

HIV Self-Testing National Survey Results: Knowledge, Access, Usability, Supports, and Barriers

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Working with Our National Partners



We are leading a national implementation science effort to reach those who are undiagnosed with HIV, and support linkages to care.

With the pending approval of 1st HIV self-test approval in Canada, it's important to understand the pragmatics of how HIV self-testing can be used as a new tool for reaching the undiagnosed and how to support people with linkages to care.

The engagement and support of front-line community based agencies across the country is key to ensuring HIV self-testing is accessible in ways for those who need it most.

This is the first survey of the front-line sector to examine the knowledge, acceptability, readiness, usability, and supports available for accessing HIV self-testing in Canada.

How did we reach people for the survey?

Our goal – recruit persons working in the front-line sector and from community-based organizations across Canada

Recruitment:

- ✓ Following our national HIV self-testing webinars - hosted August 5th, 11th and 13th, 2020 - we invited those who attended these the opportunity to complete an online survey on HIV self-testing
- ✓ We also sent out an invitation through our national REACH 3.0 network
- Participants given a link to complete the anonymous survey created in Qualtrics
- Data was collected between August 6th to September 11th, 2020
- Ethics approval obtained at St. Michael's Hospital and University of Toronto

What did we look at?

We surveyed people working at the frontlines in the following 4 main areas:



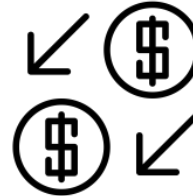
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Knowledge and
beliefs about
HIV self-testing



2

Client access,
linkage to care,
and supports



3

Cost, directives,
and policies for
HIV self-testing



4

Impact of
COVID-19 on
HIV testing and
other services

Who

Participated and where?

308 participants

55 were people living with HIV (17% of total)

Their roles

20% front-line workers

7% peer worker/navigator

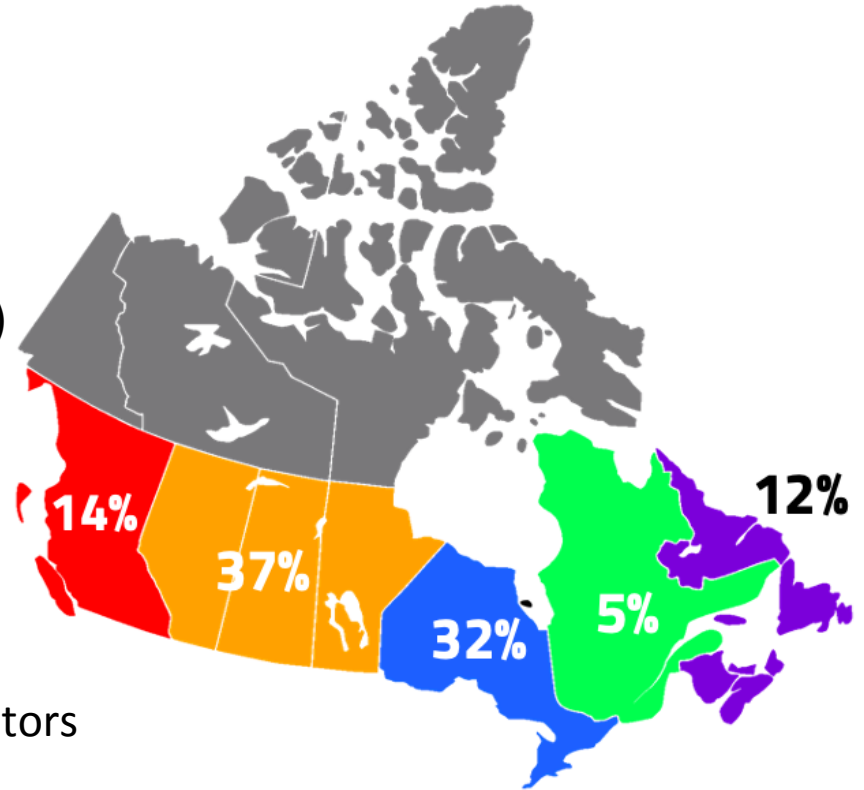
12% educators

26% healthcare providers/nurses

22% executive directors/managers/coordinators

8% researchers

4% worked in other areas



*n's = BC: 35, AB: 44, SK: 6, MB: 46, ON: 81, QC: 13, Atlantic provinces: 31; Territories and Northern Canada: 0

How much do people know about HIV self-testing in Canada?



