

Summary Baseline Report of PLACE Assessment in **Karaganda**, Kazakhstan

Local Investigator

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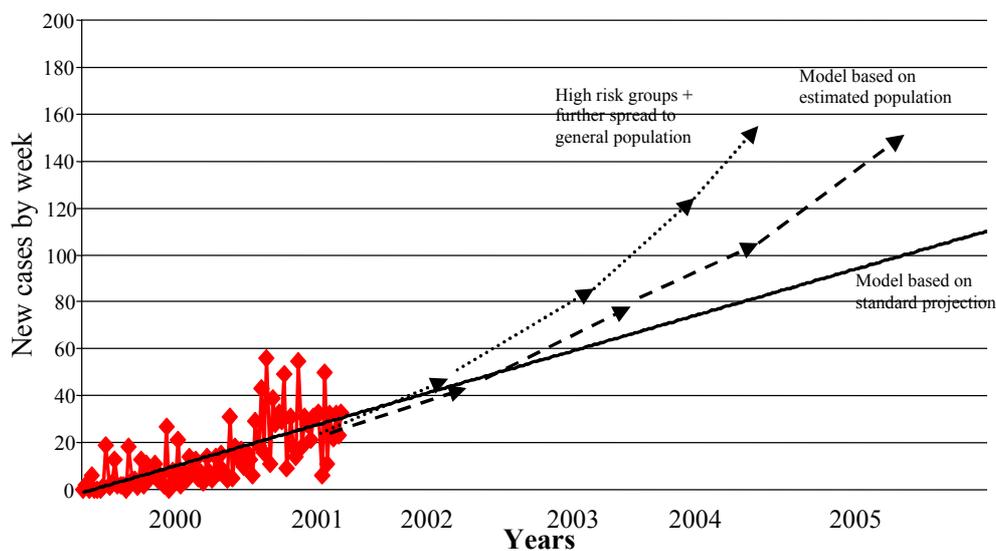


Background and Objectives

A. The HIV epidemic in Kazakhstan

The incidence of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection in Kazakhstan increased between 2000 and 2001 (Figure 1). By December of 2001, Kazakhstan had reported a total of 2,000 cases. The actual number of cases is estimated to be 10 times higher.

Figure 1. HIV incidence rates in Kazakhstan, 2000-2005



Projection models based on weekly reports of HIV cases illustrate the potential explosion in the epidemic between 2000 and 2005 if the epidemic moves from the injecting drug user population to the general population (Figure 1). These models assume that there were 200,000 injection drug users in Kazakhstan in 2000 and that the prevalence of HIV infection among injection drug users was 18% during that year. If the epidemic spreads from injection drug users to the general population, there could be over 300 new cases of HIV per week by 2005 in Kazakhstan and 450,000 people infected. These projections illustrate the urgent need for HIV prevention interventions in Central Asia.

B. Priorities for Local AIDS Control Efforts (PLACE)

The PLACE method identifies areas likely to have a higher incidence of HIV and specific sites within these high transmission areas (HTAs) where AIDS prevention programs could reach those most likely to transmit infection. The PLACE method is appropriate for Central Asia because the epidemic is concentrated in certain geographic areas.

5 Steps of PLACE Method

- 1 Selection of assessment areas
- 2 Key informant interviews
- 3 Site visits
- 4 Interviews with people socializing at sites
- 5 Summary and recommendations

The first step in the PLACE Method is to identify HTAs using available demographic, socio-economic, and qualitative information. The second step is to ask key informants in each HTA to name places where injection drug users can be found and places where people meet new lovers, boyfriends, girlfriends or one night only sexual partners. The third step is to locate and describe all the sites named by key informants. The fourth step is to conduct interviews with people socializing at a sample of sites to learn about their demographic, social, and behavioral characteristics. The final step is to provide recommendations to intervention groups.

