

# The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on **women and girls who sell sex** in Nigeria and South Africa

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# The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls who sell sex in Nigeria and South Africa

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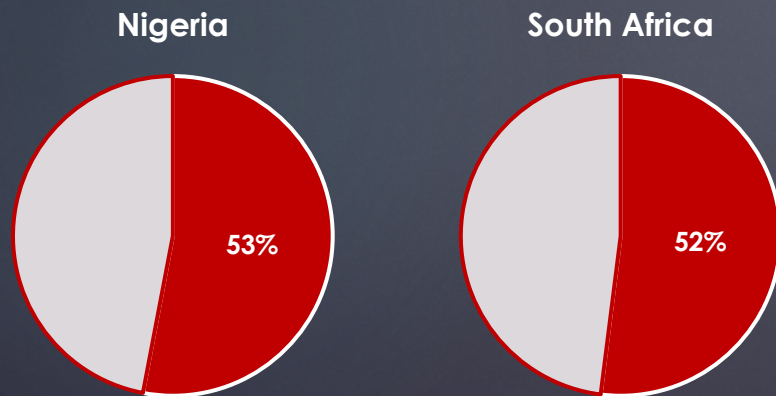


## Background, methods

- ▶ Little is known about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected women and girls who sell/trade sex in Nigeria and South Africa.
- ▶ We conducted an anonymous, cross-sectional survey to assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on this population group.
- ▶ Participants were recruited using a combination of venue-based and snowball convenience sampling.
- ▶ Survey topics included demographic characteristics, sexual risk behaviors, self-reported HIV status, and economic impact.
- ▶ This presentation covers some of the key findings.

## Most women and girls who sell/trade sex were young, and more than half reported living with HIV

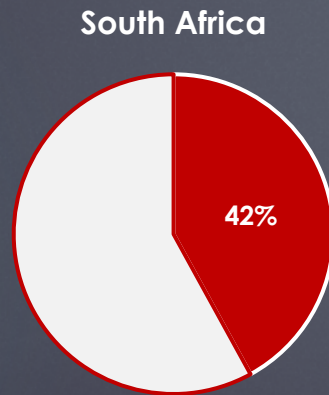
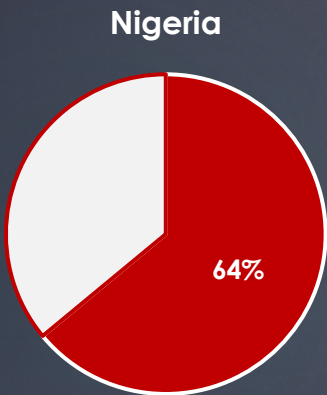
- ▶ The respondents who sell/trade sex were under 30 years old (71%, 1430/2006 in Nigeria; and 56%, 340/603 in SA). Of these, 17% were adolescent girls, 15-18 years old, in both countries.
- ▶ Self-reported proportion with HIV:





## Impact on livelihood of women and girls who sell/trade sex: Substantial loss of income

- ▶ Among other effects, women and girls who sell/trade sex **reported experiencing a substantial drop in income** since the start of the pandemic:

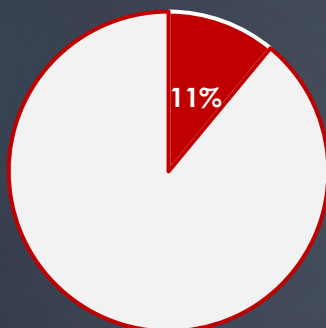




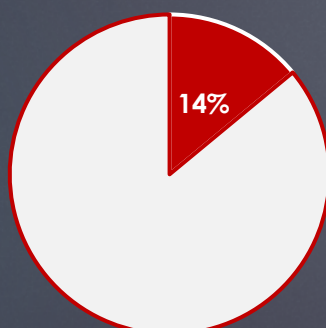
## More women and girls used sex work and transactional sex to sustain their livelihoods during the COVID-19 pandemic

- ▶ **Started selling/trading sex** during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Nigeria



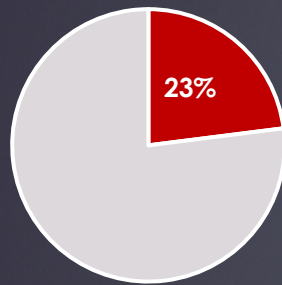
South Africa



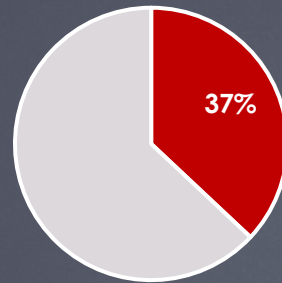
## Declining condom use in Nigeria and South Africa

- ▶ **Did not use a condom** at last sexual intercourse:

Nigeria



South Africa



- ▶ **Started engaging more in condomless sex** during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Nigeria



South Africa





## Conclusions

- ▶ Our findings suggest an overall negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on women and girls who sell/trade sex, including economic impact and increased HIV risk behaviors.
- ▶ Interventions to address the harms of COVID-19 among these vulnerable members must be designed and implemented in collaboration with sex-worker-led organizations to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.