# 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.

## 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 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 & location of the club, customer harassment, and being treated badly by other people because of what they do were reported as work related health risk by the majority of sample.

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### San Francisco Strip Club History 101:

1988- O’Farrell Theatre reclassified their dancers from employees to independent contractors & began charging the dancers a “stage fee.” Other clubs followed & reclassified their dancers as independent. 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 filed 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.

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.

2006 - COSW presents legislation to Entertainment Commission,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.

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What they did not like:

“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).

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What they did like:

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

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## Aspects of the work that dancers like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N=13</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Maybe or Sometimes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible Hours</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Others Dancers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Good exercise</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of a community</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Like Dancing/performing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best employment options</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Independent Contractor*</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make good money</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Private Booth/Rooms</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping people</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Wage Employees*</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Freedom</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Easy to get employment</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personally rewarding</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Lap dancing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poll dancing</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being my own boss</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Stage shows</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Fantasy aspect</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My manager</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Fitness Needs

1. Exercise: (9/13) about up to 100 minutes/week walking for 30 min/day; (10 of 13) say they are active outside work.


3. Health Education: (12 of 13) receive health education from a professional, 12 of 13 say they always wear a seat belt when driving.

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### Recruitment/Convenience and Snowball Sampling

Recruitment activities were conducted at 16 strip clubs in San Francisco. Inclusion criteria: woman identified, having worked in the last three years. Thirteen (13) dancers were eligible and participated in the assessment. Survey Instrument: structured interview, w/3 semi-structured 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 selected. Findings are not generalizable.

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### Introduction


