

Vulnerability and solidarity among individuals who sell sex via the internet

Vulnerability to violence; trust levels in the police and existing healthcare and support services; and the importance of experience sharing with other sex workers

Aleksander Sørli og M. P.

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Foreword

In the Ministry of Health and Care Services' National Strategy for Sexual Health *Talk about It! (Snakk om det! 2016)* sex work is explicitly mentioned in relation to the infection of HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). The connection between being vulnerable to acts of violence and to that of HIV and STI infection is a key issue in the report, because violence particularly affects sex workers: «For people who sell sex, there may be challenges related to the risk of violence and abuse, which in turn increases the risk of unprotected sex and transmission of infection» (p.40). Although far from all sex workers experience violence, many live with the insecurity and fear associated with it. Moreover, it has been well documented that the criminalization of the organization and facilitation of sex work has had severe costs for sex workers both in terms of being more vulnerable to acts of violence and crime, and in the form of forcing sex workers to have a higher threshold for reporting offences. Simultaneously, the market has been changing and today it is largely online and mobile, with one of the consequences being that people who sell sex are more alone and isolated than ever before.

The aim of this survey is to gain more knowledge about what the current work situation is; to what extent sex workers are exposed to violence when using the internet; as well as what resources they have readily available to them when they end up in difficult situations. The knowledge will both strengthen PION's work in the field, and – we hope – open the door to more research on issues that can provide more, and better, information and through that help form a better knowledge-based political approach to this field.

This project has been overseen by PION and has been carried out and written by Aleksander Sørle and M. P. We would like to thank the Norwegian Directorate of Health who has supported the project, and a huge thank you to May-Len Skilbrei and Ida Kock who have assisted both during the start-up of the project and during the implementation.

Last but not least, a big thank you to the sex workers who have spent their time sharing their experiences with us, without which this report would not have been made, we are very grateful for your assistance.

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Astrid Renland

Managing Administrator for PION

Contents

Summary	9
Introduction	10
Approach	11
Selection Criteria	11
Respondents	13
Citizenship and ethnicity	13
Gender	14
Age	15
Experience with sex sales	16
Number of years in sex work	16
Age when they first sold sexual services	17
Contact with customers	17
Employment	20
Current work locations	20
Desired work locations	22
Experiences of violence and offence	24
Unwanted experiences with customers	24
Harassment and threats from customers	24
Physical violence from customers	25
Sexualised assaults and offences	26
Other offences and unpleasant incidents	28
Violence and abuse by non-customers	29
Police and healthcare	31
Trust towards the police	31
Experience with the police	32
Trust in public healthcare services	33
Experiences with healthcare	34

Trust in healthcare and support services for people selling sex	36
The experience of access to healthcare services	36
Contact with other sex workers	36
Network size	37
Arenas for contact	37
Topic of conversation	37
The importance of social networks for sex workers	39
Conclusion	41
PION's recommendations for the way forward	42
Changes to the legislation	42
Strengthening public healthcare services	42
Work against stigma	42
Introduction of Ugly Mugs in Norway	43
References	44

Summary

This report is a mapping study of the experiences of people selling sex in Norway via the internet. The report is based on a survey of 50 respondents conducted between November 2018 and January 2019.

The findings from this mapping underpin research from previous surveys showing that people who sell sex in Norway are a vulnerable group in terms of violence, harassment, and sexual assault, and they confirm that this also applies to those who primarily sell sex when using the internet. A total of 72 per cent of respondents reported being subjected to violence, intimidation, or sexual abuse by a customer in the last three years. Thirty per cent reported being subjected to physical violence, intimidation, or robbery by non-customers because they were selling sex.

The majority of respondents have low confidence in the police, and several failed to make contact with the police in the aftermath of a violent or criminal incident. A new finding in our survey is that trust in the police is significantly lower among Norwegian-language respondents, than with foreign-language respondents. On average the trust in the police is low for all groups.

Trust in public healthcare services was slightly higher than that of the police but was still considered relatively low. A worrying finding was that a significant proportion of respondents reported that they had experienced stigmatizing attitudes from healthcare professionals. At the same time, our survey shows that many sex workers have great confidence and trust in employees in the health and support services who specifically work with people who sell sex, and this applies to both the Norwegian-language and the foreign-language respondents.

The sex workers in this survey stated that contact with others who sell sex is important, in part because it contributes to increased security and provides social support, but also because it provides a safe space with others who understand the situation without the worry of stigma or discrimination.

The survey is conducted by PION and funded by the Directorate of Health.

Introduction

Several surveys show that the internet has long been the main arena for the advertising of sexual services among sex workers, and that street prostitution makes up only a small proportion of the total market (Kock, 2017; Tveit & Skilbrei, 2008). Despite the knowledge that internet-based sex work accounts for the largest part of the market, it is street prostitution that has received the most attention, both in the public debate and in terms of surveys and research. Attention has also primarily focused on women, although a significant proportion of men and transgender people also sell sex.

The possibility of being able to use the internet, as well as the access to smartphones, that emerged in the mid-2000s led to major changes in the pattern of advertising and organization of sexual services. For many sex workers, the internet can make it easier to work independently without dependence on third parties and with more control over their own business. The Internet and smartphones make it easier to retrieve information about customers before a match and makes it easier to pass on relevant information to other sex workers, such as warnings about violent, criminal and/or rogue customers. In one of the largest studies on internet-based sex work, researchers found that finding customers online was safer than working in the outdoor market (Sanders, Scoular, Campbell, Pitcher, & Cunningham, 2018).

At the same time, internet-based business comes with its own challenges and problems. The Internet opens up for new forms of crime such as online stalking and unwanted contact on social media, and it lowers the threshold for outing and intimidation (Cunningham et al., 2018).

The knowledge of internet-based sex work in Norway is very limited. The most relevant reports are Nadheim and Pro Sentret's reports on internet-based sex work, which have mapped a selection of ad pages and they present findings from in-depth interviews with a selection of women (Treacy, 2017, Kock, 2017).

Our aim with this survey has been to gain more knowledge about the work situation and the violence towards sex workers who sell sex using the internet, and we have examined what resources sex workers have available when they end up in difficult situations.

The most important questions we wish to address through this survey are the following:

- To what extent do internet-based sex workers experience violence and harassment?
- To what extent do sex workers have access to, and trust in, public services if they are subjected to violence or other criminal acts related to selling sexual services?
- To what extent do sex workers have contact with other sex workers, and what is the significance of that kind of contact for sex workers?

The objective of these questions is to contribute to the knowledgebase of the experiences and the needs of people who sell sexual services.

Approach

The survey was internet-based, anonymous and open to people of all genders who use the internet to get in touch with customers in Norway and the survey was open to responses from November 2018 to January 2019. In the survey, we specifically asked about sex workers' experiences selling sex in Norway. All respondents had the option to choose between answering the survey in Norwegian, Thai, English or Spanish. The survey was largely spread through networks related to PION and therefore does not show a representative sample of all people selling sexual services in Norway.

In both the development and implementation of the survey, we placed great emphasis on involving people with experience from selling sexual services at all levels. They were included both in management and in advisory roles throughout the process. One of the authors has therefore chosen to remain anonymous. We have also consulted with researchers in the field, including Ida Kock and May-Len Skilbrei, and had discussions about the Public Health Services for sex workers in Oslo.

The survey was posted on PION's website and spread via media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Furthermore, the survey was spread on various ad pages for people selling sexual services, where it was sent as a message to people who advertised their services there. To reach men and queer people selling sex, a profile was created on the queer dating site Gaysir. Personal messages were sent to people who were part of groups associated with selling sexual services or who used signals or language associated with the sale of sex in their profiles. Messages were also spread via the dating app Grindr.

In other words, we largely chose to use the snowball method, where people who sell sex and are in contact with PION were asked to share the survey with others selling sexual services. Some did this privately, while others used media platforms to spread the survey further. The survey was also shared and disseminated by other Nordic interest organizations for sex workers.

Selection Criteria

We had no other criteria beyond looking for people who had experiences selling sex in Norway and who use the internet to get in touch with customers. Many people pressed into the survey without answering any questions, others had answered, but responded to so few questions that it could not be used, in addition, a few respondents have filled in double, and some have answered the survey without being in the target audience. We were thus left with responses from respondents in the target group who had completed the majority of the survey.

After being sorted by completion by target group, we sat with a total of 50 full responses from different respondents. Of these, 35 had responded to the Norwegian-language survey, 10 had responded to the English, 4 had responded to the Spanish, while one respondent had responded to the Thai-language survey.

Since many of the questions were of a private nature or could be perceived as difficult, we had chosen to make the majority of the questions voluntary to answer. This means that the number of people who have answered each question varies, as some have chosen not to answer all the questions.

Where there are relevant differences, we have chosen to process the answers from the Norwegian-language survey separately from the answers in the English, Spanish and Thai-language surveys. Where this is done, the latter three are treated together. This is due to the relatively low number of respondents in these surveys, and the demographics within these groups are also very heterogeneous. We have chosen to refer to these respondents collectively as «foreign-language respondents.»

We have mainly chosen to provide the number of responses from respondents in numbers, but in some sections, we also use percentages derived from the responses. In the graphs comparing Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents' responses, we have chosen to illustrate this by using percentage for each group.

Respondents

To get a basic overview of who the different respondents were, we asked for information related to age, gender, ethnicity, and citizenship.

Citizenship and ethnicity

The majority of the 50 respondents stated that they had Norwegian or Nordic citizenship (41). As expected, all Norwegian-language respondents reported being Norwegian or Nordic citizens, and the nine respondents who were not Norwegian citizens were foreign-language.

The majority of respondents reported being from Norway (25). Other countries listed included Poland (2), Spain (2), Sweden (2), Colombia (1), Germany (1), Italy (1), Finland (1), Australia (1), USA (1) and Costa Rica (1). In addition, some respondents chose to write a region instead of countries and 6 respondents listed their home country as «Europe», one stated «Scandinavia» and one stated «South America».

Table: Country of origin of respondents.

Norway	25
Europe	6
Poland	2
Spain	2
Sweden	2
Germany	1
Italy	1
Finland	1
Colmbia	1
Costa Rica	1
South America	1
Scandinavia	1
United States	1
Australia	1

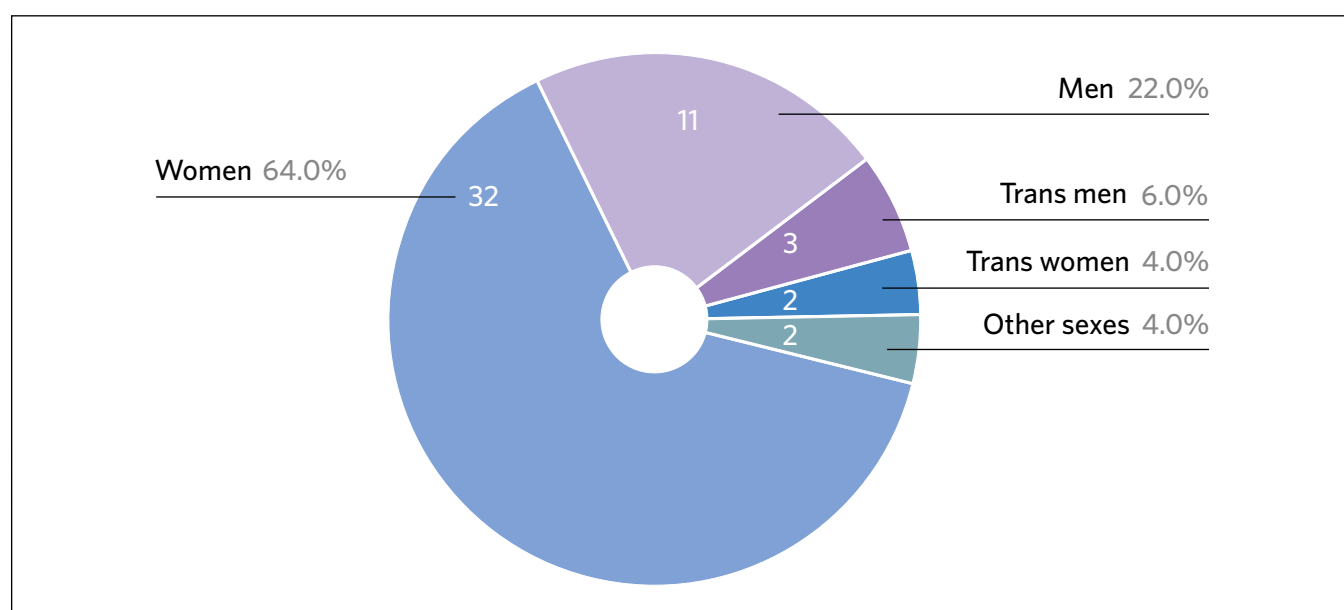
One of the two respondents who listed countries of origin such as Sweden responded to the survey in Thai. Given that the person chose to answer in Thai rather than Norwegian or English, there is a possibility that he has given up his current place of residence or citizenship rather than country of origin.

Gender

There was a clear majority of women who responded to the survey: 34 out of 50 respondents identified as women, of whom 2 stated that they were trans women¹. Moreover, there were 14 men, of whom 3 stated that they were trans men.

Another two people listed sex in the free text field as «non-binary transmasculine»² and «trans» respectively. The person who only gave up their gender as «trans» has not provided further information about gender. Respondents could choose more than one gender, as some transgender people did by ticking off both «male» and «transman», and «transwoman» and «woman.» In this report, we have chosen to treat trans men together with other men and trans women along with other women whose gender is divided. Where it has been relevant, transgender people are compared to those who have not stated that they are trans.

Respondents' gender, with trans men and trans women as separate categories.



Although the clear majority of respondents reported their gender as being «woman» in this survey, there is a significantly higher proportion of men and transgender people than has previously been common in Norwegian surveys. In total, there were 14 people who identified themselves as men and 7 people who identified as trans. As far as we are aware, this is also the first Norwegian-language survey to have included people who have clearly defined themselves as transmen or transmasculine.

When it comes to the gender distribution, there is a noticeable difference between the Norwegian-language and foreign-language respondents. Among the foreign-language respondents, there were about the same number of men as women, compared to around 75 per cent of women and 25 per cent men among the Norwegian-language respondents.

