

Socioeconomic Background and Contraception: Is there a Connection for Students at the University of Botswana?



Elise M. Beckman
 Associated Colleges of the Midwest (ACM); University of Botswana
 Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, Illinois



Introduction

With an estimated 34 million people worldwide living with HIV, individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 are said to be at the highest risk of being infected (HIV and AIDS in Botswana, 2011; E.P. Mukamaambo, 2012). This project is aimed at studying the relationship between socioeconomic background and students' perceptions of contraception on campus at the University of Botswana, as students are considered to be the most sexually active population. Previous research has indicated that wealth plays a role in the knowledge and perception of the use of contraception; students from lower income households have been found to engage in riskier sexual behaviors (Seloilwe, E.S., 2005). By using data from current UB students, this research supplements prior research and provides practical implications for lowering the prevalence of HIV amongst the student population while operating under the hypothesis that socioeconomic background does impact students' perceptions of contraception and HIV.

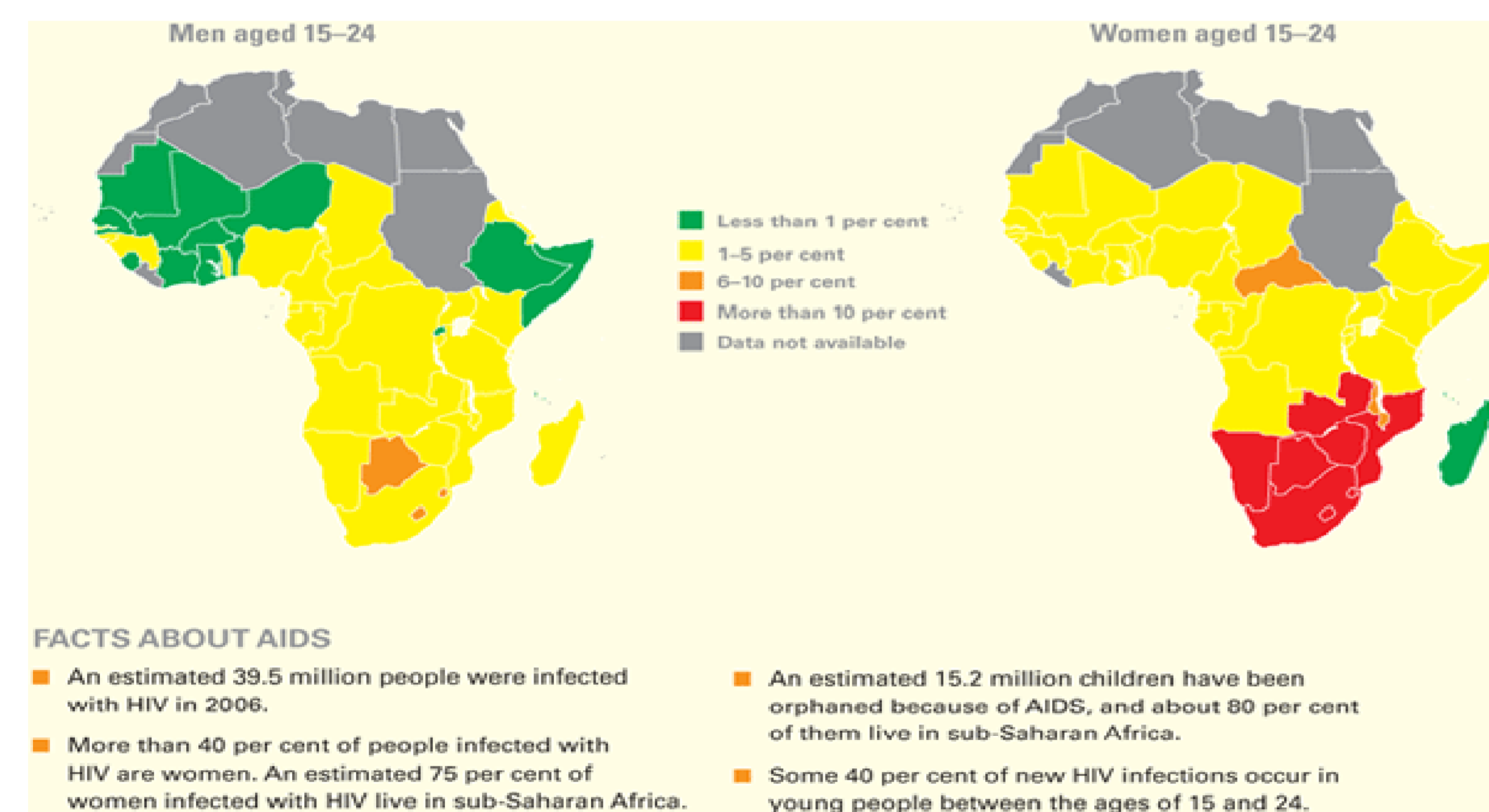


Figure 1: Prevalence of Youths Living with HIV in Africa

Methods

An anonymous survey was used to collect data from students at locations across campus; surveys were administered anonymously to protect the identities and privacy of the respondents. 72 surveys were collected and analyzed. Of the respondents, 61% were female and 36% were male; 3% of respondents declined to provide their gender. The mean age of respondents was 22.5 years with the youngest respondent at 17 and the oldest at 45. Respondents represent a wide range of ethnicities, including but not limited to, Bakalanga, Bakgalagadi, Balete and Bakwena. 34% of respondents are unaware of their family income statistics while 10% identified as coming from high income families, 42% from middle-income families and 14% from low-income families.

