



# MEN WHO BUY SEX

Who they buy and what they know

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**Men who buy sex**  
**Who they buy and what they know**

A research study of 103 men who describe their use of trafficked and non-trafficked women in prostitution, and their awareness of coercion and violence.

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A sample of 103 men in London, England, who used trafficked and non-trafficked women in prostitution were asked about their experiences and awareness of the sex industry. Almost all (96%) bought sex indoors. Many reported that they were aware of pimping, trafficking and other coercive control over those in massage parlour, brothel, and escort prostitution. These men were frequently aware of the vulnerability and risk factors for entry into prostitution including childhood abuse, lack of alternative job choices, coercive control and homelessness.

The men listed effective deterrents to buying sex which included time in prison, public exposure and being issued an ASBO. They described their ambivalence about buying sex and their ambivalence about the nature of their relationships with women. Some of the attitudes expressed by the interviewees in this study have been associated with violence against women in other research.

# 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Two agencies collaborated in producing this research report. Eaves runs the POPPY Project, providing accommodation and support to women trafficked into the UK for the purposes of exploitation through prostitution and domestic servitude. The POPPY Project is an internationally recognised model of good practice in supporting women who have been trafficked into prostitution to exit the sex industry.

Eaves also undertakes research, policy development, lobbying, training and awareness-raising on a wide range of violence against women issues, inc prostitution, trafficking, domestic violence and sexual violence. Key stakeholders in Eaves' work include the Home Office, the Ministry of Justice, the Metropolitan Police Service and the Crown Prosecution Service.

Eaves is a feminist organisation committed to working to curb demand for commercial sex acts, which increase sex trafficking and organised crime in general.

Prostitution Research & Education (PRE) is a US non-governmental non-profit organisation which has since 1995 researched and documented the harms resulting from prostitution and trafficking and explored alternatives to prostitution. PRE offers educational materials and resources on its widely-used website ([www.prostitutionresearch.com](http://www.prostitutionresearch.com)). PRE is formally affiliated with the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology and with the Center for World Indigenous Studies. In 2005 PRE began an international study of men who use women in prostitution aimed at developing culturally relevant programmes to prevent prostitution. The present research report on men's demand for prostitution in England is one of several reports that will be produced from other locations where PRE has conducted similar interviews with partner organisations, including Scotland, India, the US and Cambodia.

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Helen Atkins was the project co-ordinator, responsible for all logistics, assisted by Sarah Mills, who made important contributions to the research. They placed newspaper advertisements, researched websites, located interview sites, answered the telephone and scheduled interviews. In addition, they covered all administrative requirements for research purposes and for accommodating the team of international researchers. Roselle Birkbeck answered the telephone and greeted research participants.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION

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In 2007, Eaves and Prostitution Research and Education (PRE) began a study of the attitudes and behavioural patterns of men who use women in prostitution. Both organisations have previously studied and reported on the violence that is integral to prostitution (Bindel and Atkins, 2008; Farley et al, 2003).

Kinnell (2008 p42-43) recently described the range and intensity of violence perpetrated against women in UK prostitution, including sexual assaults, physical assaults, robbery and verbal abuse. Also documented was the use against prostituted women of covert photography of the women during sex acts with buyers, blackmail, threatening letters and phone calls, people posing as police, verbal abuse, threats including with weapons, intimidation, stalking, mugging, thrown missiles (fireworks, stones, bottles, urine, dirty nappies, eggs), harassment by youth gangs and vigilantes, ejection from moving cars or assault by cars and kidnapping. Buyers also reportedly refused to use or tampered with condoms and forced acts that were not paid for.

When compared with the large number of studies of women in prostitution, it is apparent that men who buy women for sexual use are an under-researched group. There is a need for research that offers additional information on those who have been described as “the invisible subjects of the sex industry” (Marttila, 2008).

A few studies have highlighted the range of physical locations where prostitution takes place (Kramer, 2003). Most studies focus on street prostitution, which is diminishing today in the UK (Matthews, 2008). A consequent aim of this research was to learn more about indoor locations where men buy sex.

This research is timely. Addressing the human rights violations in prostitution is being discussed in the UK and the EU today. Several Nordic countries have criminalised the sex buyer while at the same time decriminalising the person who sells sex and providing services. This research will hopefully bring some useful information about men who buy sex to the attention of the public and to policy makers as they address trafficking and the commercial sex industry.

Men’s acceptance of prostitution is one of a cluster of attitudes that encourages and justifies violence against women. Violent behaviours against women have been associated with attitudes that promote men’s beliefs that they are entitled to sexual access to women, are superior to women and are licensed as sexual aggressors. The purpose of the research was to assess men’s attitudes toward women in prostitution and their awareness of and use of trafficking victims, with the goal of ultimately developing prostitution and trafficking prevention programmes.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

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The questionnaires used in this research were designed to advance knowledge of buyers' perceptions of women generally and their attitudes toward prostituted women in particular. Standardised and validated questionnaires yielded both quantitative and qualitative data from the interviews. Questionnaires included a 100-item questionnaire that asked about buyers' attitudes toward prostitution, acceptance of rape myths (Burt, 1980), sexual behaviours and condom use, pornography use, commission of sexually coercive behaviour toward prostitute and non-prostitute partners (Koss and Oros, 1982), likelihood to rape, and demographic characteristics. A second measure inquired about hostile male identity based on adversarial sexual beliefs, negative masculinity and dominance as central to love relationships (Malamuth et al., 1991, Malamuth and Thornhill, 1994).

Interviewers also used a structured interview to obtain quantitative and qualitative data which included the men's history of using women in prostitution, what they looked for when they bought sex, their evaluations and perceptions of women in prostitution, pimp-prostitute relationships, awareness of trafficking, first use of women in prostitution, how they discussed prostitution with their friends and deterrents, among others.

A team of nine researchers interviewed 103 London men who had bought sex from women in prostitution. Four of the interviewers had previous experience in using the same questionnaires to interview men who bought sex in other countries (India, Scotland, the US). Men were invited to participate via advertisements in local newspapers. The advertisements listed a phone number, guaranteed anonymity, and stated that payment of £20 would be offered to cover the cost of transportation and as a token of appreciation for their time.

Hundreds of phone calls were received in response to the newspaper advertisements. Not all phone calls were returned because of the high volume of calls. All those who were spoken to by phone were accepted for research interviews unless 1) they reported that they had not used a woman in prostitution, 2) they were seeking sex from the person who answered the phone or 3) they were seeking a second interview after having already been interviewed once.

Research participants reviewed and signed informed consent forms. They were also provided with details for referral to psychological counselling in the event of post-interview emotional distress. None of the men asked for further details of the counselling option. A number of men expressed interest in and appreciation for having participated in the interview. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half to two hours.

The men were assured of anonymity. They were met in a public place and told they were not expected to give their names to anyone working on the research project and that if they used a real name, then that would not be used to identify them in the research protocols. Some men disclosed that they would not have participated if they were identified. For example, "I haven't ever told anyone I have been to a prostitute, and I never will. It is like a dirty secret," and also "It is something that I would not reveal, I am talking to you because you are a stranger." A third man stated that in conversations with others, "I'd never let on I know anything about it."

This research design is based on concepts and ethical principles from the field of psychology, providing a different perspective from the sociological paradigms that have been described as previously dominating research on prostitution (Munro and Della Giusta, 2008, p7).

