

The Health Needs of Sex Workers: A Descriptive Study

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St. James Infirmary

- **History**

- ▶ **COYOTE, EDA**
- ▶ **San Francisco DPH STD Unit**

- **Clinic goals**

- **Services offered**

- **Recruitment**

- ▶ **Outreach**
- ▶ **Pre-Trial Diversion**

What Is Sex Work?

- **“Provision of sexual services or performances by one person (prostitute or sex worker) for which a second person (client or observer) provides money or other markers of economic value”**

Priscilla Alexander, *Sex Work and Health: A Question of Safety in the Workplace* in JAMWA vol 53, no. 2.

Psychosocial Intake

- **Convenience sample**
 - ▶ n=70
- **Sept 1999-May 2000**
- **Peer Intake Counselors**
- **Demographics, Work history**
- **Prior health-care access, Drug Use History**
- **Domestic and Occupational Violence**

Demographics

- **Gender**

- ▶ 71% women, 20% men, 8% transgender

- **Age**

- ▶ Mean 34 years (range 18-76)

- **Sexual orientation**

- ▶ 36% bisexual, 33% straight, 22% gay/lesbian

- **Ethnicity**

- ▶ 69% Caucasian, 13% Asian/Pacific Islander
- ▶ 18% Latino, African-American, and other

Demographics

● Education

- ▶ 13% some graduate school or degree
- ▶ 55% some college or degree
- ▶ 25% high school

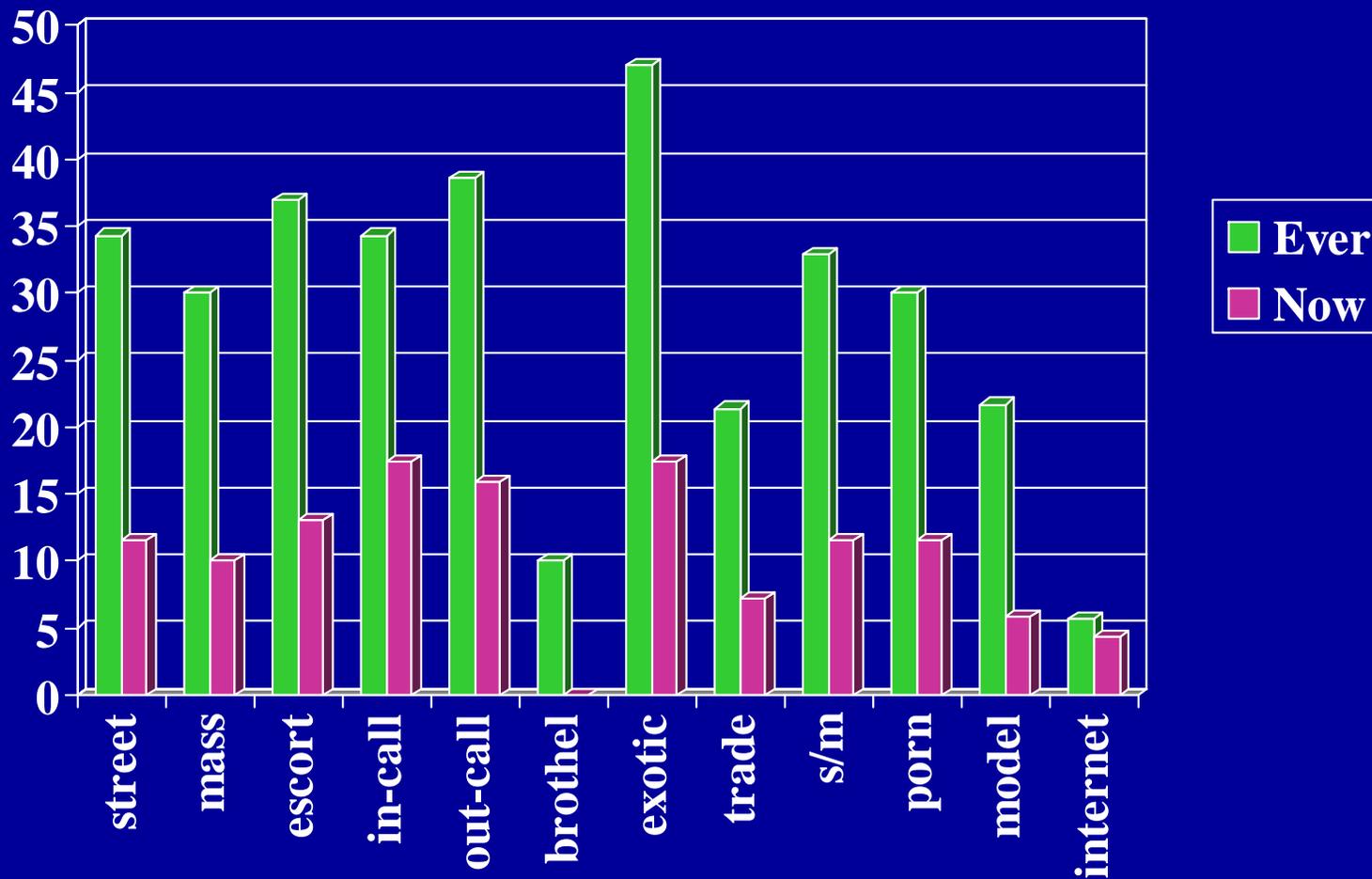
● Housing

- ▶ 84% stable housing
- ▶ 16% unstable housing/homeless

● Income

- ▶ 54% under \$10,000
- ▶ 24% \$10-20,000
- ▶ 11% \$20-30,000

Work History



Prior Health Care Access

- **63% pap within past year**
- **Last visit to provider**
 - ▶ **60% within 6 mos**
 - ▶ **25% within 1 year**

