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**ESRC (RES-000-22-3163): The Regulatory Dance**  
**Preliminary Report**  
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## **Introduction**

This report draws on quantitative data of 107 questionnaire surveys and qualitative observations undertaken in clubs in London, Leeds and Harrogate, as well as through an on-line survey. At the time of writing 86 paper questionnaires have been collected, as well as an additional 21 completed online surveys.

## **Dancer Demographics**

### **Age**

The majority of dancers (68.8%) are aged between 22 and 29. Interestingly, despite an emphasis on youth within the industry, only 10% were younger than this and 21.3% of dancers were older than 29. The age range between dancers spanned from 19 to 39.

**Table 1: Age of dancers**

<b>Age band</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-21	10.0
22-25	35.0
26-29	33.8
30-33	10.0
34-37	8.8
38-41	2.5
Total	100.0

The age at which most dancers had started dancing, however, was considerably younger. A large proportion of 68% started dancing when they were under 25 years old and 92% began when they were under 29. Only a small proportion (7.6%) started when they were over 30. Women who started dancing later in life were more likely to cite family reasons, such as illness in families or partnership break up as their reason for starting dancing.

**Table 2: Age started dancing**

<b>Age started</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>18-21</b>	26	32.9
<b>22-25</b>	28	35.4
<b>26-29</b>	19	24.1
<b>30-33</b>	4	5.1
<b>34-37</b>	2	2.5
<b>Total</b>	79	100

Half of the dancers were single (50%), but the other half were in some form of relationship with someone with whom lived (21.3%) or did not live (21.3%). Only 6.3% of the dancers were married.

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Single	40	50.0
Co-habiting	17	21.3
Have partner, but live alone	17	21.3
Married	5	6.3
Other	1	1.3
Total	80	100.0

Only 19% of dancers surveyed had children. Amongst dancers with children 86.8% had one child and 13.2% had two children. No dancer had more than two children.

## **Nationality**

British nationals constituted over half the dancers surveyed. The next largest national groups were Romanian (19%) and Brazilian (8.9%).

**Table 3: Nationality by region**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
British	42	53.2
EU	26	32.9
Non-EU	10	12.7
Dual: EU-Non EU	1	1.3
Total	79	100

**Table 4: Nationality of dancers**

<b>Nationality</b>		<b>No.</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
<b>EU</b>	British	43	54.4
	Romanian	15	19.0
	Latvian	2	2.5
	Lithuanian	2	2.5
	Polish	2	2.5
	Estonian	1	1.3
	French	1	1.3
	Italian	1	1.3
<b>Non-EU</b>	Brazilian	7	8.9
	Thai	3	3.8
	Zimbabwean	1	1.3
<b>Dual</b>	Canadian-EU	1	1.3
<b>Total</b>		79	100.0

## **Education**

All of the dancers had some education and had finished school with some qualifications. 87% had completed at least Further Education, while 25% had completed an undergraduate degree.

**Table 5: Educational Attainment**

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
School	7	8.9	8.9	100
School and currently in FE	3	3.8	12.7	91.1
Further education	30	38.0	50.6	87.3
FE and currently in undergraduate education	11	13.9	64.6	49.4
FE and currently in other (non-HE) education	8	10.1	74.7	35.4
Undergraduate	14	17.7	92.4	25.3
Undergraduate and currently in postgraduate education	5	6.3	98.7	7.6
Postgraduate	1	1.3	100.0	1.3
<b>Total</b>	79	100.0		

However, a significant number of dancers were still studying at some level. Just over one third of dancers were students. 31% of dancers were currently in some form of education, making students a significant proportion of dancers. 3.8% were taking further education courses, 13.9% were using dancing to help fund an undergraduate degree and 6.3% for a postgraduate degree.

Non-higher education courses included Beauty School; Drama School; Hairdressing; Interior Design; Life Coaching; and The Knowledge. Undergraduate courses included Media and Journalism; Business Studies; Economics; Nursing; Psychology; Radiography; Mechanical Engineering and Sociology. Postgraduate studies included Ecology and Law.

## Work history and entry into dancing

Dancers gave multiple different reasons for beginning to dance. Most, however, cited money as the main motivator (see table 6).

