

Dear Sir/Madame,

I would like to submit evidence against clause 6 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill at committee Stage. I have reason to believe that creating an offense of purchasing sexual services would be counter productive and more harmful than helpful to existing Sex Workers in Northern Ireland.

Please find my attached submission, which details information showing how the Swedish model has indeed been detrimental and made conditions worse for Sex Workers, leaving them without support or health care. Is this really what you want for the women working in Northern Ireland?

I would suggest it better to act harder with the bill and legal resources already available, with longer sentences and sentences that fit the crime.

Yours faithfully,

Poppy

# Submission to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence by a Current Sex Worker

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Review of Legislation on Prostitution 2012

Sex Worker

2/28/2013

This document reviews and analyses how new legislation may affect current Sex Workers in Ireland, who are largely working free of will and how the Swedish Model would have a negative impact on Sex Workers, including trafficked women wishing to be rescued.

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## Personal Introduction

I am a Sex Worker and have been involved in this occupation for approximately 4 years. I started part-time in order to supplement my regular wage and soon discovered that I enjoyed the work and that I would be in a better position to pay off debts incurred through further education and maintain my financial responsibilities better by moving to full-time.

I am keen to improve my financial status and as such I do declare my taxes, so that I can get back into the black and pay off my debts in full. I did have the option to continue in my previous work, but this would have meant moving away completely and my son was studying for his GCSE's at the time, so for me it made sense to stay where we were and for me to continue with Sex Work.

While I am working, I am also furthering my own education, to broaden my choices at a later date. Where I am enjoying my work now, I can see that I will not always want to remain in this career and am making provision for my future, with the money earned.

As a Sex Worker who works independently I set my own boundaries and work well within them. I vet all my clients on the phone and if they sound abusive or misogynistic I refuse the booking. I am also at liberty to terminate a booking at any point during the time paid for, if I am not entirely happy. I have created a website that reflects my personality and encourages clients that suit me best. I largely enjoy the company of intelligent, polite and respectful men who are looking for good company.

In the four years that I have worked, I have never met a man who has abused me or encountered any violence. I have never been forced to do anything that I was not willing to do and where I do need money to pay for the cost of living, I am in a position where I can refuse work if I do not feel up to it due to fatigue, illness or wary of the caller and always put my health and well-being before money.

With further regard to my health and well-being. I attend a GUM clinic once every three months, where I have been honest and up front and told them of my occupation. They give me all the tests available and I have been immunised against the Hep B virus. If at any point I have any concerns with my health, I am at liberty to attend the GUM clinic at short notice, with their blessing and assistance. This information is anonymous and not held on record, which is reassuring. To date I have never had an STI and I believe this is because I am careful about how I work and precautions taken. I have a variety of condoms at my disposal, shower, lubricants etc. I would never entertain bareback sex and believe regulation would help to further reduce STI's generally within Sex Work, as up to date certificates would be a transparent way of making sure Sex Workers are clean and safe.

I have been working around the UK and Ireland touring for the last two years. Currently I work alone, although I feel there are many advantages to working in pairs, as this again would reduce the possibility of any abuse or violence, especially for the younger girls, who are still picking up life and social skills. I currently work from apartments and hotels and work discretely, so that other residents or guests are not aware of what I am doing. I believe discretion is important and would continue to be whatever the legislation. I personally would not choose to work for an Agency,

Brothel or be a Street Walker, but if ran correctly I'm sure they could be good avenues to take, as long as it is their choice, then it should not matter where you work.

## **Prostitution as a Positive to the Sex Worker and Community**

Like most jobs there are negatives to Sex Work, but the majority of Sex Workers do choose to be in the occupation. It is a relatively easy job to start up in, with no training needed, although if you want to do well, you do need to be good with people and have a reasonable skill base. You work within your own boundaries and offer what you are comfortable with. No one tells you how much to charge or how to run your own business, so it is up to you as the Worker to do your homework and decide what you are willing to offer.

The wonderful thing about this line of work is variety. We all work differently, even though essentially we offer the same thing. For many of us there is a huge sense of community and we look out for each other to make sure that there is someone covering our back and if we do get into trouble, then there is someone to call and get help. We also share information via the internet, so that we know who the bad men are and can avoid them. This is an invaluable part of the working community and it would be tragic if we lost it, due to no longer being able to advertise or communicate on the internet. We would be placed in a lot more danger, as we would only be able to rely on our own source of numbers. For this reason it is vital that whatever future legislation comes into action, we are not removed totally from sight or unable to communicate with each other via forums, such as SAAFE and the Home Office approved 'Ugly Mugs' scheme in the UK.