32%

Are **well informed** about
HIV self-testing*

(57% indicated they were
“moderately informed”)

*lower reporting of being
“well informed” in Atlantic

How will HIV self-testing impact diagnosis rate?



32%

Are **well informed** about
HIV self-testing*
(57% “moderately
informed”)



93%

Indicated that
HIV self-testing will
increase diagnosis rate

*lower reporting of being
“well informed” in Atlantic

How important is HIV self-testing in Canada?



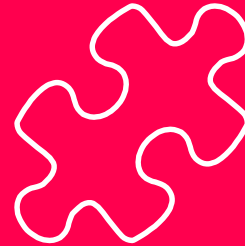
32%

Are **well informed** about
HIV self-testing*
(57% “moderately
informed”)



93%

Indicated that HIV self-
testing will **increase**
diagnosis rate



97%

Indicated HIV self-testing
will be an **important tool**
to end the HIV epidemic
in Canada

*lower reporting of being
“well informed” in Atlantic

Do we need a national HIV self-testing policy in Canada?



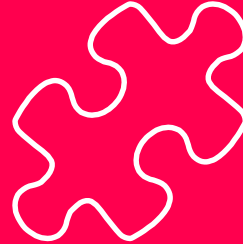
32%

Are **well informed** about HIV self-testing*
(57% indicated being “moderately informed”)



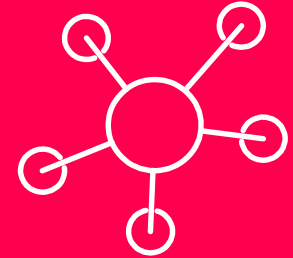
93%

Indicated that HIV self-testing will **increase diagnosis rate**



97%

Indicated HIV self-testing will be an **important tool to end the HIV epidemic in Canada**



