

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Gender Inequality

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# Commercial Sexual Exploitation as Patriarchal Capitalism

- **“‘[...] while [sic] sex work clearly did answer a genuine consumer demand, something was terribly terribly wrong with any society that effectively tells the vast majority of its female population they are worth more dancing on boxes between the ages of 18 and 25 than they will be at any subsequent point in their lives, whatever their talents or accomplishments. If the same woman could make 5 times as much money stripping as she could teaching as a world-recognized scholar, could not the stripping job be considered bullshit simply on that basis?’ [...] The only objection I could really raise here is that her argument might not go far enough. It’s not so much that stripper is a bullshit job, perhaps, but that this situation shows us to be living in a bullshit society.”**

# Commercial Sexual Exploitation

- **Commercial Sexual Exploitation is a deeply gendered phenomenon.**
- **Structural discrimination and inequality are at the heart of commercial sexual exploitation**

# **Structural discrimination and inequality are at the heart of commercial sexual exploitation**

**Commercial sexual exploitation depends upon the push and pulls of:**

- 1) occupational segregation and lack of quality, flexible work**
- 2) women's unequal responsibility for unpaid care**
- 3) austerity and the failing safety net for women**
- 4) the impunity with which men can abuse and control women**
- 5) cultural acceptance of the centrality of men's sexual desires and expectations**

# Commercial sexual exploitation depends upon:

## **1) occupational segregation and lack of good quality, flexible work for women**

- **Women are twice as likely to give up paid work in order to care.**
- **On average women earn £175.30 less per week than men.**
- **64% of workers on poverty wages are women**
- **Black and Minority Ethnic women are concentrated in low-paid jobs despite high levels of educational attainment, with higher rates of unemployment than white women or BME men.**

# Commercial sexual exploitation depends upon:

## 2) women's unequal responsibility for unpaid care

- **92% of lone parents are women**
- **Women provide up to 70% of unpaid care**
- **Carers save the Scotland approx. £10.8 billion per year (making up 1/3 of the economy) but only receive a maximum of £2 per hour for providing essential care**
- **Women are twice as likely as men to give up paid work in order to care, with clear ramifications on their education, income, and health**

# Commercial sexual exploitation depends upon:

## 3) austerity and the failing safety net for women

- **Women are twice as dependent on social security as men, with 20% of women's income coming from the benefits and tax credit system, compared with 10% of men's.**
- **Women who have insecure immigration status, have been released from prison, are homeless, or have been trafficked are at high risk of extreme poverty and destitution**
- **By 2020 the Scottish budget will have been cut by £2.9 billion in real terms. 86% of savings from austerity are borne by women.**
- **Women are being placed at risk of violence by government policy eroding financial and bodily autonomy and safeguarding harm**

# Commercial sexual exploitation depends upon:

## 4) the impunity with which men can abuse and control women

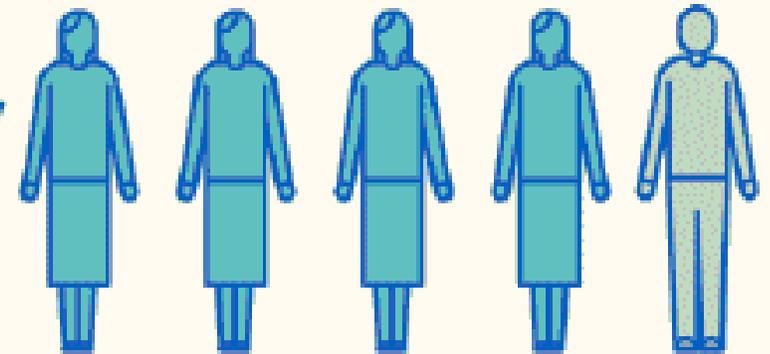
**58,810  
Incidents**

**DOMESTIC ABUSE RECORDED BY  
THE POLICE IN SCOTLAND,  
2016-17**

### **WHO**

#### **Were the victims?**

4 in 5 of the  
victims in 2016-17  
were female



**Domestic abuse is the third most common reason for homelessness application in Scotland**

# Commercial sexual exploitation depends upon:

5) cultural acceptance of the centrality of men's sexual desires and expectations



# • Systemic and Structural Inequality in Scotland

- **The commercial sex trade reinforces the notion of women and so-called gender “deviants” (LGBTQI+) as sexual goods for consumption by men.**
- **It works on the ideology that men “need”, or even have a right to sex and depends upon women’s unequal access to jobs, income and support**
- **These intersecting inequalities, which are based on systematic discrimination, mean people in the commercial sex trade are unlikely to be on equal footing with their customers, who have both the money and choices.**
- **Because it is rooted in gender inequality, solutions must focus on achieving gender equality.**

**Ideology and  
practice of male  
entitlement /  
violence**

**Commercial  
Sexual  
Exploitation**

**Violation of  
Women's Human  
Rights**

**Women's  
intersecting  
Structural  
Inequality**

# Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

## **CEDAW 3 Principles: Non-discrimination, Substantive Equality and State Obligation**

**Recognizes that we must eradicate the stereotypes, prejudices, customs and practices, which condone or promote gender-based violence against women and underpin the structural inequality of women with men if we are to be successful in ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls**

**Substantive Equality meaning looking at the condition of women's lives as a measure of whether equality has been achieved.**

**The Committee has said that “gender-based violence against women is rooted in gender-related factors, such as the ideology of men's entitlement and privilege over women, social norms regarding masculinity, and the need to assert male control or power, enforce gender roles or prevent, discourage or punish what is considered to be unacceptable female behaviour.”**

# The way forward

**Address the entire ecosystem which pushes and pulls women in to commercial sexual exploitation by ensuring gender equality**

**PUSH FACTORS – Reasons why women and girls enter commercial sexual exploitation**

- 1) occupational segregation and lack of quality, flexible work**
- 2) women's unequal responsibility for unpaid care**
- 3) austerity and the failing safety net for women**

**PULL FACTORS – Reasons why there is a commercial market for commercial sexual exploitation**

- 4) the impunity with which men can abuse and control women**
- 5) cultural acceptance of the centrality of men's sexual desires and expectations**

**Address the needs of women and girls to achieve substantive equality**

**Shrink the commercial sex trade by shifting stereotypes and holding men accountable**

# Food for thought

**What would it mean for the commercial sex trade if the heart of sexual equality came to mean mutual sexual desire?**