

Gender disparities in prevalence, frequency, and baseline correlates of transactional sex among high-risk adolescents

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Background

- HIV prevalence among transgender sex workers is higher than any other key affected population globally, estimated at 28-40%
 - **9x** higher than cis women sex workers
 - **4x** higher than cis men sex workers
 - **2x** higher than trans people who do not exchange sex
- Trans and non-binary youth who exchange sex are severely marginalized and underserved by existing public health programs
- No interventions in the CDC Compendium are designed for transgender populations and only one included sex workers in efficacy trials



Objectives

- Examine gender disparities in the prevalence and frequency of exchange sex among adolescents in a large HIV prevention trial
- Test associations between exchange sex, demographic characteristics, structural factors, and other HIV risk behaviors
- Assess PrEP and PEP use among adolescents who exchange sex



Methods

- **Data:** Adolescent Medicine Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions (ATN) CARES Study in Los Angeles and New Orleans (NICHD U19HD089886)
- **Sample:** N=1,092 adolescents ages 12-24 years old
- **Recruitment venues:** LGBT youth centers, clinics, homeless shelters, social media and dating apps, and participant referrals
- **Statistical analysis:**
 - Logistic regression (Ever exchanged sex in lifetime and last 12 months)
 - Zero-inflated negative binomial regression (# of times in last 4 months)



Sample Characteristics (N=1,092)

| | n | % |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| Sex assigned at birth | | |
| • Male | 1,057 | 73.5% |
| • Female | 381 | 26.5% |

| | | |
|---------------|-----|-------|
| Gender | | |
| • Trans women | 58 | 5.3% |
| • Non-binary | 44 | 4.0% |
| • Trans men | 25 | 2.3% |
| • Cis women | 218 | 20.0% |
| • Cis men | 747 | 68.4% |

| | | |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| Sexuality | | |
| • LGB | 688 | 63.0% |
| • Heterosexual | 404 | 37.0% |

| | n | % |
|-------------|-----|-------|
| Race | | |
| • Black | 654 | 60.0% |
| • Latino | 220 | 20.2% |
| • Other | 218 | 20.0% |

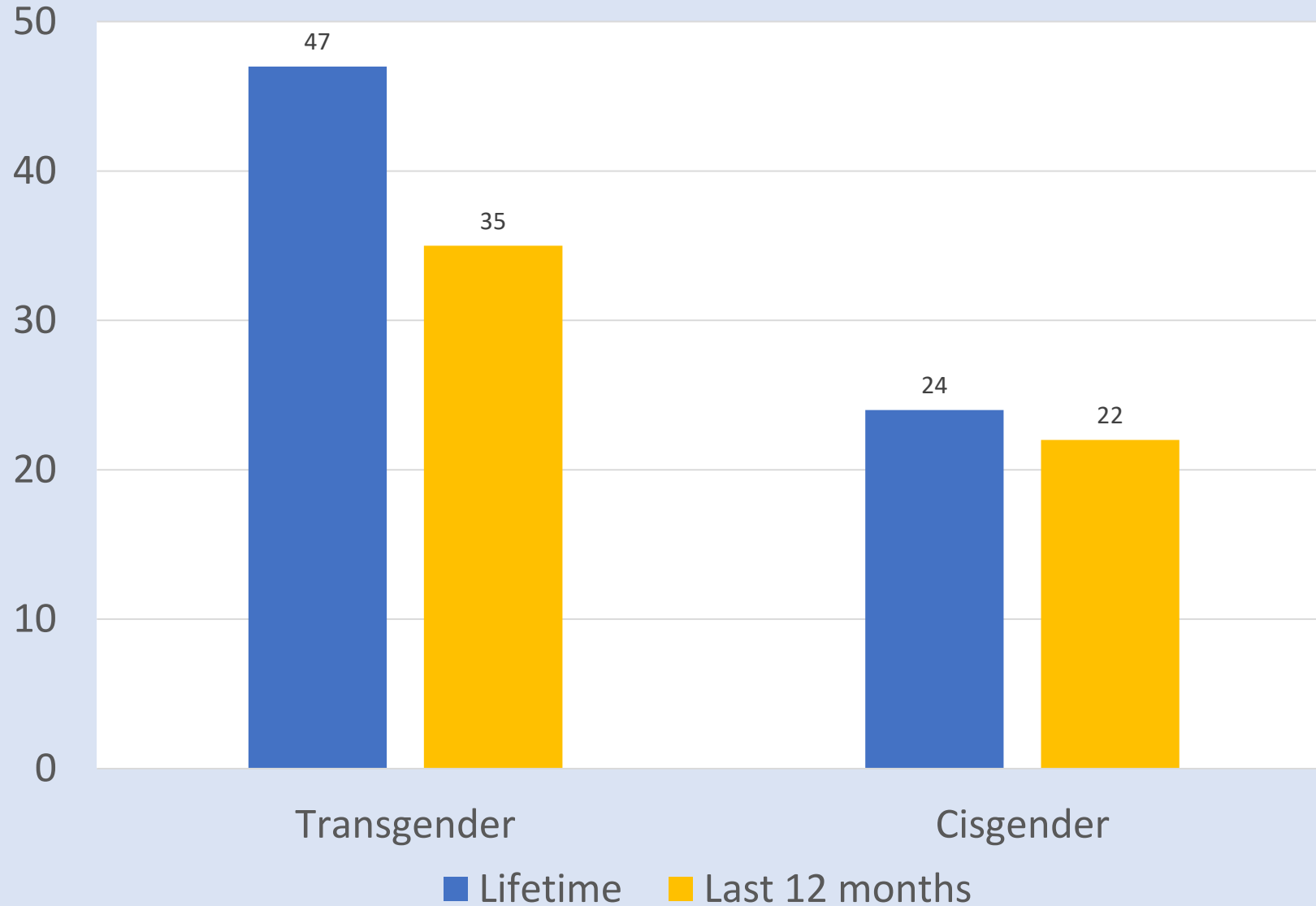
| | | |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| Geography | | |
| • Los Angeles | 561 | 52.6% |
| • New Orleans | 505 | 47.8% |

