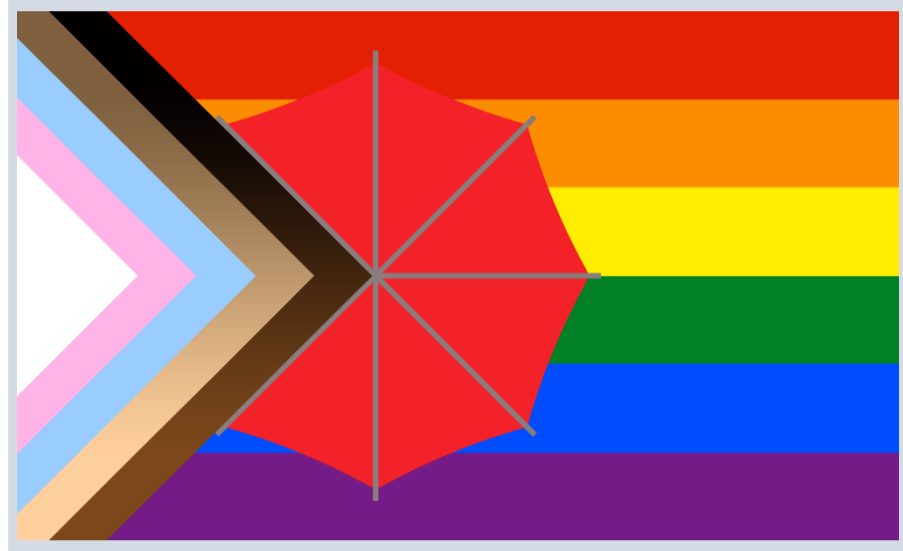


# Examining the Impact of Sex Work Decriminalisation on Sex Workers in Victoria, Australia

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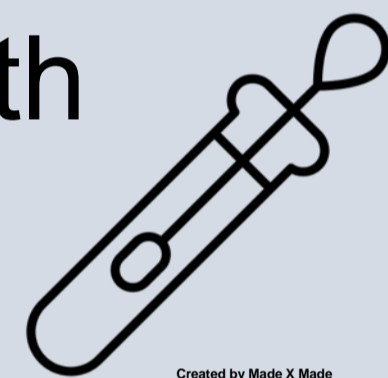
## Background:



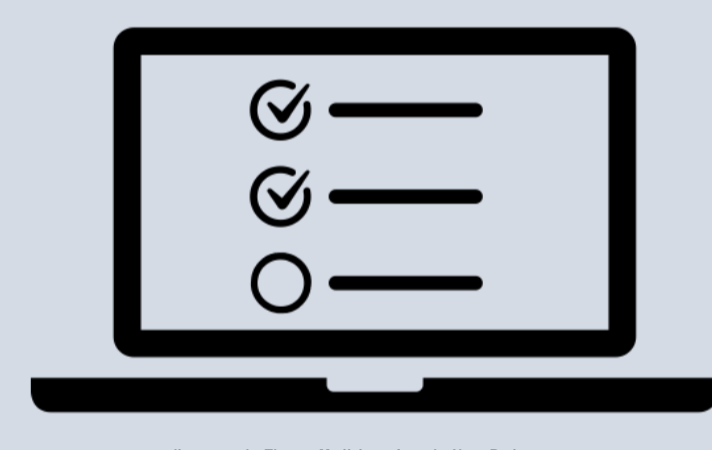
The Victorian government initiated the decriminalisation of sex work on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 to reduce social and structural barriers to sex worker health and wellbeing.

## Aims:

Examine the impact of decriminalisation on sex worker's condom use practices with clients and STI/BBV testing

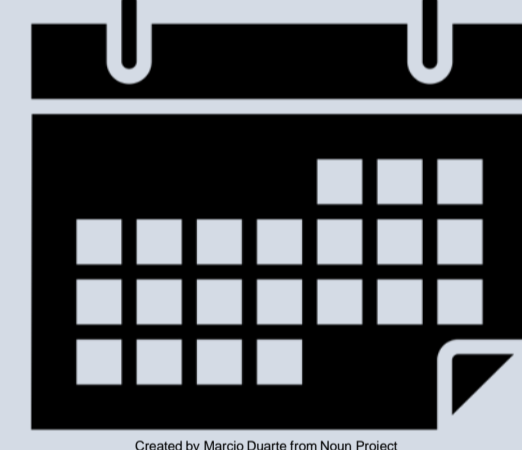


## Method:



Anonymous Qualtrics Survey distributed with QR codes via:

- social media
- posters at MSHC



Dec 2022 to April 2023

## Eligibility

- Aged 18 years or older
- Current sex worker in Victoria, Australia

## Survey Measures

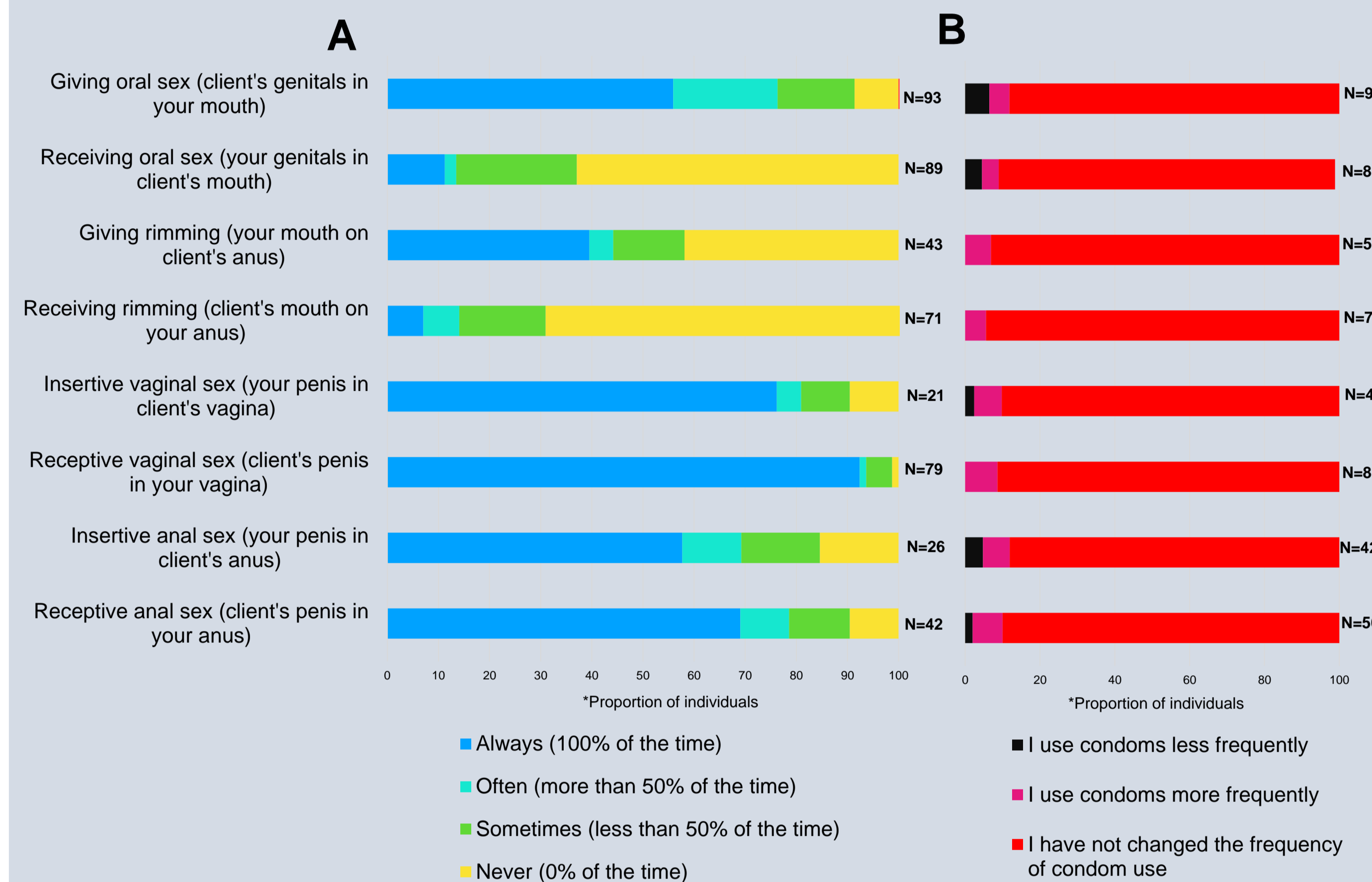
- Changes in condom use
- Sexual health check-ups post decriminalisation
- Free-text for insights, thoughts and comments

