

Public Awareness of AIDS in the Federal Republic of Germany 2010

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour
relating to protection against AIDS

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

Summary

June 2011

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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 connection with HIV and 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 respondents)

Sample size:

	n unweighted	% unweighted	% weighted
Total	7,001	100	100
Western Germany	6,048	86	84
Eastern Germany	953	14	16
Men	3,112	45	49
Women	3,881	55	51
Singles under the age of 45	3,245	46	20
Men	1,674	52	55
Women	1,571	48	45
16 to 20 year-olds	1,970	28	8

Survey period: October 2010 to December 2010

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

Introduction

The AIDS education campaign entitled "Don't give AIDS a chance" has been informing the population of the Federal Republic of Germany about HIV and AIDS and the associated infection risks since the mid-1980s. It tells people that and how they can protect themselves against infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. Information offerings in the form of both mass and personal communication are made available, specifically targeting different segments of the population.

The principal goals of the campaign are to prevent the further spread of HIV and 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 study entitled "Public Awareness of AIDS" to examine

- The extent to which the population is reached by the campaign's various education measures and makes use of the information offered,
- Whether a climate of social acceptance exists among the population regarding people with HIV and AIDS, or whether there are detectable tendencies to isolate them,
- Whether the level of knowledge necessary for AIDS prevention continues to be maintained, and
- The extent to which people protect themselves against the HI virus by using condoms - particularly including groups of the population displaying relatively risky sexual behaviour, such as 16 to 44 year-old singles having changing partnerships.

The present Summary contains key results of the latest survey, which was completed at the end of 2010.

Education offerings on HIV and STIs

Use of media of the AIDS education campaign

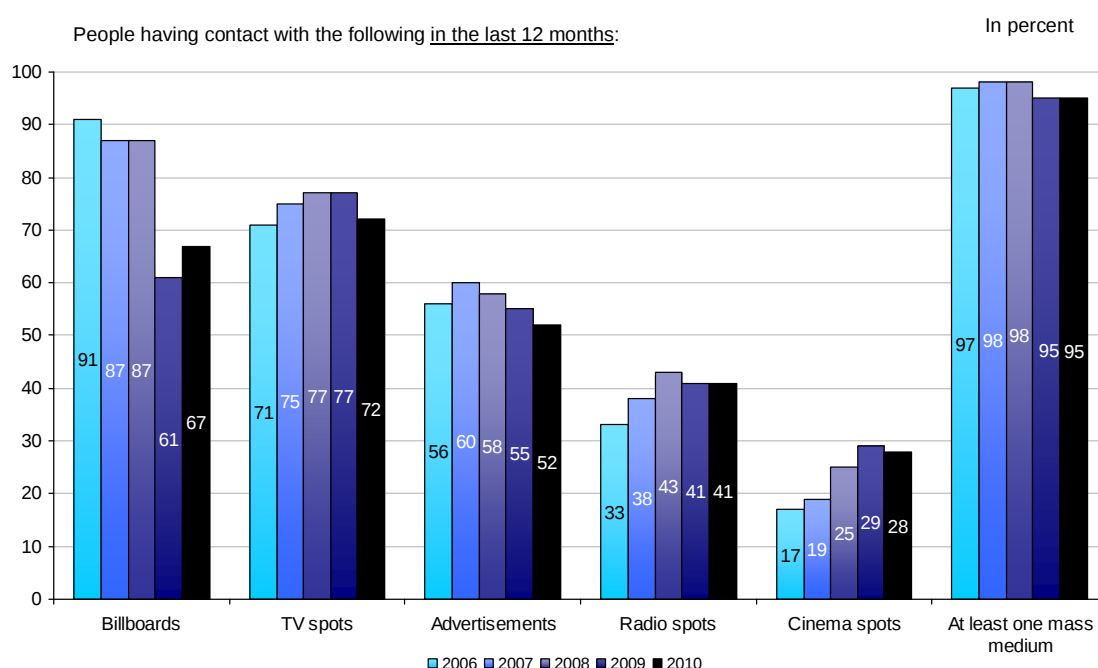
One of the central tasks of the "Public Awareness of AIDS" study is to examine the extent to which the German population as a whole, and important sub-target groups thereof, are reached by the various AIDS prevention media.

By way of example, the reaches are presented for the 16 to 44 year-old singles and refer to the past 12 months.

