

CONNECT; HIV Testing in the Community

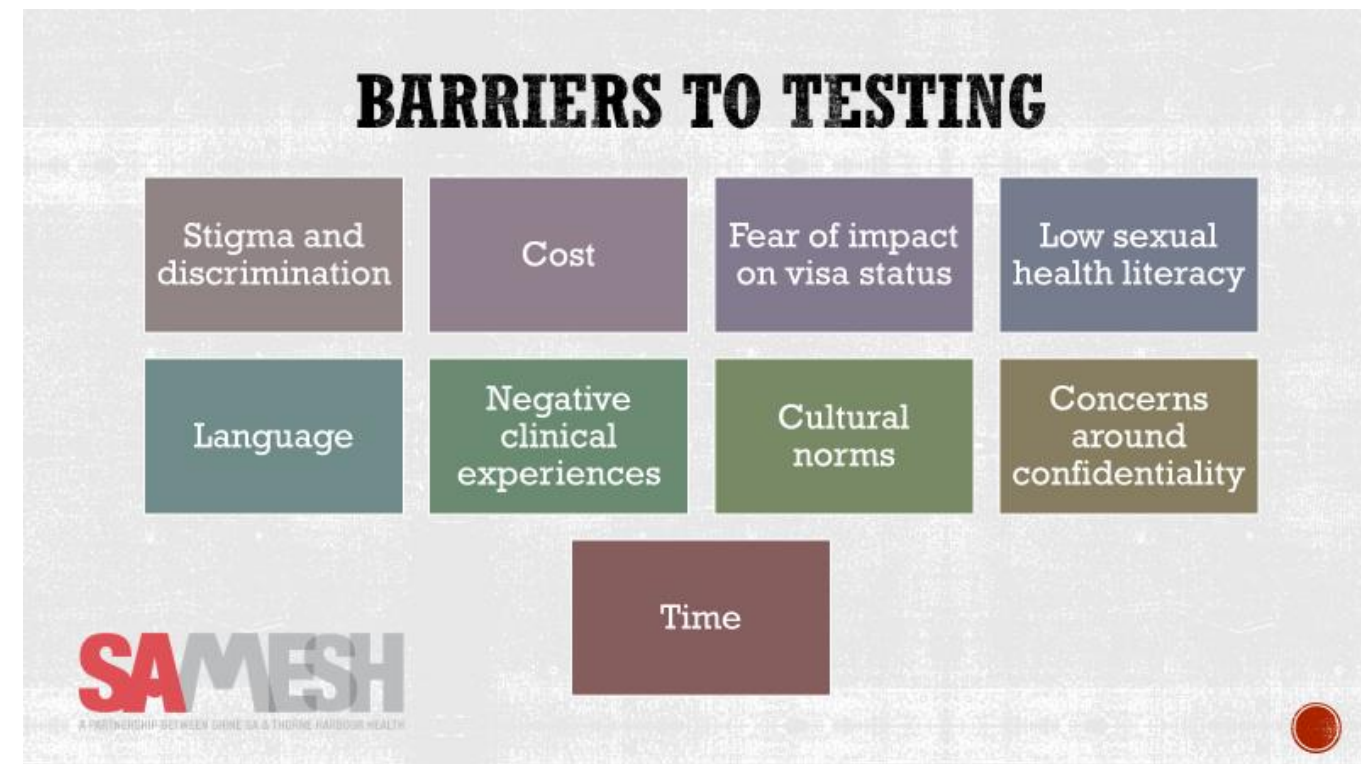
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Background and Aims

In partnership with SHINE SA, Thorne Harbour Health and SAMESH are piloting and evaluating the use of vending machines to dispense free Atomo HIV Self-Test (HST) kits to support rapid testing and to strengthen pathways to treatment and support.

This pilot project, which is taking place in South Australia, is the result of a successful tender for federal funding as part of Activities to Support the National Response to Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI).

