

A woman's silhouette is centered on the page, filled with a semi-transparent image of a city street scene. The scene shows a sidewalk, a parked car, and buildings in the background. The overall color palette is muted, with blues, greys, and soft oranges.

MARIA MOURANI

***Housing : Needs and Preferences of
Women and Girls of the Sex Industry***

Abbreviated Version

MOURANI-CRIMINOLOGIE



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MARIA MOURANI

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Publishing and production
Mourani-Criminologie
PO Box 68027 BP Blainville
Blainville, Quebec
J7C 4Z4
Website: <https://mouranicriminologue.com/>



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Research and writing

Maria Mourani

Literature review

Catherine Malécot

Advisory and Research Support Committee

The Way Out (Montreal)

La rue des femmes (Montreal)

Le 2159 (Youth component of Action Nouvelle Vie in Longueuil)

Maison d'Hébergement Pour Elles des deux Vallées (Outaouais)

Alliance-Jeunesse Chutes-de-la-Chaudière (Quebec City)

PECH (Quebec City)

Collectif d'aide aux femmes exploitées sexuellement (CAFES)

Revision (French) and page layout

Esther Carpentier

English Translation

Johanna Cardinal

Matthew Plunkett

Page layout and graphics

Pascal Taillon

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INTRODUCTION

Mourani-Criminologie is a criminology firm based in Quebec. We offer various services, including research. In October 2017, we were commissioned by The Way Out - an organization whose objective is to provide housing and support for victims of sexual exploitation - to carry out a study on the housing needs of people wanting to leave the sex industry, and with the results, to develop housing intervention models.

In an effort to improve the services offered to victims of sexual exploitation, The Way Out applied for and was awarded a grant by Public Safety Canada in order for us to conduct a study that would allow for a better understanding of housing needs and to develop intervention models for such clientele in Quebec. This study meets the research objective within the framework of The Way Out's project, called Horizon.

This report is therefore the result of the research conducted by Mourani-Criminologie. It is divided into different sections: the first part addresses the existing knowledge about women in the sex industry and the process of leaving; the second part describes the steps of the research process; the third part reveals and discusses the results; and the last part concludes with proposals for housing intervention models.

OBJECTIVE

Given the mandate entrusted to us and taking into account the reality of the situation, we wanted to further clarify the purpose of this study. At first, it was decided that we would focus the study only on women. Later, we deemed it important to expand our pool of women to include those who were no longer in the sex trade.

This study focuses on the housing needs and preferences of women and girls who are or have been in the sex industry. We were also interested in the services they have used and as well as which ones they would like to have access to. Moreover, in order to have a better perspective of all the needs of these women and girls, we deemed it important to identify the factors that contributed to the entry, exit and continuance in prostitution.

METHODS

In order to meet the objectives for our research, we chose to conduct a descriptive survey and used a quantitative approach. Identifying housing needs and preferences was carried out through a questionnaire that we developed in collaboration with women who had been in the sex industry or who were still active in the industry at the time of the study. The questionnaire was also developed with stakeholders from organizations providing services to this clientele. This portion of the study was conducted using a qualitative approach, by means of a focus group.

This questionnaire was then filled out by women and girls 17 years and older who are or had been in the sex industry. The recruiting process was performed by stakeholders from organizations involved in the study, as well as through the snowball effect. Other respondents were identified through online advertisements for sexual services and informal sources. The questionnaire was available online and in paper form. The majority of women and girls completed the questionnaire² without help, but there were some who much more unstable that were helped by their stakeholders.

Data collection took approximately 7 months to collect 548 questionnaires. Of these, 257 reported they were still in the sex industry and 212 were no longer involved. However, 79 women refused to state their current situation. Consequently, of a sample of 469 respondents, 55% of the women and girls surveyed were in the sex industry compared to 45% who were no longer involved.

Given the lack of socio-demographic data for the group being studied, no weighting was applied to the results. Only bivariate analyses were performed. The data was processed using MACTAB³, a software package that allows cross-tabulation and statistical tests (Chi-squared and Student) to identify significant differences. The maximum margin of error for all respondents is 2.1% at a confidence level of 95%. Note that margin of error applies in a probabilistic sampling context, which is not the case with this study. Nevertheless, we have provided these numbers, but they should only be used as guidelines.

