



Results of HIV – Self Testing Pilot Program in an Environment with Structural Challenges: Youth in the General Population Show Satisfaction with the Physical Characteristics of Tests

Topic: Self-Testing Strategies and Factors Affecting Testing Patterns

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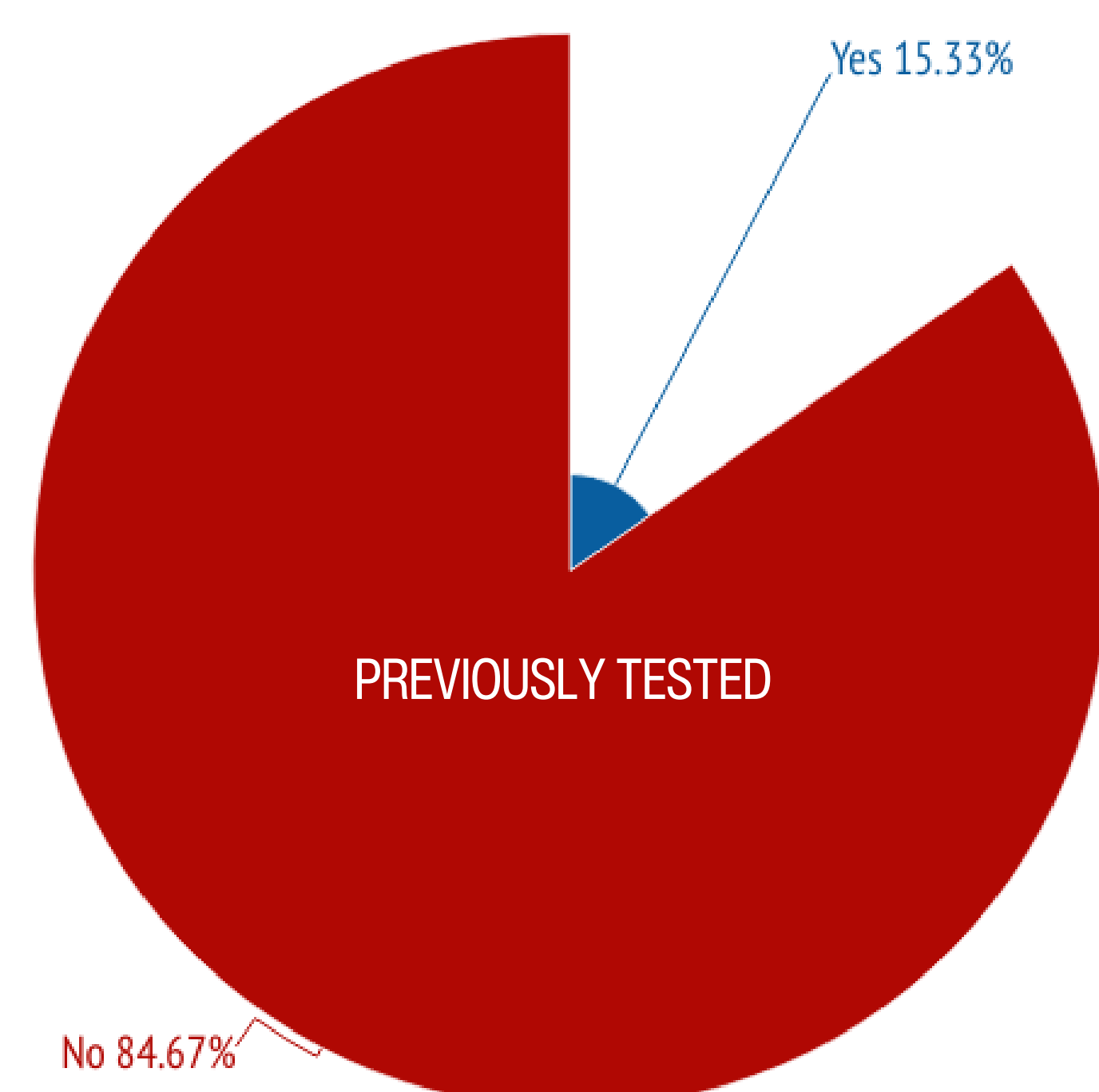
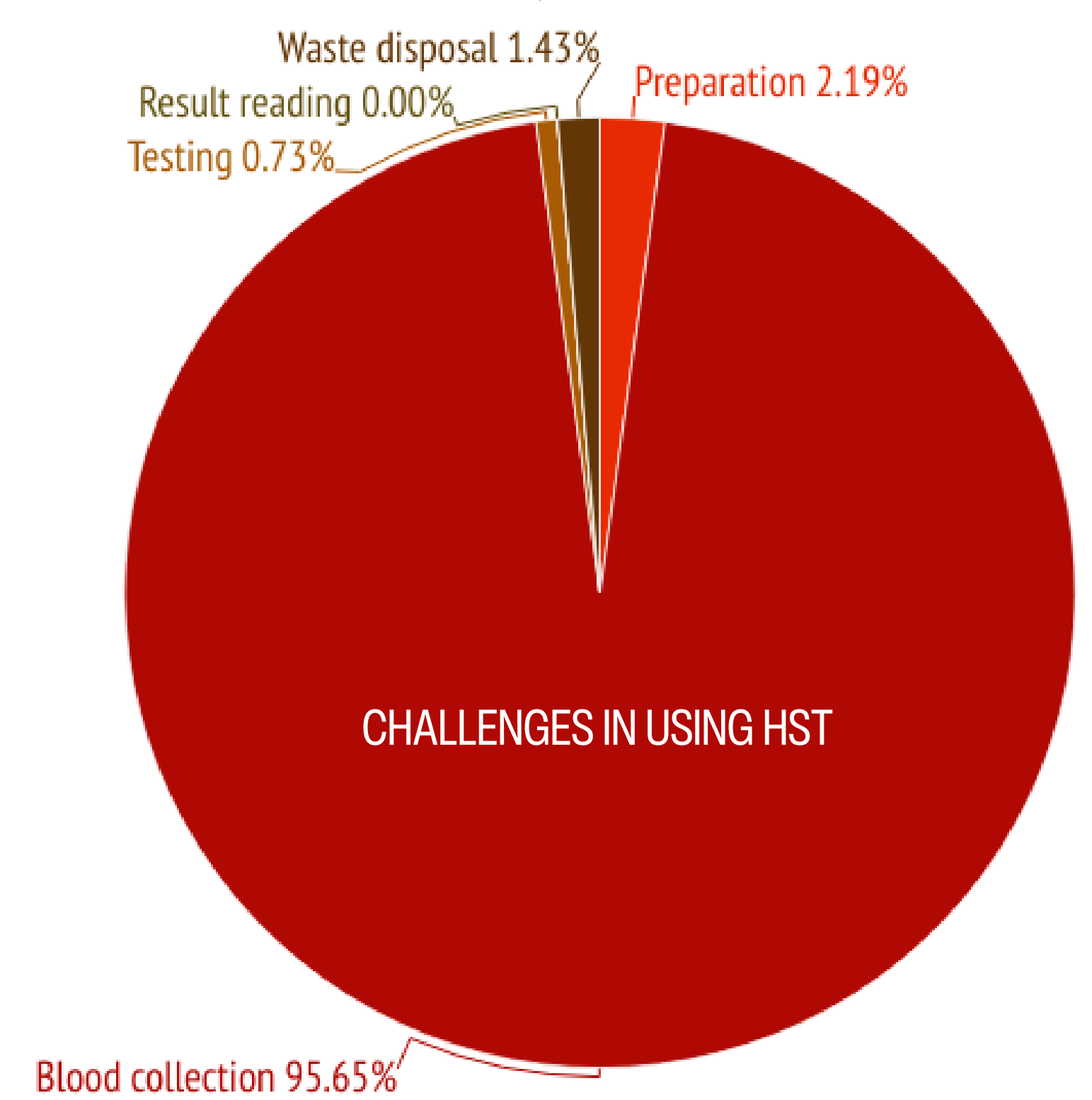
