

“I feel safe when I’m working with her”:  
Sex workers’ experiences of management  
and wider work relations.

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## Declaration

*The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.*

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The concept for the thesis originated with the author. It was developed with the assistance of supervision from Dr Kate Hardy, Dr Gabriella Alberti and Dr Xanthe Whittaker.

## Abstract

Sex workers' relationships with third parties are assumed, both in legislation and in the public imagination, to solely be exploitative or controlling (May et al., 2000; Hickie and Roe-Sepowitz, 2016), yet sex workers' experiences with criminalised third parties are severely under-researched. This means that the nature of these relationships, what shapes them, and how they are experienced by sex workers is largely unknown. However, the relationships between and actions of third parties and sex workers are legislated based on these assumptions, meaning that selling direct sexual services is only legal if done completely alone and without support.

The underpinning research for this thesis is made up of a survey of 185 current full-service sex workers in England, in a variety of work environments, on their experiences with and as third parties. The first major finding is that the majority of (criminalised) third parties in the UK are sex workers themselves – mainly acting in the role of colleagues, rather than managers or others in a position of power over workers. Second, it finds that sex workers have a mix of positive, negative and neutral experiences with third parties. These findings necessitate a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between third parties and sex workers. Specifically, contrary to existing public and legal imaginaries which represent third parties as having total control over workers, third parties generally do not have the power to prevent sex workers from leaving their work relationships and workplaces. This is corroborated by the finding that sex workers in street-based work, premises, clubs, agencies and independent indoor work are not distinct groups, but instead commonly move between these different work areas. Contrary to common understandings, this displays high levels of labour mobility power use (Smith, 2006; Alberti, 2014), showing workers' ability to make changes to their work situations, with sex workers leaving certain work environments and third parties in favour of others considered to offer better or more suitable conditions. Third, sex workers overwhelmingly feel their working conditions and relationships with third parties can be improved through legal change. The majority of participants argues for the decriminalisation of some or all third parties in order to improve their access to labour rights, and their safety and wellbeing at work.

The overarching thesis is that the majority of third party relationships are better theorised with the novel concept of 'wider work relations'. This allows us to conceptually distinguish between third parties in managerial positions and wider work relations – third parties who do not hold managerial power or control over workers. Reconceptualising the relationships between sex workers and third parties this way makes it clear that workers would benefit from the decriminalisation of third parties, since third party criminalisation makes workplaces insecure and increases precarity amongst sex workers, thus restricting their agency to work in a manner of their choosing.

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## Acronyms and abbreviations

AW	Adultwork – sex work advertising website commonly used by independent workers.
ASW	Adult Service Website – a third-party internet platform where full-service sex workers advertise their services directly to potential clients.
BAME	Black and minority ethnicities.
BDSM	Bondage, Discipline, Dominance, Submission, Sadism and Masochism.
CERIC	Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change.
Cis	Cisgender.
Civ / civvy	Civilian – referring to people who are not sex workers.
Decrim	Decriminalisation.
Duo	Duo booking – session in which two workers see one client.
ECP	English Collective of Prostitutes.
EU	European Union.
FSSW	Full-service sex worker.
ILO	International Labour Organization.
MF	Male/female – a couple with a man and a woman seeing clients together.
NHS	National Health Service.
NPCC	National Police Chiefs’ Council.
OWO	Oral without – oral sex without the use of a barrier or condom.
SWARM	Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement.
SAAFE	Support And Advice For Escorts – online advice forum for independent sex workers.
SW	Sex work or sex worker.
SWer/ SWers	Sex worker / sex workers.
Trans	Transgender.

## 1 Introduction

Full-service sex work, in which direct in-person sexual services are exchanged for payment, is the one occupation in England that is completely legal *only* when the worker works alone. This situation is caused by the fact that ‘third parties’ surrounding the worker – people providing services or management – are criminalised. As such, sex workers face a unique position as workers: they experience legally enforced self-employment and professional isolation, as well as the criminalisation of their workplaces, even though their work itself is not illegal. The concept of third parties in sex work covers any person involved in the labour process of sex work, beyond the sex worker and the client themselves. Third parties usually provide skills or services that impact sex workers’ ability to find or meet clients, keep themselves safe, or free up their time (Bruckert, 2018a). This includes, amongst others: managers, colleagues, maids, drivers, cleaners, security staff, landlords, web developers, personal assistants, and receptionists. Sex workers’ relationships with third parties are assumed, both in legislation and in the public imagination, to solely be exploitative or controlling (May et al., 2000; Hickle and Roe-Sepowitz, 2016) on the part of the third parties. This legislation, therefore, implies that sex work is viewed to have an assumed hierarchy in which sex workers are *at all times* at the bottom, with all third parties having power and control over sex workers, regardless of the reality of their work situation. However, the reality of sex workers’ experiences and relationships with criminalised third parties are severely under-researched, and it is therefore not known to which degree these representations hold up to empirical or theoretical scrutiny.

Existing research has helped develop sophisticated understandings of sex workers’ employment conditions and experiences of work (Vanwesenbeeck, 2005; Krusi et al., 2012; Sanders and Hardy, 2012; Cruz, 2013; Hardy and Sanders, 2015; Adriaenssens et al., 2016), yet very little is known about their labour relations with third parties who can be understood as managers, colleagues, and even contractors. In addition, this topic has clear implications for policy and practice. With pressure from both political organisations and members of parliament to change sex work legislation, it is likely that in the near future there will be a demand for data on third parties’ role in sex work in order to develop national level policy. Indeed, there should be demand for research such as this in order to generate genuinely evidence-based policy in this area. This research is therefore innovative in that it is the first of its kind in the United Kingdom (UK) and offers data on a hereto invisible area of social and work life, which requires illumination in order to improve the well-being of an extremely marginalised sector of society. In light of the political and media debates on sex work, it is clear that the role of third parties

in sex work is a complex topic that requires empirical enquiry in order to move beyond current polarised and largely anecdotal debates.

In order to explore the relationship between sex workers and third parties, this research has surveyed 185 full-service sex workers, using a survey resulting in a mix of qualitative and quantitative data, on their experiences with and as third parties in their work. Additionally, the research has used key informant, legal and case data to explore the legal status of third parties in depth (see Chapter 3).

## 1.1 The context of third parties in sex work in England

Many residents of the UK, both sex workers and non-sex workers, are confused about the legal status of sex work and workplaces such as brothels (Pitcher and Wijers, 2014). In order to fully understand the legal status of sex work and third parties, this chapter provides an overview of the legal and social context of sex work in England, placing it within global debates on sex work legislation. Due to recent legislative changes in Northern Ireland, including the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services since the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2015 (*Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Criminal Justice and Support for Victims) Act (Northern Ireland), 2015*), and small differences in legislation between England, Scotland and Wales (Hubbard, 2006) discussing sex work in the UK as a whole is not within the scope of this project. Therefore, the focus of this research will solely be on the role of third parties in sex work in England. In this research, the term 'sex work' will be used to refer to full-service sex work (also known as prostitution or escorting) which involves direct, in-person, sexual physical contact between a worker and a client. Other forms of sex work, such as stripping, porn acting, webcam/online work, phone sex operating and many other types of non-full-service sex work are not part of this research, although they are, at times, mentioned by participants who also perform these types of sex work. Third parties are defined as any person who, in relation to the labour of a sex worker, provides a service that affects the work, time, or earning potential of the worker (Bruckert, 2018a).

Any debate on third parties and sex workers in their capacity as workers takes place in the context of wider international debates on the legal status of sex work. Sex work is generally governed by one of three legal models: (full) criminalisation, legalisation (referred to by some as partial criminalisation (Mac and Smith, 2018)), and decriminalisation (Sanders and Campbell, 2014). Criminalisation refers to modes of governing sex work that legally prohibit some or all activities related to commercial sex – this can include the criminalisation of persons who sell sex, the criminalisation of people who buy

sexual services, and the criminalisation of sex workplaces and third parties. This includes a legal model referred to as 'client criminalisation', which does not directly criminalise sex workers but criminalises clients of sex workers, and which in the last few decades has been introduced in, among others, Northern Ireland, Sweden and France (Levy and Jakobsson, 2014). A 'legalisation' model of sex work refers to modes of governing that regulate some conditions in which sex work is legal, while the parts of the sex industry outside of those remain illegal. Generally, legalisation results in a wide range of laws and regulations that prescribe who can do sex work and under which circumstances, for instance legalising licensed brothels in specific locations. Some sex workers argue that the legalisation model creates a two-tiered system for sex workers, in which more privileged workers are able to work legally, but less privileged workers are still criminalised (Mac and Smith, 2018). Finally, decriminalisation is a mode of governing sex work in which sex work is treated as other forms of labour, governed by general labour and criminal law (Abel and Ludeke, 2021). This means that sex workers, clients, and third parties are not criminalised, and that sex work is not treated as separate from other forms of embodied or service work. Although the implementation of decriminalisation is both recent and geographically limited – most notably having been introduced in New Zealand in 2003 – sex worker rights organisations worldwide, as well as organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Amnesty International advocate for the decriminalisation of sex work, and argue that sex workers should therefore have access to the same protections and rights as workers in other professions (Orchiston, 2017; Büschi, 2014; Grenfell et al., 2016; Agustín, 2007).

Currently, sex work in England is in a legal position where selling and purchasing sexual services in private is decriminalised, but where most sex workplaces and third parties are criminalised. This includes the criminalisation of the management or letting of premises where two or more people sell sexual services under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, the controlling and inciting of others' sex work under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, and the transportation of sex workers under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, along with some common law offences and lesser used offences surrounding advertising. Although this legislation at first glance seems to be aimed at third parties who force or abuse those who do sex work, it is argued that, in practice, the criminalisation of third parties can make it more difficult for sex workers to undertake their work safely (Pitcher and Wijers, 2014). There is no clear distinction in UK law between coercion and non-coercive assistance by third parties in the sex industry (Hickle and Roe-Sepowitz, 2016; Home Affairs Committee, 2016). In contrast, employment-related relationships are criminalised, which means that a third party explicitly hired by a sex worker to provide services or support, such as security staff, is still assumed to coerce or control them. Sex worker-led organisations argue that this legislation means many of the people facing charges and convictions for third party offences are sex workers themselves, or are there to support sex workers,

which negatively affects sex workers' safety (English Collective of Prostitutes, 2016). Additionally, although there is evidence that third parties do sometimes coerce sex workers, sex workers argue that current legislation criminalises and endangers them by denying them the ability to work with another sex worker for protection (Pitcher, 2015).

In the context of full-service sex work in England, this research will focus on five main areas of sex work, which are main groupings of workplaces or work environments: 1) indoor premises, 2) independent indoor work, 3) street-based work, 4) clubs and parties, and 5) agency work. Indoor premise sex work takes place in premises like brothels, parlours or saunas. These premises usually have multiple sex workers working in them, often at the same time, are generally managed by a third party in a managerial position or a premises owner, and regularly have support staff like receptionists, maids, cleaners or others present. Independent indoor work is sex work that is usually not managed by a third party, and takes place indoor in homes, purpose-rented venues, hotels, temporary rentals, or venues rented from other sex workers. Independent sex workers at times work together with other independent workers, and may hire third parties to provide services. Street-based work is sex work where clients are solicited outside (which is criminalised as well), although the sexual services themselves may take place either outdoor or inside. Street-based sex work is usually not managed by a third party, and street-based workers may work together with colleagues or with a third party providing services. Sex work in sex clubs or sex parties covers a range of workplaces and events where several clients and often multiple workers are present at the same time. Some clubs only have workers and clients present, while others are open to the general public and only have incidental sex work going on, while others still market themselves as private members clubs. Some sex workers are hired by a third party organiser or manager to work at these events or venues, while others organise their own events, and third parties present may be acting as colleagues, security or other support staff. Finally, agency work is managed sex work that is mediated by an agency (usually referred to as an 'escort agency'), and takes place in the clients' homes, in hotels, or in the home of the worker. In addition to the manager or agency owner, third parties might be colleagues, or support staff such as receptionists and drivers. Of all these areas of sex work, only independent indoor sex work can – in certain situations – be done without the criminalisation of either the sex worker or the third parties involved.

In summary, sex work in England is work that is legal only if it takes place when the worker is without the protection of co-workers, a legal employment relation, or any other support. Clearly, sex work legislation assumes that sex workers are *in all cases* controlled or coerced by any third parties they may encounter, and that third parties exert high levels of control over sex workers. Simultaneously, due to the criminalisation of employment relations in sex work, sex workers are often officially

considered self-employed even when – in practice – they have a third party with whom they have an employment-like relationship (Sanders and Hardy, 2012; Cruz et al., 2016). Sex workers are assumed to have less agency and power in their relationships with third parties than workers in other industries (Fudge and Strauss, 2014), and legislation and policing reflect this assumption. However, third parties in sex work in England, and sex workers’ experiences with them, are severely understudied. This absence in academic literature seems even more stark when compared with the degree of criminalisation third parties face. Current legislation is therefore not based on evidence, data or research on third parties and their relationships with sex workers. The goal of this research, then, is to map and explore these third party relationships and sex workers’ experiences with them, to investigate the impact they have on the work, safety and wellbeing of sex workers, and to develop theorisation of how these relationships might be better understood.

## 1.2 Research questions

Following from the knowledge gap present in research into third parties in sex work in the English context, as well as the knowledge gap underlying the formulation of third party legislation, the central question of this research is therefore: What are sex workers’ experiences with third parties in sex work in England? The sub-questions include:

- Which third party relationships exist in sex work in England?
- What experiences do sex workers in England have with third parties?
- How do current legal frameworks relating to third parties affect sex workers’ working conditions and experiences?
- How is sex workers’ agency – including agency in the form of labour mobility power – used, enabled and restricted in relation to third parties?
- What would improve sex workers’ wellbeing, labour rights, and ability to work in safety in relation to third parties?

In order to answer these questions, this research used a survey with a mix of quantitative and qualitative components to ask 185 current (at the time of the survey) full service sex workers about their experiences with third parties in current and past sex work. The focus on sex workers’ experiences, rather than those of third parties, stems from the feminist standpoint epistemology



underlying this project – as did the development of community-transferred financial compensation of research participants, which was created for this research. Additionally, the research includes an in-depth study of third party legislation, case law and prosecutions, and has engaged the English Collective of Prostitutes as consultants for this section of research, as well as a Research Assistant with legal expertise. Together, the data from the survey and the legal analysis give an overview not only of sex workers’ experiences with third parties, but also on the way third party criminalisation affects workers in all areas of full service sex work.

The substantive aim of this thesis is to map third parties in sex work and to explore sex workers’ views on their relationships with third parties. The theoretical aims are to centre sex workers’ experiences with, and views of, third parties in research and wider debates on the presence and criminalisation of third parties in sex work; and to develop better conceptualisations for understandings work-related relationships beyond worker-employer and worker-client/customer relationships. Finally, the methodological aims are to clarify third party legislation, policing, and the interpretation of this legislation; and to develop and define ethical ways of undertaking research such as this, including the development of a novel research participant compensation method: community-transferred financial compensation.

This project contributes empirically to the understanding of sex work as work by expanding understanding of the role and work of third parties, and by providing in-depth knowledge on an understudied area of sex work. It also improves understandings of the ways legislation affects sex workers in England, and adds further evidence to both the academic discourse and the public and political debates which may feed into policy making. Finally, it contributes to the field of work and employment relations by providing the novel conceptualisation of wider work relations both in the field of sex work and outside, and the ways wider work relations affect workers’ wellbeing, agency and safety.

### 1.3 Argument

This research expands the understanding of the relationships between sex workers and third parties, and the forms that agency and control can take within these relationships. It builds on a number of conceptual frameworks, including the continuum of agency and control within the labour relation (Skrivankova, 2010; Marcus et al., 2014); the importance of work relations in informal work (Monteith

and Giesbert, 2017); disguised employees and dependent self-employment both within sex work (Cruz et al., 2016; Sanders and Hardy, 2012) and outside (Fudge and Strauss, 2014; Davidov, 2002); the enabling and constraining factors that affect sex worker agency (Bruckert and Law, 2013; Ham and Gerard, 2014); as well as the ambivalence of labour mobility power use (Alberti, 2014). The aim is to contribute to the debate on the role and legal status of third parties in sex work, and the effect third parties and third party criminalisation have on sex workers themselves. The thesis does this by proposing the novel concept of 'wider work relations' for understanding the multiplicity of relationships between sex workers and third parties. Wider work relations are defined as all roles beyond the worker, manager and client or customer – who do not have control over workers' pay, time or work, do not directly profit off workers' labour, and whom the worker does not have dependency on – who provide services or support to a worker which directly enable them to do their work. Such a concept is useful in that it can capture the fact that the majority of third parties in sex work do not have managerial power over sex workers and are not in an employer/employee relationship with them. The thesis concludes that sex workers are highly mobile workers with a range of experiences with third parties and the ability to leave unsatisfactory workplaces and that as such, they would benefit from the decriminalisation of third parties, since third party criminalisation makes workplaces insecure and increases precarity amongst sex workers, thus restricting their agency to work in a manner of their choosing.

The first empirical finding supporting this argument, is that sex workers participating in this research argue for legal change to third party legislation as a step towards worker rights and workplace protections, in order to improve their working conditions and relationships with third parties. The criminalisation of third parties effectively criminalises all workplaces, as well as sex workers working together, and forces workers to choose between breaking the law or working in a less safe way. The second empirical finding is that the largest group of (criminalised) third parties encountered by participants are sex workers themselves – mainly in the role of colleagues – rather than managers or others in a position of power over workers. It is argued that a conceptual distinction is needed between third parties in managerial roles and third parties who are not in a managerial role, since the power relations are notably different. For this reason, the concept of wider work relations is developed and defined. The conceptualisation of wider work relations is a useful classification of a wide range of third parties that strongly affect people as workers, while not being part of the employer-employee and worker-client relationships. Although developed through the lens of sex work, a context in which wider work relations are uniquely criminalised, the concept of wider work relationships is a useful tool for exploring the relationships between workers and third parties who

have a strong effect on their labour, wellbeing and safety, yet are usually left out of analyses of the labour process.

The third empirical finding is that sex workers have a mix of positive, negative and neutral experiences with third parties, which proves the importance of an understanding of the relationships between third parties and sex workers which is more nuanced than the current public and legal discourse. Positive experiences amongst participants are more common with wider work relations, and negative experiences are more common with third parties in a managerial position, but this is not the case for all workers. Specifically, and contrary to public and legal imaginaries which represent third parties as having total control over workers, third parties discussed by participants generally do not have the power to prevent sex workers from using their agency by leaving their work relationships and workplaces. This is corroborated by the fourth finding, which is that sex workers are able to – and commonly do – leave unsatisfactory work situations and workplaces, and display high levels of labour mobility power use between areas of sex work. The mobility of participants between areas of sex work is so high, that it is argued that workers in any one area of sex work should not be considered a discreet group separate from workers in other areas of sex work for the purposes of research.

This work posits that third parties should not be seen as a homogenous group which exerts power and control over sex workers, but instead is composed of third parties in a managerial position – who have control over workers' pay, time or work, directly profit off workers' labour, and on whom the worker depends – and wider work relations, who do not have this managerial relationship with sex workers, but who provide services or support to a sex worker which directly enables them to do their work. It therefore concludes that sex workers, as highly mobile workers embedded in wider work relations with a range of experiences with third parties and the ability to leave unsatisfactory workplaces, would benefit from the decriminalisation of third parties and co-working, since this criminalisation increases precarity and workplace insecurity amongst sex workers, thus restricting their agency to work in a manner of their choosing.

## 1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is organised into eight chapters, including four chapters discussing the empirical data gathered from the survey of 185 full-service sex workers. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of debates on agency and control in informal work, as well as a review of existing research into third

parties in sex work. In the section on agency and control in informal work, several approaches to worker agency and managerial control in informal workplaces will be discussed. First, it will explore disguised and dependent self-employment, both in mainstream work and in sex work, followed by an analysis of the continuum of labour unfreedom as not unique to sex work. Then, worker agency in informal and non-standard work will be discussed, as well as the ways worker agency and labour mobility power are conceptualised in sex work specifically. It will then explore theorisations of sex worker agency in relation to third parties specifically, focussing on the view of Ham and Gerard (2014) that rather than asking *if* sex workers have agency, it is more useful to ask *how* they use their agency – an approach which will be carried forward into the rest of the thesis. Finally, the section on third parties in sex work will delve deeper into the classifications of third parties as developed by Bruckert and Law (2013), which will be used throughout the thesis. It will move from a broad view of the debate of sex work as work, via a discussion on types of third parties and notable international research on third parties, to a narrow focus on the existing research on third parties in sex work in the UK.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the philosophy, ethics and methods underpinning this research. It examines standpoint epistemology and the ways it supports the use of mixed data for research with a social goal. Delving deeper into the ethics of doing research into sex work, and the ongoing debate on the financial compensation of research participants, it will then develop and define the novel method of community-transferred financial compensation (CTFC). The goal of community-transferred financial compensation is to give financial compensations to community organisations in contexts where direct compensation of participants is not possible. Chapter 3 will then discuss the research design and data analysis, and finishes with a section reflecting on participant feedback. The empirical data show that there is a range of interpretations of third party legislation amongst sex workers, and that deeper investigation into the legal status and policing of third parties was warranted. This resulted in the development of an extra research phase (included in Chapter 4), for which a legal research assistant as well as a national charity with relevant expertise were consulted.

Chapters 4 to 7 are the empirical core of the thesis. Chapter 4 discusses the legal status of third parties, the policing of third parties, sex workers' experiences with third party criminalisation, and sex workers' desired changes to third party legislation. It asserts that the criminalisation of third parties affects a large number of sex workers, including those who do not work in premises or in a managed environment. The criminalisation of third parties effectively criminalises all workplaces, causing increased precarity for workers and reducing their access to alternative workplaces in cases in which they would prefer to move away from a specific third party. The empirical data show that participants argue for legal change and/or decriminalisation of both sex work and third parties, in order to improve

their working conditions and relationships with third parties, and argue that the current criminalisation of third parties forces them either break the law or work in a less safe way.

Chapter 5 uses survey data to map which third party roles exist in sex work in England, how common they are, and who is acting in these roles. It discusses sex workers taking on third party roles themselves, sex workers directly hiring third parties, the multiple roles colleagues take on for one another, and discusses friends, family and partners in third party roles. It also discusses the payment of third parties, and the gifting economy that underlies a large part of exchanges between sex workers and informal third parties. The empirical data show that the majority of third parties encountered by participants are not in a managerial role, but that instead the largest group of third parties comprises of sex workers, mainly in the role of colleagues. This shows that a conceptual distinction is needed between third parties in managerial roles and third parties who are not in a managerial role, since the power relations between sex workers and those two groups are notably different. Finally, Chapter 5 develops the novel concept of wider work relations, and its uses both in the study of sex work and in the wider field of work and employment.

Chapter 6 discusses the reasons sex workers decide to engage or not engage third parties, both third parties in a managerial role and wider work relations, based on qualitative survey data. First, it explores the advantages participants experience when working with third parties in a managerial position, including the services they provide. Second, it will discuss the disadvantages of working with managers that participants describe, including fees and wage theft, risk shifting, safety, work pressure, control mechanisms, and abusive behaviour. After this, the advantages and disadvantages of working with wider work relations will be explored, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of working without any third parties at all. Finally, the ways in which sex workers and wider work relations both resist and reinforce managerial power will be explored, arguing that wider work relations can reinforce managerial control, but can also support workers in resisting managerial control. The empirical data show that participants have a mix of positive, negative and neutral experiences with third parties, and that in general, positive experience are more common with wider work relations, and negative experiences are more common with third parties in a managerial position, although this is not the case for all workers.

Chapter 7 finds that there are high levels of labour mobility between different areas of sex work (premise, agency, street, independent, parties/clubs), which is one form of sex worker agency use. It explores the differences in labour mobility use between different groups of sex workers, as well as their experiences of labour mobility. It finds that participants whose first experience of sex work is in independent work are less likely to move to other work areas, and argues that this lower mobility

power use may be due to high levels of worker power over their work environment and third parties in independent work. The empirical data show that sex workers are able to – and commonly do – leave unsatisfactory work situations and workplaces, and display high levels of mobility power. However, criminalisation, stigma and managerial interventions can constrain the labour mobility power of sex workers and their access to suitable workplaces. This explains in part why participants argue for the decriminalisation of third parties, which is synonymous with the decriminalisation of their workplaces.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes that the sex working participants to this research are highly mobile workers with a range of experiences with third parties and the ability to leave unsatisfactory workplaces, managers, and wider work relations. As such, they would benefit from the decriminalisation of third parties, since the broad interpretation of third party legislation makes their workplaces insecure and increases precarity amongst sex workers, thus restricting their agency to work in a manner of their choosing. Since the largest group of third parties encountered by participants consists of a sub-group of wider work relations – sex working colleagues – it argues that the decriminalisation of sex workers working together for safety, company, and increased income should be prioritised in legislative change. However, as both sex worker participants and sex worker-led organisations argue, the decriminalisation of all third parties and workplaces would increase rather than decrease sex workers' agency over their work, since it would allow sex workers access to labour rights as workers. Following from these findings, this chapter concludes that interventions and legislation should aim to increase the agency of sex workers within their relationships with third parties, and should centre the informed experience of sex workers.

## 2 Literature review and conceptual framework

In order to theorise sex workers' experiences with third parties and the effect third parties have on their work and wellbeing, this chapter will give an overview of debates on worker agency and control in informal work, as well as existing research into third parties in sex work. It will show that, in order to conceptualise the effect of third parties in sex work, theorisations of the employer/employee relation are insufficient due to the presence of non-managerial third parties. The first half of this chapter will provide an overview of conceptualisations of agency and control in informal work, both in general and in sex work specifically. First, it will explore disguised and dependent self-employment, both in mainstream work and in sex work, followed by an analysis of the continuum of labour unfreedom as not unique to sex work. Finally, sex worker agency will be theorised, both in sex work in general, and specifically in relation to third parties. The second half of this chapter will explore current research on third parties in sex work both internationally and within the UK, and will also delve deeper into the employment relations present in sex work. Together, this chapter will show that sex worker agency in their relationship with third parties should be theorised through the lens of how the agency of sex workers is enabled and constrained in relation to third parties, and that third parties involved with sex work need conceptualising beyond the employer/employee relation.

### 2.1 Agency and control in informal work

Underlying the legislation criminalising third parties in sex work, is the assumption that relationships between third parties and sex workers are automatically based on control over and exploitation of the worker (Scoular et al., 2019; Sanders et al., 2018b), while relationships between workers and third parties in other sectors are usually not assumed to be based on control and exploitation. However, this assumption that sex workers are uniquely vulnerable to exploitation, and non-sex workers are not – and the underlying assumption that sex workers do not have agency in their relationships with third parties – lack both empirical data and theorisation to support them. This section will explore the wider employment literature to discuss the ways both sex workers and non-sex workers, through disguised employment and dependent self-employment, may lack access to certain forms of agency and labour

rights. It then argues that all workers, and not just sex workers, fall on a continuum of labour unfreedom. This means that many workers, especially those in non-standard work, have constrained agency and have differing levels of access to forms of resistance such as labour mobility power. Finally, it will explore how the agency of sex workers may be theorised and explored in sex work in general, and in relation to third parties in sex work specifically.

The goal of this approach is to avoid a common pitfall of research into sex work, which is to focus on the question whether sex workers are victims or have free choice, rather than discussing the actual working conditions of sex workers (Huschke, 2017). Instead of focusing on the question of *whether* sex workers have agency, this section will discuss a variety of approaches to worker agency, and will argue that research into the working conditions of sex workers and the ways they *use* agency in the workplace is far more relevant. Power, in this research, will be conceptualised similarly to, and building on, Whitson's (2007) work on power in informal work, which in turn builds on the Foucauldian "analytics" (Foucault, 1998, p.82) of power. In Foucauldian analysis, power is not seen as a top-down, simple power-over another, but is instead part of a constant interplay of power and resistance, relationally produced, embedded in other forms of inequality, and omnipresent "because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1998, p.93). Similarly, a Foucauldian analytics of power views resistance to power as inherent within the power relationship, and states that power is in need of resistance in "the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relationships" (Foucault, 1998, p.95), while simultaneously resistance can only exist within power relationships. In this tradition, Whitson (2007) theorises informal work as simultaneously a consequence of unjust treatment by the state and economic systems, as well as a form of resistance against this unfair treatment. Whitson builds on both Foucault and on Scott's (1985) concept of 'everyday resistance' by defining resistance as actions and interactions which destabilise dominant power relations. Whitson extends the Foucauldian analytics of the interplay of power and resistance further:

"there can be no single actor 'with power' within the space of informal work: rather, individual employers, the state, workers (waged or self-employed), and the economic system more generally can all be understood as deploying power within this space. As a result, informal work cannot be conceptualized as purely 'a space of power/control' or 'a space of resistance', but rather must be understood as a space in which multiple expressions of power – including exploitation, subjugation, and resistance – interact simultaneously." (Whitson, 2007, p.2921)

In this work, worker agency and engagement with control will be considered in this dynamic way, in which it can be present in workplaces where forms of control may also be present at the same time, joining Whitson in viewing "all actors and actions as potentially powerful" (Whitson, 2007, p.2921).



### 2.1.1 False self-employment and disguised employees

Due to the fact that third party legislation criminalises employment relations between third parties and sex workers, there are no formal employment relations in full-service sex work. Instead, in most cases, employment is informal and outside of the scope of employment protection and regulation. Some sex workers do not have relationships with third parties that mirror employer/employee relations: Pitcher (2015) found that independent sex workers<sup>1</sup> are comparable to self-employed lone traders in other industries, in that they set their own services, prices and working hours, and Sanders et al. (2016), found that the sense of autonomy among sex workers in the UK is high. This may be affected by the fact that many sex workers cite the flexibility and limited hours of their work as one of the main reasons for doing sex work (Brooks-Gordon et al., 2015). However, in contrast to independent sex workers, Jeffrey (2018) found a high level of managerial control amongst full-service sex work agencies, due to the fact that workers in agencies are officially self-employed but are often treated as employees while lacking access to labour protections (Jeffrey, 2018). In many ways, this is mirrored in mainstream work and non-full service sex work by the use of labour structures such as dependent self-employment and gig work: many workers who are classified as independent or autonomous contractors lack “recourse to some of the most significant employment rights” (Prassl, 2016). In the theorisation of both full-service sex work and gig and informal work, the legal definitions of employer and employee/worker fall short, meaning that many workers who may not officially be employees are still in relationships that mirror an employer/employee relationship. Theorising the position of workers in non-standard employment relations and dependent self-employment is therefore an important part of understanding the relationships between sex workers and third parties.

Davidov (2004) claims that an employee is characterised by democratic deficits (or control) in relation to their employer, and by economic and social/psychological dependence on the employer. A similar argument is made on ‘disguised employees’ (mis)classified as self-employed independent contractors (Davidov, 2002). Instead of focusing on the legal status of workers, Davidov argues, one should ask to what extent workers are under the authority or control of the ‘employer’, and to what extent the worker/employee has an independent business, in order to assess the existence and extent of a democratic deficit, or control, and social or economic dependency. Similarly, Prassl’s (2016) functional concept of the employer states that an employment relationship is classified by the employer’s control over the employee, by the employer profiting off the worker’s labour, and by the level of dependence of the employee on their employer. Smeaton (2003) finds that many self-employed workers would prefer to be in permanent full time employment, low-paid workers are overrepresented among the

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<sup>1</sup> Independent sex workers tend to work without any third parties in a managerial position, although they might engage third parties in non-managerial positions to provide business services.

increasing number of self-employed workers, and both professionals and non-professionals are subject to 'constrained choices' rather than moving completely voluntary into self-employment. Smeaton emphasises that many female self-employed workers give domestic commitments as a reason for their self-employment, and rightfully points out that although this may seem a positive pull-factor of self-employed work, it can also be seen as a constrained choice due to a lack of flexible employment or affordable childcare. Additionally, many self-employed people, especially sole traders or others who do not employ others, have less in common with entrepreneurs and more with employees (Cranford et al., 2005). The fact that the daily work situation of self-employed workers is so similar to that of paid employees, Cranford et al. argue, means that many of these workers are in 'disguised self-employment' or false self-employment. Because of these similarities to employees, Cherry and Aloisi (2017) argue for people in dependent self-employment such as gig workers to be legally recognised as either workers or dependent contractors, in essence expanding the scope of employment relationships and worker protections.

Disguised self-employment allows firms to shift risks and some business costs to workers. Moore and Newsome (2018) argue that self-employment is used by firms to move 'unproductive time', a normal and expected part of business, away from their business costs and onto workers. They place this in a context in which solo self-employment dominates, and in which not only social costs such as sick pay, holiday pay, and pensions are transferred to the worker, but in which also an increasing amount of unpaid labour is expected of them. A similar type of financial exploitation and unpaid labour is found in strip clubs in the UK. Dancers are officially classified as independent contractors (self-employed) rather than employees (Sanders and Hardy, 2012). However, there are many circumstances that point to a level of control by managers that is not consistent with their self-employed status: 'employment' files kept on dancers, and dancers having to adhere to staff conduct, complaints, drugs and security policies in addition to a list of 'house rules' (Sanders and Hardy, 2012). These high levels of control point to false self-employment, where dancers are not being treated as contractors but rather as employees. However, dancers in strip clubs strongly identify with the label of self-employment, and would prefer more control and autonomy in the workplace (Cruz et al., 2016) in line with 'true' self-employment. In the case of dancers, then, any attempts to improve working conditions should not be based on a claim to employment rights, and should, argue Cruz et al., be based on claims to decent work and collective organising.

In a similar argument to Cruz et al. (2016), Sanders and Hardy (2012) show how false self-employment means strip club dancers have no recourse to employee protections, and simultaneously allows for managers to profit from high levels of financial control and power over dancers. Clubs make profits through charging dancers house fees, commission, fines and tips, and charging customers entry fees

and drinks purchases. Since most of these income streams come from the dancers, it is clear that the risks of doing business are shifted from club management to the dancers in a similar way to how firms shift business risks to temporary workers (see Forde (2001), Cranford et al. (2005), and Enright (2013)). One dancer states that management “started to view the girls as a source of direct income” (Sanders and Hardy, 2012, p.526). In fact, 70% of interviewed dancers report having completed a shift without making any profit, or even making a loss. The dependent self-employment of dancers leaves them with a lack of access to mainstream labour rights to push back against hyper-exploitative management practices, while also adopting all of the financial risk. Fudge and Strauss (2014) discuss similar risk transfers from firms to non-sex agency workers, and conclude that while agency work can be a voluntary choice based on workers’ desire for flexibility, it is more commonly simply a risk transfer from firms to vulnerable workers. Their follow up question is:

“Is temp agency work precarious because vulnerable segments of the labour market cluster in these types of jobs, or [are] temp agency workers (...) made precarious because of the nature of the work?” (Fudge and Strauss, 2014, p.170-171).

This same question can, and should, be asked of full-service sex work as well: if sex workers are vulnerable to exploitation by third parties, does this happen because sex work is inherently precarious and exploitative, or are sex workers made precarious by the legal and social context of their work and workplaces? In answer to this question, Fudge and Strauss (2014) point out that there is a distinct difference in how the agency and power of workers in different industries are viewed and constructed by legislators: even if the same level of managerial control is present, migrant hospitality or care workers are generally considered to have agency over their choice of work, while agricultural or sex workers are assumed to have less agency and power, and legislation and policing reflect these distinctions. These assumptions on the agency and freedom of sex workers could be one of the sources of the unique legal status of third parties in sex work, compared to third parties who engage disguised employees in mainstream sectors of the labour market. For this reason, it is important to further theorise freedom and agency amongst workers in both mainstream and sex work.

### 2.1.2 Continuum of labour unfreedom

Are sex workers uniquely unfree and lacking in agency in relation to their work? Since much of the debate on sex work focuses on whether sex work, and specifically any third parties in sex work, are inherently exploitative, this is a very relevant question. While the International Labour Organization’s (ILO) defines forced labour as labour “which is extracted from any person under menace of any penalty and which said person has not offered himself voluntarily” (ILO, in: Strauss 2012, p140), Strauss

criticises this position by pointing out that low wages, poor working condition, lack of alternative employment options, or economic necessity can also push people into work they would rather not do (Strauss, 2012). Strauss uses the term 'unfree labour' to cover these situations and argues that, within a capitalist system, there is a degree of exploitation of all workers, and that in many cases this means unfree labour is not recognised as such. In contrast with an individualist conceptualisation of agency, Fudge and Strauss (2014) emphasise that the *structures* that create precarity and exploitation are also the cause of labour market unfreedom: "the fundamental tension at the heart of capitalist social relations is that workers are free insofar as they have the capacity to sell their labour as a commodity, and unfree insofar as they are compelled to do so in order to reproduce themselves" (Fudge and Strauss, 2014, p.14). They acknowledge that this unfreedom may be worse for some than for others, using Skrivankova's concept of a continuum of unfreedom with decent (but still forced by economic necessity for most) work on one side, and forced labour on the other, and most workers somewhere in between those two points on the spectrum. This approach allows for a more nuanced conceptualisation of unfreedom in labour, which includes the ways not only employers, but also social structures such as states, gender, race, and borders affect the unfreedom of workers. Importantly, Skrivankova (2010) stresses the point that most workers in forced labour do not see themselves as victims, but rather as workers in a difficult situation, and that giving them access to labour rights and control over their lives must be central to those who aim to work against coercion and forced labour. She also points out that, while trafficking and forced labour may overlap, it is possible for either to exist without the other. These conceptualisations of labour unfreedom as a spectrum influenced by structural issues do not uniquely apply to sex workers, and place sex workers' experiences in the workplace on the same spectrum as those of mainstream workers.

Cruz (2018) uses the framework of the continuum of unfreedom to explore discourses on the agency of migrant sex workers in relation to their labour. Cruz critiques the way debates on sex work contrast 'free choice' and 'forced labour', and goes on to define 'free' labour as existing only when there is a system of labour protections and social rights available to the worker. A worker's freedom is therefore limited to freedom of movement, to change employers, and freedom to contest their employment conditions, but in reality does not extend to the freedom to not perform wage labour. In this way, sex workers have the unfreedoms they encounter in their labour in common with workers in other industries. Pitcher (2018, p.3) joins Cruz in a critique of common discourses on sex work, which:

"present a simple binary between 'free; and 'forced' labour, 'legitimate' or 'illegitimate' work, with no consideration of the extent to which there may be degrees of coercion and control in sex work or, indeed, other forms of labour".

Cruz explicitly explores how the continuum of unfreedom is gendered, racialized, and (re)enforced by legislation in the case of migrant sex workers in the UK. Existing hierarchies of gender, race, and migration legislation constrain the amount of agency workers have with regard to employment and work circumstances. These hierarchies therefore shape the relationships between third parties and migrant sex workers, and Cruz shows that migrant sex workers are often at the bottom of these hierarchies, which limits their labour agency. While sex workers are often at least nominally self-employed (Sanders and Hardy, 2012), Cruz stresses that this false self-employment – and even possible high earnings – does not undo the precarity of migrant sex workers in the UK. Nor does it diminish the dependence of workers on their employers/managers, or the control and unfreedom they experience.

The acknowledgement that labour unfreedom falls on a spectrum beyond the two poles of ‘free choice’ and ‘forced labour’ is a useful addition to conceptualisations of employment relations in the sex industry. Strauss (2012, p.137) states that the policy debates on unfree and forced labour have focussed on “emotive areas of trafficking (especially related to prostitution), ‘modern slavery’ and, to a lesser extent, child labour”. For this reason it is important to acknowledge the continuum of exploitation inherent in capitalism, in which all labour is unfree to a lesser or greater extent (Strauss, 2012) and in which therefore all workers are in need of labour protections and rights. Both Strauss and Cruz point out that, while there is more attention to labour exploitation in the sex industry, these unfree employment situations are based on structural hierarchies and not unique to that one industry, and encourage an engagement with the labour rights and conditions of workers.

### 2.1.3 Constrained agency and labour mobility power

If all, or nearly all, labour happens within the continuum of labour unfreedom, then how can we conceptualise worker agency, especially outside of the standard employment relationship? And since the structures of society affect people’s ability to exercise agency (Damman and Henkens, 2017), how do they affect people’s agency in the workplace? Some workers have access to unions and are able strike in ways that affect their employers, but other workers – especially workers in non-standard employment – are forced to use political labour movements instead (Coe and Jordhus-Lier, 2011). Coe and Jordhus-Lier (2011) argue that many workers have constrained agency to some extent, and that the influence of the state in labour issues and disputes should not be underestimated, since it shapes who is a worker and what that means. This is, of course, especially relevant to sex workers, who are policed, legislated and discussed as victims of third parties rather than as workers who need access to labour rights in their relationships with third parties. The concept of constrained agency:

“builds on the basic insight that workers cannot be understood as solely victims of the whims and power of capital and the state (that is, lacking any capacity to shape the geographies of capitalism). Nor, however, can they be viewed as the “free agents” of economic theory, as their opportunities to act are fundamentally shaped by uneven power relations and the multi-scalar regulatory context of contemporary relations of production. The capacity of workers to exercise agency is thus uneven and contingent, but it is real.” (Schwiter et al., 2018, p.465).

Schwiter et al. (2018) emphasise that the scope of workers’ agency is affected by their intersectional positionalities such as nationality, migration status, gender, ethnicity, class etc. as well as emphasising the importance of social reproduction. They use the term ‘constrained agent’ to foreground the decisions and trade-offs workers make when deciding where and how to work.

While, as constrained agents, informal workers lack sufficient labour protections and social security, many informal workers exercise agency in order to improve their working lives (Lee et al., 2020). Due to informal workers’ lack of access to official worker organising and certain forms of collective action, they are most likely to “undertake individualized actions for enhancing their working life” (Lee et al., 2020, p.97). One common way for precarious and informal workers to navigate precarity and undertake individual action is the use of their labour mobility power (Alberti, 2014), which is one component of labour power (Smith, C., 2006). This ability to leave a workplace and move to another, out of dissatisfaction or in protest, is an essential form of resistance to managerial power. While Smith focuses on the destabilising effect of labour mobility for employers, Alberti argues that (migrant agency-mediated) workers have a range of agentic reasons for using their mobility power that go beyond the workplace: increasing geographic mobility, increasing income, increasing opportunities to improve skills, flexibility in non-work time, and as part of a wider occupational strategy (Alberti, 2014). The ability to use labour mobility power is considered a key indicator of worker agency and “a proactive strategy designed to enhance mobility, agency and longevity within the [sex] industry” (Ham and Gerard, 2014, p.308). Yu et al. (2018) differentiate two types of labour mobility amongst female sex workers in China: spatial mobility, meaning jobs in different locations, and temporal mobility, or changing jobs. They found that sex workers used their labour mobility to combine work in different workplaces and types of sex (and mainstream) work based on their individual needs, ability to maximise their income, meet personal goals, and to minimise the risks of their work (Yu et al., 2018). Yu et al. emphasise the importance of informal networks of sex workers for their labour mobility: workers let each other know about workplaces with better conditions or pay, and due to the informal nature of the work, they are able to quickly move on to better workplaces in a different region or even country.

Labour mobility, however, is ambiguous, since mobility can both be a tool for or expression of worker agency and occupational freedom, but also a consequence of high managerial control and precarious working conditions (Alberti, 2014). Similar to the constrained choice of self-employment made by women with domestic responsibilities (Smeaton, 2003), labour mobility power can be used for a move towards positive change, or it can be used as a consequence of constraints stemming from the workers' context, and therefore as a move away from a bad or unsatisfactory work environment (Yu et al., 2018). However, reduced labour mobility power increases worker dependency on employers (Alberti and Danaj, 2017) and reduces their agency. This also means that the experiences of informal workers are not just of a simple and singular form of exploitation and resistance, but unique to the people, institutions and structures involved. Whitson concludes that:

“As a result, informal work cannot be conceptualized as purely ‘a space of power/control’ or ‘a space of resistance’, but rather must be understood as a space in which multiple expressions of power - including exploitation, subjugation, and resistance - interact simultaneously” (Whitson, 2007, p.2921).

In order to understand sex worker agency and resistance to workplace control by third parties, then, it is important to understand the various forms this agency and resistance can take in the context of informal work and sex work.

#### 2.1.4 Conceptualising agency in sex work

Public and legal discourses of sex work often focus on whether or not sex workers have agency in their work, and much of the academic discourse on sex work focuses on defining sex worker agency: Van Bavel (2017), in research on adolescent Tanzanian sex workers, conceptualises agency as being made up of intentionality, rationality and power, and emphasises that even in the most constraining of circumstances agency can be exercised. Alternatively, Swendeman et al. (2015, p.1013), define agency as “the process by which resources are mobilized to gain achievements”. A range of definitions of agency will be discussed in this chapter in the context of the sex work research they are attached to, such as: the exercise of control over one’s life (Bungay et al., 2010), making choices and decisions that lead to changes in everyday life (Sandy, 2006), and the capability to reflect and take action to improve conditions (Huschke, 2017). However, in this research, agency will be conceptualised with a focus on the context in which it is used, following Ham and Gerard (2014), going beyond questions on the presence of agency in order to investigate how and why agency is *used* or *constrained*. Ham and Gerard’s analysis of agency is twofold: firstly, they position their view of agency in a tradition of social theories that agency, being “the ability to act in a given context” (Ham and Gerard, 2014, p.300), is

universal and intrinsic to humans. Secondly, they follow in a tradition of feminist researchers intentionally sidestepping questions and theorisations with oppressive assumptions, in this case, the question of whether or not sex workers have agency. Instead, Ham and Gerard argue that:

"policy and practice requires a more nuanced understanding of agency that allows a climate in which frank discussion of 'vulnerabilizing' contexts is not yielded as a political tool to erase women's agency, resilience and resistance. This involves situating vulnerability and agency within the contexts workers operate in, rather than as static qualities inscribed on particular racialized and gendered bodies. Rather than continuing to fixate on the question of whether women in sex work have agency, a more generative question such as 'what constrains or enables the agency of women in sex work?'" (Ham and Gerard, 2014, p.309-310).

A similar approach to agency is taken by Sandy (2006, p.466), who theorises sex worker agency as comprising of constrained choice while rejecting victim narratives: "sex workers not as victims or free agents but as actors, or people who are capable of making choices and decisions that lead to transformations of consciousness and changes in everyday life". This theorisation of agency, in which sex workers are on the continuum of unfreedom like other workers, allows us to move past the discussion of the presence of agency in sex workers, which Ham and Gerard (2014) argue is an 'inherent human capacity', and allows research to focus on the decisions workers make, both within their work and in relation to third parties. This research will use Ham and Gerard's (2014) theorisation of agency as 'the ability to act in a given context' and 'an inherent human capacity', while emphasising the importance of discussing the use of agency rather than the presence of it. This is especially important since the denial of agency increases stigma and criminalisation of sex workers, clients, and third parties, and research that does not centre sex workers agency is less likely to reflect the realities of sex workers' lives (Burnes et al., 2018). Stigma will not be discussed in depth in this research, and will only be mentioned in the contexts of participants or theorists stating the presence or effects of stigma. However, in the tradition of the sociologist Goffman, stigma is defined as the "relationship between [an] attribute and [a] stereotype", in relation to the presence or assumption of "an attribute that is deeply discrediting" (Goffman, 1963, p.2-3). This has been expanded on in the field of sex work by (Pheterson, 1993), who emphasises the structural rather than interpersonal nature of the 'whore stigma'. Similarly, where stigma is mentioned in this research it will focus on the structural effects of stigma, even where it affects individual participants.

The dichotomy of the debate's focus on voluntary versus forced sex work simplifies a complex issue and hinders rather than enhances the wellbeing and agency of sex workers (Bettio et al., 2017) and the lack of attention paid by legislators to the diverse experiences of sex workers directly undermines



sex workers' agency and access to labour rights (Pitcher, 2018). Similarly, in naming someone a sex slave rather than a worker, the state has fewer obligations and protections for them, not more (O'Connell Davidson, 2006), and migrant sex workers can and are being deported, regardless of their status as 'trafficked'. A state which focuses on eradicating forced sexual labour rather than an expansion of labour rights for sex workers, then, is likely a state that extends its monopoly on power, its control of mobility, and the restriction of freedom of movement (O'Connell Davidson, 2016). O'Connell Davidson (2014) argues that what many find so distasteful about sex work is its embodied nature, but that no labour can be completely separated from the body of the worker. Focusing on "prostitutes' and other workers' shared experience of selling aspects of their embodied selves" (O'Connell Davidson, 2014, p.529) shows that without alternatives to 'wage slavery', all workers share this experience of self-commodification under capitalism. For this reason it is important to support the rights of sex workers as workers while staying critical of the social and political inequalities underpinning markets, including sex markets (O'Connell Davidson, 2002).

Additionally, the concept of a sex work 'victim' is highly gendered and racialised, and presents migrant women especially as vulnerable and helpless (Kempadoo et al., 2012). For many theorists and policy makers who accept the victimhood narrative, the recognition of agency is dependent on whether that agency is exercised within sex work or outside of it, meaning that migrant sex workers have to conform to (and even perform) mainstream ideas of trafficking victims in order to prevent deportation, denying their own agency (Ham and Gerard, 2014). Instead of seeing vulnerability as intrinsic to a person, Ham and Gerard view it as a "relation between an agent and a context, so that the same worker can experience different types of vulnerability and agency across different workspaces" (Ham and Gerard, 2014, p.301). For instance, they found that some workers prefer working in illegal brothels over legal ones, because clients are less demanding and are there for a shorter time. This is an illustration of less visible forms of agency, including actively avoiding visibility to the state or support organisations in order to avoid stigma and other social harms. Although avoiding visibility is, by nature, a form of agency use that is hard to observe or research, it is undeniably one of the many ways agency can be used by sex workers. Ham and Gerard (2014, p.310) then argue for a move from discussions of vulnerability and agency, towards enquiries into the contexts that constrain or enable the agency of sex workers, and "recognizing forms of agency, such as strategic invisibility, that may not be readily apparent as more politically visible actions".

### 2.1.5 Sex worker agency in relation to third parties

The mainstream discourse on third parties in sex work, which assumes the presence of exploitation and control, creates a view of sex workers as victims rather than workers with agency. If sex workers are thought to be victims, then sex work is seen as violence and all third parties are automatically abusive (Bruckert and Law, 2013). This circular reasoning sidesteps the experiences of sex workers, the variety of third party roles that exist in sex work, the services third parties provide, and the agency of sex workers within their work and in relation to third parties – many of which will be discussed in Section 2.2 and the rest of this work.

Going beyond assumptions of control and the question of *whether* sex workers have agency, and instead discussing the ways control and agency play out in the labour process within strip clubs, Hardy and Sanders (2014) found strong disciplinary power and high levels of control exerted by strip club management. Even though strippers in these venues are technically self-employed independent contractors, they find that the levels of control by clubs “makes the reality of self-employment tenuous and contradictory” (Hardy and Sanders, 2014, p.73). They describe this as the ‘myth of self-employment’, a form of false self-employment in which dancers take on financial risks but do not get the freedom from managerial control that is usually associated with that. The strip club industry is unique in its contradiction that “some elements of erotic dance are highly regulated, while the exploitation of dancers and regulation of their working conditions remains outside legal frameworks” (Hardy and Sanders, 2014, p.7), and so strippers lack worker protections. While the legal status of third parties in stripping and third parties in full-service sex work are different, Jeffrey (2018) similarly found a high level of control amongst full-service sex work agencies, in which workers are also officially self-employed but lack labour protections, causing “precariousness rather than flexibility, as is the case in so many other industries in the neo-liberal era” (Jeffrey, 2018, p.132-133).

Clearly, there is a wide range of constraints that affect the context of sex workers’ decision making with regards to their work, from dependent self-employment and managerial control, to autonomy over working hours. Research with a focus on the material conditions of the labour of sex work, such as that by Hardy and Sanders or Jeffrey, allows us to investigate how “sex workers continue to exercise control in spite of disadvantage” (Bungay et al., 2010, p.15). The criminalisation of third parties fails to distinguish between ‘being managed’ and ‘bad management’, and rather than eradicating management all together, this criminalisation has prevented good management practices from becoming commonplace (Jeffrey, 2018). Instead of criminalisation, Jeffrey (2018, p.124) argues that policy should focus on improving access for sex workers to “tools for self-empowerment, including complaint mechanisms, the ability to move between workplaces, and useful knowledge on the operation of the law and their rights”. Huschke (2017, p.195) defines agency as “the capability to

reflect on one's choices and to subsequently take action to reach one's life goals or improve one's living conditions", and found that the majority of sex workers in Northern Ireland have agency over the services they provide, but that criminalisation and stigma make sex work labour relations more open to abuse than legal businesses (Huschke, 2017). Similarly, Bruckert and Law (2018) noted that agency owners and managers treat sex workers as employees whom they can fire and hire, and concluded that most indoor sex workers with a manager are essentially dependent contractors or in false self-employment:

"they usually work exclusively for one establishment, they are not paid a wage/salary but relinquish a portion of their fees (between 30 and 50 per cent in our research) to the agency upon which they rely for the location, equipment, and clients." (Bruckert and Law, 2018, p.92).

Laws which purport to protect sex workers from third parties, then, do not provide protections to them as workers.

If managers in certain sex work contexts exert control over the labour process, then sex workers, like other workers, will likely use their agency to respond to and resist that control. Marcus et al. (2014) found that adolescent sex workers in the United States experienced increasing agency and control over their work over time, regardless of management status. They found "a continuum of agency" (Marcus et al., 2014, p.232) present amongst participants, in which their agency was constrained by their context – such as economic vulnerability, employment options, educational opportunities and housing – but not directly by third parties. This continuum of agency both contradicts and mirrors Skrivankova's continuum of unfreedom: both acknowledge that no worker is fully free and all are constrained by circumstances, but where Skrivankova emphasises that no worker is fully free, Marcus et al. emphasise that some level of agency is always present amongst the sex workers they encountered. The continuum of unfreedom and the continuum of agency therefore describe the same range of access to agency and choice, but with a different focus on either limited freedom due to contextual constraints, or on agency *despite* these same contextual constraints.

One of those contextual constraints is the legal context of sex work and sex workplaces. Criminalisation and decriminalisation affect the ability of sex workers to access labour rights, but may not do so in the same way it does in mainstream work. Abel and Ludeke (2021) conclude the main challenge for indoor managed sex workers is that they are treated as employees rather than independent contractors: control over shifts, work hours, and pricing. They found that, even when workers knew their labour rights in the decriminalised context of New Zealand, it was often easier and more fruitful for workers to move to a different workplace than to make an official complaint. However, they found that:

“decriminalisation did have a meaningful impact on the way sex workers negotiated potentially exploitative dimensions of brothel-based work. Decriminalisation has provided the context where it is possible for sex workers to experience safer and more supportive work environments than they otherwise might, where they can (and sometimes do) contest managerial control.” (Abel and Ludeke, 2021, p.1).

These findings about the nuanced effects of legislation on the working lives of sex workers and their relationships with third parties can only be found by investigating *how* sex workers use their agency, rather than asking whether they have agency to begin with.

In summary, due to the criminalisation of third parties in sex work, legal employment relations in sex work are not possible, but sex workers can still have relationships with third parties that mirror the employer/employee relation. False self-employment is common both in and out of sex work (Sanders and Hardy, 2012), and can be recognised by employer control and profit (Prassl, 2016), worker dependence on the employer (Davidov, 2002), and whether or not the worker has an independent business (Davidov, 2004). All workers, not just sex workers, are on a continuum of unfreedom (Skrivankova, 2010) dictated by their context. For workers with constrained agency, such as informal and marginalised workers (Schwiter et al., 2018), the use of their labour mobility power (Smith, C., 2006; Alberti, 2014) can be a central strategy for the use of agency. Managed sex workers are often treated as employees (Hardy and Sanders, 2014) yet lack access to worker protections, but neither narratives that posit sex workers as victims nor legislation that criminalises third parties help sex workers access protections as workers. Therefore, echoing Ham and Gerard (2014), this research will focus on asking how sex workers’ agency is *used* and *constrained* in their relationships with third parties. This will allow the conceptualisation of the effects of social, political and material circumstances on the experiences sex workers have in their workplaces, and on their relationships with third parties.

The next section will discuss the current research on the wide range of third party roles, services, and relationships that exist in full-service sex work, both internationally and in the UK.

## 2.2 Third parties in sex work

This section aims to give an overview of recent research into sex work as an issue of work and labour, the range of third party roles that are present in sex work, and the current status of knowledge and

debates on third parties in sex work both internationally and in the UK. Together, it will show that rather than being universally exploitative, as assumed by legislation, the relationships between sex workers and third parties are neither static nor homogenous, and are part of a complex labour market which is shaped by the local context (International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe, 2016).

### 2.2.1 Sex work as work

The academic study of sex work as an issue of work (rather than a moral, political, criminological, or health issue) has grown expansively over the last decades. Although full-service sex work and related activities are not fully decriminalised in the UK, sex workers are liable to pay tax over any income earned, and so it can be argued that sex work is considered work by the government. Within academia, sex work is increasingly studied as an issue of labour with “particular forms of exploitation and stigmatisation” (Adriaenssens et al., 2016), which means there is a new body of research focussing on quality of work in sex work, decision making and agency, sex work as body work, aesthetic labour, care work, service work, emotional labour, dirty work, and sexual labour, and on sexual labour markets being diversely racialized and gendered (Hardy et al., 2013; Dodsworth, 2014; Mai, 2012; Rivers-Moore, 2012; Rivers-Moore, 2013; Smith, N.J. and Laing, 2012; Hardy, 2016). Although some of these issues will be discussed here, the focus of this work is on one aspect of sex work as labour: the relationship between sex workers and third parties. However, the context in which sex work takes place is an important aspect of these relationships, and this includes the wider labour market as well as the legal context. Sex workers commonly combine their sexual labour with mainstream labour – often as a consequence of casualisation of mainstream work and the lack of a social safety net – in order to deal with financial emergencies, or to pay tuition or mortgages. This ‘duality’ of worker identities results in a double precarity, since sex workers can lose a mainstream job if their sex work becomes known, but they lack worker protections in their sex work since it is not fully accepted as work within society and the legal system (Bowen, 2021). Many authors, including Mac and Smith (2018), point out that the criminalisation of full-service workplaces means that workers in sex workplaces uniquely lack access to protections such as employment tribunals, contracts and occupational health. However, the question of how this criminalisation of workplaces affects workers deserves more attention in research.

While there have been many attempts to estimate the size of the sex industry and the number of people doing sex work in the UK (Cusick et al., 2009; Brooks-Gordon et al., 2015), there are no universally trusted figures on any of these topics due to the hidden nature of the sex industry (Home Affairs Committee, 2016) and it is often seen as impossible to provide a reliable estimate of the

number of sex workers (Sanders et al., 2018a). There is, however, a picture of the sex industry that become clearer through research, even if quantitative data is often an estimation. Street-based, or outdoor, sex work represents a relatively small minority of sex work, Brooks-Gordon et al. (2015) estimate that only between 5 and 12% of the sex work market is comprised of street-based workers, and that although an estimated 41% of sex workers are migrants, this rises to 80% in London. They claim that male and transgender workers make up between 8-15% of the sex industry in the UK, but do not clarify whether this only includes workers who market themselves as transgender, or also those who pretend to be cis men or women for their work. Whowell (2010) critiques the absence of male sex workers from policy and discourse – men discussed are generally managers or clients – which ignores the needs and experiences of male sex workers (and often all sex workers who are not cis women).

Generally, research on full-service sex work differentiates between street-based work, managed premises, agency work, and independent indoor work (Pitcher, 2018), and all these areas of sex work are internally diverse in relation to the way businesses and work relationships are organised by workers and potential third parties. The introduction of widespread use of the internet has led to decreased street-based and managed work, and an increase in independent work (Adriaenssens et al., 2016). However, within internet sex work there is a distinction between services that take place online, and services that are advertised online but take place in person. The first category, online sex work, includes services such as webcam and direct chat, does not involve in-person full-service sex work and therefore does not fall under the remit of this thesis. The second category, in-person full-service sex work that is advertised online, is referred to as “Direct Internet-based or enabled sex work” (Sanders et al., 2018b, p.15), or as “digitally mediated direct sex work” (Hardy and Barbagallo, 2021, p.534).

### 2.2.2 Types of third parties

There is no definition of third party that is consistently and commonly used in literature on third parties related to sex work. This research will use a definition of third parties – both within and outside the sex industry – which defines third parties as persons who:

“provide (more or less) valuable services that allow us, as consumers or workers, to access skills and competencies we do not possess, to avoid tasks we do not enjoy, to free up time for other activities, or to connect with individuals/businesses with whom we do not, in the normal course of our lives, have contact.” (Bruckert, 2018a, p.8)

Which roles third parties take on in sex work is dependent on the context of the sex worker, on the area of sex work involved, on the needs of the sex worker, and on the local legislation. The International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe (2016) states that:

“the category of third parties includes sex workers’ bosses, brothel keepers, agents or managers, as well as those letting premises for sex work, offering advertisement, transport or security. All of these third party relations significantly shape sex workers’ labour arrangements and working conditions”

There is very little research which theorises or creates an overview of the different types of third parties in sex work. Instead, most descriptions of third parties are specific to a single research context. For instance, May et al. (2000) and Sanders et al. (2009) focus solely on third parties in managerial roles, while Whittaker and Hart (1996) and Cooper et al. (2007) focus on the role of maids. Whowell (2010) discusses some third parties involved in facilitating between male sex workers and clients in gay venues in Manchester, mainly bouncers and bar managers. Pitcher (2015) discusses third parties in a subcontracted role, such as accountants or web developers, and Sanders and Campbell (2007) discuss sex workers co-working with colleagues. Marcus et al. (2016), in their North American research field, differentiate between third parties in a managerial position, sometimes referred to as ‘pimps’<sup>2</sup>, for whom their third party role is their primary source of income, and ‘spot-pimps’ who occasionally refer clients to sex workers in exchange for a tip from the worker.

In the context of the UK sex markets, Sanders (2008, p.710) has the most structured overview of third party roles, by differentiating six “ancillary industries that facilitate and support the sex markets: premises; advertising; security; transport; presentation; recreation and hospitality”. These include third parties in the role of landlords, print and online directories, web developers and hosts, printers and ‘card boys’ who post advertisements in phone boxes, professional bouncers, partners in a security role, maids/receptionists, cab drivers and firms, cleaners, handy men, beauty practitioners, in-brothel sales staff (who sell clothes or perfume), food delivery, and delivery of alcohol or drugs.

The most extensive classification of third parties in sex work is created by Bruckert and Law (2013) in their report on third parties in indoor sex work (in other words, premise, independent and agency work) in Canada. In this report, they differentiate between third party agencies, associates, and contractors:

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<sup>2</sup> This work will not use the term ‘pimp’ unless used by a participant, due to the localised meaning and racialised connotations of the term, due to the fact that it is rarely used within the British context, and due to the impreciseness of the term. Instead, terms like third parties in a managerial position, abusive and controlling management, or descriptions of specific types of behaviour will be used.

“Agencies, hire sex workers, who then have a dependent contractor or employer/employee type relationship with the third party. Associates are third parties who are partners or collaborators with sex workers. Finally, Contractors are third parties who are hired by sex workers.” (Bruckert and Law, 2013, p.31).

They argue that these three categories are on a continuum of control or authority over sex workers, and further define sub-categories of third parties in their report. Agencies, in their categorisation, often exert managerial control over workers and their relationship with workers can resemble an employer/employee relationship if the agency has control over pay, work hours, and the ways that sex workers work. The relationship with associates and contractors, however, does not include the same levels of power and control – and in fact, in the case of contractors, it is possible that sex workers have employer-like power over third parties rather than the other way around. This classification (see Figure 1) by Bruckert and Law makes clear that there are important differences between third parties, and that their relationships with sex workers cannot all be assumed to have the same balance and level of power and authority.

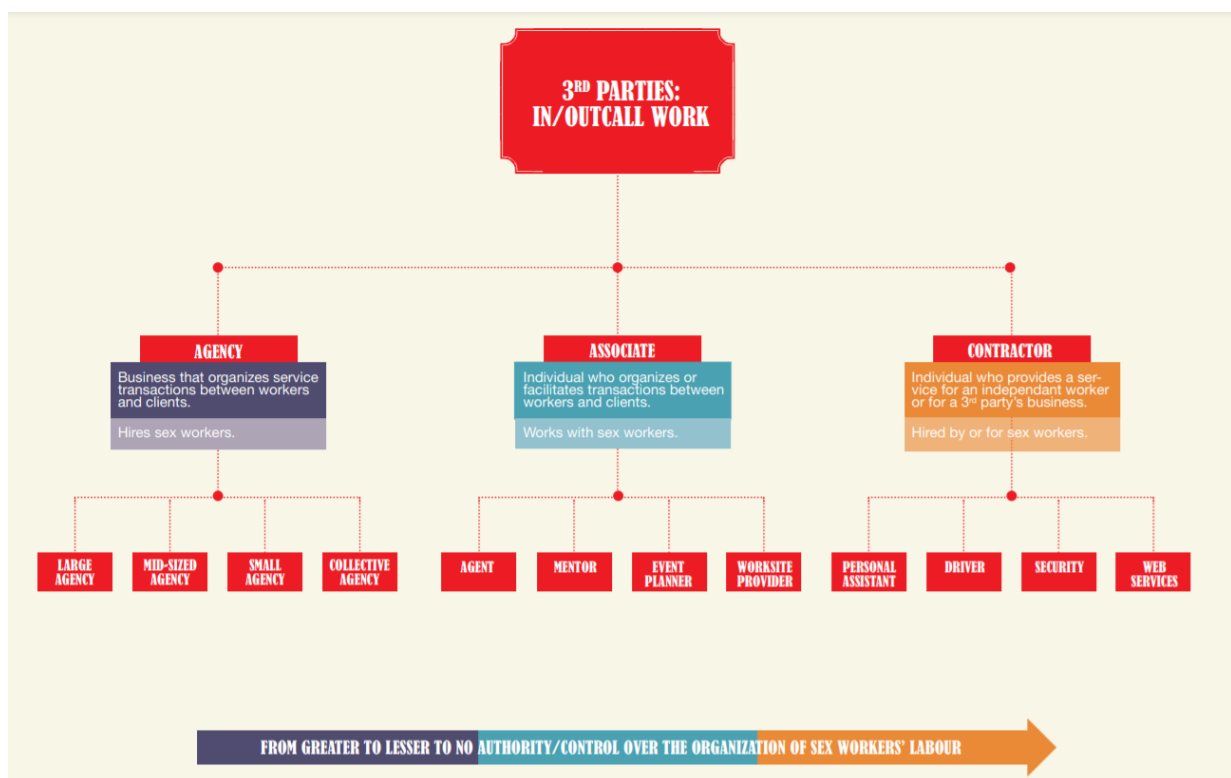


Figure 1: Image reproduced from Bruckert and Law (2013, p.32), with permission.