² Auto-administered questionnaire.

³ MACTAB is a software package that generates charts. It allows tables to be printed directly from the database that was built during the survey, avoiding transcriptional errors. It calculates margin of error, taking into account the sample design, and has an unlimited potential for growth.

The results for each of the questions are presented in form of a banner that includes all the variables relevant to the analysis of the results, in this case the region, amount of time spent in the sex industry, sexual services (amount and types), current situation regarding the sex industry, current housing, marital and family status, age, ethnicity and sex, education and income. Questionnaires that were incomplete were not retained and non-responses were excluded from the final results.

RESULTS

1. Geographical Distribution

- Although there are geographic disparities, the sex industry exists in almost every administrative region of Quebec.
- Of all those who responded, 54% live in the Montreal census metropolitan area (CMA), while 46% live elsewhere in Quebec. Of those currently in the sex industry, 63% live in the Montreal CMA and 37% elsewhere in Quebec; as for those no longer in the sex industry, 45% live in the Montreal CMA and 55% elsewhere in Quebec.

2. Socio-demographic Profile

- The majority of the respondents that are in the sex industry are young: 51% are 25-35 years old and 22% are under 25.
- The majority of the respondents that are in the sex industry are single and do not have children.
- Women and girls who are no longer in the sex industry have a higher level of education (college) than other respondents.

3. Income

- Women and girls in the sex industry have higher incomes than those who have left.
- The incomes of almost all women and girls (over 90%) in the sex industry come from this trade.
- Over 40% of the women and girls who have left the sex industry received welfare as a source of income, while over 30% of them declared employment.

4. Prostititutional Situation

- Excluding those who refused to disclose their situation, 55% of the respondents who participated in this study were in the sex industry at the time of completing the questionnaire while 45% were no longer involved.
- The majority of women and girls are active in the sex industry for 2 to 5 years. A minority practice occasional prostitution or are active less than a year.

- The most practiced activity is escorting, at over 50%. The second most practiced is strip dancing.
- The majority of respondents practice (90%) or have practiced (84%) one to (a maximum of) three prostitution activities

5. Incentives for Entry into the Sex Industry

- Of all those who responded, the two most common reasons for getting into the sex industry were the need for money (70%) and housing (46%).
- Over 40% of respondents cited the necessity to meet a basic need (food, transportation, etc.) and pay off debt.
- Two thirds of women who claim to have taken a break from the sex industry (67%) mentioned the need for money as being the motivating factor in wanting to go back. Debt was the second most common reason at 39%.

6. Obstacles to Exiting the Sex Industry

- Women and girls who have considered leaving the sex industry were dissuaded at the thought of their need for money (64%), their debt (51%), the cost of their basic needs (45%) and housing (34%).
- Women and girls who have unsuccessfully tried leaving the sex industry identified the need for money (70%) and housing (53%) as the two primary obstacles in leaving.
- Women and girls who left the sex industry after many attempts identified the need for money (75%) as the main obstacle in leaving. However, over 50% identified, respectively and in order of importance, the following obstacles: loss of trust in public institutions, the need to pay for basic needs other than housing, and addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc.).

7. Incentives to Exiting the Sex Industry

- Moving away/ leaving the prostititional milieu (53%), not wanting to feel judged and wanting to be believed and heard (53%), wanting to feel safe (45%), having access and support for obtaining housing or shelter (42%) and having access and support for basic needs (40%) are the five most cited incentives for respondents who permanently left the sex industry.
- Among respondents who say they have taken a break from prostitution, 42% report the need to feel safe as one of the reasons for leaving and 38% mention having moved and left the prostititional environment.

