

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on community-based testing for HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmitted infections in the WHO European Region

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Consortium composition:



Objective: to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on CBVCT for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs in the WHO European Region.

Methods

Online survey: distributed between 14 October-13 November 2020 to actors involved in the provision of services in the WHO European Region.

Key questions: impact on testing volume, reasons for the observed impact, measures to mitigate, economic effects, and areas where guidance or support were needed

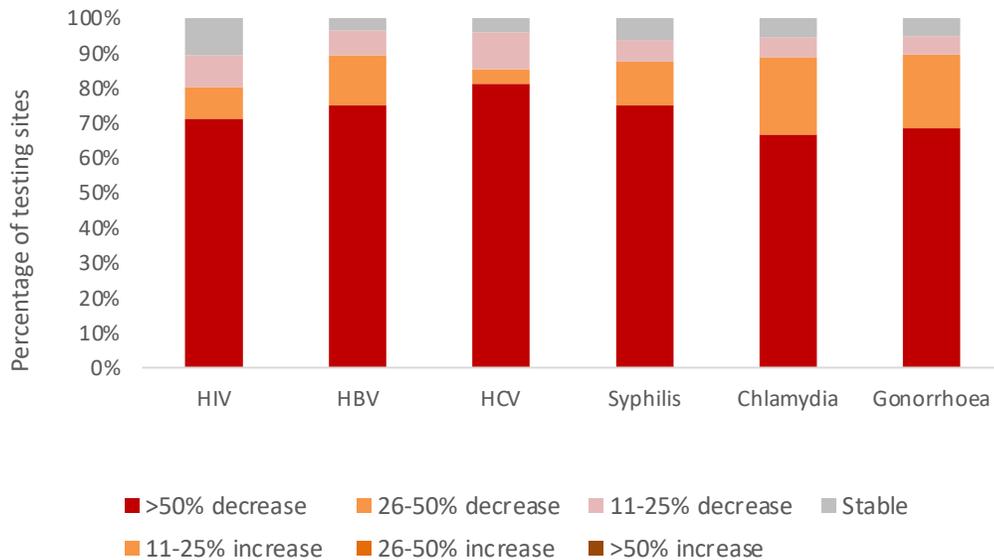
Data analysis: A descriptive analysis on data reported by CBVCT services was performed.



Results:

- 71 CBVCTs from 28 different countries completed the survey
- Changes in testing volumes

