

SELECT SEX INDUSTRY STATISTICS

Number of licensed brothels

In 2010-11, there were 23 licensed brothels in Queensland. There were nine in the Brisbane City Council area, six in the Gold Coast City Council area, one in the Sunshine Coast Regional Council area, one in the Moreton Bay Regional Council area, one in the Logan City Council area, one in the Mackay Regional Council area, one in the Toowoomba Regional Council area, one in the Townsville City Council area, one in the Cairns Regional Council area, and one in the Mount Isa City Council area.

Outcalls

It is illegal for outcalls (escort services) to be made from licensed brothels, but outcalls are legal when provided by legitimate sole operators (single sex workers). Outcalls are estimated to constitute a significant proportion of the state's sex industry. Some of this demand is met by illegal operators, such as escort agencies.

Street-based sex work

It is an offence to publicly solicit for prostitution. The number of street-based sex workers is small. In 2004, it was estimated that street-based prostitution accounted for just 2% of all sex workers in Queensland. They were located predominantly in Fortitude Valley, New Farm, Spring Hill, and Kangaroo Point.

A study of 247 female sex workers, *Selling Sex in Queensland 2003*, found that on average street workers commenced sex work six years earlier than other sex workers, and were significantly more likely to have left school earlier than those persons working in the legal prostitution industry. They were also significantly more likely to have left home for an adverse reason, such as sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, than other sex workers.

Characteristics of sex workers

The *Selling Sex in Queensland 2003* study found that the respondents were aged between 19 and 57 years, with an average age of 32.

In terms of education, about one-quarter of licensed brothel workers and sole operators

reported that they had completed a bachelor degree. This compares favourably with the general community. According to an Australian Bureau of Statistics publication, *Education and Work*, May 2007, 21% of Australians aged between 15 and 64 years had attained a bachelor degree or above. Approximately one-quarter of licensed brothel workers and sole operator sex workers were married or in de facto relationships, with most of their partners aware of their involvement in prostitution. Just over half of the women had children.

Unsurprisingly, money was the main motivating factor for involvement in prostitution revealed in the *Selling Sex in Queensland* study, but flexible working hours was also an important consideration, particularly for licensed brothel workers. 46.5% of brothel workers revealed they were unable to earn sufficient money in more mainstream employment, compared to 23.3% of sole operators, and 12.1% of street workers.

In a busy week, street workers reported seeing 35 clients, licensed brothel workers 29, and sole operators 24. However, in a quiet week street workers reported seeing 9 clients, brothel workers 11, and sole operators 8.

Income from prostitution varied between workers, with street workers earning \$1,814 in the past seven days of the study, sole operators \$1,541, and licensed brothel workers \$1,341.

Street sex workers are more likely than other sex workers to use illicit drugs. The *Selling Sex in Queensland* research found that 75.8% of street workers revealed they had become involved in prostitution because they were using drugs and needed money to pay for them, in comparison to just 2% of brothel workers and 8.5% of sole operators.

Contrary to widely held community perceptions, research in Australia has consistently demonstrated that female sex workers have a higher standard of sexual health than the general population. According to the Kirby Institute, *HIV, viral hepatitis and sexually transmissible*

infections in Australia Annual Surveillance Report 2011: “In the past 5 years, more than 75% of men and women seen for the first time through a network of sexual health services were tested for chlamydia” (p. 8). This is a reference to the Australian Collaboration for Chlamydia Enhanced Sentinel Surveillance (ACCESS). Of the priority populations tested, female sex workers had the lowest rate of chlamydia. Just 5.6% of female sex workers tested positive. This compared to 20.7% of both male and female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, 16.3% of young heterosexual males, 15.6% of young heterosexual females, and 9.1% of men who have sex with men.

Sexually transmissible infections (STI) in Australian sex workers are amongst the lowest in the world. Sex workers care about their sexual health because staying healthy and well is central to their livelihood. The consistent use of prophylactics with clients is the norm in the sex industry. In Queensland, it is illegal for sex workers and clients to engage in sexual intercourse or oral sex without the use of prophylactics and it is illegal for clients to ask for unprotected sexual intercourse or oral sex.

Characteristics of the clients of sex workers

Because of a reluctance of some men to self-report, it is difficult to estimate with any degree of certainty the proportion of men who purchase sex. However, according to the *Selling Sex in Queensland* report, at least one in every 30 men has purchased sex in any given year and it is possible that the true figure is substantially higher.

PLA contact details

Street address:
Level 3, 5 Gardner Close
MILTON QLD 4064

Telephone: 07 3858 9500 * Facsimile: 07 3876 3641
E-mail: pladmin@iprimus.com.au * Website: www.pla.qld.gov.au

Research indicates that the clients of sex workers are on average aged in their late thirties, less likely to be married than those that do not employ the services of sex workers, and if they are married more likely to describe their marriage as unhappy or unsatisfying. They are also more likely than other men to have injected drugs, drink excessive amounts of alcohol, to smoke cigarettes, and to have been diagnosed with an STI.

The motivation of clients in purchasing sex varied from lack of a regular partner, social awkwardness, a desire to have sex with a variety of women, an outlet for relief when away from home, a desire for sexual practices (possibly more extreme) not otherwise available to them, the avoidance of commitment and complication, and to fulfil non-sexual needs.

The *Selling Sex in Queensland* report received responses from 200 clients of sex workers. It found that between 10% and 20% of clients visited sex workers weekly, but that clients most commonly visited a sex worker once every few months.

The most commonly purchased service was vaginal sex, followed by oral sex. Hand relief and massage were also popular.

Are you interested in further information?

Further information may be obtained from:

- PLA, *Selling Sex in Queensland 2003*
- CMC, *Regulating Prostitution: an evaluation of the Prostitution Act 1999 (Qld), December 2004.*

Disclaimer: Whilst the PLA has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of printing, it does not warrant its accuracy and accepts no liability for reliance on the information.