

# THE NORDIC MODEL VS. FULL DECRIMINALISATION

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NORDIC  
MODEL **NOW!**

Hi, I'm [name]. [Optionally, say something here about why this issue is important to you.]

Before I begin, I just want to say that at the end of this talk, I will give you a link to where you can find references for all the studies and data that I mention during the talk.



To understand what is an appropriate solution to a problem, we first need a **realistic** understanding of what that problem actually involves.

So what is prostitution, really?

Many people assume prostitution is normal consensual sex and that it typically involves a negotiation about what will happen. And there's an assumption that the two parties – the woman and the punter – are equally placed in this negotiation.

I'm going to draw on the words of prostitution survivors in the Nordic Model Now! group, to show that this simply isn't true.

### EMILY

"I was sold a complete lie. It's not easy money. To the buyer, you are nothing more than an object for their consumption, not an actual human being with emotions. You're expected to just put up with whatever they want to do and say to you. The exchange of money makes them feel entitled to treat you however they like, with no regard for your feelings or consent..."

First Emily. She got into financial difficulties when she was at university and swallowed the idea being promoted all around her that "sex work" is a real job, good money, a no brainer even, for cash-strapped students like herself. So she started in prostitution. This is what she said:

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### HARRIET

"People think prostitution is about having consensual sex for money. It's not. Those men don't want to pay for that. They paid me and then used me however they wanted. I was beaten with objects until I bled; spat at; anally raped; gang raped; passed around at sex parties like a toy, men slipping off their condoms; I was shouted at, threatened, choked, told to look like I enjoyed it or he'd take the money back. I was scared every single second."

Next, Harriet, who also turned to prostitution after a series of catastrophes left her at risk of homelessness. She described it like this:

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Sian echoed this when she said, "The reality is that you do as the punter wants or you'll very quickly be without work – and may even end up in hospital."



Esther, put it like this:

*"The punter is king. It's a total myth that you can negotiate with him as an equal when you're in a private space, operating in a competitive market, and under the threat of bad online reviews, reprisals from the brothel manager, and/or violence from your pimp... It's nothing like the type of exchange you'd have with a sexual partner outside the sex trade."*

<b>WARNING</b>	
RISKS AND HARMS OF PROSTITUTION INCLUDE:	
Infections & unwanted pregnancy.	Brain injury through strangulation & other acts of physical violence.
Injuries to the vagina, anus & rectum, & damage to abdominal & pelvic areas.	Dissociation, PTSD, & high rates of other mental health disorders.

Next, I want you to consider those health and safety notices that you get in workplaces. This slide shows what one might look like for prostitution.

Here are just some of the risks:

- **Infections:** including gonorrhea, syphilis, chlamydia, herpes, hepatitis, HIV and more. Some resistant to antibiotics.
- **Unwanted pregnancy.**
- **Injuries:** including tears, abrasions, fissures and fistulas to the vagina, anus and rectum. Damage to internal abdominal and pelvic organs caused by prolonged and heavy pounding, which can lead to incontinence, prolapse, pain and infertility. And, not to forget, injuries elsewhere caused by punter violence.
- **Brain injury:** including through strangulation and other acts of physical violence, typically at levels comparable to boxers and victims of torture.
- **Mental health impacts:** including very high rates of PTSD, and other mental health disorders correlating with high levels of violence.



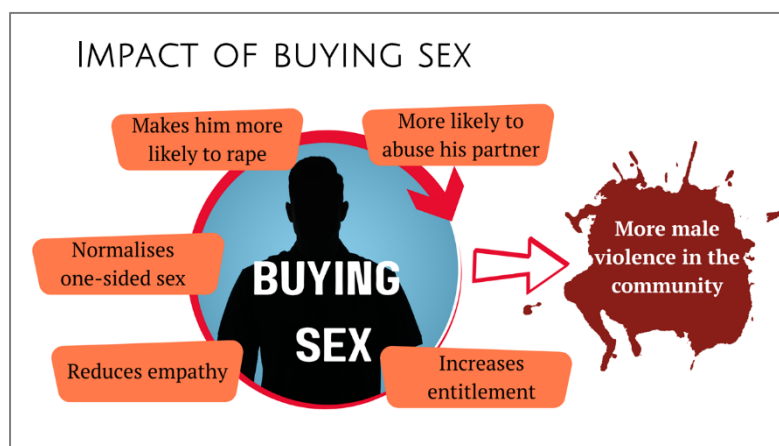
I think it should be obvious that condoms don't come close to giving protection from all of these hazards, and anyway, many men refuse to wear them or take them off midway.

