

# Optimizing Targeted Testing Approaches for High-risk Groups: Examining the Effectiveness of the Community Post Model in Harare, Zimbabwe, 2020-2023

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## BACKGROUND

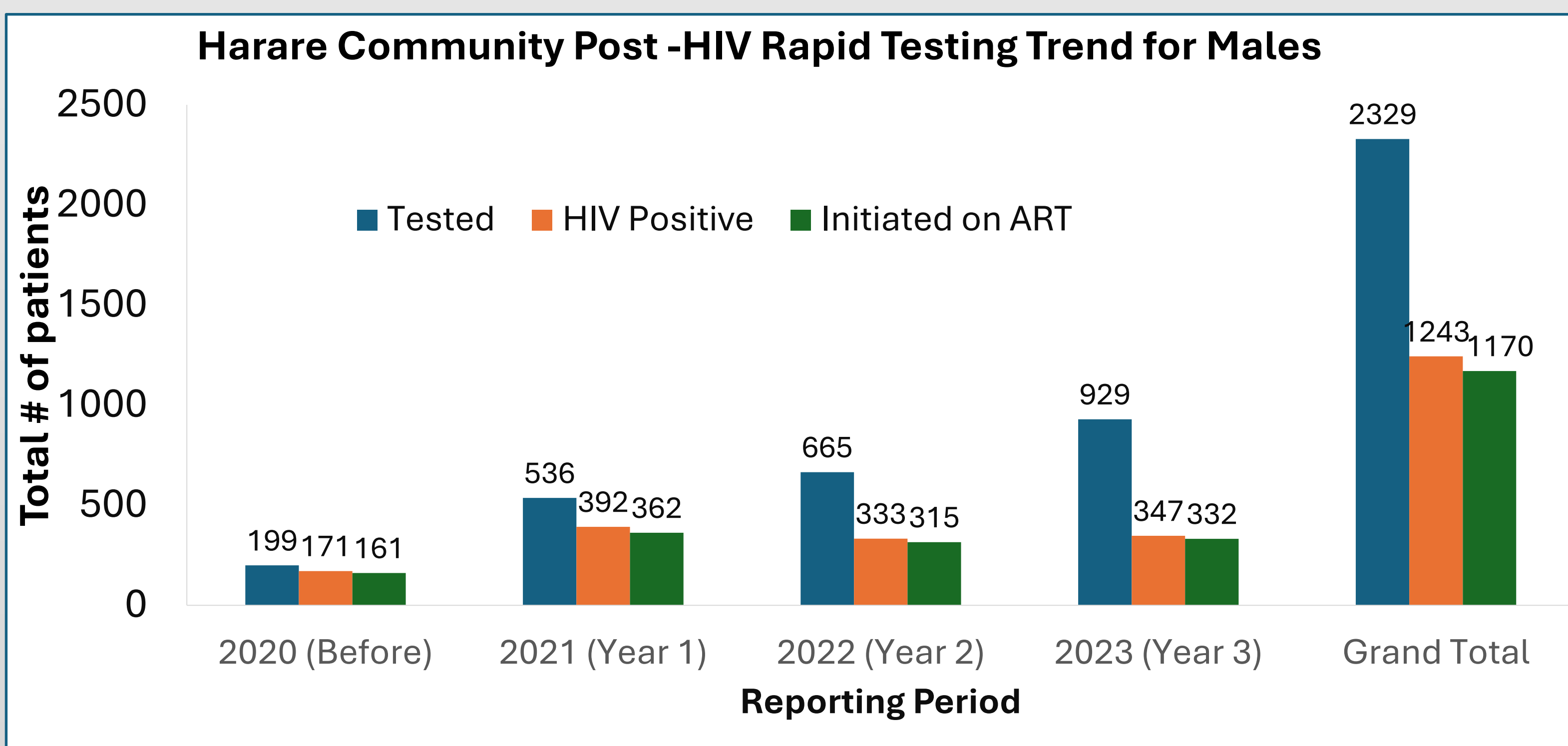
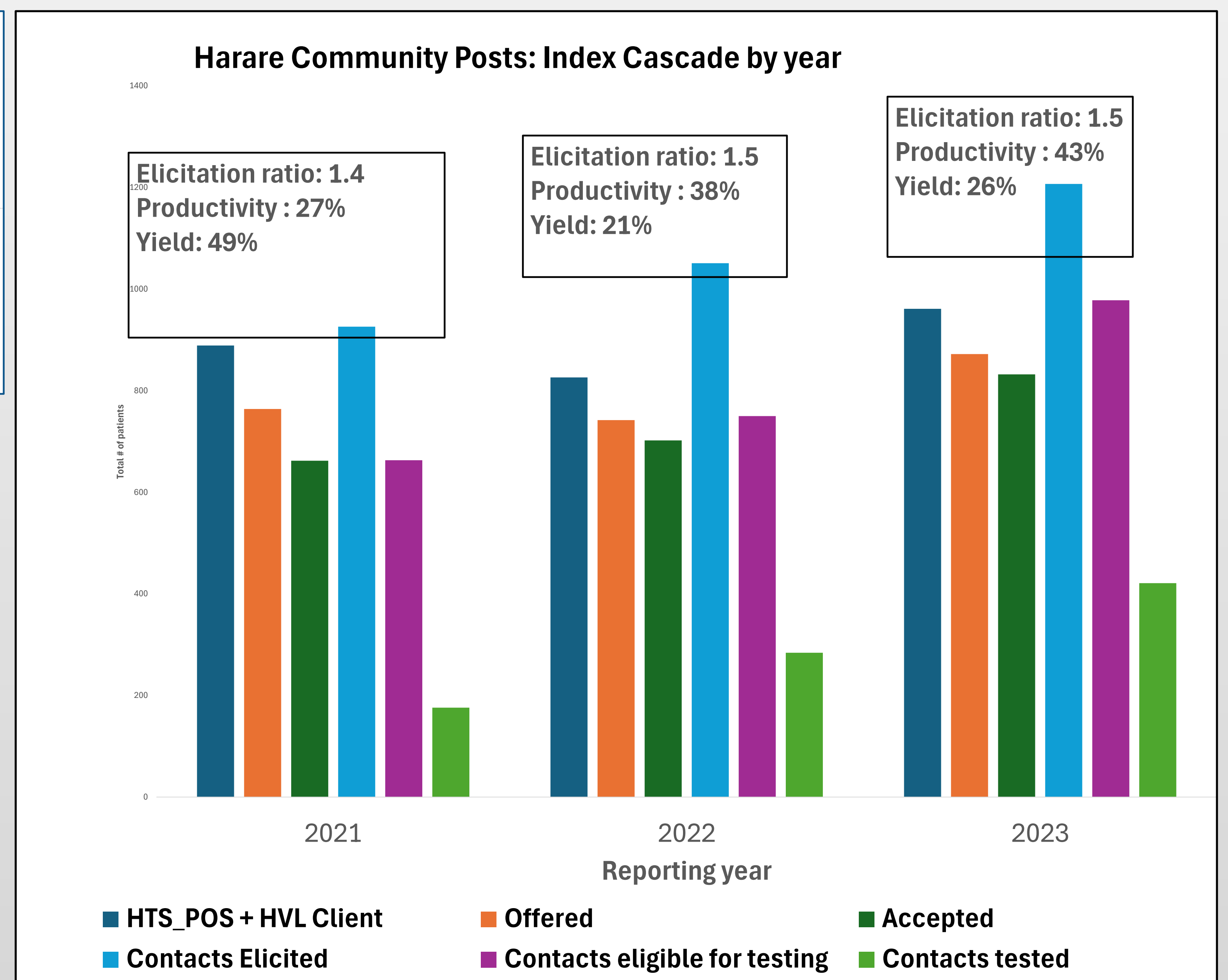
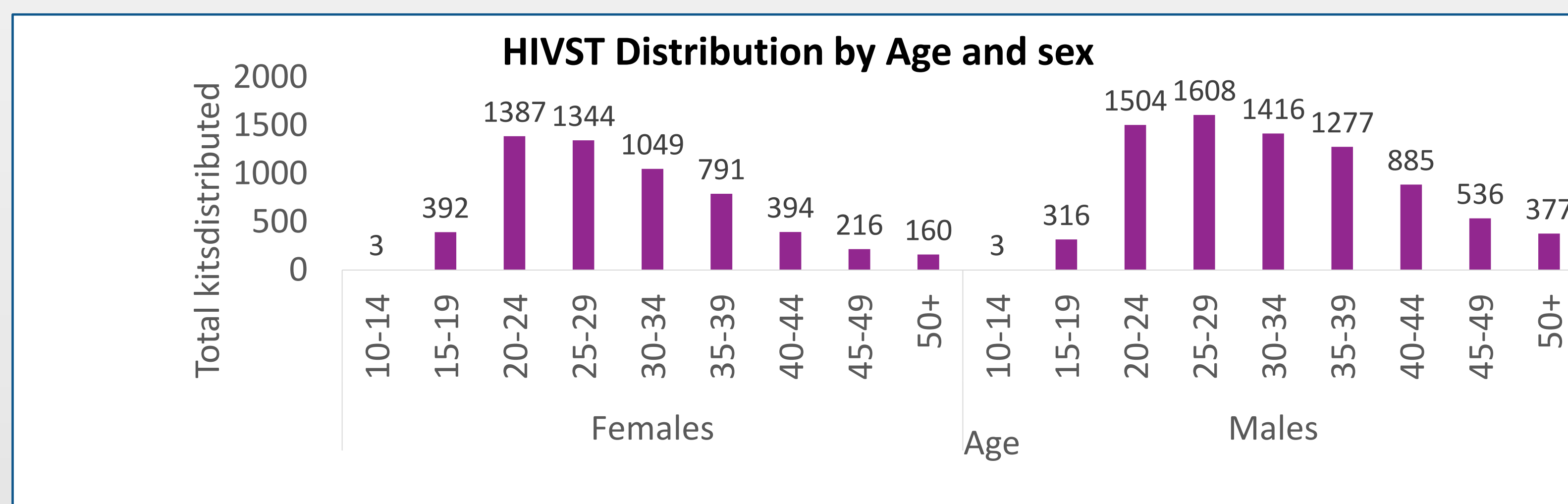
Zimbabwe Association of Church-Related Hospitals (ZACH) set up and expanded community post model to combat HIV barriers, including stigma, discrimination, and limited health services, by distributing HIV self-testing (HIVST) kits, educating vulnerable populations about HIV status and linking them to prevention and treatment services as appropriate. The community post model is currently being implemented in Harare's marketplaces, high traffic residences, church yards, and bus termini, targeting priority populations that have challenges accessing conventional health centres like men and adolescents.

