

# Patient tracing for linkage to HIV care and Treatment in a Community Based HIV Counselling Testing (CBCT) program in five districts, South Africa

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## BACKGROUND

HIV Testing and Counselling services (HTS) in South Africa has made great progress over the past years with over 10 million people testing for HIV every year. Beyond post-test counselling however, there are limited systems available to help HIV-positive individuals enrol into HIV care in health facilities. It is estimated that without post HIV counselling interventions, less than 30% of people identified in various HIV testing sites will link into HIV care programs. This paper seeks to determine successful strategies to improve linkage to HIV care and treatment services.

## METHODS

HTS services were provided to clients by HIV counsellors including support to reach health facilities for enrolment into care if test results were found to be reactive. If diagnosis was not accepted, individuals were referred for additional counselling. Follow-ups through home visits or telephone calls were conducted for those who did not visit health facilities to enrol into HIV care. Cross sectional program descriptive data from community-based HTC provided in 5 districts in South Africa was analysed to determine the proportion of HIV positive individuals who were linked to HIV care programmes via different support mechanisms provided by the CBCT program.



Photo 1: Queuing for transport to escort client



Photo 2: Taking the bus to the facilities to escort client



Photo 3: Passing the river



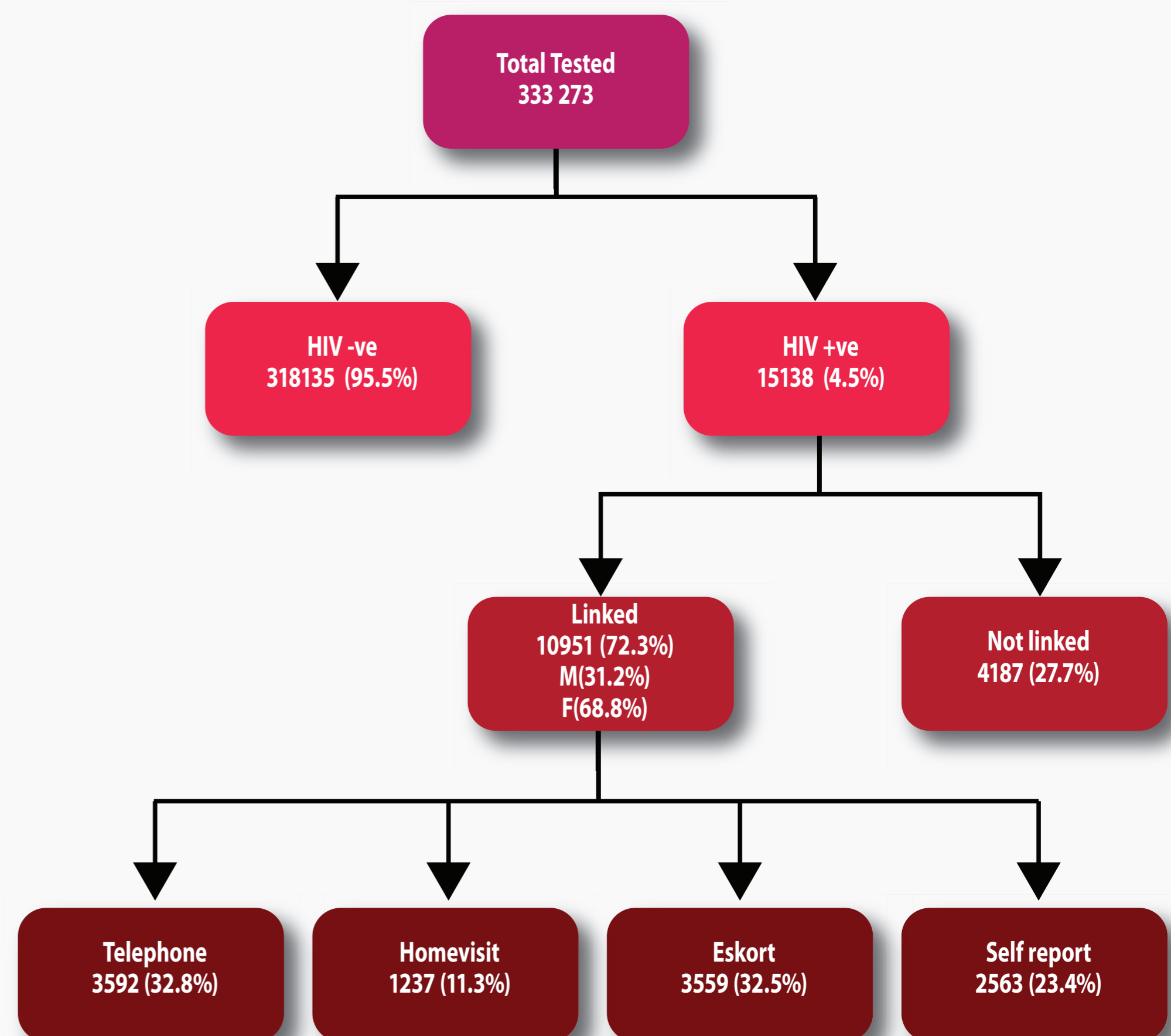
Photo 4: Trying to find hard to reach clients

## RESULTS

Under the review period, April - December 2018, a total of 333,273 individuals tested for HIV through the community-based HTS programme. Out of these individuals, 15,136 (4.5%) were diagnosed HIV positive. Overall 10 951 (72.3%) were successfully linked into HIV care and treatment programmes in the health facilities. Post-counselling support

activities were conducted to facilitate linkage to care. Individuals were supported to reach health facilities for linkage through telephone calls 3592 (32.8%), home visits 1237 (11.3%) and counsellor escorts 3559 (32.5%). Only 2563 (23.4%) were confirmed as linked at the facility but with no evidence of post counselling support. A large proportion of HIV positive individuals 4187 (27.7%) are still to be traced for linkage to HIV care.

### Linkage process flow map



## CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that a bigger proportion of HIV positive individuals can be successfully link into HIV care if provided with support beyond standard HIV post-test counselling services in a community-based HIV program.

**Keywords:** linkage to care, patient tracing, HIV, community-based HIV testing



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