



**PERSONE LGBT  
SIEROPOSITIVE  
ONLUS**

# HIV Test: Which is You Best?

An Italian Survey on Testing Preferences among MSM

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## The survey

**Background:** HIV testing opportunities in Italy are frequently limited to the hospital setting. Experiences in other countries show that offering HIV testing and counseling services in other facilities could improve HIV testing uptake, reduce the proportion of late diagnosis especially in targeted populations and offer opportunities for better prevention interventions.

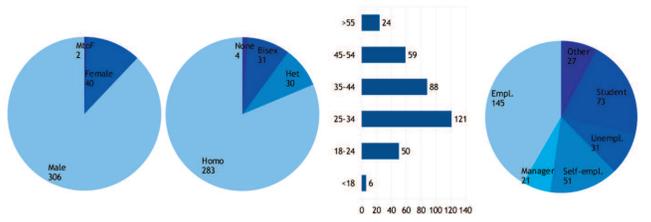
**Methods:** An internet-based survey was conducted between March 10 and April 3, 2014. The survey was promoted on Plus onlus social networks (Facebook, Twitter) and gay websites (plus-onlus.it, gay.it).

## General findings

### population characteristics

A total number of 348 questionnaires were collected. Responders were 88% male, 11% female, 1% transgender women. Most represented age groups were 25-34 (35%) and 35-44 (25%). Lombardia (20%), Emilia-Romagna (16%), Lazio (12%), Toscana (10%) and Veneto (10%) were the most represented regions. Most of responders identify themselves as homosexual (81%) or bisexual (9%).

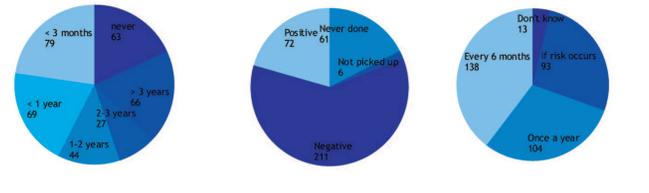
Gender	Sexual Orientation	Age	Job
Male 87,9% N=( 306 )	Homo 81,3% N=( 283 )	<18 1,7% N=( 6 )	Empl. 41,7% N=( 145 )
Female 11,5% N=( 40 )	Het 8,6% N=( 30 )	18-24 14,4% N=( 50 )	Manager 6,0% N=( 21 )
MtoF 0,6% N=( 2 )	Bisex 8,9% N=( 31 )	25-34 34,8% N=( 121 )	Self-empl. 14,7% N=( 51 )
FtoM 0,0% N=( 0 )	None 1,1% N=( 4 )	35-44 25,3% N=( 88 )	Unempl. 8,9% N=( 31 )
		45-54 17,0% N=( 59 )	Student 21,0% N=( 73 )
		>55 6,9% N=( 24 )	Other 7,8% N=( 27 )



### testing behaviour

Half or responders had an HIV test within 2 years (56%) while 18% never tested for HIV: among them, 39% had more than 2 sexual partners in the past year and 44% never used condoms or used them only sometimes.

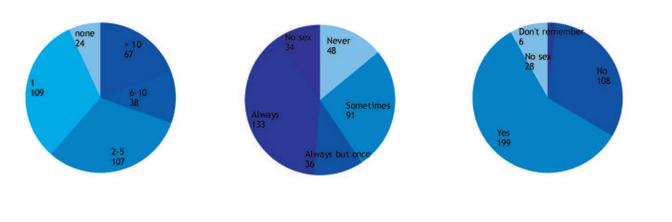
Last HIV Test	HIV Test results	How often should HIV test be done?
< 3 months 22,7% N=( 79 )	Positive 20,7% N=( 72 )	Every 6 months 39,7% N=( 138 )
< 1 year 19,8% N=( 69 )	Negative 60,6% N=( 211 )	Once a year 29,9% N=( 104 )
1-2 years 12,6% N=( 44 )	Not picked up 1,7% N=( 6 )	If risk occurs 26,7% N=( 93 )
2-3 years 7,8% N=( 27 )	Never done 17,5% N=( 61 )	Don't know 3,7% N=( 13 )
> 3 years 19,0% N=( 66 )		
never 18,1% N=( 63 )		



### sexual behaviour

Among all responders, 61% had more than 2 sexual partners in the past year, 32% had one, 7% none. Reported condom use in the past year was: always 39%, always but once 11%, sometimes 27%, never 14% (10% had no penetrative sexual intercourse).

