

Wales HIV Testing Week 2024: a community-led public health campaign to increase and diversify HIV testing in Wales.

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Background:

HIV testing is crucial for ending HIV as a public health challenge. This paper presents an evaluation of the impact of Wales HIV Testing Week 2024, which promoted HIV testing through a strategy co-designed with volunteers, clinicians, and communities. Delivered by Public Health Wales in partnership with Fast Track Cymru, a Welsh network of local authorities, clinicians, academics, and third-sector organisations, the campaign aimed to normalise testing, reduce stigma, and reach under-tested groups. This analysis builds on data and learning from previous campaign years (2020–2023).

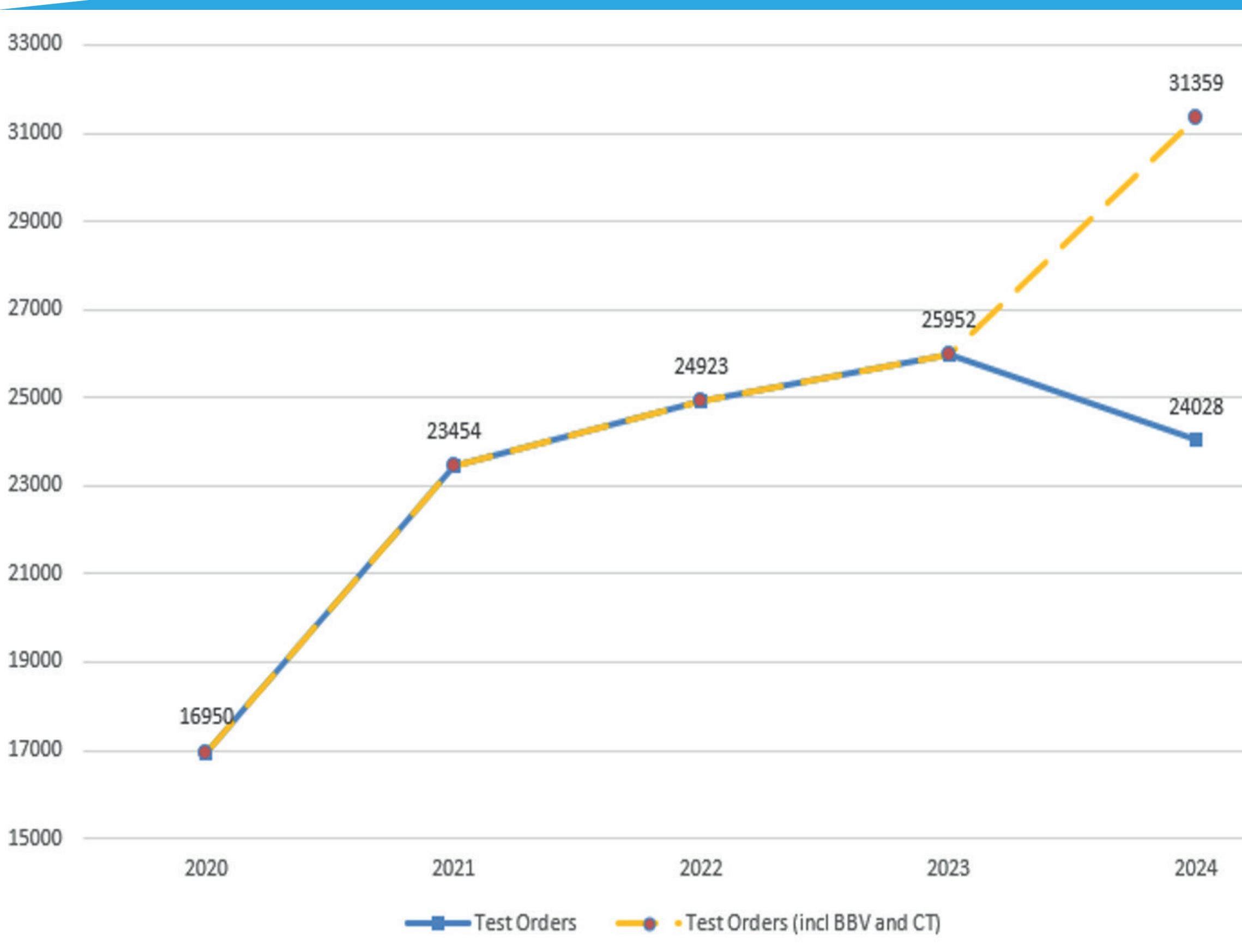
Methods:

The campaign ran primarily online during November 2024, encouraging users to order postal testing kits via the Sexual Health Wales website. In 2024, the campaign introduced three distinct testing routes: the existing “Test and Post” option, a new bloodborne viruses (BBV) pathway via NHS 111 Wales, and expanded community testing. Promotional strategies included social media ads, paid influencers, dating app advertising, and programmatic display campaigns. Pre-campaign promotion began in October, with impact tracked through to December. Quantitative data included click-tracking, orders and returns of test kits, and web and social media platform analytics.

Results:

A total of **12,653 test kits were ordered in November 2024**, compared to 5,787 in 2020. Orders via the “Test and Post” route were 8,273, with the BBV route and community testing contributing 4,390 kits. Test orders continued to increase in Wales from 5,787 in November 2020; to 8,254 in November 2021; to 8,433 in November 2022; and to c.9,000 in November 2023. Total orders for the October–December trimester reached 31,359 kits in 2024, a 31% increase from 2023 (24,028 kits) - see **Figure 1**.

HIV test kit orders - All Wales



Returned test kits with blood sample (with average)

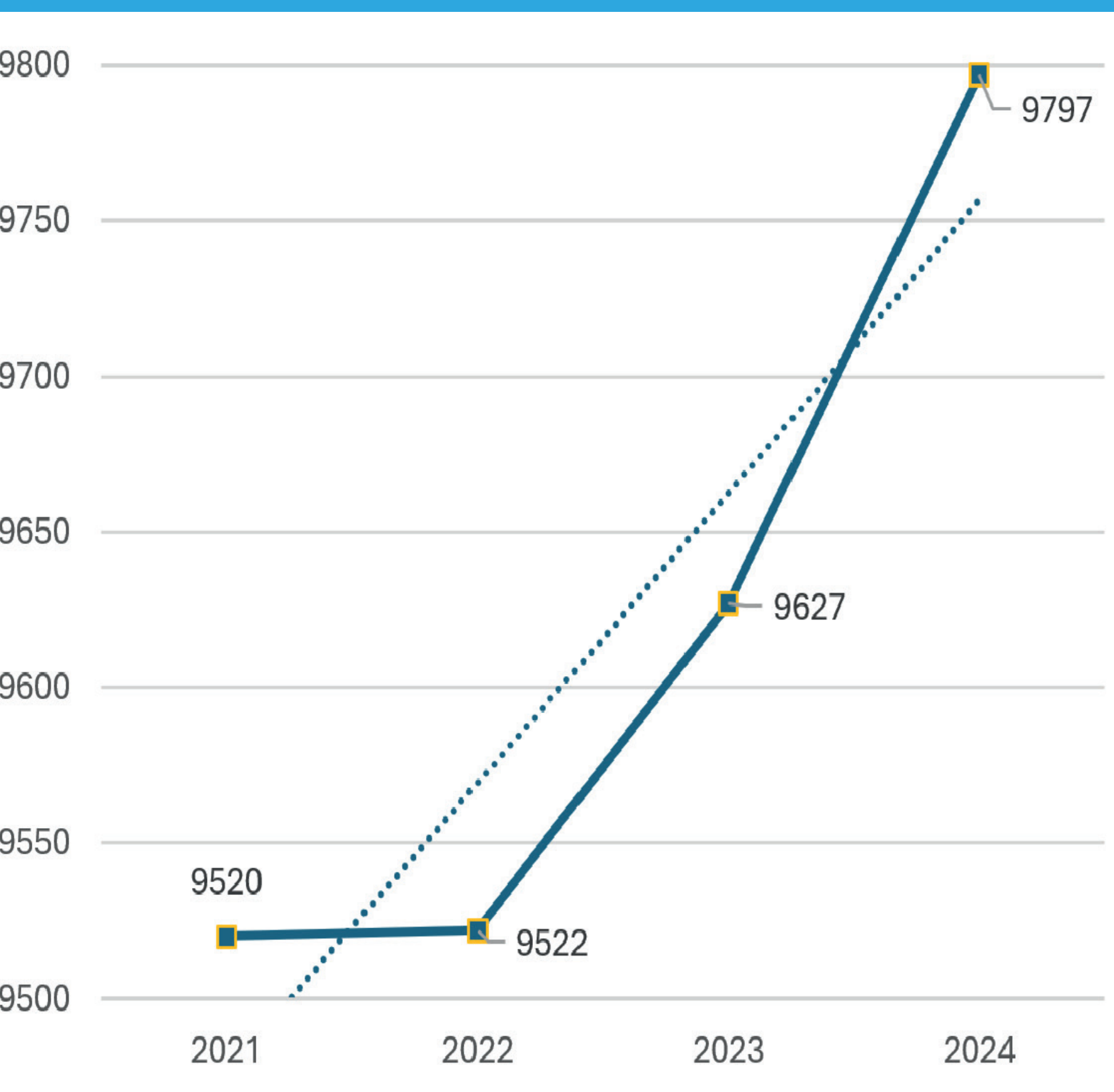


Figure 1. Left: HIV test orders from 2020 to 2024 (Oct-Dec trimester, including BBV and CT); Right: returned test kits with average.

Returned kits containing viable samples reached 9,797 in November 2024 - up 1.8% from 2023

(9,627) and 59% higher than in 2020 (6,159). This reflects both a steady improvement in the proportion of users who follow through with the testing process and the effectiveness of communications emphasising kit return. The Sexual Health Wales landing pages received 30,039 users during the November campaign period - a 194% increase compared to 2023. Approximately two-thirds (20,455 users) were from paid media campaigns. However, despite this substantial increase in traffic, digital test kit orders remained broadly similar to 2023 levels (approximately 9,000), reinforcing the concept of a “soft digital cap”: a plateau in online test kit orders despite increasing digital engagement.

