



NATIONAL STUDY OF WOMEN SEX WORKERS' USE OF ALCOHOL AND DRUGS AND EXPERIENCE OF GBV

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Background

- Globally sex workers are an extremely stigmatised population: in most countries, as in South Africa, sex work is illegal and sex workers face daily risks of harassment, gender-based violence (GBV) and theft of earnings.
- In this context many sex workers use alcohol and drugs to help them cope with the daily realities of their work. Others drink heavily and use drugs as part of the situational context of their work, especially in taverns. Some do sex work in order to pay for their alcohol and drugs.
- Alcohol and drug use would be expected to play a key role in FSWs' risk of GBV, and vice versa
- The aim of this presentation is to show the prevalence of alcohol and drug use among female sex workers and the connections between trauma and violence exposure, stigma and mental health

Methods

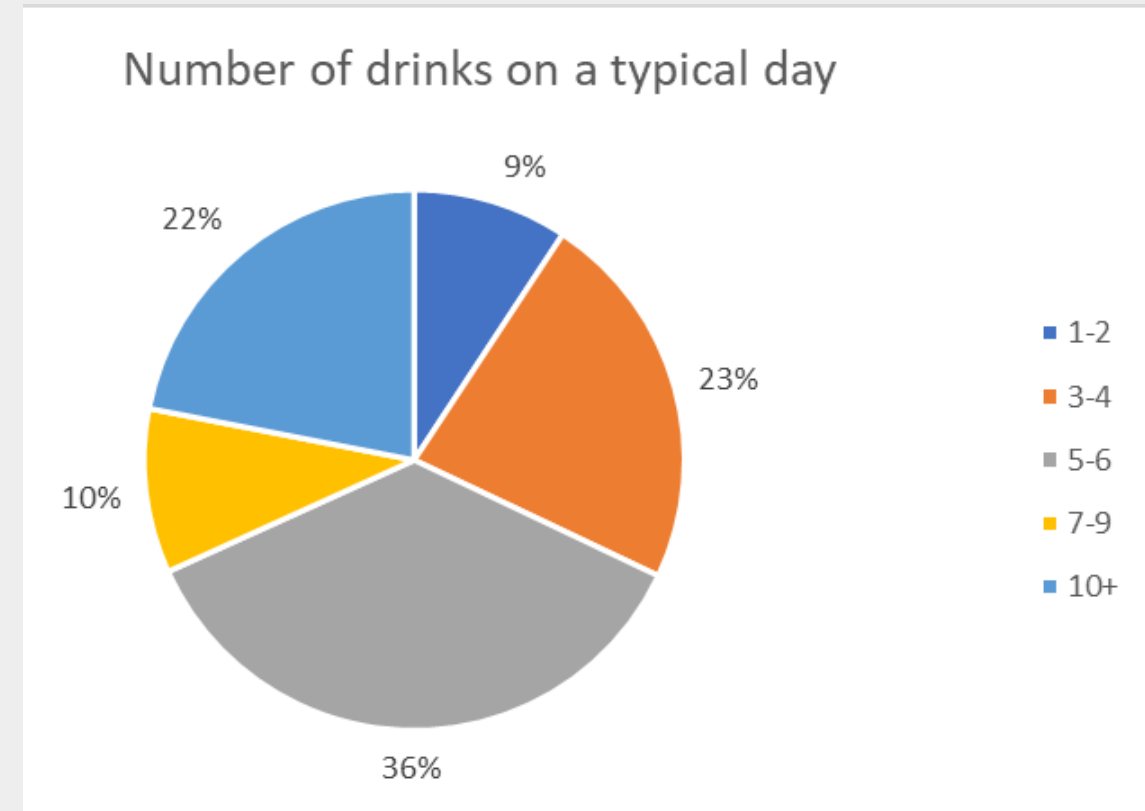
- This was a community-centric study using a multi-stage, modified Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) sampling strategy
- Data collected from 12 randomly-selected districts with FSW programmes across all 9 Provinces
- 3005 sex workers were interviewed
- Questionnaires were developed with SWs and peer educators, and peer educators undertook the interview
- **Inclusion criteria:** female at birth and currently identifying as female, 18 years or older, working within a selected district, having voluntarily sold/transacted in sex in the past six months.

