Why we need to know more

Comparative analysis of data from the Australia-wide Futures Eight Survey suggest that the needs and preferences of women from culturally diverse backgrounds are not being effectively identified despite national cross-sectional research initiatives. Whilst the average age of the 74 Australian women living with HIV captured by Futures8 is similar to PWV’s members (47 years old), there is significant variation in the region of birth of the two cohorts. 68% (n=50) of women surveyed in Futures8 were born in Australia, followed by 13.5% in the UK and Europe (n=10). Only 8% nominated Africa as their region of birth (n=6).

84% (n=62) of women surveyed in Futures8 indicated their HIV exposure was due to sex with a man despite advances in sexual health literacy in Australia. This echoes the experiences of many PWV members and points to the need to interrogate transmission through both a gender-equality and cultural practice lens.

Conclusion

African-born women are an emerging priority population in the Australian HIV response. Through consultative research, we hope to better understand the intersectionality between cultural and structural barriers that may prevent African women accessing community support services. This will help inform appropriate practice and may also provide us with an opportunity to shed light on transmission pathways mediated by unique cultural or structural factors.