**Table 6: Reasons for starting dancing**

<b>Reason for starting</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Money	28	36.4
Money for education	9	11.7
Someone else was doing it	9	11.7
Like dancing	5	6.5
Debt	4	5.2
Freedom or flexibility	4	5.2
Relationship break down	3	3.9
Adventure	2	2.6
Boost my career	2	2.6
Always wanted to	2	2.6
Increase confidence	2	2.6
Help family	2	2.6
To be able to buy nice things	2	2.6
Sociability	1	1.3
Bet	1	1.3
Lack of other work	1	1.3
Total	77	100.0

Dancers mainly found work in their first club through friends and the internet (sum = 63.6%). Agencies had a small role to play, but were more predominant amongst migrant workers.

**Table 7: Recruitment into first club**

<b>Recruitment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Friend	14	31.8

Internet	14	31.8
Agency	4	9.1
Word of mouth	4	9.1
Walked past	3	6.8
Newspaper	2	4.5
Boyfriend/ex-boyfriend	1	2.3
Just knew it	1	2.3
Job centre	1	2.3
<b>Total</b>	44	100

Most dancers

**Table 8: Length of time performing**

<b>Length of time performing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Less than 6 months	11	13.9	13.9
6 months to <1 year	6	7.6	21.5
1 year to <3 years	28	35.4	57.0
3 years to <5 years	20	25.3	82.3
5 to 10 years	12	15.2	97.5
>10 years	2	2.5	100.0
Total	79	100.0	

Dancers that we spoke to had been dancing for between 1 day and 17 years. Most dancers had been dancing for between 1 year and <3 years (mode and median). Only 17.7% had been dancing for more than five years, indicating that most dancers left between 3 and 5 years into their dancing careers.

**Table 9: Number of clubs worked in**

<b>Number of clubs worked in</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
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1-2 Clubs	45	57.0	57.0
3-4 Clubs	16	20.3	77.2
5-6 Clubs	8	10.1	87.3
7-8 Clubs	1	1.3	88.6
9-10 clubs	5	6.3	94.9
More than ten clubs	4	5.1	100.0
Total	79	100.0	

Women had danced in between 1 and 35 clubs. Most women had worked in a only 1-2 clubs. Women that had danced in more than ten clubs (5.1%) tended to have worked for agencies who had sent them to a number of different pubs and clubs.

Women generally reported earnings going down. They reported between £50 and £800 earnings in the first club they worked in. The average in the first club women worked in was £284, while the average that women currently reported was £232. This does not reflect reports from dancers that earnings have drastically gone down in the past few years. However, dancers have tended to state that it is not so much that earnings have gone down across the board but that they are a lot more inconsistent now and that earnings across the week may even out, but that they were more likely to be out of pocket on a night than they were previously.

The tables below show earnings shifting over time.

**Table: Earnings in first club per shift**

<b>Earnings per shift</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
0-49	1	3.1	3.1
£50-£99	2	6.3	9.4
£100-£199	6	18.8	28.1
£200-299	8	25.0	53.1
£300-399	6	18.8	71.9
£400-499	3	9.4	81.3
£500 or more	6	18.8	100.0
Total	32	100.0	
System	75		

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**Table: Earnings in second club per shift**

<b>Earnings per shift</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
0-49	1	2.0	2.0
£50-£99	3	6.1	8.2
£100-£199	14	28.6	36.7
£200-299	16	32.7	69.4
£300-399	8	16.3	85.7
£400-499	4	8.2	93.9
£500 or more	3	6.1	100.0
Total	49	100.0	
System	58		
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### ***Work strategies***

Most dancers worked more between 2 and less than 4 shifts a week (57.1%). Over 66.2% of dancers worked less than four shifts a week.

### **Shifts worked per week**

<b>Shifts worked per week</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
0 to <2	7	9.1	9.1
2 to <4	44	57.1	66.2
4 to <6	23	29.9	96.1
6 to 7	3	3.9	100.0
Total	77	100.0	

Dancing was the sole form of income for the majority of dancers (60.3%). However, it was significant that 39.7% of dancers did combine dancing with other forms of work and income.

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In addition to working, many dancers were combining dancing with some form of education. Less than half of the dancers (47.5%) were only dancing. The larger majority (53.5%) combined dancing with education, other forms of work or both of those activities.