Age (mean, SD) 21 years 2.2 years

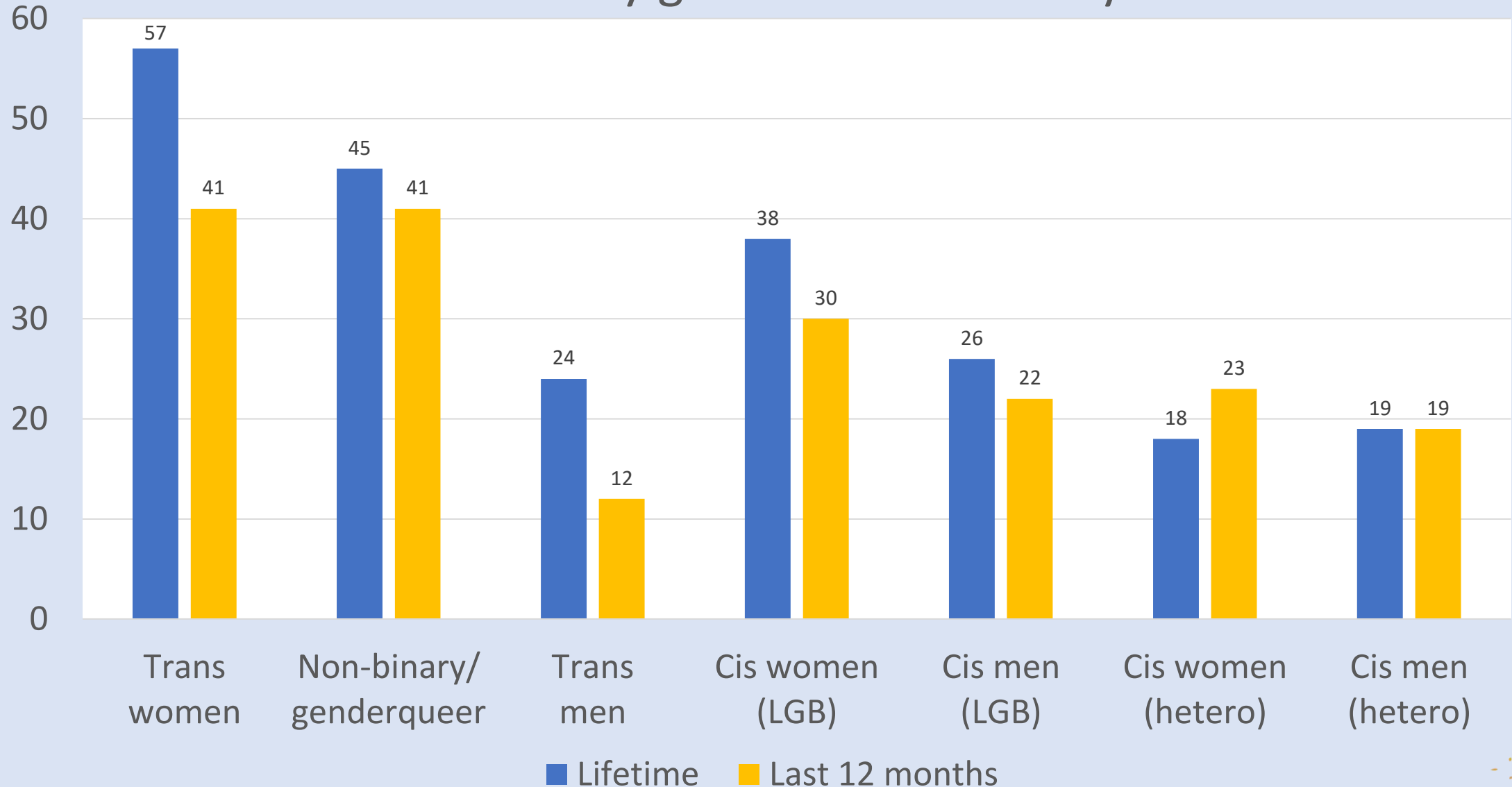
PrEP or PEP use 91 8.3%