16 to 44 year-old singles are an important target group for HIV prevention because potentially risky sexual behaviour is more common among them than in the general population: 45 percent of them began one or more new sexual relationships in the past twelve months, 62 percent can imagine starting a new sexual relationship in the near future, and 23 percent had several sex partners in the past year (30 percent of the men and 15 percent of the women). Moreover, in the last twelve months before the survey, 12 percent of them had sexual contacts with partners previously unknown to them (17 percent of the men and 5 percent of the women) and 10 percent on holiday trips (14 percent of the men and 6 percent of the women). Based on their own sexual conduct, 16 percent consider it possible that they could contract an HIV infection (19 percent of the men and 13 percent of the women).

The following is a description of the extent to which this group is reached by the mass-media education offerings and the more intensive offerings. The first item to be examined is the reach of the billboards of the "mach's mit" ("join in") campaign, TV, cinema and radio spots, as well as advertisements in newspapers, magazines or journals, over the last five years.

Fig. 1 Reaches of mass-media AIDS education
16 to 44 year-old singles

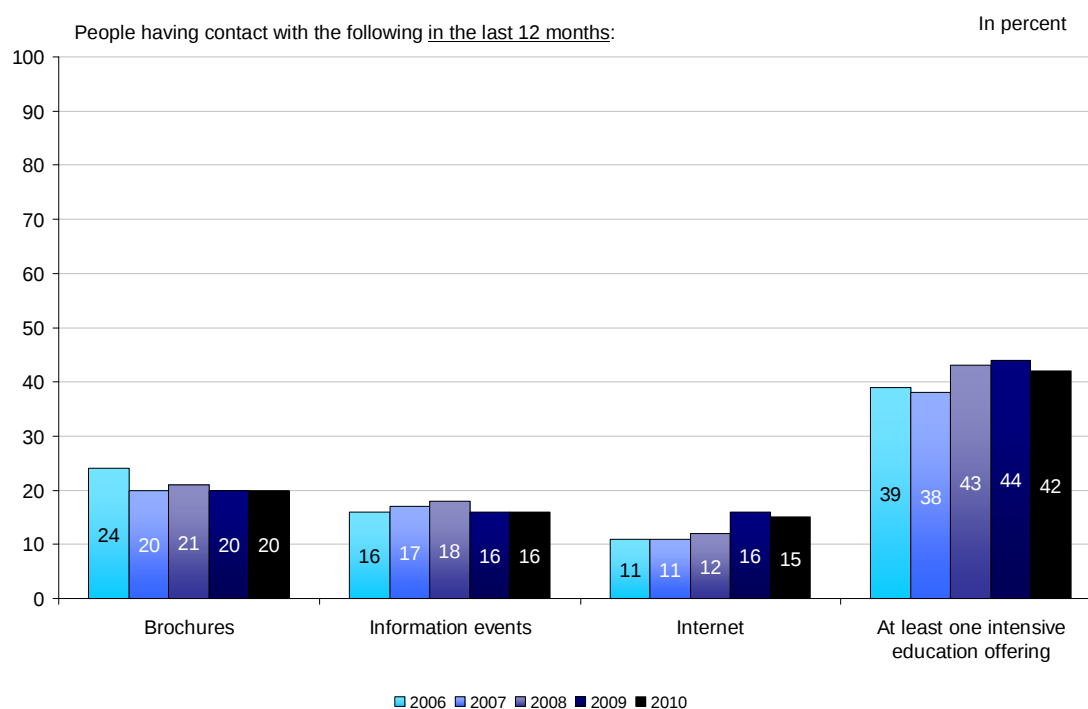


Until the year 2008, the greatest reaches were recorded for the "mach's mit" billboards. In 2010, they reached 67 percent of the 16 to 44 year-old singles, referred to the last twelve months. This indicates that the new series of "Liebesorte" ("Places for love") billboards is not yet as well-known as the "vegetable-and-condom" motifs that preceded them. The highest level of familiarity in 2010 was achieved by the TV spots (72 percent). Advertisements succeeded in reaching 52 percent in the past twelve months. 41 percent heard the radio spots within the past twelve months, and 28 percent saw the education spots shown in cinemas. Familiarity with the radio and cinema spots has grown substantially over the past five years.

All in all, 95 percent of this target group in Germany was reached by at least one of these education media in the course of the year preceding the survey.