Period March to May 2020, in comparison with the same 3 months last year

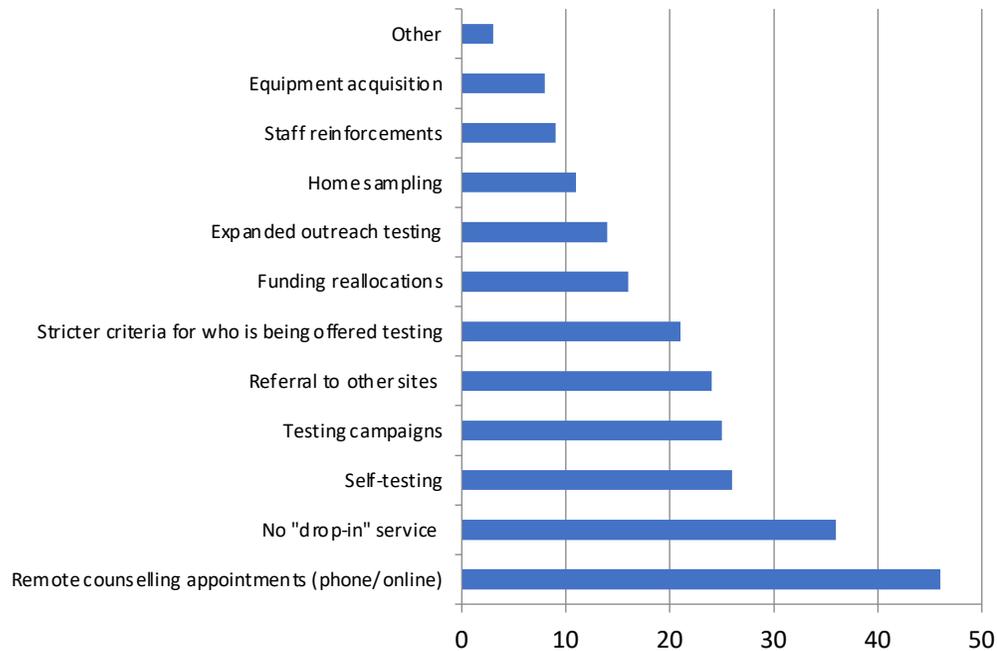


- Reasons for observed declines in testing volume

Community level sites (n=71)	major/ medium		minor/ no decrease		not applicable/ do not know	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Site(s) closed during lockdown	49	69%	12	17%	10	14%
Staff re-allocated to support COVID-19	13	20%	20	30%	33	50%
Reduced staff in site	40	60%	18	27%	9	13%
Fewer appointments scheduled/reduced attendance	45	66%	15	22%	8	12%
Fewer serological samples drawn and sent to the laboratory/fewer referrals to blood draw/testing	14	21%	18	27%	35	52%
No 'drop-in' service (only testing by appointment)	38	57%	17	25%	12	18%
Fewer referrals to your site	16	25%	21	33%	27	42%
Changes in financing system	11	16%	19	28%	37	55%
Stock-out of test kits, tubes, reagents or consumables	4	6%	31	47%	31	47%
Triaging of patients	18	27%	23	34%	26	39%
Moved to telemedicine/remote consultations	26	39%	23	34%	18	27%
Other	7	22%	4	13%	21	66%

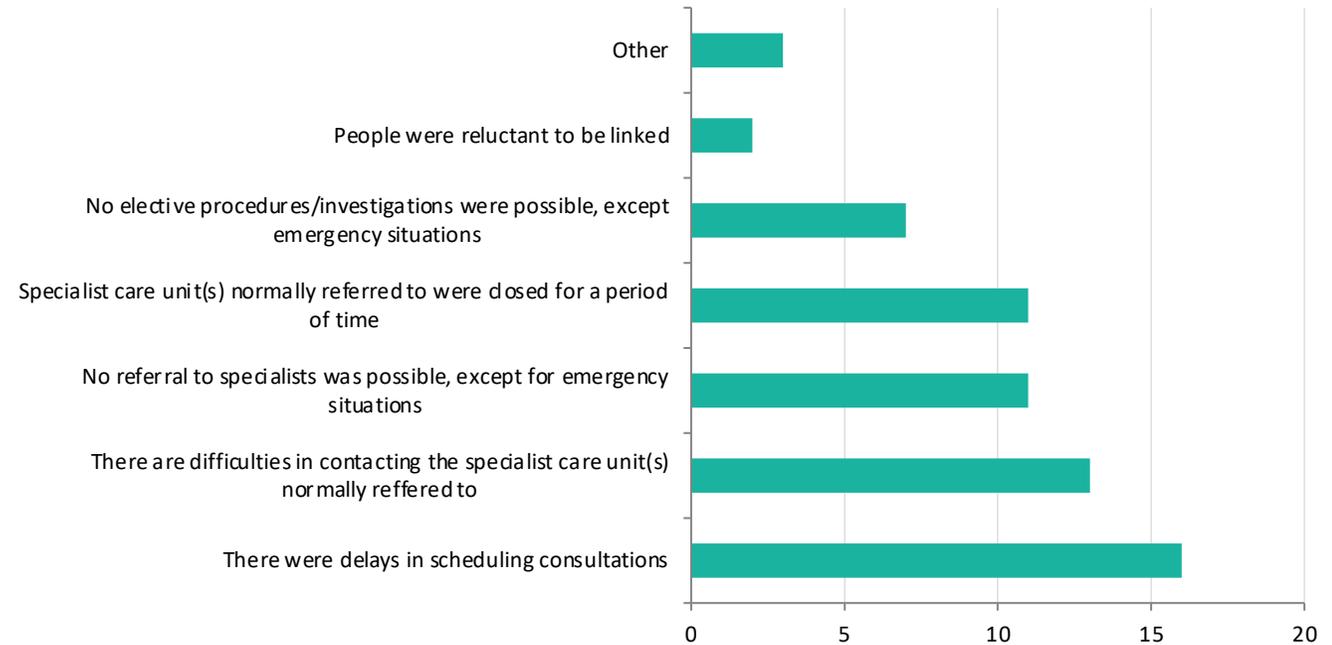
Results:

- Measures put in place to restore the provision of testing services in response to the COVID-19 pandemic



- 22 sites (31%) reported problems in ensuring linkage to relevant health care services