Since I started working as a Sex Worker, I have gone from a woman who didn't think I was compatible with the opposite sex, after a failed marriage and three short lived relationships, to someone who is genuinely looking forward to the day where I am able to start a relationship and be with someone where we are equals. It is very easy to have your judgement coloured by the people around you and previous relationships. I have also learnt not to be shallow and only entertain people that are attractive to me. I have seen so much inner beauty in men that I deemed to be 'average' I no longer use looks as my first base of call when judging men. I believe I have become a much better, more tolerant and caring person for it.

Sex Workers work with all walks of life. We provide company, for many different reasons and rarely as selfish as just wanting to have sex with a woman for the sake of it. We are designed to be emotionally and physically close to one another. The first thing you do when greeting someone is to hold out your hand or hug them. Yet there are thousands of men who live totally isolated lives. Be it due to location, work or social deficiencies they have not had the experience of being loved, or being in a relationship. They may never have had a girlfriend; they may feel too shy to ask anyone on a date or just not had the opportunity. These men need intimacy just the same as the rest of us. We all need to be hugged, to feel close to someone and it is perfectly natural to want sex. After all, we are programmed to procreate and it is a perfectly natural urge, but some never get the opportunity to fulfil that urge. I don't think any of us would want them to live totally sexless lives, so there is no better alternative than paying a Sex Worker. There is no deception, as we both know that it won't go further, no one is drunk, so it is with full consent and we can enjoy the experience for what it is.

There are then, the elderly or the disabled. Men that have had good loving relationships, but perhaps their partner has passed away due to old age and they are left with many years in them and

still have the feelings, but most of all miss just being with someone and the closeness. Often they don't book for the sex and don't always indulge. In fact it might surprise you to know that many men do not indulge in full intercourse, but prefer companionship and the intimacy of being held. They are givers by nature and need a way to outlet that emotion.

Disability is one of those words that have a whole host of meanings. There are many disabled people who have never let their disability stop them and that also include relationships. However, for some life is not that easy and they are dealing with the side effects of their disability. This might be unable to communicate, immobile, unable to move body parts or show/recognise emotion. These people still have the same urges as everyone else and still want to feel close to another human being. They don't want to be pitied, they want to be liked and enjoyed, like everyone else. Why make life even harder for them, by telling them they have no other outlet than finding someone to love them? Isn't it hard enough to find love even when you are the classic alpha male?

I personally have met men that are suffering with depression, suicidal, going through divorce, recovering from divorce, virgins in their 40+, have Asperger's and various physical disability's including one young one man who was bed bound and unable to use his own hands to give himself relief. He showed me his testimony and as a fit young 15 year old he had a perfectly normal life, but by his mid 30's he was waiting to die and wishing he was dead. If my being with him for a little time made it easier to be alive, then who could possibly say it is wrong? With a bright mind, but unable to communicate clearly and decaying body, what alternative does he have? It's all very well to say, 'then why don't you see him for free?' Yet would you say that to any other professional service provider? Not forgetting the fears of rejection where there is a selection process. This eliminates that do a degree and allows uncomplicated consensual unions.

In this way I think that Sex Workers do provide for the community. We keep relationships that would likely die alive, so that families can stay together, we help to heal the wounds of those that are dealing with separation and divorce and maintain the man who works all hours and doesn't have time to get into a relationship, but doesn't want to risk hurting someone with a one night stand. We give back the confidence, we help to unwind and de-stress and bring laughter back to those that had forgotten where it was.

These men are not abusive, violent misogynists. They are men that want to feel whole and seek it with someone who is able and at a price gives their consent to intimacy that normally takes time and commitment to receive. There is no pretence, no dishonesty, just a clear cut agreement of what the terms will be and a willingness to enjoy each other's company.

## **The Issue of Choice**

Where before the introduction of the internet it may have been in the main rarely a freely-entered choice, being set against a backdrop of abuse, poverty, low self-esteem, debt, addiction etc., I no longer believe this is the case. Today's Sex Worker is using the occupation to take control of their life and help them to take the foot up to bigger and better things.

It is widely acknowledged that women now turn to Sex Work to see them through further education and career based qualifications, or to subsidise their wages. I have known ladies who have entered into Sex work from various fields of work, such as lawyers, Nurses, Teachers and many more. These

women have used the Internet to set their path and advertise their work. They have no outside influence and are happy and willing, as it means they can fit their work in around their studies or jobs and fill any financial short fall ensuring that they are not left with a huge debt at the end of their studies.

Many jobs do not allow the flexibility needed to sustain a second job and ensure enough wages to pay for today's increasing costs. Where Sex Work is not suitable for everyone, it is an invaluable option for those that it does suit and is very empowering, with reaching goals and expectations.

