

Country progress report - Republic of The Gambia

Global AIDS Monitoring 2020



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Overall

Fast-track targets

Progress summary

The Gambia is a small West African country, bounded by Senegal, with a narrow Atlantic coastline. The country stretches approximately 400 km eastwards, and its width varies between 80km at the Atlantic and about 28km in the inland east. The country is divided horizontally by the River Gambia and the total land area is 11,295 square km. It has an estimated population of 2,273,665, and a human development index ranking of 174 out of 189 countries in 2019.

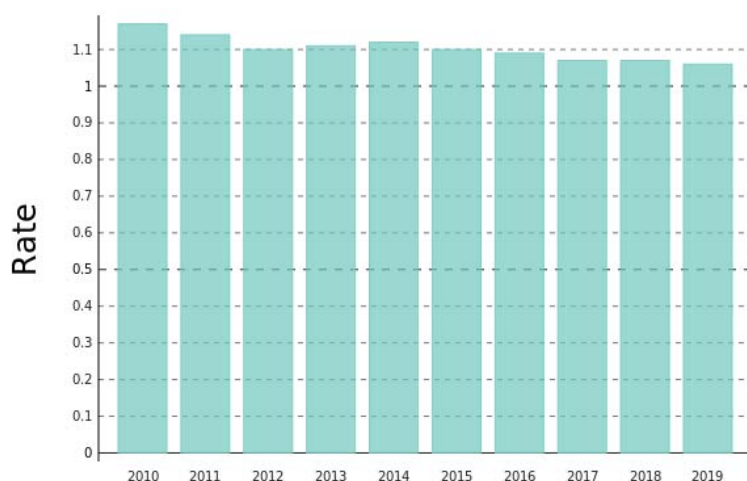
The Gambia can be described as having a generalized HIV epidemic. According to WHO, most generalized HIV epidemics are mixed in nature, in which key subpopulations are disproportionately affected. In The Gambia, HIV prevalence in the general population was 1.9% among adults (male and female) 15-49 years, according to the 2013 DHS. The prevalence among pregnant women attending antenatal clinic, however, was reported as 1.82%, according to the 2017 National Sentinel Surveillance (NSS). The most recent (2018) Integrated Bio-Behavioural Surveillance Study (IBBS) among female sex workers (FSW) and men who have sex with men (MSM) in the Greater Banjul and neighbouring areas estimates an HIV prevalence among FSW of 11% and MSM 35.5%. The HIV prevalence among FSW has decreased by 4.9 percentage points, from 15.9% in 2011 down to 11% in 2018; whilst it increased more than three-fold among MSM from 9.8% in 2011 to 35.5% in 2018.

The Gambia has made progress in combatting HIV and AIDS since its first detection in the country in 1986. The first plan developed in 1987 was health focused and led to the setting up of the National AIDS Control Programme (NACP) within the Ministry of Health. In 2001 The Gambia got funding from the World Bank for the implementation of an HIV/AIDS Rapid Response Project (HARRP). Within the framework of this project a National AIDS Council (NAC) and National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) was established under the Office of the President with The President being the chairman of the NAC.

The current National Strategic Plan for HIV (2015-2020) has recently been evaluated. Findings show a more favourable policy context provided by the transition from over two decades of dictatorship to democracy and improved governance has created a conducive environment for the fight against HIV and AIDS.

3.1 HIV incidence rate per 1000, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

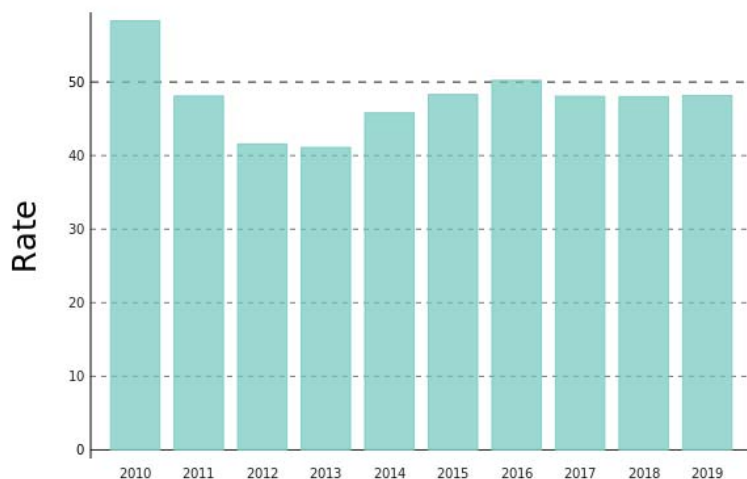
Number of people newly infected with HIV in the reporting period per 1000 uninfected population



Source: Spectrum file

1.7 AIDS mortality per 100 000, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

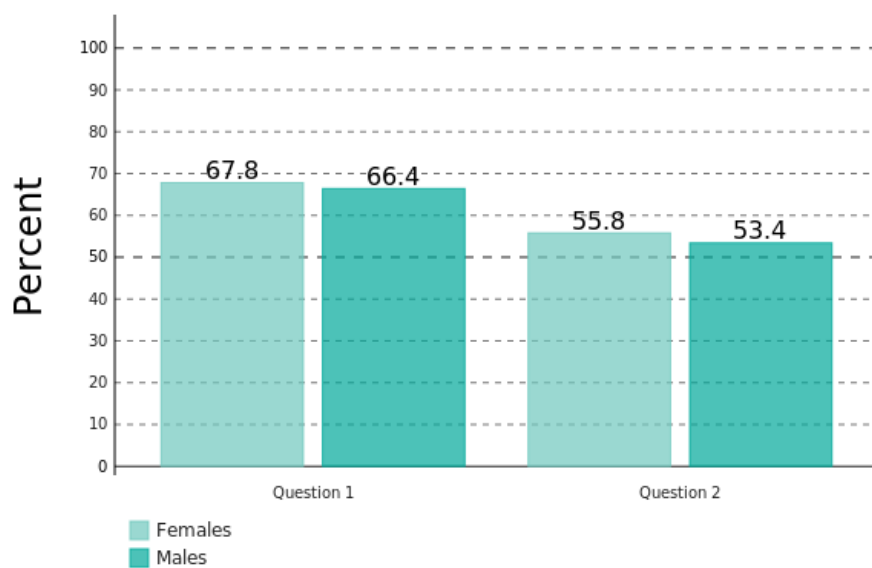
Total number of people who have died from AIDS-related causes per 100 000 population



Source: Spectrum file

4.1 Discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)

Percentage of respondents (aged 15-49 years) who respond "No" to: Question 1 - "Would you buy fresh vegetables from a shopkeeper or vendor if you knew that this person had HIV?"; Question 2 - "Do you think that children living with HIV should be able to attend school with children who are HIV negative?"



HIV testing and treatment cascade

Ensure that 30 million people living with HIV have access to treatment through meeting the 90-90-90 targets by 2020

Progress summary

The Gambia is committed to achieving the 90-90-90 targets as expressed in the current National HIV Strategic Plan (NSP) 2015-2020 and The Gambia Catch-Up Plan 2018-2020. Scaling up HIV counselling and testing (HCT) services is the key to achieving the first target (90% of PLHIV know their status). Over the years there has been the expansion of HCT, including Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission (PMTCT), to nearly all public health facilities; training of health care workers to provide testing at community health facilities; use of outreach and community-based testing to increase the testing coverage. In addition, HIV Self-Testing is being piloted among some key populations. According to the 2018 MICS report, 61.5% of pregnant women attending antenatal clinics (ANC) were tested for HIV during pregnancy and know their results. In 2019, a total of 106,126 persons were tested and knew their results.

