



COVID-19 and the heightened Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) among South African adolescent mothers



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Poster Number P2-M4

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BACKGROUND

Both HIV and IPV pose significant threats to the wellbeing of adolescent girls (15-24 years)

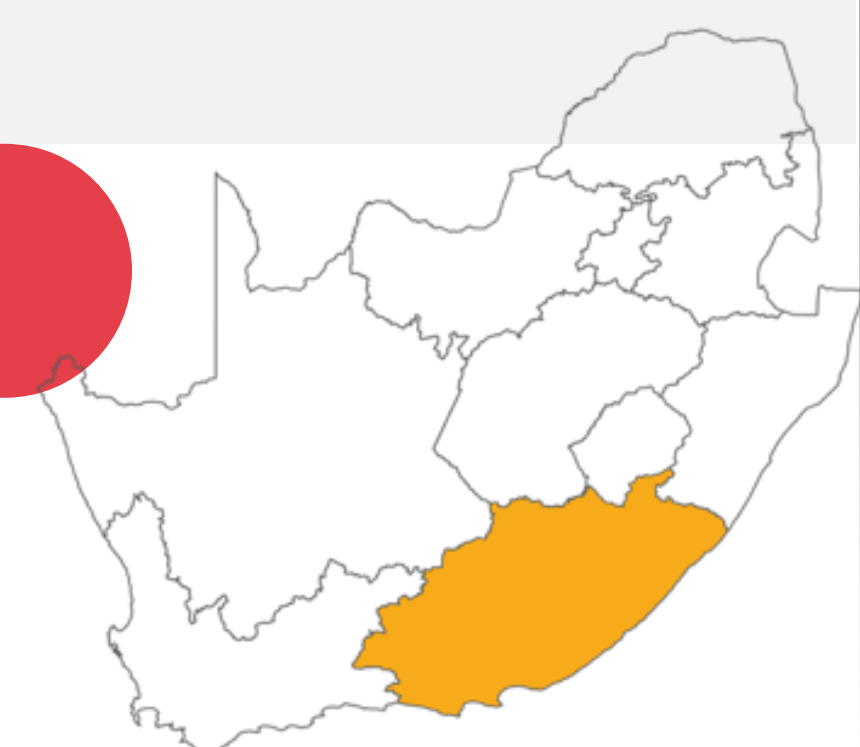
The risk of HIV acquisition is highest among those aged 15-24

- A disproportioned 26% of new HIV infections occurring among adolescent girls
- ESA is home to approximately 61% of the global population of adolescents living with HIV

The past-year estimates of IPV (16%) are highest for those aged 15-24

- IPV is a risk factor for HIV acquisition and poor HIV-related health outcomes
- The substantial economic and social impact of COVID-19 is associated with increased levels of domestic violence

METHODS



Data from 834 South African adolescent mothers, 35% living with HIV (LHIV)

