

TAILORED HIV SELF-TESTING APPROACHES

Reaching key and priority populations

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HIV self-testing (HIVST) has transformed the HIV testing landscape, allowing a person to test a sample of their own blood or oral fluid and interpret the result at their convenience. HIVST doubles general population HIV testing uptake compared to standard HIV testing services (Jamil, M. 2021) and has increasingly expanded the reach of HIV testing, particularly among populations unlikely or unwilling to visit a health facility or traditional testing sites. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly accelerated HIVST in many countries.

STRATEGIES FOR REACHING KEY AND PRIORITY POPULATIONS

HIVST is uniquely important for increasing case-finding among populations who may avoid health facilities due to stigmatizing or disrespectful treatment. JSI's HIV testing programs implement a mix of tailored approaches to successfully distribute HIVST kits to key and priority populations including adolescent girls and young women (AGYW) and men.



KEY POPULATIONS

- Employ peers to distribute kits discreetly and follow up reactive results
- Promote self-testing via civil society organization (CSO) clinics or other KP friendly spaces
- Engage influencers popular with specific KP communities
- Segment messaging via KP-preferred social media platforms



AGYW

- Leverage adolescent and young adult peer support groups
- Brand HIV self-test kits specifically for the AGYW audience
- Piggy pack onto other high demand services, like contraceptives or pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP)
- Regularly assess youth-preferred social media and refresh segmented content

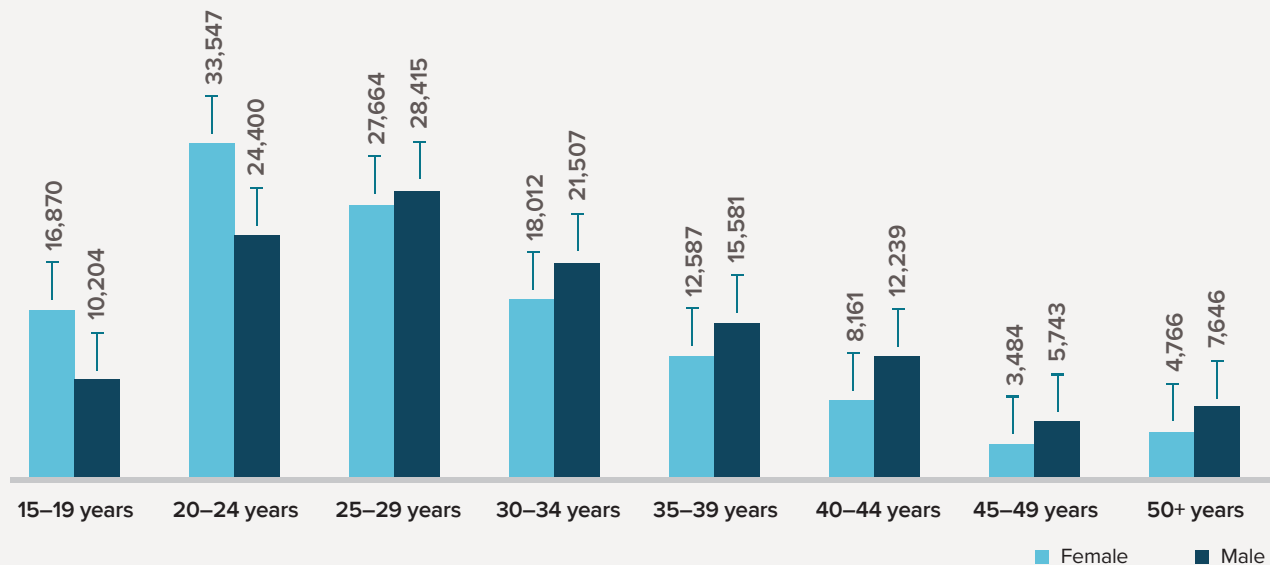


MEN

- Engage male traditional leaders and other trusted influencers
- Schedule specialized Men's Clinics to offer testing during evenings or weekends
- Engage male providers where possible
- Target key groups (e.g., taxi drivers and truckers) using road shows and other tailored strategies

These tailored testing and self-testing kits distribution approaches work. JSI's gender-disaggregated global data show a higher proportion of HIVST kit distribution among younger women and an increasing proportion of distribution among men as age increases.

HIVST kit distribution by sex, October 2018–September 2021, JSI global data



DIVERSE DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS PROMOTE UPTAKE



Peer outreach plays a critical role in distributing kits in their communities and following up on reactive results. CSO health facilities providing tailored services also send kits home as part of index testing to facilitate testing of sexual partners. Staff follow up with clients via text, offering reminders and support.



Community Pharmacies display posters to generate demand and offer walk-in clients free kits to take home with a card including the pharmacy's number and a toll-free number for call centers. Call center counselors can walk clients through testing, and in case of a reactive result, refer clients to health facilities for confirmatory testing. If preferred, clients can self-test on site in a private space and obtain on-site confirmatory testing and treatment initiation.



Health Facilities send kits home with pregnant women to test partners at home, or with index testing clients to test sexual partners. In case of a reactive result, facilities distribute yellow "VIP" cards with the kits, giving people fast-track access to confirmatory testing.



Churches/Mosques offer sessions for specific sub-populations, such as men's fellowship or youth groups. In partnership with religious leaders, programs distribute kits after fellowship meetings and help follow up with community members.



Workplace programs help engage men, for example, promoting an "hour of joy" for relaxation where there are talks on self testing and kits are distributed. Staff meetings in workplaces provide a forum for early morning talks, reaching a significant number of men with counseling and kit distribution.



Traditional Leaders distribute HIVST kits to their communities in rural areas where health facilities can be few and far apart and where people may face difficulties accessing testing services. This approach is especially effective for men, who have limited time to go to health facilities for testing.

To prevent adverse events and minimize the risk of intimate partner violence, JSI's HIV testing programs provide comprehensive counseling and equip clients with resources such as toll-free lines to report incidents or request additional support.