



National HIV Testing Day 2019

CANADIAN
AIDS
SOCIETY



SOCIÉTÉ
CANADIENNE
DU SIDA

Final Report

The Canadian AIDS Society would like to thank all of the participating community-based organizations and health authorities who made this day possible.

We would also like to thank the members of the 2019 national HIV Testing Day steering committee:

Laurie Edmiston, Executive Director of CATIE

Simon Goff, Executive Assistant and Collective Impact Coordinator at the Pacific AIDS Network

Stephanie van Haute, Program Development Officer, Manitoba HIV Program at Nine Circles Community Health Centre

Celeste Hayward, Executive Director of the Alberta Community Council on HIV

Renee Masching, Director of Research and Policy at the Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network

Jason Mercredi, Executive Director of AIDS Saskatoon

Ken Monteith, Executive Director of COCQ-SIDA

Shannon Ryan, Executive Director of the Ontario AIDS Network

Dena Simon, former Executive Director of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia

Debby Warren, Executive Director of ENSEMBLE Greater Moncton

Gerard Yetman, Executive Director of AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador

Finally, we would like to thank our corporate sponsors:



June 27, 2019, marked the second annual national HIV Testing Day in Canada. The Canadian AIDS Society (CAS) coordinated the event on a national level, with over 100 local and regional community partners organizing 109 testing events in their communities across the country, during which participants were tested for HIV and other sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections (STBBI).

General Statistics

- There were 109 testing sites across Canada, which was a 60% increase from the 68 testing sites in 2018. There were 1,035 people recorded as being tested, which is a 24% increase from the 835 people tested during the 2018 national HIV Testing Day.
- Testing Day received local, regional, and national news coverage from media such as Radio-Canada, CTV, and Global News.
- A total of 139 participants (14%) reported as never having been tested before and 129 participants (13%) reported as not having been tested in over a year.
- There were three hepatitis C diagnoses, two gonorrhea diagnoses, and one hepatitis B diagnosis reported. Without all sites reporting positive STBBI cases, we know that the numbers reported are low, but it is important to remember that all cases had the opportunity to be linked to follow-up and ongoing care, treatment, and support.
- 1,350 point-of-care testing (POCT) kits were sent out to participating organizations for use during their testing events, with any kits not used during national HIV Testing Day being kept by the organizations to do testing during the rest of the year. CAS thanks bioLytical Laboratories for supplying these kits at no cost.



Print and digital posters were created for participating organizations to promote their testing events.

Provincial Statistics

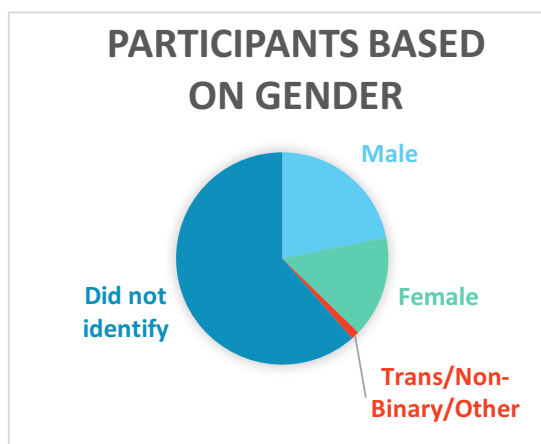
As previously mentioned, during the 2019 national HIV Testing Day there were 969 people tested at 109 different testing sites. Below is the breakdown of the number of sites by province:

British Columbia	11 sites in 8 communities
Alberta	17 sites in 7 communities
Saskatchewan	17 sites in 9 communities
Manitoba	14 sites in 6 communities
Ontario	20 sites in 14 communities
Quebec	11 sites in 8 communities
New Brunswick	3 sites in 3 communities
Nova Scotia	4 sites in 3 communities
Newfoundland	12 sites in 6 communities

Below is the breakdown of the number of people tested by province:

British Columbia	66
Alberta	103
Saskatchewan	346
Manitoba	121
Ontario	140
Quebec	98
New Brunswick	47
Nova Scotia	81
Newfoundland	33