In this way I do not feel that anyone who is working of their own choice should be discounted as 'selfish', saying that if they are able to earn money in other ways, then they should, but to understand that there are women who are happy to provide sexual gratification for those who want to buy it, as a way of income; which is not based on greed, but based on prospects, be that further education, seeing family through their schooling in a safe, warm environment, or starting a business with the capital earned.

I do not believe that poverty or debt are good reasons to say that there is no choice, as everyone works for an income and to raise their standard of living. Sex Work is no different in that respect. Many women choose Sex Work for its high earning potential, but also because of its flexibility and the opportunities it offers for the future.

### **Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Can Be Separated**

There is no evidence to suggest that women and girls trafficked echo those of women who otherwise find themselves in prostitution.

Most Sex Workers enjoy a healthy relationship with the Garda/Police. While these lines of communication stay open, it will be relatively easy for them to know which ladies are working of their own free will and leave them to look for the ones that are not. There is also a crime line number that is known within the Sex Worker community and anyone found to be working against their will would be reported.

There are certain areas that are to be avoided by Sex Workers, as they will have increased trouble there, with regards to fake bookings and intimidation. These are the areas where Agencies are known to be active and by working together, we should be able to locate where they are, which phone numbers they are using and who is working for them. In this case there is no 'honour amongst thieves' as you might think, as we do have compassion and do not want to see women working against their will. However, working for an Agency does not automatically equal trafficked, as many foreign women do use them as a stepping stone to finding work in a Country where they have minimal to no experience of the people or language and it is important to determine if the ladies are working of their own free will or coerced.

Looking at the figures supplied by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Summary report of trafficking in human beings in Ireland for 2009 there were 66 cases of suspected or potential trafficked victims in Ireland. Broken down 8 of these were male, 49 female and 17 children (no gender given). There is no evidence to suggest what they were being trafficked for, but it is to be assumed that some may have been trafficked for Sex Work. There is also a possibility that some

were not victims and proven not to be trafficked at all (13 were concluded as no evidence of trafficking), as they had not investigated this possibility for 'potentially' trafficked people at this point.

In 2010 there were 58 cases of sexual exploitation recorded, with 51 being female and 5 being male and yet we never hear of the male prostitute needing to be helped or saved? There were also 19 cases of labour exploitation of which 8 were women and 11 were men. Out of the sexual exploitation category 41 were adults and 15 were minors. Bear in mind a minor is 17 or under in the Sex Industry, this should make it easier to identify, as they legally are not allowed to work within the Sex Industry and should be removed from it.

There are strong patterns of origin shown in the statistics that show a majority of trafficked humans coming from Africa, then with much lower numbers the EU. This in itself negates the comment made by Ruhama that it is impossible to distinguish between willing sex worker and someone who is trafficked, as there are definite trends to be found.

In contrast there were 37 reported sexually trafficked victims in 2011. 34 were female and 3 were male. Of the 37 total, 7 were minors (under 18). Again the majority were from Africa (29) with the rest divided between EU, Ireland, Asia and Latin America (in that order)

To further clarify the figures so they are up to date I spoke to Barra O'Duill, who said that figures for 2012, although at the moment estimated only show another reduction with 22 cases investigated in adults and 7 with children. I assume these are reference to sexual exploitation, although this may not be the case. Either way this shows a steady decline in cases over the last 4 years. It would be fair to say that efforts were raised in 2012 with various raids on known Sex Worker sites and yet still fewer cases have been found.

These statistics show a strong element of control over the situation. A good working relationship between the Garda and Sex Worker and that the Crime Stoppers line is also effective, where men who pay for sex may report any concerns they have for trafficked women within the industry. This healthy and co-operative relationship for both the Sex Worker and the buyer will cease to exist if the buyer is criminalised, making it virtually impossible for the Garda to protect those who need it most.



## HIV/AIDS, STI's and Prostitution Legislation

Having looked at the records for STI's in Sweden, there is a general increase in most areas, with Syphilis, gonorrhoea and chlamydia. (1)

### 2012

Chlamydia infection - **2012** - 37708 - / - **2003** - 26801 (43.1% men/56.8%women)

Gonorrhoea - **2012** - 1098 - / - **2003** - 596 (69.4% men/30.5% women)

Syphilis - **2012** - 201 - / - **2003** - 177 (81% men/18.9% women)

There are two points of interest in these figures: The first being that STI's are continuing to rise. These are general and not specific to Sex Workers, but would suggest that people generally are taking more risks in Sweden and not using condoms. It has been suggested that Sex Workers in Sweden are scared to be found with condoms, as they are being used as evidence to criminalise their clients and this would be in line with these findings. The second interesting trend is that there is a huge increase in STI's with regards to men. On a personal note, I am wondering if there is an increase of sexual activity between men, as this is seen as less compromising than the threat of criminalisation if found with a female Sex Worker?

