

Is Poverty or Wealth Driving the HIV Epidemic?

UNAIDS Expert Consultation
on the Prevention of Sexual
Transmission of HIV
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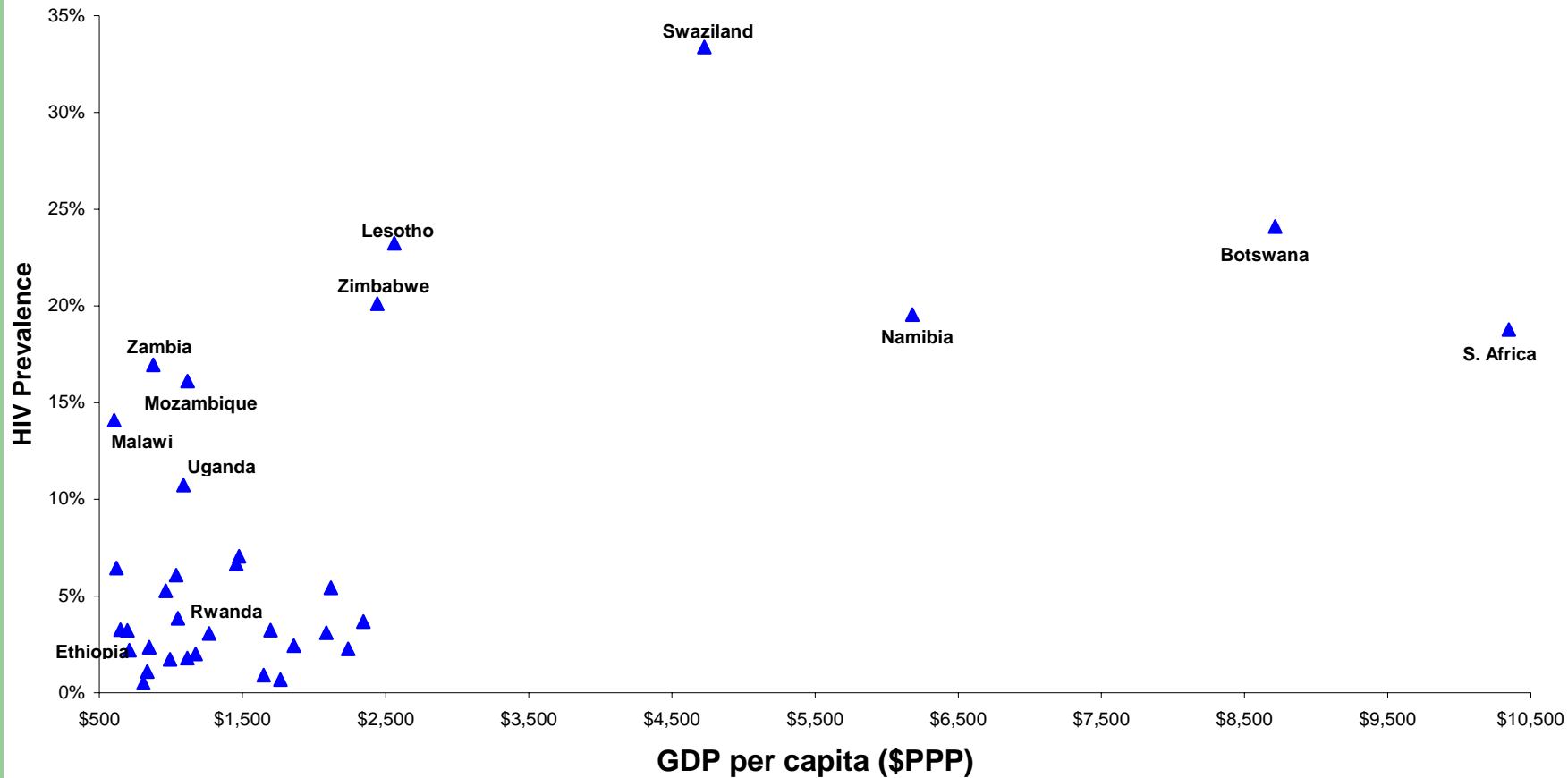
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Conventional wisdom

- “Men, money, mobility” fuelled early epidemics
- Increasingly, epidemics driven by poverty (via riskier livelihoods, migration, transactional sex)

