

## Health Assessment of San Francisco Exotic Dancers

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**Intro:** In the last 2 years, the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women (COSW) has been hearing testimony from former and current dancers about the working conditions in strip clubs. There has been a tremendous amount of disagreement between former and current dancers about the working conditions of strip clubs. While the majority of current dancers state conditions in the strip clubs are fine, some former dancers say that risk for sexual assault, HIV/STI transmission, illegal stage fees imposed by strip clubs and coerced prostitution are primary health concerns for dancers.

<u>Purpose:</u> Assess what aspects of dancers working conditions do they perceive to be health risks and health benefits. <u>Key questions:</u>

 What are dancers priority health concerns?
Which labor conditions affect those health concerns?
Which groups and agencies do dancers think act in their best interest?

Aspects of work that dancers think are risks to their	Yes	No Maybe or	
health or well-being N=13			Sometime s
Second hand cigarette smok e	5	1	6
Customer drug or alcohol use	3	6	3
Not enough support from other dancers	4	5	3
Not enough support from management	2	8	3
Costumer Abuse/Assault	3	6	3
Costumer Harassment	9	2	2
Not enough security or protection from customers	2	7	4
Abuse from other staff	2	9	1
Harassment from other staff	2	10	1
The number of hours that you work a night	5	7	1
The number of days a week that you work	7	5	1
The money that you make, not enough	8	4	
The money that you make, too much		12	1
The shoes that you have to wear	9	3	1
Standing on your feet	8	2	3
Location of club	7	4	2
People treating you badly because of what you do	7	2	4
Afraid of catching HIV/STIs	2	9	1
Limited or restricted access to condoms	1	8	
Afraid of sexual assault	3	7	3
Personal drug or alcohol use	4	7	1
Private booths/rooms	1	9	3
Being an independent contractor	4	4	2
Being an employee/not an independent contractor		6	
Stage fee or fine s	6	5	
Cleanliness/sanitation of club	7	3	3
Lack of Healthcare	11	1	
Being robbed by clients, other dancers or others	6	4	2

"If prostitution were decriminalized I feel I would be in a safer condition to make money. Guys ask me to meet them outside of the club and I could say no and not make money. I haven't said yes so far cause if anything bad happened I would feel like it was my fault and I wouldn't be able to talk about it with anyone." (Dancer #13).

## San Francisco Strip Club History 101:

"I personally feel like there is no way to organize,

women don't have any say,

we're so replaceable. The

things women have done to

organize led to worse circumstance, like stage fees.

It's a job to stick to your self

and realize someone else is

calling all the shots. Which

is really ironic cause if it

were not for the women these

doors wouldn't open"

(Dancer #2).

Recruitment: convenience and snowball sampling.

eligible and participated in the assessment. Survey

selected. Findings are not generalizable.

Instrument: structured interview, w/3 semi-structured

Francisco. Inclusion criteria: woman identified, having

worked in the last three years. Thirteen (13) dancers were

questions & 1 qualitative question. Incentives: "Burt's Bees

Kits" (\$10). Limitations: Recruitment limited to certain

hours/days; some clubs did not allow access to the dancers

dressing rooms to pass out flyers or conduct interviews, many

dancers missed. Sample size small, not randomly recruited or

Recruitment activities were conducted at 16 strip clubs in San

**1988-O'Farrell Theatre** reclassified their dancers **from employees to independent contractors** & began charging the dancers a **"stage fee**."<sup>1</sup> Other clubs followed & reclassified their dancers as independents.<sup>4</sup> As independent contractors, strip clubs no longer pay workers comp, unemployment insurance, provide health insurance or hourly wages. Independents do not have the right to organize under National Labor Relations Act.

**1993- the Exotic Dancers Alliance (EDA)** was formed. **Lawsuits** filled by dancers asserting that clubs illegally classified dancers as independent contractors and that dancers were entitled to **back wages** and the money they had paid in stage fees.<sup>3</sup>

1996-Market Street Cinema builds private rooms. Other clubs follow their lead.

2004-2006-COSW drafts legislation: all private areas must have unrestricted visibility at all times.<sup>4</sup>

**2006- COSW presents legislation to Entertainment Commission.**<sup>5</sup>Current dancers from major adult clubs presented their objections to the legislation. **Private booths are a greater part of their income**. Dancers stated they were not included in the decision making process. Commissioners stated that the dancers who objected to the legislation were paid by the strip clubs to be there and thus their opinions were negated. Entertainment Commission says no thanks to legislation as is.

## What they did not like

Results: Majority of dancers did not think risk

of HIV/STI transmission, fear of sexual assault

or private booths are a work related health risk.

Nearly 50% reported stage fees are or might be

a work related health risks. Lack of healthcare,

the shoes that dancers wear, standing on their

feet all day, the number of shifts dancers work

a week, not making enough money, cleanliness

because of what they do were reported as work

related health risk by the majority of sample.

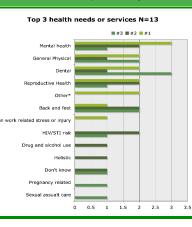
& location of the club, customer harassment,

and being treated badly by other people

"I don't like that I'm competing with prostitution in the club. I want very limited contact and other people will give full service for little money"(Dancer #7).

## What they did like:

"Certain amount of independence in that it's easy to get a job anywhere. Sometimes it was fun and sometimes I would make money. The workout, good exercise" (Dancer #1).



Aspects of the work that dance	ers like.				
N=13	Yes	No		Yes	No
Flexible Hours	13		Other Dancers	10	3
Fun	10	3	Good exercise	11	2
Part of a community	7	6	Like Dancing/performing	11	2
Best employment options	4	- 9	Independent Contractor*	8	2
Make good money	12	1	Private Booths/Rooms	7	6
Helping people	6	7	Wage Employee*	4	
Financial Freedom	12	1	Easy to get employment	9	4
Personally rewarding	10	3	Lap dancing	4	8
Challenging	7	6	Poll dancing	10	3
Being my own boss	11	2	Stage shows	9	4
Customers	5	8	Fantasy aspect	9	4
My manager	7	6	Othe r		

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5. Entertainment Commission. (2006). Commission Meeting Minutes, August 4, 2006. http://www.clean.org/