The Gambia introduced free anti-retroviral treatment (ART) services in 2004 with financial support from the Global Fund, being first piloted in three facilities: Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital (EFSTH), Medical Research Council (MRC), and Hands on Care (HoC). The services were subsequently rolled out to all the regions. Currently, there are 14 ART centres (10 public, 3 private health facilities and 1 Military Clinic). Since the provision of free ART policy came into effect in 2004, there has been a gradual increase in the uptake of ART services. In 2019, the estimated number of people living with HIV (PLHIV) was 25,900; with over a third, 9500 (37%) knowing their status, and out of which 7,500 (78.9%) are receiving ART, of which 66.7% are virally suppressed.

Among the achievements to ensuring PLHIV have access to treatment include the expansion of PMTCT sites; rehabilitation of laboratories; procurement of 6 GeneXpert machines (2018-2019); procurement of dialysis machine and refurbishment of facility at EFSTH; refurbishment of regional medical stores, including provision of solar lighting; and the adoption of the Test and Treat approach.

Policy questions (2019)

Is there a law, regulation or policy specifying that HIV testing:

a) Is mandatory before marriage

No

b) Is mandatory to obtain a work or residence permit

No

c) Is mandatory for certain groups

No

What is the recommended CD4 threshold for initiating antiretroviral therapy in adults and adolescents who are asymptomatic, as per MoH guidelines or directive, and what is the implementation status?

No threshold; treat all regardless of CD4 count; Implemented countrywide (>95% of treatment sites)

Does your country have a current national policy on routine viral load testing for monitoring antiretroviral therapy and to what extent is it implemented?

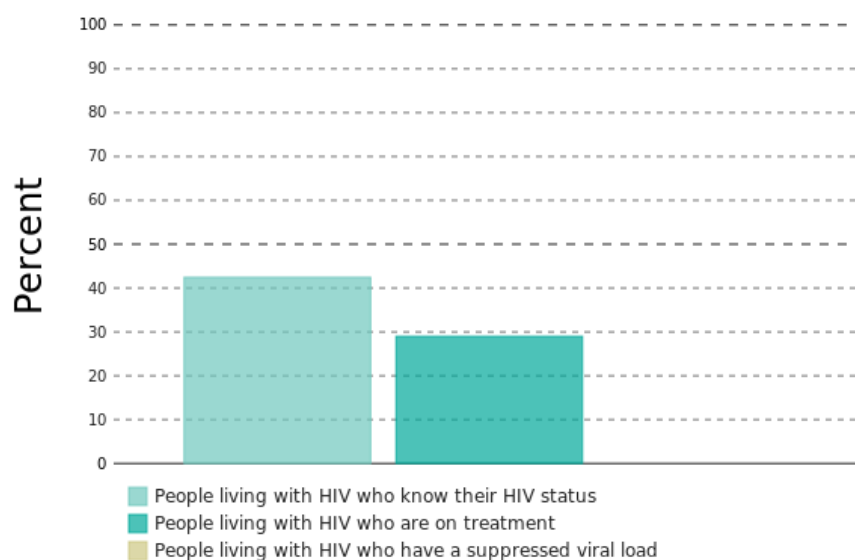
a) For adults and adolescents

Yes; Implemented countrywide (>95% of treatment sites)

b) For children

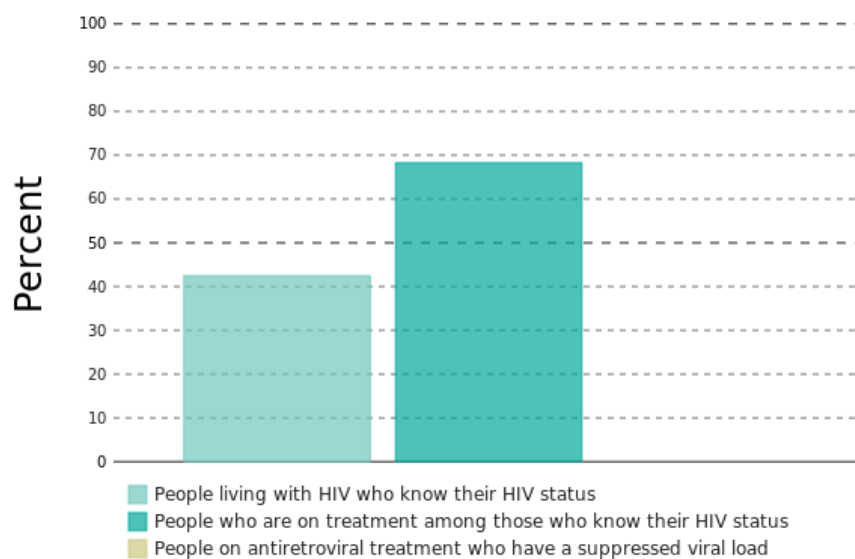
Yes; Implemented countrywide (>95% of treatment sites)

HIV testing and treatment cascade, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)



Source: Spectrum file

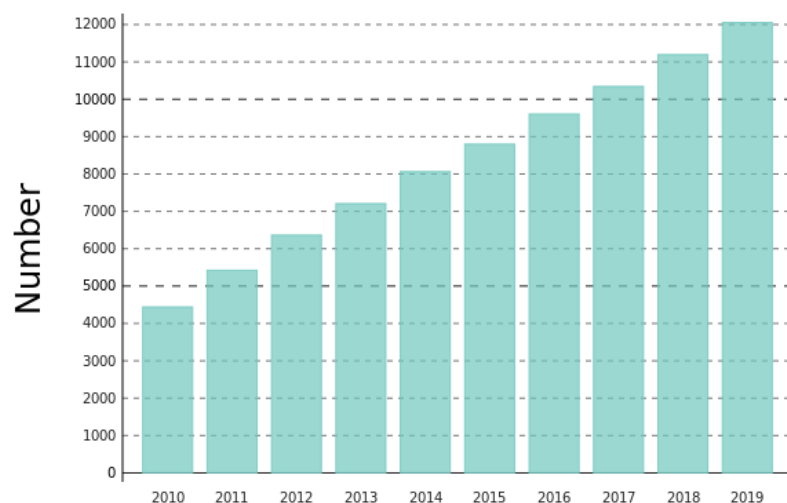
Progress towards 90-90-90 target, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)



Source: Spectrum file

1.1 People living with HIV who know their HIV status, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

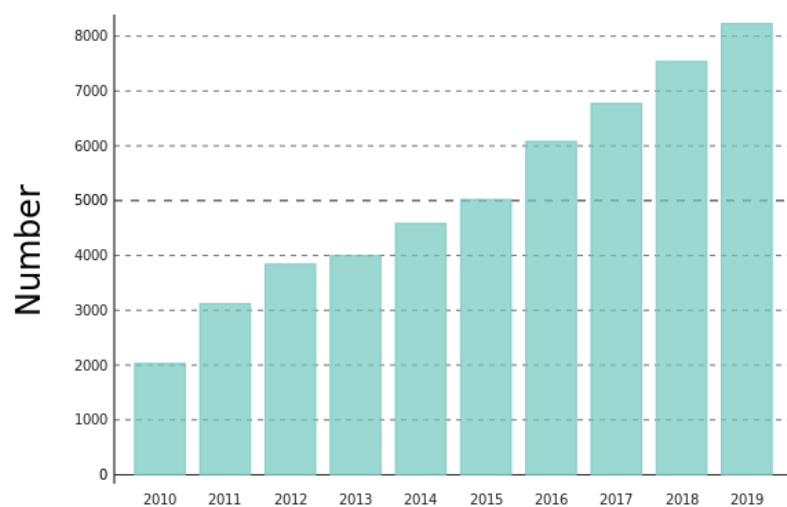
Number of people living with HIV who know their HIV status



