

Report on assessing the need to reduce drug-related harm among prostitutes who use drugs (File no. 6552-2-371)

**Health Promotion and Social Development,
Health Canada**

**Maggie's, the Toronto Prostitutes'
Community Service Project, 1994**

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1. Findings: who contributed to this study

1. a Work experience in the trade

This study consists of 161 interviews with people with both sex work and drug use experience. Of 158 people (98% of the study) who indicated whether or not they were currently working in prostitution, 15% said they were not. 85% of the study had worked on the street; 60% were women, 35% were men, and 5% were transgender (either transsexual or transvestite).

Of 134 currently working prostitutes 90% had worked the street, 38% had worked in bars and 41% had worked over the phone. 36% of currently working prostitutes had worked both on the street and in bars and 34% had worked both the street and the phone. 17% had worked all three.

81 (60%) of the currently working prostitutes were women, 45 (34%) were men, and 7 (5%) were transgender. 91% of the currently working women had worked the streets, 31% had worked in bars, 36% had worked by phone. 165 had worked all three. Of the currently working men, 84% had worked the street, 49% the bars and 49% the phone. 20% had worked all three. All seven currently working transgender prostitutes had worked the street, four (57%) had also worked in bars. Four (57%) had worked street and phone, one (14%) had worked all three.

148 people who indicated how long they had been in the sex trade represented 1,007.6 years of sex work experience. (There was no response from 8% of the study.) The average number of years experience in the sex trade was 6.8 years. The longest time working in the sex trade was 29 years. The least amount of experience in the sex trade was two and half months. Of 148 people 41% had seven years or more experience in the sex trade, 32% had ten years or more, 14% had 15 years or more, 4% had 20 years plus.

Of 89 women who responded, the average length of time spent in the sex trade was 8 years. 46% had seven or more years experience in the sex trade, 39% had ten years or more, 20% had 15 years or more, 7% had 20 years plus. Of 53 men who responded, the average length of time spent in the sex trade was 5.2 years. 34% had seven years or more experience in the sex trade, 21% had ten years or more, 5% had 15 years or more. The longest experience in the sex trade for a man was 17 years. Of five transgender prostitutes, the average length of time spent in the sex trade was 7.2 years. Two (40%) had seven or more years experience in the sex business, one 11 years and the other 12.

Of 127 currently working prostitutes who responded, 33% had started working within the last three years; 14% had started working within the last year. Of the prostitutes who had started working within the last three years, 57% women, 40% men and two per cent transgender.

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I started 10 years ago when I left home. I phoned a girlfriend who was working, and I just came out with her one night, and it started. Actually now I only come out on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. During the week I stay at home with my four-year-old boy ... I'm my own boss. I'm a single mother and that Mother's Allowance cheque just doesn't go too far.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; s/q coke, c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 23.

“I was 15, in high school, working at a Burger King, making \$1.65 an hour. And a girlfriend of mine says, ‘Come, let’s make some bucks,’ and down I came. And I’ve been here ever since ... I’ve worked escort services in Montreal, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland. I find out on the street I earn a little more money ... This whole AIDS thing ... you get

scared and get checked and things, but it doesn't really prevent people from having unsafe sex."

— female; street, phone; 12 years; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. #98.

"I think I wasted a lot of years because I was sort of just wandering around in a daze, not really knowing what the hell to do with my time. I worked some shitty jobs for shit pay, and I will never do that again, I hope ... I'm not sure if anything or anyone could have really helped me. I think I had to go through what I did and I don't really have any regrets. I ended up helping myself and taking total control over my own life and am a much happier person."

— female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.

"First I was working for escort services and massage parlours for about 3 years and then I decided I wanted to try the street. It's not so bad once you get the hang of it ... It's too scary [working the street] ... I want to get out of the scene because cops [are] all around everywhere. When it comes down to things, it comes down to my child. What could this money do for her and what it could do for me ... it's dangerous shit ... I miss my family. They're in Nova Scotia and they would be very disappointed if they knew. That's why I want to get off the street ... My child ... keeps me going. Her life could be so much better ... Sometimes my cheque doesn't stretch; that's why I do it [prostitution]. But yeah, the risks are big and that's why I intend to stop. I don't have to do this ... It's like people can't get off the street. It's like a one-way street with a dead end."

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.

"When I was 13, a guy put me out ... he told me, at school one day, that he was going to kill me if I didn't pay him for whoring ... so, I wouldn't give him the money ... later, I did all my mom's sleeping pills ... then I got a year in 311 Jarvis ... There was some good workers in there, ran into some good girls ... then I came out, and led a pretty straight life ... I was living in a group home on Sumac when I was 14 ... then they got me into my own housing ... then I turned back to the streets again ... and had my first child ... [Now] I only go out when my kids are in town, so I can have a little more money for them, because welfare won't give me anything ... I don't want to turn to welfare ... I don't need benefits."

— female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. #25.

"I had this friend who taught me how to put an ad in the paper and make a lot of money. I started doing it in Vancouver and then moved to Toronto. I mostly do outcalls in hotels but occasionally I do an incall. I have a nice place, so it looks good. I do prefer to go to a fancy hotel, though. It's much safer ... that way the guy doesn't know where I live and can't end up going psycho and following me around or something ... I love the money and I don't mind sex all that much, so it's a great job."

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

"I was 19, living in the projects, in the US, and I met this guy, and he was selling rock, and he was feeding me it once in a while, and he said, 'I know a way for you to make some money by hooking ... and I said I would never do that ... next thing you know I moved to Toronto with my girlfriend, who lived there. He was from Montreal. I called him in Montreal because welfare gave me money for two months, then cut me off. I couldn't go home because my mother was having a hard time ... she had lots of bills. So the guy came from Montreal and I told him that I wanted to work. I had no idea what was going on. He drove me to Montreal. He wasn't a pimp, he was a hustler ... he turned me out and I broke all the rules ... I didn't know how to play the game ... I didn't even know there were rules ... I learned it the hard way. So he tried to make me pay for him ... but I

didn't pay him. He got \$100 from me at the most. Before I would go home I would dig a hole and hide the money in the ground. He would beat me for the money but I wouldn't give it up ... till this day I would never pay no man. So, he just packed up his stuff and left me. So I was alone with nowhere to go and I met some girls and I start working for them ... and they got a place for me to stay. They got me street smart, taught me all the rules ... This can never be a safe job ... never! ... Maybe a better way for me would be to work indoors ... but still then it wouldn't be safe ... I made more money indoors, but I need more freedom ... I can't be bothered sitting inside waiting for calls three hours later or whatever."

— female; street; phone; 1 yr.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 49.

"I would telephone somebody, see what they wanted to do and then they wouldn't want to do it. So I figured if I advertised what I like to do, then I would only get together with guys who wanted the same thing. That's pretty much what got me started, plus making money instead of spending money, and not having to put up with the bullshit of a relationship just to have good sex ... I've tried most drugs and I don't like most of them because either the side effects are too weird or they don't do anything. What I do like is the natural stuff ... I like sex but I don't like drugs."

— male; phone; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol, tobacco, caffeine; c/u cannabis, LSD, peyote, mescaline; int. # 91.

"I stopped working the streets. I do occasionally because I need money, but I managed to work indoors. I put an ad in, and that saves me from the danger that is on the street. Not to say that there isn't danger on the inside, but now I have more control with my business and my life and I feel I'm doing a better job."

— female; street, phone; 6 years; s/q heroin; int. #109.

"I come from a good family ... I worked for an airline ... then I became an alcoholic ... I was married ... had children ... and it ended. He was an alcoholic, and it wasn't long before I became one, too ... then I got into drugs ... After a while you exhaust the welfare system ... you have to have a pretty good line to keep them going ... and then you just run it out ... The most important person to me is my girlfriend ... I'm not gay ... but she knows where I'm coming from, and I know where she's coming from, and I'd do anything for her and she would do anything for me. She's a different hooker than I am ... we are all very different."

— female; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; int. #37.

"I'm working the street because it's immediate ... I'm not waiting at home for my pager to go off. On the street you wait a few minutes and someone is there."

— female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.

"I just ended up meeting the wrong people ... I went to Calgary for a summer job, and ended up meeting a pimp ... and I ended up working in Calgary ... it was my own will, really ... I get a hotel ... 50 bucks a room ... you ask them if they want to go there and chat ... that way it eliminates bad dates, and policemen ... I haven't been arrested in two and a half years ... I stopped [working as a pro] before, and worked as a maid ... and then I got into this relationship where I got really screwed up by this guy ... and then I ended up back working the streets ... I want the money ... it's not the people that keep me here ... I have two kids ... and welfare doesn't cut it."

— female; street, phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; ; int. #26.

"[I'm working because] it's a fashion dance of night life ... night life is the way I am; I don't know why, but I just love it ... I was raped. So between the parents and then being abused and having a father and mother who drinks a lot, so it was, like, I'm totally screwed up ... One guy pulled a knife cause he realized he wasn't going to get what he

wanted, so he ended up forcing himself to get what he wanted by pulling a knife on me ... you meet a lot of people who like doing that. They don't want to give the money before they start getting their rocks off ... I started working 'cause I like the lights, the life, getting dressed up, having fun ... I think some people should think about what they're going to get into, 'cause street life is not like a bed of roses ... you have the ups and you have the downs, and I think people should think before they do things."

— male; street; 1 yr. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 137

"Me and a friend started [working] together ... we were making from \$160 to \$220 a night. First, we were just doing weekends, then we started working weekdays. It got easier and easier ... We got smart and started doing the phones in the first year. And the phones were so good. But then competition got so intense that we had to go back to the streets ... I have other jobs. I've worked in a bank. I'm a DINK: Double Income, No Kids ... I've been busted a couple of times ... used a couple of different names ... shit like that. I just feel that it's going to catch up with me ... I heard there's a new law that we can't go past Maitland ... which shifts everything to 51 Division, who will probably up their undercover division, and bust us all summer long; that's why I don't like to stay out here ... apparently, people complained, on Jarvis, that we were noisy, and were bringing down their property values, so we can't go in that area ... now where are we ever going to work ... bastards ... The money is more addictive than any drug that I know ... instant cash ... There's lots of hostility between girls out here ... drugs ... competition ... if you're prettier they tend to want to slice your face off so you're not as pretty any more ... but, hey, I've lasted two years ... I have my own condo ... it's good security ... it keeps the tricks on their best behaviour ... I never worry about [tricks finding out I'm transsexual] ... I get their money up front, so I'm in control ... I never think of it as an issue ... I show them who's boss at first."

— trans; street, phone; 2 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. # 14.

"I did escort work when I was in university ... When I say I'm not working, I mean I don't do it all the time ... now and then I think about it, especially when things get tough financially, but I have a straight job right now ... but, if something happened to that, I wouldn't discount the possibility of working again."

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

"I've done domination through friends in the business. They would refer dates to me. Also, just being involved in the S/M community, I've hooked up with people that wanted the service done. I also had worked a bit on the streets when I was 17 years old; I just did hand jobs for quick money."

— female; street, domination; 7 yrs.; c/u heroin, cannabis; int. # 69.

"I'm from Toronto and I've been trying to survive for years in this city. I come from an alcoholic father. I went through school. Later got into drugs. I'm also a homosexual. My mother is very supportive of me. I first started in the sex trade ... doing blow jobs and hand jobs on the streets. I mainly worked in boystown. I also would pick up tricks in places that I would not expect to."

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

"Risks [of using] outweigh the benefits if you're a stupid person, which most druggies aren't. They're as smart as air ... I always take the money, and I take what they don't offer me, either ... I've accepted a lesser offer and then I pick their pocket and get the rest nicely. That's the only way, girl. If they don't give it, you take it."

— trans; street, bars, bathhouses; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: Special K; int. # 87. [ck tape]

“I’m a pussycat. Meow! That’s my call ... that way everybody knows I’m coming ... I’m pretty straight up, I’ve got a lot of regulars. I’m happy-go-lucky. I’ve never stolen from any of them ... If they’re short, they let me know. And I don’t care what anybody thinks — I’ll go out for 30 bucks ... because in the long run they pay you back. I’m not going to stand around for two hours and let all these guys pass me by ... I’m a good person. A lot of people like me. A lot of people have respect for me ... I’m 30 years old. I want to have a child and settle down ... I’ve been in and out of jail ... since I was 17 ... I’ve spent a good quarter of my life behind bars. I want to make my life worth something. And I can’t find a half-decent man.”

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 151.

“I guess I got started through some friends doing erotic massage and that wasn’t really making any money for me so I started working the street ... [Prostitution] is one of the most lucrative things that I can do. I kind of feel like I’m prostituting myself in whatever I do, and at least I’m making good money in this ... A couple of times I’ve had guys say that what I gave them wasn’t worth what I was asking, and that was a bunch of shit, so I had to get a little insistent with them, but that’s about as scary as it got, I guess ... I could stop [working] tomorrow if I wanted and I could get a regular joe job, but I don’t want to.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

1. b About prostitution and drugs

Of 120 people that responded (75% of the study), 78% said that their drug use related to their work (83% of whom were currently working). Of the 22% who said their drug use was not related to their work. 89% were currently working. Of 100 currently working prostitutes that answered, 76% indicated that their drug use related to their work. (61% were women, 37% men and 3% transgender.) Of the 24% of currently working prostitutes who said that their drug use was not related to their doing sex work, 54% were women, 33% men, and 13% transgender.

Of 121 people who answered (75% of the study) 60% said they would still work as a prostitute if they stopped using drugs, 15% said that they might (26% said they wouldn't keep working if they stopped using drugs).

Of 116 people who answered (72% of the study), 75% said they would still use if they stopped working and 7% said that they might, (18% said that they would not keep using if they stopped working).

Comments from some survey respondents:

Is there a relationship between your heroin use and sex work?

“I think that those are two separate issues. I became involved in sex work to survive ... I have turned lots of tricks because I needed to get high. I have turned lots of tricks because I needed a place to sleep.”

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

Would you keep working if you stopped using?

“Yes. A girl’s got to eat.”

— trans; street, bars, bathhouses; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: Special K; int. # 87.

“I have [stopped using drugs], and I do still work.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

Does your drug use relate to doing sex work?

“When I work the street it’s to pay my bills. My car, my rent.”

— male; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u cannabis; int. # 111.

“I started [using] in high school and dropped out in Grade 11 ... I know some people who did [prostitution], they told me about it, I tried it. Money’s good ... I’m lucky I don’t have to break into someone’s house and steal. I can work the street. Other people don’t. Desperate people snatch purses, rip people off, steal. I don’t want to do that.”

— male; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, heroin, "pills"; int. # 104.

“I started doing drugs a long time ago ... long before my work in the business ... I don’t work to get high — I work for money.”

— female; street, bars; 7 yrs.; s/q LSD, mushrooms, mescaline; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 162.

“I started [in the business] when I was staying at a shelter. It was a very rough, hellish period in my life. I stopped one major run of dope, and stuff, and we all got evicted out of this place, and I ended up in a shelter. I had no money. It was through some of the women I met at the shelter. I started going out on the street with them, and it went on a while, until I got a job and started making money. It was more of a necessity thing ... I needed the money so I did it. Coke was always the one that fucked me up the most. In fact, I’d be happy never to do that again. I looked into phone sex once, thinking that at least I didn’t need to be with them if they were total assholes ... there’s other things involved with lesbians who do hetero sex-trade stuff ... in some ways it was easier, for I wasn’t sexually invested in these people at all. In other ways it was really fucked up, because I was thinking, ‘Is this what I want ... why am I doing this?’ In terms of making money for drugs, I always opted to dealing drugs, rather than tricking. When I stopped working the streets, I got back into drugs again, and I was supported by dealing, and though the dealing I got a weird sense of purpose ... people came to me for something ... I don’t know how to explain it. I was a good dealer; I didn’t rip people off. I’d give people clean fits if they wanted them ... so I felt like I was this important person doing something good. And that was before needle exchanges. I was careless many times, so I’m lucky that I didn’t end up with anything. I was always good at getting needles from surgical supply stores, coming up with good stories, and walking away with boxes of 100. Worker-run organizing would be good ... it would stop women from being adversarial against one another. There is such a shame stigma attached to drugs.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

“Ninety per cent of the girls on Queen Street are supporting a drug habit ... sad but true.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; s/q coke, c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 23.

“I do have aspirations and goals to go to school, but as far as work goes I see this as a profession — not necessarily a career, but a profession ... When I first got into the biz I was working a straight job and I was hooking and I was using ’cause of problems with my past, particularly with my family life. But I was using in order to cope with both jobs. When I decided to [work] solely [in] prostitution I was able to stop.

But there’s been periods when I wasn’t working or when I was away from the street I would start using again ... To this day there are times when I get so stressed out, I mean like an alcoholic I want to drown in that bottle of pills, and it’s so easy to do that ... Initially I would get a lot of dates offer me a couple of lines of coke, but I’ve never tried crack so [I’d] take it and sell it or give it to a friend ... If a client offered me coke or crack today I’d probably flip out and never see him again ... No one likes the fact we’re doing a drug study cause it reinforces the attitude that prostitutes do drugs, but people from all walks of life do drugs.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

If I worked, I don't know if I would use any more drugs than I do now ... I think I'm pretty leveled out now ... I could work in a monastery if I quit drugs completely, now couldn't I? I would be qualified to work there, I guess. But seriously ... I think I would need some sort of substance to work in the business."

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

"[When I started using] it could have been family problems ... I was married. I had everything. I just came home one day and said, 'Oh shit, I don't want it — give me my clothes, that's it' ... I started off with speed. That was my first drug. And seriously, I get off on it when I see the doctor take blood out of me; but I don't do needles any more ... Because I used to be a stripper ... I know everybody ... you know, any of these little hick towns, I can go anywhere and find coke."

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 151.

"Don't get into drugs. That's all I have to say ... It's a catchy thing when you're a hooker; you pick up a trick and, bam, the trick says, 'Hey, you want to get something? You want to do it right now? You go get the drug and you do it.'"

— male; street; 1 yr. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 137

"If I get into a car and I've had two or three beers and they touch me I'm hard instantaneously but if I smoke a joint and go back to their house it takes me 10 minutes to get hard ... [Working] used to bother me a lot; it used to make me feel kind of degraded. But I think that was more of a confidence thing. So now that I like myself a hell of a lot more than I used to, the situation changed a bit. But I still do drugs; I still have dates that like to do drugs ... I enjoy what I do."

— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

"I was in Regent Park, and I saw the junkies ... I got some, and thought that I was dying, and I wanted to kill myself ... but, \$100 later I realized that I wasn't dying, and I didn't want to kill myself ... it was back to the next toke [of crack] ... I wouldn't be able to afford [crack if I weren't working] ... I'm not getting welfare, I'm just living off of what I make ... Too many people are on [welfare] ... they don't need any more [people on it]... The only way to solve the drug problems is to stop the drugs. As far as me being on the streets, well, I'm glad I'm out there, because if I wasn't maybe the guy would go out and rape a little child, or something ... I think I'm saving lives."

— female; street; 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 24

"I'm trying to go back to school, and I collect welfare ... I was supposed to go to Desanew Manor, but I didn't show up ... You're letting the drug control you ... it's your fucking fault because it's all in your brain. I did a toke a while ago, but I don't get stupid. And the cops just stopped me, asking me questions, and I answered them ... no problem. If I was wanted, I'd be walking quick, you know? But once you're a street girl you learn these things. I've been on the street since I was 14 ... Some girls fuck them for \$20 stones, but I make sure I get what I want first, then I give them what they want. A lot of girls are kind of new, and stupid ... they're junkies ... Now that I'm half straight I explain it to the tricks and they take it into consideration, and sometimes even pay me more. Or sometimes I'll just take it off of them, but you have to be careful of who you're robbing because they could come back to you and shoot you just because you stole \$20. I've known it to happen ... When I smoke I do as much as I can, and if it's too late I'll just go home ... because I can't be bothered staying out here till 5 in the morning ... having cops asking me questions about what I'm doing on the street ... as if they don't know. You can't disrespect them ... you have to answer them ... when you get ignorant, that's when

they bring you to jail. So I just agree with them ... Hopefully, when I start school in September, I'll be able to stop everything ... maybe just the odd time, if I need it really badly ... for food, not for smoke ... I want to learn. My education's bad because I lost it all over this shit ... I think there should be more protection out here."

— female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.

"I've been working for an escort agency ... I got started through a friend of mine who was running a place ... she never pressured me or anything ... I was doing a lot of work and I wanted a way to support myself without maximum time being spent ... I've never had a serious problem with any drugs. I can see how easy it would be to get caught up but one of my policies is to never do drugs with my tricks. I think that helped a lot, because it would have been easy to fall into a routine. As it is, I try to keep it separate from the rest of my life ... I feel much better now that I have things under control."

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

"I got started in the business because of the economy. I was working two jobs and still was not making it. I got into phone sex, and four years later I got into dominance ... this way I thought if I wasn't fucking clients, then I wasn't a prostitute. Not that I had a moral issue about becoming a pro, it's just that I didn't think that I was going to be one. But then I realized that there really was no difference, dominance was still prostitution ... I'd love to win a lottery, but that's not a reality right now, so somehow I will always be involved in prostitution ... I didn't start in the business until four or five years ago ... but I started the phone sex eight years ago. I've been drinking alcohol for 20 years, usually once a week, and I get really drunk. I drink about 13 to 16 ounces. Then the next day I'm useless ... [Often I don't work when I'm drunk;] I'm almost paranoid ... so if I'm going to hotels, where I feel more protected, I don't want to be paranoid. It is a stressful business, but it's great because one works for oneself."

— female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.

"I've quit [working] now. I was into the S/M subculture, and I was doing my own kinds of explorations, using bondage, flagellation and blood control. I met with a dominatrix and her and I became lovers, and she had her own dungeon, and she asked me if I wanted to make 100 bucks, with her dominating me in a scene, and I said sure. So, it was kind of like getting paid for field work ... I got tired of that type of work ... also, the money wasn't as good as it was initially, because the market got flooded with doms. And also I tried to do part-time university, and work, and I found that my studies faltered. My priority is to be an anthropologist, so I had to get away from the lure of the money, and focus on school. So that's what I did ... My experience with drugs has been on a spiritual shamanic level ... an initiation. So I would plan out my journeys, and was specific of the drugs I would use to take me where I want to go ... it was a fantastic time for me because I got a chance to explore realities that are not normally accessible to us. The problem of course with drug use is that someone could abuse it, or get addicted ... I don't have a particularly compulsive or addictive personality ... I'm totally against any kinds of substance abuse. I have no objections to people who use drugs in an intelligent way ... Now I'm exploring the intensity of experience through S/M, and also through brain machines, like the cranium electric stimulator, which creates endorphins, and enhances cognitive development and memory ... For me, the drugs were ceremonial sacraments ... Psychedelics are not like cocaine in that you want to use them every day, and need more of ... chasing some elusive high. With psychedelics, you're there ... There's something degrading and demoralizing about trading [sex] for drugs."

— female; domination, bi shows, stags; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, LSD, mushrooms; int. #58

"The drugs I do now, I was doing since I was 12 years old, and I enjoy them now just as much as I did then ... even before I ever heard of working."

— female; street, phone; 15 yrs. (ncw); s/q heroin, "chemicals"; c/u cannabis; int. # 54.

“I can’t even go to the bar without being drunk or high, because I feel too self-conscious ... We do smoke weed every night ... but weed isn’t a bad drug ... we do coke only when we have lots of money ... It takes guts to get in a car with a complete stranger, not knowing if they’re going to kill you.”

— male; bars, street, phone; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, ecstasy, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 02.

