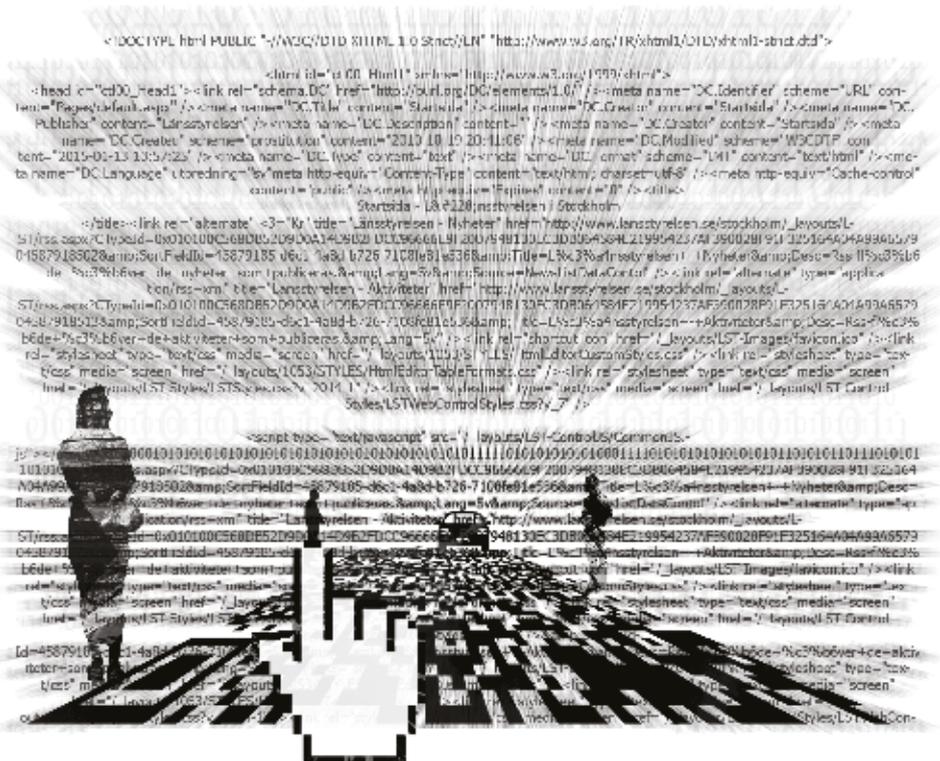




# Prostitution in Sweden 2014

## The extent and development of prostitution in Sweden



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Phone: 010-223 10 00

Project leader: Amanda Netscher

Author: Endrit Mujaj and Amanda Netscher

Illustrator: Karl Lindstrand

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For further information contact  
Secretariat against Prostitution and Trafficking, phone: 010-223 11 40

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The extent and development  
of prostitution in Sweden

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# Foreword

In December 2013, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm in its role as the National Coordinator against Prostitution and Trafficking was commissioned by the Government to survey and gather knowledge about the extent of prostitution in Sweden. This involved analysing the spread, extent and forms of prostitution, including trends, channels of communication and which people buy and sell sexual services as well as describing international developments in this area. The County Administrative Board has had the task of monitoring developments on an ongoing basis since 1998. Approximately twenty scope surveys have been carried out since 1993.

The material on which this report is based has been produced and processed in close cooperation with the National Board of Health and Welfare, which had the task of monitoring developments in prostitution on an ongoing basis since 1998. The collaboration between these authorities has been crucial to the implementation of the report since it has enabled the sharing of different experiences and resources.

The report is addressed to the Government and the Riksdag, the judicial system, and other bodies which through their work come into contact with people who buy or sell sexual services, and to others who take an interest in this issue.

The author of the report is Amanda Netscher, the project manager, and Endrit Mujaj of the County Administrative Board of Stockholm. Ingrid Åkerman of the County Administrative Board has also been involved in the mapping.

The report could not have been written without the support of other stakeholders—many thanks to you all. Special thanks go to Olga Gislén at the National Board of Health and Welfare who helped make this collaboration most successful. A big thank you also to Anna Hall of the University of Gothenburg, Charlotta Holmström and Sven-Axel Månsson of Malmö University, and Måns Magnusson of Linköping University. Finally, a big thank you to the experts at the authorities, universities/higher education institutes and voluntary organisations who have checked the quality of the content of this report.

Stockholm, February 2015



Magdalena Bosson

Deputy Governor



Kristin Marklund

Head of Social  
Development Unit



## Summary

In December 2013, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm in its role as the National Coordinator against Prostitution and Trafficking was commissioned by the Government to survey and gather knowledge about the extent of prostitution in Sweden (U2013/6848/JÄM). The methods currently available are unable to estimate the exact extent in Sweden. This does not mean that attempts at estimation should be excluded; rather, that methods should be developed.

The methodological challenges include the fact that people in prostitution constitute to some degree a hidden population, which means that we do not know the size of the population, nor do we fully know which people are engaged in it. We also lack a single definition of prostitution and human trafficking, which makes it difficult to draw comparisons between and within countries over time. Despite these challenges, it is still possible given the surveys available to say something about the extent of and trends in prostitution.

### **Population survey – adults over 18 years old**

According to the latest population survey in 2014, the proportion of individuals in Sweden who have bought and sold sexual services is relatively constant over time. Those who have stated that they have bought sexual services are exclusively men. Approximately 7.5 percent of Swedish men between 18 and 65 years of age have bought sexual services at some point in their lives, which is a low figure compared to other Nordic and European countries. The proportion of Swedish men who have stated that they have bought sexual services during this past year is 0.8 percent, a figure which is also relatively constant over time. KAST, units in the three largest cities in Sweden carrying out programmes targeting buyers of sexual services also report that they encounter men solely.

In the latest population study carried out in 2014, 0.7 percent stated that they had sold sexual services at some point. Only men have stated this, which is line with previous surveys where a larger share of men stated that they had had experience of selling sexual services, compared to women. As regards men and women who have had experience of selling sexual services, the somewhat higher proportion of men in these population studies might be explained by the fact that it is women of non-Swedish origin living in Sweden on a temporary basis who constitute a significant proportion of women in prostitution. Women of non-Swedish origin are not reached by population studies and are therefore not represented in these types of surveys. The same applies to women in institutional care or the penal system or with an intellectual disability, who are not reached either by the population studies.

Support for the Swedish Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services as shown by the population studies has remained consistently strong since the first of these recent surveys was carried out: the most recent one in 2014 showed that 72 percent were in favour of it (85 percent of women and 60 percent of men). At the same time, support for criminalising the sale of sexual services is also evident: 48 percent (59 percent of women and 38 percent of men). Greater support has been expressed by women than men both for the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services and for criminalising the sale of sexual services.

### **Street prostitution has been cut by more than half since 1995**

Street prostitution has been cut by more than half since the estimate made in 1995, which was 650 women at the time. Approximately 200–250 women were engaged in street prostitution in 2014 according to estimates made by the Prostitution Units known as Mikamottagningarna in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö.

A reduction in street prostitution needs to be understood in relation to the digital and technological developments that have occurred during the past 15 years. However, one cannot ignore the fact that in countries where the purchase of sexual services is legal street prostitution is widespread, in the form of red light districts, for example, while at the same time illegal prostitution on the internet is a reality in these countries too. The County Administrative Board's overall assessment is that the ban on the purchase of sexual services may have had a normative effect on prospective buyers and thus had an impact on the extent of prostitution in Sweden. More science-based studies are needed in order to assess this effect.

### **Prostitution on the internet**

Two internet surveys commissioned by the County Administrative Board in collaboration with the National Board of Health and Welfare show that the internet plays a central role in the area of prostitution. One way of measuring the extent of prostitution on the internet is to estimate the number of escort ads, yet these estimates too are beset by methodological challenges.