Source: Spectrum file

1.2 People living with HIV on antiretroviral therapy, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

Number of people on antiretroviral therapy



Source: Spectrum file

1.3 People living with HIV on antiretroviral treatment who have suppressed viral load, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

Number of people living with HIV with suppressed viral loads



Source: Spectrum file

1.6 AIDS mortality rate per 100 000, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

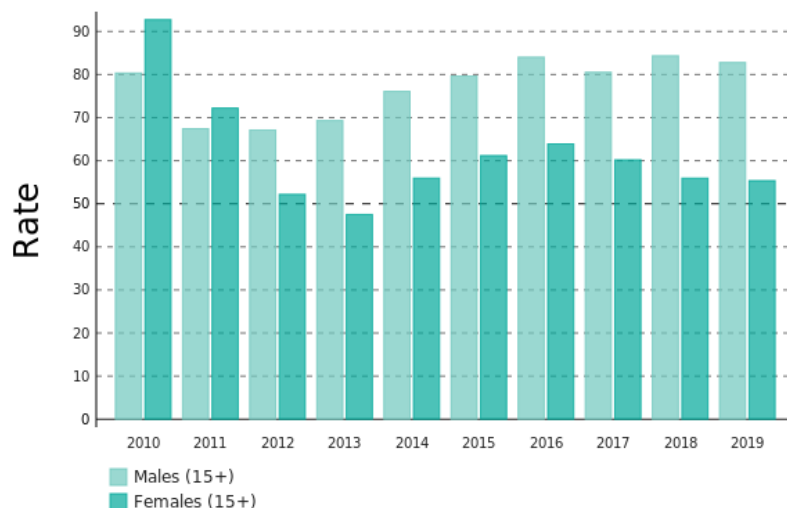
Total number of people who have died from AIDS-related causes per 100 000 population



Source: Spectrum file

1.6 AIDS mortality rate per 100 000 among adults, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

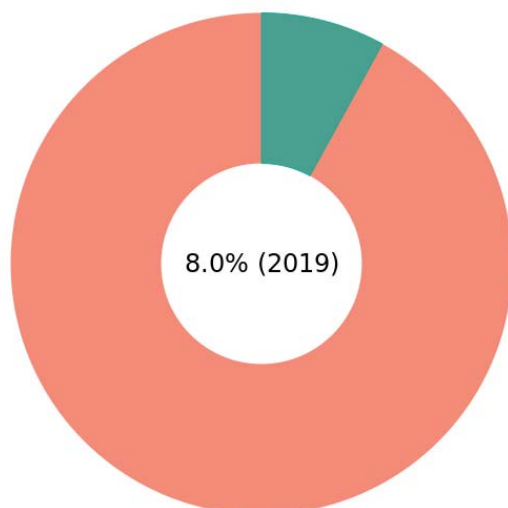
Total number of adults who have died from AIDS-related causes per 100 000 population



Source: Spectrum file

1.7 HIV testing volume and positivity, Gambia (Republic of The)

Percentage of HIV -positive results returned to people (positivity) in the calendar year



Number of HIV tests conducted = 37 594

Prevention of mother-to-child transmission

Eliminate new HIV infections among children by 2020 while ensuring that 1.6 million children have access to HIV treatment by 2018

Progress summary

In 2013, The Gambia developed its first National Strategic Plan for Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV 2013-2015. In 2015, eMTCT was included in the new NSP2015-2020 as a priority outcome in order to meet the HLM targets. The target is to reduce mother to child transmission of HIV at 6 weeks from 10% to 3% by 2020. By 2019 the following have been achieved:

- Percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women who received antiretrovirals to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission: 80% (624 out of 780)
- Percentage of infants born to women living with HIV receiving a virological test for HIV within two months of birth: 53.7%
- HIV-exposed infants started on Cotrimoxazole prophylaxis within 2 months of birth: 75% (279 out of 370)
- HIV exposed infants tested at 6 weeks: 53.7% (199 out of 370)
- Infants born to HIV-infected mothers who are infected: 6.7% (21 out of 312)

Policy questions (2019)

Does your country have a national plan for the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV?

Yes

Target(s) for the mother-to-child transmission rate and year: <5%; 2013

Elimination target(s) (such as the number of cases/population) and year: -

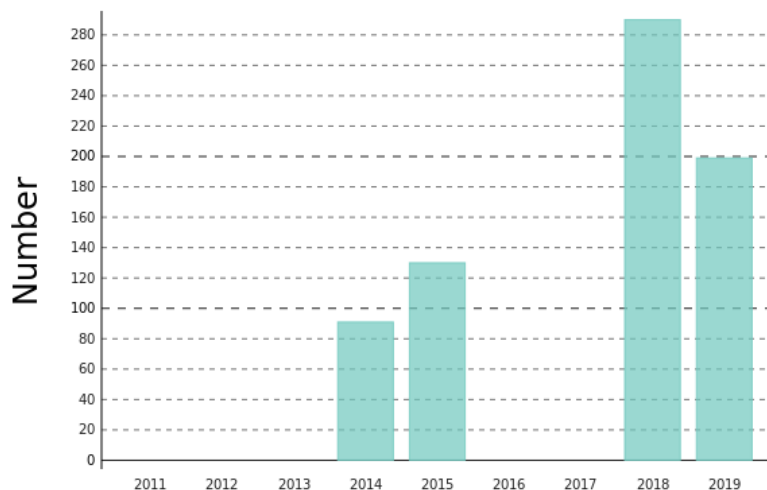
Do the national guidelines recommend treating all infants and children living with HIV irrespective of symptoms and if so, what is the implementation status of the cut-off?

Treat all, regardless of age

Implemented countrywide (>95% of treatment sites)

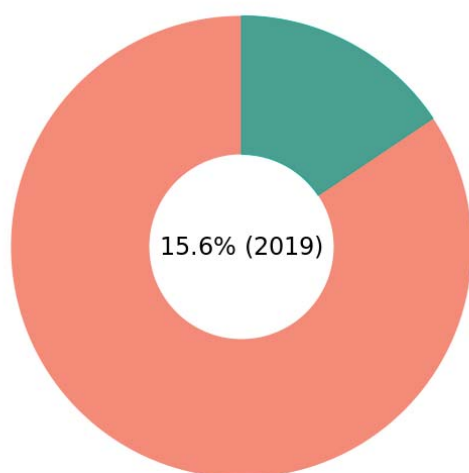
2.1 Early infant diagnosis, Gambia (Republic of The) (2011-2019)