“I was 17 when I started [in the business] ... I had moved back into my parents’ place ... and I was going crazy ... and I had to move out again. So we took off to downtown Toronto ... and we started pulling tricks in bars, all ages clubs, picking up guys who didn’t get lucky at the gay bars ... places like Voodoo, or Backstreets, or the Twilight Zone. You’d panhandle your way at the door, or they’d pay your \$12 admission fee, then follow you around and harass you all night. Then you could pop them the question of sex for money. They were always into it. All my friends were doing it ... we were hanging out downtown all the time, staying at shelters, or a bus shelter for a few days, just so you could stay downtown and party, and take drugs ... Giving it to them was out of the question ... that was just the rules of the game ... you were a pretty boy and these guys were willing to give you money for it.”

— male; bars; 7yrs.; s/q coke, speed; c/u cannabis, heroin, mushrooms; int. # 33

“I’ve always been an IV-drug user; my first experience with drugs was IV drugs ... I have shared needles with people who have AIDS. I have not contracted the HIV virus yet ... I’ve contracted STDs as a result of working on the streets for drugs and not being aware of how to protect myself, when I was much younger ... I learned to let my tricks know what service they could get for a certain amount of drugs.”

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

“Marijuana ... like alcohol, sometimes I’ll do it and sometimes I won’t. Like the sex trade: I have control over my body, just as I have control over my drug intake. It’s the same thing. I can take it or leave it ... From my experiences, and from the other voices on the street, and the impact due to the nature of the business — violence against women issues, bad dates — my concerns turn to women’s health issues and the impact the business has on their bodies, like communicable diseases; my interest turns to prevention of such diseases and violence ... People have to gain more understanding of what the heavy drugs out there are doing to them, and then they have to help themselves deal with their addictions ... not to abuse it where it’s going to put them in their grave ... Also, we are in the sex trade, so we have to be careful not to have unprotected sex. And knowledge of the consequences of sharing needles and pipes.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

“I was working at night, I was going to school in the day and it started, the drugs, at school. People would bring out drugs at parties. I realized coke gave me lots of energy and I decided to use it, and then became dependent on it. But it really helped me. I use it at night when I’m working and it helps me get through things ... Sometimes when I wanted to get some blow I would call my dealer and invite myself over, go with him, and he gave me drugs ... I think when I would go with a dealer I would get less than if it was straight cash ... I tried heroin but I saw people get fucked up with heroin so I stuck with coke ... My life is the drugs, the streets ... my life is the way it is and until I change that I can’t change any part of it.”

— ?; street; 4 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 105. [CHECK TAPE]

Is there a relationship between your cocaine use and sex work?

“When I go to work ... I see people I know ... I have dates that love to do coke, so it’s really hard not to ... There were times [after working] when the first thing I’d want to do is get high and forget what was going on there.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

1. c Drug experience

One of the interviewing problems that developed in conducting this study (discovered after transcription), was that people often had extensive experience with several different drugs. In order to look for quotes about people's experiences with specific drugs, we divided the interviews into drug categories by determining which drugs people were currently using, OR which drugs they had successfully quit, (If people had successfully quit a drug which they were no longer using we wanted to know about their experiences quitting that drug.) We also looked to see if the drugs people were currently using were their current drug(s) of choice. Lots of people had lots to say in more than one drug category, and it was not always clear which drug related to an experience someone recounted. Fortunately most people made some reference.

92% of the study indicated that they were currently using something.

Comments from some survey respondents:

“Weed — I feel relaxed. Mushrooms is a spiritual buzz. Cocaine and crack makes me feel super horny, acid makes you hallucinate.”

— male; street, stripping; 0.6 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis; int. # 79

“Crack I would not do in jail. I mean, that would not be the spot to be doing crack. But Valium’s nice; it made me feel a lot more calm. And hash was nice ... I find [alcohol] a less complex drug than crack or cocaine ... I know how I can handle it. ... with alcohol, you’ve gotta sleep sometime.”

— male; street; 16 years; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. #160.

“Ex is incredible for sex; so is smoking pot. And when you feel like eating, smoke a joint — it’s great; it makes you hungrier. Crack, oh, well, that can curb your appetite. Alcohol, well, if you feel like vomiting that’s good. That’s about it, really.”

— trans; street, bars, bathhouses; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: Special K; int. # 87.

“I was a speed freak for a year and a half solid. I’ve been doing pot steady, for the last 10 years, every day. Acid and all the rest of them were just hit and runs. Maybe once a month I would try something else ... Doing acid was just a party thing. With the speed, I went in search of it.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 26 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 110.

“I didn’t feel that the pot, or alcohol, or acid were the problem ... they were for fun ... the other ones were habit ... Addiction was not the only reason I was in the Homewood — the psychiatric institution ... I lived in a small town ... addictions were not talked about ... I was still young, and wasn’t really able to recognize that I had a problem ... I’m sure I do [drugs to escape], to a point, but then again I think that most people do with anything, whether it be television, work or sports ... I kind of have a balance in my life now, and I’m not interested in going down that dark road again .. I come from the school of thought that a lot of drugs are useful in opening up your consciousness, so I think that some drugs have done a lot of good things for me ... more the hallucinogenic kind and marijuana, rather than the amphetamines or the coke... if you look on [drugs] as giving you physical problems then you will get them.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (new); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

“Some people seem to be able to do a couple of lines at a party, and they’re fine, but most seems to stick their head in a bowl of cocaine, or heroin, and spend the rest of their life there. I think everybody reacts differently to everything ... booze, medication, junk, whatever.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

alcohol:

Another interviewing problem discovered after transcription; not all interviewers reminded interviewees to include alcohol as a drug that had been used. 60% of the study (98 people) indicated that they had used alcohol. 48% of people interviewed indicated they were currently using alcohol. 19% of the people who said they had used alcohol said they had tried to quit drinking, (58% of whom were currently drinking). 47% of those who had tried to quit alcohol said they did so successfully, (44% of those people were currently drinking; 67% were currently working.) 16% of people who indicated that they had used alcohol specifically named alcohol as drug of choice.

Why won't you quit alcohol?

“I still do alcohol. Some people prefer to have a joint; I prefer a drink. My personality comes out with alcohol ... I’m not a lush or something but, like I said, I don’t mind having a drink a day.”

— male; phone, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: alcohol; int. # 40.

cannabis:

For the purposes of this study, we lumped all cannabis products—pot, hash, oil in to one category "cannabis". Cannabis is the most commonly-used illicit drug in Canada [reference] and the most commonly-used drug in this study. Cannabis was the most common drug currently being used and most common “drug of choice”. Cannabis was the drug that the most people said they wouldn't quit. No one in this study had received treatment for cannabis use although some have and some have indicated that it has had an ill effect on their health.

76% of people interviewed (124 people) said they had used cannabis. 72% of people who had said they had used cannabis were currently using. Only 6% of the people who said they used cannabis had ever tried to quit, 50% of whom said they had quit successfully (all of whom are currently using). 11% of those who had used cannabis products tried to reduce or control their pot habit. Of 89 people (55% of the study) currently using cannabis, 51% were female, 44% were male and 5% were transgender. 87% said that they were currently working. 57% of the currently working prostitutes we talked to said they currently use cannabis. 33% of people who had used cannabis specifically named cannabis as a drug of choice.

Why won't you quit cannabis?

“How many smoke-aholics do you see lying on the corner?”

— male; street, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 101.

“I smoke pot, and I will until I die. I love it. It’s just a little herb.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbituates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

coke:

68% of people interviewed (111 people) had used coke. 33% of people who said they had used coke were currently using coke, 24% of those who had used coke said they had quit coke successfully, (15% of whom were currently using). Of 60 current and former coke users (37% of the study), 48% were female; 42% were male and 8% were transgender.

82% said they were currently working. 23% of the currently working prostitutes we talked to said they currently use coke. 18% of people who said they had used coke specifically named it as a drug of choice.

“I used to do [cocaine] 4 or 5 times a week, but now I do it maybe once or twice a week, but now I drink more ... Finally I just reached a plateau where I felt I had a handle on it ... I liked the way coke affected me more than speed ... but I found that I needed to do more Valium in order to come down after, so there was a little bit of a cross-addiction going on there.”

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

crack:

45% of people interviewed (74 people) had used crack. 70% of those who had used crack were currently using. 35% of those who had used crack said they had quit crack successfully, (65% of whom were currently using). Of 60 current and former crack users (37% of the study), 70% were female, 25% were male. and 5% were transgender. 82% said they were currently working. 97% had worked the street. 50% of the currently working prostitutes we talked to said they currently use crack. 42% of people who said they had used crack specifically named it as a drug of choice.

How did you try to reduce your crack use and why were you not successful?

“I was doing less prostitution. I was doing one date per evening, making \$60 or so. And the next day to curb my jonesing I would buy my friends burgers and Pepsi and weed and my money would be gone in two days but I could handle that. When I had only two dollars I would go out and do another date again ... I used to ache for it and nothing else seemed to be ... I wasn't interested in anything else. Nothing seemed to occupy my mind. I had nothing to work on. So it was right back to the drugs a week later. I'd be proud I'd made it seven days and I was so proud I'd want to party.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 years; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. #121.

relationships between crack and coke:

Why were you successful at controlling your crack use?

“I've been doing coke and crack for a couple of years now and the high is very different and the environment in which people who do crack travel is different and I'm kinda getting sick of it all ... it's too much bullshit. So I control it that way — relax, stay at home, take yourself out to dinner.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

Have you ever tried to reduce your crack use?

“I started doing the powder [coke] at first, but it wasn't strong enough for me, so I started doing the rock; it was a little heavier. That's why I changed ... I never tried to reduce. Never. I took a break for about a month but then I started up again. It seems like if you take a break ... then you do it more. That's why if you do it more often you do less. That's the way I look at it. I do a little bit at a time.”

— female; street, bars; 3.5 years; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. #113.

relationships between crack and the sex trade:

Have you ever taken less money than usual because you needed crack?

“I turned a date for \$10 or \$8 just to buy a piece of rock ... Just last night I met a guy down there who said he had rock at home and he bought a \$10 piece and he took me home and that's all he had, and he wanted a blow job for it.”

— female; street; 0.25 years; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. #145.

“I don’t really know how I started. I guess a friend turned me on to it, said it was easy money. I tried it; I liked it ... I lost my two kids so I turned to prostitution and drugs ... I work part-time in a recreation centre ... It’s not that I do it [work] every day. Maybe twice a month ... Sometimes I want to go home. Nova Scotia. But I just don’t have the dough. I blow it all on crack ... I don’t know how I’m going to stop [working].”

— female; street; 11 years; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. #108

heroin:

30% of people interviewed (49 people) said they had used heroin. 33% of those who had used heroin were currently using. 38% of those who said they'd used heroin said they had quit successfully, (28% of whom were currently using). Of 29 current and former heroin users (18% of the study), 66% of were women; 35% were men. 69% said they were currently working, 86% had worked on the street. Of the currently working prostitutes we talked to 10% said they currently use heroin. 16% of the people who said they had used heroin specifically named heroin as a drug of choice.

“Heroin is all I use. When I first started, it was for recreation ... for the first 5 or 6 years it was just on the weekends, and the guy I started it with, we used to live together, and he died of an overdose. When he died I started using all the time, which was probably silly, but that was my excuse ... I got out of thinking about it. I had it all together, man. I mean, he left me a business and a condo, and instead of me being set for life, I used it all on drugs. Then I started selling drugs to support my habit. Then I went to jail. I never went to jail until I was 33. It was a real strange experience. And I’ve only been hustling since I’ve been out of jail.”

— female; street, phone, regulars; 1 yr.; c/u heroin; int. #92.

speed:

Speed, also contemporarily referred to as "meth", "crystal meth", is an amphetamine medically referred to as methadrine[?] that has been enjoying a resurgence in popularity in club scenes in larger cities particularly in the west. It is generally available in pill, capsule or powder or crystal form. Popular ways of using speed include shooting, snorting, and swallowing. We didn't plan to look in particular at speed because it has been generally unavailable regionally for some time. Many people however made interesting comments in reference to speed. 24% of people interviewed (40 people) said they'd used speed. 5% of those who'd used speed said they were currently using and 15% of those who'd used speed said they had successfully quit. Of 40 current and former speed users, 58% were female, 43% were male. 80% specified that they were currently working. 2.5% (one person) of those who said they'd used speed named speed as a current drug of choice.

hallucinogens

Acid:

39% of people interviewed (62 people) said they'd used LSD (Lysergic acid diethylamide). 18% of the people who said they'd used acid said they currently use it. 13% of those who had used acid (one person) said they'd tried to quit. 1.6% of those who said they'd used acid (one person) named it as a drug of choice.

ecstasy:

A cousin of MDA (methylenedioxy amphetamine) (which exists naturally in nutmeg), ecstasy or X, MDMA, (3-methoxy-4, 5-methylenedioxy amphetamine) was developed after the American FDA outlawed MDA. The American FDA later passed legislation outlawing chemically related drugs [**proper term, dates?**]. An amphetamine that can have mild hallucinogenic effects popularly available in either pill/capsule or powder/crystal form. Its known as the love drug and has enjoyed recent popularity in the

dance club scene in the large cities in North America and Europe. In Toronto, other drugs often get sold or passed off as X including acid/speed, acid/coke, Special K, heroin/coke etc. 14% of the study (22 people) said they'd used ecstasy. 41% of the people who'd said they'd used X, said they currently use it. 9% those who'd used X named it as a drug of choice.

mushrooms:

15% of the survey (24 people) said they'd used mushrooms. 33% of those who said they'd used mushrooms said they currently use them. 4% of those who had used mushrooms (one person) specified mushrooms as a drug of choice. 4% (one person) said they'd tried to quit mushrooms.

other drugs:

13% of the study (21 people) said they'd used valium. 24% of those who said they'd used valium said they currently use it. 5% of those who'd used valium (one person) named it as a drug of choice. Although interviewers didn't ask interviewees to include prescription drugs inhalants (glue) or tobacco some people did so in response different questions. Other people names more general descriptions such as barbiturates, "pills", "downers", "needle drugs", "anti-psychotic drugs" etc. 0.6 % of the study (one person) opium, and one named Special K. Special K is a horse tranquilizer—Ketamine [?]

2. Findings: workplace health and safety

2. a Why some prostitutes don't mix drugs with work

Comments from some survey respondents:

Are there risks involved in alcohol use?

“I think [alcohol] is mentally and physically destructive ... I would take more chances when drinking ... but it's a false sense of safety ... because one is not on one's guard ... It's dangerous to be out in this city, and drunk.”

— female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.

Does your drug use relate to your doing sex work?

“Most times I don't go out with drugs ... I just look after my responsibilities. If I have the time I'll take out some of that time to party, and enjoy life with my friends. I really have my time with my friends and my times with my responsibilities separated.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

“One of my policies is to never do drugs with my tricks ... Sometimes I use drugs as a bonus ... I don't think the drug use has a direct correlation with being in the sex trade ... I don't think drugs and sex go hand in hand in the sex trade. A lot of people that are working do have problems, but it's not always the case. Alcohol is a big problem and no one is going around saying shit.”

— female; phone; 4 years; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #97.

“The two are not connected for me. I work for the money. It works for me ... I usually don't get high before a date ... If I was doing any other job that pays this much, I'm sure I would still do the same kind of drugs I do now.”

— female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.

“I always used ... I never got high when I was working ... it was a separate issue ... I was working for survival ... I think a lot of people do drugs when they work, but I know that didn't apply to me, and I know a lot of other people that it doesn't apply to.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

“They are very separate things. Just as most people with so-called normal jobs don't mix their drugs with work, nor do I. I like to drink on occasion, but not during my work ... Actually, I was doing far more drugs before I got into the business than I am now ... I'm not working to support an addiction. I'm working to make the kind of money I make and to spend it on all kinds of wonderful things ... I know my clients, and I check any new ones out pretty carefully ... I don't plan to stop this wonderful job, but if by chance I did, I would still drink, I'm sure.”

— female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.

“Speed did not mix at all with the escort business ... I would make time to get high in my spare time, never when I was working ... I would have been too paranoid ... I did work at times and use the money to buy speed, but I used the money for other things, too.”

— male; phone; 2 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 166.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you needed to get high?

“No, I keep my work and dope separate.”

— female; street, stripping, bars; 4 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 52.

“I could never go to work if I’m high or drunk ... I just can’t function that way ... you’re going to get busted, or you’re going to get a really bad date, ’cause they know you’re fucked up.”

— female; street, phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; int. # 26.

2. b Pros remarks about working and getting high

We asked people a number of questions in an attempt to determine whether needing to get high or being high impaired peoples' judgement enough to increase the level of risks in the workplace. We asked people whether they had ever worked because they needed to get high; whether they had ever taken less money or done work that they normally would turn down. We asked them if they had ever misjudged a job because they needed to get high. We also asked people if they had

Of 132 people that responded (82% of the study), 56% said they had worked for drugs. Of 126 people that answered (78% of the study), 74% said they'd worked because they needed to get high. Of 61 people that answered (38% of the study), 54% said they'd done unwanted work because they needed to get high. Of 55 people that responded (34% of the study), 51% said they'd taken less money because they needed to get high. Of the 106 people that responded (66% of the study) 40% said they'd misjudged a job because needed to get high.

Of 96 people that responded (60% of the study), 41% said they'd done work they normally would turn down because they were high. Of 44 people that responded (27% of the study), 55% said they'd taken less money because they were high. Of 96 people that answered (60% of the study), 44% said they'd misjudged a job because they were high.

Comments from some survey respondents—needing to get high

Have you ever done work you would usually turn down because you needed to get high?

“I did kinky sex; I did half-and-half’s.”

— female; street; 4 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; DOC: speed; int. # 120.

“I’ve engaged in riskier sexual behaviour than I might have otherwise. Or, I’ve done tricks for many hours longer than I normally would have.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

“He got weird, and kinky, and I should have read him right away when I got in the car, but I didn’t.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 7 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. #19.

“I took a lot of chances. When you’re having fun with anywhere from 2 to 3 to half a dozen people a night, you really don’t know what you’re getting into. Most of them didn’t use condoms and I didn’t care.”

— trans; street, bars; s/q alcohol, tobacco; int. #93.

“I’d have to say yes. I don’t cut myself short ever as far as money goes. Maybe when you’re with the person you have second thoughts and the next day you say, ‘Shit, if I was straight at the time I might not have done it even for the money’.”

— male; phone, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: alcohol; int. # 40.

“Yes ... I did a golden shower.”

— male; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol; int. # 170.

“A couple of times, to get drugs. I let a date fuck me to get more money.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

“Yes, often, and I thought about it while I was doing it, too — saying to myself, ‘Aw, fuck, what are you doing?’.”

— female; street, bars, brothels; 16 years; s/q “all”; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. #155.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you needed to get high?

“The worst is one night he took me far away and I got out and he left me there and I was stranded.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 81.

“The worst is a guy who drops you off and gives you a boot in the head or something or treats you with disrespect.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.

“Too often for my liking ... I trust the tricks too much and let them take me too far [away] before I get my money and I’m left stranded without even bus fare, and they got everything they wanted, and I got nothing ... I’ve never been brutally assaulted. I’ve gotten bruises and stuff like that. I’ve been lucky. I can usually control my jones enough if someone looks like they are going to hurt me I’ll turn it down for sure.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.

“I’ve been ripped off a number of times.”

— male; phone; 1 yr.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: alcohol, coke, crack; int. # 43.

“I got beat up, and ripped off ... but it only happened once.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 7 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. #19.

“This asshole took me out to a hotel in the middle of nowhere, got me high all night, but he didn’t give me any money ... he dragged me around town assuring me that he was going to get money ... I remember fighting with him briefly, and him throwing me out of the car, leaving me blocks away from home.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

Have you ever done work you would normally turn down because you needed crack?

“The guy paid me for a blow job, but he had sex because he forced it ... I have a policy to never go home with tricks because I don’t know them, and I ended up at this place with 5 guys waiting for me.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, speed; int. # 85.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you needed coke?

“This guy who was involved with coke, and he kept wanting me to blow him, more and more, and he wouldn’t get off. Then it got to the point where he ran out of dope, and he wanted me to keep going. It got kind of ugly ... I was down on him, and he wouldn’t let me go ... his hands were on my head and he wouldn’t let me get away. He was drinking, and he was punching me in the face ... he was really getting off.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

Comments from some survey respondents—being high

Have you ever done work you would usually turn down because you were high?

“There are many, many things I would do when I was high ... I haven’t gotten into threesomes or foursomes or anything that would make me feel uncomfortable.”

— male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.

“I’d go with some questionable people, people that were dangerous or drunk ... Against my better judgment I let [this guy] in, and he was not a nice person ... I didn’t want to let him in and ... he just got rough and stuff like that, which I don’t enjoy, and so I told him, ‘No rough stuff,’ ... and he got real nasty. If I hadn’t been stoned I probably would have closed the door as soon as I saw his face.”

— male; phone; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol, tobacco, caffeine; c/u cannabis, LSD, peyote, mescaline; int. # 91.

“When I’m high I take more risks; I don’t have the same ability I have when I’m straight.”

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

“[You’d let them] stay longer ... let them control you more ... When I woke up, my ass was sore ... that was before I started getting fucked ... You get into cars that are a bit shabbier ... you’re less choosy.”

— male; street, bars, stripping; 1 yr.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: cannabis; int. # 04.

“I did an S/M date while I was high. I hate [S/M].”

— male; street, bars, phone; 1 yr.; s/q cannabis; c/u alcohol, cannabis, LSD; DOC: alcohol; int. # 21.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you were high?

“A couple of times I had bad tricks where I was too fucked up to know what was going on, and before I knew it, my money was gone, or I was being dropped off in the middle of nowhere ... and didn’t know where the fuck I was because he drove me somewhere, and I was too fucked up to figure out where.”

— male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (new), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.

“I got popped; I got busted.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol, crack; int. # 89.

“I was fucked out of my goddamned mind ... usually I ask if they’re cops, and I didn’t ask, and he was a cop.”

— male; bars, street, phone; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, ecstasy, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 02.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you were drunk?

“When I was drunk I didn’t know who I would bring home and what type of person that guy was.”

— female; street, 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 144.

“I misjudged a trick when I was drunk, and he ended up being a cop ... bastard! I got busted ... I’ve been busted only twice in my life.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 05.

Have you ever done work you would normally turn down because you were high on coke?

“When I was working [on coke] I really did not care who I went with.”

— female; street, phone, 3 yrs.; s/q.cocaine; c/u alcohol, tobacco; int. # 72.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you were high on crack?

“I didn’t have any sexual desire when I’m high because I get very paranoid. But I had a very high tolerance ... I’d smoke \$40 or \$50 rocks at one time, and then I’d ... get paranoid, and end up robbing a lot of tricks ... I’ve been beat up a lot from tricks since I’ve been into the drugs ... before that I never really had a problem because I used to just turn my regulars ... then I got into the coke and the crack ... I couldn’t handle it.”

— female; 20 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 36

2. c Violence

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I’ve been ripped off. Promised stuff from guys if you do such and such, and then they take advantage of you because you’re basically crying for the drug, so you do anything ... One guy ... it was 6 a.m. and there was nothing around and he was trying to get my money and I wanted to score ... he dug in his pocket and said, ‘Here, have this,’ and punched my face and broke my nose and left this scar.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.

“I was raped. It’s not that it was my fault, but if I had a few more wits about me, I wouldn’t have misjudged the character.”

— female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.

“I got beat up by four guys in a van.”

