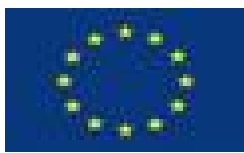


EQUAL

European Community
initiative EQUAL project:
„Integration of women
involved in prostitution,
including human trafficking
victims, in legal labour
market“



On the meaning of prostitution in Estonia: critical attitudes are increasing

Partner organisations of the
project:

**National Institute for
Health Development**
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**Estonian Women's Studies
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**Estonian Institute for
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Introduction

This survey was completed within the EQUAL project financed by the European Social Fund. The goal of the EQUAL project was to bring women involved in prostitution to the legal labour market. This undertaking was completely novel for Estonia. There was no experience with or knowledge of activities of this kind. In order to launch a rehabilitation programme as significant and costly for Estonia as that, it was necessary to analyse the attitudes and opinions of the public and to consider them. It was necessary to find out the willingness of the public to rehabilitate women involved in prostitution, to admit them to the working collective and to treat them as equal members of the society.

Prostitution is a difficult subject for study due to its covert and underground nature yet research is necessary to understand this complicated phenomenon, to seek for ties and regularities and also in order to find practical solutions. Studies of prostitution are carried out constantly and in a number of different countries. The usefulness of the studies is hard to overestimate, since they are the main channel of information for:

- explaining prostitution, finding its causes;
- forecasting the spreading of prostitution
- developing preventive programmes and planning activities reducing the risks of young women of entering the sex business;
- improving legislation, which would help to curb prostitution;
- drafting aid programmes for helping those involved in prostitution.

Studies of prostitution have been carried out in Estonia as well since 1999, targeting various groups:

1. Involved in prostitution (minors and adults)¹

¹ Aire Trummal. Rahvusvaheline projekt STOP 2 – Alaealised seksitööstuses. Tallinn 2000.a; Eesti Avatud ühiskonna Instituut 2005:

-
2. Public opinion leaders ²
 3. Population in general³
 4. Specialists dealing with prostitution (police personnel, social workers, education staff)⁴
 5. Mediators of prostitution⁵
 6. Clients⁶

The background studies were crucially important for the launching and completion of the EQUAL project. It was necessary to determine how prepared were the women involved in prostitution to enter the labour market and what would be the attitude of the general public towards former prostitutes. The Estonian Institute for Open Society carried out four studies (in the years 2005-2008), two of them among the general public and two among those involved in prostitution.

The first major study on women involved in prostitution in Estonia was carried out by the Estonian Institute for Open Society in 2005 within the EQUAL project, where 408 women were addressed using the interview method. A follow-up survey was held in 2007 among 75 women, who are giving up the sex business and are willing to find legal employment. Since the goal of the EQUAL project was to bring those involved in prostitution to the legal labour market, the study concentrated on the educational and professional level of these women, their skills in selling their labour, their ability to manage their lives independently, as well as their mental and physical health. The survey also addressed the process and causes of becoming a prostitute, childhood and time at school, activities as prostitute, abuse and conflict situations, use of alcohol and narcotics, the subject of HIV/AIDS and venereal diseases etc.

In 2007 the Estonian Institute for Open Society carried out a survey involving interviews with 75 women, who were giving up the sex business and willing to find legal employment. The study concerned the status of these women and the help and support they needed for entering the legal labour market.

² Marion Pajumets. Prostitutsioon – kas ühiskondlik probleem? Arvamused nähtuse olemusest, põhjustest, tagajärgedest. ENUT. Tallinn.2004

³ Eesti Avatud ühiskonna Instituut 2003, 2005, 2008. Turu-uuringute AS 2006

⁴ Eesti Avatud ühiskonna Instituut 2002

⁵ Eesti Avatud ühiskonna Instituut 2002

⁶ Katri Eespere. Prostitutsiooni varjatud pool: räägivad seksi ostjad. Sotsiaalministeeriumi toimetised nr 5/2007

In order to bring those involved in prostitution to the labour market, it is vitally important to determine the attitudes of various social groups of the society towards prostitution and abused women. The results of the survey enabled a consistent shaping of the public opinion. Significant positive changes have taken place in the public opinion in the period 2005-2008 while tolerant attitude towards brothels and prostitution has declined. While 63% of men considered brothels necessary in 2005, the figure had declined to 53% in 2008. Support to brothels among women also declined from 46% to 38%.

The change in attitudes could be considered an excellent result of the EQUAL project, since as recently as in the 2003-2005 period the positive attitude of the population towards brothels was slowly increasing, among men from 60% to 63% and among women from 42% to 46%.

The problems and risk factors related to prostitution had never been explained to the wide public in Estonia as broadly and systematically before the EQUAL project. The EQUAL project has included a number of activities, which have all contributed to bringing along a qualitative breakthrough in the public attitudes. More than 70 different interviews have been granted to the mass media, a dozen articles have been written, the art exhibition "Body market" was held and a TV documentary "From flesh market to legal labour market" was produced. The rehabilitation centre ATOLL for prostitutes has been established. The book meant for the broad audience "Vaikijate hääled 2" (Voices of the silent 2), which opens the background and nature of prostitution as trading in humans.

The information provided by the surveys also played a central role in the training of specialists in order to prepare them for helping those involved in prostitution and bringing them to the labour market. A total of 330 specialists were trained within the EQUAL project: education and youth workers, social workers, police officers, lawyers, vocational and career advisors etc. Specialised and detailed training aids for every target group were written in advance. The training materials were based on the one

hand on international experience, on the other hand on the surveys carried out by the EIOS.

The EIOS carried out two studies of the public.

1. The first study of the public was held in 2005, at the start of the project. It matted the level of information among the Estonian public on prostitution problems and the attitude towards prostitutes.
2. The follow-up study was held in 2008 as the project was accomplished in order to find out the impact of the EQUAL project on the public opinion and the people's willingness to help those involved in prostitution.

