

# INJECTION, SEX AND TATTOOING AMONG 2,359,220 PRISONERS: A GLOBAL SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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## Introduction:

Prisons continue to be environments where key populations most at risk for infectious disease transmission are concentrated. HIV and hepatitis C infections are elevated in prison populations. Prisoners engage in risky behaviours that can lead to the transmission of infections such as HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Behaviours include sharing contaminated syringes, unsafe sex, tattooing and skin piercing practices.

## Methods:

This review systematically summarizes the epidemiologic literature on four key HIV/HCV risk behaviours; drug injection, sexual activity, tattooing and piercing among prisoners globally. We searched peer-reviewed papers and grey literature between 2007-2017.

## Results:

We located 8,571 peer-reviewed and 4,295 grey literature publications, of which 140 and 14, respectively, met inclusion criteria. Data covered 53 of the 195 countries (28%). Regions with high levels of injecting among prisoners were Asia Pacific (20.2%), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (17.3%) and Latin America and the Caribbean (11.3%). Low levels of injecting in prison were found in East and Southern Africa (0.6%) and West and Central Africa (0.5%). In NSW, drug injection (21-41%), sharing injecting equipment (19-36%) and risky sexual behaviour (36%) within prison were reported among inmates. High levels of sexual activity in prison were located in Western and Central Europe and North America (12.1%) and West and Central Africa (13.6%). Lower levels were found in the Middle East and North African region (1.5%). High levels of tattooing originated from Latin America (45.4%), Asia and Pacific (21.4%) and Western and Central Europe and North America (14.7%).

**Conclusion:**

Prisons are burdened with a high prevalence of infectious diseases, a high prevalence of risk behaviours for disease transmission, and, in most settings, a lack of evidence-based infection control measures. Most prisoners return to the community. Failure to implement effective responses has repercussions not only for prisoner health, but also for public health.

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