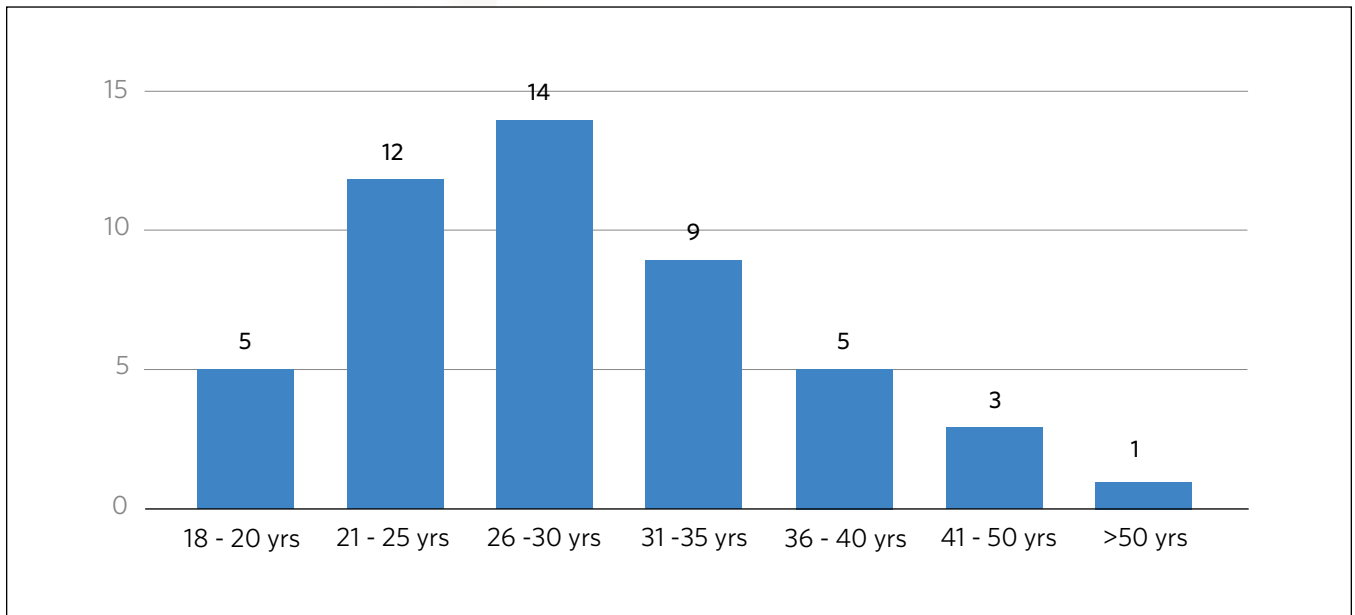
1 Trans women are a term for people who were assigned to the gender male at birth, but who identify as women. Transmen are similarly opposite; persons who were assigned the gender woman at birth, but who identify as men.

2 Non-binary is a term used about people who identify themselves as something other than male or female. Transmasculine is a term used for and by persons who were assigned to the gendered woman at birth and who move in a masculine direction socially and/or in medical care.

Age

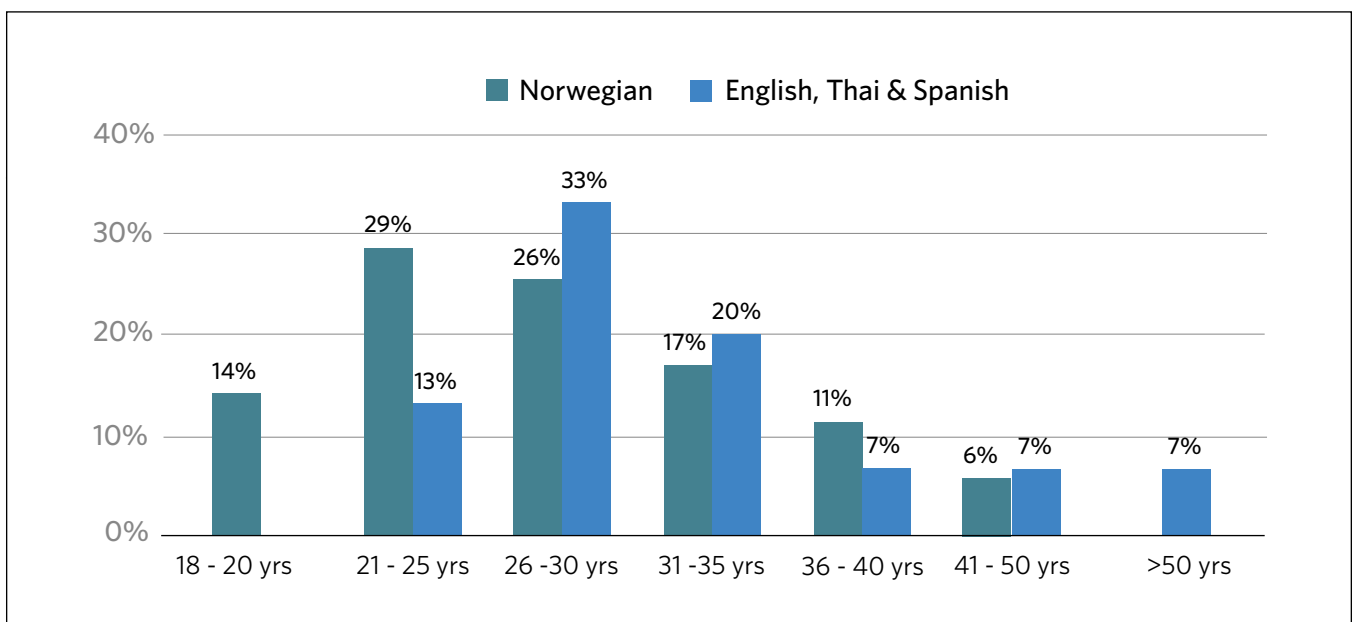
The age range among respondents was large and ranged from 18 for the youngest up to 67 for the oldest. The majority of respondents were in their 20s or 30s. The median was 28 and the average was 29.5.

Respondents' age.



There was some difference in age between the Norwegian-language and foreign-language respondents, where the Norwegian-language respondents were on average younger. Among the foreign-language respondents, the median age was 30.5 years, and the average age was 34 years. Among the Norwegian-language respondents, the median age was 27 and the average age was 28 years. All respondents under the age of 21 were Norwegian-language respondents.

Respondents' age: comparison of Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents.



The relatively low age among Norwegian-language respondents suggests that the survey has reached a younger segment of sex workers than has been common in previous surveys. In Pro Senteret's report from 2009 on Norwegian women selling sex, they report a median of 33.5 years for Norwegian women in the indoor market and further write that only 2 of their 51 respondents reported being under the age of 25 (Norli, 2009 p. 62).

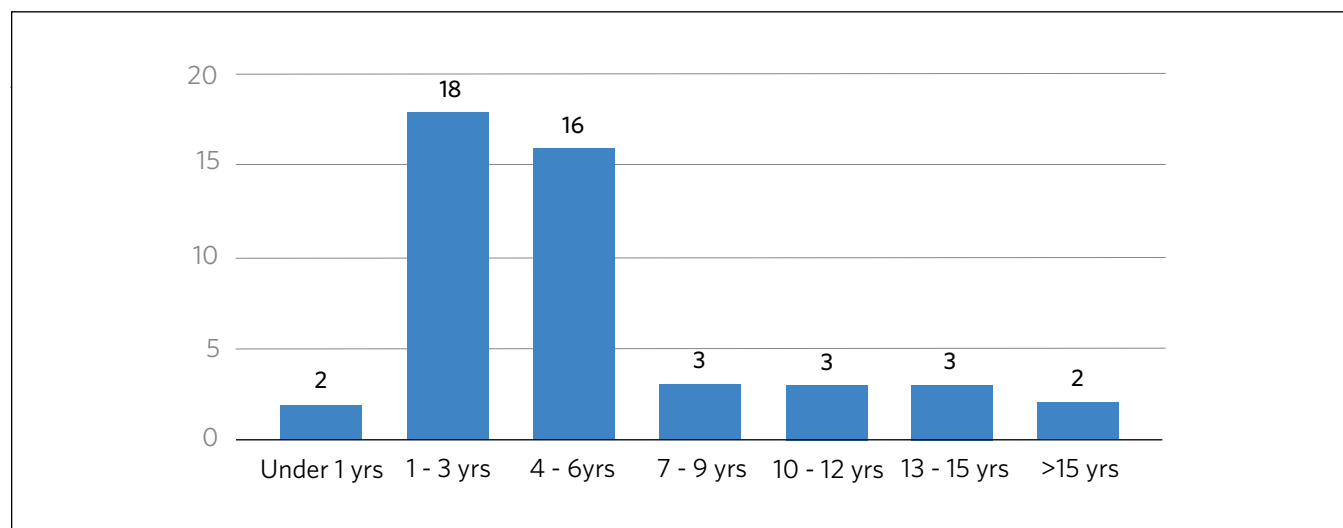
In comparison, 12 out of 35 Norwegian-language respondents in this survey reported that they are under the age of 25. Pro Senteret attributes the higher median age reported in previous Norwegian surveys to be, in part, due to the fact that research on sex workers has mostly taken place through the support services that have also traditionally been used more frequently by slightly older women. This may also help explain why the age composition in this survey is somewhat lower than in previous surveys.

Experience with sex sales

Number of years in sex work

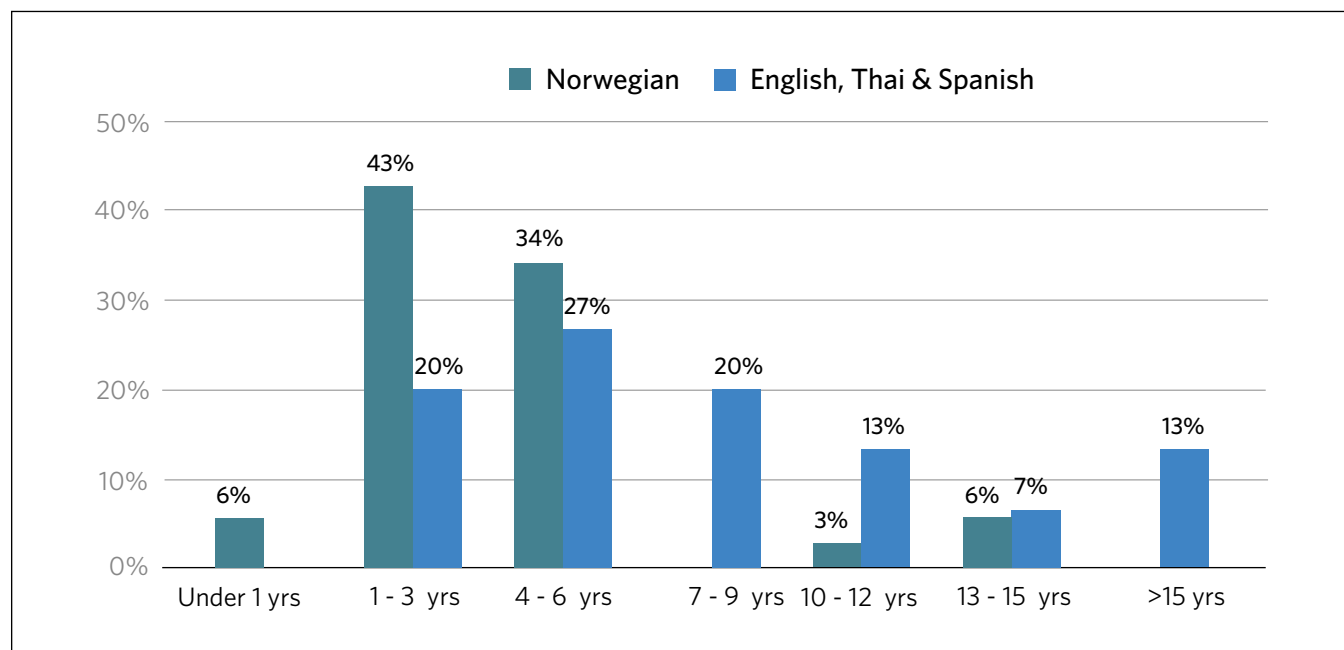
There was a wide range in how long the respondents had sold sex, from three months at the shortest to 26 years at the longest. Given the wide range in age, this was as expected. The median experience with sales of sexual services was ~ 4 years and the average was ~ 5.5 years.

How many years the respondents said they had sold sex.



With regards to this question, the answers from the respondents in the Norwegian-language survey differed from the answers in the foreign languages. The foreign-language respondents reported mainly longer experience selling sexual services, and the majority had sold sex for more than 5 years. Among this group, the median sex sales were 8 years, and the average was ~9 years. Among the Norwegian-language respondents, the majority had sold sex for less than 4 years, and the median experience of sex sales was 3 years, with an average of ~4 years. These are findings that may be related to the fact that the foreign-language respondents were on average a few years older than the Norwegian-language respondents.

How many years the respondents reported that they had sold sex: comparison of Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents.



