



Media Release

Canadians are five times more likely to support than to oppose Canada's current prostitution legislation

London, Ontario
Montreal, Quebec
New York, New York
August 27, 2020

Embargoed until 10 a.m. Thursday, August 27, 2020

2020 Pan-Canadian Poll

A new national poll conducted by Nanos Research on behalf of the London Abused Women's Centre (LAWC), Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (CLES) and the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), in collaboration with Canadian organizations, reveals Canadians' views on legislative approaches to prostitution and other prostitution related issues (poll results, methodology and technical note attached).

With the Government of Canada's announcement that it will evaluate the impact of the 2014 Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA), enacted to address prostitution in Canada, this first national poll researching prostitution will help ensure that the views of Canadians are represented in the evaluation; help inform the process; and help raise public awareness about Canada's current legislation.

The PCEPA addresses the system of prostitution by solely decriminalizing individuals who are bought and sold in prostitution, while holding accountable purchasers of sexual acts ("sex buyers"), promoters of prostitution (pimping) owners and managers of commercial sex establishments (e.g. brothels, illicit massage parlors, escort services), and other third-party exploiters.

The poll results are of interest to Canadians and the Government of Canada.

- 49% of Canadians support Canada's current prostitution legislation, which is almost five times more than those who are opposed (11%)
- 46% of Canadians are more likely to support the current legislation as their preferred approach to addressing prostitution. This number is almost twice as many as those supporting prostitution as a legal profession where there are no laws against prostitution, including pimps, brothel owner-operators, sex buyers, and those selling sex

(24%), and almost three times more than those supporting prostitution being illegal and all those involved in selling sexual services being criminalized (16%)

- 61% of Canadians agree that the federal and provincial governments should provide appropriate funding to organizations working with women in prostitution to provide long-term counselling and support services, which is almost nine times more than those opposed (7%)
- 51% of Canadians disagree with approving of a family member to pay for sexual services, which is more than four times more than those who agree (12%)
- 43% of Canadians agree that if most women and people had viable economic alternatives, they would not choose to engage in prostitution. This is more than four times more than those who disagree (10%)
- When asked if prostitution should be viewed as a profession or job like any other profession or job, 34% of Canadians agreed and 26% disagreed. However, when asked to what extent Canadians support prostitution as a legal profession, with all activities around prostitution including sex purchasing, selling sexual services, pimping, trafficking and brothel ownership-operation being legal, 45% of Canadians were opposed which is more than twice as many as those who supported (17%)

Background

In December 2014, The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (also known as the Nordic or Equality Model) received Royal Assent and became law. The law does not criminalize women and people who are bought and sold in the sex trade. The law protects those who sell their own sexual services from criminal liability. The law mandates the government to provide services to prostituted and sex trafficked individuals, who are mostly women and girls, while prohibiting the purchase of sexual acts; owning or operating a brothel; pimping; and trafficking.

The most comprehensive overview of Ontarians' views of the legislative approach to prostitution was completed in 2018. The poll resulted in 58% of Ontarians opposing any changes to the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act that would decriminalize pimps, brothel owners and sex buying (<https://www.lawc.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Press-release-LPSOS-7.2018.pdf>).

The Government of Canada intends to evaluate the success of the legislation, now five years since its passage, in protecting communities, helping survivors access services and holding sex purchasers and traffickers accountable.

This current poll was done to ensure that the views of Canadians are represented in the government's evaluation. Both the Ontario and national polls demonstrate that many more Canadians are supportive of Canada's current prostitution legislation and would not endorse the legalization or full decriminalization of prostitution.

The London Abused Women’s Centre (LAWC)

The London Abused Women’s Centre, located in Ontario, Canada, takes systemic action to end the oppression of women while providing women and girls subjected to male violence with immediate access to long-term, trauma-informed, woman-centred counselling, advocacy and support.

La Concertation des luttes contre l’exploitation sexuelle (CLES)

The Concertation des luttes contre l’exploitation sexuelle (CLES) is a frontline organization that believe that prostitution is a form of violence against women and a systemic example of women’s inequality, women’s poverty, as well as of racism and colonialism. We support women who are in the sex industry and the ones who have exited. We believe that the voices of survivors of this form of violence and their leadership in ending this form of violence is essential to the feminist movement.

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW)

The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) is one of the oldest international organizations dedicated to ending the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and girls as gender-based violence and discrimination. CATW engages in legal advocacy, public awareness, and education and prevention programs to combat trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America.

“This pan-Canadian survey shows a simple truth: most of us know in our guts that prostitution is synonymous with exploitation, no matter what the exploiters want us to believe. It provides clear encouragement to maintain a law that decriminalizes women in prostitution while stating that sexual exploitation has to go!” says Diane Matte, co-coordinator of the Concertation des luttes contre l’exploitation sexuelle (CLES). “It is noteworthy that even though police organizations across the country have been inconsistent in their application of the 2014 law and the public are generally misinformed about it, support for the law’s objectives is definitely there.”

“This Canadian survey shows that when the public understands how the system of prostitution operates, they not only oppose it, they want laws that decriminalize and help those exploited, while holding accountable those who harm them, including sex buyers,” said Taina Bien-Aimé, executive director of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. “It also reminds us of the urgency to educate people about the violence and dehumanization inherent to the sex trade, whose core is steeped in historic colonialism, racism, and misogyny.”

“The London Abused Women’s Centre (LAWC) recognizes prostitution as male violence against women; incompatible with women’s equality and human rights; and gendered and racist with women and girls as the overwhelming majority of those who are prostituted and trafficked. It is estimated that 50 percent of sexually exploited girls and 51 per cent of trafficked women in Canada are Indigenous,” said Megan Walker, executive director of LAWC. “The poll demonstrates support for Canada’s current legislation which decriminalizes women in prostitution while criminalizing sex purchasers, pimps, brothel owners/operators.

Research Methodology

These observations are based on an RDD dual frame (land- and cell-lines) hybrid telephone and online random survey of 1,094 Canadians, 18 years of age or older, between July 26th and 30th, 2020. The margin of error for this survey is ± 3.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

This study was commissioned by the London Abused Women's Centre and the research was conducted by Nanos Research.

To see the full report, please go to <https://www.nanos.co/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/2020-1689-LAWC-July-Populated-Report-FINAL-Updated-with-Tabs.pdf>

Contact Information

Nik Nanos Research

Nikita James Nanos CMC FCRIC

Chief Data Scientist and Founder, NANOS RESEARCH

613.234.4666 x237 | Skype niknanos | www.nanos.co

Email: nik@nanos.co

Global Fellow > Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars > Washington DC

Research Professor > The State University of New York > Buffalo, New York

Megan Walker

Executive Director

London Abused Women's Centre 1-519-432-2204

mwalker@lawc.on.ca

www.lawc.on.ca

Diane Matte

Co-coordinator

Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle (CLES) 1 514 376-9241

diane.matte@lacles.org

(English and French speakers available for interviews)

Mariana Vanin

Communications Manager

Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) 1-212-643-9895

media@catwinternational.org

(English and French speakers available for interviews)

Collaborators

Tri-County Women' Centre

Persons Against Non-State Torture

Vancouver Rape Relief and Women's Shelter

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre, Inc

Aboriginal Women's Action Network