## 4. RESULTS

**Table 1 – Selected comments about prostitution by London men who buy sex**

"Prostitution is like masturbating without having to use your hand."
"It's like renting a girlfriend or wife. You get to choose like a catalogue."
"I feel sorry for these girls but this is what I want."
"No big deal, it's just like getting a beer."
"I like it if it'd be super expensive...she comes in, nothing said and she is instantly very sexual, a sexual creature."
"My favourite experience in prostitution was when she was totally submissive."
"I don't like the ones that make no secret of it being a job. I like customer care. They try to finish quickly but I want to take a little bit of time."
"I have sex as a means to an end to meet my sexual needs... It's a financial transaction."
"I found her on punternet.com and she looked at me with the look of a puppy dog in the Christmas window."
"Look, men pay for women because he can have whatever and whoever he wants. Lots of men go to prostitutes so they can do things to them that real women would not put up with."
"If you go to the wrong one, you might as well be in a morgue, there's a slab of flesh there."
"We're living in the age of instant coffee, instant food. This is instant sex."
"Prostitution is a last resort to unfulfilled sexual desires. Rape would be less safe, or if you're forced to hurt someone or if you're so frustrated you jack off all day."
"Prostitution is being able to do what you want without the taxation."
"It's no strings attached sex, no bother about buying gifts, it's a one off financial commitment."
"It should be legalised over here. This is the way God created us. It is being human. If you don't have a partner then you have to go to a prostitute."
"It's unfulfilling, there's no reward. It's empty. It's terrible. You come out feeling even more empty and unloved. You will likely feel quite empty afterwards, as if you have been used."
"Prostitution is like being able to masturbate without doing any of the work."
"You pay for the convenience, a bit like going to a public loo."
"I hugely recommend it but be sure you know there's a threshold you'll be crossing. Prostitution is naturally questionable, whether it's to yourself or to society."

### 4.1 Sample demographics

#### 4.1i Age

**Table 2**

<b>Age 18-29</b>	30% (n=31)
<b>Age 30-40</b>	36% (n=37)
<b>Age 41-70</b>	33% (n=34)

The average age of the 103 research participants was 38, with a range of 18 to 70. These age ranges are consistent with other studies of men who buy sex. McKeganey (1994) interviewed 70 men in Glasgow, whose average age was 37 years, ranging from age 23 to 61. Busch, Bell and colleagues (2002) interviewed 1,342 buyers arrested for solicitation of prostitution in the Western United States whose average age was 39, ranging from 18 to 84 years.



#### **4.1ii Ethnic identities**

The ethnic identities of the men who participated in this research were varied. About one-half of the men (47%) described themselves as White British, 11% were Black British or African, 10% were British Asian, 10% described themselves as of Indian or Pakistani descent, 4% were Eastern European and 4% described themselves as having mixed ethnic backgrounds. An additional 14% included Afghan, Australian, Brazilian, Central American, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, western European, White South African, and African American.

Eighty-eight per cent of the interviewees identified themselves as heterosexual and 12% identified as bisexual.

#### **4.1iii Family income**

About one-third of the men (35%) reported an annual family income of £20,000 or less, about one-half (48%) of £20,001 to £50,000, and 17% greater than £50,000.

#### **4.1iv Family educational background**

About one-half of the men (51%) indicated that their fathers had less than a university education, about one-third (37%) reported that their fathers had a university degree and the remaining 12% said that their fathers had a postgraduate qualification. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents (63%) reported that their mothers had less than a university education, slightly fewer than one-third (31%) had mothers with a university degree and 6% indicated that their mothers had a postgraduate qualification.

Approximately one-half (52%) described themselves as politically centrist, with 21% on the right or far right of the political spectrum and 28% on the left or far left.

#### **4.1v Religion**

Thirty-five per cent of the men in this sample reported no religious affiliation. One-third described themselves as Christian. Ten per cent described themselves as Hindu, 5% as Muslim and 4% as Jewish, Buddhist, Sikh or Spiritualist. Thirteen per cent reported an unspecified other religious affiliation.

Two-thirds of the men rarely or never (41%) or only occasionally (24%) attended religious services. 20% of the men sometimes attended religious services and 15% reported that they fairly often or frequently attended religious services. Lowman and Atchison (2006) reported similar per centages for Canadian men who buy sex.

#### **4.2 Number of sex partners and number of women used in prostitution**

About one-half of the study participants (54%) said that they were currently in a relationship. Other research has found that men's decision to buy sex generally is not because of a lack of a sex partner. McKeganey (1994) found that 66% of his Glasgow buyers were married or living with a partner. Chetwynd and Plumridge (1994) found that 50% of New Zealand men who bought sex were married or partnered.

Three-quarters (77%) of the men said that they had had more than ten sex partners in their lifetimes, with more than one-quarter (28%) indicating that they had had more than 50 partners. In similar findings, Ward, Mercer, Wellings and colleagues (2005) in the UK also found that men who paid for sex were significantly likely to report ten or more sex partners in the past five years. Only a minority of these men's lifetime sex partners (19%) were women in prostitution.

Ninety per cent of the interviewees acknowledged that they had bought women in prostitution in the year before being interviewed. The remaining men had bought sex more than a year previously. When asked how many women in prostitution they had ever bought, the number most frequently mentioned was 15, although responses ranged widely, from 1 to 2,000. Twelve per cent of the men reported use of more than 130 women. Sixty-five per cent believed that “most men” go to prostitutes every now and then.

The range of definitions of prostitution, from kerb crawling to other forms of impersonal commercialised sexual behaviour, and the variation in research sample selection, has resulted in estimates ranging from 80% of all men having purchased sex (Benjamin and Masters, 1964) to 10% (Haavio-Mannila, Rotkirch and Kontula, 2000). Soothill and Sanders (2005) cited the national Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles which reported 9% of London men aged 16-44 paid for sex in the past five years. This number might be at least 5-10% percentage points higher if it were to include older men and men who had bought sex at any time in their lives. It should also be noted that traditional distinctions between prostitution and stripping have become blurred (Matthews, 2008 p18). A lap dance in which a man is masturbated by a woman’s body to ejaculation or an erotic massage are in fact prostitution but in many instances may not be named as prostitution by men who purchase those sex acts.

### **4.3 Age and circumstances when first bought sex**

Of the men studied, 44% reported that their first use of women in prostitution occurred when they were below the age of 21. One man explained, “For a man it’s part of growing up.” Their first use of purchased sex ranged from 12 to 58 years of age. More than three-quarters of the men (78%) had bought sex by the time they were 25 years of age.

The men were asked about the social circumstances in which they first paid for sex. Forty-three per cent reported that they were with one or more friends during their first purchase of sex, and 2% were accompanied by a family member. Twenty-nine per cent said that prostitution was their first sexual experience, in what Bernstein (2001) has described as “unproblematic instances of sexual entitlement and male bonding.”

### **4.4 Locations where men purchased sex in London**

Twenty-seven per cent of the men said that they used the Internet to locate women in prostitution for their use. Mansson (2004) described the role of online communities that support and facilitate buying sex. Blevins and Holt (2009) noted that the online subculture of buyers placed significant value on the notion that paid sexual encounters are normal and non-deviant, with significant value placed on buyers’ experiences and knowledge of the sex trade.

The men bought women for sex in both indoor and outdoor locations. The vast majority (96%) bought sex indoors and 36% also bought sex on the street or in cars. Four out of five (81%) had bought sex in more than one location. This suggests that the estimate by the UK Network of Sex Work Projects (2008) that 70% of prostitution is indoors is low.

The interviewees most frequently bought sex indoors in what they described as brothels (60%) or private flats that functioned as brothels (55%) or massage parlours (47%). Other locations included escort agencies (33%), saunas (27%), strip clubs (23%), bars (20%) and private parties (19%).

