



NUMbrella Lane

Scotland Needs Assessment: Summary Report 2022

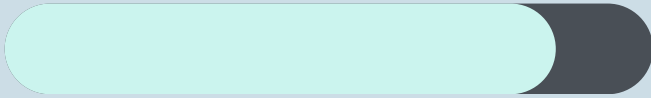
This summary report presents findings from research conducted by National Ugly Mugs in 2022 for the purposes of the NUMbrella Lane wellbeing project in Glasgow. This data, from recent or current sex workers in Scotland, highlights their support needs as defined by themselves.

Thank you

to the 27 community members who participated in administered surveys, and Research and Development team member Jewel Sinclair for conducting the research.

Demographics

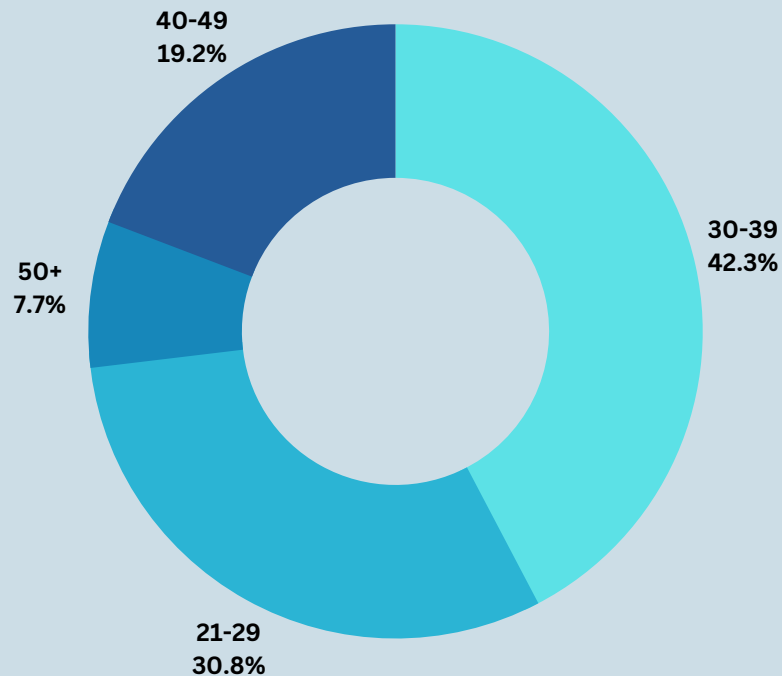
Gender Identity



85% of respondents identify as women

Others identify as non-binary, trans, and male

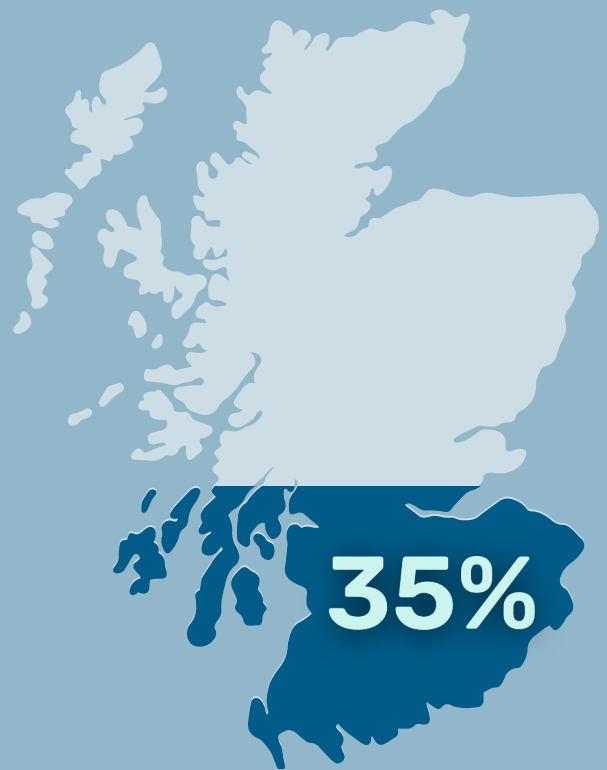
Age



Ethnic / migrant identity

Majority White
British/ Scottish

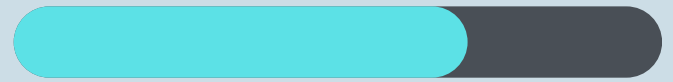
19% state that English is *not* their first language