Bruckert and Law (2013) discuss how agencies organise transactions between worker and client, and can be premise owners/managers and escort agencies. Related to agencies are middle managers, such as receptionists and security staff at some premises, who are in the contradictory position of enforcing rules but also being reliant on workers for their indirect or direct income. Associates can perform a wide range of third party roles, such as the ‘spot pimp’ role discussed by Marcus et al. (2016), fellow sex workers who train or mentor new workers, sex party organisers, landlords, and sex workers who rent out their workspace to colleagues. Contractors are hired by sex workers to provide services for them, and include personal assistants, drivers, security hired by sex workers themselves, and those who provide online advertising (platforms) for sex workers. Bruckert (2018b, p.37) states that in these contractor relationships “it is the sex worker who hires and establishes expectations”, and that the contractors do not have power or control over the sex workers’ labour. However, Bruckert and Law (2013, p.80) do point out that website moderators can have a form of power over sex workers, since they “have the authority to suspend or ban workers from their sites; thereby reducing the sex worker’s advertising options and potentially their income”. In later work, Bruckert and Law (2018) argue that independent sex work entails the running of a complex business which requires skills, assets, time and labour, and that “Some sex workers do not have the money to start and maintain their own business; others lack the time, interest, or competence to assume responsibility for wide-ranging administrative tasks” (Bruckert and Law, 2018, p.84). For this reason, they argue, it is clear that third parties provide concrete benefits to sex workers, and the state’s assumption that all third party relationships in sex work are exploitative is incorrect. While this model of a spectrum of third parties that includes agents, associates and contractors is both useful and detailed, a downside is that there are relationships in sex work that do not perfectly fit onto this model. For example website moderators, who can hold a significant amount of power over sex workers livelihoods (Brouwers and Herrmann, 2020) despite being contractors within this model. It is important that any analysis of third parties includes the nuances and grey areas that are present within sex workers’ relationships with third parties

### 2.2.3 International research on third parties in sex work

Besides this in-depth classification of third parties in the Canadian indoor sex markets, there is some research on third parties in sex work internationally that is of more limited scope. Rather than having a labour focus, the majority of this research focuses on the effect of managers or other third parties on either the health, especially HIV prevention, or the safety of sex workers. With regards to occupational health, rather than sexual and reproductive health, Vanwesenbeeck (2005) – in her research on burnout among sex workers in indoor work venues in the Netherlands such as brothels, windows, escort businesses, and sex clubs – found that supportive management and autonomy at

work can help prevent burnout, as do positive relationships with colleagues. The rates of burnout symptoms found among sex workers were not higher than a comparison group of female health care workers.

The effects of relationships with managers and colleagues on sex worker safety are also researched internationally. In the context of indoor sex work venues in Switzerland, Büsschi (2014) found male managers with no experience in sex work have a more authoritarian management style than female or ex-worker managers, and many brothel managers see their role in large part as security and violence prevention. Katsulis et al. (2010) found a range of third party relationships amongst street-based workers in Mexico: they often work together with colleagues, writing down car details and waiting for one another to return before they see a client. Workers who use hotels tip hotel staff not only for cleaning, and also for timekeeping and safety tasks. Violence at the hands of third parties was found to be extremely rare: less than one percent of sex workers reports having experienced this. While sometimes partners took on a security role, the concept of a pimp may simply not be culturally relevant to Mexico:

“When asked about whether or not they had a pimp (a personal manager to whom they paid their earnings), most participants in this study laughed. Only one replied yes, stating that she considered her live-in boyfriend a “pimp,” because he was lazy and lived off of her earnings” (Katsulis et al., 2010, p.352).

Little research on third parties in sex work is focused on the labour processes in sex work. This has an outsized effect on the ways sex workers and third parties are viewed by policy makers, since “the stereotypes of pimps, procurers and parasites that flourish and take on an aura of ‘truth’ in the absence of empirical evidence” (Bruckert and Law, 2013, p.83). Even in research that does show the presence of people identified by themselves or by sex workers as ‘pimps’ – such as the thorough research into employment relations in street-based sex work in New Jersey, USA, done by Marcus et al. (2016) – shows a different image of these relationships than the general imagination of these third parties. They found a wide variety of third party roles related to street-based sex work, differentiating between self-described full-time pimps who “derived their primary income from exclusive relationships with one or more sex workers” and spot-pimps: “street hustlers and drug dealer who refer walk-up customers to sex workers for tips, but have no exclusive relationship” (Marcus et al., 2016, p.50). They observed that:

“Sex workers who were able to command the highest prices and had the most regular customers generally had the greatest choice in pimps – leading them to select ones who, as

one woman in her late 20s described, “treats me well, keeps me happy, finds me the best customers, and makes me a whole lot of money” (Marcus et al., 2016, p.53).

These findings point to a relationship between sex workers and third parties that is more complicated than the simple top-down control assumed in English, and much international, sex work legislation. According to Marcus et al. (2016, p.55), pimps mostly find clients, run errands, and provide protection. In fact, “spot-pimps” are described as providing “temporary and casualized labor”, and are infrequently engaged by sex workers to provide them with clients in exchange for \$10 to \$20 tips. They also found that, occasionally, local shop owners and other small businessmen also provide third party services to sex workers - and many sex workers under the age of 21 also provided protection, support and other third party services to peers, often without any exchange of payment. This shows that there are a range of third party roles present in street-based sex work, including ones that take on an associate or contractor role in the Bruckert model. Finally, Marcus et al. (2016) found that pimps/personal managers generally avoided working with minors for three main reasons: an abundance of voluntary adult sex workers, lower skill and experience among younger sex workers, and lower labour discipline in younger sex workers, all of which make working with adult sex workers more profitable for third parties. Of course it is unclear if, and to what extent, any findings of this work can be extrapolated to the UK, but it does show that, even amongst marginalised workers, relationships with third parties are more varied than simply forced labour relationships between managers and sex workers.

Bruckert (2018b) and Law (Bruckert and Law, 2013; Bruckert and Law, 2018) have conducted the most extensive research on the labour relationships between sex workers and third parties in the indoor sex industry. Their interviews with both third parties and sex workers in Canada focused on the wide range of third party roles in sex work, and found that “the line between sex worker and third party is exceptionally porous, rendering the sharp distinction between sex workers (as victims) and third parties (as predators) spurious” (Bruckert, 2018b, p.36). Another finding is that third party work in the sex industry is largely performed by women. Often, sex workers move into management in order to leave direct sex work itself, out of frustration with bad management or conditions, or are motivated by potential profits. Bruckert and Law (2013) find that many agencies require exclusivity and do not want workers employed by other agencies at the same time. At times, to maximise income, third parties are known to lie to a client about the way a worker looks, or may be “less than diligent in regard to screening” (Bruckert and Law, 2018, p.89), which can have a negative effect on the safety of the worker. Bruckert and Law critique the assumption that third parties are automatically considered to be exploiting workers, and the idea that sex workers who engage third parties are automatically vulnerable and in need of state intervention (Bruckert and Law, 2013). They point out that to

criminalise these relationships between workers and third parties, means that sex workers do not have access to safeguards, recognised labour organising, or strikes as a method of improving their work circumstances.

All research findings are influenced by the local legal context in which sex work occurs, which is usually different from the legal context in England, but effects on different types of sex work legislation on wider work relations in sex work are only limitedly studied. Orchiston (2017), in her research on the legalised (and therefore regulated rather than decriminalised) sex work settings in New South Wales and Queensland, Australia, found that due to the regulation of sex work, brothel managers have extensive power over the workers: making demands of clothing and grooming, working hours and shifts, fines, and even forbidding them to work independently in addition to their brothel work. Generally, managers maintain a high level of control of workers, and Orchiston concludes that legalisation has not necessarily brought better employment standards to sex workers in Australia (Orchiston, 2017). These findings are echoed by Maher et al. (2012). In the criminalised context of most of the United States, Gira Grant (2014) describes how illegal workspaces can still be run in a relatively formal way:

“The dungeon is informal only to the extent that the labor producing inside its wall isn’t regarded as real work. There are shift meetings, schedules, and a commission split based on seniority. Utility bills arrive, and are paid. Property taxes, too. In some cases the manager would give discreet employment references. And sometimes people were fired.” (Gira Grant, 2014, p.51).

In other words, the legal context of a workplace does not inherently predict the conditions within that workplace. However, Bruckert and Law (2018, p.93) point out that criminalisation prevents the development of industry standards or access to legal protections, meaning that sex workers “have no legal recourse against wrongful dismissal, arbitrary and undeserved disciplinary or labour practices (...), or sexual harassment from third parties”. Additionally, stigma and criminalisation make it harder for sex workers to run even an independent business, since they are at times denied service by landlords and financial institutions such as banks (Jeffrey, 2018), all of which can push sex workers towards working in criminalised managed workplaces,.

In contrast to these criminalised and legalised (also referred to as partial criminalisation, since all parts of the sex industry that are not legalised are still criminalised) contexts, is the decriminalisation of sex work and third parties in New Zealand. Abel and Ludeke (2021) found that the decriminalisation of sex workplaces has considerably changed the way labour is organised in managed premises, and enables access to labour rights for some sex workers. While in the past, many brothel managers had used fines

as a way of controlling sex workers and shifting financial risk from management onto workers, decriminalisation has made that harder to do. One of their participants stated “that the receptionist at the brothel she worked at had fined her for being late for a shift, but knowing her rights, she complained to management who immediately reimbursed her” (Abel and Ludeke, 2021, p.8). However, not all sex workers in a decriminalised environment have access to or use resistance to bad management as their first response to an unsatisfactory workplace, instead using their labour mobility power to move to other workplaces in search of better working conditions or environments. Abel and Ludeke (2021) also note that there has been a move towards independent work and work from home amongst sex workers since the decriminalisation of sex work. However, participants saw several benefits of working in managed premises:

“the sex workers interviewed in this study saw working in brothels as a way of “out-sourcing” tasks, such as advertising and making bookings, activities that they did not necessarily want to perform themselves. It also provided a place to work away from their own home” (Abel and Ludeke, 2021, p.2)

#### 2.2.4 Third party research in UK

Like international research on third parties, UK research on third parties in sex work – especially research with a labour perspective - is relatively rare and usually recent. However, the legal status of third parties in sex work in England is relatively unique, since third parties are criminalised but indoor sex work itself is not, and therefore the local context is essential to understanding sex workers’ experiences with third parties.

##### 2.2.4.1 Roles of third parties

A minority of UK literature that mentions third parties in sex work does this as the focus of their research. Whowell (2010) found some third parties involved in facilitating between male sex workers and clients in gay venues in Manchester, mainly bouncers and bar managers, that could be compared to the ‘spot pimps’ described by Marcus et al. (2016). Their role is informal, and they occasionally let customers know who is working at the moment, or rent out a space where sex workers can see a client they have picked up in or near the bar. However, Whowell has not researched any financial transactions or the nature of the relationships involved from a work relations perspective.

As discussed above, Sanders (2008, p.710) describes six “ancillary industries that facilitate and support the sex markets: premises; advertising; security; transport; presentation; recreation and hospitality”.

Premises mostly include rented properties where women work alone or collectively at the same or different times. Sanders adds that since this puts the landlords at risk of being charged with brothel keeping, landlords often charge high, and sometimes extortionate, rents. Advertising, and especially online advertising, is crucial to contemporary sex work. Sanders states that besides the traditional cards in phone boxes, advertising can now include photographers, web designers and webmasters, web directories and other advertising sites have become a large part of the advertising landscape. Sanders (2008) states that both official security and unofficial security, in the form of for instance partners of workers checking in on their safety, can be present. She does not mention maids or colleagues as security, but these third parties can also take on a security role. Drivers or cab firms connected to individual premises, brothels or sex workers can have both a transport and security role (Sanders, 2008). However, the use of cab firms and in-person security has become notably less common since this research happened, at least in part due to the policing of drivers and security staff, but also due to the introduction of rideshare companies and easier access to incidental taxi drivers.

#### *2.2.4.2 Third parties and safety*

The effects of the criminalisation of third parties, and especially the effects of the criminalisation of two or more workers working together, on the safety of workers is regularly pointed out. This criminalisation prevents co-working for safety, prevents crime reporting (Campbell et al., 2019), and forces sex workers to work in isolation (Pitcher and Wijers, 2014; Bowen, 2021). For the same reason, Mac and Smith (2018) contrast sex work, in which lone working is the only legal option, with other professions, such as healthcare and social work, in which workers are warned against lone working by unions and professional organisations. In other words, while “[m]odes of self-employment in the indoor sex industry, from dependent workers to entrepreneurs, are similar to those in the formal economy” (Pitcher, 2015, p.120), sex work is unique in England in that the state has determined that lone working without any management or support is the only legal business arrangement.

Besides co-working, sex workers have additional safety strategies that involve colleagues: informal information sharing and the ‘buddy system’. Just over 30% of participants in the Sanders et al. (2018b) investigation into sex workers who do online and digitally mediated sex work, use an informal system of safety buddies: fellow sex workers who are not physically present but still look out for the safety of a co-worker when they see clients. This number might be higher amongst workers who do full-service sex work in general, since a part of the sample of the research of Sanders et al. does not meet clients in person. Additionally, Campbell et al. (2019) found that just over 40% of their research participants

used informal information sharing between sex workers to warn each other about dangerous clients and other safety information.

In addition to colleagues who provide safety for workers, Sanders et al. (2018b) found that 23.2% of their participants had had someone present in their work locations for security reasons: 11% had used door staff, and 10.4% a driver who also fulfilled a security role. Sanders et al. (2018b, p.107) conclude that: “This shows that for a small group, having third party support is part of their business model.”. Scoular et al. (2019, p.214) state about the criminalisation of third parties that “although prostitution is not illegal, it is difficult and sometimes impossible for individuals to work safely without breaking these laws”, which shows that legislation is driven by a sex work abolition worldview, rather than one that centres the safety of sex workers. While abuses are possible within relationships between sex workers and third parties, these relationships can also be beneficial for workers and do not automatically include a third party having control over a sex worker (Scoular et al., 2019). Similarly, Campbell et al. (2019) find that the criminalisation of third parties prevents sex workers from running their businesses like other workers. Sanders et al. (2018b, p.108) found that while just under a quarter of sex workers shared premises with colleagues, when “asked what change they felt could most improve sex worker safety, allowing sex workers to work together was the most frequently identified measure”. Ultimately, the criminalisation of third parties seems to have a strong chilling effect, by which workers feel unable to take the security measures they feel would most protect them.

#### *2.2.4.3 The role of maids*

Whittaker and Hart (1996) note that sex workers respond to and try to prevent risks by co-working with a colleague, or by using a partner or friend as a safety person. They state that the commonly used term ‘maid’ implies a subordinate position to the sex worker she works with, yet they observed 4 types of maid/worker relationships. In the first, the sex worker employs the maid as a receptionist to do housework and provide security; the second relationship is more friendly and includes a friendship outside of work; the third relationship is between an experienced maid and a new sex worker, and the maid has more control and gives more advice. Finally, in the fourth type of worker/maid relationship, the maid has a managerial role and has control over the hiring and firing of workers (Whittaker and Hart, 1996). Although this research very in depth, it is likely that the advent of internet advertising, changes in legislation, and changes in the sex markets in general have changed relationships between sex workers and third parties since the 1990’s, as it has become easier for sex workers to advertise online without the need to work in a premise or with a third party.

Cooper et al. (2007), researched the way the relationship between workers and managers/maids effect sex workers' sexual health risks. They state that in London walk-ups the majority of the sex workers are migrants, and the majority of the maids are what they call 'local'. They define 'maids' as someone who: "acts as a receptionist and usually manages the premises" (Cooper et al., 2007, p.43) – but do not go deeper into a definition of the term maid, or what managing entails. They do go into detail about the financial arrangements in premises with maids:

"in some flats maids are employed by sex workers and there are occasional co-operatives also. Most walk-in flats, however, are managed by maids who hire sex workers on a shift basis. (...) Sex workers pay a daily rent (...) and maids are paid a basic wage (...) plus a commission on earnings. Sex workers are also responsible for running costs such as electricity, laundry and refreshments and therefore have to make a considerable amount of money before they cover their costs. However, in some flats, sex workers and maids divided takings equally after paying expenses" (Cooper et al., 2007, p.44).

It is mentioned that maids have done sex work in the past, but it is not specified if this was observed occasionally or commonly. Also, the seven maids interviewed all ran the flat entirely independently, paying fees directly to a landlord, without any interference in the business process, but it is unclear if this is common. Maids are often described as encouraging - or even requiring - condom use by sex workers, and having a coaching/teaching role: practicing condom use with new workers, supporting language and negotiating skills, referring workers to sexual health services, and providing safety/security. One sex worker was reported to be scared of her maid and refused to answer questions about money or procedures in the flat, and another described how she saw maids as 'pimps' who exploit sex workers. It is clear that, in the work of both Cooper et al. and Whittaker and Hart, the definition of 'maid' is broad and can describe a wide variety of work relations that can be supportive, coercive, or both at once.

#### *2.2.4.4 Employment relations in sex work*

A limited number of studies focus mainly on the relationships between sex workers and third parties, and the way these affects sex workers in the UK. Most of these are by Pitcher (2015), who found that, regardless of the legal status of third parties:

"the position of independent workers was similar to that of self-employed lone traders in other labour market sectors. They set their own terms and conditions, determined the services they would offer, their working hours and rates of pay" (Pitcher, 2015, p.115-116).



On the other hand, she found that brothel and agency workers, while technically self-employed, were in an employer/employee relationship with some third parties who they some of their income to. Pitcher found that there is very little managed agency work available to cis male or trans sex workers. While agencies tended to take responsibility for marketing and client communication, most agency workers were still able to decide or negotiate their rates, hours, and services. Brothel and parlour management, in contrast, tended to control these decisions for brothel workers, leading Pitcher to conclude that sex workers with agencies are in a similar situation to other dependent self-employed workers, “although the illegal status of managed premises for commercial sex in the UK increased the precariousness of their circumstances” (Pitcher, 2015, p.116). Many workers in managed settings appreciated being able to outsource the marketing and admin work to management, but some had encountered more exploitative practices in previous premises. The independent sex workers interviewed felt they were able to have more autonomy and control over their working conditions than sex workers who have managers, but also than they would have working in the mainstream service sector (Pitcher, 2015). Similar to the work of Pitcher and Wijers discussed previously, this study also found that some independent sex workers preferred to work together in order to share costs and companionship, and to increase safety. Pitcher describes “collective working” between sex workers as the practices of (independent) sex workers who share premises, sublet premises to other workers, and who take on administrative work for each other in exchange for payment. Although Pitcher does describe sex workers as “independent contractors/lone traders” and ‘dependent self-employed’ workers, and even refers to those they hire as subcontractors, she does not delve further into how these relationships differ from the control and coercion assumed by UK legislation.

Hardy and Barbagallo (2021), discuss the experiences of sex workers with digitally mediated direct sex work through adult service websites. Research into the influence of adult service websites on the labour processes in sex work is in its infancy, but Hardy and Barbagallo explain why some workers would rather work for a third party than independently through an adult service website:

“Using a relatively conservative estimate of three additional hours of labor needed for marketing, responding to requests, and maintaining social media profiles, then the hourly charge rate is only one-quarter of the hours that workers have spent working” (Hardy and Barbagallo, 2021, p.541).

Additionally, they found that although digitally mediated direct sex work has made some workers less reliant on third party managers, the main platform in the UK has a high level of control over workers, and drives prices down, normalises riskier services, and has intensified the working day of independent sex workers (Hardy and Barbagallo, 2021). Similarly, Brouwers and Herrmann (2020)

discussed the effect adult service websites have had on workers during the pandemic, and claim that some of these websites function similar to platform work in other sectors:

“most ASWs<sup>3</sup> do not feel responsible for the economic and health risks to sex workers who use their services in the same ways as an employer would. This tendency is similar to what has been identified on other platforms in modern capitalism, such those facilitating food delivery or private car hires” (Brouwers and Herrmann, 2020, p.14).

This means that although these online platforms allow sex workers to work without managers or managerial control, there are clear downsides to independent sex work, which can include increased safety risks due to lone working, and a large amount of additional work on top of seeing clients. Additionally, independent workers who mainly or only advertise online are largely isolated: Sanders et al. (2018b) found that 72% of online and digitally mediated sex workers worked alone.

In summary, while there are great analyses of third parties within certain parts of the sex industry, there is currently a gap in our knowledge of third parties ranging all areas of full-service sex work in England, and research that focuses on sex workers’ experiences with third parties is especially lacking. This thesis aims to fill this knowledge gap.

Taking together the existing debates on third parties in sex work and on sex workers’ use of agency in the workplace, there is a clear disconnect between the legislative assumption that third parties universally have power and control over sex workers, and the wide range of third party roles that are present in sex work. If some third parties are associates or contractors rather than managers (Bruckert and Law, 2013), then power and agency in the relationship between sex workers and third parties requires further exploration. The goal of this research is therefore to explore “the actual working conditions of sex workers” (Huschke, 2017, p.192) in relation to third parties, the ways sex workers use their agency and resist or engage with control, and how their agency in the workplace is enabled or constricted by individuals and the wider social context.

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<sup>3</sup> Adult Service Websites, or platforms where sex workers advertise and sometimes also make appointments with clients or directly sell online sexual services.

### 3 Methodology, philosophy, ethics and methods: developing Community-Transferred Financial Compensation.

*If your research isn't needed, don't do it. If you're unsure of your motivations (or if they're self-serving), don't do it. If you're a complete outsider, don't do it. If you can use existing sources of data, use them. If you do end up working with marginalised people, look after them. Afterwards, give up your platform whenever you can. (Phipps, 2015)*

Researchers hold increased responsibility for ethically and methodologically sound research when investigating marginalised populations, since participating in research requires investment of time and emotional energy from participants (Phipps, 2015), and since bad research or bad reporting of research in the media can negatively affect them (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010). Additionally, it is notoriously difficult to research hidden populations such as sex workers, both because it is impossible to have a representative sample of a population on which there is no reliable quantitative data available (Cusick et al., 2009; Home Affairs Committee, 2016), and because many sex workers have a healthy mistrust of researchers (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010; Jenkins, 2010). These issues mean that research into sex work needs to be necessary, sensitive, and thoroughly considered from a methodological and ethical perspective. This chapter will discuss the ways these values have been at the heart of this research project from conception: from a grounding in standpoint epistemology and an emphasis on research ethics, to participant payment and reflexive engagement with participant feedback. In addition to implementing best practice in sex work research, this project has resulted in the development of a new method of participant compensation which is especially suitable for sex work research.

First, this chapter will discuss the epistemological basis for this research: feminist standpoint epistemology, and will delve into the ways standpoint epistemology supports the use of mixed data in research such as this, which is mainly qualitative in nature and is supported by descriptive quantitative data and secondary legal analysis data. It then goes on to discuss the ethical issues relevant to this research, including the ethics of researching an over-researched marginalised population, data-protection, and participant payment. In the course of this research, a new type of

indirect compensation of participants was developed: community-transferred financial compensation (CTFC). The core principles underlying the development of community-transferred financial compensation will be discussed, as well as the use of CTFC in this research and by other researchers who have adopted CTFC. The chapter then discusses the research design and strategy, including changes to the research design caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the use of Reflexive Thematic Analysis in data analysis. The chapter ends with a section on the additional legal research phase that was added to the research following participant feedback.

### 3.1 Standpoint epistemology

The main philosophical basis for this research is feminist standpoint theory, or standpoint epistemologies<sup>4</sup>. This section will discuss the ways standpoint epistemology emphasises the positionality of the researcher and rejects the idea that knowledge can be neutral. It then goes on to discuss the ways knowledge is seen as situated in this epistemology and how the centring of marginalised knowledge follows from this. Finally, standpoint theory's arguments for the use of mixed data will be discussed.

#### 3.1.1 Standpoint theory and researcher positionality

Standpoint epistemologists have heavily critiqued both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies for the ways they hide biases and the positionality of both researchers and participants (Westmarland, 2001). Where positivists see knowledge as objective and disconnected from individual scientists (Haraway, 1988) and see the subjectivity of researchers as something that must either be ignored or overcome (Mies, 1983), standpoint philosophers view the subjectivity of researchers as unavoidable and simply part of the reality of the human condition. Rather than ignore the fact that knowledge is always affected by the position of the researcher, standpoint epistemology requires researchers to be open about their positionality (Alcoff, 1995), and to be accountable for how this affects the knowledge they create (Haraway, 1991). This does, however, not mean that standpoint

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<sup>4</sup> Among feminist academics there is a common practice of expressing the plurality of viewpoints in a debate by pluralising words, referring to knowledges, epistemologies etcetera. To prevent this work from becoming confusing, I will aim to use the singular form of these words wherever possible. However, this is not to be taken as an endorsement of the idea that there is only a single standpoint epistemology: this is a highly contemporary debate with many competing and shifting theories.

epistemology agrees with interpretivist epistemology instead, which states that there is no such thing as objective truth and all researchers can do is try to understand the social meaning of that which they research (Benton and Craib, 2011). Standpoint theorists, instead, state that simply because it is not possible for researchers to have objective knowledge of the truth, that does not mean that this truth does not exist and the search for it is meaningless. It is still possible for some knowledge to be more true (or less false) than other knowledge. In the words of Alcoff (1995, p.106): “To say that location *bears* on meaning and truth is not the same as saying that location *determines* meaning and truth”.

Standpoint epistemology rejects the notion that knowledge can be objective and neutral, positionless, and not influenced by the researcher at all (St. Denny, 2014). Instead, standpoint epistemology states that while there is a truth external from the observer, it is not possible for people to access this truth in a neutral way – the researcher’s identity will always affect the knowledge produced (Alcoff, 1995). Feminist scholars are deeply aware that the position<sup>5</sup> of a researcher influences the questions they ask, which in turn influences the answers generated and the knowledge that is ultimately found (McCorkel and Myers, 2003). In other words, standpoint theory views positivist epistemology as a claim to ‘see everything from nowhere’, and views interpretivist epistemology as ‘seeing nothing from everywhere’ (Thiele, 2010). Standpoint epistemology’s alternative to these positions is “partial, locatable, critical knowledges” (Haraway, 1988, p.584), or: seeing something from somewhere.

For this reason, it is important to position myself as a researcher: as a queer and disabled immigrant, sex work has always been a significant part of my communities and of the lives of those around me. I have worked in the field of sexual and reproductive health and education for years, and have worked to increase my organisation’s understanding of sex work in that time. Since then, I have offered my training, research and language skills to sex worker-led organisations occasionally when needed, for instance to run a training when no members were available, or to do a piece of legislative research in the languages I speak. Through this work, I have developed a good relationship with several sex worker-led organisations and many individual sex workers and sex worker rights activists. This research has developed as a result of those relationships: the project was conceptualised after two separate sex worker-led organisations identified a lack of research on third parties in sex work, and expressed their need for data on this topic. My positionality, then, influences my research in the way that I view sex workers as agents in their professional and personal lives, and as leaders in activism and political discussion on their work.

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<sup>5</sup> Also called positionality – the social context in which a person exists, taking into account their time in history, the privileged and marginalised identities they may hold (race, age, gender, ability, class, legal or migration status, and many more), and the way this informs their knowledge and understanding of the world.

### 3.1.2 Standpoint theory and situated knowledge – centring research participants and marginalised perspectives

In addition to acknowledging the standpoint of the researcher, standpoint epistemology also concerns itself with the positionality of research participants and subjects: the people who, besides social scientists, are involved in the process of creating knowledge in the social sciences. Standpoint theory challenges researchers to question not only the idea that they can be objective (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000), but also “the assumption that the scientific community knows what the world is like” (Kuhn, 1996, p.5). In this way, social scientists are dependent on the people they study and who participate in their research, but in practice academics often have a different and more powerful position in society than their research participants. Many standpoint theorists see it as their ethical responsibility to use their position to break down the barriers that prevent less privileged voices from being heard (St. Denny, 2014), and focus their methodologies on “honouring the lived experience and knowledge of the people involved” (Gatenby and Humphries, 2000, p.89).

Not only researchers’ knowledge is situated, but so is that of every other person in society. According to standpoint epistemology, some knowledge can only be accessed from certain positions in society, which in turn affects choices as to which people and structures should be researched. Standpoint theorists therefore argue that “subordinate” (Mies, 1983) or “subjugated” (Haraway, 1991) standpoints<sup>6</sup> should be privileged in social science research, since they possess more knowledge, and since this knowledge cannot be accessed by those who do not share those standpoints. This view is supported by the historical influence of both Marxist and feminist thought on the social sciences, which opened up lines of inquiry based on classist or sexist oppression that were not part of these sciences beforehand (Benton and Craib, 2011). In other words, since a less privileged position requires a person to have more knowledge, this should, according to standpoint epistemology, also affect researchers’ decisions on their choice of participants, topic, and which questions to ask. For this reason, the knowledge and experience sex workers have about their own work has been centred from the conception of this project: whether in the research design, in the research questions, or in the project as a whole (see Section 3.4 for more).

### 3.1.3 Standpoint epistemology and the use of mixed data

Standpoint epistemologists have heavily critiqued both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies for the ways they hide biases and the positionality of both researchers and participants

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<sup>6</sup> More modern versions of these terms would be oppressed, marginalised, or non-privileged.

(Westmarland, 2001). Core to these critiques is the acknowledgement that there are no neutral research methods which do not affect the results of the research and the knowledge it produces (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). In this way the positionality of researchers and the topic of research have an effect on the methods chosen, the way they are implemented, and the research outcomes, and this should be acknowledged. Since standpoint epistemology considers it impossible for knowledge to be perfect, neutral, and positionless, the methodological concerns are not with certain methods being better than others. Instead, the focus is on deciding and justifying which methodologies are good or right for the specific research project (Scott, J., 2010) and for the effect that this research may have on society (Westmarland, 2001). For instance, one of the methods that has been influenced by standpoint theory is 'dialogic collaboration', developed by Gillespie and Hardy (2021) This method requires not only the centring of situated knowledge, but also ongoing non-tokenistic solidarity with the social movements of participants, collaboration to make sure research is relevant to participants, and an iterative ongoing dialogue between researcher and participants (Gillespie and Hardy, 2021). Importantly, Gillespie and Hardy point out that collaboration does not mean that the research requires a large time investment from participants, but instead that participants have a voice in making sure the research uses methodology and produces data in a form that is useful to them and their movements. This research is mainly qualitative in nature, and the qualitative data is supported by descriptive quantitative data and secondary legal analysis data. This section will discuss how standpoint epistemology supports using different types of data as a basis for research and analysis.

Standpoint epistemology neither endorses nor rejects either qualitative or quantitative methodology across-the-board. However, since according to standpoint epistemology all knowledge is situated and incomplete, it does have some strong arguments in favour of the use of mixed data. The first of these arguments is that the type of knowledge we get from either method is different, and when combining them this multiplicity in knowledge helps researchers come closer to the truth than either method could individually. Hesse-Biber (2010) discusses a study in which men were asked to individually fill in a quantitative questionnaire on attitudes to rape and sexual assault, and were also qualitatively interviewed on the same topic together with their sports team mates. From the quantitative data, it seemed that participants thought rape was wrong in all circumstances, but in the more social atmosphere in group interviews they expressed the belief that often the victim was also partially to blame. Together, the mixed method data paint a picture of attitudes towards rape that are affected by social context, in a way that could not be concluded from single method research. Another example of this benefit of mixed data research is that quantitative data may give researchers knowledge of the prevalence of an occurrence, but only qualitative data can show the wide variety of circumstances and

structures that cause the phenomenon and the context in which they occur – thus helping researchers interpret their data and the relationships between them (Scott, J., 2010).

The second argument is that using mixed data can help researchers in representing the knowledge of the most marginalised participants. It is impossible to prevent methodology from affecting the knowledge it creates, but mixed data can help researchers to be aware of these effects. For instance, marginalised participants may find the official and written nature of questionnaires intimidating or difficult, which could cause them to give expected rather than honest answers to the questions asked (Mies, 1983). On the other hand, participants may feel interrogated during an interview, or may feel uncomfortable discussing certain topics in person. And since participants are not a homogenous group, the ways in which they respond will differ between participants and it is impossible to know which will be the case for whom. Using mixed data can reduce the effect these individual methods have on the knowledge produced (Gioia, 2010), and can improve the way the standpoint of the most marginalised participants is represented (Hesse-Biber, 2010), as well as corroborating findings by triangulation between the different types of data.

The third argument for the use of mixed data, therefore, is triangulation, which allows researchers to check their qualitative and quantitative data against each other for differences and inconsistencies. For instance, qualitative interviews may show that a firm is strongly committed to providing parental leave to its employees, while quantitative data may show that the uptake of this leave is very low. When these data sets are compared, it may point to a standpoint that could illuminate the discrepancy (Hesse-Biber, 2010) – for instance, the researcher may want to interview parents within the firm or ex-employees to learn more about the reasons for the low uptake of leave – or ways that the methods may have influenced the knowledge they produce.

A fourth argument for the use of mixed data is that it forces researchers to be reflective of their own standpoint and how it affects their research. Using mixed data means a researcher needs to be aware of the pros and cons of different types of data and how different research methods influence the knowledge they produce. In being able to criticise and argue for both methods, and in engaging with the idea that knowledge production isn't a neutral process but is influenced by methodology, the researcher is forced to reflect on their own position and how this may affect their research as well (Pryse, 2000).

A final argument for the use of mixed data is that feminist research often has a practical, political, or activist component (Hesse-Biber, 2010). In these cases, mixed data are looked at in a practical sense: qualitative data can help explain the gendered differences and structures underlying quantitative data, and at the same time quantitative data can influence policy and political action in a way



qualitative data rarely does (Westmarland, 2001). To summarise, in the eloquent words of Westmarland:

*What has traditionally been seen as a strength of quantitative research, namely objectivity, has been shown to reflect the subjective knowledge of the researcher and hence reveals the false dichotomization of objectivity and subjectivity, and of quantitative and qualitative methods. Without this unnecessary opposition the usefulness of mixed method research can be realised and feminist perspectives on research can be acknowledged simply as "good" research (Westmarland, 2001).*

Using mixed data allows researchers to combine the different types of knowledge to produce more accurate, representative, critical, positioned, and effective research outcomes. This is especially important in research on controversial topic such as sex work, and which concerns a marginalised population which is often hard to reach.

A final reason the use of mixed data has been chosen is because of the project's exploratory nature: since there is very little prior data on this topic, a solely qualitative or quantitative approach would give an incomplete view of employment relations in sex work and would risk being one-sided. Mixed data on the other hand provide a fuller view of the topic, allowing the research to both show which employment relations are common, and to explore how these employment relations affect sex workers. Another reason for including quantitative data is that the research is built on an ongoing relationship between the researcher and two major sex worker-led organisations in the UK. These organisations have expressed a need for quantitative data in order to inform evidence-based policy and to help support the safety and wellbeing of sex workers. Together, the mixed data will allow for a more complete view of employment relations in sex work in the UK.

### 3.2 Research ethics

Doing research in a field in which many people's work is illegal and/or highly stigmatised is complicated (Cusick et al., 2009). Understandably, sex workers are not always willing to participate in research, nor always likely to tell the truth of their experiences and views to an outsider. Unethical or bad research into sex work apparently occurs so often that multiple academics and sex worker organisations worldwide have felt compelled to write guides on how to research sex work in an ethical fashion, including Phipps (2015) and Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research

Indonesia (2010). In order to engage with these serious concerns, first feminist research ethics in relation to this research will be discussed. Then, there are three main ethical issues which will be discussed: sex workers being an over-researched population, the research being on a sensitive topic, and data protection and anonymization.

### 3.2.1 Feminist research ethics

Since standpoint epistemology emphasises the knowledge that comes from a marginalised position in society, in this research sex workers are viewed as the experts on their lives, their work, and their industry. In order for this research to be welcoming to marginalised workers, several considerations have been taken into account. These include: using easy to understand language in recruitment and informed consent materials; keeping the survey as short as possible; using language that is free of metaphors and other language that creates a barrier for non-native speakers; and offering a signposting sheet with support organisations at the end of the survey. Feminist research ethics emphasise the power difference between researcher and participants, so researchers carry a large responsibility for the wellbeing of participants and should make sure participants are supported after their participation if they wish to be.

In order to prevent Othering (Nagel, 2003) of participants, the research lets participants speak for themselves as much as possible, rather than speaking for them. However, “transcription is a powerful act of representation” (Oliver et al., 2005, p.1287) and too-literal transcription can sometimes reproduce stigma and prejudice - for instance about accents or the linguistic ability of certain groups. This is very important while writing within a discourse that often presents (migrant) sex workers as lacking language skills, education, or even professional skills and abilities. In contrast, this research aims to centre the experiences of and analysis by sex workers themselves, and this includes representing their ideas in a way that is not hindered by the fact that online written language is different from academic written language. As such, in this thesis quotes from participants may be adjusted a little for clarity of reading or to correct misspellings, since there is no value in keeping these in, and since they may be viewed by some readers to detract from the points made by participants. Additionally, emphasis is on directly quoting participants rather than paraphrasing or interpreting their words, and using a reflexive and participatory approach (Atkins, 2013) to the role of researcher. Reflexivity and responsiveness to critiques from participants and the wider sex worker community at all times is also essential to this approach. This openness to criticism is further discussed in Section 3.6 of this chapter.

### 3.2.2 Researching a sensitive topic with an over-researched group

Sex work, and potentially negative experiences at a workplace or with an employer in sex work, are sensitive topics both from a data protection view (see Section 3.2.3) and emotionally. It is important that researchers take care to support their participants where needed (Dempsey et al., 2016), to not discuss sensitive topics without reason (Phipps, 2015), and to provide aftercare where desired by participants. In this research, this includes signposting a wide range of support organisations at the end of the online survey, and being contactable and responsive to participants. However, research on sensitive topics can also be a positive, or even cathartic, experience. In research on traumatic medical events, Elmir et al. (2011, p.14) found that: “in spite of the sometimes strong emotions the women demonstrated, they wanted to continue and later disclosed that they were pleased to have had the opportunity to discuss their experiences”. Dempsey et al. (2016) claim that deciding not to do research on a sensitive topic, or assuming participants are too vulnerable to take part, can be disempowering the individuals involved to make a choice for themselves, and can also be an evasion of the researchers’ responsibility to research those topics that are most in need of exploring.

Since sex workers are very commonly asked to participate in research (Phipps, 2015), it is essential to only ask them to participate if the research is relevant (Brinkmann, 2013) and likely to have a positive effect on sex workers’ wellbeing. Additionally, doing research into the experiences of a marginalised and over-researched group is generally not ethical if the group does not stand to gain from their involvement in the study (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010). Several sex worker-led organisations and researchers with sex work experience have been engaged with in the process of writing the research proposal, developing research questions, reviewing and piloting the survey (Bryman, 2008), and sense-checking the initial findings from the survey data. However, even if the research is arguably of use to sex worker-led organisations, that does not mean it is of use to individual sex workers, especially at the time of the research. If research does not have a direct positive result for participating sex workers, then best practice states they should be compensated for their time (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010; Marcus et al., 2016). This will be further discussed in Section 3.3 on community-transferred financial compensation.

### 3.2.3 Data protection and anonymisation

Since a person’s sex life is considered private both in general society and within human rights legislation, and full-service sex work includes sexual contact, extreme care is required around the personal data gained from this research. This includes adhering to the highest standards of data

protection, and immediate anonymization of all personal data (Dempsey et al., 2016). The core responsibility of the researcher in this is to ensure the anonymity of all data and participants (Wilson, 2004), and to make all participants feel safe to engage with the study. This was done at the start of the survey by explaining that the research is anonymous and participants would not be asked to share any identifying information. The researcher used a university approved questionnaire website (Qualtrics) that does not retain identifying information of participants such as IP addresses. Digital materials with personal data were anonymised and password protected in accordance with or in excess of the requirements under the Data Protection Act (Clark, 2006) and European data protection regulations (*General Data Protection Regulation*, 2018). Derived data (Information Commissioner's Office, 2012) will be used where removing of partial-identifying information is not possible.

Since some third party activities are criminalised, it can be difficult to make sure participants feel safe and free to talk openly about this topic. These difficulties are exacerbated by the fact that some of the sex worker participants have taken part in these criminalised third party activities as well. This means that the researcher needed to be clear about the difference between confidentiality and anonymization (Brinkmann, 2013). This has also affected the way data is presented in this work: in order to ensure participants cannot be recognised by readers, even if they may know each other in real life, limited demographic data of participants will be shared and participants are not identified by a pseudonym. This might be considered an unusual decision in terms of data presentation, but it is necessary to maintain the levels of anonymity required in this research. Instead, the gender, age, and migration status of participants will be noted with each quote, since this combination of information can in nearly all cases refer to more than one participant. Additionally, participants are not numbered and there is no table of participants in the appendices, both because of the large number of individual participants cited and to ensure anonymity. All participants were signposted to sex work support and community organisations at the end of the survey. The research project was approved through the Leeds University ethical review process (ethics reference AREA 18-017).

### 3.3 Developing community-transferred financial compensation of participants

In the process of searching for a way to reward participants for survey participation in this research, a novel method of research participant compensation has been developed: community-transferred financial compensation (CTFC). Community-transferred financial compensation was developed out of

a desire to financially compensate each survey participant fairly for their time and for sharing their expertise, while allowing participants to preserve their anonymity and have some say over how their effort benefits their community. This section will discuss the importance of paying participants, the context of participant payment within this research, the use of CTFC in this research, and the core principles of community-transferred financial compensation when applied in research both within and outside the field of sex work.

### 3.3.1 Paying sex worker research participants for their time and expertise

Since sex workers are very commonly asked to participate in research, it is essential to only make requests of their time if the research is relevant (Brinkmann, 2013) and likely to have a positive effect on sex workers' wellbeing. If research does not have a direct positive result for participating sex workers, then they should be compensated for their time (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010; Marcus et al., 2016; Phipps, 2015). Sex workers as a group are very aware of the value of their time, and time spent participating in research can also be spent seeing clients, doing marketing, or any other activity that would benefit them personally or professionally, meaning that participation in research can be to the direct financial detriment of potential participants.

There are of course vivid debates about paying participants for the time they spend taking part in research, but there is a clear history among researchers in the field of sex work (and other precariously self-employed work) of directly compensating participants for their time. Examples are a large international research project on sex worker mental health (Geymonat et al., 2018), research into sex worker self-organisation in Argentina (Hardy, 2010), and a large 2-year research project among street-based sex workers in Atlantic City, USA (Marcus et al., 2016). Another example is the EU report written by Forde et al. (2017) on workers in the platform economy, where the researchers set up a 'job' on multiple platform sites inviting workers to participate in the research by filling out the questionnaire. In all these cases, research participants were marginalised workers and researchers took efforts to make compensation as fair as they were able to in relation to local, industry and platform levels of income. Some involved in ethical review feel that payments or financial compensation can unfairly induce participation, or might even directly harm participants (Warnock et al., 2022). However, even for the most vulnerable of potential research participants, for instance participants with low levels of income who regularly use drugs, the NHS Health Research Authority (2014) states "there is evidence that payment for participation in research does not promote the purchase of drugs nor lead to relapse and can enhance recruitment". Instead of payment influencing participants to take part in research

they otherwise would rather not take part in, payments can enable potential participants to take part when they otherwise would not be able to (Warnock et al., 2022). Additionally, failure to compensate research participants may skew results; potential participants who are not highly educated, interested in research, or privileged enough to have the free time and energy to participate for free will not be able to take part (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010), especially when participants are in casualised or precarious work (Warnock et al., 2022). Echoing Warnock et al. (2022, p.199), it is essential to consider participant payment, within the research context, as “a respectful practice” that shows researchers value the expertise and time of participants. As such, compensating research participants for their time is an essential part of research into marginalised groups, and of this research project.

### 3.3.2 Context of participant payments

Initially, the research design included an in-person focus group phase, for which participants would be compensated with £100 in cash at the beginning of the focus group. The rate of reimbursement was based on the fact that the focus groups would take at least an hour and should therefore aim to at least be at the low end of the scale of an average workers’ hourly income. This should not be seen as an incentive, but as a reimbursement for time that could otherwise have been spent working (Warnock et al., 2022). Since feminist research views marginalised people as experts on their experiences, this reimbursement for time is closer to a fee for the service of sharing their time and knowledge. Paying participants for their time also makes participation cost-neutral, allowing the most disadvantaged of workers – those least likely to be able to take an hour out of their working day for an interview – to take part, which means the research is more likely to be representative of sex workers as a whole. Cash payments at the start of the focus groups were decided on in order to preserve the anonymity of participants, and to make sure that participants felt able to leave at any point, without financial penalty, if they no longer wished to take part in the research. Due to the pandemic, the focus group phase did not go ahead (see Section 3.4). However, financial compensation was also part of the survey design and the marketing thereof.

Several ways of compensating participants for engaging with the survey were explored: paying a small amount of money directly to individuals after taking part, sending participants vouchers or gift cards to online or physical shops via email, and asking participants their email addresses to take part in a raffle that would award a larger amount of money to a single participant. However, these methods all have downsides that make them less suitable for this research project. These disadvantages include requiring participants to give the researcher a method of contacting them, which may make potential

participants worry about their anonymity, something that sex workers are especially sensitive to. This worry about anonymity could especially disincentivise the participation of the most marginalised workers and those critical of the research project, whose voices are especially important to include within a standpoint epistemological framework. Additionally, it would require extra work from participants: creating an anonymous email address if they feel the need, checking it to see if the compensation had arrived or if they had won, etcetera. A large downside of creating a raffle would be that, although all participants have a chance at winning, only one participant would actually be compensated for participation. Because sex workers are so aware of the value of their time, an unclear chance of being compensated did not seem suitable for this research. Additionally, a raffle would result in the majority of participants not being compensated for their time, which comes with all the ethical and practical disadvantages discussed above.

Compensation through gift vouchers, although common in some fields, was considered to be too constrictive and patronising to participants: it would entail the researcher deciding where they could spend the money rather than this decision being up to participants. Additionally, some sex workers receive deposits or even whole booking fees from clients in gift vouchers, since they can be sent anonymously. They are then stuck with online shopping vouchers that do not allow them to pay their rent or bills. It was decided not to recreate this problem within the framework of research participation. The main downside of directly paying participants to take part in the online survey is that this requires participants to share a large amount of personal data, including bank details and legal name, with the researcher. It would have been unsuitable to ask participants to share this information in general (hence the original plan of direct cash payments for focus group participation), but it is especially unreasonable to ask participants to share this personal information in exchange for the smaller amount of compensation they would receive in exchange for taking part in the survey. Additionally, asking for, and having, such a large amount of personal and financial data about a group of marginalised and stigmatised workers would be a large data protection risk that should best be avoided in the first place. Due to the relatively small amount of compensation available per individual participant in the survey, the downsides of common methods of compensation, and the unacceptability of not compensating sex worker participants, it was necessary to find an alternative.

### 3.3.3 Community-transferred participant compensation (CTFC)

After considering all these factors, a new form of participant compensation was developed: community-transferred financial compensation. Community-transferred financial compensation pools the compensation of individual participants and gives it to organisations that directly benefit the

community participants are part of. It was decided that for each participant taking part in the survey, the compensation would be £2.50, and that they could choose one of four community organisations to receive that amount. The organisations in question were contacted in advance to ask their permission to be part of the survey in this way. Three sex worker-led organisations and one well-known national support service were chosen: the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP), which supports sex workers with legal, personal, and migration casework, and produces legislative briefings; SWARM (Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement), which organises sex worker community events, education on sex work topics, and supports sex workers with tax, migration and benefits advice; X:talk, which supports migrant sex workers, hosts regular community events and workshops, and is engaged in political organising and coordination; and National Ugly Mugs (NUM), which provides casework support for workers who have been the victim of a crime, and runs a database warning sex workers of dangerous clients. All organisations agreed, and several of them also agreed to share out the call for participants. Participants were made aware in advance that in exchange for their participation, £2.50 would be donated to one of these four organisations of their choosing. The final question in the survey was a multiple choice question which asked which of the four organisations the participants wanted to support with their participation. Once the survey was closed, these results were tallied and payments to the organisations were made as soon as possible.

The community-transferred financial compensation was well-received by participants, many of whom shared the survey link with their networks, colleagues and friends. It allowed for each participant to feel like their participation was compensated without having to share personal information, and to express which community organisation they felt they wanted to support with their time and expertise. Like all decisions surrounding compensation, it is possible that this method has skewed the sample somewhat, in this case towards community-minded participants. However, this skewing is likely already in place in any research with a social goal, and does not seem to have affected the wide range of experiences and opinions that participants expressed in the survey (see Appendix 1 for demographic data of the participant group).

The funds for the community-transferred financial compensation of participants were kindly provided by CERIC, the Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change at Leeds University Business School. For an overview of the final amounts of this compensation, see Appendix 6.

### 3.3.4 Core principles of community-transferred financial compensation

In the development of community-transferred financial compensation, the effects of this method of compensation, as well as the context in which it is most suitable, were a strong consideration.



Community-transferred financial compensation should be used only if other methods of compensation, or non-compensation, are not feasible. Transferred compensation should not be used simply because direct compensation is a hassle or extra work for the researcher. Similarly, if CTFC would introduce more bias into the sample than not compensating participants (for instance if participants are likely to participate in non-compensated research, and all potential organisations that can be donated to are controversial within the group), it can be preferable not to compensate participants at all instead. The compensation should be fair for the amount of work: in the case of this research, £2.50 for a 10-15 minute survey amounts to a rate of £10 to £15 per hour of work, without the expectation of travel or sharing personal or intimate details. If the time or effort investment is higher, or if members of the researched community have reduced ability to take part in unpaid research, then the compensation should be higher too. The organisations that participants can choose, if shortlisted by the researcher, should have a direct connection with the community that is being asked to participate, and should generally be in good standing within a broad spectrum of the community. Although the impossibility of finding the perfect organisation to donate to through CTFC should not keep researchers from using the method, none of the organisations suggested should be strongly controversial within the community participants are part of.

Finally, the potential effect of using community-transferred financial compensation on the participant sample should be considered and discussed. In the case of this research, it is possible that using CTFC introduced a bias toward more community oriented participants deciding to fill in the survey. Additionally, sex workers who do not know the relevant organisations may be less likely to be reached while using this method of compensation. Considering this, a mix of organisations was chosen: the ECP works mainly with female and migrant sex workers, many of them mothers; X:talk works mainly with migrant sex workers; SWARM's work is activism and education focussed; and NUM is not sex worker-led but reaches many workers who do not engage with the three other organisations. This wide range of organisations was therefore chosen with the aim of reaching an equally wide range of potential participants.

In summary, the core principles of community-transferred financial compensation, when applied in research both within and outside the field of sex work, are:

1. Community-transferred financial compensation should only be used if direct financial compensation of participants is not feasible.
2. Using CTFC should not introduce more bias than doing uncompensated research would introduce.
3. The compensation should be fair for the work involved in participation.

4. The connection between the community researched and the organisations needs to be close, and the organisations should be broadly well-known and regarded.
5. The organisations chosen need to be diverse enough that a range of potential participants feel represented by, or could benefit from, the work of the organisations.
6. None of the organisations should be so controversial within the community as to discourage participation.
7. Researchers should explicitly consider and discuss the effect of using CTFC on the participant sample.

Since the development of community-transferred financial compensation, this method of participant compensation has successfully been used by two other researchers in their PhD research. Tess Herrmann, who researches interconnectivity within the adult industry, used CTFC to compensate lap dancing club workers who took part in her online survey. She nominated three organisations that participants could donate to, all related to dancer organisation and support: United Sex Workers, the Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement, and the East London Stripper Collective. Herrmann found that, by using community-transferred compensation, she was able to compensate participants for their time and effort regardless of the fact that the survey was remote and online, and that it enabled the participants to stay anonymous (Herrmann, 2022a). Bianca-Ioanidia Mirea, in her research on job quality and satisfaction on digital labour platforms, used an amended version of CTFC: Mirea gave interview participants the option to either receive a voucher with a value of £10, or to nominate a charity or non-profit of their choice which the researcher then donated £10 to. Mirea found that many participants preferred the option of donating their compensation over receiving a voucher, and were genuinely excited to nominate an organisation, which she theorises may be related to the fact that many of her participants were already involved in volunteer and non-profit work (Mirea, 2022).

Community-transferred financial compensation has already proven to be a useful tool in research into marginalised communities that would prefer to stay anonymous, as well as communities that are engaged in non-profit or volunteer work. It allows researchers to provide compensation for participation in cases where direct financial compensation has ethical or practical complications, and can provide participants with the understanding that their knowledge and time is valued even if they cannot or choose not to be paid directly.

### 3.4 Research design

Following from standpoint epistemology's arguments for mixed data, this research had a mixed data design from the outset. However, both circumstance and reflexive practice have created significant changes to the research design. This section will discuss the development of this study in cooperation with sex worker-led organisations, individual sex workers and researchers with sex work experience. It then goes on to discuss the changes that were made to the research design, and the recruitment strategy.

#### 3.4.1 Development and changes to the research design

The knowledge and experience sex workers have about their own work has been centred from the conception of this project, in the research design and the project as a whole. Before the start of the development of the research project, key informants (two sex worker-led organisations and several sex working individuals) were contacted and asked what research was most needed or most starkly missing in their experience. Research on third parties in sex work was the only topic mentioned by all, and it was emphasised that the research gap here was unusually large, leading to policy and activism being based on anecdotes and assumptions instead. From this basis, the research questions and research design were developed. Key informants were again asked for feedback at several points in the research process: research questions, reviewing and piloting the survey (Bryman, 2008), and sense-checking the initial findings from the survey data. This feedback took place in more formalised settings by contacting worker-led organisations, and in more informal settings at conferences and presentations, or by asking researchers with sex work experience for their views.

This iterative process of development and feedback ensured that the research is needed and considered useful by the community it researched, so as not to waste the time of participants (Phipps, 2015). It also aimed to ensure that the survey and recruitment materials used sensitive language and correct terminology. This second aim was not entirely successful, which will be reflected on at several points in this thesis.

The initial research design included two phases: a mixed data self-completion survey with at least 80 participants, aiming to develop understanding of the range and prevalence of sex workers' relationships with third parties; and a series of at least three focus groups in three cities, with an average of eight participants each, with the aim of gathering more in-depth qualitative data on the experiences sex workers have with third parties. The data gathered from the survey would be used to

map the most common third party relationships and the experiences sex workers have with third parties, and this data would then be further explored through the follow-up focus groups with a smaller number of survey participants. Focus groups were chosen in order to create space for participants to discuss and explore the differences and similarities between their experiences with third parties, and to start theorising reasons for these differences with participants present.

However, the data from the survey was much richer, more varied, and more in-depth than expected. Additionally, the number of participants who filled out the complete survey was much higher than the minimum originally aimed for, at 185 participants. This was extremely fortunate, since the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the focus groups from taking place. Although phone or internet mediated interviews can be an especially good tool for research on sensitive topics (Elmir et al., 2011; Jenkins, 2010), there was no such evidence for whether this is the case for focus groups as well. It was anticipated that both researcher-participant and between-participant trust and rapport building, essential in researching sensitive topics (Dempsey et al., 2016; Easterby-Smith et al., 2018), would be harder to build in an online meeting. Additionally, an online focus group would prevent the participants from receiving their compensation in cash, before the start of the focus group, and without giving personal and financial information to the researcher. Finally, online focus groups understandably cause participants to be concerned regarding anonymity and trust between participants themselves and between participants and researcher. For these reasons, and due to the richness of the survey data, the focus group phase of the research was cancelled and analysis was focused on the survey data.

In addition to the removal of the focus groups from the research design, feedback from participants also instigated a new research phase: in-depth research into the legal status and policing of third parties in England. This was done with the help of a research assistant and the English Collective of Prostitutes, who collated legislation data, relevant legal text, and summarised casework, which were then analysed by the researcher. This legal research phase has resulted in the findings of Chapter 4, which synthesises legislation, casework and participant experiences and views on third party criminalisation. This process of feedback, reflection and research development will be discussed in depth in the final section of this chapter.

### 3.4.2 Survey design

The use of a survey with a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions was chosen due to the fact that this is most suitable for exploratory research into a field for which there is little prior data available. The mixed data survey method allows for efficient gathering of a wide range of data from

diverse participants, while also limiting the amount of time and effort required from each participant individually, which is especially important when researching an over-researched group such as sex workers. An online survey can be participated in at the workers' convenience, in any location where they have access to the internet, and can easily be shared with other potential participants to facilitate snowballing of the sample. In contrast with observation-based methods, a survey allows for data on past work experiences and for the gathering of the same level of demographic data on each participant. In contrast with interview-based methods, it requires a smaller time investment from each participant and can therefore reach more, and hopefully also a wider range of, participants. Due to the anonymous nature of an online survey, participants may feel more able to discuss personal topics or criminalised behaviour, which is very relevant to this research. And although arguably the qualitative data from a survey, even one with a large number of open questions, may be less in-depth than the data from other qualitative methods, this research aims only to be the start of deeper academic investigation into third parties' involvement in sex work in England. Because of this, the wide range of participants and data resulting from a survey was decided to be the best starting place for the exploration of this topic.

Due to the format of the survey, qualitative and quantitative data were gathered at the same time in the research process (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The closed quantitative questions and open qualitative questions served different but complimentary goals. Due to the exploratory nature of this research, descriptive quantitative data on the third party relationships<sup>7</sup> of sex workers is meant as a starting point into understanding more about which third party relationships and roles are more and less common, which third party roles sex workers themselves take on, and how commonly participants work without third parties at all. It allows the research to 'zoom out' from the details of individual experiences, and to consider the landscape of third party involvement in sex work as a whole, and in this way they support the qualitative findings. The open qualitative questions, on the other hand, "does not count the number of people with the same characteristic (value of variable) but it establishes the meaningful variation (relevant dimensions and values) within that population" (Jansen, 2010, p.38). They are able to investigate those research questions that go deeper into the experiences of participants and the meaning they give to those experiences. They also allow for participants to correct the questions they are asked if they disagree with them<sup>8</sup>, to add nuance to their answers to closed questions, and to question their own or the researcher's understanding of the topic. In this way, open questions are used not only as a way for the researcher to gather qualitative data, but also as a way for participants to directly communicate with the researcher in a medium that does not

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<sup>7</sup> Although not intended to be statistically representative, see Section 3.4.3 on recruitment.

<sup>8</sup> An option several participants took advantage of, see for example Section 3.6 on participant feedback.

always allow for this. This option for feedback and communication has been an essential part of the research ethics of this project, as well as leading to reflection and an additional research phase.

The survey was developed through an iterative process, with input from a sex worker-led organisation and researchers with sex work experience. The initial survey questions were developed out of the research questions, community feedback was requested and given, and the questions were then adjusted. The main adjustments made were with regards to sex-work specific language – mainly in relation to the different workplaces, and with an eye to limiting the amount of survey questions and simplifying the language used in the survey. The goal was to create a survey that would take a maximum of 10 minutes to complete, unless the participant chose to write long responses to the open questions. An additional goal of the cyclical process of question development and feedback was to make the survey accessible to people with a range of English language and literacy skills by avoiding long questions, academic language, or local British idioms.

Once the final version of the survey was developed and set up in the Qualtrics software, several key informants with sex work experience tried the online version of the survey and gave feedback on their experience and the time it took to complete the survey. The online version in Qualtrics was set up to skip any questions not relevant to the individual participant taking the survey, in order to limit the time needed to take part. The first page of the online survey gave information on the research and the contact information of the researcher, encouraging participants to get in contact with any questions, and explained the community-transferred financial compensation to participation. It then went on to ask if the participant was a current (at the time of the survey) full-service sex worker, 18 or over, and working in England. Only in case of a yes answer did participants get routed to the rest of the survey. The survey then went on to ask about the length of sex work experience, other sources of income, and the gender of their clients. After this, participants were asked if they had experience working in brothel/parlour work, street-based work, agency work, independent indoor work, party or club work, and other types of sex work. Follow up questions about which third parties participants had worked with in those work areas, and what their experiences were, were only asked of those to whom these questions were relevant. Then, questions about sex workers themselves, or their partners/friends, in third party roles were asked. After this, demographic questions on age, gender, gender identity, migration status, parenting status, ethnicity, sexuality and disability were asked. At the end of the survey participants were asked to choose which organisation they would like to benefit with their participation in the survey, and were asked about their interest in taking part in future research. The final page of the survey stated thanks for their participation, and provided the researcher's contact details and a list of support organisations with a summary of their services and their contact information

The survey map can be found in Appendix 2, with the dotted arrows representing custom routes where questions can be skipped if not relevant to the participant. The full text of the survey can be found in Appendix 3. Please note that the survey mentions a second research phase that later was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3.4.3 Recruitment

Since it is impossible to create a probability sample of a hidden population such as sex workers, a snowball convenience sample with some quota sampling (Bryman, 2008) was used. The quota sampling was used to ensure a diversity of viewpoints and experiences amongst participants. Similar to Bruckert and Law (2013), recruitment was focused on the richness and disparity of data that was gathered from participants, rather than the impossible aim of having a representative sample of a hidden population. Throughout the period the survey was open to participants, a close eye was kept on the areas of sex work participants had experience in. Since estimations of the size of the street sex market put the percentage of workers who work on the street at around 4-7% (Cusick et al., 2009; Brooks-Gordon et al., 2015), any percentage of participants with street-based work experience above 7% was considered acceptable. Additionally, demographic data was monitored to ensure migrant workers, parents, LGB+ workers, transgender workers, older workers, black or minority ethnicity workers, disabled workers, and male workers were represented. Distribution of the questionnaire via the internet allows for the ability to participate anonymously, but it was thought that it may be less likely to reach more marginalised potential participants (Neville et al., 2015). In light of this, in-person outreach to underrepresented groups of sex workers was considered if the demographic survey data revealed a need for this. However, while the survey was live it became clear that a large amount of diversity between participants was present and further outreach was not needed. Although the diversity amongst participants is high, this research does not include an in-depth intersectional analysis of the experiences of sex workers with third parties. This is due to the fact that, firstly, not all intersections are represented by enough participants to draw conclusions on the effect on the intersectional identities, and secondly, because the format of a survey does not allow for the gathering of the depth of data needed for an intersectional analysis. The aggregated demographic data on participants can be found in Appendix 1.

Participants were recruited via personal and professional contacts with a wide range of sex worker-led and sex worker support organisations, in addition to individual contacts. When the survey went live, the link to the survey was distributed via social media posts on Twitter and Facebook, to sex-worker online groups, via organisations and individual sex workers on social media, and via direct

emails to sex workers' publicly available email addresses. On all platforms, workers and non-workers were encouraged to share the survey link with their networks or directly with sex workers they knew. Finding participants through established respondents (snowballing) was an essential part of recruitment due to the fact that sex worker communities are tight-knit and often weary of researchers. The recruitment materials did not clearly state that participants did not have to have experience of working with third parties in full-service sex work, so it is possible that those with experience with third parties are overrepresented. After the survey closed, the researcher was made aware of a couple of cases in which potential participants did not take part for this reason.

The survey was live between the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2018 and the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 2019. Through repeated reading of the survey responses, a saturation of data was noticed at that point, with newer responses to open questions being much more likely to repeat points earlier made by others than to raise new topics or ideas. At that point the survey was closed and donations to the community organisations were made. Examples of the recruitment materials can be found in Appendix 5.

### 3.5 Data Analysis - Reflexive Thematic Analysis

There is no standard method of analysis within standpoint epistemology, although reflexivity is generally seen as an essential tool in this type of research. Similarly, research using a mix of data generally requires a mix of analysis methods that suit the different types of data generated. Quantitative and qualitative analysis happened concurrently and in an iterative and cyclical process (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2012; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010) between the two types of data, in order to combine insights from both. Quantitative data analysis took place in Qualtrics, SPSS 27, and Excel, as well as by hand as a method of creating intimate familiarity with the data. The first round of qualitative data analysis and code generation took place on paper, and in later cycles of qualitative analysis NVivo 12 was used. The quantitative data generated is not to be seen as a definite description of the full population of sex workers in England, but rather as a general indication of how common or uncommon certain groups, third party relationships, and experiences are. However, they are based on a sizable and diverse group of participants who represent a large range of experiences in most areas of full-service sex work in England.

