

# Media alert: Second edition Ritshidze report finds stockouts crisis persist in North West clinics

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Thursday 21 July 2022

10am onwards

Sign up for live stream: <https://bit.ly/RitshidzeNorthWest2022>

On 21 July 2022 Ritshidze will launch a detailed report into the state of the public healthcare system in North West that finds **improvement in certain indicators, and deterioration in others over the last year, impacting the overall quality of HIV, TB, and other health services.** The report will be presented to the North West Department of Health and other duty bearers at a community meeting in Mafikeng. The report is based on the results of data collected through Ritshidze's community-led monitoring of 13 facilities in the province together with additional data collected at 57 facilities by TAC, Stop Stockouts Project and Ritshidze related to stockouts.

This is the second edition of the North West State of Health report; the [first was published in June 2021](#). Data in this report were collected between April 2022 to May 2022. Like the earlier edition, the 2022 report identifies challenges that discourage people from going to the clinic for HIV, TB and other health services.

## Key issues found include:

- + **Despite improvement, stockouts still persist:** This year there were 398 reports of different medicines, contraceptives and vaccines being out of stock in total across 57 facilities, down from 895 reports across 56 facilities last year — and 26% of patients said they or someone they knew had left the facility without the medicines they needed. The North West scored worst across all provinces monitored on this indicator.
- + **Waiting times have improved, but remain long:** Waiting times have improved, down from 5:09 hours to 4:08 hours waiting after the facility opens. However, 91% of public healthcare users interviewed think that waiting times are still long. 64% of those people blamed staff shortages for the long hours waiting.
- + **Marginal improvement in staffing levels:** While marginal improvement has been identified in staffing levels in the last year — from 0% of Facility Managers reporting enough staff last year, up to 15% this year — this remains a very high proportion of understaffed sites.
- + **Index testing implemented unsafely and without option to refuse:** Index testing is always meant to be voluntary, yet worryingly 36% of respondents reported that they could not refuse to give the contacts. Worse, while every precaution should be taken to not put people at risk of violence, 34% of respondents were not asked if their partners had any risk of violence, despite national guidelines mandating this process.

- + **The North West is lagging behind in extending supply of ARVs:** just 6% of people living with HIV interviewed reporting 3 month ART refills — compared to 25% in the same reporting period last year.
- + **100% said viral load test results explained, but not all understand the U=U message:** The province remains the highest performer on explaining test results for the second year. The next step is improving the quality of these explanations to ensure better understanding of the benefits of treatment adherence, including that an undetectable viral load means a person cannot transmit HIV — something that only 75% of people interviewed understood.
- + **Staff attitudes must be improved to ensure friendly and welcoming services for all people living with HIV and key populations:** Only 58% of public healthcare users thought that clinic staff were always friendly and professional. Only 33% of respondents reported that facility staff are always friendly and professional towards gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men; 35% towards people who use drugs; 33% towards sex workers; and 40% towards trans\* people.
- + **Specific services for key populations remain unavailable:** Only 20% of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, 9% of people who use drugs, 14% of sex workers, and 14% of trans\* people reported being offered PrEP at the facility; and only 9% of gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men, 12% of people who use drugs, 5% of sex workers, and 4% of trans\* people said they could access lubricants.
- + **Positively the North West has the cleanest facilities:** 77% of public healthcare users reported that clinics were “very clean” or “clean” — and only 5% of public healthcare users reported that facilities were “very dirty” or “dirty.”
- + **Inadequate space continues to be a challenge:** 92% of Facility Managers interviewed reported needing more space for waiting areas, filing systems, and rooms for private HIV counselling/testing and medical care.

These, among other issues, will be presented on Thursday together with the personal experiences of people living with HIV, key populations and other public healthcare users. This year’s report will show what progress has been made in the last year, where the Department has committed to make change, and what still needs to improve. **The embargoed State of Health report is available upon request.**

Ritshidze is a programme of the PLHIV Sector made up of the National Association of People Living with HIV (NAPWA), Positive Action Campaign, Positive Women’s Network, the South African Network of Religious Leaders Living with HIV (SANERELA+), and the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC).

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