

Views and Experiences with HIV Testing Among African Americans in the U.S.

Since the first case of what was later identified as AIDS was reported in 1981, more than 1.7 million Americans have been infected with HIV, including more than half a million who have died. From the outset, the U.S. AIDS epidemic has disproportionately affected African Americans, who today account for nearly half of new infections, while representing just 12 percent of the U.S. population. In some U.S. cities – notably those with large African American populations – prevalence rates are considerably higher than the national average. Some 500,000 African Americans in the U.S. are estimated to be living with HIV today – and those infected are more likely to die of AIDS than other racial or ethnic groups.

Using data from the Kaiser Family Foundation *2009 Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS*¹, we find that in many ways, African Americans' reported views and experiences reflect the disproportionate impact of the epidemic on their community. Compared with whites and Latinos, African Americans are more likely to say AIDS is a more urgent problem for their local community now than it was a few years ago, more likely to say they know someone who is infected with HIV or has died from AIDS, and more likely to say they are personally very worried about becoming infected themselves.

Several findings from the survey indicate that African Americans are more likely than their white and Latino counterparts to have gotten the message about the importance of HIV testing. Compared with whites and Latinos, African Americans are more likely to report talking to their doctors and/or partners about HIV/AIDS, and more likely to report being tested for HIV. In fact, over the past several years, there has been a steady increase in the share of African Americans who report talking about HIV/AIDS with a doctor or other health care provider. There are also signs that HIV testing has become "normalized" for many African Americans. Nearly seven in ten say if they were to be tested for HIV, it would make no difference in how people they know think of them, and almost one in five say people they know would think *more* of them if they found out they were tested. Among those who report being tested, 44 percent (including 60 percent of 18-29 year-olds) say HIV testing is something they do every year.

Despite these positive signs, there are some troubling trends in the survey as well. For example, the share of all non-elderly African Americans, and of those ages 18-29, who report being tested for HIV has been relatively flat for at least 5 years. And despite the increase in the share who report talking with their doctor about HIV/AIDS, far fewer African Americans – 29 percent – say that a doctor or other health care provider has ever suggested they be tested for HIV.

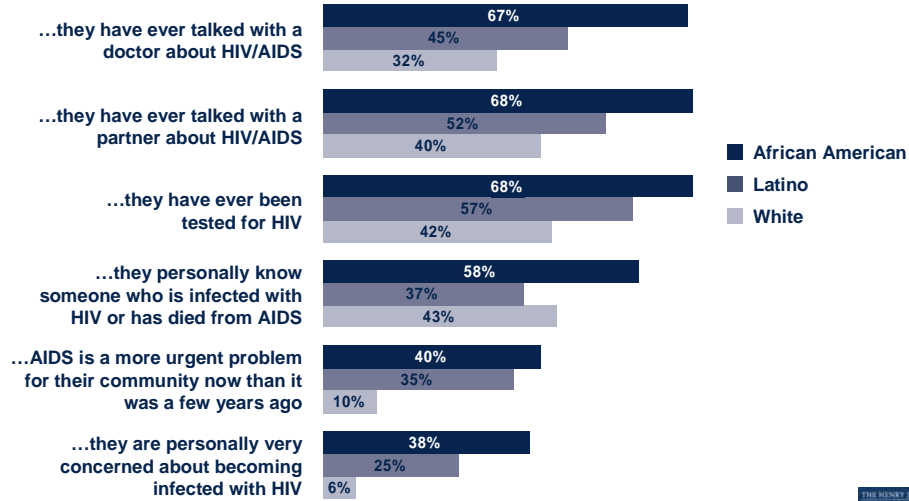
The following charts show highlights of the survey findings related to HIV testing among African Americans, including trends and differences among African Americans by age and gender when noteworthy.

¹ A full report on the overall survey findings is available at: <http://www.kff.org/kaiserpolls/posr042809pkg.cfm>

CHART 1

Some Key Differences on HIV/AIDS by Race/Ethnicity

Percent saying...



