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EXPOSED: THE HOME OFFICE DODGY DOSSIER ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEX SLAVES

by stephenpaterson on July 15, 2009

AFTER FIVE YEARS, the secret dodgy dossier behind the Government's claim of 4,000 'sex slaves' in the UK has finally been revealed.

The figure has been repeated countless times by ministers and is relied on to justify a wave of new prohibitionist laws – such as the plan to criminalise some sex workers' clients – and to strengthen others, by closing premises housing 'brothels' for three months and arresting 'kerb crawlers' without warning.

But the means by which it was reached has been a closely guarded secret since it was first estimated in 2004.

Enquiries both in and out of Parliament merely elicited the response that it was in an "internal Home Office document on serious organised crime."

Even the Joint Committee on Human Rights was unable to gain access, and noted in Paragraph 78 of its [report on Human Trafficking](#), that: "Though [new research] has not yet been published, the Government told us it showed there were an estimated 4,000 victims of trafficking for prostitution in the UK during 2003 at any one time....we have not been able to judge the validity of this figure."

And we can now see why it wasn't published.

The figure has been repeated countless times by the media as a definitive indication that the UK's brothels are teeming with coerced migrants.

Yet the rationale in Chapter 3 of the [Home Office's study](#) could be pulled apart by any reasonably intelligent Year 7 pupil.

To arrive at their 4,000, the Home Office researchers started with three sources.

These were:

- A report on sex venues in London by the highly prohibitionist, Government-funded Eaves Housing/Poppy Project
- A news clipping from a 2002 copy of *The Times*
- [The McCoy's British Massage Parlour Guide](#)

The researchers went on to make (they admit) a whole series of assumptions.

Picking up the Poppy report ([Sex in the City: Mapping Commercial Sex across London](#)), they took the mid-range of the figures in it. These indicate 4,417 women working in London's flats, saunas and massage parlours, and 1,988 in escort agencies.

Then they assumed that:

- 80 percent of the 4,417 indoor workers are migrants (unlike the other assumptions, there is sound basis for this)
- half these had been smuggled into the UK
- of that half, three-quarters had then been trafficked (ie forced or coerced into providing sexual services). This would mean 1,325 sex trafficking (HTfSE) victims in London
- that 80 percent of women working for London escort agencies are migrants, that of these one in five had been smuggled and of that figure, half had been trafficked. This added another 32 HTfSE women in London.

This is when they picked up their 2002 Times news clipping – a story by Ian Cobain, now with the Guardian, entitled [Albanians take over organised crime](#).

The researchers claim that they could deduce from Cobain's story that there were 70 walk-up brothels in London, though there's no hint of this in the version currently on line, which merely claims in its closing paragraph that Albanians control 70 percent of Soho and are responsible for much trafficking.

Nevertheless, the researchers assumed that:

- these 70 walk-ups contain an average of six sex workers
- ninety percent of the women in them are migrant, and
- all these migrant women are trafficked

This added another 378 HTfSE victims to the London total.

Having already broken new boundaries in creative hypothesising, what the Home Office researchers did next was truly astonishing.

They picked up a copy of George McCoy's [*British Massage Parlour Guide*](#) and calculated that the Poppy report reckoned that there were, in fact, 4.5 times as many women working in London than George had in his guide.

They assumed the Poppy report was more comprehensive than the guide.

Then they assumed that everywhere outside London must have 4.5 times as many prostitutes as in George's guide as well.

Within England, and excluding London, George's guide at this point listed 4,709 working ladies, which, multiplied by 4.5, became 21,190.

Based on information from West Yorkshire Police, the researchers assumed that nearly a third of these - 7,009 – were migrants.

Within Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, they found George's guide listed 775 women. This, too, was duly multiplied by 4.5 and became 3,487, but this time, based on information from the National Criminal Intelligence Service, they assumed that 15 percent (or 524) of the 3,487 were migrants.

They then went on to assume that:

- the breakdown between those working in flats, saunas and massage parlours and those working for agencies is the same everywhere in the UK as that shown in the Poppy report on London, but that there are no walk-ups outside London
- the percentages trafficked in each category would also be identical to that in London

This would mean 2,033 HTfSE victims indoors in the UK outside London, with another 44 in agencies, totalling 2,077.