**Table 8: Activities combined with dancing**

<b>Combine dancing with</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>
Education	12.0	15
Other forms of work	18.0	22.5
Work and education	12.0	15
Only dancing	38.0	47.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>80.0</b>	<b>100</b>

Of the dancers who were engaged in other types of work. When these are examined alongside nationality an interesting pattern emerges. While British dancers are fairly evenly distributed in terms of the strategies that they are using, Non-EU dancers overwhelming only dance and do not undertake any education or other forms of work.

**Table 9: Combinations of dancing, work and education by nationality**

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Education</b>		<b>Other forms of work</b>		<b>Other forms of work and education</b>		<b>Only dancing</b>		<b>Total</b>
	<b>No.</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Per cent</b>	
<b>British</b>	6	14.3	12	28.6	10	23.8	14	33.3	42
<b>EU</b>	6	23.1	4	15.4	2	7.7	14	53.8	26
<b>Non-EU</b>	0	0.0	1	10.0	0	0.0	9	90.0	10
<b>Dual: EU-Non EU</b>	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1
<b>Total</b>	12	15.2	18	22.8	12	15.2	37	46.8	79

### **Feelings about work**

Job satisfaction amongst dancers was strikingly high. Asked to score their job satisfaction from 0 to 10 with 10 being the highest, a significant proportion (84.4%) rated their satisfaction above five and only 5.3% rated their satisfaction at less than five.

**Table 10: Job satisfaction scores**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Zero to four	4	5.2
Five	8	10.4
Six to Ten	65	84.4

Looking more carefully at the numbers, no dancers rated their satisfaction below three, the majority rated their satisfaction at work at 7-8, with the second largest group rating it at the highest levels of 9-10 (24.7%).

**Table 11: Job satisfaction scores**

<b>Score</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
1-2	0.0	0.0
3-4	5.0	6.5
5-6	13.0	16.9
7-8	40.0	51.9
9-10	19.0	24.7
<b>Total</b>	77.0	100.0

When asked how happy they felt at work, the majority of dancers stated that they felt Happy or Very Happy (76.4%). While 22.2% were neutral, only 1 person said that they felt unhappy.

**Table 12: Happiness at work**

<b>Happiness at work</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Very Happy	12	16.7
Happy	43	59.7
Neither Happy or Unhappy	16	22.2
Unhappy	1	1.4
Very unhappy	0	0
<b>Total</b>	72	100

Dancers were also asked how respected they felt within the workplace. This time, the majority (59.2%) were neutral, stating that they neither felt respected nor disrespected. Despite this neutrality, significantly more dancers said that they felt Respected or Very Respected (33.8%) than Disrespected or Very Disrespected (7%).

**Table 13: Respect at work**

<b>Feelings of respect</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Very respected	4	5.6
Respected	20	28.2
Neither respected nor disrespected	42	59.2
Disrespected	4	5.6
Very disrespected	1	1.4
<b>Total</b>	71	100

A large majority of dancers felt safe at work. However, a number of them stated that there was significant difference between clubs and therefore it was hard to say as a rule.

There was little significant difference in happiness at work between different nationalities, although Non-EU nationals were the most likely to rate themselves happy or very happy at work.

<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Happy or Very Happy</b>	<b>Neither</b>	<b>Unhappy or very Unhappy</b>
British	78.9	21.1	0.0
EU	71.4	23.8	4.8
Non-EU	81.8	18.2	0.0
Dual	0.0	100.0	0.0

A large majority of women felt safe or very safe at work (88%), however many commented that it was hard to state exactly as it varied from club to club.

**Table 14: Safety at Work**

<b>Feelings of safety</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Very safe	20	26.7
Safe	46	61.3
Neither safe nor unsafe	8	10.7
Unsafe	0	0
Very unsafe	1	1.3
<b>Total</b>	75	100

### Positive feelings about work

Dancers were given a list of options and asked whether any of them represented things they felt was the best part of their job:

- 98.1% said that one of the best features of the job was the ability to **choose their own hours**
- 80.6% **earning more money** than in other jobs
- 77.8% said **getting money straight away**
- 75% said the ability it gave them to **be independent**
- 74% said that **keeping fit** was one of the best features

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- 74% said **combining fun and work**
- 56.9% said **making new friends**
- 51.4% said **feeling good about themselves** was one of the best elements
- 51.4% said **working shorter hours**
- 32.8% said it helped their **career prospects**

