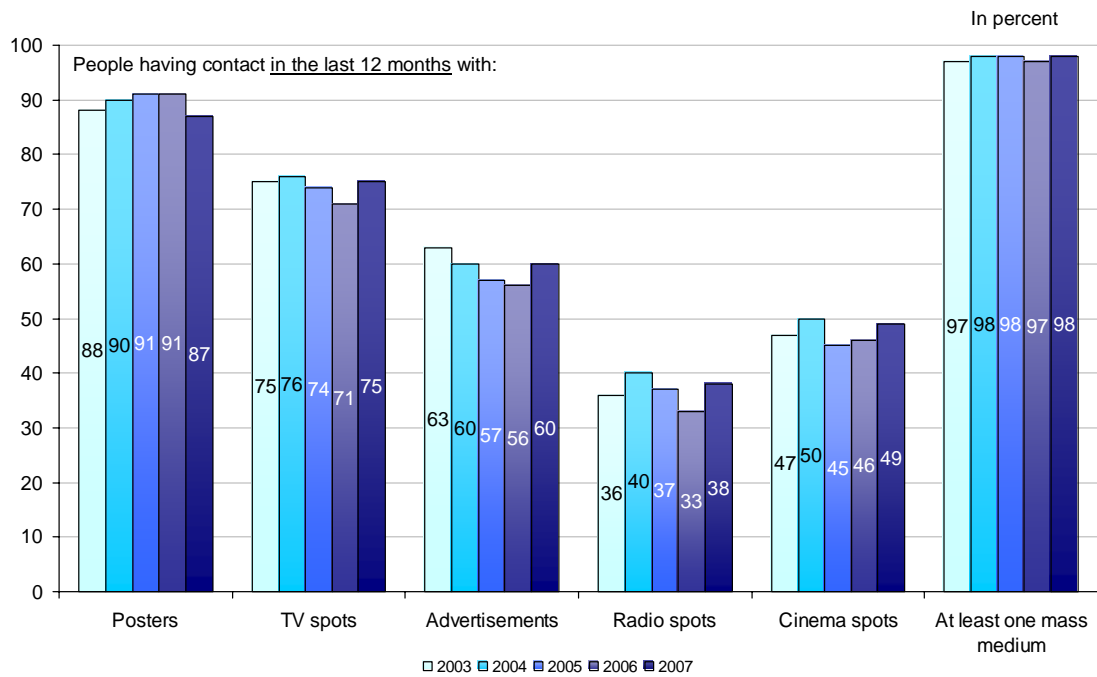
Mass-media AIDS education has even higher reaches among the group of sexually active 16 to 44 year-old singles, who are particularly important for AIDS prevention (Figures 3 and 4). In total, almost all (98 percent) 16 to 44 year-old singles in Germany were reached by at least one of these education media in the course of the past year, and nine-tenths in the last three months before the survey.

Figure 3: Reaches of mass-media AIDS education
16 to 44 year-old singles



BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2007”

Figure 4: Reaches of mass-media AIDS education
16 to 44 year-old singles



BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2007”