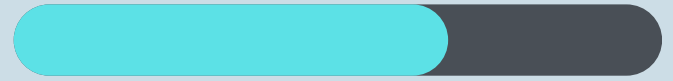
35% of respondents identify as migrants

Working Location

All engage in sex work in Scotland



70% work in **Glasgow**



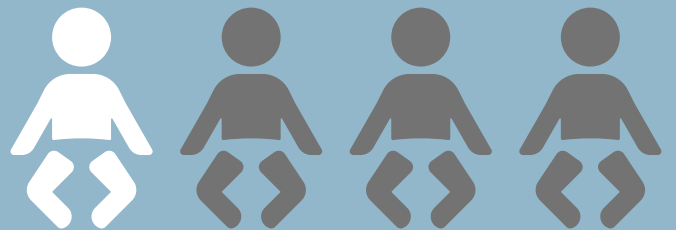
67% work in **Edinburgh**

Disability

64%

consider themselves to have a long-term **condition or disability**

Dependents

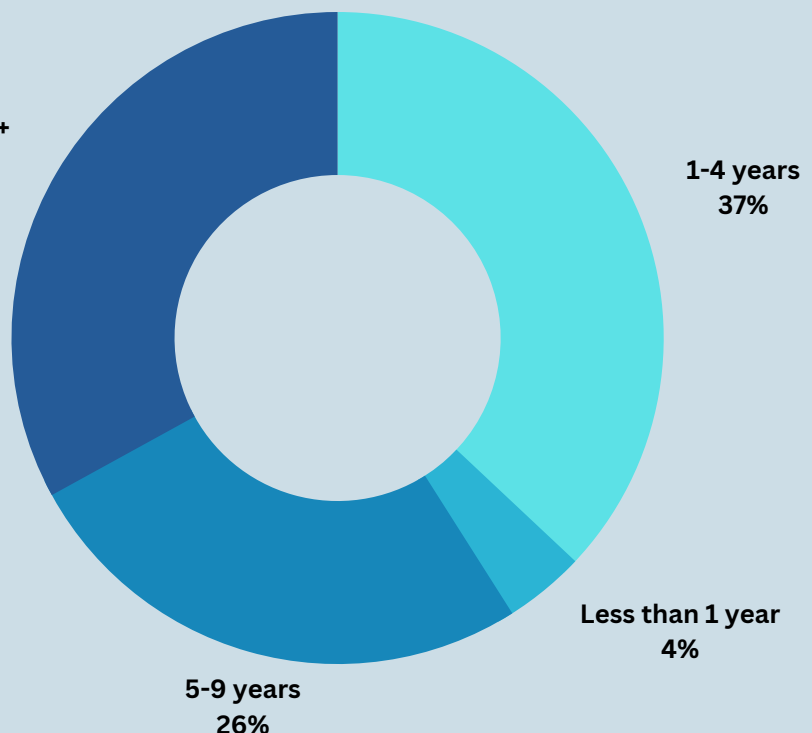


Almost **1/4** of all respondents have **children/ dependents**

Career Length

The largest portion of respondents have been sex working for **1 - 4 years**

10 years +
33%



1-4 years
37%

Less than 1 year
4%

5-9 years
26%

Forms of Sex Work

Respondents have experience in...

