



The Student Sex Work Project (TSSWP) - Bridging research and practice through innovation

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Aims

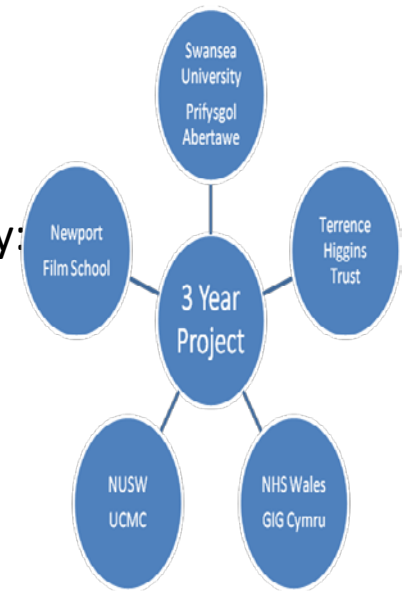
- Describe the project and its aims.
- Discuss the findings from the research element of the project.
- Consider Belle's story and avenues of biopsychosocial support for student sex workers.

Why TSSWP?

- Growing concern re changes to funding of HE
 - Result - substantial shifts in the cost burden of HE from the government onto the individual students and their families
 - Expecting students to contribute a bigger share of their HE cost implies that students need to have access to financial resources
 - Not surprising that there are indications of increased involvement of students in the sex industry
- Societal trend towards normalisation and mainstreaming of sexual consumption
- Growing radical feminist discourse across Europe – sex work as violence and exploitation
- Lack of service provision for students working in sex industry
- Difficulty in attracting research funding

Research and Service Delivery = Innovation and Public Engagement

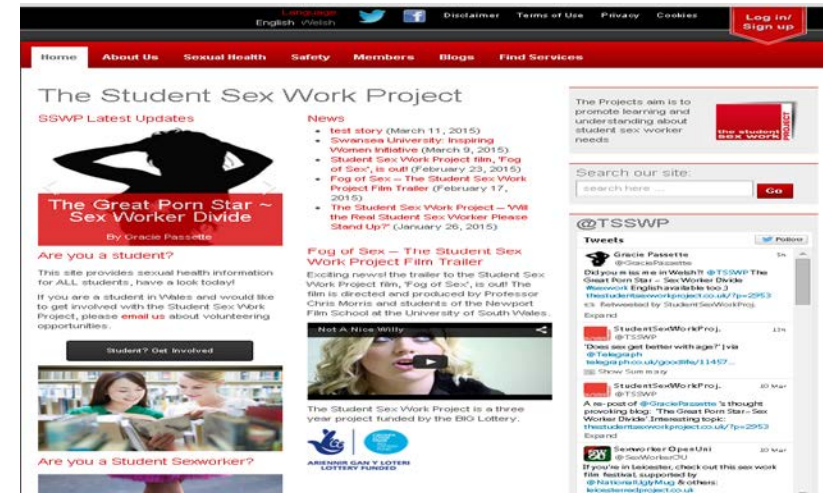
- **First cross sector e-health service**
- **Innovative research** - combination of research and service delivery:
 - Data Collection – Quantitative and Qualitative
 - Website
 - Member's Forum
 - Net-reach services
 - Online counselling



- **Methodology – PAR**

“To promote learning and understanding about student sex worker needs and associated issues, and to provide an innovative sexual health service to a marginalised population through an ethical, empowering research led framework.”

- **Public Engagement**
 - Fog of Sex
 - Development of training
 - Video Diary





Immediate impact and social inclusion

“When I think about The Student Sex Work Project I still think of them with relief.

Relief that is still with me three years on.

Relief that will stay with me forever actually.

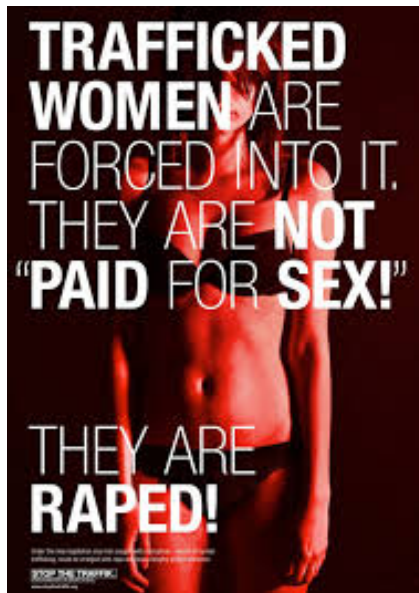
That's probably quite a bold statement to make but it's true.