The more intensive AIDS education offerings are brochures, information events or information from the Internet. These media provide a basis for obtaining more detailed and more extensive information on the subject of AIDS. Since occupation with these media is an active and more time-consuming form of access, the ranges of these media are far smaller than those of the mass-media AIDS education measures. The use of brochures for obtaining information on HIV and AIDS has been in the region of 20 percent for several years. The use of information events as a source of more intensive AIDS education is likewise constant, amounting to 16 percent in 2010. Use of the Internet for HIV education rose from 11 percent in 2006 to 16 percent in 2009, but did not continue to rise in 2010, when the figure was 15 percent. In total, 42 percent of the 16 to 44 year-old singles thus had contact with at least one offering of intensive AIDS education in the year 2010.

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



BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2010"

Need for information on sexually transmitted infections

There is a close link between HIV/AIDS prevention and education regarding infection risks and protection options in connection with other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). For example, sexually transmitted infections, such as syphilis or gonorrhoea, can increase the risk of infection with HIV.

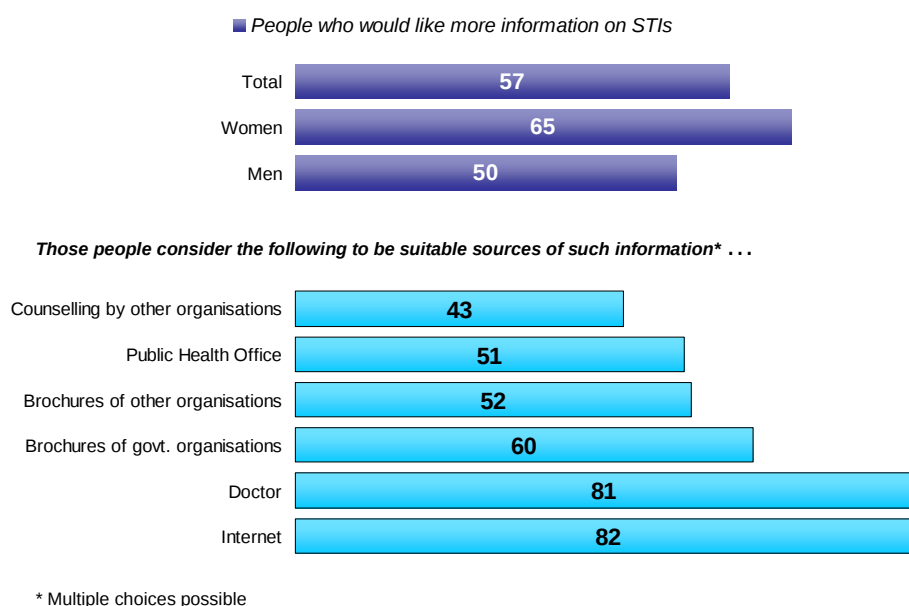
Increasing attention is already being paid to the subject of STIs in the framework of the "Don't give AIDS a chance" campaign, and targeted information is being provided regarding infection routes, symptoms and protection options. For some years, the repeat surveys have included questions that give an insight into the public's need for information regarding STIs. 65 percent of the men and 50 percent of the women surveyed currently express a need for additional information on STIs.

In reply to the question as to which sources of information they personally consider suitable for obtaining information on STIs, more than four-fifths of the respondents say a personal talk with a doctor (81 percent) and the Internet (82 percent). 60 percent consider brochures from government organisations to be a suitable medium for education on STIs. However, brochures from other organisations (52 percent) and counselling at Public Health Offices (51 percent) are also rated as suitable sources of information by roughly half of the 16 to 44 year-old singles, counselling by other organisations being named by 43 percent.

The results show that – very much as in the case of HIV/AIDS prevention in the past – a variety of access routes based on mass media and personal communication can be used for the further development of STI prevention.

