

CHAPTER 10

KNOWLEDGE OF AIDS

10.1 Knowledge About AIDS

AIDS is a major health problem in Zambia. In order to assess basic knowledge about AIDS transmission and prevention, the ZDHS questionnaire included a section of ten questions about AIDS. Women were first asked if they had ever heard of AIDS and if so, from what source they heard information in the last month. They were then asked several questions about various possible means of transmission of the AIDS virus and whether they thought it was possible to prevent AIDS transmission and if so, how. Finally, respondents were asked what they thought government should do for people with AIDS and who they would prefer to care for a relative with AIDS.

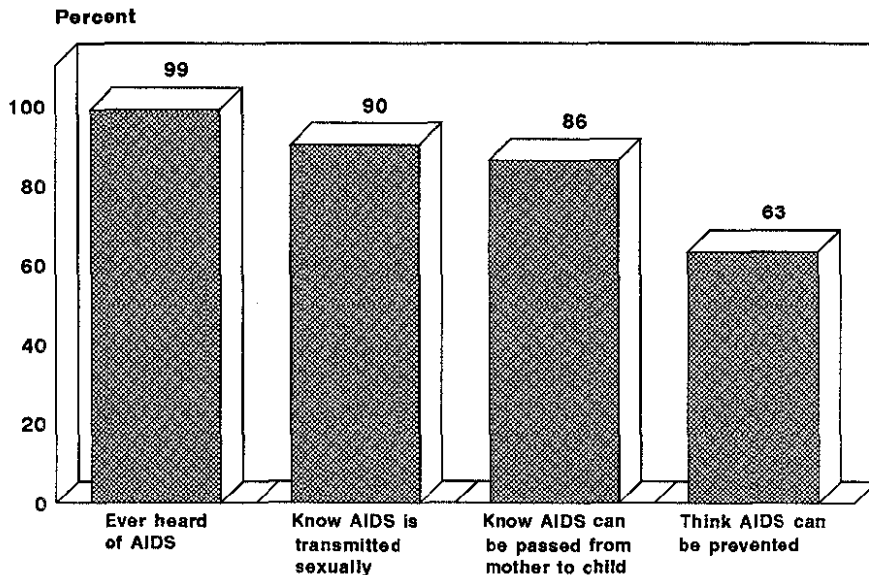
Knowledge of AIDS is almost universal among women in Zambia: 99 percent of women interviewed said they had heard of the disease (see Table 10.1 and Figure 10.1). Moreover, this same high level of knowl-

Table 10.1 Knowledge of AIDS

Percentage of women who have ever heard of AIDS and percentage reporting various modes of transmission, by selected background characteristics, Zambia 1992

Background characteristic	Ever heard of AIDS	Mode of AIDS transmission					Don't know	Number of women
		Sexual intercourse	Needles, blades, skin punctures	Mother to child	Blood transfusion	Other		
Age								
15-19	98.0	86.3	14.3	0.8	7.7	2.3	11.7	1984
20-24	98.9	92.3	15.1	0.9	7.3	1.8	6.8	1441
25-29	99.5	93.6	18.0	0.7	9.7	2.3	5.1	1179
30-34	99.5	90.9	17.6	0.3	10.3	1.7	7.5	915
35-39	99.0	92.4	18.6	1.3	10.3	2.3	5.8	656
40-44	99.2	86.6	15.5	1.2	6.2	2.0	11.6	505
45-49	97.5	86.6	14.6	0.8	4.0	2.2	12.4	380
Residence								
Urban	99.4	93.8	16.6	0.9	12.6	1.5	5.1	3636
Rural	98.1	85.8	15.4	0.7	3.6	2.8	12.2	3424
Province								
Central	99.1	85.8	9.6	0.5	5.0	3.4	12.2	622
Copperbelt	99.6	93.6	16.4	0.5	11.8	1.8	5.2	1743
Eastern	98.8	76.7	17.4	0.5	4.6	3.9	20.6	729
Luapula	96.9	96.1	30.6	1.6	9.2	1.2	3.4	431
Lusaka	99.4	93.3	13.7	1.1	12.9	1.2	5.6	1234
Northern	97.3	91.6	27.0	2.6	7.6	0.7	6.3	652
North-Western	98.7	90.2	11.6	0.2	7.2	1.8	9.2	183
Southern	98.7	87.3	11.3	0.3	3.6	1.4	10.8	1045
Western	97.4	91.6	10.3	0.3	2.6	6.2	6.8	422
Education								
No education	95.9	81.3	8.7	0.8	1.9	1.5	17.3	1161
Primary	99.2	89.2	13.9	0.4	4.7	2.7	9.0	4213
Secondary	99.7	97.4	23.9	1.5	18.3	1.2	1.6	1561
Higher	100.0	99.1	53.3	6.7	59.7	0.0	0.0	124
Total	98.8	90.0	16.0	0.8	8.2	2.1	8.5	7060

