Adolescent Mental Health Summit 2024

Digital Health Technologies as Facilitators for Adolescents Access To Mental Health Services: Barriers, Opportunities, and Best Practices

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Outline

- Background
- Mental Health Barriers
- Opportunities and Best Practices

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Background: Who is impacted?

Mental health affects
- How we think, feel, and act.
- How we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.

It is an integral component of health and well being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in (WHO)

It exists on a complex continuum experienced differently by different people and in varying severity with multiple impacts

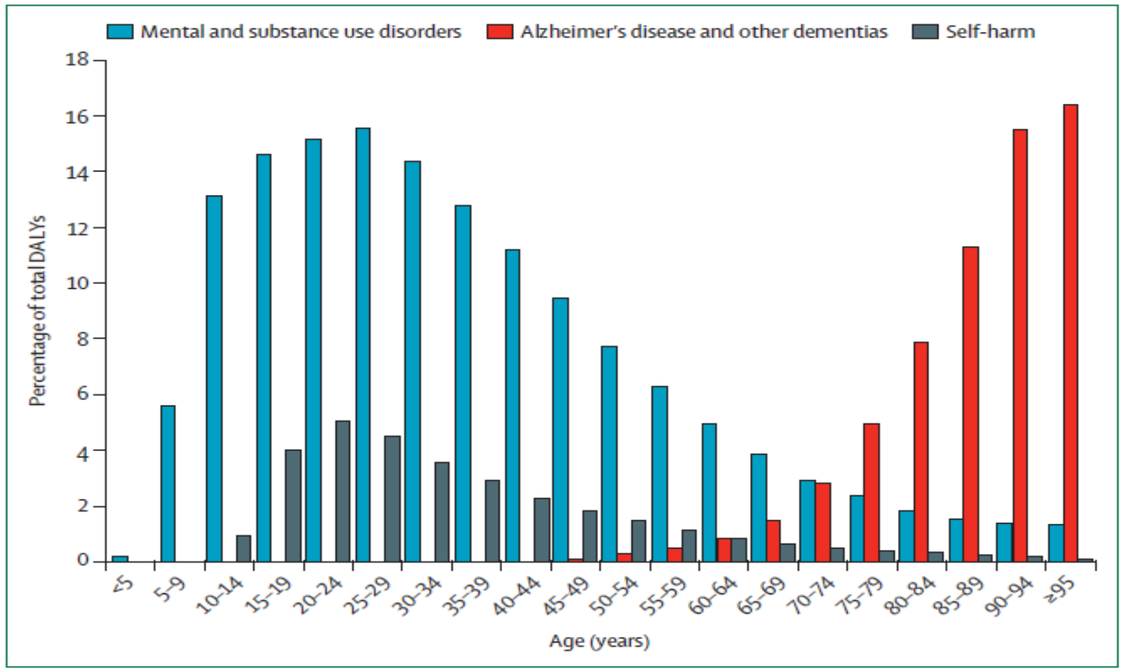
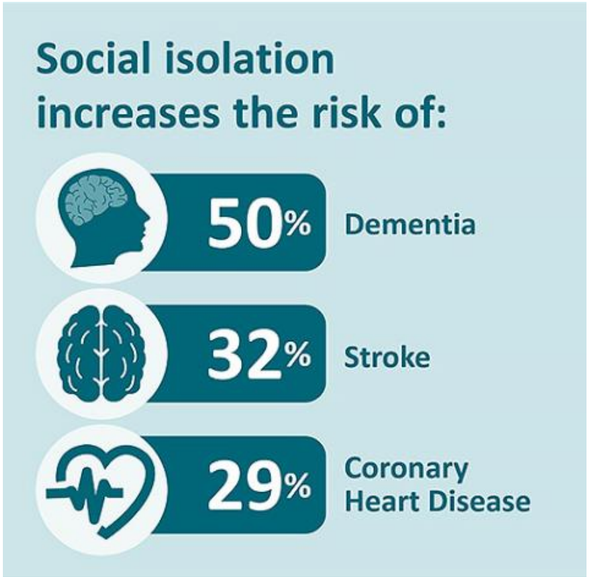


Figure 3: **The global burden of mental and substance use disorders, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, and suicide (self-harm) in DALYs across the life course**
Data are Global Burden of Disease health data (2016). One DALY represents 1 lost year of healthy life. The sum of DALYs across the population, or the burden of disease, is a measurement of the gap between current health status and an ideal health situation in which the entire population lives to an advanced age, free of disability and disease. DALY=disability-adjusted life-year.



