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SEX WORKERS DESCRIBE THE MARKET OF FEMALE CLIENTS IN AUSTRALIA

Caldwell H¹, de Wit J¹

Political, moral and academic debates about the sex industry are increasingly addressing clients of sexual services, who are typically considered to be male. There is little scholarly evidence that women buy sex despite growing media and marketing of sex to women. This exploratory study describes the market for women who buy sex, and begins to address the empirical shortfalls.

The study is a qualitative project using semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 20 self-selecting key informants who are sex workers. It is part of a larger study that will also examine social settings within which women buy sex and interview women who have bought sex. A thematic analysis was used to characterise the market for women buying sex in Australia.

Preliminary results highlight a growing market of women buying sex although smaller than the market of men. Examination of advertising sexual services is misleading due to multiple advertisements for single workers, and hopeful or fake advertisements. All participants described women who buy sex as diverse, not fitting any stereotype, from all ethnicities and income groups and of all ages. All types of sexual services are available to women however there are fewer sex workers of all genders who are willing to see female clients. Sex workers spoke about the motivations of women to buy sex, and the specific behavioral, language and cultural differences between genders of clients.

These initial findings make clear that a market of women who buy sex exists and that further investigation is needed.

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¹ UNSW CSRH, Sydney, Australia