

# KAISER PUBLIC OPINION SPOTLIGHT

*Kaiser Public Opinion Spotlights provide in-depth analysis of public opinion on a variety of health care and health policy topics. Each Spotlight uses public opinion data from Kaiser surveys and other sources to examine current views and trends.*

*Updated: August 2006*

## **The Public's Experiences with and Attitudes about HIV Testing**

In 2006, about half of adults in the U.S. (48%) say they have been tested for HIV at some point, including about one in five (19%) who say they've been tested in the past year. Reported testing is most common among those ages 18-39 (60%) and ages 40-64 (51%); people ages 65 and older are the least likely to say they've been tested (21%). The share of non-elderly adults who say they've ever been tested increased slowly but steadily from 43% in 1997 to 55% in 2004, but has since leveled off. The most common reason people report for not being tested is that they don't feel at risk.

African Americans, and to a somewhat lesser extent, Latinos, seem to have gotten the message that HIV testing is important. Both groups are much more likely than whites to say they have been tested for HIV in the last year, and they are more likely than whites to say that HIV testing should be a "very important" priority when it comes to HIV prevention in the U.S. In addition, African Americans are more likely than whites to say that spending more money on HIV testing in the U.S. will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic.

Stigma around HIV testing is not a concern for most people (62% say that finding out they had an HIV test would make no difference in how people they know would think of them); still, about one in five (21%) say they believe people would think less of them if they found out they had been tested.

Two-thirds of the public believes that HIV testing should be treated just like routine screening for other diseases, while about a quarter say it should require special procedures, such as written permission from the patient.

For more information about public opinion on HIV/AIDS, see:

Public Opinion on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hivglobal/index.cfm>

Public Opinion on the HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hivus/index.cfm>

Attitudes About Stigma and Discrimination Related to HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hivstigma/index.cfm>

The Public's Knowledge and Perceptions About HIV/AIDS  
<http://www.kff.org/spotlight/hiv/index.cfm>

**Click on a title below to jump to that section of the Spotlight:**

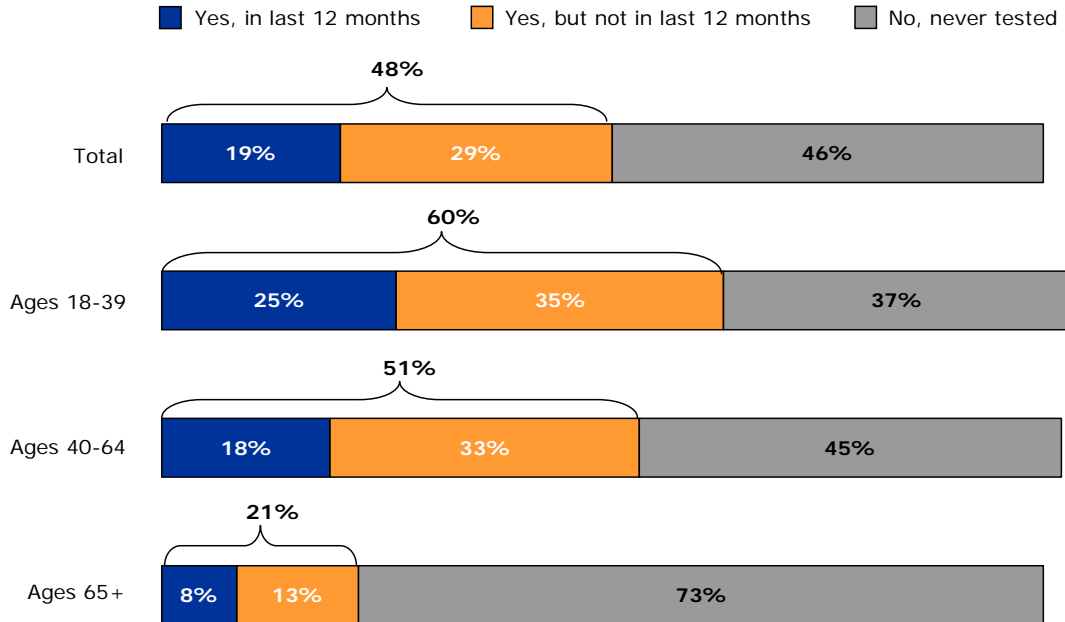
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## 1. Percent Who Report Being Tested for HIV by Age

Nearly half (48%) of adults in the U.S. say they have been tested for HIV at some point in their lives, including one in five (19%) who say they've been tested in the last 12 months. People ages 18-39 (60%) and ages 40-64 (51%) are more likely than those ages 65 and older (21%) to say they've ever been tested for HIV.

