

**Forum:** Human Rights Council

**Issue #2:** Measures to address the violation of human rights among individuals engaged in the sex industry

**Student Officer:** Jaden Jeong

**Position:** Chair of the Human Rights Council

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## Introduction

Prostitution, often recognized as the oldest profession in the world, involves the exchange of sexual services for economic profit, globally generating over one hundred billion dollars annually. Today, there are an estimated 40 million sex workers across the globe, with over 80% being female (Carlson), and over 75% of them belonging within the age group of 13-25 (European Parliament). Yet, despite its prominence in global society, the long-lasting stigma against the practice of sex work, often deriving from

religious beliefs, puts sex workers in poor working conditions, further sparking concerns regarding the protection of their basic human rights.

The main threat to the rights of sex workers is different laws and regulations that each country enforces towards the sex industry. While there were movements to decriminalize or legalize the sexwork within the last two decades, arguing that the government should not be telling adults who they can have sexual relations with, majority of the government still either partially/fully criminalizes sex work around a common moral belief that the practice of prostitution is unrighteous and pay for sex should not be legal. While it is not entirely wrong for a country to criminalize sex work, since its perception and interpretation is fully dependent on different moral and cultural values, the reason why criminalization of sex work is being globally discussed and few countries attempt to break the mold is due to the danger and risk that the sex workers have to face as an aftermath of criminalization.

While there may be various human rights threats that sex workers might face due to criminalization, the main concerns that are largely discussed are the victimization of sex workers and the lack of legal protection & access to external support. The concern of victimization comes from the lack of governmental regulation of the sex industry, putting sex workers at higher risk of exposure to crimes besides prostitution (If considered illegal). These include human trafficking, forced labor, physical abuse, exploitation, etc... Moreover, the nature of sex work, where individuals under hardships, either voluntary or involuntary, decide to join the industry due to various factors such as financial instability, lack of employment opportunities, legal status, human trafficking, enforcement, drug abuse, and family rejection, exacerbates the exposure to victimization.

Yet, despite these risks and exposures, sex workers in countries where sex work is criminalized lack legal support and protection, facing the consequences of being arrested themselves while being victims themselves. Not only that, despite various physical health risks such as rape, sexual harassment, unwanted pregnancy, and a 30 times higher chance of contracting STDs (WHO); sex workers struggle to access proper health care service in countries where sex work is criminalized due to lack of legal

status, and also in decriminalized countries as well because of rejection of service deriving common stigma around the sex workers. Thus, despite all the programs and laws that have been implemented, this issue still persists, and the solution lies in the protection of women, men, and children in situations of vulnerability.

### Definition of Key Terms

**Brothel:** A house or location where prostitution is practiced. Typically, the owner either hires or exploits a female to provide sexual services for a fee, then either pays the employees a salary or a portion of the transaction made during each sexual service. Done on a larger scale, and thus often defined as a house where two or more females reside to practice prostitution. (UNHCR)

**Criminalization:** Turning an activity or behavior into a criminal offense by making it illegal. In regard to this topic, prohibiting prostitution, or the selling and buying of sexual conduct. (Yale)

**Decriminalization:** The process of repealing or ceasing to treat a certain activity or behavior as a criminal offense, in specific removing criminal penalties associated with it, yet still considering it illegal by law. (Not the same term as legalization) "Removal of criminal penalties for the buying and selling of sexual acts, specifically those categorized as prostitution." (ACLU)

**Human Trafficking:** "Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of people through force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them for profit" (UNODC). Often associated with the sex industry as a method for the recruitment of sex workers used by brothel owners.

**STD:** Sexually Transmitted Disease, a form of disease and infection transmitted from one person to another through sexual contact, often associated with sexual intercourse through the genitals. Common viruses/diseases include HIV, herpes, and syphilis. (Harvard Health)

**Stigma:** A negative attitude or stereotype associated with a specific characteristic, group, circumstance, quality, etc, often leading to societal discrimination and exclusion. Frequently faced by sex workers due to the negative perception of the industry, without any consideration of the circumstances or background. (Fitzgerald-Husek)

**Sexual Exploitation:** Actual or attempted abuse of one's position and vulnerability in society, depending on others for living, to obtain sexual favours or enforce involuntary contribution to the sex work. (UNHCR)

**Prostitution/Sex Work:** Selling and exchange of sexual services for money or other economic gain. Though synonymous, the term "sex work" is more often utilized to emphasize the labor aspect of the practice, while the term "prostitution" is more often used when referencing specific legal provisions. (United Nations)

**Public Service:** Any service intended to address a specific need in society. Aimed at supporting communities, serving others, and protecting public rights. Public service often includes hospitals, schools, law firms, civil rights organizations, transportation, social services, and more. (Cornell)

## General Overview

### Exposure to Crimes and Victimization

A severe consequence of prostitution is the sex worker's increased risk of victimization in other crimes that physically and/or mentally harm them, threatening individuals before and after partaking in the sex industry.

