Research into Prostitution in Northern Ireland

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Methods

- This report is based upon findings that were obtained by an online survey with sex workers in which there were 171 respondents and an online survey of clients that produced 446 respondents. We also undertook face-to-face interviews with 19 sex workers and 10 clients. Other methods included scraping data from websites that advertise prostitution, 18 interviews with experts and service providers, phone interviews with representatives of 9 councils across Northern Ireland, questionnaires for providers of support services for sex workers as well as a review of policies regarding prostitution in other societies.

- All of the sex workers and clients interviewed for this study sold/paid for sexual services in Northern Ireland.

- Survey respondents included sex workers who live in Northern Ireland (18%), sex workers who live in other parts of the UK (25%) and in the Republic of Ireland (26%) and some who lived elsewhere (20%). 46% of all respondents said that they sold sex in Northern Ireland. 11% of the respondents in the client survey said they lived in Northern Ireland. Among those who lived elsewhere 12% had paid for sexual services in NI.

- The study did not exclude respondents who sell or buy sexual services outside of Northern Ireland for three reasons:

  (1) All of the websites that were included in this study advertise sexual services across borders (e.g. across the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and/or across the entire UK). In an area that is characterised by fluidity and interactions across national and regional borders such as prostitution (and particularly the indoor/online sector), it would have been methodologically impractical to limit responses to Northern Ireland-based respondents.

  (2) Sex workers (and clients as well) tend to be mobile, that is, they work (or pay for sex) in more than one place and often in multiple jurisdictions within the UK and across the border. Furthermore, the sex industry constantly adapts to changing circumstances and opportunities, with sex workers frequently offering services in new locations. A focus on sex workers in Northern Ireland only would provide a distorted picture of the sex industry which generally operates across regional and national boundaries.

  (3) A significant number of people (15% in both surveys) did not disclose where they live. It can be assumed that some of these live in Northern Ireland. Excluding these respondents would have limited the findings of this study.
Demographics of sex workers

- 44% of the sex workers who took part in the survey and 26% of the interviewees were foreign nationals; including people from across the world;

- Almost half of the sex workers (48%) were below 30 years of age, with the largest group (23%) being in the 26-30 year old age bracket;

- The highest proportion of sex workers (32%) over 40 years of age were located in Northern Ireland (UK 30%, Republic of Ireland 22%);

- Nearly 3 quarters (74%) of respondents had provided sex for money for the first time before they were 30 years of age. 4% said that they were under the age of 18 when they first started selling sexual services;

- Sex workers located in Northern Ireland were slightly more likely than their counterparts to be married or to be in a relationship with a partner (16%);

- Nearly one third of sex workers (32%) had children of their own – their ages varied form under one year to children who had already reached adulthood. 8 in 10 (80%) sex workers with children were also their main carer;

- Over half (53%) of the sex workers participating in the survey had completed some trade, technical or vocational school or earned an undergraduate degree (Bachelors) or above.

Prostitution in Northern Ireland

- Prostitution has significantly changed over the last years. It has become more mobile and increasingly organised via the internet;

- Many sex workers offer services in more than one location across Northern Ireland, either by offering out-calls to visit clients, or by booking a hotel or renting an apartment for short periods of time in different locations;

- Sex workers also frequently cross national borders. Out of the 62 respondents who said that they sold sexual services in Northern Ireland, 31 respondents worked exclusively in Northern Ireland while the remaining 31 respondents worked in other parts of the UK or in the Republic of Ireland as well, or even in other parts of Europe or worldwide;

- The majority of people selling sex in Northern Ireland are women. However, there is an established male prostitution sector in Northern Ireland, as well as a small number of sex workers who identify as transvestite or transgender;

- We estimate that over the last 5 years, the number of people engaged in street-based prostitution has dropped from around 30 to 40 people to about 20 people;
- On average, there were 525 advertisements for female sex workers, 209 advertisements for male sex workers and 38 advertisements for transsexual and/or transvestite sex workers in Northern Ireland available online on any one day. Thus, 68% of the adverts were for female, 27% for male, and 5% for trans sex workers.

- Based on a critical assessment of the number of advertisements and our interview data, we conclude that the total number of women, men and transgender people potentially contactable by those purchasing sexual services in Northern Ireland is between 300 and 350 on any given day.

**Experiences of prostitution**

- The need to earn money to survive (22%), the need to support the family financially (18%), to finance their own education (14%), to pay off debt (10%) and having no other way to earn a living (7%) were stated reasons for respondents to engage in prostitution. 1 in 5 respondents stated that they were curious about it, whilst 1 in 10 respondents said they thought they could explore their sexuality by selling sex. Less than 1% said that someone had forced them to do it;

- Northern-Ireland based sex workers were significantly more likely than sex workers overall to say that they needed money to survive (32%) or to pay off a debt (26%) or that that they had no other way of earning money;

- Fewer than 1 in 10 (9%) had been working in the sex industry for less than one year, whilst 15% of respondents had worked as a sex worker for more than ten years. The longer someone has worked in prostitution, the more difficult it may be to ‘fill the gap’ in one’s CV and to (re-)engage in other forms of work;

- 15% of the people who took part in the online sex worker survey and 7 of the 19 people interviewed were currently or had previously worked with or for a third party, such as an agency or a ‘booker’;

- Foreign nationals were more than twice as likely to work all of the time or sometimes for a third party such as an agency (22% compared to 9%). Among the sex workers who live in Northern Ireland, only one person said that they worked for someone else;

- Less than 5% of all survey respondents said that they had ever worked, or currently worked for a mafia-like or paramilitary organisation, a criminal gang, or someone else who controlled them;

- Stigmatisation and the related fear of exposure constitutes a very significant issue for the sex workers who took part in this study, ranked above fears of violence, financial concerns, health concerns, and worries about the effects selling sex has on one’s emotional and mental well-being. 38% said that they dislike having to lie about how they earn money, and 25% worried about friends and family finding out about it. 6% felt that selling sexual services harms their mental or emotional well-being, and 3% said it makes them feel abused;
- However, respondents from Northern Ireland were 3 times more likely than non-Northern Ireland respondents to state emotional and mental harm and 4 times more likely to state that they felt ashamed. They were also over 2 times more likely to state that they disliked having sex with clients and 4 times more likely to feel abused;

- 29% of the respondents in Northern Ireland who completed the survey said that they “worry about violent clients” (24% elsewhere);

- 23% of sex worker respondents in Northern Ireland stated that they worried about “violence from other people” e.g. strangers, people they work for, partners or the police, compared to fewer (13%) elsewhere;

- Experiences of violence were reported by several interviewees, including violent clients, robberies and threats by ‘agents’ and organised crime gangs;

- Around 3 quarters of the female heroin addicts who presently engage with the Belfast Drug Outreach Team have or do engage in prostitution.

People who pay for sex

- Over one quarter of sex workers (28%) saw over twenty clients per week, with 1 in 10 seeing 30 or more, thus on average 4 or more clients per day. Sex workers living in Northern Ireland – on average – tend to see fewer clients per week than sex workers living elsewhere;

- We estimate that about 3% of the adult male population (between 20 and 65 years of age) pay for sex in Northern Ireland (i.e. 17,500 people);

- Nearly 2 thirds of clients (64%) who responded to the survey were between 31 and 50 years of age, with very small proportions being under 22 or over 75 years of age;

- The survey sample consisted predominantly of relatively wealthy, well-educated middle-aged males;

- Client respondents overall, on average, purchase sex more than once or twice a year, but less than once or twice a month;

- The most likely sexual service clients had purchased was an ‘escort service’, that is, services from a sex worker who advertises online;

- 84% of clients in Northern Ireland access prostitution via the internet;

- Nearly 25% of clients said that they provided the hotel room in which the sexual contact would take place, and 1 in 10 clients (11%) had sex with a sex worker in their own home (‘out-calls’);

- Only a small minority of clients had sex in the car or in public places. Respondents from Northern Ireland were least likely to have sexual contact in a public place/on the street (2%);
Main reasons to pay for sexual services include: not wanting or not feeling ready to commit to a relationship; not enjoying or feeling comfortable with conventional ways of meeting sexual partners; finding one’s sex life unsatisfying; wanting to express and explore one’s sexuality without being judged; looking for fulfilment of emotional and social needs; and enjoying the thrill of the encounter.

**Trafficking**

- PSNI data show that between 2009 and June 2014, the total number of potential victims identified by the PSNI was 81. The number of confirmed victims (i.e. victims that were conclusively identified as such via the National Referral Mechanism) for the same time period is 26;

- These numbers include 8 confirmed victims of child sexual exploitation;

- In addition, 3 survey respondents in the online survey said that they had been trafficked in the past. 12% of sex workers said that, at some point in their lives, that at least one person told them that they had been trafficked, and 5% said that they had personally witnessed trafficking in the sex industry;

- Of the 12% of sex workers who had witnessed or been told about trafficking, an equal number had either reported it or said that they had considered reporting this, but then did not;

- We found that the number of trafficked victims in the Northern Ireland sex industry is low and that the majority of people selling sexual services are not trafficked;

- With regard to reporting trafficking among people who pay for sex just over half of the respondents (51%) said they would want to report this anonymously to the police by phone. The second preferred option (21%) was reporting this to a specialised police officer in the sex industry. Direct reporting was less popular among Northern-Ireland-domiciled clients (15%). The third preferred option (16%) was reporting this to a third party, like a sex worker health clinic or support service, whilst the least preferred option (11%) was reporting this anonymously to the police via email;

- Within the sex worker survey 44% would report trafficking to a specialised police officer, a further 25% anonymously by phone to the police and a significant fifth would do so via a sex worker clinic or related support service;

- Several interviewees described exploitative practices in the sex industry, including the recruitment of foreign sex workers based on false promises regarding income and working conditions, and unreasonably high charges for travel arrangements.
Support services

- There is only one designated service for sex workers in Northern Ireland (the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service). Several other organisations do or would provide services to sex workers, but do not specifically cater to this population;

- Lack of knowledge about existing support services appears to be a significant problem, particularly among non-Irish/British sex workers;

- It appears that many sex workers do not trust the police and do not feel that they can report crimes and receive support;

- In regard to services needed to leave the sex industry, 25% of survey respondents said that they did not want to exit from prostitution and did therefore not need any exit services. The next most likely response (19%) was that the sex worker would need ‘a job that pays for expenses’. 15% said that ‘professional qualifications’ would enable them to quit prostitution;

- Programmes that support sex workers in exiting the sex industry are considered most effective if they are flexible and tailored to the individual needs of sex workers, non-judgmental and follow a holistic approach that addresses not only leaving the sex industry but addresses any issues that sex workers may face in their lives.

Policy

- Our review of the literature suggests that the effective regulation of prostitution – regardless of the policy framework – continues to be a challenge for states and societies. Both the Swedish (neo-abolitionism) and the Dutch (regulationism) regimes appear to record sex trafficking despite shared objectives to the contrary;

- Research from Sweden shows that while the 1999 sex purchase ban reduced street prostitution, the claims that prostitution continues off-street and that non-Swedish nationals continue to be involved cannot be dismissed;

- Only 2% of the sex workers who responded to our survey supported the criminalisation of clients;

- Sex workers worry that criminalisation of clients will lead to a potential decrease in security, worsen working conditions and increase risks of violence and other abuse. Some are also concerned about the loss of what they determine as decent clients and an increase in the number of violent clients. Another common concern is that criminalisation of clients will lead to the increased involvement of organised crime groups and ‘pimps’ in the sex industry;

- For sex workers criminalisation of clients may mean that they would be less inclined to report crimes to the police out of fear of incriminating themselves or becoming involved in legal procedures;
- If paying for sex was criminalised, 8% of clients in Northern Ireland said they would stop paying for sex altogether, whilst 18% would stop paying for sex in Northern Ireland, but would simply pay for sex elsewhere. The most likely responses given was that they would only see escorts that they trusted (43%) or simply be more careful (33%);

- 36% of Northern Ireland clients either thought it was illegal to pay for sexual services or were not sure about it. Thus, more than one third of clients in Northern Ireland were not aware of the current legal framework in regard to paying for sex;

- The opinions of experts and service providers varied regarding the criminalisation of clients. While some would welcome the criminalisation of clients based on their understanding of all forms of prostitution as sexual exploitation and abuse of women, others were concerned that it would increase violence against sex workers and drive them (further) away from services;

- In addition, PSNI officers noted that, in their opinion, a sex purchase ban would be difficult to enforce and would be largely ineffective in reducing the level of trafficking in sexual exploitation. They were concerned about the resources needed to effectively police the proposed new law, and pointed out significant difficulties with producing evidence against clients that would be of value for either prosecutions or trials. In Sweden, evidence is generally gained by employing covert tactics such as phone surveillance. It is doubtful that investigations into prostitution (as opposed to investigations into trafficking for sexual exploitation) would meet the threshold, in Northern Ireland for the use of such tactics.
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the research

1.1.1. At present in Northern Ireland practices related to prostitution, such as soliciting or loitering for purposes of prostitution, organising or advertising prostitution and brothel keeping (defined as more than one person selling sexual services in a given location) constitute criminal offences under the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008. This cultural and legal context has produced particularly hidden forms of prostitution with the internet becoming a major platform for advertising sexual services and setting up meetings in hotels or apartments (DoJNI 2011a: 2, DoJNI 2011b). Despite the legal context and alternative discourses concerning prostitution in Northern Ireland there has been a paucity of research on social issues that relate to prostitution, such as migration, trafficking and the nature of prostitution.

1.1.2. Limited research evidence is available with regard to the size and composition of the sex worker population in Northern Ireland. It can be deduced from the few available government and NGO publications that sex workers operating in Northern Ireland include locals and people from other parts of the UK, the Republic of Ireland, as well as sex workers from Europe and from across the world, e.g. Nigeria, Colombia and Brazil (Martynowicz et al. 2009: 39, DoJNI 2011a: 4, cf. Ruhama 2011: 12). Northern Ireland, and particularly its largest city Belfast seems to be a destination for mobile sex worker (Kelleher et al. 2009: 22, DoJNI 2011a: 3, Martynowicz et al. 2009: 37). Although some sex workers may sell sex only in one place, most appear to be mobile, moving between different cities across Ireland and the UK, as well as across the continent (e.g. Spain, Italy, Germany) (cf. Ward and Wylie 2010: 110). This generally mirrors the practice of sex workers across Europe (TAMPEP 2009: 9).

1.1.3. While these reports and studies provide some insight into the lives of sex workers and their clients, the evidence is patchy, largely unsystematic and not as extensive as the evidence available in other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. So far, reliable academic studies based on interview or survey data from those who sell and buy sexual services in Northern Ireland have generally been unavailable. However, the issue of prostitution has received considerable interest in Northern Ireland over the last year, due mainly to the proposal within Lord Morrow’s Private Member’s Bill (Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill) to criminalise paying for sexual services. This study commissioned by the Department of Justice aims to fill some of the existing research gaps by conducting a mixed methods study of prostitution in Northern Ireland.

1.2. Definitions of key terms

1.2.1. In the public debate about prostitution as well as in academic research, terminologies are a matter of political and moral position. It is difficult if not impossible to use terms that
are neutral and universally acceptable. As researchers we define the terms used and explain our choices. For the purposes of this study and based on the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, prostitution is defined as the provision of sexual services for payment or promise of payment. ‘Payment’, here, constitutes any financial advantage, including the discharge of an obligation to pay or the provision of goods or services gratuitously or at a discount. The term ‘sexual services’ is not defined in the law and could potentially include interactions without physical contact (e.g. phone/webcam sex, pornography). In this study, we focus on ‘sexual services’ that include face-to-face contact between the person selling and the person buying sex in order to narrow and manage the scope of the research.

1.2.2. We use the term ‘prostitution’ to refer to the practice of selling sex, as it is used in the tender document and in legal documents. However, when referring to people who sell sex, we use the term ‘sex workers’ rather than ‘prostitutes’ because the majority of our research participants did not refer to themselves as ‘prostitutes’ and reject the term as derogatory and stigmatising.

1.2.3. The term ‘sex worker’ is used to refer to all adults who sell or exchange sexual services for money, goods or services (e.g., transport), and the term ‘clients’ for those who buy sexual services. These terms are most commonly used in evidence-based, peer-reviewed academic publications. We do not use the term ‘sex worker’ for those who do not or who cannot give consent such as victims of trafficking or those under the age of consent.

1.2.4. When conducting qualitative interviews with sex workers, clients, experts and service providers, we adapted the language used to the specific interview context in order to avoid offending or alienating research participants. For example, a person who experienced prostitution as traumatising may prefer to be referred to as a ‘survivor of prostitution’ and people selling sexual services via the internet may prefer the term ‘escort’.

1.2.5. Anyone else involved in the transaction will be referred to as a ‘third party’ instead of terms such as ‘pimp’ because not all sex workers view the third parties involved as ‘pimps’ and may find this term pejorative, while other research participants may use the term for anyone who provides services to a sex worker (incl. for example online agencies). We asked research participants to elaborate on their interactions with the third party, i.e. to describe whether this person is in the position of an employer who has the ‘right’ to give instructions – and if so, of what nature – and profits financially from the interaction – and if so, to what extent, or someone is merely providing a service to them, such as arranging meetings, making bookings, or renting out a room for the purpose of prostitution.

1.3. **Aims of the research**

1.3.1. The aim of the research is to provide the Department of Justice with a better understanding of the extent and characteristics of prostitution and human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. In response to the tender, we set out to investigate the following issues and questions:
- approximate number and demographics of sex workers in Northern Ireland, including on-street and off-street prostitution;
- the characteristics of the current sex industry, i.e. street-based prostitution and indoor prostitution;
- an analysis of pathways into prostitution, reasons to sell sexual services and sex workers’ experiences of prostitution;
- the impact of prostitution on local communities;
- approximate number and profile of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation;
- an analysis of the demand side of prostitution in Northern Ireland, including the approximate number of people who pay for sexual services, the demographics of clients, and their reasons to pay for sex;
- an analysis of how clients in Northern Ireland access prostitution;
- an assessment of the potential effects of criminalisation of paying for sexual services on a) those engaged in prostitution; b) those who pay for sexual services, and more generally the demand for prostitution, and c) the levels of sex trafficking;
- an assessment of the existing support services for sex workers in Northern Ireland and additional services needed;
- an assessment of programmes and services that support people in exiting prostitution in this and other jurisdictions;
- an analysis of the effectiveness of the responses to prostitution in other jurisdictions;
- an analysis of measures and programmes in other jurisdictions that aim to reduce demand for prostitution by non-legislative means.
2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1. This is the first academic study that aims to assess prostitution as a complex social phenomenon in Northern Ireland. There has been a vigorous debate in Northern Ireland concerning criminalisation/de-criminalisation and issues around morality and stigmatisation. However, these debates have not been paralleled by research as robust as the debates themselves. The gap in evidence, experience and research depth concerning what is a largely hidden social phenomenon is an issue of concern that is addressed by this report.

2.1.2. To meet the challenges of the study, we employed multiple research methods, including quantitative (e.g. online surveys) and qualitative (e.g. face-to-face interviews) methods. To assess and understand the diverse experiences of people in prostitution we gathered data via the extensive online surveys with both sex workers and clients and interviewed:

- current sex workers;
- people who have left the sex industry;
- sex workers with experience in different sectors of the industry, including on-street and off-street prostitution;
- female and a small number of male sex workers;
- local sex workers and foreign nationals;
- victims of trafficking;
- a diverse group of men who pay for sex;
- a range of experts in the field of prostitution and trafficking.

2.1.3. This has allowed us to respond to the questions set by the funder and to draw a holistic and complex picture of the sex industry in Northern Ireland. We view this report as a starting point rather than the final say on prostitution in Northern Ireland. It will allow the reader to get a better understanding of who the people are that sell and buy sex, their reasons to do it, how they go about it, and what the risks are for those involved in prostitution. It will shed light on social practices that have been largely hidden thus far. This study reports what has been observed and is based upon robust and tested research methodologies.

2.2. Methods

Surveys

2.2.1. We conducted online surveys among sex workers and with people who pay for sex using the online survey website SurveyMonkey. Fieldwork took place from May to August
2014. These self-completion surveys generated quantitative and qualitative data regarding the experiences of those selling and buying sexual services.

2.2.2. The survey respondents include women, men and transgender persons who sell and buy sexual services across Northern Ireland, other parts of the UK, and the Republic of Ireland (ROI).

2.2.3. For several reasons, the survey did not exclude respondents from outside of Northern Ireland.

2.2.3(i) Excluding respondents from outside Northern Ireland would have been difficult for methodological reasons. All websites that were included in this study advertise sexual services across borders (e.g. ROI, Northern Ireland and Great Britain). When reaching out to potential survey respondents via websites that advertise sexual services, information about our study was available to all users of the websites, including sex workers who do not live or work in Northern Ireland. Limiting participation to sex workers in Northern Ireland would have driven away respondents and limited the attention that the study received in the sex worker community (and thereby it would limited the number of people who read about the study, including other Northern Ireland-based sex workers). The same is true for people who pay for sex. In the online sector, neither the sex worker nor the client community are confined to national or regional borders. The research design had to account for this fluidity.

2.2.3(ii) The mobility of sex workers needs to be taken into account. The majority of sex workers in the off-street sector are mobile, i.e. they work in more than one place and often in multiple jurisdictions within the UK and ROI. While some sex workers live and work in Northern Ireland only, these do not represent the entirety of the sex workers who work in Northern Ireland. Those who remain local often do so because of particular circumstances that characterise them, e.g. they may have caring responsibilities or be in relationships which prevent them from travelling; they may have other jobs and sell sex as a 'sideline'. A focus on these sex workers only would provide a distorted picture of the sex industry which generally operates beyond regional and national boundaries. Also, sex workers constantly adapt to the areas in which they work. A sex worker who only works in Dublin today may start working in Belfast tomorrow because of changing circumstances and opportunities. This also applies to clients of sex workers who often buy sex opportunistically regardless of where they are.

2.2.3(iii) A significant number of people (15% in both the sex worker and client surveys) did not disclose where they live. Excluding these respondents would have limited the findings of this study.

2.2.4. The remit of this study was to explore the extent and nature of prostitution in Northern Ireland. However, it is important to understand that the extension of the regional remit to all of the UK and the ROI does not limit the findings of this study, but rather provides a more accurate picture which takes account of the mobility of both sex workers and clients. Throughout the report (wherever feasible), we differentiate between responses from sex workers/clients who sell or buy sexual services in Northern Ireland and those who
do so elsewhere. The interviews with sex workers and clients were conducted with people who sell and buy sexual services in Northern Ireland (with one exception, see 2.2.14).

**Sex worker survey**

2.2.5. The sex worker survey was translated into 9 languages, accounting for ethnic, national and linguistic diversity among sex workers operating in Northern Ireland. The sex worker survey was available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Italian, Mandarin and French. Responses completed in languages other than English were translated back into English to be included in the analysis.

2.2.6. The sex worker survey generated information on the composition of the sex worker population in Northern Ireland in regard to age, nationality, gender, religion, relationship status, number of children, level of education, form of work (independent; for or with a third party) and experiences of violence and exploitation including trafficking. The survey also gathered data on other issues such as pathways into prostitution.¹ The data was complemented by and triangulated with the data generated via the other methods employed in this study.

**Sex worker survey responses**

2.2.7. Being a sex worker is a very sensitive subject area. We could therefore expect a rate of refusals much higher than would be found when studying less sensitive topics. In total, 240 sex workers logged on to the survey. The vast majority logged on to the English sex worker survey (n=187). This was followed by Romanian (n=28), Portuguese (n=9), Spanish (n=6) and Polish (n=5). The 6 remaining completions were in Russian, French and Italian. No one completed the survey in Bulgarian or Mandarin.

2.2.8. Some respondents chose not to complete the survey after they had logged on or only completed to an extent that analysis would be meaningless. These records were deleted. By default, SurveyMonkey (the online platform used for the surveys) records the IP addresses² of respondents. 3 IP addresses were used twice and one IP address 3 times. These records were deleted. Deletion was also used in one case, where it appeared that the same person had started filling out the survey twice (giving the same answers). Some respondents only answered the background questions (age, relationship status, number of children etc.) and then left the survey. These responses were kept as they still add to the information about the demographics of sex workers/clients, even though they did not tell us anything else.

2.2.9. Responses were deleted if the participant did not confirm that s/he had understood the purpose of the study and did not consent to taking part.

2.2.10. After dataset cleaning, 171 respondents remained for the sex worker survey.

¹ The survey questions can be found in Appendix B.
² An IP address (Internet Protocol address) is a fixed number automatically assigned to any device that accesses the internet (e.g. computers, mobile phone etc.).
**Client survey responses**

2.2.11. In the client survey, 553 people logged on and started to complete the survey. 2 IP addresses were used twice, in one case this was a duplicated completion – probably because the survey was not fully completed the first time round, which was removed from the sample. 19% of respondents did not answer any questions or answered so few questions that their inclusion in the analysis would be meaningless. These responses were also deleted.

2.2.12. Responses were deleted if the participant did not confirm that s/he had understood the purpose of the study and did not consent to taking part.

2.2.13. After dataset cleaning, 446 respondents remained for the client survey.

**Interviews**

**Interviews with sex workers and victims of trafficking**

2.2.14. In addition to the survey, we conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with sex workers. With one exception, all of them work permanently or sporadically in Northern Ireland. One of the interviews was conducted via phone rather than as a face-to-face interview. All of the interviews were conducted in English as all participants were comfortable speaking English. The interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. Interviewees represented the diversity of sex workers with regard to their gender, the sector of the sex industry in which they operate(d) and their nationality. The Table below outlines the demographics of people interviewed.

2.2.15. To better understand trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland, we interviewed 2 women who were recognised as victims of trafficking into Northern Ireland via the National Referral Mechanism, the official process of identifying victims of trafficking. Both interviews were conducted by using an interpreter.

**Table 1: Demographics of sex workers interviewed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Years working in the sex industry</th>
<th>Sectors of the sex industry (previously) worked in</th>
<th>Sex worker in Northern Ireland (yes/no)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>11 years (on and off)</td>
<td>Independent escort; escort agency/booker</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Independent escort;</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Independent escort; webcam</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 One interviewee was a Dublin-based Romanian sex worker who was included in the study despite the fact that she does not currently sell sexual services in North Ireland. Her experience of being trafficked and controlled by an abusive boyfriend before becoming an independent escort provided unique insights, which we felt needed to be included in the study in order to represent the diversity and complexity of sex workers’ experiences.

4 For details on the process of identifying victims and the numbers of confirmed victims of trafficking in Northern Ireland (based on PSNI statistics) see chapter 8.3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Additional Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Independent escort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>House ('brothel')</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>A few months</td>
<td>Independent escort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lucy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>Independent escort; escort agency/booker; porn</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Francis</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>3-4 years, not working anymore</td>
<td>Independent escort; street prostitution</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>over 20 years, not working anymore</td>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ramona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Independent escort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Alexandra</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Independent escort; escort agency/booker</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Cathy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>Independent escort; clubs/brothels (abroad)</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Independent escort; film/porn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>Independent escort; clubs/brothels (abroad)</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>British</td>
<td>3 years, not working anymore</td>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Betty</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31-35</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>5 years, not working anymore</td>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Aileen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>House ('brothel'); escort agency/booker</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Independent escort</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Annabel</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>Irish</td>
<td>Over 20 years, on and off</td>
<td>Independent escort; massage parlour; escort agency/booker</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>Northern Irish</td>
<td>About 20 years</td>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Demographics of victims of trafficking interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Nationality*</th>
<th>Form of trafficking</th>
<th>Trafficked into Northern Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>Trafficking for sexual exploitation</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Doussou</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Trafficking for sexual exploitation</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nationalities were omitted to protect the identity of the victims.

Interviews with clients

2.2.16. In addition to the online survey with clients, we also conducted 10 semi-structured, recorded interviews with men who (with one exception) regularly or sporadically pay for sexual services in Northern Ireland. One interview was conducted via phone rather than face-to-face. All of the interviewees were British or Irish nationals. The Table below outlines the demographics of the interviewees.

Table 3: Demographics of clients interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Relationship status</th>
<th>Current job</th>
<th>Years of paying for sex</th>
<th>Sectors of the sex industry accessed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dan</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>divorced</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jonathan</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>divorced</td>
<td>Sales assistant</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jeff</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Paul</td>
<td>66-70</td>
<td>separated</td>
<td>Retired professional</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>41-45</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>56-60</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>Self-employed, service industry</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>46-50</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Philip</td>
<td>36-40</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>IT professional</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>61-65</td>
<td>married</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>Online escorts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>51-55</td>
<td>single</td>
<td>Employee, public sector</td>
<td>Over 20 years</td>
<td>Online escorts and street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews with experts and service providers

2.2.17. The surveys and interviews with sex workers and clients were complemented by semi-structured interviews with experts and service providers who have knowledge about prostitution and/or trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation and/or provide services that are relevant for sex workers (e.g. regarding sexual health and sexual violence). This included a variety of voices and opinions about prostitution and the environment in which sex workers operate. The interviews were either recorded or detailed notes were taken by the interviewer. Table 4 below provides an overview of the interviewees.

---

5 Nationalities were omitted to protect the identity of the victims.
6 We included this particular client who pays for sex in the Republic of Ireland as he could offer unique insights into the experiences of men who pay for sex: he was the only interviewee who predominantly paid for sex because of his sexual preferences (he identifies as a cross-dresser).
Table 4: Overview of experts and service providers interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>PSNI</td>
<td>Organised Crime Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>PSNI</td>
<td>Organised Crime Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>PSNI</td>
<td>Specialist team investigating child sex offences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>PSNI</td>
<td>Criminal Investigation Department, South Belfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>NICEM</td>
<td>Strategic advocacy project manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>UglyMugs</td>
<td>Admin at uglymugs.ie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Drug Outreach Team Belfast</td>
<td>Outreach worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ruhama</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Barnados</td>
<td>Service manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Foyle Women’s Aid</td>
<td>Case worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Rainbow Project</td>
<td>Sexual health development officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service</td>
<td>Health care coordinator/advanced nurse practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Law Centre NI</td>
<td>Casework manager and immigration solicitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>GUM clinic Royal Victoria Hospital</td>
<td>Medical doctor and nurse in genito-urinary medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Independent Immigration Solicitor</td>
<td>Casework manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>No More Traffik</td>
<td>Development manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rowan Centre</td>
<td>Service manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Nexus</td>
<td>CEO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysis of website data

2.2.18. Several websites provide a platform to sell and buy sexual services within Northern Ireland and across the UK and/or the ROI. Some specialise in advertising ‘escorts’ and other are multi-purpose websites that include ‘classified ads’. The profiles of people selling sexual services are publically visible and thus there are no issues of obtaining access.

2.2.19. The following websites were included in this study:

- Adultwork
- Backpage
- Craigslist
- Escort Ireland
- Escort Magazine
- Irish Independent Escorts
- Sunday Sport
- Vivastreet

2.2.20. They were selected based on the number of advertisements for Northern Ireland and on the relevance for the sex industry (i.e. interviewees referring to them in
There are significant differences between these websites in regard to design, purpose, and costs of advertising, as Table 5 shows.

**Table 5: Overview of websites included in the analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Type of website</th>
<th>Advertising costs</th>
<th>Locations</th>
<th>Type of adverts</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adultwork</td>
<td>Specialised platform for sex workers and clients</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Worldwide; NI-specific categories: all counties covered</td>
<td>Personal profile</td>
<td>Has a forum/message board; offers webcam services, videos, chats, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpage</td>
<td>General website for classified ads</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Worldwide; NI-specific categories: Belfast only</td>
<td>Classified ads</td>
<td>Category ‘adults’ includes sub-categories for ‘escorts’, ‘male escorts’, ‘dom &amp; fetish’ etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigslist</td>
<td>General website for classified ads</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Worldwide; NI-specific categories: Belfast only</td>
<td>Classified ads</td>
<td>No specific category for prostitution-related ads (e.g. ‘escorts’); sex workers advertise mainly in the categories for ‘personal’ and ‘therapeutic’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort Ireland</td>
<td>Specialised escort website</td>
<td>56 GBP/3 days 80 GBP/7 days 280 GBP/30 days 20 GBP/extra day</td>
<td>Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland NI-specific categories: Belfast; Derry/Londonderry; and all counties</td>
<td>Personal profile</td>
<td>Has a forum/message board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort Magazine</td>
<td>Specialised escort website</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, United Kingdom, USA; NI-specific categories: Belfast only</td>
<td>Personal profile</td>
<td>No nudity or sexually suggestive content allowed; no reference to payment arrangements allowed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2.21. To analyse the profiles of the number, age, gender and nationality of people offering sexual services in Northern Ireland and the locations in which they work, we manually ‘scraped’ data from the main websites, i.e., manually copied information such as age, gender, services provided etc. and put it into an accessible format for data analysis (an excel spreadsheet). On 7 days in August all the advertisements for Northern Ireland on the 8 identified websites were counted. Advertisements were classified by gender (male, female, transgender/transvestite) and if possible by Northern Ireland county.

2.2.22. The 8 websites are differently organised (see Table 5). To count the number of advertisements, we had to employ different approaches.

- On Escort Ireland and Sunday Sport, adverts are only visible when they are ‘active’ (i.e. the time period for which the advertiser paid). Here, all advertisements available were counted.
- On Vivastreet, Craigslist and Backpage, adverts are listed by the date they were uploaded. If active, adverts are updated to appear higher up in the list. In order to avoid counting old/invalid adverts, we only counted adverts dating back 2 weeks from day of counting.
- On Adultwork, Irish Independent Escorts and Escort Magazine, personal profiles can be uploaded free of charge and remain on the website even if they are not accessed or updated. To avoid counting inactive profiles, we only included profiles that had been created or updated in 2014.

2.2.23. To get a more detailed snapshot of people advertising online, we did a one-off scraping of all the advertisements for sexual services offered in Northern Ireland on the five most relevant and commonly used websites (Adultwork, Vivastreet, Escort Ireland, Irish Independent Escorts, Backpage). The adverts were counted and classified by gender, sexuality, nationality, ethnicity, location within Northern Ireland and lowest rate offered,
although not all the advertisements included all of the information. We further gathered information on the services provided (e.g. if no intercourse was offered) and similarities between advertisements which suggested that the same person is advertising on various websites.

**Analysis**

2.2.24. Analysing data from websites provided us with information about how prostitution is advertised. However, it is important to note that people may change their profile in order to attract clients (for example by changing age and nationality) or may have multiple profiles in order to attract different types of clients. Therefore, the data generated via this method was cross-verified by comparing it to the results collected through using other methods (referred to as *triangulation*), and was thus assessed critically. As a complementary method, it helped us in estimating the number of people selling sexual services via the internet in Northern Ireland and their gender, age and nationality, and the locations in which they operate.

**Assessing the impact on local communities**

2.2.25. The intention of this area of the research was to consider to what extent prostitution is a public issue. All councils in Northern Ireland were contacted via email and, following the email, by phone with information about the study. 9 councils contributed to the research, generally via phone interview.

2.2.26. The councils that responded to the request were:

- Ards Borough Council
- Castlereagh Borough Council
- Cookstown District Council
- Down District Council
- Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council
- Fermanagh District Council
- Limavady Borough Council
- Lisburn City Council
- Newry and Mourne District Council

2.2.27. Members of the Policing and Community Safety Partnerships, Good Relations Officers and Community workers took part in the study. Interview questions were sent to all participants ahead of phone conversations so they could prepare any information needed.

2.2.28. Issues discussed with interviewees included how often prostitution and/or trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation were discussed at council or community
level (if at all) and to discover what steps had been taken in the various council areas to raise awareness about the sex industry.\(^7\)

**Assessing exit programmes**

2.2.29. To assess support programmes for people wishing to exit the sex industry (i.e. 'exit programmes') we designed a questionnaire that included questions about the services provided, the target groups and design of the exit programmes. We also sought information on the organisation’s positive and negative experiences with the programmes, e.g. hurdles to exiting the sex industry and benefits of the programmes.

2.2.30. The questionnaire was sent out to support services across the UK (Northern Ireland, Scotland, England & Wales), the ROI, Sweden, the Netherlands and New Zealand. These jurisdictions were selected to match the comparison of policy regimes included in this study (see 10.2.1). The assessment of exit programmes (see 9.4) includes information on support services from 7 legal jurisdictions:

- Belfast, Northern Ireland (*Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service*)
- Dublin, Republic of Ireland (*Ruhama*)
- Stockton on Tees, England/Wales (*A Way Out*)
- Edinburgh, Scotland (*Sacro*)
- The Hague, Netherlands (*SHOP*)
- Stockholm, Sweden (*Mikamottagningen*)
- Auckland, New Zealand (*Streetreach*)

2.3. **Access to research participants**

2.3.1. Access to potential research participants constituted one of the main challenges of this study. To reach the target numbers, we employed a range of different methods to inform potential participants about the study rather than relying on a single approach.

2.3.2. To reach potential research participants for both the online surveys and the face-to-face interviews, information about the study and the links to the surveys were posted in forums used by sex workers and/or clients on 3 different websites that advertise sexual services (Escort Ireland, Irish Independent Escorts, Adultwork).

2.3.3. Individual private messages were sent to users of the 3 largest specialised websites (Adultwork, Vivastreet and Escort Ireland) via the messaging function in the website to reach those who do not take part in the forums. We also sent direct messages (email or text messages) to those advertising on websites that do not have forums (Craigslist, Backpage, Sunday Sport).

2.3.4. Interviewees were asked to inform other sex workers and clients about the study. In some cases, interviewees posted messages about the research in online forums after taking part, sharing their experience of being interviewed and encouraging others to participate.

\(^7\) The questions are included in Appendix H.
2.3.5. Information about the study was provided to the Rainbow Project, NICEM, Women’s Aid Northern Ireland, the Belfast Law Centre, the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service, the Drug Outreach Team (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust) and UglyMugs.ie. All were asked to inform their clients/members about the study.

2.3.6. The sex worker survey was also printed and given to service providers (Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service and Women’s Aid Belfast) who were then asked to distribute it to their clients.

2.3.7. Contacting potential research participants via the internet proved to be the most effective means of recruitment.

2.4. Data analysis

2.4.1. The quantitative survey data and the information gathered via the scraping method were analysed using the programme SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), a professional software for statistical analysis.

2.4.2. The qualitative data (i.e. interview transcripts and replies to open-ended questions in the surveys) were fed into NVivo, specialised software that allows the researcher to collect, organise and analyse qualitative data. The interview transcripts and written survey responses were assessed for information that would allow us to meet the requirements of the tender. Specific codes were assigned to the corresponding sentences and paragraphs, with codes being words or groups of words that refer to meaningful concepts, e.g. ‘reasons to buy sexual services’, ‘number of trafficked victims’. NVivo allows the analyst to search for all of the information that refers to a given code; thereby, information can be compared and cross-checked across all of the qualitative data sources.

2.4.3. All of the data (both qualitative and quantitative results) were triangulated, i.e. cross-checked by assessment from two or more data sources, thereby allowing us to verify results. Comparing interviews with different types of participants and with the data gathered in the surveys ensures that results are not “merely idiosyncratic of single individuals or settings” (Shaver 2005: 304).

2.4.4. The quotes included in this research report were selected based on two principles:

- they either represent the diversity of opinions and experiences (in this case, multiple quotes will be presented expressing these diverse views);

- or they provide a typical example of the practice or experience discussed in the respective session, based on the analysis of all of our data sources.

2.5. Research ethics

2.5.1. In the following we describe how we approached sensitive issues and the measures we took to ensure that the study meets the ethical requirements for social science research. The study design was reviewed (separately by 2 senior academics) and approved by the
Ethics Committee in the School of Law at Queen’s University Belfast in March 2014. An advisory group was established at an early stage (before responding to the tender) to support the research team in designing and conducting a robust study. The members of the group were reflective of a diversity of opinions, experience in research and service provision.  

*Informed consent*

2.5.2. All participants were informed about the aims and methods of the research project through an information sheet that was sent to participants via email, or made available as part of the online survey. Written informed consent was acquired before all face-to-face interviews and was also part of the online survey. Oral consent was acquired at the beginning of phone interviews. All participants were invited to ask questions about the study and had the right to withdraw their consent at any stage of the research.

*Confidentiality and data protection*

2.5.3. Pseudonyms or initials were used in all written documents, including interview transcripts, notes and publications. All names mentioned in the interviews were anonymised during transcriptions of the recorded interviews. Personal details (such as real name, address, phone number) and locations where prostitution takes place (e.g. street names), if they became known to the researchers, were not shared with others. In regard to interviews with service providers and experts, we only named the organisation if they explicitly gave their consent. All datasets were encrypted and pass-words when saved.

*Potential risks for research participants*

2.5.4. Potential risks for sex workers and victims of sex trafficking included distress caused by talking to the researcher about difficult experiences and fear of stigmatisation due to participating in a study on prostitution. To ensure that the interview situation did not cause the participant any emotional or psychological harm, the interviewer was flexible regarding the interview questions, and adjusted the topics addressed in the interview according to the participant and the interview context if necessary. The interviewer refrained from asking questions which visibly made the participant uncomfortable or caused undue distress. This interview process required sensitivity and empathy, and cannot be formalised. Dr. Huschke’s experience of working with undocumented migrants and her previous experience in interviewing sex workers allowed her to react flexibly and respectfully to the individual needs of the research participants. The safety and well-being of the research participants were put before the researcher’s curiosity and interests at all times. The research team were fully aware of the issue of re-traumatisation and worked to remove the potential for it and the effects attached to it. This is a sensitive area of study in which repeating the traumas and undermining coping mechanisms would have been inappropriate and unethical.

2.5.5. Fear of denunciation, exposure and stigmatisation is an issue for both sex workers and clients who took part in the study. This was avoided by anonymising the names of the

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8 See Appendix I for a full list of advisory group members.
research participants, and – if required by the participants – by omitting personal details, such as hometown, physical appearance etc., from the research report.

2.5.6. The researchers adopted a non-judgmental position on prostitution and paying for sex, and avoided giving the impression that s/he disapproves of the experiences and decisions made by the research participants or their personal beliefs and attitudes. We accepted, respected and truthfully represented the subjective perspectives of all research participants, including sex workers, clients, victims of sex trafficking and professionals working in this field, such as PSNI officers and service providers.

**Potential risks for the researchers/interpreters**

2.5.7. The researchers ensured their own safety by not sharing personal information, such as their home addresses, with research participants. The researchers discussed the methods used in the study in detail with the advisory group to ensure that potential risks were accounted for.

2.6. **Limitations**

**Number of Sex Workers**

2.6.1. Estimating the size of an essentially hidden population such as sex workers constitutes a methodological challenge in any location. Estimating the size of the sex worker population in Northern Ireland is particularly challenging because some of the most common approaches can only be applied to a very limited extent. Common approaches include using data from service providers such as health clinics and charities and/or relying on data gathered on street-based prostitution (Cusick et al. 2009; Kinnell 1999). Neither of these approaches would be effective in Northern Ireland: there is only one service that directly caters for the sex worker population (the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service), and it mainly provides services to street-based sex workers. Other community sector organisations have very limited or no contact with sex workers (see 9.2). Data gathered on street-based prostitution is not sufficient to estimate the total number of sex workers, particularly not in a setting like Northern Ireland, where the street sector constitutes only a small subsection of the sex industry.

2.6.2. Because of the inapplicability of conventional models of estimating numbers, we relied on combining and triangulating numbers based on scraped data from websites, survey data and expert interviews in order to reach our estimates of the number of sex workers.

**Closed markets**

2.6.3. In the interviews conducted for this study, there have been anecdotal references to ‘closed markets’ within the Northern Ireland sex industry, i.e. certain ethnic minority/migrant groups advertising sexual services in their language in specific media (e.g. newspapers, info boards) predominantly used by members of the same community (see also ACPO 2010: 10). The time frame and the staff resources of the present study did not allow further investigations into this.
Number of trafficked victims

2.6.4. Research on the sex industry is difficult. Research on trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is even more difficult for a number of reasons:

- Finding and interviewing people who were trafficked into the sex industry is a difficult endeavor, as it constitutes a closed social environment that cannot be accessed by any of the means used to find and contact other research participants.

- The social arenas of prostitution on the one hand, and trafficking for sexual exploitation on the other do not necessarily overlap. Thus, interviewees (i.e. sex workers and clients) may have only very limited knowledge of the conditions under which people are forced into the sex industry against their will and may be able to offer little information.

- Interpretations and definitions of trafficking vary. There are differences between the tight legal definitions deployed by state governments and the broader understandings of trafficking employed by e.g. advocacy groups. People working in the sex industry may also refuse to be identified as victims of trafficking, even though they are viewed as such by police or support organisations (cf. Feingold 2010; di Nicola 2012; Tyldum 2010). These differences render it more difficult to identify potential research participants.

2.6.5. Because of these difficulties we are unable to give reliable estimates on the total number of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. Instead, we present the numbers of known victims as identified by the PSNI, discuss the main features of sex trafficking in Northern Ireland and highlight some of the existing barriers to tackling this crime.

Level of demand

2.6.6. To assess the level of demand for prostitution in Northern Ireland, the only way of gathering representative data would be to conduct a general population survey. However, due to the high sensitivity of this subject area and the attached social stigma to both sex workers and clients of sex workers, it is very unlikely that a population survey would yield reliable and valid results. Prostitution is predominantly a hidden phenomenon, and clients are unlikely to admit to buying sexual services. If anything, the current debate on the potential criminalisation of those who pay for sex may have increased the likelihood that a population survey would fail to collect the desired data.

2.6.7. We consider that questions on payment for sexual services would be best placed in a larger sexual health survey, whereby respondents who have agreed to take part in a general sexual health survey would then be more likely to answer a few questions on the exchange of money or goods for sex. However, the time frame and budget of this study did not allow us to include our questions in the current Northern Ireland Health survey, a large scale and representative survey among the adult population in Northern Ireland.
2.6.8. Due to the limitations of this study, the results regarding the level of demand presented in this study are estimates. They are not based on a representative assessment of paying for sex in the general population, but on estimates of client numbers provided by sex workers, and on information given by clients regarding the frequency with which they pay for sex.

**Representativeness**

2.6.9. For research on prostitution, it is virtually impossible to provide representative data in the statistical sense, i.e. include a sample of sex workers and clients that accurately reflects the demographics of the entire population – simply because the demographics of the entire population of sex workers and clients are unknown.

2.6.10. However, we have ensured that the sample is reflective of the diversity of social backgrounds and experiences of both sex workers and clients by purposefully approaching and selecting research participants, e.g. by including street-based and indoor, foreign and British/Irish nationals, and female and male sex workers. Interviews with experts and service providers also contributed to our assessment of the various facets of the sex industry.

**Selection bias**

2.6.11. In the absence of randomised and representative survey data, which would allow for a generalisation of the findings and a reasonably reliable calculation of sex workers and clients, collecting data using an opportunistic sampling frame is the next best option. However, this has limitations. One of the disadvantages of such sampling frames is that people will be more inclined to respond to the survey than others, and it is difficult to know which sub-population is over-represented (Wright 2005). Estimates of the population size of sex workers and clients on the basis of such data alone are therefore unreliable.

2.6.12. With regard to the experiences of those selling sexual services, we assume that Irish and British nationals over-reported in this study, while foreign nationals under-reported. It is also possible that sex workers with a relatively high degree of choice and independence about their working conditions are over-represented, and women, men and transgender persons who are, to varying degrees, controlled by someone else, are underrepresented.

2.6.13. Possible reasons for this include:

- language barriers, as the information about the study was given in English;
- foreign nationals may be less inclined to take part in research, particularly if they are only staying for short periods of time, because they do not feel as affected by the public discourse and by policy decisions;
- access barriers, e.g. no private internet access;
- being controlled by someone else which may prevent people from taking part in a research project.
2.6.14. This, however, does not mean that their voices and experiences of those who may have underreported are not represented in this study:

- 44% of the sex workers who took part the survey and 26% of the interviewees were foreign nationals.

