

Media Toolkit for Sex Workers, Journalists, and Allies

By PACE Society and Collaborators



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Who is PACE?

PACE Society is a peer-driven organization located in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, BC, Canada. We provide support, advocacy, and education by, with, and for current and former sex workers of all genders. PACE Society takes a rights-based, harm reduction approach to service and program delivery. We provide non-judgmental, and low barrier programs and services that reflect the self-identified needs of our members.

Mission

PACE is a peer-driven society that seeks to reduce the risk of harm, and isolation associated with Sex Work through education, support, and advocacy. We work to increase the health, safety, and empowerment of our members, by respecting their right to self-determination and supporting their self-identified needs. With the help and expertise of our members (we use the term 'member' instead of 'client' to create a respectful environment of equality), PACE seeks to find solutions to address the growing needs of marginalized peoples in our communities. The services provided by PACE strive to reach a very diverse population that represents all socio-economic groups, ethnicities, genders, orientations, cultural values and backgrounds.

Vision

We envision a future where all sex workers are free from the risk of violence, discrimination, social stigmas, and harms so they may enjoy the same rights as all other Canadians including the rights to life, liberty, security of the person, and equal protection under the law.

We hope for long-term commitments to social change within all levels of government and individual citizens to eradicate systemic issues that create disproportionate levels of poverty, homelessness, health concerns, and substance use within the Sex Work community, so that individuals can make safe, healthy, and informed decisions in their lives.



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Using this guide

Media has the power to shape conversations about sex work, which not only impacts general understandings of sex work, but also the legitimate safety and well-being of those in the industry. This media toolkit was created in recognition of the power media has in shaping understandings of sex work and the treatment of sex workers, and to support both sex workers and allies, and those who work in the media as they navigate covering sex work for print, television, and online.

We hope this guide will serve as a valuable tool and resource for journalists, media makers, community organizers, educators, and others who want to think, talk, and write about how we can shift the popular discourse of sex work and sex workers. This toolkit will also support sex workers and allies who wish to speak with the media. This multi-purpose tool can be used in several ways:

- providing sex workers and allies with tools and essential knowledge to feel safe and confident during media interviews
- finding tips for specific language or frameworks to use in a news article
- facilitating conversations or trainings with colleagues about responsible reporting on sex work

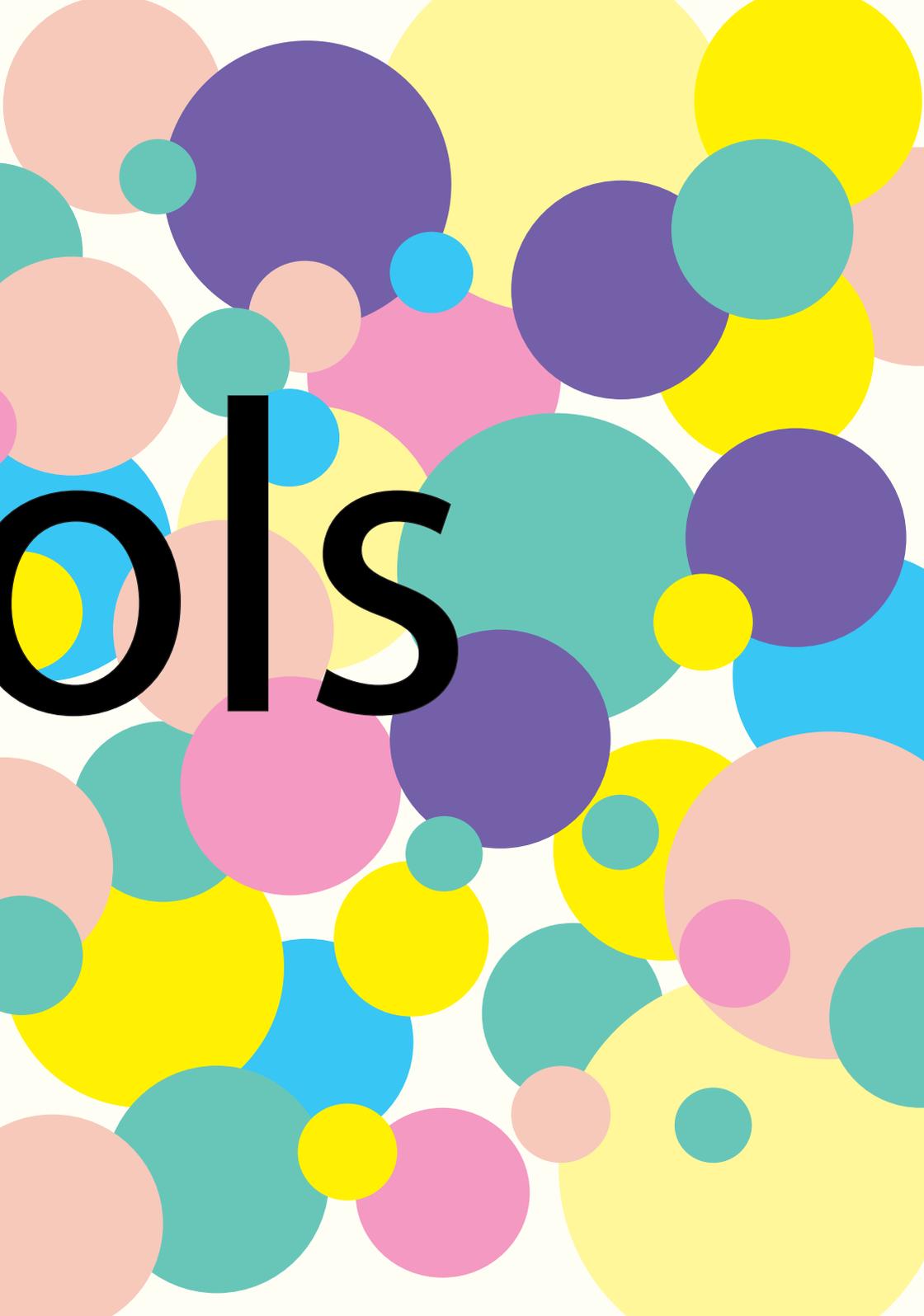
This toolkit was informed first and foremost by the data and feedback of the PACE and greater Vancouver community members. By analyzing existing data and resources, and hosting community discussions, this guide serves as a direct response to the specific needs of our community. This toolkit is informed by an intersectional approach to sex work, which recognizes each unique lived experience of our community members. This is a community-informed toolkit, created by and for a diverse group of sex workers.

