

# Ath Checkpoint:

## Reducing Undiagnosed HIV Infections In Crisis-Affected Services In Greece

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### OBJECTIVES - BACKGROUND

More HIV infections in Western Europe occur among Men who Have Sex with Men (MSM). An estimated 20-30% of them are unaware of their infection. Interventions to increase testing rates are important to facilitate early HIV diagnosis. Since 2010, Greece has been experiencing an economic crisis that disrupted testing services. Given this, “Ath Checkpoint” started its operation in central Athens in November 2012 offering free rapid HIV testing and counselling while trying to minimize HIV stigma. We present herein results of first-year operation.

### METHODS

Clients who visited the Ath Checkpoint in 2013 were tested by INSTI™ Rapid HIV1/2 Antibodies Test by Biolytical Laboratories. Staff members were collecting information on socio-demographics, sexual orientation, testing history and sexual behavior. Data was analyzed in SPSS, edition 21.

### RESULTS

- 2.282 participants were tested in 2013 (mean age 31.2 years old)
- One third of them (n=686) had never been tested before
- Most participants were males (n=1949, 85.1%) and MSM (n=1662, 72.8%)  
Heterosexual participants (n=543, 23.8%)
- 87 infections (3.8%) were newly diagnosed, especially among MSM (n=83, 5%)**
- Of new diagnoses, **15 (17.2%)** were participants without previous test (Figure 1)  
Twenty four (24) participants **(27.6%)** had a self-reported negative HIV test less than 6 months ago

### CONCLUSION

- Ath Checkpoint has offered free rapid HIV testing to MSM -the mostly HIV-affected group in Greece- while at the same time avoided stigmatization by also attracting participants other than MSM
- Our novel and friendly facility constitutes a major complement to the disrupted HIV testing structures due to the economic crisis
- We aim at further reducing the HIV undiagnosed fraction by facilitating testing among vulnerable groups who are reluctant to visit public structures or unable to pay the recently established fee

### When was the last time you had an HIV test? Reactive (N=87)

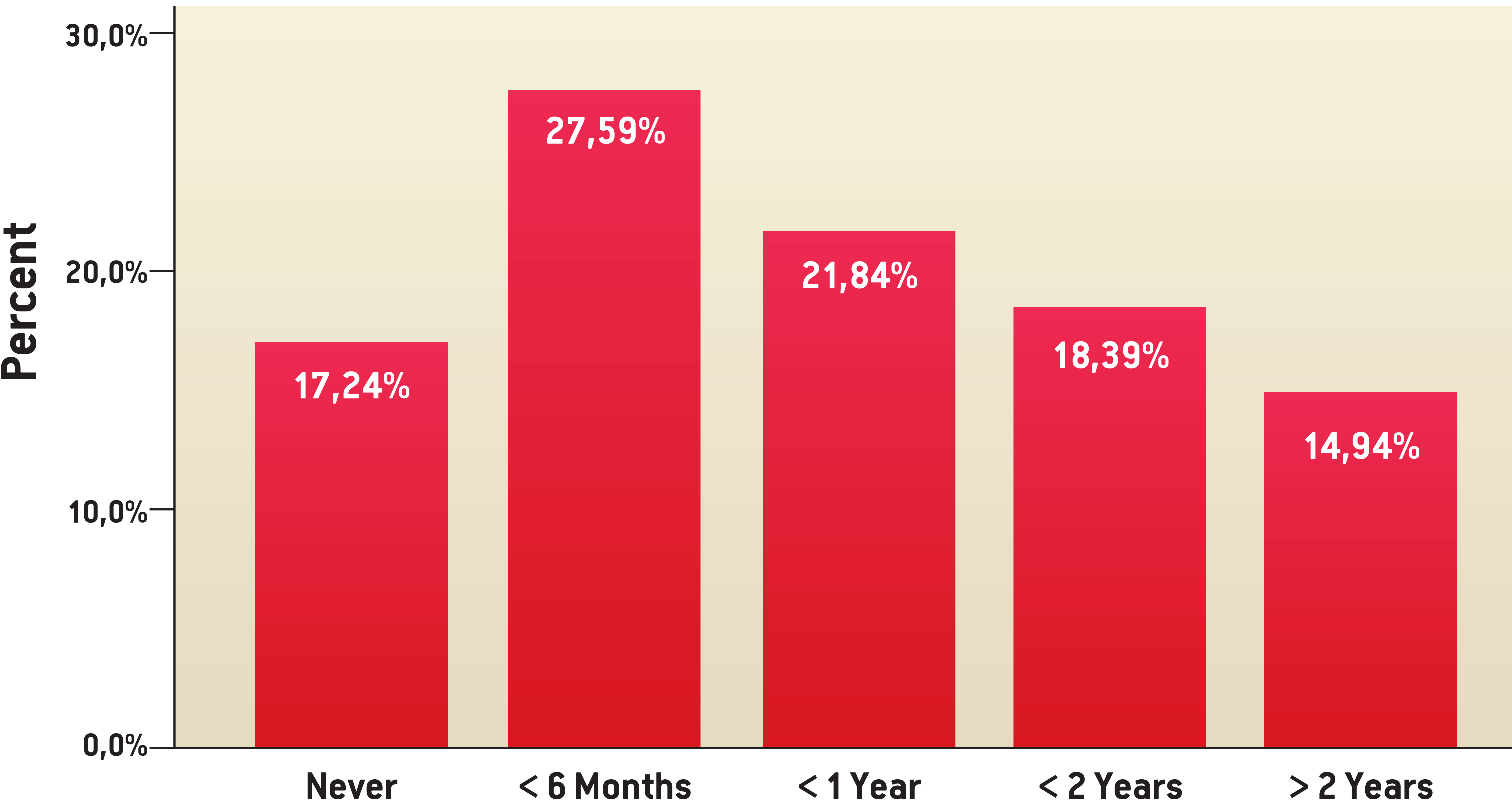


Figure 1. Recent Infections & New Diagnoses

1. ECDC/WHO Regional Office for Europe. HIV/AIDS surveillance in Europe 2012. Stockholm; 2013, <http://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications/Publications/hiv-aids-surveillance-report-2012-20131127.pdf>  
2. Hamers, FF., Phillips, A. Diagnosed and undiagnosed HIV-infected populations in Europe. HIV Med. 2008;9 (Supl 2): 6-12  
3. Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report in Greece, 31-12-2013 (Issue 28). Athens 2013. Also available at: <http://www.keelpno.gr>  
4. SIALON <http://www.sialon.eu/en/projects/lessons-learnt-from-sialon.html?id=7>. [The study/survey indicated that 56% of HIV+ people were unaware of their HIV status. Rates of unaware MSN were higher than 70% in Bucharest and Ljubljana and lower than 50% in Barcelona]  
5. The European MSM Internet Survey (EMIS): <http://www.emis-project.eu>  
6. WHO Data and Statistics webpage: <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/communicable-diseases/hiv/aids/data-and-statistics>