Number of infants who received an HIV test within two months of birth



2.1 Early infant diagnosis, Gambia (Republic of The) (2018-2019)

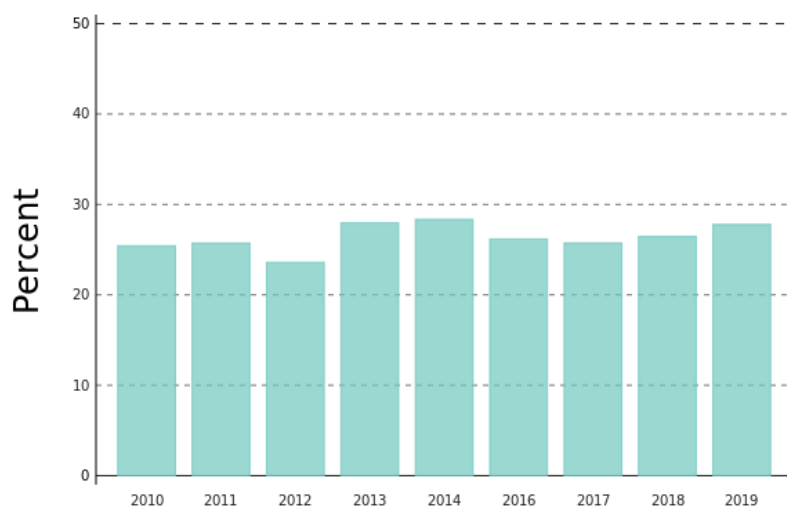
Percentage of infants born to women living with HIV receiving a virological test for HIV within two months of birth



↓ 23.2% (2018)

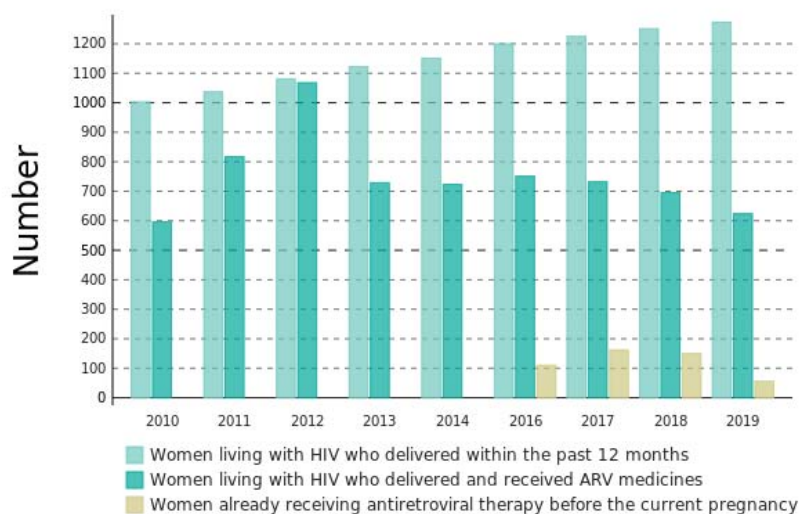
2.2 Mother-to-child transmission of HIV, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

Estimated percentage of children newly infected with HIV from mother-to-child transmission among women living with HIV delivering in the past 12 months



Source: Spectrum file

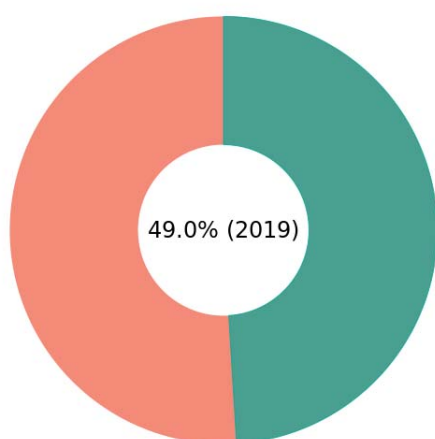
2.3 Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)



Source: Spectrum file

2.3 Preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV, Gambia (Republic of The) (2018-2019)

Percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretroviral medicine to reduce the risk of mother-to-child transmission of HIV

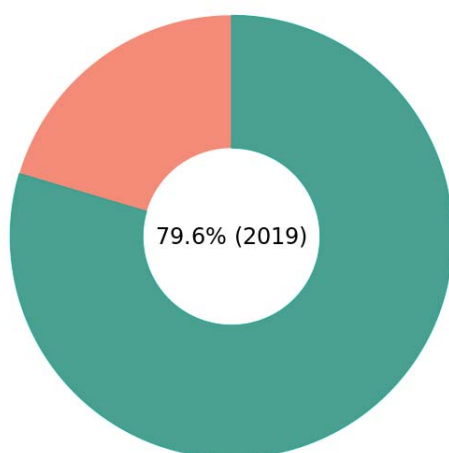


↓ 55.56% (2018)

Source: Spectrum file

2.6 HIV testing in pregnant women, Gambia (Republic of The) (2018-2019)

Percentage of pregnant women with known HIV status



↓ 100.0% (2018)

HIV prevention; Key populations

Ensure access to combination prevention options, including pre-exposure prophylaxis, voluntary medical male circumcision, harm reduction and condoms, to at least 90% of people by 2020, especially young women and adolescent girls in high-prevalence countries and key populations—gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, sex workers and their clients, people who inject drugs and prisoners

Progress summary

The NSP 2015-2020 is silent on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP), voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) and harm reduction. While PrEP is considered relevant to the national HIV response and has been addressed in the new draft NSP 2021-2025, currently being developed; VMMC and harm reduction have not been articulated in the new draft. According to the new NSP 2021-2025 PrEP will be rolled out, accompanied with national guidelines and protocols, targeting key populations. The Gambia is not among the countries WHO has recommended VMMC. The promotion of the condoms has always been a key prevention strategy in the national HIV response. In 2019, a total of 1,864,242 male condoms and 1,200 female condoms were distributed nationally. The male condoms were distributed in the general population but also targeting FSW, MSM and young persons. Female condoms were mainly distributed to FSW. The following are some of the key achievements:

- Provision of PrEP to 15 discordant couples
- No shortages of condoms (male and female) and lubricants
- Hiring of medical doctor for KPs
- 2 mobile vans to serve as mobile clinics for KPs
- 3 wellness centres established in 3 regions: Barra, Soma, Basse
- Retained services of a lawyer for KPs
- Availability of a dropping centre for KPs

Policy questions: Key populations (2019)

Criminalization and/or prosecution of key populations

Transgender people

- -

Sex workers

- Sex work is not subject to punitive regulations and is not criminalized

Men who have sex with men

- Yes, imprisonment (up to 14 years)

Is drug use or possession for personal use an offence in your country?

- Drug use or consumption is specified as a criminal offence

Legal protections for key populations

Transgender people

- -

Sex workers

- No

Men who have sex with men

- No

People who inject drugs

- No

Has the WHO recommendation on oral PrEP been adopted in your country's national guidelines?

