

Maximizing Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention in Lilongwe, Malawi, by targeting men in priority age group (15–29 years)

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Background

- Since the global voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) program started in 2007, it has primarily been attracting younger boys
- In 2016, the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) provided technical guidance to the 14 countries implementing VMMC programs to prioritize men aged 15-29 for accelerated impact in reducing new HIV infections (the "age pivot")
- In Malawi, a review of 2016 PEPFAR performance data indicated that 51% of VMMC clients in Lilongwe, where VMMC is provided by Jhpiego's Project IQ, were boys under 15 years
- New strategies were needed to increase uptake by older males, as monitored through routine performance data

Methods

- Project IQ adjusted demand creation and service delivery approaches to target men aged 15-29:
 - Employing/training satisfied clients within the priority age group to recruit friends
 - Mapping communities to identify and reach out where men congregate e.g. market places and "bawo" games
 - Extending service hours to accommodate working men
 - Training community leaders and key influencers on VMMC to act as VMMC champions.
 - Enhancing referrals from other service delivery points (e.g. sexually transmitted infections clinic)
 - Conducting campaigns outside school holidays
 - Instituting weekly dashboard to track performance by age group
- To evaluate the program's efforts to target these men, we conducted a descriptive analysis of program data from October 2016 to September 2018
 - VMMC aggregate program data is collected monthly through partner monitoring and evaluation systems and reported quarterly to PEPFAR
 - Variables reported include client numbers and ages

Results

- A total of 93,050 clients were circumcised in Lilongwe between Oct 2016 and Sept 2018
- In 2016, 44% of the clients who underwent VMMC in Lilongwe were aged 15-29
- Quarter to quarter variation in age pivot performance was noted, but the same quarter across successive years showed improvement for each quarter (Figure 1)
- An increase in age pivot to 71% was noted in 2017 with further increase to 82% in 2018 (Figure 1 and 2)
- Across all the years, Q4 has a high number of 10-14 year olds because of the school holidays and major campaign period
- The trend of annual increase in number of VMMC did not affect age pivot (Fig.3)

