

# KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS ON SOUTH AFRICA'S NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE (NHI)



## NHI STUDY FEEDBACK

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# OUTLINE



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# WHY A SURVEY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS?



- South Africa aims to achieve Universal Health Coverage by providing equitable, high-quality, and affordable healthcare for all through the NHI<sup>1</sup>.
- Healthcare professionals are essential for the successful implementation of the NHI, as their knowledge, attitudes, and engagement directly influence health system readiness and performance<sup>2</sup>.
- There is currently no national study assessing knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions across all categories of healthcare professionals, limiting understanding of workforce perspectives on NHI.



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# WHY IS THIS SURVEY IMPORTANT



## Aim

Describe healthcare professionals' knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions of NHI as the chosen route to UHC, to inform a national NHI communication strategy.

## Objectives

- Assess HCPs' knowledge of NHI principles, objectives, and operations.
- Determine HCPs' attitudes towards NHI as the path to UHC.
- Explore HCPs' perceptions of NHI implementation and its potential impact on service delivery.
- Identify socio-demographic and professional factors linked to knowledge and attitudes about NHI.



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# HOW WAS THIS STUDY CARRIED OUT?



## METHODS

**Study Design:** Descriptive cross-sectional survey of HCPs across all nine provinces.

**Population:** All registered healthcare professionals and undergraduate medical students in South Africa

**Data Collection:** Online structured questionnaire distributed via regulatory bodies and medical schools.

**Sample Size:** Target  $\geq 1,537$ ; final  $n = 2,394$ .

**Analysis:** Descriptive statistics, scoring of knowledge/attitudes, logistic regression for associated factors.

**Ethics:** SAMAREC approval; voluntary, anonymous participation; informed consent obtained



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# WHAT DID WE FIND?



## Socio-demographic Characteristics

- A total of **2,394 healthcare professionals** participated in the survey.
- Most respondents were between **31–50 years old (52.5%)**, and the majority were **female (72.4%)**.
- **Nurses** formed the largest professional group (**58.1%**).
- Almost half of respondents worked in the **private sector (48.8%)** compared to **35% in the public sector**. The outstanding 16.2% were either in non-clinical settings such as academics or various industries such as pharmaceuticals.
- The **racial distribution was similar** between Black (45.3%) and White (40.9%) respondents, with other groups representing 13.8%.
- Provincial representation was highest in **Gauteng (37.7%)**, followed by Western Cape (17.1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (14.3%).



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# BEHOLD THE RESULTS



79.8%

of respondents correctly recognised that the **NHI Fund** aims to **create a unified financial source** for both **private and public healthcare providers**



Correctly Identified Key Funding Sources:

Personal Income Tax **76.0%**

Public Health Budget **60.6%**

Less Often Identified:

Medical Schemes Fees Tax Credits **39.1%**

Surcharge on Income Tax **36.3%**



Correctly Stated NHI Fund Governance:

NHI Board **57.2%**

20.1%

Minister  
Portfolio  
Committee

**33.9%** Incorrect  
Treasury **X**

86.4%

**86.4%** correctly stated that **medical aids** will cover benefits not included in the NHI Fund benefit package



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# RESULTS



85.6%

85.6% correctly said NHI entails entering into agreements with public and private hospitals, 73.7% correctly said there will still be private practitioners and healthcare services



90.6%

90.6% correctly stated OHSC is responsible for ensuring health facilities meet set standards



72.4%

72.4% correctly stated FALSE to that NHI will tell providers where to work irrespective of current workplace



84.1%

84.1% correctly stated NHI webpage is the place to find updated info



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# RESULTS

## Knowledge: Descriptive Findings



### Common Misconceptions about NHI

40.7%



thought NHI would be a  
**National Government Component**

30.7%



believed **State Owned Enterprise**  
(like Transnet)

Only 14.7%



correctly identified it as a  
**Schedule 3A Entity**



### Key Misconceptions Identified



26.3%

thought **private healthcare** would  
**cease** under NHI.