When asked what dancers liked most about dancing as a job, the most frequently cited answer was clear, "Money!":

*I get money really easily.*

*Earn VERY good money in the short term. £100-£200 a night. My favourites are Tues, Wed, Thurs - that's the business guys*

*Easy money. Getting things I could never have got otherwise. Seen more money than I have ever seen in my life and I've gained a lot of confidence.*

*It's only about money. I like the money. It's fun. Interesting talking to people.*

Fun, socializing and sociability were also frequently stated, alongside money, as key factors for engaging in dancing:

*Money. Some of the girls. I made a best friend here. Social life - I like working socially.*

*Money. Nice people. Sometimes you can find nice people to have a conversation.*

*Money. I like to be with the girls and have fun.*

*Money. Also, it's just like going to a rave.*

*Money. Fun.*

*Meeting people. Different types of people.*

*Meet different people, different backgrounds, shouldn't be ashamed of it, not a prostitute.*

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*I love it. It is a really glamorous job. I love the socialising, the glamour. You meet some really decent guys as well. It does shine a light on many things in many different ways. You get regulars and that makes the job so much easier. In the club I work in now no-one has ever been rude or racist towards me. Never.*

*Fun. Drink every night. Talk to random people.*

*I'm an exhibitionist. Definitely the money. It's a social thing as well, all my friends work here.*

The actual dancing itself was a commonly cited reason for engaging in lap dancing and also for why women enjoyed it:

*I like the actual dancing and it is good money.*

*It's a lot of fun. Personally, in a year's time I am going to start a pole dancing studio. I love it. It's a proper sport.*

*I love music. I like dancing.*

*I was dancing from when I was a small child. I have no inhibitions about my body and like to be sensual and to express myself.*

*I like dancing, I do all sorts of dancing, even belly dancing! I like having freedom of choice and being your own boss. It is also a good confidence boost.*

*I can exercise, use my energy.*

It was felt that this also offered the opportunity to self-improve and to learn new skills:

*You meet a lot of people, learn about new people. You learn a lot about the psychology of the human being.*

*It keeps you fit. Gives you bravery. It makes you a very a good psychologist.*

*Lots - money, fun, you get to look after yourself. Lost 6 kilos. Trained to look better with age..*

*Helps me to handle men, to be more feminine, to take care of myself and my appearance. It's like an art, not just dancing.*

*Fully independent, flexible hours, social job, confidence as a woman. Self esteem.*

Flexibility was also frequently mentioned and sometimes in combination with both earning potential and socialability:

*Money. Flexibility.*

*Freedom. You can drink. You don't have set times. That's the main thing.*

*Choose when you want to work. Plan your own schedule.*

*Work when you want. Only have to work three days a week, still earn more than in five days a week. I like night work. It's just social. you have a laugh, even when it's crap, it's like going on a night out.*

*It's not stressful. Good money. If you don't want to work, you don't work.*

*I can choose my holidays, like if I just want to go away, I don't have to wait. Money. It's the same feeling like when I go out to a club.*

*I've just started a 9-5 job. It is literally so shit. Impossible.*

The flexibility also enabled people to engage in the other parts of their life that they valued:

*I like that it's a night out. Dressing up, glamorous side of it and the money. See my daughter all day.*

A number of dancers also cited the feelings they drew from dancing as being a very positive part of the experience:

*I'm an exhibitionist, I like the attention and it's a good way to make money.*

*Money. I like the feelings, I can feel...*

*Communicate nicely. Meet different people. When started, I was scared, now have confidence. I like making friends, chat, being happy. Good, but you can't do it all yourself.*

*My satisfaction went down - 9 when I started, 2 or 3 by the end. Social life, work/life balance, immediate earnings, suits other employment and education and the money are all advantages. Being English means you don't have to do things you don't want to. Keeps you fit, take care of yourself for a living and play dress up. It gives you confidence with guys.*

*Great confidence about myself and how I look.*

*Seeing people happy*

*Work when you want, as long as you want. Quite social. I do enjoy going to work.*

*When there is money to be made, it's great. It's fun. The flexibility is good too.*

*Social life. Keeping fit. Nocturnal hours. Positive self image. Combines fun and work.*

*You can relax and socialise and drink. Can be good money on a good day. Something physical which is what I have done all my life.*

*Working evenings. It is glamorous. Working with the girls. Getting a lot of money.*

All of these feelings were neatly summed up by one dancer who surmised "Better money. No commitment. Leave when you want to leave. Drink what you want".