Self Care

The following toolkit discusses coverage of sex work in mainstream Canadian media, the policing of sex work, and sexual violence against sex workers. Reading this toolkit can evoke a range of feelings, and we welcome you to take care of yourself as you read or discuss this material.



Too



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Media Reporting of Basics of Laws and Ethics

Professional journalists within Canada, abide by a set of ethics and laws, intended to hold themselves accountable for professional work, respect the rights of the people involved in the news, and defend the public interest.

As both a journalist and someone being interviewed by the media, it is important to be mindful of basic journalism ethics throughout the entire reporting process.

Reporters have an ethical obligation to:

Make sure to retain the original context of all quotations or clips, striving to convey the original tone. Reporting and editing will not change the meaning of a statement.

NOT refer to a person's race, colour, religion, sexual orientation, gender identification or physical ability unless it is pertinent to the story

Correct* a mistake, whether in fact or in context and regardless of the platform, promptly and in a transparent manner, acknowledging the nature of the error

NOT manipulate people who are thrust into the spotlight because they are involved in a crime or are associated with a tragedy. Nor do you publish voyeuristic stories about them.

Declare yourselves as journalists and do not conceal your identity, including when seeking information through social media

Interview subjects DO HAVE the rights to:

Remain anonymous or use a pseudonym

Journalists may use anonymous sources or pseudonyms when there is a clear or pressing reason to protect the person's identity, and when the information gained from the interview is essential to the story. In many cases, journalists are willing to let you choose how you want to be identified, and in their reporting they will specify that a fake name is being used.

Journalists have an ethical duty to protect the identity of anonymous sources, but may be asked in a legal setting to divulge confidential information. For this reason, journalists may refuse the use of a fake name.

In such a case, you as an interview subject, have the right to decline the interview.

Report a factual error, misquote, or a case of defamation

In the case of a mis-quote or factual error, you can contact the reporter you worked with, or a senior editor at the news organization and request a correction. With adequate proof, the media organization is responsible to edit the story (when published online) and include a footnote explaining that an error had been made and was now corrected.

If you feel that a news story published about you follows the criteria of defamation, you have the option of filing a formal complaint, or lawsuit. A first step would be to contact the news organizations' Ombudsperson, and negotiate if a correction and apology can be accomplished without going to court. The next step would be to hire a lawyer.

Interview subjects do NOT have the ethical right to:

- Request payment as an interview subject
- Request a statement retraction after the interview or before the work is published or approve a completed article before it is published (but you can always ask).

Self Care for Sex Workers Speaking in the Media

Before the Interview

Identification and anonymity

Consider how you want to be identified during your interview, i.e., if you want to use your full name, re-main anonymous, and the terminology that you use in regards to your work or experience.

Request Media Training

Many media organizations offer free media training, either one-on-one or as group workshops. Ask your media contact if there are resources available to you.

Ask about Logistics

- Ask and discuss when and through which formats your interview will be published.
- While it's not guaranteed, you can ask to see interview questions beforehand. This will help you to prepare answers.
- Let your interviewer know which topics of discussion are off limits.
- For television or other live interviews, you may have a "pre-interview". Take notes during this process to help prepare for the live version

Practice

- Write-out your thoughts, thinking carefully about what you want to say and what you are comfortable saying
- Rehearse with a friend: act out a practice interview with someone you trust. This will give you space to release difficult emotions.

Inform

Tell the people around you that you will be talking with the media, let them know that you may need their support in the days following.

Make a self-care plan

- Interviews can be empowering, and a way to voice important but difficult feelings or ideas. They also can be physically and emotionally exhausting, or triggering. Plan for how you can take care of yourself directly after the interview, and the days to follow
- Consider inviting a support person/loved one to join you for the interview, or to meet you after
- Employ the same self-care techniques you already use to manage stressful and emotional experiences

Pros and cons of using a legal name/work name vs. anonymity

Pros

Ability to market yourself, your work, or the work of your organization
 You may feel more empowered using your work name, and help to destigmatize the sex worker identity
 Ability to talk more openly and more detailed

Cons

Unfortunately, being "out" as a sex worker can and does carry with it significant risk
 The CRA may choose to audit you
 Travel may become more difficult
 Your family/friends/direct community may be impacted

Self Care for Sex Workers Speaking in the Media

During the Interview

Center Yourself

- Just before the interview starts, center yourself using your preferred calming practices, e.g., meditation, prayer, have a glass of water.
- Breathe. During your interview, it's OK to stop, breathe, or take long pauses between responses.

