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## ***S.F. prostitutes: scared teen-agers***

**By John Rice**  
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — Growing numbers of hard-eyed hookers prowling San Francisco's seedy Tenderloin are middle-class teen-agers fleeing abusive homes to a life of "horror upon horror" on the streets, a new study shows.

"Almost 70 percent of the women currently prostituting were juveniles and a number of them were 10 and 11 years old," said criminologist Mimi Silbert, who directed the year-long study of 200 San Francisco streetwalkers for the National Institute of Mental Health.

Silbert said the Delancey Street Foundation study probably indicates a national trend toward younger prostitutes from wealthier homes.

In San Francisco, "we tend not so much to be different, but to be earlier," she said.

Two basic paths to prostitution emerged — poor, minority women desperate for money and middle-class white teen-agers desperate to escape a troubled home, Silbert said.

Sixty-eight percent of the prostitutes said they came from families with average or higher incomes. Usually, they said, they

had been beaten and sexually molested by their fathers or other male relatives.

"Three-quarters of them had a religious upbringing . . . They were sent to church while their parents had drinking problems, drug problems, a lot of family violence," she said. "They run away because they don't know how else to cope."

At home, the girls learned helplessness, Silbert said.

"The vast majority of them said they were beaten for things that had nothing to do with them."

They traded the violence of the home for the violence of the street, selling themselves in the back alleys and neon glow of topless bars while their former friends attended school.

"Nearly two-thirds said they had been beaten by customers, an average of 4½ times in their careers. Three-quarters said they had been forced into perversions, an average of 17 times.

Seventy percent said they had been raped, "totally unrelated to their work, mostly because they are on the streets," Silbert said. "The majority never told anybody about the rapes."

About 88 percent said they were poor or "just making it." About half — and more of the younger ones — had pimps who took their money.

"About 66 percent reported having been physically abused by their pimps. Well over half of them are beaten regularly" for disrespect, failing to surrender money or for trying to quit, Silbert said.

She said prostitution would be discouraged if families admitted problems and sought help instead of holding up "a facade of looking good while the whole family is crumbling."

It's also important, she said, "to bring kids up with some sense of power over their own lives."

Prostitutes in the study were volunteers located by the street-wisedrug rehabilitation foundation, and not people found in police files, Silbert said.

Almost all were "desperate," Silbert said. "They all are looking to leave." But most are trapped in feelings of hopelessness and have no social contacts, she added. "Unfortunately I think more of them die than we know of."

\* This article ran in papers throughout the country as an AP article.