

**CRIME AND ABUSE
EXPERIENCED BY SEX
WORKERS IN IRELAND
VICTIMISATION SURVEY**





16TH SEPTEMBER 2013

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ABOUT UGLYMUGS.IE

UglyMugs.ie is a scheme that aims to improve the safety of sex workers in Ireland and reduce crimes committed against them, by bringing sex workers together to share information about potential dangers.

Established by E Designers in 2009, over the last 4 years, Irish sex workers have reported over 4,000 incidents of crime and abuse to UglyMugs.ie.

Since 2013 Safe IQ has been working on UglyMugs.ie in partnership with E Designers to develop products and services to improve escort safety, carry out research into sex worker safety and raise awareness of the need for sex workers to have the same protections as other workers.

A report on crime and abuse of sex workers in Ireland, based on the information UglyMugs.ie has collated over the last 4 years, is due to be published in October 2013.

The aim of this survey has been to learn more about escorts (indoor sex workers) in Ireland and their experiences of crime and abuse by directly asking a wide range of Irish escorts to participate in this survey.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Online survey of 195 female, male and trans* escorts (indoor sex workers) in Ireland

Key Findings

- 25-34 is the largest age group of escorts currently working. The largest specified age group for entry to sex work was 18-24. None of the participants reported entering sex work aged under 16 years old.
- The leading countries of birth of participants were Romania (25.7%), United Kingdom (15.6%), Ireland (12.6%), Brazil (12%) and Hungary (7.2%).
- Participants were highly educated, 74.9% having completed third level education.
- 53.8% of participants worked as a sex worker in another country before working in Ireland.
- 97.3% of participants were currently working as independent, not agency, escorts. 33.3% had experience of working for a third party, e.g. an escort agency, in Ireland or elsewhere in the past.
- 54.1% of participants normally work alone to comply with brothel laws that criminalise sex workers who do not work alone.
- Participants reported low alcohol and drug use.
- Participants overwhelmingly reported always using condoms for vaginal and anal sex.
- 60% of participants detailed experiences of crime whilst working as an escort.
- 57.4% of participants detailed experiences of abuse whilst working as an escort.
- A range of persons commit crime against sex workers in Ireland, not only clients.
- 66.7% of participants who had been a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland did not report to the police. Stigma leads the list of reasons for not reporting crime. Experiences of police vary but there is significant dissatisfaction and distrust of police amongst escorts.
- Participants said that other escorts were the biggest source of help to them after experiencing crime. Currently there are no useful support services for escorts in Ireland, but escorts would welcome the establishment of a variety of sex worker support services.
- Fear of media exposure is very high, even higher than fear of crime, with 3 out of 4 escorts in Ireland worried or very worried about being exposed as an escort in the newspapers or other media.

METHODOLOGY

The survey was an online survey carried out in July/August 2013.

The survey could be completed online in a web or mobile browser. It was made available in the three main languages spoken by escorts in Ireland; English, Romanian and Spanish¹. Participants were not asked for any personally identifying information. No incentive was offered to participants. The survey was designed not to be overly intrusive and all questions could be skipped by participants if they did not wish to answer.

The aim of the survey was to learn more about escorts (indoor sex workers) in Ireland (both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland) and particularly about their experiences of crime and abuse.

It was announced on the UglyMugs.ie website and various social media websites that a survey was being conducted of escorts in Ireland. However the web address of the survey was not published publicly, to prevent non-escorts completing the survey. Escorts were invited to contact UglyMugs.ie for further information. Invitations to take the survey were also sent by email and SMS to escorts that had joined UglyMugs.ie. On three occasions over three weeks all escorts advertising on the escort directory website Escort-Ireland.com were sent an invitation to take the survey.

All escorts advertising on the escort directory website were advertised as independent. Almost all escorts in Ireland advertise as independent. Agency escorting is unusual or hidden in Ireland. However it can be assumed that, were any escort invited to take the survey to be in a situation where an agent or other third-party is in control of his/her email/phone, the escort may not have had the opportunity to participate.

A total of 195 participants took the survey, though many participants skipped various questions.

¹ UglyMugs.ie services have been available in 15 languages for 4 years and English, Romanian and Spanish are consistently the most popular language choices.

FINDINGS

WORKING GENDER

Question: What gender do you work as? (You can select more than one if appropriate, for example if you work as both a male escort and a trans escort)

Female	82.8%	159
Male	8.3%	16
Trans	4.7%	9
Trans & Male	2.6%	5
Female & Trans	0.5%	1
Female & Male	0.5%	1
Female & Male & Trans	0.5%	1

192 participants answered the question. 3 participants skipped the question.

Notes: Participants were asked their working gender(s), in recognition that, for commercial reasons, some sex workers may work as a gender other than the gender they identify as.

AGE

Question: What is your age group?

Under 18	0.5%	1
18-24	18.2%	35
25-34	50.5%	97
35-44	20.3%	39
45-64	9.9%	19
65+	0.5%	1

192 participants answered the question. 3 participants skipped the question.

ETHNICITY

Question: What is your ethnicity?

Asian	2.1%	4
Black	7%	13
Middle Eastern	0%	0
Mixed	8.6%	16
Oriental	1.1%	2
Other	4.8%	9
White	76.5%	143

187 participants answered the question. 8 participants skipped the question.

COUNTRY OF BIRTH

Question: What is your country of birth?