Lead

- Repeat the questions before you respond. This will allow more time to consider your response, as well as clarify what is being asked
- If you're asked something irrelevant, invasive, or triggering, you can redirect the conversation.
- Always clarify when you are "on the record" and "off the record". If you say something "on the record" but wish to retract it, tell your interviewer right away.
- Be firm about your time commitments. If you feel uncomfortable or wish to end the interview, or simply need to be somewhere else, tell your interviewer that you need to wrap things up.

Examples of Redirects

"Can we talk about my advocacy work instead?"

"I'd rather not discuss that, but I can tell you about..."

"That's beyond my knowledge/experience"

"I'm not sure that question is relevant to the story, but I think your readers should know..."

After the Interview

- Practice some of your favourite self-care rituals. Try unplugging from social media for a few days.
- Ask the reporter to review your interview notes, and make corrections in case of a misquote
- If you have any second thoughts about something you disclosed or your level of anonymity, you can contact the media organization to request a change.
- After the publication date, contact the reporter or producer to offer feedback on the final product. This may help you de-brief but also will improve future reporting.

7 Tips For Frontline Workers

Frontline workers, including advocacy group staff, volunteers, and other professionals who are allies to sex workers, can anticipate being regularly contacted by the media to speak on current issues regarding sex work, or on sex workers' behalf. It is important that front-line workers feel prepared for interviews and have the proper support systems in place. These 7 tips aim to help front-line workers as they navigate the mainstream media system.

For frontline workers who are not experienced sex workers, consider if you know someone who is better suited to speak to the topic, i.e., someone experiential, and willing to talk to the media.

1. Talk to your organization's Public Relations manager, or other manager or supervisor, about regular the media practises. They may be able to offer tips, guidelines, or reference material specific to the organization's area of work and mission.
2. Request media training if available, either within the organization or a training offered by an external NGO/company.
3. Talk with you co-workers and community members about their experience with media. You can also ask if they have experience with the particle reporter or media organization that has requested an interview. This may help establish your comfort level with a proposed interview.
4. Take your time. There is no rush to decide if you do or do not want to speak with media, or when the interview will take place. While journalists often have tight deadlines, you still have the power to be specific about your needs.
5. Consider how you want to be identified throughout the interview, and why or why not you might choose to disclose your personal experiences with sex work. Are your personal experiences relevant? Or would you prefer to focus on the work of your organization?
6. Ask a coworker to join you for the interview. Having a support person or second interviewee present will make you feel more comfortable, diversify the interview responses, and can even stop the journalist from asking personal or invasive questions.
7. Debrief with your team after the interview. This will help you to release any feelings or anxieties, but also allow your coworkers to ask questions and learn from your experience.

Understanding the Mainstream Media



Within any news organization, including print, online, TV or radio, there are many people and steps involved in producing a single news story.

For Sex Workers and allies:

It is important to remember that even if the journalist assigned to your story is using supportive frameworks and language, they may not have control over the final product. Editors may make changes to the body text or headline, photo editors may choose a problematic photo, and online editors may write the social media caption.

So what can you do?

- Ask your interviewer about the work involved in producing the story, and remind them of your identifiers and boundaries.
- It's OK to say, "I don't want this photo, headline, etc." (While you can't demand anything, it never hurts to ask!)
- Offer resources that can be easily shared with the organization

For Media Organizations:

Because no one person can control a single story, it is essential that not just individual journalists or editors learn about better practices for reporting on sex work, but the entire team.

Journalists who do identify as allies, it is your responsibility to:

- Challenge the ways your co-workers edit your work, and introduce new approaches to reporting on sex work
- Purpose training initiatives
- Include options for headlines, photos and social captions that you feel are empowering.

Checklist When Reporting on Sex Work:

Language

Words matter. The language we use to discuss sex work is anything but neutral and has real-life implications on the livelihoods and safety of our community. Language has the power to shape policy and law, so we all need to be mindful of the language we use not only in reporting, but in our conversations with co-workers, family, and friends. Preferred language within sex work communities vary, and so the best policy is to always ask.

ASK how a person or organization wants to talk about sex work and how they want to be talked about, and be transparent about it.

DO Respect the person's autonomy by using the language of their choice. Sex worker or adult service provider are both terms widely used and assume the reality that sex work is a job while also encouraging autonomy

DO NOT refer to sex work or sex workers as prostitution or prostitutes. Prostitution as a term has a lot of historical, social, and legal connotation that carries a lot of stigma. The term sex work is preferred to highlight that sex work is a form of labour.

DO use correct gender pronouns. Ask the interviewee what pronouns they use (She? He? They?).

DO NOT use language which community members do not use to describe themselves. * See more on page 20

DO NOT use the phrase "consensual sex work" to distinguish it from "forced sex work". "Forced sex work" is assault and abuse, not work.

DO recognize sex work as work, while acknowledging that sex workers can still experience exploitative labour situations.

DO NOT default to the descriptor "victim" unless this is the wording an interviewee prefers, even when reporting on a crime. Sex work does not make sex workers victims, which suggests a lack of agency.

DO be considerate when reporting on crime involving a sex worker or sex work. * See more on page 19

DO NOT refer to the assault of a sex worker as "theft of services" or any other legal term that underplays the survivor's experience.

Checklist When Reporting on Sex Work: Language: Other Important Terminology

Date/Session/Appointment: A single meeting or appointment between a sex worker and their client. Similar to the ways we might describe a workout session, counseling appointment, etc.

Date/Client: Both terms are used by sex workers to describe their clients/customers and are less problematic than the media's typical use of "John".

