Experiences of Violence among Transgender Individuals in Colombia

Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI)
Bangkok, 2013

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Supported by NICHD Grant R01 HD 046258 (2008-2013)

Presentation

- Explore differences between M-to-F transgender and MSM participants
- Examine risk behaviors among both groups
- Explore the types of violence experienced by both groups and the perpetrators

Background

- Transgender understudied, underserviced and vulnerable group
- Target of violence, stigma, and social cleansing
  - Experiences of violence are likely to lead to poor outcomes

Methodology

- 5-year NIH grant in Bogotá Colombia
- Qualitative Phase:

Key informants (N=19), Focus Groups (N=9) and in-depth qualitative interviews(N=42; 14 Trans); internally displaced; NVivo8 for data analysis; Grounded theory

- Quantitative Phase:

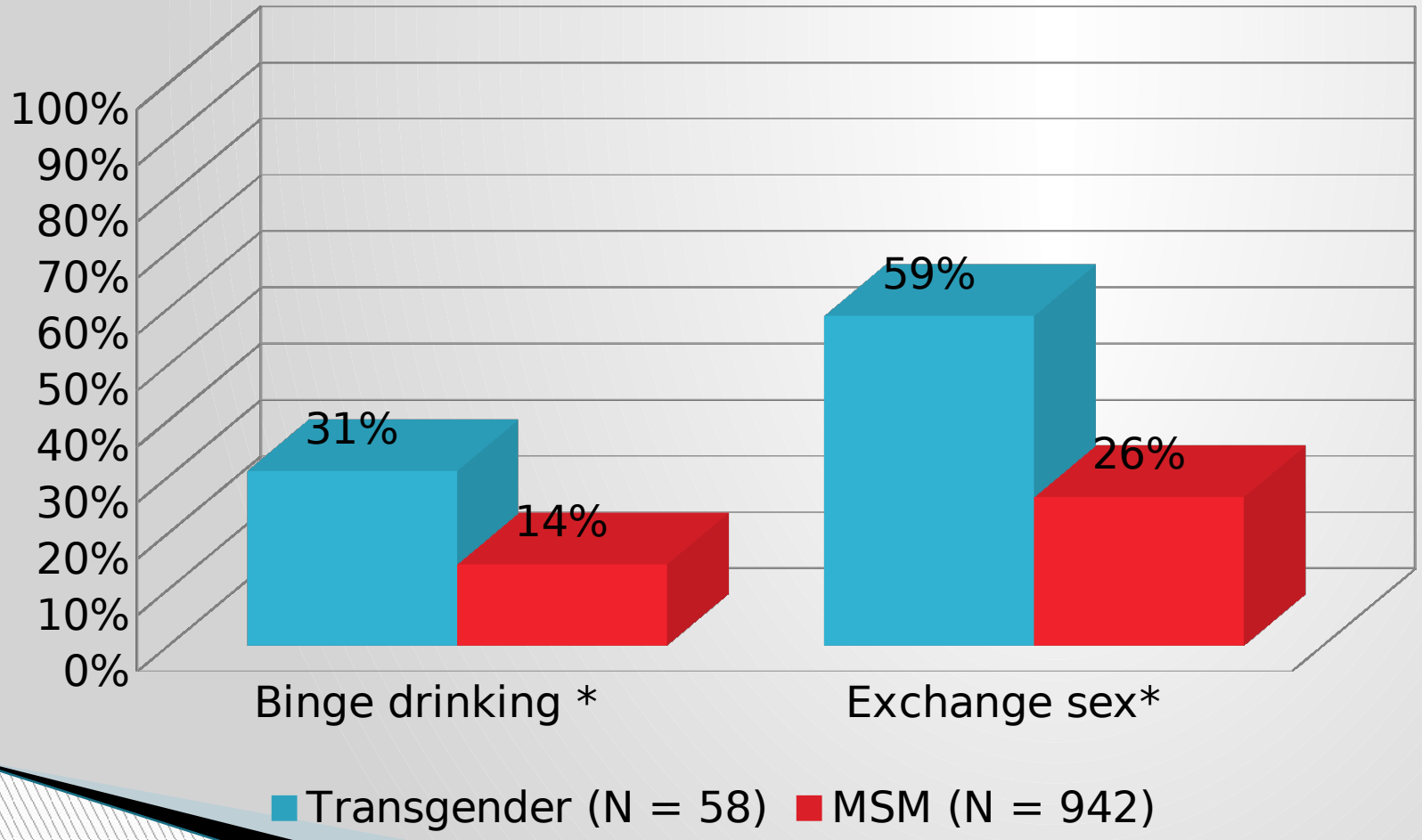
1,000 A-CASI surveys with MSM between the ages of 18-49; 942 MSM and 58 Trans; Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS); Rapid oral HIV testing