Characteristics of FSWs

- Most were younger women: 47% were aged 25-34 (mean age 33)
- 45% were food insecure
- 79% had a boyfriend or (infrequently) husband
- Half were homeless or stayed in brothels or other sex work venues
- Most concealed their work from their families (66%)
- Two-thirds (65.6%) worked on the street some or all of the time

ALCOHOL USE

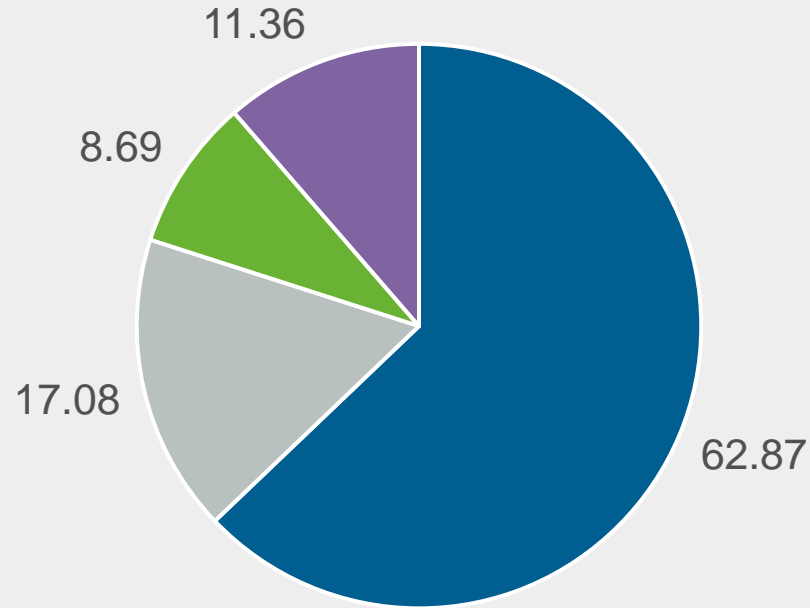
- 71.7% drank alcohol
- 28.4% drank alcohol to help with doing sex work
- 15% drank 4+ times a week
- 56.4% drank typical drinks of 500ml + (including 1,2 & 5l wine)
- Among those drinking large volumes, 73.4% drank 5+ drinks on a typical day



FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ALCOHOL USE (AUDIT C)

	Odds ratio	[95% conf.	interval]	P value
Age	0.96	0.95	0.97	<0.0001
Staying in home				
Homeless	0.77	0.61	0.98	0.034
Sleeping at SW venue	0.88	0.71	1.10	0.277
Picks up clients in taverns	1.93	1.53	2.43	<0.0001
Partner controlling behaviour (mild)				
Moderately controlling	1.15	0.91	1.46	0.249
Highly controlling	1.60	1.14	2.25	0.007
Raped by a non-partner in last year	1.33	1.10	1.62	0.004

USE OF SUBSTANCES TO COPE WITH SEX WORK (%)



