

4. HIV Sentinel Survey 2019

National STD/AIDS control programme conducted the 14th round of HIV sentinel surveillance survey (HSS) during 2019. This survey was conducted for a period of 3 months starting from 1st October to 31st December 2019. The previous HSS was conducted in 2016.



Methods

The current HSS survey protocol included the same sentinel sites, sentinel groups and testing algorithms to enable comparison of HIV trends over time. Each of the nine provinces of the country was considered as a sentinel site. The sentinel groups included men who have sex with men (MSM), female sex workers (FSW), clients of sex workers, transgender women (TGW) and people who inject drugs (PWID).



Tests

The serological tests were performed by trained laboratory personnels using WHO approved test kits in the STD clinic laboratories. Testing for Hepatitis B and C were limited in many sentinel sites due to logistic issues.



Enrollment

A total of 3,554 participants were enrolled for the sentinel surveillance 2019. Only those who were above 18 years of age were eligible for the surveillance. The lowest mean age was seen among men who have sex with men, which was 29.9 years. The mean age of female sex workers was 36.6 years and among clients of female sex workers, it was 32.3 years.



Results

The highest HIV prevalence was seen among MSM which was 1.5%. Female sex workers and Clients of female sex workers showed a low prevalence which was 0.1%. There was one positive case of HIV among transgender women, giving rise to a prevalence rate of 1.4% as the number of total transgender women participated in the survey was only 74.



Table 4.1 Sentinel groups enrolled and their age

Sentinel group	Number enrolled	Age range	Mean age
Female sex workers	1,481	18-69	36.7
Men who have sex with men	825	18-69	29.9
Clients of sex workers	1,104	18-77	32.3
People who inject drugs	70	18-59	30.9
Transgender women	74	18-60	37.6

Table 4.2 HIV sero-prevalence among sentinel groups

Sentinel group	No. tested for HIV	No. positive	HIV prevalence
Female sex workers	1,466	1	0.1%
Men who have sex with men	822	12	1.5%
Clients of sex workers	1,097	1	0.1%
People who inject drugs	70	0	0.0%
Transgender women	74	1	1.4%

Table 4.3 All syphilis (TPPA) prevalence among sentinel groups

Sentinel group	No. tested for TPPA	No. positive	All syphilis prevalence
Female sex workers	1,361	24	1.8%
Men who have sex with men	748	24	3.2%
Clients of sex workers	1,026	16	1.6%
People who inject drugs	70	2	2.9%
Transgender women	45	6	13.3%

The prevalence data of all forms of syphilis (both active and inactive) among 3,250 participants of the sentinel surveillance are summarised in Table 4.3. The prevalence rate was highest among transgender women (13.3%) which was performed on a small sample, followed by MSM (3.2%) and people who inject drugs (2.9%). Table 4.4 shows the prevalence of active syphilis. Those who had a VDRL titre of $\geq 1:8$ were

considered as a proxy for active syphilis infection. Active syphilis was seen only among MSM (0.5%) and clients of female sex workers (0.3%) in the sentinel surveillance, and was not found among female sex workers, people who inject drugs or transgender women. As shown in table 4.5, 2635 Hepatitis B surface antigen tests were performed among the sentinel groups and only a female sex worker and a MSM

were tested positive for HBV. Table 4.6 shows a total of 2,567 Hepatitis C antibody tests were performed among the all groups. A client of female sex workers and five people who inject drugs were found to be positive for Hepatitis C. The prevalence rate was 7.4% among people who inject drugs, and the number tested was only 68.



