



Violence Against Sex Workers: A Review of Global Research

Background

We regularly hear reports of violence against sex workers from around the world, but we rarely hear sex workers specifically mentioned in international agendas aimed at preventing gender-based violence. Currently there is little research on how common violence against sex workers is, or what contributes to it, globally.

The Question

How common is violence against sex workers globally? What factors shape their risk?

The Review

The Gender & Sexual Health Initiative (GSHI) research team conducted a **systematic review identifying 28 studies to do with factors relating to violence and 14 studies with estimate of how common violence is**. GSHI is a research arm of the BC Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS that examines working conditions, health and safety in the sex industry to inform evidence-based sexual health policy and practice to reduce health inequities.

The Results

The review of studies from around the world showed:

- 45-75% of sex workers experienced violence in their lifetime,
- 32-55% experienced violence in the last year.

Contextual factors found in the review to be linked to violence against sex workers include:

- Criminalization and policing,
- Population movement and mobility,
- Work environments,
- Economic conditions,
- Gender inequality,
- Power and stigma.

Geographic regions included in the review:

- Asia
- North America
- Central and Western Europe
- Sub-Saharan Africa
- The Middle East
- Latin America
- South Africa

The Policy Implications

- This review shows a need for more research, and for violence against sex workers to be made a national and international public health and human rights priority.
- In partnership with sex work communities, there is a need to better document and respond to the factors shaping violence against sex workers, **including decriminalizing sex work, and making changes to policing practices**.

Deering KN, Amin A, Shoveller J, Nesbitt A, Garcia-Moreno C, Duff P, Argento E, Shannon K. A systematic review of the correlates of violence against sex workers. *AJPH*, 2014.