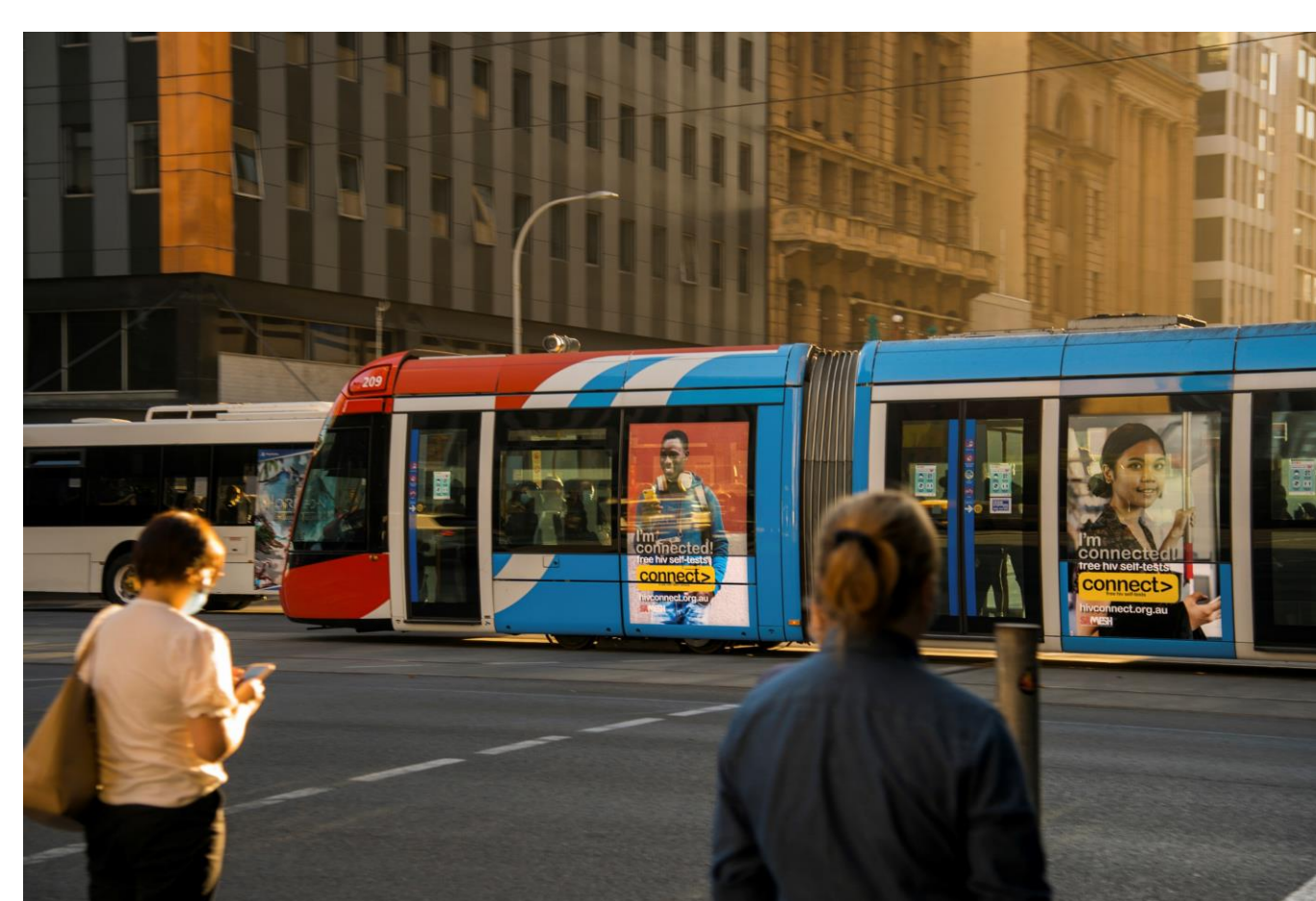
CONNECT aims to overcome known barriers and increase testing in non- and infrequent-testers, in particular men who have sex with men (MSM) from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, migrants, and international students.



Approach

Key components of CONNECT include:

- Establishment of a Cultural Advisory Group
- Multilingual resources (available in Arabic, Chinese (simplified), Hindi, Indonesian, Malay, Spanish and Vietnamese)
- Customisation and installation of six vending machines: five at university campuses (UniSA, University of Adelaide, Flinders University) and one at Pulteney Sauna
- CONNECT webpage www.hivconnect.org.au
- Outdoor and social marketing campaigns
- Follow-up protocol developed in consultation with clinical staff at SHINE SA and Adelaide Sexual Health Centre
- Data collection: via webapp, Google Analytics, and survey
- Independent evaluation