80% independent escorting

44% BDSM, kink or fetish-based services

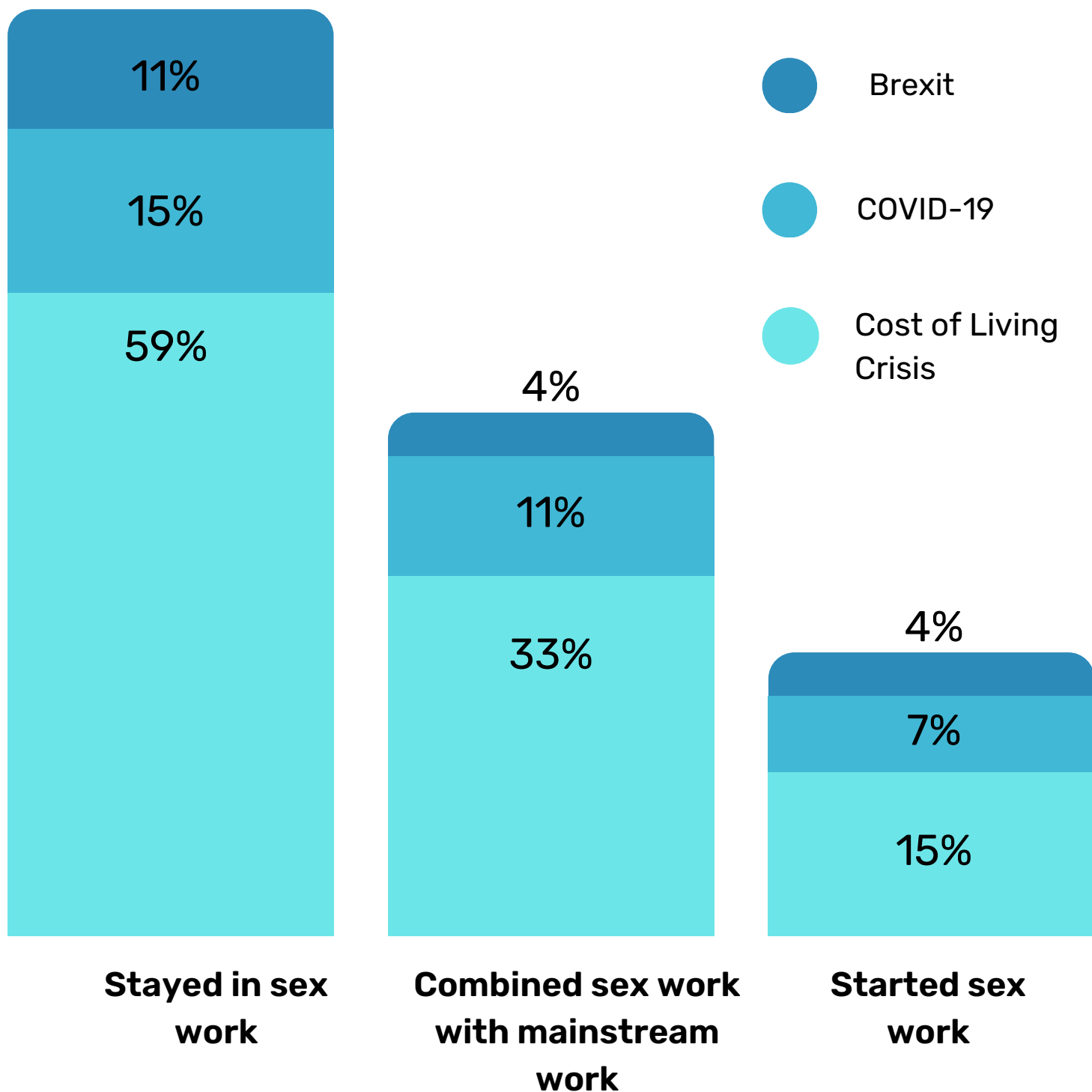
19% webcamming

15% erotic/ exotic dance

15% pornography, glamour modelling or content creation

Other forms include sex-based therapeutic services, phone/ TV/ text-based work, and brothels/ parlours/ saunas

Due to the Cost of Living Crisis, COVID-19, and Brexit, Scotland's sex workers have...



Sex workers in Scotland believe the Cost of Living Crisis has been the most impactful, with Brexit being the least

“

It's been a hell of a
triple whammy

”

"Because of COVID I've used up all my savings, and with the rising cost of living I am struggling to be able to afford things."

"I find it very difficult to exit sex work as the rising cost of living has meant **I need to earn the money that sex work gives me**"

"It was the rise in the cost of living in the years before COVID that pushed me into escorting"

"...there was a drop in clients after Brexit, then there was no work during the lockdowns, and even now I still have very few clients...I have no other income to rely on.
I am scared."

30%

agree the **higher cost of living** makes it impossible to manage financially

19%

agree that **COVID-19** has made it impossible to manage financially

Migrant sex workers have faced unique challenges

"I couldn't do sex work online because the Home Office will see the payments from sex work websites in my bank statement."

