

# CREATING A HOME- GROWN INTERVENTION: THE T.R.U.T.H. PROJECT

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# What we are going to cover...



Describe Community mobilization

Innovative methods to incorporate HIV prevention discussions into restricted environments

Innovative ways to engage communities around social issues



# What is Community Mobilization?



Community mobilization engages all sectors of the population in a community-wide effort to address a health, social, or environmental issue. Community mobilization empowers individuals and groups to take some kind of action to facilitate change.

- Phase I: Planning for Community Mobilization
- Phase II: Raising Awareness
- Phase III: Building a Coalition
- Phase IV: Taking Action
- Phase V: Monitoring and Evaluating



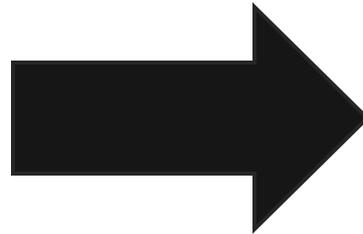
Reference: <http://www.cdc.gov/std/see/Community/CommunityGuide.pdf>

# How can it be utilized for HIV counseling and testing?

- community members to make informed decisions about HIV counseling and testing;
- HIV counseling and testing services to be normalized and people to know their status;
- acceptance of HIV/AIDS as an important issue for the communities;
- community involvement and participation in HIV counseling and testing services;
- increased uptake of these services;
- reduction of denial, stigma and discrimination.

# AFH history of innovation

- AIDS Foundation Houston, Inc.
- Founded in 1982, First AIDS Service Organization in Texas
- Core Services: Prevention, Housing and Supportive Services



# Opportunity to Innovate

## AGENCY CAPACITY PLUS

- Agency Infrastructure
- Resources
- Funding

## KEVIN'S BIG VISION

- Current platform in the target population
- Unique experience
- Something different
- Clearly defined need for more

# Why I wanted to capitalize on this opportunity with MSM....The numbers

## National

- A CDC study from 2008 of major cities found that 1 in 5 MSM were infected with HIV and 44% were unaware of their infection.
- Nationally, MSM are the only risk group in which new HIV infections have been increasing steadily since the early 1990s. In 2006, MSM accounted for 53% of all new HIV infections in the US.

## Local

- From January- August 2012, there was an 83% increase in infectious syphilis cases in comparison to the same time period in 2011.
- Enhanced record review of a sample of recent primary & secondary cases indicate that the most cited places partners are meeting are clubs/bars (33% of sample) and the internet (28% )

# Influencing factors increasing risk amongst YMSMs

- Poverty, education
- Denial/Misperception of personal risk
- Little/No Family Support
- Homelessness (couch hopping)
- The Black Church experience
- Fear

The T.R.U.T.H. Project, The WHAT?

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**Telling Real Unapologetic Truth  
Through Healing**

# Major Components of TRUTH

- Major volunteer involvement
- Event based Testing events
- Quarterly Performances
- Welcoming environment
- Non-judgmental staff and volunteers
- Excellent customer service
- Focus on personal self-development and providing resources at each event



# 6 events, major themes/experiences

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Abuse and discrimination

Bullying

HIV Awareness and Stigma

Self-Esteem

Depression in Black Men

Coming Out!

