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PROSTITUTION: EXIT

DID YOU KNOW?

a nine country study found that 89% of respondents said they wanted to leave prostitution and would do so if they had other options. Given this statistic – and the numerous instance of gender based violence within the industry – the need for exit programs is indisputable.

**<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3651545/>

Social, economic, political, cultural and legal factors place vulnerable people in a position where prostitution is the only option available for survival, therefore significantly decreasing chances of not only preventing entry, but exiting the system too.

Many people do not have formal work in South Africa, partly due to lack of skills and high unemployment rates¹. Poverty is also highly “feminised” (more common for women), with women working longer hours for less money than men. Women also often do more caring for children, the elderly and people with disabilities², which is work that is unpaid or poorly paid³. Studies show that 80% of prostituted persons are women⁴

Prostitution requires little or no training and pays quite well. One study in 2010 found that, although most of the prostituted women surveyed had not completed secondary school, they earned an average income more than double that of all employed South Africans^{5,6}. A similar survey in Cape Town found that, depending on their level of education, prostituted people earned between 1.5 and 5.4 times more than they had made in their previous employment⁷. Unsurprisingly, 76% of prostituted people in this study reported that their main reasons for selling sex were financial. Another common motivation was that prostitution allows for flexible hours and so is well-suited to people who have other commitments such as work or child-care.

¹ Statistics South Africa (2014). “Employment, unemployment, skills and economic growth”. StatsSA, Pretoria.

² Statistics South Africa (2013). “Gender Statistics in South Africa, 2011”. StatsSA, Pretoria

³ Bentley, K. (2004). “Women’s Human Rights & the Feminisation of Poverty in South Africa” *Review of African Political Economy*, 31(100): 247-261.

⁴ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3651545/>

⁵ Richter, M. et al. (2013). “Characteristics, sexual behaviour and risk factors of female, male and transgender sex workers in South Africa.” *South African Medical Journal* 103(4): 226-251.

⁶ Statistics South Africa (2010). Monthly earnings of South Africans, 2010. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

⁷ Gould, C. & Fick, N. (2008). “Selling sex in Cape Town: Sex work and human trafficking in a South African city”. Pretoria/Tshwane, Institute for Security Studies.