

A CROSS SECTIONAL STUDY OF HIV
PREVALENCE & SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AMONG
MEN HAVING SEX WITH MEN (MSM) IN
MALAWI

Presented by

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Introduction

- Malawi has a generalized HIV epidemic with an estimated current population prevalence of 12% translating into almost one million persons living with the HIV virus, in a population of 12 million people.
- There are an estimated 110,000 new HIV infections per year, and AIDS is the highest cause of death in adults (80,000 deaths annually).
- The dominant risk factors for HIV in Malawi have been heterosexual and vertical transmission. HIV prevention expenditures have nearly exclusively targeted decreasing these two modes of transmission.

Background of MSM IN MALAWI

- *Existence of MSM*

- Political and Religious leaders previously denied existence of MSM.
- Research has shown that MSM exist in significant numbers.

- *Constraints/challenges*

- 1. Legal*

- Criminalization of homosexuality under the Malawi's penal code (sect **153&156**) prohibit “unnatural offences” and “public indecency.” These offences include sodomy and other sexual acts, considered “unnatural.” and attract a penalty of 14 years in prison.

Constraints and Challenges cont...

2. Access to Health Care

- Lack of HIV prevention and care programs or funding by NGOs or the Government directed at Men having sex with men (MSM).
- Though Malawi's National HIV/AIDS Policy includes the MSM as a high risk group. The 2005-2009 Malawi HIV and AIDS National Action Framework has unfortunately left MSM as target group.

2. Social marginalization cultural & religious

- Homosexuality is believed to be alien and unreligious
- Culturally immoral

METHODOLOGY

Objective

- This study was designed as an epidemiologic probe of HIV among 200 MSM in Malawi.
- This was a community-based study assessing HIV-related risk behaviors and describing the epidemiology of HIV infection among MSM.

Sampling and Recruitment

Respondent-Driven Sampling and Recruitment

- A chain-referral strategy similar to snowball sampling
- 20 “seeds” were recruited

Seeds were the starting point for the chain-referral sampling scheme

Seeds identified members of their sexual network who satisfied the study’s eligibility criteria

PROCEDURES

Oral Informed Consent

Questionnaire

- demographic, sexual risk behaviour, and rights violation questionnaire

OraQuick[®] Salivary Specimen Donation

- Participants donated an anonymous oral mucosal transudate specimen taken using the OraQuick[®] collection device for an HIV test

