

Examining Perceptions of Virtual Conference Participation in the Time of COVID-19

Highlights from the 12th International Women's and Children's Health and Gender (InWomen's) Virtual Conference 2020

2020 Internship Showcase

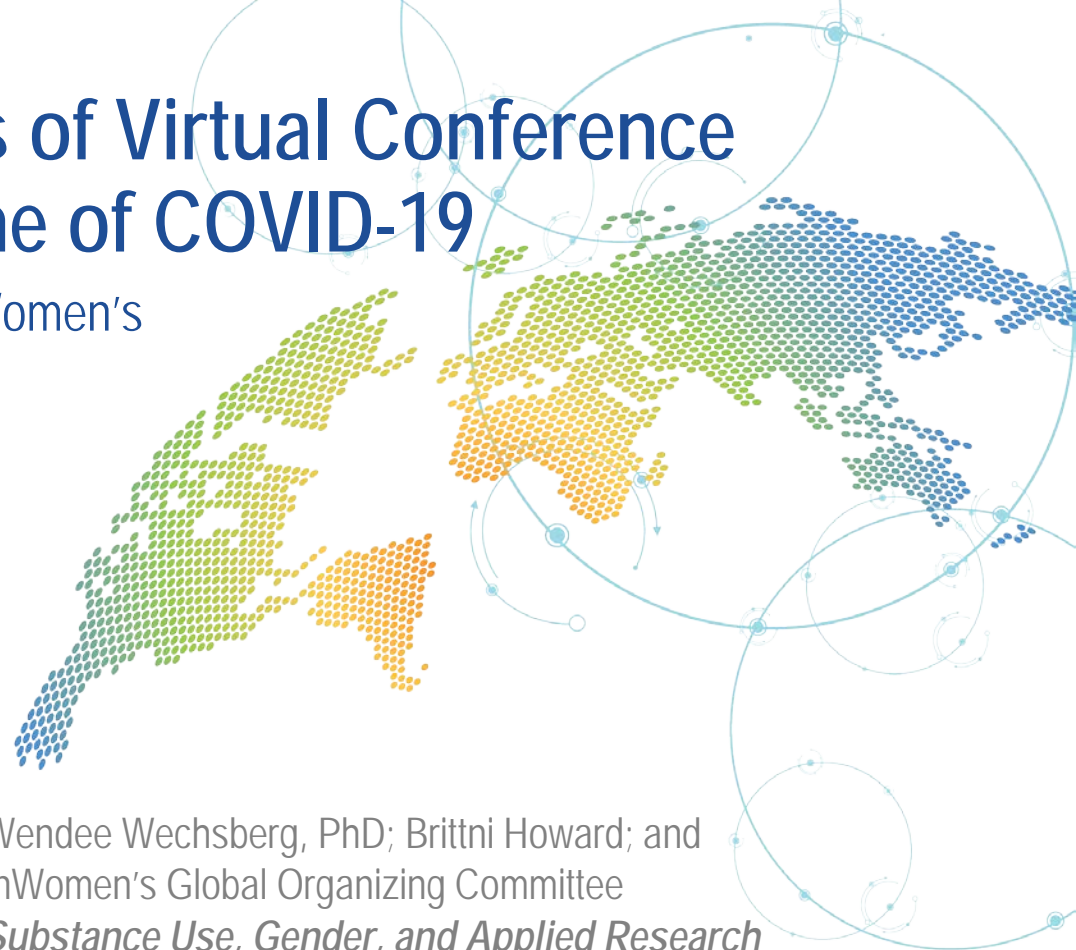
Nosipho Shangase, MSPH

UNC-Chapel Hill

internships@rti.org



Wendee Wechsberg, PhD; Brittini Howard; and
InWomen's Global Organizing Committee
Substance Use, Gender, and Applied Research





What Is InWomen's?



12th InWomen's Conference was held on June 19, 2020.
10:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m. EDT

- International Women's and Children's Health and Gender (InWomen's) Group
- Multidisciplinary forum addressing aspects of substance use among women, children, and youth
- Shares new and significant findings
- Identifies and promotes innovative research
- Promotes the benefits of prevention, intervention, and treatment

Approach

Aim

- Evaluate participants' perceptions of and satisfaction with virtual conferences

Methods

- Online questionnaire (JotForm)
- 29% of conference attendees completed
- 313 registered attendees; 241 attended from 28 countries

The world is waking to injustice, today marks Freedom Day from Slavery in the US. But slavery continues globally we must still work on Justice & Inequality. As healers & problem solvers. How are we doing?