Albania	1.2%	2
Argentina	1.2%	2
Bahrain	0.6%	1
Barbados	0.6%	1
Brazil	12%	20
Bulgaria	1.2%	2
China	1.2%	2
Colombia	1.2%	2
Czech Republic	1.8%	3
Dominican Republic	0.6%	1
France	0.6%	1
Germany	1.8%	3
Greece	0.6%	1
Hungary	7.2%	12
Ireland	12.6%	21
Italy	0.6%	1
Jamaica	0.6%	1
Latvia	0.6%	1
Moldova	1.2%	2
Portugal	1.8%	3
Romania	25.7%	43
South Africa	0.6%	1
Spain	4.2%	7
Sri Lanka	0.6%	1
Taiwan	0.6%	1
Trinidad and Tobago	0.6%	1
United Kingdom	15.6%	26
United States	1.2%	2
Venezuela	1.8%	3

167 participants answered the question. 28 participants skipped the question.

EDUCATION

Question: What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No education	2.1%	4
Primary school	4.8%	9
Secondary school	18.2%	34
Third level education	74.9%	140

187 participants answered the question. 8 participants skipped the question.

ENGLISH LEVEL

Question: What is your standard of English?

Basic	7.4%	14
Moderate	7.9%	15
Good	25.9%	49
Fluent	40.2%	76
Native	18.5%	35

189 participants answered the question. 6 participants skipped the question.

EXPERIENCE OF SEX WORK IN OTHER COUNTRIES PRIOR TO WORKING IN IRELAND

Question: Is Ireland the first country you worked as a sex worker in?

No - I worked as a sex worker in another country before working as a sex worker in Ireland	53.8%	86
Yes - Ireland is the first country I worked as a sex worker in	46.3%	74

160 participants answered the question. 35 participants skipped the question.

LENGTH OF EXPERIENCE IN SEX WORK

Question: What length experience do you have of working in sex work, either in Ireland or elsewhere?

Less than 1 year	12.3%	20
1 - 2 years	20.4%	33
3 - 5 years	38.9%	63
6 - 10 years	23.5%	38
More than 10 years	4.9%	8

162 participants answered the question. 33 participants skipped the question.

AGE OF ENTRY INTO SEX WORK

Question: What age were you when you first started in sex work, either in Ireland or elsewhere?

Under 16	0%	0
16-17	6.8%	11
18-24	46.9%	76
25-34	31.5%	51
35-44	12.3%	20
45-64	2.5%	4
65+	0%	0

162 participants answered the question. 33 participants skipped the question.

EXPERIENCE OF OTHER TYPES OF SEX WORK

Question: Do you have experience of any other types of sex work, besides escorting, either in Ireland or elsewhere? Please tick as many as apply.

Outdoor / Street Sex Work	13%	13
Massage Parlour / Brothel	49%	49
Dancer / Stripper	30%	30
Adult Modelling / Pornography	20%	20
Phone or Webcam Sex	34%	34
Other (please specify)	3%	3

100 participants answered the question. 95 participants skipped the question.

Others specified were dominatrix, hostess clubs and night clubs.

EXPERIENCE OF WORKING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

Question: Have you ever worked as a sex worker for someone else, where they keep part of your earnings, e.g. worked for an escort agency, in Ireland or elsewhere?

No	66.7%	104
Yes	33.3%	52

156 participants answered the question. 39 participants skipped the question.

INDEPENDENT OR AGENCY

Question: Are you currently working as an escort in Ireland as an independent escort or an agency escort?

Independent	97.3%	144
Agency	0.7%	1
Both - I do both independent and agency escort work	2%	3

148 participants answered the question. 47 participants skipped the question.

WORKING PART OR FULL TIME

Question: Is escort currently your main job or do you have another job?

No, working as an escort is not my main job currently	27.6%	43
Yes, working as an escort is my main job currently	72.4%	113

156 participants answered the question. 39 participants skipped the question.

WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

Question: In which environments do you work as an escort in Ireland? Tick as many as apply.

Incalls to your working apartment / house	69.6%	110
Incalls to your hotel room	38%	60
Incalls to an apartment / house that is also your home	34.2%	54
Outcalls to clients in hotels	51.3%	81
Outcalls to clients in apartments/houses	33.5%	53
Other (please specify)	1.3%	2

156 participants answered the question. 39 participants skipped the question.

Others specified were cars and to a client's workplace/office.

WORKING ALONE

Question: Do you normally work on your own or with another person, when you are working as an escort in Ireland?

Alone - I normally work on my own	54.1%	85
Not Alone - I normally work alongside another escort/person	12.1%	19
Both - I work both ways, sometimes on my own and sometimes alongside another escort/person	33.8%	53

157 participants answered the question. 38 participants skipped the question.

Notes: In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland sex workers must work alone in order to work legally. Brothel laws criminalise sex workers who do not work alone.

EXPERIENCE OF WORKING IN REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND

Question: Have you worked as an escort in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland?

Yes - I have worked both in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland	49.1%	78
No - I have only worked in the Republic of Ireland	44.7%	71
No - I have only worked in Northern Ireland	6.3%	10

159 participants answered the question. 36 participants skipped the question.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CLIENTS PER WEEK

Question: When you are working as an escort in Ireland, how many clients do you see in a week on average?

1 - 5 clients a week	12.9%	19
6 - 10 clients a week	27.9%	41
11 - 20 clients a week	30.6%	45
21 - 30 clients a week	11.6%	17
31 - 40 clients a week	9.5%	14
51 - 60 clients a week	4.8%	7
60 - 70 clients a week	2%	3
More than 70 clients a week	0.7%	1

147 participants answered the question. 48 participants skipped the question.

Notes: The option of 41 – 50 clients a week was left out by mistake and thus participants were unable to select this option.

