

WOMEN'S AUTONOMY, CONTRACEPTIVE USE, AND SEXUAL ACTIVITY IN SUB- SAHARAN AFRICA: A MULTI-COUNTRY ANALYSIS

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Background

- **Contraceptive prevalence rate** in Sub-Saharan Africa remains low but varies substantially by country
- Research on **women's empowerment** and reproductive health outcomes have shown mixed results
- **Coital frequency** is often overlooked in studies on contraception and women's empowerment
 - ▣ Arranged vs. romantic marriages
 - ▣ Relationship quality, pleasure and sexual intercourse

Research Questions

- Is contraceptive use associated with the timing of most recent sexual intercourse?
- Is women's empowerment associated with the timing of recent sexual intercourse?

MALI



UGANDA



GHANA



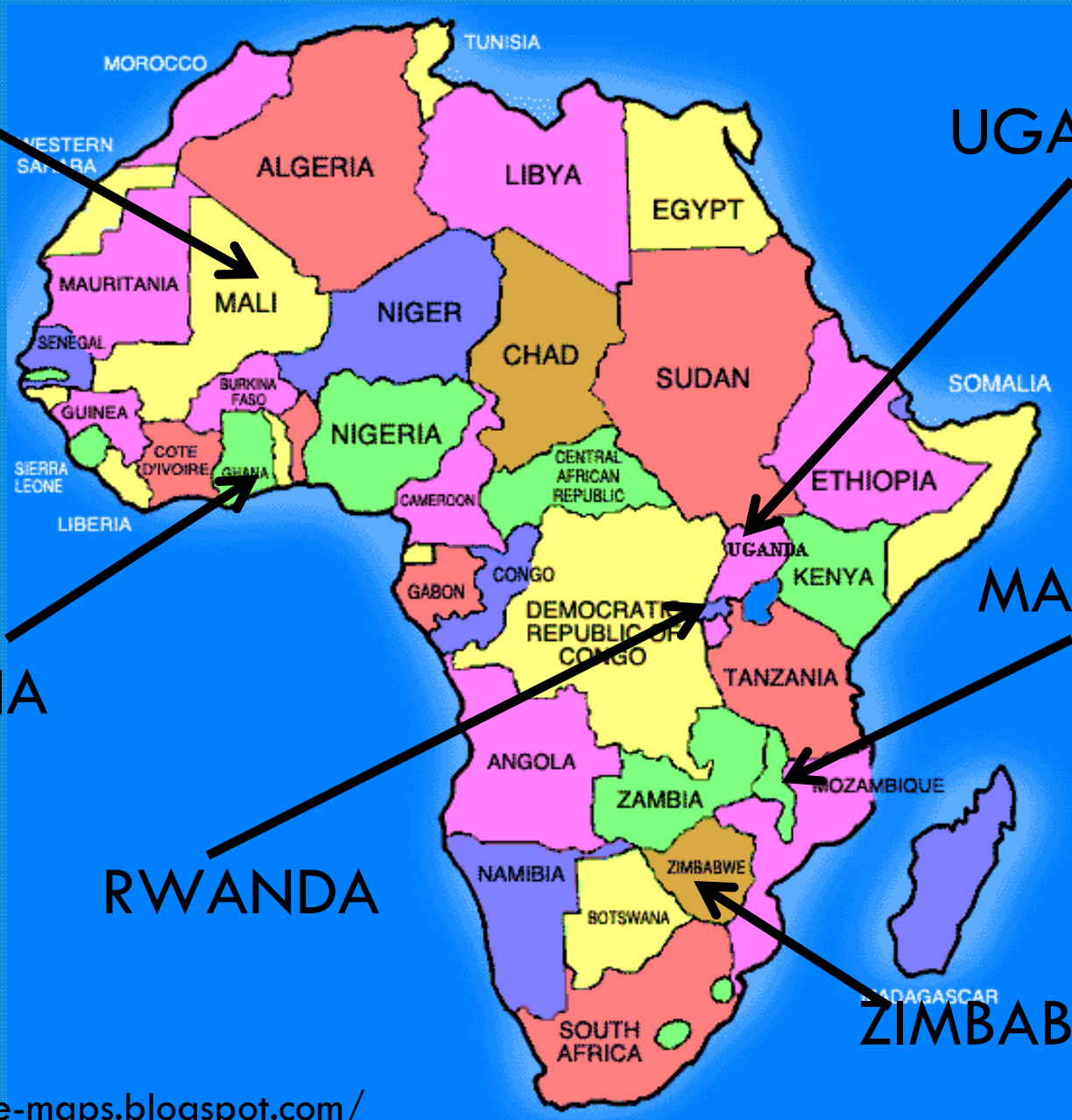
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ZIMBABWE