N° of sexual partners in the past year	Condom use in penetrative sex in the past year	Condom use last time you had penetrative sex
none 6,9% N=( 24 )	No sex 9,8% N=( 34 )	No sex 8,0% N=( 28 )
1 31,3% N=( 109 )	Always 38,2% N=( 133 )	Yes 57,2% N=( 199 )
2-5 30,7% N=( 107 )	Always but once 10,3% N=( 36 )	No 31,0% N=( 108 )
6-10 10,9% N=( 38 )	Sometimes 26,1% N=( 91 )	Don't remember 1,7% N=( 6 )
> 10 19,3% N=( 67 )	Never 13,8% N=( 48 )	

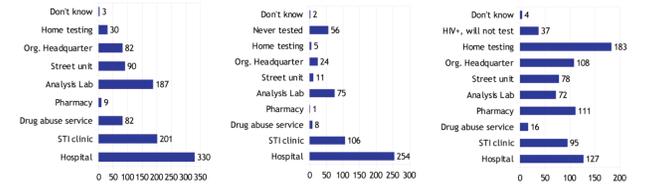


## Testing knowledge, experiences and preferences

### places for testing

Most known places to have an HIV test is the hospital (95%), STI clinic (58%) and chemical analysis laboratory (54%); most used places are hospital (73%), STI clinic (30%), laboratory (22%) while 5 responders reported having had a self-test at home. Preferred places where to have an HIV test is self-testing at home (53%), hospital (36%), pharmacy (32%) and headquarter of an organization (31%).

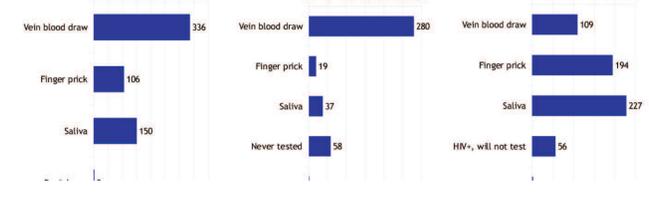
Which places for HIV testing do you know?	Which places for HIV testing did you use?	Which places for HIV testing would you like to use?
Hospital 94,8% N=( 330 )	Hospital 73,0% N=( 254 )	Hospital 36,5% N=( 127 )
STI clinic 57,8% N=( 201 )	STI clinic 30,5% N=( 106 )	STI clinic 27,3% N=( 95 )
Drug abuse service 23,6% N=( 82 )	Drug abuse service 2,3% N=( 8 )	Drug abuse service 4,6% N=( 16 )
Pharmacy 2,6% N=( 9 )	Pharmacy 0,3% N=( 1 )	Pharmacy 31,9% N=( 111 )
Analysis Lab 53,7% N=( 187 )	Analysis Lab 21,6% N=( 75 )	Analysis Lab 20,7% N=( 72 )
Street unit 25,9% N=( 90 )	Street unit 3,2% N=( 11 )	Street unit 22,4% N=( 78 )
Org. Headquarter 23,6% N=( 82 )	Org. Headquarter 6,9% N=( 24 )	Org. Headquarter 31,0% N=( 108 )
Home testing 8,6% N=( 30 )	Home testing 1,4% N=( 5 )	Home testing 52,6% N=( 183 )
Don't know 0,9% N=( 3 )	Never tested 16,1% N=( 56 )	HIV+, will not test 10,6% N=( 37 )
	Don't know 0,6% N=( 2 )	Don't know 1,1% N=( 4 )



### procedures for testing

Most known testing method is draw blood from vein (97%), which is also most used (80%) but the least preferred (31%) while saliva (65%) and finger prick (56%) are the preferred choices.

