

Facts about sex work & violence in Botswana.



SEX WORKERS IN BOTSWANA FACE UNACCEPTABLE LEVELS OF VIOLENCE, STIGMA, DISCRIMINATION AND OTHER HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS. IT PUTS THEM IN SITUATIONS THAT MAKE THEM CONSIDERABLY MORE VULNERABLE TO HIV AND AIDS. SUPPORTIVE LAWS AND PROTECTIVE SERVICES ARE NEEDED TO SECURE THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF SEX WORKERS.

What the law says:

It is illegal to solicit clients or live on the earnings of sex work. Bylaws on public disorder, indecency and loitering are used to prosecute sex workers.



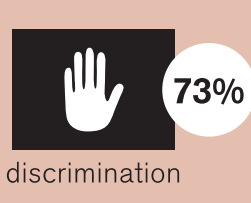
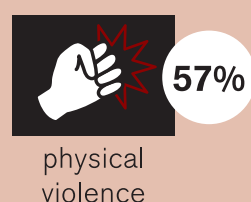
Criminalization:

Sex workers who operate in settings where prostitution is criminalized face increased risk of violence, experience police abuse and lack of access to health care and the justice system.



66% of the sex workers in Botswana experienced violence in the past year

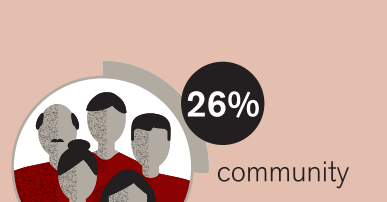
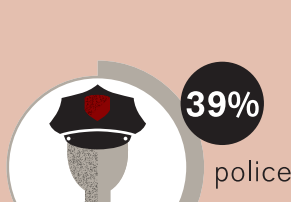
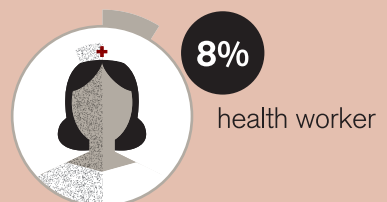
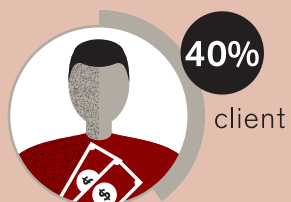
Sorts of violence



Risk factors



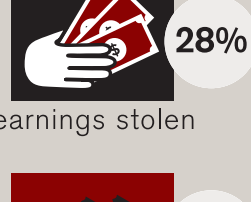
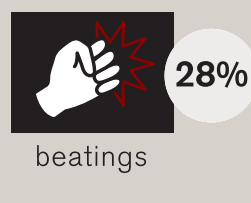
Who are the perpetrators?



“ He called me and we went out. He then choked me and I got injured. He pulled me into the bush and took the money I had. I was rescued by the guards who passed by with a car. ”

49% of the sex workers experienced violence by the police in the past year upon arrest

What type of violence are we talking about?



Hard facts

To prevent getting arrested, 32% of the sex workers had sex with a police officer and 37% paid bribes to the police.



Arrest

48% of the sex workers were arrested last year. On average they were arrested 6 times and most of them were detained for 24 hours per arrest.

Reasons for arrest



Filing a case

34% of the sex workers filed a case with the police. Only 19% of the cases were investigated by the police.

“ Some police officers make us pay and if we do not have money we will be closed up in cells until our friends come to rescue us. However at times we meet remorseful police officers and they release us and warn us not to do sex work again. ”

45% of HIV-positive sex workers do not have regular access to treatment

HIV prevalence

17% is HIV negative



30% is HIV positive

42% does not want to disclose status

11% has never been tested

At the clinic



51%

of the sex workers has been yelled at and/or stigmatised by a health worker in the past twelve months.

Access to regular HIV medication

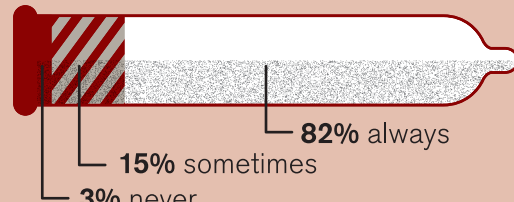
Of those who indicated to be HIV positive:

55% receives regular treatment



45% gets no regular treatment

Condom use while selling sex:



“ As a foreigner, I have to pay for treatment, but sometimes I do not have money. So the one time I was tested for STIs, I did not get treatment. ”

Recommendations:

- 1 Decriminalize sex work
- 2 Develop guidelines for law enforcement officers on handling arrests of violence on sex workers, register complaints of stigmatized people such as sex workers and above all handle cases with sensitivity and accountability
- 3 Support and empower sex workers to have the voice to advocate for their rights

Hands Off! Reduction of violence against sex workers

The Hands Off! programme, coordinated by Aids Fonds, works on the reduction of violence against sex workers in Southern Africa through prevention, care and support. The programme works with sex worker-led groups, law enforcement, health and support services, legal centres and NGOs working on human rights.

Sisonke and BONELA

Sisonke is a sex worker-led organisation that advocates for the rights of sex workers in Botswana. The Botswana Network on Ethical Law and HIV/AIDS (BONELA) is a non-Governmental human rights organisation dedicated to making human rights a reality in the national response to health and HIV in Botswana.

Read the full report or more about Hands Off! at www.aidsfonds.nl/handsoff

