

Community-based initiatives encourage HIV testing in Black and Minority Ethnic groups (BAME)

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BACKGROUND

According to PHE, by the end of 2011 an estimated 96 000 were living with HIV and almost 1 in 4 of them were unaware of their infection. In addition, 47% of the HIV diagnoses were¹ made at a late stage of infection when treatment should have already begun. Higher percentages of late diagnoses are more common in black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (BAME). In order to reduce the number of undiagnosed and late-diagnosed infections in the UK, HIV testing should be available to people in a range of settings. Community services are well placed to offer this in places that are more accessible and acceptable to patients than traditional settings. Naz Project London (NPL), provides sexual health and HIV prevention and support services to BAME communities. As the largest BAME led sexual health organisation in London, NPL is committed to making a positive contribution to addressing the sexual health inequalities BAME communities are facing. Our agenda is to achieve sexual health equality for BAME communities within the next decade by challenging HIV and homophobic stigma. We believe that stigma is one of the key barriers that prevents BAME communities from enjoying good sexual health.

METHODS

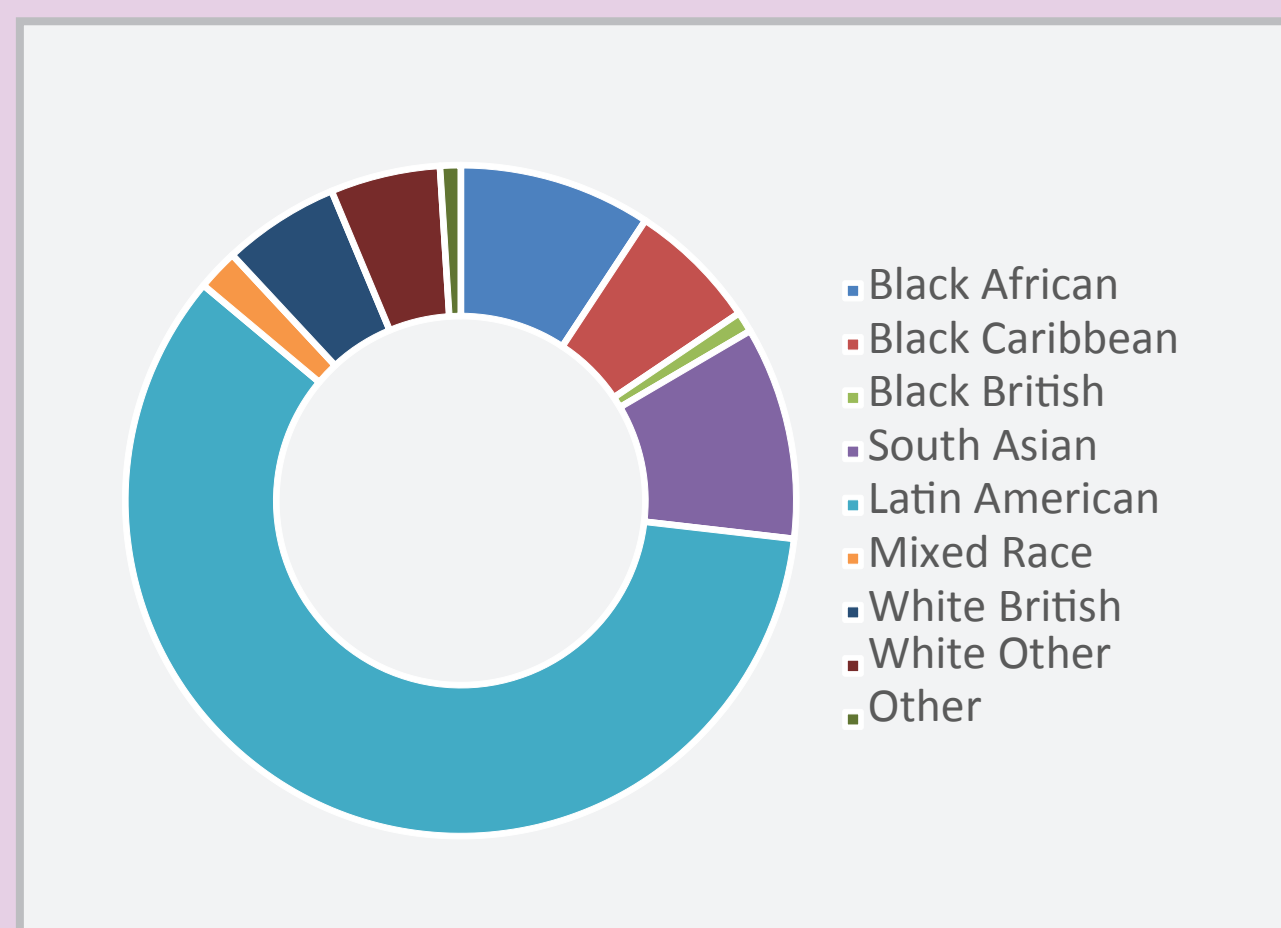
Staff and key volunteers at NPL were trained to undertake rapid HIV testing along with pre-and post-test counselling. From June 2013, HIV testing has been conducted in a variety of settings and through various testing campaigns and initiatives, including:

