

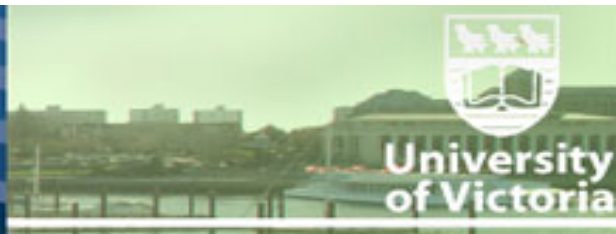


# Understanding sex work in Canada

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# Outline

- Global view of sex work regulation, including for Canada (sellers, buyers, third parties)
- Knowledge gaps in sex workers' health & safety
- Our national study
- Questions

# Global labour market

- Commercial sex is a major source of income for a significant number of adults in most countries
- International Labor Organization estimates approximately 1.5 percent of the world's female population—46 million people—participated in commercial sex work
- # male & transgendered sex workers unknown

## 3 regulatory strategies

1. Full criminalization
  2. Partial decriminalization
  3. Full decriminalization
- National, state/provincial level & municipal policies
  - Laws directed toward sellers, buyers, and third parties

# Sex workers

- Prefer the term sex work, rather than prostitution, because sex work underscores the labour and economic implications of the sex industry
- Most research based on data from survival sex workers; depicts sex workers mainly as victims and with limited control over their lives
- Sex work like “ ... most paid work.., involves varying degrees of coercion, exploitation, resistance, and agency” (Sullivan, 2010, p. 87)

# Buyers

- There are few studies of buyers; those available gather data exclusively from male clients, focus on heterosexual sex, and involve small samples
- % of males from 15 countries who reported buying sex at least once in their lifetime:
  - 5-20% (e.g., UK, Sweden, USA, Australia, China, France)
  - 21-40% (e.g., Spain, Italy, Japan)
  - >60 % (e.g., Cambodia, Thailand)

# Third parties

- Popular perceptions of third parties focus on individuals who act as abusive pimps, brothel or escort operators
- Third party prohibitions also penalize sex workers' romantic partners, adult children, other adult family members and friends, and supportive managers of sex work establishments

# Canada: partial decriminalization

- Federal criminal code , Sections 210-213
  - It is not illegal to sell sex services, but nearly impossible to do so without breaking the law
1. Owning, managing or being found in a **bawdy house** (any place used habitually for prostitution)
  2. Procuring a person to sell sex services and **living on the avails** of prostitution
  3. **Communicating** for the purposes of prostitution



# Canada:

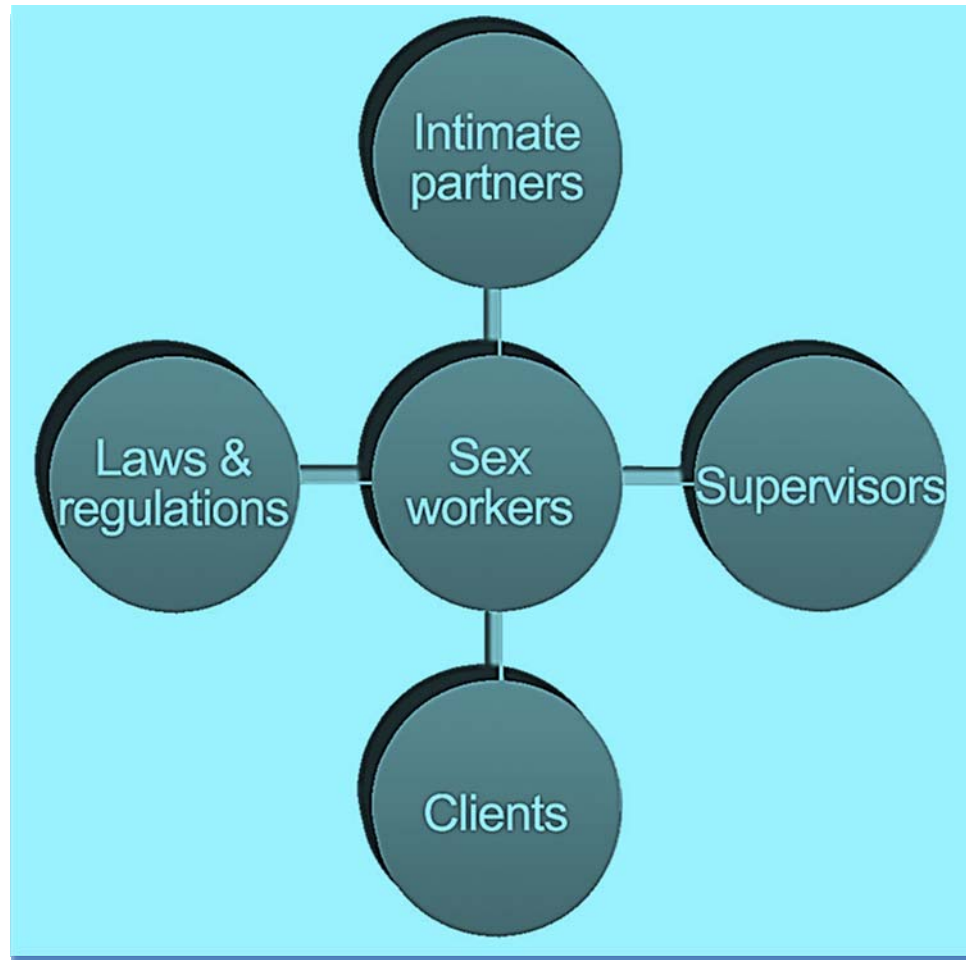
## partial decriminalization

- 2010 Bedford vs. Canada (Ontario Superior Court of Justice); the judge struck down all three prostitution laws
- In 2012, the Court of Appeal for Ontario struck down the bawdy house as unconstitutional and amended the prohibition on living on the avails of prostitution to apply only to those who do so “in circumstances of exploitation”
- October 25, 2012, the Supreme Court of Canada granted leave to the Crown's appeal; Supreme court hearing expected June, 2013

