



Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituut



EQUAL Community Initiative project of the European Union

“Integration of Women Involved in Prostitution, Including Victims of Human Trafficking into the Legal Labour Market”

Prostitution in Estonia: a Survey of the Situation of Women Involved in Prostitution.

Results of a sociological study

Compiled by

Iris Pettai

Helve Kase

Ivi Proos

TALLINN 2006



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Partners of the
Estonian Institute for Open
Society Research in the
EQUAL
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“Integration of Women
Involved in Prostitution,
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Labour Market”

Tervise Arengu Instituut



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Introduction

The European Union initiative EQUAL, financed by the European Social Fund, supports and promotes international cooperation in the struggle against any discrimination and inequality in the labour market. The goal of EQUAL is to find effective means for combating alienation, discrimination and inequality related to the labour market. Since one of the primary goals of the employment policy is to increase the general level of employment, all available potential should be used for this.

The situation of women involved in prostitution has been studied to a limited degree in Estonia so far. Within the EQUAL project „Integration of women involved in prostitution, incl. human trafficking victims, into the legal labour market” the Estonian Institute for Open Society carried out a survey of 408 women active in prostitution in the period of August-December 2005. Compared to the previous studies, this is an extensive and detailed study, which covers many areas concerning the life and livelihood of prostitutes, including their childhood home, reasons for joining the sex business, devastating influence of prostitution on their physical and mental health etc.

The Estonian Institute for Open Society has previously organised two polls on public attitude concerning prostitution, in 2003 and 2005. The polls showed that the population has a rather tolerant attitude towards prostitution, with 63% of men and 46% of women considering the existence of brothels necessary. Prostitution concentrated in brothels is viewed as an inevitable accompanying phenomenon of market economy, where everything can be sold or bought, including – quite openly – sexual services. Estonia’s extremely liberal market economy is certainly one of the factors, which has brought along the favourable attitude towards the brothel business. The Estonian residents do not have presently definite positions regarding prostitution and the studies show that prostitution is not interpreted as abuse of women or a social trap for young women and girls.

Estonia’s population continues to believe in the myth of „the necessity of prostitution” for men. Fifty-four percent of Estonia’s residents believe that „prostitution helps to relieve the sexual tension and stress of men“. The men’s belief in the necessity of prostitution is obviously stronger than that of women. Sixty-three percent of men and 46% of women believe that prostitution helps men to better cope with their stress.

The economic and social conditions prevailing in Estonia ensure a constant supply of new prostitutes. Prostitution and trafficking in women have found in Estonia favourable ground among the groups of women, who are socially the most vulnerable, primarily those with limited education, unemployed, without citizenship, often also underage girls.

According to different estimates, there are approximately 3,000 prostitutes in Estonia, i.e., women engaged in selling their body. This is a very large number for a country of Estonia’s size. The ratio of prostitutes in Estonia exceeds the

European average two times, that of low-level countries like Sweden seven times, Finland and Norway three times. One could argue that Estonia in 2006 has become an export and transit state of prostitution and trafficking in women.

The rapid growth of sex business obliges the Estonian state to take more efficient measures for controlling the mediation of prostitution. On the one hand, the application of a prostitution policy similar to that of Sweden could be considered, which calls for the punishment of buyers of sexual services. On the other hand, it is necessary to seriously address the issue of supporting former prostitutes' return to normal lifestyle and integration into the labour market. In order to launch this rehabilitation programme, highly significant and expensive for Estonia, it is necessary to study the situation of prostitutes and to analyse their need for aid.

The goal of this study was to find out the following:

- The profile of the prostitute: age, ethnicity, citizenship, education, personal status, economic situation etc.
- The profile of the client: men most frequently purchasing sexual services: age, ethnicity, marital status etc.
- The prostitutes' contacts with various groups of clients like tourists, freighter crews, athletes etc.
- Ties between prostitution and childhood abuse
- Typology of prostitutes as based on their experience of sex business: elite, internet.-based, street and other prostitutes.
- Trafficking of women involved in prostitution to foreign countries
- Health state of women engaged in prostitution, share of drug addicts and those infected with HIV/AIDS
- The prostitutes' problems and need for aid
- Preparedness of women involved in prostitution to end activity as a prostitute, to enter the legal labour market and find a lawful occupation.

On the interviews.

Interviewing the target group of individuals involved in prostitution is difficult, since they are operating out of sight of the public. The experience of other countries, where such interviews have been carried out (the USA, Germany, Sweden, Finland, etc.) shows that a sociological study of prostitution requires a special research strategy, training of interviewers etc.

Several barriers need to be overcome:

1. The interviewer needs prior special training.
2. The interviewees may find it psychologically difficult and embarrassing to discuss their work as provider of sexual services; the interviewers would have to encourage them gradually and delicately during the interviewing process.
3. The interviewees should be guaranteed anonymity. The interview should take place in an area preventing eavesdropping.
4. The interviewees and interviewers should be ensured access to psychological support, consultations etc.

The Estonian Institute for Open Society took advantage of the international experience in the organisation of the study. The concept and methodology of this study was developed by Iris Pettai and Helve Kase. The technical organisation of the interviews was carried out by the Estonian Institute for Open Society. The size of the sample is 408 women involved in prostitution in the age span of 15-45 years. Considering that according to various expert estimates the number of women in Estonia involved in prostitution is approximately 3,000, this means that every seventh prostitute took part in the study.

While forming the sample we presumed that approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of women involved in prostitution operate in Tallinn and Ida-Viru county. The poll was carried out in Tallinn, Ida-Viru county, South Estonia and West Estonia.

Contacting the interviewees.

We prepared for the study for more than six months, seeking for contacts with people, who have close knowledge of the sex business: mediators, brothel owners, former and current prostitutes, as well as police officers, psychologists and social workers, who have contacts with prostitutes. Finding women involved in prostitution was no great problem, they willingly and openly responded to the approximately two-hour interviews.

We used various channels in making contact with women involved in prostitution:

- Approached brothel owners and mediators, who permitted holding interviews in their establishments;
- Direct contacts with street and road prostitutes;
- Finding women involved in prostitution via shelters, support centres, advisory offices, drug addicts aid centres;
- Contacts via the Internet;
- By using newspaper and magazine advertisements of women involved in prostitution, who seek for clients;
- Looking for interviewees in hotels, night clubs, bars, aboard ships, in railway stations.

Method of data gathering

The interviewing methods involved include direct interviews and questionnaires for filling up independently. We presumed that not all interviewees would be willing to discuss their life and activities in a direct interview. At the same time they would agree to respond in writing with the assurance that the questionnaire would be anonymous. The place of the interview was agreed upon with every interviewee individually, according to their wishes.