— male; street, bars; 11 yrs.; s/q coke heroin, speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int # 102.

“I had a date that tried to rip me off with bad dope once. I told him I wasn’t doing anything with him. He tried to rape me at that point.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 121.

Have you ever done work you ordinarily wouldn't have because you were high?

“I was smoking hash one night, and I had a bad date who cut my face.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u cannabis; int. # 31.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you needed to get high?

“I’ve been ripped off because I needed to get high. I’ve been ripped off for drugs and money. I got stabbed once because I was jonesing and the trick didn’t look dangerous. And I’ve been choked and raped. I just wanted that money.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, speed; int. # 85.

“I had him try and mug me when I was four months pregnant.”

— female; street, 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 144.

“He literally beat the shit out of me.”

— female; street, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke; int. # 66.

“I was raped by two guys. Subsequently, I was paid for it, and then raped an additional time on top of that initial assault.”

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

“I got stabbed, and left in a linen closet to bleed to death.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

“I’ve had a few crazy people, like getting knives pulled and [getting] thrown out of cars.”

— female; street, phone, regulars; 1 yr.; c/u heroin; int. #92.

“Yes, I guess, in the sense that I went with dates that would try to rip me off. I was aware of it, though, and told him I wanted the correct amount that was mentioned before I started the date. That’s when he tried to take the money. I grabbed for his keys ... and he tried to grab them back. We struggled for a while, then I tried to get out of the car. That was when [it felt like] ... he stabbed me with a needle.”

— female; street; 16 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 67.

“I have been ripped off by dates who tried to give me less money for the date. I’ve been ... assaulted, raped, beaten. I got into cars with two men in them, which was wrong, because they would rip me off ... I think [the worst thing was] being held captive and repeatedly raped, and knocked out for hours.”

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

“I’ve been ripped off by a couple of tricks. That was ’cause I was an idiot and I was young. One guy tried to shove me out of his car down at Cherry Beach. The worst that’s ever happened to me was ... this guy I was with paid me 150 bucks and then tried to choke me. And when he left me on the bed I was half fucking dead and he took his \$150 back and left me there.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 86.

“Lots of times ... I had a bad date; I was up for days, and he had a white van, and we went down behind this factory; that’s when he pulled out this big knife, and raped me the whole time this knife was against me. I did call the police, and he was charged. But it was thrown out.”

— female; street; 4 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; DOC: speed; int. # 120.

“Oh, yes, many a time ... [The worst was] when I was 8 months pregnant, my head being smashed up against a brick wall.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, speed; int. # 85.

“The worst was getting beat up, stabbed.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you were high?

“Probably ... but not that time I got raped, because I wasn’t high at all ... but like I say, many things could have happened ... when I was drinking so heavily I wouldn’t remember whole episodes and evenings.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

“Right now, I don’t really give a fuck ... I’m in that state of mind where I would pick one of those crazy tricks that would kill me, just to put me out of this agony that I’m going through ... it’s that vicious circle, and I’m sick of it ... I just want it to end ... and there is no help, really.”

— female; street, bars, body rub; 18 yrs.; c/u heroin, alcohol; int. # 38.

“A friend and I were to be submissive schoolgirls for this one guy’s fantasy, and he wanted to hit us. He ended up hitting much harder than I wanted to be hit ... he also used a paddle and strap, and I ended up black and blue.”

— female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.

“I picked up a trick at the Paramount, and he took me back to his place — where, I don’t know — and he assaulted me and threw me out the door with nowhere to go and no money.”

— female; body rub, bars, “in house”; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

“[I’ve been assaulted by tricks] a few times, but I only had one bad one. I had been stabbed in the head and throat and legs. I got stitches.”

— female; phone, stags; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 129.

“I’ve been kidnapped, taken from one town to another, and locked in a hotel room by bikers. I’ve been beat up, raped, got stalled at the border. I got knifed really bad and put in the hospital ... this chick hacked me up real bad, and while in hospital I went through ... speed withdrawal ... it wasn’t a choice, it was just part of the recovery from my wounds.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

“[The trick] bit **[hit? check tape]** me and I ended up in the hospital for seven days.”

— female; street, bars; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 152.

“I had been beaten up, scraped and got a black eye, stuff like that.”

— female; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 123.

“I got hit in the back of the head with a steel pole. He hit me and knocked me out, and I don’t remember the rest.”

— female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.

“I’ve been punched in the face.”

— trans; street, bars; 5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 139.

“That’s why you’re high, cause you don’t think. I got threatened, yeah, with a knife in the car. After it was over he said, ‘I’m not paying you. Now get the hell out of my car.’”

— male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.

“I’m not the type that someone is going to pick up because they want some little kid to throw around ... [I’ve] never [been] beaten up, but people getting rough ... there’s a fine line ... but I’ve always been very careful, and kept my eyes open for things ... and it’s different for a man than a woman ... I mean, no one ever pulled a knife on me ... or a gun ... most women are smaller, so they have to be more careful ... but if you have a knife pulled on you, I guess your size doesn’t really matter. But it does seem that the girls are assaulted more often than the guys.”

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

Have you ever misjudged a john because you were drunk?

“I ... had the shit beaten out of me. I was tied to a bed and he beat me up with a leather belt; he broke the skin a few times with the belt, just cause I was really drunk.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

2. d Pros remarks on safe sex

Comments from some survey respondents:

Have you ever done otherwise unacceptable work because you needed to get high?

“I always use a condom. Never been high and not used one. Always safe.”

— female; street; 11 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. # 108

“I always use a condom ... and I find more guys are asking for double condoms.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; s/q coke, c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 23.

“I always have tons of condoms ... and usually I only do oral ... I use the flavoured ones.”

— female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. # 25.

“The emphasis on AIDS is important [in safety info] but you get these brochures that say you’re not going to get AIDS from sucking cock ... but you can still get everything else, and having to take medication to get rid of that is going to fuck up your immune system anyway. So I think the idea of safety has to go beyond AIDS ... The time I did acid I sucked a guy off without a condom [not for money] and that to me is stupid.”

— male; phone; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol, tabacco, caffeine; c/u cannabis, LSD, peyote, mescaline; int. # 91.

“If you’re working, you can afford [condoms] ... even junkies that are \$20 whores can afford them ... otherwise, it’s their choice not to use them ... those girls are just sick ... they don’t care about themselves ... and they obviously don’t have anything to live for ... In the US when a girl gets arrested for prostitution, they give them AIDS tests ... and I really think they should do the same here ... because it’s just not worth it dying for money, when I could catch something because of a broken condom, because the guy caught something from one of the cheap whores who doesn’t care about herself ... I really think these girls should be tested.”

— female; street, phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; int. # 26.

“I’m always very safe. I want to live too much to be stupid.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

Have you ever done otherwise unacceptable work because you needed crack?

“I’ve done lots of things I’m not proud of that I’ve done for dope ... I’ve justified it by saying, ‘Oh, he didn’t come inside,’ or ‘He didn’t come in my mouth, so that’s okay.’ If some guy comes by and says, ‘Hey, baby, I got a rock,’ I would be the first one to go. I’ve done a lot of risky things.”

— female; street, phone; 12 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 98.

How does your drug use relate to your doing sex work?

“When I worked, I did not use drugs ... too many things could go wrong, and you have to be in control, because someone has faith in you that you’re not going to miss, and hit something you’re not supposed to hit ... I would get clients who appeared to be on cocaine or alcohol so I would refuse them. Their ability to be fully consensual was impaired and their ability to assess risk was not there. I feel they could not adequately judge pain, so it was not a safe practice.”

— female; domination, bi shows, stags; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, LSD, mushrooms; int. #58

Have you ever been stuck without a condom?

“Yes ... but I’d get the trick to buy one ... and if they don’t buy, then I don’t go.”

— female; street; 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 24

Other comments?

“I am a recovering addict ... I’m HIV positive, working the street. I know I’m walking a thin line. I’m very careful with what I’m doing, cause I know that if I do anything wrong I’ll be thrown in jail. I always insist on condoms.”

— trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.

“I’ve always practiced safe sex. I never kiss my clients.”

— female; phone; 4 years; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #97.

“I do everything with a condom except for a hand job ... I think I have a better head on my shoulders than a lot of people turning tricks on the street. It’s hard to imagine a lot of these men and women working on the street and they are totally fucked up and that’s how they usually work, and I wonder if they would suddenly realize they had no condoms on

them, they needed a fix, would they go to the trouble of finding somewhere they could go get one before doing their next trick? Myself and all the people I know are safe in everything they do.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

2. e Ways to stay safe

Most people who commented on ways to work safely (in respect to avoiding bad dates or getting busted named four considerations:

- proper process to screen of clients
- only seeing regular clients, not seeing strangers
- making sure the client understands that the prostitute is the one in control
- not working while intoxicated or impaired (see section 2. b pg. ?)
- taking extra precautions when working high, being more aware

Comments from some survey respondents:

- **proper process to screen of clients**

Have you ever done otherwise unacceptable work because you needed to get high?

“Luckily, the way my service works, the clients are very well screened before they get to me. So I haven’t been in situations of real danger. Maybe the pressure to stay longer ... like the whole night, for no extra money. But I never do that.”

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

- **only seeing regular clients, not seeing strangers**

“I’ve been in the trade for 16 years; I know who I can go with now; I have regulars. So I don’t go with anybody new, I just stick with the safe ones.”

— male; street; 16 years; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. #160.

“I have a pretty regular clientele so I don’t have any problems. I usually don’t get high before a date anyway ... I know who I’m dealing with. My work is totally safe.”

— female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.

- **making sure the client understands that the prostitute is the one in control**

“I’ve never had any problems since I’ve worked, with anyone. I’ve always been straight-up with them, and always made them well aware that I can handle myself. And I’ve always been aware of who I was going with.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; 11 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 154.

“I know my job very well, and I’m the one who is in control, so there isn’t any room for that.”

— female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.

- **not working while intoxicated or impaired (see section 2. b)**

- **taking extra precautions when working high, being more aware**

Have you ever misjudged a john because you were high?

“Oh no, honey, I straighten up right away. You have to. You don’t know who you’re dealing with. There’s a lot of crazies out there ... I’ve never run into no problem, me. Pretty cool about undercovers.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. #107.

“I would remind myself that I was high, especially with a few people, you know. I always kept my money in my zippered-up pocket.”

— male; phone; 3 years (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. #168.

“When I’m high I’m more on the ball and more aware.”

— ?; street; 4 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 105.[CHECK TAPE]

3. Findings: family issues

3. a Effects of the family on drug use

Although family issues were covered by this study, there were many comments that had something to do with familial relationships. Lots of people quit or reduce drug use because of responsibility for children, others believe they would if they had such responsibility. In other circumstances the family has a negative effect on peoples' lives and their ability to quit or reduce drug use. Some families or family members are supportive of relatives who are trying to reduce or quit drugs while others contribute to the stress, etc. that fosters drug use.

Comments from some survey respondents:

About positive effects–

What made it easier to control your drug use?

“My pregnancy, and a lot of outside society put-down. Being pregnant you should not be using ... people putting me down, a few suppliers cutting me off ... I couldn't smoke a big hit with my baby in me. I would puke, and I can't handle puking. I figure it's too expensive a puke.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.

“I never tried to reduce, man. Just one day I found out I was pregnant and I said that was it. I did fall of the wagon a few times, but ... only for a few days ... I realize that if I keep doing drugs I'll lose my daughter ... I got out of the area ... I'm a cheap bitch and I don't like spending money ... I had an apartment to go to ... another life to think about aside from my own, and I was getting on in age.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 86.

Why were you successful at controlling your cannabis use?

“I used to smoke hash every day; it was like a cigarette to me; it didn't even really affect me ... so I had to smoke a large, large amount. I think I was able to stop because I had my boyfriend, and I was pregnant ... I think it was basically because of the baby, not because of anything else ... I wasn't going to kill my child for it, or have something happen to it because of drugs ... it's not worth it ... Right now I only smoke up occasionally ... I have a lot of responsibilities.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u cannabis; int. # 31.

Why were you successful at quitting drugs?

“Sometimes you think that you'd like to have it just one more time, but there is no one more time. I've fallen off a couple times before, because my old man died in a motorcycle accident, but then I go home and I look at R., my son, and think, ‘What are you doing?’ So, when I feel myself getting wired, well, then I'm out of there, I'm gone.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

“I began to realize that's not the way to get my kids back. Children's Aid had taken my kids and I wanted them back ... I moved to Toronto, so I had new friends; I didn't know where the drugs were ... I didn't want someone telling my daughter that I was dead cause I overdosed on drugs ... After my second little boy was born I quit altogether.”

— female; street, 1.5 yrs. (ncw); s/q coke, heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int # 138.

“[I quit] automatically when I found out I was 3 1/2 months pregnant.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, speed; int. # 85.

“I got married, had children, just settled down.”

— female; street, bars, phone, massage; 13 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 13.

Why were you successful at quitting your drinking?

“I had really disappointed my daughter. And it was getting to the point that I was blacking out 3 or 4 times a week. So I just consciously quit, cold turkey. It had to stop, especially when you’re a mom ... I felt like my life was out of control, and alcohol was the source of my problems.”

— female; body rub, bars, “in house”; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

“My sister was more supportive. My family was more supportive of me with the drugs. They knew.”

— male; street; 16 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. # 160.

“My son had a child — my first grandchild. That really helped a lot.”

— female; street, bars, brothels; 16 yrs.; s/q "all"; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. # 155.

Why were you successful at quitting crack?

“I stopped doing crack after my fourth kid.”

— female; street; 7 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 94.

“The longest I stopped for was 9 months, because of my baby.”

— female; street, 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 144.

Why were you successful at quitting speed?

“My kids were with me, I did a hit, and I went under ... and that was that. Then I said, never again.”

— female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. # 25.

What would make it easier to quit drugs

“If I had my baby back with me.”

— female; street; 2 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 61.

“If I got pregnant.”

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 151.

What would make it easier to quit crack?

“I want this baby. Once I have him I know it’s going to be easier. No one can smoke around my baby. I had a child before and it was easy around her. I haven’t seen her for over a year.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.

About negative effects

“When I was eight I was abused, not sexually, by my father ... at twelve I was raped and the way my body developed kind of got me into the situation, and I got kicked out at 16 and got my own place, got welfare. Before I got welfare I was working the street and staying at each and every hostel ... I found out I was pregnant a third time ... the father had a hole in his heart and it passed on, so he died and [our child] has leukemia from his father ... right now [prostitution] is the only way to make money. I’m helping my son. I’m looking for a job during the day but for now I have to buy the syrup for his leukemia and support him and myself ... From the time I was a kid up to 15 my life was a disaster. I had problems with my parents; I had fights with my father. I was handcuffed. I was chained up. He wouldn’t let me out of the house. I was supposed to stay locked in and not meet anyone, so I decided to say ‘Fuck it’.”

— female; street; 7 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 94.

“Part of the reason I do what I do — drugs and sex work — is because I’ve had a lot of negative influences on my life. My family is very dysfunctional and my high school was a nightmare. All this and other shit.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

“I started [in the sex business] when I was 15 ... basically because I was raped when I was 5 years old. Later, I always figured that if someone wanted to have sex with me then they wanted to pay me, sort of thing. I had an alcoholic father, who beat my mother who was good to me ... I’ve got a beautiful daughter, and her father is a pimp.”

— female; 20 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 36

What made it hard to quit?

“I had lost my children ... and I was just having family problems.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; 11 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 154.

What made it hard to quit heroin?

“I was living with my girl friend, and she was way off the deep end with the junk ... and it just got really emotional ... shit from my past was coming up ... stuff like sexual and physical abuse ... things that I didn’t want to remember ... my childhood stuff was kind of getting louder and louder.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

“When they took my little girl away from me, then I went back to it.”

— female; street; 9 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, antipsychotic pills; int. #30.

“I stopped working and I got rid of my pimp relationship ... I managed to get away from him, and stay away from him.”

— female; street, phone; 15 yrs. (ncw); s/q heroin, "chemicals"; c/u cannabis; int. # 54.

Why did you not successfully control your coke use?

“When I decided to quit doing so much we started having problems in our relationship. I really wanted it to work out, so I guess I went back to the drugs just because I wanted things to be as fun and happy as they used to be, but it was all bullshit. None of our real problems were getting solved, and I was just doing more coke to try and escape my depression ... he didn’t want to support me in trying to quit.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

What would have made it easier to quit crack?

“I guess I would have liked the support from my parents. I wanted my parents to understand what I was going through but they didn’t take the time to understand.”

— female; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 123.

3. b Effects of drug use on families

Comments from some survey respondents:

How has your life or health been affected by your drug use?

“At the moment, because of my usage during my pregnancy, I’m having a hard time getting my baby back. I had a baby 10 days ago; Children’s Aid has my baby. It’s a temporary arrangement. I have 3 months to get my life together and after that I’ve lost my baby.”

“I’m in the process of trying to quit [prostitution]. ... Until [I had the baby] I was using heavy and hard. Day in, day out I was on the street, and I couldn’t do lays, but I was still out there, and guys would pick me up to party ... I was using bigger and bigger and I couldn’t get high off it, I just wanted more and more. Because I was cutting down I

gave more [crack] away, and once I gave more away I was out there twice as quick getting more. I was working twice as hard pregnant.

I was working the street right up until the day I went into the hospital. I had a lay the day my water broke. I was high when I went in, and I told the hospital, 'My water's broken, I've been using, so I really don't know if I'm feeling the contractions.' I was scared, because using hides pain, so I didn't know if I was in labour ... They did all sorts of tests and [the baby's] fine. I was doing crack but it was a little amount, so I was very glad nothing showed up in him, but I was honest with the doctors about my using, so they were happy to see that he wasn't a crack baby.

The first 2, 3 days I came out of hospital I told myself I was celebrating, because I had no visitors in the hospital, no one came to congratulate me or see the baby, no cards or nothing ... I could have went to see the baby ... but I never even phoned about him ... I thought, 'God, I'm so fucked up.' I didn't want the hospital to know I was high or they might call Children's Aid ... I want to go back to being a mum, working a 9 to 5."

— female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.

What are the risks involved in using drugs?

"I have the fear of my family or friends finding out because they can really mess up my life emotionally, because I could lose their trust and their friendship and that is something I don't want."

— male; street (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #134.

What would have made it easier to quit drugs?

"If I wasn't put on the spot, where I was losing my kids, I probably would do it better, or easier ... if I had a choice, rather than them saying that I have to, because or else ... you know, that would have been easier."

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 47.

Why won't you quit using cannabis?

"I have a 4-year-old daughter who is very, very hyperactive; she's just gone through sexual abuse and she's very hard to look after, and I smoke a joint and I'm more mellow and it's easier to look after her."

— female; street, 1.5 yrs. (ncw); s/q coke, heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int # 138.

3. c Young peoples' experiences with legal drugs

Comments from some survey respondents:

"After my parents kicked me out of the house I just ... did what I had to do ... When I was a child my parents used to feed me downers, and my doctor still was up until a few months ago, when I stopped doing them."

— male; street, bars; s/q heroin, c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 95.

"One time when I was 13 I had about two feet of snow covering me and I was in a lane way naked and I was high on pills and booze."

— female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.

"I developed an addiction to Valium when I was 9 years old, because I was diagnosed as hyperactive, by a doctor. By the time I was 12 I was doing acid, mushrooms, pot, hash, anything smoke able. When I was 15, I was an amphetamine addict, cocaine, speed; and when I was 18, I started doing a lot of heroin."

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

“I do have a history of child abuse, and I remember my parents trying to give me some form of pills in early childhood, but I refused to take them ... so maybe that has prevented me from doing drugs today, and maybe it’s helped me to keep my sanity that way.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

“I’ve been on prescription drugs since I was 15 ... my father was a pharmacist.”

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

3. d Alternatives to family

People talked about financial constraints, boredom, lack of self esteem, change of circumstances, will power, families and friends as things that affected their drug use.

Like familial relationships, friendships and friendly relations show both negative as well as positive effects on peoples attempts to control their drug use. Pressure from friends and acquaintances (see section 6. a) was often cited as obstacles to people controlling their drug habits. Peer support (see section 6. b) and support from friends was also often cited as a benefit to people controlling their drug use.

Of 86 people who said they'd tried to control their drug use (53% of the study), 9.3% said that they were successful because of friends. Of the people who'd tried to control their drug use, 3.5% mentioned “support” as a reason they successfully controlled their drug use. Of the 127 people who'd tried to quit (79% of the study), 6.3% mentioned “friends” as something that would make it easier. Of 113 people who'd quit successfully (including temporarily) (70% of the study), 13.2% mentioned “friends” as a reason for successfully quitting. Of the people who had quit, 9.7% mentioned “support” as a reason being successful, 11% of the people who'd tried to quit mentioned “support” as something that would make it easier.

4. Findings: adverse effects on health

4. a Ill effects on health

Of 134 people who responded (83% of the study), 66% said that their life or health was affected by their drug use. Of 128 people who responded (80% of the study) 86% said that there were risks or harms to using. Of 128 people who responded (80% of the study), 78% said that there were benefits. Of 83 people who responded (52% of the study), 42% thought that the risks outweighed the benefits, 22% thought that the risks maybe outweighed the benefits, and 36% thought that the risks didn't outweigh the benefits.

adverse effects of drug use on health named:

- **addiction**
- **overdose**
 - heart attack
 - loss of consciousness
 - nerve damage
 - coma
- **tranmittable diseases**
 - hepatitis a, b, c, etc.
 - HIV
 - other STDs
- **damage to health**
 - malnutrition
 - weight loss
 - suppressed imunity
 - sleep deprivation
 - lung damage
 - dental disease
 - vein damage
 - heart damage
 - liver damage
 - kidney damage
- **effects on mental health**
 - memory loss
 - confusion
 - effects on judgement
 - effects on mood
- **medical emergencies**
- **general malaise**
 - headaches
 - nose bleeds
 - lethargy

Comments from some survey respondents:

What are there risks to using drugs?

- **tranmittable diseases**

“I’ve contracted hep a, b and c. I’ve also contracted std’s as a result of working on the streets for drugs and not being aware of how to protect myself: PID, vaginal warts”
— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.
- **damage to health**

“I was diagnosed with rickets; I was dehydrated, and was suffering from malnutrition.”
— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

“Once I got bronchial pneumonia.”
— female; street, stripping, bars; 4 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 52.

“My breathing [was affected] and my heart was doing funny stuff, and my mental health, I’m sure, was affected.”
— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

“Heart problems ... I had to go to the hospital.”
— male; street, bars, phone; 7 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. #19.

“I was wearing my immune system down.”
— female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.

- **medical emergencies**

“I’ve been in situations where I can’t remember anything and I go right through windows. I’ve slashed myself up pretty badly; I’ve put myself in danger of bleeding to death.”
— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

“Several times I ended up in hospital.”
— male; street, bars; 11 yrs.; s/q coke heroin, speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int # 102.

- **general malaise**

“Nosebleeds and headaches, but nothing life-threatening.”
— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

alcohol:

What are the risks involved to using alcohol?

“It’s a big risk to mix the booze and the pills. It can really fuck you up, I’m telling you. I would do it and the next day I would have no idea of what I had done the night before. That’s pretty scary. Also, I’ve heard of people who have gone into comas from mixing the two drugs. I was lucky, or maybe just smart enough not to take more than I could handle.”

— female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.

What made it easier to quit drinking?

“I almost died in a car accident when I was drunk. Another time I took Antabuse after drinking, an entire bottle of it, and threw up my stomach acids, and ended up in hospital.”
— male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (ncw), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.