C. Objectives of the PLACE study in Karaganda

The objectives of the PLACE study in Karaganda were to:

- Identify sites where injection drug users socialize
- Identify sites where people, including commercial sex workers, meet new sexual partners
- Describe the social and behavioral characteristics of people at these sites
- Assess the extent that youth who visit these sites inject drugs and have new sexual partners
- Identify priority sites for HIV intervention programs
- Provide site-based indicators for monitoring of interventions

D. Organization of the PLACE study in Karaganda

This study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Public Opinion in Almaty. USAID provided funding through the MEASURE *Evaluation* Project. Results were shared with USAID, PSI, the Soros Foundation, UNAIDS, the City AIDS Center, and other organizations.

Step 1: Identifying areas for assessment in Karaganda

A. Objective

The objective of this step was to identify high transmission areas in Karaganda.

B. Methods

Karaganda is divided into 32 “post office units” for administrative purposes. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted to identify which units were likely to be high transmission areas. Focus groups participants, including commercial sex workers, injection drug users, physicians, taxi drivers, and youth, were asked where people were most likely to go to meet new sexual partners, where sex workers were most likely to solicit clients, and where injection drug users were most likely to be found. In-depth interviews were also conducted to identify areas.

C. Results

Since there was little information about where new sexual partnerships are formed or where injection drug users socialize, the entire city of Karaganda was included in the PLACE assessment.

Step 2: Key Informant Interviews

A. Objectives

The objective of this step was to identify all sites in the city where injecting drug users can be reached and where people meet new sexual partners.

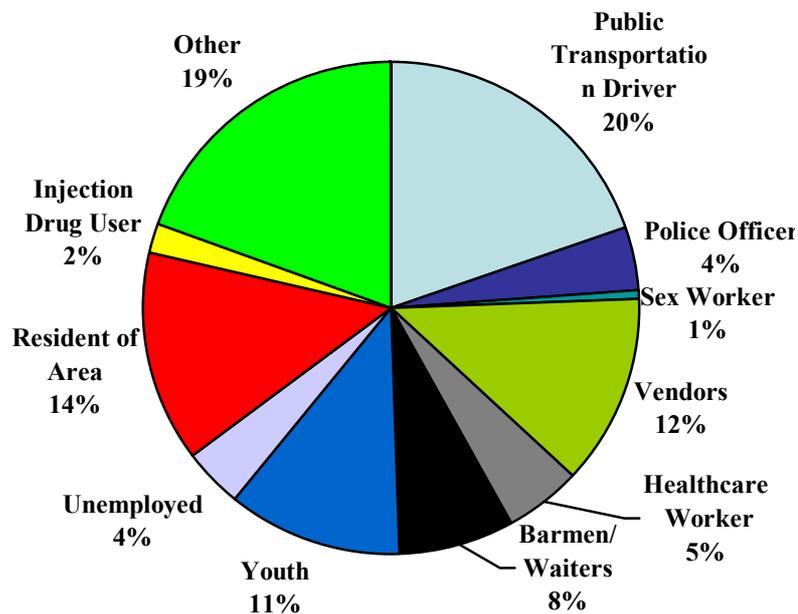
B. Methods

Key informants in each area were asked to name sites in the area where people meet new sexual partners, where sex workers solicit clients, or where injection drug users can be found. Key informant reports were compiled into a master list of sites.

C. Results

Twenty-six interviewers conducted 900 key informant interviews in five days. On average, each informant named 3.5 sites. There were 3,140 site reports and 645 unique sites. Half of the key informants were male. Adults age 18 and older of all types were interviewed. Youth, vendors, public transportation drivers, barmen and waiters, and area residents were the most common types of key informants (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of Key Informants by Type



Step 3: Site Visits

A. Objectives

The objective of this step was to describe the characteristics of sites named by key informants.

B. Methods

An interview team was assigned to each unit and given a list of sites inside the unit to visit and describe. There were so many reported sites (645) that it was not feasible to visit every site. Every site named by 2 or more key informants was visited, but flats, basements, roofs, stairwells, entire street blocks, and sites not identified as a priority site for people meeting new sexual partners, injection drug use, or commercial sex were not visited if they were named by less than 2 key informants. Sites located outside the study units were also not visited. The interview team obtained site coordinates using hand-held Geographic Positioning System (GPS) units. The team also questioned a responsible party at each site about characteristics of the site relevant to HIV prevention.