- 15% of the people who took part in the online survey and 7 of the 19 people interviewed were currently, or had previously worked with or for a third party, and could thus discuss the differences between working independently and working for or with someone else. Sex workers with many years of experience could usually describe and discuss different forms of organising prostitution based on their relationships and conversations with other people in the sex industry.

2.6.15. The majority of the clients who took part in the study predominantly used the internet to find sex workers/escorts. Thus, people who pay for sex on the streets or access prostitution via informal routes and unspecific websites such as Craigslist are underrepresented in this study.

2.6.16. However, street-based prostitution constitutes only a small part of the Northern Ireland sex industry, and the internet constitutes the main platform to sell and buy sex (see 4.2.2). Between 13% and 29% of the respondents in the online survey had also used other sectors, (e.g. brothels, saunas or street prostitution) not only services provided by online escorts. Their responses shed light on the demographics and views of people who pay for sex in various parts of the sex industry.

**Confirmation bias**

2.6.17. Confirmation bias describes a process in which the researchers only consider data that supports a presupposed and desired conclusion, or interpret data in a way that supports their pre-existing views. The following means were employed to avoid confirmation bias in this study:

- conducting research in a team of persons with diverse perspectives and attitudes rather than as an individual project
- triangulation of data from multiple methods
- analysis of the interview data (i.e. coding of interviews and free comments in the surveys) was conducted by several researchers independently and then cross-checked and combined
- interview techniques:
  - a) probed into ‘established truths’ and led interviewees to explain their views and describe their experience in detail, rather than simply generating stereotypical or vague responses.
  - b) asked respondents to clarify contested terms such as ‘pimp’ or ‘brothel’ as these may mean different things to different people.
critical discussion of research questions and results with the research team and advisory group.

'Fake' and invalid responses

2.6.18. As stated in 2.2.8, SurveyMonkey automatically records the IP addresses of respondents as well as the start and end date and times of the survey completion. This allowed us to monitor any irregularities with regard to the completion, such as double entries and so on. It is in principle possible to purchase IP addresses and therefore to complete the same survey several times with different IP addresses to create fake responses. However, we critically assessed the data in a number of ways to detect fake or invalid responses. Invalid or fake responses can be identified by inspecting open responses or comments which tend to be nonsensical or rude. We did not identify any fake or invalid responses in the client or sex worker survey. We concluded that results were valid because of the number, diversity and heterogeneity of responses and the congruence of the results with existing academic research in this field in international comparison (both regarding sex workers and clients). 'Fake’ responses could be expected to be overly uniform and/or contradictory to existing evidence in this field.

2.6.19. In the questionnaire design, we took steps to minimise the potential for fake and invalid responses, e.g. by the way the questions were set and by disallowing nonsensical or invalid responses.

2.6.20. The main issue in regard to invalid survey responses was the non-completion of questions, and this was dealt with by deleting those respondents from the dataset that had only completed a very small number of questions.

2.6.21. In the face-to-face interviews, it would be more difficult to create 'fake responses', i.e. create life histories and experiences that do not reflect the lived experience of the interviewee. Interviewees were informed that they did not have to answer the questions if they felt they were inappropriate or too personal. They were asked to express any concerns or discomfort or simply move on to the next question rather than to give ‘safe’ or incomplete answers. Most of the interviews with sex workers lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. The interviewer followed up on statements made by the interviewee and allowed the conversation to flow naturally, rather than simply ticking off questions. Again, similar to the survey responses, if interviews had been faked (e.g. to portray prostitution in an unrealistically positive light), we would have expected the conversations to be one-dimensional and homogenous. This was not the case. The conversations with both sex workers and clients were heterogeneous and covered a variety of experiences, opinions and views.

2.6.22. Data triangulation is an important procedure for ensuring reality is represented correctly and for preventing biased or ‘fake’ results that would distort conclusions. Statements made by sex workers, clients and experts/service providers were checked against data from various different sources, e.g. interviews, surveys and literature review. If results
contradicted other evidence or could not be verified by cross-checking other sources, they were not included in the report or are described as ‘anecdotal evidence’.
3 DEMOGRAPHICS OF SEX WORKERS

3.1. Introduction

3.1.1. In the following, we present results from the online survey with sex workers (171 respondents) and our assessment of online advertisements, complemented by data gathered via interviews with experts, service providers and sex workers wherever feasible.

3.1.2. We address the following questions:

- How many people sell sexual services in Northern Ireland?
- What are the demographics of sex workers, e.g. gender, age, nationalities?
- What do the biographies and backgrounds of sex workers look like?

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Sex workers who sell sexual services as a full-time or part-time job are just one of the subgroups that would legally be defined as ‘prostitutes’ (i.e. offering sexual services in return for cash or non-monetary payment). Other practices that could be defined as prostitution include young people casually offering sexual services in return for phone credit or drugs; sex that implicitly takes place in return for drinks or drugs on a night out; and homeless people offering sexual services in return for a place to stay, food, drugs, etc. (“survival sex”).

- Because of this wide range of practices involved and the difficulties in accessing a hidden population such as sex workers, this short-term study did not allow us to calculate the exact size of the sex worker population in Northern Ireland.

- However, the methods employed allowed us to provide an estimate: we conclude that there are approximately between 300 and 350 female, male and transgender sex workers potentially contactable by those purchasing sexual services in Northern Ireland on any given day.

- The majority of sex workers in Northern Ireland are female, but there is an established male and transgender prostitution sector as well.

- People of all ages sell sexual services. Most commonly, sex workers are between 25 and 30 years old. The majority of people in the Northern Ireland sex industry did not start selling sex when they were underage. Under-age prostitution is not common, neither in the indoor nor in the outdoor sector.

- The sex worker population includes a significant number of people who have been educated to undergraduate degree level. Only a small proportion of sex workers in
Mobility constitutes one of the defining factors of the Northern Ireland sex industry. More than half of sex workers in Northern Ireland are foreign nationals. Many of the people who sell sexual services in Northern Ireland do not live here; they only visit for work. Sex workers also commonly sell services in more than one location, a practice referred to as ‘touring’.

The sample included in this study reflects this diversity. Survey participants and interviewees included local sex workers and foreign nationals, sex workers in their early 20s as well as sex workers in their 50s, street-based and indoor sex workers, people who work independently and people who work with or for someone else and/or have experienced exploitation, female and male sex workers, and current sex workers as well as people who have left the sex industry.

3.2. Numbers

3.2.1. The exact calculation of the number of sex workers active in Northern Ireland is difficult to undertake. A reliable calculation would require random or quota sampling involving a large section of the population. This would be a much more costly research project. As stated in chapter 2, the most cost-effective way of collecting such information is likely to be via the inclusion of questions in an existing health-based population survey, such as the Northern Ireland Health survey. However, prostitution is socially stigmatised, and as long as this is the case, many people involved in prostitution – whether they are clients or sex workers - will ultimately be reluctant to report this.

3.2.2. Our mixed-methods approach, using opportunistic sampling procedures is suitable to highlight issues around prostitution and understand the practices and issues involved. It is not suitable to calculate the exact population size of sex workers. However, we are able to provide an estimate based on the following methods:

- We monitored the number of online advertisements of sex workers in/for Northern Ireland over a period of time.

- We conducted a detailed analysis of the adverts on the main websites on one random day, including an assessment of duplications (multiple adverts that were likely to refer to the same sex worker).

- In our interviews with sex workers and experts, we asked about advertising practices to help us understand the differences between websites and the potential for duplications and inactive/fake adverts.

3.2.3. This mixed-methods approach allowed us to reach a fuller understanding of the Northern Ireland sex industry and to identify trends and common practices. These different sources contributed to our critical appraisal of the numbers gathered and helped to put them into context.
3.2.4. There are several particularly hidden sides to prostitution in Northern Ireland that could not be accounted for in our calculation, but would be defined legally as prostitution (i.e. offering sexual services in return for cash or non-monetary payment). These include:

- homeless people who offer sexual services in return for a place to stay, food, drugs, etc. (“survival sex”);
- young people who casually offer sexual services in return for phone credit, drugs etc.;
- sex that implicitly takes place in return for drinks or drugs on a night out;
- sexual services that are informally offered in gay venues;
- people who engage in prostitution very sporadically in a moment of crisis.

3.2.5. Furthermore, there are additional blind spots that would increase the number of sex workers in Northern Ireland if counted in:

- Prostitution that is not advertised openly (i.e. on the internet or in newspapers), but rather through word of mouth and knowledge within local communities.
- There is a significant number of mobile sex workers (i.e. ‘touring escorts’), some of whom may only come to Northern Ireland a few times a year and therefore may not have been counted in this study.

**Calculations**

3.2.6. Based on interviews with service providers and experts, we estimate the number of street-based sex workers in Northern Ireland to be 20 on any given day.

3.2.7. In regard to the indoor sector, we can offer the following calculations. Over a period of 7 random days we recorded the number of online advertisements of sex workers for Northern Ireland (see 2.2.21). On average, there were 525 advertisements for female, 209 advertisements for male and 38 advertisements for transsexual and/or transvestite sex workers in Northern Ireland available online on any one day. Thus, overall there is an average of 772 advertisements for sex workers available for Northern Ireland on any one day.

3.2.8. Table 6 shows the average number of adverts for each of the websites separately.

**Table 6: Numbers of adverts on main websites on an average day**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Trans</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adultwork</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Backpage</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigslist</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort Ireland</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort Magazine</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Independent Escorts</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Sport</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivastreet</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>525</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.9. There are several reasons why the actual number of sex workers who offer services in Northern Ireland can be assumed to be **less than the number of advertisements**:

- Some sex workers have multiple profiles on one website and/or multiple profiles on different websites.
- Duplication of profiles can be difficult to establish, as sex workers use different profiles, different means of contact or both.
- Some profiles/adverts are likely to be out-of-date, especially on webpages which do not charge for the ads.

3.2.10. In particular, we view the following limitations for each of the websites, based on their different characteristics (see 2.2.20, Table 5).

3.2.11. Because of the advertising costs, the number of advertisements on *Escort Ireland* and *Sunday Sport* can be assumed to reflect the actual number of available sex workers through these websites relatively accurately. It is unlikely that adverts would be paid for if the sex worker wasn’t actually working. We therefore base our estimates for these websites on the actual number of adverts. The adverts on *Irish Independent Escorts* were also all included in the estimates, as the numbers of adverts are low and it appears uncommon to upload fake adverts on this website.

3.2.12. The numbers of advertisements on *Adultwork* (the website with the highest numbers of adverts) appear not to reflect the actual number of active sex workers, which we assume to be significantly lower for several reasons.

- Adultwork offers the feature of ‘verifying’ profiles/adverts. To be labelled a ‘verified’ user, sex workers have to send in a copy of their driver’s license or passport or a photo of themselves in which they hold up a print-out of their verification number. On average, about 20% of the adverts are verified. It can be assumed that generally the verified adverts – so about one fifth – relate to active sex workers.
- Advertisements are generally free, unless sex workers want to have their advert placed in the ‘local escorts’ section, where adverts cost £1.50 per day. Only a small number of advertisers use this feature (on average about 5%, most of these are also verified users). As most advertisers don’t pay for their adverts, there is no pressure to remove inactive adverts.
- Some of the advertisements on Adultwork appear to not actually be ads for paid sex but rather for casual sexual encounters (e.g. comments such as “no charges just good sex”).
- A significant number of men advertise their services for women, and while we found some evidence that women pay for sex in Northern Ireland, this does not appear to be common. It is unlikely that the men who advertise here do see a lot of – or any – female clients or can be considered active sex workers.

- Some of these adverts, however, will relate to active sex workers (e.g. part-time sex workers or new members) even though they are not verified.

3.2.13. Based on our assessment of this website and interviews with sex workers and experts, we therefore estimate that only about one fourth to one third of the adverts on Adultwork actually relate to active sex workers.

3.2.14. Backpage, Craigslist, Vivastreet and Escort Magazine, adverts are also free. Thus, similar issues arise in regard to fake or inactive adverts, except for the issue of fake adverts for male sex workers, which does not appear to be as prominent here compared to Adultwork. Vivastreet offers a ‘feature’ service for ads, which involves costs. Around 15-20% of the adverts are featured. The website also offers an email service which allows advertisers to ‘update’ their profile every day via email so that it shows up higher in the list. About one third of the adverts appear to be updated regularly.

3.2.15. Based on these facts, we estimate that about one third to one half of the profiles/adverts on Backpage, Craigslist, Vivastreet and Escort Magazine relate to active sex workers.

3.2.16. Table 7 shows the estimates for each of the websites.

**Table 7: Estimates for actual number of sex workers based on online adverts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Estimate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adultwork</td>
<td>~88-116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>backpage</td>
<td>~19-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigslist</td>
<td>~57-86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort Ireland</td>
<td>~70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escort Magazine</td>
<td>~15-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Independent Escorts</td>
<td>~5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday Sport</td>
<td>~15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivastreet</td>
<td>~18-28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>~287-371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.17. It needs to be taken into account that some sex workers advertise on multiple websites, using multiple profiles, to increase visibility. Every effort was made to discount such multiple advertisements, but there is a chance that a small number of sex workers have been counted multiple times in the above calculation, as it is not always very easy to identify multiple adverts. Other sex workers, however, do not advertise online at all – they may, for example, rely entirely on informal referrals (see also 3.2.4). However, this hidden population is likely to at least make up for any possible multiple counts in Table 7 above.

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9 The prices are not mentioned on the website.
3.2.18. The mean between the two estimates above is $\sim 330$. Combined with the number of street-based sex workers (20), we therefore estimate that the total number of female, male and transgender sex workers potentially contactable by those purchasing sexual services in Northern Ireland is between 300 and 350 on any given day.

3.3. Gender

3.3.1. Over 3 quarters (78%) of respondents logging on to the sex worker survey were female. 18% were male and 4% identified as transgender.

3.3.2. There was a much higher proportion of male sex workers (43%) among those who live in Northern Ireland, which is probably due to the fact that some survey respondents were recruited through an organisation that works with male sex workers. In fact half of all male sex workers in this survey lived in Northern Ireland.

3.3.3. In addition to the surveys, we also recorded the number of online advertisements of sex workers for Northern Ireland over a period of 7 random days on 8 websites (Adultwork, Vivastreet, Escort Ireland, Irish Independent Escorts, Backpage, Craigslist, Sunday Sport, Escort Magazine). The following Table gives the total number of ads/profiles – divided by gender - across all websites for all days. On average, there were 525 advertisements for female sex workers, 209 advertisements for male sex workers and 38 advertisements for transsexual and/or transvestite sex workers in Northern Ireland available online on any one day. Thus, 68% of the adverts were for female, 27% for male, and 5% for trans sex workers.

Table 8: Total and average number of profiles/ads from sex workers operating in Northern Ireland. By gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All female ads/ profiles</th>
<th>All male ads/ profiles</th>
<th>All trans ads/profiles</th>
<th>ALL ads/profiles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>457</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>654</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3</td>
<td>572</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 4</td>
<td>522</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 5</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 6</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>778</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average number per day</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3.4. The results from the survey and the scraping of online data indicate that the majority of people selling sex in Northern Ireland are women.

3.3.5. However, it is important to note that there is an established male prostitution sector in Northern Ireland, and a smaller number of sex workers who identify as transvestite or transgender. In regard to male prostitution, our interviews with experts and service providers indicated that it is mainly young men (late teens to late twenties) selling sexual services to men, although there is a small number of older male sex workers as well as men who sell sex to couples and women. In a study among service users, the Rainbow Project\textsuperscript{10} found that most male sex workers identify as gay or bisexual.

3.4. **Age**

3.4.1. Figure 1 below details the age profile of the sex workers responding to the online survey. Almost half of the sex workers (48%) were below 30 years of age, with the largest group (23%) being in the 26-30 year old age bracket.

3.4.2. Northern Ireland-based sex workers had the highest proportion of sex workers over 40 years of age (32%; UK 30%, Republic of Ireland 22%), and were slightly more likely than their counterparts to be married or to be in a relationship with a partner (16%) – which is very likely related to their slightly higher age.

**Figure 1: Age profile of sex workers in years (survey data) (%)**

3.4.3. Our analysis of online advertisements provided the following information: The age of the sex workers in the ads ranged from 18 to 64 years. The average age was 30.6 years and the median age was 29 years, i.e. half of the sex workers were 29 years of age or younger.

\textsuperscript{10} Unpublished report, Rainbow Project 2011.
One quarter were 24 years or younger. These results mirror the data gathered in the online survey.

Under-age young people involved in prostitution

3.4.4. Our data shows that generally, the number of people involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland who started selling sexual services under the age of 18 is generally low. We found that under-age prostitution appears to be more common for young men than it is for young women.

3.4.5. In the survey, respondents were asked how old they were when they first started selling sexual services. Figure 2 shows the results.

Figure 2: Age at which respondents first sold sexual services (%)

3.4.6. Figure 2 shows that the most likely age when respondents first provided sexual services for payment was 18-21 years. In fact, nearly 3 quarters (74%) of respondents had provided sex for money for the first time before they were 30 years of age. However, there is a significant minority (26%) who were over 30 before they first had sex for payment, and around 6% did not have sex for payment until they were 40 or older.

3.4.7. 5 sex workers (4%) said that they were under the age of 18 when they first started selling sexual services, none of these were based in Northern Ireland. 2 of the sex workers who were interviewed face-to-face (and currently sold sexual services in Northern Ireland) stated that they had started working under the age of 18 (one respondent was 17 and one was 15), and 4 others stated that they were 18 or 19 years old when they started.

3.4.8. Some interviewees (including experts as well as sex workers) reported individual cases of young people under the age of 18 in street prostitution. This does not seem to be common though, and is generally not tolerated in the sex worker community. In regard to
the indoor/online sector, some of the people who advertise (or are advertised) on the websites such as Craigslist and Backpage are said to be 18 and 19 years of age, but could potentially be younger.

3.4.9. As Figure 3 shows, UK and Irish sex workers were much more likely than those with other national backgrounds to start prostitution at a later age, i.e. when they were 35 years of age or older (33% and 13% respectively). They were also a little less likely to have started prostitution before they were 18 years of age, although the number of respondents was too small for this to be statistically significant. Northern Ireland-domiciled sex workers and those working in Northern Ireland generally tended to have started prostitution later and were a bit older compared to the sample overall, but statistically this difference was not very significant.

**Figure 3: Age respondents first sold sex. By Nationality (%)**

3.4.10. When under-aged persons are exploited through prostitution, this appears to be largely organised informally and thus even less visible than other forms of prostitution, as interviews with Barnados, the Belfast Trust Drug Outreach Team, the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service and with sex workers showed.

3.4.11. It appears that some young people engage in sex-for-payment interactions in informal settings (e.g. approaching men in bars, staying in on abusive relationships with groomers). A Barnados staff member also reported that some of the young people they supported over the years may move on to exchange sex for money or other forms of payment once they reach adulthood, i.e. engage in survival sex work, “because their social conditions and their upbringing don’t allow them to do anything else.” Offering sex in return for money, a place to stay or a drink is viewed as a way – or perhaps the only way – to get by.

*Young men in prostitution*

3.4.12. Importantly, three quarters of male sex workers in the survey sample had started prostitution by age 21. This compares with under one third (31%) of female sex
workers. The interview data also suggests that there are more young men selling sex in Northern Ireland than there are young women, i.e. people as young as 16 or 17 years of age. Possible reasons for that were mentioned by a senior doctor at a genito-urinary clinic who regularly treats young male patients:

Some young gay men may feel that they are stigmatised and outside of Northern Irish society already, due to persisting homophobic attitudes, and so they feel that they are beyond normal standards. In this environment, sporadically getting paid for sex may become normalised.

3.4.13. Apart from the small number of professional male online escorts, male prostitution appears to be predominantly opportunistic, i.e. young men offer paid sexual services sporadically, whenever the chance to get paid for sex arises. Clients are approached in bars and clubs or on the street. Service providers at the GUM clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital reported that some of their male patients, particularly those from lower socioeconomic background, engage sporadically in prostitution “when they run out of money.” One doctor commented that the attitude of these young men (18-25 years of age) would be: “If I am going to have sex I may as well take the money.” In this area of opportunistic prostitution, payment may not necessarily be monetary, particularly if the client is also a young man, but may be “a bottle of champagne, a place to stay for the night, a new iPhone,” as the GUM clinic staff explained.

3.5. Nationality, ethnicity and immigration status

Survey results

3.5.1. In the survey, 56% of respondents stated that they were Irish or UK Nationals. The greatest proportion of those who were other nationals were Romanian and Hungarian, but the sample generally included nationals from across the world. 88% of those who were not British or Irish citizens had European citizenship.

3.5.2. The number of local sex workers, that is, respondents with British or Irish nationality, was slightly lower among Northern Ireland-based sex workers (81%) compared to sex workers based in other parts of the UK (88%). Compared to the ROI, however, the number of local sex workers was much higher: only 27% of ROI-based sex workers said that they had British or Irish nationality.

3.5.3. Based on our assessment of online advertisements and interviews with experts, we assume that this high percentage of British and Irish sex workers in the Northern Ireland samples is partially a result of over-reporting of local sex workers in our survey. However, the comparison to the Republic of Ireland may indicate that overall, the percentage of foreign sex workers is higher in the Republic of Ireland than in Northern Ireland.

3.5.4. Based on interview data, we also suggest that this stark difference between the two parts of Ireland could indicate that it is common for foreign sex workers to be based in the Republic of Ireland but to cross the border to Northern Ireland sporadically to work.
Results from the websites

3.5.5. The data scraped from five of the main websites (Adultwork, Escort Ireland, Irish Independent Escorts, Vivastreet, Backpage) also shows a significant number of foreign sex workers: in 139 of the 523 adverts counted on one day for Northern Ireland, advertisers gave a nationality. 41 people advertised as British or English and 6 as Irish, the remaining 66% advertised using various foreign nationalities. The most common nationalities were:

- Brazilian (n=13)
- Hungarian (n=12)
- Romanian (n=12)
- Spanish (n=10)
- Czech (n=5)
- Bulgarian (n=4)
- South American (n=4)
- French (n=3)
- Polish (n=3)
- Portuguese (n=3)

3.5.6. Out of 92 sex workers who advertised using a foreign nationality, 62 (67%) advertised as EU citizens. Brazilian appears to be the single largest non-European country of origin, followed by a number of other South American countries. Asian and African countries are very rarely advertised on the main websites.

3.5.7. While these results do not serve as exact representations of the nationalities of sex workers, they do suggest that the majority of sex workers who work in Northern Ireland are foreign nationals. Furthermore, we deduce that among the foreign nationals in the Northern Ireland sex industry, EU citizens constitute a significant proportion, with Romanian and Hungarian constituting the most common nationalities.

Immigration status

3.5.8. Regarding the immigration status of non-EU nationals, only 4% of the non-EU nationals who completed the online survey said they had no legal status, the remaining sex workers said they were in possession of a tourist or study visa or had a permanent visa.

Ethnicity

3.5.9. Asked to identify their ethnicity, the majority of sex workers who responded to the online survey identified as ‘white’ or ‘Caucasian’. Around 5% said they were ethnically ‘black’ or ‘African’ whilst an even smaller proportion described themselves as ‘Asian’, ‘mixed race’ or identified ethnically by their religion (e.g. Catholic, Christian, Christian Orthodox).

3.5.10. Similarly, online advertisements most commonly state ‘white’ or ‘Caucasian’, with a smaller number of sex workers advertising as ‘Black’, ‘Asian’ or ‘Latino’. Figure 4 below shows the ethnic background of sex workers as given in online adverts. For a large
proportion, the ethnic background is not available, however, the Figure still gives a sense of the profile of sex workers, with the majority identifying as ‘white’ or ‘Caucasian’.

Figure 4: Stated ethnic background of sex workers in online adverts

3.6. Education

3.6.1. Over half (53%) of the sex workers participating in the survey had completed some trade, technical or vocational school or earned an undergraduate degree (Bachelors) or above. 21% had achieved A-levels or equivalent. Only 2% said they had no qualification at all.

3.6.2. This may be partially due to an over-representation of educated sex workers in the survey sample (as people with higher levels of education are more likely to fill out a detailed survey). However, a recent study conducted elsewhere in the UK found that in a survey with 438 participants, “more than one third of respondents were degree-educated, with over 18% (n=88) holding post graduate qualifications” (Jenkins 2009: 99).

3.6.3. The interviews conducted for this study also show that sex workers come from a variety of educational backgrounds, with a significant proportion having completed A-Levels or educated to degree level and only a small proportion without any educational qualifications.

3.6.4. The small number of respondents who had worked in brothels or on the street do not allow for comparisons between different sectors of the sex industry. However, based on interviews, we suggest that among street-based sex workers, education levels tend to be lower, with a number of street sex workers in Northern Ireland not having completed school.

3.6.5. As Table 9 shows, there is no statistical difference between UK/Irish nationals and other nationals with regard to their highest level of education. They were very close indeed. There is also statistically no difference by location where they live – i.e. NI, other parts of
UK, ROI or elsewhere. The Table also shows the qualifications of the Northern Ireland-domiciled sex workers as a comparison.

**Table 9: Educational qualification of sex workers by nationality. Comparison with NI-domiciled sex workers (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>British/Irish</th>
<th>NI-based</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GCSE/junior cert or equivalent</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-level, leaving cert or equivalent</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trade, technical or vocational school</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate/Bachelor</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate - Masters/Phd</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONE</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.7. Locations

**Home address**

3.7.1. Most sex workers gave towns in the UK or the Republic of Ireland as their home address, but some also gave addresses in Eastern Europe (e.g. Bucharest, Prague) as their home address. Some said they ‘travelled Ireland’. Of those respondents who did state their home town, 31 named a city or town in Northern Ireland – most of these Belfast. Table 10 below shows where sex workers said they lived.

**Table 10: Where sex workers’ responding to the study said they lived most of the time (recoded) (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In Northern Ireland</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In other parts of the UK</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhere else or in various places</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing (Location not given)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Locations where sex is sold**

3.7.2. While only 18% said they lived in Northern Ireland, nearly half (46%) of respondents said that they did sell sex in Northern Ireland, again an indication that a significant
proportion of the sex workers who offer services in Northern Ireland do not actually live here and only visit for work for shorter time periods.

3.7.3. 6% of all the respondents who worked in Northern Ireland said they would sell sex anywhere in NI, 18% said they sold sex in Belfast, 5% sold sex in Derry/Londonderry. The proportion of respondents who sold sex in the other listed locations in the survey – namely small towns, is too small to report.

3.7.4. Our detailed analysis of online advertisements on five websites shows a similar picture: over 2 thirds of the 523 adverts related to Belfast and surrounding areas as the location where the sex workers would meet their clients, followed by Derry/Londonderry and surrounding areas. However, all 6 Northern Ireland counties were covered on most webpages, and some adverts stated that the sex workers would work Northern-Ireland wide.

3.7.5. We conclude, based on our survey data and the scraping of websites, that prostitution takes place across Northern Ireland, including smaller towns and rural areas, but that Belfast, and to a lesser extent Derry/Londonderry, are the main locations for prostitution.

3.8. Additional data

Relationship status and family

3.8.1. Just under half (48%) of the sex workers in the survey were currently single, with a further 7% either separated or divorced or widowed. This means that 45% of sex workers were in a relationship, with over one quarter of these (12% overall) either married or in a civil partnership.

3.8.2. Nearly one third of sex workers (32%) had children of their own – their ages varied from under one year to children who had already reached adulthood. 8 in 10 (80%) sex workers with children were also their main carers.

Table 11: Relationship/family status by nationality and of NI-domiciled sex workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a relationship</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>civil partnership/married</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>separated/divorced</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>widowed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has children</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.8.3. As Table 11 shows, sex workers with Irish and British national background were much less likely to be single than those from other nationalities. They were also twice as likely (42%) as those from other nationalities to have children. The proportion of Northern Ireland-based sex workers with children was very similar to those who said they lived in other parts of the UK (43%), but much higher than those who lived in the Republic of Ireland (26%).

Religion

3.8.4. Just over half (51%) of sex workers said they belonged to a religion. 42% said religion is not important to them, whilst 32% said that it was.

3.8.5. A higher proportion of Northern-Ireland based sex workers (34%) than in those in other parts of the UK (22%), but a lower proportion than those in the Republic of Ireland (60%) said they belonged to a religion. This was also reflected in the importance that respondents said religion had for them, with sex workers based in the Republic of Ireland placing a higher importance on religion than sex workers in Northern Ireland whilst sex workers from other parts of the UK placed the least importance on religion.

Criminal record

3.8.6. Sex workers were asked about their criminal record. Over 8 in 10 (84%) had never been arrested. 9% said they had been arrested, but not convicted, whilst 4% had been convicted. Only one of these arrests or convictions related to prostitution. 2% refused to answer this question.

3.9. Diversity of the sample

3.9.1. In the survey, respondents were offered the opportunity to write comments about their backgrounds. Below are some quotes that characterise the diverse sample.

Good family, well educated, have had high paying "normal" jobs in the past but just prefer to escort. [British respondent]

I came from a structured, religious and conventional family. I had a good formal and moral education. I see this only as a job like any other and I think that relating sex professionals to a class of unworthy and drugged people, slag of humanity, is a stupidity of a hypocritical society. [Latin American respondent]

I came with someone I loved to get a job and get my life back on track. After 5 years, almost 6, I'm still in the same **** place I was back in my country. I was abused mentally and psychically by my brother and mother – it was a way out for me. Since I didn’t have money to go to UK, I worked in brothel in my country for 1.5 months and I met someone from UK who told me I’m gonna end up doing the same over there. He was right. I had a choice to go back home or live on the street in England when I got left out without anything by the guy who I came with, I decided to have sex for money since I was too proud to go back to my personal hell. [Polish respondent]
I come from a wonderful hard working family, farmers in rural Ireland, people who
neighbours go to for help, my mother over-loves me, and my father is the template of the
man I hope to marry, in morals, and been good dad. I grew up in rural Ireland, I was heavily
involved in the community, worked from young age. I’m sick of people presuming I must be
abused, come from neglect. I like sex, and found my Masters was quicker paid for it by
selling it. [Irish respondent]

I came here to look for a job because Romania didn't satisfy me financially. [Romanian
respondent]

I was in full time employment; I wanted to return to education but needed to fund my
choice. I made an informed decision to start escorting to fund my education. [British
respondent]

Before, I was in a relationship with someone I trusted for 5 years. I sacrificed myself for him.
This man disappointed me in every possible way. I used to run a hairdresser’s. I had a
permanent and stable job. Unfortunately, because of my feelings and trust I had for him, I
had to close down my business and leave my town without notice. I was harassed and
threatened to. I decided to do this to be able to fight for my rights and come back home.
[Polish respondent]

3.9.2. The sex workers who took part in the face-to-face interviews also come from a range
of backgrounds. The sample included, amongst others:

- a young woman from Romania who views prostitution as a way of financing her
  lifestyle and enjoys the financial freedom it offers her
- a Northern Irish woman who sold sex in order to finance her heroin addiction and
  experienced prostitution to be damaging to her self-esteem and self-worth
- a Northern Irish man in his 40s who identifies as gay and has been engaged in
  prostitution since the age of 15 as a way of making ends meet
- a British single Mother with two diplomas who sells sexual services to pay off debts
  and is currently working towards adding to her third level education
- a Belfast woman who started selling sexual services in her late 40s and who feels that
  this part-time job has given her a purpose in life and makes her feel appreciated
- a woman in her early 20s from Poland who has earned two degrees while working in
  the sex industry but who feels that due to the stigma attached to it, prostitution
  prevents her from enjoying her life and building relationships
- a Northern Irish man in his late 40s who started advertising as an escort for female
  clients in addition to taking part in swinger parties and working in the porn industry
- a Romanian woman in her late 20s who was forced to start selling sex by an abusive
  boyfriend at the age of 17 but who now works as an independent escort
- a Northern Irish mother of several children who has been battling with various drug addictions all her life and has, for a significant period of time, relied on prostitution to substitute her income
4. NORTHERN IRELAND’S SEX INDUSTRY

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we address the following questions:

- What do the different sectors of the sex industry (outdoor/indoor prostitution) look like in Northern Ireland?
- How is prostitution organised? What is the role of third parties, e.g. agencies, bookers, and organised crime gangs?
- How are local communities affected by prostitution?

MAIN FINDINGS

- Prostitution takes place all across Northern Ireland, although it is concentrated in Belfast.
- Over recent years, the Northern Ireland sex industry has changed significantly. There has been a general increase in people selling sexual services in the indoor sector, facilitated by the internet. As a result of increasing mobility and transnational migration, the sex worker population has also become more diverse, including a significant number of foreign nationals. Simultaneously, street-based prostitution has decreased, with only about 20 people selling sexual services outdoors.
- Street-based sex workers are mainly local women, with a smaller number of male and transgender sex workers selling sex outdoors. Street sex workers usually work independently, that is, without being controlled or ‘worked by’ someone else.
- Street-based sex workers are more likely than indoor sex workers to come from a poor economic background, to have low levels of education, to start at a younger age and to have issues with drug-addiction. However, it is important to note that not all street-based sex workers fit these characteristics.
- The indoor sector constitutes the largest sector in Northern Ireland’s sex industry. The majority of sex workers work as ‘escorts’, that is, advertise for their services via the internet.
- The indoor sector is characterised by mobility. Indoor sex workers offer ‘out-calls’, that is visits to the home of the client or a hotel room rented by the client, and/or ‘in-calls’, that is visits to accommodation rented by the sex worker (hotel rooms or apartments). Many sex workers also go ‘on tour’, working in multiple locations within Northern Ireland and across the border.
- ‘Brothels’ in Northern Ireland usually constitute regular apartments or houses, with often only one sex worker being present at a time. These locations are either rented by one of
the sex workers or by a third person, commonly referred to by sex workers as a ‘booker’, i.e. someone who manages the appointments with clients. Appointments are made in advance via the internet or telephone. Stereotypical ‘walk-in’ brothels with several sex workers working at the same time are uncommon in Northern Ireland.

- Indoor sex workers either work independently or with/or a third person. Working with or for a third person can include any or all of the following practices: someone else sets up and manages online profiles; takes phone calls; arranges and manages bookings with clients; determines the kinds of services to be provided by the sex worker; sets the prices; organises and facilitates travel (within one region or across national borders); and arranges accommodation.

- It is important to note that working with or for someone else, such as a ‘booker’ or an escort agency, can be an informed decision by the sex worker. Some sex workers, particularly foreign sex workers with limited language skills and knowledge of the Northern Ireland sex industry, find it easier to have someone else manage their online profiles and bookings. On the other hand, some research participants described exploitative practices, including over-charging for services, sometimes resulting in debt-bondage, and threats and violence by managers, agents or crime gangs.

- The PSNI informed us that the number of people who actively control and manage prostitution and trafficking is small. Local paramilitary groups do not play a significant role in organising prostitution in Northern Ireland.

- While the limit and scope of the research does not allow any definite estimates of the percentage of people in the sex industry who work independently or for a third party, we can conclude the majority of sex workers in Northern Ireland are not being controlled – in the sense of having little or no say over their working conditions and/or working against their will – or involved with organised crime. The changes in the sex industry, i.e. the increasing use of the internet to advertise and to communicate with other people in the sex industry, appears to contribute to a wider range of working arrangements and more independence for sex workers.

- In regard to how prostitution affects local communities, we found that prostitution was rarely brought up as an area of concern by members of the public. While trafficking for sexual exploitation has received some attention (e.g. resulting in campaigns to raise awareness), prostitution is not a priority issue for the councils that took part in this research.

### 4.2. Sectors of the industry

#### 4.2.1. In the online survey, respondents were asked in what sections of the sex industry they were working. The majority worked as escorts, that is, in the online-based indoor sector described in more detail below. Fewer than 3% said they worked as a street sex worker,
provided phone sex or webcam sex or worked in a brothel or massage parlour/sauna. Those working in Northern Ireland were exclusively working as escorts.

4.2.2. While these numbers are not representative of the entire sex worker population (see 2.6.9), they do match the information we gathered regarding the current composition of Northern Ireland's sex industry: internet-based indoor prostitution constitutes the largest section of the industry.

4.2.3. In the following, we describe both outdoor and indoor prostitution in Northern Ireland in more detail.

**Outdoor prostitution**

**Extent**

4.2.4. Street prostitution appears to exist only in the city centres of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. Over recent years, numbers have dropped: from about 30 to 40 people to about 15 people selling sex in Belfast’s city centre, and even less in Derry/Londonderry. As a PSNI officer said in an interview:

> We have no longer much of an issue in respect of on-street prostitution. (...) This is not twenty years ago, when you could’ve driven round parts of Belfast, like most parts of other European cities, and you would’ve found the proverbial red light district. You won't find that anymore in Belfast, it doesn't exist.

4.2.5. This is related to the significant changes the Northern Ireland sex industry over the last few years: instead of walking the streets, people now use the internet to advertise their services. Only a small number of people remain on the streets.

4.2.6. Another factor that may have caused a decrease in visible on-street prostitution is the change in the law in 2008, when soliciting and loitering for the purposes of prostitution became illegal under the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, rendering it more likely for sex workers to be arrested by the police when working outside. As a staff member with 14 years of experience at the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service, the only service in Northern Ireland that caters specifically to sex workers, explained:

| Interviewee: | Before the changes of the law, the police would've come around and chatted, said hello and befriended them [the street-based sex workers]. And then, in the next few months they were getting, like, warnings... |
| Researcher: | After the law changed? |
| Interviewee: | The law changed, and... well, I don't even know if anybody has actually been arrested, I think they've been cautioned. So someone would have had two cautions and been told that next time it would be an arrest for her. But in some ways that's sad too, because I don't see those people then as frequently [in the drop-in centre], so you don't know what's going on in their life. And I do feel... |
that we push them into secrecy, and I think that in that secrecy there's more danger.

Profile

4.2.7. The majority of street-based sex workers are women, although there has been, and still is, a small number of men who offer sexual services to men in Belfast city centre. Men generally appear to work separately from the female street-based sector, and offer their services in different locations. There are also a small number of transvestite and transgender sex workers in the street sector.

4.2.8. The street-based sector in Northern Ireland appears to be largely composed of local sex workers, that is, people from across Northern Ireland who come to Belfast (and to a lesser extent to Derry/Londonderry) on working nights. Research participants with knowledge of the Belfast street prostitution scene mentioned foreign nationals, including women from Africa and Eastern Europe, who worked in the city centre for a period of time. However, the majority of street-based sex workers continue to be Northern Ireland women.

4.2.9. Our data also shows that street-based sex workers in Northern Ireland generally work independently, that is, they are usually not controlled or ‘worked by’ someone else.

Transactions

4.2.10. In street-based prostitution, sex workers either wait for clients on street corners or in their own cars. Clients generally drive by in a car to pick up a sex worker. In some cases, sex workers also give out their mobile phone numbers to clients, particularly to regular clients, who can then contact them directly. The interaction then takes place somewhere else: in a parking lot or darker street, or even in the client’s home.

4.2.11. Prices are generally lower than in the indoor sector, and are based on the service provided and not on time. The standard price for full sex appears to be around £50 or £40, £30 for oral sex and £20 for ‘hand relief’.

Vulnerabilities

4.2.12. Lower prices and risky practices such as these would usually be offered by people in a particularly vulnerable situation: drug users, people from a very poor economic background who desperately need money, inexperienced and/or younger sex workers, and foreign sex workers – and particularly people with a combination of these factors.

4.2.13. It appears that a number of the people who engage in street-based prostitution have drug-addiction issues, have experienced psychological and physical abuse in their childhood and/or come from a care background. The following text was written by one of the interviewees, Michael, a man in his forties who identifies as gay. It exemplifies the vulnerability of street-based sex workers. Michael did not complete school education. Prostitution constituted his main and only way of earning money since the age of 15.
When I was working as a prostitute when I was 15 years old I felt used by men for I did not know what I was supposed to do. And when we finished we went back to where he picked me up and handed me money and I didn’t know why he was asking me to take it off him. So I felt like a rent boy. So I thought why not, if they just want me for sex. And I usually got a client once a week or when I was going through the place where people get picked up for sex. Mostly they were married men and I was taken to their house but they always said their wives were out. One client tried to tie me up and burn my skin but I always let the girls know where I am and we all looked out for each other who worked the street, and if we were not back they would pass on the car number to the police. But thankfully I got back. I go back to the street sometimes but I always take another girl who worked the street with me now.

4.2.14. One of the women interviewed for this study, described working in the streets, referring to other women that she had met while working:

You are standing there in minus 10 in the winter and it is freezing and it is late and you don’t have a penny to get taxi home, what are you going to do? You have to do something to get home. So you lower your price, offer something you don’t usually offer. You know, touch wood, I never, never had to do that because I always had a car. I always had food in my cupboards. But there is a lot of people down there who don’t have heating, don’t have food, don’t have electric, you know, maybe they have a drink problem and of course, you want that bottle of vodka, that bottle of wine, that bottle of whatever, you desperately need that. I don’t know, maybe they have kids, they need that electric for the morning for the kids, they need school uniforms, they need to feed the kids – of course you gonna lower your price. (Betty)

4.2.15. However, there are also street-based sex workers who do not fit into these categories of vulnerability. Betty is now in her late 30s, a successful, married business woman. She sold sexual services in Belfast city centre for 5 years to pay off a debt, and once she had paid it off, she left. She was very clear about her rules and her reasons to sell sexual services: she used the money she earned only for the purpose of paying off her debt, and did not offer full sex to clients either. In the interview, she was asked:

Reseacher: *Looking back, do you regret that you did it?*
Betty: *No.*
Reseacher: *Do you feel that it is or was damaging to you in any way?*
Betty: *No, definitely not. I think it made me a stronger person. It just ... it was a path in my life I had to take at the time and with no other option whatsoever. I wouldn’t say I regret it but it is a part of my past I don’t want to talk about.*
Reseacher: *And why is that?*
Betty: *Because I have moved on and married. I’m happy now, and that is the old me. I think I wouldn’t have got to where I’m today without doing it. I wouldn’t have*
survived, you know, I can't say what would have happened, but I certainly don't think I would have been who I am.

**Indoor prostitution**

4.2.16. The term ‘indoor prostitution’ covers a range of different practices and interactions which are difficult to group neatly into different categories, as there are overlaps between different forms of selling sex indoors, and certain terms (such as ‘escort’) may refer to different practices depending on who uses them and in which context. Generally, indoor prostitution in Northern Ireland is organised via the internet, that is, services are advertised on specific websites, and appointments are booked in advance (either directly with the sex worker or with an agency/a booker).

**Extent**

4.2.17. Indoor prostitution organised via the internet is currently the largest part of the Northern Ireland sex industry, and has grown over the last years. Several different websites are available for those seeking to sell and buy sexual services, ranging from dedicated ‘escort’ websites to ‘all-purpose’ websites such as Craigslist where people informally advertise for sex. While an advert on one of the main websites, escort-ireland.com costs 100 Euro per week, advertising on websites such as backpage.com and Craigslist is free, which makes the latter particularly attractive to sex workers who lack the funds to pay for professional advertising, and for those who only work part-time (e.g. in addition to another job) and thus do not want to spend money on advertising.\(^{11}\)

**Advertising and prices**

4.2.18. On specialised escort websites, sex workers upload a profile that includes more or less detailed information about themselves, the services they provide, their prices, and their current location (many sex workers work in various different places, see 4.2.36). Many profiles include photos. On less professional and multi-use websites such as Craigslist, adverts are very short, and less detailed and precise.

4.2.19. In our assessment of five of the commonly used websites (see 2.2.23) we found that prices for female sex workers start at £30 for 15 min and for male sex workers at £10 for 15 min. The lowest price we found for transgender/transvestite sex workers was £10 for 30 min. The highest starting price (i.e. the minimum price a client would have to pay) mentioned in adverts was £300 for one hour for female sex workers and £100 for half an hour for male and trans sex workers. Based on the interviews we conducted, it appears that prices depend on various factors, including:

- the experience of the sex worker (with newcomers often offering lower prices)
- the services provided (with specialised or rare services paying more)

\(^{11}\) For a detailed overview of websites assessed in this study, see 2.2.20.
- the image of the sex worker (e.g. an internationally known porn star will charge more)
- the perceived ‘desirability’ of the sex worker (e.g. based on client reviews).

Services provided

4.2.20. On specialised escort websites, profiles usually include the range of services offered by the sex worker, whereas adverts on multi-purpose websites such as Craigslist are short and do not give details. Some sex workers specialise, for example in domination, whereas others offer a wide range of different services.

4.2.21. In the online escort industry the encounter between the sex worker and the client is not necessarily just about sex: talking, eating together, cuddling, or simply ‘hanging out’ can be part of the interaction. For some clients, this is part of the attraction:

I would have a couple of preferred people that I would return to. You build up a rapport with them. Quite often it is not just about the sex, it is about, you know, having a bit of craic with each other, with jokes going on and being sort of silly and burst out laughing and I think that is what makes it. No way would I classify it as mechanical process, it is very much interactive, it is good fun. (Jonathan)

And then you discover whenever you go visiting them that they are actually real people. They are not the – well at least the ones I have met – not dirty, filthy, diseased – et cetera, what you read about in so many descriptions, they seem to be perfectly nice people. I don’t make any pretence that there’s a romance going on, it’s a commercial transaction. But some of them are very interesting to talk to. (Paul)

Maybe I’m looking for company as well, you know. It’s someone you can open up to and tell everything, really, about my own home life, the family – everything really, you name it, I’d talk to them about it! (Roger)

4.2.22. Some sex workers described similar interactions:

A lot of them like pay for an hour and just want that closeness with someone, they would say just lie beside me on the bed, you know, and saying: let me hug you, you know, you chat to them and stuff. (Aileen)

 Mostly I do hours, so the client comes in, in the apartment, we sit on the couch and talk for like 20 minutes. (Bella)

 There is a thing escorts offer called the ‘girlfriend experience’ where you get on like a girlfriend would get on, so you get a client that will take you out for dinner or going to the cinema, go out for lunch or go out for coffee or whatever. And then I have had clients in the past who paid me for an hour and all they have done is just talk and cuddle or whatever and watch a movie and that was it. (Francis)

4.2.23. This is one of the significant differences to the street-based sector, but also to sex workers in the online sector who charge lower prices, which appear to be focused on the
sexual interaction that the client pays for.

Setting up meetings with clients

4.2.24. There are two main ways of setting up a meeting with a sex worker: the client either gets in touch via private message (using the messaging function on the website) or phone, or less commonly, makes an appointment via an online booking system.

4.2.25. Before meeting a new client, many sex workers ‘screen’ or ‘scan’ the client, i.e. decide based on the phone conversation and/or email contact whether or not they want to meet the person (see 6.3.8).

4.2.26. Where the sex worker is working for an agency or with a ‘booker’, the person answering the phone or responding to the email is not the sex worker. This is not usually made known to the client because of the stigma attached to working with an agency. In Northern Ireland, any sort of third-person involvement may be labelled as ‘pimping’ regardless of the actual relationship between the sex worker and the agent/booker (see 4.3).

In-calls and out-calls

4.2.27. In-calls refer to encounters that take place in the sex worker’s place of (temporary) residence, most commonly a hotel room or rented apartment/house (see 4.2.31) and less often her/his own home.

4.2.28. Out-calls refer to encounters that take place in a location chosen by the client, e.g. the client’s home or a hotel room rented by the client.

4.2.29. Some sex workers only do in-calls as they feel that being able to choose the location makes the encounter safer for them.