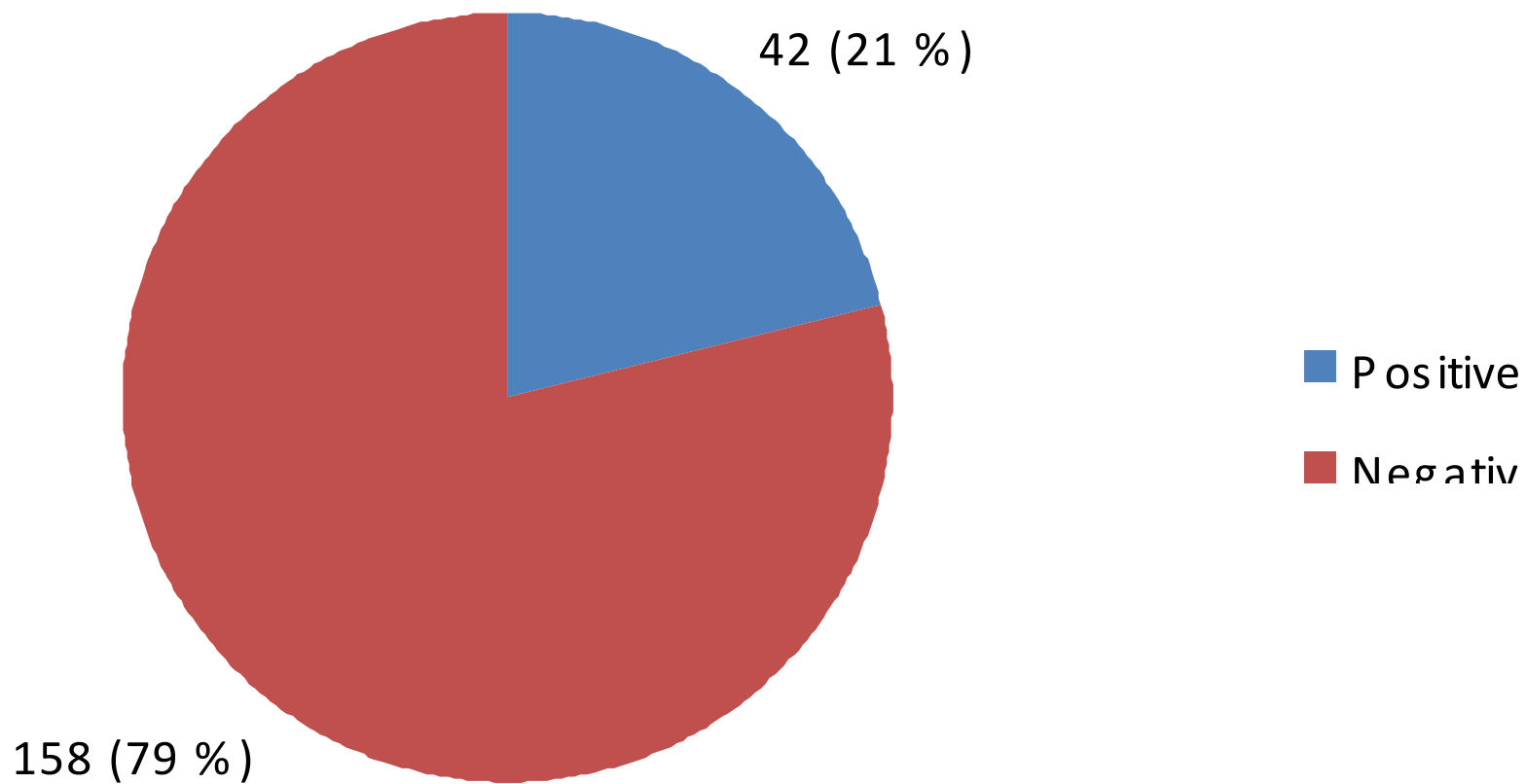


RESULTS

Demographics

- The sample consisted of 200 MSM with a mean age of 25.96 (SD 5.43).
- The sample had a relatively wide age range of 18 – 49.
- Majority (91%) had attained either secondary or tertiary education. (1% no education.8% primary level).
- 54% had boyfriends while 46% had casual boyfriends.
- 47 % of the respondents were in relationship with female partners while 53 % were not.