B. Results

Interviews were conducted at 443 sites meeting the eligibility criteria over a period of eight days. Interviews were declined at 59 sites. The remainder of this section of the report describes the sites where interviews were completed.

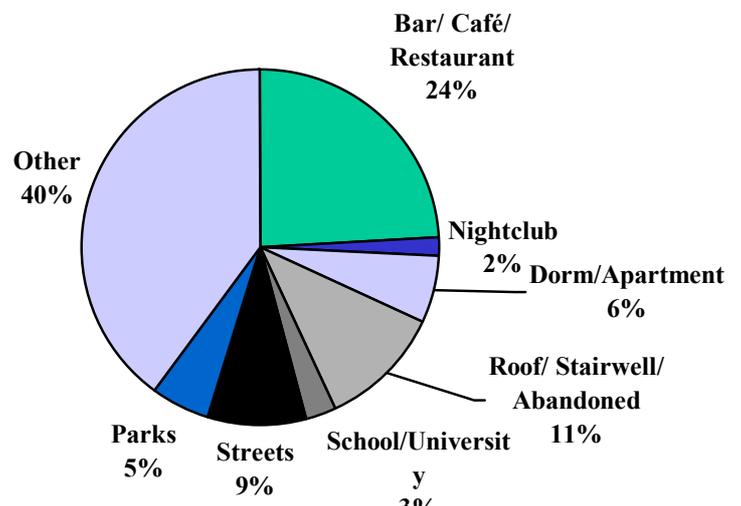
Site characteristics

The most common types of sites were bars, cafés, and restaurants and roofs, stairwells and abandoned buildings (Figure 3). Alcohol was consumed at the majority of sites. Other popular activities included dining, listening to music, and dancing.

Site visitor characteristics

Many respondents reported that site visitors lived within a ten-minute walk, visited the site at least once a week, were students, and/or consumed alcohol at the site. Respondents at 60% of sites reported that men met new female sexual partners at the site of interview. Twenty-five percent reported that sex workers solicited clients. Approximately 8% reported that men met new male (gay) sexual partners.

Figure 3. Type of Site



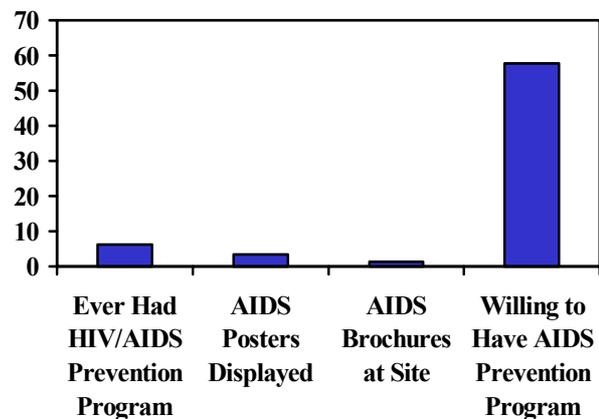
Injection drug use

Slightly over half (55%) of the respondents thought that injection drug use was “very common” or “somewhat common” in the area. Only 7% thought that injection drug use did not occur in the area. Fifty-one percent of the respondents reported that injection drug users socialized at the site. Thirty-seven percent said that they had seen used syringes at the site during the three months prior to the interview. Interviewers saw used syringes at 9% of the sites.