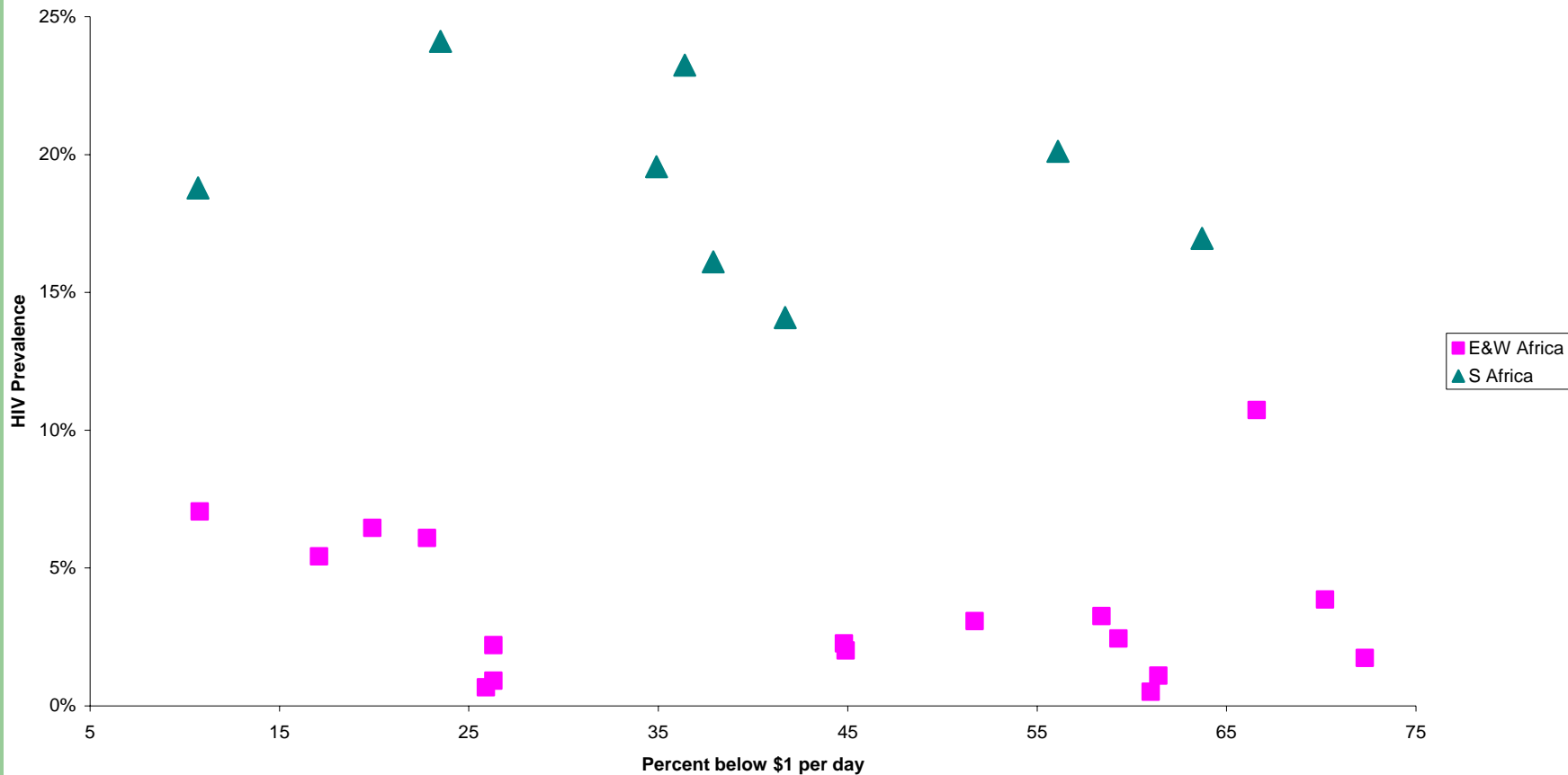
HIV and GDP per capita in Africa



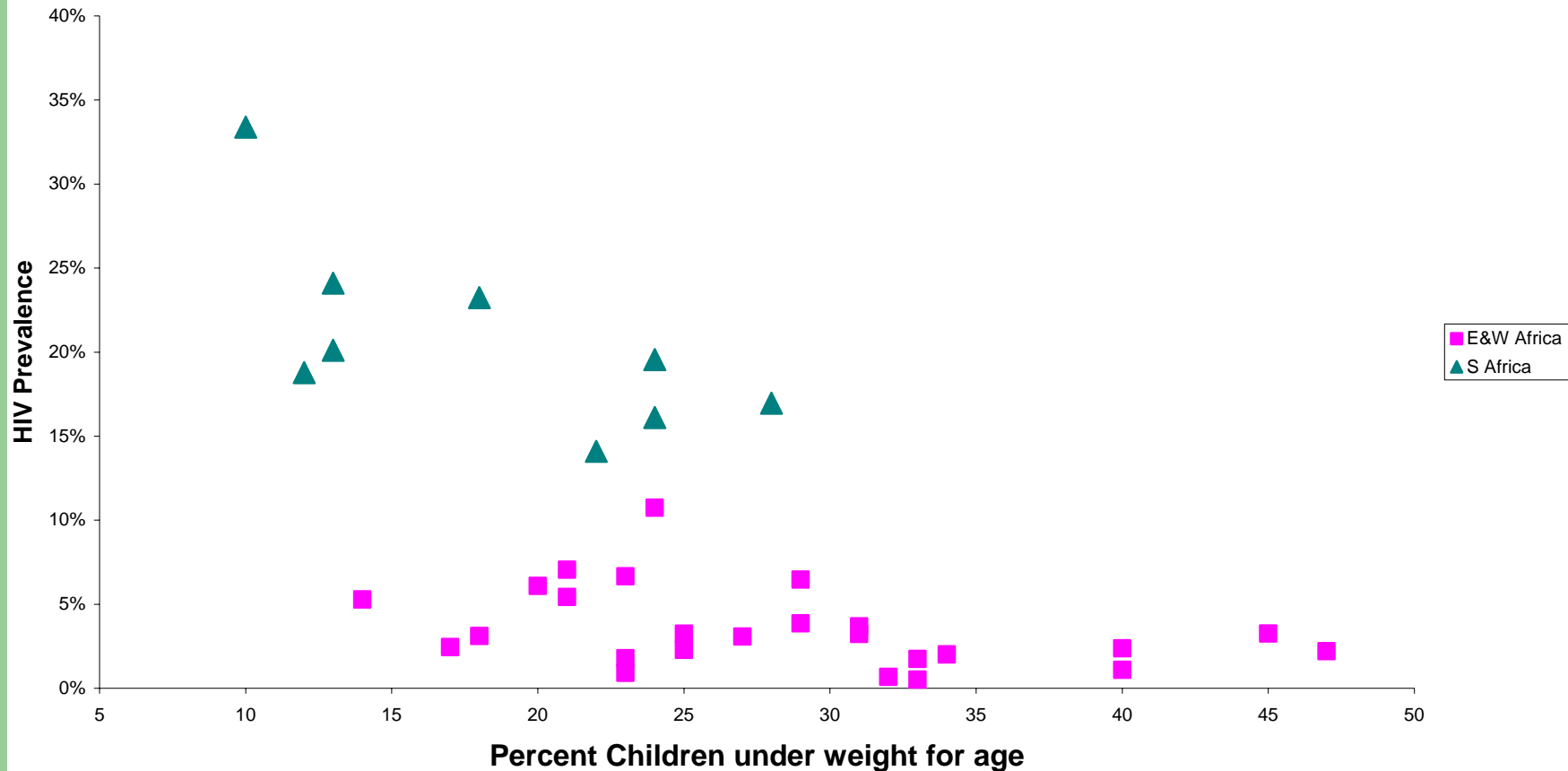
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HIV and Poverty in Africa