Training of interviewers for carrying out the survey

The Estonian Institute for Open Society arranged five special training sessions of interviewers. The training involved all interviewers, who were psychologists, social workers, Tartu University psychology and medical faculties' students, volunteers of Eluliin (Lifeline), police personnel (Northern Prefecture), as well as former prostitutes.

1. General characterisation of women involved in prostitution

TABLE 1.

	%		%
Age:		Education:	
- up to 18 years	7	- primary or basic	50
- 19 - 21 years	26	- vocational	10
- 22 - 25 years	31	- secondary	26
- 26 - 30 years	21	- secondary special	10
- 31 - 35 years	9	- higher	4
- 36 - 40 years	3		
- over 40 years	3		
Marital status:		Number of children:	
- single	44	- no children	64
- married	11	- 1 child	26
- cohabitation	18	- 2 children	9
- steady partner	18	- 3 or more children	1
- divorced	6		
- widow	1		
Composition of family		Personal net income per month:	
- single	31	- up to 5,000 EEK	29
- adult + 1 -2 children*	12	- 5,001 – 7,000	16
- 2 adults	17	- 7,001 – 9,000	8
- 2 adults + 1 - 3 children*	22	- 9,001 – 11,000	9
- 3 - 4 adults	9	- 11,001 – 15,000	12
- other options	8	- above 15,000	14
		- did not answer	12
* younger than 18			
Citizenship:		Ethnicity:	
- Estonian citizen	57	- Estonian	31
- stateless	31	- Russian	59
- Russian citizen	9	- other	10
- Citizen of other country	3		
Current status*:		Domicile:	
- woman with steady sponsor (sponsors)	33	- Tallinn	41
- has legal (official) job	23	- Kohtla-Järve	20
- pupil	19	- Narva	11
- housewife	17	- Tartu, Pärnu	9
- unemployed	21	- Other county centres	10
- seeking for work	16	- Other towns (small towns)	4
- other options	18	- Rural settlements +villages	6
* since every respondent could give several answers, the total could exceed 100 percent			

Command of Estonian: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - good - average - limited - did not understand 	44 33 16 7	Providing sexual services abroad: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has worked - has not worked 	74 26
Has been providing sexual services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 year - 2 years - 3 years - 4 - 5 years - 6 -10 years - over 10 years 	22 23 15 19 14 7	Began to provide sexual services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - younger than 15 years - 16 - 18 years - 19 - 21 years - 21 - 23 years - 24 - 25 years - 26 - 30 years - over 30 years 	6 48 23 9 7 4 3
Latest place of operating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - at home - escort service - elite brothel - ordinary house - hotel (boarding house) - apartment brothel (local and response to outside calls) - striptease bar, night club - road, street, park - sauna, massage parlour - at the client's - passenger ship - railway station 	26 13 15 21 16 16 16 15 15 5 4 2	Main method of finding clients: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - via mediator (brothel) - via the Internet - in night clubs, striptease bars - bars, restaurants - via newspapers - on roads - streets - other option 	37 23 18 17 10 10 10 7

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute for Open Society. 2005

Prostitution involves young women,

Eighty-five percent are up to 30 years old. Only six percent are older than 35 years. Selling their body begins at an early age, half by the time they are 18 years old, $\frac{3}{4}$ until 21. They do not last long in the occupation with the average time being 4 - 5 years. Every fifth woman has worked six years or longer.

70% are non-Estonian,

out of whom $\frac{2}{3}$ do not have Estonian citizenship. Only 30% are Estonian. Three quarters reside in Tallinn or Ida-Viru county. Every tenth resides in Tartu or Pärnu. Every fifth resides in a smaller town or in the countryside.

Limited education,

2/3 only have primary or basic education. Every fourth has graduated from the secondary school. Only every fourth, who has graduated from vocational or specialised secondary school, has a profession.

Half of women engaged in prostitution have a family on the side.

Forty-seven percent are married/cohabitate or have a steady partner, 53% are single. Every third has children. Mostly there is only one child.

Finding the clients.

The main channel for finding clients is a mediator or a brothel (37%). Every third seeks for clients in night clubs, bars and restaurants. Every fourth uses the Internet. Every tenth uses advertisements in newspapers or magazines.

Employment status.

Prostitutes find it difficult to determine their status. Only every fourth has an official (lawful) job. Every third has a steady sponsor (sponsors). Every fifth is studying (pupil), every sixth is a housewife. Thirty-seven percent define themselves as unemployed or looking for work.

Income.

Prostitutes could be divided in three groups as to their income. The low-income group (29%), who earn up to 5,000 EEK per month. The medium-income group (24%), who earn 5,000 – 9,000 EEK per month. The high-income group (33%), who earn 9,000 – 15,000 EEK or more per month.

Classes of prostitutes.

Dependent on their working conditions and earning opportunities, the prostitutes can be divided in four classes:

- A.** Elite prostitutes - 25%, predominantly work in elite brothels and escort service.
- B.** Higher class prostitutes - 24%, predominantly work in ordinary houses, as well as hotels, striptease and night clubs.
- C.** Middle class prostitutes - 35%, predominantly work in apartment brothels, saunas and massage parlours as well at home.
- D.** Lower class prostitutes - 16%, predominantly work in the streets, parks, roads, railway stations.

2. Childhood and experience of abuse

TABLE 2.

Question: With whom did you grow up during most of your childhood?

	%
Regular family with father and mother	51
Raised by mother only	14
Family with foster parent	11
Grandparents or relatives	9
Orphanage	8
Raised by father only	2

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Only every second woman engaged in prostitution had an opportunity to grow up in a regular family with both father and mother. Every fourth was raised by mother/father alone or by grandparents. Every tenth had a foster parent. Eight percent spent most of their childhood in an orphanage.

TABLE 3.

Abuse experienced in childhood ¹

	%		
At home			Outside of home
Psychological abuse	49	65	Psychological abuse
Physical abuse	29	34	Physical abuse
Sexual abuse	5	15	Sexual abuse

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Violence is a rather inevitable phenomenon in the life of a prostitute, which many of them encounter as early as in childhood. Two thirds have experienced psychological, every third physical, and 15% sexual abuse. Abuse experienced outside of home has been worse than that experienced at home. Only every third respondent had experiences childhood without abuse.

¹ Various kinds of abuse were explained to the respondents as follows :

- **Mental abuse:** You have been severely insulted, run down, humiliated, threatened or subjected to other kind of mental suffering
- **Physical abuse:** You have been hit, beaten or subjected to other kind of physical pain
- **Sexual abuse:** You have been subjected to forced sexual intercourse or such intercourse has been attempted

TABLE 4.**Question: Who were the most abusive towards you in childhood?**

	%
Schoolmates, male acquaintances	26
Father	23
Mother	19
Teacher	15
Stepfather	7
Vend	5

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The most violent towards the respondents have been schoolmates or male acquaintances, but also their father and mother. Fathers have been more violent than mothers. Fifteen percent have also suffered abuse from teachers.