8. Housing Situation

- Slightly over half (51%) of women and girls in the sex industry and 37% of those who are no longer part of it, say they have spent one night in their own apartment or house without rent subsidy in the last six months.
- Women and girls who left the sex industry are more likely to have spent one night with a family member or partner in the last six months; whereas those who are still involved in prostitution are more likely to have spent a night with a john or stranger in exchange of sexual services.
- A very small minority of women and girls out of the sex industry reported having spent at least one night with a john (3%) or a stranger in exchange of sexual services (2%) in the last six months.
- Women and girls in the sex industry are more likely to have spent at least one night in a hospital (18%) in the last six months.
- The majority of respondents do not live in their own apartment, house or subsidized housing (66% of respondents outside the sex industry and 84% of those still in the sex industry) and more than half of them do not live in their own apartment or house without rent subsidy; respondents outside the sex industry stay with family or a partner, while those who are currently in the sex industry tend to stay with a friend, a sugar daddy or other people also involved in the sex industry.
- Over a third of the women and girls surveyed have lived in the same place for less than six months.
- More than 60% of the women and girls surveyed do not live alone. The majority of them permanently live with one or two people, most often with their children (under 18 years of age), or with friends or acquaintances.

9. Satisfaction of Housing Situation

- Women and girls in the sex industry generally have a neutral opinion (47%) of their current housing situation, but are less satisfied than those who are no longer involved in prostitution.
- Respondents, who are in the sex industry are much more likely to report the cost of housing as being too high (18%) and being in an inadequate environment (13%).
- Respondents who left the sex industry were more likely to report feeling comfortable (17%) and having a healthy environment (15%) in their current home.

- The most common reasons given for being “satisfied” to “very satisfied” with one’s housing situation are the appearance of the apartment, feeling safe and comfortable, low cost and a healthy environment.
- The most common reasons given for being “dissatisfied” to “very dissatisfied” with one’s housing situation are the high cost, inadequate location and environment and not feeling at home.

10. Housing Preferences

- Women and girls currently in the sex industry have a preference for subsidized housing (33%) or rent subsidy (26%), while those who are no longer involved in prostitution prefer to have access to permanent housing in a building designated for women and girls who have been involved in prostitution (22%). Nevertheless, subsidized housing (19%) or rent subsidy (16%) are also desirable options for women and girls who have left prostitution.
- The majority of respondents rejected housing models involving a restriction of their autonomy and those that put them in cohabitation with women who have issues different from their own.
- Respondents who are or have been strip dancers (42%) or escorts (38%) are more likely to want subsidized housing, while those who are or have worked in pornography are the least interested in this type of housing (10%).
- Over half of the women and girls surveyed would like to live alone; the majority of them citing the desire for privacy/peace (over 70%) and independence (over 50%).
- Of the respondents who did not want to live alone, over 40% of those currently in the sex industry mentioned that they preferred to live with others to have companionship, share costs, safety, and for love and parental responsibility. These same responses were also given by over 50% of women and girls who are no longer in the sex industry.
- Of the respondents who did not want to live alone, around 40% said they wanted to live with their children, with friends, or roommates. Meanwhile, 45% of respondents who left the sex industry reported wanting to live with a partner or spouse compared to only 22% of those still involved in prostitution.
- The majority of respondents who are or have been in the sex industry would like to have secure access to their building (intercom, security camera, etc.) and a security guard.

11. Accessibility and Service Preferences

- The services that were the most used in the six months prior to the completion of the questionnaire are physical health services (74% of those who are no longer in the sex industry vs. 56% of those who are) and psychological and/or psychiatric health services (57% of those who are no longer in the sex industry vs. 20% of those who are).
- 31% of respondents currently in the sex industry reported that they had not used any services in the six months prior to the completion of the questionnaire.
- Respondents who have spent more than 10 years in the sex industry are much more likely to use multiple services (psychological/psychiatric, food, legal or administrative, related to sexuality and children services).
- Respondents who are or have worked in brothels (84%) are more likely to use physical health services, while those who are or have been in pornography have most used psychological/psychiatric health services (50%).
- Respondents who are or have been involved in street prostitution are the most likely to use services relating to food, drugs and alcohol.
- Respondents no longer involved in the sex industry are more likely to use services than those who are still involved.
- Over 50% of all respondents claimed that they would like to have access to physical and psychological/psychiatric health services in the next six months. The second most requested category of services involves meeting basic needs—mainly food (more than 40%).
- Respondents who are or have been involved in street prostitution are the most likely to seek alcohol-related services (23%) in the next six months.
- Respondents, who are or have been in pornography, strip dancing, have or had sugar daddies, are the most likely to desire access to education-related services, legal, administrative, financial, sexuality, and housing security services over the next six months.

