

**Press release**

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## **Latest TB report finds South Africa is still missing the men most at risk**

As the country marks World TB Day, data on South Africa's testing rates show that the country is failing to reach the very group most affected by the disease: men.

This finding, from the TB Accountability Consortium's fifth annual State of TB in South Africa report titled Deep diving into the TB Dashboard: How data can drive advocacy and accountability, reveals a stark mismatch between who is being tested and who is getting sick.

The report is released annually to mark World TB Day. This year's report draws on the first ten months of data from South Africa's new public-facing TB dashboard to assess progress in the national TB response. The dashboard was launched in October last year and is freely accessible for anybody interested in TB data.

The analysis of the data in the dashboard shows that while women make up nearly 61% of those tested for TB, men account for more than 60% of all TB diagnoses. In other words, men are less likely to be tested — but far more likely to have TB when they are.

The findings of the report have been echoed by the government.

At South Africa's official national commemorations today, Deputy President Paul Mashatile spoke about the urgent need to reach men, who remain disproportionately affected by the disease.

Addressing community members, health workers and civil society organisations at the Caledon Sports Ground in the Western Cape, Mashatile called for greater awareness, increased testing and stronger community-led responses to TB.

"We have recognised that it's mostly men who don't test, and we want to make a call for them to visit their nearest clinics to be screened and tested for TB," he said, urging more men to come forward.

He noted that while testing rates remain lower among men, those who do get tested are more likely to be diagnosed.

“Even though fewer men are being tested, according to the recently launched TB public-facing dashboard, their positivity rate is much higher,” Mashatile added.

The release of the dashboard follows multiple calls by advocates to access data on TB.

“This is the most urgent signal coming out of the data,” says TBAC Project Director Russell Rensburg. “The populations most at risk of TB are the ones we are not reaching. If we do not fix that, we will not end TB.”

For the first time, TB data is accessible in near real-time, allowing communities, advocates, researchers and policymakers to track testing, diagnoses and trends at national and sub-national levels. This has already contributed to a 10% increase in TB testing since the dashboard’s launch, demonstrating how transparency can drive action.

But the report emphasises that data alone is not enough. “The dashboard is a tool, not a solution,” Rensburg notes. “Its value lies in how we use it. And right now, it is telling us something we cannot ignore: we need to fundamentally rethink how we reach men.”

The report calls for urgent, targeted interventions to close this gap, including:

- Expanding community-based and workplace TB testing
- Designing male-friendly health services with flexible hours
- Using data to identify and target high-burden districts and populations
- Strengthening advocacy and accountability at all levels of the health system

South Africa continues to face a heavy TB burden, with an estimated 56,000 people dying from the disease each year— despite it being preventable and curable.

Download the full report here: <https://bit.ly/41oxZXU>

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