

**Program Implications**

- Only about a quarter of truckers have reported comprehensive knowledge on major two ways of HIV infection prevention and three misconceptions (being faithful to one partner or avoiding multiple sex partners; consistent and correct condom use, healthy looking person can have HIV infection, HIV does not transmit from sharing foods and mosquito bites). As such comprehensive knowledge motivates to change behavior, programs should focus on providing complete information on these issues through various channels.
- About 60 percent of the truckers knew that they could have a confidential HIV test in their community. However, only around 37 percent of them had been tested. So, particularly for those truckers, who practice unsafe sex, prevention programs should encourage them to visit VCT and STI sites on a regular basis.
- Coverage of ongoing HIV program on truckers is relatively low. So more truckers should be reached by outreach workers and encouraged to visit DIC, VCT and STI clinics.

**Recommendations**

- The knowledge of the truckers on the causes of HIV and STI transmission was reported very poor. Coverage of ongoing outreach programs on truckers is also low. More programs should be launched targeting this particular group on the highways, and coverage area of existing programs should be increased.
- HIV/AIDS prevention programs should focus more on the need for consistent and correct condom use with all kinds of partners to prevent HIV and STI infection.
- Truckers should be encouraged to use condoms consistently through social marketing and/or free condom distribution programs run by NGOs/health workers/volunteers.
- IEC materials like posters/pamphlets and billboards/signboards have been quite effective in disseminating HIV/AIDS awareness information to the truckers. Such activities should be continued and further extended to cover major highways.

The IBBS Surveys are part of the National HIV Surveillance Plan, led by National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC) and conducted by New Era and SACTS, with technical assistance from Family Health International (FHI) Nepal and financial support from United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Cooperative Agreement 367-A-00-06-00067-00”

**For more information and full report, please contact:**

National Center for AIDS and STD Control (NCASC)  
Tel: 01-4261653/4258219, Fax: 01- 4261406  
Kathmandu, Nepal  
Email: ncasc@mos.com.np

ASHA Project  
Family Health International (FHI)/Nepal Country Office  
Tel 01-4437173, Fax 01-4417475  
GPO Box 8803, Kathmandu, Nepal  
Email fhinepal@fhi.org.np



**Brief Description of the Study**

Truckers are one of the most frequent clients of female sex workers (FSWs). In Integrated Biological and Behavioral Surveillance (IBBS) Survey 2009 about 58 percent FSWS have reported truckers as their frequent clients. Since 1999 HIV prevalence studies are being conducted among truckers.

The fourth round of IBBS among truckers was conducted in 2009. A total of 400 truckers were recruited in the sample from the Pathlaiya study site. Data for the study was collected from February 28 to April 25, 2009. The survey measured HIV and syphilis prevalence among truckers along with information on variables which are associated with a risk of HIV infection and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), such as condom use, sexual behaviors, knowledge of HIV/AIDS, reported cases of STIs, STI treatment behaviors, exposure to HIV/AIDS messages and alcohol and drug use habits.

**Methods**

This cross-sectional IBBS was conducted among truckers - one of the most frequent clients of FSWS. The eligibility criteria used in the study were “male truck drivers aged 18 years or above or their helpers aged 16 years and above intercepted at the Pathlaiya truck stop along the Mahendra Highway”. To allow comparison over time, the 2009 survey followed the same sampling procedure used in the previous rounds of IBBS with truckers. The ACNielsen research team visited Pathlaiya to observe the flow of trucks and locate sites where the trucks stopped for new assignments, loading/unloading goods and for the night halt. This quick consultation with local people revealed that all truckers passing through Pathalaiya halt there at least once or twice in a month.

To meet the criteria of covering at least 30 clusters for the survey, a total of 40 clusters were covered to achieve a sample of 400 truck drivers/helpers. Looking at the average flow of truckers per day through the Pathlaiya point, every fifth truck passing through the highway was selected for the sample. The drivers of the intercepted trucks were screened to ensure that they were eligible with respect to their age.

