

# PROUD

## OUT LOUD!

Volume 8: December 2014

### Sex Work Criminalization and Homelessness

**PROUD OUT LOUD** is a newsletter produced to communicate preliminary research findings from the PROUD Study, as well as relevant information for our community members and partner organizations. From March 2013 to January 2014, the PROUD study recruited a total of 858 people who use drugs to participate in a survey and HIV point of care testing. This current issue covers data related to people who reported engaging in sex work.



December 17th is the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. On that day, people around the world come together to remember those who were lost, and renew their commitment in the on-going struggle for empowerment, visibility, and rights for all sex workers

25.1% of total survey participants had ever given money, drugs or gifts for sex

27.2% of total survey participants had ever received money, drugs or gifts for sex.

31.3% of male participants had ever given money, drugs or gifts for sex

21.3% of male participants had ever received money, drugs or gifts for sex

5.7% of female participants had ever given money, drugs or gifts for sex.

44.8% of female participants had ever received money, drugs or gifts for sex

Of the 108 participants who had engaged in sex work in the past 12 months:

31.5% were living in their own house/apartment

68.5% were not living in their own house/apartment.

68.5% had spent at least one night in a shelter

52.7% had spent at least one night on the street or outdoors in a park.

31.5% had experienced violence from a client in the previous 12 months

Of the 108 participants who had engaged in sex work in the previous year, 77 had been stopped or searched by the police without arrest. Of those 77 participants:

42.8% had their drug works/paraphernalia smashed by the police

9.6% had their belongings seized by the police

50.6% experienced verbal abuse/harassment by the police

31.1% experienced physical abuse by the police

.06% experienced sexual abuse by the police

Of the 108 participants who had engaged in sex work in the previous 12 months:

40.7% did not feel comfortable calling the police

46% had been red-zoned

84.3% had ever been detained overnight or longer in jail or at a police station

38% were on probation, out on bail, or on parole at the time the survey was done

The “Protection of Exploited Persons and Communities Act” which came into effect on December 6th, criminalizes both the sellers and the buyers of sexual services. These prohibitions do not address the structural inequalities that increase the vulnerability of the most marginal street-based workers to violence at the hands of predators, clients, community members, or police. Where sex workers or their clients fear police detection and legal repercussions, it makes it more difficult for them to access essential public health services

The PROUD study is a community-based research project that examines HIV risk among people who use drugs in Ottawa. Participants who reported using injection drugs or smoking crack cocaine in the past 12 months were enrolled through a targeted, street-based recruitment strategy. We enrolled a representative sample of participants who completed a comprehensive questionnaire and were offered HIV Point-of-Care testing. The survey and strategy was developed by people who use(d) drugs and their allies.

The PROUD place (216 Murray st.) will be closing down at the end of 2014. The research will continue at different locations within the community.



Special thanks to our:

Former Community Advisory Committee members (Kelly F., Dan M. Fredrique C., Rick S., Hana D., Gilles D.)

Current Community Advisory Committee members (Jen B., Tiffany R., Ranji M., Alana M., Tyler P., Caleb C., Sean L.)

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