- **damage to health**

What are the negative effects of drinking?

“My health ... mainly cirrhosis of the liver, amongst other things.”
— female; street, phone; 10 yrs. (ncw); s/q "everything"; c/u alcohol; int. # 63.

“Alcohol can wreck your liver and skin and make you look like hell.”
— female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.

“I have a bad liver because of drinking.”
— female; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 123.

- **effects on mental health**

What made it easier to quit drinking?

“With drinking ... I got frightened ... I woke up in a drunk tank and it was like being in a horrible movie ... I woke up in hospital emergency and the nurse said the police wanted to take me to jail because they thought I was on drugs ... but ... I was only on alcohol.”

— male; phone; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol, tabacco, caffeine; c/u cannabis, LSD, peyote, mescaline; int. # 91.

“With alcohol I got myself into some very sticky situations. I woke up with strange men, not knowing where I was, or how I got there ... I’ve been threatened, treated really badly ... It’s still something I have to be careful with, and I still sometimes get myself in the same stupid things, because of blackouts, which, at times, have led to me injuring myself. I’ve scarred my face, and knocked teeth out while drunk. So it’s dangerous for me.”

— female; body rub, bars, “in house”; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

cannabis:

What are there negative effects of using cannabis?

- **damage to health – lung damage**

“When I smoked hash ... I have asthma, so it was really hard ... to breathe.”

— female; street, 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 144.

“My lungs are not the best.”

— female; street, phone; 12 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 70.

“Sometimes I think my lungs are in rough shape from smoking pot or hash, but I keep pretty fit. I have a good diet and I exercise, so I’m in pretty good shape.”

— female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.

- **general malaise**

“When I was living in this house full of all kinds of hippie drug people I was doing way too much drugs and I got lethargic.”

— male; street; 1 yr.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: alcohol, ecstasy; int. # 44.

cocaine:

What are there risks involved in using coke?

“I guess you’re putting your life in jeopardy just doing the coke; it’s a bad drug.”

— male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.

- **addiction**

“Coke can get you totally addicted and you could end up spending everything you own on it. I suppose you could also overdose.”

— female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.

“I seen myself becoming addicted to cocaine. I seen my life pass before me one too many times. I was getting hurt physically and mentally.”

— female; street, phone, 3 yrs.; s/q.cocaine; c/u alcohol, tobacco; int. # 72.

- **overdose**

“Yes, there are risks; you can die. You could be vegged out; you could be totally paralyzed; you could be in a coma — it could do anything.”

— female; street; 25 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 65.

- **tranmittable diseases**

“There was always the possibility that I could use a dirty needle.”

— male; street, phone; 11 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; DOC: alcohol; int. # 03.

What are the negative effects of using cocaine ?

- **damage to health**

“Coke, I could feel in my body, being harmed by it, losing weight ... stress ... I could see my health deteriorating if I continued. If I try to do a line now, my body feels very weird and different. I get all worked; I get a headache; my side hurts.”

— male; phone, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: alcohol; int. # 40.

- **effects on mental health**

“I got really violent when I was using cocaine. I went to jail for it.”

— female; street, stripping; 2 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 127.

crack:

What are the risks involved in using crack?

“It took away all my feelings, crack did. Don’t do crack ... Everywhere I go my life is threatened. And my health — I’ve got hepatitis b and it’s just got me pneumonia, stuff like that ... This is deadly stuff man.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.

“I had a heart attack, and pneumonia, and there was confusion and a lack of memory from using crack.”

— female; street, bars; 0.33 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 10.

“Crack is the worst because every time I do it, it makes my chest feel like it’s caving in ... [it’s] just hell, and what [it does] to your life makes me depressed.”

— male; street, bars, stripping; 1 yr.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: cannabis; int. # 04.

“Heart attack, lung crystallizing, collapsing, pneumonia, loss of memory, state of confusion, weight loss. Police-related risks also.”

— female; street, bars; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 114.

- **addiction**

“Health risks ... this crack coke addiction gets larger cause your body is building up a natural immunity to it, and so you’ve got to do more and more to get the same high, so there’s the risk of overdose ... you tend to do things that you wouldn’t normally do to get coke or crack, and if you’ve got family ties, which I do, it can and eventually does affect everyone you know who has money.”

— male; street, regulars, ran brothel; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 88.

“As long as you’re an addict you have nothing ... you’ll always work on the street. Most people don’t care about their appearance, clean clothes, a roof over their head. All they’re doing is wondering about that next hit, where it’s coming from. I’ve seen people out here in blizzards, last \$20, and they could be freezing or starving and, ‘Oh, I’ll get this hit and worry about it later.’ 15 minute high and you come down, still freezing, still hungry.”

— female; street, phone; 12 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 98.

- **overdose**

“I almost overdosed about ten times on crack ... my chest would hurt ... did the funky chicken ... begged my friend to dial 911.”

— male; street, bars, stripping; 1 yr.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: cannabis; int. # 04.

“There have been times when I’ve done too much crack and had what you may call a little fit ... then passed out. [I’ve] blacked out for long periods.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

- **damage to health**

“Health-wise there’s your heart, lungs, collapsing, confusion, memory loss, loss of equilibrium, loss of sleep, loss of appetite.”

— female; street, bars; 0.33 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 10.

“I was 85 pounds, I was dying.”

— female; street, phone; 12 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 98.

“Physically, you will lose weight. Mentally, if you do too much, it becomes a way of life — you need it.”

— trans; street, bars; 5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 139.

“I lost my teeth ... I’ve lost a lot of sleep; I would stay up for 9 days and get three days’ sleep. I would be starving. I starved myself for crack.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 121.

heroin:

What are the risks involved in using heroin ?

- **overdose**

“I ODED and puked my brains out ... I was lying unconscious on my bed for 12 hours. The result of that was memory loss, which I still have, and nerve damage to my left leg ... The disability that I have is a constant reminder.”

— male; street (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #134.

- **transmittable diseases**

“When I was doing heroin I never took care of myself at all. I was doing too much at one time ... I was sharing needles with people. I was putting myself at risk for STDs. Basically it just depleted my health.”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

- **damage to health**

“You can get sick ... You can fuck up your arms from needles. I got abscesses. Lumps of the stuff it was cut with built up in my veins.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

“I was losing weight, ‘cause I wasn’t eating, and my weight got to 87 lb. and I had to be hospitalized.”

— female; street, 1.5 yrs. (ncw); s/q coke, heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int # 138.

- **effects on mental health**

“I just wasn’t conscious for weeks.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

speed:

What are the negative effects to using speed ?

“I was all bones. My face was hollow. I was hallucinating ... I remember once staying up for 30 days solid. No sleep. Constantly hitting. You get pretty messed up doing stuff like that ... I do have a heart condition and I don’t know [why].”

— female; street, phone, bars; 26 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 110.

“I did too much speed one night .. the next day I had a swimming practice, and I nearly drowned.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

“I was harmed by doing speed ... the physical addiction made my life too complicated ... I lost a lot of weight, and I couldn’t function normally ... I had a vitamin deficiency and whatnot.”

— male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.

4. b Relationship of stress to using drugs

Many respondents cite life crises and other forms of stress as important factors in their drug use. Excessive drug use often produces further stress. Thus some people seem to feel that they have to choose between being stressed and using drugs. Others seem to find a comfortable level of consumption, particularly of alcohol or cannabis, and don't feel their drug use is a problem.

(See also section 2. e Ways to stay safe.)

Comments from some survey respondents:

What made it hard to control your drug use?

“I guess you could say it was a screwed up time in my life ... a lot of problems with family, friends, jobs and things like that, and it was making me turn to that more ... if somebody was there [and] they had the drugs, or if I had the money I’d buy it.”

— male; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u cannabis; int. # 111.

“Habit, stress, wanting to feel good, wanting to escape and clear things out of my brain.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

What would make it easier to quit drugs?

“I would have to be extremely comfortable with myself to quit—be in control of your life, have some mental stability. Who would need drugs then?”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

“Being away from it, being away from the people that have it, being away from the stressful atmosphere that causes you to do it.”

— male; phone; 2 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 166.

Stress related to being HIV-positive:

What made it hard to control your drug use?

“My health situation right now is that I’m HIV positive and working out on the street I’m working a thin line ... If I use drugs right now my T4 count will go right down and I will be considered full blown and I don’t want that.”

— trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.

“I was disenchanted with my lifestyle. I had no goals after I finished school, and then I discovered that I was HIV-positive, and I was really at a crossroads where I didn’t feel

that anything was going to be happening, so there was no point in trying to achieve anything any more because I wasn't going to be around any more anyway."

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

Stress related to physical abuse:

What made it hard to control your drug use?

"Initially I thought I was doing it just for fun, but as the years progressed, I would recognize the pattern ... I realized I came from a violent background ... I was in a physically abusive relationship with my stepfather ... I was very unhappy ... my grandmother had died, and a cousin who was very close to me was murdered ... I started abusing the drugs, and it was definitely for escape."

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

What made it hard to quit?

"Abuse from my family, abuse on the streets ... giving abuse to other people ... I was fucked in the head ... I've been in psychiatric hospitals a couple of times ... I was skinny when I was doing drugs, and I thought that the drugs gave me energy, kept me going, and made me happy. Also, I had a lot of friends die around that time, and the drugs help me to forget."

— male; street; 1 yr. (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 62.

alcohol:

What made it hard to control your drinking?

"The tendency is to drink when I'm stressed out ... It started out innocently, but got out of control ... a blackout was like a vacation from the problems in my life."

— female; body rub, bars, "in house"; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

Why did you not quit drinking?

"I just can't go a day without it because I get stressed out so fast ... and if I'm not drunk, I can't be nice."

— male; bars, street, phone; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, ecstasy, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 02.

cannabis:

What are the benefits to using cannabis?

"The weed makes me feel relaxed, at peace; I can sleep, have good sex."

— male; street, stripping; 0.6 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis; int. # 79

"If I didn't do it, I would sit at home and die of stress ... and I wouldn't have no furniture left because I'd beat it all up."

— male; bars, street, phone; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, ecstasy, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 02.

Do the benefits outweigh risks in using cannabis?

"Maybe it makes me a bit of a dreamer, but that's better than living in a nightmare."

— male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (ncw), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.

Why won't you quit cannabis?

"I don't want to ... You don't get fucked up like you do on alcohol. It's a great tranquilizer. I smoke a joint, and go into never-never land for a few minutes before I have to come back to reality, more prepared to handle the day."

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

What made it hard to control your cannabis use?

“Lately I’ve been smoking more because I’ve had a lot of stress in my life.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

Would you still use cannabis if you quit working in the sex industry?

“I’ll be a granny, still smoking; my son’ll bring me a joint ... We all have stress, I don’t care what walk of life you’re from.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

“Yes — Stopping working is not going to stop my stress.”

— male; bars, street, phone; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, ecstasy, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 02.

heroin:

What are the benefits to using heroin?

“It made it so that I didn’t hate my life so much. It got me out of this horrible world I had been living in, which was being a fag in high school ... leaving home, going down to a big scary city, getting scared ... getting really fucked up made it all more tolerable ... I didn’t have to deal with that shit.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 7 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. #19.

“I like the high. I like the nod. I like the rush ... It takes the edge off reality so that I don’t do something stupid like take the building apart bit by bit.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

What made it hard to control your heroin use?

“Any crisis in my life ... I would go right to heroin, because it was the only thing that would make me feel good and not worry about my problems.”

— male; street (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #134.

speed:

What made it hard to quit speed?

“Everybody seems to grab onto something when they’re stressed ... and at the time a friend committed suicide, so I was pretty upset about that ... so I did speed after that.”

— male; phone; 2 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 166.

4. c Medical use of illegal drugs

Comments from some survey respondents:

cannabis:

What are the benefits to using cannabis?

“I know that when I’m by myself and I do it I feel fine ... I have a pain in my back and legs and that pain goes away for a little while; nothing the doc prescribes works. And I have epilepsy and smoking marijuana keeps me relaxed so I don’t have seizures.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 82.

“I find the marijuana helps, particularly during times of PMS ... It helps me with my creativity and my artistic skills.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

“[Weed] kills the time ... Weed makes me eat so I gain weight, and it makes me nice so I can keep my friends. I find if I don’t smoke, then I can’t sleep ... I’ll stay up all night.”

— male; street, bars, stripping; 1 yr.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: cannabis; int. # 04.

4. d Pros remarks on safe drug use

Comments from some survey respondents:

“There is a community here. The women who work are good to each other. Look out for each other ... I can call The Works and they are here in five minutes, so there are no risks ... for needles. So, yeah, I use clean needles, or if not, I use bleach. I’m safe.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.

“Sometimes I’ll do a mushroom trip or LSD trip in the country, but it’s all very carefully planned out. It helps me get a perspective on life, and it’s very therapeutic.”

— female; domination, bi shows, stags; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, LSD, mushrooms; int. #58

“As far as I’m concerned, the only way to go in terms of drug prevention is decriminalization of drugs and teaching people how to shoot up safely and giving people clean drugs, ’cause that’s where the harm comes from — people buying drugs off the street and they’re dirty.”

— female; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q scripts; c/u alcohol, cannabis, tylenol; DOC: cannabis; int. # 42.

What would make it easier to quit using drugs?

“I don’t agree with that needle and condom truck ... if you think about it, you’re just helping them in a way, because if they don’t have it, they won’t use it, and if they can’t go to a drugstore, then they’re fucked.”

— female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.

cannabis:

“Pot stabilizes and satisfies me .. it keeps me away from other drugs ... It’s used medicinally ... it prevents glaucoma. Cancer patients use it. I don’t have those things; I just like it ... I don’t find that it’s a health risk because it grows — it’s organic.”

— male; street; 12 yrs.; s/q coke, "downers"; c/u cannabis, tobacco; DOC: cannabis; int. # 57.

cocaine:

How do you use coke?

“Wisely. I like to bang it but I like to smoke it and snort it also. Any way possible. I don’t get a chance to do it very often. When I’m banging stuff I always use clean needles and when I’m having sex with someone other than my girlfriend I always use a condom. I don’t do enough drugs to merit having a number at the needle exchange, but I get them from friends.”

— male; street, bars; s/q heroin, c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 95.

ecstasy:

“I’ve used ecstasy to limits and had convulsions but I was never hospitalized or anything like that ... The moment I thought I was overdoing it and it was interfering with my life, my emotional state, and getting things done, I would stop or cut down altogether ... There are certain physical effects that are long term. Ecstasy acts on your central nervous system and it depletes your spine of spinal fluids so more recently I’ve been taking calcium magnesium supplements before I do the ecstasy and I will have a smoother trip. I have a drug positive physician and he recommended this.”

— female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.

4. e health insurance coverage

[What about stuff like dental/health plans, retirement plans, other labour related stuff in relation to underground economy work.]

Comments from some survey respondents:

“If I could get a job, I would, but I can’t ... I can’t get no straight job until I get my teeth fixed ... who’s going to hire someone with teeth missing? Being a waitress ... impossible.”

— female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. # 25.

“I’ve scarred my face, and knocked teeth out while drunk. So it’s dangerous for me.”

— female; body rub, bars, “in house”; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

“I lost my teeth ... I’ve lost a lot of sleep; I would stay up for 9 days and get 3 days’ sleep. I would be starving. I starved myself for crack.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 121.

5. Findings: reducing vs. quitting

5. a Why some people choose not to quit drugs

Of 148 people who were currently using something (92% of the study), 43% of said that there were drugs they wouldn't quit. 29% of those currently using alcohol said they wouldn't quit drinking, 48% of those currently using cannabis said they wouldn't quit, 8% of those currently using coke said they wouldn't quit coke, 2% of those currently using crack wouldn't quit crack, 13% of those currently using heroin said they wouldn't quit heroin, 60% of those currently using valium (three out of five people) said they wouldn't quit valium, 38% of those currently using mushrooms said they wouldn't quit mushrooms, 11% of those currently using ecstasy wouldn't quit ecstasy, 9% of those currently using LSD wouldn't quit acid. There was one person who said they wouldn't quit "everything."

Comments from some survey respondents:

"I like it too much."

— male; street, bars; s/q heroin, c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 95.

"It's really just recreational."

— trans; street, phone; 2 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. # 14.

"Because I'm totally in control of the types of drugs that I use and the quantity and also I pick out the occasions that I use them—they are very special occasions — sort of like a ritual."

— female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.

"I like my drugs. They're festive. They make me feel sexy."

— trans; street, bars, bathhouses; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: Special K; int. # 87.

"I use drugs to deal with the fact that I'm HIV-positive."

— trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.

Why won't you quit crack?

"I've tried to, but satisfaction [from crack] is so great ... Basically, the people I was hanging around with; I was with people who had it on them all the time. It was available all the time, so it was easy to do. I do not really want to quit."

— trans; street, bars; 5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 139.

What made it hard to quit drugs?

"I didn't deal with any of the problems that made me use drugs. Eventually I went back to it ... I lived in hell when I was straight."

— female; street; 4 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; DOC: speed; int. # 120.

"I know I will always use drugs ... once you start making regular use of it, you're an addict till the day you die ... so, I'll never say I'll quit completely, because you never know what might happen ... never say never,"

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 05.

5. b Reducing harm by reducing use

Of 101 people that responded (62% of the study), 84% said they'd tried to reduce or control their drug use. Of the 86 people who said they had tried to reduce or control their drug use, 24% tried to reduce their alcohol use, 16% tried to reduce their cannabis habit; 17% tried to reduce using coke; 21% tried with crack; 12% with heroin; 2.3% with LSD, 2.3% with speed, 1.2% with valium, and 1.2% with mushrooms. Of the 21 people who'd tried to reduce their alcohol use, 76% did so successfully and 14% were successful temporarily. Of the 14 people who'd tried to control their cannabis habit, 57% were successful and 14% were successful temporarily. Of the 15 people who'd tried to reduce their coke use 93% were successful, 7% were successful temporarily. Of 18 people who'd tried to control their crack habit, 56% were successful, and 33% were successful temporarily. Of the ten people who'd tried to reduce their heroin, 50% were successful, and 30% were successful temporarily. Of the 85 people that responded (53% of the study) 65% said they'd successfully reduced or controlled their drug use, 27% said they were temporarily successful, and 8% weren't successful.

Comments from some survey respondents:

Other comments?

“I started smoking pot when I was 13. I got into it like most of the other people I knew did. Later on I tried acid but I never did it again. It freaked me right out ... I still do coke, but not as much as I used to. I went nuts with it for a while ... I really cut down ... when I first started it I really liked it and started doing it far too much. I knew I had a problem ... With pot [the benefits] definitely outweigh the risks ... cocaine is a different story altogether. I think if you are really careful with it and use it in moderation, then the risks are not all that high, but unfortunately most people get way too deep into it. I'm a good example. I still have to keep an eye on myself with it, because I know how easily you can end up hooked ... It seemed like, because I wanted to stop, that everyone else who was still using didn't want to hear about my life. It was like they felt too guilty to be around me ... I think the person has to really want to stop, first off. If they don't want to stop, nothing on earth will change that for them, unless of course you get rid off all the drugs, and that would be pretty hard.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

Why were you successful in controlling your cannabis habit?

“I used to smoke every day, and I was just getting so burnt out. So now I smoke only a few joints a week ... It just caught up to me and I realized I had to cut down. It wasn't hard ... It just made me so tired I wasn't getting around to anything ... As soon as it started affecting my life I realized I had to reduce and I did. I'm ... strong willed.”

— female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.

“I would buy a half bag and smoke only a few joints out of it. I would try to make it last longer ... Basically I try to say to myself that I have to make this last.”

— male; street, stripping; 0.6 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis; int. # 79

Why were you successful in controlling your heroin use?

“I started using less of it, weaning myself off, but a lot of the problems around it is social pressures. I mean, certain groups of people like to sit around and shoot up all night long, and it's hard to say no ... so I just cut back on my social life.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

Why were you successful in controlling your drug use?

“[I] just cut back on my own ... I was tired of being broke and burnt out. I realized that I could be spending the money on much better things ... I woke up to the reality of how

much money I could be making, instead of sitting around all doped up with nowhere to go. I still do some drugs but ... I have it way more under control ... I ended up helping myself and taking control over my own life ... Actually, I was doing far more drugs before I got into the business than I am now.”

— female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.

“I had my nose broken by some freak ... and that was what basically made me decide I had enough.”

— male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.

“I smoke half of what I used to ... I’d be into finding other ways to enjoy life now ... It all refers to my health situation right now. Knowing I’m HIV positive, I know it’s not good to continue using drugs. Basically, I’m trying my best to avoid a lot of people and places where there’s drugs.”

— trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.

“[I reduced cocaine] about 90 per cent ... partly because of the money factor, and partly because I was getting sick of the crap that went along with buying it.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

6. Findings: deciding to quit

Of 136 people who responded (84% of the study) 93% said they'd tried to quit something. Of 127 people who'd tried to quit something, 15% tried to quit alcohol, 7% tried to quit cannabis, 32% tried to quit cocaine, 33% tried to quit crack, 16% tried to quit heroin, 11% tried to quit speed, 6% tried to quit LSD, 0.8% tried to quit mushrooms, 0.8% tried to quit valium. Of 131 people who answered (81% of the study) 48% said they'd successfully quit something, 38% quit something temporarily, and 14% said they hadn't.

Of the 19 people who'd tried to quit using alcohol, 47% said they were successful, 44% of whom were currently using. Of the nine people who'd tried to quit using cannabis, 44% said they were successful, 100% of whom were currently using. Of the 41 people who'd tried to quit using coke, 66% said they were successful, 15% of whom were currently using. Of the 42 people who'd tried to quit using crack, 62% said they were successful, 65% of whom were currently using. Of the 20 people who'd tried to quit heroin, 90% said they were successful, 28% of whom are currently using. Eight people said they'd tried to quit LSD, nine people (113%) said they'd successfully quit acid, none of whom said they were currently using it. 14 people said they'd tried to quit speed, 16 people (114%) said they'd successfully quit speed, 6% of whom (one person) said they were currently using. One person (100% of those that tried) successfully quit valium.

Of 148 people currently using something 25% indicated they were planning to quit. Of the 37 people who said they were planning to quit, 62% said they were planning to quit on their own; 51% said they were planning to quit on a program; and 14% said they were planning to quit both on a program and on their own. Of the 23 people who said they were planning to quit on their own 29% also indicated that they weren't planning to quit on a program. Of the 19 people who said they were planning to quit on a program, 47% also indicated that they were not planning to quit on their own, No one said they were neither quitting on a program nor quitting on their own.

6. a Obstacles to quitting/reducing

Comments from some survey respondents:

“It made me escape the reality of my life. I didn't really want to quit. I felt I wasn't going anywhere in my life.”

— male; street, regulars; 1 year (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke, DOC: coke, int. # 01.

Why were you not successful at quitting coke?

“It would just be there, coke or alcohol ... and if I drank, coke usually followed, and then I just couldn't stop.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

“I wasn't ready when I went in [to treatment] ... I was going in for my mother's sake.”

— female; street; 14 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 29.

Pressure from other users

Why were you not successful at quitting coke?

“I've done a lot of coke and I've tried to stop coke a lot of times, but I think it's the drug — when I go to work, I go to a bar ... I see people I know. Maybe I'll pull some dates — I have dates that love to do coke, so it's really hard not to ... I work the street ... a good portion of all the people on the street do drugs and they say, 'Hey, want a toke or a line or do some hash,' and it's really hard to get away from [them].”

— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

Why did you not successfully control your cannabis use?

