



## SOUTH AFRICA RAPID ASSESSMENT OF ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (ASRHR)

JANUARY 2022



Performance event on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.

Photo: Gender Links

South Africa is making progress in delivering Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Services (ASRHR) services to its youth but there are still gaps to be addressed. Over half (53%) of young people said they received services without their parent's presence. Youth rate confidentiality and quality of service in South Africa high. However, after-hours' services are generally satisfactory. Youth in urban centres are better served than those in rural areas.

These are among the findings of the ASRHR Rapid assessment undertaken in Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe from November 2019 to December 2020. The research aims to strengthen youth-led and focused efforts to promote ASRHR through gender and youth responsive local

governance. Overall, the study included 13,395 young people between ages 10 and 19 (52% female and 48% male). In South Africa, 2,282 youth participated in the survey (52% female and 48% male). Gender Links South Africa conducted the study in 29 Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government - Blouberg, Brandwag, D'Almeida, Dana Bay, Emfuleni, Friemersheim, Great Brak, Hartenbos, Herbertsdale, Joburg City-Orange Farm-Region G, Joburg City-Soweto-Region D, Joe Slovo, Kwanonqaba, Lepelle Nkumpi, Midvaal, Mogale City, Molemole, Mossel Bay, Polokwane, Sonskyn Valley, eThekwini Ward 101, eThekwini Ward 11, eThekwini Ward 26, eThekwini Ward 31, eThekwini Ward 34, eThekwini Ward 68, eThekwini Ward 98 (Umkomaas), eThekwini Ward 98 (Umnini)<sup>1</sup>. This pamphlet should be read together with the detailed report of the eight country study that includes the objectives, methodology and recommendations.

<sup>1</sup> For this report, eThekwini Ward 98, is differentiated by the name of the clinic in parenthesis.