Yes, PrEP guidelines have been developed and are being implemented

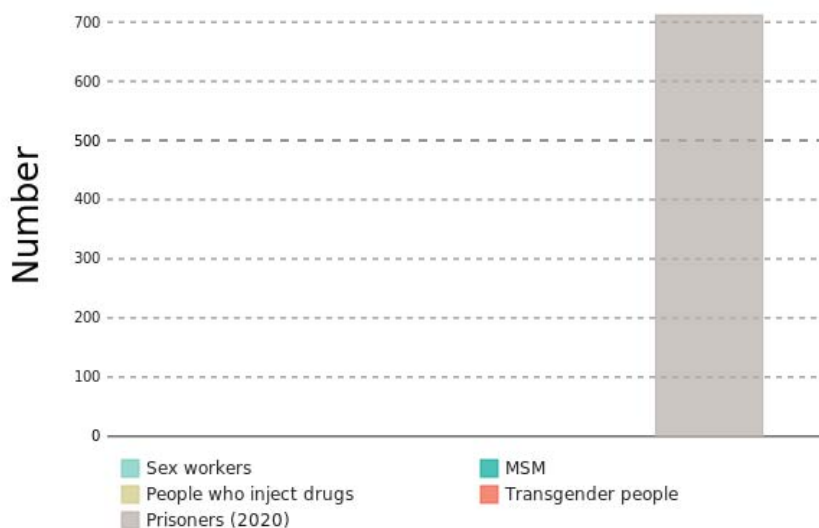
3.1 HIV incidence rate per 1000, Gambia (Republic of The) (2010-2019)

New HIV-infections in the reporting period per 1000 uninfected population (Adults, ages 15-49)



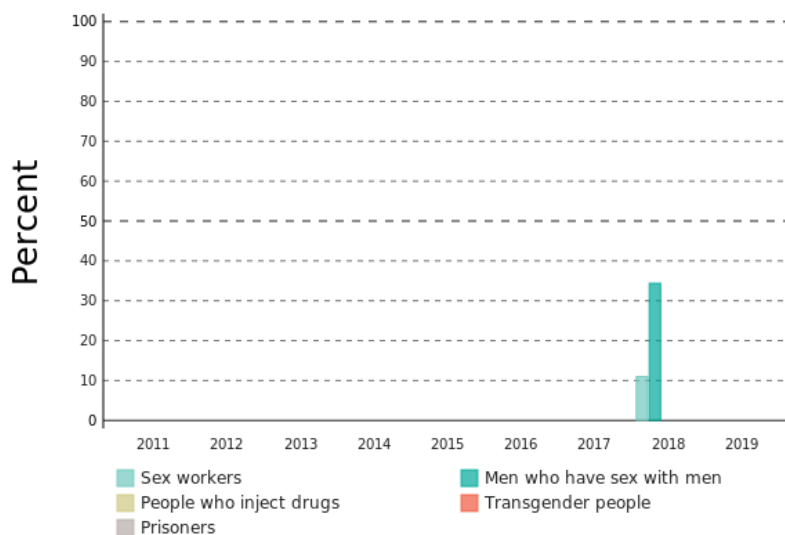
Source: Spectrum file

3.2 Estimates of the size of key populations, Gambia (Republic of The)



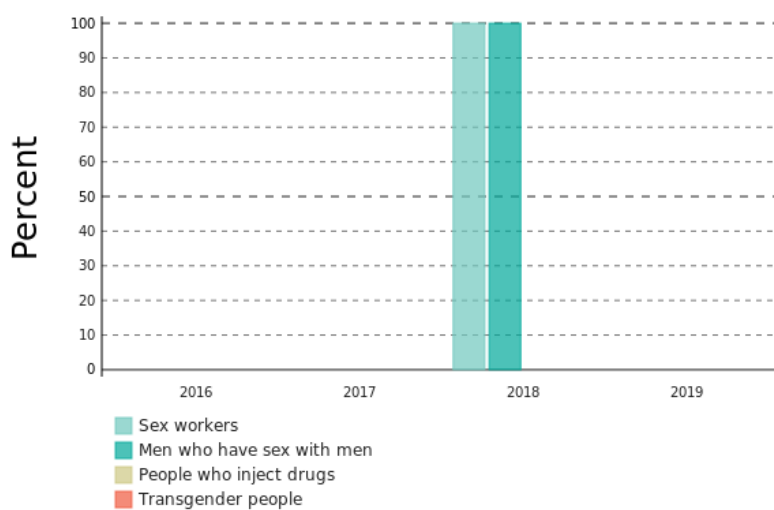
3.3 HIV prevalence among key populations, Gambia (Republic of The) (2011-2019)

Percentage of specific key populations living with HIV



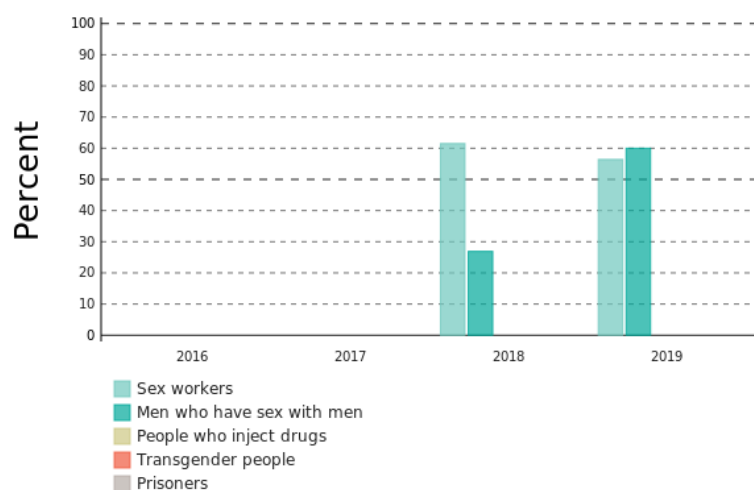
3.4 HIV testing among key populations, Gambia (Republic of The) (2016-2019)

Percentage of people of a key population who tested for HIV in the past 12 months, or who know their current HIV status



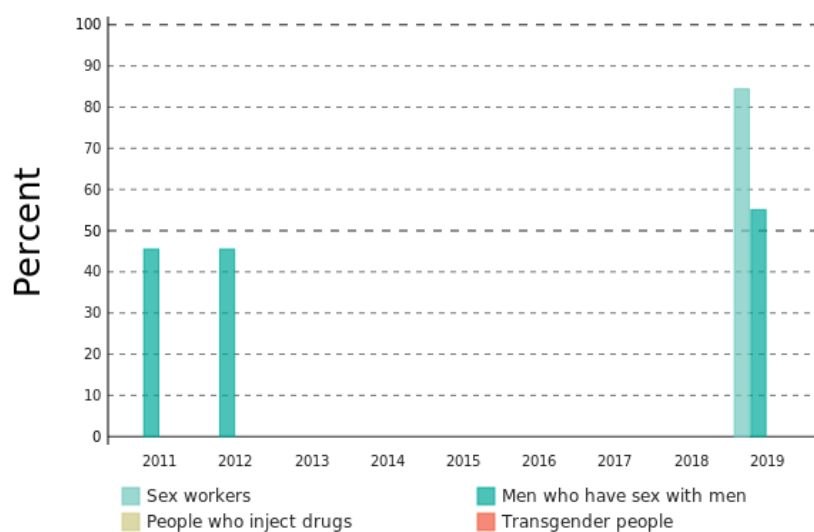
3.5 Antiretroviral therapy coverage among people living with HIV in key populations, Gambia (Republic of The) (2016-2019)

Percentage of the people living with HIV in a key population receiving antiretroviral therapy in the past 12 months