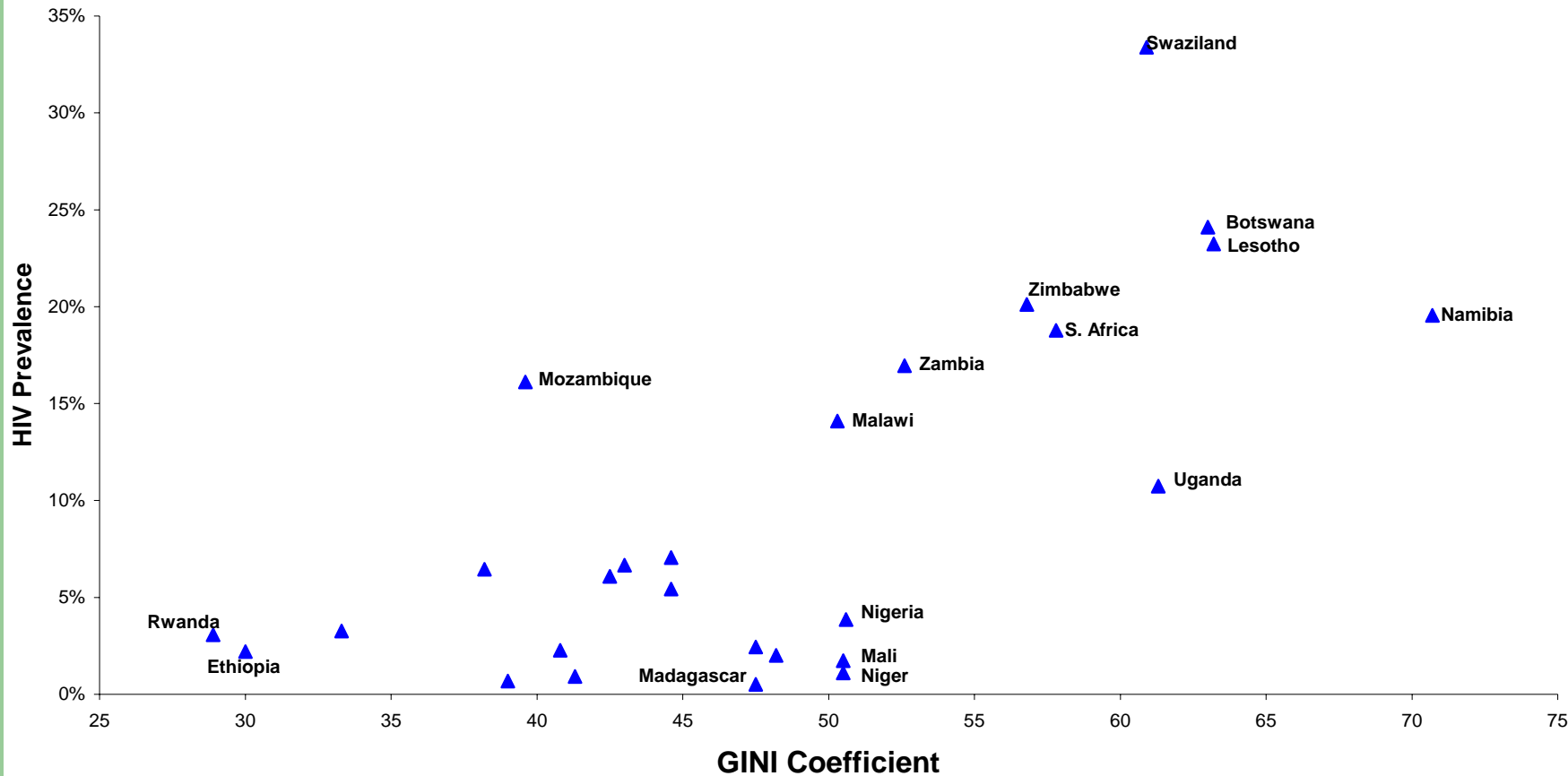
HIV and Child Nutrition in Africa



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HIV and Income Inequality in Africa