ALCOHOL USE

Question: Do you ever drink alcohol whilst you are working as an escort in Ireland?

No	76.1%	118
Yes, but only ever light drinking	20.6%	32
Yes, and sometimes heavy drinking	3.2%	5

155 participants answered the question. 40 participants skipped the question.

DRUG USE

Question: Do you ever take drugs whilst you are working as an escort in Ireland?

No	93.6%	147
Yes, but only ever light use	6.4%	10
Yes, and sometimes heavy use	0%	0

157 participants answered the question. 38 participants skipped the question.

CONDON USE

Question: Do you use condoms when working as an escort in Ireland?

FOR VAGINAL SEX		
Sometimes use condom	1.4%	2
Always use condom	97.9%	142
Never use condom	0.7%	1
Not applicable (I don't provide this service)		11

156 participants answered the question. 39 participants skipped the question.

FOR ORAL SEX		
Sometimes use condom	43.4%	66
Always use condom	54.6%	83
Never use condom	2%	3
Not applicable (I don't provide this service)		3

155 participants answered the question. 40 participants skipped the question.

FOR ANAL SEX		
Sometimes use condom	2.5%	2
Always use condom	96.3%	78
Never use condom	1.2%	1
Not applicable (I don't provide this service)		65

146 participants answered the question. 49 participants skipped the question.

EXPERIENCES OF CRIME

Question: Whilst working as an escort in Ireland, have you been the victim of any of the following crimes, and if so, was it in the last 12 months? Please tick as many as apply

		Yes, in last 12 months		Yes, longer than 12 months ago
Abusive or threatening phone call(s) or SMS(s)	66.7%	78	17.1%	20
Abusive or threatening email(s)	19.7%	23	8.5%	10
In-Person abusive or threatening behaviour	35%	41	10.3%	12
Attempted assault	12.8%	15	10.3%	12
Assault (slapping, punching, kicking)	9.4%	11	6.8%	8
Assault with a weapon (knife / gun / other)	8.5%	10	1.7%	2
Strangulation / Suffocation	1.7%	2	2.6%	3
Held against will	5.1%	6	5.1%	6
Drugging (administered a drug / poison on you)	0%	0	1.7%	2
Attempted rape / sexual assault	3.4%	4	2.6%	3
Vaginal rape	0%	0	2.6%	3
Forced oral sex	1.7%	2	1.7%	2
Anal rape	0.9%	1	1.7%	2
Other sexual assault	0.9%	1	0.9%	1
Removal of condom during sex without consent	20.5%	24	11.1%	13
Attempted robbery	14.5%	17	11.1%	13
Robbery	16.2%	19	8.5%	10
Didn't pay or paid with fake money	23.9%	28	15.4%	18
Caused damage to property	6%	7	6%	7
Person impersonating a police officer	13.7%	16	10.3%	12
Harassment	19.7%	23	13.7%	16
Stalking	20.5%	24	6%	7
Pimping, trafficking or other exploitation	1.7%	2	1.7%	2
Blackmail or other extortion	14.5%	17	5.1%	6
Fraud	4.3%	5	5.1%	6
Other (please specify)	5.1%	6		

117 participants answered the question. 78 participants skipped the question.

Others specified that could not be included in a category above were being driven off a road. Two participants highlighted that they believed the crime they had experienced was instigated by pimps who wanted them to leave town. Another participant said he/she had left Ireland due to threats from a landlord and was now working in another country where he/she feels the police protect sex workers.

EXPERIENCES OF ABUSE

Question: Whilst working as an escort in Ireland, have you been the victim of any of the following abuses, which may or may not be crimes, and if so, was it in the last 12 months? Please tick as many as apply

		Yes, in last 12 months		Yes, longer than 12 months ago
Unauthorised photography of you	7.1%	8	8%	9
Media intrusion into your life by a journalist	8%	9	6.3%	7
Mistreatment of you by a landlord or letting agent or management company	14.3%	16	14.3%	16
Mistreatment of you by hotel staff	12.5%	14	8%	9
Persons requesting illegal acts, e.g. underage sex	9.8%	11	5.4%	6
Persons seeking unsafe sex	70.5%	79	18.8%	21
Encountering persons that are drug users or in possession of drugs	42%	47	14.3%	16
Other (please specify)	3.5%	4		

112 participants answered the question. 83 participants skipped the question.

Others specified that could not be included in a category above were mistreatment by police officers. Participants also mentioned some crimes, suspiciously acting persons, and harassment via distribution of print outs of escort profiles from an escort website.

OFFENDERS

Question: What types of person have perpetrated crime against you whilst working as an escort in Ireland? You can select as many as apply

Client	53.5%	54
Pseudo client (Person who pretended to be client to commit offence but was not a genuine client)	42.6%	43
An escort agency manager or "pimp"	18.8%	19
Another escort	20.8%	21
A current or former boyfriend/girlfriend/husband/wife/partner	5%	5
Landlord / Letting Agent / Management Company	19.8%	20
Hotel staff	13.9%	14
A neighbour	4%	4
Taxi driver	5%	5
Police officer	11.9%	12
Other (please specify)	5.9%	6

101 participants answered the question. 94 participants skipped the question.

Others specified that could not be included in a category above were strangers and persons impersonating police. Persons unknown also came up, with one participant describing harassment causing the participant to have to keep moving hotel as an unknown person was sending a copy of his/her escort profile on an escort website to hotel management.

