

Evaluating the Impact of Expanding Internet-based Testing for Sexually-transmitted and Blood-borne Infections: Awareness and Use of GetCheckedOnline in Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities in BC

Rodrigo A. Sierra-Rosales^{1,2}, Aidan Ablona², Hsiu-Ju Chang², Cheryl Prescott³, Dee Hoyano⁴, Amy Prangnell⁴, Maja Karlsson⁵, Jessica Bridgeman⁵, Devon Haag², Heather Pedersen², Nathan Lachowsky^{6,7}, Darren Ho⁶, Cathy Worthington⁷, Daniel Grace⁸, Mark Gilbert^{1,2}.

¹ University of British Columbia, ² British Columbia Centre for Disease Control, ³ Fraser Health Authority, Surrey, ⁴ Island Health Authority, Victoria, ⁵ Interior Health Authority, Kelowna, ⁶ Community-Based Research Centre, Vancouver, ⁷ University of Victoria, ⁸ University of Toronto

Background

- Research during the pilot phase of *GetCheckedOnline*, BC's online sexually-transmitted and blood-borne infection (STBBI) testing service, found it effective in improving access to testing
- Since launching in Vancouver in 2014, the service has expanded to seven urban, suburban and rural communities: Wave 1 (2016): Kamloops, Nelson and Victoria; Wave 2 (2019-2020): Kimberley, Maple Ridge.

Objective: To assess post-expansion implementation outcomes (awareness, use, and intention to use) of *GetCheckedOnline* in these communities.

Methods

- Between July-Sept 2022, we conducted a cross-sectional survey in each community, recruiting in-person and online with oversampling among populations more likely affected by STBBI.
- Eligible participants were BC Residents ≥ 16 years old, sexually active (≥ 1 oral, anal or vaginal intercourse in past year)
- Questions evaluated awareness, use, and intention to use *GetCheckedOnline*.

Results

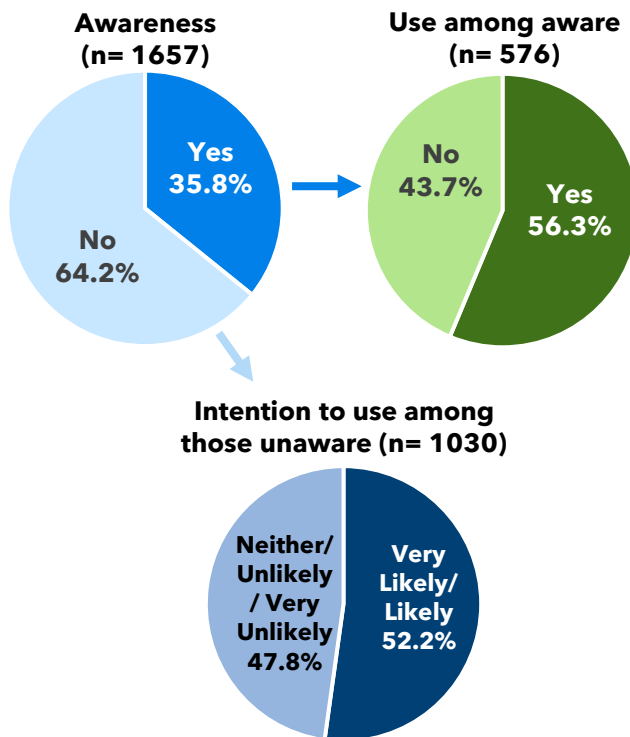


Table 1: Description of study sample

Characteristic	n = 1657
Age	
Mean	33 years
Standard Deviation	11.75 years
Gender	
	n (%)*
Man	459 (30.7%)
Woman	784 (52.5%)
Gender Diverse	251 (16.8%)
Cisgender	1246 (89.8%)
Transgender	151 (10.2%)
Race/Ethnicity	
	n (%)
White	1099 (68.3%)
Indigenous	208 (12.9%)
People of Colour	301 (18.7%)
Non-heterosexual Sexual Identity (yes)	793 (53.0%)
Annual pre-tax income in 2021 < \$20,000	392 (26.9%)
Drug Use (Illegal/non-prescribed, past year) (yes)	566 (39.1%)
Ever been homeless (yes)	315 (21.5%)
Never tested for STBBIs (yes)	319 (20.7%)
Reported 3+ sexual partners in the last year (yes)	463 (30.9%)
Diagnosed with 1+ STBBI during past year (yes)	104 (7.8%)

* Percentages were calculated on the basis of valid responses

Table 2: Outcomes among participants living in communities according to expansion wave

Expansion Wave	Awareness	Use among Aware
Wave 1 (2016)	39.6%	60.1%
Wave 2 (2019-2020)	18.1%	38.2%

Other outcomes observed:

- 66.8% (990/1483) reported experiencing barriers to accessing provider-based testing in the past year (e.g., long wait times, not knowing where to access testing).
- For 91.1% of participants (1334/1465) it was very easy/easy to go online

Conclusion

- Our study suggests *GetCheckedOnline* is improving access to STBBI testing in these communities, as 20% of participants – representing half of those aware of the service – had used the service in a sample where barriers to accessing provider-based testing were common.
- Communities where *GetCheckedOnline* had been available longer had higher awareness and use of the service
- Given the high intention to use, further promotion of *GetCheckedOnline* to increase awareness may be beneficial.

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