HIV prevention activities

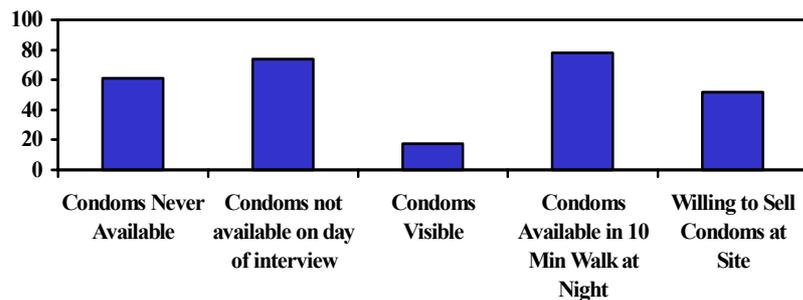
Site-based AIDS prevention activities were rare (Figure 4). Only 6% of respondents reported that HIV prevention activities had ever occurred at the site. HIV posters and brochures were displayed at less than 3% of the sites. Almost 58% of respondents were willing to have HIV educational programs at their sites.

Figure 4. AIDS Educational Activities at all Sites



Interviewers saw condoms at only 18% of the sites (Figure 5). Nearly three-quarters (74%) of respondents reported that condoms were not available on the day of interview, and 61% reported that condoms had never been available during the twelve months preceding the interview. Half of respondents were willing to sell condoms at their site. Seventy-eight percent said that it was possible for someone to find a condom within 10 minutes of leaving the site at night.

Figure 5. Condom availability at all Sites



Step 4: Interviews with people socializing at sites

A. Objective

The objective of this step was to describe the demographic, social, and behavioral characteristics of site visitors.

B. Methods

Interviews were conducted with people socializing at a random sample of sites. In addition, interviews were conducted at sites named by 15 or more key informants but not selected in the random sample. These sites were considered important potential intervention sites.

An interview team visited each site and selected a sample of people to interview. The goal was to interview 1,750 people in total, including 200 injection drug users and 200 commercial sex workers. Ten people were interviewed at small sites, 20 people at medium-sized sites, and 30 people at large sites. Interviewers tried to obtain a representative sample at a site by using the following strategies:

- Not approaching more than one person from a group of people socializing together;
- Numbering the people at a site and identifying potential respondents using numeric intervals;
- Approaching individuals at different locations within a site.

C. Results

Interviews were conducted at one-quarter of the sites that were visited (Table 2). It took 28 interviewers 11 days to complete the interviews. The target number of interviews was obtained, but oversampling of injection drug users was necessary to reach the target for this group. Results are reported separately for the representative sample and three high-risk groups: youth, commercial sex workers and their clients, and injection drug users.

Table 2. Summary of Individual Interviews Field Work

Number of Sites Visited for Individual Interviews	107	
% of Verified Sites Visited	24.2%	
Number of Days of Interviews	11	
Number of Interviewers	28	
<i>Numbers Interviewed</i>	M	W
Total	998	853
Representative Sample	897	752
Youth	440	471
CSWs and Clients	238	280
IDUs	225	63

Part 1: Representative Sample of People Socializing at All Sites

The representative sample includes everyone interviewed except for the injection drug users that were added later to reach the target for this risk group.

Sociodemographic Characteristics

Slightly more than half of the people interviewed were men. The average age of male visitors (27.4 years) was higher than that of females (25.9 years). Ninety-five percent of men and women were residents of Karaganda, and about 59% of men and women had lived in

Karaganda for their entire lives. Men were more likely than women to be married (42% vs. 30%), employed full-time (51% vs. 36%), and to have slept outside the city in the past three months (42% vs. 35%). Similar proportions of men and women had higher education (29%) or were currently students (20%).

Social and Sexual Behavior

Many men and women reported that they visited the site of interview on a regular basis; almost 30% of respondents said that they came every day. Approximately 69% of men and 73% women believed that people came to the interview site to meet a new sexual partner. In fact, 30% of men and 38% of women said that they had personally met a new sexual partner at the site.

Large proportions (86%) of men and women had had at least one sexual partner in the four weeks prior to the interview. Equal proportions of men (43%) and women (44%) had had at least one new sexual partner during the same period. Approximately one-third of men reported giving money in exchange for sex during the past 3 months. The proportion of women who had received money in exchange for sex was 32%.