Results: Differences between MSM and Transgender

- No differences:
  - Being displaced
  - Having unprotected sex
  - Having had a STI

- Differences:
  - Age
  - Involvement in gay community
  - Binge drinking
  - Exchange Sex/Sex work
  - Sexual Abuse as a child
  - Mistreated for being effeminate as a child
  - Discriminated for being Trans as an adult
  - Types of violence
  - Perpetrators of violence

Risk Behaviors

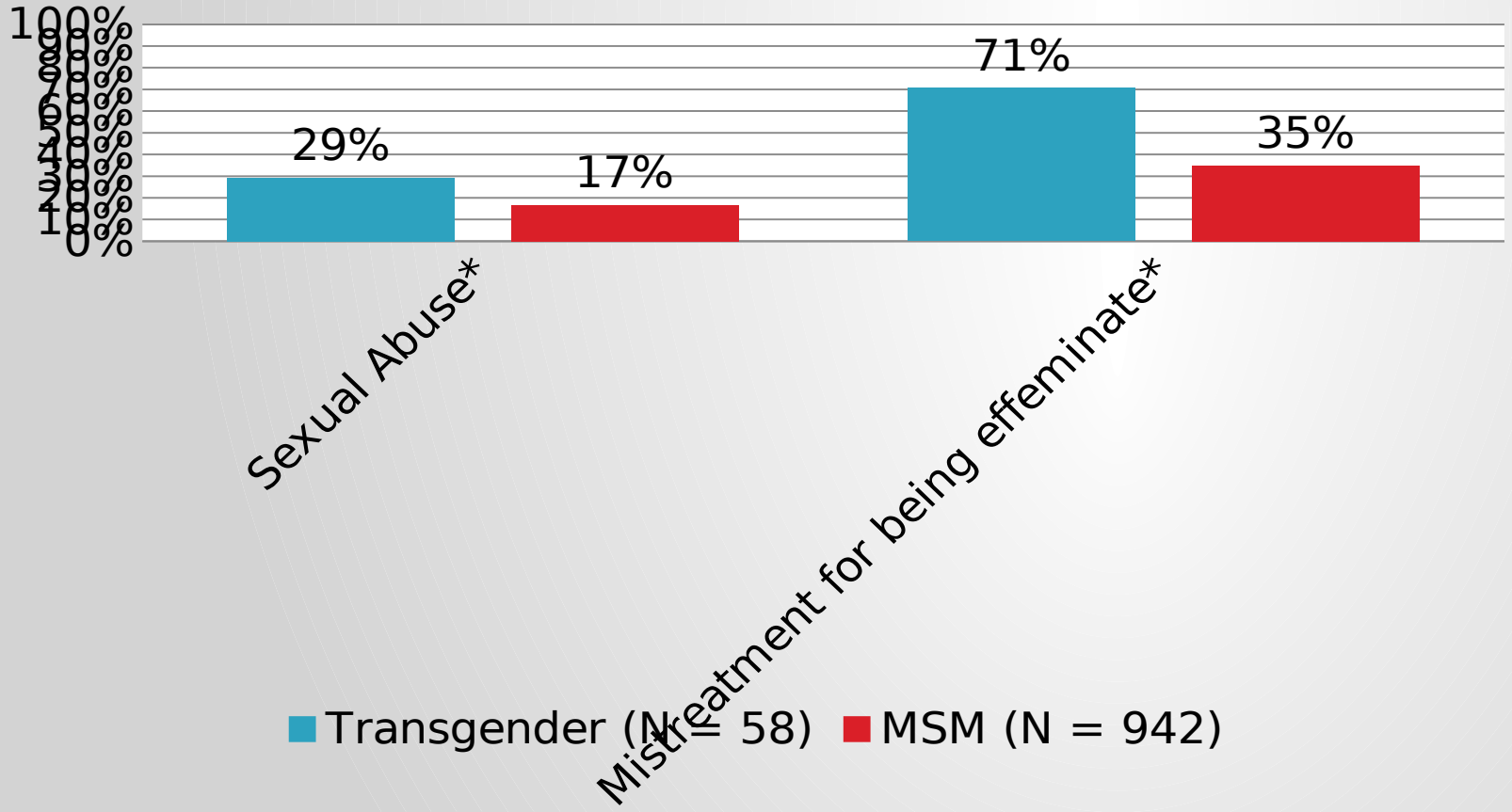


Qualitative: Violence associated with sex work

- *There was this social cleansing group called "Mano Negra" (Black Hand) that was in charge of killing gays, whores, and petty thieves. Thank God we did not have the misfortune of having them kill one of us on our corner, but they have killed a lot of people from our community*. [Marisol]