- “*Lets STOP HIV*” campaign targeted at the Latin American community in partnership with CLAUUK (the Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK) via various community-based organisations across London.
- National HIV Testing Week
- Health and Wellbeing fairs
- At NPL premises

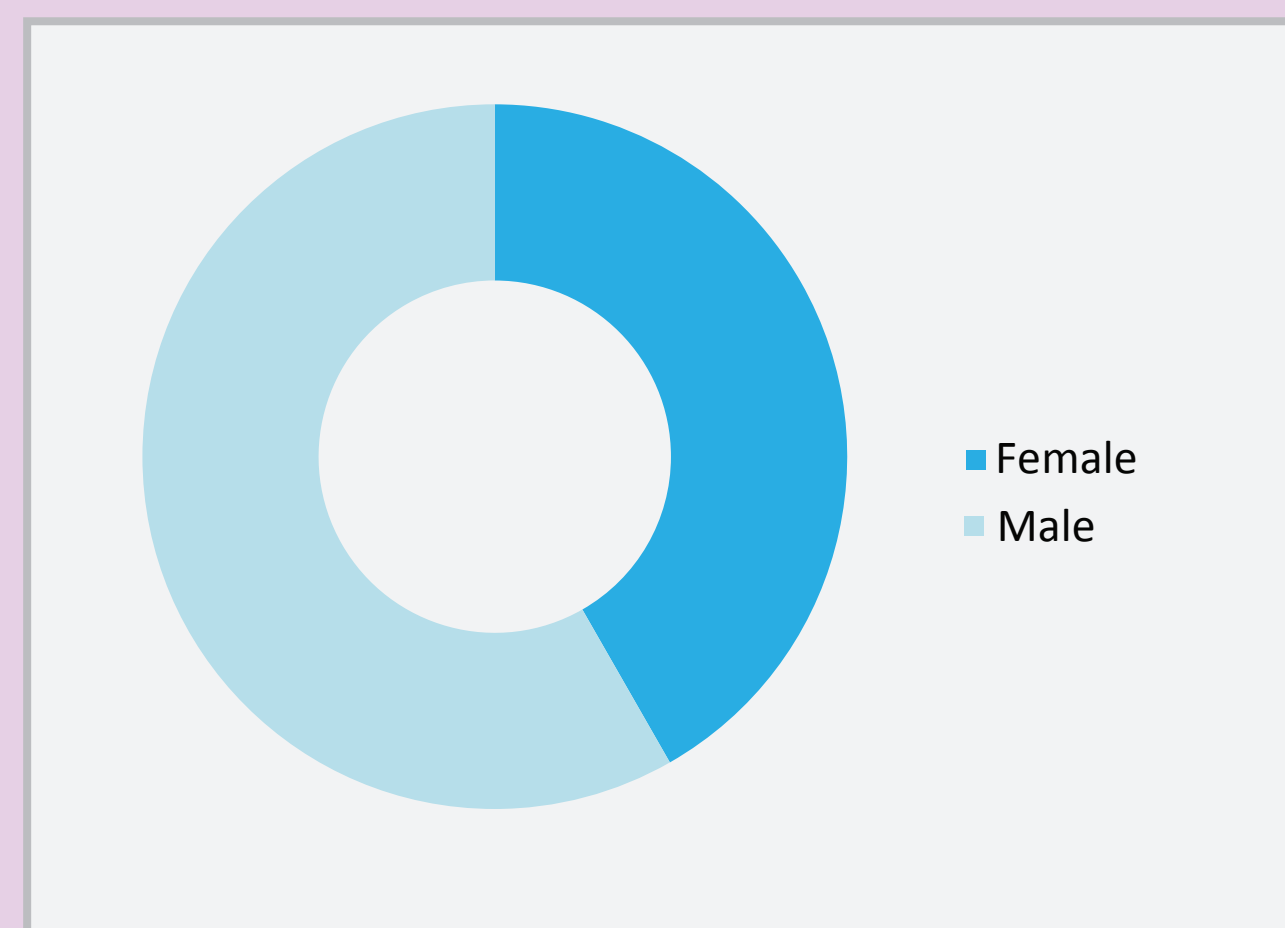
Demographic information on the 302 individuals who tested was collected as well as comments on reasons for testing and the reasons for testing through NPL services.