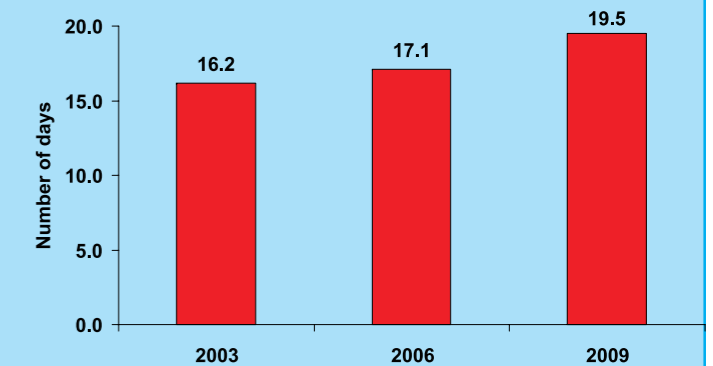
**Methods**

A structured questionnaire was used to collect behavioral data relating to background information and sexual behavior among the respondents. HIV and syphilis were tested from the blood samples collected. The study was conducted in compliance with both ethical and human rights standards and ethical approvals were obtained from Nepal Health Research Council (NHRC) and the Protection of Human Subjects Committee (PHSC), Family Health International (FHI)’s ethical review board.

**Key Findings**

**Truckers are young and majority has some schooling:**  
Average age of truckers was 27 years and about 45 percent were under the age of 25. Almost a quarter of truckers had SLC+ education and only about one percent was illiterate. Rest of the truckers had some schooling.

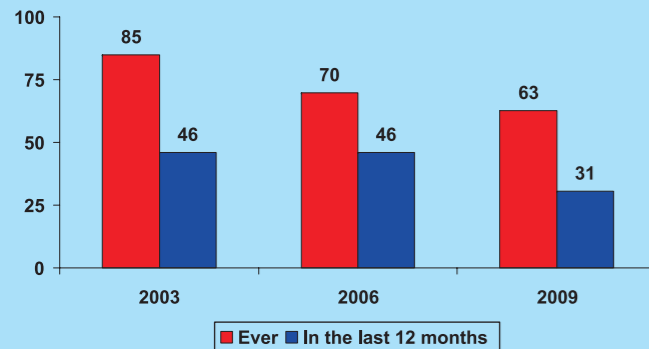
**Average duration of truckers outside home has increased:**  
The truckers are considered a mobile population because their profession keeps them away from their homes and families for long intervals. About 64 percent truckers were married. The married truckers were away from their family for the mean duration of 19.5 days in a month. In previous rounds of IBBS the married truckers were away from their family for mean duration of 16.2 days in 2003 and 17.1 days in 2006 (Fig. 1).



**Risky sexual behavior of truckers has decreased:**  
The proportion of truckers who reported ever having sexual intercourse with FSWS was 62.8 percent in 2009. Almost 85 percent of the truckers in 2003 and 69.7 percent in 2006 had reported sexual intercourse with FSWS. Similarly, percentage of truckers reporting sex with FSWS in the last 12 months also has decreased in the recent years (Fig. 2). The mean amount of money paid by the truckers for their last sexual intercourse with the FSWS was Rs. 289 in 2009.