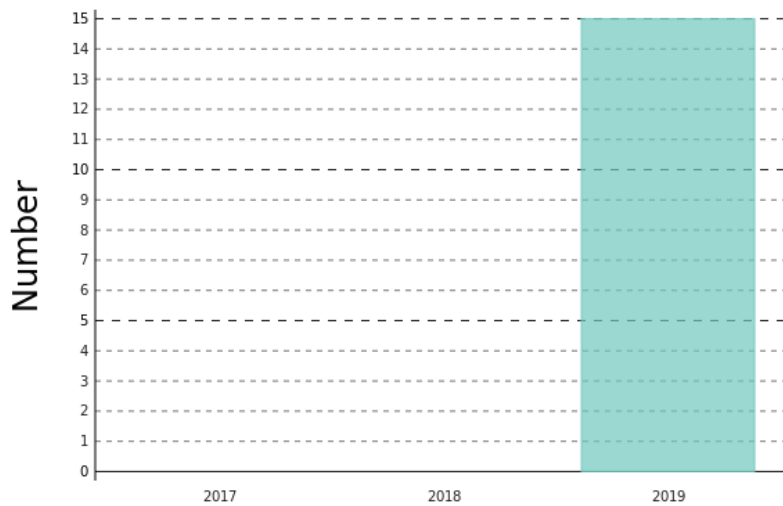
3.6 Condom use among key populations, Gambia (Republic of The) (2011-2019)

Percentage of people in a key population reporting using a condom the last time they had sexual intercourse



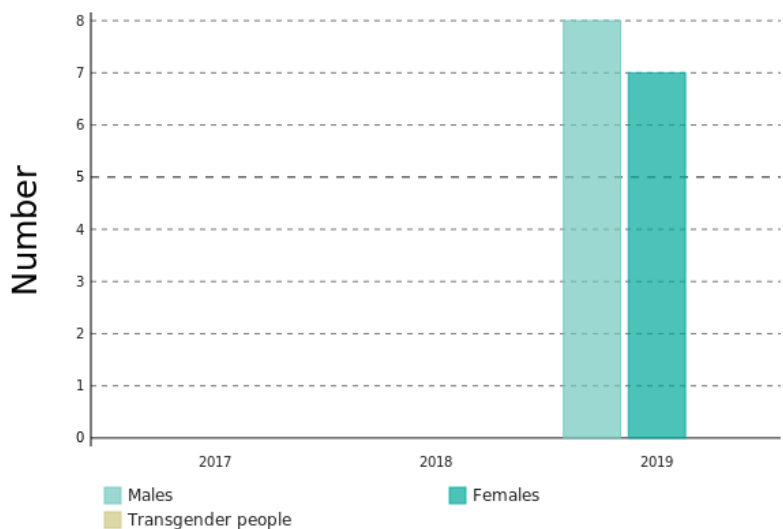
3.15 People who received pre-exposure prophylaxis, Gambia (Republic of The) (2017-2019)

Total number of people who received oral PrEP at least once during the reporting period



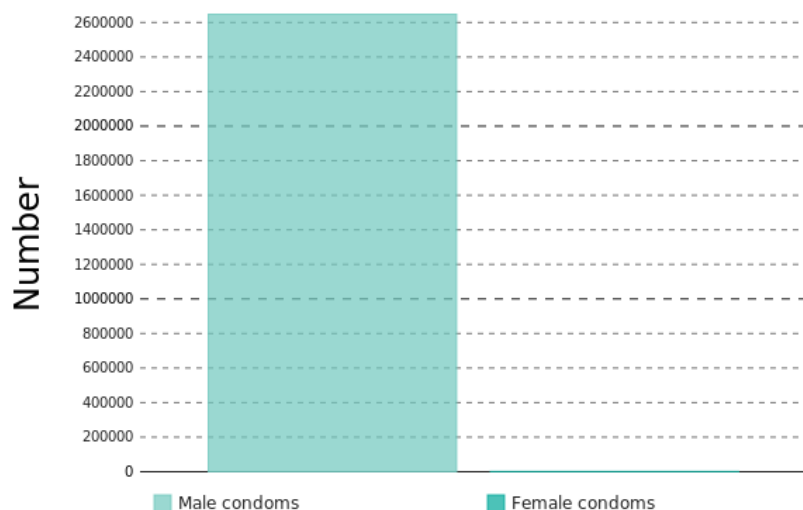
3.15 People who received pre-exposure prophylaxis, Gambia (Republic of The) (2017-2019)

Number of people who received oral PrEP at least once during the reporting period



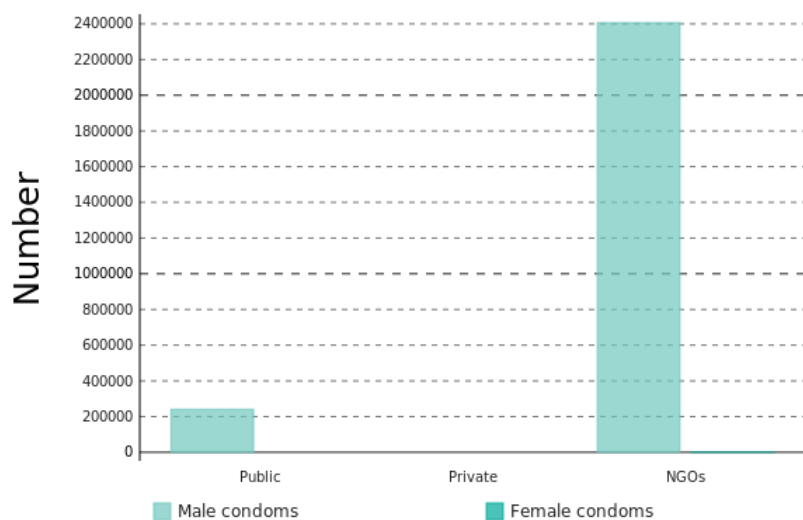
3.19 Annual number of condoms distributed, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)

Number of condoms distributed during the past 12 months



3.19 Annual number of condoms distributed, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)

Number of condoms distributed during the past 12 months



Gender; Stigma and discrimination

Eliminate gender inequalities and end all forms of violence and discrimination against women and girls, people living with HIV and key populations by 2020

Progress summary

In 2015 The Gambia enacted the HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Act. The Act includes provisions to protect vulnerable groups from violence and discrimination. In the same year female genital mutilation was declared banned; and the Ministry of Health developed The Gambia National Health Strategic Plan 2015-2020. The Strategic Plan's overall goal is to reduce inequalities in health care services and reverse the downward trend in health-related outcome indicators. The Plan also articulates universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for those who need it.

The 2018 IBBS report show stigma and discrimination felt by FSW and MSM varied lot. Both FSW and MSM reported experiencing community, family and healthcare setting stigma and discrimination. The 2018 MICS report also shows stigma and discrimination against PLHIV, especially among young persons. Only 54.5% females and 44.3% males 15-24 years knew that HIV cannot be transmitted by sharing food with someone with HIV.

Policy questions (2018)

Does your country have a national plan or strategy to address gender-based violence and violence against women that includes HIV

Yes

Does your country have legislation on domestic violence*?

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What protections, if any, does your country have for key populations and people living with HIV from violence?

- Programmes to address intimate partner violence*
- Interventions to address police abuse

Does your country have policies in place requiring healthcare settings to provide timely and quality health care regardless of gender, nationality, age, disability, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, religion, language, socio-economic status, HIV or other health status, or because of selling sex, using drugs, living in prison or any other grounds?