Bullied Too

# Houston Splash Testing results

## 2011

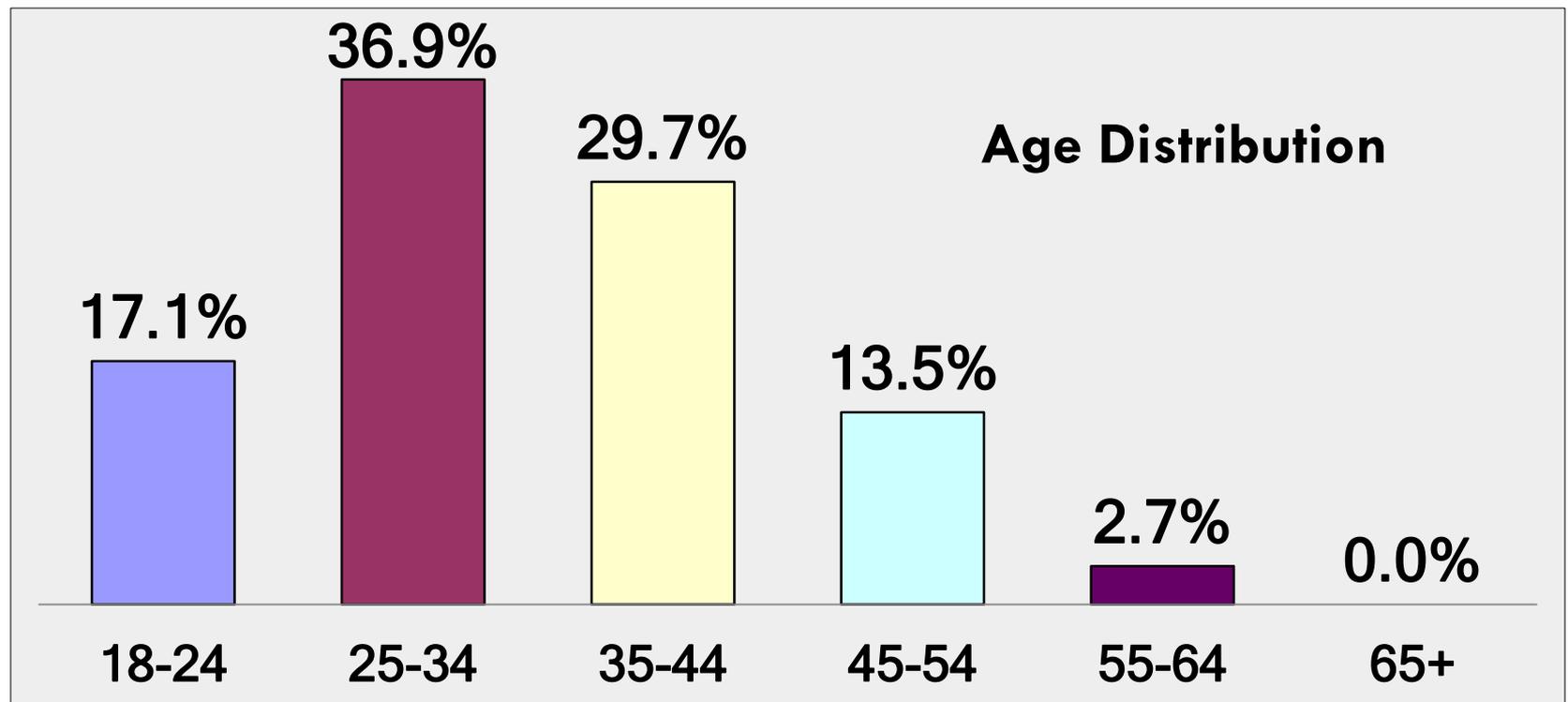
- 153 tested for HIV
- 6 new HIV+ (**4%**)
- Syphilis total = 96 tested
- 96 tested for syphilis (RPR)
- 24 RPR+ (**25%**)