"After Brexit, [adult services website] forced me to send them a copy of my ID...because I'm a migrant sex worker I don't share any ID with any website or government and they shut down my account"

"I have no right to work in the UK and so I couldn't get a mainstream job or apply for [Universal Credit]... [I couldn't move online] because it requires sharing your ID...and being paid into your bank account - which I don't have."

Harm and Reporting to Police

85% have experienced *crime, harm or violence* as a result of sex work

Condom removal/ refusal 46%

Verbal abuse 42%

Stalking/ Harassment 39%

Physical assault 27%

Sexual assault 27%

Rape 23%

Robbery 23%

Discrimination 15%



Only **16%***
reported to police

All were **dissatisfied** with police support

"They asked me many questions about me and took down my name and address, but showed no interest in the man I was reporting and sent me home in a police car and that was it."

"[T]hey spoke to the perpetrator, but he said 'no comment' and they left it at that and did nothing."

"Every single interaction I had with the police as a sex worker has been negative and damaging"

* Statistic from Scotland Assessment respondents only, percentage from all reports made to National Ugly Mugs indicate that consent to engage police involvement was 8% in 2021

Respondents expect only harmful impacts from the Scottish Government's plan to criminalise the purchase of sex

*More likely to
report crime,
harm or violence*

0%

Feel more safe

0%

*Easier to meet
clients*

0%

*Less likely to
report crime,
harm or violence*

74%

Feel less safe

87%

*Harder to meet
clients*

96%

Quotes from survey respondents

" It's difficult to manage risk, share knowledge, support the sex work community and its providers and clients if either side is criminalised "

" The police already have so much power over us, I would hate for them to be even more empowered by the proposed criminalisation, **nothing good would come out of that for people like me. "**

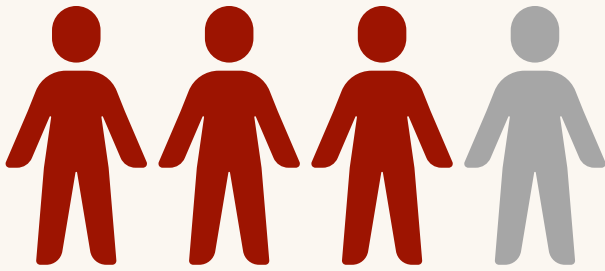
" Pushing sex work underground is going to make it easier for clients to bring harm to sex workers and put us into position where we have to do things we don't want to. "

" [It] creates the likelihood of harm because criminal market places are harmful. "

" I've had no problems while working in the brothel – apart from the violence and trauma of the police raid, and most of **the violence I have experienced working on my own was due to the fact that I was on my own.**"

" [Model for Scotland] could potentially **lead to death of sex workers** and it will be entirely on the government. "

Banking Discrimination



Over 3/4

do not disclose

sex work to their bank

"[T]hey don't want to touch our industry so we have to lie."

Of sex workers who have disclosed,
most experienced difficulty
accessing financial services

"[Online bank] gave me the option to select sex work...I chose it, thinking it was great...but I was then denied the account."

Some respondents express fears around accessing government services

“

I am afraid to ask for [Universal Credit]...it may bring up sex work and will result in my bank account being closed.

”

“

I am afraid to disclose...I am afraid of how that may affect my relationship with HMRC and DWP.

”

Migrant status severely impedes access to financial support

"I don't have access to financial resources or support, I don't even have a bank account."

"On a spouse visa, I can't access public funds or financial support."

" As for government support, the current hostile environment makes it very hard for me "



65%

of respondents
use or have used
food banks

Goals for sex work

Enough money
to live on

85%

Money for
major purchase
(e.g. home, car)