**Table 3 – Indoor locations where London men purchased sex**

Type of indoor location	Percentage (number) of men
Brothel	60% (62)
Private flat belonging to prostitute or pimp	55% (51)
Massage parlour	47% (48)
Escort agency	33% (34)
Sauna	27% (28)
Strip club	23% (24)
Bar	20% (21)
Private party	19% (20)

#### 4.5 Buying sex during service in the Armed Forces

Twenty-one per cent of the men we interviewed had been in the Armed Forces. Of these, about one-quarter (26%) had bought a woman in prostitution during their time in military service.

#### 4.6 Buying sex outside the UK

In addition to buying sex in the UK, one-half (49%) of the 103 men interviewed had bought sex outside the UK, having travelled to 42 countries on six continents between them.

They most frequently travelled to Amsterdam (see Table 4). A number of men mentioned specifically that they travelled to the Netherlands or New Zealand *because* prostitution was legal in those countries. As Collins and Judge (2008, p 143) noted, “A migration of demand toward the more relaxed policing area can be expected” whether that “more relaxed area” is a particular neighbourhood in London or a particular country in the EU. Twenty-two per cent travelled alone and 28% travelled with a group of friends. Noting the frenzied pace of the Dutch sex industry, one man commented, “Amsterdam was like going through a turnstile into a fairground ride: two minutes and you’re out. The idea that the women had been with five men in the last hour or 20 men in a day was a big turn off.”

The most common reason cited for buying sex in another country was the opportunity that resulted from business travel away from home. “The trip was paid for by my business but the prostitute was paid from my own pocket.” After one man returned to London from a trip visiting Prague for a “lads’ weekend,” his view of prostitution changed: “When I got back, my whole perception of prostitution changed. I felt no guilt. Before I saw it as something illegal and wrong – not morally wrong, but I didn’t want to pay for sex because I didn’t have to pay for sex. But in that different setting, the context where there are different views, it rubs off on you very quickly. In Prague, prostitution is very much seen as business, just like we here work in a job we don’t enjoy or like to do, some women choose to work in prostitution. It’s not their dream but it’s a living. Here, in an office job, you are selling yourself in a different way. Whether you are selling your body or mind, you are still selling yourself.” Later, he went to Amsterdam on a tour arranged by the same travel agent/pimp: “Amsterdam - the same person arranged it. A different group of lads. They hadn’t paid for sex before so I felt like a veteran. This time I had no hesitation.”

Several mentioned Prague or other locations, not because prostitution was legal there but because it was tolerated and promoted on the Internet. "I got a Virgin Media package: on Bravo they showed a lot of what was going on in Prague, it looked right up my alley. They've got a very liberal attitude towards sex, fetish sex, orgies. I think I'll go for a walk on the wild side." Some men researched the currency exchange and the toleration of prostitution, "Like holiday destination where currency exchange is good and there's also prostitution. The girls there like you more because you have more money. You can live like a king for two weeks."

**Table 4 – Countries where women in prostitution were bought by London men**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Number of times noted</b>	<b>Cities/regions specified</b>
Netherlands	19	Amsterdam, Arnhem, Nijmegen, Groningen
Thailand	8	Pattaya
India	7	Calcutta, Gujarat, Bombay
Germany	7	Munich, Stuttgart
United States	7	Los Angeles, Las Vegas, New York
Spain	6	Amena, Costa del Sol
France	5	
China	4	Hong Kong
Hungary	4	Budapest
Australia	3	
Belgium	3	
Brazil	3	Sao Paulo, Rio
Nigeria	3	Lagos
Switzerland	3	
Cuba	2	Havana
Czech Republic	2	Prague
Kuwait	2	
Indonesia	2	
Malaysia	2	
New Zealand	2	
Portugal	2	
Russia	2	
Singapore	2	
Belize	1	
Bulgaria	1	
Congo	1	
Dubai	1	
Gibraltar	1	
Greece	1	Athens
Italy	1	
Japan	1	Tokyo
Kenya	1	
Laos	1	
Madagascar	1	
Mexico	1	
Micronesia	1	
Mozambique	1	
Philippines	1	
Poland	1	
Saudi Arabia	1	
South Africa	1	
Ukraine	1	
Zaire	1	

#### 4.7 Rape myth acceptance, prostitution myth acceptance and hostile masculinity

The association between these men's acceptance of myths about prostitution and their acceptance of myths about rape was statistically reliable ( $r = 0.23$ ,  $p = .024$ ). The more accepting they were of prostitution, the more likely they were to also accept cultural myths about rape such as "Women say no but they really mean yes" or "A woman who dresses provocatively is asking to be raped." The notion that prostitutes are "un-rape-able" was a common belief among the men in this sample. Twenty-five per cent told us that the very concept of raping a prostitute or call girl was "ridiculous." Nearly one-half of the buyers stated that rape happens because men get sexually carried away (47%) or their sex drive gets "out of control" (48%). Sixteen per cent stated that they would rape a woman if they could be assured that they would not be caught. Acknowledging their sexually coercive behaviours with non-prostitute women, 37% told us that they had tricked non-prostituting women into having sex by lying to them. Twenty-four per cent asserted that the concept of rape simply does not apply to women in prostitution.

Twenty-seven per cent of our interviewees explained that once he pays, the customer is entitled to engage in *any act he chooses* with the woman he buys. Forty-seven per cent of these London men expressed the view to a greater or lesser degree that women did not always have certain rights during prostitution. Seventeen per cent of the men agreed that half of the time or less frequently prostitutes have certain rights during the prostitution encounter. Another 22% of these interviewees expressed 60-80% agreement with the statement "women have certain rights in prostitution". These findings suggest that at various times during prostitution, many of the men who buy women for sex think that the women they buy have no rights in the interaction. As Kinnell (2008) argues, such men believe that "buying sex entitles them to do anything they want" (p264) or that paying "gave them the right to inflict any kind of assault they chose" (p86).

#### 4.8 The theory that prostitution is rape prevention

The men expressed a number of misogynist attitudes, some of which frankly endorsed rape. Those with the highest scores on the hostile masculinity scale tended to be those who most strongly endorsed rape myths ( $r = 0.71$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ). There is construct overlap between these two questionnaires which to some extent measure similar attitudes. An adversarial stance toward women was evident in many of these men's responses. For example, 33% reported that most women are basically liars. Nearly one-half (46%) felt that most women get pleasure in putting men down. Thirty-one per cent felt that they "get a raw deal" from women in their life.

Fifty-four per cent of these London buyers subscribed to the theory that prostitution decreases rape. There is no empirical basis for this theory, nonetheless it is assumed to be the truth by many people, including these buyers. In part as a justification for prostitution, men who bought sex reasoned that if prostitution did not exist then they would be more likely to rape women who were not prostitutes. This belief was clearly held by one man who stated that "Sometimes you might rape someone: you can go to a prostitute instead." Forty-one per cent of 110 Glasgow and Edinburgh men who bought sex also believed this theory (Macleod, Farley, Anderson and Golding, 2008). Another man explained, "Society benefits. I've heard that levels of rape have decreased due to Internet porn." And, "Prostitution is a last resort to unfulfilled sexual desires. Rape would be less safe, or if you're forced to hurt someone or if you're so frustrated you jack off all day."

A related belief held by the interviewees is the notion that the concept of rape does not apply to prostitutes. Twenty-five per cent of these men believed that a prostitute cannot be raped, yet they tended to be aware of some of the factors that made women vulnerable.

Rape rate statistics from the US raise the possibility that there may actually be a *positive* association between legal prostitution in Nevada and higher rape rates in that state. The Nevada rate of rape was higher than the U.S. average and significantly higher than rates of rape in several more populous U.S.

states – California, New York and New Jersey<sup>1</sup>.

The notion that men are not responsible for violence, rape or sexual exploitation if their sexual expectations are unmet has been promoted with respect to rape and incest, as well as prostitution.

