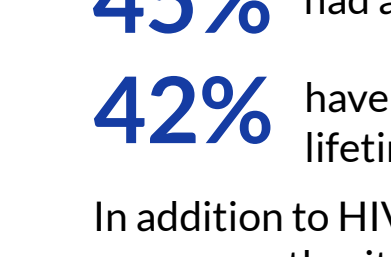


Bringing Testing Home

IMPROVING HIV/STI TESTING UPTAKE AMONG YOUTH WITH AT-HOME TESTING



Youth are disproportionately impacted by HIV & STIs but bear low testing rates.



The Center for Disease Control recommends at least **yearly HIV testing** for gay men, yet according to an online survey of gay youth

45% had an HIV test in the past year

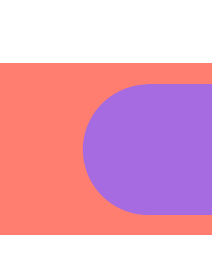
42% have **never** had an HIV test in their lifetime

In addition to HIV testing, STI screenings are low among youth with **less than 1 in 2 youth** reporting having an STI test in the past year.

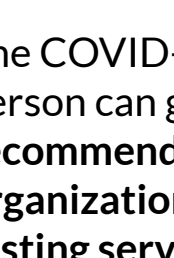
2 in 10



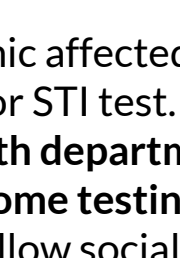
new HIV cases are among youth aged 13 to 24.



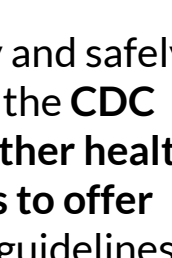
Common Factors for Low HIV/STI Testing Rates



Access to Testing Services



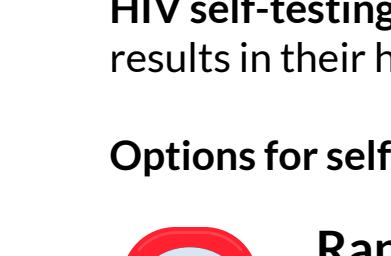
Privacy Concerns



Low Perceived Risk

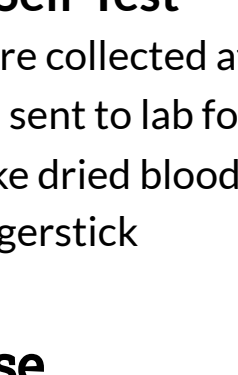


Social Stigma



HIV/STI Self-Testing offers an opportunity to increase testing rates among youth.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected how easily and safely a person can get an HIV or STI test. As a result, the **CDC recommends that health departments and other health organizations use at-home testing strategies to offer testing services that follow social distancing guidelines.**



HIV self-testing (HIVST) allows people to take an HIV test and find out their results in their home or a private space.

Options for self-testing include:



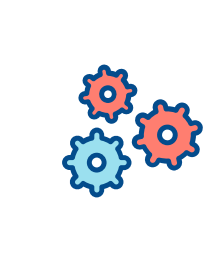
Rapid Self-Test

an FDA-approved oral fluid test done entirely at home that provides results in about 20 minutes.



Mail-in Self-Test

samples are collected at home and sent to lab for testing, like dried blood from a fingerstick



Web & App-based HIVST shows promise.

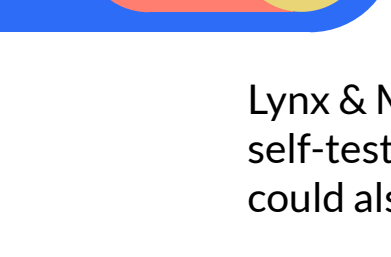
A recent study tested the effects of providing HIVST via web-portal among 2,665 gay men and found that participants who received HIVST were:

3x

more likely to test for HIV

2x

more likely to identify HIV infections



Lynx & MyChoices studied how gay youth used and reacted to app-based HIVST.



What were the goals of the study?

Lynx & MyChoices are two mobile apps tailored to increase HIV/STI testing and PrEP uptake among gay youth.



Who participated?