Age when they first sold sexual services

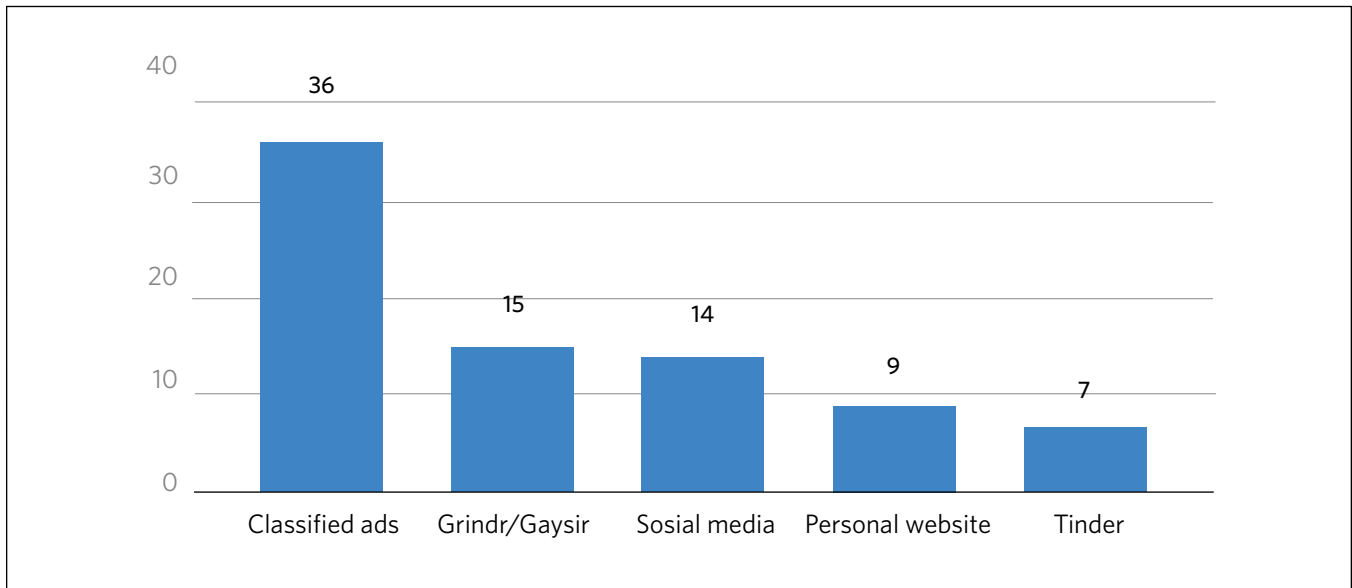
No questions were asked about what age the respondents were when they first started selling sexual services, but it is still possible to get some information about this by looking at their current age and how long they reported they have been active. Here, however, it is worth noting that many who sell sex over extended periods may have had one or more breaks from sex work. It is not clear whether the respondents state the number of years they have sold sex, but deduct any breaks they may have taken, or whether they answer the number of years from when they first started. The figures may nevertheless be useful in view of the respondents who state an age and how many years' experience they have, which means that they must necessarily have started selling sex at a particularly young age.

When we counted on the debut age of the respondents, it emerged that at least five respondents (2 men and 3 women) started selling sex before they had reached the age of 18. Judging by the numbers, they would have been around 13, 15, 15, 16 and 17 years old when they first started selling sex.

Contact with customers

To get a picture of how respondents got in touch with customers or advertised their services, we asked where they found their customers, and they got a list of many different options as well as the ability to enter other information in a free text field. Respondents could choose as many options as they wanted.

How respondents got in touch with customers, with the alternative to choose several options.



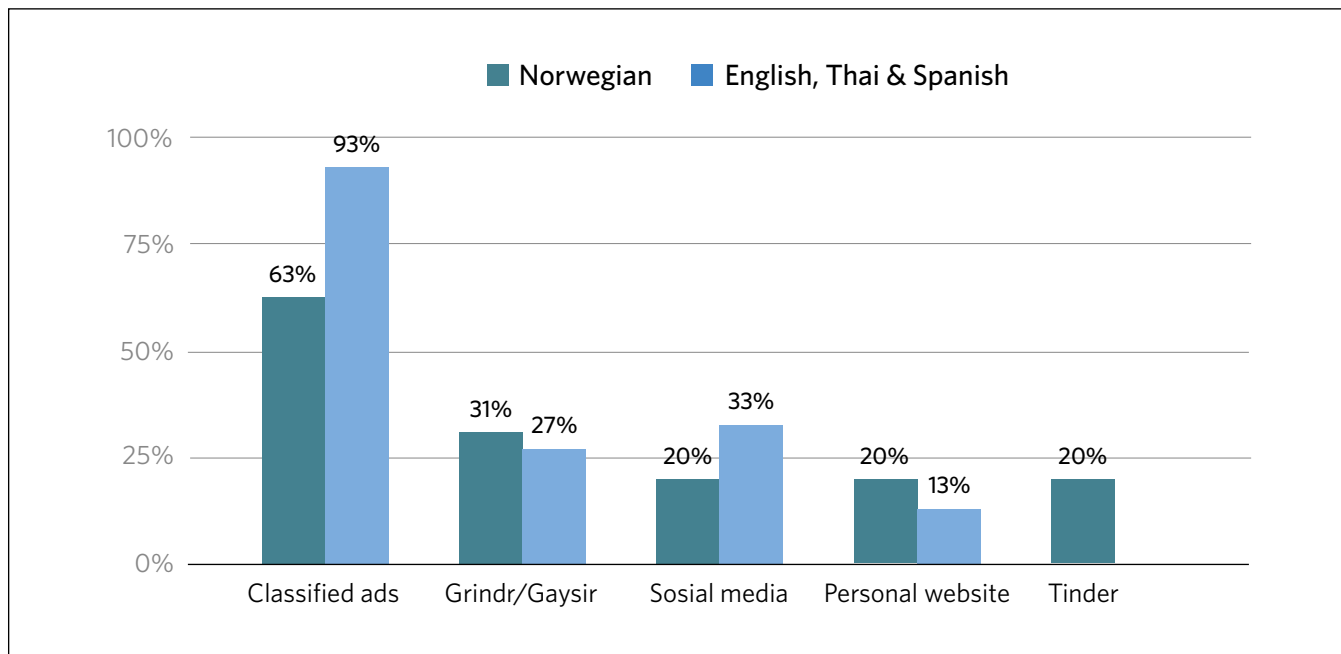
It was clearly most common to use ad pages on sites such as Realescort, Escort Girls or Rentmen (36). These are pages designed to connect sellers of sexual services and potential buyers. Some ad pages are available to use for free, but the most common is that sex workers pay a fixed sum to have one or more ads on the page. There they can post information about what services they offer, photos of themselves and prices and contact information.

Among men and transgender people, a significant proportion responded that they found their customers through Grindr, an app for men who have sex with men (12) or Gaysir.no, a dating and sex site among queers (10). None of these pages are set up for commercial sex but are common points of contact for sex and dating between queers.

Otherwise, there were 15 different respondents who stated that they used some form of social media to connect with customers, such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. This was a somewhat unexpected finding due to previous online sex work survey in Norway reported findings that indicated that sex workers rarely used social media to get in touch with customers (Kock, 2017).

Among those who used social media, there was a large predominance of women. 11 of the 14 who had responded were women, one of whom was trans. Otherwise, there were 2 men and one «trans». Social media use was also somewhat more common among foreign-language respondents. An interesting finding was that those who gave up using social media were no younger on average than the rest of the respondents, and that most (all but one) had sold sex for at least 5 years. This suggests that it is not primarily young women with limited sex sales experience who are using social media as a platform for sex sales.

How the respondents got in touch with customers: comparison of Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents.



In addition to this, nine people reported using their own website and 7 used the dating app Tinder. Those who used Tinder were all respondents from the Norwegian-language survey.

In addition, some wrote their own options where one person wrote that they found customers through chat sites, one through being visible in the media, one on the website nakenprat.no, one found customers on the street, one through their own client registry and one through «sugar dating».

Employment

Since the pimping clause affects the ability of sex workers to organize their work freely, we wanted to map where sex workers report that they tend to meet their customers today, and where they would rather do this if they felt they could choose freely.

The Pimp Clause (§315)

Norwegian law stipulates that many ways of working in sex work are illegal because they come under section 315 of the Penal Code, often called the pimping clause. This is a section under the Chapter of the Penal Code on sexual offences and deals with the organisation and facilitation of prostitution. Pimping carries a penalty of either a fine or imprisonment up to 6 years, and criminalizes it as:

- a) promotes the prostitution of others, or
- b) rents out premises and understands that the premises shall be used for prostitution or exhibit gross negligence in this regard. (Penal Code, 2005, Section 315)

According to legal preparatory work and Norwegian case law, the definition of «promoting the prostitution of others» is rather broad and encompasses several actions that may facilitate that someone else can sell sex, regardless of whether there has been any financial gain or not. It also includes collaborating with other sex workers by sharing an apartment to keep each other safe, and outlaws all forms of brothel activity.

The pimp clause also applies to anyone who indirectly benefits from the prostitution of others by renting out apartments or hotel rooms to people who sell sex in these premises and who knew about or should have understood that the purchase and sale of sexual services took place there. Among other things, this has led to sex workers being evicted from hotel rooms and rented apartments because the owners fear being prosecuted by the police (Amnesty International, 2016)

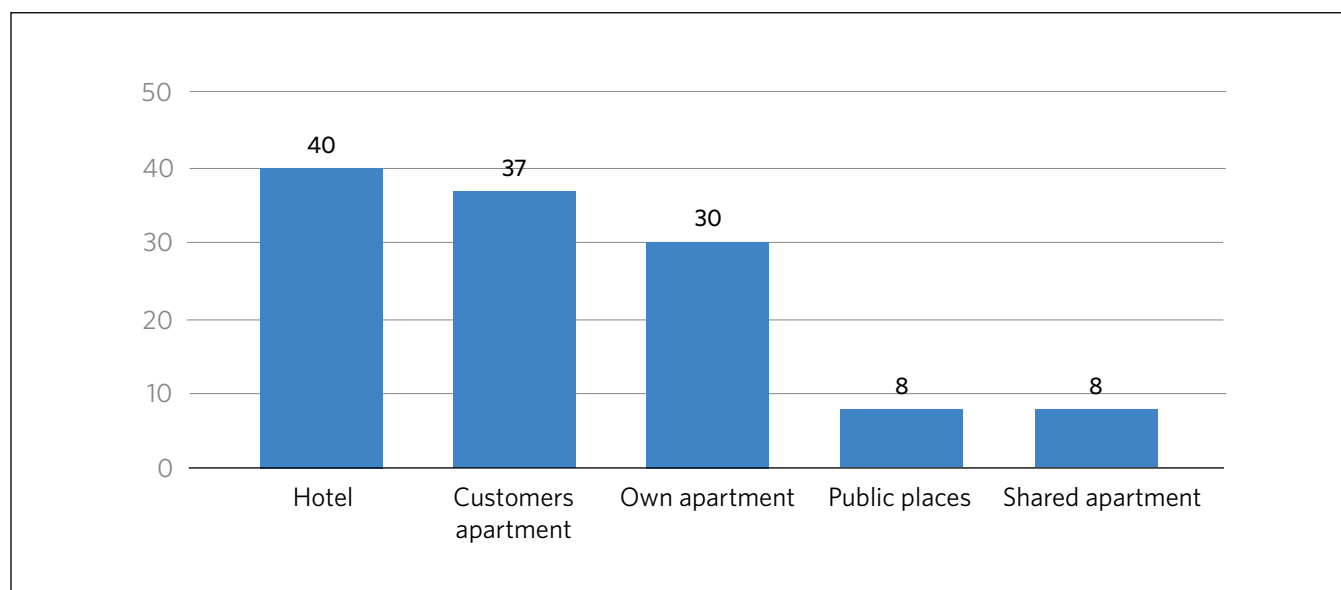
Current Work Locations

To map the place of work, we asked respondents where they tend to meet customers. They had the opportunity to choose several options.

Most respondents stated that they met customers in several different locations, but there were three options mentioned more often than the others. The majority responded that they met customers in hotels (40), at the customer's home (37) and/or in their own apartment or residence (30).

In addition, 8 of the respondents said they met customers in public places, on the street or in cars, and further 8 reported meeting customers in an apartment they shared with others selling sex. One respondent replied that he met customers at a bar, club, or sauna.

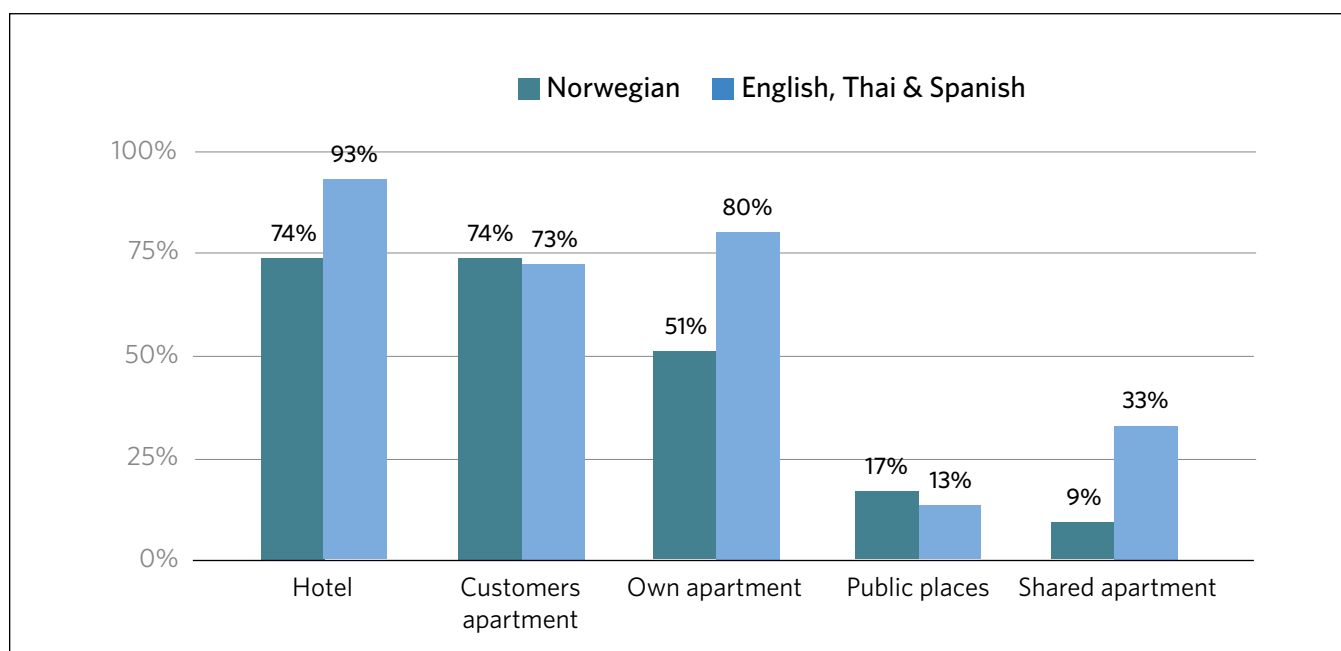
Where respondents tend to meet customers, with the option to choose multiple answers.



Although the first three options were most common among both Norwegian and foreign-language respondents, there were some differences between the groups. Firstly, there was a significantly larger percentage of foreign-language people who responded to having sold sex from their own apartment or place of residence, and all but one sold sex from hotels.

In addition, there was a greater proportion of foreign-language people who responded that they sold sex from their own apartment or residence and reported that they were selling sex from an apartment shared with other sex workers.