#### **4.9 Awareness of age at entry into prostitution**

The interviewees thought that on average, 36% of women began prostitution under age 18.

According to evidence submitted to the UK Government (Home Office, 2004), between 50-75% of women entered prostitution before they were 18, with 15 years being the average age of entry. In addition, *Paying the Price* (Home Office, 2004) noted that 75% of children abused through prostitution had been missing from school. Cusick and colleagues (2002) found that a majority of British women in prostitution had begun prostitution as minors. The average age at entry into prostitution is adolescence (Spangenberg, 2001; Boyer, Chapman and Marshall, 1993; Nadon, Koverola and Schludermann, 1998).

#### **4.10 Awareness of minors in strip clubs and massage parlours**

Nineteen per cent of the men believed there were girls under the age of 18 in strip clubs or massage parlours that they had visited.

#### **4.11 Awareness of childhood abuse**

Thirty-two per cent of the 103 buyers estimated that relatively few (0-20%) women in prostitution were abused as children, even as 34% of the interviewees estimated that between 30-40% of all women in prostitution were, and 35% thought that 50-90% were.

In fact, an overwhelming majority of women in all forms of prostitution have been sexually abused as children (Silbert and Pines, 1982a; Nadon et al., 1998). Some estimates are as high as 90%. As one woman explained, "Through childhood sexual abuse, many prostituted women have become conditioned into thinking that this is their choice... It normalises this kind of behaviour and causes many to enter into the trade" (Aumord, 2009).

#### **4.12 Awareness of homelessness**

The men expressed varying degrees of awareness that a majority of women in prostitution are currently or recently homeless. Eighteen per cent of interviewees estimated that 50-90% of all prostitutes were homeless; 26% estimated that 30-40% were homeless, and 46% estimated that 10-20% of all prostitutes were homeless. Eleven per cent of the men believed that no prostitutes were homeless.

Research has shown that there is a 75% rate of current or past homelessness among those prostituted in nine countries (Farley et al., 2003).

#### **4.13 Awareness of the psychological damage caused by prostitution**

There is extensive literature documenting that prostitution causes profound emotional damage (Baldwin, 1992; Barry, 1995; Dworkin, 1997; Herman, 2003; Hoigard and Finstad, 1986; Farley et al., 2003; Raymond et al., 2002).

Forty-four per cent of the men believed that prostitution had a very or extremely negative effect on the prostitute. Only 19% felt that prostitution had a very or extremely positive effect on the prostitute. The

<sup>1</sup> FBI Uniform Crime Report (2004) Available at [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius\\_04/](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_04/)

positive effect they referred to was primarily a financial benefit. One interviewee explained, "There's an intimacy in all sex, even if it's only a small part of sex and if you give it away to loads of men there's not much left. It's about giving a piece of yourself away and there's not much left." Another: "Once they've had sex for money they lose morals or values in themselves which affect their everyday life and their value of other things as well."

Some of the interviewees described the psychological damage resulting from prostitution in detail. One man understood the emotional numbing that results from prostitution. "They don't feel anything. Their lifestyle generally makes them insensitive to warmth." Another described complex posttraumatic disorder, a psychological condition that results from chronic traumatic stress. Prostitution "changes the person when she does it," he said. "It changes how she looks into the world."

However, a number of these men felt that women in prostitution had intrinsic qualities that made them different from other women and they were not aware of the specific psychological harms *caused* by prostitution. As a result of sexual exploitation and violence before and during prostitution, women, men and the transgendered in prostitution are known to suffer from depression, traumatic stress and other anxiety disorders, dissociative disorders, eating disorders and others (Farley et al., 2003).

"Their mind is twisted, or they're like used," said one man. "They've seen everything already. Their mind is opened up – they have no guards up." Blaming the woman for her prostitution, another man said, "The very fact that they're prepared to do that job where others won't even if skint, there's some capability inside them that permits them to do it, to not be disgusted by this, a normal woman would be if she was asked to do it." Another man concluded, "They must be able to have sex more often because they do it all day. They don't mind foregoing a lover or romance or a married partner.... They don't mind going to people's homes for sex. They don't mind having sex with anyone." One interviewee who struggled with the notion that prostitution damages women rationalised it by believing that women in prostitution are, unlike other women, intrinsically indecent and slutty: "It's a dirty job in my humble opinion, having sex for money isn't a decent thing for a human being. I wouldn't go out on a date or be in a relationship with one of them. I don't see myself going out with someone who has been paid for sex. I'm an old fashioned person, Roman Catholic. In high school, boys don't want to go out with slutty girls. Part of my brain is divided - like a wall. I think two different ways about women."

#### **4.14 Awareness of pimping, trafficking and coercive control**

Forty-eight per cent of 103 London men said they believed that most women in prostitution are victims of pimps, reflecting a reality that converges with what is known from observation and research studies (Boyer, 2008; DiPaolo, 1999; Giobbe, 1993; Herman, 2003; Ling et al., 2007; Raphael and Shapiro, 2002; Silbert and Pines, 1982; Vanwesenbeeck et al, 1995; West et al., 2000). "Prostitution is forced on her," explained one man, "not always physically, but definitely mentally. To convince her to do a job she doesn't want to do, you must be a good manipulator." A number of the men reported in-depth information about pimps. "The pimp does the psychological raping of the woman," explained one. "The pimps treat them very harsh; they have no freedom and they have to ask for everything." Another said, "The pimp could be a husband or boyfriend in need of cash and tells the girl: 'You gotta make money for us.'" Another perceived that sellers are deceptive: "Pimps know how not to look like a pimp to customers. They look like normal people and you'd never expect them to be a pimp."

A majority of women who sell sex have pimps who may be called by other names, such as friend or husband. Nonetheless they function as pimps (McLeod, 1982; Farley, 2007).

Fifty per cent of interviewees said that they had used a woman in prostitution who they knew was under the control of a pimp. As one man explained, "It's like he's her owner." As another man put it: "The girl is instructed to do what she needs to do. You can just relax, it's her job." One-half of the research participants (51%) said that they had observed a prostituted woman who had a pimp. Nearly one-third

of the interviewees (31%), often those who bought sex in the Soho area, used prostituted women who were controlled by women pimps. Twenty-five per cent of the men interviewed had encountered a woman in the sex industry who they believe was forced into a brothel, massage parlour or another type of prostitution. Some of the men described pimps as abusive, controlling, opportunistic, coercive and violent. They described beatings and forced addiction. "Pimps get their money and abuse them. They have no respect for them at all. They treat them virtually like dogs." One man explained, "Some are really made to or forced – like raped – and they find there is no other hope for them. Some are being held hostage and in a brothel, not all of them but in situations where she is looking to get out. I felt a little bit guilty when I was in saunas and massage parlours." A number of the men appeared to have a somewhat nuanced if rationalised awareness of the psychological dependence of women on pimps: "It's a cold relationship from his part. But the woman does it because she's in love with him and doesn't want to lose him."

These men's awareness of the sexual exploitation, coercion and violence associated with buying sex is confirmed by a significant literature on violence against women in prostitution. Watts and Zimmerman (2002) at the Department of Public Health and Policy of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine noted that trafficking for prostitution and violence against prostitutes was one of the most common and severe forms of violence against women in the world (2002). A study of 240 women prostituted in Leeds, Edinburgh, and Glasgow found that 26% of women in indoor prostitution had experienced some form of serious violence from the men who had bought them in the past six months (Church et al., 2001).