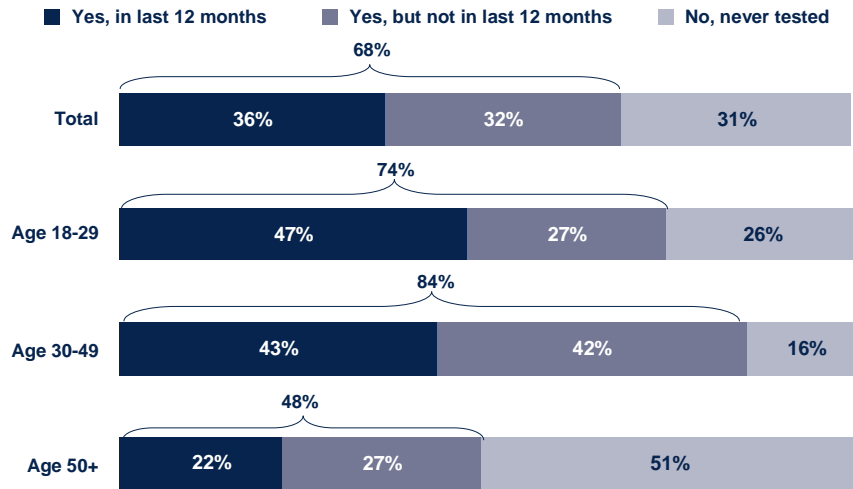
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 2

Percent of African Americans Who Report Being Tested by Age

Percent of African Americans saying they have ever been tested for HIV...



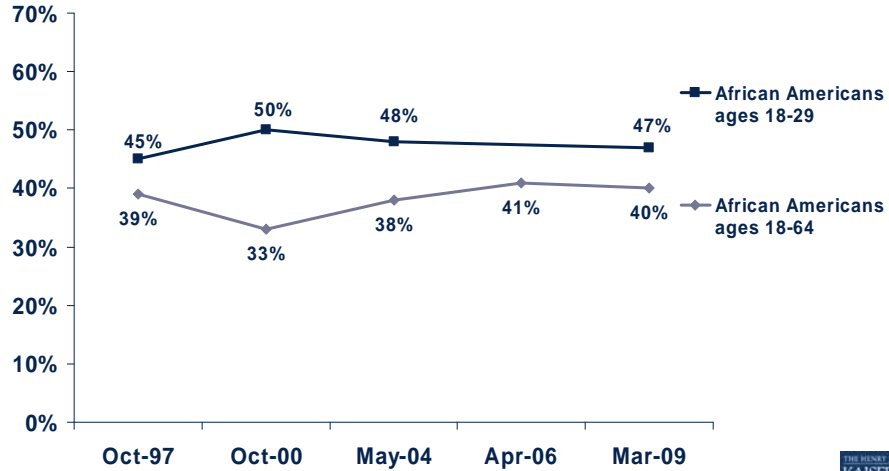
Note: Don't know responses not shown; Numbers may not add up exactly due to rounding.
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 3

Trend in Share Who Report Being Tested For HIV in the Last Twelve Months

Percent saying they have been tested for HIV IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS...