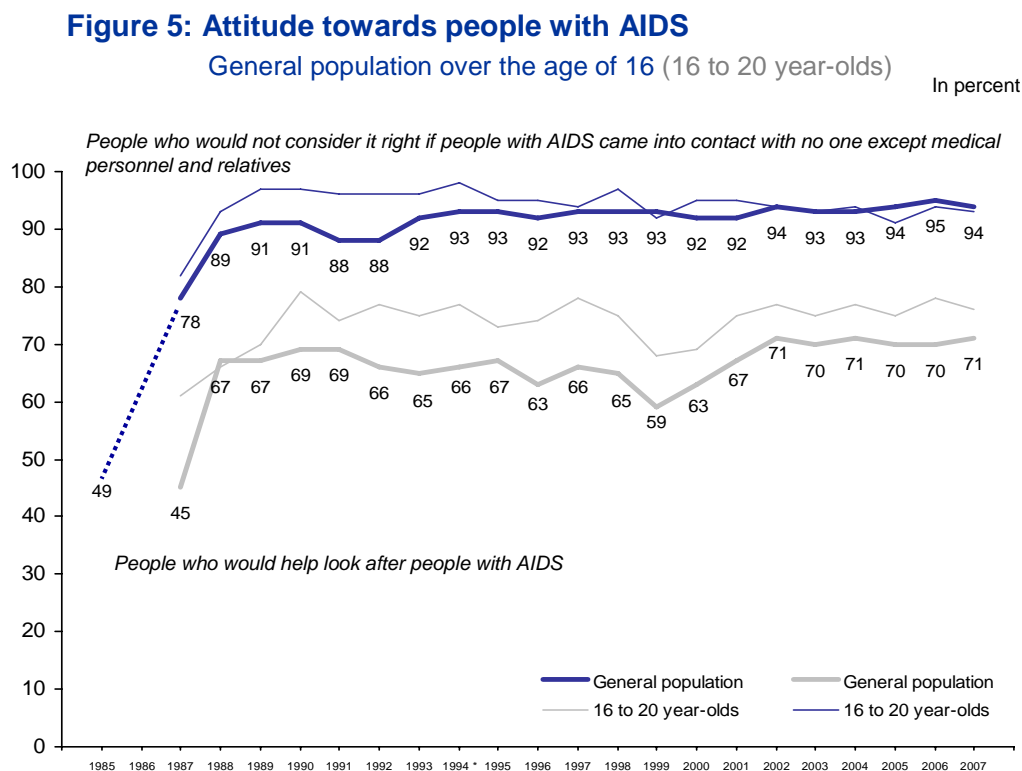
Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS

One major concern of the national "Don't give AIDS a chance" education campaign is to create and stabilise a social climate dominated by attitudes opposing the stigmatisation and isolation of people with HIV and AIDS, and to promote willingness to provide social support and assistance (Figure 5).

The attitudes of the population towards people with HIV and AIDS continue to remain stable. In 2007, 94 percent of the general population again rejected the isolation of AIDS patients. Only few were willing to isolate people with HIV and AIDS.

A high percentage of the population (71 percent), and particularly also of the young people, was willing to help look after people with AIDS.

These attitudes did not prevail in the early days. In 1985, before the start of AIDS education for the whole of the population, only just under half (49 percent) considered social isolation to be wrong (36 percent were even in favour of it), and less than half (45 percent) were willing to help look after people with AIDS.



BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2007"