The interviewees were asked about their awareness of deception and trafficking for prostitution. Forty-three per cent of the men said that it was their impression that one-half or fewer of all those in prostitution were fully informed about the nature of prostitution. Of the men interviewed, 55% believed that a majority of women in prostitution were lured, tricked or trafficked. Thirty-six per cent said they thought that the women in prostitution they used had been trafficked to London from another country. Seeming to understand the levels of abuse and vulnerability of most women in prostitution, one man described prostituted women as "orphans or from other countries who are treated like family. But others can be treated like shit if they don't pay their fees." Another explained, "The guy at the top normally controls about a dozen brothels and they move them around. Some of the Chinese girls move on after just one week." An interviewee said that in Amsterdam he assumed a woman was trafficked "because of the way it was set up with a big guy standing outside," adding that "the woman looked younger than sixteen" and appeared to be "Polish, Russian, Albanian or Romanian." One man described with some chagrin a prostituted and possibly trafficked woman who had told him that she was going on a holiday. Later he realised "It was against her will. When I went back two weeks later, they were not there. The phone number also did not work. They bring in girls and move them around to different points so she doesn't know where she is... it's sick." Another said that he had seen women with "bruises, cuts and Eastern European accents in locations where lots of trafficked women and girls are."

Similar estimates were made by an additional 223 men who bought sex in Scotland and the US. Fifty-six per cent of men who bought sex in the US and 63% in Scotland said that they also believed that a majority of all those in prostitution are lured, tricked or trafficked into it. Studies by Anderson and O'Connell Davidson (2003) and Di Nicola et al (2009) report that most men who buy sex are aware of and have witnessed exploitation, coercion and trafficking but this does not affect their decision to buy sex.

Coy, Hovarth and Kelly (2007, p 23) found that 43% of London men who bought sex estimated that a majority of the women they used for sex were "non-British," and most commonly estimated that the women were from Eastern Europe. Few men acknowledged using trafficked women, but Coy and colleagues noted that some men "simply presumed that so long as there was no incontrovertible, visible evidence of force, women were on an equal footing with them."

"Some pimps start relationships with girls then force them into prostitution. Other pimps trick girls



from other countries then take their passports," according to one man. Another offered the following concerning pimping and trafficking in London: "In Europe pimps used to treat women with lots of violence. Now they treat her better. Unless the girl steals money, then they will beat her. They make her get naked and check her body orifices for money. The girls are put in the window which costs €100 per night or €3,000 rent for one month. The girls are from Bulgaria, Russia, gypsies, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia. Pimps give the girls 50%. In the beginning they pay for everything. Later, she has to pay. The girls never refuse sex acts. The best sex is without a condom – condoms kill sexual pleasure by 30%."

One buyer displayed a mental struggle to convince himself against compelling evidence that the woman was *not* under a pimp/trafficker's control: "The relationship looked very professional, like a business. Still he instructed them to do things they weren't entirely happy with. A stern look on his face and a slight raised voice, made me slightly uncomfortable. But after the girl had been talked to by him she put on a professional face and got on with it. My uncomfortable feeling went away because she did it – she could have walked away from the job."

In this short description, one man's mental construction of prostitution appears to shift from his perception that one person was under coercive control by another person to a different viewpoint in which the woman makes a free choice to prostitute. Marttila (2008) has noted a similar stubborn ignorance by Finnish buyers of the factors compelling women into prostitution in the border regions of Estonia and the Russian Federation.

Two men said that women in prostitution asked them for help but neither believed the women's request for help. An African woman "was trying to get me to be like her brother," said one man. "She was frightened and nervous. She told me she had been tricked." Yet this man also stated to the interviewer that he paid her for sex after which he decided that she was probably lying to him about being tricked. Three men suspected that they had encountered trafficked women based on the women's inability to speak the local language or on how young or vulnerable they appeared. For example, "I could tell she was new to the country. To be new in a country and be a prostitute – it can't be a choice... She looked troubled."

Several men reported that the women themselves informed them that they had been trafficked. None reported this to the police. One man described going to a location near Heathrow, where "She kissed me and gave me a massage, it seemed to last forever. It's called the girlfriend experience. Later I realised she must have been forced into it and there was a criminal element."

Despite their awareness of coercion and trafficking, only five of these 103 men reported their suspicions to the police. They feared a loss of anonymity, especially fearing their families' discovery of their use of prostitutes. One interviewee said that he did not report his suspicions because he assumed that "the authorities are involved in it as well". Another "rang Crimestoppers to report a flock of 14-year-old Russians were working in North England but they said it wasn't their patch".

Some of the men said that they tried to assist women in prostitution by paying them extra money. Later, some tended to believe that they had been cheated out of their money.

#### **4.15 The myth of mutuality in prostitution: lack of emotional connection and empathy for women in prostitution**

The men were asked about any emotional connection they perceived with the women during the act of prostitution and how they felt during the encounter. About one-half (53%) of the men interviewed in London acknowledged having some sort of emotional connection with the women they paid for sex. Of the men who acknowledged any emotional relationship, nearly half of them (46%) described the relationship as minimal, rating the extent of the relationship as 1 or 2 on a scale of 1 to 10. In many cases, this lack of emotional connection was intentional. As one man explained, "I don't want to know about

her. I don't want her to cry or this and that because that spoils the idea for me."

Forty per cent of the words used by the interviewees to describe the woman's feelings during prostitution sessions attributed a positive feeling to her (see Table 5). For example, the men assumed that the women felt safe or comfortable or that she was "positively evaluating me." Their responses were later compared with a previous study in which women had been asked about their feelings during acts of prostitution with buyers. Only 9% of the women in Kramer's (2003) study indicated that they had any positive feelings at all during acts of prostitution. More commonly, Kramer's interviewees described feeling sad, detached, angry or anxious when prostituting.

Of the words used by the interviewees to describe what they assumed were the women's feelings during prostitution, 33% were negative. By contrast, Kramer's study of the women themselves found that 77% of the time the women experienced a negative emotional state (see Table 5). Some men understood the dissociation necessary to perform prostitution, using some of the same negative words that women have used to describe their experiences of prostitution: "they are trying to blank their minds," "disconnected," "attempting to switch off or distance herself," "empty," and "hurry up, and get the fuck out of my head." Other negative words that the men used to describe how the women might feel included "disgusted," "miserable," "dirty," "hatred," "scared," "physically and mentally painful," and "relief that I'm not going to kill her."

**Table 5 – Comparing men's attribution of women's feelings during prostitution with women's reports of their actual feelings (from Kramer, 2003)**

	<b>Positive feeling words</b>	<b>Negative feeling words</b>	<b>Neutral words</b>
<b>London buyers (current study)</b>	40% (151)	33% (123)	27% (103)
<b>Women in U.S. prostitution (Kramer, 2003)</b>	9% (41)	77% (127)	14% (64)

These findings suggest that the men not only lack emotional involvement with the women they use in prostitution but also that they lack accurate empathy. Coy (2008 p185) suggested that a denial of subjectivity occurs when the experiences and feelings of the "object" are not recognised. This denial of women's subjectivity can also be understood as sexual objectification. Both were evident in these men's lack of empathy with the feelings of women in prostitution. They constructed her in their own minds, according to their own masturbatory fantasies, as opposed to recognising the reality of the woman's feelings. It is also telling that often the men switched from understanding the woman's situation and feelings to attributing to her what they wanted her to feel during or after sex. The men's sexual objectification of and lack of accurate empathy with the women they buy are likely preconditions for men's sexual use of women in prostitution. Coy (2008) noted the same lack of emotional connection between buyers and the women they bought. As one of her interviewees stated, "There's no obligation put on me to have a relationship with a person, they're available, therefore at your disposal."