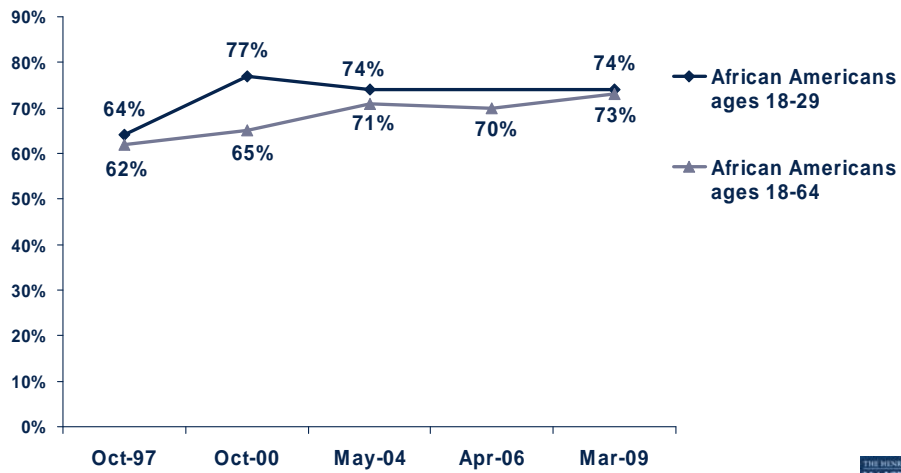
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys



CHART 4

Trend in Share Who Report Ever Being Tested for HIV

Percent saying they have EVER been tested for HIV...



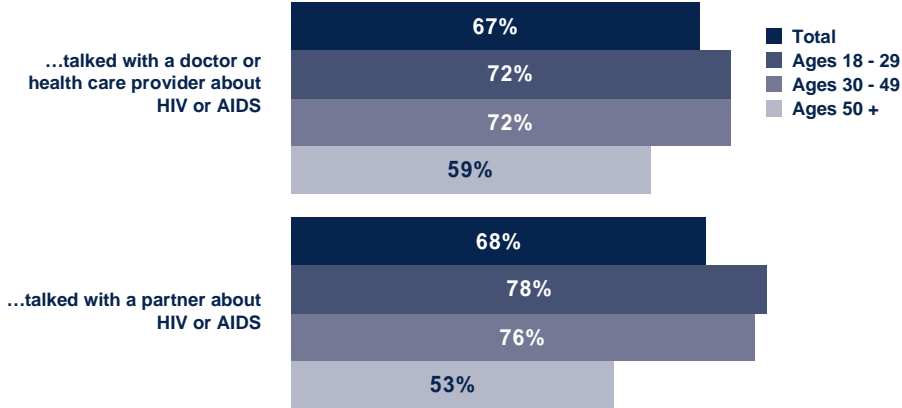
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys



CHART 5

Percent of African Americans who Report Talking with a Doctor and/or Partner about HIV/AIDS

Percent of African Americans saying they have ever...



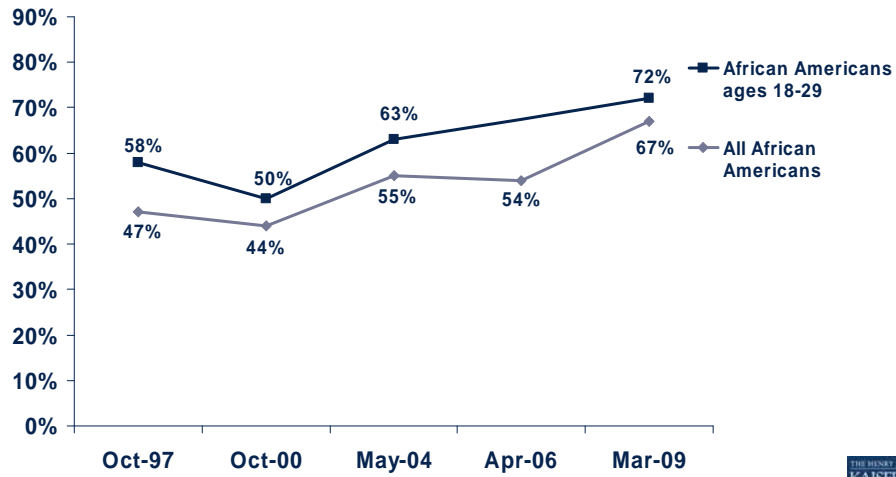
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 6

Trend in Reports of Talking to Doctors About HIV/AIDS Among African Americans

Percent saying they have ever talked with a doctor or health care provider about HIV or AIDS...