WHO DID WE REACH?

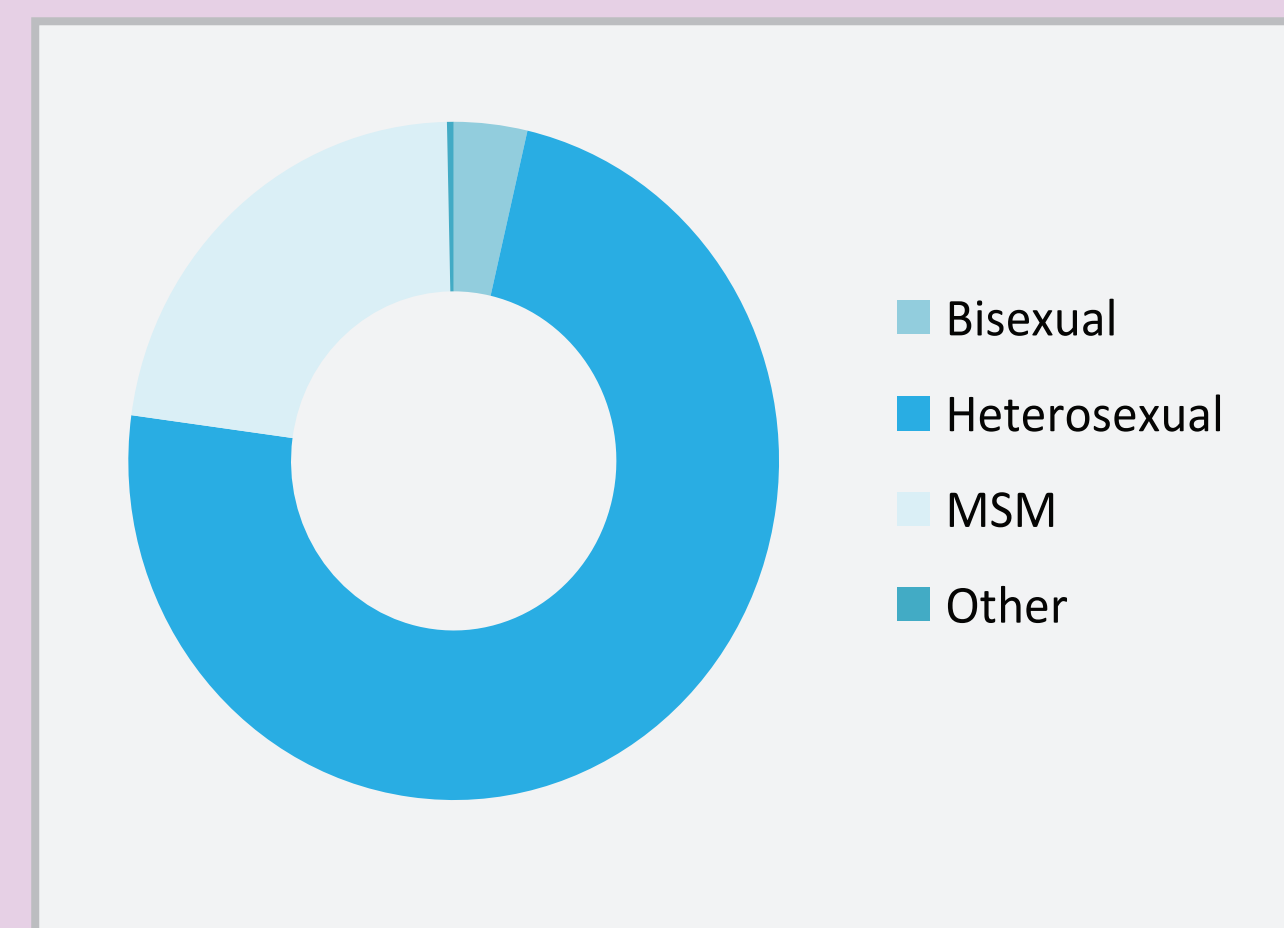
Ethnicity



