



December 8, 2016

The Capacity Research Unit releases SPACES study recommendations report

The Capacity Research Unit is pleased to make available the third report from the SPACES (Sex, Power, Agency, Consent, Environment and Safety) Study, *Recommendations from the Off-Street Sex Industry in Vancouver*. This report and the SPACES Study would not have been possible if not for the collective efforts of project staff, local by and for sex worker organizations, members of the sex industry, advocates and allies, and all of the participants who shared their stories and experiences. These stakeholders represent a long history in Vancouver and Canada of work dedicated to the recognition of the human rights for people engaged in the sex industry and we hope that this report will act as a tool for supporting their past and current endeavours.

What is the report?

Since 2012, SPACES has worked to describe aspects of Vancouver's off-street sex industry, as well as the circumstances under which individuals (sex workers, clients, and third parties) interact and make decisions regarding their health and safety within this local environment. Based on discussion of this project's findings with industry experts and a diverse group of stakeholders (e.g., sex workers, community organizations and members, researchers, policy makers) this report presents evidence-informed recommendations to address the complexities of the environment and circumstances in which off-street sex work occurs.

What did we learn?

The SPACES findings affirm a correlation between context and the safety of those engaging in Vancouver's off-street sex industry. Within this predominantly independent marketplace, a diversity of individuals make efforts towards accessing low-risk environments and ensuring occupational health and safety. However, these efforts are often met with a number of social, institutional and legal barriers. The 2014 enactment of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* in particular is broadly considered a prominent barrier with deleterious effects. *Recommendations from the Off-Street Sex Industry in Vancouver* highlights these findings and lends support to evidence throughout Canada that current institutional structures and socio-legal contexts are failing to appropriately ensure the safety, security, and rights of those engaging in commercial sex work.

Study results also support the overwhelming evidence that stigma remains a pervasive issue socially and within the context of health and other support service provision and interactions with law enforcement. Stigma cannot be underestimated and this report reflects the need to curb stigma and the detrimental effects it has daily on the mental and physical health of those engaging in the sex industry.

What are the key evidence-informed recommendations from the project?

The recommendations presented within this report reflect the evidence indicating the need for social, institutional and structural changes necessary to acknowledge the rights and promote occupational health and safety of people engaged in the sex industry. Some of the key evidence supported recommendations include:

- Repeal of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act*.
- Include, have present, and consult sex workers, clients, and third parties when drafting policies and regulations.
- Implement staff training in community-based agencies on how to listen and engage with sex workers and clients in a non-discriminatory and non-judgmental way.
- Develop enhanced education campaigns for health care providers and mental health services on the diversity present in the sex industry.
- Improve access to sexual health clinics that offer anonymous and confidential services for those engaged in the sex industry to be informed of and have.
- Promote discourses that are strength-based rather than rescue or victim-based and discourage the use of stigmatizing language by researchers, health care and social service providers, the law, policy makers, the media and general public.

We hope that this report and the recommendations therein will be useful for practitioners and others engaged in advocacy efforts, policy making and service delivery, and will help enhance all efforts directed at promoting the safety, health, and rights of those engaged in the commercial sex industry. *To access the report, please [click here](#).*

Next Project

Findings from the SPACES study also highlight that information and communication technologies (ICTs), computers, phones, email, and social media are a vital part of occupational health and safety within the industry. To help understand more about ICTs, Dr. Vicky Bungay and Chris Atchison are co-leading a project to examine how these technologies are being used to develop relationships, exchange information and facilitate the face-to-face exchange of sexual services. Further information about this project is available at www.street-to-screen.ca.

About the Capacity Research Unit

The Capacity Research Unit at the University of British Columbia includes an interdisciplinary team of researchers, staff, students and organizations and their members. Canada Research Chair holder and scientific director of the unit, Dr. Vicky Bungay, and this team work together to generate knowledge and address systemic discrimination in an effort to inform and promote practices, programs and policies that positively affect the well-being of people who regularly experience health and social inequities. For additional information, please contact capacity.research@ubc.ca

Funding for the SPACES study was provided by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and with support from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research Scholar program. Statement prepared by V. Bungay on behalf of the project team.