



EU Migrant Sex Work in the UK Post-Referendum

Dr Laura Connelly and The English Collective of Prostitutes

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Collaborative partners

English Collective of Prostitutes:

The English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) is a network of sex workers working both on the streets and indoors, campaigning for the decriminalisation of prostitution and for sex workers' rights and safety. You can find out more about ECP's important work and/or donate at: prostitutescollective.net



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Artwork

The artwork featured in this report is by India Joseph, a Freelance Illustrator based in Manchester. Her work can be found at: moonandmothstudio.com



Enquires and future research

Please direct any queries you have about this research, or possible future collaborations, to Dr Laura Connelly - L.J.Connelly@salford.ac.uk. You can also send requests for hard copies of the report, research summaries in English or Romanian, and other related resources to the same email address.

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Introduction and key findings

Over recent decades, UK governments have implemented increasingly repressive immigration controls. Stricter conditions of entry have been accompanied by an expanding immigration detention estate, the increased use of criminal penalties for so-called immigration 'offences', and an increasingly hostile environment for people who have migrated to the UK. The UK can be particularly hostile for migrant sex workers, with the quasi-criminalised and stigmatised nature of the sex industry compounding the negative effects of their 'migrant' status. The effects of this may be felt greatest by racially minoritised, transgender, and non-binary migrant sex workers.

The migrant sex worker population in the UK has increased in recent decades, with a particular concentration in London. The English Collective of Prostitutes estimates that 41% of sex workers in the UK are non-British nationals. The majority of migrant sex workers working in the UK are from Eastern Europe.

For some migrant sex workers, the EU Referendum and the UK's exit from the EU has negatively impacted their lives. The English Collective of Prostitutes has, for example, observed an increase in the arrest and deportation of EU migrant sex workers. Despite legal rulings that migrant sex workers can claim self-employed status which allows them to remain in the UK, no legal precedent has been established. Since sex work is not widely recognised as 'legitimate' work in the UK, EU migrant sex workers may find it difficult to compile the documentation, including a record of waged labour, that is needed to apply for Settled Status in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme.

While sex work can offer a viable and flexible labour option for migrant sex workers looking to make a living in the UK, precarious or unclear immigration status and the quasi-criminalisation of sex work can be manipulated by managers and clients. There is ample evidence that (migrant) sex workers are reluctant to report any victimisation that they experience to the police for fear of arrest. This, in turn, enables violent clients to hold the balance of power over (migrant) sex workers, and act with impunity.

The commonplace conflation of sex work and human trafficking/modern slavery also means that migrant sex workers are frequently targeted by anti-trafficking measures. Police raids and 'rescue missions' undermine migrant sex workers' safety and ability to earn an income, and can result in their detention and deportation. In this respect, it is clear to see that the modern slavery agenda serves as a guise through which the state pursues its anti-immigration agenda. It is within these contexts that we present the findings of our research.

The research project

This research project set out to explore: 1) what impact, if any, the EU Referendum result had on EU migrant sex workers' experiences in the UK; and 2) what strategies EU migrant sex workers have adopted to navigate sex work post-Referendum.

The data presented in this report were generated via a survey, co-designed by Laura Connelly and Fez Endalaust, with input from the English Collective of Prostitutes. The project received ethical approval from the University of Salford. The survey was made available in two languages, English and Romanian, and was available for completion for a six-month period from April 2019 to October 2019. A link to the online survey was initially shared via social media but paper copies of the survey were subsequently requested by several sex worker support projects to distribute to their service users. The ECP and other sex worker-led or sex worker support projects assisted some respondents to complete the survey, particularly when English was not their first language.

In total, 41 sex workers completed the survey: 34 in English and 7 in Romanian. All Romanian language surveys were subsequently translated into English before data analysis. Data were analysed with the aid of SPSS computer software. The relatively low completion rate – common in research of this nature – is indicative of EU migrant sex workers' reluctance to speak out about their sex work in the current socio-political climate. Whilst not statistically representative, this small-scale research – the first of its kind to explore this issue – gives us an important insight into EU migrant sex workers' experiences post-Referendum and points to key things that sex workers and their allies can organise around in pursuit of better rights for migrant sex workers in the UK context.

Whilst the data presented in this report pertain to EU migrant sex workers' experiences specifically, it must be noted that non-EU migrants share many of these experiences. Indeed, the conditions that both constituted, and were constituted by, the Referendum result are likely felt even more acutely by non-EU migrants (and especially, racially minoritised sex workers) because of their experiences of intersecting inequalities and potentially more precarious immigration status.

Key findings

- 78% of EU migrant sex workers reported that their ability to earn income through sex work has decreased since the Referendum.
- 68% of respondents noted at least one way in which they have changed their working practices post-Referendum. Key changes include: where they work (39%), the hours they work (24%), and the 'type' of client accepted (24%). On the latter point, some reported having to accept clients that they would have previously rejected on safety grounds.
- EU migrant sex workers also reported having to make changes to their working practices due to a perceived increased risk of deportation. Some reported having been raided and arrested, whilst others have been threatened with closure orders. This is particularly concerning post-Referendum because even those granted Settled Status under the EU Settlement Scheme can be deported if they are convicted of committing a criminal offence.
- The majority of respondents (63%) perceive that clients' attitudes towards migrant sex workers have worsened since the Referendum.
- The majority of respondents (63%) also perceive that the general public's attitudes towards migrant sex workers have worsened post-Referendum.
- 68% of respondents are worried about the levels of violence they experience as EU migrant sex workers.
- 68% of respondents said that their concerns about experiencing violence have increased since the Referendum.
- Reflecting on actual levels of violence against migrant sex workers post-Referendum, 44% of respondents noted an increase.
- Three-quarters of respondents (76%) reported having experienced hate crime post-Referendum. We included sex worker hate crime in the list, alongside other widely accepted types of hate crime. The most commonly reported type of hate crime was sex worker hate crime (reported by 61% of respondents), followed by hate crime on the basis of nationality (51%) and gender (17%).
- Over half of respondents (57%) noted that the levels of hate crime that they experience have risen since the Referendum.
- Some respondents reported experiencing more xenophobia since the Referendum, including physical and verbal attacks. One sex worker had eggs and tomatoes thrown at them.
- Respondents have also developed strategies to navigate negative experiences post-Referendum. Some conceal the truth about their nationality to avoid xenophobia, others have increasingly adopted safety strategies such as 'buddying' or working with a third-party (e.g. maid); although, this has legal implication given that existing sex work laws prevent sex workers working together or with a third-party for safety.
- Respondents reported increased stress post-Referendum (59%). A key source of stress was the increased risk of detention and deportation. There is a commonly held perception amongst EU migrant sex workers that because they are sex workers they have no right to reside in the UK. Whilst technically sex workers can claim self-employed status, there is no legal precedent for this. This means each sex worker must fight immigration rulings on an individual basis. Depending on how migrant sex workers have sold sex, they may not have the documentation required to prove continual residence in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme.
- A significant number of respondents (54%) believe that their risk of arrest has increased since the Referendum.
- 66% of respondents perceive their risk of deportation to have increased post-Referendum.
- 44% of respondents described their relationship with the police as either 'poor' (20%) or 'very poor' (24%). Respondents noted that do not report victimisation to the police for fear of arrest, detention and deportation.
- The vast majority of respondents (85%) would like to see changes made to sex work laws in the UK. All

of these respondents either explicitly or implicitly advocated for the decriminalisation of sex work. None of the respondents were in favour of the so-called Swedish Model (the criminalisation of clients).

Recommendations

Based on these findings, we make a number of evidence-based recommendations:

1. **Decriminalise sex work.** This will improve the rights and safety of all sex workers, including migrant sex workers.
2. **Grant automatic Settled Status to all EU citizens in the UK.** This will help to redress the significant challenges EU migrant sex workers encounter in applying to the EU Settlement Scheme.
3. **Expunge historical convictions for all sex workers.** This will help to ensure that migrant sex workers are not deported as a result of having criminal convictions for sex work.
4. **Improve financial assistance for migrants in the UK.** This will help to ensure that migrant sex workers are not compelled to accept dangerous clients in order to earn enough income to live off.
5. **End the hostile environment.** This will help tackle the range of state-imposed difficulties faced by people who migrate to the UK.

A separate two-page research summary is available (in both English and Romanian) on the English Collective of Prostitutes' website. Hard copies are available upon request.

Section 1: About the survey respondents

This section briefly describes the socio-demographics of the 41 migrant sex workers who responded to the online survey. It also describes survey respondents' sex working practices in order to contextualise the rest of the report.

Gender

The majority of the 41 survey respondents self-identified as female (n = 32; 78%). Only three respondents self-identified as male; four respondents self-identified as non-binary; and one as trans-female/feminine. One other respondent preferred not to disclose their gender. Most survey respondents identified with the gender that they were assigned at birth (n = 36; 88%), although four did not and one person preferred not to say.

Age

The most common age category of survey respondents was 25-34 year olds (n = 21; 51%), followed by 18-24 year olds (n = 10; 24%). Four respondents fell within the 35-44 year old category (n = 4; 10%) and a further six in the 45-55 year old age bracket (n = 6; 15%). The youngest survey respondent was 18 years-old and the oldest was 50 years-old. The mean average age of respondents was 30.5 years-old.