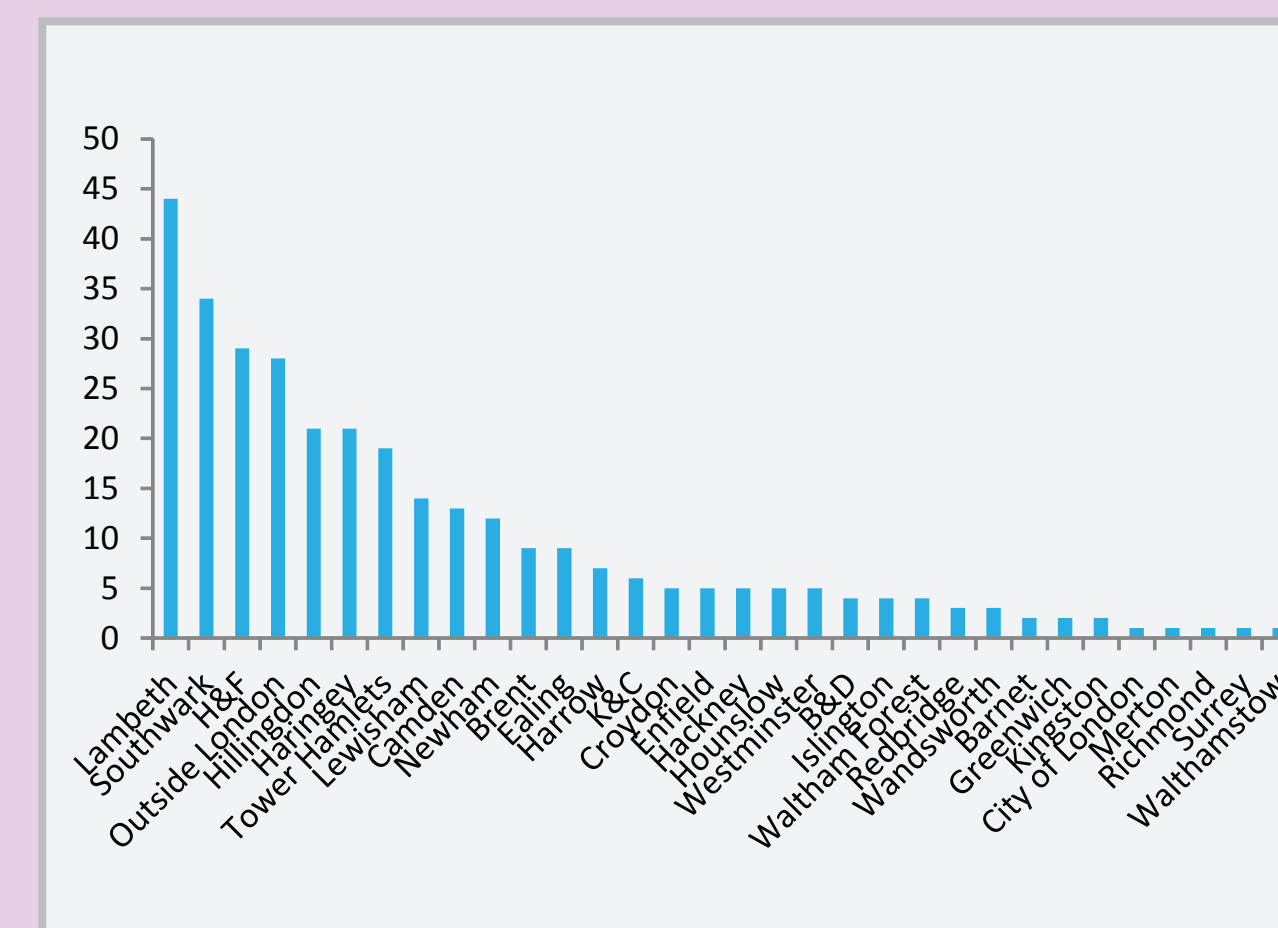
Gender



Sexual Orientation



