

# EVIDENCE OF WOMEN BUYING SEX DISRUPTS NEO-ABOLITIONIST SEX INDUSTRY NARRATIVE

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## Neo-abolitionist philosophy

- ❑ Believes the sex industry is inherently harmful due to;
  1. a moral rejection of sex as a commercial activity and that commercial sex is degrading,
  2. a belief that women only perform sex work in economic desperation or under duress from men, or
  3. a belief that male consumers are violent or unknowingly exploiting female sex workers.
- ❑ Aims to abolish the sex industry by advocating for the criminalisation of clients

## Neo-abolitionist strategies

- Conflates voluntary, consensual sex work with sex trafficking and slavery (sex workers as female victims)
- Framing the sex industry as a problem, and a feminist issue affecting all women (and children)
- Sensationalises with horrific descriptions of violence
- Dismisses sex worker's advocacy as unrepresentative or 'pimp lobby'
- Considers clients as male (perpetrators of violence), but...
- IF accepting women buy sex, they divorce their behaviour from men, downscale, downplay, and label as errant.
- US anti-trafficking agenda linking foreign aid to recipients commitment to abolishing the sex trade.

**Neo-abolitionist views are not supported by science**

## Women buying sex are:

Not prominent academically;

- Believed to be uncommon, and
- Believed to be unproblematic.

Increasingly prominent in media;

- Often sensationalised, and
- Often with dire warnings.

Women buying sex do not fit traditional views of female sexuality.

## Three studies from Australia

<b>Women who bought sex</b>	<b>Sex Workers</b>	<b>Contemporary Discourse</b>
Phenomenological Analysis	Thematic Analysis	Textual Analysis
21 in-depth interviews	17 in-depth interviews	Popular ad in media. Was it female sex tourism?
Tell me a story of your experiences	Tell me about your female clients	Texts about the ad
Will you buy sex again?	Tell me about the market of female clients	Audience commentary about the ad

## Results - Women who bought sex

- Described a solid female market in Australia.
- Are diverse; all genders, ages, educational, social and economic status.
- Bought diverse services; male escort and companion, body work counselling and education, female escort, and specialist services such as BDSM.
- Described positive outcomes for buying sex.
- About half bought sex primarily for fun, the other half for therapy.
- Did not witness any harms to sex workers.
- Fear being criminalised.

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## Results – Sex workers:

- Felt the female market to be increasing.
- Felt female clients did not fit any stereotypes.
- Women may buy sex from female sex workers in Australia more often than male sex workers.
- Found very minor gendered differences in behaviour of clients.

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## Results – Australian discourse

There is a lack of sensitivity to the possibility of women buying sex and when challenged:

1. Sex work is work – 50%
2. All commercial sex is exploitation – 50%
3. Stigma for buying sex is gendered – men are violent, women are sluts or victims



## Discussion

### Women buying sex challenge:

- All commercial sex as problematic
- All commercial sex as exploitative
- Ideas about female sexuality

### Neo-abolitionist strategies:

- Reinforce dichotomies of expected gender behaviour
- Privilege and shame women buying sex
- Undermine feminist visions of gender equality