

The nature and prevalence of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales today

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This study would not have been possible without the support of hundreds of participants, including professionals across statutory, academic and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Most notably, we heard from over 500 individuals currently or formerly involved in prostitution and sex work. We are sincerely grateful to those who shared their time, thoughts and personal experiences and thank in particular those who completed the follow-up email interviews. We hope that this report faithfully reflects their diverse voices.

The research team, October 2019.

Executive summary

In Spring 2018 a team of researchers at the University of Bristol were commissioned by the Home Office and the Office of the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner to report on the current ‘nature’ and ‘prevalence’ of prostitution in England and Wales. The remit required us to focus on adults aged 18 or over. We were not asked to report on policy or law. The research team developed a working definition which took a broad view of the sex industry:

Prostitution and/or sex work constitutes the provision of sexual or erotic acts or sexual intimacy in exchange for payment or other benefit or need.

The research was carried out between May 2018 and June 2019. We used a combination of methods (see **Appendix 1**) to answer the question set:

1. A systematic search for relevant academic and other publications post-2000, to recognise the existing evidence base – over 1400 items identified;
2. A public online survey, open for 6 months, yielding 1180 complete qualitative responses, including 529 from individuals who identified as currently or recently involved in prostitution and sex work;
3. 135 invitations to a representative group among those 529 survey respondents who identified as currently or recently involved, to participate in a follow-up in-depth email questionnaire (42 completed these);
4. To try to reach those individuals unlikely to respond to an online survey, we sent out questionnaires to 76 NGOs to administer to their service-users or members: 16 individual service-user/member responses were received plus 3 responses completed by NGO staff based on their work with service-users/members;
5. We invited 35 NGOs and 42 police forces to trial data collection to estimate prevalence (11 and 5 responded, respectively; further representatives of both groups engaged in discussion around the data and/or attended regional consultations);
6. Email, face-to-face and group consultations and discussions with over 90 organisations including sex worker collectives, support services, police forces, adult websites, health and local authorities across England and Wales, as well as leading academics, at different stages of the research.

To ascertain the ‘nature’ of prostitution and sex work, we developed a typology from the research data which would describe and classify contemporary practices. This has two elements. In Section

1, part (a) of this report we present a discussion of six themes which cut across the sector as a whole. These are:

- Identifying sex work, identifying as a sex worker
- Social identities, inequalities and routes in
- Patterns of engagement and moving between settings/services
- Advertising, payment and third parties
- Risk, harm and managing safety
- Buyers and buying

In Section 1, part (b), we identify fourteen settings and services and describe their key features:

Bar-based sex work and hostess bars	Sex parties
BDSM, kink and fetish	Street and outdoor
Brothels, parlours, saunas	Sugar arrangements
Erotic and exotic dance	Telephone, text-based, TV-based, Live voyeurism
Erotic massage	Therapeutic services
Escort: independent	Webcamming
Escort: agency	
Pornography, Glamour and Erotica	

In terms of assessing ‘prevalence’, we were asked to explore data sources for estimating the national prevalence of those involved in sex work and prostitution, and to develop a tool for assessing the robustness of such sources. In Section 2, and in the Appendices to this report, we review existing work and share the resources that we have developed. This includes a data quality assessment tool (**Appendix 9**) that can be used by organisations to help produce best estimates for their geographical area.

It should be noted that currently in the UK, no source of data allows for the production of representative population estimates for this group. Stigma, the private and hidden nature of the sex industry, and the transience of activities mean that estimating prevalence is challenging.

Previous studies using a range of methodologies have given wide estimates. Notably, studies have tended to focus on segments of the industry (street and outdoor; brothels and parlour; and more recently, escorting) and to under-represent other areas of the industry (for example: male and trans workers; those involved intermittently; victims of trafficking and exploitation, and so on). Producing an accurate estimate would require studies to follow the guidance and recommendations on data collection jointly produced by the UNAIDS and World Health Organisation (WHO) (2010) and/or to use statistically representative samples.

The insights in this report reflect the experiences of our research participants and the stakeholders who engaged with this research. Given methodological and ethical constraints (see **Appendix 1**), we recognise two groups whose voices are under-represented or absent within this report:

- (1) Migrant sex workers;
- (2) British and non-British individuals who are/were forcibly coerced, who are/were trafficked, who are/were sexually exploited and/or who are traumatised in relation to their experience.

While we have drawn on the contributions of NGOs and on the existing published evidence base to reference these two groups, further work, with appropriate methods, ethical safeguards and resources, is required to understand more clearly the nature and prevalence of their experiences.

Overall, the data gathered shows the complexity and diversity in how sex is sold in England and Wales today. This highlights the need for caution in seeking to make generalised claims on this issue. We make this final observation in that spirit.

We recognise that there are many individuals in prostitution who are subject to acute exploitation and serious and sustained harm. Some identify selling sex as a pleasurable and lucrative career choice, or as a therapeutic vocation. Our sense from the data that we have collected and from reviewing existing research is that a substantial proportion of individuals (mainly women and trans women) are selling sex to get by financially, given different constraints in their lives around caring responsibilities, physical and mental health, lack of access to social security benefits and support services, workplace discrimination, or other reasons. Their situation is compounded by stigma and managing safety, and many find that the longer they sell sex, the harder it can be to leave completely. This moves beyond individual 'choosing or 'not choosing' and recognises the structural economic and social context in which choices are narrowed: or in the case of those coerced in to selling sex, choices removed. We ask readers of this report to recognise and hold these tensions in mind.

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Introduction

On 1 July 2016, the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC) published their interim report on prostitution. The report made six recommendations: decriminalising soliciting; amending brothel-keeping legislation; deleting previous offences relating to prostitution; developing guidance for police and local authorities; policy changes to prevent trafficking and exploitation; and strengthening the evidence base on prostitution. The Government response accepted that there was a need for in-depth research to develop an impartial evidence base, prior to considering further changes to policy and legislation.

Separately, South Wales Police carried out a profiling analysis and consultation on a force basis to understand better the policing demands in terms of types of prostitution and sex work, including brothels and online. This work was undertaken through the assessment of held data and in consultation with support providers, street sex workers and women working in parlours. Local findings were reflective of some of the issues highlighted by the Home Affairs Select Committee.

In Spring 2018, the University of Bristol were commissioned by the Home Office and South Wales Police to consider **the extent and changing nature of prostitution in England and Wales**. The research team were tasked with:

- developing a comprehensive typology of contemporary prostitution, incorporating the multiple realities of workers and others linked to prostitution and sex work. This was to include street and off-street sectors; those working online; those trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation; and other relevant categorisations;
- developing approaches for estimating the extent of each of these types of prostitution; and specify where further work needs to be undertaken;
- where possible, populate the typology using existing survey and administrative data.

The researchers developed a working definition, which took a broad view of the sex industry:

Prostitution and/or sex work constitutes the provision of sexual or erotic acts or sexual intimacy in exchange for payment or other benefit or need.

The research was carried out between May 2018 and June 2019.

Method

This section summarises our method: how we sought, collected and analysed data to answer the question set - what is the nature and prevalence of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales today?

We were required by the terms of the tender to carry out a systematic search of the literature, to identify the research and knowledge that already exists. We used the literature review to begin to develop a 'typology' of prostitution and sex work and prevalence measurement criteria. After scanning the initial returns on the literature (nearly 11,000 items), we could see that this would provide only a partial picture of prostitution and sex work, given:

- (a) that it has been a fast-changing area, particularly post-2000, and all but the most recent papers may not reflect the current position in England and Wales;
- (b) the tendency for the literature to focus on particular groups (e.g. street workers) or on normative, legal and policy issues.

We decided therefore to refocus the method by giving far greater weight to seeking contemporary views and experiences, including individuals involved in prostitution and sex work currently or recently. This involved a public online survey soliciting qualitative responses, as well as follow-up email interviews. This data was analysed alongside a mapping of the literature, to address the questions on nature and prevalence. Thereafter we carried out an extensive consultation exercise with NGOs, criminal justice and other agencies, sex workers and academics to test the validity of the findings. In summary then, this work is rooted in the voices and experiences of those directly involved with and within the sector.

Careful thought was given throughout to our approach, our communications, to the safety of participants and to the handling and presentation of data. Information was provided and individual consent sought for the survey, interviews and consultations. This work was approved by a University of Bristol Research Ethics Committee. Full details of the method are available in **Appendix 1**.

Methods in detail.

We identify two key limitations to this work.

1. Our online survey did not solicit personal demographic data from respondents. We were conscious that a Home Office funded study could deter some from responding, should such mandatory questions have been perceived as intrusive. We also solicited open, qualitative (rather than pre-categorised) responses. Both methodological decisions led to rich data for this study, as Part 1 of this report demonstrates. The limitation is that we could not present this data in simple numerical terms or make, for example, statements on the precise proportion of the respondents who had a particular experience.
2. Given methodological and ethical constraints (see **Appendix 1**), we recognise two groups whose voices are under-represented or absent within this report:
 1. Migrant sex workers;
 2. British and non-British individuals who are/were forcibly coerced, who are/were trafficked, who are/were sexually exploited and/or who are traumatised in relation to their experience.

Some individuals will belong to both groups. Further work, with appropriate methods, ethical safeguards and resources, is required to understand more clearly the nature and prevalence of their experiences.

We publish in the appendices our methods and data collection tools both for transparency and for others to use, adapt and critique.

Results

Introduction

The Results are divided into Section 1, The ‘nature’ of prostitution and/or sex work (further divided into Part A: Cross cutting themes and Part B: Settings and services) and Section 2: Prevalence.

Section 1: The ‘nature’ of prostitution and/or sex work

In this section we begin by providing an overview of the cross-cutting themes from our survey and email interview respondents, before going on to briefly outline the different settings and services of prostitution and/or sex work that currently exist. Together, these elements constitute our typology. The clear message through our data is that practices of prostitution and sex work are complex. Communities of interest may wish to do further context-specific work to distil and develop elements of the typology. See **Appendix 3** for brief comments on existing typology literature.

Part A: Cross-cutting themes

This sub-section draws on the online survey responses, the follow-up email interview data and the stakeholder consultations. We had 529 respondents to the online survey who identified as being formerly or currently involved in prostitution and sex work, including 7 who described themselves as sex buyers. We asked 135 of the 529 respondents to engage in follow-up email interviews and received 42 completed forms. We also sent out questionnaires to 76 NGOs to administer through their service-users or members: 16 individual service-user/member responses were received plus 3 responses completed by NGO staff based on their work with service-users/members. Drawing on this data, we identified the following main themes which appeared to cut across settings and services. These were:

- Identifying sex work, identifying as a sex worker
- Social identities, inequalities and routes in
- Patterns of engagement and moving between settings/services
- Advertising, payment and third parties
- Risk, harm and managing safety
- Buyers and buying

We have worked hard to code and analyse all this data in the time available. However, given the time constraints and given the qualitative nature of data collected, we cannot in some cases give precise numbers on how many respondents expressed one view or another. We therefore use terms such as ‘a handful’ or ‘some’ to indicate a smaller number of participants, and ‘a sizeable number’ or ‘many’, to indicate a view expressed by more than 10% of participants. In all cases, readers should avoid over-extrapolating from single quotes.

Identifying sex work, identifying as a sex worker

A key issue in this research has been finding the right language to ensure that we included the breadth of experiences under our definition of ‘prostitution and sex work’. As outlined in the introduction, we defined our focus for this report as “the provision of sexual or erotic acts or sexual intimacy in exchange for payment or other benefit or need”. This section will illustrate why these terms were chosen.

First, it is important to acknowledge the debates around the terms ‘prostitute/prostitution’ and ‘sex worker/sex work’. The former is used often by those who problematize identifying the exchange of sex for monetary or other benefit as ‘work’ (they may see it only as exploitation and the use of the

term ‘work’ as ‘normalisation’; they may reject the use of the term ‘selling’); and also by those who wish to reclaim words which have been used to denigrate (e.g. ‘whore’, ‘harlot’, ‘prostitute’ etc.). The term ‘sex work’ (accredited to Carol Leigh) emerged from a desire to recognise the individuals and/or the labour of those engaged in selling sex and, for some, has provided an identity under which to unite and call for rights and protections from the state. Sex work may also be used to refer to broader services than simply the physical exchange of sex for money or other benefit: it may for example include stripping, acting in pornography or webcamming. The language is therefore contested and the two terms ‘prostitution’ and ‘sex work’ have tended to signify conflicting political, ideological or moral positions. However, this ‘two tribes’ approach can be simplistic and unhelpful: our data suggests there is great diversity in opinion and experience and there is also much common ground.

The different views on language did however present challenges for writing interview and survey questions. For example,

“Prostitute” is a slur. We prefer sex worker or escort. (Non-binary DFAB¹Independent Escort)
I usually describe myself as a prostitute in personal conversations, but when speaking to people outside of my immediate friend group I use the term ‘full service sex worker’. (Female Brothel Worker)

Those working in BDSM [bondage and discipline (B&D), dominance and submission (D&S), and sadism and masochism (S&M)] in particular, stressed that their work did not necessarily involve any in-person or genital contact:

I am a Domme. It classes as sex work, but I rarely shed a layer of clothing! (Female Professional Dominant)
I am a professional dominant... None of the services I offer include sexual acts but I am classed as a sex worker because the nature of my work is erotic. (Female Professional Dominant)

Some will identify as ‘survivors’ or ‘victims’ of prostitution. This also has a displacement effect on whether individuals perceive buyers as ‘clients’ or ‘customers’ or as ‘exploiters’. One NGO we contacted to distribute our ‘survivor’ questionnaire (see **Appendix 4**) was very concerned about the language used:

...hardly any of our clients who were victims of sexual exploitation would associate themselves as prostitutes even if they had been forced to work in brothels or on the street with others in the sex industry. (NGO, Email Correspondence)

We acknowledge in the introduction that a limitation to this study is that, for reasons of methodology and ethics (see **Appendix 1**), few of our participants identified as survivors of prostitution or as current victims of sexual exploitation. When we use the term ‘sex work’ through this report, it is important not to lose sight of those for whom this term does not resonate, and whose experience requires further documentation.

Individuals who had been involved in sugar relationships may not identify this as ‘sex work’, particularly where the exchange has been premised around companionship and intimacy. However, respondents said that sex was almost always part of the sugar relationship and many spoke of the difficulties in establishing boundaries, in contrast to ‘clear-cut’ sex work.

Sugaring was challenging - at first, I found it quite enjoyable to be paid to eat delicious food with someone and simply make polite conversation, but soon realised that after a few ‘dates’

¹ DFAB is designated female at birth.

it's a dangerous, precarious line of work because they've got expectations from you that are not being clearly and properly communicated. (Female Independent)

Some men who exchange sexual or intimate acts for monetary or other benefit, particularly on the gay street scene, may embrace, repudiate or be ambivalent towards notions of 'sex work' and the identity of 'sex worker', depending on the context:

Often people are meeting on [a dating app] or in a club. It could be, like, they fancy them, so they don't charge for sex – but if they don't, they would... Many would not seem themselves as 'sex workers'. (NGO Consultation)

During the two years prior to 'officially' starting, I had a couple of paid meets. These were quite random occurrences. I had a (non-escort) profile on a hook-up site on which I said I was open to being paid for work, I picked up a couple of jobs from that (one of which was wallpaper stripping and decorating, with sex afterwards). (Male Independent)

This resonates with recent research (Morris, 2018) with men who have agreed to sell sex online after being propositioned by other users, without advertising sexual services: almost all participants in Morris' study did not identify as 'sex workers'.

Equally, some buyers do not identify as 'sex buyers' - for example, those who pay to attend sex parties and/or hire escorts to attend with them.

As these examples illustrate, it was important that our definition captured this broader exchange of sex, erotic acts and sexual intimacy for money or other need or benefit. It also highlights that there will be individuals that much empirical research on sex work/prostitution will not reach or capture, because the individuals involved do not identify with those terms.

Finally, we should note too that there was dispute among our survey respondents on whether sex buyers, and whether third parties such as brothel owners or receptionists, should be included in research on the nature of prostitution and sex work. While the overwhelming majority of our data comes from those directly selling, our approach was to be open to these other voices, but to demarcate clearly in the report from what position people speak.

Social identities, inequalities and routes in

Taken as a whole, individuals selling sex in England and Wales today are diverse in terms of demographics and motivation. At the same time, there are recurrent patterns of experience or identity that mark some individuals' entry into the sex industry and/or the type of setting, service or the conditions in which they work.

It is important to note that we did not require any demographic information from research participants. This was because our concern was to be inclusive and to protect identities, where that was important to people. However, given the full answers that survey respondents and email interviewees gave, we were able in most cases to discern gender, as well as the types of services in which they were (or had been) involved. Many also gave details around mental or physical health, their role as carers, their national or ethnic background, their sexuality, and so on.

The overwhelming majority of respondents to the online survey who self-classified as currently or formerly involved in prostitution and/or sex work (n=529), were women. Around 13 explicitly identified as male and eight as non-binary or trans. However, it is likely that we under-identified both trans and non-binary (and possibly male) participants as we relied on their mentioning it in their survey responses.

We sent out follow up email interviews to 135 individuals drawn from across the group: 42 responded, almost all of whom are engaged currently in prostitution and/or sex work. We believe the gender breakdown of email interviewees requested and completed to be as follows:

Follow up interviews requested		Follow up interviews completed	
107	Female sellers	27	Female sellers
6	Trans female sellers	1	Trans female seller
2	Non-binary, designated female at birth sellers	2	Non-binary, designated female at birth sellers
20	13 male sellers and 7 male buyers	12	7 male sellers and 5 male buyers

Sexuality was less often stated by women, with those who did identifying as straight, queer, bisexual or (two respondents as) pansexual. It is worth noting here that stated sexuality on advertising or in their work role may not be the same as self-identified sexuality. For example, a number of individuals will advertise their sexuality as bisexual, as this is perceived to boost their marketability to potential clients (see **Appendix 10**).

Male sex workers tended to state their sexuality as gay and that they provided services usually (or exclusively) to men. Some had provided services to women or to couples. Two male respondents identified as heterosexual and advertised for female clients, both offering BDSM services.

We also heard from escorting couples, who can be any combination of genders. For example:

We've worked as a mature escort [male-female or 'MF'] couple for nearly 6 years, and started because we both like sex, and came into it from occasional swinging. We are a professional escort couple and see only men, mostly married, over the age of 40 up to around 75. You need to be aware that there are about 1000 MF escort couples working [in the UK] ... (Male-Female Escorting Couple)

We believe that the majority of sellers who participated in our research were likely British or European, probably Caucasian, with a good command of English (our survey was only available in English). We infer this both from participant references to their upbringing or country of origin and to the questionnaire responses: we asked participants about their perception of buyer and seller demographics. We recognise again therefore the limitations of this study in relation to the experiences of migrants, particularly from the Global South, for example. Our interviews with buyers (see below) and with adult online platforms suggest that there are sellers from multiple countries working as escorts and in flats and brothels. Here again we note how nationality, like age and sexuality, is commonly misrepresented in sex work advertising, depending on the seller characteristics that buyers are seeking (see **Appendix 10**).

Social class and education level appear to be diverse, and a weak mitigation of economic need and for some, economic precarity. Financial difficulty characterised the entry point for many of the sellers, and those now exited, who responded to this research.