**Key Findings**

**Fig. 2: Percentage of truckers reporting sex with FSWs**



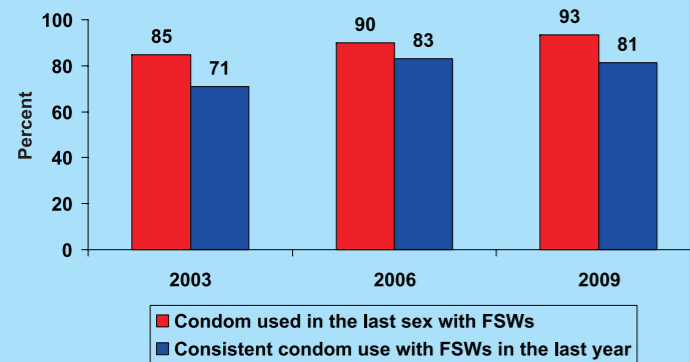
**Truckers visit FSWs in India too:**

Among the truckers who ever had sex with FSWs, altogether 13.6 percent reported that they ever had sexual contact with FSWs in India too. The mean number of FSWs visited in India was about two. Significantly higher percent of the truckers who ever had sex with FSWs in India (51.5%) had such encounters in the last 12 months preceding the survey in 2009. Data indicate that percentage of truckers visiting FSWs in India is increasing over time (26.7% in 2003 and 31.6% in 2006). Only one percent truckers reported having sex with male partners in the last year.

**Condom use with FSWs is increasing over time:**

A large majority (93.4%) of the study population reported that they had used condom in the last sex with FSWs. The figure for the same was 84.7 percent in 2003 and 89.8 percent in 2006. Altogether about 81 percent of the truckers had used condom consistently in the last year while having sex with FSWs. The percentage of truckers who had consistently used condom with FSWs was 83 percent in 2006 and 71 percent in 2003 (Fig. 3). In 2009, percentage of truckers reporting consistent condom use with other female friends, girl friends and wives was 74 percent, 46 percent and four percent respectively. About 46.7 percent truckers have reported that they carry condoms regularly.

**Fig. 3: % of truckers reporting condom use with FSWs**

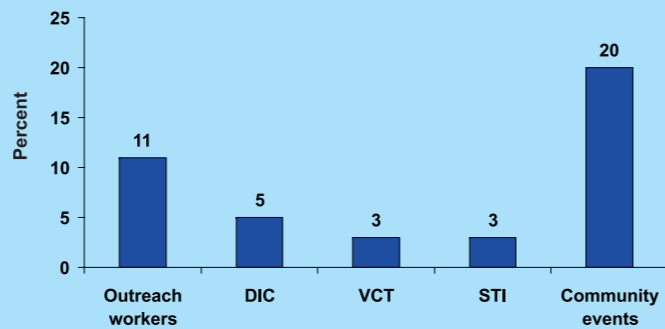


**Key Findings**

**Uptake of HIV and STI services is low among truckers:**

Percent of the truckers who had used prevention services such as peer and outreach education, Drop-in-Centers (DIC), STI clinics, VCT sites and HIV/AIDS awareness raising community events in the last 12 months is 11 percent, five percent, three percent, three percent and 20 percent respectively (Fig. 4). This is a very low coverage. However, about 60 percent of truckers have reported that they know the place where VCT services are available in their area.

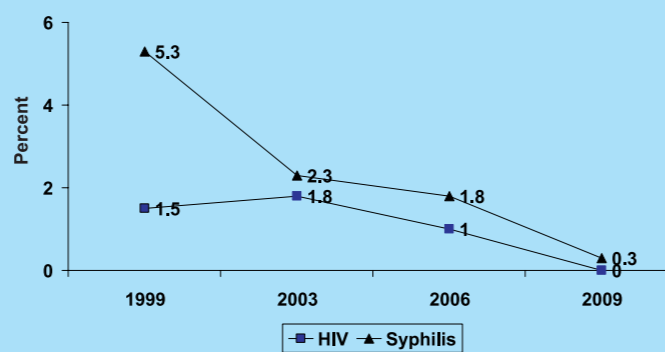
**Fig. 4: % of Truckers reached by various HIV and STI programs in the last 12 months preceding the survey**



**HIV and STI prevalence is low among truckers:**

Among the 400 truckers who participated in the study, no one was found to be HIV positive in 2009. HIV prevalence was 1.5 percent in 1999, 1.8 percent in 2003 and one percent in 2006. Altogether 0.3 percent of the truckers were found to be currently infected with syphilis. In the previous rounds of IBBS 2.3 percent truckers in 2003 and 1.8 percent in 2006 were infected with current syphilis. Both HIV and Syphilis among truckers shows a declining trend (Fig. 5).

