

Venue Based HIV Testing in Gay Saunas, Clubs and Bars – 3 year experience

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Testing Station at Sauna

1 Background

Formed in 1988, Action for AIDS (Afa) is a voluntary community based organization that provides support and assistance to HIV-infected persons living with HIV and AIDS; organizes awareness, education to high-risk communities; and runs the largest anonymous VCT facility in Singapore.

Till the end of October 2009 there were 4,159 Singapore residents who tested positive for HIV. 378 were newly diagnosed in 2009. The proportion of MSMs has been increasing - from 12.5% in 2000 to 34.5% in 2008. Intervention programs targeting MSM were ramped up since the middle of the decade.

Increasing accessibility to HIV testing and obtaining sero-prevalence of HIV infection among MSM were the objectives of a novel outreach testing program.

2 Methods

Since 2007 Afa has conducted anonymous free HIV testing projects using the OraQuick rapid HIV-1&2 oral fluid test kits for patrons of gay saunas, bars and clubs.

This service was conducted over 3 periods:

- Period A - end 2007/early 2008
- Period B - end 2008/early 2009
- Period C - end 2009/early 2010

Venues frequented by MSM were identified; these included saunas, bars & clubs.

MSM patrons were approached to test free of charge.

The tests were done anonymously to minimize the fear of loss of privacy and confidentiality.

Each participant was given a serial numbered ID card which had information on interpretation of negative or positive results, where to go for confirmatory tests, and the telephone number to call for test result and counseling.



ID Card & Survey Card

3 Results

Demographic

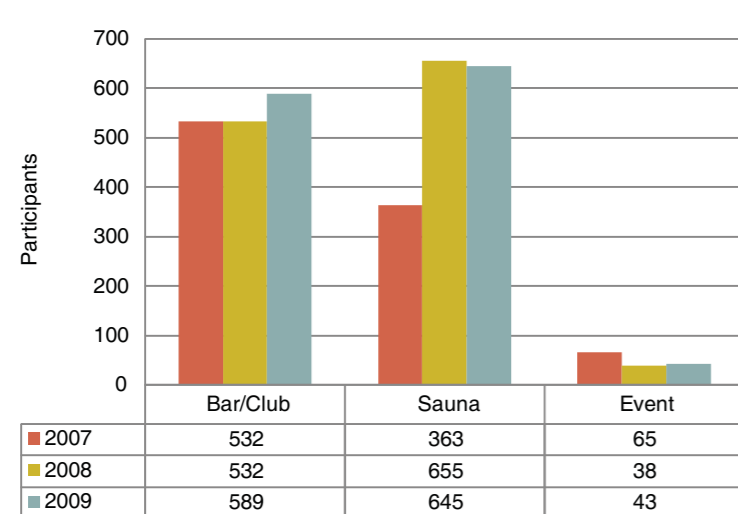
Number of Participating Venues

Project	Venues	Approached	Participated	Declined
2009	Saunas	9	8	1
	Bars/Clubs	8	8	
	MSM events	3	3	
2008	Saunas	7	5	2
	Bars/Clubs	5	4	1
	MSM events	1	1	
2007	Saunas	6	4	2
	Bars/Clubs	5	4	1
	MSM events	1	1	

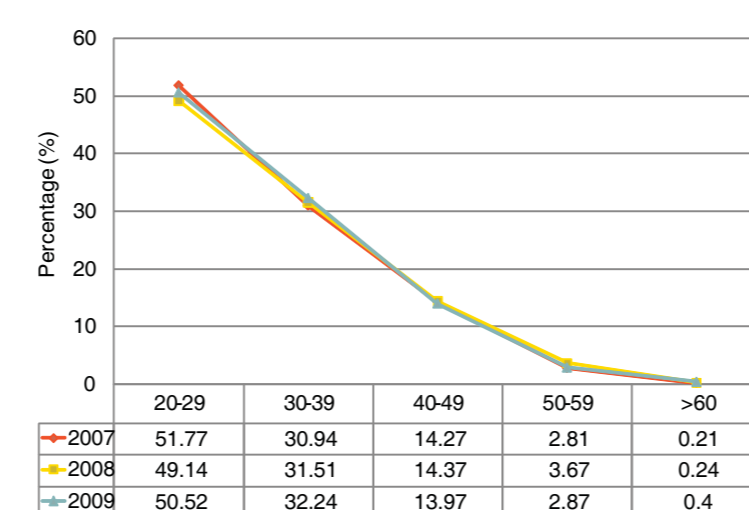
2009 - 2010 Breakdown

Venues	Samples	Start	End	Visits
8 saunas	645	18 Nov'09	26 Feb'10	51
8 bars / clubs	589	14 Nov'09	26 Feb'10	17
3 MSM events	43	10 Oct'09, 12 Dec'09, 06 Feb'10		