Table 4.4 Active syphilis (VDRL \geq 1:8) prevalence among sentinel groups

Sentinel group	No. tested VDRL titre	No. with VDRL titre \geq 1:8	Active syphilis prevalence
Female sex workers	1,361	0	0.0%
Men who have sex with men	748	4	0.5%
Clients of sex workers	1,026	3	0.3%
People who inject drugs	70	0	0.0%
Transgender women	45	0	0.0%

Table 4.5 Hepatitis B sero-prevalence among sentinel groups

Sentinel group	No. tested for HBsAg	No. positive	HBV prevalence
Female sex workers	1,103	1	0.1%
Men who have sex with men	541	1	0.2%
Clients of sex workers	889	0	0.0%
People who inject drugs	69	0	0.0%
Transgender women	33	0	0.0%

Table 4.6 Hepatitis C sero-prevalence among sentinel groups

Sentinel group	No. tested for HCV Ab	No. positive	HCV prevalence
Female sex workers	1,106	0	0.0%
Men who have sex with men	511	0	0.0%
Clients of sex workers	869	1	0.1%
People who inject drugs	68	5	7.4%
Transgender women	13	0	0.0%

Conclusions

HIV sentinel surveillance survey covered five sentinel groups, i.e. men who have sex with men (MSM), female sex workers (FSW), clients of sex workers, transgender women and people who inject drugs (PWID). It was noted that the number of samples collected from transgender women and people who inject drugs were very small. Further, testing for Hepatitis B and C were limited in many sentinel sites due to logistic issues. According to the findings of the sentinel

surveillance survey 2019, Men who have sex with men (MSM) is the key population group with highest HIV prevalence (1.5%), Hepatitis B prevalence (0.2%) and active syphilis prevalence (0.5%), and their active and inactive syphilis prevalence also remain high (3.2%). Even though the numbers tested were small, the prevalence of Hepatitis C among people who inject drugs (7.4%) and active and inactive syphilis among transgender women (13.3%) were very high.



Details of STD clinic attendees - 2019

		New patients registered			Total new patients with STIs	Total clinic visits by STD patients	Total visits by others
		Male	Female	Total			
Central Province	Kandy	497	488	985	450	3,841	7,021
	Matale	152	238	390	233	1,202	1,810
	Nuwara Eliya	122	232	354	80	981	2,591
Eastern Province	Ampara	159	164	323	238	909	4,308
	Batticaloa	119	170	289	77	1,065	2,013
	Kalmunai	182	167	349	32	365	941
North Central Province	Trincomalee	154	168	322	52	156	8,492
	Anuradhapura	483	426	909	305	1,512	20,433
	Polonnaruwa	335	364	699	534	1,608	3,359
North Western Province	Chilaw	375	438	813	417	1,670	1,810
Western Province	Kuliyapitiya	114	80	194	68	238	298
	Kurunegala	767	1,025	1,792	1,069	3,393	5,521
	Jaffna	203	101	304	156	541	14,222
Northern Province	Kilinochchi	80	42	122	62	179	2,935
	Mannar	7	14	21	-	-	3,289
	Mullaitivu	21	30	51	18	172	1,926
Sabaragamuwa Province	Vavuniya	137	103	240	114	519	4,611
	Embilipitiya	132	120	252	160	861	350
	Kegalle	351	399	750	431	2,690	2,268
Southern Province	Ratnapura	503	436	939	353	2,509	2,767
	Balapitiya	363	270	633	258	1,079	1,868
	Hambanthota	444	366	810	376	1,730	6,267
UVA Province	Mahamodara	451	434	885	445	3,651	3,515
	Matara	363	261	624	328	2,098	8,019
	Badulla	289	329	618	353	1,862	9,218
Western Province	Monaragala	189	230	419	217	963	3,690
	Avissawella	175	234	409	256	1,377	551
	Colombo	5,062	2,556	7,618	3,312	25,655	9,671
Western Province	Gampaha	378	333	711	369	2,459	1,507
	Kalubowila	1,127	967	2,094	1,310	8,562	3,548
	Kalutara	460	720	1,180	567	4,390	3,438
	Negombo	342	540	882	522	3,565	2,816
	Ragama	623	408	1,031	634	4,372	1,882
	Wathupitiwala	144	145	289	205	542	952
Total		14,950	12,655	27,605	13,756	83,417	141,838