I think that sex work is very varied and many people do it for many reasons but the main one is financial. It was for me. If government is very serious about limiting the number of people selling sex, then it needs to look at root causes of sex work which are poverty, lack of economic opportunities, high costs of housing and education etc... Prostitution is not driven by 'demand' but by the economic needs of people. (Male Erotic Masseur)

Eventually I paid off the debt and felt less poor and therefore able to extricate myself. [...] being poorer made it much easier to abuse me. More money = more freedom of choice. So when people say they're 'cracking down' on demand that strikes me as stupid because less income made me more desperate. (Female Former Brothel Worker)

I just want to say that I know the industry is bad but I don't think it's ever going to not exist unless we solve all of the money problems people have. So I think the focus should be on what would make it safer rather than what would make it smaller. (Female Street Worker)

Around 8% of survey respondents specifically mentioned caring responsibilities (for children, often as single parents; for own parents; for grandparents; and for partners), mental or physical health needs or disability. It is important to underline that because we did not systematically collect this data in the survey or follow-up (see **Appendix 1** for further discussion), but rather noted where respondents disclosed this information, this 8% figure is likely to be an under-estimate. Among this group, participants talked of managing long-term pain, long-term depression or a mental health diagnosis, for example, which made holding down 'mainstream' jobs difficult. These respondents talked of sex work giving them the flexibility to work when they felt well.

Trans respondents mentioned gender transition and the costs, the physical toll and experience of exclusion in the workplace, which led them to selling sex. Some respondents felt that, given these reasons, trans individuals were 'over-represented' in sex work. A number of participants identified as higher education students (as either precipitating their entry into sex work or sex work funding a return to education) and a number identified their (legal) migrant status as constraining their options. The word 'survival' was used frequently:

I started in 2014. I was in a desperate financial situation, no parents to support me and about to become homeless. As I am disabled and was in full time education my opportunities for work were (and remain) limited. Due to my immigration status (not meeting the habitual residency test) I don't qualify for benefits, so despite living in the UK since infancy, having had all of my education here, and never having lived elsewhere, I wasn't eligible for support from the state. (Female Independent)

Everyone I know who does sex work does so for complex and personal reasons. Myself, I am a survival sex worker; I do sex work because it offers me the most flexible way to support myself and my mother who has an autoimmune disease. Under austerity, this is the only job that pays enough. (Female Independent Escort)

I don't know any real-world sex workers. The ones I interact with online seem to be mostly in similar situations to me i.e.: independent, often struggling to get by. (Female Independent Escort)

A way of surviving while being disabled, since I can work for only a few hours a week or even a few hours a month if that's all I can manage, and manage to pay the rent. (Female Independent Escort)

I got started a few years ago after a period of job insecurity in office temping jobs. [...] My experiences of trying to claim benefits have been awful - I felt bullied and belittled by the benefits office and the housing benefit amount they gave me wasn't enough to cover my rent in a private let house share anyway. After suddenly losing a temp job I thought I would give it a try just to try and pay that month's rent while I looked for another job. (Female Webcamming)

I'm a transsexual woman, which was the primary driving force behind my decision to go into the sex industry. At the start of my transition, I was sacked from my job and no one would give me work. Jobs I eventually got were very low paid, insecure and exploitative. I also had discrimination with housing and ended up homeless for over a year sleeping on friends' sofas and in my car. At the same time, the NHS pathway for transition was demeaning and extremely slow and didn't provide all of the necessary treatments I required. So, as well as needing money for basic survival, I was desperate to fund my transition to help minimize the harassment and discrimination I was facing. Sex work for me was profitable compared to

other work available, and helped get me out of the situation I was in. (Trans Independent Escort)

I came to this country legally (have a British passport) as a young adult of 20. I had no family support, no education, no money. [...]. I turned to sex work as a means to survive. Because of this work, I was able to lift myself out of poverty, get myself an education and also support other family members who came here to settle in the UK after me [...]. I still work in the sex industry because when obtaining 'mainstream' qualifications the stigma of my sex work followed me and no one would employ me. And when not telling prospective employers of my work background, there was a big gap in my CV... [...]. So now I work as a dominatrix. I pay all my taxes, am my own boss and am totally in charge of what I do/don't do. It took 20 years to get to this place. (Female Professional Dominant)

Some identified family breakdown or substance misuse as precipitating or compounding factors. These were more commonly articulated among (though not the sole preserve of) street/outdoor workers and brothel workers:

Yes, I would say that most of the girls [in the brothel] I worked with were English but about 30 percent of them were from Eastern Europe and their motivations were purely monetary, I would say. They never drank, they never did drugs, they never bought takeaways, they never had fun or joined in our laughs, they were very work focussed. The rest of us seemed to have no homes to go to or friends, and a breakdown in family relationships, so it was very much a replacement family to most of us, it seemed. (Female Brothel Worker)

We find a trend with women who are on the streets come from experiences of care, or family disruption, they are mostly homeless, and our client load are majority White British. Women who come to us digitally are more diverse, from a range of backgrounds. Many have turned to selling sex for debt reasons, but we have cases of women who have been previously employed or have other life options. (NGO Consultation)

We have all got different reasons why we do this. The two main reasons are money and drugs. You know that anyway. (Female Street Worker)

In addition to the individual and structural circumstances described above, some NGOs (rather than affected individuals themselves) detailed how for some individuals their entry into the sex industry is through deception or coercion by third parties.

We should also note that there were a cluster of responses which strongly rejected and problematised the notion that those involved in selling sex have necessarily experienced any 'disadvantage' or 'adverse early experience'. This group often stressed the pleasures, financial freedom, and satisfaction that sex work afforded them. It is important therefore to underline that the experiences outlined above do not define every individual experience. They are however recurring patterns of experience evidenced in the narratives of the research participants in this study.

Patterns of engagement and moving between settings/services

Both the responses to the online survey and the follow-up email interviews suggest that it is common for individuals to move between settings and services. Although we cannot rule out that our respondent sample is a particularly mobile group, this appeared to apply across diverse backgrounds.

Motivations for moving in and out of settings/services include:

- perceived safety (e.g. from independent escorting into erotic massage; from street into brothels)

- to avoid intermediary payments (e.g. out of brothels into independent)
- to obtain cash quickly (e.g. into street)
- frustration with slow payment (e.g. out of webcamming)
- as a side-line to existing work (e.g. into clip-making)
- to earn more per hour (e.g. into BDSM; out of phone work)
- to establish regulars (e.g. into sugaring)

Those in street prostitution may move into indoor (brothel, escorting) if they obtain access to a phone or the internet; while for others in street work, lack of access or technological literacy, as well as chaotic contexts and drug addiction hinder such mobility. Those in street prostitution may also temporarily sell sex indoors while in homeless hostels, or receiving health treatment, for example. Movement for some was facilitated by a chance encounter or peer recommendation.

I've done erotic massage and stripping too and they were fine but actual full service sex work in brothels or at an in-call with other girls is the easiest type of work there is for me. (Female Brothel Worker)

I have done a range of work over the years, from 15-minute sexual services, car meets, in calls, outcalls. I've never done phone or cam work as I find it too forced/uncomfortable for me. I am now taking a formal massage course [...] and hope to offer non-penetrative non-oral erotic massages as I feel this will be a sexually safer thing to offer. (Trans Female Independent Escort)

In the first year of working I only did stripping and did 3/4 nights a week. Now I am studying full time too so I work 2 days a week as an escort in addition to 'strippergram' work for stag parties etc. whenever they come up, which is usually a couple of times a month. (Female Erotic Dancer)

[As a street worker], I worked roughly six nights a week seeing 1 or 2 clients a night. I have been an independent escort and now work in a massage parlour. I feel a lot safer now being able to work indoors and having either a way to screen or security in the building. (Female Former Street and Current Brothel Worker)

[I work on the street] every night. I worked in a brothel for a few weeks but they took half of my money - I didn't like that, so stopped. (Female Street Worker)

Individual movement between settings may also be determined by trafficking or coercion:

'It is not uncommon for women to be trafficked into prostitution from abroad, escape from a brothel in the UK, only to end up street homeless and exchanging sex for shelter, before re-entering prostitution...' (NGO Survey Response)

Respondents described a range of engagement patterns: some identify sex work as their only income; others are studying, doing other paid work, volunteering or are caring for others. 'Full-time' could be 2-3 clients a week for some who are paid at the higher end; others are working for as many days as they need to get by. Engagement can be intermittent, including 'end of the month'; 'touring' periods of several weeks; yo-yo-ing while trying to address substance misuse or homelessness; funding travel or study and working between or as needed; or working during stable periods of mental or physical health. Some respondents engaged in selling sex for shelter, to meet bills, for food or drugs described their engagement as 'survival sex'. NGOs and sex worker collectives reported changes in social security benefits to be a driver for many, either in returning to sex work after leaving it, or entering it for the first time. Some individuals may sell sexual services once in their lifetime; some may be involved (continuously, or on and off) for decades.

In the past, I have worked at brothels where I go in once a week for a 6-hour shift and that's it; and at other times I'll be there 3 or 4 days a week, sometimes doing double shifts. It depends on how much time I have available or how much money I need to make at a given

time. Sometimes I will work for months doing outcalls only and only seeing clients once a week, and sometimes I will hire an in-call space for a few days and work non-stop for four-five days and then take a break and do it again. (Female Brothel Worker)

It fluctuates with my circumstances. Just now, it is my only income. (Trans Female Independent Escort)

Three clients a month currently but 3 a week in the past. Sometimes more, sometimes less. (Male Independent Escort)

I started off almost every night of the week as I had fled domestic violence with a toddler and needed a deposit and first month's rent, clothing, furniture, toys and Christmas was around the corner. (Female Street Worker)

Finally, in terms of engagement, it was mentioned in our stakeholder consultations that sellers may go abroad on some jobs (for 2-3 days, for example); similarly, it was noted that individuals may fly in to the UK for short jobs, coming in to local airports and working nearby. The examples given by participants related to independent or agency workers. This is distinct to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, which may also occur within and across state boundaries.

Advertising, payment and third parties

While local press, specialist magazines and carding (e.g. telephone boxes) were the predominant forms of advertising pre-2000 for indoor sex work (escorting, brothels/parlours), the majority of advertising is now online. There are a handful of large online platforms, which provide a listings service and a search function for services or for seller attributes.

Some independent workers run their own website or use social media to raise their profile and advertise services. Dating and other apps are used to arrange meetings. Specialist sites are available for 'sugar dating' or escorting. Regular listings or online classified sites are also used. Some independent escorts, out of concern for anonymity, do not advertise, but instead respond to ads placed by buyers. As noted above, some individuals, particularly men, arrange paid encounters on dating apps and social networking sites after being propositioned by other users, without having advertised sexual services (Morris, 2018).

Follow up contact is then organised by text, email, phone or Skype with most independent sellers following their established procedures to promote safety (see **Risk, Harm and Managing Safety** section below).

Brothels, parlours, strip clubs and escort agencies tend to have a web presence, sometimes with profiles of workers for prospective buyers to view, and some use social media to advertise. Many brothels and parlours offer a walk-in service, with buyers paying the receptionist or maid and viewing either a live line-up or photos of the individuals working that day.

Some street and outdoor workers are also using phones or online platforms to arrange meetings with new buyers or regulars; others simply walk their particular 'beat' or 'patch' locally.

Few of our respondents identified having pimps (again, we recognise that this research will not have reached those currently most exploited), though a small number of street workers or individuals who had experienced trafficking mentioned previously having a pimp:

I once had a pimp to look after me, that did not go well. He is serving time and I managed to break free before I got passed on. I work on my own. I don't advertise as such but [it's] quite clear why I'm stood around. (Female Street worker)

Several NGOs noted the involvement of abusive partners where the abuse included expecting her to pay for his, or for their mutual, drug/alcohol use through selling sex, particularly in the case of street

prostitution. An NGO supporting male sex workers noted that coercion to have sex with others as part of a controlling relationship occurred among same-sex male, as well as heterosexual, relationships. Some NGOs noted traffickers, including within the context of organised crime, as potential third parties.

There are a wide variety of payment methods. Commonly, cash is used, and almost always taken at the start of an off-street booking or outdoor encounter. Clients will tend to prefer cash if they are meeting a new seller and/or if they are concerned to maintain their privacy. Bank transfers, debit and credit cards are also used, particularly for high cost services or where a regular relationship is established. Clients also pay using online marketplace vouchers, buying items on wish lists, dedicated payment or money transfer services, or gifts in kind. Online shopping vouchers are less desirable as where they can be spent is limited, while bank transfers are less desirable for some because they may reveal the seller's or buyer's real identity.

Escort workers doing out-calls in hotels will usually require a deposit to book the room. BDSM workers will tend to require a deposit to book dungeons and/or because there may be significant preparation. Many survey respondents cited deposits as a way of weeding out 'timewasters'.

Sex can also be exchanged for shelter/rent, drugs/alcohol or food, or other things such as transportation (we heard, for example, of taxi drivers asking for sex instead of money for journeys). One NGO observed that some women who are experiencing homelessness may engage in sex for shelter for short time periods, e.g. 1-2 nights at a time, as well as sell sex outdoors. The men offering shelter can be regular punters, drug dealers, or local men who have a flat near the beat. The same NGO observed that women working off-street who are exchanging sex for shelter, tend to do so for longer time periods. Some brothels and parlours offer accommodation, which may or may not relate to a seller's earnings on the premises.

Individuals using adult platforms to advertise their services or to facilitate webcamming, for example, explained that sites take between 10-30% as a fee and bank transfer the remainder once the individual hits a 'check-out' amount, e.g. £100. Some platforms use credits or tokens, which are then converted into actual money transferred to the seller on check-out.

Respondents described varying payment terms in strip clubs, brothels, parlours and escort agencies.

Some clubs control the flow of cash, so it goes from the customer to them and then to me (minus the cut if there is one). In the case of card payments, the money always goes through the club first, then to me. The more control the club has over the flow of cash, the more opportunity they have to abuse the power balance – e.g. adding on extra fees, 20% surcharges etc. (Female Erotic Dancer)

In the brothel, my manager charges them money to come into the building then agrees a price with them. I take the money from the room to the lounge so they can check it for fakes, and in the room I discuss extras with clients (things like oral without a condom). The managers don't want to hear about extras because there's a proper shop front and they have their line about "whatever happens in the room is between the two of you" so I keep the money, but they don't let you charge more than £20 for extras and always say that they find out from clients how much you charge extra and stuff. Reception take their cut (around 50%) and then any fees – we have "facilities fees" where they charge us for stuff like bedding and locker use – and then give us the money when we're done. I'm not allowed to tell clients how much money I'm getting. If we don't get any clients we still have to pay facilities fees so sometimes they send us to the cash point to pay them. (Female Brothel Worker)

A number of independent sex workers mentioned that they do self-assessment for tax purposes.

Risk, harm and managing safety

Survey and email interview participants provided a sizeable amount of data on risk, harm and safety. For the online survey, we think that this was in part due to proposals for the UK to adopt a FOSTA/SESTA-style² law and related debates in the UK Parliament that took place soon after the survey opened. For the follow-up interviews, we specifically asked (Q11 – **Appendix 4**), “What are the (a) challenges (b) risks (c) harms of what you do (did)?” Three email interview respondents (out of 42) identified this as a leading question, which they felt was rooted in assumptions about sex work. However, question 11 was preceded by (see Q10 – **Appendix 4**) “What are the benefits/positive aspects of what you do (did), for you and for others?” so we feel confident that we sought a broad response. The benefits identified by participants are included throughout this report.

Many female respondents mentioned the fear of, and experience of, physical or sexual violence. The majority linked this fear and experience with the legal environment (see below) as well as violence against women and girls in society more broadly. Potential perpetrators were identified as clients, police and ‘civilians’. A number of female participants were clear that they had never experienced any violence and, indeed, that they were more likely to within ‘non-sex-work’ situations. While some male respondents did identify the risk of physical and sexual violence, their concerns were more focused on sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and managing social stigma. Robbery and payment with counterfeit money were also identified as risks to be managed.

Some participants noted that drug use heightened the risk of violence or other harm. Being held against one’s will (e.g. in a buyer’s home) was mentioned as a potential risk for both indoor and on-street direct sex work settings.

Stalking, or clients becoming ‘obsessed’ or ‘emotionally involved’ was a concern for some:

I was stalked by a client for about 18 months – it was like a slow death. It ended up being mostly online; I received threats and he bad-mouthed me all over the internet. He would stalk other sex workers as well as me. He only stopped because I pretended to move abroad. (Female Independent Escort)

Some respondents identified psychological harm, particularly where financial need or coercion meant it was not possible to pick and choose clients.

It’s traumatising to have sex with people you’re disgusted by. (Female Independent, previously induced into prostitution at 18)

Some reported self-harming while selling sex. Others talked of the emotional labour involved in maintaining the fiction of being interested in, or intimate with, clients. For example:

When I started, I was an escort. That usually involved for me longer appointments, often overnights. That was more stressful work because it required more of an act. Being nice to someone for 12 hours or on occasion two or three days is hard work. (Male Independent)

Some cited a related risk of emotional ‘numbness’ and negative views towards men: something that was not always recognised until after they had left sex work completely.

Every escort will tell you they love what they do, but they are slowly dying inside. This is my personal experience. [...] I became the commodity, and I was totally numb towards men. (Female Former Independent Escort)

² H.R.1865 - Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017, 115th Congress (2017-2018), available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1865>; S.1693 - Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act of 2017, 115th Congress (2017-2018), available at: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/1693>

Another risk I see, which hasn't affected me, but I see in other, younger, women, is the potential to develop disdain for male sexuality [...] in this kind of job, that disdain could impact subsequent personal relationships. (Female Erotic Dancer)

I'm less trustful of men now. But more realistic about them, probably. (Female Erotic Masseur)

A small number mentioned the preoccupation with body image and the pressure to engage in cosmetology. Organisations working with male sex workers spoke of misuse of steroids as a current issue.

A small number of sellers mentioned the challenge of dealing with clients with poor oral or genital hygiene.

Participants, including individuals and NGOs, identified STIs as a key risk. Most individuals currently sex working spoke of regular sexual health check-ups as important. While our data suggests that most sellers and buyers (including on-street) are insisting on protection, sellers did identify instances of buyers trying to slip off a condom or trying to pay extra for 'bareback'. Oral sex seems to be more often offered without a condom. In the adult film industry, a respondent told us that:

...the shoot was without protection, as is usually the case in porn it seems so we [poly-amorous, fluid-bonded partner] had to have a discussion around that. And I obviously had to get fully checked for STI's beforehand and had to get a signed form stating I was clear. (Male, Single Experience of Porn Acting)

In relation to sexual health, the closure of support services in recent years was keenly felt by some participants:

I lost my sex worker support service (the service was 35 years old). They were like real mums – they were there no matter what. I was utterly devastated. They found me a police officer I could trust, they got me PREP (HIV meds) when I was raped, they supported me in following my dreams. Where do we go now? Where do people new to the industry go now? (Male Independent Escort)

The clinic that I regularly attended for 7 years [...] lost its funding just under two years ago and closed down. [...] I had a really strong and consistent relationship with the two nurse practitioners who ran the clinic [...the] Project gave me a focal point, staff that I trusted who I knew I could contact if I had any problems and who understood the job I was doing. (Male Independent Escort)

Male respondents and NGOs mentioned the risks of chemical sex or 'chemsex' particularly among male sex workers and their clients. Chemsex involves taking drugs (such as crystal methamphetamine, GHB (gamma hydroxybutyrate) or mephedrone, also known as miaow miaow) that enhance sex and make individuals feel uninhibited. This respondent works with men to normalise sober sex:

Sex work for men is dangerous currently. Many escorts get high with clients, meaning they are vulnerable to robbery, rape and attack regardless of muscle mass. [...] Most of my clients are recovering from the "chem sex" scene, meaning they have gotten so used to sex on drugs that they are afraid they cannot enjoy sober sex. (Male Independent Escort)

A small number of survey respondents claimed that drug use in some brothels and parlours is encouraged and/or supplied by management, and by some escort agencies.