Notes:

When escorts identify an escort agency manager or pimp as an offender, it should be noted that this does not necessarily indicate the escort worked for an agency or pimp. We know from our experience of recording crime against sex workers that it is common for independent escorts to experience crime or abuse that is, or at least they believe is, instigated by a local agency or pimp who doesn't want them around, presumably for competitive reasons.

We know from our experience of recording crime against sex workers that incidents of persons impersonating police to commit crime are common. With the reluctance of many sex workers to engage with police, situations do occur where sex workers have an experience with a person or persons who claim to be police, but it is not clear if they are genuinely police or not. This can sometimes lead to sex workers believing police have committed crime against them when it is actually a case of police impersonation.

REPORTING TO POLICE

Question: If you have been a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland, did you report it to the police?

Yes	21.8%	19
No	66.7%	58
Both - I have reported some crimes to police but not others	11.5%	10

87 participants answered the question. 108 participants skipped the question.

REASONS FOR NOT REPORTING TO POLICE

Question: What reasons have you not reported crime you have experienced whilst working as an escort in Ireland to the police for? Tick as many as apply.

Not applicable - I am always happy to report to police	19.4%	18
Fear of police investigating you	31.2%	29
Fear of losing your accommodation	33.3%	31
Worried about being judged for being an escort	41.9%	39
Worried you won't be believed because you are an escort	40.9%	38
Worried about media exposure if you engage with criminal justice system	33.3%	31
Dealt with matter yourself	11.8%	11
Dislike / fear of police	8.6%	8
Fear of reprisal by offender	8.6%	8
Feel police could have done nothing	35.5%	33
Feel police would not have bothered / not been interested	30.1%	28
Inconvenient / too much trouble	17.2%	16
Too trivial / not worth reporting	18.3%	17
Previous bad experience of the police or courts	7.5%	7
It is a common event / just one of those things / just something that happens to escorts	12.9%	12
It was partly my fault	2.2%	2
(Thought) Someone else had already reported incident / or similar incidents	2.2%	2
Tried to report it but was not able to contact the police / police were not interested	6.5%	6
Other (please specify)	6.5%	6

93 participants answered the question. 102 participants skipped the question.

Others specified were, reported to bank instead (counterfeit money), fear of family or friends finding out, alone and could not speak English, not wanting to report if incident happened in own apartment, no protection of privacy if it goes to court an name and address will be put in newspapers, the work is not legal and friends of the participant have had police take their money.

HATE CRIME

Question: If you have been a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland, have you ever felt a crime against you was a hate crime? (Hate crimes occur when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group, e.g. because the person is a sex worker.) Tick as many as apply.

I do not feel I have been a victim of hate crime	61.9%	52
Sex worker targeted hate crime	27.4%	23
Disability hate crime	0%	0
Homophobic hate crime	6%	5
Racist hate crime	11.9%	10
Religious hate crime	3.6%	3
Transphobic hate crime	2.4%	2
Other (please specify)	3.6%	3

84 participants answered the question. 111 participants skipped the question.

Notes: Sex worker targeted hate crime is not recognised in Ireland. Sex workers who have been the victims of sex worker targeted hate crime may not identify as such, due to lack of understanding and/or recognition of sex worker targeted hate crime in Ireland.

IMPACT OF CRIME

Question: If you have been the victim of a crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland, do you feel it caused you any of the following? Tick as many as apply.

Long lasting feelings of anxiety	62.1%	36
Long lasting feelings of depression	48.3%	28
Feeling suicidal	15.5%	9
Other (please specify	10.3%	6

58 participants answered the question. 137 participants skipped the question.

Others specified were annoyance, occasional anxiety, fear of accepting new clients, being more careful and working more privately, short term anxiety and passing anxiety.

HELP AFTER EXPERIENCING CRIME

Question: If you have been the victim of a crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland, did you receive any useful help or support from any of the following? Tick as many as apply.

Other escorts	78.1%	57
Escort-Ireland.com / UglyMugs.ie	46.6%	34
National Ugly Mugs	4.1%	3
Chrysalis Drug Project Dublin	2.7%	2
Red Ribbon Project Limerick	0%	0
Rape Crisis Ireland	0%	0
Ruhama	1.4%	1
Immigrant Council of Ireland	0%	0
Women's Health Project Dublin	5.5%	4
A GP / doctor / nurse / hospital	2.7%	2
A solicitor or other legal professional	9.6%	7
Victim Support	1.4%	1
Other (please specify)	1.4%	1

73 participants answered the question. 122 participants skipped the question.

Other specified was a regular client.

SECURITY MEASURES

Question: Do you frequently take any of the following security measures when working as an escort in Ireland? Tick as many as apply.

I work with another escort for safety	41.1%	51
I have someone acting as a security person nearby	16.1%	20
I have a "buddy" I phone before and after each booking	20.2%	25
I use "Ugly Mug" lists and/or online warning boards	38.7%	48
I ask new clients for a "reference" from another escort	20.2%	25
I have self-defence products, like alarms, sprays	27.4%	34
I have weapons to defend myself	8.1%	10
I have taken self-defence training classes	10.5%	13
I have CCTV at my workplace	15.3%	19
I have a security system with a panic alarm	4.8%	6
I take more precautions when it is a new client	58.1%	72
I don't do outcalls	39.5%	49
I don't get in cars with clients	65.3%	81
Other (please specify)	5.65%	7

124 participants answered the question. 71 participants skipped the question.

Other specified that could not be included in a category above were not doing outcalls to private residences, sending a client's car registration to a friend before getting in the client's car, not meeting new clients on an outcall basis without a reference from another escort and the client being registered on an escort website, working for a landlord so a person can be ordered out, only doing outcalls to regular / previous clients, asking for proof of address if going on an outcall to a private residence, only doing outcalls to hotels.