The qualitative survey data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, a type of thematic analysis which has been developed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2014; 2019; 2021) with an approach distinct



from thematic analysis types that focus on coding reliability or the use of codebooks. Braun and Clarke's approach to thematic analysis is well suited to standpoint epistemology's claim that knowledge is always positioned, since they strongly reject the idea that themes 'emerge' from the data, and instead emphasise that themes are generated through analysis of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). They emphasise the use of themes as a central organising concept, or "stories about particular patterns of shared meaning across the dataset" (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p.592), rather than domain summary themes which summarise the range of meaning in the data related to a topic. In other words:

"The coding process requires a continual bending back on oneself – questioning and querying the assumptions we are making in interpreting and coding the data. Themes are analytic outputs developed through and from the creative labour of our coding. They reflect considerable analytic 'work,' and are actively created by the researcher at the intersection of data, analytic process and subjectivity." (Braun and Clarke, 2019, p.594)

However, because of the exploratory nature of this research, a combination of themes that present shared meaning and themes that explore a shared topic were used. The narrower themes, which are more like a 'bucket' of experiences, include themes such as 'experiences with managers', 'fear of police engagement' or 'forms of managerial control'. The second group of themes, which represent shared meaning, include themes such as 'resisting managerial control together' and 'loneliness and isolation as a result of criminalisation'.

The analysis of qualitative survey data included several phases and tools, including ones recommended by Braun and Clarke (University of Auckland, 2021) and additional steps:

1. Data familiarisation: repeated reading of the data and noting down initial thoughts.
2. Initial coding: a first round of coding the entire dataset with in vivo and generated labels.
3. Mapping codes: creating a thematic map of the codes and their relationships.
4. Generating themes: creating initial themes based on the thematic map.
5. Re-coding: re-coding the entire dataset in NVivo based on the generated themes.
6. Reviewing codes and themes: an iterative process of reviewing the data, themes and codes in relation to the quantitative data, to theory, and to the generated themes.
7. Defining themes and writing up.

This cyclical process of deeply exploring the data and the finding of shared meaning and ideas amongst such varied survey responses means that reflexive thematic analysis is especially suited to be at the basis for the qualitative analysis of this research.

### 3.6 Participant feedback and additional legal research phase

At the start of data analysis, during the data familiarisation stage, it became clear that several participants had strong views on some of the statements and questions on third party legislation that were part of the survey. Although the research was started with the understanding that all third parties are criminalised, the finding of high levels of ambiguity and a range of interpretations surrounding the criminalisation of third parties amongst sex workers emphasised that further data on this topic was a necessary underpinning for further research into third parties in general. This provided important feedback, and led to the development of a new research phase: in-depth research into the legal status and policing of third parties in England.

This section will discuss the responses participants had to the question on third party legislation, including a range of interpretations and knowledge levels of third party legislation, and emphasising the role of enforcement. Finally, the development of the legal research phase will be discussed.

#### 3.6.1 Divergent interpretations of third party legislation

A key finding in the survey data is that there is a range of interpretations, (mis)understandings and knowledge levels in relation to high third party legislation in England amongst participants. In response to the question “Did you know that all the people mentioned in this questionnaire as work relations (managers, colleagues, employees, contractors, people you have paid or who have done work for you, etc.) are criminalised in England at the moment?”, 30.8% of participants answered no. This is not entirely unexpected, since Sanders et al. (2018b), in their research on online and internet mediated sex work, found that many workers are unclear on sex work related legislation. However, the qualitative answers following this question brought a lot of nuance to this number.

Several participants respond with surprise to the statement that third parties are criminalised. In the words of one participant: “I am actually shocked, also think it is unfair” (trans non-binary, 43, British).

Another worker worries about the effect criminalisation can have on her partner who takes on a third party role:

*“Well, I knew some were criminalized, but didn't realize that ALL were and this changes a bit the game. I've been super careful for a long time and thank god nothing ever happened, but it's a matter of chance and now I feel way more insecure, specially about my fiancée” (cis woman, 29, EU migrant)*

Other participants, although also unaware of (some of the) legislation relating to third parties, have misconceptions about the law that are clearly incorrect. Two participants are under the incorrect impression that clients are criminalised, which they are not, which again confirms that sex work legislation is confusing many workers. One of them states:

*“I believe the criminalization protects me in some ways. I know that no client is ever going to expose me as they will also be incriminating themselves. This allows me to work in secrecy” (cis woman, 20, British)*

The other feels the opposite:

*“Whilst my clients are criminalised my work is more precarious because there is less clear communication about my boundaries/what services I offer because the client is anxious about being caught while this exchange is happening, so it has to happen 'under the table'” (trans non-binary, 24, British)*

The fact that workers are so unclear on the legal status of their work is an issue that affects their safety and their wellbeing, since it directly affects workers' perception of their access to justice and their rights in the workplace. Confusion on the legal status of sex work is not limited to the legal status of third parties. Morris (2018), in a study of incidental male sex workers with male clients, found that most of the research participants who work via male dating sites believe this is illegal. Similarly, Campbell et al. (2019) found that several of their online sex worker participants were unsure about the legal status of their work, and this affected their access to justice.

A few participants engaged directly with the wording of the survey question on criminalisation (“Did you know that all the people mentioned in this questionnaire as work relations (managers, colleagues, employees, contractors, people you have paid or who have done work for you, etc.) are criminalised in England at the moment?”), disagreeing with the premise that all third parties are criminalised. One participant stated: “I don't believe they are illegal, I'm very familiar with the law” (cis woman, 43, British). This is a fair critique which shows the downside of a survey design that had accessibility to

non-native speakers as an important consideration. This research question was simplified (the first version was “Did you know that, although not all are policed consistently, many third parties mentioned in this survey are criminalised under third party legislation in England?”). In making the survey more accessible, it seems too much nuance was lost.

One participant engaged with this issue in a lot of detail, which deserves to be reproduced in full:

*“I have ticked “yes” above, because I had to give an answer. However, with the greatest respect to the questionnaire author, I did not want to answer yes or no because I found the question problematic. Implicit in the question is a commitment to a belief which I feel is misleading and inaccurate. I dislike that I have had to give an answer to this question in a yes/no format. I am very aware of the law, but do not agree with this interpretation of the law. It is inaccurate to say that all such relationships are criminalized/illegal. It is not the case that duo partners are criminalized/illegal, although the law makes it extremely hard to find a place for duo work to take place, without it counting as a brothel. The latter fact concerns me, but doesn't stop me from doing occasional duo work. The law is incredibly ambiguous, and it depends on your reading of it, as to what counts as “hiring downers for the purposes of selling sex” or “working for someone”. I have done extensive research, and although I understand that it is against the law to encourage anyone to start sex work, it is not against the law to share information on how one has gone about things in certain circumstances. It is not illegal to use free platforms in order to advertise your services as an escort, within which it is strictly your time and company that are paid for. It is also not illegal to hire hotel rooms for escorting, given that the payment is not for sex but strictly for time and money. And it is certainly not illegal to share work experiences with others. I think this question is posed in a slightly misleading way. However, the ambiguities and vagueness within the law certainly make me much more hesitant than I would be otherwise.” (trans non-binary, 39, British)*

I strongly agree with this participant that third party legislation is ambiguous, and that in many situations the legal status of third parties is unclear. However, both at the time of the survey and after further research of the relevant legislation, I have come to different conclusions on the legal status of many third parties. Nonetheless, their critiques on the research question are very valid and I feel that I oversimplified this specific question in my goal to make the survey accessible. This feedback also helped me conclude that further research on legislation is strongly needed.

### 3.6.2 The role of enforcement

Several participants state they do not feel third party legislation affects them, not because they do not engage third parties but because third party legislation is unlikely to be enforced by police. In the pithy words of one respondent: “I think the police have better things to do with their time than pursue photographers and web hosts” (cis woman, 43, British). Another worker states: “I don’t think anyone would prosecute an unknowing party” (trans woman, 30, British) such as taxi drivers or hotels. Another participant shares her experience that there are exceptions to enforcement for certain premises and for workers sharing premises without management present:

*“Yes but only to an extent. It seems that some brothels (the one in Surrey<sup>9</sup>) the police have a blind eye to. I know that two women working together is illegal but can’t imagine that many women are criminalised for this though I know it happens” (cis woman, 40, British)*

Another worker conflates criminalisation and enforcement:

*“I feel that in England laws are not strictly enforced when it comes to sex work, and I feel that my situation, working with a duo partner, sharing an incall<sup>10</sup> and having a secretary, is not likely to come to the eye of the police force as situations such as parlours and agencies are tolerated. I understand that agencies operate in a grey area, but if these situations are not criminalised at all I find highly unlikely that my kind of arrangement would be criminalised at all” (questioning woman, 28, EU migrant)*

These responses, which focus on policing rather than legislation, were a very useful additional lens through which to view third party legislation. Following engagement with participants’ views of this topic, I decided enforcement was an important issue to include in my further research on third party legislation for this project.

### 3.6.3 Additional legal research phase

After deciding to include a study of law and enforcement to address disagreement and diverse interpretations of legislation among study participants, as well as to clarify my own understanding of

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<sup>9</sup> Referring to a well-known brothel, run by a former police officer, which has had publicity and is known to the police but has not attracted enforcement of brothel keeping legislation.

<sup>10</sup> Incall refers to an indoor workplace that is used by independently working sex workers, which can be a home, hotel or location used solely for the purpose of sex work by one or more workers.

legal ambiguities, a new research phase was added to the project. This section will discuss the reasoning for the legal research phase, the engagement of a Research Assistant and the English Collective of Prostitutes as key informants, and the research methods used.

After engaging in a second round of literature review on third party legislation, it quickly became clear that the literature on third parties within the field of Law was even more limited than within the employment literature. An especially wide gap in the literature is the lack of overview and analysis of third party legislation as a whole, rather than the occasional discussion of a single part of legislation such as brothel keeping or trafficking. For this reason, an analysis of secondary research on the topic of third party legislation was not fruitful. In addition, there are very few analyses on the policing of third party legislation beyond the acknowledgement that policing is highly dependent on regional and constantly changing policing habits. Participant feedback showed that the perceived risk of enforcement, rather than a simple division between legal and criminalised third parties, also plays a large role in the relationships between sex workers and third parties.

It became evident that, in order to make any statements on the criminalisation of third parties and the enforcement of this legislation, an exploratory piece of research into third party legislation was necessary. The aim of this new research phase would be to answer the following questions as far as possible, within the confines of a single research phase within a wider PhD project:

- Exactly which pieces of English legislation cover third parties in sex work?
- How widely is third party legislation to interpreted, policed and/or prosecuted?
- How commonly are the person(s) policed and/or prosecuted themselves sex workers?

From these research questions, it became clear that two kinds of specialist knowledge were needed for this legal research phase: knowledge of English law, and knowledge of recent and past policing of third parties. In order to do this work justice, within the limited time frame available and within a research project where the emphasis is on sex worker experiences of third parties rather than on the legislative context, it was decided to access outside legal specialist and key informant expertise. To collate third party legislation and case law, I engaged a Research Assistant between July and October 2019. The research assistant, Serena Crawshay-Williams, has an LLM (Masters of Law) and had just finished the Bar Professional Training Course, so the research took place between her admittance to the bar and the start of her pupillage. Serena specialises in employment law. In addition, I engaged the English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP) - an organisation established in 1975, which has decades of experience supporting sex workers in England - to consult on the policing and prosecution of third parties in sex work. The ECP brought decades of institutional knowledge and casework directly supporting sex workers and third parties, and answered questions on their experience with third party

policing and prosecution in England – including cases where the third parties involved were sex workers themselves. While the ECP was very generous with their cooperation, their ability to devote time to this research has understandably been limited by their high workload and by the urgency of their day-to-day work with sex workers and policymakers. Since a lot of cases have either gone unreported or have involved policing but not prosecution (for instance cases where the police have threatened prosecution or has arrested a third party and later dropped the case), judgements or court documents are not available and the casework experience the ECP has in this field is likely the best source of data on the policing of third parties. The English Collective of Prostitutes were willing to share their experience and, where appropriate, and often anonymised for safety, their case data for this research. The decades of experience the ECP has in supporting sex workers in these situations means that, rather than being anecdotal, this information is a form of key informant expertise sharing.

The expertise of the ECP is not a direct replacement of other forms of research into third party legislation and prosecution. Instead, the legal analysis in Chapter 4 is meant to be a starting point for further research on third party criminalisation and policing by researchers specialised in legal or criminological research. Ideally, this follow-up research would include an analysis of court cases and arrest records, trends in policing and convictions, requests for unreported court documents, and Freedom of Information requests to local police forces in order to compare interpretations and policing styles of third party legislation. However, within the scope of this research project, these avenues of inquiry were not available due to time constraints. For this reason, the findings on third party legislation, and especially on third party prosecutions, are based on decades of experience in case support by the ECP, but they are not able to speak to the cases they have not had involvement in. The analysis of third party legislation and policing in Chapter 4, then, is limited by the scope of the ECP's experience and the time constraints of this research project.

Data gathering for the legal research phase was an iterative process between the researcher, the research assistant and the consultants at the ECP. It started with the research assistant collating relevant legislation, receiving follow-up questions on legal terminology from the researcher, and looking up definitions of legal terms. The research assistant then asked the ECP consultants, through email exchanges and expert interviews, for examples of policing and prosecutions of third party offences in their casework. Through this process, a rough overview of legislative and common law third party offences and interpretations was created. The ECP added their assessments on the likelihood of persecution of different third parties, taking into account intersectional considerations and their experience in assisting sex workers with cases brought against them or the third parties they engage. In addition, the ECP shared several case files used in their support of sex workers prosecuted

under third party legislation. This data was then collated, analysed and compared to research participants' views and experiences by the researcher.

Financial support for engaging both the research assistant and for consulting by the ECP was kindly provided by the Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change (CERIC) at Leeds University Business School. The combined findings of the legal research phase and relevant sections of the survey data will be summarised in Chapter 4.

### 3.6.4 Final research design

The final research design, then, contained the following steps:

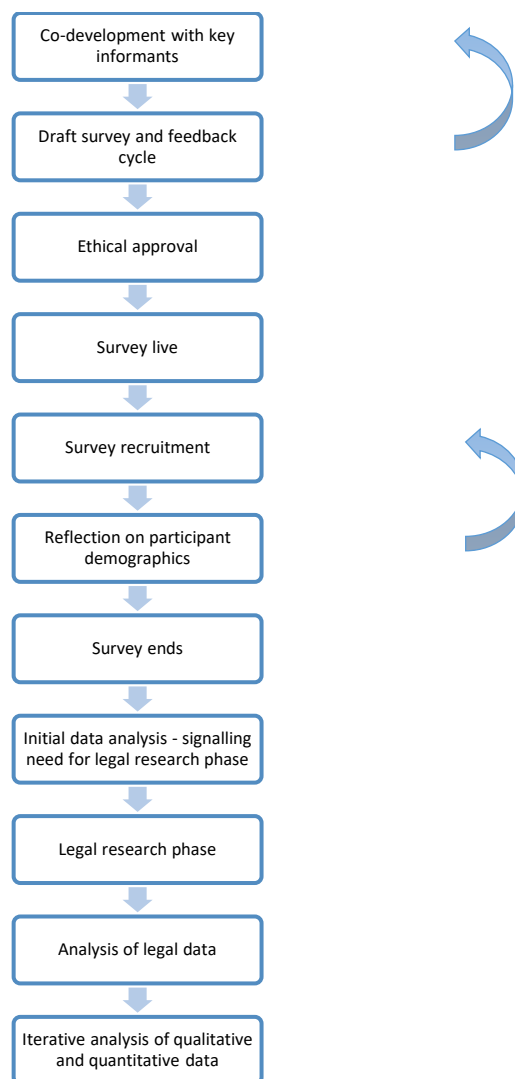


Figure 2: Final research design



In summary, this research is based in standpoint theory and centres the situated knowledge and experiences of sex workers. It has been designed in an attempt to be as ethical as possible towards participants and the wider sex worker community through a topic choice based on community needs, strong data protection, sensitivity to the topic, the development of community-transferred financial compensation of participants, an iterative process of survey design, and a reflexive approach to data and feedback that led to the addition of a legal research phase. In these ways, the research has been developed to be minimally extractive from the sex worker community, while giving back both to participants (in the form of CTFC) and the community (in the form of research that was actively requested), at the same time as producing rigorous data and findings.

## 4 Third party legislation and policing: sex workers' views on the criminalisation of third parties.

This chapter has a twofold goal: to create an overview of the legal status of a range of third parties, and to discuss sex workers' view on and experiences with the criminalisation of third parties. It will argue that third party legislation is broadly interpreted by judges and the police to criminalise a wide range of third party roles, both sex workers themselves and non-sex working third parties, including those with little to no managerial power over (other) sex workers. Additionally, as a consequence of the criminalisation of third parties, nearly all sex work workplaces are also criminalised. This chapter will argue that the criminalisation of workplaces causes hyper-precarity for workers, where they face both employment and income insecurity, as well as legal insecurity in the workplace and at times in their homes. This affects sex workers' relationships with third parties and their access to workers' rights, and leads the majority of sex workers to argue for decriminalisation or changes to third party legislation. Participants argue that changes in third party legislation will improve their wellbeing at work as well as their relationships with third parties, and means they will not have to choose between unsafe working conditions or breaking the law.

One of the major findings of the survey, as well as from further engagement with participants, is a high level of misunderstanding and confusion about the legal status of third parties in England, as outlined in the previous chapter. In an analysis of sex work legislation in the UK, Brooks-Gordon (2006) describes legislation surrounding sex work as 'legal chaos', and as pushing sex workers towards covert behaviour in order to avoid the police. Reading the plain text of third party legislation is not sufficient to understand the legal status of third party roles. It is certainly unclear to the casual observer that offences such as trafficking or controlling prostitution do not require coercion and can in fact happen even if the worker has consented to management or transport, or has themselves requested the services of a third party. This explains, to a certain extent, why there is confusion about the legality of third parties amongst participants. A second contributing factor to the differing views on third party legislation amongst sex workers is the large discrepancy in policing between police forces and over time, and following from this, the way policing affects different groups of sex workers in different ways. Migrant workers, sex workers of colour, and third parties of colour are more likely to be affected by the policing of third party legislation (X:talk, 2010), which may in part explain why some workers are unaware of the criminalisation of some or all third parties. A clear overview of third party

legislation and policing is therefore urgently needed in order create deeper understanding of the role of third parties in sex work.

In this chapter, first, a quick overview of third party legislation will be given. Second, different groups of third parties will be discussed with regard to their legal status and participants' views on and experience with their criminalisation<sup>11</sup>. Thirdly, the likelihood of prosecution of third parties is discussed, and finally participants' arguments for legal change are discussed in more detail.

#### 4.1 Overview of third party legislation

This chapter will present the findings of a review of third party legislation and the experience of the English Collective of Prostitutes in supporting sex workers and some third parties in criminal cases. Due to the constraints of this research, it is not possible for this Chapter to provide a full analysis of third party caselaw and policing, and instead it will focus on cases in which the breadth of policing of third parties is displayed. Rather than looking at cases in which obvious coercion, lack of freedom, or forced labour has taken place – the cases which are covered by the plain language of the law – this chapter will focus on the policing of sex workers and of third parties who seemingly have little to no control over the sex workers they work with. The goal of this focus is to assess how widely third party legislation is interpreted, and to create a broad overview of how likely it is that specific third party roles will be policed. The relevant Sections of Acts relating to the criminalisation of third parties can be found in Appendix 4. Since legal language can be obscure or confusing, a number of terms need to be defined for clarity. This section will use the terms 'sex worker' and 'prostitute'<sup>12</sup> interchangeably, to mean a person who exchanges in-person sexual services for payment. Payment, according to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 Section 51(2), can include financial payment, goods, services (including sexual services), or a discount on goods and services (*Sexual Offences Act, 1956*). In contrast to payment, 'gain' can include both financial advantage and goodwill that may in future bring financial advantage (*Sexual Offences Act, 2003*). The terms 'prostitution' and 'sexual exploitation' are equated in several Acts to mean to voluntarily or involuntarily offering sexual services in exchange for payment

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<sup>11</sup> Many of the court cases and prosecutions discussed in this chapter stem from the decades of casework support experience that the English Collective of Prostitutes shared as consultants to this part of the research project. Additionally, some of the initial research, but not the analysis, of the legal sections of this chapter was done with research assistance from Serena Crawshay-Williams.

<sup>12</sup> Although this thesis will aim to use the term 'sex worker' when discussing full service sex work, legislation uses the term 'prostitute' and for clarity so will this chapter at times.

to oneself or another person, and a brothel is defined as a location where two or more people offer sexual services, where these people are not required to be present or working at the same time.

The Sexual Offences Act 1956, in Sections 33 to 35, criminalises third parties related to brothel management and letting out a venue to be used as a brothel (*Sexual Offences Act, 1956*). This law states that keeping, managing or assisting in the management of a brothel is an offence, criminalises landlords and letting agencies who let premises which are used as a brothel, and criminalises tenants or occupiers for letting a premise to be used as a brothel or to be used for prostitution more than once.

The Sexual Offences Act 2003, in Sections 52 and 53, criminalises anyone who causes or incites any other person to become a prostitute anywhere in the world, or who controls any of the activities related to another person's prostitution (*Sexual Offences Act, 2003*).

The Modern Slavery Act 2015, in Section 2, criminalises the arranging or facilitation of travel (within, through or outside the UK) of another person, in order for this other person to be exploited or if they could reasonably know the other person could be exploited during or after travel (*Modern Slavery Act, 2015*).

Some shorter and less commonly used pieces of legislation related to third parties are the Obscene Publications Act 1959 (criminalising persons who publish an obscene article for gain (*Obscene Publications Act 1959*)), the Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981 (criminalising the public display of indecent matter (*Indecent Displays (Control) Act, 1981*)), the Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 (criminalises placing sex work advertisements in phone boxes<sup>13</sup> (*Criminal Justice and Police Act, 2001*)), and the Metropolitan Police Act 1839 (fining pub landlords for allowing prostitutes to gather in their pub (*Metropolitan Police Act, 1839*)). Additionally, there are the common law offences<sup>14</sup> of Keeping a Disorderly Home (used to convict people who sell non-traditional sexual services<sup>15</sup>) and Conspiracy to Corrupt Public Morals (used to convict people who advertise others' sex work), although they have not been successfully used in prosecutions recently.

From the plain text of the acts and other legislation that covers third parties, it is not immediately clear which third parties are criminalised, nor how this criminalisation affects sex workers. The next

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<sup>13</sup> These advertisements were often posted in the 1990's and early 2000's and were commonly known as 'tart cards'. However, use of this method of advertising dropped steeply since sex work mediated by internet advertising has become more common.

<sup>14</sup> A common law offence is one created by the courts, as opposed to parliament. Sentencing for these offences is at the discretion of the courts, and there is no maximum limit.

<sup>15</sup> These are sexual services that may not include intimate genital contact, and are generally kink or BDSM related services such as bondage or domination.

section will look at different third party roles, discuss the ways they are criminalised, and will show how this criminalisation affects sex workers.

## 4.2 Legal status of third parties, and sex workers views

This section will discuss the legal status of five categories of third parties: managers, venue owners, support staff, (fellow) sex workers, and contractors (service providers hired by sex workers themselves). These categories build on the categorisation of Bruckert and Law (2013), who distinguish between agencies, associates, and contractors, but is extended based on the English legal and empirical context. Managers are third parties who are in a managerial role over sex workers and prescribe some or all of the way or location sex workers do their work: they may run a sex work premise or venue, set rates or take fees, recruit or vet clients, do advertisement for the sex workers they manage, create and enforce workplace rules, or set working hours or shifts. Venue owners own the location sex work takes place in. They can be highly involved in the running of a sex work premise, in which case they also take on a managerial role, can passively take income from a sex work venue while being aware that sex work takes place, they may be unaware of the sex work taking place and simply be a landlord, or they can be tenants themselves and sublet premises for sex work to take place. Support staff are non-sex workers who work in a managed sex work environment, such as receptionists, maids, cleaners, drivers and security who work in premises, for agencies, or in sex clubs. Sex working colleagues take on a range of roles, including colleagues at premises or agencies, duo partners in independent indoor work, or independent colleagues who share living and workspaces, safety support and advice. Finally, contractors are service providers that are hired by sex workers themselves to provide services: advertisers, photographers, drivers, accountants, security staff, personal assistants, and many others

In this section, each of these categories of third parties will be discussed with regards to both their legal status, and the experiences sex workers have as a result of their criminalisation. Many prosecutions and judgements related to third party offences do not go reported, and therefore have not been available within the scope of this research. The discussion of third party legislation, and especially on third party prosecutions, is based on the limited caselaw accessible, on secondary literature, and the on decades of experience in case support by the English Collective of Prostitutes.

Therefore, this analysis is limited by the scope of the ECP's experience as well as the time constraints of this research project, and is intended as a starting point for further research.

#### 4.2.1 Managers

Depending on the area of sex work they are in, third parties in a managerial role can be criminalised under different Acts. Managers of premises or sex clubs can be prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act 1956, which criminalises brothel keeping. Managing a brothel is defined quite expansively: it includes having any form of influence over a space in which two or more people offer sexual services, regardless of whether they are present at the same time. The influence does not need to include control or compulsion (Hickle and Roe-Sepowitz, 2016; Home Affairs Committee, 2016), so a third party in a managerial position can be convicted of brothel keeping regardless of whether the work is voluntary or not, and regardless of the working conditions. However, the policing of brothel managers is not consistent: some territorial police forces have an unofficial policy of not prosecuting owners of 'well run' premises, and in at least one area, premises run by an ex-police officer are not policed (Derbyshire, 2018).

All third parties in a managerial position (whether in premises or clubs, running agencies, organising parties, or managing an individual sex worker) are criminalised under Sexual Offences Act 2003 for controlling prostitution or inciting a person to start sex work. The offence of inciting someone to start sex work for gain can be used to prosecute third parties who force or coerce others to start sex work, but does not require force or pressure: it can include suggesting, proposing, persuading, inducing or encouraging a person to start sex work (Rook and Ward, 2016). Similarly, the offence of controlling a sex worker for gain may include control over the sex workers' prices, the place of work, or the number of clients. In the experience of the English Collective of Prostitutes it can also include indirect control, such as control over a sex worker's diary or travel arrangements, telephone bookings or tax returns. Force or lack of consent are not required as a part of this control, and in fact the consent of the sex worker involved is irrelevant (Rook and Ward, 2016). A wide range of common management activities are considered control, including deciding pricing or work hours and days, deciding the commission workers pay, or which services are offered, and all are criminal offences even if the worker has agreed to the terms of management (Rook and Ward, 2016).

Finally, third parties in a managerial position can be prosecuted for trafficking under the Modern Slavery Act 2015 if they transport, or arrange for the transport of, sex workers. The English Collective of Prostitutes provided support in a case where a manager was prosecuted for picking one of the workers in her brothel up from the airport, and was convicted to three years in prison. According to

the ECP, both the police and the judge acknowledged that the workers worked voluntarily and that the brothel was known to the police to have good health and safety. Another example involved a Chinese woman prosecuted for trafficking for driving a sex working friend from Reading to Nottingham. In the experience of the ECP, trafficking prosecutions seem to be more likely if either the workers or the third parties are migrants (English Collective of Prostitutes, 2022), and migrant workers who are deemed to be trafficked are regularly deported by authorities (Marshall and Thatun, 2012), and in that case are often returned to the conditions that caused their initial move in the first place (Kempadoo et al., 2012).

The definition of 'managing' and 'controlling' in third party legislation is quite expansive, and includes several activities which, on their own, would not be considered managerial control in mainstream work. Based on the analysis in Chapter 2, in this research managerial power is defined as a person with control over workers' pay, time or work, who directly profits off workers' labour, and on whom the worker depends for their income. This includes managers of premises, agencies, clubs and individual managers, but not third parties who lack those powers and who are hired by managers or sex workers themselves. However, due to the expansive interpretation of third party legislation, these non-managerial third parties can still be criminalised as managing or controlling sex workers, as will be discussed in the rest of this section.

Participants describe a range of effects that the criminalisation of third parties in a managerial role has on them and their relationships at work. Firstly, Bruckert and Law (2013), as well as the research participants, argue that the criminalisation of brothel keeping "impedes the establishment of safe incall locations" (Bruckert and Law, 2013, p.87). One participant describes how brothel keeping legislation reduces the number of brothels and how, because of this, workers lack alternative work venues if they are unhappy with management:

*"I didn't like the manager and brothel owner since they were thinking only about the money and not about the girls (...) due to the fact that there weren't many brothels" (cis woman, 27, EU migrant).*

According to some participants, the criminalisation of brothel keeping limits their work options and affects their income. For instance, this worker would like to work in a brothel rather than independently, but is limited in options due to criminalisation:

*"I would prefer to work in brothels [rather] than manage things myself, but considering that it is criminalised I believe that it brings out the worst types of people to exploit that." (Cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant)*

Several participants describe how the criminalisation of third parties in a management role reduces or removes access to labour rights or workplace regulations, increasing rather than decreasing sex workers' risk of bad or dangerous management. In one participant's experience:

*"[third party criminalisation] emboldened the brothel owner to impose really unethical and unsafe work practices, as what she was doing was already illegal, so it really didn't matter to her" (cis woman, 39, British).*

Accessing and exercising labour rights in an illegalised workplace is very challenging. For another participant, the criminalisation of her workplace causes a lack of access to justice, in addition to a lack of access to labour rights:

*"it means I have no access to labour rights and would not be able to report abusive behaviour from clients or anyone else in the industry as I am also criminalised through working in a brothel, as well as knowing that should I report anything my workplace will be shut down and myself and my 40+ colleagues (many of whom I consider friends) would suddenly be unemployed. I am also aware that if my workplace is closed due to my report I will never be able to work in a brothel again" (cis woman, 24, British)*

For many participants, their critique of the criminalisation of management is grounded in their personal experiences of danger and safety in their work. One participant discusses the criminalised status of sex clubs and parties, and the effect this has on her sense of safety at the event:

*"Management are nice, but there's no formal security and I don't actually know what would happen if a customer assaulted me. For legal reasons, management pretend not to know that it is a full service place, so I'm supposed to keep up that illusion" (cis woman, 26, EU migrant)*

In this way, responsibility for the health and safety of workers, as well as direct physical risk, is shifted from management to workers. This is a direct consequence of the criminalisation of third parties: if third parties in a managerial role feel they cannot acknowledge the actual sexual labour taking place for fear of criminalisation, then they are unable to provide the safety procedures needed to safely do sex work without incriminating themselves. These are not new developments – one worker describes how employers using 'plausible deniability' as a defence against brothel keeping legislation made their employment precarious over 20 years ago:



*“In London, in the late 90s, I worked in hostess bars. All the girls were hookers but you were supposed to pretend you weren’t and once, one of them followed us around the corner in Soho and saw us arranging transaction with clients, and we almost lost our jobs” (cis woman, 42, British)*

Finally, one participant describes being in a situation that the criminalisation of third parties in sex work aims to prevent: a personal relationship with a friend in a management role, which over time has turned abusive and coercive. She explains that she would like to be able to leave this relationship, but that the criminalisation of this person has the effect of making it harder for her to leave the third party and access support:

*“While in theory it should deter manipulative or coercive individuals from controlling SWs and profiting from that, this is a lonely industry and it is possible for these individuals to emotionally manipulate SWs into being stuck - e.g. I am currently debating whether or not to approach police with my situation, as while I feel it has gotten out of hand I also do not wish to see him go to jail.” (cis woman, 26, British)*

She would, instead, like there to be a middle ground between reporting a third party to the police and being unable to act against mistreatment at all, and she feels that the criminalisation of management exacerbates her situation rather than supports her to get out of it.

#### 4.2.2 Venue owners

The ‘owners’ of venues in which sex work takes place, fall into two rough legal categories: premise owners or people letting out venues where they know sex work takes place, and landlords who are unaware of the sex work taking place. Owners or landlords who know of and directly profit off the sex work taking place in their premises are likely to be prosecuted under the Sexual Offences Act 1956 and 2003 as discussed above for management of a brothel or controlling a sex worker.

Landlords who are unaware of the sex work of two or more people taking place on their property can be prosecuted under brothel keeping legislation. However, according to the English Collective of Prostitutes, the police is more likely to inform the landlord of the sex work taking place and threaten prosecution unless the landlord evicts the sex working tenant or tenants. The English Collective of Prostitutes supported a sex worker, Ms S., in 2011 after the Metropolitan police made a ‘welfare visit’ to her flat where she worked alone. They asked about her working conditions and whether she was trafficked, and were assured that she was working voluntarily and independently. They then spoke to

her neighbour and her letting agent, saying Ms S. was a prostitute and threatening her landlord with prosecution unless she was evicted. Since Ms S. worked alone and the premises were therefore not a brothel, there was no legal basis to threaten the landlord with prosecution, nor is there any legal basis for informing neighbours of the type of work someone in their building does. Although the police reporting sex workers to their landlord does not result in an arrest or caselaw that can be cited, this type of policing action is not rare according to the English Collective of Prostitutes, and regularly causes sex workers to be evicted from their homes. Landlords are able to break the lease of their property by using a morality clause, which are common in standard tenancy agreements in England. This is also possible if there is only a single sex worker using the premise and it therefore is not a brothel, since morality clauses do not require habitual sex work by multiple workers like brothel keeping legislation does. This means that tenancy agreements are used to, in practice, police sex workers' workplaces more strictly than the law itself allows.

While landlords can only be convicted of a crime if there are multiple sex workers using the premise, thereby making it a brothel, tenants and occupiers of premises are more restricted. Tenants can be prosecuted if they allow a single sex worker to work on their property more than once. The English Collective of Prostitutes has been involved in the 2016 case of Mr Walkey, who let a single sex worker friend work from his home, without asking for payment. Due to the broad remit of the criminalisation of tenants allowing a premise to be used for sex work, this prosecution was possible even without the premise counting as a brothel. This means that it may be possible for non-sex working friends, family and partners who rent their home to be criminalised for allowing a single sex worker to work in their home, even if their motivation is to provide a safe working space. This shows a large discrepancy in the law with regard to home ownership status, where working in a premise is a crime when the premise is rented, but not a crime when the premise is owned.

Taken together, this legislation has the effect of theoretically criminalising or making precarious nearly all workplaces sex workers could use. Under brothel keeping legislation, every location where more than one sex worker does business is criminalised, even if they do not work or are present at the same time. This includes not only managed brothels in which workers give part of their earnings to third parties, but also workers sharing a home they work in, a purposely rented workspace, or temporary accommodation such as an Airbnb. By criminalising tenants who sublet, rented workplaces where only a single sex worker trades can also be criminalised if they allow a fellow sex worker to work there once, or if they sublet a workplace more than once. This means that sex workers can only legally work, without breaking the law or falling foul of morality clauses, in a workspace they legally own and work alone in.

Many sex workers' critique of third party legislation is focused on the criminalisation of landlords who let their property be used for sex work, and the stress and anxiety this causes to workers:

*"Shared with a friend for a while (...). She wasn't as security conscious as me and didn't care about neighbours finding out which I was pretty anxious about as its technically illegal, apparently you're most likely to just be told to leave but I that was bad enough and I felt on edge all the time" (cis woman, 34, British)*

Since many sex workers live in the same rented accommodation they work in, getting "told to leave" amounts to losing both a home and a workplace, as well as potentially a reference from a landlord which could help them find a new place to live. Several participants discuss the stress and lack of safety they experience due to the criminalisation of landlords: "I feel unable to be open and honest about my work to some of them such as landlord which make me unsafe as a bad client could alert neighbours and get me chucked out" (cis woman, 34, British), and: "I also cannot disclose to my landlord or anyone who is not a trusted friend that I do sex work, which is intensely stressful" (cis woman, 25, British).

Several workers feel that the criminalisation of landlords and tenants increases the stigma of sex work and exacerbates the isolation they experience. One worker has dealt with stigma in their housing due to the criminalisation of tenants who allow their place to be used for sex work:

*"I had to leave a house situation because my friend was too worried about the criminality of my work, it put a big strain on our relationship and on my life, as I had to find somewhere else to live" (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

Because the only legal way to do sex work is to work alone (and to own the venue, or at least to make sure the landlord doesn't find out), several workers mention the high costs caused by the criminalisation of sharing a workspace:

*"Yes, if I could hire a workspace with other workers at an affordable price, legally, I wouldn't be working from home, risking the legally required eviction of myself and my civ<sup>16</sup> flatmates, I can't afford fancy incalls on my own and outcalls never provide enough money on their own" (trans non-binary, 21, British)*

Echoing these experiences, Brooks-Gordon (2006, p.36) argues that these laws push sex workers towards "unscrupulous landlords who are prepared to break the law and will often charge exorbitant rents" and that "in these statutes are created the conditions for exploitative relationships between

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<sup>16</sup> The abbreviation 'civ' stands for civilian, or non-sex worker.

unscrupulous landlords and sex workers to germinate”. Participants agree that criminalisation of landlords means that prices for a work venue where the landlord is aware sex work takes place are increased significantly: “It’s meant that I’ve had to pay extortionate amounts for work spaces” (cis woman, 25, British). Between the criminalisation of brothels, management, landlords and tenants, the locations where sex workers can work are severely limited. However, besides managers and landlords, other third parties are criminalised as well.

#### 4.2.3 Support staff: non-sex working employees

Support staff are any employees or workers of a sex work business, who are not the managers or sex workers themselves. This includes receptionists at agencies or premises, maids at a premise, cleaners in premises or clubs, security staff at any sex work business, drivers for agencies, or any other support staff such as photographers hired by managers of an agency or premise, or external vendors selling consumables at brothels. Support staff can and have been prosecuted for assisting in the management of a brothel, for controlling prostitution, or for trafficking.

Assisting in the management of a brothel is very broadly defined and has been used to prosecute receptionists, cleaners, security staff, and sex workers themselves. For instance, judges do not see control as a requirement and there have been convictions for actions such as transporting a worker and doing building maintenance without any involvement in management activities (*Jones v DPP*, 1992). A more recent example of a conviction for assisting in brothel keeping is that of a 70 year old part-time cleaner at a brothel in Dorset. She rang an ambulance and performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) when a client became severely unwell, and was consequently arrested and convicted for brothel keeping (BBC News, 2017). The English Collective of Prostitutes states that being in possession of keys to the premises, as cleaners often are, can be sufficient evidence for the police to conclude a person is assisting in the management of a brothel. For similar reasons, the English Collective of Prostitutes considers receptionists and security staff to be at a high risk for prosecution, since many brothels advertise their opening hours, and receptionists are likely to be present during a raid, on top of having keys and being the main point of contact for both workers and clients.

Controlling for gain can be used for the prosecution of most third parties, but is especially likely to be applied to support staff in premises. Since the legal definition of control in this context can involve any kind of influence on the work of a sex worker, booking in appointments or holding on to money can be seen as proof of control. The English Collective of Prostitutes has seen a decrease in premises hiring security due to the policing of security staff, and if security is present at the time of a police raid, they are very likely to be prosecuted – especially if the security person is male, and even more so if they

are a man of colour. However, the English Collective of Prostitutes knows of at least one case where a woman, who was off-site answering security phone calls, was prosecuted.

In the public imagination and in media, trafficking is usually seen as the moving of women across borders, either through force or deception, in order for them to do sex work they do not want to be doing. However, legally, trafficking charges are used for the prosecution of any person knowingly involved in the transport or travel of a sex worker – either within the country or internationally –, does not require force or coercion, and can include third parties who are requested by a sex worker to provide transport. This means that any person who knowingly provides transport for a sex worker could be convicted of trafficking. This travel or transport does not require the crossing of borders or even county lines, and a few miles of travel is sufficient. In fact, “[t]he offence may, for example, be committed where a person is trafficked to a house in the next street or perhaps even next door” (Leigh, 2015, p.654). This means that a regular driver for an agency, who is aware of sex work taking place, could be prosecuted under trafficking legislation, as could other agency employees who arrange the travel.

Several participants discuss ways in which the criminalisation of support staff means sex workers do not have access to the same protections and rights as other workers in their relationships with these third parties. One participant describes that support staff in her workplace break the law, specifically because they feel sex workers are unable to access protections:

*“staff (not performance staff) taking the piss and attempting crime/theft because they assumed we wouldn’t be able to report it” (cis woman, 46, British).*

Although support staff usually do not have managerial power over sex workers, the fact that workplaces are criminalised means that at least some support staff feel it is so unlikely sex workers will access the justice system, that they feel enabled to steal from workers.

#### 4.2.4 (Fellow) sex workers

Sex workers, as workers, colleagues or housemates, can in several contexts be criminalised for assisting in the management of a brothel, for inciting or controlling prostitution, or for trafficking.

Independent workers could be, but rarely are, prosecuted for brothel keeping due to working together with a colleague without any management being present. Although two sex workers doing a one-off duo booking<sup>17</sup> is technically a brothel, co-working independent sex workers are usually not the people

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<sup>17</sup> A session where two workers see the same client at the same time.

who get prosecuted. The English Collective of Prostitutes asserts that brothel keeping prosecutions are generally directed at premises where people are working together in a more established way. However, for independent sex workers who share a workspace on a more regular basis, there is no requirement for more than one worker to be present or working at the same time, so independent workers sharing premises intermittently on a more regular basis are liable for prosecution of brothel keeping (Rook and Ward, 2016). The ECP has argued that evidence for assisting with the management of the brothel can be as simple as sex workers arranging which days or times they will be using a shared venue, or their name being on a tenancy agreement or council tax documents. This does not only include sex workers who share a workplace for the sole use of seeing clients, but also sex workers who share a home where they both live and work.

Brothel keeping legislation is also used to police and prosecute sex workers working together in premises that are managed or organised by a fellow sex worker. Although the National Police Chiefs' Council guidelines for police officers and investigators state: "Don't start from a position that treats sex workers as criminals simply for being sex workers or engaging in practices that have been undertaken to increase their own personal safety, such as, 'managing or keeping brothels'" (National Police Chiefs' Council, 2019, p.10), these guidelines are not rules and are interpreted and implemented differently in different police force areas. The English Collective of Prostitutes was strongly involved in the case of Ms Finch in 2009 (BBC News, 2010). Ms. Finch was charged with brothel keeping, since she and three or four other women worked from her home in Bedfordshire, and she argued that due to the high number of attacks on sex workers in the area, she had no choice but to share a working space for her own safety. Ms Finch's defence was successful and she was acquitted (*R. v Finch (Claire)*, 2010). In contrast, sex workers in premises, at agencies, or sharing workspaces with colleagues, can also be prosecuted for assisting in the management of themselves. For instance, in *Elliott v DPP*, the court held that six women had assisted in the management of the brothel they worked at because in addition to getting paid for sexual services, they also negotiated which services they would offer (Rook and Ward, 2016). This case shows that a sex worker can be convicted of assisting in the management of a brothel in which they themselves work and are managed. In other words, they can be guilty of a crime they themselves are the victim of.

Similarly, sex workers have been prosecuted for assisting in the 'controlling for gain' of themselves (Rook and Ward, 2016), meaning that they have committed a crime by helping the person who was committing the crime of which they were considered the victim. The English Collective of Prostitutes has experience of one case in which a worker in central London visited nearby flats to speak to fellow sex workers and encouraged all sex workers in the area to raise their prices by £5 at the same time. This worker was threatened with prosecution for controlling for gain, since her labour organising was

seen as evidence of control over the pricing of others. In both this example and that of the workers negotiating their work above, it seems that workers who take a proactive approach to improving their working conditions for themselves and their colleagues are at additional risk of prosecution. Sex workers sharing premises without third parties or management activities being present can also be prosecuted under controlling for gain legislation, according to the English Collective of Prostitutes, which has been involved with a Southampton case in which two sex workers were prosecuted for controlling each other while voluntarily working together.

Sex workers, in the role of colleagues, could be prosecuted for inciting prostitution in some cases, for instance when helping a new sex worker get set up with advertisement, or by giving advice to other workers, according to Hardy and Barbagallo (2021, p.545):

“laws against “incitement for the purposes of prostitution” (Section 52 of the 2003 UK Sexual Offences Act) prevent workers from advertising, but also from offering advice to each other, threatening the very communities of safety that sex workers self-organize”.

Many sex work support organisations, sex worker-led organisations, and individual sex workers worry that they could be prosecuted for giving advice to new sex workers under inciting for gain legislation. For instance, the English Collective of Prostitutes themselves state that, due to incitement legislation, they are not able to tell sex workers where it is safe to work indoors, about any escort agencies or parlours they could recommend, or about safe areas for street-based work. They know of at least one case where a sex worker of colour was charged with incitement for gain for helping another sex worker with her website. After support in her case by the English Collective of Prostitutes she was not convicted.

Finally, sex workers can be prosecuted for trafficking if they transport, or arrange for the transport of, other workers. The English Collective of Prostitutes was involved in a 2007 case that is closer to the narrative of trafficking that is common in the media: sex workers whose travel to the UK is arranged, after which they have to pay back a large amount of money to the people who organised the international travel. In this case, the person charged with trafficking, S. K., had come to the UK from Thailand this way voluntarily in order to save up money to support her family and was aware she would be doing sex work. She drove another Thai sex worker, who had been voluntarily working in the UK for four years, between workplaces in the UK, and was prosecuted for trafficking. This case shows that it is possible for fellow sex workers and trafficking ‘victims’ to be prosecuted for the trafficking of one another if transport takes place.

The problems caused by the criminalisation of co-working with other sex workers is one of the topics most discussed by participants: “I would like to live with another sex worker but current laws don’t allow that” (trans man, 29, British). Other participants agree with this view:

*“The best work environment is your own home which I do now, but I would prefer to have another worker with me. This is for safety and psychological wellbeing (...) But the law prevents it” (cis woman, 46, British)*

and:

*“Technically it wasn’t a brothel. I worked from my home. But I allowed close friends to work from my home at the same time as me. So I could provide somewhere safer for myself and friends to work together. But I’m aware in the eyes of the law this would be classed as a ‘brothel’” (cis woman, 33, British)*

Workers regularly discuss brothel keeping legislation and its policing between themselves: “I have heard of girls being charged for operating a brothel as they shared an apartment” (cis woman, 34, British). The same participant also discusses that clients who are aware of brothel keeping legislation, are able to use this information to threaten co-working sex workers with a report to the police, and can use this to extort the workers: “I’ve heard clients have blackmailed/threatened SWs with the police as they know it’s illegal”.

A large number of participants states that the criminalisation of co-working means they either work in ways that are less safe, or break the law in order to protect themselves. As one participant summarises: “I know that working with my friend is illegal. This makes me extremely anxious, as working with her is the only time that I feel fully safe” (cis woman, 25, British). Others work less safely in order not to break the law: “If it were legal to work from the same premises as another worker I would feel much safer. I work with no security or others present so if something were to happen I would be helpless” (cis woman, 34, British). One participant describes how she prioritises her physical safety over the possibility of arrest and prosecution:

*“In rare instances having a duo partner and someone I know doing security has literally saved my life when in physical danger from a client. I feel lucky to live in the UK comparatively, but I only feel safe because I break the archaic and nonsensical brothel laws. (...) When on tour, having a colleague working in the same residence has always been beneficial psychologically, and has at times meant the difference between life and death. (...) I would be doing sex work the way I do it despite the laws, because I have to. It is how I survive. Revising the*



*laws would merely remove that element of fear and potentially save lives by promoting collectivity and solidarity” (cis woman, 29, British)*

Several participants state they do not feel safe reporting clients to the police due to the criminalisation of colleagues working together: “I’m less likely to report a crime if I was working a duo or in another workers premises when the crime was committed” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant). Participants also worry about how any contact with the police may affect third parties: “it means that I can’t call the police at work if something happens to me because if I did my incall flatmate could be prosecuted” (cis woman, 31, British).

One participant discusses how fear of legal repercussions means either having less income or less security:

*“When I had a flatmate who was a proDomme<sup>18</sup> it meant we had to really limit the amount of work we could do, so as not to attract attention because of brothel laws. As such, we never saw more than 3 incall clients a week between us, which meant income was low, (...). She wasn’t even full service, but we had to err on the side of caution. Thankfully I also had a student loan at the time, but it wasn’t enough. Moving out and removing those limitations was really important in order to earn more money. Now I still do occasional duo bookings with a friend who lives elsewhere, and worry about brothel laws with that, but they’re so few and far between it shouldn’t attract any attention – 95% of the time I’m alone when I’m working now, which takes away a level of security, but also means I’m less likely to have my home raided or have to mention my sex work on a court record if I were to be arrested for sex work related offences” (cis woman, 24, British)*

Another participant states: “I’d quite like to let out my work room when I’m not working but that would make me a criminal” (cis woman, 41, British). Advertisement, and therefore income, is also affected by the criminalisation of co-working:

*“While for the most part we ignore the stupid law and work together anyway, it does mean we’ve had to be very careful about how we advertise things like duo-work, and that has probably had a negative impact on the amount of bookings”*  
*(non-binary questioning, 27, British)*

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<sup>18</sup> Professional dominatrix – a sex worker who specialises in domination and related sexual services. This may or may not include physical sexual contact between client and worker.

Finally, some participants refer to the controlling for gain sections of third party legislation, in full understanding that neither control nor gain are required for prosecution for: “it makes me concerned to share working spaces even though we do not profit from or control one another’s work, we share space for safety” (cis woman, 31, British). One worker states that third party criminalisation “makes it risky to help each other stay safe. We risk either our safety or our liberty. Not an acceptable choice to have to make so regularly” (trans non-binary, 27, EU-migrant).

#### 4.2.5 Contractors: service providers hired by sex workers

There are several third parties that get hired by sex workers, independent indoor or street-based workers most commonly, to provide services directly to the sex workers themselves. This can include drivers, security staff, advertising services, photographers and videographers, accountants, web developers, personal assistants, cleaners, and individuals or companies who provide temporary workspaces, such as hotels and Airbnb hosts. As discussed before, offences such as assisting in the management of a brothel and controlling the prostitution of another person do not require a third party to have managerial power over sex workers: keeping a diary of appointments or holding a key to a sex work venue have both been used as evidence, so it is not impossible for a contractor to be hired by a sex worker and be prosecuted for controlling that same sex worker. However, for most contractor positions this has not been tested in caselaw and prosecution seems to be unlikely. This section will discuss cases in which contractors are more likely to be prosecuted, and the ways that the criminalisation of contractors, regardless of the likelihood of prosecution, affects sex workers.

The group of contractors most likely to be affected by third party criminalisation, in the experience of the ECP, are regular drivers. Regular drivers differ from incidental drivers, such as taxi or rideshare drivers, in that they are hired by a sex worker on a more regular basis. They are usually aware of the nature of the sex work, and often take on a security role as well, for instance by waiting near the location a worker sees a client or by holding on to the booking fee if the worker worries about being robbed by a client. These drivers may be prosecuted for both trafficking, since their work involves transporting a sex worker, and for controlling a sex worker. While migrant sex worker organisation X:talk emphasises the need for legislation that “differentiates between people forced, coerced or deceived into sex work and those migrating to work in the sex industry willingly” (X:talk, 2010, p.5), The Modern Slavery Act explicitly states that the consent of sex workers in their choice to travel for work is irrelevant for the prosecution of trafficking (*Modern Slavery Act*, 2015). Contractors providing security services, without providing transport, may be charged for controlling the prostitution of another person as well.

Personal assistants, or secretaries, for independent sex workers are likely to have similar levels of control-activities as receptionists at premises, but, according to the ECP, they are much less likely to be policed if they work for an independent indoor sex worker. However, the ECP are aware of one case where a personal assistant to an indoor independent sex worker was threatened with prosecution for controlling for gain. Similarly, third parties who are involved in advertisement for sex workers could theoretically be prosecuted for controlling for gain, but this is rare if it is their only third party activity. The English Collective of Prostitutes has been involved in one case where the partner of a sex worker was prosecuted and pled guilty to controlling for gain for making and running a website his partner and her colleagues advertised their services on, without other forms of third party activity present. Brooks-Gordon (2006) points out that the legislation specifically criminalising sex work advertising, ends up criminalising the advertisement for the sale of something that is not illegal itself.

To the knowledge of the English Collective of Prostitutes, the criminalisation of other contractors, such as photographers, advertising companies or accountants has not been tested in case law. However, several participants explain that third party criminalisation stops them from accessing the support and services that third parties could offer, such as: “It stops me utilising services that could be good for me” (cis woman, 24, British), and “I would pay others to help me with my work/my safety more often if I was not nervous about it because it's criminalised” (cis woman, 31, EU-migrant). Workers express worrying about putting people around them at risk by asking them to take on a third party role:

*“it makes me cautious about paying people and asking for help. It particularly makes me concerned about friends who help me by checking in with me after bookings and who I sometimes pay for doing this” (cis woman, 41, British)*

Sex workers also say that criminalisation stops people from being willing to offer those services: “people are nervous about assisting sex workers even for safety purposes” (trans non-binary, 20, British). One participant compares the effects of third party criminalisation to how unexceptional third party support is in other professions: “like any other worker, to work in a safe and professional manner takes a team” (cis woman, 18, British). Another participant agrees:

*“In any other business you wouldn't expect one person to operate alone. We pay taxes and can run it as efficiently as a private dentist surgery. It is safer to work with another person in this line of work, hygiene is important so having a cleaner would be good, having a manager who could screen and book clients would make it professional and a driver for outcalls would ensure you get to and from appointments safely.” (cis woman, 22, British)*

In conclusion, the criminalisation of third parties in sex work does not simply criminalise third parties in a managerial role, or those who force others into sex work. It can also be used to criminalise landlords, support staff in venues, colleagues, and several types of contractors hired by sex workers to provide specific services. Scoular et al. (2019, p.214) argue that:

“The operation of these laws has created a paradoxical situation where, although prostitution is not illegal, it is difficult and sometimes impossible for individuals to work safely or without breaking these laws. Decades of research confirm that the only way to avoid criminal charges has been to work alone, in private spaces.”

This has the effect of criminalising nearly all workplaces available to sex workers, and making sex work more precarious by creating multidimensional insecurities or hyper-precarity (Lewis et al., 2015; Zou, 2015). In other words, on top of the precarity of income and employment which exists in sex work, the criminalisation of third parties adds legal precarity for sex workers: they worry about police intervention, prosecution of themselves or others, and the fact that the criminalisation of nearly all workplaces can make even their housing precarious. Participants also emphasise that the legislation criminalising third parties makes it illegal for them to take a range of security precautions, including working together with a co-worker or hiring a contractor to provide security services. Several participants discuss that they have to make a calculation to decide whether the legal risk of breaking third party legislation is higher than the physical risk of not breaking the law and working alone and without support. This dilemma is eloquently summarised by one participant as:

*“I take the risk of being criminalised to keep myself safe. Other people choose to keep themselves less safe but not risk a criminal record. No one should have to make that choice” (cis woman, 28, British)*

How that calculation is made depends, in part, on how sex workers interpret the likelihood of themselves or third parties being prosecuted for third party offences. The next section will delve deeper into this issue.

### 4.3 Likelihood of prosecution

The fact that police forces across the country have vastly different approaches to the policing of third party legislation makes it hard to gain an overview of which third party roles are most at risk for arrest

and prosecution, and this information may differ widely between regions. In fact, even within police forces, individual officers may have such strongly differing attitudes and approaches to sex work and sex workers that Bowen et al. (2021) describe this as ‘policing roulette’ for workers who attempt to report crimes against them. Most sex workers, however, do not base their workplace decision-making purely on the technical legality of their work practices, but balance the risks of lone working with their assessment of the likelihood of police attention and prosecution. This section will discuss sex workers’ own assessments of the risk of prosecution of themselves or others under legislation that criminalises third parties. It then goes on to discuss the two main consequences sex workers’ fear of prosecution has on them: lack of access to justice, and increased isolation. Finally, a quick overview of prosecution risk per third party role will be given.

#### 4.3.1 Sex workers’ assessment of prosecution risk

Participants were asked the question “Does the fact that these work relations are criminalised/illegal affect your work or your safety in any way?”. Out of 185 respondents, 131 answers stated that the criminalisation of third parties does affect their work or safety, 43 answered that it does not, and another 11 gave an answer that was either unsure or stated the question was not applicable to them. Many of the workers who answered that the criminalisation doesn’t affect them, say that this is because they do not engage third parties (“No my money is mine, even [if] legal I would not share it or pay anyone” (cis woman, 56, British)), or because they feel they are not at risk of being policed due to privilege or due to the type of work they do. Several participants feel that enforcement of third party legislation is unlikely for a variety of reasons, such as doing indoor work: “I understand that police are unlikely to target indoor independent sex workers so it doesn't bother me too much” (cis woman, 26, British). Another reason is because there is no control or financial gain involved, and a lack of interest from the police in these cases is assumed:

*“When working with other people in duos we make our own money and I do it very occasionally, no one is unfairly profiting or exploited and the police have better things to do than bother me!” (cis woman, 43, British)*

How realistic workers’ assessment of the likelihood of policing is, depends on their specific situation, such as their advertising presence, the local police force’s practices, intersecting vulnerabilities, and simply luck with regards to landlords and neighbours. For instance, one worker feels very safe from police intervention regardless of her consistent use of third parties:

*“I feel that in England laws are not strictly enforced when it comes to sex work, and I feel that my situation, working with a duo partner, sharing an incall and having a secretary, is not likely to come to the eye of the police force as situations such as parlours and agencies are tolerated. I understand that agencies operate in a grey area, but if these situations are not criminalised at all I find highly unlikely that my kind of arrangement would be criminalised at all” (questioning woman, 28, EU migrant)*

Workers who express fear of the police often refer to ‘raids’, or police actions in which a large number of police officers enter premises, take money and electronic devices, and demand proof of identity from workers: “I avoid where possible working with others through fear of being raided so I work alone most of the time which is much less safe” (trans woman, 30, EU migrant). Not only workers in premises are afraid of the police, but so are independent workers: “It makes me feel less safe to know that I could be in trouble for lending my workspace to a friend or that someone could be in trouble for helping me to stay safe” (cis woman, 30, British). Although brothel keeping prosecutions for independently working sex workers are not common, there are cases in which participants are worried about malicious tip-offs to the police:

*“[criminalisation] turns us into criminals when we help each other. That gives people leverage to blackmail us. Generally, the police don't seem to care about our small scale stuff, but if someone wanted to screw me over legally (like in my impending divorce) they could” (cis woman, 28, non-EU migrant)*

Similar to findings by Bowen et al. (2021), this fear of the police is stronger for migrant workers, both EU migrants and non-EU migrants, who fear losing their visa or being deported if they come into contact with the police: “when I worked at the brothel I was very scared of getting caught in a raid and losing my visa or having a criminal record” (cis woman, 27, non-EU migrant). Migrant workers who want to share a workspace for safety are forced to weigh the risk of solo working against the risk of police intervention and losing their migration status:

*“Because I'm a migrant as well, I am sort of double criminalised. Being found out as a 'brothel keeper' could lead to issues with my immigration status and access to permanent residency, so with this in mind I am additionally too scared to consistently work with others. If I had been British, I feel that the cost-benefit analysis works in the favour of risking working with others in a low volume setting, or with a strong cover story. I still do share with people from time to time*

*but I always have to weigh up how much I need to risk it, which sadly often comes out to having to anyway". (non-binary questioning, 22, EU migrant)*

Like this migrant worker, several participants acknowledge that their own position in society affects how they assess the risk of potential policing. One participant states: "It hasn't [affected me] so far but I imagine it would for less privileged workers than myself" (cis woman, 25, non-EU migrant).

#### 4.3.2 Consequences of fear of prosecution

The participants who feel they are affected by the criminalisation of third parties have a wide range of ways in which this affects them: fear of police and the Home Office, lack of access to justice, lack of safety at work, lack of labour rights, diminished access to support and professional services, limitations to their work options, and increased isolation and negative mental health effects. Many participants feel that the criminalisation of third parties means they have lost access to the justice system and the police if they are victims of a crime:

*"I do feel less safe from clients working on my own, particularly when I have had to manage difficult situations without support. It also means that I haven't been able to report incidents or follow up on incidents with the police. I have to accept I'll never receive justice" (cis woman, 35, British)*

Research in a range of sex work contexts, both in the UK and internationally, has found a similar reluctance to report crimes experienced by sex workers, or a lack of access to police and justice amongst sex workers. Sanders et al. (2018b), in their research of online and internet-mediated sex work in the UK, found that crime against sex workers has been seriously under-reported, and found several reasons sex workers give for non-reporting crimes: lack of confidence in the police, fear of judgement or inaction, fear of prejudice or not being taken seriously, previous bad experiences with the police, fear of arrest of the worker themselves or third parties (especially co-workers), fear of deportation, and fear of losing their workplace. Bowen et al. (2021), in close cooperation with National Ugly Mugs, have observed a strong decline in the willingness of sex workers who experience victimisation to report these crimes to the police. They found that amongst research participants who did not want to report victimisation to the police, fear or experience of criminalisation was the most common reason, with 72% of workers stating this as a reason not to report. Campbell et al. (2019) found that confusion about legality was another reason sex workers did not report to the police, as well as similar reasons to Sanders et al. for under-reporting:

“A range of factors shaped under-reporting in our study: fears that they and/ or their sex work location would become identified by the police; fears that the police may take action against them or others they worked with; fears that criminal justice investigations would jeopardize their anonymity leading to identification of their sex work to family, friends, employers, acquaintances and the wider public; previous experience of unsatisfactory response from the police; fears about perpetrator reprisals; for some victims their own perceptions of the ‘severity’ of the incident and how they would be treated in the criminal justice system. Several described having low confidence in police responses and feeling alienated from the police” (Campbell et al., 2019, p.1547)

Brooks-Gordon (2006) states that criminalisation of workplaces and sex work stigma together cause sex workers avoiding contact with the police. Australian research by Stardust et al. (2021) show similar avoidance of police involvement and under-reporting in a partially decriminalised system, and adds that the decision not to report is often based on “an embodied whole knowledge comprised of sex workers’ individual, direct experiences with the system” (Stardust et al., 2021, p.154).

Many clients know that sex workers in premises or working together are technically breaking the law, and workers worry about that being used against them by clients:

*“The fact that it is criminalised definitely means that I would never report anything to the police, which gives clients an immense degree of power over me, and this is something all of my duo partners and workers I’ve shared places with have echoed” (non-binary questioning, 22, EU migrant)*

Several participants echo the fact that they do not feel safe reporting clients to the police due to brothel keeping legislation, and explain that this encourages dangerous people: “predators know we can’t go to the police and that they can get away with anything they do to us. So that makes it so much more dangerous” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant). Participants also worry about how any contact with the police may affect third parties, partners, and the risk of eviction:

*“I would generally never talk to the police, but especially because their investigation into any crimes perpetrated against me may lead to my partner and I being persecuted or losing our home” (cis woman, 26, British)*

This concern for third parties, including especially colleagues, was also found by Bowen et al. (2021), when nearly half of their research participants stated ‘fear of harm to others in the industry’ as a barrier to reporting crime. Bowen’s participants feared that any information they gave the police



about their workplace could lead to raids or could in other ways affect the livelihood of other sex workers in their workplace or area.

Finally, many participants discuss how criminalisation affects their mental health and causes or increases isolation amongst sex workers. Having to be secretive about their working lives can be very stressful:

*“it means I have to be extremely secretive in how I conduct my work. From the type of web host I use, to my presence in a hotel, or what I say to my landlord and any of his staff that I have to deal with. It is extremely inconvenient and causes a lot of stress and hassle” (questioning woman, 34, British)*

One worker states, referring to third parties: “I never keep a paper trail of money I pay someone. I always have a cover story. I keep all my dealings very private to protect me and them” (cis woman, 51, British). Another participant shares this worry about endangering the people around her: “I cannot openly discuss all aspects of my work for fear of getting the people around me into trouble” (cis woman, 20, British), while another states “I work alone to not harm anyone else” (questioning man, 38, British). One participant explains that the stress of potentially losing her income and workplace affects interpersonal relationships:

*“it means that I am always at risk of having my workplace/source of income suddenly removed, and also at risk of being investigated myself. This of course leads to me being very private and cautious about who I talk to and how I talk about my work. Keeping secrets in this way can lead to toxic, unhealthy habits and relations, for example with family and friends. It's stressful to know that any day your life could change for the worse, and that those changes are out of my control” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Another worker describes the many ways criminalisation has influenced their life, including safety, loss of interpersonal relationships, stress, loss of housing, guilt, and isolation:

*“It massively affects my work and my safety that these relations are criminalised. All of those relations would be so much safer if they weren't. Now, we constantly have to worry about privacy and discretion and hiding and it takes a lot of effort. Sometimes we don't have the energy to go through the effort and stress of risking doing something criminal, and therefore we can lose out on a lot of colleagues and a lot of relationships that could make work safer. (...) Sometimes I've also experienced feeling guilty for other people around me being criminalised through*

*knowing about my work in different ways, so then I avoid talking about it or avoid telling them important things, and it makes my life more stressful, draining, isolated and dangerous.” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

#### 4.3.3 Overview of likelihood of prosecution of third parties

As this chapter has shown, legislation criminalising third parties can and has been interpreted expansively by courts and the police, and can include third parties who do not have managerial power over sex workers. However, for several third party roles – such as safety buddies<sup>19</sup> or accountants – this has not been tested in caselaw according to the ECP, and there seems to be little interest from police in prosecuting these third parties. Generally, the casework experience of the ECP shows that third parties are at higher risk of prosecution if their work takes place in a venue where multiple sex workers work (such as a premise or brothel), if they have managerial power over sex workers, if they organise or provide transport, and if they or the sex workers involved are migrants or people of colour. Further research on this topic is clearly needed, and would ideally include an attempt to refute or confirm these trends in policing and prosecution through an extensive quantitative analysis of prosecutions, convictions, arrests and investigations.

