

A word on ethical imagery

ALONG WITH THE WORDS—OR WHAT JOURNALISTS MIGHT REFER TO AS “COPY” IN AN ARTICLE—YOU’LL OFTEN SEE AT LEAST ONE PHOTO.

Why?

Relatability

People can better relate to an idea or concept visually.

History-keeping

Despite the now overwhelming digital presence coming from newsrooms, there are still people and organizations that archive or keep photos, as they can communicate significance and/or importance about the time in which the article was published.

Layering

Adding more tools to the storyteller’s toolkit can help not only with communication, but context.

If used properly.

What about sex workers?



Reporting on sex workers, in particular im/migrant sex workers, can be difficult—but it can be done. More of the appropriate pieces SWAN has seen includes —**and doesn’t silence**—sex workers’ voices.

What are some examples of bad imagery?

In 2023, SWAN put together a qualitative data compilation of approximately four dozen images published by an assortment of Canadian outlets. The photos came from a media scan that spanned articles from March 2020 to March 2022.

[Take a moment to view some of those photos at this page.](#)

Why the images below don't work

Selected examples of imagery that should **NOT** be used



Images like these perpetuate a stereotype in which sex workers are othered and dehumanized. Every sex worker should be respected for their individual and lived experience.

In conclusion

BELOW ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK BEFORE WE CONSIDER USING CERTAIN IMAGES

Does this photo **accurately** enhance and/or convey the idea used in my storytelling?

Have I thought about the **impacts** this photo could have before I publish it?

Does this photo **push stereotypes** about an already marginalized group of people?

Is this **conveying** what the story is trying to get across?

Can this photo create a situation that leads to **sensationalist** reporting?

Please note: Not everyone's primary identity centers around their job. Not all who engage in sex work will self-ID as a sex worker, despite the broad language that is sometimes used to refer to this community.

Do you believe in **accurate** and **informed** reporting?

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