Consumption of alcohol in strip clubs was similarly identified as increasing the potential for assault:

It is also difficult, in an environment where alcohol is flowing freely, to police your own personal boundaries, particularly if you are in a venue where the no-touching rule is not enforced. (Female Erotic Dancer)

Developing a drug or alcohol dependency, in order to cope with sex work for those who did not fully want to be doing it, was noted as a risk both for indoor and outdoor settings.

Loneliness was a recurring issue voiced by participants. Working with another individual (or individuals) was identified as a way of enhancing safety, of sharing tips, saving on costs, of having a laugh and 'off-loading' emotionally between clients.

Sharing also meant I could work less, since it was cheaper to split the costs of the flat and bills. (Female Independent Escort)

If I had a seizure (I have epilepsy) with a client, as most clients think escorting or being a client is illegal... they are unlikely to call 999 in case they get arrested or the event outs them, breaking their double life with a wife. (Male Independent Escort)

The majority of respondents within the online survey and within the email interviews identified the prevailing legal environment within England and Wales – in particular, the law against two or more sellers working together from the same premises - as problematic for managing safety. Sellers who had experienced rape, assault, stalking, robbery or other crimes were often reluctant to report to the police. This was identified as empowering perpetrators:

I had moments where I was afraid for my safety: I was insulted and threatened and I knew that in these cases I wouldn't report to the police. And the aggressor knew it too. (Female Erotic Masseur)

The law is impossible to navigate, because all of the stuff that makes me safer is illegal, and I had to hide from the police on the street even though I had no option but to be there. Now I work in illegal premises but it's safer. (Female Street Worker)

Police raids on indoor premises were described as a constant threat.

In the brothel - because reception held my money - I would have lost it all had there been a raid. Also, if there was trouble then we were told not to contact police and draw attention to the place. (Female Brothel Worker)

Some workers were also reluctant to report crimes which occurred outside of work, for example, being sexually assaulted on a date, because they felt that their identity as a sex worker would compromise their ability to be taken seriously by police, or to seek justice.

A BDSM practitioner identified specific risks in relation to their work:

I also have to be careful with clients that demand for risky BDSM services, because they might choke/faint/bleed and I don't want to have to call an ambulance [...] The added risk of being a fetish worker is that you're working at a space that's full of potential weapons... (Female BDSM Practitioner)

This fear was compounded where workers are also (legal) migrants:

In terms of "duos", aka doing a booking with another worker, I've done them a few times and I do again think they are miles better [...] in terms of safety and in terms of beating isolation. They're not something I do often though because I still have this awful fear of a bad client reporting us - my clients know I'm an immigrant [because the] ([adult services website] doesn't let you lie about it) so they know at any point that by ringing the police on me I'd be doubly in trouble than a British sex worker would be. (Female Independent Escort)

Some street workers and independent workers did however report good relationships with local police. In addition, some police operations may identify individuals who are being forcibly coerced or exploited.

Some erotic dancers identified the revocation of many SEV licences following the Policing and Crime Act 2009, without attendant scrutiny of working conditions, as problematic:

...suddenly [there were] fewer venues to work in, and a surplus of labour. Not enough work to go around creates a race to the bottom in terms of value... The clubs that survived the cull now have a monopoly, and can control working conditions to their own benefit. (Female Erotic Dancer)

The combination of financial need and the legal and regulatory environment were identified as a “perfect cocktail of conditions” (Female Erotic Dancer) for undermining safety:

... it can often become a free-for-all race-to-the-bottom of transgressive behaviours – rules and boundaries may become flouted if dancers are in need of cash (the higher the house fees and commissions, the greater the pressure to earn) which then gives customers an upper hand. (Female Erotic Dancer)

The place was very profitable [...] This is the kind of money that fosters an unhealthy relationship with the boss – she could fire us at any moment and abused that fear to control us. There were many points we had to choose between her abusive behaviour (threats, mind games, expensive fines etc.) or walk out and lose a lot of money. I personally had a lot of debt and this felt like a difficult choice to make, so I stayed. (Female Brothel Worker)

No holiday pay, no sick pay. If we don't work, we can't pay the bills. If we get injured, we could face weeks without pay. (Female Independent Escort)

Individuals selling or advertising sex online are increasingly using technology in order to try to manage safety. Some adult platforms provide a feedback system and at least one platform, a webcam option, so that sellers can review clients' history, registration date and reviews (see also **Appendix 11**). Reviews on sellers are also published. Participants talked of calling clients for first appointments so that they can hear their voice and preferring to have a telephone number, rather than receive a call from a withheld number. A handful mentioned using Skype to screen clients first.

I only advertise through [online adult platform]. It has a feedback system. I only see clients with at least five positive feedback and no negative feedback. (Female Independent Escort)

Conversely, some sellers spoke in negative terms about online review boards ('punter sites'):

Online review boards. They're terrifying. The threat of a “bad review” (which many perceive as career-ruining - but this is mostly untrue) can be utilised to make sex workers perform services they're not comfortable with. (Female Independent Escort)

I don't read punter forums because I find them to be degrading (only a minority of clients use them, thankfully). (Female Independent Escort)

Social stigma was commonly identified among participants as a source of harm and anxiety.

The stigma perpetuated by politicians and the media. Because of the constant negative dialogue around sex work, I feel I have to hide my occupation from my family and wider friend group. (Female Brothel Worker)

The harm would probably be that I feel like damaged goods now – if I was looking for a meaningful romantic relationship, it really weighs down on my self-esteem. (Female Erotic Masseuse)

It is very hard to be stigmatised because of what you do. I lost friends and partners who couldn't accept what I was doing. (Male Erotic Masseuse)

A number of respondents identified the fear of being 'outed' to friends, family or work colleagues. They also feared social services becoming involved and questioning their ability to parent. One woman working in escorting noted that working in a rural location increases the risk of being outed or identified by people, compared to working in larger cities.

Others expressed concern that stigma and the law (including convictions for prostitution-related offences such as brothel-keeping and street soliciting) meant their ability to exit and move into other employment became harder:

The lack of further employment opportunities is a huge thing - it's totally contradictory because I'm at university which should give you a sign that I don't intend to do this forever, but it's basically been rendered my only choice at least until I find a charity/NGO with enough goodwill to hire a "fallen woman". (Female Independent Escort)

Finally, some respondents identified some of the fractious political and social media debates around prostitution and/or sex work as increasing psychological harm and overlooking the underlying economic and intersectional issues:

...Abolitionists using my story to score political points instead of listening to me explaining how and why decriminalisation would make me safer (Female Independent, formerly Street Worker)

In my experience the only real harm has been a lack of choice. If I hadn't been abused and made homeless I wouldn't have been in the industry, if there was adequate support for disabled people I wouldn't have been here. [...] I know that the sex industry is sexist but that's because we live in a patriarchy, everything is sexist. I keep seeing things where people say that the sex industry teaches men that they can buy women and so it needs to be over, but I never see anyone offering alternatives. (Female Independent)

Buyers and buying

A number of sex buyers responded to our online survey and we completed follow-up email interviews with five. All were male. In addition, a number of individuals completed the online survey but did not identify as buyers – though their answers suggested they were or had been. In the follow-up email interviews, we asked sellers whether they had, or would consider, paying for sex. We also asked buyers if they had, or would consider, selling sex. There was evidence for both, for all genders. Sellers who would consider paying or had paid for sex, talked of buying as an opportunity to learn new skills and in appreciation of fellow sex workers. However, the majority of sellers said they would not pay for sex: most commonly because it did not appeal; or because they did not need to; or because they would not want to engender in others the difficult feelings that they themselves felt when selling.

We asked sellers to describe the demographics of their clients and we asked buyers to describe the demographics of other buyers they knew (our small sample did not know other buyers in person, except buyers they may come in to contact with at sex parties).

I must confess that I am unaware of any of my friends and acquaintances who pay for these services. I feel sure that some do, but it's so important that it remains confidential, and I think many men would be embarrassed to admit that they do. (Male Sex Buyer)

Some participants were keen to stress that buyers are diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, sexuality, class and so on.

Everyday guys. People's brothers, dads, sons... your local plumber, teacher, shop worker, mechanic etc... there is nothing strange about these people: they are just ordinary guys you might pick up on a night out. (Female Former Street Worker)

While it appears to depend in part on geographical location and service/setting, by far the most common demographic cited by participants was, "White, middle class men, aged 30s-50s". Respondents said that clients tended to be married: some are high-status, sometimes high-profile, individuals.

Respondents with experience of managed brothels or selling BDSM services were more likely to identify clients as ‘middle and upper class’ men. Most buyers appear to visit brothels individually; some in groups. Some travel to different parts of the UK to pay for sexual services, or indeed abroad. For one respondent, it was the experience of paying for sex overseas that had led to regular buying on return to the UK.

We asked buyers and sellers to identify buyer motivations: responses were varied. We group these responses in to 3 broad categories, listed in no particular order:

Personal	Practical	Sexual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To have intimacy and human contact • Loneliness • Being single or widowed or separated • Partner has long-term illness • Having difficulty dating due to physical or intellectual disability, size, disfigurement • Older clients seeking “last roll of the sexual dice before they die” • Feeling more masculine • Losing virginity • A personal treat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No time to invest in non-paid relationships • No commitment required • Clarity and certainty on what will happen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being in a ‘sexless’ marriage or long-term relationship • Being sexually unhappy, lacking in sexual confidence • Men who grew up in a religious/homophobic environment struggling with their desires • Physical sexual release • To engage in ‘vanilla’ sex and or clichéd ‘sexy chat’ • Needing help with ejaculation issues (after prostate operation, or old age, or just nervousness) • Looking to explore a fantasy • Primary partner may not want to engage with fetishes • Buying in groups, often having taken drink or drugs

Part B: Settings and Services

Three sources of information were analysed and combined in order to identify the ‘Settings and Services’:

1. Coding the 1400+ items of literature from our systematic search by setting/service;
2. Coding the survey responses where respondents identified which setting they worked in;
3. Downloading and analysing the survey responses to the question, “Are there particular ‘types’ of prostitution and sex work that you feel need to be included in this project? Please give details.”

Overall, we identified the following settings and services for prostitution and sex work (listed in alphabetical order):

Settings and services	
Bar-based sex work and hostess bars	Sex parties
BDSM, kink and fetish	Street and outdoor sex work
Brothels, parlours, saunas	Sugar arrangements
Erotic and exotic dance	Telephone, text-based, TV-based, Live
Erotic massage	voyeurism
Escort: independent	Therapeutic services
Escort: agency	Webcamming
Pornography, glamour and erotica	

Please note the limitation identified in **Appendix 1** on the identification of literature for settings/services other than street/outdoor work and some indoor work.

Bar-based sex work and Hostess bars

Our literature review identified 17 items relating to ‘bar-based sex work’ and ‘hostess bars’. Fourteen of these relate to East Asia: China, Japan, Thailand, Korea, Taiwan Cambodia or the Philippines. Three relate to male sex workers (Collins, 2005; Collins, 2007; Storer, 2001) and the majority are ethnographic studies (for example, Bedford & Hwang, 2011; Wilson, 2008; Ratliff, 2003), with three focusing on sexual health (Morisky et al., 2010; Maher et al., 2011; Storer, 2001). Migrancy, mobility and ‘border areas’ appear to be common themes in this literature.

According to the literature (our research participants did not discuss experiences in this setting) there is no directly comparable hostess culture in England and Wales to that found in East Asia.

For decades, ‘clip-joints’ (or ‘near-beer’ bars) operated in London’s Soho area and elsewhere, inviting male customers to pay exorbitant prices for non-alcoholic drinks and minimal sexual interaction, under duress of bouncers enforcing ‘service charges’. In 2007, the London Local Authorities Act reclassified clip-joints as sex establishments, meaning that they required a relevant licence. Some bars in London and elsewhere are described as ‘hostess bars’, offering a cocktail or speakeasy atmosphere. Some venues may host sex parties (see **Sex Parties** below).

There are a number of ‘gentleman’s clubs’ across the country offering lap dancing, stripping or other sexual entertainment for an audience for financial gain. Some services within these venues, such as paying for a VIP hour, which includes attentive conversation and flirting, could be considered akin to hostess bar practices. These clubs are licensed as ‘sexual entertainment venues’ under Section 27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009. See also **Erotic Dance** below.

BDSM, Kink and Fetish

We identified 6 items of literature relating to the nature and prevalence of bondage and discipline (B&D), dominance and submission (D&S), and sadism & masochism (S&M) (which we refer to collectively here as BDSM) or kink or fetish work. These include an ethnographic study of life as a dominatrix (Lindemann, 2012; Lindemann, 2011) and the therapeutic value of BDSM work (Williams & Storm, 2012; Lindemann, 2011). We are aware of a wider sociological and legal literature on issues of consent in BDSM, for example (see, e.g. Cowan, 2012; Pinsky & Levey, 2015), but in general, it appears that the experience of BDSM, kink and fetish (including male and other gender practitioners) is under-researched in the contemporary academic literature on prostitution and sex work.

Our respondents indicated that roles in BDSM include professional dominant (dominatrix, pro-domme, femdomme); professional submissive (pro-sub; bottom); and professional switch (who may

swap roles between dominant and submissive). Dominants are generally female and may provide services online or in-person. There are also male and trans BDSM practitioners providing services to cis or trans male or female clients. Some BDSM practitioners will state clearly that they offer no intimacy, nudity or genital contact. Escorts and independent workers may also offer some BDSM practices as part of their service. Some pro-dommes will have careers outside of BDSM: for others, this is their main job.

Practices include spanking, humiliation, roleplay (as a child, as a pet), bondage, penetration, sado-masochism, play-piercing and other 'impact play'. Many BDSM practitioners will hire a dungeon space or may establish their own. Financial domination (or findomme) involves role-playing of the client being blackmailed financially.

Kink and fetish work can appear non-sexual but the client invests erotic meaning in to an object (e.g. shoes) or practice (e.g. trampling), making this a sexual or erotic experience for them. Other services offered within the BDSM, kink and fetish umbrella, as well as by some escorts and independent workers, include hardsports/scat, watersports, splashing or Adult Nursing Relationship (also known as 'ANR' or erotic lactation). Additional specialist practices described by respondents to the online survey include shibari, ropework and session wrestlers.

A common entry route identified by respondents was an interest in, or unpaid experience of, BDSM, kink and fetish, including attending fetish clubs or parties or seeking to explore personal kinks. Others moved in to BDSM since it potentially provides greater control over the transaction, including removing nudity and genital touching if desired, and higher fees.

A sizeable number of respondents talked about offering 'basic' BDSM services as part of their escort or independent work. However, BDSM was identified as a service that requires skill and commitment to embrace the role convincingly.

It was acknowledged by respondents that professional submissives face higher risks than dominants. In-person domination work is not without any risk to the seller if, for example, the buyer does not adhere to the rules established at the outset or has malign intent.

Buyers described pro-dommes as 'confident' and 'well educated' or 'well-travelled', though this can also be part of the projected role. Respondents described the BDSM scene as overwhelmingly White and middle class.

Brothels, Massage Parlours and Saunas Operating as Brothels

Previous research in England and Wales has looked at the backgrounds and working practices of individuals working in brothel settings (Pitcher, 2019, 2015a, 2015b; Sanders, O'Neill & Pitcher, 2009; Sanders, 2005); their health, including sexual health and drug/alcohol use (Jeal & Salisbury, 2007); violence/harm and safety management (Kinnell, 2008; Sanders & Campbell, 2007; Church, et al., 2001); and trafficking and exploitation in brothel settings (Skidmore et al., 2016). These have primarily focused on women in brothel settings, and on residential brothels as well as massage parlours and saunas operating as brothels.

Brothels are indoor premises where direct sexual services are provided for payment by more than one individual, either simultaneously or at different times. Brothels can exist in residential flats or houses, hotels, and licensed and unlicensed saunas and massage parlours that also offer sexual services. We were also told of nail bars functioning as brothels.

It is important to note that not all massage establishments and saunas will offer – or allow on their premises – paid sexual services; this includes, for example, gay saunas where men meet for unpaid sexual encounters. The focus of this section is on any brothel setting where the primary purpose of a premises is to offer paid sexual services, with multiple individuals working/available for paid sex in that premises.

The legal position of brothels in England and Wales can be found on the Crown Prosecution Website (CPS)³: in brief, a brothel is defined as more than one individual providing sexual services from a premises. Managing a brothel, or permitting a premises to operate as a brothel, are illegal activities. Selling sex within a brothel is illegal if it can be shown that the seller is in some way involved in the running of the brothel.

Sexual services offered in brothels include various direct sex acts such as penetrative (vaginal or anal) sex, oral sex and manual masturbation. These are sometimes combined with other services such as massage or BDSM.

Brothels can be rented or owned by the individuals (or at least one of the individuals) selling sex from the premises ('collaborative' brothels), or they can be managed by a third party that does not themselves sell sex from the premises, such as a brothel manager, agency, or an individual renting out the premises to those selling sex but not themselves selling sex ('managed brothel').

In **managed** brothels, (whether in flats, parlours or saunas), individuals work shifts ranging from e.g. 6 hours to 24 hours. They may work anywhere from once per week to 7 days per week. They may work in one brothel or in different brothels over the course of a week/month. Some managed brothels have one individual on-site selling sex at a time, others have several individuals. Managed brothels do their own advertising, usually via online directories, their own websites, social media, and possibly local newspapers. There is usually a receptionist and/or maid who takes bookings/walk-ins and ideally screens clients. If there is more than one individual present selling sex, they present themselves to the buyer, who chooses an individual (if there is more than one available), agrees a price either with them or the receptionist/maid, and usually pays this up front and in cash.

Prices in managed brothels depend on the services agreed. Individuals in managed brothels pay a cut to the brothel from their earnings from buyers, usually 40-60%. They may in addition pay further fees to security and the receptionist/maid if this is not included in the initial cut. Some brothels also require people working in them to pay a shift or day fee for being there (one respondent noted a £200 day fee, plus 20% of that day's earnings to the receptionist). Individuals may be able to keep money from 'extras'.

In addition to static managed brothels as described above, in some cases escort agencies or individuals rent out flats to sex workers, and organise clients for them. In cases of trafficking, gangs/traffickers rent out mainly residential premises, including temporarily, keeping predominantly non-UK national victims there to provide sexual services against their will, often moving them between brothels. As recent research shows, traffickers also sometimes exploit women in brothels fronting as 'massage parlours'. These women may be advertised on adult services websites (Skidmore, et al., 2016).

In the case of **collaborative** brothels, individuals selling sex share a flat or house with others selling sex, either concurrently or at different times, taking in-calls as escorts. In some cases, individuals tour together, renting premises temporarily. Aside from a landlord or hotel to whom rent/fees are paid, there is no third party such as an agency or manager managing the premises. Individuals in collaborative brothels usually organise their own advertising and bookings, or they may employ someone else to do so. They can share rental costs equally. As recent research notes, in some cases one sex worker takes on an administrative role and charges other workers a fee for rent and other costs, which can blur the lines between managed and collaborative (Pitcher, 2015a).

