

# Re-testing as a Pathway to Re-engagement

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Leveraging DSD Strategies to Optimize HIV Testing and Linkage Services

March 13-16, 2023 | Nairobi, Kenya



# Outline

- Malawi HIV Context
- Factors that contribute to non-disclosure of knowledge of status
- Motivations for re-testing
- Malawi's Innovation on re-testing for re-engagement
- Lessons learnt - programmatic experience
- Question to the audience

# Malawi HIV Context

Total population:	20,645,060
PLHIV:	1,012,135
HIV prevalence (15+):	8.01%
1 <sup>st</sup> 95 :	95%

**36,000** PLHIV undiagnosed

**26,000** previously diagnosed but not on ART; of whom **25,000 (95%)** were previously on ART

*(Spectrum Estimates 2023)*

- **A significant number of PLHIV know their HIV status but are not on ART**
- ***A proportion of these will certainly seek HIV testing to re-engage in care***
- ***No precise global guidance on testing for re-engagement***

# Possible reasons for non-disclosure of HIV status leading to re-testing

- Prohibitive policies discouraging re-testing for previously diagnosed PLHIV
- Strong messaging on life-long adherence to ART
- Provider attitudes towards clients who disengage (previously known as defaulters)
- Non-disclosure to sexual partner

# Motivations for Re-testing

*Some documented reasons for re-testing among PLHIV who know their status include<sup>1</sup>:*

- Doubts about the validity of a previous positive test result
- Beliefs in “healing” after spiritual interventions or herbal medicine use
- Coercive provider-initiated testing strategies
- New sexual partner
- Re-engagement into care

<sup>1</sup>Olislagers et al. *Reasons for, and factors associated with, positive HIV retesting: a cross-sectional study in Eswatini*, (2022): AIDS Care; Psychological and Socio-medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV

# Malawi's Innovation on Re-testing for Re-engagement - 1

The Malawi Ministry of Health through the Department of HIV, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and Viral Hepatitis (DHA) introduced sections in the **revised testing registers - scan form registers** - to capture data on the last HIV test, history of ART use, time since last taken ARVs and referral for re-initiation.

Last HIV Test* <small>ONE</small>									Time Since Last HIV Test Write number. Specify unit with one letter: Days, Weeks, Months or Years <b>123 ABC</b>	Ever Taken ARVs?* <small>ONE</small>			
Never tested	Negative (-)		Positive (+)			Invalid or Inconclusive		Exposed Infant		No	If yes, cross the most recent ARV taken		
	Self-Test	Professional Test	Self-Test	Initial Professional	Professional Test	Self-Test	Professional Test		PrEP or Inf. Prophylaxis		PEP	ART	
Nev.	Self-	Prof.-	Self+	Init.+	Prof.+	Self?	Inc?	Inf.	number D/W/M/Y	No	PrEP	PEP	ART
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	2 <input type="text"/> Y <input type="text"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**. Client and Provider Details**

Link ID \* DAE Important: Copy the Link ID for this client from the Initial Register.

Visit Date \* 123

Book Page Row Check dd mm yy

1 0 0 - 2 - 2 - X 2 / 5 / 2 2

**. HIV Tests and Results** Result ONE Kit Expiry Date 123

	(-)	(+)	dd	mm	yy
HIV Test 2 *	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	3 0	1 2	2 2
HIV Test 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>			
HIV Test 1 (Immediate Repeat)	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	3 0	5	2 3