The number of escort ads aimed for men who buy sexual services from women has increased markedly during the past eight years from 304 to 6,965 ads. The number of escort ads primarily targeted at the LGBT community, and consisting almost exclusively of men who buy sexual services from men, has increased from 190 to 702 ads in about four years. Authorities who have studied escort ads in the past have noted that one and the same seller of sexual services is often found in several advertisements. This finding is also indicated by the internet surveys, mainly in the form of the same telephone number cropping up during a search of several advertising sites. The overlap between the number of advertisements and escort sites and the duplication of many ads is shown by both surveys. This is also confirmed by other authorities working the field. Against this background, there is nothing indicating

that the actual number of individuals engaging in prostitution has increased. However, the access to and the flow of information about sexual services on the internet has increased.

The number of ads does not correspond to the number of different individuals involved since the number of individuals posting the ads is unknown. One reliable figure for the number of individuals behind the ads can be estimated more precisely with the aid of a method that has been tested in Denmark. As a part of this report, the County Administrative Board has carried out a pilot study which has taken its inspiration from the Danish model and can be repeated and developed in a Swedish context in the future.

### **Increased knowledge about children and youths**

According to youth studies that have been done, the proportion of young men who state that they have experiences of selling sexual services (1.3–3.6 percent) is higher compared to young women (1–4.6 percent). Men defining themselves as homosexual, bisexual and transgender persons constitute a large group of youths who have had experience of offering sex in return for payment, this being one of the findings shown by the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, RFSL, (14.5 percent of young men, 3.7 percent of girls and 4.2 percent of those who come under neither young man/woman category). Certain groups are not reached by youth studies and are therefore not represented in these types of surveys. Examples here are young people who have a nationality other than Swedish and young people in institutional care where sex in return for payment is more common among young women than young men (10–16 percent compared with 4–7 percent).

### **Age**

Certain difficulties arise in estimating the age of people in prostitution. Based on the picture presented by this scope survey, the County Administrative Board estimates that people in

the 18–30 age group constitute the majority of those selling sexual services. The age of the buyers varies, with the exception of men who buy sexual services from men and young men who tend to be older than the sellers.

### **Nationality**

The majority of the sellers of sexual services are foreign nationals. 80 percent of the escort ads on the internet state a nationality other than Swedish, and, according to Mikamottagningarna in Stockholm and Gothenburg, the majority of women engaged in street prostitution are foreign nationals. Romanian and Nigerian women are over-represented among women in street prostitution, which is the case in several other countries in Europe. In the case of internet prostitution, it is more difficult to interpret details about the nationalities stated in the escort ads. For marketing purposes, a nationality is often given that can be intended to attract prospective buyers.

### **Knowledge gaps**

In order to be able to offer support and help to those who need it and target interventions in the right direction, it is important that the extent and development of prostitution are monitored. Scope surveys are necessary but involve many challenges. The County Administrative Board has been able to identify a number of gaps in our knowledge about the extent and forms of prostitution. This primarily concerns vulnerable groups with an overhanging risk of being subjected to prostitution and newer trends in prostitution:

- unaccompanied minors
- under-represented groups in population and youth surveys
- the extent of and vulnerability among transgender persons
- the significance of the internet and new digital forms of communication
- hidden prostitution, mainly in massage parlours

### **As regards the carrying out of further assignments and research, the County Administrative Board proposes that:**

- systematic follow-up of prostitution and minimum estimates are made in relation to several different arenas:
  - regular surveys of sexual habits (population and youth surveys) take place, every five years
  - internet surveys take place every other year
  - the pilot study for estimating the extent of internet prostitution is repeated
  - an assignment involving the provision of estimates of street prostitution on an ongoing basis is given to a relevant actor
- assignments in the field are coordinated. This would be facilitated by an authority or other actor being commissioned at national level to estimate the extent of prostitution on an ongoing and systematic basis.



## The extent and development of prostitution – an overall assessment

This part is one of two parts in the Swedish version of the report. It starts by providing the background to the work assigned to the County Administrative Board and its implementation by the same. This is followed by a conceptual discussion and a brief look at legislation models in Sweden and Europe.

The section entitled *Development Tendencies* describes the way the extent and composition of prostitution have changed over time. It starts with a description of the development of street prostitution, after which the most important results from the two internet studies are presented, as is an analysis of these. The most important results from the population surveys over time are presented thereafter. The section concludes with a look at children and young people who offer sex in return for payment and also at specific risk groups.

Part A concludes with a look at the gaps in knowledge and the proposals made by the County Administrative Board for carrying out scope surveys in the future.

In the Swedish version of the report, part A is followed part B, by the starting point for the scope survey. There has been no cohesive picture of previous scope surveys in Sweden. For this reason, a body of knowledge was compiled containing proposals for scope surveys in the future, and this is presented there.

Part B concludes by presenting estimates of the extent and the knowledge obtained from different actors in the area of prostitution. With the help of various actors, previous research, reports, estimates and new material were compiled and presented separately in different sections.

## Introduction

As of 2009, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm has been assigned the role of national coordinator for combating prostitution and human trafficking. In December 2013, the County Administrative Board was assigned by the Government to survey and gather knowledge about the extent of prostitution in Sweden. This involved analysing the spread, extent and types of prostitution, including trends, channels of communication and information about individuals buying and selling sexual services, and describing international developments in this area. As of 1998, the National Board of Health and Welfare has been assigned by the Government to monitor on an ongoing basis the development and extent of prostitution in Sweden, and as of 2013 it has also been assigned the task of once again monitoring the development tendencies in prostitution.

The scope survey is one of the measures included in the Government's action plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children (Govt. Paper 2013/14:91). The County Administrative Board has been checking its work on an ongoing basis with experts and reference persons in the area and with the involved ministries. The Board has also been in touch with all those national authorities assigned a role under the action plan.

## Background

Unequal power relations exist between a buyer and seller, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, in the context of prostitution and human trafficking. Prostitution takes place in different arenas and among people regardless of their gender identity, age, ethnic origin, economic background or sexual orientation – even though men are over-represented as buyers and women as sellers.

The starting point has been to provide knowledge in order to develop relevant policies and appropriate measures for those affected by

prostitution. The County Administrative Board hopes that this scope survey offers a clearer picture of the extent and provides a better basis for determining future interventions in combating prostitution.

## The work carried out by the County Administrative Board

Despite significant methodological challenges, the County Administrative Board intends to take an overall approach in addressing the extent of prostitution, the expectations here being that this work will lead to permanent and systematic follow-up measures involving the cooperation of several actors. The report can be seen as an important step in adopting an approach based on knowledge in this area by proposing which arenas would enable estimates to be made.

The County Administrative Board's scope survey presents a number of different kinds of material and studies relating to the area of prostitution. It is a gathering of knowledge old and new which has been provided by various stakeholders. The different kinds of knowledge gathered include in part that obtained when carrying out previous assignments which came under the Government's action plan to combat prostitution and human trafficking (Govt. Paper 2007/08:167), which in turn focused on the extent, such as prostitution among LGBT people and the ability of the penal system to count the number of women who have had experience of prostitution.

As described above, information has been obtained in from previous and new research in the form of online surveys, the National Board of Health and Welfare report on The Development of Prostitution 2015, a population survey, civil society contacts with persons selling sexual services, and the Police. The County Administrative Board has chosen to focus in depth on online prostitution to monitor the gaps in knowledge remaining from previous scope

surveys. The overlap between estimates has not been studied in this scope survey, but it is very likely that the same individuals selling and buying sexual services appear in many of the findings presented. It is therefore essential to read the report in its entirety to gain a complete picture of the extent of prostitution.

## The gathering of knowledge by other actors

The work of the survey has benefited from collaboration with various authorities, organisations, universities and higher education institutes, experts and companies – all with different roles and access to knowledge and information on the basis of different perspectives and experiences. In order to assure the quality of the work done by the County Administrative Board in carrying out the scope survey, the Board has been in close collaboration with experts and researchers possessing special competence in the area of prostitution. With the aid of all these actors, the County Administrative Board has provided a common ground for discussion in analysing the results of the current scope survey.

## Conceptual discussion

### Definition of prostitution and sex for payment

How prostitution is defined is of great importance in scope surveys. The definition has consequences for the way in which the work and study will be shaped and which population is to be surveyed. How to describe the problem and which terms to use are also crucial to which answers will be provided by surveys. This applies to both the questions asked to people who sell or buy sexual services and the questions asked to professionals and people in public authorities who come into contact with individuals in prostitution.