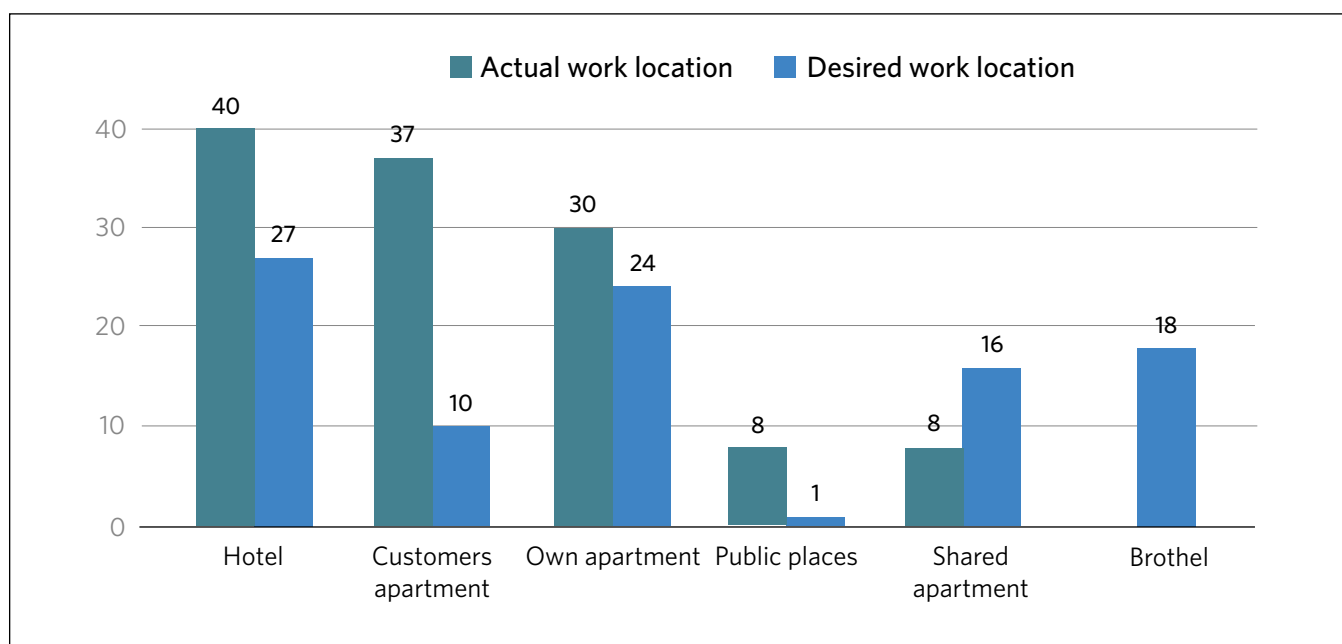
Where respondents tend to meet customers: comparison of Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents.



Desired Work Locations

Where the respondents stated that they wanted to work differs at several points noticeably from where they actually worked. The difference is by far the greatest when it comes to selling sex at the customer's home. Most of the respondents reported that they sell sex at the customer's home (37), only 10 respondents reported that they would do so if they could choose freely. There were no major differences between the foreign-language and Norwegian-language respondents.

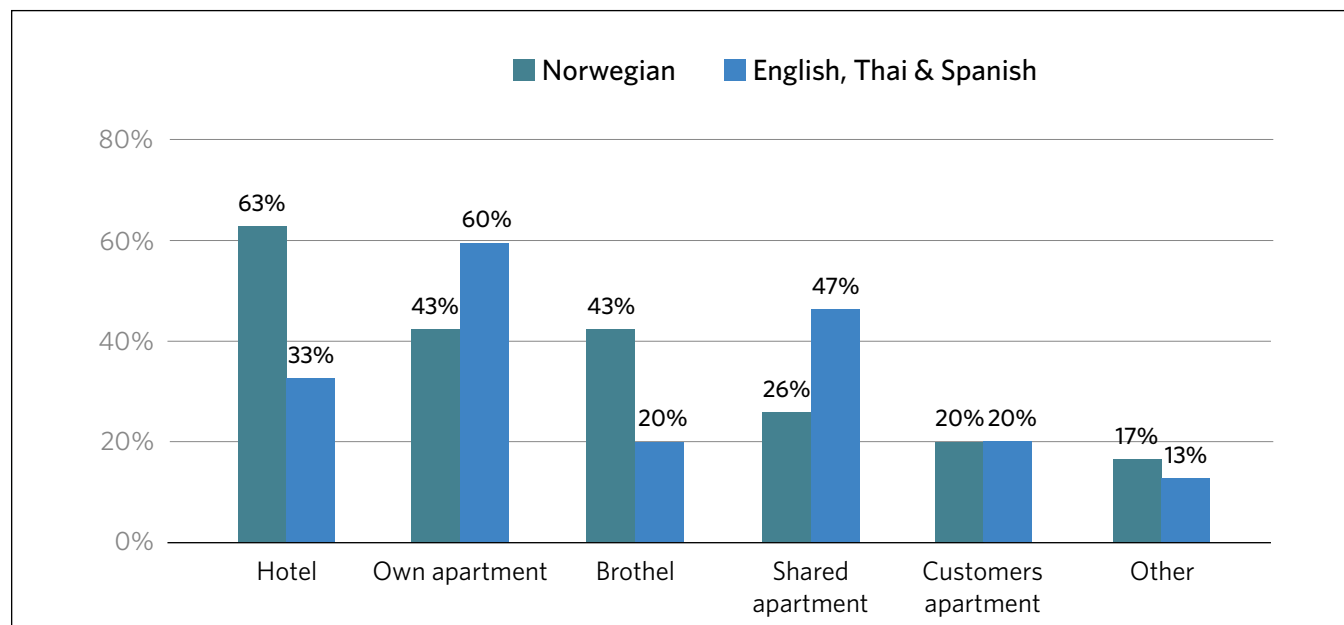
Comparing where respondents responded that they tend to work and where they would rather work if they could choose freely, with the possibility of choosing more answers. Stated by quantity.



The place most wanted to work from was a hotel (27) and their own apartment or residence (24). Then came the option of brothel (18). There was also a relatively large proportion who responded that they would rather sell sex from an apartment shared with other sex workers (16), more than twice as many who responded that they did now. In addition to these options, four respondents replied that they would sell sex from a bar, club, or sauna, three would rather work at a massage institute and one respondent wanted to sell sex in public places.

When it came to the desired place of work, there was a noticeable difference between the foreign-language and Norwegian-language respondents at several points.

Comparing Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents' responses to where they would work if they could choose freely.



Among the foreign-language respondents, the majority (9) said they wanted to sell sex from their own apartment or residence if they could choose freely, while just under half of Norwegian-language respondents answered the same (15).

Among the Norwegian-language respondents, working from hotels was by far the most chosen option, while only a few foreign-language people replied that they would meet customers in hotels if they could choose freely. This is striking given that 93 per cent of this group responded that they used to meet customers in hotels. We did not ask questions about the reason behind respondents' wishes in the survey, yet we know from previous research that migrants who sell sex experience a significantly greater degree of discrimination, evictions, and suspicion from hotel staff than Norwegian and Nordic sex workers, which may explain this difference (Tveit & Skilbrei, 2008).

There were also some notable differences in other sections of the survey. The Norwegian-language respondents were significantly more interested in working in brothels. Only three of the foreign-language respondents chose this option, compared to 15 Norwegian-language respondents. As for working from an apartment shared with others selling sex, there was significantly greater interest among the foreign-language respondents, with almost half (7) having chosen this option.

An important finding in our survey is that respondents had a clear preference for working in ways that are currently criminalized under the pimping clause. For both the Norwegian and foreign-language respondents, the three most popular places of desired locations for work are all affected by the law. Furthermore, a large majority of respondents met customers at the customer's home, one of the few options not affected by the pimping clause, despite that, only 20 per cent of respondents would do so if they could choose freely.

Experiences of violence and offence

It is well documented that sex workers in Norway are a group that is particularly vulnerable to being exposed to violence, both inside and outside sex sales (Bjørndahl, 2012; Bjørndahl & Norli, 2008; Warpe, 2015). Most Norwegian mapping studies that address to what extent sex workers experience violence have mainly focused on women selling sexual services on the streets. The knowledgebase addressing the same experiences of people who primarily sell their services via the internet is therefore limited. The findings from our survey underpins previous research showing that people who sell sex through the internet in Norway are also a vulnerable group in terms of violence, harassment, and robbery.

Unwanted experiences with customers

To map respondents' experiences of harassment and violence, we made a list of specific incidents with questions about whether respondents had experienced any of the following actions from a customer without consent. We specifically asked for experiences of violence that had occurred in Norway over the past three years. We also wanted to know if respondents had experienced unpleasant or threatening behavior over the phone or through the internet.

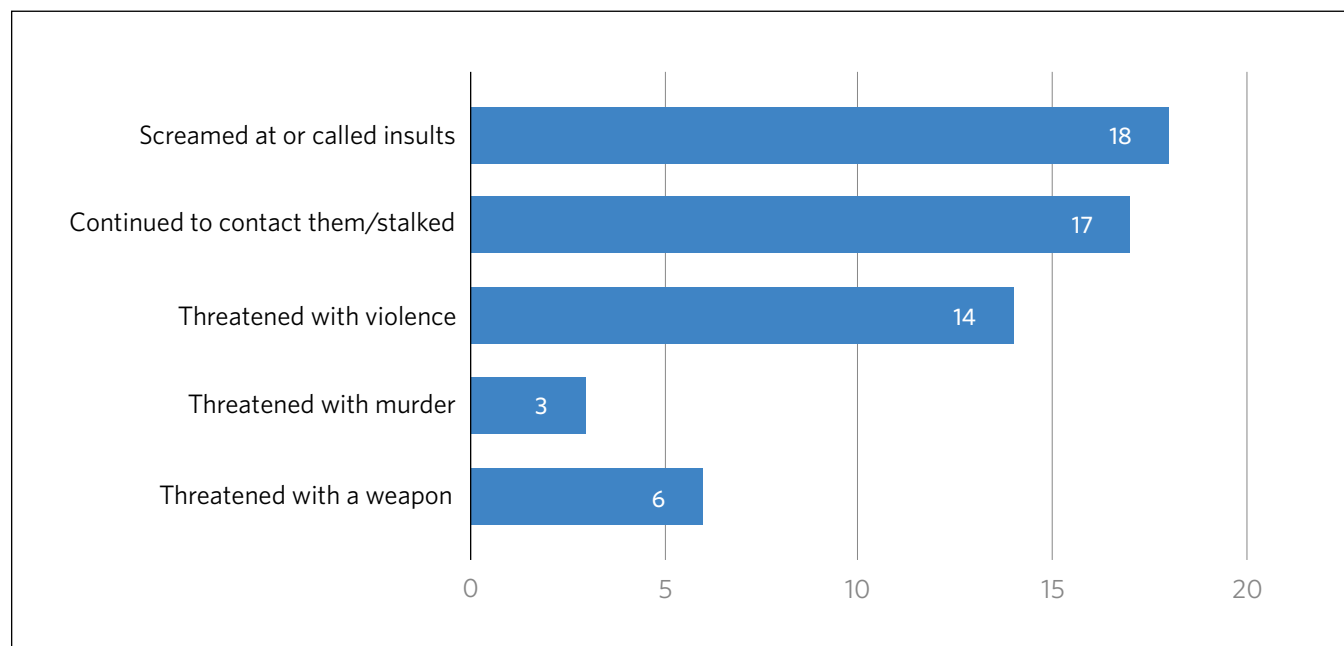
The respondents reported that they had been, to a large extent, exposed to violence and abuse by customers. 72 per cent reported that they had been subjected to some form of physical violence, threat, or sexual assault by a customer in the past three years, and 82 per cent reported at least one unpleasant and unwanted incident from a customer.

Harassment and threats from customers

Harassment in the form of being cussed at, reprimanded, shouted at, or stalked was common. So were threats of violence or murder. In all, 60 per cent of respondents reported that they had been subjected to either threats or harassment from a customer.

Eighteen respondents had experienced either being cussed at or being shouted at. Seventeen people reported that they had experienced that a customer had followed them or continued to contact them after they asked them to stop.

Respondents' experiences of harassment or threats from customers, with the option to select multiple answers.



In the case of threats, 14 reported that they had been subjected to threats of violence from a customer, 6 respondents reported being threatened with guns, and 3 respondents had been threatened with murder.

At this point, it is worth noting that a significantly larger proportion of foreign-language respondents responded that they had been subjected to threats of violence: 47 per cent of foreign-language respondents compared to 20 per cent of Norwegian-language respondents.

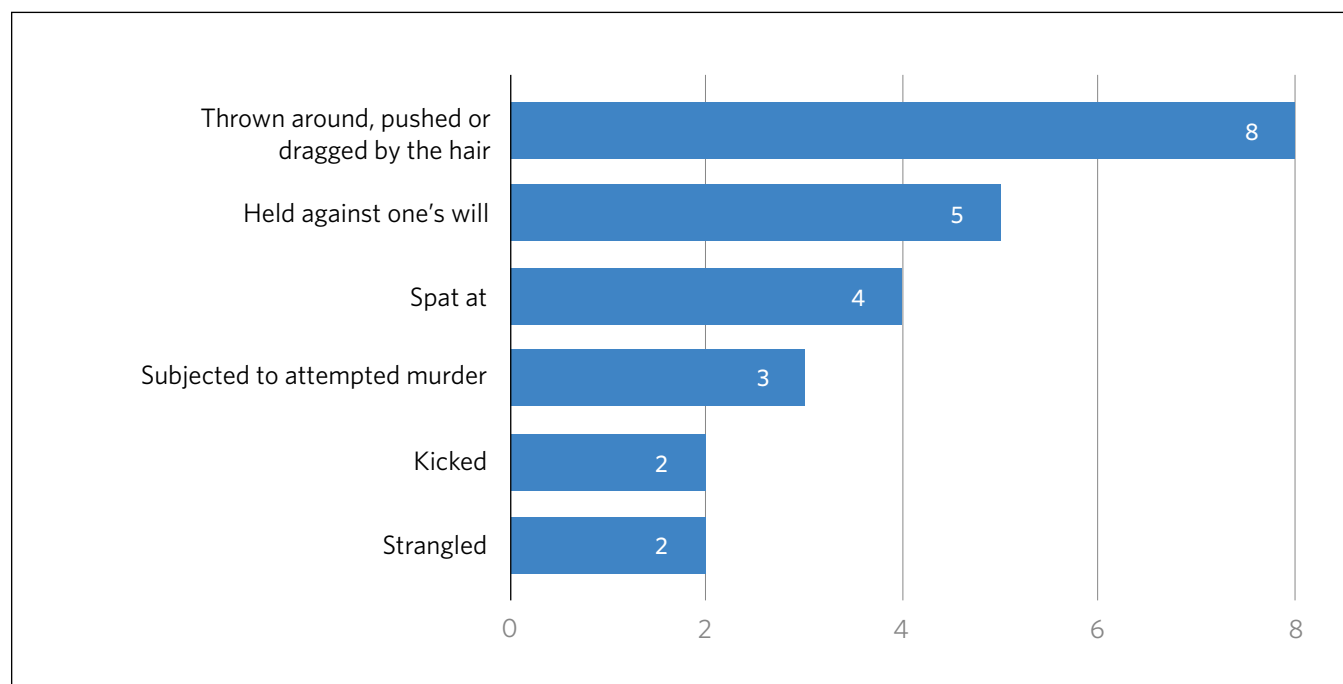
For harassment and intimidation, there was no significant difference between women and men. Harassment or threats were also reported by 5 out of 7 transgender people in the survey.