Bad Date or Bad Client: A phrase used to speak of a client who acts beyond the limits of the contract established with a worker. In some instances a client can become aggressive or violent. This can be different to aggressors who target sex workers. Violence against sex workers should always be reported as violence.

Incall: This refers to a location; an apartment, dungeon, massage parlour, which a worker rents and or lives in, and uses to sell sexual services.

Outcall: A worker meeting a client at another place of their choosing, a home, hotel etc.

Indoor sex work: Work and workers who operate at an incall location, who may navigate their work online or via the phone

Street-level/outdoor sex work: Work that may be navigated outdoors or in a "public" space, including a stroll.

Phrases to Avoid

Spotter: Person who may act as a safety person for the worker, either jotting down license plates or accompanying the worker to an outcall location. Under current law, this safety mechanism is prohibited by 2014 provisions in the Canadian criminal code which criminalizes anyone "receiving material benefit", leaving workers faced with working alone, or their spotters risk up to 14 years in prison.

John: A generic term used to describe a hegemonic group of men. This term is highly gendered, removes agency and does not represent the diversity and individuality of clients.

Exiting: Using exiting instead of "retiring" or "switching careers" perpetuates negative stereotypes around sex work as labour. It also implies that people "enter" sex work, which is also highly problematic and inaccurate.

Pimp: A legal term often used to prosecute friends/family members and loved ones who may work with/live with/ and keep sex workers safe. Within Canada, third party activity relating to sex work can be criminalized.

Brothel/Bawdy House: 15th century English slang which translates to "house of filth". "Prostitution" was removed from the legal definition of bawdy house during *Canada v. Bedford*, and in 2018 Bill C-75 proposed to remove the bawdy house law altogether. As of December 2018 the Bill is going through Senate.

Whore/Slut/Hooker/Hoe: These are stigmatizing terms when used by members outside of the sex working community. Hoe is African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and is used by some sex workers but is not acceptable for people outside of the black sex-worker community to use.

Checklist When Reporting on Sex Work: Frameworks and Imagery

Consider the purpose and relevance of your reporting

Before you start collecting your research and drafting interview questions, it's essential that you consider the importance, relevance, and the purposed intent of your work.

- What do you hope to achieve with your work? Whose interests and well-being are you serving, or potentially hurting?
- Has this story been done before? Are you adding anything new or timely to the sex work discourse?
- Is the approach voyeuristic, tokenizing, or merely clickbait? "A day in the life of a stripper" for example, is a tired approach that will likely do little to help the sex worker community.
- Why are YOU taking on this assignment? Consider your location in relation to sex work. Do you have a colleague who might be better for the job? Is it possible to commission a sex worker in media to do the reporting?

Confront your assumptions and challenge media stereotypes

No two sex-workers are the same, recognize the unique experiences of your subjects. Thinking there is a 'stereotypical' sex worker is a stigmatizing fallacy and should be avoided.

For more on popular myths on sex work, and how to challenge these myths, see page ().

Be hyper-critical in image and headline choices

Stock photos

Some journalists tend to use the same stock imagery when writing about sex work. They also tend to use stereotypical imagery (ie, feet on the street). This overuse of similar imagery perpetuates existing stereotypes of sex work and erases the diversity of the sex work community.

Alternatives to stock photos:

- Sex worker rights groups have lot of photos, drawings and other imagery on their website or social media pages that provide a diverse perspective of their work.
- With permission, take original portraits of your interview subjects that are both empowering and humanizing
- Use images from sex work rights rallies or events that illustrate the sex worker movement, rather than individual sex workers
- Commission an experiential artist to produce an illustration/art piece to accompany your article

Headlines

The headline of a news article is the first opportunity for your work to either empower sex workers or add to existing stigma. Consider the following as you write a news headline or social media caption:

- Who's voice are you centering? Sex workers, the police, the government? Think about who is the main subject of your story.
- Are you using proper terminology? Eg. sex Worker, survivor, migrant worker
- Is your headline sensationalizing the story? Or missing key information?

Instead of this: "12 Trafficking Victims Removed from Downtown Brothel"

Try this: "Migrant Sex Workers Detained by Government Despite Work Permits"

Essential Tips on Interviewing Sex Workers

Before the Interview

Do your research

- Familiarize yourself with the current laws, campaigns and activism
- Be aware of the preferred language used within the community you are reporting on
- Read/listen/watch recent coverage of the particular event/issue you are covering, especially media that is produced by sex-workers

Inform and Ask

- Inform the person you're interviewing the nature of your reporting, and when possible, share your interview questions or topics of discussion beforehand
- Ask your interviewee if there are any subjects or possible trigger words that may be off-limits
- Inform them of where, when and in what format the interview will be published
- Ask your subject where they would like the interview to take place, and be mindful of their access to resources (transportation, housing etc.)
- Inform your interviewee that can bring someone with them to the interview

During the interview

Check your assumptions.

- When asking difficult questions, explain to your interview subject why the question is essential to the story
- Allow adequate time for the interview so that it does not feel rushed. Understand that some conversations will be difficult. Long pauses and breaks may be needed.

After the interview

Follow-up

- Allocate time at the end for a de-brief on how the interview went.
- Reach out to your subject later that day, or the next day, and allow them time to review their comments. There may be something they feel uncomfortable with and want to be edited or removed. Also, be transparent about your own deadlines to be sure it can be done before publishing.
- Provide a list of resources available to them (e.g. support lines) for support post interview.