3. Beginning of sex life

TABLE 5.**Question: How old were you during your first intercourse?**

	%
Younger than 15 years	39
16-18 years	54
19-21 years	7
22 years or older	-
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Women involved in prostitution are characterised by early start of sex life. Approximately 40% had their first sexual experience before the age of 15. As many as 93% of the women began their sex life by the time they became 18 years old.

TABLE 6.

Question: Have you experienced sexual intercourse against your will (rape)?

	%
Yes, once	26
Yes, repeatedly	16
No	35
Cannot say	23
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Every fourth woman working as prostitute has experienced rape once in her life, 16% have been raped repeatedly. Only one third of women has never experienced rape, according to their statement. Sex and violence are taboo topics for prostitutes. Every fourth woman either cannot or is unwilling to recall/define rape.

TABLE 7.

Question: How old were you during your first experience of forced sex?

Experience of forced sex, %	
Up to 12 years	8
13-14 years	34
15-16 years	24
17-18 years	18
19-21 years	11
Above 21	5
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Fifty-five percent of women answered that they had been forced to have sex against their will (raped). Two thirds of them experienced forced sex in the age of up to 16 years. The largest number of rapes concerned girls in the age of 12-14 years. Every third experienced rape in that age span.

TABLE 8.**Question: If you were forced to sexual intercourse, then by whom?**

	%
Acquaintance (neighbour etc.)	25
Stranger	20
Boyfriend	14
Stepfather/mother's friend	9
Relative (uncle, grandfather, brother etc.)	7
Husband / partner	7
Teacher / instructor	5
Father	4
Group rape	4

Source: *Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005*

The survey confirms the generally recognised fact that most rapes are committed by male acquaintances of the women. Every fifth woman was forced to have sex by her boyfriend or husband/partner. Every tenth woman has been raped by her stepfather or a boyfriend of her mother. Every fifth has been raped by an unknown man.

4. Mechanisms of becoming a prostitute

It is a rather widespread belief in Estonia that prostitution is a voluntary choice of earning one's living in that particular manner. The survey enables to view the background of becoming a prostitute and to determine, whether it was a voluntary choice or whether prostitutes operate under coercion and threats.

Direct coercion is not unknown in the recruitment of prostitutes, but it is a relatively infrequent phenomenon. However, there are numerous indirect factors turning young women towards prostitution. The usual factors are the following: incomplete education, lack of profession, inability to sell oneself at the labour market, childhood abuse, early sex life and rapes, dependence on alcohol and narcotics etc. Girls, who cannot find a place in the normal working life and whose personality has been crushed by abuse, are easy targets for recruitment to the sex business.

Yet not all girls with such harsh experience become prostitutes. Sex business also attracts a small number of women, who have grown up in normal circumstances and whose childhood did not involve abuse.

Money and opportunity to work abroad are important motives for entering the sex business. Women engaged in prostitution make on the average approximately 11,000 EEK per month, which would be quite impossible to earn in the legal labour market by a young women with limited education and no occupation.

A common trait among most prostitutes is their willingness to take risks and their tendency to seek an opportunity to earn more goods via sex business than their education level and professional abilities would enable. Frequently these are naive and romantic young women, whose limited social experience does not permit them to foresee the true nature of sex business or the difficulties in escaping from it.

The positive attitude of a girlfriend or a sexual partner plays a largely decisive role in entering sex business.

TABLE 9.

Question: Did you asked for someone's advice before staring to look for sponsors/offering sexual services?

	%-s
Girlfriend	40
Boyfriend	10
Husband/partner	8
Parent(s), siblings	2
Others	3
Did not discuss with anyone	32

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Two thirds of girls have discussed the matter with someone close before staring to sell sexual services. The opinion of a girlfriend is asked for most frequently – 40% of cases. The next most frequent individual to be consulted with is boyfriend or husband/partner. Nearly every fifth woman has consulted a male acquaintance.

A girlfriend and a male acquaintance are the main individuals, whose opinion is decisive in a woman's becoming a prostitute. The opinion of the parents and siblings is not asked as a rule. Every third woman become operating as a prostitute without asking for any prior advice..

TABLE 10.

Question: what is the opinion of your partner and other close persons towards your search for sponsors/providing sexual services?

	Does not know	Positive attitude	Negative attitude	Does not have any
Closest girlfriend	15	47	7	8
Boyfriend	25	13	6	28
Husband/partner	23	11	2	46
Mother	59	5	7	10
Sister/brother	48	4	5	19
Father	53	1	2	24
Child	30	1	1	50

%-s

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

It is not easy for prostitutes to find understanding towards their activity among their closest circle of relation. Half can rely on the understanding attitude of their girlfriend, every fourth of her boyfriend or husband/partner. Only five percent report support among their close relatives. The mother/father or siblings often have no idea of the occupation of their daughter or sister.

It can be concluded that many prostitutes live in considerable isolation and solitude. This is proven by the answer to the question: „Do you have a very close person you could completely trust?“ Only 52% of the respondents gave a positive answer.

5. Prostitution and sexuality

There is a myth concerning the prostitutes, according to which sexual services are provided predominantly by highly sexual women and those with excessive sexual needs. We asked in the survey about the necessary qualities of a woman, who would start providing sexual services?

According to the respondents, the primary quality would be the ability to handle difficult (abusive) clients. Abuse is an inevitable part of a prostitute's life (see part 9). Dealing with abusive clients is a crucial ability, it determines, whether and how long one can last in sex business.

TABLE 11.

Question: What abilities/qualities should a woman possess if she wants to look for sponsors/provide sexual services?

	%-s	
	Yes, this is important	No, this is not important
Ability to handle difficult (abusive) clients	35	23
Ability to pretend passion	33	23
Ability to satisfy various sexual needs	32	27
Knowledge of sexual techniques	30	31
Not to become attached to a client	25	29
High sexual needs	14	44

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

High sexuality and excessive sexual needs are, according to the prostitutes' assessment, one of the less significant qualities in providing sexual services; acting skill – the ability to pretend passion - is rather more significant. The determining quality in providing sexual services is the ability to hand all kinds of clients (including violent ones) and their (including perverted) sexual needs.

6. Self-esteem of women providing sex for money

Since providing sexual services and receiving money for it is not a lawful occupation or work in Estonia, the women occupied in this sphere use different expressions in describing their status.

When carrying out the survey, we provided a scale to the respondents, enabling the women engaged in prostitutions to choose how to define herself and to characterise her activities. The questioning of prostitutes is a highly sensitive sphere; therefore we selected the answer options from among mild and neutral terms, so as not to injure them.