54%

Pay off debts

39%

Earning
alongside care
responsibilities

15%

Common barriers to achieving these goals



Disability and health status



Inability to work full time



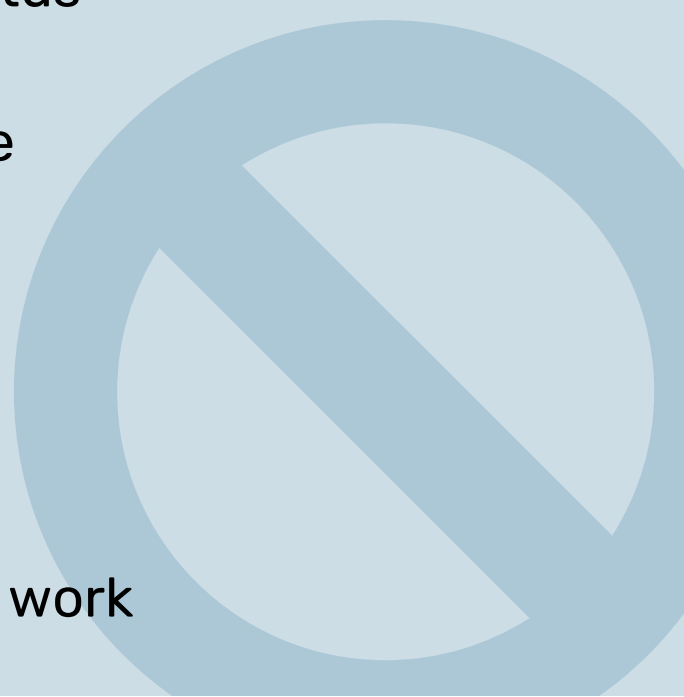
Insecure housing



Care responsibilities



The legal context of sex work



88%

have considered getting a **mainstream job** *alongside or instead of* sex work

Goals for mainstream employment

Enough money to live on

64%

Moving away from sex work

23%

Pay off debts

23%

Money for major purchase (e.g. home, car)

23%

Goals are greatly diverse

"I like to work, but there is a difference between meaningful activity and lining someone else's pockets"

"[S]omething more fulfilling, It wasn't about money, I make enough money in sex work."

42%

of respondents have left
and **returned to sex work**

Most Common Reasons for Return

1. **Personal circumstances changed**
(e.g. health, housing)
2. **Insufficient pay** from mainstream work
3. Impact of **COVID-19**



Mainstream hours didn't work for me



Lost another source of income



Benefits income was not enough to live on



Could not find mainstream job



Disliked the mainstream job

"My children grew up and I was able to go back to [sex] work"

Expected or experienced barriers when trying to get a mainstream job

Can't tell employers about skills gained through sex work

Disability or health condition (e.g. chronic illness)

Mainstream jobs do not pay enough

Lacking education, training, or experience

Gap in CV due to sex work

Caring responsibilities are incompatible with mainstream work

Inability to work full-time

" I am **unsure how my CV is going to fly with the potential employers** because many of my previous jobs are related to sex work "

"I **had to lie** in my CV, and also **I wasn't in control of my own time** in the mainstream work, like choosing holidays, so I left."

In addition to lack of access to financial support, **migrant sex workers face limited employment options...**

" I have no right to work in the UK, and any education I may have received means nothing here "

" Home Office doesn't allow me to get another job...I can't get [a] different kind of mainstream job "

" [M]y degree is not recognised in the UK. If I wanted to work in the same field, I would have to go through the same education again "



Scotland's sex workers' experiences of sex work and mainstream work

" Combining sex work and mainstream work is often exhausting, both mentally and physically, because **you live a double life** "

" There was **not enough money**...
I had to start sex work in order to make ends meet. "

"[I am] struggling to transition into mainstream work because of its **demands for consistency and reliability** which I struggle with due to my neurodivergence."

" Clients of my mainstream business will recognise me and report me to HR...these companies hire strippers for every Christmas party, and the **double standard is just not fair!** "

" In sex work I can make **more money in fewer hours** than in mainstream jobs that are available to me. "

64%

of respondents consider themselves to have a **long-term disability or health condition**