Ethnicity

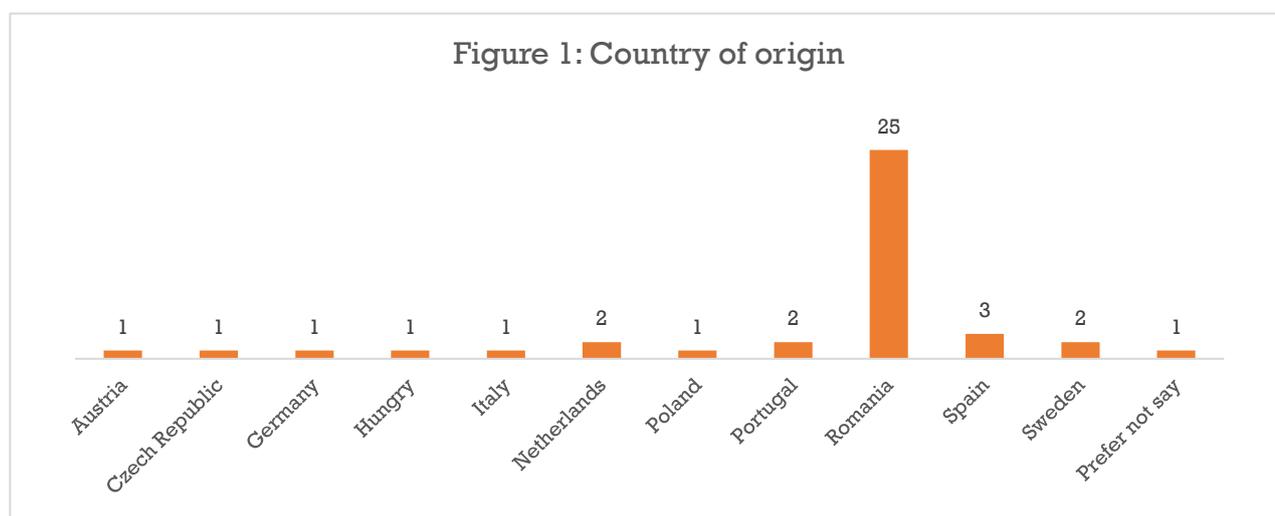
All but four respondents self-identified as being from a White ethnic group. One respondent identified as Mixed Other; two respondents select the Other ethnic group option – that is, an ethnic grouping not listed on the survey – and one respondent preferred not to say.

Parental status

Most respondents said that they did not have any children (n = 25; 61%); although, a significant minority did (n = 15; 36%). Six respondents noted that they have one child; five respondents have two children; one had three children; and three respondents had more than three children. One respondent chose not to say.

Country of origin

Respondents were asked to select their country of origin from a list of all EU countries (excluding the UK). At the time the survey was live, there were 28 EU member states. As Figure 1 shows, by far the most common response was Romania, with 25 out of 41 respondents (61%) selecting this as their country of origin (including the 7 respondents who completed the Romanian language version of the survey). Three survey respondents were from Spain; two were from Sweden, Portugal and the Netherlands; and one respondent each from Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and Poland. One respondent chose not to provide a response.



Length of time in UK

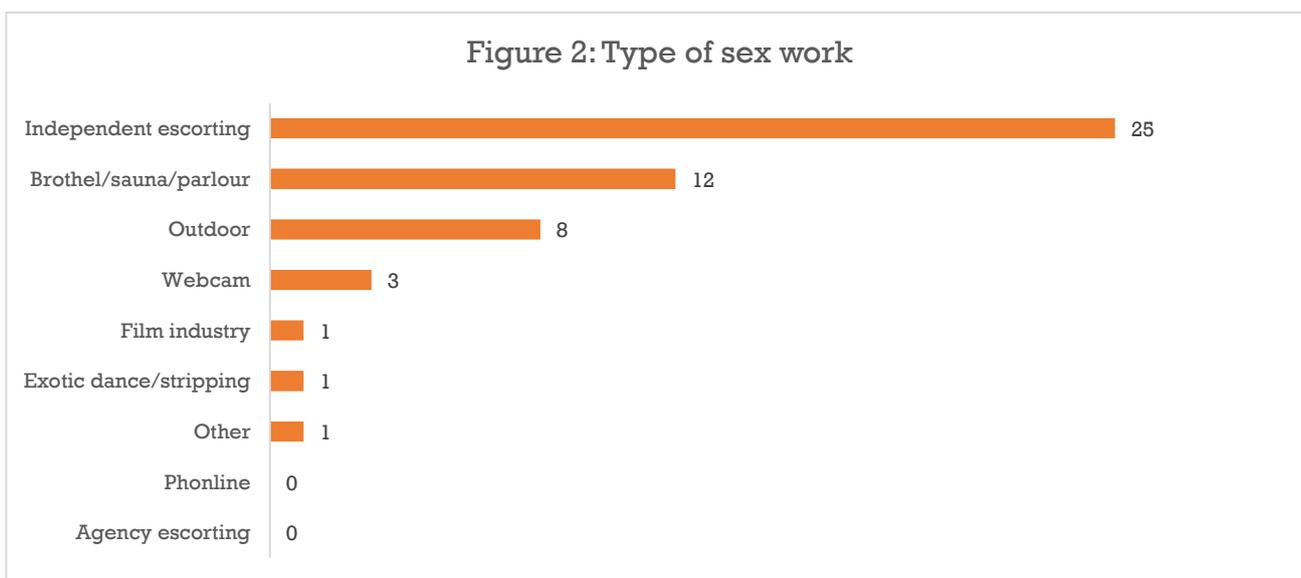
Just under a half of respondents (n = 19; 46%) had lived in the UK for 1-4 years. Thirteen respondents had lived in the UK for 5-11 years (32%) and eight for less than one year (20%). No respondents had lived in the UK for 12-14 years, but one respondent had lived in the UK for more than 14 years.

Length of time sex working

Respondents were asked how long they have been sex working, including any breaks. The majority of respondents had been sex working for 1-5 years (n = 26; 63%). Four respondents had been sex working for less than a year (n = 4; 10%); and nine had been sex working from 6-10 years (n = 9; 22%). Two respondents said that they had been sex working for more than 16 years.

Type of sex work

Respondents noted that they sell sex in a range of ways. Respondents could select from a predetermined list the types of sex work that they were engaged in at the time of completing the survey. They could select more than one option. As Figure 2 shows, the most common type of sex work for the respondents of this survey was independent escorting (n = 25; 61%), followed by working in a brothel, sauna or parlour (n = 12; 29%). Eight respondents sex work outdoors (n = 8; 20%), whilst three respondents engage in webcamming, one works in the film industry, and one works in exotic dance/stripping (non-contact). One respondent noted that they engage in another type of sex work, which they listed as tantra massage.



Income

Using two Likert scales, respondents were first asked how confident they are in their ability to earn an income through sex work (see Figure 3) and second, how their confidence in their ability to earn an income through sex work has changed since the EU Referendum (see Figure 4). In each, respondents' levels of confidence varied.

As Figure 3 shows, almost a quarter of respondents (n = 10; 24%) were 'very confident' in their ability to earn an income through sex work, and 32% of respondents (n = 13) were 'somewhat confident.' However, 20% of respondents (n = 8) were 'somewhat unconfident' and 17% (n = 7) were 'very unconfident' in their ability to earn an income through sex work. Three were 'neither confident nor unconfident.'

Reflecting on confidence levels post-Referendum (Figure 4), one respondent noted that they understand their ability to earn an income through sex work to have 'increased a lot' since the Referendum (n = 1; 2%), and eight respondents (n = 8; 20%) didn't think it had changed. The majority of respondent believed that their ability to earn an income through sex work had decreased since the Referendum: 20 respondents (49%) thought it has 'decreased a little' and 12 respondents (29%) thought it has 'decreased a lot.'

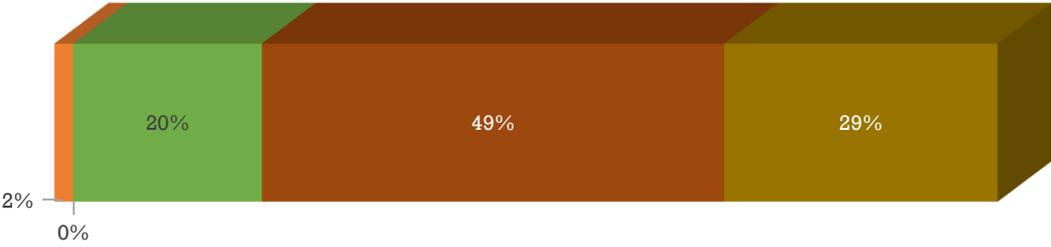
Figure 3: Confidence in income

- Very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Neither confident nor unconfident
- Somewhat unconfident
- Very unconfident



Figure 4: Confidence in income post-Referendum

- Increased a lot
- Increased a little
- Hasn't changed
- Decreased a little
- Decreased a lot



