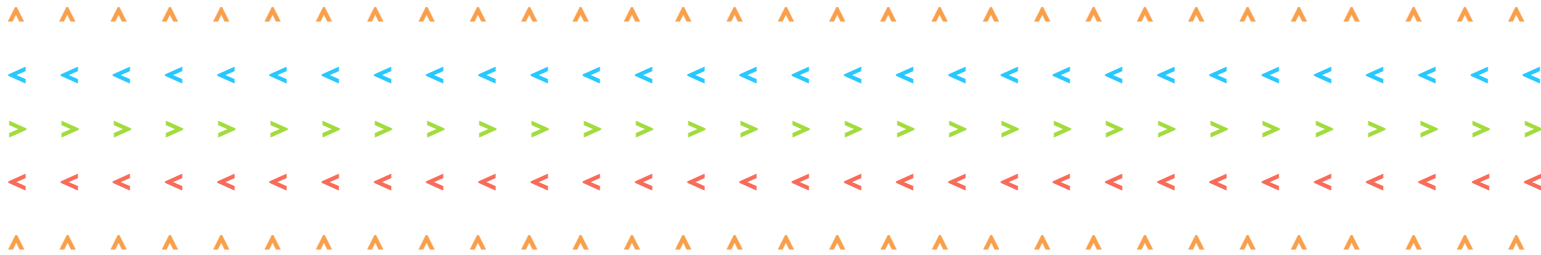


Stopping Sexual Exploitation: 2019 Program Evaluation



Executive Summary > > >

The Stopping Sexual Exploitation Program (SSE) is a 10-week, group-based intervention for men designed to decrease repeat sex buying. Participants find accountability by confronting the harm and exploitation women in prostitution face, which is enabled by the demand to buy sex.

SUMMARY

The post evaluation data suggests the SSE class has positive effects on attitudes and beliefs that effectively meet the program goals regarding: (1) reframing prostitution from a "victimless" crime to a system of gender-based exploitation and violence; (2) changing beliefs and attitudes regarding the cultural construction of masculinity and promoting men's accountability in stopping the harm of prostitution; (3) encouraging healthy masculinities; and ultimately (4) personal decisions to not buy sex again.

Since July 2018, the SSE program has engaged 103 individual participants. **When asked, "Do you think you will buy sex again," 95% of responding participants answered "No".**

In the past year, by the end of the SSE program:

- **94%** of responding participants acknowledged that women are harmed by prostitution
- **87%** of responding participants disagreed that men have a right to pay for sex
- **89%** of responding participants disagreed that women freely choose to be in prostitution
- **93%** of responding participants said that their thinking about prostitution has changed after participating in the SSE program

"After learning what prostitution was as a whole, I believe that **I will not buy sex again. This class was a huge help in my journey.**"

"I learned why I chose to pay for sex instead of seeking out meaningful relationships."

"We have to be able to take a step back and see the big picture. **Futures are being stolen from women every day.**"

Program Overview > > >

Stopping Sexual Exploitation (SSE) was launched in 2015 as a program of the Organization for Prostitution Survivors (OPS). Seattle Against Slavery began delivering the program in July of 2018. SSE, an innovative 10 session educational program for men who buy sex, is open to self-referrals as well as referrals from the criminal justice system. SSE is based on principles of social justice and personal transformation; it is designed to help men understand their behavior and promote their own decisions not to buy sex. SSE has become a core component of *King County's Ending Exploitation Collaborative*, a coordinated community response to commercial sexual exploitation.

Sex buyer intervention programs first emerged in the 1990s as a response to the demand side of the commercial sex industry, signaling a growing recognition that sex buying was a harmful practice and that sex buyers were an appropriate focus population for education efforts. These early programs were limited in their potential to change buyer behavior due to a lack of available information about the motivation of the target population and the slow-to-change social and cultural norms that have persistently regarded the buying of sex as a victimless crime. Many localities throughout the country have since adopted one-day "John Schools" modeled after those early efforts without significant consideration of the effectiveness of the programs on the behavior change of individual participants or the meaning and influence of those programs as legal consequences to sex buying that set social norms for the larger population.

The duration, content and participatory design of SSE distinguish it from "John Schools", creating greater opportunities for individual behavior change of participants. Adoption of the program also serves a social norm setting function in communities that utilize it by identifying sex buying as a harmful practice that requires a substantive and thoughtful response. SSE is based on the best and most-promising practices available to prevent gender-based violence.