It was also noted in the statistics that the age group most likely to be affected by an STI is between the ages of 20 and 29, which is also the age bracket of the majority of Sex Workers.

Unfortunately Ireland does not have a database of facts in such an efficient order as Sweden, but I have found evidence, which I think will show that to bring in the Swedish Model, which may inhibit the use of condoms, would be a terrible set back to the already failing education for using precaution.

An article written by Deborah Condon from [Irishhealth.com](http://Irishhealth.com) shows how Ireland is struggling to spread the word that the use of condoms is essential to prevent STI's. Here is the article.

Ireland has seen a big increase in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in recent years. The trend is related in part to the economic boom, but also the fact that we have a young, very active population. In addition, because Ireland has had a very mixed attitude to sex education, attempts to provide clear facts to young people have been the subject of repeated controversy and some resistance.

A few years ago, the Department of Health launched a national awareness campaign,

*'Think Twice Every Time'. Its aims? To educate and inform 18-35 year-olds about their relationships and their sexuality.*

One of the reasons for the campaign was the rise in the incidence of STIs.

Speaking at the launch of the campaign, Health Minister, Michael Martin, said that the Government was setting out to achieve a major attitude and behaviour change.

"You can't run a fast campaign, toss out a bundle of leaflets and hey presto, people suddenly manage their sexuality differently", he said at the time.

### **Campaign failure**

Of course, such a campaign needs to be carried out in a slow, measured and comprehensive manner. Unfortunately this did not happen - funding for the project was discontinued after a year in operation. Many aspects of the campaign, including a website, never saw the light of day and today, the incidence of STIs here continues to rise. It is a symptom of the lack of vision and understanding by some health authorities to serious issues. But it also points to the fact that many people are not being cautious in their sexual lives.

This is backed up by an article released [thejournal.ie](http://thejournal.ie) (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2012), which shows recent stats:

***THE NUMBER OF cases of STIs in Ireland has risen significantly, with gonorrhoea now at the highest rate ever recorded for the country.***

***The report by the HSE's Health Protection Surveillance Centre found there were 13,259 notifications of STIs in 2011, an increase of just over 12 per cent on the previous year.***

***Gonorrhoea cases increased by one third (33.4 per cent) to 834 cases, and the incidence rate now stands at 18.2 per 100,000 population – a figure that is significantly higher than the European average (10.4) as well as being the highest incidence recorded in Ireland. Men made up almost 80 per cent of cases.***

***The report was compiled using data from STI clinics, laboratories, and GPs. Other findings include:***

- ***Chlamydia remains the most common STI accounting for 48.3 per cent of cases last year.***
- ***Genital warts were the second most frequently reported STI at 18.5 per cent.***
- ***Almost 60 per cent of people with STIs were aged between 20 and 29.***
- ***There were 653 cases of syphilis in 2011, a slight increase on the previous year.***
- ***Genital herpes saw the single biggest jump in the number of cases with an increase of 39.8 per cent year on year.***

As a Sex Worker who currently works in Ireland (2013) I can tell you that there are many men who do not understand how important it is to use a condom, but as a Sex Worker, I insist on them being used. We are actively educating our clients to the risks of not using condoms and the majority of us will not entertain a client who is not willing to wear one.

There have been times where I have been asked if I will perform sex without a condom, or they have told me that they have had 'the snip' and therefore cannot get me pregnant, so will I allow bareback sex. These kinds of requests tell me that they have no idea of why we insist on condoms and that they are not there to stop pregnancy, but to stop the spread of STI's.

I am also very aware that Irish men rarely if at all attend clinics and do not attend regular tests to make sure that they are clean of sexually transmitted diseases. They assume that they would know if there was something wrong, even though it is common knowledge that some diseases like chlamydia for example, have no traceable side effects in the majority of people who have it. Yet this can stop their partner from having children if they pass it on without detection.

It is my opinion that Sex Workers offering unprotected sex should be illegal; regardless of their working status and that ladies who insist on using condoms for penetrative sex are legal, along with their clients. This is legislation that I would be keen to adopt.

Health should be taken very seriously and it concerns me that Ireland is not already pulling out all the stops to ensure that their young people are not fully prepared and aware of all the reasons why they need to be taking full protection with condoms. With this in mind, I think the Swedish Model would influence some Sex Workers to stop using condoms, especially if they have been targeted by the Garda and further exasperate an existing problem in Ireland that has not yet been combated.

