



Sixth HIV and Health Study FAQs

Who is eligible to participate in this study?

All regular household residents, including visitors to the household who slept there the previous night.

How are households chosen?

Households were selected within geographical areas called small area layers (SALs) which were developed and mapped by Statistics South Africa. A total of 15 households will be randomly selected in 2070 selected SALs across the country. In this way, every household in South Africa has an equal opportunity to be selected.

Do I have a choice or is participation compulsory?

Participation is completely voluntary; you will not be forced or coerced to participate.

Why is it so important to participate in the study?

To truly inform our health policies and make decisions that will benefit our entire country, the survey needs your participation as it will then be a true representation of South Africans, including all socio-economic backgrounds, different ages, population groups and locality types (rural, urban, and farm areas).

Can I find out in advance if I am part of the chosen sample for the study?

Unfortunately not as no maps are printed for all 2070 selected areas. Once the maps are printed, a yellow dot is placed onto the 15 selected households. We do not have any physical addresses for selected households. The survey teams also have no idea who lives within the selected households prior to the survey visit.

Is there a set time when HSRC field workers will visit my house?

Communication regarding areas that will be visited by the survey teams will be sent out every two weeks via social media and community media platforms. The survey team will visit your home multiple times and during different times in the day in order to try and interview your household.

How much of my time will it take?

Completion of questionnaires and collection of dried blood spots will take between 45 minutes to one hour.

Can I just do the questionnaire and not give any blood?

Yes but the survey collects both questionnaire information and blood samples. Therefore, all participants are encouraged to take part in all aspects of the survey.



What happens to the blood samples taken?

The blood will be tested for HIV antibodies, HIV viral load and drug resistant HIV as well as for COVID-19 antibodies. The blood will also be kept in storage for 5 years for future research purposes.

How will I know that the people I am speaking to are genuine HSRC representatives?

The data collectors will have an HSRC ID badge as well as HSRC branded bags and bibs.

What if I do not want to know about my HIV status?

You have that option, but we encourage everyone to know their HIV status for access and linkage to care in order to improve your health status since HIV is now a manageable condition.

Can I speak to someone from the HSRC before I participate in the study?

Yes, if you have any questions about the research, you may email the project directors Dr Musawenkosi Mabaso, Ms Alicia North or Dr Shandir Ramlagan at on SABSSMIV@hsrc.ac.za.

Will data collectors be able to speak to me in my language?

Yes, fieldworkers/data collectors are recruited to match the languages and where possible of the selected race throughout the country

Who else will know about my HIV status?

Only the trained HIV counselor that provides pre- and post-testing counselling will know your HIV status. No one else will know about your HIV status because no personal information is linked to the HIV test result.

How soon will I receive my HIV test results?

If you take up the option of participating in the HIV counselling services and HIV rapid testing, you will know your HIV status immediately.

Can I get access to my HIV test results if I want to?

Besides the HIV result which is available immediately, for those who are HIV positive the viral load and HIV drug resistance test results can be collected from the nearest local clinic between 8 and 12 weeks for viral load results and after 6 months for HIV drug resistance results, from when the specimens are collected in the house.

What happens if I am not comfortable speaking to a younger person about my sexual life?

You can request to speak to a slightly older fieldworker if you desire.



If the study covers the whole household, will you allow me some privacy so that I do not discuss my sex life in front of my children?

Participants will be interviewed alone and privately to uphold confidentiality.

We are still in the COVID-19 pandemic, and I don't want strangers coming into my house and interviewing my household

Our research teams are particularly aware of the COVID-19 pandemic as learning more about the pandemic is part of the research objectives. Our teams are screened every day before data collection commences and are provided with all the necessary PPE (personal protective equipment) to ensure the safety of both the team and the participants during data collection.

Are you collecting blood samples for COVID-19 from everyone in the study

We have randomly selected SALs in which we will conduct COVID-19 antibody testing. All persons aged 15 years and older in these SALs will be eligible for COVID-19 antibody testing.

What COVID-19 tests will you be performing

We will not be conducting PCR tests (nasal/throat swab), so we will not be able to inform you as to whether or not you currently have COVID-19. We will be conducting antibody testing from the blood samples that we will collect, and we will inform you as to whether or not you may have been exposed to COVID-19 previously.

Will I test positive on the COVID-19 antibody test if I have been vaccinated

The tests that we will be using for the antibody assay will be able to differentiate between antibodies from a previous infection and antibodies developed from the vaccines.

How soon will I receive my COVID-19 antibody test results?

Antibody test results should be available within 30 days from the time the blood sample is collected