

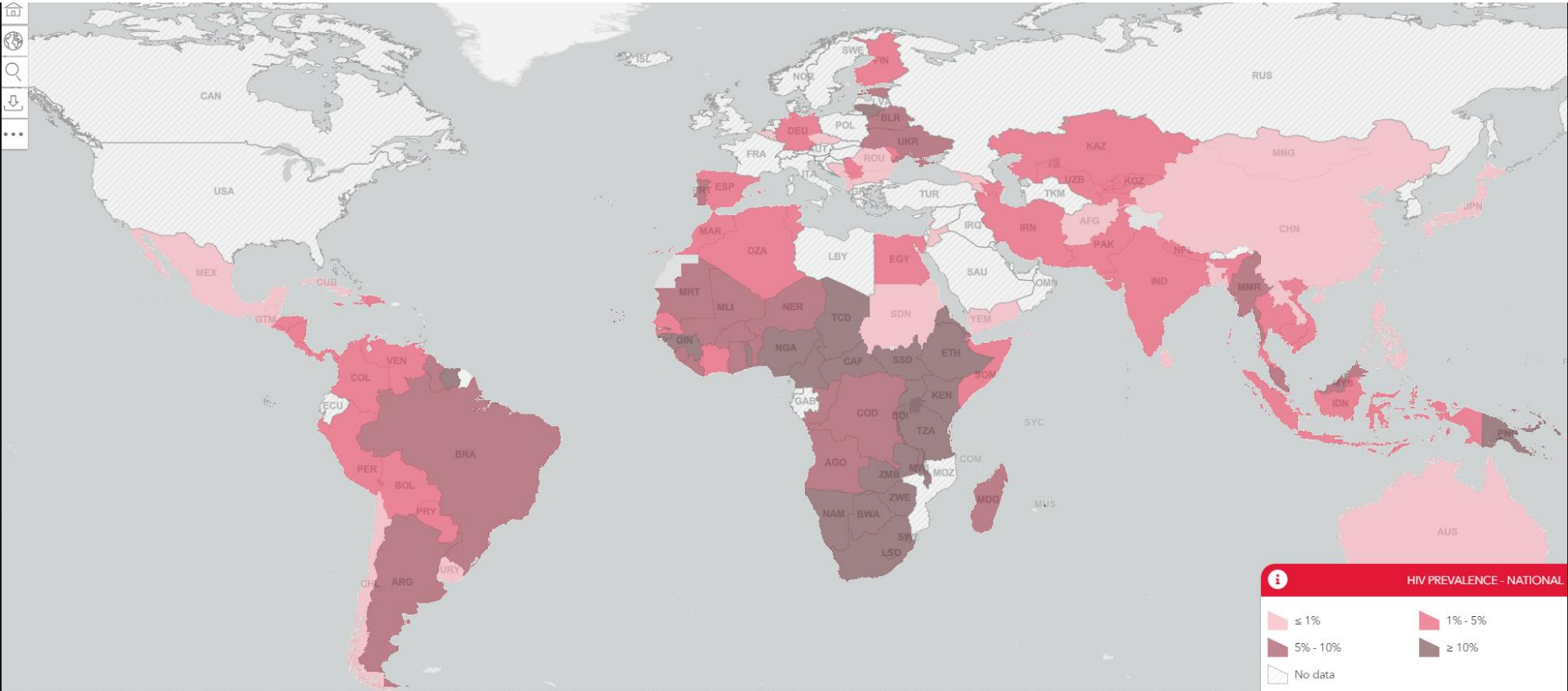
PrEP for female sex workers : what do we know?