Fig. 3 Need for information on STIs

16 to 44 year-old singles



In percent

Protection against HIV and STIs

Attitudes towards condom use

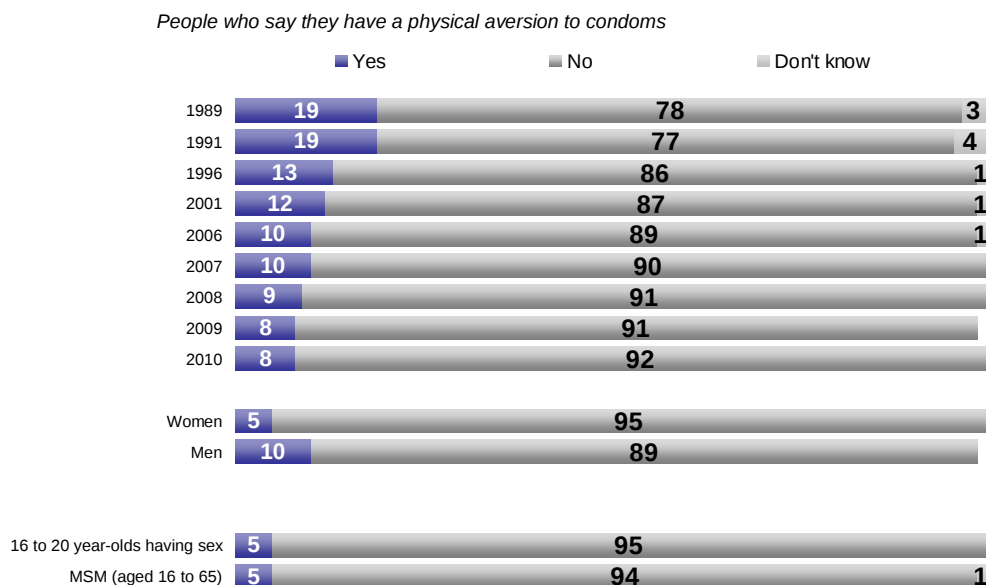
People with frequently changing sex partners are an important target group for the prevention of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Be it when looking for a partner, during fleeting sexual contacts, or when making holiday acquaintances: every new sexual relationship holds the risk of a person contracting HIV or some other sexually transmitted infection (STI). Consequently, attitudes and behaviour in this respect are presented here explicitly for the group of 16 to 44 year-old singles.

Ever since the start of AIDS education, the education offerings of the BZgA have aimed to break the taboo regarding the use of condoms and to make it easier for people to use them. For instance, humour was used in TV and cinema spots to address reservations and anxieties, or on billboards to remind people to use condoms as protection against an HIV infection.

Emotional reservations regarding condoms have slowly but steadily declined in the course of the nationwide AIDS education campaign, particularly also among 16 to 44 year-old, sexually active singles. The number of people stating that they have a "physical aversion" to condoms dropped from 19 percent in 1989 to 8 percent in 2009. This figure remained unchanged in 2010, when 5 percent of the women expressed these reservations, and 10 percent of the men. At 5 percent, 16 to 20 year-olds who have already experienced sexual intercourse expressed a physical aversion just as rarely as men who have sex with men (MSM).

This positive trend increases the probability of condoms actually being used.

Fig. 4 Attitude: Physical aversion to condoms
16 to 44 year-old singles having sexual intercourse in the past 12 months



