

Why Decriminalization of sex work? Decriminalization would:

1. Increase safety.

Police crackdowns break up safety networks. Raids, arrests and prosecutions make it harder for sex workers to collectively assert their rights to better working conditions. Street workers are forced into isolated areas and are at greater risk of attack. It is illegal for sex workers to work together inside, yet this is much safer.

2. Free up police time & resources to tackle violent crimes instead of consenting sex.

While the vast majority of murder cases are solved, in one-third of murders of sex workers the killer is never found. Fear of arrest, and for immigrant sex workers, fear of deportation, are the biggest obstacles to reporting rape and other violence. When sex workers do report they have been prosecuted for prostitution offences while their attacker goes free. Violent men take advantage of this legal vulnerability and deliberately target sex workers.

3. Remove sexist, racist and transphobic laws.

Prostitution laws are enforced in a racist and discriminatory way disproportionately targeting women of color working the streets for arrest and prosecution. Trans women face additional harassment and abuse from the police.

4. Enhance health.

Aggressive policing and the stigma associated with sex work makes it harder for sex workers to negotiate condom use with clients and access health services. Possession of condoms has been used as evidence of prostitution.

5. Provide legal recognition of sex workers as workers.

Sex workers could organize to improve their working conditions, get a pension, form and join trade unions.

6. Protect immigrant sex workers.

Police raids are often justified in the name of saving victims of trafficking but target immigrant sex workers working consensually for arrest and deportation. Genuine victims rarely get help.

7. Recognise sex workers' contribution.

The majority of sex workers in the US are mothers, mostly single mothers, supporting families in the face of rising unemployment, welfare cuts, lowering wages, homelessness and debt. They are at risk of having their children taken away and put in foster care, not because of abuse but because of poverty, especially if they are women of color and face arrest.

8. End criminal records.

Convictions can bar access to other jobs and prevent sex workers from leaving prostitution.

9. Help end the hypocritical stigma attached to sex work.

Criminal laws against sex work intrude into people's sex lives and are a form of state control over women's bodies. Consenting sex should not be a crime. Gay sex was decriminalized, why not consenting sex where money is exchanged.

New Zealand successfully decriminalized prostitution in 2003. A government review has shown positive results: no rise in prostitution; women able to report violence without fear of arrest; attacks cleared up more quickly; sex workers more able to leave prostitution as convictions are cleared from their records; drug users treated as patients not criminals.

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