The largest percentage among Estonian and non-Estonian respondents admit that providing sexual services is an opportunity for them to earn **extra money**.

One fourth of all respondents admit that providing sexual services is the **main or sole source of** income for them or their families.

The third group of women providing sexual services would not link themselves directly with sex business, but prefers to describe their activity as **relations with sponsors**.

The fourth group of women refused to admit their ties to sex trade and preferred to answer that they have ended providing sexual services or have never been engaged in it.

TABLE 12.

Question: An opportunity for a woman, who cannot find (profitable) work, is to find rich sponsors or to provide sex/sexual services for money. Have you ever had to provide sexual services for money?

	%-s		
	Women's average response	Estonian women's response	Non- Estonian women's response
Yes, I have earned/earn (extra) money by selling sexual services	36	38	36
Yes, selling sexual services is presently the main (sole) source of income for me (my family)	26	23	27
I have a number of sponsors , but I am not providing sexual services	22	25	21
I have stopped providing sexual services	10	12	9
I have never looked for sponsors nor been engaged in providing sexual services	6	2	7
TOTAL:	100	100	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

There were no significant differences in the responses of Estonian and non-Estonian interviewees. The younger the respondents, the more frequently they defined themselves as „favourites of sponsors“ and the less willing were they to admit that providing sexual services was their main source of income. Forty-one percent of women younger than 18 chose the option „I have sponsors“, and 15% admitted that selling sexual services was their main source of income. The responses of women between 18 - 21 years were divided 34% and 23%, those of women between 22 - 25 years 15% and 28% and the responses of women between 26-30 years 16% and 33%.

The analysis of ties between the self-assessments of women providing sex for money and their official jobs showed that at the time of response, 25% of women defining themselves as „favourites of sponsors“ had an official job. The remaining 75% of women with analogous self-assessment did not have official occupation. Among the women claiming to earn extra money by providing sexual services, also 25% had official occupation. Consequently, providing sexual services was the sole source of income for 75% of the women. Out of women stating that sexual services were their main source of income only 2% had an official job at the time of response.

TABLE 13.**Question: Assessment of women providing sexual services of their personal qualities**

%-S

Respondents' assessment of their appearance and abilities	Characterisation of providing sexual services (respondents' self-definition)		
	Women with sponsors	Earning extra	Main source of income
Assessment of appearance			
- highly satisfied	37	27	22
- generally satisfied	54	53	47
- not satisfied	8	18	29
- could not answer	1	2	2
Assessment of communicative abilities			
- highly satisfied	48	31	25
- generally satisfied	43	58	53
- not satisfied	8	10	18
- could not answer	1	1	4
Assessment of mental abilities			
- highly satisfied	45	16	13
- generally satisfied	38	60	52
- not satisfied	16	19	25
- could not answer	1	5	10
Assessment of success, ability to succeed			
- highly satisfied	33	12	15
- generally satisfied	47	47	37
- not satisfied	18	33	32
- could not answer	2	8	16

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The survey reveals a clear tendency of the women linking themselves to sponsors to assess their personal qualities significantly higher than the other respondents. The most revealing is the percentage of women selecting the "highly satisfied" option to rate their personal qualities. This concerns the assessment of one's appearance, mental capabilities and general success.

Compared to the other respondents, the lowest self-esteem was observed among the women admitting that providing sexual services is their or their families' main source of income.

The comparison of the various self-esteem ratings shows that all women selling sexual services consider their communicative abilities their greatest strength. They are the most critical of their success and ability to succeed. Thus prostitutes themselves do not consider selling sex a prestigious occupation, which would mean success in the generally accepted way.

And yet the prostitutes' self-esteem is high. Three fourths or more of the respondents rate their various personal capabilities high („highly satisfied“ or „generally satisfied“). High self-esteem and high expectations regarding material income would certainly complicate the prostitutes' choices in entering the legal labour market. At the same time the prostitutes' high self-esteem could be a protective mechanism or a kind self-deception, not allowing the recognition of an irreversible path of decline on which most of the prostitutes travel.

The way of the women assessing their activities and position in providing sexual services, is related to the prostitutes' assessment of the risks involved in their occupation.

TABLE 14.

Question: Considering threats, is your activity in providing sexual services ...

Respondents' assessment of their activities' risk level	Characterisation of providing sexual services (respondents' self-definition)		
	Women with sponsors	Earning extra	Main source of income
High-risk (high health threats)	22	31	41
Average-risk (some health threats)	35	57	40
Low-risk (no health threats)	43	12	19
TOTAL:	100	100	100

%-s

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Seventy-nine percent of the respondents assess the providing of sexual services as a risky occupation involving health threats. The tables reveal a clear tendency that the women, who whom prostitution is the main source of income, consider their occupation significantly more dangerous than those, for whom it is dealing with sponsors or earning extra income.

7. Judgement of clientele

The survey also contained questions concerning the age, marital status and ethnicity of the clients. The interviewing methodology was structured so as to have every respondent assess the age, marital state and ethnicity of their most frequent clients.

An example of determining the age of the client: which age group of men have you had intercourse with most frequently? Please select one option, which best characterises your clients.

Age of client:

1. up to 20 years
2. 21-25 years
3. 26-30 years
4. 31-40 years
5. 41-50 years
6. Older than 50 years

The interviewees could select only one option representing their most typical group of clients.

How did the respondents know with who they were dealing with?

- According to the survey, 75% of prostitutes have steady clients, who buy their sexual services. On the average, one prostitute has five steady clients.
- Most clients reveal many aspects of their personal life to prostitutes. Prostitutes often serve as confidential persons, to whom men dare speak a lot about their domestic life and relations with their wives/partners. The interviewers judged that prostitutes know quite a lot about their clientele. Besides, prostitutes exchange information about clientele, for example to avoid contacts with abusive or sadistic men.

The typical client is a middle-aged married Estonian man

TABLE 15.

Age.

	%-s
Up to 20 years	2
21-25 years	11
26-30 years	16
31-40 years	42
41-50 years	26
Older than 50 years	3
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

As many as 95% of the clients are younger or middle-aged men, in the age range of 21 - 50 years. The most clients are in the 31 - 50 years age span, amounting to 69% of the whole clientele.

The prostitutes' estimates of the age of clientele are quite similar to the results of a survey carried out among Estonia's population in 2005, which showed that men in the age of 20 - 49 years amount to ¾ of buyers of sexual services in Estonia.²

TABLE 16.
Marital status.

	%-s
Married	65
Partnership	13
Single	15
Steady partner, but reside separately	4
Divorced	3
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Three fourths of the clients are married or in partnership, which contradicts the opinion that prostitutes are frequented mainly by single men, who experience difficulties in developing relations with the opposite sex. The share of single or divorced men of clientele is 18%.