Google Search ads generated 4,898 clicks, and programmatic campaigns—including dating app placements and YouTube—contributed over 1.2 million impressions.

While reach was high, conversion from interest to action remained modest, suggesting a gap between awareness and follow-through.

A key learning from 2024 is that community testing interventions played a vital role in supplementing the campaign’s reach. The 4,380 additional kits from the BBV and CT routes helped access groups that may not have engaged through online platforms alone. This reinforces the importance of hybrid strategies that combine digital and in-person outreach to achieve equity in HIV testing access and outcomes.

Conclusions:

Wales HIV Testing Week 2024 demonstrated the impact of combining public health expertise with community insight. The addition of BBV-specific and community testing routes significantly increased uptake, while sustained

engagement through tailored messaging and outreach proved highly effective, particularly among Black and Asian communities. Despite record website visits and over 1.2 million ad impressions, a plateau in online orders highlighted a “soft digital cap,” reinforcing the need for hybrid strategies.

Key learnings include:

- Local community engagement drives deeper reach and trust than digital-only approaches.
- Clear, inclusive messaging improves kit return rates.
- Broad institutional support (from all Welsh health boards and local authorities) strengthens campaign legitimacy and reach.

Future campaigns should build on these insights, combining robust digital promotion with expanded in-person access and continuous evaluation.

Widening uptake of HIV testing in Wales

- A total of 12,653 test kits were ordered in November 2024, compared to 5,787 in 2020.
- Returned kits containing viable samples reached 9,797 in November 2024 - up 1.8% from 2023 (9,627) and 59% higher than in 2020 (6,159).

