

2023

Snapshot on HIV and AIDS

EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

unicef 
for every child

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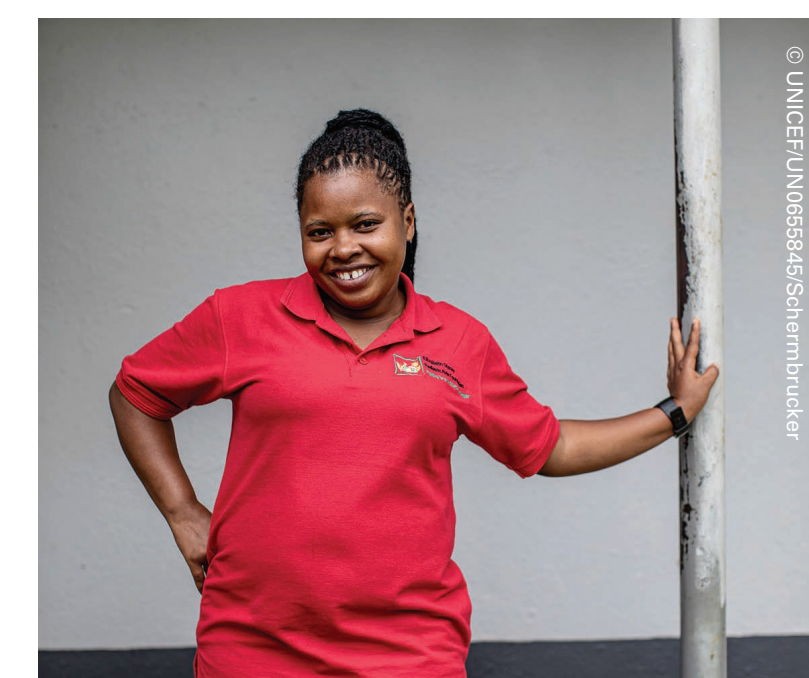
1. The overall situation



The overall situation

Eastern and Southern Africa carries a huge share of the global HIV burden in children and adolescents

| | Global | Eastern and Southern Africa | Estimate |
|--|-------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Children (0-14 years) living with HIV | 1.5 million | 940 000 | 63% |
| Older adolescents (15-19 years) living with HIV | 1 million | 690 000 | 69% |
| Pregnant women living with HIV | 1.2 million | 840 000 | 70% |
| New HIV infections in children (0-14 years) | 130 000 | 60 000 | 46% |
| New HIV infections in adolescents (10-19 years) | 140 000 | 77 000 | 55% |
| AIDS-related deaths in children (0-14 years) | 84 000 | 36 000 | 43% |
| AIDS-related deaths in older adolescents (15-19 years) | 15 000 | 10 000 | 67% |



2.

Vertical transmission



Programmes to prevent vertical transmission of HIV have saved lives

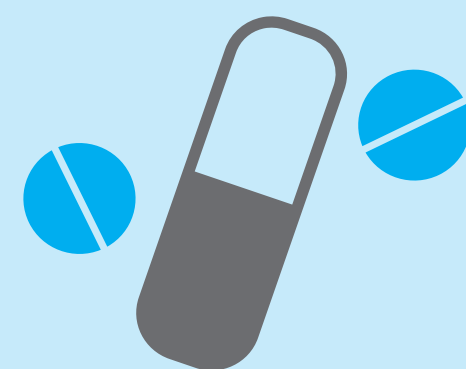
69%

drop in the annual number of new vertical infections in **children** (0-14 years) since 2010