- *Because I was new, the girls would attack me… and even more so because I was not ugly…They dragged me; they took my purse; they hit me with the heels of their shoes. It was horrible. They pulled a lot of my hair out…. They attacked me because they were envious.* [Janet]

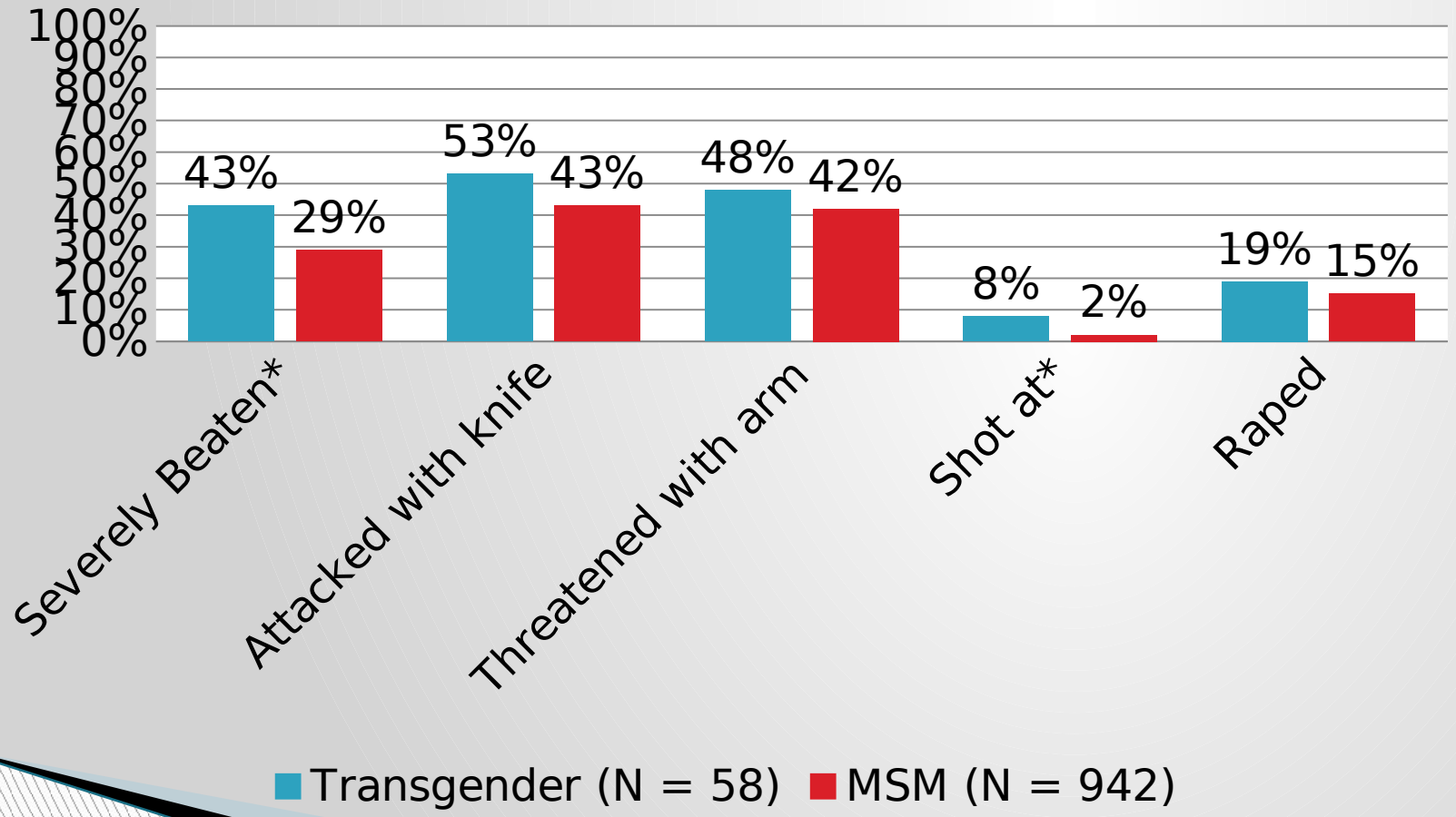
Early experiences of violence



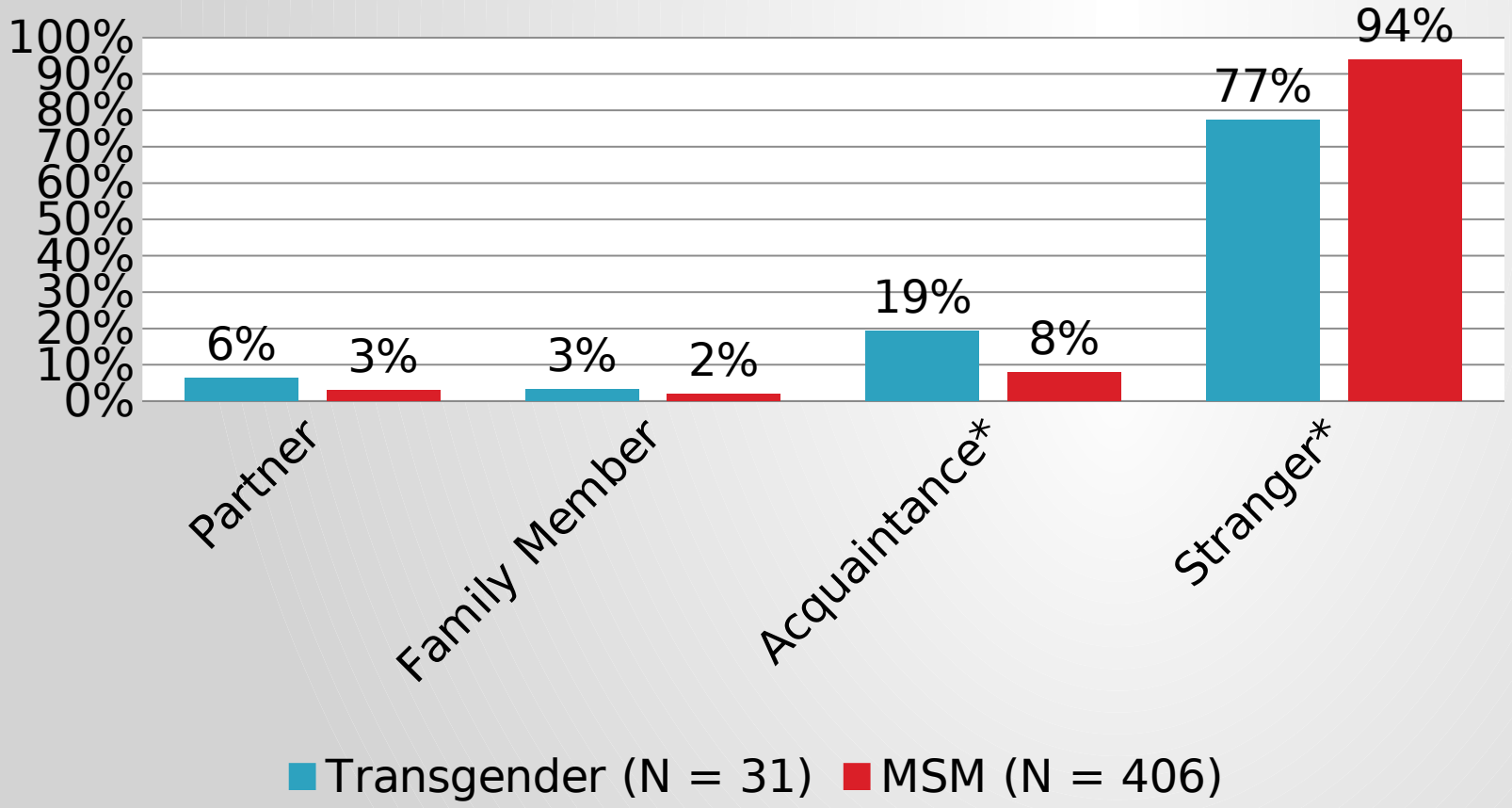
Qualitative: Violence associated with gender identity

- *So…from the time I was a little girl, my dad had always been very hard on me because he saw me as effeminate. So he believed that by beating me up or by cursing at me that he could change the reality (that I was not a boy)…. So anything I did or said, "Pow" I would get a beating. Therefore, one grows up with this trauma that people will get you, that people will beat you , that people will kill you. [Celia]*