Asked to describe their own feelings before and after the acts of prostitution, the men listed equal numbers of neutral feelings before and after (15% in each case). However, their emotions tended to shift in a negative direction after prostitution transactions. After prostitution, the men listed fewer positive words and a greater number of negative words (see Table 6). Examples of the words and phrases men used to describe their own feelings after using a woman in prostitution included: "I'm not satisfied in my mind," "looking for more partner satisfaction," "regretful and remorseful," "disappointed – what a waste of money," "angry at myself," "morally at odds," "confused," "lonely – still," "psychologically dirty," "guilt about

my relationship with my wife," "asking myself what has led me to this," and "50% satisfied."

**Table 6 – Men’s descriptions of their own feelings before and after purchasing sex**

	<b>Positive words</b>	<b>Negative words</b>	<b>Neutral words</b>	<b>Total words</b>
<b>Before buying sex</b>	51% (211)	34% (142)	15% (64)	100% (417)
<b>After buying sex</b>	44% (173)	41% (161)	15% (60)	100% (394)

Possibly to counter these feelings, men who buy sex are often committed to the idea that prostitution is an equal exchange of sex for money or goods. If, as many prostituted women have reported, prostitution is paid rape (Farley, Lynne and Cotton, 2005) then the *payment itself* (whether cash, food, housing, drugs) functions as the means of coercion to the sex in prostitution (MacKinnon, 2001, 2009). Against much empirical evidence a number of buyers insist that prostitutes truly enjoy the sex of prostitution. This highlights a major contradiction. While the buyer is often aware that it is his money and his purchase of her for sex that gives him the control while removing her autonomy and her dignity, he still seeks to convince himself that she both likes him and is sexually aroused by him. Perhaps this conviction is an attempt to reduce the cognitive dissonance of his sexual use of her under conditions he accurately perceives are not free or equal. Plumridge and colleagues (1997) pointed out buyers’ firmly held but contradictory beliefs that on the one hand commercial sex is a mutually pleasurable exchange, and on the other hand that payment of money serves to remove his social and ethical obligations.

Most interviewees said they assumed that to a greater or lesser extent, women in prostitution are sexually satisfied by the sex acts purchased by buyers. The interviewees believed that women in prostitution were satisfied by the sex of prostitution 46% of the time. One man argued that women who were “professional prostitutes” all like sex. Another said, “A normal woman is never as highly sexed as a prostitute. It would be wrong.” Generally, the literature indicates that women are not sexually aroused by prostitution, and that after extended periods of time servicing hundreds of men, prostitution damages or destroys much of their own sexuality (Barry, 1995; Funari, 1997; Giobbe, 1991; Hoigard and Finstad, 1986; Raymond et al., 2002).

The culturally-touted “girlfriend experience” where men seek to buy a simulated emotional and sexual relationship with a woman in prostitution, is included in category number three in Table 7 below. Many men who buy sex seek an experience that “playacts” the kind of relationship that they are unable or unwilling to obtain with non-prostituting women.

Interestingly, a number of the men explained the importance of being able to create an illusion *to other men* that they had acquired an attractive woman *without payment*. These men seem to place as much importance on what other men think of the women they buy as they do on the prostitution transaction itself. For example:

“I want my prostitute not to behave like one. I want them to role play to be a pretend girlfriend. To a third person it looks like we’re in love – but it’s a casual hook up, I want to chat about lots of things, what I like in life, what my friends are, and not money. She should enjoy her business. I actually want her to be genuinely attracted to me. I feel sorry for these girls but this is what I want.”

The notion that she really wants sex with him combines with his need to present the woman to other men as someone with whom he is in a real relationship. A number of the men disclosed that they were competitive with each other about prostitution. “I told a friend I’d gotten free sex from a prostitute and he told me bullshit and didn’t believe me. It was a competitive thing – we were bragging about how good we are in bed and I told him that. It wasn’t true.” Another explained, “The next day I compared notes with the other guys. We all try to be the best – who is the best man? Later I realised they were lying about it.”

The need of some men to convince themselves that the women they buy enjoy the sex can explain why the women themselves strive to give this impression. It is, quite simply, good business practice. Since the prostituted woman is paid for acting as if she really likes him and as if she is sexually aroused by him, the woman will perform as though this is the case. One man sought "someone who's expensive that I'd meet in a flat that's a brothel or a club like 'Models Upstairs' in Soho. Someone who puts on a good performance, who acts like they like what they're doing." The men seek reinforcement for the notion that women are not only totally compliant but happy to sexually service men. One man told an interviewer that he sought "a happy one and she does everything I'm looking for." Another stated he was "after a short friendship." The ideal experience to some men "feels like there is mutuality."

Yet many of the men clearly understood that they, not the women in prostitution, controlled the interaction. One man explained that with prostitution, "You're more in control of the situation. You're more in control of everything, you choose most of the factors."

Other observers have documented that some of the men who have rigid expectations of exactly how women should act are those who react with violent rage when they are treated by women in prostitution like any other buyer or when they cannot achieve an erection (Kinnell, 2008, p 59-61). Often, the men want to be the special one, the buyer who cares the most, the buyer that she falls for. Kurtz (2004, p 375) also noted that the violence perpetrated against women in prostitution emerged from the man's "frustration at being unable to achieve an erection or to ejaculate." The men's violence may also be associated with their substance abuse. Forty-eight per cent of the men acknowledged that they were sometimes intoxicated when they bought sex. Nineteen per cent of these 103 men reported being intoxicated at least half of the time when they purchased sex.

#### **4.16 Reasons men offer for buying sex**

When asked to summarise their reasons for buying sex, notions of men's biological imperative or men's basic rights as consumers to buy sex were at the root of the reasons given (Coy, Horvath and Kelly, 2007). The reasons for buying sex that were offered by the men interviewed in this study are comparable to those reported by other researchers (Bernstein, 2001; Lowman and Atchison, 2006; McKegany and Barnard, 1996; Monto, 2000; Pitts et al., 1997; Xantidis and McCabe, 2000) – see Table 7.

**Table 7 – Why do men buy sex?**

<b>Seven primary reasons for buying sex according to 103 London men</b>	<b>Frequency of response</b>	<b>Percentage of 398 responses*</b>
1. Satisfy immediate sexual urge, entertainment, pleasure	128	32%
2. Seeks variety, wants to select certain physical, racial and sexual stereotypes	83	21%
3. Can't get what he wants sexually or emotionally in his current relationship	78	20%
4. Convenience, no commitment, no emotional connection	58	15%
5. It's a thrill; likes to break a taboo	33	8%
6. It's an addiction or compulsion or result of intoxication	12	3%
7. Male bonding, peer pressure	6	2%

\* Multiple responses were possible

#### **4.17 Sexualisation and commodification of race/ethnicity**

Men often select specific women in prostitution on the basis of racial/ethnic stereotypes. Ethnicity itself is eroticised in prostitution. One man said, "I had a mental check list in terms of race; I have tried them all over the last five years but they turned out to be the same." Another man sought as much variety as he could buy in prostitution: "Eastern European; Oriental; African European." A 2008 study of men who buy sex in Europe found that "In the customers' narratives, the young, beautiful and exotic prostitutes were often described as fetishlike objects and were also collected like such objects" (Marttila, 2008, p 43).

An interviewee explained that his use of Chinese women in prostitution was in order to fulfil a fantasy that he held about them. "You can do a lot more with the Oriental girls like blow job without a condom, and you can cum in their mouths.... I view them as dirty."

The ethno-sexualisation of 'other' women may be used to justify the objectification and exploitation of women of a different nationality. Correspondingly, the desexualisation of 'our own' women has been used by some men as an explanation for the use of paid sexual services, since these men were reluctant to ask their wives or girlfriends to perform acts that they considered deviant or perverse (Marttila, 2008, p 44).