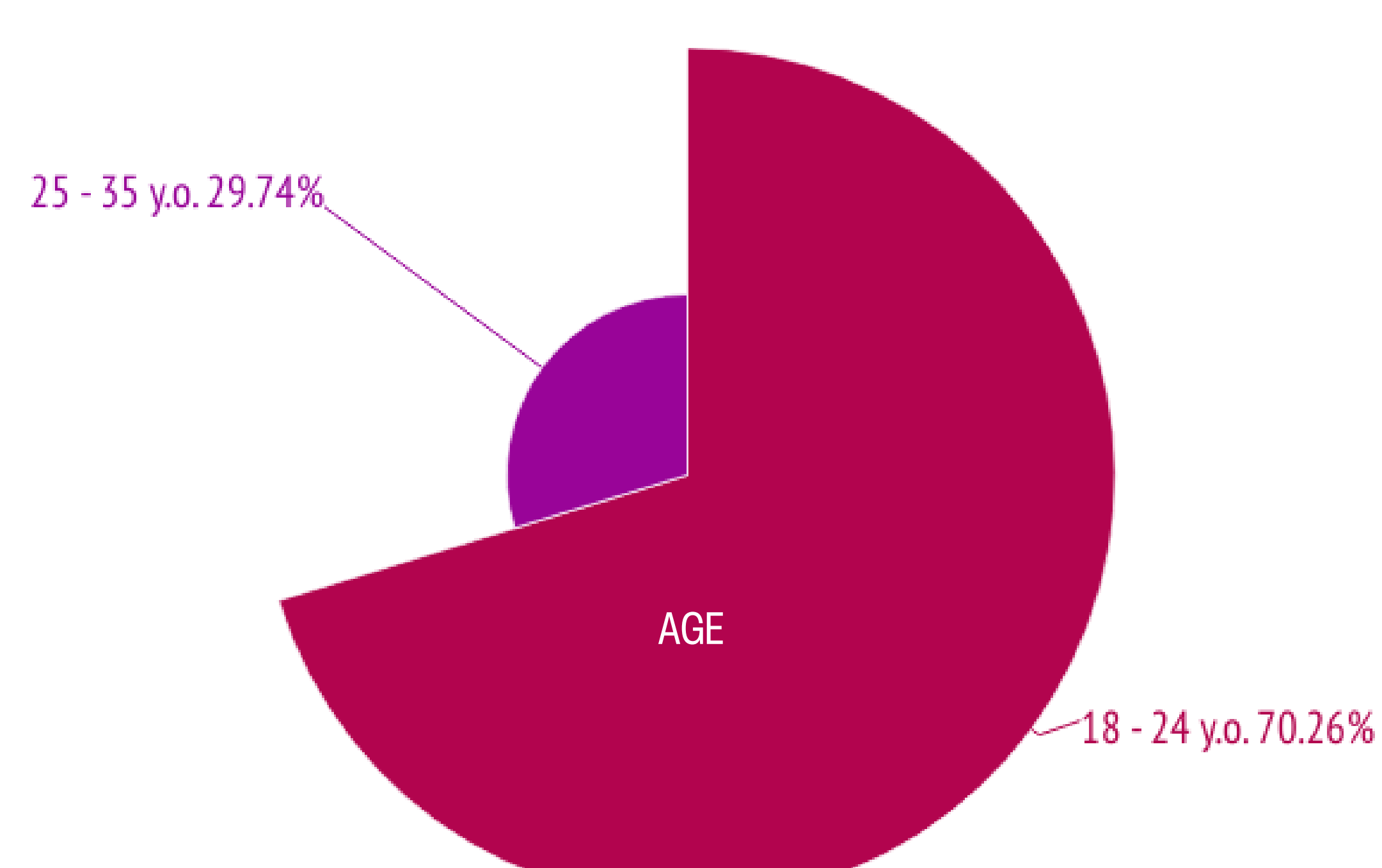
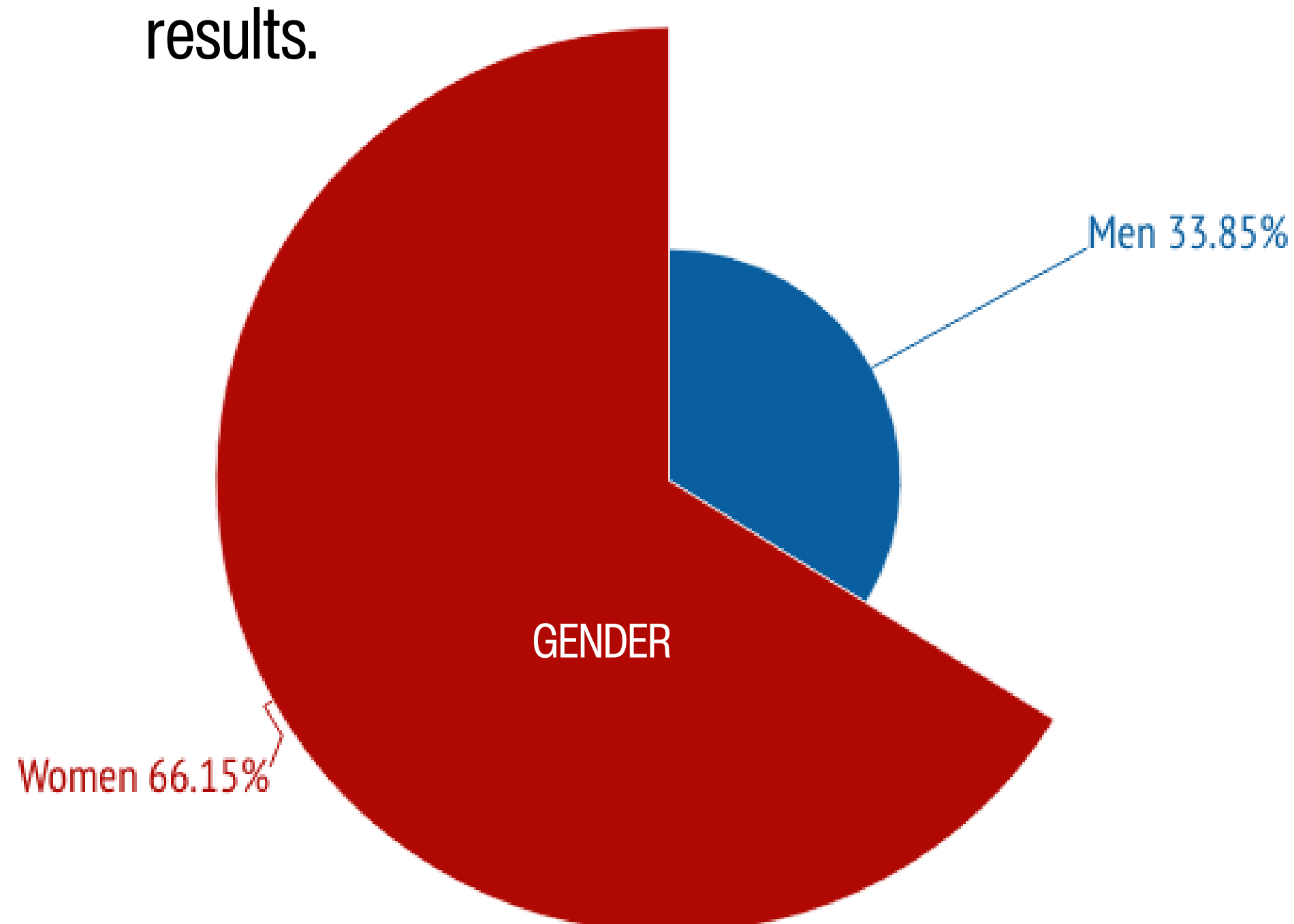
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Objectives:

HIV self-testing (HST) face obstacles in Romania, including high costs and limited availability. There may also be a lack of emphasis on their importance in the media and culture. Social structures and policies are needed to encourage distribution and utilization, along with addressing physical barriers. This could increase the number of individuals who use this testing option.

Methods:

500 Abbott CheckNow HIV self-testing kits were given to university students, with instructions on how to contact a counselor for a reactive result. Follow-up phone assessments were conducted within 14 days of the test to collect feedback on the user's experience, evaluation of instructions, and overall trust in the results.

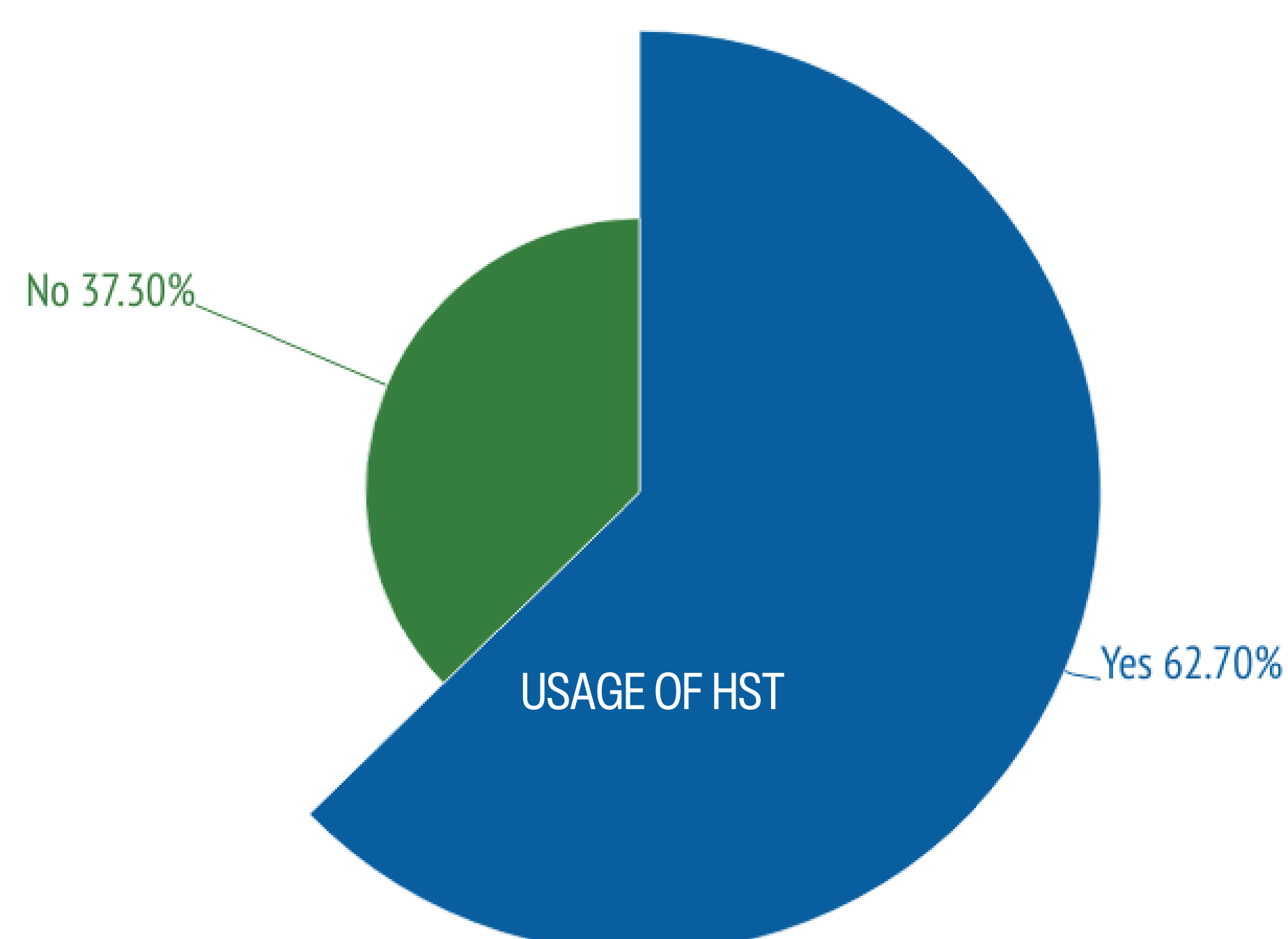


Results:

Based on feedback from 207 students who provided feedback, 62.70% did the HST. It was found that most of the participants were female and younger than 24. 15.35% had been previously tested for HIV, and all tests were negative in this group. The easiest phases in the testing process were preparation and reading the results, while a small proportion of users (2%) encountered difficulties in the blood collection through finger pricking. Users found the written and graphic instructions well organized and easy to follow. Overall, participants rated the testing experience as excellent, and a majority preferred the self-testing kits to point of care testing.

Conclusion:

According to users, the HST is convenient and easy-to-use. Some youths have saved the test for later use due to the perceived scarcity and high costs of the test in the market or at other centers. Some users said they needed a second safety lancet. It is not known whether the youth who did not respond to the phone used the HST or not. Structural obstacles must be addressed to increase access to affordable testing. Empowering individuals is key to tackling the HIV epidemic.



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