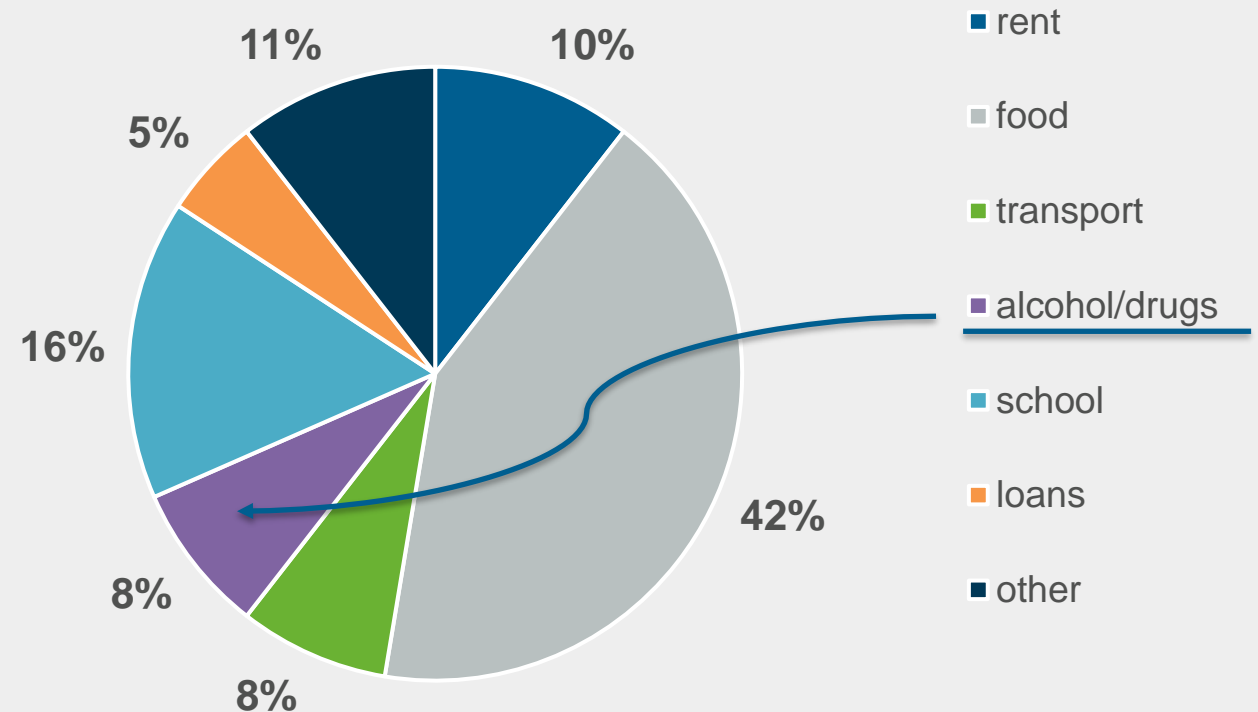
■ None ■ Alcohol ■ Drugs ■ Both

Alcohol is the substance of choice for most sex workers who use a substance to help them cope with doing sex work

EXPENDITURE

- Amount spent on alcohol/drugs in last month
- median R 150
- IQR R0-750
- range R0- 8000

Proportion of monthly income spent on alcohol and drugs



DRUG USE

- 20.% Used drugs to help with sex work
- 14.3% Did sex work to help buy drugs
- Drugs used the previous day:
 - 14.6% dagga
 - 5.7% tik
 - 3.1% mandrax
 - 2.4% nyaopi
 - 2% crack
 - 1.8% heroin

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH DOING SEX WORK TO BUY DRUGS

	Odds ratio	[95% conf.	interval]	P value
Age	0.98	0.96	0.99	0.001
Food insecure	1.40	1.09	1.78	0.008
Staying in home	1.00			ref
Homeless	1.49	1.10	2.00	0.009
Sleeping at SW venue	1.67	1.28	2.18	<0.0001
Audit C score	1.00	0.97	1.03	0.965
Depressed	1.49	1.13	1.96	0.005
Has PTSD	1.02	1.00	1.04	0.039
Partner does not know she does SW	1.00			ref
Partner knows	1.46	1.15	1.87	0.002
No partner	1.34	0.94	1.89	0.102
Physical IPV experienced in last year	0.73	0.57	0.93	0.012
Partner controlling behaviour (mild)	1.00			ref
Moderately controlling	1.85	1.25	2.72	0.002
Highly controlling	2.63	1.69	4.10	<0.0001
Raped by a non-partner in last year	1.54	1.18	2.00	0.001

CONCLUSIONS

- Research confirms that women sex workers as a group drink heavily, although more than a quarter do not drink
- Those who drink more heavily, more often sell sex from taverns and have more experiences of GBV
- Drug use is common. More often drugs enable sex work, rather than SW being driven by need to buy drugs
- Drug-using women are more often food insecure and homeless, have more mental health problems and experiences of GBV than other women sex workers

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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