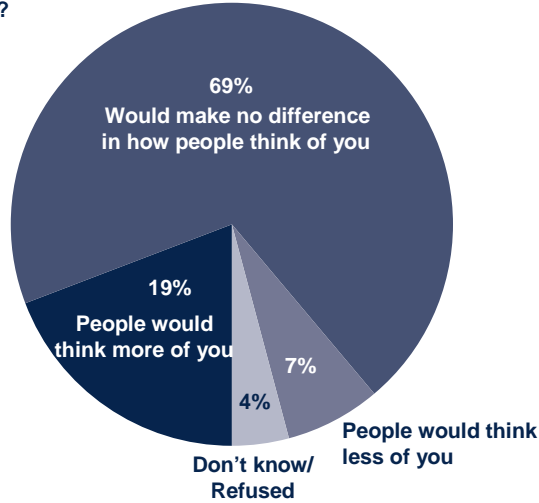
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation surveys



CHART 7

African Americans' Perceptions of Whether Testing Leads to Stigma

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?



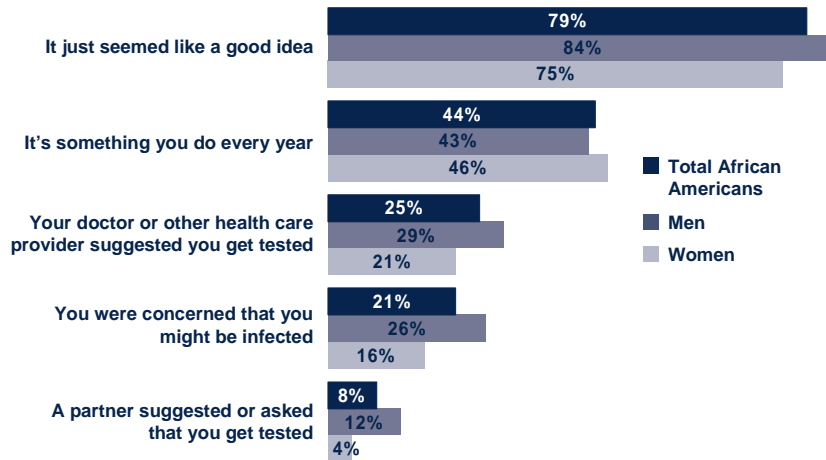
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 8

African Americans' Reported Reasons for Being Tested for HIV

Percent saying each of the following is a reason they got tested for HIV (Among the 68% of African Americans who report being tested)

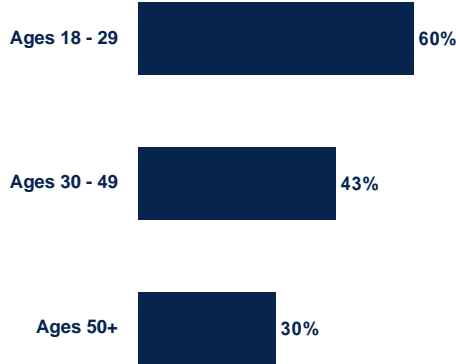


Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



Reported Yearly Testing by Age

Percent saying they got tested for HIV because it's something they do every year:
(Among the 68% of African Americans who report being tested for HIV)