Engaging African American Women in HIV/STI Testing in Usual-Care Settings in North Carolina

Erin N. Cox, BS,¹ Felicia A. Browne, ScD, MPH,^{2,3} Brittni N. Howard, BA,¹ Jackie W. Ndirangu, MSc-GH,¹ & Wendee M. Wechsberg, PhD,^{2,3,4}

¹RTI International, Research Triangle Park, NC, USA; ²UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health, Chapel Hill, NC, USA; ³Duke University School of Medicine, Durham, NC, USA; ⁴North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, USA

Background

- In North Carolina, young African American women have higher rates of HIV/STIs compared to whites from other race/ethnicities.
- Social determinants, such as SES, racism, and disparities in insurance coverage, hinder engagement with HIV/STI services. Addressing these barriers in usual-care settings can be difficult despite the technological need.

Methods

- A randomized trial in three counties enrolled 102 African American women ages 18-29 who reported recent HIV-risk behavior and had not recently tested for HIV-1.

Findings

The accommodations of their HIV/STI testing hours was cited in 118 study forms (36% of the study appointments).

Type of Deviation	County #1	County #2	County #3	TOTAL
Rescheduling deviations	45	50	5	100 (67%)
Testing deviations	32	0	2	34 (23%)
TOTAL	77	50	7	223

Figure 2. Timing of Testing Deviations during Study Appointments (n=118)

Timing	Percentage
Early/Before	41%
During	36%
After/After	18%
Other	5%

Discussion

- Most observations noted the accommodations due to test site.
- With implementation, there is a potential barrier to accessing and with effort to reach this population.
- These results may have implications for other HIV/STI testing populations who use usual care.

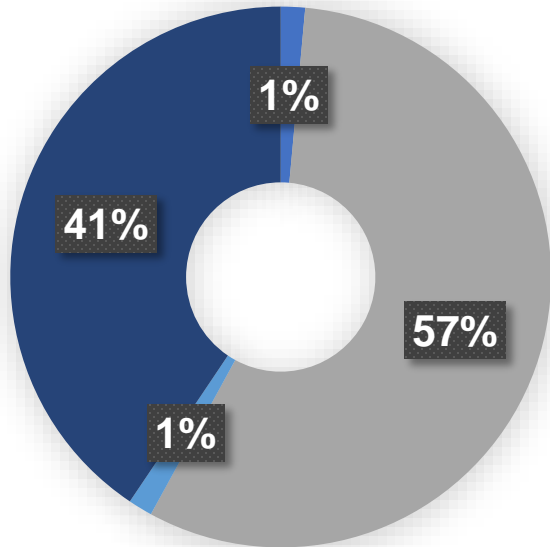
References

1. North Carolina's HIV/STI Health Disparities Report: A Call to Action. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of HIV, STD, and TB Control, 2018.
2. Browne, F. A., Wechsberg, M. E., & Ndirangu, J. W. (2018). HIV and STI Risk Reduction in Usual-Care Settings for African American Women: A Randomized Trial. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 320(12), 1200-1208.

