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BACKGROUND

- People who inject drugs (PWID) are disproportionately affected by HIV globally, including those in the San Diego-Tijuana border region (SDTBR).
- Yet, HIV testing is low among PWID¹ due to multi-level barriers (e.g., fear of stigma and discrimination, limited access to healthcare, transportation, homelessness) to standard, facility-based HIV testing.²
- HIV self-testing (HIVST) kits, including their secondary distribution in the social networks of PWID, could circumvent these multi-level barriers and promote HIV testing but remains understudied among PWID.^{3,4}
- **Objective:** We examined willingness to use and distribute HIVST kits among PWID in the SDTBR.



METHODS

- **Study Population:** 612 PWID ≥18 years of age enrolled in the ongoing *La Frontera* study from 2020-2021.⁵
- **Study Procedures:** Participants underwent HIV testing and completed interviewer-administered surveys, including a social network inventory (SNI).
- **Data Analysis:**
 - Modified Poisson regression examined associations between willingness to use and distribute HIVST kits and socio-demographics, HIV testing, substance use and sexual behaviors, and social network characteristics.
 - We restricted analyses to participants who tested HIV negative and did not report prior HIV diagnosis (N=539), and further restricted analyses of social network characteristics to those who consented to SNI (N=366).

We found high willingness to use and distribute HIVST kits among PWID, and high potential for secondary distribution to peer networks to increase HIV testing among PWID who face the greatest barriers to standard HIV testing.