‘Brothels’

4.2.30. ‘Brothels’ in Northern Ireland tend to be regular houses or flats that are not readily identifiable as such from the outside, with sex workers working, usually one at a time, in shifts. These houses may be run by a third party (e.g. a ‘booker’) or simply rented by a sex worker who then sublets to other sex workers and coordinates the work schedules. Advertising strategies are usually internet-based, and bookings need to be made in advance.

4.2.31. Legally, the term ‘brothel’ is ambiguous. It is not defined in the relevant legislation, Article 64 of the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, ‘keeping a brothel used for prostitution’. As a PSNI officer explained:

There's a lot of ambiguity with the brothel-keeping offences. How many people need to be present in a brothel for it to be a brothel? How many need to be providing sexual services? How many people need to be there on a day to day basis or at a particular time?
4.2.32. Because of the small size of brothels in Northern Ireland (with often only one sex worker present at any one time), they are sometimes referred to as ‘micro-brothels’. One of the characteristics of micro-brothels is that they are often ‘mobile’: the house or apartment may only be rented for a short period of time. This is done to avoid suspicion and disclosure.

4.2.33. It appears that it is mainly women who work in these micro-brothels. In their research, the Rainbow Project\textsuperscript{12} did not find evidence of male and trans sex workers working in brothels in Northern Ireland, and it was not mentioned by any of the participants in our research project.

4.2.34. There is some anecdotal evidence (e.g. from sex workers who had heard about it from clients) that there may be places in Northern Ireland that match more closely the popular idea of a brothel – with several sex workers being present at any given time, and clients being able to ‘choose’ the sex worker without a previous booking. These places may also be characterised by an element of control (i.e. the person who runs the house using psychological or physical violence and exploiting the workers).

‘Touring’

4.2.35. Mobility is one of the defining features of current prostitution in Northern Ireland. Many sex workers offer services in more than one location across Northern Ireland, either by offering out-calls to visit clients, or by booking a hotel or renting an apartment for short periods of time in different locations.

4.2.36. As already discussed in 2.1, sex workers frequently cross national borders. Out of the 62 respondents who said that they sold sexual services in Northern Ireland, 32 respondents worked exclusively in Northern Ireland while the remaining 30 respondents also worked in other parts of the UK or in the ROI, or even in other parts of Europe or worldwide. Out of the 19 people interviewed, 9 travelled across the border to the Republic of Ireland or to other parts of the UK to work.

4.2.37. Sex workers commonly refer to this work-related mobility as ‘touring’. It is a business strategy employed by independent escorts and by agencies and other third parties to increase client numbers. Despite the financial gains touring may bring, some sex workers found travelling exhausting, and were concerned about the costs, as Bella, an independent escort, explained:

\begin{quote}
The travel is harder than to stay in one place, it’s more stress. Sometimes, I can make more money. But, you see, if I travel, it’s like: if you are lucky you are working, if you are unlucky you don’t work, so the petrol, food, cigarettes and accommodation – that’s a lot of money. You go in and then you have to make that money and then you have to make plus. While if I stay here [in Dublin], I don’t have to pay accommodation and petrol and stress, so, I just get that plus and I don’t have to work as hard as I would be working if I am touring.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12} Unpublished report, Rainbow Project 2011.
4.3. Independence and third party involvement

4.3.1. In addition to differentiating between the indoor and the outdoor sector, our results have shown that it is also important to differentiate between different forms of work arrangements, as selling sexual services can be organised in various different ways. Generally, it appears useful to differentiate between:

- sex workers who work independently, that is, they determine their working conditions e.g. prices, clients, times, locations, services provided;
- and sex workers who work with or for a third party, that is, someone else has a say in regard to their working conditions, e.g. prices, clients, times, locations, services provided.

4.3.2. It is important to highlight that working with or for a third party can be an informed choice made by the sex worker, and – viewed from the perspective of the sex worker – does not necessarily imply any form of control, exploitation or abuse. Working with or for a third party includes various different practices and relationships, ranging from the relative independence of the sex worker to forms of highly controlled and restrictive relationships, as discussed further below.

4.3.3. There is also a degree of fluctuation between different forms of working. It appears that one of the most common trajectories for foreign sex workers is to first work with an agent or a ‘boyfriend’ and then move on to work independently once they have learned how things work in the new location and have better language skills. For example, talking about other Romanian sex workers she knows, Bella explained:

\[\text{I have a friend who helped a girl from Romania to come over; she paid for her flight ticket. This girl started working, and the other girl was doing the phone for her, paid for the advertising and paid for the accommodation, and they were doing 50/50. At some stage this girl started sharing [an apartment] with independent girls, so this independent girl said: Your English is very good, why do you allow somebody to do the phone for you? Work for yourself and keep all the money! So at some stage the girl was like: F...k this, I am going on my own. (Bella)}\]

**Working independently**

**Extent**

4.3.4. In the online survey, 85% of respondents said they currently did not work for or with somebody who partially kept their wages. This figure was the same (84%) among those who said they worked in Northern Ireland, but it was even higher (94%) among Northern-Ireland domiciled sex workers.

4.3.5. 17 of the 19 sex workers interviewed for this study (18 of whom worked in Northern Ireland) were currently working independently. 6 of these had worked with or for someone else in the past (e.g. an escort agency).
4.3.6. Street-based sex workers in Northern Ireland also generally work independently. We have found no evidence of current involvement of paramilitary groups or other third parties in street prostitution.

4.3.7. Our data shows that working independently is common, particularly among British and Irish sex workers, and those foreign nationals who have the language and organisational skills required to work independently and/or have been working in the sex industry long enough to be able to run their own business.

Independent sex workers as employers

4.3.8. In some cases, independent sex workers employ someone to work for them, for example as a security guard. This may look like a sex worker-‘pimp’-relationship from the outside but may be merely a safety measure. For example, some sex workers would bring along a man when doing out-calls, as this makes them feel safer:

I have a guy who looks after me – he’s not a pimp, I would stress that. There’s no sex between us. I pay him to drive me and sit there for security, because I got robbed at knife point before. And he’s just some guy that I know through someone else and he’s been struggling to look after his family. He cooks for me, he cleans for me, he puts my washing on, looks after me. He’s lovely to me, you know. (Alexandra)

Renting accommodation

4.3.9. Some independent sex workers rent apartments, houses or rooms for a short time (usually days or weeks) while ‘touring’. Landlords may or may not know what the purpose of the rental agreement is. Sometimes landlords are also involved in prostitution, i.e. escorts who rent out their houses or apartments to other escorts. Usually, these relationships are limited to renting out the apartment. For example, when asked how she would describe the relationship with the person who sub-lets an apartment to her for her tours, Bella replied: “It is just the person who rents and pays for the apartment, nothing really.”

4.3.10. The price most often mentioned by research participants was 700 Euro/Pounds per week (half if the apartment was shared with another sex worker). To advertise apartments, some landlords/tenants send text messages to the phone numbers given in online escort profiles, thereby informing escorts about the rooms available.

Working for or with a third party

4.3.11. When working with or for a third party, this person would most commonly be in charge of any or all of the following tasks:

- set up and manage online profiles;
- take phone calls (on the number provided in the sex workers advertisements);
- arrange and manage bookings with clients;
- determine the kinds of services to be provided by the sex worker;
- set the prices;
- organise and facilitate travel (within one region or across national borders);
- arrange accommodation.

4.3.12. These activities could be undertaken by:
- an individual ‘booker’, i.e. someone who rents a house and arranges bookings with clients for the sex workers who work in the house;
- an agency that specialises in escort services;
- an organised crime gang;
- or, in some cases, a ‘boyfriend’ or partner who profits from the engagement.

4.3.13. It is important to note that the majority of sex workers who took part in this research would not refer to a third party as a ‘pimp’ or a ‘crime gang’ nor view them as criminals. Instead, they would refer to ‘bookers’ or ‘agencies’.

4.3.14. Even though these activities may not necessarily be perceived as exploitation or abuse by the sex workers involved, they constitute criminal offences under the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008. Between 2007 and 2012, there were 22 convictions for principal offences related to exploitation of prostitution, that is, brothel-keeping (i.e. keeping, managing or assisting in managing a place where more than one sex worker works), inciting prostitution for gain and/or controlling prostitutes for gain (i.e. intentionally controlling the activities of a sex worker and financially gaining from it) (DoJ data 2014, see 8.7.12 for more details).

4.3.15. Generally, when working with or for someone else, the lines between ‘free choice’ and exploitation are blurry. Our research suggests that the majority of foreign nationals who sell sexual services in Northern Ireland, and are working with a third party, were aware that they would be working in prostitution before they moved. However, some of them may have hoped for a better income or better working conditions than they found. An administrator of the Irish UglyMugs scheme, an online service that allows sex workers to report and be informed about violent clients and other forms of trouble, explained:

They're not under any illusion that they're doing a different type of work. What would be the case is that the advertising only highlights the positives of it. They are promised huge amounts of money, luxury lifestyles, everything wonderful. I've seen plenty of adverts which are really quite ridiculous amounts of money, you know – saying how you can earn 10,000 Euro a week. For that, you'd want to be seeing an awful lot of clients, and if there's a percentage going to the agency, what is that 20,000 a week you're supposed to be bringing in? So, what often happens is girls come over with an agency and they do not get what they expected, because they do not make the kind of money that they were expecting to make, but the apartment they're in might be squalid, disgusting, dirty, and they might be working with other girls they don't like. I've also never in my life seen agencies highlighting that when
you work together, you can get arrested, so they might get arrested by the police, and prosecuted, and named in the newspapers, and all of this. So it's certainly common that people come over and they get not what they were expecting.

4.3.16. Similarly, a PSNI officer, when asked about the forms of exploitation he encountered in his work on organised prostitution, said:

> It started off as 50/50, but sometimes it went down to maybe 20% they were receiving; but even that was actually good recompense for what they would have received being a sex worker in Romania. As you can see from the adverts, the recruitment adverts, for sex workers – there’s actually Romanian females now advertising themselves, wanting to be sex workers, to come to the UK and Ireland. So there’s no shortage of sex workers that they can recruit. In our view, they were exploiting them. In their own view, they probably didn’t think they were being exploited as badly as we thought they were being exploited.

Extent

4.3.17. In the online survey, a range of questions were asked to establish relationships with agencies and other third parties. As detailed in 4.3.4, the majority of respondents (85%) said they worked independently. 7% said that they sometimes worked with or for someone else, and 8% said they did so all the time. 2 of the 19 sex workers interviewed were currently working with someone else (a ‘booker’ who rents a house and coordinates the working schedules of the sex workers). A further 6 had worked with or for someone else in the past.

4.3.18. Importantly, foreign national survey respondents were more than twice as likely as UK/Irish nationals to work all the time or sometimes for an agency (22% compared to 9%). This is probably reflective of the fact that, due to language problems and lack of knowledge of the locality, foreign nationals are more likely to rely on someone else to organise their work and travel. In the survey, the proportion of Northern Ireland-based sex workers who worked for someone else was so small that a statistical breakdown is not meaningful.

4.3.19. Working with an agency or a booker appears to be particularly common for sex workers from Eastern European countries, and much less common for sex workers from the UK and from Central and Western Europe. As a PSNI officer explained:

> I think all the UK nationals and parts of the EU – Germany, France – all those sex workers who are operating within Northern Ireland are working independently, and they book their adverts themselves. But I think the majority of Eastern Europeans would be working with an agency. However, if there is an Eastern European who has become localised in Northern Ireland, who is actually living here, then yes, they could be independent; but for the ones who are appearing and disappearing, they usually aren’t.

4.3.20. Migration policies also play an important role in leading people to rely on a third party. For migrants from outside the European Union, it is impossible to come to the UK and
Ireland to work in the sex industry legally. They would either have to enter the country on a tourist or student visa and then work illegally, or enter the country clandestinely. Some rely on someone else to lend them money for the visa, help them arrange their travel and facilitate their entry into the sex industry (see 8.4.5 for the overlaps between organising prostitution and trafficking).

‘Fees’ to third parties

4.3.21. In the online survey, nearly 4 in 10 (37%) of those respondents who said they did pay fees or relinquished some of their earnings to a third party stated that it was difficult to say how much they paid, as it depended on the circumstances (e.g. some sex workers for different agencies who charge different percentages). For the majority of those who did pay a proportion of their income to someone else, this share was below 50% of their earnings. Only one respondent said that they had to hand in all earnings and one other respondent said that the figure was between 50 and 75%.

4.3.22. The face-to-face interviews painted a similar picture: interviewees (including sex workers and experts) stated that the fees charged by third parties for services range from 20% to 60%.

Advertising strategies of agencies and bookers

4.3.23. Advertisements for agencies and bookers are found online on websites such as Backpage. Research participants also mentioned trans-national recruiting practices: people who sell sex in other countries are approached by professional agents or other individuals with knowledge of Northern Ireland sex industry, who recruit with the prospect of earning much more in a shorter time:

Some Romanian guys have an apartment here and they look for girls in Romania, they go and they chat on the forum [with them], whatever, it’s like: ‘Well, if you wanna come over, I pay the flight ticket, can we go 50/50, I will take care of you, I will drive you around and so on. Now, you get 4 Euros for shagging there [in Romania], like, come on now, 4 to 40 Euros is a f…g huge difference, who would say no?! (Bella)

Sex workers’ views on working with agencies and bookers

4.3.24. Sex workers’ views on working with a third party varied. Some viewed it as a convenient alternative to working independently, as the following sequence exemplifies:

Working on your own is quite intensive as far as your own time and commitment is to the whole thing, you are doing all the email, you are doing the admin. The guy I work with now charges rent of a fiver an hour, that covers heating and everything like that and cleaning and stuff and then he takes 20% off the fee for the bookings. I think that is fair, because he is

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13 As explained in the introduction, this is different from cases where people are forced into the sex industry against their will, which is not considered to be ‘sex work’ and thus discussed separately in the section on trafficking. In those cases, the person controlling them keeps all of the earnings.
very efficient. He is very good at scheduling. You are never left without clients. And if you have any problem with any client... very rarely do we have any problems but if you do, you just tell him, he will block that number, block that email address. And working with the booker, even though they are not on the premises, you feel safer because you know there is another person, he knows the phone number of somebody who is going to see you whereas when working on your own you are completely on your own. (Melissa)

4.3.25. Some sex workers are ambivalent about agencies, as the following extract from the interview with Sarah, a woman in her early thirties who works as an independent escort, shows. Sarah generally views the activities of agencies and bookers as exploitative, based on what she had heard about them. However, her own personal experience contradicted this view, leading her to feel that in some cases, working with a third party may not be problematic for the sex workers involved.

Researcher: So, working for an agency and working independently, it's like two different worlds?
Sarah: It's sort of two different worlds. Like there was one time there, in XX, it was heavily controlled by a pimp, and you couldn't work in XX unless you actually had permission, and rented off him. I really want to go to XX, so I rang him up, made an appointment to rent an apartment for a week, it was three hundred and fifty, which meant I'd be sharing with one of his agency girls. It was so funny, he told me to meet him at Tesco's, so I was just standing there with my giant suitcase with all my crap in it, and I saw this big, brute of a man, with loads of piercings and tattoos prowling the car park. And I had my phone in my hand and I was thinking, please don't let that be him, please don't let that be him – and I rang him, and it was him that answered the phone!! I was like, 'noooo!'

Researcher: Did you run away?
Sarah: No, I didn't! Because he turned round and seen me on the phone, and waved. (...) So, jumped in the car with him. (...) Jim brought me to the apartment, showed me the apartment, he was lovely – he looked so dangerous and menacing, but he was the loveliest fella. I gave him his money, he showed me the room and everything, and then introduced me to the girl who was working there, and that was it – I was left alone, could work my own free will.

Researcher: But you called him a pimp earlier, so...?
Sarah: Yeah, I'm against agency, so I call people who are in control of agencies pimps.

Researcher: Why are you against agencies?
Sarah: I don't know, well, you see... they charge the girls for the rooms, and then they take a percentage off their earnings. And it's not the girls who decide where they want to go, it's them who (...) tell them where to go, and the girls don't
really have a choice to see someone or not see someone, if you know what I mean.

Researcher: Because they would get kicked out of the agency if they didn’t?

Sarah: Actually I don’t know what would happen there. I’ve only seen a small fraction of what happens. But the girl I was staying with [at the apartment that Jim rented out], she was perfectly happy, she had her computer, phone, laptop, whatever, all sitting there, and she said to me she would earn in a week there, she would make more money than what she would earn at home in a month. So even though she was giving half her money to him, she was still earning more. (...) I don’t know, every girl who I’ve met in the agencies, they all seem to have come of their own free will, or whatever. Yes, technically they may be pimped, in the eyes of the law, but it was their own free will, or they wanted to come over and earn money.

4.3.26. Other sex workers expressed concerns regarding the potential for exploitation in these arrangements and described abusive practices. The following conversation with Aileen, a woman in her late 30s who works in a house together with several other women (though never at the same time), exemplifies the potential risks of working with a booker.

Aileen: Jessica and Liz [two of the other sex workers] used to work for this other guy and this other guy let clients beat them. And when the clients came to Jessica’s house [instead of the house he rented], he still charged Jessica rent. How can you do that, at your own property, you know? That’s not right. You know, this guy, apparently, he is a nasty piece of work, and I am so glad that I am working with Martin [the man who runs the house she works in]. I have only known Martin, and people say it’s pimping - but he doesn’t make us do anything that we don’t wanna do and we know that. If I say to him, Martin, next week, I actually am going on a 7 day driving course and I need that week off, he’ll say: not a problem.

Researcher: So the other guy that Jessica and Liz were working with before would be different?

Aileen: Yeah, nasty, he’s beat Liz up, he’s tied Liz up before, he takes I think 30% of what they earn and they’re made to do the likes of anal sex, and if there's two guys, they're made to do two guys.

Researcher: Made to do, in the sense that he would book it for them regardless of what they wanted?

Aileen: Yeah.

Researcher: Why didn’t Jessica leave?

Aileen: That’s what I said: why wouldn't you leave? Jessica said to me, well, she has a child who has special needs and needed money [to provide for him]. I don’t know the reason why she doesn’t get any help [from the government], I think
it's ridiculous, but she said that, that's the reason why she's doing it, it's to get money.

Researcher: So she was desperate enough to just keep working for that guy, but then she obviously left?

Aileen: Yeah, she found Martin advertising for girls [looking for sex workers for the house he runs], obviously he does that every now and again, and she like me was lucky enough to see the ad, you know.

4.3.27. Several sex workers mentioned that they had been threatened or hassled by people they assumed to be working for an agency or were controlling prostitution in the area. The aim appears to be to eliminate competition by informing the police and/or the neighbours about the location where independent sex workers work so that these competitors will be kicked out of their apartment or house. Sarah shared the story of one of her friends, who ran into a confrontation with a local man who controlled several apartments/houses and was later arrested and convicted for brothel-keeping:

He caused hassle to one of my friends because she also had an apartment in XX, so I think they actually ended up in the same block, and he used to post up posters and stuff to say that she was a ho [sex worker]. [He was doing that] to get her kicked out.

Exploitation and abuse in intimate relationships

4.3.28. Working with or for someone else can also refer to working for a ‘boyfriend’. Some sex workers are exploited, controlled or ‘worked by’ a male partner. While the female sex worker may perceive the relationship as a romantic partnership, the ‘boyfriend’ may view it predominantly as a way of making money. Lara, now an independent escort, first starting selling sex in Romania when she was 17 years old. She had just recently moved to a bigger city, and needed help finding work. She describes the relationship to the man who introduced her to the sex industry, whom she now, looking back, calls a ‘pimp’:

Lara: He moved me to an apartment in that city. I worked there for a month.

Researcher: Selling sex?

Lara: Yes.

Researcher: But who got money for all of this, who sold what to whom? You never got any money?

Lara: No.

Researcher: When you were working in that house, did you receive the money from the clients?

Lara: No.

Researcher: He got the money?

Lara: Yeah.
Researcher:  *So, he took everything?*
Lara:  *Mm-hm [confirming].*

Researcher:  *So why... why did you do it?*
Lara:  *Because he told me he will raise the money so can go outside together [move abroad]. So the money was for the traveling, and all that.*

Researcher:  *That if you work hard enough, he would organise everything else?*
Lara:  *Yes.*

Researcher:  *And how did you feel about that?*
Lara:  *I was OK with it – yeah. I was young and stupid. And in the meantime, he was coming to see me, and I started to have feelings for him.*

Researcher:  *What age was he?*
Lara:  *He was like thirty five. He was older. I always had this thing about older men - I don't like younger boys, they are too stupid. So I actually fell in love with him, and then we ended up in Austria. And everything was great at the beginning, like he was really treating me well, he was very kind with me, you know?*

Researcher:  *And were you in a relationship then... was it a relationship?*
Lara:  *For me yes, for him no.*

Researcher:  *OK.*
Lara:  *He only tried to make me fall in love for him so he can take all my money.*

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**Crime gangs and paramilitaries**

4.3.29. The involvement of organised crime gangs constitutes a particular case of third party involvement. Again, it is again important to note that the boundaries between a 'pimp boyfriend', agency, and a crime gang are sometimes blurry and depend on one’s perspective.

4.3.30. Based on the data gathered for this study, it appears that local paramilitary groups do not play a significant role in organising prostitution in Northern Ireland. In the online survey, less than 5% of sex workers said that they had ever worked, or currently worked for, a mafia-like or paramilitary organisation, a criminal gang, or someone else who controlled them. Only one sex worker who worked in Northern Ireland gave this response.

4.3.31. However, some individual members of paramilitary groups may use their image to exploit and threaten sex workers or collect money from them as a form of ‘taxation’. Based on our interviews with experts and service providers we conclude that these are isolated cases of individuals looking for ways to make money, rather than an organised form of controlling prostitution. A PSNI officer elaborated:

**Yes, I think there is some evidence of some involvement [of paramilitary groups], probably on an individual basis as opposed to an organisational basis. So let me get that right: when**
you're living in a particular part of a city, and you get recognised as a paramilitary – so I'm a member of Organisation X – everybody knows you, everybody knows who you represent. You don't need to wear a badge, you don't need to wear a uniform; they just know who you are. So that person decides to go from being a terrorist to being a manager of a brothel. They don't say, by the way, I'm no longer acting or speaking to you or conducting myself as a paramilitary, it's just understood that they're paramilitaries. So they use the influence, they use the power, they use the muscle, they use the pressure, they use the real fear of what they represent, even if they're not doing so on behalf of the organisation. And that's the subtlety of people who abuse their otherwise straight-forward criminal activity, which is being a terrorist, into another type of criminal activity which is abusing people in running prostitution.

4.3.32. Francis, a former street-based sex worker, also remembered a case of individuals trying to use the label of a paramilitary group to scare her into working with them:

Francis: When I was working on the street, there was a car with two guys pulled up beside me, saying that they were UDA and they wanted girls to work for them and I just kind of looked at them, and I just walked off and I was like: yeah, nice try.

Researcher: And did they go away?

Francis: Because they kind of saw my reaction to them, they never really showed their faces again.

Researcher: Do you think they were UDA?

Francis: No, they definitely weren’t UDA. When you have lived in Belfast for as long as I have or as long as anyone who is born here and raised here, you kind of get to know who is UDA and who is UVF and who's IRA and you kind of get to know these. I have been living in Belfast since I was about 13, 14 and because different areas I have lived in I got to know certain people, so...

Researcher: So they were fake, they were just trying to make money with it?

Francis: They were just two idiots trying to make money.

4.3.33. In our interviews with the PSNI we found that, while the influence of local paramilitary groups appears to be minimal, there are some foreign crime gangs involved in the sex industry in Northern Ireland:

The numbers we're seeing of people who are actively managing prostitution and trafficking are small. And they are for the most-part non-indigenous. They're other Europeans: they're Romanians, Czech, Slovakian, and also Chinese. But they're not paramilitaries. There may be a cross-over where people work together. We had an experience where there was a very clear sense of a paramilitary unit in XX, which were beginning to run a couple of premises where girls were being brought in from Lithuania. And then suddenly the Lithuanians were the muscle, they were being used as the enforcers, and then suddenly the Lithuanians went:
do you know what, we don’t need you, we can do this. So it became a Lithuanian enterprise, with Lithuanian girls, and the paramilitaries were pushed out. Which was really interesting because the history of Northern Ireland would say, once the paramilitaries take control of something, it’s very difficult for them to break it up. Of course the Lithuanians hadn’t read the memo, and they just said: well, do you know what, these our girls, we don’t need you, you’re not bringing anything that we can’t do.

4.4. Effects on local communities

4.4.1. In all councils interviewed, prostitution was rarely brought up as an area of concern by members of the public. The reasons offered for this were:

- The hidden nature of prostitution means that it could be on-going in council areas without being known to residents.

- The often transitory nature of prostitution, particularly in relation to the locations used to sell sex, means that prostitution may only be in a particular residential area for a short period of time and move on before members of the public become aware of it, or before it becomes a concern for public as being an anti-social problem.

- As with many issues related to sexual practice, it was suggested by interviewees in the councils, that members of the public may feel too uncomfortable to report suspected ‘brothels’ to their local council, preferring to turn a blind eye to the activities, particularly in areas which are seen to be more conservative or where there is a particularly religious/Christian population.

4.4.2. This finding is supported by the responses of sex workers in the online survey: we asked them whether they had ever had any confrontations with local residents whilst working in Northern Ireland. Only 1 in 10 respondents said that had ever had any trouble. One sex worker reported that she had to move out of a house when an explosive device was fired into her back garden.

4.4.3. In some cases, residents did find ways to report prostitution to police and councils, without describing it as such. Ards Borough Council, for example, suggested that members of the public may report suspected ‘brothels’ for anti-social behaviour – having late-night visitors, noise complaints, etc. – rather than for suspected prostitution, allowing them to signpost authorities to suspected criminal activities. Members of the public generally only reported prostitution to authorities if it were particularly visible; one example of a house being used as a base for prostitution and advertising via a sign in their window in a residential area was reported to the police.

4.4.4. Prostitution is not regarded as a priority issue in any of the councils who took part in the study. It is rarely discussed, either because it is not seen as an issue in an area, or again, due to the perceived unsavoury nature of the activities involved. Some councils reported that
there was ‘local knowledge’ or rumours of some prostitution ongoing, however there seemed to be little follow-up to said rumours.

4.4.5. A few councils did discuss specific instances of known ‘brothels’ being visited by police, but it was usually reported that these cases were isolated and had already been dealt with. Specific incidents discussed in councils also included:

- issues of human trafficking into the sex industry in Newry and Mourne;
- cases of houses in residential areas being used for prostitution in Fermanagh;
- grooming for sexual exploitation taking place in a home for vulnerable young people in Ards.

4.4.6. In all cases, there does appear to have been legal action quickly enacted, and in the case of sexual exploitation of young people in Ards, we were advised that proactive, preventative policies (e.g. more rigorous background checks for workers and volunteers) were put in place.

**Measures to tackle sex trafficking**

4.4.7. Almost all councils have put awareness campaigns, talks and policies in place which highlight links between human trafficking and the sex industry. These campaigns include reporting procedures and avenues for support for trafficked victims.

4.4.8. Newry and Mourne District Council have created an educational video emphasising this link and the illegality of paying for sex with a trafficked person. It was reported that this video was well received by council members who found it hard-hitting and quite shocking due to the difficult nature of the topic. Other interviewees viewed these campaigns and activities as a mixed success.

4.4.9. Dungannon District Council organised a seminar for members of the clergy in the area on aspects of human trafficking, including relationships between trafficking and the sex industry, so that information could be disseminated throughout parishes. There was some disappointment when this was not well attended, which the interviewee thought might be due to the discomfort of invitees to the topics discussed.

**Measures to tackle prostitution**

4.4.10. Only one council (Fermanagh) reported policy measures that focused on prostitution, without prioritising trafficking. They had utilised the support of Women’s Aid in helping to create response mechanisms to prostitution, should it be found to be necessary, following investigations into suspected brothel keeping in a residential areas a number of years ago. This was reported as an isolated incident and has not been an issue for the council since.
5. ENTERING PROSTITUTION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses pathways into prostitution. We address the following questions:

- What are reasons to start (and to continue) selling sexual services?
- How do people first enter the sex industry?

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Financial needs – e.g. to earn money to survive, to support the family members financially to finance their own education, or to pay off debt – are the main reason for people to start engaging in prostitution.

- Needing money to finance a drug addiction can also be a reason, more commonly for street-based sex workers. Only a small number of indoor sex workers said that they regularly used illicit drugs such as marihuana, cocaine and heroin.

- Additional reasons include curiosity about the sex industry and the wish to explore their own sexuality.

- Only a very small number of sex workers said that someone else had forced them to engage in prostitution.

- A substantial proportion of respondents have a comparatively high income from selling sex. Three quarters said that they earned more with prostitution than they did in other jobs they had before. However, it is also important to note that indoor sex workers, especially ‘touring escorts’ may have significant costs, e.g. for travel and accommodation.

- People’s entry into the sex industry is often facilitated or initiated by someone else, commonly someone who already works in the industry and suggests it as a money earning strategy. Some sex workers are recruited by agents, and others first start selling sex because they received a financial offer from a client.

- A significant number of sex workers remain in the industry for years, some even for decades. This is an important factor in the development of support programmes that aim to facilitate an exit from the sex industry: the longer someone has worked in prostitution, the more difficult it may be to ‘fill the gap’ in one’s CV and to (re-)engage in other forms of work.
5.2. Reasons to sell sexual services

Main reasons – survey results

5.2.1. Table 12 shows the main reasons why respondents in the online survey got involved in the sex industry, comparing sex workers resident in Northern Ireland with the total sample. As the Table shows, overall different financial needs – to earn money to survive (22%); to support the family financially (18%); to finance their own education (14%); to pay off debt (10%); and not having another way to earn a living (7%) are the main reason for people to start engaging in prostitution. However 1 in 5 respondents also said that they were curious about it – in fact the second most likely reason given, whilst 1 in 10 respondents said they thought they could explore their sexuality by selling sex. Less than 1% said that someone had forced them to do it.

Table 12: Main reasons why respondents started to sell sexual services. Northern-Ireland based versus ALL respondents. Rank-ordered. Multiple response table (%)

| Reason                              | NI (% | ALL (%)
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------
| I needed money to survive.          | 32    | 22    |
| I was curious about it and wanted to try it. | 13    | 20    |
| I needed to earn money to support family members. | 19    | 18    |
| I needed money to finance my education. | 10    | 14    |
| I needed money to pay off a debt.   | 26    | 10    |
| I thought it would allow me to explore my sexuality. | 7     | 10    |
| I had no other way of earning a living. | 19    | 7     |
| Someone else forced me to do it.    | 0     | <1    |
| None of the above                   | 0     | 2     |

5.2.2. Northern-Ireland based sex workers were significantly more likely than sex workers overall to say that they needed money to survive (32%) or to pay off a debt (26%) or that they had no other way of earning money. This finding strongly highlights, in this sample, the financial need that leads people to sell sexual services.

5.2.3. Table 13 below shows differences based on nationality and compared to all those who live in Northern Ireland.
Table 13: Main reasons why respondents started to sell sexual services. UK/Irish Nationals versus other nationals compared with NI-domiciled respondents. Multiple response table (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>UK/Irish</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>NI-based sex workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I needed money to survive.</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was curious about it and wanted to try it.</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed to earn money to support family members.</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed money to finance my education.</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I needed money to pay off a debt.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought it would allow me to explore my sexuality.</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had no other way of earning a living.</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone else forced me to do it.</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.4. Financing education is more likely to be a reason among Irish/British nationals, so is exploring one’s sexuality, whereas the need to support the family is more likely to be a reason to get involved in prostitution among foreign nationals. One of the foreign national respondents said she was forced into prostitution.

**Weekly earnings**

5.2.5. In the survey, we also asked sex workers how much they usually earned per week from selling sexual services (see Figure 5 below). Nearly one quarter of respondents refused to answer this question. If it is assumed that these refusals are not unrepresentative (either higher or lower earners) of the sex workers who did respond to the question, it would appear that at least a substantial proportion of respondents have a comparatively high income from selling sex. 35% of sex workers who said they lived in Northern Ireland earned £800 per week or above.

5.2.6. However, it is important to consider that selling sexual services may come with high additional costs. As discussed in Chapter 4.2.38, 'touring escorts' have to pay for travel costs and apartments or hotel rooms rented for short periods of time (with the most commonly stated price for an apartment being £700 per week). Advertisements on some websites cost up to 100€ (ca. £75) per week. And some sex workers work with bookers or agents who charge between 20 and 50% of their income.
5.2.7. Despite the financial costs that selling sexual services may entail, over half (53%) of respondents said that they were earning ‘a lot more’ than in other jobs they had before and a further 24% said that they earned ‘a bit more’. The respective figures for Northern Ireland based sex workers were 68% (‘a lot more’) and 18% (‘a bit more’).

**Interview data**

5.2.8. In the face-to-face interviews with sex workers, the income that selling sexual services generates was also highlighted by participants as an important reason to engage in prostitution. Interviewees also explained the links to other aspects of sex workers’ lives, such as family responsibilities, debts, poverty or drug addictions:

When I got divorced] I had left behind my home, my car, and my income, and for a while, my children. And my brother left me some £50,000 – but that goes absolutely nowhere, or it doesn’t with me anyway! And it got to the stage where I didn’t have a month’s rent, which was £600, and the only job in health and safety I’d been offered was on minimum wage, and that wouldn’t’ve covered the rent on my apartment. So someone said, why don’t you do web cam or phone sex through this site? (Alexandra)

My wee boy was hungry, and I was hungry, and I had no money. And his daddy went and left us. And my family didn’t talk to me at the time and – just – things were a wee bit tough. (Karen)

I don’t know what year it was but I was in a relationship which broke down, and [I was] in financial difficulty. I was left with a lot of debt. [I owed] about £18,000. I swore that I will go
down the street and as soon as it is cleared I will walk away [from sex work]. So that is what I have done. (Betty)

I thought, you know like, I'm down and out, and I needed a wee couple of pounds. (Michael)

At stage I was up to about three bags [of heroin] a day, that’s over £500 a week. And I did a few detoxes, obviously, as people do, but there’s so many detoxes you can do and so many times you can be sick, and then one time is just one time too many so that’s whenever something switched in me that I thought, I’m never... I’m never physically going through that again, I have to sort something out long-term, I have to be able to wean myself down, or whatever, but I'm not going to be able to just stop this, and I’m not having one more day of feeling that sickness or feeling that depression and that horrible feeling. And that’s when I started working, so weighing that up against going into the town and working. (Sophie)

5.2.9. Interviewees offered a number of additional reasons why they decided to sell sexual services. For Lara from Romania, who started selling sex at the age of 17, being independent from her family was an important reason:

For me, the main reason I started this job was because I wanted to get away from my family! That's what happens when you are a teenager; you want to have your own stuff, you want to do your own money. You want to prove your family that you can do something for yourself – and that's what I did. (...) When I ran away from home, I wanted to get a normal job. But it's quite difficult for a teenager, you know, to work – nobody helps you, right? (...) So which is the easiest way? Going in prostitution. Which honestly, most of the people think that if you go into this job, it will – I don't know, how to say – psychologically, you will go crazy, or something like that. It's not like that. Of course you will have bad times, good times – depends where are you going or who you are working with. But I realised that I can do something for myself doing what I like – we all like sex, that's something that comes from our... I don't know, genes or something! So why not get paid for it, also? Like you can mix pleasure with money. You can be your own boss.

5.2.10. Mirroring the survey results presented above, some of the sex workers who entered the sex industry later in life, in their 30s or 40s, were driven by the wish to try something new, looking for more freedom and excitement in addition to the money. Martha, who had moved from Romania to Germany and then later to Ireland, only started working in the sex industry at the age of 35, when she perceived her life to have reached a dead end.

And after a while I really found myself miserable. (...) I didn't like my job as an accountant, I just started disliking everything. And then I realised, OK, it's time to do something else, you know. (...) I never thought of sex as a big taboo. Sex is to be enjoyed, and life is short. (...) [I was thinking]: I have no savings, I have no nothing at the minute; I can't really start a shop, I can't really do anything on my own. My own capital is my own body. (...) So, I just put a profile [on one of the escort websites] and the phone rung and I was very quickly getting regulars. So I came from a situation where I kind of hated my life, to a situation
where I kind of realised: oh, some people can actually be quite nice. (...) I'm in charge of my own destiny now; I can do whatever I want.

Melissa, who started working at the age of 48, had also reached a point in her life where she was looking for something different. Being asked about her reasons to start selling sex she responded:

Well I will be a liar if I didn't say the money, because it is very good. I like the sex. I like people finding me sexy. It makes me feel good, validated, worthy of something. I suppose it is one of the other reasons why maybe I got in it... I was just at the stage in my life where I was feeling as if... I had lost my way or had no purpose and it [selling sexual services] gave me purpose.

Financing drug addictions

5.2.11. Some sex workers need money to finance addictions. In the online survey, we asked people how often they used alcohol, painkillers or illicit drugs while working. Table 14 summarises the findings. The number of respondents in the ‘sometimes’ and ‘often’ categories were too small to list them separately.

Table 14: Proportion of respondents using alcohol and the following drugs while working (%):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes or often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painkillers</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marihuana</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranquilisers</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2.12. As shown, alcohol is the most commonly used ‘drug’, but over half of the respondents said they never used this while working. Only a small number of respondents said that they regularly used illicit drugs such as marihuana, cocaine and heroin. There was no difference between sex workers in Northern Ireland and those elsewhere in terms of alcohol and substance use.

5.2.13. At the same time, our interviews with service providers show that a significant percentage of female intra-venous drug users engage in prostitution to make ends meet and
finance their addiction(s). It appears much less common for male heroin addicts, although some of them may be engaging in prostitution but may not disclose this to support workers. Drug-addicted sex workers appear to sell sexual services either on the street or offer services via websites that do not charge fees.

5.2.14. Both the social worker at the Drug Outreach Team and the coordinator of the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker service informed us that the age of intravenous drug-users who sell sex has dropped over the last years, and that they now see the ‘second generation’ – young people who have grown up with heroin-addicted parents, and continue on with what they experienced at home, including a small number (only individual cases were mentioned) who start selling sex as a means to support themselves and their drug addiction. Some of them may start selling sexual services under the age of 16.

5.2.15. These findings clearly highlight the importance of combining various research methods and triangulating data (see 2.2.24). The survey data suggests that drug-use is not very common among respondents, but it needs to be taken into account that survey respondents mainly included indoor-based sex workers. Indoor sex workers who took part in the interviews confirmed that from their experience, illicit drug use does not constitute common practice in the Northern Ireland sex industry. On the other hand, the interviews with service providers and with (former) street-based sex workers indicate that in street prostitution drug use (including illicit drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine as well as alcohol and prescription medication) is more common. However, as described in chapter 3, the street sector only constitutes a small section of the Northern Ireland sex industry. We conclude that the use of illicit drugs does not appear common practice among sex workers in Northern Ireland.

5.3. Ways into sex work

5.3.1. The qualitative face-to-face interviews offered insights into how people who sell sex in Northern Ireland first enter the sex industry. In most cases, people’s entry into the sex industry was facilitated or initiated by someone else – someone who already works in the industry – suggests it as a money earning strategy, and can give advice regarding how to do things:

Most of us we have quite the same story; like, you don’t get born with knowing about this job, right? So somebody has to tell you; either it’s a friend or it’s a boyfriend, who will think: OK, maybe we can earn some money or do something for both of us. Or you find out about somebody is doing it and you want to do it also. (Lara)

5.3.2. As discussed in chapter 4.3.15, ‘agents’ may also play an important role in facilitating the entry into the sex industry:

They [agents] look for girls in Romania, they go and they chat on the forum, whatever, it’s like: well, if you wanna come over, I pay the flight ticket, can we go 50/50, I will take care of you, I will drive you around and so on. Or you can get the 4 Euros for which you are
shagging there. Like, come on now, 4 to 40 Euros is a f...g huge difference, who would say no?! (Bella)

5.3.3. In other cases, it is an offer made by a potential client that first leads people to sell sexual services. Aileen describes how she used to go on a dating website and was offered money for sex by one of the users:

This guy offered me £5,000 for one night. (...) I said no, definitely not! He went away, and then a couple of weeks later he messaged me again and offered me £6,000... well, being a single Mum... That's an awful lot of money, and it was like from 8 o'clock at night to 8 o'clock in the morning, 12 hours, how bad could it be, I thought, you know. (...) So I chatted to the guy and he booked the hotel room, booked breakfast and all. But then when it came to it, I couldn't do it, I just couldn't do it. I couldn't go at all, I just couldn't do it: no, no, it's not me. But then later [a friend] told me to go on to vivastreet.co.uk, and I went on there and saw this message: looking for a professional woman in her 30s, something like that. I answered it and it was a woman called Lorna (...) and, she explained everything, just all via text messages. So I'd ended up doing that, I was doing out-calls [for the agent]. (Aileen)

5.3.4. It is also important to mention that for some people, prostitution may not constitute a highly stigmatised and 'unthinkable' job, but a common and accepted way of making ends meet, particularly for people who see few other options for themselves. Thus, some people may enter the sex industry simply following in other people’s footsteps, as the following conversation with Bella from Romania exemplifies:

You see, Romania is different, people talk about clothes, make up, talk about shoes, talk about sex, talk about that one who went to Italy and she was a prostitute and made lots of money, and the other one who was in Spain and she came home and bought a BMW, and you hear all these things like since you are a child, you see things. (...) You hear about that one being a prostitute in Greece, you hear about that one being a prostitute in Spain, is not like any somebody says, ah let's go to Spain and we work in a club and we make money, it's just common knowledge, it's just there. It's like, okay, I'm gonna be a prostitute, get a lot of money, buy whatever I want, I am gonna be beautiful as that one and I am gonna have a car like that one, that sort of thing. (...) So it's that mentality, it's fine, I mean, all my friends know that I am an escort.

5.3.5. Similarly, Annabel, an Irish sex worker, described how she first decided to try working in a massage parlour in Dublin as a 19-year-old:

Sex work is always something I’ve been fascinated about. I remember years and years ago, when I was a small child being in the back of the car and my mum and dad were driving through Dublin, and dad said: uh! Do you know what they are? And my mum said: yeah, ladies of the night. And there was two women standing on the street corner – one of them had a fur coat on, I always remember that – but they were laughing heartily, and I thought they looked very glamorous. So that was just my perception of them, and I guess that stuck. I mean, they could've had miserable lives, for all I know. (...) And then I just did more
research and read a lot about it. And I suppose the exchange of cash for sex with strangers, as well, has always been a massive turn on for me – I guess it’s like a backlash against my Catholic upbringing. I mean, I was educated by nuns who wouldn’t allow you to wear shiny patent black shoes because it would show the reflection of your pants. So to go from that to whipping somebody up has been immense – it’s been quite a journey. But not one I’ve regretted.

Length of time spent in the sex industry

5.3.6. Once people have entered the sex industry, the data gathered for this study shows that a significant number of sex workers remain in the industry for years. As Table 15 below shows, around one third (34%) of respondents had worked in the sex industry 2 to 5 years, and almost the same proportion (29%) had worked 5 to 10 years. Fewer than 1 in 10 (9%) had been working in the sex industry for less than one year, whilst 15% of respondents had worked as a sex worker for more than ten years.

Table 15: How long have you been working in the sex industry?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 up to 2 years</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 up to 5 years</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 up to 10 years</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.3.7. This is an important factor in the development of support programmes that aim to facilitate an exit from the sex industry: the longer someone has worked in prostitution, the more difficult it may be to ‘fill the gap’ in one’s CV and to (re-)engage in other forms of work. However, one third of survey respondents (34%) also had other jobs in addition selling sexual services. Examples of other jobs included: cleaners; small business owners; nurses; administrators; part-time supermarket jobs; and teachers.
6. EXPERIENCES OF SELLING SEX

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we present data from the survey and the interviews with sex workers that depict sex workers’ experiences. We address the following questions:

- What are positive and negative aspects of selling sex, from sex workers’ points of view?
- How do sex workers view their interactions and relationships with clients?
- What forms of violence and abuse do sex workers experience?
- How are sex workers affected by the stigma attached to selling sex?

MAIN FINDINGS

- Most sex workers note both negative and positive aspects about selling sex, e.g. they may appreciate the income and flexible working hours but at the same time feel negatively affected by the stigma attached to prostitution.

- It is important to note that sex workers’ experiences often change over time. Most interviewees who had been working in the sex industry for several years felt that they had been more vulnerable to abuse and negative experiences when they first started working. All interviewees described that over time, they learned how to ‘scan’ clients, that is, to identify potentially dangerous or unpleasant clients beforehand; and, if possible, to avoid them.

- The most frequently mentioned positive aspects of selling sex are financial independence and the flexible work arrangements. Prostitution allows sex workers to provide for their families, pay off debt, or finance their education while at the same time being flexible enough to care for children or older family members, have other jobs or study.

- Another positive aspect highlighted by some sex workers are the interactions with a variety of different people and bringing happiness to clients.

- The most frequently mentioned negative aspect of selling sex is the stigma attached to it. Sex workers said that because of the stigma, they feel they have to hide what they do and lie to their family members, colleagues (if they have another job) or neighbours; and found that to be an emotional and mental strain. Sex workers also mentioned their fear of the media, and their concerns of being misrepresented and exposed against their will.

- Between one and two fifth of the Northern Ireland-based said that they do not like having sexual interactions with clients; that it makes them feel abused; and that it harms them
emotionally and mentally.

- Another frequent concern is violence from clients and/or other people (e.g. strangers, people they work for, partners). Northern Ireland-based sex workers were more likely than the overall sample to worry about violence from other people, indicating that sex workers feel more unsafe here.

- We found that the average number of clients seen by sex workers per week is 15.

- Sex workers’ experiences with clients range from friendly, respectful encounters, sometimes resembling friendships (particularly with long-term, regular clients), to problematic interactions and experiences that were perceived as unpleasant or hurtful.

- Disrespect constitutes one of the negative aspects most frequently mentioned by sex workers, with clients treating them poorly, challenging and disrespecting their personal boundaries or being verbally abusive.

- Experiences of direct violence that sex workers reported included being slapped and beaten by a client, being threatened at knife point by strangers, being robbed (e.g. by men posing as clients), being forced to engage in practices that were not agreed on beforehand, such as sex without a condom, and being raped.

6.2. Positive and negative aspects

6.2.1. It is important to note that both in the survey and in the face-to-face interviews, sex workers frequently described positive and negative sides of selling sexual services. This illustrates and evidences the complexities of prostitution for sex workers and refutes simplifications.

6.2.2. In the online survey, respondents were asked what they liked and disliked about selling sexual services. Tables 16 and 17 summarise the results. Multiple answers were permitted.

Table 16: What do you like about selling sexual services? Rank-ordered. Multiple response table. Northern Ireland based sex workers versus ALL (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL (%)</th>
<th>NI (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It helps me to be financially independent.</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the freedom of being self-employed.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps me to save money for something important.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the flexible working hours.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy meeting different people.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy bringing happiness to clients.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It allows me to buy nice things.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me feel more confident about myself and my body.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the travel.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s good for my self-esteem.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It allows me to explore different kinds of sex and relationships.</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy the sex with clients.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It helps me discover and explore my own sexuality.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above.</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17: What do you dislike about selling sexual services? Rank-ordered. Multiple response table. Northern Ireland-based sex workers versus ALL (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have to lie about what I do.</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have to hide what I do.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that my friends and family will find out about it.</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about violent clients.</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about violence from other people (e.g. strangers, people I work for, partners, police).</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about earning enough money each month.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like how it affects my personal relationships.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am worried about the health risks.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like the financial insecurity.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like how it affects my private sex life.</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It harms my mental or emotional wellbeing.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me ashamed.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me feel worthless.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like the sex with clients.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me feel abused.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It harms my confidence.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It harms my physical health.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial independence and flexible work arrangements

6.2.3. Financial independence and the flexible work arrangements were the aspects that respondents liked best about selling sexual services. The 4 most common survey responses regarding the positive aspects of selling sexual services all related to financial independence and the flexible working conditions.