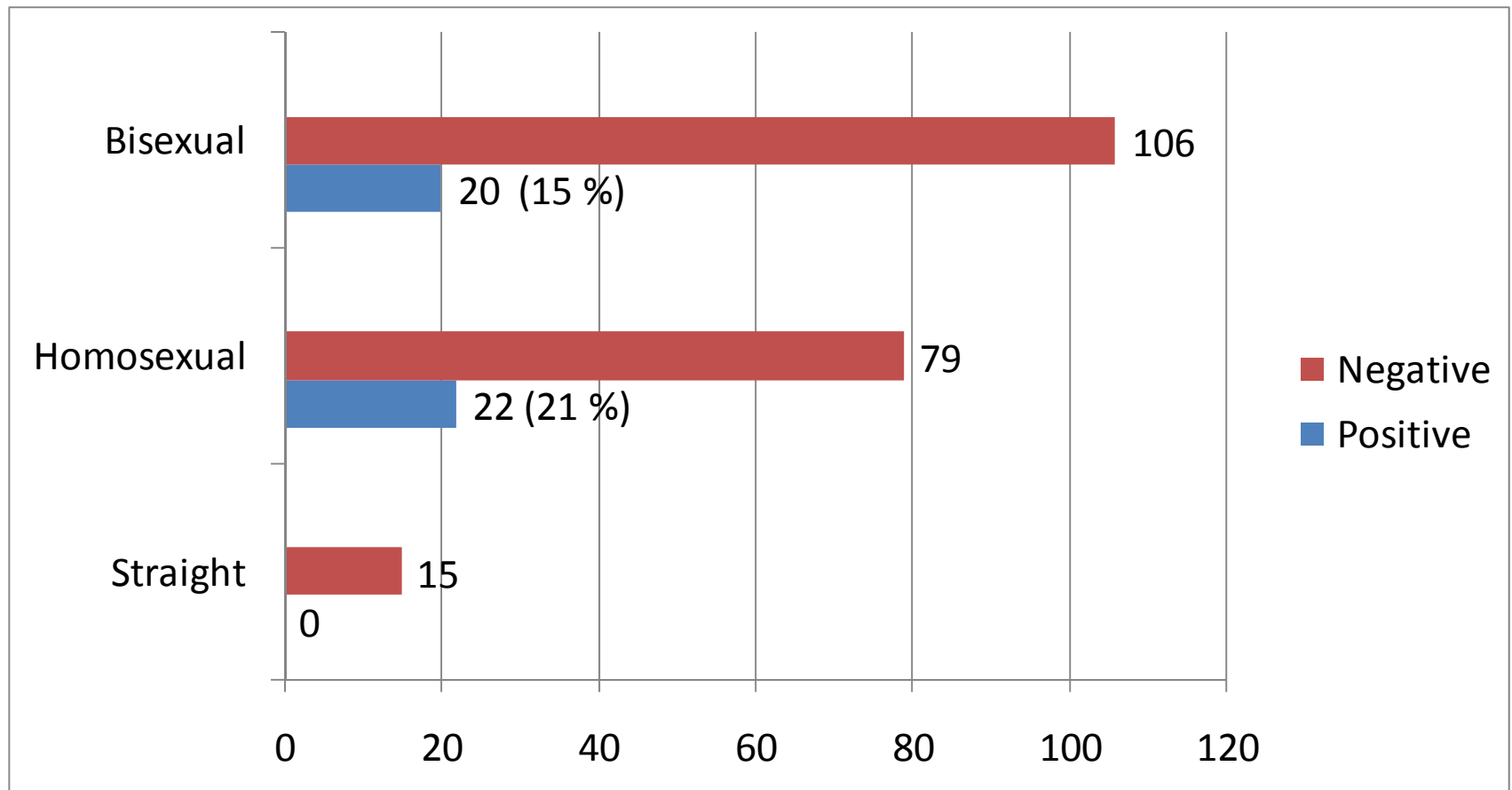
HIV TEST RESULTS



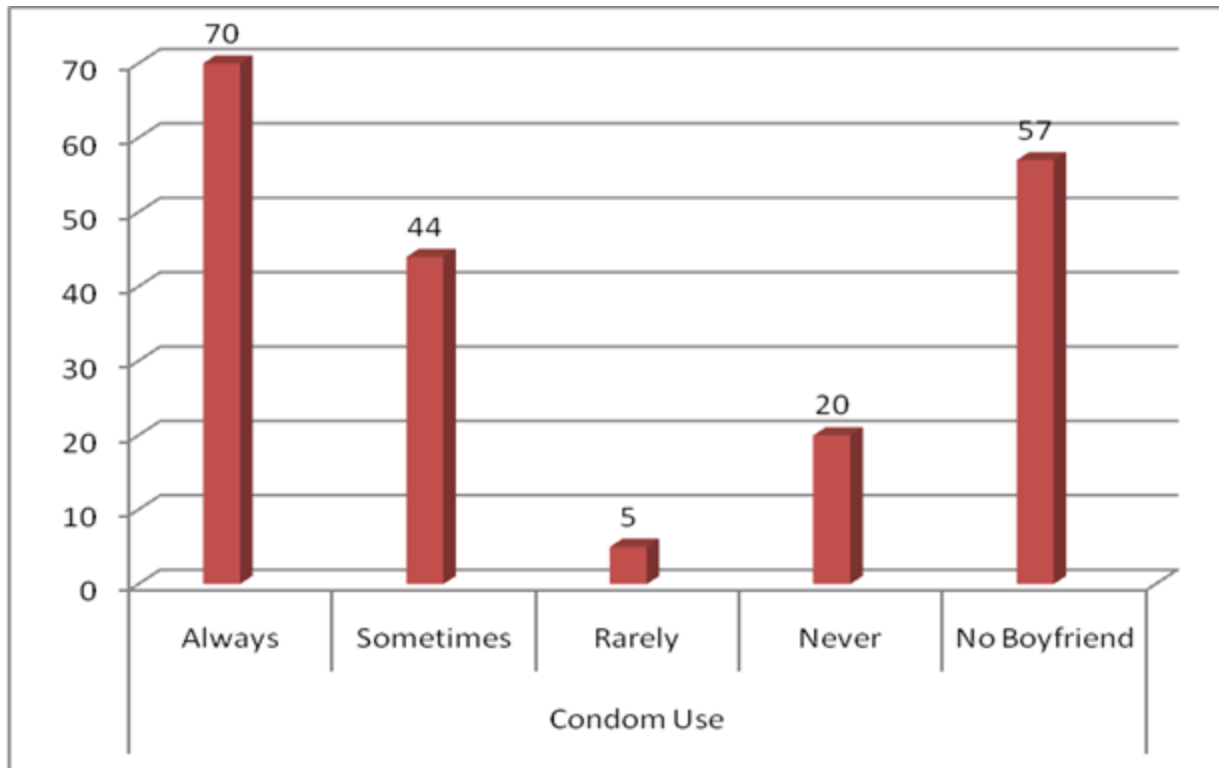
Age, sexual relationships by Serostatus

- More (76%) of MSM of the HIV reactive were in the age range of 18- 25.
- 95.3% are unaware of their HIV status
- Majority (75%) had had multiple male sexual partners with an average of 14.09 (SD 28.84) partners in a period of six months.
- 56% of the men had had multiple female sexual partners with an average of 12.42 (SD 29.89) partners.