27.6%

believed they would **lose control**  
over **where they work**.



51.8%

thought they **could not choose**  
whether to contract with NHI.



45.6%

thought users would have **no choice**  
in using NHI-funded services.



**Clear communication** is needed to correct misconceptions and **build trust in the NHI**.

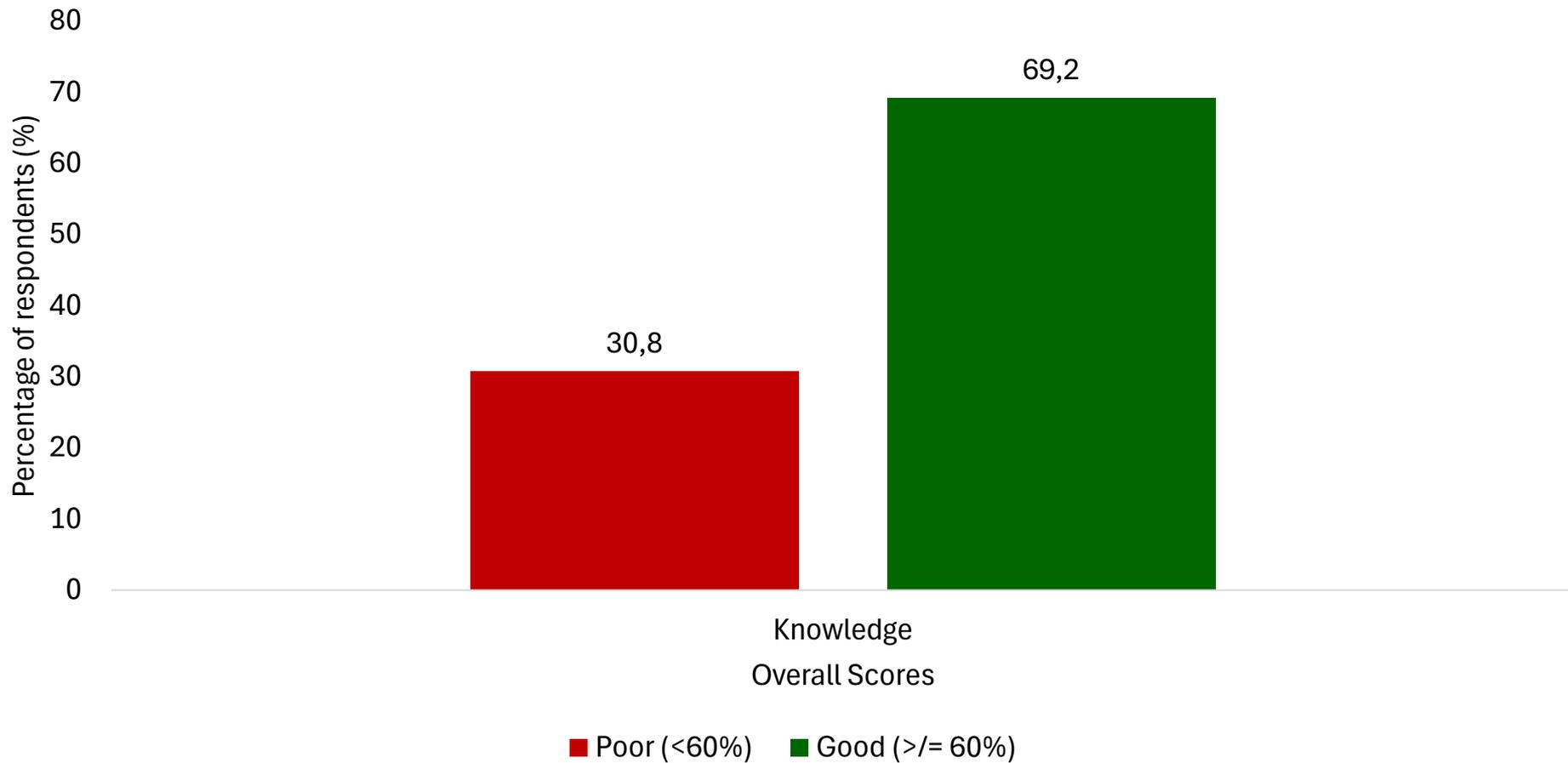


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# RESULTS: Knowledge Scores



# RESULTS: Knowledge



Table 1: Factors associated with good knowledge of NHI among healthcare professionals in South Africa

