

# Public Awareness of AIDS in the Federal Republic of Germany 2001

Knowledge, attitudes and behaviour  
relating to protection against AIDS

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

## Summary

May 2002



**Bundeszentrale  
für  
gesundheitliche  
Aufklärung**

Federal Centre for Health Education, Unit 2-25  
Ostmerheimer Strasse 220, D-51109 Köln, Germany  
Tel.: (+49) (0)221 8992-341, Fax: (+49) (0)221 8992-300,  
[www.bzga.de/studien](http://www.bzga.de/studien)

## **Introduction**

Since the start of the AIDS education campaign in 1987, the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA) has examined the effect of AIDS prevention on the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the public regarding HIV and AIDS. To this end, it conducts the annual representative survey "Public Awareness of AIDS" among the general population aged 16 or over in the Federal Republic of Germany. Specifically, the survey examines the degree to which

- education measures reach the public,
- the knowledge necessary for protection against HIV infection spreads,
- people protect themselves against sexual transmission of the virus by using condoms,
- persons with HIV and AIDS are seen as people who need attention and help and should not be isolated by society.

The present summary contains the key results of the latest survey, which was completed at the end of 2001. They are presented together with their longer-term trends, either for the general public as a whole or for sub-groups of particular importance for prevention, primarily meaning 16 to 44 year-old singles.

A detailed report on the results can be requested from the Federal Centre for Health Education or downloaded from the Internet ([www.bzga.de/studien/daten/stud.htm](http://www.bzga.de/studien/daten/stud.htm)).

## Details of the study: Goals and methods

Goals:	Evaluation of the AIDS education 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 population aged 16 or over in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1987 (including the new Federal Länder since 1994).																		
Mode of data collection:	Computer-assisted telephone interviews (CATI)																		
Sampling procedure:	Random sample (computer-generated random telephone numbers, random selection of people in the household); disproportionately stratified sampling plan as regards age (16 to 44 year-olds: 2,374 cases).																		
Sample size:	<table><tr><td>Total:</td><td>3,600</td></tr><tr><td>Western Germany:</td><td>2,920</td></tr><tr><td>Eastern Germany:</td><td>680</td></tr><tr><td>16 to 65 year-olds:</td><td>3,153</td></tr><tr><td>Western Germany:</td><td>2,554</td></tr><tr><td>Eastern Germany:</td><td>599</td></tr><tr><td>Singles under 45 years:</td><td>1,036</td></tr><tr><td>Western Germany:</td><td>841</td></tr><tr><td>Eastern Germany:</td><td>195</td></tr></table>	Total:	3,600	Western Germany:	2,920	Eastern Germany:	680	16 to 65 year-olds:	3,153	Western Germany:	2,554	Eastern Germany:	599	Singles under 45 years:	1,036	Western Germany:	841	Eastern Germany:	195
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Survey period:	September 2001 to January 2002																		
Survey sampling, interviewing and statistical analysis:	forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen mbH, Berlin/Dortmund																		
Concept development, analysis and reporting:	Federal Centre for Health Education, Cologne, Unit 2-25, Gerhard Christiansen and Jürgen Töppich																		

## Information behaviour

The AIDS education campaign carried out in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1987 under the motto "Don't give AIDS a chance" is designed as a multimedia communication process, in which the various media and information offers fulfil different tasks. For example, the AIDS education TV spots and newspaper advertisements used from the outset have the role of permanent "stimuli", which are designed to draw the attention of the general public to HIV and protection against it at regular, relatively short intervals. In 2001, 43 per cent of the general public had seen an AIDS spot in the last three months, while 39 per cent had noticed one of the AIDS advertisements bearing the familiar campaign logo during this time.

The brochures and, above all, the information events also employed since the start of the education campaign are intended to provide intensive information with a longer-lasting effect. In 2001, 23 per cent had read a brochure on the subject of AIDS in the last 12 months, while 6 per cent had attended an AIDS education information event in the same period.

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### CONTACT WITH AIDS EDUCATION MEDIA

General public

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#### People having contact with TV spots

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1994	69	85	94
1999	40	66	89
2000	30	60	87
2001	43	64	89

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#### People having contact with newspaper advertisements

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1994	52	72	89
1999	37	59	81
2000	33	57	81
2001	39	57	81

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#### People having contact with AIDS education brochures

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1994	12	27	42
1999	8	22	48
2000	7	22	50
2001	7	23	54

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#### People attending lectures, information or educational events

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1994	2	6	14
1999	2	6	17
2000	2	5	18
2001	2	6	21

Figures in per cent

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

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In the mid-1990s, the results of the "Public Awareness of AIDS" study indicated that the reach of the media used up to that time was declining. In response to this development, the Federal Centre for Health Education created a number of additional media.