In percent

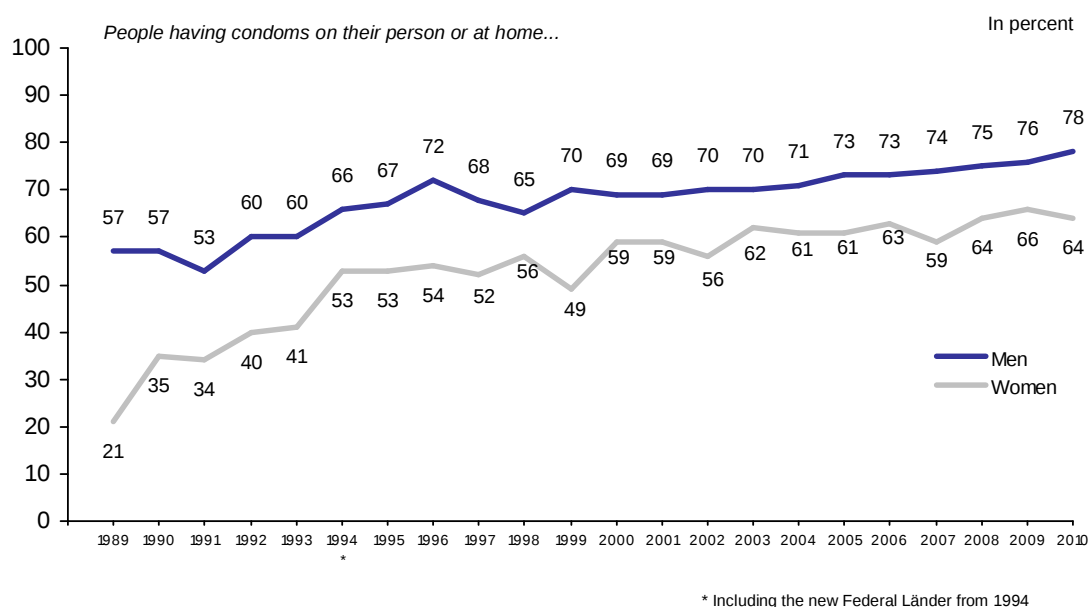
Condom possession

The decline in emotional reservations regarding condoms was accompanied by increasing willingness to use condoms for protection. Condom possession is an indicator for the intention to really use condoms in an intimate situation, because it presupposes the active purchase of condoms. Condom possession is examined by asking the respondents whether they currently have condoms at home or on their person.

In the long-term view, a substantial increase in condom possession can be seen among the group of 16 to 44 year-old singles. More than three-quarters (78 percent) of the younger, single men have condoms at home or on their person, and thus also the intention to protect themselves and their partners. The biggest increase among the 16 to 44 year-old single men was recorded between 1989 and 1996 – from 57 percent to 72 percent. The value was generally in the region of 70 percent in the next ten years, since when it has again been rising slowly, but steadily.

It is remarkable to note how condom availability among 16 to 44 year-old single women has changed: in 1989, 21 percent had condoms at home or on their person. The figure had more than tripled by 2010: almost two-thirds (64 percent) of the women have condoms at their disposal.

Fig. 5 Condom possession as an intention to use protection
16 to 44 year-old singles



BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2010"

Condom use in new partnerships

Condom use at the start of new relationships is an important indicator for protective behaviour in situations involving a potential risk of HIV or STI transmission.

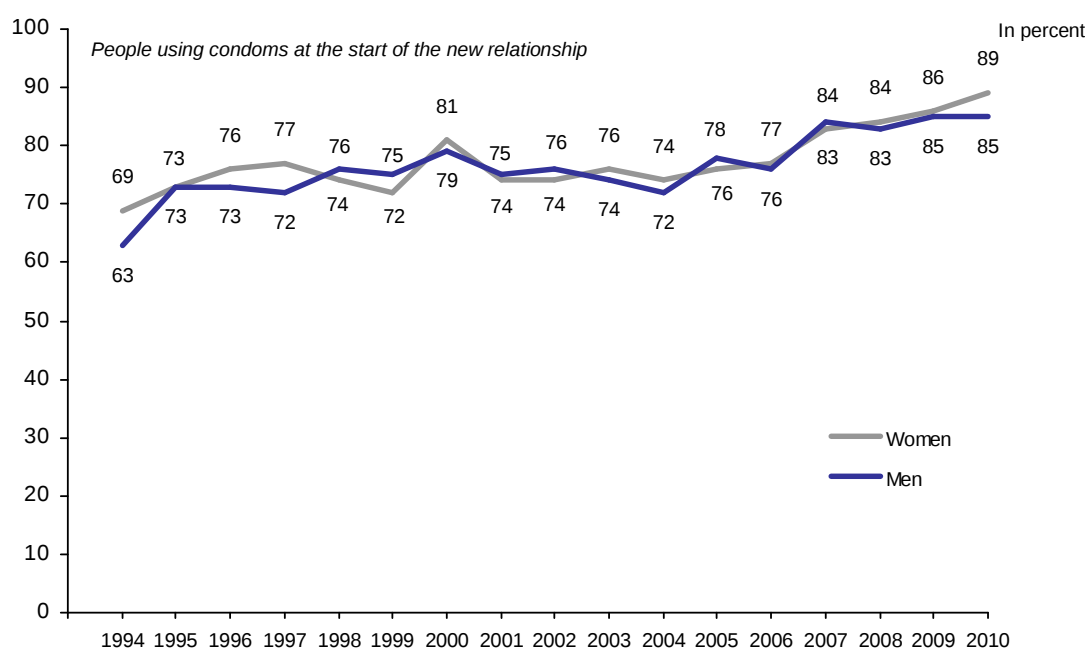
In 1994 – the year when this question was first asked – 63 percent of the men and 69 percent of the women in the group of 16 to 44 year-olds who had started a new sexual relationship in the past 12 months said they had used condoms at the start of the new sexual relationship. These figures rose to 81 percent for the women and 79 percent for the men by the year 2000.

A marked decline in the use of condoms at the start of new relationships was seen in the period from 2000 to 2004. This development followed a pronounced decline in the reaches of HIV education media, and thus in publicly communicated reminders about HIV and AIDS.

