



Understanding victimization and poly-victimization amongst female sex workers in Soweto, a South African township

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Background

Sex workers (SWs) epitomise South Africa's dual HIV and violence epidemics

CRIMINALISATION

SW is criminalized in South Africa, driving vulnerability to violence by police, clients, families, & community

SEXUAL RISK

HIV vulnerability is heightened through violence exposure which results in inconsistent condom use and STI exposure

MENTAL HEALTH

Resulting trauma less to mental health complications such as PTSD, substance abuse & poor treatment adherence

South Africa's complex sociopolitical history fostered and normalized a culture of violence

One response amongst those most on the receiving end of apartheid violence, was the creation of more violent masculinities predicated on toughness, superiority, and sexual entitlement.

Men who purchase sex also engaging in IPV, rape, multiple concurrent partners, binge drink, and are more likely to refuse to use condoms

Modelling estimates have suggested that through addressing violence amongst SWs, 25% of HIV infections amongst this population could be averted

AIM

To describe the prevalence of violence by perpetrator category and violence type, as well as patterns of victimization and polyvictimization, amongst FSWs in Soweto, South Africa



Methodology

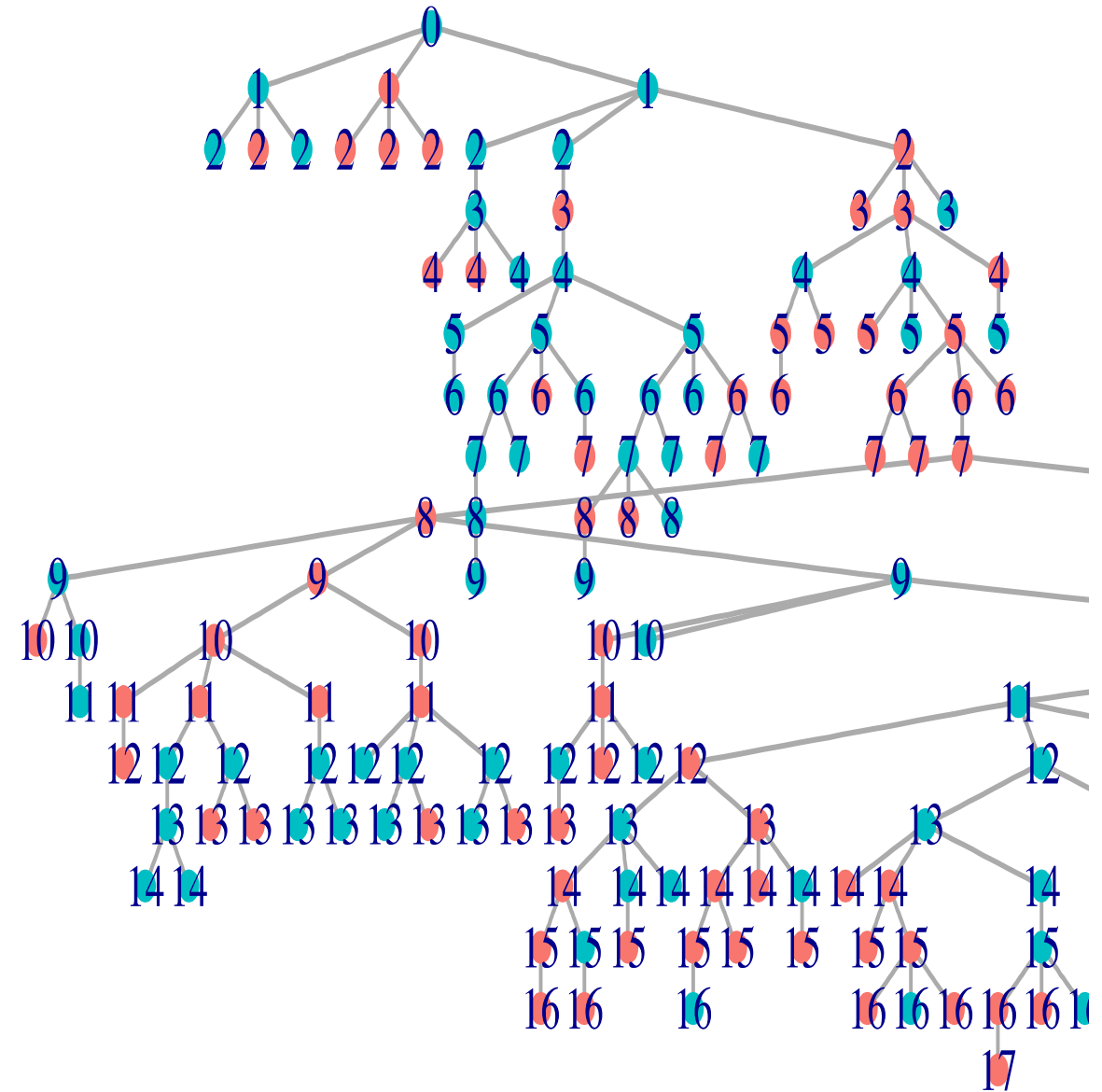


Inclusion criteria: Female, >18 years, Sold sex in Soweto, knew the person recruiting them

Cross sectional, Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS),

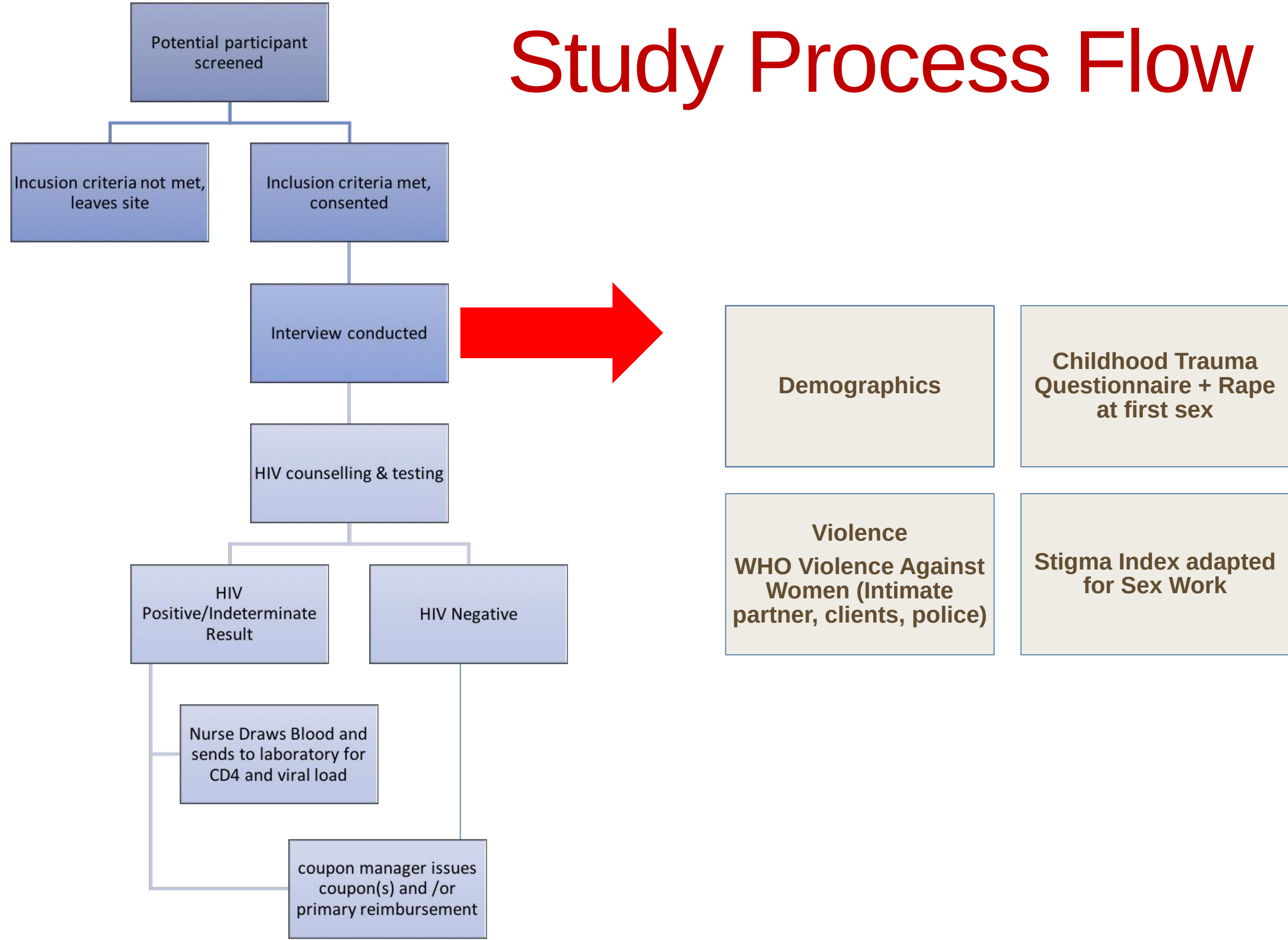
11 initial recruits selected by study team (seeds)