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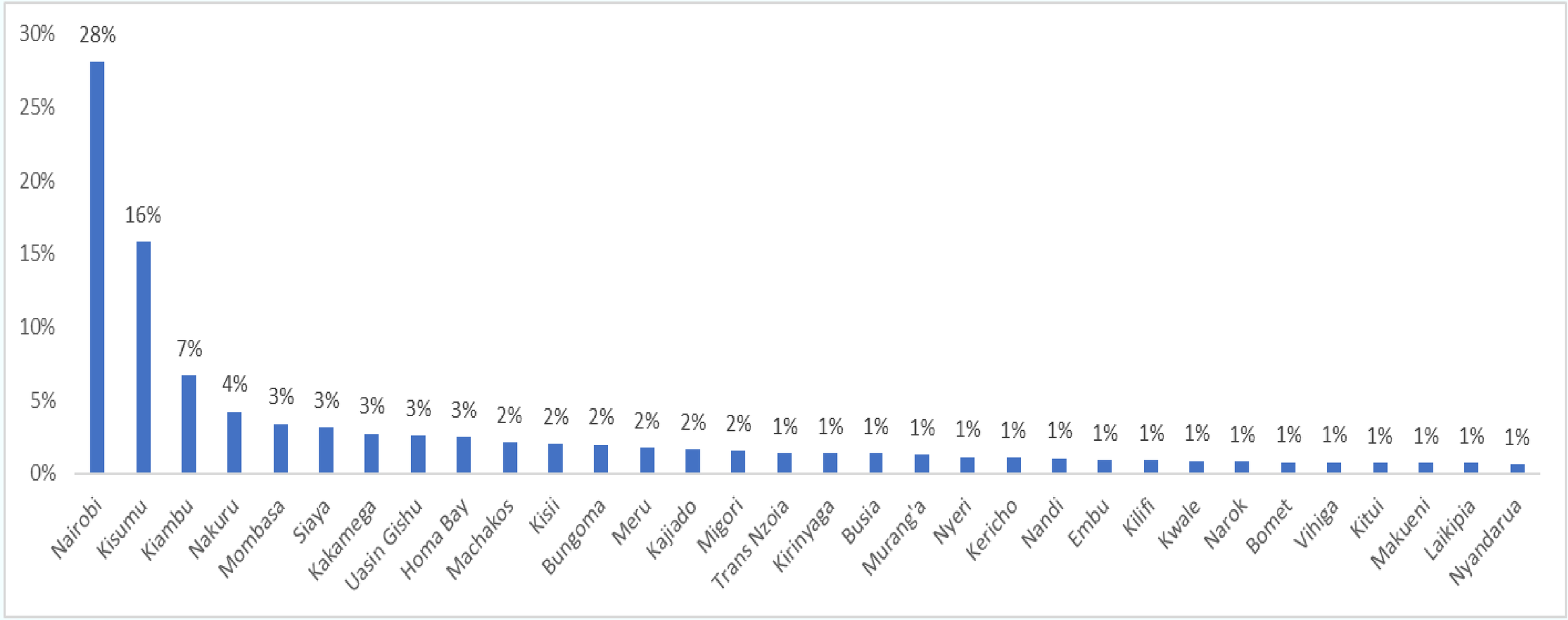
Mental Health Barriers among Adolescents