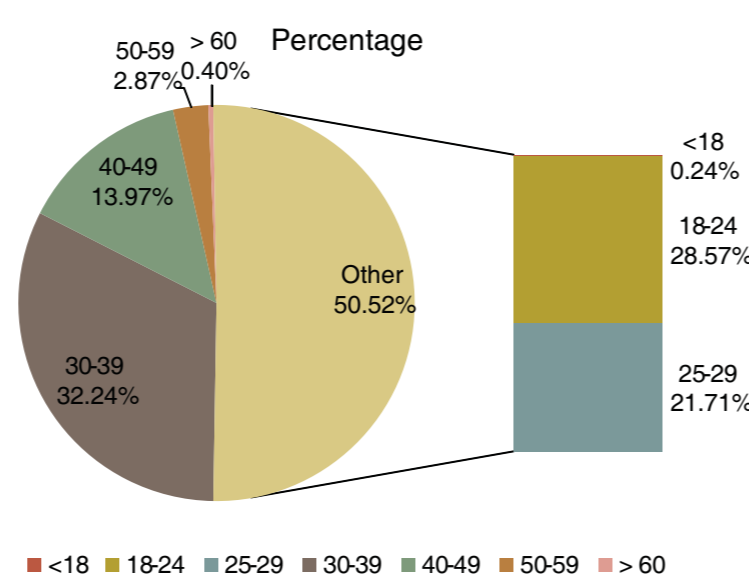
Testers by Types of Venue and Year



Age Group by Year

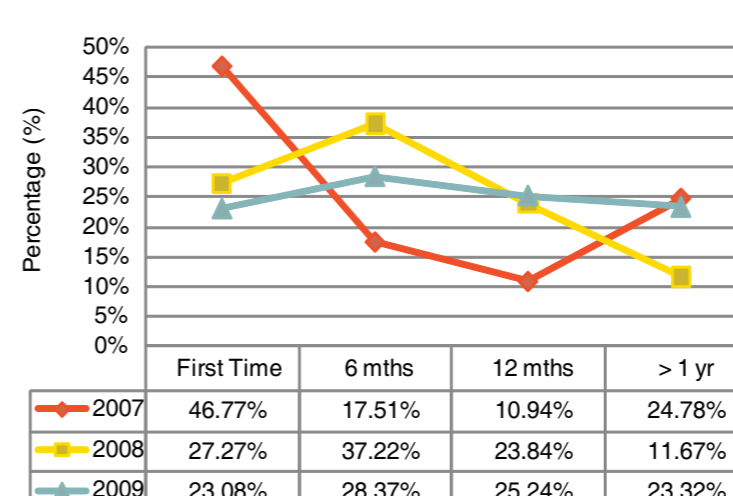


Age Group Breakdown (Year 2009)