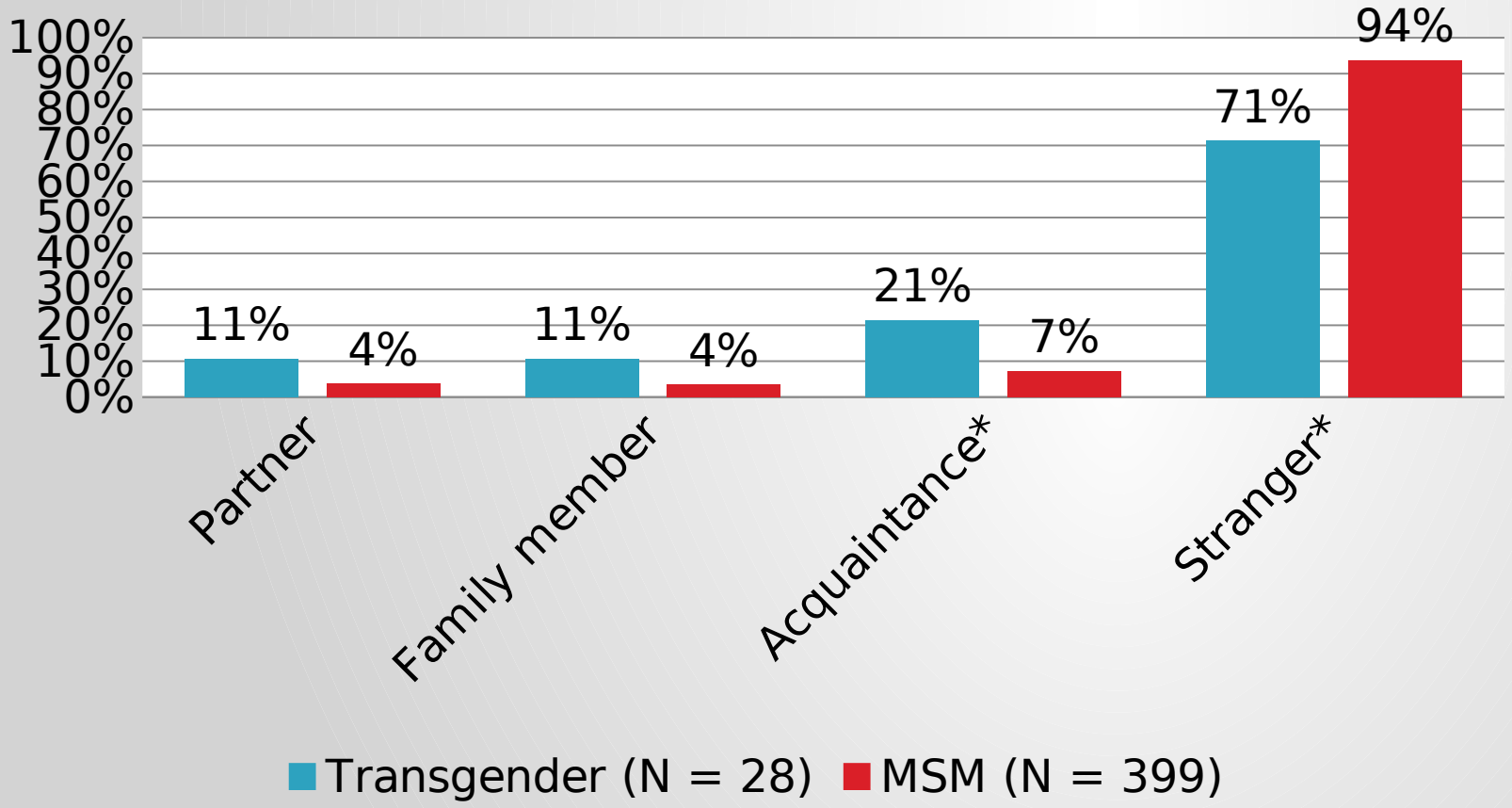
Types of violence ever experienced



Attacked with knife BY perpetrator



Threatened with arm BY perpetrator



Conclusions

- Overall Trans more often the target of violence, discrimination and sexual abuse than MSM
- Sex work could be a risk factor for Trans as they experience violence from both within and outside of their community
- Experiences of mistreatment and abuse due to gender nonconformity and stigma begin at an early age and seem to persist through adulthood
- For some types of violence Trans were more often the target of violent acts by somebody they knew than a stranger

“Life as transsexual is tough enough without serving as a public probing ground for gender theories and insecurities. But the fact that I cannot meet someone without destabilizing their sense of gender and identity means that, no matter how isolated I feel, I am not for myself alone. What I am is part of what you are; I define you as you define me. “ ***[Joy Ladin]***