

Headline	1 in 7 with HIV in Europe unaware of status		
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1 in 7 with HIV in Europe unaware of status

STOCKHOLM: One in seven people with HIV in Europe is unaware of their infection, the European Union and World Health Organisation reported yesterday, as 2015 marked another record year for new HIV cases in the region.

"HIV/AIDS continues to be a serious problem in Europe... The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) estimates that one in seven people living with HIV are unaware of their status is particularly worrying," EU Health Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis said in the report released ahead of World AIDS Day tomorrow.

"People who do not know they are infected cannot benefit from life-saving treatment, and can continue to transmit the virus to others."

The ECDC figure is based on data from the 28 EU nations plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

Almost half of cases in those countries — 47 per cent — are diagnosed at a late stage of infection, ECDC said, estimating that on average, it takes almost four years before an HIV infection is diagnosed and reported.

Sex between men remains the main reported HIV transmission mode in those 31 countries, accounting for 42 per cent of diagnoses. Men who have sex with men is the only group that has seen a steady increase

in infections over the years, the report said. Heterosexual sex accounts for 32 per cent of diagnoses, followed by drug use at four per cent.

Meanwhile, Europe registered its highest number of new HIV cases in a single year last year, at 153,407 cases, up from 142,000 in 2014, WHO said.

The 2014 figures were also a record number, driven by cases in Russia and immigrants who acquired the virus after arrival. The WHO regional office for Europe has a different definition of Europe and compiles data from 53 countries.

Almost 80 per cent of the 2015 cases it tallied were reported in eastern Europe, 18 per cent in western Europe and three per cent in central Europe.

Russia, where HIV remains a largely taboo subject, accounted for 64 per cent of all newly diagnosed infections in WHO's European region, and 81 per cent of cases in eastern Europe.

There, heterosexual sex is the main route of transmission of the virus which is spread through contact with contaminated body fluids.

Other countries with high rates of new infections last year were Ukraine, Belarus, Estonia, Moldova, Latvia and Georgia. **AFP**