Main challenges for linkage to care



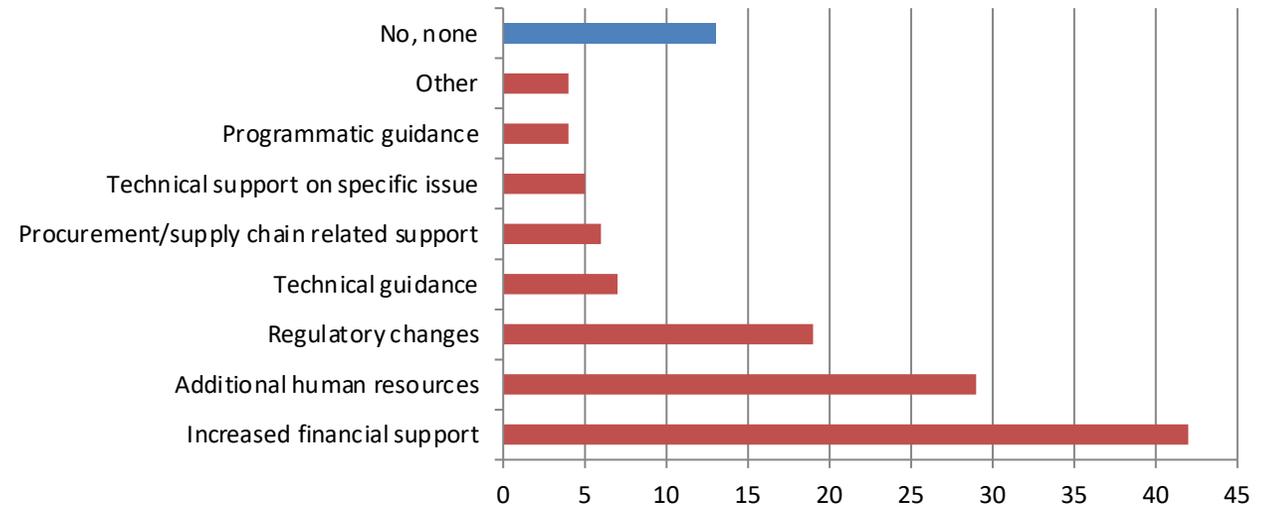
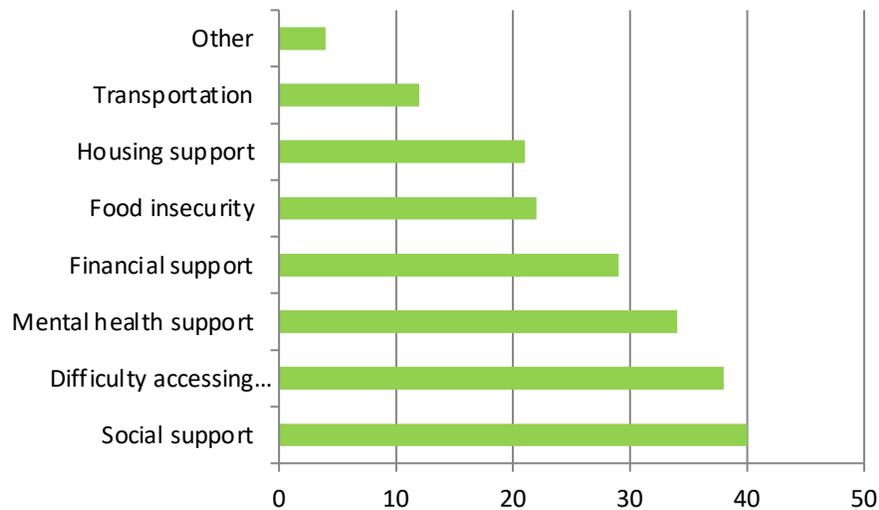


Results:

□ Some kind of budget cuts due to the COVID-19 pandemic was reported by almost one third (30.0%)

□ In 49 sites (69%) clients reported increased needs and/or any new needs since the pandemic

□ Totally 82% reported the need of guidance/support in the coming months





Conclusions:

- ❑ The COVID-19 pandemic has had considerable impact on testing for HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs in CBOs in the WHO European Region.
- ❑ Most of respondents reported testing less than half the expected number of people during the first wave of lockdown measures across Europe.
- ❑ These findings suggest that key populations attending CBVCT services have experienced further reduced access to testing and other essential services than before the pandemic.
- ❑ Several new measures were implemented due to the pandemic to provide minimum services or adapt testing capacity.
- ❑ Support and guidance to European CBVCT services are paramount to minimize testing interruptions and ensure provision of COVID-secure services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acknowledgments:

- *The Consortium of partners: AAE, AFEW, COBATEST network, EACS, EATG, EASL, ECDC, EuroTEST, IUSTI, WHA, WHO Europe, Independent experts from Estonia, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and United Kingdom.*
- *All CBOs that have participated in the survey*