Before I started speaking to the project I was working in absolute isolation”.



What does sex work look like?

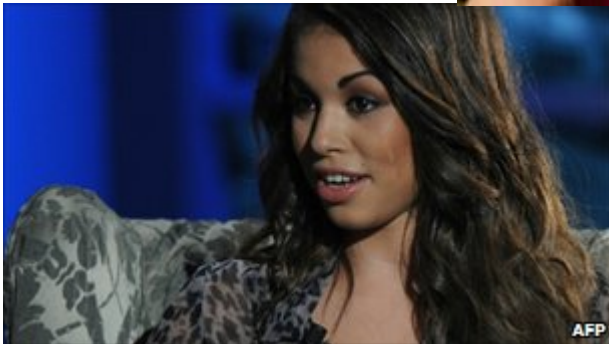
Variety of images come to mind



Often associated with violence and murder



Or Glamour



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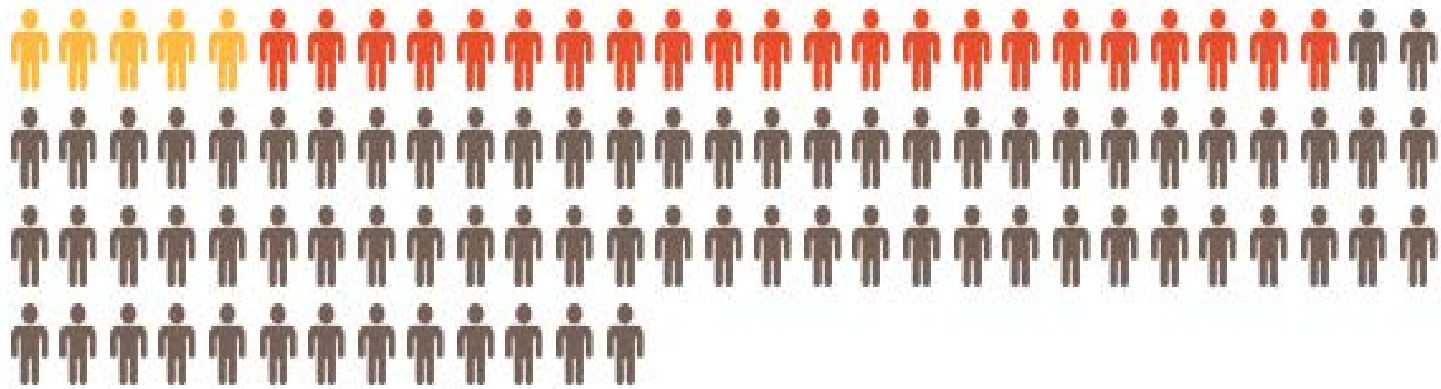
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Our Definition

- Three categories were distinguished:
 - Direct sex work (Escort work for example)
 - Indirect sex work (web cam work for example)
 - Organisational and auxiliary roles (driver for example)