Borough of residence



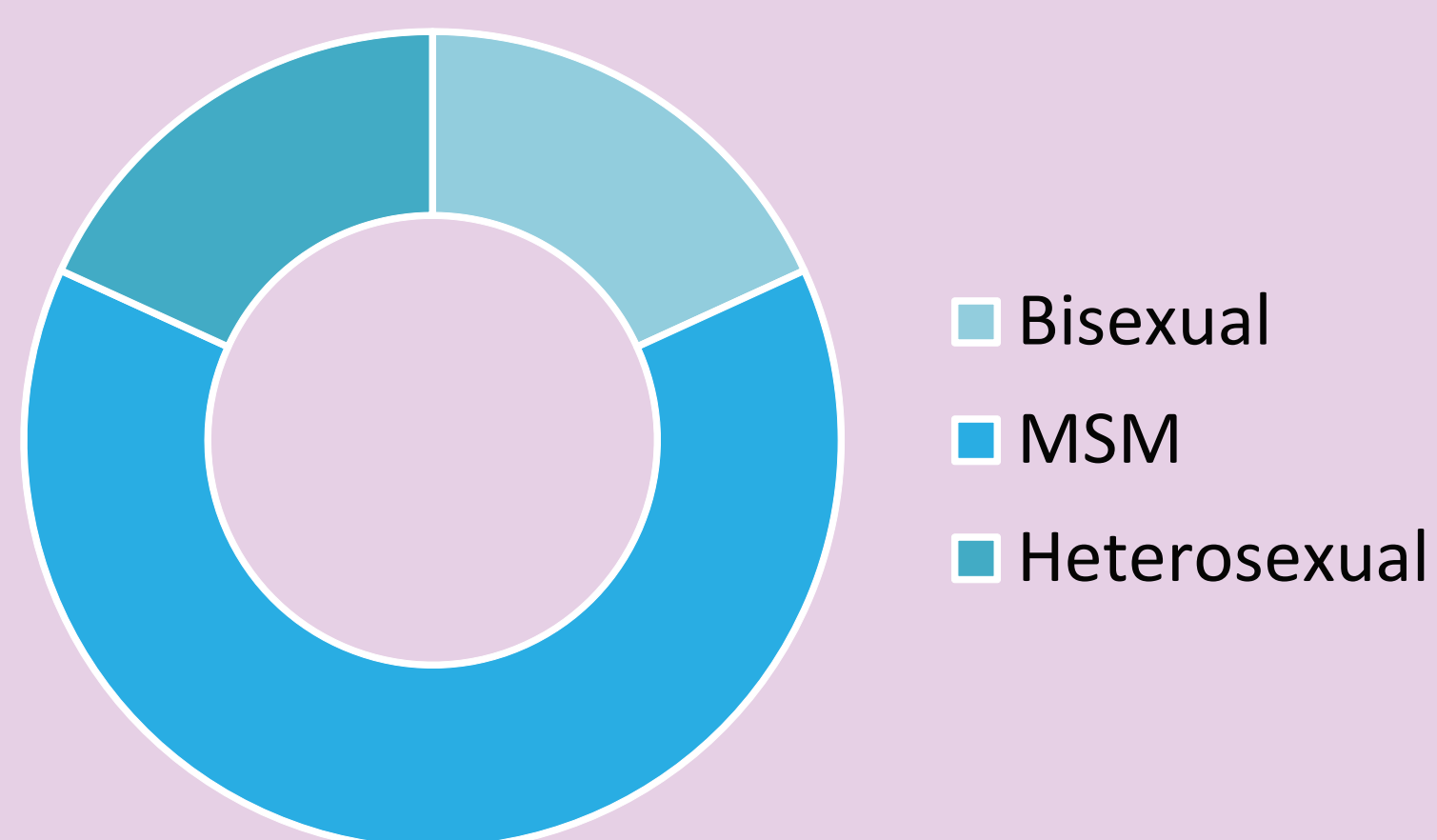
WHAT WAS THE OUTCOME?