For instance, even before being involved in the sex industry, the nature of the industry that largely attracts individuals with unstable socioeconomic or legal status places sex workers at an increased risk of human/sex trafficking, forcing them to commit themselves involuntarily. Of course, some individuals partake in the sector through their own will, seeking a source of income that meets their circumstances and needs. Yet, it is still important to recognize that out of 27.6 million trafficked individuals world wide, 23%

of the victims are involved sex trafficking (US Homeland Security); highlighting the severity of involuntary engagement in the field of sex work that makes sex workers criminals for being a sex worker, but also victimized as a victim of sex trafficking who involuntarily committed themselves to the industry under pressure.

This risk of victimization of sex workers threatens them even during and after they commit themselves to the industry. For instance, the sex workers have a 45-75% chance of experiencing sexual violence on the job, with many reporting these to be related with rape, sexual harassment, physical violence for denial, and more (Swift). Moreover, these sexual violences during/after working are equally exposed to all sex workers, no matter their own will of commitment, thus emphasizing the violent nature of the sex industry that must be considered.

With that said, the decriminalization of sex work has been discussed actively among nations as a potential solution to combat these crimes, with countries that have implemented this measure arguing that decriminalizing sex work opens room to report and access legal protection. However, there have been opposing viewpoints to this argument as well, with some experts arguing that decriminalizing sex work actually increases the overall rate of sexual violence and trafficking within the nation, with criminalization of sex work showing a correlation with decreased trafficking rate (Harvard Law School). Demonstrating the controversial debate regarding implementing decriminalization as a key resolution to combat sexual violence.

### **Health and Safety**

Other consequences of prostitution are an increased risk of health issues, considering the lack of safe sex within the industry that often forces the workers to have sexual intercourse with their clients without using any protection or contraceptives. For instance, "In a study of women who acknowledged sex work and who accessed services at a family planning clinic, 40% reported that they were offered more money for unprotected sex, 30% reported a history of client condom refusal, and 16.5% reported they were forced to have sex in the past" (Russo), highlighting the health risk of unprotected sex, which possibly could lead to far severe consequences such as unwanted pregnancy or capturing STDs. In fact, according to the UNFPA, sex workers

around the world are 30 times more likely to contract STDs than the general population, further emphasizing the severity of health risks that sex workers must face as a part of their work.

Hence, the decriminalization of sex work suggests high potential to combat these health risks faced by the sex workers, with experts arguing that the decriminalization of sex work has the potential to decrease STD infection by 33-46%, as it works as a measure to advocate for safe sex and increase the worker's access to proper health care services and frequent health checks (UNFPA). Yet, just like how it was for the issue of sexual violence, many experts argue that decriminalization does not directly increase the workers' access to proper health care, as they often encounter stigma (further elaborated in the section below); thus emphasizing how the decriminalization of sex work can't be a definitive solution to address the human rights issue of the sex workers, and how its aftermath and consequences should be deliberately considered before being widely implemented.

### **Lack of Access to Public Services/Stigma**

As mentioned previously, the main reason why sex workers must face the consistent violence and health risks is the lack of legal support and protection that they receive; especially considering that in countries where sex work is criminalized, the workers must take the risk of being arrested and possibly being fined or imprisoned when attempting to access public services such as hospital or police to keep themselves away from the previously mentioned issues. In fact, 25% of the sex workers reported that they were rejected from accessing the health care services due to their occupation, with 60% reporting that they fear going to the health care institutions (WHO). Moreover, when it comes to seeking legal protections from the government as a measure to cope with unjustifiable exposure to crimes and violence, sex workers in reality face additional violence throughout this process. Indeed, 89.2% of the sex workers have reported that they encountered some sort of violence throughout their interaction with a police officer when reporting the crime and violence that they were victimized by, with an unspoken risk of arrest that they had to face (Stenersen).