The "mach's mit" ("join in") poster campaign has become an important, new driving force in the AIDS education campaign. Half (50%) of the population had noticed the "mach's mit" posters showing colourful condom motifs in the last three months. 81 per cent are familiar with the poster campaign.

The purpose of radio and cinema AIDS education spots is likewise to motivate more people to regularly use protection against HIV. In the last three months of 2001, 17 per cent had heard a radio spot, while 12 per cent had seen a cinema spot.

Among the newly introduced media, the Internet offers the opportunity of obtaining more detailed information on AIDS. Three per cent of the general public and seven per cent of the 16 to 20 year-olds had utilised this offer in the 12 months of 2001.

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## CONTACT WITH NEW MEDIA OFFERS

General public

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### People having contact with the "mach's mit" campaign

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1999	47	66	75
2000	44	69	81
2001	50	68	81

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### People having contact with AIDS education cinema spots

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasionl
1999	10	20	41
2000	8	19	42
2001	12	22	45

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### People having contact with AIDS education radio spots

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1999	20	33	38
2000	18	31	39
2001	17	28	36

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### People obtaining information on AIDS via the Internet

	In the last 3 months	In the last 12 months	At all on some occasion
1999	1	2	3
2000	1	2	3
2001	1	3	5

Figures in per cent

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

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Taken together, all the media of the AIDS education campaign reached 77 per cent of the general public in 2001, 92 per cent of singles under 45 and 98 per cent of young people between the ages of 16 and 20. Compared to the previous year, the total reach rose among all groups, as did the reach of the mass-media education materials. This is primarily due to the fact that the TV spots on AIDS education were broadcast more often in the recent past.

There was no increase in utilisation of the opportunities for finding more detailed information; they were used to the same extent as in previous years.

Beyond the AIDS education campaign, more people again obtained information on AIDS from reports on television and in newspapers in 2001. The result of the generally greater use of mass-media information offers on AIDS is that there is again increasing communication on this topic in conversations with friends and relatives.

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## TOTAL REACH OF AIDS EDUCATION MEDIA

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### Total reach:

People having contact with at least one of the AIDS education media

	General public	16 to 44 year-old singles	16 to 20 year-olds
1999	75	87	92
2000	69	83	91
2001	77	92	98

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### Reach of the mass-media education media:

People having contact in the last 3 months with "mach's mit" posters, TV spots, cinema spots, radio spots or newspaper advertisements

	General public	16 to 44 year-old singles	16 to 20 year-olds
1999	72	84	90
2000	64	79	86
2001	73	89	95

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### Reach of detailed information opportunities:

People having contact in the last 12 months with brochures, information events or on the Internet

	General public	16 to 44 year-old singles	16 to 20 year-olds
1999	26	33	48
2000	24	34	53
2001	26	34	53

Figures in per cent

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

BZgA' 2-25/05.02

## Interest in information on AIDS

There is still widespread interest in AIDS education. Of the relatively young singles, 71 per cent expect information on how they can protect themselves against HIV infection. More than half (56%) of the total population over the age of 16 would still like to be informed about protection options and protective behaviour.

Seen over a lengthy period of time, there has been no major change in the interest in AIDS education. Only in the mid-1990s did it decline slightly, remaining largely constant at an average of 70 per cent among younger singles since 1998; among the general public as a whole, there has again been a slight increase in interest in AIDS education in recent years.