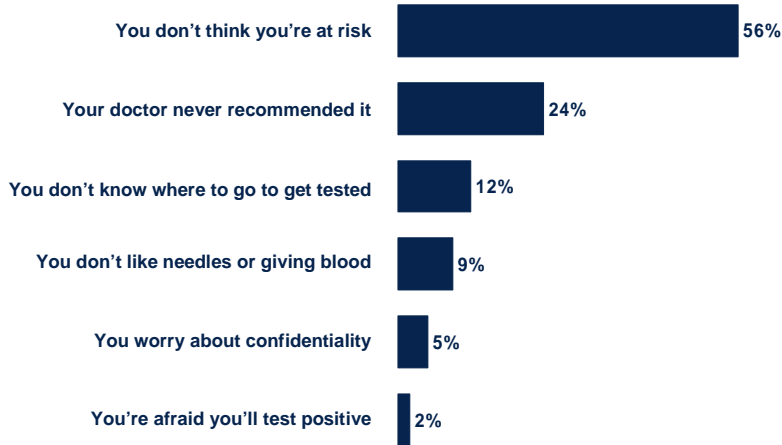


Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



African Americans' Reported Reasons for Not Being Tested for HIV

Percent of African Americans saying each of the following is a reason they haven't been tested for HIV
(Among the 31% of African Americans who say they have never been tested)



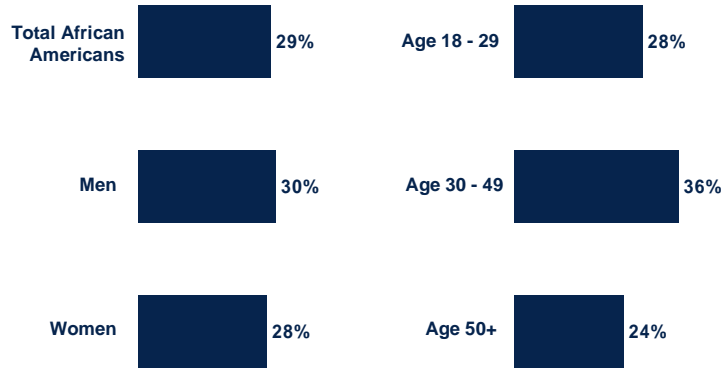
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 11

Percent of African Americans Saying Their Doctor Suggested HIV Testing

Percent of African Americans saying a doctor or other health care provider has ever suggested that they be tested for HIV:



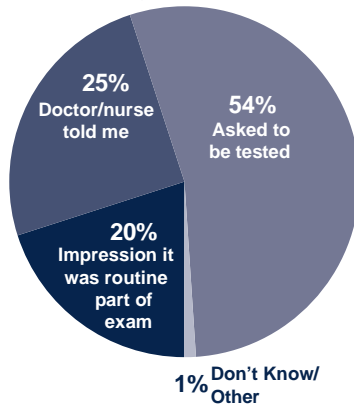
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



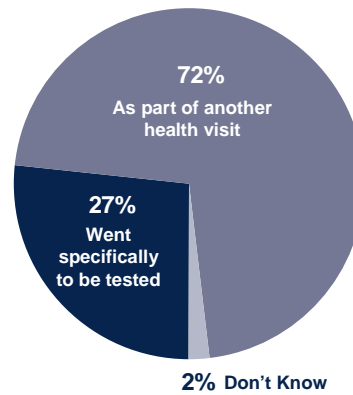
CHART 12

African Americans' Reports of HIV Testing Experiences

The last time you were tested for HIV, how did you know the test was being done? Did you ask to be tested for HIV, did the doctor or nurse tell you this test was being done, or was it your impression that the test was a routine part of the exam? (Among the 68% of African Americans who report being tested)



The last time you were tested for HIV, did you go to a doctor or clinic specifically to get an HIV test, or did you decide to get an HIV test as part of another health visit, such as a routine check-up? (Among the 68% of African Americans who report being tested)