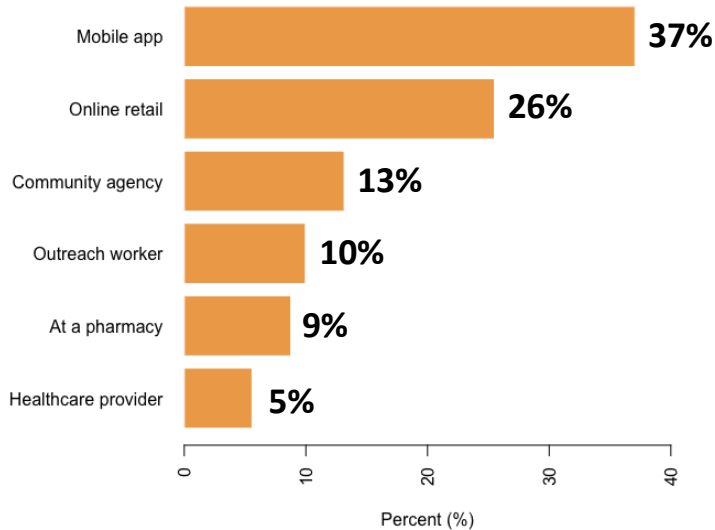
85%

Think a **national policy** will facilitate **access** to HIV self-testing

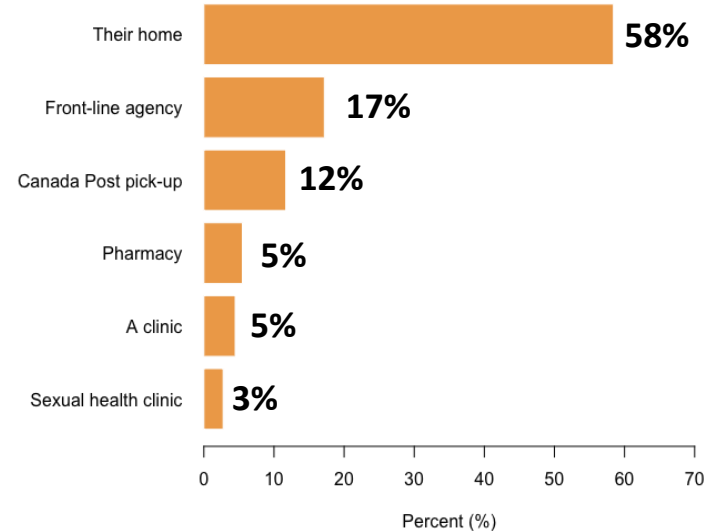
*lower reporting of being “well informed” in Atlantic

How do people want to access HIV self-testing?

Preference for **ORDERING** an HIV self-test



Preference for **DELIVERY** of HIV self-test



1. Mobile and online ordering are most preferred for ordering
2. Most clients are comfortable receiving self-tests at their home
3. 29% want to pick up their self-test: 1 in 6 want to pick up at CBAO, and 12% at neutral location

Client preference for HIV self-testing support

When respondents were asked about their clients' preferences ...



75%

“at least somewhat comfortable”
accessing support
and counselling online

*16% “very comfortable”



69%

Would likely seek
pre/post-test
counselling online



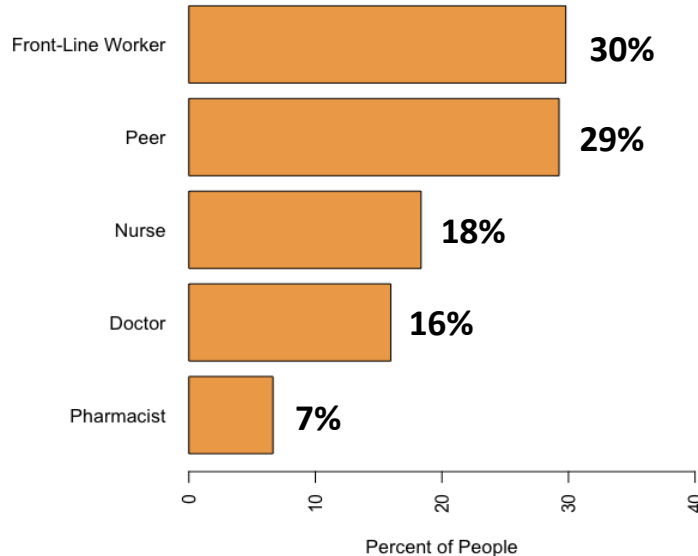
76%

Indicated a peer would
improve the
HIV self-testing experience

Comfort level for clients

Using technology & online supports to get linked to care?

Online telehealth platform for linkage to care



Clients most comfortable connecting with front-line workers or peers (59%) through a telehealth/online platform

NOTE: We found similar results when asking about connecting through **text messaging** or using **phone**

How many clients would like support the first time they use an HIV self-test?



62%

**Thought clients would like someone present
for the first time they use an
HIV self-test
(assisted testing)**

What should be offered along with HIV self-testing?

Respondents indicated that...