CONTACT WITH GARDAÍ

Question: Have you had any contact with the police in the Republic of Ireland, the Gardaí, whilst working as an escort, and if yes, how satisfied / dissatisfied were you with the service you received?

Very satisfied	25.5%	12
Fairly satisfied	23.4%	11
A bit dissatisfied	8.5%	4
Very dissatisfied	27.7%	13
Too early to say	14.9%	7
I have had no contact with Gardaí	144.7%	68

115 participants answered the question. 80 participants skipped the question.

Notes: We know from our experience of recording crime against sex workers that incidents of persons impersonating police are common. With the reluctance of many sex workers to engage with police, situations do occur where sex workers have an experience with a person or persons who claim to be police, but it is not clear if they are genuinely police or not. This can sometimes lead to sex workers having a negative impression of police when what they experienced was actually a case of police impersonation.

CONTACT WITH PSNI

Question: Have you had any contact with the police in Northern Ireland, the PSNI, whilst working as an escort, and if yes, how satisfied / dissatisfied were you with the service you received?

Very satisfied	15%	3
Fairly satisfied	30%	6
A bit dissatisfied	15%	3
Very dissatisfied	35%	7
Too early to say	5%	1
I have had no contact with PSNI		86

106 participants answered the question. 89 participants skipped the question.

Note: We know from our experience of recording crime against sex workers that incidents of persons impersonating police are common. With the reluctance of many sex workers to engage with police, situations do occur where sex workers have an experience with a person or persons who claim to be police, but it is not clear if they are genuinely police or not. This can sometimes lead to sex workers having a negative impression of police when what they experienced was actually a case of police impersonation.

ARREST

Question: Have you ever been arrested for a prostitution related offence in Ireland?

No	91.3%	116
Yes	8.7%	11

127 participants answered the question. 68 participants skipped the question.

POLICE CORRUPTION

Question: Have you ever encountered corrupt police whilst working as an escort in Ireland?

No	81.6%	102
Yes	18.4%	23

125 participants answered the question. 70 participants skipped the question.

Note: We know from our experience of recording crime against sex workers that incidents of persons impersonating police are common. With the reluctance of many sex workers to engage with police, situations do occur where sex workers have an experience with a person or persons who claim to be police, but it is not clear if they are genuinely police or not. This can sometimes lead to sex workers having a negative impression of police when what they experienced was actually a case of police impersonation.

CRIME RATE NOW COMPARED TO 2 YEARS AGO

Question: If you have worked as an escort in Ireland for 2 years or longer, how do you feel the crime rate against escorts has changed since two years ago?

A lot more crime	45.5%	35
A little more crime	14.3%	11
About the same	32.5%	25
A little less crime	6.5%	5
A lot less crime	1.3%	1
Not applicable, I have worked in Ireland for less than 2 years		40

117 participants answered the question. 78 participants skipped the question.

EXPECTATION OF BEING A VICTIM OF CRIME

Question: How likely do you think you personally are to be a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland in the next year?

Very likely	23.1%	27
Fairly likely	26.5%	31
Fairly unlikely	28.2%	33
Very unlikely	22.2%	26

117 participants answered the question. 78 participants skipped the question.

VIEW ON CRIME AGAINST SEX WORKERS

Question: How do you perceive crime against escorts in Ireland?

Very serious problem	47.2%	58
Serious problem	26.8%	33
Fairly serious problem	13.8%	17
Not a serious problem	7.3%	9
Not a problem	4.9%	6

123 participants answered the question. 72 participants skipped the question.

FEAR OF CRIME

Question: How safe do you feel working as an escort in Ireland?

Very Safe	7%	9
Safe	48.4%	62
Unsafe	29.7%	38
Very Unsafe	14.8%	19

128 participants answered the question. 67 participants skipped the question.

FEAR OF MEDIA EXPOSURE

Question: How worried are you about being exposed as an escort in the newspapers or other media?

Very Worried	45.4%	59
Worried	29.2%	38
Not Worried	25.4%	33

130 participants answered the question. 65 participants skipped the question.

SUPPORT SERVICES WANTED

Question: Which of the following services would you like to see available to escorts in Ireland? Tick as many as apply

Police Sex Worker Liaison Office	75.8%	94
General advice service for escorts	63.7%	79
Legal advice service for escorts	73.4%	91
Health services for escorts	74.2%	92
Exiting services for escorts who want to leave sex work	57.3%	71
Counselling for escorts	51.6%	64
Escort-friendly rape crisis service	50.8%	63
Escort-friendly domestic violence service	50%	62
Other (please specify)	3.2%	4

Others specified were hypnotherapy, anxiety treatment, privacy protection support and help for agency escorts that want to leave their agency and become independent.

124 participants answered the question. 71 participants skipped the question.

SURVEY CONCLUSIONS

Escorts in Ireland publish much information about themselves online. Detailed profiles with photographs are the norm. Many escorts also engage in message board discussions, use social media websites or have blogs or websites of their own. However much of this information is advertising material, designed to attract clients. It is normal for escorts to take on an online persona, which may differ from their real selves in many ways. This survey aimed to get honest information about escorts in Ireland, by giving escorts the opportunity to fill out as much or as little of this survey as they wished, in complete anonymity, with no pressure to disclose anything they didn't want to and no reason to present themselves falsely in any way.