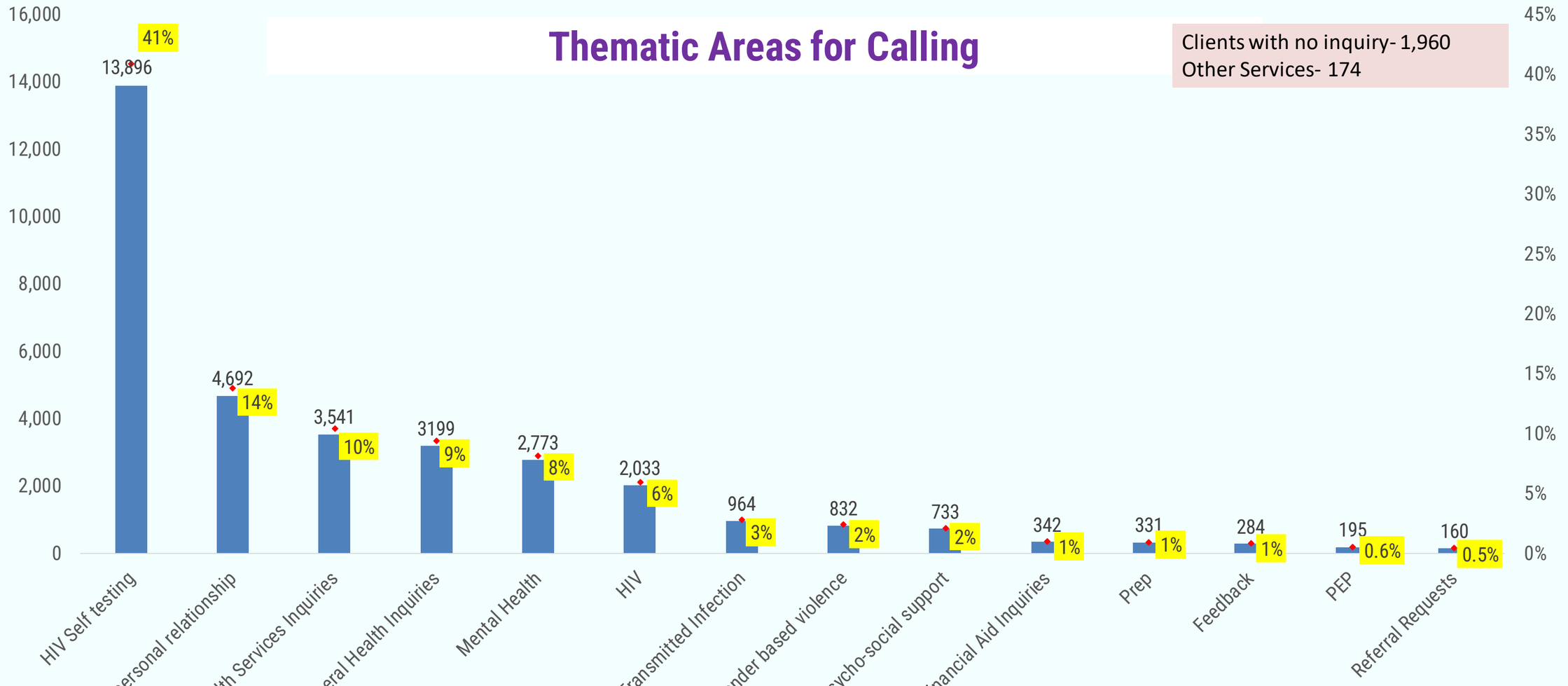
Barriers	Digital Solution
Stigma – Hesitance to seek traditional mental health services	More discreet and private means of accessing support, reducing the fear of judgment
Accessibility - Geographical distance, transportation issues, and long wait times are common barriers to accessing mental health services.	Digital technologies can bridge this gap by providing remote access to services, allowing adolescents to receive support regardless of their location.
Cost - Traditional mental health services can be costly, making them inaccessible to many adolescents	Digital health technologies offer more affordable alternatives, such as mobile apps or online counseling services, often at reduced or no cost.
Knowledge Gap - Adolescents may lack awareness of available mental health services or feel uncertain about how to access them.	Digital platforms can disseminate information about mental health resources empowering adolescents to make informed decisions about their mental well-being.
Availability of mental health services - there is not a wide range of mental health services	Digital platforms allows for quick linkage to services needed beyond