The SSE program is designed to support three process-based goals for participants:

1. Reframe sex buying from a "victimless crime" to a practice of gender-based exploitation and violence.
2. Deconstruct "toxic masculinity".
3. Support healthy alternative conceptions of masculinity.

Devised to work towards those goals, SSE consists of the following components:

- Two individual 60-minute sessions of Motivational Interviewing (MI) before participation in the group
- Eight weekly group classes follow. Group size is limited and the eight three-hour learning modules are highly interactive, utilizing exercises and group discussion to engage participants in a process of self-reflection and critical analysis. Weekly topics include:
 1. Sexuality and Gender Socialization
 2. Harm to Victim/Survivors
 3. The Sexual Violence Continuum
 4. Pimping, Trafficking and Intimate Partner Violence
 5. Power and Violence
 6. Shame and Vulnerability
 7. Mutuality in Relationships
 8. The Will to Change

EVALUATION APPROACH > > >

The SSE program is designed to be an educational program and not a clinical intervention. The class engages participants with information and education targeted to change beliefs and attitudes about commercial sexual exploitation and gender-based violence, and ultimately change behaviors away from sex buying.

The evaluation approach utilizes a post self-assessment. Participants are asked to complete the assessment at the end of the last class. This approach allows participants to reflect and assess how their attitudes and beliefs have or have not changed over the course of the program. The assessment includes 19 questions with seven options for qualitative responses in these categories:

1. Has your thinking changed about prostitution after participating in SSE?
2. Will you buy sex again?
3. Impact of sex buying
4. Program improvement

RESULTS

From July 2018 – November 2019, the SSE program engaged 103 individual participants throughout 10 cohorts. Data summarized in this report reflect responding participants' views to select questions.

SUMMARY

The post evaluation data suggests the SSE class has positive effects on attitudes and beliefs that effectively meet the program goals regarding:

- Reframing prostitution from a "victimless" crime to a system of gender-based exploitation and violence;
- Changing beliefs and attitudes regarding the cultural construction of masculinity and promoting men's accountability in stopping the harm of prostitution;
- Encouraging healthy masculinities; and ultimately
- Personal decisions to not buy sex again.

Do you think you will buy sex again?

"NO" – 95%

"When I first came to this class, I was not court ordered, but was requesting help/info... After learning what prostitution was as a whole, I believe that **I will not buy sex again. This class was a huge help in my journey.**"

"If more men were accountable for buying sex, there would be a lot less prostitution."

"Purchased sex is not intimacy; it is abuse."

Do you think that women are harmed by prostitution?

"YES" – 94%

"I understand how **women are truly victims in this.**"

"The impact is forever and consequences of prostitution may never heal."

"We have to be able to take a step back and see the big picture. **Futures are being stolen from women every day.**"

Do you think that women freely choose to be in prostitution?

"NO" – 89%

"Before, I thought prostitution was a choice – entertainment and a pleasure. Now, I have learned how **prostitution is an 'I-IT' relationship that is unjust dominance.**"

"[I learned] that sometimes, we as people do not pay attention to our selfishness and how it can severely impact others. **Prostitution is not a willing choice nor is it pleasure.** It is torture and extremely emotionally and physical harmful to others."

Do you think that women in prostitution can be raped?

"YES" – 92%

"I didn't realize how much abuse people in prostitution go through."

"No one wins in this."

Do you think that men have a right to pay women for sex?

"NO" – 87%

"I learned that as men, we need to see everyone as a human instead of an object."

"Men have the responsibility to not buy sex, as well as combat gender-based violence in their daily lives."

Do you think that if you give a woman money for sex, she should do whatever you want her to do?

"NO" – 90%

"Before [this class], it did not seem to feel as if it was that big of a problem."

"I learned new ways of thinking about sexual relationships, communication, and how men think about emotion and self-worth."

Do you think that sex buying had a negative impact on women in prostitution?

"YES" – 81%

"Now, I am aware of the damage I was causing the women I was seeing."

"Men have a choice to help these people in need without having to engage sexually. [The] choice [to buy sex] is always an option."

Do you think that buying sex had a negative impact on your life?

"YES" – 84%

"I learned why I chose to pay for sex instead of seeking out meaningful relationships."

