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SWEDD & COVID-19: Considering adolescent girls during crises

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SWEDD & COVID-19 **CONSIDERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS** **DURING CRISES**

May 19, 2020

“The Sahel is the youngest region in the world. As a source of innovation and creativity, youth is an asset that should not be underestimated. Young people and women play an immeasurable role in building the foundations of tomorrow’s world, and we should expect changes in the social norms and values that guide them. Access to education, healthcare, employment, and training will make more of a difference than ever if we want to see the Sahel countries progress towards shared, lasting, and sustainable growth. Harnessing the demographic dividend is an opportunity Africa can’t pass up.”

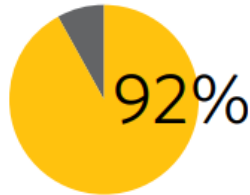


Mabingue Ngom

UNFPA Regional Director

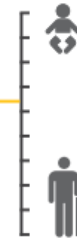
West and Central Africa Regional Office

SAHEL

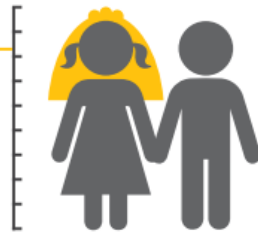


THE RATIO OF
DEPENDENT CHILDREN
(<15 YEARS)
COMPARED TO THE
WORKING-AGE
POPULATION

MEDIAN AGE



MEDIAN AGE AT 1ST MARRIAGE



USAGE RATE OF MODERN
CONTRACEPTIVES

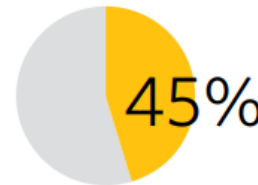


9%

NUMBER OF CHILDREN
AVERAGE PER WOMAN



6.2



BIRTHS
ATTENDED
BY QUALIFIED
PERSONNEL

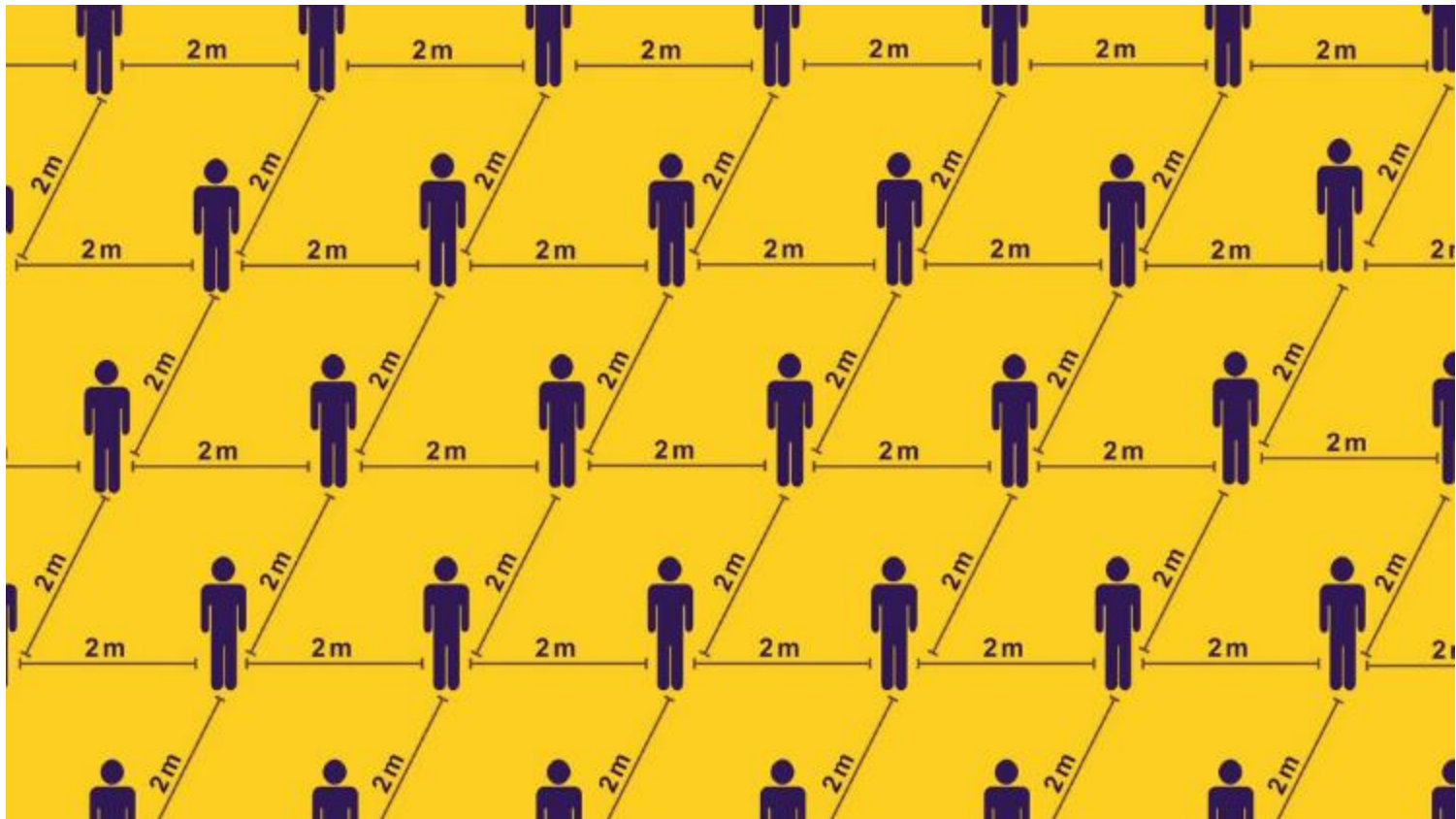


606 maternal deaths
PER 100,000 LIVE BIRTHS

1. Adolescent girls (AGs) differ from children & women; need dedicated attention
2. Adolescence critical life phase for girls; girls at crossroads at puberty, with potential for lifelong consequences & benefits
3. Protective assets help safe transition to adulthood
4. AGs often overlooked despite tremendous domestic responsibilities & potential
5. Use adolescent programming ‘good practice’ principles to guide decision-making
6. Girl-centered perspective integrating evidence & AG’s unique experiences & point of view.
7. Not all AG experience risks the same; recognize heterogeneity between girl segments
8. Poorest girls often excluded from programming; social isolation exacerbates exclusion.
9. COVID-19 exacerbates social isolation; Social support key asset

COVID-19 affects everyone, everywhere.

Why do adolescent girls merit special consideration?