Building Connections

When reporting on sex work, it is important that your writing is sex-worker centred. This requires speaking with diverse community members and developing a network of sex workers, community workers and allies who are comfortable speaking with media.

Tips for building connections and improving your sex work literacy:

Read, watch, and listen to work produced by sex workers. Members of the sex work community are also media makers; authors, bloggers, directors, and podcast producers. Immersing yourself in sex-worker produced storytelling will help improve the quality of your own work and introduce you to community members with media experience.

Attend local events. Stay updated on the programming and events hosted by local sex worker organizations, and attend as many as possible. This will help to localize your learning so that your reporting is relevant to your community. Events are also a great opportunity to meet sex workers and organizers. But always be mindful of which events are media friendly, and those that are for community members only.

Give Back. Work with your media agency to develop media training workshops for sex workers and frontline workers and organizers. This will both help to demystify media and increase media literacy of your potential interview subjects, but also show the community that you are working with them, and actively trying to improve the quality of reporting.

Reporting on Crime Involving Sex Work

Sex work isn't a crime, but the media still frequently talks about it like it is. Though, sex workers and other community members are sometimes involved in crimes as the victim, a witness, "the rescued" etc. Things to consider when reporting on crime involving sex work or sex workers :

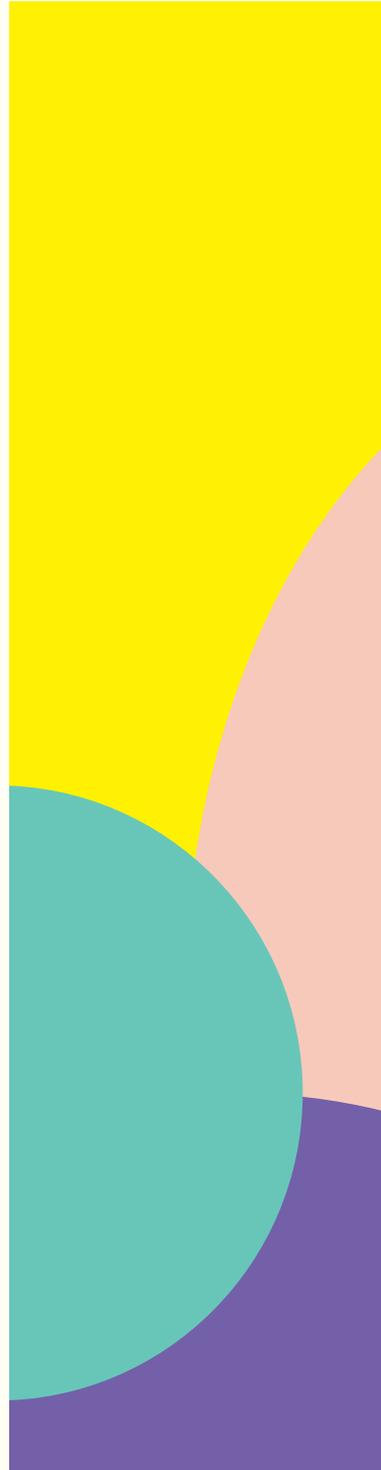
Sometimes sex workers are victims of crime and this victimization should be recognized as the crime it is. Unfortunately in a criminalized context, when sex workers are victims of crime, not only is the violence against sex workers seen as inevitable, but also our legal rights are not respected.

Familiarize yourself with Canada's Criminal Code. Any journalist reporting on sex work in Canada should be familiar with Canada's Criminal Code, as well as the problematic nature of Canada's sex work laws.

*For more on this, see pages 24&25

Don't jump to conclusions. Certain groups within the sex worker community are policed and criminalized differently; Migrant and Indigenous sex workers, street-level sex workers, trans sex workers etc. It is important that your journalism considers such intersections of oppression and does not add to the existing stereotypes of such communities.

*For more on this, see pages 28-30



Reporting on Sexual Violence

Violence against sex workers can and does happen. In one study* of street-involved sex workers in Vancouver, 45.8% of respondents had been sexually assaulted by someone without a weapon. 40.7% had been sexually assaulted with a weapon. However it is important to recognize, and communicate through reporting, that sex work is not inherently harmful. Rather, the compounding impacts of criminalization, stigma, and gender-based violence result in a society that permits violence against sex workers. For more on this, see page 26.

Identification

Survivor

“Survivor” is a widely used term used to describe someone who has experienced sexual violence. This term can convey resilience, agency, and power. This word, however, also identifies a person based on their experience. Not all those who have experienced sexual violence choose to be identified as a survivor.

Victim

The term victim is highly contested in sex worker rights and Violence Against Women (VAW) communities. Referring to someone that has experienced sexual violence as a “victim” is stripping them of agency, and connects their identity closely with their experience. “Victim” removes the possibility of resistance and activism. It can be related to passivity and acceptance of one’s position of vulnerability.

Alternative language you can use to avoid the victim/survivor dichotomy:

- a person who was subjected to sexual violence
- a person who was sexually assaulted
- a person who survived sexual abuse

But of course, the best way to know if you are using the right language to describe your subject is to ASK. Be sure to explain, to your co-workers, editors, and audience, the reasoning as to why you are using such terms.

*PACE Society. 2011). Violence Against Women in Vancouver’s Street Level Sex Trade and the Policy Response. [pace-society.org/ library/sex-trade-and-police-response.pdf](http://pace-society.org/library/sex-trade-and-police-response.pdf)

Reporting on Sexual Violence

What is rape culture?

Rape culture is a structural system which blames survivors and excuses perpetrators. Rape culture infiltrates public opinion, political discourse, the justice system and police practices.