## Results:

**101** sex workers were included in the analysis

Gender	Age	Length of time in the sex industry
• 62 (61.4%) women (cis or trans)	• 12 (11.9%) 18-24	• 12 (11.9%) Less than a year
• 22 (21.8%) non-binary individuals	• 56 (55.5%) 25-30	• 20 (19.8%) 1-2 years
• 14 (13.9%) men (cis or trans)	• 21 (20.8%) 31-35	• 69 (68.3%) >=3 years
• 2 (2.0%) gender fluid individuals		
• 1 (1.0%) gender queer individual		

Figure 1: Self-reported frequency of condom use among 99 sex workers A) before the Victorian Decriminalisation Act of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022 and B) after the Victorian Decriminalisation Act of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022



\* The proportion is calculated excluding those that have not provided that service for each sexual practice. The denominator for each practice (excluding those who did not practice that activity) is listed at the end of each bar in the figure.

Has your STI/BBV testing frequency changed?

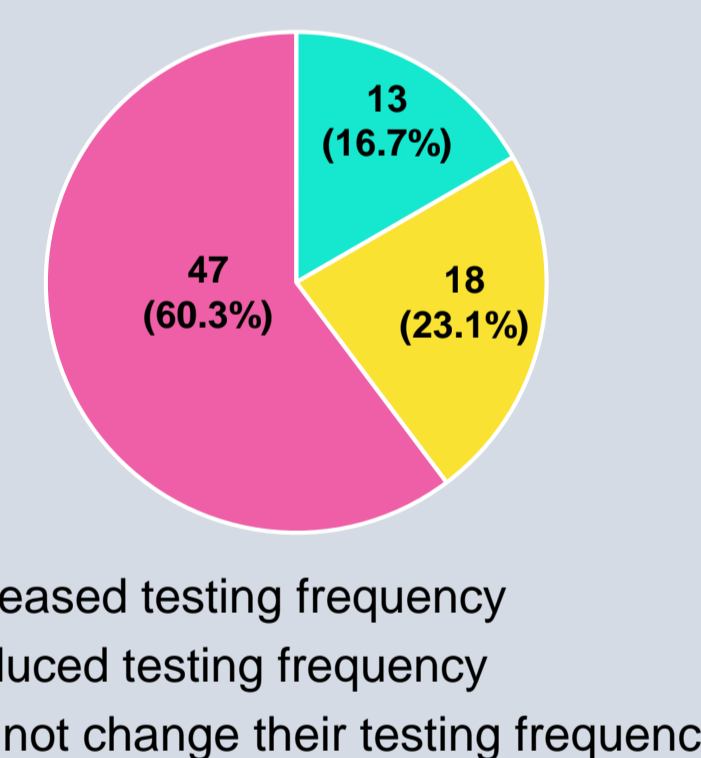


Figure 2: Testing frequency after decriminalisation among 78 sex workers who had previously tested every three months

Do you usually disclose your sex worker status at routine sexual health checkups?