³ CPS guidance on Prostitution and Exploitation of Prostitution, together with links to statute, are available at: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/prostitution-and-exploitation-prostitution>

Erotic Massage

We did not identify through our systematic searches of the literature any ethnographic, qualitative or quantitative studies focusing specifically on erotic massage (noting our previous caveat on the literature searches), but the setting was frequently identified by survey respondents and email interviewees.

Erotic massage, which is also known as ‘happy ending’, ‘rub and tug’ or ‘bodyslide’, involves sensual massage ending usually in masturbation of the client. While erotic massage may form part of the repertoire of an escort or independent worker, it can also be offered as a distinct service by a dedicated erotic masseur, working with others or alone. Some respondents identified oral sex, rimming (oral stimulation of the anus) or penetration as part of the massage: others did not.

Erotic massage was identified positively by many respondents, either as a current role or as a role they would like to work towards.

We could not discern a clear pattern of demographics for this setting: most commonly however it appears to be a progression from, or additional practice for, full-service escorts and independent workers.

Erotic and Exotic Dance

There appears to be more established literature on erotic dance. We identified 28 items through our systematic search of the literature. The majority of the literature is focused on the United States and on female dancers. One study considers male dancers (Boden, 2007) and Pilcher (2016) explores female spectatorship. Three studies develop a typology of erotic dance, dancers or clubs (Sloan, 2004; Colosi, 2008; Bradley-Engen, Mindy & Ulmer, 2009).

Ethnographic and interview work exploring the lived realities of erotic dance form the majority of the literature identified (for example, Shoemate, 2009; Barton, 2001; Clifton, 2002; Deshotels & Forsyth, 2006). Intersections with race (Brooks, 2010) and with drug use and sexual health (Sherman et al., 2011a; Sherman et al., 2011b) form the remainder.

Erotic or exotic dance is also known as stripping or striptease. ‘Strippergrams’ or ‘kissograms’ are individuals who are self-employed or employed via an agency or business to deliver a greeting, combined with a striptease act.

A Sexual Entertainment Venue is defined in law under section 27 of the Policing and Crime Act 2009 as “any premises at which relevant entertainment is provided before a live audience for the financial gain of the organiser or the entertainer.” Such venues require a license to operate. ‘Relevant entertainment’ can include as Lap dancing; Pole dancing; Table dancing; Strip shows; Peep shows; and Live sex shows. Burlesque shows may not fall under Sexual Entertainment Venue licensing rules, depending on how they are conducted. We focus here particularly on the experiences of those working in strip pubs and clubs.

In general, our email interview respondents tended not to have previously worked in the sex industry: rather, they were attracted to erotic dance specifically. However, the majority went on to escorting or working from home offering full-service, though perhaps after an extended period of stripping. Routes in usually involved individuals contacting a club to arrange an audition or signing up with an agency.

Respondents identified dancers as diverse in terms of socio-economic background and ethnicity. Their perception was that the licensing conditions placed on sexual entertainment venues, requiring that dancers have the right to work in the UK, meant that they were not aware of dancers who had been coerced or trafficked from outside the UK.

Respondents told us that shifts are arranged through the house manager or agency. There are a wide variety of working conditions and payment methods: dancers identified these as frequently problematic (see under **Cross Cutting Themes - Risk, harm and managing safety**

Escorting: Independent

The literature on escorting in England and Wales (including studies on the UK as a whole) explores the broad experiences and backgrounds of both independent and agency escorts, of various genders (Cunningham, et al., 2018; Pitcher, 2019; Pitcher, 2015b; Sanders, et al., 2009; 2017). Some of the literature focuses on experiences of violence and risk/safety management strategies employed by escorts generally (Kinnell, 2008) and specifically by male escorts who sell sex to men (Jamel, 2011). There is sometimes differentiation between agency and independent escorts (Pitcher, 2015a; Sanders et al., 2016). The majority of studies appear to focus solely or primarily on independent escorts, including as relates to violence and risk/safety management (Campbell, et al., 2019; Davies & Evans, 2007). We did not identify any literature focusing exclusively on agency escorts in England and Wales.⁴

According to our respondents, those working as independent escorts work alone and are independent of third parties such as agencies, managers or pimps. They offer direct sexual services, sometimes combined with other services such as fetish/kink/BDSM. They can take in-calls, where they meet clients at their (the escort's) home, a hotel, or a flat or room rented or owned for this purpose. This can be a static location or various locations (e.g. booking hotel rooms while 'touring' different towns/cities). Independent escorts may take out-calls, where they meet clients at the latter's home or at another indoor location organised by the client. They set their own prices, hours, service limitations and decide which clients they see. Some may manage all aspects of their work, some may subcontract out aspects such as web design or accounting (Pitcher, 2015a). The majority advertise online, including on adult services websites (including both general and niche websites), social media, dating sites or apps, and/or their own websites. Some advertise on one platform, some on several. Some independent escorts also advertise in local print newspapers, but online is preferred by most. Bookings are arranged via email, sms, phone call, direct messages on social media platforms or websites.

Individuals can have bookings anywhere from each day per week, to only once or twice every few weeks or months. Bookings can be 15 minutes or half an hour (some escorts will not offer these brief slots), to one or several hours, overnight, or several days.

In-calls tend to cost less than out-calls. Additional services such as 'watersports' may cost extra.

Respondents suggested those working as independent escorts are mainly women (cis and trans), and to a lesser extent, men (cis and trans). It has been noted that men, trans men and trans women are more likely to work independently than in managed brothel settings (Pitcher, 2015a, 2015b).

Some try sex work without direct sexual contact, but find it less profitable than full-service and move into independent escorting for this reason.

Many would rather share a flat or other premises with others selling sex but avoid because of the risk of arrest under brothel-keeping laws.

⁴ Amongst our literature search results, only three studies focused on agency escorts, and these were in the US: Smith, Grov & Seal (2008a; 2008b) and Smith et al. (2013), explored the experiences of male escorts working for a single agency in the US.

Escorting: Agency

Agency escorts may offer the same services as independent escorts identified in the section above, but will almost always offer out-calls only (for example, to a hotel or to a client's home). Agencies will generally organise advertising, booking and handle payment, or workers receive the payment and are asked to refund part of it as commission to the agency.

Key issues raised by agency escort respondents were around levels of autonomy and commission charges. Some felt that agencies restricted choice and could make it harder to 'say no'; but this also depended on the agency.

I've worked for an agency and independently, both indoor in in-calls/hotels/client homes. The main difference ... is that when I work independently I can screen my clients myself, feel more able to refuse a client if I don't feel comfortable with them, and nobody takes a cut of my money except HMRC. (Female Independent Escort)

Pornography, Glamour and Erotica

We identified only eleven items of literature on pornography through our systematic search. However, our key words for the systematic search related to 'sex work' and/or 'prostitution'; using the key word 'pornography' would have yielded a far higher return. Among the eleven items: two consider the intersection of pornography and ethnicity (Miller-Young, 2010; Shimizu, 2010); two explore the impact of the internet on pornography (Chang, 2003; Döring, 2012) and three include more ethnographic work on the porn industry (Delamater, 2010; Escoffier, 2007; Tibbals, 2013). Dines' (2010) work is a critical account of the relationship between pornography and sexuality.

Pornography is the depiction (through printed or visual media) of sexual subject matter with the explicit intention of stimulating sexual excitement. The term applies to the depiction, rather than the subject matter itself. So for example, group sex is not pornography, but a photograph depicting group sex could be described as 'pornographic'.

Glamour modelling or photography is a genre of photography involving individuals posing in erotic poses (clothed, part-covered or nude) which can be sold for private use or commercially for calendars and magazines. While distinctions may be made between categories by those involved in the production of pornography, glamour and erotica: viewers and consumers may conflate these as 'pornography'.

Respondents identified engaging in the following practices: performing in adult films; glamour photography and modelling; adult or erotic underwear modelling; clip making/clip producing; custom video making; sharing photos/nudes for sale through subscription-based services on mainstream as well as specialist photo-sharing internet sites.

We did not receive sufficient comments to provide more description on the characteristics of, and experiences in, this setting, but we include it because a number of respondents referred to engaging in pornography, glamour and erotica in addition to, for example, escorting, BDSM or sugaring. This links to the cross-cutting theme **Patterns of engagement and moving between settings/services**. We also recognise some overlap with this setting and the **Webcamming** and **Telephone, Text and TV** categories below.

Sex Parties

We did not identify any studies through the systematic search which focused specifically on 'sex parties', though one study (Byrne, 2006) considered the rise of dogging or 'piking' in the UK and the crossover with sex work where individuals are marketed through online sites.

Sex parties are events where attendees can engage in sexual experiences together in what is positioned as a safe and consenting environment. Parties are variously described as ‘sex-positive spaces’, ‘play parties’, ‘private parties’ or ‘orgies’.

We recognise that not all of the following examples involve an individual or a group of individuals themselves selling sexual services. For example, for many of the events, attendees may pay an admission price to the organiser, but they do not go on to have sex with the individual organiser. However, in some instances sex workers are paid to attend or take part in these parties and/or may organise and provide services. While survey respondents did stress the focus on safety and consent, it was flagged in the stakeholder meetings that instances of abuse of sex workers may still occur within parties or other group sex settings.

Drawing on our survey data and the stakeholder consultations, we identified the following examples:

Swing clubs and swinger parties: Swinging describes the engagement in group sex as a recreational or social activity. It is sometimes referred to as husband/wife/partner swapping and is a form of non-monogamy. Swing parties are arranged at private homes or clubs. It was noted in responses that swinger communities have tended to be White and heteronormative.

Party and play: These are parties involving chemical sex (see under **Risk, harm and managing safety** in Part 1A **Cross-Cutting Themes**) and are associated in particular with some venues within the gay male sauna and bathhouse scene (see above **Brothels, Massage Parlours and Saunas Operating as Brothels**).

BDSM or kink/fetish play parties: BDSM parties or ‘domina parties’ can take place in dungeon spaces, or in a private home for example, where attendees pay with the expectation of engaging in BDSM activities provided by those organising. There are also larger-scale and/or commercial events held in warehouses, music or club venues that facilitate BDSM, kink and fetish practices, often spread over different ‘play rooms’. Some parties include direct sex, whether in the main rooms or separate rooms, which may be ‘secret’ and entered only with a password. There tends to be a dress code and there may be restrictions on unaccompanied males attending. Parties are advertised on relevant online platforms.

‘Elite’ or invitation-only sex parties: There are a number of companies running sex parties which are billed as ‘exclusive’ and ‘glamorous’, allowing people to explore sexual experiences. Often these events are invitation-only and some require a photo and personal description to assess membership. Again, many events will admit men only as part of a couple but will admit single females. Some men may hire escorts to gain entry to these parties. Dress codes expectations may differ between genders. These parties may be held in luxury properties across the UK. There are also events for women only, for those identifying as ‘bi-curious’ or bisexual. Some parties market themselves specifically as queer-friendly.

Weekend events: Weekend events, often arranged in private homes or luxury properties, may be arranged involving escorts attending independently or with a paying partner.

Escorts accompanying a buyer may or may not be expected to have sex with the buyer or with other individuals at the party. We heard from one exited escort who was anally raped at a private sex party.

Dogging: Originally a term used to describe ‘spying’ on couples having sex in public, this practice could be considered under the term ‘sex party’ since it increasingly involves couple and group sex in public or semi-public places, pre-arranged over the internet. A related practice is a ‘gangbang’, where a number of individuals have sex with one or more individuals who are paid. There is a voyeuristic element here too. Gangbangs may also be arranged in brothels and are a feature of some pornography.

Street/Outdoor

There is a wealth of research by academics and service providers on prostitution taking place on-street/outdoors in England and Wales. These studies have tended to focus on women selling sex on-street/outdoors, in particular their physical, sexual and mental health, including drug/alcohol addiction and violence/harm; social backgrounds; routes in and out; and relationships with intimate partners and children (e.g. O'Neill, 2001; Barefoot Research and Evaluation, 2016; Renouf, 2016; Sandwith, 2011; Harding & Hamilton, 2009; Sanders et al., 2009; Coy, 2008; Jeal et al., 2008; Kinnell, 2008; McClelland & Newell, 2008; Jeal & Salisbury, 2007; Jeal & Salisbury, 2004; Hester & Westmarland, 2004; Church, et al., 2001). Fewer have written about men selling sex on-street/outdoors, and how their experiences and approach may differ from female sellers (Ellison, 2018; Atkins & Laing, 2012; Sanders, et al., 2008).

Street/outdoor prostitution consists of individuals soliciting to sell sex, or providing sex, in outdoor locations. This is mostly individuals soliciting buyers – e.g. in streets in residential neighbourhoods or in industrial areas, in parks/forests, car/lorry parks, around rail/coach stations or ports – with the sex act taking place outdoors (e.g. street/alley, buyer's vehicle, forest/park) or indoors (e.g. in a nearby flat or hotel). However, soliciting/arrangement can also be made via phone or online, with the sex act taking place outdoors. Male street prostitution can also take place in cruising sites or gay districts that include other venues such as clubs and bars, where men seek both paid and unpaid sexual encounters with other men (see also Ellison, 2018; Atkins and Laing, 2012; Sanders et al., 2009; stakeholder consultations). Individuals can stand in an area known for street prostitution with buyers coming to these areas, or they can walk around and approach men asking for a cigarette or a light and then offer sexual services. Some individuals solicit in an area alone, others in areas where there are also others selling sex.

Individuals can engage in street prostitution anywhere from every day, to once or twice every few months or even years, depending on their circumstances. Peak times for soliciting are usually evenings and mornings, when buyers are going/coming from work, or in the early morning when some buyers working night shifts finish work. The sex acts involved are usually manual masturbation, oral sex, or penetrative (vaginal or anal) sex. Services are normally paid for in cash and ideally up-front. However, sex is also exchanged for shelter, food and drugs/alcohol. In some cases, 'regulars' or buyers who book a hotel room might pay via bank transfer.

Third party involvement may or may not be present. Some individuals work on their own and some are exploited by pimps (who can also be intimate partners) or gangs or traffickers/organised crime groups.

Street prostitution mainly involves women (cis and trans) individuals selling sex, but some areas have male street prostitution. Some of these men identify as gay or bisexual, but some identify as heterosexual, although all groups overwhelmingly sell sex to men (Ellison, 2018). While women are more likely to deliberately be on-street for the purpose of selling sex, some men may be cruising for unpaid sex or socialising in gay areas and be solicited for paid sex by older men, and end up selling sex (Ellison, 2018).

Street workers tend to have experienced acute circumstances in childhood and adolescence. Later homelessness or leaving care may facilitate entry into street work. Some are described as engaging in 'survival sex' or 'transactional sex' to this end. One respondent described their entry into selling sex on-street:

(...) my abusive father kicked me out of the house for being gay. I was 17 and I had no way of living or making money, so stayed on friend's couches in the nearest city and worked on the street to pay for transport to school and food. (Female Former Street Worker)

Sugar Arrangements

We identified only one paper through our systematic search, which looked specifically at sugar dating. Nayar (2017) explores the differences between paid intimacy, romantic love and more explicit forms of sex work. As mentioned elsewhere, this is likely because our key words for the systematic search were related to 'sex work' and/or 'prostitution'. Using the key words 'sugar baby', 'sugar dating', 'sugar arrangement' and so on, would likely have yielded a far higher return. Further relevant references can be found, for example, in Mulvihill and Large (forthcoming, 2019).

A sugar arrangement is where one individual enters into what seems to be a mutually beneficial relationship with another, exchanging companionship and/or intimacy with economic security (including fixed monthly payments) or benefit in kind (such as a place to live). Commonly, this will involve a younger woman (a "sugar baby") making an arrangement with an older man (a "sugar daddy"). However, different configurations of gender, including same gender relationships, also occur.

There are a number of internet sites through which individuals can be introduced and negotiate sugar arrangements. Commonly, sugar parents pay a registration fee and sugar babies do not. Arrangements are found particularly in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and elsewhere. Sugaring draws some comparison with 'compensated dating' (or Enjo-kōsai), common in Japan, but also Taiwan, Hong Kong and within other East Asian countries or communities.

A leading sugar arrangement website identifies two-fifths of its registered members as students, a group commonly looking for support with tuition fees and rent.

While sex is not explicitly identified as part of the arrangement in the online advertising, a number of respondents and the wider academic literature suggest that sex is usually exchanged, even if not initially.

Our respondents identified particular risks associated with sugaring, including:

- The lack of a clear contract or clear expectations, meaning that the boundary of consent was not well defined
- Difficulty in managing the emotional labour of sugaring, which requires an ongoing fiction of intimacy, companionship and sex (unless the sugar baby genuinely enjoys the relationship)
- The sugar daddy (or mummy) becoming jealous or controlling

Telephone, Text-based, TV-based, Live voyeurism

We identified ten items of literature focussed on phone, text or TV based sex work. The literature originating from England and Wales (five of the ten references identified) explores the impact of the digital age on sex market characteristics (Cunningham & Kendall, 2011). This includes: the working conditions of internet based sex workers (Sanders et al., 2016); the types of crimes experienced; risk management strategies (Campbell et al., 2019); and the experiences and identity of men who buy sex via on-line forums (Earle & Sharp, 2007). The international literature explores the negative effects and potential benefits on/for those involved (Hughes, 2004; Döring, 2009); online sexuality and cyber identity (Ross et al., 2005; Reynolds, 2017); and notions of power and identity amongst women phone sex workers (Maurice, 2011).

The proliferation of technology and the internet has brought about many changes in the way that sex work operates, with most sex workers and their customers making contact via websites, mobile phone or email (Sanders et al., 2018). This setting includes different forms of technology-enabled sex work, which has increasingly been superseded by the internet. For example, live voyeurism was traditionally provided in the form of peep shows where erotic/ pornographic pictures or film, nude or semi-nude models or live sex shows could be viewed from a coin operated booth with shuttered

peepholes/viewing windows. While peep shows do still exist in the form of coin-operated booths or windowed cabins (e.g. in London's Soho), live voyeurism now largely operates in the form of webcamming.

Phone sex can be classified as a form of indirect internet-enabled sex work. Most existing phone sex chat services are now integrated with internet services (phone calls to sex workers are transferred through the internet – see Sanders et al 2018). Some of our respondents started off providing phone sex chat before moving on to different forms of sex work such as webcamming, or more direct services such as on-street selling or escorting. A key reason cited was that phone sex did not offer the same earning potential as other forms of sex work. Others felt it was more exploitative than other types of sex work.

Phone sex was gross...I hated it. Street was better for me...Phone sex was a premium number but I earnt 10% of what they did. I was not exploited on the street. (Female Street Worker)

Others found the non-direct nature of phone sex work did not always provide job satisfaction.

I used to do phone sex, but I found it difficult to tell if the client on the other end of the phone was happy or not because they would usually just hang up when they were done and I couldn't tell if this was because they came or because they found me boring, which caused me a lot of anxiety and so I quit after a few months. (Female BDSM Practitioner)

Instant messaging (IM) involves sex workers providing sexually explicit photographs or messages via text/SMS to customers on their mobile phones or other electronic devices. A number of adult websites and internet domain services facilitate sex emails and IM services allowing messages to be sent and received without having to share personal contact information. IM is charged by the messages received from the sex worker, with prices varying on different platforms. Some companies pay workers 8p for every text message they sent to a client (Cunningham et al 2018; Sanders et al 2018).

TV phone-ins are interactive adult TV channels which broadcast live simulated sex or sexual conversations and where customers can phone women and men (18yrs+) advertised on screen via a premium rate telephone number. The number is often operated free-to-air for a limited period before becoming encrypted so that customers must then subscribe for a fee to gain explicit site access. In recent years, some adult channels have branched out to provide webcam shows alongside these TV enabled phone sex chat lines.