“Really depressing thoughts, family and stuff. No one really wants to talk to you so you think I’ll try to get some help and treatment and someone comes up to you and says, ‘Want to smoke some pot?’ and you’re right back to square one and you’re back into it. You do the drug cause you can’t handle reality is what I think, and so I stick with the drug.”

— male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.

Why were you not successful at quitting heroin?

“It’s tough when you’re running into people three nights a week who are shooting up ... I was making a lot of money ... and I found this niche of people who liked to get high in the daylight hours ... When you’re down all the time, it’s easy to say, ‘Okay, I’m going to do a hit’.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

What made it hard to control your speed use?

“Speed was really hard because all the people I was around were into [it] ... someone would score and we would all want in on it.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

What made it hard to quit?

“Old crowd, old surroundings — ‘Want a stone?’ ‘Yeah, sure’ — and up again, gone off to the races.”

— female; street; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 140.

“I wasn’t able to quit cause of the people I hang around with. I don’t think I can.”

— female; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 145.

“I was hanging around not the greatest crew of people, and after I stopped hanging around these people it just seemed to diminish altogether.”

— male; street; 16 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. # 160.

“There were times when I was around people who were using it that I had trouble.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis; int. # 126.

“I find that most people who are addicted or using always want everyone else to be using with them. Misery loves company. So if you stay away from them then you don’t have to associate with them, which makes it a lot easier to quit, if you don’t have people standing around saying, ‘Would you like some?’ I’m still offered it but I don’t have any interest in it ... To this day, I don’t hang around people who use.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 26 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 110.

What made it hard to control your drug use?

“I think the reason I did it was to just be part of the crowd. Like, I enjoy it, yes, but I could stop any time. But it was just the friends I hung around with. I just did it to be cool, I guess.”

— female street; 0.5 yrs.; c/u alcohol; int. # 76.

Lack of self-esteem

“I dwelt on things like thinking I was a bad person, and also I felt people believed that I couldn’t do anything better for myself; people didn’t have faith in me. But the drugs, at times, made me feel that I could do anything.”

— male; street, regulars; 1 year (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke, DOC: coke, int. # 01.

“My health [was affected] but also at the time I was using it I didn’t care. I wasn’t happy so I didn’t care enough about myself to care about myself.”

— male; street (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #134.

What would have made it easier to quit crack?

“If I lived in a remote village, away from crack ... if I were working, and felt better about myself.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

Boredom

“I chose to get back into it ... boredom — not being satisfied with what you’re doing in your life.”

— male; street, regulars, ran brothel; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 88.

“Basically, I was just bored with my life, and I was trying to get rid of that boredom.”

— female; street, bars; 7 yrs.; s/q LSD, mushrooms, mescaline; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 162.

“I always went back to the same thing ... I guess I was bored with myself. I just wanted to get high again, go back out on the streets.”

— female; street; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol, crack; int. # 124.

6. b Incentives to quit drug use

Examples of other users

“I’m a technician in a lab ... I was getting sick of hooking ... you can’t do that forever ... so I was starting to think of my future more, and decided to turn my life around. I saw friends of mine from high school doing great things with their lives while I was doing basically nothing. And then I saw other people who were worse off than me — got me thinking that I could be them ... so seeing what the lifestyle was doing to a lot of people made me realize that there were other things that I wanted to do with my life ... I got into a bit of a row with the girls I was living with, and then decided it was time to get out ... I moved in with some friends whose lifestyle was different, and for about half a year, occasionally, I did do some coke, but the money wasn’t there because I was going to school again ... If I found that the drug was disrupting my life after a couple of uses, or if I found that I didn’t like what the drug was doing to me emotionally or physically, then I would just stop using it ... I never found that I got addicted.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

What helped you successfully quit heroin?

“Last summer ... I thought I was doing heroin a bit too much. I just stopped doing it ... I just got sick of it. I didn’t like what it was doing to some people I knew and I didn’t want that to happen to me. I don’t want to become wired out.”

— male; street, bars; s/q heroin, c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 95.

What helped you successfully control your drug use?

“Just ... looking around, and seeing people fuck their lives up, and dying ... that is enough to make me stand back.”

— male; street, phone; 17 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 56.

“I was stressed out with the people I was working with ... I saw what it was doing to them, what they would do for drugs ... it was making me ill.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 05.

“When I seen my roommate crawling on the floor looking for something that wasn’t there ... it brings you down.”

— male; street, stripping; 0.6 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis; int. # 79

Financial constraints

What helped you successfully reduce crack ?

“I just bought this jacket and shoes and I’ve been trying to cut it down ... not going cold turkey, but ... for me to spend \$200 on blow one night, wake up in the morning broke — it’s like watching your money burn. And today I went and bought this, and at least I have something to show for it. I did a little 20 piece today.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.

What helped you successfully control your drug use?

“I’ve cut down and controlled it for a short period of time. Usually at the beginning of the month after all my bills were paid it’s party, party, party as long as I have food or whatever. Near the end of the month when I realize I’ve got a cable bill or another bill coming in then I’ll cut down. Every month I cut it down ... I just say to myself, ‘You have a cable bill coming up.’ These things are important to me.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

“It was making me spend all my money; it made me broke.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 81.

“I had run out of money — my unemployment ran out; I wasn’t getting a lot of dates. I would only do domination — nothing sexual with men, maybe a hand job at the most. So money is a factor.”

— female; street, domination; 7 yrs.; c/u heroin, cannabis; int. # 69.

“You just fit it into your budget and that’s it for the month. That’s what you have. You can’t go beyond that. It’s like paying your other bills ... I said no, that’s enough, can’t afford it.”

— male; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u cannabis; int. # 111.

“Sometimes it is due to finances ... if I can’t afford it then I just don’t buy it.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

“I don’t have any magic answers ... for one thing I don’t have much money and it’s expensive and I’m saving up for holidays and I would rather put money aside for that.”

— male; phone; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol, tobacco, caffeine; c/u cannabis, LSD, peyote, mescaline; int. # 91.

How does your drug use relate to your doing sex work?

“Most of my money is spent on drugs; almost all of it. Without the need for drugs I wouldn’t need the amount of money I’m making, so I would try something else. I don’t want to work forever doing what I’m doing.”

— male; street; 4 yrs., s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, heroin, "pills"; int. # 104.

“The sex trade gave me instant access to cash ... I didn’t have to explain to my parents where it came from ... so, it made buying [drugs] possible ... it gave me extra income, on top of what I was making from an allowance from my parents ... I wouldn’t take a McDonald’s job where I was getting paid \$60 a day, just so that I could get high, when all I’d have to do is suck on some guy’s dick for \$60, and then get high, right?”

— male; bars; 7yrs.; s/q coke, speed; c/u cannabis, heroin, mushrooms; int. # 33

6. c Things that facilitate quitting

Will power

What helped you quit drinking?

“I became very bad; I got sick of drinking, so I quit ... I wanted to feel better in my body. I wanted to wake up without a hangover. I noticed I was hating myself for doing it. I realized I wanted to get better. I think when I drink I just don’t care about nothing. But after I just want to get control. When I am drinking sometimes I just don’t have control of what I do and I wanted to take control of my health ... Remembering what it was like helped me stay away.”

— male; stripping, modelling; 2 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 80.

What helped you successfully reduce your coke use?

“I just wanted to do it ... I really wanted to change my life around ... and I did it. I think that I really just had enough of it, you know ... you grow up. And I noticed that my health was being affected ... I just didn’t want to be in that head space any more ... there were other things I wanted to do with my life ... and I didn’t want to end up dead.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

What helped you successfully control your drug use?

“I just had been moving forward in life positively and I basically woke up and it was my own choice. ... I decided I don’t need it. I don’t like it ... I changed some of my friends who were basically using me to get high themselves.”

— male; phone, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: alcohol; int. # 40.

“Strictly willpower, and it was an effort ... moving out of prostitution ... I needed the money for important things like my education ... The people around me were not into it ... it wasn’t condoned.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

“I woke up one morning and said to myself that I can’t go on any more. I was losing my head and those ambitions that I wanted to do in my life. I knew by doing drugs I couldn’t do them so I just stopped.”

— female; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 123.

“I was at the bottom. I don’t think I could’ve gotten any lower as far as life forms are concerned. I hate to use an AA term, but ... you can’t go any lower and there’s nowhere else to go but up so you’ve got to make the effort to change.”

— male; street, regulars, ran brothel; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 88.

“I just got sick of doing it. I didn’t feel good doing it and I was using every second day.”

— male; street, bars; 1 yr.; s/q alcohol; c/u crack; DOC: coke; int. # 142.

What would have made it easier to quit drugs?

“More willpower ... and just having that friend there to give a good kick in the pants towards the right direction.”

— male; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q coke, LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 08.

“I just have to be more serious about quitting. It’s just got to be me. I’m not afraid of the risks and I have to just be totally fed up with it ... I have to be the one to put my foot down.”

— female; street, phone, regulars; 1 yr.; c/u heroin; int. #92.

Opinions about treatment:

“If I’m going to go to an AA meeting, I don’t care if there’s sex workers there ... if I feel like quitting I’m gonna quit, not just because there’s a bunch of ho’s in the room.”

— male; street; 16 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. # 160.

“I think I might [get treatment] in the future. Personally for crack coke you do not need those treatment centres and that; it’s all in your mind. If you’re willing to quit, you’ll quit.”

— female; street, 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 144.

Change of location/circumstances

Why did you successfully control drinking?

“I only drink now about 2 or 3 times a year ... Money controlled my use to a degree, or love affairs ... I have a child, so, different circumstances.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

What made it easier to control your coke use?

“I had a lover in BC and he was really into the coke. He’s the person who got me started ... eventually I just said fuck it, and broke up with him ... the love was gone and I was very unhappy. That was one of the reasons I moved to Toronto. Getting away from that whole scene really helped.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

“It wasn’t a matter of quitting ... I got tired of it ... the quality wasn’t there anymore ... I just stopped hanging around the people that I was with, and then it wasn’t around any more .. I just got sick of it ... I grew up ... I wasn’t enjoying it ... all those sleepless nights ... I remember being depressed ... I would wake up hungover on whatever I had used the night before.”

— female; street, bars; 7 yrs.; s/q LSD, mushrooms, mescaline; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 162.

What made it easier to control your crack use?

“It [crack] used to be on a daily basis; now it’s every 10 days ... [I’d] move out of the area, stay away from some of the people I knew, give my money to someone else ... Right now I have a part-time job, so I have a responsibility to that ... I’ve made a commitment and there are things I have to do and when I’m finished, I don’t have time for drugs ... I made up my mind to do what I had to do to get my life in order.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q valium; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 103.

What helped you successfully quit crack?

“I moved to Kitchener ... I had to get away from ... the people who were doing crack.”

— male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.

Why were you not successful at quitting crack?

“[As] soon as I’m back here, I fall ... as soon as I’m near it ... I wasn’t really stopping. I was just away from it. Then, I came back, and it was the same.”

— female; street; 2 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 61.

What is the relationship between your crack use and doing sex work?

“When I’m working I do a lot more drugs because I’m around a lot of ho’s and stuff who do it. I’m not really a leader; I’m more of a follower ... I can say no so many times and then it’s like, ‘Fine, okay, let’s go do some rock.’ If it’s around me constantly I’ll do it. I can’t have it sit there in front of me and not do it.”

— male; street, bars; 4 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 117.

Other comments about heroin?

“Even now, till this day ... when you’re in it as long as I was, you know every junkie on the street ... so now when I’m out working I’ll run into them sometimes, and they’re still using; they’ll be high. Then that feeling comes over you ... and I have to run ... I don’t walk, I run ... Avoidance is important. It’s not that they’re telling you to come on ... it’s just that your willpower goes down the drain, because you know the feeling.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

What helped you quit speed?

“[I quit] by leaving LA.. and coming back to Toronto — where speed isn’t, as far as I know — I’ve been clean for a year.”

— male; street, phone; 17 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 56.

What would make it easier to quit drugs?

“If I had moved out of the city, stayed away from downtown.”

— female; street; 14 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 29.

“Get out of Toronto, get into the countryside, a log home.”

— trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.

“Probably pick new friends, ’cause if you’re going to go for treatment you have to let the past go and start fresh. And starting fresh is a really hard thing to do, especially living on the street and stuff.”

— male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.

Why were you successful at quitting?

“I concentrated on who I was hanging out with, and concentrated on good, close friends. I made a conscious effort to cut a lot of people out of my life. I wouldn’t return phone calls to people who were still in that mode ... so, I basically hibernated ... I developed other interests, I started hanging out with more positive-minded people ... people whom I wanted to be like.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

What helped you successfully control your drug use?

“I stayed away from people who were using it.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.

“I left the scene ... I left Toronto and moved to another city.”

— male; street, regulars, ran brothel; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 88.

“I stayed away from downtown.”

— female; street; 16 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 67.

“The moment I walk back into a situation figuring I could handle it, I just went straight back to where I was before. I try to avoid people, old friends and old situations.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.

“I quit, I went back home and stayed with my parents. And I had to stop ... I had no money to buy it ... but, being at home, nobody was doing it around me, and I had no money.”

— female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.

“Just the fact that I was in jail ... it freaked me out.”

— female; street; 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 24

“My mother wouldn’t let me come downtown.”

— female; street; 14 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 29.

“Living with my dad has helped me to reduce my use of drugs because I will not do them if he is around.”

— female; street, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke; int. # 66.

“I just stopped hanging around the old people, scene. I’d go out, make my money, and go home. Just stay away from the scene.”

— female; street, bars, phone; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 141.

“Basically I stayed away from it, the people and the environment where it was conducive ... not that I’m saying bars make people alcoholics, because they don’t, but it’s a good idea to stay away from it if you have a problem.”

— male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (ncw), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.

“I usually have bench warrants and I knew that if I got too fucked up they would get me, or I knew I needed the rest. I would take off on my own or get away for a while. People would think I was in jail.”

— female; street; 25 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 65.

“I’ve been in rehab a couple of times, but only once for a full stay ... It wasn’t [successful] because of my return to Toronto, which was my downfall. There’s not really an excuse, because I was dry ... until I got back here, and then I relapsed ... Loneliness is a very strong part of my drug abuse.”

— female; street, bars, brothels; 16 yrs.; s/q "all"; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. # 155.

Having a support system

Why were you successful at quitting?

“I just started to mentally fall apart and with the support of a friend I just sort of woke up to the fact that I really didn’t need to be doing this shit, because the thrill of the high had begun to wear off. It was becoming more of a dependence and less of a high. It wasn’t really fun any more. It just made me feel like shit and kept me from feeling really bad shit.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

What helped you quit crack?

“When I had no money and I wasn’t feeling well I stayed in, and none of my self-help friends would drop by and give me a forty piece.”

— trans; street, bars, bathhouses; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: Special K; int. # 87.

What helped you quit speed?

“I quit speed 8 years ago ... I just quit cold turkey. I was heavily addicted ... I couldn’t really function ... I was getting very depressed about my wanting to be stoned all the time ... I just wanted to stop. Willpower is the ultimate answer ... but of course I had the support of friends as well. I quit with a bunch of friends who were also on speed, and we helped each other out.”

— male; street, bars; 10 yrs.; s/q speed; int. # 163.

What made it hard to reduce your drug use?

“I got no family or support, so I got involved with people doing drugs; I felt that they became my only friends.”

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

What would have made it easier for you to quit drugs?

“Meeting people like you. People out there who care about you. There is not enough of it. I think of murders and people found dead in alleys, and it’s because there are not enough people like you guys [Maggie’s workers].”

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.

“It’s hard to say, okay, I can’t keep running and hiding, I’ve got to deal with it once and for all. I need a lot of help and support when it comes to having to deal with everything I’ve done.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.

“Having good friends and other interests besides drugs really helps ... Maybe if people were nicer to each other and a little more understanding of each other, there wouldn’t be so many drug addicts ... [Getting] rid of all the drugs.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

“A few better friends. Some of the ones I’ve had have not turned out to be as strong as I would have hoped ... I think people really have to want to help themselves or it’s not going to work.”

— trans; street, bars; s/q alcohol, tobacco; int. # 93.

“A very close friend — that’s all.”

— female; street, phone; 10 yrs. (ncw); s/q "everything"; c/u alcohol; int. # 63.

“Having a friend or two that I could depend on almost totally for support when I felt like doing drugs or if I got so depressed I felt like doing drugs.”

— male; street, bars; s/q heroin, c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 95.

“I suppose if I found someone who I felt was really sincere at helping me and talking to me ... someone I could go back to talk to ... someone who will accept me no matter what level I’m on.”

— female; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; int. # 37.

“Friends, family, more support.”

— female; phone, stags; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 129.

“More support from people.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 34.

What helped you successfully control your drug use?

“My friend’s support helped me ... it was more work on her part than it was on mine. She took me in for a whole week and made sure I didn’t leave, made sure I didn’t need for anything.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 26 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 110.

“I moved in with some friends of mine ... who gave me a lot of support.”

— male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (new); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.

“In terms of support, I have friends that I can turn to.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

“I’ve got a circle of friends for support.”

— male; street; 1 yr.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: alcohol, ecstasy; int. # 44.

“I had the right guidance ... people who understood what I was, and who I was, and why I wanted to quit.”

— male; street, bars, phone; 7 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. #19.

“I met somebody who really cared about me. He raised my self-esteem, and it was either quit, or lose him.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

“[I quit] Thanks to a friend of mine. I was told if I ever used drugs again I would get my legs busted ... I was so burned out ... that’s when my friend helped me ... He was a biker. He’s dead now. He kept me locked up in my house for 3 months, and he wouldn’t let me go nowhere. He would flatten me out if need be, but he wouldn’t let me out to get high. And I haven’t done drugs now in 24 years.”

— female; street, phone; 10 yrs. (ncw); s/q "everything"; c/u alcohol; int. # 63.

What helped you quit?

“Business got better, things were coming together ... a friend was there, offering help ... I really didn’t know where to go on my own ... I think it was because I had someone to help me through it ... My own self-esteem was boosted by his presence ... he made me feel that this was something I could do, and his support was inexhaustible. He didn’t treat me like ‘just some hooker.’”

— male; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q coke, LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 08.

“I had a lot of friends ... we got organized and set up a little support thing, not just for me, but for other people ... when you got a heavy craving you could call someone and talk for an hour, to keep you from making that move of buying ... a lot of love and support, and a lot of people who were going to tolerate my withdrawal.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

Effects on health

“[I quit] Because of my health problems. I mean, they give me six months to a year to live with this cancer now. So if I were to continue my use of drugs, it would shorten my life span anyway.”

— female; street, bars, brothels; 16 yrs.; s/q "all"; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. # 155.

“[When I went off speed cold turkey] it was about a week before I stopped seeing images all over the place ... The only reason I don’t do other drugs now is because I have a heart condition ... Speeding my brains out for so long or smoking weed and getting the munchies and eating everything in sight ... could have contributed to my heart condition, which is called angina.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 26 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 110.

“I had been thrown out of my house ... I was still in high school ... I was doing a lot of combination drugs ... I just woke up one day and knew I was killing myself. My doctor told me ... if I continued I would probably be dead within a month.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

What helped you successfully reduce your drug use?

“My heart was scaring me ... it was beating funny.”

— male; street, bars; 2 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, tobacco; int. # 17.

“Age, health ... my kidney failure.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.

“Being put in a coma really made me stop right there ... when I saw myself in a mirror, after waking up from that coma, I did not recognize myself, and that’s what I liked most about myself was my face ... I just thought there was no reason for this to happen again.”

— male; street; 1 yr. (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 62.

“I think that I really just had enough of it, you know ... you grow up. And I noticed that my health was being affected ... I just didn’t want to be in that head space any more ... there were other things I wanted to do with my life ... and I didn’t want to end up dead.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

7. Findings: experiences with treatment

Of the 69 people that responded (43% of the study), 49% said they'd sought treatment. Of the 34 people who said they'd sought treatment (21% of the study), 76% were currently working and 65% were women.

Of 84 people that responded (52% of the study), 63% said they had received treatment. Of the 55 people who'd received treatment (34% of the study), 27% were treated for heroin (of whom 20% (four people) had received methadone); 20% had received treatment for alcohol; 16% were treated for coke; 5% were treated for crack; 4% were treated for speed; 1.8% (one person) indicated that they were treated for valium. No one received treatment for cannabis. 14.5% didn't indicate which drugs they were treated for.

Of the 55 people who said they'd received treatment, 25% mentioned "rehab," 16% mentioned Alcoholics Anonymous, 11% mentioned "therapy", 9% mentioned Narcotics Anonymous, 7% mentioned "counselling," 7% mentioned hospitals, 5.4% mentioned Addiction Research Foundation, 3.6% mentioned the E. Frye Society, 3.6% mentioned Donwood treatment centre, 1.8% mentioned Grant House, 1.8% mentioned the Salvation Army, and 1.8% (one person) women's treatment centre in Hamilton.

Of 88 people that responded (55% of the study), 23% said they were currently receiving treatment. Of the twenty people who said they were currently receiving treatment (12% of the study) 75% were currently working, and 70% were women.

Of the 38 people that specified (24% of the study) 42% wanted treatments that were unavailable. Of the 16 people who wanted unavailable treatments (11% of those currently using), 50% had sought treatment; 63% had received treatment and 13% specified that they hadn't received treatment. Of the 22 people (15% of those currently using) who said there were no unavailable treatments they wanted, 32% hadn't looked for treatment; 27% had; and 41% had received treatment in the past; 32% had not. Of the 127 people who had tried to quit, 11% specified that they wanted treatments that were unavailable.

9.5% of those currently using a drug, said they were currently quitting on their own. Of the 32 people that responded (23% of those currently using something), 66% said they were not planning to quit on their own. Of those 18 people 6% (one person) said they were currently receiving treatment.

Of the 55 people who had received treatment 33% said they had quit something, 42% quit something temporarily, and 15% didn't quit at all.

7. a Why some people won't use treatment

Comments from some survey respondents:

"I was going to their aftercare program once a week but then the people were really pathetic and I wasn't getting anything out of it."

— male; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol, crack; int. # 89.

"There's a clinic [in Parkdale] that I go to and talk to a doctor. He helps people with drug addiction. Hasn't helped me at all. He talks a lot, eh?"

— female; street; 11 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. # 108

"Everyone I know who went to treatment, it didn't work, so why should I bother?"

— female; street, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke; int. # 66.

"Most of the people I met had been to treatment and went back to using as soon as they got out."

— female; street, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q heroin; int. # 109.

“There was mostly men [on] staff ... They told me I had to walk five miles up hills every day ... and this guy in the program didn’t give me time to talk ... he just pushed this stuff on me in two days, so I broke down and walked away.”

— female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. # 25.

“Not appealing at all ... the idea of going to a rehab ... the whole idea of counselling and therapy freaked me out. I think that the idea that these people get paid to help you out, the whole idea that this person is going to tell me that I’m doing something bad, when I’m well aware that I’m doing something bad ... all I need is to just get off of it, so I should just stop.”

— male; bars; 7yrs.; s/q coke, speed; c/u cannabis, heroin, mushrooms; int. # 33

7. b Experiences with the Addiction Research Foundation

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I tried counselling with the Addiction Research Foundation; I found that to be a bunch of bullshit. I went to various youth drug programs ... I found them not to have an understanding of drug addiction, plus they could not provide good advice ... At the Addiction Research Foundation the advice they gave me was ‘When you feel like doing drugs jog around the block.’”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

“I went to the Addiction Research Foundation once ... I found it hard to stick it out ... They’re a bunch of assholes ... they just told me it was lots of waiting ... They were not very open ... they were very bureaucratic about the whole thing.”

