



Implications of HIV Self Testing (HIVST) for Sex Workers in Australia

Who is left behind in the 'virtual' elimination of HIV?

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Udesha Chandrasena

(Scarlet Alliance Policy Officer)

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Sex workers in Australia

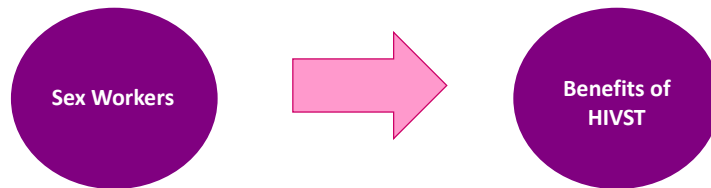
- Sex workers in Australia experience world renowned low rates of HIV and STIs.
- This has largely being attributed to highly successful and targeted community-led HIV prevention programs, including:
 - peer education,
 - support and outreach services,
 - distribution of comprehensive and free safer sex information and tools, and
 - community developed health promotion and resources.
- However, sex workers in Australia continue to struggle with criminalisation, stigma and discrimination, and counterproductive public health policies.



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What are the benefits of HIVST: “home testing is great, it just needs to be voluntary” . Quote from respondent in HIVST study.

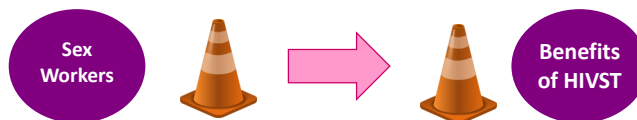
- HIVST may provide some sex workers with additional testing options that:
 - is private and confidential.
 - is outside of a clinical setting.
 - will not necessarily lead to instant criminalisation.



3

What are the risks of HIVST for sex workers in different social, legal and policy environments:

- As sex workers are a low prevalence population, HIVST will produce a higher rate of false reactivities.
- The National Policy on HIV Testing states a HIVST reactive result will be considered evidence of HIV infection.
- Laws and policies that place restrictions on sex workers living with HIV includes:
 - disclosure laws,
 - ‘reasonable precaution’ laws, and
 - laws that excludes sex workers living with HIV from working in the regulated sex industry.
- HIVST provides little or no opportunities for pre- and post- test counselling.



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What are the risks and benefits of HIVST for sex workers in different social, legal and policy environments in Australia ?

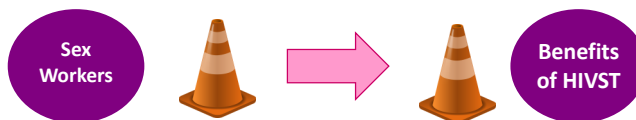
What are the conditions necessary to ensure that HIVST does not inadvertently undermine the agency and human rights of sex workers?



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What are the risks of HIVST for sex workers in different social, legal and policy environments:

- HIVST may be added onto existing mandatory testing regimes and jurisdictions that mandates 'reasonable precautions'.
- Employers, clients, health officials, police and peers may pressure sex workers to test.
- In most states and territories the safety and support structures of private sex workers are criminalised.
- Sex workers operating in the unregulated sex industry have less access to formal justice protections.
- HIVST may shift sex industry sexual health messaging from safer sex to knowing everyone's status.
- HIVST may lead to increased surveillance of and stigma against sex workers' living with HIV.



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What are the conditions necessary to ensure that HIVST does not inadvertently undermine the agency and human rights of sex workers?

- Sex workers need continued investment in programs that we know works.
- Sex workers need comprehensive protections against forced or coerced testing.
- Laws that unfairly target, criminalises and forces sex workers to undergo testing needs to be abolished. This includes:
 - removing criminal laws related to sexual health and BBVs, such as laws that criminalise sex workers living with HIV and transmission and 'reasonable precaution' laws.
 - removing laws and policies that coerces or forces sexual health testing, such as spitting laws and mandatory testing.



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What are the conditions necessary to ensure that HIVST does not inadvertently undermine the agency and human rights of sex workers?

- Sex workers need to have their privacy rights adequately protected.
- Although sex workers as a low prevalence population and the evidence demonstrates that they should not be targeted for HIVST, due to the risks of HIVST being used against workers, at a minimum, there needs to be comprehensive and translated sex worker specific information on:
 - the risks of false reactivities and non-reactives,
 - the need for confirmatory testing,
 - state and territory legal rights and responsibilities upon receiving a reactive result,
 - sex worker led or friendly referrals, and
 - what to do in the instance of forced or coerced testing.



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Further Questions?

policy@scarletalliance.org.au

