

# THIRD PARTY MYTHS



## Who are third parties?

Most service industries include third party systems. In sex work, third parties can be receptionists, managers/venue owners, advertisers, website providers, drivers, housekeepers, spotters and security guards, etc. However, unlike in other industries, sex work third parties are criminalized and stigmatized.

## How do third party myths harm sex workers?

End-demand sex work laws are informed by myths, misinformation and the conflation of sex work with sex trafficking. This cycle of criminalization and stigmatization amplifies dangers for sex workers and hinder sex workers' access to occupational health and safety.

### ✗ Myths:

Third parties in sex work are exploitative and abusive male “pimp” figures.

Workplace raids by police or migration officials help protect migrant sex workers from third party exploitation or trafficking.

Decriminalizing third parties will create greater opportunity for exploitation.

### ✓ The evidence:

Third party roles are often occupied by current and former sex workers and a majority of third parties are women, contrary to the exploitative male “pimp” stereotype. Sex work third parties are diverse, like in other service industries. Third parties in sex work provide client screening, security and sexual health resources for sex workers which promote sex workers' occupational health and safety.<sup>1</sup>

Workplace raids do not protect sex workers, but disrupt occupational health and safety practices such as condom availability onsite.<sup>2</sup> The fear of condoms being used as evidence of sex work by authorities, forces sex workers and third parties to worry about being further criminalized for practicing safe sex. In AESHA, more than half of indoor sex workers feared workplace inspections that could result in arrest and immigration status revocation and deportation.<sup>3</sup>

Decriminalization of all aspects of sex work will allow sex workers to organize and root out exploitation and confer access to labour rights and occupational health and safety standards, in line with workers in other industries.<sup>1</sup>

The AESHA Project (An Evaluation of Sex Workers' Health Access) is a long-standing, community-based research project of the Centre for Gender and Sexual Health Equity (CGSHE) in Vancouver, BC. The following findings on the impacts of third party criminalization are informed by quantitative data from over 900 sex workers across diverse work environments and qualitative data collected from indoor sex workers and third parties

1 McBride B, Shannon K, Murphy A, Wu S, Erickson M, Goldenberg, SM & Krüsi A (2020). Harms of third party criminalisation under end-demand legislation: undermining sex workers' safety and rights, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*  
2 Goldenberg SM, Krüsi A, Zhang E, Chettiar J, Shannon K. Structural Determinants of Health among Im/Migrants in the Indoor Sex Industry: Experiences of Workers and Managers/Owners in Metropolitan Vancouver.  
3 McBride, B, Shannon, K, Duff, P. et al. Harms of Workplace Inspections for Im/Migrant Sex Workers in In-Call Establishments: Enhanced Barriers to Health Access in a Canadian Setting