

1 Criminalisation of sexual services

2 ([original at http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/572#pro_statement_anchor](http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/572#pro_statement_anchor))

3 It is time for a serious conversation about the real effects of
4 criminalisation of sex workers.

5 On the one hand, there is an urgent concern that criminalisation creates a
6 culture permitting violence against sex workers.

7 In America, many sex workers are arrested at will when the police who
8 know their faces need to fill quotas. Also, sex workers experience a high
9 level of police brutality. There are many stories of police verbally abusing
10 sex workers, throwing away their condoms, extorting money or sex from
11 them, or physically or sexually assaulting them.

12 No wonder that sex workers are afraid to report crimes against them.
13 Gary Ridgway, the Pacific Northwest "Green River Killer", murdered more
14 than 60 women after police failed to investigate information about a
15 potential serial killer targeting sex workers. He and other violent criminals
16 prey on sex workers, knowing that missing or murdered prostitutes are
17 not a police priority.

18 On the other hand, if the goal of criminalisation is to end prostitution, it
19 fails. Many sex workers are unable to do any other work because of their
20 criminal records. In particular, living-wage jobs in health care, education,
21 or finance require a criminal background check.

Questions

- 1) This article is an extract from a debate on whether prostitution should be made legal or not. Which side of the debate do you think the author was arguing for?
- 2) The text uses the terms 'sex worker' (throughout the text) and 'sex services' (in the title). These are the official or PC (politically correct) terms. What label is used in normal language to refer to sex workers?

- 3) What is the subject of the verb 'need' in line 8? Is there anything unusual about the grammatical agreement between the verb and its subject?
- 4) Explain why sex workers are sometimes arrested at will (see the vocabulary section below for an explanation of 'at will').
- 5) Why are sex workers reluctant to report crimes against them?
- 6) What are the consequences of sex workers being afraid to engage the police?
- 7) What reasons does the text give for the inability of the police to catch the Green River Killer?
- 8) What arguments does the *conjunction* (a word used to connect ideas) 'on the one hand' (line 5) and its counterpart 'on the other hand' (line 18) link together and in what way?
- 9) What do you think about making certain illegal activities (such as prostitution in the UK or the US, or the use of certain drugs in the CR) legal? Is it a good idea?

Vocabulary

concern (line 5) – worry, solicitude, anxiety or problem; note that this word is fairly often a cause of confusion as it also means, amongst others, 'a matter that engages a person's attention, interest, or care' and is also used as a verb in both meanings

at will (line 7) – at one's discretion or pleasure; as one desires; deliberately

abuse (line 9) – to treat in a harmful, injurious, or offensive way OR to speak insultingly, harshly, and unjustly to or about

extort (line 10) – to secure (money, favours, etc) by intimidation, violence, or the misuse of influence or authority

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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