## 2012

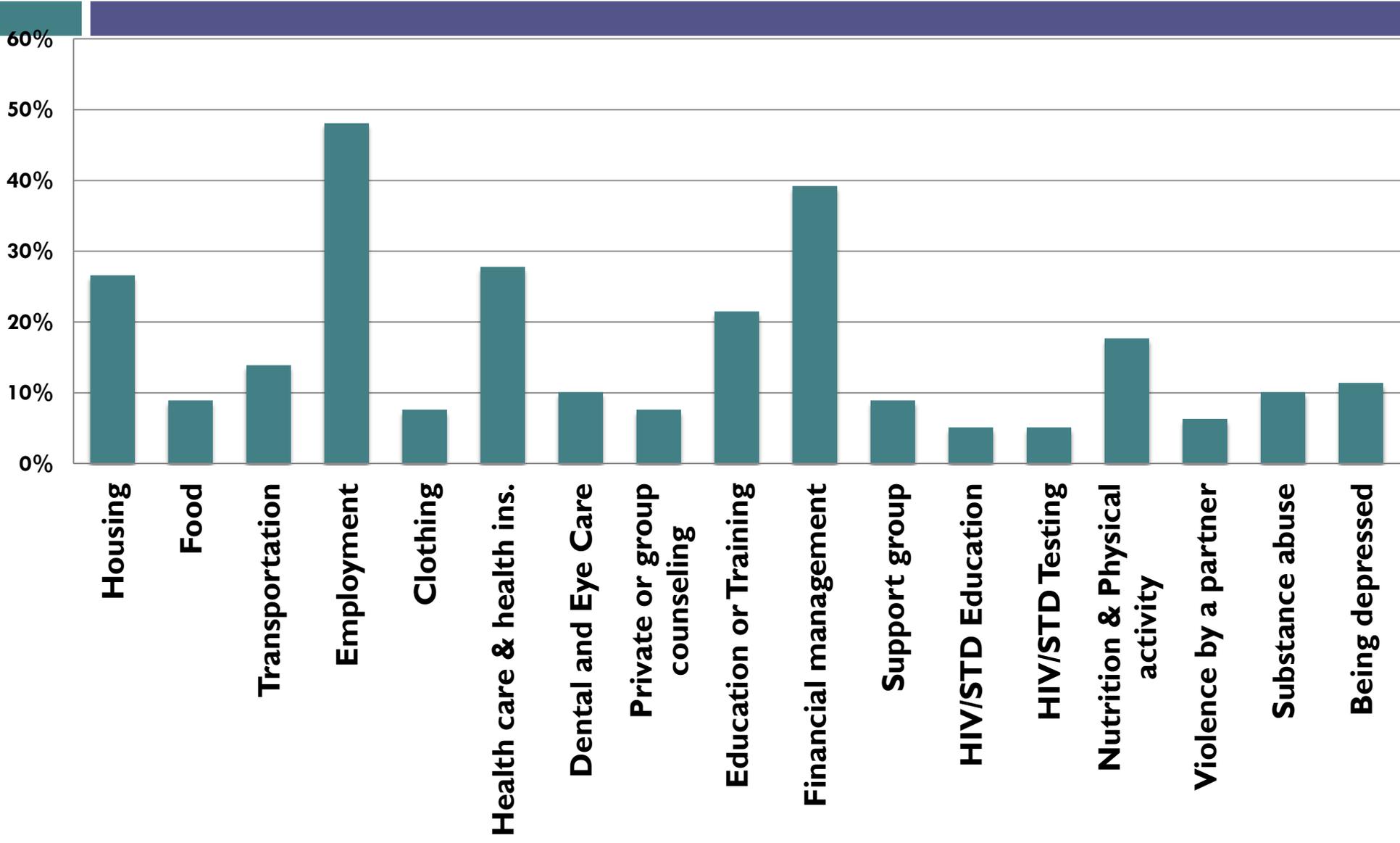
- 155 tested for HIV and Syphilis
- 8 new HIV+ (**5%**)
- 205 tested for Syphilis(RPR)
- 32 RPR+ 1:8 titer or higher (**15.6%**)

# Houston Splash 2012 survey

- n=111, 92% male, 92% African American
- 88% self-identified as Gay, Bisexual or Curious, 6% Heterosexual