Therapeutic Services

We identified five studies focussing on therapeutic sex work. One study in England and Wales uses narrative accounts of women engaged in sex work and women engaged in therapeutic massage/bodywork to explore the commonalities between the two professions (Oerton & Phoenix (2001). The remaining international literature (US, Australia and Europe) explores the psychosexual profile of sexual assistants (Limoncin et al., 2014); the similarities and differences between sexual surrogacy, sex work and sexual assistance (Wotton & Isbister 2017); the nature of BDSM and pro-domme work in the context of sexuality and gender power dynamics (Lindemann, 2012); and the therapeutic function of BDSM for clients (Williams et al., 2012; Lindemann, 2012).

According to Limoncin and colleagues (2014), therapeutic massage can be included within sex work because of the remunerative aspect paired with physical sexual acts (or any activity which involves physical contact and the use of one person by another for her/his sexual satisfaction). Services such as sexual surrogacy, sexual assistance or sexological bodywork offer support to help individuals (mostly, but can also include work with couples or groups) work through any sexual or intimacy problems. These problems may be experienced due to social, learning, emotional or physical disabilities and to others with limited access to any sexual outlet (see also Wotton & Isbister, 2017;

Oerton & Phoenix, 2001). It can include physical sexual acts such as sexual intercourse, oral sex, massage therapy including erotic massage, masturbatory acts, as well as non-sexual activity such as discussion/education around sexuality, contraception, use of sex toys (Limoncin et al., 2014), immersive role-play, sexual health, gender roles, pleasure and consent.

Many of the people I see have social, learning or physical disabilities that make it hard or improbable of meeting someone for intimate contact (physical, mental or emotional) ... Loneliness is dangerous for social creatures. Everyone deserves to feel connection to another/others. (Female Independent)

Professional sexual surrogacy /assistance services are often advertised via online practitioner directories. Other related sex work services such as erotic massage or BDSM are also mostly advertised online via key social media applications.

Those offering therapeutic services tend to be women working with male clients, but other gender combinations apply. Most work independently and alone (although some do work as part of a couple), are client-led and tend to be educated and usually (but not always) professionally trained/qualified.

Webcamming

The 'Beyond the Gaze' project and associated publications by Sanders and colleagues (2017; 2018) provide key insights in to webcamming and contemporary online sex work in England and Wales. In the remaining (US-based) literature identified, Jones (2016) critically examines entry into adult webcam modelling, while Weiss (2017) considers how gender influences patterns of interaction in webcam sex work.

Sex work using a web camera (also referred to as camming or cam work) involves a 'cammer', 'cam model' or 'cam worker' selling sexual acts and dialogue, videos and pictures to customers via websites dedicated to hosting webcam shows. Live webcam shows can be public or private and vary in terms of the acts performed (Jones, 2016). Usually, nudity or sexual content are streamed to customers watching on their own personal computers/tablets/phones (Cunningham et al., 2018). Live-streaming via webcam platforms can offer a more personal experience than, for example, phone sex (Jones, 2016), although intimacy is not always sought or obtained by webcam customers (Sanders et al., 2017). As well as live webcam shows, cammers can also upload pre-recorded videos or photographs that buyers then pay to view.

Customers pay a fee for cam shows via the website/online platform, although there are also some cam shows that can be accessed free. Group or public shows are performed to more than one customer and each pays a per-minute rate. Private shows are performed to just one customer and may be priced more highly (Sanders et al., 2017). Some websites operate a system that revolves around 'tips', where a model performs a show in a public 'room' that customers can log into and watch free of charge. The customer then tips the model using tokens purchased from the webcam platforms (Sanders et al., 2017).

Our respondents indicated that cammers set their own prices and work for themselves: many are registered as self-employed and thus pay tax on their earnings. The websites/platforms take a cut of individual earnings and pay the cammer the remainder. However, payment may not be immediate; an issue cited by a number of respondents.

The majority of cam workers are women. Individuals of all ages can be involved but most start in their 20s and 30s with many claiming they are younger than they actually are. Some described being introduced by friends or others already using webcam platforms. The process of entry into webcam work (and thus the potential for earning money) was seen as relatively easy – requiring only ID

verification and a profile - compared to non-sex-work employment. The flexibility that camming provides, in terms of the hours worked and the option to work from home, was seen as appealing:

Occasionally, I have periods of poor mental health and when I was camming I had more freedom to just take a few days off and not justify it to anyone. Even though I wouldn't get paid, I could just work more when I felt better to make up the difference... I think camming is quite common among students and mothers because of the flexible hours/working from home element. (Female Webcammer)

Cam work is not commonly done full-time, with many individuals doing cam work occasionally or for a short period of time or to top up low pay from other employment.

Section 2: Prevalence

Preliminary comments

A key aim of this study was to explore the possibility of estimating the prevalence of sex work and prostitution in the UK by collating data from existing sources and previous research. Counting is widely viewed as enabling planning and resource allocation and can be useful in tracking progress and identifying unmet needs (Walby, 2016). A range of participants in the consultation meetings highlighted the usefulness of counting and monitoring for funding, comparability, and to keep issues on the agenda. Others highlighted how counting can potentially result in increased risks for people in the industry (such as stigma, deportation, reprisals), and add administrative burden to support organisations who are already severely stretched.

Estimating the prevalence of sex work is challenging. Producing unbiased estimates requires a (sufficiently large) representative sample, which in turn requires some knowledge of the population being studied e.g. the size, key characteristics, and so on. Research based on non-representative samples will likely be biased, meaning that it is not possible to extrapolate findings from the observed group (sample) to the wider population. The nature of sex work and the stigma often associated with it⁵ means that activities often occur in private. The stigma also means that some people involved in sex work do not identify as such, and may not be in contact with support organisations or the police (Sanders, 2006). In cases where legality is breached or unclear, activities are even more likely to be undercover. As a result, research on sex work and prostitution tends to have low response rates (National Ugly Mugs (NUM), 2016), meaning that generalisation can be problematic.

Furthermore, **sex work and prostitution span a wide range of activities**, as illustrated in **Section 1 Part B** of this report. Each sector or setting has different characteristics and those involved face different issues (NUM, 2016). The expansion of the internet over the last two decades has transformed the industry, making it easier for those offering sexual services to promote and manage their work independently (albeit not all those advertised on online platforms are independent or have control over the clients they see and acts they perform) as well as giving rise to new forms of sex work such as camming (Sanders et al., 2018). An added difficulty for estimating prevalence is that **sex work and prostitution are, for many, transient activities**. People move in and out, as well as across settings, and from place to place. In summary, the transient, hidden and multifaceted nature of sex work and prostitution makes it very challenging to obtain robust estimates as to its prevalence.

This complexity means that **prevalence data should always be accompanied by caveats**.

Researchers and institutions aiming to estimate the prevalence of prostitution and sex work must

⁵ Although this varies by activity, with some activities subject to less stigma and some affording more or less privacy.

use approaches that reduce and control bias, as well as the potential risks (Walby, 2016). This includes acknowledging data quality issues and data gaps and considering the implications for existing estimates. Prevalence estimates must also identify the precise type of prevalence estimates being produced (e.g. for a specific point in time, a period or lifetime prevalence). For those interested in data collection, in **Appendix 5**, we include a summary of best practice advice on how to collect data following the UNAIDS/WHO recommendations with the purpose of producing robust estimates. These recommendations also offer useful considerations for those evaluating existing data. In this section, we draw on our data collection exercise and describe the data that we sought and collected. We summarise our findings for each source of data identified and evaluate their potential and limitations. Additionally, we offer some reflections on the potential of case studies and introduce a data quality assessment tool to guide those interested in gathering data at the local level and provide suggestions for the future.

Data sought and collected

One of the purposes of the study was to explore access to, and the value of, potential data sources for the study of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales. While there are no existing available robust data sources that would allow the production of national estimates, a range of institutions and individuals hold data on the industry. These include statutory organisations such as the NHS and the criminal justice system, charities and NGOs working directly with and/or doing advocacy for people involved in sex work and prostitution, sex worker collectives, police, government and government institutions as well as agents and mediators. It is not possible either to secure full access to, or usefully to triangulate all this data, given the lack of consistent definitions or data collection purposes or approaches. That is not to say that the sources are not useful: they do provide a snapshot of the characteristics of specific population groups.

The discussion below is informed by the literature, our data collection exercise and follow-up discussions with research participants. The table in **Appendix 6** provides a summary overview.

Crime records and police data

This sub-section is based on our interaction with police forces nationally. We received feedback from 5 police forces on how to formulate a data request regarding prostitution and sex work, and 5 further responses once our request was circulated. We also received feedback from police representatives in our regional stakeholder consultations and individual interviews. In total 17 separate police forces (15 in England and 2 in Wales) provided data and/or feedback for this research.

Overall, offences recorded by police are not a useful indicator for estimating prevalence.⁶ Recorded offences only include those elements of the industry that 1) come to police attention and 2) constitute offences. As a result, there is a risk of both over-counting and under-counting. However, police forces may collect other data that could help provide further insight. To trial this, we asked forces to provide estimates for their local areas regarding four settings:

- a) commercial saunas and massage parlours known or suspected to be offering sexual services
- b) the number of residential settings operating as brothels, both established and temporary
- c) the number of people selling sex on-street (even if the actual sex act takes place indoors)
- d) the number of independent sex workers and/or escorts

⁶ For example, 30 recorded offences for brothel-keeping in a force area could be referring to 10 brothels, some of which were dealt with by police multiple times.

All 5 forces who completed our data request provided estimates for the number of residential settings operating as brothels. Three forces were able to provide data for commercial saunas and massage parlours known or suspected to be offering sexual services and for the number of people selling sex on-street. Only 2 forces gave estimates regarding independent sex workers and/or escorts. The data reported corresponded mainly to the local area and drew on local police knowledge, data collected during a specific operation, visits to sites, and proactive data collection (e.g. monitoring of online advertising). Data collection was shaped by active work at the time, whether police engaged with a particular setting/type, as well as data collection strategies in place.

Fluctuating funding and priorities mean that any changes in figures regarding premises and individuals can be a result of increased or decreased attention by police (e.g. increases during a particular investigation, decreases when funding shifts), as well as reflect actual changes. While unsuitable to produce prevalence estimates, the data can be used to verify other sources as well as gain an understanding of local police methods, priorities and experiences in the field.

Administrative and health data

Administrative and health data are routinely collected by government organisations. For example, one option to estimate the population of sex workers is to look at tax returns. However, this is likely to lead to a severe underestimate of the population. Only those self-identifying and regularly employed in sex work who can or wish to be legally registered, would be identified. Furthermore, many will not specify sex work as their occupation on the tax return.

Another possible source is health registers. Health care providers are often considered ideal gatekeepers to access the population involved in prostitution and sex work as they provide key services. However, stigma and concerns about data protection mean that it may not be possible to identify users involved in the sex industry. Furthermore, some groups such as victims of exploitation or trafficking are less likely to access such services altogether. Some of the drawbacks can be overcome by combining rich administrative data with the multiplier method (see Brooks-Gordon et al., 2015 for an example). By itself, administrative health-data is likely to both under-estimate the prevalence of sex work and prostitution and to provide a partial picture of the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the population.

Local authorities

Local authorities oversee the licensing for Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEV, Local Government Act 1982), including premises where there is a display of nudity such as sex cinemas, and lap-dancing clubs. We were able to access such data by submitting a Freedom of Information request to a small number of councils. However, not all venues are to be licenced. Notably, massage parlours and saunas are exempt from regulation, and local authorities can waive the need for licensing. The number of SEVs can provide a conservative estimate of local venues (as not all are, or are required to be, licenced).

Some local authorities keep records on the support services and charities operating in their area. We spoke to a small number of councils who play a pivotal role in coordinating services in their local area: they were able to provide estimates for the sex work population and their profile. Other authorities do not have the capacity or would not consider this a priority.

General population surveys

In the UK, there are no national surveys that aim to estimate the prevalence of sex work and prostitution. The National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (NatSal) collects information on

whether male respondents have paid for sex. The survey does not ask respondents whether they themselves are involved in selling sexual services. The proportion of men who report in NatSal having paid for sex has increased over time, from 2% in 1990 to 4% in 2000, and 11% in the latest survey (Ward et al., 2005; Jones et al., 2014). It is not possible to know whether the data reflects an actual increase, or whether the changes reflect sampling error, increased willingness to report having paid for sex or methodological changes. While the first two survey rounds asked only men about having paid for sex with a woman, the last round did not specify gender (including thus male and trans sex workers).

Groom and Nandwani's (2006) survey of over 2000 men in Glasgow obtained an estimate of 10% who had paid for sex, very close to the national estimate produced by the 2010 NatSal. However, given the nature of the sampling - limited to one location, and in an STI clinic - it is not possible to extrapolate the results to the total population. To our knowledge, the only survey that has addressed individuals in the industry is the Student Sex Work Project. Sagar et al., (2015) used an online survey to estimate the proportion of sex workers among the student population in Wales and later the UK. This was not however a representative survey, meaning it cannot be used to generate national estimates.

Academic literature

Appendix 7 offers an overview of research published over the last 20 years (between 1999 and 2018), in both peer-reviewed and grey literature, which provide possible prevalence data. We focus here on studies that aim to reflect the sex industry as a whole. Studies that have focused only on sub-populations, such as lap dancers (Hady and Sanders, 2015), the indoor sector in London (Dickson, 2004), and victims of trafficking and exploitation⁷, are not discussed here but are included in the overall literature list (published on www.bristol.ac.uk). For each study, we report the year in which the information was collected, the population to which the data refers as well as key advantages and limitations of the method. The latter are not extensive, and readers are encouraged to refer **Appendix 6** for an overview of the different methods of prevalence estimation and their characteristics.

Charities and NGOs

Charities and NGOs who work with people involved in prostitution and sex work have a unique, almost real time perspective, of changes in the industry. Accordingly, a number of studies have aimed at estimating the prevalence of sex work and prostitution by contacting organisations and asking them to provide estimates of groups they work with, then extrapolating to estimate the whole population.

We also used a reduced version of this approach. The research team contacted 35 NGOs identified as working with people in sex work and prostitution to ask about estimates for the population they work with, as well as recommendations on "how to count". The data collection tool we devised for this purpose is available in **Appendix 8**. We received data from 11 organisations (all based in England) and held email correspondence with other organisations who were not able to provide

⁷ Data on trafficking and exploitation is published quarterly by the National Crime Agency. The last data available indicates that in 2018, 1305 adults (92% females) and 626 children were identified as potential victims of sexual exploitation. The figures reflect referrals of potential victims through the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and thus is likely to be an under-estimate. Using 2003 data, Dubourg and Prichard (2008) estimate that around 4000 women were trafficked to the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation (no data is provided for children or men). DfE Children in Need Census in England, 2015/16 estimates around 17600 children to be victims of or at risk of sexual exploitation in England. See also Walby (2016) for a review of data on trafficking in the EU.

data but offered their views on the data collection process as well as the estimation of prevalence more widely. Reasons for not providing data included concerns about the privacy and safety of their service users; concerns about data protection; as well as lack of capacity. Several organisations have limited resources, and recording priorities are informed by the information demanded by funders. One key organisation reported concerns about the potential administrative burden of using a harmonised data collection tool. We summarise the findings from the NGO data collection in **Appendix 12**.

Overall, charities offered invaluable insight into the specificities of sex work in their area. The data provided illustrates how the nature and prevalence of sex work varies substantially by location (e.g. rural/urban): for example, some areas do not have street prostitution. NGOs are also able to identify changes in the population they work with. Limitations that appear in working with charity data include: differences in data collection procedures and record keeping; resource constraints; and a specialised focus on certain groups or settings.

Online Platforms

The expansion of the internet has changed the sex industry, opening up new ways to advertise and find clients, provide services, manage transactions, and so on. While providers of sexual services often have their own websites, many advertise through large online advertising platforms. Previous research on online advertising platforms has highlighted the risk of severely over-estimating the numbers selling sex work online by adding up front-end profiles. Providers often have multiple profiles within the same or across different platforms (Sanders et al., 2018). Additionally, some profiles will be inactive, or incomplete but still show in the total numbers. For instance, Sanders and colleagues (2018) found that up to 32% of front-end profiles are inactive. Our own analysis of data from one of the leading online platforms suggests that 52% of profiles miss some key socio-demographic information, with men and older workers more likely to have incomplete profiles. This suggests that that these groups may be more likely to register but make less use or no use of their profile.

In **Appendix 10** we examine the profiles advertised on two online platforms (Platform A and Platform B). We focus on key socio-demographic characteristics: gender, cis/transgender, sexual orientation, age and ethnicity⁸. Not all information was available for both platforms. Where comparable data was provided, we contrast the findings. Information is based on clean data, where incomplete or inactive profiles have been excluded.

Overall, data from online providers offers a valuable insight into the characteristics of the online sex industry. While widely available - anyone can access front-end data by accessing a number of platforms - the data needs to be considered with caution. Contrasting the information against back-end data where possible would reduce issues around double counting and the counting of inactive or incomplete profiles. However, different population groups use different platforms, thus analysing only the most widely used platforms would lead to an over-representation of White and female sex workers. Groups who use less well-known platforms (e.g. minorities, those offering specific services) are likely to be under-represented.

More importantly, data from online platforms only reflects a portion of all practices that represent prostitution and sex work, with large segments of the population excluded - such as those working in venues or in the street, and more generally those who do not advertise or conduct sex work online. As a result of both the over-estimation of the number of profiles in the front-end data, and the differences in access to, and use of, online platforms across sub-groups, using online advertising platforms to generate prevalence estimates will result in partial and biased results. Moreover, given

⁸ Unfortunately, it was not possible to explore nationality due to large amounts of missing data.

that experiences and motivations may be different, we should be cautious about attempts to generalise results obtained from researching online work and prostitution, to the off-line sector.

Use of case studies

To conclude, there is currently no single data source in the UK available to generate national prevalence estimates. The lack of prevalence data for the UK led us to explore the elaboration of case studies, building on potentially data rich areas (a piece of work that was not in the original tender). After extensive research, contacting NGOs, local authorities, police, online advertising platforms, and other third parties, none of the four areas that we originally identified as data-rich yielded sufficient data to allow the addition and triangulation of prevalence data. As mentioned, data is heterogeneous, with organisations tending to work with specific groups and to collect different forms of information.

Any attempt at estimating the prevalence of prostitution and sex work will require the cooperation of a wide range of actors. Different actors are aware of, and in contact with, different segments of the market. Cooperation is key. Furthermore, available information should be contrasted where possible, e.g. by comparing the estimates from multiple sources. In doing so, difficulties appear in terms of delineating borders. Police forces, administrative authorities, charities, and so on tend to operate within defined boundaries but these do not necessarily overlap. Thus, data for the same general area may effectively correspond to different locations.

The nature of prostitution and sex work is ever changing. People in the industry alter their behaviour as a response to changing constraints and opportunities. Geography matters – different areas within and between England and Wales have different profiles. Discussions with research participants highlighted how neighbouring towns could have very different sex work profiles. We developed the data quality assessment tool to orient organisations aiming at estimating the prevalence of prostitution and sex work in their area.

Assessing data robustness

Reliable and robust data is essential for assessing the scale, trends and patterns in the industry (Walby, 2016). Estimating the prevalence of prostitution and sex work at the local level can be useful to identify priorities for action, make funding decisions and to assess the impact of projects. The data quality assessment tool (**Appendix 9**) has been developed to guide organisations who wish to assess the data available at the local level. The guidelines are inspired by those provided by the WHO (2017) to assess the quality of health data, but have been adapted to reflect the specificities of the prostitution and sex work population, existing resources and data collection systems. The tool received positive reviews in our consultations and follow up interviews.