Rape culture causes survivors to feel guilt, shame, and blame about the violence they experienced. Sex workers are especially vulnerable to the effects of rape culture.

Rape culture too ignores the diversity of those that experience sexual violence. Rape culture does not acknowledge locations of race, gender, sexuality, ability. And those most marginalized also have the least access to support and are less likely to have their experiences validated.

Rape culture enforces the gender binary, and characterizes masculine and feminine identities based on hegemonic ideas of behaviour. Rape culture upholds the idea that men can't control themselves, and feminized people are constructed as passive and sexually available.

Why sex workers may choose not to report sexual violence

Part of rape culture is the notion that if a survivor does not report their experience to the police, or take legal action, their story is not valid. However, there are many reasons for not reporting sexual violence. Many survivors prefer other methods of healing and justice that do not involve our police and judicial system.

- *History of police violence against sex workers*
- *The court process does not support survivors or sex workers*
- *Barriers to access to legal information*
- *Most sexual assault cases do not lead to a conviction*
- *Marginalized communities are already over-represented in the prison system*
- *Re-traumatization*



Educ



ation

Sex Work Legal Framework In Canada

Understanding Criminalization, Decriminalization, and Legalization

Criminalization: State violence towards sex workers, the poor or homeless, people who use drugs, people living with HIV and so many other marginalized groups. Perfectly represented by Canada's disproportionate jailing of Indigenous Canadians by the justice system.

Decriminalization: The removal of all sex work specific laws, along with a holistic response to addressing exploitation and violence with existing laws, and an application of labour laws and frameworks to regulate sex work. This also includes removal of the tools used to overpolice and oversurveil historically criminalized and marginalized communities that occupy public space.

Legalization: Sex work is restricted by guidelines and laws determined by government. This also perpetuates a hierarchy within sex work as those with barriers who might not be able to meet requirements for regulation will still work under criminalization. Sex workers all over the globe prefer the model of decriminalization, because it offers more autonomy to workers.

Canada's Criminal Code

Current laws in Canada introduced in 2014 make the exchange of sexual services for money illegal. In particular, it is illegal to purchase sexual services, to advertise sexual services, to receive material benefits from sex work, to procure others to do sex work, and in some cases illegal to solicit or discuss the sale of sex in public areas.

Purchasing Offence:

- Obtaining sexual services for consideration, or communicating in any place for that purpose (section 286.1)
- Those who sell their own sexual services are protected from criminal liability for participating in the commission of this offence if the offence relates to their own sexual services (subsection 286.5(2))

Advertising Offence:

- Knowingly advertising an offer to provide sexual services for consideration (section 286.4)
- Those who sell their own sexual services are protected from criminal liability for committing this offence if they advertise their own sexual services (paragraph 286.5(1) (b)), or for participating in the commission of this offence if the offence relates to their own sexual services (subsection 286.5(2))

Material Benefit Offence:

- Receiving a financial or other material benefit obtained by or derived from the commission of the purchasing offence (section 286.2)
- Those who sell their own sexual services are protected from criminal liability for committing this offence if the only benefit they receive is from the sale of their own sexual services (paragraph 286.5(1)(a)), or for participating in the commission of this offence if the offence relates to their own sexual services (subsection 286.5(2))

This offence does not prevent those who sell their own sexual services from entering into legitimate family and business relationships. The following contexts are exceptions to the material benefit offence:

- Legitimate living arrangements (e.g., children, spouses, roommates,)
- Legal or moral obligations (e.g., supporting a disabled parent, gifts)
- Goods and services offered to the general public, and goods and services offered informally for fair value

Procuring Offence:

- Procuring a person to offer or provide sexual services for consideration (section 286.3); or, For the purpose of facilitating the purchasing offence, recruiting, holding, concealing or harbouring a person who offers or provides sexual services for consideration, or exercising control, direction or influence over the movements of that person (section 286.3)
- Those who sell their own sexual services are protected from criminal liability for participating in the commission of this offence if the offence relates to their own sexual services (subsection 286.5(2))

The problem with the Nordic Regime

In 2013, three criminal laws relating to sex work were struck down in the landmark *Canada v. Bedford* case. In 2014, the Conservative government introduced a new set of laws that they claim to be inspired by Nordic “end demand” regimes. They framed this new set of provisions as “decriminalizing sex workers and criminalizing clients”, but the reality could not be farther from the truth. Sex workers are still criminalized under the current regime, as are clients and third parties.

Nordic regimes introduce the criminalization of the purchase of sexual services, and are usually layered on top of already existing criminal regimes. In the case for Canada, a focus on “end demand” has resulted in increased stigma, discrimination, and marginalization of sex work, which has very harmful consequences for sex workers.

Sex Work Myths and Popular Discourse

What is Sex Work?

Sex work is the exchange of intimacy, affection, emotional or physical labour, fetishistic or sexual acts for material goods, such as cash, food, drugs, a safe space to stay, clothes, etc. Sex work is often used as an umbrella term that includes Strippers, Escorts, Dominatrices, Camming, Porn, Subbing, GFE (Girlfriend Experience), Survival, Phone sex... it's all sex work. It can involve intimacy, affection, sexual fantasies. We label such as 'Sex work' to reinforce that this IS a job, that involves mental, emotional and physical labour.

Stigma Kills

The single biggest barrier facing sex workers is stigma.

Stigma is defined as a mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality or person. A set of negative and often unfair beliefs that society or a group of people have about something. Synonyms include: shame, disgrace, dishonour, humiliation.

