

Experiences of Men, Nonbinary & Two-Spirit Sex Workers

Findings from Metro Vancouver and Victoria



What did we find?

Popular discourse and sex work policy often ignore the needs and realities of men, nonbinary, and Two-Spirit (MNB2S) sex workers. Drawing on in-depth interviews with twenty-one MNB2S sex workers, we found that:

MNB2S sex workers face intersecting barriers to reporting violence¹

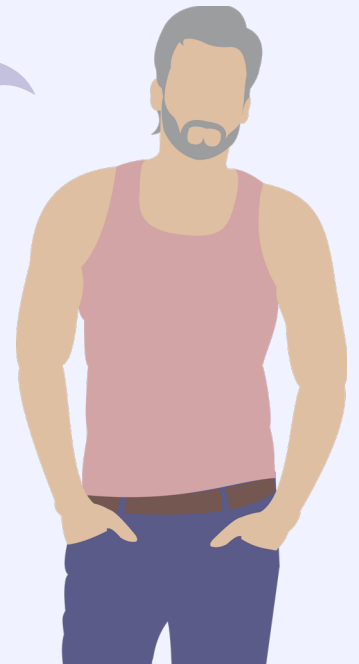
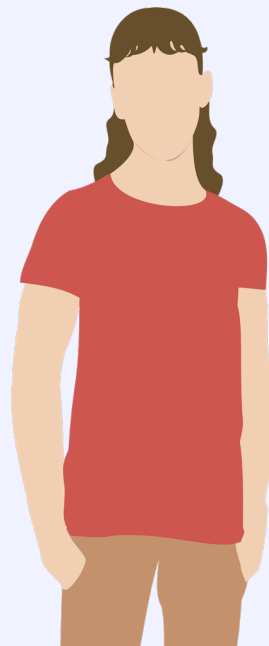
Participants said that their work is not inherently violent.

But when isolated violence did occur, barriers to reporting violence to the police included criminalization of sex work and substance use, gender stereotypes, homophobia, transphobia, and racism.

Participants viewed reporting violence to police as ineffective and traumatizing.

“You face things like homophobia, you face issues of, ‘well, you’re not an ideal victim, how do I help you? I don’t.’ There’s no system in place to go to figure that out.”

- Scott, white, queer cis man



“It’s not the police or the community at large, it’s the community within our communities that keep us safe. It’s peer-led organizations”

- Joey, white, non-binary

Criminalization and censorship of online platforms hinder Men, Nonbinary, and Two-Spirit Sex Workers (MNB2S) sex workers' safety strategies²

Sex work criminalization, stigma, and restrictive website policies, such as FOSTA/SESTA, compromised workers' ability to work online and enact safety strategies.

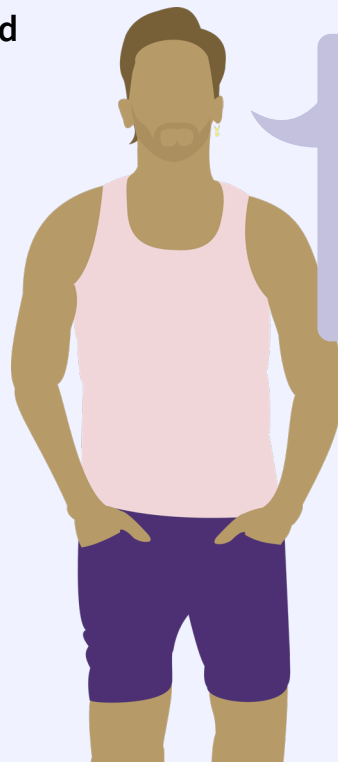
Sex work laws led to the closure of websites used by MNB2S sex workers. Many participants experienced online "displacement", losing contact with clients and other sex workers.

Website policies, and clients' fears of criminalization led to "asymmetrical privacy". Sex workers must share personal information, but clients do not have to. This put sex workers at risk of having their information disclosed, increased stigma and threats of violence.

What do we recommend?

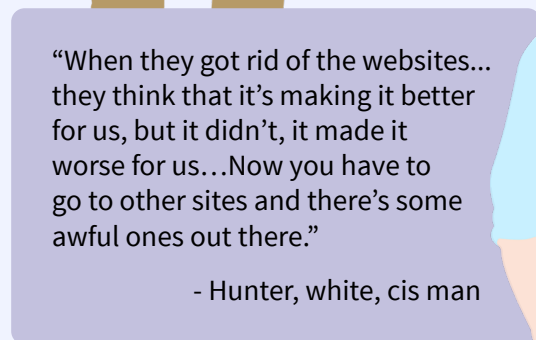
To support the needs and priorities of MNB2S sex workers, we must:

- Remove laws that criminalize sex work to prioritize the occupational health and safety of sex workers across all genders.
- Divest from policing and reinvest in community-based violence reporting mechanisms responsive to the needs of MNB2S sex workers.
- Develop standards for online sex work platforms, in partnership with sex workers, that prioritize sex worker safety.



"You can tell clients what services you offer, right up front and spell it out for them. It weeds out situations that may occur if you negotiate in person."

- Jake, Indigenous/white, cis man



"When they got rid of the websites... they think that it's making it better for us, but it didn't, it made it worse for us... Now you have to go to other sites and there's some awful ones out there."

- Hunter, white, cis man



¹Koenig B, Murphy A, McDermid J, Johnston S, Knight R, Gilbert M, Shannon K, & Krüsi A. (2023). Intersecting structural barriers to reporting violence among men and non-binary sex workers under end-demand criminalization in Canada. *SSM - Qualitative Research in Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmqr.2023.100311>

²Koenig B, Murphy A, Johnston S, Pearson J, Knight R, Gilbert M, Shannon K, & Krüsi A. (2022). Digital Exclusion and the Structural Barriers to Safety Strategies among Men and Non-Binary Sex Workers Who Solicit Clients Online. *Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11070318>