2.25

million HIV infections in **children** have been averted since 2010



Number of annual new HIV infections in **children** have declined

2010

200 000

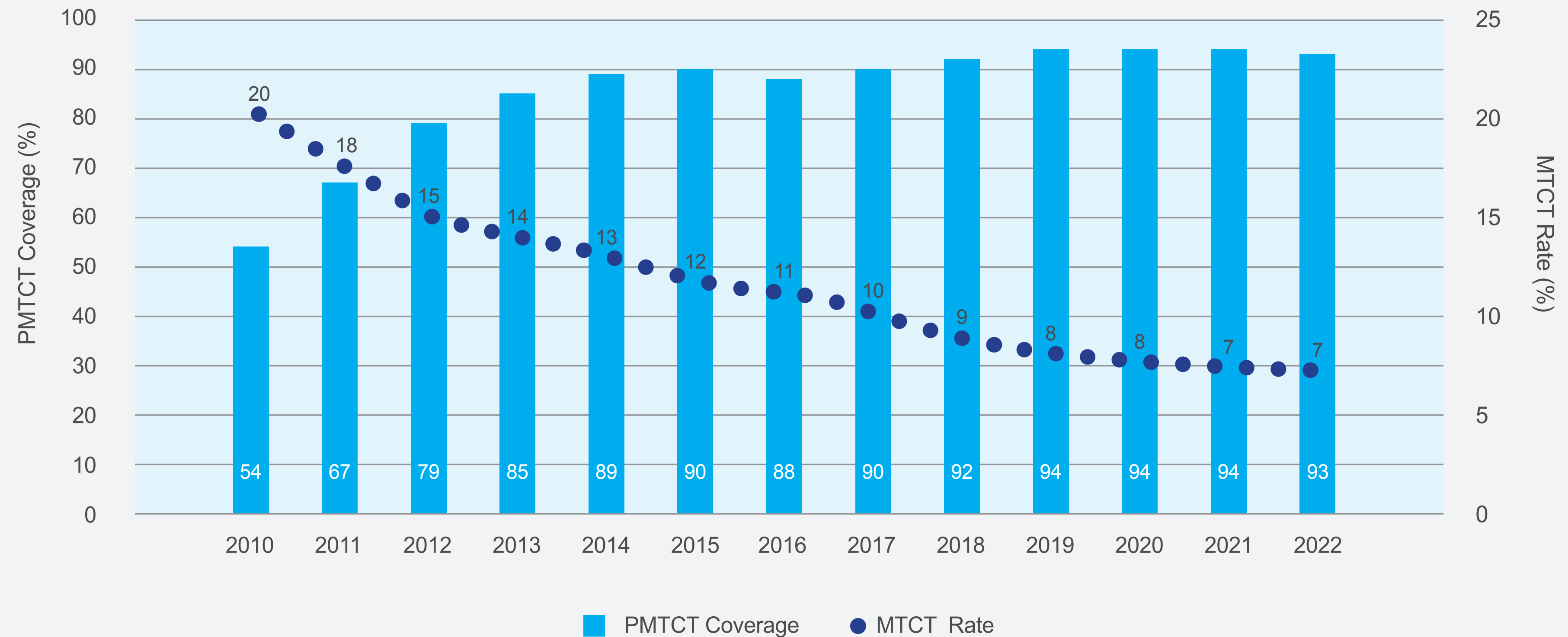
2022

60 000



Source: UNAIDS 2023 Estimates

While PMTCT coverage is more than 90%, about 1 in 14 HIV-exposed infants acquired HIV in 2022



Source: UNAIDS 2023 estimates.

Remarkable progress in averting HIV infections in children

Fewer new HIV infections in women and rising treatment coverage among those living with HIV have led to a 69% drop in the annual number of new vertical infections in children between 2010 and 2022 in eastern and southern Africa. Overall, HIV programmes have averted at least 2.25 million HIV infections among children (0–14 years) in the region since 2010.

These gains are due in large part to the very high percentages of pregnant or breastfeeding women living with HIV who are receiving antiretroviral medicines to protect their health and prevent vertical transmission of HIV to their children: about 93% in 2022.

But the strategies that led to these gains may not be enough for the “last mile.” Despite the successes, the decline in new infections in children has slowed considerably in recent years and, in 2022, 60 000 children still acquired HIV.

More detailed analysis indicates key acceleration needed on:

- Coverage of antiretroviral therapy among pregnant and breastfeeding women across the region has changed little over the past eight years. New approaches and dedicated resources are needed to reach the women who are being missed by testing and treatment programmes in low performing countries.
- A substantial share of new infections in children is attributable to their mothers acquiring HIV during pregnancy or breastfeeding. More effective combination prevention services need to reach these women, including condom promotion, HIV screening and self-testing for their partners, greater access to pre-exposure prophylaxis and linkage to social, economic and protection services.
- Greater investment is needed in community strategies, including peer led models to retain mothers and their infants in care.

There is also an urgent need for a tailored package of services that respond to the specific difficulties and needs of young mothers. About one quarter (24%) of pregnant women or mothers living with HIV are aged 15-24 years.



Children and adolescents are still missing out on HIV treatment

Children and adolescents are still missing out on HIV treatment

Children aged 0–14 years comprise about 5% of people living with HIV in eastern and southern Africa, but accounted for almost 14% of all deaths due to AIDS in 2022.

Thanks to wider availability of point-of-care early infant diagnosis, 4 in 5 HIV-exposed children were tested within their first two months of life in eastern and southern Africa in 2022.

The number of AIDS-related deaths among children has plummeted since 2010: over 1 million AIDS-related deaths have been averted among children since then.

