

Universal Declaration of Consenting Adult Sex Work & Pornography

A Rights-Based Framework for Dignity, Safety, and Economic Justice

FOUNDATIONAL ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

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Abstract

This declaration articulates a comprehensive rights-based framework for consenting adult sex work and pornography, asserting that bodily autonomy, labor protections, economic equity, and freedom from discrimination are non-negotiable rights. Rather than perpetuating criminalization, stigma, and systemic exclusion, this framework calls for decriminalization, legal equity, institutional recognition, and the active dismantling of prejudice. By centering the voices, safety, and dignity of workers themselves, this declaration establishes an international standard for policy, platform governance, and societal treatment of adult industry professionals.

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Introduction: Why This Declaration Matters

This declaration is written in a moment of profound contradiction: billions of people consume sexually explicit content and purchase sexual services, yet the workers who produce and provide them face criminalization, violence, economic exclusion, and systematic erasure.

Sex work is not a new industry. It has existed across virtually every human civilization—sometimes tolerated, sometimes criminalized, but never eliminated. What has changed is our understanding of human rights, bodily autonomy, labor justice, and dignity. We now recognize that work is work, regardless of stigma. We understand that prohibition creates danger, not safety. We know that exclusion from banking, housing, and healthcare destroys lives.

The Current Reality

Today, sex workers and adult content creators face:

- **Criminalization:** Millions are arrested annually, creating criminal records that destroy employment prospects and housing access
- **De-banking:** Payment processors, banks, and financial institutions systematically exclude adult workers, forcing them into cash-only economies vulnerable to theft and exploitation
- **Platform exclusion:** Digital platforms shadow-ban, censor, and delete adult creators' livelihoods based on vague, inconsistently enforced terms of service

- **Healthcare discrimination:** Medical professionals often refuse care to sex workers, or provide inferior treatment rooted in stigma rather than evidence
- **Violence without recourse:** When assaulted, robbed, or raped, sex workers cannot seek police protection without risking arrest
- **Compounded marginalization:** LGBTQ+, transgender, racialized, disabled, and immigrant sex workers face layers of intersecting discrimination and violence

Why Rights-Based Framework?

This declaration rejects the false choice between "legalization" and "decriminalization." It goes further: it asserts that sex work is legitimate work, worthy of the same protections, dignity, and respect afforded to any other profession. This is not moral relativism—it is a recognition that labor rights, bodily autonomy, and freedom from discrimination are not conditional on social approval.

The evidence is clear: **criminalization increases danger; decriminalization increases safety, reporting, and labor protections.** Jurisdictions that have decriminalized sex work (parts of Australia, New Zealand, and New South Wales) see increased reporting to police, higher rates of HIV testing, and reduced exploitation. Conversely, SESTA-FOSTA (the U.S. law criminalizing online platforms that facilitate sex work) has driven workers underground, increased trafficking vulnerability, and reduced access to safety resources.

Who This Declaration Serves

This framework is written by and for:

- Sex workers of all genders, identities, and backgrounds
- Adult content creators and independent performers
- Workers in legal brothels, escort services, and private practice
- Cam performers, OnlyFans creators, and digital adult workers
- Strippers, exotic dancers, and other bodily labor professionals

- Transgender and non-binary workers disproportionately pushed into sex work by discrimination
- Survivors of trafficking who have chosen to continue in sex work with full agency
- Policymakers, advocates, and allies committed to justice and dignity

It is not written for those seeking to exploit, traffic, or abuse others. Trafficking, coercion, and abuse are violations of consent and are explicitly outside the scope of "consenting adult sex work."

The Universal Declaration

Preamble

Recognizing that bodily autonomy and the right to self-determination are fundamental human rights;

Acknowledging that consenting adult sex work and pornography are forms of labor, creative expression, and commerce that have historically been subjected to profound stigma, systemic discrimination, and unjust criminalization;

Asserting that the safety, dignity, and financial security of workers must be the central priority of any policy, platform, or legal framework concerning adult industries;

We hereby proclaim this Universal Declaration as a standard of achievement for all nations, platforms, and societies, to ensure that those who engage in consenting adult sex work and pornography are afforded the exact same rights, protections, and respect as workers in any other industry.