The limited number of cases discussed in this chapter, as well as the casework data from the English Collective of Prostitutes, show the following broad-strokes picture of risk of prosecution for a range of third party roles (see Table 1 on the next page):

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<sup>19</sup> A safety buddy is a friend, partner, or fellow sex worker who provides safety support, usually from a different location. They are often unpaid, but sometimes receive a small amount of money or an exchange of services or gifts for their time.

	<i>Third party role</i>	<i>Legislation</i>	<i>Additional nuance</i>
<b>Higher risk</b>	Brothel managers/owners	Brothel keeping, Inciting and Controlling Prostitution.	If transport is present also Trafficking.
	Receptionists/maids	Assisting in Brothel keeping, Controlling Prostitution.	Minimal proof of control needed for conviction.
	Regular driver/security	Controlling, Assisting in Brothel keeping, Trafficking.	Especially men of colour and migrants are likely to be policed.
<b>Medium risk</b>	Workers subletting their workspace to each other	Brothel keeping – SOA 1956 s.36.	Especially migrants are policed, no habituality required, a single instance is enough.
	Colleagues in parlours	Controlling Prostitution.	Workers can be convicted of controlling each other.
	Cleaners	Assisting in Brothel keeping.	At least one case, ownership of keys was proof.
	Agency owners	Inciting and Controlling Prostitution.	Less likely to be prosecuted than brothel owners.
	Flyerers (phone boxes)	Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001 s.46.	Prosecutions dwindling as advertisement changed.
<b>Low risk</b>	Duo partners	Brothel keeping, Controlling Prostitution.	Low risk if occasional and not in a brothel.
	Safety buddies	Controlling Prostitution.	Low risk if independent work and off-site.
	Personal assistant	Controlling Prostitution.	Low risk if independent worker, one known prosecution.
	Advising colleagues	Inciting prostitution.	One arrest known, untested in caselaw.
	Web/advertiser	Inciting and Controlling Prostitution.	More likely for migrant/POC workers and third parties
<b>Theoretical risk only</b>	Landlords	Brothel keeping.	Only if habitual - instead workers get evicted.
	Occasional driver	Trafficking.	No prosecution if unaware of the sex work involved.
	Photo/videographer	Controlling Prostitution.	Theoretically possible, but untested in caselaw.
	Website developer	Controlling Prostitution.	Theoretically possible, only used on a sex worker/partner.
	Advertising companies	Controlling Prostitution.	Theoretically possible, but untested in caselaw.
	Accountant	Controlling Prostitution.	Theoretically possible, but untested in caselaw.

Table 1: Likelihood of third party prosecutions.

## 4.4 Sex workers' desired changes in third party relationships and legislation

After exploring the legal status of third parties, the effect of third party criminalisation on sex workers, and the likelihood of prosecution of different third parties, this section will discuss how sex workers feel their relationships with third parties can be improved, both with regard to legislation and other factors. The criminalisation of third parties in sex work affects sex workers' access to third party services, their decisions on whether and how to engage with third parties, their relationships with third parties themselves, their access to workplaces, and their relationship to the police and the justice system. Bruckert and Law (2013) found that criminalisation “obscures and enables labour exploitation”, “excludes sex workers from protective labour legislation”, “impedes the establishment of safe incall locations”, and “makes sex workers vulnerable to being criminally charged as third parties” (Bruckert and Law, 2013, p.86-88 ). In addition, Sanders et al. (2018b) found that only 8% of sex workers thought that managers, landlords and receptionists in third party roles in sex work should be criminalised.

Similarly, this research found that a large majority of sex workers want the legal status of some or all third parties to change. To the question “What would make your relationships with third parties better or safer for you?”, 45% of participants answered that decriminalisation would have that effect, and a further 33% says that better laws, not criminalising third parties, or legalisation/regulation would have that effect. This section will first discuss the responses that mention decriminalisation explicitly, then the responses that include changes to legislation in general, and finally other improvements to relationships with third parties that participants mentioned would improve their relationships with third parties.

### 4.4.1 Decriminalisation

A large minority of participants answered the question on what would improve their relationships with third parties with only the word decriminalisation or a variation on that word. This is unsurprising, since sex workers and sex worker-led organisations worldwide have been campaigning for decriminalisation for decades and participants rightly assume researchers in the field are aware of what this entails. However, opinions on exactly who and what should be decriminalised differs, as this selection of responses shows:

*“All aspects of sex work should be decriminalized.” (trans woman, 35, EU migrant)*

*“Decriminalisation of brothel keeping.” (cis woman, 21, British)*

*“Full decriminalization and the ability to organize with other sex workers for peer support.” (cis woman, 25, British)*

*“Decriminalization of workers sharing a space.” (cis woman, 25, British)*

*“Decriminalisation of working with others, that includes migrants, and for the police to actually follow the guidelines set by the NPCC.” (non-binary questioning, 22, non-EU migrant)*

*“Full decriminalization of the entire sex industry, including managers, drivers, landlords and co-workers.” (cis woman, 24, British)*

*“Clarity in the law and specific provisions made for the decriminalisation of assistance given to SWs.” (cis woman, 33, British)*

*“Decriminalise them. Except for agencies/managers.” (cis woman, 35, British)*

*“Decrim (full)” (cis man, 34, British)*

Several participants mention that decriminalisation will reduce the imbalance in power between themselves and managers or other third parties: “If I had legal rights at work through decriminalisation, my manager would have less power over me” (trans non-binary, 20, British). Additionally, several participants feel that decriminalisation would allow them to not need managers at all: “Being able to co-work with other sex workers, without managers involved in any way, would make work a lot safer” (cis woman, 39, British).

Several participants state that decriminalisation would specifically improve their safety at work: “Decriminalisation would mean that we were not worried about criminal repercussions of our safety measures” (cis woman, 31, British), and: “I would be much happier if colleagues and friends who help me with my work were not criminalised, and I would be and feel far more safe” (non-binary questioning, 32, British). Many participants express the desire to work together with others without breaking the law, or to take other safety measures as they see fit: “Being able to openly work together with others and employ other people if I want for added safety measures” (trans woman, 30, EU migrant). Safety is described as a communal issue, which can only be ensured by the decriminalisation of mutual support between sex workers: “Sex work to be decriminalised, of course, so we can all ensure each other’s safety” (cis woman, 29, EU migrant). Safety under decriminalisation also includes

the ability to report bad or violent clients to the police: “[Decriminalisation] would also help others to report if they are assaulted” (cis woman, 22, British).

Finally, many participants discuss how decriminalisation, although in itself not enough to solve all problems in sex work, would open up space to work on issues such as whorephobia, labour rights, societal stigma against sex workers, forced labour, support for sex workers, and the wider societal issues like poverty which cause people to start sex work in the first place. These additional changes will be discussed in Section 4.4.3.

#### 4.4.2 Legalisation and regulation

A third of participants answered that a change in legislation would improve their relationship with third parties, but did not mention decriminalisation specifically. Some advocate for regulation or legalisation, some simply call for ‘better laws’ or ‘legislation’, or in other terms state they want a change to the current legislation. The distinction between decriminalisation and legalisation is unclear to many non-lawyers, and it is not a stretch to assume that not all participants are clear on that distinction either. For that reason, it cannot be assumed that all 33% of participants in this category would support legalisation over other legislative interventions. Some of these responses call for decriminalisation in other terms (“For their involvement to not be criminalised. For the law to be on my side if I encounter bad or abusive behaviour from them, so I would feel able to report them” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant), and “If I knew they weren’t illegal” (trans man, 29, British)), and others advocate clearly for legalisation and regulation:

*“People offering a service that I want like a receptionist or agency owner or photographer should not be criminalised. Maybe a fit and proper person check should be made before they get a licence to offer these services?” (cis woman, 26, British)*

As in the last section, many participants state their desire to work together for their safety and wellbeing: “Being able to work with another sex worker would make me safer if it wasn’t criminalised” (cis woman, 23, British). Sex workers co-working seems to be the third party activity all participants agree shouldn’t be criminalised:

*“Allowing 2 people to share an incall apartment. My pal and I have been lucky so far, but if one of us did get raped/attacked at work, it would be a barrier to us seeking police involvement if we thought we might get penalised for sharing a flat for work” (cis woman, 26, British)*

One worker focuses on the criminalisation of giving advice:

*“If I could pay people or accept payment from people to share premises or information or anything really. I think I could provide some really good safety training for sex workers but no one could pay me to do that!” (cis woman, 41, British)*

Other workers extend this to third parties providing security and transport services (“If we could work together from premises, employ security and drivers like others. Not have to worry about getting advice on working/safety” (cis woman, 51, British)) and to brothel keeping: “If I could work legally with someone in a flat or have the option to work in a parlour without risk of raids I would be a lot safer” (cis woman, 23, British).

Several participants specify that only “non exploitative relationships such as drivers or someone you rent from” (cis woman, 41, British) should be decriminalised or legalised, and that “[i]f someone is exploiting a vulnerable woman and controlling who she sees and what she does that should be illegal” (cis woman, 41, British). One worker argues that abusive work relations are more common while third parties are criminalised, and that the ability to operate ‘above board’ will help with this:

*“Some common sense and up to date understanding of the industry when making the laws. Just help empower ourselves to operate independently, legally and safely. That means letting us be able to advertise, rent safe work spaces, pay taxes, hire booking/admin assistants, drivers & security all above board like any working professional. Keeping the industry in the dark and workers limited is what enables so much abuse to go on invisibly. Workers feel they have no rights, power or autonomy to work safely above board.” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Some participants who propose regulation and “protective legislation for sex workers” (trans non-binary, 22, British), are unsure if decriminalisation should extend to managers. Another worker agrees that:

*“I could see how changing the law might improve safety for a lot of girls. However, whilst the idea of paying for photographers, drivers, girls working together in flats to keep each other safe are all completely harmless I do worry if perhaps legalising “managers” might allow those to take a profit from girls who might be vulnerable i.e. pimps. I think it's difficult...” (cis woman, 20, British)*

One participant argues for the monitoring of third parties:

*“I'm not sure that I would fully decriminalise management activities, however I feel there should be strong leniency/observation - if there is no exploitation or violence and this can be proven, I think management could be a really positive thing for the SW community. I would love to see a positive, safe, supportive, empowering environment managing other SWs and ensuring their welfare was looked (...). Full decriminalisation of management activities would, however, leave SWs more vulnerable to exploitation, but having a legal middle ground which allowed monitoring of potentially exploitative activities might work well.*

*(cis woman, 26, British)*

Although they were not directly asked if they wanted decriminalisation or changes to the legal status of third parties, 78% of participants states that changes to the legal status of some or all third parties is the main thing that would improve the safety or quality of their relationships to third parties. The next section will discuss the other ways sex workers would like their relationship with third parties to be improved.

#### 4.4.3 Other improvements to third party relationships

Of course, participants do not just respond to the question “What would make your relationships with third parties better or safer for you?” with legal changes. Instead, sex workers express a large number of things they would like to change both in their workplaces and in wider society. These include labour rights, the ability to be a legal employer, fiscal integration into society, reduction of stigma, and more resources and support for sex workers and those who may in future do sex work. However, not all workers feel their relationship with third parties need improving. One worker states: “They are safe and suit me as they are” (cis woman, 60, British), while another states the only way is to “Not have them involved at all” (cis woman, 23, British). Another participant agrees that the best improvement would be “That they all bugged off and stopped parasiting off working girls” (cis woman, 32, British).

Many participants express they want workplace rights and protections, like this worker who asks for “Being given normal labour rights, like any other job so that I can fight my corner when I’m mistreated” (trans non-binary, 24, British). Often workplace rights are mentioned in combination with decriminalisation: “Decriminalisation of sex work. Full labour rights” (cis woman, 38, EU migrant). The other side of this is that workers also want the ability to legally hire third parties and pay them for services, like this worker who feels that “Being able to explicitly hire/fire as standard employment” (cis woman, 46, British) would improve her relationship with third parties. Another participant states: “If we were able to put out advertisements for the job role and hire like other businesses” (cis woman,



22, British). However, some participants raise questions about the usefulness of decriminalisation for the most marginalised of workers: “To be honest, it’s hard to imagine some kind of policy about how brothels need to give equal opportunity to trans workers” (trans woman, 22, British). Bruckert and Law (2018) point out a similar issue with the common presence of racism, sizeism and classism in the sex industry in Canada. As in many industries that have never been criminalised, theoretical access to workers’ rights and legal protections cannot guarantee that those with less access to legal and support systems will be able to breach the gap between entitlement to labour rights and the ability to exercise these rights.

In addition to workers’ rights and protections, and the ability to be legal employers, some participants also want fiscal integration within society:

*“For private landlords I rent a workspace from by the day, it would be good for my accounts if I could get receipts from them for my tax return but they’re unwilling to give them because of the nature of the industry and because they don’t want to declare the cash I give them” (cis woman, 28, British)*

This wish for what Benoit et al. (2021) call ‘occupational rights’, ties into the business needs that sex workers primarily have in their independent work, which may make workers more reliant on third parties. There is clear evidence of financial discrimination against sex work businesses and individual sex workers from banks and payment processors both in the UK and internationally (Herrmann, 2022b). For this reason, one participant mentions he would like the ability to insure his business and have access to business banking without hiding the fact that he does sex work:

*“Insurance & Banking - Because the insurance industry can't insure against sex it means there's no official recognition and no online or high street bank will give you an account. It's a sitting duck industry with no protection” (cis man, 47, British)*

Several participants mention the importance of the reduction of sex work stigma and whorephobia for their relationships with third parties: “Making it illegal only promotes stigma, pimps and worse working conditions” (cis woman, 40, EU migrant). One worker states that: “Keeping the industry in the dark and workers limited is what enables so much abuse to go on invisibly” (cis woman, 34, British). For many workers, legitimisation and reducing stigma are connected. They want sex work “to be recognised as a legitimate form of work” (cis woman, 23, British), in order to cause a “reduction of stigma, being able to openly discuss things socially etc. I want to be able to work closely with my friends for safety without fear” (cis woman, 24, British). This fear of stigma and whorephobia affects

both sex workers and third parties: “[I wish] that I didn't have to hide what I do for a living. That they didn't have to risk anything for helping me” (cis woman, 35, EU migrant). For one participant, workers’ rights and reducing whorephobia in wider society go hand in hand:

*“Decriminalisation, rights like any other workers, challenging/tackling whorephobia in general and particularly in the justice, education and employment systems” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Participants suggest a range of improvements to sex worker support and wider society that can improve their relationships with third parties. One worker states they would like “better support services for workers. Stronger more public allies and less performative allyship” (cis woman, 27, non-EU migrant), another would like “Legal advice!” (cis woman, 43, British) to be accessible to workers. Another participant emphasises that improving people’s lives once they do sex work would not be needed if they did not have to start sex work in the first place, saying she wants: “Decrim but also the resources not to have to do sex work at all” (cis woman, 42, British). One worker sums up the views of many participants on improving third party relationships in a very clear way, stating that a lot of changes in society are needed, and that decriminalisation is only part of this:

*“Knowing that they were legal, and that neither me nor them could get in trouble with the law in any way would provide so much more lee-way for negotiating things, it would make things more equal. However, the provision of better social care, more money into mental health care, more financial support for disabled people, more resources into domestic abuse support and more education on gender, i.e. a better and more equal welfare system, would be needed on top of decriminalisation of sex work, for those relations to improve. However, decriminalisation would be an excellent start.” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

In conclusion, legislation criminalising third parties has a broad scope, and besides criminalising third parties with managerial power<sup>20</sup> over sex workers, it also criminalises third parties without managerial power and sex workers themselves. Third party legislation also criminalises nearly all workspaces and forces sex workers to work alone and without support, or risk prosecution. While the likelihood of policing and prosecution for third party offences seems to differ depending on location, context and

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<sup>20</sup> Control over workers’ pay, time or work, direct profit off workers’ labour, and worker dependency. This includes managers of premises, agencies, clubs and individual managers, but not third parties who lack those powers and who are hired by managers or sex workers themselves.

local police forces, the fear of prosecution reduces sex workers' access to justice, and increases stigma and isolation. Many workers feel that they have to choose between breaking the law or working unsafely, and 78% of participants states that changes to the legal status of some or all third parties is the main thing that would improve the safety or quality of their relationships to third parties

In order fully understand why sex workers argue for changes to the legal status of third parties, even though third parties are often thought of as controlling or exploiting sex workers, a deeper understanding is needed about which third party relationship are most common, and what sex workers' experiences are with those third parties. The next chapter will map sex workers' relationships with third parties in detail.

## 5 Mapping third party relationships in UK sex work: conceptualising wider work relations.

Now the legal status of third parties in England has been further explored, this chapter will map the wide range of third parties that are engaged by sex workers or who engage sex workers. Due to the lack of existing data on the prevalence of third party relationships, it will start with a quantitative mapping of the third party relationships reported by sex workers in this study, and will then complicate this map by discussing the role of sex workers as third parties or employers themselves. After this, it will look at the varied and complex roles sex workers have as colleagues of one another, and will discuss the inclusion of friends, family and partners in third party roles. Finally, this chapter will discuss the gift/exchange economy that further shows the unique ways third party relations take form in sex work.

This chapter will argue that the majority of third parties are not in a managerial role, and that instead, the largest group of (criminalised) third parties comprises of sex workers, mainly in the role of colleagues to one another. Sex workers report strongly different experiences with third parties in a managerial position (agents), and other third parties such as colleagues/associates and contractors, as classified by Bruckert and Law (2013). In this research, the term manager will be used instead of agent, since agencies are a specific area of sex work and this naming may lead to confusion. Managers are third parties who exert control over the worker and profit directly off their labour (Prassl, 2016), whom the worker is dependent on (Davidov, 2002), and whom the worker does not have an independent business from (Davidov, 2004). Associates are third parties who work alongside sex workers for a manager, or who work parallel but without managerial power over sex workers. This includes colleagues, people letting out workspaces, non-sex working staff at indoor premises or agencies, and any other third parties who are neither hired by sex workers nor have managerial power over them. Finally, contractors are third parties who are hired by sex workers to provide services, and sex workers may have power over their work, hours or pay.

Finally, the wide range of third parties involved in sex work and criminalised in third party legislation shows that 'employer/employee' or 'employment relation' are not sufficient to describe all the relationships workers in the grey economy – such as sex workers – have in connection to their work. Because of the finding that power relations are notably different between workers and managers, and workers and other third parties, a conceptual distinction is needed between third parties in

managerial roles and the associates and contractors who are not in a managerial role. As a result, the term 'wider work relations' is conceptualised to allow researchers to account for the relationships that impact workers beyond those between managers/employers and workers, defining wider work relations as non-managerial third parties who provide services or support to workers which directly enable them to do their work.

## 5.1 Mapping third parties

This section will map which third parties are present in indoor venue work, independent indoor work, street-based work, indoor agency work, and club or party work. In addition, the quantitative data on the prevalence of each type of third party per work area will be discussed. The survey asked about experiences with third parties at any time in the participant's work history, meaning that work in certain venues or with third parties may be referring to past experience rather than present. This gives a unique temporal element to the data which is especially notable in the quantitative data.

### 5.1.1 Third parties in indoor premise work

Workers with experience in premises (such as brothels, parlours or saunas) report a range of different third party relations. The main ones are with managers/owners of the premise, with colleagues who are fellow sex workers at the venue, with receptionists/maids/cleaners (these roles overlap significantly and cannot easily be distinguished from one another), and occasionally with security staff. Often, however, there is no security staff present, and in many premises the owner/manager is also regularly absent.

56 participants (30.3% of participants) report working in or having worked in an indoor venue. They report the presence of third parties in response to the following question.

When you worked in a brothel or parlour, was there a:

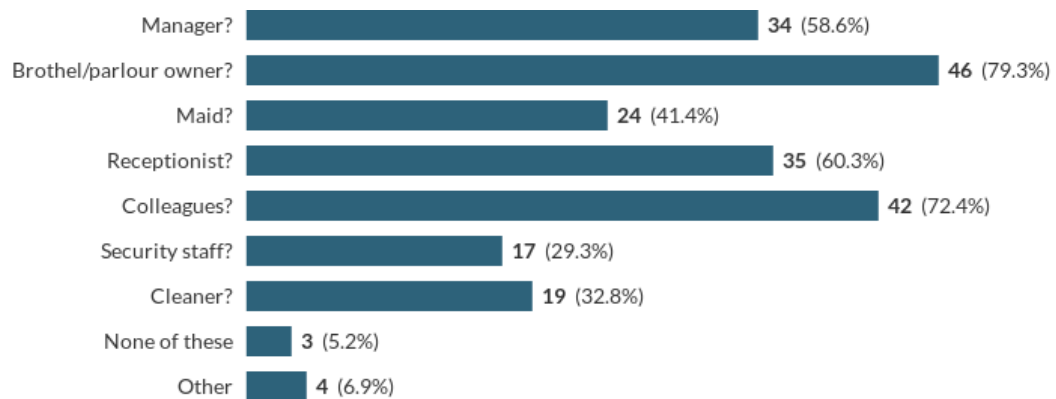


Figure 3: Third parties in indoor premise work.

The 'other' responses include a person who does advertising, website management and photography, and external vendors who visited the parlour on a regular basis selling makeup, perfume, condoms, stockings and other consumable items. In the context of indoor premise work, managers are the managers or owners of the premise, if they are involved in the running of the premises and have power over the workers' time or labour. All other third parties in premises are associates, since they are not hired by the sex workers themselves and do not have managerial powers over sex workers.

### 5.1.2 Third parties in independent indoor work

The vast majority of respondents (95.7%, 177 participants) had ever done independent indoor work. Independent indoor workers are those who do not work for a manager or boss, and who meet and see clients in indoor locations in incall or outcall format. In incalls the client comes to the location the worker has chosen to work, such as their own home, a purpose rented incall apartment, or temporary incall locations such as Airbnbs or hotels. In outcalls, the worker travels to the client's hotel or home. Additionally, indoor workers can tour, meaning travel to one or multiple cities or countries for the purpose of work and attracting new clients. Touring is done to see multiple clients over a short period of time, rather than work travel for the purpose of seeing a single client, which would not usually be referred to as touring.

Third parties can have a variety of relationships to independent sex workers: they can be duo partners (colleagues they work with in-session), colleagues they do not share clients with but with whom they share a workspace or who take on other third-party roles, partners and/or friends, or incidentally or regularly hired third parties.

When you worked independently, did you have:

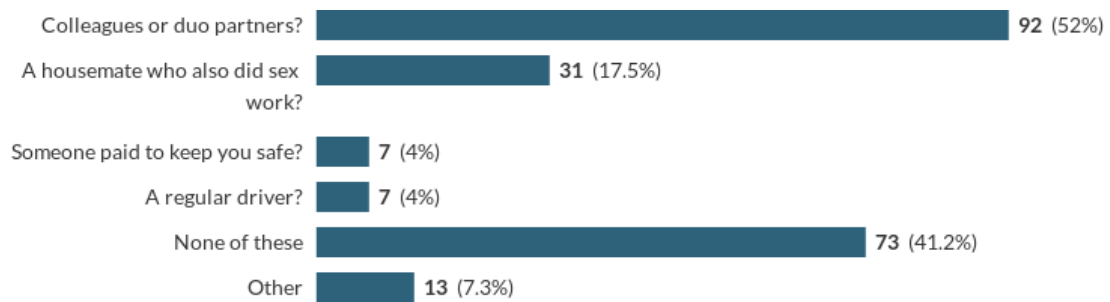


Figure 4: Third parties in indoor independent work

The 'other' answers include five times friends were mentioned as safety calls, a fellow sex worker housemate, a person on-site at all times (not specified as admin or safety role), a live-in husband, a secretary/PA/admin person, a friend as security person, nobody, unpaid security, and colleagues and friends helping with admin, housekeeping etc (disability support). In the context of independent indoor work, there are generally no managers present. Colleagues and housemates are associates, and other third parties tend to be contractors who are hired by sex workers to provide services. A wider range of associates and contractors will be discussed later in this chapter.

### 5.1.3 Third parties in street-based work

Of the 16 participants (8.6%) who have done street-based work, one person has ever had another person recruiting clients for them, one person had colleagues in their street work, one person paid someone to keep them safe, and the person who selected 'other' had an unpaid friend keeping an eye on their safety.

When you did street-based work, did you have:

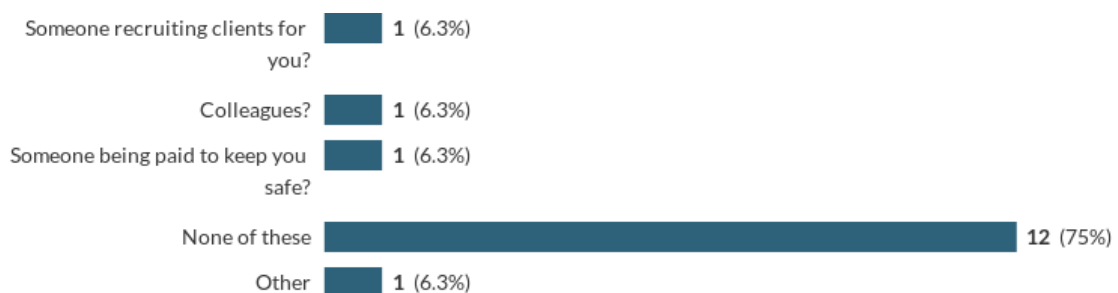


Figure 5: Third parties in street-based work

The other 12 (75%) had not had any third parties involved in their street-based sex work at all. In the context of street-based sex work, none of the participants discussed a third party in a managerial role. Colleagues are associates, and whether third parties who provide client recruitment and security services are managers or contractors is dependent on the power relations present.

#### 5.1.4 Third parties in agency work

Agency work includes outcalls to clients' homes/hotels, incalls in hotels, or incalls in the worker's own home or workspace. Participants with experience in agency work (59 participants, or 31.9%) mainly write about their experiences with agency managers/owners, and rarely about receptionists. However, in many of their answers they instead speak about "the agency" or "them", making no real distinction between the two roles – which may in fact be because in many agencies the distinction between these two roles is unclear. A large minority of participants also discusses drivers, and a small minority mentions contact with colleagues.

When you worked via an agency, was there a:

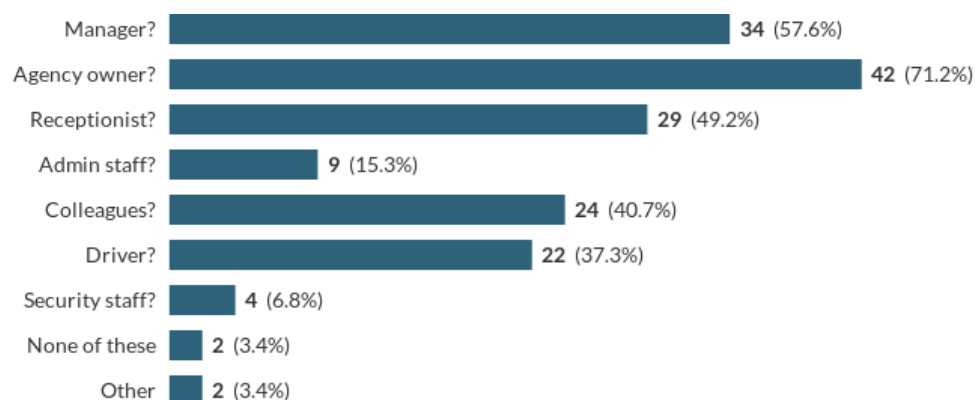


Figure 6: Third parties in agency work

The two 'other' responses were a person stating they paid the agency website to advertise and then shared a venue/apartment with other workers, and a person stating they arranged their safety procedures with friends rather than through the agency. In the context of agency work, managers are the managers or owners of the agency, if they are involved in the running of the premises and have power over the workers' time or labour. All other third parties in premises are associates, unless they are hired by the sex workers themselves to provide a specific service such as additional security beyond what agency management provides.



### 5.1.5 Third parties at clubs and parties

A quarter of participants (24.9%, 46 respondents) have done sex work at sex parties or sex clubs, which are events where several clients and often multiple workers are present at the same time in a space where sex takes place. Some parties only have workers and clients present, while others are open to the general public and only have incidental sex work going on (especially common at fetish or kink focused events). While the majority of respondents state they are hired by the organiser of the parties they attend, about a quarter of participants who have worked at parties have organised their own. One participant describes that the sex club they work at “functions a bit like a strip club (and markets as a private members club) in that you arrive as a freelancer, pay a house fee, but then all your earnings that you hustle are your own” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant). For most, doing sex work at parties or clubs is done in addition to independent work or work in premises.

When you worked at sex parties/clubs or at kink parties/clubs, did you:

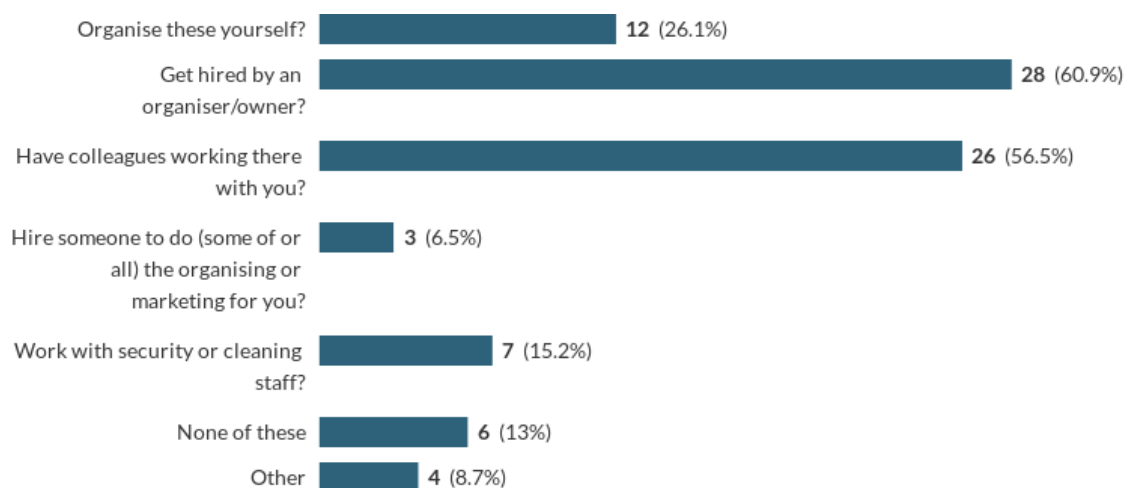


Figure 7: Third parties at clubs/parties

The other responses include 2 participants explaining that their sex work at events was freelance (similar to a strip club with a house fee), one participant explaining they would be taken along to parties by clients, and one participant clarifying they worked at parties as a performer and not a full-service worker. In the context of sex work at clubs or parties, the event organisers or owners of the premise are managers if they have power over the workers’ time or labour. Event organisers and club owners who have no power over the sex workers’ work, time or pay at all are (knowing or unknowing) associates, and colleagues and security or cleaning staff are also associates. Third parties who are

hired by the sex workers themselves, which may be the case if the event is organised by a sex worker, are contractors.

### 5.1.6 Other third parties

At the time of the survey, only 6.5% of respondents reported currently having a manager or someone else who has power over either their work hours or which clients they see. This shows that the majority of third parties in sex work are not working in a managerial position. Instead, there is a wide variety of paid and unpaid third parties who provide services to sex workers in relation to their work, and who can be categorised as contractors. In some cases, such as incidental taxi drivers, accountants or hotel staff, they are generally not aware that they are providing services to a sex worker. However, most other contractors on this list know that they are being contracted by a sex worker to provide services supporting their work.

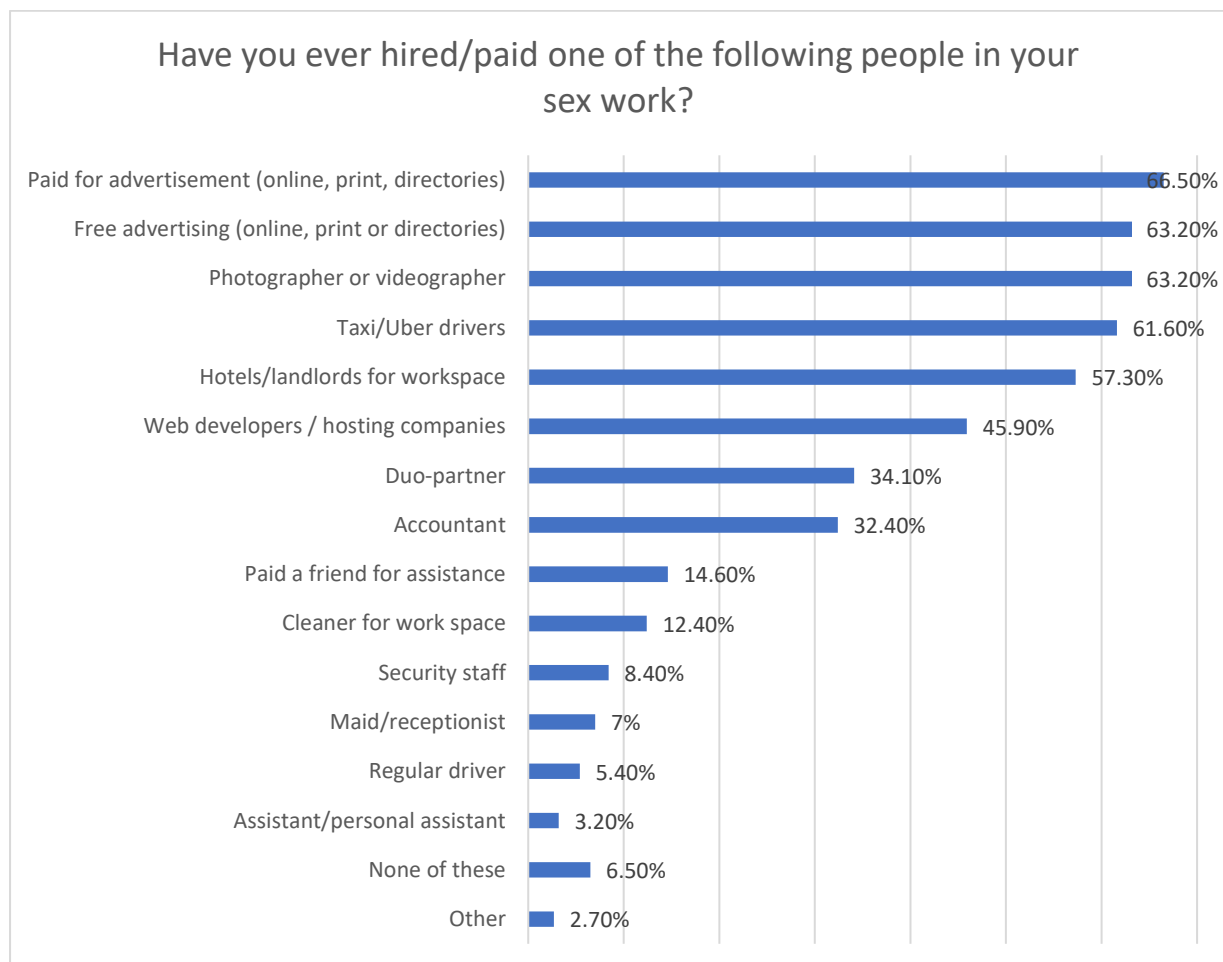


Figure 8: Other third parties

The 'other' answers include hiring someone to design and build dungeon furniture/equipment, makeup and hair artists for photoshoots, and unpaid exchanges of services with other sex workers. The paid and unpaid exchanges with other sex workers will be further discussed in Sections 5.3 and 5.5 of this chapter.

#### 5.1.7 Data visualisation

The data visualisation in Figure 9 (on the next page) is providing a simplified view of the data presented in Sections 5.1.1 to 5.1.5, and shows in relative sizes which third parties are most commonly engaged by sex workers participating in this research.

**Which third parties do Sex Workers in the UK work with?**



Data: Brouwers, 2022

Figure 9: Overview of third parties (design by Maartje de Goede) – size of circles represents the number of respondents.

## 5.2 Sex workers taking on third party roles and hiring contractors

This section will map the frequency of sex workers either taking on potentially criminalised third party roles, or paying for third party services, and will discuss the experiences sex workers report with these third parties. Both of these occurrences, while exceedingly common, seem to be unaccounted for in current third party legislation. In the Canadian context, Bruckert and Law (2013, p.11) point out that: “relationships to third parties are complex and layered, and defy easy classification – a third party can be a boss, an agency or an individual one contracts, or an associate. Indeed, one can be a third party, hire a third party and work for a third party simultaneously”. This overlap of roles is also present in the English context.

### 5.2.1 Sex workers in third party roles

Due to the broad interpretation of third party legislation and inconsistent policing, there are several activities common to self-employment which could be seen as criminal third party behaviour when done by sex workers. This could include sharing workspace with other workers (brothel keeping), giving advice to someone new to the field (incitement to prostitution), and being paid for giving training or advice (controlling for gain).

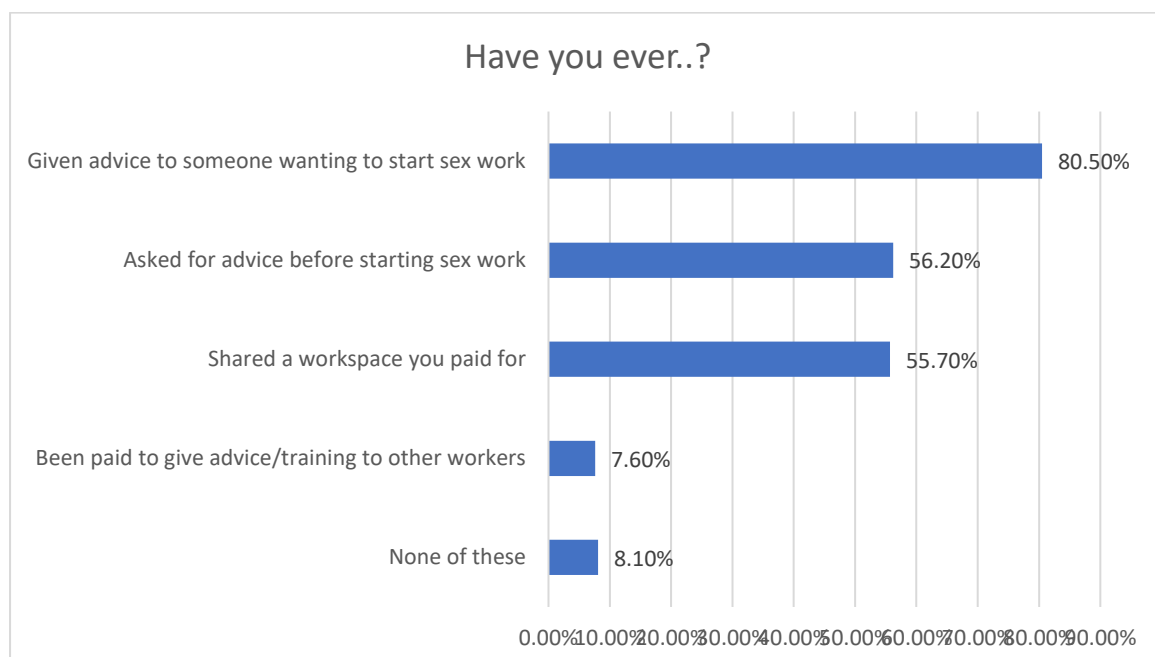


Figure 10: Sex workers in third party roles

Only between 8.1% and 19.5% of participants report never taking part in any of these potentially criminalised activities. This means that the vast majority of sex workers in this research has taken on a third party role at least one time in their career. Additionally, over half of participants has asked others for advice before starting sex work, meaning that, despite possibly being covered by third party criminalisation, this is a common occurrence and important to sex workers' ability to start work.

### 5.2.2 Other third party relationships

Most research on third parties in sex work focuses on the relationship between sex workers and third parties in a managerial position – in other words, on relationships that mirror employer/employee relations in some way. However, there are many more relationships sex workers have in their work: colleague, tenant, customer (of hotels, advertising platforms, web hosting), paying client (of freelancers and other service providers), or regular or incidental employer of contractors (often informal).

Figure 8 (on page 122) shows that at least 66.5% of participants has been a customer of services related to sex work, through payment for advertising, web hosting, or incidental driver services. At least 63.2% of sex workers in this research has hired contractors as service providers or freelancers for services such as photography, accountancy, cleaning, security, regular driving services, maid or receptionist services, or personal assistant services. Over half (57.3%) have paid hotels or landlords for a workspace.

Only 6.5% of participants has never paid a third party for sex work related services at all. It can be concluded that third parties who provide services for sex workers are much more commonly engaged with by sex workers than third parties who are in a managerial position.

### 5.2.3 Sex workers as employers or clients of contractors

Participants describe a range of experiences with the large percentage of third parties who provide services to sex workers. Some were hardly discussed in the open questions about third party services, for instance incidental service providers such as Uber drivers, photographers or hotel staff, or more impersonal services such online or print directories. However, more personal and long-term relationships with third parties such as drivers, security staff and personal assistants were discussed in more detail.

Respondents were especially positive about their interactions with their personal assistant or secretary:

*“My secretary affects my wellbeing extremely positively as they save me from a part of the job that is boring, repetitive but also essential to keep my business alive. I think most people would say the same of their personal assistant.”*

*(questioning woman, 28, EU migrant)*

Participants stressed the importance of the administrative side of independent sex work and the fact that having assistance with these tasks allows them to focus on other parts of their work. Administrative assistance can include a wide range of tasks including daily updating of advertisements and listings, executing payments for advertisements, posting photos online, and correspondence with clients.

The role of drivers and security staff largely overlap, with an emphasis on the security role of the driver for workers who do independent or agency outcalls. One agency worker explains how she employed a driver as a contractor to provide security services, since the agency did not provide that service to workers:

*“I had an arrangement where I got the money and took it out to the driver as a way of checking in to say I was OK. Then the driver would keep track of time and we had security system if I was late calling/getting out.” (cis woman, 51, British)*

Although people who protect the physical safety of sex workers are often depicted as invariably being strong young men, security staff can be of any gender or age: “The driver enabled me to work. I would have been v[ery] scared without her” (cis woman, 51, British), and “I had an older gent who took £10 per booking when I started out and he would be in the house in case of emergencies” (cis woman, 23, British). Additionally, third parties in security roles often already have a personal relationship with the participants (see Section 5.4 of this chapter): “I paid my friend to wait in the other room while I was doing incalls with clients, which made me feel a lot safer” (cis woman, 21, British).

A minority of three participants describes experiences with third parties they hired, which ranged from not entirely positive to very negative:

*“He made me feel safe we got along really well but had sex with him once and felt like I couldn’t continue paying him so I went 100% solo afterwards” (cis woman, 23, British)*

The third parties described in these negative experiences all had roles that included security. One worker describes that the power between herself and a contractor changed, and while they were initially hired by the worker to provide security services, the third party started to act like an abusive personal manager over time:

*“A friend initially paid to keep me safe and handle bookings, who however became more similar to a stereotypical pimp i.e. controlling my finances, taking a bigger cut, threatening web account closure otherwise” (cis woman, 26, British)*

It is notable that all three participants with negative experiences with third parties they paid, describe the experience in the past tense, and two of them actively describe their agency in the decision to stop working with this third party: “Driver/“protector” abused me before I got rid of him” (cis woman, 22, British).

### 5.3 Multiple roles of colleagues

Participants regularly discuss a range of interactions and relationships with associates who are fellow sex workers: colleagues either at their workplace or met in the wider sex worker community, with whom they may or may not work together during bookings. An illustration of this range of roles colleague take on is this participant’s experience:

*“Colleagues, house mates and duo partners have been great, they make me feel safer when I work and it’s always nice to have someone there who you feel shares your experience. I currently engage a lot with colleagues online, and it has been so important. I have been able to learn lots from more experienced colleagues and figure out my own working style and strategy. I’ve been able to improve my work a lot through these online spaces in particular.” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

For this worker, colleagues can be people you share bookings with (duo partners), fellow sex workers you share a living and/or workspace with (housemates) and part of the wider sex work community online or offline (colleagues). They help them feel safe, provide a sense of being understood, and support the development of entrepreneurial skills and working style. Colleagues in sex work, then, are not simply the people workers share an office, workplace or project with. They provide a range of interactions and relationships that are unique to their relationships with fellow sex workers.

Colleagues are especially important to participants working in premises and to independent indoor workers, although for different reasons. Premise workers tend to spend a lot of time with their colleagues in between bookings, while independent sex workers might never meet other sex workers



unless they seek them out. Street-based workers, agency workers and those in clubs or at parties mention their colleagues much less. Very few participants working for an agency mention colleagues, in many cases because they rarely meet one another:

*“Hardly ever meeting any other agency workers was very alienating (...) there was no support network or socialising between any of the girls at the agencies I worked for” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Since many club/party workers also work independently, these participants emphasise the effect of colleagues at parties in opposition to their solo work, with one worker stating that their colleagues affect them “always in a positive way, where we can have each other’s backs and feel a connection and solidarity that is missing when working independently” (non-binary questioning, 32, British). Participants working in premises are most likely to describe their colleagues in similar ways to workers in non-sex working in-person jobs, describing social contact at work, personality clashes, conversation, competition, and banter. Independent indoor workers are most likely to describe a wide range of roles that they and their colleagues take on for each other to support each other in their work. The following sections will discuss colleagues co-working with a duo partner, providing entrepreneurial business improvements, safety in bookings and outside, social relationships, support with client management in bookings, information and signposting, skill improvement at work, and the sharing of a workspace and workspace costs.

### 5.3.1 Co-working

Duo partners are fellow sex workers who work together sharing a session with a client, and 64 participants (34.1%) had worked with a colleague as a duo-partner. They are relatively common in independent sex work, but also occur in other work environments. Duo partners can be romantic partners, friends, acquaintances, or sex workers who do not know each other but whom the client has picked. While duo bookings provide a unique experience for the client, sex workers describe a variety of positive benefits to their experiences with duo partners as well. The support of a duo partner can make work easier even if the worker would rather not be doing sex work:

*“My colleague/duo partner is a saving grace! I don't want to be in this industry, but she makes it fun, we can laugh at distressing events, support each other. I am lucky to have her - my mental health would be severely worse without her” (cis woman, 25, British)*

Additionally, many independent workers stated that having a duo partner around made their work more fun and “gives you someone to laugh with” (trans non-binary, 30, British). One participant stated: “I would exclusively work duos if I could” (cis woman, 39, British). Co-working in duos also has a financial benefit: “We get bookings together that we wouldn't get otherwise” (cis woman, 34, British).

Three respondents, out of 177 independently working respondents, mentioned negative experiences with duo partners. One independent worker states that it is “hard to find someone who has the same working style” (trans non-binary, 39, British), and two others express experiences with jealousy and competitiveness becoming a problem between duo partners. One of them states: “I made some good friendships but it's very easy for things to become competitive & other girls to become jealous & bitchy” (cis woman, 23, British).

### 5.3.2 Co-entrepreneurs

Independently working participants often use duos as a method of co-promotion, promoting both each other and the bookings they work together with the goal of increasing income for both workers: “I was able to offer more options to clients so it was good for business” (cis woman, 27, British). But marketing and business success are also affected by duo partners in less direct ways. For instance, one participant states her duo partners are “[g]ood to discuss marketing and business plans with” (cis woman, 25, British), helping her improve her business separate from the duo sessions. A party/club worker appreciated about her colleagues that “they were able to share useful business tips” (cis woman, 27, British). Additionally, several participants mention that having a duo partner improved their motivation to work, with one independent worker saying they “pushed each other to be more successful” (cis woman, 35, EU migrant). Another states that “[In times when I am alone and have to work alone I notice a marked difference in my motivation” (non-binary questioning, 22, EU migrant). If they do not hire contractors, independent workers are usually entirely responsible for all parts of work, including marketing, answering client queries, booking appointments and seeing clients. This means that a lack of motivation can have a profound impact on their income:

*“We helped each other get bookings and did some of them together. Work was more fun and profitable. Especially the more labour intensive and tedious parts of the job like answering emails and messages felt easier.” (cis woman, 35, EU migrant)*

One participant mentioned getting together with duo partners even when they did not have a shared booking that day, in order to have 'admin days' and do administrative and marketing work together, which they would otherwise be doing alone.

### 5.3.3 Security

Several participants who work at clubs or parties mention that the presence of fellow workers makes them feel safer at work. One participant was able to prevent a dangerous situation from escalating due to the help of his colleague: "My colleague and I were assaulted whilst working in a sex club. We stuck up for each other and prevented it going further" (cis man, 34, British). Both working with duo partners and being in contact with the wider sex work community allow independent workers to warn each other about clients, about clients' little quirks as well as larger dangers: "They (...) allowed me to know if certain clients were dangerous" (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant). Duo partners can warn each other about clients if one of them has seen the client before, give advice on safer sexual health practices and help keep an eye on the client to prevent 'stealthings', which is when the client surreptitiously removes the condom to penetrate the worker without protection, without the worker's knowledge or consent. Building on this, participants expressed that having a duo partner present in the booking meant they were less required to be on guard with the client, and that they had backup if they wanted to redirect or challenge the client: "Good to have a companion to (...) support each other with our boundaries during a booking" (trans non-binary, 24, British).

Additionally, many participants support colleagues as a safety call or 'the buddy system'<sup>21</sup>: a person that is aware of when/where the worker is seeing a client and who is responsible for agreed upon safety procedures, but who is not physically present at the work location. Often, but not in all cases, this is done by fellow sex workers.

### 5.3.4 Social relationship

A repeatedly mentioned benefit of working with duo partners, colleagues at premises, or of being in contact with colleagues through the wider sex work community is the sharing of company and understanding. A reoccurring theme, especially among independently working participants, is that

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<sup>21</sup> I don't feel it is ethical to go into the specifics of how safety calls/the buddy system works, since it is central to how many sex workers keep themselves safe – the less is publicly known about this the better. Being a safety buddy usually requires only a small time investment, but also reliability, punctuality and an understanding of the risks to the safety of an independent worker. For this reason, sex workers often take on this role for each other, although non-sex working partners and friends sometimes do as well.

loneliness and isolation are common while doing sex work due to stigma, unusual working hours and lone working. Unsurprisingly, many independent workers find that “It’s lonely work, so working with colleagues really brightens my day up” (cis woman, 35, British). One participant only started offering duos with fellow workers after years of working solo, finding that: “[It] made a huge positive difference to my life after working in isolation for years when I started to offer duos with local escorts” (cis woman, 30, British).

### 5.3.5 Client management

Several participants reflect on the way having a duo partner present makes their work easier in very practical ways, such as making “clients easier to handle” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant), or “allowing de-brief or bounce strategies off them, or if it was a difficult client I would deliberately try to make it a duo so that the work was easier and/or safer” (cis woman, 39, British). More experienced or assertive workers describe being able to take charge of the booking and of client management when needed, like this worker states about duo bookings with agency colleagues, in contrast to colleagues at a premise:

*“I found I mostly managed the bookings when I was with another colleague, maybe because I was older then or some of the women at the agency were more unsure of themselves than the women at the brothels I knew.” (cis woman, 35, British)*

### 5.3.6 Information

Some participants describe how working with colleagues helped them learn about safety procedures, support organisations, sexual health services, the wider sex worker community, or dangerous clients in their area. Since ‘incitement to prostitution’ is criminalised, there generally is no training or education for sex workers available, and invaluable knowledge for the safety and wellbeing of often isolated workers is relayed via colleagues instead. One participant states: “My duo partner allowed me to gain access to sex worker resources (breakfast, support groups)” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant), in this case referring to sex worker-led community breakfasts in London and to sex worker-only support groups on social media. Some of those sex worker networks are more formal and focused on activism, but those activist networks still are also a space for mutual practical support and help:

*“Through sex worker activism, I have made many friends who are sex workers – they have helped me access resources in terms of sexual health clinics, advice on agencies, safety tips and organisations” (cis woman, 34, British)*

A street-based worker who mentions colleagues states that they helped her access sexual health services.

### 5.3.7 Skill improvement

Several participants mention the ways in which duo partners have been a rare opportunity for them to learn about how to improve their work in-session and to access advice from a fellow sex worker. In a field where education and traineeships do not exist, all workers learn on the job. One participant writes that: “It’s very nice to do a client with someone else because you can learn a lot from looking at how the other sex worker does her work” (cis woman, 38, EU migrant). For another participant, having a duo partner was essential to their ability to get a successful start in their work: “When I first started, having a duo partner allowed me to get more work, to get some initial reviews and gave me some tips on safer working” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant). For independent sex workers, duo partners may be the only way they can access the knowledge of more experienced workers. One participant states: “I regularly see clients with other sex workers who are friends, because we already know and trust each other. It also means we can skill swap during the booking” (questioning woman, 34, British).

### 5.3.8 Workplace sharing

Sex workers who do not have a work venue supplied by a third party in a managerial role (which is usually the case in brothels, saunas, parlours, and most clubs and parties) require a work venue. Although sharing a work venue with another worker, also referred to as ‘collective working’ by Pitcher (2015), is criminalised under brothel keeping legislation, there are many ways in which workers share the costs of a work venue. This can be through sharing a home with sex working housemate(s) which is also used as an incall, two or more workers who share a place neither of them lives in and which they exclusively use as an incall, or one worker paying another worker for the use of their incall (which may be their home or a designated incall location). The main benefits mentioned by participants of sharing a work venue are lower costs and safety: “I feel safer knowing a friend is around and I have someone to vent or process with afterwards” (cis woman, 31, British). Most participants who discussed sharing a home with a fellow worker had positive experiences with this arrangement. Besides lower costs, they mention having “each other’s’ backs” (cis woman, 23, British), but also

directly sharing clients: “if she’s having a particularly busy night she sends clients my way if she cannot see them all, and I do the same” (cis woman, 20, British). One participant mentioned that while sharing a home “it helped give me a sense of community being able to live with another sex worker” (trans non-binary, 21, British). However, while some participants experience the sharing of clients to be a positive for their work, others experience this potential part of sharing a home with a colleague more negatively: “this did not work out so well as I found clients that were theirs coming to me and my clients coming to them” (cis woman, 45, British).

Workers who share an incall they do not live in (which could be purpose-rented apartment multiple workers share for incalls only, or a hotel or Airbnb property shared for a combined tour), have the same arguments of cost cutting and safety for sharing their incall: “I feel (and am) much safer when there is another worker around. If I’m sharing a workspace I know that if a client were to assault me, my friend is not far away” (trans non-binary, 30, British). However, a few participants mentioned differences in working style (including drug use and tidiness) and jealousy as reasons why they prefer not to share work premises with other independent workers. One participant prefers working with colleagues in brothels over sharing and incall since “In brothels girls get on better because someone else decides on all the rules” (cis woman, 32, British). Another participant states that they were relieved to no longer be sharing an incall space with another worker, because it felt less discreet to work together and they worried about the neighbours or landlord making a report to the police about them. Finally, one participant described their experience with using another worker’s incall:

*“At one point I rented an incall room from another sex worker and having her upstairs was lovely - I really liked having coffee and chats with her between bookings. It felt homely and nothing like sitting in a hotel room on my own all day” (cis woman, 31, British)*

Although this isn’t exactly the same as a housemates arrangement, this does seem to share the same benefits mentioned by workers with housemates above.

#### 5.4 Friends, family and partners in third party roles

Like many workers, especially informal workers, sex workers receive help from friends and partners in relation to their work. Williams (2006) found, in research on informal work in rural parts of the UK,

that only 7% of informal work was done for people who were not identified as friends, family, or neighbours. Similarly, third party roles in sex work are regularly done by people in a personal relationship with sex workers, and Section 5.5 will discuss how this work often happens without payment. Participants discuss a wide range of interactions with friends, family and partners surrounding their work, which can be anything from emotional support after a long day to paid help with marketing or transport. Although most of these interactions do not fall under the third party roles of managers, associates or contractors, they are included in this section because workers mentioned them when asked if friends or family have helped them with their work, and interactions like emotional support were important enough to participants to include in their answers. However, for friends and family to be considered a third party, they must provide support or services that could potentially also be provided by a third party they are not in a personal relationship with. In other words, security or marketing support is a third party role, but providing a space to vent after a long day is not. This section will map the frequency and type of third party interactions participants have with friends and partners, and to a lesser extent with family.

#### 5.4.1 Friends and acquaintances as third parties

Out of 185 participants, 104 (56.8%) has had friends or acquaintances involved with or help with their sex work, and 27 (14.6%) participants has paid a friend for help with work. Many of the third party roles of friends who are sex workers have already been discussed in Section 3, so this section will focus on friends who are not sex workers themselves. However, it is impossible to completely separate co-workers and friends, since many third parties are both. To the question “Have friends or acquaintances ever been involved with, or helped you with, your work?”, 56.8% of respondents answered yes. Out of 104 responses, the respondents received help from:

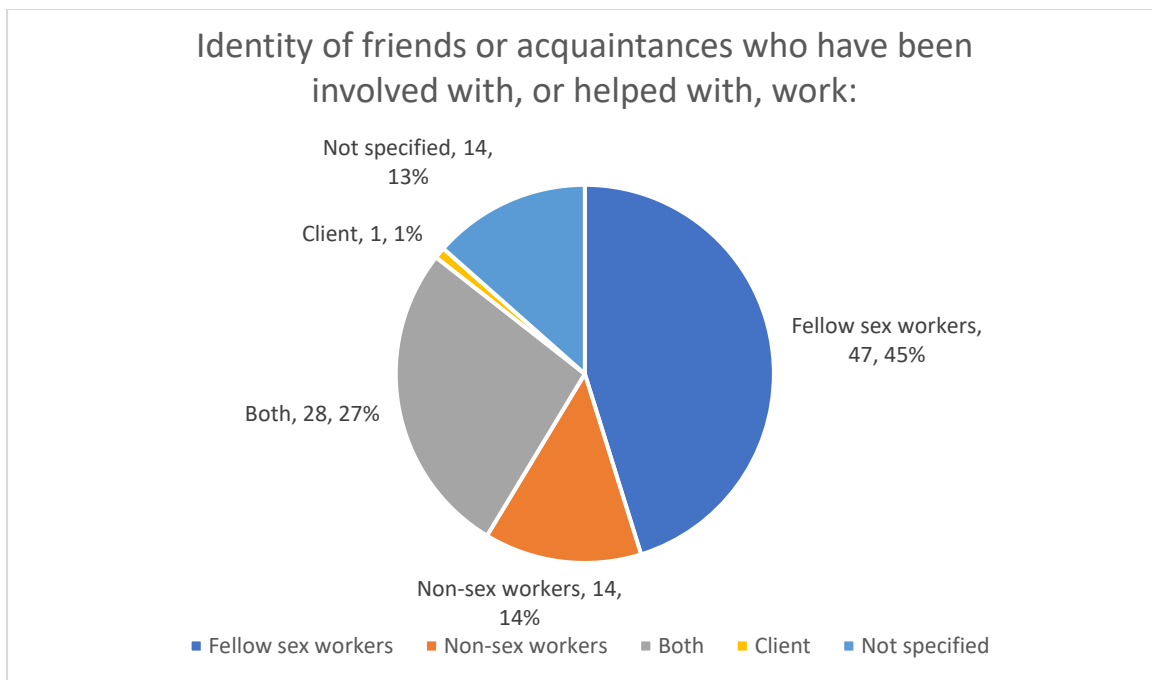


Figure 11: Friends or acquaintances who help with work

Of those respondents who have both sex working and non-sex working friends involved with their work, many specified that the majority of the time, the friends helping them are fellow sex workers, and non-sex worker help is more incidental: “Yes, friends have helped by being a safety call and with advertising (web design, photography, wording on ads etc.). Most, but not all, were sex workers” (trans woman, 30, EU migrant). The most common third party roles of friends of participants are safety/security, advice, photos and business support, and emotional support. The majority of this help from friends is unpaid, but 14.6% of participants has paid a friend for help or support. It is common for participants to have multiple friends performing different third party roles or to be performing the same ones (safety buddying and taking pictures especially) at different times.

Safety calls (checking in by phone and being on hand from a distance), security (being physically present) and driving are common ways friends perform third party roles that fall under the contractor category. Non-sex working friends are more likely to take on an in-person security role, while sex working friends are more likely to be safety calls. One respondent writes:

*“My friends often acted as buddies for me and I for them. This was life saving. One of my friends was attacked and it was only because of our security system that we found her promptly” (cis woman, 51, British).*

Others use a mix of safety calls and physically present security: “I have occasionally had (non sex worker) friends and/or lovers hiding in another room pretending not to exist while I’m working” (cis



woman, 24, British). At times, friends who help with security also help with things like driving or cleaning: “I have a friend who is my safety call if my husband is unavailable. Sometimes he will also help me clean my incall” (cis woman, 27, British).

Common ways sex worker participants receive business support from friends in an associate or contractor role, are help with making photos or other content, website design and coding, copy writing or editing, help with advertisement and graphic design: “I have had friends and partners do photography and copy-editing work for me. My main [safety] buddy is my best friend. None are sex workers” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant). However, as in other types of help from friends, it is more common for participants to receive this support from fellow workers: “One friend was not [a sex worker] and he built my website. Everyone else that I asked help or advice from was a sex worker” (cis woman, 30, British).

Emotional support from friends is mentioned regularly by participants as a type of help received from both sex workers (“They were sex workers who encouraged and supported me when I found the going tough” (questioning, 56, British)) and non-sex worker friends: “[they] listen to me moan about work” (cis woman, 37, British). Providing only emotional support may not be sufficient to count as a third party role, but even when receiving practical support from colleagues and friends, the positive emotional impact this has is emphasised by workers:

*“I have friends who have helped me with photos and videos, and to figure out more business aspects of my work, and also friends who I have talked through difficult emotional work experiences with. In all respects, it has been very enjoyable to work together with friends, or get help from friends with work stuff. They have made working a lot more enjoyable as I again feel less isolated.” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

Finally, one participant mentions the way clients have helped her in her business: “I have also had clients who I traded porn content with for their graphic design skills, for my Twitter for example, which has helped me with my work” (cis woman, 20, British).

#### 5.4.2 Family as third parties

A group of potential third parties the survey failed to ask questions about is family. Thankfully, some participants have brought up the help they receive from family members as third parties in contractor roles themselves: “My aunt for example helped me do my website” (cis woman, 23, British). Another

workers states: “My sister takes some of my work pictures” (cis woman, 26, British). In addition to website design and photography, family can also help within the workspace:

*“My boyfriend has effectively worked security for me, and I regularly pay a family member for security and cleaning duties. Both men keep me psychologically supported and feel safe. I would be terrified to take clients sometimes without my (technically illegal) security system in place.” (cis woman, 29, British)*

These are the only 3 participants who directly mention family, but the percentage of workers who receive help from family may be higher, since this was not directly asked about.

#### 5.4.3 Romantic partners as third parties

To the question “Has a romantic partner of yours ever been involved with, or helped you with your work? For instance, as a colleague, as a manager, as a safety call, or doing any other work to support your sex work?”, 84 participants (45.4%) answered yes. Since ‘helped with work’ is a broad term, the majority of responses discuss a variety of support partners provide, both practically and emotional, such as in this response:

*“My girlfriend is a constant support for my work. She helps me organise both myself and my workspace before bookings, acts as a person nearby/a safety measure during incall bookings (or a security call during outcalls) and as a person I can vent to after.” (cis woman, 26, British)*

Partners provide participants with several types of help, often incidentally, including being a safety call, being a duo partner, and driving or providing security services. Less often mentioned support includes photography, administrative help, set up or clean up of a workspace, and emotional support.

