

increasing sex worker safety + reducing trafficking

full decriminalization of sex work is the only model shown to increase worker safety while reducing barriers to resources

full decriminalization	swedish model*	legalization
Removes criminal penalties for sex work and sex work related activities	Removes criminal penalties for sex workers but not for clients or peer organizing leading to clients preferring rushed, isolated, and anonymous interactions which could create dangerous situations for workers	Creates a regulatory framework that leaves some workers criminalized. Low income workers might not be able to afford regulatory fees and licenses. Legal enforcement of regulations leads to higher chance of criminalization of sex workers or sex work related activities
Reduces fear of arrest and allows workers to more freely pursue resources, safety measures and services	Workers' financial resources are impacted, leading them to having less choice in clients and having to take bigger risks in order to survive	Resources provided to law enforcement to enforce regulations. Criminalized workers still experience barriers to resources
Enables workers to more effectively screen clients, engage in more direct communication and organize with other workers to create safety and information networks. Lowers risk of STI and HIV transmission.	Rates of violence against workers increase due to criminalization of safe client-screening options. Clients are less likely to participate in screening and condom usage leading to potentially higher rates of STI and HIV transmission	Criminalized workers still experience risks to safety; non-criminalized workers can lose autonomy around safety practices
Limits interactions between sex workers and police and decreases stigma and legal concerns so that sex workers can safely access sexual health services	Requires sex workers to continue to avoid police due to criminalization of sex work related activities, supplies and location and continue to face harassment while seeking sexual health services	Creates a division between "legal" vs "illegal" sex workers and encourage policing and criminalization and stigma of sex work related activities

*The Swedish Model is also referred to as the Nordic Model, Equality Model, Entrapment Model, and End Demand.

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full decriminalization of sex work is the only model recommended by Amnesty International, the World Health Organization, and sex workers across the globe

full decriminalization

- Removes criminal penalties for sex work and sex work related activities
- Increases worker comfort with law enforcement engagement, including reporting trafficking
- Reduces stigma and increases access to resources
- Lowers rates of HIV and STI transmission
- Allows workers to more effectively screen clients and provide collective safety measures
- Recommended by Amnesty International, The World Health Organization, and sex workers around the globe

swedish model*

- Continued criminalization of clients leads to increased surveillance of workers
- Continued criminalization of third parties penalizes worker-organized safety structures
- Increases violence against workers
- Continues policing efforts against sex workers in the forms of location policing, supply confiscation, client-outing efforts and continued criminalization of crimes relating to sex work
- Does not reduce trafficking or HIV transmission
- Workers' financial resources are negatively impacted, forcing them to engage in higher risk behavior
- Clients are less likely to participate in screening or wear a condom

legalization

- Creates restrictions around who can engage in sex work, and where and how sex work can operate, which leaves some workers criminalized
- Requires workers to publicly out themselves by registering with the state
- Low-income workers might not be able to keep up with registration fees, costs, and licenses
- Workers who remain criminalized still face safety risks and barriers to resources

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**criminalization of sex work harms
sex workers, the LGBTQ community, and society at-large**

public health

- criminalization of sex work doubles the rate of HIV and STIs
- 15% of trans sex workers report living with HIV compared to 1% of trans people not engaged in sex work

economic harm

- in places where sex work is criminalized, workers have lower and less stable incomes
- having a criminal record for sex work reduces future job prospects for workers

social stigma

- sex workers report systemic discrimination
- criminalization is a form of social control of women and sexual/gender minorities

**removing criminalization of sex work benefits
sex workers, the LGBTQ+ community, and society at-large**

public health

- decriminalization of sex work could cut HIV transmission rates by up to 46%
- gonorrhea decreased by 39% in Rhode Island during the period of decriminalization

economic benefits

- According to an ACLU review of research “full decriminalization [of sex work] might allow all sex workers access to more stable, legal income and autonomy.”

stigma reduction

- Margo St. James: “If prostitution were decriminalized, women would finally be given control of their own bodies, control of their own destinies.”

harms of swedish model/end demand

the End Demand or Swedish model exacerbates harms and vulnerabilities experienced by sex workers, pushing them further into unsafe working conditions and limiting their access to essential support services.

safety

- a yearlong study in France of 583 people trading sex found that after the Nordic Model passed in 2016, 63% of people trading sex experienced a deterioration of their work conditions, including increased social isolation, and 42% experienced an increase in violence.
- after Northern Ireland implemented the Nordic Model, workers reported increased stigmatization, anxiety, and unease. There was also an increase of assaults, sexual assaults and threatening behavior toward workers. There was no noted increase in the supply or demand of sex work
- workers in Vancouver, Canada reported a reduced ability to negotiate terms (services, price, use of condoms) with clients after End Demand legislation was implemented. They also reported increased fear and shame in clients, which led to more aggression. Overall, they felt that End Demand impeded their occupational safety.

public health

- a yearlong study in France of 583 people trading sex found that after the Nordic Model passed in 2016, 38% of workers found it more difficult to negotiate the use of condoms.
- people who trade sex were 2x more likely to have HIV and 1.5x more likely not to use condoms under criminalization, including End Demand.
- criminalization and repressive policing of sex work is associated with an increased risk of violence, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections.

housing

- in Norway, the Nordic Model was used to justify the systematic evictions of 400+ people, primarily migrant women, from their homes, in a campaign called "Operation Homeless." "Operation Homeless" increased enforcement of the law prohibiting "promotion" of sex work, including "letting premises for prostitution." Landlords increased evictions of sex workers out of fear of prosecution.
- people trading sex in End Demand countries experience rental discrimination, paying exorbitant rents because landlords fear criminal charges. Amnesty International reports that this lack of access to stable, affordable housing makes people more vulnerable to exploitation and sex trafficking.

SOURCES

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