

HIV Testing Rates in VA 2009-2011

Office of Public Health
Department of Veterans Affairs

March 2012

HIV in US

- **HIV infection is a treatable disease**
- **HIV prevalence is increasing in US**
- **1.1 million HIV-infected persons in the U.S.**
- **21% unaware of their HIV infection**
- **40,000 - 50,000 new HIV diagnoses in the US every year**
- **HIV transmission rates higher among people who do not know they are HIV-infected**

MMWR: Vol 57(39), 2008

HIV testing in VA

- **Historically, HIV testing has been restricted in VA by Section 124 of Public Law 100-322**
 - Prohibited widespread HIV testing in VA
 - Required written informed consent for HIV testing and scripted pre- and post-test counseling
- **Historically, testing rates have been low in VA**
 - As of 2009, <10% of Veterans in VA care had ever tested for HIV
 - Over 50% of HIV patients in VA had AIDS at time of diagnosis
- **Restrictions lifted in 2008-9**
 - Section 124 repealed in October 2008 by Public Law 110-387
 - Implementing regulations in 38 CFR took effect in August 2009

VA HIV Testing Policy Changes

August 17, 2009

- **VA National HIV Testing Policy revised**
 - After Section 124 repealed, VA was able to revise policy to promote widespread access to HIV testing
 - Routinely offer HIV testing to all Veterans
 - Eliminate written informed consent and prescribed pre- and post-test counseling
 - Verbal consent still required and must be documented in medical record
 - Written educational materials about HIV testing must be provided to patients

VHA Informed Consent Handbook 1004.01: August 17th, 2009

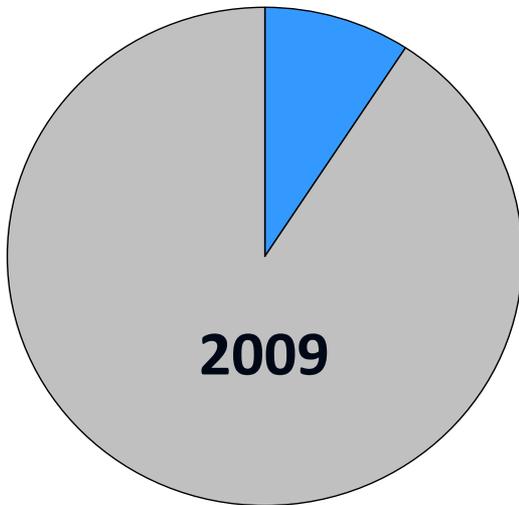
VHA Directive 2009-036, August 17, 2009

VA HIV Testing Rates: Data Collection Methods

- **Data Extract Routine installed at all facilities to generate HIV test reports by Calendar Year (CY)**
- **All stations provide an annual HIV test report in January to Office of Public Health for the preceding CY**
- **Data collected on all outpatients in that CY**
 - **Number with HIV test ever done**
 - **Number with HIV test done in that CY**
 - **Number with positive result in that CY**

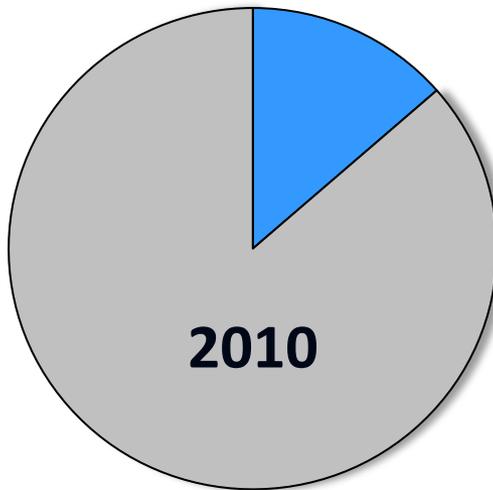
Veterans Ever Tested for HIV by Year 2009-2011

