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Short Communications

HIV 2025: disparities and trajectories

SC 5 STIs Testing Among Young People: Strategies, Results, and Educational Implications

N. prog: SC 5

Title: STIs Testing Among Young People: Strategies, Results, and Educational Implications

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Abstract body

Background: Young people aged 15 to 24 represent about 12% of the population in Bergamo and its province cohort, and they are a key target for the Bergamo Fast-track City network. The strategy involves awareness-raising, information and training courses in high schools with the #cHIVuoleconoscere project, the universities in collaboration with the Rectorate and Student Council, and events among the territory with significant youth participation. Making young people proactive is the core of the system.
Specific actions concerned contexts frequented by young migrants, as CPIA (Provincial Centers for Adult Education).

Materials and Methods: Data were collected with the anonymous and optional Cobatest questionnaire.
From November 2021 onward, 2,877 individuals under 24 were tested for HIV, HCV, and Syphilis, representing 38% of all the tests did by the Bergamo FTCI. (FIGURE 1)
29% did the test at the checkpoint, the others on events among the territory. (FIGURE 2)

Results: The median age at testing was 20.69 years: 2.3% were under 18, 50.4% identified as male, 48.7% as female, 0.5% as transgender, and 0.4% as non-binary.
17.4 per cent were foreigners, most of them reached in CPIAs (Provincial Adult Education Centres) or in outreach services.
92% of participants were first-time testers.
20% declared they did the test because of a risk, 83% for control (multiple answers allowed). About the use of a condom in the last intercourse, 53% say they used it and 47% said they didn't use it. Among those who didn't use a condom, only 24% stated that they did the test because they were aware of having taken a risk.
75% of the young people who did not use a condom during their last sex stated that they had never had a test before and only 21% reported that they had taken a risk. (FIGURE 3)
These data do not differ in the adult population.
The ongoing collaboration with high schools and universities has enabled a considerable increase in participation by young people in testing initiatives (in 2022 28% of the total were <24 years old, in 2023 40%, constant data to date).
Relating the number of tests carried out by young people to the total population of young people in Bergamo gives an impact index of 2.4%; compared to the over 24s, where the index is 0.5%.

Conclusions: Youth demonstrated higher testing participation, reflecting potential greater sensitivity, but also the impact of educational efforts.
While their reactive case rate is lower, risky behaviours are under-recognized.
Testing initiatives enhance awareness, encourage safer behaviours and promote health-consciousness in early sexual experiences, fundamental to reduce future infections.
In Italy, sex education should be supported financially and made curricular in schools, and the potential in terms of the propensity to be tested especially in the school environment should be exploited.

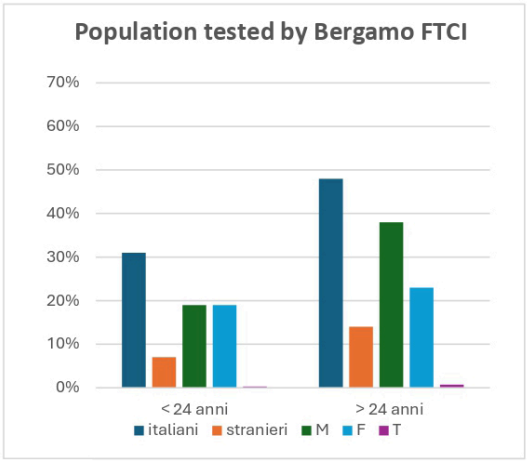
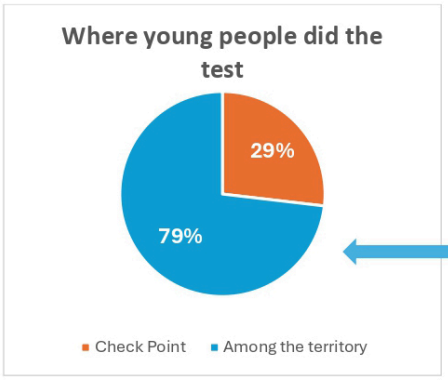
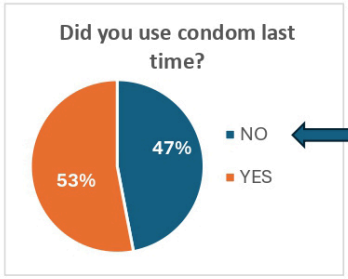


FIGURE 1



Where young people have been reached
Universities, high schools, CPIA
Locals, Bar, Pub
Events: Pride, Musical Concerts, Festivals
Youth meeting places

FIGURE 2



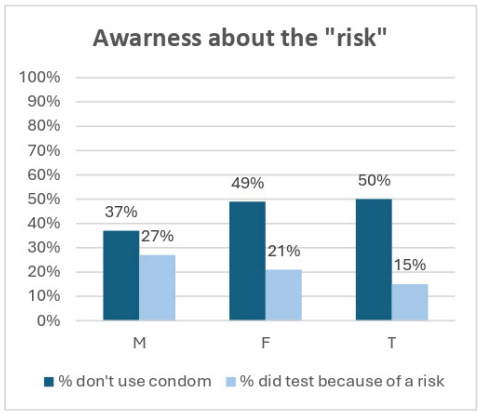


FIGURE 3