Section 2: The effects of the Referendum on sex working practices

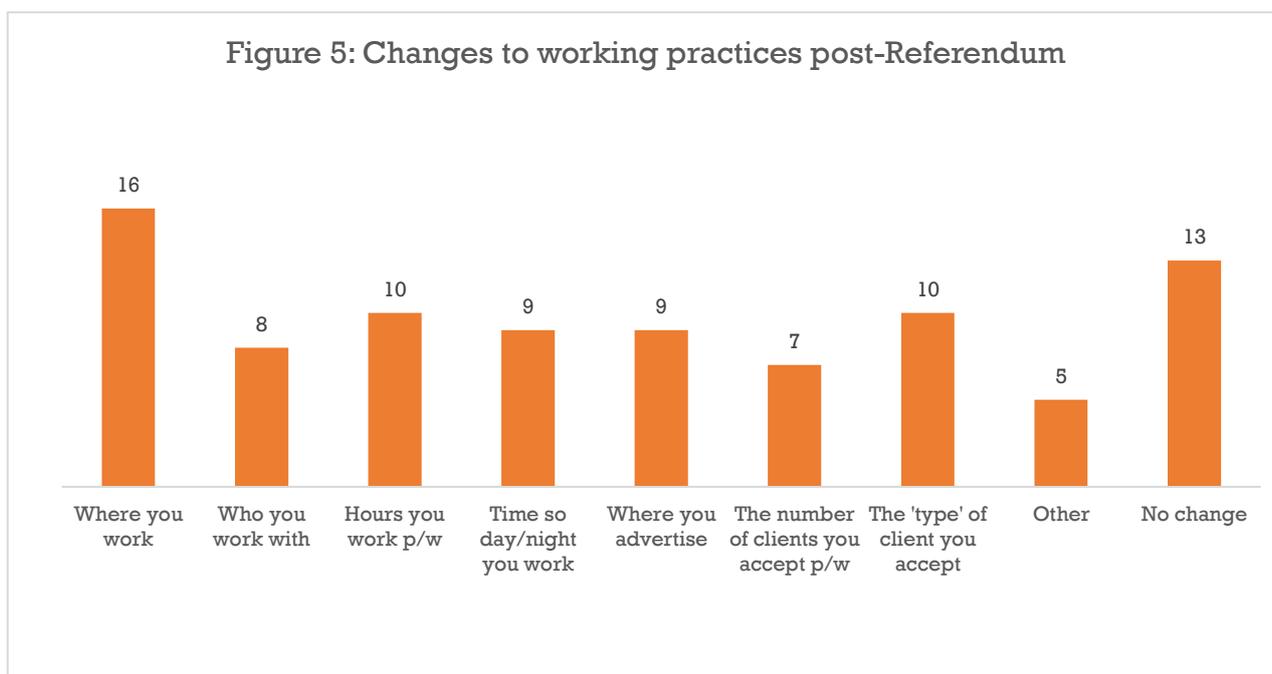
Section 2 outlines some of the key changes that EU migrant sex workers have made to their working practices since the Referendum. In particular, the Referendum result has compelled migrant sex workers to make changes to their workplaces, their working hours, and the clients they accept. Additional changes have been made to working practices as a result of increased fear of arrest and deportation post-Referendum.

Changes to working practices post-Referendum

Respondents were asked to select from a pre-determined list the ways in which they have changed their working practices in order to boost their income following the EU Referendum. Respondents could select more than one option. Although 13 respondents (32%) said that they had made no changes since the Referendum, 28 respondents (68%) noted at least one way in which they had changed their working practices.

As Figure 5 depicts, the most common change was 'where you work' (n = 16; 39%), followed by 'hours you work' (n = 10; 24%) and 'the type of client you accept' (n = 10; 24%). Five respondents noted that they had changed practices in 'other' ways: two had reduced their prices; one was trying to find ways of formally recording their contribution to UK society (to include on their application for Settled Status), for example, by applying to study English, Maths and IT; one had changed their renting practices to short contracts; and one did not provide an example.

Of the 28 respondents who noted that they had changed their working practice post-Referendum, 20 respondents had changed their working practices in more than one way. In fact, seven respondents had changed their working practice in more than five of the ways that we listed.



We invited the 28 respondents who said that they had made changes to their working practices post-Referendum to explain those changes by way of an open-text response. 26 respondents chose to provide a written explanation, many of which build on the responses documented in Figure 5.

Changes to workplaces

Some respondents noted that they have changed where and how they work post-Referendum (n = 8). One sex worker noted that they have started working in a brothel alongside their independent sex work in order to supplement their income. Another sex worker now 'tours' more – that is, travels to various locations across the UK for particular periods of time – and has rented a place for 'in calls' because 'out calls' are no longer

enough. Conversely, another respondent has moved away from 'out calls' to only doing 'in calls' to maximise income:

"I have also went from working only in hotels to working in my own home, as I haven't been able to afford hotels and I need to be available more often so that I can catch the few clients that are around now."

Two respondents noted that they have changed to short rental leases due to the uncertainty both over their immigration status and their ability to earn enough income in the UK, whilst one respondent noted that they have been forced to move premises because of the violence they have experienced since the Referendum. Two other respondents work in other countries to supplement their income because working in the UK no longer provides enough to live off. The obligation to move between the EU and the UK in order to earn enough income may be very problematic in a context where – as explored later in this report – concern over immigration status and restrictions on movement cause migrant sex workers significant stress and, in some cases, can lead to arrest, detention and deportation.

Changes to hours worked

One of the key themes to emerge from the qualitative comments was that migrant sex workers have had to make changes to their working hours since the Referendum result. One respondent noted that they now only work during the day, framing it as a mechanism through which to improve their safety, whilst another respondent noted that they are having to work more nightshifts: "Working more nights, which sucks, as business is slow." Several respondents (n = 4) noted that they work longer hours post-Referendum in order to maintain their existing income.

Changes in clients

Respondents also reflected on how they have made changes to the 'types' of clients that they accept, particularly around the nationality of clients. For example, four migrant sex workers said that they no longer accept non-British clients. This was epitomised by one respondent, who noted that they: "Don't take foreigners. Only UK clients." Another explained that as a Romanian sex worker, they no longer accept Romanian clients due to a perception that they will call them a "curva", meaning bitch or slut in Romanian.

Conversely, two respondents said that they now only accept migrant clients because UK clients can be verbally abusive: "I work only with migrants because they can't call us names." This points to a trend noted elsewhere in academic literature around an increase in xeno-racism post-Referendum. Whether it is accepting only British or only non-British clients, it is clear that some migrant sex workers are having to make tough decisions about which clients to accept post-Referendum in order to protect themselves; decisions that limit their client base and thus, income.

Some respondents were less able to decline clients and instead noted that they are compelled to accept risks to safety in order to earn enough income. Indeed, three respondents said that they have had to take on more clients and/or clients that they would not previously have accepted. This was epitomised by one respondent, who said:

"I have had to say yes to more clients, including clients that I have previously rejected and who are requesting services I'm not comfortable with... I accept far more clients than I used to as my regulars have all gone. I offer more services that I didn't used to, and I decreased my rates."

As noted in the above quote, some respondents (n = 5) said that they have had to reduce their rates since the Referendum in order to attract clients. One respondent explained that there has been a reduction in the number of clients willing to pay the rates that they have historically charged and that this has forced them to reduce their rates. Two others said that they have to work without protection (a condom) in order to attract clients: "I offer services without condoms as otherwise I lose the clients."

It is clear that although there is significant heterogeneity in EU migrant sex workers' working practices post-Referendum, the majority have had to make changes, and some have been compelled to compromise their safety in order to make a living. This is particularly concerning given that – as we will show later in the report – it empowers dangerous clients and, given that many migrant sex workers do not feel comfortable reporting victimisation to the police, enables perpetrators to act with impunity.

Changes made as a result of the threat of arrest and deportation

Three respondents reflected on how (threats of) arrest and deportation post-Referendum had forced some changes to their working practices. One explained that they had had to move to another premises because of the threat of a closure order – a power that allows for the closure of premises to prevent or deal with so-called public nuisance and disorder:

“Me and my friend working from a flat. We were threatened with a closure order. The police came round twice. The second time they bought a piece of paper which said we were running a brothel and any female found in the premises in the future is very likely to be arrested. So, we moved and set us somewhere else.”

Another explained that they have constantly had to move premises to avoid arrest and have begun working a non-sex work job in order to evidence a history of ‘legitimate labour’ when applying to the Home Office for Settled Status. Reflecting on arrest and deportation, a third respondent noted:

“I was raided after the Referendum to leave or remain in the EU was announced. I was arrested for brothel keeping even though I was the sex worker and then the case was dropped against me but they then gave me a letter saying I wasn't allowed to stay in the UK because I wasn't exercising treaty rights. I had to be working, self-employed or be a student or employed. So then I stopped working in that place and started working somewhere else and online by myself. I have been working much less and I am relying on my boyfriend to help me with money.”

This respondent's experiences reflect those noted elsewhere by ECP that migrant sex workers have been subjected to increased levels of policing post-Referendum, and have faced questioning around their immigration status despite complying with their treaty rights – that is, rights that allowed EU nationals to enter, live and work in any of the member states of the EU. Now that the UK has left the EU, EU migrant sex workers must apply for Settled Status (or Pre-Settled Status). It is particularly concerning that migrant sex workers are reporting an increase in levels of policing post-Referendum since even those granted (Pre-)Settled Status can be deported if they are convicted of committing a criminal offence, and many elements of the sex industry are criminalised.