# What are the TOP 3 needs/issues having a major effect in your life right now? (Circle all that apply)



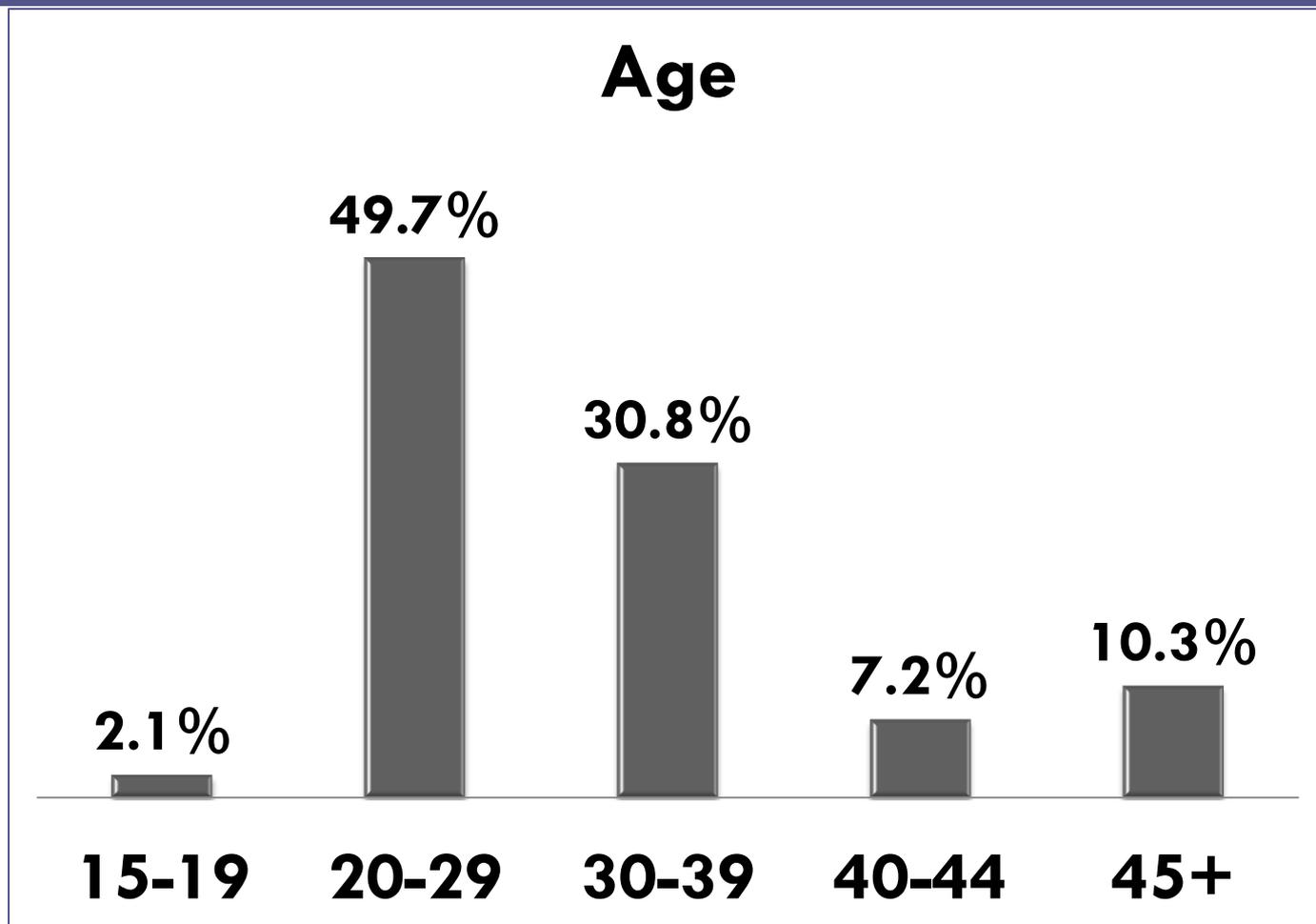
# NEEDS ASSESSMENT EVALUATION

905 completed Pre-registration survey (MSM self-identified n=195)

