

Knowledge of HIV/AIDS Preventive Behaviors among Youth in the Gilgel Gibe Dam Area

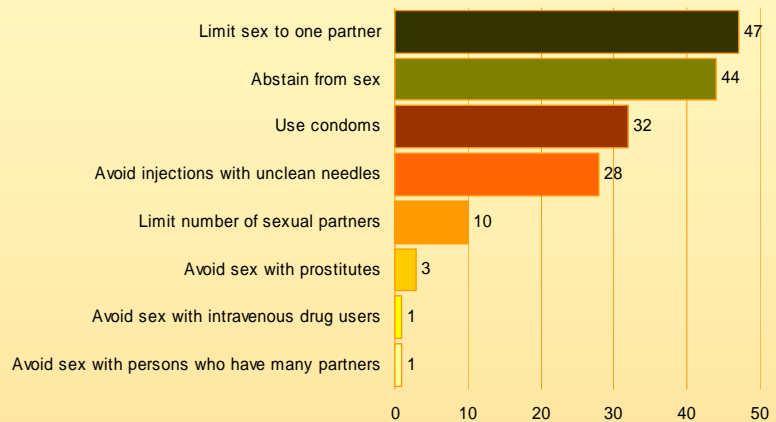
Based on data from the Gilgel Gibe Social and Sexual Relationship History Survey (June-July 2006).

The Gilgel Gibe Social and Sexual Relationship History Survey asked 1,278 young people to identify all of the ways they knew to avoid contracting HIV/AIDS. Considered as correct answers for gauging youth knowledge were: abstaining from sex, limiting sex to one partner, limiting the number of sexual partners, avoiding sex with persons who have many partners, avoiding sex with prostitutes, using condoms, avoiding sex with intravenous drug users, and avoiding injections with unclean needles.

Knowledge of Different HIV Preventive Behaviors among Youth

Almost one-half of the young people in the study area mentioned limiting sex to one partner or abstaining from sex as ways to avoid HIV/AIDS, and one-third reported condom use. Other sexually related preventive behaviors, such as avoiding sex with prostitutes or with persons who have many partners, were mentioned by a very small percentage of respondents. Around one-fourth of the youth mentioned avoiding injections with unclean needles.

Percent who mentioned the following HIV preventive behaviors

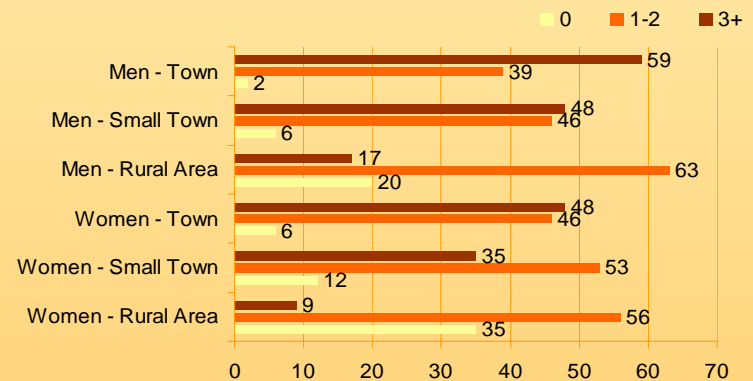


Knowledge of Different HIV Preventive Behaviors by Place of Residence and Education

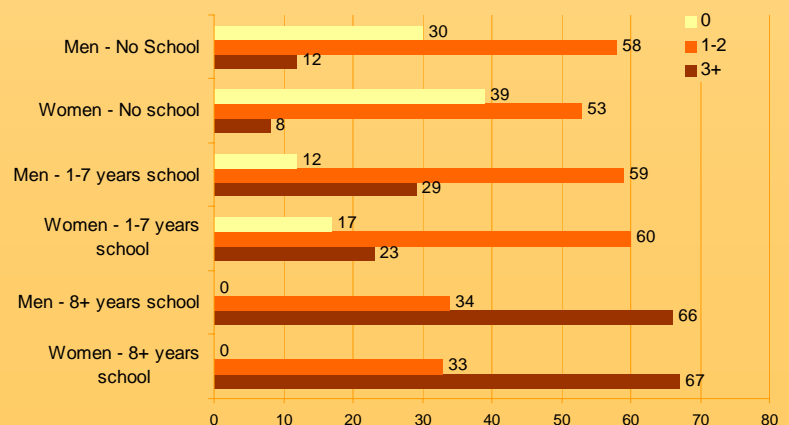
There are substantial differences in knowledge of preventive behaviors between youth in rural and urban communities in the Gilgel Gibe area. Not surprisingly, knowledge is greatest among youth in towns and lowest among youth in rural areas.

Around one-third of women in the rural communities are not aware of any preventive behaviors, and only 9% of rural women are aware of three or more. Fully 20% of men in rural areas were unable to cite at least one preventive behavior. By contrast, in urban areas very few youth are not aware of at least one HIV/AIDS preventive behavior.

