DECRIMNOW

A CAMPAIGN TO DECRIMINALIZE SEX WORK IN DC

Why Decriminalize Sex Work?

Learn more about why we must fight for the decriminalization of sex work through definitions, articles, infographics, statistics, and other resources.

What is sex work?

"Sex work" is the exchange of money or goods for sexual services. Sex work is an umbrella term that encompasses many different forms of sexual labor, some of which are listed below. Not everyone who participates in these actions will consider themselves sex workers. We use the term "sex work" to reinforce the idea that sex work is work and to allow for a greater discussion of labor rights and conditions. Here are some of the forms of sex work that fall under this umbrella:

- **Street-based:** This is what people often think of when they hear the term "prostitution": someone standing on a corner or walking a street, directly connecting with clients.
- **Online:** Sex workers can also connect with potential clients online, and arrange to meet in homes, at hotels, or other locations.
- **Camming:** This involves someone sharing live video of sexual acts to a paying audience.
- **Phone:** Phone sex operators take calls from clients and talk about different sexual acts with the client for a fee.
- **Exotic dancing**: Exotic dancing can include different forms of stripping, lap dancing, pole dancing, go-go dancing, and burlesque. Exotic dancing is one of the few forms of sex work that is currently legal in the United States. However, in some jurisdictions — such as Atlanta, Georgia — all exotic dancers are required to have a city license to work at a strip club.
- **Adult film:** Adult film actors appear in porn and are typically paid per film, just like other actors.
- **Escorting:** An escort is someone who offers companionship for a fee, and this companionship can include sex.
- **Brothels:** A house or other location where a group of sex workers meet clients.
- **Sensual massage:** This involves providing clients with full body sensual massage and various bodywork practices.
- **Fetish work:** When someone engages in and explores various fetishes with clients for pay.

- **Sugaring:** This involves dating and engaging in romantic relationships in exchange for money and gifts.
- **Nude modeling:** When someone sells nude or partially nude photos.

This list isn't exhaustive, and we're still adding to it! Notice any types of sex work missing? Contact us to let us know! Gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the list.

Check out these articles and infographics about sex work decriminalization.

Articles and Information

On Sex Work Decriminalization

Decreasing Human Trafficking through Sex Work Decriminalization

Sex Work Decriminalization: Factsheet by BYP100

Sex Work Decriminalization: Factsheet by Sex Workers Advocates Coalition

Removing Penalties for Sex Work in DC: Infographic by HIPS

Sex Work, Human Trafficking, and the Harm of Conflating the Two: Factsheet by Asijiki

Sex Work 101: Toolkit by Reframe Health & Justice Consulting DC

Human Trafficking and Sex Workers' Rights: Factsheet by Freedom Network USA

The Criminalization of Sex Work: Women and Girls of Color: Factsheet

Associations between sex work laws and sex workers' health: A systematic review and meta-analysis of quantitative and qualitative studies

Read some statistics about sex work.

Sex Work Statistics: On Human Trafficking

According to the legal definition of child sex trafficking, any minor who engages in survival sex has a trafficker. **But less than 15%** of those legally defined as child sex trafficking victims have a pimp, trafficker, or other exploitative third party, according to a 2016 study by the Center for Court Innovation.

Some anti-trafficking organizations suggest that **up to 500,000 youth** are being trafficked for sex in the U.S. The number comes from estimates from the National Network for Youth that show that between 500,000 and 1.8 million youth in the U.S. are experiencing homelessness. Because **more than 60%** of homeless youth have experienced physical or sexual assault while sleeping in public spaces, anti-trafficking organizations correctly suggest that this population is most vulnerable to exploitation.

The majority of human trafficking cases are actually labor trafficking. According to the International Labor Association (ILO), there are **24.9 million victims** of human trafficking worldwide. Of these, 16 million (64%) were exploited for labor, 4.8 million (19%) were sexually exploited, and 4.1 million (17%) were exploited in state-imposed forced labor.

Sex Work Statistics: On Anti-Trans Discrimination

According to a study by the DC Office of Human Rights (DC OHR), **48%** of DC employers preferred a less qualified cisgender applicant over a more qualified transgender applicant.

The 2015 DC Trans Needs Assessment showed that **55% of Black trans adults** are unemployed in DC. As a result of employment discrimination, transgender people of color therefore frequently turn to the underground economy to access survival needs.

The DC Trans Coalition found that **23% of Black transgender people** were physically or sexually assaulted by police because they were perceived to be transgender and involved in the sex trade.

Sex Work Statistics: On Sexual Violence

In DC, one in five sex workers (or individuals profiled as sex workers) have been approached by police asking them for sex.

80% of street-based sex workers have experienced physical/sexual assault on the job.

Sex Work Statistics: On Racial Dynamics

85% of DC's trans sex workers are Black and Latinx.

In 2015, nearly **40% of adults** arrested for prostitution were Black. This disparity is larger for minors, where approximately 60% of youth under the age of 18 arrested for prostitution were Black

—despite being categorized as victims of sex trafficking under federal law.

Sex Work Statistics:
On Incarceration

DC has only had a Safe Harbor law to prevent people under the age of 18 from being charged with prostitution since 2014. Despite this law, one of the leading causes of incarceration for Black girls in DC is prostitution.

In 2015, Metro Police Department arrested **723 adults** for prostitution and **6 juveniles**.

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Why Decriminalize Sex Work?

Survival Resources

Sex Work Myth Debunker

DEMAND SUPPORT FOR DECRIMNOW FROM DC COUNCIL & CANDIDATES!

Why Decriminalize Sex Work?

Click the resource above to read articles and learn statistics about sex work decriminalization

Survival Resources

Click the resource above to access resources and direct services for people involved in sex work

Sex Work Myth Debunker

Click the resource above to learn the truth about the myths that contribute to the stigma of sex work

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