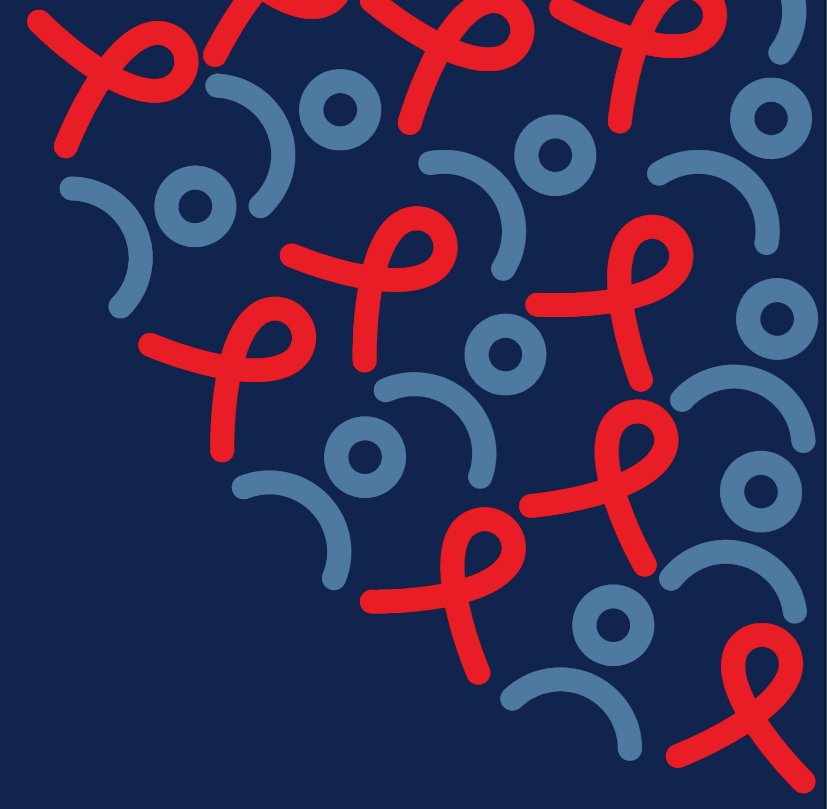


# Enhanced linkage to voluntary medical male circumcision: an essential prevention tool

EPD058

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## BACKGROUND

Programs serving men who have sex with men (MSM) present an opportunity to reach men at risk of HIV infection with prevention services such as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC). The Lesotho VMMC program, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), aimed to reach 80% male circumcision coverage among

10- to 29-year-old males by 2021. The coverage has significantly improved, with more than 56% of men circumcised; however, there are no data to show coverage of VMMC services among MSM in Lesotho. MSM who also have sex with women represent a very high proportion of the cohort and so could benefit from the prevention aspects of VMMC.

## METHODS

We analyzed routine program data from the risk assessment of MSM as part of service provision from April 2020 to January 2021 to determine the proportion of MSM circumcised. Data were cleaned, and circumcision was analyzed as a factor associated with HIV diagnosis among MSM. The analysis adjusted for age, other sexually transmitted infection (STI) symptoms, number of sexual partners, and identity of partners.

