

RESEARCH or 'RESEARCH'?

Debunked: The Research Claiming 'Decriminalising Pimps is Best'



FAKE

Research by Brothel Keepers

Overseen by Child Prostitution Apologist

Research by Pro Trafficking Group

Research by off shoot of Escort Ireland

False Claims of 'Zero Sex Trafficking'

Policy Decided Before Research Carried Out

This paper is available online at www.notbuyingit.org.uk/'research'

Not Buying It www.notbuyingit.org.uk no@notbuyingit.org.uk

Introduction

There are a number of research studies which claim the best way to address prostitution is by decriminalising profiteers ('pimps') and punters coupled with total deregulation of the industry – **DECRIM/DEREG**. These studies are invariably led by those advocating for 'dereg, decrim'. This includes brothel keepers, supporters of child prostitution, pro trafficking NGOs and offshoots of escort websites.

These studies are often commissioned by governments or human rights organisations, overseen by prestigious institutions, published in leading journals and provide a key lobbying tool.

Recurring Themes

There are clear, recurring themes to all research that supports a 'Decrim/Dereg' approach:

1. **Carried out/overseen by/heavily linked to advocates of 'Decrim/Dereg'**
2. **Highly ideological language and framing**
3. **Demonstrable bias and poor quality including:**
 - Inherently biased data sampling and collection
 - Demonstrably biased/poor quality interpretation/representation of information gathered
 - Often hard /impossible to gather data [eg where pimps/punters decriminalised]

Note on Terms Used

Full Decriminalisation ('Decrim/Dereg')

- Profiteers (pimps) and punters decriminalised as well as those who sell sex
- Industry de-regulated
- Prostitution viewed as work so no public campaigns to deter sex buying/entry, no exiting support
- Adopted in New Zealand and parts of Australia
- Essentially **identical to 'Legalisation'** (in Germany, Netherlands) – recognised as a total failure

Nordic Decriminalisation

- **No one selling sex criminalised** but offered support, including to exit (90% want to get out)
- All profiteers (pimps) and punters **criminalised**
- Education campaigns to prevent sex buying and entry into industry
- Adopted in Sweden, France, Norway, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Canada

Prohibition

- **All parties criminalised** (profiteers, punters and those who sell sex)
- Not a model widely under serious consideration



NEW ZEALAND (2008)

'Decriminalising Pimps Works'

Research claims success of 'Decriminalise/Deregulate' in New Zealand from 2003.

Key Points

- **Research headed by multiple Brothel Keepers & pro-Trafficking NGO**
- **Numerous False Claims (like 'No Sex Trafficking')**
- **Comprehensively Debunked**

Background

In 2003, the New Zealand Government introduced 'Decriminalise, Deregulate' legislation .

To assess the impact, the Government commissioned reports by a panel comprised primarily of:

- **Multiple Brothel Keepers**
 - 'Sex work' group (NZPC), which **advocates for the decriminalisation of sex trafficking**
- No impartial reviews into pimp/punter decriminalisation ever conducted
 - No reviews carried out since 2008 and none planned
 - Even though New Zealand Prime Minister stated in 2012 '[Decriminalisation hasn't worked](#)'



Shrink the Sex Industry

It was promised that decriminalising and deregulating would shrink the sex trade.

Research claims: 'Sex Industry Shrunk'

Reality: Industry substantially expanded



Improve Safety

It was claimed that decriminalising pimps and punters would improve the health and safety of sex sellers. There would be less violence and increased reporting of any abuse.

Research Claims: 'Health and Safety Improved'

Reality: No Reduction in Violence, Abuse or other Harms

- No reduction in [violence/abuse](#) or its reporting
- [9 murders](#) of prostituted women since decriminalisation
[only 1 in Sweden/Norway combined, after adopting the Nordic Model]
[The New Zealand [prostitution murder rate](#) by population is one of the highest globally]
- Record levels of HIV infections amongst those who sell sex
[NPZC, lead researchers/advisers, tell 'sex workers' [not to disclose AIDS](#) to buyers]
[NPZC funded by Government, partly to reduce spread of AIDS]
- No exit support provided despite this being a key promise of decriminalisation
[NPZC do not believe in exit support and do not provide any]



Reduce Child Prostitution

Decriminalising pimps and punters was intended to reduce child prostitution (already criminalised).