In carrying out this scope survey, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm has main-

### Prostitution

When a minimum of two parties obtain or provide sexual services in return for payment (usually financial); this constituting a prerequisite for sexual services.

ly used the definition of prostitution as given in SOU 1995:15, the one also used by the National Board of Health and Welfare (National Board of Health and Welfare 2000; 2004; 2007). Prostitution is defined as: When a minimum of two parties obtain or provide sexual services in return for payment (usually financial); this constituting a prerequisite for sexual services. This definition is deemed appropriate since it emphasises the money aspect which is the most common form of remuneration for sexual services, but it also leaves room for other types of remuneration that exist too, such as drugs, clothes, food and somewhere to live. Previous studies in Sweden have used the word prostitution but also sex in return for payment, depending on the type of study and who the target is.

### Young persons and experiences of selling sexual services

The way of describing individuals as young persons, youth, young adults, young men and young women, boys and girls and children is not always consistent in studies and reports aiming to map young person's experiences of selling sexual services. In previous studies, the term youth was used for a target group aged between 13 and 25 years. This means that the population includes both minors (under 18 years) and adults (over 18 years). It is therefore important to emphasise in this report that minors under 18 years of age are victims of sexual exploitation regardless of the way in which the questions in the youth studies have been formulated or answered. A person who buys sexual services from minors under 15 years of age can be convicted of child rape (Chapter 6, Section 4 of the Penal Code) and a person who buys sexual services from a minor aged 15–18

can be convicted of the purchase of sexual services from a minor (Chapter 6, Section 9 of the Penal Code).

### **Hidden and open prostitution**

How open the market in prostitution is, is of great, if not to say crucial, significance for the real chances of measuring and assessing the extent of it. This is an important methodological challenge faced when carrying out a scope survey. The starting point for this scope survey has been that prostitution as a phenomenon is both open (available for scrutiny) and hidden (unavailable for scrutiny). One important aspect is that the communication between the buyer and seller can be initiated via an open point of contact and then transferred as part of the second stage to an arena of communication that is hidden to the outside world. People who buy or sell sexual services to some extent constitute a so-called hidden population which means, for instance, that the size of the population and which people are included in it are not fully known. This means that it is not possible to identify exact figures for how many people buy and sell sexual services.

There are two open arenas of prostitution in Sweden, the street and the internet, which are possible to study over time. Open prostitution means places or arenas where sexual services are marketed or bought in the open, such as via ads posted on sex and escort websites on the internet. Open prostitution is therefore easier to study even though it also entails methodological challenges, such as people on the street moving away or online ads appearing on several classified ad websites, or several people using one and the same ad or escort profile.

Hidden prostitution is more difficult to study since the contact between the buyer and the seller takes place via forums such as chat sites, community sites, apps, clubs, hotels, restaurants and massage parlours – sometimes termed indoor prostitution. This means that it is neither marketed nor sold openly, and the

methodological challenges posed in these arenas are therefore even greater than in those where prostitution takes place in the open.

### **Human trafficking for sexual purposes**

The scope survey also presents figures on human trafficking for sexual purposes. The County Administrative Board of Stockholm has based this report on the definition used by the Police, which is: Human trafficking is the organised transport of people with the intention of exploiting them for sexual purposes. Prostitution and human trafficking are two phenomena which are sometimes distinguishable from each other, but this distinction can be most unclear. In the event of a buyer of sexual services being caught, it may be that the seller turns out to be a victim of human trafficking.

Furthermore, the inclusion of human trafficking has been necessary since authorities and organisations record different statistics and use different terms for the phenomenon. Some make a distinction between prostitution and human trafficking while others categorise both prostitution and human trafficking in terms of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse.

Finally, there is an interesting aspect to human trafficking; namely, nationality and origin. In order to understand both the extent of and changes in prostitution as a phenomenon, it is essential to have an understanding as well of how prostitution can sometimes be connected to human trafficking. This applies in particular in cases where people of a nationality other than Swedish are found to be engaged in prostitution.

## **Legislation in brief**

### **Ban on the purchase of sexual services in Sweden**

The Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services (SFS 1998:408) came into force on 1 January 1999. In connection with the sexual

crimes reform of 2005, what was known as the Sex Purchase Act was revoked and replaced by a new penal provision – the purchase of sexual services – in Chapter 6, Section 11 of the Penal Code. The Sex Purchase Act is still a term used in everyday speech, and is still finding its way into the language used by scope surveys today.

The Swedish legislation was part of the Government Bill on Violence Against Women, and prostitution was seen as resulting from the structural inequality between the sexes and as a part of male violence against women. The legislation itself is, however, gender-neutral. One hope held was that the ban would have normative effect on the population.

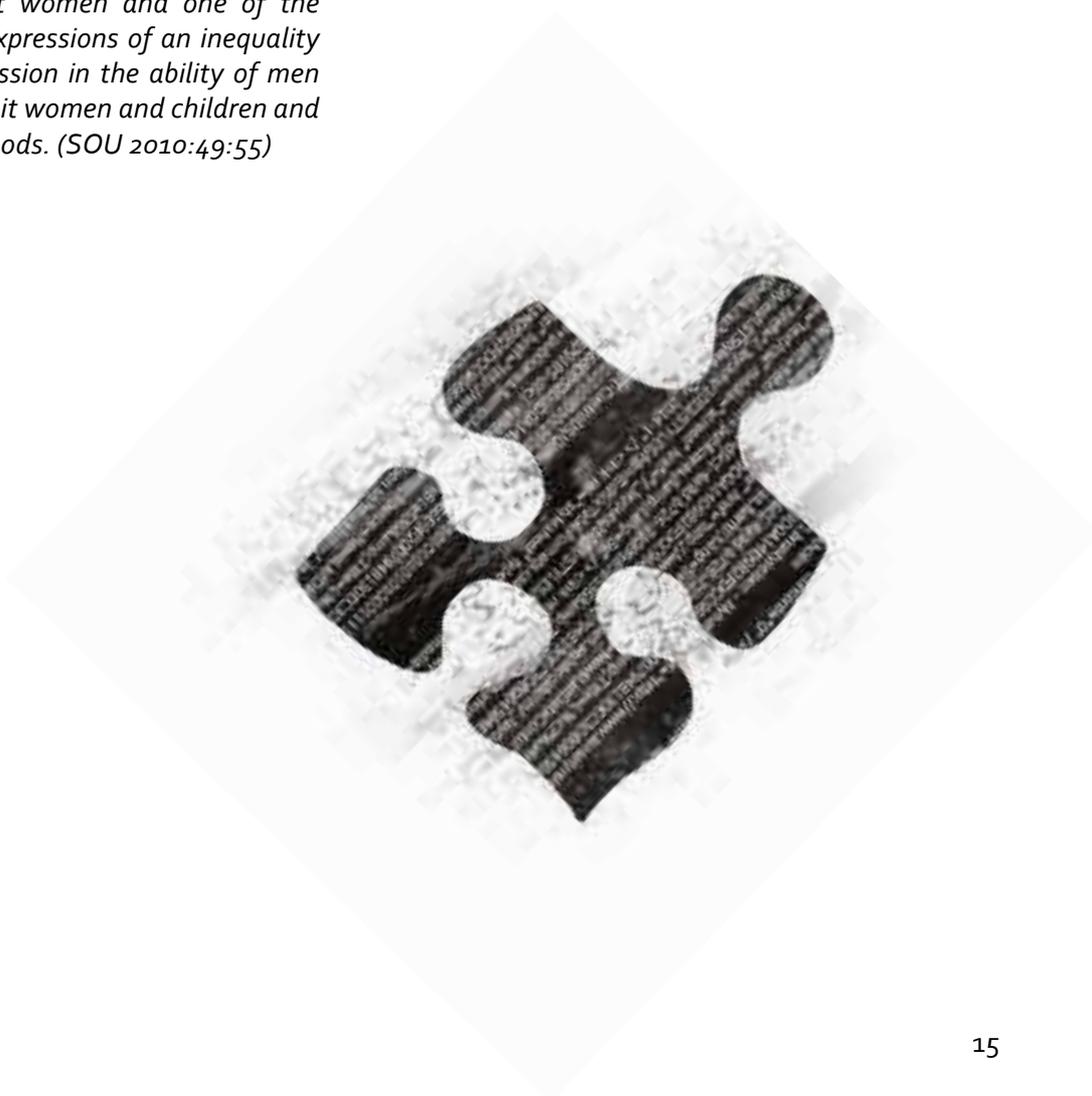
*According to the view of sex trafficking that forms the basis for Sweden's policy on equality, sex trafficking is thus a form of male violence against women and one of the more extreme expressions of an inequality that finds expression in the ability of men to buy and exploit women and children and treat them as goods. (SOU 2010:49:55)*

### Legislation in Europe

European countries have tackled the question of prostitution in a number of ways.