Article 1: The Right to Bodily Autonomy and Consent

Every individual possesses the absolute right to govern their own body. The choice to engage in consenting adult sex work or the production of pornography is a legitimate exercise of this autonomy. Consent must be ongoing, enthusiastic, and free from coercion, and workers maintain the right to revoke consent or refuse services at any time without penalty.

Article 2: Recognition of Labor and Safe Working Conditions

Sex work is work. All individuals engaged in these professions have the right to safe, equitable, and hygienic working conditions. This includes the right to form unions, engage in collective bargaining, establish worker-owned cooperatives, and access standard labor protections, including occupational health and safety guidelines.

Article 3: Freedom from Financial and Societal Discrimination

No individual shall be denied access to essential services based on their profession. Workers have the right to equitable access to banking, payment processors, housing, healthcare, and financial credit.

Institutional blacklisting and discriminatory "de-banking" practices against consenting adult workers are a violation of their economic rights.

Article 4: Digital Rights, Privacy, and Platform Equity

In an increasingly digital landscape, workers possess the right to digital privacy and protection. Platforms must enforce transparent, unbiased terms of service that do not shadow-ban, unfairly censor, or arbitrarily remove the livelihoods of adult creators. Furthermore, workers must be rigorously protected by law and platform policy against doxxing, piracy, and the non-consensual distribution of their content.

Article 5: Freedom of Expression and Association

The creation and distribution of consenting adult pornography is recognized as a valid form of free speech, artistic expression, and commerce. Workers have the right to associate freely, both in public and online, without facing shadow-bans, censorship, or social ostracization.

Article 6: Decriminalization and Legal Equity

The criminalization of consenting adult sex work actively endangers workers. All laws that penalize, criminalize, or disproportionately police consenting adult sex work—whether on the streets, in brothels, or online

—must be abolished. Legal frameworks must shift from punitive models to rights-based models designed by and for the workers.

Article 7: Intersectional Protections and LGBTQ+ Rights

Marginalized communities form a vital cornerstone of the sex work industry. All legal, medical, and societal frameworks must explicitly protect LGBTQ+ and transgender workers, who face compounded layers of violence and discrimination. Transgender and gender-expansive workers have an absolute right to exist and work without facing targeted harassment, misgendering, or exclusion, and must be guaranteed access to safe, stigma-free, and gender-affirming healthcare.

Article 8: Solidarity and Mutual Respect

This declaration calls upon society to actively dismantle the stigma surrounding sex work. Furthermore, it serves as a unifying charter for the workers themselves, fostering solidarity, mutual aid, and community care across all sectors of the adult industry.

Supporting Framework & Rationale

The Evidence for Decriminalization

What the Research Shows

Decades of public health research demonstrates that criminalization increases vulnerability to violence and disease, while decriminalization improves safety outcomes:

- **Violence:** Criminalized sex workers are 40x more likely to experience violence than legal workers. When sex work is decriminalized, workers can report abuse to police without fear of arrest
- **HIV Testing & Care:** Decriminalized workers access regular STI testing at higher rates and have better health outcomes. Criminalization drives testing underground, increasing transmission
- **Reporting & Justice:** In jurisdictions with decriminalization, sex workers are far more likely to report crimes to police, improving case closure rates
- **Labor Conditions:** Legal status enables workers to negotiate safer conditions, enforce contracts, and organize collectively without fear

- **Trafficking:** Contrary to fears, decriminalization does not increase trafficking. In fact, it improves identification and support of trafficking survivors

Consenting Adult vs. Trafficking & Coercion

A Critical Distinction

This declaration applies exclusively to **consenting adult sex work and pornography**. It explicitly excludes:

- **Human trafficking:** Movement or control of persons through force, fraud, or coercion for exploitation
- **Child sexual abuse:** Any sexual activity involving minors (anyone under 18)
- **Non-consensual recording or distribution:** Recording or sharing intimate content without consent is a violation of bodily autonomy and dignity
- **Coercive labor:** Debt bondage, wage theft, or restriction of movement or documentation
- **Exploitation:** Any arrangement where vulnerability is weaponized to reduce payment or autonomy

The rights outlined in this declaration apply only when consent is genuine, ongoing, informed, and freely given.

