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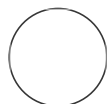
Sex Work and Sexual Violence Research Study Protocol 2022 V.1

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ABSTRACT

Globally, the most important public health issue that sex workers face is their experience of high levels of violence (Kinnell 2006, 2008; Alexander, 1999) with a systematic review estimating levels of sexual violence as being between 15 and 55% (Deering et al, 2014).

The overarching question this study seeks to address is how social, legal, and judicial contexts shape the safety and well-being of people engaging in sex work and, in particular, how context shapes experiences of sexual violence. This mixed method research will compare four different legal environments: legalisation (Nevada USA), criminalisation (Northern Ireland), decriminalisation (New Zealand) and partial criminalisation (England and Scotland).

Interviews, a survey of sex workers and reviews of legal cases in each jurisdiction will generate empirical data from which to build theory as to:

- The relationship between legal consciousness, legal norms, and legal practices and experiences of sexual violence and sexual autonomy in different models of governance;
- How marginalised groups (sex workers) interpret the sexual violence they experience, their rights regarding sexual violence, how and whether they seek redress through the criminal justice system, and outcomes in different models of governance;
- How various criminal justice institutions respond to sexual violence among various sex-working populations in both theory (law and legal norms re consent) and practice (police actions, reporting systems, court dispensation) in different models of governance;
- Differences among groups of sex workers by gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, citizenship, and sex market, especially for trans, MSM sex workers, and migrant communities;
- How researchers and expert advisors can work together in the research process to interpret findings and build theory, and empower expert advisors with evidence for better practices;
- Generate and disseminate evidence-based information on best practices to help provide justice for sex workers.

The research will have ethical approval from each research site, an Advisory Board and trained, paid peer researchers to assist with data gathering, analysis and dissemination. The study will report findings in 2023/2024. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.