The 195 escorts who participated in the survey identified their working gender as female (82.8%), male (8.3%), trans (4.7%) or working as multiple genders (4.1%). This would seem to be a quite balanced sample in regard to gender. Statistics about escorts advertising online in Ireland put the gender mix at female (91%), male (3.3%) and trans (5.7%)². (Participants were asked their working gender(s), in recognition that, for commercial reasons, some sex workers may work as a gender other than the gender they identify as.)

DEMOGRAPHICS

The three main age groups were 25-34 (50.5%), 35-44 (20.3%) and 18-24 (18.2%). One participant was under 18 (aged 16 or 17).

76.5% of participants identified their ethnicity as white. The leading countries of birth for participants were Romania (25.7%), United Kingdom (15.6%), Ireland (12.6%), Brazil (12%) and Hungary (7.2%).

Participants were highly educated with 74.9% of participants saying they had completed third level education. 84.6% said their English standard was good, fluent or native, whilst 15.3% had only basic or moderate English.

SEX WORK EXPERIENCE

Just over half of participants (53.8%) stated they had worked as a sex worker in another country before working as a sex worker in Ireland.

12.3% of participants had less than a year's experience of sex work, but most had multiple years of experience, 1-2 years (20.4%), 3-5 years (38.9%), 6-10 years (23.5%) and more than 10 years (4.9%).

² Escort-Ireland.com response to Irish Government public consultation process on the future direction of legislation on prostitution, August 2012, <http://sexwork.ie/2012/08/31/escort-ireland/>

The age of entry to sex work was 18-24 (46.9%), 25-34 (31.5%), 35-44 (12.3%), 16-17 (6.8%), 45-64 (2.5%). 162 participants answered this question, whilst 33 participants skipped it. No participant selected the Under 16 option.

Just over half of participants (51.3%) answered a question about their experience of other types of sex work (in addition to escorting). However there was not an option for participants to indicate they did not have experience of any other types of sex work, so it is not clear how many of the remaining 48.7% had no experience of other types of sex work or merely chose to skip the question. Of participants that answered the question, the three main additional types of sex work participants had experience of were Massage Parlour / Brothel (49.0%), Phone or Webcam Sex (34.0%) and Dancer / Stripper (30.0%).

66.7% had no experience of working as a sex worker for someone else, e.g. working for an escort agency, in Ireland or elsewhere. 33.3% did have experience of working for a third party.

WORKING AS AN ESCORT IN IRELAND

97.3% of participants stated they were currently working as independent, not agency, escorts.

72.4% of participants stated that working as an escort was currently their main job.

The most popular working environment was incalls to the escort's working apartment / house, with 69.6% of participants saying they sometimes worked this way. However other ways of working were also popular with 51.3% of participants sometimes doing outcalls to clients in hotels, 38.0% sometimes accepting incalls to their hotel room, 34.2% sometimes accepting incalls to an apartment / house that is also their home and 33.5% sometimes doing outcalls to clients in apartments/houses.

54.1% of participants stated they normally worked alone. 12.1% indicated they normally worked with another escort/person and 33.8% said they worked both ways, sometimes alone, sometimes with another escort/person. In both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland sex workers must work alone in order to work legally. Brothel laws criminalise sex workers who do not work alone. That almost half of participants do not always work alone, is indicative of many escorts not wanting to work alone, and shows escorts are often prepared to risk potential legal consequences rather than work alone.

49.1% of participants had experience of working in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, whilst 44.7% had only worked in the Republic and 6.3% had only worked in the North.

The most popular options selected by participants as to the number of clients they saw a week on average were 11 - 20 clients a week (30.6%), 6 - 10 clients a week (27.9%) and 21 - 30 clients a week (11.6%).

DRUG AND ALCOHOL USE

Participants reported low alcohol and drug use whilst working as escorts. 76.1% participants did not use alcohol at all whilst working, 20.6% only ever drank lightly and 3.2% sometimes drank heavily. 93.6% never used drugs whilst working, 6.4% reported light use of drugs only and 0% reported heavy drug use.

SEXUAL HEALTH

Participants overwhelmingly reported always using condoms for vaginal (97.9%) and anal (96.3%) sex. Participants were more flexible about condom use in regard to oral sex, 54.6% reported always using a condom, whilst 43.4% sometimes used a condom.

However, further on in the survey, 24 (20.5%) participants who completed a section on having experienced crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland stated that they had experience of removal of condom during sex without consent in the last 12 months. This may constitute rape in law and is certainly a sexual health risk. Also 79 (70.5%) participants who completed a section on having experienced abuse whilst working as an escort in Ireland stated they had experience of persons seeking unsafe sex in the last 12 months.

EXPERIENCES OF CRIME AND ABUSE

Participants were asked about their experiences of crime and abuse.

60% (117) of participants answered a question about types of crime experienced whilst working as an escort in Ireland. However there was not an option for participants to indicate they had no experience of crime, so it is not clear how many of the remaining 40% had no experience of crime or merely chose to skip the question. Of participants that answered the question, numerous participants indicated they had experience of a variety of serious crimes in the last 12 months.

Crimes than more than 10% of participants who answered the question indicated experience of in the last 12 months were:

66.7% - Abusive or threatening phone call(s) or SMS(s)

35.0% - In-Person abusive or threatening behaviour

23.9% - Didn't pay or paid with fake money

20.5% - Stalking

20.5% - Removal of condom during sex without consent (this may well constitute rape in law)

19.7% - Harassment

19.7% - Abusive or threatening email(s)

16.2% - Robbery

14.5% - Blackmail or other extortion

14.5% - Attempted robbery

13.7% - Person impersonating a police officer

57.4% (112) of participants answered a question about types of abuse experienced whilst working as an escort in Ireland, which may or may not constitute a crime. However there was not an option for participants to indicate they had no experience of any of these abuses, so it is not clear how many of the remaining 42.6% had no experience of the abuses or merely chose to skip the question.