### Percent Who Report Being Tested for HIV by Age

Percent who say they have ever been tested for HIV... (Mar-06)



Note: Don't know responses not shown; Numbers may not add up exactly due to rounding.

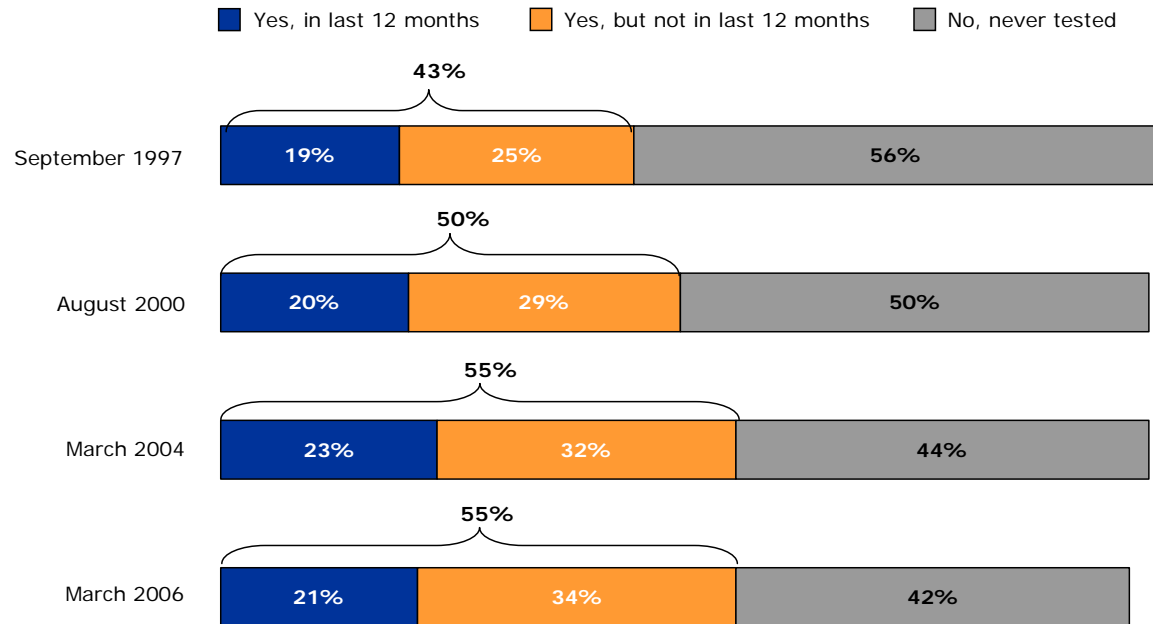
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 2. Trends in Non-Elderly Who Report Being Tested for HIV

The share of non-elderly adults who say they've ever been tested for HIV increased slowly but steadily from 43% in 1997 to 55% in 2004, but has since leveled off. The share saying they've been tested in the past year has remained fairly steady at about one in five since 1997.

### Trends in Non-Elderly Who Report Being Tested for HIV

Percent saying they have ever been tested for HIV among those under age 65... (Mar-06)



Note: Don't know responses not shown; Numbers may not add up exactly due to rounding.