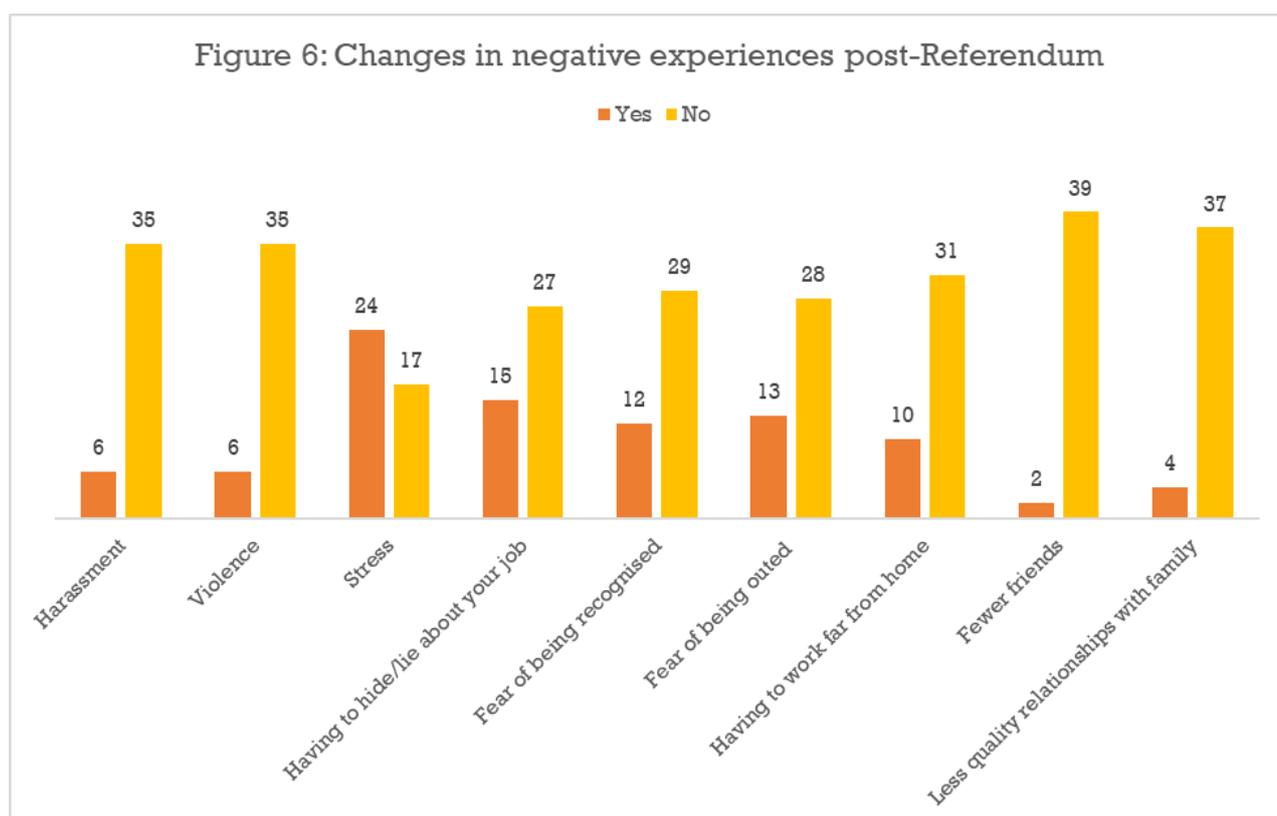
Section 3: Negative experiences of, and attitudes towards, migrant sex work post-Referendum

Section 3 explores the extent to which negative experiences have increased amongst migrant sex workers since the Referendum, and the related issue of worsening attitudes towards migrant sex workers. It also touches upon the strategies migrant sex workers adopt to navigate negative experiences post-Referendum.

Negative experiences post-Referendum

Respondents were also asked to select from a pre-determined list any negative experiences related to their sex working that they had increasingly experienced since the EU Referendum result. The list of negative experiences was compiled from existing literature on (migrant) sex work.

As Figure 6 shows, more respondents said that they had not experienced an increase in negative experiences post-Referendum than said that they had, in all but one category. Thus, for example, most respondents said that they had not experienced an increase in harassment (n = 35; 85%); violence (n = 35; 85%); having fewer friends (n = 39; 95%); or less quality relationships with family (n = 37; 90%). The only exception was that more respondents noted that they had experienced increased stress since the Referendum (n = 24; 59%) than those who said they hadn't (n = 17; 41%).



It should be noted, however, that only two respondents (5%) hadn't experienced an increase in any of the negative experiences outlined on the survey. Indeed, two respondents (5%) indicated that they had experienced an increase in five of the above categories; four respondents (10%) experienced an increase in four of the categories; nine respondents (22%) in three categories; twelve respondents (29%) in two categories; and eleven respondents (27%) noted that they had experienced an increase in one of the negative experiences outlined on the survey.

Respondents were invited to provide an open-text response to explain what had happened if they had experienced an increase in any of the above negative experiences post-Referendum. Twenty-eight respondents (68%) chose to provide an open-text response.

Reflective of how a range of negative experiences coalesce for some migrant sex workers, one respondent noted that they'd experienced an:

“Increase in anonymous harassing emails from clients/client forum members, I have been assaulted more since then, I have a fear not of being recognised by those that know me but of clients recognising me in my personal life and then linking that identity to my work one. My stress has went up a lot due to the unknown migration situation.”

It is clear therefore that for some sex workers, the Referendum outcome has resulted in a range of negative effects that compound the challenges of sex working in a stigmatised and quasi-criminalised sex industry.

Sources of increased stress

It was clear from these responses that there are multiple sources of increased stress post-Referendum. Nine respondents (n = 9; 22%) explicitly reflected on a theme that emerged consistently from the survey – that is, that the perceived increased risk of deportation since the Referendum was a key source of stress. This was epitomised by one respondent who noted: “I always fear that because I am a sex worker and therefore no right to reside in the UK I am going to be deported.” Several respondents also explained that their fear of deportation has compelled them to withhold the truth on residence applications. For example, one respondent said:

“I've had to lie to the home office in order to get leave to remain (I couldn't risk telling them I'm a sex worker in my application, so I've had to invent a different self-employed job) and being outed in any way could mean this comes out. I don't know if that means I could be deported, but I don't want to risk it.”

As is made clear by this respondent, some sex workers' fears about being outed to their friends and family are compounded by fears that the Home Office will not consider sex work a form of employment under the EU Settlement Scheme. Indeed, to apply for Settled Status under the Scheme one is required to prove continual residence in the UK for five years, usually using one's National Insurance Number. Those who have not lived in the UK for five years can apply for Pre-Settled Status. Whilst sex workers can technically claim self-employed status under the Scheme either using a National Insurance Number or other documentation as proof of residence, this can be challenging in practice. No legal precedent has been established for sex workers to be regarded as self-employed workers, which means that each sex worker must fight their legal ruling around immigration on an individual basis. Depending upon how sex workers have sold sex, they may, or may not, have documentation (such as tax return) to prove residence, and criminal convictions for sex work offences also serve as a barrier to Settled Status.

Increased experiences of xenophobia

Other respondents used the open-text response box to reflect on the increasing xenophobia and/or racism they have experienced since the Referendum. One sex worker noted that they have had eggs and tomatoes thrown at them, and another was verbally abused by a client, leading them to only accept non-British clients (a point noted on page 8). Several sex workers described how they believe clients are increasingly buying sex only from British sex workers which, in turn, compels migrant sex workers to lower their rates or offer services that they are not comfortable with in order to attract clients.

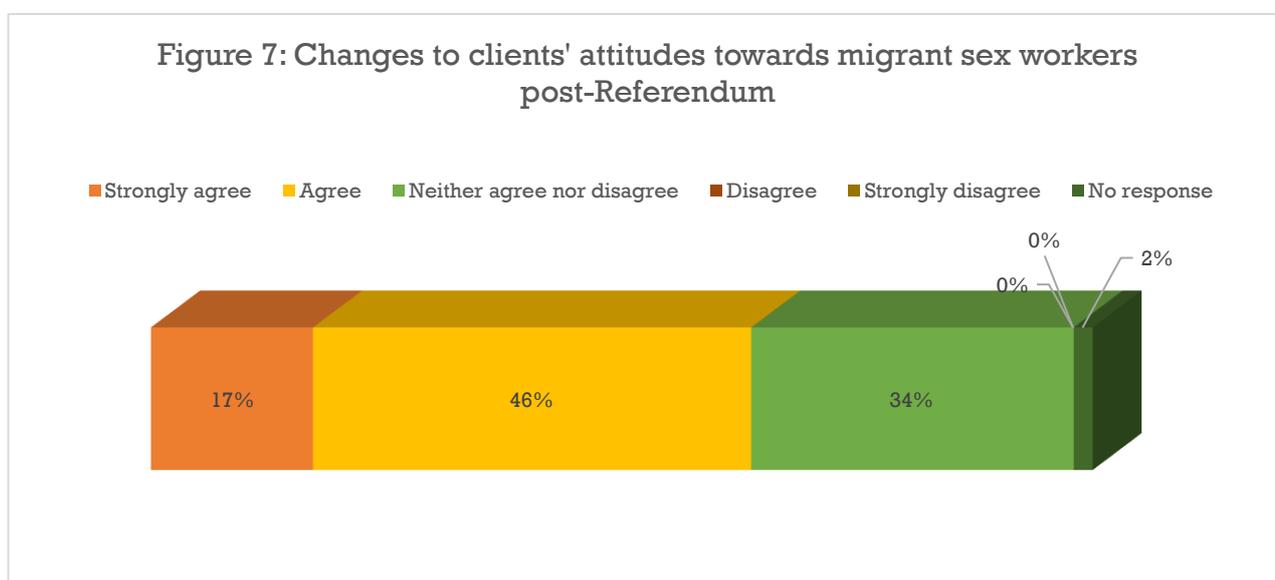
A similar sentiment was expressed by another respondent, who noted that there is pressure for migrant sex workers to adjust their prices: “I've had some xenophobic messages from my ads saying I should lower my rates to the “standard non-British” rates in my areas.” There was a perception shared by a couple of respondents not only that some clients see migrant sex workers as being situated below British sex workers on the 'status hierarchy', but that this problematic construction has been worsened by the Referendum outcome.

Attitudes towards migrant sex workers post-Referendum

In order to explore how sex workers perceive that attitudes towards them have changed post-Referendum, respondents were asked to reflect on the extent to which they agree with a series of statements.

Respondents were first asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with the statement: Clients disapprove of and look down on migrant sex workers more than British sex workers. Most respondents indicated that they either 'strongly agree' (n = 19; 46%) or 'agree' (n = 12; 29%). Seven respondents (17%) 'neither agree nor disagree', whilst one respondent 'disagrees' and one other 'strongly disagrees'. One further respondent chose not to provide a response.

Next, we asked respondents to reflect on the extent to which they agree with the statement: Clients' attitudes towards migrant sex workers have worsened post-Referendum. As Figure 7 shows, no respondents said that they 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement; although one respondent (2%) chose not to provide a response. The majority of respondents believe that clients' attitudes towards migrant sex workers have worsened since the EU Referendum: 46% (n = 19) 'agree' and 17% (n = 7) 'strongly agreed'. A significant proportion (n = 14; 34%) 'neither agree nor disagree'.