# MSMs Only n=195

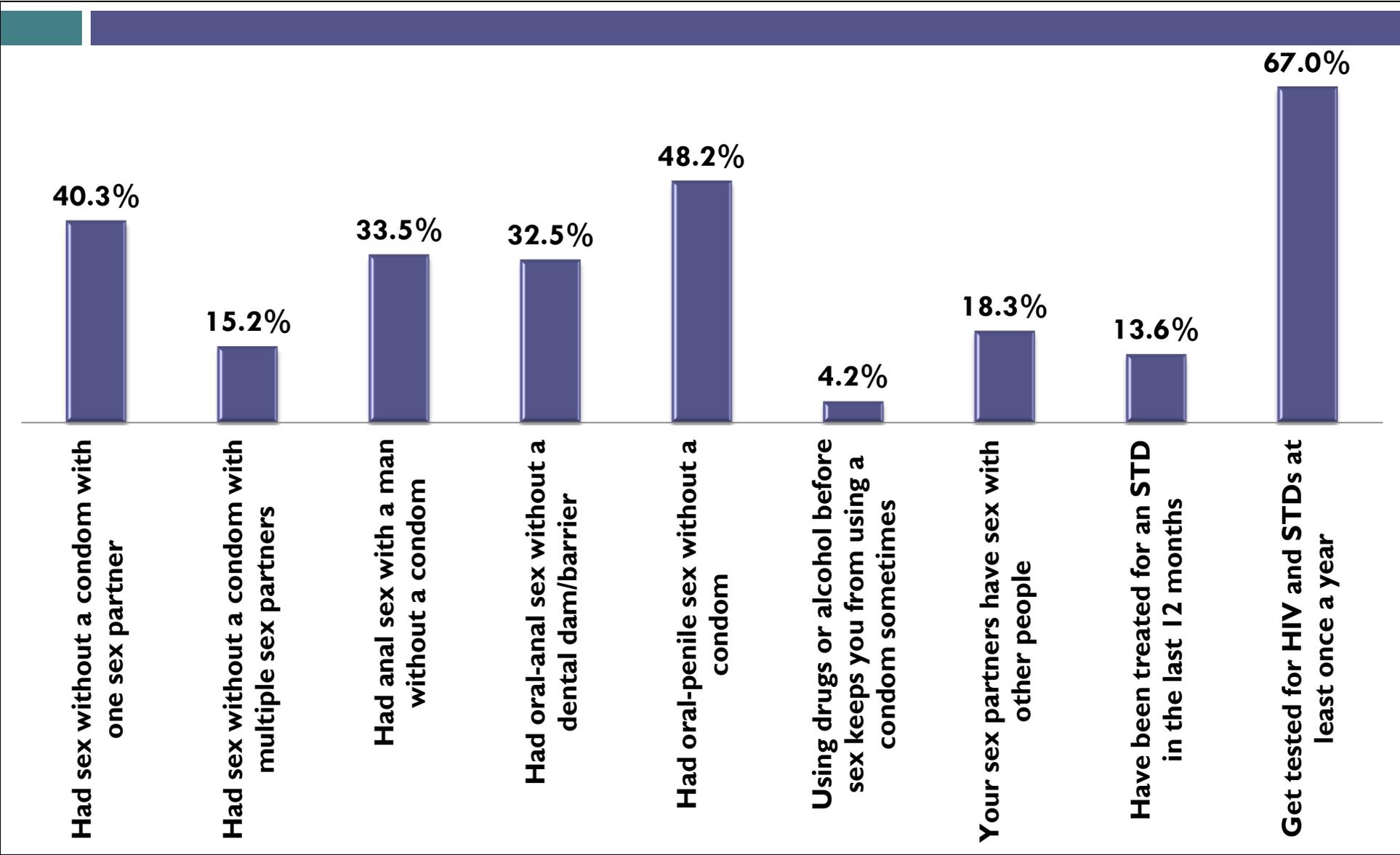
\*95%  
African-  
American

\*157 between  