Physical violence from customers

Being exposed to physical violence was somewhat less common, but 24 per cent reported having been subjected to some form of physical violence or physical abuse.

The most common experience of violence among respondents were being thrown around, pushed, or being dragged by their hair (8). 5 respondents stated that they had been grabbed and held against their will, and 4 had experienced being spat on. Other experiences of physical violence included being beaten/hit or slapped (2), being strangled (2), or kicked (2). Among the most serious cases are three respondents who stated that they have been the victim of attempted murder.

Respondents' experiences with physical violence from customers, with the option to choose multiple answers.



Since there were relatively few answers in this category, it is difficult to systematize them into groups. Nevertheless, it is clear that Norwegian-language respondents were overrepresented on most of the options in this category. When it came to being beaten or slapped, being put into a chokehold, being strangled, or spat on, all the respondents who stated that they had experienced this were in the Norwegian-language group.

In addition, all but one respondent who had had experiences of being thrown around, pushed, or being dragged by their hair, were Norwegian-language respondents. Looking at the numbers, there is no one incident of violence where foreign-language respondents were significantly more vulnerable than the Norwegian-language respondents.

As for gender, there was no significant difference in the proportion who had experienced at least one form of physical violence, but it is worth noting that all but one who had been subjected to attempted murder or who had been threatened with a weapon by a customer were women. The individual who responded as not identifying as a woman, reported their gender as «trans».

Sexualized assaults and offences

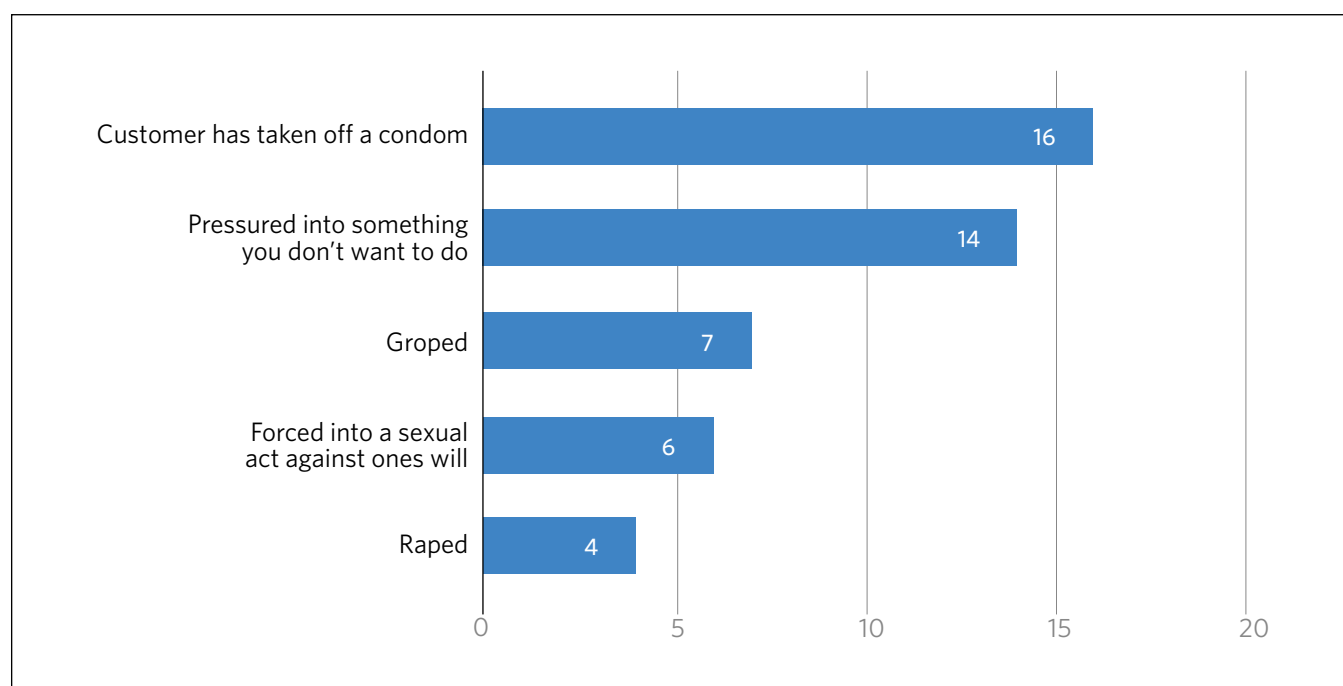
Experiences of sexual violence or offence were reported by a significant proportion of respondents. A total of 48 per cent said they had been subjected to some form of sexual abuse from customers, not including those who responded that they had experienced a customer who refused to pay. As it is not clear whether the customer refused to pay before or after the sexual act had been carried out, we chose to treat this separately. Despite this, it is natural to assume that a proportion of these will be cases of sexual offences.

There were also two other answer alternatives that implicate sexual acts, but where it was not specified directly. This includes the response alternative «to be pushed into something you didn't want by a

customer» and «to be filmed or photographed without it being agreed upon.» If we include respondents who had experience with the latter two options, a total of 60 per cent reported being subjected to sexual offences or abuse.

In this category, the most reported experience was to experience that a customer had taken off a condom without consent (16). Here there was a significantly larger proportion of foreign-language respondents who had this experience: 53 per cent of the foreign-language respondents compared to 23 per cent of the Norwegian-language respondents.

Respondents' experiences of sexual assault or misconduct by customers, with the option to select multiple answers.



Six people stated that they had been forced into sexual acts against their will, and 7 had been groped against their will. With regards to these two answer alternatives, all but one respondent came from the Norwegian-language survey.

In addition, 14 respondents reported that a customer had pressured them to participate in something they did not want to do, but it was not specified what this meant. One man also chose to elaborate in the free text field, where he particularly highlights customers who are intoxicated as particularly problematic:

«It's uncomfortable when the client is drunk or high on drugs and wants to do more than what we've agreed. I always ask for money in advance and twice I've had to throw them out.»

Twelve respondents stated that they had been filmed or taken pictures of without this being agreed upon. Being filmed against their will was significantly more common among the foreign-language respondents, with 40 per cent reporting this compared to 17 per cent of the Norwegian-language respondents.

Compared to the other options, a relatively small proportion reported that they had been subjected to rape (4). It is possible that this can be explained by the fact that respondents have a higher threshold for calling

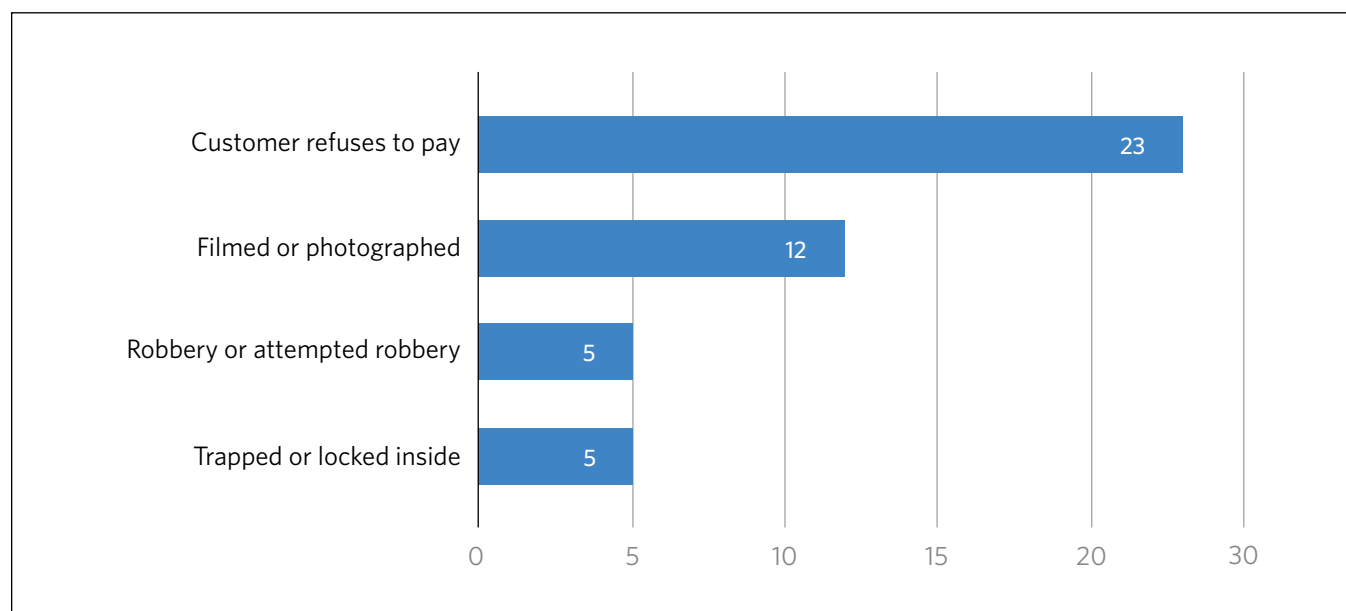
sexual violence or coercion for rape, given that so many report experiences of physical violence and sexual offences, such as that the customer has taken off a condom without consent or forced themselves into sexual acts. It may also be that experiences with rape are less common in this group of respondents than have previously been reported.

A somewhat unexpected finding was that there did not appear to be any significant difference between the sexes when it came to sexual assault and offence, regardless of type of offence. In the survey, there was an approximately equal proportion of men and women who reported being sexually assaulted, this also applied to trans men and women as separate groups. When it comes to transgender people, the number of respondents is so low that it is not possible to determine any trends, but it is worth noting that all trans men in the survey reported sexual abuse from customers, and one trans woman and one «trans» reported being pushed into something they did not want or to be filmed or taken pictures of without consent.

Other offences and unpleasant incidents

Of the various forms of offences experienced by those selling sexual services, the most common by far was customers who refused to pay. A total of 23 respondents stated that they had been in that type of situation, and it was common amongst both the Norwegian and the foreign-language respondents. It was also relatively evenly distributed between male and female respondents, and all but one who had reported being trans had experienced customers refusing to pay. Additionally, five respondents reported that they had been the victim of a robbery or attempted robbery by a customer.

Respondents' experiences with unpleasant and unwanted experiences from customers with the option to choose multiple answers.



Two people described experiences in the free text field that cannot be easily categorized, but which deal with difficult feelings related to sex work also in a context where violence may not have occurred:

«A lot of little nerve-wracking events all the time. Nothing really rough has happened, just generally being nervous that your gut feeling has messed up this time.»

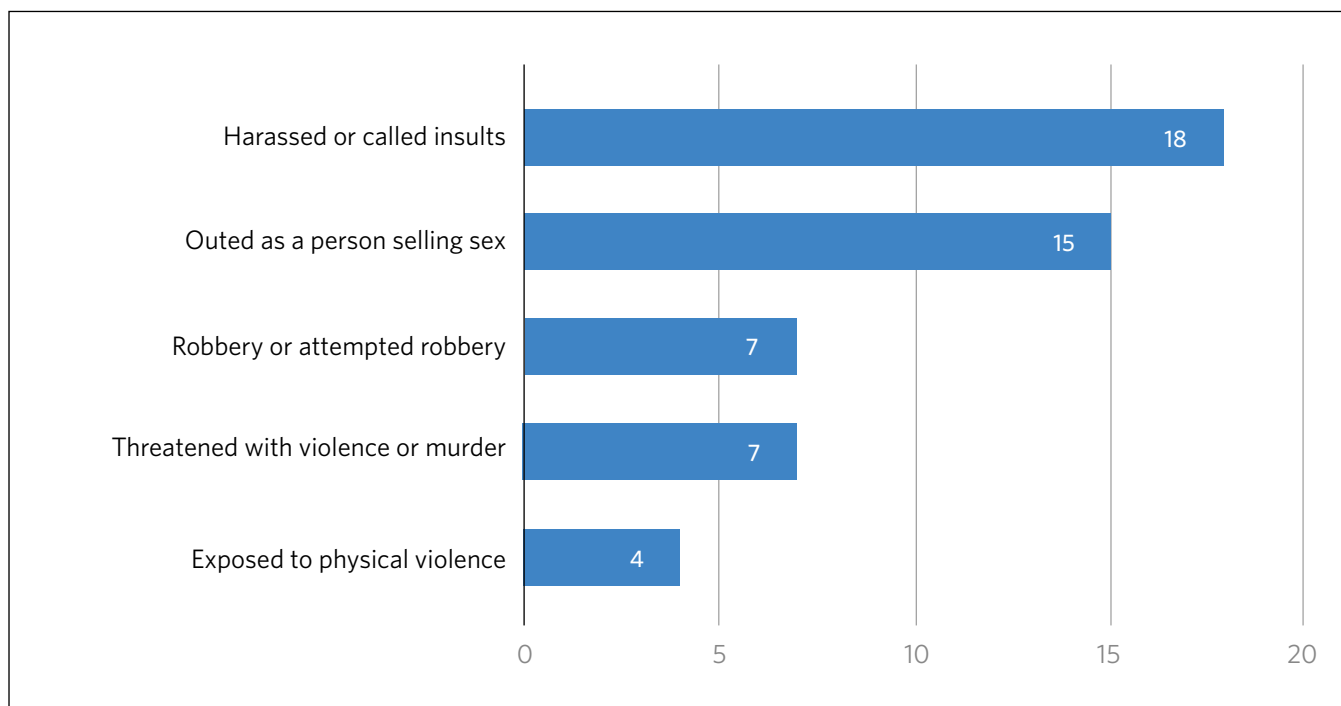
«It's every time I have a customer. I simply feel like a piece of dirt. Men (=customers) treat me like just a <piece of dirt>, and at the best as some tube they can put all their sperm in.»