9.2% Ever Tested
n=524,267



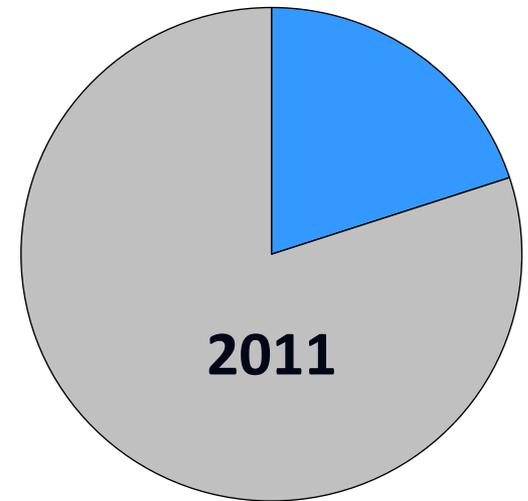
Outpatient Visits
n= 5,713,265

13.5% Ever Tested
n= 795,126



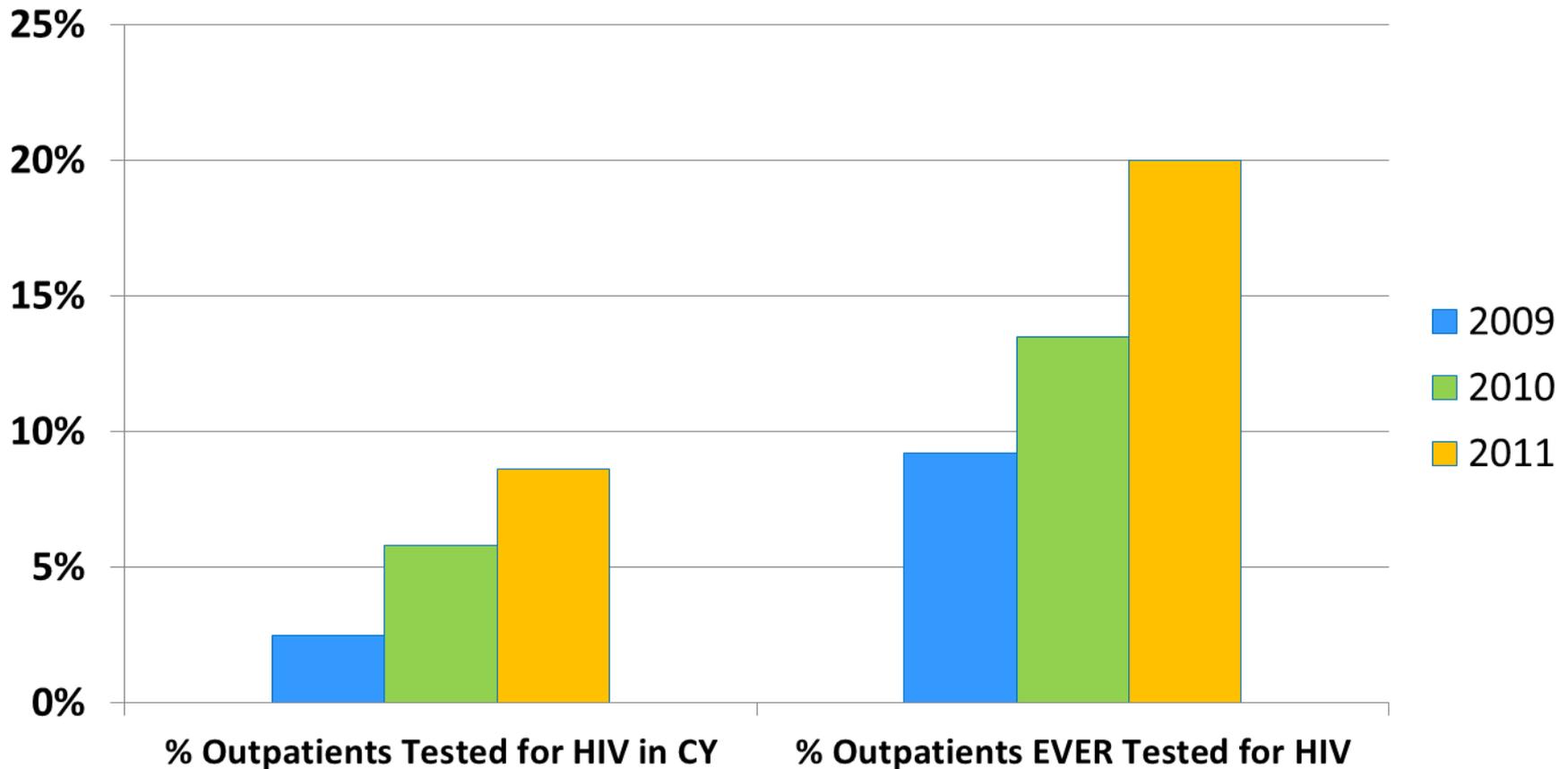
Outpatient Visits
n= 5,888,599

20% Ever Tested
n= 1,221,328



Outpatient Visits
n= 6,114,034

Increases in VA HIV Testing 2009-2011

