

Rates of advertised condomless sex in the online profiles private sex workers: A cross-sectional study



Health
South Eastern Sydney
Local Health District

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Thng C¹, Lisandro E², Mclver R¹, McNulty A^{1,3}

¹Sydney Sexual Health Centre, Macquarie Street, NSW 2000; ²University of New South Wales, Kensington, NSW 2052; ³School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of NSW, Kensington

Background:

The internet is now the primary platform that Private Sex Workers (PSWs) use to advertise their services. Online advertisements have the potential to reach a larger audience than newspapers and are less restricted in terms of word count and explicit language.

Aim

To describe the sexual services advertised online by PSWs based in Sydney, Australia.

Methods

We used a google search to identify the most popular websites for advertising sexual services in Sydney

We reviewed online profiles of PSWs and recorded the following information in an excel spreadsheet: age, gender, location, rate and services provided.

The primary outcome was any association between profile characteristics and advertised condomless oral, vaginal and anal sex.

We used a chi square test to determine the association between advertised condomless sex and age, gender, location and rate, and logistic regression to calculate the odds of advertised condomless sex by age, gender, location and rate. Variables that were statistically significant were included in the multivariate model.

Results

We reviewed 829 profiles from 8 websites and, after excluding duplicates, included information from the profiles of 339 female, 53 male and 39 transgender PSWs in our analysis

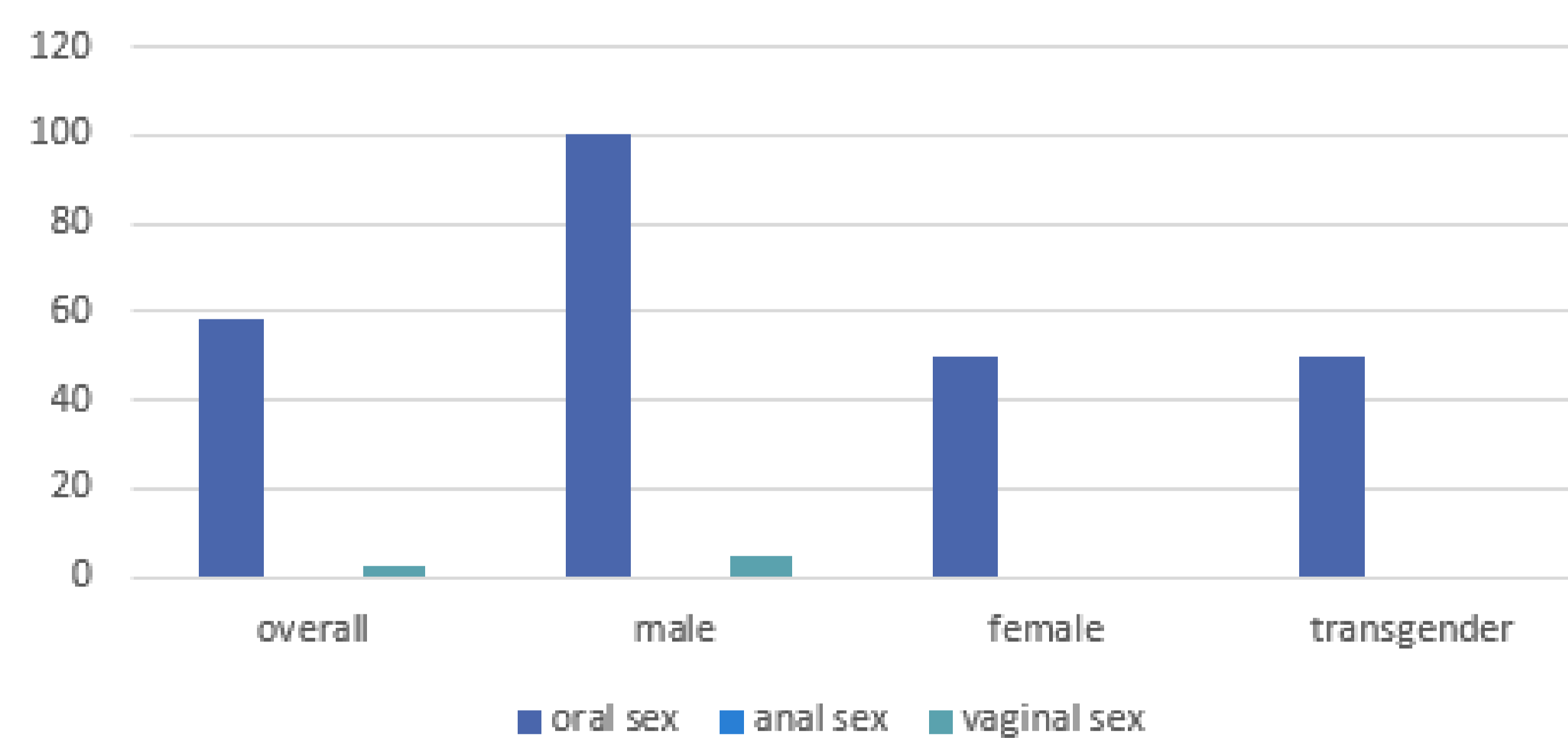
Characteristics of private sex workers advertising sexual services online overall and by gender

Characteristics	Overall	Male	Female	Transgender
Advertisements n (%)	431 (100)	53 (12.3)	339 (78.7)	39 (9.1)
Age (years)				
< 25	184 (42.7)	17 (32.1)	157 (46.3)	10 (25.6)
25-29	157 (36.4)	20 (37.7)	116 (34.2)	21 (53.9)
30-35	44 (10.2)	8 (15.1)	30 (8.9)	6 (15.4)
35+	46 (10.7)	8 (15.1)	36 (10.6)	2 (5.1)
Median	25	26	25	26
Range	18-53	20-42	18-53	19-39
Local health district				
South East Sydney	377 (87.5)	49 (92.5)	293 (86.4)	35 (89.7)
Other*	54 (12.5)	4 (7.5)	46 (13.6)	4 (10.3)
Incall rate (AUD)†				
Median	450	250	500	250
Range	110-1000	110-500	160-1000	200-500
Outcall rate (AUD)†				
Median	475	250	550	-
Range	140-1850	140-400	210-1850	-

*Sydney, Northern, Western, Central Coast, Nepean Blue Mountains, Illawara, Shoalhaven, regional/remote

†Australian dollars. Incall referring to the cost of visiting the premise of the sex worker. Outcall referring to the price for the sex worker to come to the customer's desired premise.

Advertised condomless sex (%)
by type of sex and gender of PSW



Age less than 25 years was the only characteristic with a statistically significant association with advertised condomless oral sex in the multivariate analysis (OR 1.56, 95% CI 1.03-2.37, p=0.037)

Discussion

Reviewing online profiles is a novel way to estimate the risk behaviours of this hard to reach population. While it is possible that services offered online may not reflect actual practice, we found very low rates of advertised condomless vaginal and anal sex and higher rates of condomless oral sex which is consistent with published research. Safer oral sex should be an area of health promotion for PSWs and should specifically target younger workers.