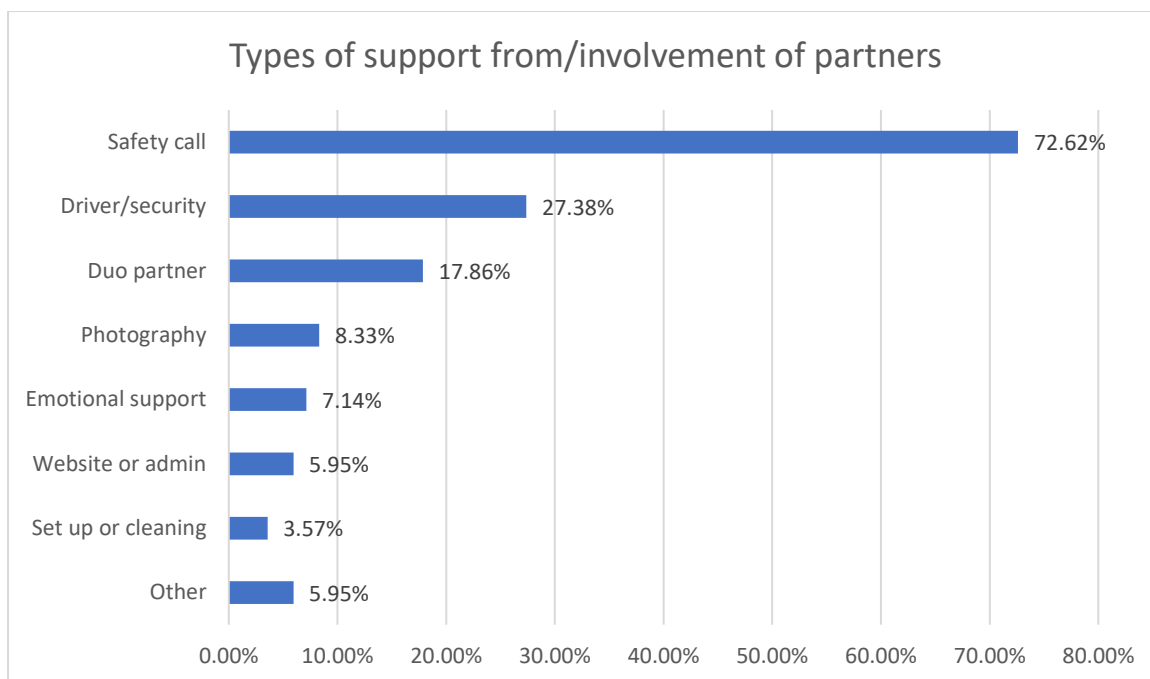


Figure 12: Types of support from partners

The main way partners are involved in participants' sex work is through being a safety buddy and providing safety support from a distance: 61 of the 84 respondents answering this question had a partner regularly or occasionally function as a safety call. Many workers appreciate the sense of safety and convenience of having their partner as a safety call: "My romantic partner has always been my first option safety call. Having them helps enormously" (cis woman, 25, British), and "My partner is my safety buddy, without them I would be very anxious going into bookings" (trans non-binary, 24, British). However, a few respondents mention how their partner gets worried, and therefore they prefer to have fellow workers or non-romantic friends be their safety call rather than partners:

*"Sometimes I tell my partner the address when I do an outcall and call him afterwards. But I try to use friends (especially other sex workers) rather than my partner as he tends to worry about me." (cis woman, 35, EU migrant)*

One respondent compares two of their ex partners and how their attitudes and skills affected how useful they were as safety calls:

*"he would get worried and it would put pressure on the relationship (...) My ex-girlfriend would do the safety thing as well, which was really good because she was quite chill about it and also had a lot of martial arts skills so I knew if she had*

*to come when I was in trouble I would be okay". (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

15 respondents mention a current or past romantic partner as an associate in the role of a duo partner. This includes partners who were already sex workers, partners who started doing sex work only after the start of the relationship, and partners who only do sex work in duos together with the respondent (and not separately). Since the market for heterosexual male sex workers seeing female clients is smaller, the last category was mostly made up of male partners, as in this response: "[My husband] is incredibly supportive of my work, and when a client requests another male he is always happy to join in" (cis woman, 27, British). Other respondents have partners who themselves are also sex workers, and their experiences with having their partner as a colleague are overwhelmingly positive:

*"I dated someone and we would do duos together as well as work out of the same hotel seeing different clients. This was good because the person understood my job" (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

and:

*"I have done duo work with people I am romantically and/or sexually involved with. Not only does working with someone else make me feel safer, but when it's someone I know well, we also look after each other's boundaries and emotional well-being." (cis woman, 26, EU migrant)*

One participant does not currently have a sex working partner, but expresses their desire for a partner she could share her work with: "Working together with my partner is still something I'd very much like to do, but right now I'm waiting for the right person" (trans woman, 35, EU migrant).

13 respondents mention a romantic partner as a driver and 10 as a physically present security person (either in another room or waiting in a car), but in most cases these two functions overlap. One respondent writes how having their partner as a driver makes them feel safe: "My husband drives me to appointments and is my safety call. This gives me a lot of peace of mind and makes me feel protected." (cis woman, 27, British). For another respondent the fact that her partner was both driver and security has had a direct effect on her safety in bookings:

*"My partner was often my driver and it meant I could trust her completely. I had a lot of close scrapes where clients were aggressive or tried to lock me in premises. Having a driver meant I could threaten them and I always got away safe." (cis woman, 51, British)*

In both these cases, the role of driver and security person clearly overlaps. For others, especially those who work from home and do not have need for transport to work, security is a separate role: “My partner is always in the house when I’m with a customer and I can call if I need them. Having their support is necessary” (trans non-binary, 22, British).

Other, less common, help given to participants by partners includes photography (which can be anything from semi-professional photoshoots to the occasional picture for Twitter – mentioned 7 times), help with administration or website (mentioned 5 times), setup or cleaning of the workspace (mentioned 3 times), and emotional support (mentioned 6 times). One respondent discusses the how their partner’s support helps them: “My partner often buddies for me and will take pictures for my advertising too. Having his support makes all the difference” (cis woman, 31, British). Help with administration is often incidental rather than an ongoing arrangement: “My partner (...) sometimes handles emails, calls or texts for me” (trans non-binary, 24, British). In contrast, website help can be both incidental and more like a formal arrangement: “I occasionally (...) get him to look over my website when I’m updating it” (cis woman, 24, British), or “I have also had partners help with setting up, building and maintaining a website for me” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant).

A few types of support were only mentioned by a single respondent: travelling, touring together, party organising, help getting started in sex work, and use of a partner’s bank account. Travel for work is mentioned both with a partner who is a sex worker (“I have often toured with my ex-girlfriend” (cis woman, 31, British)) and with a partner who is not a sex worker as ‘cover’ of sorts: “Travelling together as a couple while touring/working abroad in order to appear inconspicuous” (cis woman, 24, EU migrant). Since especially the United States are known for banning solo-travelling suspected sex workers from entry and deporting them, this is an understandable precaution. One participant describes how using their partner’s bank account prevented them from having to pay their rent in cash and arousing suspicion in their landlord:

*“Another partner at one point was letting me use his bank account to put cash in and transfer it to the person I was paying rent to because I didn’t have a local branch to make regular deposits” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

Finally, 6 participants mentioned their partners providing emotional support as one of the ways their partners help their work (often in combination with other forms of support). This can be as simple as “[He] listens to me moan about work” (cis woman, 37, British), or as simple acceptance: “it is rare to feel accepted as a sex worker, so (...) it’s a nice counterbalance to the discrimination and stigmatisation” (non-binary questioning, 32, British). Often emotional support is mentioned at the same time as other help: “My girlfriend is extremely emotionally supportive and helps me with

photos” (cis woman, 20, British), and is seen as just as important as help with more practical aspects of sex work:

*“It has been an immense help to have the support and help of partners in my work, both in helping to take some of the weight off, as well as to provide safety and emotional support” (trans non-binary, 32 non-EU migrant).*

While providing emotional support to a partner is of course not covered under third party legislation, the fact that this has come up multiple times in answers to this question means it is an important form of support to the participants.

Seven out of 84 respondents discuss negative experiences with romantic or sexual partners as third parties, both partners in contractor roles and partners taking on a managerial role. One participant describes how her ex’s help with security and safety in fact added to their work stress:

*“They helped with occasional safety call and security person. However, I wish now they had not played any role, and they were very unreliable and often contributed to extra stress for me”. (cis woman, 39, British)*

Other participants’ negative experiences are more severe and come closer to coercive management, or to the public imagination of what pimping is like, and can involve both emotional and financial abuse in addition to high levels of control over the work of a sex worker. Although abusive partners of sex workers are generally imagined to only be men, participants describe male, female and non-binary partners in these positions. Those whose partners received payment and who had negative experiences describe that their partner has a level of power or leverage over them. This can be through debt: “She took all the money to pay off a large debt I owed her” (cis woman, no age, British), or through drug use: “He took most of it, at the time I was a drug user also” (cis woman, 35, British). In one case, the power imbalance originated in an abusive BDSM relationship:

*“They first suggested a 15% cut. Later on they claimed that managing me was taking over their entire life and stressing them out, so pushed me towards offering them a 50% cut reflecting that. They control my money so I haven’t even carried my profits as disposable income – this was initially something they pressured me into but assured was negotiable and reversible as part of the BDSM dynamic and assured me that my money was still my money and wouldn’t ever be denied, but since changed the goalposts saying that they REQUIRED me to allow them full control of my finances, and that they would not*

*deny me anything as long as it was “reasonable”, and that if I ever walked they would keep the money.” (cis woman, 26, British)*

In this situation, the partner has several forms of managerial control over the worker, including control over the worker’s time and pay. Only one participant actually refers to her ex-partner as a pimp:

*“I had a previous partner who was a pimp masquerading as a partner. I was already doing sex work, but they groomed me into many forms [of sex work] which I was not comfortable with.” (questioning woman, 34, British)*

The topic of abusive or controlling romantic partners who take on a managerial role in sex work will be further discussed in Chapter 6, Section 1.2.7.

## 5.5 The sex worker gifting economy

An additional reason why sex workers’ work-related interactions with third parties do not fit neatly in the employer/employee framework, is because many exchanges between workers and third parties, especially friends and partners, are of a non-monetary nature. In part, this is likely to do with both the stigmatisation of people who make money from others’ sex work, and with the criminalisation of third parties. However, non-payment of those who help with sex work is also very common between sex workers themselves. Not only does a large number of participants not (regularly) pay the friends, family, partners or other third parties that support them, but 44 respondents (23.8%) have had someone help them with work in exchange for something other than money. There is very little data on gifting economies and informal work without strong financial motive in the UK. However, Williams (2006, p.383) found that amongst informal workers in rural parts of the UK “just 7 percent of paid informal tasks are conducted for businesses and people that suppliers do not define as friends, neighbors, or kin, and only 17 percent for primarily profit-motivated purposes”, and that: “The primary rationale of consumers when using the paid informal labor of friends, neighbors, relatives, and other household members is either “community-building” or “redistribution”” (Williams, 2006, p.396). Williams states that community building reasons for doing informal work are used to ‘cement and consolidate’ interpersonal relationships, while redistributive reasons often involve an exchange between “between “time-rich/money-poor” and “money-rich/time-poor” people” (Williams, 2006,

p.400). Similar considerations are also stated by sex worker participants who informally exchange labour, gifts and money with others.

### 5.5.1 Informal exchanges between sex workers

A very common theme in the data is the importance of formal and informal networks of sex workers who help one another out. This help and support can take many forms:

*“friends who have helped me have all been sex workers. This has ranged from friends who advised me on how to begin sex work, how to set up a website, book clients, what screening might involve, how to take safety precautions, what to look out for, what to charge – to sharing lists of dangerous clients, participating in online forums that I find really crucial, giving me advice on what to do if something has gone wrong, if I need to work with a cold sore or with thrush, etc. etc. I have a friend who did a free photoshoot for me. Friends who have given me advertising advice! Everything!” (trans non-binary, 32, British)*

This support is explicitly seen as mutual, and respondents report both receiving and giving help:

*“No, there is no payment [for help from sex worker friends]. I have also been able to share the same information and safety resources with other sex workers. Peer support networks are a godsend to sex workers, and free” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Some of those sex worker networks are more formal and focused on activism, but those networks still are also a space for mutual practical support and help, as discussed in Section 5.3.6.

The payment of fellow sex workers for their help is sometimes replaced by a donation:

*“Administrative work and photography is usually done as a favour or as a skills exchange (either for some of my other skills, or for other shoots). My friend who did my accounts requested a charitable donation instead of payment, to a marginalised worker’s Gofundme<sup>22</sup>. I have always paid my sex worker friends for use of their venues (both private and hotels)” (cis woman, 26, EU migrant)*

The theme of mutuality and gift giving, rather than payment, also comes up regularly. Help is often mutual and does not include an exchange of anything besides support in multiple directions:

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<sup>22</sup> Community fundraising website used by individuals in need, often to fundraise emergency housing or rent money, transgender healthcare costs, or to cover food or bills.



*“I have a group of friends who all look out for each other, doing safety checks, touring together, and being supportive with chats (...) Friends who are other workers have passed on clients, shared tips, been safety buddies, helped with website, taken pictures” (cis woman, 42, British)*

Doing a duo together is not considered payment by participants, since the overwhelming consensus of respondents is that each worker simply receives their half of the money they earned together: “We split our earnings 50/50” (cis woman, 29, British). This happens regardless of who the extra labour of organising the duo falls on:

*“No, the client pays both of us. Ideally, I would like the client to organise it all (I am not an escort agency), but in reality it is me who organises it all, which is extra work for me while I am not paid anything extra. However, I do like working with someone else as this gives friends the option to make a living and I learn from how they work.” (cis woman, 38, EU migrant)*

One participant states she pays friends who refer clients to her: “I’ve given the courtesy of a low percentage of money (10-15%) but not as a regular payment system” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant). Another worker states that, besides paying for the use of a workspace, “I have also paid other workers for web design, tech support and photos” (non-binary questioning, 33, British). A single participant mentions paying sex worker friends for safety buddying: “Friends doing security over the phone would be £20, and more if it was a long booking” (cis woman, 51, British).

### 5.5.2 Informal exchanges between workers and friends/family

Of the 104 participants who discussed help from friends – a large number of whom are sex workers as well – a strong majority say they do not pay their friends for their involvement with their sex work. Only 13 respondents say they pay their friends, and 10 mention paying their friends for some of their help, but not in all cases. The large majority of respondents who do not pay often mention reciprocity and friendship as part of the reason they do not pay their friends, or why their friends would not accept payment: “I always offered. One friend read my ad copy, another lent me their flat and I always offered to pay, but they both said no and we swapped favours instead” (cis woman, 30, British). These favours may sometimes be more explicit than others, and even those who provide professional services may refuse payment from friends: “She made my website without charging me, although she charges other people to make their websites” (cis woman, 29, EU migrant).

Help from non-sex working friends was more likely to be followed by gift giving (possibly due to the lack of ability to do a similar favour back) or treating the friend: “One non-sex working friend was regularly my safety call. She never took money but sometimes I would buy her lunch to say thank you” (cis woman, 31, British). One participant describes receiving a large amount of ongoing help and support from a non-sex worker friend who helps with content writing, SEO, and other business advice:

*“he NEVER expects a penny from me (...) I told him I’d take him to the Maldives as a thanks when I’m done paying my mortgage. It’s because of him (and because I’m good at what I do, having done it for so long) that I have reached this high and am so busy. I can never thank him enough for his selfless help.” (cis woman, 39, EU migrant)*

Many participants who do not pay their friends for their help, instead mention giving gifts and sharing their financial good fortune when they are able to. One participant responded to the question if they paid their friends:

*“No, but we very often had dinner together and I paid :) I think, when someone does something for me I should give them something. They never wanted money (“This is not hard work, just looking at the phone time to time”) but I wanted to show my gratitude” (cis woman, 35, EU migrant)*

Two separate participants mention baking their helping friends cake: “I bake them cakes” (cis woman, 31, British), and “I only paid with homemade cake! I’ve texted friends locations and durations and details of bookings in return for a homemade Victoria sponge!” (cis woman, 26, British). Dinner is also regularly mentioned as a way of thanking friends:

*“With SW’er friends we buddy each other, so no money switches hands as it’s a mutual thing. With civvy<sup>23</sup> friends I would take them out for dinner or something similar.” (cis man, 34, British).*

Several workers use their income to support their friends when they need it: “No payment, but (...) sometimes financial support in difficult times” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant). Many participants seem to be very aware of the financial situation of their friends compared to their own: “I never paid them but I try to help all my friends when they are in financial need. I also like to buy my friends dinner or presents if they are worse off than me” (cis woman, 35, EU migrant). This is not just

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<sup>23</sup> Civilian – non-sex worker.

the case when workers are financially well-off, but also when they are only marginally more wealthy than their friends:

*“For my best friend, we were both homeless addicts at the time and I had more income than her. I bought her lots of stuff and gave her plenty of cash, but (...) it wasn’t ‘payment’ so much as it was me spending my money as I wanted to. The same goes for all my other friends who have helped, really. I’ll give money as a friend – if/when I have any – as it naturally arises over the course of a relationship, not as someone who enlisted their help.” (trans woman, 22, British)*

Those respondents who sometimes pay friends for their help but in other cases do not, usually have certain types of help they do decide to pay for. Often these are specific skills like web design or for the renting of a workspace: “In the majority of cases (...) people did it as a favour, or in exchange for me helping them with something. Previously I did pay someone to do my website and photos” (trans woman, 30, EU migrant). Other examples are “I paid a friend for photography, but my safety buddy friends never asked for money” (trans non-binary, 24, British), and “I pay him to clean my incall, but he acts as my safety call for no financial reward, just out of concern for my welfare” (cis woman, 27, British). Two participants mention paying with services they would usually get paid for. In both these cases the value of what they gave is relatively easily quantified, such as session costs, content cost, and rent deductions: “I paid the clients who did graphic design things for me with my porn content” (cis woman, 20, British), and “I gave my friend who organised the parties free domination session and my other friend lived with me for very low rent for a while” (cis woman, 43, British).

Finally, 11 respondents answered that they pay their friends with money for their help (“as they were providing professional expertise and time and labour” (trans non-binary, 32, non-EU migrant)), either in all cases or they did not mention cases in which they do not pay. One participant expressed discomfort at paying friends for their help, and feels that this ties in to the quality of her relationships: “Yes. I don’t have any real friends because everyone benefits off the money I make but doesn’t respect it” (cis woman, 25, non-EU migrant).

### 5.5.3 Informal exchanges between sex workers and partners

The vast majority of participants whose romantic partner performs third party services (45.4% of respondents have a partner who helps out at times), state their partner does not get financial compensation in exchange. Only 14 participants stated that a current or past partner receives direct compensation for their help. Interestingly, 12 participants give a response along the lines of this one:

“In the sense that we run a household and raise a kid together, my income is part of our shared income” (trans non-binary, 26, British), or “Not directly, but we share household bills and as I earn more money I pay a higher percentage.” (cis woman, 26, British). Although ‘shared finances’ responses have not been counted as yes answers, it is telling that this response was so common, as this may show workers’ awareness of old third party legislation<sup>24</sup> that has been used to criminalise partners and relatives of sex workers who shared a household and finances with them.

This awareness likely also plays a role in the obvious offence some respondents have felt at the question whether their partner(s) receive compensation for their support: “No, and he would never ask or accept that” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant), “No. The people who offer to be my safety call do it out of care and concern for me and no other motive” (non-binary questioning, 32, British), “No! Lol, don’t be silly!” (cis woman, 41, British), and “No. That would be exploitation” (cis woman, 29, British). One participant explains:

*“No, he earns his own salary (more than me, actually) and when I’m low on earnings he pays my part of the rent. He also buys the food for the household. I am the one profiting from him instead of the other way around (with his consent, of course, he wants to help me)” (cis woman, 29, EU migrant)*

Those who work duos with a romantic partner all describe a 50/50 split: “We split the money equally if we work together. What we earn alone, we keep” (questioning woman, 21, British). “We’re a MF<sup>25</sup> escort couple, though we both work solo as well. [Income] goes into a single ‘pot’” (cis man, 62, British) For one respondent, the help she received moved from paid to unpaid as the relationship developed: “He was paid to be my driver (while working independently (...)) and once married he was my driver/security for free.” (cis woman, 30, British).

Half of those participants whose partners received part of their income in exchange for help had positive experiences, and the other half are the 7 mentioned earlier as having negative experiences with a partner as a third party. Those with positive experience express that they decide what amount a partner receives, or that they view the cut to be a reasonable one: “Usually quite a sum, but I charge a lot so it’s worth it for the safety element” (cis woman, 44, British), “Yeah, they get about 50% of my earnings” (cis woman, 21, British), “£10 per booking he used to get” (cis woman, 23, British), “Yes, a fair percentage in consideration of managing the website, general marketing costs and administration time” (cis woman, 37, British), “Yes, I would give the driver a cut. On average I would pay 50 pounds”

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<sup>24</sup> In the past, the offence of Living off the Earnings of Prostitution has been used to not only prosecute third parties in a managerial position, but also partners and even adult children of sex workers.

<sup>25</sup> Male and Female.

(cis woman, 51, British). Others pay their partners for work they do in their mainstream job: “An ex of mine helped me build my first website. As it’s her job, I paid her for it” (non-binary questioning, 33, British), and “He was a part time minicab driver, so he charged me low price taxi fares” (cis woman, 42, British). One participant describes both financial compensation or an exchange of services as part of the exchange with partners:

*“No one ‘gets a cut’, but when I feel either [partner] has exerted a lot of labour in support of my income, I have compensated them either financial or in labour exchange of various forms.” (cis woman, 29, British)*

Finally, several participants mention not paying their partners for their help, but instead giving their partner gifts or being able to provide for them where needed. For some this is because their partner won’t accept direct payment: “I offered but they wouldn’t accept, so I spent some money treating them to dinner and stuff instead” (trans woman, 30, British). For others, sex work provides the opportunity to give their partner luxuries they would otherwise not be able to afford: “I might buy us a nice meal out or a bottle of wine for his support” (cis woman, 38, British), and “[I don’t pay her], but I treat her well because of my job and this makes me very happy” (cis woman, 20, British). Some respondents do not pay a fixed amount to their partners in exchange for their help, but do make sure to contribute to necessities when they can: “[I don’t pay them] formally, but I paid for a lot of things like their rent, study fees” (cis woman, 39, British), and “some financial help in his start up business where I can, but he never asks for anything” (cis woman, 45, British). One participant describes how reciprocity and generosity is important in these relationships, rather than a formal financial arrangement:

*“Sometimes if we worked together and one of us didn’t do so well we would pay more to cover the other person’s hotel costs so the profit could be bigger. Like if I didn’t earn enough to pay for the hotel she would pay for it so I didn’t lose money. None of the other people helping me were getting paid like on a payroll, but if I’d had a profitable week I’d buy them food and pay for outings, or if people were short on money I’d lend it them for rent or groceries or school supplies, and I wouldn’t expect them to pay it back.” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

From the data it is clear that the majority of the help provided by partners to participants is incidental and not a formalised arrangement. This is illustrated both by the fact that the majority of partners do not receive financial compensation for their help, and by the fact that many respondents were

very adamant that the help they received from their partners is voluntary and without any compensation.

## 5.6 Developing the concept of wider work relations

Having mapped the relationships between sex workers and third parties, it is clear that – although legislation assumes that third parties have control over sex workers – the majority of third parties in this research are not managers, but take on the role of associates or contractors. Management, in the context of this research, is characterised by employer control over and profit from the worker (Prassl, 2016), worker dependence on the employer (Davidov, 2004), and whether or not the worker has a business independent from the manager (Davidov, 2002). In sex work, management is usually present in agencies, at premises, and sometimes in clubs, and can be recognised by workers having to follow rules and policies, and managerial control over worker hours, services and rates (Sanders and Hardy, 2012). However, because management is present in agencies, clubs and premises does not mean that all third parties in those workplaces exert managerial control over workers, nor do workers depend on non-managerial third parties such as colleagues or cleaners for their income. The relationship between sex workers and those third parties, then, cannot be described as an employer/employee relationship. In fact, mutual agency and autonomy are emphasised in several responses in which participants discuss the relationships they have with third parties who are not in a managerial position:

*“She never took a cut of the money I made and I never took a cut of hers. (...) Neither of us had any control over what clients [the other] took or what services we provided. These were our own decisions” (cis woman, 31, British)*

With only 6.5% of participants stating they have someone in a managerial role to them at the time of the survey, it is clear that third parties in non-managerial roles play a very large role in the working lives of sex workers. When discussing third parties in sex work, commonly used terms for the relationships between workers and others quickly fall short: ‘employer/employee relations’ is terminology that does not cover all relationships sex workers have with third parties. As discussed in Chapter 4, criminalised third parties are not only employers, managers, and intermediaries, but they include a host of other work-related relationships as well. The current chapter makes clear that friends, partners, family members, and others commonly play a role in the working lives of sex worker participants in ways that support or enable their work, and that neither payment nor power over the

worker are essential parts of this involvement. The relationship between a worker and a landlord, housemate, accountant, maid, or co-worker cannot be called an employer/employee relation by even the most flexible definition of the term. The need for terminology to discuss non-employment relationships related to work is present not only in the study of sex work, but is increasingly important in the wider field of labour and employment. With increasing attention for – and research into – non-mainstream work, gig work and informal labour, there is a need for ways to describe the ad-hoc service provision, the blending of work and social relationships, and the fluid nature of the roles, interactions, and forms of compensation in non-standard work and the informal economy. For this reason, the concept of wider work relations will be developed and will be used to categorise third parties who are not in a managerial position.

### 5.6.1 Work relations

There is some research which acknowledges that a fuller understanding of employment relations may require expansion beyond broadening the concept of the worker and employer as suggested by Davidov (2002); (2004) and Prassl (2016). Bélanger and Edwards (2013, p.433) argue that “the worker-customer interaction is conceived as part of the social structure that shapes it, namely the employment relationship”. They discuss the idea of a trilateral relationship or ‘service triangle’ between employer, worker and customer rather than a bilateral one between just the employer and worker, due to the strong influence customers have on employment relationships in service work. Additionally, Cederholm and Åkerström (2016, p.749) show how, in the leisure industry, there is a form of ‘hybrid friendship-business relationship’ which also goes beyond the more narrow conceptualisation of employment relationships: “in this context, a formal economy of provider/customer and employer/employee relationships co-exists with informal economic exchanges among kin, friends and other people helping out”. These informal relationships are clearly present in the experiences of sex workers as described in this chapter as well. There is some acknowledgement within literature on informal work that relationships outside the employer/employee relationship can have a profound effect on workers’ wellbeing and job satisfaction. Monteith and Giesbert (2017) state that usual conceptualisations of ‘good work’ or labour rights-based approaches often fail to consider that amongst the main factors informal workers value about their work are their relationships at work, including not only relationships between (in)formal employer and employee/worker, but also their relationships with other self-employed workers, colleagues, customers and others they regularly encounter in their work days.

The term 'work relationships' is occasionally used to describe relationships in the sphere of work and labour that go beyond the 'standard' employer/employee relationship. At times it is used to describe flexible, precarious, or nonstandard forms of labour that legally differ from the employer/employee relationship but have similar power structures in place (Zeytinoglu, 1999), or worker-manager and worker-colleague relationships in more mainstream employment (Sluss and Ashforth, 2007; Warren and Warren, 2019). In some research it refers to the relationship between contracted workers and intermediaries (Ruiner et al., 2020). The high-quality work relationships literature also focuses on relationships between co-workers and worker-manager relationships in mainstream workplaces (Ehrhardt and Sharif, 2019). Ragins et al. (2017) emphasise the role of work relations in mainstream workplaces, such as mentors, colleagues and supervisors, in providing emotional support for workers, while Poole and Regoli (1980), in their work on cynicism among prison guards, use the term 'work relations' to refer to relations not only between workers and management, but also between colleagues, and between guards and inmates. When 'work relationship' is used in these contexts, the term is rarely defined or critically engaged with.

#### 5.6.2 Wider work relations

Clearly, the term 'work relations' is still more limited in scope than the wide variety of work-related interactions and relationships that participants have discussed in this chapter. There is a clear need for a concept that expands both our vocabulary and our view of which relationships are important to enable and support the labour of workers in the informal economy, due to the high prevalence of non-managerial third parties in sex work. I suggest the use of the term 'wider work relations' to cover the range of non-managerial work and social relationships which are covered by the concept of third parties in sex work legislation: colleagues, contractors, support staff, duo-partners, incidental service providers, and all others that have been discussed in this chapter and that are often criminalised due to their support of the work of sex workers. This allows our analysis to differentiate between third parties in a managerial role – who have control over workers' pay, time or work, who profit off workers' labour, and on whom workers depend for their income – and third parties who are not in a managerial role and do not have these powers, but who still affect and enable the work of sex workers to a large degree: wider work relations. In contrast to relationships with third parties in a managerial position, wider work relations can include mutuality as well as situations in which sex workers have power over the payment and work of others. The concept of wider work relations will be used in this work to explore the types of interactions sex workers have in a wide variety of relationships surrounding their work.



Both managers and wider work relations fall under the umbrella of third parties, and both are often criminalised. In general, third parties of all sorts provide services to sex workers that support them in their work, increase their income potential, or reduce the number of tasks the worker needs to do. However, the power relations between sex workers and wider work relations are different from those between sex workers and third parties and those in a managerial role: where managers have control over the worker, profit off the worker's labour, and there is a level of dependence on the manager for income or work (Prassl, 2016), wider work relations do not have these same power relations with sex workers. The fact that wider work relations are assumed by legislators to hold power over workers is unique to sex work, and in other (informal) industries wider work relations are not thought to control or manage (fellow) workers. Therefore, in order to critique the unusually wide reach of third party criminalisation, the concept of wider work relations provides a useful comparison between industries. A legal distinction between third parties in a managerial position and wider work relations can even be used if sex work were fully decriminalised: a distinction between third parties in a managerial position and wider work relations would be essential to decision making in employment tribunals for instance.

Similarly, the concept of wider work relations can be used to investigate the web of social and work relationships that enable and support workers in other industries as well, especially with regards to informal and gig work. For instance, the importance of embeddedness in interpersonal and professional networks for migrant entrepreneurs (You and Zhou, 2019) can, when viewed through the lens of wider work relations, show that migrant entrepreneurship is reliant on not only community *support* but also on community *labour*. In research into sex work, due to assumptions of control, there is some awareness of the range of actors who provide services or support to a worker which directly enable them to do their work. Exporting this awareness to other fields of work can open up avenues of investigation that explore how workers depend on the labour of many people in order to be able to work, even (or perhaps especially) in the absence of an official employer. The fact that these relationships are not criminalised in other industries does not mean they do not have a large effect on the working lives of the people in those industries. Wider work relations, then, can be defined as all roles beyond the worker, manager and client or customer – who do not have control over workers' pay, time or work, do not directly profit off workers' labour, and on whom the worker does not depend for their income – who provide services or support to a worker which directly enable them to do their work. The goal of the conceptualisation of wider work relations is to open up an avenue for the exploration of these important and impactful work related relationships in other areas of research into work and employment relations

In mapping third parties in sex work, it was found that the third parties most commonly encountered by sex worker participants in this research are not in a managerial position, but are sex working colleagues. Additionally, sex worker participants both take on third party roles for other workers as associates, and hire third parties as contractors to provide services for them. A large proportion of those taking on third party roles or supporting sex workers in this research are friends, family members and romantic partners of sex workers, and exchanges are often based on mutual support and gifting rather than financial payments. This shows that many of the potentially criminalised third party relationships are informal and do not include managerial power or control. Because the majority of third parties in this research does not hold managerial power over sex workers, a conceptual distinction has been developed between third parties in managerial roles and third parties who are not in a managerial role: wider work relationships. To explore the effect third parties, both managers and wider work relations, have on sex workers, the next chapter will explore the reasons sex workers decide to engage or not engage third parties.

## 6 (Dis)advantages of engaging – or not engaging – third parties in a managerial role and wider work relations.

The last chapter explored which third parties, both those in a managerial role and wider work relations, play a role in participants' working lives. Building on the finding that the majority of third parties in this research are not in a managerial position, it is important to explore what sex workers' experiences are with managers and wider work relations. This chapter will look at the reasons why sex workers decide to engage or not engage third parties, including wider work relations, their assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of these work relationships, and the ways they resist managerial control. Research by the UK migrant sex worker organisation X:talk (2010) into the ways sex workers assess the quality of their work conditions has found that control over working hours, a good enough income, safety in the workplace and positive interpersonal relationships are all important factors in their working conditions. This chapter will delve deeper into the effect managers and wider work relations have on the wellbeing and success of sex workers at work, as well as the level of control that is present in the interpersonal relationships with third parties.

This chapter argues that sex worker participants have a mix of positive, negative and neutral experiences with third parties, but that positive experiences are generally more common with wider work relations than with third parties in a managerial position. It will start by discussing the advantages and disadvantages of working with third parties, both managers and wider work relations, and will then discuss the advantages and disadvantages of working without third parties from sex workers' perspectives. Finally, the ways sex workers and wider work relations resist and complicate managerial power in the workplace will be discussed.

### 6.1 Working with third parties in a managerial position

The main reasons sex workers in this research decide to engage third parties in a managerial position, is the fact that they offer services that help increase sex workers' income and reduce the amount of administrative and marketing labour sex workers need to do. In exchange, many managers are paid by taking a cut before paying the worker (often a percentage of their income). However, due to the

criminalisation of third parties, there are no legal employer/employee relations in sex work, and so sex workers are generally dependent self-employed workers in these contexts (Pitcher, 2015). Third parties in a managerial position – who have control over workers’ pay, time or work, directly profit off workers’ labour, and whom the worker has dependency on – are most commonly present in premises, at agencies, and in clubs. However, in some instances, participants report having a personal manager, generally a partner, in independent work<sup>26</sup>. Besides the services offered by managers, sex workers discuss the fairness of the amount paid to managers as a reason to engage them, the fact that they offer a sense of safety over working alone, and good and fair management practices. However, sex workers also discuss a range of negative experiences with third parties in a managerial position: unreasonable fees, wage theft, risk shifting, pressure to work, safety concerns, and managerial control and abuse.

#### 6.1.1 Advantages of working with third parties in a managerial position

Participants often describe their satisfaction with third parties in a managerial position with reference to the fairness of the financial cut they take, often in relation to the services they provide. When the services provided are considered to be high quality – by increasing income, and/or reducing the amount of work needed to find clients or do administrative work – workers can consider these cuts fair. For example, according to this agency worker:

*“They do all the admin in terms of answering the phones, talking to clients and lining up bookings for me. In return I pay them 30% of my earnings – which I am glad to do, as it feels like a fair exchange” (cis woman, 34, British).*

Another agency worker frames the cut she pays to an agency as a commission, which she is happy to pay if the agency is well organised and provides a good service: “They provided me with bookings which is what I was paying them commission for. They organized things for me well and listened to any issues I had” (cis woman, 26, British). One participant describes her premises as “perfectly fine. There's better brothels but it was a safe place to work & the manager didn't take huge cut” (cis woman, 23, British), again stressing the importance of the portion of income taken by managers not being too high.

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<sup>26</sup> Independent work managed by a personal manager is a bit of a misnomer – if management is present the worker of course is not fully independent. However, this is the classification participants themselves used, since even with a personal manager they organised their work in the same way as they did/do while working independently.

Besides the balance of services and costs, the main way sex workers in this research evaluate the usefulness of managers is by their effect on their safety. Several participants emphasise that their priority in working in premises is their safety, and the fact that having other workers and third parties present increases their sense of safety. When workers speak about premise managers in positive terms, they mention the provision of safety measures, the managers being nice and helpful, and understanding of the work. A participant who described their first workspace in sex work wrote: “[the] owner wouldn’t put me on the evening shift, as he knew I wasn’t comfortable” (cis woman, 34, British), meaning she was able to work a shift she felt safer doing. Managers are generally spoken about in less positive terms than wider work relations in this research, but even when unhappy about their management, some workers still mention that the manager or owner of a premise makes it possible for them to work in a safer environment:

*“My manager makes me feel angry and like I’m being taken advantage of, but at the same time working there has made me feel far safer than working alone.”*  
(trans non-binary, 20, British)

One participant discusses how the agency manager has a positive effect on her safety due to their screening procedures: “My current agency makes me feel quite secure as it’s a well-known agency with a screening process and the manager seems to genuinely care about her workers” (cis woman, 25, non-EU migrant). Another worker discusses that the agency has a procedure to deal with bad clients, and that trust between manager and worker is an important part of that:

*“I have been able to report clients (which has been extremely rare) and the agency have always taken me on my word and either blocked them from the agency or blocked them from contacting me again (depending on the issue)”* (cis woman, 34, British)

One participant mentions that a party manager makes her feel safe by listening to the workers and acting on their safety needs: “I know that what I say goes, if I’m not happy with a client, he gets warned and/or removed” (cis woman, 42, British). In other words, good management in sex work with regards to safety, according to participants, requires: flexibility in shifts, providing a workspace with others present, good screening or safety processes, procedures for dealing with bad clients, and trusting workers when they report safety issues.

Several participants mention that they felt comfortable in their work because they “Never felt under pressure to take bookings” (questioning, 51, British). Those who are positive about their experiences with agencies mostly emphasise the lack of pressure they experienced:

*“I've always felt listened to and supported by the agency staff. I am able to set and uphold boundaries, work as much or as little as I want, take time off. I've never felt coerced or encouraged to do anything” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Another worker states:

*“She asks my availability for the week ahead but also checks in every day with what time I'd like to start and finish. She will give me some info about the booking and ask me to confirm if I can. It's never an issue if I can't” (cis woman, 35, non-EU migrant)*

Related to the concept of pressure to work, one participant describes her positive experiences working for an agency where the owner acknowledged that work was often slow and there were not as many clients as they would like: “He would even text when it was quiet just to reassure me that it was quiet for everyone” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant). In other words, good management with regards to work volume, according to participants, includes no pressure on workers to take on more than they want to, and being kept in the loop on client numbers and work volume.

Advantages of working with managers, as described by participants, are: providing useful services (a workplace, company, marketing, admin, client recruitment and communication), a reasonable percentage of income in exchange for those services, providing a safe workplace, good safety procedures or screening, trust between worker and manager, keeping workers informed, and no pressure to work or take on more clients than workers want. The next section will discuss the disadvantages sex workers experience in working with third parties in a managerial position.

### 6.1.2 Disadvantages of working with third parties in a managerial position

Participants describe their dissatisfaction with third parties in a managerial position with reference to the manager's effect on their pay, fines and wage theft, the shifting of business risk, pressure to work, a negative effect on workplace safety, the use of control mechanisms, and abusive behaviour from third parties in a managerial role. Negative experiences with third parties in a managerial role range from mild disagreement with business practices to outright abusive workplace practices and abusive intimate relationships. Many of these disadvantages are similar to what Bernhardt et al. (2013) call ‘workplace violations’ – a wide range of managerial violations of labour and employment law that are mostly present at the bottom of the labour market: underpayment, unpaid overtime, illegal pay deductions, late payments, stolen tips, denied breaks, and retaliation for worker complaints or organising. Bernhardt et al. conclude that the main cause of workplace violations is weak penalties

and weak enforcement of labour law, but within the criminalised context full service workplaces, this enforcement of labour law is not present at all. Additionally, due to the structure of dependent self-employment in most sex work workplaces, 'unpaid labour-time' (Cole et al., Forthcoming) is the norm, since rather than earning an hourly wage, sex workers do not get paid for the time they are not with clients.

#### 6.1.2.1 Fees, fines and wage theft

Several participants discuss how the cuts taken by management while working in premises were more than they feel they should be:

*"When I was working in the brothel, (...) 70 pounds was taken out for the maid then the rest was split 50/50 with the manager. Even though my manager was alright, I don't agree with 50/50 split, the sex worker should get the majority" (cis woman, 28, British)*

This 50/50 split is discussed more often, either as an expression of that rate being too much ("They took almost 50% of the earnings" (cis woman, 25, British)), or explaining what that cut is used for by premise managers/owners in addition to profits: "in the brothel you pay 50/50 to the manager, their 50% goes towards rent, bills etc advertising so you don't have to do it all yourself" (cis woman, 28, British). For several participants, the level of money paid to the premise is the main or only downside about working in premises: "I found the extortionate rate hard to deal with, but they otherwise left me to my own devices" (cis woman, 25, British). Finally, several premises have more complicated structures for extracting money directly from workers:

*"The workers are responsible for paying the maids' fees as well as a daily house fee of 350 pounds on top of that. If we went in, made only 300 pounds, we would owe 50 pounds to the owner and 50 to the maid, not taking any money home."*  
*(cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant)*

This direct extraction of income from sex workers is also described in Hardy and Sanders' (2014) research into UK strip clubs, in which they describe how fines and fees directly transfer risk from owners to dancers, and limit the autonomy of workers. In their study they found that 70 per cent of strip club workers had at least once made a loss during a shift, meaning they owed the club more money than they made – which is a much higher rate than full-service sex workers in premises.

Participants described the same issue of cuts or fees being too high amongst agencies: "Most agencies are okay but they take way too much money from girls for drivers or their own fees" (cis woman, 46,

British). Several describe that either the service the agency provided was not worth their rates, or the percentage they took was too high: “They were good for finding work, but they took too much money” (trans woman, 43, British).

Many participants mention another issue related to money in their relationship with managers: the presence of fines or other forms of wage theft. These come mainly from work relations in managerial positions – in agencies, premises, clubs, and occasionally in independent work. Wage theft includes financial exploitation through large cuts or fees, fines that would be illegal in legal workplaces where workers have access to labour rights, and extra charges put upon workers. In addition to taking a cut of earnings or charging a house fee, some premises and clubs add fines for breaking the ‘rules’ set by management. This can be a fee for being late for a shift, for missing a shift due to illness, or any other reason: “the owner served as a maid at times and fined us 100 pounds for coming in late” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant). The lack of access to employment rights in these criminalised workplaces means that workers not only lack an hourly wage or sick leave, but also that they can be forced to work while ill or risk getting fined by the premise manager:

*“They have ordered me to come into work when I’m ill otherwise I have to pay a £380 fine. (...) Some managers are happy to send you home with nothing if you don’t make the ‘rent’ after you’ve seen several clients. (...) It also makes me angry that the managers are so greedy and ask for so much money from the working girls, it makes me feel like they’re taking advantage of us” (cis woman, 21, British)*

Several participants working in premises and for agencies describe additional forms of wage theft and direct profiting from workers which they have experienced. One worker states that the “Money didn’t always match number of clients seen” (cis woman, 42, British) at the agency she worked at, while another states that her agency even asked her to pay for hotel rooms and taxis in advance herself.

One participant discusses that the manager of the premise they work in took not only a large cut, but also charged for the working space: “I was really unhappy that the management took 50% and charged me to use the room. I felt a bit exploited” (trans non-binary, 24, British). A few participants also mention that managers in premises refuse to do the minimum of advertising and providing a safe workspace:

*“My manager/owner is the bane of my life, always bringing in stupid rules and regulations. Recently she even tried to stop advertising for us and still take a cut of our earnings” (trans non-binary, 20, British)*



Another worker experienced a manager refusing to replace furniture inside the premises, leaving that cost to workers as well: “They also make the working girls buy the furniture for the brothel, as they refuse to replace it when it breaks, no matter how dangerous it is” (cis woman, 21, British).

#### 6.1.2.2 *Risk shifting*

The shifting of risks, both shifting financial risks onto workers and creating physical risks for workers to facilitate financial gain by owners or managers, is a commonly reoccurring topic amongst participants. By making workers pay a daily house fee and additionally paying maids, cleaners or security directly, there is no financial business risk to the owner if there are days with few clients or if there are changes in the market. In fact, since the workers do not receive an hourly wage, the more workers are present – and subsequently the lower individual workers’ incomes are – the more profit owners make. This shifts all the financial risks of the business onto sex workers, while the non-sex working employees receive a guaranteed income, and guaranteeing management a profit. This risk shifting can extend so far that it can cause people to work and see clients but still owe money, and is comparable to the financial structure of strip clubs in the UK as described by Hardy and Sanders (2014). Due to the criminalisation of full-service sex workplaces, workers have limited options to leave a premise for another if they are affected by this oversupply of workers by management. One participant explains how the agency she worked for put all financial business risks on the workers: “The agency wanted me to shell out a majority of the expenses (hotel room, taxis, etc) but were flippant about clients not showing up or things going against plan which resulted in wasted money” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant). Another participant explains that an agency she worked for expected workers to pay for the photos which were used for marketing: “[They] push for you to pay for new photos” (cis woman, 32, British). Additionally, a few workers mention that third parties have tried to prevent them from working independently, including through outright deception, meaning that they have missed out on income, like this agency worker: “They would put me on edge by creating fake bookings to make sure I wouldn’t accept clients independently” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant). Clearly, some managers view sex workers’ ability to work independently as a potential financial risk, either because it may reduce availability of sex workers, or because independently working people may not be as willing to pay their fees.

However, the most commonly mentioned form of risk shifting is the creation or acceptance of physical and safety risks for workers to facilitate financial gain by wider work relations. One participant states that an agency she worked for: “don’t screen any of their clients. They put me in dangerous situations including sending a stranger to my door at 5am when I was asleep and had signed off work” (cis

woman, 23, British). In this case, the manager/owner chose potential income over the clearly stated, and obvious, safety concerns of workers. One participant describes a clear pattern of risk shifting she experienced at several agencies, where the desire to fill a booking no matter what, increases the likelihood of angry clients and violence toward workers for being sent a bad match:

*“They would send any girl to any guy just as long as they filled the booking. This meant you'd often not be compatible and they'd be disappointed or they'd attempt to do something you didn't offer as they'd assumed you must do it as they'd requested and they'd get angry and want money back. You'd often be put in awkward and possibly dangerous situations due to the agency's actions.” (cis woman, 34, British)*

One participant had been lied to about an important safety aspect of her work, which increased their unsafety but created more profit for party organisers: “I was lied to about the numbers of clients. (...) I was worried things would get out of control” (cis woman, 44, British). Several participants reference that it is these security concerns and the high pressure to earn that pushed them to leave managed work environments.

A final risk that is put onto workers to increase third party profits is medical risk. Medical risk is rarely mentioned<sup>27</sup>, but a few participants discuss being pushed to provide services they do not want to provide, such as oral sex without a condom. One worker became so stressed from the pressure and risks at a premise that she began showing symptoms of vaginismus:

*“It did get quite extreme and my body refused to allow penetration (because I wasn't allowed to stay in consent by the managers), so I had to drastically change the services I offer and the type of sex work and approach to sex work that I do” (cis woman, 35, British)*

In this way, the management of their workplace tried to maximise their profitability by offering more services to clients, but the cost was put entirely on the worker, who suffered a health condition and had to re-invent the services she offers, as well as potentially deal with a drop in income due to no longer being able to offer penetrative sexual services.

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<sup>27</sup> In part likely because the survey took place before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 6.1.2.3 Pressure to work

Many participants mention being pressured to work as one of the main signs of bad management, and a lack of pressure to work as a sign of a positive work environment. This pressure to work from third parties is present in premises, at agencies, in clubs, and in some cases in independent work. Pressure to work is described as feeling pushed to see clients they either would rather not see or do not feel safe with, or to work at times they would rather not be working. Participants discussed this pressure coming from brothel managers/owners taking the form of pressure to constantly engage with clients: “All colleagues not with a client had to be in the lounge, competing to chat with potential clients” (non-binary questioning, 33, British).

A few workers discuss how this pressure includes both being present for many shifts, and pressure to be making enough money. Together, this means that some premise managers are trying to get as much profit as possible out of the workers and are laying this earning responsibility with the workers rather than their own marketing or management practices:

*“I guess it was annoying that if you missed too many shifts they would restrict how many you could book and sometimes girls who weren’t earning enough would get fired or get like a pep talk about how they had to try harder as if it was their fault not the clients. I guess it was weird cos they weren’t coercive or violent to me or anything but in the end they make money from you seeing clients and so are going to be on the clients side” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

One worker mentions how this pressure to work and earn was presented as beneficial to the workers, but was clearly for the benefit of the premise manager: “he pressured me to attend as many clients as possible and never reject the bad ones “because it's more money for you” (and for him too, of course Sherlock)” (cis woman, 29, EU migrant).

Many participants with experience working for agencies mentioned pressure to work in at least some of the agencies they worked with. Unlike at premises, there is no physical limit to how many workers can work at one time. Several participants describe how agency managers made them feel stressed, pressured to work, and as if they couldn’t take time off or reject clients:

*“they didn’t respect my free time and availability, giving me too much work and no time to rest” (cis woman, 36, EU migrant)*

*“The agency owner was an ex worker and she was OK about security but pushy to make me work more than I wanted, go out at late etc.” (cis woman, 51, British)*

*“I made tonnes of money and the 2 flats I have today come from that very period, but oh my god was I under pressure then.” (cis woman, 39, EU migrant)*

One worker compares agencies favourable to premises, since at an agency the manager is not physically present, but states that there is still a lot of pressure from agency managers: “they are usually as pushy, (...) push [you] to do hours you don’t want to do, send [you] to badly screened customers who are rude or drunk when you arrive” (cis woman, 32, British).

This pressure to work, or be available to work, is in stark contrast with the fact that sex work has far from an endless supply of clients. This makes the pressure to work at agencies and premises something that is clearly to the advantage of owners or managers – who do not pay an hourly wage and therefore lose no money if there are many workers present and few clients – and to the disadvantage of workers, who are waiting around without getting paid and are unable to work in other jobs or independently in that time. One worker felt pressure to accept all clients, since she could not afford potential retaliation from the agency manager resulting in less work: “I felt more pressure to accept every booking in case the manager stopped referring clients to me” (cis woman, 31, British). Another participant had similar experiences working in a club: “I had to go to the club every evening otherwise they would kick me out” (cis woman, 36, EU migrant).

Finally, pressure to work is strongly linked to issues of safety. Several workers discuss feeling pressure to not turn down clients, even if they feel unsafe, and experiencing pressure to use unsafe sexual health practices:

*“They weren't great with boundaries etc- made me take a second booking after a condom break, pushed me into duos with girls, shamed me for not performing OWO<sup>28</sup>” (cis woman, 26, British)*

#### 6.1.2.4 Safety

While safety is discussed as a possible advantage of working with third parties in a managerial position, it is also regularly brought up as a disadvantage, showing the range of experience workers have with managers. Participants with experience working for agencies express a lot of ambivalence about the safety precautions and screening that agencies undertake. Managers, receptionists and drivers are all regularly seen by participants as not as careful and effective as they could be with regards to safety. Several participants discuss being put in dangerous situations by an agency, either due to a lack of

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<sup>28</sup> OWO stands for ‘oral without’, or oral sex without a condom.

client screening or by other negligent practices: “They don’t vet [clients] properly and you end up seeing drunks, coke heads and dangerous clients” (cis woman, 31, British), and “The main thing I would say is there was very little security done for outcalls” (cis woman, 39, British). Agency managers and owners are explicitly seen by participants as having responsibility for the safety of workers, and to regularly be lacking screening practices: “Managers made life hard by sending me to people who they didn’t screen” (cis woman, 28, British). These negative experiences with management do not seem to be dependent on the gender of the owner:

*“The agency owner was not very helpful or supportive and often sent me to situations in which I felt very unsafe. She also sent someone to me once without telling me they wanted to tie me up and I was alone!” (cis woman, 43, British)*

Another worker states that the agency she worked for did not provide sufficient screening of clients or marketing: “They were supposed to - as I was paying them, but it felt like an excuse to take more money from me really” (cis woman, 35, British).

Premise managers are most often discussed as having a negative effect on workers’ safety: “manager ignored me when I shouted for help when I was with a customer” (cis woman, 21, British). One of the main complaints from participants is that premise owners or managers knowingly allow dangerous clients to see workers: “Owner was awful and made my work dangerous. Letting in Ugly Mugs<sup>29</sup> because they were regulars and not screening or reporting clients” (cis woman, 27, non-EU migrant). A second experience that reduces worker safety is managers or owners not supporting workers when they enforce boundaries or refuse to see a dangerous client:

*“In most [premises] it had a bad effect on me since they expected me to go with abusive clients. At the current one it has a very positive effect because I know when I don't want a client and he becomes angry when I say no they will have my back and tell him to leave” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant)*

Finally, some workers discuss the effect the gender of the manager or owner has on their safety, and either express their view that men are worse managers than women, or express their surprise that female managers are also capable of creating an unsafe work environment. For instance, one participant explains that, in her experience, male managers put more pressure on workers:

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<sup>29</sup> Dangerous clients.

*“The managers that had never done the work before, especially men, pushed you to work more and more, without considering the physical and emotional strains.”*

*(cis woman, 35, British)*

Another participant discusses how a female premise owner runs a brothel that is much less safe than a male-managed premise she worked in before:

*“Parlour 2: (...) The owner is a woman, contrasted with [Parlour 1], and was very exploitative. (...) The workplace was hostile due to the owner, and everyone was walking on eggshells. Dangerous clients were allowed to frequent even after having been complained against” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant)*

Participants with experience in premise work generally feel that the safety or unsafety of their work is in the hands of the premise managers or owners, and that due to their desire for profit the safety of workers is often compromised.

Several participants with experience working in parties or clubs mention that clients, especially in high numbers, are mainly seen as a risk to the safety of workers: “Parties are overwhelming and an easy opportunity for low paying clients to abuse as many women as possible” (cis woman, 31, British). Those who have felt unsafe in club or party work mainly mention negative experiences with managers or party organisers, and express that they felt unsafe and like organisers did not provide suitable control over clients. Issues of exploitation, theft, and safety are the main concerns workers have towards party organisers, and even if the organiser is trusted, the party environment means that clients are less likely to be screened and workers may feel less safe for that reason:

*“A trusted friend was the organizer of these events, and a couple of other acquaintances were working there. I did not particularly enjoy the experience because there's a lot less screening, but being in a semi-public environment offset the risk enough” (cis woman, 25, British)*

#### 6.1.2.5 Control mechanisms

Participants discuss several control mechanisms used mostly, but not exclusively, by third parties in a managerial role. These mechanisms include the use of rules and mistrust of workers, separating workers, abusive behaviours, and taking advantage of the lack of employment rights in criminalised workplaces.

Several participants discuss how premise owners or managers bring in rules to control the behaviour of the workers, and the role that receptionists play in enforcing these rules. One worker summarises her experience of working in several premises as: “I’ve worked in too many to write separately, but the net result of parlour work and sharing generally is stress, tiredness, low self esteem from being ‘watched’ all the time” (cis woman, 32, British). One worker in a premise “was penalised for coming in 15 minutes late to my shift by having a day of work taken from me” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant). A party worker discussed how the partner of the party organiser was involved for a while, and that his use of rules created a lot of stress for the workers until he left, because he “kept making and changing rules all the time” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant).

More so than other work environments, agency workers mentioned mistrust and deception from managers towards the workers, with agency owners using methods such as “sending pretend clients to check if I steal their details” (cis woman, 36, EU migrant), or sabotaging independent sex work avenues by “creating fake bookings to make sure I wouldn’t accept clients independently” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant). One participant expressed worry about clients risking her job at the agency by going to the manager: “The clients were often claiming to be friends with the agency owner, so I worried that if I didn’t do a good enough service they would complain to the agency owner” (cis woman, 31, British). This mistrust may have to do with the fact that there is no common physical space between managers/owners and workers at an agency, which means that managers attempt to control their workers in different ways.

A small number of premise workers mention how managers aim to keep more distance between colleagues than the workers themselves would want: “Colleagues were good to have because it was people to chat to and share tips with and laugh about clients, though the bosses didn’t really like us doing that” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant). One participant hypothesises that this may be to prevent workers from organising together, which will be further discussed in Chapter 7 Section 4.2.

#### *6.1.2.6 Abusive behaviour*

A sizable minority of participants discussed their experiences with managers who used abusive behaviour as a form of control. Most of these experiences occurred in premises and agencies where mainly managers behaved in abusive ways, but some participants had encountered abusive third parties in their independent work, mainly friends or partners. One worker states: “A brothel owner literally forced me to continue shift and sex acts when I wanted to stop” (cis woman, 29, British). One participant worked at premises that specialise in BDSM services as well as full-service work, and which

is known amongst workers to have abusive management which allows dangerous practices and clients to continue to see workers: “I have developed complex PTSD from the clients being allowed in as well as the verbal abuse from the owner” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant). Another participant writes about her experiences with emotionally abusive management at a premise, who used this behaviour to pressure workers to provide more services:

*“The manager played workers off against each other, often critiquing the other workers and also myself, and encouraging fear of repercussions for having boundaries and saying no to clients, and planting seeds of jealousy generally (in order to get me to work longer/harder). I dreaded going to work when she was there” (cis woman, 39, British)*

Another participant has similar experiences with the partner of the owner of a premise they worked in:

*“The owner's boyfriend was an absolute prick - he acted as if he owned the place. Shifts would often start with him shouting at us all about the shortcomings of workers the previous day, or in general of things that other workers had done wrong, while we all stared into the middle distance. Nasty guy and obviously this affected my wellbeing negatively” (trans non-binary, 32, British)*

Two participants mention managers (one at a club and one in premises) who pressure workers to have sex with them, either in exchange for preferential treatment or simply as an abuse of power: “I worked at [X] gentleman’s club for two months. It was fun from the beginning but disappointing when I realised that some girls have sex with the owner to get more clients” (cis woman, 36, EU migrant). One participant describes her experiences with both emotional and sexual abuse at the premises she worked at:

*“I found that they were useful at the start, but felt exploitative or tried to rule by divide and conquer/fear. One female manager would weigh the women, tell us we were too fat (at size 8!), should get breast implants etc. Another male manager would hit on us all until someone relented and had sex with him. I started to dread work and feel depressed about it because of all this.” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Another form of emotional control used by some managers is body-shaming and the effect this has on workers’ mental health. This is mentioned by a few participants who had worked in premises: “One manager was extremely negative about my body, which has had a lasting effect” (cis woman, 30,



British). One worker was “often told to lose weight, which was detrimental to my mental health” (cis woman, 25, non-EU migrant). Another participant discussed the rare times she encountered the managers of the agency she worked at:

*“When you do see them, they like to make comments about your appearance (you’re their product!) what number out of ten you are, whether you are fresh faced enough etc” (cis woman, 32, British).*

Finally, several participants mention ways in which managers in premises abuse the lack of access to employment rights in criminalised workplaces in order to control workers. One participant mentions: “having no breaks” (cis woman, 40, British), while another states: “Sauna manager did not allow us to leave premises during shift” (non-binary questioning, 33, British). Another worker describes that in one of the premises she worked at:

*“The manager makes our schedules, messages us daily and decides where we are able to work (which branch). He also controls our movement by not letting us leave early when it was quiet or leave for food during the day when they were under police surveillance” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant)*

Discrimination, in ways that would be illegal in other workplaces under the Equality Act (2010), is also mentioned by participants:

*“Because I’m trans, the manager would only let me work with one who had experience working with trans women. My colleagues were all cool, but only one of them was alright with doing a double with me” (trans woman, 22, British)*

One participant describes a range of ways in which worker rights were inaccessible to her while working in premises:

*“Managers in the past at brothels have fired me on the spot and have refused to give me a reason for doing so. I have also received racial abuse and homophobia (...) They also don’t care about working conditions, I have worked in multiple premises with rats, mice and cockroaches where the management has refused to pay to treat it, yet they still charge us extortionate rent. They also make the working girls buy the furniture for the brothel, as they refuse to replace it when it breaks, no matter how dangerous it is.” (cis woman, 21, British)*

#### 6.1.2.7 Partners as abusive managers

In addition to premise, agency and club managers, a small minority of independent workers has had experiences with romantic partners or close friends who took managerial control of their work and income in a way that is often presented as the norm in mainstream depictions of sex work. Although the data are clear that this experience is relatively rare and that the majority of participants are able to leave this situation, it clearly does happen and is very damaging to workers. One participant, the only one to refer to a romantic partner as a pimp, states: “With the pimp person, everything was divided in a half and the money only arrived with me once I had paid whatever debt I may have had with them first” (questioning woman, 34, British). Another worker states: “she was my girlfriend at the time but she exploited me for her own sake. I had no say in the arrangements” (cis woman, no age, British). One participant states that her abusive partner was also a colleague:

*“Ex-partner was a colleague, they ended up taking an unreasonable amount of control over my work and it was extremely abusive (...) Positive was having someone to talk about my work with and being "involved" with someone else professionally, as it is otherwise a lonely and isolating job. However they became very demanding and emotionally abusive, destroyed my self confidence and sense of self, controlled me and monitored me nearly 24/7” (questioning woman, 34, British)*

Finally, one participant describes the abusive relationship with a friend who controlled her work. At the time of the survey, she had not been able to leave this abusive situation yet:

*“We performed on cam previously and they were a friend (although also an intimate partner both sexually and with BDSM), they suggested helping me get into escorting. They set up my online profile, started out managing my messages and bookings but eventually passed that onto me due to stresses in their personal life, however they still respond to messages when I am either seeing clients or sleeping and will advise on approaches to particular clients or who to avoid. They set a minimum "requirement" of £1000 per week” (cis woman, 26, British)*

In these cases, the partner or friend not only takes on a managerial role, but they use the personal relationship between themselves and the worker to exert high levels of control over the worker and their business decisions.

Disadvantages of working with third parties in a managerial role, as described by participants, are: management taking a cut that is considered too high, the presence of fines or wage theft,

management practices that cause financial or physical risk for workers, pressure for constant availability and to skip breaks, insufficient or non-existent safety practices, high levels of control, deception and sabotage of worker organising or independent work, and abusive behaviour including verbal and sexual harassment of workers. Additionally, a small number of participants has experienced a partner or close friend taking on a managerial role in an abusive or controlling way.

## 6.2 Working with wider work relations

The majority of participants who work with – or have worked with – wider work relations, mentions the effect of those wider work relations on their sense of safety at work. Secondly, an important reason sex workers decide to engage third parties is the fact that they offer services that help increase sex workers' income or potential to income: marketing, administrative services, access to clients, or access to a workspace. Additionally, they can free up time and energy for seeing clients, and provide companionship and understanding in a society that stigmatises and isolates sex workers. Participants' negative experiences with wider work relations focus on the cases in which they make workers feel unsafe, in which they (try to) exert control and pressure over a worker and take on a more managerial role, and cases where wider work relations are explicitly hired to act on behalf of management when managers are not present. Clearly, the line between third parties in a managerial position and wider work relations can be blurred, and participants generally dislike when wider work relations act as an extension of managerial power.

### 6.2.1 Advantages of working with wider work relations

Wider work relations can take on a range of roles, but nearly all third parties that are physically present (and some that are not) have a safety function. There are two types of third party roles that are directly related to the security of independent sex workers. The first is referred to as a safety call or 'the buddy system': a person that is aware of when/where the worker is seeing a client, and who is responsible for agreed upon safety procedures, but who is not physically present at the work location. The second type is more standard security, where the security is done by a person being present on/near the work premises. Although these third parties are also often fellow workers, friends or partners, this is also done by third parties who are compensated for their time (not surprising since it requires being present at a specific time and place). One BDSM worker states she

has “someone who is on-site at the dungeon premises at all times” (cis woman, 29, British). Independent workers tend to speak positively about wider work relations’ effect on their safety, or will make clear that they ended the work relationship if it did not increase their safety. Safety buddies/calls are considered essential wider work relation by some workers:

*“I wouldn't risk doing an independent booking if I didn't have someone I trusted to buddy me. I need to feel safe in order to relax and do my job well. Therefore I cannot do my job if I don't have a safety network in place” (cis woman, 34, British)*

However, they are seen as more optional to other participants: “I only use the buddy system when I have a bad feeling about a client, but it's good to know people are there” (cis woman, 42, British). Most often, safety calls are informally exchanged with colleagues, but they can also be non-sex working friends or partners who perform this task without any compensation: “It's peace of mind to know my partner knows where I am” (cis woman, 34, British). Some participants are aware that safety buddies are technically criminalised:

*“I wouldn't take the risk of no-one knowing where I was or how long I was supposed to be or someone else who had some details of the guy. These are basic safety procedures that we are prevented from doing legally which is so wrong.” (cis woman, 28, British)*

Often, these safety buddies are sourced from local and national networks of sex workers on Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp and other social media, which are used for socialising, mutual advice, and the sharing of resources. These networks, besides connecting workers with potential safety buddies, also help combat the loneliness many independently working participants mention experiencing.

Not only security staff and safety buddies affect sex workers’ sense of, and actual, safety, but so does the presence of any other wider work relations present in person: colleagues, receptionists/maids, cleaners, duo partners, and friends or partners who are nearby during work. Although many wider work relations are mentioned by participants as making sex workers feel safer, the vast majority of the comments about safety are related to colleagues: co-workers, duo partners, safety buddies, and the wider sex worker community. This is in part likely because of the high percentage of participants who have experience in independent work, but also because participants’ experiences with colleagues are more universally positive with regards to safety. Safety is very commonly mentioned by participants as a positive effect of working with a duo partner. Both in general terms (“I feel safe when I’m working with her” (cis woman, 25, British)) and in reference to specific risks that are diminished

when working with a colleague as opposed to working solo. As discussed in Section 5.3, colleagues can take on a security role, including giving advice on safer sexual health practices and preventing 'stealthings' during duo bookings.

Participants doing street-based work rarely mention engaging wider work relations, but one participant mentioned that colleagues help keep her safe: "Other sex workers gave me information on dangerous clients so I could avoid them" (cis woman, 20, British). One worker discussed her safety procedures with clients, making it clear that her friends would keep her safe:

*"I kept safe doing car meets [by] telling the client that I would send their plate number to a friend, if they refused to have their plate number sent, I wouldn't get on the car. Nothing bad ever happened and I did that for 2 years" (questioning woman, 28, EU migrant)*

Another street-based worker mentioned that the person they paid for security: "Made me feel safer (...) They are super important and make me feel a bit more confident and better" (trans non-binary, 22, British).

Several participants working in premises feel especially safe if there is a receptionist or maid present: "The maid made a massive difference to how safe I felt, I wouldn't have worked if she wasn't there" (cis woman, 28, British). Having a receptionist or maid who understands sex work through their own experiences is mentioned by several workers as increasing their sense of safety as well: "I've worked in at least five different places. In all, the receptionist was an ex worker. So generally they had quite a good grasp of the job and were careful about our safety" (cis woman, 51, British). Another participant states that the receptionist's attitude helped with conflict prevention as well as conflict resolution:

*"The receptionist was really helpful because she dealt with the clients really well and gave a no nonsense vibe which discouraged them from acting up or thinking it would be okay to be aggressive, it kind of set the tone for expected behaviour" (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

Agency workers generally work alone and, for that reason, rarely discuss wider work relations increasing their safety. However, some participants work with drivers and see them as an essential security measure: "Some of the drivers were really helpful for my wellbeing, I really enjoyed having someone there for safety and to get into the car after a booking" (cis woman, 30, British). One respondent did not have a driver arranged by the agency, and she hired her own driver for security: "I employed my own driver and it saved me many a time" (cis woman, 51, British).