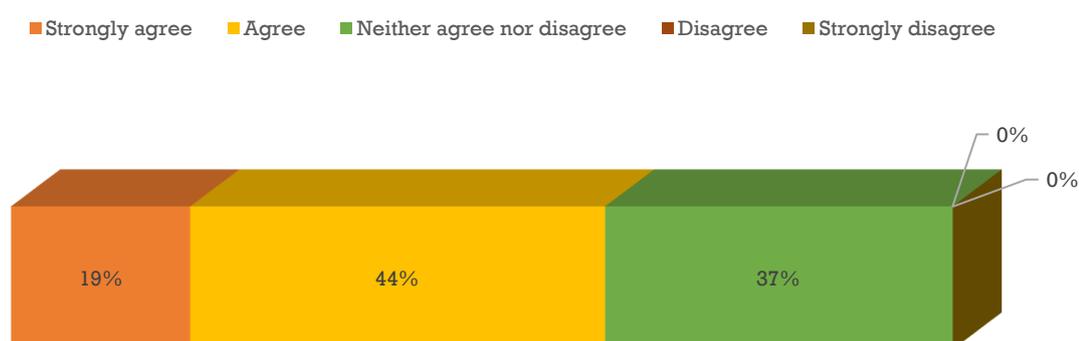


We were also keen to explore how migrant sex workers believe that they are perceived by the wider public. In this respect, we first asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agree with the following statement: The general public disapproves of and looks down on sex workers. The vast majority of survey respondents 'strongly agree' with the statement (n = 30; 73%). A further seven (17%) 'agree' with that statement, whilst three (7%) 'neither agree nor disagree'. No respondents 'disagree' with the statement but one respondent (2%) 'strongly disagrees' with it.

Respondents were then asked about the extent to which they agreed with the statement: The general public disapproves of and looks down on EU migrant sex workers more than British sex workers. Once again, most respondents either 'strongly agree' (n = 18; 44%) or 'agree' (n = 13; 32%) with the statement. 15% (n = 6) 'neither agree nor disagree', whilst only one respondent (2%) 'disagrees' and one other (2%) 'strongly disagrees.' Two respondents chose not to provide a response.

Next, we also asked respondents to reflect on the following statement: The general public's attitudes towards migrant sex workers have worsened post-Referendum. As Figure 8 shows, no respondents 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with this statement; although, 37% (n = 15) 'neither agree nor disagree.' The majority of respondents either 'agree' (n = 18; 44%) or 'strongly agree' (n = 8; 19%) with the statement.

Figure 8: The general public's attitudes towards migrant sex workers have worsened post-Referendum



Strategies to navigate negative experiences post-Referendum

Respondents were also invited in the form of an open-text response to reflect on the strategies they employ to navigate any negative experiences they have encountered post-Referendum. Thirty-three respondents offered some reflections.

Several respondents (n = 4; 10%) indicated that in order to navigate the xenophobia directed at them, they hide their (national) identity and migrant status from clients. This was epitomised by one sex worker who noted:

“[I] try to be more discreet about my nationality, smile and take it when British clients talk poorly about southern Europe knowing I’m Spanish.”

Respondents indicated that concealing the truth about national identity can be understood as a tool both by which to maintain their client base and protect against xenophobic clients.

One respondent did note that not all clients seek to avoid non-British sex workers, however:

“I work more in a club now rather than alone as an escort because higher volume means there will always be clients who also want dances from migrant workers. I’ve even had clients who wanted a dance with me *because* I was from the EU.”

Yet it is clear that this respondent has had to make changes to their working practices, including working more in a (strip) club, in order to maintain a client base as a migrant worker. Moving between sex markets may be easier for some migrant sex workers than others.

Others noted (n = 7; 17%) that they too have changed their working practices, including working indoors increasingly with a ‘buddy’, which is criminalised under brothel laws in the UK. Thus, a situation exists whereby EU migrant sex workers are being compelled to adopt strategies to protect themselves from xenophobic clients that place them at heightened risk of arrest. This represents further evidence that existing brothel legislation is deeply problematic and harmful towards sex workers.

Some respondents (n = 5; 12%) also reflected on the support mechanisms they have developed, noting the importance of friendships with people who are understanding of and respectful towards their sex working: “I stay in touch with those who are understanding and isolate myself from those who aren’t.” Three respondents explicitly stated that it is often other (migrant) sex workers that they draw on for support: “My sex work community/friends (largely migrant and European) helps the most.”

Reflective of the challenges of earning an income through sex work, one respondent noted that they (must) put their need to earn an income above their own safety: “I have none [strategies to navigate negative experiences]. I don’t care about safety. I need money to send to my kids!” This serves as an important reminder

that not all (migrant) sex workers are in a position to employ safety mechanisms to navigate the risks that they encounter in the current socio-political climate. It is clear therefore that systemic change is required.



Section 4: Experiences of victimisation

This section explores respondents' experiences of victimisation. It begins by exploring migrant sex workers' concerns about violence generally; whether their concerns about violence have increased post-Referendum; and whether their actual experiences of victimisation have worsened since the Referendum. Next, it focuses on experiences of hate crime, before it examines the mechanisms migrant sex workers put in place to protect themselves against victimisation.

Concerns about, and experiences of, violence

Respondents were asked to reflect on their concerns about violence generally, and then about whether their concerns had changed post-Referendum.

In general, respondents were worried about the violence they experience as an EU migrant sex worker. As Figure 9 depicts, 32% of respondents (n = 13) were 'very worried' and 36% (n = 15) were 'worried' about violence. Five respondents (12%) were 'neither worried nor not worried', whilst eight said that they were 'not very worried' (19%) about violence. No respondents selected the 'not at all worried' option.

It is also clear that levels of concern have increased post-Referendum. As Figure 10 shows, 41% of respondents (n = 17) noted that their 'worried have increased a lot' since the Referendum, whilst 27% of respondents (n = 11) said that their 'worries have increased a little'. Although eleven respondents (27%) noted that their level of concern haven't change, no respondents said that their concerns had decreased since the referendum.

Respondents were also asked to reflect on whether they perceive the actual levels of violence that they experience to have changed post-Referendum. In total, 44% (n = 18) of respondents thought that levels of violence had increased since the Referendum, of which 15 respondents thought it had 'increased a little' (37%) and three thought it has 'increased a lot' (7%). 42% of respondents (n = 17) didn't think there had been a change in the levels of violence they experience and six respondents weren't sure.

Hate crime

Respondents were asked about their experiences of self-identified hate crime post-Referendum. Hate crime was defined for respondents as 'acts of violence or hostility directed at people because of who they are or who someone thinks they are.'

Respondents could select from a list of widely-accepted types of hate crime, based on: nationality, race, sexual orientation, gender, or disability. They could select more than one type of hate crime. Sex worker hate crime was also included in this list given recent calls for the state to recognise crimes against sex workers as a form of hate crime. Respondents could also select 'other' type of hate crime and enter details in an open text box, or select 'none' if they had not experienced hate crime.

Figure 9: Levels of worry about violence

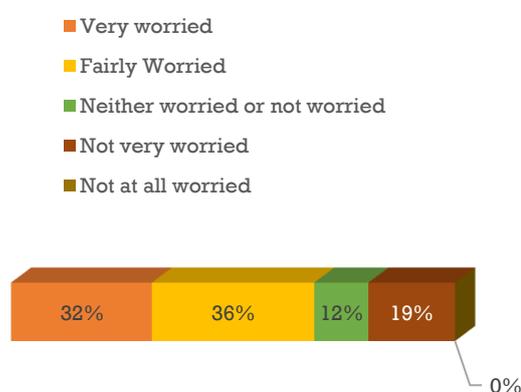
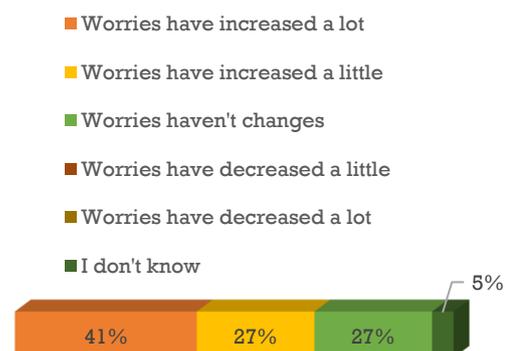
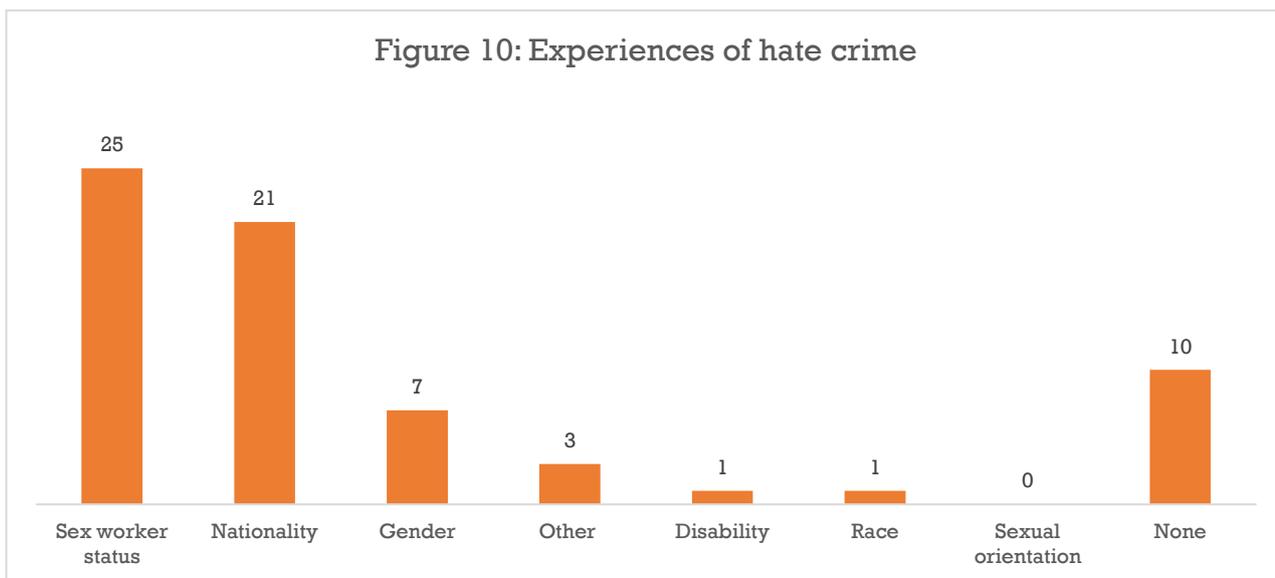