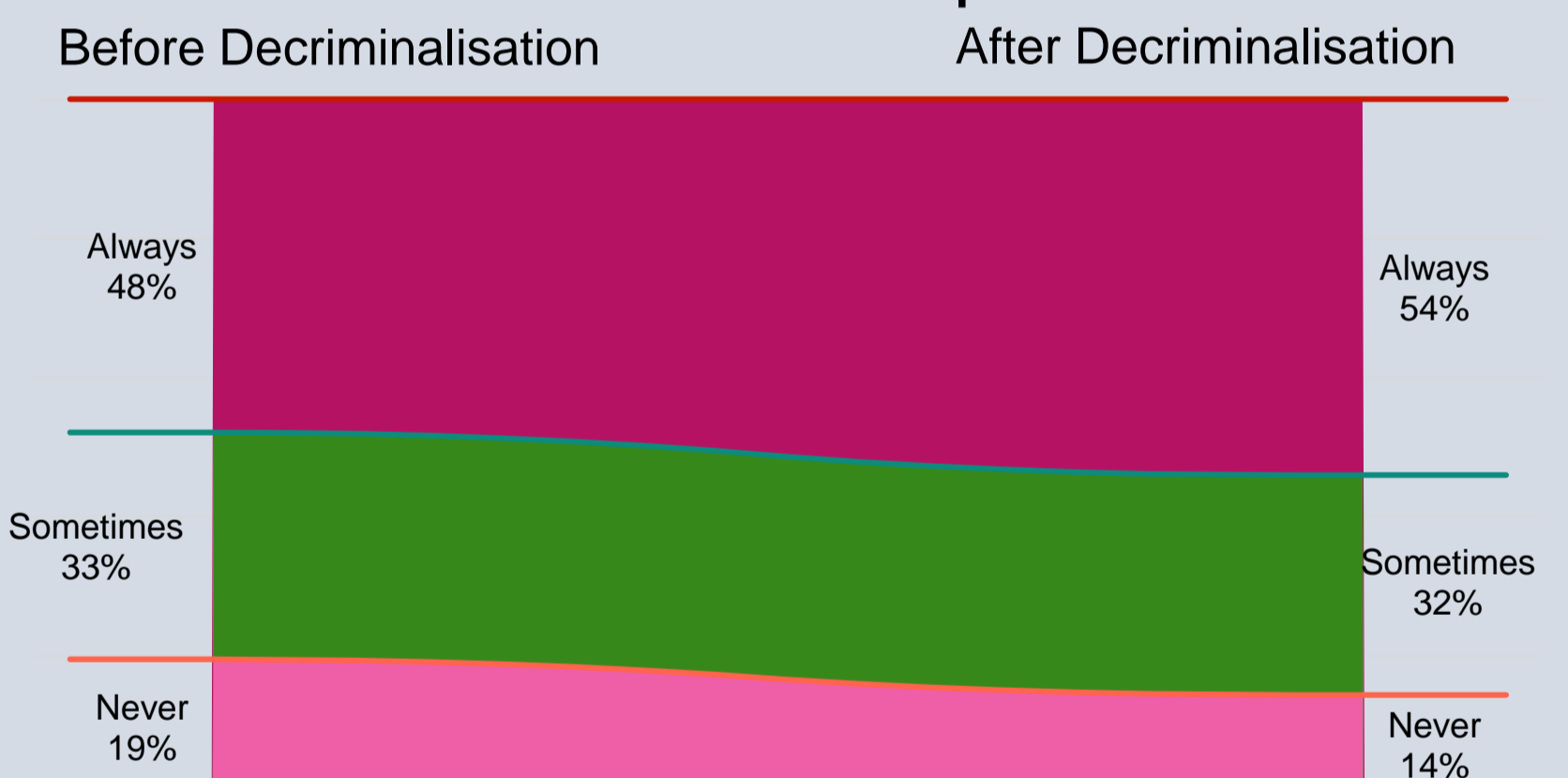


Figure 3: The frequency with which 98\* sex workers disclosed their sex worker status to clinicians during STI/BBV testing before and after the Victorian Decriminalisation Act of 10<sup>th</sup> May 2022

Table 1: An overview of themes from short-answer responses from 42 sex workers on their additional thoughts, insights or comments about how the decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria has affected their sexual health or condom use at work and their STI/BBV check-ups

Positive and hopeful	Neutral	Negative or fearful	Tangential insights
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can access healthcare more easily</li> <li>• I am safer at work</li> <li>• I have more agency over my work and my body</li> <li>• I face reduced stigma</li> <li>• It is better for other sex workers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My health has always been and continues to be my priority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I worry it will increase STIs</li> <li>• It means clients are more emboldened to ask for services without a condom</li> <li>• I worry it will increase stigma</li> <li>• It is harder to remember to test now</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is still judgement from healthcare providers</li> <li>• More resources are needed to enhance peer-led education</li> </ul>

## Conclusion:

The majority of sex workers in our study maintained high rates of condom use and sexual health testing frequency following decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria.