## KEY DATA FROM THE RAPID ASSESSMENT OF ASRHR SERVICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

| Indicator   | Region | South Africa | Blouberg | Brandwag | D'Almeida | Dana Bay | Emfuleni | Friemersheim | Great Brak | Hartenbos |
|---|--------|--------------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|--------------|------------|-----------|
| Total sample  | 13 395 | 2 282        | 173      | 45       | 40        | 40       | 84       | 47           | 40         | 42        |
| % female  | 52%    | 52%          | 49%      | 56%      | 40%       | 50%      | 44%      | 47%          | 50%        | 55%       |
| % gender non-conforming                                 | 0.3%   | 0%           | 1%       | 0%       | 0%        | 0%       | 1%       | 0%           | 0%         | 0%        |
| % male  | 48%    | 48%          | 50%      | 44%      | 60%       | 50%      | 55%      | 53%          | 50%        | 45%       |
| <b>Logistic information on health facilities</b>        |        |              |          |          |           |          |          |              |            |           |
| Health facility 10km from your home %                   | 71%    | 76%          | 46%      | 100%     | 100%      | 88%      | 94%      | 83%          | 68%        | 60%       |
| The facility opens after school? %                      | 57%    | 86%          | 89%      | 98%      | 100%      | 90%      | 99%      | 100%         | 95%        | 29%       |
| The facility opens on weekends? %                       | 62%    | 44%          | 69%      | 0%       | 0%        | 0%       | 27%      | 2%           | 3%         | 0%        |
| Comfortable waiting and consultation area? %            | 82%    | 79%          | 95%      | 89%      | 100%      | 83%      | 70%      | 34%          | 65%        | 93%       |
| Does the facility charge a fee? %                       | 29%    | 0%           | 0%       | 0%       | 0%        | 0%       | 0%       | 0%           | 0%         | 0%        |
| Average fee in USD                                      | \$2    | None         | None     | None     | None      | None     | None     | None         | None       | None      |
| <b>Quality of care</b>                                  |        |              |          |          |           |          |          |              |            |           |
| Peer counsellors available %                            | 53%    | 65%          | 99%      | 24%      | 20%       | 74%      | 85%      | 30%          | 10%        | 95%       |
| Young people treated with respect %                     | 89%    | 88%          | 99%      | 98%      | 100%      | 97%      | 89%      | 94%          | 88%        | 100%      |
| Young people treated without parent present %           | 58%    | 53%          | 30%      | 47%      | 93%       | 50%      | 44%      | 21%          | 38%        | 43%       |
| Young people have privacy %                             | 85%    | 87%          | 87%      | 84%      | 100%      | 93%      | 87%      | 85%          | 80%        | 100%      |
| Young people have confidentiality %                     | 89%    | 89%          | 97%      | 93%      | 100%      | 97%      | 90%      | 83%          | 83%        | 100%      |
| Sufficient time with young people %                     | 75%    | 81%          | 87%      | 84%      | 100%      | 90%      | 93%      | 62%          | 75%        | 100%      |
| Appropriate information %                               | 74%    | 84%          | 95%      | 36%      | 100%      | 87%      | 92%      | 83%          | 70%        | 95%       |
| <b>Sexual and reproductive health services (%)</b>      |        |              |          |          |           |          |          |              |            |           |
| <b>Maternal health</b>                                  |        |              |          |          |           |          |          |              |            |           |
| % young people who requested contraceptives             | 31%    | 42%          | 80%      | 16%      | 46%       | 30%      | 68%      | 37%          | 15%        | 60%       |
| % requested contraceptives that received contraceptives | 79%    | 90%          | 95%      | 86%      | 94%       | 92%      | 87%      | 100%         | 83%        | 83%       |
| % young women requested a pregnancy test                | 29%    | 36%          | 90%      | 0%       | 33%       | 0%       | 37%      | 0%           | 0%         |           |
| % young women who received a pregnancy test             | 70%    | 88%          | 96%      |          | 100%      |          | 64%      |              |            | 0%        |
| % young women who were pregnant                         | 9%     | 16%          | 29%      | 0%       | 0%        | 0%       | 16%      | 0%           | 0%         | 0%        |
| <b>Menstrual health</b>                                 |        |              |          |          |           |          |          |              |            |           |
| % young women who requested pads                        | 14%    | 30%          | 78%      | 10%      | 25%       | 21%      | 43%      | 35%          | 38%        | 7%        |
| % of those who requested pads that received pads        | 64%    | 87%          | 100%     | 0%       | 0%        | 100%     | 92%      | 100%         | 0%         | 100%      |
| <b>HIV and AIDS and STI</b>                             |        |              |          |          |           |          |          |              |            |           |
| % young men who requested male circumcision             | 40%    | 41%          | 86%      | 0%       | 47%       | 5%       | 42%      | 0%           | 0%         | 0%        |
| % of those who requested male circumcision received     | 87%    | 93%          | 99%      |          | 88%       | 100%     | 88%      |              |            |           |
| % who requested HIV test                                | 45%    | 46%          | 98%      | 11%      | 44%       | 3%       | 40%      | 24%          | 18%        | 50%       |
| % of who received HIV test                              | 83%    | 92%          | 85%      | 100%     | 94%       | 100%     | 72%      | 90%          | 100%       | 100%      |
| % who requested STI test                                | 17%    | 31%          | 94%      | 9%       | 21%       | 5%       | 17%      | 0%           | 5%         | 41%       |
| % who requested who received STI test                   | 83%    | 89%          | 89%      | 100%     | 100%      | 100%     | 91%      |              | 50%        | 100%      |
| % who requested anti-retrovirals (ARVs)                 | 6%     | 14%          | 42%      | 0%       | 0%        | 0%       | 12%      | 0%           | 0%         | 7%        |
| % who requested who received ARVs                       | 64%    | 80%          | 81%      |          |           |          | 75%      |              |            |           |

| Indicator   | Herbertsdale | Orange Farm | Soweto | Joe Slovo | Kwanonqaba | Lepelle Nkumpi | Midvaal | Mogale City | MoleMole | Mossel Bay |
|---|--------------|-------------|--------|-----------|------------|----------------|---------|-------------|----------|------------|
| Total sample  | 40           | 128         | 82     | 40        | 40         | 132            | 122     | 121         | 239      | 40         |
| % female  | 50%          | 53%         | 52%    | 50%       | 50%        | 74%            | 50%     | 50%         | 51%      | 50%        |
| % gender non-conforming                                 | 0%           | 1%          | 0%     | 0%        | 0%         | 0%             | 0%      | 0%          | 0%       | 0%         |
| % male  | 50%          | 46%         | 48%    | 50%       | 50%        | 26%            | 50%     | 50%         | 49%      | 50%        |
| <b>Logistic information on health facilities</b>        |              |             |        |           |            |                |         |             |          |            |
| Health facility 10km from your home %                   | 100%         | 79%         | 100%   | 80%       | 85%        | 75%            | 96%     | 64%         | 73%      | 55%        |
| The facility opens after school? %                      | 98%          | 98%         | 99%    | 93%       | 90%        | 98%            | 95%     | 87%         | 97%      | 93%        |
| The facility opens on weekends? %                       | 3%           | 30%         | 100%   | 5%        | 13%        | 98%            | 34%     | 29%         | 97%      | 13%        |
| Comfortable waiting and consultation area? %            | 100%         | 80%         | 90%    | 73%       | 88%        | 99%            | 78%     | 86%         | 78%      | 69%        |
| Does the facility charge a fee? %                       | 0%           | 0%          | 0%     | 0%        | 0%         | 0%             | 0%      | 0%          | 0%       | 0%         |
| Average fee in USD                                      | None         | None        | None   | None      | None       | None           | None    | None        | None     | None       |
| <b>Quality of care</b>                                  |              |             |        |           |            |                |         |             |          |            |
| Peer counsellors available %                            | 100%         | 78%         | 11%    | 92%       | 95%        | 83%            | 55%     | 42%         | 64%      | 65%        |
| Young people treated with respect %                     | 100%         | 89%         | 84%    | 98%       | 100%       | 99%            | 74%     | 91%         | 77%      | 92%        |
| Young people treated without parent present %           | 90%          | 52%         | 35%    | 8%        | 0%         | 36%            | 75%     | 48%         | 64%      | 18%        |
| Young people have privacy %                             | 98%          | 88%         | 93%    | 93%       | 98%        | 99%            | 87%     | 95%         | 83%      | 90%        |
| Young people have confidentiality %                     | 93%          | 87%         | 91%    | 95%       | 100%       | 99%            | 87%     | 90%         | 85%      | 95%        |
| Sufficient time with young people %                     | 100%         | 83%         | 73%    | 93%       | 98%        | 92%            | 69%     | 85%         | 84%      | 92%        |
| Appropriate information %                               | 100%         | 87%         | 83%    | 88%       | 100%       | 99%            | 76%     | 83%         | 89%      | 92%        |
| <b>Sexual and reproductive health services (%)</b>      |              |             |        |           |            |                |         |             |          |            |
| <b>Maternal health</b>                                  |              |             |        |           |            |                |         |             |          |            |
| % young people who requested contraceptives             | 35%          | 30%         | 10%    | 54%       | 43%        | 80%            | 27%     | 34%         | 44%      | 27%        |
| % requested contraceptives that received contraceptives | 100%         | 94%         | 75%    | 74%       | 76%        | 88%            | 94%     | 97%         | 91%      | 90%        |
| % young women requested a pregnancy test                | 17%          | 52%         | 28%    | 67%       | 50%        | 78%            | 31%     | 29%         | 34%      | 5%         |
| % young women who received a pregnancy test             | 0%           | 100%        | 83%    | 80%       | 70%        | 91%            | 95%     | 88%         | 94%      | 100%       |
| % young women who were pregnant                         | 0%           | 23%         | 2%     | 19%       | 39%        | 51%            | 17%     | 15%         | 18%      | 5%         |
| <b>Menstrual health</b>                                 |              |             |        |           |            |                |         |             |          |            |
| % young women who requested pads                        | 40%          | 11%         | 5%     | 71%       | 47%        | 76%            | 16%     | 16%         | 35%      | 23%        |
| % of those who requested pads that received pads        | 0%           | 43%         | 0%     | 100%      | 100%       | 92%            | 78%     | 50%         | 100%     | 100%       |
| <b>HIV and AIDS and STI</b>                             |              |             |        |           |            |                |         |             |          |            |
| % young men who requested male circumcision             | 0%           | 50%         | 95%    | 53%       | 55%        | 97%            | 52%     | 58%         | 36%      | 16%        |
| % of those who requested male circumcision received     |              | 73%         | 86%    | 100%      | 100%       | 88%            | 90%     | 100%        | 97%      | 100%       |
| % who requested HIV test                                | 40%          | 51%         | 27%    | 77%       | 66%        | 87%            | 40%     | 37%         | 38%      | 13%        |
| % of who received HIV test                              | 93%          | 92%         | 86%    | 100%      | 100%       | 77%            | 96%     | 100%        | 99%      | 100%       |
| % who requested STI test                                | 4%           | 39%         | 10%    | 58%       | 47%        | 82%            | 25%     | 21%         | 34%      | 8%         |
| % who requested who received STI test                   | 100%         | 94%         | 88%    | 100%      | 100%       | 69%            | 97%     | 100%        | 93%      | 100%       |
| % who requested anti-retrovirals (ARVs)                 | 8%           | 19%         | 0%     | 0%        | 4%         | 67%            | 4%      | 15%         | 4%       | 5%         |
| % who requested who received ARVs                       | 100%         | 88%         |        |           |            | 64%            | 100%    | 100%        | 100%     | 100%       |