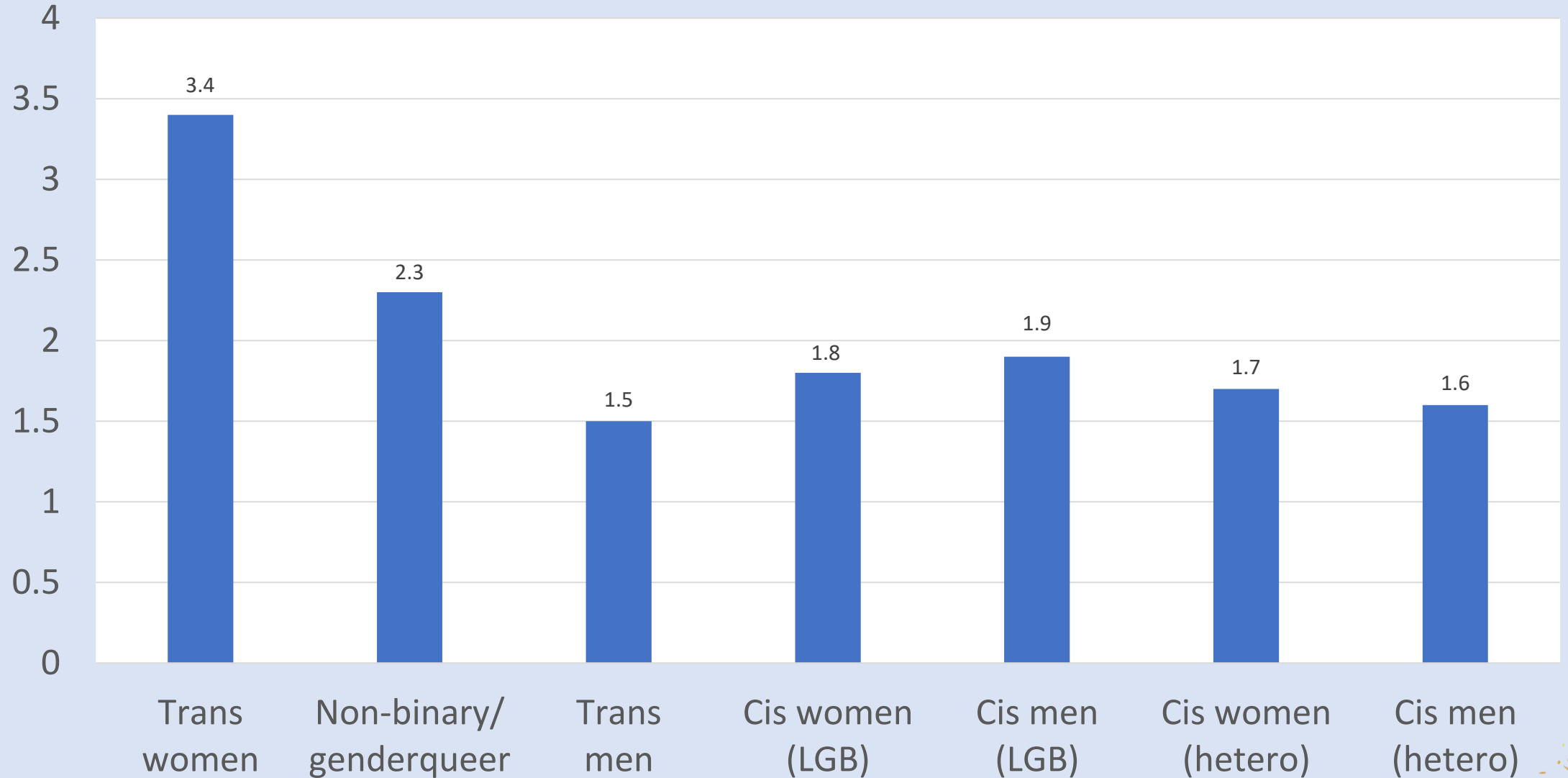
% reporting exchange sex in lifetime and last 12 months: trans vs. cis