Children living with HIV in this region are still much less likely than adults to receive ART – and that gap is widening. Treatment coverage among adults was 83% in 2022, almost 20 percentage points higher than among children.

Viral suppression rates are also much lower among children: 51% compared with 83% among adults. As a result, the epidemic claimed the lives of an estimated 36 000 children in the region in 2022.

Close to one third of the estimated 1.0 million adolescents aged 15–19 years living with HIV in Eastern and Southern Africa were also not receiving antiretroviral therapy in 2022.

Acceleration of evidence-based strategies are urgently needed, including:

- Expansion of point of care, self-testing, and other innovative testing methodologies along with improved laboratory systems
- Full roll out of optimal paediatric regimens
- Expanded support, including peer driven models to support children and adolescents living with HIV and their caregivers



Adolescent girls (10-19 years) are still disproportionately affected

Concerted prevention efforts and the preventive impact of treatment programmes have led to a steep drop in the number of new HIV infections among adolescents in Eastern and Southern Africa: from 170 000 in 2010 to 77 000 in 2022, a 55% decrease.

But there are two big outstanding challenges. New infections among adolescents are not declining at a rate that is quick enough to reach the 2025 targets.

And 66 000, or 85%, of the adolescents who acquired HIV in 2022 in this region were girls. They continue to face inordinately high HIV risks.

Gender inequity, discrimination, violence, and poverty deny many adolescent girls control over their sexual lives, expose them to both emotional and bodily harm, and limit their education – all of which can increase their risk of HIV. A lack of basic knowledge about sex and sexuality, and limited access to sexual and reproductive health and rights services compound those vulnerabilities.

Differentiated and multisectoral services and support are urgently needed at scale, including through peer driven models.



3.

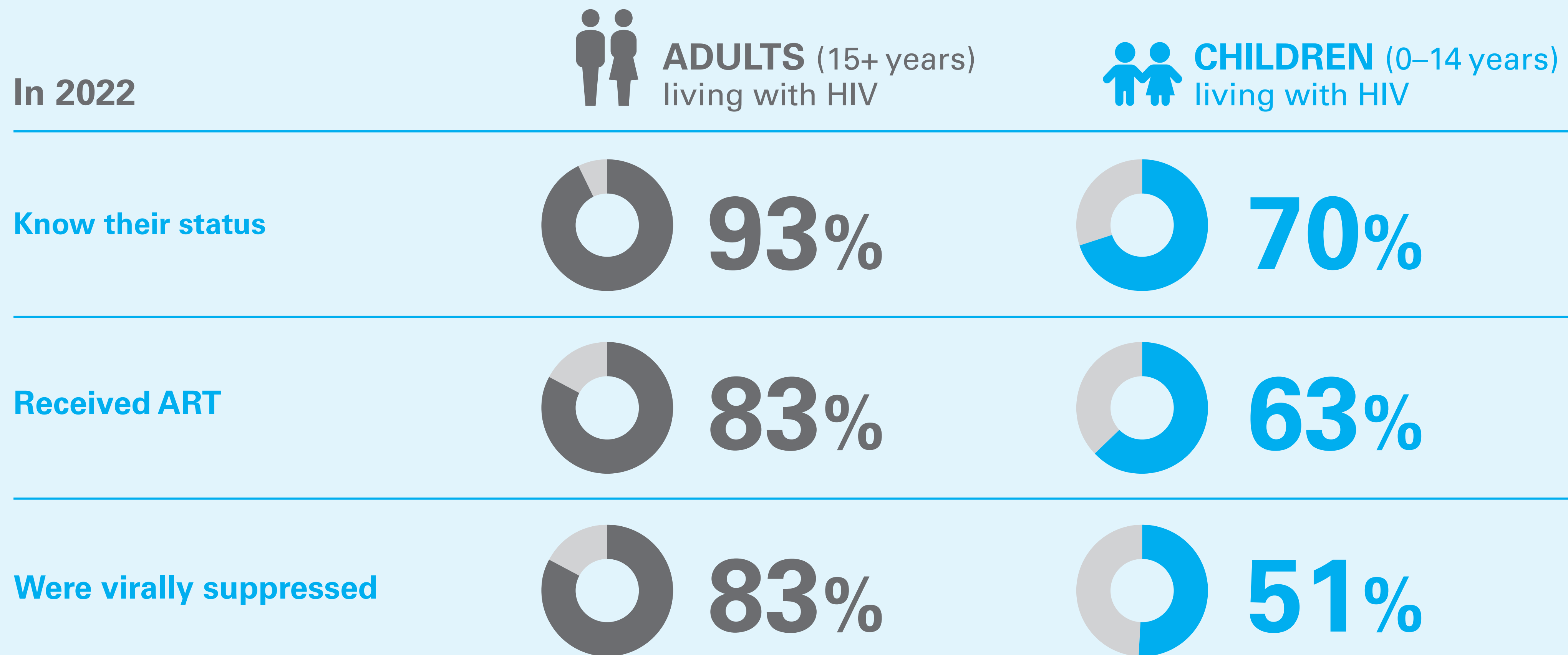
Treatment gap



In Eastern and Southern Africa, children comprise about 5% of people living with HIV, but accounted for almost 14% of all deaths due to AIDS in 2022.