Figure 10.1
Knowledge of AIDS among
Women Age 15-49



ZDHS 1992

edge is found among women at every age group, in rural as well as urban areas and in every province and education group. It is also encouraging that the vast majority of women (90 percent) know that AIDS is transmitted through sexual intercourse. Far fewer reported other modes of transmission such as needles, skin punctures, birth, or blood transfusions. This may indicate lack of knowledge, but it could also be due to the interviewing process. Interviewers were instructed to mark all modes of transmission mentioned by the respondent and to probe for other means; however, it is likely that many marked only the first answer the respondent gave and did not probe for others. In any case, it appears that women in Eastern Province are relatively less knowledgeable about how AIDS is transmitted—only three-quarters of them said that AIDS could be transmitted by sexual intercourse and one in five said they did not know how AIDS is transmitted. Knowledge of AIDS transmission is better among more educated women.

ZDHS respondents were also asked if they thought they could get AIDS from a variety of not uncommon social situations such as shaking hands with someone who has AIDS or sharing clothing or eating utensils with someone who has AIDS. These situations are generally believed to pose extremely low risk of transmission of the AIDS virus. Women were also asked if they thought it was possible for a healthy-looking person to be carrying the AIDS virus or for a woman with the AIDS virus to give birth to a child with the virus. The results are shown in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2 Perceived modes of AIDS transmission

Percentage of women who think it is possible to get AIDS by various means, according to urban-rural residence, Zambia 1992

Mode of transmission	Urban	Rural	Total
Possible to get AIDS by:			
Shaking hands with someone who has AIDS	7.8	23.6	15.4
Hugging someone who has AIDS	9.6	26.9	17.9
Kissing someone who has AIDS	42.0	54.5	48.0
Sharing the clothes of someone who has AIDS	21.7	43.9	32.4
Sharing eating utensils with someone who has AIDS	20.1	39.6	29.5
Stepping on the urine or stool of someone who has AIDS	40.7	58.0	49.0
Mosquito, flies or bedbug bites	53.6	68.1	60.6
Possible for a healthy-looking person to carry AIDS?			
Yes	83.0	67.0	75.3
No	12.4	23.4	17.7
Don't know	4.1	9.4	6.7
Missing	0.5	0.2	0.3
Possible for a woman with AIDS to give birth to a child with AIDS virus?			
Yes	91.0	80.8	86.1
No	4.6	9.6	7.0
Don't know	4.1	9.5	6.7
Missing	0.3	0.2	0.2
Number of women	3616	3357	6973

Less than 20 percent of women believe that it is possible to get AIDS from shaking hands with or hugging someone who has AIDS, however, almost half say that it is possible to get AIDS from kissing someone with the disease. *Sharing clothes or eating utensils with someone with AIDS was mentioned as a mode of transmission by less than one-third of the women interviewed, while stepping on the urine or stools of someone who has AIDS was mentioned by half of the women and mosquito, flea or bedbug bites were mentioned as a possible means of transmission by 61 percent of women. Rural women are much more likely than urban women to believe that it is possible to contract AIDS from the situations asked about in the ZDHS.*

Three-quarters of the ZDHS respondents said that it was possible for a healthy-looking person to be carrying the AIDS virus and 86 percent said that it is possible for a woman with AIDS to give birth to a child with the virus. A higher proportion of urban than rural women responded affirmatively to these two questions. These results show that Zambian women are generally quite knowledgeable about the main sources of AIDS transmission; however, many also believe that it can be transmitted through casual contact and insect bites as well. Urban women appear to be considerably more knowledgeable about the means of AIDS transmission than rural women.