Research Claims: 'No Increase in Child Prostitution'

Reality: New Zealand a 'Source Country' for Trafficked Girls

- [Child prostitution](#) effectively decriminalised, unfunded and '[not a target area](#)'
 - [Minimal/no sentences](#) for buying/exploiting children
 - Police cannot ask for [proof of age](#) from 'sex workers' and brothels may not keep this information
 - Data almost impossible to gather
 - US Trafficking report warns of New Zealand [sexual exploitation of children](#)
 - New Zealand '[a source country](#)' for internal sex trafficking of underage girls
 - No funding to support [child victims](#) of prostitution
 - Researchers refer to prostituted children as '[underage workers](#)'
- [NPZC, [deny child prostitution](#) a significant issue even though they suggest 56% enter as a child]
[NPZC advises [against arresting men](#) who rape prostituted children]



Reduce the 'Underground' Industry

'Decriminalise and Deregulate' was introduced to reduce 'the underground' industry.

Research Claims: Little Contact with or Reporting on 'Underground' Industry

Reality: Organised Crime Prolific

- Significant, unreachable underground industry ([gang houses with armed guards](#))
- Researchers and authorities have no contact with the [Black Market](#) or reporting on it
- Possibly [4,000](#) in illegal market
- [Indigenous women](#) over represented, including most abusive forms & underage entry [NPCZ, lead researchers and advisors, [in denial about gang involvement](#)]



Reduce Sex Trafficking

'Decriminalise/Deregulate' was introduced to reduce sex trafficking.

Research Claims: "Zero Sex Trafficking"

Reality: New Zealand 'failing to meet minimum standards' to combat Sex Trafficking

- Re-analyses of research shows [substantial increase in trafficking](#)
- [Trafficking redefined](#) to exclude internal displacement, contrary to International standards
- US Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report advises [removing this exclusion](#)
- TIP states '[evidence traffickers have forced adults into commercial sex](#)'
- TIP states New Zealand '[failing to meet minimum standards](#)' to combat sex trafficking [Lead researchers, NZPC, [deny sex trafficking a significant issue](#)] [NPCZ canvases for overseas workers to enter prostitution on temporary visas ie [trafficking](#)]



No Monitoring

- NZPC [fails to gather evidence-based data](#) – a requirement of their government contract
- Government [does not monitor performance](#) of NPZC, despite giving them \$1million/year
- Despite legal requirement for [brothel inspections](#), no funding provided
- [11 brothel inspections \(2005-2015\)](#), [23](#) between 2003-2015. Possibly [none](#) ever in 3 largest cities
- Police [cannot inspect brothels](#) except for alcohol license and cannot ask a workers' age
- Immigration officers *only* may [inspect brothels](#) - but only respond to 'complaints'

References

- [Summary \(p 9-11\)](#)
- [In depth Review](#)
- [Survivors' Perspective](#)
- [Child Exploitation](#)
- [Data Analysis](#)
- [Infographics](#)



Amnesty International [2016]

'Nordic Model a Failure in Norway'

Research from Amnesty International falsely claims the Nordic Model failed in Norway.

This appears to be motivated by Amnesty seeking to create a 'decrim, dereg' policy after lobbying by one of the UK's largest pimping networks.

Key Points

- **Amnesty had already Decided Policy Before conducting research**
- **Research heavily influenced by advocates for Pimp Decriminalisation**
- **Amnesty Research Debunked by independent analysis**

A 'Not So Hidden' Agenda?

- Amnesty had **already decided on a policy to decriminalise pimps** before researching the issue
- Idea to decriminalise pimps initiated after Amnesty lobbied by one of **UK's largest pimps**
- Amnesty never actually looked into the impact of decriminalising pimps
- Consultation with members on decriminalisation was equally a 'sham' - **poor quality and biased**

Research or 'Research'?