6.2.4. The following quotes from the face-to-face interviews provide insights into why this is important to sex workers.

What I do like, oh my God, I don’t have to go out in the rain! It’s very comfortable, warm, I stay in a nice apartment, in a warm, nice hotel room. (...) I like the money, I have the freedom to work whenever I want, to see whoever I want. I can afford a nice apartment in Dublin, I can afford a really nice expensive car, I can afford to go and shop in Brown Thomas, I save money, so why would I give up? (Bella)

On the good parts of this business: I give my mother [in Romania] money. (...) I can say in a month, I can send two or three hundred Euros. Or sometimes, when bad things happen... like for example last month I sent her a thousand Euros because she was twice in the hospital. And it doesn’t matter what she is like, she’s my own mother, and I have to care about her. (Cathy)

It was empowering, to be honest. If I hadn’t turned to sex work I would have lost my house and it was fantastic to be able to do that. (...) It enabled me to do things I would never have been able to do otherwise. (Carol)

[When it was my daughter’s] birthday I was able to take her into town and spend £200 on her, on clothes. Whereas, I was never able to do that before, never, and Christmas was always, you know, you're getting stuff out of catalogues, and then you just paid off before next Christmas, and then you have to get stuff again, so it was just a vicious circle. Plus I am able to help my sister out a lot, financially as well because she's not able to work, so she doesn't get as much money now, being on the dole. (Aileen)

Positive interactions

6.2.5. In regard to positive aspects, around one third of all respondents also said that they enjoyed meeting different people (34%) and bringing happiness to their clients (29%). 1 in 5 respondents said this work was good for their self-esteem.

6.2.6. Similarly, some interviewees explained that selling sex had taught them a lot about people and widened their perspective in a good way.

I realised through this job that I was quite good at counselling people and people opened up to me. It is a lovely feeling. For disabled people, I found that difficult to begin with because I'm not used to being around people with certain disabilities. Again, it makes you realise that you are just one person in the whole tapestry of the world. I felt quite privileged that I was able to make somebody else happy that may never have had the chance to experience
I like the fact that it made me a better person because I'm not judgmental as I used to be. (Carol)

What this job really teaches you is not to discriminate people about looks, you know? Because sometimes I've met guys who really are unattractive and stuff, but the way they speak to you with such respect, and they treat you nicely, I mean – it's not – you're not hating the sex – sometimes it's good, sometimes it's really not good, let's put it that way. But you're never in a position where you're going: I don't want to be here. (Lucy)

Meeting people is the most lovely part of this job. Because you meet every type of crazy guy, every type of body – things happen that maybe never in your life you had thought about them. (Cathy)

Stigma

6.2.7. Dislikes were predominantly connected to the stigma that prostitution carries. Nearly 4 in 10 (38%) said that they felt they had to lie about what they were doing, and a similar proportion (37%) said that they had to hide what they were doing.

6.2.8. Northern Ireland-based sex workers were more likely to worry that their friends and family would find out what they did.

Violence and health risks

6.2.9. Nearly one quarter (24%) of all respondents worried about violent clients. 1 in 10 respondents were worried about the health risks.

6.2.10. Importantly, Northern Ireland-based sex workers were more likely to worry about violence from other people (i.e. strangers, people they work for, partners). They were also 3 times more likely to state that selling sexual services causes them emotional and mental harm, 4 times more likely to state that they felt ashamed and abused.

6.2.11. In part, these differences can be explained by the fact that a higher proportion (43%) among Northern Ireland-based sex workers were males selling sex to other males (see 3.3), which carries particular health risks as well as the additional social stigma of homosexuality.

Emotional and mental health

6.2.12. As shown in Table 17 above, some sex workers responded that they do not like having sexual interactions with clients (10% of NI-based sex workers, 4% of total sample); that it makes them feel abused (13% of NI-based sex workers, 3% of total); and harms them emotionally and mentally (19% of NI-based sex workers, 6% of total). The following quotes from face-to-face interviews exemplify similar experiences.

My first client was horrendous – I just loathed him. He had uncut toenails, and they were yellow and long, and he was fat – it was grim. That did put me off. Well, it did, until I
actually got home and I had the £200 in my hand and I thought: It was worth it really. So I just had a long bath. And then I still hated it, and I still don't particularly like being kissed – but you know, you do it, because that's what they like. And then, yeah, it just got easier and easier. (Alexandra)

I didn't like doing what I had to do. I didn't like it – still don't. Don't like it at all. But sure, you do what you gotta do, love. (Karen)

Not all of my experiences were terrible or bad, it was just I didn't want to do it – I resented it, I resented myself, I hated doing it and it took everything in my being to pretend that I wanted to be there. They ask ridiculous questions like: why do you do this job? And no one wants to hear: I'm doing it because you're paying me, you know. (...) And they would say things like: but you must like it?! And you don't want to say: no, I don't. But men obviously like deluding themselves. I think as a woman if I was picking up someone... I would know that that person didn't want to be there, I would know that if they really wanted to go out and have random sex they would just go to a bar and pick somebody up, they wouldn't be standing on the street. But anyway, yeah, they don't seem to mind that. (Sophie)

6.2.13. In the interviews, some sex workers also explained that selling sex can be draining, not just physically but also emotionally and mentally:

Sometimes some days you are not even in the mood to go out and see a client, whatever, but the money is there, the money is being offered, you have to drag yourself out of the bed. You kind of go and do it and because at the end of the day that is £120 in your pocket and £120 for me was quite a lot of money. (...) There are other days that are actually grand. But I have seen girls who have done it for a while and they got kind of depressed because of it. I am not really the depressive sort of person and I never have been but I have seen girls who kind of doing it all day every day, getting depressed. (Francis)

Well, if you're only doing something for money, no matter what job it is, it's going to harm you, you know? If you are a care worker going in and wiping people's arses and are not a caring nature and don't actually care about that person getting better, that's going to damage you. But if you have to go have sex for money, it's going to damage you as well, if you're not a caring nature and you don't like your job. You may not see it in the forefront at the start, but five, six years down the line you're going to really, really regret that. That's what I'm saying, not everyone is suitable for this type of work, you know? (Sarah)

It is hard work. You do not just sit on a lovely arm chair in socks and satins, drinking champagne with men in tuxedos. You do not, it is not like that at all. It really is... fast, fast! But once you get used to that, that is okay. It is fun... and it is funny sometimes and for some clients, it is a very small part of a human contact for them or a listening ear. But it is like being a waitress or an air hostess or anybody that has a public interface, you know, you have to be nice all the time. And it is not a problem really but you do have to perform. You got to be an actress, play at the role they want you to play. It could be the dominatrix role, and that is quite mentally tiring. (Melissa)
6.2.14. Building on these varied and complex opinions regarding the experience of selling sex, the remainder of this chapter highlights in more detail the aspects that sex workers defined as particularly important in both the survey and the interviews: interactions with clients, experiences and fears of violence, and stigmatisation.

6.3. Interactions with clients

Number of clients

6.3.1. In the online survey, we asked sex workers how many clients they would usually see per week when they work in Northern Ireland. Figure 6 below summarises the results. One fifth of respondents said they would see 1 to 5 clients. This was the most likely response. However, escorts were almost as likely to say that they would see 6 to 10 clients or 16 to 20 clients. Over one quarter (28%) saw over twenty clients per week, with 1 in 10 seeing 30 or more, thus on average 4 or more clients per day.

Figure 6: Number of clients sex workers usually see per week when they work in Northern Ireland. Sex workers living in Northern Ireland versus ALL sex workers (%)

![Graph showing the number of clients sex workers usually see per week when they work in Northern Ireland.](image)

6.3.2. Figure 6 above also shows that sex workers living in Northern Ireland – on average – tend to see fewer clients per week than sex workers living elsewhere, with no one saying that they would see more than 20. This can be partially explained by the way sex workers organise ‘tours’ (see 4.2.36). These tours are most profitable when sex workers see as many clients as possible. Sex workers who live and work locally – in this case in Northern Ireland, do not have as much pressure to see a high number of clients. None of the demographic background variables (such as age, gender, nationality, relationship status etc.) were significantly related to the number of clients sex workers see.
Types of clients

6.3.3. Survey respondents were also asked in an open-ended question about the type of clients they see. The responses below show the diversity as well as the various forms of interactions and relationships that sex workers develop with clients.

They come from a variety of backgrounds, unemployed on benefits to white collar workers, manual, skilled manual, self-employed, managers, those involved in jobs considered to be respectable and responsible in society. (...) The clients I choose to keep seeing I build up good relationships with based on mutual trust and respect, we know the boundaries and do not encroach on them.

A dissertation could be done in answer to this question. Briefly: Men between 30 and 67, all types, all professions. They come for sex and the majority return again. The men that I see often also phone and text between meets. I can’t say that they are friends as they are separate from my life and they pay me for our time together. It is after all a business transaction, however it often feels as if they are or could be [friends] if we met in a different way.

All professions use my services - taxi drivers, builders, plumbers, electricians, farmers, car sales men, mechanics, delivery drivers, council workers, doctors, policemen, accountants, retired men, property landlords, captains of ships, airline pilots, post men, you name a profession and I have seen them - they pay me for a service and that’s it - but it’s not like you think it is - people who have never done this job really do not understand it – it’s not seedy or dirty or wrong it’s just like getting your hair cut - you come in have a service pay and leave and like all haircuts - all the services I provide are different.

Regular clients

6.3.4. In the face-to-face interviews, sex workers described some of their relationships with clients, usually regular clients, as resembling friendships:

Part of being an escort, it’s almost like being their counsellor, because they come and they talk to you about things, you build a relationship with your regulars. You know they’re never going to have a proper relationship beyond that, but it becomes like an intimate friendship. I’ve got a client who I’ve been seeing since I started escorting, from the year 2000, and I still see him. We’re very, very good friends – I go with him on holidays, and things like that. He’s single, but he likes having company, but he doesn’t want a wife either. So we both understand this is not going over the lines, and I like that. (Lucy)

There’s one, he says, would you like to go for a fish supper? But he was in a wheelchair. And I went: dear, that’s alright, no problem. I says: I don’t care what you’re in. There’s me round the car, got the wheelchair out of the back of the car, went round, put him in the wheelchair, we went in, ate our fish and chips, and we done our business, and he left me back to where he picked me up. (Michael)
I get a lot of widowers. They can come and crack jokes, tell me stories, show me photographs of the grandchildren's weddings, photographs of their wives who've died... I've one who Waltzes naked with me. He used to do it with his wife, apparently. And I've others who want to have a wee cuddle, and lie in the bed cuddling, and kissing, and holding hands. It's kind of sad though that no one pays any attention to them. I love them, they're brilliant. (Sarah)

Negative experiences and bad clients

6.3.5. These survey responses and quotes from the interviews address positive aspects of sex worker-client-interactions. In the face-to-face interviews, however, sex workers also addressed problematic interactions and experiences that were perceived as unpleasant or hurtful.

I had clients I wouldn't see again but I'm not sure if I will class them to be bad clients. There are some people that because of the stigma they are so petrified of catching something. Guys who don't kiss I am not particularly interested in seeing again. I need that interaction. I need to feel like a woman and not just a vessel. I have never had a violent person. I have had a few cocky men that think probably they are a bit better than me and I wouldn't see them again. I don't think they are bad people but I think they have allowed the stigma to affect the way they behave with people like myself (...), they got this view through the media. (Carol)

I think respect has got to be up there with the top of them, so a bad client to me is somebody who doesn't show you any respect and comes in with the attitude of: I've paid you, therefore you will do this and that. That doesn't go down well with me at all. (Annabel)

Sometimes it is gross, like. Not everyone is a knight in shining armor who smells beautifully of roses, and is so hot – you do get some amazing hot men that you just want to take a photograph of you licking, just to say: I've been here! But you do get some absolutely mingers, oh God! (…) You get these wee old men that probably haven't had a shower in probably a couple of months, and they never use condoms with their wives so as soon as you stick something on there it sort of dies, and you have to give them a lecture about STIs, because they're like: oh, but such-and-such let me put it anywhere, and I'm like: well, I don't want to die by you giving me HIV because you've been sticking that everywhere round such-and-such! But you know they're nice, they're just stinky. (Sarah)

6.3.6. The following quotes from the interview with one respondent, Sophie, who used to sell sexual services on the street in Belfast, express most clearly the negative aspects of prostitution that some sex workers experience.

It's not that I ever expected the 'Pretty-Woman-Scenario', but you pick up very early on that the men that you're with see you as what you are... like, in their eyes you are a prostitute, slapper, whatever, and you can feel that off them. (…) They would be quite rough, or just very disrespectful, or lacking in any sort of care. (…) And it's not that I would want them to
care for me, because most of the time I would be happy to never see them again, I'm just happy to take their money, but it sort of reinforces that feeling that you're less than anyone else out there, or reinforces the feeling that you're dirt to them, or you're just a commodity to be bought and used.

Sophie also felt that many of her clients did not respect her boundaries and decisions:

I didn’t like being touched at all... I didn’t mind, sort of, above the waist, obviously people need something, but I don’t like their hands down under my hips at all... I used to say: nothing below the waist. But some people don’t take no for an answer and they will just keep going, and it’s like talking to a four-year-old. They’d say: why, why, why? And it just used to really irritate me. I’ve just said no, I don’t need to give you a reason. Don't get me wrong, I never enjoyed the job (...), but the interaction is made slightly easier if someone's at least being respectful and civil to you.

Being asked whether she felt that these experiences would be shared by other women in the street-based sector, Sophie responded:

If, you know, nine out of ten of your clients are dick heads and horrible to you, then the one that’s civil to you suddenly becomes super nice by comparison to the rest. And I think women here who are strung out and using heroin and who maybe have really crappy lives right now (...) and are quite isolated, for them, any little bit of affection or anybody being civil to you can be interpreted as, you know, a friend. So I can see that some of the women certainly feel like they’re attractive to these men and that’s where they’re getting their self-worth from. (...) I never felt that – ever. Never felt that.

Independence, vulnerability and changes over time

6.3.7. It is also important to note that sex workers’ experiences often change over time. Most interviewees who had been working in the sex industry for several years felt that they had been more vulnerable to abuse and negative experiences when they first started working. For example, Aileen, who works in a house but used to do out-calls with an agency, explained:

It’s just that sometimes clients aren't very nice. And whenever I first got into it I was very green, I didn't know much about it (...). And I was doing things that I wasn't comfortable with and then I was going home and I was feeling really, really bad. You know, and the money, I didn't even want the money, it was making me feel sick to my stomach. And then it does get easier. And now I work from a house. (...) I don't like kissing them, to me it's a job and I wanna keep it a job, separate, and there's other things that I won't do either. Like having anal sex and I won't do it and that's that.

6.3.8. Aileen’s example shows that over time, sex workers may become more self-confident and independent, and less vulnerable – or possibly anaesthetised to harmful experiences. In face of their potential exposure to violent and abusive clients, unpleasant or disrespectful
ones, or simply ‘time-wasters’ (people who book an appointment and then do not show up), all interviewees described that they learned how to ‘scan’ clients, that is, to identify potentially dangerous or unpleasant clients beforehand, and to avoid them. Ways of identifying ‘bad clients’ included the following: avoiding clients from a certain ethnic, national or social background based on their accent; clients who use an aggressive tone on the phone; clients who try to haggle and reduce the price; and generally clients with rude behaviour. Some sex workers also reported refusing certain clients once they got to meet them in person:

I choose it, I’m not drunk, you know. I have the freedom... if he comes and I don’t like him, or I just see that something's wrong with the person... maybe he's rude, I just say: please go, I don't want to be with you, and that's it. You are not forced actually to be with every single guy. (Lara)

6.3.9. As suggested above, the ability to choose and refuse clients depends on the social and economic situation of the sex worker, the sector of the industry that s/he works in, and her/his working conditions (i.e. working independently vs. having to follow someone else’s rules). Based on the interviews we conducted, it appears that sex workers who are either new to the job and/or particularly desperate are more prone to accept disrespectful or abusive clients. Martha elaborated this point:

You have to pay your rent, you have to eat. But a good escort with a good reputation [i.e. many regular clients, good reviews] can – even if she’s not financially secure – she can always refuse a few clients if she doesn’t feel right about it. I know that many escorts, even if they’re desperate and need money, if they hear something they don’t like, they will never take the chance. They know that after that phone call there might be a nice client calling. But if you’re new and you have no reviews and nobody would take a chance on you... yes, I do pity those girls, you know, because probably they will take chances. Even if her instinct is telling her no, she will take chances.

6.4. Violence

6.4.1. It is illegal in Northern Ireland (as well as in the Republic of Ireland) for more than one person to work out of the same location, as this is classed as brothel-keeping. As a consequence, sex workers usually work alone, meeting their clients in a hotel, an apartment, in the client’s home or in a car. They are thus vulnerable to various forms of abuse and violence from clients as well as from other people who take advantage of their situation. 29% of the NI-based respondents in the survey said that they “worry about violent clients” (compared to 24% of all respondents), and nearly one quarter (23%) worried about “violence from other people” e.g. strangers, people they work for, partners or the police (compared to 13% of all respondents).

6.4.2. Experiences of violence that research participants reported in the interviews included:

- being slapped and beaten by a client
- being threatened at knife point by strangers
- being robbed (e.g. by men posing as clients)
- having a client put cigarettes butts out on their genitals
- being forced to engage in practices that were not agreed on beforehand, such as sex without a condom
- being raped (by a client or by a stranger).

**Violent clients**

6.4.3. Michael, a man in his forties who has worked in the street for over 20 years, and had been raped as a child by a neighbour, shared the following experience of an attempted rape by a client.

> I was tied like this here, on the chair. He tied me on the chair, and tried to do... you know. He tried to do whatever he had to do to the bottom part, and I went and kicked him. But I rolled over in the chair... I didn't know I was still tied to the chair. And the girl [another sex worker], the one that came up with me to wait outside, she heard the bangs and went: that's it. She dived up... she was a big hefty girl... ran up, grabbed him, put him against the wall, untied the ropes and got me outta there. I was all bruised, she took me straight to the police then, she said: that's you, you were raped, he was about to do that to you again, Michael. Because I'd told all the girls what'd happen to me [as a child]. She says, no, we have to look after you. You look after us, we have to look after you.

6.4.4. Sophie, a former heroin user, used to sell sex on the street while working another full time job. In the interview, the following experience came up:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher: What do you mean with ‘nasty clients’?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie: There was a range of things. I was assaulted... I was raped by two guys one night. And that upset me, it upset me hugely for about eight months, I was just a complete wreck... and then because you can’t tell anybody...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher: So you didn’t report it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie: No, I didn’t report it. No. I didn’t do anything.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher: Did you consider reporting it?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie: No.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher: What were you scared of?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophie: I was just so terrified of starting that ball rolling, of getting the police involved and then that just cascading into everyone knowing, people at work knowing what I do. People would ask, why were you there, why would you give two men that you didn’t know a lift? It was two young fellas, like, it was two students...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Researcher: So they were in your car?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Sophie:  *Mm, they were in my car. I always had a rule that I was never going to take anybody in the car drunk, and it was one night that I was so skint, and there was nobody about all evening [no clients], and they came round and asked for a lift, and they said they’d give me a fiver each, and that’s a tenner... You know, they were just, sort of, drunk – and I always swore I would never go with anyone drunk.*

Researcher:  *So they weren’t even proposing sex?*

Sophie:  *Not at that stage. And then when we were on the way up, they asked me if I was working and whatever, and I said yes; and they were just being lads and eejits, but I just kinda thought, I really need the money... I really, really need the money... so I ended up doing something, again, that I would never do, which is go to someone’s house. They were living in the Holy Lands in student accommodation, and I went into the house. There was meant to be just one of them that I was going to do business with, and then the other one that I’d got a bad vibe from the start, anyway... Yeah, so, I just felt to stupid that I’d went to their house as well, you know.*

**Violence from other people**

*6.4.5.* In addition to violent or abusive clients, some sex workers also reported violence from other people, including people who profited from their work such as ‘boyfriends’ and agents (see 4.3.27). Lara, who first starting selling sex because of her boyfriend at the time, responded to the question about negative aspects of prostitution:

> Well, the worst part of it was that I was beaten. He was scared every time that I was coming home that maybe I would bring the police. He threatened me with my family, that he will hurt my family if I say something or if I bring the police home. So he started to beat me.

*6.4.6.* Most commonly, interviewees mentioned robberies and threats by people they assumed to be agents or crime gangs involved in managing prostitution:

> A big problem is the robberies. Now that to me is due to sometimes agencies [trying to put independent sex workers out of business], but at other times I feel it's all this media coverage that's going on. Because you have people writing that escorts are earning thousands a day – they're not! I mean we also have expenses and things like that. So these guys are thinking: oh, will I rob a Tesco, or will I rob this girl – what's easier? (Lucy)

This issue was also acknowledged by the PSNI officers interviewed:

> The sex workers in Belfast are always being robbed... and they never report it because they either don't trust the police, don't want to tell the police what's going on, or they're just too scared.

*6.4.7.* The administrator for the Irish UglyMugs scheme, an online service that allows sex
workers to report and be informed about violent clients and other forms of trouble, summarised the various forms of violence that sex workers encounter and the reasons she sees behind the increasing abuse\textsuperscript{14}:

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Interviewee:} There are offenders who literally go round to apartments, and they say to the sex workers: either you have sex with me for free or I'm phoning your landlord, or the police. That's what's changed in recent years. I mean, there was always exploitation, but there's more and more abuse and exploitation.

\textbf{Researcher:} And why do you think that it has increased like that?

\textbf{Interviewee:} Because people know very well that sex workers will not go to the police, they will not seek help. Some sex workers will go to the police, it happens sometimes, but it's very common for people to be, you know, robbed at gun point, stabbed, all sorts of very serious things, and they won't go to the police. And offenders know that and recognise that. A typical thing sex workers always used to get told by offenders was: you're just a whore, you can't report me to the police, if you did no one would believe you anyway. That type of mentality. But then you also have the other one coming in, which is: ‘Sure if I didn't take your money your pimp would take your money anyway.’ And, you know: 'You're forced to have sex with sixty men a day so I do whatever I f…ing want.'

\textbf{Researcher:} And why is that?

\textbf{Interviewee:} It's continually reinforced in the wider public that the people selling sex are all these victims who are controlled by pimps and probably trafficked, and have to do all sorts of things and get treated like shit. Offenders justify it to themselves: it's OK, their pimps will take the money if we didn't rob them. We have a kind of whole increased focus on sex work in the media, increased hate of the whole industry, increased publicity constantly saying that you can do anything you want to a sex worker, and that they're trafficking and forced and pimped anyway. So under that environment there is more abuse and exploitation.
\end{quote}

\textbf{6.4.8.} The issue of non-reporting will be discussed in chapter 8 in more detail. As pointed out by several interviewees, experiences of violence are closely related to the stigma attached to prostitution, and public images of sex workers.

\section{Stigma}

\textbf{6.5.1.} In the online survey, the 3 most common responses to the question “What do you \textit{not} like about selling sexual services?” related to the secrecy and negative image attached to prostitution. Stigmatisation and the related fear of exposure constitute the single most important issue for the sex workers who took part in this study, ranked above fears of

\textsuperscript{14} After the completion of the research, UglyMugs.ie published statistics about the incidents reported by sex workers. The numbers can be found here: http://uglymugs.ie/wp-content/uploads/5-year-stats-NI.pdf
violence, financial concerns, health concerns, and worries about the effects selling sex has on one’s emotional and mental well-being.

6.5.2. The following quotes from the interviews with sex workers exemplify their experiences of and concerns about stigma and exposure.

Well, it’s normally not safe for all the girls and the fellas that was doing it – standing on the street. And then other people would’ve been coming past going: that’s a disease, that’s a disease, that’s a disease, you shouldn’t be standing here, don’t be standing outside my front door trying to sell sex! They would throw stones and bottles and stuff. (Michael)

You’re thinking not just about yourself. You’re thinking about: if my family ever find out, if my daughter ever found out. It’s the whole taboo thing, it’s illegal in people’s eyes, it’s dirty, like if my mum was ever to find out, she would completely disown me. (Aileen)

I don’t like secrecy and I hate the stigma, and I hate the fact that society doesn’t want me to be doing what I’m doing. I am not allowed to be proud with what I do and I am not supposed to enjoy what I do. (Carol)

Ireland is like twenty years behind in stigma and acceptability. We’ve got a lot of catching up to do, we need to get people to realise that we’re not two-headed monsters. (...) People find it hard to accept that it’s just a job, and you come home and get into your onesie and have a bowl of Coco Pops on the couch like everybody else. (Annabel)

I don’t like the whole stigma – it’d be so nice if you could work from home, and be able to have kids, and a family, and not have to worry about people finding out. You could go off, do your job like normal, and come back in the evening, and people aren’t sitting there trying to take your children off you because you’re a hooker, so therefore you’re worse than a paedophile. And the media: I don’t like the idea of being exposed – it’s like, how is it in public interest to know that I’m a ho [sex worker], really? (Sarah)

6.5.3. As these quotes show, sex workers experience abuse and stigmatisation and are worried about their families, friends and colleagues finding out about their work, as they feel other people would think that selling sex is not an acceptable way of earning a living.

6.5.4. Several interviewees also mentioned their fear of the media, and their concerns of being misrepresented and exposed against their will, as there have been news reports in the past about individual sex workers, describing their working locations and giving away personal details without the sex worker’s consent.

6.5.5. Fear of being exposed may also discourage sex workers from reporting crimes committed against them, such as assaults, robberies and rapes, as mentioned throughout this chapter. Sex workers’ views on working with the police will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8.
7. PAYING FOR SEX

7.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we present our results regarding the demand side of prostitution in Northern Ireland. We address the following questions:

- How many people pay for sex?
- What are the demographics of people who pay for sex (e.g. gender, age, educational background, family status, income)?
- Why do people pay for sex?
- How do clients access paid sex?
- What are the types of transactions and interactions between clients and sex workers?
- What do clients know about the legal context and what are their attitudes towards prostitution?

MAIN FINDINGS

- We estimate that about 3% of the adult male population (between 20 and 65 years of age) pay for sex in Northern Ireland (i.e. 17,500 people).

- The vast majority of their clients are male, with small numbers of women paying for sex with men and some women occasionally participating as part of a couple. Men most commonly pay for sex with women, but a significant number of clients also pay for sex with transgender/transvestite sex workers or male sex workers.

- The majority of clients are between 30 and 50 years old. However, there are small numbers of clients who are younger than 22 or older than 75. Over half of clients first started paying for sex before the age of 30.

- The majority of clients are local men, with a smaller number of foreign nationals, e.g. foreign residents or visiting business men.

- A significant number of clients are married or in a relationship and/or have children.

- Clients tend to be well-educated with a relatively high income, although some clients also come from a lower socio-economic background. Survey and interview data showed that a wide variety of professions are represented, including, for example, medical doctors, farmers, construction workers, IT specialists, civil servants, care workers, bank clerks, and managers.

- There are many different reasons why people pay for sex, and not all interactions between clients and sex workers are purely, or even mainly, about sex. Main reasons include: not wanting or not feeling ready to commit to a conventional relationship; not
enjoying or not feeling comfortable with conventional ways of meeting sexual partners; finding their sex life (in a marriage or relationship) not satisfying; seeing sex workers allows them to express and explore their sexuality; liking the thrill of the encounter; and feeling that their interactions with sex workers fulfill emotional and social needs, e.g. being listened to, being hugged and being treated kindly.

- Due to the significant changes to the Northern Ireland sex industry over the last years – increasing internet presence, and more sex workers offering services – access to paid sex has become easier. Presently, most clients access paid sex via the internet. Many of the interviewees explained that they had not known about Northern Ireland’s sex industry, or thought of it as street-based prostitution only, and had ‘stumbled’ upon it on the internet.

- ‘Payment’ for sex does not only include money, but also, for example, a place to stay, a meal, drinks, or presents such as jewellery or perfume.

- Most commonly, the frequency with which clients pay for sex is either ‘a few times a year’ or ‘once or twice a month’. Very few clients said that they see sex workers every week or more than once a week.

- Clients mainly pay for ‘escort services’, that is, book an appointment with a specific sex worker based on online profiles or advertisements. Paying for sex in a brothel or using street prostitution is not very common, mirroring the decline in street-based prostitution and the relative absence of brothels (i.e. places where sex can be bought from a range of different sex workers without previous appointment) in Northern Ireland.

- More than one third of Northern Ireland-based clients did not know what the legal context of prostitution is, that is, they either thought paying for sex was illegal or they did not know whether it was illegal or not.

- None of the interviewees had informed themselves about the legal aspects before first paying for sex. Instead, knowledge about laws on prostitution was gained over time (if it all), mainly by using online forums.

- From the perspective of clients, the negative aspects of paying for sex include: the stigma attached to prostitution and the resulting feelings of guilt and shame; and concerns about the well-being and safety of sex workers. Some clients, however, do not appear to consider the fact that people could be selling sex against their will or under circumstances that they cannot completely control.

7.2. Numbers

7.2.1. As discussed in Chapter 2.6., due to the time frame and resources available for this study, it was difficult to get representative data for the level of demand in Northern Ireland, i.e. show how many of Northern Ireland residents currently pay or have paid for sexual services in the past. Any relatively precise calculation of the proportion of adults buying
sexual services would require a population survey using a random or at least quota sampling frame.

7.2.2. Unlike sex workers who need to advertise in one way or the other in order to attract clients, the clients themselves are much more likely to remain anonymous and ‘in the dark’ to protect their identity, particularly if they are married or in a relationship – in our survey this was around half of respondents. The proportion of people who are open about purchasing sex, either with their partner’s consent or jointly with their partner, remains small and a niche culture.

7.2.3. Despite these difficulties, we were able to make the following estimates based on our survey data.

**Calculation**

7.2.4. Participants to the client survey were predominantly recruited through internet-based escort websites. In the survey, we found 4 main types of clients purchasing sex in Northern Ireland:

- Northern Ireland residents paying for sex in Northern Ireland only;
- Northern Ireland residents paying for sex in Northern Ireland and elsewhere;
- Northern Ireland residents paying for sex outside Northern Ireland only;
- Clients living elsewhere paying for sex in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

7.2.5. The information from sex workers about the number of times they sell sex in Northern Ireland per week helps to estimate the number of clients in Northern Ireland, but does not account for Northern-Ireland domiciled clients who purchase sex elsewhere. Table 18 below shows the number of clients seen by sex workers when working in Northern Ireland, divided by residence.

**Table 18: Average number of clients per week by residence (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of clients per week</th>
<th>Sex workers not resident in NI</th>
<th>NI resident</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 5</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 to 10</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 15</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 to 20</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 to 25</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 30</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30+</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.2.6. Based on our figures for NI-based and non-NI-based sex workers selling sexual services in Northern Ireland, the average number of transactions per week would be approximately 17 for a non-NI-based sex worker and 10 for an NI-based sex worker, with the average overall being approximately 15 transactions per week. Sex workers may see the
same client(s) more than once in any one week, but our interview data shows that this is uncommon. It is noteworthy that this average figure taken from the survey would seem to provide confirmatory support for the average figure of 15 clients per week reported in the interviews.

7.2.7. 15 transactions per week, every week, would amount to 780 transactions per year. We now relate this figure to the frequency with which clients have purchased sex per year, presented in Figure 12 below (see 7.6.2). Our results show that nearly half of respondents purchased sex only a few times a year and around nine in ten clients no more than a few times a month. This would suggest that a hypothetical full-time equivalent (FTE) sex worker with 15 transactions a week would have approximately 210 separate clients per annum. This does not take into consideration the imbalance between a Northern Ireland-based sex worker and a non-Northern Ireland-based or touring sex worker, but is simply an estimate derived from the reported rates of activity of those purchasing sexual services.

7.2.8. 15 transactions per week, every week, would amount to 780 transactions per year for a full-time sex worker. Not every sex worker will complete 780 transactions per year, in fact very few, if any, are likely to do so. Some sex workers sell sex on a part-time basis; most, if not all, will take days or weeks off; and with regard to travelling sex workers we have to account for the days in which they move from one location to the next, and on these days the number of transactions will be lower. In order to estimate the likely client numbers and demand we therefore need to assume the concept of a full-time equivalent (FTE) sex worker (i.e. a sex worker operating at the average level of activity for her peer group throughout the whole year).

7.2.9. We relate this figure to the frequency with which clients have purchased sex per year, presented in Figure 12 below (see 7.6.2). Our results show that nearly half of respondents purchased sex only a few times a year and around nine in ten clients no more than a few times a month.

7.2.10. Any hypothetical FTE sex worker completing 780 transactions per annum might do so with any number of possible clients (up to 780 different individuals). The reality is much more likely to be that the client base will be a mixture of those purchasing sex on a weekly basis, on a monthly basis, only a few times a year or only once per year. Assuming that the client rates in Figure 12 are accurate and capable of generalisation, it should therefore be possible to estimate the possible numbers of those purchasing sexual services in Northern Ireland each year by combining these rates with the numbers of FTEs in Northern Ireland and their reported rate of throughput (which differs between those locally resident and those not resident in Northern Ireland).

7.2.11. Above (see 3.2.15) we estimated that there is typically a market of between 300 and 350 sex workers potentially contactable by those purchasing sexual services in return for money. However, we know that not all of these sex workers will be working full-time and we also know that not each advert will attract clients (whereas others may attract multiple (clients). On the theoretical assumption that there is the equivalent number of
completed transactions for 100 full-time sex workers operating at any one time (i.e. 100 FTEs) and 20 are Northern Ireland street sex workers and 80 work in the indoor sector, the estimated number of clients per year in Northern Ireland would be 21,400 if all indoor sex workers were based outside of Northern Ireland (and working at the higher rate described above, see 7.2.6) and 13,760 if all indoor sex workers were NI-based. The estimate based on a 50:50 split between indoor sex workers from outside and from within Northern Ireland would be 17,580.

7.2.12. We would emphasise that these are predicated on the assumption that the estimates of activity as reported by sex workers (Figure 6, see 6.3.1) and clients (Figure 12, see 7.6.2) in the online surveys are broadly reflective of prostitution in Northern Ireland. Based on more than half a million males in Northern Ireland in the age band of 20-65, we would therefore assume that approximately 3% of these are purchasers of sexual services in any one year.

7.3. Demographics

Gender

7.3.1. In the online survey with clients, almost all respondents were male (97%), with only 2% being female, and 1% identifying as transgender. All of the clients who took part in the face-to-face interviews were men paying for sex with women (and sporadically, trans persons), and so were all clients who contacted the research team to offer their participation (but who had to be declined because they had only paid for sex in the Republic of Ireland, not in Northern Ireland). This mirrors the experience of female sex workers: the vast majority of their clients are male, with women occasionally participating as part of a couple.

7.3.2. In regard to male and trans prostitution, we can add the following information. In a study based on interviews with service users, the Rainbow Project in Belfast\textsuperscript{15} found that the majority of male and trans sex workers provide services exclusively to men, with a smaller number providing services to both males and females.

7.3.3. We thus conclude that the majority of people who pay for sex in Northern Ireland are men.

Age

7.3.4. The average client appears to be middle-aged: 64% of the 446 clients who responded to the online survey were between 31 and 50 years of age, with very small proportions being under 22 or over 75 years of age, as Figure 7 below shows.

\textsuperscript{15} Unpublished report, Rainbow Project 2011.
7.3.5. Figure 8 shows the age at which survey respondents said they first paid for face-to-face sexual contact. It shows that the most likely age when this happened was between 22 and 25 years of age, and for over half (57%) of respondents this had happened by the time they were 30 years old. Among respondents from Northern Ireland, a slightly lower proportion (45%) had purchased sexual services by that age.

Figure 7: Age Profile of Clients in years (%)
Locations

Home address

7.3.6. Respondents lived across the ROI and the UK, with the majority living in large cities in the ROI and Northern Ireland (e.g. Dublin, Cork, Belfast, Limerick). 49 respondents said they lived in Northern Ireland – 2 thirds of these in Belfast. Over one quarter (27%) of respondents said they lived in Dublin. The high percentage of respondents from the Republic of Ireland is probably due to the recruitment strategies used: Escort Ireland, one of the websites that was used as a platform to inform potential participants about the research and which led to a significant number of responses, focuses on advertising escorts in Ireland.

7.3.7. A high proportion of respondents did not say where they lived (14%) – probably due to fear of being identified, so the actual number of respondents from Northern Ireland is likely to be higher.

Locations where sexual services are bought

7.3.8. Table 19 below shows the geographic locations in which respondents had paid for face-to-face sex. Multiple responses were possible, so the total does not add up to 100%. 8 in 10 Northern Ireland-based clients had purchased sexual services in Northern Ireland compared with 1 in 5 of all clients. However, nearly half of respondents from Northern Ireland had also bought sexual services in the Republic of Ireland, over one third had done so in other parts of the UK and over one quarter in other parts of Europe. Overall, 64% of respondents said they never purchased sex in Northern Ireland. As respondents could specify the locations in which they had purchased sexual services, there was a great variety of places represented.

Table 19: Geographic locations in which respondents purchased sexual services. Multiple response table. Northern Ireland based versus ALL clients (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic location</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in the UK</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in Europe</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere in the World</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.9. Respondents were also asked to specify the geographic locations in which they had purchased sexual services in Northern Ireland. Belfast was by far the most common locality, but the results also show that people pay for sex across Northern Ireland. The findings are summarised in Table 20 below. Again, the Table results compare all respondents with those based in Northern Ireland.
Table 20: Geographic locations in Northern Ireland in which respondents purchased sexual services. Multiple response table. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL respondents (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic location in Northern Ireland</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belfast</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Antrim (but not Belfast)</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry/Londonderry</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Londonderry (but not Derry/Londonderry City)</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Down</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Armagh</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Tyrone</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co Fermanagh</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>&lt;5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Mobility and fluidity**

7.3.10. It is important to reiterate that mobility is an integral feature of the sex industry (see 2.2.3). Interviewees explained that they adapt their strategies of finding and meeting sex workers to the circumstances, and it appears to be common for clients to pay for sex in various locations, not only in their home town (or in some cases, not at all in their home town), but also, for example, when going on business trips or on holiday. Also, the current locations where people pay for sex only represent a specific moment in time, and may change in the future. Therefore, we considered it important to include the responses from all clients in this report, regardless of where they live and where they currently pay for sexual services.

**Nationalities**

7.3.11. Nearly 2 thirds (63%) of survey respondents said they had an Irish nationality (mirroring the high number of respondents living in the Republic of Ireland), followed by 14% who said they were British. 2% said they were ‘Northern Irish’. Other nationalities included Indian, Australian, US-American, Romanian, French and German.

7.3.12. This reflects the experience of sex workers in Northern Ireland: the majority of clients appear to be local men, i.e. Irish/British men, with a smaller number of foreign nationals, e.g. foreign residents or visiting business men.

**Religion**

7.3.13. 53% of respondents said they did not belong to any religion, 42% said they did, whilst 6% did not answer this question. Only one quarter of respondents stated their
religion, with most identifying as Christian (Roman Catholic or Protestant denominations) and a very small number identifying as Muslim, Hindu or Jewish.

7.3.14. Half of respondents (50%) said that religion was not important to them, with 11% saying it was important and 35% saying it was neither. Respondents from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland were more likely than those from Britain and those from elsewhere to say that they belonged to a religion and that religion was important to them. The proportion of respondents from Northern Ireland who said that religion was not important to them was 48%. This was similar to those from the Republic of Ireland (47%), but lower compared to those from other parts of the UK (58%) and those who lived outside the UK and Ireland (60%).

**Relationship status and family**

7.3.15. Figure 9 below shows that over 4 in 10 respondents (42%) said they were single. Combined with the separated/divorced and widowed respondents, the proportion of those who were not in a relationship was over 50%. 4 in 10 (38%) respondents from Northern Ireland were married or in a civil partnership. This was the highest proportion in the sample (other parts of the UK: 30%; Republic of Ireland: 28%; elsewhere 25%).

![Figure 9: Marital status of respondents (%)](image)

7.3.16. 43% of the respondents said they had children – this number was 52% among clients living in Northern Ireland. 63% of respondents with children said they were one of the main carers for these children. The ages of the children varied from under one year to over 40 years of age, i.e. children who were already adults.
**Education and employment**

7.3.17. Overall, the background data reveals that the sample consists predominantly of relatively wealthy, well-educated middle-aged males. Considering the average costs involved in purchasing face-to-face sex, this is not surprising.

**Educational qualifications**

7.3.18. Figure 10 shows the educational qualifications of respondents. The Figure shows that over half of respondents had an undergraduate qualification or above. The proportion of those who had an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification was higher among respondents in Britain (72%), lower among clients living in Northern Ireland (61% having at least an undergraduate qualification) and lowest among clients living in the Republic of Ireland (53%).

**Figure 10: Highest educational qualification of respondents (%)**

![Graph showing educational qualifications]

**Employment**

7.3.19. 59% of respondents were employed, whilst a further 25% were self-employed. 5% said they were retired. A very small proportion of respondents were unemployed or were students. 1 in 10 respondents refused to answer this question. The proportion of self-employed clients was highest among respondents who lived in Northern Ireland (28%) and the Republic of Ireland (27%).

7.3.20. Respondents worked in a wide variety of jobs, from agriculture/farming, to construction and IT. Among the respondents were also medical doctors, civil servants, care workers, bank clerks, accountants, electricians and company directors.
Income

7.3.21. Over one quarter of respondents reported a gross annual income of £50,000 or above for 2013 with almost 3 quarters of respondents reporting an income of at least £20,000 annually (Figure 11 below).

Figure 11: Respondents gross annual income for 2013, in Sterling (%)

Diversity of the sample

7.3.22. The 10 clients who were interviewed in person for this study exemplify the diversity of biographies and reasons to buy sexual services, while at the same time generally resembling the demographics pictured in the survey data. The following case stories may serve to paint a picture of men who buy sexual services in Northern Ireland.

Dan

Dan, a Belfast man in his late 40s, is divorced and currently single. He is self-employed and earns between £20,000 and £30,000 a year. He started paying for sex after separating from his wife. Dan describes his marriage as very difficult. He came out of it deeply hurt, and explains that he does not feel emotionally ready for another relationship. He visits mainly Irish and English escorts who are in their thirties or older, as he feels more comfortable with them. For him, having a chat with the escort, being in someone’s company – the social interaction – is an important part of the encounter. For that reason, he has never paid for sex in the street or in a brothel; he only sees independent escorts and always books a full hour. Dan also describes his previous sexual experience as rather limited mainly due to a monogamous, yet largely sex-less marriage, and he feels that he is learning more about sex and his own sexuality from escorts.
Jonathan

Jonathan described himself as the “average Joe on the street”. He is in his early 50s, divorced after a long marriage, and works in sales. He lives in a rural area outside of Belfast. Jonathan is a father and says he has a good relationship with his children. Jonathan ‘discovered’ the Northern Ireland sex industry on the internet, by chance. Like many others, he had thought prostitution meant only street walking, and was surprised when he found out about online escorts. For the last 2 years, he has paid for sexual services from escorts on average every 2 months. Being asked about his reasons, he says he works long hours and does not feel he could commit to a relationship at the moment. Jonathan prefers to see the same sex workers regularly, and enjoys talking, joking and “having a bit of craic” in addition to sex.

Jeff

Jeff is a married Northern Irish man in his early 50s. He is a successful self-employed business man. He explains that sex and intimacy have not been part of his marriage for many years, and that he therefore regularly pays for sex. For Jeff, it is about “getting attention.” He generally visits the more expensive sex workers, paying about £200 per hour, as he feels that they will see fewer clients and more likely not be doing this work “purely for the money”. He says he would prefer to be able to tell his wife, but feels that she would be devastated and it would end their marriage, even though it has survived affairs in the past. Jeff pays for sex several times a week, often when he is away from home on business trips, and sometimes pays for the whole night. Seeing escorts has been a part of his life for 15 years.

Paul

Paul is in his 60s and a retired professional from Belfast. A few years ago he separated from his wife, with whom he has several children. Affected by the separation and the way his life had turned out, Paul went through a phase of serious depression in his early 60s. He came out on the other side being more open-minded, he says, and more aware of his own sexuality and needs, which he felt were oppressed most of his life due to his conservative upbringing in Northern Ireland. He tried dating websites but did not like the experience. Instead, he started seeing escorts, and has been paying for their services regularly about once every month or less for the last 3 years. From his point of view, seeing a sex worker is a much more “honest thing to do” because it is out in the open what each party wants: the client wants sex and companionship, and the sex workers want to earn a living. He appreciates the directness of the encounter but also enjoys the social side of it and the conversations with sex workers.

Nick

Nick lives in the Republic of Ireland and usually pays for sex there, but has come to Belfast on business several times and met sex workers in apartments and hotels here. He is in his early forties, single, and has a degree in engineering. His first encounter with a sex worker
was 7 years ago, and was given to him as a birthday present by a friend. He feels that the older he gets, the harder it is to meet new people. For Nick, paying for sex with an escort about once a month is the best way to regularly have sex without the “jumping through the hoops” that dating entails. He also feels that he can explore his sexuality with sex workers and try new things. Nick is generally skeptical of conventional relationships as he has seen some of his friends go through hurtful divorces which also financially ruined them. For him, compartmentalising sex and social life is a safe and convenient alternative to being in a relationship.

Roger

Roger is a Northern Irish man in his late 50s who has been married for thirty years. He has grown-up children and runs his own business. Roger describes himself as happily married. He started seeing escorts five years ago only because sex stopped being part of his marriage. Roger would have preferred to work through that, and even suggested doing couple’s counselling, without success. For him, paying for sex is a makeshift solution, and he feels guilty about it. Roger visits sex workers about once a month, and says the only thing that would stop him is if he could have sex again with his wife, or if his wife found out and wanted him to stop.

Andy

Andy, a man in his late 40s from Cork, travels across the ROI and Northern Ireland for work. He is self-employed, earning about £100,000 per year. He is married and has children. Andy says sex hasn’t been part of his marriage for ten years, which was the main reason he started paying for sex. He felt that seeing sex workers was an alternative to having an affair, and didn’t come with emotional strings attached. When he first discovered the “exciting fantasy world” of online escorts, Andy paid for sex about twice a week. After doing that for a while, he turned to only seeing a small number of sex workers, and is now only seeing one. He describes his relationship with this particular sex worker and a few others as a friendship, as a relationship that goes beyond just booking an appointment. Andy also invites them to shows; they go out partying together and sometimes spend entire days or even weekends together. By now, his relationships with people in the sex industry have become like a second life to him – a life that he keeps separate from his family life at home.

Philip

Philip is in his late thirties and grew up in Northern Ireland. He describes himself as shy and introvert. He was raised in a Christian family, but stopped going to church after his brother came out as gay, and family members reacted with rejection – which he felt was due to their conservative Christian attitudes. Philip is currently single and works long hours. He first paid for sex when he was away on a business trip in England. He then started looking into escort services back home, and realised that there were various different websites advertising sexual services. For the last 6 years, he has visited sex workers about once a month, sometimes more often. In between, he had been in a relationship, and stopped paying for sex then – for him, that would have been cheating. After the relationship ended, he returned
to seeing escorts. For Philip, the main reason for paying for sex is that he feels he doesn’t have the time to go out and meet women because of his work schedule, and he also doesn’t particularly like to go out “just to meet a woman”.

