Title: **Comparison of HIV testing performed pre and during COVID-19 at Community-Based Testing Centers in Europe: COBATEST, 2019-2020**

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Text: **Objectives:** The impact of the COVID-19 on HIV testing has been predicted right from the start of the pandemic. Standardized testing data collected by Community-based voluntary counseling and testing (CBVCT) services in Europe as part of COBATEST network can serve as good base to demonstrate how COVID-19 might have impacted HIV testing. This study compares the data on HIV testing performed by CBVCT services pre COVID-19 (2019) and during first year of the pandemic (2020) among COBATEST Network member centers.

Methods: Only COBATEST member centers that submit complete data in 2019 and 2020 were included in this study. People were excluded if aged < 16, previously diagnosed or test results were not available. Only the most recent record per client was kept. Descriptive analysis of the data and of some key indicators were performed.

Results: From 2019 to 2020**,** forty centers from 15 European countries reported data on HIV testing in both years using the COBATEST standardized data reporting tools. In total 111,117 persons were tested for HIV by forty centers in 2019, and in 2020 the same 40 centers reported 70084 (36.9% less) persons tested. Most of the centers demonstrated substantial decrease in persons tested ranging from 30% to 60% compared to 2019. Three centers had reported more than 60% decrease in HIV testing in 2020 compared to 2019. Minor increase was found in 4 centers and one center reported substantial increase.

Conclusions: Overall, drastic change in proportion of persons tested for HIV in 2019 compared to 2020 has been found. The difference could be attributed to availability of these services during lockdowns and also to restrictions imposed by governments on free movement across the cities/towns/countries due to COVID-19 pandemic. However, this data should be interpreted cautiously as no specific data has been collected on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic in these 40 centers.