In fact, back in 2004 when this occurred, the [UK Network of Sex Work Projects](#) had specifically warned against use of the Poppy report for the production of national statistics in [response to a Government consultation](#) on prostitution called *Paying the Price*:

A recent document from Eaves Housing (*Sex in the City, 2004*) presents a prevalence study which is based on London only.

It is widely accepted that the London scene is different from the rest of the country, and that any capital city involves different social and economic forces compared to provincial cities, towns and rural areas. Therefore, these findings must be treated with caution rather than as a true picture of the extent and nature of indoor sex work nationally. This is particularly the case for the high proportion of migrant sex workers based in the London sex industry, this cannot be simply extrapolated to other regions of the UK.

In fact, had the Home Office researchers achieved the research capabilities of the average 11-year-old, they would have known that the McCoy's guide they used was [only one of a series](#) by George required to build a more comprehensive knowledge of the UK adult scene.

So their final conclusion, adding in the London figures, was an estimate of 3,812 HTfSE victims throughout the UK. This seems to have been conveniently rounded up to 4,000 in the chapter summary.

During and since this 'estimate', all 55 police forces in the UK and Ireland have been mobilised twice in two unprecedented combined operations, known as [Pentameter](#) and [Pentameter 2](#). Between them, they found just 255 HTfSE victims, of which an undisclosed number have since been deported.

Nevertheless, the estimate has been used to justify the multi-million pound UK Human Trafficking Centre in Sheffield, and over £5.8m has been given to the Poppy Project, part of Britain's burgeoning rescue industry.

Amongst criminologists, sociologists and other academics, though, the mysterious 4,000 figure has always been something of a joke.

Meanwhile in the USA, 50,000 human trafficking victims a year were officially estimated to be pouring in shortly before the millennium. The Bush administration poured over \$150m into a plethora of spontaneously created citizens' groups and blanketed the nation with 42 Justice Department task forces to search for HTfSE victims and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Seven years later a [Washington Post study](#) discovered the number of trafficking victims found as a result: just 1,362.

Funnily enough, a read through the Washington Post story reveals the CIA 50,000-a-year estimate relied largely on newspaper clippings, too.

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peter schevt [permalink](#)

the “rescue” industry is quite a lucrative one where womens rights are ignored & abused under the guise of being saved.

to justify having cushy jobs,the rescue industry has to create a “moral panic” using lies,disinformation and propaganda

the rescue industry is just a money making racket

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Douglas fox [permalink](#)

Oh well as they say there are lies and damned lies and then statistics LOL. The truth when you are on a moral crusade is really irrelevant the important thing is to create an emotional mythology based on a few facts posing as universal truths and hey presto you have a crusade.

The sad thing is that all the lies and arguments over stats hide the facts that sex workers are the bottom of the pile and are being equally exploited by traffickers and by the lucrative rescue industry that will save them regardless of them wanting to be saved or not. The voice of the sex worker is an annoying irrelevance to the truth or making a nice living from exploiting those socially excluded by bad law.

Douglas

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I want you to know that we are very pleased with the quality of post / article you have provided. I sincerely appreciate your responsiveness and the way you conduct. I have recommended your to others because of my satisfaction. I look forward to doing with you further comment or suggestions. regards.

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Hi.... nice to visit here, Thanks.

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Speaking of the Poppy Project, their director Abigail Stepanitz is speaking at a fantastic concert raising awareness on human trafficking.

The concert is September 29th at Cadogan Hall and is called 'Abandoning Silence'
It's an orchestra concert so the music should be amazing as well.

Purna Sen -Head of Human Rights at The Commonwealth Secretariat is going to give the key note speech.

Should be a high impact event. I'm definitely going!

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- [Madam Becky](#) 'Madam Becky Adams. 20 years in the British Sex industry, a witty, comedy blog about lust, love & sex by the UK's most famous Madam'
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- [The Xtalk Project](#) English help for migrant sex workers mainly in London

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- [Adore Amy](#) Blog of the highly articulate sex work activist Any, of Scarborough
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• US Sex Workers' blogs

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- [New York City Sexbloggers' Calendar](#)
- [PONY](#) Prostitutes of New York
- [Renegade Evolution](#)
- [The Honest Courtesan](#) Ex call girl Maggie McNeill's insight on the sex industry

• Useful UK law sites

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