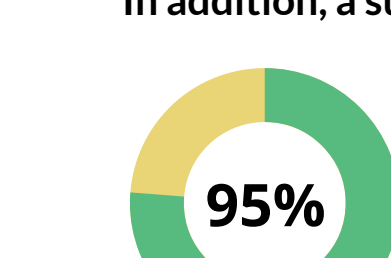
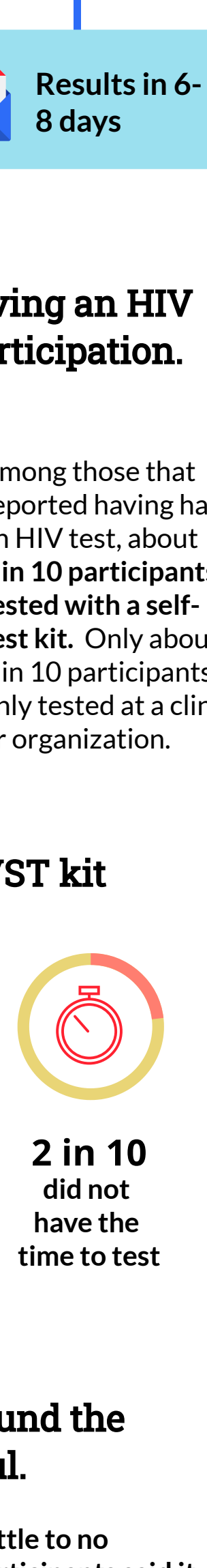
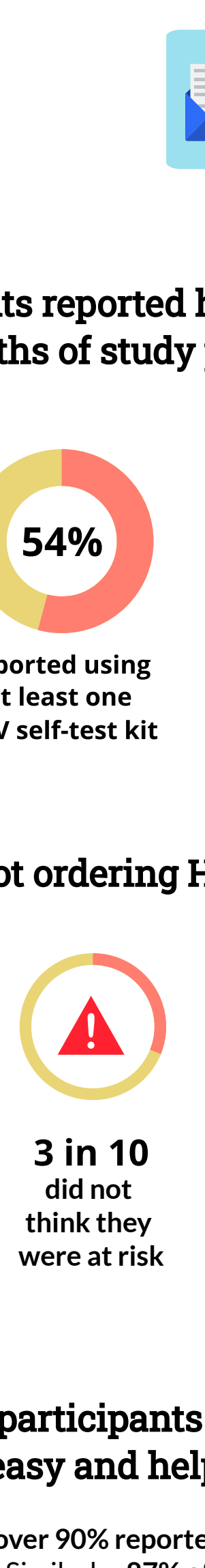
80 cisgender men aged 15-24 who (1) did not recently have an HIV test, (2) were not on PrEP, and (3) were at risk for HIV.



What tools did the apps provide?

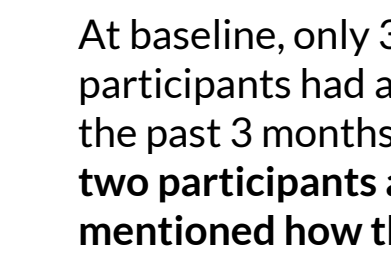
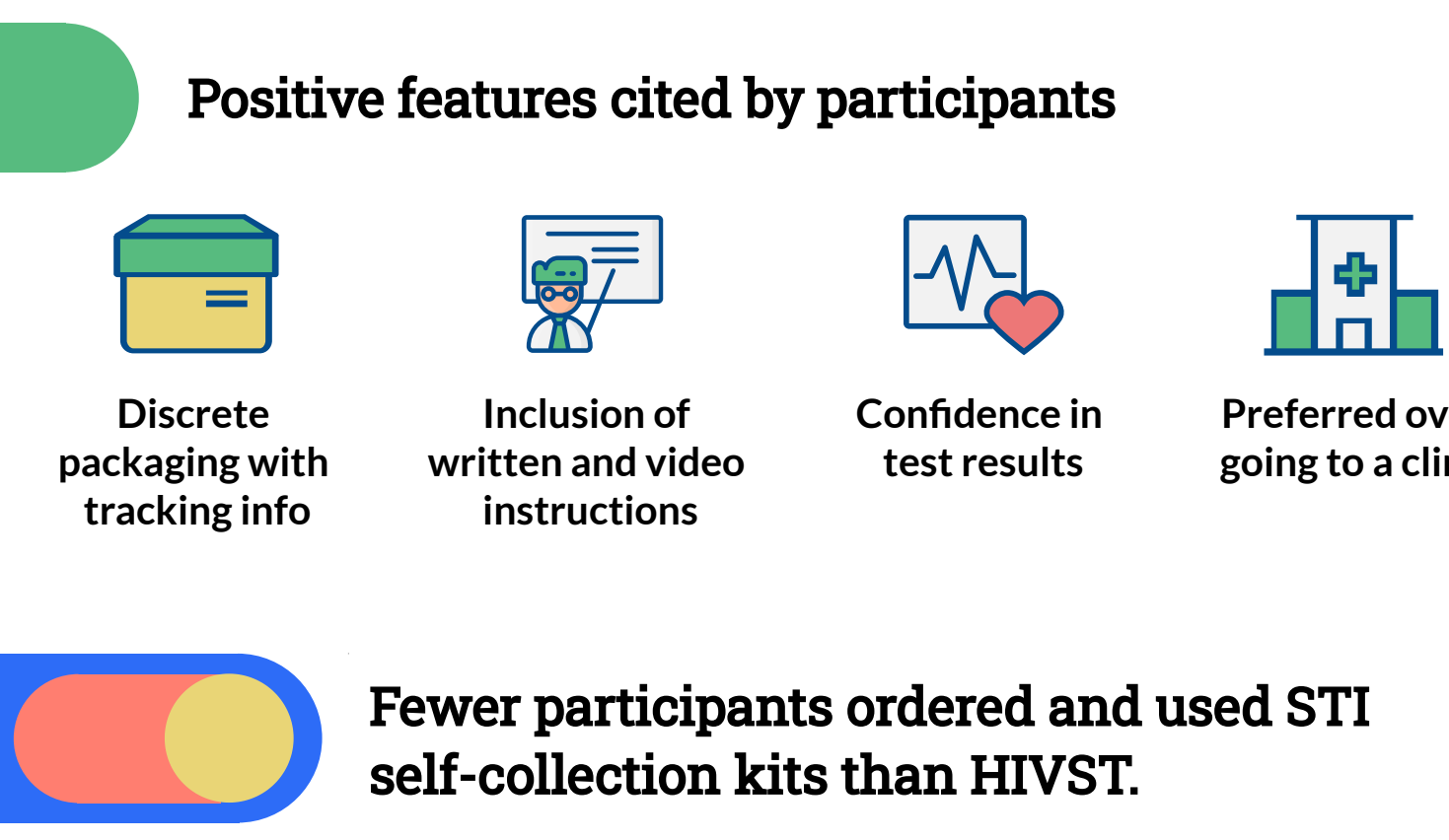
While each is app is slightly different in design, both offer features like:

- sexual risk assessments
- geo-based PrEP locator
- PrEP testimonials
- home HIV/STI testing

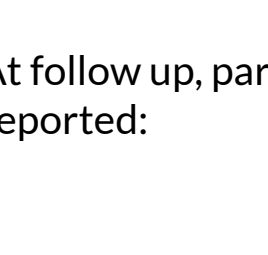


How Participants Ordered HIV & STI Self-Tests

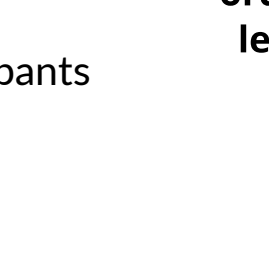
Lynx & MyChoices allowed participants to place orders for HIV/STI self-testing kits directly through the app. In addition, participants could also order free condoms, lube, and other safer sex supplies.



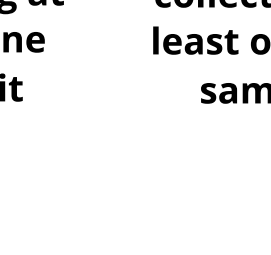
More participants reported having an HIV test after 6 months of study participation.



54% had a prior HIV test at baseline

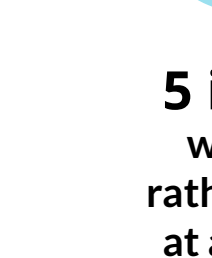


76% had an HIV test during follow up

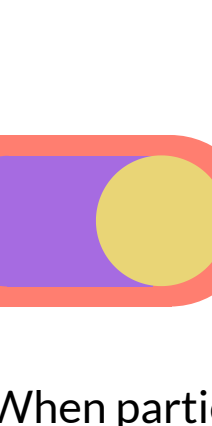


54% reported using at least one HIV self-test kit

Among those that reported having had an HIV test, about **8 in 10 participants tested with a self-test kit**. Only about **2 in 10 participants** only tested at a clinic or organization.



Common reasons for not ordering HIVST kit



5 in 10 would rather test at a clinic



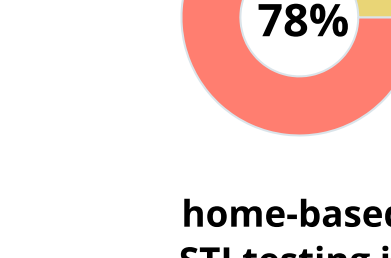
3 in 10 had a recent test elsewhere



3 in 10 did not think they were at risk



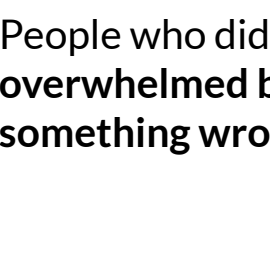
2 in 10 did not have the time to test



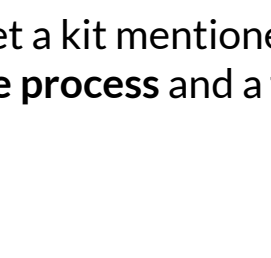
The majority of participants found the HIVST process easy and helpful.