- Independent analysis by Norwegian government **rebukes Amnesty research**
- Amnesty relies on false claims in another, **since retracted**, anti-Nordic report
- Amnesty falsely claims women routinely evicted from their **brothel 'homes'**
- Falsely claims **increased violence**
[Actually only 1 prostitution murder recorded in (Nordic Model) Sweden/Norway combined vs 9 in decriminalised New Zealand]
- Amnesty collaborated heavily and *only* with those who advocate for **pimp decriminalisation**
- Research based on **poor quality**, biased sampled, unrecorded, interviews with (ex) 'sex workers'
- Interviewee(s) who disagreed with 'sex as work' appear to have been **edited out**
- Research confuses Nordic Decriminalisation with total criminalisation (**prohibition**)
- Norway lumped with prohibitionist countries which criminalise sex selling (eg Papua New Guinea)

References

- **Here**
- **Here**



Medicine du Monde [2018]

'Nordic Model - a Failure in France'



[Medicine du Monde](#) claims Nordic Model in France 'a failure'

France had adopted this just 2 years earlier, with it [far from fully implemented](#)

Key Points

- **90% overseeing committee lobbied against the Nordic Model**
- **Qualitative data only. No quantitative data. Highly biased sampling**
- **For years, only [Headline claims](#) published in English, which did not reflect report**
- **Various reports since debunk many claims of the Study**
- **Some of study's claims rejected by European Courts**

Research or 'Research'?

False Claim: Law led to Reduced Earnings

- Claimed 'sex workers' earnings reduced (as more competition for fewer punters)
- But the law means far *fewer* 'sex workers' - the 90% seeking to escape are supported out
- In fact:
 - Nearly [400 exiting programmes](#) run in first 4 years alone
 - [1,250](#) in prostitution provided with social support
 - [95%](#) have found stable work
- Research did suggest possible reduction in earnings
- But in some cases this was noted **years before** the law introduced
- And this cannot be linked to law change rather than other factors such as economic crises

False Claim: Increased Pimping

- Opposers of the Nordic Model claim it increases pimping
- But Medicine du Monde found **no evidence of this**
- In fact, there was a:
 - [54% increase](#) in trafficking investigations in the first 3 years

- [55% increase](#) in criminal proceedings from pimps and sex traffickers
- And a [7 fold increase](#) in identifying victims of sex trafficking

False Claim: Law led to Increased Risks and Violence

- Opposers of Nordic Model claim there is *more* violence when punters criminalised
- The research did not assess if there was a genuine increase in violence
- Did not assess if any reported increase was merely due to greater reporting
- Opposers of the law also claim women are forced to work less safely
- The study indicated this was reported by some *but this is a global trend*
- And those who sell sex no longer risk arrest – with [zero arrests](#) since law enacted

More

- Recent poll suggests nearly [80%](#) of French understand the harm of sex buying
- [75%](#) support the law
- [2.35 million euros](#) collected from sex buyers to fund exiting support
- [European Courts](#) unanimously support legality of Nordic Decriminalisation in 2024

References

- [Debunk](#)
- [CATW update](#)
- [2019 appraisal](#)
- [2020 appraisal](#)



Northern
Ireland
Office

NORTHERN IRELAND (2019)

'Nordic Model - Failed in N Ireland'

Research claims the Nordic Model 'didn't work' in Northern Ireland. This is widely used to discredit the model. Conducted by Queens University Belfast. Commissioned by DOJ (Dept of Justice)

Key Points

- **Research overseen by Advocate of Child Prostitution**
- **Research by offshoot of Escort Ireland**
- **Commissioned by DOJ who actively opposed the Nordic Model**
- **Data re-assessment fully Debunks Research**

Research or 'Research'?