| Indicator   | Polokwane | Sonskyn Valley | Thekwini Ward 101 | Thekwini Ward 11 | Thekwini Ward 26 | Thekwini Ward 31 | Thekwini Ward 34 | Thekwini Ward 68 | Thekwini Ward 88 | Thekwini Ward 98 (Umkomaas) | Thekwini Ward 98 (Umnini) |
|---|-----------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Total sample  | 319       | 39             | 83                | 41               | 39               | 41               | 40               | 41               | 55               | 47                          | 42                        |
| % female  | 53%       | 49%            | 49%               | 49%              | 51%              | 49%              | 50%              | 51%              | 55%              | 47%                         | 50%                       |
| % gender non-conforming                                 | 0%        | 0%             | 0%                | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%                          | 0%                        |
| % male  | 47%       | 51%            | 51%               | 51%              | 49%              | 51%              | 50%              | 49%              | 45%              | 53%                         | 50%                       |
| <b>Logistic information on health facilities</b>        |           |                |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                             |                           |
| Health facility 10km from your home %                   | 68%       | 87%            | 51%               | 100%             | 90%              | 100%             | 100%             | 83%              | 89%              | 60%                         | 38%                       |
| The facility opens after school? %                      | 86%       | 46%            | 48%               | 100%             | 92%              | 98%              | 100%             | 88%              | 93%              | 9%                          | 2%                        |
| The facility opens on weekends? %                       | 83%       | 0%             | 12%               | 0%               | 10%              | 0%               | 3%               | 0%               | 7%               | 2%                          | 0%                        |
| Comfortable waiting and consultation area? %            | 78%       | 97%            | 99%               | 15%              | 95%              | 100%             | 100%             | 41%              | 55%              | 21%                         | 0%                        |
| Does the facility charge a fee? %                       | 0%        | 0%             | 0%                | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%               | 0%                          | 0%                        |
| Average fee in USD                                      | None      | None           | None              | None             | None             | None             | None             | None             | None             | None                        | None                      |
| <b>Quality of care</b>                                  |           |                |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                             |                           |
| Peer counsellors available %                            | 70%       | 100%           | 86%               | 12%              | 67%              | 100%             | 100%             | 2%               | 93%              | 15%                         | 0%                        |
| Young people treated with respect %                     | 77%       | 100%           | 100%              | 68%              | 79%              | 100%             | 100%             | 73%              | 82%              | 85%                         | 90%                       |
| Young people treated without parent present %           | 54%       | 85%            | 66%               | 63%              | 49%              | 80%              | 78%              | 90%              | 75%              | 60%                         | 100%                      |
| Young people have privacy %                             | 78%       | 100%           | 100%              | 66%              | 82%              | 100%             | 100%             | 85%              | 71%              | 66%                         | 76%                       |
| Young people have confidentiality %                     | 78%       | 100%           | 100%              | 61%              | 82%              | 100%             | 100%             | 85%              | 84%              | 85%                         | 79%                       |
| Sufficient time with young people %                     | 66%       | 100%           | 87%               | 59%              | 77%              | 100%             | 100%             | 63%              | 69%              | 47%                         | 81%                       |