Among participants who ordered a test, **over 90% reported little to no difficulty** ordering an HIV or STI test kit. Similarly, **87% of participants said it was extremely or very helpful** to be able to order testing kits and other safer sex supplies.

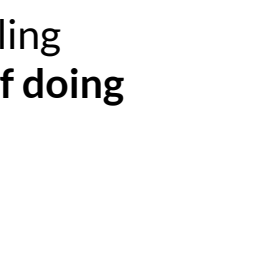
In addition, a survey of LYNX app users found that participants:



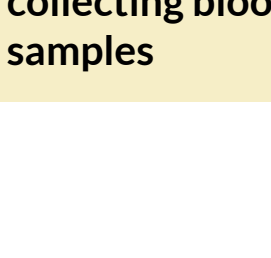
95% felt that they correctly used the HIVST kit



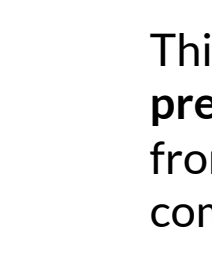
80% felt confidence in using HIVST in the future



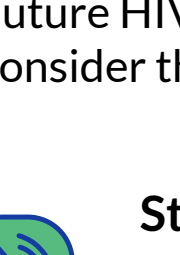
63% reported testing alone



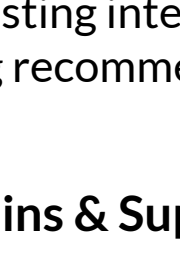
37% reported testing with other persons



Positive features cited by participants



Discrete packaging with tracking info



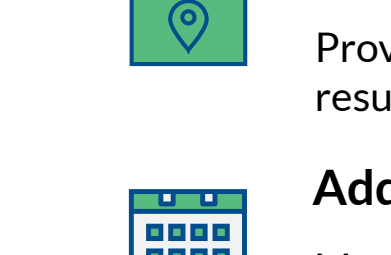
Inclusion of written and video instructions



Confidence in test results



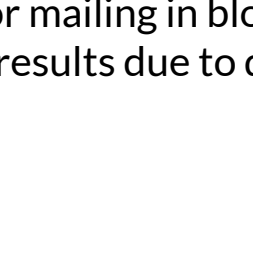
Preferred over going to a clinic



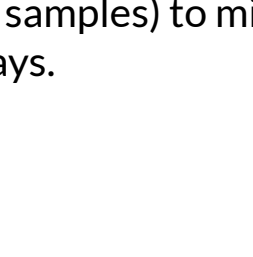
Fewer participants ordered and used STI self-collection kits than HIVST.

At baseline, only **3% of participants** had an STI in the past 3 months. **One in two participants** also mentioned how they had no regular testing schedule.

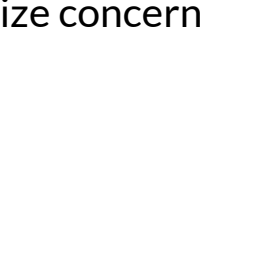
At follow up, participants reported:



65% ordering at least one STI kit



31% collecting at least one STI sample



13% returning at least one STI kit



Common reasons for not ordering an STI kit

5 in 10 would rather test at a clinic

4 in 10 did not think they were at risk

3 in 10 did not have the time to test

2 in 10 had a negative test elsewhere

STI self-collection was well accepted but still more difficult than HIVST.

When participants were asked about their experiences ordering and using STI self-collection, most participants agreed or strongly agreed:

78% home-based STI testing is convenient

85% privacy was protected through the process

51% they preferred collecting their own sample rather than a doctor

85% they would use home-based testing in the future

Challenges cited by participants

During online interviews, several participants mentioned **trouble completing samples**, especially blood, often **having to ask a friend or staff for help**. Some also felt distressed when it took longer to get results.

People who didn't get a kit mentioned feeling **overwhelmed by the process** and a **fear of doing something wrong**

50%

reported at least some difficulty collecting blood samples



HIV/STI self-testing is highly acceptable and increases testing among youth.

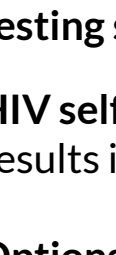
This study showed how HIV/STI self-testing can **bridge gaps in prevention services** by bringing testing to youth's doorsteps directly from a web or app-based portal, making the process convenient, comfortable, and private.

Future HIV/STI self-testing interventions using mobile apps should consider the following recommendations:



Staff Check-ins & Support

Additional communication to provide reminders and help with ordering kits or collecting samples (e.g. real-time video chat)



Tracking Information

Providing more detailed status and timing for lab deliveries and results alleviate participant concern during the process



Additional Guidance around Timelines

More clarity around timelines for mailing samples (e.g. maximum number of days for mailing in blood samples) to minimize concern about inaccurate results due to delays.

To learn more about iTech studies and other activities visit: www.itechnetwork.org