Further to this there is also the issue of 'stigma'. In Sweden the criminalisation of clients has worked to further stigmatise Sex Workers and their clients and as such both clients and Sex Workers are not receiving the care that they need with regards to sexual diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The information below states:

*A fear raised by the Ombudsman was that the increased stigma would lead to worse prospects for health promotion and HIV-preventive work. It referred to UNAIDS, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, that discourages criminalization for this reason: social stigma might influence the contact with social authorities, the health care system and the judicial system.*

*RFSL(2) also referred to UNAIDS and expressed its great concern for the Swedish situation: the organization has knowledge of several instances where HIV-preventive measurements aimed at clients were stopped with reference to the ban. It further believes that the point of view expressed by the evaluation, that "increased stigmatization is positive" is an almost counteractive attitude to harm reduction. For example, sex workers with whom the RFSL has been in contact have reported that stigma prevents them talking about their prostitution experiences when testing for HIV/STI. To strengthen the stigma will lessen the chances to reach people who sell sex and to conduct harm reduction measures, concludes RFSL. The organization also points out that HIV-preventive needs are greater amongst men who sell sex to men and transgender people, but that the official evaluation almost totally ignores this population. Studies done by RFSL showed that 38.5 percent of the men who sell sex never tested for STIs.*

*It is therefore possible that yet another negative consequence of the ban is an increased level of STI and HIV amongst sex workers and their clients. The Board of Health and Welfare, which also expresses concern about the consequences of an increased stigma, writes in its response that according to the 2010 Swedish UNAIDS report that only 18.5 per cent of drug-using sex workers used a condom during their most recent intercourse.*

## **Conclusion**

*We believe that one has to look at several factors to understand the discrepancy between the stated success of the Sex Purchase Act and its documented effects. While there are some police, social workers and former sex workers who claim that the ban has indeed helped reduce prostitution and trafficking and deterred clients without any adverse effects, the reports and documents that have a scientific rather than ideological base do not support these success claims. Hence, as we and others have written elsewhere, we believe that it is in the ideological and cultural domains that the creation of the "unique" Sex Purchase Act and the above mention discrepancy must be found. It has to do with a desire to create and uphold a national identity of being the moral consciousness in the world; with notions or "good" and "bad" sexuality; with the whore stigma; with creating new forms of sexual*

*deviancy; with a communitarian, rather than liberal, political culture, and perhaps above all: a stereotypical and uninformed understanding of prostitution. (3)*

As mentioned previously, there is already a growing trend in STI's with regards to males in Sweden, which backs up the theory written above that men are at greater risk of not being treated for STI's, which is on the increase. With Ireland being behind with regards to sexual education and already unsupported with regards to educating people, this could be catastrophic to the population.

## **Analysis of the Swedish Model**

*The "Swedish model" consists of several laws and regulations. The three main laws that criminalize or prevent prostitution involving adults are those addressing pandering, the forfeiture of rental apartments and rooms used for prostitution, and the purchase of sex. (4)*

This means that Sex Workers if discovered by the Garda will likely find themselves evicted, as the landlords will be forced to drive them out or risk prosecution. The landlord may have had no idea, but the second they are informed they would have no choice but to act.

In the Spotlight document 'Prostitution regulation in Ireland: Which way now?' It states that in Sweden prostitution is partially criminalised. The purchase of sexual services is a crime, but the sale of sexual services is not. The Swedish law aims for the promotion of equality for women and protection from violence. It aims for the abolition of prostitution in the long run and for public support for this aim.

The first fault I find with this is the 'promotion of equality'. Sex work is not only for females. Although it does have a majority female work force, both males and females can and do participate in prostitution. If they are looking for equality in the work force, then perhaps they should be looking in other fields of business where the majority of managerial positions are dominated by men and men earn more than women when doing the same job. Sex Work is one of the few occupations where a woman can earn money comparable with the higher end jobs that are normally denied them. This IS equality!

Violence! Yes Sex Work can be a volatile and dangerous occupation, but no more so than serving in the Military, being a Nurse/Doctor or Fire Person, to name but a few dangerous occupations. The work itself is not violence and should not be considered so, as long as both parties are consenting. Yes it is good to have measures in place in case of violence, but it should not be presumed as part of the occupation.

It also goes on to say that the Swedish Model is based on the perception that all prostitution is viewed as exploitation and involuntary. This however is incorrect and as such the reasoning behind it is unfair to both the purchaser and the provider. As someone who has chosen to be a Sex Worker, I can categorically say that I am not exploited, as I am paid well for my services and only offer services that I am comfortable with. I have the freedom to withdraw services at any point and I am at liberty to refuse services completely if I believe the client to be of any risk to myself.