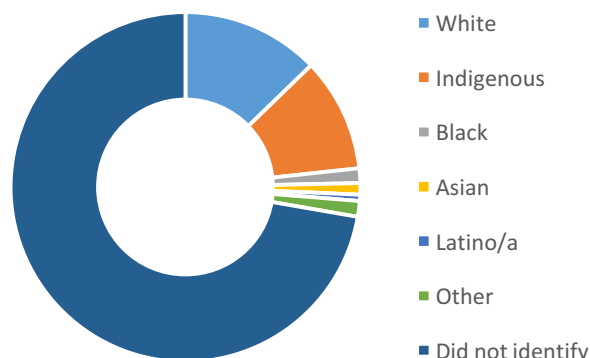
Demographic Statistics



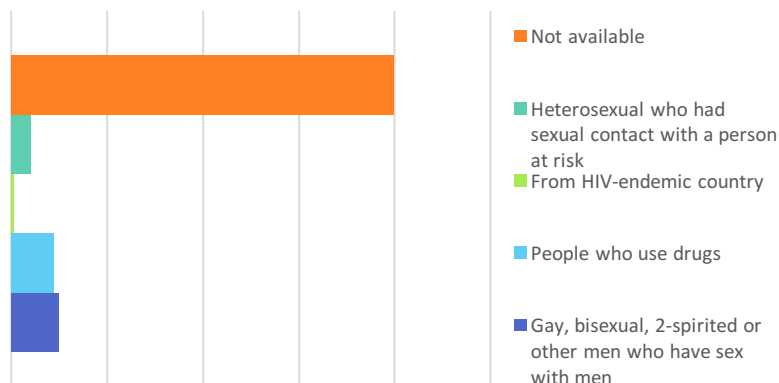
226 participants (21.8%) identified as male, 160 participants (15.5%) identified as female, and 13 participants (1.3%) identified as transgender, non-binary, or belonging to another gender identity. Data was not available for 636 participants (61.4%).

132 participants (12.8%) identified as white, 109 participants (10.5%) identified as Indigenous, 14 participants (1.4%) identified as Black, 11 participants (1.1%) identified as Asian, 6 participants identified as Latino/a (0.6%), and 15 participants (1.4%) identified as belonging to another ethnic background. Data was not available for 748 participants (72.3%).

PARTICIPANTS BASED ON RACE



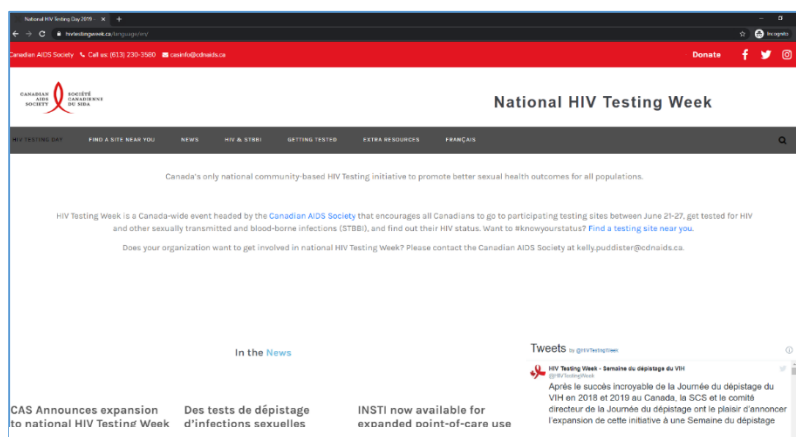
EXPOSURE CATEGORY



100 participants (9.7%) identified as gay, bisexual, 2-spirited, and other men who have sex with men (gb2MSM); 90 participants (8.7%) identified as people who use drugs; 6 participants (0.6%) identified as people from an HIV-endemic country; and 42 participants (4.1%) identified as heterosexual people who have had sexual contact with a person at risk. Data was not available for 797 participants (77.0%).

Online Presence

For 2019, CAS created a website specifically dedicated to national HIV Testing Day (www.hivtestingday.ca). Between May 22nd and June 28th 2019, there were 1,766 unique page views.



The landing page for the national HIV Testing Day website (now updated for the 2020 national HIV Testing Week).



As part of this year's national HIV Testing Day, the Canadian AIDS Society is pleased to endorse the Undetectable Ribbon, developed by HIV Edmonton. The Undetectable Ribbon symbolizes the suppressed viral load of someone living with HIV whose treatment has made their HIV undetectable. This is a unique awareness tool to reduce stigma against people living with HIV. #UequalsU #knowyourstatus #EndStigma #HIV

Dans le cadre de la Journée du dépistage du VIH cette année, la Société...
See more
See Translation



You and 9 others

21 shares

A post from the national HIV Testing Day Facebook page (now updated for national HIV Testing Week).