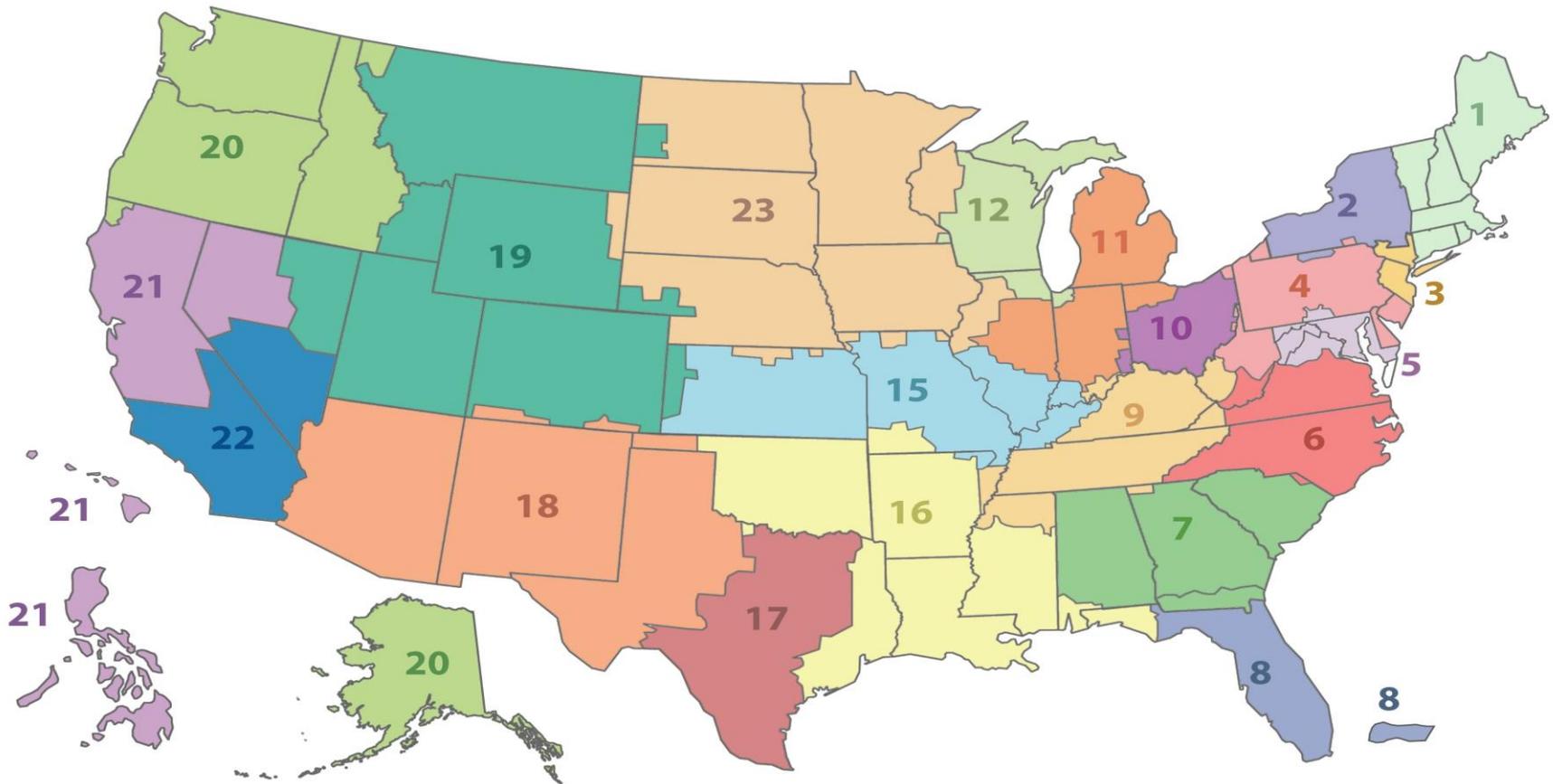


VA National HIV Testing Data for 2009, 2010 and 2011

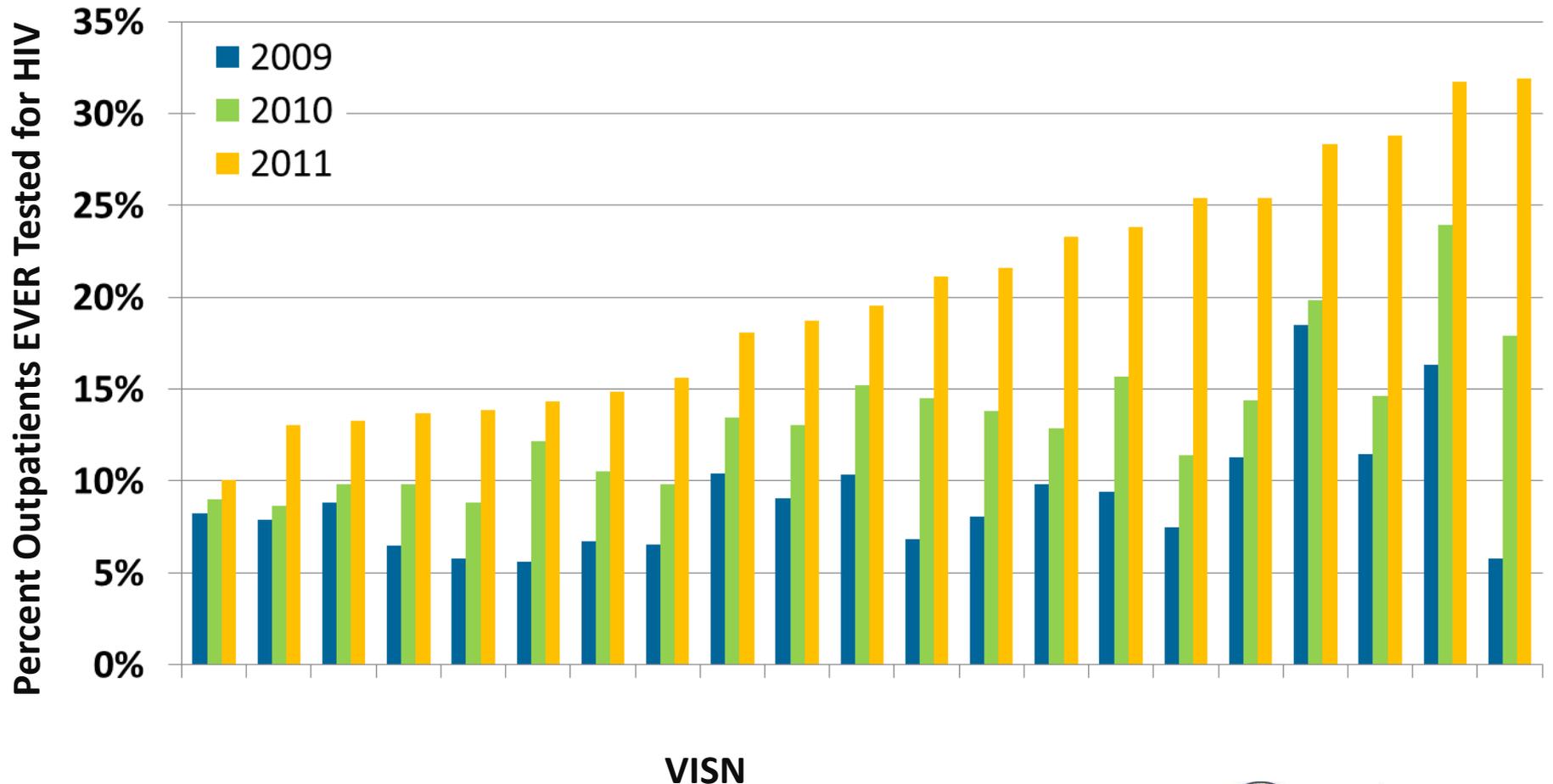
Variable	2009	2010	2011
Number of Veterans with an outpatient visit in CY	5, 713, 265	5, 888, 599	6, 114, 034
Number and % of Veterans with an outpatient visit ever tested for HIV	524, 267 (9.2%)	795, 126 (13.5%)	1,221,328 (20.0%)
Number of Veterans with HIV tests performed in CY	142, 345	341, 414	523,361
Number of Veterans with HIV positive tests in CY	1,739	2,233	2,149
Seropositivity rate of Veterans tested in CY	1.2%	0.7%	0.41%