I chose this occupation after carefully considering my skill base, time available and flexibility; it is totally voluntary. The majority of Sex Workers are Independent and have similar choices as myself.

Being Self-Employed I am a registered tax payer. Admittedly I do not use the title of 'prostitute' or 'sex worker' for my business due to the stigma attached and not wanting any impact on future jobs, but I am keen to pay my way and contribute to society. This also allows me to claim expenses and build up on my credit rating, which will improve my future with greater financial options. I think if Sex Workers were encouraged to feel that their work was legal and above board, more would opt to pay tax and like me contribute to Society financially. This does not mean that the government are profiting from sex, but profiting from self-employed people offering a service, which is exactly how it should be viewed by all.

I am not sure where the law would stand on this if our client base were made to be criminals? Would this not also make it even more ambiguous as the government could then be seen to be profiting from criminal activity? Surely it is better to encourage transparency and participating in contributing to the Country, where we reside most from earnings, without fear of discord? Also, if the person is paying tax, is it not more reassuring that they are working of their own free will and not an illegal immigrant, in turn creating another way to monitor trafficking.

Returning to the Spotlight document it argues that the Swedish model means that trafficked prostitutes will be more likely to seek help and get out of prostitution as they will not be prosecuted for selling sexual services. This makes no sense, as it is not illegal now, so what difference exactly is there to make it 'more likely?' Arguing against the approach it rightly acknowledges that ***'the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services drives prostitution deeper underground, which makes it both more difficult to find and assist trafficked prostitutes and more dangerous for the prostitutes'***. I am inclined to believe this is closer to the reality and as such there would be less approaching for help, as they would find it harder to reach out to any help offered, plus with the clients being too scared to report concerns there would be less co-operation in finding them out and on a more mercenary note. Sex Workers who do not wish to lose income will likely work elsewhere, leaving less choice for the purchaser; who may be more inclined to turn a blind eye, in the knowledge that his activities are criminal anyway. Please do consider that the more law abiding clients may have stopped visiting Sex Workers, leaving the less sympathetic purchaser behind, possibly encouraging Sex Workers to agree to bookings they may have previously rejected.

There are very few statistics to be found with regards to how much prostitution there was before and after the Swedish Model came into play, but with the figures that have been presented it would be a fair analysis to assume that there is no difference in the amount of people selling sex, but the way in which they work has changed in order to avoid the negative consequences of the legislation.

Accordingly to the Malmö Knowledge Centre, the changing technology has resulted in the "hidden" (indoor) prostitution now making up four-fifths (80%) of the overall prostitution prevalence, compared to two-thirds (67%) before the ban was introduced. This would leave us with a similar total number of people involved in prostitution as before the ban, or about 1,500 people.

In its 2007 report the National Board of Health and Welfare summarized the situation in the following manner:

***It is also difficult to discern any clear trend of development: has the extent of prostitution increased or decreased? We cannot give any unambiguous answer to that question. At most, we can discern that street prostitution is slowly returning, after swiftly disappearing in the wake of the law against purchasing sexual services. But as said, that refers to street***

***prostitution, which is the most obvious manifestation. With regard to increases and decreases in other areas of prostitution – the “hidden prostitution” – we are even less able to make any statements.***

The National Board for Health and Welfare. (5)

In short prostitution has been driven underground and with it the trafficked minority, who would be even harder to find, rescue and help. This also makes the lives of the voluntary Sex Workers harder and more susceptible to violence, which would not be reported for fear of future surveillance. It also proves that the legislation ban cannot be claimed as a ‘success’ as they are not substantiated.

Furthermore apart from not actually having any evidence of reducing Sex Work in Sweden it can also be said that:

***The Sex Purchase Act can both be a hindrance to traffickers, but also a tool to improve market conditions, due to the higher prices for sex that the ban creates.*** (6)

This supports my belief that trafficking will become worse under this legislation and not work to improve conditions and accessibility to those who want to be found and rescued, but make more money for the sophisticated criminal. This is further evident by the following statement.

***Serious organized crime, including prostitution and trafficking, has increased in strength, power and complexity during the past decade. It constitutes a serious social problem in Sweden and organized crime makes large amounts of money from the exploitation and trafficking of people under slave-like conditions.***

National Police Board press release March 2010 (6)

The Swedish Model legislation to criminalise the purchaser is not effective in combating trafficking and in driving prostitution underground it has encouraged more sophisticated criminals, which have a tighter grasp and money interest on exploiting women for sex work. This chart below shows the reported trafficked numbers and how many convictions generated. (7)

Year	Reported	Convicted
2003	21	2
2004	29	0
2005	44	7
2006	26	11
2007	15	2
2008	15	0
2009	31	0
2010	31	?