The respondents' estimates regarding the clients' marital status also coincide quite closely with the results of the survey carried out among Estonia's population in 2005, which showed that 68% of the buyers of sex are married or in partnership.³

TABLE 17.
Ethnicity.

	%-s
Estonian	45
Russian	19
Finnish	23
Swedish	2
Other ethnicity	11
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

² Estonian Institute for Open Society survey on public opinions regarding prostitution, 2005

³ Same survey

Approximately half of the buyers of sex are Estonian men, every fifth is a Russian. The total share of local men amounts to two thirds of the clientele. Every third client is a sex tourist. Finns amount to the greatest part of sex buyers from other countries. Finnish men amount to one fourth of all clients.

The respondents' estimates regarding the ethnicity of the clientele again coincide with the results of the 2005 survey, which showed that the structure of the clients corresponds to Estonia's ethnic makeup. Two thirds are Estonian men and one third non-Estonian men. 4

According to the poll among the prostitutes, local men amount to 64% (45% Estonians and 19% Russians) of the clientele. Further calculation shows that the share of Estonians is 70%, which is close to the results of the population study.

TABLE 18.

Question: which is the most frequent state of drunkenness of the client?

	%-s
Very drunk	10
Slightly drunk	46
Sober	23
Unable to say	21
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The drunk man is a rather typical sex buyer. According to the women's estimates, more than half of the clients are drunk. Only every fourth client is sober.

TABLE 19.

Question: Has the establishment, where you provides sexual services or have your received any of the following types of clients as organised groups?

	Responses to answer „Yes, constantly“, %
Foreign tourists (male tourism group: businessmen, “bachelors” etc.)	21
Merchant ship crews	16
Estonian businessmen	15
Brothel owner (pimp) with friends, so-called „subbotnik“, where you had to provide free service	8
Estonian athletes	5
Foreign athletes	5
Foreign tourists, disabled	4

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

⁴ Same survey

The survey shows that many sex buyers practice organised visits to brothels as large groups. The most frequent collective visits to brothels are organised to foreign tourists as special male groups, e.g. „British bachelors“, as well as businessmen, who are provided with sexual services besides business meetings. Estonian businessmen, as well as cargo ship crews, also practice organised (in groups or by firms) purchase of sexual services.

Brothel owners/mediators also arrange organised „group visits“ or so-called „subbotniks“, during which they offer the services of their establishments to friends, „colleagues“ or „business partners“.

The less frequent organised buyers of sex are Estonian and foreign athletes, who are provided with prostitutes or arranged group visits to brothels after the completion of competitions or training. Group visits to brothels are also organised to specific groups of foreign tourists like the disabled.

8. Trafficking of women involved in prostitution to other countries

TABLE 20.

Question: In which countries have you provided sexual services for money?

	%-s
Finland	26
Germany	8
Sweden	7
Norway	7
Holland	6
Russia	6
Latvia	5
United Kingdom	5
Italy	4
Ireland	4
Lithuania	4
Spain	3
France	2
USA	1
Japan	1

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The foreign countries, where prostitutes from Estonia offer sexual services, can be conditionally divided in three groups:

The sole representative of the first group is Finland, whose share exceeds more than three times the most popular destination of the second group, i.e. Germany. Every fourth woman involved in prostitution in Estonia has provided sexual services in Finland.

The second group includes the countries, where at least 5% of prostitutes from Estonia have been working. This group is headed by Germany, where 8% of all girls have been working. Sweden and Norway follow (7%). Six percent of the girls have been providing sexual services in Holland and surprisingly in Russia. It can be presumed that the latter case concerns girls from Ida-Viru county, whose destination was St. Petersburg. Five percent of women have worked in the UK, but also at out southern neighbours, in Latvia.

The third group consists of the countries, whose significance as destination of providing sexual services has been smaller. This includes predominantly South European countries and more remote and exotic destinations, like Japan. Lithuania, where 4% of the girls have worked, represents the Baltic states in the last group.

TABLE 21.

Question: If you have worked abroad, how did you find work there?

Answers to options „Usually + that way also”, %

Mediators in Estonia organised via their acquaintances	41
Went independently and operated on my own	39
Mediators from abroad came to recruit girls from Estonia	20
Boyfriend organised	20
Via labour recruitment firm	17
Went independently and found local job/mediator	13
Relatives-acquaintances organised	12
Via travel agency	4

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Girls from Estonia found their way abroad to provide sexual services predominantly via the international contacts of local mediators. This shows that the Estonian mediators of prostitution are a part of an international network of trafficking in women.

There is also a rather high (39%) share of the girls, who travel abroad on their own and find a local mediator there. Every fifth girl was recruitment abroad was organised by her own boyfriend. Seventeen percent used the services of labour recruitment firms.

Every tenth girl, who left for work abroad had fallen victim to a fraud and admits that she had hoped to find some other type of employment, but found out on arrival that he would have to provide sexual services.

TABLE 22.

Question: If you worked abroad, did you leave with ...

	%
A legal labour contract	31
No labour contract	62

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Two thirds of the girls have left for abroad without a labour contract.

TABLE 23.

Question: Which visa did you use?

	%
Tourist visa	33
Working visa	24
Illegally, without visa	17
Did not need visa to work in the country	60

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

One fourth of the girls have left to work abroad with working visas, one third had tourist visa. Sixty percent of the girls have worked in countries, where visa was not required. This apparently concerned in most cases short-time stay in the EU countries. Seventeen percent have worked in foreign countries illegally without any visas.

TABLE 24.

Question: How long do you usually work in a foreign country at a time?

Answers to option "Usually that long" %

Less than 1 month	28
1 month	27
2-3 months	23
4-6 months	12
7 months up to one year	8
Longer than one year	4

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

In more than half of cases the girls operate in foreign countries during short periods lasting up to one month, which fits within the span of a tourist visa. Every fourth girl, who has operated abroad, stayed in the country for 2-3 months, 12% for up to half a year. Only 4 % has worked abroad for longer than a year.

9. Abuse in the lives of women involved in prostitution

TABLE 25.

Question: Have the clients or mediator/employer ever ...

Responses to options "Yes, constantly + some times", %

	Clients	Mediator employer
Insulted and humiliated you	59	31
Hit with hands, fists or kicked	29	13
Had forced sex with you, raped	19	9
Used violence to force you to sexual practices you would have otherwise refused to do	25	9

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The risk of violence is quite high in the life of a prostitute. Psychological abuse (insults and humiliation) predominates; 59% of the respondents have experienced it. Physical and sexual abuse are also frequent, every third-fourth woman has experienced these kinds of abuse.

