A new unprecedented survey, carried out on Brazil’s principal highways, delineated a comprehensive profile of Brazilian truck drivers. The study was conducted by the graduate program in psychology of the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul in partnership with Childhood Brasil (Instituto WCF). It offers one of the most comprehensive studies on who today’s active Brazilian truck drivers are and how they live.

Transporting more than 60% of all cargo carried throughout the country, these professionals spend most of their lives in the truck cabin. Just to mention a few problems they have to cope with, they consider themselves as society’s outcasts, have self-esteem issues, eat and sleep poorly, and stop at spots that lack infrastructure. Over a third of them admit having been directly involved in a situation of child or adolescent sexual exploitation, frequently not even having a clear notion of what that means.

The objective of the study was to get to know truck drivers and learn, among other things, how they deal with the issue of sexual exploitation, considering that they bump into this problem on almost every road they use. The results will assist the actions of Programa Na Mão Certa (On the Right Track Program), conceived by the Childhood Brasil (Instituto WCF), which aims to put society into action and confront child and adolescent sexual exploitation on the roads of Brazil. Truck drivers will be the main characters in this process, agents who will protect children and adolescents.

The study, coordinated by Professor Silvia Kolier, originated by recognizing that truck drivers might be strategic partners to address this phenomenon. At the university, besides faculty and research activities, the professor is also responsible for the “CEP-Rua”, a studies center dealing with children, families, and adolescents living in at-risk situations. The experience acquired through CEP-Rua, in pursuance of Childhood Brasil’s objectives, originated and grounded the research on truck drivers.

The work was carried out by 13 undergraduate and graduate students, who traveled on Brazilian roads to...
“If we don’t increase the awareness of the owners of the establishments where truck drivers stop and the businessmen who make up this sector, we are not going to get anywhere towards giving dignity to truck drivers.”

Silvia Koller
Coordinator of UFRGS’ graduation program in psychology

Students of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul that helped to conduct the research coordinated by Professor Silvia Koller.

— interview 259 truck drivers. “Many of them have no idea of what sexual exploitation is and how it destabilizes a child’s development,” Silvia, explains. “Many of them believe they are actually helping. They give a plate of food, a ride, some money. In exchange, the sexual favor comes. For him, it is not abuse, because the child, as he says, ‘had already been initiated in sexual life, so they are no longer a child.’ Such viewpoints were made evident by the research.”

What is there for us to do in the face of this reality? Many things and many of them are presented in the main article of this issue which starts on page 28.

Numbers
A relevant aspect pointed out by the survey is that there are other key players in the process of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents - policemen. Although only a minority does so, there are some policemen who take advantage of the situation to make some money from sexual exploitation on the roads. According to truck drivers, there are policemen using adolescents as decoys to lure truck drivers into sexual abuse entrapment to ask for bribes of up to R$1,000, according to testimonials. Despite the efforts of various government agencies to eradicate corruption in the Police, the truck drivers are emphatic about this fact. The survey demonstrated that police corruption is the fifth major professional problem faced by the truck driver.

The principal problems of this profession
The questionnaires were collected in the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Norte, Sergipe, and Pará, which are crossed by the main arteries of the Brazilian cargo transportation infrastructure. The average age of truck drivers is 38 and 69% of them are married. The majority has only completed elementary school.

The most enlightening points of the survey refer to:

- Fuel, food, and rest stop conditions. According to the interviewees, many of the rest stops have infrastructural problems. Over 50% of the respondents declared that they would like to at least find a clean bathroom, a good lounge or TV room, and quality food. So, considering that truck drivers cannot even find a decent bathroom, their having low self-esteem causes no surprise. Over 75% of them consider that the society dislikes them.

