

Fact sheet on legalizing prostitution

When prostitution is legalized, three things occur:

1. There is an explosive growth in the commercial sex market that is accompanied by an increase in organized crime.
 - a. The best example of this is the city of Amsterdam.¹
2. Sex trafficking increases because demand exceeds the supply of women in legal prostitution.
 - a. In a study analyzing over 150 countries, the authors documented that human trafficking inflows increase where prostitution is legal.²
3. Inherent harms of prostitution are not mitigated but may actually increase with legalization.
 - a. Rape- In Nevada, the counties with legal prostitution have 5 times the rate of rape than similarly populated counties that do not have legal prostitution.³
 - b. PTSD- In Australia where prostitution is legal⁴:
 - i. 47% of women in prostitution met criteria for PTSD currently or in the past.
 - ii. 85% reported work-related violence
 - c. Emotional consequences in Australia⁵:
 - i. 87% of women reported mild or moderate depression
 - ii. 54% reported current severe depression symptoms
 - iii. 42% have attempted suicide while 74% have experienced suicidal ideation

The experience in rural counties of Nevada, the only location where prostitution is currently legal within the U.S.⁶

1. 81% of women in legal prostitution want to leave it.
2. There is a clear linkage between prostitution and sex trafficking in Nevada.
3. Women in legal prostitution suffer from violence, threats, physical injury, HIV and other STI's.
4. 23% of the women in legal brothels were prostituted as a child.

The experience from Rhode Island where indoor prostitution was legal from 1980-2009⁷

1. Rape was not decreased with decriminalization of prostitution.
2. The rates of gonorrhea and chlamydia were not decreased by decriminalization of prostitution.

¹ Huisman W., Kleemans ER. "The challenges of fighting sex trafficking in the legalized prostitution market of the Netherlands." (2014). *Crime, Law and Social Change*. 61(2): 215-228.

² Cho S., Dreher A., Neumayer E. "Does legalized prostitution increase human trafficking?" (2013). *World Development*. 41: 67-82.

³ Ruggieri C, Miethe TD, Hart TC. "Rape and Other Sex Offenses in Nevada, 1990-2007." (2009). *Center for the Analysis of Crime Statistics*. Available online at: https://www.unlv.edu/sites/default/files/page_files/3/Rape-in-Nevada-1990-2007.pdf

⁴ Roxburgh, A. Degenhardt, L. Copeland, J. "Posttraumatic stress disorder among female street based sex workers in the greater Sydney area, Australia." (2006). *BMC Psychiatry*. 6:24. Available online at: <http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-244X/6/24>.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Farley M. *Prostitution and Trafficking in Nevada: Making the Connections*. 2007. Prostitution Research & Education; San Francisco CA.

⁷ Lachapelle L., Schneider C., Shapiro M., and Hughes DM. (2019) "Does the Decriminalization of Prostitution Reduce Rape and Sexually Transmitted Disease? A Review of Cunningham and Shah Findings." (2019). *Dignity: A Journal on Sexual Exploitation and Violence*. Vol. 4(3): Article 6. DOI: 10.23860/dignity.2019.04.03.06.