Abuses than more than 10% of participants who answered the question indicated experience of in the last 12 months were:

70.5% - Persons seeking unsafe sex

42%- Encountering persons that are drug users or in possession of drugs

14.3% - Mistreatment of you by a landlord or letting agent or management company

12.5% - Mistreatment of you by hotel staff

Ireland's sex worker population overwhelmingly works indoors with access to phones and the Internet, which is safe conditions, in comparison to outdoor sex working. However a number of factors put Irish sex workers at risk of violence and abuse. The lack of support services and good relations with police, mean offenders specifically target sex workers in Ireland, in the belief that sex workers are people in society without any help, who offenders can abuse with a very low risk of facing any consequences as a result. Irish sex workers are also portrayed in the media as people with no rights, no choices, helpless victims who can't say no to anything or anybody. This sends a very dangerous message to offenders.

OFFENDERS

When asked what types of person have perpetrated crime against them whilst they have been working as an escort in Ireland, participants identified clients (53.5%) or persons pretending to be clients who are not actually clients, so called pseudo clients (42.6%) as the most common offender types. Others that more than 10% of participants indicated were:

20.8% - Another escort

19.8% - Landlord / Letting Agent / Management Company

18.8% - An escort agency manager or "pimp"

13.9% - Hotel staff

11.9% - Police officer

When escorts identify an escort agency manager or pimp as an offender, it should be noted that this does not necessarily indicate the escort worked for an agency or pimp. We know from our experience of recording crime against sex workers that it is common for independent escorts to experience crime or abuse that is, or at least they believe is, instigated by a local agency or pimp who doesn't want them around, presumably for competitive reasons.

From our experience of recording crime against sex workers we know incidents of persons impersonating police to commit crime are common. With the reluctance of many sex workers to engage with police, situations do occur where sex workers have an experience with a person or persons who claim to be police, but it is not clear if they are genuinely police or not. This can sometime lead to sex workers believing police have committed crime against them when it is actually a case of police impersonation.

REPORTING TO POLICE

66.7% of participants who had been a victim of crime(s) whilst working as an escort in Ireland indicated they did not report to the police. 21.8% stated they had reported to police. 11.5% stated, both, they had reported some crime(s) to police but not other(s).

Participants who had been a victim of crime(s) whilst working as an escort in Ireland were asked to give their reasons for not reporting crime to the police. 19.4% indicated they were always happy to report to the police. The remaining 80.6% selected reasons that had held them back from reporting crime to police in the past. Reasons over 10% of participants selected for having not reported crime to the police were:

- 41.9% - Worried about being judged for being an escort
- 40.9% - Worried you won't be believed because you are an escort
- 35.5% - Feel police could have done nothing
- 33.3% - Fear of losing your accommodation
- 33.3% - Worried about media exposure if you engage with criminal justice system
- 31.2% - Fear of police investigating you
- 30.1% - Feel police would not have bothered / not been interested
- 18.3% - Too trivial / not worth reporting
- 17.2% - Inconvenient / too much trouble
- 12.9% - It is a common event / just one of those things / just something that happens to escorts
- 11.8% - Dealt with matter yourself

That the top two reasons for not reporting to police are fear of being judged or not believed is indicative of the high level of stigma associated with being an escort in Ireland.

HATE CRIME

Hate crimes occur when a perpetrator targets a victim because of his or her perceived membership in a certain social group, e.g. because the person is a sex worker. 61.9% of participants who had been a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland did not identify as having been the victim of a hate crime. 27.4% of participants felt they had been a victim of sex worker targeted hate crime, 11.9% racist hate crime, 6% homophobic hate crime, 3.6% religious hate crime and 2.4% transphobic hate crime.

Sex worker targeted hate crime is not recognised in Ireland. Sex workers who have been the victims of sex worker targeted hate crime may not identify as such, due to lack of understanding and/or recognition of sex worker targeted hate crime in Ireland.

IMPACT OF CRIME

58 (27.7%) participants answered a question about the impact of being a victim of crime whilst escorting in Ireland had on them, with 62.1% saying it caused them long-term anxiety, 48.3% long-term depression and 15.5% saying it led to them feeling suicidal. However there was not an option for participants to indicate being a victim of crime whilst escorting in Ireland did not have any such impact on them, so it is not clear how many of the remaining 72.3% were not impacted in these ways after experiencing crime or merely chose to skip the question.

HELP

73 participants answered a question about whether any of a list of organisations and professionals had provided them with any useful help after being a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland. Participants indicated that other escorts were the biggest source of help after experiencing crime, with 78.1% of participants saying other escorts had helped them. The other main source of help was Escort-Ireland.com / UglyMugs.ie, with 46.6% saying useful help had been provided. None of the other organisation or professionals scored highly including the leading support organisations for sex workers in Ireland, Ruhama (1.4%), Immigrant Council of Ireland (0%) and Women's Health Project Dublin (5.5%).

SECURITY MEASURES

Participants reported taking a number of security measures whilst working as an escort, the top ones being not getting in cars with clients (65.3%), taking more precautions when it is a new client (58.1%), not working alone (41.1%), not doing outcalls (39.5%), and using an ugly mugs scheme (38.7%).

