

FACT SHEET 1

SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL HIV, BEHAVIOUR HEALTH SURVEY 2012

The South African National HIV, Behaviour and Health Survey 2012, which sees fieldwork teams reaching up to 15 000 households and 40 000 individuals throughout the country, is the fourth survey after those conducted by the same team in 2002, 2005 and 2008.

The study, which provides a comprehensive assessment of the health of the people of South Africa, is led by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in partnership with the Medical Research Council (MRC), the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The project also has the support of the National Department of Health, and the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC).

The first study, conducted in 2002, has provided an important gauge of the health status of South Africa, including HIV and AIDS. It is conducted every three to four years and the results are used as a foundation to inform important health programmes such as the national HIV and AIDS and STI Strategic Plan, among others. South Africa is the only country that will have conducted such a study four times by the end of this year. The study is funded by the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) through CDC, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and UNICEF.

The focus of the study for 2011 has been expanded to include a wide range of health information including the health of infants and mothers, child health, and emerging HIV prevention interventions such as male circumcision. Issues such as psychological health and health challenges such as alcohol abuse are also addressed.

The research structure will follow the methods used and validated in previous surveys carried out in 2002, 2005, and 2008. The scope of the 2011 study has, however, been expanded to include:

- Determining the health status of all South Africans including infants and their mothers;
- Determining the use and access to child health, maternal health and general health services;
- Collecting data for monitoring the indicators required for the preparation of the country's reports to various international bodies;
- Conducting surveillance of HIV infection and sexual behaviour to obtain a better understanding of factors driving the epidemic;
- Collecting demographic and health indicators, including fertility, morbidity and mortality;
- Tracking the proportion of circumcised males in South Africa;
- Estimating infant, under five and maternal mortality rates;
- Collecting information on infant feeding practices; and
- Estimating current fertility trends in the country.

As with similar national studies, a random sample of households is chosen from communities throughout South Africa to ensure national representativeness, but unlike before, all members of the household will be invited to participate and provide a blood specimen. The 'take all' household members approach allows the study to report on a larger pool of variable factors. This time all participants will be able to access their HIV test results at their nearest HIV Counselling and Testing (HCT) sites in their area.

Fieldwork has already commenced in some provinces but will begin in all provinces by next week. All fieldwork shall be completed by June of this year.

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