the age of  
20-39

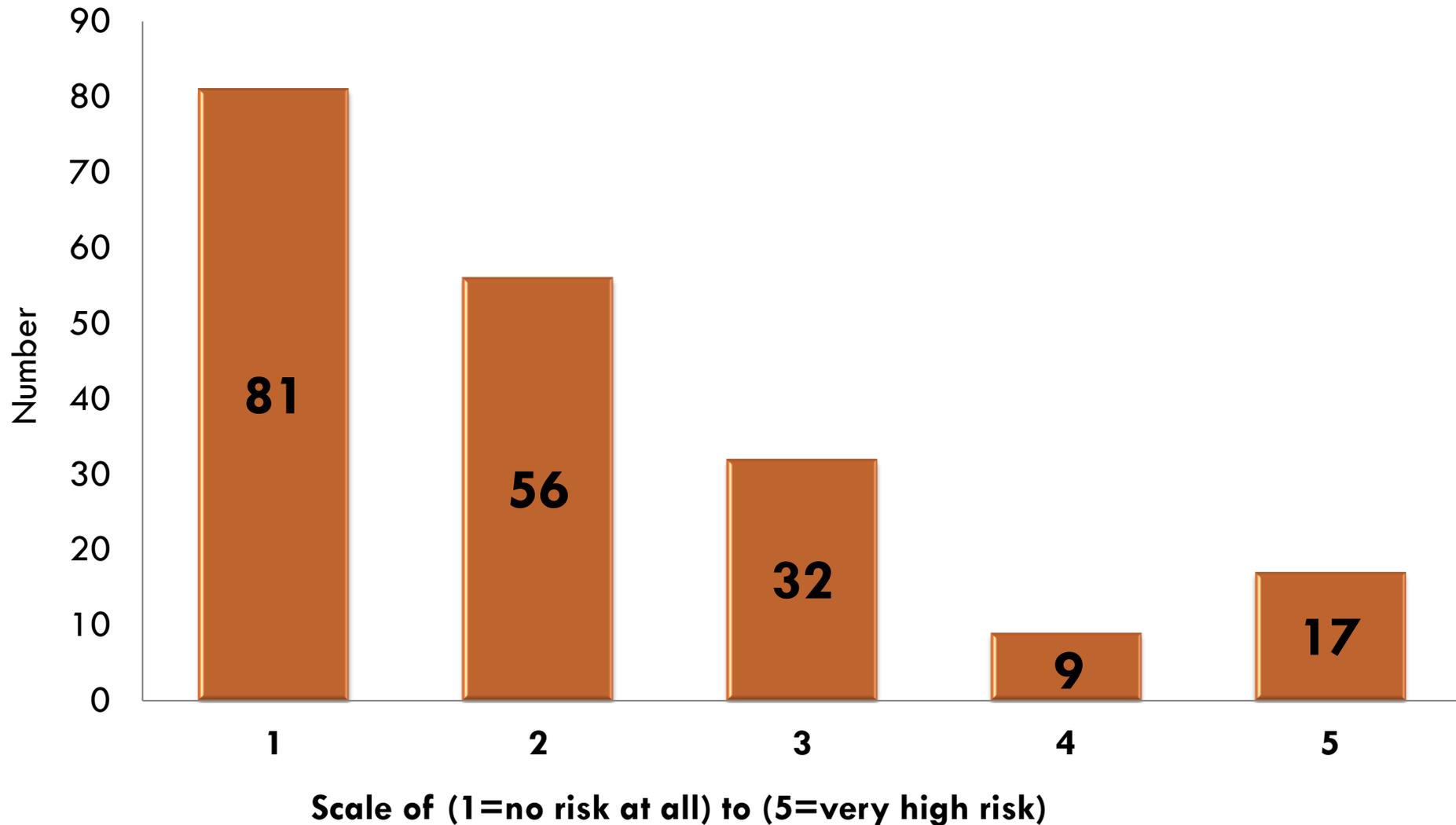


## Pre-Registration Survey