Both surveys were nationwide with a representative sample and involved approximately 1,000 individuals between 15 – 74 years of age.

The goal of this survey was to determine the changes of the public opinions and attitudes in the period 2005-2008 on the following issues:

- The role of prostitution in the Estonian society
- To which extent is prostitution considered a threat to the society? Hazards related to prostitution.
- Risk groups of prostitution.
- Attitude towards prostitutes and men buying sexual services.
- Personal contacts with prostitution: attempts of recruitment or offers to buy sexual services
- Willingness to work in the same collective with former prostitutes, to treat them as equals.
- Willingness to rehabilitate former prostitutes, to help them in the reintegration to the society and labour market
- Attitude towards legislation regulating prostitution.

The authors of the report are on Iris Pettai, Ivi Proos and Helve Kase.

1. On the principles of organising the survey and the sample

The concept and methodology of this study were developed by Iris Pettai, Ivi Proos and Helve Kase. The technical organiser of the poll was the firm SaarPoll. The study involved interviews with 1,008 individuals in the age of 15 – 74. The sample of the study was formed according to the random method and it was representative of the population model. The results of the study can be interpreted as links and trends characteristic of Estonia.

1.1. Principles of forming the sample

The target group was the population of Estonia in the age range of 15-74 years. The sample was formed according to the principle of proportional random sample. The route method was used at the penultimate stage of the forming of the sample in the sample point. This means that the interviewer would be given a starting address, proceeding from which the interviewer would select the apartment/house over five. The selection of the respondent in an apartment was based on the household. It was first determined how many individuals in the 15-74 age group lived in the household. The person with the most recent birthday was then selected. That person was interviewed. This principle was used to achieve a sample corresponding to the principles of forming a random sample.

The following measures were taken to assure the quality of the study:

1. The interviewing point was not large, amounting to 6-8 individuals in this study. This approach ensured adequate geographic coverage.
2. The interviewer had to make at least three serious efforts to reach the selected respondent (contacts on various days of the week and at various times of the day). Only after that was the interviewer allowed to select a new address.
3. Two networks of interviewers were used, based on their language skills, which were used in the interviewing of respondents. Estonian respondents were interviewed only by those speaking Estonia as mother's tongue. Non-Estonians were approached by interviewers using Russian as their main language of daily communication. Using this principle is especially important in

case of subjects politically or economically sensitive. This approach significantly lowered the barriers, which could have compromised the reliability of the information received. The linguistic identity of the respondent and the interviewer was of crucial importance for communication in this study.

4. The following measures were taken to monitor the quality of the interviews:
 - a) checking the route report sheets
 - b) logical mathematical check of the database
 - c) in the emergence of possible errors in the database the filled questionnaires were studied or the interviewers addressed in order to find out the nature of the problem.

The resulting sample was assessed from the following aspects: the social-demographic structure of the individuals in the 15.-74 age group achieved by using the random method and the final sample after mathematical weighing.

	Achieved sample	Weighed sample (according to model)
Gender		
Male	46,2	46,7
Female	53,8	53,3
Language of questionnaire		
Estonian	65,8	69,4
Russian	34,2	30,6
Age		
15-19	9,7	9,8
20-29	18,9	19,2
30-39	16,6	17,5
40-49	17,7	17,8
50-59	16,7	16,9
60-74	20,5	18,7
Ethnicity		
Estonian	64,7	68,6
Other	35,3	31,4
Education		
Basic or lower	28,2	30,7
Secondary	49,0	54,4
Higher	22,8	14,9
Urban/rural		
Urban	70,6	69,9
Rural	29,4	30,1
Region		
North Estonia	37,8	39,5
West Estonia	12,8	11,9
Central Estonia	9,8	10,3

Northeast Estonia	14,6	13,0
South Estonia	25,0	25,3

2. Awareness about the EQUAL project

We researched in the study the level of the public’s awareness of the EQUAL project. The result was surprising, since regardless the fact that the EQUAL project only lasted 3 years, every fourth woman and every fifth man had heard about bringing women involved in prostitution to the legal labour market.

TABLE 1. Have you heard about the EQUAL project, which attempts to help prostitutes leave the sex business and find employment?

%s

	All respondents	Gender		Ethnicity	
		Male	Female	Estonian	Non-Estonian
Generally well informed	2	1	1	2	1
To a small degree	21	19	23	24	16
I know almost nothing + cannot answer	77	80	76	74	83
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

Women and Estonians were better informed. The reason of the non-Estonians’ significantly lower awareness was the fact that the project was predominantly presented in the Estonian-language media and the specialists trained were mainly Estonians. The lower awareness of the male respondents could be caused by lack of interest or unwillingness to concentrate on problems of this target group.

The public’s high awareness of the EQUAL project is also revealed in the significant positive changes in the public opinion during the period of 2005-2008. Tolerant attitude towards brothels and prostitution has declined (see section 7 of the report).

The problems and risk factors related to prostitution had never been explained to the wide public in Estonia as broadly and systematically before the EQUAL project. The

EQUAL project included a number of activities, which have all contributed to bringing along a qualitative breakthrough in the public attitudes.

3. Prostitution as a source of threat

When people are asked about what poses the greatest threat to Estonia, prostitution holds the next to last place in the list of 12 threat factors. The greatest threats as seen by Estonia's residents in 2008 are primarily related to price rise and economic decline, as well as the spreading of narcotics addiction, which are rated as highly hazardous by more than 2/3 of the population. The following major group of threats considered highly hazardous by more than half of the population is formed by HIV/AIDS and alcoholism.

TABLE 2. How serious a threat to Estonia is posed by the following phenomena?