Edward

Edward is in his sixties, married and has children. He is a successful businessman and earns about £100,000. He says he has had a good life so far: he grew up in a good family, has had a good marriage; enjoys his work and hobbies. However, he always wanted a bit more: he enjoys trying new hobbies and travelling. And although Edward describes his wife as “loving” he feels that their relationship is rather love-less. He first started paying for sex five years ago, mainly because of the thrill, the excitement. He usually chooses the more expensive escorts. Having a conversation and learning about their lives and work is an important part of the encounter for him. He also says that some of the escorts he has met have given him advice on things such as his health, and generally provided him with new insights.

Bob

Bob is a British man in his 50s, living in the Republic of Ireland. He is single and works in a hospital. Bob identifies as a heterosexual cross-dresser, but even though he knew from an early age, he only came out when he was in his late 20s. He still keeps it a secret from his family, friends, and colleagues. He has had relationships before where he was open about his needs, but they didn’t last. For him, the only time he gets to be himself is with sex workers. He limits the encounter to touching, cuddling and hugging, as sex, for him, belongs in a loving relationship. He pays sex workers to have a space where he can dress up, and be accepted the way he is. He sees escorts whenever he has enough money to do so, once a week if he can afford it. As not all sex workers are open to a cross-dressing client, Bob prefers to see the same escorts, the ones that he feels comfortable with.

7.4. Reasons for paying for sexual services

Main reasons – survey results

7.4.1. As the case studies above exemplify, there are many different reasons why people pay for sexual services, and clients in Northern Ireland are no exception in this regard. In the online survey, respondents were asked what they liked about buying sexual services. Table 21 summarises the findings and gives insights into why people pay for sex.

Table 21: What respondents like about buying sex. Rank-ordered All respondents versus NI-domiciled respondents (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI-domiciled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy having sex with different people</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.4.2. The Table shows some differences between the Northern Ireland-domiciled clients and the overall sample, e.g. a higher proportion of Northern Ireland-based clients said that sex with sex workers gave them a thrill; that they were able to do things they could not do with their partners; and it increased their self-esteem.

7.4.3. Respondents had the opportunity to comment on this question. Their responses provide explanations and show the diversity of reasons why men pay for sex. In the face-to-face interviews, participants were also asked why they pay for sex. Their responses were similar to the reasons given by survey respondents. The main themes identified in participants’ responses are presented in the next section. It is important to notice, however, that for most clients, different reasons overlap, and their views on paying for sex change over time.

Commitment

7.4.4. **Not wanting or not feeling ready to commit to a conventional relationship** is one reason why people pay for sex. Jonathan, who is divorced and works irregular, long hours, explained:

> I am now single but I don’t have the time to go out to night clubs and bars looking for dates whatever. And the escort industry is a good outlet. I am divorced, but I still have good contacts with the kids and everything, and work long hours, and I feel it will be very unfair to me to enter into a relationship with a woman at the minute because I couldn’t commit.

7.4.5. Nick, a single Irish man, is generally wary of commitment:
If I got married, all of a sudden she controls the purse strings, because if anything ever happens [and] the marriage is up, I pay a financial price for the rest of my life. (...) So I'm conscious about that, just purely me, for selfish reasons, that if I ever go done that road of relationships, I have to be very, very, very, careful. So for me, sex and escorts provide that situation where I can enjoy sex, I can experiment, non-judgmentally, and it's compartmentalised.

7.4.6. The following survey responses paint a similar picture:

Personally I am single but looking after an elderly parent semi full time along with working anti-social night shifts. Attempts to form personal relationships have been difficult and it is an outlet for my desire for intimacy about six or eight times a year currently.

I have particular body issues which make me more comfortable with an escort than a non-escort as I view escorts as providing a professional service.

I lost my virginity to an escort at the age of 40 and if it weren't for escorts I would still be a virgin.

Dating

7.4.7. Some clients do not enjoy or feel comfortable with conventional ways of meeting sexual partners, and feel that paying for sex is more honest. Dan, a 48-year old divorced man, said:

There was a pretty bad marriage (...) and I’m just not ready to go for that again and I didn’t want to hurt anybody. I thought it would be better to (...) visit a sex worker, it is an honest experience, you know you are gonna set the time, you know exactly what is on the table, you know what I mean. (...)The aftermath of one night stand could be pretty nasty, if the woman concerned is of the opinion that she’s, you know, in a relationship. Personally I think that’s nastier than visiting a sex worker.

7.4.8. Survey responses included the following comment:

I don’t have to guess if I am going to have sex when I visit as this is sure and no hassle. People make too much fuss about sex it is a natural part of us. It is better that than going out to the pub where everyone is posing and getting drunk and don't know what they want. This is the safest and best way. Too much STD in the clubs and pubs, these escorts are tested and always practice safe sex.

Sexual dissatisfaction

7.4.9. Another common reason mentioned by participants who are in a relationship or married is that they feel that their sex life is not satisfying to them. Roger, a married man in his late 50s, feels guilty about seeing escorts, but at the same time sees no other solution, as sex is no longer part of his marriage:
Roger: I am very, very happily married. Say, probably about 5 years ago, my wife was just getting a little bit fed up with sex, and really, you know, I tried to talk her into going to a sex counsellor, but she refused point blank. So I thought she might come round. But then I lapsed into using escorts, and I've been using escorts ever since really, probably visiting them about once a month.

Researcher: Would you prefer to not go see escorts, and just go back to be with your wife?

Roger: Yes, yes. If I had a good, active sex life at home, I definitely wouldn't be going to any escorts, but you know, my wife just doesn't want to – she just shuns the whole thing, really, you know. (...) I suppose maybe we've just withdrawn from each other a wee bit, maybe, but we're still very happily married, you know, we still go out and socialise quite a bit, but it's just, you know, when it comes to the sex – I suppose I sort of gave up. (...) So, as much as I would really love to go back and have sex with my wife, but I don't know whether I should broach the subject or what, she hasn't been that well, either, so I really don't want to sort of upset her in any way, if you know what I mean.

Researcher: And you feel like there's no way you could talk to her about this?

Roger: I don't think so, no, to be honest with you. If she knows what I'm up to, she'll leave me, definitely. I suppose it's once a month [that I see an escort], the lapse is – I don't know, permissible, or whatever.

7.4.10. Andy, also married, views paying for sex as a release, and differentiates between paying for sex and having an affair:

Andy: I work long hours, rarely get time off at weekends – I don't have the opportunity to have feckin' affair. I didn't want an affair anyway – I'm happy at home, I have a good relationship with my wife, my kids, but I just needed this release. And this was an easy release – a hundred quid and you could meet any beautiful girl you wanted to.

Researcher: What is the difference between this and an affair, you say you don't want an affair?

Andy: An affair means you're actually – Jeez, I suppose this is cheating too. But if I was having an affair, that's a bit different – that's kind of, you know, putting emotions and feelings into a relationship whereby I didn't want that, I didn't need that. The only thing I was missing at home was sex – that was the only thing I was replacing – the thrill, the excitement. (...) 

Researcher: But you do want to stay married, is your marriage something you find important?

Andy: I do want to stay married, and it was getting to a situation with quarrels and frustrations and lack of release that it could have gone a bit more sour than it is at the moment. I'm not saying escorts have saved my marriage but I would
have to consider that – if a man can’t get sex, he’ll get frustrated. (...) If I had an affair, would I be looking to move with this other girl, and leave my wife and kids? I don’t want that, that’s not what I’m looking for. So escorts are just a release, a bit of excitement, but I have to go back home and live my normal life.

7.4.11. Survey responses that correspond to this theme included:

After being faithful to my wife for 12 years I found out she was cheating on me. I live in a rural area and find it hard to meet people. So twice I have paid for sex to fulfil my physical needs.

I live in a loveless marriage with no physical contact.

My wife refuses to sleep with me. Either she is having an affair or she has problems. I don’t care at this stage, we are just hanging in there because it’s handier than getting a divorce and I want to see my kids growing up.

My partner has issues from past experiences so we don’t have sex often. This is just to release the sexual frustration that builds up in an otherwise loving relationship.

Exploring sexuality

7.4.12. Some clients is that they feel that paying for sex allows them to express and explore their sexuality, which they feel they wouldn’t be able to do in a conventional relationship either because of the nature of their sexual desire or because of the limitations they experience in building conventional sexual relationships.

7.4.13. Bob, a man in his early 50s from Dublin identifies as a cross-dresser. This is the main reason he visits sex workers, as he explained:

They [escorts] accept me for what I am. (...) Well, but I have never had intercourse. I only have intercourse with somebody I love. (...) I am a bit old-fashioned when it comes to intercourse. I love cuddles and falling asleep together in each other’s arm after she has given me a ‘happy ending’. I don’t enjoy doing it [intercourse] and then walking away.

7.4.14. Survey responses that reflect similar experiences included the following:

I missed out on young love and wanted to experience sex with young women. I find young women the most attractive and yet am too old/unattractive to have any chance without paying.

I have a disability and am a wheelchair user, although it is by no means impossible to have an emotionally and sexually satisfying relationship, I have given up for the moment because of the difficulty and the emotional vulnerability.

I like strap-on-sex and cross-dressing, that doesn’t work in a normal relationship.
In previous relationships (even short term ones) I had severe performance anxiety, which went on for years and only got worse as time went on. Whether with a girlfriend or a brief encounter, I could not perform. My few experiences with escorts helped me to overcome my anxieties. The women I visited were very understanding of my problem, did their best to help me relax and overcome fears. It’s not something I’m proud of, but these problems had been preventing me from having a good (or any) sex life for most of my life up until now.

Emotional and social needs

7.4.15. For other clients, their interactions with sex workers fulfill emotional and social needs in addition to sexual needs. Philip, a single man in his late 30s explained:

See, one of the things that distinguished between the escort in the hotel or apartment and the street-based prostitutes – you know, half the reason I go to the girl in the hotel is you want something more, it’s not just sex. No matter if even at the back of your head there’s always, this is play acting, this is not real – but at least you’re spending some time with somebody, you know, and it’s intimate time – it’s not a case of just going to the cinema or to the bar with your mates sort of thing.

7.4.16. In the survey, respondents provided the following similar comments:

None of these [responses] mentions the need to feel wanted even if it is only a short term illusion.

I feel I can be myself.

It is not just about sex. It’s about intimacy and cuddles and human contact... it keeps me sane.

I have never had a girlfriend (currently 25 years old). I have never had much confidence with women but seeing escorts has increased my confidence immensely.

Thrill and adventure

7.4.17. It is also the thrill of the encounter, the adventure that leads some clients to pay for sex:

What’s not to like? You learn a lot about yourself too and it’s a bit of an adventure. It’s much more like actually living out a fantasy than using internet porn, which is just fantasising.

I enjoy the selection process, I enjoy the thrill of the initial stages of the encounter, and then the act itself.

7.5. Accessing paid sex

7.5.1. Survey respondents were asked how they find out about available sexual services. Again multiple responses were possible. Table 22 below shows that by far the most likely
place where respondents access sexual services is the internet (83% gave this response). Respondents living in Northern Ireland did not differ significantly in the way they located sexual services from respondents.

**Table 22: Where would respondents locate sexual services? (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through the Internet</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saunas or massage parlours</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In clubs or bars</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the street</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking a taxi driver</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returning to a house or micro brothel visited before</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Through friends, colleagues or relatives</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At private parties</td>
<td>&lt;1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.5.2. In the face-to-face interviews, clients explained that they found out about the services offered by sex workers while browsing the internet, or in some cases because friends told them about it. Some respondents used newspaper advertisements to set up meetings with sex workers, or visited street-based sex workers. Compared to accessing prostitution via the online sector, however, these practices appear to be rather marginal, as both the survey and the interview data show.

7.5.3. Due to the significant changes to the Northern Ireland sex industry over the last years – increasing internet presence, and more sex workers offering services – access to paid sex has become easier. Many of the interviewees explained that they had not known about Northern Ireland’s sex industry, or thought of it as street-based prostitution only, and had ‘stumbled’ upon it on the internet. Other people first pay for sex elsewhere, and then actively start looking for sex workers back home.

7.6. **Types of transactions**

*Forms of payment*

7.6.1. As outlined in the introduction to this report, legally, ‘payment’ for sexual services is not limited to money. In the online survey, respondents were asked a range of questions about paying money or goods for sexual services. Table 23 below shows a breakdown of how
respondents had paid for sexual services. Multiple responses were possible. The Table compares the responses of all clients with those from Northern Ireland. The comparison shows very few differences, but reveals that Northern Ireland-based clients were more likely to exchange sex for a place to stay and for a meal or drink out. Examples of other forms of payment were: jewellery, dental work or perfume.

Table 23: Proportion of respondents who paid for sex with money or other goods or services. Multiple response table. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL clients (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paid for face-to-face sexual services with</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presents</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money for bills or fees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A safe place to stay</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A meal or drinks out</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A holiday</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequency

7.6.2. Figure 12 below shows how often respondents said they have purchased face-to-face sex. As the Figure shows, the large majority of the 446 respondents had sex for money (or goods) a few times a year. Respondents from Northern Ireland did not vary statistically from their counterparts with regard to the frequency they purchased sex.

Figure 12: Frequency with which respondents have purchased sex (%)
7.6.3. Looking at respondents’ relationship status, those who were widowed and married reported the highest frequency of purchasing sex, although this was statistically not significantly higher than among single and divorced respondents. Statistically, there was also no difference by respondents’ income.

**Gender of sex workers**

7.6.4. With regard to the *gender of the sex workers* from which they had bought sex, 85% of the respondents said they had purchased sex from female sex workers, 14% had purchased sex from a trans sex worker and 3% had purchased sex from a male sex worker.

7.6.5. Based on our interviews with service providers and our assessment of online profiles of sex workers, we assume that the low percentage of clients who had paid for sex from a man is likely to be an under-representation related to the recruitment strategies used in this study. Due to limited resources, we focused on non-specialised websites rather than also targeting websites that focus particularly on advertising services from and for men who have sex with men.

**Location of the transaction**

7.6.6. Respondents were asked *where* the transactions – i.e. the sexual contact for money or goods – took place. Table 24 below details the findings. Multiple responses were permitted, so the results do not add up to 100%. Table 24 shows that most transactions took place in an environment – either home, hotel or brothel – provided by the sex worker or their agent(s) (‘in-calls’). However, nearly 25% of clients also said that they provided the hotel room in which the sexual contact would take place, and 1 in 10 clients (11%) had sex with a sex worker in their own home (‘out-calls’). Only a small minority of clients had sex in the car or in public places.

**Table 24: Location in which sexual ‘transactions’ between clients and sex workers took place Multiple response table. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL respondents (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location for sexual transaction</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the home of the sex worker/escort</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a hotel room the sex worker/escort rents</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a hotel room the client rents</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a brothel</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the client’s home</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the car</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a public place (street, alleyway, parking lot etc.)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In another place</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.6.7. Transactions that clients from Northern Ireland had with sex workers were much less likely to take place in the home of the sex worker or in a brothel, but much more likely to take place in a hotel room that the sex worker had rented. Possible reasons for this include the general absence of massage parlours and typical brothels (see 4.2.31 for a detailed definition of brothels) in Northern Ireland which exist in other parts of the UK, and sex workers’ fear of being exposed, which may be greater in Northern Ireland because of the lack of anonymity that larger urban areas offer, and which may lead sex workers to avoid selling sexual services in her/his own house or apartment.

7.6.8. Respondents from Northern Ireland were least likely to have the transaction in a public place/on the street (2%). This could be related to the displacement of prostitution from outdoor, street-based prostitution to the indoor sector that marks the Northern Ireland sex industry (see 4.2.5.).

7.6.9. Lower income clients were slightly more likely to have the transaction in public places. This is not surprising as services provided in public places or cars are likely to be cheaper than time-based encounters with sex workers in hotels or private apartments.

**Types of services**

7.6.10. Respondents were asked what *types of services* they had paid for and whether they had done so *in Northern Ireland and elsewhere*. Table 25 below summarises the findings to this question. The Table shows that by far the most likely sexual service clients had purchased was an ‘escort service’, that is, services from a sex worker who advertises (or is advertised) online.

**Table 25: Have you paid for any of the following in Northern Ireland and elsewhere? Multiple response table. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL clients (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Service</th>
<th>In NI</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
<th>In NI</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Escort service</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex in a massage parlour/sauna</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex in a brothel</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striptease/lap dance</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcam sex</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone sex</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other things (e.g. sex parties)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.6.11. Northern Ireland-based clients were more likely to purchase sexual services elsewhere that are not easily available in Northern Ireland, such as striptease and lap dance or sex in a brothel (commonly referring to a place where sex can be bought from a range of different sex workers without previous appointment, which appears not to be common in Northern Ireland, see 4.2.31).

7.7. Interactions with sex workers

Contradicting stereotypes

7.7.1. Several interviewees described their first encounter with a sex worker, arranged via the internet, as surprising, explaining that it challenged the stereotypes they had previously taken for granted:

*I saw it on the internet, which is where most clients would find this. I knocked on the door – I just thought if it’s just what some people thought of it, some corner somewhere, traumatised, but it’s just nothing like that. Perfectly normal person, and perfectly normal encounter.* (Dan)

*That was only a few years ago when I discovered that it was perfectly – how shall we say, acceptable thing to do. And that all the stuff that I had heard about it was rubbish, and guff, and lies, and myths. Like that they’re all dirty, filthy, diseased – et cetera, all the usual stuff that the antis [term used for anti-prostitution activists] come out with. Then you go and do a bit of research and you discover that this does not appear to be the truth.* (Paul)

Different or same sex workers

7.7.2. In the online survey, respondents were asked whether they would see the same or different sex workers. Only 5% of respondents said that they would always see the same sex worker. However, nearly one third of respondents said that they tried to see the same one, but would see others if this were not possible. The majority of respondents (58%), on the other hand, said that they would generally see different sex workers.

7.7.3. Responses did not differ with regard to age and religion. Respondents from Northern Ireland were slightly more likely to say that they would always see the same sex workers, but this was a statistically insignificant difference. Due to the small number of females and transgender people in the client sample, a breakdown of these findings by gender is statistically not feasible.

7.7.4. Some respondents alluded to their rationale for seeing the same or different sex workers in their comments:

*I have a small number of favourites, but would sometimes choose to meet new people too.*

*I like to have a "friendly relationship" not just in and out.*

*I prefer to see only one or two escorts on a regular basis as it allows friendship and trust to develop.*
Variety is key to keeping things fresh and not mundane.

I will see different people, but if I meet someone I really like I will see them regularly too.

I don’t go regularly, by the time I come back they are not in the city/country anymore.

Social relationships/friendships

7.7.5. Reflecting the views of sex workers, some clients described their relationships with sex workers that they see regularly as going beyond a business interaction. Clients may consider the ‘social side’ of the interaction as important as the actual sex. For example, James explained in the interview:

To put it in perspective: I’ve purchased sex about 35-40 times, and about 40% of the time I’ve stayed well after hours, be it twenty minutes, half an hour, an hour after the scheduled appointment, chatting, talking, effectively in the groove, you know. Talking about anything from YouTube to how they got into the industry or what’re they going to do afterwards, just really casual. And I have to admit, part of me will enjoy that almost more than the sex itself, that human contact kind. Because I find that in the normal social context, there’s an awful lot of bravado and a lot of front from both parties. And a characteristic I’ve found routinely on women that I’ve spent time with is a very strong sense of self-determination. What mothers for example are doing... hazardous jobs, that’s the best you could say... to make money for her kids, or to get a better life for themselves. For me, if I was to sum up my opinion on sex workers that I’ve met, it’s just admiration for their self-reliance, you know? When you go to an appointment with an escort – it’s a difficult job, and I think it’s important that even if they don’t enjoy their time with you, that at least they say: he’s a client I’d like to see again, because, you know, he’s a safe guy, reliable – if all clients were like him it would be a lot easier job. That’s my responsibility, for want of a better phrase.

7.7.6. Talking about one of the sex workers he saw regularly, Philip said:

I’d sometimes book for 2 o’clock in the afternoon, and then afterwards we just go and hang out in Belfast somewhere for a couple of hours. For me, the first time that happened was weird, because you’re used to: OK, your hour is up, bit of a chat, go on ahead home. But she just went: I was thinking of getting a coffee, do you want to go get coffee? So, you know, whenever she toured, we would just meet up, maybe an hour and half beforehand, then go to the apartment, then maybe again hang around for an hour or something afterwards.

7.7.7. Paul, single and in his 60s, gave the following example when asked about his relationships with sex workers:

Paul: Then I got a text from her [a sex worker he had seen several times] saying, can you lend me some money? Which was a bit odd, but I thought alright, why not? And she had to tell me her real name and her bank account details. So I internetted the money over to her, which I discovered was for her rent. (...) I
Researcher: How much was it?
Paul: 400 quid, which is a week's rent for a lot of crap flats in the sticks in Northern Ireland. Which is extortionate. So, a while after this I get a text saying: I'm back, and you get the money back with interest. And that all ended up with her actually coming to the house, bringing a bottle of some sort of tequila-based chocolate liquor, and a bottle of wine, and an envelope with £400 in it.
Researcher: What did you make of that?
Paul: We both got incredibly drunk. And we both had the most awful hangovers the next day. It was good fun, but nothing much happened because neither of us was capable of doing anything! But that's what I mean when I say you discover that they are real people – that it is not the sort of stereotype you would ever imagine from what the average person likes to believe.

7.8. Legal aspects and attitudes towards prostitution

Knowledge of current law

7.8.1. Respondents in the online survey were also asked a range of questions which focused on the legality of prostitution and their attitudes towards buying sex in Northern Ireland. 41% said that they thought it was not illegal to pay for sex in Northern Ireland; 20% of respondents thought it was illegal; the remaining 38% were not sure.

7.8.2. A greater proportion of respondents from Northern Ireland (64%) said that it was not illegal in Northern Ireland to pay for sexual services, probably reflecting the fact that Northern Ireland laws are more relevant to clients who pay for sex and live in Northern Ireland. Regardless, the remaining 36% of Northern Ireland-based clients either thought it was illegal to pay for sexual services or were not sure about it. Thus, more than one third of clients in Northern Ireland were not aware of the current legal framework in regard to paying for sex.

7.8.3. From the face-to-face interviews, it became apparent that none of the clients interviewed informed themselves about the laws regarding prostitution before they first paid for sex, as the following responses to the question "When you first started paying for sex, did you know what the laws were?" exemplify:

No, I just heard on the News and things like that it's available. (Bob)
No, not really, I just thought I'd take a chance, just. (Roger)
Not really, I assumed it was completely and utterly illegal. (Philip)
Not initially, no. That's why I was hiding, and getting them to come to me, and things like that. From reading the boards, very quickly yes. I found out exactly what my rights were, what the legalities are. But initially I will admit, no, I didn't. (Andy)

Concerns and attitudes towards prostitution

7.8.4. In order to assess what clients worry about apart from (or instead of) the legality of paying for sex, the following responses from the online survey are of interest. Clients were asked what they disliked about paying for sex. Table 26 summarises the survey results.

Table 26: What respondents dislike about buying sex. Rank-ordered (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dislike</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have to hide what I do, I don’t like that.</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that my friends and family will find out about it.</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry about the well-being of the sex worker/prostitute.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I have to lie about what I do, I don’t like that.</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am worried about the health risks.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel that I spend too much money on it.</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I miss the emotional connection.</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn't get good value for money</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't like the settings in which it takes place.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It makes me ashamed.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was hoping it would lead to more than just sex.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It damages my confidence.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.8.5. Again, similar to the responses of sex workers (see 6.2 and 6.5) the issue of stigmatisation ranks high. However, about one third also expressed concerns about the well-being of the sex worker. The open-ended comments to this question also referred predominantly to the worries about the wellbeing and safety of the sex workers, but also to issues of guilt and the stigma attached to paying for sex:

I always talk to the women providing the services that most of them are working un-coerced but there are definitely some who are.

Health risks are a concern. I obviously always use a condom for vaginal sex, but rarely for oral sex (both ways), which may come back to haunt me. It’s a big drain on my income. Ladies can be exposed to any type of guy at any time; it can be a dangerous job.

All of this takes place under the shadow of false morality and fake piety that occurs in this ******** island.
I am concerned that sex work will damage the sex worker’s chances of a stable relationship in the future. I am concerned that paying for sex is addictive and wonder if I am able to stop.

I feel annoyed at myself after it.

I feel that it is criminalised in Ireland.

In some circumstances I worry about the girl’s wellbeing.

I suffer from nerves and also probably from emotional guilt (although intellectually I don’t feel guilty).

7.8.6. These responses, supported by the face-to-face conversations with clients, show that again, stigma and fear of exposure are the main concerns for those who pay for sexual services, both for themselves and for the sex workers involved, along with concerns for the physical and emotional well-being of the sex worker.

7.8.7. At the same time, some clients expressed annoyance regarding the ‘performance’ of some sex workers while showing limited awareness of the possible reasons for a ‘bad service’, as the following sequences from interviews show.

Nick:  And I’ve never met a woman that I’ve felt that was stressed, but I have met women that were, shall we say, pleasant but formal, do you know what I mean? There was no attempt to kind of make a human contact at all, you know. They were grand, they were polite, we’d chat, but there was no – I wouldn’t say a connection.

Researcher:  Why do you think that was?

Nick:  Why do I think that that was? I think they were just in it for the money, not really that interested in the human contact. Like: I’ll spend my 45 minutes or the hour with the clients, that’s it, and when I go back I’ll be watching the TV, or doing what I want to do, do you know what I mean. I wouldn’t like to say there was no effort because that’s kind of patronising, but they didn’t have any interest in the human contact of the liaison.

7.8.8. Similarly, Jeff described:

Jeff:  I picked a girl up one night, and went to her place and it was crap. She was obviously just in it for the money and it was sort of mechanical, get it over with, and get out. So if that had been my only experience of escorting, I would’ve been stopping at that point.

Researcher:  Hold on one second, let’s go back to that. So, the experience was ‘crap’?

Jeff:  Yes. No interaction, no desire to...

Researcher:  Did you consider leaving?

Jeff:  My wife?
7.8.9. These sequences show that some clients expect sex workers to sell sex because they like it (or at least act like they do), not simply (or mainly) because of the money. And while the interviews with sex workers have shown that some do enjoy their work, the main driving force behind selling sex is indeed the money – a fact that some clients appear to deny. The sequences show that some clients may not necessarily consider the fact that people could be selling sex against their will or under circumstances that they cannot completely control.

**Stopping demand**

7.8.10. In the online survey, respondents were asked what would stop them from paying for sexual services. Table 27 below shows that the 2 most likely reasons for respondents to stop paying for sex given were if they were in a relationship (35%), or if they could have sex without paying for it (27%).

7.8.11. If paying for sex was a crime, only 16% of respondents said they would stop paying for sex – this proportion was just marginally larger among respondents from Northern Ireland (20%).

**Table 27: What would stop respondents from paying for sexual services. Rank-ordered. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL clients (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If I was in a relationship</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could have sex without paying for it</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If my partner found out and wanted me to stop</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If paying for sex was a crime</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I could express my sexuality/sexual preferences without paying for it</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If there was less stigma around my sexual preferences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.8.12. The comments with regard to this question referred again to respondents’ sex life, but also to trafficking for sexual exploitation and the health and safety of sex workers. 2 of the 45 open-ended comments referred to the legal framework as a determining factor in
the decision to stop paying for sex, both indicating that they were not sure what they would do if paying for sex was criminalised.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More frequent sex at home.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A relationship with a loving partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I wouldn't visit escorts if I was in a relationship. I have found that visiting escorts is addictive though, although it may just be sex that is addictive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I started a relationship 8 months ago - not seen an escort and plan not to ever again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have stopped. It was poor for my self esteem and I never felt good after.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not decided on what to do if it becomes a crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I couldn't afford it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can never see any situation where I would not pay for sex, it's all a question of how often.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I found out the girl was a victim of trafficking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If I got an STD or STI from doing it. And if I found out the girls are trafficked or forced then I would stop.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. TRAFFICKING

8.1. Introduction

8.1.1. In this chapter, we respond to the following questions:

- How many people have been identified as victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland over the last years?
- What is known about the demographics of victims of trafficking in Northern Ireland (e.g. age, gender, nationality)?
- What do sex workers and clients know about trafficking for sexual exploitation?
- What are the current statistics regarding convictions related to sex trafficking, and what are the issues around reporting and policing trafficking for sexual exploitation?

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- We found that the number of trafficked victims in the Northern Ireland sex industry is low and that the majority of people selling sexual services are not trafficked.
- Between 2009 and June 2014, the total number of suspected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation encountered by the PSNI was 81. The number of confirmed victims (i.e. victims that were conclusively identified as such via the National Referral Mechanism) for the same time period is 26.
- 8 of these 26 confirmed victims were under the age of 18 when trafficked, and all of them were from Northern Ireland.
- With 2 exceptions (one under-aged male victim and one transgender adult), all of the victims were female. The most common nationality of confirmed adult victims was Chinese (n=5), followed by Czech (n=4), Romanian (n=3) and Northern Irish (n=3).
- In addition to these PSNI statistics, 3% of the respondents in the sex worker survey said they had at some point in the past been trafficked into the sex industry, including a Hungarian woman who was trafficked to Northern Ireland, a Romanian woman and a pre-op transgender woman from Brazil, both of whom were trafficked elsewhere. In the face-to-face interviews, one out of the 19 interviewees said that she had being trafficked into the sex industry at an earlier stage. All of them said them said that they now work as independent escorts and are not being controlled by anyone.
- 5% of sex workers in the survey said that they had personally *witnessed* trafficking (of someone else) in the sex industry. A further 12% of said that someone else had *told* them that they had been trafficked.
Most commonly, sex workers referred to the following form of exploitation as a typical case scenario in the sex industry: the person who organises the travel and makes work arrangements charges several thousand Euro, which then need to be ‘worked off’. Research participants explained that the victims would be aware that they would be coming to sell sexual services, and may have already been sex workers in their country of origin. However, the high charges and the dependency on the ‘agency’ were viewed as exploitation.

The number of convictions in relation to sex trafficking in Northern Ireland is low. Between 2010 and 2012, there were 14 convictions for Controlling prostitution for gain, 20 convictions for brothel-keeping, and 2 for trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. It is important to note that the same person may have been convicted for the same (or a different) offence on several accounts, so the convictions do not match the total number of offenders. The offences ‘controlling prostitution for a gain’ and ‘brothel-keeping’ also do not have to be related to trafficking (i.e. the coercive/deceptive recruitment and movement of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation), but in some cases it may be.

One of the major hurdles in identifying victims of trafficking is the suspected victim’s lack of trust in the police or the criminal justice system more generally. For victims of trafficking who reside in Northern Ireland illegally, fear of deportation can be a reason to refuse coming forward and working with the authorities.

Another issue that may prevent suspected victims of trafficking from coming forward is the fact that some people may be reluctant to cooperate with the police as their general aim may not be to leave the sex industry, but rather to improve their working conditions and income.

The preferred way of reporting trafficking among sex workers would be to a police officer specialised in the field of the sex industry (e.g. a liaison officer).

8.2. Definitions

8.2.1. Due to the hidden nature of human trafficking, it is difficult to assess the number and profile of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland. There certainly is a link between human trafficking and prostitution; however, the hidden nature of prostitution exacerbates the issues around estimation of numbers of any human trafficking links with prostitution – finding a hidden population within an already hidden population.

8.2.2. Because of this as well as the allocated time and resources for this study, we have gathered information regarding the extent and nature of trafficking for sexual exploitation mainly based on official statistics and a small number of interviews with victims of trafficking and experts in this area.
Another issue in regard to researching trafficking for sexual exploitation is the question of defining victimhood. In some cases, the lines between ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’ are not clear cut. For example, as a senior police officer explained in an interview, there have been cases of sex workers who collaborate with organised crime groups, e.g. by arranging bookings and accommodation for other women who sell sex, or by collecting and transferring money. They have a level of control over other women (who may be forced or tricked into the sex industry), but they are, in turn, controlled by members of the organised crime group who are further up in the hierarchy, and they may also still be working in the sex industry themselves. In cases like these, it can be difficult to determine whether the women involved are themselves victims or not.

The definition of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation used in this study is based on the Palermo Protocol (the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children) and the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. Victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation (also referred to as sex trafficking) are defined as people who have been recruited and moved under the conditions of deception, coercion and/or force for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This includes people who have been trafficked from another country as well as within the UK. The category of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation furthermore encompasses cases of child sexual exploitation, which, legally, does not fall under the label of prostitution (as the term prostitution only refers to interactions between adults).

In addition, we relied on the self-identification of people in prostitution. That is, if research participants did not view themselves as victims of sex trafficking (i.e. as forced, coerced or tricked into prostitution against their will), we did not categorise research participants as such. This is based on our conviction as social science researchers that the subjective views and experiences of research participants need to be valued and respected, regardless of the views of the researcher.

Official statistics

National Referral Mechanism

In the UK, the process of identifying victims of trafficking is framed by the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), based on the UK’s obligations under the Council of European Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. In order to start the process of determining whether or not a person has been trafficked, a referral needs to be made to one of the two Competent Authorities (CA), either the Home Office Immigration and Visas or the UK Human Trafficking Centre. The referral via the NRM can only be made by one of the local agencies authorised to do so, the so-called first responders. In Northern Ireland, first responders include the PSNI, the Health and Social Care Trusts, Migrant Help and Barnados.

Once the referral has been made, trained experts in the CA will determine within 5 days if there are ‘reasonable grounds’ to believe that the person has been trafficked, based on information available at that stage. If the decision is positive, the potential victim will be
allocated a place in a safe house (if required) and is granted a 45-day recovery and reflection period, during which the person can decide what to do next, e.g. cooperate with the police to gather evidence or return home. During this period, the CA will make a conclusive decision whether or not the person is a victim of trafficking, based on all available information. If the decision is positive and the victim is a non-EEA national, s/he may be granted discretionary leave to remain in the UK for one year (or in some cases longer).

8.3.3. Decisions are based on the trafficking definition given in the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (see above). Indicators for trafficking include for example the following practices$^{16}$:

- the potential victim was charged excessive fees for travel documents
- the trafficker provided fake travel documents
- the potential victim was recruited for a non-existent job (e.g. babysitting) or the working conditions were misrepresented
- the potential victims was given a ‘loan’ that is hard to pay back (e.g. large sums of money, high interest rates)

8.3.4. More specifically, in regard to victims of sexual exploitation, staff is trained to look for example for the following signs:

- persistent fear
- a loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- difficulty in concentration or a pervasive loss of control and memory loss or distortion
- an attitude of self-blame
- shame
- pregnancy as a result of their trafficking situation
- sexually transmitted diseases
- injuries of a sexual nature
- gynaecological symptoms such as urinary or vaginal infections, pelvic inflammation, pain

8.3.5. In regard to under-aged victims, further indicators include:

- no evidence of parental permission for the child to travel or stay with the adult
- little or no evidence of any pre-existing relationship with the adult or even a complete lack of knowledge of the accompanying adult
- evidence of unsatisfactory accommodation

---

$^{16}$ Information for front line staff:
**PSNI statistics**

8.3.6. The following numbers are based on PSNI data.\(^\text{17}\) Between 2009 and June 2014, the total number of suspected victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation encountered by the PSNI was 80. Not all of these the suspected victims were referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the UK authority for human trafficking, in order to determine whether they actually were victims of trafficking. There are various reasons that would prevent a referral, such as the person not wanting to enter the legal process or a return to their country of origin before a referral could be made.

8.3.7. Of the suspected victims that were referred to the NRM to have their case assessed, 41 were believed to have presented reasonable grounds that they had been victims and their cases were assessed in more detail (in the following referred to as ‘potential victims’). Cases in which the decision regarding reasonable grounds (to believe that the person had been trafficked) was still pending were not included in these figures. The number of **confirmed victims** (i.e. victims that were conclusively identified as such via the National Referral Mechanism) for the same time period is 26.

8.3.8. Table 28 below summarises the numbers, differentiating between under-age victims (12 potential and 8 confirmed victims) and adults who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation (29 potential and 18 confirmed).

8.3.9. The actual number of (undiscovered) victims is unknown, but based on other data gathered in this study, can be assumed to be higher.

**Table 28: Numbers of suspected, potential and confirmed victims between 2009 and 2014 (PSNI data)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victim group</th>
<th>Suspected victims identified by PSNI</th>
<th>Potential victims ('reasonable grounds’ decision via the NRM)</th>
<th>Confirmed victims ('conclusive decision’ via the NRM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adult victims</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minors</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>41</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{17}\) Official NRM statistics available from the National Crime Agency (NCA) are not as detailed in regard to nationality, gender and age of victims of sex trafficking and were therefore not used for this study. They also do not include the number of potential victims as first identified by the PSNI, only the number of victims actually referred into the NRM.
8.3.10. With 2 exceptions (one under-aged male victim and one transgender adult), all of the victims were female. Most commonly, adult victims of sex trafficking (whose age was known) were between 30 and 45 years of age.

8.3.11. Among the 12 potential under-aged victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were 1 Nigerian, 2 Chinese and 9 Northern Irish minors. 8 of the Northern Irish young people were confirmed to be victims of trafficking. Table 29 summarises the nationalities of suspected, potential and confirmed adult victims.

**Table 29: Nationalities of adult victims between 2009 and 2014 (PSNI data)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Suspected victims identified by PSNI</th>
<th>Potential victims ('reasonable grounds' decision)</th>
<th>Confirmed victims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British (incl. Northern Irish)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungarian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austrian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigerian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzanian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroonian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leonean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guinean</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolivian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>59</strong></td>
<td><strong>29</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.4. Research evidence of trafficking

Survey results

8.4.1. In the sex worker survey, we asked several questions related to trafficking. To avoid confusion and misunderstandings, respondents were informed that by ‘trafficked’ we meant being forced/coerced or tricked into working in prostitution against their will, within Northern Ireland/the UK as well as across the border from other countries. Respondents were then asked if they had been trafficked at any stage in their life.

8.4.2. 3% of the people who responded to the question in the sex worker survey said they had at some point in the past been trafficked (n=3):
- A Hungarian woman in her early thirties with 2 children, who was trafficked to Northern Ireland.
- A single woman from Romania in her late twenties who was trafficked elsewhere.
- A pre-op trans woman from Brazil, late twenties, who was trafficked elsewhere. Her responses also show that she had started selling sex under the age of 16.

All of them said that they now work as independent escorts and are not being controlled by anyone. They all sold sexual services in Northern Ireland.

8.4.3. In addition, 5% of sex workers said that they had personally witnessed trafficking (of someone else) in the sex industry. A further 12% said that someone else had told them that they had been trafficked; out of the 12% 7% said that this had happened once or twice whilst the remaining 5% said that this had happened more than 3 times. Respondents’ comments clarify that in some cases, this referred to people’s past experiences of trafficking (similar to the responses of the 3 respondents above), not to their current situation.

8.4.4. In their comments, some respondents mentioned countries of origin of the people they said had been trafficked: Romania, Bulgaria, Russia, England, Albania, Czech Republic, Brazil and more generally South America and Eastern Europe.

8.4.5. An Italian trans sex worker commented:

I haven’t seeing anything in Northern Ireland but I do know in Dublin more than 10 transsexuals comes to UK and Ireland in general paying 15 to 20 thousand Euro, for me is also kind of traffic.

This comment refers to a practice that has been mentioned by several research participants, particularly in regard to sex workers from Brazil: the person who organises the travel and makes work arrangements in Ireland charges several thousand Euro, which sex workers then need to ‘work off’. When research participants mentioned this, they said that the people involved were aware that they would be coming to sell sexual services, and may have already been sex workers in their country of origin. However, the high charges and the dependency on the ‘agency’ were viewed as exploitation.
8.4.6. Exemplifying these experiences of false promises and exploitative working conditions, the Brazilian sex worker who identified herself as a victim of trafficking (above) left the following comment:

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When I came to Europe, a person charged me 8000 euros, said he would give me good working conditions but in reality was not as well.
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**Interview data**

8.4.7. In the face-to-face interviews, one out of the 19 interviewees said that she had been trafficked into the sex industry at an earlier stage. Lara, a woman from Romania, was brought to Austria at the age of 17 by her boyfriend, who was abusive and controlling. He introduced her to the sex industry and took most of her money, in addition to threatening and beating her (see interview sequences in chapter 4.3.29). After a while, Lara left him and reported him to the Austrian authorities. However, she did not receive any support and was deported back to Romania. After trying to make ends meet in Romania by working in restaurants for a few years, Lara decided to move to Spain and later to Ireland to work in the sex industry. She now works as an independent escort.

8.4.8. None of the other interviewees said that they had been trafficked. In response to the question if they had ever encountered a trafficked person or if someone had told them that they were forced, coerced or tricked into prostitution, none of them described concrete cases of trafficking in Northern Ireland:

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No. I never had occasion to meet them, you know. But yeah, in Spain I saw it with my eyes.
(Cathy, Romanian sex worker)

See, I don't really think there is that much trafficking in the sex industry. I think there's, like, the pimps involved and the Romanian gangs, and all that sort of thing, but I wouldn't say there's a lot of trafficking.
(Alexandra, a British sex worker who has been working in prostitution for 6 years)

Honestly? I've never met that kind of person. Never. I've been to Austria, I've been to Spain, I've been to Ireland, I've been to England – I've never found that kind of person.
(Lara, see case description above)
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**Client survey**

8.4.9. In the client survey, 2% of respondents said that someone had at some point *told* them that they had been – at an earlier stage – trafficked into the sex industry in Northern Ireland (i.e. had been a victim in the past). Respondents said that the victims came from countries such as Afghanistan, Albania, Romania, Spain, Italy and generally from Asia. None of the respondents said they had personally *witnessed* this (i.e. actually seen or met a current victim of trafficking in the sex industry). These low numbers may be partially due to the fact that victims of trafficking are commonly threatened by the people who exploit them (see also case examples below) and told to not to talk to anyone about their situation or ask for help. Out of fear, they may try to hide their suffering from clients.
8.4.10. The open-ended comments from the survey below exemplify clients’ awareness regarding the potential of exploitation and abuse in the sex industry and the measures they may take to avoid paying for the services of a trafficked victim:

| If ever I met an escort who told me this, I would immediately suspend the appointment (accepting the loss of the money for the escort’s safety) and report it to the nearest police. |
| I asked every single woman I was with if they were under any sort of coercion, before having sex. |
| Not in NI but elsewhere yes and I left without using the service and contacted the authorities in the country that I was. |
| No, but if they did, I would report it & try to help them. |
| This is the first question I ask and I have only been with those sex workers who have assured me that they are doing this voluntarily. |
| I always ask first and I don’t go for young girls. |

Conclusions regarding the extent of trafficking into the sex industry

8.4.11. In sum, there is some evidence for trafficking into the sex industry from official statistics and our survey and interview data. The data does illustrate some of the exploitative practices that occur in the Northern Ireland sex industry and shed light on the lived experiences behind the label “sex trafficking”. It also indicates that the number of trafficked victims in the Northern Ireland sex industry is generally low.

8.4.12. In addition, however, it is useful to consider the social spheres that research participants engage in: there could be a general lack of interaction between the people who took part in this study and victims of trafficking due to a minimal overlap between the locations where the respondents operate (the professional online sector as well as the street-based sector), and the kinds of locations and practices related to sex trafficking (as described in the case examples below). Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it appears that trafficked victims may be more commonly advertised on less professional websites or informally via people’s private social networks, and to a lesser extent via the main professional websites on the internet or in the street-based sector. It is thus not surprising that the people who took part in this study do not come in contact with trafficked victims on a regular basis. Lara, a Romanian sex worker, suggested a similar explanation:

Well, think about it. Like, a real organisation, right, who runs the girls who don't know what they’re going to do here, and they force them to do it – they will never, ever give those girls contact with independent girls. Never. That’s stupid, right? Because if I’m independent and I have contact with those girls, I will tell them: oh, you are stupid, why you do that, go and work for yourself! Of course I will do that, right? So it does not make sense to allow any contact.
8.4.13. Thus, in order to find out if more detail about trafficking for sexual exploitation is available, a more in-depth study of this particular subject would be necessary.

8.5. **Ways into trafficking**

8.5.1. Research conducted by the Association of Chief Police Officers in 2010 regarding migrants and human trafficking in off-street prostitution provided some analysis into the reasons behind people being trafficked (ACPO 2010). The primary reasons were:

- economic reasons – people from impoverished communities are particularly vulnerable to being trafficked as they can be hopeful that moving country will give them a ‘better life’ but become bonded by debt to those organising travel;
- difficulty in organising travel – inability to organise travel for financial, political or visa reasons, leading people to seek out alternate means of travel, which leaves them vulnerable to smugglers (i.e. people who facilitate illegal border-crossing) and traffickers (i.e. people who aim to exploit the person in question, using force, coercion or fraud);
- lack of education including language barriers is a vulnerability regarding trafficking;
- relationship with authorities including criminal convictions which may be preventative in cross-border travel can leave individuals vulnerable to trafficking.

8.5.2. Similarly, some of the sex workers interviewed pointed towards the relationship between border regimes and entry regulations on one hand, and people smuggling and trafficking on the other:

> Before 2009 before Romania was in the EU, you would need a pimp to come over [to] pay for your ticket, whatever, and then you just start here or you give him all your money and he would give you something to send home or you go 50/50. But with the internet evolution, passing the years, nowadays it's not like that anymore, you don't need a pimp anymore to come over to work, people know people, girls talk to other girls, guys would talk to girls, everyone talks to everyone. (Bella)

Thus, it could be argued that freedom of movement and the end of migration restrictions combined with the development of the internet can contribute to an evolution of more consensual forms of prostitution.

8.5.3. The following 2 case studies are based on interviews with women who were trafficked into the sex industry in Northern Ireland. They exemplify the vulnerabilities mentioned above and the role of traffickers. Both women were referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM), the national authority dealing with cases of trafficking, and were supported by local organisations. They received a positive conclusive decision from the NRM, confirming their status as trafficked victims.
Mary

8.5.4. Mary is a woman in her mid-fifties. In 2000, the mother-of-two came to the UK from a rural area in Asian country, where she had worked as an accountant. After she was arrested and imprisoned by her government for being a member of a persecuted religious group, she decided to leave the country.

8.5.5. She relied on the help of an organised crime gang that smuggles people to the richer countries in Europe and elsewhere. A friend of hers paid £10,000 to the trafficker to arrange her travels and help her settle in London. For almost ten years, she worked in take-away restaurants and as a live-in babysitter in various cities across England, paying off her debt.

8.5.6. In 2008, when it became increasingly difficult to find work as an undocumented ("illegal") migrant, the trafficker started threatening her, saying he would harm her 2 teenage children back home if she did not pay more money. He eventually found another job for her: she was told she would be working as a babysitter. A woman contacted her to discuss the details, explaining to her that in Northern Ireland, she would be paid better, and it would be easier to find work. She was brought over to Belfast in 2009.

8.5.7. Upon arrival, Mary was driven to a house outside of Belfast – a brothel run by the woman who had promised her work as a babysitter. Mary was locked into the house, and sexually exploited for one month before the police raided the premise and rescued her. There were other women in the house, but Mary was the only one who lived there. The other women came and went, so Mary did not get the chance to talk to them and find a way of getting out of the house.

8.5.8. The woman in charge had also warned her that if she tried to leave, she would be followed and killed. When asked about her interactions with the ‘guests,’ and whether anyone ever asked any questions or offered help, she said:

I don’t speak English, so I couldn’t talk to the men. Once, there was a man from my country, and I asked him: ‘Where am I? How can I get away?’ And he responded: ‘Don’t ask me these questions,’ and then he just left.

8.5.9. During the interview, Mary expressed that she felt that the people who had trafficked and raped her were not punished enough. Even though charges were brought forward, she felt that the punishment of less than a year of jail time for one of the men who raped her was too little. She would have also liked to speak for herself in court and is frustrated about the fact that she was merely interviewed in a hotel and never had the chance to tell her story in court. Mary is also concerned about her immigration status, as she only has leave to remain until 2016, and doesn’t know what will happen to her then. She does not want to return to her home country, and feels rather helpless and trapped in her current situation.