Only 63 percent of women believe that AIDS can be prevented (see Table 10.3). The vast majority of them say that sticking to one partner is a way to prevent the disease, with very few reporting other means of prevention. Again, this could be due to lack of probing by interviewers rather than lack of knowledge of other means of prevention. Differences between urban and rural women are minimal.

Table 10.3 Perceptions about AIDS prevention

Percent distribution of women age 15-49 by whether they believe AIDS can be prevented and, of those who believe it can be prevented, the percentage reporting various means of prevention, according to urban-rural residence, Zambia 1992

AIDS preventability/ Means of prevention	Urban	Rural	Total
Can AIDS be prevented?			
Yes	69.6	56.1	63.1
No	26.1	31.4	28.6
Don't know	3.9	12.4	8.0
Missing	0.4	0.1	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	3616	3357	6973
Among those who believe AIDS is preventable, percentage reporting means:			
Stick to one partner	94.2	90.7	92.7
Use condoms	9.1	5.9	7.8
Sterilise needles	7.5	6.5	7.1
Other	6.8	10.3	8.3
Number of women	3616	3357	6973

10.2 Sources of Information about AIDS

The government of Zambia has been actively seeking to inform the general public about AIDS and how to prevent its spread. Table 10.4 indicates that dissemination of AIDS information is widespread. Although the largest single source of information cited was friends and relatives (60 percent), almost 40 percent of women had heard about AIDS on the radio in the month preceding the survey and one-third said they had heard about AIDS from health workers. Ten percent of women had heard about AIDS from television and 10 percent from slogans, pamphlets or posters in the month preceding the interview. In fact, only 9 percent of women said they had not heard any information about AIDS in the previous month. As might be expected, radio, television and newspapers are a more important source of AIDS information for urban women than for rural women.

Table 10.4 Sources of AIDS information

Percentage of women who report hearing of AIDS from various sources in the month before the survey, by urban-rural residence, Zambia 1992

Source of information	Urban	Rural	Total
Radio	54.3	22.3	38.9
Television	18.1	1.4	10.1
Newspaper	13.8	3.2	8.7
Health worker	33.6	35.6	34.5
Church	4.9	5.6	5.2
Friend/relative	58.0	62.1	60.0
School/teacher	8.7	4.5	6.7
Slogan/poster/pamphlet	14.2	5.3	9.9
Community meeting	2.7	2.0	2.4
Other	1.2	4.1	2.6
None	8.5	10.5	9.4
Number of women	3616	3357	6973

10.3 Attitudes about AIDS

ZDHS respondents were asked what they thought was the most important thing the government should do for people who have AIDS. As shown in Table 10.5, three in five said government should provide medical treatment. Ten percent think that government should quarantine those with AIDS and ten percent think government should not be involved.

Three in five women say that if a relative were suffering from AIDS, they would prefer relatives and friends to care for him or her. Almost one-quarter say they would prefer government to provide care. Urban and rural women do not differ much in their responses to these questions.

Table 10.5 Attitudes toward AIDS			
Percent distribution of women by perception of the most important action government could take for people with AIDS and by preferred caretakers for a relative with AIDS, according to urban-rural residence, Zambia 1992			
Government action/ Preferred caretaker	Urban	Rural	Total
Suggested government action			
Provide medical treatment	58.7	64.7	61.6
Help relatives provide care	4.6	1.7	3.2
Isolate/Quarantine/Jail	11.9	8.7	10.4
Not be involved	10.7	9.1	9.9
Other	13.7	15.6	14.6
Missing	0.3	0.1	0.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Preferred caretaker			
Relatives/friends	62.8	60.9	61.9
Government	24.5	22.2	23.4
Religious organisation/mission	0.2	0.1	0.1
Nobody, abandon	2.8	6.7	4.6
Other	9.7	10.1	9.9
Missing	0.1	0.0	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number of women	3616	3357	6973