	Percentage of all respondents	
	High threat	No threat
Price rise and economic decline	73	1
Narcotics addiction	62	4
HIV/ AIDS	54	6
Alcoholism	51	4
Unemployment	46	6
Deterioration of public health	41	7
Crime	40	4
Constant advertising of sex and pornography products in the media and the Internet	26	19
Sexual exploitation of minors	25	17
Human trafficking, selling of Estonia's women to brothels in other countries	20	20
Female prostitution	20	22
Domestic abuse	18	20

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

All phenomena related to the sex trade, e.g. the advertising of sex and pornographic products, as well as prostitution, human trafficking and sexual abuse of minors, are placed at the low end of the list; every fourth or fifth respondent considers them hazardous. One could conclude that the public do not feel directly threatened by prostitution.

One of the reasons of the low sense of threat is that people do not encounter prostitutes in their everyday life. Prostitution takes place somewhere in a remote, separate world, which cannot threaten the security of an ordinary citizen not frequenting brothels or meeting with prostitutes. Many people also believe that the immediate threat group of prostitution is small and concerns only a tiny part of the population. It is thus believed that prostitution primarily threatens the unemployed and Russian-speaking young women.⁷

Although prostitution seems a relatively harmless phenomenon, compared to other threats, the background fear of the public towards the sources of threats related to prostitution is nevertheless very high. The people sense that HIV, venereal diseases and drugs abuse spread via the prostitutes.

TABLE 3. Which threats in your opinion accompany prostitution?

Answers to the scale item „Highly hazardous“ (percentage of all respondents)

	Women	Men
Spreading HIV/AIDS	82	76
Spreading of venereal diseases	75	68
Spreading of drugs addiction	66	57
Spreading of crime	46	43
Spreading of alcoholism	43	41

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2005

The spreading of HIV/AIDS, venereal diseases and drugs addiction are the most feared. It is also presumed that crime and alcoholism spread alongside with prostitution. Since there is presently no official statistics on prostitution in Estonia, no one is engaged in determining the indirect threats accompanying prostitution or informing the public. As a result, there is no information, no problem and no clear sense of threat.

4. Attitude towards parties involved in prostitution

⁷ Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituudi uuring, 2005

The Estonian public views prostitutes as a hazardous and unsafe risk group and wishes to keep as far away from them as possible. As for working together with prostitutes the attitude is wary and passively rejecting rather than open and tolerant.

TABLE 4. What is your attitude towards the following situations?

percentage of all respondents

	I have nothing against it	I do not care	Rather not
A female acquaintance of yours becomes a prostitute	6	27	67
A former prostitute is a close colleague	23	52	25
A child of a prostitute studies in the same class with your child or grandchild	23	49	28

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

Only every fourth respondent is willing to have a former prostitute as a close colleague. The rejecting attitude is often extended to the children of prostitutes. The stigma of a prostitute is inherited by the following generation and their children are often branded as “whore’s offspring” for the rest of their lives. The cautious and somewhat rejecting attitude also concerns the situation when the children of prostitutes are studying in the same class with those of the respondents. Only every fourth has a positive attitude in that regard.

The Estonian respondents are also cautious and rejecting rather than open and tolerant regarding working together with a client in the same collective.

TABLE 5. Question: What is your attitude towards the following situations?

percentage of all respondents

	I have nothing against it	I do not care	Rather not
Your close colleague is a man, who is a steady client of a brothel	19	55	26
Your male acquaintance becomes a steady client of a brothel	9	42	49

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society, 2008

Only every fourth respondent is willing to have a client as a close colleague. More than half are indifferent. But the attitude becomes significantly more negative when a close male acquaintance becomes a steady client of a brothel.

5. Willingness to work together with representatives of risk groups

We studied in our survey the willingness of the people to work together with various risk groups: mobility-impaired people, homosexuals, former prostitutes, HIV/AIDS positives, former convicts and drug addicts (see Table 6). The most tolerant attitude concerns those with mobility impairment; three fourths are willing to work together with them. A significant increase of tolerance can be observed, - 13% in three years. Former prostitutes hold the second position in the tolerance ranking as 22% of respondents are willing to work with them, every fourth is not and the remainder (half of the respondents) are indifferent. The number of those tolerant towards former prostitutes has increased 7% in three years, but the number people having negative attitude has gone up nine percent as well.

Homosexuals have the third position in the tolerance ranking and also face low tolerance as only one fourth is willing to work together with them. Although willingness to have homosexuals as colleagues is slightly higher than in the case of former prostitutes with 26%, the negative attitude is nearly twice as high (46%). The number of those with positive attitude has increased 8% in three years, but the number of those with negative attitude has also grown by 9%.

The least tolerance concerns drug addicts, former convicts and those infected with HIV/AIDS - 5-11%, predominant majority would not work with them in the same collective.

TABLE 6. Would you agree with the following working as your close colleagues...

%-s

	2008		2005	
	I would not mind	Better not	I would not mind	Better not
Mobility-impaired people	72	10	59	16
Former prostitutes	22	25	15	19
Homosexuals	26	46	18	55
HIV/AIDS infected	11	69	9	71
Former convicts	10	72	8	73
Drug addicts	5	86	3	89

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

6. Sex business pressure for finding new prostitutes and clients

Within the last five years every eighth women in Estonia has encountered attempts to recruit her to provide sex services. This amounts to an absolute figure of approximately 60,000 women in between 15 and 74 years of age. When dividing it by five we find that approximately 12,000 women on the average are annually approached for recruitment into prostitution.

TABLE 7. Have you encountered during the last five years attempts to recruit you to provide sex services?

Percentage of positive answers to the scale point "Yes"

Estonian women		Non-Estonian women	
2008	2005	2008	2005
12	15	20	17

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

The pressure of sex business is nearly twice as strong on non-Estonian women as on Estonians.

TABLE 8. Have you encountered during the last five years attempts to recruit you to provide sex services?