Along with the regular CAS social media accounts, CAS has created specific Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts to promote the initiative. These profiles can be found at:

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/HIVTestingDay/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hivtestingweek>

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/hivtestingweek/>

Between June 6th and July 4th, the main CAS Facebook page and the HIV Testing Day Facebook page reached 9,000 people, 2,100 of whom engaged with posts. In June 2019, the HIV Testing Day Twitter account had 57,700 impressions and 317 profile visits. Between June 20th and July 3rd, the HIV Testing Day Instagram account reached 734 unique account and its posts were viewed 4,263 times.

We also contacted notable Canadian influencers to promote the event on their social media platforms (see the next page for two examples).



HIV Testing Week - Semaine du dépistage du VIH @... · Jun 6, 2019
If you follow your treatment plan+maintain an undetectable HIV viral load for at least 6 months, HIV can't be transmitted to sex partners. Hear more about U=U at an event near you during @HIVTestingDay on June 27th bit.ly/2MxoYYY #KnowYourStatus #HIVTestingDay #UequalsU



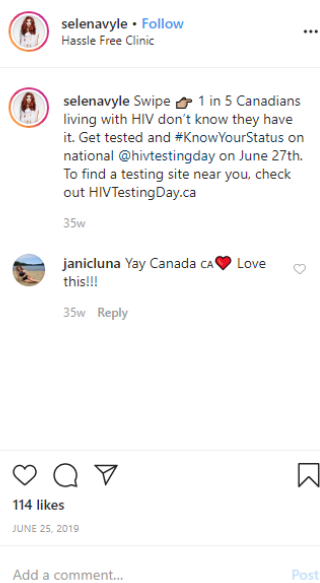
A post from the national HIV Testing Day Twitter page (now updated for national HIV Testing Week).

Linkage to Care

From last year's Testing Day events, CAS learned anecdotally about different strategies used by some of the participating organizations to ensure that participants received the specific care that



Toronto drag queen Selena Vyle promoting national HIV Testing Day on her Instagram account. Photo source: Selena Vyle/@selenavyle



they needed. At two testing sites in Saskatoon, for example, where the main method of testing used was POCT, if a participant identified themselves as participating in higher-risk behaviours, they would be taken to a private room where they would be able to receive more in-depth pre-test counselling and be assigned a caseworker who would link them to care if necessary. In Winnipeg, Nine Circles Community Health

Centre also assigned a community support worker to self-identified individuals at higher risk to assist them throughout the testing process.

While we do not have specific data on the number of people that were linked to care, given the number of participants who had never been tested before, it is highly likely that at least some of them were introduced to the services provided by participating organizations for the first time. During this year's national HIV Testing Week, we have asked participating organizations to record the number of clients that were linked to care after being tested so that we will be able to compare this data to future years of national HIV Testing Week.



Danny Ramadan, a LGBT-refugee activist based in Vancouver, promoting HIV Testing Day on his Instagram account. Photo source: Danny Ramadan @dannysesit



Analysis

After viewing the final data for the 2019 national HIV Testing Day, CAS considers it to have been a resounding success. There were both more testing sites and more people tested than in 2018, indicating that this initiative is reaching more and more people across Canada, including people that other testing campaigns have not been successful in reaching. The following is an analysis of several key aspects of the 2019 Testing Day.



Ryan Meili, Official Opposition Leader in Saskatchewan, getting tested in Saskatoon

Provincial statistics:

After breaking down the number of testing sites and the number of people tested by province, we have been able to gather some interesting insights. The fact that so many people were tested in Saskatchewan is likely due to the concerted efforts of the Saskatchewan HIV Collaborative and the community-based organizations who participated. The national HIV Testing Day initiative was actually based on Saskatchewan's province-wide HIV Testing Day, which was first held in 2017, one year before the first national HIV Testing Day.

Demographic statistics and targeted population efforts:

2019 was the first year during which CAS asked participating organizations to, if possible, keep track of the gender, ethnicity, and potential exposure category for their participants. Although many testers did not provide demographic information, from the participants who did, we can see that Testing Day was more successful in reaching some populations than others.

While many of Testing Day participants identified as gb2MSM or people who use drugs, only 14 testers or 1.4% of the total number of testers identified as Black (although it must be noted that some of the 748 testers who did not provide information about their race may self-identify as Black). Regardless, in 2017, members of the African, Caribbean, and Black (ACB) communities made up 25.3% of new HIV cases in Canada, while making up 3.5% of the total Canadian population. In order to remedy this, CAS will specifically reach out to community organizations that serve members of the ACB communities, and has added an individual who has significant experience in testing initiatives with these communities to the project's steering committee.