BREACH SYMPOSIUM 30TH OF NOVEMBER 2021 – DOLCE LA HULPE

Heleen Van Mieghem



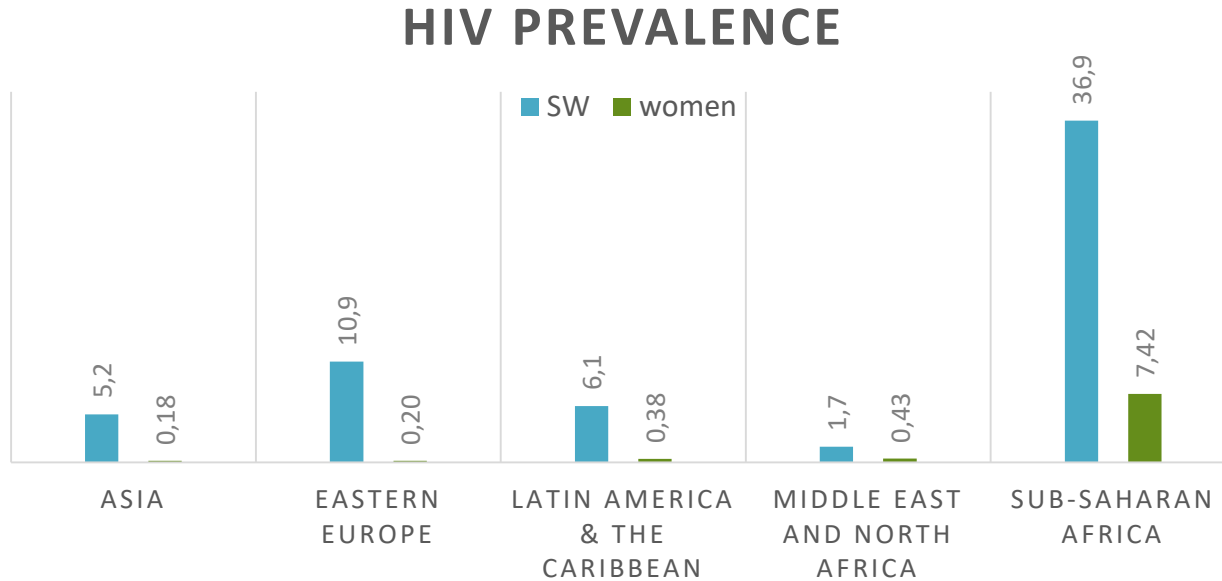
HIV-prevalence among sex workers (SW): global perspective



THE BOUNDARIES AND NAMES SHOWN AND THE DESIGNATIONS USED ON THIS MAP DO NOT IMPLY THE EXPRESSION OF ANY OPINION WHATSOEVER ON THE PART OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION CONCERNING THE LEGAL STATUS OF ANY COUNTRY, TERRITORY, CITY.

Source : UNAIDS key populations atlas – July 2021

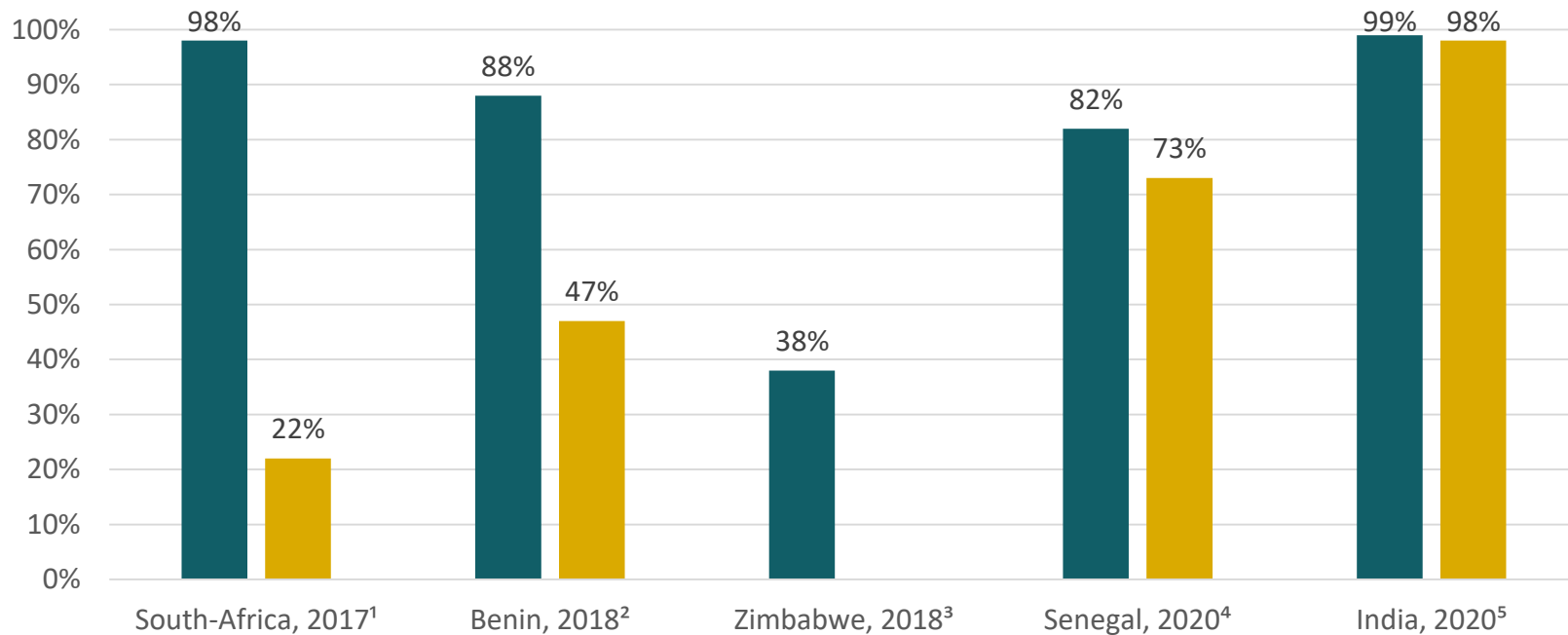
Disproportional of HIV burden in female SW as compared to the general population, in Low- and Middle-income Countries