### Negative feelings about work

Dancers were given a list of options and asked whether any of them represented things they felt was the worst part of their job:

- 55.6% said **never knowing how much money they would earn**
- 48.6% said **keeping their job a secret** was one of the worst aspects of the work
- 31.9% said **customers being rude or abusive**
- 30.6% said that having to **compete with the other dancers** was problematic for them

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- 23.6% said feeling **pressure on their bodies** to look a certain way
- 23.6% said **losing respect for men**
- 20.8% said they found it **emotionally difficult**
- 13.9% said they felt it meant they **didn't have career prospects**
- 11.1% said **feeling bad about themselves**
- 6.9% said feeling that they could **lose their job easily**

Dancers were also asked open question about what they liked least about the job. Customer behaviour was consistently cited by dancers as one of the more negative elements of the jobs:

*Stupid men!*

*Stupid people! Stupid men.*

*Try and grab you. Think you're something that you're not*

*When a customer is rude, it is difficult.*

*When you get weirdos coming in. Some are pushy, but you can always call a bouncer.*

*When people expect more than they're going to get from VIP*

*Touching. Nasty customers. I don't like stress when I am working.*

*It's tedious talking to drunk men and pretending to enjoy their conversation*

*The way that some people treat you, but that doesn't happen often.*

*The men, dealing with the men. Tiring - emotionally and physically and it changes your body clock.*

*Rude customers. People who think they don't have to pay. People who touch you, only when they're drunk though.*

*Rude men: some men are perverted, they don't respect the rules and just be coarse. We are dancers, not prostitutes.*

*You can get some bitchiness. Lifestyle - drinking all the time. You can get some assholes as well.*

*Pigheaded guys and assholes. English guys don't have much sense, they want intimacy, to have a relationship with you. The job is mainly ego boosting. Have got to make them believe that you'll go home with them, when you have no intention of doing that at all. More so in London than anywhere else.*

*People expect a lot from you. A lot refuse dances because you won't let them touch you.*

*Pervy men. Don't like the fact that some men are really disrespectful.*

*Painful or difficult customers. You get asked for sex all the time. Managers sometimes and fines.*

*Guy's attitudes sometimes. You know which ones they are though.*

*I hate the job, but love the money. I hate all the wankers, but the money is worth it. Don't like finishing at 3am. I don't like the men or the manager or the mental torture, you have to stay very strong minded.*

*Men are idiots.*

*Men being rude.*

*Men being rude - boundaries that men cross, asking ridiculous questions.*

*Men who don't buy dances.*

*Customer being rude. When they talk about sex during a private dance.*

Dancers reported customers requesting 'extras', such as touching the customers or being allowed to touch the dancers and this was frequently cited as one of the worst aspects of the work:

*People expect a lot from you. A lot refuse dances because you won't let them touch you (Dancer, 20, Leeds).*

Many attributed this to the fact that some girls were willing to offer more during dances and to bend or break the rules in order to get higher tips and more dances. However, when asked about how frequently that took

place, most said it was a small minority rather than a majority of customers and that it didn't happen very often.

Financial instability was similarly found to be problematic.

*You make a compromise. Stupid men. They think we are a bitch because we have this job. This is a lottery, sometimes you make money, sometimes you don't.*

*Worst thing is that it is up and down.*

*When you don't make money.*

*Shit money now.*

*Insecurity - not knowing how much money you'll make.*

*It's gone down, my satisfaction, as it is harder to make money. Everyone is a bit desperate now. Bit hard to give them what they want to get them to stay and spend more money. The rules have made it quite sterile and a bit edgy. It used to be that you'd do a dance, have another and make it sexier and sexier. Now, everyone is being watched and there's not much more you can do. You can't really enjoy it. It makes the dance interaction weird. You can't put your full concentration to it to make him feel like he wants to spend more money.*

The hours:

*The fact that I am working long hours, I am tired a lot but still enjoying the job.*

*The hours can be long, it can be hard.*

*The nocturnal hours, pressure to consume drugs, harassment from managers, pressure to consume alcohol and it's emotionally draining*