- At a stop, what truck drivers least desire is to have sex. Less than 3% does look for sex at the end of a working day. On the other hand, talking with friends, watching TV, and sleeping are mentioned as favorite activities by over 65% of the truckers. It is easy to conclude, then, that a place with minimal comfort to rest and

- Numbers
A relevant aspect pointed out by the survey is that there are other key players in the process of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents - policemen. Although only a minority does so, there are some policemen who take advantage of the situation to make some money from sexual exploitation on the roads. According to truck drivers, there are policemen using adolescents as decoys to lure truck drivers into sexual abuse entrapment to ask for bribes of up to R$1,000, according to testimonials. Despite the efforts of various government agencies to eradicate corruption in the Police, the truck drivers are emphatic about this fact. The survey demonstrated that police corruption is the fifth major professional problem faced by the truck driver.

The principal problems of this profession
The questionnaires were collected in the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Norte, Sergipe, and Pará, which are crossed by the main arteries of the Brazilian cargo transportation infrastructure. The average age of truck drivers is 38 and 69% of them are married. The majority has only completed elementary school.

The most enlightening points of the survey refer to:

- Fuel, food, and rest stop conditions. According to the interviewees, many of the rest stops have infrastructural problems. Over 50% of the respondents declared that they would like to at least find a clean bathroom, a good lounge or TV room, and quality food. So, considering that truck drivers cannot even find a decent bathroom, their having low self-esteem causes no surprise. Over 75% of them consider that the society dislikes them.

- At a stop, what truck drivers least desire is to have sex. Less than 3% does look for sex at the end of a working day. On the other hand, talking with friends, watching TV, and sleeping are mentioned as favorite activities by over 65% of the truckers. It is easy to conclude, then, that a place with minimal comfort to rest and

- Numbers
A relevant aspect pointed out by the survey is that there are other key players in the process of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents - policemen. Although only a minority does so, there are some policemen who take advantage of the situation to make some money from sexual exploitation on the roads. According to truck drivers, there are policemen using adolescents as decoys to lure truck drivers into sexual abuse entrapment to ask for bribes of up to R$1,000, according to testimonials. Despite the efforts of various government agencies to eradicate corruption in the Police, the truck drivers are emphatic about this fact. The survey demonstrated that police corruption is the fifth major professional problem faced by the truck driver.

The principal problems of this profession
The questionnaires were collected in the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Norte, Sergipe, and Pará, which are crossed by the main arteries of the Brazilian cargo transportation infrastructure. The average age of truck drivers is 38 and 69% of them are married. The majority has only completed elementary school.

The most enlightening points of the survey refer to:

- Fuel, food, and rest stop conditions. According to the interviewees, many of the rest stops have infrastructural problems. Over 50% of the respondents declared that they would like to at least find a clean bathroom, a good lounge or TV room, and quality food. So, considering that truck drivers cannot even find a decent bathroom, their having low self-esteem causes no surprise. Over 75% of them consider that the society dislikes them.

- At a stop, what truck drivers least desire is to have sex. Less than 3% does look for sex at the end of a working day. On the other hand, talking with friends, watching TV, and sleeping are mentioned as favorite activities by over 65% of the truckers. It is easy to conclude, then, that a place with minimal comfort to rest and

- Numbers
A relevant aspect pointed out by the survey is that there are other key players in the process of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents - policemen. Although only a minority does so, there are some policemen who take advantage of the situation to make some money from sexual exploitation on the roads. According to truck drivers, there are policemen using adolescents as decoys to lure truck drivers into sexual abuse entrapment to ask for bribes of up to R$1,000, according to testimonials. Despite the efforts of various government agencies to eradicate corruption in the Police, the truck drivers are emphatic about this fact. The survey demonstrated that police corruption is the fifth major professional problem faced by the truck driver.

The principal problems of this profession
The questionnaires were collected in the States of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, São Paulo, Rio Grande do Norte, Sergipe, and Pará, which are crossed by the main arteries of the Brazilian cargo transportation infrastructure. The average age of truck drivers is 38 and 69% of them are married. The majority has only completed elementary school.

The most enlightening points of the survey refer to:

- Fuel, food, and rest stop conditions. According to the interviewees, many of the rest stops have infrastructural problems. Over 50% of the respondents declared that they would like to at least find a clean bathroom, a good lounge or TV room, and quality food. So, considering that truck drivers cannot even find a decent bathroom, their having low self-esteem causes no surprise. Over 75% of them consider that the society dislikes them.