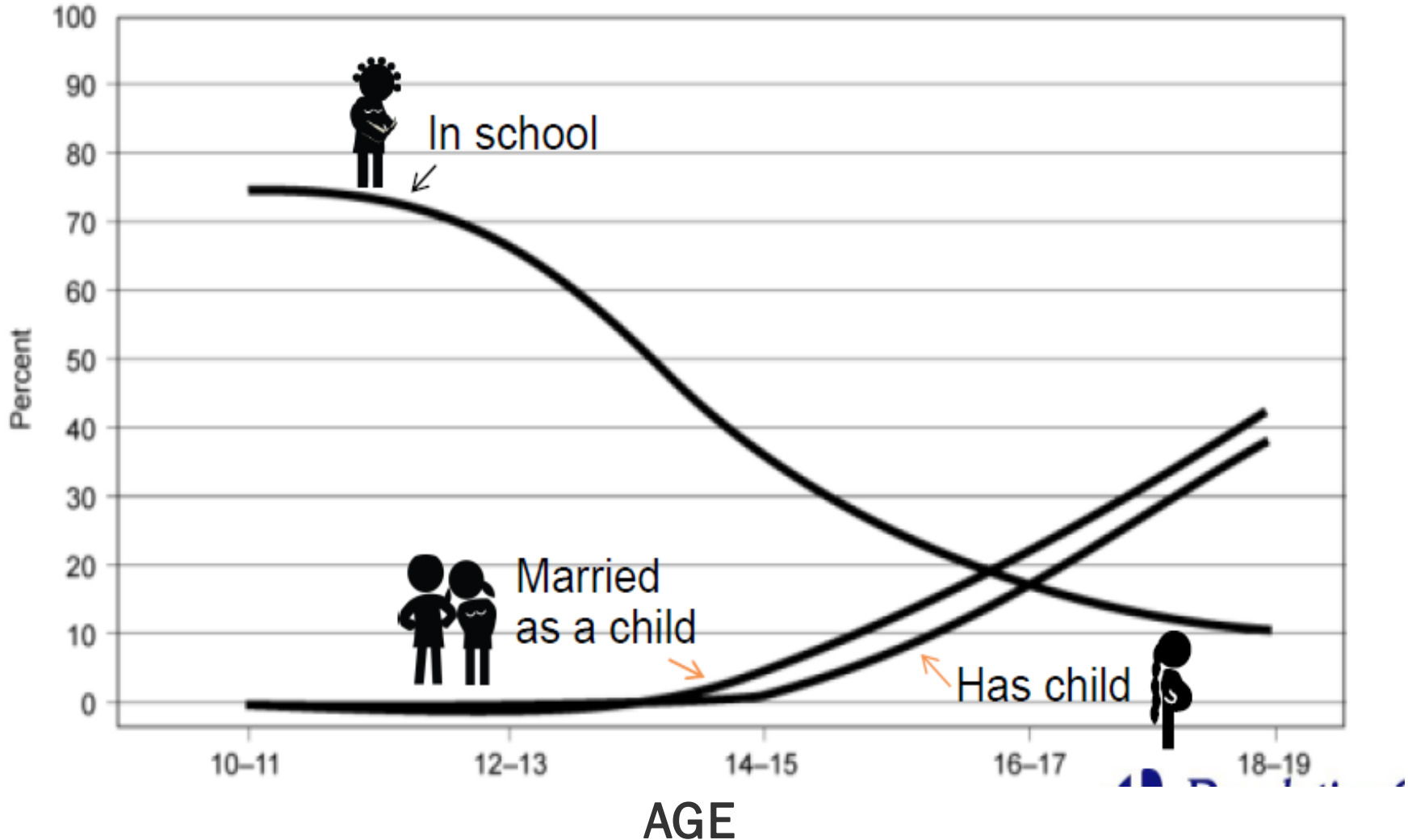


Adolescence as formative life phase: Tremendous opportunity & risk

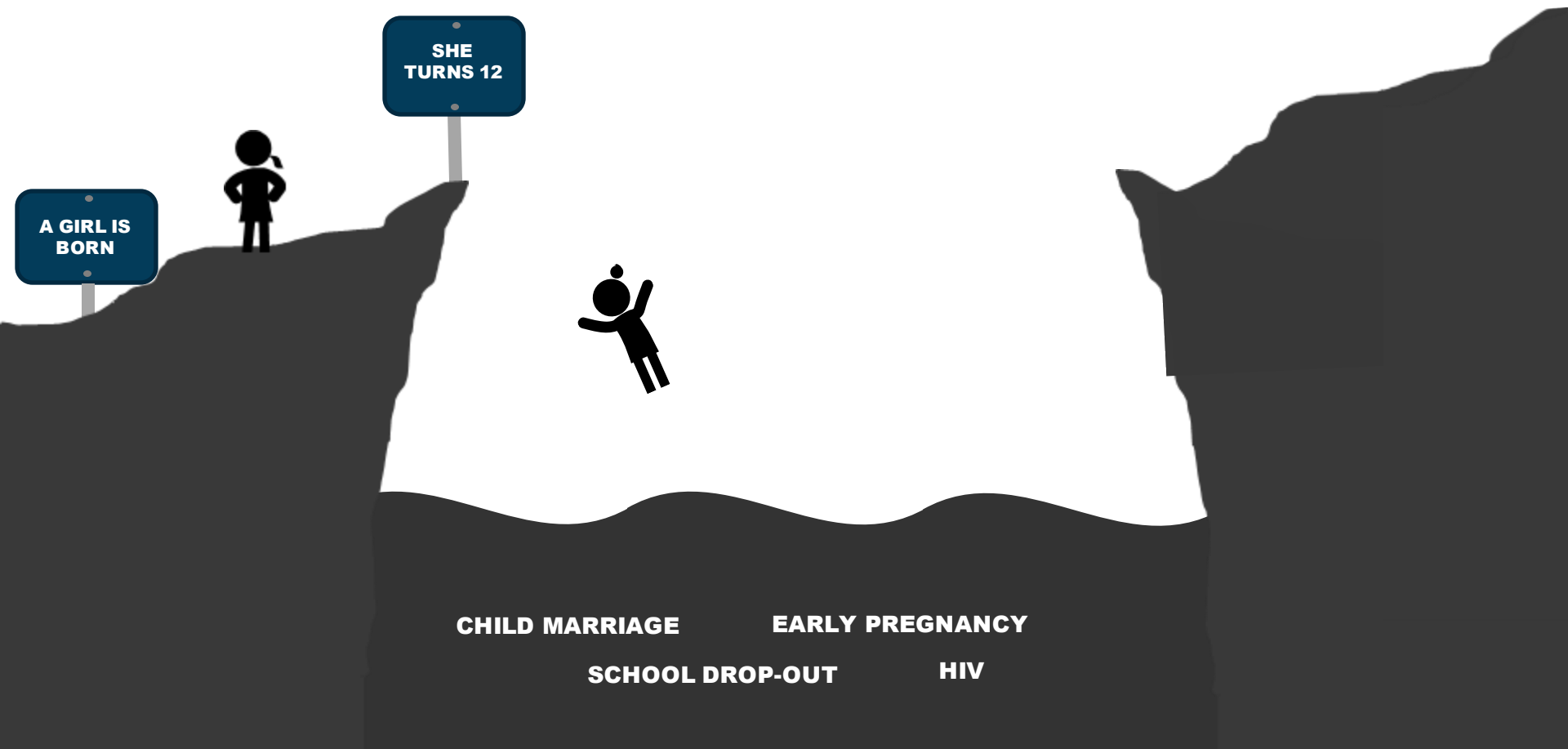
- Life phase dense with changes
- Also dense with responsibilities
 - Adolescent girls step into fill household gaps: for income, labor, water, etc.
 - Inequitable distribution of domestic labor disadvantages girls
- Potential *now* to contribute to COVID-19 response & resilience; building back better
- Potential *later* for safe transition to adulthood
 - Empowered girls become empowered women
 - Responsible for biological & social reproduction