The clients are more abusive towards the girls. After verbal abuse, brutal physical violence dominates, e.g. beating with fists and kicking. Every third-fourth girl has experienced physical abuse from client. The third place is occupied by sexual abuse, when the girls were forced to sexual practices they would have otherwise refused from. Every fourth girl has experienced sexual coercion from client.

The mediators/employers also abuse prostitutes, but less frequently than the clients.

TABLE 26.**Question: Have you ever received...**

Responses to option "Yes", %

	Clients	Mediator Employer
Grievous (life-threatening) bodily harm	9	6
Minor bodily harm	47	17

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The threat of minor or serious injuries to prostitutes is very high. Every second woman involved in prostitution has suffered minor injuries through abuse from clients. Every eleventh girl has received serious or even life-threatening injuries.

The mediators/employers have also treated girls brutally, resulting in minor or serious injuries, but such cases are much less frequent than abuse by clients.

The results allow the conclusion that the girls do not consider numerous cases of physical abuse as violence, especially if rare cases of beating are involved. Accordingly, although every second woman involved in prostitution has received injury, only 29% claim that they have suffered physical abuse when providing sexual services.

10. Health state of women involved in prostitution

TABLE 27.**Question: Have you, and how frequently, suffered from the following?**

(Responses to options "Frequently + sometimes" %)

Stress, constant tension	88
Nervousness	72
Sleeplessness	66
Depression	64
Sense of giving up, indecisiveness	53
Considered suicide	47
Deliberately injured oneself	24

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The psyche of prostitutes is extremely exhausted. Eighty-eight percent of them suffer from stress and constant state of tension, 66 % from sleeplessness and 64% complain of depression. Life in sex business is existence in a constant borderline state, where the risk of a woman taking her life is quite high since nearly half consider suicide from time to time (women in Estonia on the average consider suicide three times less frequently).⁵

TABLE 28.

Question: Have you ever...

Responses to option „Yes“, %

Done abortions	50
Suffered from gynaecological diseases	35
Suffered from venereal diseases	25

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Half of prostitutes have had abortions, every third has had gynaecological and every fourth venereal diseases.

TABLE 29.

Question: Which long-term health problem concerns you most?

%

Problems with nerves	45
Stomach troubles	42
Problems with arms or feet	34
Problems with back or neck	30
Skin diseases, allergies	25
Respiratory tract or pulmonary problems	22
Venereal diseases	21
Problems with eyesight	14
Heart, blood pressure, circulatory system troubles	14

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The cost of prostitution is high; 2/3 of women involved in sex business have long-time health problems. The respondents had the most problems with nerves and stomach complaints, every fifth suffered from uncured venereal diseases. The respondents are not very consistent in taking care for their health. Every second woman had a serious health problem within the past 12 months, which would have presumed seeing a doctor, yet they did not do that.

⁵ Estonian Institute for Open Society study, 2003

One of the reasons for the failure to seek medical attention is the lack of health insurance. Only half of the women have the health insurance fund card. Prostitutes attempt to treat themselves on their own. Fifty percent of them use some kind of medication.

TABLE 30.
Pharmacy products used during last month:

	%
Painkillers	50
Vitamins	41
Hormonal contraceptives	40
Tranquilisers (prescription drugs)	29
Drugs against cold	20
Blood pressure and heart drugs	7
Antibiotics	13
Has not used medication	7

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Every second respondents had used painkillers during the past month, 40% has used hormonal contraceptives, 29% tranquilisers (only 3% of women in Estonia on the average use tranquilisers in one month).⁶ A total of 43% of prostitutes use tranquilisers.

11. Spreading of HIV among women involved in prostitution

TABLE 31.
Question: In which year did you have your latest HIV test?

	%
2005	24
2004	11
2003	7
2002	2
Earlier	7
Have not been tested for HIV	49
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Estonian Institute for Open Society study, 2003

Only half of prostitutes have been tested for HIV, one fourth of them last year.

TABLE 32.

Question: Was your latest HIV test positive?

	%
Yes	20
No	76
Do not know test results	4
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

According to the survey, every fifth prostitute tested positive for HIV.

TABLE 33.

Share of respondents using narcotics, %

HIV positive	82
HIV negative	18
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Drugs abusers have a very high risk of receiving HIV infection. Out of drug abusing women, who were tested for HIV, 82% were found to be HIV positive.

TABLE 34.

HIV infection risk groups among prostitutes.

Share of HIV positives %

Single	59
Without citizenship	59
From Ida-Viru county	40
Operating alone	29
Non-Estonian	25
Basic education	25
19-25 years	24

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

HIV infection is more frequent among prostitutes living alone and working alone, who have neither children nor a partner. HIV infection is also more frequent among non-Estonians without citizenship, who live in Ida-Viru county.

12. Use of alcohol and narcotics

TABLE 35.

Question: How old were you when you began consuming alcohol?

	%
Before 12	5
13-14 years	29
15-16 years	34
17-18 years	24
19-21 years	6
Later	2
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The lives of prostitutes are tied to alcohol since their early teens. Every third begins drinking by the age of 14, 2/3 by the time they were 16. Ninety-two percent of the respondents began drinking before they became adult.

TABLE 36.

Question: How frequently do you use alcohol in quantity leading to drunkenness?

	%
Never	9
Some times per year	23
Several times per month	31
Some times per week	22
More frequently	5

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Alcohol dependence is characteristic of women involved in prostitution, 80% gets drunk at least a few times per year. More than half of the girls are frequent consumers of alcohol. Twenty-seven percent gets drunk several times a week, while 31% several times per month.

TABLE 37.**Question: Do you use narcotics?**

	%
Use all the time	13
Use sometimes	20
Have tried	32
Never	35
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Two thirds of women have experience of drugs abuse. Every third uses narcotics more or less regularly, while 13% are constant users.

TABLE 38.**Question: How old were you as you began using narcotics?**

	%
Before 12	1
13-14 years	11
15-16 years	20
17-18 years	17
19-21 years	8
Later	5
Do not use narcotics	38

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Prostitutes also start early the use of narcotics. Every third had experience with drugs before she was 16 and every second by the time she was 18.

TABLE 39.**Use of narcotics in different age groups**

Response to options "Use constantly + sometimes", %

Up to 18 years	45
19-25 years	37
26-30 years	30
Above 30 years	9

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The largest number of drugs addicts is among the “up to 18 years” age group - 45%. Narcotics dependence declines as the age rises. Only 9% of women older than 30 use narcotics. The more frequent drugs users have basic education (43% use drugs), non-Estonian (37% use drugs) and the residents of Ida-Viru county (28% use drugs).

TABLE 40.
Use of alcohol and narcotics while providing sexual services

		%	
Alcohol			Narcotics
Almost always	32	12	Almost always
Sometimes	56	31	Sometimes
No, never	9	51	No, never
Cannot answer	3	6	Cannot answer

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Alcohol and narcotics have become indispensable for many prostitutes when providing sexual services. Eighty-eight percent are often or sometimes under the influence of alcohol and 43% under that of narcotics while entertaining clients.