— male; street; 4 yrs., s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, heroin, "pills"; int. # 104.

7. c Experiences with Alcoholics Anonymous

Comments from some survey respondents:

“If the first thing I do is wake up craving a drink, then I’ll just go to AA ... it really helped last time.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

“I like therapy. I like talking to people in group therapy, talking to a person one-on-one. AA did me the most help in this world.”

— female; street, bars, brothels; 16 yrs.; s/q "all"; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. # 155.

“For 5 years I did quit [with AA].”

— female; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; int. # 37.

“It wasn’t for me ... They [AA] run on Christian beliefs, and those aren’t my beliefs. I’m pagan. So what I had to do is convert whatever they were talking about and think of it as spirituality — not necessarily Christianity. I didn’t want to think I was going to a bible-thumping class with all the books they gave you about God and Jesus Christ.”

— female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.

“AA...terrified me. They would come up to me and tell me they loved me, they would hug me and tell me everything was all right. I didn’t know any of these people and did not like that approach. They seemed to replace drugs with a group of people.”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

“AA was not for me because it was really depressing. I did not like to sit around and listen to everybody’s sob stories. I’d rather go to a place where they did a more positive reinforcement as opposed to negative reinforcement.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

“I don’t want to get into a big analysis about AA, but I found it was really competitive ... they brag about their 5, 10, 15 year medallion; meanwhile they’re all lying. And sometimes you run into them in bars ... it’s usually the people who have been there for ten years or more who do all the talking, and you sit back and try not to choke to death on cigarettes and coffee.”

— male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (ncw), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.

“I went to a few AA meetings but I found it really wasn’t for me. Too many people I didn’t know giving me hugs and telling me all kinds of bullshit. I never went back.”

— female; street; phone; 1 yr.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 49.

“I don’t trust AA ... I don’t buy this idea that God is going to save you. It has to come from inside ... otherwise it’s just a band-aid.”

— female; body rub, bars, “in house”; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

8. Recommendations: treatment accessibility

8. a Programs should be accessible to everyone

Comments from some survey respondents:

“It seemed like, at the time when I wanted it most, all doors were closed ... I actually packed up my clothes and went to the Addiction Research Foundation; they turned me away. I called the Salvation Army; they turned me away.”

— female; street, bars, brothels; 16 yrs.; s/q "all"; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. # 155.

“When I was really heavily into it I tried to sign myself into a nut ward ... just to get off it cold turkey or whatever ... and they would not accept me.”

— female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.

“I had quit being a junkie and wanted to talk to a psychiatrist but no one wanted to talk to a fucked up 19-year-old chick. I had to slice my wrists to try and get in a hospital psychiatric ward and they belted me outta there. That’s the type of treatment I got.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.

“These treatment centres, all they do is talk to you, and feed you the same shit that everyone else does ... I’ve been on waiting lists to go to London, the drug institute there, but they won’t accept me because I was a criminal ... I would like there to be treatment for people who want it, not because they have to ... and not having to wait for it; in the meantime you relapse ... who knows what could happen?”

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 47.

8. b More drug treatment programs available in Canada & funded by Medicare/OHIP.

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I need help. I want help. I went to a place ... and I had one stupid communicating charge on me, and they wouldn’t let me go down to the US for an in-patient program. You know, it pissed me right off. And I was willing to go. I wanted to. That was my first step ... everything was ready , but I was refused at the border, immigration refused me because I had one stupid outstanding charge.”

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 151.

“They should spend less money on sending people down south, and more on intelligent alternatives ... Most centres were in the US, and there were long waiting lists in Ontario ... It’s not feasible at all ... it’s fucked.”

— male; street, phone; 11 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; DOC: alcohol; int. # 03.

“It would have been nice if I didn’t have to go to the US in the first place ... there should be treatment centres like that here in Canada.”

— male; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q coke, LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 08.

8. c Treatment for heroin addiction

Comments from some survey respondents:

About heroin withdrawal:

“The only benefits from drugs that I get is not being physically ill. That’s it.”

— female; street, bars, body rub; 18 yrs.; c/u heroin, alcohol; int. # 38.

“If I don’t use [heroin] I get sick. I use it just to be normal. It’s no fun for me anymore; I need it now. I’m wired.”

— female; street, phone, regulars; 1 yr.; c/u heroin; int. #92.

“If you can’t go a day or two without your thing, something’s wrong. When I didn’t have any H, I would turn into this [aggressive] monster.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

“I was told if I went cold turkey I would die, so I had to go into the hospital, in bed, for six months.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

Methadone treatment:

“I didn’t even know [before that] meth existed. Had I known, I would have tried to get on the program a lot earlier. More education is needed about meth as a ... treatment for heroin.

I finally succeeded because of the meth program. It enabled me to maintain my health and not use drugs ... through the meth I was able to gradually build a life.”

— female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.

“I am on the methadone program and that’s keeping me off heroin right now. I’m not using any drugs at the moment. That’s the only thing that’s worked for me so far. It’s enabled me to function again. You don’t get high off it; it just gives me the physical ability to live my life without having to turn to drugs for support.

If meth weren’t so hard to get on, I could have started treatment a lot faster and started on my way before a lot of things happened. I might not have had to go on the street. I could have maintained my life at that time.

The government should ... put out more meth programs for junkies ... it worked for me and it’s worked for ... many addicts I know.”

— female; street; 6 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int.# 118.

“People think you get off on [methadone] and from what I’ve heard, you don’t. It’s not free drugs; it’s helping people get off drugs.”

— male; street; 4 yrs., s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, heroin, "pills"; int. # 104.

8. d Treatment should not involve going away or being locked up

Comments from some survey respondents:

“Treatment where you had to go away and be locked up for two months or something ... I could never do that, because ... I was going to school.”

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

“Twenty eight days in some facility just wasn’t realistic for me, because who was going to take care of my children?”

— female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.

“I had the opportunity to go into treatment, but I’m independent, and like to be on my own ... like a lot of people, I rebelled against it.”

— female; street, stripping, bars; 4 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int., # 52.

“I’ve gone to rehab but it doesn’t work; you come out of there wanting the shot more than when you went in ... I was ... locked up like a prisoner ... My boyfriend still used and

met me the day I got out. I really wanted some and he tried to discourage me but my mind was set after that hellish month.”

— female; street bars, body rub, phone; 4 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 133.

8. e Shorter waiting periods

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I didn’t think they were applicable to me ... I mean I couldn’t see going on any waiting lists ... and that’s the way it seemed to work ... When I want to do something, I want to do it now, and waiting lists didn’t give me that option.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

“One of the difficulties was that [at the Addiction Research Foundation] they kept making me wait ... ‘come back in a month and we’ll give you an assessment’ ... you know, just booking me over and over again.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

“There’s always that waiting period where you’re ready mentally, you’ve decided, ‘I’m ready, and I’m going to go in,’ and they’re saying, ‘Well, no, you can’t ... we don’t have any room for you, or we’re not ready for you ... by the time your name does come up, you’re so far gone again that you’ve forgotten that you want to quit ... you say ‘What am I going to do [now]?’; they say ‘Well, what have you *been* doing?’”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

“I tried to check myself into ARF but it was a six-week wait and it was, like, I’m going to be dead in six weeks, either from overdosing or cause I was so suicidal from using. My experience ... is that traditional 30-day programs don’t work. You need that long-term support ... With the majority of drug programs: the waiting list is too long.”

— female; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q scripts; c/u alcohol, cannabis, tylenol; DOC: cannabis; int. # 42.

“You always have to wait weeks to get in.”

— female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.

9. Recommendations: how programs should be run

9. a More respect for people in programs

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I feel that because I’m a street person, they don’t really expect me to quit ... they don’t even expect me to have the dedication, so they don’t trust me ... whereas a friend I had who was a businessman, successful, who quit successfully with them ... well, they treated his case with a lot more importance ... it’s more important that he quit than I do because I’m expendable.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

“The programs I went to were no good. It was all talking and stuff, and it didn’t work ... They treat [you] like children who have done a bad thing. Instead of as people who are diseased. I don’t need someone to slap me on the wrist. I need someone to help me because I’m sick.”

— ?; street; 4 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 105.[CHECK TAPE]

Opinions about treatment?

“Nonjudgemental people to talk to who have gone through the same thing, and maybe a guide book of some sort.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #16.

“People should not stand in judgement of something they know absolutely nothing about. People shouldn’t pity others, but at least be a little more understanding, and supportive. The people who gave me the most support have been dealers.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs., c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack, int. #05.

9. b More peer (prostitute) programs/outreach

Comments from some survey respondents:

“What would be good is a place strictly for sex workers, because then we wouldn’t have the burden of others ... looking down on us ... it’s very intimidating ... it shouldn’t be that way.”

— female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.

“Maybe [what would have helped is] an outreach program, where the people who ran it had similar experiences to my own with drugs, and with working in the sex trade ... you can’t get that in a rehab ... the ones in charge have no idea where you are coming from.”

— male; street, bars; 10 yrs.; s/q speed; int. # 163.

“I think it’s important to have people who know what you’re going through ... and could talk to you ... that can help ... it’s better than taking you to some fucking place, making promises that they can’t keep ... the same fucking bullshit, over and over.”

— female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 47.

“We can’t change the world, but we can change our own patterns of behaviour ... [Maggie’s] is a great outreach program that should be all over the place ... it’s really important not only for the health education, but education about the sex trade in general ... it’s also a place where you can meet other people who are in the business. So, with places like Maggie’s you’re not as isolated from the world ... there are others out there like you. So, I hope they fund a lot more places like Maggie’s.”

— female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.

“[Sex] Worker-run organizations would be good ... it would stop women from being adversarial against one another ... There is [so much] shame [and] stigma attached to drugs.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

“It may have been helpful being around people who were going through the same thing.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

“Someone to look up to, who has survived the experience, and knows what they’re talking about ... not someone who lives through a textbook or God ... Maybe a non-addictive form of drug that would cut the craving.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

“What would have been nice is to meet with other people like myself, on a regular basis — say, once a week — to discuss our drug experiences and to know it’s okay to have gone through them and learn from them — a peer support group.”

— female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.

“I wanted to go to a place where they treated just prostitutes with drug problems ... that’s what I wanted but couldn’t get ... They should have a program for [prostitutes] who have a problem with drug or alcohol abuse ... they should hold meetings once a week for prostitutes who have a rough time ... this way they could learn from each other’s experiences. It would be easier to talk with other people who are prostitutes, about having a drug problem, because they are there for the same reason that you are, and do the same things you do for the drugs.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u cannabis; int. # 31.

“[Treatment programs would work better if there was] more emotional support ... I think the physical addiction is the easiest to get over ... I wish there had been more of a community outreach kind of thing ... perhaps run by people whom I would consider my peers.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

9. c Programs run by fellow addicts

Comments from some survey respondents:

Opinions about treatment

“At first I went to a group drug rehab but I didn’t like it because everyone was recovering cocaine addicts and there was only one or two heroin addicts there. It was a large group and I saw nothing being done. All they did was talk. It was a full day from nine to four and for an hour two they would talk about drug use ... It was religious and I’m not religious.”

— male; street (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #134.

“I don’t like treatment centres at all. The best kind of treatment centre would be for those who are recovering addicts who are counsellors; they’re the best you can get. But not anyone who has never experienced drugs as staff, ‘cause they’re not worth it.”

— trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.

9. d Individual treatment; not being around other addicts

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I almost received help with a program, but it was ridiculous. The people running the program were full of shit. I had to be around other junkies — that made it worse.”

— female; street, domination; 7 yrs.; c/u heroin, cannabis; int. # 69.

“I got out and started using right away ... I didn’t like anything about it ... it assumed everyone was addicts, naturally born addicts ... there was no individual treatment ... everybody was lumped into the same sort of sickness ...

I think that if everybody was treated individually, more focus on individual therapy rather than group stuff, more focus on the individual’s past ... they believed that all people who come from dysfunctional families are addicts, etc. ... I think a lot of it should have been focused on the individual, rather than assuming that everybody was the same.”

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

“More therapy for people. I’m always better on a one-to-one basis. Groups have never helped me at all.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

9. e Communal programs

Comments from some survey respondents:

“[I’d like to see] a home environment, sort of thing ... a place that housed people like me ... more of a family-like environment ... I mean some of my girl friends go to meetings, then leave and they’re back on the street being tempted. So, more in-house programs.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; s/q coke, c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 23.

“I have a lot of good friends and not all of them use drugs ... that pressure from them to keep myself above water ... living in a communal house helps, because people really notice what is going on ... [they] aren’t afraid to say, ‘Hey, are you doing too much of this?’”

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

9. f “Women-only” groups

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I liked going to the meetings ... it wasn’t bad, you know? ... It’s all women ... they’re mostly alcoholics ... but I like it because it’s just women ... I wouldn’t like it if there were men as well.”

— female; street; 14 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 29.

“[The] women’s treatment centre in Hamilton [had] sort of a life skills program, how to deal with grief and stuff. It helped in that I learned how to deal with people of the same sex, which wasn’t a very easy thing to do for me prior.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.

“A situation where I was with people who had similar experiences that I had, with drugs and in the business, with groups of women where we would look at our woman power ... not mixed with the nice middle class of which we are not a part.”

— female; body rub, bars, “in house”; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

9. g Non-religious programs

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I went to a treatment program. It didn’t work out. I tried a detox two months ago, but I didn’t even last two days there. The Christianity bugged me, so I walked away.”

— female; street, phone; 10 yrs. (ncw); s/q "everything"; c/u alcohol; int. # 63.

“Constantly telling you that something outside yourself is going to be your salvation ... where they tell you to put your faith in God ... especially, being a woman in our culture ... disempowers us even more.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

[See also: 8. c, Experiences with Alcoholics Anonymous.]

9. h More time from counsellors, more one-on-one

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I received help through a rehab program ... I was getting some support from my doctor, and now I’m completely off cocaine. With no support program now ... The rehab centre was the best thing for me to do. They really helped me with my addictive cycle. The support was great. I was always depressed and there was someone around all the time to talk if I wanted to.”

— female; street, phone, 3 yrs.; s/q.cocaine; c/u alcohol, tobacco; int. # 72.

“A rehab centre in Parkdale. More support groups. More one-on-one. Someone who’s been through the same things.”

— female; street; 11 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. # 108

“I think there should be a lot more detox centres. But they’re always busy ... they really don’t have the time ... and when you’re with a counsellor, they should fuck the phone calls ... they should stay with you, because you’re the client ... they talk to you for a minute, then they’re gone for a minute ... Rehabs really push you; that’s why addicts don’t stay long. If you fuck up, you should be able to just start over again.

I didn’t last more than three hours ... I went there once, and I was really crying, and I really wanted to quit, but they were always busy with something else ... they talk to you for a minute, then they’re gone.”

— female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.

9. i Longer programs

Comments from some survey respondents:

Opinions on treatment for crack?

“I’m telling you treatments don’t work. It’s like a vacation ... I went to one of these 20-day programs. I got out of the program and as soon as I hit down here [the street] I bought a rock. Cause I had no place to go once I got out of the program ... I’m my own treatment. I support my own self.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.

Opinions about treatment programs?

“I think a lot of programs are not long enough.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

“People ... only go so far in helping you. The treatment centres can only give so much of themselves ... You’ve got social workers, certain people who say they care ... but they can go along with your bullshit only so long ... then they get tired of it ... they don’t know

how tired you are ... and, I guess it's always been for me, 'Can you out wait me?' ... if I could see someone who could, then I'd listen to that person."

— female; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; int. # 37.

9. j alternative drugs

Comments from some survey respondents:

What kind of treatments were unavailable?

"I would have rather liked to have access to the drug of my choice, at that time [trying to quit] ... I think I could have easily weaned myself off of the drug that I was addicted to, had I had access, and not had to worry about being arrested, or murdered while trying to get it, or robbed, or ripped off ... with controlled access, eventually I could be weaned off of it."

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

Why were you successful at quitting?

"Smoking pot helped me get through quitting."

— female; body rub, bars, "in house"; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.

"When I used to quit the other drugs, I would replace them with pot and hash."

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis; int. # 126.

"I smoked my brains out, trying to get away from all the other drugs."

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

What ways did you try to control your drug use?

"I always felt, wrongly, that I had control over my drug use — that I was doing drugs because I wanted to and could stop at any time. That later proved to be incorrect. When I did stop, I was usually stopping one substance and turning to another."

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

"I'm controlling it now ... [I went] from cocaine to weed."

— female; street, bars, phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 34.

Why were you successful in controlling your drug use?

"Having a few drinks instead of getting high was more practical for me ... at least I wasn't as messed up the next morning ... a lot of it was the motivation to get stuff done."

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

reducing/quitting alcohol:

Why won't you quit alcohol?

"I enjoy it, and I don't think it is as harmful as other drugs. Everyone needs a vice, or a crutch, and at the moment I feel that I would rather do more alcohol than coke, because, mainly, I can sleep on alcohol."

— male; street, regulars; 1 year (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke, DOC: coke, int. # 01.

"Alcohol makes me more at ease, being a crack addict, it can sway the urge ... takes away the moods I get into being an addict ... There's no benefits, but I do like it."

— female; street, bars; 0.33 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 10.

reducing/quitting cocaine:

Why were you not successful in quitting coke?

“I had to sneak behind my boyfriend’s back and work the streets to get the money to buy marijuana to keep me off the coke. I had to smoke so much marijuana it was ridiculous—you smoke a quarter of marijuana every day and you don’t want to get up to go to work.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.

Why were you successful at quitting coke?

“When I started using heroin my appetite for coke disappeared.”

— female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.

reducing/quitting crack:

What helped you reduce crack?

“I got sick of doing it. I crushed my pipe one night and wore it around my neck to remind myself that I really wanted to stop. I used pot and hash to replace it. I started to work out at the gym ... I’ve been a strong-willed person.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis; int. # 126.

Why were you successful at quitting crack?

“I stayed off crack for a few weeks and started hanging around people who smoked weed, which I liked better. With weed you can still be functional.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 121.

“I just found that when I quit crack, everything else just followed. You know, the ... pills were just so I could come off the crack, more or less.”

— male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.

reducing/quitting heroin:

“I think there was a benefit to heroin. It allowed me to stop other drugs and plod through an unhappy time in my life. [But] ultimately there is no benefit. The effects are not worth it.”

— female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.

What would make it easier to quit heroin?

“I used to wish that there was drugs you could take to counteract the drugs you were doing, so you could get fucked up — shoot up heroin — party for as long as you wanted to, and then pop a pill, and it would all be over.”

— male; bars; 7yrs.; s/q coke, speed; c/u cannabis, heroin, mushrooms; int. # 33

Why were you successful at quitting heroin?

“I used coke to come off heroin.”

— male; street, phone; 2 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u crack, cannabis; int. # 53.

“I drank a lot of wine to curb the cravings.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

reducing/quitting speed:

How did you try to control your speed use?

“Sometimes I would take Valium so it wouldn’t hurt so much.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

What helped you quit speed?

“I quit different drugs at different times for certain periods of time. There is no good speed ... around so I’ve been to coke now.”

— female; street, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke; int. # 66.

10. Recommendations: public education

The purpose of this study was to determine what health and safety risks related to drug use exist and to develop strategies to reduce those risks and make the workplace safer. A large proportion of the danger encountered by prostitutes comes directly from individuals—the public. Social stigma and the public's conceptions about the value of prostitutes and drug users, and drug-using prostitutes in particular contribute to what could be considered hate-related violence—individuals violent actions against prostitutes. While it is politically treacherous to survey prostitutes about their drug use because prostitutes could possibly be further stigmatized as drug users, it is evident that many prostitutes are very knowledgeable about drugs and safe drug practices. Employing prostitutes with drug use experience is one way to educate sex workers about safe drug use particularly in relation to transmittable infections (like HIV). This would also be a start to internalized stigma by fostering a sense of pride in the work. But it is also crucial to educate the public in an attempt to destigmatize both sex work and drug use. One of the first steps in destigmatizing any practice is to promote public acceptance. Any change in public opinion will have to begin with change in the legal status of the practice.

“Other people on the street can harrass you. Gay bashers. I’ve only been harrassed by people I thought were also on the street, though I never saw them before they had that feel about them, that they lived on the street and they didn’t think that I should be in their area or something. Or they saw me as a filthy little whore or something. In my opinion, I wasn’t being that obtrusive or anything.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

10. a Destigmatize sex work

Comments from some survey respondents:

“As it is now, the girls on the street have to fear the cops, the johns, the pimps, the right wing ... it’s scary because everybody hates everybody and there’s no tolerance ... it would be easy to control it where the girls are protected ... I mean, it is our bodies and we should be able to do what we want to do with [them]. This doesn’t have to be such a deep, dark world any more ... many of the workers are very ordinary people ... not the dark, mysterious fiends that prostitutes and drug users are made out to be ... prostitution is the oldest profession, and instead of fighting it, people should just get used to it and accept it.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

“I don’t know if I would normally be a prostitute ... when I was clean for a while I did have this moral/ethical thing about whether or not it was cool to be a prostitute. I don’t have a problem with it because of the men, because they are very lonely and I feel I’m doing a service just being there. But I don’t like being treated like a whore. I feel like shame is put upon me, which is a very ugly feeling.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.

“Everybody makes it seems so dirty ... people think if you’re a prostitute, then you’re a drug addict, liar, whatever ... of course there’s going to be some, but that’s like that with everybody ... [Maggie’s] should do public service announcements ... something needs to be done ... there’s too much tension involved ... it’s hard coming to work being afraid, you know ... People look down on prostitution, but it’s not a crime ... Not everybody who is a hooker is involved in drugs ... that’s also false.”

— female; street; c/u alcohol; int. # 27.

“I have a daughter and I don’t want her to know what mommy does for a living. She’s only two, but kids learn fast these days.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.

“I think the drug war thing is a whole class issue to wipe prostitutes and drug users off the face of the earth, and put them in working camps ... to automatically say that they are an unwanted part of society. They want to try to make their lives as miserable as possible ... the whole politics of a drug war is a total class thing ... it affects me in that I could go to jail just for who I am, and what I believe ... and I think it’s gross.”

— male; bars; 7yrs.; s/q coke, speed; c/u cannabis, heroin, mushrooms; int. # 33

10. b Destigmatize drug use

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I’d like a little bit of standing in society. You can’t even walk into an apartment without people screaming, ‘Get out, whore! We don’t want crack whores around!’ It’s embarrassing; no one wants to talk to you. It’s like a kick in the head, getting reminded all the time.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.

“[When I went to hospital with cocaine overdoses] they were good, but they were kind of rough, too. Like they wanted to make sure you wouldn’t do it again, so they kind of put me through the mill ... my hand was infected, so they had to lance it and squeeze all the pus out, so they didn’t do [that] until they really, really had to ... they made sure I went through the pain of it.”

— male; street; 16 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. # 160.

What would have made it easier to quit drugs?

“Public awareness ... realizing that addiction is a disease, that you’re not a slime bag ... if people had a little more sympathy, and a little more respect, and treated you a little bit better when you go into these treatment places.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

What do you think about anti-drug campaigns?

“Total nonsense, really. They should spend that money on addicts, rather than putting out hate literature on them.”

— male; phone; 2 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 166.

