



# Physical and Sexual Violence By Intimate Partners Among Street and Off-Street Sex Workers

## Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) by men against women is a human rights issue and public health concern associated with increased risk of HIV for women around the world. Despite this, there is little research about IPV among marginalized populations, including sex workers.

## The Question

How does intimate partner violence (IPV) impact HIV risk among street and off-street sex workers?

## The Study

The Gender & Sexual Health Initiative (GSHI) research team drew upon data from **interviews with 387 street and off-street sex workers between 2010 and 2012**. This project is part of AESHA (An Evaluation of Sex Workers Health Access), 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, with ongoing outreach to street and indoor sex work venues (by experiential and non-experiential team).

## The Results

GSHI researchers interviewed 387 sex workers who had at least one male, intimate sexual partner in the past 6 months, of those:

- **1 in 5 reported experiencing moderate or severe physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence in the last 6 months.**

*1 in 5 sex workers interviewed reported experiencing physical and sexual violence in the last 6 months.*

Experiencing intimate partner violence was correlated with:

- Exposure to physical and/or sexual abuse as children;
- Inconsistent use of condoms;
- Less than daily prescription opioid use;
- Having a male partner who depends on their partner's sex work income; and
- Getting drugs from their intimate partner.

## The Policy Implications

- There is a need to focus on marginalized and stigmatized sex workers, as many remain in a cycle of violence that began in childhood and now impacts their current relationships.
- The criminalization of sex work in Canada drives stigma against sex workers, limits women's job choices, and undermines their health in general.
- Health programs must address stigma, foster discrimination-free spaces and work with sex work communities.

Argento E, Muldoon KA, Duff P, Simo A, Deering KN, Shannon K. *High Prevalence and Partner Correlates of Physical and Sexual Violence by Intimate Partners Among Street and Off-Street Sex Workers*. PLoS One, 2014.