

# The Impact of Political Conflict on the Dynamics of Sex Work and the HIV/STI and HCV Epidemic in Ukraine: DYNAMICS STUDY FINDINGS

## Introduction



The Dynamics Study aims to disentangle the effects of conflict on the HIV and Hepatitis C (HCV) epidemics in Ukraine as mediated through sex work



This brief report provides an overview of preliminary findings from the first wave of the study (Wave 1), which was conducted from September 2017 – October 2018 in Dnipro, Ukraine

## Purpose of Study

- To assess and understand the influence of conflict on the HIV/HCV epidemic involving both female sex workers and their clients in Dnipro
- To inform the delivery of HIV/HCV services for sex workers and their clients in the context of conflict, and contribute to HIV/HCV prevention programmes locally and globally

## Study Methods

- Mixed methods with qualitative and quantitative components preceded by mapping of geographic locations (“hotspots”) where female sex workers and their clients congregate



### Recruitment places:

- Offices/“brothels”
- Apartments
- Public spaces
- Highway/truck stops
- Entertainment venues
- Cafés/restaurants/bars
- Massage/beauty parlours
- Art clubs/strip bars
- Hotels/motels



### Quantitative methods:

Involved a cross-sectional bio-behavioural survey, with rapid point of care tests and serological confirmatory testing on dried blood spots for HIV and HCV with sex workers and their clients

Inclusion criteria:



Women aged 14 years and older, who identified as female sex workers, soliciting within an identified hotspot and had been in sex work for at least 3 months



Male clients aged 18 years and older purchasing sex at identified hotspot



### Qualitative methods:

Involved a series of in-depth interviews and diaries with female sex workers, and interviews with relevant key informants/stakeholders from Dnipro and Kyiv, Ukraine

- This brief report summarizes key findings from the quantitative component of Wave 1
  - Qualitative analysis is on-going
- After Wave 2 of the study, mathematical modelling to estimate the influence of political conflict via changes in sex work on HIV and HCV transmission among female sex workers and clients is planned

# OUR FINDINGS

## Demographics

### SEX WORKERS

Women had been working in sex work for a median of 5 (IQR 2-8) years

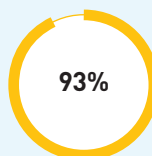
#### N

560 sex workers

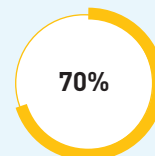
#### AGE

The median age of sex workers was **26** (IQR 22-30) years old

#### EDUCATION



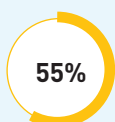
completed secondary education



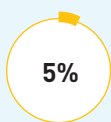
completed vocational, technical or higher education

### MARITAL STATUS

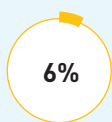
15% of participants were living with a regular sex partner (spouse, common law/boyfriend)



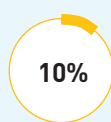
Single, never been married



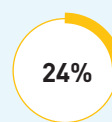
Married & living with spouse



Married but not living with spouse



Living with intimate partner



Widowed/divorced

### DEPENDENTS

53% of sex workers reported supporting one or more dependents (children, parents, grandparents or intimate partners)

### CLIENTS

Clients had been purchasing sex from sex workers for a median of 9 (IQR 5-13) years

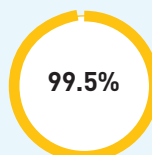
#### N

370 clients

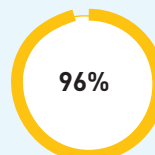
#### AGE

The median age of clients was **32** (IQR 27-38) years old

#### EDUCATION

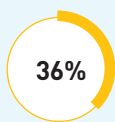


completed secondary education

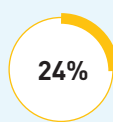


completed vocational, technical or higher education

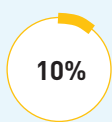
### MARITAL STATUS



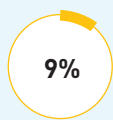
Single, never been married



Married & living with spouse



Married but not living with spouse

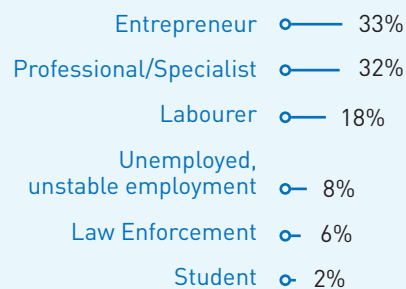


Living with intimate partner



Widowed/divorced

### OCCUPATION



## HIV AND HCV PREVALENCE

Based on 2018 seroepidemiological monitoring data, the HIV prevalence among the general population in the city of Dnipro was 0.85%\*. Below, we present HIV/HCV prevalence according to findings from our serological confirmatory testing.