A negative unanticipated bi-product of the legislation has found purchasers being black mailed and fewer convictions against traffickers due to less willing witnesses to step forward.

***When it comes to clients, it seems they are less willing to assist as witnesses in cases in which profiteers who exploit the sexual labour of others are prosecuted, since they now find themselves guilty of a crime. Clients are exposed to blackmail and robbery, and the stigma***

*associated with buying sex means people often have to leave their jobs and positions, even on a mere suspicion.* (9)

Consequently the last convicted Pimp/Trafficker was in 2007, despite 77 cases being brought forward between 2008 and 2010. This would support the theory that criminalising sex purchasers has made it harder to gain vital evidence in order for a conviction to be granted.

## **Religious, Feminist and Moralising Organisations**

With regards to morals, this legislation is not really concerned with the morality of Sex Work. It should not really be a factor in today's society of whether it be right or wrong, but kept to the real facts that are about reducing trafficking and people (not just women and children) entering into a situation where someone else is profiting from them. It should also be about making the job as safe as possible, with regards to violence and health and this won't happen if we are further stigmatised by criminalising the very people that pay our wages.

It is difficult to see how representatives that are more interested in Feminism, religious beliefs and Morals can contribute impartially and I think the evidence shows this is the case with the existing Swedish Model as it stands.

On a final note it was concluded in the Etute-suede 2011:

*Our stance when it comes to policy regarding prostitution is that it has to be based on knowledge rather than morality or radical feminist ideology. We also believe that when policy is developed, the actors at the heart of this policy must be adequately consulted and duly respected. In our opinion, this has not been the case with regards to "the Swedish model".* (10)

Isn't this history repeating itself? Is it not possible to learn from the mistakes of others and use them for the greater good of the whole community and not just sectors that disapprove? This legislation helps no one, but will do a lot of damage to the very people it is alleged to help.

## **The Sex Purchase Act**

The Sex Purchase Act was introduced by feminist policymakers who argued that '*prostitution is a form of male violence against women, that it is physically and psychologically damaging to sell sex and that **there are no women who sell sex voluntarily.***' Furthermore, it was claimed that '*if one wants to achieve a gender-equal society, then prostitution must cease to exist – not only for the above-mentioned reasons, but also because all women in society are harmed as long as men think they can "buy women's bodies". If the ban would have adverse effects for individual women who sell sex, or if it violates their right to self-determination would not matter. The gender-equal symbolic value of the Sex Purchase Act is more important.*'

We already know that the highlighted statement is not true. Many women are able to not just survive working within this industry, but prosper. It is condescending to suppose that women do not know themselves well enough to succeed as a Sex Worker without some form of damage, in the same way they would know if they were suited to the Military, being a gymnast or a Scientist. We all have different qualities to offer and select our work accordingly.

With regards to gender-equality and men not being able to see us as equals as long as they are able to “buy women’s bodies” is ridiculous. More likely the objection is lack of control as many women control their men through their inherent need for sex and ration them depending on what they want from them. It is the man that is being controlled and lacking gender equality in relationships and sometimes in the workforce. Yet this goes overlooked? It is also possible for women to buy time from men or use their bodies as a bargaining tool, using their marital status as a carrot, knowing full well that in the eyes of God they are not able to obtain sexual relief anywhere else. The fact that some men choose to purchase sex makes that dangling carrot redundant and despite the fact they would argue not using their feminine charms to get what they want, it happens on a daily basis, with no one batting an eyelid. At least with purchasing sex there is no game playing, not agenda and no deception. It is a case of double standards.

The overall implications of these laws is that no one can operate a brothel, **rent an apartment, room or hotel room**, assist with finding clients, act as a security guard or **allow advertising for sex workers**. This in turn implies that sex workers cannot work together, **recommend customers to each other**, advertise, work from property they rent or own or even **cohabit with a partner** (since that partner is likely to share part of any income derived from sex work). In addition, the law against pandering makes it difficult for the authorities to utilise harm reduction strategies. For instance distribution of condoms, although perfectly legal under the Social Services and Communicable Diseases Acts respectively, might be perceived by non-legal experts as encouraging prostitution, (4i)

The highlighted areas I would like to discuss. If I am unable to rent an apartment or room, then I am being forced onto the street, which is putting me in greater danger and exposure. If I am not allowed to advertise, then it means that I am going to have to go underground and offer different services to those actually offered. This means I will have more clients asking for services I am not happy to offer and make complications that could lead to an assault. Client recommendations are the best word of mouth way to know that you are dealing with a safe and trustworthy client. All businesses operate in this way and give priority to good customers. Cohabit with a partner. This is the worst rule I have read so far. This means that you are actively denying a Sex Worker a loving relationship. Where are the equal rights for women when a woman is denied a normal life outside of work? There is no relationship where the couple does not benefit from wages earned. It is that which gives them stability. How can a law be put in place to deny a woman a loving relationship or marriage? I would imagine living a life without love would be far more damning and psychologically detrimental than a life as a voluntary Sex Worker; otherwise there would not be such a thing as a Swinger, where they actively seek out sex with strangers for their own pleasure.