However, protective behaviour in this sub-group has again increased substantially since 2004: from 72 percent to 85 percent among the men, and from 74 percent to 89 percent among the women in 2010. In both groups, these are the highest figures to date for the number of people using condoms at the start of new sexual relationships.

Fig. 6 Condom use at the start of new relationships

16 to 44 year-old respondents having new sexual relationships in the past year



* Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2010"

Condom use in the event of changing partnerships

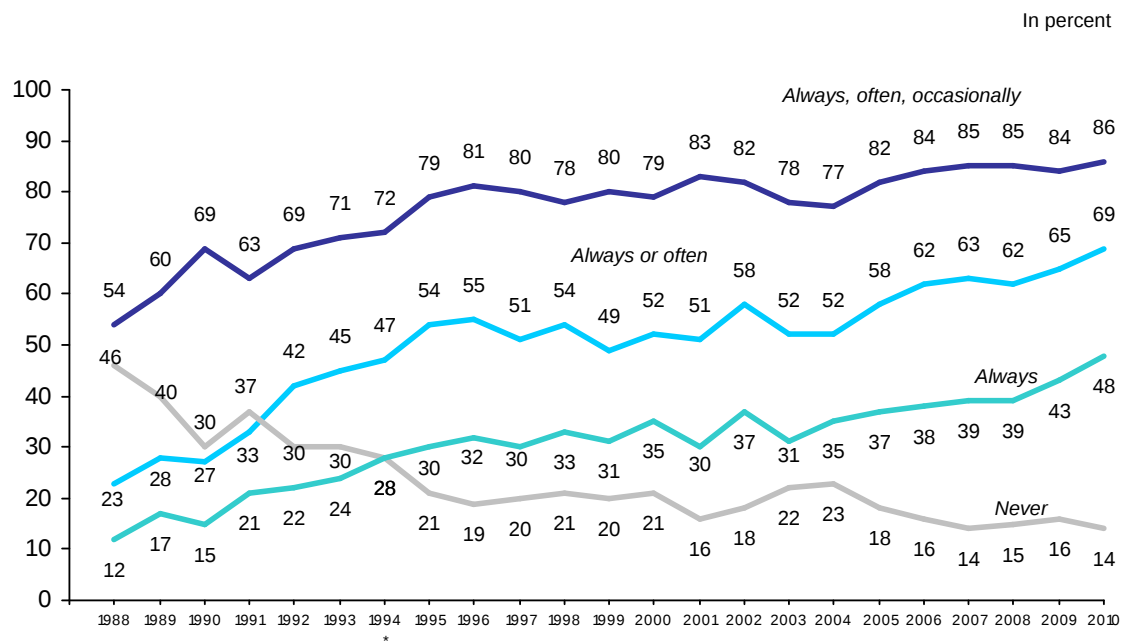
The "mach's mit" prevention campaign also specifically addresses non-monogamous adults. The campaign is designed to arouse people's awareness of risky situations and offer them concrete options for their actions, e.g. for the purchase and storage of condoms or the conscious expression of an interest in protection in an intimate situation.

Since 1988, when the question was asked for the first time, there has been a major increase in condom use among respondents who had several sex partners in the last twelve months prior to the survey. Between 1988 and 1996, the proportion of people in this group who had at least occasionally used condoms in the recent past rose from 54 percent to 81 percent, declining to 77 percent in 2004, following a certain degree of fluctuation in the years between. The number of condom users (always, often, occasionally) has been rising again since that time, reaching a figure of 86 percent in 2010.

There has, however, been a particularly marked increase in the proportion of people who use condoms regularly (often or always): to be precise, it tripled from 23 percent in 1988 to 69 percent in 2010, this being the highest value to date. The proportion of people who always use condoms is also remarkable. It quadrupled in the period under review, from 12 percent to 48 percent. At the same time, there was a substantial decline in the number of people who never use condoms. The figures were 46 percent in 1988, 21 percent in 2000 and 14 percent in the survey conducted in 2010.