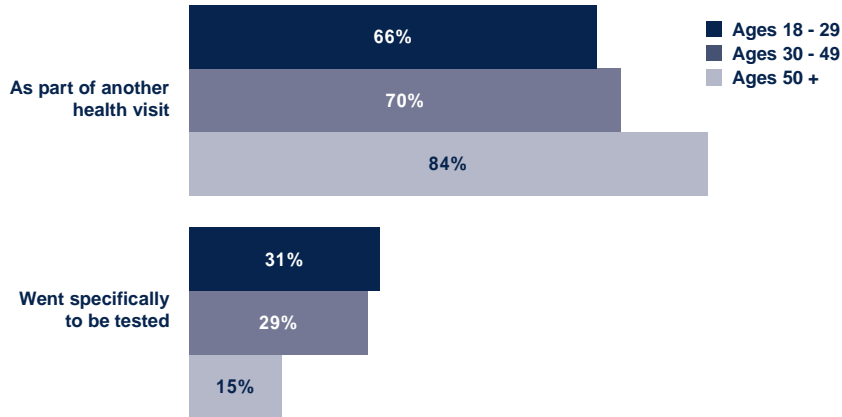
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 13

Reported HIV Testing Experiences by Age

The last time you were tested for HIV, did you go to a doctor or clinic specifically to get an HIV test, or did you decide to get an HIV test as part of another health visit, such as a routine check-up?
(Among the 68% of African Americans who report being tested)



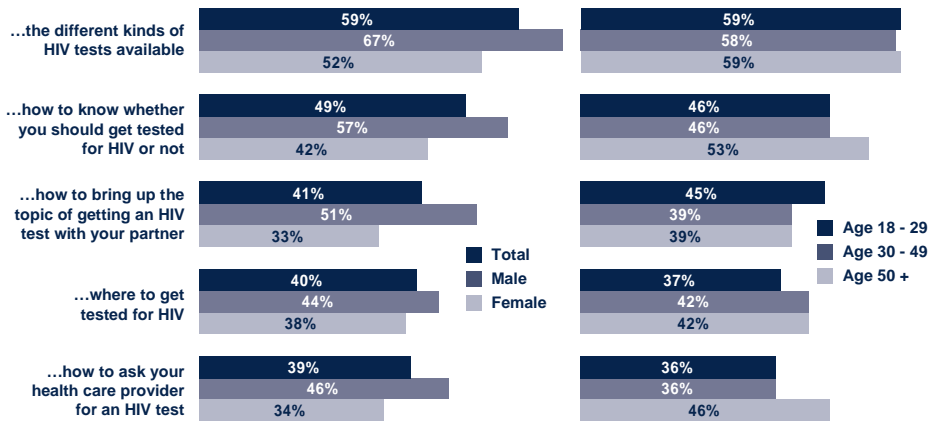
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



CHART 14

Reported Desire for More Information About Testing

Percent of African Americans saying they would like to have more information about...



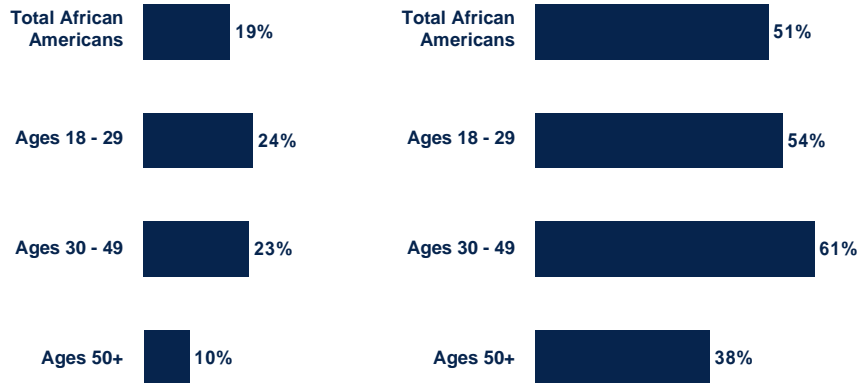
Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



Testing for Other Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Has a doctor or other health care provider ever suggested that you be tested for any other sexually transmitted diseases besides HIV, or not?

Have you, yourself, ever been tested for any other sexually transmitted disease besides HIV, or not?



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS (conducted Jan. 26-March 8, 2009)



This publication (#7927) is available on the Kaiser Family Foundation's website at www.kff.org.