

Group sex events among female sex workers in Melbourne, Australia

Turek EM^{1,2}, Fairley CK^{1,2}, Tabesh M^{1,2}, Phillips TR^{1,2}, Chow EPF^{1,2,3}

¹ Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Alfred Health, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

² Central Clinical School, Monash University, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

³ Centre for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, The University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Australia

Background:

Group sex is associated with increased risk of HIV and sexually transmitted infection (STI) but there is limited data on group sex among female sex workers (FSW). Understanding current group sex practices among FSW may assist with understanding and addressing the rise in STI observed among Australian FSW in the 2010s. The aim of this study was to describe the proportion of FSWs who had engaged in group sex.

Methods:

We conducted a cross-sectional survey among FSWs attending the Melbourne Sexual Health Centre, Australia, between March and April 2019. Females aged ≥ 18 years who self-reported as a sex worker were invited to participate in the survey asking whether they had had group sex in the past three months. Group sex was defined as sex that involved two or more sexual partners.

Results:

Of the 51 FSWs who completed the survey, the median age was 29 (IQR 24-34). Almost half (49%; $n=25$) reported having group sex in the past three months with a median number of group sex events of 2 (IQR 1-4). Australian-born FSW were more likely to report group sex than overseas-born FSW (76% vs 42%; $p=0.02$). Age, number of paid clients and injecting drug use were not associated with group sex.

Conclusion:

Our findings show that group sex is not uncommon among FSW and should be included in peer sexual health education and interventions among FSW

Disclosure of Interest Statement:

E.P.F.C. is supported by an Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Emerging Leadership Investigator Grant (GNT1172873). C.K.F. and C.S.B. are supported by Australian NHMRC Leadership Investigator Grants (GNT1172900 and GNT1173361, respectively). All other authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.