#### **4.18 Frequency of pornography use**

Fifty-eight per cent of these London men used pornographic film and/or videos at least once a month. Fifty-one per cent used Internet pornography once a month or more often (20% once a week; 15% more than once a week). Thirty-two per cent of these London interviewees used pornography in magazine form once a month or more often. Twenty-four per cent of the men frequented 'sex shops' once a month or more often.

While using pornography, 60% of these men reported that to some extent they classified the women in pornography as a prostitute. One man explained the impact of pornography on his sexual behaviour,

generally: “The more I’ve watched pornography, the more specific my wants have become. Watching pornography has shaped my sexual desires. I watch pornography and I discover ‘hey, that really turns me on’ and I want to recreate what I’ve seen in porn.” Two of the men contrasted their experiences of buying women in prostitution with their use of pornography. “I would say prostitution is bad: don’t go. You won’t get what you are expecting, it’s not like a porn film,” said one man. Another stated, “You can get whatever’s on the menu [in prostitution]. I would argue it’s not quite as thrilling as one would expect. Look at how it’s depicted in some movies: she’d have orgasm after orgasm, take her clothes off and say “take me now”, she’d be really wild and defer to the man like he’s a sex god. When really he’s just another client, it’s business-like, cold and clinical. It doesn’t always quite feel as exciting as you’d expect it to feel when you are physically involved in the sex acts. That could be because adult films give a false impression of it being better than it actually is.”

Monto and McRee (2005) compared the pornography use of 1,672 U.S. men who had been arrested for soliciting women in prostitution with samples of U.S. men who had not used women in prostitution. Men who had used women in prostitution were far more likely to use pornography on a regular basis. In a statistically significant linear relationship, men who were repeat users of women in prostitution were more likely than first-time users of prostituted women to use pornography, and first-time users of women in prostitution were more likely than non-buyers to have used pornography.

#### 4.19 Deterrence

Asked what would deter them from using women in prostitution, the men’s responses suggest that there are a number of equally effective alternatives. These include being added to a sex offender register, prison or being publicly exposed via billboard, newspaper, Internet or letter to family or employer. Higher fines, greater criminal penalties and having their driver’s licence suspended or their car impounded would also deter these men from buying sex, if they were convinced that laws and penalties would actually be enforced. Being required to sign an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) or receiving an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) would, according to this study’s interviewees, serve as a deterrent to approximately three out of four of these men (see Table 8).

**Table 8 – What would deter men in London from buying sex?**

Being added to a sex offender register	85%
Having your picture and/or name on a billboard	85%
Time in prison	84%
Picture and/or name in the local newspaper	83%
Picture and/or name posted on the Internet	83%
Higher monetary fine	80%
Letter sent to family members	79%
Suspension of driver’s licence	78%
Greater criminal penalty	77%
Car impounded	76%
ASBO (Anti-Social Behaviour Order)	74%
ABC (Acceptable Behaviour Contract)	73%
Community service	72%
Required to attend an educational programme	47%

Several men noted that the current laws are not enforced. Only 6% of the men with criminal convictions

had ever been arrested for soliciting prostitution<sup>2</sup>. “Deterrents would only work if enforced, said one man. “Any negative would make you reconsider. The law’s not enforced now but *if any negative thing happened as a consequence it would deter me* but laws are not enforced.” Another explained, “It’s about the enforcement. None of these things are enforced. If I’d get in trouble for doing it, I wouldn’t do it. In this country, the police are fine with men visiting prostitutes.”

One man suggested that the reason the laws are not enforced is that “the big guys that make the law all see prostitutes themselves. The bosses of the world are not going to make it difficult for themselves to see a prostitute, to break the law. They’re not going to make the law too hard on themselves. The biggest criminals are the ones in the suits.” Holmes (2009) has discussed evidence for the role of political corruption in facilitating trafficking for prostitution.

#### **4.20 Men’s ambivalence about prostitution**

A significant majority (71%) of the men interviewed for this study reported that they have some degree of guilt, shame or negative feelings about paying for sex. In a separate study of 137 UK men who paid for sex, Coy (2008 p189) noted that many acknowledged “guilt and ambivalence” about prostitution. As one of Coy, Hovarth and Kelly’s interviewees (2007, p23) said, “I think it’s wrong, in a way, but I suppose it’s just life really, innit? It’s just the way it is. I do think it’s wrong.”

Possibly to deflect self-blame, a significant majority of these 103 men who bought sex (78%) consider their own prostituting behaviours to be an addiction. Many of these men classified themselves ‘sex addicts,’ suggesting that they view their behaviour as an illness that is out of control and needs to be cured. There is no psychiatric diagnosis named “sex addiction” (Irons and Schnneider, 1996).

Although more than one-half of the men interviewed said they were currently involved in a sexual relationship with a woman, many were not, and yet the dissatisfaction felt by some looking for the ‘girlfriend experience’ led to disappointment and resentment. Many men seemed to want a real relationship with a woman and were disappointed when one did not form: “It’s just a sex act, no emotion. Be prepared to accept this or don’t go at all. It’s not a wife or girlfriend.”

Twenty per cent of the men claimed that the primary reason for paying for sex was “not getting what they wanted from a relationship.” While Sanders (2008) suggested that differences between men who buy sex and those who do not are modest, the men interviewed for this study noted significant differences in their experiences of purchased and non-purchased sex. For example, one man expressed his feelings of emptiness both during and after the prostitution encounter: “In the end you wonder what’s going on and there’s the biological thing going on. Then it takes over and the male sex drive takes over. In the end it just becomes this need that needs to be fulfilled. I don’t feel good about it, it’s something to do – express some emotions in a way, but then when it doesn’t happen, you go away feeling worse than you did before.” Another man felt guilt at what he felt was his betrayal of his partner and the pointlessness of his actions: “There was a group of girls, I chose one because she was good-looking compared to the rest but it’s not a good memory because I felt that I did not do the right thing because I already had a girlfriend. It’s bad for my character.” For another, the myth of the uncomplicated, convenient sexual encounter was disproved. He felt equally pressured to ‘perform’ with a woman he was buying as he would with a mutual date: “Prostitution can be business-like and uncaring. It’s an unfulfilling, unemotional experience. I wouldn’t actively encourage it. It can be a nerve-wracking experience and not as easy as they imagine.... there’s some apprehension, you still have to perform like if you met a nice girl in a bar. It can be quite pressurised in a business-like transaction, not as straightforward as you think. You could end up wasting

<sup>2</sup> Of those with a criminal record, charges included disturbing the peace, drug possession, theft from employer, other thefts, driving offences including driving with no insurance, use of a pellet gun, general public disorder, fraud, drunk and disorderly behaviour, burglary, assault, receipt of stolen goods.

your money because there's no money-back guarantees if you couldn't perform."

For some men it was obvious that the woman is not emotionally connected to them during the encounter, and yet they paradoxically seem to seek an emotional connection during prostitution encounters in order to achieve sexual satisfaction: "you've got to understand you're having a cold relationship to some extent. Don't expect fireworks and the symphony orchestra in the background. If you go to the wrong one, you might as well be in a morgue, there's a slab of flesh there. If it's a lifestyle you are choosing for sexual relief, it won't work every time, all the time."

Some of the interviewees were aware of the women's resistance and lack of alternatives to prostitution and as a consequence reported their own negative feelings about buying sex. One man explained, "She is following something unnatural to them which deep down they don't want to do. Being in a situation where they have no other option. They said they are only there for the money. This makes me feel low self-worth; really low down. They see us as unnatural. You have failed to have a relationship, so it makes you feel angry and upset."