Fig. 7 Condom use in the event of changing partnerships

16 to 65 year-olds having several sex partners in the past year



* Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

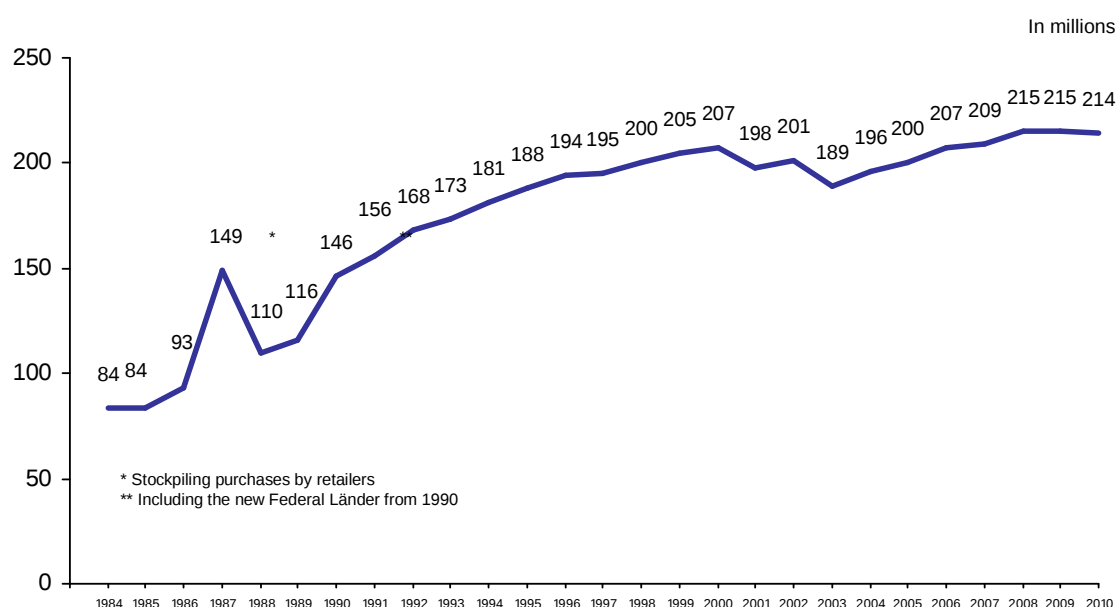
BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2010"

Condom sales

The development of condom use can also be seen from data not obtained with the help of surveys. They include the condom sales figures collected and published by the Informationszentrum der Deutschen Latexforschung. The sales figures curve rose steeply when the AIDS education campaign began, reaching record sales of 149 million in 1987. This growth can be interpreted as being a reaction on the part of retailers, who increased their stocks in response to the growing demand emerging at the time.

After that, condom sales initially dropped again, to 110 million, then steadily rising again to reach a total of 207 million in the year 2000. The condom sales figures subsequently declined to 189 million between 2001 and 2003, which more or less coincided with the decrease in condom use measured in this study (see preceding section). However, the decline did not continue in 2004, and condom sales began to rise again, reaching a figure of 215 million in 2008. Sales in 2010 totalled 214 million condoms. It is apparent that the condom use measured in this study and the externally documented condom sales display parallel changes.

Fig. 8 Condom sales



Source: Deutsche Latexforschungsgemeinschaft Kondome e.V.

BZgA – Representative survey “Public Awareness of AIDS 2010”

Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS

One of the essential concerns of the national "Don't give AIDS a chance" education campaign is to create and stabilise a climate of social attitudes opposed to stigmatisation and isolation of people with HIV and AIDS, and the promotion of willingness to provide social support and assistance.