Findings: Participation in the sex industry



Involved in the sex industry

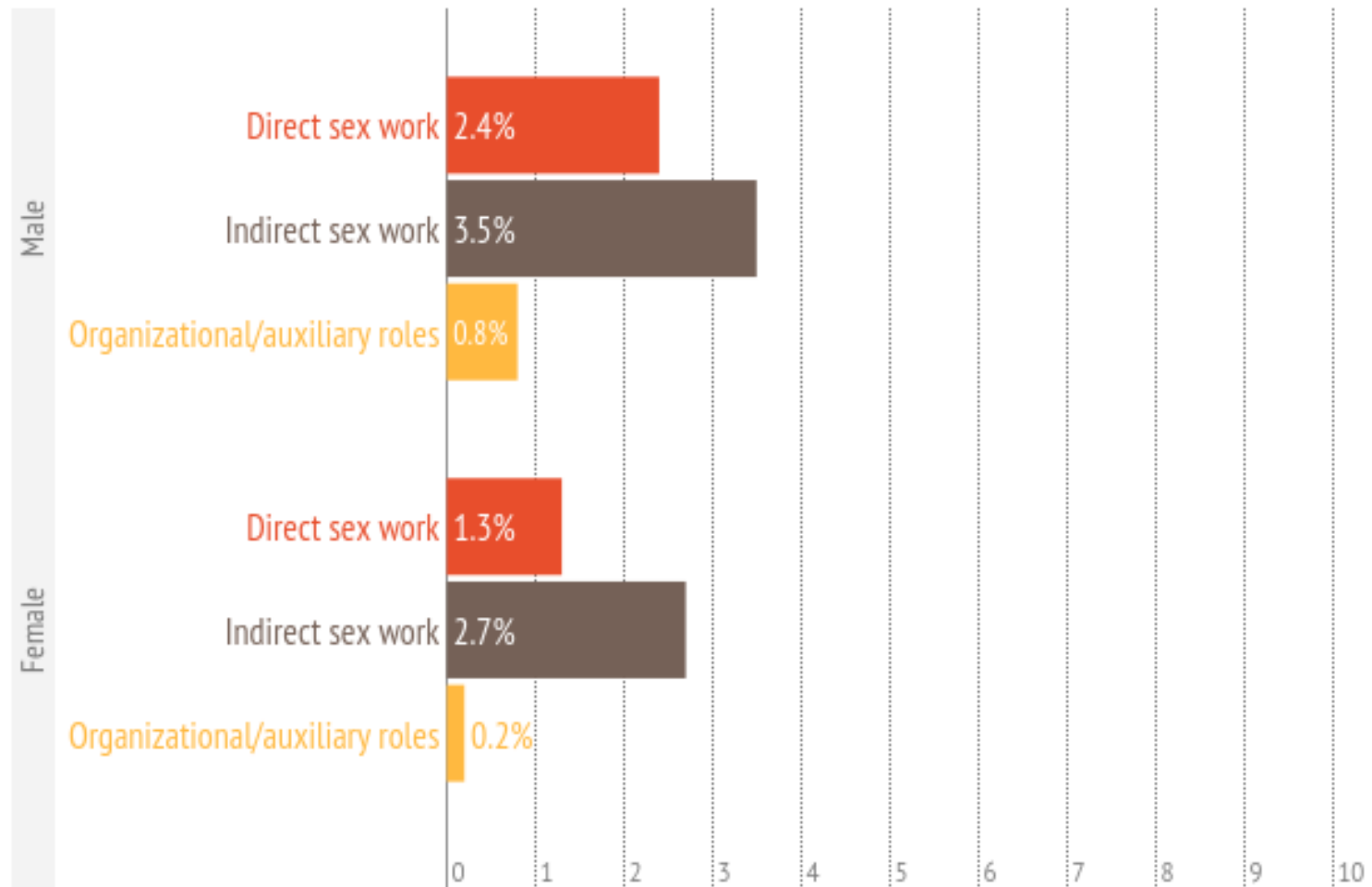
Considered involvement

Not involved nor considered

- 4.8% of the respondents had ever been involved
- 21.9% had ever considered involvement