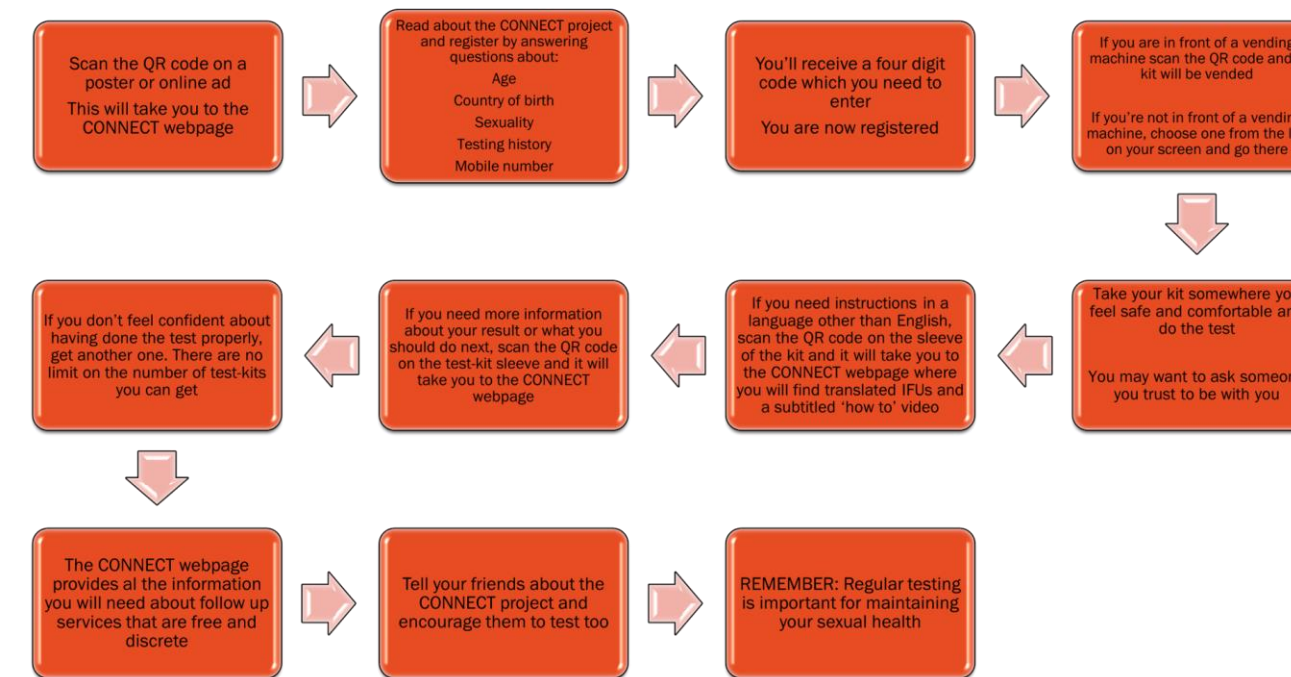
Accessing and using a self-test kit

To access a kit, users are required to:

- Scan the QR code on a CONNECT machine, poster or postcard. This takes them to the webapp
- Answer four questions: country of birth, age, sexuality, testing history
- Supply a mobile phone number
- Enter the four digit code sent to the mobile number provided into the webapp

Once a user is registered they can access a free HIV self-test kit by simply scanning the QR code on any of the CONNECT vending machines.

There is no limit to the number of kits that a single user can access.



Seven days after registering, users receive an automated SMS containing a link to a follow-up survey which they are invited to complete.

To date, approximately 13% of users have completed the survey.

- 95% of respondents said they found CONNECT easy to use
- 96% said they would use an HIV self-test kit again
- 98% said they would recommend HIV self-testing to others

The most popular reasons given for using CONNECT are:

