



Findings from British Columbia

Many BC residents use GetCheckedOnline (GCO) to get tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and even more intend to use it. In communities where GCO is available, about 30% knew about the service, and 20% have used it. Over 50% of people who were not aware of GCO are likely to use it in the future. GCO is improving access to testing for STI in BC.

People faced many barriers to accessing STI testing

- About 20% of people surveyed had never tested for an STI.
- Close to 70% of people stated they experienced barriers to provider-based STI testing in the past year. The most common barriers were:
 - Wait times being too long,
 - Needing to book an appointment,
 - Not knowing where to access testing,
 - Testing services having inconvenient hours of operation,
 - Having concerns about privacy,
 - Clinics being too far away, and,
- 39% of people agreed it was very embarrassing to test for STIs, or that they would be ashamed if someone knew they were getting tested.
- Among people who had an STI test:
 - 41% tested at least once a year,
 - 34% usually got tested through a primary care provider,
 - 10% usually got tested through GCO, and,
 - 22% usually got tested through an STI/sexual health clinic.



GetCheckedOnline

GCO launched in 2014 as an online service that allows people to get tested for STIs without seeing a health care provider.

The Community STI Testing Survey

The BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) and Health Authority partners conducted the Community STI Testing Survey in June-September 2022 to understand local communities' experience with STI testing services including GCO. We surveyed the general public in each community, including groups facing more barriers to STI testing.

GCO can reduce barriers to accessing STI testing

- Almost everyone saw at least one benefit of using GCO over provider-based testing. The most common benefits were:
 - Testing without waiting for an appointment,
 - Getting test results online,
 - Saving time,
 - Finding it easier to go to a lab than a clinic,
 - Finding it more private, and,
 - Not having to talk about sex-life with a healthcare provider.

1658 people across 5 BC communities

We recruited participants in-person and online in 5 communities across BC where GCO is available:

- Victoria,
- Maple Ridge,
- Kamloops,
- Kimberley, and
- Nelson.

Awareness and use of GCO was high and depended on how long the service had been available in a community

- 36% of people we surveyed knew about GCO, and 20% had used it.
- Awareness and use of GCO was higher in the communities where GCO launched in 2016 (Kamloops, Nelson and Victoria) than those later in 2019-2020 (Kimberley and Maple Ridge).
- Most people heard of GCO through word of mouth (from friends or a health care provider, or someone at a community organization) or through social media.
- Among those who had not heard of GCO before the survey, 52% intended to get tested through GCO in the future.

The survey included 1658 people living in BC, who were 16 years or older and sexually active.

The survey included many:

- Gender and sexually diverse individuals (17% of participants identified as gender diverse)
- People who use drugs (39% had used illegal/non-prescribed drugs in the past year)
- People who had experience under-housing and poverty (22% had ever been homeless, 27% had an income less than \$20K)