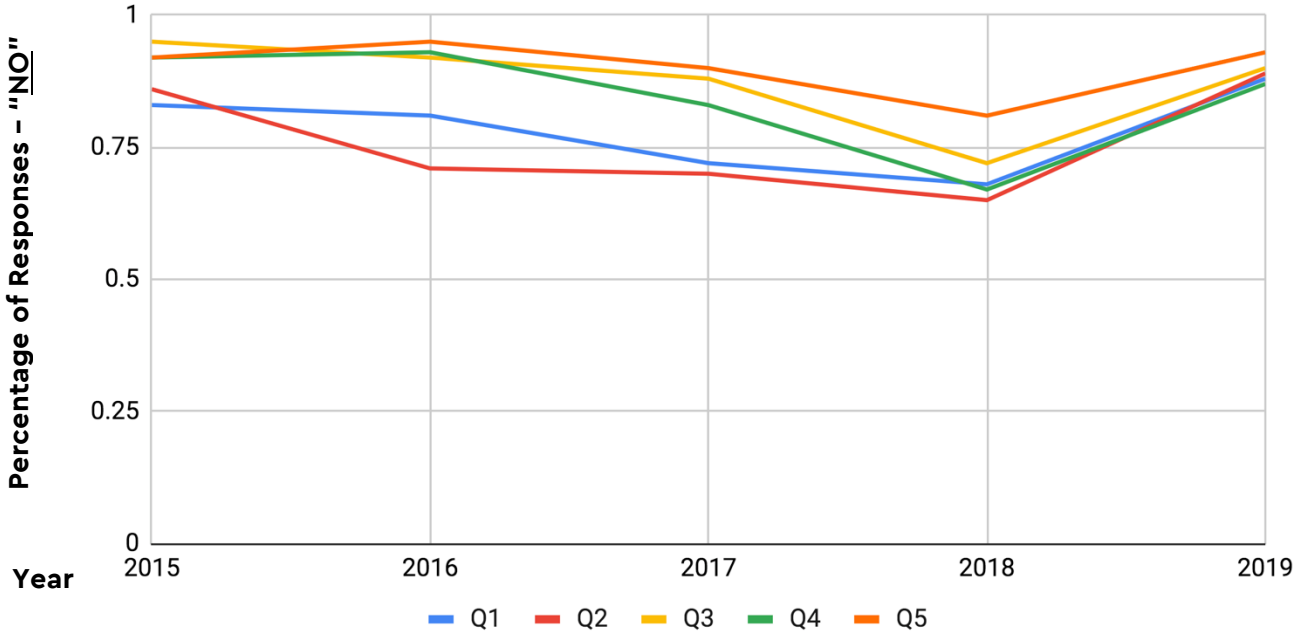
Do you think you will talk to other men about the negative impacts of sex buying?

"YES" – 79%

"[The SSE Program] was a good experience, one of the best of my life. This program changed me."

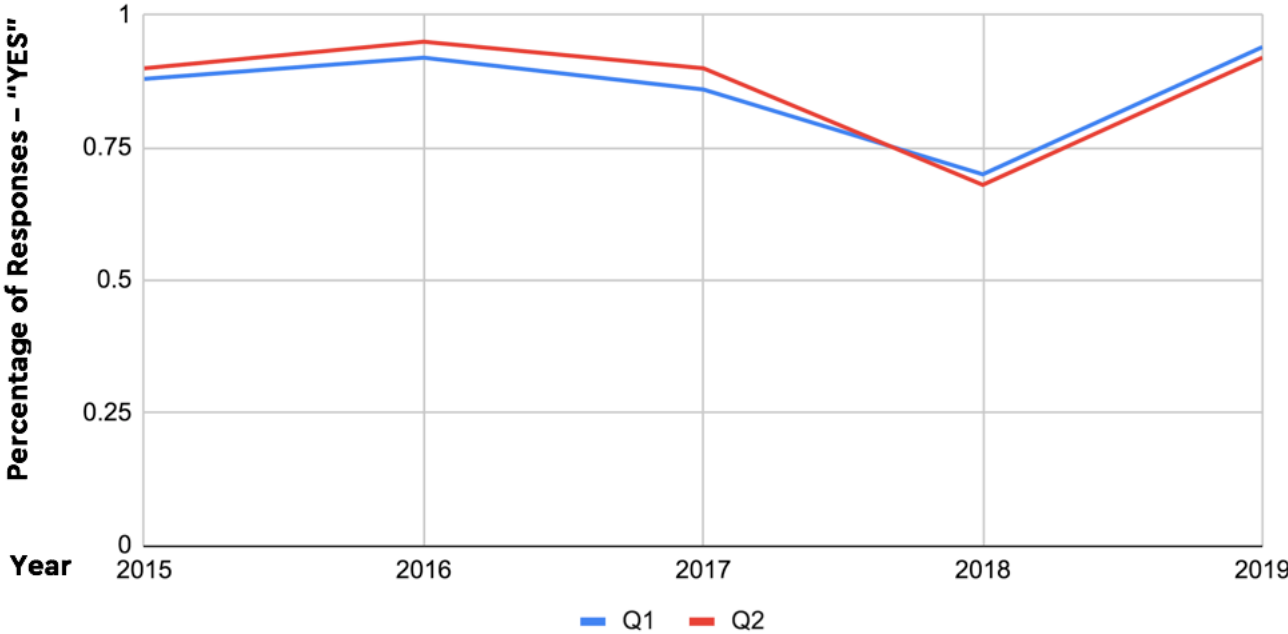
"I am leaving this class a seriously much better person and much more informed than before. Thank you."