Percentage of positive answers to the scale point "Yes"

	Estonian	Non-

	women	Estonian women
15 – 19 yrs	9	10
20 – 29 yrs	20	22
30 – 39 yrs	13	9
40 – 49 yrs	8	11
50 yrs or older	2	7

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

Women in the 20-29 year age group came under especially intensive pressure from the recruiters; every fifth was invited to become a prostitute.

The network of sex business covers the entire Estonia. Although most of the brothels are located in Tallinn, an active search for future prostitutes also goes on in other regions. The recruitment of women is the most active in Pärnu (17% have experienced proposals) and Central Estonia (14 percent). Twelve percent of women in Tallinn and eight percent in East-Viru county have been proposed to provide sex services. Eleven percent of women living in villages and rural towns have had the same experience. The pressure of sex business on men in Estonia is also quite intensive.

TABLE 9. Have you experienced attempts to entice you to buy sex services during the last five years?

Percentage of positive answers to the scale point "Yes"

Estonian men		Non-Estonian men	
2008	2005	2008	2005
11	9	20	21

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

According to the 2008 survey, every seventh man in Estonia (15%) has been invited to buy sex services.

Russian residents of Estonia have encountered attempts to recruit them as clients more frequently than Estonians. The offering of sex services is more active in Tallinn and other larger cities, where every fifth man has been proposed to buy sex. Among male residents of rural towns and settlements 11 percent have the experience. The main age group, which is attempted to be recruited as clients, consists of men

between 40 and 59 years of age. Proposals are rarely made to 15 – 19-year-olds and men over 60.

7. The public's critical attitude towards brothels is increasing

We analyse the changes which have taken place within the past five years (2003 – 2008) in the attitudes of Estonia's residents concerning prostitution. The background attitude of the adult residents towards brothels and indirectly prostitution continues to be "passively tolerant". The attitudes are reflected in the answers to the question "Are brothels necessary in Estonia". We treat as passively tolerant the situation, where the number of respondents considering brothels necessary exceeds the number of those considering brothels unnecessary. Passive tolerance of prostitution in 2008 is expressed by 45% of Estonia's adult residents consider the existence of brothels necessary and 41% of respondents consider them unnecessary. The remaining respondents (14%) had no clear position regarding the necessity of brothels.

Throughout the entire period there has been a clear tendency of men considering brothels and prostitution more necessary than women do. At the same time the three polls carried out show that the tolerant attitudes towards the necessity of brothels have become less so during the last five years. The views of both women and men have become more critical. A clear trend can be observed that an increasing number of people in Estonia are expressing their negative attitude towards brothels and indirectly towards prostitution.

TABLE 10. There are brothels in Estonia where the services of prostitutes can be purchased. Do you consider the existence of brothels necessary in Estonia and to what extent?

(assessments in %)

	Women			Men		
	2003	2005	2008	2003	2005	2008
Definitely necessary	7	6	4	19	11	10
Possibly necessary	35	40	33	41	52	43
Not necessary	30	43	48	18	24	32
Cannot answer	28	11	15	22	13	15
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society, 2003, 2005 and 2008

The attitudes of Estonia's residents towards the necessity of brothels can be characterised as follows:

- The year **2003** was characterised by two tendencies. First, the subject of brothels was unclear or incomprehensible to many respondents. More than one fifth of the respondents (28% of women and 22% of men) were unable to express their position; i.e. they had no clear understanding of the necessity or otherwise of brothels in Estonia. The second tendency was the dominance of attitudes favouring the existence of brothels and therefore sex business among both men and women. Out of women, 42% considered brothels necessary and 30% unnecessary. The favourable attitudes among men were significantly stronger. Sixty percent of men justified the existence of brothels and only 18% of the respondents considered them unnecessary.
- In **2005** the liberal and favourable attitude towards the necessity of brothels had increased still further. The position of Estonia's adult population regarding prostitution had become even more tolerant. Forty-six percent of women and 63% of men justified the presence of brothels. The favourable attitude means that prostitution concentrated in brothels is viewed as an inevitable companion of liberal market economy, where everything is bought and sold, including, quite openly, sexual services. Yet the number of respondents rejecting the necessity for brothels had also slightly increased in two years. Among women, 43% opposed brothels and among men 24%. We could characterise the situation by stating that the respondents' opinions regarding brothels were more polarised in 2005 than in 2003. Brothels had more supporters, but also more opponents. The growth trends in either direction had taken place on account of respondents previously without definite opinion. The reduction of the share of people without personal opinion should be judged as a positive

phenomenon. It showed that the subject of brothels had become more visible and audible in the Estonian society than two years ago, in 2003.

- A significant change in the attitudes of adult population occurred in **2008**. The trend has changed direction in the last three years. The tolerant attitude towards the necessity for brothels has started to decline and critical attitude has significantly increased. For the first time in five years, there were more women among respondents in 2008, who viewed critically the necessity for brothels in Estonia. Tolerant attitude continued to dominate among male respondents. Yet the number of men having critical attitude towards brothels has increased to 32% (it was 18% in 2003 and 24% in 2005).

Assessment of the situation.

The issue of prostitution is significantly more apparent in the Estonian society or in the focus of public attention in 2008 than in 2003. The number of people without a position and opinion regarding prostitution has declined. In other words, there are less people, who choose the option “cannot answer” when judging the necessity for brothels.

People have become notably more critical about the need for prostitution and brothels during the last five years. This tendency characterises the attitudes of both women and men.

Potential hazards.

Although the overall tendency is positive and the Estonian society is moving in its attitudes towards the Nordic mentality and cultural space, it would be regrettable, if we stopped to enjoy the achievements and to “rest on the laurels”. It is important to keep the issue of prostitution actively in the public communication space. It is also

vital to organise regular nationwide sociological monitoring in order to check up on trends and measure the “pulse of prostitution“.

