

It is crucial that the sexual assault of sex workers is not seen just as a consequence of a culture of male sexual entitlement and violence, but equally as a consequence of the legal and regulatory environments in which women are engaging in sex work. The purpose of emphasising this, of asking, 'what are the laws, mechanisms and protocols that enhance sex workers' safety?', is to maximise the capacities of sex workers to work safely. Research on violence against sex workers, including sexual violence, has pointed "to the power relationship between client and worker as being a crucial factor in the safety of commercial sex encounters" (Plumridge & Abel, 2001, p. 78). The institutional, legal and occupational organisation of sex work has a significant impact on shaping the safety or unsafety of commercial sex encounters. Sex workers' knowledge about risk minimisation and prevention should be seen as expert knowledge and used to inform legislation, policies and strategies to prevent violence and sexual violence.

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has been recently implemented in Sweden. As yet, there is little conclusive evaluative evidence of whether this has lessened women's involvement in sex work or made it easier to exit the industry. The research available is contradictory. Some suggest that prosecuting men as clients has made street-based sex work more dangerous rather than less. Clients are more anxious about being caught and so pressure sex workers to find more secluded and isolated areas to complete the exchange. From sex workers' perspectives, they now have to make quick decisions about whether the client looks safe, and this leaves little time for workers to negotiate what will take place. Other research suggests this new framework has made it easier for women to leave the industry. See Östergren (2004).

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