Almost three-quarters of men (71%) and two-thirds of women (64%) reported that they had had a regular sexual partner during the 12 months prior to the interview. Of these, significant proportions of men (65%) and women (51%) reported that they had had at least one new partner in addition to their regular partner during this period.

Men rarely reported having sex with another man during the four weeks prior to the interview (1%).

Condom Use

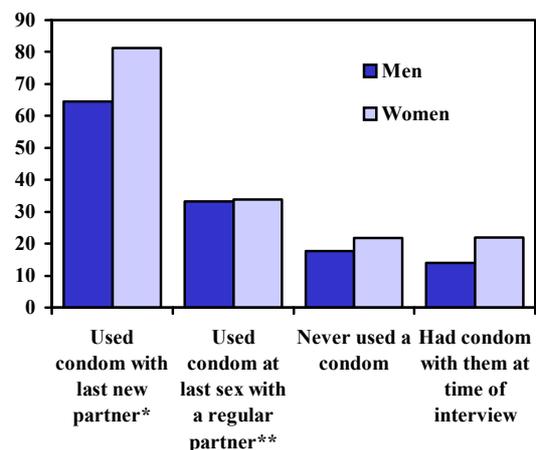
Most men (82%) and women (78%) said that they had used a condom. Two-thirds of men and 81% of women who had had a new partner in the last four weeks reported using a condom with their last new partner (Figure 6). One third of men and women who had a regular partner reported using a condom during the last sexual act with that partner. Approximately 14% of men and 22% of women had a condom with them at the time of the interview.

Men most frequently reported obtaining condoms from pharmacies and kiosks. Women reported that they obtained condoms from pharmacies or from their partners.

HIV Knowledge

Approximately 9% of men and 12% of women had attended an HIV educational session in the 12 months prior to the interview. Over 97% of men and women knew that HIV can be transmitted by sharing needles or by sexual contact without a condom. However, only 80% of men and women identified condom use as a way to reduce their personal risk of HIV infection. Only 60% of men and women knew that using sterile needles is another way to prevent

Figure 6. Condom use by gender



*Among individuals with at least 1 new partner in past 4 weeks
 **Among individuals with a regular partner

infection. **Almost** three-quarters of men and women knew that a person who looks healthy can be infected with HIV.

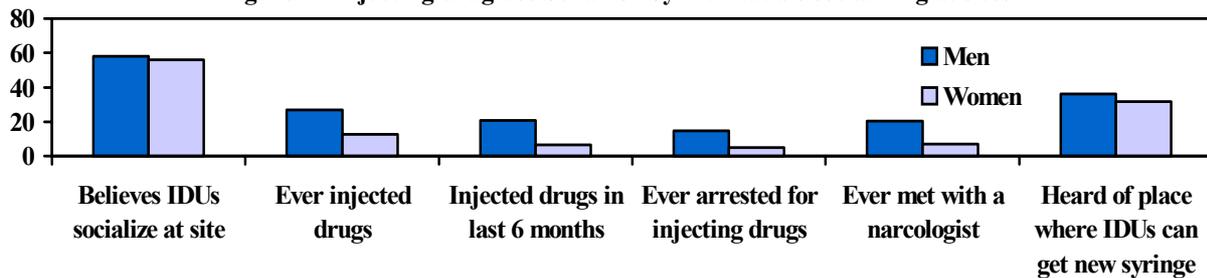
Approximately 40% of men and 45% of women interviewed had been tested for HIV in the 12 months prior to the interview. **Approximately 56% of men and 67% of women** tested had done so voluntarily.

Injection drug use

Approximately **48% of men and 41% of women** reported that injection drug use was “very common” or “somewhat common” in the unit where they were interviewed. Less than 5% of respondents thought that drug use did not occur in the unit. **Over 20%** said that they did not know. **Approximately 58% of men and 56% of women** thought that injection drug users socialized at the interview site (Figure 7).