**Fig. 5: HIV and Syphilis prevalence among Truckers**



**Key Findings**

**Comprehensive knowledge of HIV among truckers is low:**

In total, only 25.8 percent of the respondents had comprehensive knowledge on HIV (proper knowledge of abstinence, condom use and misconceptions on sharing food, mosquito bite and healthy looking person).

**Truckers report very high STI treatment seeking behavior:**

Only 2.8 percent of the truckers reported at least one STI symptom experienced in the past year. All the truckers with such symptoms had got treatment for problems experienced. However only 42.9 percent of truckers who went for treatment had received counseling on HIV and STI.

**Use of alcohol and drugs among Truckers:**

Almost 15 percent truckers reported that they had consumed alcohol on a daily basis in the past month. About 25 percent consume 2 to 3 times in a week. Moreover, about six percent truckers have reported the use of other drugs as well.

**Program Implications**

- The truckers reported that they were away from home for an average of 19.5 days per month. Approximately 47 percent of the married truckers spent around 15-21 days per month away from their homes. Programs should be targeted to such truckers to encourage them for practicing safe sex while they are away from home.
- Almost 63 percent of the truckers had maintained sexual contact with FSWs. Behavioral communication programs should be targeted to such truckers in a specific way through one-on-one communication activities so that they can either change the behavior of visiting FSWs or practice safe sex with them.
- Among the truckers who visit India, the behavior of visiting FSWs in India is increasing over time. This behavior has greater risk of HIV and STI. Therefore, programs should have specific counseling activity to such truckers to reduce their high risk behaviors.
- Altogether 81.2 percent of the truckers had used condoms consistently with FSWs and around 74.1 percent of them with other female friends in the past year. But use of condoms was reported to be low with wives and girl friends. As more housewives are being infected through their husbands, HIV programs targeted to truckers also should have special activities to aware and motivate them for consistent and correct condom use with their wives too, if they have practiced unsafe sex outside home.

**Key Indicators**

Indicators	year		
	2003	2006	2009
<b>Mobility of Truckers</b>			
Married Truckers : mean days away from family in a month	16.2	17.1	19.5
<b>Sexual behavior of Truckers</b>			
Ever had sex with a FSW	85.0	69.7	62.8
<b>Sex practices of Truckers</b>			
% of Truckers who had sex with FSW (both in India and Nepal) in the past year	46.0	46.0	30.5
Mean number of FSWs visited in Nepal in the past year	4.0	6.4	3.8
<b>Sex practices of Truckers in India</b>			
% of truckers who had sex with FSWs in the past year in India	26.7	31.6	51.5
<b>Condom use with different types of sex partner</b>			
% of truckers who used condom during the last sex with FSWs	84.7	89.8	93.4
% of truckers who had used condom consistently in the last year while having sex with sex workers	71.0	83.0	81.2
% of Truckers who usually carry condoms	NA	58.7	46.7
<b>Knowledge of HIV</b>			
% of Truckers who have comprehensive knowledge of avoiding HIV/AIDS *	NA	NA	25.8
<b>HIV test</b>			
% of truckers who had HIV test within last 12 months and had test results	NA	NA	13.8
<b>Reported STI and treatment</b>			
% of truckers reporting at least one STI symptom in the past year	NA	NA	2.8
Received counseling during the treatment	NA	NA	42.9
<b>Use of alcohol and drugs</b>			
% of truckers who consumed alcohol on daily basis in the last year/month	NA	NA	14.8
<b>Stigma and discrimination</b>			
% of truckers who showed willing to maintain confidentiality of a HIV positive family member	NA	NA	34.5
<b>HIV/STI prevalence</b>			
% of truckers who were tested HIV +ve	1.8	1.0	0.0
% of truckers who had current Syphilis	2.3	1.8	2.0

\* knowledge on abstinence, being faithful, condom use and with no misconceptions on HIV in healthy looking person, HIV transmission by mosquito bite and sharing food utensils