8. Assessment of the state’s interference with the prostitution business

Besides the need for regular monitoring, which displays the overall attitudes towards prostitution, it is important to sense what the public expects from the state and what is the public opinion regarding the state’s responsibility for the developments in prostitution business.

TABLE 11. Should the Estonian state do something to control prostitution?

(assessments in %)

	Women		Men		Average assessment	
	2005	2008	2005	2008	2005	2008
The state should not interfere, because sex tourists bring profit	2	X	3	X	3	X
The state should not interfere, because prostitution cannot be controlled	X	5	X	7	X	6
The state should permit prostitution, but keep it under strict state control	41	35	53	37	47	36
The state should resolutely end (liquidate) prostitution	38	43	21	29	30	36
Do not care, cannot decide	19	17	23	27	20	22
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2005 and 2008

By this question we placed the respondents in an active position, having them to choose the role of the state in the subject of prostitution. The responses showed how

active reaction or interference the respondents expected from the state, i.e. their expectations regarding the state's position in controlling the prostitution business.

As for the responses, first of all there is a clear tendency of the people to expect the state's active measures regarding everything related to prostitution. Only a very small percentage of residents (2-5%) can see a „passive” or „distant” state in controlling prostitution business. In 2005, three percent of respondents found that sex tourists are profitable for business and therefore the state should not interfere in prostitution business. In the 2008 survey we used the option that the state should not interfere with prostitution business, because prostitution cannot be controlled. This viewpoint was shared only by 6% of respondents. There were no significant differences in the opinions of men and women. These responses indirectly also reflected the respondents' fear. The public does not want the business related to prostitution to be only regulated by the market and remain a weakly controlled sphere of business.

Therefore a predominant share of the respondents, nine out of ten, expects an active attitude and measures from the state in controlling prostitution business. Accordingly, the Estonian public believes that the state cannot and may not remain a passive observer regarding prostitution business and should certainly regulate it.

The respondents' views differ on the ways the state should regulate the business related to prostitution. Three years ago, in 2005, the dominant position (47% of respondents) was that prostitution should be permitted, but only under strict state control. A smaller share of respondents (30%) believed three years ago that the state's task was to terminate prostitution decisively and unequivocally. Significant changes have taken place in the attitudes during the past three years. According to the 2008 survey, the shares of respondents supporting state-controlled legal prostitution (36% of respondents) and those willing to forbid prostitution (36% of respondents) have become equal.

The positions of both women and men have become more critical within the three years. An increasing number of respondents tend to support the outlawing of

prostitution and thus expect the state to display greater activity in controlling the business.

The judgements on prostitution are closely tied to the respondents' gender and age. Among men, the most critical regarding the liberalisation of prostitution are young men in the 15-19-year age group and men above 60. The most favourable about prostitution, i.e. expecting the state to permit it, are men in the age of 50-59 years (44% of respondents wish the legalisation of prostitution) and 40-49 years (42% of respondents). Women's responses are characterised by a similar tendency. The most critical respondents are younger than 19 and older than 60. The liberalisation of prostitution is supported the most by women between 40 and 49 years (43% of respondents support the liberalisation of prostitution).

Ethnicity, besides gender and age, is the third important factor influencing the respondents' judgement on prostitution. Estonians, both men and women, have a significantly more liberal attitude towards prostitution than the non-Estonians. Estonian men see as the best option legalised prostitution in Estonia, with the state controlling the business, thus providing greater security to the users and providers of the service. Out of Estonian men 43% of respondents favour the legalisation of prostitution, while 24% of non-Estonian men hold the same view. Twenty-six percent of Estonian men and 35% of non-Estonian men believe that the state should actively attempt to suppress prostitution. Similar differences characterise the attitudes of women. Thirty-seven percent of Estonian women support the legalisation of prostitution and 30% of non-Estonian women.

The attitudes towards prostitution are not influenced by the marital status or domicile of the respondents.

We addressed the expectations regarding the state in somewhat greater detail in the 2008 survey. The respondents assessed their idea of the state controlling the subject of prostitution in the society. The state's ability to control prostitution can be studied only indirect assessments. Many people believe that prostitution is a source of clear hazards to various social groups.

The most threatened group are the prostitutes. They are threatened by diseases, primarily being infected with AIDS, as well as violence of clients and employers (mediators). The prostitutes' clients and family members are also threatened.

We worded the question of the hazards of prostitution deliberately in a general manner without emphasising the threat to individual social groups. The state's position in defending the residents was introduced because the previous surveys had clearly shown that the people's expectations are high specifically regarding the state. The public is not naively expecting the businessmen profiting from prostitution to take significant measures for the protection of people.

TABLE 12. Can the Estonian state protect the public from hazards related to prostitution?

(assessments in %)

	Women	Men	Average assessment
Yes, this is correct	4	3	3
This is generally correct	23	31	27
This is not correct	49	46	48
Cannot answer	24	20	22
TOTAL:	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

There are more respondents, who do not believe that the state could protect the residents against hazards caused by prostitution (48% of all respondents). More than a fifth (22%) of respondents has no position regarding the state's opportunities and capability to protect its residents. This shows the inactivity of the state in offering measures and activities for curbing the risks caused by prostitution.

9. Gender equality in brothel business

We also addressed the aspect of equal opportunities in prostitution in the two latest surveys. The respondents assessed, whether there should also be brothels for women with male prostitutes providing service.

The question about brothels for women was introduced in the survey in order to gauge the strength of the idea of prostitution as ordinary business, which could expand if the market (consumption) should grow.

TABLE 13. In your opinion, should there be brothels for women in Estonia with male prostitutes providing service?