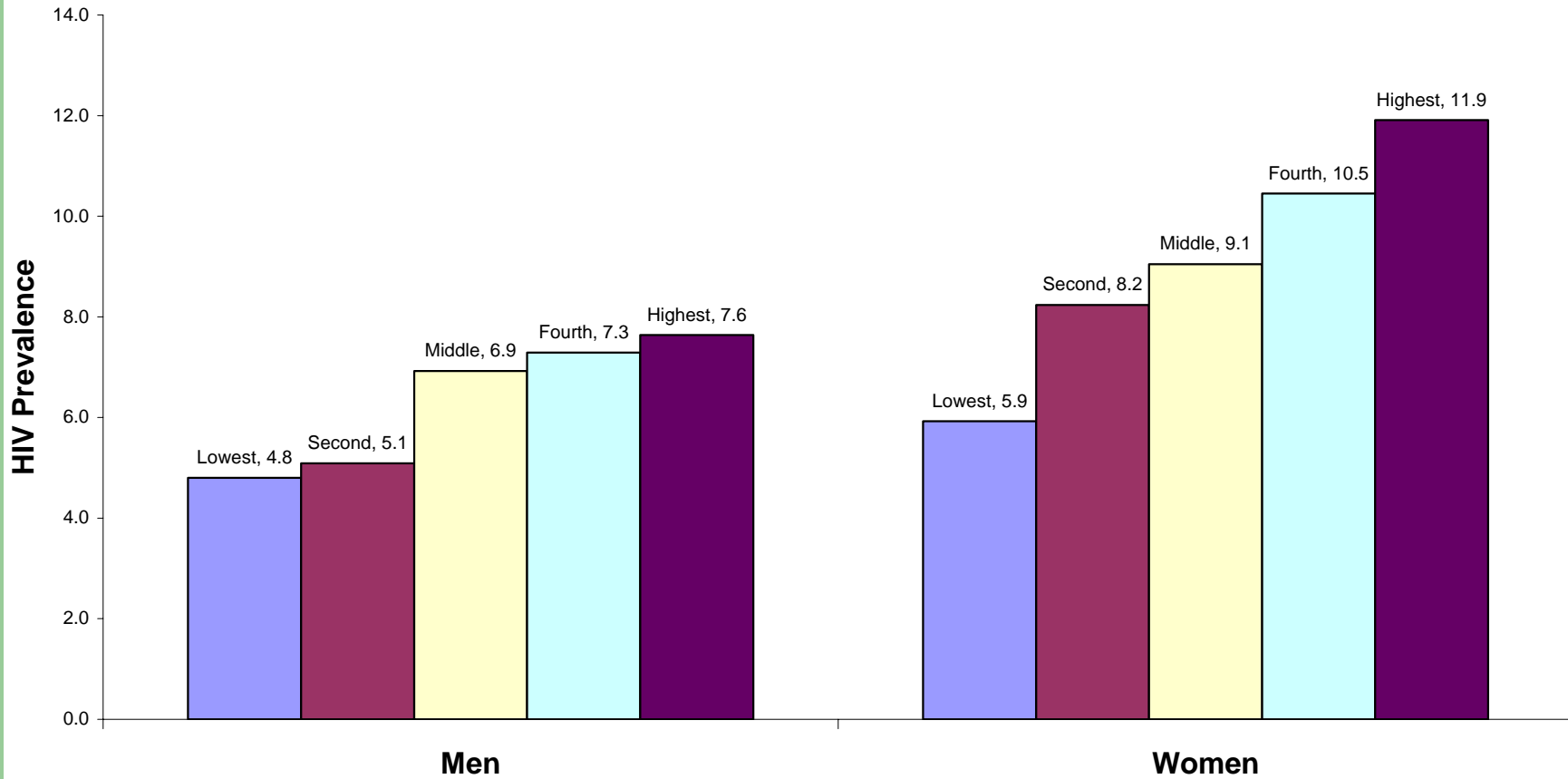
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New evidence

- Detailed multivariate analysis of multi-country DHS datasets (Mishra *et al* 2006) and other single-country cross-sectional studies.
- Longitudinal national panels (Zambia)
- Longitudinal studies of seroconversion (KwaZulu Natal)
- Studies linking other interacting factors (mobility, gender, malnutrition) with risk and vulnerability
- Evidence mainly from Africa