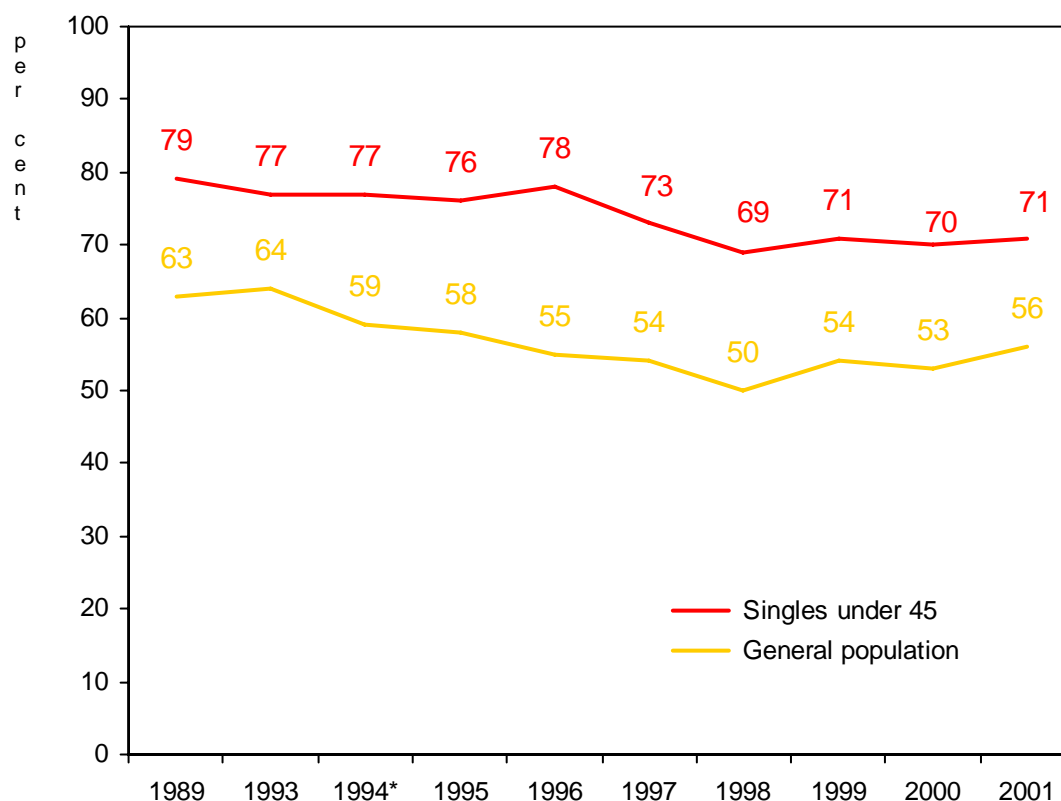
The majority of the general public is also still interested in other AIDS-related topics: 87 per cent would like to hear about medical research into the disease, while 65 per cent would like to know about the living situation of people with HIV and AIDS.

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## INTEREST IN INFORMATION ON PROTECTION AGAINST AIDS

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



\*including the new Federal countries from 1994

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Source: BZgA-Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by

forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin /Dortmund

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## Information level

Virtually the entire population has the basic knowledge necessary for protection against AIDS. For example, 99 per cent see unprotected sex as a potential source of infection. Almost as many (98%) are aware of the infection risk when injecting drugs. The knowledge necessary for living with people with HIV and AIDS is equally widespread: 95 per cent see no risk of infection when sharing a workplace with people with HIV.

This very high level of knowledge was reached soon after the start of the AIDS education campaign and has remained unchanged to this day.

There is still a need for information in a number of fields of knowledge of importance for HIV prevention. For instance, roughly one-quarter of young people are unaware of the fact that HIV can be transmitted even before full-blown AIDS develops; roughly one-fifth of relatively young singles is of the opinion that an HIV infection can be recognised by externally visible signs.

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### KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSMISSION ROUTES

General public

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	1987	1988	1995	2000	2001
<i>People who say a risk of infection exists if ...</i>					
You have unprotected sex with unknown partners	96	98	98	99	99
Blood from someone infected with HIV gets into an open wound	97	96	98	98	98
Someone takes heroin or similar drugs with a needle previously used by other drug addicts	-	-	98	98	98
<i>People who say <u>no</u> risk of infection exists if ...</i>					
You shake hands with an AIDS patient	95	96	97	95	97
You work together with someone infected with HIV	94	94	96	95	95

Figures in per cent

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

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## Protection against AIDS

The *willingness* of people to protect themselves against the risk of HIV infection by using condoms when having sex with a new partner is very widespread. This is expressed by the finding that 93 per cent of 16 to 44 year-old singles would agree to the partner's request only to have sex with a condom at the start of a new sexual relationship (92 per cent in West Germany, 97 per cent in East Germany).