(assessments in %)

	Women		Men	
	2005	2008	2005	2008
Definitely yes	5	5	9	5
Probably should be	26	18	30	26
No, it would be unnecessary	55	61	36	46
Cannot answer	14	16	25	23
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2005 and 2008

There is a general tendency that men's attitudes are more liberal than those of women, also regarding potential brothels for women. The other tendency is the sale pointed out in the previous analysis. Attitudes regarding brothels have become more critical within the past three years. In 2005, thirty-one percent of women considered brothels for women necessary (39% of men). Three years later, in 2008, twenty-three percent of women and 31% of men supported the idea of brothels for women.

According to the results of the 2008 survey we can state that the assessments are not related to the women's or men's education level.

10. Myths for the justification of prostitution

The subjects related to prostitution have attracted increasing public attention in the Estonian society during the past five years. The media are more active in discussing

the problems, while various studies and awareness campaigns have been carried out within different projects. Shelters and advisory centres have been opened for abuse victims and prostitutes.

Nevertheless, a number of myths are still in use for the justification of prostitution. We have addressed the prostitution-related myths in our studies from three aspects

First, prostitution as business activity, which contributes to economic success and is therefore justifiable. Although the mediation of prostitution is forbidden by law in Estonia, it is countered by the idea of business freedom and liberal market economy, which is widely spread and publicly accepted.

Secondly, prostitution as a form of subsistence and an opportunity to earn money for unemployed women. It is based in the idea that prostitution is a possible work, which is chosen by some women voluntarily and therefore willingly.

Thirdly, prostitution as a way of relieving stress and strain for men. It is based on the idea that the opportunity to visit brothels has a positive effect for some men, relieves their stress, prevents possible domestic conflicts and reduces the likelihood of divorce.

TABLE 14. To what extent do you agree with the following claims about prostitution in Estonia?

(assessments in %)

	Women		Men	
	2005	2008	2005	2008
Businessmen earn profit (travel firms, hotels, taxi drivers, strip bars)				
○ Agreed (completely + generally)	89	82	91	80
○ Disagreed (rather + completely)	7	10	4	10
○ Cannot decide	4	8	5	9
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100
Brings sex tourists to Estonia				
○ Agreed (completely + generally)	81	73	84	71
○ Disagreed (rather + completely)	9	15	8	17
○ Cannot decide	10	12	8	12
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100
Provides work and income to many women				
○ Agreed (completely + generally)	59	47	68	46

○ Disagreed (rather + completely)	34	45	28	43
○ Cannot decide	7	8	4	11
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100
Helps to relieve men's sexual strain and stress				
○ Agreed (completely + generally)	46	43	63	53
○ Disagreed (rather + completely)	37	38	27	34
○ Cannot decide	17	19	10	13
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2005 and 2008

The survey data show that the commercial aspect of prostitution, various firms' desire for profit is clearly viewed as the most important factor in launching sex business and keeping it in operation. The respondents accept that representatives of various businesses are interested in the promotion of prostitution. This includes the immediate procurers of sex services, brothels, strip bars, as well as the mediators, who indirectly earn from sex business like tourism firms, hotels and taxi drivers.

The mediators of sex trade, firms and their activities are the most hidden part of the business about which the public has the least information. This is obvious, because the mediation of prostitution is forbidden in Estonia by law and those involved in prostitution-related business are jealously guarding it from outsiders. Therefore information does not reach the media and there are active attempts to link everything related to sex trade to the service providers or prostitutes. The emphasis of sex trade is placed on prostitutes there are frequent attempts to show that the main cause and justification of sex business is the prostitutes' personal initiative and activity.

Issues related to prostitution and sex business are a hard to access subject in the Estonian society. Businessmen directly and indirectly related to it and social groups interested in prostitution attempt to develop an idea in the society of prostitution as an ordinary form of business, which is legal and favoured in a number of countries.

On the other hand, prostitution-related issues discussed in the media often reflect negative aspects of the business and the tragic fate of women involved in it. The incidents of human trafficking, when young and inexperienced girls are tricked into sex business, develop a negative general background for it.

An idea, which used to be quite popular until recently, proposed that Estonia and especially Tallinn could develop into an area of North Europe specialising in sex business in the vicinity of the Scandinavian countries, which forbid prostitution. A proposal was advanced for public discussion foreseeing the establishment of a “red lanterns street” in central Tallinn and legalisation of sex business in entire Estonia.

We analysed the people’s response to that tendency in the previous survey of 2005. The respondents had to choose between two positions: would the economic profit from sex-related tourism and business overcome the reputation of a sex country. The survey clearly showed that a majority of Estonia’s residents are afraid of Estonia receiving a reputation of a sex tourism destination. Seventy-five percent of respondents choose the answer that Estonia’s advertising as a sex tourism destination would cause irreparable harm to the state. Twelve percent believed that Estonia could accept the reputation provided sex business would bring tourists to Estonia and the country’s economy would benefit from it. Thirteen percent of the respondents had no position on this issue.

All social groups, the young and the older, urban and rural residents, high-income and lowly-paid individuals were similarly concerned with the possibility that the spreading sex business could harm Estonia’s reputation. The Russian-speaking population agreed with the Estonians on that issue and was also worried about Estonia’s reputation.

In recent years, prostitutes, human trafficking and related risks have been the aspects of sex trade, which have been the most discussed ones. This is certainly one of the reasons of the retreating of the idea in the respondents’ attitudes that an important cause of the spreading sex business is its economic aspect, providing women with work and income.

11. Control of prostitution – prohibitions and punishments

There are in principle three different regulations, which could be used to control prostitution. It is necessary to decide, which should be criminalise or who should be punished. The public considers the punishment of the mediators (brothel-keepers) the most suitable way, which also has been legally regulated in Estonia. Actual police and court practice has shown that the criminalisation of the mediation of prostitution is complicated and the law has little effect; in other words, it lacks social efficiency.