Thus, these statistics often lead one to think that decriminalizing prostitution could address the issue of lack of access to public services and legal protection, since the workers don't have to risk being arrested by public service institutions. Nevertheless, in countries like the Netherlands, where sex work is completely legalized, the sex workers still report that they face the fear of being discriminated against, abused, and rejected by the officials at public service institutions due to the long lasting stigma that couldn't be broken simply by decriminalizing it and making it legal for them to access these services solely on paper (Struyf). Therefore, emphasizing the fact that while decriminalization of sex work could possibly be a plausible solution that could address the issue of lack of legal protection and protect the rights of the sex workers to a certain degree, the potential risks and aftermath that it could bring make its global implementation a controversial topic fully dependent on one's interpretation of its pros and cons.

## Major Parties Involved and Their Views

### Netherlands

The Netherlands is one of the most progressive and remarkable countries regarding the issue of the rights of sex workers, having legalized and regulated it since the 2000s as a measure to promote the workers' basic rights, safety, and health. The government of the Netherlands ensures the legalization of sex work as long as it involves sex between consenting adults above the age of 18, and also enforces strict regulations on every aspect of the industry, expanding beyond sex workers themselves to others involved in the issue as well, such as the brothel owners (Netherlands). Moreover, unlike many other countries that partially legalized sex work (legalizing selling sex but criminalizing any other activities involved, such as owning a brothel and buying sex), the Netherlands legalized owning a brothel as well, resulting in the establishment of well known red-light district of Amsterdam, known as De Wallen, which is officially sanctioned and regulated by the Dutch government (Amsterdam). Thus, the Netherlands serves as a crucial benchmark for many other countries legalizing prostitution, yet still faces concerns such as the system's vulnerability to trafficking, lasting influence of the stigma, etc. (Gretener)

## **Sweden**

As a pioneer of the Nordic Model in 1999—which criminalizes the purchase of sex/prostitution and ownership of brothel while decriminalizing the practice of prostitution itself, aimed at directly targeting the buyers and reducing the demand of prostitution—Sweden served as a key advocate for sex workers' rights for decades, aiming to change the perception of sex workers as victims rather than criminals (Nordic Model Now!). While this model influenced the sex industry and prostitution policy of other countries, with a few countries such as Sweden, Norway, Canada, Iceland, France, and more directly implementing the model, the extreme conditions and polarizing nature of the model itself often make it a controversial policy among other nations.

## **United States of America**

Despite being the globally recognized advocate for human rights, the United States takes a significantly closed approach when it comes to human rights and the protection of individuals in the sex industry due to the lasting influence of conservatism and religious history within the nation. Except for Nevada (Las Vegas), which permits licensed brothel ownership in certain counties, and Maine, which decriminalized prostitution but not the act of purchasing it, all 48 states consider the act of prostitution illegal, both selling and purchasing (AIDS United). Not only that, the passage of the Sesta-Fosta Act in 2018, aimed at combating online sex trafficking by criminalizing an act of knowingly assisting, facilitating, or supporting sex trafficking and exploitation, further molded the strict view of the United States federal government against prostitution in its entirety (AIDS United). Thus, the sex workers in the US are considered much more vulnerable to trafficking, violence, and exploitation than the sex workers of Europe, showing the division of opinion and perspective regarding this issue even within the countries of alliance that share similar views of human rights and their protection.

## **Russia**

Often criticized by other countries for its extreme policies, which frequently violate human rights, Russia's systematic abuse is also reflected in the sex industry, with the government neglecting the human rights of individuals in the sex industry by treating them as criminals rather than victims without consideration of the background or reason



for involvement (NSWP). Thus, this punitive approach following strict criminalization of prostitution in Russia often leads to various limitations and threats to the protection of the rights of sex workers in Russia, especially when it comes to accessing public services such as health care services due to structural barriers and rejections, highlighting the urgent need for reform and protection of the sex worker's rights (King)

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia enforces one of the harshest policies against the sex industry in the world, with all forms of sex work strictly criminalized and punishable under the Sharia law, an Islamic legal system based on religious and moral codes for Muslims deriving from the words of the Quran and Sunnah. While there were efforts to protect individuals from violence in general, including sexual violence deriving from prostitution in 2013, the strict Sharia principles of the prohibition of adultery, abortion, and any type of immoral sexual relationship besides marriage threaten the protection of the rights of sex workers in Saudi Arabia (UNFPA). Thus, Saudi Arabia demonstrates the restriction, discrimination, and lack of protection of sex workers in the sex industry deriving from strict religious principles and laws, showing how the expression of rights and legal protection of sex workers are strictly repressed in religious countries.

