



## Recognizing the Rights and Wants of Sex Workers as Mothers

### Background

Research on sex workers has largely focused on HIV/STI prevention, overlooking the health needs and wants of women in sex work as mothers. The lack of research on the reproductive health needs of sex workers might explain the lack of services and supports that currently exist for these women.

### The Question

What factors are related to the pregnancy intentions of women in sex work in Vancouver BC?

### The Study

The Gender & Sexual Health Initiative (GSHI) research team drew upon data from **questionnaires and follow-up interviews with 510 women in sex work in Vancouver, BC from 2010-2011** as 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. AESHA includes ongoing outreach to street and indoor sex work venues (by experiential and non-experiential team).

### The Results

Of the 510 women in sex work interviewed:

- 394 reported having been pregnant before,
- 140 reported currently being pregnant or trying to get pregnant, or wanting to have children in the future.

*'Positive Pregnancy Intention'*  
*means currently being pregnant or trying to get pregnant, or wanting to have children in the future.*

**There was no difference in pregnancy intention by ethnicity or by HIV status, and very little difference when compared to women in other occupations.**

Factors associated with increased odds of 'positive pregnancy intentions' include:

- Servicing clients in indoor settings (e.g. massage parlours) vs. outdoor/ public settings
- Inconsistent condom use by clients
- Being younger
- Experiencing intimate partner violence.

### The Policy Implications

- This study shows a need for accessible HIV/STI prevention, harm reduction and reproductive health services for sex workers that work together to better support sex workers.
- A decriminalized model of sex work would likely decrease stigma and violence, and increase access to indoor sex work venues that better support sex worker's right to have children.

Duff P, Shoveller J, Feng C, Ogilvie G, Montaner J, Shannon K. [Pregnancy intentions among sex workers: Recognizing the rights and wants of sex workers as mothers](#). *Journal of Family Planning & Reproductive Health Care*, 2014.