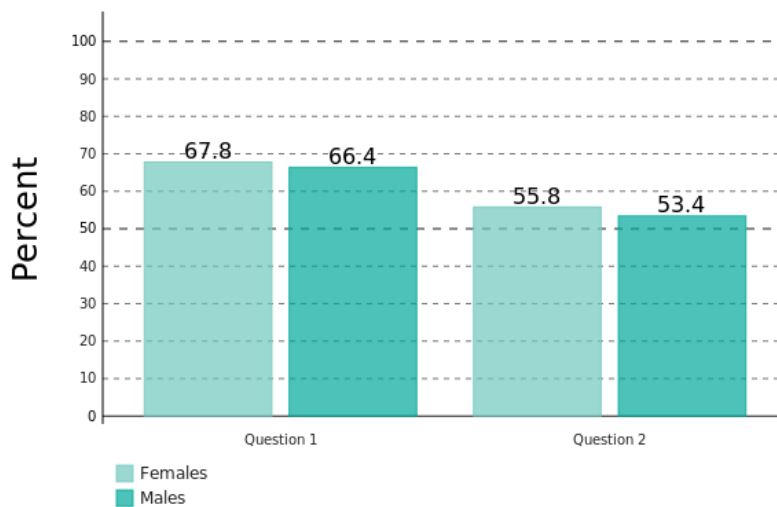
Yes, policies exists and are consistently implemented

Does your country have laws criminalizing the transmission of, non-disclosure of or exposure to HIV transmission?

Yes

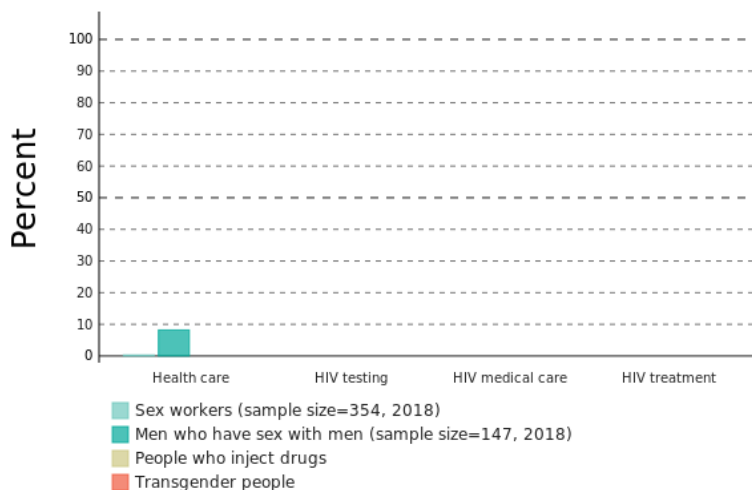
4.1 Discriminatory attitudes towards people living with HIV, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)

Percentage of respondents (aged 15-49 years) who respond "No" to: Question 1 - "Would you buy fresh vegetables from a shopkeeper or vendor if you knew that this person had HIV?"; Question 2 - "Do you think that children living with HIV should be able to attend school with children who are HIV negative?"

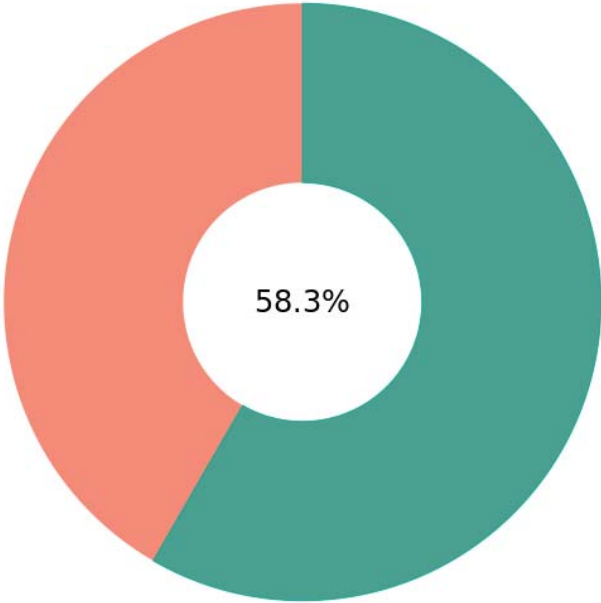


4.2 Avoidance of health care among key populations because of stigma and discrimination, Gambia (Republic of The)

Avoidance of health care among key populations because of stigma and discrimination



Percentage of Global AIDS Monitoring indicators with data disaggregated by gender



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Knowledge of HIV and access to sexual reproductive health services

Ensure that 90% of young people have the skills, knowledge and capacity to protect themselves from HIV and have access to sexual and reproductive health services by 2020, in order to reduce the number of new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women to below 100 000 per year

Progress summary

The NSP 2015-2020 has prioritised interventions targeting the youth aged 15-24 years. Youth were to be targeted to reduce HIV incidence by increasing their awareness and knowledge on HIV and safe sex. HIV information will be provided to in-school and out-of-school youths. In addition, the National Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Policy, 2017-2026 sets out 8 priorities one of which is Improving Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health. Comprehensive knowledge on HIV prevention, however, has always been low, especially among young people. The 2018 MICS reveal that only 22.7% females and 19.7% males 15-24 years have comprehensive knowledge about HIV

Policy questions (2018)

Does your country have education policies that guide the delivery of life skills-based HIV and sexuality education, according to international standards, in:

a) Primary school

Yes

b) Secondary school

Yes

c) Teacher training

-

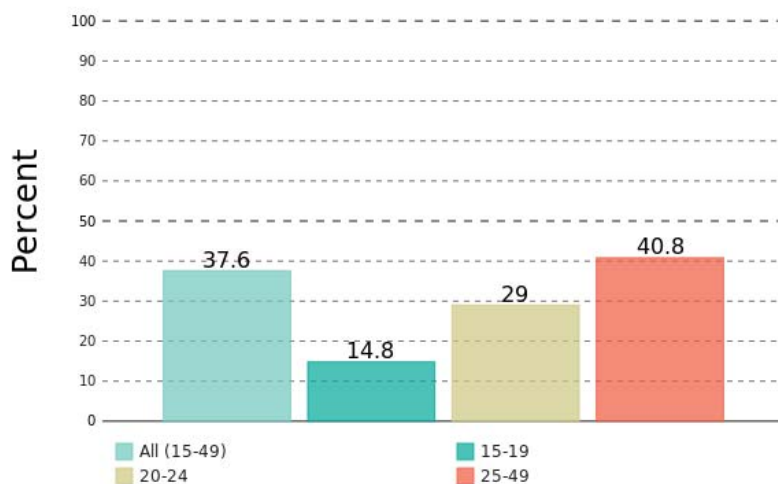
5.1 Young people: Knowledge about HIV prevention, Gambia (Republic of The) (2018)

Percentage of women and men 15-24 years old who correctly identify both ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission



5.2 Demand for family planning satisfied by modern methods, Gambia (Republic of The) (2018)

Percentage of women of reproductive age (15-49 years old) who have their demand for family planning satisfied with modern methods



Social protection

Ensure that 75% of people living with, at risk of and affected by HIV benefit from HIV-sensitive social protection by 2020

Progress summary

The National HIV and AIDS Policy (2014) prioritises the social protection of women and youth and zero discrimination towards people living with HIV. Furthermore, as policy directions included in the National Policy particularly aims to promote development and integration of stigma reduction interventions at all levels of the healthcare system and protecting the human rights of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) as well as bridging the gap between vulnerability and resilience to HIV.

Policy questions (2019)

Does the country have an approved social protection strategy, policy or framework?