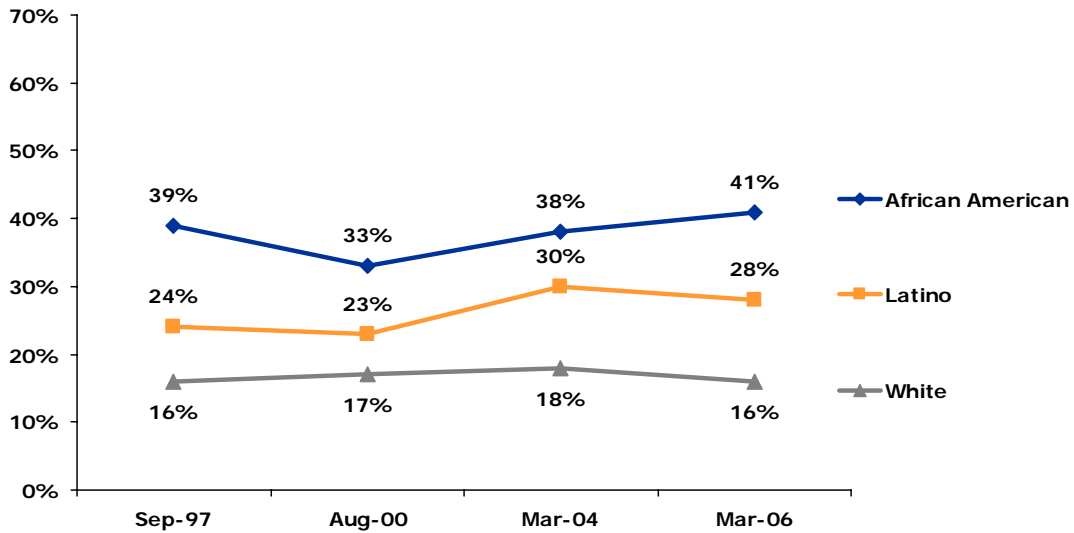
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys

### 3. Trends in Non-Elderly Who Report Being Tested in the Last 12 Months by Race/Ethnicity

In 2006, non-elderly African Americans (41%) and Latinos (28%) are much more likely than whites (16%) to say they've been tested for HIV in the last 12 months. The shares of each of these groups saying they've been tested in the last 12 months has remained fairly steady since 1997, although there has been an increase among African Americans from 33% in 2000 to 41% in 2006.

#### Trends in Non-Elderly Who Report Being Tested in the Last 12 Months by Race/Ethnicity

Percent saying they have been tested for HIV IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS among those under age 65...



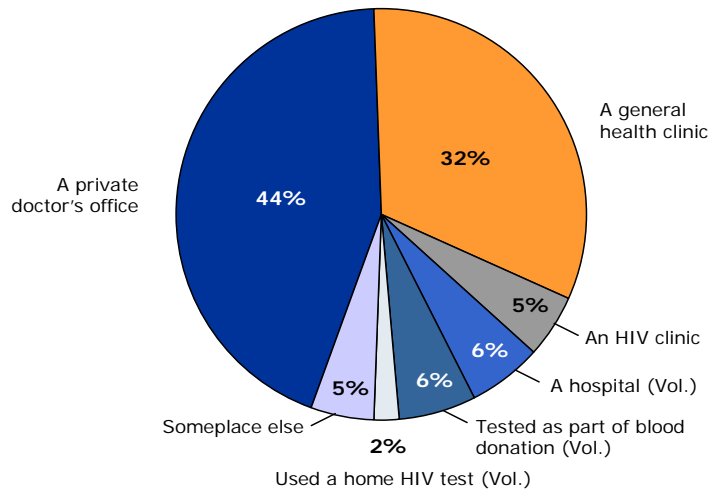
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys

#### 4. Where People Go To Get Tested for HIV

The vast majority of people who report being tested for HIV in the last 12 months say they were tested in a private doctor's office (44%) or a general health clinic (32%). Smaller shares say they were tested in an HIV clinic (5%), in a hospital (6%), or as part of a blood donation (6%). Just 2% said they used a home HIV test.

##### Where People Go To Get Tested for HIV

Among the 19% who say they were tested for HIV in the past 12 months: Where did you go to get tested? (Mar-06)



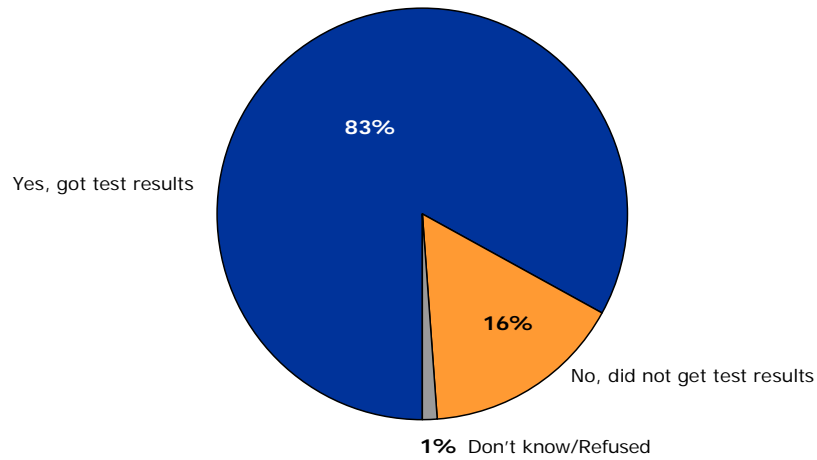
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 5. Did You Get Your HIV Test Results?