HIV and Wealth Index

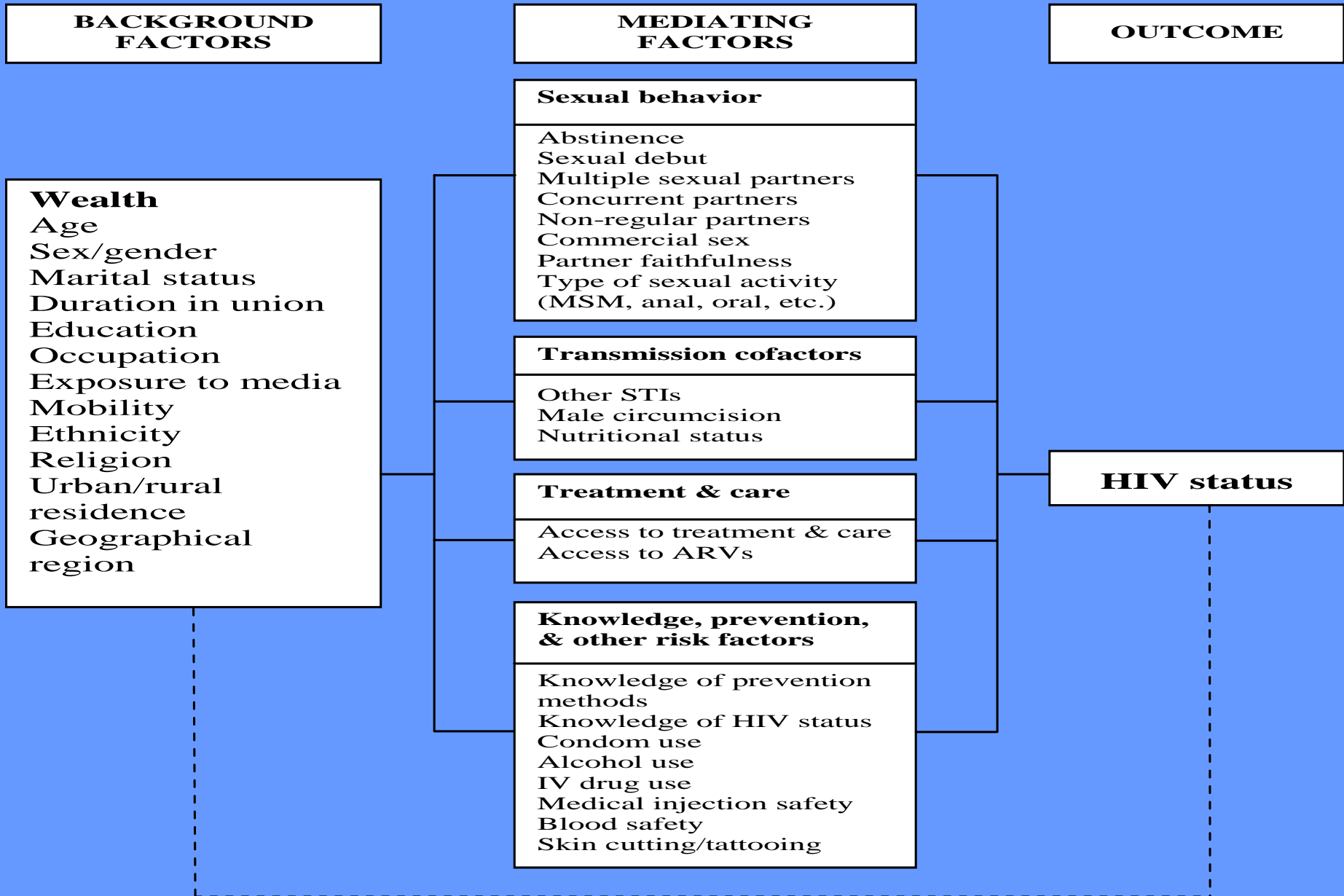


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SOCIAL CONTEXT

Social attitudes & practices, level of economic development, stage of AIDS epidemic, HIV prevalence, availability & access to prevention & treatment methods



Factors predisposing wealthier groups to greater risk

- More money
- Greater mobility
- More leisure time
- Earlier sexual debut
- More lifetime concurrent partners
- More likely to be urban-resident
- Greater alcohol consumption
- Better nourished
- Better access to health care and ARV drugs



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Factors predisposing wealthier groups to less risk

- Better communications
- Better education
- Better access to health care
- Better nourished
- Men more likely to be circumcised



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Conclusions

- Poverty is not the predominant driver of transmission in most contexts (in Africa)
- Wealthier groups appear to be most at risk, in most contexts
- Pathways and interactions are complex
- Extremely poor women may also be particularly vulnerable to HIV

Caveats and qualifications

- We are examining *relative*, not absolute wealth
- The way “poverty” is defined, and by whom, is important
- Patterns are not uniform across countries
- The relationship is dynamic and may change over time
- Social capital, social cohesion and community-level structural factors are under-researched but potentially very important
- More research is needed from outside Africa
- The relationship between poverty and the post-infection impacts of HIV and AIDS is likely to be quite different (not addressed in this paper)