They also felt that some of the rules and systems instigated in the club were unfair:

*The stage - they should pay us, or should encourage men to pay for the show. We get nothing no matter much we're on there for. We're only here for one reason.*

*Some of the customers. The industry is a bit greedy, self-obsessed, money grabbing..*

*Rules - it's got much stricter about when you want to leave. The authority of it.*

*Money is really hit and miss. Also, how much they take off you seems unfair sometimes.*

*Inconsistency with the rules.*

Stigma:

*Nothing. I have no regrets. Although I don't like the publicity that us dancers get. I'm self-employed, I'm a law abiding citizen. During the day I am a full time Mother. I don't carry myself like this outside!*

*Stigma, most of my friends know but family don't know. Can feel degraded, depends on how the club is run. You get propositioned a lot, comes with the job. Can't take things personally, you just have to act dumb.*

*Have you got time?! Stigma - I don't like that. The stereotyping of people outside. I don't like the length of the hours, but I do like working nights.*

Interestingly, a lot of women said that there was nothing they disliked and often emphasised the freedom to leave if you did not like it:

*Nothing.*

*Nothing.*

*Nothing. If you don't want to work, you don't work.*

*Nothing. It's fine.*

*Don't dislike anything about the job. There are good/bad days like any job.*

*You can always walk away.*

In addition, many said that they felt that the high numbers of women working each evening produced problems between the girls as they were forced to compete with each other. As the number of women working has

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grown and the number of clubs proliferated there is increasingly intense competition between the dancers on any one evening, in some contexts this led to tensions and hostility between the dancers. Dancers were forced to intensify their work in a number of different ways: 1) by working more shifts 2) by offering more to customers in order to be able to compete with other dancers.

## **Conditions**

### ***Wage slips***

Although the majority did not receive a wage slip, some reported receiving receipts for how much they had earned. Though these often had to be requested by the dancers, rather than offered at the end of each shift.

### ***House fees, fines, debts and commission***

- House fees paid by dancers ranged from £0-£200 though only 19% of dancers had ever paid over £80.
- Commission on private dances and other services ranged from 0-66%, but only 18% had ever paid over 30% commission.
- 74.6% of dancers had been fined at some point in their dancing career. The highest reported fine was £100 for a missed shift. The most common fines were for chewing gum and lateness.
- 15.4% of dancers had owed debts to the clubs. These were either made up of costumes that they had to buy from the club in order to comply with its rules around dress or a result of house fees that the dancers had been unable to pay. Dancers often made a distinction between earned money and 'their own' money and a number of them reported having had to pay house fees from their own money that they had to go to the cash point to get out when they had not made enough money on a shift to cover their house fee.
- 69.6% of dancers surveyed had been out of pocket by going to work at least once during their time dancing

## **Rules**

Club rules consistently came up as an element of dancing that dancers did not like. Some felt that there were too many rules and others felt that they were enforced inconsistently and often with significant favouritism.

*Rules swap and change and you never know what they are (Dancer, 26, Leeds).*

Many of the women felt that they didn't have access to knowledge about what the council imposed rules were and which had been instituted by the club. Some thought that this was a good reason to have a contract between the club and the dancers:

*It would set out the rules properly. Rules for everyone: set out what people aren't allowed to do (Dancer, 21, Leeds).*

## **Improving conditions**

One 22 year old from Leeds said that she thought a union would be able to help to offer clear information about what the clubs were and were not allowed to do:

*If there's new legislation it's good to have some information from someone other than the clubs of what the rules are.*

Others thought that monthly meetings between management and all of the dancers would also help to make the situation and the rules clear.

None of the women I spoke to had their own insurance. Some vaguely knew that they needed it, but others had never thought about it and no-one had ever spoken to them about it. This makes the women extremely vulnerable. If they were injured and unable to work, they would not be paid by the club and would have no legal come back.

One 20 year old dancer in Leeds summed up all the things that needed to be improved in the industry as:

*[There needs to be] more regulation of agencies. One was done for running a brothel and simply renamed itself. This legislation not to have been passed. Girls don't know where they stand. There's no way to find it out. There's not enough security, I know of girls who*

*have been raped and abused at work. You cannot go to the police, as you are a stripper, so there is no legal standing at all.*

In order to improve security, panic alarms, more CCTV and doormen were cited as important. Similarly, many felt that the way in which private booths were set up also endangered them and also allowed standards to be lowered by dancers offering more than is allowed in the dances.