Call Centre services per County (Calls): 2018 to date

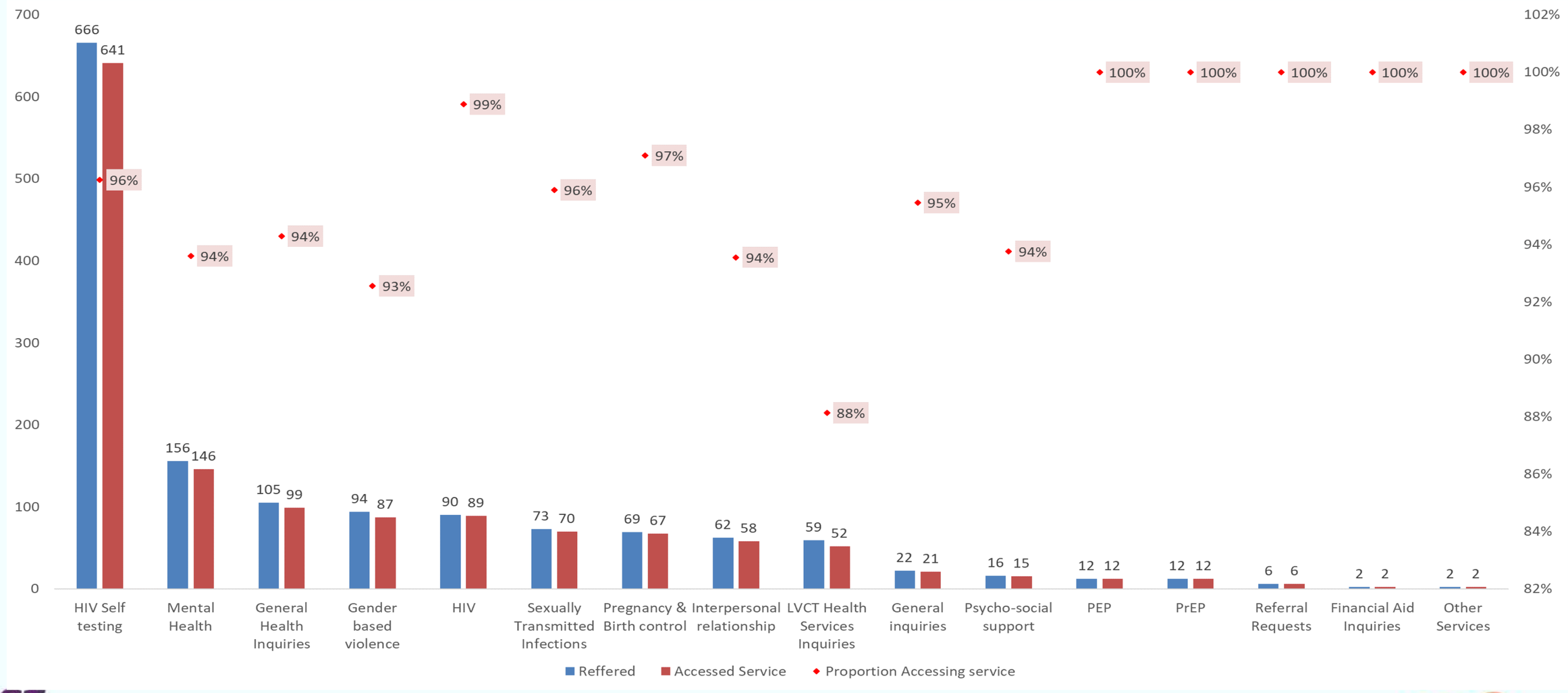


Thematic Areas for Calling

Clients with no inquiry- 1,960
Other Services- 174



Number of Clients Referred & Accessed service
N=1,465



Opportunities for Digital Health Technologies

- **Call in centers –** For immediate support, guidance, and resources to young people in crisis or in need of mental health assistance.
- **Teletherapy and Telepsychiatry:** Virtual therapy sessions can be conducted through video calls to overcome geographical barriers and provide adolescents with access to mental health professionals from the comfort of their homes.
- **Mobile Apps and Online Platforms:** Mobile apps and online platforms offering mental health support, ranging from self-help tools and educational resources to peer support networks and therapy sessions.
- **Anonymous Support:** Some digital platforms allow adolescents to seek help anonymously, which can reduce the fear of stigma and encourage them to reach out for support.
- **Social media platforms:** Different social media platforms share a variety of mental health information
- **Collaboration between digital platforms and healthcare providers** can ensure continuity of care and better outcomes for adolescents. Digital health technologies should complement traditional mental health services rather than replace them.

Considerations for digital mental health services

Grounded in **evidence-based practices** and undergo rigorous evaluation to ensure effectiveness and safety.

User-Centered Design: Designing digital platforms with input from adolescents ensures that the tools are engaging, intuitive, and culturally relevant. User feedback should be actively solicited and incorporated into ongoing development efforts.

Protecting the **privacy and confidentiality of adolescents' mental health information** is paramount.

Adhere to security standards and privacy regulations.

Collaborative Care: Digital mental health interventions should be integrated into existing healthcare systems, facilitating seamless coordination and collaboration between digital platforms, primary care providers, and mental health professionals.

Conclusion

1

Digital health technologies hold immense promise for improving adolescents' access to mental health services by **addressing barriers, leveraging opportunities, and implementing best practices**.

2

By embracing innovation and collaboration, stakeholders can **harness the full potential of digital solutions** to support adolescents' mental well-being effectively.

3

Integrating mental health services into HIV care is essential for **addressing the complex needs of individuals living with HIV/AIDS**. By providing holistic support that addresses both physical and psychological health, integrated care models can improve treatment adherence, quality of life, and overall well-being for this population.

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Thank you

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