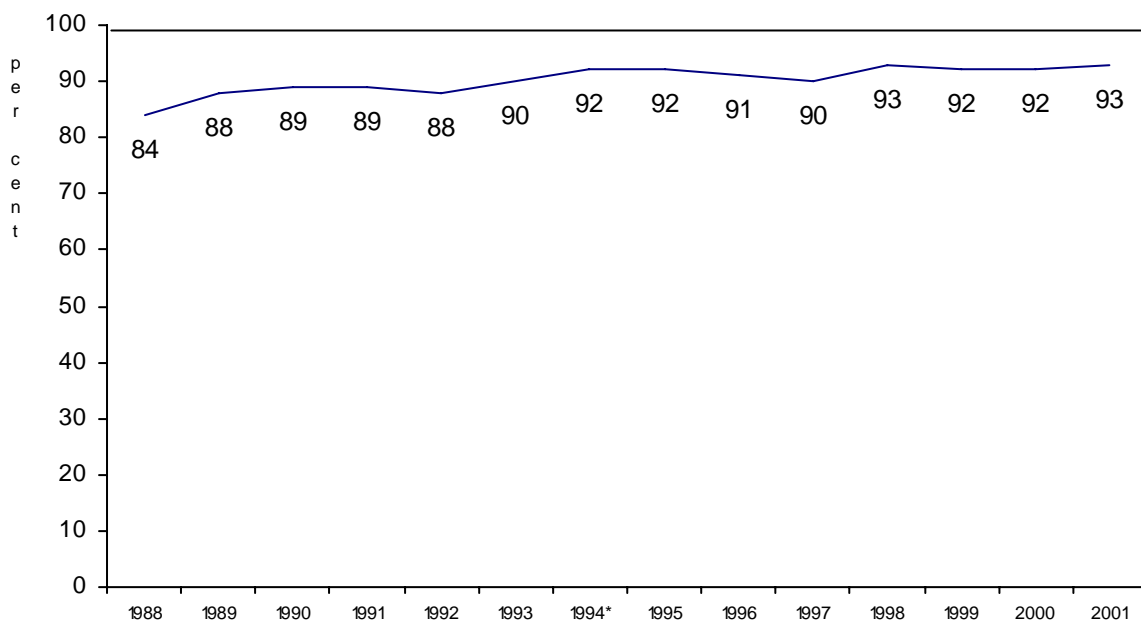
As long ago as 1988, 84 per cent of younger singles already accepted condoms as protection against AIDS when starting a new relationship. The trend increased slightly in the following years, reaching a figure of more than 90 per cent in 1995 and 1996. The willingness to use condoms with new sex partners has remained constant since that time.

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### ACCEPTANCE OF CONDOMS IN NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Singles under 45 years of age

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\* including the new Federal Länder from 1994

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

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Most younger singles are prepared: 65 per cent say they currently have condoms at home or with them.

Seen over the longer term, there has been a marked increase in condom possession. In 1989, only 41 per cent of younger singles had condoms with them or at home. There was a major increase of 23 percentage points up to 1996. However, this trend has not progressed since that time.

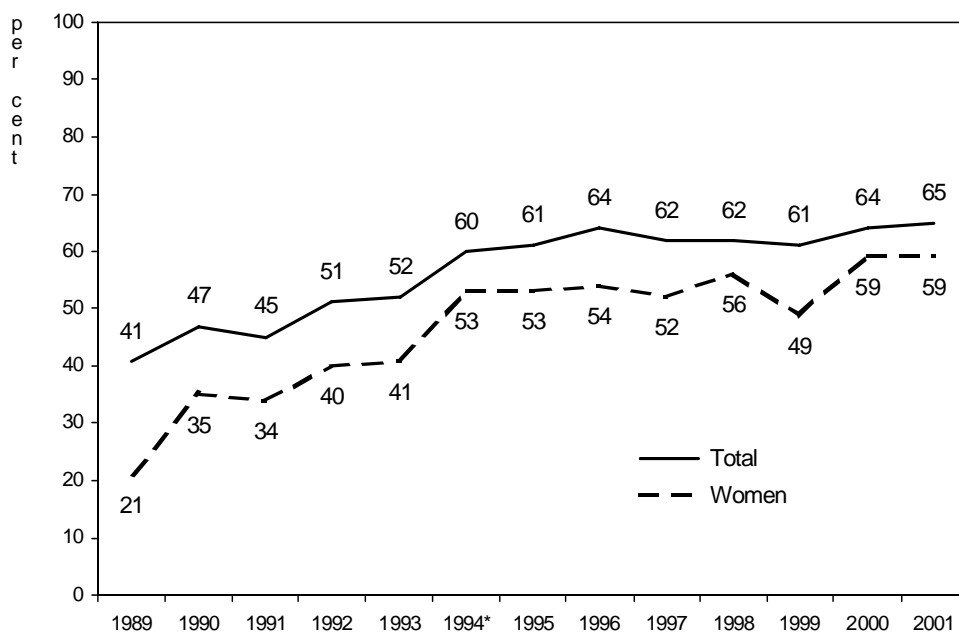
There has been a remarkable change in the availability of condoms among younger single women: in 1989, only 21 per cent said they had condoms at home or with them, while this figure had risen to 59 per cent by 2001, a value that no longer differs very greatly from the average (65%) for all younger singles.

