

“In Australia, I’ve not had anyone talk to me about it” -A qualitative study on the awareness of HIV prevention strategies among heterosexual migrants from Sub-Saharan African countries in Australia

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Background:

- In Australia, HIV notifications among heterosexual people born in Sub-Saharan African countries have steadily increased, from 6.7 per 100,000 population in 2023 to 7.4 per 100,000 population in 2024.
- This study explores community members’ awareness of HIV and HIV prevention strategies in Australia.

Methods:

- Qualitative interviews were conducted by a PhD student between July and September 2024.
- We used a convenience sampling method to recruit participants.
- Data were analysed using a descriptive qualitative analysis.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Born in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- HIV-negative.
- 18 years and above.
- Medicare eligible.

Exclusion Criteria:

- HIV-positive.
- Unable to consent.
- Limited English-language proficiency

“Here, in Australia, there is a tendency to concentrate on other big [health] issues, like cancer, high blood pressure, and diabetes. I don’t think there is enough information about [HIV] prevention. The assumption [by African community members] is that, here, in Australia, [HIV] is non-existent.”

Findings:

- 15 participants completed the interview; 1 interview was removed because it was incomplete.
- Mean age was 36 years; mean length of stay in Australia was 9 years.
- Most participants obtained HIV information in their country of origin.
- Nearly all were familiar with condoms to prevent HIV, with some awareness of HIV self-testing kits, PrEP and PEP.
- However, many of them did not receive HIV education upon arrival in Australia, especially those who were newly arrived (less than 3 years).
- Critical of the lack of information and education about HIV specific to their cultural communities.

“At the end of the day, [HIV] is a disease, and it’s not a death sentence anymore. Once people take the taboo out of the conversation, you can have more discussion, and you learn more; you can actually do something to protect yourself, your partner, and the whole community.”

Participants Characteristics

Characteristics	Number
Country of Birth	
Cameroon	1
Democratic Republic of Congo	3
Djibouti	1
Ghana	2
Kenya	1
Liberia	1
Nigeria	1
Somalia	1
Uganda	1
Zimbabwe	3
Gender	
Male	9
Female	6
Age Group	
20 - 29	5
30 – 39	5
40 – 49	3
50 – 59	1
60 – 69	1
Length of Stay in Australia	
1 – 3 years	8
4 – 7 years	1
8 -15 years	3
>15 years	3

Recommendations:

- HIV organisations to co-create HIV education programs with the Sub-Saharan African communities.
- HIV education to include HIV stigma to challenge cultural stereotypes and assumptions about people living with HIV.
- Education programs to cater for different age groups and generations, as young people who were born and/or grew up in Australia may require different information than the older generations.
- HIV education to be delivered at community events and gatherings, using peer workers and in their own language.



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