TABLE 41.
Question: How much money do you use on the average every month on narcotics?

	%-s
Do not need to use money on it	30
Up to 500 kroons	13
501 -1,000 kroons	16
1,001- 3,000 kroons	21
3,001-6,000 kroons	11
More than 6,000 kroons	9

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Seventy percent of the respondents use money on narcotics. On the average, a prostitute spends 2,600 kroons per month. Every fifth spends more than 3,000 kroons per month.

13. Opportunities of escaping from sex business

TABLE 42.

Question: Have you ever considered or attempted ending the providing of sexual services?

	%-s
I have sometimes thought about finishing	39
I have tried to end, but it did not work out	17
No, I do not want to end	26
Cannot answer	18
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The prostitutes' willingness to cease providing sexual services is quite limited. Half of the respondents have considered ceasing now and then, some of them have even attempted to exit the sex business, but with little results for the time being. Twenty-six percent are definitely unwilling to leave the business.

TABLE 43.

Question: If you have attempted to ease providing sexual services, then why have you failed?

Response to options "This is the main reason + this is also important" %

I cannot find another profitable job	48
I am the main breadwinner of the family	33
I have large debts I have to pay off first	31
I tried a lawful job, but this did not suit me	21
The mediator (pimp, brothel owner) disagreed	8
I was forced to continue	8

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The main problem for half of the respondents is finding an alternative equally profitable occupation. One third has the reason that they are the main breadwinners, another third has debts. One fifth tried lawful work, but gave up. Only 8% cites the reason of being forced to continue.

TABLE 44

Question: Please estimate your future. For how long can you continue looking for sponsors/providing sexual services?

	%
Up to one year	6
2-3 years	25
4-5 years	7
Longer	7
Cannot say	55
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

Half of the respondents do not yet know how long they could continue in the sex business. Every third estimates that they could last another 2-3 years.

14. Need for help among women involved in prostitution

TABLE 45.

Question: Do you need help or support at present?

	%
Yes, certainly	13
Probably yes	46
Do not need	26
Cannot say	15
TOTAL:	100

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

More than half of the respondents (59%) need help and support. Only every fourth woman claims that she does not need any help.

TABLE 46.**Question: What kind of help would you need?**

Response to options "Yes, this is what I need most + I also need that", %

Primary need for aid

Help in finding profitable lawful job	49
Financial support until I can survive on my own	47
Free medical aid	40
Support and aid for learning and obtaining a profession	36
Shelter or apartment for living	34
Support and aid for ending working as provider of sexual services	33

Important needs

Free contraceptives and medication	28
Psychological assistance	25
Reliable individual (support person) I could always turn to for assistance	25

Less important needs

Cure from drugs dependence	13
Protection against abuse and brutality	10
Treatment of AIDS, HIV	9
Help and support in bringing up children	9
New documents, I lack any ID at present	8
Opportunity to spend some time in a shelter, safe house	4
Treatment of alcoholism	4

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The specific pleas for aid reveal that half of the prostitutes consider it vital to escape from sex business and to start working in the legal labour market. Accordingly, they need the most aid for finding a profitable lawful occupation (49%), to begin studying and obtain a profession (36%). Forty percent needs free medical aid. Twenty-eight percent find it important to have free contraceptives and medication. Every fourth needs psychologist's aid or a support person. Less important for the respondents are treatment from drugs addiction, AIDS/HIV and alcoholism.

15. Motivation for entering legal labour market

We asked all women what they would find important in a new job if they should change their occupation. All women involved in providing sexual services answered the question regardless of whether they had an official job or not at the time of answering.

It appeared that out of all factors influencing the choice of job, the definite leader was „as high salary as possible at the new job”. Ninety-two percent considered high salary important (94% of Estonians and 91% of non-Estonians). High salary was followed, ranked according to importance, „a good and understanding boss”, which was considered important by 52% of respondents (53% of Estonians and a 52% of non-Estonians). The third place was held by „interesting work”, important to 50% of respondents (42% of Estonians and 53% of non-Estonians) and the fourth position by „fringe benefits at work”. The latter was considered important by 46% of respondents (42% of Estonians and 47% of non-Estonians).

The greatest role in entering (or returning to) the legal labour market is played by material factors. Therefore, for entering the legal labour market and giving up providing sexual services, the women should find a rather profitable job. The average net salary (after taxes) they wished to receive after changing the occupation was 11 thousand kroons (Estonians average 9,300 kroons and non-Estonians 11,800 kroons). The desired net salary is remarkably high compared to the average Estonian net salary. The premises for earning such a salary in today's Estonia would be good education and high qualification. However, the education level and qualification of women providing sexual services do not enable them earn such a salary.

The respondents' education level:

- five percent of women had lower than basic education (2% of Estonians and 6% of non-Estonians)
- basic education 22% (15% and 25%)
- incomplete secondary education 23% (24% and 22%)
- vocational education 10% (11% and 10%)
- specialised secondary education 10% (10% and 10%)
- secondary education 14% (10% and 16%)
- incomplete higher education 13% (23% and 8%)
- applied higher education 2% (3% and 2%)
- higher education 2% (2% and 3%)

Considering this education level, the dreams of entering the legal labour market at a monthly salary well over the Estonian average are quite unrealistic.

16. Critical age group in labour market – women of 18 – 25 years of age

It appeared that among the interviewed prostitutes, the largest social group were women in the age of 18 - 25 years. Fifty-six percent of all respondents were in the 18 - 25 age group, 60% of Estonians and 55% of non-Estonians. A rather large sample, 408 women, was interviewed, and since various expert estimates place the number of prostitutes in Estonia between 2,000 and 3,000, it can be presumed that the 18 - 25 years age group is actually the largest among women engaged in prostitution.

This the age, when young people generally start an independent life and attempt to leave their parents' home. Finding work obtains vital importance for youths in that period and the choices made at that time could have crucial impact on their future. Since the 18-25 years age group clearly dominated the general sample of prostitutes, it seems likely that women of that age are a critical age group, from among whom most of the young women are recruited to prostitution business.

Prevention and varied attention should target primarily women of that age, many of them seek for work (in many cases certainly their first job), fail to find a suitable one, become disappointed or lose hope and thus may more easily find their way to the sex business. The survey showed that the education structure of the most threatened age group among Estonian and Russian-speaking women differed. Forty-nine percent of Estonians in the 18 - 25 years age group had basic education, 48% had secondary and 3% had higher education. Among non-Estonians of the same age group, 69% had basic education, 30% had secondary and 1% had higher education. The group of respondents with basic education included those having completed or incomplete basic education, as well as those with incomplete secondary education or vocational education not corresponding to secondary level.

