



Talking Points for Advocates

- Sex work is when adults choose to offer sexual services in exchange for something of value, usually money. People engage in sex work for numerous reasons. Many feel empowered by their work and participate even when other options are available to them. Others turn to sex work because of poverty, family circumstances, immigration status, drug use, or discrimination.
- Human trafficking is when an individual or group uses force, fraud, or coercion to compel another into some kind of labor, including commercial sex acts. Human trafficking is an egregious abuse of human rights and a critical public health issue that causes long-term harm to individuals and communities.
- When lawmakers conflate human trafficking with consensual adult sex work, innocent people are arrested and prosecuted, victims face barriers to services, and exploitation proliferates in the black market.

ARGUMENTS FOR DECRIMINALIZATION

Safety

- Sex workers deserve to live and work without fear.
- Criminalization fuels violence, exploitation, and silence
- Decriminalization is a proven harm-reduction strategy that makes communities safer.

Dignity

- Every person deserves respect and autonomy over their body and work.
- Sex work is work—and should be treated with the same labor rights and protections.
- Decriminalization affirms the humanity and worth of sex workers.

Organizations Endorsing Decriminalization: Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP); Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; World Health Organization (WHO); UNAIDS; ACLU; Freedom Network USA

ARGUMENTS AGAINST NORDIC/END DEMAND/ENTRAPMENT/EQUALITY MODEL

- Criminalizing any aspect of sex work pushes it underground where sex workers are more vulnerable to exploitation and violence and makes it harder for individuals to come forward to access justice and/or services.
- Assumes all sex work is exploitative which removes any sense of agency or autonomy from sex workers and perpetuates harmful stigma.



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ARGUMENTS AGAINST NORDIC/END DEMAND/ENTRAPMENT/EQUALITY MODEL CONT.

- All of the harms associated with law enforcement continue. Sex workers are surveilled by police, arrested for related crimes and remain at risk of extortion by police.
- Attempts to control consenting adults' choices
- Criminalizes all related activities (i.e. sex workers can't work together for safety).
- Interferes with sex workers' harm reduction practices.

TAGLINES

- "Sex work is work."
- "Safety is a right, not a privilege."
- "Decriminalization protects people, not systems."
- "No one should be arrested for trying to survive."
- "Criminalization fuels violence, not protection."
- "Decriminalization affirms dignity and autonomy."
- "We want safety and dignity, not stigma and punishment."

RELEVANT EVIDENCE

1. A 2018 Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health meta-analysis reviewed over 130 studies conducted over 30 years and made the following critical findings:

- Repressive policing practices around sex work were associated with increased risk of sexual and physical violence at the hands of clients, third parties, and domestic partners.
- Sex workers exposed to these policing practices were put at increased risk of infection with HIV and other STIs, and more likely to have condomless sex than those who had not been.
- Repressive policing of sex workers, their clients, and/or venues disrupted sex workers' support networks, workplace safety, and risk reduction strategies.

2. New Zealand passed the Prostitution Reform Act (PRA) in 2003, fully decriminalizing sex work for New Zealand nationals. According to a study conducted by the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW), there was no evidence of human trafficking among populations where sex work had been decriminalized between 2003 and 2018. Trafficking of migrant sex workers, who are not legally permitted to work under the PRA, persists. Reformers are pushing for the law to decriminalize sex work among migrants as well.



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RELEVANT EVIDENCE CONT.

3. Rhode Island inadvertently decriminalized indoor prostitution in 1980 in an attempt to make laws governing sex work more specific. In 2003 the loophole was noticed by lawmakers and indoor sex work was re-criminalized in 2009. A study published by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that during the six-year window of decriminalization, the number of rapes reported in Rhode Island diminished by 31 percent and the statewide incidence of gonorrhea diminished by 39 percent.

4. The same health and safety benefits of decriminalization are not observed under Entrapment (Nordic/Equality) Model policies. The Northern Ireland Department of Justice released a report in 2019 analyzing three years of the impact of laws criminalizing clients of sex workers in Northern Ireland. Key findings include: An analysis of 173,460 ads shows little effect on the supply of or demand for sex work.

- From 2015 to 2018, there was an increase in reports related to assaults (from 3 to 13), sexual assaults (from 1 to 13), and threatening behavior (from 10 to 42).
- Sex workers are exposed to higher rates of anti-social and nuisance behavior, and report higher levels of anxiety and unease as well as increased stigmatization.