1985: forsa representative survey

*Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

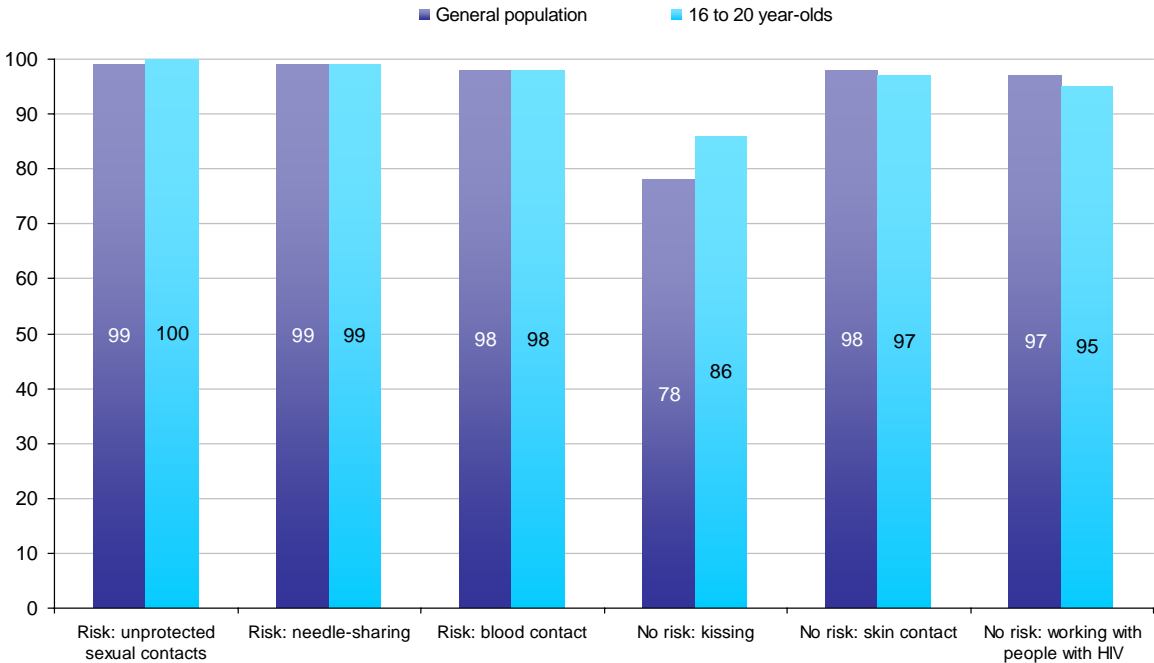
Level of information and knowledge

Following the launch of the AIDS education campaign, the level of knowledge of the general population regarding the transmission routes of HIV reached a very high level that has been maintained to this day (Figure 6). Almost the entire population possesses the basic knowledge required for protection against AIDS. 99 percent of the general population know that a risk of infection exists in the event of unprotected sexual contacts and intravenous drug use. Similarly, 98 percent are also aware that blood-to-blood contacts pose a risk of infection.

There is also widespread knowledge regarding how the HI virus cannot be transmitted. This knowledge is an important prerequisite for a social climate opposing the isolation of people with HIV and AIDS. 98 percent know that there is no risk of infection in the event of skin contact with people with HIV, and 97 percent see no risk in sharing a workplace with people with HIV. 78 percent of the general population are aware of the fact that kissing can virtually be ruled out as a potential transmission route.

On the whole, 16 to 20 year-old young people have the same high level of knowledge as the population in general. Kissing is an exception: more young people (86 percent) know that it is not to be rated as a transmission risk.

Figure 6: Knowledge of transmission routes



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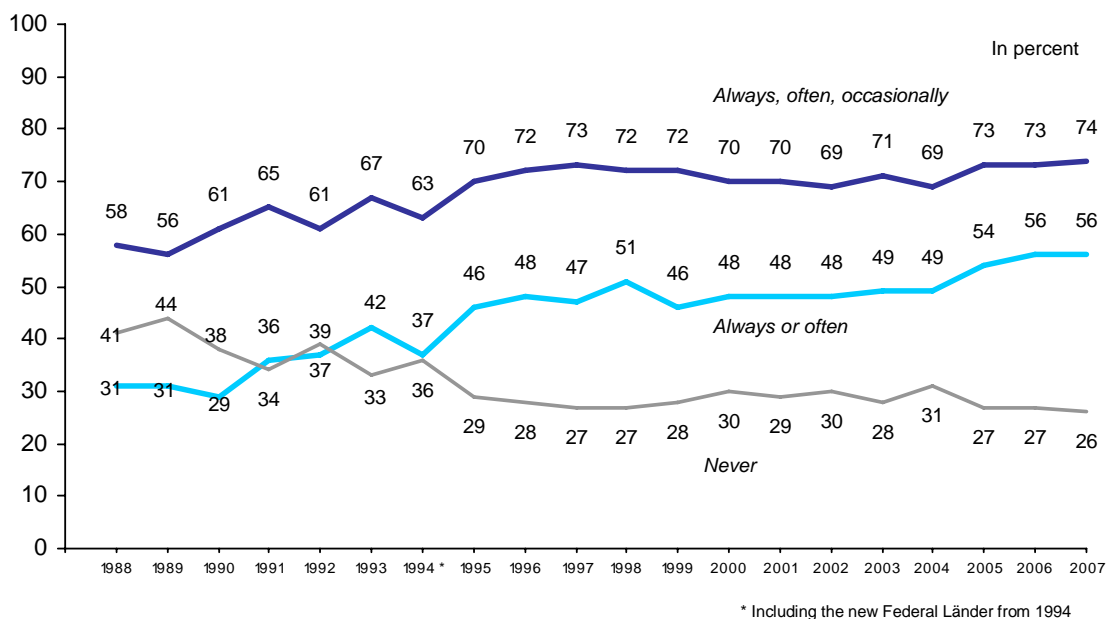
Protection against HIV

The use of condoms has spread substantially among the population of the Federal Republic of Germany since the beginning of the AIDS education campaign. Thus, while 58 percent of the respondents in the sexually active group of singles under the age of 45 used condoms in 1988, the figure had risen to 74 percent by 2007 (Figure 7).