Internalized stigma is the term used for when a discriminatory societal belief becomes a message we believe about ourselves or others. Internalized stigma can act to make sex workers feel as though we don't matter, our bodies and our lives don't matter.

Stigma distances sex workers from services, it makes us feel as though we don't deserve help or care, or that we will be punished for seeking support. When service providers hold judgements and stigmatizing beliefs about sex workers, sex workers are less likely to access such services. Stigma forces sex workers to lie to loved ones, friends, counsellors, and doctors, which impacts the kinds and levels of supports sex workers access with success.

Myths about Sex Work

Myth: All workers in massage parlours are trafficked

Reality: Many people who work in massage parlours are economic migrants- people who came to do sex work and get paid a higher wage than they would at home. That is not the same thing as trafficking.

Myth: All sex workers are thin, glamorous, and affluent

Reality: Sex workers come in all sizes, shapes, colours, beliefs and in all socio-economic ranges.

Myth: Violence is part of the job

Reality: Violence isn't part of the job- the often very gendered violence workers encounter is a part of society; it's patriarchy and misogyny and that needs to be addressed in a dire way. But sex workers are not inviting violence, just by going to work. Sex workers experience and are at risk of greater violence due to three reasons: criminalization, stigma, and lack of workplace protections afforded to other labourers.

Myths about Sex Work

Myth: Sex workers are unfit parents because of their work

Reality: The work you do does not affect the quality of the love, or time spent with your children.

Myth: All sex workers are cis women

Reality: Sex workers might be predominantly women, but there is a significant portion who are cis men, and, due to societal transphobia, trans people are overrepresented in sex work, especially BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Colour).

Myth: All sex workers use drugs

Reality: Many sex workers have never used drugs, many are using drugs to self-medicate, and many are sober. Assuming all sex workers are supporting a drug habit is extremely hazardous and incredibly stigmatizing. A lot of the stigma around this specifically is due to the fact that street level workers are more visible, and sex work is a low barrier form of employment that people who use drugs can access.

Myth: Sex work is dirty, that workers are selling their bodies, or that STI and HIV rates are higher in sex worker populations

Reality: Workers sell services, just like any labourers do. They are not selling their bodies. STI and HIV infection rates are actually lower in sex worker communities, because sex workers tend to get tested more often than the general population.

Myth: Some sex work jobs are more respectable than others.

Reality: The Sex work hierarchy, also called the "Whorearchy" is problematic in that it undervalues the lives and work of certain sex work communities, producing even more stigma and less safe working conditions.

"There is a social hierarchy where it seems that being a porn actress is better than being a prostitute, and this only serves to encourage prejudice. We are in different sectors, but all of us are working women with the same stigma."

- THE RESPONSIBLE GUIDE TO TALK ABOUT SEX WORK IN THE MEDIA, AMARNA MILLER



Sex Work, Exploitation and Human Trafficking

Sex work and human trafficking are often conflated in language, policy, and practice.

In June, 2018 the Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform submitted a briefing and list of recommendations to be considered by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights on Human Trafficking. Pages 28-30 of this toolkit contain excerpts from such briefing.

The Canadian Alliance for Sex Work Law Reform is a coalition of 28 sex worker rights and allied groups across Canada (Including PACE). The majority of our member groups are composed of sex workers and many groups offer services to sex workers in their region. Together, we work for law reform that supports the rights and safety of people who sell or trade sex, including safety from exploitation and trafficking.

Rights not Rescue

Far from being protective, the sex work prohibitions, and the end-demand model they represent, facilitate exploitation and trafficking by pushing people away from police and social services and into a clandestine underground where there are no legal or social protections.

Sex work is sometimes framed as an inherent form of human trafficking or, more generally, as an inherent form of violence against women. This framing underpins the PCEPA and promotes the ensuing harms outlined above. Further, when sex work is seen as an act of violence or outright human trafficking, it trivializes actual incidents of violence against sex workers, denies sex workers their right to address incidents of violence, violates sex workers' right to autonomy, and invalidates sex workers' right to consent to sex when exchanging sexual services for money.

When sex work is perceived as human trafficking, anti-trafficking initiatives become de facto anti-sex work initiatives, and sex workers and the people with whom they work are indiscriminately targeted for surveillance and investigation. Colleagues, employers and family members may be mistakenly identified as traffickers. People who work in the sex industry often rely on the support of third parties and family members to help organize their income, communicate with clients, offer additional security precautions or advertise their services.

As well, sex workers themselves frequently act as third parties for other workers. Sex workers have been charged with trafficking offenses, even in the absence of exploitation, because they work or associate with other sex workers, or receive material benefits related to services or resources they provided for other sex workers. In light of these impacts, sex workers and their personal and professional contacts are further compelled to isolate themselves from law enforcement. This undermines efforts to identify and assist actual trafficking victims.

Migrant Sex Workers, Deportation and Agency

Migrant sex workers' realities are unique and diverse. Migrant sex workers do sex work for many reasons, such as generating income to provide for themselves and their families, and accessing things they want or need. They also may experience multiple and intersecting struggles related to language, legal systems, immigration status, finances, health, safety, racism/racial profiling, sexism, employment conditions and family, among other struggles.

Migrant sex workers' are often the targets of anti-trafficking policies and practices. Migrant sex workers – particularly workers who are Asian – are assumed to be trafficked victims without agency or capacity to make their own life decisions. This reproduces the racist and sexist stereotype that Asian women are ignorant, passive, helpless and lack all agency and self-determination.