Abbreviations: CY= calendar year; HIV = human immunodeficiency virus

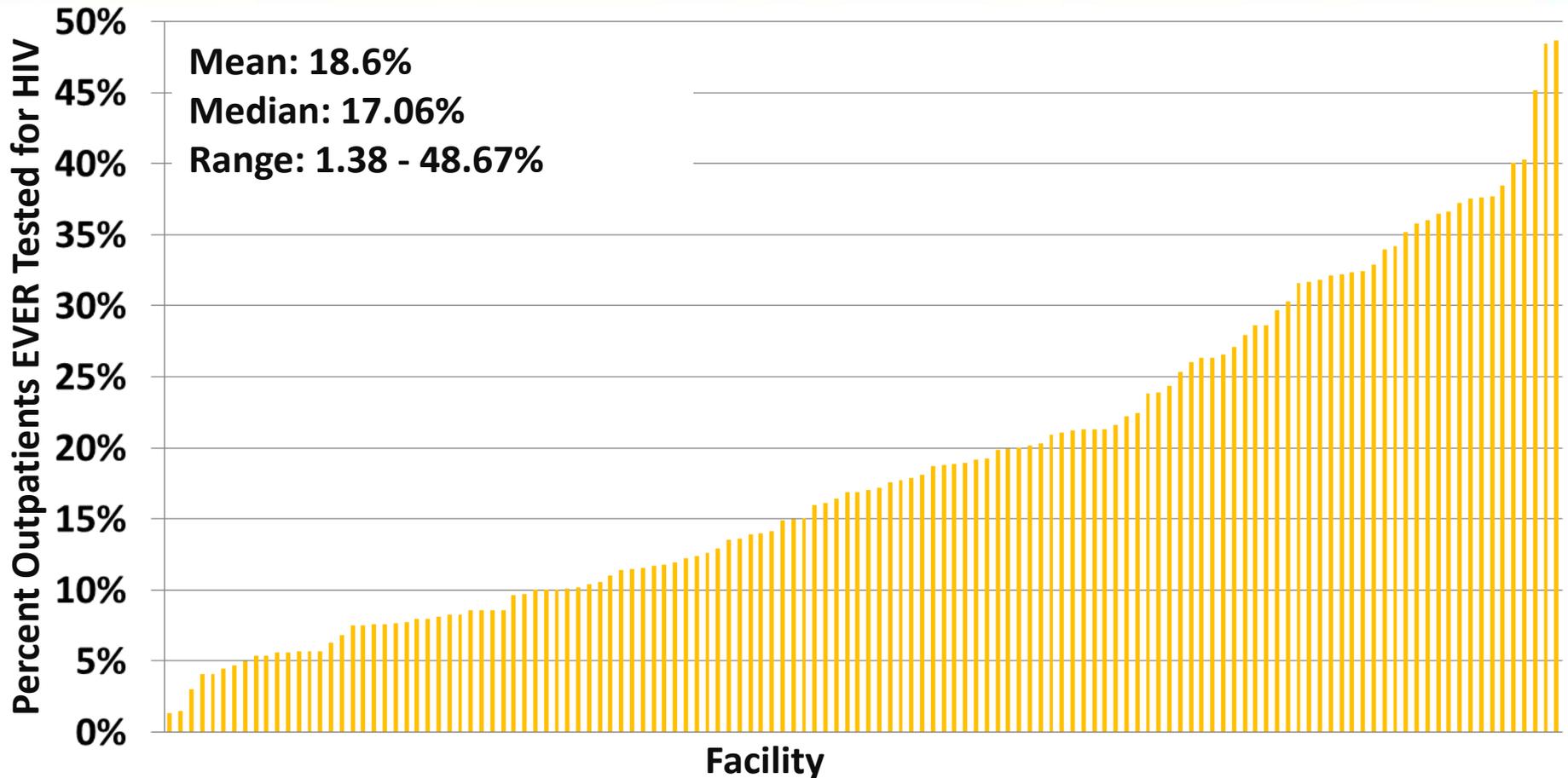
Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISNs)