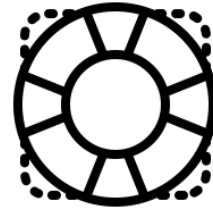
98%

Should offer **linkage to counselling and care**



94%

Should offer **prevention services like PrEP and PEP**

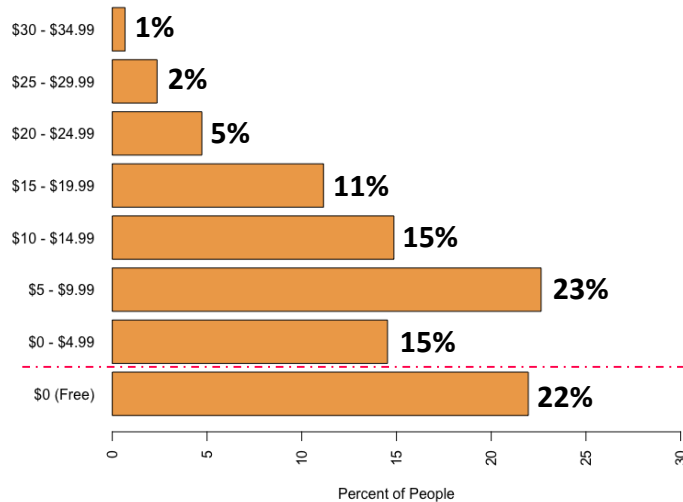


76%

Should offer **harm reduction services**

How much should HIV self-testing cost?

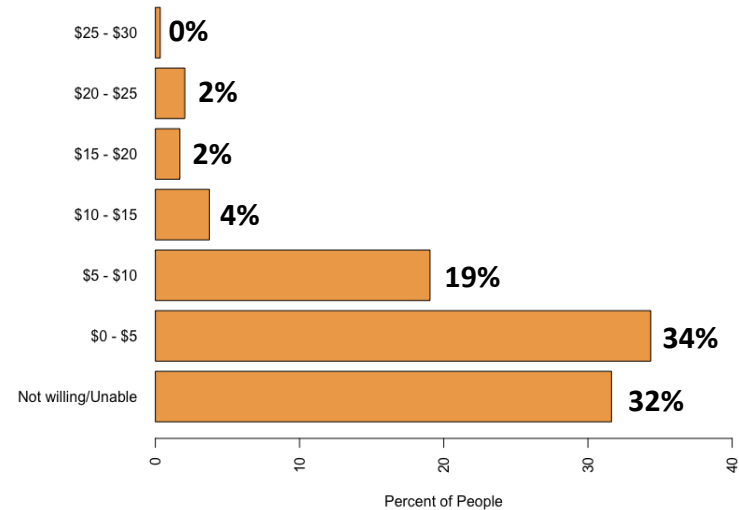
How much would clients spend?



Most participants (86%) thought HIV self-tests should cost under \$20

How much would clients contribute? ("pay it forward" model)

*If your client got an HIV self-test for free, how much would they be willing to contribute to support someone else to get tested?



Most clients (53%) would willing/able to contribute \$10 or less to support someone else getting tested