## RESULTS

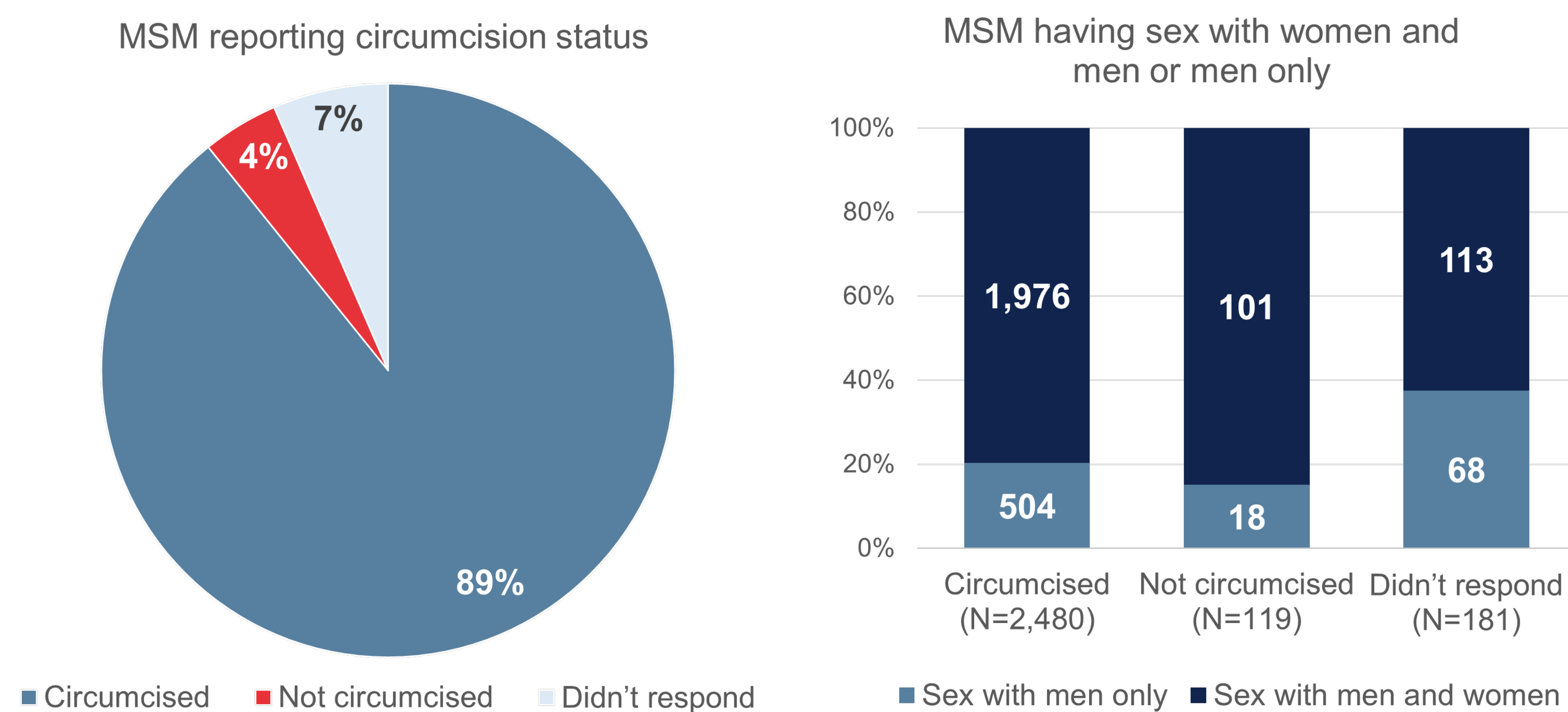
Records from 2,780 MSM were analyzed. Of these individuals, 2,480 (89.2%) were circumcised, 119 (4.3%) reported not being circumcised, and 181 (6.5%) did not respond (Figure 1). Of the men tested for HIV, 78% (2,181) reported having sex with women (Table 1). The HIV case-finding rate was 10% (10/101) among MSM who

have sex with women and were not circumcised and 3% (63/1,967) among MSM who have sex with women and were reported to be circumcised ( $p < 0.001$ ). MSM who had sex with men only had lower HIV positivity rates, and the result did not differ by circumcision status.

## CONCLUSIONS

The MSM program is strengthening linkages with VMMC providers, referring men identified as not circumcised, and following up on the referral outcome and documentation. Information is needed about why uncircumcised MSM who also have sex with women had not accessed VMMC services, and whether there was perceived stigma in accessing VMMC services.

**FIGURE 1. Distribution of circumcision status as reported by MSM**



**TABLE 1. HIV positivity rate among MSM in Lesotho by circumcision status and whether they have sex with women or with men only (April 2020–January 2021)**

Sex partners	Circumcision status	Negative	Positive	Total tested	Positivity rate	p-value
MSM who have sex with women	No	91	10	101	10%	0.0001
	Yes	1,904	63	1,967	3%	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2,103</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>2,181</b>	<b>4%</b>	
MSM who have sex with men only	No	18	0	18	0%	0.899
	Yes	495	3	498	1%	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>1%</b>	

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