Violence and abuse by non-customers

Previous research shows that people who sell sex are not only exposed to violence from customers but are also vulnerable to abuse in close relationships and from strangers, which is why we chose to ask questions about this as well (Bjørndahl, 2012; Bjørndahl & Norli, 2008). Here, too, we gave respondents a list of specific actions with questions about whether they had experienced any of the following from someone who was not a customer.

Here it is important to clarify that we only asked about events that respondents had experienced *because they were selling sex*. In other words, it is not a survey of experiences of violence outside of sex sales on a general basis.

Respondents' experiences with violence or abuse, because they sold sex, from individuals who were not customers. Respondents could choose multiple answers.



When asked about their experiences of harassment, the results were disheartening as it was seen as something commonplace by the respondents. 36 percent had experienced being yelled at or cussed at by some random stranger/passersby just because they were selling sexual services. Among those who experienced harassment, the most common perpetrator of harassment are strangers/bystanders, followed by either friends and/or acquaintances. Additionally, a respondent stated that she had been subjected to harassment from her family, her partner, and in the free text field pointing out that feminists had also been perpetrators of similar forms of harassment.

Looking at the numbers, we can see that harassment from people other than customers occurred more frequently among the foreign-language respondents, with 53 per cent compared to 29 per cent for the Norwegian-language respondents.

15 of the respondents reported being outed as a sex worker against their will. Foreign-language respondents were also overrepresented in this section with 47 per cent compared to 23 per cent among Norwegian-language respondents. Of those who experienced this, the people who, most commonly, outed them were either friends, acquaintances, or strangers. Four respondents also stated that they had been subjected to physical violence because they were selling sexual services. Contrary to the responses of physical violence from customers, the respondents who had experienced physical violence from someone other than a customer were all foreign-language respondents: two men and two women.

Seven respondents reported being threatened with violence or murder for selling sexual services, and seven stated that they had either been robbed or someone had attempted to rob them. Of the seven respondents who reported being robbed or attempted robbery, five were foreign-language, three were women, one man and one who identified as «trans».

Two people reported to have been subjected to threats or violence from pimps or in connection with organized crime in Norway, both of whom were women: one Norwegian-language and one foreign-language respondent. One described a dangerous situation where she had been subjected to serious threats and persecution because she owed money to someone in the group that ran organized crime in Oslo. The other woman described a situation where a customer and boyfriend had exploited and abused her grossly:

«I met a customer and foolishly fell in love. He got very violent and started pimping me out. If I didn't want to work, he'd beat me up. If I didn't voluntarily hand over all my money, he just abused and beat me up and took it all.»

Several of the respondents used the free text field to describe instances of abuse they had experienced as a direct consequence of being forcefully outed. One reported that she had lost her job as a direct result of being outed as a sex worker, and several others described experiences of being frozen out or subjected to stigmatizing attitudes:

«Been cut out by friends because I was selling sex.»

««I've been met with <how can you do something like that with your own body> and general ignorance where the info they've received is typical from series where sex workers have been shamed for being a sex worker.»

«Told it to a friend who turned out to be much more prejudiced than I thought.»

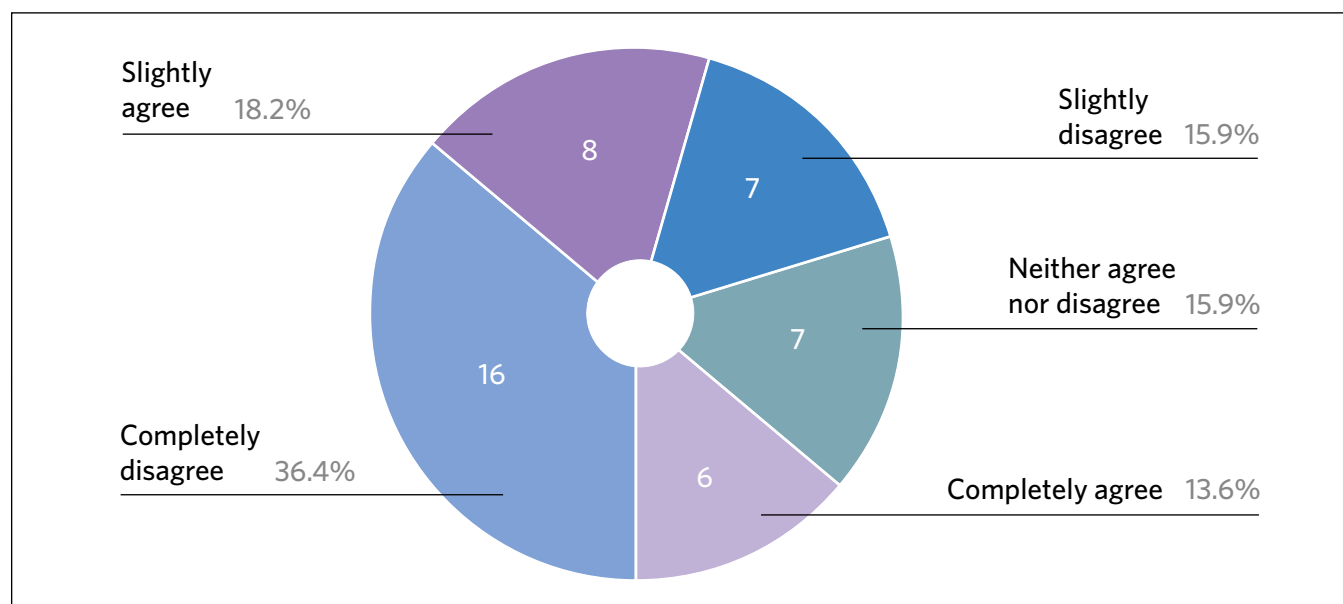
Police and healthcare

An important purpose of this survey has been to map out what resources are available to people, who sell sex using the internet, if they are exposed to violence or unpleasant incidents. In particular, we wanted to identify respondents' relationships with the police and public health services. Topics related to this were addressed in several places in the survey. Among others, respondents were asked about their experiences with different services and were presented with various claims that they should consider.

Trust towards the police

The lack of trust in the police was a consistent find in this study. When respondents were asked to consider the statement «I have confidence in the police», the most chosen response to this claim was «strongly disagree» (16), while seven respondents ticked the «slightly disagree» option. In comparison, seven respondents said they «slightly agree» and six respondents said they «completely agree.» In addition, seven respondents «neither agree nor disagree».

Respondents' assessment of the claim «I have confidence in the police».



With regards to this statement, there were some differences between the foreign-language and Norwegian-language respondents. One of these is that the Norwegian-language respondents reported having significantly less confidence in the police than the respondents in the foreign-language responses. None of the 35 Norwegian-language respondents said they «completely agree» with the statement «I have confidence in the police,» compared to 6 of the foreign-language respondents.

Although the figures suggest a slightly higher confidence among foreign-language respondents, one third of this group also explicitly report that they do not have confidence in the police.

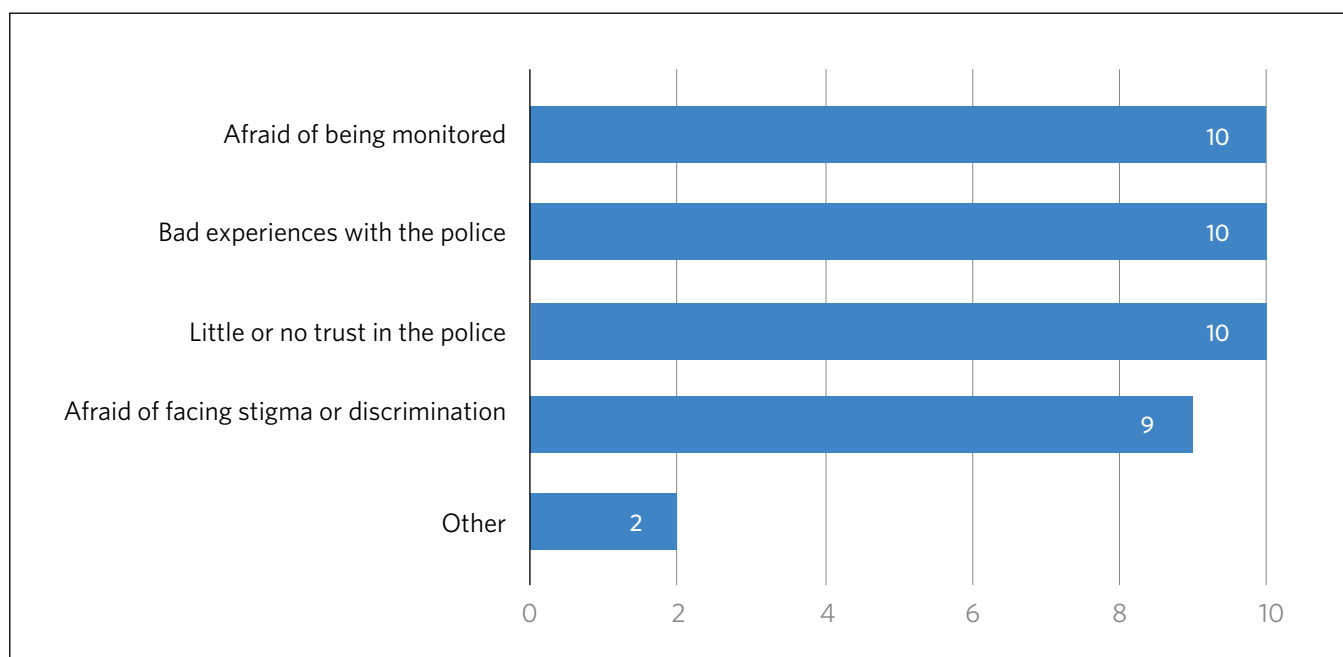
Experience with the police

We also wanted to identify the extent to which respondents who had been subjected to abusive or violent incidents contacted police in the aftermath of the incident. Respondents were therefore asked the following question: «If you answered that you had been subjected to something unpleasant or violent, did you contact the police afterwards?»

Among those who answered the question and who stated that they had been the victim of violence or abuse, only seven people answered yes. Twenty-four respondents said they had not reported to or contacted the police. Among these, 11 stated that the reason for this was that they themselves felt that they did not need help.

The remaining 14 who had avoided contacting the police were given a follow-up question on what the reasons were for not making contact or informing police. Of these, 10 were Norwegian-language and 4 foreign-language respondents. There were no major differences between the groups when it came to the reasons why they had not sought help.

Reasons why respondents did not contact police in the aftermath of a violent or unpleasant incident, even if they needed help, with the possibility of choosing more answers.



The reasons for refusing to contact the police were mainly related to concerns with the police themselves, rather than external reasons such as fear of retaliation from the perpetrators. Most respondents chose several alternatives. 10 respondents stated that they did not report because they were afraid of being monitored by the police, 10 stated that they had had bad experiences with the police from previously reported incidents and 10 responded that they had not reported anything because they had «little or no confidence in the police or the judiciary.» In addition, nine respondents said they were afraid of being exposed to stigma and discrimination if they did report the incident.

One woman stated that she had not filed a complaint because the person who had been violent to her would have killed her, another respondent reported the cause as *«I was afraid they would take away my children or contact child welfare services.»*

A common denominator to the answers is that the stated reasons are almost exclusively about fear of the police themselves, rather than backlash from the perpetrators or fear of retribution. Given the scope of this investigation, we cannot say for sure what the cause of this is, but there are findings from other reports that are worth noting. One of these is from Vista Analyse's evaluation report on the Sex Purchase Act, which points out that people who sell sexual services experience that the Sex Purchase Act has led to more stigma against those who sell sexual services and that *«more police officers look down on the prostitutes and therefore to a greater extent than previously harass women in prostitution»* (Rasmussen et al., 2014, p. 77).

Some respondents chose to describe experiences in the free text field. A young man who responded to the Spanish survey linked his positive experiences with the police to the fact that he did not have dark skin:

«It's positive, but it could be because I'm white. I know of others who because they are dark are stopped. Its very unfair.»

One woman wrote in a free text field that she was afraid that the police would «catch» her because she didn't pay taxes:

«Haven't needed to call the police yet but would have done it if necessary. Even though I don't feel completely safe with the idea because I don't pay taxes. Will they arrest me for not paying taxes at the same time?»

A Norwegian woman described different experiences based on the police district in question:

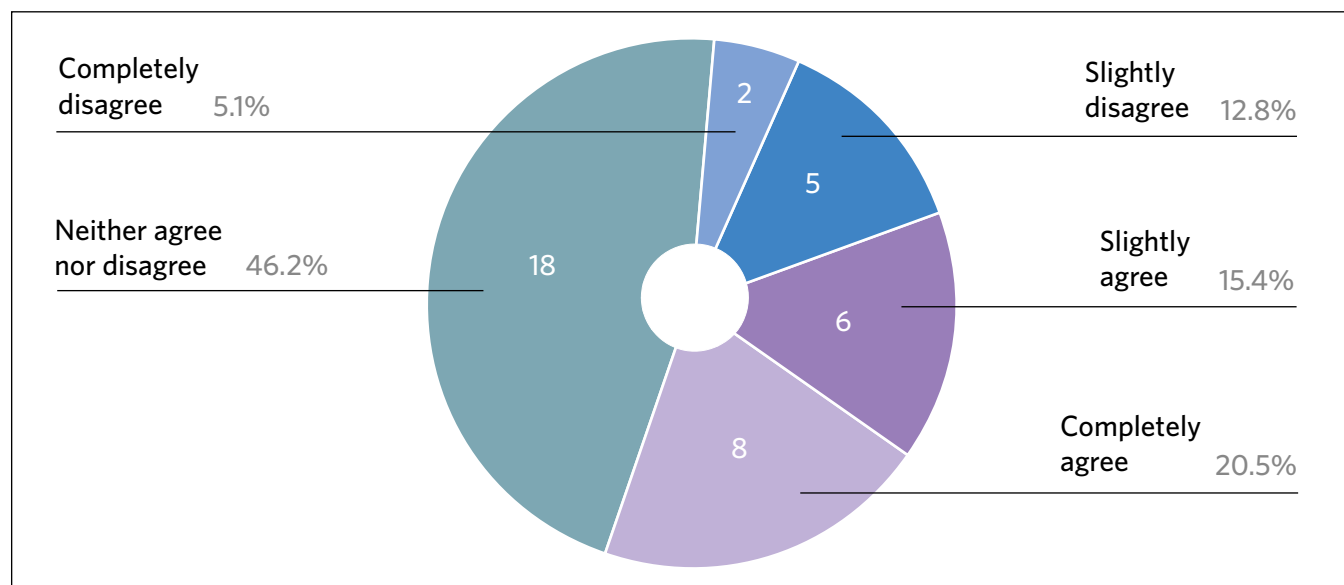
«I have been met with respect and received the help I needed from the police and Pro Senteret in Oslo. However, when I was threatened by him, I reported him, and when the case came before the court, I got zero help from the authorities in Rogaland.»