- It is convenient
- It is free
- It is private and discreet



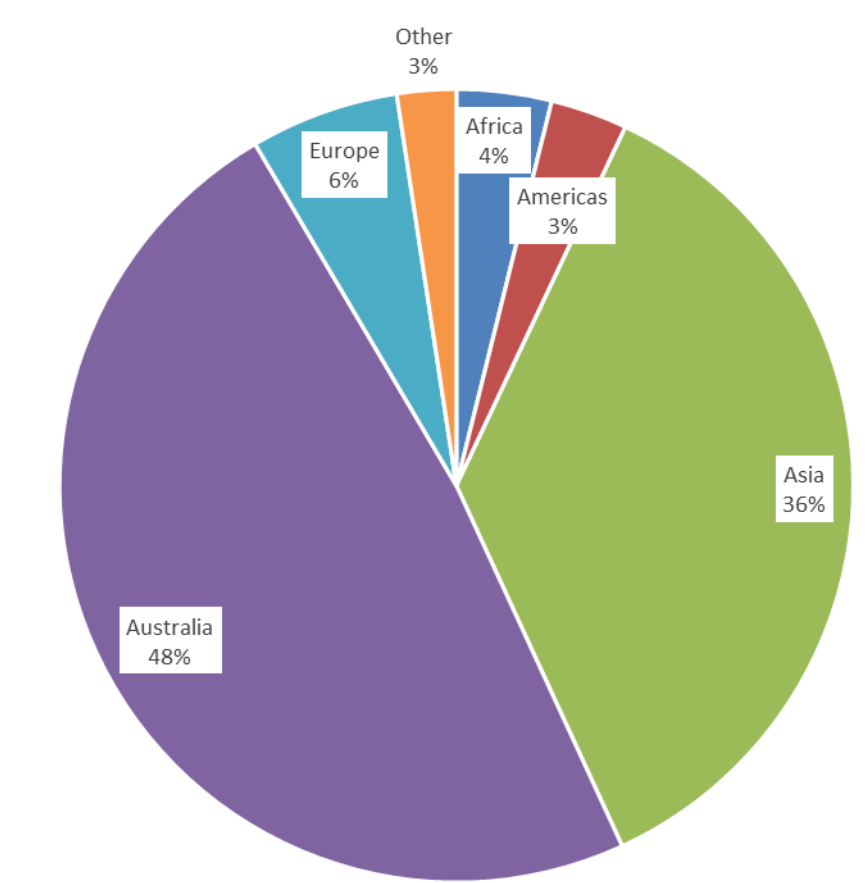
Findings

Between March 2022 and July 2023:

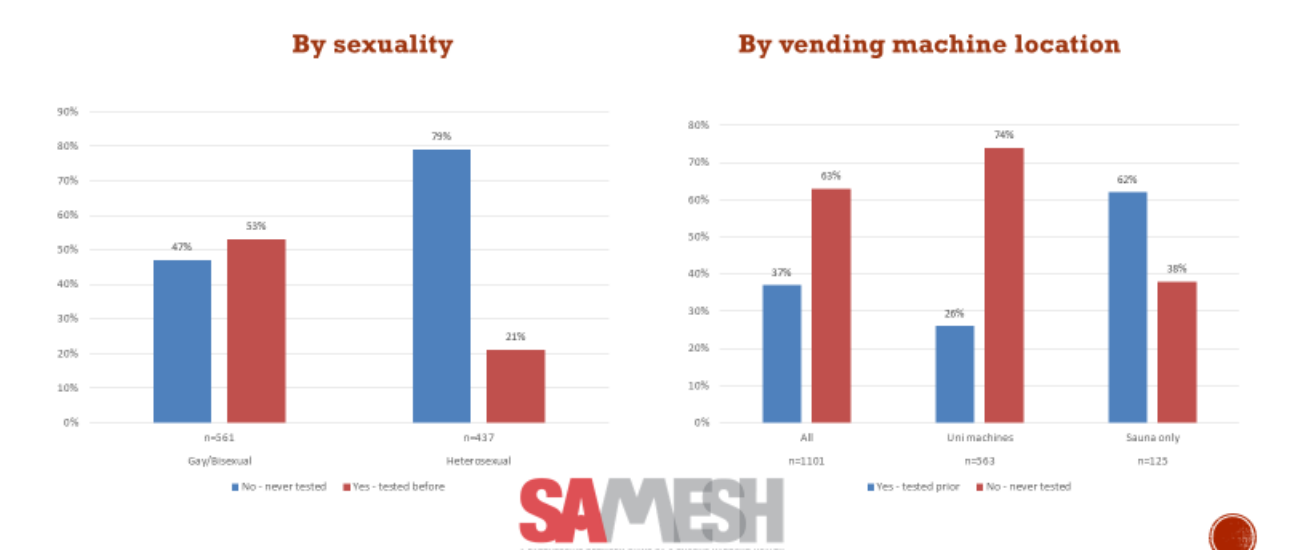
- 1615 people have registered to use CONNECT
- 1921 free HIV self-test kits have been dispensed
- 11 per cent of users are repeat users
- 21 per cent of users have accessed more than one kit