Racist and oppressive views underpin current anti-trafficking initiatives and policies; they function as racial profiling tools used to detain and exclude migrant and racialized individuals and communities. Racialized communities are stigmatized by law enforcement and policy makers and misrepresented as "organized crime rings."

Anti-trafficking initiatives and policies that conflate exploitation and human trafficking with sex work increase migrant sex workers' contact with law enforcement and often lead to highly negative consequences for sex workers who avoid law enforcement due to precarious immigration status, in addition to conflict with numerous criminal and municipal sex work related laws.

Anti-trafficking initiatives have resulted in increased operations and raids of sex workers' workplaces. Law enforcement may assert that these initiatives are intended to target clients and third parties, but they often result in the detention, arrest and deportation of migrant sex workers.

"Violence against Asian sex workers is a direct result of repressive laws and a climate of hatred towards sex workers and sex work. Because Asian sex workers avoid detection from police and larger societal stigma and discrimination, Asian sex workers are at once both isolated and targeted for violence."

- Butterfly Toronto

Sex Work among Indigenous Communities and Canada's History of Colonization

Indigenous people who sell or trade sexual services do so for a wide range of reasons and motivations. Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people exercise agency and self-determination and, like other sex workers, make decisions in various contexts including poverty, homelessness, and discrimination, in addition to historical institutionalized colonialism.

The assumption that all Indigenous people who sell or trade sex are trafficked blurs these realities and over-simplifies these realities. It is a lost opportunity to explore the ways factors such as poverty in urban and rural communities impact the lives of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people and how the sale or trade of sex can be a path that represents agency and self-reliance. Focusing solely on trafficking and imposing this framework onto Indigenous women has deeply influenced governments' and non-profit organizations' initiatives that attempt to address violence against Indigenous people and has encouraged anti-violence strategies based in anti trafficking strategies. This results in prioritizing and funding law enforcement strategies that increase over-policing in Indigenous communities, instead of investing in peer-led programs that allow Indigenous people selling or trading sex to exchange knowledge and support each other.

Indigenous women, girls and Two-Spirit people experience many types of violence. This targeted and systemic violence needs to be understood in the context of colonialism. Indigenous women and Two-Spirit people are targeted for violence because predators know police are less inclined to investigate their disappearances, and also because they know Indigenous women are constantly avoiding police for fear of detection and apprehension. Indigenous women and communities are both over-policed and under-protected. Indigenous communities receive little to no access to justice and have very limited remedy to address the violence they experience.

- *Indigenous women are 12 times more likely to be murdered or missing than non-Indigenous women.*
- *Indigenous women between the ages of 25-44 are five times more likely to die from acts of violence than other women the same age.*
- *Among Indigenous women, the self-reported rate of sexual assault is three times higher compared to non-Indigenous women*
- *Indigenous two-spirit and trans people face the added jeopardies of homophobia and transphobia. Two-spirit and trans people are violently victimized nearly five times as often.*

Ensuring Inclusive and Diverse Reporting

"Either they are deceived victims, abused and have ended up in this business against their will; or they embody the perfect rich girl who engages in sex work as an act of bourgeois rebellion. The street whore or the luxury escort. The mistreated porn actress, or the one who becomes rich at the expense of the suffering of others."

- THE RESPONSIBLE GUIDE TO TALK ABOUT SEX WORK IN THE MEDIA, AMARNA MILLER

Media representations can inform our understanding of who sex workers are, and more importantly, which sex workers are "worthy" of compassion, understanding, safety and justice. It is crucial to draw attention to the very diverse realities and lived experiences of *all* sex workers, but paying particular attention to marginalized groups.

Tips for ensuring inclusive and diverse reporting:

- Understand sex work as much more than a "morality" issue. When you consider more complex systems that impact sex workers, patriarchy, labour rights, capitalism, etc., you are able to report on more unique and necessary issues pertaining to sex work.
- Avoid the "Whorearchy" by identifying all types of sex workers as sex workers.
- Give voice to the protagonist or "positive" experiences. Sex work is often depicted as negative, while positive sex worker experiences are characterized as exceptions.
- Base your reporting on sex worker-centered research and interviews, rather than existing mainstream media and your own assumptions.
- Speak with a diverse group of sex workers and frontline workers.

Resources for Sex Workers

**This is not an exhaustive list*

British Columbia

PACE Society, Vancouver
pace-society.org

SWAN, Vancouver
swanvancouver.ca

WISH Drop-In Center, Vancouver
wish-vancouver.net

Peers, Victoria
safersexwork.ca

Alberta

SHIFT, Calgary
shiftcalgary.org

PEICE, Edmonton
twitter.com/pieceedmonton

Ontario

POWER, Ottawa
powerottawa.ca

Maggies, Toronto
maggiestoronto.ca

Native Youth Sexual Health, Toronto
nativeyouthsexualhealth.com

Butterfly, Toronto
butterflysw.org

Quebec

Chez Stella
chezstella.org

Nova Scotia

Stepping Stone, Halifax
steppingstonens.ca

National and Global Resources

Network of Sex Work Projects
nswp.org

Indigenous Resources

National Association of Friendship
Centres
nafc.ca/en/friendship-centres

Talk4Healing
talk4healing.com

Indigenous Transition Houses
The Healing Journey
thehealingjourney.ca/inside.
asp?279



PACE SOCIETY, 2019
pace-society.org

148 W. Hastings St.
Vancouver, Canada
604-872-7651

*PACE's Media Toolkit for Sex Workers, Journalists and Allies is
intended for use in
Canada only and is not intended for use
in the United States or other nations.*