The education level of Estonians in the dominating age group of prostitutes was significantly higher than that of the non-Estonians. Therefore, the risk groups of non-Estonians largely include youths with basic (vocational) education. On the other hand, among the Estonians, the risk groups with basic and secondary education are of equal size. Thus the risks of young Estonian women to become involved in sex business can largely emerge after graduation from grammar school and not just at the basic and vocational education levels.

17. Women's initiative to seek for lawful occupation

Our survey studied the percentage of women providing sexual services, which had tried to find an official job and which opportunities and channels they had made use of.

TABLE 49.

Question: Which opportunities have you used for finding official work or starting your own business?

	%
Following opportunities were used for finding official work	Share of respondents (%) making use of the opportunity
Looked for job via state labour board, private labour agency	
- all respondents' average	41
- women residing in Tallinn	34
- women residing in Narva and Kohtla-Järve	54
- women residing in other larger cities	38
- up to 18 years	21
- 19-25 years	31
- 26-30 years	56
- over 30 years	68
- Estonian	34
- Estonian	45
- basic education	43
- secondary education	36
Appealed directly to employer	
- all respondents' average	44
- women residing in Tallinn	45
- women residing in Narva and Kohtla-Järve	49
- women residing in other larger cities	37
- up to 18 years	28
- 19-25 years	37
- 26-30 years	56
- over 30 years	64
- Estonian	37
- non-Estonian	47
- basic education	44
- secondary education	43
Responded to advertisements (in newspapers, on the Internet etc.)	
- all respondents' average	45
- women residing in Tallinn	45
- women residing in Narva and Kohtla-Järve	50
- women residing in other larger cities	40

- up to 18 years	24
- 19-25 years	45
- 26-30 years	52
- over 30 years	46
- Estonian	39
- non-Estonian	48
- basic education	42
- secondary education	49
Was interviewed by employer	
- all respondents' average	28
- women residing in Tallinn	29
- women residing in Narva and Kohtla-Järve	24
- women residing in other larger cities	28
- up to 18 years	7
- 19-25 years	24
- 26-30 years	30
- over 30 years	48
- Estonian	30
- non-Estonian	26
- basic education	23
- secondary education	33
Approached relatives or acquaintances	
- all respondents' average	46
- women residing in Tallinn	49
- women residing in Narva and Kohtla-Järve	42
- women residing in other larger cities	45
- up to 18 years	38
- 19-25 years	38
- 26-30 years	64
- over 30 years	54
- Estonian	38
- non-Estonian	50
- basic education	46
- secondary education	45

Source: Survey of women involved in prostitution. Estonian Institute of Open Society. 2005

The data included in the table allow estimating the prostitutes' initiative for finding a legal job. Slightly less than half of the interviewed women have used official channels for finding employment.

Forty-one percent of the women have approached the **labour agencies**. Women residing in North-east Estonia have been more active than the others. Russian-speaking women have been more active than Estonians. The latter aspect is directly related to the place of residence, since there are more Russian-speaking women in North-east Estonia.

There is a clear relation to the age of the respondents. The older the women are, the more will they attempt to find lawful occupation via labour agencies. More than 2/3 (68%) of women older than 30 years have attempted to find lawful occupation with the help of labour agencies.

Forty-four percent of women **have approached the employers directly** and 45% have responded to **job offers**. Women of North-east Estonia have been in comparison with the others the most active in making contact with the employers and responding to advertisements. The analogous tendency applies to ethnicity and age. Russian-speaking women and women older than 26 years have been more active than others in approaching employers and responding to advertisements.

At the same time, slightly more than one quarter (28%) of women engaged in prostitution have reached **an interview with the employer**. Being interviewed by the employer can be considered a certain achievement or the second stage in applying for a job. There are no differences related to ethnicity or place of residence here. Women over 30 and with secondary education show better results in this respect than the others.

Asking for help from relatives and acquaintances in seeking for employment can be considered making use of the social networks. Approximately half of women involved in prostitution have used this channel in looking for employment. Non-Estonians are more active than Estonians in making use of the social networks. Women in the age group of 26-30 years were significantly more active in seeking work with the help of the social network, while those even older, over 30 years, used this option slightly less.

The survey displayed a clear tendency – the older are the prostitutes, the more active are they in their attempts to return to or enter lawful employment and to give up sex business. This is related to the presence of children. Seven percent of prostitutes younger than 18 years have children. Among the dominant group of sex business, women in the 19-25 years group, 23% have children (29% of Estonians and 20% of non-Estonians).

However, the number of women with children increases sharply after the 25th year of age. Fifty-four percent of women in the 26-30 years group have children and 71% of those older than 30. It is therefore understandable that women with children are more active than others in their efforts to find lawful occupation.

We asked the respondents, whether they had attempted to find means for starting their own enterprise so as to escape from sex business. Three percent of all respondents had sought for capital for starting their own business.

18. Orientation at self-improvement

A predominant majority of all respondents would like to receive adult education or training; 85% of all respondents, 84% of Estonians and 86% of non-Estonians. Among the desired spheres of further education, the three most popular are:

- **Foreign languages**, training is desired by 52% of respondents (49% of Estonians and 53% of non-Estonians)
- **Driving**, 45% (42% and 46%)
- **Computer use**, 44% (36% and 48%)

Two of the most popular subjects are of general educational type (foreign languages and computer use), while the third, motor vehicle driving, is also an elementary skill for the young people and a common one in the modern mobile way of life.

The following four spheres of further education are less significant and more than one fifth of all respondents would improve their knowledge of these areas:

- **Law and legal aid**, 24% (29% and 22%)
- **Accounting and finances**, 23% (28% and 20%)
- **State language**, 22% (13% and 26%)
- **Security and self-defence skills**, 21% (11% and 25%)

There is reason to presume that the most popular areas of training are linked to the present occupation of women providing sexual services and the results are less of an indicator of the prostitutes' serious desire to leave the illegal sex business.

Idealistic ideas also characterise the prostitutes when interviewed on their attitudes towards the desired education. Thirty-two percent of women with basic education want to obtain secondary or specialised secondary education and 38% higher education (incl. university education 23% and applied higher education 15% of respondents). Twenty-three percent of women with basic education were not able to define their expectations regarding education.

Out of respondents with secondary education, 64% of women want to receive higher education (incl. 47% wanting a university degree and 17% applied higher education). Seventeen percent of respondents with secondary education were not able to express an opinion about their desired education.

The expectations regarding adult training and future education, rated by the respondents, are daydreams rather than realistic desires and intentions. Women involved in prostitution rather live in a world of dreams and illusions and the dreams of high income at the lawful labour market and university education are images lending bright colours to drab reality.