Demographic and Health Survey Data and Sample Size

Country	Dates of Fieldwork	Sample Size
Ghana	Sept 2008 – Nov 2008	1938
Malawi	Nov 2004 – Jan 2005	5532
Mali	May 2006 - Dec 2006	5317
Rwanda	Feb 2005 - July 2005	3927
Uganda	April 2006 - Oct 2006	2812
Zimbabwe	Aug 2005 - Feb 2006	3594

- Exclusions: single, divorced, widowed, polygynous union, and pregnant at the time of the survey

Key Variables Used in Analyses:

- Outcome Variable: Timing of recent sexual intercourse with spouse/partner
 - ▣ Survey question: When was the last time you had sexual intercourse with X partner?
 - ▣ Continuous variable by week
- Key Independent Variables:
 - ▣ Current contraceptive use (none, traditional and modern)
 - ▣ Household Decision-Making (wife, husband and joint in health care, large purchases, daily purchases and visits to family and friends)

Statistical Analysis

- Outcome of interest: Time to most recent sex (by week)
 - ▣ Time-to-event analysis (Cox Proportional Hazard Models)
 - Unadjusted analysis
 - Adjusted analysis with block modeling
 - Full model: contraceptive use, household decision-making, urban/rural residence, respondent's education, partner's education, respondent's age, age difference, wealth, husband's residence, marital duration, parity, and fertility preference

Results: Respondent Characteristics

Mean values and percent distributions of respondents

	Ghana	Malawi	Mali	Rwanda	Uganda	Zim
Sex: past 4 wks (%)	61	75	80	88	81	80
Time to sex (Mean Weeks)	15	8	7	12	6	5
Contraceptive Use (%)						
Traditional Use	9	5	1	9	7	2
Modern Use	20	35	8	13	22	68
Decision-Making Score 0-4 (mean)						
Wife Only	1.1	0.6	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.8
Husband Only	1.0	2.6	2.9	1.4	1.5	0.4
Joint	1.9	0.8	0.4	1.7	1.7	2.8
Sample Size	1938	5532	5317	3927	2812	3594

