

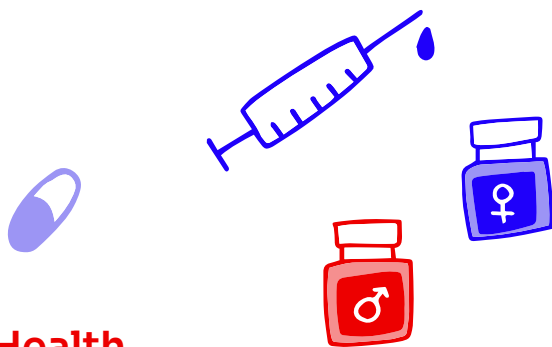
Migrant Sex Workers in the Netherlands Report Summary

The research report “Migrant Sex Workers in the Netherlands”, has been conducted by SAVE (Sex workers Against Violence and Exploitation) and Trans United Europe with the help of Proud, and with the technical and financial support of ICRSE (the International Committee on the Rights of Sex workers in Europe) as part of their Rights not Rescue program. The report focuses on the situation of migrant sex workers in regards to their health, workplace, safety, housing, exploitation and trafficking, police, and stigma.

Migrant sex workers face structural violence not only as sex workers but also as migrants and potentially as people of color, people living with HIV, people from the LGBT+ community and in particular trans people, and as women.

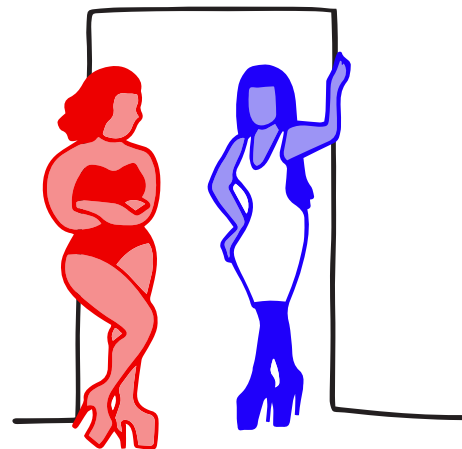
For our research we carried out a two-step qualitative methodology. First, we conducted 32 structured interviews of migrant sex workers about the categories outlined below. Second, informed by the findings of the structured interviews, we conducted three focus groups to further investigate the experiences of migrant sex workers.

In principle sex work is recognized as a form of labor in the Netherlands, meaning that sex workers from countries in the European Union can work legally in the country; however, sex workers from outside the European Union are not allowed to get a Dutch sex work permit.



Health

Sex workers, including undocumented migrant sex workers, can have access to regular sexual health check-ups. However, the intersection of stigma and discrimination against sex workers, LGBT+, and migrants, makes access to quality general and mental health care challenging.



Workplace and work safety

Restrictive sex work regulations have led to a two-tier system with some sex workers working in the licensed sector and some in the unlicensed sector. The lack of access to legal ways of doing sex work makes migrant sex workers more vulnerable to violence and exploitation.

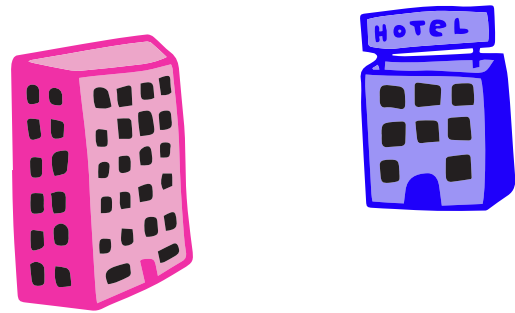


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Housing

Working in a stigmatized profession makes it more difficult for migrant sex workers to access the formal housing market. Additionally, sex workers who want to work from home run the risk of hefty fines, losing their source of income, and even eviction.



Trafficking

Restrictive sex work regulations and anti-migration laws lead to confusion between unlicensed sex work and trafficking, especially in the context of migration. This confusion causes anti-trafficking policies that push migrant sex workers to work even more underground due to the fear of deportation and the lack of other resources to survive.



Police

The police enforcing the restrictive Dutch sex work policies makes sex workers distrust the police and makes sex workers less inclined to report abuse.

Stigma

Economic, social, emotional, psychological, physical, and sexual violence are reinforced or even caused by stigma and discrimination. Regulations influenced by stigma around sex work are the cause of restrictive labor laws that worsen the position of sex workers, leading to a vicious cycle of restrictive laws, a more precarious social position for sex workers, more stigma, and further restrictive laws.



In conclusion, due to the intersection of restrictive sex work regulations, anti-migration law and anti-trafficking measures, the position of migrant sex workers in the Netherlands, especially if undocumented, is precarious. Based on the findings of this report, recommendations are as follows:

- Placing the voice of migrant sex workers at the center of the debate on sex work and trafficking.

- Reinforcing peer-to-peer support and sex worker-led initiatives.
- Fully decriminalizing sex work in order to improve access to safe workplaces and labor protection while decreasing stigma around sex work.
- In order to improve the socioeconomic position of migrant sex workers, all migrants from outside the European Union should be granted the same rights as European citizens.



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