### **Timeline of Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
2400 BCE	The earliest recording of prostitution as an occupation in ancient Babylonia. Though controversial, often recognized as the world's first ever profession (Jenkins).
1600 BCE - 476 CE	Throughout ancient Greece to ancient Rome, prostitutes were commonly recognized and considered a legal profession, even being regulated, registered, and taxed (Mark).

6th-15th century CE	Countries, dynasties, and empires began criminalizing sex work, prohibiting brothels and prostitution. These enforcements were often associated with religious moral beliefs, with medieval European kingdoms influenced by Christian moral laws (Brown University), and Islamic caliphates influenced by Sharia law, which strictly prohibits zina (unlawful sexual intercourse), (Brandeis University).
16th century	Yet difficult to pinpoint a specific time period or person, the term "venereal disease" became a commonly used term to generalize a type of disease transmitted through sexual intercourse, later becoming known as an STD (UK Health Security Agency).
1864	The UK passed the Contagious Diseases Act, regulating women suspected of prostitution to reduce the transmission of STDs within the British army. Sparking public stigmatization of sex work (Policy Navigator).
1910	The United States Congress passed the Mann Act, criminalizing "any woman or girl for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose," which influenced other nations to pass similar acts, as the US began becoming a world power through its imperialistic policies during the early 20th century (Legal Information Institute).
1930	The League of Nations established the "Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Women and Children", aimed at addressing the issue of sex trafficking prevalent among women and children. Highlights the rise of international efforts to protect individuals from sex trafficking and involuntary involvement in prostitution, yet also highly contributed to the stigmatization of sex work and the continuous criminalization of it in newly established nations (UN).
1949	The United Nations held the "Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others," which called for the abolition of prostitution to combat human trafficking.

Became a foundation for global anti-prostitution prohibitionist policy (OHCHR).

1962 The National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) was established as a measure to combat all forms of sexual violence, often advocating for the decriminalization of victims, sex workers who have been used and harmed for sex, while penalizing their abusers (NCOSE).

1973 Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (COYOTE) was founded by a former prostitute, Margo St. James, in San Francisco. Concerned with the exclusion of the voices of the prostitutes from the debates regarding prostitution, the organization began advocating for the better recognition of sex workers in society, mainly calling for the decriminalization of sex work and equal treatment of sex workers (Duke University).

1975 Approximately 100 sex workers gathered and occupied Saint-Nizier Church in Lyon, France, to protest for the decriminalization of sex work, expressing anger regarding the poor protection and living conditions they face. Marked the beginning of international protests demanding the decriminalization of prostitution (Sandas).

1999 Sweden introduced the Nordic Model, which criminalized the act of buying sex, but not selling it, mainly aimed at reducing the demand for prostitution while protecting the rights and autonomy of the sex workers (Nordic Model Now!). Later, countries like Norway, France, Canada, and Ireland implemented the model (NWAC).

2000 The Netherlands became the first country to legalize all forms of sex work, including brothel ownership and operation, advocating for the protection of the rights of sex workers, while ensuring its regulation through strict requirements and registration (The Netherlands).

- 2003 With the passage of the Prostitution Reform Act of 2003, New Zealand became the first country in the world to decriminalize prostitution (not legalize), removing the penalties associated with the involvement in sex work (New Zealand Legislation).
- 2013 The United Nations International Labor Organization released "Roadmap for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour: a training guide for policy makers", a training guideline for government officials, NGOs, and other institutions to prevent child prostitution and trafficking (ILO)
- 2016 Amnesty International officially endorsed full decriminalization of sex work to protect health and human rights, arguing that the poor condition and treatment of sex workers could be significantly improved through its decriminalization (Amnesty International).
- 2022 European Sex Workers Rights Alliance's congress was held in the European Parliament, aimed at reuniting sex workers from across the globe and discussing the industry struggles, with possible solutions and strategies to help the sex workers fight for their rights (European Sex Workers Rights Alliance).
- 2025 With still more than half of the globe criminalizing and enforcing penalties on sex work, the rights of sex workers and their poor treatment still remain a controversial global issue with various perspectives and opinions surrounding it. Yet, the international society is continuously making efforts to improve the workers' quality of life and protect their rights, with the United Nations continuously updating its framework for sex workers to advocate for the decriminalization of sex work, ensuring equal access to public services and protection from violence (OHCHR).

## UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

### **Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Women and Children/Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others**

In the earlier days of the United Nations, even going back to the League of Nations (predecessor of the UN), the UN frequently advocated for the strict criminalization and abolition of sex work, seeing it as a severe threat to international society, especially due to its close connection to trafficking activities. For instance, throughout the establishment of the “Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Women and Children” during the League of Nations, countries advocated for the strict regulation and prohibition of prostitution as a measure to address sex trafficking (UN). Moreover, during the “Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others,” the UN called for the abolition of prostitution to combat human trafficking (OHCHR). Thus, in the earlier days of the UN, the general trend regarding the issue of sex work was mainly focused on prohibiting and regulating prostitution, which contributed to the poor protection of sex workers' rights, stigmatization, and global anti-prostitution prohibitionist policy.

### **Nordic Model**

The Nordic Model is a set of laws adopted by several Nordic countries regarding the decriminalization of prostitution. Originally introduced by Sweden in 1999 as the Kvinnofrid Initiative, this model advocated for the protection of the rights of sex workers across the globe, promoting sex workers' equal access to public services, safe transition to another profession, etc... Specifically, this model had four main elements: first, decriminalization of sex work in which made it legal to sell sex but illegal to buy it; second, exit system for women who want to leave the sex industry, consisting of employment alternatives, psychological support, housing, finance, education, and more; third, public education, in specific raising awareness about the topic and poor treatment of the sex workers to remove stigma; and fourth, penalization of anyone who is promoting prostitution, including running brothels or contributing to sex trafficking (Nordic Model Now!). Thus, while this model is considered controversial and extreme based on different moral views regarding the topic of sex work—countries believing all forms of sex work immoral and should be punished—the Nordic model is one of the most important resolutions that marks the beginning of international efforts to protect

the rights of sex workers, with it being implemented by other countries that show large interest in human rights such as Norway (2009), Iceland (2009), Canada (2014), Northern Ireland (2015), France (2016), Ireland (2017), and Israel (2020). (NWAC)

### **Modern day UN involvement (Roadmap for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour: a training guide for policy makers/A Guide on the Human Rights of Sex Workers)**

Unlike the earlier United Nations involvements in the topic, the UN has made more progressive efforts in the topic of the protection of the rights of sex workers, now still seeing sex work as a field that should be controlled and regulated, yet at the same time separating the sex work and ones who are involved in it to protect their rights, acknowledging the fact that the sex workers are frequently victimized and forced to commit themselves. For instance, the United Nations introduced a training guideline for government officials, NGOs, and other institutions to prevent child prostitution and trafficking, named "Roadmap for achieving the elimination of the worst forms of child labour: a training guide for policy makers," in which calls for constant efforts to provide education and support to prevent kids from being involved in prostitution and being victimized (ILO). Not only that, the United Nations, in the most recent Guide on the Human Rights of Sex Workers, released in March 2024, has demonstrated its eagerness to show its full support and interest in the decriminalization of sex work as a measure to combat human rights violations and victimization of sex workers. In fact, in this guide, the United Nations explicitly showed its concerns surrounding the common stigmatization of sex work, arguing that sex work should be considered a legitimate work and profession, and thus ultimately advocate for the full decriminalization of sex work to combat health and violence risks faced by sex workers under criminalization (OHCHR).

### **Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue**

Over time, different agencies and countries have attempted to resolve the issue by suggesting and implementing various measures to ensure legal protection of sex workers, equal access to public services, and societal recognition of sex work as a legitimate profession to protect the rights of sex workers. Many of these models/policies



either promoted legalization or decriminalization as a main solution for the issue, and some of these examples are:

### **Nordic Model**

Starting with Sweden in 1999, numerous nations (mostly European countries) have implemented this pro-sex worker policy, advocating for the decriminalization of the act of selling sex, but keeping the act of buying sex illegal. Therefore, this model clearly demonstrates an attempt at resolving this issue that puts a grand emphasis on protecting the rights of sex workers in particular, yet keeping a negative perspective towards the act of buying sex, running a brothel, and engaging in sex trafficking. However, despite its clear goal of solely focusing on the improvement of the treatment of sex workers, this policy remains controversial and questionable. For instance, Dr. Maria Berlin of SITE has noted that while the Nordic Model has shown its effectiveness in reducing violence for indoor prostitution, it also had an unintended consequence of increased intimate partner violence and sexual assaults due to former clients expressing frustration towards non-prostitutes (Berlin). Moreover, the LSE report has expressed that while the model is effective in regions where sex workers are largely made up of local workers, in regions where the majority of the sex workers consist of immigrant workers, the implementation of the Nordic Model in reality increases the worker's chance of deportation, while still keeping their access to healthcare and legal protection limited, mainly due to their societal status of being an immigrant (LSE); demonstrating the limitation of the model for becoming a global resolution for the issue.

### **The Netherlands Legalization**

The Netherlands became the first country in the world to fully legalize sex work in 2000, meaning that they became the first country to legalize selling sex, buying sex, running a brothel, and other sex work-related acts. Thus, this attempt by the Netherlands demonstrated one of the most extreme policies in addressing the issue of the lack of protection of the rights of sex workers, marking a significant change in the international trend regarding the acknowledgement of sex work as a legitimate profession and the protection of the workers' rights. That said, despite strict regulations and requirements enforced by the Netherlands government, the extreme nature of the policy and its unintended consequences keep this attempt a questionable measure in addressing the

issue. In fact, while the policy in general showed positive results with reduced risk of violence and increased access to public services, various sex workers continuously report their fear and rejection in accessing public services, including healthcare and legal protection, due to their stigmatization (Struyf), making one question the effectiveness of legalization/decriminalization as a measure to address the issue.

## Possible Solutions

### Decriminalization/Legalization of Sex Work

While controversial and often considered an extreme measure to tackle the issue, the decriminalization/legalization remains one of the most efficient and rapid solutions, as well as the one that shows the most dramatic change in the quality of life of the sex workers. In fact, various countries have already implemented this solution in the form of the Nordic Model or their own law, and the United Nations also recently began recognizing decriminalization as an effective measure to tackle the human rights issue of sex workers. Yet, major limitations still exist. First, while decriminalization/legalization significantly improves access for sex workers to public services in the matter of law, the solution doesn't necessarily remove the social stigma against the workers, which keeps the barrier of limited access to public services in reality. Second, the solution has serious limitations for becoming a universal resolution because decriminalizing/legalizing sex work requires each government to abandon its views against the immorality of the practice entirely. Third, the division between decriminalization and legalization. While similar, decriminalization and legalization of sex work have a clear difference, as decriminalization only removes the legal consequences of being a sex worker, while legalization fully recognizes the legality of the practice of sex work, including sex trafficking and brothel operation. Thus, sparking additional debate regarding which solution is more effective and aligns with the moral beliefs of each nation. Thus, while it has a great potential of becoming the most dramatic solution to improve the rights of sex workers, the solution has multiple limitations and possible unexpected aftermath that must be deeply discussed and agreed upon for the solution to express its full potential.

**Anonymous Access to Public Services**

One of the main human rights issues among sex workers is their limited access to proper healthcare and legal police protection despite their increased exposure to health risks and crimes. This solution promotes the access of sex workers to these public services while keeping their personal information/profession anonymous, and maintaining sex work illegal and criminalizing participation in the industry. Therefore, the sex workers could more easily access these services with reduced risk of denial and legal consequences. That said, while this solution addresses some of the major issues regarding the human rights of sex workers, the solution still faces some of the most essential limitations. Primarily, it only covers the major human rights issue of sex workers, ignoring other issues and violations that the workers may encounter. Moreover, the issue of anonymous access to healthcare and legal protection is a sensitive matter that extends beyond the passage of a resolution, requiring the reform of the universal healthcare and legal system. This makes the solution a much more complicated process to implement than it may seem.

**Border Control**

Sex trafficking is an essential issue that is closely associated with the human rights of sex workers, as it not only victimizes the workers, but also brings in victims to a foreign country without any legal process being completed, which in result makes them an illegal immigrant and creates an extra barrier for the workers from accessing public services. Thus, not only to improve the human rights protection of the sex trafficking victims, but also to guide the previous solutions to fully express their effectiveness after the passage of the resolution, stricter border control regulating sex trafficking across the border must be advocated.

**Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

The United Nations is indirectly, yet deeply invested in addressing the issue of the lack of protection of the human rights of sex workers as a part of its 2030 agenda, which includes various human rights-related goals set to be improved.

**SDG #3: Good Health and Well-Being**

As mentioned earlier, sex workers are often exposed to increased health risks, including physical harm, STDs, unwanted pregnancy, and more. Yet, despite these increased exposures, sex workers often lack access to quality health care services due to the criminalization and stigmatization of sex work, which is a significant barrier and limitation in ensuring the protection of the rights of sex workers. Thus, the United Nations with its Sustainable Development Goal #3 which aims to “end the epidemics of AIDS; ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services; and achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all” (Goal 3) is working to improve health-related rights not only for sex workers, but also for individuals around the world more broadly.

**SDG #5: Gender Equality**

It is crucial to understand the fact that the issue of the rights of sex workers is closely correlated to gender inequality, acknowledging that over 80% of the sex workers are female, and they face increased risk of victimization compared to other sex workers in the industry who are male (Carlson). Hence, the United Nations, with its Sustainable Development Goal number 5, targeted at “ending all forms of discrimination against all women and girls; eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls; eliminating all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation; recognizing unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies; and ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights” (Goal 5), is making significant efforts to ensure the gender equality at society regarding health, employment, safety, etc... by 2030, which is an essential step for getting closer to the protection of sex workers' rights across the globe.

## Appendix



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution\\_law#/media/File:Prostitution\\_laws\\_of\\_the\\_world2.svg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prostitution_law#/media/File:Prostitution_laws_of_the_world2.svg)

**Source A:** The image above is a color-coded map representing the status of sex work laws as of 2023. Each color represents different laws that each country implements, along with the description of each policy. (Neo-abolitionism is the Nordic Model.) While this image is a great place to begin your research, especially checking what your assigned country's position is, please note that this image is from Wikipedia and thus requires the delegates to double-check their country's position. (Please avoid using Wikipedia as your source under all circumstances.)

<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/a-guide-on-the-human-rights-of-sex-workers-March2024.pdf>

**Source B:** The link to the presentation below is the United Nations-published “Guide on the Human Rights of Sex Workers”. The presentation briefly explains the health, legal, and societal problems caused by the criminalization of prostitution, and a few possible solutions that the UN suggests as measures to address this issue. Thus, to better your understanding of the topic from the United Nations perspective, the researchers suggest to at least skim through the presentation after reading this issue bulletin.

## THE DATA

In 2019 approximately **8%** of new adult HIV infections globally were among sex workers of all genders (1). In countries with data, the prevalence of HIV is significantly higher among transgender sex workers than cis-gendered sex workers, in some cases more than 20 times higher (3).

Criminal laws, law enforcement practices, stigma and discrimination increase risks of violence for sex workers such that

**45% to 75%** of adult female sex workers are assaulted or abused at least once in their lifetimes (4).



Intersecting socio-structural contexts of racism, transphobia, economic insecurity and migration status can also serve to increase vulnerability to violence for different groups of sex workers (5).



Among sex workers,  
**32.8%**  
do not know their  
HIV status.

Less than half of female  
sex workers stated  
that they were able to  
access at least two HIV  
prevention services  
in the past three  
months in 16 of the 30  
reporting countries in  
recent years (1).

[https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/05-hiv-human-rights-factsheet-sex-work\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/05-hiv-human-rights-factsheet-sex-work_en.pdf)

**Source C:** The Image above is from the “HIV and Sex Work” factsheet published by the UNAIDS in 2021. The infographic above shows the close relationship between sex workers and STDs, specifically HIV, and thus effectively shows the health risks that sex workers encounter using statistics. For instance, it shows that the sex workers have a 30



times higher chance of acquiring HIV than the general female population, and also that 32.8% aren't aware of their HIV status. Thus, to better your understanding regarding the issue of the health risks that sex workers face, please take a look at this factsheet carefully.

<https://www.nswp.org/>

**Source D:** The link to the site below will guide you to the website of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, a non-profit company that advocates for the improvement of the rights and treatment of sex workers. On this website, the delegate will be able to search for different movements, events, and projects happening in each country that advocate for the improvement of the rights of sex workers. Thus, this website is a great source to understand the internal conflicts/events happening regarding the issue within each nation.

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