

Most migrant sex workers are not forced to sell sex

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Most migrants working in the London sex industry do not feel they are forced to sell sex. In fact, they decide to work in the sex industry to achieve a good standard of living for themselves and their families back home. They say working in the sex industry avoids employment in menial and poorly paid jobs. These are the findings of a study led by Dr Nick Mai of London Metropolitan University. The study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), is based on in-depth interviews with 100 women, men and transgender migrants working in the London sex industry.

The findings will be presented at a half-day event, "In whose name? Migration, Sex Work and Trafficking". The event, as part of the ESRC's Festival of Social Science, is open to all with a specific focus on targeting policymakers, [sex workers](#) rights organisations, community services, and the media to attend.

"The perception that the commercial sex industry is connected to international organised crime and irregular immigration has raised moral panic about trafficking in the UK. Neither the moral panic, nor legislation brought in to counter trafficking, reflects existing research evidence," says Dr Mai. "To avoid knee-jerk reactions and to obtain a better understanding of the issues, it's essential that the findings of recent and relevant research are made known to the government and the public at large."

The presentation will be followed by a screening of a work in progress a

cut of Dr Mai's documentary which draws on his research findings.

In addition to the ESRC funded research, the results of two recent and relevant studies will be presented. These were carried out by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the x:talk project.

Dr Lucy Platt and Pippa Grenfell from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine will present the key findings of a linked survey and qualitative study, funded by the Medical Research Council, which explores risks and vulnerability among migrant and non-migrant female sex workers in London.

The report, Human rights, sex work and the challenge of trafficking, produced by x:talk will be the focus of a third presentation. Ava Caradonna (pseudonym), spokesperson for x:talk says, "We've always suspected that attempts to address human trafficking have been co-opted by people with another agenda - eradication of the sex industry. What this report highlights is that rather than assisting and supporting trafficked people, anti-trafficking policies have been effective at putting the safety, health and even the lives of sex workers at risk. The policies have also helped make sex workers a soft target for the Border Agency."

Provided by Economic & Social Research Council

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