Approximately **27% of men** reported that they had ever injected drugs, while **13% of women** had done so. Of these, over 75% of men and **50% of women** had used injection drugs during the past six months. **Fifteen** percent of men and **5%** of women had been arrested for drug use. **Over 30%** of respondents had heard of a place in the city where injection drug users could get new syringes.

Figure 7. Injecting drug use behavior by individuals socializing at sites



Part 2: Youth

Youth aged 18 to 25 years were examined as a separate group. Almost **50%** of men and **63%** of women in the representative sample were youth. Results that differed from the representative sample are emphasized here.

Youth: Sociodemographic Characteristics

Twenty-one percent of male youth and **17%** of female youth were married. **Approximately 70%** had lived in the city their entire life. Only **37%** of male youth and **23%** of female youth were employed full-time. **Approximately one third of youth** were currently students.

Youth: Social and Sexual Behavior

Most male (**72%**) and female (**80%**) youth believed that people came to the site to meet new sexual partners. One-third of male (**32%**) and female (**46%**) youth had personally met a new partner at the site. **Half of male and female youth** reported that they had had a new sexual partner in the 4 weeks preceding the interview. Only **61%** of male youth and **58%** of female youth said that they had had a regular sex partner in the past 12 months.

Over one-quarter of male youth had given money in exchange for sex in the 3 months prior to the interview. Almost 40% of female youth said that they had received money in exchange for sex during the same period.

Only 2% of male youth reported having sex with another man in the four weeks preceding the interview.

Youth: HIV Knowledge and Prevention

Only 11% of male youth and 12% of female youth had attended an AIDS education session during the three months prior to the interview. Nearly all youth were aware that unprotected sex and needle sharing were risk factors for HIV transmission. Smaller proportions identified using condoms and avoiding needle sharing as ways to reduce personal risk. Two thirds of male youth and 86% of female youth had used condoms with their last new sexual partner. Smaller proportions had used condoms with their last regular sexual partners.

Youth: Injection drug use

Over 60% of the male and female respondents thought that injection drug users socialized at the interview site. Male youth (28%) were much more likely than female youth (13%) to report that they had ever used injection drugs. Among those who had ever injected drugs, 72% of male youth and 40% of female youth had done so in the past 6 months.

Part 3: Commercial Sex Workers and Clients

Commercial sex workers were defined as women who reported receiving money in exchange for sex in the 3 months prior to the interview. Clients were defined as men who reported giving money or other gifts in exchange for sexual services during the same period. Approximately 33% of the women interviewed were commercial sex workers and 24% of the men were clients. Results that differed from the representative sample are emphasized here.

CSWs and Clients: Sociodemographic Characteristics

The majority of CSWs were under the age of 25 and only 5% were married. Four percent reported that they were employed full-time; 57% reported that they were unemployed and looking for work. Five percent were currently students and approximately 72% had completed high school. The average CSW was 23 years old, while the average client was 27 years. Thirty-six percent of the clients were married.

Clients and CSWs: Social and Sexual Behavior

Almost 83% of clients and 99% of CSWs thought that people came to the interview site to meet new sexual partners. In fact, almost half of the clients (49%) and most of the CSWs (90%) had met a new sexual partner at the site. The majority of CSWs visited the site of interview more than once a week. Most CSWs went to only one or two sites to solicit clients.

Approximately 85% of CSWs had 4 or more new sexual partners in the 4 weeks preceding the interview. Over 93% had had 15 or more new partners during the past 12 months. About one-third of the CSWs interviewed said that they had a regular sexual partner.

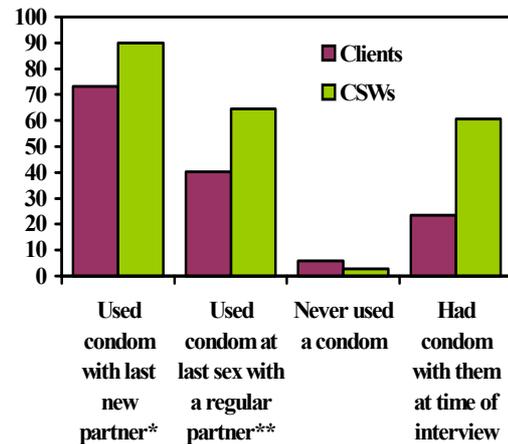
Seventy-four percent of the clients reported that they had had a new partner in the 4 weeks prior to the interview, and 65% had had 4 or more new partners in the past 12 months. Two percent of clients reported that they had recently had sex with another man.