RDS weights were calculated using participants relative network size & recruitment chains enabling **population level prevalence**





Study Process Flow



Demographic Overview (n=508)

Variable	n (%)	Adj % (95% CI)
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS		
Age Median (MED, IQR)	30(18-59)	31(25-37)
Place of birth		
Gauteng	346 (68.1)	71.6(64.6-77.2)
KwaZulu Natal (KZN)	86 (16.9)	13.1(9.4-17.9)
Other	76 (15)	15.2(10.5-20.3)
Education		
Incomplete schooling	384(75.6)	74.2(69.2-79.9)
Secondary complete/Some tertiary	124(24.4)	25.8(20.4-30.9)
Number of Intimate Partners (past year) (MED, Range)	1 (0-20)	1.0 (1.0-1.0)
Number of FSW with current male partner	498 (98.0)	97.1(94.2-99.1)
Age of Intimate Partner (MED, Range)	34 (20-62)	34 (28-40)



Childhood Trauma

18 (12-34)

Neglect - 14.8%



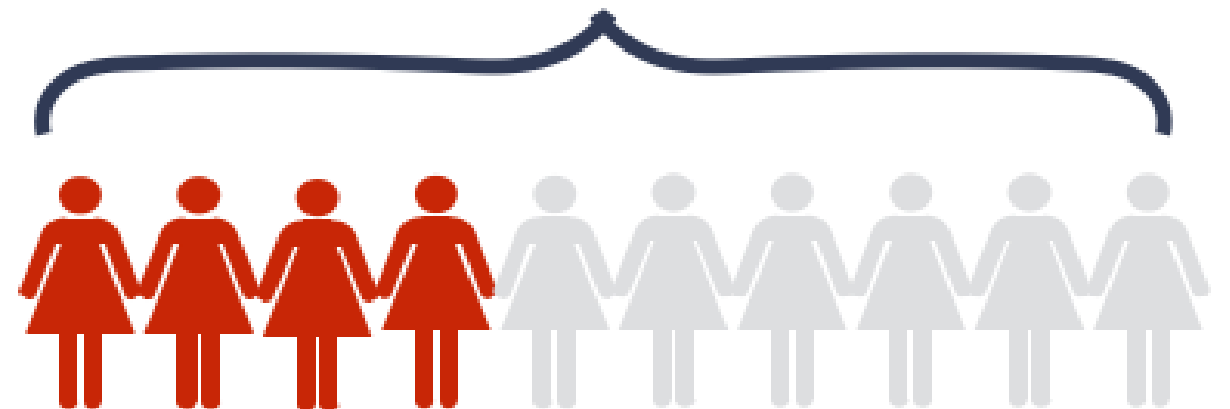
Emotional Abuse - 17.2%



Physical Assault - 20.8%



Sexual Assault - 44.3%



Never vs. Sometimes/Often/Very often

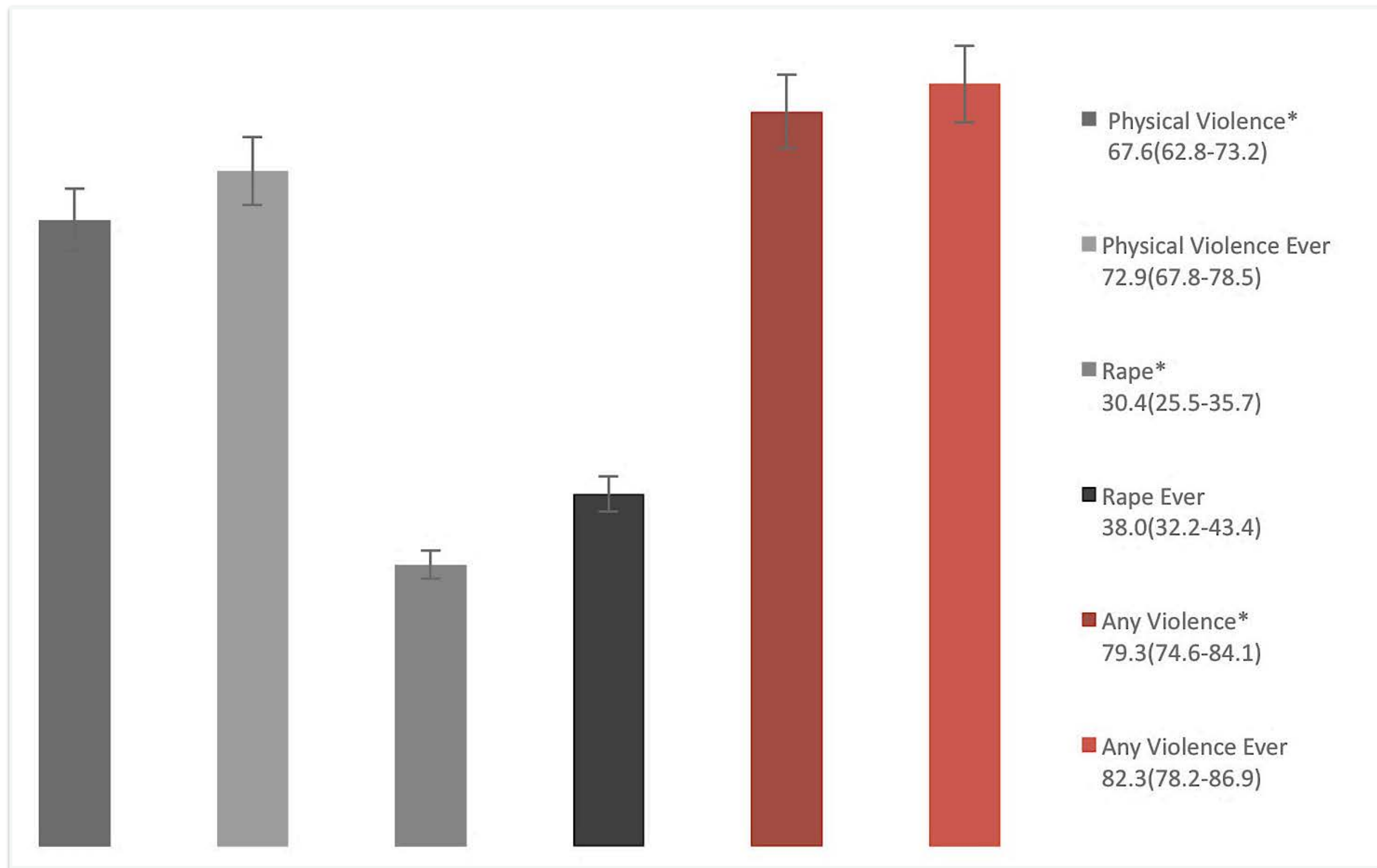
Never/Sometimes vs. Often/Very often

