

Baseline HIV knowledge of adolescents: a retrospective review of intake knowledge assessments

Background:

Illness related knowledge is associated with treatment perceptions and understanding in chronic illness. The purpose of this study is to examine HIV specific knowledge of adolescents (aged 13-19) upon registration at a community organisation for people living with and affected by HIV in London

Methods:

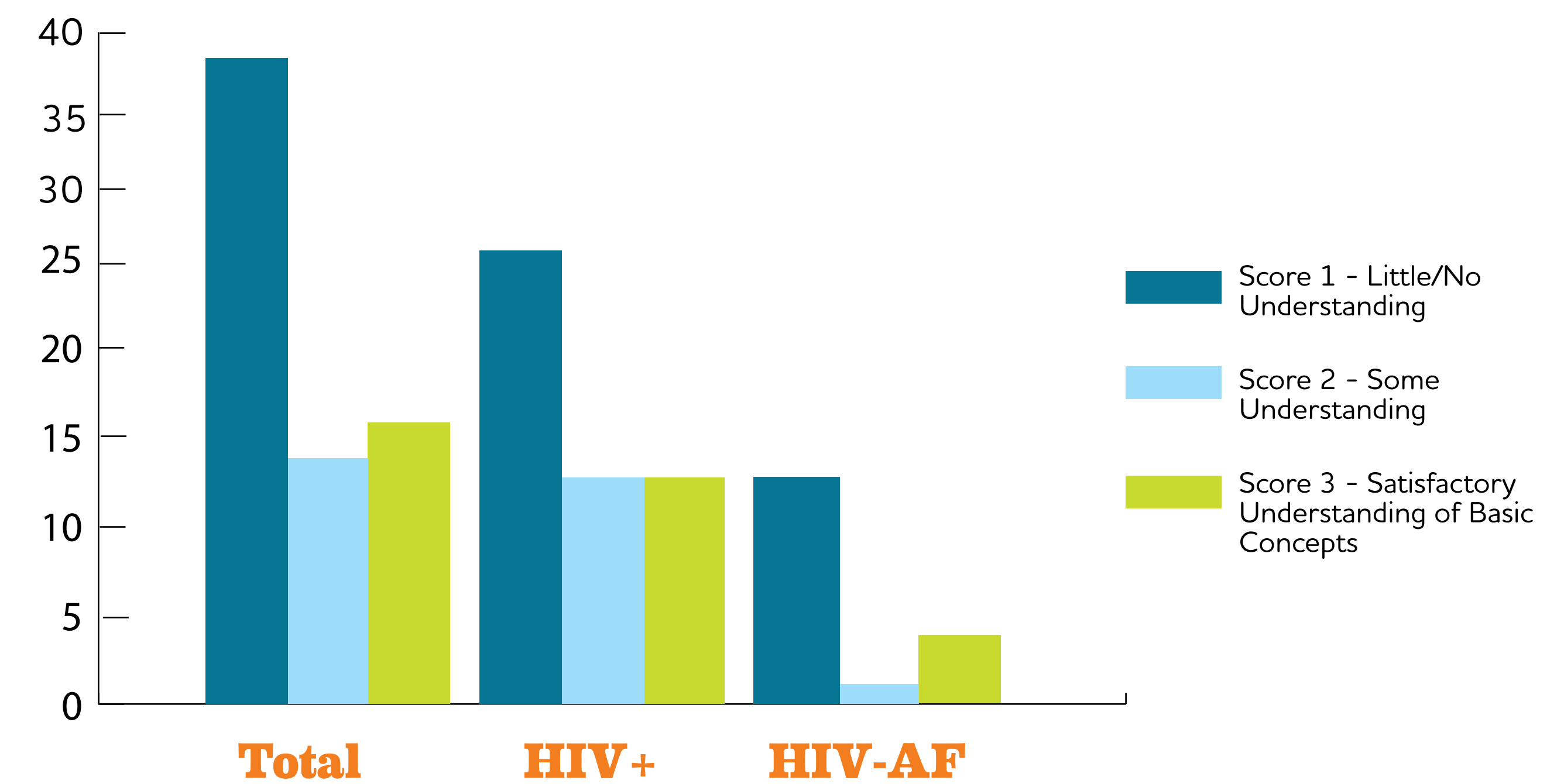
During 2011, all new adolescent registrants at a community organisation undertook a brief, 5 item screening process to measure baseline understanding of key concepts related to HIV, including: basic comprehension of the HIV diagnosis, CD4 count, viral load, transmission routes, and ways for a person living with HIV to stay healthy. 66 new registration charts containing assessment were retrospectively reviewed to evaluate knowledge trends.