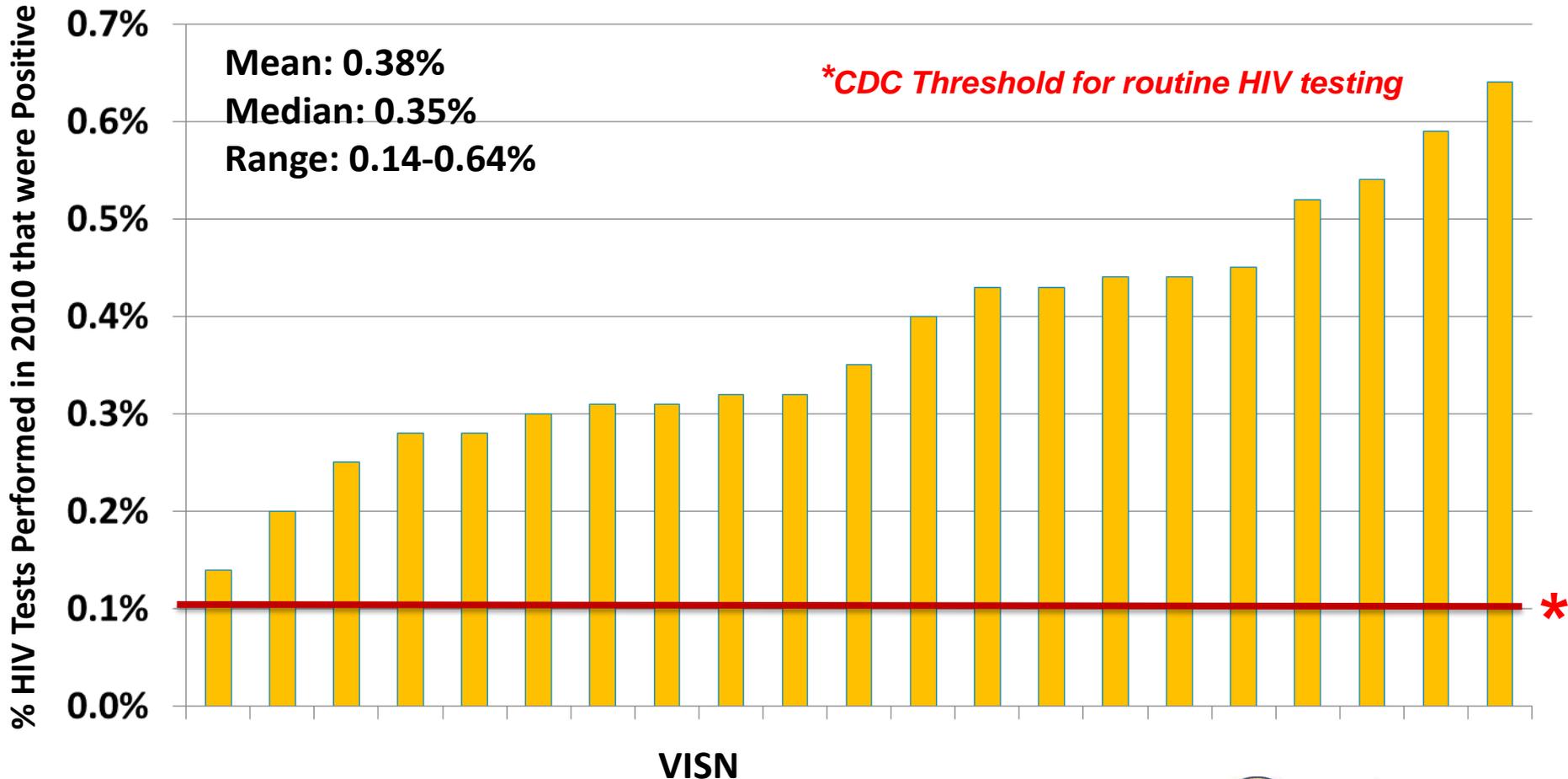
Percent of Veterans EVER Tested for HIV, by VISN: 2009, 2010, 2011