In 1999, Sweden became the first country in the world to introduce the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services. Out of the Nordic countries, Iceland and Norway have also passed similar legislation.

Certain European countries, such as the Netherlands and Germany, have legalised the purchase of sexual services and to a certain extent the operating of brothels. Other countries, such as Romania and Serbia, have criminalised outright both the purchase and sale of sexual services.



## Development and trends

This section describes the way the extent and rise in prostitution has changed over time, based on previous population surveys and studies in the area. It starts off by describing the decrease in street prostitution, and then presents the most important results from the online surveys and an analysis of these. After that, the most important results from the population surveys over time are presented. The section concludes by taking a look at children and young persons subjected to sexual exploitation and specific risk groups.

### Introduction

The extent of prostitution is influenced by many different factors such as globalisation, migration, technological development, economic and social factors and aid and support measures for those engaged in prostitution (Skilbrei & Holmström 2013). Although it is difficult to give a precise picture of its extent, one can still say something about the way in which prostitution has changed over the past twenty years.

Prostitution takes place in a number of arenas that often overlap each other. The arenas which are easiest to study are street prostitution and prostitution that can be studied via the internet. As regards other arenas, such as pubs, massage institutes and hotels, these are by nature more hidden and therefore more difficult to study.

### Street prostitution has been cut by more than half since 1995

Street prostitution is the arena for which we have gathered the most reliable data over time in comparison with other arenas, such as so-called indoor prostitution. In 1995, approximately 650 people a year were estimated to be selling sexual services on the street in Sweden

Table 1. Estimated number of individuals engaged in street prostitution.

YEAR	NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
1995	650 women (SOU 1995:15).
1998/1999	The introduction of the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services meant that prostitution more or less vanished completely from the streets (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2000).
2008	300–430 women (SOU 2010:49).
2010	200 women (contacts with the Prostitution Units <sup>1</sup> ).
2011–2014	200–250 women yearly (contacts with the Prostitution Units).

Street prostitution has been cut by more than half since 1995. The estimates from 2010 and onward indicate that street prostitution is relatively constant, but the basis of these findings contain many uncertainty factors since the figures from the Prostitution Units for 2010–2014 cannot be compared with previous surveys.

(SOU 1995:15). The National Board of Health and Welfare report, Knowledge about Prostitution 1998–1999, shows that street prostitution almost vanished completely with the introduction of the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services at the turn of the year 1998/1999 (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2000). Street prostitution made a gradual recovery after 1999, but not to the same extent as before. The evaluation of the Sex Purchase Act estimated that the extent of street prostitution has been cut by half since the Act's introduction (SOU 2010:49). This is very much in line with previous scope surveys (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2000, 2004, 2007). The most recent details to be published are from 2008, when the Prostitution Units stated that between them they had come into contact with approximately 300–430 people engaged in street prostitution during the past year (SOU 2010:49).

The Prostitution Units in Gothenburg and Stockholm (Mikamottagningarna) and the

<sup>1</sup> *The Prostitution Units (Mikamottagningarna) are organisations in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö which work in different ways to help individuals who have experience of selling sexual services.*

Counselling and Support Team in Malmö come into contact with approximately 200–250 different individuals engaged in street prostitution each year. The statistics have been taken from the years 2011–2013 and up to June 2014. As of 2010, the number of people engaged in street prostitution has been relatively constant.

These units have been asked to gather statistics on the people with whom they come into contact as part of their outreach activities and provision of counselling and treatment.

The figures available on the extent of street prostitution in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö are based on the number of people with whom the Prostitution Units and Counselling and Support Team in Malmö encounter as a part of their work. This means that this is a minimum estimate of the number of individuals who have offered sexual services on the street during this period.

There are different understandings behind the decline in street prostitution. The evaluation of the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services (SOU 2010:49) interprets the decline as a consequence of the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services. Reference is made here to the fact that, at the time the Act was introduced in, the extent of street prostitution was much the same in Norway and Denmark as in Sweden. In both of Norway and Denmark, however, there has been an increase in street prostitution, while in Sweden there has been a decline. The evaluation also refers to the fact that street prostitution in the Norwegian cities Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger fell sharply when the Norwegian Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services was introduced in January 2009, and this would suggest that a ban on the purchase of sexual services has an immediate impact on the extent of street prostitution.

The decline in street prostitution should also be seen in the light of the technological developments and digitalisation that have occurred over the past 15 years. Those who criticised evaluation of the Act prohibiting the Purcha-

se of Sexual Services claim that the decline in street prostitution is a result of new channels of communication, such as the internet and mobile telephony. It is also argued that the decline in street prostitution is not unique to Sweden. A similar development has been observed in other countries since the mid 1990s and has thus been linked to new information and communication technology and new channels of communication being made available to people selling and buying sexual services (Bernstein 2007, Munro & Della Giusta 2008).

However, one cannot ignore the fact that, in countries where the purchase of sexual services is legal, street prostitution is widespread in the form of, red light districts while illegal prostitution-related activities on the internet take place in these countries as well. This may indicate that the ban on the purchase of sexual services has had a normative effect on potential buyers and an impact on the extent of prostitution in Sweden.

### **Swedish and foreign women on the streets**

Previous scope surveys and studies show that there has been a gradual increase in the number of foreign women engaged in street prostitution over the past twenty years (SOU 1995:15, National Board of Health and Welfare 2004, 2007, SOU 2010:49).

The evaluation of the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services (SOU 2010:49) reports that the Prostitution Units in Stockholm and Gothenburg estimated that over 50 percent the women engaged in street prostitution were foreign nationals. The corresponding proportion of foreign nationals in Malmö was one quarter. Most of these women came from the Baltic region and countries in Eastern Europe. There were also reports of women from Thailand and countries in South America. In Gothenburg it was reported that a relatively large proportion of women engaged in street prostitution were from Nigeria.

According to information provided by the Police and dating from 2014 (Swedish National Police Board 2014), it has been possible to note an increase over the past two years in the number of women coming from Romania. In 2014, the Prostitution Units in Stockholm and Gothenburg also noted that the majority of women engaged in street prostitution were living in Sweden on a temporary basis and were foreign nationals. Romanian and Nigerian women are over-represented among those on the street, which is in line with several other countries in Europe.

The increase seen in women from Eastern Europe engaged in prostitution, both in Sweden and the EU, can be explained by factors such as globalisation, poverty and the freedom of movement within the EU. It is already a known fact that criminal gangs profit from activities such as prostitution and use the strategy of transporting women from poor countries to countries in Western Europe. The room for manoeuvre that women have is less in a country where they lack language skills or are unaware of their rights and legislation (CBSS, Baltic Sea Region round-up, 2013).

## Online prostitution

The internet offers important channels of communication for people who buy and sell sexual services, and has become an increasingly large and essential arena. In 2000, the National Board of Health and Welfare stated that the internet was an growing arena for the purchase and sale of sexual services (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2000). The RFSL<sup>2</sup> report, *Invisible Visible Actors*, shows that ads posted by LGBT people who sell sexual services are also found on the internet (Larsdotter, Jonsson, & Gäredal, 2011)

The first online survey was carried out in the frame of Knowledge about Prostitution 1998/1999 (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2000).