The vast majority (83%) of those who report being tested for HIV in the past 12 months say that they got their test results; however, about one in six (16%) say they did not get their results.

### Did You Get Your HIV Test Results?

Among the 19% who say they were tested for HIV in the past 12 months: Did you get your test results, or not?  
(Mar-06)



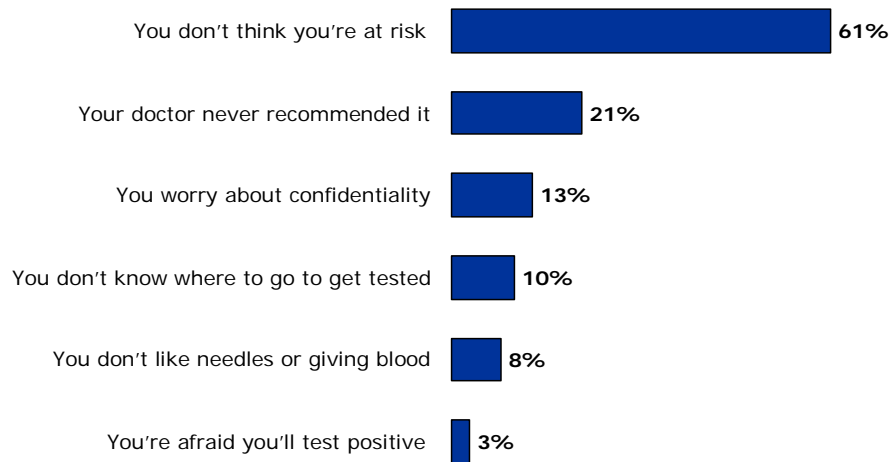
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 6. Reported Reasons for Not Being Tested

The most frequently cited reason for not getting tested among those who have never had an HIV test is not feeling at risk (61%). Smaller shares of those who have never been tested cite the following reasons: their doctor never recommended it (21%), they worry about confidentiality (13%), they don't know where to get tested (10%), they don't like needles or giving blood (8%), and they're afraid they'll test positive (3%).

### Reported Reasons for Not Being Tested

Among the 46% who say they have never been tested for HIV, percent who say each of the following is a reason they haven't been tested... (Mar-06)



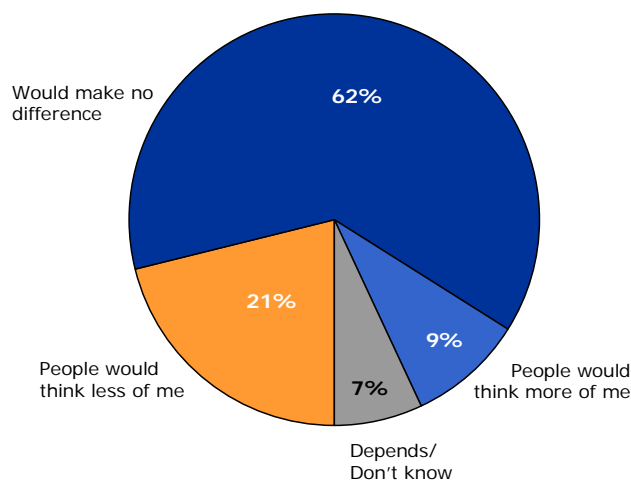
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 7. Perceptions of Whether Stigma Follows Testing

Stigma around HIV testing is not a concern for most people. Six in ten (62%) say that finding out they had an HIV test would make no difference in how people they know would think of them, and 9% say it would make people think more of them. However, stigma may be a concern for a minority of the public –about one in five (21%) say they believe people would think less of them if they found out they had been tested.

