

Barriers to sexual health testing for sex workers in Metro Vancouver

Roles of stigma & systemic racism within health care



Access to safe, voluntary, and sex work-friendly sexual health testing is one of many occupational health and safety priorities for sex workers. In the context of ongoing criminalization and occupational stigma, we explored sex workers' access to HIV/STI testing.

What did we find?

The odds of recent HIV/STI testing were

2x

higher for participants accessing sex worker-specific services

48%

lower for Women of Color and Black participants compared to white women

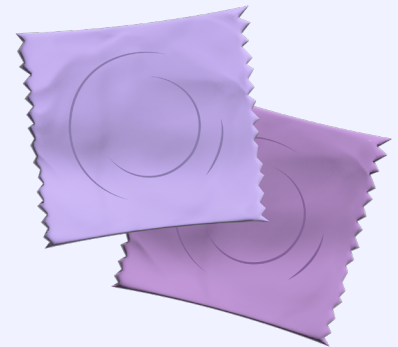
24%

lower for im/migrant women compared to Canadian-born sex workers

What do we recommend?

To improve sex workers' access to sexual health services, we must:

- Fully decriminalize sex work, including for im/migrant workers, to reduce stigma and barriers to health services
- Increase options for sex worker-led, low-barrier, and multilingual HIV/STI testing services
- Establish structural interventions to address systemic racism within and beyond the health system



AESHA (An Evaluation of Sex Workers' Health Access) is a long-standing, community-based research project based at the Centre for Gender & Sexual Health Equity in UBC's Faculty of Medicine in Vancouver, BC. AESHA includes > 900 sex workers across outdoor and indoor venues, with Indigenous, racialized and im/migrant sex workers overrepresented among participants. Almost half of participants reported soliciting on the street or in public, while 30% solicited services in indoor establishments, and 20% solicited services independently (e.g., online).

Goldenberg, S. M., Pearson, J., Moreheart, S., Nazarov, H., Krüsi, A., Braschel, M., Bingham, B., & Shannon, K. (2023). Prevalence and structural correlates of HIV and STI testing among a community-based cohort of women sex workers in Vancouver Canada. PLOS ONE, 18(3), e0283729. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0283729>