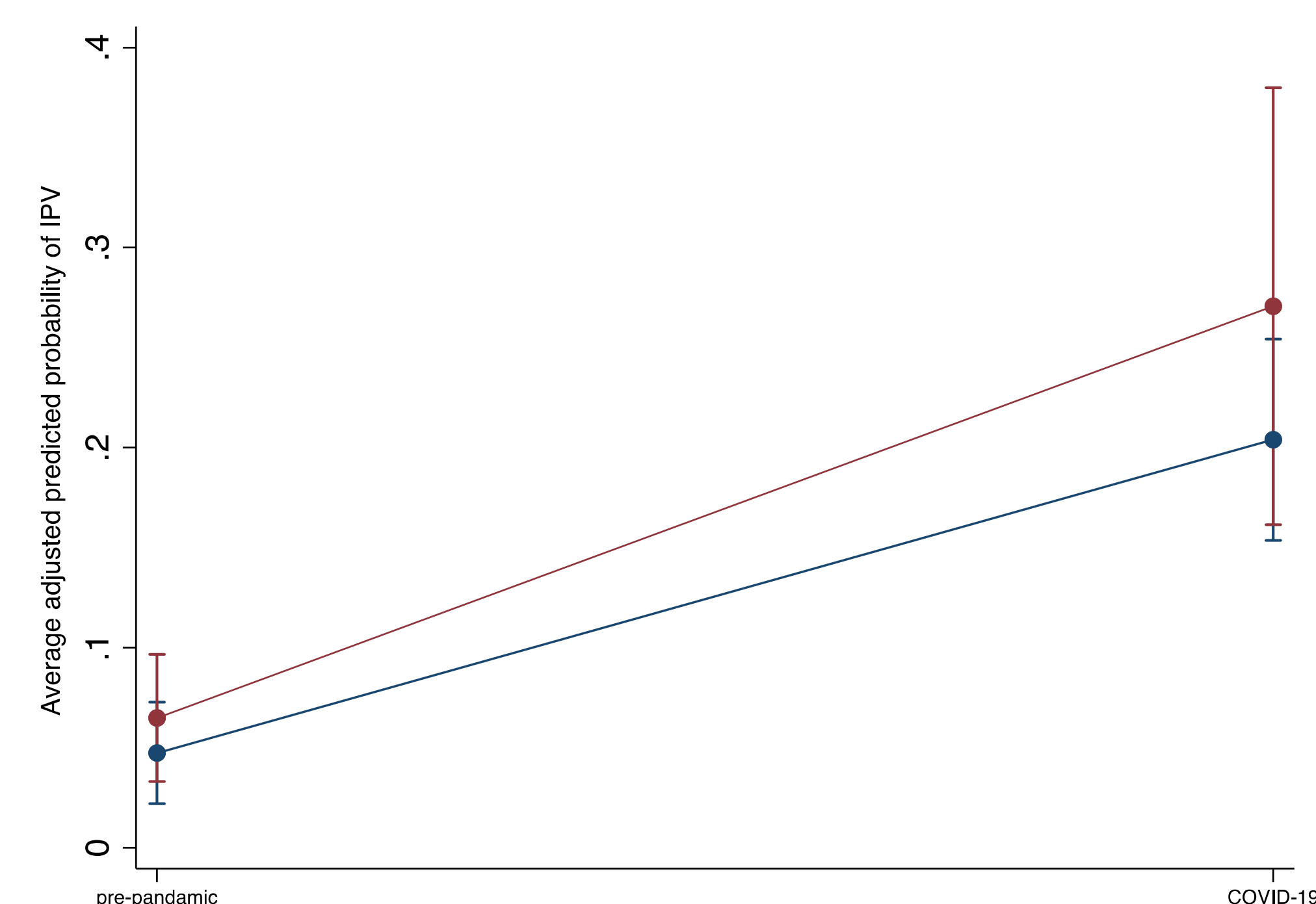
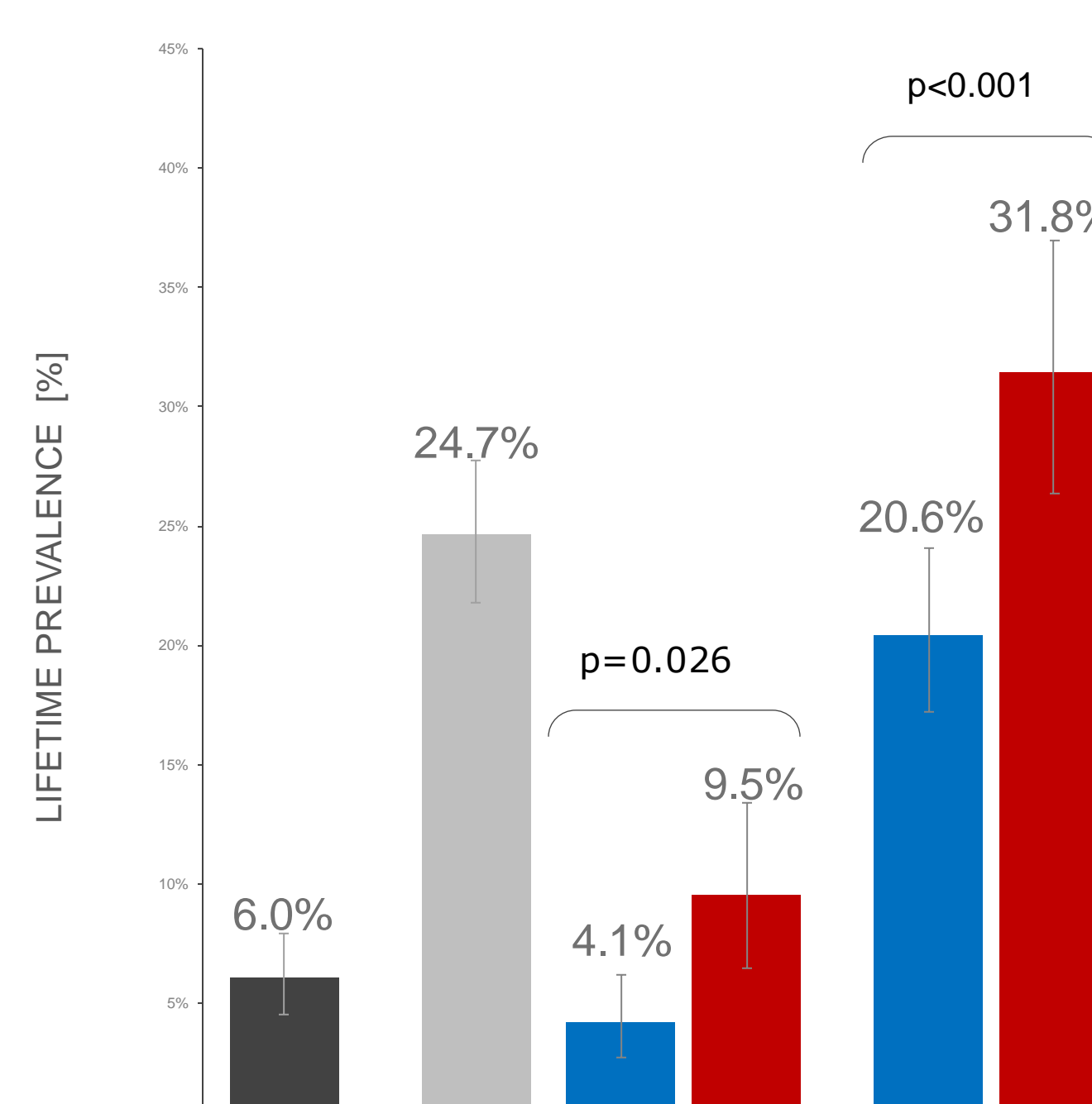
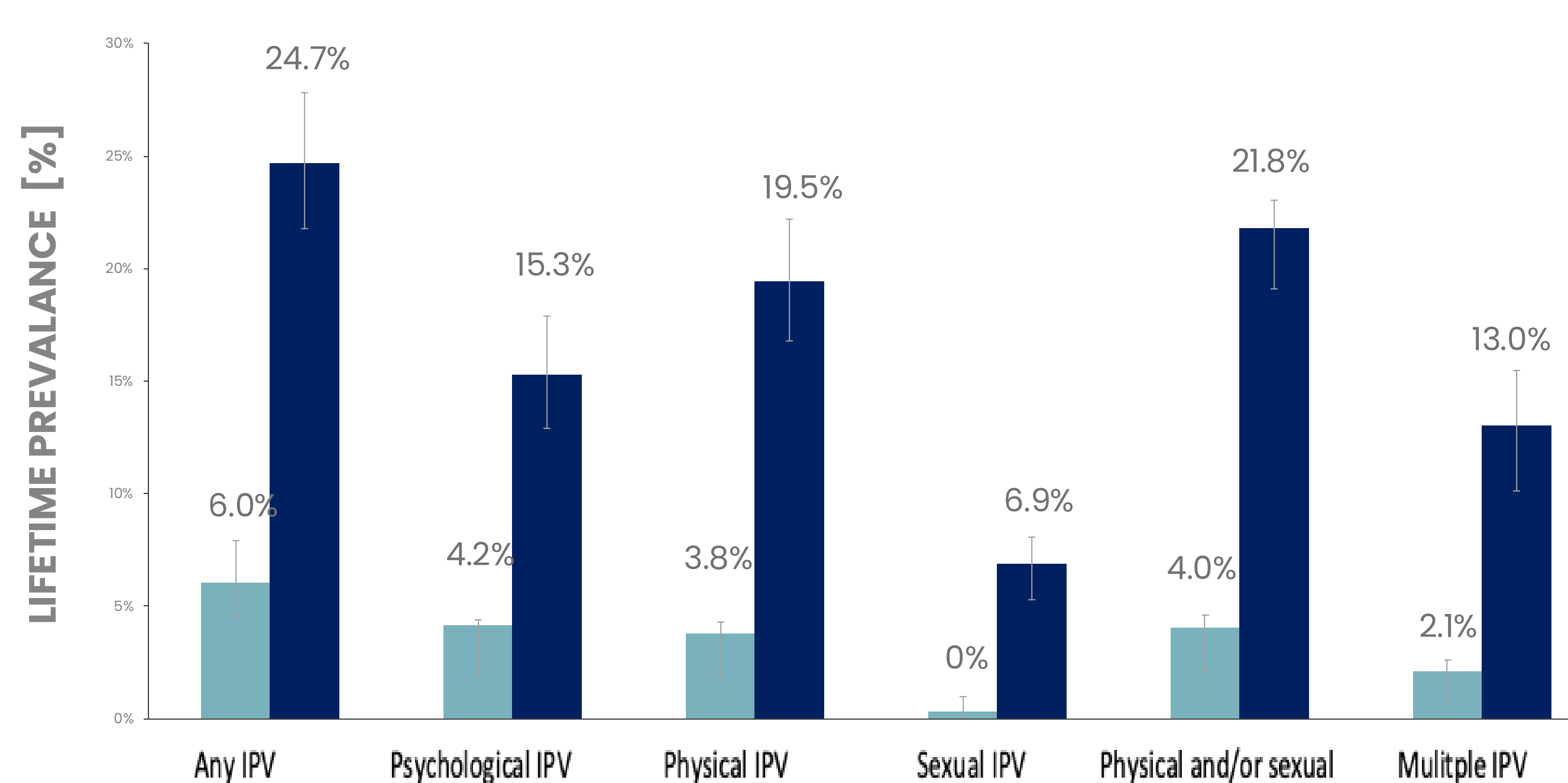
Pre-pandemic interviews 2018-2019 were in-person and COVID-19 interviews were telephonic in 2021-2022

