



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

Background

Male-perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive human rights violation and public health concern, associated with increased HIV risk among women globally. Despite this, there is limited evidence and understanding about IPV among marginalized populations, including research on how IPV might increase the risk of HIV among 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 **baseline and follow-up 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), a longitudinal ethnographic and qualitative 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

Of 387 sex workers who reported having at least one male, intimate sexual partner in the past 6 months:

- **1/5 reported experiencing moderate or severe physical and/or sexual IPV in the last 6 months**

These experiences were correlated with:

- Early exposure to physical and/or sexual abuse;
- Inconsistent condom use;
- Less than daily prescription opioid use;
- Economic dependence of male partner on sex work; and
- Sourcing drugs from an intimate partner.

'The high prevalence of intimate partner violence among sex workers is a critical public health concern and underscores the need for integrated violence and HIV prevention and intervention strategies tailored to this key population.'

The Policy Implications

- There is a critical need to focus on marginalized and stigmatized sex workers, as many remain in a cycle of violence often beginning in childhood and now impacting their current relationships.
- The criminalized nature of the sex industry in Canada drives stigma against sex workers, constrains their occupational choices, and undermines their health in general.
- Health programs must address stigma and work with sex work communities to foster discrimination-free environments at all levels.

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.