Adolescence a critical phase of life

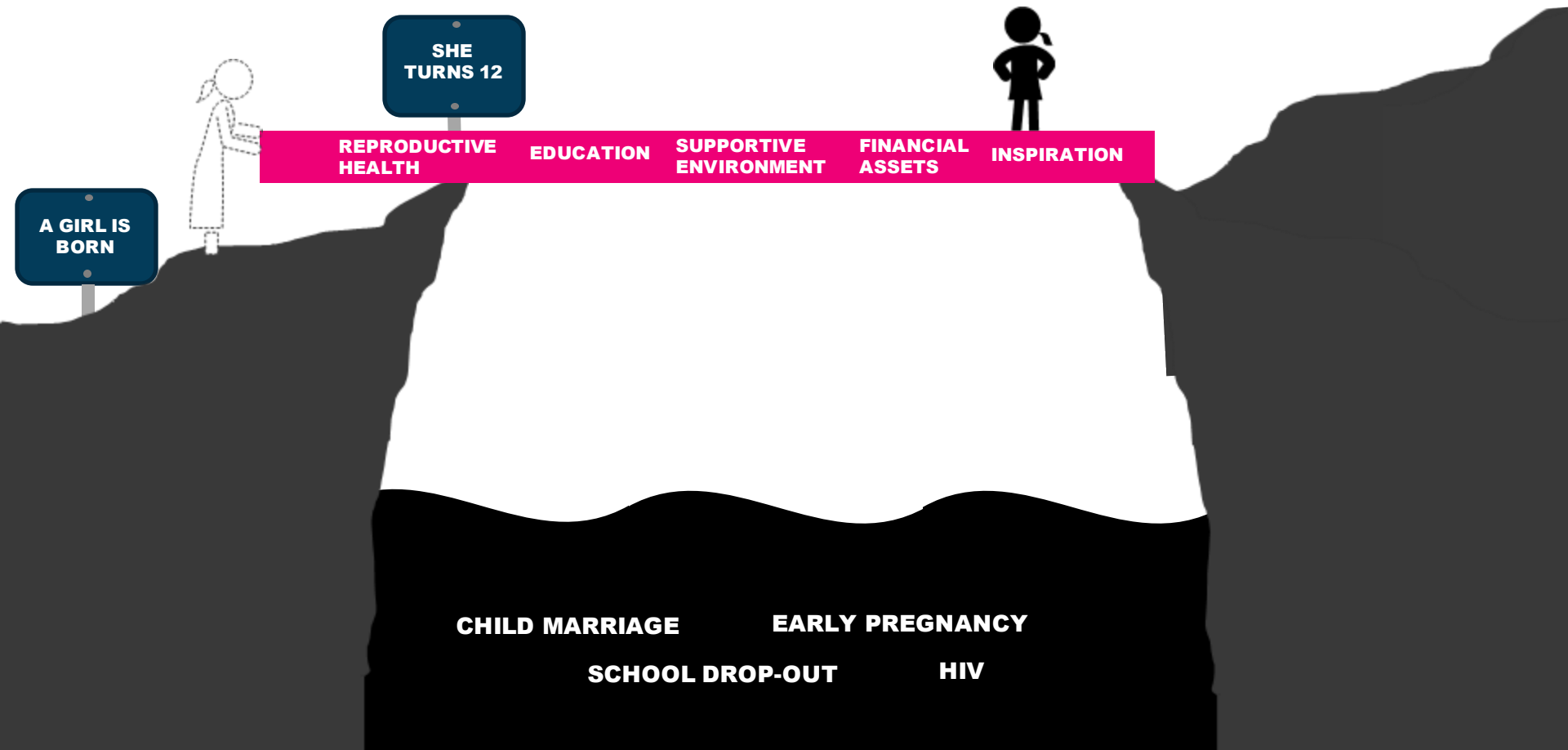
Percent of Guatemalan girls 10–19, by outcome



Girls may go off track after puberty: Threats with life-long consequences



Protective assets can reduce risk, increase opportunity, enable safe transitions to adulthood





WE
DON'T
REACH AG
BECAUSE WE
ASSUME WE HAVE

They are not mini-adults or large children; we risk missing them without dedicated attention

CHILD ≠ AG

YOUTH ≠ AG

WOMAN ≠ AG

Why is it a problem?

Increased domestic responsibilities

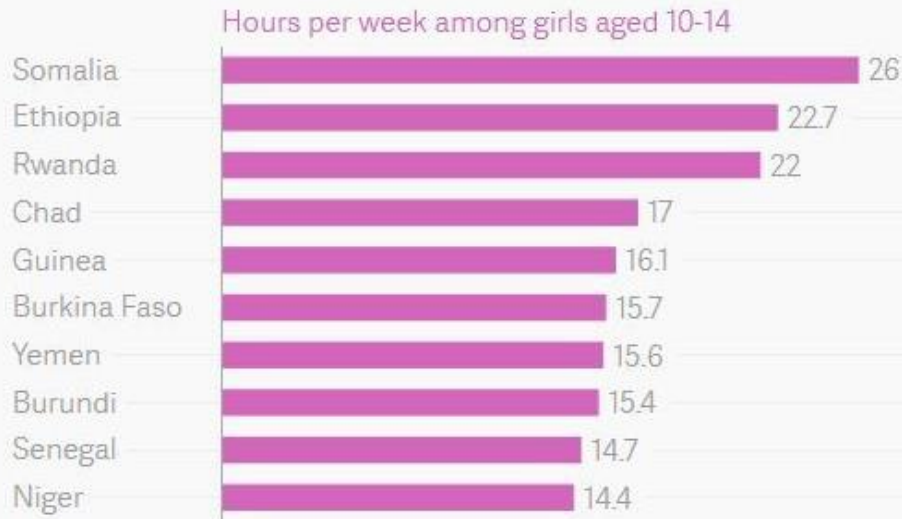
“In general the outbreak experience means that women’s* domestic burden becomes exacerbated as well, making their share of household responsibilities even heavier...”