Figure 10: Change in levels of worry post-Referendum

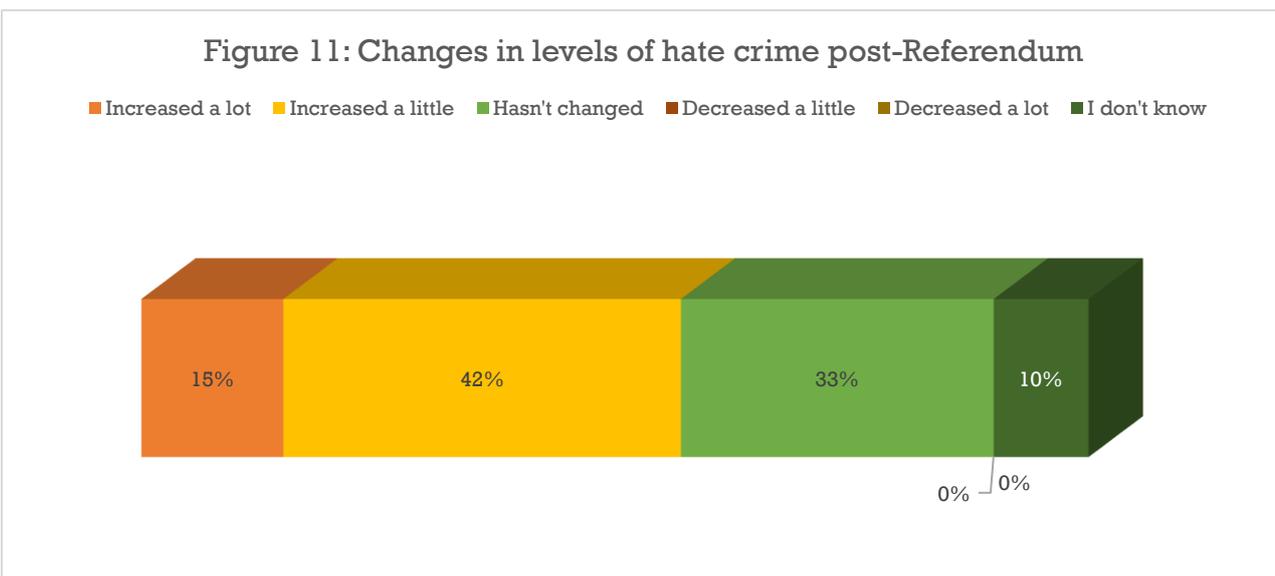


Although ten respondents (24%) said that they had not experienced hate crime, 31 respondents (76%) had experienced at least one type of hate crime post-Referendum. In fact, of the 31 respondents who had experienced at least one type of hate crime, many had experience multiple types. More specifically, 18 respondents had experienced two types of hate crime; three had experienced three types; and one respondent reported that they had experienced five types of hate crime.

As Figure 10 indicates, the most common type of hate crime was based on 'sex worker status' (n = 25; 61%), followed by 'nationality' (n = 21; 51%) and then gender (n = 7; 17%). Three respondents selected 'other' and added open text descriptions of the type of hate crime they have experience. One said that they had experienced hostility and discrimination because of their size/weight; one said that they have experienced domestic violence; and the other said they experience discrimination from the police.



Respondents were also asked to reflect on whether they had observed any changes to the levels of hate crime that they experience post-Referendum. Their responses are displayed in Figure 11. Over half thought that the levels of hate crime they experience had increased: that is to say, 42% thought it had 'increased a little' (n = 17) and 15% thought it had 'increased a lot' (n = 6). Fourteen respondents did not perceive it to have changed and four were unsure whether it had or had not. Not one respondent noted that the levels of hate crime they experienced have decreased post-Referendum.



Sex workers' mechanisms of protection

We also asked respondents to provide open-text responses reflecting on how they try to protect themselves from victimisation during their sex work. All but four of the 41 respondents provided a response to this question.

Eleven migrant sex worker respondents noted that before they agree to see a client, they engage in the screening of prospective clients as a way of reducing the likelihood of experiencing victimisation. One sex worker, for example, explained that they screen clients over the phone and by using number checking tools:

"I make sure all clients call me, have a short conversation with them to try and establish rapport and see if I can sense any danger or disrespect across the phone, then I put their number through Ugly Mugs and SAAFE and if it doesn't come up I see them."

Another respondent noted that they rely on the reviewing system hosted by online platforms in order to vet prospective clients:

"Vetting processes and use of online booking forms that allow for feedback, I refuse to meet with anyone with less than 5 positive reviews."

Two respondents reflected on how they rely on 'gut feeling' to screen out potentially dangerous clients, relying on their intuition and experience within the sex industry to see the warning signs that signal someone might become violent.

A significant number of respondents noted that they work with other people in order to keep themselves safe when sex working. Several (n = 5) 'check in' over the phone with friends or boyfriends after seeing a client. Ten respondents said that they use a 'buddy system', whereby they work in the same premises as another sex worker to reduce their risk of experiencing violence from a dangerous client. Others employ a maid (n = 1) or a driver (n = 2), or work in premises where there are door staff (n = 2). One respondent works at home where their partner is present to intervene if cause should arise: "I only take clients to my house when my husband is in to protect me." The role played by third parties in helping sex workers to protect themselves from victimisation therefore points to the importance of the global demands by the sex workers' rights movement for the full decriminalisation of sex work, including the decriminalisation of third parties.

Given concerns over xeno-racism, one respondent said that since the Referendum they have hidden their non-British identity from clients as a way to protect themselves from xenophobic victimisation:

"I pretend to be a British worker, and I think that is the main thing protecting me from crime, the fact that potential offenders and clients don't assume I have the same vulnerabilities they assume migrant workers have."

As this respondent alludes, there was a concern amongst several survey respondents that their precarious immigration status, coupled with the quasi-criminalisation of the sex industry in the UK, encourages a perception amongst violent clients that they can act with impunity. This was noted in the following response:

"I have been threatened by men on the street who said they would attack me. When I went to the police, they said 'are you telling me you're a prostitute because if you are, I am going to arrest you.' I have experienced increasing racism and sexism from the police since the referendum was announced."

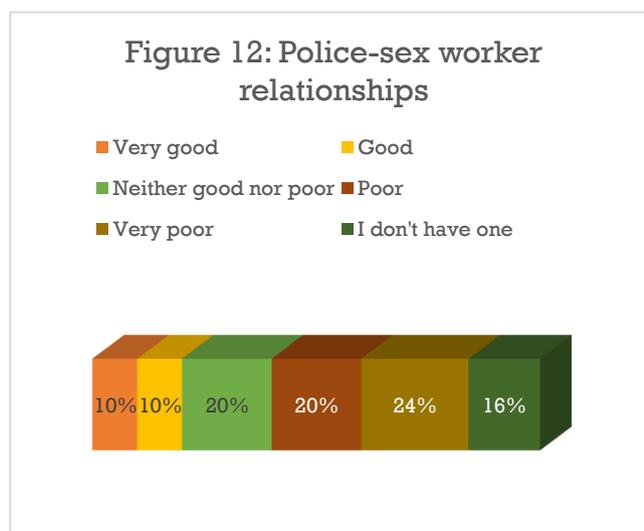
As this respondent makes clear, and as is documented in the wider academic literature, it is too often the case that sex workers are treated as offenders when reporting victimisation to the police. Furthermore, it is clear too that sex workers may be subjected to further harm (at the hands of the police) when they seek support. As the next section of this report details, this respondent was not alone in reporting negative experiences with law enforcement.

Section 5: Relationships with law enforcement

This section explores EU migrant sex workers' relationships with law enforcement. It begins by exploring migrant sex workers' perceptions of their relationships with the police generally and then whether it has changed post-Referendum. Next, we examine the same dynamics in relation to immigration agencies, before reflecting on how fear of arrest and detention may impact the working practice and lives of EU migrant sex workers. Finally, we explore whether (and how) sex workers would like sex work laws in the UK to be changed.

Relationship with the police

Respondents were asked about their relationship with the police and, as Figure 12 shows, experiences were variable. The most common response, by a small margin, was that relationships with the police were 'very poor' (n = 10; 24%). Eight respondents described their relationship with the police as 'poor' (n = 8; 20%), and the same number noted that their relationship was 'neither good nor bad' (n = 8; 20%). Four respondents noted that their relationship with the police was 'good' (n = 4; 10%) and a further four described their relationship with the police as 'very good' (n = 4; 10%). It is worth noting that six respondents (16 %) indicated that they don't have a relationship with the police.



We also asked respondents about whether their relationship with the police had changed since the Referendum. Just over half (n = 21; 51%) noted that their relationship with the police had not changed since the Referendum, whilst just over a quarter (n = 11; 27%) indicated that the relationship had changed. Nine respondents (22%) weren't sure about whether or not it had changed.