Following a lengthy period of stagnation, there has been a marked increase in regular condom use (always or often) since 2004 - from 49 percent to 56 percent in 2006 and 2007, the highest level ever since the study began.

In 2007, 26 percent of the sexually active respondents without a steady partner stated that they had never used condoms during sexual intercourse in the recent past. Following an initial decline, this figure has been stagnating for more than ten years at just over one-quarter of this group.

Figure 7: Condom use among singles under the age of 45
having sexual contacts in the past year

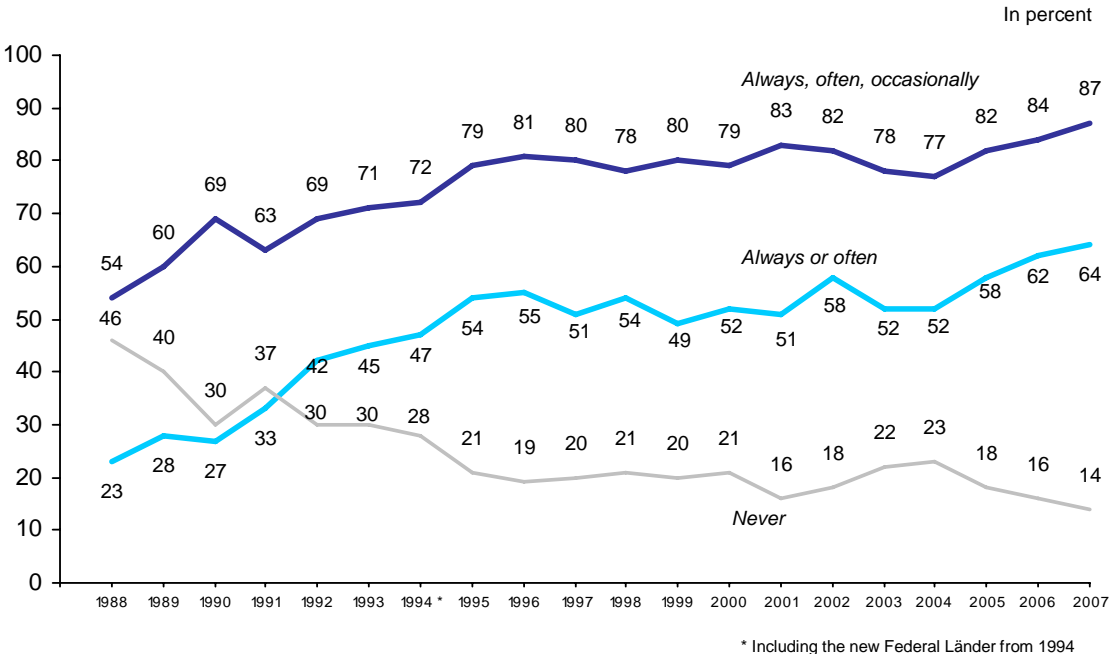


BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2007"

Following a decline between 2001 and 2004, condom use again increased rapidly in the group of people having several sex partners in the past twelve 12 months, reaching 87 percent - and thus the highest figure to date - in 2007 (Figure 8). The proportion of people using condoms regularly (often or always) rose even more rapidly in the last four years, from 52 percent to 64 percent, this likewise being the highest figure recorded so far.

In this sub-group of persons displaying potentially risky sexual conduct, 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. However, there was also an increase here between 2001 and 2004. Since 2005, there has been a renewed decline in the proportion of people who never used condoms in the recent past - to 14 percent, the lowest figure to date.