Result Given To Client \* ONE

Neg New Pos New Inconcl. Exp. Infant Pos Re-test Inconcl. Re-test

# 2022 HIV Diagnostic Algorithm for *Last Professional Positive Clients*

## Diagnostic Algorithm

R = reactive  
NR = non-reactive

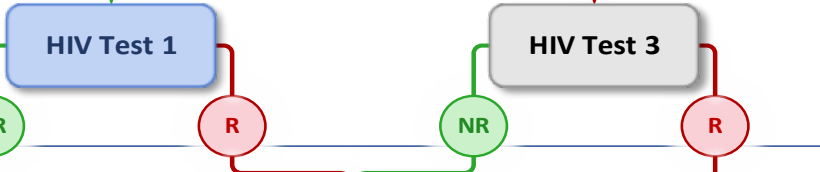
Blood Draw 1



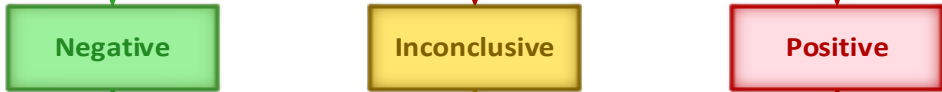
Blood Draw 2



Blood Draw 3



Interpretation



Result Given



Referral

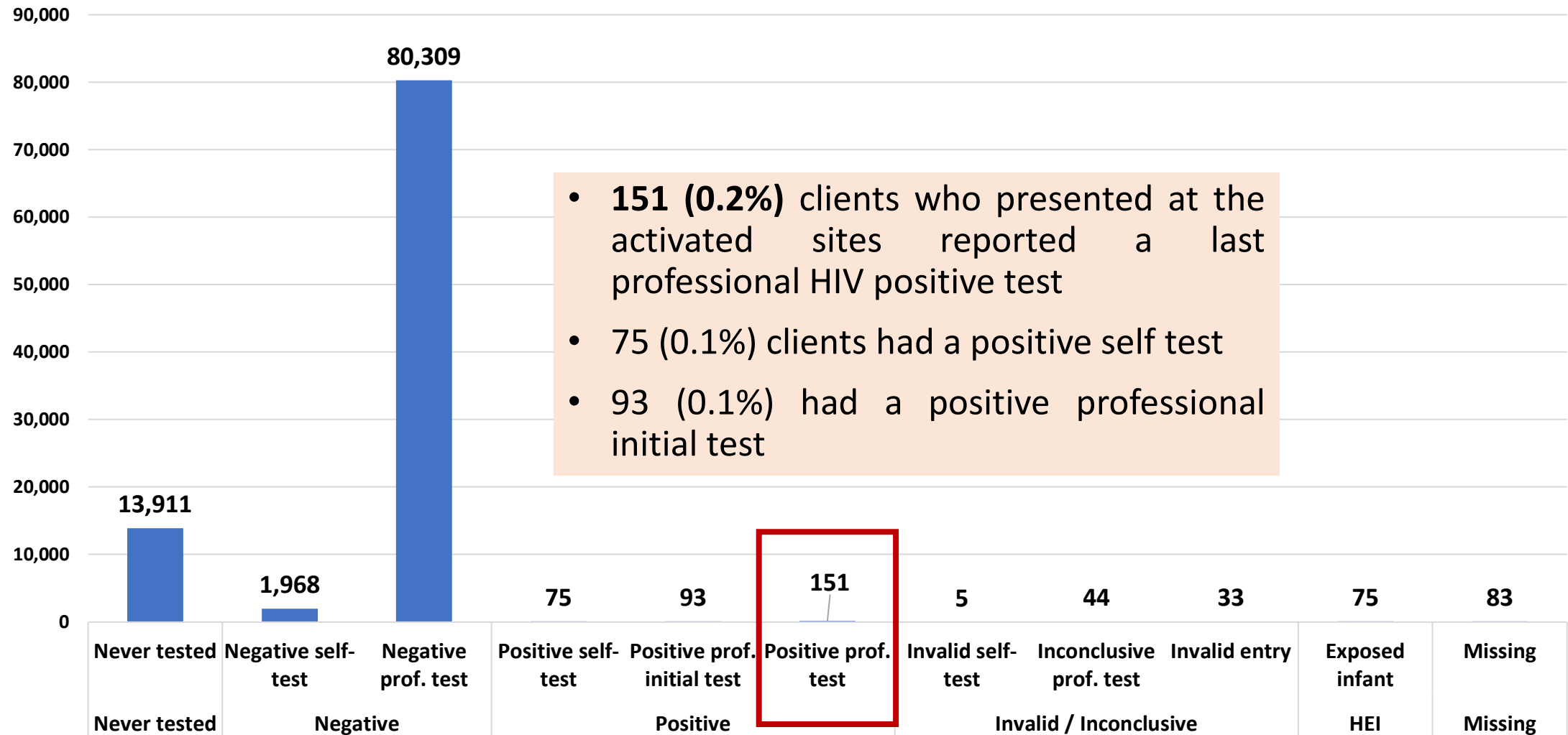
Repeat whole 3-test algorithm after 2 weeks  
 If repeat is still inconclusive: DBS for reference lab  
 DBS result provides final diagnosis, except:  
 If DBS is negative and client is on ART: interrupt ART, repeat 3-test algorithm after 3 months.