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## CONDOM POSSESSION AS AN INTENTION TO PROTECT

Singles under 45 years of age

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### 2001

West Germany: 64%  
(n=628)

East Germany: 67%  
(n=145)

\* Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

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

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Of the singles under the age of 45 who had sexual contacts in the past year, 70 per cent used condoms every time, frequently or occasionally.

In the first phase of the observation period – from 1988 to 1996 – there was a pronounced upward trend in condom use: the proportion of younger singles who always, frequently or occasionally used condoms rose by an average of 1.3 percentage points per year during this time, from 58 per cent in 1988 to 73 per cent in 1997. The rise then came to an end. The percentage of condom users has even declined slightly since that time.

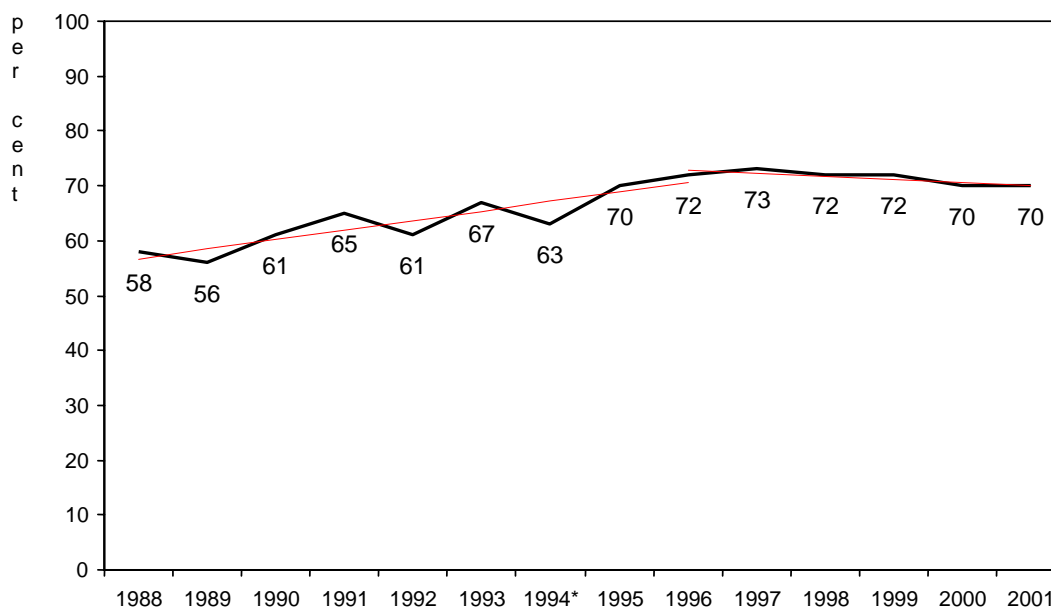
Just under half (48%) of younger singles with sexual contacts in the past year used condoms regularly (always, frequently). Regular condom use had also risen steadily between 1988 and 1996. Since 1996, however, this indicator has also stagnated – at just under 50 per cent.

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## CONDOM USE ALWAYS, OFTEN OR OCCASIONALLY

Singles under 45years of age with contacts in the past year

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Trend (1988-1996)

$y = 55,0 + 1,7x$   
 $t = 5,14; p = 0,001$   
 $n = 3746$   
 Significant change  
 at  $\alpha = 0,05$

Trend (1996-2001)

$y = 73,4 - 0,5x$   
 $t = -2,97; p = 0,041$   
 $n = 3301$   
 Significant change  
 at  $\alpha = 0,05$

2001

W.Germany: 69%  
 (n=470)  
 E.Germany: 77%  
 (n=104)

\* including the new Federal Länder from 1994

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

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The slight decline or stagnation in the condom usage trend does not mean that people are less aware of the risk: no stagnation can be detected as regards protection against AIDS in risky situations. All the indicators for risky situations display a steady upward trend, although the individual annual values sometimes fluctuate widely because of the relatively small numbers of cases.

Thus, in 2001, 74 per cent of the people who had begun a new sexual partnership in the past 12 months said they had used condoms at the start; the figure was 65 per cent in 1994.

