

Meeting the Needs and Priorities of Young Sex Workers

Young sex workers (aged 18–29) have diverse needs and priorities. They face multiple structural barriers and increased vulnerabilities:



Moral judgments surrounding age, sexuality, and gender, which exacerbate stigma and discrimination from family, and in health, housing, and educational settings



Age of consent laws and the criminalisation of premarital sex



Widespread violence, theft, and extortion by perpetrators posing as clients



Policing and closure of online platforms used by young sex workers, restricting their access to vital resources and peer support



Young sex workers may be harder to reach because they often work or advertise online, rather than in physical work venues



Complex relationships with older sex workers



Reduced access to health and social services. Most settings lack tailored services for young people or are not sensitive to their needs

Sex worker-led strategies for engaging with and building the capacity of young sex workers include:



Peer-to-peer learning (both informal knowledge exchange and formal mentorship)



Community-building activities



Creating young persons advisory structures in sex worker-led organisations



Using online tools and social media



Engaging young people as staff, board members, researchers, outreach workers, and in other roles in sex worker-led organisations

