

Introduction

- GetCheckedOnline** (GCO) is an online sexually-transmitted infection (STI) testing service in British Columbia (BC)
- First launched in **Vancouver**, GCO has expanded to two health regions across BC (**Island** Health Authority and **Interior** Health Authority), including smaller urban and rural communities
- GCO is known to reduce STI testing barriers, however these barriers may differ across regions given a lower availability of existing STI services outside of Vancouver

Objective

- From June 2015 – March 2019, GCO testers were invited to participate in an online, anonymous survey
- We used a multi-level framework to assess STI testing barriers and facilitators related to:
 - individual-level** factors (e.g., embarrassment to test)
 - factors related to **interacting with healthcare providers** (e.g., comfort discussing sexual health)
 - clinic level** factors (e.g., distance, hours), and
 - social and structural level** factors (e.g., peer norms)
- Bivariate analyses comparing Vancouver survey respondents with those in Interior and those in Island were conducted using chi-square, Fisher’s exact, and t-tests; significant results (p<0.01) are shown
- To determine whether STI testing barriers reported by GCO clients differ across regions

Results

- Of all 783 completed surveys with valid postal code or city of residence, 400 (51%) were completed by Vancouver respondents, 270 (35%) by Island respondents, and 113 (14%) by Interior respondents
- Being a repeat tester was reported by 336 respondents in Vancouver, 221 in Island, and 86 in Interior

Figure: Framework for assessing STI testing barriers

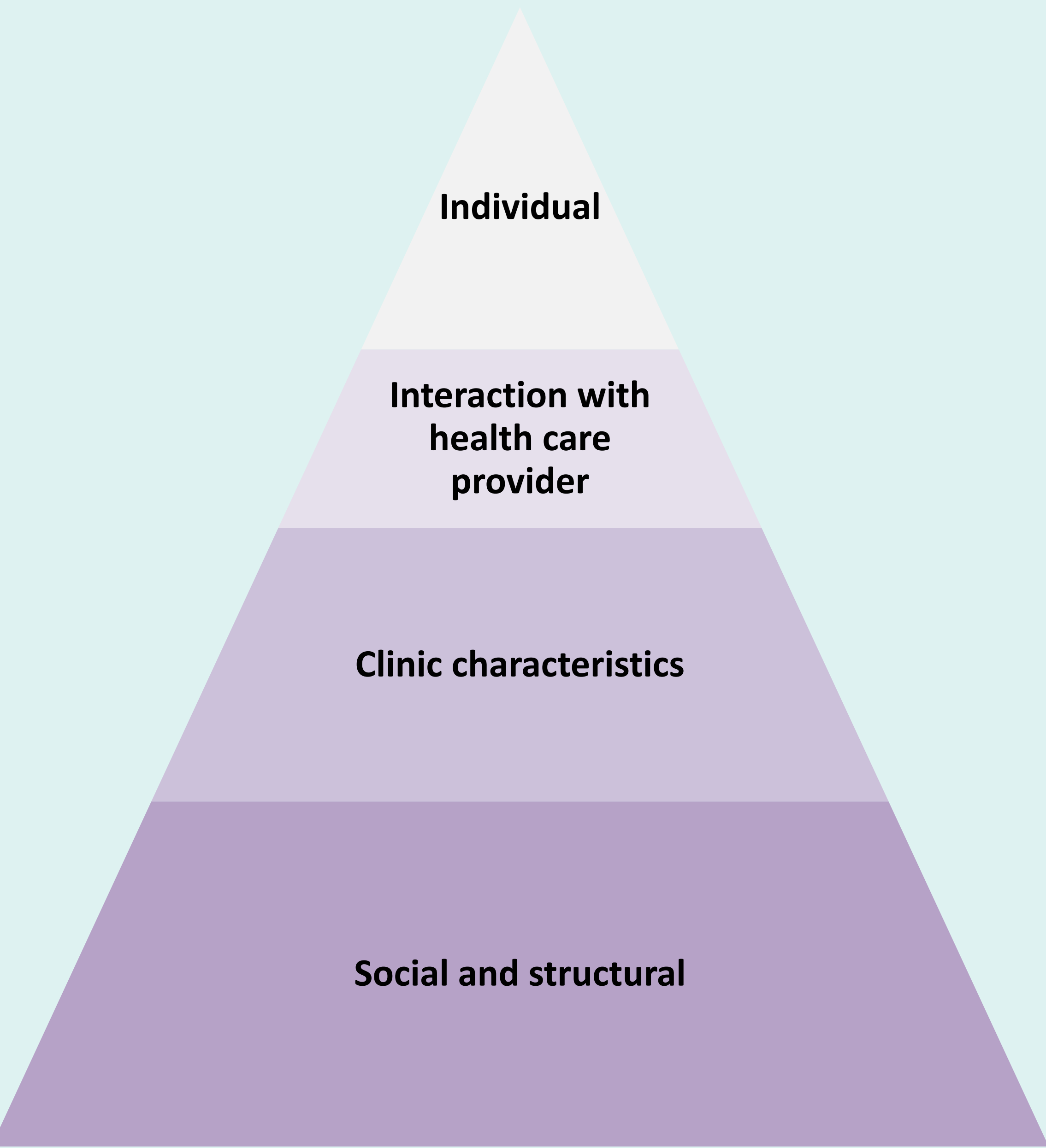


Table: Selected demographics and STI testing barriers and facilitators, June 2015-March 2019 (BOLD: significantly different from Vancouver, p<0.01)

Client Characteristic	Vancouver N=400	Island N=270	Interior n=113
Women	38%	43%	63%
Men who have sex with men	43%	30%	19%
White	70%	84%	79%
Completed university	64%	46%	35%
Full-time employed	69%	57%	55%
Income ≥\$80,000	69%	57%	55%
Born in Canada	70%	86%	90%
First test	9%	18%	24%
Reason for last test:			
Routine test	63%	45%	33%
New relationship	24%	31%	34%
Tested after event or exposure	27%	32%	32%
Empowerment – Agreed that:			
Testing is one way I can take charge of my sexual health.	97%	95%	93%
Comfortable discussing sexual history with any HCP	72%	66%	65%
Worried about judgment from HCP when providing sexual history	31%	36%	35%
Importance of anonymous testing	33%	34%	40%
Reason delayed testing (restricted to repeat testers):			
Didn’t know where to go	13%	10%	14%
Needed an appointment	49%	38%	36%
Wait was too long	48%	30%	38%
Clinic wasn’t open	33%	27%	23%
Distance to clinic	15%	16%	11%
Stigma – Agreed that:			
It is very embarrassing for me to test for an STI or HIV	14%	18%	15%
I would feel ashamed if someone I knew found out I tested for an STI or HIV	17%	20%	23%
I would feel guilty if I were diagnosed with an STI or HIV	61%	61%	69%
Social norms – Agreed that:			
Among my peers, people regularly get tested for an STI or HIV	60%	50%	40%

Conclusions

- Our findings suggest that testing barriers faced by GCO clients may be similar across regional health authorities in BC
- More respondents from outside Vancouver reported testing for the first time through GCO and fewer reported testing because of routine practice
- Despite the apparently wider availability of in-person sexual health services in Vancouver, clinic-level barriers in accessing these services may persist
- Regional differences reflect opportunities for testing and service promotion (e.g., addressing testing social norms vs. addressing clinic access issues)
- Stratification by key characteristics may help explain these differences (e.g., MSM vs. non-MSM; first-time vs. repeat testers)
- Further research among people who have never completed testing and those who have not tested through GCO may help to contextualize these findings