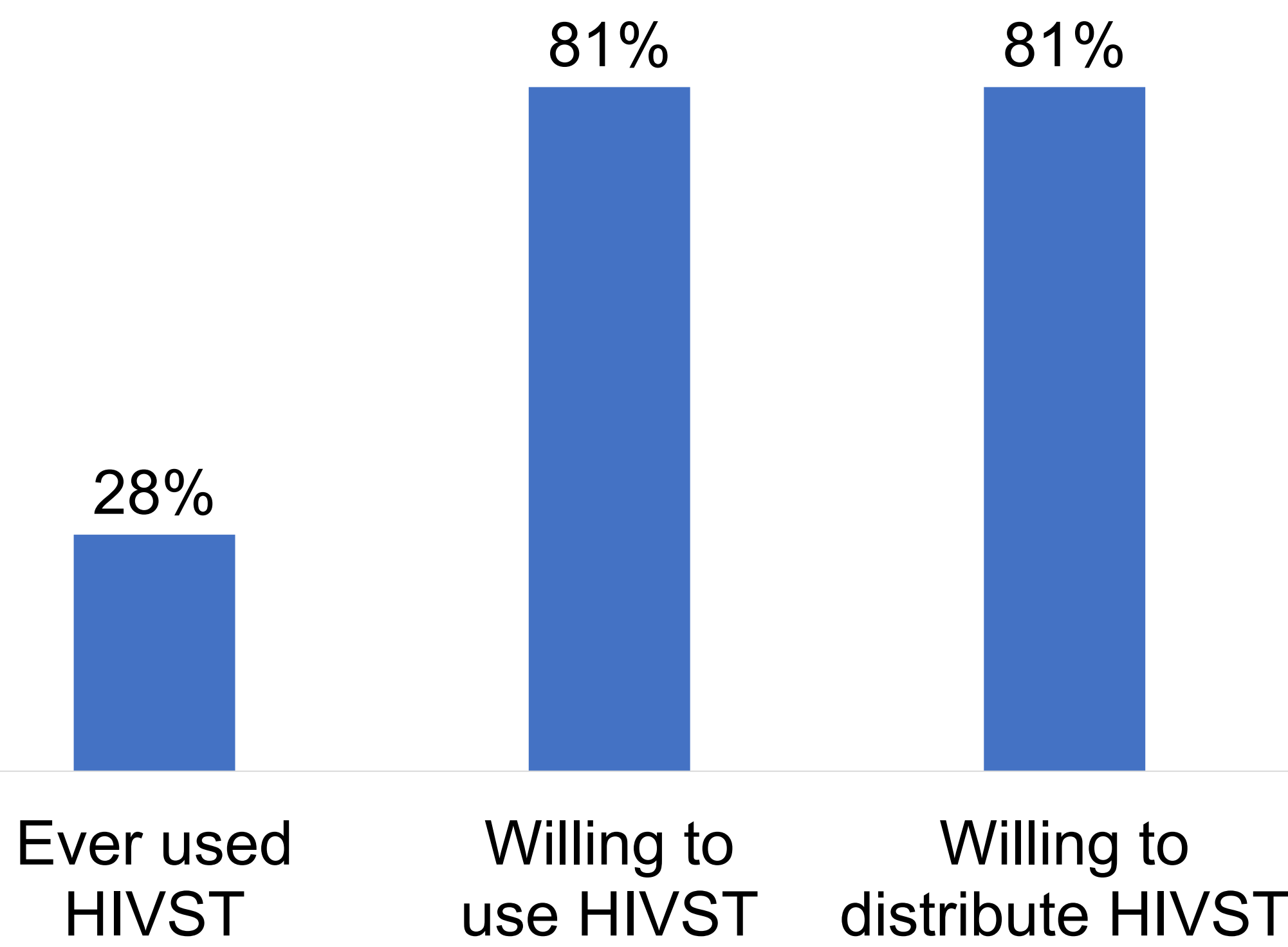
RESULTS

• Individual Characteristics (N=539):

- Mean age: 43.3 years (SD: 10.8); 75% assigned male sex at birth
- 72% identified as Latino/Hispanic; 69% resided in San Diego
- 74% prior HIV testing; 46% past 6-month homelessness

• Social Network Characteristics (N=366):

- Mean social network size: 3.2 members (SD: 2.1)
- On average, networks consisted of mostly persons participants described as male (71%), using drugs every day (65%), and having a history of unstable housing (58%) and detention/arrest (56%).



I would want use HIVST kits because... (N=436)	
I would be able to test for HIV more regularly	94%
It would be more convenient than going to a clinic/CBO	91%
It would give me more privacy and confidentiality	95%

I would not want to use HIVST kits because... (N=103)	
I would be worried that HIV self-tests are less accurate	24%
I would be worried about using the test incorrectly	24%
I would be worried about misinterpreting the test result	24%

Individual characteristics associated with willingness to use HIVST kits	Adjusted PR (95% CI)*
Years of education	1.02 (1.01-1.04)
Prior HIV testing	1.24 (1.10-1.40)
Prior HIVST kit use	1.27 (1.18-1.36)
Hazardous alcohol consumption	1.12 (1.04-1.22)
Injected drugs multiple times per day (past 6 months)	0.87 (0.80-0.95)
Receptive syringe sharing (past 6 months)	0.92 (0.85-1.00)
Perceived HIV risk	0.83 (0.74-0.93)

Individual and social network characteristics associated with willingness to distribute HIVST kits	Adjusted PR (95% CI)*
Years of education	1.02 (1.01-1.04)
Prior HIV testing	1.27 (1.12-1.43)
Prior HIVST kit use	1.25 (1.17-1.35)
Willing to use HIVST kits	8.31 (4.88-14.17)
Network size	1.04 (1.01-1.08)
% of network with whom they are “very close”	0.80 (0.69-0.94)
% of network that has ever had unstable housing	1.51 (1.31-1.74)
% of network that has ever been detained/arrested	1.57 (1.36-1.82)
% of network that offered drugs/encouraged drug use	1.29 (1.16-1.44)

* Prevalence ratios (PRs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) from separate modified Poisson regression models for each characteristic-outcome relationship of interest adjusted for variables identified using directed acyclic graphs (DAGs) as necessary to control for confounding.

CONCLUSIONS

- We found high potential for HIVST kits and their secondary distribution to increase PWID HIV testing.
- Strategies to bolster HIV knowledge and address fears of stigma from close peers may enhance the impact of HIVST kits and their secondary distribution among PWID.

SELECTED REFERENCES

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