CSWs and Clients: Condom use

Condom use was high among CSWs and their clients (Figure 8). Six percent of clients had never used a condom. A large proportion (73%) of clients who had a new partner in the past 4 weeks used a condom with the last new partner. Less than half (40%) of clients with regular partners reported using a condom at last sex with that partner.

Only 3% of CSWs had never used a condom. Approximately 90% had used a condom with their last new partner. Approximately two-thirds also used a condom at last sex with a regular partner. Approximately 24% of clients and 61% of CSWs had a condom at the time of the interview. Only 21% of CSWs depended on their partners to provide condoms.

Figure 8. Condom use by CSWs and clients



CSWs and Clients: HIV Knowledge

Less than 10% of CSWs and clients had attended an HIV education session in the 3 months prior to the interview. Large proportions of CSWs (94%) and clients (83%) knew that condom use is a way to reduce the risk of getting HIV. Approximately 69% of CSWs had been tested for HIV in the past 12 months. Over three-quarters (76%) had done so voluntarily. About half of the clients (45%) had been tested.

Clients and CSWs: Injection Drug Use

Three-quarters of CSWs thought that injection drug users socialized at the interview site, while only 65% of clients did. Approximately 33% of clients said that they had ever used injection drugs; of these, 62% had done so in the past six months. Approximately 30% of CSWs reported that they had used injected drugs. Of CSWs who had ever injected drugs, 39% had done so within the past 6 months.

Part 4: Injection Drug Users

An IDU was defined as someone who reported that they had used injection drugs in the 6 months preceding the interview. Seventy-eight percent of the IDUs interviewed were men. Because only 63 female IDUs were interviewed, much of the analysis will be restricted to male IDUs. Results that differed from the representative sample are emphasized here.

IDUs: Sociodemographic Characteristics

The average age of male IDUs was 25.6 years. Only 24% of male IDUs were married, and 15% were employed full-time. Only 4% were students and 7% had at least some higher education.

IDUs: Social and Sexual Behavior

Almost 85% of male IDUs visited the site of interview at least once a week. Most male (75%) and female (84%) IDUs thought that people came to the site to meet new sexual partners. In fact, 38% of male IDUs and 56% of female IDUs had met a new partner at the site. Eighty-two percent of male IDUs had at least one sexual partner in the past 4 weeks; of these, 61% had at least one new partner during this period. Almost 60% of male IDUs had a regular sex partner. Approximately 27% of male IDUs paid for sex during the 3 months prior to the interview. Over 60% of the 63 female IDUs interviewed said they had received money in exchange for sex during the past 3 months. Few (4%) male IDUs reported recent sex with another man.

IDUs: HIV Knowledge and Prevention

Less than 15% of male IDUs attended an AIDS educational session in the past year. Male IDUs were likely to identify using sterile needles as a way to reduce the risk of getting HIV. Fifty-three percent of the male IDUs with a new partner in the past 4 weeks used a condom with the last new partner. Approximately 30% of male IDUs with a regular partner used a condom at last sex with that. Fifty-five percent of male IDUs had been tested for HIV in the past year.

IDUs: Injection Drug Use

Most male IDUs (73%) said that injection drug use was “very common” or “somewhat common” in the unit where the interview took place. No male IDUs reported that injection drug use did not occur in the unit. Almost 88% thought that other IDUs socialized at the interview site.

Heroin was the most commonly reported drug but 36% reported raw opium. Most had used drugs for years; only 7% reported injecting for less than one year. Thirty-eight percent of male IDUs reported always taking drugs with the same group; for 35%, it depended on the circumstances.