COUNTY OR BIRTH OF USERS

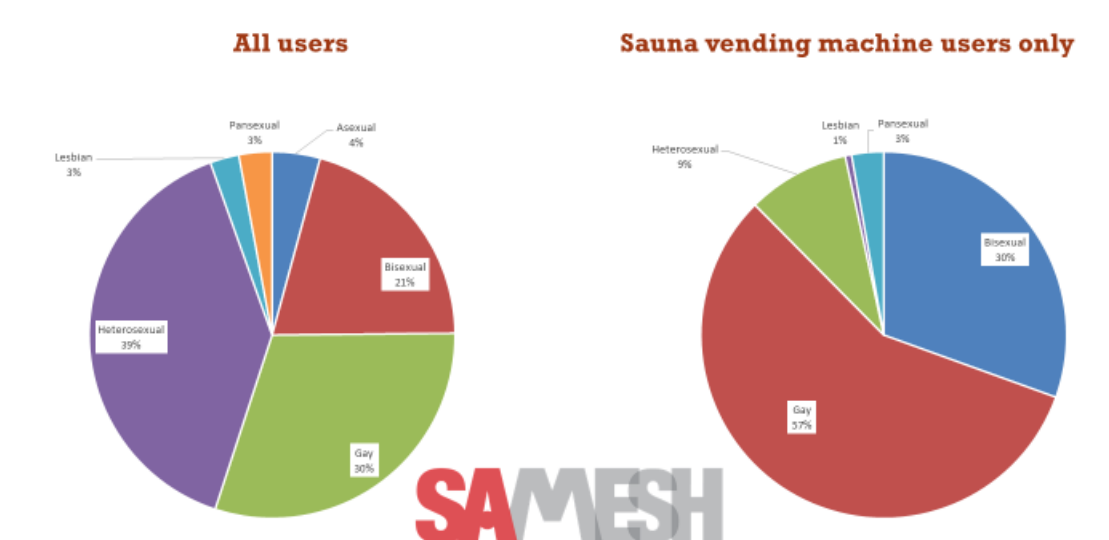
51 per cent of users overseas-born
Overseas-born users from 83 countries
Majority overseas-born users are from an Asian country
China and Hong Kong (12 per cent), India (7 per cent), the Philippines (3 per cent) and Vietnam (3 per cent) account for 2/3 of Asian-born users



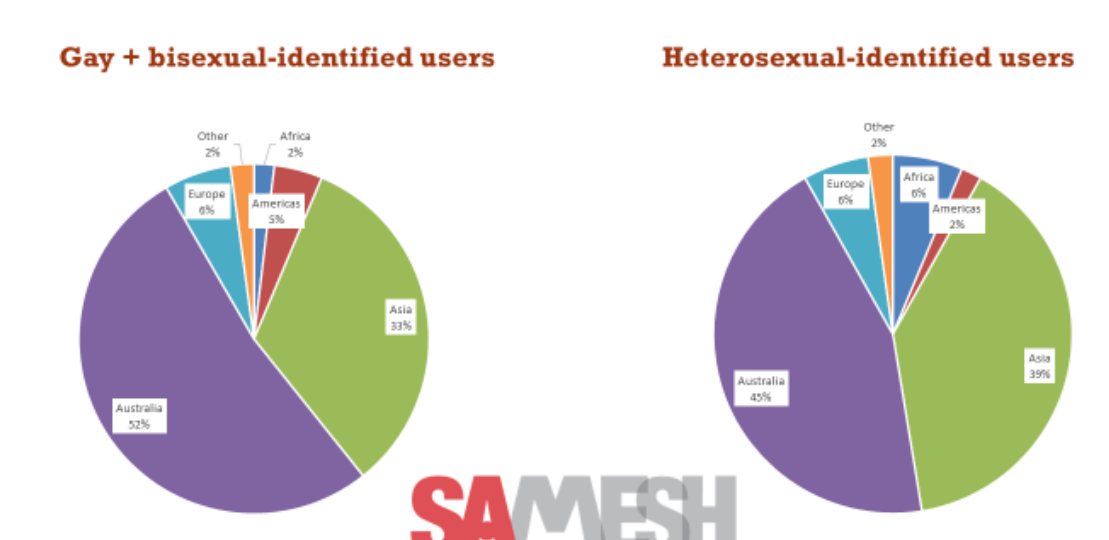
TESTING HISTORY



SEXUALITY OF USERS



COUNTY OF BIRTH + SEXUALITY



university campuses

- Repeat users are more than twice as likely to identify as gay or bisexual than as heterosexual
- 47% of users who identify as GBMSM have never tested before (compared to 12% in latest Periodic Survey)
- CONNECT has reached more users, and a larger percentage of people who have not previously tested, than any other project of its kind in the world