Results: Contraceptive Use and Recent Sex

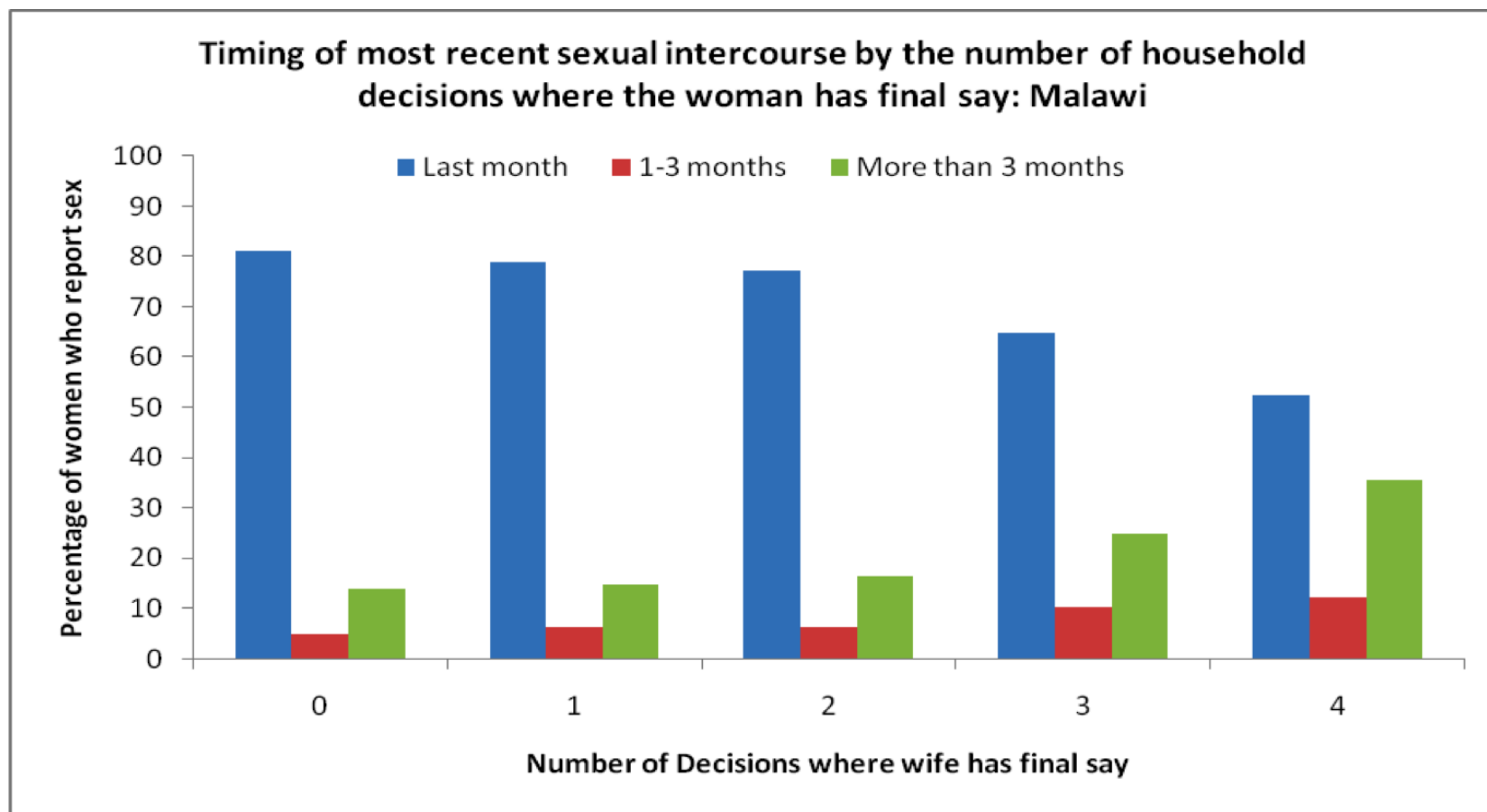
Adjusted hazard ratios of time to most recent sex in weeks by contraceptive use¹

Contraceptive Use (Ref = No Use)	Ghana	Malawi	Mali	Rwanda	Uganda	Zim.
Traditional Use	1.66***	1.35***	1.08	0.99	1.29***	1.52***
Modern Use	1.71***	1.49***	1.20***	1.13***	1.35***	1.45***

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

¹Adjusted for urban/rural residence, respondent's education, partner's education, respondent's age, age difference, wealth, husband's residence, marital duration, parity, fertility preference, and household decision-making

Results: Women's Autonomy and Recent Sex



Summary of Results

- Contraceptive use is highly correlated with the timing of most recent sexual intercourse with current users reporting more recent sexual activity.
- High degree of association between women's autonomy and recent sexual intercourse
- No consistent pattern was found between the socio-demographic variables and recent sexual activity across countries.

Limitations

- Cross-sectional data that limits our ability to determine the timing of events
- Limited to the questions asked in the demographic and health surveys (example: recent sex vs. sexual frequency)
- Only six countries were included, however, the countries represent different regions of Sub-Saharan Africa
- Results are not generalizable to unmarried women or women in polygynous unions

Implications

- Despite limitations, this is one of the first studies to utilize the DHS data on timing of most recent sex.
- Understanding why more autonomous women delay sex may speak to the nature of sexual relationships. Further data are needed on the quality of relationships in sub-Saharan Africa
- With contraceptive users (especially modern method users) reporting more recent sexual activity, these data may provide another avenue for promoting contraceptive use.



THANK YOU!