Since then, a number of surveys and studies of the extent and composition of online prostitution have been made (Flink & Sjögren 2003, Johansson, Turesson & Borg 2006, Scaramuzzino & Malmström 2006, Scaramuzzino 2007, Olsson 2007, National Board of Health and Welfare 2007, Larsdotter, Jonsson & Gäredal 2011, Sandman 2013, Scaramuzzino 2014). The most recent are the surveys carried out in the frames of this publication in 2014 by the research and business and market intelligence solutions company Glykol and RFSL (the Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights), which were commissioned by the National Board of Health and Welfare and the County Administrative Board.

Online surveys involve a number of uncertainty factors when estimating the actual number of individuals behind the ads. Moreover, prostitution takes place via other platforms such as chat sites and apps that cannot be monitored in the same way. (National Board of Health and Welfare 2007, Larsdotter, Jonsson & Gäredal 2011, Scaramuzzino 2007).

Below are the most important results from the surveys to be presented and compared with previous surveys.

Table 2. Number of ads in online surveys

YEAR <sup>3</sup>	NUMBER OF ADS
2006	304 (Glykols survey)
2014	6,965 <sup>4</sup> (Glykols survey)
2010	190 (RFSL, report <i>Unvisible Visible Actors</i> )
2014	702 (RFSL on behalf of the County Administrative Board and the National Board of Health and Welfare)

Online sex and escort ads have increased in step with the development of the internet. The number of ads does not correspond to the number of different individuals.

<sup>2</sup> The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights.

<sup>3</sup> Time when recorded and not per year.

<sup>4</sup> Glykol found a total of 6,965 ads, but this figure includes a high number of duplicates, making comparison with the 2006 result more difficult.

## Results from the Glykol online survey

The survey carried out by Glykol in 2014 and commissioned by the County Administrative Board and the National Board of Health and Welfare has mainly found ads and profiles aimed for men wishing to buy sexual services from women. The ads and profiles are found on websites which often specialise in advertising sexual services – so-called escort sites.

### Increase in the number of ads and profiles offering sexual services

The internet has come to be an increasingly important channel of trade in goods and services. Simultaneously, communication via social media has exploded in recent years. One question, therefore, is whether prostitution as a phenomenon has increased in scale in Sweden or whether marketing of sexual is increasingly taking place via the internet and social media, and thereby becoming more visible. The online survey done by Glykol on behalf of the National Board of Health and Welfare in 2006 identified a total of 304 ads posted by sellers of sexual services. In the most recent survey, which was carried out over a ten-week period in the spring of 2014, this figure is considerably higher; namely, 6,965 ads. The picture is complicated, because several escort sites have considerable shortcomings in terms of functionality, which confirms the fact that overlap and duplicates of ads are very common. Above all, there are many links on these sites that do not work. Moreover, clicking on certain links and ads on the webpage Eskorterplats sometimes takes the visitor to the webpage Sex-tjejer, another escort site. However, the findings of the online survey contain nothing that would indicate an increase in scale as such – meaning, the number of sellers engaged in prostitution – even though the online activity and flow of information relating to sexual services seem to have increased.



### Age is an important variable

Age is an important variable in communication relating to sexual services, and is often used for marketing purposes. This is clear from the discussions conducted by both clients and sellers in different forums on the internet (Larsdotter, Jonsson & Gäredal 2011, the National Board of Health and Social Welfare 2015). Details of age were given in almost all the profiles and ads surveyed. In 2006, an age of 18–30 was stated in half of the total number of ads. In the 2014 survey, the same age group appeared in approximately three quarters of the ads. Whether the age range stated in the ads reflects the true age range of the individuals is hard to say. Age can be taken to act as marketing strategy, whereby a lower or higher age is a means of attracting different persons.

### Uncertain details regarding nationality

The proportion of foreign nationals has increased since the previous survey in 2006. Just over one fifth of the advertisers state that they are Swedish. That said, in the majority of the ads and profiles studied, another nationality is given, such as Spanish, Italian, English, Brazilian or African<sup>5</sup>.

There are, however, no other information on whether Spanish or Italian women might constitute a large proportion of group of seller of sexual services in Sweden today. What is

<sup>5</sup> The ads only specify Africa, not an African country, as the point of origin.

The image shows a web form with several sections for filtering preferences:

- Längd (cm)** (Blank väljer allt): Från: [input], Till: [input]
- Vikt (kg)** (Blank väljer allt): Från: [input], Till: [input]
- Ålder** (Blank väljer allt): Från: [input], Till: [input]
- Skostorlek** (Blank väljer allt): Från: [input], Till: [input]
- bröstorlek** (Blank väljer allt): A grid of checkboxes for sizes A, B, C, D, DD, E, F, FF, G, GG, H, HH, J, JJ, K, KK, L.
- Silikon bröst** (Blank väljer allt): A dropdown menu.

Picture 1. Alternatives regarding sexual preferences which can be filled in when marketing an ad.

known, though, is that a large number, mainly women, who have been identified as victims of human trafficking and prostitution in Sweden and other parts of Western Europe are of Romanian origin (Swedish National Police Board, 2014). Likewise, the Police already know that a large number of Nigerian women in Swedish prostitution receive their first Schengen visa in Spain or Italy. Another explanation might be that people are described or describe themselves as being Spanish or Italian for marketing purposes in order to attract buyers.

Moreover, the 2006 survey showed that Swedish was the most common language used in the ads, while the 2014 survey showed that English was the most common language. In many ads there is much to indicate that the person who has written the ad has a mother tongue other than Swedish, since the language used in the ad is incoherent and suggests that a translation generated by Google Translate has been made.

### Sexual services as an e-commerce product

Economic incentives are a driving force for the actors behind websites who advertise sexual services. These websites are run from countries where legislation on prostitution differs

from that in Sweden and where the provision of sexual services in return for payment is not criminalised.

Profits are generated not only from advertising but also from those who advertise sexual services. On closer analysis of these websites, it can also be said that these are based on technology produced for e-commerce, marketing and the selling of products. One important aspect of this is that the online prostitution is also shaped by the technical conditions that exist. By categorising and sorting through the services, the buyer is able to search the website on the basis of his preferences. These relate mostly to physical attributes such as gender, height, weight, measurements and so on, although which services are offered is of interest too. This is reminiscent of dating sites as well, where appearance, interests, geographic location, language and so on are of central importance.

The picture above, which is taken from a website advertising sexual services, is an example of this.

### Reviews on Flashback

Today the internet enables a greater flow and exchange of information than ever before. On escort websites such as Sexwork or online dis-

ussions boards as Flashback thousands of discussion threads on prostitution can be found. A number of much visited and active threads concern experiences of purchasing sexual services, in which men discuss and review the women from whom they have bought sexual services (Swedish National Police Board, 2014). The language in these discussion threads is often very derogatory and sexist, the focus being on whether the woman has lived up to the sex purchaser's expectations in terms of appearance, physical attributes and willingness to perform the services promised.

### **The actors behind the ads and profiles**

The ads and profiles offering sexual services often emphasise that the sellers are independent individuals who engage in prostitution of their own free will alongside their studies and that they enjoy it; never that someone has forced them or that they are in any way subject to exploitation. It is not impossible that some of the sellers in the ads engage in prostitution for precisely these reasons. Another plausible explanation is that the sellers are presented as being independent in order to attract and persuade potential buyers who know that the purchase of sexual services is a criminal offence, so that the conditions of purchase are made more equal and morally defensible. Moreover, much points to the fact that the ads are written by someone other than the women themselves. On closer analysis, one sees that several ads and profiles give the same telephone number. This is also confirmed by details provided by the Police, and indicates that women who provide sex in return for payment are not involved in the actual marketing (Swedish National Police Board, 2014).