Findings

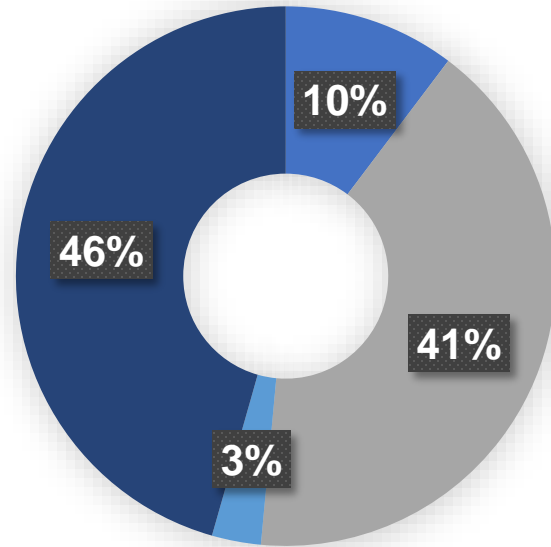
N = 69

Overall Experience



■ Average ■ Excellent
■ Fair ■ Very good

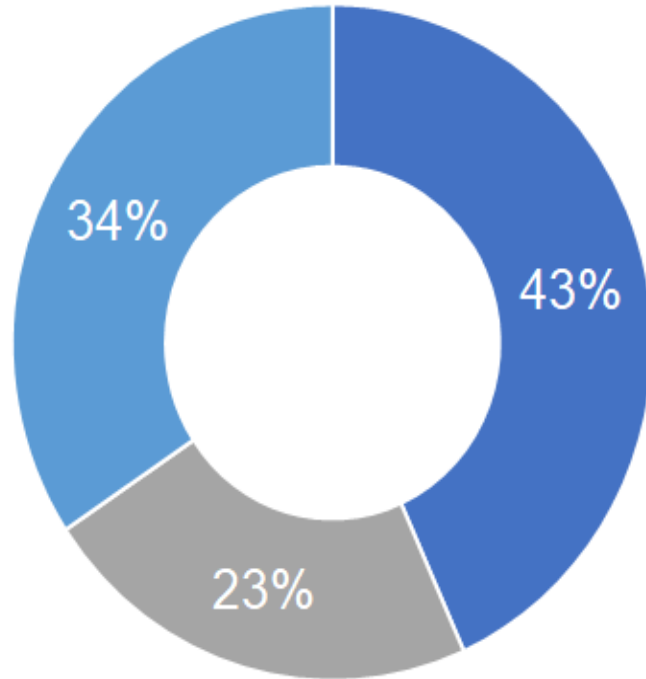
Virtual Conference System



■ Average ■ Excellent
■ Fair ■ Very good

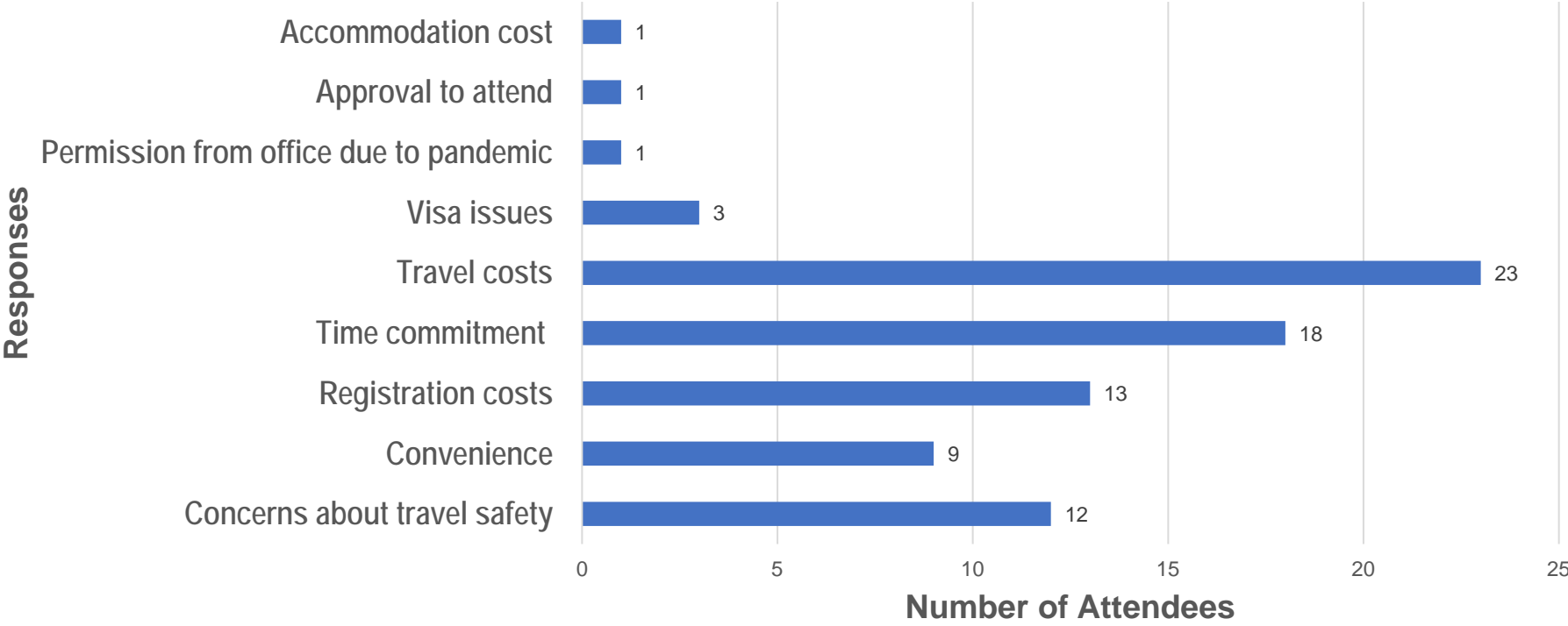


Next InWomen's Conference Attendance Preference



- I would plan to attend in person
- I would plan to attend virtually
- Not sure at this time

Reasons for Preferring Virtual Conferencing



Theme

Reasons for Attending an In-Person Conference

Networking Opportunity

- "It helps to put a better face to social and professional networking."
- "Certain connections and conversations can't be reproduced authentically online."