### Sex workers

HIV prevalence 2.9%  
HCV prevalence 5.9%

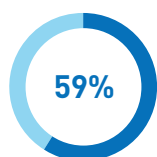
### Clients

HIV prevalence 2.4%  
HCV prevalence 6.5%

\*Official statistical data obtained by request from Dnipro Oblast Centre on AIDS Prevention and Control

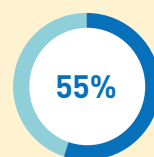
## HOTSPOTS

### Sex workers



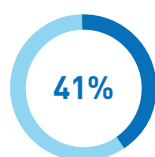
worked at only one hotspot in the last 12 months

### Clients

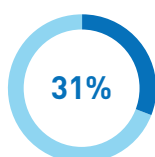


purchased services at only one hotspot in the last 12 months

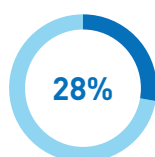
**224 respondents reported working at more than 1 hotspot during the last 12 months. Of those\*\*:**



worked at 2 hotspots

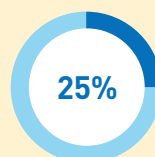


worked at 3 hotspots

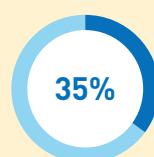


worked at 4 or more hotspots

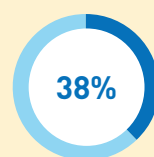
**167 respondents reported visiting more than 1 hotspot during the last 12 months. Of those\*\*:**



visited 2 hotspots



visited 3 hotspots



visited 4 or more hotspots

\*\*Percentages do not equal 100 due to some non-response

## SEXUAL PARTNERSHIPS

### Sex workers

**23 (IQR 18-30)**

Median number of clients in the past 30 days

### Clients

**1 (IQR 1-2)**

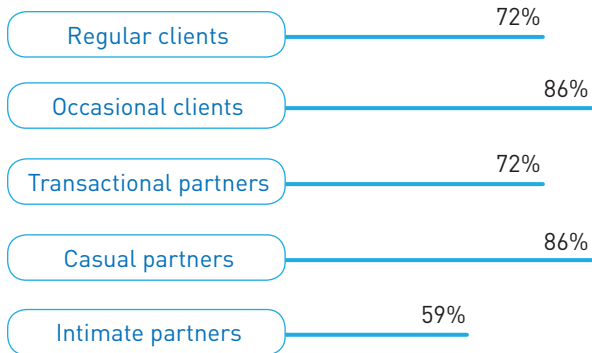
Median number of sex workers in the past 30 days

% of sex workers		Reported median
96%	Regular clients	5 (IQR 3-7)
99%	Occasional clients	17 (IQR 13-23)
48%	Transactional partners	2 (IQR 1-3)
30%	Casual partners	4 (IQR 2-8)
46%	Intimate partners	1 (IQR 1-1)

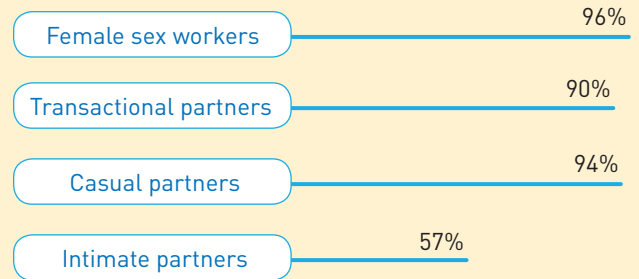
% of clients		Reported median
8%	Transactional partners	1 (IQR 1-4)
99%	Casual partners	2 (IQR 1-2)
72%	Intimate partners	1 (IQR 1-1)

## CONDOM USE

The proportion of **sex workers** who reported using a condom 100% of the time with the following sexual partners in the past 30 days:



The proportion of **clients** who reported using a condom 100% of the time with the following sex partners in the past 30 days:



