

Figures and Tables

In academic writing, any picture, map, diagram or graph is referred to as a figure. Figures and tables (collectively referred to as 'graphics') should only be used if they either **condense large amounts of information or make complex data easier for your reader to understand**. Figures and tables should always be **referred to in text**, before they appear on the page. In text, there is no need to re-iterate all the information portrayed in the graphic, **rather draw your reader's attention to the most important information you want them to notice**.

For example: "The HIV incidence rates among women are of particular concern (**Figure 1**). The HIV incidence rate among female youth aged 15-24 years was over 4 times higher than for males in the same age group..."

- Graphics should be **numbered separately and sequentially** (Figure 1, Table 1, Figure 2, and Table 2).
- Graphics should **be clearly labelled** (title, axis and bars) and **scales** (on either X-axis or Y-axis) **should be constant**.
- The title of a figure (referred to as a legend) should appear **below** the figure.
- The title of a table should appear **above** the table.

Both legends and titles should be **sufficiently descriptive to allow the graphic to stand alone**. In other words, if someone in your field was given a page with just a table and title or a figure and its legend on it, they should be able understand the information being presented to them. Remember to write abbreviations in full if you use them in your figure or table.

Important:

If a table or figure is **from another source**, please **reference** it correctly (at the end of title or legend). E.g. "Table 1: overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race, and locality, South Africa, 2012 (**HSRC, 2014**)"

If you have modified the graphic, then mention that it was "**modified/adapted from**" followed by reference. If the graphic was copied, mention that by saying "**reproduced from**" followed by the reference.

"Table 1: overall HIV prevalence by sex, all age groups, race, and locality, South Africa, 2012 (**adapted from HSRC, 2014**)"

Tip: When you print, make sure your titles and legends are still on the same page as the tables or figures they refer to.

Examples:

Table 1: HIV prevalence by sex in selected age groups in South Africa in 2012, where ‘n’ refers to the number of individuals and CI refers to the confidence interval.

Age groups (years)	Males			Females			Total		
	n	(%)	95% CI	n	(%)	95% CI	n	(%)	95% CI
12 months and younger	426	0.5	0.1–2.3	378	2.2	0.9–5.1	804	1.3	0.6–2.7
0–4	1,238	2.1	1.3–3.5	1,117	1.4	0.8–2.4	2,355	1.7	1.2–2.6
5–14	2,898	2.4	1.7–3.5	2,726	2.9	2.2–3.9	5,624	2.7	2.1–3.4
15–24	2,798	2.9	2.1–3.9	3,092	11.4	9.8–13.2	5,890	7.1	6.2–8.1
25–49	3,670	20.9	18.4–23.7	5,160	29.4	26.8–32.2	8,830	25.2	23.2–27.3
50+	2,289	8.2	6.3–10.5	3,697	7.1	5.9–8.6	5,986	7.6	6.5–8.8
15–49	6,468	14.5	12.8–16.3	8,252	23.2	21.3,25.1	14,720	18.8	17.5–20.3
Total	12,893	9.9	8.9–11.0	15,792	14.4	13.3–15.6	28,685	12.2	11.4–13.1

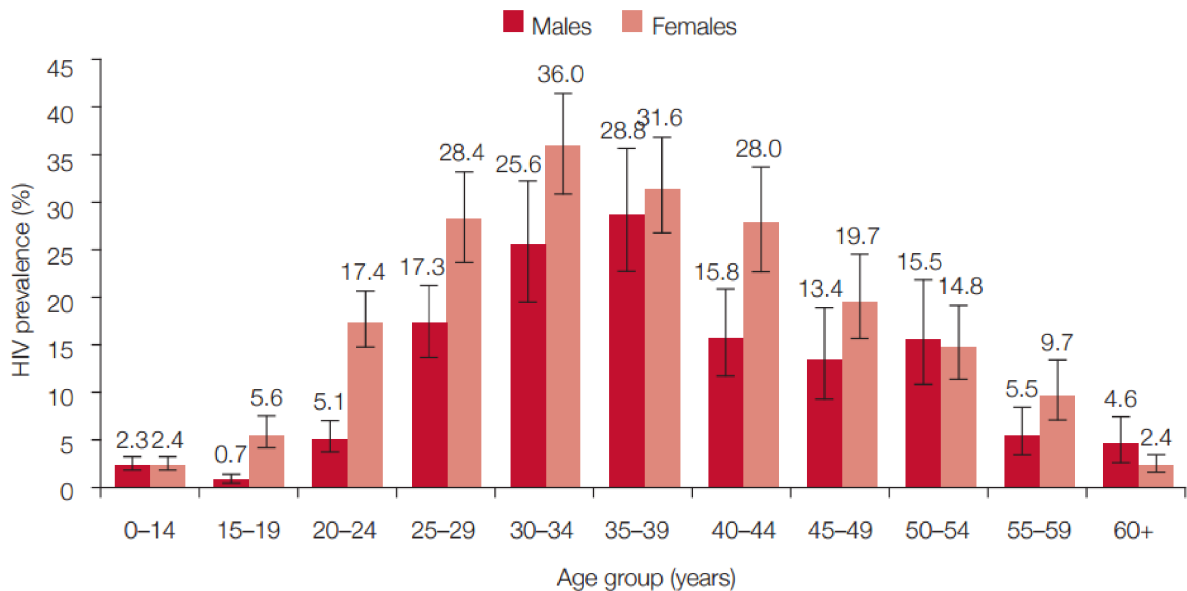


Figure 1: HIV prevalence in South Africa in 2012, categorised by sex and age with associated error bars.

Tables and figures adapted from: Human Sciences Research Council, 2014. South African national HIV prevalence, incidence and behaviour survey, 2012. HSRC Press, South Africa, page 40.

Content adapted from: UCT Upper Campus Writing Centre, 2015



FHS

University of Cape Town



WRITING LAB