Characteristic	Reference	Unadjusted OR	95% CI	p-value	Adjusted OR	95% CI	p-value
<b>Age &gt;70</b>	18-30 years	1.89	0.99 – 3.58	0.05	<b>2.61</b>	1.15 – 5.19	<b>0.02</b>
<b>Sex: Female</b>	Male	0.72	0.56 – 0.88	<b>0.001</b>	–	–	–
<b>Ethnicity: Coloured</b>	Indian/Asian	1.63	1.00 – 2.64	0.04	1.52	0.89 – 2.58	0.12
<b>Current role: Pharmacist</b>	Academia/ Research	1.61	0.87 – 2.90	0.12	<b>1.94</b>	1.00 – 3.74	<b>0.04</b>
<b>Province: Eastern Cape</b>	Gauteng	1.35	0.94 – 1.93	0.09	1.37	0.94 – 1.99	0.09
<b>Province: Free State</b>	Gauteng	1.60	1.02 – 2.52	0.04	<b>1.58</b>	1.00 – 2.51	<b>0.04</b>
<b>Province: Limpopo</b>	Gauteng	0.73	0.49 – 1.09	0.13	0.70	0.47 – 1.06	0.10

**Good knowledge was associated with older age (>70yrs);  
Pharmacists and HCP living in the Free State province**

# RESULTS: Perceptions



Healthcare professionals who would **emigrate** if NHI is implemented: **32.7%**  
Healthcare professionals willing to **relocate** their practices to **underserved areas**:

- **41.1%** expressed willingness, and 46.3% unwillingness
- Students (75%) and nurses (49,9%) most willing.