Article-by-Article Rationale

Article 1: Bodily Autonomy as Foundation

Bodily autonomy is recognized as a fundamental human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, medical ethics frameworks, and constitutional law worldwide. Yet this right is systematically denied to sex workers through:

- Laws that criminalize the sale of sexual services, treating workers as perpetrators rather than agents
- Mandatory testing, condom confiscation, and forced rehabilitation programs
- Loss of custody of children based on profession alone

Solution: Sex workers must have the same bodily autonomy as any professional—including the right to refuse clients, negotiate boundaries, and exit the profession.

Article 2: Labor Rights & Recognition

Sex work shares the fundamental characteristics of labor: it is work performed by one person for compensation on behalf of another. Yet workers are systematically excluded from labor protections:

- No minimum wage guarantees
- No workplace safety standards
- No collective bargaining rights
- No workers' compensation for injuries
- No unemployment insurance or retirement benefits

Solution: Apply standard labor law to sex work, including OSHA standards, union organization rights, and workplace safety requirements.

Article 3: Economic Inclusion

Financial exclusion is one of the most devastating consequences of sex work criminalization:

- **De-banking:** Processors like Stripe, PayPal, and traditional banks systematically exclude adult workers, citing compliance with FOSTA-SESTA and "morality clauses"
- **Housing discrimination:** Landlords refuse to rent to known sex workers, increasing homelessness
- **Credit denial:** Criminal records and undocumented income prevent access to mortgages, car loans, and small business financing
- **Healthcare costs:** Uninsured workers lack access to preventive care, forcing emergency room use

Solution: Explicit legal protections against employment and financial discrimination based on sex work participation.

Article 4: Digital Rights & Platform Justice

As sex work increasingly moves online, platform governance has become a critical arena for rights protection:

- **Shadow banning:** Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok systematically suppress content from adult creators without explanation
- **Arbitrary enforcement:** Content moderation policies are vague and applied inconsistently
- **Content theft:** Piracy of adult content is rampant, with limited legal recourse for workers
- **Doxxing:** Workers face targeted harassment, with platforms slow to remove identifying information

Solution: Transparent terms of service, appeal mechanisms, and explicit IP protections for adult creators.

Article 5: Free Speech & Expression

Adult pornography exists at the intersection of free speech, artistic expression, and commerce. Yet legal frameworks often deny it protection:

- Obscenity laws criminalize the creation and distribution of sexually explicit content
- FOSTA-SESTA (2018) criminalized platforms for hosting content deemed to "facilitate sex work"
- Visa and Mastercard have pulled services from adult payment processors

Solution: Recognize adult pornography as a legitimate form of expression, with standard free speech protections (excluding trafficking, minors, and non-consensual content).

Article 6: Decriminalization Models

There are three primary legal models for sex work:

- **Criminalization:** Both buying and selling are illegal. This increases danger and underground exploitation
- **The Nordic/Equality Model:** Selling is legal, but buying is criminalized. This is intended to discourage demand, but in practice, it stigmatizes workers and reduces reporting
- **Full Decriminalization:** Both buying and selling are legal and regulated like any other business. This is associated with the best safety outcomes

This declaration advocates for full decriminalization, based on evidence that it produces the best outcomes for worker safety, health, and dignity.

Article 7: Intersectionality & Compounded Marginalization

Sex work does not affect all communities equally. LGBTQ+ and transgender individuals are disproportionately pushed into sex work by discrimination, family rejection, and economic exclusion. Once in the industry, they face:

- Higher rates of violence (54% of trans sex workers experience violence, vs. 40% overall)
- Police harassment and targeted arrest
- Denial of gender-affirming healthcare
- Misgendering and social erasure

Solution: Explicit intersectional protections, including gender-affirming care access and targeted violence prevention programs.