Trust in healthcare care services

Part of the study was to get an overview of the trust in the public healthcare sector and the experiences with regards to access to public healthcare services. The confidence in public healthcare services among respondents seems to be somewhat higher than the trust in the police. The majority of respondents (18) responded that they neither agreed nor disagreed with the claim «I have confidence in public healthcare services.»

Eight respondents said they «completely agree» and six respondents said they «slightly agree.» 5 responded that they «slightly disagreed,» and two people «strongly disagreed» with the claim.

Respondents' assessment of the claim «I have confidence in public healthcare services.»

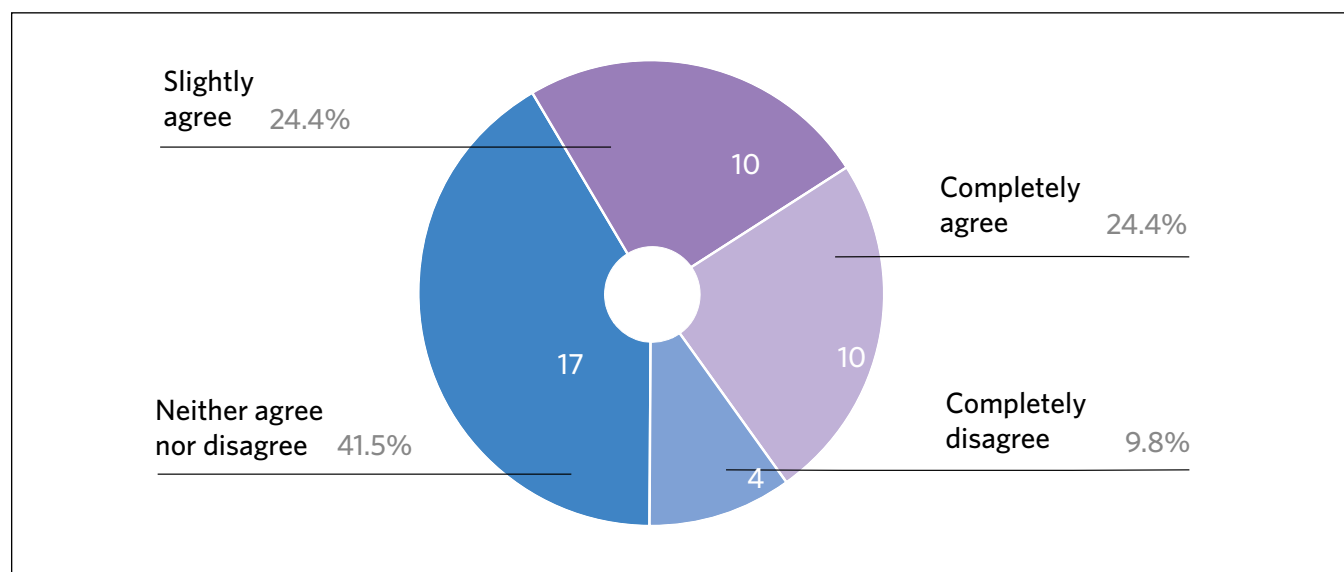


The answers also revealed a slightly greater confidence in public healthcare services among the foreign-language respondents than among the Norwegian-language respondents. Among those who had responded to the foreign language surveys, 53 per cent reported that they were either completely or slightly agreed, compared to only 17 per cent of Norwegian-language respondents.

Experiences with healthcare

A finding from this part of the survey that raises our concern is linked to the stigmatizing attitudes among healthcare professionals. When respondents were asked to consider the following claim: «I experience stigmatizing attitudes from those who work in healthcare services» the majority of respondents who answered the question stated that they either «completely agree» (10) or «slightly agree» (10). There were 17 respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 4 respondents said they «strongly disagreed.» No respondents slightly disagreed.

Respondents' assessment of the claim «I experience stigmatizing attitudes from those who work in healthcare.»



The most common cited reason for not seeking healthcare services when the sex workers needed it was stigma.

Respondents who had been subjected to violent or unpleasant incidents were asked whether they had contacted the healthcare services in the aftermath of the abuse. 22 respondents answered no, and here the majority (18) cited the reason that they did not really need help. Six people responded that they did not remember whether they had made contact or not, and another six responded that they had not contacted the healthcare system even though they needed help.

When these six respondents were asked to share their reasons for not getting help, the most chosen response was «I was afraid to experience stigma or discrimination» (4).

Other reasons stated were «I have had previous bad experiences with the public healthcare system» (2), «I was afraid that the healthcare system would contact the police» (2), «I did not know what services were available» (2) and «I was afraid to be outed or recognized» (2). In addition, one responder who answered that the kind of help she needed was not available, and another was afraid of being convicted. Three women, one of whom is trans, also described experiences in the free text field:

«I was afraid they were going to tell me that my clients hadn't done anything wrong to me because I'm a sex worker and I wanted it. And that everything was done by my own free choice, and that's exactly what happened.»

«I feel ashamed to say what I'm really doing in fear that they're going to dislike what I'm doing. I love my job and I'll keep going for as long as I can. This is my dream job.»

«I needed someone to talk to and some psychological support, but I know this kind of service isn't available, at least not for a travelling and touring sex worker, in any case.»

Trust in healthcare and support services for people selling sex

A positive finding from the survey is that respondents had significantly greater confidence and trust in the employees working in healthcare and support services that are specifically aimed at people who sell sexual services, such as Pro Sentret, Pion, Nadheim, Albertine and Marita. 21 of the respondents said they «completely agree» with the statement. «I have confidence in employees working in healthcare and support services that target people who sell sexual services.» Furthermore, another five stated that they «slightly agreed», five who neither agreed nor disagreed, two who chose «slightly disagree» and two who «strongly disagreed.»

In addition, six respondents said they did not know of any of the offers listed. Here it is worth noting that five of those who did not know about any of the healthcare facilities were Norwegian-language respondents. The fact that several Norwegian-language respondents who sell sex in Norway using the internet are not aware of any of the organizations or services that are in place for sex workers, this suggests that there should be more effort put into outreach projects focused on information and awareness raising to Norwegian-language sex workers. People who speak Norwegian and can navigate the internet should be a target group who may be easier to inform about services and providers in Norway.

The experience of access to healthcare services

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the claim «I feel like I have good access to healthcare services.». The majority of respondents said they «completely agree» (18) or «slightly agree» (12). In addition, seven respondents «neither agreed nor disagreed,» two «slightly disagreed» and another two respondents «strongly disagreed.»

There were no major differences between the Norwegian and foreign-language respondents, both of whom responded to having good access.

Contact with others sex workers

One of the objectives of this survey was to try and map out to what extent people who sell sexual services have contact with other sex workers, and what role does it play for this group. As an interest organization for sex workers, PION has for many years been a contact arena for people who sell sexual services.

In PION's experience networks and friendships with other sex workers are of great importance to many in this group, and that online platforms are important for obtaining and maintaining contact with others who sell sexual services.

In conversations with employees at Nadheim and Pro Sentret, it emerged that healthcare service providers also find that among their users there are larger and smaller groups of sex workers in Norway who use internet-based applications to obtain and maintain contact with other sex workers. This is especially true when it comes to sharing information about violent customers or safe places to sell sexual services. The findings in this study confirm these experiences.

Network size

The vast majority of respondents knew of others who sold sexual services. Among the 50 respondents, 41 said they have contact with other sex workers. The number of people the respondents reported that they knew were sex workers ranged from one to 1000, and there is a large variation between these two extremes.

There are many reasons why these figures vary, such as how long you have been in the industry, how public or «out» you are, and what languages you speak. Among our respondents, there was a wide variation within the different groups. However, those who stated that they were active in sex work activism or in interest organizations for sex workers, reported consistently higher numbers of acquaintances.

Arenas for contact

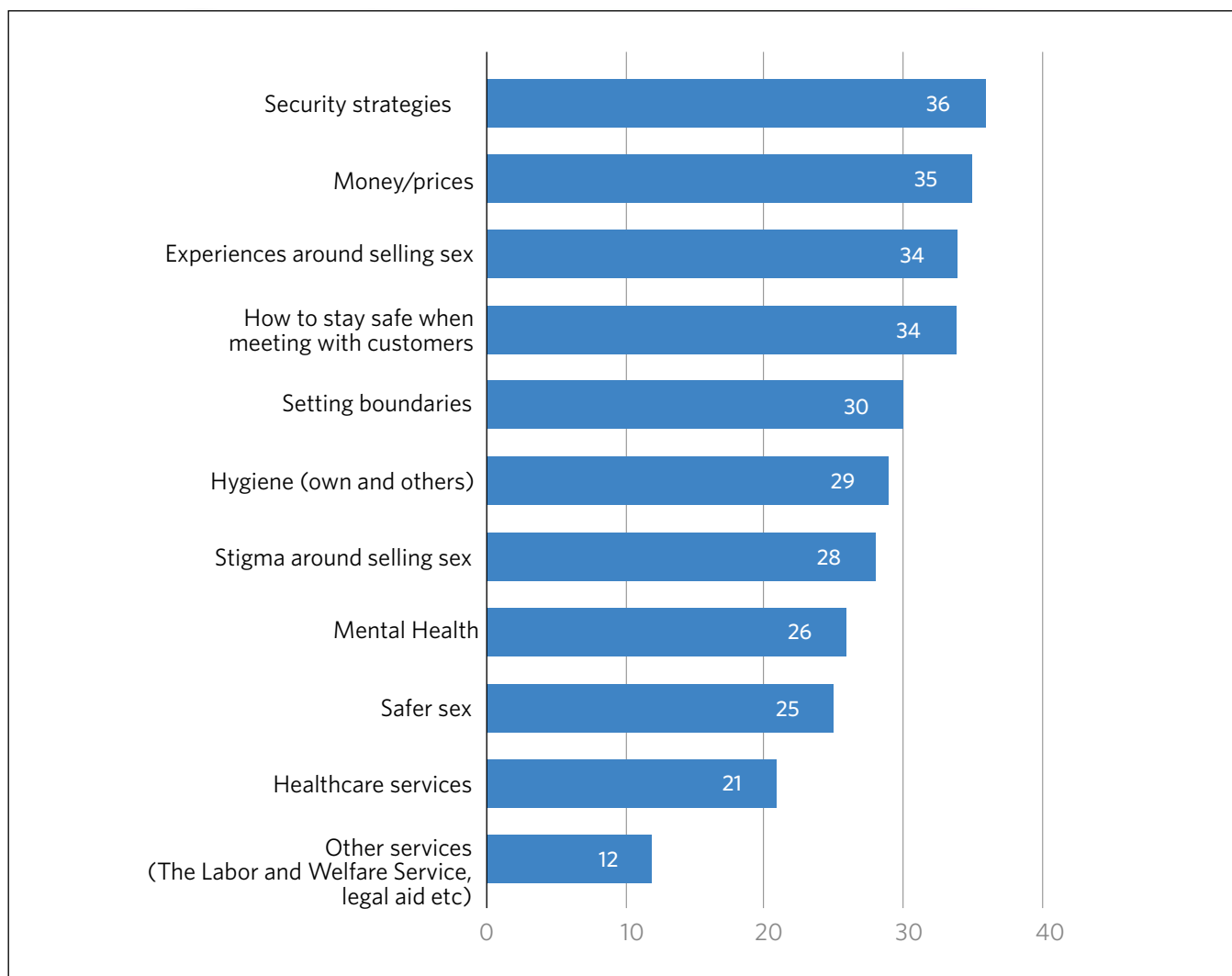
Respondents were also given the opportunity to write in the free text fields about where they had gotten to know other sex workers. The responses in this section had a large variety of answers. Some respondents mentioned that they had gotten to know others via the internet, others through their work, in connection with travel or common place of work, or because a sex worker had gotten in touch through ads that had been placed. Additionally, responses included contact through sex worker organizations, outreach programs, queer feminist environments, trans environments, through Pro Sentret, mutual acquaintances, through Grindr, unrelated to sex sales or by the fact that a partner, friend, or family member also sold sexual services.

Given that we had recruited respondents to the survey via networks for sex workers and the target audience were people who actively use the internet for sex sales, it was not surprising that the internet was reported as the most common way to obtain and maintain contact with other sex workers.

Topics of conversation

Respondents who stated that they knew others who were sex workers were also asked what they talk about with other sex workers. They were given a list of several answer alternatives and could elaborate in the free text field.

What respondents talk about with other sex workers, with the option to choose multiple answers.



With regards to this question the most chosen response was «security strategies» (36), followed by «money/prices» (35), «experiences from selling sex» (34) and «how to stay safe when meeting customers» (34).

Other options that were also popular included «setting boundaries» (30) and «hygiene» (29), «stigma around selling sex» (28), «mental health» (26), «safer sex» (25) and «healthcare services» (21). The least chosen alternative was «Other services (NAV³, legal help etc.)» with only 12 respondents. In addition, five respondents chose to describe their topic of conversation in the free text field:

«Everything really! Nice to have someone to share/discuss our job with! :)»

«How we wish things were, and topics completely unrelated to work :)»

«At the moment I don't have anyone to talk to. If I had spoken to my former friends, they would have called me SWERF and even TERF⁴ and stuff. Although I know they all have their own problems.»⁴

³ NAV is the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen)

⁴ SWERF and TERF are abbreviations for the English terms Sex Worker Exclusionary Radical Feminist (SWERF) and Trans Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF).