Results:

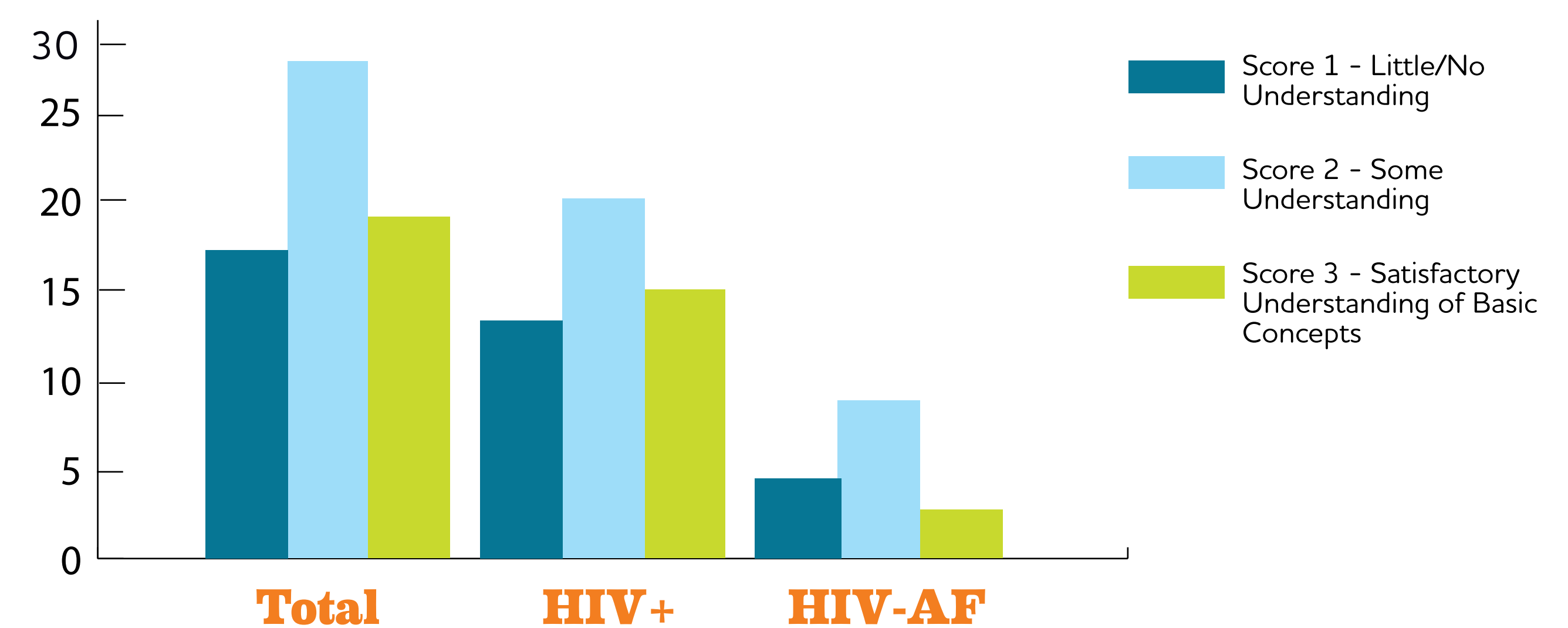
66 total charts were reviewed; 50 of 66 belonged to HIV positive (HIV+) adolescents and the remaining 16 belonged to HIV affected (HIV-AF) adolescents. Items were scored 1-3: scores of 1 indicated little or no understanding, 2 indicated some understanding, and 3 indicated a satisfactory understanding of basic concepts. Maximum score for individual assessment was 15 and minimum score was 5. The mean score for registrants was 9.136, indicating some understanding of key concepts related to HIV. HIV+ adolescents demonstrated a slightly higher overall understanding (mean 9.52) than HIV-AF adolescents (mean 8.563), a trend that was consistent across all items. there were no significant differences in knowledge between male or female scores. Adolescents aged 13 had lower mean scores than adolescents aged 14-19 (8.421 versus 9.511 respectively).

