

# FACTS

ABOUT

# SEX WORKERS

AND THE MYTHS THAT HELP SPREAD HIV

THE LANCET series on HIV and sex workers

## Misconceptions about sex workers hinder effective HIV prevention programmes

THE MYTH IS...

BUT THE TRUTH IS...

THE IMPACT BEING...



All sex workers are women

FALSE



Sex workers may be male, female, transgender or non-transgender and from diverse backgrounds<sup>7</sup>



Heterogeneity of epidemics across various groups<sup>7</sup>



Male sex workers are all gay

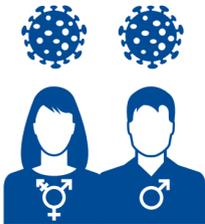
FALSE



Often male sex workers with male clients don't identify as gay or bisexual and have female intimate partners<sup>5</sup>

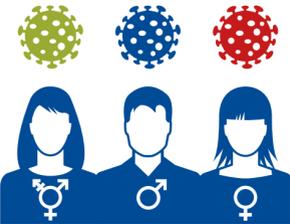


Heterosexual identity in male sex workers represents increased risk among their non-paying female partners<sup>5</sup>



Transgender female sex workers face the same risk of HIV as male sex workers

FALSE



Transgender women have distinct biological HIV risks from male sex workers or non-transgender women<sup>6</sup>



Transgender female sex workers demonstrate about **1.5 times** the risk of HIV compared to male sex workers<sup>6</sup>

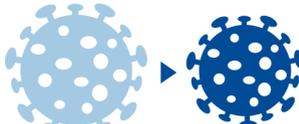


Sex work is not a real job

FALSE



Sex work is officially recognised as an occupation in Brazil, entitling sex workers to labour rights<sup>3</sup>



Community empowerment among sex workers reduced the odds of HIV by **32%**<sup>3</sup>

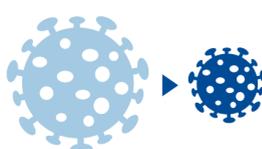


Sex workers won't use condoms

FALSE



Greater success in condom uptake has been reported in sex workers than any other affected population<sup>2</sup>



Condom promotion in South Africa has reduced HIV in sex workers by more than **70%**<sup>2</sup>

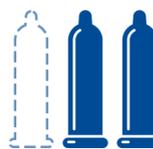


Criminalising sex work prevents HIV spread

FALSE



Police harassment forces hurried transactions which jeopardise condom negotiation<sup>4</sup>



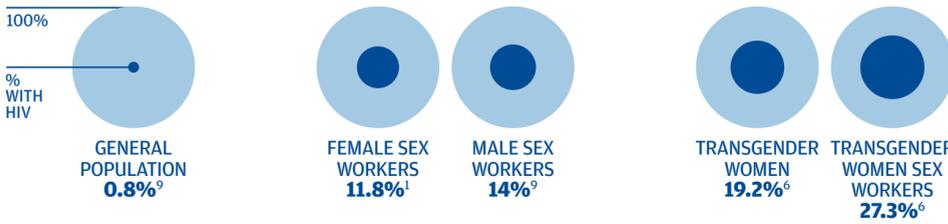
**One third** of sex workers don't carry condoms as they are used as evidence of illegal sex work<sup>1,4</sup>

## THE HIV BURDEN

Sex workers have higher burdens of HIV, although epidemics are reflective of, and impact on, surrounding adult populations.

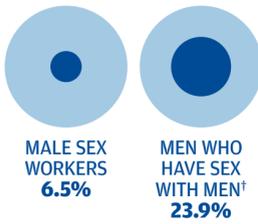
### HIV PREVALENCE

#### WORLDWIDE

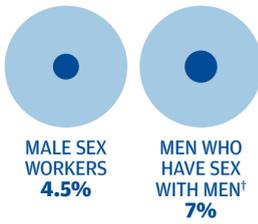


#### EPIDEMIOLOGICAL TRENDS AMONG MALE SEX WORKERS AND OTHER MEN WHO HAVE SEX WITH MEN<sup>1</sup> VARY BY REGION

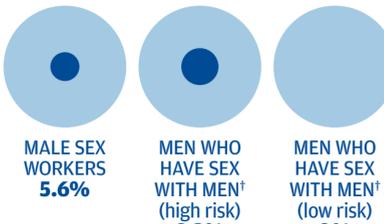
##### SYDNEY



##### SHENZHEN



##### TEL AVIV



<sup>1</sup>men with no history of sex work who have sex with men

### HOW MUCH COULD HIV INFECTIONS BE AVERTED?\*

#### DECriminalISING SEX WORK



33–46% reduction<sup>1</sup>

#### SAFER WORK ENVIRONMENTS



21–45% reduction<sup>1</sup>

#### SCALE-UP OF ANTI-RETROVIRAL THERAPY



9–34% reduction<sup>1</sup>

#### ELIMINATION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE



17–20% reduction<sup>1</sup>

\*modelled potential improvements in reducing HIV among female sex workers and clients within a decade

Read the full series at [www.thelancet.com/series/HIV-and-sex-workers](http://www.thelancet.com/series/HIV-and-sex-workers)

#### SOURCES

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