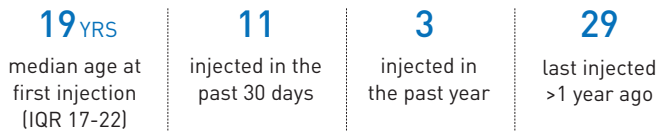
*21% of clients reported paying extra for sex without a condom*

## DRUG USE

### Sex workers



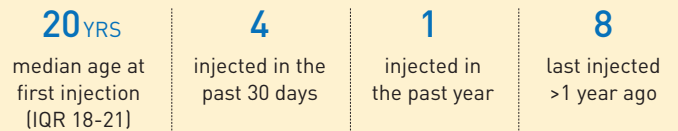
Of the 44 respondents who ever injected\*\*\*:



### Clients

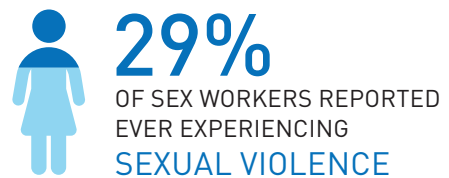
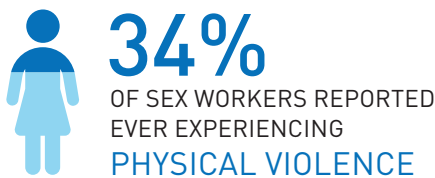


Of the 14 respondents who ever injected\*\*\*:



\*\*\*1 non-response

## VIOLENCE



32 women (6%) reported experiencing physical violence in the past 3 months

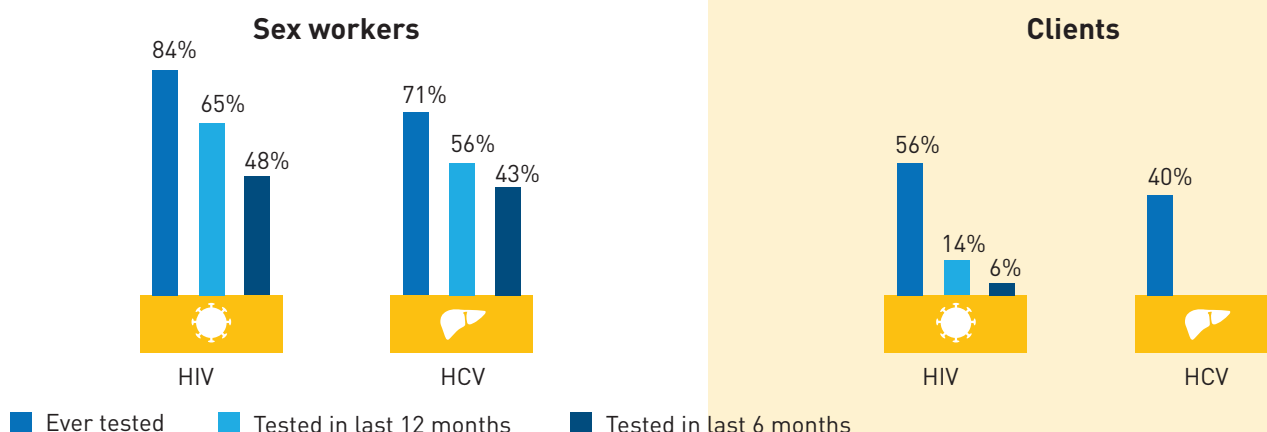
**Most common perpetrators:**  
Occasional clients: **63%**  
Intimate partners: **28%**



13 women (2%) reported experiencing sexual violence in the past 3 months

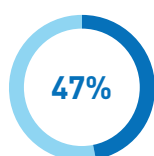
**Most common perpetrator:**  
Occasional clients: **69%**

## HIV AND HCV TESTING

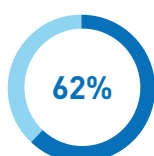


## UTILIZATION OF PREVENTION AND SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES PROVIDED BY PROGRAMMES FOR SEX WORKERS

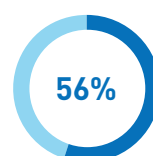
67% of sex workers are not clients of prevention programmes