Adolescents scored higher on broader concepts (HIV, transmission routes, and ways for a person living with HIV to stay healthy) than on specific concepts (CD4 count and viral load). Overall scores for understanding specific concepts were low both before and after adjusting for potential factors such as age, HIV status, or gender (mean of 1.712 for CD4 count and 1.5 for viral load out of a potential 3 points each item).

Question 3: What does Viral Load mean?



Question 4: How can HIV be transmitted or passed from one person to another?



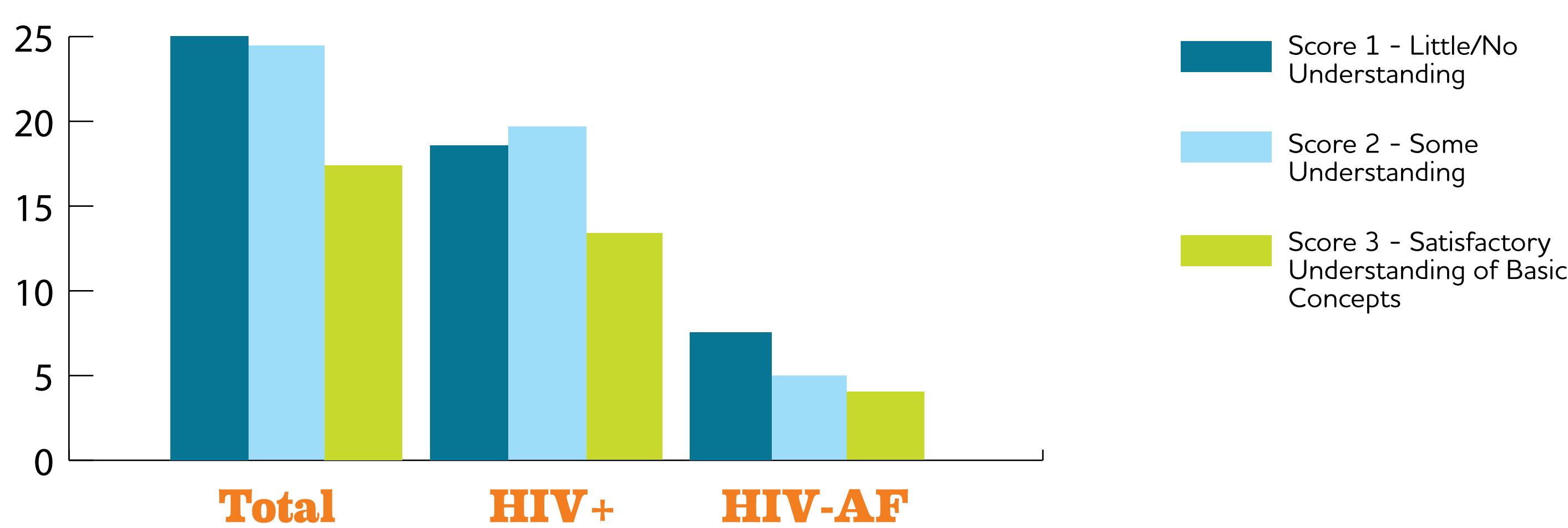
Total Score: HIV positive young people

Score	No. of young people
5	9
6	3
7	4
8	4
9	5