### **Survey of communication in social media**

In order to gain knowledge of how the communication of sexual services takes place in social media, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the County Administrative Board of Stockholm engaged M-brain, a company pro-

viding media-based competitive intelligence, to carry out a survey of this area. The survey shows that there is relatively little open communication in social media relating to sexual services, which means that it is difficult to estimate a scale. Approximately thirty active Facebook accounts and a fewer number of Twitter accounts, used for marketing communication relating to sexual services, were identified. These channels are used mainly for directing traffic into other forms of communication, mainly Escort sites. For example, certain escort sites use private accounts on Twitter for sending out brief messages:

*New! Ebony #escort Megan on tour in Stockholm! With real photos, available for some days only!*

### **The Swedish federation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights (RFSL) – survey of sex services provided in return for payment in the LGBT community**

Men who sell sex to men have been described in past research as an invisible group, but in recent years more knowledge has come to light (Eriksson & Knutagård 2006, Månsson 1996). The RFSL report *Invisible Visible Actors LGBT People with Experience of Selling and/or Buying Sexual Services* (Larsdotter, Jonsson, & Gäredal, 2011) has been a significant contribution to this. The report is based on a research review and qualitative and quantitative studies. In order to monitor the development in this area, the National Board of Health and Welfare and the County Administrative Board of Stockholm commissioned RFSL to carry out a new survey of online prostitution. The survey has studied LGBT people and their experiences of prostitution.

### A doubling of the number of ads involving men selling sexual services to men

As with the Glykol survey, RFSL can see an increase in ads, or to be more precise a doubling of ads comprising both men and transgender women on the internet since the last study in 2010. At that time, 129 ads were found in which men offered sex in return for payment via escort ads. In 2014, 275 ads were found in which men offered sex in return for payment via an escort ad. The 2010 study showed 61 ads in which transgender persons offered sexual services, while this study identified 134 ads in which transgender persons offered sexual services<sup>6</sup>.

### Age and nationality

Two thirds of the ads identified in the RFSL study gave an age range of 21 to 30 years. A comparison with the RFLS survey in 2010 shows that the age distribution is roughly the same, with the majority falling within the 21–30 age group. Both of these surveys indicate that it is most common for people in the 21–30 age group to have sex in return for payment, and it becomes less common the older the people involved. As with the Glykol survey, it is not clear whether the age range stated in the ads reflects the true age range of the individuals is hard to say. Age can be taken to act as marketing strategy, whereby a lower or higher age is a means of attracting different persons.

In the qualitative part of the RFSL report *Invisible Visible Actors* (Larsdotter, Jonsson, & Gäredal, 2011), several informants said that the first time they had received payment for sex was in their early teens.

Just over half of the advertisers said that they came from a country in Europe, usually Sweden

(approximately 40 percent). Other countries given were Spain, the Czech Republic, Italy and Germany. Details of ethnicity/nationality are also difficult to interpret on the basis of the way the different advertisers presented themselves, such as “Latino”, “African” or “Mediterranean”.

### Sexual orientation as stated in the ads

30 percent of the men stated that they were homosexual. Just over a third said that they were bisexual (32 percent). A smaller proportion stated that they were heterosexual (5 percent). The reason for including the group of heterosexual men was that they sold sex to other men. The proportion of men who did not state their sexual orientation amounted to 33 percent.

The report *Invisible Visible Actors* (Larsdotter, Jonsson, & Gäredal, 2011) puts forward the argument that women who sell sex to men sometimes give “bisexual” as their sexual orientation as a means of attracting more people to offer remuneration for sex. This is because there are some men (buyers) who ask for a “lesbian show”, a sexual service whereby two women have sex with each other in conjunction with meeting with the buyer. However, this does not necessarily mean that they do not define themselves as bisexual. According to RFSL, some women who sell sex to men advertise themselves as being heterosexual, yet they define themselves as lesbian or bisexual outside of selling sexual services. The sexual orientation stated in the ad need not, therefore, be the same as that which the advertiser defines him or herself as being; rather, it can be seen as a means of attracting clients.

One third of transgender persons<sup>7</sup> presented

<sup>6</sup> The Glykol survey shows the number of ads and profiles, while the RFSL survey shows the number of different individuals. The explanation for this is that the Glykol survey could not establish with certainty whether the ads were linked to one or more different individuals. The total number of ads found by RFSL was considerably smaller than the number identified by Glykol. RFSL has therefore had the opportunity to study the ads one at a time, and has in this way been able to estimate with greater certainty the number of different individuals.

<sup>7</sup> Transgender persons are individuals whose gender identity and/or expression of gender identity differs some or all of the time from the norm for the gender under which they were registered at birth. The survey found only MtF (Male to female) transvestites or MtF transsexuals who sold sexual services to men and to men and women together. “Male to female” is a common way of making clear both the biological gender of the individual and the gender which the individual feels or considers him or herself to be. In this case, someone who was born as a biological man and who is now a woman.

themselves as being bisexual (31 percent). A smaller proportion said that they were heterosexual (14 percent), and a few said that they were homosexual (2 percent). In most cases, however, their sexual identity was not stated.

### **Differences and similarities in the marketing of sexual services**

Ads comprising of women and aimed for men wishing to buy sexual services from them often take the form of commercial ads on escort sites. The ads are primarily intended to reach as many people as possible who can offer money for sexual services. The sites are easily accessible and often require no registration, and anyone at all is able to search them. Ads aimed for men purchasing sexual services from other men have been few on these particular sites.

LGBT people offer sexual services to men on the Swedish LGBT-forum Qruiser but mostly on the international forum PlanetRomeo, according to the RFSL survey in 2014. Qruiser's method of marketing differs from that used in heterosexual prostitution in that advertising is not normally done openly; rather, it can for instance be hinted at in different ways in the wording of the user's presentation. Enquiries and offers of sex in return for payment are most often communicated via private messages, and the most likely explanation is that Qruiser is intended to serve not as an escort site but as an online forum for the LGBT community.

In the case of PlanetRomeo, where the RFSL survey found the highest number of men selling sex, the advertising is more reminiscent of the escort sites found by Glykol in its own survey. The website provides a tab which takes the user to a site with escort ads where people offering sex in return for payment have listed prices, age, nationality and ethnicity and sexual services. Unlike Qruiser, one can visit an escort site on PlanetRomeo without being a member, which also means that the ads can reach a greater number of potential buyers. However, contact cannot be made with the seller without registering first.

### **Population studies– adults over 18 years of age**

In order to monitor developments and human behaviour over time which relate to the experiences of buying and selling sexual services in Sweden, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm produced a population-based survey in 2014. The findings were processed and compared to previous surveys in this area in collaboration with Carl-Göran Svedin, Professor at Linköping University.

The surveys have been carried out using a variety of methods and choices, so considerable caution is therefore needed in making comparisons.

### **Experience of sex in return for payment relatively constant**

On the basis of the 2014 survey, support for the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services can still be said to be high in Sweden, and the proportion of individuals who stated in a population and online panel-based questionnaire that they had bought or sold sexual services is relatively constant.

Five percent of those studied in the 2011 survey answered that they had paid money or another form of remuneration for engaging in sexual activities with another person (Priebe & Svedin, 2012). Of these, 99 percent were men. In the 2014 survey, 3.8 percent – all men – reported that they had at some point bought sexual services (County Administrative Board, 2015). When divided between gender, 7.5 percent of the men in the latest findings stated that at some point they had bought sexual services. A comparison of the two most recent findings shows an insignificant decline between the times of the surveys which is, moreover, not significant.

A comparison of the results from previous surveys, in which 12.7 percent of the men in 1996 (Månsson, 1998) and 7.6 percent in 2008 (Kuosmanen, 2008) stated that they had bought sex-

Table 3. The proportion of men and women who have provided and received sexual services in population studies between the years 1996–2014.

	1996 (Månsson, 1998)	2008 (Kuosmanen, 2008)	2011 (Priebe & Svedin, 2012)	2014 (County Administrative Board, 2015)
Target group	Members of the public 18–74 years	Members of the public 18–74 years	Members of the public 18–65 years	Members of the public 18–65 years
Method	Interview study	Questionnaire study	Questionnaire study	Online questionnaire study
Provided payment men	12,7 %	7,6 %	10,2 %	7,5 %
Provided payment women	0 %	0,2 %	0,1 %	0 %
Received payment men	0,5 %	1,4 %	0,8 %	1,2 %
Received payment women	0,3 %	1,1 %	0,6 %	0,2 %

ual services at some point in their lives, shows that there was a decline after 1996 and then a certain – if rather ambiguous – increase to 10.2 percent in 2011, followed by a return to the somewhat lower level of 7.5 percent in 2014. As in the previous studies, the most recent purchase of sexual services lay relatively far back in time, but just under half of those who had bought sex stated that they had done so after the introduction of the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services.