DISCUSSION

The sex industry⁴ is widespread throughout the province of Quebec. Notwithstanding a geographical distribution mainly concentrated in large urban centres, it exists at the national, regional and local level. Although the results of the respondent's geographical distribution appear to us, in part, related to the disproportion of data collection - as mentioned above, some organizations were more active than others and some sources in the milieu were more present in certain regions than others depending on their respective networks - three facts cannot be ignored: 1) respondents that are active in the sex industry are spread out across Quebec, despite geographical disparities. This leads us to believe that no administrative region can claim to be free of prostitution; 2) the majority⁵ of respondents in the sex trade reside in the Montreal CMA, mainly in Montreal (28%), Laval (12%), Longueuil (9%) and Montreal East (9%); those who live elsewhere in Quebec, are predominantly in Quebec City (24%); 3) Respondents who left the sex trade are more likely to reside outside the Montreal CMA (55%) than those who are currently involved (37%). This prevalence of women and girls in the sex industry living in Montreal, and, to a certain extent, Quebec City, seems to follow in the direction of much literature⁶ that claims Montreal to be one of the most popular cities for prostitution in Quebec and a sexual tourism destination in North America. When discussing prostitution on this scale, we cannot ignore Quebec City, particularly in light of its touristic importance. The principle of supply and demand.

This sex industry of Quebec appears to be predominantly made up of women and girls, young, single, and without children, with an overrepresentation of Native and LGBTQ + people. The breakdown of age groups raises serious questions regarding the presence of minors. We find that 24% of respondents are under 25 years of age. However, it was not possible for us, given the disparity in collection and the age restriction at age 17, to establish convincing results for minors, but we assume that this figure would be significant in the proportion of under-25's in our sample, also knowing that in Canada, about 80% of adult prostituted individuals started at a younger age (Poulin, 2008). Moreover, according to studies and the individual provinces within Canada, the proportion victims of sexual exploitation that are minors ranges from 30% to 40% (RCMP and HTNCC, 2013; Ricci et al., 2012). This

⁴ In the context of this study, we did not consider men in prostitution. We therefore specify that use of the term "sex industry" is restricted to females in this case.

⁵ Excluding the "Other" category.

⁶ CSF, 2002; RCMP & HTNCC, 2013; Mourani, 2009; SRCQ, 2013; U.S. Department of State, 2016.

is hardly surprising since the clientele is constantly seeking women and girls that are younger and younger. Therefore, specific research on minors and their needs would provide important additional insights.

The majority of respondents in the sex industry are active for 2 to 5 years. They practice from one to three prostitutional activities, mostly escorting, strip dancing (strip club) and sugar daddy. A minority of them engage in occasional prostitution or for less than one year. Other popular activities are: masseuse in erotic massage parlours and street prostitution. In general, these prostitution activities involve much more than dancing, a simple massage or accompaniment/dating and lead to prostitution in order to make more money. Women and girls in the sex trade have higher monthly incomes than those who are no longer involved. The vast majority of their income is generated from the sex industrie (more than 85%), while women and girls who have left prostitution mainly live on welfare (about 45%) and declared employment (approximately 35%). For a small minority of this subgroup, prostitution remains a last resort source of income; due to adversity they take a road they would prefer not taking, despite knowing better. Indeed, 6% of respondents who say they left the sex industry claim that they nevertheless had income from the sex industry during the last month at the time of completing the questionnaire. This number jumps to 13% when considering the last six months. This recourse to prostitution as a last resort is also used for housing: 3% of women and girls no longer in the sex industry say that they have spent at least one night with a john in the last six months and 2% have done so with a stranger in exchange of sexual services.

