

From sexual debut to first HIV test: delays in HIV testing among young MSM in Mexico

Prevención del VIH / ITS

Macías-gonzález, Fernando. Cisdat. Piñeira-mendoza, Alicia. Cisdat. Rivera-buendía, Frida. Cisdat. Hernández-leyva, Mónica. Cisdat. Ciudad Del Carmen

Introducción. HIV diagnosis remains a challenge in Mexico, with increasing new cases since 2014. Although HIV testing services have expanded, uptake has not increased proportionally. Limited attention has been given to the timing of the first HIV test. We examined time from sexual debut to first HIV test and factors associated with delayed testing among young MSM (16-24 years) in Mexico. **Materiales y métodos.** A cross-sectional survey was conducted at four NGO-based sites in Chiapas, Jalisco, and Yucatán from April 2023 to August 2026. Sociodemographic characteristics, sexual behaviors, and HIV testing history were collected. Participants reported whether the HIV test was their first. Group comparisons used F and chi-square tests. Among first-time testers, time from sexual debut to first HIV test was calculated. Weibull accelerated failure time models identified factors associated with testing delay, reported as time ratios (TR) with 95% confidence intervals. **Resultados.** Among 1,123 participants, 478 (42.6%) were first-time testers and 645 (57.4%) had previously tested. First-time testers were younger (20.6 vs. 21.6 years; $p < 0.001$), had lower educational attainment, and reported less condomless anal sex (70.1% vs. 80.8%), multiple partners (59.4% vs. 66.4%), chemsex (15.1% vs. 26.7%), sexual partner pressure (9.2% vs. 23.9%), and partners living with HIV (3.8% vs. 11.5%). Early sexual debut (< 16 years) was more frequent among first-time testers (33.7% vs. 23.1%; $p < 0.001$). HIV reactivity was 8.9% among first-time and 6.7% among previous testers ($p = 0.178$). Among first-time testers, mean age at first test was 20.9 years (SD 2.2), and mean time from sexual debut to testing was 53.5 months (SD 31.3). In the adjusted model ($n = 474$), longer time to testing was associated with older age (aTR=1.22 per year; 95%CI: 1.20–1.24), early sexual debut (aTR=1.68; 95%CI: 1.58–1.77), and condomless anal sex (aTR=1.08; 95%CI: 1.02–1.15). Older partner age at sexual debut was associated with shorter time to testing (aTR=0.993 per year; 95%CI: 0.988–0.999). **Conclusiones.** Young MSM in Mexico commonly experience long delays between sexual debut and first HIV testing. Earlier testing strategies should prioritize adolescents and young MSM, particularly those with early sexual debut and condomless anal sex. Higher HIV reactivity among first-time testers further supports targeted testing efforts.