

HIV TESTING AMONG OVERSEAS-BORN GAY, BISEXUAL, AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN AFTER ARRIVING IN AUSTRALIA: AN ANALYSIS OF NSW DATA FROM A NATIONAL SENTINEL SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM

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Background:

The NSW HIV Strategy (2021-2025) aims to decrease time between arrival in Australia and first HIV test among at-risk overseas-born people to prevent late diagnoses. We evaluated this duration among overseas-born gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (OSB-GBMSM).

Methods:

We used data from ACCESS, a national sentinel surveillance system and included OSB-GBMSM (age at arrival >15) with a NSW postcode attending any of 20 ACCESS NSW Clinics with first HIV test between 2013-2023. We calculated the duration in years between year of arrival and year of first test, and compared the mean and proportion with a duration ≤ 2 years over the study period using linear and logistic regressions. Additionally, we examined demographic differences for the proportion with first test ≤ 2 years using chi-squared tests.

Results:

Among 14,685 OSB-GBMSM included, median age at arrival was 26 (IQR:16-71) and 29 at first test (IQR:17-84). The mean duration declined from 4.7 (SD-6.9) to 3.5 (SD-6.2) between 2013-2019, increased during COVID-pandemic to 4.2 (SD-6.0) in 2022, and dropped to 3.7 (SD-6.7) in 2023 (coefficient=-0.08(CI:-0.13,-0.04), $p<0.001$). The proportion with first test ≤ 2 years rose from 54.7% to 61.3% between 2013-2019, fell during COVID-pandemic to 46% in 2021, and recovered to 66.9% in 2023 (OR=1.02(CI:1.004,1.03), $p=0.01$). The proportion with first test ≤ 2 years varied by region of birth and age at first test ($p<0.001$): lower among those from Asia, and other regions (Africa, Middle East and Pacific Island countries) and those age <25 years; and higher among those from English-speaking high-income countries, Europe and Latin-America, and older OSB-GBMSM.

Conclusion:

Time to first HIV test among OSB-GBMSM in NSW has improved over the decade except COVID pandemic years. However, greater efforts are needed to reduce the duration further, especially among younger men and those from Asian, Middle Eastern, African and Pacific Island countries.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: