

# ~~Incomplete List of Legal Discrimination against Sex Workers~~ (OLD VERSION: [All future updates will on this document](#))

Compiled with additional writing by [Ashley Lake](#) (blame me for mistakes!)  
and a lot of help from community commenting (don't blame them!)



Last updated 08/01/2018 (Added Rebrandly).

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## Introduction

This is a living document - a combination of reporting and data tracking we will continuously update. We've found over 150 companies, institutions, and discrete products (like Skype or Youtube) that in some way discriminate or ban sex work or adult products OR have been shut down completely following increased anti-sex work legislation.

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We've augmented this list with commentary in specific sections, including some longer form discussion of [the anti-sex campaign against sex workers currently being branded as anti-trafficking](#) and [another fairly lengthy bit on political grandstanding and](#)

[crusading](#). If you are completely new to this topic and think a narrative might be more useful than a list, we might humbly suggest you skim the list after reading the introduction, just to get a sense of scale, then read those general informational sections first before giving the list itself a closer look.

As sex workers are not a [protected group](#) under US law, companies and institutions have a wide berth when it comes to setting policies to discriminate against people working in sex related jobs or at sex related companies - everything from [full service sex workers and porn performers](#) to people who [make and sell toys](#) or [safety products](#). The US Government also just passed broad legislation that makes it [riskier for online services](#) to include sex workers. Called SESTA/FOSTA, the legislation equates all consensual in-person sex work with “trafficking”, [putting sex workers in danger](#). It’s being followed by other laws that [directly impact peer-led aid groups and direct harm reduction services](#). While “[no platforming](#)” is often referred to as a possible tactic against extreme racism or fascism, it’s possible [the removal of sex workers from the internet is the best example of this idea in practice](#).

The passing of legislation like FOSTA/SESTA, aimed at sites that offer sex workers safe advertising, [has been touted as a victory](#) for trafficking survivors. But no additional funding was set aside for survivors and no new programs were created - instead the bill offered only additional criminal laws specifically mentioning facilitation of “prostitution”, clearly including consensual work. [Evidence in the past](#) suggested [this approach would not help victims](#) and [today we are again seeing the terrifying stories sex worker advocates, internet freedom groups, and empirically informed anti-trafficking organizations](#) feared play out. Bills that remove online resources for sex workers don’t fight trafficking, they [increase](#) it.

Groups that have done long term first hand research like Amnesty International [recommend full decriminalization for all consensual sex work](#), but much of this document covers discrimination that applies directly to people who already do legal

work (in America or elsewhere). It should be obvious that criminalizing sex work doesn't end it - [we've got three thousand years of evidence to look at](#).

"Torture, mutilation, fines, imprisonment, banishment, excommunication, and even the death penalty have all been deployed at various points, and none have succeeded in abolishing the sex trade. Nor have these punitive measures ended sexual abuse. All that ever happens is that consenting sex workers are forced to work in dangerous conditions and are further stigmatised for what they do." - [Historian Kate Lister](#)

This list is mostly focused on the sex industry in the United States of America, but due to the global nature of many of these companies, the [impact](#) is felt [worldwide](#). If you're not a sex worker, and you've landed here, imagine trying to run your business, or just live your daily life, without access to all these commonly used things. Keep in mind that when sex workers are pushed off these platforms, they're often pushed off altogether and permanently under any name even if they are [not actually using](#) that platform for sex work.

These policies also directly impact other marginalized groups - especially [trans women](#) and women of color - with "[walking while Black](#)" and "[walking while trans](#)" being memes for a reason. The idea of technology helping with these issues, rather than simply amplifying our societal issues at scale, is hard to take seriously while [press salivates over the idea](#) of Uber encouraging drivers to report people involved in the sex trade to the police based on their hunches.

This used to be a document available for public comments and participation.

Unfortunately, some people decided to take advantage of that to actively destroy it, so I've had to lock it down. This is a big document but it may not be the most *up to date* document. Other resources are listed towards the end.

We are working on a list of recommended and safe services for sex workers, but it's honestly a LOT harder, especially with the daily addition of anti-sex work TOS changes

and the current constant loss of sex work specific sites. Here is the link: [Technical Resources for Sex Workers](#).

This document is currently over 100 pages. I'm sorry.

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## **Financial Discrimination**

Financial discrimination is a huge issue for sex workers and extremely under reported in the media. Regardless of the kind of sex work they do, they're at risk of losing their livelihood at any minute when kicked off a platform. They're kneecapped in their ability to compete with everyone else, because the latest technical innovations don't allow their access.

Sex workers don't have the same options for banks, people willing to invest in them or their products and ideas, and are often limited to working with more abusive companies that take much higher fees for subpar quality services. There's no real logical reason for this, though many have called it “high risk” as an excuse. There is very little data to back up sex work being higher risk than other kinds of online commerce.

Sex workers are often kicked off platforms even if they have nothing to do with their business. People report having personal bank accounts closed once the bank learned of their profession and they've been kicked off of personal fundraising platforms like GoFundMe while trying to get help from friends and family with healthcare.

The intentional conflation of "human trafficking" with consensual "prostitution" is designed to remove stability and agency from sex workers, because abolitionists really believe that sex workers do not deserve to have a life. They want them to not have any option other than "not be a sex worker." This approach has never worked, only made sex workers poorer and unable to take care of their basic needs.

One good article on this subject is [How the Financial Sector is Making Life Miserable for Sex Workers](#), by sex worker Tina Horn for Vice.

## Banking and Payments

1. **JP Morgan Chase Bank** - Reported: [XBIZ](#), [Daily Dot](#), [Daily Beast](#), [Vice](#), [Inc.](#)
2. **Bank of America** - Reported: [Fast Company](#)
3. **Capital One Bank** - from personal experience ([Jocelyn Mae](#)), "Banked with capital one for over 4 years. Received a letter soon after the Eros raid. Said they could no longer offer services to me because my accounts weren't consistent with normal business/household expenses. Wouldn't give me any other info." (Anonymous Source)
4. **Citi Bank** - From personal experience ([Marla Lyons](#)) ([Kristen DiAngelo](#)) (Gina DePalma)
5. **Choice Bank** - reporting: [Amarna Miller](#)
6. **Wells Fargo** - From personal experience (and [tweet](#), [tweet](#))
7. **US Bank** - From personal experience (and [tweet](#))
8. **Simple Bank** - From personal experience (and [tweet](#))
9. **Scotiabank** - From personal experience (and [tweet](#))
10. **Chime Bank** - From personal experience ([tweet](#))

11. **Credit unions** - from personal experience ([Liana Roux](#))
12. **Loan/Mortgage denial** - Reported: [Fast Company](#), anonymous sources on their own housing struggles
13. **Visa/Mastercard and Merchant Accounts** - reported: [Engadget](#)
14. **VC Firms and Investors** - Reported: [Fast Company](#)

See also "[Operation Choke Point](#)" and [Tom Dart's Letters to Payment Processors Skirting the Legal System](#)

## Payment Processors

([h/t missfreudianslit](#), [engadget](#))

13. **PayPal** - "You may not use the PayPal service for activities that... relate to transactions involving.... certain sexually oriented materials or services."- prohibited [in TOS](#), reporting: [Engadget](#). PayPal has banned many people for life even if they never used PayPal for their sex related work - there are many petitions out there [like this one](#).
14. **Square** - "Will not accept payments in connection with ... Adult entertainment oriented products or services (in any medium, including internet, telephone or printed material)" - [in TOS](#), reporting: [Engadget](#)
15. **FirstChoice, First Choice Pay** - Lost Chase Bank, no longer able to process adult payments ([source](#))
16. **Payoneer** - Lost Chase Bank, no longer able to process adult payments ([source](#))
17. **Paxum** - Lost Chase Bank, no longer able to process adult payments, may be finding a solution ([source](#))
18. **Stripe** - "By registering for Stripe, you are confirming that you will not use the Service to accept payments [for] Pornography and other obscene materials (including literature, imagery and other media); sites offering any sexually-related services such as prostitution, escorts, pay-per view, adult live chat features." - [in](#)

[TOS](#). We have also gotten first hand reports of sex educators and toy companies being banned.

19. **Braintree** - A PayPal parent-company, they state "You may not use the Payment Services in connection with any product, service, transaction or activity that involves sexually-oriented or pornographic products or services." - [in TOS](#)
20. **Google Wallet** - "Unacceptable product - Adult goods and services - Pornography and other sexually suggestive materials (including literature, imagery and other media); escort or prostitution services." - [in TOS](#)
21. **SquareCash** - as above, and many [personal anecdotes](#)
22. **Snapcash** - processed with Square, see above
23. **Skrill** - "It is strictly prohibited or restricted to send payments in order to pay for and/or receive payments as consideration for the delivery of a) adult related and pornographic material including but not limited to websites selling videos/pictures and or DVDs of such; b) Escort services" - [in TOS](#)
24. **2CheckOut** - "Prohibited products- Adult Entertainment (Sexually Oriented)" - [in TOS](#)
25. **Intuit** - "We may terminate your Merchant Agreement without prior notice to you if you fall into one of the following categories and/or accept payment for... Lingerie or passion parties; adult DVD rental/sales; adult novelties; massage parlors (without licensed massage therapists); escort services; adult digital content." - [in TOS](#)
26. **Venmo** - "You agree you will not use the Venmo Services [for sales of] items that are considered obscene; ... certain sexually oriented materials or services; ... You further agree that you will not use the Venmo Services to conduct transactions that: ... are otherwise related to illegal activity, gambling, pornography, obscene material or otherwise objectionable content or activities." - [in TOS](#)
27. **AmEx Serve** - "You agree that you will not... Use the Service to sell personal services that are illegal or sexual in nature; Use the Service to sell any items or



material that are obscene, vulgar, offensive, pornographic, profane or sexually explicit or indecent items or materials." - [in TOS](#)

28. **WePay** - "You will not accept payments or use the Service in connection with the following activities, items or services: Adult or adult-related services, including escort services, adult massage, or other adult-entertainment services; Adult or adult-related content, including performers or 'cam girls'." - [in TOS](#), reported [Daily Dot](#)
29. **Circle** - "So it turns out that Circle Pay has done a 180 on us and is NO LONGER SEX WORKER FRIENDLY. Has already closed multiple sex worker accounts." ([source](#)) So much for the slogan "On a mission to create a more inclusive global economy." "You hereby agree that you will not:.... upload, display or transmit any messages, photos, videos or other media that contain illegal goods, pornographic, violent, obscene or copyrighted images or materials for use as an avatar, in connection with a payment or payment request, or otherwise" - [in TOS](#)
30. **GreenDot** - "Nothing was found in their Cardholder Agreement, but during a private chat they said, "The Green Dot Card cannot be used for adult website or adult services."" - [Source](#)
31. **SentryLogin** - Paywall service, removed a sex educator. In emails to her - "Unfortunately, we cannot accept that kind of subject matter, even if it is educational. ALSO, nothing that requires any kind of age requirement is allowed by us or by Stripe. So that means even if you remove the age requirement, it is not acceptable."
32. **GiftRocket** - "Nothing was found in their legal page, but when asked about using the site for adult services in an email: "Your customers can send you gifts through our site, but keep in mind that we are not a payment processor and that is not an approved use of our site. We also only recommend you only accept gifts on our site from people you know." - [source](#), also [Liana Roux](#) has heard of accounts closed from trusted primary sources
33. **TransferWise** - from personal experience ([Liana Roux](#), [Jocelyn Mae](#))

34. **Coinbase** - "When asked about using the site for adult services in an email:  
"As long as your company is operating legally and compliant with all state and federal regulations, you can use Coinbase's merchants services." ([source](#)) but since that quote they've shut down accounts of both legal and gray area sex workers (from primary sources on background)
35. **Payoneer** - "Quoted: "We provide payment options for people in the adult industry but they need to sign up through one of our partner companies in order to use Payoneer as a payment solution [like] LiveJasmin, Myfreecams and other similar sites.  
"But please be advised that people working in the adult industry cannot get paid through the US Payment Service. Your Payoneer card is intended to be used as a payout solution, to get paid from any of our official partners or the US Payment Service. Your Payoneer account should not be used for the sole purpose of Private Loading. Under section 5 of the terms and conditions of that specific service does not support adult work. Please also note that the US Payment Service is not available to those residing in the US." ([source](#))
36. **Remitly** - Said to an escort in a country where SW is legalized - "Remitly's service cannot be used to fund escort services or other adult activities." (anon source), "It is a violation of the Agreement to use the Service for any of the following: sexually-oriented materials or services," - [in TOS](#)
37. **Dwolla** - "You will not: Engage in transactions involving escort services" - [in TOS](#)
38. **Google Checkout** - Reported: [Inc.](#)
39. **Amazon Payments** - Can't allow people to pay with Amazon on your site, "the following product or services are prohibited from using Amazon Payments: Adult Oriented Products and Services - includes pornography (including child pornography), sexually explicit materials (in all media types such as Internet, phone, and printed materials), dating services, escort services, or prostitution services." [TOS](#), Reported: [Engadget](#)

40. **Amazon Gift Cards** - Also you aren't even supposed to have an [Amazon Wish List](#).  
Lame!

41. **Affiliate Programs** - A lot of affiliate programs and tools (like Amazon and eBay) don't allow adult products for promotion or the service to be used on sites with adult content. Enforcement seems unpredictable, via sources on background.

There are reliable [reports](#) on anonymous sources saying they are being hit even if they are not US based:



**Michael Fattorosi**  
@pornlaw

Following



Interesting possible FOSTA fallout credit card billing situation... just got word that an EU biller stopped processing for an EU website that does legal escorting ads & camming on all US based customers... they dont even have ads for US escorts...

12:33 PM - 19 Apr 2018

**Note** - Sex work "friendly" processors [charge high fees and take a larger cut of each transaction](#), putting sex related businesses at a disadvantage in the global marketplace and tilting the porn industry from independent content creators towards major companies like MindGeek that [often have abusive labor practices](#).

## Crowdfunding

41. **GoFundMe** - [GoFundMe cancels sex workers' legal fundraising efforts](#) (of a non-profit legal group, not like individual is doing non-criminal activities), pulls down pages of sex workers trying to pay for medical bills - From Personal Experience ([Keiki](#))

42. **Patreon** - Tightened up restrictions on adult content, “you cannot sell pornographic material or arrange sexual service(s) as a reward for your patrons. We define pornographic material as real people engaging in sexual acts such as masturbation or sexual intercourse on camera. You can’t use Patreon to raise funds in order to produce pornographic material such as maintaining a website, funding the production of movies, or providing a private webcam session.” [in new TOS](#) (see also [Open Letter to Patreon, reporting on Patreon’s TOS changes](#)), reports: [Engadget](#), [Motherboard](#), and a lot more linked at [AboutLara.com](#)
43. **GiveForward** - “Alexander received an email from GiveForward, saying her payment processor WePay had forced them to cancel her campaign, take down her page, and freeze her funds. The reason given? Alexander had “violated” WePay’s terms of service, which state that “you will not accept payments or use the Service in connection with pornographic items”: (There was no reference to “pornographic items” on Eden’s (now-cached) GiveForward campaign page; instead, there’s a footnote saying that “Eden will be using these donations for living and medical expenses ONLY,” and that “no funds will be used to finance any sort of creative or business project.”)“ - [firsthand account by Eden at xoJane](#), reported, [Daily Dot](#)
44. **Crowdfunder/Tilt**: Funnily enough, Crowdfunder used to be one of the few sites that allowed, for example, a porn star to try and get help paying medical bills, but now “We’re now part of the Airbnb family, and our focus will be to incorporate our social payments experience into their product ecosystem. As such, we’re no longer accepting new campaigns and will soon be retiring the Tilt service. While you’ll no longer be able to create any new campaigns, we’ll be continuing to support active campaigns through June 4th and payouts through the Tilt.com platform until June 12, 2017.” so, looks like they’re AirBNB now (the [let’s ban sex workers for life](#) under any name even if they have no intention of working out of a rental “AirBNB”)

45. **Kickstarter** - "Don't post obscene, hateful, or objectionable content. " - in [Community Guidelines](#), "Pornographic material" on [Prohibited Items](#). Kickstarter has been known to shut down anything remotely sexual, including projects like sex toys, safety products, and education ([Reporting at Tech Crunch](#))
46. **OnlyFans** - "You may not publish "obscene" content; you may not advertise contests; you are not allowed to promote escorting." ([source](#))

## Self Promotion/Expression and Advertising

Sex workers are also at a disadvantage in their businesses when it comes to exposure and normal participation in marketplaces. They can't use typical advertising services and often have trouble using social media - it's also important to note that the social media issues keep sex workers from being able to participate fully in politics. This list leaves out many paper, direct mail, telemarketing, etc, advertising services - not because they don't ban sexual products and labor (they do) but because many of them just don't have as easy to link to TOS or reporting. We'll try to expand it later if it seems useful.

## Social Media Platforms - Banned

47. **Facebook** - Many personal experiences reported, including Liara Roux. (Of course, they leave catfishing accounts with performers' pictures up). Pictures of sex toys from sex toy review blogger removed and account suspended ([source](#)). "We already know they don't like adult content but they seem to be really enforcing it and booting any adult pages." ([Source](#)) ([Kristen DiAngelo](#) - banned for life). They've also [banned people just for sharing media requests](#) about sex work. "We remove content that displays, advocates for, or coordinates sexual acts with non-consenting parties **or commercial sexual services**. We do this to avoid facilitating transactions that may involve trafficking, coercion, and non-consensual sexual acts. "Sexual services" include prostitution, escort services, sexual massages, and filmed sexual activity." - [Gizmodo's single page version](#) of Facebook's monstrous community guidelines. There is a ton more,

including “sexualized messages”, “escort services”, and an entire section devoted to why they ban most nudity. This part seems particularly ridiculous: “Do not post: ... “Sexually explicit language, defined as description that goes beyond mere mention of: A state of sexual arousal; An act of sexual intercourse unless posted in an attempt at humor or satire, or if educational in nature”. So, like, no sexy stories. Unless they have a punchline?

48. **LinkedIn** - This may seem funny to some, but it means that if someone is a sex worker, they either cannot mention it on their professional profile (delegitimizing sex workers as workers and not allowing them to be proud of their history) or they will be banned for mentioning it on their profile (delegitimizing sex workers.) Considering many sex workers have multiple careers, being a well known sex worker could lead to writing gigs, panel appearances, and so on - but only if they are very careful with how they word their LinkedIn. Reporting at [Telegraph](#)
49. **WordPress.com Blogs** - More notes on this below, but while WordPress seems to allow text-only blogging “about” sex, they have periodically banned people for anything more than that.
50. **Blogger** - “Starting March 23, 2015, you won’t be able to publicly share images and video that are sexually explicit or show graphic nudity on Blogger. Note: We’ll still allow nudity if the content offers a substantial public benefit, for example in artistic, educational, documentary, or scientific contexts.. . . If your existing blog does have sexually explicit or graphic nude images or video, your blog will be made private after March 23, 2015.” ([source](#)) - reporting: [ZDNet](#)

## Social Media Platforms - Ghettoized or Hidden, sporadically banned or suspended

51. **Twitter** - Twitter is [a major offender](#) and one of the [most harmful](#). Right now, hashtags and viral posts have immense power to shape the public dialog. But a variety of implementations and policies keep sex workers from participating, including announced ones like “sensitive content” filters and un-announced ones

like shadowbanning (making it even harder to find accounts for unknown and untold (to users) reasons.) Twitter has reported that over 90% of users have the sensitive content filter on (which is on by default and not super easy to find.) But the sensitive content filter doesn't explain all the trouble on twitter.

"In a study that looked at tweets from 2014 to early 2015, over a quarter million tweets were found during the one year period in Turkey to have been censored via shadow banning. Twitter was also found, in 2015, to shadowban tweets containing leaked documents in the US. In January 2018, a Twitter spokesperson told Fox News, "Twitter does not shadowban accounts." There is some controversy as to whether or not that statement by a Twitter's spokesperson is technically correct." - [Wiki](#)

"When [contacted by VICE](#) for comment about alleged shadowbanning, though, Twitter claimed they do not shadowban accounts. But, they did describe how the visibility of content from accounts that have violated their terms of service can be affected. " Visibility of content you say? Hmm, that kind of sounds like a shadowban. Worth noting again, most people who experience being shadowbanned haven't gotten any sort of notice of terms of service violation or how it could be corrected.

What this means in practice is that sex workers don't show up in the feed for the vast majority of users. People have trouble finding or tagging their accounts even when they type in the full exact username. It's [been reported](#) that shadowbanned accounts might not show up in "likes". They don't show in #MeToo. Sex workers' attempts to educate as responses to cruelly whorephobic joke hashtag #QuestionsForAProstitute also didn't show up. Considering the toxicity of the twitter stream for any given search term, I'm not sure why keeping out sex workers, who fill their feeds with flowery emojis and complementing each other,

is somehow making the site a nicer place.

Personally it's been a pain in the ass as press (and fans) describe searching for me and only finding fake accounts. Stormy Daniels described ([and Boing Boing confirmed](#)) searching for herself and only finding posts by Trump himself and vitriol directed at her. Here's an example of my feed and the public feed when looking for posts about Backpage right after it went down:



### Search filters · Show

### Related searches

- kamala harris
- Charlie Walk
- craigslist
- backpage DOJ
- kamala

### Who to follow · Refresh · View all

-  **Bill Nelson** @SenBillNel...  
Follow
-  **Chelsea Handler** @chel...  
Follow
-  **FBI Washington Field** ...  
Follow

Find people you know

### United States trends · Change

- #WWEHOF**  
61.8K Tweets
- #DearDonaldJTrump**  
34.7K Tweets
- Patrick Reed**  
4,467 Tweets
- #SpockExplainsGIFs**  
1,803 Tweets
- #UFC25Years**  
1,885 Tweets
- Texas National Guard**  
8,149 Tweets
- #RevolutionChi**  
2,224 Tweets
- Backpage**  
US federal authorities seize classified ads site Backpage
- Amir Johnson**

**Twitter Moments** @TwitterMoments · 3h  
Known for its adult classified ads, **Backpage.com** has been shut down by the US government.



### US government authorities seize classified ads site Backpage.com

US news

Reports say the US-based site, known for its adult classified ads, has been shut down. The home of its founder, Michael Lacey, was raided on Friday morning.

Moments

16 88 101

Rylee Mae - Ottawa Apr 8-14th and 9 others Retweeted

**Morgan M Page** @morganmpage · 5h  
It is obvious to anyone who bothers to listen to sex workers that the seizing of **backpage** will not end the sex trade, but only serve to make it more dangerous. SESTA/FOSTA is putting sex workers' lives in jeopardy.

22 428 802

Show this thread

Elle Thorn and 7 others Retweeted

**Emma Evans** @TrancewithMe · 6h  
@KamalaHarris will be personally responsible for the death of sex workers, for political gain.

I say this because she was specifically told BY LAW ENFORCEMENT that **backpage** had been working with LEO to fight trafficking and a shut down would harm that.



**FuryOfPatience** @IndigoHaze36

This action will have immediate impact on #sexwork everywhere. Locally I know it is used to advertise and screen. Sex work is also LEGAL here in Saskatoon. Shutting down this site globally crosses legal boundaries. Clear...

14 229 277

Show this thread

Lucie Bee and 1 other Retweeted

**Taste The Moone** @annamoonesyou · 7h  
**Backpage** has just been seized by the federal government and taken down. This is terrifying.

backpage

**Backpage**

Top Latest People Photos Videos News Broadcasts

**Search filters** · Show

**Related searches**

- kamala harris
- Charlie Walk
- craigslist
- backpage DOJ
- kamala

**New to Twitter?**

Sign up now to get your own personalized timeline!

**Sign up**


**Worldwide trends**

- #WWEHOF  
61.8K Tweets
- Ben Simmons  
38K Tweets
- اعتذر لِنفسي لاني  
28.7K Tweets
- #ماذا تقول لمن لا يثق بك  
41.5K Tweets
- Guede  
24.6K Tweets
- #Sixers  
6,042 Tweets
- Luíla  
1.35M Tweets
- #نطالب بمحاسبه وزير التعليم  
19.6K Tweets
- CON UN MILLON CORONAMOS  
7,922 Tweets
- Bron  
18.8K Tweets

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**Twitter Moments** @TwitterMoments · 3h

Known for its adult classified ads, [Backpage.com](#) has been shut down by the US government.



**US government authorities seize classified ads site Backpage.com**

US news

Reports say the US-based site, known for its adult classified ads, has been shut down. The home of its founder, Michael Lacey, was raided on Friday morning.

16 88 101

**Gabrielle Renee Seunagal** @\_ClassySnobbb · 3h

Dear sex workers,

99.9999999999% of society doesn't care about the closure of **backpage** hurting your "careers." We care about **Backpage** being used for child rape and child trafficking.

Sincerely,

Decent America

30 65 130

**Kingsbro Godsson** @KingsbroGodsson · 5h

So while Kimmel and Hannity have their little thing going, Sessions and DOJ are killin' it!

Two-time border hoppers converted to felons.

Sextrafficking **Backpage** and affiliates raided and seized.

The world is becoming a better place everyday.

23 73 161

**BuzzFeed News** @BuzzFeedNews · 6h

The classified ads site **Backpage**, known for personal adult ads, now displays a message that "[backpage.com](#) and affiliated websites have been seized"

52. **Tumblr** - You can't upload adult video files, even clips of yourself naked will be removed, though they allow you embedding and uploading gifs or pictures. Tags are restricted from search, blogs are hidden if they are marked as adult, even if an

individual post was not on an adult topic or containing adult content. “In other words, if your blog has been flagged as Adult, nothing you post will ever appear on Tumblr’s public tag searches.” This basically means, for example, if someone makes a #MeToo blog post, no one will see it under that tag or know to retweet it. Tags that MAY BE related to adult content are prohibited, even the tag #gay.

Reporting - [Daily Dot](#), sporadic stories of account removal

53. **Instagram** - “You may not post violent, nude, partially nude, discriminatory, unlawful, infringing, hateful, pornographic or sexually suggestive photos or other content via the Service.” - [in TOS](#) - Has been enforced by banning accounts of people that are worksafe but include mentions of working in porn or other sorts of sex work.
54. **Periscope** - Owned by twitter. “Do not post content that: Depicts pornography or sexual acts. This includes intercourse, masturbation, and sexual nudity. Nudity that is intentionally artistic, educational, or associated with newsworthy events may be acceptable.” - [in TOS](#)
55. **Snapchat** - Despite being wildly popular for sex workers and their fans, snapchat does sporadically suspend sex workers.
56. **Vine** - Allowed nudity at first, but no longer after it became a really popular platform ([Wired](#) )
57. **Twitch** - “Sexually explicit content and activities, such as pornography, sexual acts, and sexual services, including solicitation and offers for such content, are prohibited. Broadcasting in areas where nudity or sexual activity may be taking place, even if such conduct or activity is not at the direction of the broadcaster or takes place in the background of the broadcast, is prohibited.... Sexually suggestive content is prohibited. ... Attire intended to be sexually suggestive and nudity are prohibited.” ... many more details [in TOS](#), in practice people report being banned for even mentioning to their twitch audience that they are a sex worker.

We're also self censoring to try and avoid removal ([some instructions here on Tits and Sass](#)).

## Online Advertising Tools - Banned

58. **Facebook Ads** - "Adult Products or Services: Ads must not promote the sale or use of adult products or services, except for ads for family planning and contraception. Ads for contraceptives must focus on the contraceptive features of the product, and not on sexual pleasure or sexual enhancement, and must be targeted to people 18 years or older; Adult Content: Ads must not contain adult content. This includes nudity, depictions of people in explicit or suggestive positions, or activities that are overly suggestive or sexually provocative." - [Prohibited in TOS](#)
59. **Google AdWords** - No adult material *in* ads (not the biggest deal), but also "Content that may be interpreted as promoting a sexual act in exchange for compensation" which allows for a lot of things but at least they specify includes "cuddling sites". Limitations on other things - [in TOS](#)
60. **Twitter Ads** - "Twitter prohibits the promotion of adult or sexual products and services globally." followed by a huge list of everything it "[applies, but is not limited, to](#)" which is business speak for it can mean whatever they say it means, no appeal. - [in TOS](#)
61. **Tumblr Ads** - "Tumblr does not allow ads for sexual products or services. This includes but is not limited to: Pornography books, films, magazines, or websites, Sex toys, Libido increasers, Prostitution or escort services, Adult entertainment establishments or in-home exotic dancers, Intimate and erotic massage services, International marriage brokerage services (e.g., mail order bride services)" - [in TOS](#)
62. **Instagram Ads** - Instagram actually *is* Facebook since 2012, and for advertising their policy links redirect to the same TOS above.

63. **Pinterest Ads** - "We don't allow ads for adult products and services, including toys, videos, publications, live shows, sexual enhancement products, sites that promote casual sex, international match-making or escort services. We do allow ads for family planning and contraception as long as the focus isn't on improving sexual performance or pleasure." ([source](#))
64. **LinkedIn Ads** - "LinkedIn does not allow advertising related to any of the following: .. Sexual or Adult Content .. Sexual or Adult Products or Services .. Even if legal in the applicable jurisdiction" with [further examples in TOS](#)
65. **Youtube Ads** - "Advertising is not permitted for the promotion of any adult or pornographic content on YouTube. Advertisements containing adult or sexually explicit content are also prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to: Pornography, Nudity (including pixelated imagery), Sexual acts that are blurred, pixelated, or has stars and bars, whether real or implied, Fetish content, Sexual abuse, Exposed or minimally covered breasts, buttocks, or genitals, Sexually suggestive poses, Concentrated attention on particular body parts in a gratuitous manner... Adult toys and lubricants... Please note that YouTube does not allow this content regardless of whether or not the ad complies with government regulations on this kind of advertising. ... What we consider as adult content in video ads: Whether breasts, buttocks or genitals (clothed or unclothed) are the focal point of the video, Whether the video context is sexually suggestive (e.g, subject is depicted in a pose that is intended to arouse the viewer), Whether the language used in the video is vulgar and/or lewd, Other factors include the camera angle and focus, and the clarity of the images in the video." - [in TOS](#)
66. **Yelp** - Currently direct aid organizations like [St. James Infirmary](#) are allowed on yelp, but individual sex workers (unlike accountants) are not.
67. **Reddit ads** - Reddit, long a bastion of adult content, a year after shutting down in person sex work subreddits, recently removed their official advertising options for sex related stuff. (Reporting [4/16/19](#))

## Content Creation, Organizing and Distribution

Sex workers are hard working creators of some of the most voraciously consumed content on the internet (and anywhere.) Porn is ubiquitous and insanely profitable - though because of discrimination with payment platforms much of that money goes to tube sites and giant megacompanies that benefit from pirating of independent sex work and predatory contracts. With less discrimination, independent sex workers in porn could thrive. But for now, they have trouble even using the same tools others do to create media and share it.

### Content Creation Tools

67. **Google Drive** - Post-FOSTA, many reports of accounts being locked or files disappearing. [Reporting by Motherboard](#). "Do not publish sexually explicit or pornographic images or videos.... Additionally, we do not allow content that drives traffic to commercial pornography." [in TOS](#) - but several people have said their personal accounts were targeted.
68. **Microsoft OneDrive** - As a microsoft service, it [now will be moderated for sexual content](#).
69. **ZohoDocs** - "Sexually Explicit Material – Sexually explicit materials are those materials that contain adult or mature content. We do not authorize users to publish or transmit sexually explicit material using Zoho Services." - [in TOS](#)
70. **UpWork** - "We recently learned that your job post included adult content, which is against our Terms of Use. Adult content includes material that is considered pornographic, erotic, obscene, or sexually explicit. As a result, we deleted the post and removed any proposals that had already been submitted." - even though actual job posting had no adult content, just said help was needed for a website that "contained adult content". - from personal experience ([Liana Roux](#))

71. **Rebrandly** - Link shortening branding service doesn't allow material that "depicts sexually explicit images" - [in TOS](#) (Ashley note: [Short.cm](#) support told me they support all legal content and ok'd our xxx site)
72. **DropBox** - While dropbox does allow people who make adult entertainment to use the product, it's explicitly against the rules to use it to distribute or share any adult content via public or otherwise links.

## Content Distribution Platforms

71. **Vimeo** - Removes accounts with content "focused on sexual stimulation", personal experience. ("I was very careful with my Vimeo to never post any content that was less tame than your average music video. Small amounts of nipples here and there, but I used Vimeo like any other artist. They shut down my paid account with no warning and when I complained and gave comparative examples, they said my content was "focused on sexual stimulation". [This was the most explicit video I ever posted there.](#) "- Liara Roux) (Kristen DiAngelo)
72. **YouTube** - No Nudity allowed (unless you're a major label or hollywood studio). ("They absolutely do not support SWs. My video was flagged for removal and my account was completely suspended/banned: Looking at my video clearly it DOES NOT violate any policies. I am walking around a beach in a bikini! But the title and description ["NYC Ebony Escort - Chanel Carvalho - Exotic Black New York City Escort" ] was definitely an issue for them." - [Chanel Carvalho](#)) (Kristen DiAngelo - banned for life)
73. **Smugmug** - Photo sharing website, prohibited - "User Content that is ... obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, sexually suggestive" - [in TOS](#)
74. **Flickr** - Now owned by SmugMug, so while they previously only explicitly stated they had a policy against non-consensual pornography and said no nudity was allowed in icon or cover photo, and "Full frontal nudity is "restricted."" they're now going to be playing by SmugMug's rules above. It was never super clear if they allowed adult content past nude and suggestive content (and some have had

accounts closed before) but now all Flickr content is [going to be transferred to SmugMug ownership as of May 25th, 2018](#). [Flickr said on 4/23](#) that they are fine with “this content” as long as it’s filtered, but we’ll see how this plays out.

Flickr was nice enough to respond when I asked them for clarification of what they [do and don’t allow](#), and directed me to [a page that says](#) “restricted” content may include “full-frontal nudity and sexual acts; photos only—videos cannot contain restricted content and are deleted if reported.”

75. **Soundcloud** - “In order to protect the community and maintain positivity, please don’t post... Pornography: Remember that SoundCloud can be accessed by people as young as 13. Don’t post any content that is predominantly sexual in nature, or that could be perceived as an aid to sexual gratification. This includes, but is not limited to, images containing nudity and recordings or detailed descriptions of sexual acts. There are plenty of other places to find that content online.” - [in TOS](#) [Ed. Note - “plenty of other places, but not the ones on this list, IE, most places.]
76. **Google Play** - Updated to TOS to ban explicit content such as “promotional images of sex toys” and “apps that support escort services.”
77. **Apple App Store** - Apple says they remove “[overly sexual](#)” content, but it’s actually a lot worse. Since they don’t allow adult apps, it has a huge chilling impact on any company that wants their app in the store. It’s been speculated that [Apple’s guidelines are behind Tumblr’s censorship](#), for example.
78. **Steam/Valve** - This one is actually [kind of a question mark](#), because some sexual games get banned, some don’t, some show back up - and their moderation of individuals is really opaque. Steam recently has had more items added to a “[Sexual Content](#)” tag, so it’s likely they are trending in a positive direction since you can now search directly for them. Update 5/19/2018 - [Valve is currently cracking down on sexual games](#). NCOSE is [taking credit](#).



## Website / eCommerce Creation Tools

79. **WordPress.com** - Specifically things hosted on WordPress.com and not instances of WordPress open sources software on people's self hosted sites. There is a lot of confusion over this one. WordPress.com is a business venture by the company Automattic, which was started by a founder of the WordPress.org open source software project. You will not be prevented from making a site with WordPress software you have downloaded from WordPress.org or installed through your web hosts control panel.

However, you may have your account shut down or content removed if you host your blog/site at WordPress.com, which says [in its TOS](#): "There are limitations to the mature content permitted on our service. Please don't: Post visual depictions of sexually explicit acts (such as, but not limited to, images, videos, and drawings) that can be considered pornographic; Post links or ads to adult-oriented affiliate networks, such as pornography site signups; Post links, text, or images promoting or advertising escort or erotic services;" and has been known, through firsthand accounts, to suspend adult industry workers using it for personal or promotional blogging.

It's not clear to the extent Automattic polices use of other services/plugins that you log into with a WordPress.com account (like JetPack), but we'd advise caution for WP users on allowing your images to be compressed by JetPack packaged plugins, for example.

80. **SquareSpace** - Doesn't allow "[offensive, sexually explicit or obscene](#)." and while escorts have been able to have SFW sites up in the past, now many people are reporting their sites being taken down.

81. **Etsy** - Content may be listed as "Mature" but "Pornography is prohibited on Etsy." - [in TOS](#)

82. **Wix** - Confirmed by a Canadian sex worker whose account got shut down,  
Reporting on it: [Sex workers say Wix is shutting down their websites](#)

## Webhosts / Web Services

*Section needs to be fleshed out, about which webhosts don't allow adult content.*

83. **EscortDesign** - This was an escort friendly website service (obviously) and they just disappeared around 4/6? Workers reporting sites missing ([Source](#))

84. **Cloudflare** - the popular DNS tool just shut down their service with regards to the site Switter.At, saying "Cloudflare has been made aware that your site is in violation of our published Terms of Service. Pursuant to our published policy, Cloudflare will terminate service to your website.". Read [Switter's statement here](#).  
[Reporting at The Verge](#).

85. **Google** - "Google have already used a form of shadow banning for some time. When you're typing in the search box Google starts giving you suggestions until it thinks you're after something sexual, at that point the suggestions disappear."  
([tweet](#))

## Communication Tools

86. **MailChimp** - Mailing list tool shuts down adult accounts (Just heard SpankChain said it shutdown their account?) "Please don't use Mailchimp to send anything offensive, to promote anything illegal, or to harass anyone. ... You may not send: Pornography/sexually explicit content; ... Some industries have higher-than-average abuse complaints, which can jeopardize the deliverability of our entire system. ... Nothing personal, but in order to maintain the highest delivery rates possible for all our customers, we can't allow businesses that offer these types of services, products, or content: Escort and dating services;.. we may closely review, suspend, throttle, or disable accounts that exceed these rates and/or offer the following services, products, or content: Adult Entertainment/Novelty Items " - [in TOS](#), (Personal experience - Kristen DiAngelo)

87. **Constant Contact** - [TOS](#) links to Prohibited Content - "Pornography or illicitly pornographic sexual products, including but not limited to adult magazines, video and software, escort services, dating services, or adult "swinger" promotions; provided, however, the foregoing prohibition shall not apply to established retail home-based party businesses;" - "Uses any image we make available in connection with our products or services in a way that places any person depicted in the image in a way that a reasonable person would find offensive, including the use of images (i) in pornography or sexual products;" " Asked support if it was ok to "keep customers of my adult oriented business up to date" and they said "Ah, we actually don't work with that. It is one that our compliance team won't do. My apologies."
88. **Active Campaign** - "[I] was using it for newsletter and my account was suspended a couple days after SESTA was voted on" ([Stella Jane](#)). "You will not use ActiveCampaign's Services to send anything offensive, to promote anything illegal ... you may not send any messages or content that: Is unlawful ... obscene, pornographic, indecent, lewd, suggestive ... We do not allow you to use our Services to: Send messages regarding: ... escort and dating services; ... other products or content that is, in our sole judgement, objectionable or likely to upset recipients" - [in TOS](#)
89. **Skype** - As a microsoft service, it [now will be moderated for sexual content.](#)
90. **Talky.io** - "User shall not communicate any message or material that is deemed... indecent (including nudity, pornography, and sexually explicit content), obscene... otherwise unlawful." - [in TOS](#)
91. **Discord** - "You agree not to use the service in order to: post, upload, transmit or otherwise disseminate information that is obscene, indecent, vulgar, pornographic, sexual or otherwise objectionable as outlined in our Community Guidelines;" - [in TOS](#)
92. **Appear.in** - No content that "displays or links to pornographic, sexually explicit or any other indecent material;" - [in TOS](#)

93. **Asana** - While it may be fine to organize your porn business (not confirmed) the TOS implies you really shouldn't upload any pornographic content directly - "is deceptive, fraudulent, illegal, obscene, pornographic (including child pornography, which, upon becoming aware of, we will remove and report to law enforcement, including the National Center for Missing and Exploited children), defamatory, libelous or threatening, constitutes hate speech, harassment, or stalking;" - [in TOS](#))

*Note: I know several chat tools don't allow discussions on sexual topics, what are those?*

## Production Rights

There's a fairly common take on sex work that goes "well, if there's a camera in the room, it's legal, ha ha". Yeah, no. [As AdultBizLaw informs](#): "Those are the only two states that have state Supreme Court cases that have held that the production of pornography is NOT prostitution and/or pandering and is rather a First Amendment free speech right. This is why the adult entertainment industry is a legal and recognized business within California." and it gets trickier from there. I recommend reading the [full article](#).

So, this is untested in a lot of places. I think the average American probably believes porn is legal, full stop. They probably don't even see an existential issue with it. But our laws don't actually reflect that. Which leaves sex workers, once again, under the constant threat of having their entire career pulled out from under them.

## The Loss of Sex Work Friendly Resources

At Patrecon, Patreon's convention, I talked to an investor who said that since the internet is decentralized, sex workers could just go elsewhere if their access to platforms is limited. Besides the fact that if this idea is applied across the board, it's obvious it doesn't make any sense (if every restaurant in NYC just decided to stop serving gay or Black people, I'm pretty sure that would be looked upon badly by most NYC residents), it also completely ignores that the purpose of the attacks on sex work is to remove sex

work from the internet entirely. Legislation like FOSTA/SESTA, while hurting sex workers on all platforms and increasing stigma, is also aimed squarely at the websites sex workers use for their business every day.

[Supporters of this](#) are not shy about their goals of removing porn and other sex work from the internet and society as a whole if they can. The reality for sex workers is that they live daily in fear of losing their livelihood and communities, regardless of their location on mainstream sites or on sites dedicated to sex work.

## Websites - Sex work related services removed

93. **Craigslist** - Shutdown erotic services section in 2009, [adult services in 2010](#), all personals in 2018 ([NPR](#))
94. **Reddit** - [TOS changes, asked mods to censor some subreddits](#), outright banned (most with no warning) subreddits include r/escorts, r/maleescorts, r/sugardaddy, r/hookers, r/sexworkerblogs
95. **YellowPages** - Shut down adult boards
96. **Facebook Groups** - While probably already against TOS, people have recently reported losing sex worker only discussion groups
97. **Backpage.com** - While previously they've had sex work sections shut down, the entire site is now [Seized by the FBI 4/6](#). Backpage is a huge focus for crusaders and (perhaps this is why) it was one of the most used, lowest cost, advertising venues for independent sex workers. There's a ton to talk about here and we've placed it in the essay sections below.
98. **Doublelist.com** - Backpage style site with dating pages, now updated with this notice: "Due to the recent shutdown of some sites, we have been experiencing an influx of illegal posters on the site. As these posters are trying to find a new place to post, we are working hard 24-7 to permanently remove and block them. Please report any illegal activity to us, and please flag all illegal posts! Thank you. Read our [full notice](#) here about the security changes we will be rolling out soon."

## Sex Work Websites - Online resources taken down or lost

99. **MyRedBook** - Lost in 2014 and mourned often on the West Coast. See "[The Rise and Fall of RedBook, the Site That Sex Workers Couldn't Live Without](#)" at Wired.
100. **RentBoy.com** - Taken down and CEO convicted. "Judge said although company was illegal, "[there is no question it did a lot of good.](#)" As Mathew Rodriguez [observed at the time](#) "Jeffrey Hurant build a site that made sex work safe and it landed him in prison." See also, [How the Feds Took Down Rentboy.com](#) at Vice. I remember being so shaken by this the first time and I'm honestly tearing up thinking about how terrible this was. I included more on this below. I feel like I should also note that this entire site and community was men for men - not sure how that fits into the trafficked women and children narrative used to justify the efforts to attack it.
101. **CityVibe** - Seems to now be down, no official statement?
102. **Cracker** - "Essentially a copy of Backpage. In Australia your Backpage advert cross posts to cracker and vice versa. Both are now gone in Asia and Oz." - [Amber Ashton](#)
103. **The Erotic Review Ad Boards** - Closed right after FOSTA/SESTA passing then...
104. **The Erotic Review / TER** - Closed ALL US ACCESS as of 4/6 ([source](#)), further reporting at [Ars Technica](#)
105. **Humpchies.com** - Quebec-based message board, blocked all US access as of 4/19
106. **NightShift** - Closed
107. **Hung Angels** - Forums removed
108. **YourDominatrix** - Shut down US ads
109. **CallEscort.com** - "Maitenance"
110. **CallEscort.org** - Closed
111. **MyFreeCams** - "CHANGE in TOS: explicit ban on any transaction such as offering to meet a site member for tokens." ([source](#))

112. **TouchByVenus.com** - Closed
113. **P411** - Canadians are now barred from advertising in the states. Update, 4/7 - Not accepting new applications from USA providers ([source](#)), Other reported issues, possibly take caution
114. **Eccie** - Seems to be down, 4/7 ([source](#))
115. **MyScarlettBook** - Closed
116. **ProvidingSupport** - ~~Closed~~ Update from site owner: "I am the owner and operator of ProvidingSupport.com and I noticed in your Google Doc that you have us listed as not in operation. We had an issue with an update to our program right around the time Fosta/Sesta was signed that made people think we were down, but it was unrelated and the site is still up. I have no plans to pull it anytime soon, I am willing to run the risk of the unconstitutional aspects of the bill being implemented (the retroactive application of the law) and the site will be up until at least 12/31/18. I do hope to have the site migrated and owned by someone else by then, and then the site will live on, but for now it will at least stay up until the end of the year."
117. **Humaniplex** - Removed classifieds section on April 14, 2008 ([source](#))
118. **MyProviderGuide.com** - Closed
119. **Open Adult Directory / OAD** - Closed US Listings (at least as of 4/11)
120. **SpaHunters.com** - Closed
121. **TheEscortgirl.com** - Closed
122. **TouchedByVenus.com** - Closed
123. **USA Sex Guide** - Closed
124. **AdultOpenDirectory** - Removed all US Escort and Domme Boards
125. **SouthernGFE.com** - "As it stands today, SouthernGFE will more than likely shut down at some point in April or June." They state it is NOT due to the bill. (?) ([Read more here](#), it's a weird one and by weird I mean this dude calling people "skank whores")
126. **Adultwork** - Closed US ads ([at least of 4/17](#))

127. **Men4RentNow** - Closed March 2018
128. **YourDominatrix.com** - Shut down all US Based Advertising
129. **MojoEscorts** - "Runtime Error"
130. **BarebackRT-BBRTS** - Quote their email, 4/6: " You are receiving this message because your Account on BarebackRT (BBRTS) has been identified as being an ESCORT/MESSAGE THERAPIST or some other type of "PRO" Account. It is being sent to your account INTERNALLY and to the email address on file with your account. Due to changes in US Federal Law, PRO Accounts can no longer exist on BBRTS in any form. Your account is being closed to get YOU and US into compliance with the US Federal Law and eliminate legal exposure to YOU and US that may be caused by the changes the new law creates."
131. **Massage Republic** - Ended US services as of 4/19/19 ([Their statement](#), archived [twitter link](#))

## Sex Work Sites - TOS Changes / Gone

131. **My Free Cams** - "Changed their policies to ban any talk about transactions of any kind." ([source](#)), no longer allowed to do meet ups (regardless of any sexual activity - many cam workers used to offer public hangouts, meet and greets, or dinner dates - all completely out of the gray area, 100% legal activity.) or raffles that include meet ups as prizes. ) ([Riley Scarlett](#))
132. **Eros** - Unsure if there was an actual TOS change, but definite enforcement change. [Users now getting emails saying "Full Nudity is Not Allowed" even for photos that just show breasts](#). A call center used by Eros was also [raided by Homeland Security last year](#) and several international sex workers have reported being turned away at the border by officials directly referencing their ads on Eros.
133. **HungAngels** - A trans centric site, it was not only a place for sex work but also an important community resource, but now they are removing forums
134. **DommeCraft.com** - Canceled all classes for 2018



135. **XoticSpot** - Stripper social network site and hosting for conversation for several clubs, closed due to FOSTA fears - [reporting at Missoula News](#)
136. **OffBeatr** - Adult friendly crowdfunding site forced to close after being unable to shoulder payment processing while being shunned by the mainstream banks - (sources [1](#), [2](#))
137. **Globill** - Payment processor that [shutdown in 2003](#), losing clients large amounts of money
138. **RedPass** - A sex work friendly payment processor, now also out of business
139. **r/SexSells** - A notable subreddit for a variety of sex work such as clip and panty sales, male mod kicked off other mods and closed it ([Source](#))

## Porn Sites

140. **Insex** - A BDSM site that was taken down in 2005 under pressure from the gov and a new “anti-obscenity” initiative by the FBI. ([source](#))

I know there are other porn sites that have crumbled under pressure (and it would also be interesting to talk more about all the ones bought by MindGeek, but that may be a little off topic.) There’s also [a long history](#) of people fighting against printed and video porn. You should actually read that article, [The War on Porn is Back](#), because it does all tie in very much with the ongoing narrative against sex work. [Here’s another article](#), at Scientific American, that’s address some of the anti-porn narratives directly with studies showing there are usually “no negative effects and it may even deter sexual violence”.

This document is, honestly, a little more focused on full service in person sex workers - it’s the opinion of this author that a lot of the stigma applied to other sorts of sex work is tied into the criminalization and extreme stigma directed at full service sex workers. You can see this in the terms used to refer derogatorily to cam girls, porn stars, etc. Often it’s “whore.”

But the war on porn is real, and it’s the same war on the rest of sex work.

## Advertising / Safety Websites Impacted

141. **VerifyHim** - Community discussion boards removed, peer safety notes lessened or removed, other changes in the works. VerifyHim is a miracle site for sex workers, a pure safety resource - no clients allowed - that allowed quick and comprehensive screening based on different inputs (like a client's number, name, nickname, email, and so on). *Really comprehensive*. Like, down to people's address history, who has owned the phone number in the past, arrest records, memberships on sites - from Facebook to The Erotic Review - and most importantly blacklist results from several databases in addition to VerifyHim's own and the ability to directly contact references anonymously, who could decide to get back to you directly. I can say with 100% certainty both that no trafficking has ever happened on VerifyHim and that losing it or lessening its features will result in violence and death.
142. **MyRedBook Bad Date Lists** - When MyRedBook went down, it took its safety resources and community forums with it.

## Personal Life Services

Many of the previous work related items intersect with people's personal services - like being banned from skype or losing your social media. But other platforms that people take for granted just to live a happy and healthy life are also denied to sex workers. Like online dating or renting an AirBnB for your vacation. There's no reason sex workers shouldn't be able to enjoy contemporary niceties, but many are scared to announce their job (no matter the legality of their specific sort of work) because they risk losing access to basic sites.

## Dating Sites

Some sex workers do use dating sites to pick up work (and in the author's opinion, there's nothing wrong with that) but it's worth noting that many sex workers are

removed for such sites simply for stating their profession. Shouldn't it be an option for stigmatized people to let others who might want to date them know their job? Dating outside the industry as a sex worker [can be hard enough as it is](#).

143. **Pounced.org** - CLOSED From Pounced: "we were able to offer pounced.org as a free service to the community because the liability to use was well managed and we could manage our cost effectively... in many ways this bill targets small sites like ours directly, it favors organizations with the resources to invest in filtering technology, paid staff and legal support staff." - [Tweet](#) - Reporting: [Vice, Lawyers and Liquor](#)
144. **OkCupid** - From personal anecdotes, will add more later.
145. **Tinder** - From personal anecdotes, will add more later.
146. **FetLife** - NO EXCHANGING OF SEX ACTS GOODS OR SERVICES - NO ESCORTING - NO CONSENSUAL BLACKMAIL OR FINANCIAL DOMINATION - Subject to change. ([source](#))

## Sugar Dating Sites

147. **SeekingArrangement.com**
148. **SugarDaddie.com**
149. **WhatsYourPrice.com**
150. **MissTravel.com** - "They're all active, I was adding them because they discriminate. I believe they're all owned by same company [*Ed note - unconfirmed*], myself and several escorts I know have been deleted and banned from site for being a sex worker. even if not using the site as a "performer" even with your legal name they don't allow you to be on sites. It's in their rules and when they delete you they're not shy about telling you it's because you're a sex worker. (lol sugaring IS sex work)" - [Jocelyn Mae](#), "This happened with me also on S.A. 100% correct" - Cazzy Kush

## Hotels

Several people have reached out to me wanting to mention in this document that they've experienced discrimination at hotels. It's a very valid note. It's hard to know exactly what to "list" at the moment, but it's generally understood that while hotels are happy to let civilian (non-sex) workers meet and greet in their suites (and have whatever crazy civilian sex they have at those things), they really don't want to be known as having sex workers working there.

Tales of being kicked out, asked to leave, or having to be extra careful around hotel workers are very commonplace. Of course, many hotel laborers themselves (it should be said) are happy to turn a blind eye and even help with small acts of kindness like leaving extra towels when they realize what you're up to.

One of the worst things about hotel discrimination is that it doesn't really just hit active workers. People have been *arrested* for even *appearing* to be sex workers. This hits transgender women and women of color - and transgender women of color - the hardest.

As [the Guardian reports](#) - "A transgender woman who was jailed for eight days after hotel staff called the police to report "two men" engaging in prostitution, has settled her lawsuit against the hotel... Meagan Taylor, 22, and her friend, both Black transgender women, spent the night at the Drury Inn in West Des Moines, Iowa. The pair had been on their way to Kansas City to attend a funeral. But Taylor wound up getting arrested and spending eight days in a county jail after being found in possession of her hormone drugs without a copy of her prescription, a charge that was later dropped."

As well of a terrifying example of the prevalence of harmful ideas about trans people, it's also an all too uncommon side effects of the criminalization of full service sex work. Even if the police cannot prove anything (or indeed if anything even happened) they are happy to add whatever kind of charges they can add and generally make life hell for people suspected of being sex workers. Taylor was able to bring a case against the

hotel, but many people are forced to accept this kind of stigma and abuse with little recourse.

## Other Applications or Services

151. **AirBnB** - Has been known to close accounts (permanently) of anyone it finds out to be a sex worker (porn star, cam performer, escort, whatever), regardless of their reason for wanting to rent an AirBNB. "Since Airbnb boasts more listings than the top 5 hotel chains combined, their behavior, like making it acceptable to discriminate against porn stars, could have a much larger impact. Sara Jay worries about what this means for the future. "Imagine a hotel chain saying that to you? We won't accept your reservation because you are an adult film star?" asks Jay." - [Airbnb's War on Porn Stars: 'They Locked Me Out'](#)  
Reporting - [Broadly, The Daily Beast](#)
152. **Uber** - Consensual sex workers have reported being turned in after taking an Uber. Uber defends this as "anti-trafficking" policy, and redirects to their press releases lauding themselves for being so good about it. Seems unlikely this has helped many trafficking victims, because, well, arrest doesn't really help anyone.
153. **Eventbrite** - Excludes events that constitute or promote "explicit sexual activity or pornography" [in Community Guidelines](#), changed as of on April 3, 2018
154. **Udemy** - Online learning site, doesn't allow education about adult content. BUT does allow anti-sex content, hosting three separate courses on "porn addiction" as of 5/19 and one course about protecting your kids from "sexting". And "You will not post or provide any inappropriate, offensive, ... pornographic ... content or information" - in [TOS](#)
155. **Model Mayhem** - Says "Do not use Model Mayhem to network for or solicit any pornographic, sexual, or imminently dangerous content or activities of any kind. Do not link to pornographic websites." in TOS, but now apparently is banning people who work in the adult industry from using the site to find modeling gigs for non-adult projects. [Reporting at YNOT.](#)

## Lost Safety Resources and Government Oppression

It's not hyperbolic to say that sex workers are under attack. They are [literally under extreme risk of harm](#) and society continues to force them into it. For an example, [Rape and sexual assault reports increased two-fold after Scotland introduced laws criminalizing solicitation in 2007](#). Legislation like FOSTA/SESTA encourages censoring of websites and has a chilling effect on direct outreach. Criminalization of aspects of sex work enhances stigma, makes life more dangerous, and puts the most vulnerable members of the community in direct contact with police, [who are known to rape, steal from, and/or arrest workers instead of helping them deal with other violence](#).

Sex workers don't get the same kind of respect for their work that would allow them to solve business disputes through the courts. They don't have access to basic government resources. Sex workers, regardless of legality, also have trouble traveling as they are frequently harassed at borders.

## Safety Resources, Non-Profit Groups, Direct outreach and Harm Reduction

154. **SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Project) Sacramento** - Suspending all direct services in relation to FOSTA/SESTA and possible broadening of "pandering" law to include any help for sex workers, not just help that gets "financial benefit." Basically, we can no longer hand out condoms, educate people on how to work safely, offer healthcare, anything else that "enables" someone to keep working - IE to stay alive the way they know how and help them stay safer. Amazingly fucked up and a sign of things to come. ([Source](#))
155. **O.School** - "Last month, with FOSTA days from being signed into law, O.School did the same, adopting a new preventative internal policy that would remove all talk of sex work from its platform. In a subsequent official statement, organizers discussed the broader strokes of FOSTA, offering only one vaguely worded

mentioned of how it would affect the platform directly: “Bills like FOSTA, SESTA, and SB1204 stand directly in the way of [creating and nurturing a culture of sex positivity], and directly impact our ability as a third party provider to provide a space to educate people about sex workers’ rights.” - Reporting at [The Verge](#)

156. **Sexual Freedom Summit / Woodhull** - “Because of recent changes in federal law (SESTA/FOSTA), Woodhull is unable to provide information online about topics related to sex work.” ([Source](#))

157. **Desiree Alliance / “Transcending Borders: Immigration, Migration, and Sex Work”** - The organization will no longer have their conference (the largest conference in America on sex work, latest title of it above) because of FOSTA concerns about posting about it online, and increased border harassment meaning many of the attendees would be turned away or held at the border - as has actually happened to some sex worker organizers and even educators.)

158. **VerifyHim** - I know I’m mentioning this twice, forgive me, but it’s just that important. A resource JUST FOR SAFETY that had screening tools for workers to see if they might be meeting someone dangerous, community that helped people stay safe, communication tools to help workers talk directly to each other - those tools have started coming down. Screening is still active but people report that user generated safety tips have been removed.

## US Government Resources

This is a hard section to fill out without adding tons and tons and tons of detail, but the biggest governmental threat to sex workers is law enforcement. As we mentioned above, police [may be primary offenders](#) when it comes to the abuse of sex workers which leads activists to say if you care for sex workers [the number one thing you can do is avoid calling the police](#) - because it can literally be a death sentence for a sex worker.

Police will not help any sex worker (legal or not) with a rape report and won’t take other accusations seriously either. [This story of an abused woman crying to the police that she was being trafficked and them laughing it off](#) is a common refrain in sex worker

circles (again, keeping in mind that the intersection of victims of trafficking and consensual workers is very strong - while not portrayed much in media, [it's not uncommon for someone to leave an abusive situation and then work for themselves](#), much happier when they are keeping their money while using skills they know).

Criminalization and stigma makes it hard to keep track of how many people are sex workers since people do not report their careers to the government (and don't generally want to report it to anyone else either), meaning that it's near impossible to properly serve the community. That means harm reduction efforts are hampered and abolitionist organizations are free to fill the gap in empirical knowledge with junk statistics.

The industry being ostracized means there aren't the same labor protections afforded to sex workers as workers in other industries. I'm sure there's a lot more I should put here, please let me know.

**Legal** - Less protection under the law, in practice and otherwise, high risks of harm by law enforcement.

**Policing** - This could be a whole book, and in fact, has been, but basically if you ask sex workers what they're scared of, the police are near the top of the list. Police see sex workers, agree to a service, [do it](#), and then arrest instead of paying. That itself is rape - sex was consented to under one condition, and that condition was denied with violence in its place (being restrained against your will is violence.) And that's the relatively tame story. Many people I have personally talked to have experienced extreme violence at the hand of the police.

And guess what? Police often use their authority and the always standing threat of arrest to get sex without arrests and when they share that situation ([as 30 police officers in oakland did with a minor](#)) then they are actually traffickers themselves.



**Family/Children** - It's very common for someone's life as a sex worker to be used against them as evidence with regards to custody cases. (I've got a bunch of articles to go through to expand this section and cite it.)

**Borders** - Sex workers are routinely harassed and discriminated against, and banned for life at borders, even if they are coming to the US just to visit.

"Anyone who has worked in the sex industry in the last 10 years are inadmissible to the United States and are on the same inadmissible list as those who commit crimes against humanity + genocide.

This is regardless of whether sex work is legal in their country of origin or whether they intend to visit the US on personal reasons with no intent on working in the country. Burlesque dancers, cam girls, porn performers, full service sex workers, BDSM sex workers, non-sexworkerBDSM educators, non-sexworkersex educators and non-sexworksfrom the queer community suspected to be sex workers based on inaccurate and discriminatory profiling have also reported being banned for life from the American border under the same pretences as sex workers.

We believe that they have a target sting operation for non-american sex workers travelling to america. *[Ed Note: I've actually heard a LOT of stories that support this view, and it is my belief as well that there is currently a major crackdown going on at the border. I've had friends come to visit that have visited dozens of times suddenly shaken down and denied entry.]*

On Canadian Work Visas, there is a line that states you are prohibited from any work in the sexual service industry. No other industry is listed as prohibited." - [Harley Stone](#)

"This was also used if you are alleged or presumed a sex worker as what happened when we held the last International AIDS conference here. We are about to see this again when we hold the 2018 in SF." - [Cristine Sardina](#), Desiree Alliance

“For non-US citizens, there is a line on the standard customs form which asks if you have engaged in prostitution. If so, you are barred from entering the country, even if this is legal in the country where you participated.” - [Kate D Adamo](#)

## **Context: The Campaign Against Sex Workers Branded as Anti-Trafficking From “White Slavery” to Today**

It’s worth including some detailed information on the history of campaigns against sex work and sexual expression. Full service in person sex work was not always illegal in America. How it came to be is not only a story of removing agency from women, it’s a terrible historical example of weaponized racism.

The phrase [“White Slavery”](#) was created as a reaction to the emancipation of Black men. With little evidence, [activists suggested that Black men would now be secretly taking white women as slaves](#): “They feared the concept of a white woman possibly having sex with a non-white man and heaven forbid, having a mixed child. This fear painted women as helpless victims who were held against their will and forced to commit “immoral” actions. This demonized immigrant and Black men, allowing for the profiling and targeting of minority owned businesses. The propaganda of the “white slave” myth warned white women against patronizing minority owned businesses or even moving into urban areas, while reinforcing the concept of non-white men as criminal and dangerous. An undeniable part of the legislative agenda caused by “white slave” panic was to blur the lines between the “immoral” (consensual) prostitute, and the helpless, unwilling victim. This made it easy to rally public support for criminalization of sex workers and the mass scale closing of legal prostitution zones.”

“By painting the picture of the white woman working in a legal brothel as being forcibly held there against her will, comparing her work to slavery, we exonerated the white woman, upholding her as the mythical beacon of purity and morality, while laying blame on the “other,” the “immoral” migrant workers, oversexualized Black women, and the

“evil, dangerous” Black and brown men who raped them and made money from it. Certainly, if this business is actually slavery, we must rescue these poor women, right?”

Think about the word “pimp”. Do you associate it with a Black man? [That image was intentionally created](#) - and not as marketing for rappers as I’ve seen some ridiculous takes suggest - to vilify Black men, sow fear about interracial sex, and remove agency from women trading sex. All in one blow, very neat.

Listen to this: ““One thing should be made very clear to the girl who comes up to the city, and that is that the ordinary ice cream parlor is very likely to be a spider’s web for her entanglement. This is perhaps especially true of those ice cream saloons and fruit stores kept by foreigners. Scores of cases are on record where young girls have taken their first step towards “white slavery” in places of this character.”

Does it seem at all familiar? Very similar to the stories we hear now. “I dropped my kid off at a mall and the next time I saw her was on Backpage!” Maybe true for that person. Not representative of the sex trade. That quote was by Edwin W. Sims, a US district attorney in Chicago.. [in 1900](#).

What’s going on in Cook County today? “Over 2/3 were forced onto the streets before the age of 16, with pimps and traffickers beating into them – in both a physical and verbal sense – the notion that their bodies are their only measures of self-worth. No girl grows up dreaming of selling sex to strange men.” That’s [Sheriff Tom Dart, with some similarly bogus ideas](#). I’m not sure I’d like to be referred to as a girl but guess what? I can tell you from personal experience he’s wrong about that last sentence.

I highly recommend reading the entire essay that references that 1900s quote, which was anonymously posted on Medium early this year - [White Slavery And the Anti-Trafficking Panic](#).

Just like we have alarmist Netflix documentaries now, they had [The Girl Who Went Astray](#). For history buffs, this not only lead to criminalization of brothels and [The Mann](#)

[Act](#) (Known at the time as the “White-Slave Traffic Act), it also was the founding reason for the Bureau of Investigation (aka the FBI.)

You’ll notice that when someone says “trafficking”, you probably add “sex” to it in your head. That may be because it’s “the worst” but since sex trade trafficking is [much less common than other forms](#), it’s more likely you think of “sex slavery” because it’s more exciting to get upset about. Noted in [iNews UK](#): “According to the International Labour Organisation there are at least 52.6 million men and women, and 7.4 million children, trafficked around the world to work into domestic slavery. And yet, there has been no clamp down on various websites and apps that facilitate manual labour or cleaning services. Why? Because we all recognise that doing so would damage the working conditions of people happily working in domestic service, and would do little to protect those being exploited.”

It’s possible to suggest that the “crime” of sex trafficking itself is a fabrication - much is made about the “sex trafficking industry” but almost every individual story of trafficking could also just be called, well, kidnapping and pandering (aka pimping), which are already crimes. As reported by Melissa Gira Grant at [In Justice Today](#), “Though FOSTA expands [the Mann Act](#) [*Ed. note - there it is again, should we call it by it’s original name, the White-Slave Traffic Act?*], criminalizing the act of “facilitating” prostitution online, using and operating a website to “facilitate” prostitution is already a federal crime under the [Travel Act](#) (with which the popular men’s escort site [rentboy.com](#) was [prosecuted](#)).”

So why the need for a new and more exciting crime name and new and exciting criminal legislation? To allow for new and exciting law enforcement.

We’re currently in the middle of a resurgence of anti-sex work rhetoric and propaganda, much of it amplified through a strange alliance between the far right and sex work exclusionary radical feminists (or SWERFs). The far right brings puritan ideas and posturing, and certain people on the left believe that all commercial sex is inherently exploitation against women. You’ll see these groups also focus very much on the idea of children being exploited, though the vast majority of sex workers are consenting

adults. The focus on a small amount of terrifying anecdotes is a tactic the far right also uses against abortion to attack the entire concept.

Elizabeth Bernstein, a professor of Women's Studies and Sociology at Bernard College, wrote in 2012 about [her ongoing empirical research \(which includes some good observations on the various models of approaching sex work you might want to read\) into the rise of anti-trafficking rhetoric](#): "In recent years, the trafficking of women and children into the sex sector has become the focus of a steady spate of media coverage, the subject of abundant policy interventions, and the target of local, national, and transnational activist campaigns uniting highly diverse constituencies."

"From the political left to the far right, from secular feminists to evangelical Christians, sex trafficking is frequently described as "modern day slavery" and is considered to be a moral question that is "beyond politics," something no one could possibly claim to be "for." This unity is all the more striking given the fact that definitions of the term remain murky, with many states and activists applying it not only to forced but also to voluntary forms of sexual labor. Despite this ambiguity, sex trafficking has risen to a position of cultural and political prominence that it has not held since the "white slavery" panic similarly circled the globe at the turn of the last century."

"This surge of interest presents sociologists and other scholars with some vexing social and historical questions. If prostitution is the "oldest profession," why the resurgence of interest in it now?"

Many of these explicitly anti-porn organizations have been very successful in rebranding against trafficking. It's easily understood that slavery is wrong. Sex slavery is even more alarming to many, though the majority of labor trafficking is in other industries (and many undocumented labors experience extremely high rates of sexual abuse as well, which they are often afraid to report.) They use their large funding to directly pay law enforcement to step up "trafficking raids" (almost completely targeted on consensual

workers) and release press release with the word “trafficking”. [This sounds insane, but it’s actually extremely well document in media and FOIA requests](#). Their studies basically use consensual sex work to [make up numbers](#) that are impossible to back up but widely repeated by people scared of a trafficking “epidemic.”

**Reporting:** “The Washington Times repeated the widely shared assumption that “... the number of children sexually exploited in the U.S. or at risk of being exploited is between 100,000 and 300,000.” Going further, it cited an “expert,” Nathan Wilson of the Project Meridian Foundation, in Arlington, VA, who claims that 1.6 million children younger than 18 – native and foreign-born – have been caught up in the U.S. sex trade. So acceptable is the figure [100 - 300k] that last year, when celebrities Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore introduced their well-meaning video, “Real Men Don’t Buy Girls,” on CNN, Kutcher insisted, “It’s between 100,000 and 300,000 child sex slaves in the United States today.” – Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, two academic researchers, originally proposed the estimate in a 2001 paper, “The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children In the U. S., Canada and Mexico.” Their warning has long been forgotten: “The numbers presented in these exhibits **do not, therefore, reflect the actual number of cases in the United States** but, rather, what we estimate to be the number of children ‘at risk’ of commercial sexual exploitation.” - [CounterPunch](#)

**Reporting, on same topic:** “That number is a distortion of a figure from a 2001 study by Richard Estes and Neil Weiner of the University of Pennsylvania, which estimated that number of “children, adolescents and youth (up to 21) **at risk** of sexual **exploitation**.” “Sex trafficking” was the **least prevalent** form of “exploitation” in their definition. Other forms included stripping, *consensual homosexual relations*, and merely *viewing porn*. Moreover, two of the so-called “risk factors” were *access to a car* and *proximity to the Canadian or Mexican border*. In a 2011 interview, Estes himself estimated the number of legal minors actually abducted into “sex slavery” was “very small . . . {w}e’re talking about a few hundred people.” - [Washington Post](#)

**Reporting:** “The Dallas Morning News recently took the figure to new levels of preposterousness, claiming in an editorial last November that, “In Houston alone, about 300,000 sex trafficking cases are prosecuted each year.” As defense attorney Mark Bennett pointed out on his blog, the actual figure was two. **Not 200,000. Just two.** The paper did print a correction, though the correction simply deleted the original 300,000 figure from the editorial. The paper still didn’t bother to mention the actual number, perhaps it didn’t support the alarmism in the rest of the editorial.” - [Washington Post](#)

**Reporting:** “The 100,000 figure is based on little empirical substantiation. Most disconcerting, the Department of Justice reports: “Federally funded human trafficking task forces opened 2,515 **suspected** incidents of human trafficking for investigation between January 2008 and June 2010.” It goes further, “more than 1,000 incidents with allegations of prostitution or sexual exploitation of a child.”” - [CounterPunch](#)

**Reporting:** “Bellevue Police Chief Steve Mylett told me two years ago that police had broken up “a well-organized ring promoting sex slavery.” None of the men arrested, however, were charged with trafficking – only with promoting prostitution. At a sentencing hearing for one of the men who pled guilty, a King County prosecutor acknowledged that his office had no evidence of trafficking or forced behavior in any of these cases, according to court documents. **“Trafficking requires some sort of coercive behavior, usually physical coercive behavior. And believe me, we looked hard at whether we had facts or not to file trafficking and it did not meet the standard,”** prosecutor Gary Ernsdorff told the judge. He added that prosecutors could not prove that the man was guilty of promoting prostitution in the first degree, which consists of coercion or profiting from sex work. “We did not have the evidence in this case to file... Promoting 1,” Ernsdorff said, referring to the first-degree charge.” - [The Intercept](#)

Along with the reporting on the subject by Alison Bass above at The Intercept, there’s also this amazing long form investigation, in three parts, into the creation of the sex trafficking narrative around busts in 2015 and 2016 - [The Truth About the Biggest U.S. Sex Trafficking Story of the Year](#) by Elizabeth Nolan Brown. She notes in her introduction

to the piece "[The first \[part\]](#) offers a glimpse at how this sexual economy actually operated, the motivations of its main actors, and how police came to "infiltrate" the scene. [Part two](#) explores how the government's war on prostitution — rebranded as a war on sex trafficking — brands innocent men as sexual predators and sets dangerous new standards of disrespect for free speech and free association rights. And [part three](#) looks at how policies designed to get tough on pimps and traffickers wind up threatening the very women they're supposed to save."

Realistically, some of the numbers may be a more accurate estimate of *consensual sex work ads on the internet*. It's true that hundreds of thousands of ads for sexual services exist. That's because there are hundreds of thousands of sex workers! OR actually, millions. A study from Fondation Scelles said [they estimate there are 40-42 million full service sex workers worldwide and 1 million in America](#). Even abolitionists don't suggest that 1 million people in America are sex trafficking victims, but that's the community they're hurting. But when reporting this, some go on to say "90 percent of all prostitutes are dependant on a pimp" - something there is *very little* evidence of. How many pimps would there need to be to have 40 million people *dependant* on them. The idea is ridiculous.

The peer group [Police Prostitution and Politics](#) notes that "Most people do not even know what the US population is (2010 Census- Males: 154,492,067 Females 159,421,973) which means that when someone claims that there are between "100,000 to 300,000" minors being trafficked into prostitution EVERY YEAR, and suggests that those 'victims' are 'forced to have sex with 10/ 15/ 25/45/ 60 men per day, 7 days per week' ([links to those guesstimates and statements found in the material below](#)) such unsubstantiated statistics would indicate that there are more men hiring underage prostitutes than exist in the entire US... [for example, using 100,000 minors each year x (10 'johns' per day x 200 days per year)= 200,000,000 men... if we use the '200,000 minors' x (10 'johns' per day x 200 days per year)= 400,000,000 men per year."



If the actual number of sex trafficking victims (again, leaving aside that most trafficking is not related to the sex trade) is in the hundreds or low thousands, how does that contrast with the huge increases to sex worker safety afforded by the internet? Why make legislation, policy, and enforcement that will kill actual people to save hypothetical other people? Abolitionists often talk as if any trade off is worth it to save kids “sold into sex slavery.” But why should there be a trade off at all? Consensual sex workers are natural allies - we hate the idea of anyone doing our job and not getting paid good money, because we know just how hard a job it is.

But the goal isn't actually to lesson the amount of people killed and abused. It's a misguided (and doomed) effort to get rid of sex work entirely. And if that fails, move people off the streets and into jails.

[Professor Bernstein, continuing from her studies](#): “One of the things that I have found is that the various constituencies who have pushed for the anti-trafficking frame have been united not only by a politics around gender and sexuality (i.e., a commitment to an ideal of amatively coupled heterosexual egalitarianism, one that cannot imagine a place for prostitution outside the scope of exploitation) but also by an unspoken commitment to a particular carceral agenda, in which the pursuit of “women’s human rights” is envisioned primarily in terms of criminal justice. Crucially, the unspoken sexual and carceral assumptions that prevail among these well-intentioned social activists can often wind up doing more harm than good.

Contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns have been far more successful at criminalizing marginalized populations, enforcing border control, and measuring the compliance of other countries with human rights standards based on the curtailment of prostitution than they have been at issuing any concrete benefits to victims. This is true both within the United States, where pimps can now be given 99-year prison sentences as sex traffickers and where sex workers are increasingly arrested and deported for the sake of their “protection,” as well as elsewhere around the globe, where the U.S. tier-ranking of other countries in its annual Trafficking in Persons Report, and associated economic

sanctions, have led to the tightening of borders internationally and to the passage of punitive anti-prostitution policies in numerous countries. The accelerated arrest of sex workers is particularly ironic, given that sex workers themselves are likely to describe prison, not prostitution, as tantamount to slavery. Increasingly, heightened policing, arrests, and incarceration have become the surprising political core of many activist agendas on behalf of “women’s human rights.”

FOSTA/SESTA will feed directly into this since it’s now classified consensual full service sex work as trafficking in the new law against advertising. This will let abolitionists say “we’ve detected hundreds of thousands of instances of trafficking” without being easily corrected - but in reality there is little evidence to support trafficking rising because of online advertising and much [evidence to support the position that online advertising reduces the number of women being abused and killed](#). Numbers for sex workers of other gender identities are similar. Online advertising makes it easier for sex workers to work independently, with many current and former sex workers describing how it helped them leave abusive situations (or “pimps”) and full decriminalization seems a lot more likely to make a space for women (and people of other genders involved in sex work!) to assert their agency - as opposed to being humiliatingly handcuffed, dragged around, and put in jail.

## Epistemic Injustice in Press Coverage

I’m currently working on actively studying press coverage to quantify this, but it’s obvious from regular observation that when reporting on sex work, actual working sex workers are quoted at an insanely small rate compared to other groups. Preference is given to law enforcement, non-peer led nonprofits, those willing to identify with victimhood, politicians, [and even celebrities](#). It should be obvious that sex workers are experts on sex work. And experts of all kinds expressing themselves in many different ways - I’ve included links to tweets, quotes, stories, comics, and scholarly books and articles by sex workers all in this one document.

But due to stigma, they are not considered reliable sources. If a sex worker exits the industry and is willing to condemn the entire industry, their perspective is boosted by abolitionist non-profits, while they actively work to minimize active sex worker voices. That's the stigma at work - "Sex work is bad, so if a sex worker says it's bad we can help her. If she says it's good, she herself is bad or being controlled by someone bad."

The words abolitionists use to talk about sex workers are expressly designed to remove their agency. "Prostituted woman" is a good example. They'll say this regardless of the existence of anyone to be doing an action to that woman, and hand waive it off with theory about the patriarchy controlling them. I'm happy to get back into my college pastime of theory when we're done dying at such a high rate, but I'll leave them with this thought - how can you talk about society removing agency from women while using language expressly designed to do just that? I've never had a client or fan of my porn talk about me that way, never - they love what I **do**.

Epistemic injustice is a concept described in detail in a book by Miranda Fricker - "Fricker gives the example of a woman who due to her gender is not believed in a business meeting. She may make a good case, but prejudice causes the listeners to believe her arguments to be less competent or sincere and thus less believable. In this kind of case, Fricker argues that as well as there being an injustice caused by possible outcomes (such as the speaker missing a promotion at work), there is a testimonial injustice: "*a kind of injustice in which someone is wronged specifically in her capacity as a knower*." - [Wikipedia](#)

Since the public is prejudiced against sex workers and sees them as less than people, it's easier to also see sex worker's *conveyed experiences* and *opinions* as less worthy than other figures we are trained to respect - whether through positions of concrete governmental and organizational power or simply the power of popularity. Since sex work is presented as bad, "seedy", "disgusting", and so on, most of society only considers sex workers victims if they feel sex workers are worth considering at all. Thus when writers they look to quote sex workers, they look for victims and prioritize

statements like "[Most girls do have somebody that is controlling them. Somebody that takes all the money at the end.](#)" that represent a terrible situation but in no way represent *the average situation*. The truth is, that person is wrong. She was hurt, but she is wrong about "most girls" and there is absolutely zero evidence to back it up. And [survivors are not monolithic](#). Just by reaching out to more than one source, and definitely past the sources supplied by abolitionist groups, they would be able to see the variety of thought among sex workers.

The narrative, however, persists. And [as sex work activists say - stigma kills](#): "In 2000, [John Lowman identified](#) a 'discourse of disposability' in media reports on sex workers, by analysing media descriptions of efforts to abolish sex work by politicians, police and local residents. Lowman linked this with a sharp increase in the murders of street sex workers in British Columbia after 1980. He argues that, 'It appears that the discourse on prostitution of the early 1980s was dominated by demands to get rid of prostitutes from the streets, creating a social milieu in which violence against prostitutes could flourish.'"

When articles cite "Anti-Trafficking Organizations" or "Anti-Trafficking Activists" it is most common that they cite an abolitionist organization. But that's *not actually* representative of anti-trafficking organizations. Leaving aside global policy setters in favor of decriminalization like Amnesty International and the World Health Organization, Freedom Network USA is the "largest coalition of experts and advocates providing direct services to survivors of human trafficking in the U.S." and their position is also [against criminalization and FOSTA in particular!](#)

Journalists should actively examine their biases and make sure to quote actual workers, and a variety of workers, when reporting on them or on legislation that impacts sex workers directly. They need to realize that there may be "both sides" among sex workers, and when quoting victims instead of quoting a tech company or EFF rep as "the other position", see what other impacted groups might think. This was very frustrating in the run up to FOSTA, because, honestly, we're fighting for our lives and

that's a lot more heart wrenching story than "some tech companies are concerned about freedom of speech but come on trafficking is so bad you guys."

If writers go into researching an article thinking all sex work is bad - and it may be hard for them to think otherwise considering how it's portrayed in media, fictional and reporting - they're going to find a lot of things that seem to support that position. Writers should look first to lived experiences, well conducted empirical studies and solid investigative reporting, not whatever stat seems like it will drive the most headlines.

## Political Grandstanding and Crusading

A major issue in sex work discourse in America (and I'm sure abroad) is that "ending trafficking" just sounds really great. It kind of drowns out anything else. I mean, of course, who doesn't want to end trafficking? Stopping pimps, saving girls, saving children - great things for a politician or hero cop to have on their record. So politicians and politically minded law enforcement have made a habit of this. It's honestly pretty similar to the war on drugs and tough on crime rhetoric in general, though it's disappointingly pushed by some politicians that are darlings of activists in both parties, whose supporters then attack criticism on a large array of unrelated grounds.

The religious right can be trusted to always have terrible ideas about sex (and those are very very well represented in this documents section on abolitionist non-profits), but the current crusade is arguably led by Democrats. A really good person to act as case study of this is [Kamala Harris](#). While she is by no means alone (and I'll list some other notable examples below this), considering her prominence and the length of her career building on "trafficking", allow me to pick on her for a minute.

A Black woman from California with [some generally progressive policies](#), she's risen to be a bit of an icon and is [expected run for president](#). She's also a cop (literally) who has lead the crusade on sex worker resources and made her career on vilifying backpage and other sex work sites. [When criticizing her actions](#), many (including myself, oddly) have been accused of being misogynistic "Bernie Bros" - which makes even less sense

considering Bernie himself *also* disappointingly voted for FOSTA/SESTA, as well as Elizabeth Warren and every Democratic and Republican Senator except for Rand Paul and Ron Wyden. The inference is that any opposition to her has to do with her being Black and a women, instead of *her policies directly harming groups that disproportionately* [INCLUDE BLACK WOMEN](#).

[Zoé Samudzi](#) writes [in the publication Verso](#): “Despite [arguments by sex workers](#) that the closure of online work spaces would be harmful to them, Harris, like many others, claimed to support sex workers while actively making their lives more difficult: her prosecutorial logic deliberately conflated voluntary sex work and sex trafficking in a way that was indistinguishable from the rhetorics of sex work abolitionists and sex work exclusionary feminists (SWERFs). Her carceral justifications for these criminalizations were complementary to the outright anti-poor, anti-Black, anti-queer and trans attacks from the present administration and their [material implications for sex workers](#). Yet Harris has swiftly been elevated as a kind of progressive feminist hero injecting new life into the party purporting to stand in stark ideological opposition to the one currently dominating most of the American government.”

Samudzi goes into detail about the deification of Kamala Harris and the liberal meme “Black women will save us”, then [continues](#), further on: “[I]t is both politically necessary and politically correct to make pointed critiques of a woman of color’s track record of advocating for and even embodying the carceral state. Ironically, many of these same white people – particularly liberal white women – pay lip service to “amplifying the voices of women of color,” yet they, once again, erase our voices as soon as they realize that our opinions are not monolithic and we cannot be so easily objectified and dehumanized as the saviors of liberalism through empty rhetorics of representation and inclusion.

The refusal to acknowledge the violent politics of a woman of color because of her raced-gendered identity is comparably racist to a critique of woman of color that revolves solely around those identities: white supremacy, remember, knows no sectarian

or ideological bounds. Dehumanization, whether through degradation or deification, reflects of bigoted regard for minoritized individuals or groups; it objectifies of the identities of women of color to suit one's politics. It is both infantilizing and condescending to avoid holding women of color's politics to the same standard of rigor as the white men we easily (and necessarily) critique and rests on no meaningful understanding of hegemonic social structures. This is superficial politics of representation (i.e. the idea that elevating minorities to positions of power is an unquestioned social good regardless of their politics) and a weird fetishization, rather than actual respect, for non-white womanhood."

I'll note that Zoe's presentation of how white women listen to women of color, rejecting them when "opinions are not monolithic and we cannot be so easily objectified and dehumanized", is very similar to [how powerful \(mostly white\) "liberal" women are treating sex workers](#).

Setting aside Kamala fans' personal attacks on critical analysis, along with her terrible intersectional track record [on police and prison reform](#) and [challenging of trans prisoner's health care](#), let's talk now on how she set up the crusade against Backpage to make her career.

Backpage was a classified site, basically a public post board like craigslist, but one that became very useful for independent sex workers - and, of course, like any tool - a small number of bad people. Want to know more about what Backpage was actually used for day to day? [Here's an informative comic](#).

Most of the stats repeated about Backpage stretch very far to imply that every advertisement was an instance of trafficking. Any sex worker will tell you that every advertisement isn't even an instance of a *sex worker* - we post multiple ads over time, some of us post under different personas to get more attention in different markets, and we're very aware of bots making ads with random pictures to scam people out of personal information. Kamala helped in the effort to publicly paint Backpage as a hive of scum and villainy. Aside from the completely junk stats we discuss in this document,

you'll also see the narrative shaped by careful placement of large numbers next to shocking anecdotes.

For example stats like "Revenue at Backpage increased to \$135 million in 2014 from \$5.3 million in 2008, according to a Senate report last year. More than 90 percent of the earnings came from adult ads, the California Department of Justice found" alongside terrible singular stories of trafficking. And generally absolutely no mention of the purpose of the vast majority of the ads - making independent sex workers a living. The New York Times, where that quote is from, seems actually [incapable of even using the words "sex work"](#) in their reporting on Backpage.

Importantly, even among victims, not every worker who feels forced into the sex trade actually *blames* Backpage, in fact, [many say it made their abusive situation safer](#). Additionally, there's an emerging narrative from people talking about how Backpage actually *helped* them escape traffickers by offering an easy way for them to start working *for themselves* with the same skills they learned in their previous situation. Here's [Maya, as told to NewsHub New Zealand](#): "I started doing sex work at 15 as a recent migrant from Asia, having been groomed by a predator. It was Backpage which actually allowed me to escape that sort of niche and enter the industry proper, and from there I was able to choose my clients and have more agency."

And when people were doing sex work they felt they had no choice to do, some of them were thankful to have Backpage so they didn't have to do more dangerous work. Sarah Fenix discussed her experience with a drug using abusive partners [in a viral twitter thread](#) - "I walked around the gas station, from semi truck to semi truck, asking IN BROAD ASS DAYLIGHT if any truckers would like to have sex with me .... Someone on [twitter] told me about backpage. I took my laptop to a coffee shop, took a quick picture of my boobs, and posted an ad for free. ..."

"With Backpage, I could post my phone number, and I would actually talk to these dudes a little bit. I could weed out the worst ones. ... Being homeless was scary. Being under the control of an abusive man who needed an illegal substance to stay semi-functional



was scary. Backpage was the only lifeline I had to people who would give me money, so I could stay alive. And yes, I tried to get out. On 3 occasions, I walked up to police officers and said "Help me, I'm a prostitute, that man makes me post ads and takes my money, please take me or him to jail" and they laughed at me and turned me away"

"I'm sad backpage is gone. But more than sad, I'm scared for all the other sex workers who are where I was 2 years ago, who are going to go knock on semi truck doors or walk along the highway, with no way to screen clients."

A 2015 study in the *Journal of Sex Research* [came to a similar conclusion about general safety](#), saying that workers able to advertise online have "minimal" risk of physical violence or rape when compared to workers on the street (though both still experience violence). Additionally, some speculate that easy online advertising may not just [reduce the rates of homicides against women](#) because sex workers are in less vulnerable positions, but it *also* allows women with no capital or belongings to *leave abusive domestic situations* and support themselves.

Sex workers, of all sorts, also do experience high rates of domestic abuse and the National Domestic Violence Hotline has a page just for ["Safety Planning With Sex Workers"](#). Their first bullet point on "tactics of abuse?" "Threatening to report the survivor/sex worker to law enforcement". That's right, "trafficking" is more often domestic abuse than international gangs and the biggest *threat* is often the police.

It's worth noting here (and anywhere it's talked about, really) that **Backpage has long been an active partner to law enforcement and aggressive ally in the fight against trafficking**. While people may have feelings on the fact that Backpage was accepting of (and profited off) ads for full service sex work, the record shows that Backpage instituted many policies and reforms to keep underage people off the site and make sure people were posting their own ads, as well as actively policed their site and reported things that seemed wrong to the police. They allowed police to conduct stings through their site and worked hand in hand with law enforcement in many actions. (In fact, one of the only major complaints I ever heard about how Backpage was "bad" from

sex workers themselves was that they were very helpful to law enforcement - sex workers do not love law enforcement.)

Backpage has been accused of editing ads to “help pimps” by suggesting removing key words, but every sex worker knows that when you post ads on sites some words are ok and some aren't. *Many* sex workers capitalize on a fetish for looking young - it's an entire genre of porn - I'm not personally comfortable with branding myself that way but if everyone is a consenting adult, calling yourself “barely legal” as part of your branding is just that, branding.

And I look young too - I'm fairly certain my ads on website were reported based on my interactions with a not so good at being undercover cop that was very insistent on finding out who made my website (I did, I moved to sex work from tech because it was less misogynistic. I'd cry often after coming home from my tech job experiencing a full day of dismissiveness, odd comments, and outright harassment.) I politely showed him the door.

Sites like Backpage know that branding as young is possible, but *also* want to discourage people looking for young in person sex workers - so they don't allow certain words. That's not to *help pimps* - that's to *make sure all the workers are consenting adults* and that the advertising appeals to clients that are *seeking consenting adults*.

Backpage actually started doing this kind of moderation of key words more aggressively *after* critics complained that these ads seemed to be advertising underage services. And their attempts to be proactive to make the site safer were, again, used against them later as evidence of them knowingly allowing something wrong. To make this clear - Backpage was telling users something was *not allowed* on their site and this was used as evidence that they were allowing the thing on their site.

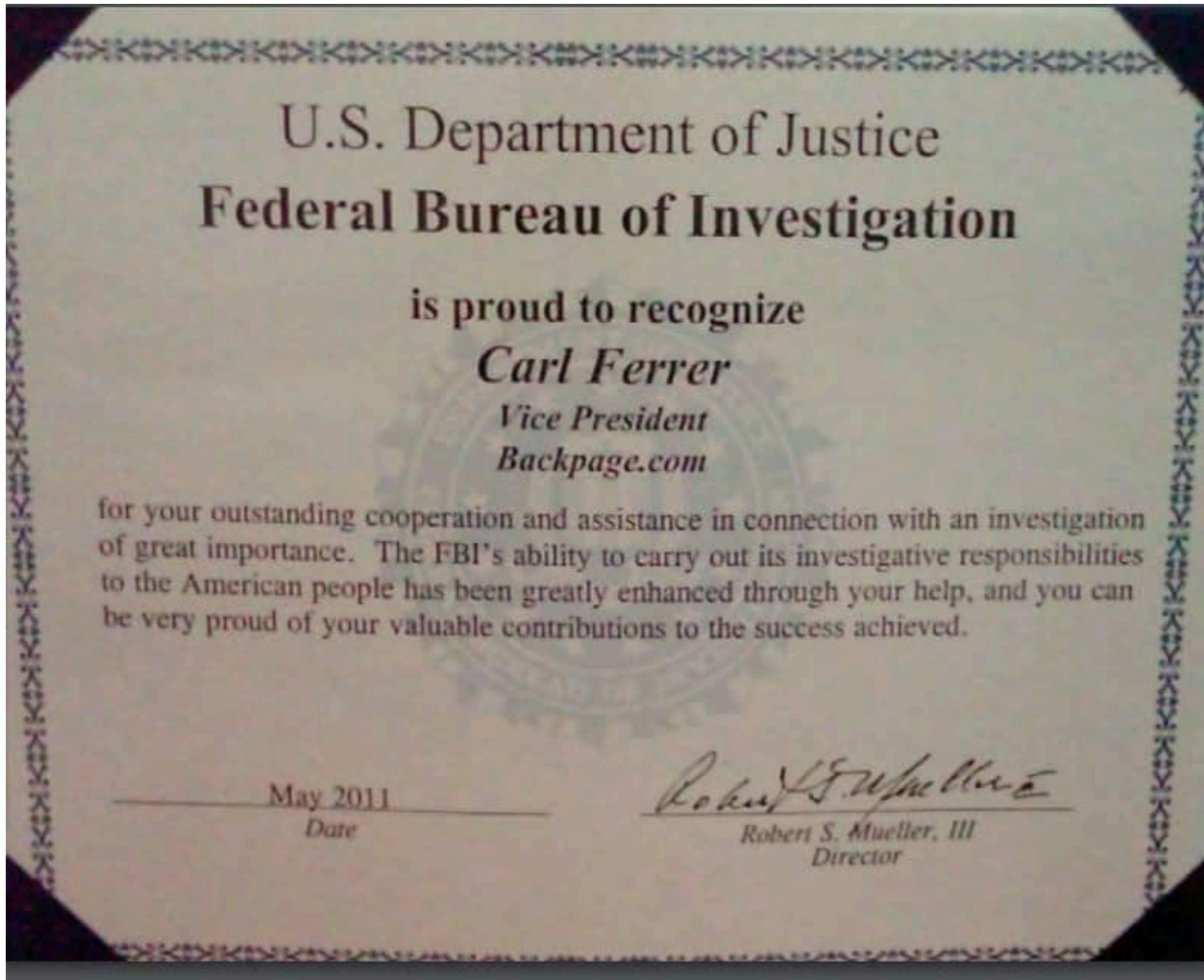
[As the Washington Post reports:](#) “The site provides a responsive, reliable repository for local and federal investigators to track illegal activity, from prostitution to murder. Backpage responds quickly to subpoenas and provides testimony and research to

police and prosecutors.” Their cooperation with law enforcement has actually lead people on the front lines (as opposed to politicians) to *gush* about Backpage’s leadership in the fight:

““Mr. Ferrer,” went one email from the FBI in 2011, referring to Backpage chief executive Carl Ferrer, “We want to submit your name for recognition of your assistance following this case.”

“We appreciate Backpage’s vigilance to help protect kids,” an email from Texas said in 2011.

“Your company’s level of cooperation is not the norm,” said an email from a Massachusetts agency in 2011, “and makes a huge difference in our ability to target and ultimately arrest the offender.””



[Image courtesy of Megan Cassidy at Republic Media](#)

When Backpage went down again, [LE and front line workers rescuing children spoke up in support](#) - "Dr. Lois Lee described Backpage as a "vital resource" and an "investigative tool" used by law enforcement not only to rescue exploited children, but also to arrest those involved in abduction or trafficking. "Child prostitution existed long before Backpage or the Internet," she concluded. "Backpage is not the cause or even a cause." For almost a decade Backpage worked with law enforcement personnel [while under constant attack](#) by the public face of law enforcement.

The portrayal of Backpage as being adversarial towards people trying to help victims is completely untrue. Backpage hasn't fought their court cases because they don't care

about victims - they've fought them because the cases were witch hunts looking for easy people to blame for the narrative of "sex trafficking epidemic" the crusaders themselves created. And they fought them because they were right. Backpage had won every case against it so far. It's not a loophole, it's just because the founders of Backpage were *not actually pimps*. They created a tool that sex workers used to post ads. Sex workers used Backpage. Backpage did not use sex workers.

I'm not going to personally vouch for the founders and everything they've done, because I simply don't know them and don't know everything they've ever done - but many of the acts they are accused of are flat wrong. That won't stop the press and politicians from just calling it "Backpage, a site used for trafficking children into sex slavery."

[WaPo again](#) - ""We harness the technologies that have been created," Backpage general counsel Liz McDougall told an Arizona human trafficking task force in 2013, "and use them intelligently to find and stop the perpetrators of this horrific crime. ... Backpage has no tolerance for sex trafficking. As a result, Backpage is one of the best places in America to get busted trafficking a child."" With that in mind, the statistic that abolitionists [trot out](#) - "[Backpage] is involved in 73 percent of cases of suspected child sex trafficking in the U.S" (commonly just shortened to remove "suspected") is not actually evidence of Backpage being horrible but *rather* the fruits of Backpage's aggressive cooperation with law enforcement with *finding* the vulnerable people listed on their site.

Notre Dame Law School lecturer Alex F. Levy wrote about this in a paper called ""The Virtue of Unvirtuous Spaces" which was reported on [in an article by Elizabeth Nolan Brown](#) - "A closer and more rigorous inspection reveals that the war on Internet platforms like Craigslist and, more recently, Backpage.com ("Backpage") is (at best) based on a misunderstanding of their relationship to human trafficking. Even though some traffickers make use of these platforms, there is neither an empirical foundation for the assumption that the platforms cause trafficking, nor any evidence that shuttering them would reduce trafficking. To the contrary, allowing Internet platforms on which

sexual services are brokered to thrive may be key to apprehending traffickers and recovering victims.”

Before her senate run, while Attorney General of California, Kamala Harris increased the usage of the word trafficking to refer to people in a wide range of situations from workers in abusive relationships, to working for a nice agency, to being kidnapped and held with violence, releasing [many press releases](#) which include statements portraying her heroically - like this one: “Attorney General Harris has made fighting human trafficking a priority for the California Department of Justice, and has advocated for increased collaboration among federal, state and local law enforcement agencies during the investigation and prosecution of human trafficking crimes. “ (Interestingly enough, [that release](#) only includes *one* instance of actual felony convictions for trafficking as evidence of the success of all those efforts.)

Harris created a “work group” and released reports citing the same statistics we’ve discussed above ([Literally the first citation](#) in this report is from the “Demi and Ashton Foundation”). She [sponsored bills](#) in the state senate. She’s constantly reached out to the press at any opportunity afforded to deride Backpage or [praise closures of other adult media](#).

TechDirt did some pretty in depth reporting (directly on the court documents) that seems to show the charges were a sham, in an article fairly straightforwardly called [Details Of Charges Against Backpage Execs For 'Pimping' Look Totally Bogus](#). This was during her senate run already. It’s honestly hard to understand how someone in such legal authority would actually think these cases would go through. Did she really ever think they would or did the fight itself just make her look good? Or feel good? I have no idea.

Anyway, she was chasing Backpage as a cop for a long time, her very convenient bogeyman. While [article](#) after [article](#) after [study](#) showed online advertising saved lives, she [continued to try](#) to indict, arrest, and prosecute Backpage [again](#) and [again](#). [She was literally told by a judge that “Congress has spoken on this matter and it is for Congress,](#)

[not this Court, to revisit](#)". So she ran for congress, pushed a law, and here we are. She and her allies even included provisions to make the law retroactive (again, aimed at Backpage), [which is blatantly unconstitutional](#). Heck, even the [US Department of Justice](#) has issued statements with doubts about the legislation.

Now that Backpage is down (and seized) once again, we don't yet know how the latest case against Backpage will go, but we can look at previous proceedings for similar sites. For some defendants, it's not gone great. The people who run these sites are much more complicated figures than their enemies present them as - for example Jeffrey Hurrant, a gay man who ran a site, Rentboy.com, that allowed other gay men post ads for sexual services.

[His court case](#) fits neatly into the history of government oppression against "deviant" sexual behavior, like with gay sex and interracial marriage - "In an apologetic statement to the court, Mr. Hurrant said he had always tried to run Rentboy as "a force for good," even though he knew it was illegal. He challenged the owners of other escort websites to join him in working to change the laws that govern sex work."

From Graham Gremore at [Queerty](#) - "Many have long said Hurrant was unfairly targeted because he operated a website used by gay and bisexual men, and that plenty of female escort sites are still running, with advertising being bought and sold across the internet."

US District Judge Margo Brodie, who oversaw the case, acknowledged this in her ruling but, she said, the law is the law.

"This case has kept me up many nights," she said during sentencing, adding that she received more than 70 letters in support of the former CEO and website and that she believed the site was started "with good intentions."

That's the *sentencing judge* saying he had good intentions! But much of the press left out anything that would humanize Hurrant.

The run up to SESTA included a lot of similar twisting of motivation to create bad guys. For example, reporting noted that a Backpage affiliate [encouraged people to post](#) their sexual businesses on Backpage instead of other sites (*note: most of that article is weird wanking over how cool police raids are*). That's like.. A pretty common business tactic for any business, right? Poach from your competition?

Keep in mind that *in much of the world in person sex work is not criminalized so posting ads on Backpage is NOT associated with criminal activity in any way*. But when retelling the story, [Unicef, for example, says](#) "A separate report found that the site was also using a proxy company in the Philippines in order to **seek out sex traffickers** by "contacting people who posted sexually explicit ads on rival escort sites and offering them a free ad on Backpage."

That's a huge shift! It's even a huge shift from the second half of that sentence, where it just says "people who posted". That's usually the sex worker themselves! The [original report](#) again?

"[The Backpage affiliate] appeared to us to be actively engaged in looking worldwide to try to find prostitutes to get them to bring their wares to be sold on Backpage," he said." They're specifically saying that this is a company seeking out individual workers who have the agency to choose between advertising venues. The only thing "wrong" with that is sex work. Again, not criminalized internationally, but many people in America don't know that. "Overseas prostitution" just sounds like some scary colonialist nightmare to them.

Through all of this, Backpage has changed a few times, gone up and down. And those periodic gaps in access means we actually know, 100%, for a fact, [that closing Backpage does not stop "child trafficking"](#). And yeah, less advertising venues make things *more dangerous* for trafficking victims

From the [New York Times](#) in early 2017: "For Tiffany, 18, the demise of Backpage's adult listings has made things far more unpredictable — and dangerous, she said. The old ads



allowed her to try to vet customers by contacting them before meetings, via phone or text message. With far fewer inquiries from the dating ads, she said, her first encounters with men now take place more often on the street as she gets into cars in red light districts around the Bay Area. "It's harder to catch a date now," she said. "Now everybody's daddy puts them on the street."

Right, exactly what we've been saying for years, right?

The Times continues: "Eric Quan, a sergeant in the human-trafficking unit with the San Jose Police Department, said there had been a conspicuous rise in street prostitution in San Jose, where Tiffany is often forced to work. "When Backpage was running adult ads, we used to get tips, but that has dropped off," Sergeant Quan said. "It makes it a lot more complicated for us to figure out what's going on. I do see more girls on the street, but we're not sure why."

Yeah, well, I guess courts have said [it's ok to ban smart people from becoming cops](#).

The reason *why* is workers *lost safer online advertising*.

Considering how we've already gone into how that this crusade is built on junk numbers (and Harris, being in a position of law enforcement power, knows the real numbers and arguably isn't stupid), FOSTA/SESTA [won't actually help current victims](#) and [will actually hurt them](#), and its primary impact is on consensual sex workers' ability to make a living and survive - now you can add all that to the fact that Harris has been shot down in courts multiple times and pushed unconstitutional legislation.

Harris, and those like her, care a lot more about headlines and political points than actually helping anyone in the sex trade - consensual laborers or victims of trafficking alike (with the reality being far from so binary even considering those labels).

Or, more charitably, you might say that that politicians and celebrities care more about *thinking* they've helped people than actually helping as many people as possible.

They've got their big wins and they've been celebrating, but it's unclear exactly what.

We're just going to see more people on the street and more confused cops like Eric Quan.

[Nolan Brown, again reporting on Levy's research](#) - "In the late 19th and early 20th century, the focal point of this symbolic fighting was the dance hall. Now it's online venues such as the classified ad sites Craigslist and Backpage. Levy finds that both campaigns are "pageantry: a kind of theater designed to satisfy people's need to identify and fight bad guys without regard to nuance or long-term outcome." And while "removing exploitation from view" may settle some middle-class queasiness, it is "at odds with recovering victims."

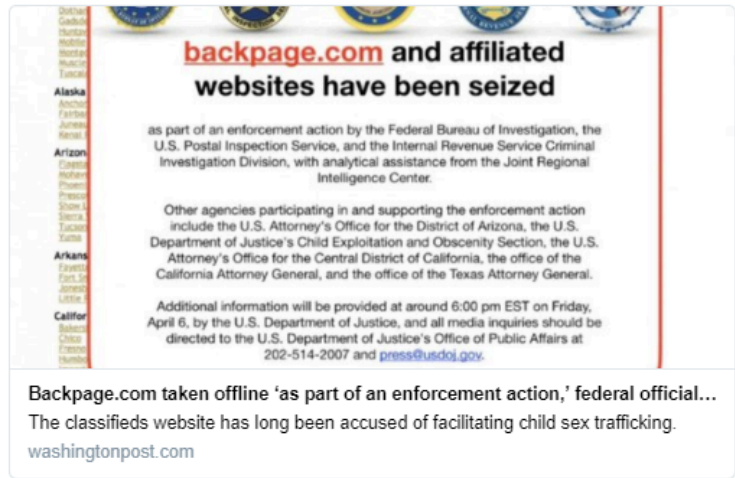
The site was seized on Friday April 6th, 2018 with a bit of flair from the FBI and timing [coinciding with an abolitionist conference in DC quick to celebrate](#). It seems that the supposed lawmakers [didn't even need to wait for the law to take effect before celebrating it taking down Backpage](#). Doesn't that kind of indicate that they didn't need a new law, though?



**Mimi Walters** ✓  
@RepMimiWalters

Follow

Thanks to #FOSTA with my #SESTA Amendment, the Department of Justice has seized [backpage.com](http://backpage.com) and affiliated websites that have knowingly facilitated the sale of underage minors for commercial sex.



5:47 PM - 6 Apr 2018

That's... not how laws work. The thing hasn't even been signed. It can't be credited with this - unless it's not the actual law itself that mattered to the backers but the symbolic victory. I guess it's kind of how PR campaigns work. Substance doesn't matter.

After the site went down on Friday, the DOJ promised indictments unsealed that evening. It didn't happen. We waited through a whole weekend of hysterical "Backpage taken down for sex trafficking!" headlines and political backpatting about saving "child sex slaves", before we finally got to see the latest batch of charges. Reading through them, moral bankruptcy of this crusade is even more evident. The actual charges included [no counts of trafficking](#) instead serving us with criminal "evidence" such as this:

3           10. These strategies are a fiction designed to conceal the true nature of  
4 Backpage's ads and customers. Indeed, the BACKPAGE DEFENDANTS have  
5 admitted—in internal company documents and during private meetings—that they know  
6 the overwhelming majority of the website's ads involve prostitution. In one internal  
7 document, LACEY actually bragged about the company's contributions to the prostitution  
8 industry: "Backpage is part of the solution. Eliminating adult advertising will in no way  
9 eliminate or even reduce the incidence of prostitution in this country. . . . For the very first  
10 time, the oldest profession in the world has transparency, record keeping and safeguards."

That's right, they are using the fact that some backpage employees were proud of their work *making life safer for sex workers and more transparent in finding victims of abuse* as evidence to try and *put that same person in jail*.

Since the laundering charges they are also trying to bring require criminal activity to be criminal themselves (IANAL, but..), It's pretty fucking easy to see that if sex work wasn't criminalized there would be literally nothing at all they could even *try* charging Backpage with. But instead they'll use this "bust" as an instance of trafficking, citing the news reports from over the weekend that won't be corrected, supposed evidence of why increased criminal enforcement is necessary, and the abusive cycle continues.

We'll have more depressing stories about Backpage going down soon enough - we've already got them for Craigslist's personals - "When Craigslist personals shut down last month, it impacted trans women of color drastically, CASS program manager Nona Conner also told me in Twitter messages. She said she knows a "host of girls" who are now facing extreme homelessness, sleeping on the street, and being rejected from shelters because they've lost income from sites like Backpage. "It leaves the girls hungry and unable to even travel on the [DC] Metro. It's a major struggle," Conner wrote."  
- Samantha Cole at [Vice](#)

You know, I did forget a whole big thread of this - [asset forfeiture](#). [Cops love taking money without actually convicting people](#), and [Harris was way into it](#). And this isn't even

the “bad” cops - we all already know they shake down workers on the regular, [when they aren't busy raping them](#). [This is policy](#). That's probably why the FBI tacked on all those money laundering charges. Did I mention the cops [get to keep the money for raises and cool new guns and shit](#)? Let's move on.

- **The Senate** - Not sure who to exactly lay this (probably Rob Portman and Claire McCaskill) on but the senate did an “investigation” and released a report called “Backpage.com’s Knowing Facilitation of Online Sex Trafficking”. In it, they twisted the fact that Backpage knew there was trafficking into an attack on the site itself - despite the fact that they knew *Backpage knew* about trafficking because [Backpage worked closely with law enforcement to report it](#).
- **Kamala Harris** - We’ve just gone over this, so no need to go into more detail on the list. I’ve dedicated the most time to her because, honestly, I believe her political trajectory may put her in the White House.
- **Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton** - Similar grandstanding to Harris, [heavily involved in the same 2016 trumped up charges](#). Guy was doing all of this while engulfed in his own money related legal problems, he’s still got [a criminal case](#) against him pending. Jus’ sayin.
- **Sheriff Tom Dart** - Tom Dart has made a name for himself by attacking backpage. In Cook County he’s led countless stings targeting clients - [here’s some \(sometimes slightly unreliable\) on the ground reporting from Time](#) - “Since 2011, Sheriff Dart’s office has organized the “National Day of Johns Arrests,” now re-named “National Johns Suppression Initiative,” a series of stings coordinated with other jurisdictions over the course of several weeks, aimed at encouraging a permanent change in police practices.”

He came up with a novel ([and completely fucked](#)) idea of writing letters to credit card companies to have them defund backpage, since he lost too many times in the courts. It actually worked, sending sex workers scrambling to learn cryptocurrency and figure out other methods. That ties neatly into our financial

discrimination section above. He didn't just recommend they stop serving part of the site he thought was wrong - he actually got them to pull out of every Backpage transaction, furniture and all.

The idea of law enforcement finding out that their targeting is not legal so putting on a pressure campaign (AS LAW ENFORCEMENT) on private companies is pretty scary, imho. [He was reprimanded by the courts for this as this was an illegal act and 1st Amendment violation](#). Some have found the [Judge's witty and educated slap downs](#) to be amusing, but it's hard to laugh now. So since Tom Dart and sex workers are both kinda criminals, I guess we can be judged on our other merits.

- **Lots more** - I'll fill this in a bit more when I feel like I have the energy for it, but honestly FOSTA and SESTA passed both houses of congress with near unanimous approval. It's really safe to say that in the United States the entire federal government is failing sex workers, and states and local governments are not doing much better on average.

## Sex Work Abolitionist, Anti-Porn and Trafficking Alarmist Organizations

- **Project Meridian Foundation** - This group regularly repeats debunked numbers, as above.
- **The Rachel Project**
- **SOAP (Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution) Outreach**
- **Morality In Media** - Blatantly anti-porn organization that later returned to...
- **National Center on Sexual Exploitation** - actually [literally the same organization](#) as Morality in Media!
- **The Salvation Army** - "in the present day seeking tougher legislation on immigration as part of their anti-trafficking strategy. Notable anti-trafficking strategies supported by large NGO's like Salvation Army include interrogating

women seeking entry into the US and choosing who and who not to allow in based on their assessment.” - [at Medium](#) - This right wing religious org (sorry, they don't just run thrift stores) has gone as far as to call sex work “[‘Cannibalism’ Of The World's Women And Children Through Sexual Trafficking And Prostitution](#)”. God what a disgusting display of racism, colonialism, misogyny, whorephobia, wow they really just wrap it all up. That post is one of the most degrading and disgusting things I've ever read, referring to women as “produce”, “flesh”, “the goods” and so on, because apparently “victim” wasn't enough.

- **Equality Now** - From the [Global Alliance Against Traffic in Woman](#) - “US-based NGO Equality Now has launched a campaign against some UN research into HIV, human rights, and sex work, which concluded that States should decriminalise sex work. GAATW-IS regrets that it is necessary to make clear that not all anti-trafficking organisations support the claim made by Equality Now that decriminalising prostitution will increase human trafficking. On the contrary, GAATW's years of experience working on trafficking in persons, all over the world, has led us to the opposite conclusion.”
- **Sanctuary for Families** - “Stomping out the sexual exploitation of women and children requires shutting down the market in which vulnerable individuals are bought and sold with the click of a mouse,” Lori Cohen, director .. “The predatory sale of human beings for sex via the Internet is not speech; it is rape.” - [Newsweek](#).
- **World Without Exploitation**
- **Enough is Enough**
- **Coalition Against Trafficking in Women** - “Which has organized women's rights activists as far back as [the Clinton administration](#) not just against trafficking, but to press governments to define all commercial sex as trafficking.” ([source](#))
- **Expose Sex Ed Now** - Doesn't like sex ed. Likes FOSTA.
- **National Decency Coalition**
- **The Institute on Religion & Democracy**

- **Family Watch International**
- **Demand Abolition** - Group whose stated mission is to end demand for sex work by going after buyers, known to [pay law enforcement to let their consultants shape the narrative of police reports](#)
- **Space International** - “formed in Ireland, in 2012, for the purpose of changing social attitudes towards prostitution and pressing for its recognition as a sexually exploitative human rights violation.” and we know how that went because, as I pasted once before above: “In the year since Ireland brought in the Nordic model there has been a 54% increase in crime against sex workers reported to National Ugly Mugs Ireland, and violent crime is up by 77%.” While they feature survivors of trafficking who truly seem like they want to help others, we’ve noted earlier that anyone unwilling to decry all sex work suffers epistemic injustice - these people’s voices are magnified while others are ignored.
- **Unicef** - I don’t know much about the history of Unicef but it’s a shame to seem come down hard on the side of SESTA advocates. But [there they are](#), repeating a lot of the same talking points we’ve just dissected and go into even more detail below in the politics section.
- **The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children** - I don’t know a lot about missingkids.com but I do know they are quoted *all over the place* as saying “there has been a more than 800 percent increase over the last five years in reports of suspected child sex trafficking, with much of it having online.” First just use your eyes to check out the words “reports” and “suspected.” Who does the reporting? Why you do! And you and you and you! [Here is their actual honest to god “reporting” tool](#). Hold on, let me screenshot this.



## Report an incident

Information entered into this report will be made available to law enforcement for possible investigation. You can contact the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children 24 hours a day at 1-800-THE-LOST (1-800-843-5678).

0% complete

Incident Information

<b>What are you reporting?*</b>	<b>Where did the incident occur?</b>
<input type="text" value="Select"/>	<input type="text" value=""/>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Select</li><li>Child Pornography (possession, manufacture, and distribution)</li><li>Online Enticement of Children for Sexual Acts</li><li>Child Sex Trafficking</li><li>Child Sexual Molestation (not by family member)</li><li>Child Sex Tourism</li><li>Misleading Domain Name</li><li>Misleading Words or Digital Images on the Internet</li><li>Unsolicited Obscene Material Sent to a Child</li></ul>	<input type="text" value=""/>
<b>Approximate Date and Time of Incident</b>	<b>Time Zone</b>
<input type="text" value=""/>	<input type="text" value="Select"/>

**Do you have information about one or more individuals involved in the reported incident?\***

\* indicates a required field

**Where did the incident occur?**

- Webpage/URL
- Email
- Newsgroup
- Chat/Instant Messaging
- Peer to Peer
- Not Internet-Related
- Cell Phone
- Online Gaming
- Other

**Time Zone**

I wonder why there was an increase in reports of internet related *suspected* child sextrafficking! Could it be because they made a form that literally anyone can fill

out with no special knowledge (not the worst idea, yet) based on seeing pictures on the internet, and then you're using that to relay a statistic as if this increase in usage of your reporting tool has any real correlation to trafficking? (now there's the harmful part.) A *huge* amount of these are going to be false positives. People have been interviewed saying they go into "shifts" with this tool as their volunteering and just go to backpage and report anyone who looks "young."

Having people look out for those in harm's way is a great idea. We do that, all the time, for each other and potential victims of abuse or kidnapping. So do many peer led organizations! This reporting tool could lead to lives saved. Repeating those numbers in crazy campaign to shut down helpful resources? Not so great! These numbers really should only be printed with heavy caveats if at all.

## Misinformed Celebrities and Alarmist Media

- **"Real Men Don't Buy Girls"** - This Ashton Kutcher pushed campaign was started about a terrible instance of nigerian girls being kidnapped, but has warped into a tool for the anti-sex work campaigners in America. With Kutcher testifying junk numbers in front of congress, it helps them whip up a fury for anti-sex work laws like FOSTA/SESTA. The very idea of applying "buying" people to consensual sex work negates the agency and labor of sex workers. Reporting: [Huffington Post](#), "[Ashton Kutcher Claims He Helped Cops Save Way More Sex-Trafficking Victims Than Authorities Say They've Found](#)" at Reason
- **Hot Girls Wanted**
- **I Am Jane Doe / Mary Mazzio** - [From a fairly impartial review at the New York Times](#) - "Some documentaries inspire so much sympathy for their subjects – and outrage on their behalf – that it's all too easy to miss the fact that what we're watching is more advocacy than argument. .... Attempting to simplify a dauntingly complex tangle of rights and responsibilities, the director, Mary Mazzio, has shaped her material into a classic heroes-and-villains showdown. ...

... [This portrayal] might also numb the critical thinking that allows you to notice the movie's lack of clear definitions for terms like sex trafficking and child sex (which mean different things in different states). How it fails to consider the criminalization of sex work as a possible barrier to rooting out those who exploit minors. Or how the plaintiffs' demand for age verification of the women in online ads could be almost impossible to put in effect. ...

... The movie's most persuasive section shows evidence of possible collusion between the site and some of its advertisers; yet despite an abundance of legal expertise, no one is on hand to substantively address First Amendment rights, or to examine claims that the website is a useful ally in locating and prosecuting traffickers.

Without these balancing voices, "I Am Jane Doe" coalesces into a steamroller of pain that squashes our ability to see beyond its wounded families. It's the tale of a crusade whose horrifying details resist Jessica Chastain's silky narration. Yet there's a reason that so far the website keeps winning, and it's worth at least considering that it might not be a negligible one."

- **"As easy as ordering a pizza"** - God do I even have to go into how stupid this is? Go try to order a sex slave, I'll wait. I'm fucking kidding, don't, but *do* look into what you might actually have to do to *specifically find an underage non-consensual sex worker and get her to come to your house within the hour with the same ease of calling for a pizza*. You can't dude. There has never been any shred of evidence to support this hyperbole. What you *could* do was text or email a consensual sex worker and if they thought you didn't sound crazy (and if you passed their additional screening), they might meet up with you relatively quickly.
- **Amy Schumer** - I can't even right now, I'll come back to this. Possibly.

- **Sheryl Sandberg** - "Perhaps the most significant coalition-building support came from Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg, architect of the women's empowerment platform LeanIn.org. Sandberg's [endorsement](#), straddling feminism and Silicon Valley, even found its way into the daily email alert from House Majority Whip Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA) on the morning FOSTA went for a floor vote." - [In Justice Today](#)
- **Ivanka Trump** - "Ivanka Trump [gathered](#) SESTA and FOSTA co-sponsors in the Roosevelt Room, along with I Am Jane Doe director [Mazzio](#). "On behalf of the president," Trump thanked the roundtable participants for their work "to end the shameful and tragic crime of online sex trafficking." - [In Justice Today](#)

## "End Demand" and the "Nordic Model"

This is a model supported by some groups (and implemented in some countries already) dedicated to the idea of "helping" by criminalizing "johns" and other "supporters" of the sex trade without directly criminalizing workers. This is obviously a flawed approach, because how would sex workers continue to make money without clients? And if you take out clients who don't want to do anything "bad" aren't you kind of just telling sex workers they'll have to see the less safe clients? This model also runs into a lot of issues in implementation by basically treating anyone aside from an individual worker working alone as a criminal - like someone who rents a safe space to work, helps another worker, recommends a nice client, etc.

[As sex historian Kate Lister writes](#), "The Nordic model does not work because by criminalising the client, you in turn criminalise the sex worker. How would you fair if the source of your income was suddenly criminalised? [Research](#) from the countries that have adopted the Nordic model shows again and again that 'end demand' legislation only place sex workers at significantly greater risk of harm. Criminalising clients may reduce demand from those not wishing to commit a crime, but it does not deter those who wish to hurt sex workers.

Once demand has been reduced, competition for less desirable clients increases among sex workers, leading to an increase in risky, dangerous behaviour, such as unprotected sex, working in isolation or in deserted areas. As clients become less willing to directly approach sex workers, Sweden and Norway saw the use of third party negotiators (pimps and madams) increase dramatically.”

A bit later on she adds - “I am a historian of sex work and I can categorically tell you that no attempt to abolish either the selling or buying of sex in the whole of human history has been effective. Not one.” That’s across 3000 years of attempts. And she’s right. It’s literally *not possible* to “end demand” and even the phrase itself is ridiculous if examined without an innate disgust for sex work.

**Reporting:** “Based on an appealing, proactive vision of gender justice, the Swedish model has caught on in Iceland and Norway – even though it hasn’t panned out as planned in Sweden, where street-level prostitution dropped temporarily after the law took effect in 1999, only to climb again. Sweden’s sex workers say they are forced to rush negotiations and have to rely more on intermediaries to access wary clients. Prostitution hasn’t gone away; it’s simply gone underground.” ... “End-demand strategies could also lead to more pressure on sex workers from pimps and traffickers. “Pimps don’t accept the rationale that there’s a new law and fewer johns now,” said Paul Holmes, a counter-trafficking expert and former Scotland Yard official. “So if a girl is working 16 hours, she’ll have to work 20, and under more brutality. You’ll also drive the trade underground, which makes it more dangerous for them and more difficult for us.””

- [The New York Times](#)

"In the year since Ireland brought in the Nordic model there has been a 54% increase in crime against sex workers reported to National Ugly Mugs Ireland, and violent crime is up by 77%. The Sex Workers Alliance Ireland (SWAI) strongly opposed the introduction of this law and rightly warned that it would lead to increased violence against sex workers." - [iNews UK](#)

So if end demand is bad, what's good? Decrim, decrim, decrim. Decriminalization. At the risk of pasting all of Lister's article - "In 2003, New Zealand decriminalised sex work in order to support sex workers, not the state, in controlling their work. According to research carried out by the University of Otago, more than 60% of New Zealand sex workers reported feeling empowered to refuse to see certain clients, and 95% said they felt they had rights after decriminalisation. In 2014, a New Zealand sex worker took a brothel operator to Human Rights Tribunal, after being sexually harassed – and won her case."







I could go into a lot more detail about this, but it's been really well covered. Read that article by Kate Lister above and I'll leave you with "[Why the 'Nordic Model' sucks \(with references\)](#)" by Alison Phipps (it's got a big list and, yes, references) and the briefing papers she links by [SCOT-PEP](#) and [the Sex Worker Open University](#).

## Legalization Vs. Decriminalization

There's a lot of confusion about this - sex workers and advocates want decriminalization. Basically that means the erasure of criminal laws that apply to sex work, so workers can do their work as anyone else - under normal business law. Of course, some businesses have regulations - and we know that's dangerous in sex work - but in theory some regulation might be ok. Like if it was just regulations about how seriously to take reports of abuse, for people who work in a brothel. That would be ok!

But most people seem to suggesting some kind of weird dehumanizing "tag and release" kind of legalization where sex work is closely monitored. No bueno.

I just saw [a great Twitter thread by London Green Party / LGBTQA+ activist Molly Angelica Gerlach-Arthurs](#), so I'll let her take it from here:

   A quick primer on why sex workers want DECRIMINALISATION rather than LEGALISATION   

To legalise something is to write it into law as permitted. In the process of doing this, the thing has to be defined and limits and regulations are put onto it. Sex work in the UK is currently legal and it's not working.

Innocent workers are being prosecuted under brothel-keeping laws when they work together for safety. All legalisation does is define an acceptable way to work, and victimise workers who deviate from it.

Often the "acceptable" form of work has barriers for more marginalised people - for example, in the UK, workers can't solicit on the street. The poorer workers, including homeless people, can't access online advertising to get around this. They're forced to work illegally.

They're also in far more danger, but cannot go to the police because they have broken the law. Legalisation puts workers in this position - where they fear the police because they could have broken some kind of arbitrary regulation.

DECRIMINALISATION doesn't impose any regulation. It makes things legal by virtue of not having any legislation banning them - the same way there are no laws specifically stating that working as a librarian or a plumber is legal. They are protected under labour laws.

But what about trafficking? Decriminalising sex work isn't going to make it any more legal to force people into it. See the example of farming: legal, but features a huge trafficked workforce. Laws that criminalise workers won't fix the problem.

(There's also a huge problem with the definition of "trafficked" workers, and how it can include migrant workers who haven't been coerced, but I'm not an expert - [I recommend reading Laura Agustin for more on this](#)) *[Ed Note: Me too! Agustin does [very important work in this area](#)]*

In summary: If we decriminalise, sex workers are protected under the same labour rights as any other worker; if we legalise then sex workers are regulated and many are made unsafe.

Yeah, so that's that. [Here's another great twitter thread on it by Sex Wok Hive](#) (amplified through account takeover - not a bad idea, allies!). You should also check out all the stuff right below here where major organizations that have done huge studies with their big brains have come to the same conclusion those of us on the ground have - cops are not good for our health.

## Further Resources on This Topic

If you're looking to report on this topic, there is a lot of previous reporting and academic research you can build on. There are also NGOs like Amnesty International and the World Health Organization that have released in depth explanations of policy positions. Most importantly we encourage you to *speak to sex workers*. It's not that hard. Switter.at, as social media platform *created by sex workers* in response to our loss of resources now has over 20,000 users. Survivors Against Sesta has a dedicated media outreach team and would love to put you in touch with a variety of current sex workers from different backgrounds. Right at this very moment I have information from 50 sex workers all over the world looking to talk to press on record about FOSTA/SESTA and other discrimination - and that's just my personal reach at this very moment!

Please do your research before blindly repeating things said by abolitionist organizations (also branding as "end demand" and "end sexual exploitation), law enforcement, politicians and celebrities. *No one* is more educated on sex work than sex workers. We are writers, researchers organizers, and academics ourselves. Our community is rich in knowledge both lived and gathered. We can direct you to outside academics and studies that actually listened to sex workers. Let us teach you.



## Resources For Sex Workers

- [Technical Resources For Sex Workers](#) - Survivors Against SESTA and Community Additions. This is a very early draft of the flipside of this document. We are trying to help sex workers find safe and secure places. To be bluntly honest, it's much harder than finding discrimination.
- [Sex Work Approved Payment Options \(Part 2\)](#) - MissFreudianSlit on Tumblr
- [List of FOSTA/SESTA Fallout](#) - The Dr. Sue Review
- [Documenting Tech Actions](#) - Survivors Against SESTA
- ["Operation Do The Math"](#) - Police Prostitution and Politics.com
- [17 Facts About Sexual Violence and Sex Work](#) - Huffington Post research study roundup
- [What Antis Can Do To Help, Part One: Aiding Those Still in the Industry](#) - It's important to note that you don't actually have to be "pro sex industry" to help sex workers. This is a life and death issue, not just a quality of life issue. Part of the frustration for sex work inclusionary feminists is that many theorists want to debate "the male gaze" and "participation in patriarchal systems" and while we certainly have the chops, education, and literature to have that argument, we're also literally being killed right now by bad policy. So, you know, listen and help us with that first.

## Major Organization Positions on Sex Work

- [Amnesty International](#) - I highly recommend [reading through this full post announcing their policy position and research](#) as well as their actual policy papers and research. Amnesty has done some of the most intensive and unbiased research on sex work globally and present it in a very easy to understand format.

"Amnesty International's policy is the culmination of extensive worldwide

consultations, a considered review of substantive evidence and international human rights standards and first-hand research, carried out over more than two years.

Its formal adoption and publication follows a democratic decision made by Amnesty International's global movement in August 2015, [available here](#), which was reported widely at the time.

The policy makes several calls on governments including for them to ensure protection from harm, exploitation and coercion; the participation of sex workers in the development of laws that affect their lives and safety; an end to discrimination and access to education and employment options for all.

It recommends the decriminalization of consensual sex work, including those laws that prohibit associated activities—such as bans on buying, solicitation and general organization of sex work. This is based on evidence that these laws often make sex workers less safe and provide impunity for abusers with sex workers often too scared of being penalized to report crime to the police. Laws on sex work should focus on protecting people from exploitation and abuse, rather than trying to ban all sex work and penalize sex workers. “

You can also read their [“Decision on State Obligations to Respect, Protect, and Fulfil the Human Rights of Sex Workers.”](#) Amnesty makes it very clear - criminalization of consensual sex workers is a human rights abuse.

- **Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women**
- **Global Commission on HIV and the Law**
- **Human Rights Watch**
- **UNAIDS**

- **The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health**
- **World Health Organization**
- **Reframe Health and Justice**
- **International Women’s Health Coalition** - “Nina Besser Doorley, a senior program officer at the International Women’s Health Coalition - “By taking away one of the few tools that sex workers have to organize and to screen clients, this bill increases sex workers’ risk of violence, making it harder to identify and support survivors,” she said.” - [In Justice Today](#)
- **National Center for Lesbian Rights** - “Sex workers and trafficking victims alike “would be subjected to increased violence, exploitation, and more incarceration,” said Tyrone Hanley, policy counsel at the National Center for Lesbian Rights.” - [In Justice Today](#)
- **National Center for Transgender Equality** - “Widespread discrimination leads many transgender people to engage in sex work to get by, and this legislation would make it even harder for them to keep themselves safe and find other economic opportunities if they choose,” said Kory J. Masen, racial and economic justice policy advocate at NCTE. “Limiting their access to safe working conditions and resources will exacerbate the problems of human trafficking, violence against women, and public health.” - [In Justice Today](#)
- **[Global Commission on HIV and the Law](#)** - Their report [HIV and the Law: Sex Workers](#)’s introduction “The Commission conducted an eighteen month process of research, consultation, analysis, discussion, and decision-making. They held regional dialogues in seven global regions and collected written and oral submissions from over 1000 individuals and organizations, more than 700 of whom included people living with, or directly affected by HIV and AIDS.” included statistics like sex workers are “approximately eight times more likely to be infected with HIV than other adults” which are often quoted out of context by abolitionists suggesting that sex work is the cause of this. They continue, though, “When forced into “underground” settings through criminalization, sex workers

have less negotiating power to insist on condom use. Police harassment, extortion, and client violence go unpunished. Sexual violence makes HIV transmission more likely. At the same time, HIV prevention and care services become harder for sex workers to access and are less trusted by sex workers who suffer discrimination on a daily basis. “Criminalization, in collusion with social stigma, makes sex workers’ lives more unstable, less safe, and far riskier in terms of HIV”. There’s a lot more, you should read the whole 5 page fact sheet.

- [ACLU Vote Recommendation on FOSTA](#) -

“In this vote recommendation, the ACLU urged Senators to support an amendment to H.R. 1865, the 'Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act' (FOSTA). While the ACLU opposes the underlying legislation because it would hinder online freedom of expression, the amendment from Sen. Ron Wyden would provide some protections to online platforms engaged in moderating their sites.”

- [ACLU Legal Position on Decriminalization of Full Service Sex Work](#) -

“The ACLU supports the decriminalization of prostitution and opposes state regulation of prostitution. The ACLU also condemns the abuse of vagrancy or loitering laws or licensing or regulatory schemes to harass and arrest those who may be engaged in solicitation for prostitution. “

- [Freedom Network USA](#) - “Freedom Network USA is the largest network of anti-trafficking service providers and advocates in the United States. Our 57 members from over 30 different cities include attorneys, social workers, case managers, researchers, and advocates. Together, we serve well over 1,000 human trafficking survivors per year. This wealth of experience informs our understanding of the best practices of anti-trafficking work and the policy changes needed to effectively combat human trafficking in the US. We believe that FOSTA will not provide a meaningful improvement in anti-trafficking efforts, and may cause severe consequences for sex workers and trafficking victims alike.

The Problem with FOSTA: The CDA currently allows federal agencies to prosecute websites and other third parties that actively participate in human trafficking, including both labor and sex trafficking. Prosecutors can, and should, identify any third parties that are collaborating with human traffickers, and prosecute them to the fullest extent of the law. FNUSA supports legislative change that empowers trafficking victims with increased access to justice and services, reduces vulnerability to trafficking in communities that have been put at risk, or increases prosecution of traffickers who intentionally exploit others for commercial gain. FOSTA not only fails to accomplish these goals, but may actually harm victims and consensual commercial sex workers.

FOSTA expands the criminalization of consensual commercial sex workers under the guise of addressing sex trafficking. This squanders limited federal resources and puts sex workers at risk of prosecution for the very strategies that keep them safe. Consensual commercial sex workers use harm reduction tools such as online forums to screen clients, avoid high risk activities, share resources, and protect each other. Further criminalizing consensual commercial sex work, where there is no force, fraud or coercion, is no way to protect victims.” - [in issued statement](#).

- **Womens’ March**

## Peer-led and Sex Worker Inclusive Organizations

Somewhat more for reference and for sex workers and allies who want to donate or get involved, here are some organizations that include sex workers in their work in more ways than just being the “served” (ie, “rescued” or “saved”) target. This section was just created and needs a lot of love! Please suggest your organization!

- [Sex Workers Outreach Project / SWOP](#) - “Sex Workers Outreach Project-USA is a national social justice network dedicated to the fundamental human rights of people involved in the sex trade and their communities, focusing on ending violence and stigma through education and advocacy.”

- [Global Network of Sex Work Projects](#) - A UK non-profit, “NSWP’s work is based on three core values: Acceptance of sex work as work, Opposition to all forms of criminalisation and other legal oppression of sex work (including sex workers, clients, third parties\*, families, partners and friends), Supporting self-organisation and self-determination of sex workers.” You may want to check out their 2013 [Consensus Statement on Sex Work, Human Rights, and the Law](#).
- [Collective Action for Safe Spaces / Safe Spaces DC](#) - While their mission is about gendered harassment and assault in general, they’ve been [very vocally supportive](#), include sex workers in their actions and organizing, and issued a blog post “[Supporting Sex Workers in the Wake of Sesta](#)”.
- [Touching Base](#) - Charitable organization out of Sydney devoted - “Touching Base developed out of the need to assist people with disability and sex workers to connect with each other, focusing on access, discrimination, human rights and legal issues and the attitudinal barriers that these two marginalised communities can face.”
- [Desiree Alliance](#) - “The Desiree Alliance is a national [USA] coalition of current and former sex workers working together with supporting networks for an improved understanding of sexual policies and its human, social and political impacts of criminalization surrounding global policies in sex work.”
- [Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement / SWARM / Sex Work Hive](#) - Based in the UK, pretty active globally with a strong [social media presence](#)
- [English Collective of Prostitutes](#) - “We are a self-help group of sex workers working both on the streets and indoors. Since 1975, we have been campaigning for decriminalisation and safety.”
- [UK Network of Sex Work Projects](#) - “A non-profit, voluntary association of agencies and individuals working with sex workers. Supporting sex work projects, networks and academics to work together, share practice and learning across the UK and advocate to policy makers.”
- [Scarlet Alliance](#) - Large sex worker rights organization in Australia

- [New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective](#) - "A New Zealand wide organisation, which is run by sex workers for sex workers. We advocate for the rights, health, and well being of all sex workers."
- **Empower Foundation** - Empower is a Thai sex worker organisation that has been promoting rights and opportunities for sex workers since 1985. It is led and largely managed by sex workers in Thailand. The majority of its support comes from international donors e.g. Mama Cash, American Jewish World Service, but Empower also receives contributions from the Thai government as well as our own fundraising.
- [Whores of Yore](#) - "Whores of Yore is a proudly sex-positive, inter-disciplinary, pro-sex worker rights research hub and archive, dedicated to exploring the history of human sexuality and challenging shame and stigma."

## Articles on This Topic

This is organized not by subtopic but by date. It's important for people to understand this isn't new and we can learn from the history.

[How the Feds Are Using Civil Asset Forfeiture to Threaten Free Speech](#) - 02/20/2019 - Reason

[Airbnb's War on Porn Stars: 'They Locked Me Out'](#) - 05/19/2018 - The Daily Beast

[Valve is suddenly targeting adult visual novels for removal from Steam](#) - 05/19/2018 - Destructoid

[Anti-sex trafficking law FOSTA is hurting online sex educators, too](#) - 05/16/2018 - The Verge

[The internet made sex work safer. Now Congress has forced it back into the shadows](#) - 05/01/2018 - The Verge

[Twitter, one of the last online spaces friendly to sex workers, was just banned by its network](#) - 04/19/2018 - The Verge

[Trump signs anti-trafficking law that weakens online free speech protections](#) - 04/11/2018 - The Verge

[Amid FOSTA crackdown, sex workers find refuge on Mastodon](#) - 04/11/2018 - The Verge

[Politicians Who Said SESTA Was Needed To Takedown Backpage Claim Victory Over Backpage Takedown... Without SESTA](#) - 04/09/2018 - TechDirt

[In the wake of the Backpage seizure, sex workers are increasingly concerned about their safety](#) - 4/09/2018 - ThinkProgress

[Indictment Shows Backpage Facilitated Prostitution, But its Shutdown Will Still Hurt Sex Workers](#) - 04/09/2018 - Motherboard

[Australian sex workers fear US anti-trafficking laws could make the internet off limits](#) - 04/09/2018 - ABC News Au

[Kiwi sex workers at risk after classifieds website shut down](#) - 04/09/2018 - Newshub New Zealand

[Feds Praise Backpage Takedown as Sex Workers Fear for Their Lives](#) - 04/09/2018 - Gizmodo

[Football legend Neville Southall lets sex workers take over his Twitter](#) - 04/09/2018 - Metro

[“Erotic Review” blocks US Internet users to prepare for government crackdown](#) - 04/09/2018 - Ars Technica

[When is sex work ‘decent work’?](#) - 04/09/2018 - Open Democracy

[With Backpage Closed, Where Will the Sex Slave Trade Go?](#) - 04/09/2018 - The Crime Report (I don't like the title, obviously but it includes a good interview with an expert witness on trafficking cases)

[A Blockchain Startup Is Calling for Sex Workers to Out Congressmen Clients Who Supported FOSTA](#) - 04/09/2018 - Motherboard

[Sex Workers Are Canaries In The Free Speech Coal Mine](#) - 04/07/2018 - BuzzFeed News

[Is Stormy Daniels being shadowbanned on Twitter?](#) - 04/06/2018 - Boing Boing



[\*\*A little-known bill threatens the basic safety and livelihood of sex workers\*\*](#) -

04/06/2018 - Salon

[\*\*Facing SESTA and Political Threats, Sex Worker Organizations Brace for Fallout\*\*](#) -

04/06/2018 - The Slot

[\*\*The Federal Attack on Sex Workers' Rights Is a Threat to Everyone's Free Speech\*\*](#) -

04/05/2018 - In These Times

[\*\*Sex workers are sick of censorship on social media\*\*](#) - 04/04/2018 - New York Post

[\*\*Sex Workers Fear for Their Future: How SESTA Is Putting Many in Peril\*\*](#) - 04/04/2018 -

Daily Beast

[\*\*Sex Workers Say They're Being Pushed Off Social Media Platforms\*\*](#) - 04/02/2018 - Vice

[\*\*Should Sex Work be Decriminalized? One Advocate says Yes\*\*](#) - 04/01/2018 -

TheRealNews.com - Setting aside the funky title (just one? lol), it's a good interview

[\*\*A brief history of attempts to abolish sex work: from 1075 BC to the digital age\*\*](#) -

03/30/2018 - iNews UK (spoiler: it doesn't work)

[\*\*Scrubbed clean: why a certain kind of sex is vanishing from the internet\*\*](#) - 03/30/2018 -

The Guardian

[\*\*As a sex historian, this is what I want you to know about the buying and selling of sex\*\*](#) -

03/28/2018 - iNews UK

[\*\*What the @\\$%&! Microsoft bans nudity, swearing in Skype, emails, Office 365 docs\*\*](#) -

03/28/2018 - The Register

[\*\*In New Orleans, an 'Anti-Trafficking' Initiative Is a Clear Move to Criminalize Strip Clubs\*\*](#)

- 03/26/2018 - Jezebel

[\*\*Group That Opposes Sex Work Gave Money to Prosecutors' Offices - and Got Sings\*\*](#)

[\*\*Against Johns in Return\*\*](#) - 03/24/2018 - The Intercept

[\*\*Craigslist's Sex Work Ads Saved 2,150 Women's Lives. A Bill Could Make Such Posts\*\*](#)

[\*\*Illegal.\*\*](#) - 03/20/2018 - Huffington Post

[\*\*Watch: This Is How New Legislation Puts Sex Workers in Danger\*\*](#) - 03/20/2018 - The

Root

[Sex Trafficking Bills Backed By Dem Presidential Contenders Could Cause More Harm Than Good](#) - 03/18/2018 - Huffington Post

[Anti-Online Trafficking Bills Advance in Congress, Despite Opposition from Survivors Themselves](#) - 03/14/2018 - In Justice Today

[If You Care About Sex Trafficking, Trust People in the Sex Trades – Not Celebrities](#) - 03/07/2018 - Allure

[House Passes 'Online Sex Trafficking' Bill That Critics Say Actually Silences Survivors](#) - 02/27/2018 - The Slot

[When Walking While Trans Is a Crime](#) - 01/31/2018 - The Cut

[Proposed Federal Trafficking Legislation Has Surprising Opponents: Advocates Who Work With Trafficking Victims](#) - 01/26/2018 - In Justice Today

[White Slavery And the Anti-Trafficking Panic](#) - 01/21/2018 - Posted at Medium

[The Phony Feminism of Kamala Harris](#) - 01/11/2018 - Reason

[Who's 'the Harvey Weinstein of' Sex Work? The Police](#) - 10/13/2017 - Reason

[Rentboy CEO Jeffrey Hurant has checked into prison](#) - 10/08/2017 - Queerty

[Problems With SESTA's Retroactivity Provision](#) - 09/27/2017 - Technology & Marketing

[The War on Porn Is Back](#) - 09/20/2017 - Jezebel

[Dehumanization by Deification: On Kamala Harris and "Black Women Will Save Us"](#) - 08/05/2017 - Verso

[How Backpage and Similar Sites Are Crucial in Fight Against Sex Trafficking](#) - 08/16/2017 - Reason

[The Bogus War on Internet Sex Work](#) - 08/05/2017 - Daily Beast

[People are pissed about Rentboy CEO's prison sentence](#) - 08/03/2017 - Queerty

[Kamala Harris' Whorephobia Is Sadly No Surprise](#) - 07/26/2017 - The Establishment

[Under attack, Backpage.com has its supporters as anti-trafficking tool. But many differ.](#) - 07/18/2017 - Washington Post - I don't love this reporter (I don't think he's used the words "Sex Work" once in all the articles I've read for him, but this article has a lot of

useful quotes from law enforcement about how much they've benefitted from Backpage in terms of finding victims forced into the sex trade.

[\*\*The Banks' War on Porn\*\*](#) - 05/07/2017 - The Daily Beast

[\*\*Sex Work is Work. And it Needs a Safe Workplace.\*\*](#) - 03/31/2017 - The Nib (there were actually informational *comics* about exactly backpage a year ago.)

[\*\*Backpage's Sex Ads Are Gone. Child Trafficking? Hardly.\*\*](#) - 03/11/2017 - The New York Times

[\*\*Ashton Kutcher Claims He Helped Cops Save Way More Sex-Trafficking Victims Than Authorities Say They've Found\*\*](#) - 02/15/2017 - Reason

[\*\*Review: 'I Am Jane Doe' Takes Aim at Escort Ads\*\*](#) - 02/09/2017 - New York Times

[\*\*Will the Backpage shutdown make sex workers less safe?\*\*](#) - 01/17/2017 - Esquire

[\*\*How the Shutdown of Backpage Disproportionately Affects Trans Sex Workers\*\*](#) - 01/13/2017 - Vice

[\*\*Why Sex Worker Advocates Are Furious Over Backpage.com Removing Adult Ads\*\*](#) - 01/10/2017 - Attn

[\*\*Republicans will try to bring back the 'War on Porn'\*\*](#) - 01/05/2017 - Think Progress

[\*\*California Attorney General Kamala Harris can't let go of Backpage\*\*](#) - 12/29/2016 - News Review

[\*\*Kamala Harris' Epic Fail: California Judge Dismisses Backpage Pimping Case\*\*](#) - 12/10/2016 - Phoenix New Times

[\*\*When Prude Investors Cockblock Sex Tech, No One Gets Off\*\*](#) - 11/12/2016 - Fast Company

[\*\*The NYPD Arrests Woman for Who They Are and Where They Go – Now They're Fighting Back\*\*](#) - 11/22/2016 - Village Voice

[\*\*'It Will Never Stop': Sex Workers Respond to Backpage.com Raid\*\*](#) - 10/11/2016 - Broadly

[\*\*Backpage says criminal charges by Kamala Harris are 'election year stunt'\*\*](#) - 10/07/2016 - Los Angeles Times

[\*\*Details Of Charges Against Backpage Execs For 'Pimping' Look Totally Bogus\*\*](#) - 10/07/2016 - TechDirt

[The Truth About the Biggest U.S. Sex Trafficking Story of the Year](#) - 09/09/2016 - Reason

[Why It's Perfectly Legal for AirBNB to Discriminate Against Sex Workers](#) - 07/18/2016 - Broadly

[Transgender woman settles case against hotel that got her jailed for eight days](#) - 06/29/2016 - The Guardian

[GAATW-IS Comment: Amnesty International calls for the decriminalisation of sex work](#) - 05/2016 - Global Alliance Against Traffic In Women

[Why the 'Nordic Model' sucks \(with references\)](#) - 02/21/2016 - Alison Phipps

[How Sex Workers Get Paid](#) - 01/29/2016 - Motherboard

[PayPal, Square and big banking's war on the sex industry](#) - 12/92/15 - Engadget

[Sheriff Dart, Meet the First Amendment](#) - 12/02/2015 - Slate

[How the Feds Took Down Rentboy.com](#) - 08/26/2015 - Vice

[Catching Johns: Inside The National Push to Arrest Men Who Buy Sex](#) - 08/18/2105

[The Rise and Fall of RedBook, the Site That Sex Workers Couldn't Live Without](#) - 02/24/2015 - Wired

[There is a Porn Monopoly, and Its Name Is Mindgeek](#) - 10/23/2014 - Slate (it's important to understand that these discriminatory policies don't end sex work, they just make it easier for predatory actors to stranglehold the industry - from abusive managers of street based work, to giant companies making money by stealing content from camgirls and smaller studios)

[This Is The Way The War On Pornography Ends](#) - 10/08/2014 - Think Progress (This article is pretty flawed in its basic premise, obviously, seeing another 4 years of the war racking up victories on the side of the sex haters [see, I can make up weird rhetoric too!] but there is good info in here about the activities of groups like Morality in Media. As we've seen, they rebranded quite successfully after this.)

[Shutdown of MyRedbook.com sparks legal debate](#) - 07/01/2014 - SFGate

[The Problem with "Real Men Don't Buy Girls"](#) - 05/20/2014 - Huffington Post

[Paying For It: Is PayPal Hurting Sex Workers?](#) - 04/10/2014 - Huffington Post

[Hawaii Police Won't Get to Have Sex With Prostitutes Anymore](#) - 03/26/2014 - Time

[Hawaii Debates Law Allowing Cops to Have Sex with Prostitutes](#) - 03/21/2014 - Time

[What Rights?](#) - 03/05/2014 - ACLU

[New NSFW Content Restrictions Enrage Tumblr Users](#) - 07/18/2013 - The Daily Dot

[GAATW-IS Statement on attack on UN research calling for the decriminalisation of sex work](#) - 10/2013 - Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women

[A Misguided Moral Crusade](#) - 09/22/2013 - New York Times

[Here's how an anti-prostitution campaign could threaten free speech online](#) - 08/09/2013

[Does LinkedIn have a sex worker problem?](#) - 05/16/2013 - The Telegraph

[What Antis Can Do To Help, Part One: Aiding Those Still in the Industry](#) - 03/19/2013 - Tits and Sass

[Oh Look: Police Can Use Backpage.com To Track Down, Arrest & Convict Pimps & Prostitutes](#) - 10/02/2012 - TechDirt

[The Problem with Producing Porn Outside California](#) - 09/21/2012 - AdultBizLaw

[The New White Slave Trade](#) - 08/24/2012 - CounterPunch

[Tracing the "Traffic in Women": Moral and Political Economies of Sexual Labor](#) - Fall 2012 - Institute for Advanced Study

[Overzealous Legislative Effort Against Online Child Prostitution Ads at Backpage Fails, Providing a Big Win for User-Generated Content](#) - 07/30/2012 - Forbes

[Slippery Slope: Erotica Censorship](#) - 2/19/2012 - The Self Publishing Revolution

[The Sunny Side of Smut](#) - 07/01/2011 - Scientific American

[Sad: Why Haven't Other Internet Companies Stood Up For Craigslist Against AGs?](#) - 09/15/2010 - TechDirt

[Attorneys General Upset That Craigslist Is Profiting From Procedure He Forced Craigslist To Put In Place](#) - 04/27/2010 - TechDirt

## Studies and Books

It's going to be a bit before I really fill this in like I want to, but I've cited a lot of stats in this document. Most of them link back to reporting which in turn links to the studies, but I intend to put some more direct links in. One of the big problems with studies is that most of the good stuff is behind paywalls and membership logins - great for academics funding their diddling (I kid) but not so great for people trying to get the truth out to the general public. I also want to recommend some good comprehensive books. What's cool is that in the mid to late 2000s there's been an almost boom in scholarly and journalistic books published by current and former sex workers about sex work (perhaps with cheaper or basically free self publishing?)

For now, I'll drop things here as I encounter them.

### [The Virtues of Unvirtuous Spaces](#) - Alex F. Levy, 2017

*Abstract: "Websites that facilitate sexual commerce have, in recent years, become pet enemies of some self-styled anti-trafficking advocates. However, this war on intermediaries should not be confused with an actual fight against human trafficking. The same pathways that may give rise to exploitation are no less available to law enforcement seeking to recover victims - a fact that recommends against shuttering these spaces."*

### [Sex, Lies & Statistics](#) - Brooke Magnanti / Belle de Jour - 2017

*Blurb: "An enlightening must-read for anyone exposed to the press" THE INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY. "Should be read by anyone claiming an interest in sex and, especially, sex equality" EVENING STANDARD. "An important book... exactly the kind of level-headed analysis that could help to dispel some of the hysteria surrounding the sex industry" THE TIMES "As entertaining as it is erudite" THE OBSERVER. As Belle de Jour she enthralled and outraged the nation in equal measure. Now her real identity is out in the open, Brooke's background as a scientist and a researcher can come to bear in her fascinating investigation into the truth behind the headlines, scandals and moral outrage that fill the media (and our minds) when it comes to sex. Using her entertaining and informed voice,*

*Brooke strips away the hype and looks at the science behind sex and the panic behind public policy. Unlike so many media column inches, Brooke uses verifiable academic research. This is fact, not fiction; science not supposition. So sit back, open your mind and prepare to be shocked... (Review excerpts refer to 2012 UK edition)"*

**[Gender, Race, and Risk: Intersectional Risk Management in the Sale of Sex Online](#)** -

Jessica D. Moorman, Kristen Harrison - 2015

*Abstract: "Sex worker experience of risk (e.g., physical violence or rape) is shaped by race, gender, and context. For web-based sex workers, experience of risk is comparatively minimal; what is unclear is how web-based sex workers manage risk and if online advertising plays a role in risk management. Building on intersectionality theory and research exploring risk management in sex work, we content-analyzed 600 escort advertisements from Backpage.com (<http://www.backpage.com>) to explore risk management in web-based sex work. To guide our research we asked: Do advertisements contain risk management messages? Does the use of risk management messaging differ by sex worker race or gender? Which groups have the highest overall use of risk management messages? Through a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) we found that advertisements contained risk management messages and that uses of these phrases varied by race and gender. Blacks, women, and transgender women drove the use of risk management messages. Black and White transgender women had the highest overall use of these phrases. We conclude that risk management is an intersectional practice and that the use of risk management messages is a venue-specific manifestation of broader risk management priorities found in all venues where sex is sold."*

**[Getting Screwed: Sex Workers and the Law](#)** - Alison Bass - 2015

*Blurb: "Alison Bass weaves the true stories of sex workers with the latest research on prostitution into a gripping journalistic account of how women (and some men) navigate a culture that routinely accepts the implicit exchange of sex for money, status, or even a good meal, but imposes heavy penalties on those who make such bargains explicit. Along*

*the way, Bass examines why an increasing number of middle-class white women choose to become sex workers and explores how prostitution has become a thriving industry in the twenty-first-century global economy. Situating her book in American history more broadly, she also discusses the impact of the sexual revolution, the rise of the Nevada brothels, and the growing war on sex trafficking after 9/11.*

*Drawing on recent studies that show lower rates of violence and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, in regions where adult prostitution is legal and regulated, Bass makes a powerful case for decriminalizing sex work. Through comparisons of the impact of criminalization vs. decriminalization in other countries, her book offers strategies for making prostitution safer for American sex workers and the communities in which they dwell.*

*This riveting assessment of how U.S. anti-prostitution laws harm the public health and safety of sex workers and other citizens—and affect larger societal attitudes toward women—will interest feminists, sociologists, lawyers, health-care professionals, and policy makers. The book also will appeal to anyone with an interest in American history and our society’s evolving attitudes toward sexuality and marriage.”*

**[Playing the Whore: The Work of Sex Work](#)** - Melissa Gira Grant - 2014

*Blurb: “Recent years have seen a panic over “online red-light districts,” which supposedly seduce vulnerable young women into a life of degradation, and New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof’s live tweeting of a Cambodian brothel raid. But rarely do these fearful, salacious dispatches come from sex workers themselves, and rarely do they deviate from the position that sex workers must be rescued from their condition, and the industry simply abolished – a position common among feminists and conservatives alike.*

*In *Playing the Whore*, journalist Melissa Gira Grant turns these pieties on their head, arguing for an overhaul in the way we think about sex work. Based on ten years of writing and reporting on the sex trade, and grounded in her experience as an organizer, advocate, and former sex worker, *Playing the Whore* dismantles pervasive myths about sex work, criticizes both conditions within the sex industry and its criminalization, and argues that*



*separating sex work from the “legitimate” economy only harms those who perform sexual labor. In *Playing the Whore*, sex workers’ demands, too long relegated to the margins, take center stage: sex work is work, and sex workers’ rights are human rights.”*

**[Sex Workers Unite: A History of the Movement from Stonewall to SlutWalk](#)** - Melinda Chateauvert - 2014

*Blurb: “A provocative history that reveals how sex workers have been at the vanguard of social justice movements for the past fifty years while building a movement of their own that challenges our ideas about labor, sexuality, feminism, and freedom.*

*Documenting five decades of sex-worker activism, *Sex Workers Unite* is a fresh history that places prostitutes, hustlers, escorts, call girls, strippers, and porn stars in the center of America’s major civil rights struggles. Although their presence has largely been ignored and obscured, in this provocative history Melinda Chateauvert recasts sex workers as savvy political organizers—not as helpless victims in need of rescue.*

*Even before transgender sex worker Sylvia Rivera threw a brick and sparked the Stonewall Riot in 1969, these trailblazing activists and allies challenged criminal sex laws and “whorephobia,” and were active in struggles for gay liberation, women’s rights, reproductive justice, union organizing, and prison abolition.*

*Although the multibillion-dollar international sex industry thrives, the United States remains one of the few industrialized nations that continues to criminalize prostitution, and these discriminatory laws put workers at risk. In response, sex workers have organized to improve their working conditions and to challenge police and structural violence. Through individual confrontations and collective campaigns, they have pushed the boundaries of conventional organizing, called for decriminalization, and have reframed sex workers’ rights as human rights.*

*Telling stories of sex workers, from the frontlines of the 1970s sex wars to the modern-day streets of SlutWalk, Chateauvert illuminates an underrepresented movement, introducing skilled activists who have organized a global campaign for self-determination*

*and sexual freedom that is as multifaceted as the sex industry and as diverse as human sexuality.”*

**Legalizing Prostitution: From Illicit Vice to Lawful Business** - Ronald Weitzer - 2012

*Blurb: “While sex work has long been controversial, it has become even more contested over the past decade as laws, policies, and enforcement practices have become more repressive in many nations, partly as a result of the ascendancy of interest groups committed to the total abolition of the sex industry. At the same time, however, several other nations have recently decriminalized prostitution.*

*Legalizing Prostitution maps out the current terrain. Using America as a backdrop, Weitzer draws on extensive field research in the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany to illustrate alternatives to American-style criminalization of sex workers. These cases are then used to develop a roster of “best practices” that can serve as a model for other nations considering legalization. Legalizing Prostitution provides a theoretically grounded comparative analysis of political dynamics, policy outcomes, and red-light landscapes in nations where prostitution has been legalized and regulated by the government, presenting a rich and novel portrait of the multifaceted world of legal sex for sale.”*

*User Review: “Very well-informed examination of LEGAL prostitution in a bunch of different cities and countries. Weitzer is more conservative than sex workers who advocate decriminalization or deregulation, but way more tolerant than the nuts who think sex trade can be made to not exist. His opposition to street trade: problematic if you have family or friends who have worked the streets. But I am reading this as a guide to what actually exists, not as a polemic. Lots of us don't know how these regulations actually work in Nevada and Holland. These are the strongest features of this book. Important contribution to the discussion.”*

**Policing Pleasure: Sex Work, Policy, and the State in Global Perspective** - Susan Dewey, Patty Kelly (Editors) - 2011

*Blurb: “Policing Pleasure examines cross-cultural public policies related to sex work, bringing together ethnographic studies from around the world—from South Africa to*

*India—to offer a nuanced critique of national and municipal approaches to regulating sex work. Contributors offer new theoretical and methodological perspectives that move beyond already well-established debates between “abolitionists” and “sex workers’ rights advocates” to document both the intention of public policies on sex work and their actual impact upon those who sell sex, those who buy sex, and public health more generally.*

*“A rich and deeply insightful collection of ethnographic studies of sex work, taking us from China to Brazil and from South Africa to North America. Probing into the complex nexus of structure and agency, exploitation and liberation, it sensitively exposes the need for public policy that is evidence-based and responsive to the lives and experiences of sex-working adults and children. A tremendously valuable and welcome collection for teaching, research, and analysis of contemporary conditions in the global sex trade.”*

**[Sex Work Matters: Exploring Money, Power, and Intimacy in the Sex Industry](#)** - Melissa Hope, Ditmore Antonia, Levy Alys (Editors) - 2010

*Blurb: “Sex Work Matters brings sex workers, scholars and activists together to present pioneering essays on the economics and sociology of sex work. From insights by sex workers on how they handle money, intimate relationships and daily harassment by police, to the experience of male and transgender sex work, this fascinating and original book offers theoretical discussions as well empirical case studies, providing new ways to link theory with lived experiences. The result is a vital new contribution to sex-worker rights. The book will equip any reader with new theoretical frameworks for understanding the sex industry, challenging readers to explore the topic of sex work in new ways, especially its cultural, economic and political dimensions.”*

**[Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry](#)** - Laura Agustin, 2007

*Blurb: “This groundbreaking book explodes several myths: that selling sex is completely different from any other kind of work; that migrants who sell sex are passive victims; and that the multitude of people out to save them are without self-interest.*

*Laura Agustín makes a passionate case against these stereotypes, arguing that the label 'trafficked' does not accurately describe migrants' lives and that the 'rescue industry' disempowers them. Based on extensive research amongst migrants who sell sex and social helpers, Sex at the Margins provides a radically different analysis. Frequently, says Agustín, migrants make rational choices to travel and work in the sex industry. Although they are treated like a marginalised group they form part of the dynamic global economy.*

*Both powerful and controversial, this book is essential reading for all those who want to understand the increasingly important relationship between sex markets, migration and the desire for social justice."*

**[Violence and the Outlaw Status of \(Street\) Prostitution in Canada](#)** - John Lowman, 2000

*Abstract: "This article constructs a profile of murders of sex workers in British Columbia from 1964 to 1998. The analysis reveals the relationships among media, law, political hypocrisy, and violence against street prostitutes. In particular, the article examines how the "discourse of disposal"—that is, media descriptions of the ongoing attempts of politicians, police, and residents' groups to get rid of street prostitution from residential areas—contributed to a sharp increase in murders of street prostitutes in British Columbia after 1980."*

**[Sex Work: Writings by Women in the Sex Industry](#)** - Frédérique Delacoste, Asa Akira (Editors) - 1998

*Blurb: "The first and possibly only book to be reviewed favorably in both The Women's Review of Books and Hustler, Sex Work popularized the term "sex work" to describe the occupations of street prostitutes, exotic dancers, nude models, escorts, porn actresses, and workers in massage parlors, and so changed the way we talk about sex and money. Features the original stories of women in the life, including writings by Sapphire, Nina Hartley, and Joan Nestle."*

**[Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition](#)** - Kamala Kempadoo, Jo Doezema (Editors) - 1998

*Blurb: "This anthology of essays by scholars, activists, and organization leaders uses*

*studies concerning both male and female sex workers of primarily Third World and developing countries to explore the social and economic issues of the industry. The writers first define both the forced and voluntary trafficking of sex in terms of a labor pool that is often migratory and at times even unionized. Issues of race and morality also play a role in the status and legitimacy of sex workers. These writings also highlight the major organizational movements and conferences of sex workers since the 1970s, as well as discussing the effects of AIDS and other health issues. Much of the literature on prostitution centers on Western cultures or single localities in the developing world. Few works have presented as well-rounded a view of prostitution as this volume."*

**Whores and Other Feminists** - Jill Nagle - 1997

Blurb: *"Whores and Other Feminists fleshes out feminist politics from the perspective of sex workers--strippers, prostitutes, porn writers, producers and performers, dominatrices--and their allies. Comprising a range of voices from both within and outside the academy, this collection draws from traditional feminisms, postmodern feminism, queer theory, and sex radicalism. It stretches the boundaries of contemporary feminism, holding accountable both traditional feminism for stigmatizing sex workers, and also the sex industry for its sexist practices."*

**Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex, and the Fight for Women's Rights** - Nadine Strossen - 1994

Review: *"University of Michigan law professor and anti-pornography crusader Catharine MacKinnon has avoided debating Strossen, a New York University law professor who heads the American Civil Liberties Union. As this book shows, Strossen has a broad arsenal of vital arguments. Free speech has long been a strong weapon to fight misogyny, she notes, and she catalogues the fuzzy legal theories behind censorship. She ascribes feminist panic over sexual expression to a surge in "cultural feminism," which was a response to 1970s setbacks to more tangible feminist projects like the ERA. The "MacDworkin" (MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin) proposed law to fight "subordinating" porn, Strossen argues, misreads evidence of its effects on men and ignores more*

*influential media images like advertising as well as the complexity of female sexuality. In practice, as recent Canadian cases show ominously, such censorship laws have been used to seize lesbian, gay and feminist material. Strossen writes in professorial prose, with numerous quotes from better writers, and eschews the opportunity to explore murkier issues like the sexism inherent in much pornography. But she forcefully makes her point that scapegoating porn diverts activists from more important fights for women's rights."*