Percent who know 0, 1-2, and 3+ HIV preventive behaviors

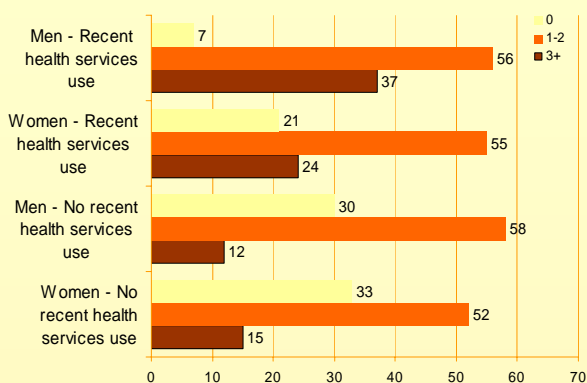


Percent who know 0, 1-2, and 3+ HIV preventive behaviors

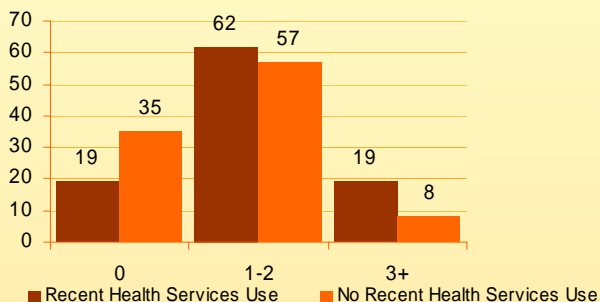


Part of the relationship between place of residence and HIV/AIDS knowledge may be due to rural-urban differences in educational levels. Youth without any schooling have the lowest level of preventive knowledge. Thirty percent of young men and 39% of young women without schooling do not know of even one HIV/AIDS preventive behavior. On the other hand, knowledge of at least one preventive behavior is universal among youth who have some primary education, and two-thirds of youth who have completed primary education know three or more preventive behaviors.

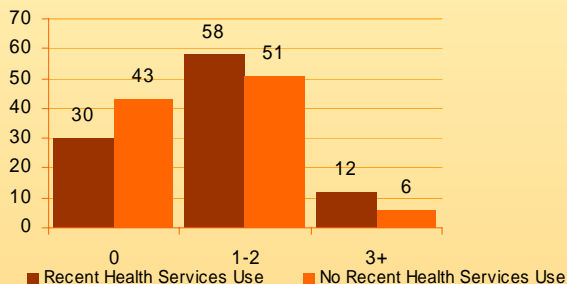
Percent who know 0, 1-2, and 3+ HIV preventive behaviors



Percent rural youth who know 0, 1-2, and 3+ HIV preventive behaviors



Percent with no schooling who know 0, 1-2, and 3+ HIV preventive behaviors



Policy Recommendations

An essential component of any effective strategy to limit the spread of HIV/AIDS is educating the population about the ways to avoid or lower the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. Increasing awareness of protective behaviors is especially critical among young people who have entered or are about to enter sexual activity. Among many young men and women in the Gilgel Gibe Dam area, knowledge of behaviors to prevent HIV/AIDS is relatively limited. Approximately one-in-four women and around one-in-seven men aged 13-24 are not aware of any behaviors to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS, and more than one-half of men and women are only aware of one or two preventive behaviors. An effective strategy for increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention among young people is educational outreach through the health services sector. Youth who have used formal health services in the last 12 months are significantly more likely to know of one or more preventive behaviors, than youth with no recent contact. The greater awareness of HIV/AIDS prevention among youth who use formal health services is even present among groups who typically have the lowest levels of HIV/AIDS preventive knowledge, such as rural and uneducated young men and women. Efforts to expand access and use of formal health service among youth will have both an immediate and preventive impact on current and future health.

Knowledge of HIV Preventive Behaviors by Recent Use of Formal Health Services

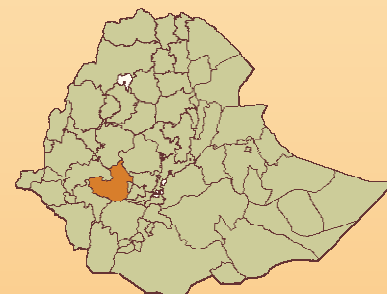
Direct contact with the formal health service sector is one way that youth and young adults acquire information about HIV/AIDS. Young people who have been to a local health center or some other formal health facility (hospital, health station, clinic, or private health facility) in the last 12 months are more knowledgeable of HIV/AIDS preventive behaviors than youth who have not had recent contact with health services.

Use of formal health services is associated with greater levels of HIV/AIDS preventive knowledge in all of the typically low knowledge groups. For instance, among youth in rural areas and youth with no formal schooling, the percentages who know three or more HIV/AIDS preventive behaviors is twice as great among those who have used formal health services in the last 12 months compared to those who have not.

Similarly, the percentages of youth who are not aware of any HIV/AIDS preventive behaviors is between 30 and 65 percent lower among youth who have used formal health services in the last 12 months compared to youth with no recent health service use.

Gilgel Gibe Social and Sexual Relationship History Survey

The Gilgel Gibe Social and Sexual Relationship History Survey was conducted in 2006. The sample for this survey was drawn from the Asendabo Demographic Surveillance System (DSS), established by Jimma University in 2005, which incorporates rural communities and small urban centers in the immediate areas surrounding the Gilgel Gibe dam, Jimma Zone. The survey sample includes 1278 young men and women aged 13 to 24.



Jimma Zone in Ethiopia

The Gilgel Gibe Social and Sexual Relationship History Survey is an innovative survey of adolescent and young adult sexual attitudes, social relationships, and behavior. The study examines the utilization of local health services, awareness of HIV/AIDS risk, formation of romantic relationships, progression of physical intimacy to sexual activity, and the context of first intercourse and risky sexual behavior. The objectives of the study are to understand the processes by which young people establish romantic relationships and become sexually active, and to identify the determinants of the pathways to risky sexual behaviors.

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This research is being conducted by faculty and students affiliated with the **Partnership in Improving Reproductive Health**.



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