Prevalence and perpetrators of violence, including a summary of overall sexual assault reported, for FSWs in Soweto, including raw and RDS adjusted percentages & CI.

	n(%)	Adjusted % (95% CI)
INTIMATE PARTNER		
Emotional (12 months)	333(65.6)	63.3(57.2-68.2)
Physical (12 months)	268(52.8)	48.6(43.7-54.3)
Sexual(12 months)	105(20.7)	20.4(16.0-25.1)
Median Number of Sexual Assaults MED(IQR)	3(1-30)	3.0(1.0-5.0)
Sexual Ever	124(24.4)	24.4(19.6-29.3)
Physical/Sexual Violence (12 months)	288 (56.7)	53.8(48.1-51.9)
Any intimate partner Violence (12 months)	353(69.5)	67.4(61.3-72.7)
CLIENT		
Physical(12 months)	247(48.6)	42.7(38.1-48.6)
Sexual (12 months)	74(15.6)	13.8(10.1-17.8)
Physical/Sexual Violence (12 months)	265(52.2)	46.8(41.8-53.0)
Median Number of Sexual Assaults MED(IQR)	1(1-7)	1.0(1.0-3.0)
Sexual Ever	91(17.9)	16.9(13.1-21.0)
POLICE		
Physical(12 months)	38(7.5)	7.2(4.0-10.7)
Sexual (12 months)	20(3.9)	3.6(1.8-5.5)
Physical/Sexual Violence (12 months)	53(10.4)	18.5(14.2-23.7)
Median Number of Sexual Assaults MED(IQR)	1(1-6)	1.0(1.0-1.5)
Sexual Ever	30(5.9)	5.1(2.9-7.4)