Future development

Studies aimed at assessing the prevalence of prostitution and sex work in the UK should follow the recommendations of the WHO (2017). Where that is not possible, organisations and local authorities can create their own mapping exercise to understand the specificities of sex work in their area and target services appropriately. All such research should prioritise the safety of workers.

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This bibliography reflects the references in the report. We also have a longer list of references generated through our systematic search of the literature (see Appendices 1 and 2), which we will make available on our website www.bristol.ac.uk as a resource for others.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Methods in detail

Systematic search of the literature

Eight key academic databases (see flowchart in **Appendix 2**) for social sciences and health were searched for any literature published from 2000, in English, and mentioning in the abstract either the word strings ‘prostitut-’ or ‘sex work’ or ‘commercial sexual exploitation’.⁹ This yielded 10,485 items, after removing duplicates. We also added in items identified via hand search (of e.g. NGO websites) and items recommended by participants through Q1 of the online survey (see below). This amounted to a further 239 items, bringing the total to 10,724.

Five members of the team worked on sifting the literature. Two pairs concentrated on half of the literature each. Within each pair, literature was sifted by abstract against criteria and then cross-checked until a final list of relevant literature was agreed. In addition, a further team member sampled every ten items of literature for the first several hundred, to ensure sifting decisions were consistent both within and between pairs. The sifting process resulted in 1,421 relevant items. The flowchart detailing this process can be found in **Appendix 2**. The sift criteria are outlined here:

Include	Exclude
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Description/location of services • Demographics and personal context of sellers/buyers • Management/where the money goes • Routes in • Routes out • Risks/vulnerabilities/agency • Prevalence (including existing prevalence data, methodologies, challenges in measurement, etc.) • Description of others related to the sex industry besides buyers and sellers, e.g. brothel owners, personal relationships etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policing and law • Different policy models and their impact • Studies of discourse or representation • Public attitudes towards prostitution • Historical pieces (relating to pre-1980) • Sex worker organising/advocacy • How professionals (e.g. health, NGOs) should assist individuals in prostitution/victims of trafficking

Since our brief was to be ‘descriptive’ and not to recommend on policy, we excluded literature focusing only on law, policy and policing. However, we appreciate that these issues are intimately tied to the nature and experience of prostitution and sex work, particularly in relation to agency and risks. It was a difficult brief therefore, which we have reconciled by including the impact of the regulatory environment in the section on ‘**Cross-cutting Themes**’ and elsewhere.

⁹ ABS(prostitut*) OR ABS("sex work") OR ABS("commercial sexual exploitation") AND PUBYEAR AFT 1999 AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

Three members of the team went through each publication to code for setting/service, geographical location and key themes. This work was used to inform Section 1 Part A of this report, ‘**Cross-Cutting Themes**’, as well as Section 1 Part B, ‘**Settings and Services**’.

We have noted elsewhere the limitations of systematic literature searches (see Mulvihill et al., 2018), particularly where the opening question is broad. For this work, the literature and data led us to take a wide view of ‘prostitution and sex work’. However, since these constituted our original search terms, the literature within this original set that we then identified for, e.g. ‘pornography’ or ‘sugaring’ was inevitably limited. For readers wishing to understand more about the academic literature on these individual settings, it would be advisable to re-run the searches, but using these specific settings/services as search terms.

Review of prevalence literature

In order to maximise the coverage of UK research, we searched the UK Data Archive database for previous studies (since 2000) using the words “sex work” (two results), “prostitution” (fifteen results), “sex industry” (three, only one of which was new and UK based). Of these, five were found relevant to the understanding of prostitution and sex work in the UK and were added to the literature database as part of the ‘Hand searches’. We also searched the UK Data Service question bank for national surveys. Only the National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (‘NatSal’) survey collected data on sex work from the general population for the UK as a whole (see **General population surveys** in Part 2 above for a discussion).

Online survey

On 26 June 2018, we launched an online survey which we publicised via our University project page, through emails to a wide range of identified stakeholders and through social media. We left the survey open until 31 December 2018, to ensure that existence of the survey was widely disseminated and people had time to take part.

Our online survey did not solicit personal demographic data from respondents. We were conscious that a Home Office-funded study could deter some from responding, should such mandatory questions have been perceived as intrusive.

In brief, the only compulsory information we required from the respondent was how they identified (e.g. as someone involved currently/ formerly in prostitution/sex work, NGO worker, police etc.). This was so that we could categorise respondents overall. We appreciate this meant that individuals had to choose one label (when they may work as both an academic and a sex worker, for example) and that self-identification could not be independently verified. However, the exigencies of time and analysis for this study meant this was the most practical approach. Provision of email for possible follow up questions was requested as optional.

The survey was unusual in that we did not ask respondents to tick pre-identified categories. Rather we asked 6 simple open-response questions:

1. Is there any particular study, report or other publication that you think it is important that we pay attention to for this project? Please give details.
2. Are there particular 'types' of prostitution and sex work that you feel need to be included in this project? Please give details.
3. Are there particular individuals or groups that you believe we need to speak to? Please give details.
4. Does your organisation collect numerical data on prostitution and sex work which you think would be useful for this project? Please give details.
5. Do you have an experience that you think would help us to understand better what prostitution and sex work looks like today in England and Wales? If so, please give details.
6. Any other comments.

This made the analysis of responses very time-consuming but yielded rich data.

We made these methodological decisions around the survey (and the follow up email questionnaires below) to try to be inclusive. It has meant however that we could not present this data in simple numerical terms or make, for example, statements on the precise proportion of the respondents who had a particular experience.

We encouraged individuals to respond within the early weeks so that we could start the work. The bulk of responses overall were received by early September, though we continued to check until the deadline of 31 December. In total we received 1,180 completed responses, of which 529 (45%) were from individuals who self-identified as currently or formerly involved in prostitution and/or sex work.

We recognised that many individuals involved in prostitution and sex work would not complete, or indeed have access to, an online survey. Therefore we also worked through a broad range of NGOs to solicit responses (see below under [Survey follow up questionnaires](#) and [Consultations](#)).

Although we asked survey respondents if they wished to be named as a contributor to the report, we decided later that, given the majority of the research was rooted in the voice of individual participants engaged currently (or recently) in prostitution and sex work, most of whom did not wish to have their name published, to publish only the names of organisations or already public individuals, risked minimising or invisibilising that central contribution. For this reason, [research contributors are not listed](#).

Prevalence data requests

The paucity of national prevalence data led us to collect primary data. The data collection exercise had three main aims:

1. to understand how organisations collect data, as well as the challenges they encounter;
2. to facilitate harmonised data collection;
3. to create easy to use data collection tools.

We contacted organisations supporting those in the sex industry, police, online service providers/adult services websites, as well as local councils asking them about any data they collected regarding prostitution and sex work.

In order to collect data from organisations and police we developed two data collection tools (see [Appendix 8](#)). These were subsequently revised in response to feedback from academics and organisations. In building the tables we had to balance collecting sufficiently disaggregated information so as to accurately reflect those in the sex industry (e.g. gender, nationality, diversity of experiences), and producing a simple instrument that could easily be completed. We sent the data collection tools to 35 NGOs that replied to our original survey (4 in Wales and 31 in England). Of these, 11 provided information. We sent requests to 42 police forces, 5 of whom were able to provide data. A further five forces gave feedback on the data collection tool.

Given the prominence of the online industry, we contacted online service providers/adult websites facilitating sexual services, to access anonymised back-end database data. We obtained access to information provided by two large platforms, and this confirms previous research that has highlighted the problems of using front-end data to generate prevalence estimates (Sanders et al., 2018).

Finally, we collected data from selected local authorities in England and Wales on the number of Sexual Entertainment Venues (SEV) in their area. Local authorities licence certain sex establishments: sexual entertainment venues (e.g. lap-dancing and gentlemen's clubs), sex shops, sex cinemas and in some cases hostess bars. Other venues, such as massage parlours and saunas, are generally not licensed.

Survey follow up questionnaires

After reviewing the online survey data, we identified 135 within the 529 survey respondents who identified as being involved currently/formerly in sex work and prostitution. This sub-sample reflected a broad range of genders and experiences of settings and services. We sent out 135 follow-up in-depth email interview questions (see **Appendix 4**) to these individuals, for self-completion. In total, we received 42 completed responses by end of February 2019.

Recognising that many individuals involved in prostitution and sex work would not have responded to an online survey, we sent out questionnaires to 76 NGOs to administer through their service-users or members: 16 individual service-user/member responses were received plus 3 responses completed by NGO staff based on their work with service-users/members generally. This was a better response rate than we expected, given that we sent the questionnaire in December – a particularly busy time for service providers – and, due to time pressure, gave NGOs only one month to respond. We acknowledge that this was too short a window and, with hindsight, we should have sent out this form earlier.

This follow-up data was used to inform Section 1 Part A of this report, '**Cross-Cutting Themes**', as well as Section 1 Part B, '**Settings and Services**'.

We recognise that there are two groups whose voices are under-represented or absent from this report:

1. Migrant sex workers;
2. British and non-British individuals who are/were forcibly coerced, who are/were trafficked, who are/were sexually exploited and/or who are traumatised in relation to their experience.

As academics in the field of gender-based violence, whose research focuses nationally and internationally on victims and perpetrators of violence and abuse, it is disappointing for us not to have elicited those voices more clearly. Our reflection on this that is that further work is needed to understand more clearly the nature and prevalence of those experiences, but that it requires appropriate methods, ethical safeguards, expertise, trust, time and likely linguistic resources. Key issues include:

1. Many individuals in these groups do not engage with services and it is unsafe to engage in research individuals who are at current risk;
2. Services increasingly do not have the capacity to participate in research and/or facilitate researchers meeting service-users and/or do not feel their service-users are ready to engage in such research;
3. Communicating the purpose of the research is important: for example, migrants involved in the sex industry may be suspicious of engaging in research funded by the Home Office, given its wider remit on immigration.

Regional Stakeholder meetings

Once we had drafted initial findings, we arranged four regional meetings in Bristol, London, Cardiff and Leeds. Overall, we invited 155 NGOs, police forces and other criminal justice agencies, local governments/councils and health organisations/agencies as well as individuals currently involved in sex work and/or prostitution active in organisations/collectives. Fifty-five individuals from 45 organisations attended overall (8 individuals from 7 organisations attended in Bristol; 12 individuals from 7 organisations attended in Cardiff; 11 individuals from 10 organisations in Leeds; and 24 individuals from 21 organisations attended in London). Here we presented emerging findings and sought feedback. Participants received a participant information sheet detailing the research and

their participation in the meetings, and completed a consent form to give us permission use their feedback in the report.

Individual meetings

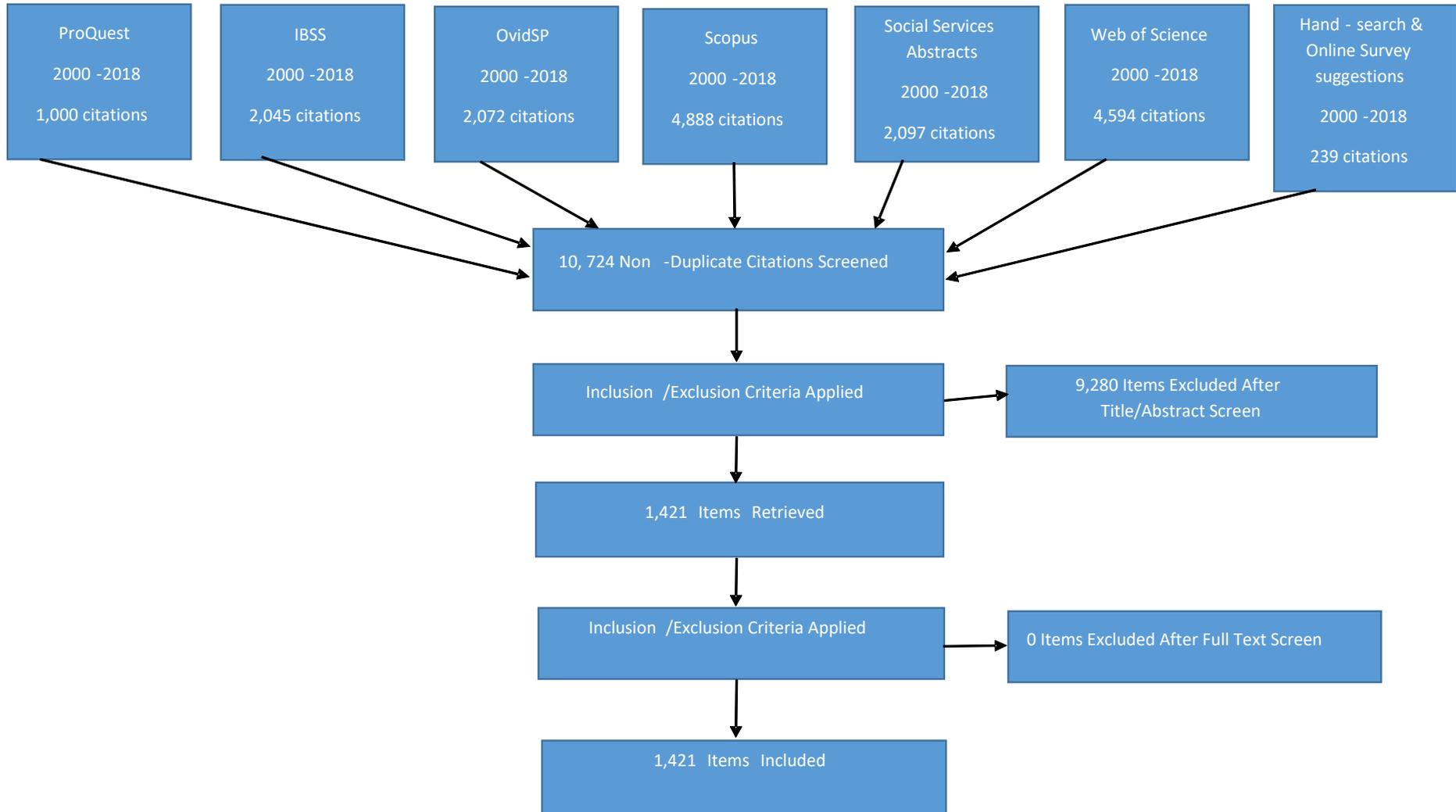
We also arranged 10 individual meetings with NGOs and collectives who worked directly with, or were represented by, individuals currently/formerly involved in sex work and prostitution. Again, we asked permission to incorporate their feedback in the report.

Ongoing consultation and final feedback on the first draft

We have had ongoing consultation with the academic community via email, telephone and meetings and a large response through the online survey. We developed a list of academic stakeholders from the literature review, from the online survey and from our own knowledge of the sector and sent updates through the months to this group as well as the wider survey community. These were also communicated through our project webpage, hosted by the University of Bristol.

In April 2019, we shared a first draft with the Home Office, which we continued to then work on till mid-May. While we had hoped to share a final copy for final consultation to all those involved, concerns about unauthorised pre-release meant we could only circulate a final draft around a pre-notified small group of named stakeholders, comprising academics, NGOs and current sex workers, for a 14-day consultation. We are grateful to a number within this group for their generosity of time and for their perceptive and detailed comments. Final edits and submission followed in June 2019.

Appendix 2 – Systematic literature search flow chart



Appendix 3 – Literature on developing a typology of prostitution/sex work

We took into consideration previous categorisations and typologies of the sex industry both in the UK (e.g. Sanders et al., 2018, Brooks-Gordon, et al., 2015; Pitcher, 2015; Sanders, O'Neill and Pitcher, 2009) and beyond (e.g. Belmar, et al., 2017; Buzdugan, et al., 2010; Buzdugan, et al., 2009; Harcourt and Donovan, 2005). There are also typologies and categorisations of trafficking developed for the UK (Cooper, et al., 2017) and US (Polaris Project, 2017), and for buyers of sexual services in the UK (Sanders et al., 2009).

Existing typologies have been created along various categorisations, including site of solicitation and/or site of the sexual service, the gender of sellers and/or buyers, choice/agency, and patterns of engagement (e.g. full-time or part-time, regular or intermittent). Some typologies employ a mix of categorisations. Often the motivation behind the typology is to inform services and interventions, particularly regarding sexual health, targeted to individuals in the sex industry, hence categorising by site of solicitation and/or of the sexual service is prominent. Many typologies only look at parts of the industry, whether that be particular types of sexual services, or certain groups of sellers (e.g. women, men or transgender sellers only, migrants only, etc).

Our typology looks a) across the sex industry, b) at individuals involved across genders, nationality etc., and c) does not approach categorising through a health programming lens. It is rooted in the experiences of those working with and within the sex industry who we were able to engage in our research.

We are conscious that the types of prostitution/sex work as well their prevalence, will vary by geographic location (Buzdugan et al., 2009, 2010), and therefore not every city/town/rural area will reflect all the settings/services presented in our typology. It was beyond the scope of this research to present typologies for individual locations. What we are providing is an overview of different types across England and Wales as a whole. A future development of this work would be to see how far the typology maps to specific locations.

Appendix 4 – Follow-up email interview questions

We devised four separate questionnaires: (1) for those currently and formerly involved in selling sexual services; (2) for those currently and formerly involved in selling sex on-street/outdoors (3) for former victims of trafficking and/or exploitation; and (4) for those currently or formerly involved in buying sexual and intimate services.

Each questionnaire was preceded by details of the research, ethical requirements, data handling and storage and contact details for the research team. This preliminary section was followed by a list of questions (reproduced below). Dr Natasha Mulvihill corresponded directly by email with groups (1) and (4). Dr Andrea Matolcsi worked through relevant NGOs to disseminate the questions for groups (2) and (3). For groups (2) and (3) questions were distributed and/or administered by an NGO worker.

Respondents completed the questionnaire in typed or (less often) hand-written format. Responses ranged from 2 pages to several pages. We received 42 completed responses in all (see **Appendix 1** Methods in detail).

Questionnaire for individuals currently or formerly involved in selling sexual and intimate services

1. How do you describe and define what you do (or did formerly)?
2. When and how did you get started?

3. How often do (did) you work? Do (did) you combine with other work or study? Do (did) you engage intermittently?
4. How are (were) appointments/the work organised? How do (did) you advertise or how were you recruited?
5. How does (did) the payment work? Are (were) other people involved (e.g. someone who does the booking or handles the money)?
6. If applicable, how would you describe your clients: their demographics, backgrounds, motivations, etc.?
7. Are (were) you involved in other types of sexual, erotic or intimate services? How do (did) they compare?
8. Do (did) you work alone or with others? How would you describe how these working arrangements make (made) you feel?
9. Thinking about those who you know as friends or acquaintances who are (were) involved in similar work, would you say that they are (were) in a similar position to you, in terms of demographics, motivations, experiences etc.?
10. What are the benefits/positive aspects of what you do (did), for you and for others?
11. What are the (a) challenges (b) risks (c) harms of what you do (did)?
12. Have you seen changes over time? If so, can you explain?
13. Have you paid for sexual, erotic or intimate services? Why or why not? Would you do so in future?
14. What are your future plans?
15. Is there anything else that you would like to say in relation to our research questions on the current 'nature' and 'prevalence' of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales, that we have not asked you?

