

PEPFAR Report - Executive Summary

The President's Emergency Plan For AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) provides funding to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS in low- and middle-income countries. For the first twenty years of its history, it was popular and bipartisan, the shining jewel of US aid programs. But right now, many PEPFAR programs are paused, clinics are shuttered, and the upcoming reauthorization fight looks uncertain. The State Department, which administers PEPFAR, says the program has saved 25 million lives. We are an independent team of journalists, academics, and technologists who decided to investigate whether that was true.

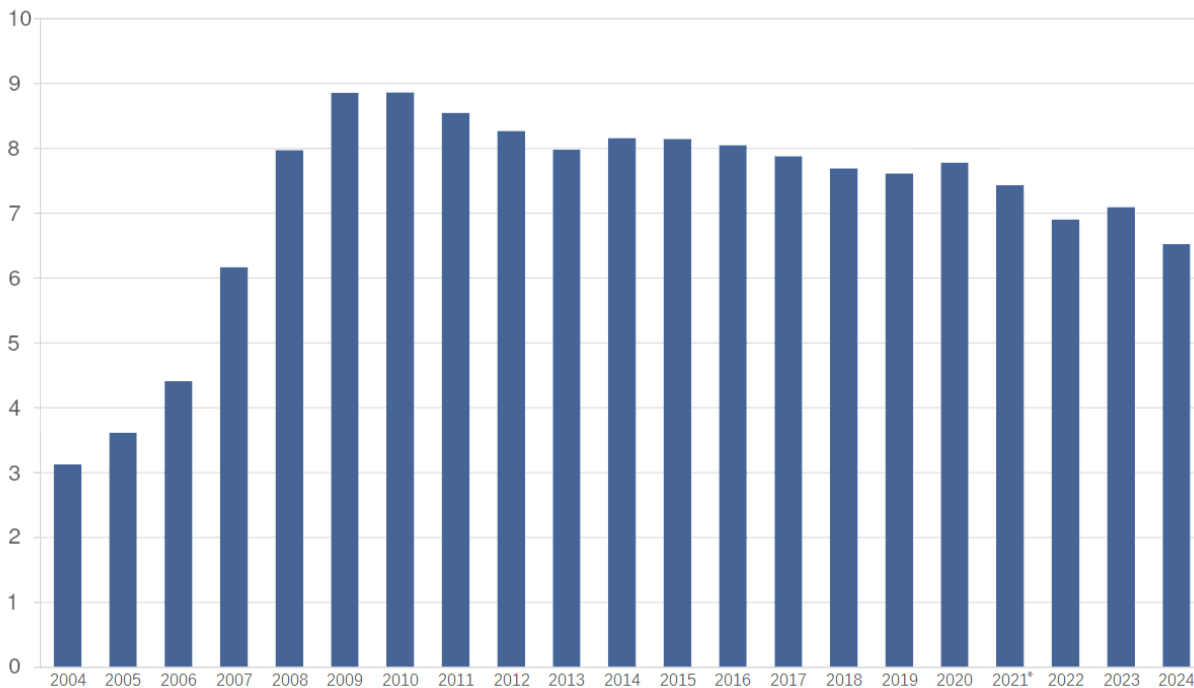
Our key findings:

- PEPFAR has saved between 7.5 and 30 million lives, at a cost between \$1,500 and \$10,000 per life saved. The US government is willing to spend at least a thousand times this much to save an American life.
- In Africa, unlike in the United States, HIV/AIDS primarily affects women and children. One of the main goals of PEPFAR is to prevent “vertical transmission”, where a pregnant mother with HIV passes on her infection to her baby in utero or during delivery. PEPFAR has prevented at least 5.5 million babies from being born with HIV.
- The number of people who die of HIV/AIDS each year has been declining since 2004—the year PEPFAR began operation. PEPFAR is a major reason for this decline.
- PEPFAR helped decrease the cost of first-line HIV medications from \$1000 a month to only \$60 a year (\$5 a month). Because of the declining cost of medications, PEPFAR is more cost-effective each year, and is doing more and more on a budget that has been declining in real dollars since 2009.
- PEPFAR also offers post-exposure prophylaxis to nurses, rape victims, and others exposed to HIV, and pre-exposure prophylaxis, medications that prevent contracting HIV, to women whose husbands have HIV and other at-risk populations.
- Over time, PEPFAR is handing off its responsibilities to the governments of the countries we're helping, but it will take decades if we want to defeat HIV/AIDS and years if we want to not destroy the good works we have done.
- PEPFAR is a well-audited program. The audits we spot-checked showed 0 to 2% rates of undocumented program expenses. This compares extremely favorably to other government programs: the Medicare fraud rate, for instance, is reportedly 5-10%.
- Controlling HIV/AIDS abroad keeps Americans safe from HIV/AIDS at home. The federal government spends [\\$29 billion annually](#) on medical care for Americans with HIV and AIDS, not counting insurance company spending: six billion for PEPFAR is a good deal.
- PEPFAR advances American interests: the program is popular, appreciated, widely known, and helps us compete with China, prevent terrorism, and win allies in Africa and beyond.

We believe that President Donald Trump should build on PEPFAR's success to advance American greatness and the interests of the American people. Our full report is at PEPFARreport.org

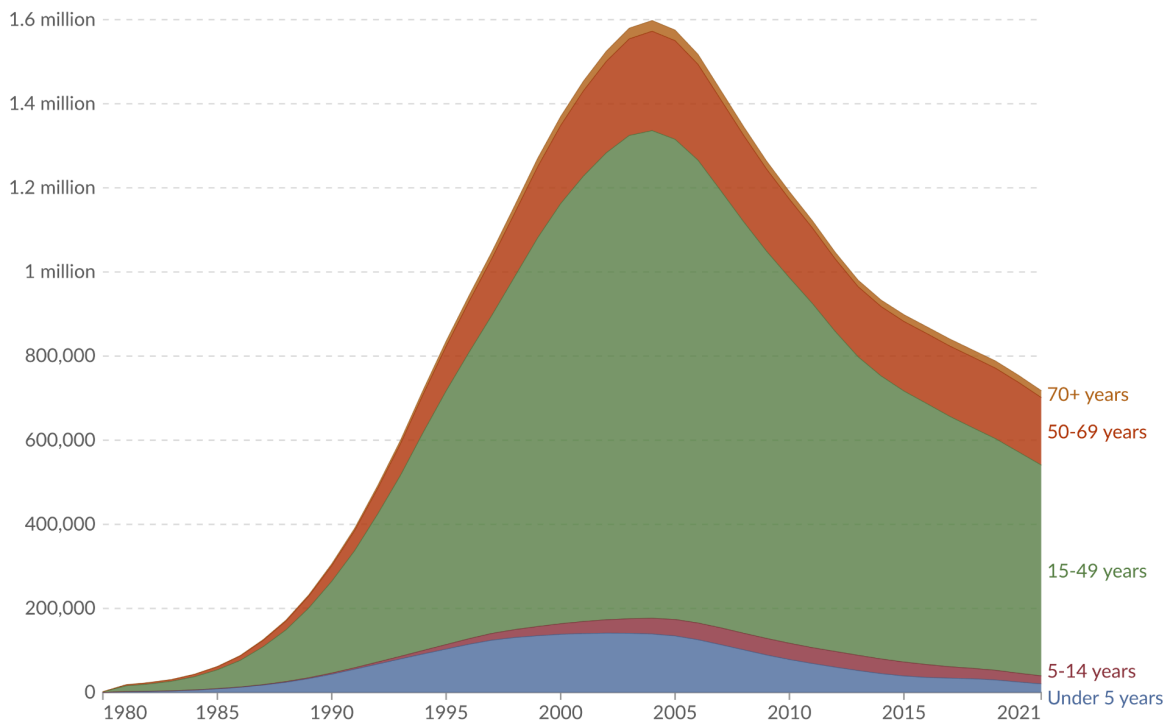
US funding for PEPFAR, adjusted for inflation

Billions of 2024 dollars, whole program per financial year



Deaths from HIV/AIDS by age, World

Our World in Data



Data source: IHME, Global Burden of Disease (2024)

OurWorldinData.org/hiv-aids | CC BY