We invited respondents who said that there had been a change in their relationship with the police (n = 11) to describe the change(s) by way of an open-text response.

Three sex workers noted that they have had more contact with the police since the Referendum. One noted that the police "are out on the streets more", whilst a second said that the police now "visit the house more often" and consequently, they have had to move to different premises. The third respondent indicated that despite the greater police presence, police officers have dismissed reports of violence made by sex workers: "the police have been out much more and have dismissed reports of violence when we go to them."

Indeed, several other respondents (n = 3) noted that the police often respond to crimes against sex workers poorly, thus making migrant sex workers' reluctant to report victimisation. Whilst it has been widely documented that sex workers are often reluctant to report victimisation to the police for fear of arrest or being disbelieved, it is clear that migrant sex workers' reluctance has worsened post-Referendum. This view was epitomised by one respondent, who said: "I would be even less willing to go to the police if I experience any violence. Too many migrant sex workers have been threatened with deportation."

Other respondents (n = 6) expressed similar concerns about the relationship between the police and immigration agencies. One, for example, noted:

"It was bad before and after. The relationship was bad before because when I was attacked, they never came and they called us hours later when I had recovered. I wouldn't call them again if something happened. After the referendum was announced the police and immigration came and questioned me for hours about my immigration status and gave me a deportation letter. I got a national insurance number and fought the deportation letter and won on the grounds that I was going to be a student."

Not only do concerns about arrest and deportation clearly prevent migrant sex workers from reporting victimisation but experiences of arrest and deportation contribute to respondents distrust of the police. This was particularly clear in one account: “We have spoken to the police before and they have been helpful but now they pretend to come around and care about us but they are looking to catch us and deport us.” It is therefore clear that migrant sex workers perceive the police to work closely with immigration agencies.

Four respondents noted that they have been issued with deportation order letters post-Referendum. Whilst the orders are not explicitly issued by the police, it is clear that respondents saw the police as being complicit. Reflecting on being issued with the letter, one respondent said:

“Before the referendum was announced, I was arrested a couple of time. I was arrested and taken into immigration van in the street. But after they took my photo and my details and printed in onto a letter which said I had to leave the UK. The officer said it was because sex work “is not legitimate job in the UK” But I say it is. I challenged the order with ECP [English Collective of Prostitutes] and also enrolled as a student so I was exercising my treaty rights. I also had to buy health insurance.”

As this respondent makes clear, sex work is not widely recognised by the authorities in the UK as a ‘legitimate’ job and as such, migrant sex workers can face difficulties when applying for Settled Status.

Two additional respondents – who had both indicated that their relationship with the police hadn’t changed since the Referendum – chose to add a note to this question. They both highlighted their distrust of the police. One sex worker noted that although their relationship with the police hadn’t changed post-Referendum, it remained as negative as before: “It’s the same. They are bad and dishonest. I never open the door to them.” The other respondent highlighted the relationship between police and immigration as problematic: “Don’t trust them. They say they don’t prosecute but actually they report you to the home office.” That sex workers are unable to trust the police has far-reaching implications for migrant sex workers, not least because – as existing literature attests – violent clients are aware that migrant sex workers are reluctant to report victimisation.



Relationship with immigration agencies

Respondents were also asked about their relationships with immigration agencies. Once again, responses were variable. Very few respondents described their relationship with immigration agencies as either 'very good' (n = 1; 2%) or good' (n = 2; 5%). A significant proportion of respondents described their relation as 'neither good nor bad' (n = 12; 29%) or indicated that they didn't know what their relations was like (n = 13; 32%). Eight respondents described their relationship with immigration agencies as 'poor' (20%) and five described it as 'very poor' (12%).

When asked about whether their relationship with immigration agencies had changed since the Referendum, 42% of respondents (n = 17) noted that it hadn't. A significant proportion of sex workers weren't sure (n = 14; 34%), whilst almost a quarter noted that their relationship with immigration agencies had changed post-Referendum (n = 10; 24%).

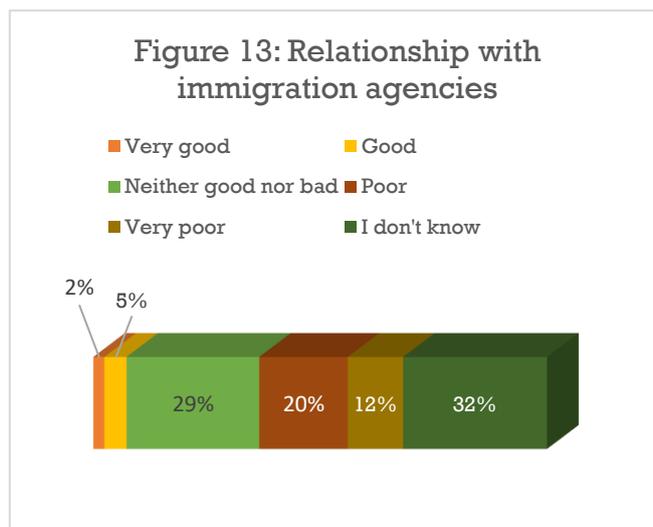
Respondents who said that there has been a change (n = 10) were invited to explain what changes they'd seen. Responses to this question were less detailed than those provided in response to the similar question above about changes in police-sex worker relationships. This appears to be because for several respondents, their relationship with immigration officials is much the same as their relationship with the police. Indeed, four respondents noted: "same as the police" as their response. There also appeared to be some confusion over the roles of the police and those of immigration, and a perception that the two organisations work closely together. The partnership working of police and immigration was raised particularly in the context of being reluctant to report victimisation for fear of being deported. In this way, the partnership working of the police and immigration agencies creates a barrier to sex workers ability to report victimisation.

A couple of respondents did indicate that they perceive their relationship with immigration agencies post-Referendum to be more hostile. One of these respondents said that they feel less welcome in the UK too: "More hostile, don't feel welcome anymore." The other reflected on their experience of applying for residency post-Referendum: "I've applied first for permanent residency and then for indefinite leave, and it's given me new insight into what a hostile shitshow the home office is."

Another respondent reflected on their experiences of applying for residency in the UK. Once again, we see the challenges that EU migrant sex workers experience when applying for (Pre-)Settled Status due to sex work not being considered by the state as a legitimate form of labour:

"I applied for permanent residence and of course had to lie about my occupation. It was frightening to send all my information and identity documents to the home office. At the time I was involved in protests outside the home office (because of sex worker deportations) and I felt very unsafe to be there. There was police observing us, and knowing the police sends photos of protesters to the DWP, there is no reason to assume they won't do the same with the home office."

Here too, we see that migrant sex workers are concerned about the close working partnerships of the police and immigration agencies.



Navigating risk of arrest and deportation

The majority of respondents perceived that their risk of arrest for sex work offences has increased since the Referendum. As Figure 14 shows, fourteen respondents (34%) believe that their risk of arrest has 'increased a lot' post-Referendum, whilst eight respondents (20%) perceive that their risk of arrest has 'increased a little.' Ten respondents said their risk hadn't changes (24%) and 22% of respondents (n = 9) didn't know whether it had changed but no respondent noted that they thought their risk of arrest had either 'decreased a little' or 'decreased a lot.'

Respondents were also asked about whether they perceived that their risk of deportation on the grounds of their sex work had increased since the Referendum. The results are displayed in Figure 15. Once again, no respondents thought that their risk of deportation due to their sex work had 'decreased a lot' or 'decreased a little' since the Referendum. Almost a quarter (n = 11; 27%) of survey respondents didn't know if their risk had changed, whilst 7% (n = 3) thought it hadn't changed. On the other hand, 27% (n = 11) believed it had 'increased a little' and 39% of respondents (n = 16) perceived their risk of deportation to have 'increased a lot'.

Those who noted that they thought that their risk of arrest or deportation had increased were encouraged to reflect on the effects of such risk on their working practices and everyday lives by way of an open-text response. Twenty-seven migrant sex workers provided a qualitative response.

It was clear that many sex worker respondents were concerned about their legal right to remain in the UK during the Transition Period and following the UK leaving the EU. Five respondents explicitly noted that they have not applied for residency in the UK and thus perceive that they are here 'illegally'.

Others (n = 9) reflected on how they avoid the police and immigration officials for fear of being deported. One sex worker, for example, noted that post-Referendum they have to hide from the police when working outdoors and move around to avoid detection: "I have to hide and always make sure the vice can't spot me on the street. Have to change the areas where I work." Whilst the criminalised nature of outdoor sex work is well known to push sex workers to work in isolated spaces to avoid arrest, it is clear that the threat of deportation post-Referendum compels sex workers to further compromise their safety in order to make a living. Similarly, two other respondents – who work indoors – described how they have to move flats regularly to avoid arrest and/or deportation. One, for example, said:

"We had to move flats and set up everything all over again. We lost the deposit on the old flat and had to get money for a new one and tell all our clients we had moved away. We had to move 30 minutes away from old flat so the police didn't find us easily but we lost clients."

It is clear from this account that moving flats has cost this sex worker financially in terms of losing a deposit but also, it has cost them clients and thus income.

Figure 14: Changes to perceived risk of arrest post-Referendum

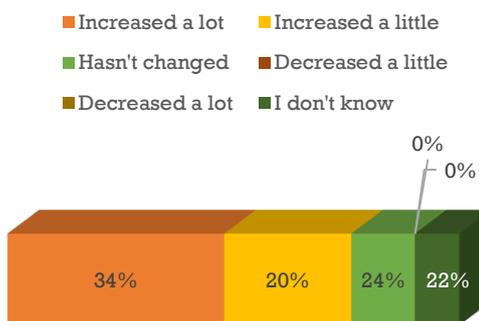
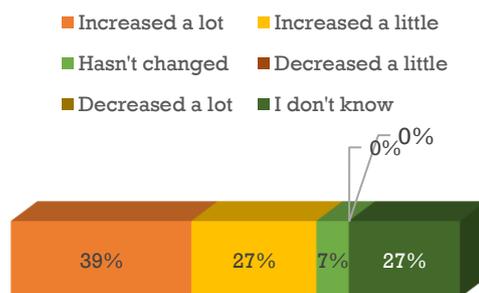


Figure 15: Changes in perceived risk of deportation post-Referendum



Another respondent reflected on how their fear of being deported forced them to forgo practices that improve safety:

“Anxiety is constant. I worry about working in pairs and how I need to compromise my safety or risk being deported. I’m worried, if I get assaulted at work, I can’t rely on the police as I could get picked up by Immigration.”

