

HIV communication programmes in South Africa – who are the unreached and how can we reach them?

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BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

HIV communication programmes (HCPs) have been shown to influence people to adopt and maintain desirable sexual behaviours; however 10% of the South African population (2.8 million people) are not reached by any programmes. The objective of this study was to explore the characteristics of those people unreached by HCPs, to understand why they have not been reached and investigate potential channels to reach them.

METHODS

We conducted a multi-stage, stratified random cross-sectional survey of 9,728 South Africans (5,291 females and 4,437 males) aged 16-55. Data on demographics, knowledge, attitudes, perception, behaviour, media access and exposure to HCPs were collected using an interviewer-administered questionnaire. Data were analysed using STATA-11.2. Bivariate and logistic regression analysis methods were used ($p < 0.05$). Analysis was weighted and adjusted for intra-class correlation within clusters.

RESULTS

The characteristics of people who were reached versus unreached differed significantly and can be seen in Figure 1.

People unreached by HCPs were more likely to be 50 years and older [OR 2.66 (1.59; 4.47)], white [OR 7.77 (4.35; 13.88)] and have only a primary school education [OR 2.89 (1.90; 4.42)]. It is clear that there is a mixed pool of unreached respondents. Polarities in media access emphasise this point further – over 60% of the unreached population never access SABC while almost 40% reported watching DSTV (a paid TV channel) at least once a week (Figure 2).



FIGURE 1: DESCRIPTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF PEOPLE WHO WERE REACHED BY HCPs VERSUS PEOPLE UNREACHED BY HCPs IN SOUTH AFRICA, 2009

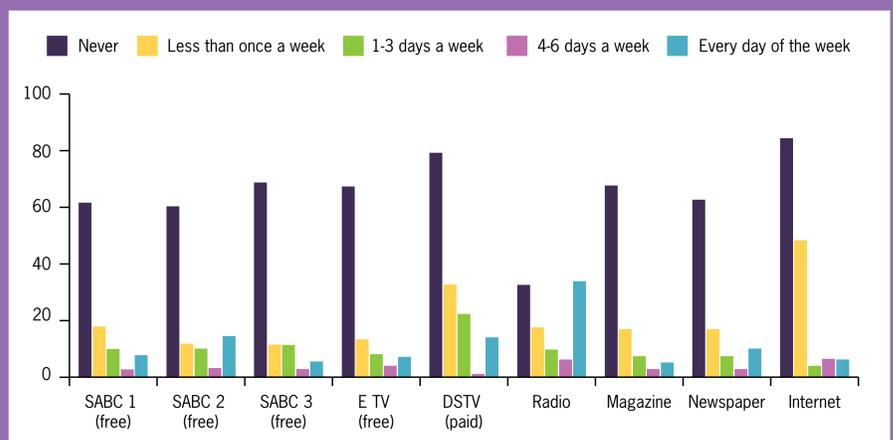


FIGURE 2: FREQUENCY OF MEDIA ACCESS BY PEOPLE UNREACHED BY HCPs

CONCLUSION

The unreached population seem to include people who live at the extremes of the poverty scale. Due to the extent of South Africa's HIV epidemic, funding limitations and clear evidence on HCPs' impact on people's behaviours; priority should be given to developing a communication strategy to target the unreached population who are most at risk of HIV – those with a low socio-economic status. Due to low levels of access to mass media, interpersonal communication and radio may be more effective channels for intervention.

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