Article 8: Community Solidarity

Sex workers have historically organized for their own rights—from the St. James Infirmary collective to the International Sex Worker Rights movement. Yet they are often excluded from mainstream labor organizing and social justice movements due to stigma. This article calls for:

- Recognition of sex workers' unions and organizations
- Integration of sex worker leadership in harm reduction, anti-trafficking, and labor advocacy
- Mutual aid networks and community care systems
- Cultural shifts that center dignity rather than stigma

Implementation Guidance

For Governments & Legislators

Legislative Reform

- **Decriminalize sex work:** Repeal laws that criminalize the sale of sexual services and the operation of brothels
- **Apply labor law:** Extend minimum wage, workplace safety, and collective bargaining rights to sex workers
- **Anti-discrimination protections:** Add "sex worker" as a protected class, with explicit prohibitions on employment, housing, and financial discrimination
- **Trafficking & exploitation laws:** Maintain strong laws against human trafficking, coercion, and abuse while distinguishing them from consensual sex work
- **Healthcare access:** Ensure sex workers have access to STI testing, contraception, mental health services, and occupational health support without discrimination

Law Enforcement Reform

- End arrest and prosecution of consenting adult sex workers
- Train police to recognize trafficking and coercion, not to criminalize workers
- Create safe reporting mechanisms for violence, theft, and assault without fear of arrest
- Hold police accountable for harassment, profiling, and violence against sex workers

For Financial Institutions & Payment Processors

Ending Financial Discrimination

- **Transparent policies:** Publish clear, non-discriminatory terms of service that do not exclude entire categories of workers based on profession
- **Banking access:** Offer bank accounts, merchant services, and payment processing to legal adult industry workers
- **Reduce compliance burden:** Apply standard AML/KYC requirements without additional scrutiny or "moral" restrictions
- **Advocacy:** Support decriminalization and legal reform at policy level

For Digital Platforms & Content Hosts

Platform Governance & Creator Rights

- **Transparent moderation:** Publish clear community standards and apply them consistently and fairly to adult creators
- **Appeal mechanisms:** Provide meaningful appeal processes for shadow-bans, censorship, and account closures
- **IP protection:** Enforce DMCA and copyright protections against piracy of adult content
- **Safety tools:** Implement advanced tools to prevent doxxing, harassment, and non-consensual sharing of content
- **Creator compensation:** Ensure adult creators are not denied monetization, affiliate programs, or other revenue features available to other creators

For Healthcare Providers & Systems

Stigma-Free Care

- Train healthcare providers to treat sex workers without judgment or assumptions of victimhood
- Ensure access to occupational health support, including STI testing and treatment without barriers
- Provide gender-affirming care to transgender and non-binary sex workers

- Develop mental health services designed by and for sex workers, addressing specific stressors (stigma, legal risk, violence)
- Protect patient confidentiality and refuse to report information to law enforcement without legal process

For Sex Worker Organizations & Communities

Grassroots Organizing

- Continue building autonomous sex worker organizations led by and for sex workers
- Develop mutual aid networks, safety resources, and community support systems
- Create training and education programs on rights, safety, and organizing
- Document violence, discrimination, and legal abuses to support advocacy and litigation
- Build coalitions with labor unions, LGBTQ+ organizations, and other social movements

Policy Recommendations by Sector

Criminal Justice System

Primary Recommendation: Decriminalize the sale and purchase of sexual services. Redirect law enforcement resources toward investigating trafficking, coercion, and abuse.

- Automatically expunge criminal records related to consenting adult sex work
- Restore voting rights to those with sex work-related convictions
- Prevent use of sex work convictions in immigration deportation proceedings
- Establish specialized units to investigate trafficking separate from consensual sex work enforcement
- Create independent oversight of police conduct toward sex workers

Financial Regulation

Primary Recommendation: Prohibit financial discrimination based on sex work. Hold banks and processors accountable for "de-banking" practices.