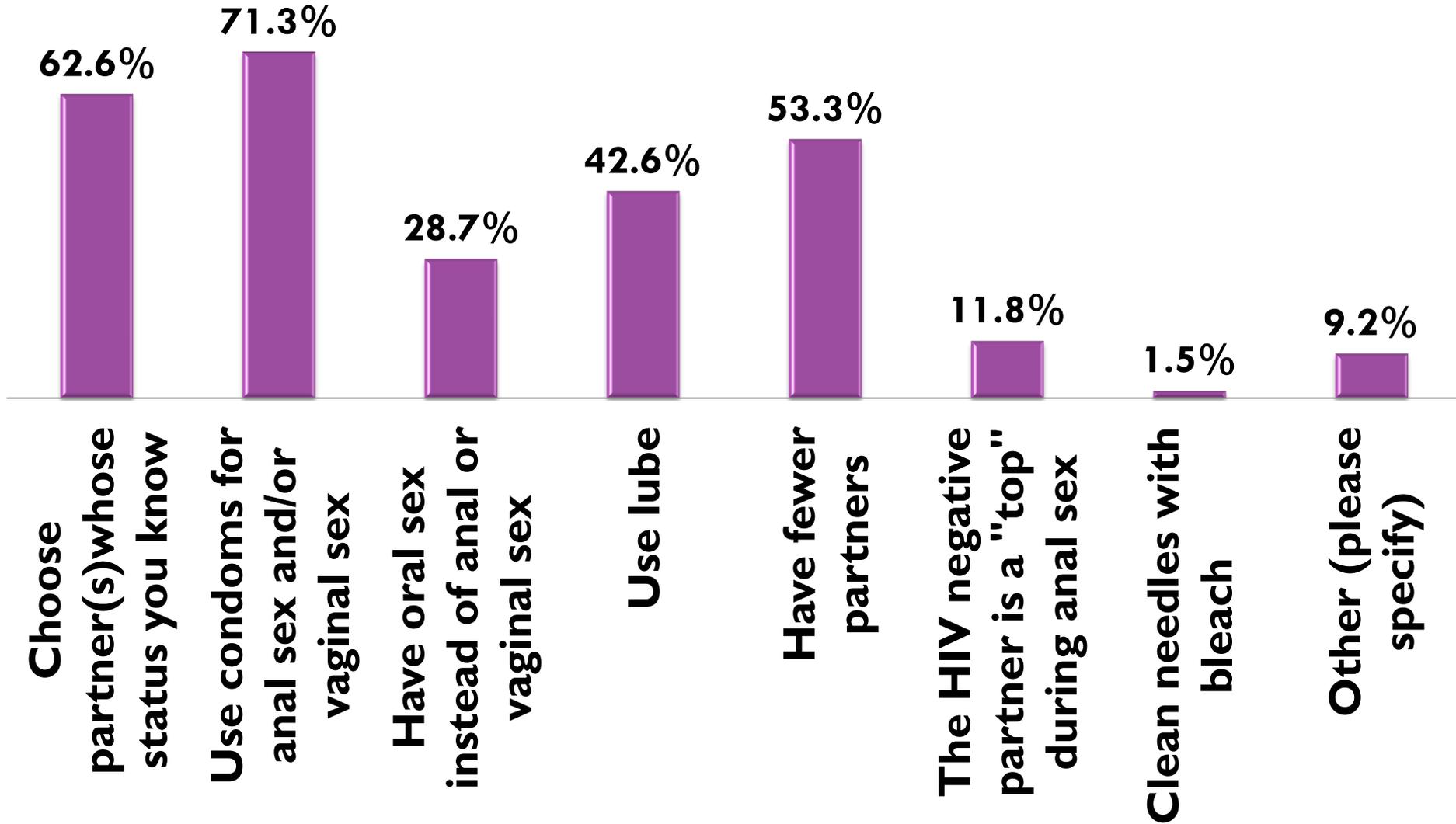
# What do you do (check all of the things you have done in the last year)