Baral S, [Lancet Infect Dis.](#) 2012 Jul;12(7):538-49. doi: 10.1016/S1473-3099(12)70066-X. Epub 2012 Mar 15.



Prep-uptake and retention among female SW (FSW): demonstration projects



¹Eagle R et al, PLOS Medicine 2017

²Mboup A et al, JIAS 2018

³Cowan et al, The Lancet HIV 2018

⁴Sarr M et al, Int J STD AIDS. 2020

⁵Reza-Paul S et al, Glob Public Health. 2020

■ Uptake

■ Retention (12 months after initiation)

HIV-prevalence among high-risk groups in Europe

Cobatest Network : Data from organizations that provide Community Based Voluntary Counselling and Testing (CBVCT) to high-risk populations. (2019)



Gogishvili M et al. COBATEST Network 2019 Report: Monitoring and Evaluation. Barcelona: CEEISCAT; 2020.



PrEP – guidelines in Belgium

Emtricitabine/Tenofovir disoproxil as pre-exposure prophylaxis (Prep)

Criteria for reimbursement

❖ MSM (men having sex with men):

- who had unprotected anal sex with at least 2 partners during the last 6 months.
- who had multiple STD's (Syphilis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, or a primo-infection with hepatitis B or C) within the last year.
- who have used PEP multiple times within the last year.
- who use psycho-active substances during sexual intercourse.

❖ High Risk Persons :

- PWID (People who inject drugs) who share needles
- People in prostitution, exposed to unprotected sex.
- People in general who are exposed to unprotected sex with a high risk of HIV-infection.
- Partners of HIV-positive patients without viral suppression (newly on treatment or no viral suppression with adequate treatment)



Remaining questions

- What is the HIV-prevalence among sex workers in Belgium ?
- What is the HIV-incidence among this group ?
- What are the risk factors for HIV among sex workers ?
- What is the access to PrEP-care among sex workers ?

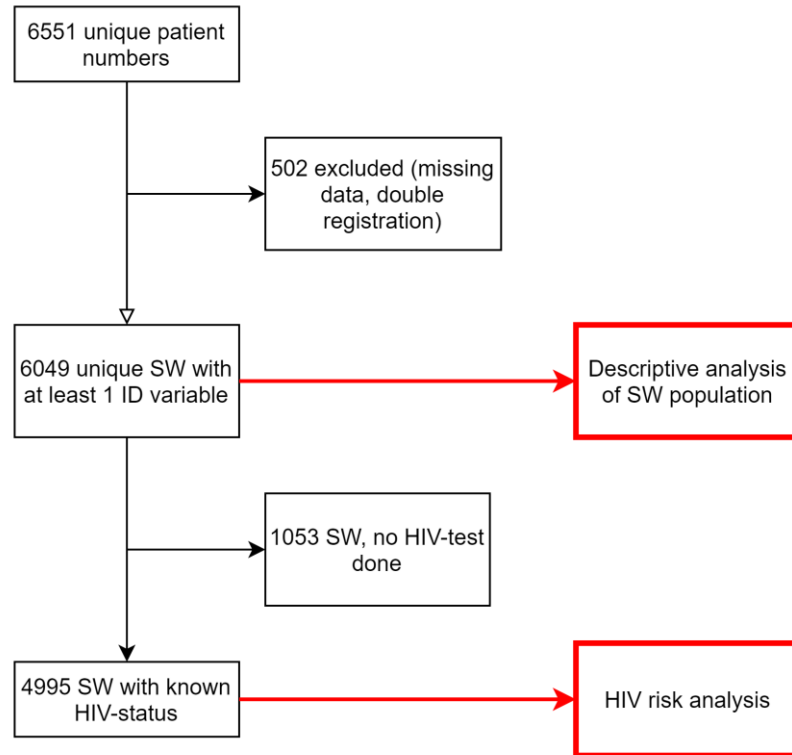


A retrospective analysis of routine data from a community-based organization (1 Jan 2016 – 31 Dec 2019)