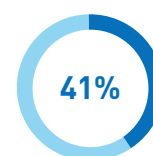
have ever obtained free condoms from organizations



have ever accessed free HIV testing from an organization



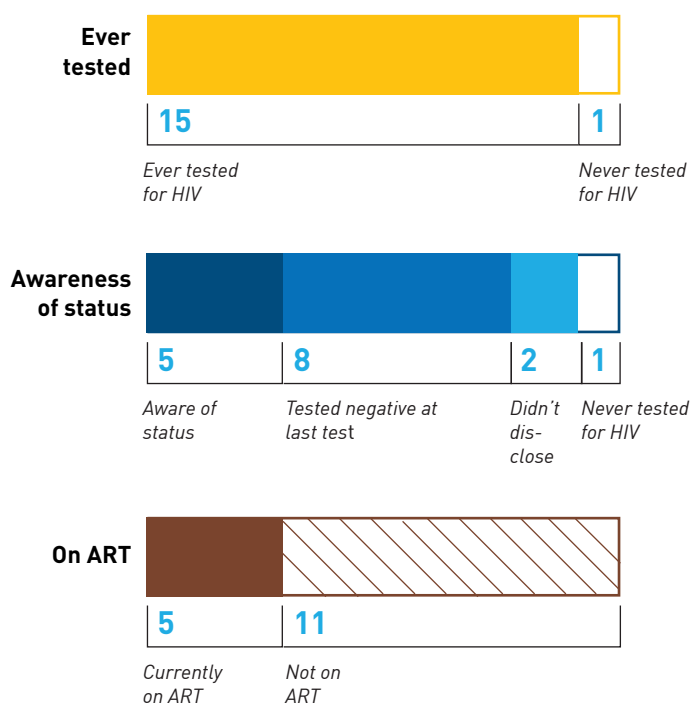
have ever accessed free HCV testing from an organization



have accessed free obstetric or gynecologic consultation

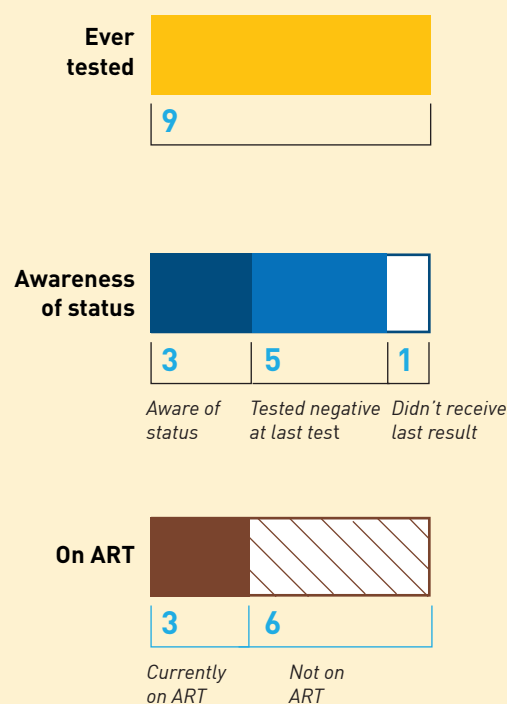
## HIV CASCADE

## Sex workers | N=16 HIV+



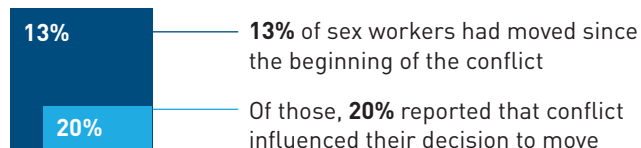
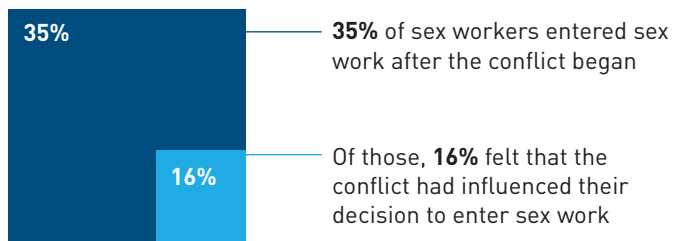
\*Each of the 5 sex workers who were aware of their HIV status were also taking ART and were registered with an AIDS Centre

