

Sexual risk behaviours, gender, & age dimensions of the adolescent HIV epidemic in South Africa

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Project description

There is limited data on adolescents living with HIV (ALHIV) in South Africa. To address this gap, we sought to quantify adolescent HIV prevalence & risk behaviours, in a collaborative project called *Being ALHIV: What do we know about adolescents living with HIV?*

Target age group



10-19 year old adolescents (stratified into 10-14 & 15-19 year age groups)
Focused on female ALHIV

Data Sources & Methods



South African National HIV Prevalence, Incidence, Behaviour & Communication Surveys for both HIV negative (HIV-) & HIV positive (HIV+) adolescents. These are known as the "SABSSM" surveys
Survey years analysed: 2005, 2008, 2012 & 2017

Analyses



Laboratory confirmed HIV results used to estimate adolescent HIV prevalence stratified by sex (male/female) & two age groups (10-14-years & 15-19-years).
Self-reported risk behaviours & relationship practices, among HIV positive & HIV negative females aged 15-19 years.
Risk indicators: ever had sex, had sex in the past year, early sexual debut (\leq age 15 years), multiple (≥ 2) sexual partners, age disparate sex & condom use at last sex.

Key Findings

Young women are vulnerable to HIV acquisition from early adolescence.
Females aged 15-19 years had the highest HIV prevalence over time with 9.4% (95% CI: 7.1-12.4) in 2005, 6.4% (95% CI: 4.7-8.6) in 2008, 5.6% (95% CI: 4.2-7.5) in 2012 & remaining at 5.6% (95% CI: 4.5-6.9) in 2017¹.
HIV prevalence among **male adolescents aged 15-19 years** increased between 2012 (0.7%, 95% CI: 0.4-1.2) & 2017 (4.2%, 95% CI 3.0-5.8)¹.

Behavioural risk indicators were consistently higher for HIV+ adolescent females compared to their HIV- counterparts¹

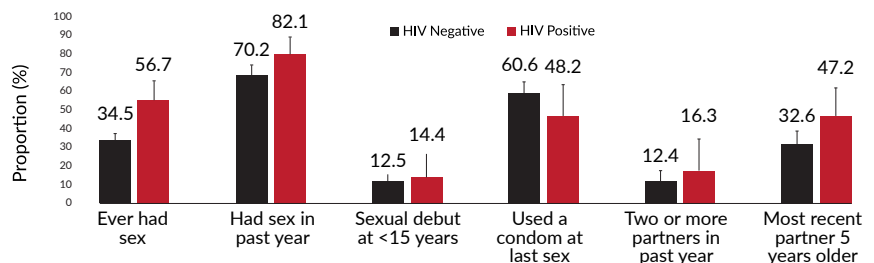


Figure 1: Female adolescents aged 15 - 19 years by HIV status, sexual behaviours & relationship practices, South Africa, 2017

Teenage pregnancy, South Africa, 2017¹



21.3% (95% CI: 17.0-26.4) adolescent females aged 15-19 years who were sexually active in the past year reported being pregnant in the past 24 months.

Of these, 41.5% (95% CI: 26.7-58.0) were ALHIV.

Equating to 107 859 young women being pregnant in the survey, among whom 22 705 were HIV+.

18.9% (95% CI: 14.8-23.8) young women who were HIV- reported being pregnant.

Lessons learnt & Recommendations

Stratification by adolescent sex & age, shows that the epidemic starts to gain traction at an early age for females.

Interventions must include specific programmes for 10-14-year-old adolescents.

This is to mitigate their risk of acquiring HIV in late adolescence, to manage living with HIV, & to prevent onward transmission if perinatally infected. Interventions should be directed to improve access to adolescents' sexual & reproductive health services with targeted messaging for both sexes.

References

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