



Violence Against Sex Workers: A Systematic Review

Background

Reports of violence against sex workers continue to emerge globally, but this violence is frequently overlooked in international agendas to prevent gender-based violence. There is little research on the magnitude, severity, or type of violence against sex workers, despite the lack of data on violence against sex workers being highlighted in a review of the scope of gender-based violence globally.

The Question

How prevalent 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 of violence and 14 studies contributing to violence prevalence estimates**. The Gender & Sexual Health Initiative 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 systemic review showed the prevalence of violence against sex workers ranged from:

- 45-75% over the lifetime;
- 32-55% in the last year.

Alongside interpersonal and individual risks (such as sexual and drug risks), **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,

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 increased research and evidence-based calls 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 contextual factors shaping violence against sex workers, **including decriminalization of sex work, and structural changes to policing practices**, work environments, gender and economic inequities, population movement, and stigma.

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.