## Clients | N=9 HIV+



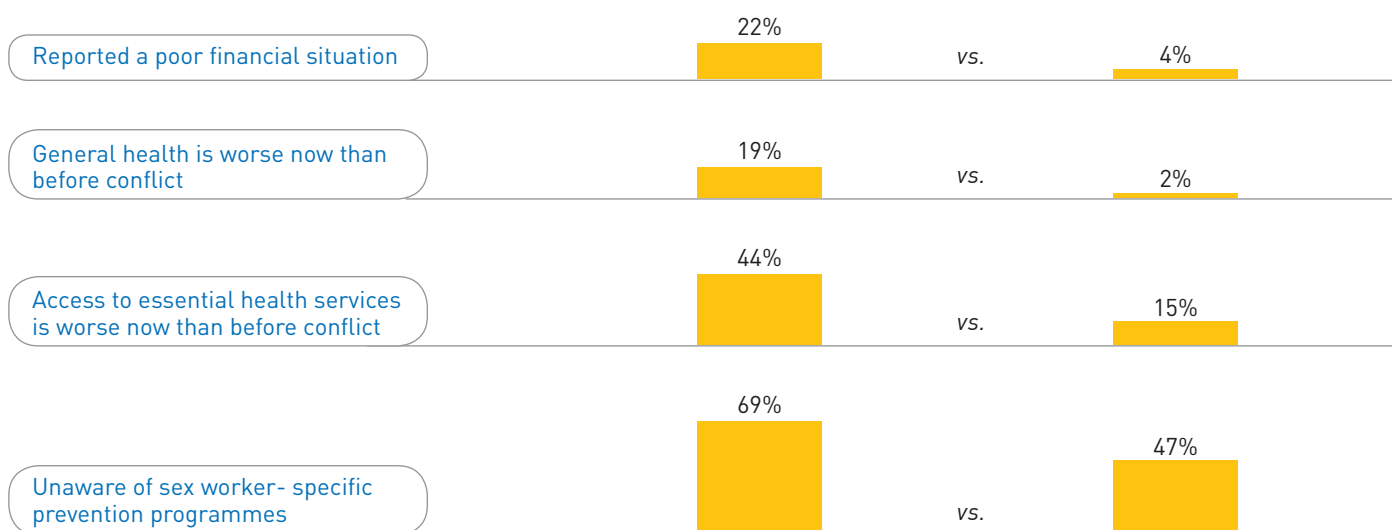
\*Each of the 3 clients who were aware of their HIV status were also taking ART and were registered with an AIDS Centre

## Influence of Conflict

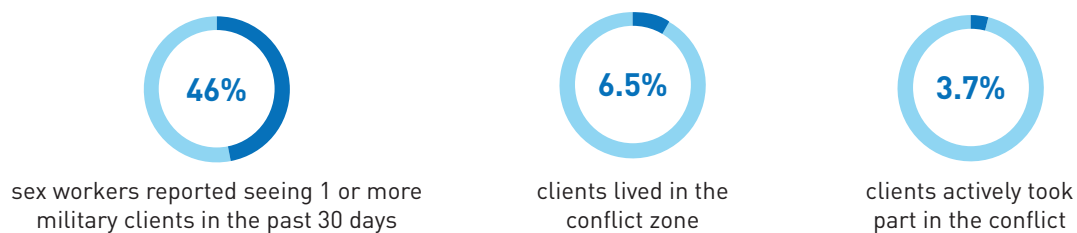


### Women for whom conflict influenced sex work entry

### Other sex workers



## MILITARY CLIENTS



## Implications and Next Steps

- HIV prevalence among clients of sex workers was more than twice that of the general population, yet there are no programmes targeted specifically for clients
- Although the majority of sex workers had ever tested for HIV/HCV, frequent testing was reported by less than half
- While approximately half of clients had ever tested for HIV/HCV, frequent testing was very uncommon
- HIV/HCV prevention programmes need to increase reach and coverage of HIV/HCV prevention services both for female sex workers and clients of sex workers and ensure a broad range of services including drug support, violence reduction and response in addition to condom distribution, HIV/HCV testing and HIV/HCV care
- For both sex workers and clients living with HIV, awareness of one's status and access to treatment was very low
- The cascades for both sex workers and clients highlight the need to strengthen all steps of the cascade- from prevention, to testing, to care
- Our preliminary data suggests that the conflict is influencing the patterns and practices of sex work with a high proportion of sex workers reporting military clients, suggesting the importance of understanding that network
- The findings from both waves will be examined to assess for changes over time and the overall results will be shared to inform policy and programmes

