

CONSOLIDATING AN ABOLITIONIST APPROACH

Brief on the Trafficking of Women, Girls and Gender-Diverse People for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation in Canada

**Submitted to the Standing Committee on the Status of Women
of the House of Commons of Canada**



Pour les droits des femmes du Québec (PDF Québec)

May 2023

Sexual exploitation can be stopped if the demand for sexual services from women and children goes away. When clients are made responsible for their actions, the demand dries up. Yes, it can be done, and we know how!

What would deter clients from buying sex?

In November 2022, American clinical psychologist Melissa Farley and her team published their research involving 763 sex buyers in six countries (Germany, Cambodia, the United States, Scotland, the United Kingdom and India).¹ In these anonymous interviews, sex buyers provided candid information about prostitution and trafficking that mirrored decades of testimony from prostitution survivors. In addition, clients in five of the six countries were asked about what might deter them from purchasing sex. The key findings of this study are summarized below.

Sex buyers told interviewers that having their names added to a sex offender registry would be a highly effective deterrent. Sex buyers do not like the notion of being labelled as sex predators, placing them in the same category with pedophiles and rapists.

The next-most effective deterrent is public exposure of the names of men who purchase sex. There is a stigma applied to men who buy sex, and rightly so. The possibility of having their names made public—via the Internet, newspaper, or a poster—are also strong deterrents. Jail time would be an equally effective deterrent, according to 82% of the men participating in the study. Half (49%) of the German sex buyers said that any amount of time in jail would deter them.

The least effective deterrent, according to the sex buyers in five countries, would be an educational program about prostitution. See the table below:

Deterrent	%
Added to the “sex offender” registry along with rapists and pedophiles	87
Your photo and/or name in the local newspaper or on a poster	85
Your photo and/or name posted on the Internet	83
Spend time in jail	82
A letter sent to your family saying you were arrested for soliciting a woman in prostitution	77
Greater criminal penalty	76
Larger amount of money paid for the fine	74
Having your driver’s license suspended	73
Your bicycle/car taken away by police	71
Having to do community service	59
Required to attend educational program for men who buy prostitutes	48

No clients means no sexual exploitation

In May 2022, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) of the United States made 11 recommendations to stop sex buying at the source:ⁱⁱ

1. Shift law enforcement's resources toward arresting and adjudicating sex buyers;
2. Make available short-term funding programs to support local and regional law enforcement agencies ready to make demand-reduction reforms;
3. Implement mandatory minimum fines on adjudicated sex buyers and use the funds to help organizations that provide survivor exit services;
4. Create increasingly severe penalty structures for repeat sex buyers;
5. Counter media messages that normalize sex buying through interventions in education and public health sectors;
6. Create and enforce employer policies prohibiting sex buying;
7. Implement targeted prevention campaigns and focus deterrence communications on behavioral "nudges";
8. Civil prosecutions against "sex tourists" and sex buyers;
9. Prosecution of sex buyers as conspirators to sex trafficking;
10. Prevent childhood exposure to pornography; and
11. Develop and refine existing demand reduction strategies to target the most active and privileged buyers.

Prostitution is a crime

It is important to note that the purchase of sexual services is in fact a crime in Canada, although it unfortunately goes under-punished or unpunished to this day, despite the passage of the *Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act* (SC 2014, c. 25). Eight years after this Act came into force, it is surprising how few offences related to the purchase of sexual services are reported in Canada, given that most women in prostitution report an average of five clients per day, and some, more than twenty.ⁱⁱⁱ Furthermore, according to the report of the Quebec National Assembly's Commission spéciale sur l'exploitation sexuelle des mineurs, some people do not know that the purchase of sexual services is a criminal offence, which means there is an urgent need for public awareness campaigns on this issue. Lastly, the normalization of the sex industry in the media and, in some cases, by prostitutes themselves, makes clients feel less responsible and makes the work of pimps easier. However, sex buyers are indeed responsible for causing serious

physical and psychological harm, including the sexual assault, rape and murder of women and children who are recruited, deceived, coerced and exploited, and then controlled through beatings, drug addiction and psychological torture to keep them from running away.^{iv}

What are we waiting for? The time to act is now.

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Universalist, mixed-gender and non-partisan feminist citizen's group established in 2013, with members from diverse backgrounds. PDF Québec believes that true democracy is possible only if we achieve true equality between women and men. PDF Québec supports a democratic and secular society.

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ⁱ Farley, Melissa et al., *Men who pay for sex in Germany and what they teach us about the failure of legal prostitution: a 6-country report on the sex trade from the perspective of the socially invisible 'freiers'*, Berlin, November 2022, <https://prostitutionresearch.com/>.

ⁱⁱ NCOSE. *Why Sex Buyers Must Be Stopped and How to Do It*, May 2, 2022,

<https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/How-To-Stop-Sex-Buying-updated-2.8.22.pdf>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Malarek, Victor. *Les prostitueurs : Sexe à vendre... Les hommes qui achètent du sexe*, Mont-Royal : M Éditeur, 2013, p. 12.

^{iv} Miller, Michelle. Appearance before the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, 2009, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/402/JUST/Evidence/EV3853912/JUSTEV17-E.PDF>.