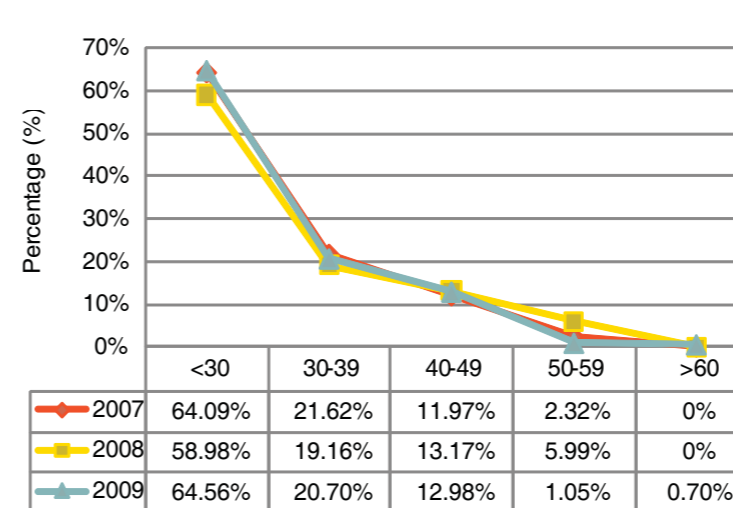


Testing Habit

Last HIV Test Done by Year

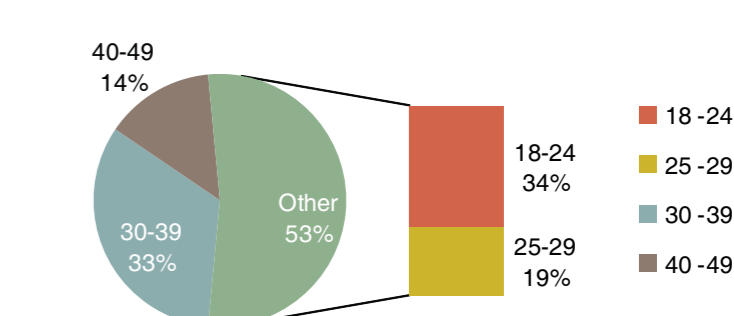


First Time Tester by Age and Year

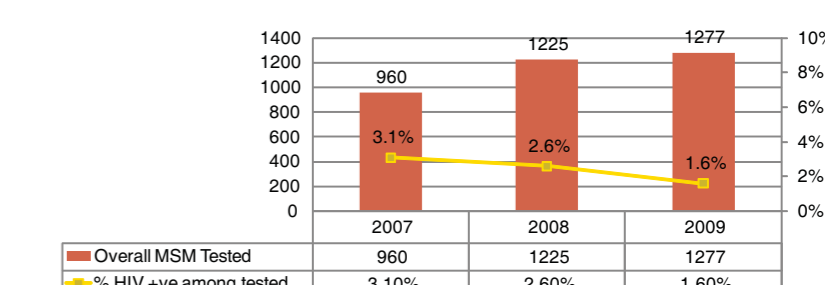


Prevalence

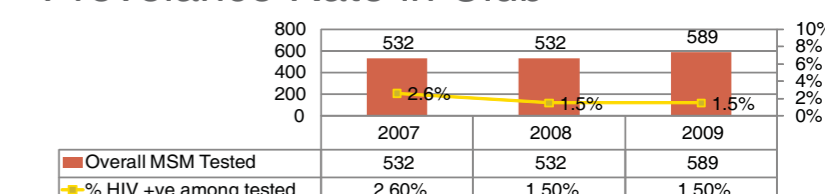
New Notification by Age Group



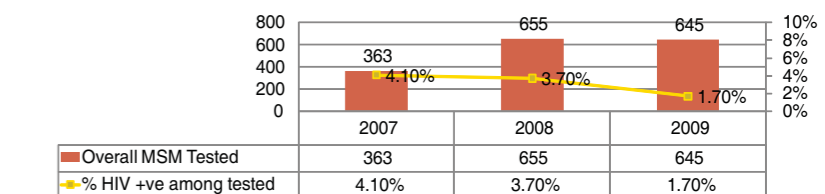
Overall Prevalence Rate



Prevalence Rate in Club



Prevalence Rate in Sauna



4 Findings & Observations

Majority of those tested were between 18 to 29 years. A slight increase in this age group as they feel more comfortable with HIV testing and are more willing to step forward to get tested.

A similar clientele pattern was observed as with the other two projects.

It was also observed that participants who took the HIV test were different at differing venues; those from saunas were older and had a greater proportion of non-Singaporeans/PRs than those in clubs/bars

Conclusion

These testing programs were effective in bringing HIV testing to venues.

Aside from providing results to the clients, HIV testing in venues was a valuable reminder in the presence of HIV/AIDS in the community.

Businesses and stake-holders were supportive and active partners in this effort, and outreach testing has become widely accepted and increasingly requested for the members of the MSM community.

About Action For AIDS, Singapore

Action for AIDS Singapore (Afa) was set up in 1988 to combine efforts from diverse communities and disciplines to promote AIDS education, care and advocacy.

Action for AIDS, Singapore was recently awarded the prestigious 2010 Dr Lee Jong-wook Memorial Prize by the World Health Organisation