Percent of Veterans EVER Tested for HIV, by Facility in 2011



Percentage of HIV Positive Tests in CY 2011, by VISN



VA Initiatives to Improve HIV Testing Rates 2009-2011

- **Legislative and Policy Changes**
 - Verbal consent for testing
 - Routine offer of HIV testing to Veterans
- **Routine HIV test clinical reminder**
- **Funding for facility-level quality improvement projects**
 - Clinical HIV testing
 - Laboratory
 - Women's Health
 - Homeless Veteran Stand Downs
- **Social marketing campaign**

Conclusions

- **The percentage of Veterans ever tested for HIV more than doubled in two years**
- **Every VISN had increases in HIV testing rates from 2009-2011**
- **Policy change, clinical reminders, grant support, and social marketing had large cumulative impact on increases in HIV testing rates**
- **In 2011, all VISNs had an HIV seropositivity rate above the CDC threshold (>0.1%) for routine HIV testing**

Summary

- **VA is the largest US provider of HIV care**
- **Routine HIV testing is warranted in VA**
- **HIV testing in VA is now much simpler**
- **Many Veterans in VA care have still not been tested for HIV**
- **Progress has been made in all VISNs; organizational efforts to promote increased HIV testing continue**

Office of Public Health

www.hiv.va.gov

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HIV Meds Quarterly, Winter 2011-2012
Brief updates and analysis of new findings related to common therapies used by HIV clinicians.

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VA National HIV Testing Campaign

A national campaign to increase HIV testing in VA facilities

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Campaign Description

The VHA is the largest single provider of HIV care in the United States, providing care for more than 24,000 Veterans with HIV in 2010. Yet, currently, less than 15% of Veterans have ever been tested for HIV in the VHA system. We are encouraging every Veteran to get tested for HIV at least once. Unfortunately, too many Americans who are infected with HIV learn about their positive status late into the course of their disease. PHS&G encourages all providers, especially those in primary care, mental health, homeless programs, and substance-use treatment clinics, to offer routine HIV testing to all patients in order to diagnose HIV infection at the earliest possible stage.

To help promote early diagnosis of HIV and to simplify the process, the VHA revised its policies on HIV testing and informed consent. As of August 17, 2009, written informed consent is no longer required for HIV testing. Instead, Veterans are able to provide verbal consent for voluntary HIV testing. Also, lengthy pre/post-test counseling is no longer required; rather, providers must give patients written materials on HIV. Another important change is that HIV testing is no longer limited to only those Veterans who identify risk factors or risky behaviors. In line with current Federal public health recommendations, voluntary HIV testing is now recommended as a part of routine medical care for all Veterans. These policy changes have a common goal to diagnose infection as soon as possible so that Veterans can receive state-of-the-art care and remain healthy for many years to come.

Campaign Resources

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