Doussou

8.5.10. Doussou is a young woman in her late twenties who grew up in a Sub-Saharan country. She comes from a poor family with 7 children. Neither of her parents went to
school. They got by on the little money Doussou’s mother earned as a cleaner and the cows that her father owned. Doussou herself went to school for 12 years and she enjoyed studying. Her father took her out of school when she completed the 12th grade and wanted to marry her to an older man who was wealthy enough to pay a bride price that would benefit her family. Doussou refused to marry the man. She was in love with someone else whom she wanted to marry. When her parents found out that she had secretly married her boyfriend in a religious ceremony, they forcibly moved her into the house of the old man who had offered to pay a bride price for her. Doussou stated:\textsuperscript{18}:

\begin{quote}
I was forced to live with him being locked into a room which was annexed to his bedroom. I was repeatedly raped by this man. I eventually managed to meet with a friend who said she would try to help me escape because she explained that she knew someone who helps people escape danger. She asked a man to help me and he promised to take me somewhere that my family would not find me.
\end{quote}

8.5.11. In 2010, the man, who was not from her country, took her over the border, got her a passport and made travel arrangements for her. She flew with him to another country, not knowing where she was. Eventually, she arrived in Northern Ireland. The man who had accompanied her brought her to a house of a friend of his. She assumes that they were from the same country. He left and never came back. Doussou remembered:

\begin{quote}
The very first night that I was at this other man’s place, he raped me at knifepoint and threatened me. He continued to rape me, and, after a few days, he began to bring men to have sex with me and they paid him. I was in that house for around four months. I was locked in the bedroom, and people would only unlock the door to let me go to the toilet or to eat.
\end{quote}

8.5.12. Doussou stayed in that house for 3 months. None of the men who paid to have sex with her ever talked to her. In November 2010, she managed to escape when the man who owned the house got drunk and fell asleep, leaving her unguarded. She ran out onto the streets and met a friendly woman who offered her a place to stay and helped her to contact the authorities.

8.5.13. Doussou stayed in a women’s shelter and was interviewed by the police. A medical examination was carried out which confirmed that she was 3 months pregnant as a result of the rapes. Her child was born in 2011.

8.5.14. Her encounter with the criminal justice system left her frustrated and angry. After having been referred to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) as a suspected victim of trafficking, she was arrested by the PSNI a few weeks later. She was alleged of ‘perverting the course of justice’ and ‘wasting police time’ – her story seemed unbelievable to the

\textsuperscript{18} Some of quotes for the case study of Doussou were taken from a witness statement. She preferred to share the written account of her story with us in order to avoid having to describe it in detail again and risking re-traumatisation. Instead, the face-to-face interview focused on follow-up questions and her current situation.
officers involved because she failed to provide details regarding her abusers and the location where she had been kept. She commented:

I think the police didn't do their work properly. I thought they would arrest the man – but they actually arrested me, and I was put into prison. So they just didn't do their work. (...) They took me as if I was the culprit of the situation and not the victim. They put me into prison for seven weeks, and I didn't understand the language and it was very difficult for me to cope.

8.5.15. The charges against her were dropped later on. No one was ever charged with the offences committed against Doussou due to a lack of evidence. Her application through the NRM, however, was successful, and as a victim of trafficking, she was granted leave to remain in the UK for one year. Her asylum claim, however, was initially refused. She appealed the decision successfully, and was granted asylum. While Doussou is disillusioned and disappointed by the work of the police, she feels very grateful for the support she received from other organisations and individuals:

Those organisations helped me a lot, especially the Trauma Centre and Nexus, because it was the primary goal for me to get back on my feet, it was really essential, so... because at this time it was very difficult for me and I thought I would go crazy, because I was in a situation I would never thought I would get into my life. So they did a lot for my health, a lot.

8.5.16. Being asked about her current situation, she said:

I'm... it's alright now. When I compare it to the last few years, it's not the same thing, and it's much better now. For the moment I'm not worried about the future at all. What's my main concern is my health – to be well.

8.6. Child trafficking

8.6.1. Trafficking for sexual exploitation does not only include adult victims, but also affects children and young people. The following section of this report is mainly based on secondary data, as the primary focus of this research did not allow us to use our resources to conduct interviews with (former) victims of child trafficking.

8.6.2. As a report published by BARNADOS already stated in 2011, the sexual exploitation of young people, including trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, is a serious issue in Northern Ireland, and it is particularly hidden. Sexual exploitation refers to either the direct sexual exploitation of a young person by an adult or a peer in return for money or non-monetary payment, e.g. drugs or a place to stay; or sexual exploitation for the gain of a third party, including in some cases the young person’s parents. Among the young people exploited is a small number of cases of child sex trafficking, referring to the movement of

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19 The report does not specify the number of cases mentioned by interviewees. Instead, it refers to the PSNI statistics presented above.
children and young people from one location to another (both internal and cross-border) for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Barnados 2011: 56). Exploitation of young people through prostitution generally takes place behind closed doors and is organised informally (Barnados 2011: 50).

8.6.3. The majority of the cases reported by Barnados involved young people – both female and male – in the residential care system. In an interview conducted for our study, a Barnados member of staff explained that young people in the care system may be specifically targeted by adults with the aim of sexually exploiting them. Contact is for example established via chat forums and social media, and vulnerable young people are approached with promises of presents (e.g. new phones, clothes) or offered a place to stay outside the care home. The young people may feel that these relationships meet their “tangible and intangible needs”, as the Barnados representative explained. Tangible needs include for example money, drugs, alcohol and phone credit, whereas intangible needs include emotional needs – to feel attention and appreciation. This relationship between the adult and the young person may then develop into a more overt form of exploitation, including the “selling” of the child or young person to people who are willing to pay for sex.

8.6.4. Barnados staff commented that what we currently know about sexual exploitation of children and young people is “only the tip of the iceberg.” As mentioned above, 21 potential victims were identified by the PSNI between 2009 and 2014, 8 of these were confirmed via the NRM as victims of trafficking. The actual number of children and young people who are moved for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Northern Ireland is not known, and due to the hidden nature of the abuse cannot be estimated.

8.7. Reporting and policing trafficking

Reporting incidents and suspicions to the police

8.7.1. PSNI experience shows that information regarding trafficking for sexual exploitation in some cases comes from members of the public, including people who pay for sexual services. In the client survey, of the 2% who knew of trafficking cases, almost equal numbers of respondents said that they (a) reported trafficking when they came across it to authorities, that they (b) did not, and that they (c) thought about it, but then decided against it. Of the 12% of sex workers who had witnessed or been told about trafficking, an equal number (50% each) had either reported it or said that they had considered reporting this, but then did not.

8.7.2. Fear of being identified and a lack trust in the police were the main reasons for not reporting this for all who had witnessed or heard about trafficking. Fear of violence from ‘pimps’ and others working in the sex industry and lack of time were other, less common reasons given for not reporting.

8.7.3. All respondents in the client survey were asked about their preferred way in which they would want to report trafficking to authorities. In the client survey, just over half of the respondents (51%) said they would want to report this anonymously to the police by phone.
The second preferred option (21%) was reporting this to a specialised police officer in the sex industry. Direct reporting was less popular among Northern-Ireland-domiciled clients (15%), perhaps due to a higher degree of suspicion towards, and lack of trust in, the police service, as regards prostitution. The third preferred option (16%) was reporting this to a third party, like a sex worker health clinic or support service, whilst the least preferred option (11%) was reporting this anonymously to the police via email.

8.7.4. In the sex worker survey, respondents chose reporting to a police officer specialised in the field of the sex industry as the preferred means of reporting trafficking, as Table 30 below shows. Again, distant and anonymous reporting was somewhat more likely to be chosen as the preferred option in Northern Ireland than elsewhere. However, the small number of sex workers who lived in Northern Ireland involved in this study means that this result has to be treated with caution.

Table 30: (Sex worker survey) How would you prefer to report it if you knew about trafficking or other criminal abuse going on (%)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To a police officer that who specialises in the sex industry and would be friendly to me</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymously to police by phone</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymously to police by email</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a third party like a sex worker health clinic or support service</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post a message on a website</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would not report this</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Victims’ lack of trust in the justice system

8.7.5. In addition to low numbers of reporting, one of the major hurdles to identifying victims of trafficking is the potential victim’s lack of trust in the police or the criminal justice system more generally. People who experience exploitation in the sex industry may feel that there is nothing in it for them if they come forward. The following sequence from an interview with an immigration solicitor and casework manager at the Belfast Law Centre describes the existing issues, highlighting:

- a lack of understanding on the part of the involved authorities regarding the effects of trauma on memory, and how that affects the evidence victims of trafficking can provide,
- a lack of expertise within the PSNI due to the relative rarity of trafficking cases, and
- a lack of awareness on the part of the involved authorities and policy makers around the issues facing migrants without legal status, namely the threat of being deported to their country of origin, which may prevent people from cooperating with the authorities.
Researcher: *What are other issues with the interaction between the police and potential victims?*

Interviewee: (...) *So, somebody has to retell the story to me, and then different agencies. I think we need to be much more sophisticated in our approach to evidence gathering to reduce trauma to the individual – having to go through this again and again, because it's heart-breaking – but also to reduce the risk of evidence being lost because of contradictions. So that is a very, very important point, that's something that we constantly have to explain: OK, there's a small discrepancy – or even quite a large one – in terms of autobiographical details, but that's not the core of the issue here; the core of the issue is whatever the type of exploitation is, and the consistency of the type of exploitation that they experienced, the day to day abuse that they suffered. So there's a learning curve for the decision makers in terms of UK Visa & Immigration [Competent Authority in trafficking cases, see 8.3.1.]. In terms of the PSNI, because the numbers of recovered victims are low, I understand that an officer or a social worker might pick up one of these cases in three years. So there needs to be an expertise point that they can then go to and get the information as to what has to happen.*

Researcher: *So if a story is not coherent or it's different then that is evidence of lying? They are expected to function like machines, which they aren't – especially not if they're traumatised?*

Interviewee: *Especially not if they're traumatised. And again, our clients, the vast majority are here illegally. They either were smuggled in, or most enter on false passports that were given to them by the traffickers, or they have no documents and they're apprehended by immigration control. So their immigration status is at the forefront of their mind: Am I going to be sent back, and what am I being sent back to? Which then compounds the psychological trauma and their own physical experiences and all of that – there's a huge insecurity there for the people that we would represent.*

Researcher: *And there is no guarantee that even if you come forward as a victim of trafficking that you will have leave to remain, right?*

Interviewee: *No, there's absolutely no guarantee whatsoever. I think that the higher the number of prosecutions that we have, then the more individuals who have been subjected to this crime will be prepared to come forward. They need to see that there's something in it for them to buy into it, because why would you stand up in a court and give evidence against the person who's subjected you to this unless you knew that there was something in it for you? A victim of human trafficking wants to see their trafficker prosecuted. That's an absolutely reasonable position.*
and Doussou felt let down by the criminal justice system and expressed little trust in the police. When Doussou first presented her case to the authorities, she was deemed to be lying, and her case was dismissed. She appealed the decision, and was later found to be a victim of trafficking, exemplifying the complexity and contradictions inherent to the process of identifying victims of trafficking. However, it was a long, difficult process that not everyone who experienced this kind of trauma would be able to go through. Both women also expressed concerns regarding their limited leave to remain in the UK. The fear of eventually being deported does usually not end even if a person is a confirmed victim. As the immigration solicitor highlighted: victims of trafficking have to feel that there is ‘something in it for them’ if they come forward and go through the long and draining legal process, and need to feel supported and understood by the involved authorities – which does not always appear to be the case at the present moment.

**Improving working conditions instead of leaving prostitution**

8.7.7. Another issue that may prevent people who are being exploited in the sex industry (and would potentially classify as victims of trafficking) from coming forward is the fact that some people may be reluctant to cooperate with the police as their general aim may not be to leave the sex industry, but rather to improve their working conditions and income. The following sequence from an interview with a PSNI officer of the Organised Crime Branch describes these nuances in regard to police operations that aim to identify and charge traffickers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee:</th>
<th>During our background operations we’re constantly putting police in front of them [people involved in prostitution], to try and move them on – it gives us an opportunity to say: Listen, we suspect you may need help, do you want help? And on every occasion they’re saying: No, leave me alone, I’m fine.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>Do you send police officers in with an interpreter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee:</td>
<td>Yes, yes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>So why do you think the people involved in this didn’t want to come forward as victims, or don’t identify as victims?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewee:</td>
<td>There is a lot of reasons – they were sex workers, previously being involved, and would continue to be sex workers afterwards. They made more money being a sex worker in Stockholm or Belfast, even with the percentage that they received, than they would ever have received in Romania. So whilst they weren’t happy with the terms and conditions, they were financially rewarded and wanted to go back to that.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.8. This resembles again the exploitative practices described above: in some cases the person in question may have been aware that s/he would be selling sexual services and has consented to that, but finds her/himself in a position of exploitation in regard to working conditions, payment, or physical and psychological abuse by the ‘agents’ or traffickers. People in these situations may clearly feel exploited, but not view themselves as victims of
trafficking. And because the main driving force between these arrangements is the need for money, potential victims of trafficking may decide to remain in the situation and not report abuses against them to the police.

**Recorded offences and convictions**

8.7.9. Generally, the number of recorded offences in relation to sex trafficking in Northern Ireland is low, as Table 31 below shows. Again, this could be reflective of overall low numbers of people trafficked into the sex industry, but to a certain extent it could also be a consequence of the multiple hurdles to effective policing of trafficking for sexual exploitation addressed above.

**Table 31: Recorded crimes related to prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation 2007-2014 (PSNI data)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exploitation of prostitution</th>
<th>Abuse of children through prostitution</th>
<th>Trafficking for sexual exploitation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.10. Table 32 below shows the number of convictions for these and related offences between 2007 and 2012. These numbers, based on DoJ statistics, only include the principal offence, that is, the offence which attracted the highest sentence in relation to the conviction. In cases where the offender was convicted of multiples crimes, the secondary offences do not show up in the statistics.

8.7.11. It is also important to notice that the offences ‘controlling prostitution for gain’ and ‘brothel-keeping’ do not have to be related to trafficking (i.e. the coercive/deceptive recruitment and movement of people for the purpose of sexual exploitation), but in some cases it may be. In the case of brothel-keeping, this generally refers to more than one person selling sexual services from the same premise – regardless of the level of exploitation involved. Theoretically, this could also refer to 2 or more independent sex workers who work from the same apartment together, without any control or exploitation from a third party.

8.7.12. Furthermore, offenders may be charged with multiple offences, and in some cases, there may not be enough evidence to prosecute someone for trafficking, but the person may be prosecuted for exploitation of prostitution or brothel-keeping.
Table 32: Convictions for prostitution and trafficking offences (as principal offences) 2007 – 2012 (DoJ data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Controlling prostitution for gain</th>
<th>Brothel-keeping</th>
<th>Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation</th>
<th>Paying for the sexual services of a prostitute subjected to exploitative conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.13. In addition to these convictions based on principal offences, Table 33 below shows the number of all convictions related to sex trafficking and prostitution between 2010 and 2012\(^{20}\). The same person may have been convicted for the same (or a different) offence on several accounts, so the convictions do not match the total number of offenders.

Table 33: Convictions for prostitution and trafficking offences (all convictions) 2010 – 2012 (DoJ data)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Controlling prostitution for gain</th>
<th>Brothel-keeping</th>
<th>Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation</th>
<th>Paying for the sexual services of a prostitute subjected to exploitative conduct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.14. The 2 convictions for sex trafficking include 1 conviction for trafficking into the UK and 1 conviction for trafficking within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

8.7.15. Both tables show that there were no convictions for the crime of paying for sexual services of a prostitute subjected to exploitative conduct, i.e. a victim of trafficking. Based on information from the PSNI, the latter is mainly due to a) the fact that evidence-gathering is very difficult regarding this offence (see also Chapter 8.2.), with prosecution usually relying on the offender admitting the crime, and b) the time limit for prosecution of this offence (currently 6 months) which may not leave the police enough time to gather evidence and prepare a court-case.

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\(^{20}\) Numbers were only available for 2010-2012.
9. SUPPORT SERVICES

9.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we address issues around service provision for people involved in prostitution. We respond to the following questions:

- What services exist in Northern Ireland for people involved in prostitution?
- What are sex workers’ experiences of the existing services? Are changes necessary? Are additional services needed?
- For people who want to leave prostitution, what lessons can be learned from established services that offer exit programmes with a view of offering similar services in Northern Ireland?

MAIN FINDINGS

- The needs of sex workers are currently not being addressed sufficiently. There is only one dedicated service for sex workers in Northern Ireland. A number of other services are open to anyone and can be used by sex workers, but do not provide specialised services.

- Lack of knowledge among sex workers about existing support services is a significant problem. This is probably due to the fact that the existing services do not (or only in very limited ways) advertise their services in a way that would allow sex workers to find out about it, that is, on the websites that people use to advertise for sexual services and in online forums.

- Knowledge and usage of existing services is particularly low among foreign national sex workers, even though they constitute a significant proportion of sex workers in Northern Ireland.

- Fear of being judged or concerns about protecting their anonymity are additional reasons for sex workers to not disclose their work to service providers, or to not seek support at all.

- Sex workers considered a non-judgmental approach regarding prostitution to be crucial for service provision, and reflected critically on programmes or services that are based on set assumptions about prostitution and sex workers or view an exit from prostitution as the main goal of service provision.

- Sex workers indicated that they would appreciate a designated police liaison officer to report crimes and abuse.

- Sex workers were also asked what they would need in order to exit the sex industry. The most common response was that they did not want to exit from prostitution and did therefore not need any exit services. Other respondents said they would need additional
professional qualifications or an alternative job that pays for their expenses, if they were to leave the sex industry.

- Our assessment of exit programmes in Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions showed that most importantly, services need to be flexible and tailored to the individual needs of each service user, follow a holistic approach that considers the living circumstances and biographies of sex workers, engage with sex workers in a non-judgmental way, and cooperate with other service providers.

9.2. Existing services in NI

9.2.1. There is only one dedicated service for sex workers in Northern Ireland, and the needs of sex workers are currently not being addressed sufficiently.

9.2.2. The following services in Northern Ireland were mentioned by interviewees (sex workers and service providers).

**Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service (Belfast Health and Social Care Trust)**

9.2.3. Established in 2000, the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service is the only existing service in Northern Ireland that caters specifically to people involved in prostitution. It currently offers a public health drop-in clinic in the city centre on one evening per week. The service includes screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraception, immunisation and sexual health education and sign-posting and referrals to other services. It is a non-judgmental service, open to anyone and focused on the individual needs of each client. When it was first set up, it catered predominantly to women involved in street prostitution. However, over the last few years, the service has been sporadically used by women involved in indoor prostitution (i.e. escorts) as well. The services are mainly used by British/Irish sex workers, with low numbers of foreign nationals accessing the clinic.

**GUM clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital**

9.2.4. The Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast provides tests and treatments for sexually transmitted infections. There is no drop-in service, and appointments need to be booked one week in advance. The GUM clinic also provides outreach services to various patient groups, including people living with HIV and users of gay saunas in Belfast. GUM clinic staff members reported that a small number of their patients – both male and female – told them that they have been paid for sex or that they work in the sex industry. The actual numbers of patients who have received payment for sex is most likely to be higher, as people may want to avoid disclosure out of fear of being stigmatised or judged. The GUM clinic staff also regularly sees patients who disclose that they have paid for sex, and seek STI screening and/or treatment as a result. The GUM clinic has not had any foreign national sex workers among their patients, which leads us to assume that foreign sex workers are not aware of the services provided or do not know how to access them.
The Rainbow Project

9.2.5. The Rainbow Project offers services to gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender people (LGBT), with offices in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry. Their work focuses on STI prevention and addresses the emotional and mental health needs of LGBT people in Northern Ireland. They offer screening for STIs as well as counselling and support services. As research conducted by the Rainbow Project in 2009/2010 showed, some of their clients engage in prostitution or informal forms of exchanging sex for gifts, favours etc. The research aimed to gather information on the experiences and needs of male and trans sex workers, and to raise awareness about prostitution among the staff members. At the moment, the Rainbow Project does not offer any specialised services for sex workers, although all of their services are generally open to LGBT sex workers.

Women’s Aid

9.2.6. The services provided by Women’s Aid focus on supporting victims of domestic violence and include refuge accommodation and case-work for legal, welfare, housing and money matters. Women’s Aid is contracted by the Department of Justice to provide services to women who were identified as victims/potential victims of trafficking. In addition, some of the women who stay in Women’s Aid shelters as victims of domestic violence are or have been involved in prostitution, including women from outside the UK. The services provided are based on the organisation’s understanding of prostitution in all forms as violence against women.

Rowan Centre/Rape Crisis Centre

9.2.7. The Rowan Centre in Antrim, established in May 2013, offers services to victims of sexual violence. The Centre runs a 24 hour helpline, offers medical care, referrals to counselling services and support with engaging in the criminal justice system, if the victim chooses to do so. They also offer forensic examinations and storage of the results for up to 7 years, which gives service users more time to decide whether or not they want to report the incident. To date, none of their service users has identified as a sex worker. This may be because sex workers are worried about being judged or rejected if they disclose, but it may also indicate that the Rowan Centre is not well known yet as a support service open to anyone, including sex workers.

Nexus

9.2.8. Nexus offers counselling and support to victims of sexual violence including those who have experienced rape and assault. Nexus has offices in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry, Portadown and Enniskillen. The organisation offers services to anyone who has experienced sexual violence, including people involved in prostitution and victims of trafficking. As they do not inquire about the background of their clients, there is no data available regarding the number of sex workers and victims of trafficking who have used their services.


**Services used by sex workers**

9.2.9. In the sex worker survey, we asked respondents about services in Northern Ireland that they had heard of or used. Of the respondents who sell sexual services in Northern Ireland, almost half had never heard of the services offered by the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service, Women’s Aid and the GUM clinic. 51% of sex workers who work in Northern Ireland had heard of the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service and Women’s Aid, but had never used their services. The GUM clinic was the service most commonly used by sex workers, with 19% saying they had used the service (see Table 34).

**Table 34: Awareness and use of services (sex workers who work in Northern Ireland) (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Never heard about it</th>
<th>Heard about it, but not used</th>
<th>Used this service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Aid NI</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUM Clinic</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainbow Project</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>&lt;5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.2.10. In the comments to the question, many respondents said that they used GUM clinics, private clinics and specialised sex worker services elsewhere, i.e. in their home region outside of Northern Ireland or when touring to other parts of the UK.

**Lack of knowledge of existing services**

9.2.11. Lack of knowledge about existing support services appears to be a significant problem. The existing services do not (or only in very limited ways) advertise their services in a way that would allow sex workers to find out about it, that is, on the websites that people use to advertise for sexual services and in online forums. This point was elaborated by the administrator of the Irish UglyMugs scheme:

> I have at least thirty inquiries every single day from sex workers wanting help with something; whether it’s wanting legal advice, health problems, UglyMugs incidents. So those people would be calling a sex worker support service, if it existed. Because I don’t even advertise a phone number – I only have an e-mail address, you know. So organisations like the Belfast Trust health project [Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service] simply don’t get the sex workers coming to them with their problems, because they’re not visible.

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21 These are incidents of violence, assault, robbery, threats etc. reported to UglyMugs by sex workers.
9.2.12. The results from the online survey and the information given by service providers suggest that knowledge and usage of existing services is particularly low among foreign national sex workers, despite the fact that these constitute a significant proportion of those offering sexual services in Northern Ireland. Their needs are currently not adequately addressed.

Concerns and issues

9.2.13. The location of specialised services is a concern for sex workers. If it is too central and visible, sex workers may be concerned that they would be ‘outed’ if they are seen entering the building. However, services need to be easily accessible:

*It needs to be a bit like a good brothel or good house. It needs to be discreet and central and has easy communication links and transport links. If they are going to offer anything to us, there is no point putting something in big bold red letters on a hospital floor.* (Melissa)

9.2.14. It is also apparent that while some sex workers may use the existing services, they may not disclose that they sell sex. For example, Sarah, who works as an independent escort, said:

*I use the GUM clinic, but I don’t tell them I’m a sex worker, because I don’t really want that going on my record, so if I do decide to have children I don’t want any social services hounding me, trying to take my children off me – I don’t know if that would happen but I don’t like that idea, so just to avoid that at all costs.*

9.2.15. Fear of being judged or concerns about protecting their anonymity are reasons for sex workers to not disclose. Non-disclosure, however, can negatively affect the service and treatment they receive, as sex workers need: more frequent tests for STIs, easy access to contraception and post-exposure prophylaxis after a possible infection with Hepatitis B and C, and HIV.

9.2.16. Fear of stigmatisation or exposure may also lead some sex workers to not seek support at all. Several current and former sex workers disclosed in the face-to-face interviews that they had been raped by clients or in their private lives, but said that had not reported the crime or sought out support services (see also 8.7)\textsuperscript{22}, as the following quote from an interview exemplifies:

*Some sort of counselling, I think, would be good. This is an issue for me too. I have been in a violent relationship before, I have been raped as well before, a couple of times. And have never had counselling for that, and have never reported it.*

\textsuperscript{22} Research participants were encouraged to seek support and were given information about existing support services, including The Rape Crisis Centre and Nexus.
9.3. Sex workers’ suggestions

9.3.1. In the following, we present further results from the face-to-face interviews that indicate which services sex workers would find useful and what they consider important in how services are provided.

Non-judgmental approaches

9.3.2. Many respondents pointed out that a non-judgmental approach is pivotal for service provision, and reflected critically on programmes or services that are based on set assumptions about prostitution and sex workers, or view an exit from prostitution as the main goal of service provision:

Not every woman out there is in need of being saved. Yes, I totally agree that there is girls out there who have had horrendous experiences, and maybe can’t move on with their life. If they’re doing the same thing day in and day out, they need help, whether it’s support on living on their own without the job, whether it’s getting them into another job, whether its financial support and advice, some women can’t read, some of them can’t write. You know there are people that don’t need saved, but rather they need support. (Betty)

This is very simple: if I have a pain, a headache, I go to the doctor. Now, if I want to exit my work, I would seek help. But with some organisations, it is like the doctor will come after you to tell you: you have a headache and that it is abnormal, but you say: no, I don’t have a headache, and he says: yes, you do have headache. But I know I don’t! I am quite happy to charge for having sex with people. (Bella)

And then, these people that run around trying to save you... There’s this area in [city in the Republic of Ireland], and it’s very bunged up with prostitutes, and they held bible meetings in the streets, and sang, in the streets, to help the prostitutes. And they thought they were doing this brilliant thing, you know, but is it really going to help them? It would be better if they would just go and give them a flask of coffee and some condoms. You know what I mean? (Sarah)

9.3.3. Several sex workers also recommended services that adopt a harm-reduction approach, supporting sex workers in improving their current working conditions and reducing exploitation:

A helping organisation for the escorts would be good, to show them for example how to be an independent girl and all that stuff. Because, like I say about the law [making it illegal to pay for sex] – if you put the law like that, we don’t get anything, and you’re not going to reduce it [prostitution]. If you’re going to do something different, just show her how to do it to be OK for her. (Cathy)

If we don’t brush it under the carpet and if we have services that are willing to say this is the client group we work with, and have something like a one stop shop, a building that provides health care, advice on benefits and all that. So things like that can make such a huge
difference, because people get caught in that cycle and they're working all night and then sleeping all day, they don't get on top of things like that. So being able to provide support services where people can actually come and say what they're doing at night, that would be good. (Sophie)

**Working with the police**

9.3.4. The responses from sex workers also indicate that many would appreciate a designated police liaison officer. As reported in chapter 8.7.4, the most common response (44%) to the question - how sex workers would like to report crimes and abuse was - “to a police officer who specialises in the sex industry and would be friendly to me”. Currently, it appears that many sex workers do not trust the police and do not feel that they can report crimes and receive support. In some cases, sex workers may fear being prosecuted for offences related to prostitution, as the following sequence shows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Betty:</th>
<th>He [a client] pinned me up the window, busted up my face. I had to have surgery. I had to have my teeth re-done.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>Did you report it?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty:</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>Why not?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty:</td>
<td>Whom I am going to report it to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>The police?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty:</td>
<td>And say what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher:</td>
<td>What he did was illegal. It is not illegal to sell sex. You didn't do anything illegal. But what he did was illegal, beating somebody up is illegal, you know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betty:</td>
<td>I always thought it is illegal to be a prostitute...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.3.5. There is awareness within the PSNI about these issues, as the following statement from a police officer in the Organised Crime Unit indicates:

*We have very little engagement with the sex work community at all. We have had individual reports through service providers and advertisers of harassments, assaults, other problems that we have dealt with; but generally we're not receiving reports or evidence that we can deal with.*

9.3.6. Another police officer commented:

*If somebody's coming from a country where the criminal law is different than Northern Ireland, or where the relationship with law enforcement is different, and we arrive – they won't have read our codes of practice; they won't have read our code of ethics; they won't understand the human rights approach that we take to policing, and nor should they – they just see the police, and they may see that as the police from wherever they came from. And*
I can absolutely sympathise why they may just shut down and say: The least I say here, the least I will get myself into bother. So, depending on which country you’re from, you may think I’m here to bust you, to arrest you – but actually, I’m here to rescue you if you’re trafficked.

Leaving prostitution

9.3.7. In the online survey, respondents were also asked what would help them to leave the sex industry. Most commonly (25%), respondents said that they did not want to exit from prostitution and did therefore not need any exit services. The next most likely response (19%) was ‘a job that pays for my expenses’. 15% said that ‘professional qualifications’ would enable them to quit prostitution. This indicates that many of the respondents view prostitution as a job, as a way of making a living and paying for their expenses. Leaving prostitution is only considered an option if there are feasible employment alternatives that offer a similar income, as exemplified by the following statement made by one of the interviewees:

So, what is it: we’ll train you on computers, so you can get a job, or something like that. Why would I want to be trained on a computer, I can already use one. You know, what sort of training can you actually give me that means I can earn loads of money? There’s nothing. (Bella)

9.3.8. Only very few respondents (fewer than 5%) mentioned government support, exit programmes, therapy or similar schemes respectively. This, however, could be due to the absence, or lack of knowledge, of such programmes. In the face-to-face interviews, some of the sex workers supported the idea of exit programmes:

The idea of having an exit strategy is absolutely wonderful, because there would be girls maybe trying to exit the industry because they are sick of it or maybe because they don’t earn enough, you know, and it’s very hard to actually come back from something like that to a normal life. Not very many girls would actually be able to do it by themselves. (Martha)

9.3.9. One of the women who participated in an exit support programme initiated by the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service (see 9.4.3.) described the positive benefits:

It was brilliant, that got me back into work. It built your confidence up. It showed that there are opportunities out there. I think I probably may have found an excuse to continue on doing it, if I haven’t had the opportunity of someone pushing me into other work. It was pride. People ask you what you do, what do you say? You make up something, but I didn’t want that. I wanted to be something, and with the opportunities that were available here at the time, I knew I wanted to take them. (Betty)

9.3.10. In the following section, we discuss existing exit programmes in more detail in order to develop suggestions regarding the successful establishment of such services.
9.4. Evaluation of exiting programmes

9.4.1. To evaluate support services for people involved in the sex industry, especially for those wishing to improve their situation or get out of the sex industry, we gathered information from 7 organisations in different jurisdictions that offer such support, further referred to as exit programmes.

Definition of ‘exiting programme’

9.4.2. As some of these organisations emphasised, the term ‘exiting’ prostitution does not always accurately describe the wishes and aims of the people taking part in these programmes. Exiting prostitution in the sense of quitting work in the sex industry and finding employment in another sector can be one of the reasons for seeking support from these organisations. The needs of service users, however, are manifold and can also include debt counseling and addiction or rehabilitation services. While various forms of employment training are included in these programmes, a career change might not be the most urgent need of service users or a wish at all. ‘Exit programmes’ therefore have to be understood in a broader sense that includes the improvement or stabilisation of the general living conditions and personal circumstances of people involved in the sex industry.

Overview of services

9.4.3. The following organisations took part in our assessment of support services available in Northern Ireland and other jurisdictions. The services provided are described by each organisation.

| Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service (Belfast, United Kingdom): | The Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service is run by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust. It is an open access drop-in centre for those working in prostitution. It is open once a week for 4 hours. The centre offers a safe, non-judgmental environment and provides sexual health services, pregnancy testing, sexually transmitted infection screening, condoms, emergency contraception and referral pathways to areas such as addiction services and sexual and reproductive health services. |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ruhama (Dublin, Republic of Ireland): | Ruhama, established in 1989, works on a national level with women affected by prostitution. Due to the mobile nature of prostitution where women are moved around the island of Ireland, we work with women who are, or have been, involved in prostitution in Northern Ireland, including victims of trafficking. |
| A Way Out (Stockton on Tees, United Kingdom): | This agency has been operating for 12 years, working with women involved in survival sex work and at risk young people. The Liberty project [the exit support programme run by A Way Out] has been running for 4 years with a stronger focus on recovery and exit. |
| Sacro (Edinburgh, United Kingdom): | Sacro is a third sector organization. Sacro helps create safer and more cohesive communities across Scotland. From providing conflict resolution that prevents disputes from escalating to supporting prisoners on release, they’ll work with |
people to repair harm and reduce conflict and reoffending.

**SHOP** (The Hague, Netherlands): *SHOP is an organization in The Hague that offers different kinds of services and assistance to (ex) sex-workers and victims of human trafficking. The organisation has two main goals: (1) to support (ex) sex-workers (male, female, transgender) in The Hague and surroundings, in order to empower them, improve their position in society and support them in making their own choices; and (2) to contribute in combatting human trafficking (either related to sexual exploitation or other types of exploitation) by providing support and assistance to the victims.*

**Mikamottagningen** (Stockholm, Sweden): *Mikamottagningen (former Prostitution unit) in Stockholm, turn to people (regardless of sexual identity and gender identity) over the age of 16 who sell or has been selling sex and/or self-harm with sex. People come on their own accord; they do not exercise any official authority (unlike most social services in Stockholm). They have professional secrecy. People can choose to be anonymous. All their services are free of charge. They offer practical help, support and advice but also counseling and therapy. They do outreach work and they also have a medical clinic where people can get medical advice and clinical tests. They also provide help to victims of human trafficking.*

**Streetreach** (Auckland, New Zealand): *Streetreach is a confidential support service for those involved in prostitution.*

9.4.4. The following 2 tables provide information about the programmes offered by these organisations.

**Table 35a: Exit programmes in the UK and Ireland**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org.</th>
<th>Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service</th>
<th>Ruhama (Dublin)</th>
<th>A Way Out (Stockton on Tees)</th>
<th>Sacro (Edinburgh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Programme</td>
<td>Progress to Work</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The Liberty Project</td>
<td>Another Way Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established in</td>
<td>one-off programme that ran for 6 weeks</td>
<td>1989</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons to initiate</td>
<td>Originally for homeless service users, later extended to sex workers</td>
<td>Initially street outreach work, identified need for additional services</td>
<td>Unfairness of some women living a normal life while others have to put themselves at extreme risk on a daily basis</td>
<td>Need for service for women regularly arrested for prostitution and related offences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financed by</td>
<td>Department of Education and Learning</td>
<td>Department of Justice and Equality, Health Service Executive, non-statutory grants and donations</td>
<td>Various funders such as Public Health and Northern Rock</td>
<td>Grants, NHS funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 Due to the before mentioned need for individualised support, not all of these organisations run specific exit programmes, but rather offer exiting support as part of their general support services.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees</th>
<th>Employed by Dairy Farm (the organisation that ran the programme)</th>
<th>11 staff member and 35 volunteers (for the whole organisation)</th>
<th>3 staff members</th>
<th>4 staff members, volunteer mentors (for the whole organisation)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Target Group</td>
<td>Street based sex workers</td>
<td>Women or trans women affected by prostitution, including victims of trafficking</td>
<td>Women involved in street based survival sex work</td>
<td>Women over 18 who are or were involved in prostitution or are at risk of becoming involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements for participation</td>
<td>Commitment; interview beforehand about educational background, interests etc.</td>
<td>Current or past experience in prostitution (including victims of trafficking)</td>
<td>Current or past involvement in the sex industry</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services provided as part of exit support</td>
<td>- Trainings in computer skills - interview skills - CV writing - referral to local employers - 200 pound cash reimbursement received after completion of the programme - regular meetings with key social worker</td>
<td>- care plan for each individual service user - support - counselling - accompaniment to various trainings - interpretation - practical support - referral to other organisations and services</td>
<td>- outreach work - in-reach work - individual accompaniment by key worker - advocacy work - group support - dialectical behavioural therapy - peer support - volunteer opportunities</td>
<td>- Emotional support - referral to drug and alcohol services - support regarding housing, benefits and finances - mentoring support - referral to onward services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperations with other organisations</td>
<td>The Dairy Farm</td>
<td>Broad range of cooperations with other services and organisations from various different sectors</td>
<td>Substance misuse services, housing providers, probation, police, prison sexual health, local council</td>
<td>NHS Lothian Streetwork Willow Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact/Advertisement</td>
<td>Information at drop-in centre</td>
<td>Website through other organisations leaflets advertisements media and awareness campaigns word of mouth</td>
<td>Website Leaflets in local agencies</td>
<td>Outreach services in saunas, on the street, online leaflets and posters in appropriate settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participants</td>
<td>4 took part, 2 completed</td>
<td>Over 2000 overall, 198 from Jan-Jun 2014</td>
<td>80 overall, 50 participants at the moment</td>
<td>35 at the moment (no data on 7 years altogether)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Success Rate</td>
<td>Both the women who completed it found a job outside the sex industry</td>
<td>Definition of &quot;success&quot; depends on individual goals and aims of service users; no exact numbers can be given</td>
<td>Some could exit with the help of the programme and although some returned to prostitution, some reduced their involvement in the sex industry</td>
<td>50-75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Participants</td>
<td>For the whole service: usually British, some with Black/Minority Ethnic background;</td>
<td>Women and trans-women from many different countries with very different educational and</td>
<td>Mostly white British women between the age of 20 and 45, the majority of which has been in the care</td>
<td>Typically Scottish women, but also from Romania, Italy, Spain, Portugal and America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
most of them with no higher education degree. Women completing the exit programme, however, had university education prior to participation.

Social backgrounds system as children with a low level of education. Education background varies from leaving school at 13 to Master’s degree.

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**Table 35b: Exit programmes in other jurisdictions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Org.</th>
<th>SHOP (The Hague, Netherlands)</th>
<th>Mikamottagningen (Stockholm, Sweden)</th>
<th>Streetreach (Auckland, New Zealand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of Programme</td>
<td>Career Switch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established in</td>
<td>April 2009 to April 2011</td>
<td>2004 (in current form)</td>
<td>2001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasons to initiate</td>
<td>Supporting sex workers in the process of exiting the sex industry</td>
<td>Decreasing prostitution and human trafficking in the city of Stockholm</td>
<td>Saw a need for support services for women wanting to exit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financed by</td>
<td>Dutch Ministry of Justice</td>
<td>Taxes (City of Stockholm)</td>
<td>LIFE Centre Trust, private donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees</td>
<td>7 staff members</td>
<td>10 staff members</td>
<td>1 part time staff member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target Group</td>
<td>National and international victims of human trafficking sex workers</td>
<td>People of all genders over the age of 16 that are or were involved in various parts of the sex industry or might become involved</td>
<td>People working in the sex industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement s for participation</td>
<td>Motivations determined beforehand to design individual programmes</td>
<td>Persons participating have to be over the age of 16 (legal reasons)</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services provided as part of exit support</td>
<td>- Registration with local government - request for financial support - organisation of debt - CV writing - psycho-social support - orientation and joining day activities and volunteer work - job orientation and application training - preparation for job interviews, - language courses - computer literacy</td>
<td>- Practical help - support - advice regarding various topics - counselling - therapy - medical services - referral to other organisations or services</td>
<td>Depending on service user’s needs - counselling - life skills - budgeting advice - drug and alcohol support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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24 Due to the before mentioned need for individualised support, not all of these organisations run specific exit programmes, but rather offer exiting support as part of their general support services.
### Cooperations with other organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cooperation with other organisations</th>
<th>Local government</th>
<th>Regular social services</th>
<th>Government organisations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>police</td>
<td>drug and rehab facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>health care system</td>
<td>churches, other support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unemployment offices</td>
<td>groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>various NGOs, migration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>offices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Contact/Advertising

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information through outreach work and contacting service users of different departments of SHOP</th>
<th>Website inform other services (NGOs, police, health care officials) about their programmes</th>
<th>Outreach work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Number of Participants

| Number of Participants | 172 started the programme (var. genders) | Around 600 in the last 5 years, 140 at the moment | 20 overall, 3 at the moment |

### Success Rate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Rate</th>
<th>15 completely exited sex industry</th>
<th>About 80% leave prostitution</th>
<th>100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>110-112 still receive support from SHOP but stopped working</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 still work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>some people did not finish the programme, 9 still work in the sex industry, rest unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Participants</th>
<th>No sufficient data</th>
<th>Very diverse group regarding ethnicity, age, class, gender, sexuality and sector of sex industry</th>
<th>Usually people involved in street based prostitution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>majority cis-women from indoor prostitution, 30-40% belong to LGBT group</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Common experiences and suggestions

9.4.5. Although these support services vary in terms of participants and years of experience, certain commonalities could be found across different services and jurisdictions. While some of these programmes might be limited to a certain gender or age group, generally their service users come from a variety of national, ethnic, educational or social backgrounds, which leads back to the need of a broader definition of what can be considered as supporting exiting prostitution (see 9.4.2). Some people might need help in CV writing or finding educational training opportunities, while others most urgently need medical attention or rehabilitation support:

**Some of our clients would need counselling before they can even be trained for other jobs, e.g. for drug addiction, experiences of child abuse. (Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service)**
From the experiences of our clients, SHOP knows that the transition to work outside the sex industry involves many obstacles, since it involves many changes: your residence may change, your expenditure budget, your friendships and your self-image. (SHOP)

The whole thing is that prostitution is only one compartment, it's all a part of the whole bigger thing, debt or addiction or you know, domestic violence or just other issues. (Ruhama)

9.4.6. This variety of needs is also reflected in the broad range of services all these organisations offer. Differences in the range of services provided or cooperation with other organisations and agencies can depend on funding opportunities and experience. Constant and/or secured funding allows service providers to establish longer running programmes, where they can build on experience with clients to further improve or broaden their spectrum of services. Being able to work within a longer time frame also allows the establishment of connections to and cooperations with other organisations that might be useful to clients (e.g. rehabilitation facilities) and being able to forward clients if the service provider itself cannot offer specific services.

9.4.7. Adapting support programmes to the individual needs of service users is particularly important. The complexity of the problems that some sex workers face – social background, drug addiction, debt, financial security, dependants, lack of education or skills – can be the reasons for entering the sex industry or a consequence of it. While they can be the drivers for wanting to change one’s lifestyle, they are also the issues that make change difficult. This also needs to be considered for victims of trafficking that for various reasons may not want to be repatriated to their country of origin and therefore may find themselves in need of support concerning immigration and residency issues. Relationships and child-care also have to be taken into account as a reason as well as a hurdle to change one's life, as it may create a need for financial security and/or flexible working hours many other jobs may not provide that easily.

Alternatives to exiting the sex industry

9.4.8. As some organisations noted, completely exiting the sex industry might not be a goal or an immediate option of some service users:

But important to say is that a real job is not what everyone wants. Each person’s goal, wants and needs are different. (Some already have a real job!) (Mikamottagningen)

For somebody who has no education, comes from a really low socioeconomic background, what can we do with a programme? What kind of work are they going to find that pays as well as sex work in the same amount of time? Educational programmes are not the answer for everyone. Also, some of them might be working at night as a sex worker and be Moms during the day – what kind of job is going to replace that? (Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service)
9.4.9. The aims of all of these support services can be summed up as providing sex workers with alternatives to their current job and lifestyle. The difference lies in the alternatives that the service providers feel they can suggest in the cases as the ones described above, when sex workers do not want to or feel that they can’t leave the sex industry. Due to the legal context in the Netherlands, enabling sex workers to work independently (rather than in a brothel or with an agency) would be considered a viable option by SHOP:

Also, if a participant would not quit sex work by the end of the offered programme, but did succeed in being an independent (professional) sex worker in a more stable situation, this can also be seen a success. (SHOP)

9.4.10. However, finding suitable alternatives within the sex industry (in general or as a starting point for further improvement of one’s situation) might not be an option in other jurisdictions, where parts of the sex industry are criminalised and/or safe working conditions cannot be ensured. Thus, although all the organisations stressed the importance of considering individual needs and wishes of their service users, how these needs can be addressed not only depends on what services can be provided, but also on the legal framework.

Best practice suggestions

9.4.11. In conclusion, the main results of the assessment of support services for people involved in the sex industry are the following:

9.4.12. Support services need to be flexible and tailored to the individual needs of each service user. Although there seem to be some similarities regarding the reasons for wishing to exit the sex industry or to make a career change, how this process can be facilitated by support services depends on the individual backgrounds and problems of each service user.

You have to meet them where they’re at, it has to be suitable. (Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service)

One person might have a substance abuse problem and is living in homelessness, another person is living with a partner, has children and a well-paid job but needs therapy for their former prostitution experience. Our exit programme is (must be!) individually tailored to each person’s needs. We as a unit need to be flexible and respectful to each person’s experiences and needs; it’s up to us to get the best help possible to those who turn to us. (Mikamottagningen)

As it’s an individual program for each client you adjust it to meet the needs of the client as you go, there is nothing fixed in this it’s about assessment and working with the client. (Streetreach)

We change our programmes when need dictates i.e. if the women are on the street at different times or different locations we alter our outreach model; we try and listen to our
9.4.13. Therefore, it is important to have a **holistic approach to supporting people** involved in the sex industry, that not only considers their experiences in the sex industry, but also other aspects of their lives that might have contributed to a difficult life situation or act as an obstacle to improving one’s situation, such as addiction issues or financial debt. Rather than just providing sex workers with alternative options of employment, support services need to consider the complexity of their service users’ lives and not just regard them as sex workers, but also parents, partners, daughters, and so on.

A last hurdle is the general complexity of the lives of (some of the) participants. If multiple problems are at stake (e.g. drugs dependency, culture and language barriers, financial problems, housing problems) one tends to remain within a context that is ‘already known’ – taking big steps (for example quitting with sex work) may then be a big challenge. (SHOP)

*Client-focused work, client-led support, no pressure to exit from prostitution, support to deal with all areas including housing, health and childcare (not just focused on exiting from prostitution). (SACRO)*

*We believe the delivery of a holistic wrap-around service which combines a range of supports (e.g. casework, education, counselling) to meet the needs of individual women, as they define them, is a very successful approach. (Ruhama)*

**To respect each individual’s experience of prostitution, their story, their life, their situation.** (Mikamottagningen)

*It is very important to make connections, if somebody wants to access a particular service, whoever is running an enhanced support service for people in prostitution should know what’s there. (Ruhama)*

*Probably it’s the stereotypical images of people in prostitution that is the biggest hurdle.* (Mikamottagningen)
Once they have exited it can take a lot of consistent support to ensure these women have every opportunity to integrate back into the community and be offered a safe, healthy life free from the stigma and judgment they will have suffered. It is this type of support that needs to be tailor made and flexible, not one size fits all. (A Way Out)
10. LEGISLATIVE APPROACHES

10.1. Introduction

This section evaluates different prostitution regimes as well as non-legislative measures with regard to their general effectiveness, based on a thorough review of relevant academic literature and official reports. We address the following questions:

- What can we say about overall effectiveness of different regimes?
- What are possible non-legislative approaches to tackling demand, and how effective are they?
- How would a sex purchase ban affect those who sell sexual services?
- How would a sex purchase ban affect the demand side?
- How would a sex purchase ban affect levels of trafficking for sexual exploitation?