- Violett (former Ghapro and Pasop)
- Medical care for sex workers
- Offices in Gent, Antwerp and Hasselt
- Outreach programs covering the whole region of Flanders
- Voluntary screening for HIV and STI



Number of participants included in the study



Gender of sex workers in Flanders

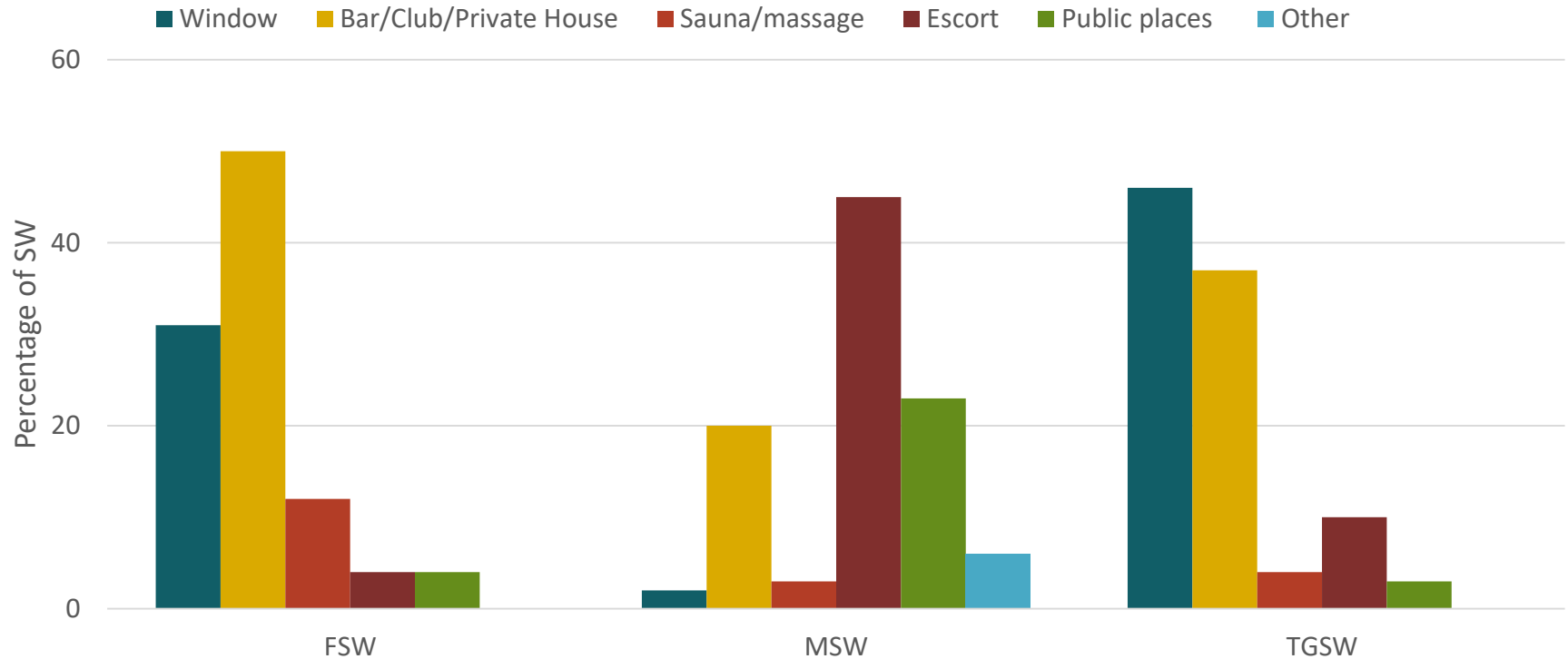
	Number	%	HIV-status
			Unknown
Gender			
FSW	5622	92,9%	996 (17,7%)
MSW	228	3,8%	29 (12,7%)
TGSW	192	3,2%	22 (11,5%)
Unknown	7	0,1%	
Total	6049	100%	1053 (17,4%)

FSW are significantly less tested for HIV than male SW (MSW) and transgender SW (TGSW)