When participants discuss working at sex parties or clubs, the majority of positive experiences with colleagues are related to collegiality and safety. Since many party workers also work independently, it makes sense that they emphasise the effect of colleagues at parties in opposition to their solo work. One respondent discusses both safety and collegiality when they state:

*“I feel safe and relaxed having colleagues there when I work. We work as a team, so we make sure we help each other with difficult and annoying clients, and we can share looks of understanding throughout, but also support each other if a client is being disrespectful in some way (...) it's nice to bond over annoying clients and talk about makeup and pets in the break. (...) most of our time together is spent working, and I enjoy working with them” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

Several participants mention that the presence of fellow workers makes them feel safer at parties. One participant states her colleagues “Made the work more fun, and made me feel more safe” (questioning woman, 34, British). Although many participants who work at parties or clubs mention their sense of safety or unsafety (“It's mostly a very nice environment and is generally very safe” (cis woman, 23, British)), few specifically mention security staff<sup>30</sup>. For one worker, security staff was essential for her sense of safety:

*“Security - checking entry, keeping an eye on clients and providing safety should there be any issues. Some also helped set up and clear up (...) [I] would have been too scared to work without security” (cis woman, 30, British)*

Wider work relations, including colleagues, can also fill the gaps in safety that are the result of insufficient screening or precautions by management. One participant states that his colleagues “made me feel safer” (cis man, 34, British) due to the fact that colleagues provide mutual security, while security staff and management did not. In general, participants in all areas of sex work feel that having colleagues around makes them safer than working alone: “It’s so much better to work with someone else, it makes work so much easier and safer and less stressful or scary” (questioning woman, 31, non-EU migrant). This can mean working independently with colleagues – both indoor and outdoor – or working in premises, at parties, and even occasionally in agency work. Colleagues are mentioned by nearly all participants as having a positive effect on their sense of safety while working, but also on their mental health and enjoyment of their work:

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<sup>30</sup> Only 7 participants (15.2%) state they worked at a party of club with security or cleaning staff present.

*“Having a working friend in the same space has always had a positive effect on my wellbeing as they understand my work and we help to keep each other safe and have a laugh in between bookings” (cis woman, 31, British)*

In addition to increasing sex workers’ safety, wider work relations can provide a range of services and support for workers, such as this independent worker who describes the work her personal assistant does:

*“Their work is essential to the success of my job, because I couldn't spend so much time doing menial tasks on my computer, and also I would probably forget or not have time to put myself available etc every single day. When I first came to London I was unsuccessful because I didn't know all the finer details of using Adult Work. I have a fantastic relationship with them and I really appreciate the work they do for me, delegating this tasks leaves me the time to concentrate on clients, on getting better selfies, on updating my website and social media, write blog posts etc.” (questioning woman, 28, EU migrant)*

Other independent workers echo the amount of work required to keep on top of advertising on the main advertising platform in England. One participant has:

*“A secretary who refreshes my ad and the duo ad I have with my friend to always have the ad in the first positions on Adult Work. On Adult Work if the ad is updated, it goes on top of the list and it's very time consuming to keep it fresh. Also, I give them cash money to pay the credits required to pay for the ad, as you have to pay to be available, to show your number, to be available in area searches every day for the following day, which is also very time consuming. Occasionally, I will send them new pics to be uploaded to my profile. Adult Work is also very demanding when it comes to creating a new profile and solving bureaucratic issues, there is a whole thread on SAAFE<sup>31</sup> and the secretary has been an intermediary numerous times. When my profile was new they wrote some fake reviews as nobody books a girl without reviews, which makes starting out very difficult. They also accept bookings on AW after they have sent me the screenshots, and answer to clients who write messages to my profile. I tell them what to say, and they answer.” (questioning woman, 28, EU migrant)*

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<sup>31</sup> Online forum where independent sex workers can exchange advice and share experiences.

Wider work relations in brothels, such as receptionists, cleaners and maids, provide a range of services that allow the workers to focus their energy on seeing clients:

*“Having a maid/cleaner was helpful cos it’s hard to keep track of all the towels and sheets and if you’re doing back to back bookings you can’t take care of everything between clients and so by the end of the day you have a big pile of towels and a trash bag full of condoms and tissues and a bed to clean and you’re tired, so it’s helpful having someone to take care of that and make sure the rooms are set up before you come in” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

In addition to those practical services, they also provide emotional support:

*“The maids allowed us to just focus on the work in the room because they dealt with the admin, washing etc. They also provided emotional support and improved moral when you were having an off-day or it was quiet. I miss working with a maid, as now I work independently on my own” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Agency workers also describe receptionists as providing practical and emotional support:

*“They were there to talk to when I needed someone to talk to about issues in this business. They were an established agency so most of their clients were known and made it very comfortable to work with” (cis woman, 26, British)*

As discussed in Chapter 5, colleagues in independent work can take on many roles and provide each other with a range of support and company: sex workers are co-working, are co-entrepreneurs, provide social relationships, reduce isolation, help with client management, provide information and education, skill improvement, and share workplaces. Many participants who do independent work emphasise the isolation they experience and how important fellow sex workers are to them. This is the case both for participants who work with others, and for those who live with other sex workers. For some workers, contact with other sex workers is essential to their wellbeing:

*“I wouldn’t be doing it without her. Having someone to tell all my stories to and who relates to me has been amazing. There’s no way I could be in this line of work and have to keep everything secret. It would be so lonely” (cis woman, 20, British)*

In conclusion, participants discuss wider work relations who increase their safety as having the following skills: understanding of the work, taking concerns seriously, having processes for screening and how to deal with bad clients, and being either physically present or reliable when off-site.



Additionally, wider work relations are seen as useful when they provide services that help sex workers focus their energy on clients themselves, or if they simply mean sex workers do not have to do the repetitive labour of cleaning or staying on top of online marketing. Additionally, both colleagues and other third parties are appreciated if they can provide emotional support in an environment that is non-judgemental of sex workers.

### 6.2.2 Disadvantages of working with wider work relations

Several participants discuss experiences of wider work relations making them feel less safe, or having insufficient consideration for their safety. Participants with experience of working in premises regularly mention that, although they feel safer due to the other people present on the premises, wider working relations themselves can affect their safety negatively. Although few participants mention security staff as separate from either maids/receptionists or owner/managers, some state security staff was not increasing their safety: “The security being useless put me in a lot of bad situations” (cis woman, 23, British). One participant states:

*“Security staff told us they were there to look after the money (not us) and refused to allow us to get taxis close to the brothel, so we had to walk through the streets at night to get taxis elsewhere - I didn't feel protected by them” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Few participants specifically mention security staff<sup>32</sup> at parties or in clubs. One worker states that wider work relations at parties attempted to steal directly from workers.

Just over a third of respondents with agency experience have worked with a driver, a role that has a strong security component, and their experiences are mixed: “[my] experience with drivers varied from helpful and making me feel safe to intrusive and rude” (cis woman, 30, British). A few workers have been sexually harassed by the drivers provided by the agency: “the drivers are sometimes ok but often they try it on with you in the car and try and stir shit between you and other girls” (cis woman, 32, British).

Of all work areas, participants are least likely to mention wider worker relations making their work less safe in independent work. In part, this is likely because many third party roles in independent work are performed through informal relationships with friends, partners and colleagues. Another reason is that work relations that increase unsafety can usually unilaterally be ended by the

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<sup>32</sup> Only 7 of party/club working participants (15.2%) state they worked at a party of club with security or cleaning staff present.

independent worker. However, this is not universally the case. One independently working participant mentioned a negative experience sharing a work venue with a colleague who had a different approach to security and made her feel unsafe in their workspace:

*“We shared mainly to split cost of central London rent and security but also to offer duos together. Felt safer at first sharing, but she often took dodgy/party clients” (cis woman, 34, British)*

These workers’ different approaches to safety made the participant feel less safe, which caused her to decide to work alone instead. In this case, in contrast with the many participants who feel less safe working alone, the decision to work alone was taken as a way to increase safety.

Although, according to participants, pressure to work comes mainly from third parties in a managerial role, a small number of participants discusses pressure to work from work relations in a non-managerial role, especially when the wider work relation’s income is tied to the number of clients sex workers see. One participant states how, in a premise she worked at, it was the workers’ responsibility to pay receptionists, rather than the responsibility of the premise owner/managers. This created a higher pressure to work: “maids are reliant on you as you pay their wage. This led to a little pressure on having bookings” (cis woman, 40, British). Another premise worker had the opposite experience, but with the same effect. The receptionists in the premises she worked at behaved like managers, and pressured the workers in that way:

*“It was a relationship between boss and worker, even with the receptionist. So I was always wary, they were normal bosses, trying to get me to work more at their convenience, but generally fair about their cut” (cis woman, 51, British)*

The line between manager and wider work relation, then, can be a porous one in some contexts. One participant stated that the receptionists at an agency “made me feel guilty whenever I took a day off by saying that that day everyone was busy and making money” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant), which also made them feel pressured into working more.

Unsurprisingly, very few independent workers mention pressure to work from wider work relations, since they rarely engage third parties in a managerial role. However, one participant mentions “I did have a driver, but he hassled me to work” (trans woman, 43, British), implying that this pressure from a work relation was enough for the worker to decide to end the work relationship. Additionally, two participants discuss abusive behaviours from third parties they hired in their independent indoor work. One worker fired their driver after abusive behaviour, and another worker stopped working with her security person for the same reason: “He also used to like me a lot and would make jealous

comments about my lingerie, rates etc in a spiteful way. That's also why I decided to stop having him around" (cis woman, 23, British).

Several workers in premises discuss the ways that the presence of wider work relations can be used as an extension of managerial power and surveillance:

*"We have many receptionists who also do basic cleaning and other work like that. Some of them are very nice and more like friends, but a few are not nice. They are all very strict on enforcing the rules of the manager so you can never fully relax around them"* (trans non-binary, 20, British)

Another participant discusses how wider work relations can create an unpleasant and discriminatory environment:

*"The maids were mostly easy going and kind, but a few tended to encourage gossip or ill manners amongst colleagues. I often heard anti-Eastern European xenophobia from them"* (cis woman, 23, non-EU migrant)

Wider work relations can be people who workers spend a lot of time with, especially in premises, and so they can affect sex workers' working lives and wellbeing in significant ways. For some, if a worker does not get along with colleagues or other work relations, maintaining positive relationships with them can be hard work:

*"It feels safer to have [colleagues] around, but it also felt like very hard work to manage relationships with not only clients, but also colleagues and security staff (...), so it made work pretty difficult."* (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)

In summary, many participants describe that they are in search of a workplace that makes them feel safe by screening clients, believing workers when they have bad experiences, barring bad clients from the workplace, and in which they are not in the workplace alone. However, even in workplaces where managers or wider work relations ostensibly take on these tasks, many participants experience the opposite: absent or insufficient screening, ineffective security, allowing dangerous clients to visit or siding with clients in conflicts. Although these negative experiences are usually ascribed to the actions or inactions of the manager/owner/organiser of the workplace, wider work relations – including fellow sex workers – can also play a role in creating an unsafe or unpleasant environment for sex workers. According to participants, wider work relations can also create pressure to work, a discriminatory work environment, or function as an extension of managerial observation and power. Additionally, negative

interpersonal relationships between workers and wider work relations, including colleagues, can have a significant effect on how participants feel about their work and workplace.

### 6.3 Advantages and disadvantages of working without third parties

While the survey asked about workers' experiences with third parties, a small number of respondents discuss their experiences with, and reasons for, working alone or solo as well. Working without third parties, whether managers or wider work relations, is generally only possible as an independent indoor or street-based worker, since in other areas of sex work managers, colleagues or other third parties come with the workplace. Most participants feel less safe working completely alone, and many express that they feel forced to choose between working alone and feeling unsafe, or working with wider work relations and breaking the law. However, participants also discuss positive reasons for independent work, such as increased income and more control over their work and hours.

#### 6.3.1 Advantages of working without managers and wider work relations

The negative experiences with managers and wider work relations described above lead some participants to decide to work independently instead. That was the case for one worker who had to stand up for herself in order to get paid by an agency at all:

*“[T]he owner wanted to accuse me of wrong doing in the end just to not pay me. Thing that I easily proved myself innocent for and so I got the money. But that event was one of the major ones that pushed me to become an independent” (cis woman, 39, EU migrant)*

Independent indoor working participants discussed their reasons for preferring to work solo, rather than with a colleague or other third party: for reasons of profits, interpersonal conflict, and control of their own work. One clear benefit of working without third parties is that none of the workers' wages go to a third party. In the words of one participant: “I'm not going to go through all that trouble getting money just to give it to another man” (cis woman, 29, British). Another worker discusses how getting a solo incall space meant that she no longer had to schedule bookings around another worker, which led to her being able to raise her prices and have longer bookings, raising her

income. However, she recognises that both considerations of safety and rising housing prices might make that a less viable options for many workers who may consider working solo now:

*“There are lots of armed robbery reports on NUM, I'm not sure I would work alone now, it is not a nice choice for sex workers to have to make” (cis woman, 34, British)*

A small number of participants mention interpersonal conflict with co-workers as reasons for them to prefer working solo. Interpersonal conflict can be especially influential if the home and workspace are the same: “Falling out with one person I shared a home/incall with did send me into a depression, so I ended up moving out” (cis woman, 25, British). Another respondent says that the fact she was able to see more clients than her colleague caused interpersonal conflict with a co-worker: “I felt safe but I felt like I had to refuse work so that she wouldn't hate me” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant). This potential for friction between workers with different levels of success is mentioned a few times by respondents.

Finally, two respondents explicitly mention the complete control they have over their own labour as a reason to prefer working solo. One worker compares solo independent sex work to working for an agency, and is especially happy about a side effect of doing her own administration, which is getting to screen clients herself:

*“Best time ever to not have to answer to anybody! Lots of additional work because I am the only one doing all the admin now, but it's better than agencies. I could never see a guy now unless I talk to him first” (cis woman, 39, EU migrant)*

Another worker finds solo work “the best way to work as you keep the money for yourself, can choose your working hours and clients and you're completely in control” (cis woman, 22, British). Both independent indoor workers and street-based workers are able to work without third parties, and one street-based worker refers to herself as “independent” and “a renegade” (cis woman, 25, non-EU migrant).

In summary, participants feel that the benefits of working without third parties are: no managers or wider work relations taking advantage, being able to keep their full income, complete control over their own work and hours, no interpersonal conflict, and independence.

### 6.3.2 Disadvantages of working without managers and wider work relations

Some participants discuss negative experiences such as loneliness and safety concerns while working without third parties present. Street-based workers are most likely amongst all participants to be working alone and without any third parties present, and they discuss a range of experiences with solo work. One respondent states, emphasising her safety concerns: “There was no one - it was horrible. I felt so vulnerable” (cis woman, 30, British). One participant describes her experience of street-based sex work without third parties as: “[I] only had myself to look out for me. It was terrifying and I was often sick with fear” (cis woman, 51, British). The survey did not ask whether lone workers would have liked to have had the help of a third party, which would have been a useful additional question.

Some participants discuss their experiences with colleagues being jealous of each other for seeing more clients or making more money. In contrast, one worker states about the potential for jealousy:

*“For me, sex work is always better with others around. The only downside I can see is potentially if you compare your earnings to them, but if you have a good friendship then it becomes much more about motivating each other and acting as each other's confidantes, than about comparison” (non-binary questioning, 22, EU migrant)*

Independent indoor workers commonly discuss experiences of loneliness or isolation as a result of doing sex work without third parties present. One respondent writes: “I struggled without having anyone to turn to who wasn't in the same situation” (cis woman, 23, British), and another states: “It's more stressful and lonely working by yourself” (cis woman, 31, British). Many participants explicitly discuss the effect of isolation on their mental health:

*“If I work on my own for like 5 days in a row I start to get a bit weird and when the clients are your only human interaction you start to not be able to judge them as objectively or get too emotionally attached. Having another person around helps avoid those kind of more vulnerable or bad boundary situations that can lead to some really negative feelings around disposability and stuff.” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

Even workers who like working without any third parties express that there are downsides to solo working with regards to safety and isolation: “I prefer to work alone (...) but there are drawbacks (...) mostly safety issues but it can be a bit lonely also” (cis woman, 35, British).

Participants state that the downsides of working without any third parties are mainly the fact that lone work is less safe, and that they experience more isolation and loneliness – resulting in worse mental health.

#### 6.4 Complicating power and resistance in the workplace

Due to the criminalisation of workplaces and employer/employee relations in sex work, sex workers do not have access to labour rights and formalised methods of contesting their employment conditions. However, similar to Whitson's (2007) conceptualisation of power in informal work, sex workers describe ways in which managerial control and worker/wider work relation resistance interact. This section will discuss the ways participants describe themselves, or wider work relations, resisting managerial control. The main forms of resistance discussed by participants are: direct and indirect resistance by workers, wider work relations and sex workers cooperating in resisting managerial power, and the use of mobility power – which Chapter 7 will explore further.

Although there were no survey questions directly asking about resistance to workplace control, participants implicitly discuss ways they resist bad or abusive management. For instance, one worker states about the manager of an agency she worked for: “The girls liked her so they didn't tend to steal clients” (cis woman, 34, British), implying that unhappy workers would ‘steal’ clients from the agency and see them independently without paying the agency their fee. The universal assumption that managers feel that workers should not see clients outside of agency channels, and that to do so would be a form of ‘stealing’, was also found by Bruckert and Law (2013). Another worker implies that she shared ways to resist the power of premise managers with her colleagues:

*“Managers (...) started to resent the fact that I had boundaries. I think they worried the other workers would also develop some boundaries. I think it felt like a challenge to their power” (cis woman, 35, British)*

In one premise, where the owner was known to use friends as clients in order to spy on workers, colleagues would “Give you heads up on customers (...) if they were managers' friends” (cis woman, 34, British). These experiences echo findings by Bruckert and Law (2018) that for sex workers, resistance to third parties in the workplace sometimes means creatively circumventing the rules set

by third parties, and that in the absence of formal labour rights worker solidarity becomes more important.

More direct descriptions of resistance to managerial control come from participants describing how wider work relations affected their work and their wellbeing. Several workers describe how wider work relations, primarily maids and receptionists, cooperate with and look out for workers by going against management rules or bending them. Maids and receptionists are in a unique position in premises, and how this role is implemented depends on the specific premise, the work relationships in play, how the premise is run, and the exact way the pay structures work. In some premises the maids are paid by the owner, and are required to enforce the rules as part of their job. In other premises the maids' fees are paid by the worker, which may change the power structures towards either more or less pressure to work from maids towards workers. And in other premises again, regardless of payment structure, maids and workers see one another as colleagues, and they organise together to bend the rules set by owners or managers. For instance, workers mention how maids hide workers to give them a break, and help them bend rules in other ways:

*“She knew I was new, so she let me take breaks and hide out in the back sometimes from customers<sup>33</sup>. Also she would knock on the door to say the time was up after 20 minutes instead of 30. (...) Receptionist would let you sit out back when a customer came in if you were tired or wanted to eat something (this was against the rules all girls were meant to come out every time to greet them)” (cis woman, 34, British)*

This more cooperative relationship between workers and maids, within a workplace with complex power relations, can turn out to be one of the most important work relationships workers in premises have:

*“The maids and colleagues were my lifeline - they were almost like experiences of family when I didn't really have one for myself. I love the honesty of sitting in a brothel in your dressing gowns and cups of tea and just talking - no need for bullshit. I really looked forward to seeing them - they were the highlight of my work” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Bruckert and Law (2018) similarly noticed that sex workers and third parties such as maids or receptionists at times build alliances against or in order to undermine managerial power. Some

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<sup>33</sup> It is implied that this 'hiding' is in order to skip a line-up/greeting of clients, and to have time for a break between clients.



participants in the survey describe that managers are more likely to listen to and believe maids or receptionists, rather than workers, particularly with regards to clients who cross boundaries. This means that maids and receptionists are in a unique position to make the workplace safer for workers, especially when managers are not around:

*“One time someone got rough with a girl and she kicked him out and he made a fuss and the bosses weren’t really on her side enough with it and told her she needed to deal with it differently in future, but when they weren’t there and the receptionist was running the show that kind of stuff was a lot easier and the receptionist would get rid of the guys and tell the bosses that like it needed to happen and then they would be okay with it” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

Since, generally, methods of official worker representation are not available in criminalised and informal workplaces, one of the only ways participants have to affect their work circumstances and use their agency, is to leave their current workplace and move to another workplace or move to another area of sex work altogether. This use of labour mobility power will be further discussed in Chapter 7.

It is also important to consider that, although many participants have had managers in the past, only 6.5% of participants reports having a manager or someone who controls their work or hours at the time of the survey. This means that participants commonly leave third parties and workplaces that are unsatisfactory in favour of better paying, safer and more pleasant workplaces. Several workers describe how they decided to move from an unfair workplace to independent work:

*“The agencies owners really required you to be available all day and evening virtually every day of the week, so I found that too overwhelming. They were very friendly and had also done full service sex work before, but I think my independent streak is too strong and I left rather than endure long hours.” (cis woman, 35, British)*

In conclusion, sex workers participating in this research have a mix of positive, negative and neutral experiences with third parties, which in turn affect their decisions to work or not work with third parties. This mix of experiences disproves the assumption, inherent in the criminalisation of third parties, that all third parties have negative effects on sex workers or are controlling or abusive.

However, high levels of control, or at times outright abuse, do take place and come mainly from third parties in a managerial position. In contrast, participants are more likely to have positive experiences with wider work relations, and speak particularly positively on their experiences with colleagues. Safety is an especially strong concern for participants, and third parties – especially those in a managerial position – can have both a positive and negative effect on worker safety. Managerial power is resisted by cooperation between colleagues, and between sex workers and wider work relations, but managerial power can also be enforced by wider work relations. This shows that sex workers experience democratic deficits and dependence (Davidov, 2004) in relation to managers and some wider work relations, but also that workers have access to a continuum of agency (Marcus et al., 2014) and resistance. Additionally, although some workers in this research report positive experiences with working completely without third parties, participants find that lone working increases their sense of isolation, as well as increasing unsafety and risk. There are also workers who feel that workplace criminalisation and the criminalisation of co-working has pushed them into ‘forced self-employment’ and professional isolation. Participants express that, either in the past or in their current work environment, they have put up with bad and abusive management practices in return for the safety their workspace allows them. However, one of the ways sex workers resist managerial control and use their agency, is to leave one workspace and move to another, or even to another area of full-service sex work. The next chapter will discuss the ways sex workers use their agency and labour mobility in order to improve their working lives.

## 7 Sex workers' use of labour mobility power as a form of worker agency and resisting control.

Workers in the full-service sex industry can be considered to have multidimensional insecurities or hyper-precarity (Lewis et al., 2015; Zou, 2015), a term used to describe the intersecting precarities of migrant workers with regards to both labour and migration status. Not only is sex work precarious due to the lack of employment rights and financial and legal risk transfers (Sanders and Hardy, 2013), but there is an additional dimension of precarity due to the criminalisation of workplaces and third parties in sex work. This means that on top of a lack of stable employment, minimum hours or guaranteed income, workers have the additional insecurity of the fear of police intervention such as raids on workplaces. This hyper-precarity reduces workers' ability to resist and protest work circumstances in traditional ways, such as through strikes and unions<sup>34</sup>. However, sex workers participating in this research do have access to labour mobility power (Smith, C., 2006; Alberti, 2014) as one of their expressions of agency in the workplace, and they use this to leave unsatisfactory working environments or to move towards better workplaces and higher earnings (Ham and Gerard, 2014). It is common for sex worker participants to move to different workplaces for a variety of reasons: lack of other options for organising or accessing labour rights (Bruckert and Law, 2018), if third party services become less reliable or of lower quality (Bruckert, 2018b), shifting personal and professional needs (Burnes et al., 2018), and in order to stay invisible to authorities (Ham and Gerard, 2014). These reasons show that labour mobility can be ambivalent, being both constrained by circumstances as well as an expression of worker agency. However, sex workers are rarely explicitly discussed as actively exercising labour mobility power as a form of agency.

This chapter will discuss the finding that participants use labour mobility to move between areas of sex work in high numbers, and that this use of labour mobility is more common amongst workers who have experience with third parties in a managerial position. In other words, the use of labour mobility power amongst participants is universally high in all work areas, but is used least amongst sex workers in independent work. It will argue that the very high level of labour mobility power *use* is one of ways sex workers use their agency in relation to third parties, especially third parties in a managerial

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<sup>34</sup> There is a yearly sex worker strike in the UK which is used as a tool for political protest, and limited unionisation of sex workers has been a reoccurring theme in sex worker organising over the last decades. However, due to the lack of legal employer/employee relations between full service sex workers and third parties, these efforts do not have the legal status of a mainstream union, and are generally aimed at changing sex work legislation rather than creating change within full service workplaces.

position. Additionally, it theorises that lower levels of mobility use amongst independent sex workers may reflect their higher levels of agency over their workplace and wider work relations, which means they are able to make changes in their workplace without using mobility power. It also shows that, as a result of finding high levels of labour mobility, sex workers in any one area of sex work should not be considered a discreet group separate from those in other areas, emphasising the value of exploring temporal and spatial aspects of sex workers' experiences. This chapter will first discuss the quantitative findings on the use of labour mobility of sex workers, and will then consider the qualitative experiences participants have of labour mobility in relation to their mixed experiences with third parties in a managerial position and wider work relations. It will go deeper into the exception to the high levels of labour mobility shown by a subgroup of independent indoor workers, and finally will discuss a range of factors, including the influence of third party criminalisation and managerial interventions, which affect the labour mobility of sex workers.

## 7.1 High levels of labour mobility

The quantitative data resulting from the questionnaire show a picture of sex workers as a highly mobile workforce, with high levels of mobility both between different areas of sex work (premise, street-based, agency, independent indoor, club/party, or other types of sex work), and between different workplaces in general. In other words, labour mobility can be used to change the space in which their sex work takes place, or it can change the nature of the way the sex work is organised in relation to third parties, for instance by moving from managed premise work to unmanaged street-based work. This section will discuss the movement of sex workers between different areas of (full-service) sex work, and the way different demographic identities affect sex workers' likelihood of working in certain work areas and using their mobility power.

### 7.1.1 Between different areas of sex work

The survey asked all participants to select in which areas of sex work they had worked. Out of 185 participants, 31.40% had worked in a premise such as a brothel or parlour, 8.6% had done street-based sex work, 31.9% had worked for an agency, 95.7% had worked independently indoors, and 24.9% had worked at sex clubs, sex parties or BDSM events.

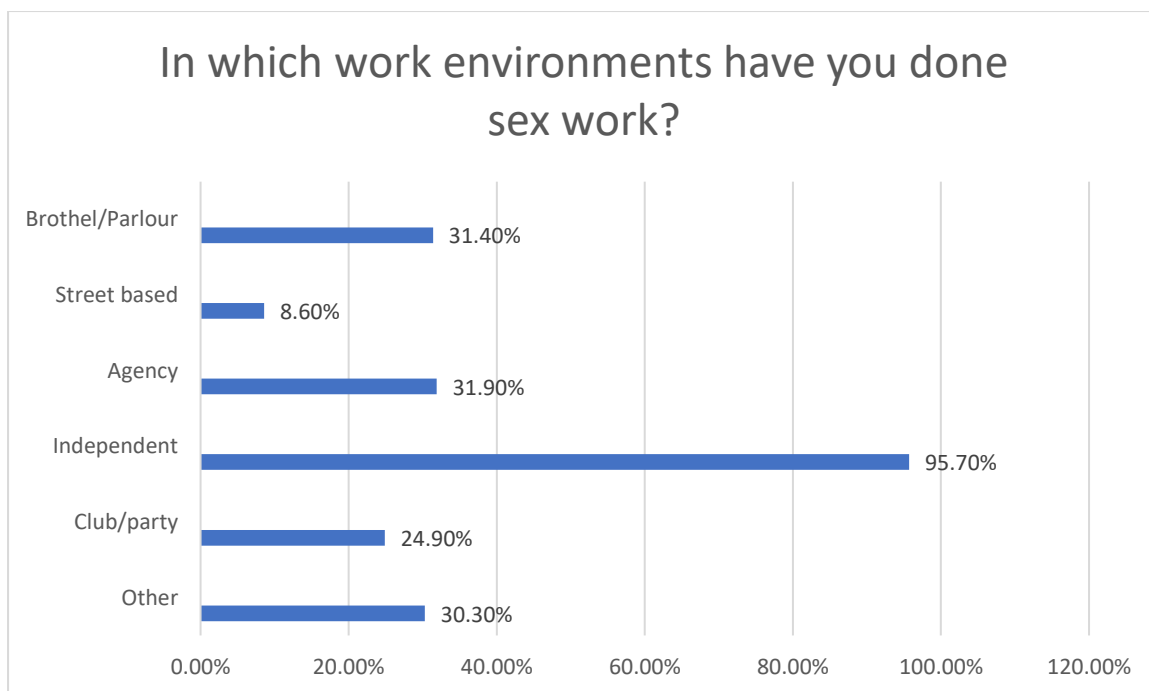


Figure 13: In which environments have you done sex work?

These data clearly show that there are high levels of labour mobility amongst participants. Most workers in this research have worked in more than one area of sex work, and many have worked in several areas either simultaneously or at different times. This shows that sex workers in different work areas - who are usually seen as distinct and therefore findings on workers in one area are seen as non-generalisable to other sex workers – are likely to be the same people who also work in other areas. In other words, sex workers in different areas are not discreet categories, and we cannot speak about ‘brothel workers’ or ‘street-based workers’ or ‘agency workers’ as separate groups. Much research on sex work focuses on the current area of sex work participants are employed in, rather than exploring sex workers’ movements throughout their careers, which clearly misses out important temporal and spatial aspects to their work and assumes discreet qualities between workers in different work areas. This high level of mobility amongst participants also means that sex workers’ experiences at work are more likely linked to their specific workplace than to ‘who they are’ (their specific occupation within sex work). Workers may move from agency to agency until they find one that treats them well, move from premises to independent work and back as suits their life situation, or move to independent work as they grow their experience and network within sex work. This hints at the power inherent in labour mobility being very important in sex work, as it is one of the main expressions of worker agency accessible to workers in informalised and criminalised workplaces. Additionally, it shows that an overwhelming majority of participants is located on an area of the continuum of unfreedom

(Skrivankova, 2010) where they are able to leave one workplace for an entirely different area of sex work.

Additionally, 30.3% of participants had done other types of sex work besides the areas mentioned. Workers mention a variety of different types of non-full service sex work they were involved in, such as pornography, camming, selling pictures and videos, selling items, phone sex, stripping, non-full service BDSM work, modelling, financial domination, and selling content via Snapchat/Skype or other direct or app mediated media. This shows that the mobility between types of sex work for participants also includes mobility between full-service and non-full service sex work, which is echoed in findings by Sanders et al. (2018b) that 50% of webcam providers in their research also do full-service sex work. Additionally, different types of sex work often enhance one another, with porn or content sales helping workers to reach new potential full-service clients.

Among those who mention full-service work outside of the 5 areas of sex work the survey asked about, several participants state they do *sugaring* (from the phrase 'sugar daddy') to reflect a type of dating in exchange for money or gifts. Payment for sugaring can be a regular allowance, payments per date, or a variety of other arrangements. Others mention *freestyling*: going to venues and trying to pick up potential clients there. They mainly go to hotel bars or other bars known for this type of meets. One participant mentions full-service car meets, although this work took place before they moved to the UK. Another mentions street-based work in this section of the questionnaire rather than before, because she was unsure if more incidental sex work counted in that section:

*"I don't know if this counts, as it's not really a sex work 'profession', but I've done survival sex work (i.e. people would approach me when I was begging and I'd go for it, or I'd be crashing at someone's place and they'd want it as my 'rent'.)"*  
(trans woman, 22, British)

Finally, one participant's answer to the question 'Have you done any other types of sex work not mentioned yet?' is "I was married....." (cis woman, 44, British), implying that transactional sex can also take place within relationships.

Figure 14 on the next page will summarise the mobility of sex workers between work area.

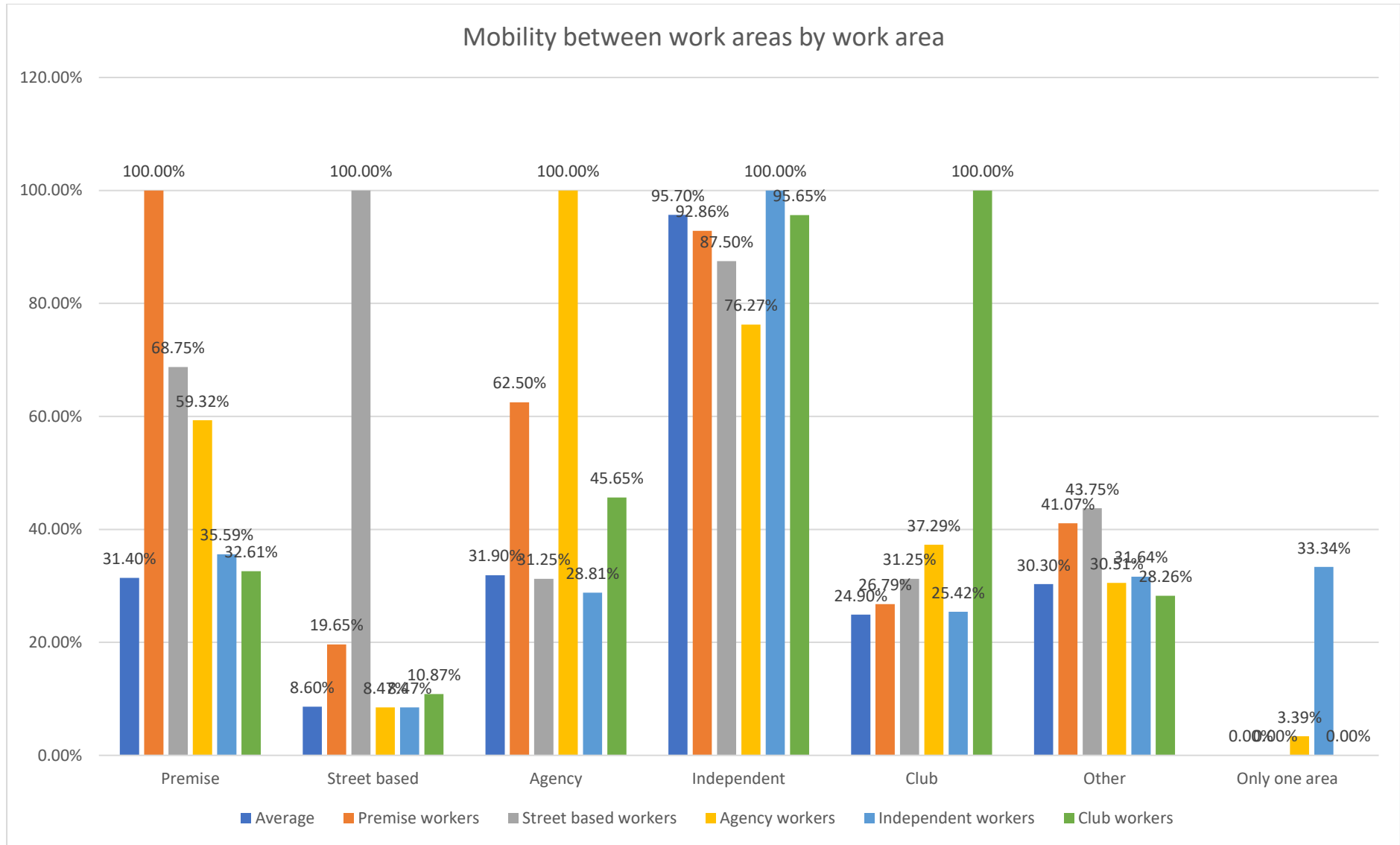


Figure 14: Mobility between work areas by work area

Of the 31.4% of participants with experience in work in premises, 19.65% has experience in street-based work, 62.5% has worked for an agency, 92.86% has worked independently, 26.79% in a club or party, and 41.07% has done other forms of sex work. Compared to the average (see Figure 14 on the last page) this means that participants in premises are more likely to have worked in street-based, agency, club and other sex work areas, so it seems that their labour mobility between work areas is higher than average. While it is assumed that a worker who moved work areas also has moved to a different workplace with different third parties, this is not always the case. One participant mentions about her agency work; “This was the same owner as the brothel, but I also did outcalls through them” (cis woman, 39, British). However, this arrangement seems to be an exception rather than the rule, and in most cases a change of work area involves a change of workplace and third parties.

Of the 8.6% of participants with experience in street-based work, 68.75% has experience in premises, 31.2% has worked for an agency, 87.5% has worked independently, 31.25% in a club or party, and 43.7% has done other forms of sex work. Compared to the average (see Figure 14) this shows a large overlap between street-based and premise workers, so it seems labour mobility between those two work areas is high.

Of the 31.9% of participants with experience in work with agencies, 59.32% has experience in premises, 8.47% has experience in street-based work, 76.27% has worked independently, 37.29% in a club or party, and 30.51% has done other forms of sex work. Compared to the average (see Figure 14) this shows that nearly twice as many participants who have worked through an agency, have also worked in premises than the average participant. Additionally, participants with agency experience are nearly 20% less likely to have worked independently. Possible causes for this will be discussed in Section 7.1.4 of this chapter. Two participants (3.39% of agency worker participants) have worked in no other work area besides agencies.

Of the 95.7% of participants with experience in independent work, 35.59% has worked in premises, 8.47% has experience in street-based work, 28.81% has worked for an agency, 25.42% in a club or party, and 31.64% has done other forms of sex work. These numbers are not very different from the average, but since workers with independent work experience are 95.7% of participants, this is no surprise. However, 33.34% of independently working participants have no experience in any other area or type of sex work. Possible reasons why independent workers in this research are less likely to move to other areas of sex work, including a higher level of autonomy and a higher take-home percentage of income, will be further discussed in Section 7.3 of this chapter.

Of the 24.9% of participants who have worked at parties or clubs, 32.61% have worked in premises, 10.87% has experience in street-based work, 45.65% has worked for an agency, 95.65% has worked



independently, and 28.26% has done other forms of sex work. Compared to the average (see Figure 14 on page 191) this means that participants with experience in clubs or parties are slightly more likely to have worked in other work areas, but this is a small difference that can likely be explained by the fact that none of them have only worked in clubs or parties and no other work areas.

For the vast majority of sex workers in this research, labour mobility between work areas is high and workers are likely to have worked in at least two, but often more, work environments or types of sex work. It is clear that sex workers in different areas are therefore not discreet groups and cannot be analysed as such. This is in stark contrast with the way sex workers are regularly researched: with large emphasis on the type of sex work they do and with the assumption that data about workers in one area of sex work cannot be extrapolated to workers in other areas. This finding suggests two important factors for future research into sex work. Firstly, workers in different areas of sex work should be assumed to overlap and should not be considered as discrete categories – echoing similar findings amongst female sex workers in China (Yu et al., 2018) that workers often engage in multiple modes of sex work simultaneously. Secondly, considering sex workers' past work experience opens up a strong avenue of inquiry into the different areas of sex work participants have worked in, allowing for comparison between work areas and investigation of the ways sex workers have used agency and mobility power.

### 7.1.2 Labour mobility and demographic differences

In addition to differences in the use of labour mobility power between areas of sex work, there are demographic factors that affect labour mobility amongst sex workers. The demographic factors included in the survey data consist of gender, trans status, migration status, parenthood, ethnicity, sexual identity, and disability. Although the data collected cannot infer causation, it is likely that some of these correlations show certain groups to be in contexts where they decide using their labour mobility power is their best option, while other groups show a lower level of access to, or use of labour mobility toward, certain sections of the sex work market, possibly due to discrimination. It is clear, then, that labour mobility power can be a form of agency that workers have access to, but can also be a sign of constrained choice if options other than labour mobility are not open to workers. Additionally, labour mobility power involves factors that can both increase and decrease workers' access to it.

### 7.1.2.1 *Gender and labour mobility*

Figure 16 (on page 200) shows the labour mobility of participants by gender, with 150 participants being female, 26 being non-binary, and 9 being male, and shows that male workers participating in this research have lower rates of labour mobility power use than female workers, and that non-binary workers have slightly different areas in which they are most likely to work. However, the survey did not ask which gender participants work as, so it may be possible that they work in a gender different from their gender identity, or even as more than one gender. This means that although we know the gender of participants, this may not exactly map onto the genders they use in their work and therefore they may encounter gendered issues and barriers in their work that do not reflect the gender mentioned in the survey. For instance, many non-binary workers do not present themselves as non-binary to clients but instead work presenting as one of the binary genders.

From the data on the limited number of male workers in this research, male sex workers seem to have fewer options for workplaces in the sex industry. Of the male participants, none had experience working in premises or in street sex work, and they are also less likely to have worked for an agency than female or non-binary workers. This is confirmed by the finding (although, again, based on a limited number of male participants) that male sex workers generally have fewer third parties engaged in their work. However, they were more likely to have worked in clubs or have done other types of sex work, and are more likely to have done independent indoor sex work as their only form of sex work. This reflects the differences in markets for sex working men compared to female sex workers – both the fact that there are fewer heterosexual female clients than heterosexual male ones and the fact that the gay sex market is different from the heterosexual market – but may also reflect fewer options for labour mobility due to a more limited market. Online advertising is generally stratified by gender, resulting in different and separate sex markets for men (Sanders et al., 2018b; Ryan, 2016).

Non-binary sex workers' labour mobility seems comparable to that of female sex workers in this research, but there are some small differences. Non-binary participants are less likely to have worked for agencies and are more likely to have done street-based sex work or worked independently. These differences may reflect the fact that agency managers are known to have strong requirements for specific gendered presentation from workers, whereas the higher levels of control over their own labour that independent outdoor and indoor sex workers have, allow for more niche or diverse presentations from workers.

### *7.1.2.2 Labour mobility and trans status*

Figure 17 (on page 201) shows the labour mobility of participants by trans status, with 143 workers being cisgender, 24 being transgender, and 18 questioning their gender identity at the time of the survey. Nearly 10% of the sample identifying as questioning their gender identity seems high, but makes sense when considering that many workers do sex work in order to be able to afford to transition their gender presentation, yet may not be able to start their transition while they do sex work because it may affect their earning potential. This creates a 'limbo' state with regards to gender identity, in which workers may prefer to identify as questioning rather than cis or trans. Additionally, non-binary workers may not feel comfortable identifying with either cis or trans identities and feel 'questioning' matches them best. LGBT+ participants seem to be overrepresented in this research, which may also play a role in the high percentage of participants questioning their gender identity. Or, of course, it is simply possible that a significant minority of sex workers questions their gender identity.

Cisgender participants are more likely than transgender and questioning workers to have worked in premises, and much more likely than transgender workers to have worked for an agency. This may reflect discrimination within both the sex industry and wider employment, where employment discrimination against trans people is very common (International Labour Organization, 2015). Participants questioning their gender identity are more likely to have worked at clubs or parties, and more likely to have done other forms of sex work. Finally, transgender participants are most likely to only have done independent indoor sex work and not have worked in other areas. This could either mean that other areas of the sex industry are less open to them due to transphobia, limiting their options for labour mobility, or that independent work is more profitable to trans workers, or a combination of both factors. In other words, transgender participants may have less access to mobility power, or they may have less need for mobility use due to the profitability of the independent market.

### *7.1.2.3 Migration and labour mobility*

Figure 18 (on page 202) shows the labour mobility of participants by migration status, with 147 participants being British workers, 28 being EU migrant workers, and 9 being non-EU migrant workers. The differences between British and EU migrant participants are relatively small, with EU migrants being slightly more likely to have done street-based and club or party work, and less likely to have worked for an agency or done other types of sex work. EU migrants in this research are also slightly more likely to have done independent indoor sex work only. It seems that British and EU migrant participants have similar access to labour mobility, although the survey took place before the UK left the EU and it is unclear if this has affected EU migrant workers' labour mobility within the UK sex

industry going forward, since sex work is part of the informal economy and right-to-work checks are generally not used even in workplaces where third parties in a managerial position are present.

Non-EU migrant participants are nearly twice as likely to have worked in premises, and somewhat more likely to have done street-based work. At the same time, they are notably less likely to have worked in clubs/parties or to have done independent indoor work, including independent work as their only type of sex work. It is possible that independent work is less accessible for migrant workers less networked into the EU/UK sex markets<sup>35</sup>, and that premise work provides access for migrant workers to learn about the UK sex market before moving on to other types of sex work. This echoes research on migrant workers' use of employment agencies in mainstream work, which find that migrants rely strongly on mediation to enable them to find work in the UK, even though they do not provide the best employment outcomes or highest wages (Forde et al., 2015). Similarly, while premises do not offer the highest income or most flexibility, they do offer a way into sex work for non-EU migrants who may not be familiar with the local sex markets.

#### *7.1.2.4 Parent status and labour mobility*

Figure 19 (on page 203) shows the labour mobility of participants by parenting status, with 163 participants not being a parent of a child under the age of 18 at the time of the survey, and 22 participants being a parent of a child under the age of 18 at the time of the survey. Participants who are parents of children under the age of 18 are more likely than non-parent participants to have worked in every single work area mentioned in the survey. They are especially more likely to have worked in premises, for an agency, and in a club/party. This may be related to the fact that parents are more likely to be in need of a higher income to provide for their children, causing them to either work in different areas simultaneously or to move between work areas to maximise their income. Additionally, the work areas with the largest difference between parent and non-parent participants are premises, agencies and clubs/parties. These are usually areas where a third party takes on the labour of organising marketing, venue and clients, which leaves the worker with more time to spend on either work or childcare. However, parents in this research are also more likely to have done street-based and indoor independent work, which are areas of sex work that are most flexible to the workers' schedule and may allow workers to work around childcare responsibilities. The need for flexible schedules therefore seems to be linked to the need to use labour mobility and change between areas

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<sup>35</sup> This can include knowledge of rates, advertising platforms, common services provided, and the legal status of sex work, as well as access to a space to work from and enough knowledge of the English language to market oneself and communicate with clients prior to bookings.

of sex work to accommodate this flexibility. This again shows the ambivalent nature of labour mobility, which can both be a constrained choice due to circumstances, as well as an active use of worker agency in order to find the most suitable workplace or work area. Participant who are parents are also much less likely to have only done independently work, confirming the hypothesis that their use of labour mobility is stronger than that of non-parent sex workers.

#### *7.1.2.5 Ethnicity and labour mobility*

Figure 20 (on page 204) shows the labour mobility of participants by ethnicity, with 170 participants being white and 14 identifying as being of a black or other minority ethnicity. Like parents, black or other minority ethnic (BAME) participants are more likely to have worked in premises, street-based, for an agency, independently and for a party or club. They are less likely to have worked independently only, and slightly less likely to have worked in other areas of sex work. Although the number of BAME participants is low and therefore may not be as representative, it is especially notable that BAME workers are twice as likely to have worked in premises and nearly three times as likely to have done street-based work. This higher need for labour mobility moving between work areas may reflect racism within sex markets and by employers and clients, meaning that BAME workers are required to work in several areas of sex work to earn the same as white workers. This hypothesis is strengthened by the fact that BAME workers are less likely than white workers to have worked independent indoors only. However, in contrast to these survey findings, Canadian research theorises that workers of colour might instead have less access to mobility power if their “employment options are limited by an appearance that does not meet (white) Western beauty ideals” (Bruckert and Law, 2018, p. 94). This illustrates the ambivalence or duality of labour mobility: both a labour power a worker can use to improve their circumstances, and a mobility forced by discrimination and reduced opportunities.

#### *7.1.2.6 Sexual identity and labour mobility*

Figure 15 (on the next page) shows an overview of participants’ sexual identities, with 44% being bisexual or pansexual, 26% being heterosexual, 9% identifying as queer, 5% as gay or lesbian, 1% as asexual, and 13% as a mix of two or more sexual identity options.

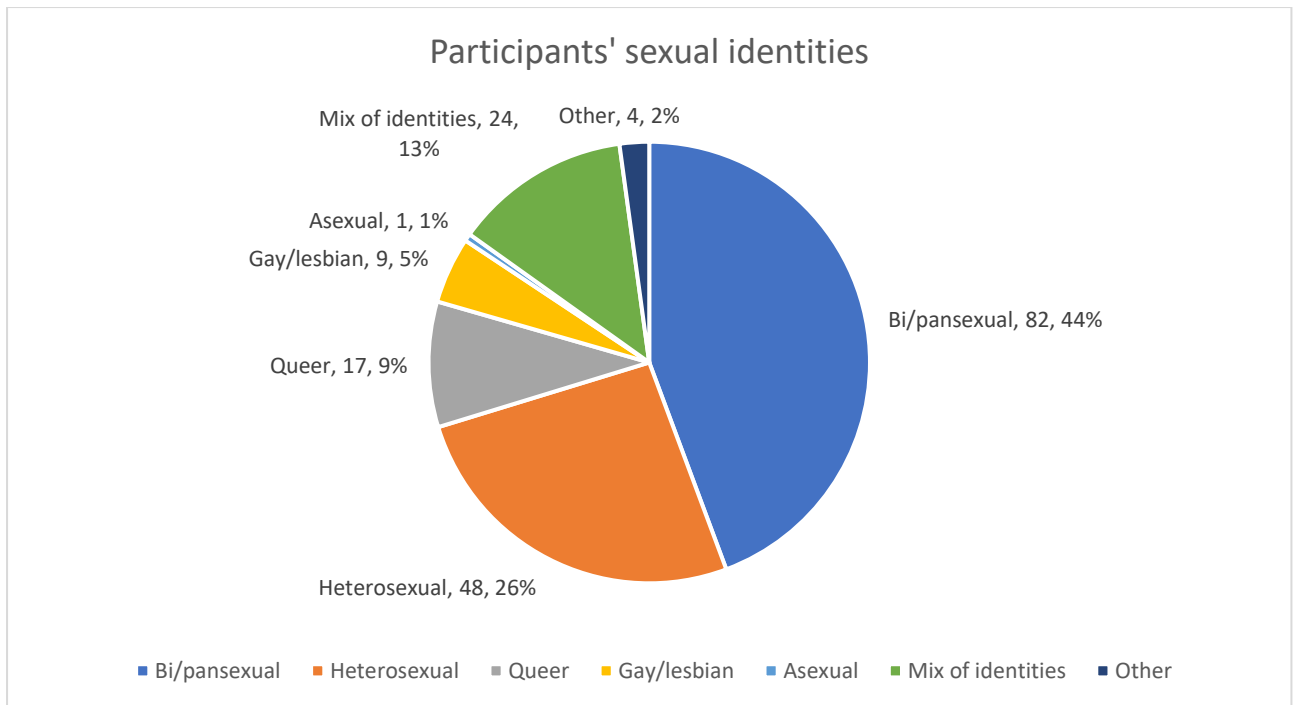


Figure 15: Participants' sexual identities

Figure 21 (on page 205) shows the labour mobility of sex workers by sexual identity. Due to the number of categories it is hard to draw strong conclusions from this data. However it is clear that gay/lesbian workers participating in this research are much more likely to have done street-based work, and that bi/pansexual workers are much more likely to have worked in clubs or at parties.

Figure 22 (on page 206) gives a less detailed look at the effect of sexual identity on mobility between work areas, since it compares the 48 heterosexual participants with all 133 lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, queer and asexual participants. The non-heterosexual participants are more likely to have done street-based work, to have worked in a club or party, and to have done other types of sex work. They are slightly less likely to have done agency or independent work, and are less likely to have done independent indoor work as their only form of sex work. These differences may reflect differences in straight and non-straight sex markets, may reflect non-heterosexual workers having a higher need for income from multiple work areas, or they may reflect difficulty for non-straight workers in reaching clients while working independently, again showing that labour mobility use may be a response to constraints and marginalisation on the labour market.

#### *7.1.2.7 Disability and labour mobility*

Figure 23 (on page 207) shows the labour mobility between work areas by disability status, with 96 participants not identifying as disabled or chronically ill, and 89 participants being disabled and/or having a chronic illness. The fact that sex work has a relatively high hourly wage and allows for more flexibility than most work may explain why disabled and chronically ill workers are overrepresented amongst sex workers in this research. Disabled participants are less than half as likely to have worked for an agency, and slightly less likely to have worked in premises. Both of these work areas require either long shifts or high levels of availability, which may explain why they are less suitable for disabled workers. However, it may also be the case that third parties in a managerial position reflect and reproduce the ableist discrimination which is more generally present in the labour market.

Disabled participants are slightly more likely to have worked independently, in clubs/parties, to have done other types of sex work, and to have worked independently only. However, they are over three times more likely to have done street-based sex work than non-disabled workers. This may reflect the flexible and ad hoc nature of street sex work, which could be easier to combine with disabilities than other types of sex work. However, it is also possible that push factors for street-based work, such as labour market discrimination, low disability benefits and increased benefit gatekeeping play a significant role (Work and Pensions Select Committee, 2019).

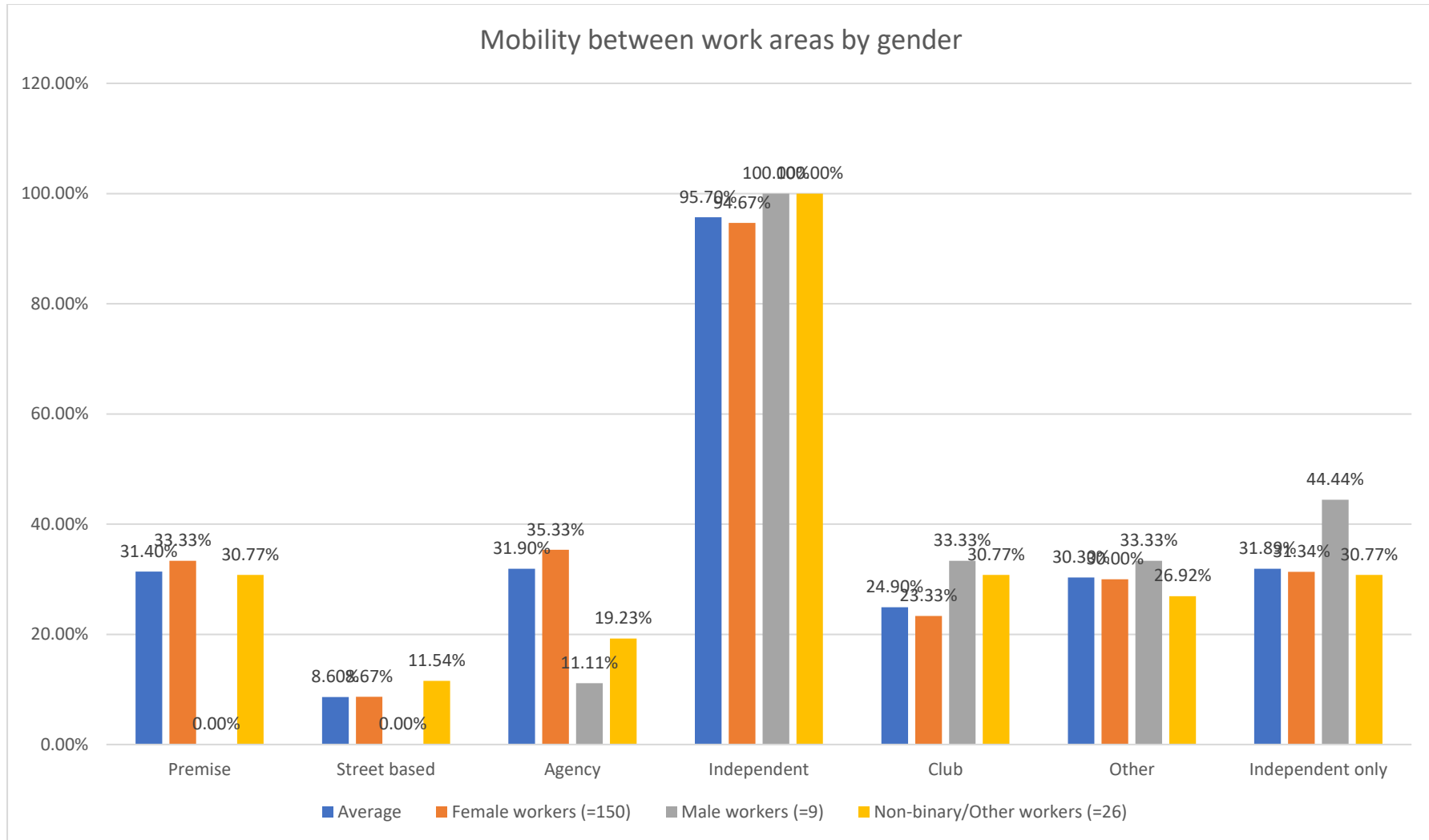


Figure 16: Mobility between work areas by gender



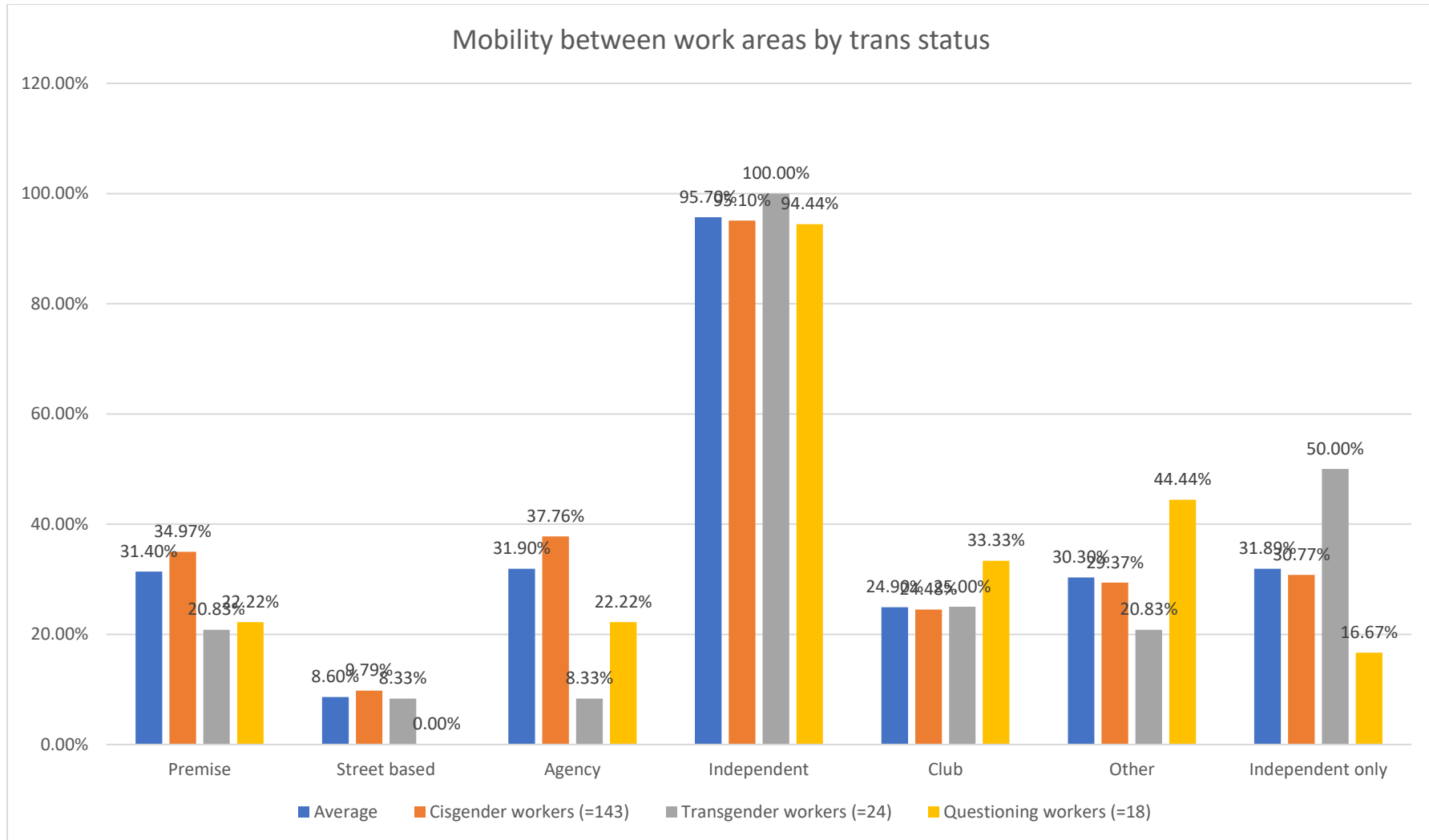


Figure 17: Mobility between work areas by trans status

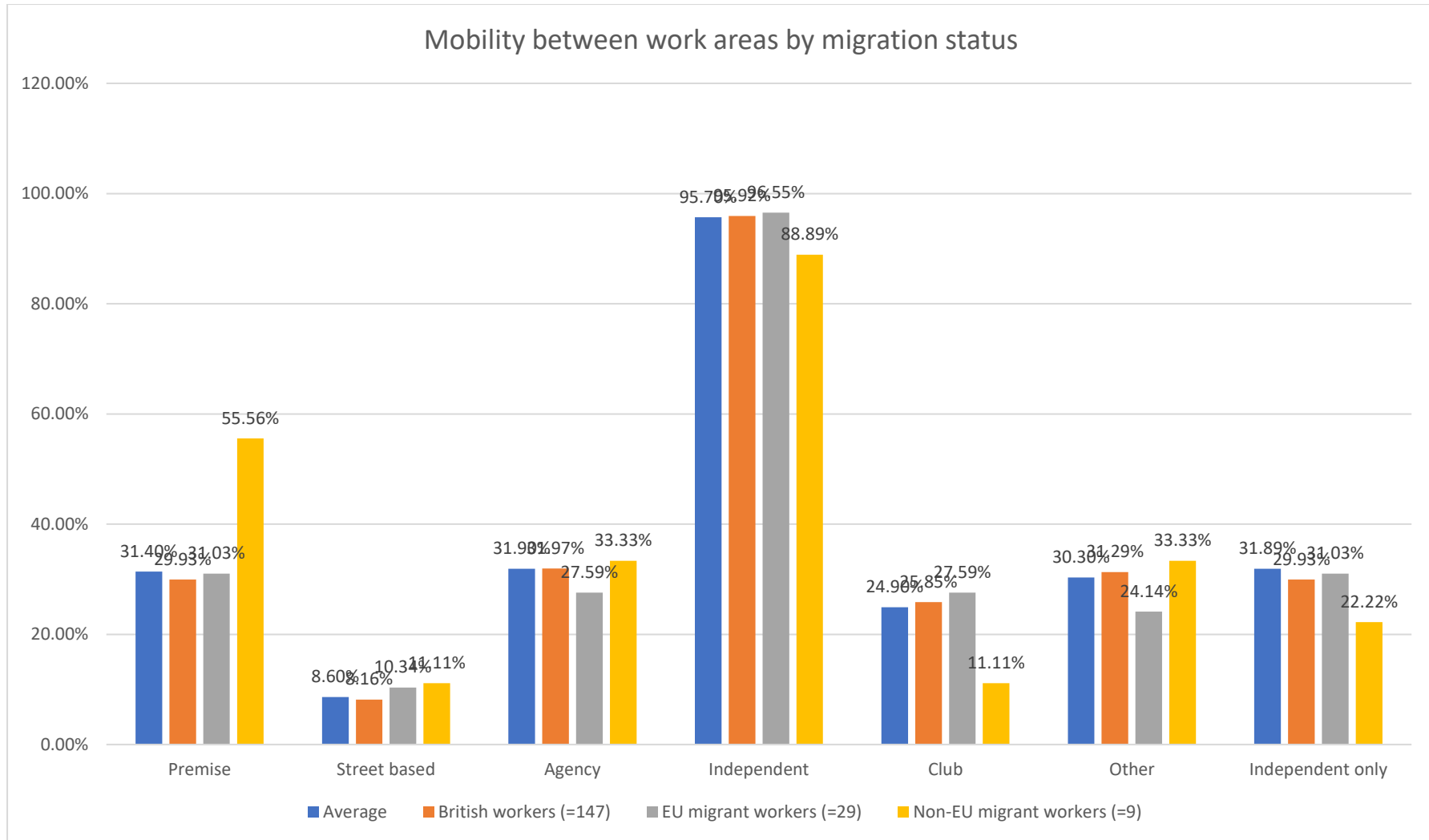


Figure 18: Mobility between work areas by migration status

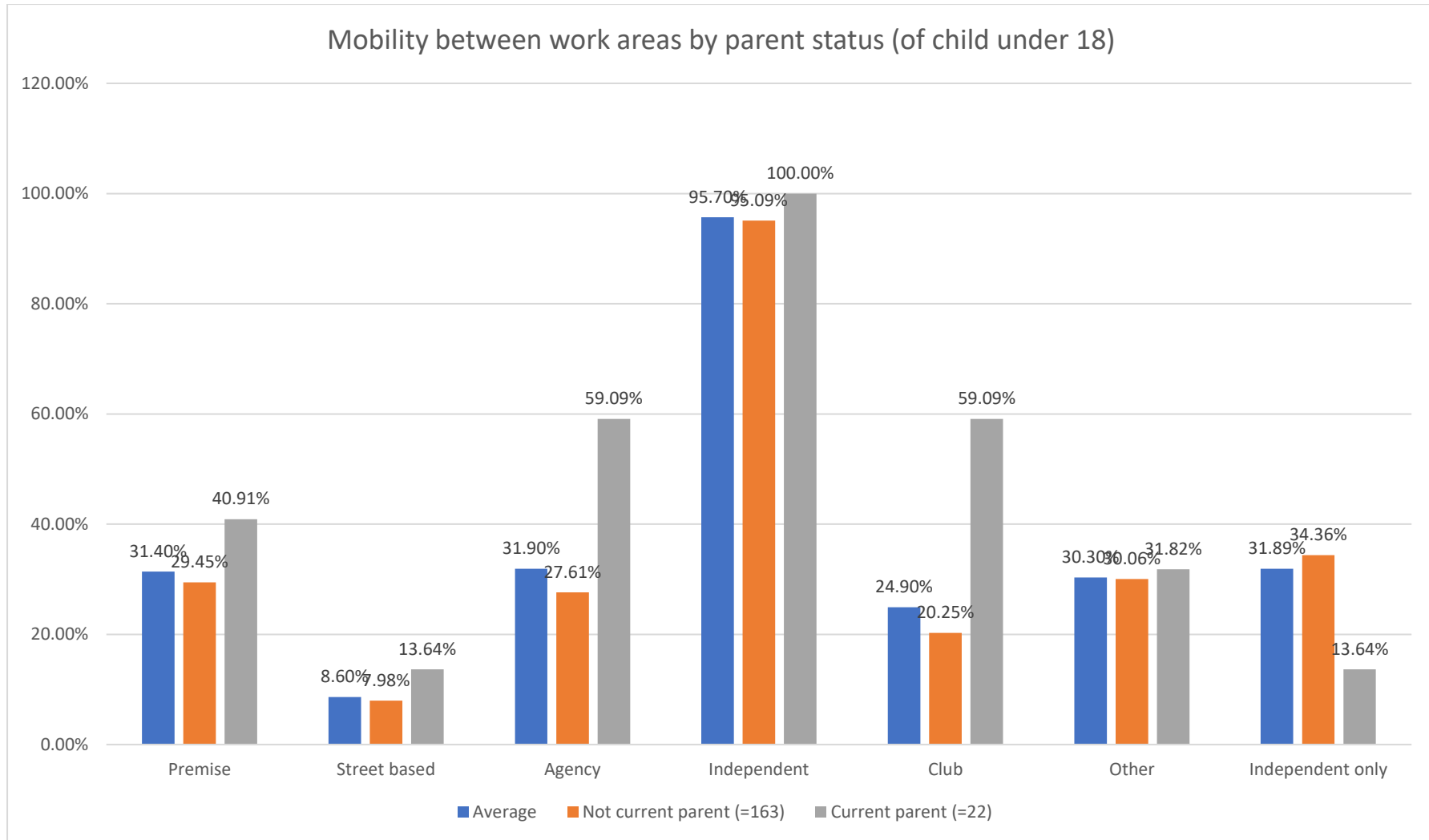


Figure 19: Mobility between work areas by parent status (of child under 18)