Other researchers have reported similar findings (Coy, 2008; Mansson, 2004; Plumridge et al., 1997; Macleod et al., 2008). Men who buy sex are aware that their relationship with a woman in prostitution is not a genuine attachment, and that the sex, race and social inequality in the relationship make real reciprocity impossible. Nonetheless they are disappointed and often feel "tricked" by what they know is the woman's simulation of emotional and sexual response.

As one man interviewed for this study explained:

"The girls in Soho could just as easily have been reading a book. People can fall in a trap. One reason is sexual release; the other is to find emotional contact: that's where the trap is. You don't get affection, it's just a transaction. The prostitutes that are very good at their job will kid you into feeling the connection's really happening."



## 5. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATIONS

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This report has included details of the often significant knowledge held by buyers about women in prostitution, and their frank discussions of their experiences buying sex. Following are some highlights of findings from this report.

### **1. Fifty-five per cent of 103 London men who bought sex believed that a majority of people in prostitution were lured, tricked or trafficked.**

Information and explanation of the newly introduced legislation on demand, which makes it an offence to purchase sex from someone who has been subjected to exploitation (Policing and Crime Act, 2009), should be part of public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing or eliminating men's demand for prostitution. The law and the potential consequences of paying for sex need to be explained to current and potential buyers. In addition, general public awareness of men's knowledge about trafficking and coercion in the sex industry is important.

### **2. Today, prostitution has moved indoors; 96% of these men used women in indoor prostitution (brothels, flats, saunas, massage parlours).**

Based on these 103 London men's reports of coercive control, pimping and trafficking, it can no longer be assumed that indoor prostitution is safer than street prostitution. On the contrary, it appears that many of the most vulnerable women are kept under control indoors, not in the street where they would be seen by the public or by police.

Local and national newspapers cannot justify selling advertising space to brothel owners and organisers of indoor prostitution. A blanket ban on advertising of this nature should be introduced.

### **3. More than one-half of the interviewees confirmed they were in a relationship at the time they used women in prostitution. This contradicts the common misperception that men buy sex because they are lonely or have no partners.**

The disappointment expressed by men seeking the 'girlfriend experience' in prostitution should be highlighted in any awareness campaign. There are men who are sold the idea that 'buying' a partner is possible and that prostituted women can fulfil that role.

### **4. Many of the men felt that at various times during prostitution, women had no rights at all. Attitudes normalising rape were common among this group of men who buy sex in London. Over half of the interviewees believed that men would 'need' to rape if they did not have access to prostituted women.**

There is no evidence supporting the theory that prostitution prevents rape. Experts in rape and other forms of sexual violence must ensure that myths that prostitution prevents rape are debunked.

### **5. For 29% of the men, prostitution was their first sexual experience**

The youngest interviewee was 18 years of age, confirming the need for public education programmes aimed at boys. Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) sessions should contain content to deter young men from becoming buyers. More than 40% of the men interviewed in this study were accompanied by friends or family the first time they bought sex. Peer pressure was a significant 'pull factor' for many of the men interviewed for this study. Public awareness campaigns could play an important role in primary prevention of prostitution. The ambivalence about buying sex expressed by many interviewees could be highlighted in such a campaign.

**6. Legalisation and prostitution tolerance zones encouraged men to buy sex. Several men explained that once having visited areas where prostitution is legal or promoted, they returned to UK with a renewed dedication to buying sex even if that practice is illegal.**

The new UK legislation needs to be enforced extra-territorially. Almost half of the men had paid for sex in other countries, mostly in legalised regimes such as the Netherlands.

**7. Many men stated that pornography informed their decisions to request specific acts with women in prostitution and also with non-prostituting sex partners. Other interviewees stated that pornography use led to their paying for sex.**

Further research into the connections between pornography and prostitution, particularly in relation to attitudes towards women and sexual violence, needs to be conducted in the UK.

**8. One-fifth of the men had paid for sex while serving in the Armed Forces.**

UK policy and deterrents like those adopted by the United Nations during the Balkan crisis are advisable.

**9. In England, Scotland and the U.S., men agreed that being placed on a sex offender register would most effectively deter them from buying sex. They also agreed that other deterrents such as prison time or public exposure would be effective.**

The least effective deterrent, according to interviewees in Scotland, the U.S. and London would be an educational programme without the threat of prison. An educational programme for sex buyers would be well advised to operate in conjunction with the Criminal Justice System and never as a substitute for criminal sanctions.

More than three-quarters of interviewees acknowledged that greater criminal penalties would deter them from paying for sex, and yet only 6% had ever been arrested for soliciting prostitution. New and existing legislation needs to be vigorously implemented. A public awareness campaign to accompany enforcement of laws against buying sex might be modelled on the 2006 anti-smoking campaign.

**10. Of 103 London men who had bought sex, two-thirds said that being issued an ASBO would be a deterrent.**

Currently in London, ASBOs are routinely issued to women in street prostitution but rarely to men apprehended as kerb crawlers. Such measures need to be used against buyers.

**11. Sixty-five per cent of interviewees believed that 'most men pay for sex.'**

General public education and awareness campaigns are essential in challenging men's demand for prostitution. An approach to public education about prostitution would be to emphasise the marginalised status of men who buy sex rather than viewing their activity as part of the mainstream.

**12. Most men (71%) said they felt ambivalence about paying for sex. They often felt guilt or shame about buying sex while at the same time continuing to use prostituted women, hiding those behaviours.**

The men avoided emotional involvement with women in prostitution while at the same time seeking the appearance of a relationship. Lacking accurate empathy with the objects of their sexual purchase, the men were usually unable to determine what the women actually thought or felt, including the women's lack of genuine sexual interest.

Men's ambivalence about prostitution might serve as a point of entry to educational programmes that promote sustained deterrence from buying sex.

Some men said they were unable to imagine a world in which prostitution could ever be ended. When asked what they thought might bring about an end to the sex trade, responses such as, "kill every girl in the world," and "you'd need to put all men in solitary cells" highlighted the fact that for many, prostitution is viewed as an inevitability. Others could see possibilities for change. "The challenge," said one interviewee, "is to change the way men think."

Men's attitudes play a central role in perpetrating violence against women. Efforts to prevent violence against women must address not only those attitudes which are overtly condoning of violence against women, but also the wider clusters of attitudes related to sex, including prostitution, which normalise and justify this violence (Flood and Pease, 2009).

A majority of these men were aware of specific instances of trafficking for prostitution. Often, they knew that they were using trafficked women for sex. Trafficking is associated with brothel and massage parlour prostitution in UK. Trafficking victims from Brazil, Lithuania and Thailand were discovered at a 2009 Reading brothel raid (Roberts, 2009). Traffickers have the capacity to hide human trafficking in the huge volume of travel facilitated by globalisation. They can also neutralise or overcome regulatory measures imposed by governments through corruption and co-option (Williams, 2009). Organised criminals who traffic women to London for prostitution have the capacity to rapidly modify trafficking operations to reflect changing risks, to forge high quality documents; to use front companies; to use advanced technology such as satellite phones, GPS, and digital surveillance; to use defence lawyers who are skilled at defending organised criminals; and to launder funds from trafficking via sophisticated methods (Picarelli, 2009).

Specifically referring to the goal of ending sex trafficking, in late 2009, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for greater efforts to tackle the global pandemic of violence against women and girls, emphasising that the international community must demand accountability and take concrete steps to end impunity (UN News Centre, 2009). Since it is known that prostitution is associated with extremely high levels of violence against women (Watts and Zimmerman, 2002), and based on this study it is known that many of the men who buy prostituted women are aware of the crimes of pimping, coercive control, lack of opportunity for escape and trafficking, the next logical step would be to move forward with stronger legal and social deterrents for the sex buyer.

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