Furthermore, we present results based on our interview and survey data, addressing the questions above and in addition, the following questions:

- On a practical level, what are potential problems with implementing (i.e. policing) the criminalisation of paying for sex in Northern Ireland?
- What are sex workers’ views on different prostitution regimes, and what are their suggestions regarding policy?

MAIN FINDINGS

- Our findings suggest that there are no easy solutions to effectively regulate prostitution and tackle sex trafficking. For example, both the Swedish (neo-abolitionism) and the Dutch (regulationism) regimes appear to record continuous sex trafficking despite shared objectives to the contrary.

- Given the complexity of the social and legal realities surrounding prostitution, there are significant problems with identifying causes and effects, i.e. it is not always clear if a policy measure – or some other variable – caused a specific change. In regard to the Swedish approach all claims about pre and post law trends are challenged by the lack of sound figures for the sex industry prior to 1999.

- No firm conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the sex purchase ban and patterns of sex trafficking into Sweden.

- There is also no clear evidence on the relationship between the type of prostitution regime and the impact on the number of sex workers.
There is, however, evidence that health and safety of those selling sex is improved in non-criminalisation regimes (New Zealand) and within the legal segments of regulationism (Netherlands).

Criminalisation of clients is not considered a useful or effective policy measure by the vast majority of sex workers. Only 2% of the 171 sex workers who took part in our survey thought that criminalising clients was a good idea, and only 8% thought that it would reduce sex trafficking.

Sex workers worry about a potential decrease in security, worse working conditions and increased risks if paying for sex was criminalised.

Some sex workers are concerned about the loss of decent clients and an increase of violent clients, and an increased involvement of organised crime groups and 'pimps'.

Sex workers stated that they would feel even less inclined to report crimes to the police out of fear of incriminating themselves or becoming involved in legal procedures.

The proposed law aims to criminalise the buyer but not the seller. The sex workers interviewed for this study felt that this did not reflect the reality of selling sex. Sex workers feel criminalised under the current law, which for example does not allow sex workers to work in the same location for safety reasons (this could be classed as brothel-keeping). They do not see how criminalising clients would reduce the pressure of criminalisation on them.

Our results suggest that criminalising paying for sex would be ineffective in reducing demand. Only 7% of clients said they would stop paying for sex altogether if it was criminalised, whilst 15% would stop paying for sex in Northern Ireland, but would simply pay for sex elsewhere.

The views of service providers in Northern Ireland on the effects of a sex purchase ban vary. Some said that they support the proposed law because it is based on an understanding of (all forms of) prostitution as exploitation. Others expressed concern about the negative effects of such a law on the well-being and safety of sex workers and the effectiveness of the law in regard to reducing demand and reducing sex trafficking.

PSNI interviewees have highlighted a number of issues around the sex purchase ban, including the lack of sufficient resources to effectively police this proposed new law with competing demands and significant problems with producing evidence and prosecuting clients, for example some covert tactics used in Sweden and other European countries are not available in Northern Ireland. In summary, PSNI officers stated that, in their opinion, a sex purchase ban would be difficult to enforce and police and would be largely ineffective in reducing the level of trafficking in sexual exploitation.25

25 The PSNI position was also articulated by Senior Police at their recent Justice Committee submission.
When asked how the government should deal with prostitution, sex workers most commonly responded that prostitution should be legalised. Many sex workers would like to see prostitution de-stigmatised and treated as a normal job. Other suggestions focused on better service provision and the decriminalisation of sex workers by allowing them to work together.

10.2. Definitions and sources

10.2.1. We were asked to evaluate different regimes types and focused on 6 different jurisdictions. 3 of these (Republic of Ireland, Scotland, England and Wales) are jurisdictions that are geographically or legally relevant for Northern Ireland, and 2 (New Zealand and in the Netherlands) are jurisdictions that represent other kinds of regime types. In order to answer the questions that specifically address the experience of the sex purchase ban or the Swedish state policy, a type of neo-abolitionist regime, an assessment of this regime type is also included below.

10.2.2. A note on sources. A vast literature exists on many aspects of prostitution. Given this research project and limitations necessarily imposed, and following Mossman (2005), we draw on research that was designed to evaluate impact of regimes on practices on the ground. A comprehensive review of up to date material upholds Mossman’s conclusion as to the limited amount of such research. There are three exceptions, primarily a comprehensive evaluation of regimes in the Nordic countries (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013): a nine-country comparison of prostitution regimes (Kelly et al 2009) that includes 4 of the states explored here, Sweden, the Netherlands, Ireland and New Zealand, and a 6 country review carried out for the Canadian Houses of Parliament (Hindle et al 2008) that includes Sweden, England (sic) the Netherlands and New Zealand. In addition, and EU funded report (TAMPEP 2009) provides a 25-country analysis of migrant sex workers in Europe. In our framework we, following Mossman (2005), also distinguish between official research (commissioned by the state or any of its agents) and other research that fits the criteria of research designed to evaluate policy.

10.2.3. We use a typology of state prostitution regimes adapted from Outshoorn (2004) and Mossman (2007). The term regime is used to underline that prostitution policies cannot be reduced to laws alone; they are connected to norms and issues within wider society (Hubbard 2006: 1); and each regime has a particular historical context (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013). The term also highlights the dynamic nature of prostitution policies, which may be implemented differently at different times within the same state. The 4 regime types are:

1. **Prohibitionism**: the policy goal is to prevent prostitution through criminalising both the seller and the buyer and laws seek to close down all the spaces where sex is sold (e.g. the USA excluding Nevada and most middle Eastern states)

2. **Abolitionism**: the policy goal is to NOT criminalise the seller of sex but to seek to abolish or reduce activity through criminalising most attendant activities such as
brothel keeping or pimping (e.g. England and Wales, ROI, and Scotland. A distinct form of abolitionism (neo-abolitionism) shifts the policy focus towards a criminal justice approach that criminalises the client but not the seller (e.g. Sweden)

3. **Regulationism**: the policy goal is to regulate or otherwise control places and activities, and not criminalise the seller of sex (e.g. the Netherlands)

4. **Non-criminalisation**: the policy goal is to manage the sex industry through legislation other than prostitution or vice specific laws (e.g. New Zealand)

**10.3. Evaluating prostitution regimes: challenges and approaches**

10.3.1. It has been argued that research alone cannot resolve the profound questions raised by prostitution, as different studies may be based on different, and sometimes competing, conceptions of social justice, human rights and gender equality. Moreover, the issue of prostitution can be approached from a series of different policy priorities such as relating to questions of morality, health, migration or law and order (Kelly, Coy & Davenport 2009).

10.3.2. Furthermore, as identified in the international literature (Mossman, 2007; Skilbrei & Holmström 2013; Wagenaar and Altink 2012; Jordan 2005; Kelly, Coy & Davenport, 2009) research into prostitution regimes (i.e. into prostitution policies implemented in a particular society) faces particular challenges.

10.3.3. One of the main challenges in assessing prostitution regimes (and their effectiveness) over a period of time is the difficulty in isolating causal relationships: it is not always clear if a certain policy measure produced a certain change, or if a change in the sex industry occurred for reasons unrelated to policy. In order to assess the effectiveness of a certain policy, it is also necessary to have reliable data on prostitution in a given society from the time period before a certain policy was implemented (Matthews 2008, cf. Kelly et al 2009). These challenges are, in turn, magnified when the research goal is to evaluate regime change within a particular jurisdiction (say, a change in the law) or to provide a cross-regime comparative analysis.

10.3.4. The international literature allows us suggest the principle challenges as summarised below:

- Little evaluative research: while there is a significant body of literature on prostitution little is designed to evaluate the impact of regimes.

- Validity of research findings – many research reports contain weak or problematic methodologies and/or poor standards of citation.

- Regime unevenness – as stated above, variations exist across and within regimes. Such variations in Sweden repudiate the idea that there is something called the ‘Swedish model’ (Skilbrei and Holmström 2014).
- The nature of the subject: sex workers tend to be highly mobile and resist or deflect policy measures, stigma encourages anonymity and the prostitution generally takes place 'in the shadow'.

- Regime adaptation: abrupt swings in policy course on the part of governments or their agents render sustained evaluations of outcomes and impacts very difficult.

- Generalised data problems: researchers face the problem of unreliable data in the field.

- New research area: the development of appropriate and sector-specific measures to evaluate prostitution law and law reform is still in its infancy.

- The problem of causality: given the complexity of the social and legal realities surrounding prostitution, identification of causal relationships is particularly challenging and even more so in the context of regime change.

- The problem of ideological 'stuckness': much research in the area proceeds from a preordained ideological commitment to one particular view or another on prostitution itself. This can lead to the recognised phenomena of what Matthews (2008) calls policy-driven research rather than evidence-based research.

- Unsupported claims: substantial claims unsupported by comprehensive evidence, are frequent in policy positions within the field.

- Research on the relationship between prostitution regimes and their relationship to sex trafficking is further challenged by the recent emergence of trafficking as a problem for states. Here too, much research tends towards commentary and is speculative or unsupported by evidence.

10.3.5. As will be seen below, our task faced many of these challenges. Acknowledging this general difficulty, however, this section draws together research explicitly designed to evaluate regimes. Following Mossman (2007) key information is in tabular form, each table showing:

- the key legislation entailed
- the legal status of different activities within the law
- the sources used: official reviews and scholarly research that examines the impact of the regimes.
- summaries or syntheses of (often detailed) analysis therein selected according to the 4 questions provided by the Department of Justice

10.3.6. In the Tables we present a case study for each of the 6 regimes as below.
### Table 36: England and Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Legislation</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Issues/Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1885.** | Prohibited:  
- Paying for sex with someone who has been forced (strict liability)  
- Purchasing sex from person under 18  
- Soliciting  
- Kerb crawling  
- Owning/managing a brothel  
- Pimping/pandering | Official Reviews  
Hester & Westmarland 2004  
Wilcox et al (2009)  
Kelly et al (2009)  
Other sources  
*Paying the Price*  
(2004)  
(HO consultation paper)  
*Shifting the Burden*  
(2014)  
(Parliamentary report)  
TAMPEP (2009)  
Hubbard, Matthews and Scoular (2007)  
Hindle et al (2008) | Traditional anti-kerbcrawling measures resulted in displacement and were of limited effect (H&W 2004)  
Kerb-crawler rehabilitation programmes appeared to positively affect participants although further research needed (H&W 2004)  
Traditional enforcement did not appear to reduce nuisance for communities. Temporary and unpredictable displacement often resulted (H&W 2004)  
Community based, non-police, collaborative initiatives more likely to produce sustained reduction in nuisance and disorder (H&W 2004)  
Exiting prostitution is a long, complex project requiring multi agency interventions and basic needs provision such as accommodation, welfare, child care, drug treatment (H&W 2004)  
Policy has been driven largely by visibility (of prostitution) and regulation has been challenged by complex legislative framework, shifting locations and adaptation of practices within the sex industry (HM & S 2007)  
All-party parliamentary group has proposed adoption of Sex-Purchase Ban (*Shifting the Burden* 2014)  
Overall, policy in England (sic) incoherent and inconsistent with both sex workers organisations and residents expressing dissatisfaction (Hindle et al 2008: 25)  
Regime can be considered a ‘pragmatic fudge’ with emphasis primarily on reducing street prostitution (Kelly et al 2009) |
| **Sexual Offences Act 1985** | | | |
| **Sexual Offences Act (2003)** | | | |
| **Policing and Crime Act (2009)** | | | |
| **Not criminalised:** | - Selling sexual services | | |

### Table 37: Scotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Legislation</th>
<th>Status of Activities</th>
<th>Research Sources</th>
<th>Issues and Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982:** | Prohibited:  
- Running a brothel  
- Trading in prostitution  
- Loitering | Official reviews  
*Being Outside*  
(2004) | 2007 law seeks to eradicate street prostitution entirely  
No evaluation of the 2007 law exists and no comparison pre and post change available |
Prostitution (Public Places) (Scotland) Act 2007

- Soliciting or importuning
- Kerb crawling
- Pimping procuring and living off earnings

Not criminalised

- Selling sexual services

Other sources
Hubbard, Matthews & Scoular 2007(d)

Since 2007, 4 proposals to criminalise the purchasing of sex failed to achieve majority within the Scottish Parliament

Pre 2007 context showed that while common traits existed, street prostitution differed in main cities (Glasgow, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Dundee) and each had history of different responses (BO 2004).

Edinburgh licences massage parlours and saunas as such while recognising they function as de facto brothels satisfied that they raise no particular concerns (HM&S 2007(d))

Off-street prostitution and male prostitution appear to be of little concern to authorities (HM&S 2007(d))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key legislation</th>
<th>Activities status</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Issues/outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1935</td>
<td>Prohibited: - Running a brothel - Pimping/procuring - Living off earnings - Soliciting - Knowingly soliciting or importuning a trafficked person for the purposes of prostitution</td>
<td>Official reviews Not applicable Other sources DJE (2012) – govt. discussion document JOCJDE (2013) – parliamentary report Ward (2010)</td>
<td>No baseline study of the sex trade exists in Ireland and no official review of legislation and its impact has been undertaken. Law currently under review (DJE 2012) and Parliamentary Joint Committee has recommended adoption of Swedish-style neo abolitionist approach (JOCJDE 2013) Review prompted because: a) despite the criminalisation of most activities, prostitution continues b) while the law does not criminalise the exchange of money for sex, there are contradictions in its effect and c) the law may need to address criminality in the new landscape of prostitution arising from new technology and ‘mobile’ brothels (DJE 2012) Ward (2010) suggests that policies over a long time have never achieved their goals: the sex industry continued to expand and adapt regardless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993</td>
<td>Not criminalised: - Selling sexual services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 39: Netherlands

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key legislation</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Issues/Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 2000 Repeal of laws banning brothels (known as B9)                               | - Prostitution considered work, licensed, taxed and subject to many regulations that vary at local level  
- Brothels licensed  
- Sex workers denied some forms of privacy and rights  
- Sex workers considered vulnerable to particular forms of exploitation | Official Reviews\(^\text{26}\)  
Other Sources  
Outshoorn (2012)  
Hubbard, Matthews and Scoular (HMS) (2007)  
Hindle et al 2008 | Daalder (2007) concluded that B9 removed illegality from licensed sector; that the market was shifting because of the internet and that outside of brothels, forced prostitution and pimping were on-going and unregulated sectors (saunas, sex clubs, escort agencies) operated (also HM&S 2007 and Kelly et al 2009.)  
Initial perception of a sex-market disaggregation into licensed (clean) and unlicensed (exploitative) sectors changed: abuse and exploitation continued in the licenced sector also (Outshoorn 2012)  
Abuse in licensed sector had not ended with legalisation, and Dutch and other EU women were trafficked in that sector (KLPD cited in Outshoorn 2012)  
Devolution of policy primarily to municipal authorities means inconsistency in implementation (Outshoorn 2012)  
Those in unregulated sector more vulnerable to violence, exploitation and may not be receiving health and safety services (Hindle et al 2008)  
While prostitution is viewed as a form of work (with special scrutiny) some workers’ rights do not apply even in legal sector and they, not clients, bear the burden of self-regulation in the interests of public health (HM&S 2007c) |
| Article 273f of the Criminal Code (prohibits trafficking and sexual/labour exploitation) | Prohibited  
- Coerced prostitution  
- Exploitation of sex workers (considered to be a trafficking offence) | | |

\(^\text{26}\) As this these reviews were published in the Dutch language we relied on secondary analysis in accordance with international peer reviewed standards of academic publishing and using established scholars in the field.

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### Table 40: New Zealand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Legislation</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Issues/Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Prostitution Reform Act 2003          | Legalised:  
- Exchanging sexual services for money  
- Brothels  
- Individual | Official reviews  
Jordan (2005)  
Prostitution Law Reform Committee (2005) | Act chimes with liberal state ideology of equal individuals making rational choices in a free market (Harrington 2012)  
Law’s goal is not to endorse prostitution but to limit discrimination and support rights and welfare of those who sell sex  (Kelly et al 2009) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prostitution</th>
<th>Ministry of Justice (MoJ) (2009)</th>
<th>No increase in numbers of sex workers as a result of the law. Sole change is shift from the managed (brothels) to the private sector (Abel et al 2007)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abel et al 2007</td>
<td>Eradication of street prostitution not achievable and legislation ‘ineffective’ to manage it: rather local non-legislative actions work (MoJ 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other sources</td>
<td>Identification of successful exist strategies requires a longitudinal cohort study (Abel et al 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harrington 2012</td>
<td>Sex workers report that their negotiation power with clients, general safety and relationships with the legal system is enhanced by law (Abel et al 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kelly, et al (2009)</td>
<td>Evidence indicates that PRA’s goal of safeguarding human rights of sex workers has ‘had a marked effect (PLRC 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Majority of sex workers interviewed felt PRA could do little about violence in industry, and that they were more likely to report such violence to the police (PLRC 2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Street workers remain most vulnerable to violence or attacks from clients (Abel et al 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Inconsistency in local jurisdictions causing difficulties for some sex workers (Abel et al 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Medical Officers report positive impact of Act on health and safety (Abel et al 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full assessment of the law requires longer time span (Abel et al 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Law appears to be widely accepted by population (F&amp;T 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New Zealand Prostitute’s Collective works with authorities to implement law and develop best practices (F&amp;T 2010)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prohibited:
- Unsafe sex practices (clients and sex workers)
- Forcing or inducing a person to exchange sexual services
- Using a person under 18 for prostitution
- Non-residents engaging in prostitution
Table 41: Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Legislation</th>
<th>Activities status</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Issues/Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Procuring</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bergen study found no evidence that prostitution was more violent, insecurity had increased or that the initial fall in numbers had reversed (S&amp;H 2013: 129).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Operating a brothel</td>
<td></td>
<td>A small study (n=34) found reduced demand but further research is needed and, overall, impact on public attitudes appears to be 'mild' (Kuosmanen 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not criminalized</td>
<td>Other sources</td>
<td>Following the Swedish Action Plan against prostitution (2008) and funding increase, police reports (prostitution and trafficking related) increased from 400 to 1,300 in 2010 (S&amp;H: 125).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skilbrei and Holmström (2013)</td>
<td>Lack of hard evidence on law’s impact and the initial decline was followed by a gradual increase in activity through mobile phones and internet (Socialstyrelsen 2004).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Florin (2012)</td>
<td>Law unevenly supported in social service interventions and professional training (Florin 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dodillet and Ostergren (2011)</td>
<td>Stockholm study indicates fewer new entrants to on-street prostitution over time but overall increase in off-street sectors and activities – perhaps a shift independent of law (HM&amp;S 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kuosmanen 2010.</td>
<td>Native sex worker activity continues in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hubbard, Matthews &amp; Scour 2007c</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘hidden sector’ (HM&S 2007)

Police face difficulties in prosecuting under the law: (Hindle et al 2008: 21)\(^{27}\)

Health and welfare service supports to those off-street appear to have been negatively impacted by the Act (Hindle et al 2008: 22)

The absence of a full evaluation, based on primary data, prevents comprehensive assessment (HM&S 2007c) and many claims, from those in favour and those against, are based on impressions and not sound evidence (S&H: 68 & 126-9)

Data weakness makes assessment of law’s impact on trafficking difficult but throughout 2000s groups of women from outside Sweden (eg Russia, Estonia) continue to show up in criminal cases (S&H 2012: 69)

**General conclusions**

10.3.7. On the basis of the reviews and evidence presented above, we suggest the following conclusions about state policies.

- Our findings suggest that the effective regulation of prostitution (regardless of the regime type) continues to be a challenge for states with the exception of the New Zealand case where evidence to date appears to support the view that state policy goals – to minimise exploitation and increase street workers’ power over their working conditions – have been largely achieved.

- State policies frequently appear to move between two sometimes contradictory approaches: that of a social welfare approach (i.e. reducing exploitation and violence) and a criminal justice approach (i.e. criminalising and prosecuting certain practices).

- In this regard, while trafficking issues are *prima facie* issues of criminality (trafficking is a crime against a person), and require criminal justice responses on the part of the state, state policies on addressing entry to and conditions within the sex industry come from primarily social welfare interventions. Conflation of prostitution and trafficking can lead to policy processes and outcomes that are ‘messy and unintended’ (Skilbrei and Holmström 2013: 144)

- Evidence available from the country studies appears to support Tampep’s (2009: 75) argument that the migrant sex worker population has grown and expanded across Europe, adaptive to (whatever) changes in legislation and law enforcement.

\(^{27}\) The scope of the Act in relation to what activities fall under its remit is unclear and prosecutions are challenged by denials on the part of client/sex workers that the act actually took place.
- There is evidence that health and safety of those selling sex is improved in non-criminalisation regimes (New Zealand) and within the legal segments of regulationism (Netherlands).

- Both Swedish (neo-abolitionism) and the Dutch (regulationism) regimes appear to record continuous sex trafficking despite shared objectives to the contrary.

- Evidence that neo-abolitionism has, at least, not resulted in a growth in the sex industry (on-street activity) is counterbalanced by evidence that the sex industry has grown in off-street sectors utilising internet technologies. Wilcox et al’s (2008) mixed conclusion on the impact of the sex purchase ban on the extent of the prostitution in Sweden is supported by Skilbrei and Holmström (2013).

10.3.8. Finally, we agree with the following two conclusions drawn by Mossmann (2007) as we could not establish any evidence that challenges these findings:

- That social exclusion and stigmatisation of sex workers may be reduced in legalised and decriminalised regimes – and conversely be worst in most heavily regulated regimes.

- There are mixed reports on the relationship between type of regime and the impact on the number of sex workers.

Conclusions regarding the sex purchase ban

10.3.9. In regard to the potential impact of the sex purchase ban on trafficking, we conclude with the following discussion.

- Evidence to date seems to indicate that no firm conclusions can be drawn about the relationship between the sex purchase ban and patterns of sex trafficking into Sweden.

- The law seeks to abolish prostitution through tackling demand and thereby to reduce or eradicate the trafficking of women. Both government and police authorities claim that there has been far less trafficking of women and involvement of foreign nationals compared to neighbouring countries (Kelly et al 2009). However, all claims about pre and post law trends are challenged by

  a) the lack of sound figures for the sex trade prior to 1999 (Skilbrei and Holmström 2010: 67); and

  b) the fact that government reports continue to show the presence of non-national women in the sex trade since the law (ibid). The number of women from, for instance, the former Soviet Union involved in prostitution since the law seems to be ‘quite significant’ (ibid: 69).

- Figures for trafficking in Sweden are complicated by the fact that the state considers all people involved in prostitution to have been trafficked by definition (Jordan 2012).
Moreover, the law appears to produce contradictory outcomes in that while people in prostitution are considered to be victims of a crime, the state has also, controversially, used migration legislation to deport foreign nationals involved in trafficking cases (Skilbrei and Holmstrom: 143). Such ambivalences, where different laws will be used to view a person in prostitution as either a victim or as a criminal, contribute to the case that the Swedish approach does not, in fact, send a clear message (ibid: 138).

10.4. Non-Criminal justice approaches to ‘tackling demand’

10.4.1. This section explores demand-reduction interventions outside of criminal justice frameworks (with the exception of John’s Schools which function within the criminal justice system but which address behaviour and attitudes of clients and may contain insights into the efficacy of demand-led interventions).

10.4.2. 4 different demand-reduction interventions are identified here and treated individually below before we move on to examine the John’s Schools. These interventions are:

- Community-level responses
- Social welfare responses
- Social marketing responses
- Educational responses

Community-level responses

10.4.1. Amongst community-level interventions are: community ‘policing’ such as photographing clients or potential clients and naming those convicted of soliciting on billboards (Hughes 2004) or through internet displays to include images and details of those arrested and convicted of purchasing sex; ‘Report a John’ campaigns where residents report car numbers and suspicious activities to the police (Willoughby and Lee 2008); community pickets against street prostitution (Hubbard 1998), traffic management schemes to curb kerb-crawling or to close roads where on-street prostitution exists.

10.4.2. Research from the UK shows that community picketing against street prostitution in several cities successfully removed sex workers from the streets (Hubbard 1998) and traffic management interventions also successfully shut down localised activities but the impact on overall demand is unknown (Wilcox et al). Hubbard (1998) argues that the community-level efforts produced displacement in the long run. Matthews (2008) has argued that tackling kerb crawling is an effective way to reduce the opportunistic aspect of demand and here specifically, shaming strategies rather than fines appear to have greater success.

10.4.3. However, responses that involve public shaming are not without attendant difficulties. Research from the U.S. suggest that naming and shaming can violate individuals’ civil rights, may have a negative impact on families, may be used disproportionately against men of colour and may in fact incite recidivism (cited in Flood 2009a). While proponents
argue for their efficacy, there is a significant dearth of research evaluating both their impact and effectiveness (Willoughby and Lee 2008: 6-7; Wilcox et al 2008). Recidivism and or deterrence may, for instance, be a function of other causal factors (Sanders and Campbell 2008).

**Social welfare responses**

10.4.4. Under the Sex Purchase Ban legislation, Sweden’s National Board of Health and Welfare was mandated to, *inter alia*, encourage people voluntarily to give up buying sex. Just 3 cities out of the 49 municipalities where prostitution is known to exist (Malmö, Gothenberg and Stockholm) have created units to provide counselling, referrals and practical assistance. These units registered contact with 112 sex buyers between 2009 and 2011 and are, according to Florin (2012), not obliged to systematically document their work with consequent implications for assessment as to efficacy.

10.4.5. To date, no evaluation of these interventions is available.

**Social marketing**

10.4.6. Social marketing interventions have been used in a number of jurisdictions to address sex-trafficking such as a) The ‘Dear John’ campaign run by the Mayor of Atlanta in 2006, targeting child trafficking, featured radio and television ads addressed to clients or potential clients (Lederer 2011), and b) Media campaigns targeted at potential sex tourists in the U.S. (Hughes cited in Flood 2009a). Other examples were also the ‘Real Men don’t Buy Sex’ social marketing campaign run by an NGO in the Republic of Ireland and an Integrated Action Plan run by the city of Seville in Spain to eradicate prostitution, sex trafficking and other forms of sexual exploitation.28

10.4.7. No evaluation of the Atlanta social marketing initiative is available and it appears that the project was not continued and that there were funding difficulties (Lederer 2011). No evaluations are available for any of the other social marketing initiatives.

**Educational interventions**

10.4.8. Educational interventions specifically targeted at male demand include a) a theatre-based performance for higher-level students to encourage pro-social bystander actions and reduce sexual violence by men (cited in Flood 2011) and b) a 3 year educational programme in the Philippines, organized by the local CATW29 chapter targeting local men and their sex-purchasing behaviour.

10.4.9. Initial findings from the Philippines project indicate that behaviour in relation to sex-purchasing had changed (Yen, 2008). However, Flood (2009a) argues that it is problematical to target educational programmes at men alone; not all men will participate,

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28 The plan was adopted by Seville City council in November 2009. See http://www.sevilla.org/ayuntamiento/areas/area-de-familia-asuntos-sociales-y-zonas-de-especial-actuacion/a-mujer/plan-integral-contra-la-prostitucion/ingles-guia-informativa-sobre-derechos-y-recursos-para-mujeres-en-prostitucion

29 The Campaign against Trafficking in Women is an international NGO that supports neo-abolitionist policies.
those who do may already be sympathetic and no programme is fully effective. Moreover, many violence education programmes can in fact create a ‘rebound’ effect and changes in behaviour affected may be very small. Piecemeal, or once-off educational programmes are of little value and any programme should by culturally sensitive and which include substantive impact evaluations (Flood 2009a).  

**John’s Schools**

10.4.10. ‘John’s Schools’ operate as a means of preventing recidivism amongst offenders including first offenders. Examples include the First Offender Prostitution Programme (FOPP)\(^{31}\) in the San Francisco area and the kerb-crawler rehabilitation programmes in the UK, initiated on foot of the *Criminal Justice and Police Act* 2001 which made kerb-crawling an arrestable offence.

10.4.11. The government-funded evaluation of FOPP (Shively *et al* 2008) found the intervention substantively reduced recidivism, was cost-effective and well-conceived and implemented. However, problematic evidence and difficulties in consistent assessment of effectiveness of such programmes have been noted (Lovell and Jordan 2012; Gillings and Willoughby 2010).

- First, while programme attendees may state that their attitudes changed, there is no evidence of corresponding behavioural change (cited in Gillings and Willoughby 5; Wilcox *et al* 2009). The challenge of conclusively measuring the overall effectiveness of John’s Schools is one of five difficulties identified by Sanders (2009).
- Second, they are resource intensive.
- Third, the cognitive behavioural model of ‘blaming and shaming’ on which they are based raises both ethical and psychological questions, as such tactics may create a rebound effect and may not be psychologically appropriate.
- Fourth, where an admission of guilt is required in lieu of prosecution, due process is compromised.
- Fifth, they do not necessarily address client’s deeper psychological or emotional difficulties and may ultimately be more damaging.

10.4.12. In sum, firm conclusions in relation to the efficacy of non-criminal justice interventions to address demand are difficult to draw and some of the interventions, described above, may create unintended or additional policy problems and are problematic from an ethical and civil rights point of view. For instance, the positive impact of anti-street

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\(^{30}\) Exemplars of anti-violence education programmes that involve men in ending violence against women and build greater gender equality are reviewed, see Flood (2009a, 2011) in bibliography.

\(^{31}\) The programme is a partnership between the public prosecutor, the police and a local non-governmental organisation, SAGE (Standing against Global Exploitation). On arrest for prostitution related offences, accused are given the option of a fine and participation in a one day programme or prosecution. About 20 such programmes have been run across the U.S. (Shively *et al* 2008).
prostitution initiatives in the UK (traffic management and anti-kerb crawling measures) was also bound up with displacement of activities rather than eradication.

10.4.13. The British Home Office funded rapid assessment report (Wilcox et al 2008)\(^\text{32}\) concluded that interventions to specifically address demand appear to have mixed results, although the evidence generally to support any particular claim is weak. Part of the difficulty in assessment is that the consequences of any policy change are often ‘hidden or practically unmeasurable’ and that the risk of displacement inherent in many such interventions threatens any gains by making prostitution more hidden and secretive.

10.4.14. They conclude that client-arrest may be the single biggest specific deterrent because of clients’ fear of the ‘informal ramifications’ of their activities. On the other hand, clients have been arrested for decades in the US and yet prostitution continues to flourish (Lovell and Jordan 2012). The growing body of research on clients shows complexity of both reasons for desiring to purchase sex and of demographics and identifies the need for comprehensive understanding of demand for sexual services (Serughetti 2013; Soothill and Sanders 2005).

10.5. Research evidence on potential effects of a sex purchase ban

Efforts on those selling sexual services

10.5.1. In the online survey, we asked sex workers if they thought that generally, it was a good idea to make paying for sex illegal. Only 2% of respondents agreed that it was indeed a good idea.

10.5.2. We also asked respondents if they would still be working in Northern Ireland if paying for sex was made illegal. Nearly 4 in 10 respondents said that they would (39%). Less than one third (31%) said they would not. Among sex workers resident in Northern Ireland, the proportion of those saying they would still sell sex in Northern Ireland if paying for sex was made illegal was almost twice as high (73%) as among the whole sample of sex workers, with only 1 in 5 (20%) saying they would stop.

10.5.3. The following comments exemplify the diversity of sex workers’ responses to the open-ended question “If paying for sexual services was made illegal, how do you think that would change (or not change) things for the people who work in the sex industry?”

Because it would be illegal, many women will be trafficked. Pimps always have access to clients.

It would cause sex workers to be a lot more secretive about their job, unlikely to reach out to other agencies for help and support.

It would be worse. We do not want our clients criminalised.

\(\text{32}\) RAP’s involve a time-limited team-based approach to qualitative research with a number of strategies to understand a topic from an insider’s perspective. Wilcox et al covered 181 different studies of demand-targeted interventions.
It would make it more difficult to find apartments and hotels to work from and those who are already established may find it easier as they already have a network set up. But new girls would be more likely to put themselves in danger, as the industry would go further underground.

Many would be driven into poverty and have to rely on benefits.

I think this would be a disaster! It would make sex workers afraid of seeking support services and reporting crimes committed against them. I don't think it will help genuine victims of sex work crime in any way.

It wouldn't [change anything] - the clients would be committing the crime, not the sex workers.

Would make it less safe because fewer girls would come forward about abuse, and websites would be banned such as Adultwork which means girls couldn't check feedback and comments about clients they are planning to meet.

Nothing would change - we would all just work around things differently - but the men have the phone numbers and know where we are - so even if we stopped advertising they would still come - men who need sex (as it's a natural function) will always come.

It will scare them and will be less people paying for sexual service.

Girls may have to take more risks with new clients. Not good for safety of escorts.

It would reduce the pool of genuine clients, all of whom would take greater steps to conceal their identity and make it more stressful and dangerous. Also when trying to obtain employment outside of sex work I think that making part of the activity illegal would be likely to look bad in the eyes of any employer or educational establishment - who wouldn't want to take staff on who are involved in something that had an illegal part to it.

Who work this job doesn’t care it is legal or illegal. They need the money.

We would work more discreetly, but would not stop doing it.

We would be even more vulnerable than we are at present. That is a very scary thought. The entire sex industry would be pushed into the hands of the controlling criminals who already have a huge foothold that doesn’t look to be getting any less. If anything, the opposite is occurring. My clients are not criminals, they shouldn’t be treated as such.

10.5.4. The majority of the 79 comments addressed negative effects. Only 3 of the 79 comments to this question referred to positive effects of a sex purchase ban for those who sell sexual services, such as a decrease in violent clients. 8 commentators suggested that there might be fewer clients, but viewed this as a negative outcome, as it would reduce their income and threaten their livelihood.

10.5.5. The comments show that sex workers are concerned that the result will be:

- a potential decrease in security, worse working conditions and increased risks;
- the loss of decent clients and an increase of violent clients;
increased involvement of organised crime groups and ‘pimps’.

Sex workers also stated that:

- they would feel even less inclined to report crimes to the police out of fear of incriminating themselves or becoming involved in legal procedures;
- they had already made changes to prepare for a potential change in law, e.g. in regard to protecting their clients;
- or that nothing would change.

10.5.6. A police officer who has worked with the police in Sweden on trafficking investigations commented on the potential of increased risk and vulnerability for sex workers:

There are concerns that we could put sex workers in a really difficult position that they’re not going to go to one central location and just remain there, they’re going to go out to the customer, because the customer’s going to be too scared to come to a brothel.

10.5.7. Another police officer also expressed concern regarding sex workers’ trust in the police and their cooperation regarding the prosecution of clients, if paying for sex was criminalised:

I think we’re missing things that are happening to these people that we don’t have a visibility of, people who are involved consensually and legally. (...) We have almost put sex workers in a position where they feel less able to reach into the police service, which means that there is a group of women who have become more vulnerable because we’ve said: if you sell sex or are part of the exchange, we might tap you on the shoulder and say: now make a police statement to say: what you’ve just done has aided and abetted a criminal offence. (...) We’ve pushed them away to the edges of society.

10.5.8. In the face-to-face interviews, we asked sex workers what their opinion was on the proposed law and how it would only criminalise the buyer, not the seller of sex, and whether they felt it would thus not affect them negatively. None of the 19 sex workers felt that that reflected the reality of the current or the proposed legal framework. For example, Annabel commented:

First of all, I'm not sure if policy makers have noticed, but we're in the middle of a bone-crushing recession and, you know, other choices that people have right now are very limited on the ground. Secondly, this bit about not criminalising the sex worker is utter rubbish – you cannot criminalise one half of an equation and hope that it doesn't affect the other half because that's not the way this works. And while we are not permitted to work together for safety, we are criminalised, effectively. And we can still be arrested for soliciting etc. So that's rubbish.

33 If two or more sex workers work together in the same premise, this could be classed as brothel-keeping and all of them could be charged.
10.5.9. Clients also viewed a number of negative effects on those who sell sexual services, based on their experience and conversations with sex workers, as the following table shows:

**Table 42: From your perspective (i.e. the client), how would the criminalisation of clients affect the people who sell sexual services? Rank-ordered. Multiple Response Table. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL respondents (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They would have to hide it more.</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It would make things less safe for them.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would have to offer services that they didn’t offer before.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would accept noncash payments (paying bills, mobile phone credit, gifts etc.).</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would have to charge more.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would have to charge less.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They would stop selling sex.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.5.10. In their comments, clients expressed the following concerns:

*If it's criminalised by definition it means that the business will only be handled by real criminals, so it would get very dangerous for them.*

*If criminalisation of clients was to come in, the industry would just go underground and be less transparent and safe. A lot of guys would stop visiting ladies (maybe skewed towards the nicer and more genuine guys stopping), leaving the ladies with a worse bunch of guys as their potential clients; sex work is only as dangerous as the guys availing of it make it.*

*They would have to offer services through criminal gangs who would provide ‘protection’ and although more may be charged to the client the worker would make less than they can now.*

*Prohibition and the war on drugs have been very successful in increasing the power that organised crime had over the market.*

**Effects on the level of sex trafficking**

10.5.11. In the sex worker survey, 85% of respondents believed that making paying for sex illegal would not reduce sex trafficking. 8% believed that it would. The remaining 7% said that they did not know. The following comments expand on these views and show that some sex workers think such a law might even increase trafficking.
It would increase it. Prohibition leads to an increase in the black market in most situations. Trafficking is 'black market'. Men would prefer to have the option of seeing an independent worker but would go underground if they had no other choice.

Selling drugs is illegal but there is still a drugs epidemic. Criminals don't obey the law so they wouldn't care one way or another about the legality of what they do. Trafficking and sex work are two entirely separate issues and have to be addressed as such.

It would increase it, as girls may go through these networks to get to clients if they do not want to be caught by police.

Coming from an immigrant family I honestly think not. Trafficked people are rarely trafficked for just that. An awful lot of people who collude with their traffickers to get past border control occasionally end up as poorly paid domestics in other immigrants houses where anything can happen.

It is already illegal to pay for sex with a trafficked worker, whether the client knows she is trafficked or not.

10.5.12. The general view expressed by sex workers that the criminalisation of clients does not constitute an effective measure to reduce sex trafficking was shared by other research participants, including senior police officers:

**Researcher:** How would it affect clients, would it reduce demand?

**Interviewee:** I don't think it would reduce demand, no. I don't think it would.

**Researcher:** So if it doesn't reduce demand, then it doesn't reduce trafficking either?

**Interviewee:** It might make it easier for traffickers to bring people in. (...) If sex work becomes even more hidden because the Swedish model is brought in, then I think that opens the gates, nearly, for traffickers to exploit further, or to bring further trafficked victims in, because there'll be even less co-operation from the sex work community.

10.5.13. In addition to deterring potential buyers of sexual services, criminalisation of clients is also intended to encourage organised crime gangs to abandon Northern Ireland as a destination for trafficking for sexual exploitation. This argument has been disputed by several interviewees, including sex workers as well as a police officer who has worked in the area of organised crime and trafficking for several years:

The trafficker doesn't read the newspaper (...); the trafficker doesn't read the political agendas of the politicians; the trafficker doesn't read the police statements. The trafficker says: Where can I make money? (...) It doesn't much matter whether the law is there; organised criminals commit crime – the fact that there's law there to prevent it doesn't stop them. It's been illegal to murder – guess what, we still have murder! It's been illegal to sell
Effects on people who pay for sex

10.5.14. Table 43 shows what clients would do if it was made illegal to pay for sexual services. The results suggest that criminalising paying for sex would be a very ineffective policy measure. Only 7% of respondents said they would stop paying for sex altogether, whilst 15% would stop paying for sex in Northern Ireland, but would simply pay for sex elsewhere. The most likely responses given was that they would only see escorts that they trusted (42%) or simply be more careful (38%) – mirroring the statements made by sex workers above. 13% of respondents said they would not do anything differently.

10.5.15. When asked what other people would do who respondents knew also paid for sex, their responses suggest that they thought an even higher proportion (16%) would not do anything differently (16%), and an even lower proportion would be deterred from buying sex: only 4% thought that others would stop using sexual services altogether and 6% thought that others would stop paying for sexual services in Northern Ireland.

10.5.16. Northern Ireland-based respondents did not differ from the overall sample in their own response to what they would do, as Table 43 below shows.

Table 43: What would you/other people do if paying for sexual services was illegal in Northern Ireland. Rank-ordered. Multiple response table. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL respondents (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>I would...</th>
<th>Other people would...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ALL</td>
<td>NI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...only see the escorts/sex workers that I trust</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...be more careful</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... stop using sexual services in Northern Ireland</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... not do anything differently</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... do it less often</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... stop using sexual services altogether</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.5.17. The written comments confirmed these results. In only 2 out of 25 comments clients stated that they would stop paying for sex. Instead, comments frequently stated that
clients would be more careful, for example by only seeing sex workers they had seen before and felt they could trust:

*I would carry on carefully.*

*The pull would be just the same, if not stronger.*

*I would only see the best women I've seen before.*

*Making it illegal is not going to stop people doing something they want to do. It will only drive this business further underground and make it more dangerous for those involved.*

10.5.18. Clients highlighted that if paying for sex was criminalised, they would be less inclined to report abuse and suspicions of trafficking to the police, out of fear of incriminating themselves.

*A client would not report abuses of the sex worker such as trafficking for fear of being prosecuted themselves.*

*Clients are not going to report anything suspicious to the police for fear of prosecution.*

*It would lessen the likelihood that a client will report suspicions of sex trafficking to the police as he will incriminate himself.*

10.5.19. Other comments from clients on the sex purchase ban as a measure to reduce trafficking included:

*As long as sexual encounters are between consenting adults, there should be no criminal charges brought against either party. It's a basic human desire and right.*

*Criminalisation of clients is the stupidest idea imaginable. The main goal of legislating the sex industry is to reduce human trafficking. This will not happen by criminalising clients. It will only make the industry more dangerous for those who work in it, whether they are trafficked or not. Escorts and clients will be more unwilling to seek aid from the police because the whole industry will be driven deeper underground than it already is. This proposed legislation will NOT stop prostitution. Nothing will ever stop the world's oldest profession. Surely then it is more logical to make it a safer industry to work in for those that choose to work out of their own free will, which I feel will help reduce human trafficking if the clients demand is shifted to independents.*

*I am a human being, I am a man; I live in a repressive catholic society which subjugates my human right to express my sexuality; that is what should be made a criminal offence.*

*Criminalising it is a bad thing in my opinion. It's not going to make it go away - it will only make it more dangerous. If I knew that the provider was not trafficked and was offering sexual services on their own free-will, then what's the harm? I helps my confidence with women, as my regular provider gives me advice and makes me feel so much more comfortable about myself.*
I have never experienced any trafficking possibly due to my style of punting. It seems to be blown out of all proportion. The police should be spending their time dealing with the trafficking issue whether it be in the sex industry or general work industry and leave us law-abiding people alone! From my experience of reading various forums, most men seem to prefer seeking out escorts from using the internet and booking independent escorts. Some prefer to use parlour type operations. Why is so much emphasis placed on street workers when this is such a small percentage of the industry these days?

I hope this research will help policy makers and law makers in Northern Ireland to let common sense prevail by following the good practice of countries that the oldest trade known to man is flourishing and helping to build and support the economy. Those who want to safely escort themselves to pay for university or a house or nice stuff – let them feel free to do so. (...) I am for campaigning against trafficking as it is awful, wrong and inhumane. Craving the company of beautiful women or enjoying sex between consenting adults is not.

For any legislation to come in, it has to be fully evidenced. And that evidence has to take priority over anybody's ideology, whether you see it as a woman's right or a man's right to sell sex, or whether you see it as the worst degradation of women – that's a personal opinion, it's an ideology. Evidence has to take precedent.

Experts' and service providers' views on the sex purchase ban

10.5.20. Experts and service providers who work with sex workers and victims of sex trafficking in Northern Ireland were consulted regarding their views on the potential effects of criminalising the purchase of sexual services. Some expressed support of criminalisation based on an understanding of prostitution – in any form – as violence against women and exploitation. An immigration solicitor at the Belfast Law Centre explained:

We support criminalisation on grounds of gender equality, we see prostitution as exploitation. We recognise the libertarian argument that a woman's right to... but the women that we represent are brought here for the purposes of sexual exploitation, they're brought here illegally – they're in more vulnerable position. (...) As an organisation our position is that we support anything that seeks to eradicate prostitution because we see it as an exploitative relationship. We believe, as an organisation, that people who enter into prostitution do so from a position of poverty and inequality and discrimination to begin with, so you're not starting at the same base point that you or I may be starting from before we decide to enter into a career. So we welcome anything that would eradicate prostitution.

10.5.21. Similar views were expressed by a staff member of Foyle Women’s Aid who has worked with a number of women who experienced prostitution and sexual exploitation:

Anybody I have ever worked with who has sold their body for sex was very vulnerable, coming from a background of abuse, so I don’t know if their decision [to sell sex] is rational choice. I’ve also known some women who when vulnerable were promiscuous and used by men, who felt bad afterwards, ashamed. They weren’t prostitutes, no money passed hands but it was organised by groups.
10.5.22. The manager of the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service was skeptical about the policing of such a law and expressed concerns about the safety and well-being of sex workers. However, she acknowledged that many of the sex workers she has seen over the years experienced violence by clients, and feels that these crimes need to be prosecuted:

I don't know how we'd ever police the criminalisation of paying for sex. But you've got to understand that a lot of the girls over the years that I have worked with have been not happy in what they do, their lives are wrecked because of what's happened to them, and because of the people who've used them and abused them. And I know that's not everybody because we're seeing a new client group who – OK, while some of them are still not happy with what they do, there are others who are very happy with what they do. So, some of the men I would like to be prosecuted for what they've done to the sex worker, there's no doubt about that. So, I think, if we concentrated on the crime, on rape, assault, and if we can try and encourage the girls to report those things, then I am absolutely, 100%: yes that person needs to be prosecuted. But if paying for sex was criminalised, we're going to see a lot more poverty, aren't we? We're going to see a lot more vulnerabilities in those women. I feel that it's not going to change – it's not going to change men paying for sex and it's not going to change women offering sex, and I do think it's going to chase it further into darker corners – there's no doubt about that. I mean, we've saw that already with the change in the law in 2008 [when soliciting and kerb-crawling were criminalised], and I have to say that I wonder where some of my vulnerable clients have gone and what's happening with them now – and, you know, where are they now?