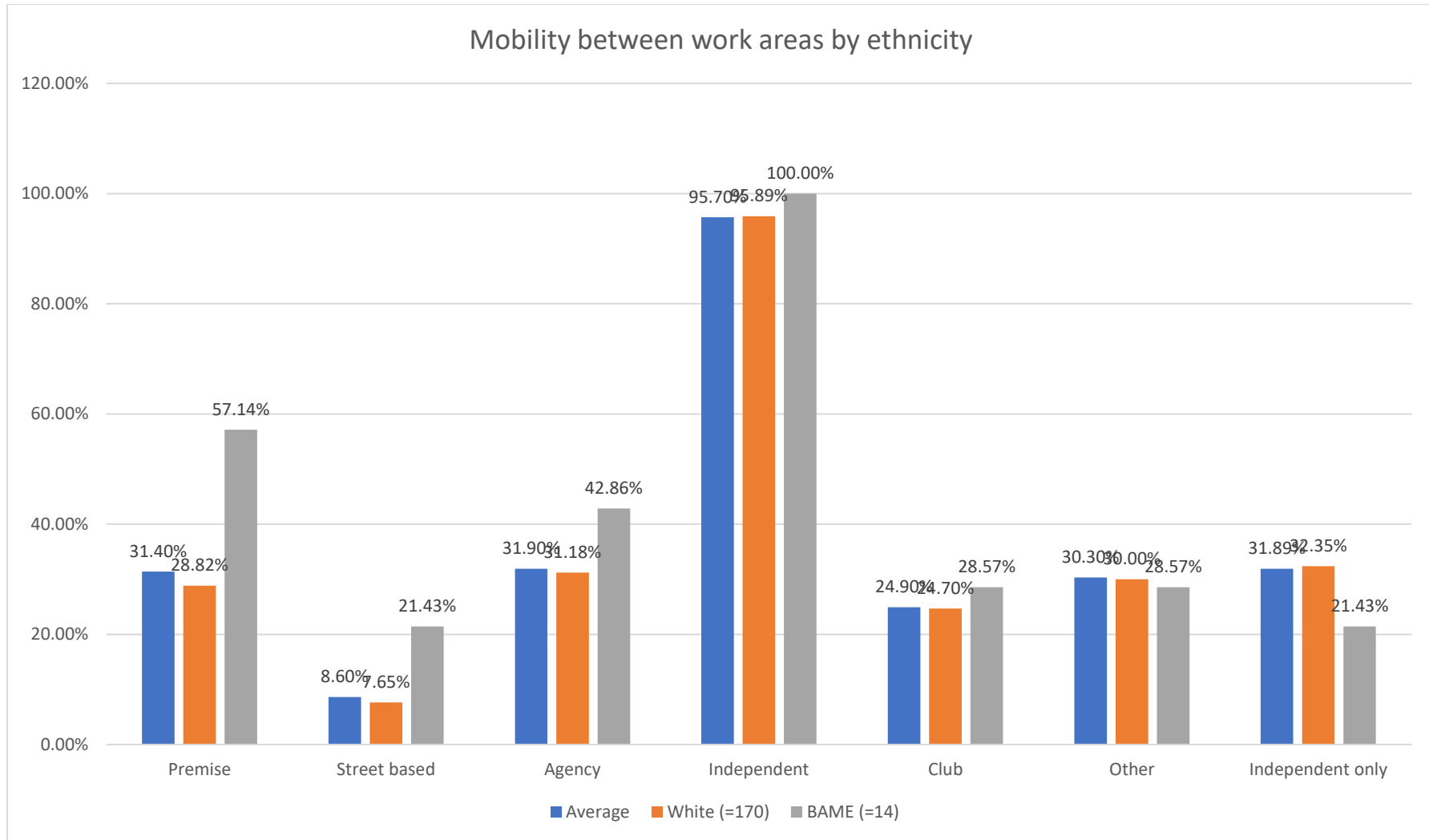


Figure 20: Mobility between work areas by ethnicity

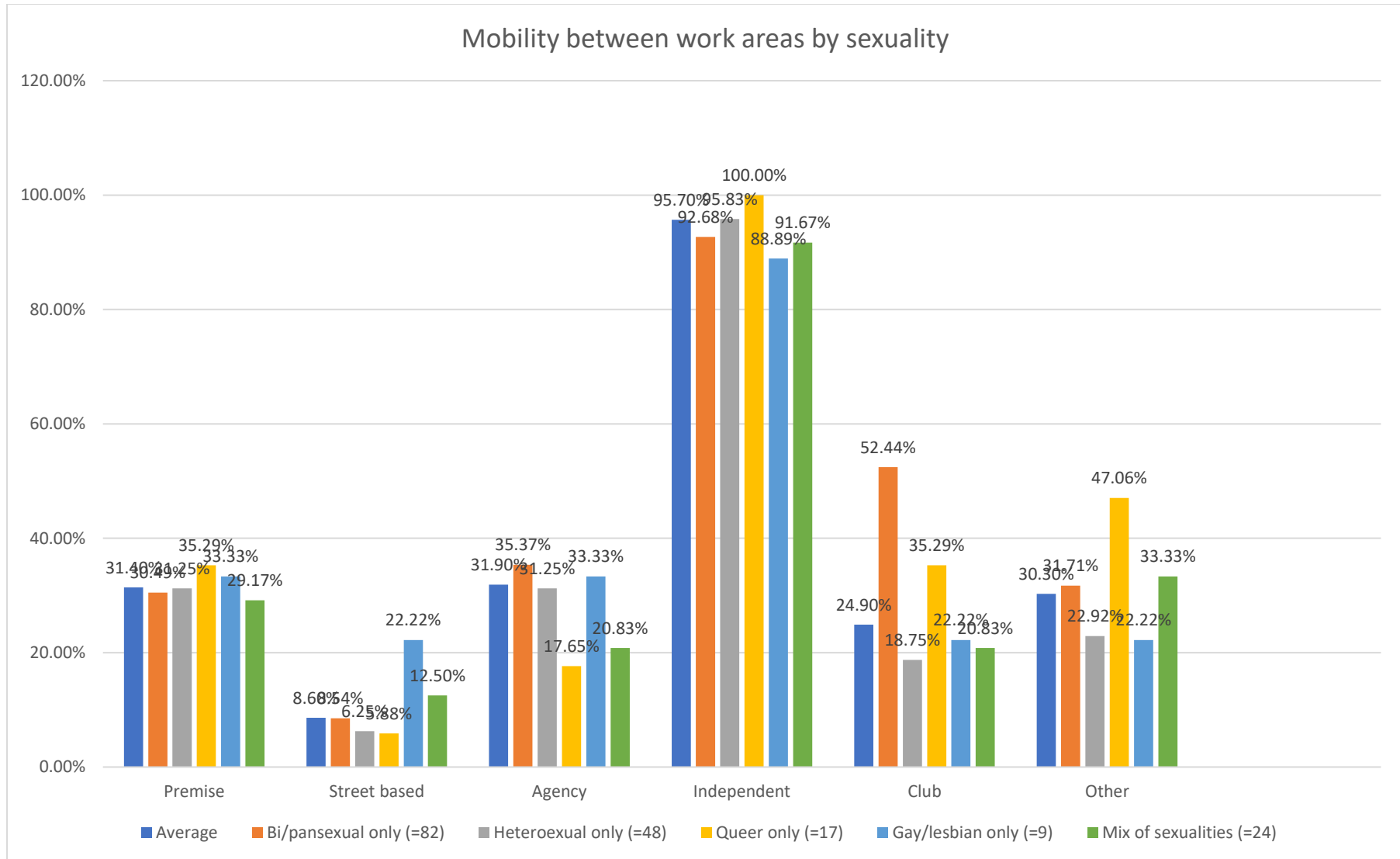


Figure 21: Mobility between work areas by sexuality

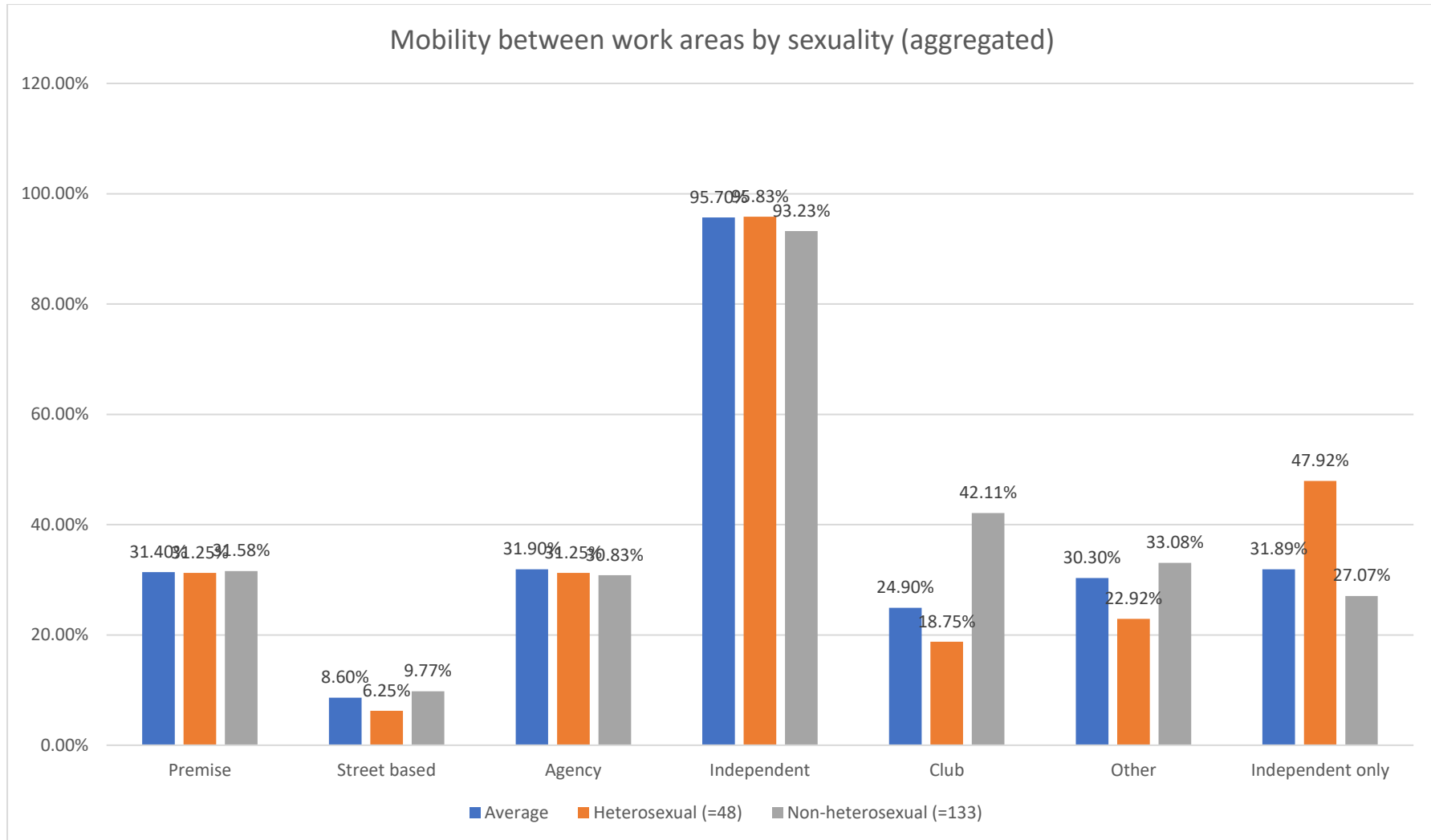


Figure 22: Mobility between work areas by sexuality (aggregated)

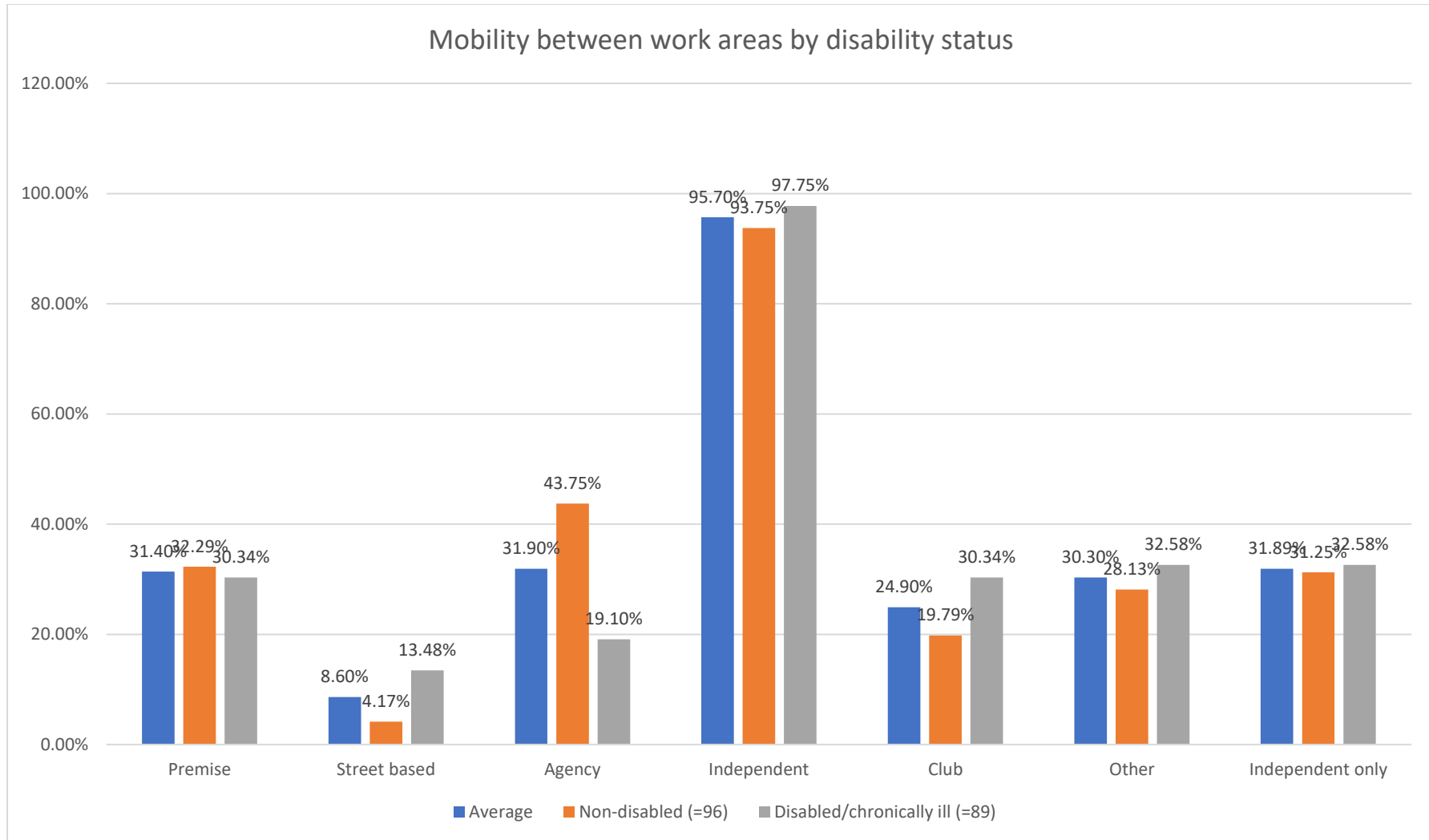


Figure 23: Mobility between work areas by disability status

## 7.2 Experiences of labour mobility

The qualitative data resulting from the survey give a diverse and rich account of sex worker labour mobility. Participants describe changing work areas or workplaces for a variety of reasons, often leaving workplaces which they see as too exploitative or unprofitable, yet what is an unacceptable workplace for one worker may be a good workplace for another. This shows that what is considered an acceptable or even good work environment strongly depends on the individual worker's needs, meaning that there is no single direction of labour mobility as a solution to the precarities experienced by workers in sex work. Instead, workers use their labour mobility power to move towards work environments they expect will be better for them, as well as in response to negative experiences in the workplace, illustrating the ambivalent nature of labour mobility. This section will discuss the experiences of sex workers who moved between work areas, experiences of those who used their mobility power to change workplaces or third parties within work areas, and the experiences of those workers who currently have a manager.

### 7.2.1 Reasons for moving between different work areas

While the survey did not ask directly about labour mobility, participants discussed their use of mobility power in several highly reflexive ways while answering questions on the effect third parties have on their experience and wellbeing at work. Their responses show that sex workers commonly use their mobility power in response to negative experiences with third parties, as well as in anticipation of positive and productive relationships with third parties. Participants compared their experience of the relative benefits and downsides of work areas, wrote about their reasons for moving from one area of sex work to another, or discussed their choice for a certain work area to suit a temporary need or as part of a longer-term occupational strategy (Alberti, 2014). Another way labour mobility is discussed in the survey is workers speaking about negative experiences with workplaces in the past tense, not explicitly saying they left but implying so:

*“I made more money per hour through the agency, so it was nice to work fewer hours for the same amount of money. However, if you weren't available all day and evening most of the week, they wouldn't prioritise you, so you got even fewer jobs” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Direct comparisons between different areas of sex work are very common. One participant feels that agency did not live up to her expectations with regards to the safety of workers, which informed her



move to independent indoor work: “They sort of took care of our safety, but I take much more safety precautions now I’m independent” (cis woman, 26, British). It is clear that different work environments suit different people. For instance, these two participants, who both have experience in premise and independent work, have used their labour mobility in opposite directions: “Working with other sex workers was comforting to me, previously I was an escort which was very lonely. I felt like I had a community there” (cis woman, 35, British), while the other states: “It’s always healthier to work alone” (cis woman, 32, British).

Third parties seem to affect workers’ decisions to use their labour mobility power regularly. One worker describes her reason for moving from brothels to agency work: “It’s not as bad as [brothels] because you don’t see the manager” (cis woman, 32, British), emphasising that interactions with and the presence of management in brothels pushed them away from premise work. Another worker described her reluctant move from brothel to agency work, since she enjoyed the presence of colleagues:

*“As the number of brothels they owned increased, they became greedier and refused to allow me the boundaries I needed to do the work safely - that’s why I stopped working in brothels. I really miss working with colleagues - far and away, fellow sex workers are the most supportive, caring and fun colleagues to have - that was the best part of working in a brothel” (cis woman, 35, British)*

In contrast, another participant describes the same work environment, sharing space with colleagues in a brothel, as the push factor causing them to move to independent and club work:

*“I have tried working in a more traditional brothel, and I found that less enjoyable as there is implicit competition and since there is a lot of dead time it’s more important that you are similar to your colleagues” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

Finally, participants describe using their labour mobility power to work in an area of sex work that is not their preferred area, in order to suit a temporary need. One worker describes her reasoning for working in premises as a student: “Felt like crap if I didn’t get any work. Was told I needed to lose weight. However, it saved me time & stress of managing my own advertising etc while studying full time” (cis woman, 37, British). Another worker discusses her reasons for working for an agency while she was less experienced in sex work, even though she would not work for an agency anymore at this point in her life:

*“I have been independent for 10 years now, but for the first 6 years in London I worked for agencies. (...) the downside was that I was also more exposed to time wasters. (...) At an agency is best if you basically say yes all the time, and when I was much younger I was also way more flexible, thing I am not now” (cis woman, 39, EU migrant)*

Participants regularly discuss using their mobility power to move from one area of sex work to another, either in response to unsatisfactory work circumstances, because of individual preferences or temporary needs, or as a consequence of increased knowledge of and access to other work areas due to work experience. While there is no clear single direction that labour mobility takes, since preferences for one work area over another are highly personal, the quantitative data showing the low number of participants who have a current managers, makes clear that in broad strokes workers are more likely to move from managed work to independent work. Burnes et al. (2018), in their research of North American street-based workers, found that workers used their labour mobility power to change work environments in a way that they considered to be ‘moving up’. Moving up includes work areas that allowed them to make more money and to have more safety, including safety through the presence of third parties. The general trend of movement from managed to independent work that has been seen in this survey will be further discussed in Section 7.3 of this chapter.

### 7.2.2 Mobility between workplaces

While the quantitative survey data make clear that there is a high level of labour mobility between the work areas amongst participants, it is unable to show mobility within the areas of sex work. The qualitative survey data, however, provides a rich description of sex workers’ experiences with moving between workplaces, and using their mobility power regularly to leave unsatisfactory circumstances or increase their earnings. Many participants discuss leaving workplaces which they see as unprofitable, too exploitative, or do not suit their life circumstances for other reasons (Alberti, 2014). According to Bruckert and Law (2018), one of the main reasons sex workers leave workplaces is because they are prevented from accessing official methods of organising and from accessing labour and human rights protections due to the criminalisation of their workplaces. Participants are most likely to describe moving between workplaces in premise and agency work, rather than in other areas of sex work. This is possibly due to the fact that in premises and agencies third parties in a managerial position have higher levels of control over the worker’s hours and labour than in other areas of sex work – managers are less or rarely present in clubs, independent indoor and street-based work.

Many workers answered survey questions by directly comparing third parties, both in a managerial position and wider work relations, in different workplaces, often in a very structured way like this participant:

*“Agency A - Only dealt with the manager since it was a one person operation and it was great. He would only send you good clients. I always felt safe. Agency B - Agency owner and 3 receptionists. They were all rude and would send you anyone because all they cared about was making money. I dreaded getting a client from them.” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant)*

Some workers describe circumstances that left them to change workplaces, although not directly in those terms:

*“The lower end agency were hell to work with, didn’t care about the clients I saw, didn’t care when I was repeatedly raped and attacked. The higher end agency I work with now are amazing, three receptionists and an amazing agency owner who always believes my side of the story, very very rarely have a bad experience with their clients” (cis woman, 23, British)*

Other participants compare agencies in a more general way, describing aggregated experiences from several workplaces:

*“I have worked for many agencies. Some are super strict and will not let you turn down bookings and would always take the man’s side if there was a problem. (...) The best ones I worked for understood that you will give a better service when you have at least an element of control” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Some comparisons between workplaces are more unspoken, such as a worker who focuses on her experience in the first agency she worked for, in order to imply differences between that agency and others:

*“my first agency lady was very supportive to me, she was quite maternal and we would chat to me a lot on the phone about work, clients and the industry. I think she understood I needed to vent and share my experiences to someone as I was effectively living a double life and it was quite overwhelming for a young girl new to the industry. (...) happy girls who want to be there, feel reasonably safe and in control and can provide the experience the client is looking for as they've been*

*matched properly by the agency is bound to better for business” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Implied in this account is that all the positive experiences in this agency – the support received, the fact that workers liked the agency manager, the fact that workers didn’t steal and that they felt safe and well-matched – did not match this participant’s later experiences in other workplaces. The impact of managers and wider work relations on sex workers is commonly directly linked with participants’ decision to use or not use their labour mobility power.

Many participants describe the positive effects of using their labour mobility to change workplaces to ones that better suit them:

*“It really differs per brothel. At most I didn't like the manager and brothel owner (...). But at the current one I work with wonderful people who always think about the sex workers first” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant)*

Often workers have very specific negative experiences or complaints that cause them to leave one workplace for another, including serious management abuses such as this participant experienced:

*“Current agency is good because my manager is very respectful of my needs, and won't match me with clients that I don't like for any reason at all. She's also very flexible with my work hours. Previous one was very intense about how I looked and often told me to lose weight which was detrimental to my mental wellbeing” (cis woman, 25, non-EU migrant)*

Another worker describes leaving a premise because of inappropriate management behaviour as well, and although she describes this as unequivocally the right decision, she doesn’t feel her new workplace is a large improvement:

*“The first brothel I worked at was a 'fancy' brothel in a country house in Surrey. There were two female co-owners who were former workers. They were in their 50s. One lady I met only once due to my rota. (...). The other co-owner was subtly belittling, intrusive towards our personal life which I ignored and drove me to leave. The best decision to be honest. The second parlour I worked in was much like the above.” (cis woman, 40, British)*

While many participants describe positive changes after using their labour mobility power to change workplaces, there is always the risk that moving to a different workplace will have a negative effect on the worker:

*“I worked with two agencies. The first was okay as manager was quite hands off so no real pressure at all to take bookings. If I was unavailable it wasn’t a big deal. The second agency I would be driven to outcalls. Drivers were paid per booking. There was huge pressure to take bookings even if I felt unsafe” (cis woman, 40, British)*

One unique facet of working in the grey economy is that there are no contracts, notice periods or references, which means that the use of labour mobility can be as simple as not showing up for a next shift and putting an advertisement up online, with no negative consequences for future employment with other third parties. Finally, some participants describe how moving between workplaces is part of a larger career strategy that also involves moving between work areas, especially to finance a move to independent work. Financial and other barriers to entering independent indoor work will be further discussed in Sections 7.2.4 and 7.3.2 of this chapter.

### 7.2.3 Mobility between wider work relations

A third form of worker agency that allows sex workers to change their work circumstances, although it may not directly fall under labour mobility power, is to change their wider work relationships with third parties that do not act like managers, including those hired by sex workers. In Chapter 5, wider work relations were defined as all roles beyond the worker, manager and client or customer, who provide services or support to a worker which directly enable them to do their work. In sex work, these wider work relations cover a range of non-managerial work and social: colleagues, contractors, support staff, duo-partners, and incidental service providers. Workers changing from one wider work relation to another is especially common amongst independent indoor working participants, who are more likely to hire wider work relations themselves or to control change in their relationships with wider work relations without having to change workplaces or work areas. Participants describe changes they made in relation to drivers, housemates/colleagues, and people who take on security roles.

A common thread in the responses that included negative experiences with third parties was that the participants had since changed their work circumstances to not include those third parties anymore. This shows that the participants have the power and ability to change their work circumstances or fire the wider work relations involved to suit them better. One independent worker describes how a friend had been helping her with work until she decided to end the work relationship:

*“Yes my male ‘friend’ who I had to let go after 2 months of him helping me. He got jealous and tried to insert his opinion on my work too much telling me to lower rates when I didn’t need to, maybe that way he thought he would stick around longer :/ (...) decided to get out of that situation because I could sense he would become too controlling or possessive” (cis woman, 23, British)*

None of the respondents expressed regret over letting a third party to their independent work go.

Some participants, rather than explaining how they changed their negative work situation, use the past tense to make clear this is a situation they are no longer in. Even though it is clear that the workers describing these experiences are no longer in those situations, none of the participants went into detail about how they managed to change their work relations. In fact, one worker described how their interaction with a third party, which was outside their control, changed due to the third party stepping back rather than action on the worker’s part:

*“The woman who manages the party I work at books all clients. I feel mostly positive about her and like she would protect us, she often tells clients off for being annoying. It was more difficult previously when her boyfriend was more involved, as he is a very narcissistic character. He had a very negative affect on me and all my colleagues- he would find endless things to correct and point out and kept telling us how to do our job even though he had very little experience. He was extremely negative and kept making and changing rules all the time. We learnt to ignore him, but it was really annoying, and its a lot better now that he has stepped back” (trans non-binary, 32, EU migrant)*

The generally large amount of control over relationships with third parties is not a selling point of independent work for all participants. One worker describes her experience with competitiveness and jealousy between independent workers who share incall venues or do duos together:

*“Even one of my good friends if I did a duo with her would be ‘on’ the guy immediately just so if was her that he would remember and book again and if you did duo day the other girl would always try and book in her customers over yours. It’s [all] competition. If you share if you’re not really assertive you’ll be taken advantage of everything from getting the worse room to the worse days (like the weekend) because the escorts often scramble over each other, put each other down” (cis woman, 32, British)*

#### 7.2.4 Small number of workers with current manager

Only 6.5% of participants state they currently have a manager or someone else who has power over either their work hours or over which clients they see. This likely reflects the high number of independent workers amongst participants, but may also have been affected by the wording of the relevant survey question<sup>36</sup>. This low number suggests that throughout their sex work career, workers participating in this research are likely to use their labour mobility to move into independent work, if suitable to their situation. Section 7.3 will delve further into the reasons why many workers prefer to work independently.

Participants regularly describe the relationship between themselves as workers and their current managers in a neutral or positive way. One worker states: “I have a manager but they have no power over when I work or who I see” (cis woman, 24, British), and an agency worker states: “[managers] kindly ask me if I’m interested (...) and only after I accept the booking it gets confirmed to the clients” (cis woman, 40, EU migrant). Those who express positive experiences with current managers describe them as helpful, making their work easier for them, and making them feel safe. One participant states: “I feel safer by their management of my work” (cis woman, 37, British), while another says: “I feel safe working for her” (cis woman, 35, non-EU migrant). One worker concludes their writing on their manager with “She is fantastic and helps me to manage my two jobs in a way that’s safe and profitable for both” (cis woman, 30, British).

Others have more ambivalent relationships with their current managers. One participant simply wrote “Very little contact – just gets me bookings” (cis woman, 25, British). Another worker feels unclear about whether they have the power to decline clients or not, saying about their manager:

*“she’s never told me I \*have\* to see a client but I do have to attend every line up and I don’t know what she would do if I tried to decline a client after I was picked. So I’ve never tried it, even with my stalker client” (trans non-binary, 20, British)*

Another participant describes that her current manager is also an intimate partner, a 12 year older man, who suggested she go into escorting, set up her profile, gives work advice, and exerts pressure on them to work. The worker finishes by saying “Severe emotional manipulation ensued” (cis woman, 26, British).

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<sup>36</sup> The survey asked “Do you currently have a manager or someone else who has power over either your work hours or over which clients you see?”, which may have led respondents to assume that a manager without power over work hours or clients would not count for this question. It likely would have been better to word the question: “In any of your current sex work, do you have a manager, or is there someone who has power over your work hours or over which clients you see?”.

The fact that the vast majority of participants do not currently have a manager, even though many have had one in the past, shows that many sex workers are able to use their mobility power to leave their work environment and work area if they choose to do so. The majority of participants who currently do have a manager describe positive experiences with those managers, but that is not the case for all participants. This may be a sign that for those workers, other factors about their managed work may be worth the negative experiences, but it is also likely that this means that access to mobility power is not equal for all sex workers in all situations.

### 7.3 Lower labour mobility use among independent indoor workers

In most areas of sex work, nearly 100% of participants has experience with several types of sex work. However, amongst independent indoor working participants, 33.34% (59 participants, see Figure 24 on the next page) has only done independent sex work and worked in no other environment. A similar finding was reported by Sanders et al. (2018b), where 42% of their participants only did independent indoor full-service sex work, even though the overlap between different sectors of the full-service industry was high in all other groups. This is the case regardless of the fact that independent indoor work has a higher barrier to entry (Bruckert, 2018a). The sizable minority of participants who work independent-only either do not have access to labour mobility power, or do not have the need to use it. Another reason may be that they do not use mobility power within independent work in a way picked up by the quantitative sections of the survey, since it did not ask questions about how they had changed their independent work in the past. Pitcher (2015) argues that independent sex workers have greater control over their working conditions than workers with a manager both within sex work and in much of the non-sex service industry, which may be the reason independent sex workers have a reduced need for the use of labour mobility power compared to other areas of sex work. This section will discuss the data on mobility within independent work, the benefits and higher barriers to entry of independent work, and participants' critiques of capitalist employer/employee relations which may inform their choice to work independently. It will show that independent workers potentially have high levels of agency and mobility power, but have a lower need to use this mobility power due to this agency allowing them to have better working conditions and the ability to change unsatisfactory working conditions.



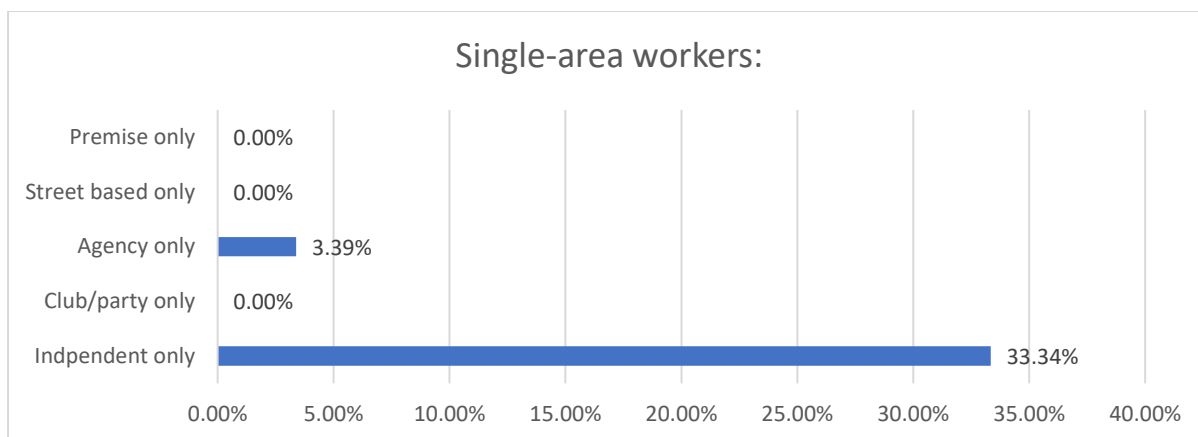


Figure 24: Single-area workers

### 7.3.1 Agency and change within independent work

Independent sex work is unique in the sense that, in order to change their work methods or environment, workers do not have to change work areas. Independent workers can decide to work in a different location or city, start or stop touring, change hotels or venue, work with others or alone, change rates, change work hours, offer different services, change marketing, or hire and fire third parties – all while still staying independent. This is especially noticeable in the phenomena of workers having multiple “personas”: more than one sex worker identity with different marketing, advertising, rates, contact methods and services, in order to attract different client markets. None of this would show as labour mobility in the survey, as even large changes in work would still fall under the ‘independent indoor’ category, yet it implies a large amount of agency to make changes to their work amongst independent sex workers.

Many independently working participants describe having changed their work significantly, while still falling under the umbrella of ‘indoor independent’ work. One worker describes her move from co-working to solo working, from sharing a workplace to having her own workplace, and from a more “party” environment to a business model based on return clients:

*“Shared with a friend for a while, we would rent different 2 bed apartments for a week on week off. (...) She stressed the fuck out of me, but I was anxious about working alone and the rent for a 1 bed apartment was much more and I worried I'd not make enough money to cover it. In the end I went for it, it was the best thing I ever did. I could market myself as higher class and offer longer bookings now as I had an entire property to myself instead of just a bedroom. My clients seemed much happier, I had a much better attitude working in a better*

*atmosphere, and I started getting regulars almost straight away. No more suspicious landlords or neighbours complaining to them either so I managed to get an offer to rent long term rolling contract of the apartments I used, and keep a really nice flat with good transport links” (cis woman, 34, British)*

Another worker describes a very large change they made in her work: moving from the USA to the UK. “My main community for the majority of my working, when I lived in the States, was online. Part of the reason I ended up moving was because it was so isolating” (trans woman, 22, British). This change, although undoubtedly involving quite a lot of labour mobility power (including access to international freedom of movement), is still not visible as labour mobility from the quantitative data, since in both countries she worked independently. Labour mobility for independent workers, then, is a highly contextual issue that comes in a large variety of forms.

### 7.3.2 Benefits and barriers to entry of independent work

Participants describe a range of benefits to independent work, including financial considerations, higher levels of control over their own labour and time, increased freedom to choose and reject clients, more independence and lack of managerial oversight, as well as the ability to avoid excessive risk-shifting or financial exploitations by third parties. These benefits are similar to the benefits of other forms of self-employment: high levels of control over working hours, client choice and rates. Independent work is described by several participants as a choice of freedom at the cost of extra labour investments, especially when it comes to doing administrative work, client communication, and arranging for a work venue.

One participant writes about how the agency she worked for “wanted me to shell out the majority of expenses (hotel room/taxis) in advance” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant) – leaving the financial risk with the worker while still taking a cut of their profits. This is a clear example of shifting entrepreneurial risk to the worker, and directly caused her to move into independent work instead. Some workers use independent work with duo partners as a way to mitigate some of the downsides and financial risks of independent work. One participant describes the range of roles their fellow independently working colleagues have: “security to do doubles with, friendship and relief between clients. Sharing the expense of a hotel and taking turns making it less of an economic risk” (trans non-binary, 27, EU migrant). In contrast, a small number of participants mention interpersonal conflict with independent co-workers as reasons for them to move into solo independent work.

Of course, working independently is not suitable for every worker, and many make the decision that the high levels of agency, risk and responsibility of independent work are not for them:

*“Having a lot of staff around makes me feel safer. Having a receptionist means that I have someone else to deal with enquiries for me so that I can focus on my current clients, and I also have someone to back me up during disagreements which can prevent them escalating. I also know that security is on hand if the receptionist is not able to deal with the client herself. Having colleagues gives me a space to vent about work to people who understand. Having a manager/owner who takes on the financial risk of running the business means that I feel more able to turn away clients as I’m not under pressure to make money to pay for business expenses such as rent, bills and advertising” (cis woman, 24, British)*

Other workers feel categorically different about the exchange of part of their income for business expenses through a third party relationship that mirrors an employer/employee relationship, which will be discussed in Section 7.3.3 of this chapter.

The fact that there is a high number of participants who only do independent work is surprising, since independent work is also the area of sex work with the highest barriers to entry. It requires knowledge of the local sex market, pricing, advertising, initial financial investments in equipment or photoshoots, and often access to a venue. Bruckert and Law (2013, p.83), in their research on third parties in Canada, found that the wide range of labour and skills required to be an independent sex worker, which they describe as “essentially running their own small business”, is not accessible or enjoyable for many workers. For participants who felt independent work was not accessible to them, agencies allow inexperienced workers to start out in sex work without having any knowledge of the industry itself: “As new in the city and young, I guess I needed guidance and an organisation to be part of, someone I worked for and found jobs for me. I made tonnes of money” (cis woman, 39, EU migrant). Some participants describe how they use agency work as a temporary strategy on the way to their goal of independent work, in this case using income from agency labour to fund re-entering the independent indoor market:

*“Worked for many agencies. All were mainly run by the owner (all women bar one man who didn’t have a clue and wanted to play pimp, I left after 2 jobs) a couple had a part time receptionist who took over the phones when they were off. My first agency (and first ever SW job) had a really nice owner, she was pretty lenient with me being unreliable (I was 19) (...) The other agencies were much stricter,*

*and I felt that they only cared about money and didn't care who they sent you to. (...) I didn't work for any of them very long. Normally it would just be when I returned to the industry after a break and just to earn some money so I could start as independent (pay for apartment/website/photos)" (cis woman, 34, British)*

This process of moving from other sex work areas into independent work might lower the barriers to entry, especially financial and knowledge barriers. However, clearly a significant minority of participants (at least the third of independently working participants who have not done other types of sex work) is able to start sex work independently despite these higher barriers to entry.

### 7.3.3 Critiques of third parties in a managerial position

A reoccurring theme in the survey responses was a critique of third party relationships that mirror employer/employee relations, whether through dependent self-employment or through any exertion of control over the labour of sex workers. This critical engagement with the labour process amongst participants might explain in part why the level of independently working sex workers in this research is so high, and why a significant minority has only worked independently.

Explicit critiques of relationships that mirror employer/employee relationships are especially common from participants with experience working in premises:

*"In the end they are my boss. (...) they weren't coercive or violent or anything, but in the end they make money from you seeing clients, and so are going to be on the clients' side" (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

Although the fact that some premise owners do not perform any labour is sometimes seen as somewhat of a saving grace – since no impact on sex work is better than a negative impact – many criticised the fact that their profits are high without working: "He didn't do anything really! Just sent someone to collect the 'rent' once a week" (cis woman, 25, British). Managers are especially critiqued when they place money over worker wellbeing and safety: "The boss was almost always focussed on how much money s/he was going to get" (cis woman, 52, British).

Another participant shares this sentiment: "Worked in many many brothels, owners fairly uniformly are awful, avaricious, don't care at all about your wellbeing and put the customers first" (cis woman, 42, British). Finally, workers critique premise owners for discrimination in order to maximise profits:

*“The manager was frustrating in that, because I'm trans, she limited how often I could work way more than everyone else, and since I made less per shift, my income was severely hampered” (trans woman, 22, British)*

These critiques of third parties in a managerial position also extended to some wider work relations. Especially where maids in premises enforced the rules of the managers in their absence, this influenced the relationship between them and workers: “Maids are okay but generally working for the owner to protect their interests, not yours” (cis woman, 46, British). However, most critique is reserved for managers:

*“Overall I would say it was good to have most of these [third parties] around, except the bosses but that's true of any boss really” (non-binary questioning, 31, non-EU migrant)*

This critical engagement with management may explain why such a large majority of the participants works or has worked independently. It can also give insight into why some participants who start out working independently do not feel the need to use their mobility power to move into other areas of sex work: independent work gives workers a higher level of control over their own labour and time, and according to Pitcher (2015) allows workers more autonomy than many mainstream service sector jobs. Even though there are significant barriers to entry, for many sex workers participating in this research, the benefits of independent work and a rejection of the inequalities of employer/employee relations makes independent work an attractive alternative. This also shows the importance of distinguishing between having access to mobility power, and having the need or desire to use that mobility power.

#### 7.4 Factors affecting workers' ability to use labour mobility

Participants describe several factors that negatively affect their ability to use their labour mobility power, which in turn increases workers' dependency on third parties in a managerial role (Alberti and Danaj, 2017). As discussed in Chapter 4, the criminalisation of third parties and workplaces limits the options available to sex workers, which affects their options for labour mobility use as well. The managerial practices and control mechanisms that some third parties in a managerial role use, as discussed in Chapter 6, can also negatively affect sex workers' access to labour mobility power. And

finally, the isolation of sex workers due to stigma and the criminalisation of co-workers, limits workers' access to the knowledge they need to fully access their labour mobility power.

#### 7.4.1 Criminalisation of workplaces and third parties

Due to the criminalisation of third parties and workplaces, many participants feel there are few options of safe workplaces, or of workplaces with a low barrier to entry. As discussed in Chapter 4, the fact that only solo independent indoor work is legal and all other workplaces are criminalised, means that workers who do not want to risk police intervention are severely limited in their options. Even independent workers are criminalised under brothel keeping legislation if they decide to share a workspace with other independent workers for safety or financial reasons. Participants who prefer working in managed premises describe feeling pushed into independent work due to criminalisation:

*“When my favourite maids left because of raids, that contributed to me leaving the brothels – it was like my safety mechanisms were being dismantled” (cis woman, 35, British)*

Several participants expressed a desire to work in premises managed by sex workers, both because of the expectation of improved management and to limit financial exploitation: “if sex workers could start our own places we wouldn't have to pay such high amounts to managers” (cis woman, 28, British). Some workers point out that the criminalisation of workplaces forces them into self-employment when they would rather not be in that position, and several participants point directly to the effects criminalisation has on the quality of management:

*“If brothels were above ground and facilities with workers' rights I would happily work in them again, because less predatory people would be running them. Even collectives where sex workers work for and amongst ourselves” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant)*

Another participant describes how decriminalisation could help them by offering alternatives and increasing the number of workplaces that offer sex workers options beyond the few workplaces that are currently present: “If they were decriminalized, this would make it much more difficult for managers to take advantage of us and would take away the monopoly position they have now” (cis woman, 27, EU migrant)

As discussed in Chapter 4, the criminalisation of workplaces also has a negative effect on workers' access to labour rights, safety, and on the ability of workers to resist management or client abuse. The

fact that workplaces are informal and criminalised means that the worker is limited in the actions they can take to improve their workplace, but also limited in their options if and when they choose to use their labour mobility.

#### 7.4.2 Managerial interventions that reduce labour mobility

Several participants discuss ways in which managers keep workers apart, and they hypothesise that this may be to prevent workers from cooperating and organising. One worker states about her experience in premises: “We were not allowed to exchange numbers with other workers/maids, and girls are separated on their day of work to keep them from organising” (cis woman, 22, non-EU migrant), and another participant states that “Colleagues were kept apart” (non-binary questioning, 33, non-EU migrant) by the agency they worked for.

At the same time, several participants discuss how isolation makes their work harder and keeps them from accessing essential support and information which could potentially help them move to other areas of sex work, to other workplaces, or enable them to work independently. One worker discusses how her bad experiences with a club manager included intentional shielding from knowledge that could have helped her work independently:

*“He was a nasty little pimp! Ruined my reputation with poor/badly edited videos posted online and had me working at very low rates/shielded me from knowing what Adultwork<sup>37</sup> was so I couldn't make money for myself” (cis woman, 25, British)*

Keeping workers apart and preventing them from organising or from learning about independent work avenues, all reduce workers' mobility power.

Additionally, several participants describe how agency owners use methods such as sending fake clients or friends of the owner, or sabotaging independent sex work avenues by creating fake bookings to fill workers' diaries. In addition to these, demands for 'exclusivity' - where an agency or premise demands to be the only venue through which the worker does sex work - are common. All these methods are ways workers are prevented from using their labour mobility to move to other workplaces, to be less reliant on the third party for income, or to be able to move into independent work.

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<sup>37</sup> A large online platform where independent sex workers commonly advertise and find clients, and the main source of clients for many independent workers.

### 7.4.3 Stigma, isolation, and criminalisation of advice as barriers to information

The stigma attached to sex work, combined with the criminalisation of independent workers sharing a workspace, leaves many sex workers without the support system other self-employed or sole trading workers have. Many participants describe feeling isolated and in need of support from and contact with colleagues: “none of my friends and family knew. Having other SWs for support is very important for your wellbeing in this industry” (cis woman, 34, British).

One participant discusses how the agency she worked for took advantage of her lack of knowledge about the industry:

*“When I started work I was 18 (24 years ago!) and very naive. The agency took such a big cut. I was making £30ph. (...) I always felt like the drivers (always men) had authority over me, almost like a manager I guess. When I came out of one booking they’d be the one with info about the next one, they definitely projected that they were in charge of me and I’m sure they’d have reported back to agency”*  
(cis woman, 42, British)

This lack of access to information on the industry may cause workers who prefer to work independently to need third parties. Unlike other types of self-employed work, there are no co-work spaces, networking events or training in sex work. Working together with duo partners is the only way for many participants to learn about the work itself, about support options, and about other opportunities for work:

*“My duo partner, a friend outside of the industry, makes me feel safe. She has been in the industry longer than me, and has been so invaluable, teaching me the small things a new worker would only learn through bad mistakes. I feel safe when I’m working with her”* (cis woman, 25, British)

In addition, unlike in other professions, improving the quality of one’s work through learning is also only possible via co-working. However, many sex workers and sex worker-led support organisations are worried that giving advice to new and less experienced sex workers may be construed as “incitement” to prostitution, which is criminalised. For this reason, many sex workers start with very little knowledge on how to do their job safely or well. In other jobs, workers are often in contact with more experienced workers or managers to ask for advice or to emulate, or to organise their labour. Even gig workers, intermediated migrant workers, or those in other forms of non-standard work can often use places like dormitories (Andrijasevic and Sacchetto, 2016) or the street (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2019) as locations of information sharing and learning. However, most sex workers (and



especially those that are not connected to the wider sex worker community) have no such opportunities outside of duos. This prevents workers from knowing which work spaces are safer, better, or more profitable, and limits their labour mobility.

In conclusion, the majority of sex workers participating in this research has worked in two or more areas of sex work, which means there is significant overlap between workers in different types of full-service sex workplaces. This illuminates the fact that sex workers in any one area of sex work should not be considered a discreet group separate from those in other areas of sex work, and shows the value of exploring temporal and spatial aspects of sex workers' experiences in research. Additionally, it is clear that sex worker participants use labour mobility power in very high numbers. Sex workers are able to – and commonly do – leave unsatisfactory work situations and workplaces. This labour mobility is ambivalent since it can both be a tool of worker agency and a response to a lack of ability to change bad working environments. For this reason, labour mobility power amongst participants seems to be lower amongst male workers, transgender workers, non-EU migrant workers, and disabled workers; while at the same time workplace inequality may be the cause of high levels of labour mobility power use amongst parents, black and minority ethnic workers, and non-heterosexual workers. Participants are more likely to discuss past work environments in negative terms, and more likely to discuss current work environments in positive terms, showing that the use of labour mobility power likely has a positive effect on sex workers. The agency and labour mobility power of sex workers are enabled by knowledge of the sector and access to community resources and information, and are constrained by isolation, bad and abusive management, the criminalisation of workplaces and co-working, marginalisation of certain groups of workers, and stigma towards sex work within society.

## 8 Conclusion

The aim of this research was to improve understanding of third parties in sex work in England and sex workers' experiences with, and views on, those third parties, within the context of third party criminalisation. In the process of doing so, several empirical, conceptual and methodological contributions have been made to the field of sex work research and the field of work and employment. First, a range of empirical contributions have been found. It has been shown that the legal status of third parties and their work is unclear for many sex workers; that sex workers argue for legal change to the status of criminalised third parties in order to improve their working conditions and relationships with them; that the largest group of third parties, amongst participants in this research, consists of sex workers themselves, mainly in the role of colleagues, rather than third parties in a managerial position; that sex workers have a mix of experiences with third parties, and experiences with wider work relations are generally more positive than experiences with third parties in a managerial position; that sex workers commonly leave unsatisfactory work situations and workplace, and display high levels of labour mobility; and that, due to high levels of mobility amongst participants, sex workers in different areas of sex work are not discreet and distinct groups. In this chapter, these contributions will be discussed with reference to the research questions they correspond with. Secondly, this research has produced a conceptual contribution: the development of the concept of wider work relations. Finally, methodologically, the use of community-transferred financial compensation of research participants has been developed and implemented. The overarching thesis is that the majority of third party relationships are better theorised as 'wider work relations' in order to conceptually distinguish between third parties in managerial positions and wider work relations (third parties who do not hold managerial power or control over workers). Reconceptualising the relationships between sex workers and third parties this way makes it clear that workers would benefit from the decriminalisation of third parties, since third party criminalisation makes workplaces insecure and increases precarity amongst sex workers, thus restricting their agency to work in a manner of their choosing.

## 8.1 Empirical contributions

In answering the research question “How do current legal frameworks relating to third parties affect sex workers’ working conditions and experiences?”, the first empirical finding is that many sex workers are unclear on the legal status of third parties in sex work. Participants emphasise the importance of differences between the technical legality or illegality of certain third party roles, and their assessment of the likelihood of police enforcement of these offences. They also point out that the likelihood of policing and of the effects of contact with the police depend on the context and privileges of the individual worker: migrant workers are concerned about losing their migration status and potentially being deported due to contact with the police, and several participants point out that less privileged workers face a higher likelihood of prosecution. Though further investigation of the legal status of third parties, as well as caselaw and policing data, is needed, it seems that legislation criminalising third parties is interpreted very broadly. This means that third parties can be convicted for controlling a sex worker even if the control was consented to or sought out, that workers can be convicted for assisting in the control of themselves, and that the only workplaces not technically criminalised are those owned by the worker – or where sex work is hidden from the landlord – while the sex worker works alone. This has the effect that many workers feel they have to choose between breaking the law or working in ways that are less safe and without support that would be useful to them.

The second empirical finding is that a large majority of sex working participants feels that changes to the legal status of some or all third parties, either decriminalisation or other legal change, is the main way to improve the safety or quality of their relationships with third parties. Those participants who argue for decriminalisation of third parties say that decriminalisation will improve their access to better workplaces, will improve their access to worker rights within those workplaces, and will improve their agency within their relationships with third parties. Some participants prefer a system of regulation, or of partial decriminalisation of some but not all third parties. Additionally, sex workers emphasise the importance of access to labour rights, the ability to employ third parties legally, fiscal integration into society, access to justice, and the reduction of sex work stigma within society. Sex workers participating in this research especially emphasise that they want the ability to work together with colleagues without being criminalised.

In answering the research question “Which third party relationships exist in sex work in England?”, the prevalence of third parties, and their different roles, in different areas of sex work was mapped. It was found that the largest group of third parties encountered by sex worker participants are not in a managerial position, or non-sex working employees of managers in sex work, but colleagues.

Additionally, it was found that sex workers both take on third party roles for other workers as associates, and hire third parties as contractors to provide services for them. Additionally, a large proportion of those taking on third party roles or supporting sex worker participants are friends (both sex working and non-sex working friends), family members and romantic partners of sex workers, and in many of these cases exchanges are based around mutual support and gifting rather than financial payments for services. This shows that many (criminalised) third party relationships are informal and do not include managerial power or control. The finding that the majority of third parties engaged by participants does not hold managerial power over sex workers, shows that a conceptual distinction is needed between third parties in managerial roles and third parties who are not in a managerial role, or wider work relationships, since the power relations are notably different. The conceptualisation of wider work relationships will be further discussed in Section 8.2.

In answering the question “What experiences do sex workers in England have with third parties?”, it was found that workers have a mix of positive, negative and neutral experiences with third parties, which affect their decisions to work or not work with third parties. This mix of experiences disproves the assumption, inherent in the criminalisation of third parties, that all third parties have negative effects on sex workers or are controlling or abusive. However, participants in this research have more negative experiences with third parties in a managerial position than with wider work relations, especially with colleagues. It was found that managerial power is both resisted by cooperation between sex workers and wider work relations, and can be enforced by wider work relations hired by managers. Additionally, although some workers report positive experiences with working completely without third parties, participants also discuss that lone working increases their sense of isolation, as well as creating unsafety for workers.

Finally, in answering the question “How is sex workers’ agency – including agency in the form of labour mobility power – used, enabled and restricted in relation to third parties?”, the first empirical finding is that the majority of participants has worked in two or more areas of sex work, which means there is significant overlap between workers in different types of full-service sex workplaces. This means that, for the purposes of research, sex workers in any one area of sex work should not be considered a discreet group separate from sex workers in other areas of sex work. Research on sex work should not only focus on the current area of sex work participants are employed in, and base analysis only on this work area, but should explore temporal and spatial aspects of sex workers’ movements throughout their careers.

The second empirical finding in relation to sex workers’ use of agency and third parties, is that a large majority of sex workers use labour mobility power as a form of agency. Sex workers are able to – and

commonly do – leave unsatisfactory work situations and workplaces, displaying high levels of mobility power. This disproves the assumption, inherent in the criminalisation of third parties, that sex workers’ ability to leave third parties and workplaces is low. Participants move from managed to unmanaged work and the other way, since what is considered an acceptable or even good work environment depends on the individual worker’s needs. This also shows that there is no single direction of labour mobility as a solution to the precarities experienced by workers in sex work, and that labour mobility is ambivalent since it can both be a tool of worker agency and a response to a lack of ability to change bad working environments. Finally, agency and labour mobility power of sex workers are enabled by knowledge of the sector and access to community resources and information, and is restricted by isolation, bad and abusive management, the criminalisation of workplaces and co-working, and stigma towards sex work within society.

## 8.2 Wider work relations

Since the majority of third parties discussed by participants are not in a managerial role, it is both legally and sociologically important to differentiate between third parties in a managerial position and other third parties, which have been conceptualised as wider work relations in this work. Wider work relations are defined as all roles – beyond the worker, manager and client or customer – who are not in a managerial position over workers (and therefore do not have control over workers’ pay, time or work, do not directly profit off workers’ labour, and whom the worker does not have dependency on), yet who provide services or support to a worker which directly enable them to do their work. While wider work relations generally have less or no power over sex workers and their work environment, they can have a large impact on sex workers’ wellbeing, safety and success at work. In contrast to relationships with third parties in a managerial position, wider work relations can include mutual support as well as situations in which sex workers hire third parties. The fact that wider work relations are assumed by legislators to hold power over workers is unique to sex work, and in other (informal) industries wider work relations are not thought to control (co-)workers. Therefore, in order to critique the unusually wide reach of third party criminalisation, the concept of wider work relations provides a useful comparison between industries. A legal distinction between third parties in a managerial position and wider work relations can even be used if sex work were to be fully decriminalised: a distinction between third parties in a managerial position and wider work relations would be essential

to employment tribunals, for instance in cases related to wage theft or discriminatory hiring procedures.

This work argues that the concept of wider work relations can be used to investigate the web of social and work relationships that enable and support workers in other industries, especially with regards to informal and gig work. It is clear from this research that the fact that wider work relations do not hold managerial power over workers, does not mean that they cannot have a large impact on workers, including on their safety, wellbeing and success at work. Exporting this awareness of the influence of wider work relations to other areas of work and employment research, opens up avenues of investigation into the ways workers depend on the support of a web of interpersonal relationships in order to be able to work, even – or perhaps especially – in the absence of an official employer.

### 8.3 Community-transferred financial compensation

Although best practice in sex work research is to either do research that directly positively impacts participants (Brinkmann, 2013), or to pay sex worker participants for the time and expertise they share as part of participation (Jeffreys and Regional Think Tank on Sex Worker Research Indonesia, 2010; Marcus et al., 2016; Phipps, 2015), this can at times be difficult to balance with the specific needs sex workers have while taking part in research. Due to the fact that sex workers have a higher need for anonymity than the average research participant, any forms of payment that require personal information to be shared with the researcher can be less suitable. This is especially the case when research does not take place in person, and therefore cash payments to participants cannot be made. For this reason, community-transferred financial compensation (CTFC) of research participants was developed and successfully implemented for this research. The goal of CTFC is to pool the compensation that would be given to individual participants and donate it to organisations that directly benefit the community participants are part of. In this way, participants are indirectly compensated for sharing their time and expertise with the researcher, without having to share potentially identifying financial information.

Important factors for the successful use of CTFC are that the community organisations chosen are in good standing within the community researched, have a direct connection with the community participants are part of, should not be so controversial as to prevent potential participants from taking part, and should be diverse enough to speak to a wide range of potential participants. Additionally,

compensation should be fair for the time investment needed for participation, the impact of the use of CTFC on the sample should be considered and explicitly discussed within the research, and if more direct methods of participant compensation are possible, they should be considered first. The use of CTFC, using the principles above, was well-received by participants in this research, many of whom shared the survey link within their networks and with colleagues. Community-transferred financial compensation has already successfully been used in projects by other researchers, both within sex work research and in the field of work and employment relations more broadly.

#### 8.4 Implications for research and policy

Following from the empirical findings, this work concludes that sex workers, as highly mobile workers with a range of experiences with third parties and the ability to leave unsatisfactory workplaces, would benefit from the decriminalisation of third parties, since the broad interpretation of third party criminalisation makes their workplaces insecure and increases precarity amongst sex workers, thus restricting their labour mobility power and their agency to work in a manner of their choosing. Since the largest group of third parties experienced by participants is not made up of those in a managerial position, but instead consists of sex working colleagues, the decriminalisation of sex workers working together for safety, company, and increased income should be prioritised in legislative change. However, as both sex worker participants and sex worker-led organisations argue, the decriminalisation of all third parties and workplaces would increase rather than decrease sex workers' agency over their work, since it would allow sex workers access to labour rights as workers:

*“If I had legal rights at work through decriminalisation, my manager would have less power over me” (trans non-binary, 20, British)*

In relation to sex work research, this work has shown that sex workers in different work environments are not distinct groups and should not be analysed as such. It emphasises the importance of a temporal axis to sex work research, since it opens up avenues of comparison and analysis of change in sex workers' experiences throughout their careers. Additionally, it advocates for the use of the concept of wider work relations in both sex work research and the field of work and employment, in order to expand both fields' understanding of the impact of persons beyond the manager-worker-client relationships on the labour process. Finally, as part of this research, the practice of community-transferred financial compensation of participants has been developed and implemented. CTFC has

already successfully been used both within the field of sex work studies and in the wider field of work and employment relations.