Questionnaire for individuals involved in street prostitution/sex work: to be administered through a relevant support organisation

1. When and how did you get started in selling sex?
2. How often do you go out to sell?
3. How is a transaction set up? Do you have a particular location? Do you work with others?
4. How would you describe your customers? (their backgrounds)
5. Are you, or have you been, involved in selling sex in other settings (e.g. brothel, parlour etc.) or in different types of sex work, e.g. adult films or erotic dancing?
6. How many individuals (roughly) do you know (a) as face-to-face acquaintances (b) as a community, who are involved in street sex working in your area?
7. Would you say that they are in a similar position to you (in terms of background, motivations, experience etc.)?
8. What do you see as the (a) challenges and (b) risks of what you do?
9. Have you seen changes over time?
10. What are your plans for the future?

Questionnaire for survivors of trafficking or exploitation

1. How would you define what happened to you?
2. How did you become involved in prostitution? What year was this approximately and was it in the UK?
3. How long did this continue? Was it intermittent?
4. How were meetings with customers or exploiters organised?
5. How would you describe the customers or exploiters (in terms of demographics, motivations, experiences etc.)?
6. How did the payment work?
7. Were you involved in different settings (e.g. brothels, street, escorting) for prostitution or exploitation? Were there any differences between these settings?
8. Were you involved in prostitution or exploited alone, or with others?
9. Thinking about those who you knew who were in a similar situation to you, would you say that they were similar to you (in terms of background, experiences etc.)?
10. Given your experience, what are the harms of prostitution?
11. When, how and why did you leave or were able to escape the situation that you were in?
12. Is there anything else that you would like to say in relation to our research questions on 'nature' and 'prevalence' of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales today, that we have not asked you?

Follow-up questions with survey respondents currently or formerly involved in buying sexual and intimate services

1. How and when did you start buying sexual/intimate services? Which kind of services do you usually buy, or have you bought in the past?
2. How often do you buy? Does it vary over time? If so, how?
3. Do you buy sexual/intimate services only in the UK, or also abroad?
4. Are there any particular websites or other sources (e.g. newspapers, word of mouth) you use when seeking out sexual/intimate services?
5. How are appointments organised?
6. How does the payment work? Are other people involved (e.g. someone who does the booking/handles the money)?
7. How would you describe the service-providers that you see, in terms of demographics, motivations, experiences etc.?
8. Have you been involved in buying different types of sexual/intimate services? How do they compare in terms of the arrangement and administration of the experience and in terms of who you see (demographics, motivations, experiences)?
9. In terms of other buyers that you know as friends or acquaintances, would you say that they were/are in a similar position to you (in terms of demographics, motivations, experiences)?
10. What are the benefits of paying for sexual/intimate services (for you, for others)?

11. Have you been a seller of sexual/intimate services? If so, how would describe the experience?
12. Would you consider selling sexual/intimate services? Why or why not?
13. What do you think are the (a) challenges (b) risks (c) harms of paying for sexual/intimate services?
14. Have you seen changes over time in the buying experience? Can you describe those changes?
15. What factors do you think will influence your decision to pay or not to pay for sexual/intimate services going forward?
16. Is there anything else that you would like to say in relation to our research questions on 'nature' and 'prevalence' of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales today, that we have not asked you?

Appendix 5 - Best practice in estimating the prevalence of sex work and prostitution

This sub-section draws on WHO/UNAIDS guidance to offer a summary of best practice in estimating the prevalence of sex work and prostitution.

Estimating the size of 'at risk populations': Given the challenges identified in the Prevalence section of the main report, a sufficient and representative sample of people involved in prostitution and sex work is difficult to achieve. Methods that collect information from the general population, such as surveys, are likely to be ineffective to study sex work and prostitution. As a response, in 2010 the UNAIDS/WHO working group on Global HIV/AIDS and STI surveillance guidelines produced a review of the existing methods for estimating the size of 'at risk populations', including sex workers. The report, which is widely seen as a reference, assesses the relative strength of different approaches to estimating the prevalence of sex work and prostitution: census and enumeration methods, capture re-capture and multiplier methods.¹⁰ The methods reviewed have previously been applied mainly to the study of direct and off-line sex work and are yet to be widely tested for the study of online markets. Accordingly, we also briefly discuss the use of online methods.

Census and enumeration methods: A census counts all members of the population e.g. all sex workers in the country, or all female sex workers working in brothels. A census would identify all locations where sex workers work and count each individual at each location. Enumeration methods apply the same principle but to a selected area(s) and multiply the observed values to create a total estimate. Both methods require a known sampling frame - for example, a comprehensive list of venues or hotspots. When a sampling frame is readily available, census and enumeration methods are straight forward to implement and can be less resource consuming than other methods. However, when the population is hidden, geographically dispersed and/or highly mobile -often characteristics of the population doing sex work- the methods do not perform as well, and a sampling frame may be difficult to define. To our knowledge, there have been no recent enumeration or census studies of the sex worker population in the UK.

Capture-recapture methods: Capture-recapture is often considered as the gold standard to count hard to reach populations. The method estimates the total population by contrasting the overlap between two independent samples. For example, a team would collect data on sex workers in a set of locations and carry out a second independent count a week later. Capture-recapture methods can be relatively easy to implement. The method does not require much data or statistical expertise.

¹⁰ The WHO also references the nomination or snowball method although it does not recommend its use and thus are not discussed here since the focus is on best practice.

However, the accuracy of the estimates rests on a range of assumptions¹¹ that can be hard to meet, particularly for hidden and mobile populations such as sex workers. When the assumptions are not met, results may be biased and either under or over-estimate the population (see Berchenko and Frost, 2011 for a detailed discussion of limitations of the method for studying human populations). Acknowledging the potential issues, the UNAIDS/WHO report provides advice on how to minimise bias in researching sex work using capture-recapture methods (UNAIDS /WHO, 2010, p. 18-19). The method has been used in a range of international studies to measure the prevalence of prostitution (e.g. Vuylsteke et al., 2010; Mutagoma et al., 2015; Sharifi et al., 2017). To our knowledge there are no national studies in the UK that have used capture-recapture in order to estimate the prevalence of sex work.

The multiplier method: The method proceeds on two steps. First, organisations and services aimed at the population of interest are contacted and estimates for the number of service users/registered individuals produced (e.g. the number of sex workers who attended an STI clinic last month). Then the percentage of the population using that service is estimated from a representative survey of sex workers in the area.¹² This second step is fundamental in order to be able to generate a robust multiplier. Prevalence is then obtained by dividing the number who received the service by the proportion reporting receiving the service. The method allows the reduction of double counting by identifying the population who are in contact with several services. Alternatively, a memorable object can be distributed to the population in order to produce the initial list. The WHO notes that “The multiplier method is preferable to census and enumeration methods when the sampling frame is questionable or when the population is difficult to reach” (WHO, 2010, p. 24). Several studies in the UK have used a simplified version of this method to estimate the prevalence of prostitution and sex work (e.g. Kinnell, 1999; Cusick et al., 2009; Brooks-Gordon et al., 2015; Pitcher, 2015), where the second step is omitted, and the multiplier is approximated using a range of approaches. While faster and more affordable than the WHO method, the estimates produced are not robust.

Online research: The expansion of the internet has brought new patterns of sex work and new research methods (Hine, 2016). Advantages of online approaches include the ability to access geographically dispersed groups, to ensure anonymity, locate samples for small population groups (e.g. a specific minority), and to collect large amounts of data in a relatively short amount of time, as also demonstrated by our own survey. The downside is the difficulty to assess non-response or sample bias (i.e. where some groups were more likely to respond than others), as well as to confirm sample characteristics. Furthermore, certain groups – including those involved in street prostitution and victims of trafficking/exploitation – are less likely to be represented in online surveys,¹³ making necessary the use of other mechanisms to include their views and experiences (as done in this research through follow up interviews via support organisations). *Beyond the Gaze* involved the first large scale study of the online sex industry in the UK, but did not provide a prevalence estimate because: ‘If we did make an estimate, we would be offering data that would be immediately out of date given the fluid and fragile nature of the sex markets online’ (Sanders et al., 2018, p. 49). Thus, extreme caution is needed in interpreting prevalence estimates.

¹¹ The assumptions are: a) two samples must be independent and not correlated b) each population member has an equal, or known, chance of selection c) each member must be correctly identified as ‘capture’ or ‘recapture’ d) no major in/out migration may occur e) the sample sizes of each capture must be large enough to be meaningful.

¹² The survey should encompass the group of interest but can also include others. For example, it can include both brothel and street-based sex workers even if the multiplier includes only brothel-based sex workers. Both sources must define the population in the same way and correspond to the same time periods, age ranges and geographic areas.

¹³ In responding to our survey and follow up consultations, multiple organisations and experts highlighted concerns about the most vulnerable populations not being able to access our online survey.

Appendix 6 - Summary and evaluation of potential data sources for estimating prevalence

Source type	Source Sub-type	What? (data available)	Who? (which groups)	Advantages	Limitations	Accessibility	Recommended
Statutory organisations	Criminal Justice/Police	National crime records	Individuals who have been in contact with the criminal justice system. More likely to be those in street prostitution, brothel prostitution and/or trafficked/exploited.	Records readily available.	Information limited to those with a criminal record. Shortcomings of police-recorded crime (inconsistent data collection within and across forces, quality issues and lack of reliability with some forces' data).	Government held data	N
		Registered offences	Individuals who have been in contact with the police, where that interaction has been registered.	Potential for disaggregated local data. Up to date.	Variations across forces on whether and how the data is collected. Irregularity as a result of changes in resources and priorities.	To be negotiated on a case by case basis	N
		Other police data	Individuals and groups who are under investigation or monitoring.	Potential for disaggregated local data. Up to date. Wider than registered offenses.	As above	To be negotiated on a case by case basis	Y, alongside other data
	Healthcare	Health records. Numbers registered in	Individuals who have received healthcare, attended a sexual clinic	Individual records, incentive for individuals to contact services,	Records may be duplicated, not all individuals access, concealing identity (shame, stigma)	Held at individual facilities. Can be shared with	Y. Potential for purposeful data collection

Source type	Source Sub-type	What? (data available)	Who? (which groups)	Advantages	Limitations	Accessibility	Recommended
		specialist sexual clinics.		health and wellbeing data.		researchers, others.	
NGOs and Charities working with at risk groups	Local, regional and national NGOs	Example data collection tool used in this study (see Appendix 8), reports and datasets.	Individuals in contact with NGOs/support organisations. Individuals known to organisations.	Close understanding of the local reality, up to date, voice for vulnerable groups (e.g. victims of trafficking, street workers). If national, potential standardized data.	Lack of standardization, data protection concerns, resource limitations, data collection informed by funder requirements.	To be negotiated on a case by case basis.	Y
Researchers and Academics	Literature	Empirical Evidence	Most groups in sex work and prostitution.	Rigorous methodology, peer review process, potential for triangulation, research framed by wider literature.	Long times to publication. Less responsive to change than charities and statutory services.	Open access, subscription journals, or contact with the authors. All ESRC funded research to be Open Access.	Y
	Project data	Project data	Most groups in sex work and prostitution.	Rigorous methodology, potentially rich data.	Limited number of datasets available to the public.	UK Data Archive holds quantitative and	Y

Source type	Source Sub-type	What? (data available)	Who? (which groups)	Advantages	Limitations	Accessibility	Recommended
						qualitative datasets.	
Government/Public Sector	HRMC	Tax records	Independent sex workers	Access is virtually free, large number of cases, data on all registered. Information on activity dates as well as income levels.	Information dependent on the completeness and accuracy of tax records. Access rules tend to make the access process long.	Request for access to anonymised administrative data.	N
	Stats Office	Surveys	NatSal has data on sex work clients. No data on people in prostitution or sex work, to our knowledge.	Randomised samples allow for conclusions about the overall population.	Social desirability bias. Limited evidence available	Yes, NatSal data is accessible online.	N, as it does not offer data on SW and people in prostitution
	Local Authority	Support services, entertainment venues licensed	Local authorities hold information on the entertainment venues licensed in their area (for lapdancing, massage and other). Some local authorities have information on support services available in the area.	Allows to create a list of registered venues as well as support services.	Limited data. Gaps in the data. No information on irregular venues, number of workers/people in prostitution.	Yes, FOI request. Case by case basis	Y

Source type	Source Sub-type	What? (data available)	Who? (which groups)	Advantages	Limitations	Accessibility	Recommended
Sex workers and people in prostitution	Organisations	Members, nature of sex work,	People voluntarily involved in prostitution or sex work, survivors (if survivor organisations).	Self-definition of sex worker/survivor, deep knowledge of the topic, recognition of agency, up to date information, awareness of latest trends.	Data collection is unstandardized, concerns about data and user protection. Assessing prevalence is complex.	To be negotiated on a case by case basis	Y, access must be negotiated. Data on nature, limited data on prevalence.
	Individuals	Access to services, online use, networks	People voluntarily involved in prostitution or sex work, survivors.	Self-definition of sex worker/survivor, deep knowledge of the topic, recognition of agency, up to date information, awareness of latest trends.	Access and trust issues, time demands, specialist personnel may be required (ethical considerations). Assessing prevalence is complex, unless a survey is conducted.	To be negotiated on a case by case basis	Y, access must be negotiated. Data on nature, limited data on prevalence.
Third parties and Services relating to sex work	Online Advertising Platforms	Number of profiles. Characteristics	Escorts, those advertising their services online	Potential to obtain national data, standardised datasets, real time information.	Only online side of business, difficulty to identify unique individual profiles/assess veracity of information,	Front end profiles are not representative of active profiles.	Y, access must be negotiated

Source type	Source Sub-type	What? (data available)	Who? (which groups)	Advantages	Limitations	Accessibility	Recommended
	Venues	Number of employees, by activity	People working in sex work/adult entertainment venues.	Up to date information, ability to stratify sample to reflect different groups.	Access and trust issues, time demands, specialist personnel may be required (ethical considerations), information limited to those legally working in venues, difficulty to identify unique individual sex workers.	To be negotiated on a case by case basis	Y, as part of a wider sampling strategy
	Services for SW	Clients	Escorts, those using the service.	Standardised information, up to date data.	Access can be difficult to negotiate. Only clients.	To be negotiated on a case by case basis	Currently not accessible

Appendix 7 – Previous prevalence estimates (1999-2018)

Source	Year	Estimate	Population	Method	Advantages	Limitations
Kinnell, 1999	1999	80,000	Sex workers in the UK (all genders, but men likely to be under-represented)	Surveyed service providers. Multiplier estimating the difference between service users and estimated sex workers and prostitutes in the area.	Support services know sex workers, sex workers have incentive to attend and provide data	Small subset of services provided information, multiplication factor obtained by comparing estimate against estimate of sex workers thought to exist by services. Some sex workers not included e.g. trafficked, escorts
Abramsky and Drew, 2014	2004	58,000	Female sex workers in the UK (indoors and street)	Estimate drawing on Dickson (2004) and MET estimates for London and extrapolate to the UK.	National estimate. Both indoor and street workers.	The London sex sector unlikely to represent the UK. Assumptions about extrapolation not tested. For a full review of limitations see Brooks-Gordon et al., (2015)
Import.io, 2017	2017	104,964	Sex workers advertising online (all genders) in one single platform	Collected front end data from one online platform.	Estimate based on data collected from the marked lead on online advertising	Non-peer reviewed. Use of front-end data overestimates the number of active profiles.
Cusick et al., 2009	2007-08	35,882 (x3=107,656)	Sex workers and prostitutes in the UK (all genders, but men likely to be under-represented)	Surveyed service providers. Prioritised services working primarily with street, massage parlours, flat and in some cases escorting. Multiplier based on previous research.	Estimates generated through support services know sex workers. Primary data collection, sex workers have incentive to attend and provide data reducing non-response, service providers expertise helps reduce double counting.	Exclusion of groups less connected to services (e.g. independent escorts; victims of trafficking; those who do not view themselves as sex workers; men). Use of a multiplier requires assumptions that are not empirically testable with the data used. As a result, the researchers conclude that they report a conservative estimate

Source	Year	Estimate	Population	Method	Advantages	Limitations
						and that the total figure may be up to three times as high.
Brooks-Gordon, et al., 2015	2009/2013	72,816	Sex workers and prostitutes in the UK (all genders, but men likely to be under-represented)	Surveyed service providers. Complemented data with previous studies for under-represented populations (e.g. males)	Support services requested to report estimates of know sex workers. Primary data collection, sex workers have incentive to attend and provide data reducing non-response, service providers expertise helps reduce double counting. Key findings were validated by sex worker population in each of the categories identified.	Data based on estimates of the population in contact with services, with a multiplier applied. Exclusion of groups less connected to services (e.g. independent escorts; victims of trafficking; those who do not view themselves as sex workers; men). Services were not asked about estimated population. Multiplier based on previous research, not contrasted.
Pitcher, J. 2015	2009-10	85,714	Street based and indoor sex workers in the UK	Surveyed service providers. Multiplier estimating the difference between service users and estimated sex workers and prostitutes in the area.	Estimates based on contact with services, plus service providers estimates of SW thought to exist in their area.	Exclusion of groups less connected to services (e.g. independent escorts; victims of trafficking; those who do not view themselves as sex workers; men). Use of a multiplier based on previous research, not contrasted.
Harworth et al., 2012	2010	1000 (sub-national)	People involved in sex work in Northumberland	Local mapping through extensive qualitative interviews with local	Broad definition of sex work. Extensive mapping exercise. Covered a wide range of support services.	Difficulty to avoid double counting as well as accessing those who are out of the reach of services. Likely to under-

Source	Year	Estimate	Population	Method	Advantages	Limitations
				professionals and providers.	Able to identify temporary locations. Saturation and triangulation techniques allow testing the validity of the data.	estimate indoor and independent sectors. Insufficient detail on estimates.

Note

There are some caveats that apply to all the sources reviewed. The generation of prevalence estimates depends in the first place on the identification of the population of interest. In this study, sex work and prostitution have been defined using a broad approach that includes all sexual services. None of the studies reviewed contain data on all of these groups or follows the methodology recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO)/ United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Existing data is likely severely to under-estimate figures for groups who are less likely to be in contact with prostitution and sex work support services, such as escorts, victims of trafficking and exploitation, migrant and or highly mobile populations. Additionally, our own qualitative research suggests that certain groups such as those involved in sugaring or BDSM, as well as people who engage in opportunistic sex for payment, do not necessarily view themselves as part of the sex industry: thus they are likely to be excluded from any counts.

Appendix 8 – Data collection tools distributed to (1) NGOs and to (2) police forces

(1) Data collection tool distributed to NGOs via named contact

If you are not in a position to share datasets/reports, it would be extremely helpful if you could provide information on the groups you work with (please add any that are missing using the ‘other’) and any estimates, if you have them, using the table below. We appreciate that boundaries may be blurred and some individuals may overlap categories: we welcome your comments on this as well as any additional information in the notes column. Feel free to use as much or as little space as you need. Leave blank any category that does not apply.

Organisation _____ City/Region _____ Date _____

	Estimated number org works/interacts with (specify timeframe e.g. week/year/month: ___)				Estimated total number in the city/region (specify timeframe e.g. week/year/month: ___)				Notes/Comments
	Female	Male	Transgender (MTF)	Transgender (FTM)	Female	Male	Transgender (MTF)	Transgender (FTM)	
Street sex workers									
Indoor managed workers (e.g. in saunas, parlours, clubs)									
Agency workers (e.g. escort, full-service, BDSM, fetish)									
Indoor independent workers (e.g. escort, full-service, BDSM, fetish)									
Erotic masseurs									
Erotic/lap dancers									
Webcammers									
Adult film workers									
Other 1 (specify:___)									
Other 2 (specify:___)									

Transgender MTF = male to female; FTM = female to male.