Family Income Distribution

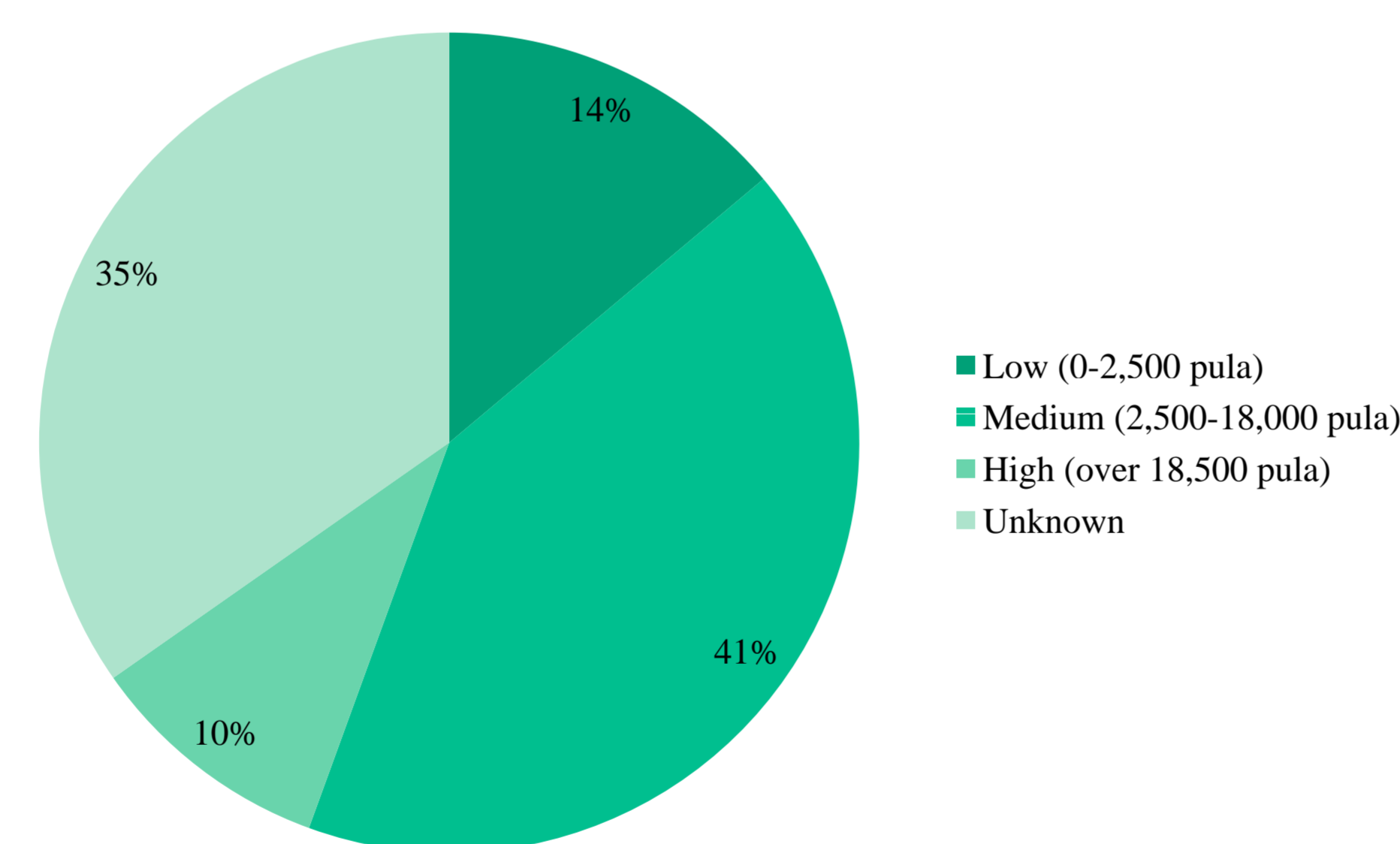


Figure 2: Family Income Distribution amongst Respondents

Results

The following three relationships were examined: the age at which a respondent first learned about contraception and his/her perception of the use of contraception on campus, the relationship between level of family income and perception of use of contraception on campus, and the relationship between number of cattle owned and perception of HIV within Botswana. For the purpose of this presentation, the primary relationship being evaluated is that between the level of family income and the respondents' perceptions of contraceptive use on campus; the results indicate that a higher percentage of wealthier students feel as though students do not use contraception as often as they should. As Figure 3 illustrates, respondents whose families have a lower level of income are less likely to answer "no" when asked whether or not students on campus use contraception as often as they should. Respondents who are unaware of their families' incomes fall between the low range and medium range income respondents when considering the use of contraception on campus.