“I don’t think they’re successful, because the way they are targeted, they don’t approach the people who need to be helped. In fact, what they do is anger non-addicts about drugs, therefore making the addicts hated. It’s a smoke screen, that’s what these campaigns are.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (new); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

10. c Conduct safe drug-use education

[See also 4. c -Pros' remarks on safe drug use]

Comments from some survey respondents:

“There should be more of a focus on educating people on the effects of drugs and education in understanding the crime surrounding drugs and how it is created.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

“I honestly believe that if I were better educated when I was younger I wouldn’t be in the position I am in now. So I do believe education is good. And exactly the way they are doing it is all right. What we are talking about at the community centre is people who are still using going into the high schools and talking to students, and I think that’s a good idea ... maybe even start younger, because they say there is a big epidemic of kids and crack.”

— female; street, regulars; 1 yr.; s/q heroin; int. # 96.

What do you think about anti-drug campaigns?

“It’s all done in the wrong way. No one who is going to do drugs will ever take that shit seriously. ‘Just say no’ is bullshit! How is that going to teach anyone anything? I think education is important and that society has to change its views on substance use. People should be taught that drugs can be used in a responsible way. Let’s face it — people have been seeking altered states since time began. You can’t stop drug use, so why not accept that, and work from there?”

— female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.

“There’s benefits and risks to everything, but that’s just the way life is ... I mean what are we talking about — living a healthy life until you’re 80, or living a wonderful, mind-enhanced life until you’re 70 ... I think society has to change its thinking, and realize that there are alternative ways of living ... the importance that drugs can [have] when used responsibly ... for me there are more benefits.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

“I think that there should definitely be some work towards starting up some sort of programs strictly for prostitutes ... they could educate people on the street while they are still young, and before they get in too much trouble, or danger ... so education and support is, I think, the most important need right now for people in our business, or young people who are just getting into it ... then, this way, a lot of unnecessary suffering, or prostitutes, or addicts getting hurt, or ripped off, whatever, a lot of these things could be prevented.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u cannabis; int. # 31.

10. d Opinions on anti-drug campaigns

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I believe it’s another part of our war-based economy. This war on drugs is replacing the cold war. On a more community level I think it’s a thing created by the cops to give the cops more power to sow new urban paranoia to those who are sympathetic to the cops ... they want to make drugs like marijuana seem as bad as cocaine and heroin so that the cops can just barge in anywhere without a warrant and bust whatever drug happens to be there and treat any abuser of substance that’s not taxed by our government in the way that somebody who is pushing heroin to kids would be treated ... I haven’t seen much intelligent treatment of [this] in any level of government ... they just use that one word, ‘drugs’.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

“I support it. I hope it stops one day ... as far as changing things, it should be taught in schools as soon as kids are able to understand what’s going on in life. Parents should sit down and talk with them, like I plan on doing with my daughter. I guess they’re doing okay. At least they’re trying. But there’s a lot of people out there who are too far gone and you can’t do nothing for them, and it’s just too darned bad.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.

“They’re unreasonable. [Supported by] fundamentalist groups, people trying to protect pubescent children ... I’m not saying they’re wrong ... but there’s always been vice. Education would help a great deal, and don’t paint it like a rag doll, all cutesy, just let them have it, you know?”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

“A lot of people who are users find them annoying; they don’t take them seriously. It is effective for younger kids, who haven’t used, but for users and people who use moderately, it’s ineffective. People take drugs for various reasons. Some people may only take pot and they see it as harmless. Then someone is stepping in and saying you are deviant and they categorize you with the hardest of drug users and that is an invasion of your personal privacy and space.”

— female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.

“It didn’t work on me, and I heard all the horror stories in school when I was a kid. I remember laughing at that when we were all fried out. Kids love to do what the adult world tells them they can’t ... I’m going to do what I’m going to do, and I really only listen to myself.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

“I think they are pointless. No amount of campaigning is going to stop people from using drugs. The only way you can help a mass of people use drugs less frequently would be to provide more treatment programs. You can teach kids about drugs but that doesn’t mean they won’t try them. The only way is to provide more treatment programs. That way people try it, they fuck up, but they can get out. Propaganda has never worked.”

— female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.

“I don’t hear anything. I’ve been on this corner for a year and I don’t have a TV ... If I want to quit it’s my decision.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.

“I think they’re useless ... there’s the ‘just say no’ on one hand, and yet on the other hand, they glamourize drugs on TV. So, ‘just say no to drugs’ doesn’t cut it.”

— female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.

“It indoctrinates young people who have never done drugs before. It may have some effects on them or at least prolong how long it takes for them to get involved in drugs. But I think drugs are so accessible and life is so dismal that people need an escape and alcohol just doesn’t cut it.”

— female; street, domination; 7 yrs.; c/u heroin, cannabis; int. # 69.

“I think that they’re bullshit. The whole war on drugs is a cover-up for something else. It’s a war on the people and we don’t need a war. It comes from governments wanting to control everything and everyone. It’s a way to get the straight, middle-class, American family together on something. The enemy becomes the drug user and the drug dealer. Meanwhile the pharmaceutical industry is making billions a year. They are making billions a year selling cigarettes and alcohol and those are drugs. It’s targeting certain groups.”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

“I think it’s ridiculous. I don’t feel that it’s a legitimate cause. The same people that are saying you shouldn’t use drugs are actually the ones supplying them in underhanded ways, so I can’t take it seriously. I think its purpose is to pull focus away from some of the problems we are facing as a society. I don’t think that drug use is one of the major problems. There are people that are fucked up, but then, you have to look at where they came from before they got into that state. It has a lot to do with the way society is set up.”

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

“I think they’re Big Brother campaigns for conformity and control. I think they are basically a bunch of crap. Especially when they’re telling kids to turn in parents, or friends to turn in friends. Hotlines for squealing on each other. How is that going to bring about any kind of cooperation or unity? How is that going to keep the family together? It’s horrible to condone betrayal. I think if we lived in a more nurturing society, where people are celebrated and embraced for being individuals, then we wouldn’t have to seek anything outside ourselves to find that consciousness.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

“Good for them. There should be a lot of them. I’m really against drugs. It’s weird — I hate crack so much, yet I can’t wait for another stone. It’s hard. Once you’re an addict, you’re always an addict.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 82.

“Colossal waste of money ... because of all these semiotics, or symbols associated with the word ‘drugs,’ they have become demonized ... I think the whole anti-drug propaganda is all about money. The big drug dealers want the war on drugs because that means their profits will remain nice and high ... We’ve become a society of witch-hunters persecuting people who grow marijuana. I mean, they should do something for the farmers of Canada — they’re all starving.”

— female; domination, bi shows, stags; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, LSD, mushrooms; int. #58

“The ‘just say no’ campaign sounds good; the word ‘no’ is a hard thing to do, to get a hold of. Saying no is telling a little kid, ‘You can’t have a cookie.’ It’s the hardest thing to do. It’s something really, really hard to stop using the drug you’re using. They’ve got one really good commercial on TV that asks if you’ve seen a bag of crack and a body bag slides over; that’s a great ad. Or you see a cop and you think, ‘Do I want to live like this?’ That’s the best one I’ve seen so far.”

— male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.

11. Recommendations: the legal status of drugs

“I think if they legalize everything and ... just make it available to anyone that wants to use, then they wouldn’t have the problems that they have now with the crime and the violence. Because drugs are illegal, that’s what makes people go to the extremes. Drives everybody underground, and it’s a lot more expensive. The availability is terrible.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q valium; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 103.

“People should be allowed to do whatever they want in the privacy of their own home. They legalize all these other drugs and those drugs fuck you up more than heroin does because heroin just makes you mellow.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

“They shouldn’t bust the users, because they don’t know what it’s like to be an addict. They should bust the dealers. Get them all. That’s what’s making everyone addicted ... [If drugs were legal ... and cheap] that might make me slow down a little, because then I would know I could get it any time and there would be less fun in it. It’s kind of fun running up the road from the cops ... if they legalized it I don’t think it would be much fun.”

— female; street; 11 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. # 108

“To go to jail for personal possession is inappropriate. ... I think the government has to understand that there is going to be no change until they talk about decriminalizing all drugs. [In] Manchester, England ... people are taught how to use drugs safely and they’re clean ... even the cops admitted the dealers had totally dropped off in the area. The government in England was able to produce a gram of heroin for 10 bucks, synthetic heroin.”

— female; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q scripts; c/u alcohol, cannabis, tylenol; DOC: cannabis; int. # 42.

“Everybody uses some kind of drug anyway ... some people use food as a drug, or people ... and food is not illegal ... it’s not illegal to be exploitive of people ... in fact, smoking is considered by most doctors to be more physically harmful than a lot of drugs, and cigarettes are not illegal ... you can buy them in a store.”

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

11. a Cannabis

What are the risks involved in using cannabis?

“To me there’s no risk ... I could walk out the door and get hit by a car, you know ... risks are everywhere ... I mean, I’m more concerned about my smoking cigarettes.”

— female; street, bars; 7 yrs.; s/q LSD, mushrooms, mescaline; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 162.

“There are no risks ... I’m not controlled by pot or alcohol ... I mean, I take more risks eating red meat, you know? I could get cancer ... I hate that they’re called drugs ... you might as well call them cheese ... that’s how harmful I think they are.”

— male; phone; 2 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 166.

“[Pot] shouldn’t be illegal. It was a corporate decision to make it illegal, and part of taking my power back is smoking, and growing it, and having it.”

— female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

“I would like to see some drugs legalized; some should remain illegal ... I don’t think crack is good for anybody, but pot should certainly be legalized.”

— male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (ncw), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.

“[Cannabis] is totally natural and should be sold in corner stores.”

— male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.

“Pot and hash are one of the drugs that I consider safe and not really a big problem. I think it should be legalized ... If they legalized drugs it would take the risks away ... People would not go overboard with doing too much that it would put them in great danger.”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

“It’s been proven countless times that pot has been very beneficial towards treating certain diseases and ailments and nervous disorders, etc. And yet we’re playing this game of how bad it is. I mean, let’s get off our high horses, people.”

— male; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q coke, LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 08.

11. b Harm reduction in relation to purchasing drugs

cannabis:

What are the risks involved in using cannabis?

“I think the risks of people getting busted for smoking pot and hash are ridiculous ... people are getting bad dope. The price is too high. People will go to great lengths to score or get money for drugs. I really think that people would not go overboard with doing too much that it would put them in great danger [if it was legalized].”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

Why won’t you quit cannabis?

“As far as pot ... I never considered it a problem so I never tried to reduce it ... I like to smoke pot, but I don’t have to ... I know people who deal pot, and they’re very nice people, and I never have any problems with them ... [Cannabis feels] like a natural part of my life.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

crack:

What are the risks involved in using crack?

“I’ve been threatened with guns, stabbed and attacked by dealers when I was trying to buy crack. The biggest health threat comes during the purchasing, rather than the using. The biggest risks are getting arrested, and getting killed trying to buy it, and being in a dangerous situation when you’re using it, getting caught using it. I think getting the money for crack; I’ve not used my best judgement sometimes.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

Other comments?

“I used to run a house of prostitution. At one point it became a crack house as well, with dealers, and at the height of it all there was a gun, a gun pointed directly at me for refusing to sell crack.”

— male; street, regulars, ran brothel; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 88.

“I’ve been in scary crack houses in Toronto, but most have been gay ones, so things are a little more organized, colourful, and not as unruly. Straight people tend to be ignorant, whereas fags have less attitude.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 05.

heroin:

Is there a relationship between your using heroin and doing sex work?

“[Heroin is] expensive, so I have to suck lots of cock every day to get it.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #16.

“If [heroin] was that available and cheap, I don’t think I would work. [If it could be purchased in a drug store] I would be fucked right up for the rest of my life.”

— female; street, phone, regulars; 1 yr.; c/u heroin; int. #92.

Have you ever misjudged a john you needed to get high?

“I had a gun pointed at my head. I was high; I wanted heroin — and the first person that stopped, I went with. He wanted my money, so I gave him the money I had. Once I got away from the car, I went to the police, but they didn’t do anything about it, cause I was high. And I didn’t give a good description of the guy.”

— female; street, 1.5 yrs. (ncw); s/q coke, heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int # 138.

How do you feel about decriminalizing drugs?

“[Heroin] was too expensive and so hard to obtain. I really think that if these drugs were easier to obtain it would not have created such a huge problem for me. I would have liked it if they were legal. It would have been a lot better for me to score, I would have got better drugs and not have to take the risks of doing bad dope, plus it would have been much cheaper.”

— male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.

“Drugs should be decriminalized ... this way the government could still have control, and it would make things safer for users ... I wouldn’t have had to work on the streets, and wouldn’t have had to deal with all the fucked-up stuff associated with being a junkie ... I could have had a life other than running around for shit ... most of the negative stuff around it is really unnecessary, due to the fact that it is illegal, expensive and difficult to get. If there was more education on how to do it safely ... I used to hit people up all the time because I knew what I was doing ... I was the nurse, kind of ... people felt safe with me ... I was careful and never hurt them.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

What are the negative effects to using drugs?

“I’ve had bad dates; I got ripped off, bought bad drugs on the streets. I’ve had a lot of bad incidents where I’ve been very frightened.”

— male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.

“Terrible shit like getting into fights with people or getting beat up by tricks or dealers ... getting ripped off or shit ... it’s not good.”

— female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.

What are the risks involved in using drugs?

“I suppose the risk of using more, but I don’t feel that happening to me ... one of the things I worry about is the possibility of getting some bad synthetic drug instead of what I’m actually paying for. I try to be careful about who I buy from, but you don’t always know the person ... you could end up with some paralysis, or worse.”

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

“If it was more accessible, and distributed legally somehow, through the government, I think that would have helped me ... I still believe, now, that I could be addicted to drugs, have my drugs dispensed where it would be legal, where it would be cheaper, rather than the ridiculous prices that I’m paying now, having to do the things that I don’t want to do, and what not.”

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

11. c Harm resulting from policing/criminal status

alcohol:

What are the benefits of drinking?

“I like my flavours [of alcohol], I like the availability, I like that I don’t have to hang out in dangerous places to get it, or worry about getting busted for drinking, I like that it’s an acceptable drug ... it’s comfortable.”

— male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.

cannabis:

What are the benefits to using cannabis?

“Weed is a benefit. You don’t see anyone rolling anyone for money or beating them up like you do for crack and coke. Weed sometimes makes me feel more imaginative—I can open up my mind, write my poetry, do my sketches. It enhances it.”

— male; street, stripping; 0.6 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis; int. # 79

general comments:

What are there negative effects to using drugs?

“[Drugs] ruined my life ... I ended up on the streets, I ended up in jail. I really think that if I hadn’t touched drugs, none of this would have happened.”

— female; street; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol, crack; int. # 124.

How do you feel about decriminalizing drugs?

“A lot of the trap of drug addiction has to do with the guilt surrounding the use of them. I think all drugs should be legalized to take away the crime and black market surrounding them.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

“What they have to do is look at what is seriously criminal, and maybe take some of those lesser things off the books. A lot of these people aren’t criminals.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

“I think most drugs should be legalized, because once it is labeled illegal, it develops a dangerous aura, and therefore becomes more attractive ... it’s like that with any element of society, from prostitution to holes in jeans, or being gay, or long hair — most of these people are pretty frigging normal too, but they are made to look otherwise by the propagandists ... I think we should take the same actions as Europe and decriminalize a lot of the things that are considered criminal here ... this would cut down a lot of crime, because many people will do anything to get their drugs.”

— female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.

“I just think that if they take away the criminal element of what I’m doing and allowed me to do drugs, really, as long as I’m not dealing them, then I wouldn’t be victimized as much as I am out here.”

— female; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 145.

11. d In relation to treatment

heroin:

What would have made it easier to quit heroin?

“What would have helped me at that time was if there was legal junk.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

What would have made it easier to quit drugs

“Maybe if it was legal.”

— female; street, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke; int. # 66.

“Access to the drug of my choice.”

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

11. e In relation to taxation income for treatment

How do you feel about decriminalizing drugs?

“I would like to see decriminalization, and all the money generated from [drug sales] could pay off our deficit, and also go towards rehabilitation and education, and to combat the social ills that are the cause of substance abuse .. Frankly, we’re putting the wrong people in jail.”

— female; domination, bi shows, stags; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, LSD, mushrooms; int. #58

“Legalize drugs. Tax it if you want, and make some money to pay off our deficit. ... it’s just silly not having them legalized. I mean I don’t view smoking a joint as a crime, I see a crime as when someone is harming someone else. Harming yourself, I do not consider a crime. If you’re doing it recreationally, then, no problem. And I think a lot less people would do drugs if they were legal ... Perhaps if the government is controlling the revenue from the sale of drugs then more programs could be implemented to get help for the people who want to quit, or get off the streets. Build them a resort, or with all the money the government would make, they could send them all to Switzerland.”

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

“If pot were sold like cigarettes then that would aid our country in regards to the deficit, and also in regards to setting up more educational programs that help addicts get back on their feet.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

“I think they suck, cause they’re oversimplifying the problem. They make it seem like people can just choose it, but there are economic situations that make people get into drugs in the first place that they’re trying to escape from, and then they get hooked on it and it’s not as simple as ‘just say no.’ It’s harmful, cause they spend all this money on getting this ‘just say no’ message out instead of spending it on treatment and approaches that would work. It’s mostly lower-income people that are trapped in this.”

— male; street; 1 yr.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: alcohol, ecstasy; int. # 44.

“[I don’t think] too much [of them]. I think they just divide people ... instead of spending all that money on denouncing drugs and addicts, they should use that money to help people who have problems with drugs. As far as I can see, drugs have always been around ... look at the ’60s ... the problem with drugs hasn’t got worse; it’s the people who are against drugs who have got worse.”

— female; street, bars; 7 yrs.; s/q LSD, mushrooms, mescaline; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 162.

12. Recommendations: prostitution-related laws

Many sex workers seemed not to know, or don't care, about the differences between legalizing prostitution and decriminalizing it. But prostitutes all know that the laws are unjust and lead to all kinds of abuse of the women and men who work as prostitutes. Many comments talk about the direct relationship between the criminal status of prostitution and the amount of danger in the work place. The comments that explicitly endorse the idea of decriminalization of prostitution demonstrate a level of awareness about the differences between decriminalization and legalization. Support for legalization tends to be a pragmatic response to the constant danger of arrest – a “we'll do whatever you want, just leave us alone” response, with some support for particular government regulations around health.

Comments from some survey respondents:

“I think I'll always be involved in prostitution to some degree (if my face holds up) because I'm a sex trade worker. The only thing is that I want to be involved without some of the risks imposed by drug use. I wish it wasn't illegal ... I wish I didn't have to take the chances and get beat up. ...

I'm almost 40 years old; I have 14 convictions on my record for prostitution. I can't take it any more.”

— female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.

“The laws I hate the most are the ones that tell us what to do with our bodies.”

— female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.

“I just think that the government shouldn't harass people for doing what they want to do with their bodies ... get out of our bedrooms.”

— male; street, regulars; 1 year (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke, DOC: coke, int. # 01.

“Change the fucking laws. Make it legal and safe and not a shameful thing. I'm a person also, and people don't always remember that. More understanding and open-mindedness.”

— trans; street, bars; s/q alcohol, tobacco; int. # 93.

“It's your body and you should be able to do what you want, and nobody should be able to charge you for that ... [It should be legal] for sure.”

— female; street; c/u alcohol; int. # 27.

“The way it is now, [prostitutes] are always running from the police, or something; there's nothing out there for them ... there should be a place where they could go and feel safe, but there isn't.”

— female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u cannabis; int. # 31.

“Making prostitution legal would make things a hell of a lot better. It's just a waste of time for the police, too ... when they could be looking for killers, or baby molesters ... stuff like that ... but no, they got to come and bother someone who's trying to make money because they can't get welfare, or something like that. I met some girls from Vancouver, and welfare wouldn't give them money, so they had to start working the street.”

— female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.

“I do psychiatric therapy and see a shrink and I do a drug called Prozac, which is supposed to be a mood stimulator and increase my productivity by tenfold, but I'm off it

now ... This type of work that people do out here is not easy. What, standing around getting busted by cops after working 4 to 5 hours?"

— male; street, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 101.

How could the sex trade be made safer?

"If there were no calls taken at people's houses. That's always a bit more dangerous than going to a hotel, because security sees you and stuff."

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

12. a Decriminalize prostitution

What would have made it easier to quit drugs

"Decriminalizing prostitution would be a start.

It seems a little absurd to be considered okay to be a prostitute but not to solicit. It doesn't make sense. So you have cops coming to you when you're standing on the corner, and taking your name down and stuff, and they don't hassle you — but as soon as you get in the car and, like, strap a condom on someone or name a price — you're in court.

And ... if you're raped and you're a prostitute you have no avenues. You asked for it, because you're a prostitute. The safety factor is really important. With decriminalizing it I think things would become safer."

— female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.

"I don't like legalization ... I don't like the word, because I think you just replace the pimps with the government. A whore can't even call a cop ... now that's criminal ... because we are citizens ... In most neighbourhoods, it's the johns that are the problem ... Women don't have that many choices."

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.

Do you think prostitution should be decriminalized?

"[Prostitution] wouldn't be a bad job ... in fact, it would be a good job if a lot of the risks were eliminated ... if it was decriminalized, then the cops could protect the workers better ... now there's no protection or organization ... just a lot of chaos."

— male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.

"Decriminalize prostitution and drugs so that it's more organized, therefore eliminating a lot of crime that goes with the two ... I do think the streets would be safer if the police left people alone a bit more."

— male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.

12 b Legalize prostitution

"They should legalize prostitution."

— male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. #. 07

"Even though prostitution is not illegal, the police still give you such a hard time. Everything that leads to it is illegal, and we have no way to protect ourselves from undercover police out here ... they can do anything they want ... if it's entrapment, it doesn't matter ... I think Europe has the right idea by legalizing a red light district ... it would be a lot safer ... the girls could get tested regularly. The government is spending millions of dollars on undercover police, when they could be making money by taxing us. Give us licenses, and those without could be penalized ... otherwise let us work."

— trans; street, phone; 2 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. # 14.

“Tell the cops to stop harassing us. We are only trying to make a living ... they should legalize it in some part of the city, some strip, and that way the cops can’t bother us.”

— female; street; 11 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. # 108

Do you think prostitution should be decriminalized?

“The legalization of prostitution [could reduce the risks involved in sex work]. Have it a bit above the board ... maybe something more like a red light district ... give those people [in the business] rights and make it easier for people in the sex trade to get protection from the police if they are being intimidated or assaulted ... Prostitution should be legalized ... sex [is] an inevitable thing in our society ... trying to control [sex or drugs] is going to create a system of oppression and crime on the fringes.”

— male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.

“I think that our government should look towards Amsterdam, where prostitution ... is more organized, safer; where drug dealers and pimps are eliminated ... it’s much more controlled there, making it safer for everyone involved. Just thinks what the cops could do if they didn’t have to waste their time trying to fight something that’s never going to go away anyway.”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

“I don’t know if you could ever make it safer ... I don’t like the idea of legalizing prostitution ... I mean, it’s okay to have a red light district, but it needs to still be monitored by the police, you know.”

— female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 32.

“Legalize prostitution for street workers ... and if they want, tax us ... and get a red light district going ... make it safer for the workers on the street ... you know they’re getting beat up out there by crazy clients, and the pimps from hell ... they’re going nowhere, where they’re only working to get money for that next hit ... other than that, there’s no life for them, whatsoever ... As long as these things are illegal, you’re going to have girls and guys in the hospital, and a hell of a lot more crime ... because some of those street workers, if they’re not turning tricks, they’re going to turn something ... probably the guy at the corner store who has a full till.”

— male; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q coke, LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 08.