What is important to note when studying the changes in prevalence as to how common it is for men to have experience of buying sexual services (at some point in their lives) is that these changes are in themselves very slow. It is only when men disappear from the population (through death or migration) that the prevalence in a population can change. For this reason, the incidence of buying sexual services (during the past 12 months) is of greater interest. It provides a measure for how many people are “active” buyers of sexual services,

and this can be monitored over time. In 2014, approximately 0.4 percent of the group surveyed had bought sexual services during the past year (0.8 percent of the men), even though this should be seen as a minimum estimate. In 2011, this figure was approximately 0.6 of the entire group surveyed (1.2 percent of the men) and the same in 1996 (1.3 percent of the men). In 2008, the figure was approximately one percent of the group surveyed (1.8 percent of the men). To obtain exact incidence figures, all population surveys would need to compensate for the fall-off in the same way, which is not the case today. Prevalence and incidence figures are rough estimates of the number of buyers of sexual services in Sweden, and need to be supplemented with other studies when describing what the group of buyers of sexual services looks like.

**No great changes since 2011**

A decline in the number of times (prevalence) that sexual services have been bought is often seen as proof that the Act prohibiting the Pur-

chase of Sexual Services has been effective; see, for example, the The Ban on the Purchase of Sexual Services. An Evaluation (SOU 2010:49). A comparison made between Sweden, Norway and Denmark in a population study in 2010 also shows that the proportion of those who stated that they had bought sexual services during the past six months was ranked lowest in Sweden, where the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services has been in force since 1999; was ranked in the middle in Norway, where the equivalent Act came into force in 2009; and was ranked highest in Denmark, where the purchase and sale of sexual services is legal (Kotsadam & Jakobsson, 2014). Given the fluctuations mentioned above, it is difficult to draw any conclusions other than the fact that no great changes have taken place in Sweden, and that the number of individuals buying sexual services appears to be fairly stable.

In the 2011 survey, 0.7 percent stated that they had sold sexual services at some point in their lives. In the County Administrative Board survey in 2014, an equally large proportion – all men – stated that they had sold sexual services. The equivalent percentage figures were 0.4 percent for 1996 (Månsson, 1998) and 1.2 percent for 2008 (Kuusmanen, 2008). The extent of the selling of sexual services appears to have been at its lowest in 1996 and at its highest in 2008. However, these changes make for ambiguous statistics, since the confidence intervals in all three surveys overlap each other.

Out of those in all three surveys who had received payment, men constituted a somewhat higher proportion than women. This may be a misleading picture of the profession, since girls or women are most often those encountered by those offering outreach services or treatment. Authorities addressing issues linked to prostitution and human trafficking find in the course of their work that women constitute the vast majority of sellers, as is indicated in the online ads too. The results in terms of gender and experience of selling sexual services may be explained by the fact that foreign nationals,

and who live in Sweden on a temporary basis, constitute a significant proportion of the sellers of sexual services in the area of prostitution. This group is not reached by population studies, and is therefore not represented in these types of surveys. It may therefore be the case that men are over-represented in population surveys.

### **Still strong support for the ban on purchasing sexual services**

Support for criminalising the purchase of sexual services, later embodied in the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services of 1999 (1998:408), increased between 1996 and 2008. In 1996, 20 percent of men and 45 percent of women were in favour of criminalisation. Twelve years later, 60 percent of men and 79 percent of women wanted to retain the Act. In 2011, there was a fall in support (65.5 percent), mainly among younger people and men; this time 50 percent of men and 80 percent of women wanted to retain the Act. The survey carried out in 2014 showed that support for the Act prohibiting the Purchase of Sexual Services seemed to have increased somewhat, and 72 percent supported it (60 percent of men and 85 percent of women).

At the same time, there was support among members of the population for also criminalising the sale of sexual services (58.7 percent in 2008 and 51.5 percent in 2011). More women than men were also in favour of a ban on the sale of sexual services. In 2014, support lay at 48 percent, which was a marginal reduction from 2011.

### **Increased awareness on the part of children and young people**

The proportion of young people in their third year at upper secondary school who stated in 2003 that they had provided sexual services in return for payment was roughly the same size as in 2009 (Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society 2009). The studies carried out during

Table 4. The proportion of boys/men and girls/women who have provided and received sexual services in return for payment, as reported in youth studies between 2003–2014.

	2003 (Svedin & Priebe 2004)	2009 (Svedin & Priebe 2009)	2009 (Svedin & Priebe 2009)	2009 (Tikkanen et al. 2011)	2014 (Agardh et al. still in progress)
Target group	Young people year 3 upper secondary school	Young people year 3 upper secondary school	Members of RFSL 17–25 år	Members of the public 15–29 år	Young persons 18–30 years resident in Skåne
Method	Questionnaire study	Questionnaire study	Questionnaire study	Questionnaire study/online	Questionnaire study
<b>Received payment boys/men</b>	1,8 %	1,7 %	14,5 %	3,6 %	1,3 %
<b>Received payment girls/women</b>	1,0 %	1,2 %	3,7 %	4,6 %	1,0 %
<b>Received payment in cases where the boy/girl distinction does not apply</b>			4,2 %		

the past ten years have resulted in greater knowledge of these groups; however, this is not equal to saying that the problem has increased in scale.

The youth studies carried out have varied in terms of age groups. The Table below presents the results of several scope studies of young people aged 15–30 years. These are not comparable since the methods, sampling frames and time intervals differ.

The studies presented in the Table above and the statistics available to us for 2014 show that boys constitute a somewhat larger proportion of young people who have had experience of selling sexual services compared to girls. A large proportion of these define themselves as LGBT. This is in line with the population surveys carried out where men have constituted a somewhat larger proportion than women. The Skåne questionnaire, which is the latest survey to be carried out of young people aged 18–30 years and resident in the region of Skåne in 2014, and which is representative of the coun-

try as a whole, reports the figure as being 1.3 percent for boys who received payment and 1 percent for girls.

Previous studies indicate that there are certain specific groups which are over-represented among those engaging in sex in return for payment, such as young people in institutional care (Swedish National Board of Institutional Care, 2011). Of these, it is more common for girls to have engaged in sex in return for payment (13–23 percent) compared to boys (4–8 percent). One explanation might be that these girls who are foreign nationals or in institutional care are not included in these surveys.

### Starting age and age given in surveys

Most of the reports show that many who have experience of sex in return for payment were in their teens on the first occasion. This is clearly borne out by sources such as the qualitative material provided in Invisible Visible Actors (Larsdotter et. al., 2011), where several informants stated that the first time they

received payment for sex was in their early teens. However, the scope surveys on selling and buying sexual services mostly show only a few individuals as being under 18 years of age. One interpretation of this that comes to mind is that young people engaging in sex in return for payment do not for the most part appear in the scope surveys, and that the methods used for surveying the extent only include a small number of young people. One likely reason for this is that many young people with prostitution-like experiences come into contact with potential buyers and perpetrators via channels that are more difficult to survey than, say, open advertising or sex in return for payment in public environments.

This picture is also supported by the surveys carried out by the National Board of Health and Welfare; prostitution in which children and young people are involved and exploited takes place mainly away from the street environment (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2000, 2004, 2007). During the past twenty years, the Prostitution Units in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö (Mikamottagningarna) have reported few encounters with young people in the street environment. The belief that young people are mainly active in indoor prostitution is also supported by surveys on youth carried out in recent years (Svedin & Priebe 2004, 2009, Abellsson & Hulusjö 2008). Most of the respondents in the latest Svedin & Priebe study stated that they had come into contact with the person purchasing sexual services from them via the internet (Svedin & Priebe, 2009). There has been speculation over whether the internet has meant a moving of boundaries and a lowering of thresholds so that young people receive payment for sexual services. Svedin and Priebe maintain that the fact that more people are coming into contact with those who provide payment via the internet does not in itself mean that the internet is encouraging young people to sell sex in return for payment to a greater extent now than before.