[UNFPA, COVID-19 A Gender Lens, 2020](#)

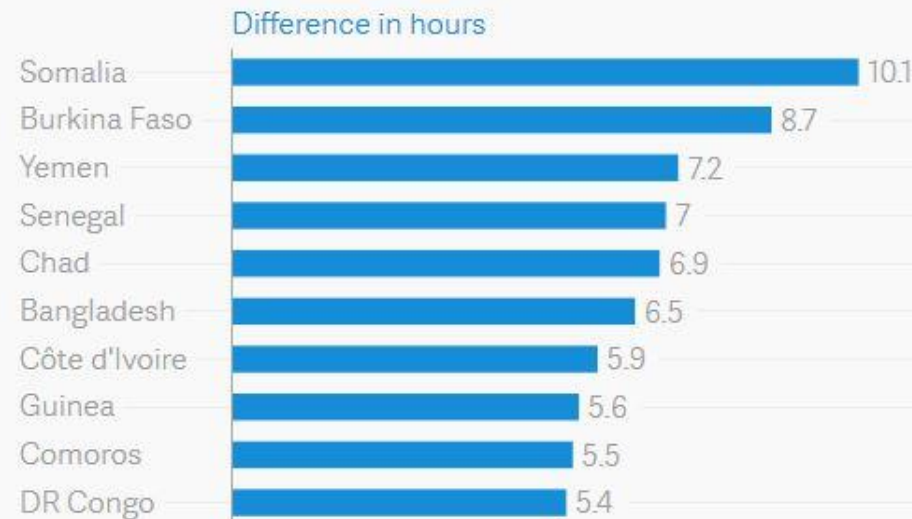
*** And girls’! Intentional efforts needed to overcome girls’ exclusion**

Where girls spend the most time on household chores

Girls spend more time on household chores than boys



ATLAS | Data: Unicef



ATLAS | Data: Unicef

SOURCE: Chutel, L. (2016). Gender Inequality Starts Young: Household-Chores Young. *Above Whispers*. Retrieved from <http://abovewhispers.com/2016/10/13/gender-inequality-starts-young-household-chores-young/>

NOTE: Original data sources not confirmed.