Gerry Croteau, Executive Director of the Gilbert Centre, speaking at a testing event in Barrie while Randy Davis, Gay/MSM Sexual Health Staff at the Gilbert Centre, looks on. Photo credit: Jessica Owen/Barrie Today

U=U Ambassador Program:

In 2019, CAS launched a new component of the national HIV Testing Day initiative: the presence of U=U Ambassadors. The Ambassadors are people living with HIV who are undetectable and can explain the U=U campaign to participants. In 2019, our only goal was to launch the initiative. We ended up having 17 U=U Ambassadors in 13 cities: Kelowna, Victoria, Calgary, Edmonton, Regina, Winnipeg, Barrie, Oakville, Sudbury, Quebec City, Montreal, Saint-Jérôme, and Halifax.

For 2020, we will set a goal of having 25 U=U Ambassadors across Canada. In the next several years of the project, we will also be looking to develop a U=U Ambassador manual that can be given to new Ambassadors to give them instructions on what activities to do during Testing Day in order to spread awareness about the U=U campaign.



Halifax during HIV Testing Day - (L-R) Becky Marval, Team Lead at MOSH Halifax; U=U Ambassador Michael Liddell; MP Andy Fillmore; Dena Simon, Executive Director of the AIDS Coalition of Nova Scotia, and U=U Ambassador Dave Miller.

Barriers:

Organizing the past two years of national HIV Testing Day has allowed CAS to gain important insight into some of the challenges to successful testing sites. As previously mentioned, one of



CAS Board Member and U=U Ambassador Bernie Mathieson getting tested.

the biggest challenges has been the timely submission of data from all testing sites by the participating organizations. Previously, CAS had not set a deadline for the submission of data, but we have now updated the terms and conditions for each participating organization so that they must agree to submit their data within six weeks of their testing event if they plan to participate.

Another of the major barriers to achieving the program goals is the inconsistency of the data collected by each testing site. While some

organizations submitted all of the information requested, others only submitted the address of their testing sites, and did not include the number of people tested and the number of positive and negative HIV diagnoses. Therefore, it is more difficult to get an entirely accurate depiction of the true number of diagnoses from the event. Although some of the participating organizations

and health authorities cannot release specific data due to the policy of their provincial health authority, we will reiterate to all participating organizations that all data asked for on the data collection form must be submitted unless explicitly not permitted by their provincial health authority or if their organization lacks the capacity to do so.

A continued lack of funding from the federal government has also been a significant hurdle in the implementation and expansion of this initiative. The Minister of Health participated in HIV Testing Day last year by getting tested and promoting the event on social media but even with this participation, PHAC has not yet agreed to financially support the initiative, which would help to expand the program and ensure its longevity and more accurate performance indicators.

Opportunities:

It was a positive step that the Minister of Health was involved in the promotion of national HIV Testing Day in 2019 and we plan to continue our collaboration with PHAC during the 2020 national HIV Testing Week and in future years. In 2020, we will be working with PHAC's National Laboratory for HIV Reference Services to provide dried blood spot testing at some testing sites during national HIV

Testing Week and are looking to roll out at-home testing in future years in order to have a diversity of options for participants looking to know their status, thus reducing some of the barriers to testing. In addition to the promotion of national HIV Testing Week, we are also looking for the federal government to officially proclaim national HIV Testing Week and to create a sustainable model of funding.

Conclusion:

Overall, CAS, the organizations who held testing events, the communities involved, and those who participated were happy with the results from the 2019 national HIV Testing Day and considered it a success, to the extent that in 2020, national HIV Testing Day will be expanded to a national HIV Testing Week. We believe that the expansion will allow smaller organizations who only have the capacity to do testing on certain days which do not fall on national HIV Testing Day to participate this year, as well as allow larger organizations to hold multiple events. Our analysis of this year's data has allowed us to target our planning for next year (for example, targeted outreach to the ACB community). We are very happy with the direction in which this initiative is heading, and believe that is making a strong impact on HIV in Canada today.



From L-R: Canadian AIDS Society Executive Director Gary Lacasse; Karen Chow, Director of Public Affairs at Gilead Sciences; Debby Warren, Executive Director of ENSEMBLE Greater Moncton; Minister of Health Ginette Petitpas Taylor, and Medical Health Officer for eastern NB Dr. Yves Léger at the launch event for national HIV Testing Day in Moncton.

It is only together that we can get to zero new infections!