If HIV self-tests were available for free... participants felt



70%

Of their clients **would want to get an HIV self-test for free**

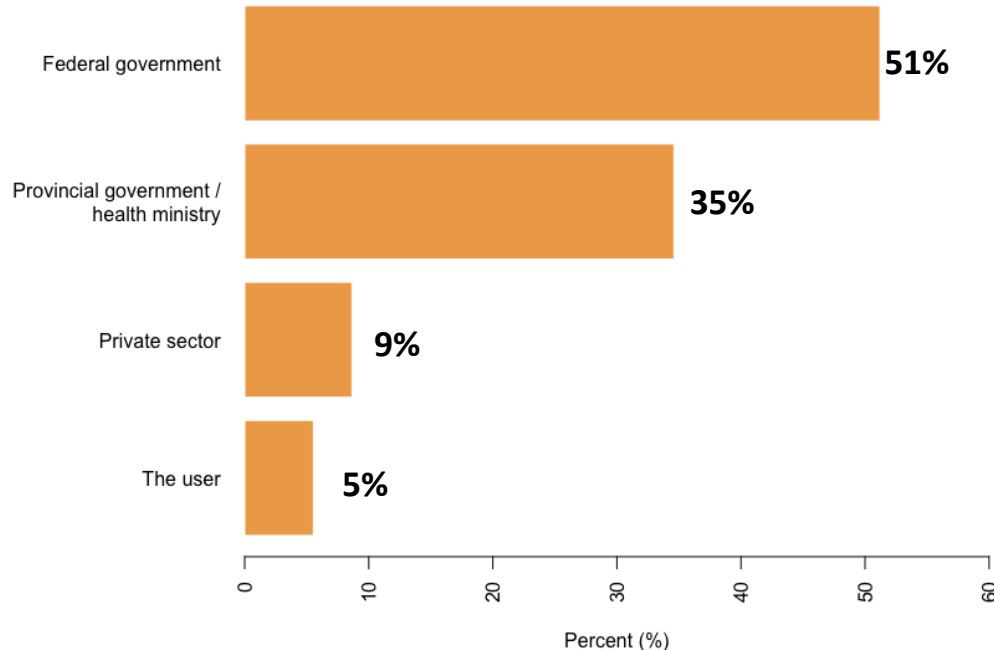
*median value



96%

Of their clients **would pass along** an HIV self-test to a friend, family member, or sexual partner

Who should pay for HIV self-testing?



- 86% indicated that the Federal and Provincial Government should pay for HIV self-tests
- Only 5% felt the user should pay for it

Are front-line organizations ready for HIV self-testing?

Many organizations are ready and willing to implement HIV self-testing



76%

Are **interested in offering**
HIV self-testing



59%

Are “somewhat ready” to
support HIV self-testing

*14% indicated they are “ready”

What are some barriers to HIV self-testing?

When respondents were asked...

45%

Indicated peer HIV point-of-care was not permitted at their agency

25%

Indicated lack of policies in place to know if staff can conduct and support HIV self-testing

23%

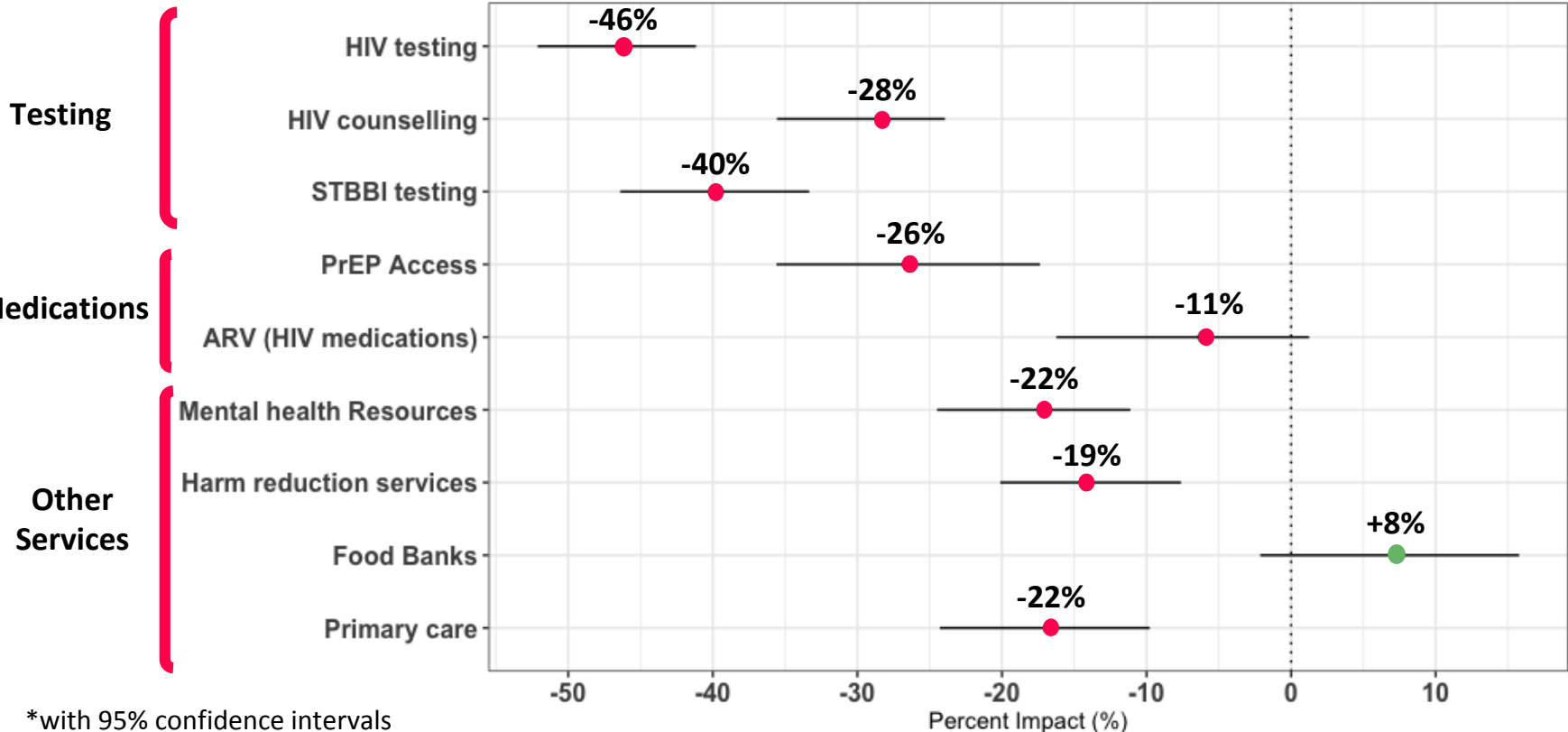
Indicated the lack of human resources or teaching staff