75%

Mental Health

63%

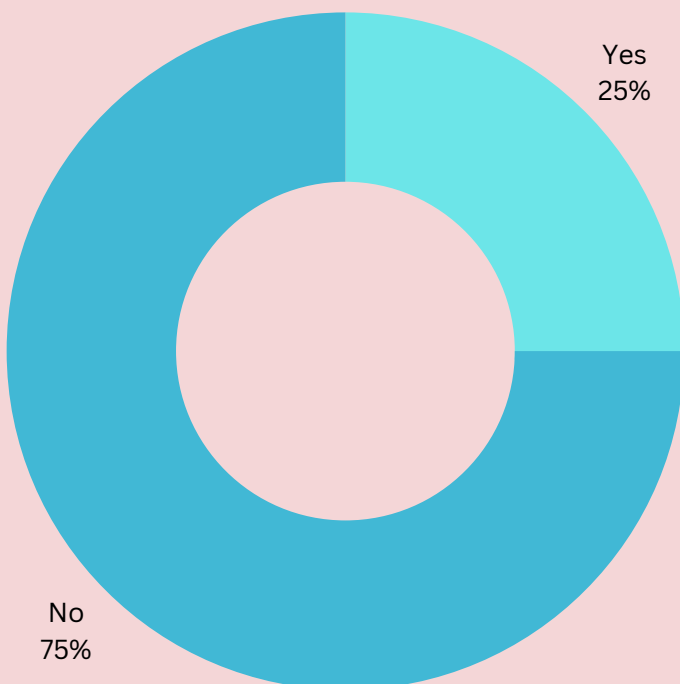
Physical Health

50%

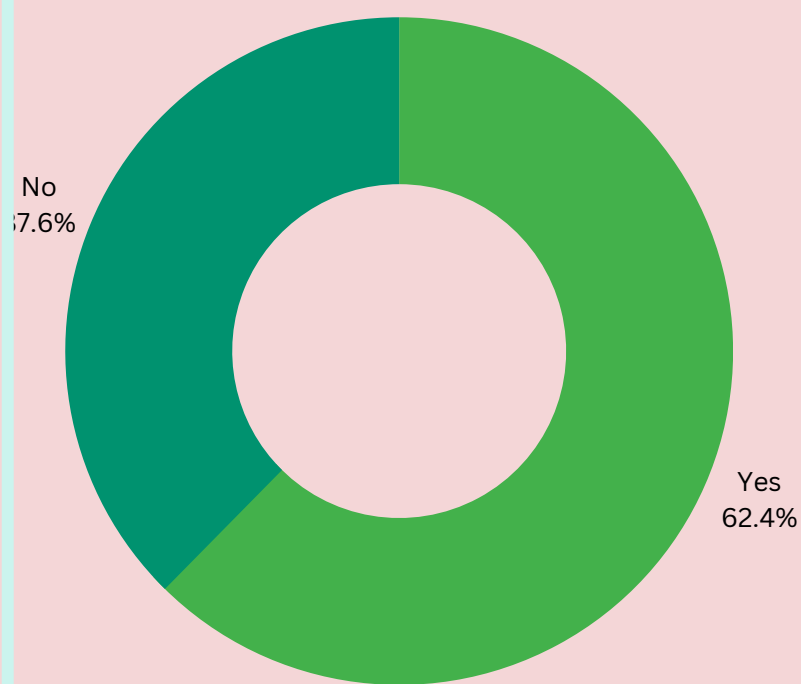
Chronic Illness

50%

Neuro-divergence



Receiving welfare support



Medication/ Treatment

Barriers to accessing **health and wellbeing support**

In order of
prominence

1. Accessibility of NHS support
2. Lack of trust in practitioners/ fear of stigma
3. Cost
4. Inconsistency in care
5. Lack of sex worker-friendly services

Barriers to accessing **sexual health support**

In order of
prominence

1. Lacking trust in practitioners / fear of stigma
2. Accessibility of NHS support
3. Lack of sex worker-friendly services
4. Inconsistency in care
5. Fear of harassment/ protest outside clinics



Scotland's sex workers' experiences of health, disability and support services

" [B]ecause of COVID and service reduction **I had to out myself** as a sex worker in order to get regular sexual health check ups "

" I have been effectively **traumatised by ineffective and irresponsible healthcare**...it's horrific that under current administrations and government there's such scarcity in healthcare...**people are harmed when they can't get help.** "

" **NHS services are spectacularly inaccessible**...Once I had to slide down the stairs on my butt to access a service and then crawl back up the stairs. "

" My experiences of accessing sexual health support in Scotland have been mostly negative, **compared to the service I received in London** "

" NHS Scotland has **refused to provide STI certificates for filming purposes**, which is why I have to travel to London "

To meet sex work-specific needs...