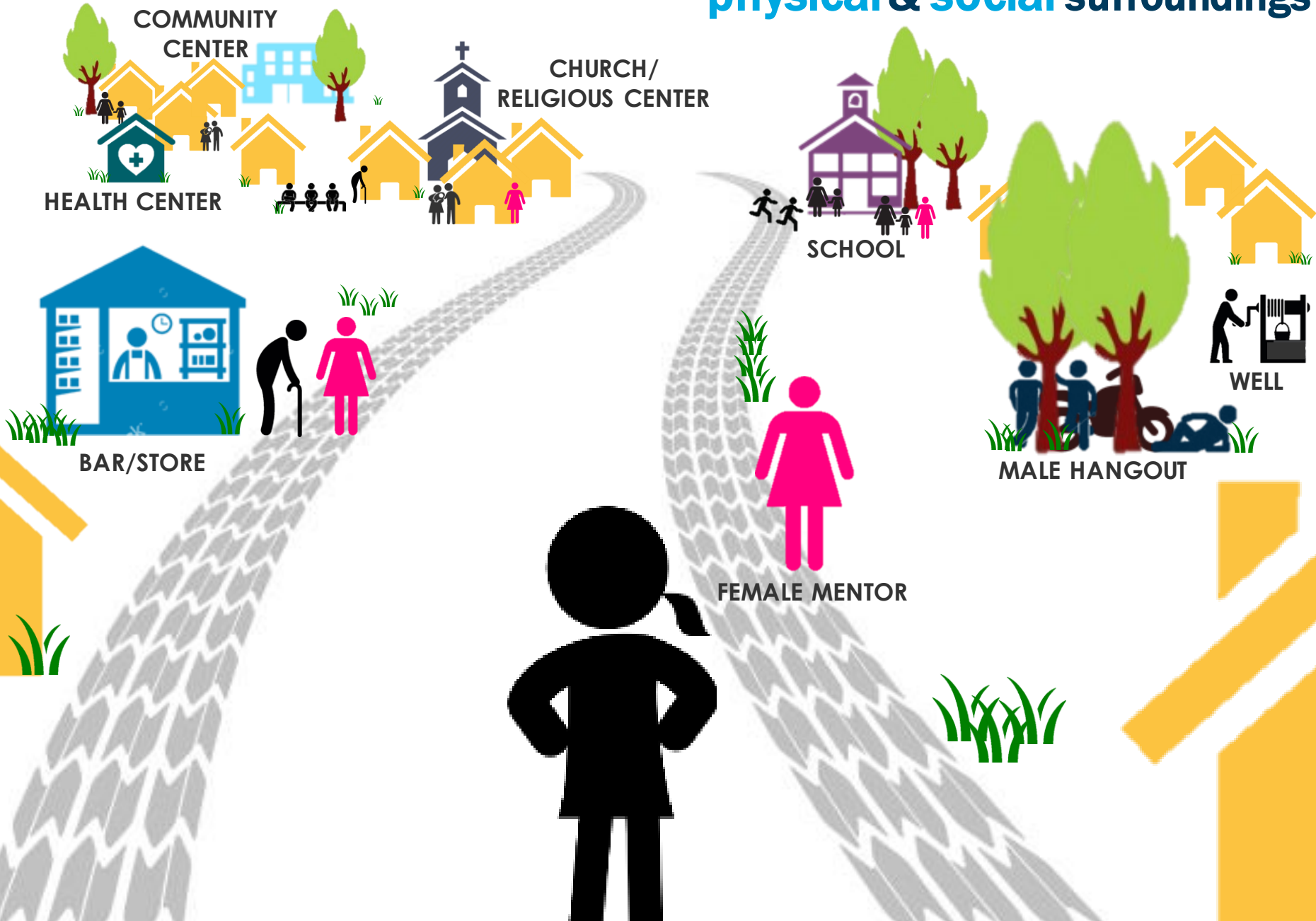
The Need: Evidence-Informed Programs

Intentionally Designed with Girls at the Center

- Use **intentional design** to overcome exclusion
- Build girls' **protective assets**
- Track **progress** at girl & community levels



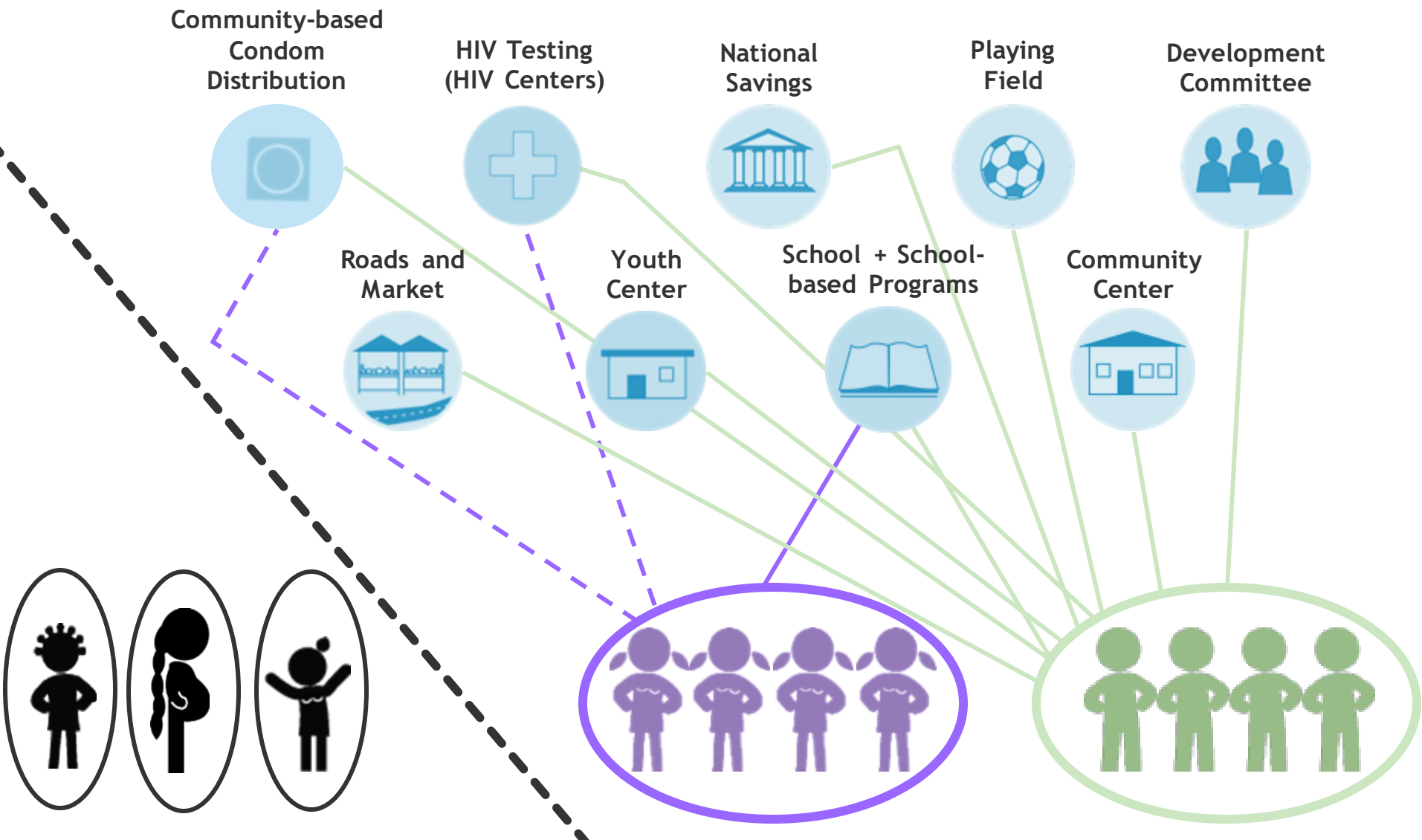
Planning based on adolescents' perspective of their communities: physical & social surroundings



Adolescents' perspectives vary.