“I think the laws should be changed. It’s really hard on the street, and I’m really glad I got accepted into this agency. I think if it were legal and under different laws — like a red light district — probably there will always be people on the street. I don’t think these neighbourhoods have valid reason to be upset because I consider it a part of life that some people enjoy.”

— female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.

“They should have a red light district, and get rid of all these punks ... this is stupid ... and once you’re allowed in the district, you should have to have HIV testing every month ... fuck this shit ... I stay far away from them, and they stay far away from me ... there’s people who really need help out there ... fuck them crack heads.”

— female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. # 25.

13. Recommendations: skills programs

[People listed boredom and well as lack of self esteem as things that make it difficult to control their drug use. Things that made it easier included change of location/circumstance. A skills centre could provide referrals to all different sorts of free or cheap education, night courses, Inter/Access, self defense, CPR, first aid, etc.]

13. a The need for something to do with their time

Comments from some survey respondents:

What helped you reduce your cannabis use?

“For a while I was spending only \$30 a month on pot ... I would just keep myself busy with other positive outlets in my life ... like concerns for the future. ... It’s usually when I’m going through a period of being on the straight and narrow, sort of thing.”

— female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.

What would make it easier to quit crack?

“I need a goal that I can focus on to keep my interests.”

— female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #16.

What helped you control your drug use?

“Whenever I have responsibilities, I refrain from doing [drugs].”

— female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.

“A friend of mine helped me by urging me to do what I really wanted ... I found that introducing a goal in my life helped me to overcome my addiction ... the goal was music; clarinet and keyboards ... I had something to occupy my time.”

— male; street, regulars; 1 year (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke, DOC: coke, int. # 01.

“I used to do it once every other day; now I do it maybe once every 2 or 3 months ... Finally by setting a goal that took up more of my time, I was able to reduce ... it made me feel positive that I was actually achieving something ... I think that’s what it was ... I had a more positive attitude.”

— male; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol; int. # 170.

“I enrolled in university ... I had a goal, or something I wanted to do, and I knew I couldn’t if I was still doing drugs.”

— male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.

Why were you successful at quitting?

“I grew up ... mostly I stay at home and paint, and clean, and think of my little girl.”

— female; street; 9 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, antipsychotic pills; int. #30.

13. b Need for job alternatives

What helped you reduce your drinking?

“I was working and [it] seemed to be ... hard to get up in the morning and I was all crazed with alcohol and drugs and it seemed to slow me down ... I was fed up and I just quit like that ... I wouldn’t go to the bar ... I stopped hanging around with the crowd ... mostly hung around by myself at one point ... My parents were kind of fed up with me.”

— female street; 0.5 yrs.; c/u alcohol; int. # 76.

What would have made it easier to quit heroin?

“I suppose if I had an idealistic life and everything was going positive and I was loving the way I was living then perhaps I wouldn’t need to rely on smack. But as it is the job situation is pretty dismal. I’m not going to sling burgers for \$5 per hour, so that could be a factor. But who knows, maybe if my life was going great I would still want it—I really enjoy the high.”

— female; street, domination; 7 yrs.; c/u heroin, cannabis; int. # 69.

What would make it easier for you to quit drugs

“If someone gives me a job or something it would get me on my feet ... I just need a little bit of help or a push.”

— female; street, bars; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 152.

“A job that keeps me busy. A job that I’d like to have, instead of working the streets.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 81.

“Getting a job ... going to school ... [Something to do with my time] so I’d sleep at night.”

— male; street, bars, stripping; 1 yr.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: cannabis; int. # 04.

“Getting out of the city, get a normal job, settle down with a girlfriend.”

— male; street, bars; 11 yrs.; s/q coke heroin, speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int # 102.

“World peace. I don’t know, maybe if I felt better, or support, or if I had a job. More responsibilities, a boyfriend, some support or something going on that made me want to be clean and stay clean.”

— male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.

13. c Career changes and retirement considerations

If you quit using heroin would you stop doing sex work?

“[If I quit heroin] I would probably [quit the street and] get into something like dancing, which I would do now if I didn’t have nasty marks on my arms.”

— female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.

“I discovered that there were alternatives ... and I didn’t have to commit suicide at 40 when I was too old to work the streets.”

— female; street, phone; 15 yrs. (ncw); s/q heroin, "chemicals"; c/u cannabis; int. # 54.

“I don’t have much education — I only have Grade — so I want to turn around I’ve got a long record ... I have about 40 convictions ... Since I have quit drugs, I have not turned any tricks at all, and I don’t plan to ... I’d like to go back to school, and take a cooking course.”

— female; 20 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 36

“The only thing that’s going to make me stop [working] is getting stuck in my head that I want to go back to school ... I still have to upgrade, and stuff.”

— female; street, phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; int. # 26.

14. Background

14. a About Maggie's and the Prostitutes' Safe Sex Project

Maggie's (officially the Toronto Prostitutes Community Service Project) is a peer-run, non profit mutual aid project and resource centre for women and men who work in the sex industry. Initiated by prostitutes, the board of Maggie's has been meeting since December 1986. It was incorporated as a non-profit charity in the province of Ontario in 1991.

The Prostitutes Safe Sex Project (PSSP) is the first phase of Maggie's comprehensive plan to provide services for prostitutes, by prostitutes. The project has been in operation, initially as a voluntary organization, since late 1986 and has been funded since April, 1988 by the City of Toronto and the Ontario Ministry of Health. In the summer of 1990, PSSP received three year's funding from the Health Promotion Directorate of Health and Welfare Canada, (AIDS Community Action Plan) to establish our safe sex resource centre for prostitutes. The resource centre provides information and referrals that focus on parenting, health issues, addiction treatment, housing, skills development, and assistance with legal aid and family and criminal matters.

Because prostitutes are the membership and staff of Maggie's, we can share our own experiences and be non-judgemental. By doing effective outreach Maggie's has gained the trust of prostitutes. Because we are prostitutes we are also connected to the customers and lovers/spouses of prostitutes. Maggie's has a well-developed and capable volunteer base. We have produced a number of very successful educational materials directed at prostitutes and other sexually active people including pamphlets, cards, buttons, radio ads, videos, a newsletter, and our very popular Bad Trick Sheet and Bad Calls List (lists of dangerous men who pose as customers of prostitutes). Maggie's has also made strong links with other AIDS prevention and prostitute organizations, and the media across Canada and around the world.

14. b Why a study about drug related harm?

Staff and volunteers doing outreach continually reported that they were faced again and again with recognizable harm related to drug use (especially crack/coke, heroin and alcohol) in the workplaces of prostitutes they were contacting. We were continually hearing that people couldn't find treatment that was accessible, appropriate, and effective. We wanted to survey current and former drug users to record potential harms and risks with the use of particular drugs, to record any successful or possible approaches to reducing those risks or harms. What were people's experiences with seeking and receiving treatment? How much of that risk or harm occurs in the workplace of prostitutes?

None of us had any background in statistical research. But we knew that if we couldn't pull it off the process would still have a good community-building effect and give people the opportunity to share experiences.

But there is a political Achilles heel to this project. Prostitution and drug use have been associated with one another by society in general, and by police, researchers, government and other policy makers, social workers, Children's Aid, and courts (to name a few) in particular. This point was vociferously raised at different times by staff and volunteers at Maggie's. For a prostitute-run resource centre and outreach project to attempt to separate two industries so intricately intertwined within the underground economy in order to address health and safety in the workplace is a treacherous task.

This project studied drug use and prostitution, not to determine a cause/effect relationship but to assess what possible harm related to drug use occurs in the workplace;

what ways harm can be reduced; how workplace health and safety education can be accomplished within criminalized workplaces.

Research on possible relationships between drug use, (including legal drugs) and high levels of occupational stress within other (legal) industries is also needed to determine ways to do effective workplace health and safety education.

For this survey we sought people with *both* sex work and drug use experience, concentrating on people who were currently working and currently using drugs. We concentrated on heroin, coke and crack; we considered alcohol a drug with possible harmful effects for which people had treatment experience. We also studied cannabis use.

14. c Funding

The Health Promotion and Social Development Office of Health Canada funded this project with an initial budget of \$35,000, (\$16,050 plus benefits for a coordinator, \$1,500 for the coordinator to attend the harm reduction conference in Rotterdam, March 21, 1993, \$4,000 for peer interviewers, \$4,000 for people being interviewed, transcription \$3,500, \$3,000 for consulting (including computer consulting), \$2,000 for writing, \$1,000 for editing and \$2,373 for production costs. Maggie's applied for the grant the end of October, 1992 and received the first cheque (\$31,500) in February, 1993. On September 1, 1993, Maggie's received confirmation of an additional \$4,375. (\$373.75, Claris Filemaker Pro 2.0, \$1,000. data base design and data entry training, \$2,000. extension for writer, \$1,000. editing.), we had requested and an extension to November 30, 1993. On February 17, 1994, Maggie's received a final additional \$4,400, (\$80. additional transcription, \$1,000, data base design - spreadsheets, \$1,920. writers research assistant, \$1,000 extension for writer), we requested, bringing the total budget to \$43,775. Originally we had proposed to have the project completed by August 1, 1993.

14. d How this study was conducted

The questionnaire was developed by a group of volunteers and staff, with the project coordinator. The group met several times to develop it and it was then tested by the original interview team. **[FIRST MEETING DATE?]**

Meetings were organized May 10 and 11, 1993, with a new coordinator and partial interview team to recruit volunteers, coordinate payment plans and start the interview process. Interview days at the drop-in were advertised on posters and leaflets, and took place two consecutive Thursdays, May 20, and May 27, 1993. They were two very busy drop-in days.

Interviewers were given \$120. "up front" with which to go out and pay six interview subjects. Once we received their audio cassettes, the interviewers were paid an equal amount. This payment system worked well for the interview taping process, and was continued for transcribing — \$20 for each interview transcript delivered. Once we trusted that the work was indeed being done, we paid out more than just \$120 at a time, since some people worked faster than others. On several occasions there were advances in pay and a few times we were over charged. We paid for about 190 interviews. Some interviews were either taped over, or were paid for and not given, some were lost when given out to transcribers. One interviewer disappeared with the initial seed money. Another, we heard through the grapevine, interviewed one person several times who used different voices and stories. (We found those transcripts and removed them.) Three portable audio recorders went missing. But, overall, the payment process worked well.

There were other difficulties one might expect from a peer-run study on people who have a history of using drugs. Communication was an enormous task. Several people had no phone numbers, others moved frequently, and everyone had different working hours that fluctuated on a daily basis. The coordinator used her apartment as a meeting place to

exchange tapes for money, and was persistent, often having to make phone calls around the clock.

There was a sense of team spirit but, some interviewers worked really hard and then disappeared, some got other work, one was hospitalized, some went into treatment programs. And some became our transcribers.

It is especially important to recognize the incredible contribution made by people managing addictions, poor, with poor working conditions for sex work— many often “against the wall.” For people who are trying not to use, or trying to manage their use, to go places with \$120 in their hand and a tape deck to talk about using drugs with people they are connected to, sometimes where they've got high, and to come back and deliver six good, half-hour interviews before they got paid, is an incredible commitment to a peer-run project.

By June 21, 1993 we had 170 transcripts on 693 pages. The transcripts were coded with coloured markers and tags to distinguish different drugs used and other pertinent information.

John Pastway was hired to research other similar harm reduction studies; read all the transcripts to pull out the information relevant to developing the data base on computer, and begin drafting the report. He was someone with prostitution and drug use experience, a masters in English who had worked as a teacher and had an interest in harm reduction. He also transcribed over a third of the interviews.

The data base was designed on Claris Filemaker Pro 2.0 on a MacIntosh system with 78 fields by Andrew Sorfleet, Deb Waddington, with help from Cathy Orfald and Inter/Access (a computer skills resource centre for artists). Irit Shimrat, a professional editor, entered the data onto the data base by going through the transcripts and editing comments for appropriate data fields. She did substantive writing, editing and proof reading.

From the original 170, only nine interviews were removed as either inappropriate or informationally worthless out of 50 that needed further scrutiny and had to be reheard. There were some problems with the peer-process used for transcribing. While keeping people involved, employed, and interested in a research project about themselves helped guarantee the authenticity of the information; literacy levels played a role in levels of accuracy. This error rate isn't high when you consider that the interviews didn't need to be wholly re-transcribed and often tape quality made accurate transcription a painstaking job.

Gleaning the information from the interviews for the data base has proven to be a long, arduous task. Many interviews lacked key questions although the information was often buried in different things the interviewee talked about. Sometimes some interviewers asked other questions not relevant to the study, which brought out some interesting responses.

There were some structural problems with the format of the questionnaire that made it seem that some interviewers were repeating the same question over several times.

Very few interviewers stayed with the drug study through the entire process of collecting interviews. There was almost a complete turnover of people from the time of developing the questionnaire and starting the interviewing to starting the transcription. It was difficult to keep interviewers trained and practiced to gather better quality interviews.

There are many blank fields through out individual records. But there are also a lot of interesting comments and raw material on database which can be sorted and compiled on a vast range of people from vastly different drug-using histories and sex-work experience.

Sifting through that database to determine what things people said that suggested or supported recommendations for reducing harm related to drug use has been an enormous task.

14. e Recommendations for future peer-run studies
[What we would do different]

- more time
- larger budget
- smaller sample
- shorter questionnaire
- develop the computer data base first then design a questionnaire that elicits the information
- redesign questionnaire, ask questions for each individual drug.
- spot checking, screening and listening to taped interviews as soon as they are turned in.
- have the transcription process as close to the pace of the interviewing as possible

Appendices

questionnaire

data sheets

Budget

Observations of PSSP AIDS educators

Other reading

(quotes from occupational stress studies re: Fran Shaver pros vs. night shift nurses etc.)

— male; street, regulars; 1 year (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke, DOC: coke, int. # 01.
 — male; bars, street, phone; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, ecstasy, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 02.
 — male; street, phone; 11 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; DOC: alcohol; int. # 03.
 — male; street, bars, stripping; 1 yr.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: cannabis; int. # 04.
 — female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 05.
 — male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, alcohol; DOC: opium; int. # 06.
 — male; street, phone; 8 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 07
 — male; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q coke, LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 08.
 — male; street, bars; 7 yrs. (ncw), s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 09.
 — female; street, bars; 0.33 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 10.
 — female; street, bars, phone, massage; 13 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 13.
 — trans; street, phone; 2 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. # 14.
 — female; phone sex, domination; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 15.
 — female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #16.
 — male; street, bars; 2 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, tobacco; int. # 17.
 — male; street, bars, phone, dancer; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; DOC: cannabis, coke, crack, LSD; int. # 18.
 — male; street, bars, phone; 7 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: coke; int. #19.
 — male; street, bars, phone; 1 yr.; s/q cannabis; c/u alcohol, cannabis, LSD; DOC: alcohol; int. # 21.
 — female; street; 10 yrs.; s/q coke, c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 23.
 — female; street; 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 24
 — female; street; s/q coke, speed; c/u alcohol; int. # 25.
 — female; street, phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; int. # 26.
 — female; street; c/u alcohol; int. # 27.
 — male; street, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, heroin; int. #28.
 — female; street; 14 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 29.
 — female; street; 9 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u cannabis, antipsychotic pills; int. #30.
 — female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u cannabis; int. # 31.
 — female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 32.
 — male; bars; 7yrs.; s/q coke, speed; c/u cannabis, heroin, mushrooms; int. # 33
 — female; street, bars, phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 34.
 — female; 20 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 36
 — female; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; int. # 37.
 — female; street, bars, body rub; 18 yrs.; c/u heroin, alcohol; int. # 38.
 — male; street, bars phone; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u coke, cannabis, LSD, alcohol, DOC: cannabis; int. # 39.
 — male; phone, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: alcohol; int. # 40.
 — female; street, phone; 9 yrs.; s/q scripts; c/u alcohol, cannabis, tylenol; DOC: cannabis; int. # 42.
 — male; phone; 1 yr.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: alcohol, coke, crack; int. # 43.
 — male; street; 1 yr.; s/q alcohol; c/u alcohol, cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: alcohol, ecstasy; int. # 44.
 — male; street, bars, phone; 1.5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol, coke; int. # 45.
 — female; street, bars, brothel; 29 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 46.
 — female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 47.
 — female; street; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 48.
 — female; street; phone; 1 yr.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; int. # 49.
 — female; street; (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, valium; int. # 50.
 — female; street, stripping, bars; 4 yrs.; s/q coke, crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int., # 52.
 — male; street, phone; 2 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u crack, cannabis; int. # 53.
 — female; street, phone; 15 yrs. (ncw); s/q heroin, "chemicals"; c/u cannabis; int. # 54.
 — female; bars, phone, street; 18 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 55.
 — male; street, phone; 17 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 56.
 — male; street; 12 yrs.; s/q coke, "downers"; c/u cannabis, tabacco; DOC: cannabis; int. # 57.
 — female; domination, bi shows, stags; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, LSD, mushrooms; int. #58
 — female; street; 2 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 61.
 — male; street; 1 yr. (ncw); s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 62.
 — female; street, phone; 10 yrs. (ncw); s/q "everything"; c/u alcohol; int. # 63.

— female; street; 25 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 65.
 — female; street, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis, coke; int. # 66.
 — female; street; 16 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 67.
 — male; street, bars, referrals; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 68.
 — female; street, domination; 7 yrs.; c/u heroin, cannabis; int. # 69.
 — female; street, phone; 12 yrs.; s/q cocaine; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 70.
 — female; street, phone, 3 yrs.; s/q.cocaine; c/u alcohol, tobacco; int. # 72.
 — female street; 0.5 yrs.; c/u alcohol; int. # 76.
 — male; street, regulars; 4 yrs. (ncw); c/u cannabis, heroin; int. # 78.
 — male; street, stripping; 0.6 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack, LSD, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis; int. # 79
 — male; stripping, modelling; 2 yrs.; s/q alcohol; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 80.
 — female; street; 4 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 81.
 — female; street; 3 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 82.
 — female; street, phone, bars; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 84.
 — female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, speed; int. # 85.
 — female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 86.
 — trans; street, bars, bathhouses; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, ecstasy; DOC: Special K; int. # 87.
 — male; street, regulars, ran brothel; 10 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 88.
 — male; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q cannabis; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol, crack; int. # 89.
 — male; street, bars, body rub; s/q "needle drugs"; c/u cannabis, ecstasy, LSD, mushrooms; int.# 90.
 — male; phone; 8 yrs.; s/q alcohol, tabacco, caffeine; c/u cannabis, LSD, peyote, mescaline; int. # 91.
 — female; street, phone, regulars; 1 yr.; c/u heroin; int. #92.
 — trans; street, bars; s/q alcohol, tobacco; int. # 93.
 — female; street; 7 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; int. # 94.
 — male; street, bars; s/q heroin, c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 95.
 — female; street, regulars; 1 yr.; s/q heroin; int. # 96.
 — female; phone; 4 yrs.; c/u coke, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 97.
 — female; street, phone; 12 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 98.
 — male; street, bars; 3.5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 101.
 — male; street, bars; 11 yrs.; s/q coke heroin, speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int # 102.
 — female; street, bars, phone; 15 yrs.; s/q valium; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 103.
 — male; street; 4 yrs., s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, heroin, "pills"; int. # 104.
 — ?; street; 4 yrs.; c/u coke; DOC: coke; int. # 105.[CHECK TAPE]
 — female; street; 4 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #106.
 — female; street, phone, body rub; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: crack, cannabis; int. # 107.
 — female; street; 11 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; int. # 108
 — female; street, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q heroin; int. # 109.
 — female; street, phone, bars; 26 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 110.
 — male; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u cannabis; int. # 111.
 — female; bars (ncw); s/q heroin, c/u alcohol; DOC: alcohol; int. # 112.
 — female; street, bars; 3.5 yrs.; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 113.
 — female; street, bars; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 114.
 — female; street; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, crack; DOC: cannabis; int. # 115.
 — male; street, bars; 4 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u cannabis, crack, ecstasy; DOC: crack; int. # 117.
 — female; street; 6 yrs.; s/q heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int.# 118.
 — female; stripping, street; 22 yrs.; c/u alcohol, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 119.
 — female; street; 4 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; DOC: speed; int. # 120.
 — female; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 121.
 — female; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol; DOC: crack; int. # 123.
 — female; street; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol, crack; int. # 124.
 — male; street, phone; 2.5 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int. # 125.
 — female; street, bars, phone; 10 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis; int. # 126.
 — female; street, stripping; 2 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 127.
 — female; phone, stags; 3 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 129.
 — female; body rub, bars, "in house"; 10 yrs., s/q alcohol, c/u alcohol, cannabis, DOC: cannabis, int # 130.
 — female; stripping, running agency for transsexuals and transvestites; prostitution; 25 yrs.; s/q speed, barbiturates; c/u cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 131.

- female, street bars, body rub, phone; 4 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, heroin; DOC: heroin; int. # 133.
- male; street (ncw); s/q heroin; c/u heroin; DOC: heroin; int. #134.
- female; domination, phone, stags; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, ecstasy; DOC: ecstasy; int. # 135.
- female; street; 10 yrs.; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: cannabis, coke; int. # 136.
- male; street; 1 yr. (ncw); s/q crack; int. # 137
- female; street, 1.5 yrs. (ncw); s/q coke, heroin; c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: heroin; int # 138.
- trans; street, bars; 5 yrs.; s/q LSD; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 139.
- female; street; 18 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 140.
- female; street, bars, phone; s/q crack; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 141.
- male; street, bars; 1 yr.; s/q alcohol; c/u crack; DOC: coke; int. # 142.
- female; street, 5 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke; int. # 144.
- female; street; 0.25 yrs.; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 145.
- trans; street, bars, phone; 6 yrs.; s/q alcohol, crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, crack, LSD, tobacco; DOC: crack; int. # 147.
- female; phone, body rub; 5 yrs.; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke; int. # 148.
- female; domination; 2 yrs.; c/u alcohol, valium; DOC: alcohol; int. # 149.
- male; phone; 5 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u cannabis, coke; DOC: cannabis; int. # 150.
- female; street, stripping; 12 yrs.; s/q crack; c/u cannabis, coke, crack; DOC: coke, crack; int. # 151.
- female; street, bars; 3 yrs.; c/u alcohol, coke, crack; DOC: crack; int. # 152.
- female; street, phone, body rub; 11 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u crack; DOC: crack; int. # 154.
- female; street, bars, brothels; 16 yrs.; s/q "all"; c/u alcohol, tobacco, 'scripts for cancer'; int. # 155.
- male; street, bars; 11 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: coke; int. # 156.
- male; street; 16 yrs.; s/q coke; c/u alcohol, crack; DOC: alcohol; int. # 160.
- female; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis; DOC: cannabis; int. # 161.
- female; street, bars; 7 yrs.; s/q LSD, mushrooms, mescaline; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 162.
- male; street, bars; 10 yrs.; s/q speed; int. # 163.
- female; street, phone; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, mushrooms; DOC: cannabis, alcohol, coke; int. # 164.
- male; phone; 2 yrs.; s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 166.
- male; street, phone sex; 6 yrs. (ncw); s/q crack; c/u alcohol, cannabis; int. # 167.
- male; phone; 3 yrs. (ncw); s/q speed; c/u alcohol, cannabis, coke, LSD, mushrooms, valium, mescaline, prescription drugs; DOC: alcohol, cannabis; int. # 168.
- male; street; 2 yrs. (ncw); c/u alcohol, coke; DOC: alcohol; int. # 170.

yrs. = number of years in the sex trade

(ncw) = not currently working

s/q = successfully quit

c/u = currently using

DOC: = drug of choice

int. # = interview no.