«Funny things customers say and do.»

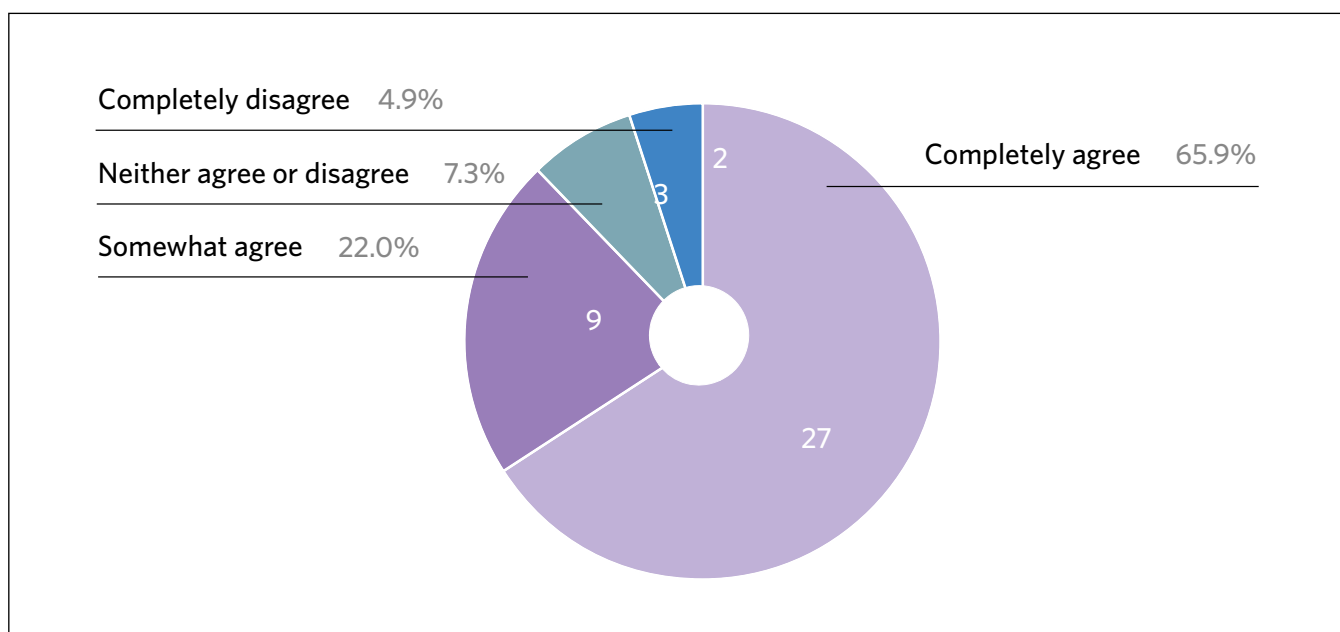
«Our spiritual needs/beliefs and how to cleanse ourselves from all the negative energy we absorb through the job.»

The importance of social networks for sex workers

Looking at the responses from the sex workers, with regards to what they talk about with each other, such as their experiences of sex sales, security issues and money, correlates with the information and impressions that PION has gained through their work over the years. These conversations are important for many sex workers since there is little information on how to sell sexual services in the safest possible way. The public discussion about sex work and the sex work industry is often centered around how to get out of sex work, and hardly ever on how sex workers can look after themselves and others while they are working in the sex industry. The result is that sex workers must essentially learn survival strategies on their own or in dialogue with others in the same situation.

This is also confirmed in this survey. When respondents were asked to what extent «Contact with others who sell sex makes me safer in my job,» the vast majority replied that they «completely agree» (27) or «slightly agree» (9) with the statement. Only two respondents «completely disagreed», and no one responded with «slightly disagree». Three respondents «neither agree or disagree» with the claim. There were no major differences between Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents.

Respondents' assessment of the claim «Contact with others who sell sex makes me safer in my job.»



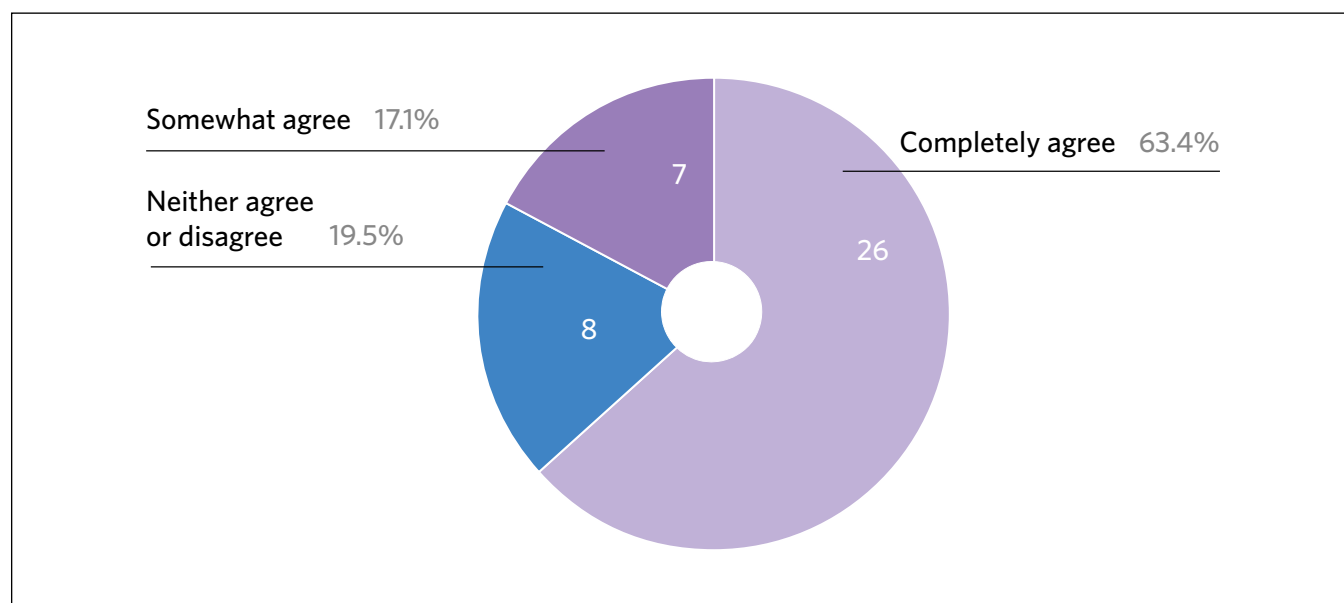
When asked who the respondents felt it was most natural to contact if they experienced an unpleasant or violent situation in connection with selling sexual services, «a friend or partner who also sells sex» was by far the most chosen option. Among respondents in the Norwegian-language survey, 18 people chose this option. In comparison, there were nine respondents to the second most popular choice, «a friend or partner who does not sell sex.»

Contacting another sex worker was also the most popular choice for respondents in the foreign-language surveys (10), with the police as the second most frequently chosen option (7).

Security and safety issues were not the only reasons that respondents seem to consider their social networks as significant. When asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement «I find it easier to talk about unpleasant experiences with others who have sold sex than with employees in various healthcare services,» none of the respondents in any of the surveys answered, «slightly disagree» or «completely disagree».

Twenty-six of the respondents said they «completely agree» and seven respondents «slightly agree». Another eight respondents stated, «neither agree nor disagree».

Respondents' assessment of the claim «I find it easier to talk about unpleasant experiences with others who have sold sex than with employees in various healthcare services.»



This is also reflected in a similar question where respondents had to answer to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statement «There are some things I can only tell others who sell sex.» The vast majority of respondents «completely agree» (27) or «slightly agree» (6). No respondents disagreed, and eight respondents stated that they «neither agree nor disagree». One person also wrote the following in a free text field:

«With the exception of some customers who've tried to take off a condom without me knowing, I don't have any bad experiences to report. 99% of all my bad experiences have been from people who claimed they loved and knew me. And they hurt me so many times that I've honestly lost count. As a result, the only people I now feel safe with, and talk to, are sex workers.»

There was little difference between the Norwegian- and foreign-language respondents with regards to both questions, which suggests that contact with other sex workers is important regardless of other group affiliations.

Conclusion

The findings from this survey support the results from previous surveys which shows that people who sell sex in Norway are a vulnerable group in terms of violence, harassment, and sexual assault. We found that respondents reported a high degree of violence and abuse from customers, and that this was also the case among respondents from groups that have not received much attention in previous research, such as men, Norwegian women who sell sex via the internet and transgender people.

We also found that trust in the police among respondents was low and that more people had avoided contacting the authorities in the aftermath of an abusive or criminal incident even if they needed help. A new finding in our survey is that trust in the police was significantly lower among Norwegian-language respondents, even though it was, overall, low in all groups. This issue is worth looking into for future research projects or mapping studies.

The findings of the survey show that many people who sell via the internet are exposed to a lot of stigmas and that this is something that significantly affects respondents' lives. Several reported that they had experienced stigmatizing attitudes from healthcare professionals or were afraid of this, and a significant proportion reported violence and harassment directly related to selling sexual services from individuals who were not customers.

Another finding, which we interpret as positive, is that the majority of respondents stated that they have good access to healthcare, and that they have high confidence in employees in the healthcare and support services who specifically work with people who sell sexual services. In our survey, this was the case for both Norwegian-language and foreign-language respondents.

The results of this study correlate to the experiences and impressions that the healthcare and support services and PION have previously conveyed, such as sex workers themselves find it important to have contact with other sex workers. Most respondents in the survey knew others who sold sex and stated that contact with other sex workers was important, both because it contributes to increased security and because it is a form of social support.

PION's recommendations for the way forward

Changes to the legislation

PION understands and supports the police's efforts to prevent the exploitation of vulnerable groups, but current legislation and enforcement practices contribute to more, rather than fewer problems for people who sell sexual services. The ban on renting and organizing sex sales prevents sex workers from being able to organize in safer ways by working together or from hotels or rented apartments. Our survey shows that people who sell sex have a clear preference for working in ways that are currently criminalized under the pimp clause. Furthermore, the survey shows that people who sell sexual services are vulnerable to both violence and exploitation, at the same time they have little to no trust in the police which can further exacerbate their situation. We believe that a change in the criminalization of co-operation and renting housing to people who sell sex is a prerequisite both for creating a safe environment for sex workers and to rebuild trust in the police.

Strengthening public healthcare services

Respondents in our survey report that they have high confidence in employees working in the healthcare and support service providers for sex workers, while confidence in the public healthcare system in general is relatively low. Several respondents also report that they have been met with stigmatizing attitudes from healthcare professionals because they sell sexual services. The healthcare and support services specifically for sex workers offers an important alternative to the public healthcare and social services, and they contribute to important competence raising and mapping of a group that is otherwise difficult to reach. Moreover, these support service providers are often also seen as much-needed meeting places and social arenas for people with experiences related to sex work.

In addition to strengthening the current alternatives that already exist today, such as Pro Sentret, Nadheim and Albertine, we would highly recommend looking at the needs for similar well-funded alternatives outside the major cities. Currently these alternative service providers exist in Oslo, Bergen, and Stavanger, however outside these major cities there are no low-threshold healthcare and social services that specifically work with or for sex workers, and they are therefore poorly adapted and wholeheartedly unsuitable for this vulnerable group.

Work against stigma

The stigma associated with the sale of sex is repeated in every part of our survey. Experiences with, and fear of, stigma are one of the major reasons why people who sell sex do not report incidents of violence to the police, and do not seek out healthcare services. Stigma is linked to the danger of outing, social exclusion, violence, and discrimination. A significant proportion of respondents reported that they have been

subjected to harassment and violence not only from customers, but from strangers, friends, partners, and family members because they sell sex. Stigma is also a common topic of conversation among sex workers, indicating that it is something that affects many.

We believe that there is a need for a more encompassing behavioral and attitude change aimed at institutions that come into contact with people who sell sex, but that do not work specifically with this group. If healthcare professionals are given better and more education and training on how to deal with physical and mental health problems in people who sell or have sold sex, it could contribute to a decrease in stigma, an increase in trust, and consequently an improvement of the healthcare and safety of sex workers. The same can be said for the Norwegian law enforcement, a large proportion of sex workers currently have little trust in the police. For the best possible outcome both the health and support service providers working specifically with sex workers and interest organizations for sex workers should play a central role in the training, awareness raising and education, and more funding should be invested for this purpose.

Furthermore, we want a re-evaluation of the criminalization of the purchase of sex, with a particular focus on stigma and violence against the sellers. One of the law's foremost purposes was to create a change of attitude towards the commercial sale of sex. We see clear indications that the law criminalizing the purchase of sexual services leads to more stigma, to some extent towards those who buy sex, but to a much larger extent against those who sell. Looking into the impact of the criminalization on purchases is important also for the sex workers' trust in the police. Fear of surveillance by the police is the main reason why people who sell sex do not report violence or other criminal acts carried out against them.

Introduction of Ugly Mugs in Norway

National Ugly Mugs (NUM) is an internal reporting system in the UK used by people selling sex to share information about dangerous customers or other individuals who may pose a threat to their well-being. In the UK in 2012, local Ugly Mugs schemes were merged into a national scheme in a pilot project, with the aim of improving the safety of people selling sex and lowering the threshold for reporting criminal incidents.

In 2016, the project was expanded. The information collected is passed on to the police if the sex worker agrees to this. In 2016, the system had over 15,000 subscribers. The system works so that incidents are reported by the people selling sexual services, and then being distributed anonymously to other sex workers via messages on their smartphone. Num's Impact Report 2016/2017 showed that 90 per cent of users felt it was easier to report violence and other crimes to the police with the support of the organization, and 96 per cent said they felt safer with the NUM.

The findings of our study show that internet-based sex workers are highly susceptible to violence and unpleasant incidents, and that they have little confidence in law enforcement. At the same time, sex workers report that they feel safer from having contact with others who sell sex, and topics related to safety were the most popular topics of conversation between sex workers. We believe that this gives good reason to introduce a project similar to NUM, and the creators of NUM have also offered to contribute their knowledge and expertise on the subject if a similar project is implemented in Norway.

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