Figure1: Quarterly trend by age band- Project IQ Malawi

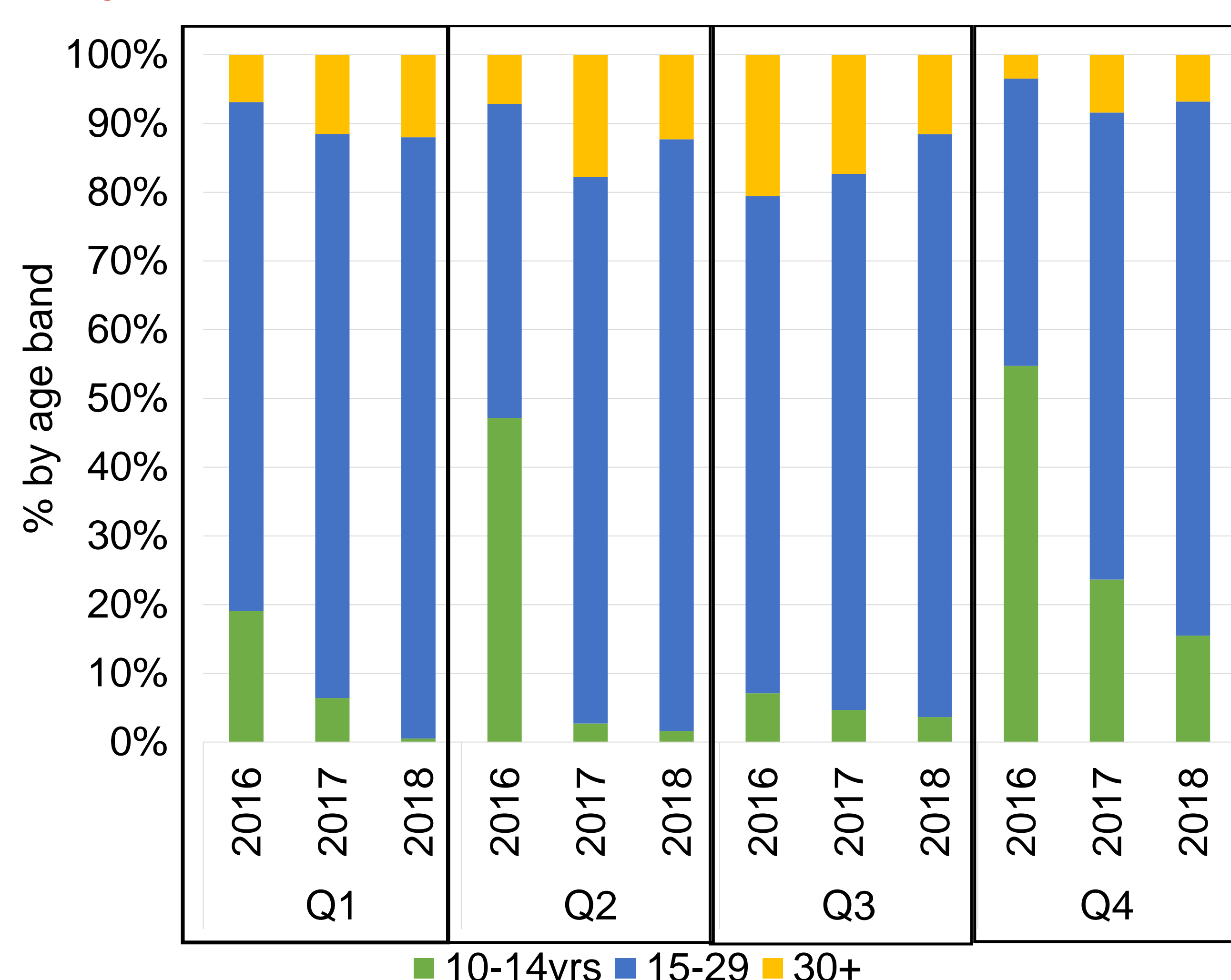


Figure 2: Annual shift in age pivot- Project IQ Malawi

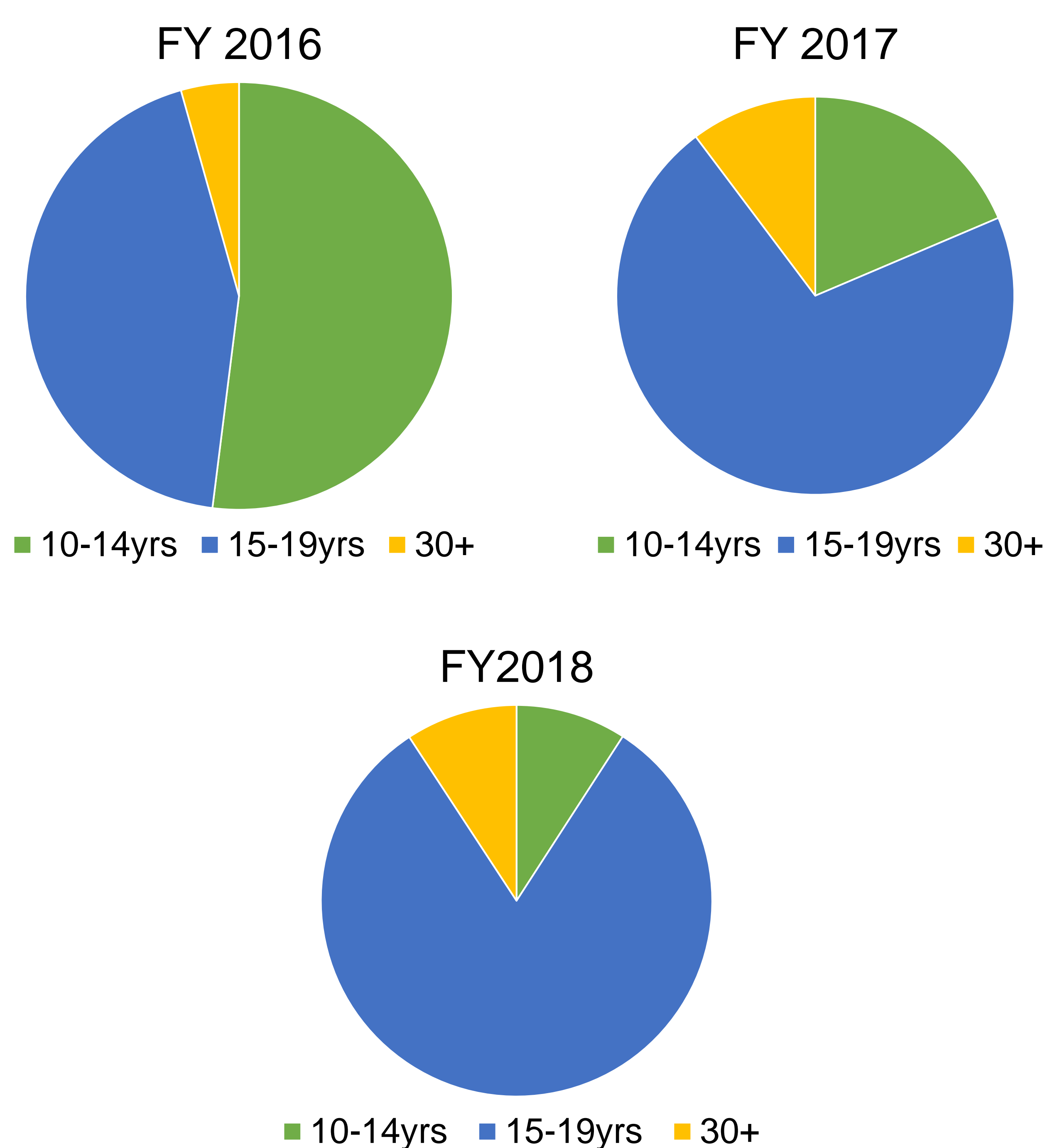
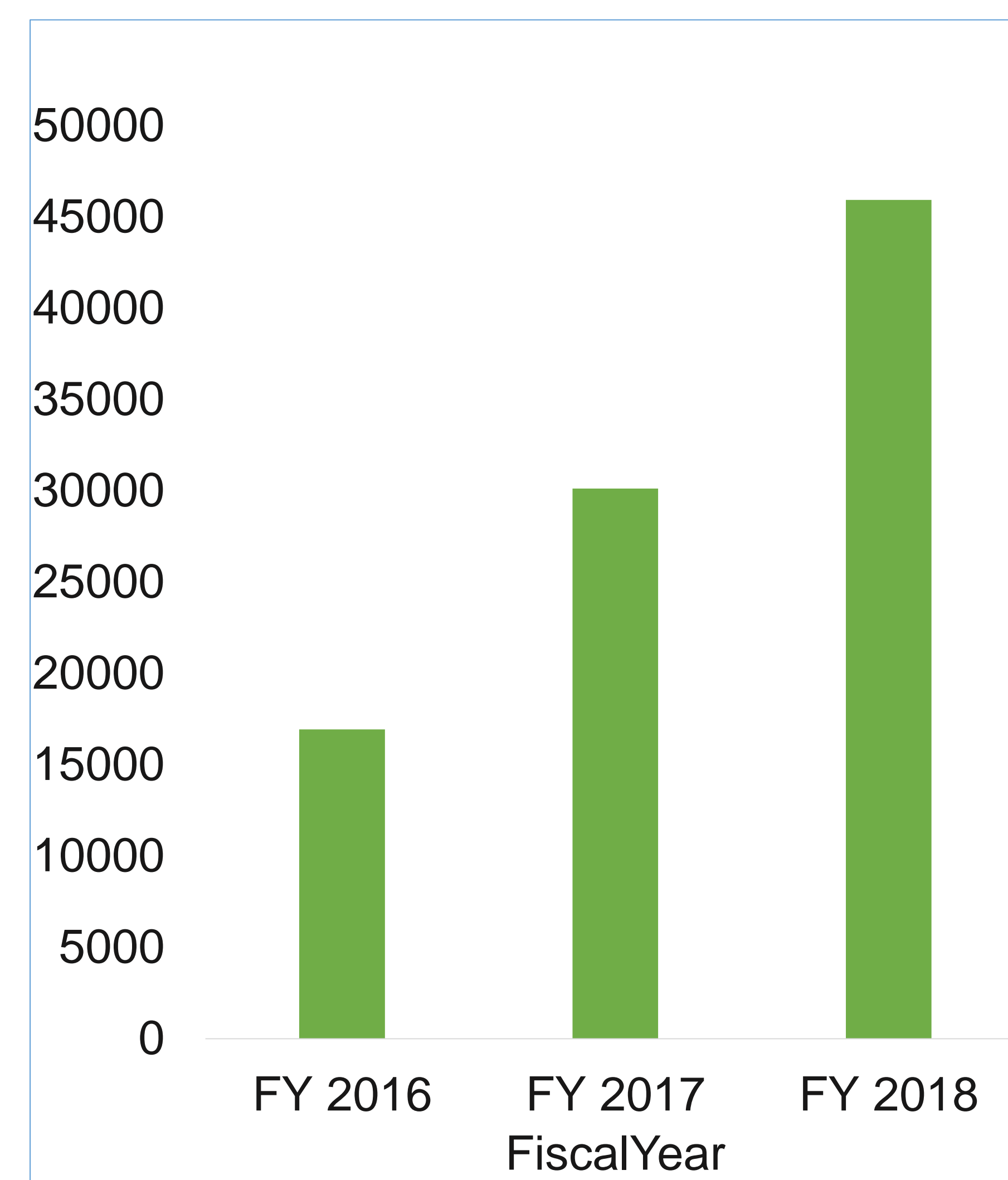


Figure 3: Annual Trend in VMMC numbers



Conclusions

- Implementing age-targeted demand creation activities effectively improves VMMC uptake among the priority age group
- Further refinements include expanding community mobilization activities in the targeted locations throughout the year to minimize seasonality

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