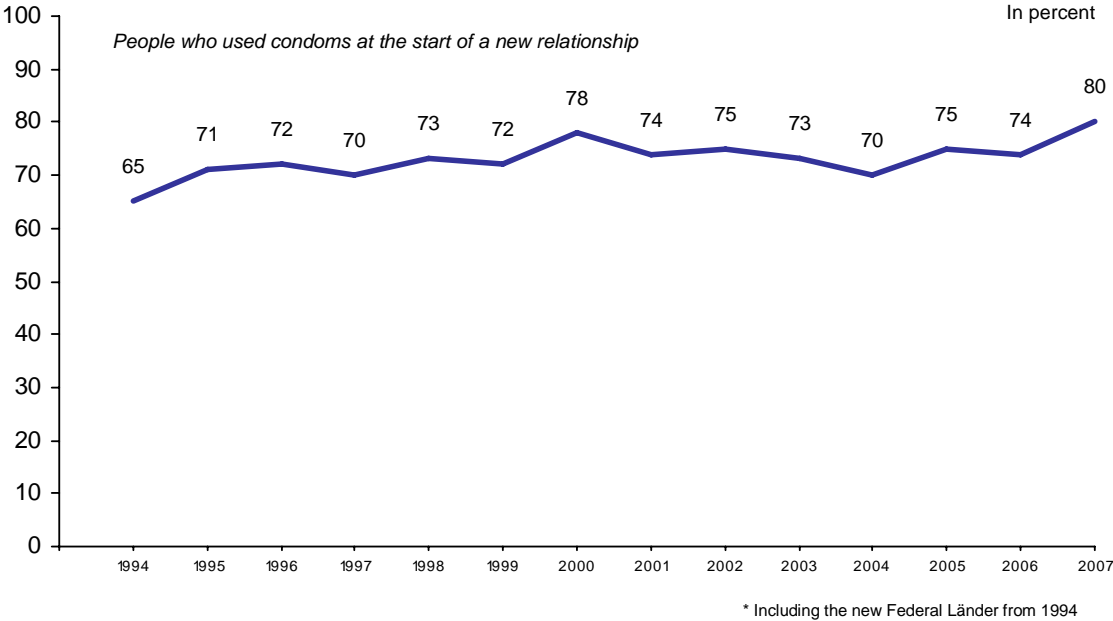
Figure 8: Condom use among respondents having several sex partners in the past year



BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2007”

Following a decline between 2000 and 2004, a marked increase in condom use at the start of new sexual relationships has likewise been seen again in recent years. In 2007, for example, 80 percent of both the men and the women who had begun a new sexual partnership in the previous twelve months stated that they had used condoms at the start of the new relationship (Figure 9).

Figure 9: Condom use at the start of new sexual relationships
Respondents with new sexual relationships in the past year

