



'Stolen Generations': Child Apprehension & HIV Risk for Sex Workers of Aboriginal Ancestry

Background

In Canada there is a history of child apprehension among Aboriginal women and sex workers in particular. In B.C. there are more Aboriginal children in state care than there was at the height of the residential school system. Despite this, we still know very little about marginalized mothers' experiences with child apprehension.

The Question

What are the experiences of sex workers in Vancouver, B.C. with child apprehension?

The Study

The Gender & Sexual Health Initiative (GSHI) research team drew upon data from **interviews with 510 adult sex workers in Metro Vancouver, BC from 2010-2013**. This project is part of an ongoing study on working conditions, health and safety in the sex industry led by GSHI/BCCfE and UBC, in collaboration with a range of community partners. The project is part of AESHA (An Evaluation of Sex Workers Health Access) cohort, including outreach to street, indoor and online sex work venues (by experiential and non-experiential team) and ongoing follow-up.

The Results

Of the 510 women interviewed, 350 reported having had one or more children.

Of these 350 women:

- **38.3% had a child apprehended by Child Welfare Services;**
- 37.4% reported having been apprehended as children.

The women interviewed reported several **factors related to an increased chance of child apprehension**, including:

- Working outdoors;
- Having used injection drugs; and
- Being of Aboriginal ancestry.

59% of sex workers of Aboriginal ancestry reported having had a child apprehended by Child Welfare Services.

Sex workers of Aboriginal ancestry were 66% more likely to have a child apprehended than other sex workers.

The Policy Implications

- There is a need for decolonization approaches to child protection that promote healing and recognize the historical trauma of colonization; funding for specific programs by and for Aboriginal mothers; and a scale up of support for sex workers who are mothers.
- This study supports the decriminalization of sex work to allow for safer indoor sex work and to make it easier for sex workers to access parenting, health and support services.

Duff P, Bingham B, Simo A, Jury D, Reading C, Shannon K. *The 'Stolen Generations' of Mothers and Daughters: Child apprehension and enhanced HIV vulnerabilities for sex workers of Aboriginal ancestry*. 2013.