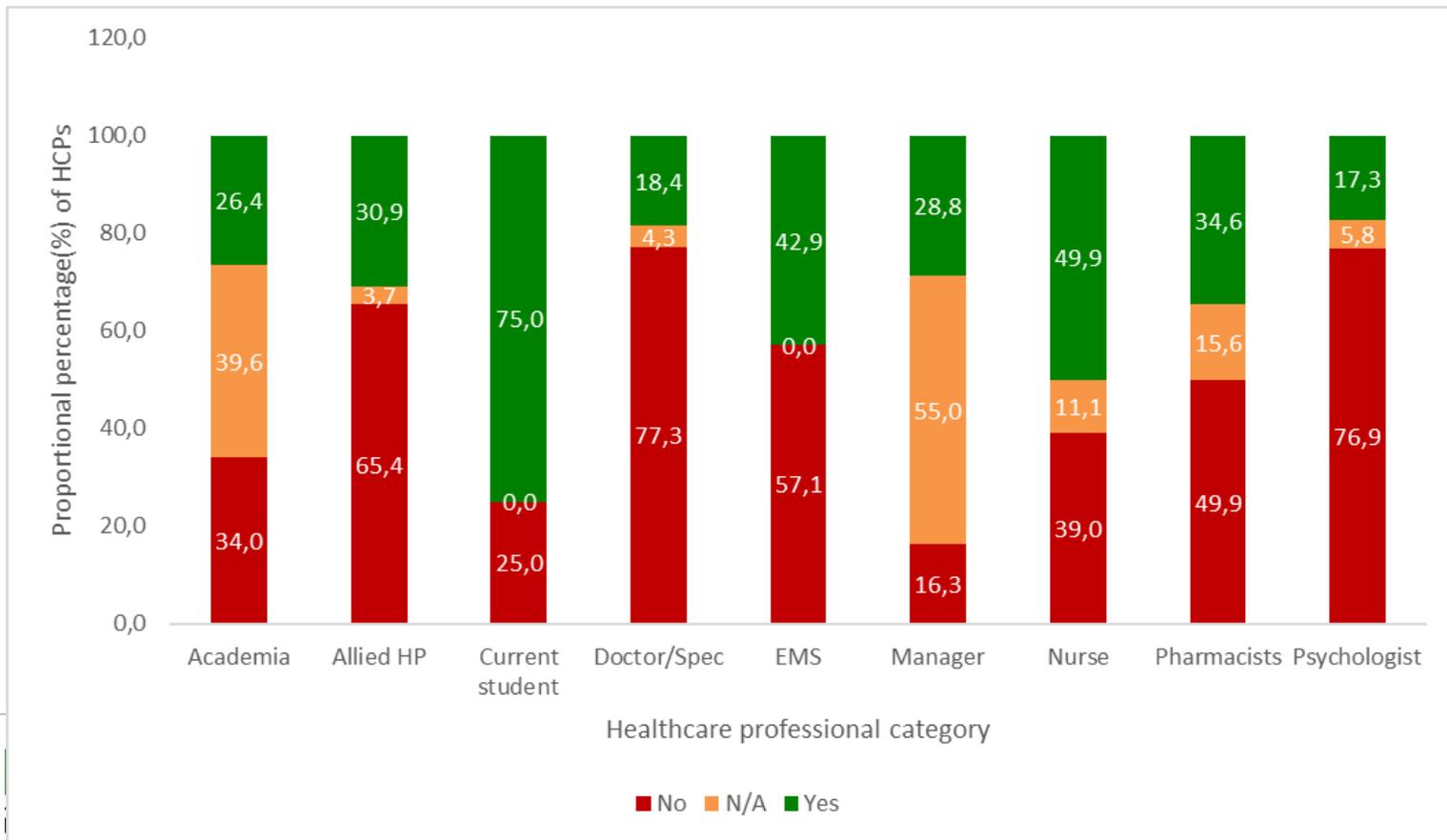


Figure 4: Willingness of HCP to move to underserved areas in South Africa

# DISCUSSION



## *Knowledge*

- Higher knowledge in older age groups may be related to **longer exposure to policy reforms and leadership roles**<sup>3</sup>.
- Higher knowledge in rural provinces may be related to **targeted outreach and training** in these areas and the greater reliance on public sector systems<sup>4</sup> (e.g., financing, regulation, service delivery)



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# DISCUSSION



## *Perceptions*

- Evidence shows that willingness to move to underserved areas is related to **training, background, and community integration**. However, to translate willingness into sustainable action, retention strategies must be developed<sup>9</sup>.
- An unwillingness to relocate is related to **safety, working conditions, and limited opportunities** for professional development<sup>10</sup>.
- The number of HCP who report that they would emigrate is lower than that proposed by media narratives and is associated with NHI-linked uncertainty.



# CONCLUSION



HCPs show good knowledge of the NHI but limited understanding of operational and governance aspects. Although there was a low number of HCPs with positive attitudes, key demographic and professional factors can inform targeted communication strategies. Encouragingly, 41.1% of HCPs are willing to work in underserved areas.

Successful NHI implementation depends on a well-informed, supported, and engaged workforce, with open communication and transparency essential for achieving Universal Health Coverage.



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# RECOMMENDATIONS



- 1. Implement targeted educational interventions:**  
Address knowledge gaps among specific HCP groups
- 2. Strengthen continuous professional development:**  
Embed NHI content into pre-service training with practical exposure and regular updates
- 3. Adopt structured change management approaches:**  
Support staff readiness and adaptability during NHI transition

- 4. Leverage local and international best practices:**  
Learn from provinces and countries with successful engagement strategies.
- 5. Target interventions to improve rural equity:** Build multidisciplinary teams willing to serve in underserved areas and support them through telemedicine, AI and digital health platforms.
- 6. Promote ongoing research and engagement:** Regularly assess knowledge, attitudes, and barriers to inform implementation.



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