11%

Indicated lack of qualified testing staff

Lack of policy and other directives may be preventing HIV self-testing implementation at frontline organizations

Impact of COVID-19 on Access to Services



When asked about the importance of HIV self-testing kits during COVID-19...

70%

Indicated that availability and access to HIV self-testing will be “very important”

*And an additional 25% said it will be “important”

Conclusions

HIV self-testing is critical to reach and support those undiagnosed with HIV!



Strong support for mobile and online technology for HIV self-testing and linkage to care



A national policy is needed for HIV self-testing with resources to support those who need it most



There is strong support for community readiness and access to HIV self-testing



COVID-19 has negatively affected access to HIV/STBBI testing and health services



Questions & Discussion

Key messages about HIV testing

- HIV self-testing is effective, safe, confidential & convenient

This has been the missing tool in Canada to support reaching people who have HIV and don't know it – we currently lag behind many other countries (including all the G7 countries) when it comes to self-testing

- Getting linked to care and having access to treatment is critical, as is to educate those at higher risk on how to reduce the risk of infection
- Reaching those who are undiagnosed, linking them to care and treatment, and helping them get undetectable is an effective public health intervention
- Increased availability to HIV self-testing will significantly help us end the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Canada

Key messages about HIV testing, *cont'd*

- The INSTI HIV self-test is the first, fastest and only self-test for HIV to be approved in Canada – *results in 1 minute*
- Increasing HIV testing options and choice for all Canadians can help to “normalize” HIV testing and lower stigma associated with HIV
- Self-testing is an important option to have available during the current COVID-19 pandemic – access to testing in traditional settings such as healthcare clinics and community agencies has been severely negatively impacted

Background INSTI Clinical Trial HIV Self-Test

- Study initiated by REACH/MAP Centre from August 2019 to March 2020
- Study included 720 participants (intended users) including “high risk” population groups
- Measured performance of the self-test compared to a blood draw with a licensed 4th generation HIV antigen/antibody test completed in the lab

Findings

- *Accuracy of the self-test compared to results of HIV lab tests was > 99% - indicates an exceptionally high level of confidence in the self-test*
- *High usability ratings close to 100% for individual ease of use by those from diverse backgrounds and locations*
- *Over 95% of study participants indicated they would use the self-test again and recommend it to their partners, family and friends*

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