Consider heterogeneity.

POOR GIRLS MOST EXCLUDED FROM OPPORTUNITIES & SERVICES



Segmentation

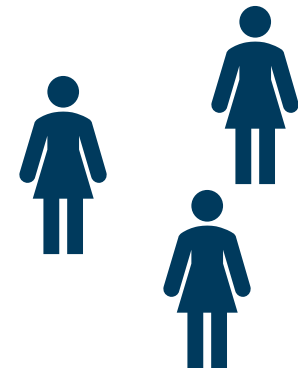
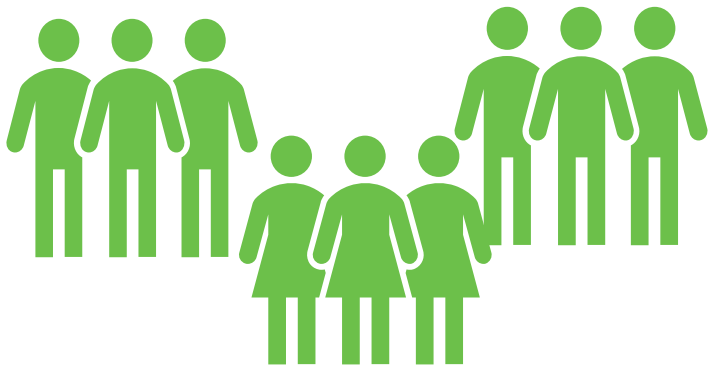
FOR PLANNING TO OVERCOME EXCLUSION: BREAK “YOUTH” POPULATION OF INTEREST INTO SMALLER AGE, SCHOOLING, MARITAL, CHILDBEARING AND LIVING ARRANGEMENTS SEGMENTS



Key source: Adolescent Data Guides (available for over 50 countries): <https://www.popcouncil.org/research/the-adolescent-experience-in-depth-using-data-to-identify-and-reach-th>

COVID-19 exacerbates risk of exclusion

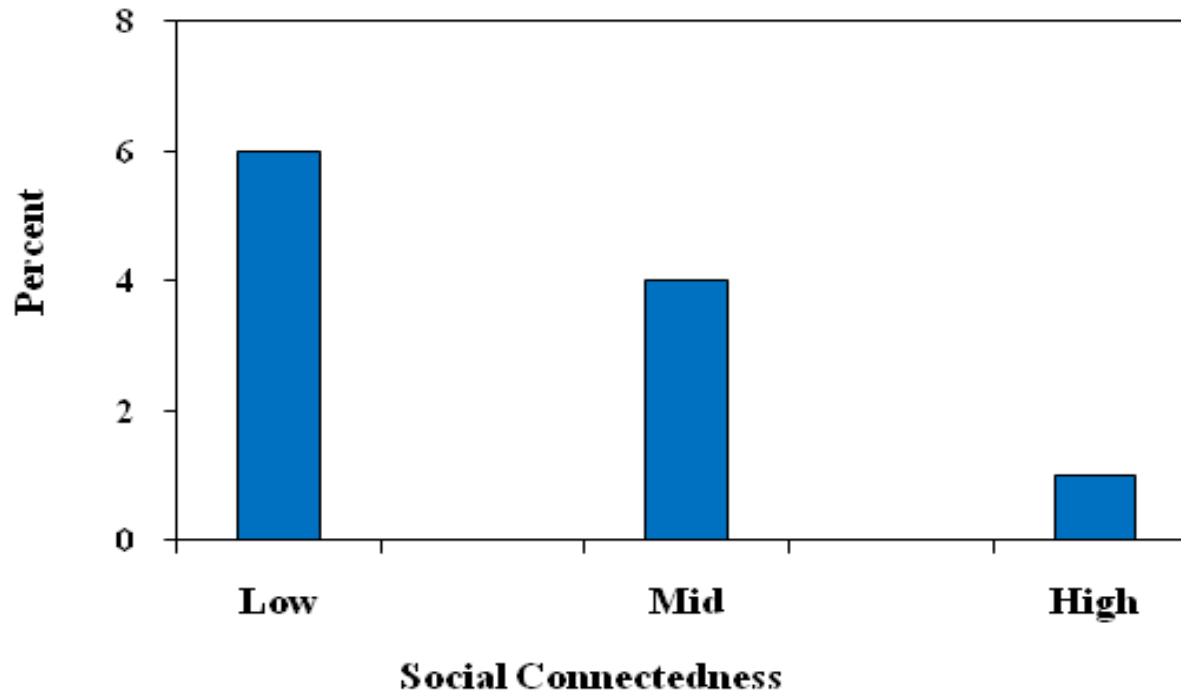
- Worst effects of COVID-19 along familiar fault lines; highlights existing inequity & vulnerability due to gender, age, other factors
- COVID-19 creates & reinforces exclusion & social isolation—priority challenge for adolescent girls