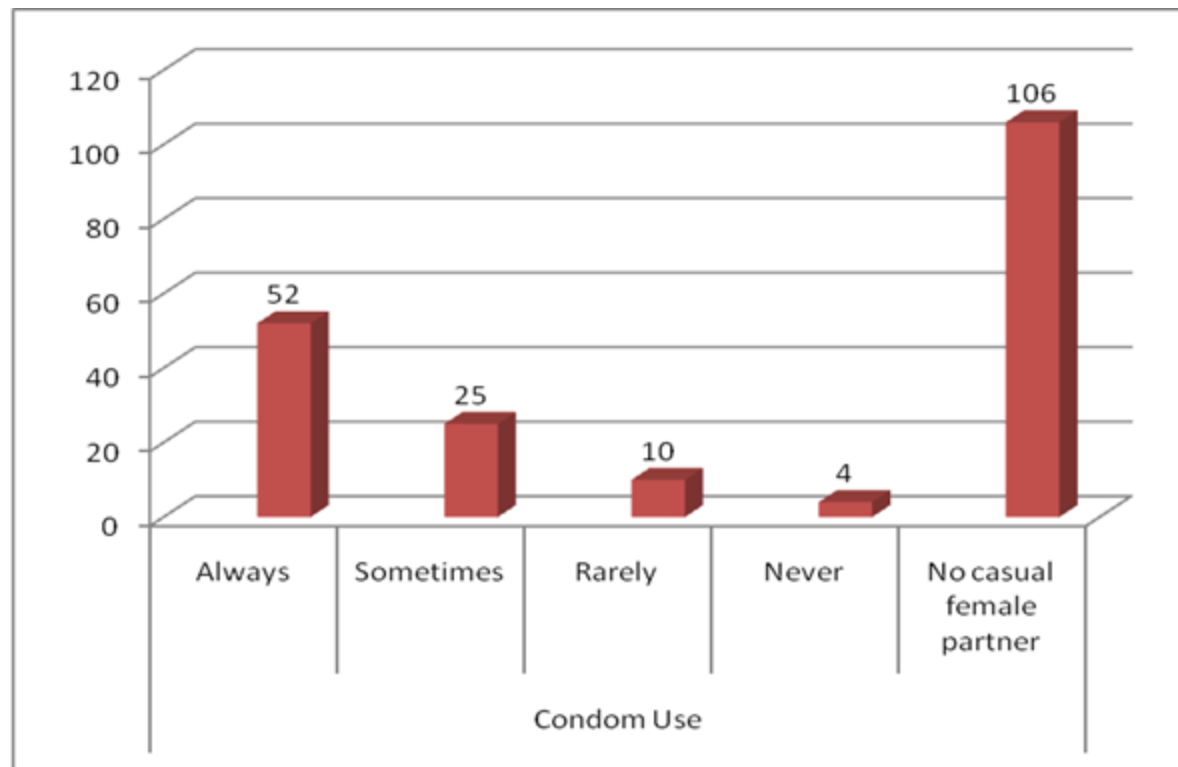
Label by Serostatus



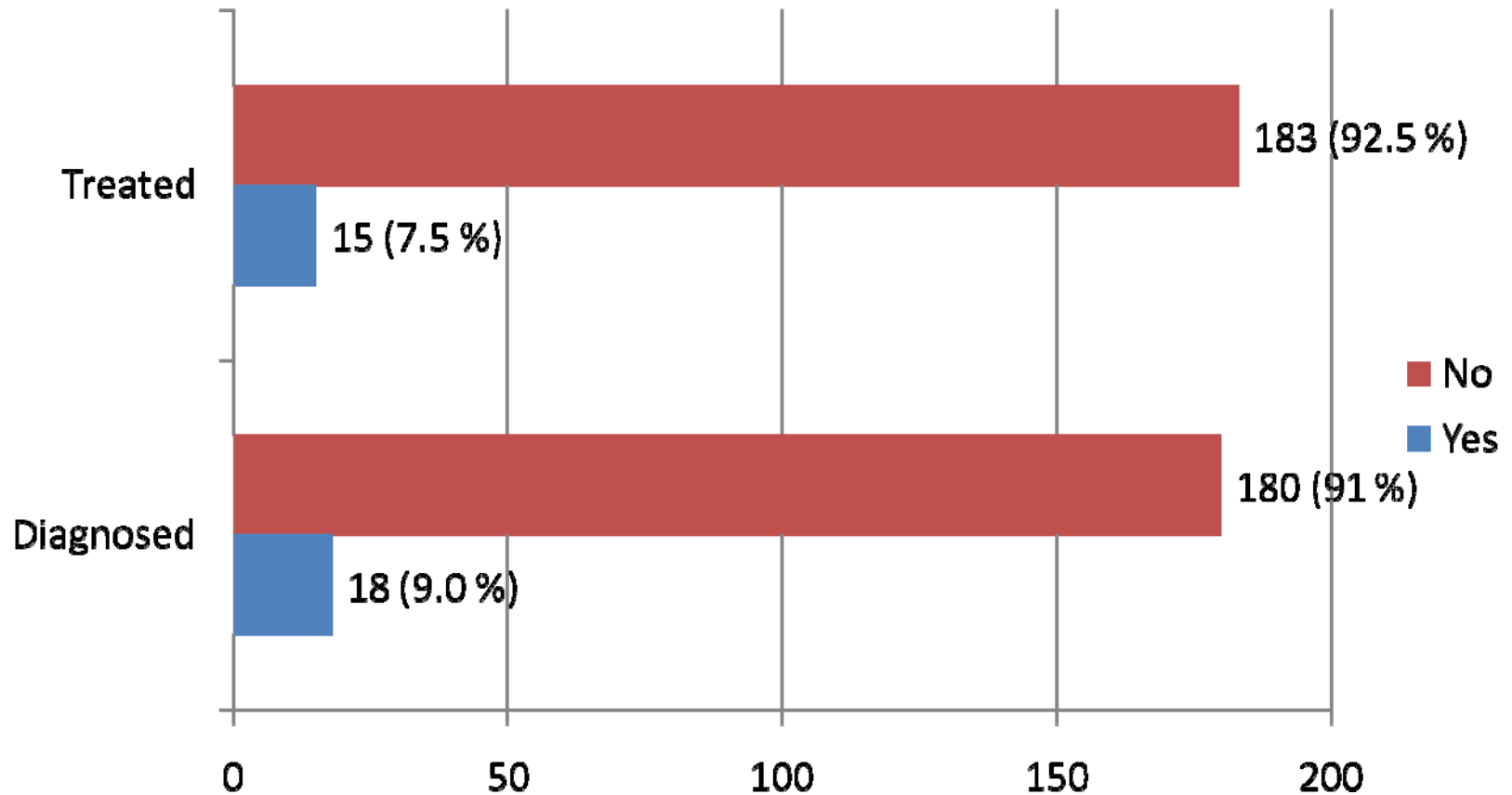
Reported condom use with casual male partners



Condom use with casual female partners



Sexually Transmitted Infections



Access to Health

- 112 (56 %) ever accessed information on how they could prevent themselves from HIV while 87 (43.5 %) had never.
- Majority (76.5 %) indicated that no health professional had ever recommended that they get an HIV test.
- majority (62.5 %) had never been tested for HIV .

Conclusions and recommendations

- HIV prevalence among Malawian MSM is much higher than the general population (Twice -21% vs 12%)
- Sex with multiple partners is high, reported consistent condom use is low.
- Use of inappropriate lubricants, which can make condoms vulnerable to breakage, was common.
- STI infections were also common
- Majority of the MSM had no Knowledge especially on HIV transmission during anal sex (a fifth of them).
- The contribution of MSM to HIV incidence-or new cases per year-in Malawi may be disproportionately high. This is the case given the high number of bisexuals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- This data justify the need for MSM prevention programs which can be beneficial to the public health.
- Need for specific interventions
 - Prevention - increasing knowledge
 - Impact mitigation.
- There is also need for increasing funding for MSM health issues by International and Local donors.
- Need for more studies to provide insights
 - Why high-risk sexual behaviour occur among MSM
 - Discern perceived barriers to sexual risk reduction

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THANK YOU