Continue / start ART as soon as client is ready (within 2 weeks)

# Malawi's Innovation on Re-testing for Re-engagement - 2

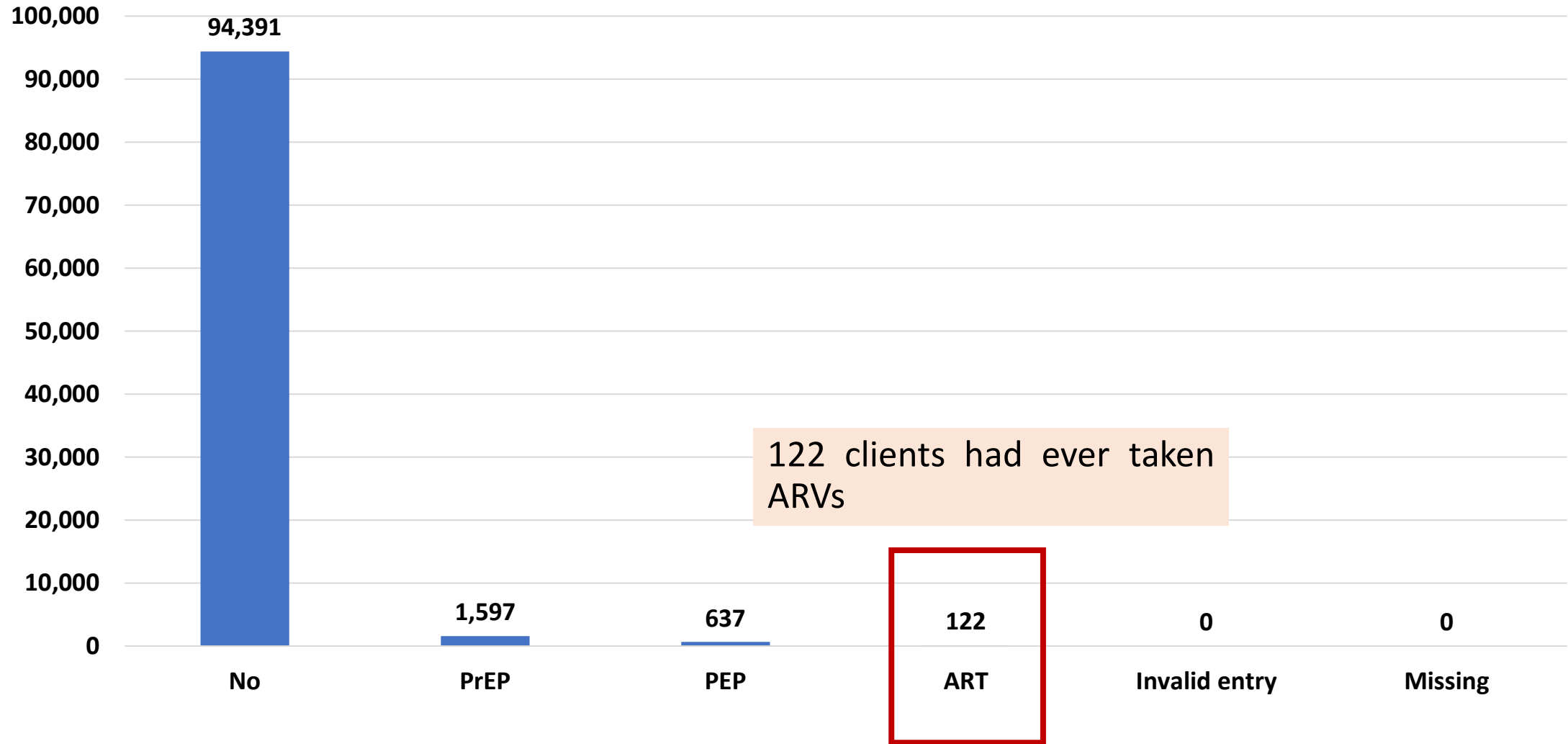
The Malawi Ministry of Health also developed an integrated **testing flow chart** that is permissive to re-testing for re-engagement - in use in activated sites since Nov. 2022