Number of HIV tests conducted*	Reactive	Positivity Rate
302	11	3.6%

* Between June '13 and March '14

- **Confirmatory tests:** Out of these 11 reactive tests, 8 were confirmatory tests for individuals previously diagnosed with HIV in another country and seeking HIV testing at NPL in order to confirm their HIV status in the UK. Once the test is done at NPL they are linked to HIV support, care and treatment services.

Sexual orientation of those tested reactive

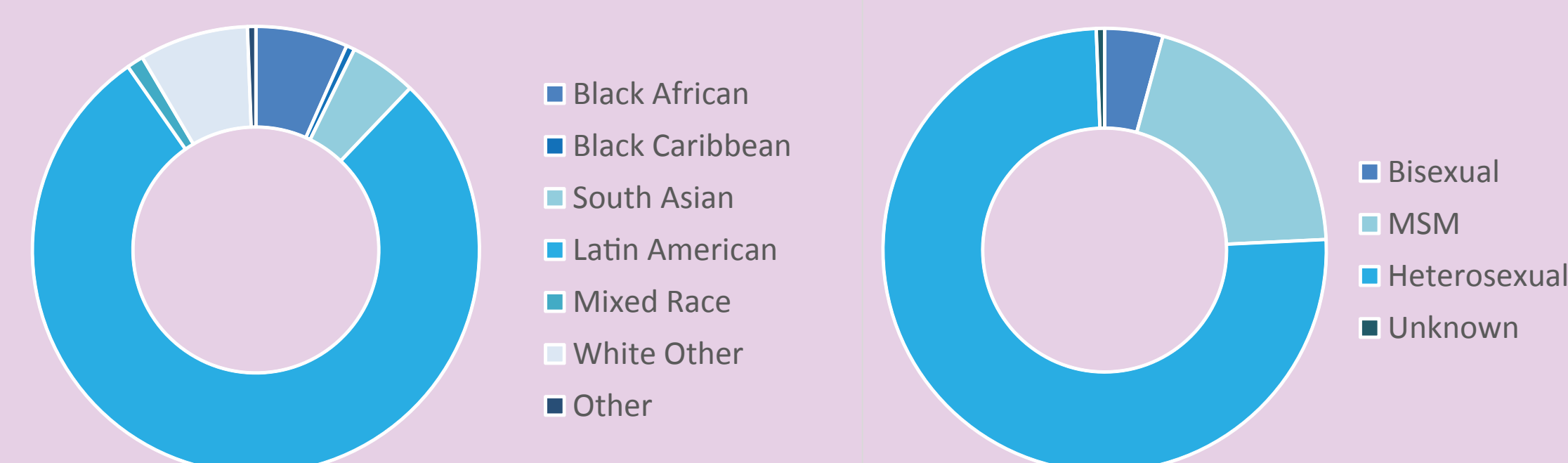


Reasons for testing: when asked for the reason why they were testing, 49% said that they wanted to know their HIV status and less than 1% said it was because they had had unprotected sex.

Why through NPL: when asked for the reason why they took the test through NPL, the most common answers were: I can speak my language (25%), relaxing atmosphere (25%) and confidentiality (17%).

PREVIOUS ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE SERVICES IN THE UK

- 55% of the people who tested at NPL had never accessed UK health services before (165 out of 302). This jumps to 78% for the Latin American community.



- In addition to the 11 HIV reactive test results, since May 2013, NPL had approximately **29 new clients living with HIV for whom NPL was the first point of contact to UK services.** They were then referred to the GUM clinic for a confirmatory test and were counted as a new HIV diagnoses.
- This is in total **40 new HIV diagnoses in 11 months** (reactive and first point of contact to UK services), and from those 96% had previously not accessed health services.

CONCLUSION

The high HIV positivity rate seen and high number of people reported to have never been seen in a sexual health clinic is of concern and a sobering reminder of the unmet need for targeted HIV testing in hard-to reach communities. Access to GUM clinics and primary care is restricted for many because of language and cultural barriers. Patients were prepared to travel across 21 different London boroughs to access the service. Trained NPL volunteers are of diverse ethnicities and come from a range of backgrounds, and have huge insight into the problems faced by these communities. They are therefore able to reach BAME at-risk individuals and to mobilise them for HIV testing in ways that traditional settings have always failed to do in the past and crucially, to provide the much needed support in encouraging individuals already known to be positive to access and remain engaged in HIV care in the country.

¹ HIV in the UK:2012 Report