The reasons for entering the sex industry or the obstacles to exiting are many. However, regardless of the unique circumstances of these women and girls, several trends can be observed. First, entry into prostitution is usually motivated by one's needs; four main ones in particular: money, housing, basic needs (food, transportation, etc.) and debt. These elements that contributed to one's entry into prostitution subsequently become obstacles to exiting, or even incentives for returning to this environment. The need for money remains the most cited by all respondents, as much a reason for entering prostitution as an obstacle to departure. In the case of being tempted to return to the sex industry, the need for money and debt are the reasons most often cited by the respondents. Housing ranks second for entry into the sex industry and an obstacle to exiting. That being said, the difference in percentages between housing and debt is minimal.

Secondly, the analysis of respondents' needs highlights a series of other incentives for entry into prostitution, some of which become obstacles to exiting: addiction (alcohol, drugs, gambling, etc.), the desire for a life of luxury (142 mentioned this as an incentive), the inability to find a job, violence (physical/psychological violence during childhood or adolescence, incest and sexual assault in the family, rape, gang rape, etc.), providing for a loved one (children, spouse/partner, other family members), the trivialization of prostitution (among one's friends/peers or family, unbridled sexuality and prostitution in the family), elements related to identity (self-confidence, low self-esteem, need for validation, etc.), paying for education, responding to a false or misleading job posting (deceit), dropping out of school and seeking excitement or a thrill.

If money, housing, debt and basic needs are the primary incentives for entry into the sex industry, addiction (26%), desire for a luxurious lifestyle (26%) inability to find a job (23%) and violence (more than 15%) are among the most cited in a series of secondary incentives. 144 women and girls reported addiction as an incentive for entering prostitution. However, there are significant variations in rates between women and girls currently in the sex industry and those who are no longer involved concerning other incentives. For example, 26% of respondents who are no longer in prostitution identify the trivialization of prostitution among their friends/peers as an incentive for entry, while only 18% of those who are currently in the sex industry mention it. This is also the case regarding a lack of self-esteem and confidence. Women and girls no longer in the sex industry mentioned this incentive at a rate of 28% compared to 10% of those who are currently involved in prostitution. These changes in rates can, in part, be explained by respondents' level of understanding of their history in prostitution. One can presume that women and girls who have been successful in getting out of the sex industry may have had to face much introspection and for some, had the help of organizations providing services to prostitutes. It's important to remember that several respondents were recruited by such organizations. As a result, despite the variation in rates, which are low for some, we believe that the incentives mentioned above are also important to consider in any assistance program and they can come up during a departure process.

As previously mentioned, the need for money, housing, paying debt and basic needs are the most cited obstacles to exiting. However, addiction is cited by almost 40% of respondents who tried leaving the sex industry and by more than 50% who permanently left after multiple attempts. While the need for money stands out

significantly, being cited by over 70% of respondents, variation in the rates of other obstacles (housing, debt, basic needs and addiction) are minimal. This leads us to believe that they are of equal importance to the respondents.

Just as the respondents told us about the incentives for entry into prostitution, they also told us about the obstacles to its departure, other than those previously reported: the lack of support from family and friends, isolation, the lack of self-esteem and self-confidence, the inability to find a job, a loss of trust in public institutions (police, DYP, judicial, etc.) and the rigidity of government service administrations (welfare, housing, etc.). Once again, the respondents who left the sex industry show significant differences from those who are currently involved. More ROSI (38%) cited low self-esteem and self-confidence as an obstacle to departure compared to 17% of RISI. These differences are even more pronounced with respect to isolation, which is cited as an obstacle by 41% of ROSI and 13% of RISI. This is also the case for rigidity of government service administrations and the loss of trust in public institutions. Indeed, respondents that have left the sex industry are much more likely to report these two obstacles to a departure than RISI. Moreover, the loss of trust in public institutions is ranked as the second obstacle (after the need for money) by women and girls who have left the sex industry after multiple attempts. Respondents who are no longer in prostitution have possibly dealt with public institutions more than those currently in the industry, hence the variation in rates. Moreover, we know that they used public services over the last six months at the time of the data collection more than other subgroups, while 31% of the RISI had not used any at all. This not only raises concerns regarding the accessibility of services, but of their quality and adaptability to the complex state of affairs of women and girls in the sex industry.

A little aside on violence: first, the purpose of this study was not to assess the significance of violence in the entry or the exit of prostitution, but rather the needs and preferences of housing. However, through the response choices of specific questions regarding the process of entering or leaving, we find a prevalence of violence. Again, there are variations in rates between respondents who are currently in the sex industry and those who are no longer involved. As mentioned above, this can be explained by the respondents' understanding of their personal history (in prostitution), but in this case, can also reflect their struggles in talking about it. Violence was, in fact, a sensitive point addressed during the discussion groups. Participants commented that it might be difficult for respondents to recognize, identify or even accept the violence they experienced, especially among those who

are still involved in prostitution. They told us that it could take years to admit that the man one once thought was her partner was, in fact, a pimp. Moreover, 97 of 548 women experienced physical or psychological violence during childhood or adolescence and 96 reported incest or assault in the family. Furthermore, 93 women and girls reported being raped, several of them in a gang bang, and 15 were reportedly sold to pimps by family members.

In light of these obstacles to exiting and incentives for entry into prostitution, it seems important to us that any reintegration or rehabilitation program should initially help these women solve their issues regarding housing, addiction and above all, money. Helping with the latter would allow them to meet their basic needs (food, transportation, etc.) and pay their debt. On the other hand, providing a safe environment free of prostitution, even if it means having to move away, remains one of the most cited incentives for departure. To that point, the geographic distribution of respondents shows a higher number of women and girls who are no longer in the sex industry living outside the Montreal CMA (55%). This leads us to believe, notwithstanding limited sampling, that these women may have had to move to escape a toxic environment of prostitution. Leaving prostitution sometimes means leaving everything behind in order to live in safety and to rebuild one's life on a new foundation; a return to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Every woman and girl can then build a personalized intervention plan to meet her specific needs (psychological, psychiatric, employability, violence, etc.), while taking into account the obstacles and judgments that can be shaped by public systems and by the trivialization of prostitution. Note that 121 women and girls considered the trivialization of prostitution by their friends and peers to be an incentive for entry into the sex industry 83 claimed this trivialization came from within their families, and 52 respondents reported having a family member in the sex industry.

In the focus groups, several women expressed that being heard, believed and not judged, having the support of family and friends, and a strong disgust of johns have been important incentives for departure. These elements are also reported to be significant by respondents who left the sex industry after one or multiple attempts. They also mention the realization of an alternative lifestyle, recognizing one's own needs, accepting help and living within one's means. These elements being used in intervention are just as significant as the identification of pivotal moments in one's departure (disgust of clients). Obviously successful counselling necessarily implies goodwill and an open mind, free of judgment. Additionally, leaving the sex industry implies a change in thinking, even a completely new outlook, on prostitution itself;

hence the importance of not only fighting the trivialization of prostitution, but also of allowing these women and girls to consider and experience alternative lifestyles that will allow them to flourish. A holistic approach seems appropriate in order to take into account not only individual issues and capacities, but the social, legal, cultural, economic, systemic and political forces and limitations that can influence one's journey, as well.

Back to the issue of housing, a crucial need and one identified as one of the primary obstacles to leaving prostitution and one of the reasons for entry. In terms of the respondents' current housing situation, a few important points emerge. First, the vast majority of respondents (more than 65%) do not have access to subsidized housing (apartment or house). Over half of them do not have their own (subsidy-free) apartment or house. Consequently, women and girls involved in prostitution tend to live with other sex workers (especially those who are in pornography), a john, a friend, a sugar daddy, a stranger in exchange of sexual services or couchsurfing (mainly those who take part in street prostitution). Those who are no longer in prostitution tend to stay with a family member, a partner/spouse or at a women's shelter. It should be noted that women and girls who are escorts are less likely live with family compared to those who work in pornography. This difference may, in part, be explained by the very nature of prostitutional activities. Knowing that escorting sometimes consists of welcoming the john into her home (in call), living with a family member is rather complicated, especially if she desires secrecy.

Moreover, over one third of the women and girls surveyed reported living in the same place for less than six months. Additionally, the majority of respondents did not live alone and lived with one or two people on a permanent basis, most often with their children (under 18 years old), friends or acquaintances. Their level of satisfaction regarding their accommodation is generally neutral, but leans towards dissatisfaction. Essentially, the high cost of rent, unhealthy environment, inadequate location and the sense of not feeling at home, are the main reasons mentioned for their dissatisfaction. As for those who say they are satisfied, they cite the appearance of their apartment, a sense of security, a healthy environment and a low cost. Therefore, respondents tend to appreciate their housing when they feel safe (healthy surroundings, adequate location, sense of security) and the rent is affordable. Overall, the housing situation of those surveyed seems rather precarious and unstable.

Consequently, we were not surprised by the majority preference of women and girls in the sex industry for subsidized housing (OMHM, FOHM) or with a rent subsidy. A financial assistance program is desired by more than 40% of respondents. They would like live in their own apartment or house with an affordable rent and with financial aid, or at least, to have subsidized housing. The other preference is for permanent housing in a building designated for women who have been in the sex industry. On the other hand, opinions are divided in terms of living alone or with others. It seems obvious that both options should be considered, since a good proportion of women wish to live alone, essentially to have privacy, serenity and independence; while many wish to live with their children, a partner/spouse, friends or roommates, to have companionship, to share the costs, to avoid isolation, out of love and parental responsibility and for personal safety. Housing models should therefore consider these various needs.

Finally, regardless of the type of housing, a large majority of respondents want to live in a building with secure access (intercom, security camera, etc.) and a security guard. This is yet another reflection of safety being a fundamental element for these women. Other services related to housing also came to light, including access to a kitchen and a community or cultural space. Respondents also expressed the desire to have stakeholders on site for support during times of crisis, to help them set up a safety plan and to obtain the following services: personal therapy or psychological aid related to prostitution and sexual violence, support groups, access to food banks, help finding a job, receiving training and returning to school. Despite the desire for the presence of stakeholders, it is important to note that the respondents did, however, reject the housing models involving a restriction of their autonomy as well as those putting them in cohabitation with women who had not been involved in prostitution.

In terms of services, we find that at the time of the questionnaire, women and girls of the sex industry mostly used services related to physical, psychological and psychiatric health over the last six months. Other services, those related to basic needs (food and clothing), legal or administrative issues, sexuality, education, children and alcohol, were also used by all respondents, although less so among the RISI subgroup. Respondents, who are or have been involved in street prostitution are the most likely to have used food services, as well as drug and alcohol addiction services. Physical health services were most used by respondents who are or have been active in brothels (place of sexual service other than a massage parlour or a strip club). Psychological and/or psychiatric and clothing services have especially

been used by women and girls who are or have worked in pornography. Many of them also used services related to legal or administrative issues, as did escorts and those who are or have worked in brothels. Escorts are most likely to employ services for their children. Education-related services were used most by respondents who are or have worked in pornography and those who have or have had sugar daddies. The latter have also been major users of services relating to sexuality, as have masseuses. Moreover, those who are or have been in the sex industry for more than 10 years tend to use multiple services (psychological/psychiatric health services, food, legal or administrative, related to sexuality and child), unlike those who are or have been involved 2 to 5 years. Respondents that have spent a short amount of time in the sex industry (occasional or less than one year) are the most in need of services relating to addiction (alcohol and drugs) and food.

Prostitutional activity and time spent in prostitution highlight the importance of offering a variety of services. Women and girls in the sex industry are not a monolithic block. Depending on their time spent in prostitution, their activities and even their family/personal situation, the services used, and therefore requested, differ and for some, tend to address multiple and intricate needs. A long stretch in prostitution seems to be associated with the use of multiple services. This is hardly surprising since prostitution is a practice tends to keep women in economic and social instability, while causing them significant psychological damage, often leading to post-traumatic stress. Moreover, the disparity in rates between respondents who are active in prostitution and those who are no longer involved raises serious questions as to the accessibility of services. This is especially concerning since for many women, prostitution can become a means of survival.

Remember that 31% of respondents in the sex industry told us that at the time of the questionnaire, they had not used any services over the last six months, whereas many were able to mention different services they would like to receive in the following six months⁷. In fact, 70% of women and girls in the sex industry would like access to psychological and psychiatric health services. 64% want physical health services and more than 40% would like food and clothing services. While the majority of these women and girls are most interested in physical, psychological and psychiatric health services, their demands are, however, many and varied. Indeed, the other primary category of desired services relates to basic needs, mainly food and clothing. Having an affordable and subsidized home is important, but

⁷ All of this is from the time the questionnaire was completed.

having something to eat and wear is just as important. Next is access to services related to education, employment, legal or administrative issues and finances. Respondents who are or have been involved in street prostitution are the most likely to wish for alcohol-related services, while those who are involving or have involved in pornography, strip dancing, or that have or had sugar daddies, are most interested in services related to education, legal or administrative issues, finances, sexuality and housing safety.

In conclusion, despite a sampling of convenience that does not allow the results to be generalized, this study has nevertheless revealed the point of view of 548 women and girls that have been or are currently in the sex industry. This constitutes a meaningful sample. These women and girls expressed their needs and preferences for housing and services. The results of this study reveal trends that can contribute to building response models of housing (intervention models) and develop service options aimed at female clients who are active, are in the process of leaving or have already left in the sex industry.

WHAT MODELS FOR QUEBEC?

In light of the results of this study, two models of housing intervention should be excluded for women and girls in the sex industry: those restricting their autonomy (ie: supervised community housing) and those requiring them to cohabit with women with problems other than prostitution (shelter or permanent housing in a building designated for female victims of domestic violence, with adapted services). What do these women and girls want?

The preference of the majority of these women and girls in the sex industry is for subsidized housing (OMHM, FOHM) or housing with a rent subsidy. They want to live in their own apartment or house at an affordable rate and have financial assistance. They are therefore looking for low-cost stability. Note that temporary housing was not selected by a single woman or girl in this study, even if it was part of the choices of this questionnaire. Therefore, these individuals wish to live in their own apartment or house permanently (or at least long term).

The other response model of housing used is that of permanent housing in a building designated for women or girls that have been or are currently in the sex industry. Such a clientele desires access to security measures in their buildings (security guard, intercom, etc.) as well as various services associated with their multiple needs. Note that women and girls who prefer to live in subsidized housing or housing with rent subsidy also wish to have access to these services. The reader should refer to the sections of the report that relate to this. Regardless of the model, housing should be safe and aimed at single women and girls as well as families. Particular attention should also be paid to the environment; in other words, to the location of these residences, since these women and girls are looking for places that are safe and free of prostitution.

The “Housing First” approach seems to be appropriate for women in the sex industry. It consists of offering people a permanent home quickly without setting requirements or restrictions. The “At Home” (Chez-Soi) project is a variant of the “Housing First” approach, which allows clients to choose their type of housing. In most cases, these people are housed in apartments with a rent subsidy⁸ and a mobile team provides support to help with maintenance of the residence. Another

⁸ “The Rent Supplement Program helps low-income households to live in private-sector rental dwellings or dwellings belonging to housing cooperatives or non-profit organizations (NPO’s), and to pay a rent similar to that for low-rental housing, i.e. rent equal to 25% of their income.” (Société d’habitation website: http://www.habitation.gouv.qc.ca/english/detail_du_programme_english/programme/rent_supplement.html).

variant of this approach favours group housing. In other words, a building designated for housing people struggling with the same difficulties with support from the staff on site. This corresponds to the requirement for permanent housing in a building designated for women and girls in prostitution. This type of approach can found in situations of domestic violence and homelessness (Goering et al., 2012; Latimer et al., 2014).

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⁹ A complete bibliography is available in the long version of the research report.

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