

## Men who have sex with men in small cities less likely to be tested for HIV

June 2 2016

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Susan Holtzman stands in front of the 'rainbow staircase' of inclusion at UBC's Okanagan campus. Credit: UBC

Men who live outside major Canadian cities and have sex with other men are less likely to get an HIV test than their metropolitan counterparts, a UBC study shows.

The study, conducted at UBC's Okanagan campus, also shows that the lower testing rates are likely connected to internalized feelings of homophobia and a reluctance to disclose [sexual preferences](#) at a doctor's office.

"This study shows that a lack of feeling accepted appears to not only pose mental health risks, it poses physical [health](#) risks," says Susan Holtzman, associate professor of psychology. "The fact that these [men](#) are reluctant to tell their doctor about their sexuality is something that requires attention in our healthcare system if we hope to increase the number of people tested for HIV."

Holtzman's study, conducted in cooperation with the Living Positive Resource Centre in Kelowna, BC, surveyed 153 people recruited through online dating sites and events in the gay community.

The study found that 24 per cent of men living in smaller communities had never had an HIV test, compared to the 14 to 17 per cent of untested men living in large cities such as Vancouver and Toronto.

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, men who have sex with men represented 53 per cent of total HIV infections in 2014, accounting for 39,630 people across the country.

Holtzman's study was recently published in the journal *AIDS Care*.

Provided by University of British Columbia

Citation: Men who have sex with men in small cities less likely to be tested for HIV (2016, June 2) retrieved 31 January 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-06-men-sex-small-cities-hiv.html>

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