# Knowledge gaps

- What is the level of victimization and health among Canadian sex workers?
- What is the impact of stigma and discrimination on sex workers and their families?
- What factors are linked to resiliency among sex workers?
- What factors lead to safer work environments?
- What factors lead to social inclusion of sex workers in Canadian society?

# Study of Canada's sex industry



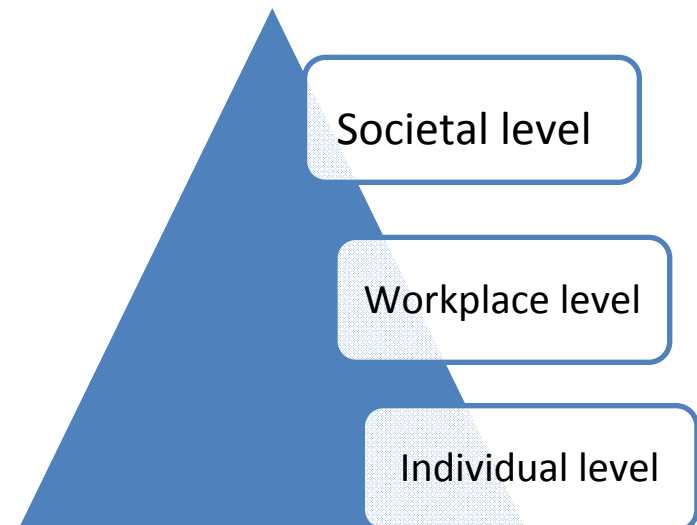
# 7 integrated studies

- Project 1: Knowledge translation
- Project 2: Sex workers
- Project 3: Sex workers & romantic partners
- Project 4: Sex workers' clients
- Project 5: Sex workers' managers
- Project 6: Sex workers' regulators
- Project 7: Ethnography of sex work

# Project 1:

## Continuous knowledge translation

- Inform challenges to Canada's *Criminal Code*
- Inform workplace policies impacting violence
- Inform best practices when delivering services to sex workers and their families



# Project 2:

## Sex worker study

- In-person tape recorded interviews (n>200)
- Combines open-ended and closed-ended questions
- Many standard questions used for other workers
- Focus on gender, health and safety strategies, stigma, interactions with regulators, access to health and social services
- \$60 honorarium
- Confidential

# Research locations

- BC
- Alberta
- Ontario
- Quebec
- Nfld & Lab



# Project 2: Participants

- **Sex work** defined as the exchange of sexual services for money which necessarily, but not exclusively, includes *direct* physical sexual contact with clients
- Criteria for inclusion:
  - Legally able to work in Canada
  - Aged 19 or older
  - Received money for sex work on at least 15 different occasions in the previous 12 months in particular city



# Project 2: Recruitment

Key informants

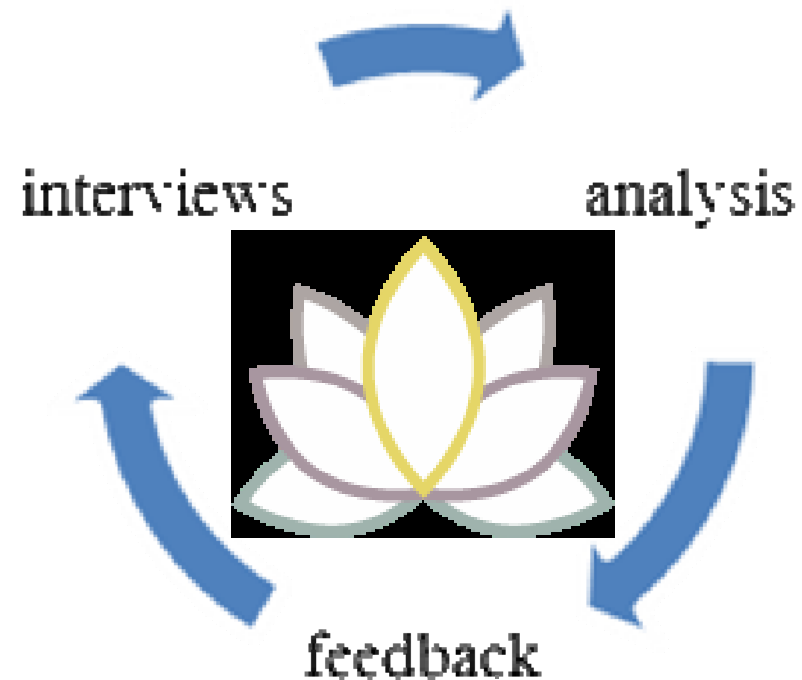
Newspaper and online advertising

Posters at sexual health centres, counselling services, spas, outreach organizations, etc.

Respondent driven sampling



[www.understandingsexwork.ca](http://www.understandingsexwork.ca)



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