INTRODUCTION: Risky sexual behaviour continues to propel sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in South Africa. However, there is dearth of research on sexual risk taking in South Africa, particularly in Mafikeng. Therefore this study was designed to examine sexual risk taking and its implication for STIs among married women in Mahikeng.

METHODS: The study cross-examined 568 women of age 18–49 years selected using a multistage random sampling technique from the clusters carved from census 2011 enumeration areas in Mahikeng. Data analyses were conducted using descriptive statistics, chi-square and logistic regression model ($\alpha = 0.05$).

RESULTS: The data show that the mean ±SD age of the women was 34.5±8.0. Fifty-nine percent has good safer sex attitude if woman had STI whereas 86.1% has good safer sex attitude if husband/partner had STI. The identified predictors of sexual risk taking are having at least primary education, being a student, belonging to Methodist faith based, acceptance of condom, spousal discussion about sex and engaging in sex for health enhancement. Women whose union have lasted less than 5 years, partners are farmers or drivers, and engage in sex for childbearing were more likely to have risky sexual intercourse. Those who have experienced forced sex and believe that husband/partner’s has right to sex were more likely to engage risky sexual escapade. Furthermore, uncertainty about being at risk of contracting STIs, and misconceptions on HIV transmission were found to be significant predictors of sexual risk taking.

CONCLUSIONS: The findings of the study suggest that there are socio-cultural, structural and individual factors that are salient in women’s sexual risk taking. It appeals for more work at individual and couple level to allay women’s vulnerability to sexual risk taking. Given that risk perception varies among women and their husband/partners influence intensify the risky behaviour. Intervention that focuses on educating women on their basic sexual rights, improving spousal communication about sex as well as streamlined information on STIs misconceptions is needed for women’s sexual health in Mahikeng.