Level of Family Income and Perception of Contraception Use

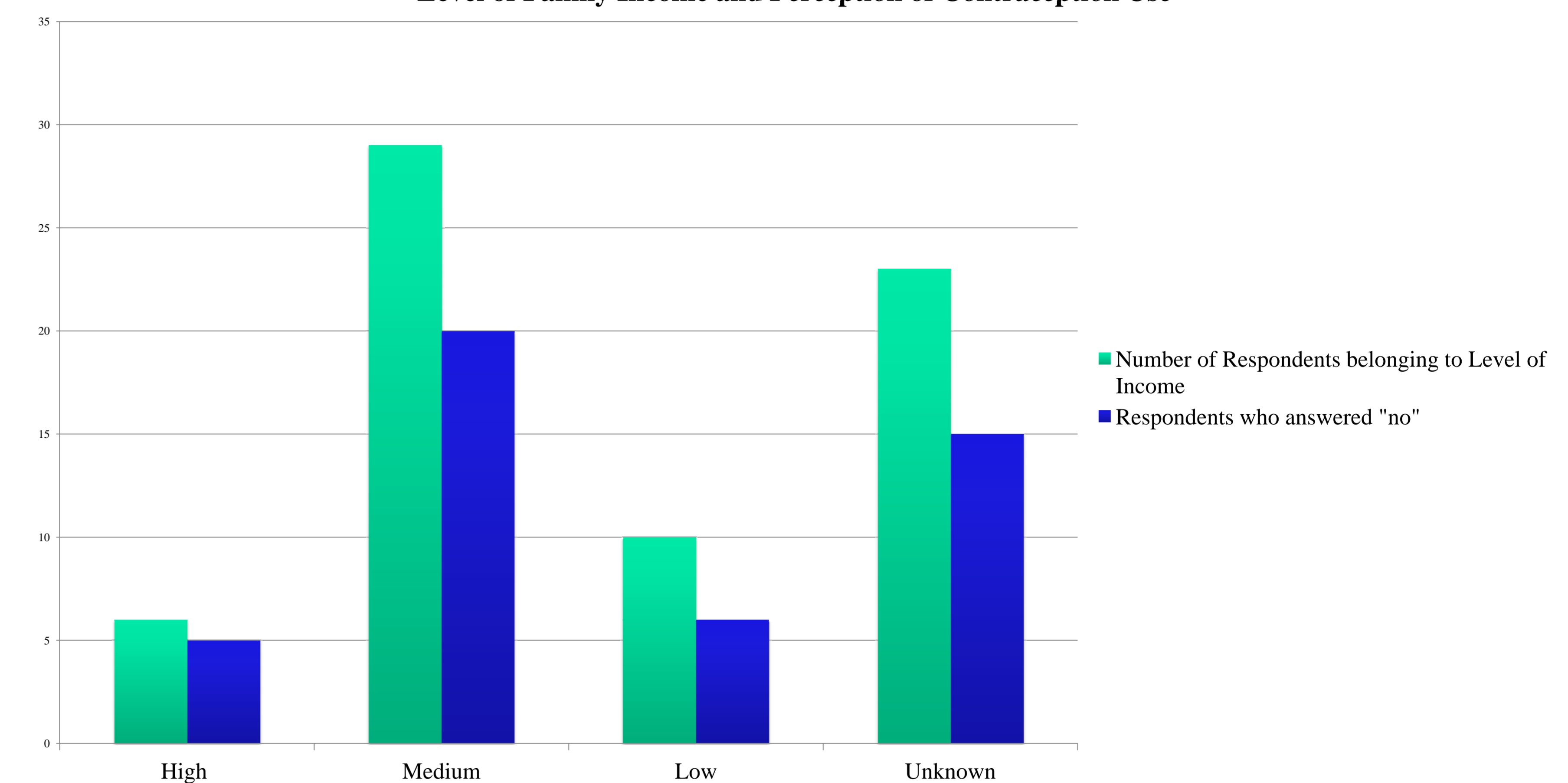


Figure 3: Connection between Family Income and Use of Contraception

Discussion

The results indicate that UB students are not using contraception as often as they should be, and the Administration at UB should be more proactive about providing students with the contraceptive devices that they need. The results suggest that the University should strengthen student groups that are focused on combating HIV on campus, and work to provide a wide variety of contraceptive devices. Lastly, the University should work to address the points of weakness in the level of understanding of HIV and contraception on campus. This research is limited by the number of respondents and the system used for analysis. In the future, this research can be expanded to include more participants; the survey instrument can also be refined to lead to more conclusive answers.



Figure 4: Condom Dispenser at the University of Botswana

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For more information, please contact Elise at beckmem@mx.lakeforest.edu.