Access to treatment has expanded for adults, but children lag behind



Source: UNAIDS 2023 estimates.

4.

Impact on adolescent girls



New infections in adolescents have decreased but not quickly enough

55% decrease

in the annual number of new HIV infections among adolescents since 2010 (short of the 90% target set for 2025)



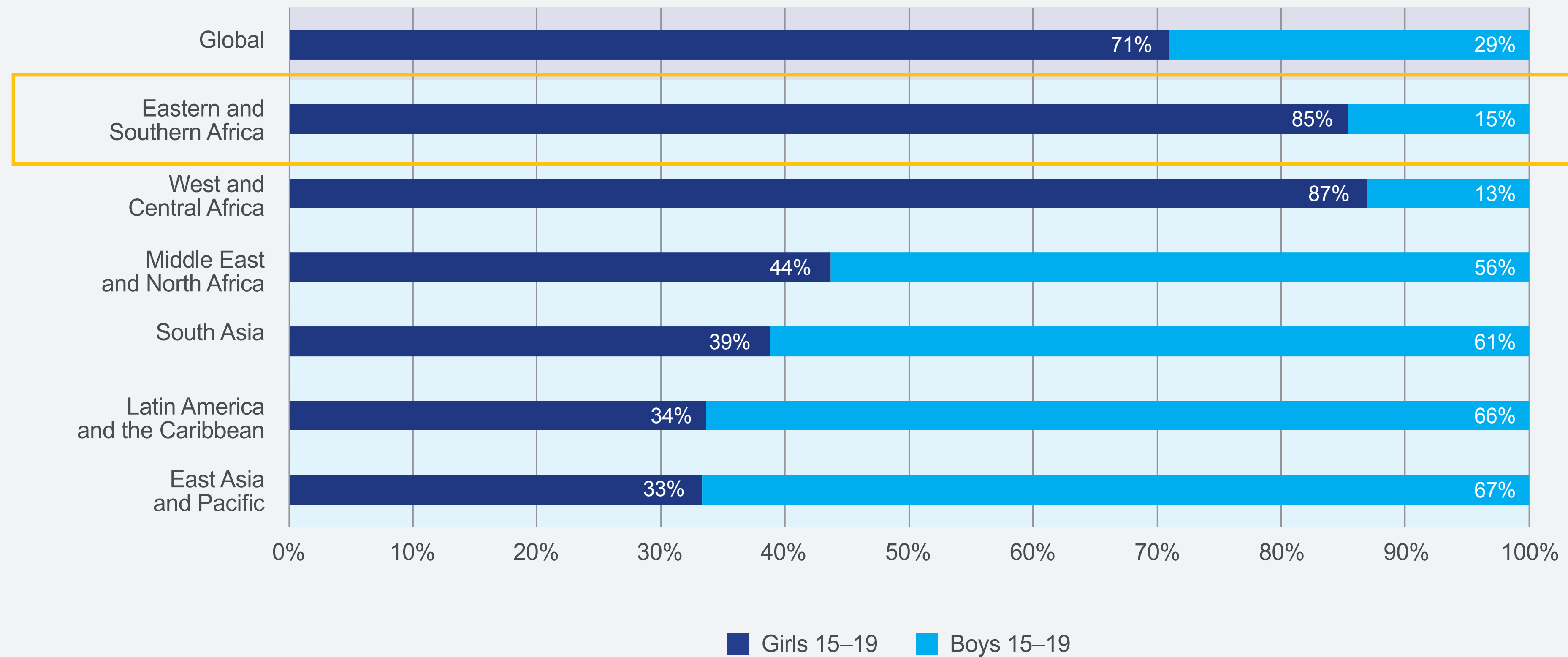
More than 1 200
adolescent girls

(10–19 years) newly acquire HIV each week in this region



Source: UNAIDS 2023 estimates.

Older adolescent girls are disproportionately affected by HIV



Source: UNAIDS 2023 estimates.

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