### Perceptions of Whether Stigma Follows Testing

If you were to be tested for HIV, do you think it would make people you know think less of you, think more of you, or would it make no difference in how people you know think of you? (Mar-06)



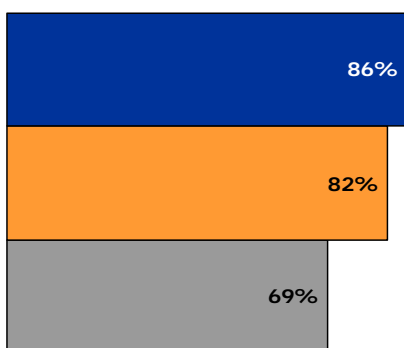
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 8. HIV Testing as a Priority by Race/Ethnicity

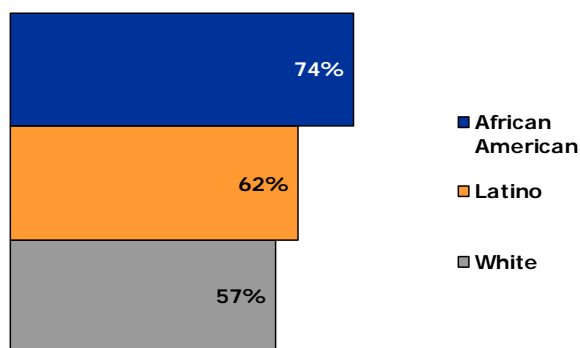
In addition to higher rates of reported HIV testing, some survey data indicate that African Americans (and to a lesser extent, Latinos) are more likely to be supportive of HIV testing on a policy level as well. African Americans (86%) and Latinos (82%) are more likely than whites (69%) to say that increasing the number of people who get tested for HIV should be a “very important” priority when it comes to HIV/AIDS prevention in the U.S. In addition, African Americans (74%) are more likely than Latinos (62%) and whites (57%) to say that spending more money on HIV testing in the U.S. will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic.

### HIV Testing as a Priority by Race/Ethnicity

Percent who say increasing the number of people who get tested for HIV should be a “very important” priority when it comes to HIV/AIDS prevention in the U.S. (Mar-06)



Percent who say spending more money on HIV testing in the U.S. so that more people would know their HIV status will lead to meaningful progress in slowing the epidemic (Mar-06)



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

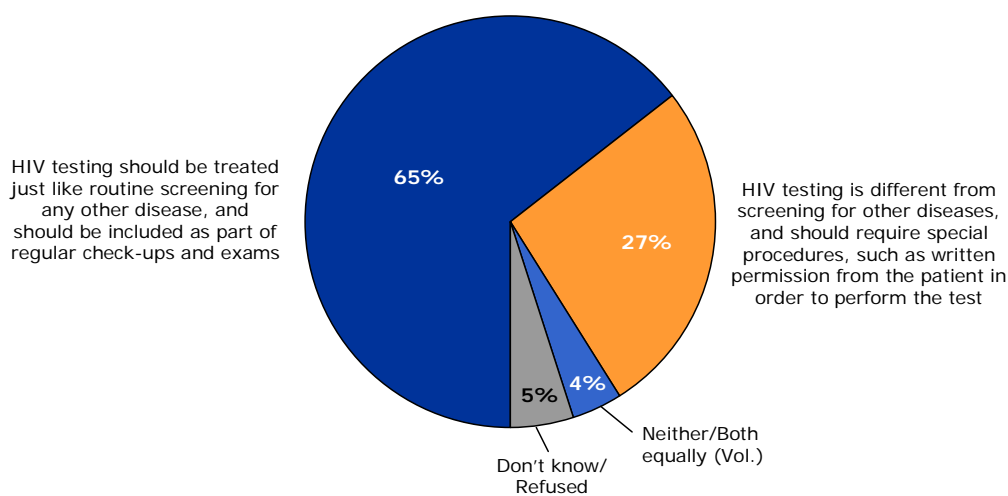
## 9. Views on Routine HIV Testing

In 2006, the CDC is expected to release new guidelines recommending routine HIV screening for all persons ages 13-64 in health care settings. The new recommendation would change HIV screening from an “opt-in” approach (where the patient must ask to be tested and explicit consent is needed) to an “opt-out” approach (where the patient is notified that the test is being performed, and consent is inferred unless the patient declines).

The public overall is supportive of routine testing, with about two-thirds (65%) saying that HIV testing should be treated just like routine screening for other disease, compared with just over a quarter (27%) who say that HIV testing should require special procedures, such as written permission from the patient.