Yes, but it is not being implemented

a) Does it refer to HIV?

Yes

b) Does it recognize people living with HIV as key beneficiaries?

Yes

c) Does it recognize key populations (sex workers, gay men and other men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, transgender people, prisoners) as key beneficiaries?

-

• -

d) Does it recognize adolescent girls and young women as key beneficiaries?

Yes

e) Does it recognize children affected by HIV as key beneficiaries?

Yes

f) Does it recognize families affected by HIV as key beneficiaries?

No

g) Does it address the issue of unpaid care work in the context of HIV?

No

What barriers, if any, limit access to social protection programmes in your country?

- Fear of stigma and discrimination
- High out-of-pocket expenses
- People living with HIV, key populations and/or people affected by HIV are covered by another programme

Community-led service delivery

Ensure that at least 30% of all service delivery is community-led by 2020

Progress summary

CSOs, CBOs and NGOs are active players in the national HIV response. An international NGO is a second Principal Recipient under the GF HIV grant. The busiest ART facility responsible for treatment, care and support is run by an NGO. Most of the work with KPs are led by NGOs and CSOs. NGOs and CSOs are also involved in the preparation of national policies and strategic plans.

Policy questions (2019)

Does your country have a national policy promoting community delivery of antiretroviral therapy?

No

Are there any of the following safeguards in laws, regulations and policies that provide for the operation of CSOs/CBOs in your country?

- Registration of HIV CSOs is possible
- Registration of CSOs/CBOs working with key populations is possible
- HIV services can be provided by CSOs/CBOs
- Services to key populations can be provided by CSOs/CBOs
- Reporting requirements for CSOs/CBOs delivering HIV services are streamlined

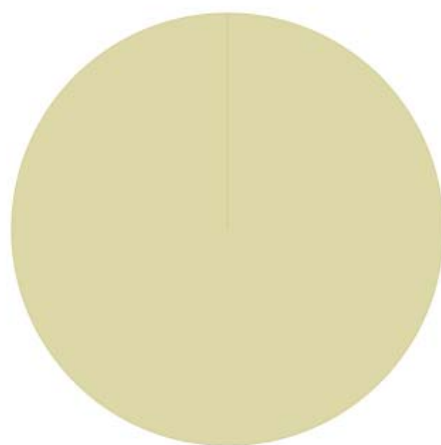
HIV expenditure

Ensure that HIV investments increase to US\$ 26 billion by 2020, including a quarter for HIV prevention and 6% for social enablers

Progress summary

The Gambia government has been gradually increasing funding for the national HIV response. In 2019 The Gambia government spent USD992,425.48 towards the HIV response. The steady compliance of government in increasing resource allocation for the HIV and AIDS response, coupled with good programme performance will further strengthen donors' confidence in the commitment of government to the HIV response.

Share of effective prevention out of total, Gambia (Republic of The) (2019)



Focused prevention

Other prevention

Other HIV expenditure

Empowerment and access to justice

Empower people living with, at risk of and affected by HIV to know their rights and to access justice and legal services to prevent and challenge violations of human rights

Progress summary

The Gambia has 12 PLHIV support groups, each linked to an ART centre. These different groups have been organized to form The Gambia Network of AIDS Support Societies (GAMNASS). GAMNASS has been supported in organizing and conducting meetings regarding resource allocation decisions guided by equity considerations where priority would be given to individuals based on need- as defined by age, gender, and distance from health facility. In 2019, NAS provided technical support to PLHIV in the Fight For Universal Access To HIV Treatment & Life-Saving Medicines through education, monitoring & advocacy.

Policy questions (2018)

In the past two years have there been training and/or capacity building programmes for people living with HIV and key populations to educate them and raise their awareness concerning their rights (in the context of HIV) in your country?

Yes, at scale at the national level

Are there mechanisms in place to record and address cases of HIV-related discrimination (based on perceived HIV status and/or belonging to any key population)?

Yes

What accountability mechanisms in relation to discrimination and violations of human rights in healthcare settings does your country have, if any?

- Procedures or systems to protect and respect patient privacy or confidentiality

What barriers in accessing accountability mechanisms does your country have, if any?

- -

AIDS out of isolation

Commit to taking AIDS out of isolation through people-centred systems to improve universal health coverage, including treatment for tuberculosis, cervical cancer and hepatitis B and C

Progress summary

The HIV response is fully integrated into the reproductive and child health services in all health facilities offering PMTCT and HIV counselling and testing. Some HIV services are only integrated in some health facilities, such as antiretroviral therapy and chronic non-communicable diseases; HIV counselling and testing and chronic non-communicable diseases; antiretroviral therapy and general outpatient care. In 2018/2019 the First Lady took part in a country-wide caravan for awareness raising, increase in HIV testing, and increased visibility of HIV and TB services in all regions in The Gambia.

Policy questions (2019)

Is cervical cancer screening and treatment for women living with HIV recommended in:

a) The national strategy, policy, plan or guidelines for cancer, cervical cancer or the broader response to non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

Yes

b) The national strategic plan governing the AIDS response

Yes

c) National HIV-treatment guidelines

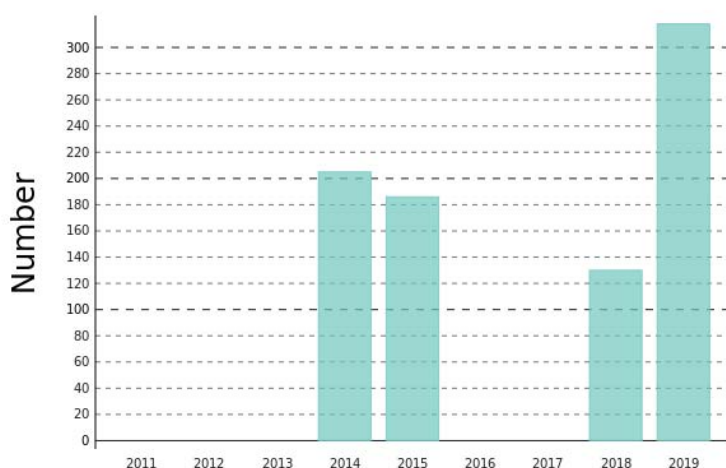
Yes

What coinfection policies are in place in the country for adults, adolescents and children?

- Isoniazid preventive therapy (IPT) or latent TB infection (LTBI) prophylaxis for people living with HIV
- Intensified TB case finding among people living with HIV
- TB infection control in HIV health-care settings
- Hepatitis B screening and management in antiretroviral therapy clinics
- Hepatitis C screening and management in antiretroviral therapy clinics

10.1 Co-managing TB and HIV treatment, Gambia (Republic of The) (2011-2019)

Number of HIV-positive new and relapse TB patients started on TB treatment during the reporting period who were already on antiretroviral therapy or started on antiretroviral therapy during TB treatment within the reporting year



10.2 Proportion of people living with HIV newly enrolled in HIV care with active TB disease, Gambia (Republic of The) (2015-2019)

Total number of people living with HIV with active TB expressed as a percentage of those who are newly enrolled in HIV care (pre-antiretroviral therapy or antiretroviral therapy) during the reporting period



10.4/10.5 Sexually transmitted infections, Gambia (Republic of The) (2013-2019)

Number of men reporting urethral discharge in the past 12 months; number of men reported with laboratory-diagnosed gonorrhoea in the past 12 months