POLICE

Experiences of the police were varied. 48.9% of participants who had contact with the police in the Republic of Ireland, the Gardaí, whilst working as an escort were very or fairly satisfied, but 36.2% were a bit or very dissatisfied. 45% of participants who had contact with the police in Northern Ireland, the PSNI, whilst working as an escort were very or fairly satisfied, but 50% were a bit or very dissatisfied. The number of participants that felt able to give an opinion on experience of the police was quite low, 40 in the Republic and 19 in the North, so the sample size here was quite small.

8.7% of participants reported having been arrested for a prostitution related offence in Ireland.

18.4% of participants reported having encountered corrupt police whilst working as an escort in Ireland.

It should be noted that escorts do not only have contact with police in the context of being victims of crime. Escorts are criminalised if not working alone and in this and other situations they can come in contact with police in the context of being treated as criminals. With this legal situation it is to be expected that some relations between escorts and police will inevitably be negative for the escorts.

From our experience of recording crime against sex workers we know incidents of persons impersonating police to commit crime are common. With the reluctance of many sex workers to engage with police, situations do occur where sex workers have an experience with a person or persons who claim to be police, but it is not clear if they are genuinely police or not. This can sometime lead to sex workers believing police have committed crime against them when it is actually a case of police impersonation.

VIEWS ON CRIME

Over half of participants (59.8%) felt there was more crime against escorts in Ireland now than 2 years ago.

About half of participants (49.6%) felt it was fairly or very likely they'd be a victim of crime whilst working as an escort in Ireland in the next year. It would be our opinion that the true percentage here could be much higher. We find some crimes against sex workers in Ireland, for example threatening phone calls and text messages, have become so common they are normalised and some sex workers don't even recognise them as crime any longer, and would only consider more serious crimes to be crime.

87.8 of participants perceived crime against escorts in Ireland as problem; fairly serious problem (13.8%), serious problem (26.8%) and very serious problem (47.2%).

55.4% of participants felt safe or very safe working as an escort in Ireland. 44.5% felt unsafe or very unsafe working as an escort in Ireland.

MEDIA

Fear of media exposure was very high, higher than fear of crime, with 3 out of 4 participants worried or very worried about being exposed as an escort in the newspapers or other media.

SUPPORT SERVICES WANTED

The need for legal and health support for escorts is clear from the various findings of this survey. Survey participants also strongly indicated they want a wide range of support services to be available,

including police liaison (75.8%), health (74.2%), legal (73.4%) and general (63.7%) advice services. Participants also strongly recognised the need for useful exiting services for those that wish to leave sex work (57.3%).

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is huge media sensationalism about sex work and sex trafficking in Ireland, but no independent research. Independent research must be carried out to establish the reality of indoor sex work in Ireland.

The safety and well-being of sex workers must be looked at, including the laws and policies that clearly put sex workers health and safety at risk. Most critically, indoor sex workers should not be forced to work alone in order to work legally, as they currently are, under Irish and Northern Irish law. The use of condoms as evidence of in prostitution cases in both jurisdictions discourages safe sex.

If brought in, we believe the Swedish model would exasperate the current problems facing sex workers, by driving sex work further underground, further stigmatising sex workers, and enabling crime and abuse to thrive. We would not expect sex work to decline as a result, but we would expect a more vulnerable sex worker population, more organised crime and an increase in crime against and abuse of sex workers.

Sex workers in Ireland are the victims of a strong media desire to repeatedly expose sex workers and apparent sex trafficking victims. Media abuse of sex workers is a very serious problem in Ireland and must be challenged. This is causing huge harm to people selling sex in Ireland, including sex workers and potential victims of sex trafficking.

The constant witch-hunting of persons selling sex in Ireland by elements of the media is also driving sex work underground, making sex workers scared to engage with police or let anyone in society know that they are selling sex. It is also having the highly damaging effect of preventing sex worker led initiatives being established in Ireland. Elements of the media have Irish sex workers too scared to meet with other sex workers, speak out or advocate for themselves, organise or attend events.

We believe all sex worker victims of crime or witnesses of crime should be entitled to anonymity, as the possibility of being identified as a sex worker in the media as a result of reporting a crime or being a witness in a court case is stopping sex workers engage with the justice system.

The current situation in Ireland is that there is an almost total lack of support services for sex workers, primarily because the main service providers in all sectors, legal advice, rape crisis, domestic violence, are anti-sex work. Even the government health service for sex workers, the Women's Health Project Dublin, is anti-sex work. Also instead of funding initiatives that could help sex workers, the Government is funding anti-sex work organisations, like Ruhama, that cause harm to sex workers.

Sex workers are not currently recognised as a minority group in need of police liaison services. The establishment of police sex worker liaison offices in the Republic and Northern Ireland would greatly improve sex worker relations with police, increase reporting of crime, and enable police to much

more effectively tackle instances of exploitation, coercion, and trafficking within the sex industry. The Merseyside model of recognising and prioritising hate crime against sex workers is recommended. The National Ugly Mugs³ scheme should be promoted in Northern Ireland.

General advice, legal advice, health services and exiting services for sex workers are needed.

Currently the main support and help for escorts in Ireland is other escorts. The situation for escorts in Ireland may remain the same or get worse in the future if the Swedish model is brought in and increased funding is provided to anti sex worker initiatives. The UglyMugs.ie service is vital, both as an ugly mug scheme and more broadly as a network that enables sex workers to connect with and support each other. In the event of the continued unavailability of any support services for sex workers in Ireland, sex workers and sex worker allies should seek to set up a helpline. The recently set up Confide⁴ helpline in Scotland is an example of a peer to peer initiative that could be established by sex workers and allies in Ireland.

³ <https://uknswp.org/um/>

⁴ <http://confideinfo.com/>