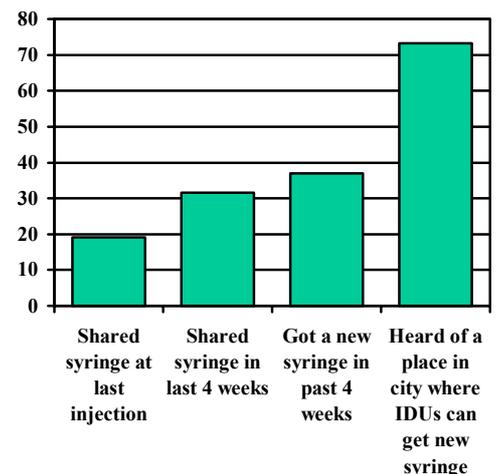
Over 70% of male IDUs had injected drugs in the previous 7 days; about 60% the day before. Those who injected the previous day did so 1.5 times, on average.

In the 4 weeks preceding the interview, two-thirds of male IDUs took drugs from a common reservoir, and 24% used a ready made drug solution without boiling. Almost 20% of male IDUs shared a syringe at last injection, and 32% had shared a syringe in the past 4 weeks (Figure 9). About 37% of male IDUs had obtained a new syringe in the last 4 weeks. Three-quarters had heard of a place in the city where IDUs can get new syringes. Half of male IDUs (53%) said that they had obtained their last syringe from a pharmacy and 20% from a trust point. Over two-thirds said that they could always get a new syringe whenever they wanted. Male IDUs frequently cited a lack of money and fear of police as obstacles to obtaining new syringes.

IDUs: Arrests and registration

Over 55% of male IDUs had been arrested for injecting drugs. Of these, 42% thought they had been registered with the police and 60% of these thought they were registered as IDUs. One-third of male IDUs had met a narcologist or visited a narcologist dispensary.

Figure 9. Needle sharing and use by male IDUs



Step 5: Summary and Recommendations

Sexual and injection drug use networks are extensive and diffuse. There is significant overlap among groups at high risk for HIV infection.

This study identified **almost 650** unique sites in **Karaganda** where people at high risk of HIV infection socialize. There was significant overlap among groups at high risk, including youth, injection drug users, and commercial sex workers and their clients.

The rate of new partnership formation is high. A large proportion of men visit sex workers.

Over **40% of men and women** interviewed at sites reported at least one new partner during the past 4 weeks. Approximately **28%** of men had given money in exchange for sex during the 3 months prior to the interview.

Condom use is high, particularly with new partners.

Condom use was high among all sub-populations. The proportion of individuals who had ever used a condom ranged from **78% of women in the representative sample** to **97%** of sex workers. Over **two-thirds** of people with a new partner in the past 4 weeks had used a condom with the last new partner.

Condoms are not consistently available at sites, but they are available nearby.

Less than **25%** of sites had condoms always available **but** condoms were available nearby at **79%** of sites. **Half** of site representatives were willing to sell condoms at their sites.

Condoms are most frequently obtained from pharmacies, kiosks, and partners.

Most men obtained condoms from pharmacies or kiosks. Women most often obtained condoms from their sex partners or a pharmacy.

Drug use is common. The locations of trust points are known and used.

In the representative sample, 27% of men and 13% of women had ever injected drugs. Over **70%** of male IDUs had injected drugs in the past 7 days. **One-third** had shared a syringe in the 4 weeks preceding the interview. **Three-quarters** of male IDUs had heard of a place in the city where IDUs can get new syringes and **20%** had obtained their last syringe from a trust point.

Recommendations

- HIV interventions should be implemented at sites where people at high risk of infection socialize, particularly at sites where these high-risk populations overlap.
- Condoms should be available at sites where people meet new sexual partners.
- Current programs promoting condom use **and needle exchange** need to be maintained.
- Follow-up studies should determine the role of public transportation in sexual and drug use networks.