At some of the clubs, the dancers felt that the club was doing very little to try to attract custom and this often meant that they were left to do it themselves. Often they would be taken out in the limo or car to try and get people to come back to the club or to hand out flyers. Some of the dancers stated that increasing the visibility of the club in this way was key to improving their conditions:

*They should promote the club more, we have to put the effort in, we have to take time out to do it ourselves (28 year old).*

## **Unionisation**

Only 9.7% of dancers surveyed were aware of any organisations or unions of dancers. 41% said they would not be interested in joining a union, while 24.7% said they would be (see Table). A significant number of respondents said that they might be interested or did not know whether there would be (33.3%). There were high levels of ignorance about the role of trade unions generally and specifically about what they could do for dancers.

**Table: Interesting in Joining a Union**

<b>Interest in joining a union</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Per cent</b>
Interested	18	24.7
Not interested	30	41.1
Maybe interested	17	23.3
Don't know	8	11.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Reasons for wanting to join a union included better regulation and accountability in the industry:

*A few reasons. There is no legislation, no insurance.*

*Occasionally we are treated unfairly. If there is ever an issue you are just seen as self-employed, so it would be good to have someone to go to.*

*Unfair things, like management favouring girls who tip them. Regulate unfairness like this.*

*I think it could help to make the conditions better.*

Others stated that representation and support would be key:

*Having someone to represent me. Clubs don't like girls that have opinions and try to stick up for themselves.*

*Maybe, as I've heard that some dancers have been taken to court, so it would be good to have support.*

Stand up for your rights, be represented, that would be good actually. Speak to them and help us make our choices.

Some emphasised the importance of having access to better information:

*...because I would be more informed, feel stronger about everything*

*To know from the others about what's going on. Information and communication. New people. I like meeting new people.*

*Depends on what it would do. Maybe to meet up with others. Learn new dancing skills.*

*I want to know what it is about. Very interesting to know what they do. I would be very interested!*

*It would be good to talk about the clubs, what goes on. I think we can do it here, but it would be better with others.*

*One of the customers mentioned that I should be insured. They'd help with stuff like that.*

Having somewhere to voice my opinions and find out whether the rules are made up by the club in their interests.



Increasing skills and income was also seen as a potentially positive role for the union:

*Not sure how would benefit. Could organise us and the clubs more so we had better work experience and more customers.*

Generally, the reasons for not wanting to join were characterised by apathy:

*No time.*

*Not beneficial for me.*

*Not interested.*

*Not my thing really.*

*I'm not into all that...*

*Can't be bothered.*

Some thought that their self-employed status was actually a reason not to unionise:

*We're self-employed. It's different than if I was working for the club.*

*When you come here you work for yourself.*

Those that said they were not interested stated that they though the industry was run fairly and they didn't feel that they needed representation:

*Don't feel the need to, it's not something I'm going to do forever.  
It's not an unfair industry.*

However, as the dancer above suggests, many felt that as they saw dancing as a transitory job it was not something they attached any identity to:

*I don't see myself as a stripper. Work is work, it's not my identity.*

*I don't take it seriously enough.*

*No, because I'm not going to do this for much longer.*

*I'm not going to make a career out of this job, not going to become a professional.*

*Not sure. It is what it is. It would formalise it a bit. It's laid back now.*

For others, formalisation was a positive thing:

*Would be good to have one. Get advice or if something has happened with a customer. If you get injured then getting advice would be useful. Legal info and accountancy from people who know about the job, to be able to do things by the book.*

Issues around identity and unionisation also emerged in terms of wanting to refute the stigma attached to dancing:

*It's a secret job, part-time job. I wouldn't want to be visible. It's a secret.*

*It's a secret! It's not like we could go on strike, only my husband knows...*

*Want to keep it completely separate to my life.*

## **Suggested action**

- Clearly displayed council rules in a number of places in the club: toilets, changing rooms etc
- Offer a receipt for fines and fees – make sure fines and fees go through the *books*
- Offer a receipt for dances where commission is taken
- Monthly meetings to discuss rules, changes, get dancers' input
- Prohibiting use of private booths
- Insurance for the women
- Limiting number of girls per capacity