### Views on Routine HIV Testing

Which comes closer to your opinion... (Mar-06)



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

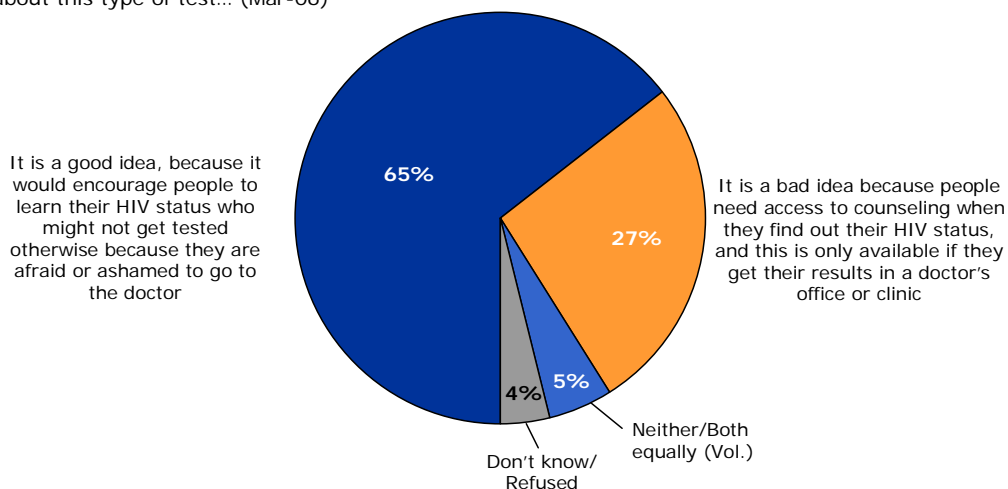
## 10. Views on Home HIV Test

In 2006, the FDA has been discussing a new type of rapid oral HIV test which would be sold over the counter. This new test would allow people to test themselves at home and learn their HIV status within 20 minutes. (Home HIV tests currently on the market require the user to send a sample of blood to a laboratory via mail, and call an anonymous phone line several days later to receive their results.)

When asked about this new type of home test, the public is generally supportive, with two-thirds (65%) saying it is a good idea because it would encourage people to learn their HIV status who might not otherwise get tested; about a quarter (27%) say it is a bad idea because people need access to counseling when they find out their HIV status, which is only available in a doctor's office or clinic.

### Views on Home HIV Test

As you may know, the FDA has recently been discussing a new type of oral HIV test that people could buy over-the-counter and use at home to learn their HIV status within 20 minutes. Which of the following comes closest to your view about this type of test... (Mar-06)



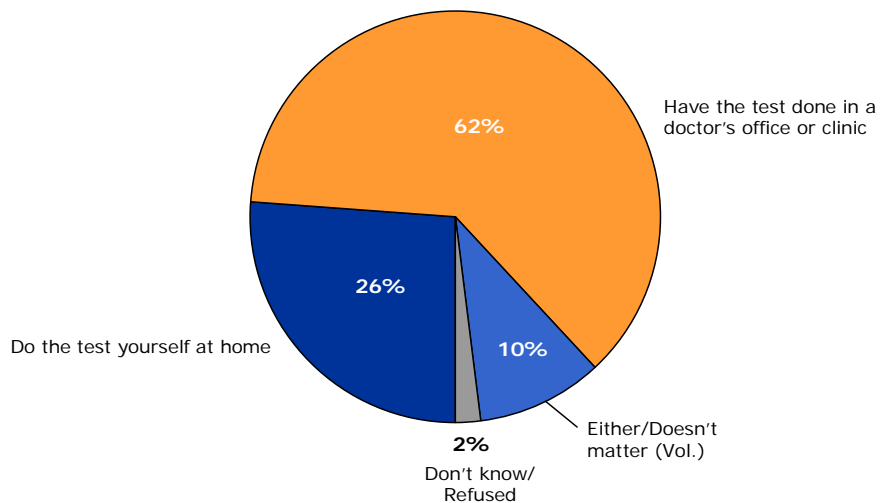
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)

## 11. Personal Preference for Home Testing Versus Doctor's Office

Despite the public's overall support for the idea of a rapid home HIV test, when given the option, six in ten (62%) would prefer to get tested for HIV in a doctor's office or clinic, while a quarter (26%) would prefer to do the test themselves at home.

### Personal Preference for Home Testing Versus Doctor's Office

If you were to be tested for HIV, would you prefer to... (Mar-06)



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation *Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS* (conducted March 24 – April 18, 2006)