($\chi^2=8,47$, $p<0,05$)



Work setting of SW in Flanders according to gender

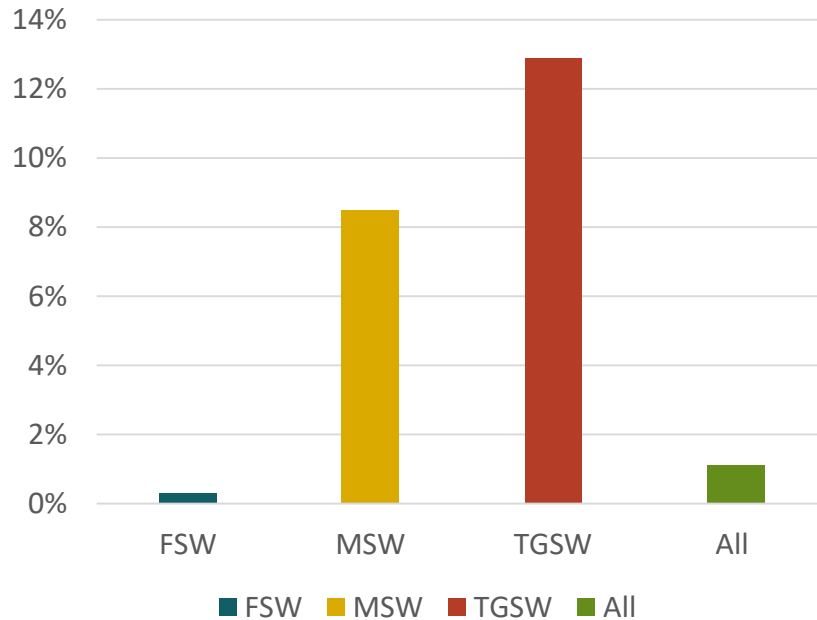


Nationality of SW per gender

Region of nationality	FSW		MSW		TGSW	
Belgium	1177	21%	116	52%	31	16%
Western-Europa	1049	19%	25	11%	67	35%
Eastern-Europa	1865	34%	19	8%	6	3%
E-Europa non-EU	105	2%	11	5%	2	1%
Latin-America	601	11%	11	5%	79	41%
N. Africa/M. East	53	1%	25	11%	3	2%
Sub-Saharan Africa	402	7%	8	4%	0	0%
North America	3	0,05%	0	0%	0	0%
Asia and Oceania	249	5%	9	4%	4	2%
	5504	100%	224	100%	192	100%

HIV-prevalence among sex workers in Flanders

HIV-prevalence



Only one FSW seroconverted during follow-up



Risk factors for HIV

	% HIV	RR	aRR
Gender			
Female	0.3%	1	1
Male	8.8%	26.4	20.5
Transgender	13.0%	39.3	37.1
Nationality			
Belgian	0.9%	1	1
Western Europe	1.2%	1.3	2.2
Eastern Europe	0.3%	0.3	1.3
Latin America	3.1%	3.4	3.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.3%	2.5	7
Other	1.1%	1.2	1.1
Work setting			
Window	0.6%	1	1
Private house/massage	0.8%	1.2	1.8
Escort	5.9%	9.5	4.2
Public places	3.2%	5.1	2.5
Other	0.5%	0.8	2.0

Statistically significant ($p < 0,05$)

RR = risk ratio

aRR = risk ratio, adjusted for gender, nationality, work setting and age at first contact

Access to PrEP-care for SW in Belgium : limited and inconsistent

With insurance

HRC *	SW on Prep
Flanders	14 (1 FSW)
Wallonia	3
Brussels	8 (1 FSW)
TOTAL	25

Data collected February 2021

*HIV-reference centre

Without insurance

CBO°	SW on Prep
Violett Antwerp	42
Violett Gent	2
Alias Brussels	27
TOTAL	89

Only Male and TG sex workers

Data collected November 2021

° Community-based organization

Conclusion

- High HIV prevalence among male and transgender sex workers in Flanders
- No HIV test was done in more than 1 in 6 female sex workers
- Access to regular PrEP-care for SW is limited



Recommendations

- Strengthening of surveillance of STI and HIV among sex workers in Belgium is needed.
- Further research on risk factors for HIV acquisition linked to sexual behaviour should be conducted.
- Structural access to PrEP-care for male and transgender SW is urgently needed.



Sincere thanks to

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 - Kris Keersmaeckers and Wendy Gabriëls
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