

2006-07 Namibia Demographic and Health Survey

Policy Brief



HIV/AIDS Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviours

Knowledge is the first line of defense against HIV transmission. How much do Namibians know about AIDS prevention, and—even more important—how do they act upon what they know?

Knowledge about HIV/AIDS Lacking

Virtually all Namibian women and men age 15-49 have heard of HIV/AIDS. More than 80 percent also can identify the three key prevention behaviours—consistent use of condoms, remaining faithful to an uninfected partner, and abstaining from sex. But many Namibian women and especially men continue to believe common misconceptions about HIV transmission. Only 71 percent of men, for example, know that the virus cannot be spread by mosquito bites and only 79 percent know that it cannot be spread by sharing food with a person who has AIDS. About one-fourth of women and 40 percent of men do not know that breastfeeding can transmit HIV and that drugs are available to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Prevention knowledge varies by region. Only 64 percent of women in Omaheke know that using condoms can prevent HIV compared to 90 percent of women in Khomas.

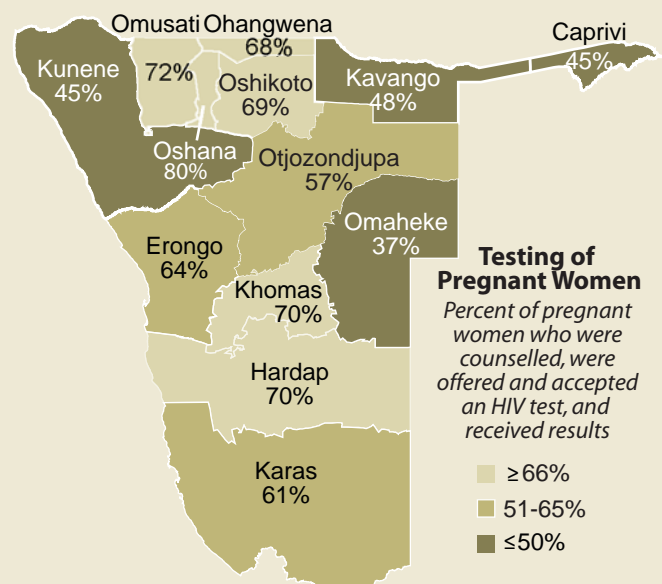
Stigma about HIV/AIDS Still Exists

Reducing stigma about AIDS can help to impart correct information, dispel misconceptions, and promote more open discussion and between sexual partners and within families. While over 90 percent of women and men say they would be willing to care for a family member with AIDS at home, only about 55 percent would not want to keep that person's HIV status a secret. Only about 75 percent would buy fresh vegetables from a person known to be HIV positive. Still, there are signs that stigma is decreasing. In the 2006-07 NDHS, 85 percent of women and men think that female teachers with HIV who are not sick should be allowed to continue teaching, up from xx percent in 2000.

Most women and men—80 percent—agree that children age 12-14 should be taught about using condoms to prevent AIDS.

Many Women are Tested for HIV

Almost 90 percent of Namibians know where to get an HIV test. Women are more likely to get tested than men; 51 percent of women have ever been tested and received their results compared to 32 percent of men. Just under 30 percent of women and 18 percent of men have tested and received their test results in the 12 months before the survey. Sixty-two percent of women pregnant in the two years before the survey were offered and received HIV testing during antenatal care. HIV testing in antenatal care facilities varies substantially throughout Namibia, ranging from 37 percent of pregnant women in Omaheke to 80 percent in Oshana.

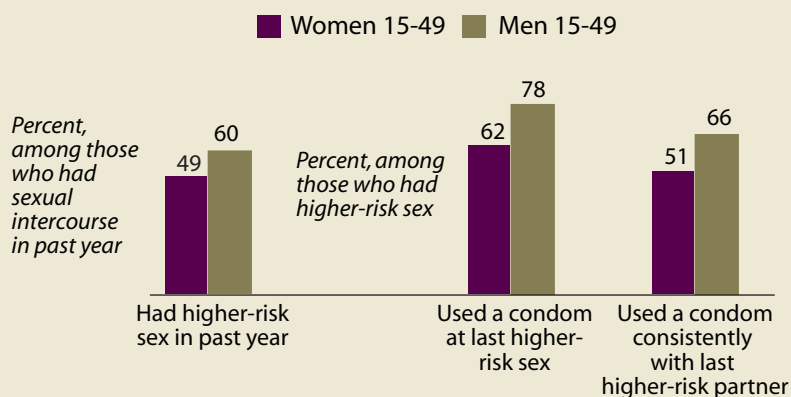




Many Report Higher-Risk Sexual Activity

Despite widespread knowledge of HIV and AIDS, many people are still putting themselves and their partners at risk of HIV infection. The NDHS asked women and men about their sexual behaviour, including higher-risk sex, defined as sex with a partner who is neither a spouse nor lived with the respondent. In the year before the survey 49 percent of women and 60 percent of men engaged in higher-risk sex. Many of these adults used condoms—about half of the women and two-thirds of the men. In the year before the survey, 16 percent of men reported having two or more sex partners compared to 3 percent of women.

Higher-Risk Sex and Condom Use



Many Young People Age 15-24 at Elevated Risk

Almost two-thirds of young women and men age 15-24 have comprehensive knowledge about HIV, that is, they know that using condoms during sex and having just one uninfected partner can reduce the chance of getting AIDS; they realize that a healthy-looking person can have AIDS; and they reject the two most common local misconceptions about AIDS. Despite their knowledge, however, more than half of young people have sex before marriage. Still condom use is widespread. More than 90 percent of youth know where to get condoms. Sixty-four percent of young women and 81 percent of young men report that they used a condom the last time they had sex.