

# Factors associated with internal HIV-related stigma score among people living with HIV in Mauritius: Results from the People Living with HIV Stigma Index (2017)



Juliana Castro Avila<sup>a</sup>, Virginie Villes<sup>a</sup>, Niloufer Khodabocus<sup>a,b</sup>, Adarshini Ghurbhurrin<sup>a</sup>, Lilawatee Kalliaperumal<sup>b</sup>, Nicolas Ritter<sup>a,b</sup>, Rosemary Delabre<sup>a</sup>, Daniela Rojas Castro<sup>a,c</sup>, Guffran Rostom<sup>a,b</sup>

Affiliations : <sup>a</sup> Community-based Research Laboratory, Coalition PLUS, Pantin, France. <sup>b</sup> PILS (Prévention, Information, Lutte contre le Sida), Port Louis, Mauritius. <sup>c</sup> Aix Marseille Univ, INSERM, IRD, SESSTIM, Sciences Economiques & Sociales de la Santé & Traitement de l'Information Médicale, Marseille, France.

## BACKGROUND

HIV-related stigma is a major barrier to HIV control and prevention.



In Mauritius, the estimated HIV prevalence was 0.8% in 2016. The epidemic is concentrated among key populations such as People Who Inject Drugs (PWIDs).

**Aim: identify factors associated with an internal stigma score among People Living With HIV (PLHIV) who responded to the Stigma Index survey Mauritius.**

## METHODS

The **Stigma Index** is a cross-sectional survey which recorded the experiences of PLHIV related to external and internal stigma.

It was conducted in **2017** by the **community-based organization PILS**, in Mauritius, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, and with the support of UNAIDS and Global Fund.

Participants were recruited via a snowball sampling in National Day Care Center for the Immunosuppressed and Methadone Substitution Sites.

We assessed the HIV-related internal stigma with a score (0 to 7), with one point added for each of the seven feelings experienced due to serological status.

A negative binomial regression model was used to identify characteristics associated with the internal stigma score.

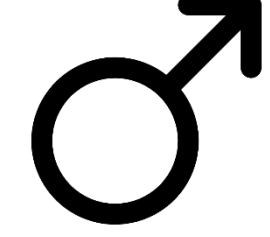
## RESULTS

**Table 1: Factors associated with internal stigma score using multivariable negative binomial regression (N=415)**


Variable	n	%	aIRR [95%CI]	p-value
<b>Sex</b>				
Male	268	64.6%	1.00 [1.00, 1.00]	.
Female	130	31.3%	<b>1.33 [1.05, 1.68]</b>	<b>0.017</b>
Trans	17	4.1%	0.67 [0.38, 1.18]	0.164
<b>Age</b>				
15-24 years old	35	8.4%	1.00 [1.00, 1.00]	.
25-49 years old	319	76.9%	<b>1.66 [1.10, 2.49]</b>	<b>0.014</b>
50+ years old	61	14.7%	<b>2.33 [1.46, 3.69]</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
<b>PWID</b>				
No	145	34.9%	1.00 [1.00, 1.00]	.
Yes	270	65.1%	<b>1.28 [1.03, 1.60]</b>	<b>0.029</b>
<b>Current employment status</b>				
Full time	109	26.3%	1.00 [1.00, 1.00]	.
Part-time	126	30.4%	<b>1.61 [1.24, 2.19]</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
Unemployed	180	43.4%	<b>1.57 [1.20, 2.05]</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>
<b>Lost a job or another source of income*</b>				
No	282	68.0%	1.00 [1.00, 1.00]	.
Yes	53	12.8%	1.32 [1.00, 1.75]	0.060
Not applicable	80	19.3%	1.05 [0.81, 1.37]	0.686
<b>At least one stigma experience in family, friends and community contexts</b>				
No	195	47.0%	1.00 [1.00, 1.00]	.
Yes	220	53.0%	<b>2.18 [1.75, 2.72]</b>	<b>&lt;0.001</b>

\*In the last 12 months

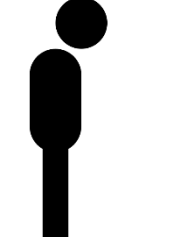
Among 415 participants:


 **65%**  
were male (n=268)

 **77%**  
were aged 25 to 49 (n=319)

 **65%**  
were PWIDs (n=270)

 **43%**  
were unemployed (n=180)

 **63%**  
had at least one feeling of internal stigma (n=260)

 **49%**  
felt guilty (n=202)

After adjustment on age, **several factors were significantly associated with an increase in the internal stigma score in the final multivariate model (N=415) (Table 1).**

## CONCLUSION

These results highlight the **impact of social and economic factors on the experience of internal stigma.**

Interventions aiming to reduce internal stigma experienced by PLHIV in Mauritius, and elsewhere, should **not be limited to the individual level**; they must also **target community, structural and policy levels.**

Discussions are currently underway regarding how to integrate these results within PILS **community-based services.**



### CONTACTS

Juliana CASTRO AVILA  
jcastro@coalitionplus.org  
Niloufer KHODABOCUS  
n.khodabocus@pils.mu