

AUSTRALIA'S FIRST FREE NATIONAL HIV SELF-TESTING SERVICE ATTRACTS HIGH PROPORTIONS OF OVERSEAS BORN, MEDICARE INELIGIBLE, SUBURBAN, AND REGIONAL USERS

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Background:

NAPWHA and QPP launched their National HIV Self-Testing Project in October 2023, the first national project to offer free HIV self-test kits (HIVST) via online order to any adult in Australia. To assess who is requesting testing, users are asked to complete a brief, optional survey about their characteristics.

Methods:

Descriptive analyses were conducted to evaluate: (1) the geographical distribution of all orders, and (2) optional survey responses. Logistic regression identified characteristics of users ordering an HIV test for the first time, compared to previously tested people.

Results:

By April 2024, 3,124 tests had been ordered: 25.9% to inner-metropolitan, 41.9% to outer-metropolitan, and 22.2% to regional and remote areas, with most HIVSTs delivered to Victoria (57.5%) and New South Wales (22.9%).

Surveys were completed by 795 respondents (25.4% of orders). Median age was 35 (IQR=28–48), 83% were male, 11.8% female and 5.2% non-binary. Most were gay (61%), bi+ or pansexual (20.6%), or heterosexual (15.8%). 44.3% of users were overseas born and 23% did not have Medicare coverage. 73.5% reported male partners only, 7.9% reported female partners only, 14.7% reported various gender partners, and 3.8% no partners. 45.9% had tested for HIV in the last year, 17% 1–2 years ago, 18.1% >2 years ago, and 19% had never tested for HIV.

Compared to those previously tested (n=644), respondents ordering their first HIV test (n=151) were more likely to be: younger (*aOR*=0.95, 95%CI=0.93–0.97), bi+/pansexual or heterosexual compared to gay (*aOR*=2.79, 95%CI=1.60–4.86 and *aOR*=3.10, 95%CI=1.38–6.99, respectively), and living in outer-metropolitan or regional and remote areas (*aOR*=1.93, 95%CI=1.19–3.12 and *aOR*=3.53, 95%CI=2.09–5.95, respectively).

Conclusion:

Offering HIVST for free across Australia has engaged a diverse range of users, including relatively high proportions of overseas-born, Medicare-ineligible, suburban and regional users. As the project continues, the aim is to increase uptake across the country.

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

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