Analysis:

1. Compare the proportion of adolescent mothers who have ever experienced IPV, pre and during COVID-19
2. Compare if changes in IPV levels during COVID-19 differ by HIV status.
3. Investigate if there was an increase in IPV associated with COVID-19

We estimated the lifetime prevalence of IPV, disaggregating by HIV status. We used inverse weighted probability multivariate mixed-effects logistic regression to examine changes in IPV between the two periods and if changes in IPV differed by HIV status.

RESULTS



Increases in IPV during COVID-19 were driven by surges in physical IPV (+15.7%) and psychological (+11.2%) IPV. While few reported sexual IPV pre-pandemic, this increased to 6.9% (95%CI=5.2-8.8) during COVID-19.

In both periods, adolescent mothers LHIV experienced significantly higher levels of IPV compared to those without HIV

Differences at both periods were primarily driven by adolescent mothers LHIV being more likely to have ever-experienced psychological IPV than their HIV-negative peers (p-value<0.001).

CONCLUSIONS

The study provides compelling evidence that adolescent mothers, particularly those living with HIV, are at significant risk of IPV, which heightened during COVID-19. Ensuring continued implementation and access to violence prevention interventions within HIV care, even especially during crises, holds significant importance in ensuring the wellbeing of this underexamined population.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all the participants who shared their stories with us.