| Appropriate information %                               | 66%       | 100%           | 90%               | 68%              | 77%              | 100%             | 100%             | 78%              | 49%              | 85%                         | 81%                       |
| <b>Sexual and reproductive health services (%)</b>      |           |                |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                             |                           |
| <b>Maternal health</b>                                  |           |                |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                             |                           |
| % young people who requested contraceptives             | 45%       | 45%            | 22%               | 82%              | 80%              | 88%              | 80%              | 32%              | 10%              | 2%                          | 17%                       |
| % requested contraceptives that received contraceptives | 89%       | 94%            | 78%               | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%                        | 86%                       |
| % young women requested a pregnancy test                | 30%       | 0%             | 7%                | 100%             | 100%             | 0%               | 100%             | 14%              | 7%               | 14%                         | 5%                        |
| % young women who received a pregnancy test             | 70%       |                | 67%               | 100%             | 100%             | 50%              | 100%             | 0%               | 100%             | 100%                        | 100%                      |
| % young women who were pregnant                         | 2%        | 0%             | 7%                | 100%             | 33%              | 0%               | 33%              | 0%               | 14%              | 0%                          | 5%                        |
| <b>Menstrual health</b>                                 |           |                |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                             |                           |
| % young women who requested pads                        | 17%       | 40%            | 2%                | 0%               |                  |                  |                  | 5%               | 0%               | 0%                          | 0%                        |
| % of those who requested pads that received pads        | 71%       | 100%           | 100%              |                  |                  |                  |                  | 100%             |                  |                             |                           |
| <b>HIV and AIDS and STI</b>                             |           |                |                   |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                  |                             |                           |
| % young men who requested male circumcision             | 26%       | 16%            | 12%               | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 0%               | 0%               | 13%              | 20%                         | 10%                       |
| % of those who requested male circumcision received     | 100%      | 100%           | 80%               | 100%             | 67%              | 100%             |                  |                  | 100%             | 100%                        | 100%                      |
| % who requested HIV test                                | 25%       | 74%            | 69%               | 100%             | 100%             | 60%              | 100%             | 29%              | 44%              | 53%                         | 10%                       |
| % of who received HIV test                              | 96%       | 100%           | 98%               | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%                        | 100%                      |
| % who requested STI test                                | 14%       | 44%            | 5%                | 0%               | 100%             | 0%               | 100%             | 10%              | 2%               | 40%                         | 7%                        |
| % who requested who received STI test                   | 93%       | 100%           | 100%              |                  | 100%             |                  | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             | 100%                        | 100%                      |
| % who requested anti-retrovirals (ARVs)                 | 2%        | 0%             | 22%               | 100%             | 0%               | 60%              | 100%             | 15%              | 0%               | 9%                          | 0%                        |
| % who requested who received ARVs                       | 50%       |                | 100%              | 100%             |                  | 100%             | 100%             | 100%             |                  | 100%                        |                           |



## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT



Young people constitute 60% of the population of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), yet face the most challenges in accessing SRHR services particularly outside capital cities. Cultural, religious and other barriers to ASRHR services is reflected in high levels of teenage pregnancies; unsafe abortion; early marriages; GBV; and the resurgence of HIV and Aids, especially among young women.

Youth-led advocacy to challenge social and gender norms on ASRHR needs to be strengthened. Despite considerable progress since the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) 25 years ago, millions of people especially youth, and mostly disadvantaged youth and adolescents still lack access to ASRH information and services. South Africa has a stand-alone *National Adolescent and Youth Health Strategy 2016-2020* which is now dated.

## FINDINGS

### Logistic information on health facilities

The study found that 76% of youth have a health facility within 10 km of their home, compared to 71% in the study overall. However, less than half of the youth in Blouberg (46%) and 38% in eThekweni Ward 98 (Umnini) reported having a health facility within 10km of their homes. After-hours access to services especially on weekends

is also a challenge. In South Africa, 86% of youth (compared to 57% in the study overall) said they could access the facilities after school and 44% said they were able to access the facilities at weekends (compared to 62% in the study overall). Access to ASRHR services after-hours is generally satisfactory in both urban and rural councils. However, urban services are generally much more accessible than rural areas during weekends.

### Quality of care

Overall, South Africa scored well on quality of care. Fifty-three percent of the youth said they received services without a third party present compared to 58% in the study overall. The majority of the youth (88%) reported being treated with respect, compared to 89% in the study overall. Similarly, 89% of young people said they were treated confidentially, same findings with in the study overall. Sixty-five percent reported the presence of peer counsellors compared to 53% in the study overall. Eighty-one percent of youth said that the health worker spent sufficient time with them (compared to 75% in the study) and the majority 84% said they received appropriate information (compared to 74% in the study). These figures also vary widely across councils. For example, in Joe Slovo, only 8% of the youth reported being treated without a third party present. In eThekweni ward 88, only 2% of the respondents said they met with peer

counsellors. This suggests that there is still much to be done in standardising the quality of services.

### Sexual and reproductive health services

**Access to contraception:** In South Africa and in the eight countries where this study took place substantially less than one third (42% and 31% respectively) of the youth requested contraceptives. In eThekweni Ward 98 (Umkomaas), 2% and eThekweni Ward 88 (10%), Joburg City-Soweto-Region D (10%), Great Brak (15%) and Brandwag (16%), hardly any of the youth sought contraceptive services. This is a concern since access to contraception is a key objective of ASRHR services. Where these are not being accessed, the risk of teenage pregnancy, unsafe abortion, as well as HIV and AIDS, is higher. What is encouraging is that in South Africa (90% compared to 79% in the region) the youth who sought contraceptives received them. Nine councils (Friemersheim, Herbertsdale, eThekweni Ward 11, eThekweni Ward 26, eThekweni Ward 31, eThekweni Ward 34, eThekweni Ward 68, eThekweni Ward 98 (Umkomaas) registered a 100% positive response rate to requests by youth for contraceptives.



**Teenage pregnancies:** Over one third (36%) of the young women surveyed in South Africa requested a pregnancy test compared to 29% overall. Eighty-eight percent of those who asked in South Africa received a pregnancy test compared to 70% in the study overall. The response by council varied widely from overwhelmingly positive to no tests being administered by Herbertsdale, and eThekweni

Ward 88. Pregnancy testing is a critical component of SRHR services, especially in countries where this can be linked to safe abortion services. Sixteen percent of all the young women surveyed in South Africa reported being pregnant, compared to 9% in the study overall.



**Menstrual health:** South Africa has removed VAT on sanitary pads. A third 30% of the sample (compared to 14% in the study overall) asked for pads and the majority 87% (compared to 64% in the study overall) received pads. Providing free pads through clinics would be another route to ending period poverty.

### HIV and AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STI's)

Forty-six percent of the sample in South Africa requested an HIV test, compared to 45% in the survey overall. Given the very high prevalence of HIV in South Africa this is a concern. However, the 92% positive response rate to requests for HIV tests in South Africa (compared to 83% in the survey overall) shows that the health system is well geared for HIV testing. Similarly, although only 31% of the youth requested STI tests in South Africa (compared to 17% in the study overall), 89% of those who asked for the tests got them (compared to 83% in the study overall). At 41%, demand for male circumcision which has been shown to significantly reduce HIV and AIDS transmission is also low in South Africa and in the study overall (40%) with major variations between the localities. More awareness raising and work with men in required.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION** go to:  
<https://genderlinks.org.za/what-we-do/governance/local-action-for-voice-and-choice/>

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