TABLE 15. Opinions of Estonia's adult residents (15-74 years) on legal regulations of prostitution

(assessments in %)

	Women			Men		
	2003	2005	2008	2003	2005	2008
Brothel-keepers should be punished						
○ yes	63	89	86	56	74	77
○ no	11	6	7	21	15	8
○ cannot answer	26	5	7	23	11	15
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100	100
Prostitutes should be punished						
○ yes						
○ no	46	63	61	31	47	48
○ cannot answer	24	23	25	42	36	32
TOTAL:	30	14	14	27	17	20
	100	100	100	100	100	100
Men buying prostitutes' services should be punished						
○ yes	38	55	56	26	35	40
○ no	29	32	29	50	50	39
○ cannot answer	33	13	15	24	15	21
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100	100
Prostitution and brothels should be legally permitted						
○ yes	34	30	34	48	41	41
○ no	34	50	49	23	36	36
○ cannot answer	32	20	17	29	23	23
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2003, 2005 and 2008

When assessing the general trend of change of attitudes, it can be observed that the people's attitude towards legal regulation of prostitution has become more negative. This means that the people increasingly believe that activities viewed as prostitution should be punished. The tendency towards tougher attitude characterises male as well as female respondents. Especially steep changes in the public attitudes took

place in the period between 2003 and 2005. The attitudes have rather stabilised in the period 2005 until 2008.

The public ideas of the opportunities for controlling sex business have retained their structure during the five years. The punishment of the mediators is considered the most important measure. This attitude was supported according to the 2008 data by 86% of women and 77% of men. This was followed by the option of punishing the service providers (prostitutes); in 2008 it was supported by 61% of women and 48% of men. The least significant for the respondents was the option of punishing the buyers of the service (men). According to the 2008 survey, 56% of women and 40% of men considered it possible.

Based on the survey results we compiled a table allowing comparing the residents' attitudes towards prostitution business in Finland and Estonia

TABLE 16. Opinions of legalisation or forbidding of sex business

	2003		2008
	Finland ⁸	Estonia	Estonia
Forbid sale (punish prostitutes)	55	39	55
Forbid buying (punish clients-men)	48	32	49
Legalise prostitution	44	40	37

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2003 and 2008

When comparing the survey results, one could say that the Estonian public's attitudes in 2008 are similar to those of the Finnish five years ago. The Estonian respondents' attitudes five years ago were significantly more tolerant towards prostitution than those of the Finns. The Estonian residents' ideas of prostitution were much more liberal five years ago than at present, in 2008.

One could hypothetically argue that the Finnish ideas may have somewhat influenced the Estonian residents' attitudes towards prostitution, the general background of attitudes in the two countries has become more similar.

⁸ Results of the Finska Gallup poll in 2003, published in the newspaper Sunnuntaisuomalainen

The similarity of opinions or attitude towards prostitution- related business and banning or permitting it obviously does not mean similarity of the actual situation. The level of prostitution in Estonia is significantly higher than in Finland.

12. The cost of prostitution

Although prostitutes earn relatively well (approximately the average national salary in Estonia) the price of the money earned in sex business is very high, because women engaged in prostitution face a number of serious problems.

Some more significant problems: ⁹

- **Exhausted health.** Practically all prostitutes have serious health problems. Ninety percent of them are psychologically exhausted, they suffer from stress and constant strain, half of them consider suicide, every fourth has deliberately injured herself. Two thirds have long-term health problems. Every fifth has HIV infection.
- **Harm to reproductive health.** The women involved in prostitution are young, in best reproductive age (18-30 years). Half of them have had abortions, every third has suffered from gynaecological diseases. Every fourth has been infected with venereal diseases, every fifth has untreated venereal disease. The prostitutes' risk of being unable to give birth or giving birth to a sick child is very high.
- **Dependence on drugs, alcohol and narcotics.** Every second prostitute has used painkillers during the last month, 40% have used hormonal contraceptives, 29% tranquilisers (on the average only 3% of women in Estonia use tranquilisers in one month).¹⁰ A total of 43% of women engaged in prostitution use tranquilisers. Most of prostitutes have alcohol dependency. Two thirds of these women have narcotics abuse experience. Every third uses narcotics more or less regularly,

⁹ Iris Pettai, Helve Kase, Ivi Proos (2006) Prostitutsiooni tähendus Eesti ühiskonnas: Sisejulgeolek või majanduslik kasu. Sotsioloogilise uurimuse materjalid. Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituudi väljaanne. Tallinn.

¹⁰ Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituudi uurimused 2005 ja 2003

- **Living on the edge of risk and danger.** Three quarters of prostitutes state that their life is riddled with dangers and risks. One of the risk factors is physical abuse, which is an unavoidable part of a prostitute's life. Fifty-nine percent have suffered from psychological, 29% from physical and 25% from sexual abuse.
- **Strong sense of loneliness.** It is difficult for prostitutes to develop normal family relations and give birth to children, hence the problems with loneliness. Three quarters are often alone with their problems and claim that they can rely on nobody and have no one to talk to about their problems.¹¹ More than half of the women feel being taken advantage of.
- **Dislike of selling their body.** Three quarters of prostitutes find selling their body more or less objectionable. Only five percent claim that they feel good about selling themselves. Only every fifth is satisfied with their current life. Ninety percent firmly oppose the idea of their daughter following their mothers' example and also stating to sell themselves.

13. What could the state do to help women involved in prostitution to leave sex business

The prostitutes' situation is quite complicated and not all can cope on their own after having ended providing sex services. Approximately 2/3 of the women need help and support. Only every fourth woman claims not to need outside help.¹²

12 most important needs for help of women involved in prostitution:

1. *every tenth needs treatment of HIV and AIDS;*
2. *every tenth needs an ID, since she lacks any documents;*
3. *every tenth needs protection against abuse;*
4. *every ninth needs treatment of narcotics dependence;*

¹¹ Helve Kase, Iris Pettai. (2008). EQUAL projektiga liitunud prostitutsiooni kaasatud naised. Sotsioloogilise uurimuse materjalid Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituudi väljaanne. Tallinn.