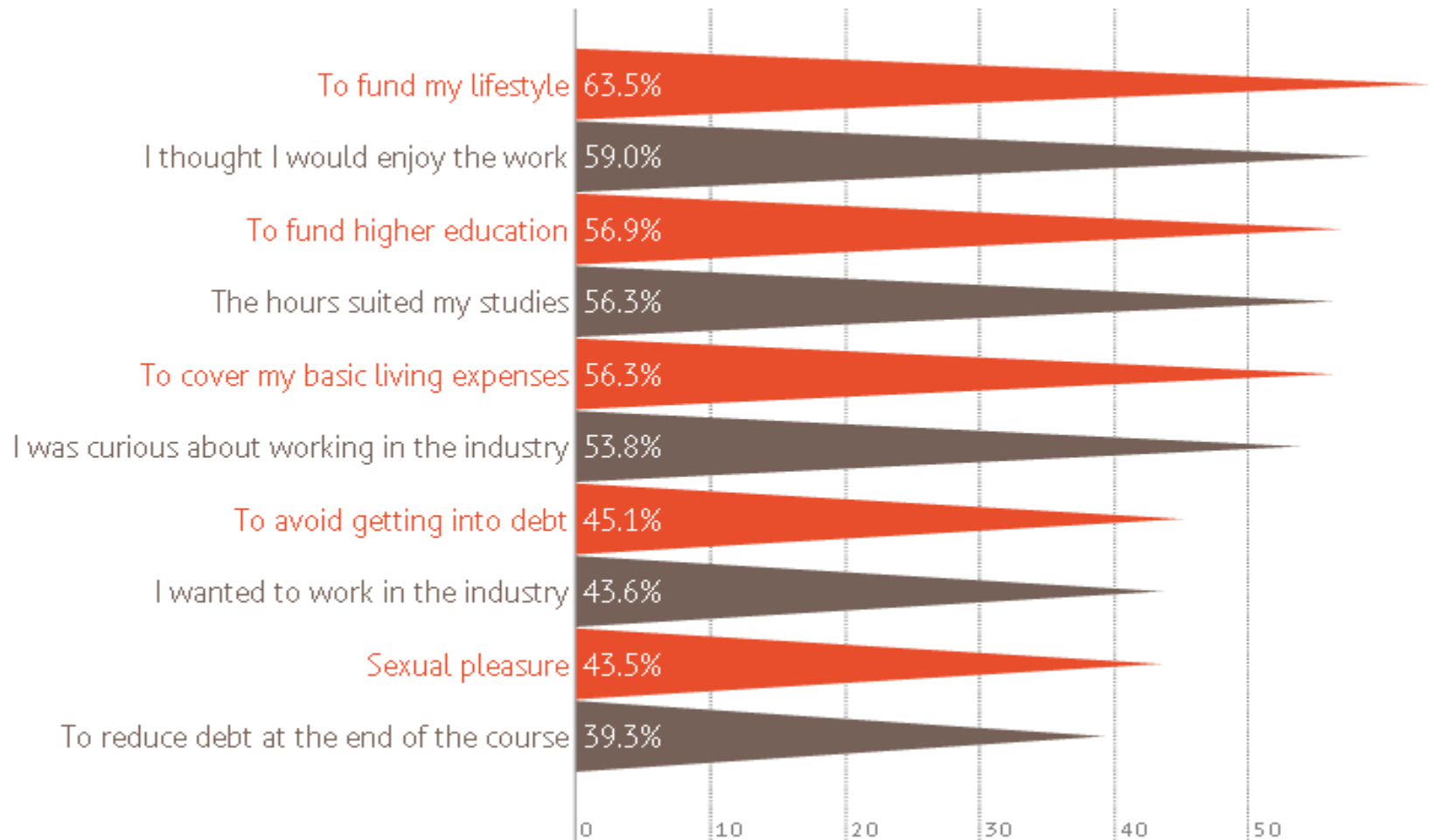


Participation according to type of activity and gender





Top ten most reported reasons





Top five negative aspects of sex work:

- Secrecy (50.7%)
- Unpredictable earnings (50.2%)
- Unpleasant customers (49.8%)
- Fear of violence (36.0%)
- Negative judgements from family and friends (34.6%)

Top five positive aspects of sex work:

- Good money (82.7%)
- Flexible hours (76.8%)
- Sexual pleasure (46.4%)
- Good clients (39.1%)
- Working conditions (38.2%)

What percentage of student sex workers reported making use of University counselling services?

- **SSWs make more use of counselling services provided to students as compared to students not engaged in sex work (21% vs. 15%)**
- If SSWs contact a professional in relation to their work, this most likely is a GP or sexual health clinic

- **biopsychosocial framework:** an approach to describing and explaining how *biological*, *psychological* and *social* factors combine and interact to influence physical and mental health



A glimpse into the life of a student sex worker

As you watch the film consider the three aspects - of bio / psycho / social factors and think about the impact of doing sexwork on the person telling her story.

But the final word goes to 'Belle' on her own identity



“It shows how difficult I find the work. She is wearing a lot of makeup which is unlike me in my ‘real’ life but exactly like me in my working life. Her expression is emotional – just how I feel before seeing a client. She also looks shocked.

After seeing a client that is exactly how I feel; quite shocked by what I have just done.

Sometimes I think it is the only thing in my life and the only thing that identifies me.

Everything else is just background noise and this is also reflected by the blurred background in the image.

Even four years later I find it hard to believe what I am doing.

I’m so alone and I think that this image shows this.

Clients do not see or know anything about who I really am.
They do not know what I do, what I like, dislike etc. I tell them a different story.”

Thank You