Of those who had spontaneous sexual contacts with unknown partners in the preceding 12 months, 48 per cent *always* used condoms on such occasions, as opposed to roughly half this number (23%) in 1989.

In the case of sexual contacts with unknown partners while on holiday, the proportion of people who *always* used condoms rose from 40 per cent in 1990 to 79 per cent in 2001.

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## CONDOM USE AT THE START OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP

Respondents with new sexual relationships in the past 12 months

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Trend (1994-2001)

$$y = 66.5 + 1.2x$$

$$t = 3.27; p = 0.017$$

$$n = 3,596$$

Significant change

at  $\alpha = 0.05$

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

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## Attitudes towards people with HIV and AIDS

In 2001, 5 per cent of the general public were of the opinion that AIDS patients should not come into contact with anyone except medical personnel and relatives, whereas 93 per cent reject the isolation of people with AIDS. This and other results of the study show that the prevailing attitude towards people with HIV and AIDS is characterised by a low level of stigmatisation and discrimination, on the one hand, and by great willingness to give social support and assistance, on the other.

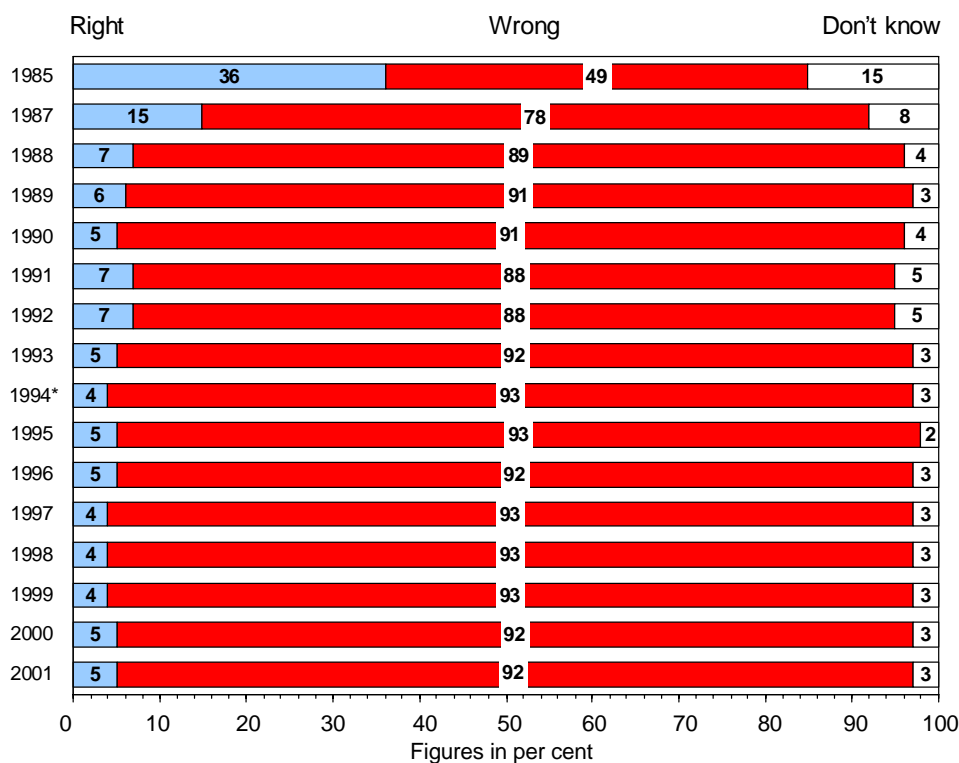
The AIDS education campaign played a key role in the development of this general attitude. In 1985 – before the campaign started – more than one-third (36%) of the general population over the age of 16 in the old Federal Republic were in favour of isolating AIDS patients. This attitude changed very rapidly following the launch of the AIDS education campaign: by 1987, only 15 per cent advocated isolation, and the figure of 5 per cent still found today was reached in 1990.

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### ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE ISOLATION OF PEOPLE WITH AIDS

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Do you think it right or wrong to make sure that no one with AIDS comes into contact with anyone else - apart from medical personnel and relatives?



\* Including the new Federal Länder from 1994

Source: 1985: forsa. - Representative survey  
 1987 - 2001: BZgA - Representative surveys "Public Awareness of AIDS", conducted by forsa. Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung und statistische Analysen, Berlin/Dortmund

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**For further information about the AIDS education campaign  
in the Federal Republic of Germany please visit the following websites:**



[www.gib-aids-keine-chance.de](http://www.gib-aids-keine-chance.de)



[www.machsmit.de](http://www.machsmit.de)