### **Young people and sex as a form of self-harming behaviour**

A specific group of children and young people who have been highlighted in the research done in recent years consists of children and young people who harm themselves through sex as a destructive behaviour. Sexual self-harm has been defined as: "... a pattern of seeking sexual relations that involve harming oneself physically and psychologically. This behaviour creates especially significant suffering or impaired functioning at school or work or in other important areas." (Jonsson & Lundström Matsson, 2012) In an interview study (Jonsson & Svedin, 2012) involving 11 young girls and women aged between 15 and 25 years, the reasons cited for selling sexual services were seeking attention and wanting to be seen and acknowledged. They also described their feeling of self-disgust and the fact that sexual assault in the past had played a crucial role in their starting to sell sex. Some of them explained that they sold sexual services in order to cope with negative feelings and escape from the anguish, and they equated selling sex to behaviours such as cutting themselves. Their self-harming behaviour took different forms in parallel with this. Some of them explained that they deliberately sought out sexual contacts which involved sexual violence. These young people said that payment was less important, and that they did not always receive or want it. It is difficult to say whether this group of children and young people has increased or not, but it is likely that an increased knowledge of the group has meant that this group is now more visible in the contacts made by professionals.

### **Young LGBT people with experiences of selling and buying sexual services**

The proportion of young LGBT people who have had experience of selling sexual services in return for some form of payment varies in different studies between approximately 4–14 percent, while the equivalent proportion of young people in general is 1–2 percent (Natio-

nal Board for Youth Affairs, 2009). Young LGBT people have also had considerably more experience than other young people of various forms of sexual exploitation via the internet. These estimates apply to children and young people in between the ages of 15–25 (National Board for Youth Affairs, 2009). Studies also show that it is more common for boys and transgender persons than it is for girls to have had sex in return for payment. However, the stereotypical impression of sex being offered in return for payment means that the experiences of boys and transgender persons are rendered invisible and that the need for appropriate support is not met (Larsdotter et al, 2011).

### Specific risk groups

Some of the risk groups which feature in previous research are people with abuse-related problems, young people in institutional care, and women in the penal system (Lindroth, Löfgren-Mårtensson & Månsson 2012, the Swedish National Board of Institutional Care 2011, the Swedish Prison and Probation Service 2009). Over the past twenty years, the number of women with abuse-related problems seems to have declined to some extent in the area of open street prostitution. In *Knowledge about Prostitution 2007*, the Prostitution Units in both Stockholm and Gothenburg stated that people with abuse-related problems constituted a smaller proportion than before of those selling sex on the street (National Board of Health and Welfare, 2007). This picture was confirmed by the Prostitution Unit in Stockholm in 2014, which stated that its staff encountered fewer women in prostitution who had identifiable abuse-related problems.

Another risk group highlighted in recent years is that of people with a disability (Kuosmanen & Starke, 2011). Even though there has been awareness of the issue in Sweden in the past, little research has been done in the area of prostitution. An interview study carried out by

professionals showed that there was an awareness of the fact that people with an intellectual disability were engaged in prostitution (Kuosmanen & Starke, 2011). What the informants knew most about was women selling sex. The individuals with whom the informants had come into contact had sold sex in a number of different arenas: the street, hotels, the internet. The most common form of selling sex was, however, in the home. Kuosmanen and Starke stated that people with an intellectual disability are a group which should be included not only in future research but also in the gathering of new knowledge and the developing of new methods for use in social work (Kuosmanen & Starke, 2011).

### Concluding remarks

The knowledge gathered by the County Administrative Board presents an operational picture of trends and developments in the area of prostitution. The County Administrative Board sees a decline in the extent of street prostitution, while noting at the same time that the internet has assumed a central role as an arena for prostitution, although there are no clear figures indicating that the actual number of individuals advertising sexual services online has increased. Furthermore, it can be said that the population and youth surveys done provide a certain amount of knowledge of the extent and development of prostitution as regards buyers and sellers of sexual services. These are, however, rough estimates of a phenomenon that requires a cross-sector approach and ongoing study.

## Gaps in knowledge

In order to be able to offer support and help to those who need it and target interventions in the right way, it is important that the extent and development of prostitution are monitored. Scope surveys are necessary but are beset with many challenges. The County Administrative Board has been able to identify a number of gaps in our knowledge about the extent and forms of prostitution.

During 2014, 7,049 unaccompanied minors applied for residence permits in Sweden, and, according to the Migration Board's forecast for 2015, approximately 7,800 unaccompanied minors are estimated to seek asylum in Sweden<sup>8</sup>. There are indications today that unaccompanied minors to some extent may be subjected to prostitution and trafficking for human beings, especially in those cases where unaccompanied minors disappear during the asylum-seeking process. These individuals, mainly boys, are in a particularly vulnerable position because of their young age and background. The scale of this phenomenon is, however, unknown. It is of great importance that authorities which come into contact with unaccompanied minors find ways and means of detecting in greater numbers those who are subjected to or risk being subjected to prostitution and human trafficking.

Since the population surveys and youth studies show that men and boys constitute a somewhat larger proportion who have had experience of selling sexual services compared to girls and women, it would be interesting to examine which groups are under-represented in these studies.

Transgender persons who sell sexual services are a particularly vulnerable group. The number of ads posted by transgender women selling sex seems to have doubled on the internet since 2010, and according to RFSL more studies are needed that include transgender persons engaged in prostitution. The assessment made by the County Administrative Board is that there are several important gaps in knowledge regarding the LGBT community's experiences of prostitution in general, even though we have an increased knowledge in recent years.

Of particular interest for further study is the significance of the internet and new digital channels of communication in advertising sexual services in return for payment.

The hidden prostitution that is taking place in different arenas, such as massage parlours, is still unknown in terms of scale. Details provided by the Police indicate that prostitution takes place in a number of massage parlours, and this arena would be interesting to study further in terms of scale.



<sup>8</sup> [http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.39a9cd9514a-346077211bf5/1423726732319/Aktuellt\\_om\\_februari\\_2015.pdf](http://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.39a9cd9514a-346077211bf5/1423726732319/Aktuellt_om_februari_2015.pdf)

## Future scope surveys and proposals

As stated earlier, prostitution and human trafficking for sexual purposes constitute problem areas beset by considerable ignorance as regards both scale and trends. The County Administrative Board is able to assert that the need for systematic follow-up measures persists, and is growing in step with the increase in international mobility and the rapid development in communications, such as those via the internet and social media.

In carrying out this survey, the County Administrative Board of Stockholm has presented a basic model for systematic follow-up measures. The work of carrying out this scope survey has entailed many challenges. In its role as national coordinator in combating prostitution and human trafficking, the County Administrative Board has had access to information provided by both researchers and experts and authorities and civil society. Thanks to the access the Board has to operative and theoretical knowledge, the work of this scope survey has taken place hand in hand with carrying out the role of coordinator, a role the Board has had since 2009. If the County Administrative Board were to be assigned the role of monitoring the extent of prostitution on a continuous basis in the form of scope surveys, it would need to be given a long-term and broad mandate as national coordinator.

Such an assignment would need to be coordinated with the ongoing task of the National Board of Health and Welfare in addressing development tendencies and also to be coordi-

nated with other actors, so that the progress reports submitted to Government are in step with each other.

In addition, it would be of value if other authorities and actors coming into contact with people engaged in prostitution were given the task of compiling statistics of good quality on an annual basis. The County Administrative Board would be able to coordinate those actors coming directly or indirectly into contact with buyers and sellers of sexual services in order to ensure consistent and comparable results.

The assessment of the County Administrative Board is that systematic follow-up of prostitution and minimum estimates made in different arenas are essential in the form of both large-scale population studies and small-scale surveys.

Monitoring human behaviour and attitudes to prostitution in Sweden will require further surveys of sexual habits where issues relating to prostitution will also be covered; these could, for example, take place every five years in order to see changes over time. Smaller scale surveys on the extent of online prostitution should take place more often, such as every other year. Fact-finding needs to be coordinated, otherwise there is a risk that it will be fragmented and that the actual gaps in knowledge are not filled in. The County Administrative Board therefore proposes that a national assignment to survey the extent of prostitution on a systematic basis be given to an authority or other relevant actor.



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