¹² Iris Pettai, Helve Kase, Ivi Proos (2006) Prostitutsioon Eestis: ülevaade prostitutsiooni kaasatud naiste olukorrast. Sotsioloogilise uurimuse materjalid. Eesti Avatud Ühiskonna Instituudi väljaanne. Tallinn.

5. *every fourth needs the help of a psychologist and therapy;*
6. *every fourth feels the need for a support person;*
7. *every third mother needs help in bringing up children;*
8. *every second needs health insurance;*
9. *every second needs living space;*
10. *every second needs help in learning a profession;*
11. *a large majority needs material support, “support money”, until the acquiring of a profession and/or finding a job;*
12. *practically all need a job enabling subsistence.*

Prostitutes find it hard to return to regular life and to find work without outside help. Yet the supporting of “veteran prostitutes”¹³ is an expensive undertaking to the taxpayer. Their psychological and physical health need improving, it is necessary to provide education and help to acquire a profession. An integrated system with specialised health and rehabilitation centres would have to be created. Estonia has started to build up such a system. Within the EQUAL project the prostitutes rehabilitation centre ATOLL has been founded.

Estonian residents’ opinions are more or less split about the need to help former prostitutes. Fifty-six percent believe that state support would be necessary, but roughly one third opposes it and 15% are hesitant. Women and non-Estonians are somewhat more willing to extend help.

TABLE 17. Former prostitutes are often in bad shape: unemployed, their health broken, etc. Not all are likely to overcome their problems without help. Should the state help and support former prostitutes?

(%)

	All respondents	Gender		Ethnicity	
		Male	Female	Estonian	Non-Estonian
Yes, certainly	15	14	15	13	18

¹³ This means long-term prostitutes (average age 28 years), who are willing to leave sex business

Generally yes	41	40	42	40	44
No, certainly not	28	30	27	30	25
Cannot answer	16	16	16	17	13
TOTAL:	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2008

These attitudes reveal the compassionate and humane attitude of the public towards prostitutes as a risk group. This attitude is somewhat surprising, since a woman becoming a prostitute faces strong condemnation in Estonia. The Estonian public does not consider employment as a prostitute a normal activity even in case of a real emergency like long-term unemployment, dependents – small children, etc. Two thirds of Estonia's women and half of men have a negative attitude towards these women. Only every fifth woman and fourth man display understanding and support.

TABLE 18. If you believe that former prostitutes should be supported, what kind of services should the state provide?

Answers to option „Certainly“ (percentage of all respondents)

	2005	2008
I Vital, supported by more than half of respondents:		
Psychologists' consultations.	52	65
HIV/AIDS treatment	65	61
Treatment of narcotics dependence	60	58
Treatment of alcoholism	54	55
Providing of shelter	25	51
II Important, supported by one third to half of respondents:		
Help and support in bringing up children	49	47
Help in finding a job	40	45
Support and help in further study and acquiring profession	38	42
Providing temporary living space	24	33

Source: Estonian Institute for Open Society 2005 and 2008

During the three-year period, 2005-2008, when the EQUAL project for helping and returning to the labour market of women involved in prostitution was carried out in Estonia, the understanding attitude and support to the target group has steeply increased.

Positive attitude has increased regarding nearly all needs for support. While in 2005 the public support was the strongest to the treatment of prostitutes against AIDS, narcotics and alcohol dependence, this support has somewhat decreased in 2008.

To some extent this decline is certainly caused by the public's understanding of the need for a different aid to those involved in prostitution.

The greatest increase concerns support to problems related to the housing of women involved in prostitution. Many of these women lack an apartment of their own. The brothel also served as their home. It is obvious that the active closing of brothels by the police raises the issue of finding housing for these women and money for renting an apartment. The traditional scheme includes renting an apartment for several women, who will then independently continue providing their services. The public support to the solving of the housing problem of prostitutes, either in the form of a temporary apartment or a halfway house, also shows that the link between selling oneself and the housing problem is understood.

During the EQUAL project period, public support to helping prostitutes in studying, acquiring a profession and finding a job has also increased 4-5%. While in 2005 the public attitude towards the helping of prostitutes could be divided in three categories – vital, important and less important needs, correspondingly supported by more than a half, one third to one half and less than a third of the population, in 2008 all needs for help of women involved in prostitution are viewed as placed in two categories – vital and important.

Table 19 presents data on the attitude of various groups of the population (women and men, Estonians and non-Estonians) towards helping former prostitutes.

TABLE 19. If you believe that former prostitutes should be helped, which services the state should provide them?

Answers to the option “yes, certainly” (percentage of all respondents)

	2005	2008				
	All respondents	All respondents	Gender		Ethnicity	
			Male	Female	Estonian	Non-Estonian
Psychologists' consultations.	52	65	61	68	71	54
HIV/AIDS treatment	65	61	62	61	62	59
Treatment of narcotics dependence	60	58	58	58	60	55
Treatment of alcoholism	54	55	56	55	56	53

Providing shelter	25	51	45	55	57	40
Help and support in bringing up children	49	47	43	50	43	54
Help in finding employment	40	45	43	47	46	44
Support and help in studying and acquiring a profession	38	42	41	42	46	34
Providing temporary apartment	24	33	29	36	33	32

Sources: *Estonian Institute for Open Society 2005 and 2008*

Estonians show greater willingness to help former prostitutes compared to non-Estonians. The only area, which is supported by non-Estonians more than Estonians, is the help in bringing up prostitutes' children. Compared to men, women are more willing to help former prostitutes. Women and men are equal in supporting the treatment of HIV/AIDS, narcotics and alcohol dependence and studying and acquiring profession