10.5.23. A staff member of the Drug Outreach Team who has worked with drug-addicted sex workers also opposes criminalisation for similar reasons:

I don't know how many lessons we need to learn from history: the more you criminalise it and you push underground – it's not going to go away. The same as drugs, they're not going to go away. The war on drugs has proven to have been a failure. Sex work isn't going away. There'll always be a market to work in and there'll always be people who want to buy sex. (...) For some women, it is sometimes the only method of making money available to them at that point in their life, for whatever reason; and whether it's to put food on the table for their kids, whether it's to feed their drug habit, or whether it's to buy a £300 pair of shoes – whatever their reason, if they're out doing it they're making a choice to do it. (...) So yeah, I am against the status quo of how things have been for years, it hasn't benefited anyone; it certainly doesn't benefit women in any way. It keeps all those stereotypes going and it keeps those attitudes that men can go out and purchase women and she doesn't have any rights. If we keep pushing criminalisation, we're just pushing it more underground. I think it should be out there, it should be legalised. Because I think with that, you decrease stigmas and stereotypes. People in Belfast would say, really, are there prostitutes in Belfast, are there people out working the streets? There's this lack of knowledge. I think certainly stigma would be reduced, and those negative stereotypes that it's all women on crack, that needs to be challenged, you know, there's a lot of other women out there who don't fit the stereotype.
The administrator of the Irish UglyMugs, a support scheme for sex workers that allows registered users to make and receive reports on violent clients, assaults, robberies etc. also highlighted the potential negative effects of criminalisation and expressed doubt regarding the effectiveness of such a law:

Interviewee: Demand won't go down, in my opinion.
Researcher: Why's that?
Interviewee: Ireland's already a terrible country for sex work policy, it's survived all this – one more bad thing, it's not going to make a difference.
Researcher: Because so many things are already criminalised?
Interviewee: It's already stigmatised, it's already underground. So I don't think we'll see a dip in demand – maybe a slight one to start with, or something, but that's it. I think you'll see it go more underground, because you can see sex workers in Sweden and Norway, they have to hide more because they have to protect their clients. So in addition to having to hide for all the reasons they're hiding currently, they absolutely have to hide because the police will be after their clients, and obviously they're trying to make money so they have to protect their clients. Not because they love their clients, but because they need to make money.
Researcher: So what does it actually mean to say it's going to go more underground?
Interviewee: Right now people talk to me. The next thing you know, people won't even talk to me. People will just be completely hidden. Right now, sex workers talk to each other, but I would say, people will be scared to even use the Ugly Mugs system in case they get traced or something, and, you know. So it'll just put more pressure on people to be underground.

A staff member of the organisation No More Traffik, an organisation that aims to educate and activate people in Northern Ireland against human trafficking, pointed out that the criminalisation of clients would not address the underlying issues that facilitate exploitation:

I worry that there would be more exploitation for sex workers. And we also live in a sexist society. Sexism is at the heart of sexual exploitation, so we need to address that. The stigma attached to sex work is also a factor - the Bill does not propose anything that would help combat that. We need to work on these cultural issues first, by addressing them in education both early on and continually in public society.

Policing the 'Swedish approach'
10.5.26. Police officers interviewed for this study felt that criminalisation of clients would be very difficult to police in practice. Their concerns focused mainly on the practical implementation of a law that criminalises clients. A number of issues were highlighted, including:

- the resources needed to effectively police such a law;
- unclear responsibility within the PSNI for the policing of prostitution, where there is non-involvement of organised crime groups;
- policing the purchase of sex would draw resources away from trafficking investigations;
- the difficulty in producing evidence and in prosecuting clients because covert tactics (as used in Sweden) would not be allowed in Northern Ireland;
- sex workers would be unlikely to cooperate in the provision of evidence against clients;
- criminalisation would include non-monetary payments such as drinks, drugs or a place to stay, which would widen the range of activities that the PSNI would have to police;
- ‘sexual services’ as defined by the law could potentially include non-physical interactions, e.g. phone sex or paying for pornography online, which would be an additional drain on police resources.

10.5.27. A PSNI officer within the Organised Crime Branch commented on the level of resources required:

*Because people think we're limitless, and we're not. We're not able to stretch infinitesimally to meet every need.*

10.5.28. It is not clear which part of the PSNI would be responsible for policing the criminalisation of clients. Unlike in other parts of the UK and other countries, including Sweden, there is no dedicated unit within the PSNI that specifically deals with the sex industry:

*It will be very difficult, very difficult. I don't know who's going to do it. I don't know who's going to have the ability to do it.*

10.5.29. Using limited police resources to pursue and prosecute clients may draw resources away from fighting trafficking. One police officer’s experience of working with the Swedish police on a trafficking case led him to comment:

*Interviewee: I'm not going to criticise the Swedes on the Swedish model, but they had no idea this was going on in Sweden. So we said, well listen, this crime gang from Romania are all based in your jurisdiction, you need to look at this crime gang, because they are moving these sex workers about and they are taking*
all the money from them – you have to look at it this way.

Researcher:  Let me get this straight. Because of the law there, they use their resources to go after the punters rather than going after crime gangs?

Interviewee: Yeah, there are significant resources against punters as opposed to seeking out the gangs involved in trafficking.

10.5.30. Interviewees highlighted that finding and prosecuting buyers of sexual services would constitute an almost impossible task because of the problems producing evidence that can be used in courts:

So the person who buys sex from a girl who’s not trafficked – well, the point we made to the committee was, how do we find that out? Because this is for the most part a consensual act. Are you expecting us to use high-end, covert tactics – surveillance and other sensitive methods – to uncover a relatively minor criminal offence in the middle of a consensual act? That may not be proportionate as we may not meet the threshold that would authorise use of covert tactics.

10.5.31. As pointed out by this interviewee, some of the evidence used in countries such as Sweden to prosecute buyers of sexual services could not be used, or indeed obtained, in Northern Ireland. In Sweden, covert tactics, including phone surveillance, is employed to police its law, and they constitute one of the main sources of evidence against buyers. In Northern Ireland, evidence gained through phone surveillance cannot be used in court based on the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA). Furthermore, using covert tactics such as surveillance cameras in private apartments or hotel rooms requires authorisation by Chief Constable or Deputy Chief Constable, with prior approval by the Surveillance Commissioner. The senior police officers interviewed for this study doubted that they would be allowed to use these tactics for investigations into prostitution, that is, the selling and buying of sexual services between two consenting adults (as opposed to investigations into trafficking for sexual exploitation).

Interviewee: If you have the person phoning up saying: I would like to come to your apartment tonight to buy some sex from you – well that's evidence? Well it might be in Sweden, but it’s not in Northern Ireland – so you rule that out. (...) For us to use any covert tactic, you have to be past the threshold of serious crime. What's the serious crime if a person visits someone, and engages in a consensual act, and agrees to buy a sexual service?

Researcher:  So you can’t actually use covert tactics?

Interviewee: No, our assessment is that in that scenario of consensual, non-threatening, non-controlling, non-trafficking environment where it is a non-trafficked girl conducting herself as a prostitute, and a non-controlling person who wants to buy a sexual service, then the consensual act between those two adults doesn’t trigger the point of serious criminality, where we can use any covert tactics. Surveillance – you would really struggle to justify that as a tactic; covert
listening devices, covert cameras – bear in mind that most of the sexual activities happen inside bedrooms. If you’re walking down the main street, we can use covert cameras at a certain level, but the moment you step into an office or a residential environment – and even within the residence, you get into bedrooms, bathrooms – I mean, you’re right at the very top end of breaches of human rights there, and privacy issues. (...) Now, I have to say, what if the girl’s trafficked? I mean, that’s different, that’s different. But actually, we wouldn’t use that [covert] tactic, because if this girl’s trafficked, we’re going in today with a sledgehammer, we’re going in through that front door. If that girl’s trafficked, we’re not waiting for there to be an opportunity to catch the client – we’re there to rescue the victim.

10.5.32. In the absence of evidence gathered via covert tactics such as phone surveillance, prosecuting a client would rely heavily on the statement of the main witness: the sex worker. Considering that, based on our survey and interview data, the majority of people working in the sex industry would not want to or feel that they can’t leave the sex industry (because it provides them with an income), it would not be in the interest of the sex worker to see her/his client prosecuted. In most cases, it is unlikely that the sex worker will come forward as a witness, a view shared by interviewees within the PSNI.

10.5.33. Not all of the terms in the proposed law are clearly defined. ‘Payment’ for sexual services can include non-monetary payment, such as drugs, drinks, a place to stay overnight, or phone credit. This would widen the range of activities the police would have to monitor. One of the PSNI officers interviewed commented: “Is that something that legitimate society wants that police be involved in?”

10.5.34. ‘Sexual services’ are not clearly defined in the proposed Bill nor in the existing legislation on prostitution. There is an array of services sold and paid for in Northern Ireland that are considered to be sexually gratifying that do not involve intercourse. Services that could fall under the label of ‘sexual services’ and would thus have to be policed include phone and webcam sex, pornography, and domination, but also practices such as people seeking to “buy used panties” on the internet:

So as well as going to hotel rooms, we’re now going to private homes to say, every time you log on to whatever the website might be, you’re committing a criminal offence? (...) Even if you are using your money, on your computer, in your home, to watch video clips? Would we have to police it?

10.6. Sex workers’ suggestions to policy-makers

10.6.1. In the survey, we also asked sex workers how they felt prostitution should be dealt with by government. Table 44 below shows the responses.
Table 44: How prostitution should be dealt with by government. Rank-ordered. Multiple responses were permitted. Northern Ireland-based versus ALL sex workers (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ALL</th>
<th>NI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prostitution should be treated as a normal job/should be legalised.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should be allowed to work together in the same place.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There should be more support services for people in the sex industry.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People should be allowed to advertise for prostitution.</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purchase of sex should be made illegal.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The selling of sex should be made illegal.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing needs to be changed.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10.6.2. The Table clearly demonstrates that among the respondents, there is support for a liberalisation of the sex industry and a need for more support services for sex workers. Criminalisation of either prostitution or the purchase of sex is not considered a good solution by most respondents.

10.6.3. This view was even stronger among Northern Ireland-based sex workers. Among these over half felt that prostitution should be legalised and no one at all supported either prostitution or buying sex to be made illegal.

10.6.4. The findings in this table also confirm earlier findings that what is seen as the greatest problem by research participants is the stigmatisation of prostitution in society, rather than the selling of sexual services itself. Sex workers would like to see prostitution treated as a normal job.

10.6.5. It is also important to highlight that 42% of NI-based respondents (31% of all respondents) said that they would like to be allowed to work together, as this would give them more safety. Currently, if there is more than one person working in the same location, this could constitute the offence of brothel-keeping. According to the survey and interview data, a change in the law in this regard would be welcome by many sex workers.

10.6.6. The last question in the survey and in the face-to-face interviews was “Is there anything else you would want to say to policy-makers in Northern Ireland in relation to sex work/prostitution?” The following quotes exemplify the views of interviewees.

> Everything in the world is changing, you know, nothing is the way it used to be. We have better perspective on everything; information is available, with the internet and smart phones. Everything is changing so why not accept that as well the escorting world has changed, or has at least the potential to fully change. It’s not anymore like twenty years
ago when you needed a pimp behind you to protect you. A normal girl that hasn't done anything bad in her eyes and she wants to do it as her life choice or as a job; a normal client who never wants to do any harm to anybody, who just wants with his arms to hug and touch somebody who is willing and able – he's not forcing anybody – just let those two people do it. Time has changed. Just regulate rather than repress. (Martha)

Part of the problem with this is that I used to respect government and I used to think they did things because they really put a lot of information into learning about things and making real decisions based on real facts. They are not making any decisions based on facts. They are making decisions for the rest of the country without really bearing in mind what the decisions are to be based on and I feel so disillusioned. Because they don't care about me, because they are not interested in what I have to say. It is not about whether it is right or wrong or whether anybody is getting hurt. It is all based on morals. (Carol)

My main thing is equal rights – you sort of feel like as soon as you slap on the stockings you lose all your human rights. Really. There's laws out there to protect black people, there's laws out there to protect Cornish people, for Christ's sake! Really there should be laws out there to protect escorts and street workers as well, so that they aren't discriminated against. You know you can go in and bring up an employer about not hiring you because you're gay, but you can't if you're a sex worker. (Sarah)

Yeah I just think that making this kind of decision is very rash, based on very little evidence. I am totally against trafficking in the real sense – I disagree with that and I don't think that anybody should be forced. But there are other ways to deal with these problems, and I think that that should be looked at, rather than rushing into making a decision that's actually not going to be beneficial to anybody. (Lucy)

I would say that they should actively engage with current sex workers to discuss the realities of the sex trade in Ireland, and the phrase 'nothing about us without us' comes to mind. I would also say that they should stop conflating sex work with trafficking because it's really not helpful. And I would like to see more of the government's coffers going more towards a sex worker-led initiative rather than nuns. (Annabel)

Mind your own business! They're going to take away my right to make an income, my right to earn a living and support my children. They're effectively going to make me unemployed, and I don't think that's right. (Alexandra)

By all means target trafficking because trafficking is morally and physically wrong. But the girls who are working for themselves, making their own living by doing it, paying their own bills, give them a break, really, leave them alone. (Francis)

Legalise it, control it, do welfare visits to every single apartment, keep an eye on what is going on, that is the only way. (Bella)

It's a bit patronising to make all these policies around people whenever you haven't actually asked them what they want. Sex workers are generally quite strong women who are able to make decisions for themselves, and do a job that a lot of people couldn't do or wouldn't do. The other thing is as soon as you try and coerce someone or persuade them: you shouldn't
be doing this and we’ll come and rescue you – that’s a huge judgement to start with, because some women don’t want to stop. It’s about tackling realistic practical issues rather than these grandiose theories, you know how you take Julia Roberts and turn her into something other than she wants to be. (Sophie)

Sometimes you want to say to them so many things, and sometimes I don’t want to tell them anything, because it’s obvious they are not trying to do something for us; they are trying to do something for maybe their political ideas, and they don’t care who is going to get hurt on the way. I do this job and they are trying to make me believe that I’m a victim, or I’m trafficked, or whatever. You cannot put a label on all the escorts that are here because we are not all the same. We all have different reasons; we all have different ideas, or different plans. And then, they always try to twist words. When it’s not convenient for them, they make it from black to white, or from white to black. Whenever we want to prove that it’s not really like what they think, they put us in a bad light – why? We are still human. (Lara)
APPENDIX

A Bibliography


ACPO 2010: Setting the Record: The Trafficking of Migrant Women in England and Wales off-street prostitution sector, Regional Intelligence Unit for the South West.


Daalder, A. L. 2007: Prostitution in the Netherlands since the lifting of the brothel ban, Amsterdam, WODC/Ministry of Justice.


Hubbard, P. 2007: *Regulating the spaces of sex work: assessing the impact of prostitution law*. Full Research Report (RES-000-22-1001), Swindon, ESRC.


**Legal Documents**


Sexual Offences Act 1985. Available at

Sexual Offences Act 2003. Available at

Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008. Available at:

The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act 1935 (Republic of Ireland). Available at

The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 1993 (Republic of Ireland). Available at
B Questions – Online survey with sex workers

**LANGUAGE**

This survey is also available in other languages:

- **Polish/polski**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Badanie_Prostytucja_Polski](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Badanie_Prostytucja_Polski)
- **Portuguese/português**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Pesquisa_Prostituicao_Portugues](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Pesquisa_Prostituicao_Portugues)
- **Romanian/românesc**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Cercetare_Prostitutie_Roman](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Cercetare_Prostitutie_Roman)
- **Russian/русский**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Issledovanie_Prostitucija_Russkij](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Issledovanie_Prostitucija_Russkij)
- **Spanish/español**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Investigacion_Prostitucion_Espanol](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Investigacion_Prostitucion_Espanol)
- **Bulgarian/български**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Izsledvane_Prostitucija_Balgarski](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Izsledvane_Prostitucija_Balgarski)
- **French/français**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Recherche_Prostitution_Francais](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Recherche_Prostitution_Francais)
- **Italian/italiano**: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Ricerca_Prostituzione_Italiano](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Ricerca_Prostituzione_Italiano)

TO START THE ENGLISH VERSION, CLICK NEXT:

**Introduction**

**THE SURVEY**

This survey asks about the experiences and opinions of people who have RECEIVED PAYMENT FOR SEXUAL SERVICES, in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

If you are looking for the survey for CLIENTS, please use this link: www.surveymonkey.com/s/SexworkResearch_ClientSurvey

**WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?**

We are doing research on the sex industry in Northern Ireland. The project was commissioned by the Department of Justice and aims to provide a detailed understanding of the sex industry (i.e. who sells which services where and why, and to whom). The findings from the may be used to inform policy and debate within Northern Ireland. If you have any additional questions, please contact us.

**WHO ARE WE?**

We are a team of researchers based at Queen’s University Belfast and at the National University of Ireland in Galway: Dr Susann Huschke, Prof Peter Shirlow, Dr Dirk Schubotz and Dr Eilís Ward.

**HOW DOES THIS SURVEY WORK?**

All replies are anonymous and confidential. We will not ask you for your name. If we use quotes or information from your responses in the report we will write, they will be anonymized so that that you are not identified.

You can save your answers and return to the survey later on if you want. If cookies are enabled on your computer, the responses are automatically saved. All you need to do is return to the same computer and use the same browser - just enter the link again and it should allow you to return to your response.
Note that only one response will be possible per computer. If other people want to fill out the survey, too, they need to use a different computer.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

You will not be paid to participate in this research project. The survey is important in terms of informing debate and giving voice to those who sell and pay for sex. This is an opportunity for you to have your voice, experience and issues heard. You are free to not answer questions that make you uncomfortable.

ARE THERE OTHER WAYS OF PARTICIPATING?

We are also doing face-to-face interviews with sex workers and clients. All interviews are anonymous and confidential. We don’t need to know your real name. If you would like to take part, or know someone who would be willing to be interviewed, please contact us via email:

Dr Susann Huschke
Queen’s University Belfast
Email: sexwork.research.NI@gmail.com

1. INFORMED CONSENT

I confirm that I have read and understand the information given for the above study and that I agree to take part in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can skip any questions that I do not wish to answer.

I agree to be quoted on an anonymous basis.

By responding to this survey, I accept this opportunity to contribute to the Prostitution in Northern Ireland study and I assign copyright for the survey responses to the project team.

☐ Proceed to the survey
☐ I’d rather not take part

2. How did you hear about this survey?

☐ A client told me about it
☐ Another escort/sex worker told me about it
☐ Through the Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service
☐ Through Women’s Aid
☐ Through Rainbow (Belfast)
☐ I found out about it online

If you found out about it on the internet or through another organization, please tell us which website or which organization:
First we will ask you some questions about yourself.

3. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
   - Trans
   Other (please specify)

4. What is your age?
   - 16-17
   - 18-21
   - 22-25
   - 26-30
   - 31-35
   - 36-40
   - 41-45
   - 46-50
   - 51-55
   - 56-60
   - Over 60

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - GCSE or equivalent (e.g. junior cert)
   - A-Level or equivalent (e.g. leaving cert)
   - Some trade, technical or vocational school
   - Undergraduate degree (Bachelors)
   - Postgraduate degree (Masters or PhD)
   - No educational qualifications
   Other (please specify)

6. What is your relationship status?
   - Single
   - In a relationship
   - Civil partnership/married
   - Separated or divorced
   - Widowed

7. Do you have any children?
   - Yes
   - No
8. What age is your child or are your children? (Please write in the ages of all your children)


9. Are you one of the main carers for a child/children?
   - Yes
   - No

10. In what city or town do you live most of the time? (Please write in below)

11. What is your nationality?
   - Irish or UK National
   - Other (please specify)

12. If you are not a UK or Irish national, what is your UK immigration status?
   - I am an EU citizen.
   - I have a temporary visa (e.g. student visa, tourist visa).
   - I have a permanent visa/residence permit.
   - I do not have a legal immigration status.

13. What is your ethnicity? (Please type in below)

14. Do you regard yourself as belonging to a religion?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Not sure

15. How important is religion to you?
   - Very important
   - Important
   - Neither important nor unimportant
   - Not very important
   - Not at all important
   - Don't know
16. Have you ever been arrested by police or convicted of a crime?
- Yes, arrested, but not convicted
- Yes, arrested and convicted
- No
- Don't want to say
Give details, if you wish.

17. Is there anything else you think we should know about your background (e.g. about your family, the community you grew up in or how you came to the UK/Ireland)?

Working in the sex industry

The next questions are about you selling sexual services.

18. What age were you when you first started selling sexual services?
- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- Over 60

19. How long have you been working in the sex industry?
- Less than 1 year
- 1 year up to 2 years
- 2 years up to 5 years
- 5 years up to 10 years
- More than 10 years
20. What were your main reasons for starting to do sex work/to get involved in prostitution? (Choose up to three)

- I needed money to survive.
- I was curious about it and wanted to try it.
- I thought it would allow me to explore my sexuality.
- I needed money to finance my education.
- I needed to earn money to support family members.
- I had no other way of earning a living.
- I needed money to pay off a debt.
- Someone else forced me to do it.
- None of the above
- Other (Please specify)

21. Could you please tell us about the people who come to you as clients – e.g. who are they, why do they come to you, what is your relationship with them?

22. Do you sell sexual services in Northern Ireland?

- Yes, I do
- No, I don't

23. In what areas of Northern Ireland do you sell sexual services (Please tick all that apply)?

- Anywhere in Northern Ireland
- Derry/Londonderry
- Newry
- Bangor
- Enniskillen
- Newtownabbey
- Belfast
- Lisburn
- Omagh
- Coleraine
- Lisburn
- Newry
- Newtownabbey
- Coleraine
- Omagh
- Coleraine
- Strabane

- In other areas (please specify)
24. What sections of the sex industry do you currently work in in Northern Ireland? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ As an escort
☐ As outdoor/ street sex worker
☐ In a massage parlour/ sauna
☐ In a brothel
☐ Other (please specify)

25. When you work in Northern Ireland, how many clients do you usually see per week?

☐ 1-5 clients per week
☐ 6-10 clients per week
☐ 11-15 clients per week
☐ 16-20 clients per week
☐ 21-25 clients per week
☐ 26-30 clients per week
☐ More than 30 clients per week

26. In which countries do you work? (Tick all that apply)

☐ Northern Ireland only
☐ The UK, but not in Northern Ireland
☐ Republic of Ireland
☐ Elsewhere in Europe
☐ Elsewhere in the world
☐ Please specify the countries you work in

27. When you work outside of Northern Ireland, what sections of the sex industry do you work in? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ As an escort
☐ As dancer/stripper (e.g. in a lap dancing club)
☐ As an outdoor/ street sex worker
☐ In adult modeling/ pornography
☐ In a massage parlour/ sauna
☐ In webcam/phone sex
☐ In a brothel
☐ I don't work outside of Northern Ireland
☐ Other (please specify)
28. Apart from selling sexual services, do you have any other jobs at the moment?

- No
- Yes

If yes, please specify:

29. Are you currently working for or with someone else where they keep part of your earnings, e.g. an escort agency, a brothel owner etc.?

- Yes, all the time
- Yes, sometimes
- No

If yes, please describe the role of this person:

30. What percentage of your income do they/does s/he approximately take?

- Less than 10 %
- Between 10 and 25 %
- Between 25 and 50 %
- Between 50 and 75 %
- More than 75 %
- Everything
- It depends

31. During your time in the sex industry, have you ever worked for or with one of the following? (Tick all that apply)

- A paramilitary organisation
- A mafia or mafia-like group
- A crime gang
- Someone who controlled you
- None of these

If yes, please describe your relationship with this person/group:
32. And are you currently working for or with one of these? (Please tick all that apply)
- A paramilitary organisation
- A mafia or mafia-like group
- A gang
- Someone who controls you
- No, I don’t

If yes, please describe your relationship with this person/this group:

33. How much would you usually earn per week by selling sexual services?
- Less than £100
- Between £100 – 200
- Between £200 – 300
- Between £300 – 400
- Between £400 – 500
- Between £500 – 600
- Between £600 – 700
- Between £700 – 800
- Between £800 – 900
- Between £900 – 1,000
- More than £1,000
- Don’t want to say

34. How much is that compared to other jobs you have worked in before?
- A lot more
- A bit more
- About the same
- A bit less
- A lot less
- Never had another job
35. What do you like about selling sexual services? (Please tick all that apply)

- It helps me to be financially independent.
- It helps me to save money for something important.
- It allows me to buy nice things.
- I like the freedom of being self-employed.
- I like the flexible working hours.
- I like the travel.
- I enjoy bringing happiness to clients.
- It allows me to explore different kinds of sex and relationships.
- I enjoy meeting different people.
- It's good for my self-esteem.
- It makes me feel more confident about myself and my body.
- I enjoy the sex with clients.
- It helps me discover and explore my own sexuality.
- None of the above.
- Other (please specify)
36. What do you not like about selling sexual services? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ I don’t like the financial insecurity.
☐ I worry about earning enough money each month.
☐ I feel like I have to hide what I do.
☐ I feel like I have to lie about what I do.
☐ I worry about violent clients.
☐ I worry about violence from other people (e.g. strangers, people I work for, partners, police).
☐ I worry that my friends and family will find out about it.
☐ It harms my confidence.
☐ It harms my mental or emotional well-being.
☐ It harms my physical health.
☐ It makes me feel worthless.
☐ It makes me ashamed.
☐ It makes me feel abused.
☐ I don’t like the sex with clients.
☐ I don’t like how it affects my personal relationships.
☐ I don’t like how it affects my private sex life.
☐ I am worried about the health risks.
☐ None of the above.
☐ Other (please specify)

37. How often do you to use any of the following while working? (Please tick one box in each row)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranquilizers (e.g. Benzodiazepine)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain killers</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marihuana</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other drugs (please specify)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
38. If you wanted to leave the sex industry, what would enable you to do so? (Tick all that apply)

- Professional training/qualifications
- Legal immigration status
- Financial support from the government
- A safe place to stay
- Legal support
- Drug treatment/therapy
- A job in another sector that pays for my expenses
- I don’t want to leave
- Other (please specify)

39. Have you – at any stage in your life – been trafficked into the sex industry in Northern Ireland or elsewhere?

- Yes, in Northern Ireland
- Yes, elsewhere
- No

You can comment if you wish

40. Has anyone ever told you that they were - at any stage in their life – trafficked into the sex industry in Northern Ireland?

- No, never
- I am not sure
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, 3-5 times
- Yes, more than 5 times

If yes, which country was the person who was trafficked from?
41. Have you personally ever witnessed trafficking in the sex industry in Northern Ireland?

- No
- I am not sure
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, 3-5 times
- Yes, more than 5 times

If yes, which country was the person who was trafficked from?

42. If you responded 'yes' to either of the last 2 questions: Did you report it to the authorities?

- Yes
- I considered reporting this, but I did not
- No
- I never encountered a victim of trafficking

You can add a comment, if you wish

43. What stopped you from reporting it?

- I felt the police would not be friendly to me.
- I felt the police would cause me problems if I talked to them.
- I did not know how to report it.
- I was worried about having to say my name.
- I don't trust the police.
- I did not have the time to report it.
- I was worried that it would create problems for me within the sex industry (by pimps, gangs, clients etc.).

You can add a comment, if you wish
44. How would you prefer to report it if you knew about trafficking or other criminal abuse going on?

- To a police officer that who specializes in the sex industry and would be friendly to me
- Anonymously to police by phone
- Anonymously to police by email
- To a third party like a sex worker health clinic or support service
- Post a message on a website
- I would not report this

You can add a comment if you wish

The Northern Irish sex industry

The next few questions are concerned with sex work in Northern Ireland specifically.

45. Is working as a sex worker in Northern Ireland different compared to other places?

- No
- I don't know - I only work in Northern Ireland
- I don't know - I don't work in Northern Ireland
- Yes (Please specify)

46. Would you say that clients in Northern Ireland are different from other places?

- No
- I don't know - I only work in Northern Ireland
- Yes (please specify)
47. Have you ever had any problems with local residents while working in Northern Ireland (e.g. complaints, attacks, confrontations)?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

You can add a comment, if you wish

48. From your perspective, has anything changed in Northern Irish sex industry over the last years?

49. Do you think it’s illegal to accept payment for sexual services in Northern Ireland?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Please comment, if you wish

Legal context

50. If paying for sexual services was made illegal, how do you think that would change (or not change) the behaviour of people who pay for sexual services?

51. If paying for sexual services was made illegal, how do you think that would change (or not change) things for the people who work in the sex industry?
52. If paying for sexual services was made illegal in Northern Ireland, would you personally still work there?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

You can add a comment, if you wish

53. If paying for sexual services was made illegal do you think that this would reduce sex trafficking?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

You can add a comment, if you wish

54. Generally, do you think it would be a good idea to make it illegal to pay for sexual services?

- Yes
- No

You can add a comment, if you wish
55. How do you think prostitution/sex work should be dealt with by governments? (Tick all that apply)

☐ The purchase of sex should be made illegal.
☐ The selling of sex should be made illegal.
☐ Prostitution should be treated as a normal job/should be legalised.
☐ People should be allowed to advertise for prostitution.
☐ People should be allowed to work together in the same place.
☐ Nothing needs to be changed.
☐ There should be more support services for people in the sex industry.
☐ Other (please specify)

56. Have you heard about or used the following: (Tick one box in each row)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Never heard about it</th>
<th>Heard about it, but never used it</th>
<th>Used it once</th>
<th>Used it more than once</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belfast Commercial Sex Worker Service (health clinic in the City Centre)</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Aid Northern Ireland</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Genito-Urinary Medical (GUM) clinic at the Royal Hospital</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rainbow Project</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please name other services you used in connection with working in the sex industry (i.e. for health issues, information, support)

57. Are there any projects you would recommend, or are there other services that should be offered in Northern Ireland?

58. Is there anything else you would want to say to policy-makers in Northern Ireland in relation to sex work/prostitution?
Thank you!

We are also doing face-to-face interviews with people who sell and buy sexual services. All interviews are anonymous and confidential. We don’t need to know your real name. If you would like to take part, or know someone who would be willing to be interviewed, please contact us via email:

Dr Susann Huschke
Queen’s University Belfast
Email: sexwork.research.NI@gmail.com
Introduction

THE SURVEY

This survey asks about the experiences and opinions of people who have PAID - or given something else in return - FOR SEXUAL SERVICES, in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

If you are looking for the survey for people SELLING SEXUAL SERVICES, please use this link: www.surveymonkey.com/s/Research_SexWork_English

WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

We are doing research on the sex industry in Northern Ireland. The project was commissioned by the Department of Justice and aims to provide a detailed understanding of the sex industry (i.e. who sells which services where and why, and to whom). The findings from the may be used to inform policy and debate within Northern Ireland. If you have any additional questions, please contact us.

WHO ARE WE?

We are a team of researchers based at Queen’s University Belfast and at the National University of Ireland in Galway: Dr Susann Huschke, Prof Peter Shirlow, Dr Dirk Schubotz and Dr Eilís Ward.

HOW DOES THIS SURVEY WORK?

All replies are anonymous and confidential. We will not ask you for your name. If we use quotes or information from your responses in the report we will write, they will be anonymized so that that you are not identified.

You can save your answers and return to the survey later on if you want. If cookies are enabled on your computer, the responses are automatically saved. All you need to do is return to the same computer and use the same browser - just enter the link again and it should allow you to return to your response.

Note that only one response will be possible per computer. If other people want to fill out the survey, too, they need to use a different computer.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

You will not be paid to participate in this research project. The survey is important in terms of informing debate and giving voice to those who sell and pay for sex. This is an opportunity for you to have your voice, experience and issues heard. You are free to not answer questions that make you uncomfortable.

ARE THERE OTHER WAYS OF PARTICIPATING?

We are also doing face-to-face interviews with sex workers and clients. All interviews are anonymous and confidential. We don’t need to know your real name. If you would like to take part, or know someone who would be willing to be interviewed, please contact us via email:

Dr Susann Huschke
Queen’s University Belfast
Email: sexwork.research.NI@gmail.com
1. INFORMED CONSENT

I confirm that I have read and understand the information given for the above study and that I agree to take part in the study.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can skip any questions that I do not wish to answer.

I agree to be quoted on an anonymous basis.

By responding to this survey, I accept this opportunity to contribute to the Prostitution in Northern Ireland study and I assign copyright for the survey responses to the project team.

- Proceed to Question 1
- I'd rather not take part

2. How did you find out about this survey?

- An escort/sex worker told me about it
- Another client told me about it
- I found out about it online

If you found out it about on the internet, please tell us which website:


General information

In this section, we will ask you some general questions about yourself.

3. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Trans
4. What is your age?
- 16 to 17
- 18 to 21
- 22 to 25
- 26 to 30
- 31 to 35
- 36 to 40
- 41 to 45
- 46 to 50
- 51 to 55
- 56 to 60
- over 60
- 75 or older

5. What city or town do you live in most of the time?

6. What is your nationality?

7. Do you regard yourself as belonging to a religion?
- Yes
- No

Please specify if you want to:

8. How important is religion to you?
- Very important
- Neither important nor unimportant
- Unimportant
- Don't know

9. What is your relationship status?
- Single
- In a relationship
- Civil partnership/married
- Separated or divorced
- Widowed
10. Do you have children?
- Yes
- No

11. What ages are they?

12. Are you one of the main carers for a child/children?
- Yes
- No

13. How many years did you attend school?

14. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

15. What is your current occupational status?
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Student
- Retired
- Unemployed, receiving benefits (e.g. job seekers allowance)
- Unemployed, no state support
- Unable to work
- Other

16. If you currently have a job, what kind of job is it?
17. What was your personal income (before taxes) from all sources in 2013?
- less than £ 5,000
- £ 5,000 – 10,000
- £ 10,000 – 20,000
- £ 20,000 – 30,000
- £ 30,000 – 40,000
- £ 40,000 – 50,000
- over £ 50,000
- Don’t know
- Don’t want to say

Paying for sexual services

Now we would like to ask some questions about sexual services you may have used.

18. Have you ever paid for, or given something else in return for face-to-face sexual services?
- Yes
- No

19. Which of the following things have you given in return for sex? (Please tick all that apply)
- Money
- Presents (such as mobile phones, clothes)
- Alcohol or drugs
- Money for fees and bills, such as education fees, rent, gas bills etc.
- Food
- A place to stay for the person
- A meal out or drinks out
- A holiday
- Other (please specify)
20. And where have you paid for sex? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] In Northern Ireland
- [ ] In other parts of the UK
- [ ] In the Republic of Ireland
- [ ] Elsewhere in Europe
- [ ] Elsewhere in the world

If elsewhere in Europe and/or the world, please tell us where:


21. Please indicate what part of Northern Ireland (tick all that apply):

- [ ] Belfast
- [ ] County Antrim (outside of Belfast)
- [ ] Derry/Londonderry
- [ ] County Derry/Londonderry (outside of Derry/Londonderry)
- [ ] County Down
- [ ] County Armagh
- [ ] County Tyrone
- [ ] County Fermanagh

22. When you were looking for sexual services, how did you find these? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] Newspaper
- [ ] On the street
- [ ] In massage parlours or saunas
- [ ] In a club/bar
- [ ] Through a friend, colleague or relative
- [ ] By asking a taxi driver
- [ ] At private parties
- [ ] By returning to a house/ micro-brothel I have visited before
- [ ] Through the internet
- [ ] Other sources

If you use the internet to find sexual services, please tell us which websites:
23. Where did the transaction (the sexual contact) take place? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] In a car
- [ ] In a hotel room that I rent
- [ ] In a hotel room that was rented by the sex worker/escort
- [ ] In a brothel
- [ ] In public (alleyway, street, parking lot etc.)
- [ ] In my home
- [ ] In the home of the person offering the service

Other (please specify)

24. Have you paid for any of the following? (Please tick all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>in Northern Ireland</th>
<th>elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Escort</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street prostitution</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex offered in a massage parlour/sauna</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex in a brothel</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Striptease/ lap dance</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Webcam sex</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone sex</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pornography</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (e.g. sex parties)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. What gender was the person/were the people you received services from? (Please tick all that apply)

- [ ] Male
- [ ] Female
- [ ] Trans

26. When you pay for sexual services, do you see the same person regularly or do you see different people?

- [ ] I always go to the same one.
- [ ] I try to see the same person but if it doesn’t work out I see others, too.
- [ ] I see different people.
- [ ] I don’t know - I have only paid for sex once or twice.

Please explain if you want:
27. What do you look for when you choose who to buy sexual services from (e.g. age, gender, appearance, services offered, price)?

28. Approximately, how often do you pay for sexual services?
- I have only paid for sexual services once/ a few times so far
- A few times a year
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a month
- Every week
- Several times a week
- More often

29. How old were you when you first paid for face-to-face sexual services?
- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-21
- 22-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-45
- 46-50
- 51-55
- 56-60
- Over 60

30. In total, how many different people have you paid for sexual services in Northern Ireland over the last 5 years?
- None (I don't pay for sex in Northern Ireland)
- 1-5
- 6-20
- 21-30
- 31-50
- 51-100
- More than 100
31. Do you think it's illegal to pay for sexual services in Northern Ireland?
- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

Please comment if you want:

32. What do you like about purchasing sexual services? (Please tick all that apply)
- It's enabled me to explore my sexuality.
- I enjoy having sex with different people.
- I just did it out of curiosity.
- I like that there are no emotional strings attached.
- It allows me to try things I haven't tried before.
- It is the only way I can get sex.
- It is the only way I can get sexual satisfaction.
- The secrecy of it gives me a thrill.
- It allows me to do things I couldn't do with a partner.
- It's good for my self-esteem.
- It's quick and easy: I don't have time for other sexual relationships.
- I don't feel ready for other sexual relationships.
- It makes me feel more confident about myself and my body.
- None of the above.

Please comment or add other replies if you want:

33. What do you not like about purchasing sexual services? (Please tick all that apply)
- I feel like I have to hide what I do, I don't like that.
- I feel like I have to lie about what I do, I don't like that.
- I worry that my friends and family will find out about it.
- I miss the emotional connection.
- I was hoping it would lead to more than just sex.
- I worry about the well-being of the sex worker/prostitute.
- I don't like the settings in which it takes place.
- It damages my confidence.
- It makes me ashamed.
- I am worried about the health risks.
- I feel that I spend too much money on it.
- I didn't get good value for money.

Please comment or add other replies if you want:

34. What would stop you from paying for sexual services? (Please tick all that apply)
- If I was in a relationship
- If I could have sex without paying for it
- If I could express my sexuality/sexual preferences without paying for it
- If there was less stigma around my sexual preferences
- If paying for sex was a crime
- If my partner found out and wanted me to stop
- None of the above

Please comment or add other replies if you want:

Trafficking

The following questions are related to human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. We define a person to be “trafficked” if he/she was forced/coerced or tricked into working in prostitution against their will. This can be within Northern Ireland/the UK as well as across the border from other countries.
35. Has anyone ever told you that they were – at any stage of their life – trafficked into the sex industry in Northern Ireland?
- No
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, 3-5 times
- Yes, more than 5 times

Please comment if you want:

36. Have you ever witnessed trafficking in the sex industry in Northern Ireland?
- No
- Yes, once or twice
- Yes, 3-5 times
- Yes, more than 5 times
- I am not sure

Please comment if you want:

37. What regions or countries were they from?

38. Did you report it to the authorities?
- Yes
- No
- I considered it, but in the end I didn’t report it.
39. What stopped you from reporting it? (Please tick all that apply)

- I did not know how to report it.
- I was worried about having to say my name.
- I was worried about being arrested.
- I don't trust the police.
- I did not have the time to report it.
- The person asked me not to report it.
- I was worried that it would create problems for the person within the sex industry (by pimps, gangs, clients etc.).
- I was worried that it would create problems for myself within the sex industry (by pimps, gangs etc.).

Please comment if you want:

40. If you found out about a case of trafficking or other criminal abuse, what would be your preferred way to report this?

- To a police officer that who specializes in the sex industry
- Anonymously to police by phone
- Anonymously to police by email
- To a third party like a sex worker health clinic or support service

Please comment or add other replies if you want:

Legal context

41. Are you aware of plans to criminalize paying for sexual services in Northern Ireland?

- Yes
- No

42. Which of the following would you do if paying for sexual services was made illegal (please tick all that apply):

- I would do it less often.
- I would be more careful.
- I would stop using sexual services in Northern Ireland.
- I would stop using sexual services altogether.
- I would only see the escorts/sex workers that I trust.
- I would not do anything differently.

Please comment or add other replies if you want:
43. If you know other people who pay for sexual services, what do you think how it would change (or not change) their behavior if the purchase of sex was made a crime? (Please tick all that apply)

☐ They would do it less often.
☐ They would be more careful.
☐ They would stop using sexual services in Northern Ireland.
☐ They would stop using sexual services altogether.
☐ They would only see the escorts/sex workers that I trust.
☐ They would not do anything differently.

Please comment or add other replies if you want:

44. From your perspective, how would the criminalization of clients affect the people who SELL sexual services?

☐ They would stop selling sex.
☐ They would have to offer services that they didn’t offer before.
☐ It would make things less safe for them.
☐ They would have to hide it more.
☐ They would have to charge more.
☐ They would have to charge less.
☐ They would accept non-cash payments (paying bills, mobile phone credit, gifts etc.)

Please comment or add other replies if you want:

45. Is there anything else you would like to comment on?


Thank you

Thank you!

We are also doing face-to-face interviews with sex workers and clients. All interviews are anonymous and confidential. We don’t need to know your real name. If you would like to take part, or know someone who would be willing to be interviewed, please contact us via email:

Dr Susann Huschke
Queen’s University Belfast
Email: sexwork.research.NI@gmail.com
D  Topics covered in the interviews with sex workers

Part I: Demographics
- gender
- age
- current home
- nationality
- immigration status
- relationship status
- highest level of education

Part II: Background
- Interviewee’s background and biography

Part III: Prostitution
- Interviewee’s experience of prostitution (e.g. locations, working conditions, number of clients, earnings etc.)
- Knowledge of the sex industry in Northern Ireland (incl. changes over the last years, comparisons to other places, and role of organised crime/paramilitaries)
- Entering prostitution (incl. age, reasons, circumstances)
- Positive aspects of selling sexual services
- Negative aspects of selling sexual services

Part IV: Clients
- Demographics of clients
- Relationships and interactions with clients
- Particularly good or bad clients

Part V: Trafficking
Intro: The following questions are related to human trafficking. We define “trafficked” as someone who was forced/coerced or tricked into working in prostitution against their will. This can be within Northern Ireland/the UK as well as across the border from other countries.
- Own experience of trafficking?
- Ever heard about it from other people?
- Ever witnessed it?
- If so: country of origin, circumstances, own reaction
- Preferred ways of reporting trafficking

Part VI: Legal aspects and policy
- Awareness of the Lord Morrow Bill
- Opinion on criminalising the purchase of sex
- Potential changes for sex workers
- Potential changes in regard to demand and client behaviour
- Potential effects on sex trafficking
- Views on criminalising the buyer but not the seller

Part VII: Support services
- Experience of support services for sex workers in Northern Ireland
- Suggestions for additional services
- Views on exiting the sex industry
- Hurdles and dilemmas
- Resources needed to leave

Part VIII: Other
- Is there anything else you would want to say to policy-makers in Northern Ireland?
- Do you know anyone else who might be willing to take part in this study?
E. Topics covered in the interviews with victims of trafficking

Part I: Demographics
- gender
- age
- current home
- nationality
- immigration status
- relationship status
- highest level of education

Part II: Background
- Interviewee’s background and biography

Part III: Experience of trafficking
- Interviewee’s experience of trafficking

Note: The interviewee was asked to share their story if they were comfortable to do so. The interviewer asked follow-up questions based on the information given by the interviewee.

Part IV: Legal aspects and policy
- Experience of the criminal justice system

Part V: Support services
- Experience of support services
  - Suggestions for improvements

Part VI: Current situation
- Interviewee’s current situation

Part VII: Other
- Is there anything else you would want to say to policy-makers in Northern Ireland?
F  Topics covered in the interviews with clients

Part I: Demographics
- gender
- age
- current home
- nationality
- relationship status
- highest level of education
- current occupational status
- personal income

Part II: Background
- Interviewee’s background and biography

Part III: Paying for sexual services
- Reasons
- How (access)
- Frequency
- Typical encounters
- Which parts of the industry used
- Decision-making (‘choosing’ the sex worker)
- Relationships and interactions with sex workers
- Positive aspects
- Negative aspects
- Knowledge of Northern Ireland sex industry

Part IV: Legal context
- Awareness of current laws
- Reasons to stop paying for sex
- Effects of criminalisation of clients

Part V: Trafficking
Intro: The next few questions are related to human trafficking. We define “trafficked” as someone who was forced/coerced or tricked into working in prostitution against their will. This can be within Northern Ireland/the UK as well as across the border from other countries.
- Ever heard about it from people?
- Ever witnessed it?
- If so: country of origin, circumstances, own reaction
- Preferred ways of reporting trafficking
Part IV: Other

- Is there anything else you think we need to talk about in order for us to understand the perspective of clients?
- Do you know anyone else who might be willing to take part in this study?
Assessment of Exit Programmes for People Involved in the Sex Industry

Questionnaire for Service Providers

Part I: General Information

- Please give a short description of your organization.
- Why and how was the exit programme established?
- For how long have you been running the exit programme?
- How many people are working in the programme and what are their qualifications?
- What is the target group of the programme?
- What kinds of services does the exit programme include?
- How is the programme financed?
- As part of the exit programme, are you cooperating with any other institutions or organisations?

Part II: Clientele

- How many people have taken part in the exit programme so far?
- How many people take part in the exit programme at the moment?
- Please provide a short general description of your clientele (social background, education, nationality, ...).
- Are there any requirements for people to take part in the programme, or any reasons that would exclude people from taking part?
- How is the programme advertised? How do people find out about the programme?
- In your experience, what are the most common reasons for people wanting to exit the sex industry?

**Part III: Experiences with the programme**

- On average, what is the success rate of the programme (that is, how many of the participants found work outside the sex industry)?

- In your experience, what are the main hurdles that prevent participants of the programme from exiting the sex industry?

- Has the programme ever been adjusted to occurring problems? If yes, what were the problems and how did you respond to them?

- In your experience, what contributed to the success of the programme?

**Part IV: Comments**

- If you want, you can add further information or comments.

_Thank you for your participation!_
Questions for local councils

- Has prostitution/sex work been brought up/discussed at council level
  o If so, what were the details – did the interviewee introduce the topic/did they take part/what was the outcome?
  o If the politician was the person who brought up the topic, what were the circumstances?

- Are the aware of any current ongoing (or past) sex work in their area?
  o If so, what is the nature of this (brothel/street prostitution etc)
  o How did they come by this information?

- Is sex work/prostitution an issue that constituents bring up as a concern in the area?

- Have members of the public informed you about activities relating to sex work?
  o If so, what were the circumstances?

- Are you aware of support services that sex workers can avail of in your area?
  o If so, details

- Are you aware of exit programmes for sex workers in your area?
  o If so, details

- If a member of the community contacted you about activities related to sex work in the area, what would your first step be?
I Members of the advisory group

- Prof Nicola Mai, London Metropolitan University
- Prof Maggie O’Neill, Durham University
- Dr Paul Ryan, Maynooth University
- Mrs Susan Semple, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust (BHSCT), Commercial Sex Worker Service
- Dr Gillian Wylie, Trinity College Dublin
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACPO</td>
<td>Association of Chief Police Officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BO</td>
<td>Being Outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Competent Authorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATW</td>
<td>Coalition Against Trafficking in Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DJE</td>
<td>Department of Justice and Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoJ</td>
<td>Department of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoJNI</td>
<td>Department of Justice Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Economic Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOPP</td>
<td>First Offender Prostitution Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F&amp;T</td>
<td>Fitzharris &amp; Taylor (see bibliography)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GUM</td>
<td>Genito-Urinary Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM&amp;S</td>
<td>Hubbart, Matthews &amp; Scoular (see bibliography)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H&amp;W</td>
<td>Hester &amp; Westmarland (see bibliography)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Internet Protocol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRA</td>
<td>Irish Republican Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOCJDE</td>
<td>Joint Committee on Justice, Defense and Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLPD</td>
<td>Dutch National Police Force (Korps landelijke politiediensten)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCA</td>
<td>National Crime Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICEM</td>
<td>Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NRM</td>
<td>National Referral Mechanism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLRC</td>
<td>Prostitution Law Reform Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSNI</td>
<td>Police Service of Northern Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIPA</td>
<td>Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROI</td>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S/M</td>
<td>Sadomasochism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOU</td>
<td>Swedish Government Official Reports (Statens Offentliga Utredningar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STI</td>
<td>Sexually Transmitted Infections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAMPEP</td>
<td>European Network for HIV/STI Prevention and Health Promotion among Migrant Sex Workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UDA</td>
<td>Ulster Defense Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVF</td>
<td>Ulster Volunteer Force</td>
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</table>