In light of both the empirical findings and the conceptual contributions of this research, it is clear that third parties in sex work need to be considered through a more nuanced lens. Through the rich data of this study, it is clear that a focus on the experiences of sex workers, rather than the assumptions underlying public and legislative debates, allows us to acknowledge the wide variety in experiences sex workers have with third parties. Due to the differences in power relations and in sex workers' experiences with them, it is important to differentiate between third parties in a managerial role and wider work relations in our analyses of third parties in sex work. The effects of the current criminalisation of third parties – the fact that it does not prevent abusive management from taking place, but it does limit workers' access to alternative workplaces, co-working for safety, and access to labour protections – should encourage us to focus on interventions and legislation that increase the agency of sex workers within their relationships with third parties. And finally, this work encourages researchers and legislators to centre the voices of sex workers, who share their views on third parties from a place of deep experience and knowledge:

*“My duo partner, a friend outside of the industry, makes me feel safe. She has been in the industry longer than me, and has been so invaluable, teaching me the small things a new worker would only learn through bad mistakes. I feel safe when I'm working with her.” (cis woman, 25, British)*



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## Appendix 1 – Demographic data on participants

### Age

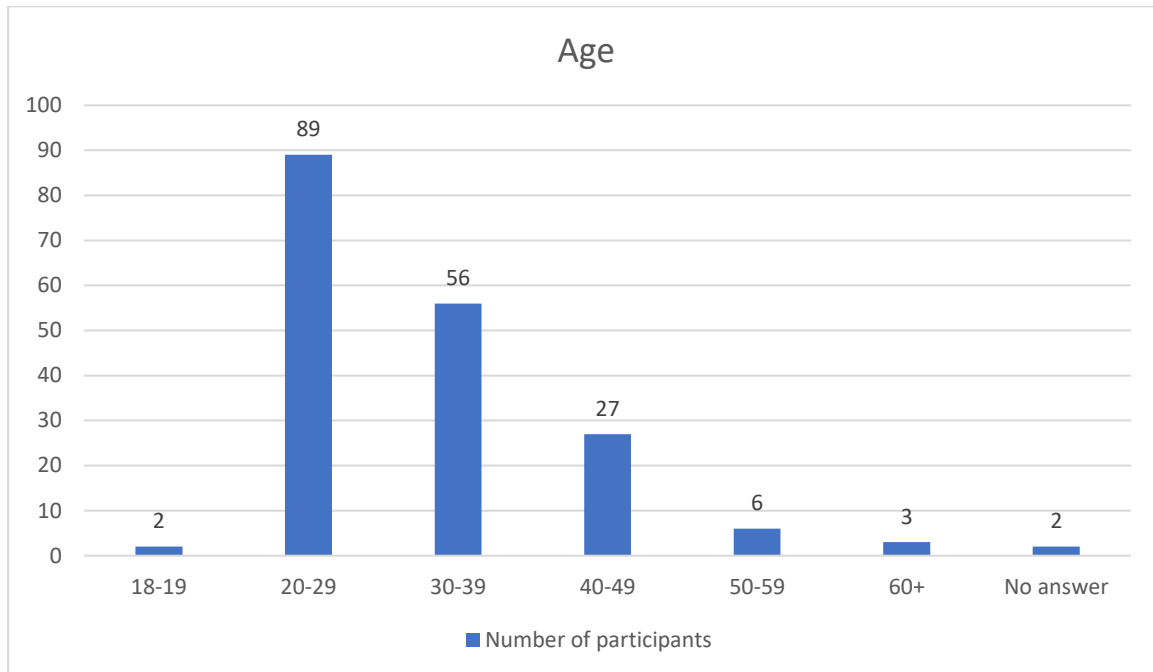


Figure 25: Participant ages

### Gender

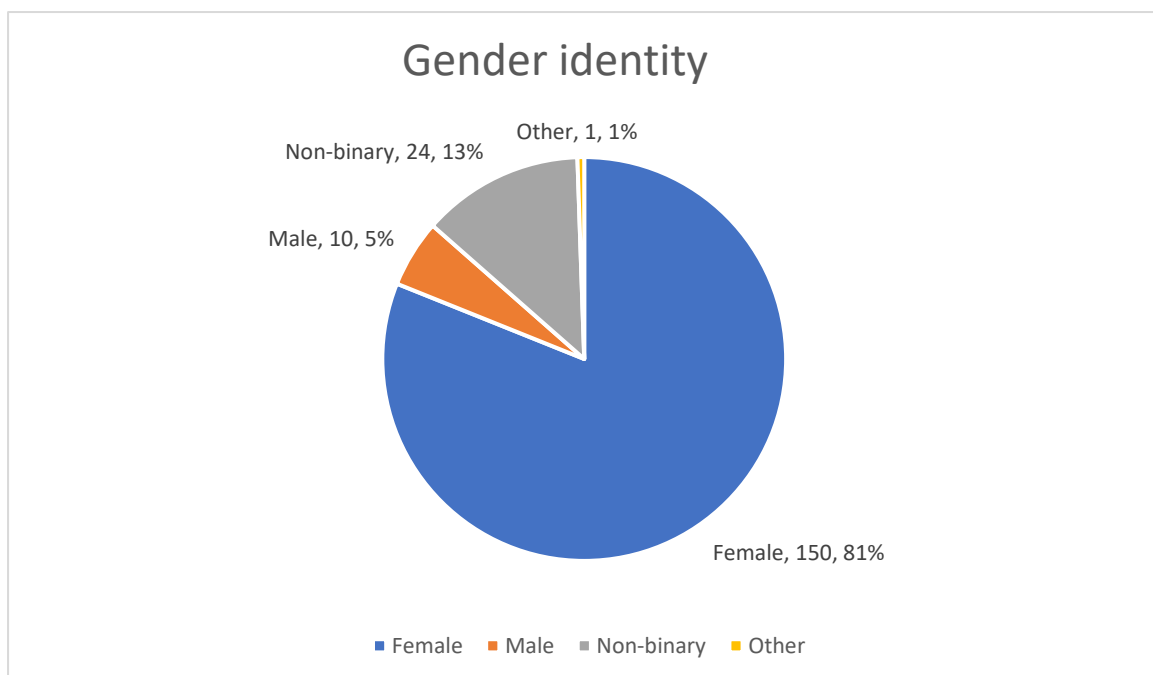


Figure 26: Participant gender identity

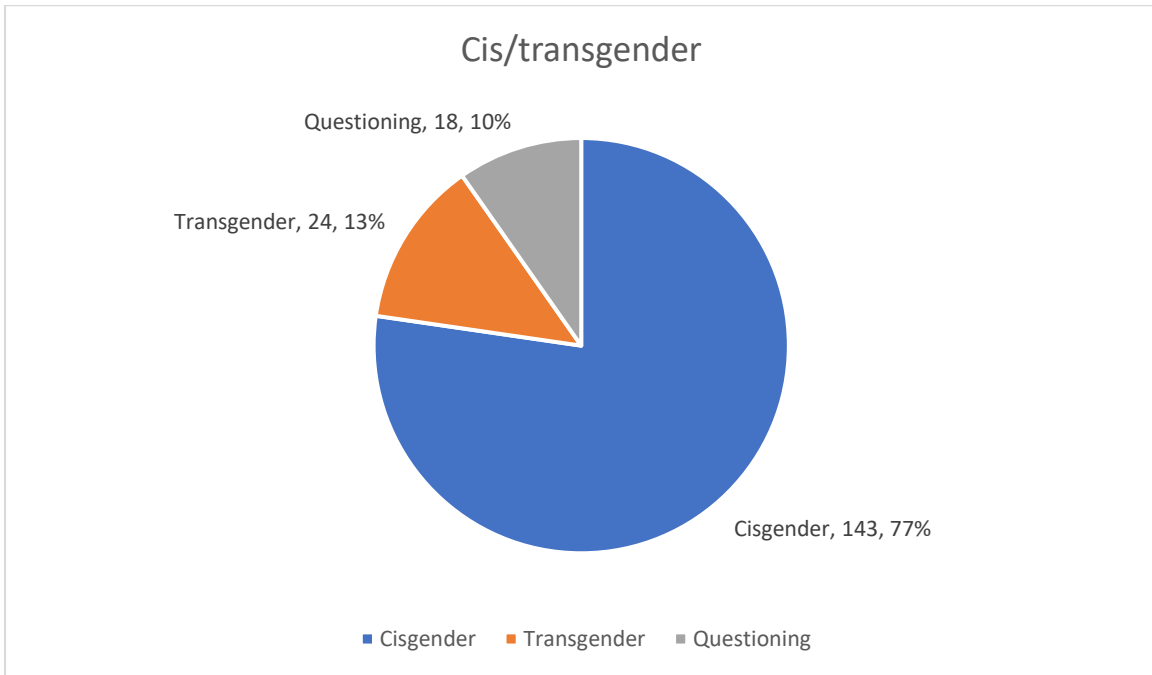


Figure 27: Participant cis/trans gender status

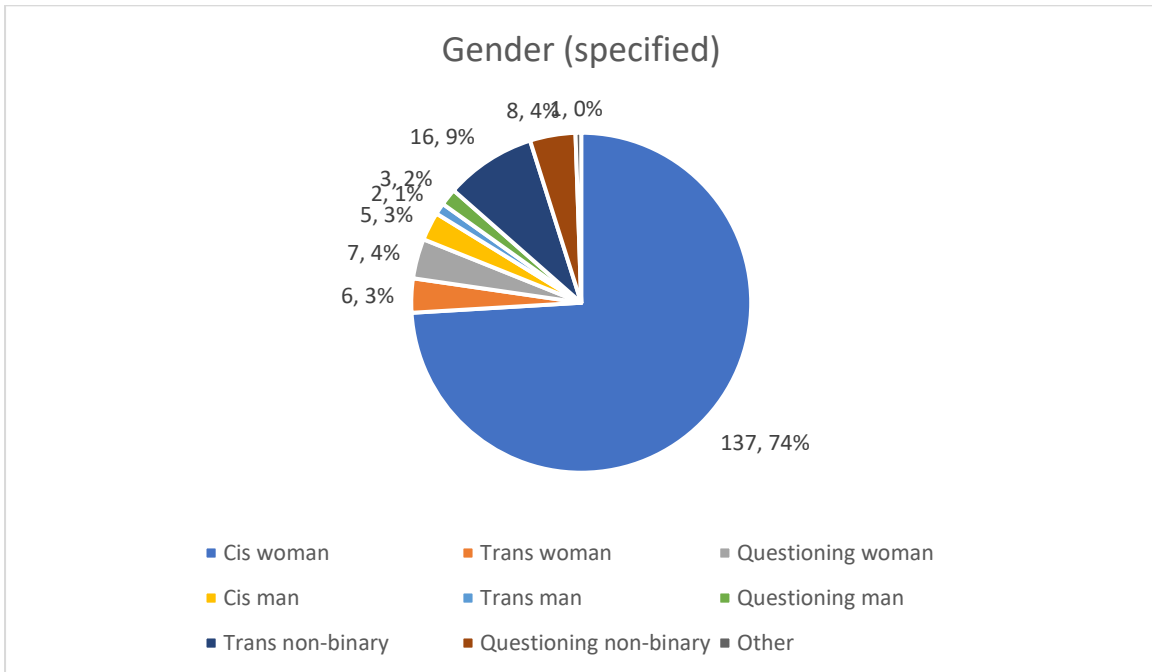


Figure 28: Participant gender – specified

## Length of time in sex work

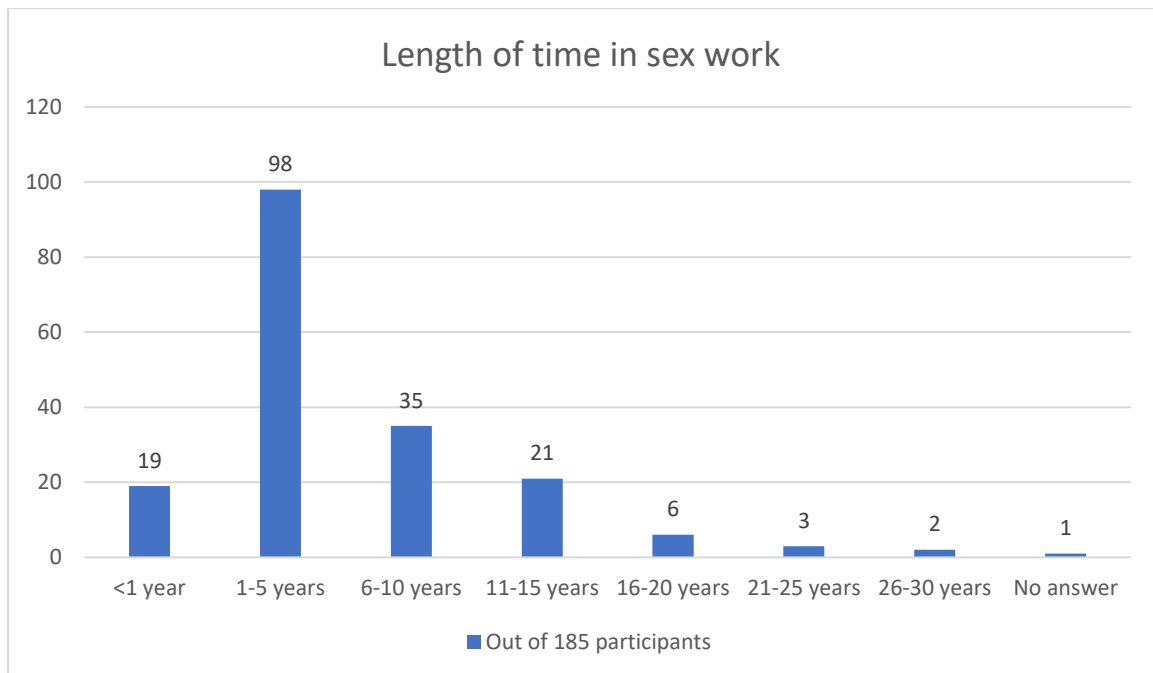


Figure 29: Participant time in sex work

## Migration status

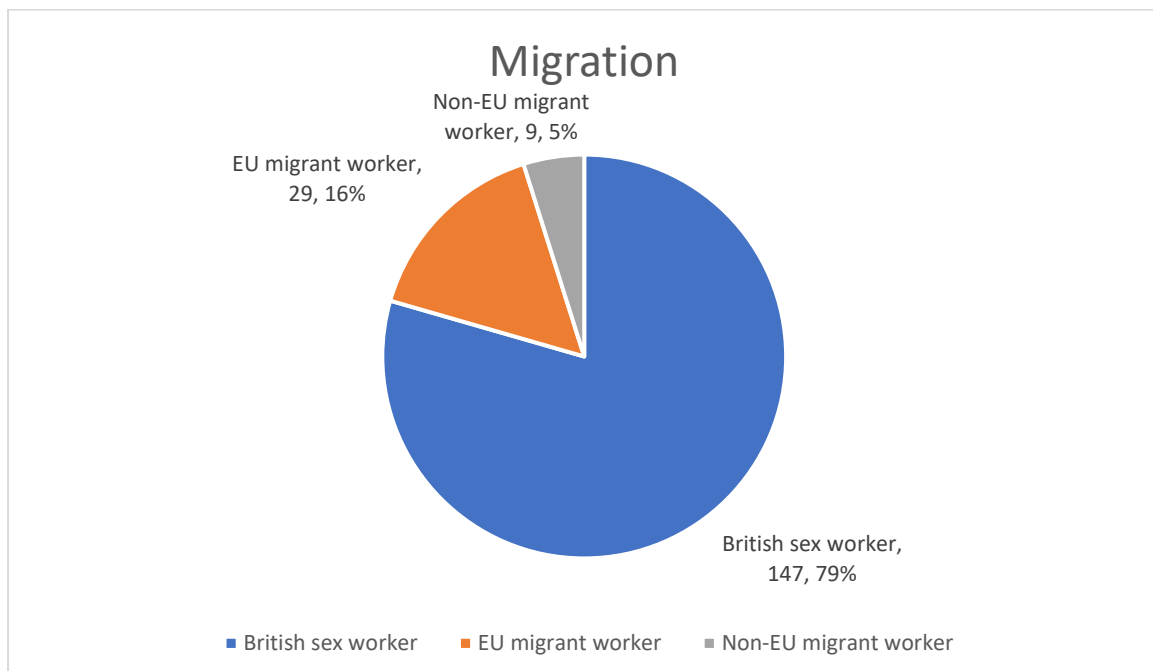


Figure 30: Participant migration status

Migrant participants have been in the UK between 3 months and 29 years. Two participants travel to the UK to do sex work for short periods of time, rather than living in the UK.

## Parent status

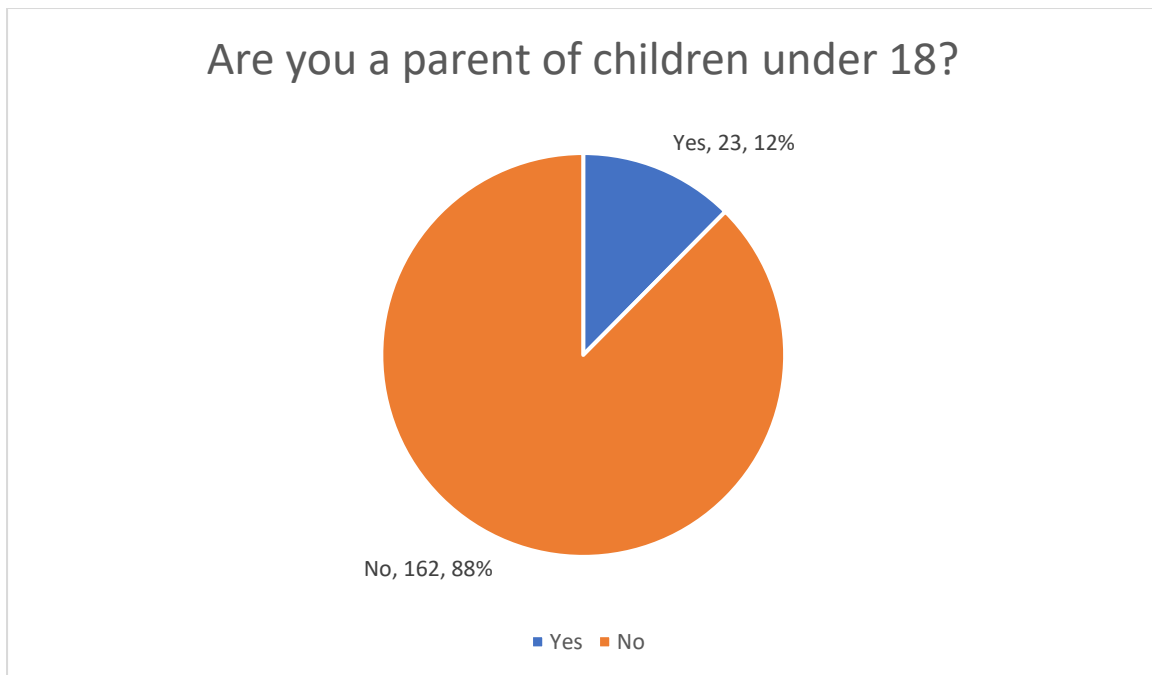


Figure 31: Participant parent status

## Ethnicity

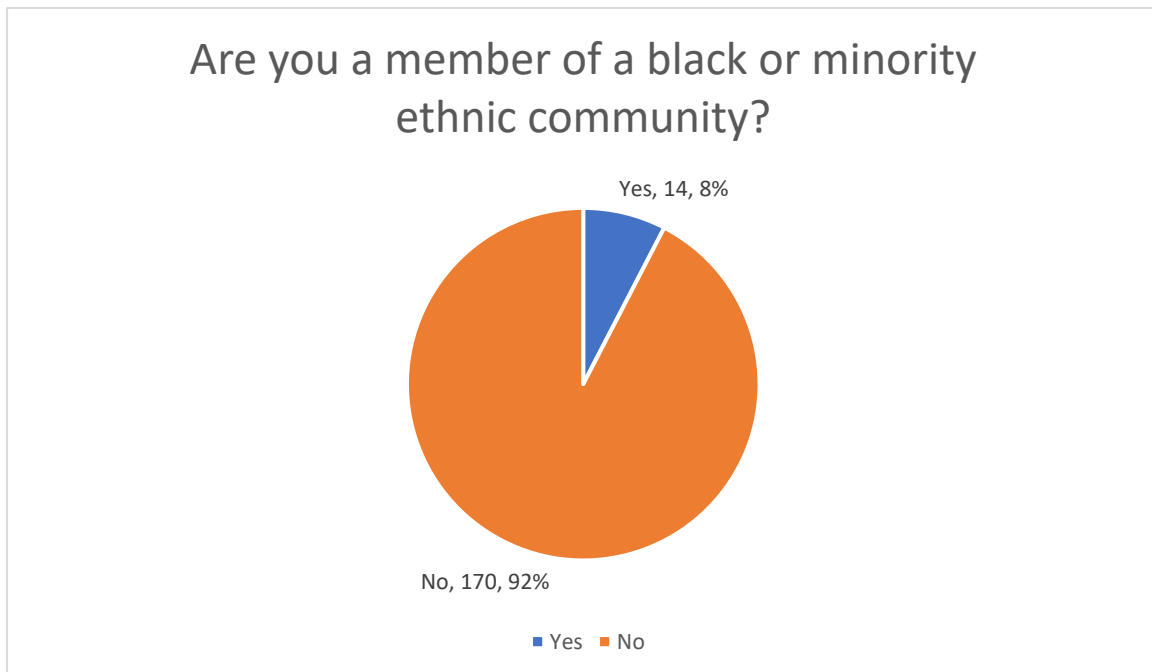


Figure 32: Participant ethnicity

## Disability

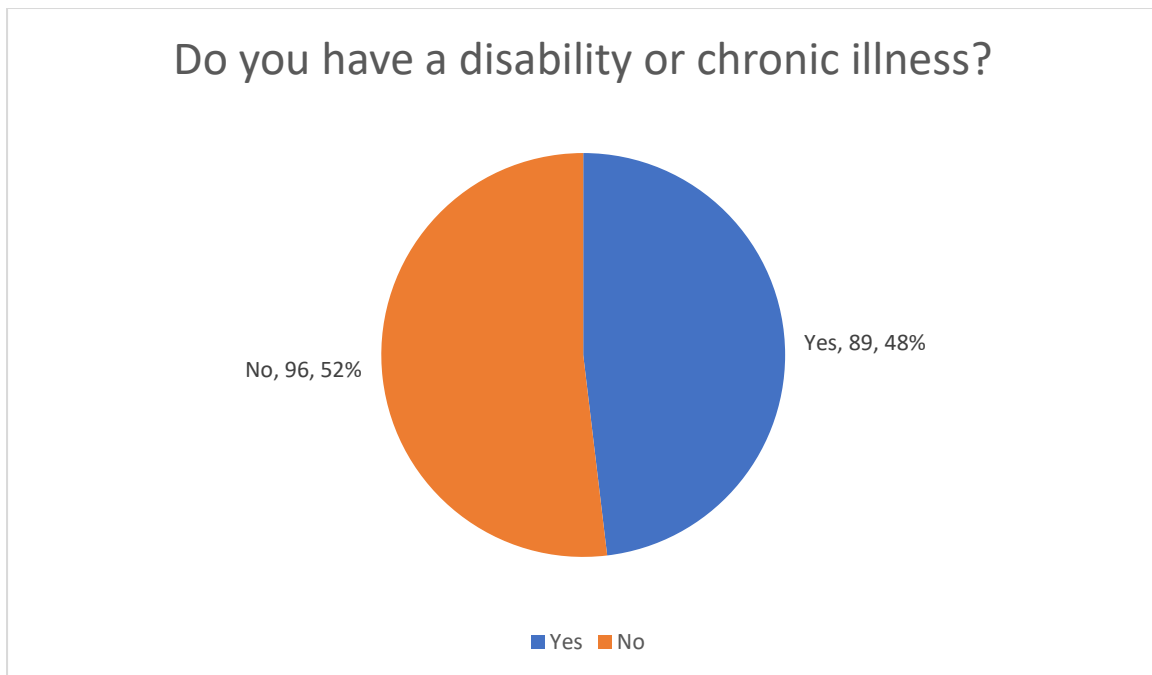


Figure 33: Participant disability status

## Sexuality

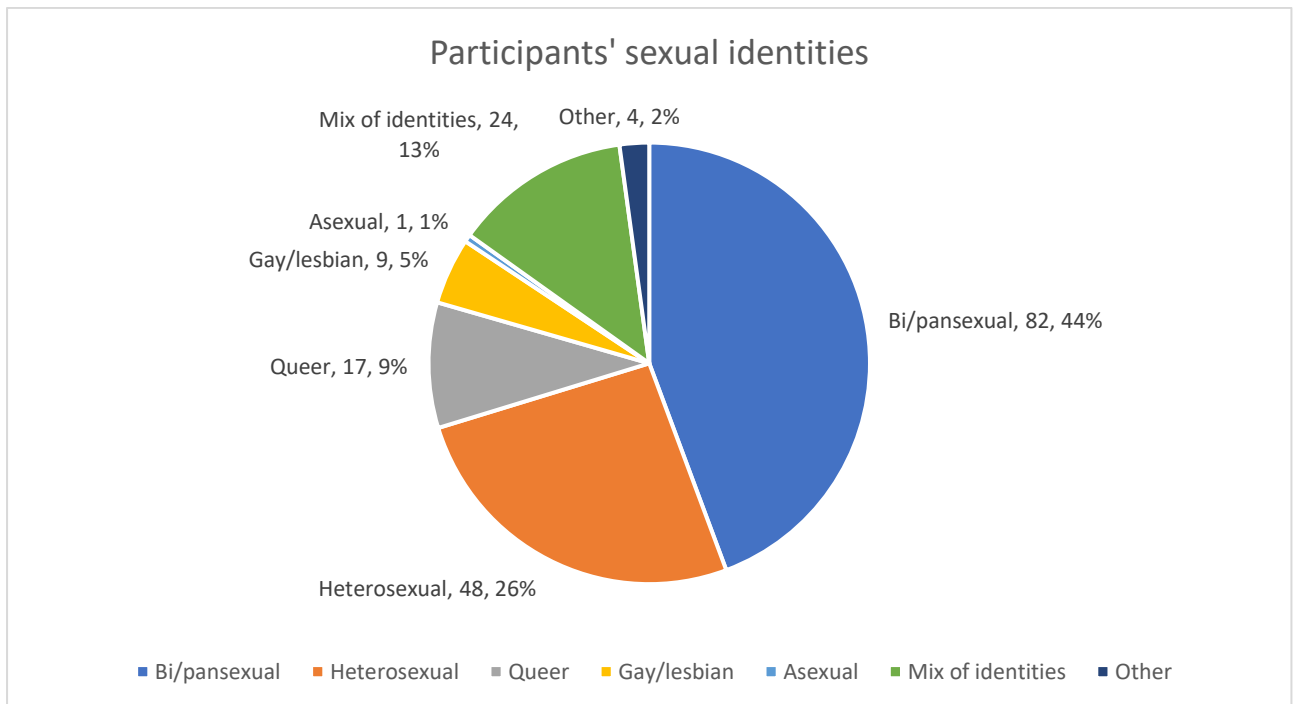


Figure 34: Participant sexual identity

## Other sources of income

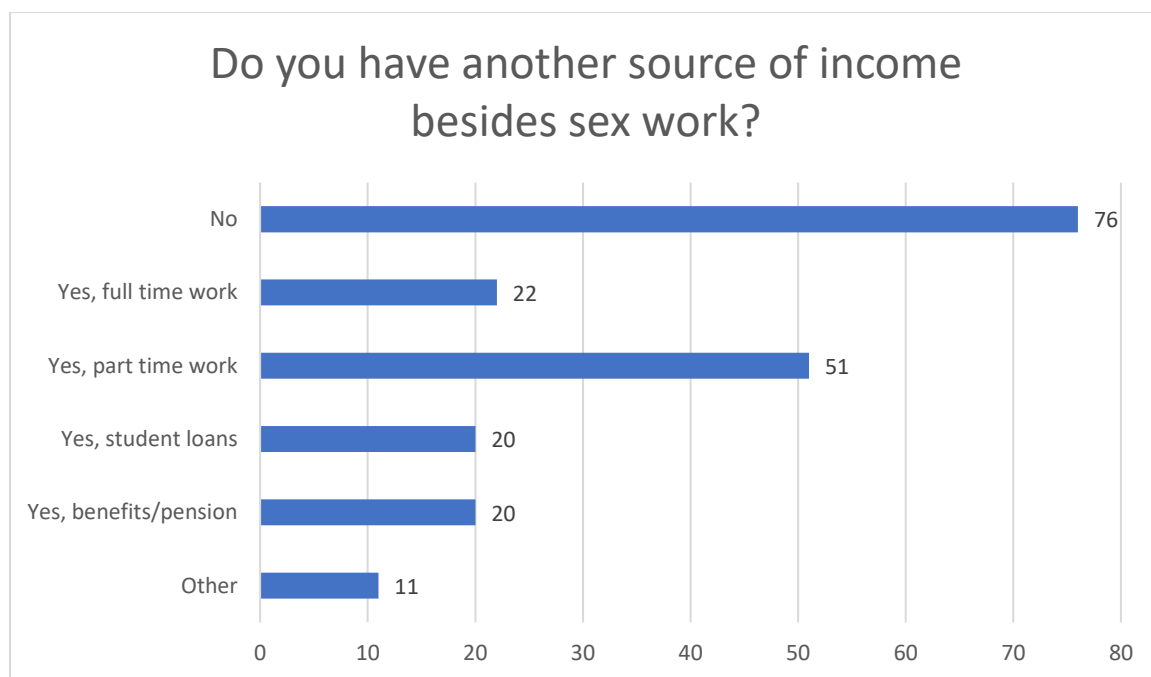


Figure 35: Participant other sources of income

## Appendix 2 – Survey map

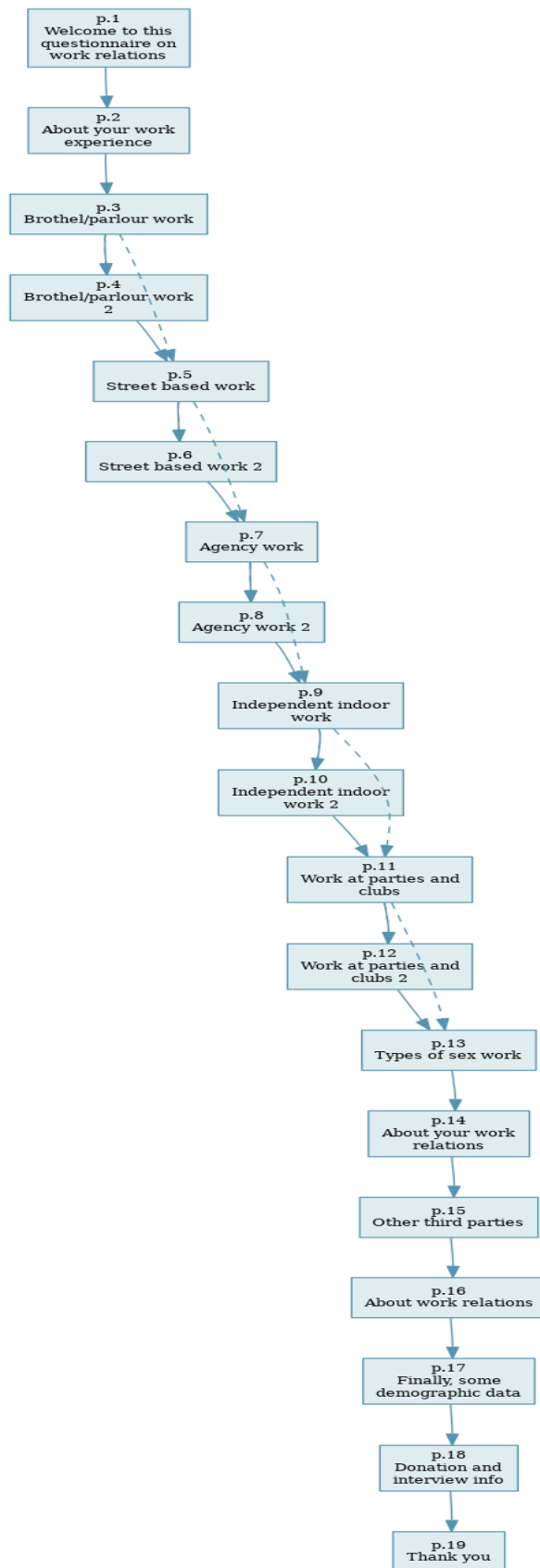


Figure 36: Survey map

## SW Work Relationships

0%

0% complete

### Welcome to this questionnaire on work relations

This anonymous questionnaire is asking current sex workers about their experiences with work relations such as colleagues, managers and others.

Are you a **full service sex worker** at the moment (meaning you do work in which you have physical contact and sex with clients), **over 18**, and **working in England**?

Yes to all 3

No

*If yes:* Welcome to this research. I really appreciate you taking part! This questionnaire is **completely anonymous** and you will not be asked to share any identifying information.

**At the end of this questionnaire you can choose one of 4 sex work organisations (ECP, SWARM, X:talk, and NUM) and I will donate £2.50 to that organisation in thanks for your participation.**

This research is done by Lilith Brouwers at the Business School of the University of Leeds. If you have any questions about this questionnaire or the research, you can contact me at [bnlheb@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:bnlheb@leeds.ac.uk)

Next



# SW Work Relationships

5%

5% complete

## About your work experience

The questionnaire will take 5-10 minutes to fill in. You can answer the open questions with as much or as little information as you want.

How long have you been doing sex work? (in years and/or months)

Do you have another source of income besides sex work?

- No
- Yes, full time work
- Yes, part time work
- Yes, student loans
- Yes, benefits/pension
- Other

Do you see clients who are:

- Only women
- Only men
- Both women and men
- Other

Next

## SW Work Relationships

11%

11% complete

### Brothel/parlour work

Have you ever done indoor sex work in a brothel or parlour?

Yes

No

Next

# SW Work Relationships

16%

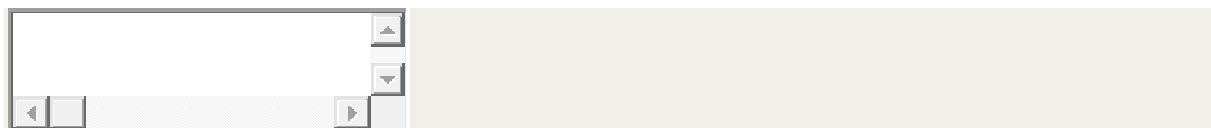
16% complete

## Brothel/parlour work 2

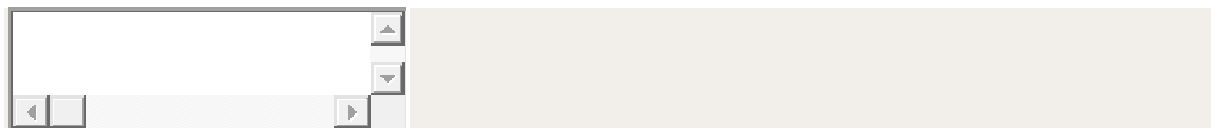
When you worked in a brothel or parlour, was there a:

- Manager?
- Brothel/parlour owner?
- Maid?
- Receptionist?
- Colleagues?
- Security staff?
- Cleaner?
- None of these
- Other

How do/did these people affect your work? (If you've worked in more than one brothel/parlour, you can write about them separately here.)

A large, empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard text area controls: a vertical scrollbar on the right side and horizontal scrollbars at the bottom.

How do/did these people affect your wellbeing? (If you've worked in more than one brothel/parlour, you can write about them separately here.)

A large, empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard text area controls: a vertical scrollbar on the right side and horizontal scrollbars at the bottom.

Next

## SW Work Relationships

22%

22% complete

### Street based work

Have you ever done street based sex work?

Yes

No

Next

# SW Work Relationships

27%

27% complete

## Street based work 2

When you did street based work, did you have:

- Someone recruiting clients for you?
- Colleagues?
- Someone being paid to keep you safe?
- None of these
- Other

How do/did these people affect your work? (If you've worked in more than one location, you can write about them separately here.)

A text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains no text. On the right side, there are two small square buttons with upward and downward arrows. On the bottom left, there are two small square buttons with leftward and rightward arrows.

How do/did these people affect your wellbeing? (If you've worked in more than one location, you can write about them separately here.)

A text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains no text. On the right side, there are two small square buttons with upward and downward arrows. On the bottom left, there are two small square buttons with leftward and rightward arrows.

Next

# SW Work Relationships

33%

33% complete

## Agency work

Have you ever done sex work through an agency? (this can be outcalls to homes/hotels, incalls in hotels, or incalls in your own home)

Yes

No

Next

# SW Work Relationships



38% complete

## Agency work 2

When you worked via an agency, was there a:

- Manager?
- Agency owner?
- Receptionist?
- Admin staff?
- Colleagues?
- Driver?
- Security staff?
- None of these
- Other

How do/did these people affect your work? (If you've worked for more than one agency, you can write about them separately here.)

A large, empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard text area navigation icons (back, forward, home, end) at the bottom.

How do/did these people affect your wellbeing? (If you've worked for more than one agency, you can write about them separately here.)

A large, empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard text area navigation icons (back, forward, home, end) at the bottom.

**Next**

## SW Work Relationships

44%

44% complete

### Independent indoor work

Have you ever done independent (without a boss or manager) indoor work? (this can be outcalls to homes/hotels, incalls in hotels, incalls in your own home, or touring different cities/countries)

Yes

No

Next



# SW Work Relationships



50% complete

## Independent indoor work 2

When you worked independently, did you have:

- Colleagues or duo partners?
- A housemate who also did sex work?
- Someone paid to keep you safe?
- A regular driver?
- None of these
- Other

How do/did these people affect your work?

A large, empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

How do/did these people affect your wellbeing?

A large, empty text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It includes standard scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

Next

## SW Work Relationships

55%

55% complete

### Work at parties and clubs

Have you ever done sex work at sex clubs or fetish/kink clubs or parties?

Yes

No

Next

# SW Work Relationships

61%

61% complete

## Work at parties and clubs 2

When you worked at sex parties/clubs or at kink parties/clubs, did you:

- Organise these yourself?
- Get hired by an organiser/owner?
- Have colleagues working there with you?
- Hire someone to do (some of or all) the organising or marketing for you?
- Work with security or cleaning staff?
- None of these
- Other

How do/did these people affect your work? (If you've worked at more than one club or party, you can write about them separately here.)

How do/did these people affect your wellbeing? (If you've worked at more than one club or party, you can write about them separately here.)

Next

## SW Work Relationships

66%

66% complete

### Types of sex work

This questionnaire asked about 5 types of sex work (Brothel/parlour work, Street based work, Agency work, Independent work, and Clubs or parties). Have you done any other types of sex work not mentioned yet?

- No
- Yes

If you selected Yes, which other types of work have you done?

Next

# SW Work Relationships

72%

72% complete

## About your work relations

Do you **currently** have a manager or someone else who has power over either your work hours or over which clients you see?

- No
- Yes

Has a romantic partner of yours ever been involved with, or helped you with, your work? For instance, as a colleague, as a manager, as a safety call, or doing any other work to support your sex work?

- No
- Yes

Does this person get a cut of the money you make? Can you write a bit more about that?

Have friends or acquaintances ever been involved with, or helped you with, your work?

- No
- Yes

Did you pay them for their involvement or help? Can you write a bit more about that?

Next

# SW Work Relationships

77%

77% complete

## Other third parties

Have you ever hired/paid one of the following people in your sex work?

- Photographer or videographer
- Assistant/personal assistant
- Security staff
- Maid/receptionist
- Cleaner for your work space
- Regular driver
- Taxi/Uber drivers
- Accountant
- Paid a friend to help you with work
- Hotels/landlords for a workspace
- A duo-partner for a threesome with a client
- Web developers, hosting companies etc.
- Paid for advertisements online, in print, or in directories?
- Used free online or print directories?
- None of these
- Other

Have you ever had someone help you with work (like finding clients, taking photos, being a safety call for you, or anything else) in exchange for something other than money?

No

Yes

If you had to define the term 'pimp', how would you define it?

With this definition, have you ever had/worked with a pimp?

No

Yes

Have you ever (tick all that apply):

Given advice to someone who wanted to start sex work?

Asked for advice on how to do sex work before you started work yourself?

Been paid to give advice or training to other sex workers?

Shared a workspace (at home, at a hotel, or any other workspace you paid for) with another sex worker?

None of these

Next

# SW Work Relationships



83% complete

## About work relations

Did you know that all the people mentioned in this questionnaire as work relations (managers, colleagues, employees, contractors, people you have paid or who have done work for you, etc.) are criminalised in England at the moment?

Yes

No

Does the fact that these work relations are criminalised/illegal affect your work or your safety in any way?

A rectangular text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains no text and has vertical and horizontal scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

What would make your relationships with these people better or safer for you?

A rectangular text input field with a light gray background and a thin border. It contains no text and has vertical and horizontal scrollbars on the right and bottom edges.

Next



# SW Work Relationships

88%

88% complete

## Finally, some demographic data

What is your age?

Please enter a number.

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-Binary
- Other

If you selected Other, you can explain more here:

Are you:

- Cisgender (the same gender you were assigned at birth)
- Transgender (a different gender from the one you were assigned at birth)
- Not sure (questioning your gender identity)
- Or, not sure you understand the question (this is no problem, just tick this box)

Are you:

- A British sex worker
- An EU migrant sex worker
- A non-EU migrant sex worker?

If you are a migrant, how long have you been in the UK?

Are you a parent with children under 18?

Yes, I have children under 18

No, I don't have children under 18

Are you a member of a black or minority ethnic community?

Yes

No

Are you:

Straight/heterosexual

Gay/lesbian

Bi/pansexual

Asexual

Queer

Other

Do you have a disability or chronic illness?

Yes

No

Next

# SW Work Relationships

94%

94% complete

## Donation and interview info

Those were all the questions. I am donating £2.50 to a sex work charity for every questionnaire filled in. You can choose which of these charities you would like to donate your £2.50 to:

- English Collective of Prostitutes (<http://prostitutescollective.net>)
- SWARM (<https://www.swarmcollective.org>)
- X:talk (<http://www.xtalkproject.net>)
- National Ugly Mugs (<https://uknswp.org/um>)

As a follow-up to this questionnaire, I would like to do some interviews in early 2019. If you'd like to take part, you can share your contact details below.

The interview will take around an hour, and you will receive £100 for sharing your time and knowledge. This will be in a location that suits you most, and if you prefer we can have the interview over the phone or via chat.

**Your contact information won't be saved together with your questionnaire answers, and will be securely stored and deleted as soon as possible. Your questionnaire answers will stay completely anonymous and can't be connected to you.**

If you would be interested in being interviewed for this research, please fill in your email address or phone number here:

If you would like to be contacted about taking part in future research on sex work, please fill in your email address or phone number here:

Finish

# SW Work Relationships

100%

100% complete

## Thank you

Thank you for taking part in this research and for sharing your expertise! If you have any questions you can contact me (Lilith Brouwers) at [bnlheb@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:bnlheb@leeds.ac.uk)  
It would be really helpful if you could share the link to this questionnaire on social media or with sex workers you know: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>

If any of the questions in this questionnaire have left you feeling like you could use some support, here are some organisations that can help:

**National Ugly Mugs** - <https://uknswp.org/um> - NUM sends out warning emails and texts about dangerous clients in your area. They can also support you with problems, or liaise with the police if you're thinking of reporting a crime anonymously.

**SAAFE** - <https://saafe.info> – SAAFE has an advice website and a forum for independent sex workers. They offer advice on all topics to do with sex work.

**The English Collective of Prostitutes** - <http://prostitutescollective.net> - Sex worker-led organisation that educates sex workers about their rights, and supports sex workers on the topics of custody, police mistreatment, and migration.

**SWARM** (Sex Worker advocacy and Resistance Movement) - <https://www.swarmcollective.org> - SWARM is sex worker led and organises regular social meetings in several cities for sex workers to socialise and exchange advice.

**X:talk** - <http://www.xtalkproject.net> - X:talk is sex worker led and organises weekly English lessons for migrant sex workers in London. They also host a radio show called Radio AvA, and regular workshops on sex worker skills.

If you need to talk and would like someone non-judgmental to listen, you can contact Samaritans: <https://www.samaritans.org>

## Appendix 4 – Third party legislation text

### Sexual Offences Act 1956

#### SECTION 33:

IT IS AN OFFENCE FOR A PERSON TO KEEP A BROTHEL, OR TO MANAGE, OR ACT OR ASSIST IN THE MANAGEMENT OF, A BROTHEL.

#### SECTION 33A:

(1) IT IS AN OFFENCE FOR A PERSON TO KEEP, OR TO MANAGE, OR ACT OR ASSIST IN THE MANAGEMENT OF, A BROTHEL TO WHICH PEOPLE RESORT FOR PRACTICES INVOLVING PROSTITUTION (WHETHER OR NOT ALSO FOR OTHER PRACTICES).

(2) IN THIS SECTION “PROSTITUTION” HAS THE MEANING GIVEN BY SECTION 51(2) OF THE SEXUAL OFFENCES ACT 2003.

#### SECTION 51:

[(2) FOR THE PURPOSES OF SECTIONS 48 TO 50, A PERSON (B) IS SEXUALLY EXPLOITED IF—

(A) ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION AND WHETHER OR NOT COMPELLED TO DO SO, B OFFERS OR PROVIDES SEXUAL SERVICES TO ANOTHER PERSON IN RETURN FOR PAYMENT OR A PROMISE OF PAYMENT TO B OR A THIRD PERSON, OR

(B) AN INDECENT IMAGE OF B IS RECORDED [OR STREAMED OR OTHERWISE TRANSMITTED];

AND “SEXUAL EXPLOITATION” IS TO BE INTERPRETED ACCORDINGLY.]

(3) IN SUBSECTION (2), “PAYMENT” MEANS ANY FINANCIAL ADVANTAGE, INCLUDING THE DISCHARGE OF AN OBLIGATION TO PAY OR THE PROVISION OF GOODS OR SERVICES (INCLUDING SEXUAL SERVICES) GRATUITOUSLY OR AT A DISCOUNT.

#### SECTION 34:

IT IS AN OFFENCE FOR THE LESSOR OR LANDLORD OF ANY PREMISES OR HIS AGENT TO LET THE WHOLE OR PART OF THE PREMISES WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS TO BE USED, IN WHOLE OR IN PART, AS A BROTHEL, OR, WHERE THE WHOLE OR PART OF THE PREMISES IS USED AS A BROTHEL, TO BE WILFULLY A PARTY TO THAT USE CONTINUING.

SECTION 35:

IT IS AN OFFENCE FOR THE TENANT OR OCCUPIER, OR PERSON IN CHARGE, OF ANY PREMISES KNOWINGLY TO PERMIT THE WHOLE OR PART OF THE PREMISES TO BE USED AS A BROTHEL.

SECTION 36:

IT IS AN OFFENCE FOR THE TENANT OR OCCUPIER OF ANY PREMISES KNOWINGLY TO PERMIT THE WHOLE OR PART OF THE PREMISES TO BE USED FOR THE PURPOSES OF HABITUAL PROSTITUTION [ (WHETHER ANY PROSTITUTE INVOLVED IS MALE OR FEMALE)].

## Sexual Offences Act 2003

SECTION 52(1):

A PERSON COMMITS AN OFFENCE IF—

- (a) HE INTENTIONALLY CAUSES OR INCITES ANOTHER PERSON TO BECOME A PROSTITUTE IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, AND
- (b) HE DOES SO FOR OR IN THE EXPECTATION OF GAIN FOR HIMSELF OR A THIRD PERSON.

SECTION 53(1):

A PERSON COMMITS AN OFFENCE IF—

- (a) HE INTENTIONALLY CONTROLS ANY OF THE ACTIVITIES OF ANOTHER PERSON RELATING TO THAT PERSON'S PROSTITUTION IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, AND
- (b) HE DOES SO FOR OR IN THE EXPECTATION OF GAIN FOR HIMSELF OR A THIRD PERSON.

## Modern Slavery Act 2015

### SECTION 2 – TRAFFICKING

“(1) A PERSON COMMITS AN OFFENCE IF THE PERSON ARRANGES OR FACILITATES THE TRAVEL OF ANOTHER PERSON (“V”) WITH A VIEW TO V BEING EXPLOITED.

(2) IT IS IRRELEVANT WHETHER V CONSENTS TO THE TRAVEL (WHETHER V IS AN ADULT OR A CHILD).

(3) A PERSON MAY IN PARTICULAR ARRANGE OR FACILITATE V’S TRAVEL BY RECRUITING V, TRANSPORTING OR TRANSFERRING V, HARBOURING OR RECEIVING V, OR TRANSFERRING OR EXCHANGING CONTROL OVER V.

(4) A PERSON ARRANGES OR FACILITATES V’S TRAVEL WITH A VIEW TO V BEING EXPLOITED ONLY IF—

(A) THE PERSON INTENDS TO EXPLOIT V (IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD) DURING OR AFTER THE TRAVEL,  
OR

(B) THE PERSON KNOWS OR OUGHT TO KNOW THAT ANOTHER PERSON IS LIKELY TO EXPLOIT V (IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD) DURING OR AFTER THE TRAVEL.

(5) TRAVEL MEANS—

(A) ARRIVING IN, OR ENTERING, ANY COUNTRY,

(B) DEPARTING FROM ANY COUNTRY,

(C) TRAVELLING WITHIN ANY COUNTRY.

(6) A PERSON WHO IS A UK NATIONAL COMMITS AN OFFENCE UNDER THIS SECTION REGARDLESS OF—

(A) WHERE THE ARRANGING OR FACILITATING TAKES PLACE, OR

(B) WHERE THE TRAVEL TAKES PLACE.

(7) A PERSON WHO IS NOT A UK NATIONAL COMMITS AN OFFENCE UNDER THIS SECTION IF—

(A) ANY PART OF THE ARRANGING OR FACILITATING TAKES PLACE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, OR

(B) THE TRAVEL CONSISTS OF ARRIVAL IN OR ENTRY INTO, DEPARTURE FROM, OR TRAVEL WITHIN, THE UNITED KINGDOM.”

## Obscene Publications Act 1959

### SECTION 2:

(1) SUBJECT AS HEREINAFTER PROVIDED, ANY PERSON WHO, WHETHER FOR GAIN OR NOT, PUBLISHES AN OBSCENE ARTICLE [OR WHO HAS AN OBSCENE ARTICLE FOR PUBLICATION FOR GAIN (WHETHER GAIN TO HIMSELF OR GAIN TO ANOTHER)]<sup>1</sup> SHALL BE LIABLE

## Indecent Displays (Control) Act 1981

### SECTION 1(1):

IF ANY INDECENT MATTER IS PUBLICLY DISPLAYED THE PERSON MAKING THE DISPLAY AND ANY PERSON CAUSING OR PERMITTING THE DISPLAY TO BE MADE SHALL BE GUILTY OF AN OFFENCE.

## Criminal Justice and Police Act 2001

### SECTION 46(1):

(1) A PERSON COMMITS AN OFFENCE IF—

(A) HE PLACES ON, OR IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF, A PUBLIC TELEPHONE AN ADVERTISEMENT RELATING TO PROSTITUTION, AND

(B) HE DOES SO WITH THE INTENTION THAT THE ADVERTISEMENT SHOULD COME TO THE ATTENTION OF ANY OTHER PERSON OR PERSONS.



## Metropolitan Police Act 1839

### SECTION 44:

*“...EVERY PERSON WHO SHALL HAVE OR KEEP ANY HOUSE, SHOP, ROOM, OR PLACE OF PUBLIC RESORT WITHIN THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DISTRICT, WHEREIN PROVISIONS, LIQUORS, OR REFRESHMENTS OF ANY KIND SHALL BE SOLD OR CONSUMED, (WHETHER THE SAME SHALL BE KEPT OR RETAILED THEREIN OR PROCURED ELSEWHERE,) AND WHO SHALL WILFULLY OR KNOWINGLY PERMIT DRUNKENNESS OR OTHER DISORDERLY CONDUCT IN SUCH HOUSE, SHOP, ROOM, OR PLACE ...OR KNOWINGLY PERMIT OR SUFFER PROSTITUTES OR PERSONS OF NOTORIOUSLY BAD CHARACTER TO MEET TOGETHER AND REMAIN THEREIN, SHALL FOR EVERY SUCH OFFENCE BE LIABLE TO A PENALTY”*

### Common law offences:

KEEPING A DISORDERLY HOME

CONSPIRACY TO CORRUPT PUBLIC MORALS

## Appendix 5 – Participant recruitment materials

Recruitment happened online through emails to sex worker- led and support organisations, emails to individual sex workers (if their email address was publicly available), posts on Twitter and other social media, and through personal contacts. Participants were also asked to help in spreading the call for participants.

### Example email to organisations:

Hi all,

Happy new year to you all!

As part of my research on employment relations in sex work in England, my survey (5-10 minutes) has gone live. Because I don't want to ask sex workers to give up their time for nothing, I will be donating £2.50 for each filled in questionnaire to National Ugly Mugs, SWARM, the ECP or X:talk.

It would be great if you could share the questionnaire or this email with your networks, or with any current workers in England.

To save a little time, I have made some example tweets, but you can of course choose completely different wording.

'Ring in the new year by supporting a sex worker-led organisation by filling out this questionnaire on sex workers' work relations. For each respondent, @LilithBrouwers will donate £2.50 to National Ugly Mugs, SWARM, the ECP or X:talk! <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>"

'There is very little research on sex workers' work relationships. Share your knowledge and support National Ugly Mugs, SWARM, the ECP or X:talk - for each respondent the researcher will donate £2.50 to a sex work organisation. Survey takes 5-10 minutes: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>'

'Want to support a sex worker led organisation with 5-10 minutes of your time? Fill in this questionnaire on work relationships and the researcher will donate £2.50 to National Ugly Mugs, SWARM, the ECP or X:talk: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>'

Your help in spreading this survey is very much appreciated. I've just received an offer of an extension to my donation budget, and I'd love to take full advantage of that by having more participants and thus donating more to sw organisations!

Warmest wishes,

Lilith

Example email to workers:

Hello!

My name is Lilith Brouwers, and I'm a PhD researcher at the business school at Leeds University. I'm doing research into third parties in sex work (like managers, maids, co-workers, drivers, security staff, landlords etc.) in England. I am looking for people to take part in a questionnaire asking about your experiences with third parties.

I recognise that taking part in research takes time (about 5-10 minutes), so for every questionnaire filled in I will donate £2.50 to one of 4 sex worker (led) organisations. They are SWARM, National Ugly Mugs, the ECP, and X-talk.

You can find the questionnaire at: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>. It is completely anonymous.

If you would like to take part in further research (including an in-person or phone interview, for which you will be compensated for your time with £100), you can fill in your contact details at the end of the questionnaire.

The goal of this research is to help future legislation on sex work to be based on sex workers' experiences, rather than on legislators' feelings about sex work. If you'd like to know more about the research you can find it here: <https://twitter.com/LilithBrouwers/status/1078683865428955136>, and if you have any questions you can contact me at [bnlheb@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:bnlheb@leeds.ac.uk).

Warmest wishes,

Lilith

Example social media posts:

Very little is known about sex workers' work relationships. Share your knowledge and support @NationalUglyMug, @SexWorkHive, @ProstitutesColl or @xtalkproject – for each respondent I will donate £2.50 to a sex work organisation: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>

Spread some Christmas cheer this boxing day by filling out this questionnaire on work relations among #sexworkers in #England. For each respondent, I will donate £2.50 to @NationalUglyMug, @SexWorkHive, @ProstitutesColl or @xtalkproject! <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>

Sex worker friends - as you know, most sex work policy is based on emotions rather than facts. Very little is known about third parties in sex work, and I'm hoping to change that with my research.

I'd be really thankful if you could take 5-10 minutes to share your knowledge and support National Ugly Mugs, SWARM, the ECP or X:talk - for each respondent I will donate £2.50 to a sex work organisation:

<https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>

(All pals: I would be super thankful if you could share this post in your social networks)

Happy New year to you all!

Want to start 2019 right? (and by right I mean supporting a sex worker rights organisation, which we can all agree is the best way to start the year)

Please fill in this questionnaire if you're a sex worker in England, and share this questionnaire link with all your friends whether you're a worker or not. I know you lot, and if you're not a worker, some of your friends may be. For each respondent I will donate £2.50 to a sex worker led organisation!

If you're a twitter person, feel free to copy this: Want to support a sex worker led organisation with 5-10 minutes of your time? Fill in this questionnaire on work relationships and the researcher @LilithBrouwers will donate £2.50 to National Ugly Mugs, SWARM, the ECP or X:talk: <https://leeds.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/sw-work-relationships>

Thank you all!

## Appendix 6 – Donations for community-transferred financial compensation of participants

Final donation amounts to sex worker-led and sex worker support organisations, as part of the community-transferred financial compensation:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Amount donated (May 2019)</b>
National Ugly Mugs (NUM)	£162.50
Sex Worker Advocacy and Resistance Movement (SWARM)	£147.50
English Collective of Prostitutes (ECP)	£117.50
X:talk	£25.00
<b>Total:</b>	<b>£452.50</b>

*Table 2: Donations for Community-Transferred Financial Compensation*

Four participants did not select any of the organisations to support.

## Appendix 7 – Labour mobility between areas of sex work

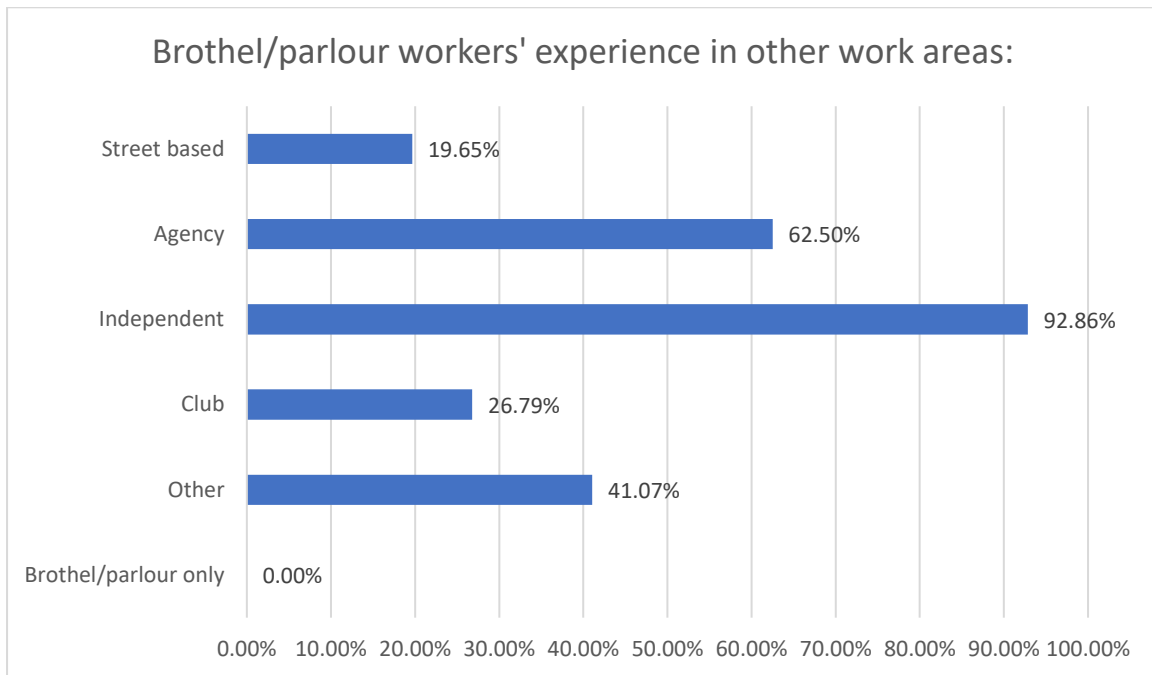


Figure 37: Brothel/parlour workers' experience in other work areas

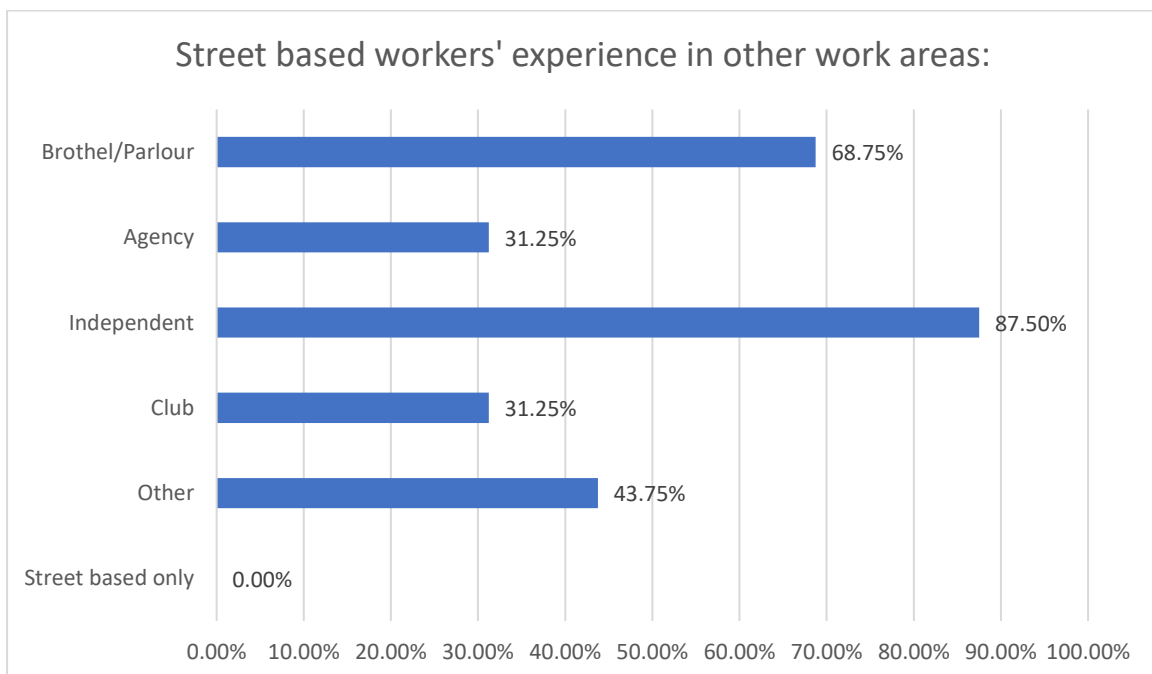


Figure 38: Street-based workers' experience in other work areas

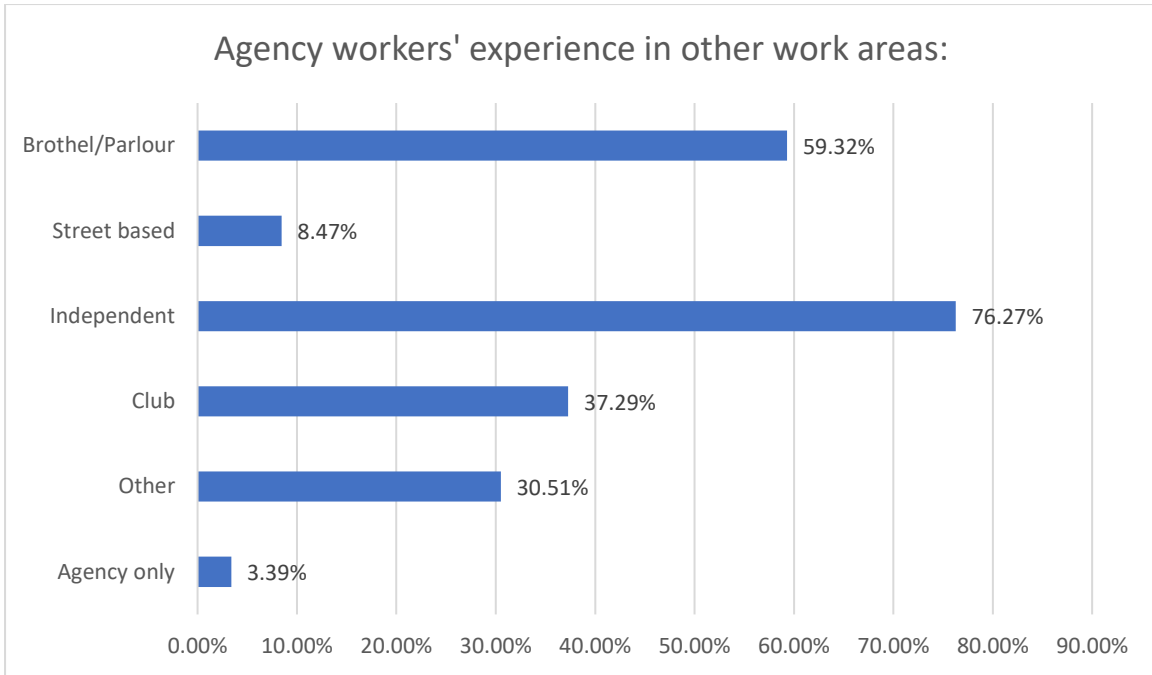


Figure 39: Agency workers' experience in other work areas

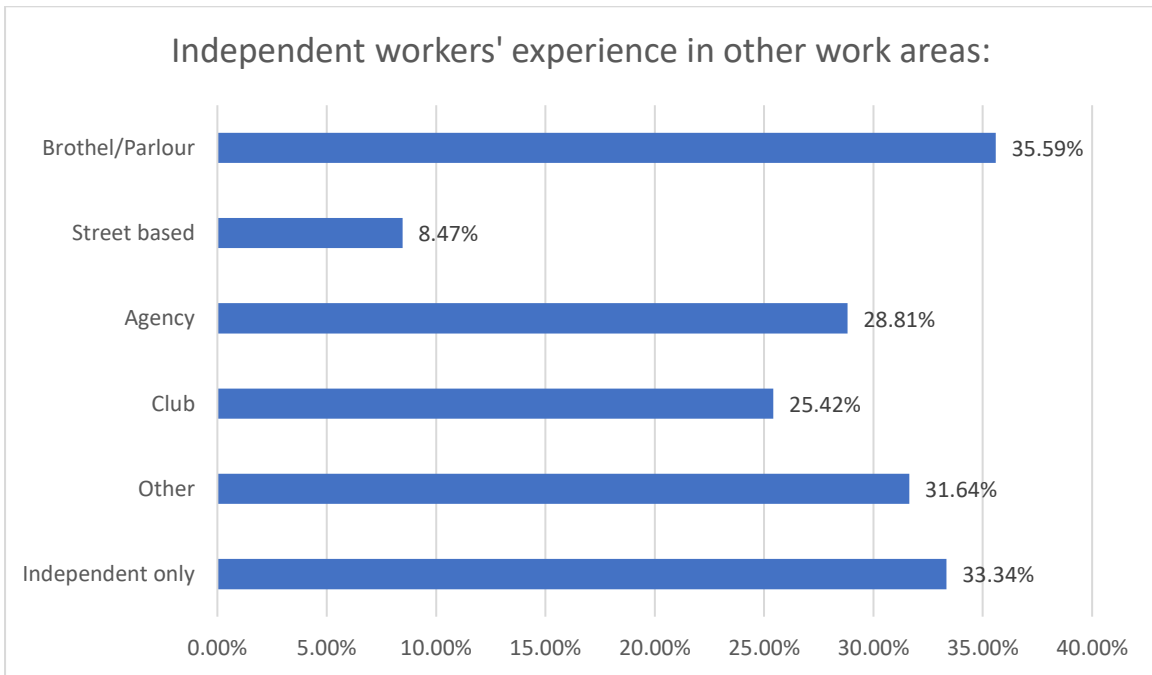


Figure 40: Independent workers' experience in other work areas



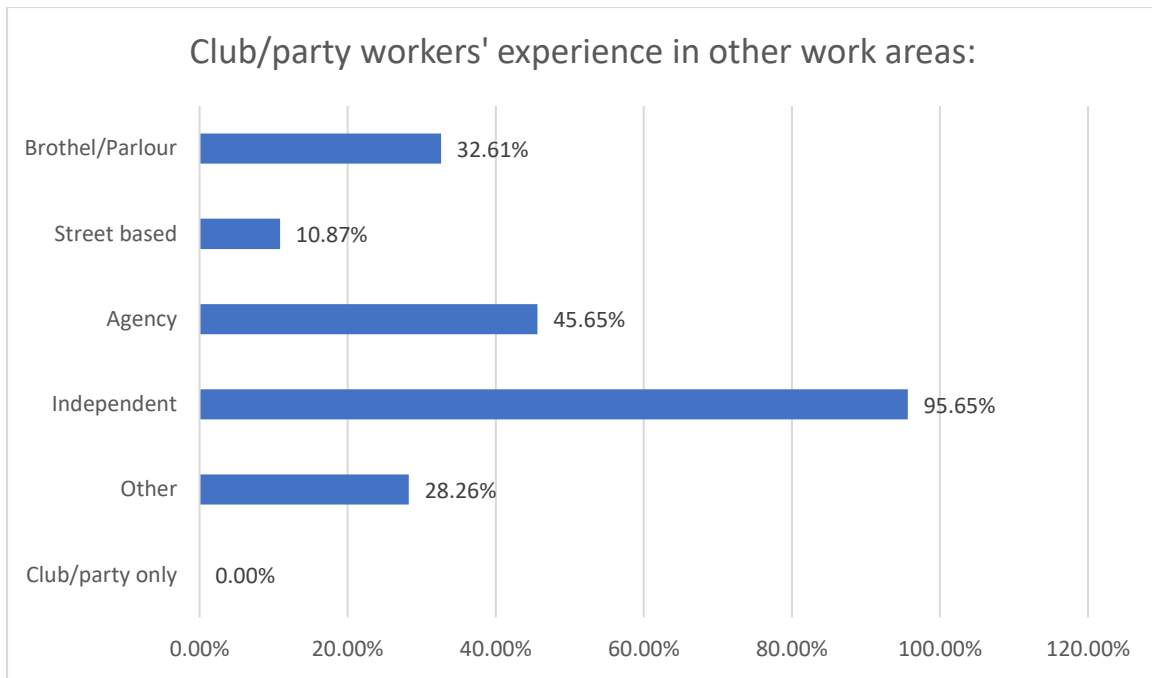


Figure 41: Club/party workers' experience in other work areas