

Human rights violations against key populations in South Africa Public health facilities: Findings from the Ritshidze Community-led Monitoring Programme



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Background

Members of key populations (KPs) have increased vulnerability to HIV and experience legal and social barriers to healthcare. The HIV response is dependent on the healthcare system's ability to serve these populations, yet they are often the most excluded from care. Through the **Ritshidze Community-led Monitoring Programme** we track the quality of healthcare for KPs in South Africa with implications for improving services and rectifying abuses.

Objectives



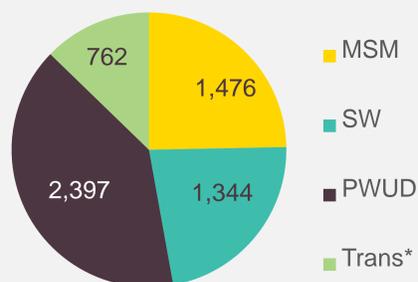
Examine KP service refusal and human rights violations at public health facilities in South Africa through a community-led monitoring mechanism

Methods

Key populations (n=5,979) were recruited for a cross-sectional survey via community-based snowball sampling in 18 PEPFAR-supported districts across seven provinces from August to October 2021.

Survey data on KP healthcare experiences were collected electronically by trained KP data collectors. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics for key service quality and human rights indicators by population and province.

Sample Size by Population



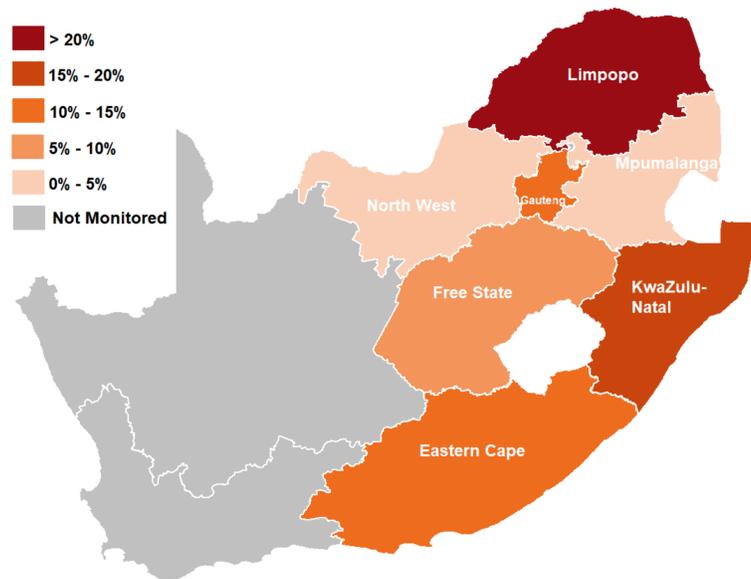
Results: Denial of services

Percent of respondents who were refused access to services at a facility by population



Over the past year, 14% of MSM (n=207), 13% of SW (n=175), 12% of PWUD (n=288), and 11% of trans* people (n=84) reported being denied health services at a public health facility because they are a member of a key population.

Percent of respondents who were denied access to services at a facility by province:



"At some point, I was chased away because, on the day of my visit I was dirty; the nurse told me clearly that they will not assist "amaphara" which is a label for a thug. In some days they will assist all the people who came to the facility after my arrival, and when I asked them they said "shut up, who are you to tell us what to do and who to see first". I stopped using this facility."

– PWUD, Illovo Ntsimbini Clinic, KZN, August 2021

Results: Privacy concerns

	Respondents who think privacy is not well respected at facilities, % (n)	Most common privacy violations, % (n)	
		Disclosure of HIV status	Disclosure of KP status
Sex Workers	28% (232)	45% (105)	44% (102)
PWUD	26% (357)	46% (164)	66% (234)
Trans* people	21% (93)	46% (43)	55% (51)
MSM	19% (167)	55% (92)	52% (87)

"I was embarrassed the last time I went to the clinic. The nurse who was supposed to consult me told me in front of other patients that I should retire as a sex worker. They do not respect our privacy. I practically stopped to go to the facility when I was exposed in front of other patients who did not know that am a sex worker. Talking about my profession and sexual partners, it made my life a living hell at the facility, and they are treating me worse now than before."

– Sex worker, Phola Park Clinic, Gauteng, July 2021

Implications

Key Takeaways

- **Human rights violations and unfriendly services at public health facilities were frequently reported by KP members in South Africa.**
- There is wide provincial variation in reported violations against KPs requiring a geographically-specific response.
- Community-led monitoring can effectively capture human rights violations against key populations and feed information to decision makers.

Limitations:

The sample is non-random, secured through community-based snowball sampling, which may limit generalizability. Monitoring did not include all provinces.

Conclusions:

Denial of health services based on key population status is a serious human rights violation and **requires immediate attention by the National Department of Health**. In addition to breaching the South African constitutional right to access health services, these violations are a likely **detriment to the health of key population members as well as to broader HIV and public health outcomes** in South Africa.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the numerous participants who generously donated their time to complete this survey. Thank you to the data collectors for their excellent work to reach participants in the community. Thank you to Alana Sharp and Elise Lankiewicz for their contribution to data analysis.

Ritshidze is supported by UNAIDS, PEPFAR, USAID, and CDC. The financial contributions of UNAIDS (and any other agencies as directed by UNAIDS) towards Ritshidze is gratefully acknowledged. However, its content and ideas expressed therein do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of UNAIDS or engage the responsibility of UNAIDS. Ritshidze is supported by a Cooperative Agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Its content are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States Agency for International Development, the Department of Health and Human Services or the U.S. Government.