## METHOD

Community posts were set up in highly male-dominated informal sectors where men congregate, work, and have fun in Harare City. Using HIV self-test kits as a targeted and high-yielding case-finding strategy the champions use a screening tool to issue self-test kits to deserving clients. Distribution of test kits has been either primary or secondary depending on the client's choice. Index testing strategy was also scaled up during the same period. Using descriptive statistics, we analyzed routine program data reported through the ZACH App summarized in PowerBI for 2020-2023.

## RESULTS

Men seek HIV testing methods that respect their privacy, as seen by the 34% rise in HIVST kits distributed, from 2,877 in 2020 to 3,878 by December 2023. There has also been a 466% rise in the number of males with access to Rapid HIV testing, from 199 in 2020 to 929 in 2023. The study found that 73% of males who had rapid HIV testing were within the 20–44 age band. The study found that of the 13658 clients who received HIVST kits 7922 (58%) were males and 5736 (42%) were females which shows the efforts to reach males. Among clients in the sexually active group in the 20-44 age band who received HIVST kits 4528 (55%) were males compared to 3780 (45%) females. The proportion of index contacts tested for HIV increased from 27% in 2021 to 43% in 2023.



## CONCLUSION

The community post model has expanded HIV testing services, particularly for males due to its proximity to areas where men congregate, work, and have fun. However, the model needs to be expanded to reach more vulnerable and key populations (KPs) with HIV testing and linkage to treatment and prevention services. Data analysis on KP services is recommended to understand linkages to treatment and prevention services. Furthermore, we recommend a cost analysis of establishing a community post to inform future expansion of this model as well as initiating an outreach program to reach out to index contacts with testing services.

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