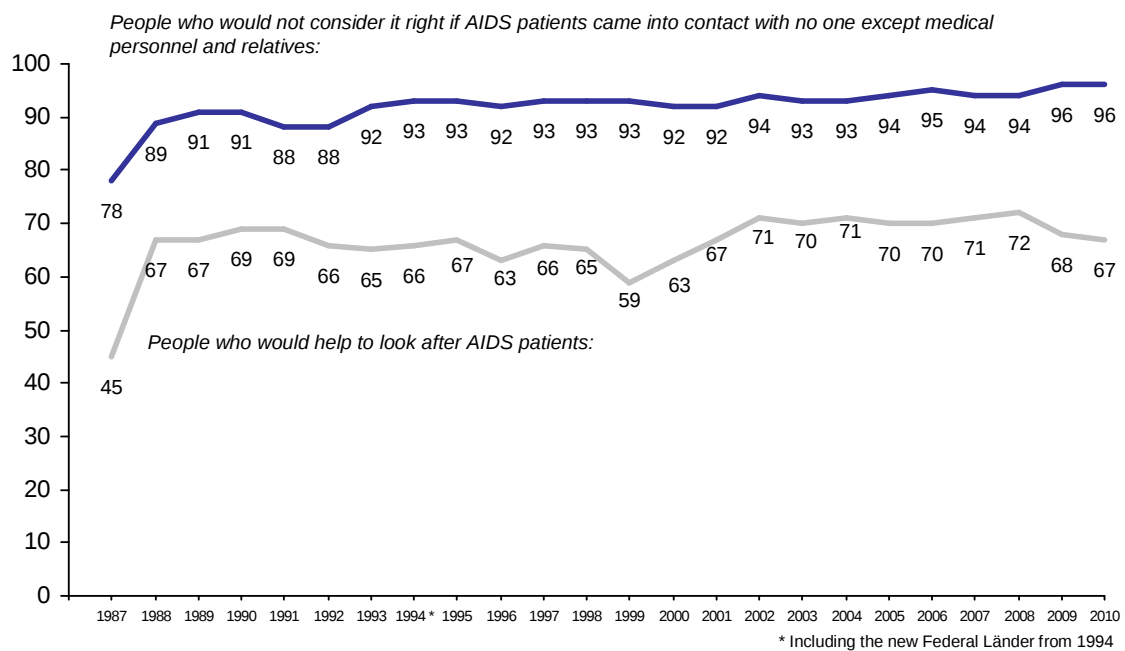
The public's attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS continue to remain stable. In 2010, too, 96 percent of the general population reject the isolation of AIDS patients. Only few advocate the isolation of people HIV and AIDS.

Moreover, a large portion of the population (67 percent) is willing to help look after people suffering from AIDS. The explanation for the slight decline in this figure could be that the improved drug treatment now available is increasingly enabling people with an HIV infection to lead a largely normal life without special care and support.

Fig. 9 Attitude towards people with HIV

General population over the age of 16

In percent



BZgA – Representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS 2010"

Summary

The HIV/AIDS prevention offerings in Germany continue to reach the population. In 2010, 95 percent of the target group of 16 to 44 year-old singles perceived at least one mass-communication AIDS education medium. The highest level of familiarity is achieved by the TV spots (72 percent). Familiarity with the radio and cinema spots has continued to grow over the past five years. Offerings of intensive HIV/AIDS education reach 42 percent of the 16 to 44 year-old singles. The use of brochures has been in the region of 20 percent for several years. Information events are utilised by 16 percent of this target group. HIV education through the Internet increased from 11 percent in 2006 to 16 percent in 2009, but no longer rose in 2010, reaching a figure of 15 percent.

57 percent of the 16 to 44 year-old singles would like additional information on sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The most important sources of information in this context are considered to be a doctor (81 percent) and the Internet (82 percent), as well as brochures from government organisations (60 percent).

Essential prerequisites for protection against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) have improved in the course of AIDS education. For example, there has been a slow, but steady decline in emotional reservations regarding condoms. The number of 16 to 44 year-old, sexually active singles who say they have a "physical aversion" to condoms fell from 19 percent in 1989 to 8 percent in 2009 and 2010, to 5 percent among the women and 10 percent among the men.

The decline in emotional reservations regarding condoms was accompanied by a parallel increase in willingness to use condoms for protection. This is revealed by the development of condom possession, which is an indicator for the intention to actually use them in an intimate situation. More than three-quarters (78 percent) of the younger, single men today have condoms at home or on their person. The figure was still as low as 57 percent in 1989. Condom availability among 16 to 44 year-old single women has more than tripled, from 21 percent in 1989 to 64 percent in 2010.

On the whole, there has likewise been a marked increase in condom use at the start of new relationships since 1994. Following a decline between 2000 and 2004, it has since increased again, to 85 percent among the men and 89 percent among the women in 2010, these being the highest figures to date since the study began.

Since 1988, there has similarly been a major rise in condom use among 16 to 65 year-olds having several sex partners in the past year. Above all, the proportion of people who use condoms regularly (often or always) has tripled, from 23 percent in 1988 to 69 percent in 2010, this being the highest figure to date. The proportion of people who always use condoms has even quadrupled, from 12 percent to 48 percent.

The development of condom use can also be seen from the condom sales figures of the Informationszentrum der Deutschen Latexforschung. Sales in 2010 amounted to 214 million condoms. The condom use measured in this study and the externally documented condom sales display largely parallel changes.

Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS again remained stable in 2010. 96 percent of the population reject the isolation of people with HIV and AIDS.