In any other job that carried such risks, workers would be required to wear full protective clothing. But how is that possible in prostitution?

Why should we expect women to be exposed to such risks that no other worker would tolerate? Especially when it serves no purpose other than to feed men's entitlement and egos.

When it's not possible to make work safe, industries are often closed down. For example, the asbestos industry was closed because the risks were deemed too great.

We believe that prostitution also can never be made safe and we therefore call for the Nordic Model, which aims to reduce the size of the industry and the numbers involved.



Before we move on to the Nordic Model, I want to take a moment to look at what 'buying sex' does to men. And when I say '**buying sex**', let's be clear. He's not paying for mutual sex between two adults who fancy each other. He pays because **she** doesn't want sex with him and he doesn't want to think about her feelings and needs. In other words, it's one-sided sexual activity in which he is in control. He pays to be the king, the master, in that situation.

So what that does that do to a person?

First of all, it increases his sense of entitlement and reduces his empathy, particularly for women. In time it makes him feel that one-sided sex is normal and even that it's his 'right' to be in control and have his own way. These are exactly the attitudes that research has found to underly most male violence against woman and girls.

It should be no surprise therefore that multiple studies of men who pay for sex show that they are significantly more likely than other men to rape and engage in all forms of violence against women. A [US study](#) found that punters were nearly **eight times** more likely to rape than other men.

This means that the more prostitution that takes place, the more male violence against women and girls are you likely to find in the general community.

So. Prostitution is **not** a private matter. It impacts the entire community.

### THE NORDIC MODEL #1

- ✓ Also known as the Equality Model.
- ✓ First introduced in Sweden in 1999, now in several countries.
- ✓ Recognises prostitution as part of the structural oppression of women and both cause and consequence of the inequality between the sexes.

OK. So what is the [Nordic Model](#) exactly?

It is the **only** approach to prostitution policy and legislation that recognises prostitution as part of the structural oppression of women. It is both a cause and a consequence of the persistent inequality between the sexes. It is an abuse of all women's human rights. If one woman can be bought, any woman can be bought.

The Nordic Model was introduced in Sweden in 1999 after extensive research that revealed (a) the extent of women's suffering in prostitution and (b) sex buyers' ignorance and lack of care of the consequences of their actions.

The researchers developed the idea of one-sided criminalisation where buyers rather than those selling sex, would be held accountable.

## THE NORDIC MODEL #2

1. Decriminalises selling sex.
2. Provides services & genuine routes out of the industry.
3. Buying sex becomes a criminal offence.
4. Strong laws against trafficking, pimping & brothel keeping.
5. Holistic measures incl. education, & training for police.

So in brief:

1. The Nordic Model decriminalises **selling sex**, because no one should be criminalised for enduring exploitation and abuse.
2. It invests in services that provide support and **genuine** routes out of the industry. Most research shows that around 90% of those involved at any given time want to get out but can't see how to. The services need to include: access to safe, affordable housing, training, health care, child care, legal and financial advice and aid, emotional and psychological support, and drug rehabilitation.
3. The Nordic Model makes **buying sex** a criminal offence. The penalty is typically a fine, which provides funding for the services. The key aim is to change attitudes and men's behaviour; to create a society where no one could even **imagine** that anyone has the right to pay to sexually use and abuse another human being.
4. The Nordic Model strengthens laws against trafficking, pimping, and brothel keeping.
5. There also needs to be a plethora of holistic measures, including: training for the police, long term investment in alternatives for women, public information campaigns, education in schools and colleges, and concrete measures to address poverty and inequality.



### WHAT HAPPENED IN SWEDEN?

- ✓ Decrease in the size of the industry.
- ✓ No evidence it has gone 'underground'.
- ✓ Hostile destination for international traffickers.
- ✓ A change in the culture and men's behaviour.
- ✓ Widespread public support.



Where the Nordic Model is implemented well, it has been shown to reduce the size of the industry and create a hostile destination for international sex traffickers. In Sweden, it has brought about a change in the culture and men's behaviour, it has widespread public support, particularly among women and young people.

Prostitution hasn't been eliminated but surveys indicate that the number of Swedish men buying sex dropped by 50% in the first 15 years of its operation.

It's not surprising therefore that pimps and lobbyists for the expansion of the industry **hate** the Nordic Model. They insist it is more dangerous for the women involved – which is simply not true, as I will show.

### FULL DECRIMINALISATION (DECRIM)

- ✓ All aspects of the sex trade, including pimping & brothel keeping, are decriminalised.
- ✓ No public funding for services to help women exit.
- ✓ Laws against trafficking are retained but in practice they are hard to enforce – so most sex trafficking goes under the radar.

What the pimps and lobbyists want is full decriminalisation, which means that **all aspects** of the sex trade are legal. Pimps and brothel keepers are transformed into respectable business people and buying sex is akin to going down the pub.

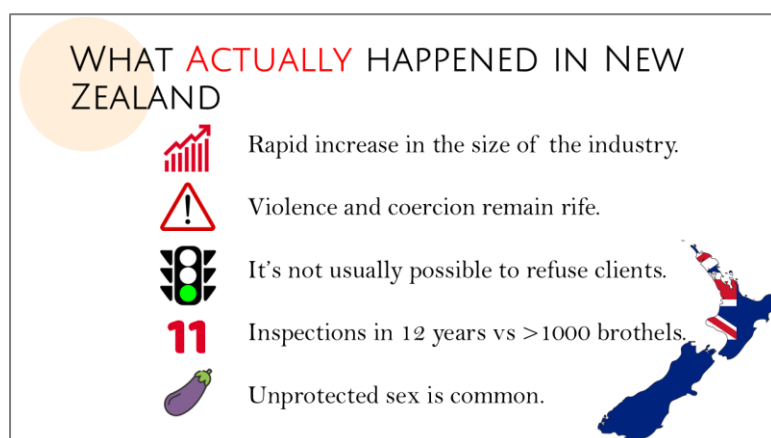


Under full decriminalisation, prostitution is regarded as a standard business, so there's no public funding for services to help women exit.

Laws against trafficking are retained but in practice they are rarely enforced.

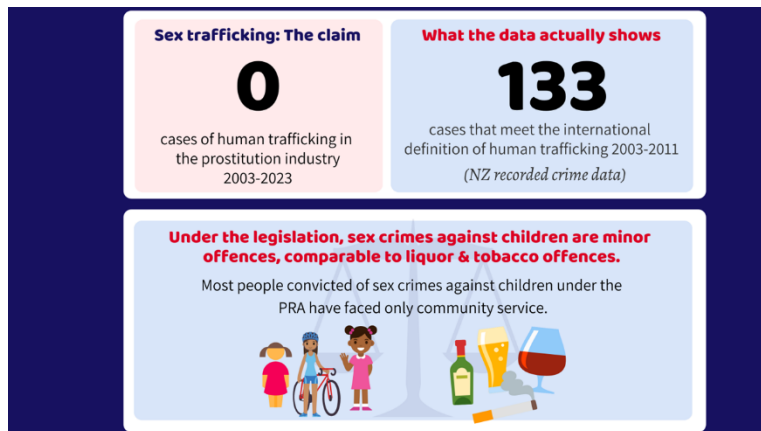


New Zealand pioneered full decriminalisation in 2003. It is **claimed** by lobbyists and even the New Zealand government that there has been a decrease in the number of people involved, that it's safer for the women, that women can refuse clients or particular services, that brothels have regular health inspections, and that condom use is compulsory. These are the **claims**. However the data in the New Zealand Government's own assessments does not support any one of these claims.



The data **actually** shows that after the law was passed there was a **rapid increase** in the size of the industry. Violence and coercion remain rife. Women can seldom refuse clients or specific acts; unprotected sex is common because men "always or nearly always" ask for it, and there were only 11 brothel

inspections in 12 years, even though more than one thousand brothel licenses were granted during that time.





















Another claim is that there is no sex trafficking in New Zealand. It is true that there have been no prosecutions for sex trafficking since decriminalisation has been in force. However, in the 9 years to 2011 there were 133 recorded cases that met the international definition of sex trafficking that were never prosecuted as such.

When prostitution is legal, it **always** leads to an increase in the numbers involved; not least because it sends out a message of official approval. Prostitution is a normal job, and buying sex is like getting a haircut, so more men pay for sex more frequently.

As a result, the police have less oversight and most sex trafficking is undetected. So in practice, sex trafficking is also decriminalized.




Under the legislation, sex crimes against children are considered minor offences comparable to alcohol violations. So most sexual exploitation of children also goes unregistered.

FEATURE	DECRIM	NORDIC MODEL
 Selling sex is legal?		
 Services, incl. routes out?		
 Pimping is legal?		
 Brothels are legal?		
 Buying sex is legal?		
 Trafficking effectively legal?		

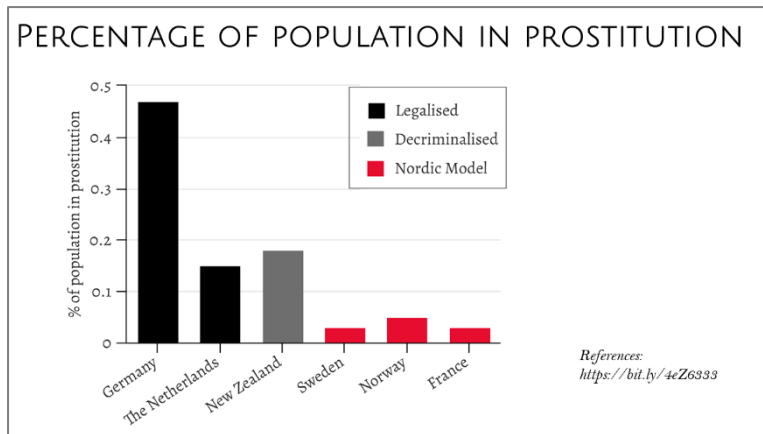
This slide compares full decriminalisation with the Nordic Model. The left-hand column shows what full decriminalisation means: Selling sex, pimping, brothels and buying sex are all legal. And because it's considered a normal job, no public money is invested to help women exit.

The right-hand column shows the Nordic Model. Selling sex is legal but pimping, brothels, and buying sex are illegal and there is specific public funding for high-quality holistic services to provide support and genuine routes out to all who want it.

### FULL DECRIM VS. LEGALISATION

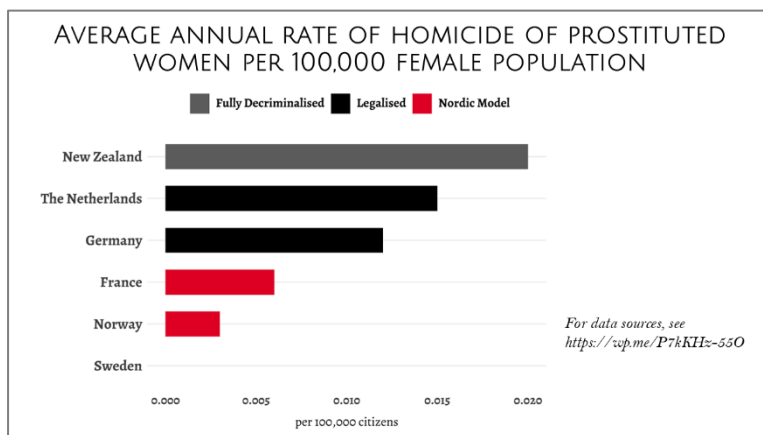
- ✓ Germany & the Netherlands both have legalisation.
- ✓ In theory, legalisation is very different from decrim – but in practice there are many similarities.
- ✓ Both result in:
  -  A massive increase in the size of the industry.
  -  Mega-brothels that cater to large numbers of punters simultaneously.
  -  Pimps are considered respectable businessmen.

Germany and the Netherlands have legalised prostitution – which in theory is different from full decriminalisation. However, there are in fact many similarities. For example, in both Germany and New Zealand, there is a massive industry with huge numbers of people involved. Both have multi-storey brothels, operating in plain sight. Pimps and brothel owners are considered respectable business people. In Germany around one million men pay women for sex every single day.



This chart uses publicly available data to show the percentage of the population involved in prostitution in six countries: Germany and the Netherlands with legalisation, New Zealand with decriminalisation, and Sweden, Norway and France that have the Nordic Model.

This shows that a **much smaller** proportion of the population is involved in prostitution under the Nordic Model. This suggests that the Nordic Model is effective in reducing the size of the industry, or at least in preventing its growth.



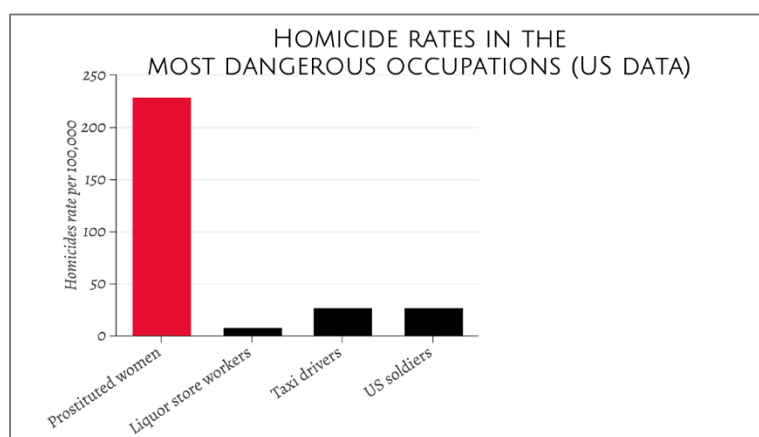
Decrim lobbyists say the Nordic Model is more dangerous for the women involved. If this were true, we would expect to see higher rates of homicide of women involved in prostitution in countries that have implemented the Nordic Model and lower rates in countries that have legalisation or decriminalisation.

This chart shows the number of prostituted women murdered by pimps and punters, expressed as an average annual rate per 100,000 female citizens during the years the legislative framework was in place.

As you can see, the homicide of women involved in prostitution is significantly higher in New Zealand, Germany and the Netherlands than in Sweden, Norway or France.

This suggests that claims that the Nordic Model is **more dangerous** for the women involved are false. However, we want to be clear that we are **not** claiming that the Nordic Model is **safer** for women, because we do not believe that **anything** can make prostitution safe. Instead, the Nordic Model aims to reduce the amount of prostitution that takes place and the numbers involved.

This data suggests that when implemented well, the Nordic Model is successful in this.



The fact is that prostitution is a very dangerous occupation – far more dangerous than being a fire fighter, taxi driver or police officer. To illustrate this, I will end with a quote from an article by Valerie Hudson, an American academic:

*“The homicide rate for prostitutes is 229 per 100,000, which is higher than the highest workplace homicide rates of any other occupation, e.g. taxi drivers (27 in 100,000) and U.S. soldiers (including combat-related deaths: 27 in 100,000 between 1980-2010). Yes, ... prostitutes are almost 10 times more likely to be killed than soldiers in combat. There is literally no category of “work” with a homicide rate as high as prostitution. This should tip us off that this is not “work,” but is in fact a form of socially sanctioned violence.”*

## REFERENCES




<https://wp.me/p7kKHZ-7ek>



As promised, here is a [link to a version of this talk](https://wp.me/p7kKHZ-7ek) that includes links that provide references for all the claims and data I have mentioned – and links to further reading.

## THANK YOU!

<https://nordicmodelnow.org>

    @nordicmodelnow

**NORDIC  
MODEL NOW!**

Thank you!