- At a stop, what truck drivers least desire is to have sex. Less than 3% does look for sex at the end of a working day. On the other hand, talking with friends, watching TV, and sleeping are mentioned as favorite activities by over 65% of the truckers. It is easy to conclude, then, that a place with minimal comfort to rest and
eat would be a fundamental step to improve their life condition. “If we don’t increase the awareness of the owners of the establishments where truck drivers stop and the businessmen who make up this sector, we are not going to get anywhere towards giving dignity to truck drivers,” Silvia Koller analyzes. “Combined with lousy rest stop conditions is the presence of sexual exploitation. Gas station owners simply benefit from that as a source of business income.”

Answers

The truck drivers were very helpful to surveyors. They showed to be willing to participate in the survey and invited their colleagues to answer the questionnaire. “They complimented us on the initiative and were inclined toward participating. Contrarily to the people who seem to disbelieve it, the truck drivers believed in the relevance of our social survey and thought participating is important,” Normanda de Morais says.

Would they be the parties most interested in taking the first step to confront sexual exploitation and improving their working conditions on the roads? The survey indicates so. On the other hand, truck drivers were not embarrassed at all to talk about their sexual life or sexual relations with children and adolescents. “This drew the team’s attention, as it shows the power of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents among truckers,” Professor Silva analyzes.

Lack of information and prejudice are strong in this group. Gender issues are treated in a contradictory manner and they usually show background driven by the macho tradition. Unfaithfulness, for instance, is better accepted when it relates to the man’s side of the question. Only 9% would accept unfaithfulness by a woman, whereas 25% accept it in the case of a man. In regard to the respondents, 64.7% stated that men rule at home and almost 50% declared that wives have to obey their husbands. On the subject of prostitution, 47.7% declared that it is not connected to exploitation and that women willingly choose prostitution; 16.5% of the interviewees consider “child prostitution” acceptable. “They don’t see a problem in finding a little girl or boy in this situation, but would never accept that in their own family, which conveys their contradictory view of this issue,” explains Normanda.

Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents on roads is part of a truck driver’s universe. It is part of his daily life, at many stops. Some testimonials gathered by the team are quite revealing:

“They offer themselves: I feel the need and I accept it.”

“She offered herself and insisted dearly.”

“She wanted to learn with me.”

“She needed the money.”

The surveyors noted that the truck drivers consi-
Luis Adriano Salles

The complexity of the child and adolescent sexual exploitation phenomenon on the roads doesn’t give room to shallow evaluations, nor to place truck drivers as the escape goat of a practice structured under commercial patterns, as well organized as drug or arm trafficking. The survey shows that truck drivers can and must become the agents of a transformation process.

For Childhood Brasil (Instituto WCF), making this diagnosis is an important step towards getting to know truck drivers better and having a little deeper understanding of what is happening on Brazilian roads. The next step is to join efforts and define responsibilities, in a way that businessmen, governments, and non-governmental organizations may effectively unite and confront child and adolescent sexual exploitation on Brazilian roads.

Survey participants:
Airi Sacco, Alyson Canindé, Elder Cerqueira Santos, Felipe Fernandes, Filipe Furlan, Heitor Tomé, José Luis Longo, Luis Adriano Salles, Morgan Yuri Machado, Normanda Araújo de Morais, Póti Gavillon, Raul Gonçalves, Samuel Artus, Silvia Koller, Silvia Reis, Vicente Cassep Borges.

To read the survey’s full text, go to www.namaocerta.org.br/english

---

**Sexual partners, when on the road**

- **Prostitute**: 60.5%
- **Casual partner**: 27.4%
- **Partner (wife/girlfriend)**: 11.3%
- **Others**: 0.8%

---

**Percentage of truck drivers that declared they had a date with children and adolescents**

- **36.8% One or more times**
- **63.2% Never**