89%

**have accessed support from
organisations specifically aimed at
sex workers**

58%

**have accessed support from
organisations *not* specifically aimed
at sex workers**

**12% say that have not accessed a
support service to meet their needs
as sex workers**

Experiences of NUMbrella Lane and the former Umbrella Lane

" Umbrella Lane (UL) helped me a lot during the pandemic. They gave us money for living no questions asked and they supported us with counselling. "

" I really like the atmosphere at UL drop-ins, you can bitch about your work and nobody is going to try to rescue you. "

" UL was really positive for me, and just reassuring, and it felt safe and it was the only place where I disclosed sex work. "







" NUMbrella Lane is relaxing, there is no fear or stigma. I felt very isolated before...but I am making new friends at NL now. "

" The only positive thing was the services via UL, UL really stands out...The only improvement would be more regular drop-ins, and NUMbrella Lane is moving in that direction "

" I contacted one of the case workers at NUM [on behalf of] a friend of mine...even though they were not speaking directly to the person they were helping, which I thought was really supportive of them."

Services sex workers want from an ideal sex worker support organisation

Basic Supplies/ Services

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Sex work clothing |  Shower facility |
|  Food and cooking facilities |  Warm clothing for outdoor work |
|  Hygiene supplies |  Childcare supplies |

Financial Information/ Advice/ Support

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Financial planning (banking, pension) |  Support with debt |
|  Access to benefits |  Tax support |
|  Support with budgeting |  Managing hostile financial services |

Sex Work



Support accessing unions/other orgs



Sex work-related skills workshops



Relevant resources on worker's rights



Peer support for different forms of sex work



Specialist support for different forms of sex work

Mainstream Work



Support accessing education/ training



Career planning advice



CV and application support



Support navigating professional language



Help seeking disability-friendly jobs

Housing



Housing advice/
support
(emergency
accommodation,
private landlords,
etc)



Help finding
accessible housing
(disability-specific
support)



Drugs



Naloxone training



Drug support
workers



Testing drug
quality/ content



Smoking/ injection
harm reduction
supplies



Smoking/ alcohol
cessation services



Harm reduction
information/
workshops (drug
consumption,
chemsex, etc)



Support for Marginalised Groups



LGBT (peer-to-peer and specialist support)



People with disabilities (peer-to-peer and specialist support)



Migrants (peer-to-peer and specialist support)



Trans (peer-to-peer and specialist support)



People of colour (peer-to-peer and specialist support)



Male/ masculine sex workers (peer-to-peer and specialist support)

Family and Parenthood



Support with childcare/ parenting



Support and advocacy with social services and Child Protection procedures



Peer-to-peer support for sex workers with children



Pregnancy support

General Health



Support accessing mental health services



Support accessing neurodivergency specialists



Support accessing GP, dental, optician services



Postpartum support

Sexual Health



Sexual health supplies (condoms, dams, lube)



In-project sexual health screening



Dedicated sex-worker only clinics



Home testing/screening kits



Rapid referrals to clinics



Contraception support (including access to abortion services)



Support for FGM



PrEP and PEP



Sexual health outreach to saunas/ parlours/ flats



Certificates for filming

Wellbeing



Community events
(talks, presentations,
parties)



Social activities and
online social groups



Drop-in services



Confidential helpline

Crime and Criminal Justice Support



Recovery support
following an incident



Sex work-specific
legal advice



ISVA and IDVA
support



Recovery support for
historic child sexual
exploitation



Making NUM reports
and disseminating
alerts



Support applying for
compensation



Speaking to police/
navigating criminal
justice processes



Support after police
harassment (e.g. via
brothel raids)

Offending Support



Support for workers experiencing criminal justice system as defendants



In prison and leaving prison



Sex workers in alternatives-to-custody programmes

Migration/ Forced Migration/ Citizenship



Accessing visas, settled status, citizenship



Access to asylum support



Translation and English language support



Information and advocacy on trafficking and modern slavery



Referral through the National Referral Mechanism for trafficking and modern slavery



We aim to work with members of the sex work community, community-led groups, allies and funders to respond to what sex workers in Scotland are asking for.



To access NUMbrella Lane, register as a member of National Ugly Mugs here:
<https://nationaluglymugs.org/register/>



DONATE

If you are interested in supporting sex workers through financial hardship and our work at National Ugly Mugs, please visit our donation page:

<https://nationaluglymugs.org/donate/>



Ending All Forms Violence Against Sex Workers

www.nationaluglymugs.org

Contact: admin@nationaluglymugs.org

NUMbrella Lane project: numbrella@nationaluglymugs.org



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NUMbrella Lane would not exist without the
generous support from...



Glasgow
Council
for the
Voluntary
Sector