% reporting exchange sex in lifetime and last 12 months by gender and sexuality



Number of times exchanged sex in last 4 months by gender and sexuality



Baseline correlates of exchange sex (yes/no)

| <u>Lifetime</u> | <u>aOR</u> | <u>Last 12 months</u> | <u>aOR</u> |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|
| • Transgender | 2.2*** | • Transgender | n.s. |
| • Homeless | 4.8*** | • Homeless | 3.9*** |
| • HIV+ sex partner | 2.4*** | • HIV+ sex partner | 4.2*** |
| • Condomless anal sex | 2.2*** | • Condomless anal sex | 2.7*** |
| • Illicit drug use | 2.0*** | • Illicit drug use | 2.2*** |
| • Positive STI test | 1.5* | | |

aOR: adjusted odds ratio

Significance level: n.s. = not significant, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$



Baseline correlates of exchange sex frequency

| <u># of times in last 4 months</u> | <u>Coef.</u> | <u>No association with PrEP or PEP use</u> |
|------------------------------------|--------------|--|
| • Transgender | 0.5* | |
| • Age | 0.3*** | |
| • HIV+ sex partner | -0.6*** | |
| • New Orleans | 0.7*** | |

Coef: regression coefficient for count model

Significance level: n.s. = not significant, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$, *** = $p < 0.001$



Discussion

- Significantly higher prevalence and frequency of exchange sex among trans adolescents, especially among trans women and non-binary adolescents
- Exchange sex is associated with homelessness, condomless anal sex, having HIV+ sex partners, STIs, and drug use, but NOT with PrEP/PEP use
- Most adolescents exchange sex infrequently (<2 times in last 4 months)
 - Outliers: 3 cis men and 1 trans woman reported 100+ times
- 97% of adolescents reporting exchange sex are 18+ years old



Limitations

- Many unknowns:
 - Are they buying or selling sex?
 - What are they exchanging/receiving for sex?
 - How do they find clients?
 - Are they working independently, with friends, or for a third party?
 - Do they self-identify as sex workers or view exchange sex as work?



Conclusions and future directions

- Adolescents who exchange sex experience multiple, intersecting structural and behavioral risks
- Intersectional/syndemic approach should guide interventions
- Need to improve PrEP access for adolescents who exchange sex, particularly trans women and non-binary adolescents
- Assess longitudinal trends in exchange sex among adolescents and test gender by race interactions



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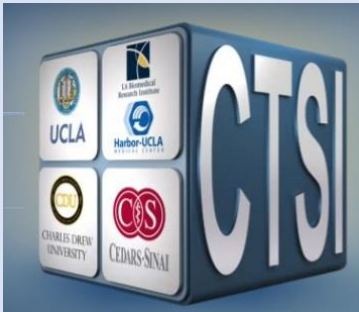


NEW ORLEANS PRIDE

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Thank you! Questions?

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