Here, we see that migrant sex workers are forced to compromise their safety by not working in pairs or with a third-party (e.g. maid) – given it’s criminalised status – due to the fear of being arrested and then referred to immigration officials.

Not only are migrant sex workers forced to adopt less safe practices but one respondent described how the Referendum has also emboldened violent and abusive clients:

“Punters are more confident to report us to the police and home office, their threats sound like ‘I am going to get you deported if you don’t give me my money back.’”

It is clear that the Referendum has further tilted the balance of power towards the client and away from the migrant sex worker. Aware of the precarious immigration status of many migrant sex workers, abusive clients can act with impunity.

Because of increased fears of arrest and deportation, two respondents noted that they now avoid selling sex to clients as often as they can. However, this is difficult in practice because they still must make a living. This tension was reflected in one account:

“I am now a lot more anxious in general, I avoid working even though I can’t afford it and end up in desperate situations where I have to take whoever calls. I know that if I got in trouble or got hurt I wouldn’t be able to call the police, and I have not called them when I have been assaulted at work.”

For many sex workers, stopping sex work may not be a viable option. As the respondent above notes, avoiding clients, without another source of income, can mean that sex workers are compelled to accept clients without carefully vetting them, in order to avoid ‘desperate [financial] situations.’

Several respondents (n = 6) described how they have had to enrol in educational courses and/or find employment outside of the sex industry in order to apply for residency in the UK under the EU Settlement Scheme. This is because, as noted earlier, applicants are required to show evidence of five years of continual residency in the UK, typically using their National Insurance Number (although it is possible to use other documentation). Whilst sex work should be considered a form of self-employment, there is no legal precedent for this and as such, sex work continues not to be considered legitimate work in the eyes of the state. One respondent reflected on the additional stress this caused:

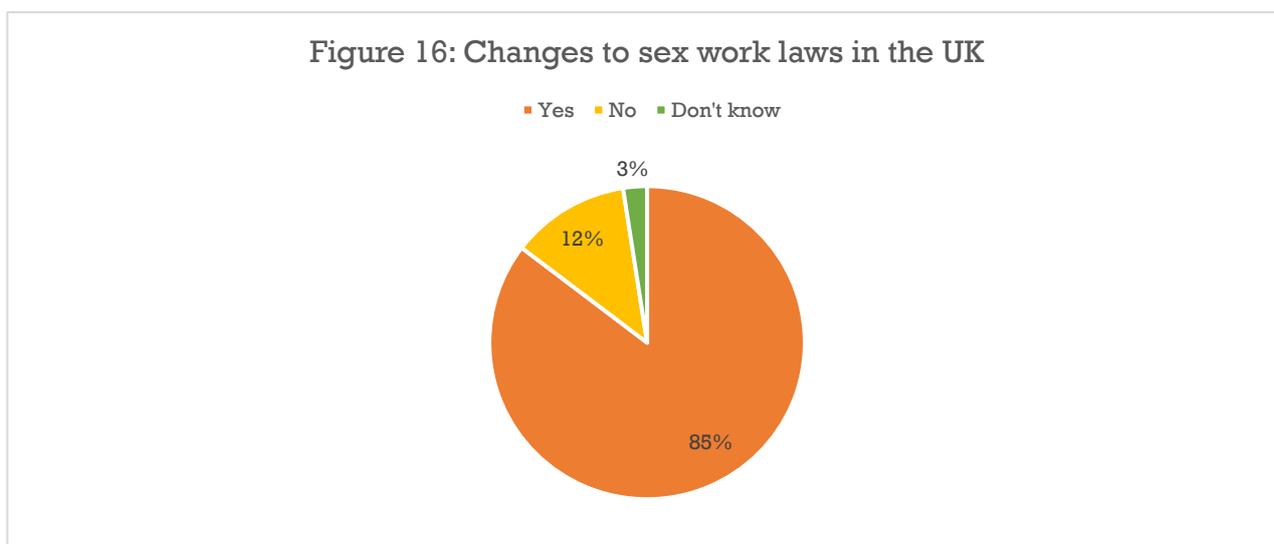
“This has a big effect. I needed to get a record of what I was doing in the UK, so I was working in a hotel as well but now I work in a shop in the day. The hours are long and the wages low, so I still need to work on the street to make ends meet. I am the main breadwinner for my son and my mum.”



Here, we get an insight into the additional burden placed on migrant sex workers post-Referendum. The requirement stipulated in the EU Settlement Scheme to evidence work in 'legitimate' employment means that some migrant sex workers are working long hours outside of the sex industry. Due to the low wage labour of these jobs, they are also having to work additional hours selling sex in order to make a living. This has clear implications in terms of health and wellbeing. Indeed, this was noted by one respondent: "I have added additional work to my sex work, so it can't be claimed that I'm not exercising my treaty rights. Since I have a chronic illness this is detrimental to my health though."

Sex work laws

We also asked survey respondents: Would you like to see the sex work laws changed in the UK? As Figure 16 documents, the vast majority of survey respondents reported that they would like sex work laws in the UK to be changed (n = 35; 85%); although, five respondents (12%) did not want laws to be changed and one respondent didn't know whether they would like them to be changed or not.



Those that noted that they wanted sex work laws to be changed (n = 35) were encouraged to describe *how* they would like them to be changed and *why* they would like them to be changed. Out of the 35 respondents, 18 explicitly stated that they would like sex work to be decriminalised in the UK. A further 12 referred to decriminalisation implicitly, for example, by noting that they wanted sex work to be legal or to sex work without fear of arrest. There are important distinctions between the decriminalisation and legalisation of sex work – most notably that decriminalisation involves the removal of all laws that govern consensual sex work, whilst legalisation involves only regulating certain aspects of the sex industry. However, they are often conflated in popular discourse.

Of those that explicitly advocated for decriminalisation, this was often mentioned in relation to improving the safety of (migrant) sex workers:

"Decriminalisation is a model that assures safety, allows us to work together, be visible and go to the authorities without fear, which is particularly important for marginalised groups. Also, it would make it a job as any other and I think it would contribute to a much needed cultural shift."

Here, the respondent identifies that decriminalisation would facilitate safe working practices and enable sex workers to report victimisation to the police without fear of arrest. Of course, given the wider problems associated with the police – institutional racism, sexism, and violence for example – it is vitally important that we also look beyond better policing as the long-term solution. Decriminalisation would also help sex work to be considered within society as a form of labour like any other, thereby attracting the same working rights as other sectors and helping to improve societal attitudes towards sex workers.

None of the respondents advocated for the Swedish Model: a model in which the client is criminalised. Instead, three respondents explicitly rejected the criminalisation of the purchase of sex:

“The Nordic model puts immigrant workers at even more risk”; “Full decriminalisation (including soliciting and brothel-keeping). No criminalisation of the client. It's imperative that this applies to migrants also”; “Maybe decriminalisation. Not the Nordic model!!! Clients go underground and we are in danger.”

Like the above respondent, several respondents (n = 4) reflected on how any change to the sex work laws in the UK should apply to migrant sex workers too. This is perhaps reflective of the problematics of the ‘charmed circle’ that has emerged in places with legalised sex industry like Amsterdam, whereby native sex workers are afforded some rights and protections that are not made available to migrant sex workers. As Smith and Mac explain in their excellent text, *Revolting Prostitutes*, legalisation results in a two-tiered system whereby (relatively) privileged sex workers are better able to comply with the rules around how to work legally than sex workers in more precarious situations. Undocumented migrants, for example, cannot work in any legal justification.

Conclusion and recommendations

As this report makes clear, EU migrant sex workers have experienced an increase in violence and xenophobia post-Referendum. Yet far from being able to rely on the authorities to seek redress, migrant sex workers are increasingly fearful of arrest and deportation. Some have been raided and arrested, whilst others have been threatened with closure orders and deportation. This is despite the fact that sex workers should be able to claim self-employed status under the EU Settlement Scheme; although, many are disadvantaged in their application due to not having the documentation required to prove continual residence or employment in the UK. It is clear too that EU migrant sex workers have been compelled to make changes to their working practices since the Referendum to maintain their income; changes that, in some cases, compromise their safety.

There is much work to be done to ensure sex workers are not undermined in their fight for safety and rights. In this regard, we make a number of recommendations based on the findings of our research. These recommendations are not exhaustive but rather, represent the most pressing demands that are required from all those concerned with the rights of sex workers specifically and migrant workers more broadly.

Based on the findings detailed in this report, the UK Government must:

Decriminalise sex work. This will improve the rights and safety of all sex workers, including migrant sex workers.

Grant automatic Settled Status to all EU citizens in the UK. This will help to redress the significant challenges EU migrant sex workers encounter in applying to the EU Settlement Scheme.

Expunge historical convictions for all sex workers. This will help to ensure that migrant sex workers are not deported as a result of having criminal convictions for sex work.

Improve financial assistance for migrants in the UK. This will help to ensure that migrant sex workers are not compelled to accept dangerous clients in order to earn enough income to live off.

End the hostile environment. This will help tackle the range of state-imposed difficulties faced by people who migrate to the UK.



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