10	5
11	6
12	5
13	1
14	1
15	7

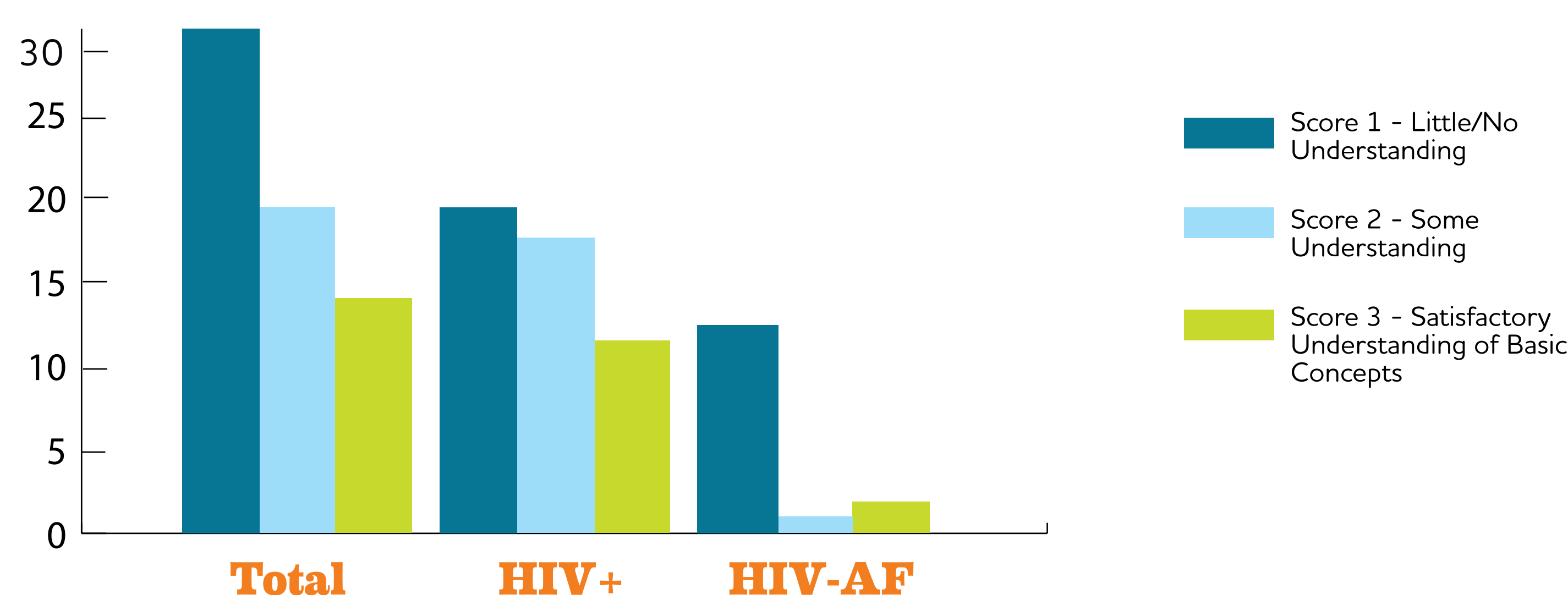
Total Score - Young people affected by HIV:

Score	No. of young people
5	2
6	3
7	2
8	1
9	2
10	1
11	1
12	2
13	0
14	0
15	1

Question 1: What is HIV?



Question 2: What is a CD4 count?



Conclusions:

Adolescents demonstrated some understanding of basic concepts related to HIV however there is substantial potential for improvement, especially around knowledge of specific concepts like CD4 count and viral load.

There is need for additional research to identify factors contributing to individual differences in HIV knowledge. Adolescents require targeted programming aimed at building HIV knowledge.