# Results 1 – Last HIV Test Results, Jan 2023 (N=96,747)

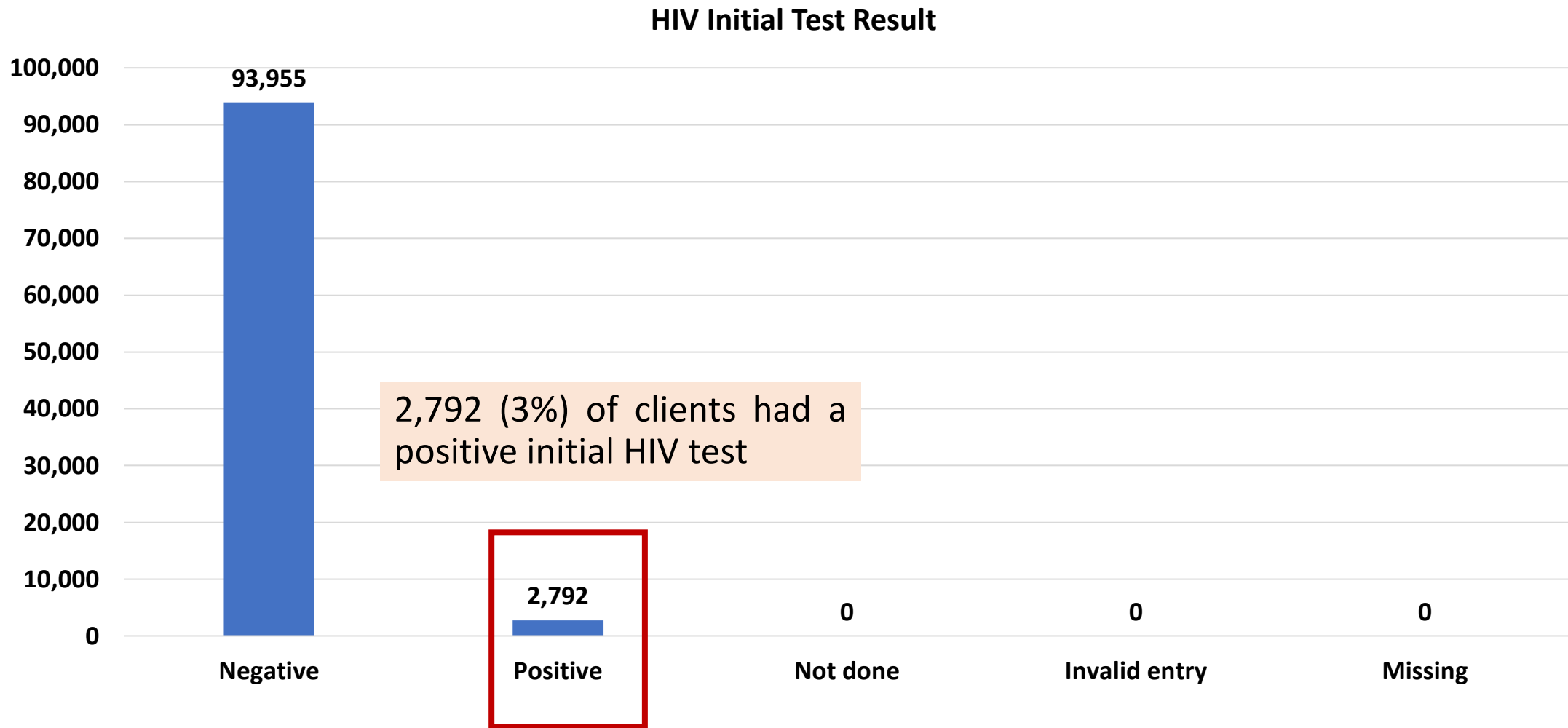




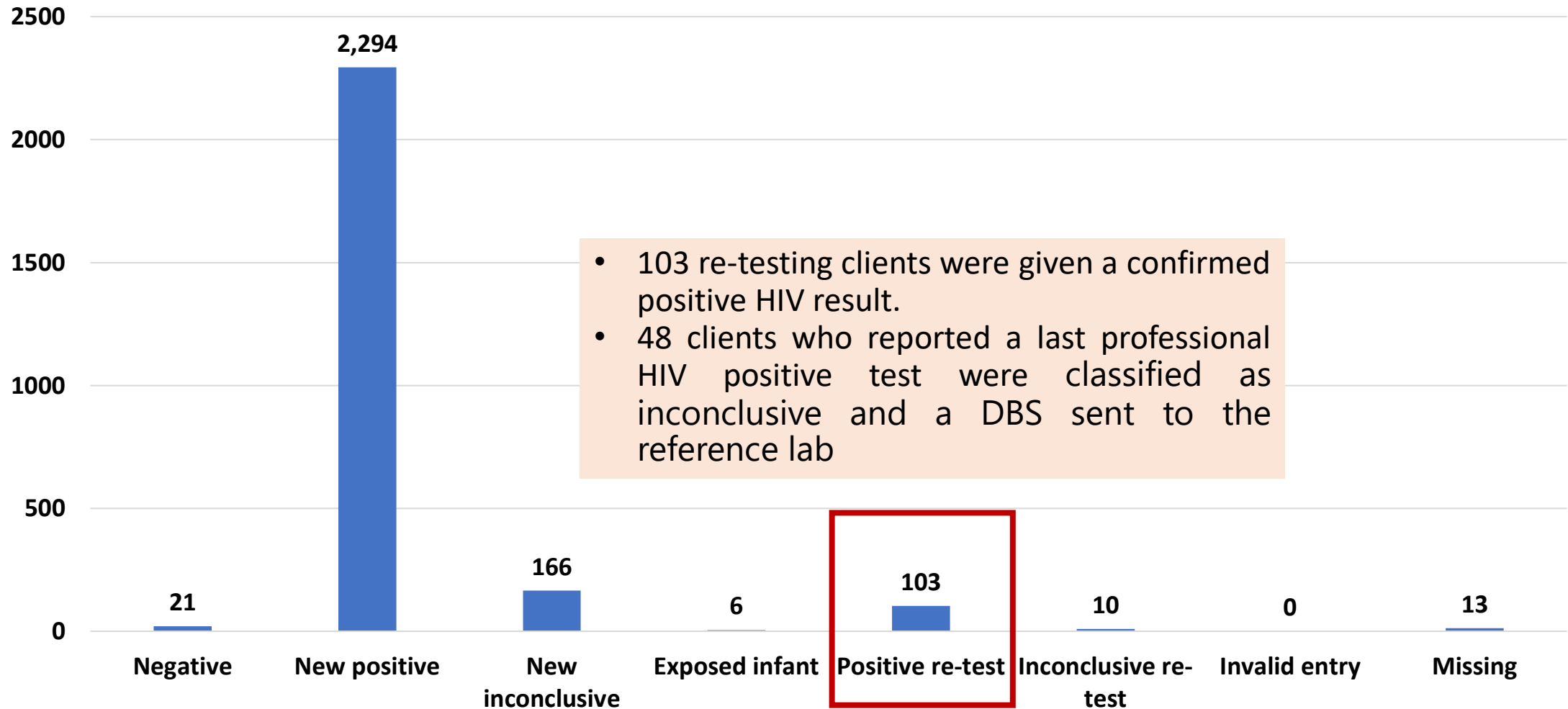
# Results 2 – Ever taken ARVs, Jan 2023 (N=96,747)



# Results 3 – Initial HIV Test Result, Jan 2023 (N=96,747)



# Results 4 – Confirmatory Test Results, Jan 2023 (N=2,613)



## Ethical dilemma....

Must clients disclose their knowledge of HIV status in order to receive an HIV test?

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# Summary

- There is a growing need to identify and support previously diagnosed recipients of care who come for re-testing through identifying and addressing the reasons for re-testing
- Ministries of health need to provide policy and guidance on re-testing occurring among previously diagnosed recipients of care
- The use of comprehensive data collection registers that include capturing clients re-testing in order to offer linkage to re-engagement and treatment
- Need to quantify the magnitude of re-testing for re-engagement including a qualitative component to explore client perceptions / experiences using re-testing as a pathway for re-engagement

Thank you!