Traveling and Cultural Experience

- "The experience I get visiting other countries and cultures in person is unique."
- "Traveling is fun and also part of experience...."

Time Zone

- "The time zone difference is very challenging with virtual conferences. If not based in the U.S., you end up missing a lot."

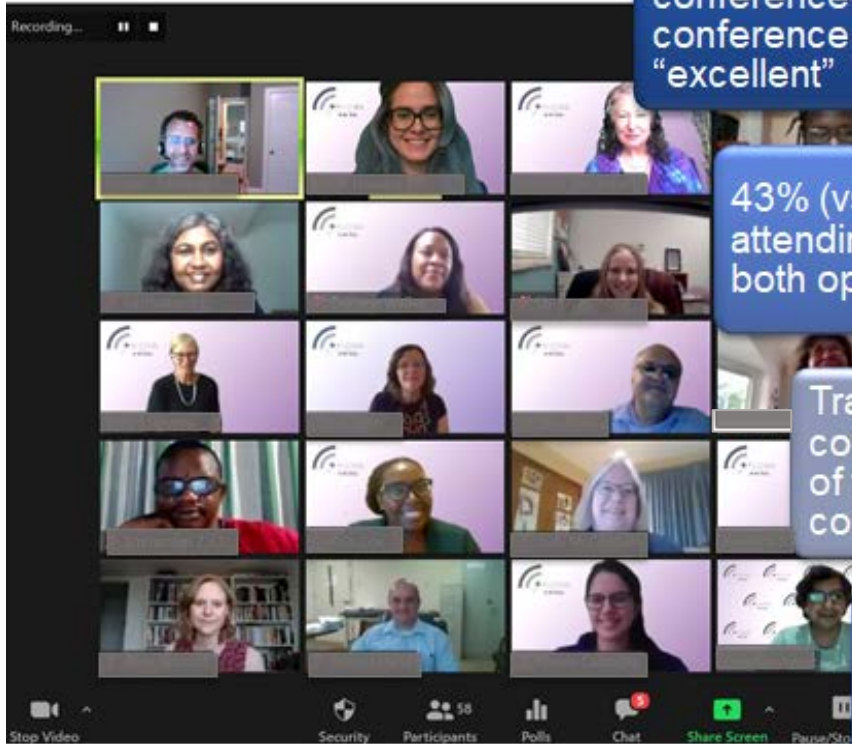
Discussion

Most participants rated the overall conference experience and virtual conference system as “very good” to “excellent”

43% (vs. 23%) of the participant prefer attending next conference in-person if both options are offered

Travel and registration costs, time commitment and travel safety were some of the reasons for favoring virtual conferencing

Reasons for favoring in-person conference included: 1) better networking opportunity, 2) traveling & cultural experience, and 3) being on the same time zone





Limitations

- Virtual conferences present challenges because of
 1. Time zone differences (attendees from 38 countries)
 2. Technical problems (e.g., poor Internet connection)
- Consequently, we had partial attendance throughout the conference (e.g., there were around 75 attendees by the end of the conference).
- Additionally, evaluations were online and occurred over a limited time period (2 weeks).
- We only received a 29% response rate, which limits generalizing. However, findings did report mostly positive outcomes for this first-time virtual conference for InWomen's.



Acknowledgments



Join the InWomen's group on LinkedIn!

- RTI International/RTI's Global Gender Center, NIDA/NIH, the University of Arizona's Southwest Institute for Research on Women, and other personal donors
- InWomen's Organizing Committee and Dr. Wechsberg, InWomen's Chair



Supported by the
National Institutes of Health and the
National Institute on Drug Abuse



Image Sources

- **All images used in this presentation are from the 12th InWomen's Group Virtual Conference. Permissions to use these photos following the conference were obtained from all attendees.**



Thank you

Contact: Nosipho Shangase | email: internships@rti.org