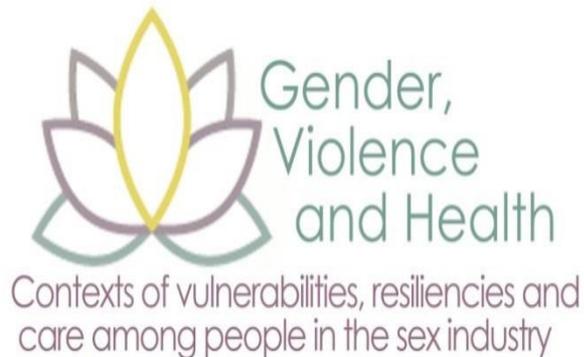


Sex Industry Workers & Confidence in the Police in Canada

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Research aims

- ❑ Examine the impact of working in the sex industry on confidence in the police and reasons why confidence varies compared to other Canadians

- ❑ Examine workers' narratives to better understand their reasons for not trusting the police and to indicate policy directions



Data

- ❑ Closed-ended data from a non-random sample of Canadian sex industry workers and from respondents who took part in the Canadian General Social Survey (GSS) Cycle 23—Victimization
- ❑ Workers' experience of discrimination from the police/courts
- ❑ Workers' narratives of interactions with the police

Table 1. Socio-demographics

	Workers (n=218)		GSS (n=19422)
	n	%	%
Aboriginal	41	18.8%	3.4%
Female	172	78.9%	55.1%
Married/common law	65	29.8%	57.3%
Completed high school	144	66.4%	73.3%
Annual household median income		\$54,636	\$60-79,999
No confidence in the police	134	61.4%	14.6%
Range by research site:			
Calgary	17	42.5%	
Victoria	25	55.6%	
Ft. McMurray	6	66.7%	
St. John's	22	66.7%	
Kitchener/Waterloo	23	67.6%	
Montreal	41	75.9%	

Table 2. Sub-group comparison reporting not very much/no confidence in the police

	Workers (n=134)		GSS (n=2835)	
	n	%	n	%
Community Belonging				
Very/somewhat weak	81	60.4%		31.9%
Trust people in your neighbourhood (low/1-2)	62	46.3%	505	17.9%
Contact with police during last 12 months				
As victim of a crime	52	38.8%	338	11.9%
As witness to a crime	46	34.3%	303	10.7%
Reasons for no confidence in the police				
Poor job enforcing the laws	34	25.4%	854	29.8%
Poor job promptly responding to calls	37	27.6%	855	30.2%
Poor job being approachable	66	49.3%	654	23.1%
Poor job treating sex workers fairly	86	64.2%	-	-
Discrimination from police/courts	74	55.2%	-	-

Table 3. Thematic analysis worker-police interactions

Responses (n=203; 15 cases missing)

	n	%
Approachability		
Approachable	65	32%
Not approachable	54	27%
Fair treatment		
Fair/respectful	40	20%
Discriminatory/disrespectful	64	32%

Approachability



Easy to talk to (or not):

- *They come up to you "Are you okay?"*
- *I do my best to stay away from them as best I can. I don't like even walking past them on the street. I'm scared because they could put me in a cage.*

Source of aid (or not):

- *If I had a bad date or what not they'd be there and taking down the information and trying to make sure I was alright.*
- *They are not there to help you. In any case, I would not feel comfortable... I got raped and I did not think about going to the police.*

Fair treatment



(Non)discriminatory:

- *In terms of police, I don't believe that they would treat me any differently than an average person.*
- *I think they look at every woman in the sex trade and addict the same way: below them.*

(Dis)respect:

- *But, first you have to recognize us as people, and you need to treat us with dignity and respect. Now that is hard for a cop to do with any person, okay, never mind a low life sex worker.*



Take away messages

- ❑ As found in other studies, workers who are more disadvantaged have lower confidence in the police
- ❑ Being unapproachable and unfair are the main reasons for workers' low confidence and trust in the police
- ❑ Interventions to make police easier to talk to and act in a non-discriminatory and respectable manner are urgently needed
- ❑ Likelihood under new prostitution laws?



Thank you

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