# How do you rate your own risk for HIV infection

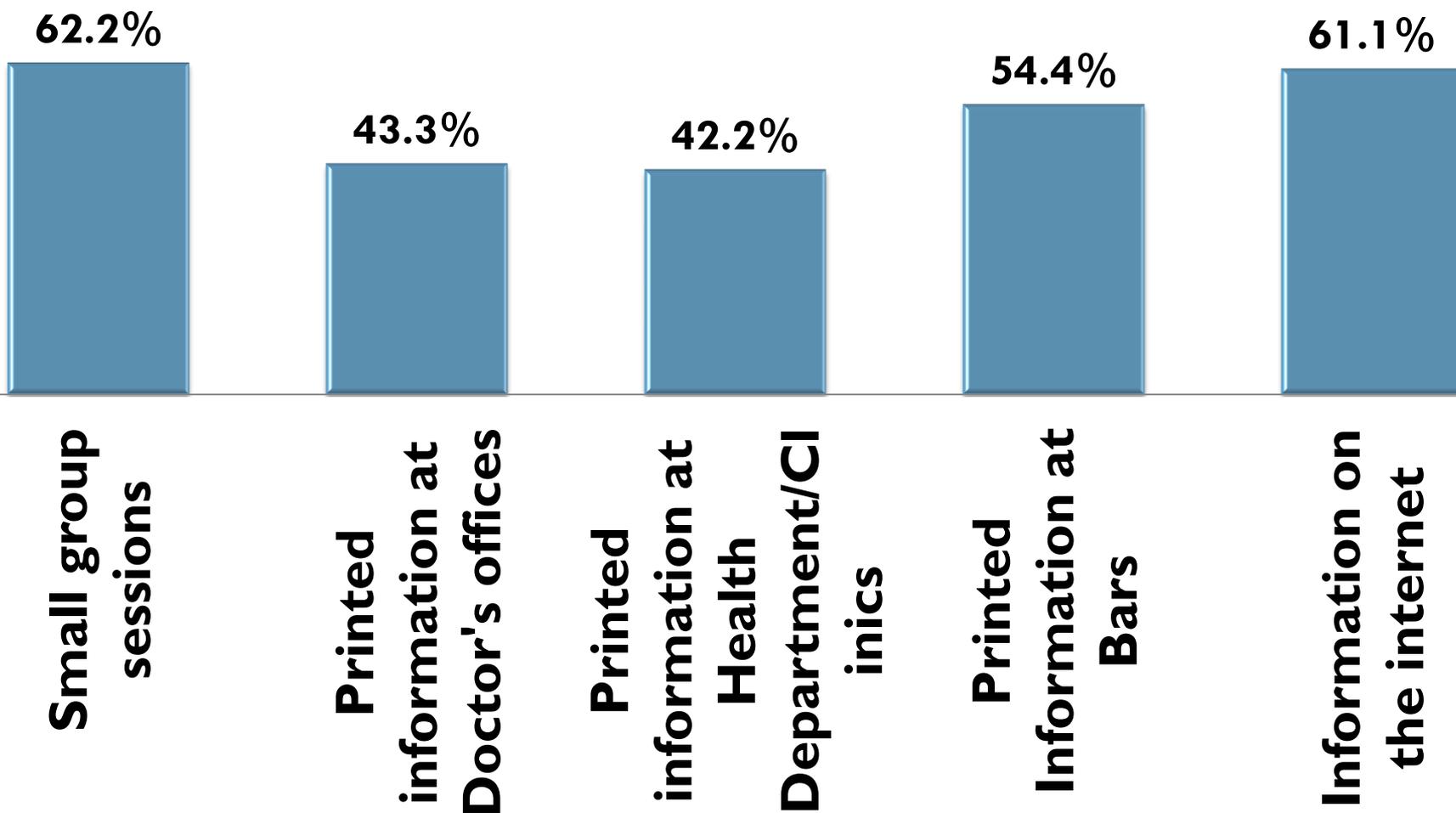


# What do you do to reduce your risk of contracting HIV or infecting others



Would you like to learn more about preventing HIV and STD infections? (Yes, 48% n=86)

If you answered yes, how can we help you do that (Select all that would be helpful)



# How has your experience at The T.R.U.T.H. Project affected the way you feel about yourself?

- “The truth project forced me to honestly look at myself, my habits and how I can make changes. I “truly” enjoyed the use of art as an expression for education.
- It help to reinforce self love. It was powerful and gave a voice for people that is silently suffering
- It was awe-inspiring. It lets me know that if ever I need help/support I know it's out there
- It helped me focus on the life of life not the death of life
- Love myself enough to get tested
- It was awesome... love myself more for being a part of this community.
- I want to help others because of the TRUTH Project
- My experience changed the way I view HIV
- I am confident in myself however I will now get tested on the regular

# Post event “Aha” moments

- the thought of what happens after your tested
- Each and every performance had an AHA moment
- We are all Human and want to live. Positive & Negative
- the light-bulb moment was when everyone stood up because they knew someone with HIV/AIDS
- HIV/AIDS can and does affect everyone and anyone....
- when the guy did the video i realized he look normal like me
- Just the way the experience made me feel
- I have a voice that i can use to spread knowledge
- when the ENTIRE crowd stood up signifying how many people they knew with HIV....Woooooowww!!!

# Successes

- ▣ Increased Awareness of experiences of the African American LGBTQ community.
- ▣ Increased sense of community and increased sense of belonging to the community.
- ▣ Healing through improvement of psycho-social factors ( self-esteem, self-empowerment, self-acceptance, self-expression, self-love, self-awareness, openness...)

# Lessons learned

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- Must Haves
  - ▣ Tangible community connection
  - ▣ Excellent event planner and facilitator/host
  - ▣ Community involvement and participation at all levels
  - ▣ Continuous community feedback and program flexibility
- Agency Leadership Buy-in and Support

# Survey limitations

- All surveys were self-reported.
- Behavior questions did not distinguish between long-term partners, concurrent partners or casual partners
- Did not ask who is already positive

# THANK YOU!

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