- Issue regulatory guidance clarifying that lawful sex work is not grounds for account closure
- Establish clear AML/KYC requirements without additional "moral" scrutiny
- Create banking access programs specifically for sex workers and other marginalized groups
- Support alternative financial institutions (credit unions, community banks) that serve underbanked populations
- Establish fines and accountability mechanisms for discriminatory de-banking

Platform & Technology Regulation

Primary Recommendation: Establish digital rights protections, including due process, transparency, and IP protection for adult creators.

- Require platforms to publish and consistently apply content moderation policies
- Mandate appeal and grievance mechanisms for content removals and account suspensions
- Establish legal liability for platforms that fail to prevent piracy and non-consensual content sharing
- Protect sex workers from algorithmic suppression and shadow-banning
- Ensure adult creators have equal access to monetization, affiliate programs, and promotional tools

Healthcare & Public Health

Primary Recommendation: Center sex workers in public health policy and program design. Remove legal barriers to healthcare access.

- Fund harm reduction services (STI testing, contraception, naloxone distribution) without requiring cessation of sex work
- Train healthcare providers on treating sex workers with dignity and without moral judgment
- Ensure gender-affirming care is accessible to transgender sex workers
- Establish occupational health standards for sex work (as exists for other industries)
- Conduct epidemiological research designed by and including sex worker leadership

Labor & Employment

Primary Recommendation: Extend labor protections, including minimum wage, workplace safety, and collective bargaining rights.

- Apply OSHA occupational safety standards to sex work venues
- Ensure sex workers can report wage theft, unsafe conditions, and abuse without fear of arrest
- Protect the right to unionize and engage in collective bargaining

- Establish workers' compensation for injuries sustained during sex work
- Ensure unemployment insurance eligibility and access

Housing & Civil Rights

Primary Recommendation: Prohibit housing discrimination based on profession. Address homelessness among sex workers.

- Add "sex worker" as protected class in fair housing law
- Protect against eviction based on criminal history related to sex work
- Develop housing-first programs with wraparound services for homeless sex workers
- Ensure background check reforms prevent denial based on sex work convictions

Immigration & Citizenship

Primary Recommendation: Prevent deportation based on sex work; protect undocumented migrants from immigration enforcement.

- Remove sex work as grounds for deportation under family-based immigration
- Ensure immigration enforcement does not target sex workers and trafficking victims

- Establish legal pathways for undocumented sex workers to report crimes without immigration consequences
- Protect temporary visa holders from deportation based on sex work disclosure

Call to Action

This declaration is not merely aspirational—it is a blueprint for justice. It calls upon:

Governments and Legislatures: Decriminalize consenting adult sex work. Extend labor, financial, and civil rights protections. Fund services designed by and for sex workers.

Policymakers and Regulators: Issue guidance protecting sex workers from financial and housing discrimination. Establish due process protections in platform governance.

Financial Institutions: End de-banking practices. Serve sex workers and other underbanked populations with dignity and without discrimination.

Digital Platforms: Enforce transparent, consistent moderation policies. Protect adult creators from piracy, doxxing, and algorithmic suppression.

Healthcare Systems: Train providers to treat sex workers without judgment. Fund occupational health services and trauma-informed mental health care.

Labor Unions and Advocacy Organizations: Include sex workers in your movements. Amplify their voices. Stand in solidarity.

Allies, Advocates, and Accomplices: Educate yourselves. Challenge stigma in your own communities. Support sex worker-led organizations and initiatives.

Sex Workers Themselves: Your leadership is non-negotiable. Your safety is paramount. Your rights are inalienable. Continue organizing, advocating, and building solidarity. The world's safety and dignity depend on yours.

This declaration is a first step. Implementation requires sustained advocacy, coalition-building, and pressure on institutions. But change is possible. In New Zealand, the decriminalization of sex work led to workers forming unions, reporting violence, and accessing services with dignity. In parts of Australia, the same is true. This model is replicable worldwide.

Justice is not a matter of waiting for permission. It is a matter of organizing, demanding, and building the world we deserve.

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This document is provided as a rights-based advocacy framework. It reflects international human rights standards, evidence-based research, and the collective wisdom of sex workers and advocates worldwide. Distribution, translation, and adaptation are encouraged.

