



Decriminalizing Consensual Adult Sex Work - Promoting Safety & Dignity

Why Lawmakers Should Act

Criminalizing consensual adult sex work harms public safety, public health, and human rights. Decriminalization is proven to reduce violence, improve health outcomes, and respect the dignity of people who do this work.

Key Points

1. Safety

- Criminal laws push sex work underground, increasing risks of violence and exploitation.
- Fear of arrest prevents sex workers from reporting crimes or accessing health services.
- Decriminalization enables safer working conditions and cooperation with law enforcement.

2. Dignity

- Sex workers deserve legal protections and respect like any other workers.
- Criminalization creates stigma and barriers to justice and services.
- Decriminalization affirms autonomy and human rights.

3. Evidence-Based Benefits

- Jurisdictions with decriminalization see less violence and better public health.
- Law enforcement can focus on trafficking and exploitation, not consensual work.
- Harm reduction and health programs become more accessible and effective.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the World Health Organization (WHO), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and other national and international organizations recognize that decriminalizing consensual adult sex work increases public health and safety, decreases exploitation and has numerous other benefits for individuals and communities.

Common Concerns

Concern	Fact-Based Response
Will decriminalization increase trafficking?	No. It helps identify and support victims better.
Will it increase sex work?	Sex work already exists; decriminalization improves safety without increasing numbers.
What about the Equality/Entrapment/Nordic/Swedish/End Demand Model of governing prostitution?	We must make laws based on evidence and fact instead of ideology. Unambiguous data shows a clear correlation between laws that criminalize clients and an increase in violence, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and exploitation within the sex trade. Decriminalization is the only means of reducing violence, illness, and exploitation.

Call to Action

Lawmakers can:

- Repeal criminal laws targeting consensual adult sex work. In VT, lawmakers can take up S.54 and H.190, bills to decriminalize consensual adult sex work. They remain pending for the 2026 legislative session.
- Support policies providing labor rights and health access.
- Collaborate with sex worker communities for informed policies.

Safety and dignity are fundamental rights — decriminalize consensual adult sex work now.

Safe Sex Work VT aims to protect the dignity, autonomy, and safety of sex workers and victims of exploitation through decriminalization. Sex work is neither inherently violent nor exploitative — the prohibition of sex work, which has led to an “illicit market” increases the risk of exploitation for sex workers and others. Evidence unequivocally shows that where sex work has been decriminalized, human trafficking decreases and public health and safety increases. Decriminalizing sex work will keep communities safer and allow police to focus on violent crime and serious threats to public safety. Our hope is that all Vermonters will join us in encouraging our elected officials to decriminalize consensual adult sex work.