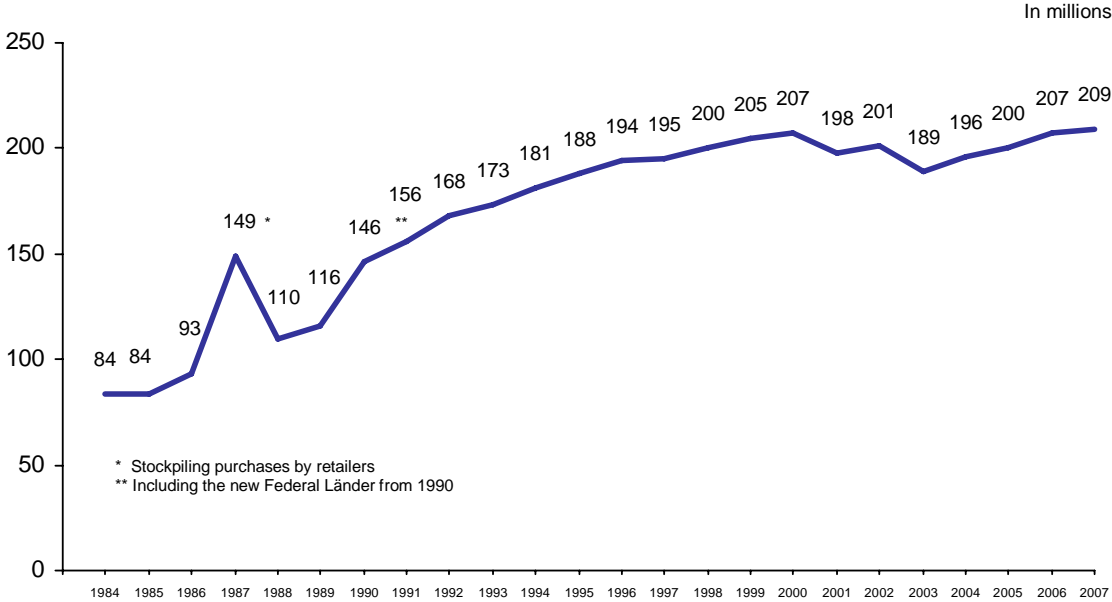


BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2007”

The development of condom use can also be seen from external data, such as the condom sales figures collected and published by the German Latex Research Information Centre (Informationszentrum der Deutschen Latexforschung) (Figure 10). The sales figures curve rose sharply following the start of the AIDS education campaign, reaching a first peak of 149 million in 1987, when retailers increased their stocks in response to the growth in demand at that time.

After that, condom sales grew steadily up to the year 2000, when they reached a total of 207 million. Between 2001 and 2003, the condom sales figures declined to 189 million. However, the decline did not continue in 2004 and condom sales again began to rise: sales in 2007 totalled 209 million condoms, the highest figure to date. This means that the condom use measured by this study and externally documented condom sales are developing in the same direction.

Figure 10: Condom sales



Source: Deutsche Latexforschungsgemeinschaft Kondome e.V.

BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2007”

Summary

AIDS education continues to reach almost the entire population. The reach of the posters among the general public has remained at a consistently high level during the past five years. Compared to the previous survey in 2006, the reaches of the TV and radio spots, and also of the advertisements in magazines, increased slightly in 2007. In total, 79 percent of the population in Germany were reached by at least one medium of mass-communication education in the last three months before the survey, and 91 percent in the course of the last 12 months.

Mass-media AIDS education achieves even higher reaches among sexually active 16 to 44 year-old singles, who constitute a particularly important target group for prevention. Nine-tenths (92 percent) of them were reached by at least one of the BZgA's mass media within the short period of the last three months. Almost the entire target group (98 percent) was reached within the preceding twelve months.

Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS again remained stable in 2007. 94 percent of the population reject the isolation of people with HIV and AIDS.

Since the start of the AIDS education campaign, the knowledge of the general population, and particularly also of 16 to 20 year-old young people, regarding the transmission routes of HIV has reached a very high level that has been maintained to this day.

The use of condoms has also spread substantially in the population of the Federal Republic of Germany. In 1988, 58 percent of the sexually active group of singles under the age of 45 used condoms, the figure in 2007 being 74 percent. In particular, there has been a marked increase in regular condom use (always or often) since 2004: from 49 percent to 56 percent in 2006 and 2007, the highest level in the whole of the period covered by the study. The proportion of singles under the age of 45 who never use condoms has remained roughly unchanged for more than ten years. In 2007, 26 percent of the respondents without a steady partner stated that they had not used condoms during sexual intercourse in the recent past.

There has been an even more pronounced increase in condom use among persons having several sex partners in the past twelve months. Following a decline in the proportion of these persons who always, often or occasionally used condoms, from 83 percent in 2001 to 77 percent in 2004, the figure has since risen by 10 percentage points to 87 percent, the highest value recorded so far. The proportion of people using condoms regularly (often or always) rose from 52 percent in 2004 to 64 percent in 2007. During the same period, the number of people who never used condoms in the recent past fell from 23 percent to 14 percent, the lowest figure recorded to date.

The use of condoms at the start of new sexual relationships likewise rose by 10 percentage points, from 70 percent in 2004 to 80 percent in 2007.

This trend towards more widespread protective behaviour is also reflected in the condom sales figures, which rose to a record total of 209 million in 2007.