

University of Bristol Prostitution and Sex Work Research 2018-2019

Online Survey update 6 July 2018 and FAQs

What is the purpose of this research?

We have been commissioned by the Home Office to describe the 'nature' and 'prevalence' of adult prostitution and sex work in England and Wales today. In summary: what is going on and how many individuals are involved? To do this, we are consulting individuals who are involved directly or indirectly through the provision of services or research. We have been asked to produce a 'typology' (that is, to identify different settings of prostitution and sex work, and their associated characteristics) and identify robust data sources to estimate numbers involved for each setting.

It is hoped that once this work is 'set up', it can be updated periodically.

Are you going to propose a change in policy on prostitution and sex work?

No. This research is not about policy or law on prostitution and sex work. This is a piece of research to capture what *is* going on, rather than what *ought* to be going on.

Of course, we know that the prevailing policy and laws affect how prostitution and sex work is practised in England and Wales. It could also be that the government uses the data from this research to inform future law and policy. But such decisions and recommendations are not within our research remit.

What do you mean by 'prostitution and sex work'?

We mean the exchange of sexual services of all kinds for money or other benefit. At this stage of the research, we are taking a broad view of the definitions. So it may include individuals of any gender or sexuality involved in: full sex independent, brothel, parlour or street, escorting, web-camming, BDSM, pornography, sugar daddies, sex for rent, coercion in a relationship to have sex with others, etc.

You talk about adult work – what about those under 18?

The government is separately funding work in to child sexual exploitation (<https://www.csacentre.org.uk/>), including the exploitation of individuals under 18 through prostitution.

However, we recognise that individuals may first be involved while under 18. This will be captured as part of the typology that we develop, under the theme of 'routes in' to different settings of prostitution and sex work.

Why are you using the term 'prostitution' or 'sex work'? – I find them problematic.

We know people hold very strong opinions on this area and that words are important. Our aim is to include a breadth of experiences, whether they identify with one or neither of these terms.

I am an independent full service worker: I love my job and I don't have a history of abuse or drug use. Are you going to include my voice in this research?

We understand prostitution and sex work to be diverse and complex. We recognise that choice, agency, indifference, survival, coercion and exploitation exist across and within different sectors, at

different times, between different individuals and within one individual's experience. We want to reflect some of that complexity in developing our typology.

Why are you asking academics, police and so on? – you should only be talking to sex workers

The experiences of those formerly and/or currently involved in prostitution and sex work are critical to this research. We are pleased that so far around 46% of our responses are from these individuals.

We recognise that, too often, research and policy is about rather than *alongside* individuals.

We do not believe that no one else should be permitted to speak on these issues. Rather, we think it is important to recognise the diverse positions from which people speak and to strive for broad-based, well evidenced and inclusive research.

We think being transparent about how we arrived at our findings is really important.

As far as possible, we want to produce a piece of work in which people of different positions can find value.

We also accept that it is not possible to please everyone.

Why do you want to hear from sex buyers, managers and representatives from the commercial sex industry? They have vested interests.

It is through listening to different people that we can come to a fuller picture of the nature of the diverse settings of prostitution and sex work in England and Wales today. We can also compare the accounts of individuals and interests which will enhance our evidence base.

There is already loads of research on prostitution on sex work – why are you doing another survey?

There is a lot of work out there. But much of the research tends to focus on specific settings (e.g. online work or street work) and is often written from a particular position in relation to law and policy. We are trying to look across the whole field and to elicit more descriptive and practical information from individuals involved, now or recently.

What do you ask in the survey?

We have some preliminary questions about you and about confidentiality. You do not have to provide a name or an email if you do not want to. We then have 6 questions. You can see that these may be relevant to different respondents:

- 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.
- Are there particular 'types' of prostitution and sex work that you feel need to be included in this project? Please give details.
- Are there particular individuals or groups that you believe we need to speak to? Please give details.
- Does your organisation collect numerical data on prostitution and sex work which you think would be useful for this project? If so, please give details and ensure your email is entered in Section 8 above.
- 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.
- Please add any other comments in this section.

Your questions are vague – I don't understand what you want to know.

Our questions are deliberately broad to allow individuals to write what they think is important. Too often, researchers close off discussion by asking very specific questions or not allowing space for free comment.

How long does it take to complete the survey?

The questions above are free text so it depends how much you want write. It could take you a couple of minutes or fifteen.

By doing an online survey, you are going to miss those individuals who are less technically/politically/economically engaged. This will skew your findings.

We are aware of the limitations of online surveys. We will be working through a number of individuals and organisations to ensure we facilitate less heard voices.

An online survey means that anyone anywhere in the world can respond – why would you listen to them?

England and Wales are the geographical boundary of this research. However, we are open to learning from individuals based elsewhere in the world.

Will you speak to us directly?

We have asked if you are willing to be contacted by email (it is entirely your choice) and we will then follow up a representative sample of respondents for further information. Given the significant number of respondents, we will not be able to speak to everyone. We are really grateful to those of you who have already shared your contact information.

This contact information is confidential to us and you can at the same time request to be excluded from any public list of survey respondents.

Why do you want to publish a public list of survey respondents?

This is research funded by public money. In addition, given the differing opinions in this area, it can be important for reasons of transparency to demonstrate who provided the data. However, we have provided respondents with the ability to opt in or opt out of any published list of survey respondents as we do not want this to deter people providing information.

What happens next?

We are reviewing the available research evidence and will then be analysing the survey responses, including following up some respondents for more information. We will use all this data to devise a first draft of the typology and start to think about how we will populate this with prevalence figures.

We will conduct some form of consultation on this draft work. Updates will be added to the project page (<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sps/research/projects/current/prostitution-and-sex-work-nature-and-prevalence-in-england-and-wales/>). The work is due to finish in Spring 2019.

How can I contact you?

The work is being led by Professor Marianne Hester (marianne.hester@bristol.ac.uk). Two researchers currently are working on the project day-to-day: Dr Natasha Mulvihill (natasha.mulvihill@bristol.ac.uk) and Dr Andrea Matolcsi (andrea.matolcsi@bristol.ac.uk).

You can also complete the survey with your email and add your question/comment to the 'Any other comments' section and we will come back to you. We are leaving the survey open till 31 December 2018 to encourage ongoing engagement with this work.

Thank you.