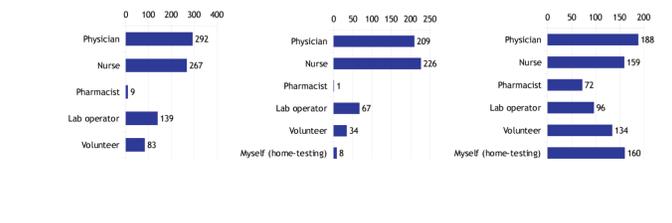
Which procedures for HIV testing do you know?	Which procedures for HIV testing did you use?	Which procedures for HIV testing would you like to use?
Vein blood draw 96,6% N=( 336 )	Vein blood draw 80,5% N=( 280 )	Vein blood draw 31,3% N=( 109 )
Finger prick 30,5% N=( 106 )	Finger prick 5,5% N=( 19 )	Finger prick 55,7% N=( 194 )
Saliva 43,1% N=( 150 )	Saliva 10,6% N=( 37 )	Saliva 65,2% N=( 227 )
Don't know 0,6% N=( 2 )	Never tested 16,7% N=( 58 )	HIV+, will not test 16,1% N=( 56 )
	Don't know 0,3% N=( 1 )	Don't know 0,6% N=( 2 )



### operator for testing

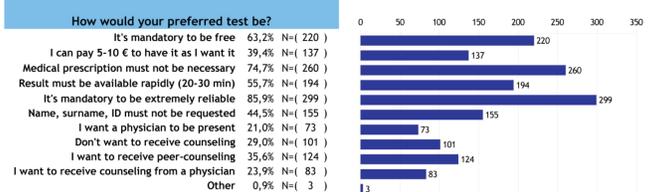
Most responders know that physicians (84%) and nurses (77%) are those who perform HIV tests and most of them had an HIV test with them (60% and 65% respectively). Physicians are the preferred operator (54%) followed by self-testing (46%), nurses (46%) and peer-volunteers (39%).

Which operator for HIV testing do you know?	Which operator for HIV testing did you use?	Which operator for HIV testing would you like to use?
Physician 83,9% N=( 292 )	Physician 60,1% N=( 209 )	Physician 54,0% N=( 188 )
Nurse 76,7% N=( 267 )	Nurse 64,9% N=( 226 )	Nurse 45,7% N=( 159 )
Pharmacist 2,6% N=( 9 )	Pharmacist 0,3% N=( 1 )	Pharmacist 20,7% N=( 72 )
Lab operator 39,9% N=( 139 )	Lab operator 19,3% N=( 67 )	Lab operator 27,6% N=( 96 )
Volunteer 23,9% N=( 83 )	Volunteer 9,8% N=( 34 )	Volunteer 38,5% N=( 134 )
Myself (home-testing) 14,4% N=( 50 )	Myself (home-testing) 2,3% N=( 8 )	Myself (home-testing) 46,0% N=( 160 )
Don't know 1,1% N=( 4 )	Never tested 16,4% N=( 57 )	HIV+, will not test 14,9% N=( 52 )
	Don't know 0,3% N=( 1 )	Don't know 1,4% N=( 5 )



### ideal HIV test

How would your preferred test be?	N
It's mandatory to be free	63,2% N=( 220 )
I can pay 5-10 € to have it as I want it	39,4% N=( 137 )
Medical prescription must not be necessary	74,7% N=( 260 )
Result must be available rapidly (20-30 min)	55,7% N=( 194 )
It's mandatory to be extremely reliable	85,9% N=( 299 )
Name, surname, ID must not be requested	44,5% N=( 155 )
I want a physician to be present	21,0% N=( 73 )
Don't want to receive counseling	29,0% N=( 101 )
I want to receive peer-counseling	35,6% N=( 124 )
I want to receive counseling from a physician	23,9% N=( 83 )
Other	0,9% N=( 3 )



The ideal HIV test should be: reliable (86%), with no medical prescription (75%), free (63%), rapid (55%), with no personal information collected (45%), with the opportunity to speak with a peer-counselor (36%).

### conclusions

**Conclusions** Changing HIV testing policies in Italy is urgently needed in order to grant a better access to the service: awaiting for the results and bureaucratic obligations represent the major barriers to be removed. Home-testing and community-based testing seem to be among the best ways to offer new opportunities though they may require a change in the legal, social and cultural context to be implemented and home testing will not allow any kind of support for newly diagnosed people.

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