‘Indoor managed’, ‘agency’, ‘indoor independent’: here we are trying to capture the distinction between individuals who feel they are working for somebody, for an agency, or for themselves. We appreciate there is crossover and welcome your notes/comment to clarify. Thank you.

	Estimated number org works/interacts with (specify timeframe e.g. week/year/month: ___)					Estimated total number in the city/region (specify timeframe e.g. week/year/month: ___)					Notes/Comments
	UK nationals	Non-UK nationals	Trafficked and/or exploited - UK nationals	Trafficked and/or exploited - non-UK nationals	Intermittent engagement	UK nationals	Non-UK nationals	Trafficked and/or exploited - UK nationals	Trafficked and/or exploited - non-UK nationals	Intermittent engagement	
Street sex workers											
Indoor managed workers (e.g. in saunas, parlours, clubs)											
Agency workers (e.g. escort, full-service, BDSM, fetish)											
Indoor independent workers (e.g. escort, full-service, BDSM, fetish)											
Erotic masseurs											
Erotic/lap dancers											
Webcammers											
Adult film workers											
Other 1 (specify:___)											
Other 2 (specify:___)											

By **'trafficked' and/or exploited'**, we refer here to individuals who, by their own account or the project's assessment, are involved in the listed sexual services as a result of coercion, threat or force. This includes trafficking/modern slavery as well as coercion or exploitation by a pimp. They may or may not be moved within and across internal or national boundaries.

By **'intermittent engagement'** we refer here to individuals who engage in work either casually or, for example, to meet occasional financial needs or wants, perhaps every few months. This would contrast with more regular or prolonged periods of engagement.

Confidentiality: The data that you provide will be stored in an access-restricted folder on the University server. We will not share this information or data with anyone else. When we write up this work for publication, please let us know if you would like us to acknowledge that you/your organisation shared data with the project, or if you would prefer to remain anonymous

(2) Data collection tool distributed to all forces in England and Wales via the NPCC P&SW Committee to Special Points of Contact

1. Estimates for premises and people selling sex, by setting/type

a. Number of commercial saunas and massage parlours known or suspected to be offering sexual services*	Geographical scope (force area, other e.g. subdivision, city/town)	Best estimate	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate	Source of data	Comments
2015/2016**						
2016/2017						
2017/2018						
2018/2019						

* We will be obtaining data on commercial saunas and massage parlours generally, but we understand that some forces collect data on those known or suspected to be offering sexual services in particular.

**April-April. If your data refer to a different time period, please specify in the comments column. Figures can refer to any point in time within the listed year, e.g. those obtained during a one-day snapshot assessment, collected over the year, etc.

b. Number of residential settings operating as brothels, e.g. flats, walk-ups*	Geographical scope (force area, other e.g. subdivision, city/town)	Best estimate	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate	Source of data	Comments
2015/2016						
2016/2017						
2017/2018						
2018/2019						

*Both permanent and temporary (e.g. 'pop-up').

c. Number of people selling sex on-street*	Geographical scope (force area, other e.g. subdivision, city/town)	Best estimate	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate	Source of data	Comments
2015/2016						
2016/2017						
2017/2018						
2018/2019						

*Soliciting on-street/in outdoor locations for the purpose of offering paid sex acts; the sex acts themselves may take place off-street.

d. Number of independent sex workers and/or escorts*	Geographical scope (force area, other e.g. subdivision, city/town)	Best estimate	Lowest estimate	Highest estimate	Source of data	Comments
2015/2016						
2016/2017						
2017/2018						
2018/2019						

*E.g. home working, advertising their services online and not through an agency.

2. In order for us to better understand the context of your data, could you also please let us know the following:

- a. Does your force (or unit) regularly scan the internet (e.g. adult services websites, parlour directories) for information on any of the above areas? If yes, since when?

- b. Does your force (or unit) carry out regular monitoring of, and/or visits to, street prostitution locations and/or indoor premises offering sexual services? If yes, since when?

Appendix 9 – Proposed data quality assessment tool

Data quality assessment tool: Assessing the quality of data on prostitution and sex work

Assessing the quality of data is essential to be able to generate accurate estimates and identify potential gaps in the existing information. Below we propose a tool that can be used to assess the quality of data on those involved in the sex industry. The data assessment tool can be useful for individual organisations as well as those aiming at designing and implementing interventions at a local or regional level. The guidelines are inspired by those provided by the WHO (2017) to assess the quality of health data but have been adapted to reflect the specificities of the prostitution and sex work population, existing resources and data collection systems.

1. Methodological note: the nature of (data on) prostitution and sex work

The nature of prostitution and sex work possess challenges to data collection. Sex work is often **hidden**. The stigma often associated with prostitution and sex work means that activities often occur in private (Sanders, 2006). As a result, some people involved in prostitution and sex work may not identify as such, and may not be in touch with support organisations or be willing to participate in research. In cases where legality is breached or unclear, there is even more reason for activities to be undercover. Prostitution and sex work are often **transient**. People move in and out of prostitution and sex work, across activities, and from place to place, all of which make obtaining robust and timely data challenging. Furthermore, sex work is **multifaceted**, spanning a wide range of activities. The expansion of the internet over the last two decades has diversified the industry even further (Sanders et al. 2018). These characteristics of the industry pose a challenge for the generation of valid and robust estimates.

Key data is not held by a single organisation (such as the NHS in the case of much health data). A **multiplicity of actors** engage with people working in the sex industry (NGOs, statutory organisations, police, government bodies, academics, etc.) with different missions, priorities and structures, and some operate on a very limited budget. This means that **data are rarely** collected in a **consistent** manner. Concerns about **confidentiality** and the protection of vulnerable clients make data sharing challenging. Additionally, sex workers may be in touch with some organisations but not others depending on their circumstances as well as the support offered in the region. Some may not be in touch with any organisation. Thus, collecting information from a sub-set of organisations is likely to produce a **partial picture** of the industry.

The above does not mean that it is not possible to gather a picture of prostitution and sex work in the UK, but it does mean that any picture or figure has to be ‘handled with caution’ and its limitations considered. **The data quality assessment tool presented here aims to facilitate the evaluation and comparison of available data on prostitution and sex work by providing a simple yet systematic method.**

2. Data quality criteria

Following the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (2017) data quality is assessed according to four criteria: timeliness, completeness, consistency and reliability, and accuracy.

Timeliness: The information is up to date so that it allows taking decisions based on current status

Completeness: This is a challenge for the study of hidden populations as the data will be by definition incomplete. The following strategies can be used to promote completeness

- Test prevalence data against typology to assess inclusions and exclusions

- Ask sources to provide estimates for the population they are in touch with, as well as overall estimates for the population.
- Awareness of the information each source holds with regards to different population groups e.g. indoors vs street workers.

Consistency and reliability: Data is deemed to be reliable when it remains consistent on repeated measures. Strategies to assess reliability include:

- Triangulation: Contrasting data from multiple sources in order to assess the consistency of results.
- Repetition: data should be plausible in view of pre-existing information/previous data

Accuracy: The data should faithfully reflect the reality of the population

3. Data quality assessment tool

The assessment process developed by the HOP team proceeds on four steps: 1) identification of the population of interest 2) data gathering, 3) comparison and evaluation and 4) revision.

Step 1: Identification of the population of interest

Population here refers to the group we are interested in studying. This may be everyone involved in sex work in a specific area, or at selected groups. For example, if you are designing an intervention addressed at male indoor workers, data could be collected and assessed for this group only.

Information could also be gathered about other characteristics of interest besides gender and setting e.g. UK Nationals/non-UK nationals, intermittent vs regular engagement, etc.

Step 2: Data gathering

Data gathering requires the identification and gathering of data from relevant sources who may hold data on your population of interest. ‘Sources’ may be individuals, organisations, associations, etc. who have direct or indirect contact with the population(s) of interest. Given that sources are likely to hold partial data, involving a range of sources is likely to result on a clearer picture on the nature and prevalence of sex work in the area.

For each collective (e.g. female street workers, female indoor workers, etc.) make a list of potential sources of data. For each source and collective assess the following:

Source	N Contact	N Estimate	Year	Last N Contact	Last N Estimate	Consistency		Notes
						Time	Sources	
NGO1								
NGO2								
Police								
Statutory NHS								
Local authority								
Sex work collective								

N Contact: Number of individuals in this group the respondent is in contact with.

N Estimate: The respondent's estimate of the population size in their area (city/region)

Year: to which the information corresponds (useful to assess timeliness)

Last N Contact/N Estimate: refer to previous data provided by the same respondent if any

Consistency: refers to the differences between observed values either between two points in time (*Time*) or two or more sources (*Sources*).

Notes: This section allows respondents to highlight any issues with the data.

Step 3 aggregate the information at the city/region level

Once data has been gathered from different sources the next step is to assess the data according to the set quality criteria.

Timeliness: For each source when was the information last collected? Highlight any source for which information is 3+ years old.

Completeness:

- Identify collectives for which there is no or only one reliable source.
- Number of collectives for which there is information and number of sources

Group	No information	One source	Two sources	Three or more
G1				
G2				
...				

Consistency: Do sources produce similar estimates?

- Identify outliers: extremely high or extremely low values. Assess the credibility of the data
- Highlight cells according to level of disparities (less than 20%, 20-39%, 40-59%, 60-99% >100%). Disparities of 20% or more should be examined. Disparities of 40% or more should be assessed.
- Can disparities be explained?

Accuracy: Have concerns about the accuracy of the data been raised? Consider these and report their likely impact on the estimates (Qualitative)

Step 4: Revision

The last step is to evaluate the process and results and consider whether changes are needed in the instruments and process of data collection. Key questions to ask are:

- Have new groups emerged or changes in the population been observed?
- Are there any gaps in the data?
- Are there organisations that have not been included but that may hold useful data?

This is a qualitative phase of reflection and revision that will help assess the limitations of the data gathered as well as to inform next steps.

4. Conclusion

After applying the data quality assessment tool, organisations will be able to evaluate the quality of estimates of prevalence of prostitution/sex work on their area, as well as identify limitations and future data needs.

Appendix 10 - Analysis of data provided by online platforms

Here we examine the profiles advertised on two online platforms (Platform A and Platform B). Platform A and Platform B are market leaders nationally in advertising adult services online. Both agreed to provide us with anonymised back-end data in raw or in summary format, for us to analyse. We focus on key socio-demographic characteristics: gender, cis/transgender, sexual orientation, age and ethnicity.¹⁴ Not all information was available for both platforms. Where comparable data were provided, we contrast the findings. Information is based on clean data, where incomplete or inactive profiles have been excluded.

Women represent around 3 in 4 back-end advertisers in both online platforms. Between 23-30% are men. The majority identify as cis-gender, with a small minority of between 1% and 4% identifying as Trans.¹⁵

Escorts by gender by region in Platform B (%)

Gender	All	Regions			
	England & Wales	London	North East	Wales	Bristol
Female	76	71	77	70	79
Male	23	27	21	26	21
Trans*	1	2	2	4	
Total	100	100	100	100	100

*See footnote 15

Platform B data allows us to explore regional differences. A substantial minority of male and transgender escorts who use the site are in London. While 25% of all escorts are in London, this is true for 29% of male (gay) escorts and 47% of trans escorts advertising on the page. There are fewer male escorts in the North East on the database compared to the other areas. However, conclusions cannot be reached from this fact alone. It may simply be that other sites are more popular there among this group.

Platform A back-end data contains details on sexual orientation. Only four in ten respondents identify as heterosexual, and only 1% as gay, while 35% declare themselves bi-sexual and 23% bi-curious, a proportion that is much higher than that of the overall population (93% of Brits identify as heterosexual according to the ONS, 2017). Further analyses show that these profiles are mostly female. There are several potential explanations for this finding. It may be that non-heterosexual people (particularly females) are more likely to engage in sex work. Alternatively, sex workers may be more likely to disclose a non-traditional sexual orientation (bi-sexual or bi-curious), e.g. in order to promote the marketability of their profile. In summary, the declared orientation may or may not reflect their actual sexual orientation (this applied to other characteristics too).

The age composition of the advertisers varies across platforms. Below we compare the reported (self-declared) age in two platforms. In Platform A, one in ten advertisers are 18 to 21. The very

¹⁴ Unfortunately, it was not possible to explore nationality due to large amounts of missing data.

¹⁵ The information provided is limited by the data collected by the platforms. 'Trans' is used here to denote a range of identities including trans-gender, trans-sexual, transvestite and others. We are aware that this necessarily broad category includes very different sexual orientations, genders and experiences. The platform does not offer other options such as non-binary and thus it is not possible to identify the proportion of individuals in these categories. The majority of advertisers under that category present themselves as female in their profiles.

young (18-19) represent only 3% of profiles. A further 30% are 22 to 26, and 28% 26 to 32. One third of advertisers report their age to be 33 or more. One in ten advertisers are aged 45 or more.

Age profiles in Platform A and B

	Platform A	Platform B
18-21	11	23
22-26	29	49
27-32	28	16
33-44	21	9
45+	10	3
Missing	1	
Total	100	100

The profiles advertised in Platform B appear to be younger than in Platform A: 23% are aged 18-21 and almost 50% are between 22 and 26 years old (note however, that age is self-reported and users may choose to report a more “desirable” age). Only 3% are aged 45+. These differences are likely to reflect usage patterns and modalities of engagement across age groups and illustrate the risks of reaching conclusions about the industry by relying in one single source.

Ethnicity information is also self-declared and thus needs to be interpreted with caution. Our interviews suggest that some advertisers will advertise themselves using a more “desirable” ethnicity (e.g. some Eastern Europeans advertising themselves as Latina/o). Around four in ten escorts in Platform B self-identify as Caucasian. One in four declare their ethnicity to be Latina/o, this is more common among women (25% compared to 12% of men and 44% of all trans escorts). Around one in ten people tick the “other category”, which is thought to be used by people who are unsure about their ethnicity. By region, Caucasians are under-represented in the North East, where 50% of advertisers in this particular platform advertise themselves as Latina/o.

Escorts by reported ethnicity and gender Platform B (%)

Ethnicity	Gender			Total
	Female	Male	Trans*	
African/Caribbean	2	7		3
Asian	11	11	13	11
Caucasian	36	64	27	41
Latina/o	25	12	44	23
Middle Eastern	0	6		2
Mixed	9		13	7
Other	16	0	2	13
Total	100	100	100	100

*See footnote 15.

The pattern in London largely matches the total distribution for England and Wales, although Latino/a are somewhat overrepresented. That said, half of African/Caribbean female escorts and 40% of male African/Caribbean escorts are in London. Similarly, 53% of all Latino male escorts, and 75% of all Latina trans escorts are in London.

In order to understand the size of over-estimation and how it varies across groups, we contrast the total number of profiles with the number of profiles with complete socio-demographic information (column two). The last column reports complete profiles as a percentage of the total. Complete

profiles are more likely to be active and regular users (e.g. those missing key information are less likely to show on the listings once filters are applied).

There are notable gender differences: 68% of women have complete profiles, compared to only 19% of males, and 40% of couples. Younger respondents are more likely to have a complete profile compared to older ones. Differences for other groups are not as large. The higher percentage of complete profiles among bi-sexual and bi-curious is likely to be a gender effect given that the vast majority of those who self-identify as bi-curious are women. Overall, estimates based on the number of profiles are likely to over-estimate activity among men, and couples compared to women, and of older workers compared to younger workers.

Profiles on an online platform by sociodemographic characteristics

		%	% complete profiles in each category
Gender	Couple FF	1	40
	Couple MF	3	39
	Couple MM	0	40
	Female	67	68
	Male	29	19
	Missing	0	
Cis/Transgender	Cis-gender	96	53
	Transgender/Transvestite*	4	45
	Missing	0	
Sexual orientation	Bi-curious	23	64
	Bi-sexual	35	58
	Gay	1	35
	Straight	40	42
	Missing	1	
Age	18-21	11	70
	22-26	29	63
	27-32	28	56
	33-44	21	43
	45+	10	36
	Missing	1	

*See footnote 15

Appendix 11 - Online platform safety measures: Platform B

Platform B is acutely aware of the risk that its site could be used by individuals for the purpose of illicit activity. For this reason, Platform B has developed a number of safety measures, which are reviewed regularly to keep pace with changing criminal modes and in line with feedback from law enforcement agencies and external partners. The platform also works with police forces across England and Wales, as needed, and has partnered with the Home Office to help develop an industry-wide approach to the identification and prevention of trafficking online.

These safety measures include user registration, and verification of identity and payment methods. The site also blocks adverts which meet certain high risk criteria, which are reviewed in partnership with other partner organisations and police on a regular basis.

Platform B partners with a national organisation dedicated to identifying individuals who seek to harm sex workers. The platform funds membership of the organisation for all its users, and encourages sex workers to become members to receive its alerts and support in documenting and reporting criminal activity. The platform also directly reports any suspect accounts to this organisation to ensure potential criminality and exploitation is dealt with by the appropriate agency.

All users of the site can also register any concerns about trafficking and exploitation. An on-screen flag directs them to a third-party specialist organisation to report any concerns. Platform B also offers free banner advertising to sex worker safety and outreach organisations on their website. The banners are displayed to sex workers as they fill out their advertisement, and can be targeted to specific regions or shown nationwide.

Platform B notes that its ability to field concerns around trafficking and exploitation would be significantly enhanced by a single point of contact to report issues nationwide. More collaborative working across relevant agencies and adult platforms would also improve practice across the sector as a whole.

Appendix 12 – Key findings from NGO data collection process

Following discussions with NGOs and the circulation of a data collection tool (see **Section 2: Prevalence**, sub-section **Charities and NGOs – project data**), we make the following observations:

1. Eight out of 11 responding organisations only worked with (self-identified) women. Several organisations mentioned funding as the underlying reason for this decision.
2. Among organisations that worked with men, these tended to be a small proportion of their clients (range 0 to 6 male clients).
3. Organisations were supporting between 24 women over a year and 353 in a single quarter, highlighting diversity of organisations and how averages are to be interpreted with care.
4. A limitation of our data collection exercise is that no organisations who work exclusively with men responded to our data request, although we did hold individual consultation meetings with this part of the sector.
5. Two organisations could not provide gender breakdowns.
6. Organisations diverged in the amount and detail of data collected. Most, but not all organisations, collected information on the gender of their clients. Only two organisations were able to provide estimates as to whether their clients were transgender.
7. Six organisations specialised in at-risk groups, mainly street workers, and also victims of trafficking and or sexual exploitation.
8. The remaining organisations supported both indoor and outdoor workers.

9. The majority of organisations reported nationality data (UK nationals versus non-UK nationals) but some warned that their data are estimates.
10. We asked organisations to provide their best estimates for the total population in their area, in contrast with the number of service users with whom they are in contact. Organisations estimated the total population of sex workers in their area to be between 1.3 and 3.4 times the size of their user base.
11. Data collection is guided by operational and funder requirements: there is no standardised approach across organisations to collecting data.
12. Given the substantial variation, using these multipliers to extrapolate overall prevalence estimates is likely to yield rough estimates at best.
13. Some organisations highlighted the difficulty of obtaining data on those who are victims of exploitation or trafficking, due to trauma, language barriers, or fear of deportation. This concern was echoed in the stakeholder consultations meetings, where the risk of ignoring the most vulnerable was frequently mentioned.
14. Similarly, a range of organisations raised concerns about sharing data (data protection), particularly with respect to service users in situations of vulnerability.