- Researchers advised almost exclusively by advocates of '[decrim/dereg](#)'
- Lead researcher lobbied [against the Nordic Model](#)
- Overseen, in part, by [Child Prostitution Advocate](#)
- Research commissioned by DOJ, who lobbied [against the Nordic Model](#)

- Research by Ugly Mugs Ireland, set up by [Escort Ireland](#) (run by convicted pimps)
- Frequent reference to **debunked Amnesty research**
- NI Police failing to implement Nordic Model as follow NPCC 'sex work' guidelines

- Research relied on poor quality data gathering with fudging of data evident
- [Re-assessment of research by data analyst shows success in Ireland](#)

References

- [Debunk](#)
- [Re-Analysis](#)



LSE/LANCET [2023]

THE LANCET

Nordic Model 'a Failure'

The Lancet publishes a policy briefing from LSE (based on a grad student dissertation).

This claims Nordic Model is 'a failure' and 'decrim/dereg' is best

Key Points

- **Based on Grad Student Dissertation**
- **Information from advocate of Child Prostitution**
- **False claim: Deportation of 'Migrant sex workers' (aka trafficking victims)**
- **False claim: Discrimination vs 'Trans/Queer sex workers'**
- **False claim: Economic disadvantage in Nordic Model countries**
- **False claim: Only 6% of prostitution involves Trafficking**

Research or 'Research'?

False Claims on Deportation

- LSE/LANCET falsely reports claims that *only* Nordic Model countries deport migrant 'sex workers'
- Omits fact that **100s migrant workers deported from decriminalised New Zealand**
- 'Migrant sex workers' almost without exception will be **sex trafficking victims**
- Considerable support available to trafficking victims in Nordic Model countries
- This can include legal and medical care, housing, even a monthly stipend
- No **meaningful support** given in countries with a 'decrim/dereg' approach

False Claims on Economic Impact

- LSE/LANCET report claims Nordic Model causes 'economic marginalisation'
- But earnings in Nordic Model countries are much higher than where prostitution legitimised
[women in prostitution in Norway or Sweden earn **7 times more per punter** than in Germany]

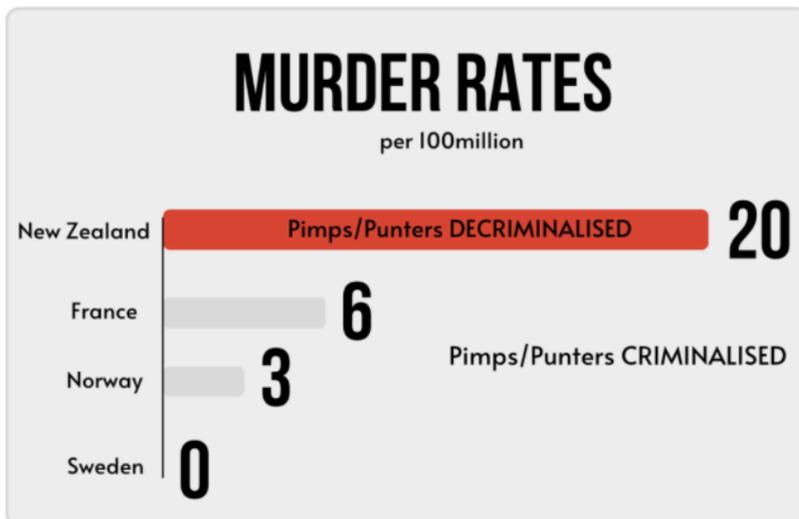
False Claims of Targeting of trans/queer 'sex workers'

- LSE/LANCET report claims 'trans and queer sex workers' targeted in Nordic model countries
- Actually, Nordic Model countries explicitly provide asylum for LGBTQ individuals
- In Norway this group is prioritised **above women and children**
- In Europe possibly 80% of murders of trans identifying males is in prostitution
- These murders are taking place in countries that legitimise the sex industry
- Few murders of people in prostitution in Nordic Model countries

False Data on Trafficking

- LSE/LANCET state **only 6% of women in prostitution are trafficked**
- This figure comes from Prof Mai - a **child prostitution apologist and sex trafficking denier**

What Really Works?



Murder rates in prostitution (by female population) in decriminalised New Zealand compared to countries that have introduced Nordic Decriminalisation.

More on Graphic [here](#)

References

- [Debunk](#)