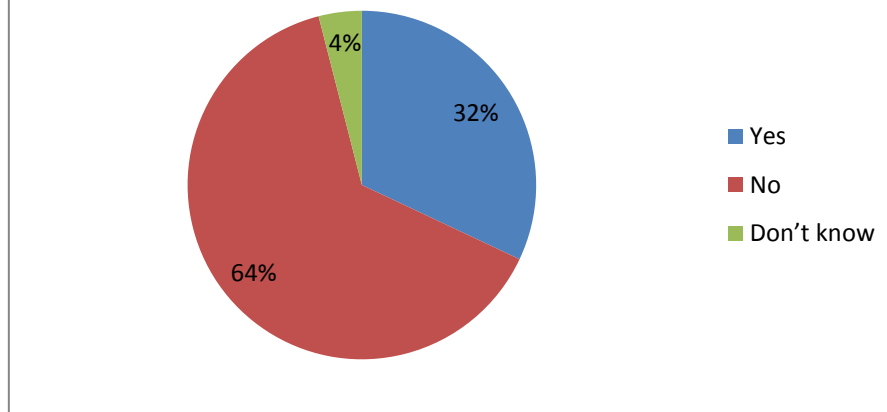
Looking at Sweden it seems that the legislation has not worked to stop men purchasing sex. They are either going to different Countries to indulge themselves or relating it to the same as a speeding fine, as the police acknowledge there is still a great demand for the purchase of sex.

*Many compared the illegal nature of buying sex with speeding; it is illegal to drive a car too fast as well, and one might or not get caught doing it – but it was still worth it. (8)*

This is in line with a small survey conducted with 113 active sex purchasers in Ireland. As you can see from the pie chart the majority said that they would continue to purchase sex, if legislation criminalised the purchaser.



## Would you stop seeing Escorts if the law made it illegal?



### Conclusion

To wrap this up as simply as possible I have to ask myself. Would criminalising the purchasers of sex improve my life as a Sex Worker? Without doubt and categorically it would not and I strongly believe it would make my life much harder and put me in unnecessary danger. I would be constantly scared that I may be thrown out of the accommodation I was using. I would be constantly worried about being under surveillance and my clients being made criminals and as such I would be involved in various court cases as an accessory. I would feel unable to use local clinics in Ireland should an accident happen where a condom splits, in case questions are asked and I would not be able to tell them that I was a Sex Worker, as this information may be passed on to the Garda, who would then be checking my movements and questioning my clients.

Do I think it would help to rescue trafficked women forced into Sex Work? Quite the reverse! I think the nature of criminalising the client will force Sex Work further underground and with it the victims of trafficking. I believe there would be more victims of trafficking, as the demand would increase in line with Independent Sex Workers seeking work elsewhere.

Do I agree that all prostitutes are working against their will and violated? How can I believe that when I am one and don't fit that mould? I personally have never come across anyone who is working against their will and I have met many women all over the UK and Ireland. I interact with them on a daily basis on various forums and I have visited several in their work place, which ranged from homely to plush. Many of the women were in further education, or had families and thought of Sex Work purely as a job. There are no hang ups, no obvious side effects and in some cases we didn't even discuss work, but normal day to day topics, as of the real world.

It is wrong to label a whole sector of society as incapable of knowing what is best for them. It is wrong to suggest that they are not capable of making an informed choice and willingly choose to work in the sex industry. It is a job that takes a certain type of person and is not suited to everyone. It is not a job to be glamorised, but for those it does suit, it can provide a good quality of life, provide financial security and a path to a fulfilling future. Some of us enjoy touring and enjoy visiting new

places, new people and have more enriched lives. It is a great facilitator. I would also go as far as to say there is great job satisfaction to be had, where purchasers have made life changing differences to their lives, based on the experience they have had with us. It does happen and it will continue to happen. If you truly care about my life and my fellow workers, be them male, female or transgender. Please don't consider the Swedish Model of criminalising the purchaser. It will only make things worse for the willing Sex Worker and those that really need your help. The minority, the trafficked few!

## Sources and Information

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