Chart 1: Year-Over-Year Post Program Evaluation



- Question 1:** Do you think that people in prostitution like what they are doing?
- Question 2:** Do you think that women freely choose to be in prostitution?
- Question 3:** Do you think that if you give a woman money for sex, she should do whatever you want to her?
- Question 4:** Do you think that men have a right to pay for sex?
- Question 5:** Do you think you will buy sex again?

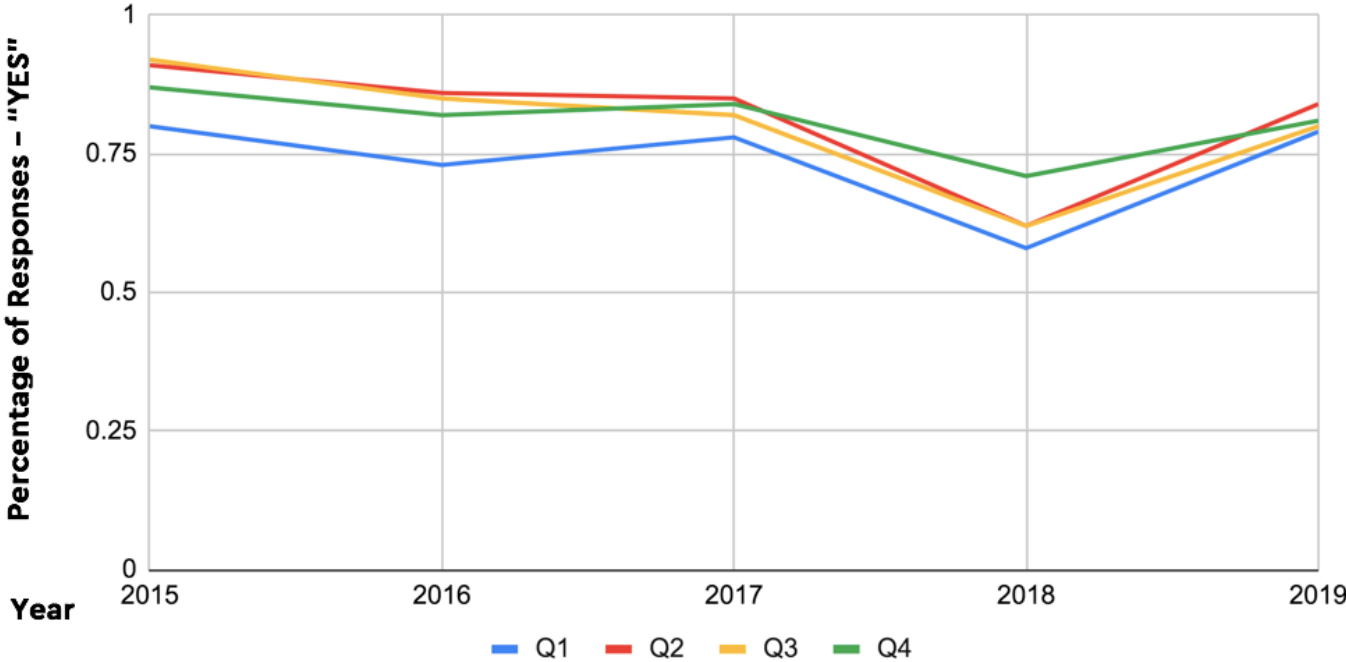
Chart 2: Year-Over-Year Post Program Evaluation



Question 1: Do you think that women are harmed by prostitution?

Question 2: Do you think that women in prostitution can be raped?

Chart 3: Year-Over-Year Post Program Evaluation



- Question 1:** Do you think you will talk to other men about the negative impacts of sex buying?
- Question 2:** Do you think that sex buying had a negative impact on your life?
- Question 3:** Do you think that sex buying had a negative impact on others in your life?
- Question 4:** Do you think that sex buying had a negative impact on the women in prostitution?