For all girls, social assets are vital

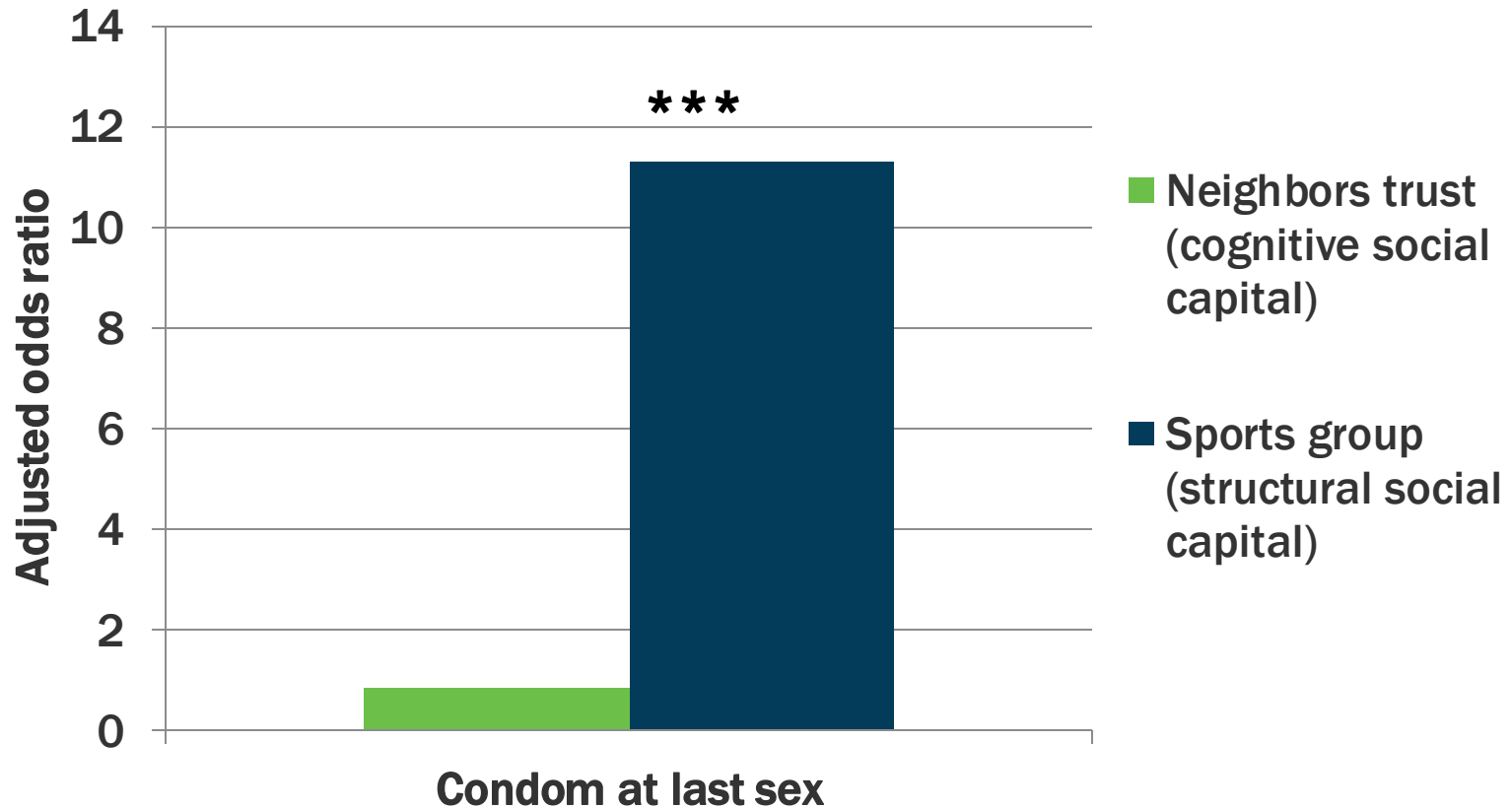
Fewer friends, greater risk: Less social connections, higher risk of forced sex

**Ever been physically forced: 14-16
year-old South African girls**



Social assets promote condom use

Trust in community, group participation, condom use at last sex
14-18 year old girls KwaZulu-Natal. Longitudinal analysis: FE logit



Kelly Hallman. 2011. "Social exclusion: The gendering of adolescent HIV risks in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa," pp. 53-80 in J. Klot and V. Nguyen eds., *The Fourth Wave: An Assault on Women - Gender, Culture and HIV in the 21st Century*. Social Science Research Council and UNESCO. <http://www.ssrc.org/publications/view/the-fourth-wave-violence-gender-culture-hiv-in-the-21st-century/>



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