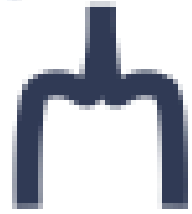
Types of violence across all 3 perpetrator categories



All Sexual Assault (Ever)

Gang rape - 4.5%

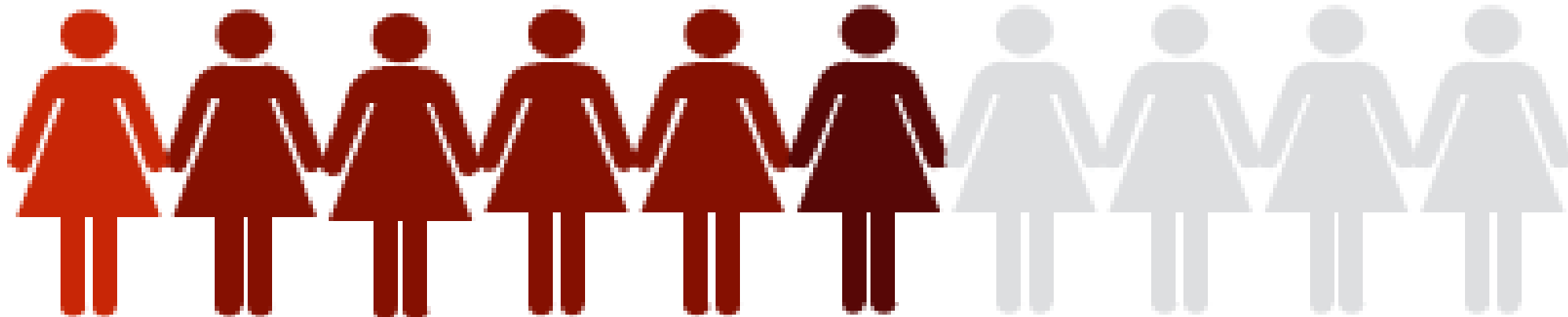
Stigma related rape - 8.4%



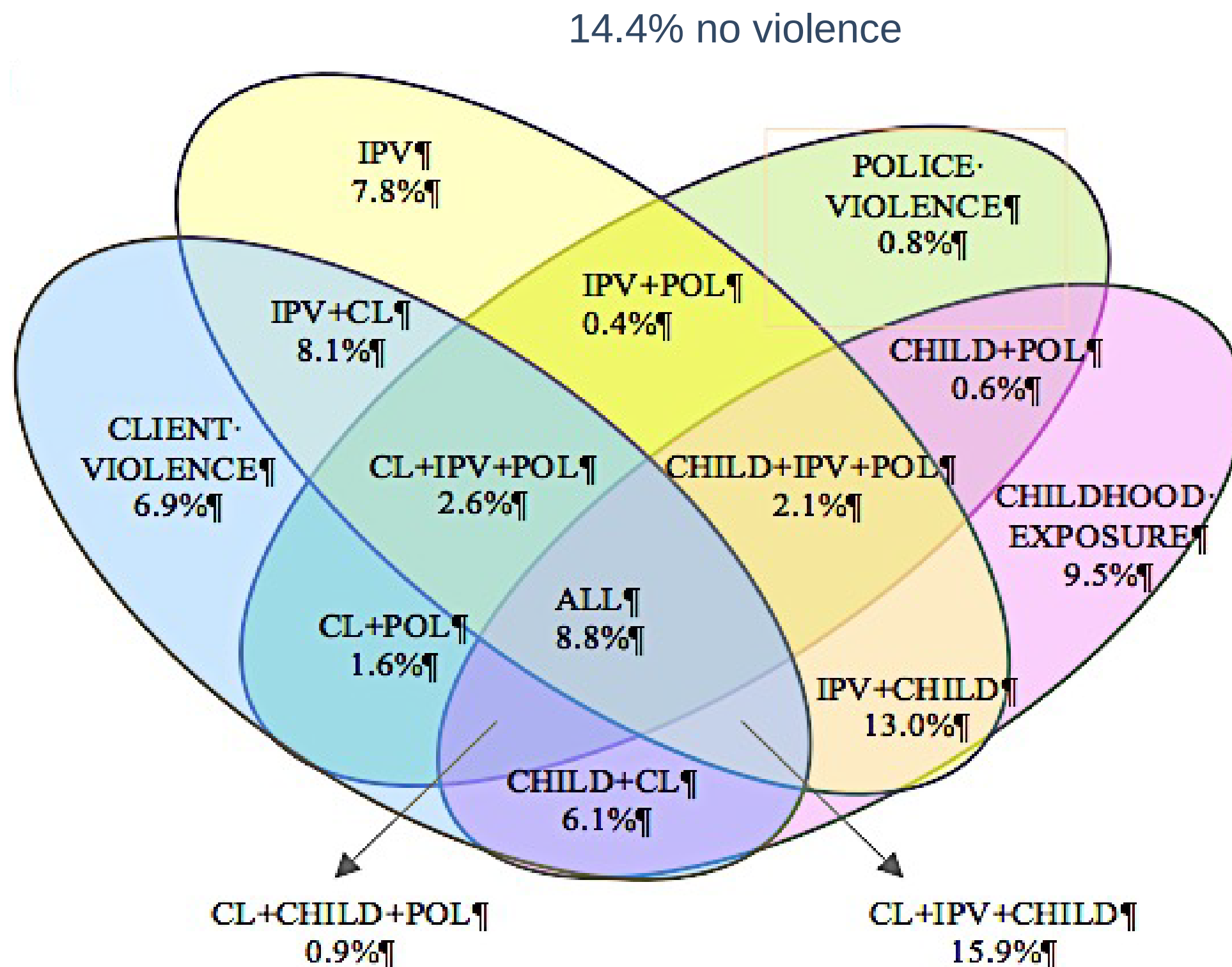
Non-intimate partner rape (Ever) - 55.5%



All rape reported (Ever) - 62.4%



Victimization and cooccurrence between IPV, client- and police violence, and childhood exposure to violence (RDS adjusted %)





Polyvictimization across the lifetime of FSWs in Soweto (IPV, client violence, police violence and childhood exposure to violence) by exposure to discrimination

Overall polyvictimization			Some External Discrimination		No External Discrimination	
	N(%)	Adj % (95% CI)	N(%)	Adj % (95% CI)	N(%)	Adj % (95% CI)
No violence	69 (13·6)	14·4(10·3-18·6)	34(9·9)	11·3(6·4-16·6)	35(21·5)	20·5(13·4-27·9)
1 type	117(23·0)	24·3(19·3-29·5)	66(19·1)	20·5(15·2-26·1)	51(31·2)	31·3(21·9-41·8)
2 types	158 (31·1)	31·0(25·4-35·7)	105(30·4)	31·7(24·7-37·5)	53(32·5)	29·8(20·3-39·2)
3 types	164(32·3)	30·2(25·5-36·4)	140(40·6)	36·5(30·4-44·1)	24(14·4)	18·5(10·8-28·2)



Conclusion

1. The intersection between gender inequality, poverty, violence and HIV creates a public health crisis centring on sexual and physical violence.
2. The power differential between FSWs and the men with whom they interact, intensifies their vulnerability, with current legislative frameworks functioning to legitimise violence against SWs
3. Criminalising SW must be reviewed as a fundamental mechanism to addressing violence against SWs.
4. Exposure to such high levels of violence are likely to hamper HIV prevention and treatment interventions targeting FSWs. Thus, there is an urgent need for a programme of research to define what works to prevent violence against SWs from paying and non-paying partners, and clearly define and implement appropriate and inclusive sex work sector violence prevention interventions.

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