Prior Health Care Access

- **Disclosure to provider**
 - ▶ 54% never, 20% always, 20% sometimes
- **Reasons for not disclosing**
 - ▶ 46% “afraid of disapproval”
 - ▶ 54% “didn’t think relevant”
- **Provider’s reaction**
 - ▶ 59% “fine”, 42% “mixed” or “negative”

Violence

- **46% past or current Domestic Violence**
- **56% past or current Sex Work Violence**
- **Perpetrators**
 - ▶ **Customer 79%**
 - ▶ **Employer 56%**
 - ▶ **Police 36%**
- **8% cases reported to police**

Drug Use

- Overall prevalence 56%
- 20% cocaine/crack
- 16% amphetamines
- 9% heroin

- 13% IVDU
 - ▶ 44% of IVDU share needles/works

- 24% drug treatment in past

Medical Intake

- **Convenience sample**
 - ▶ **n=146**
- **June 1999-May 2000**
- **317 clinical encounters**
 - ▶ **Mean visits per client = 2.2**
- **Chief complaint, Sexual history**
- **Physical exam, Laboratory tests**

Sexual History

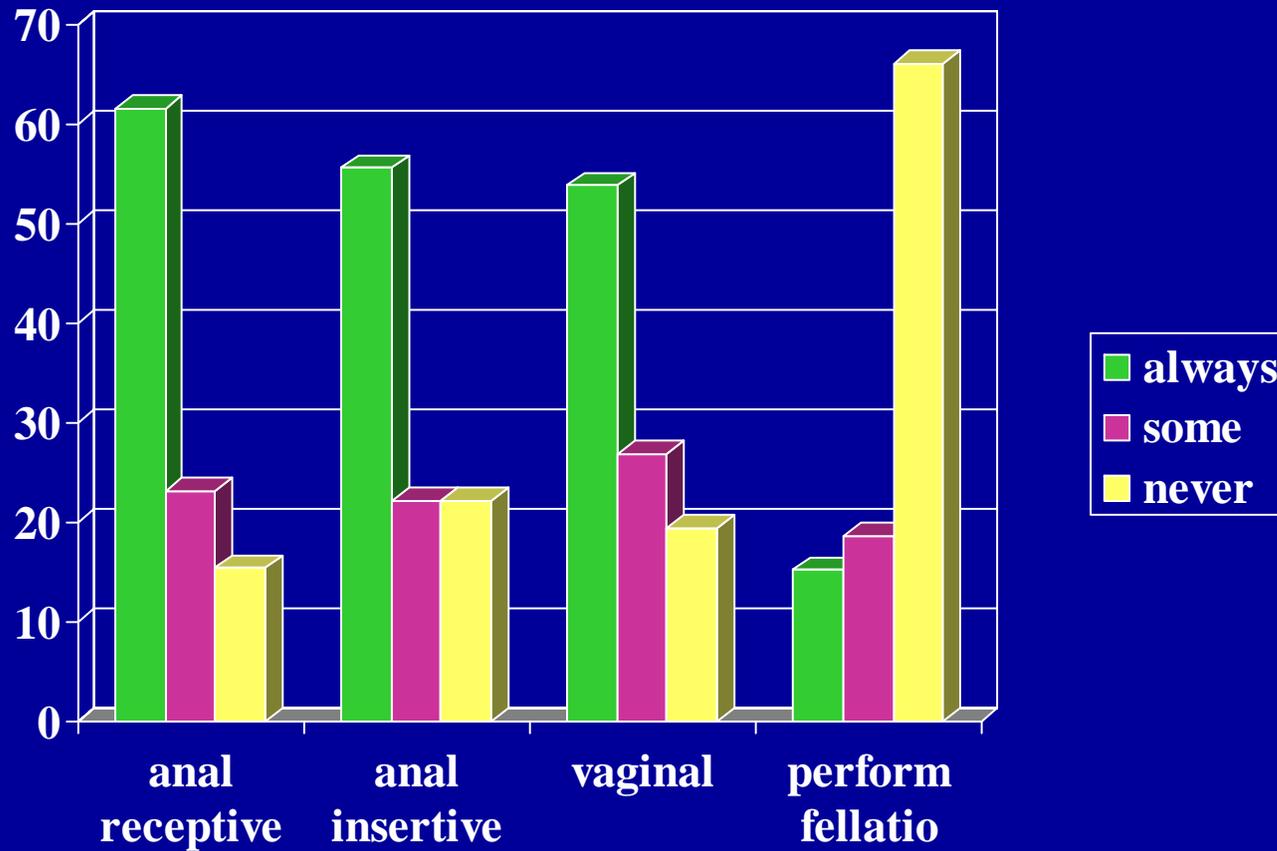
Mean # Partners in Past Year

	Intimate Partners		Non-Intimate Partners	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Male n=46	0.4	0.6	90.3	4.6
Female n=253	0.8	0.3	55.1	1.1
Transgender n=18	0.5	0.3	33.8	8.3

Sexual History

- **7% current IVDU partner**
- **47% past IVDU partner**

Condom Use



Condom Use during Last Sex

- **Main partner**
 - ▶ 67.9% no condom
 - ▶ 29.8% condom
 - ▶ 2.4% condom breakage
- **Non-intimate partner**
 - ▶ 29.2% no condom
 - ▶ 66.7% condom
 - ▶ 4.2% condom breakage

Health Care Needs

- **STI prevalence**

- ▶ **Chlamydia 0.9%**

- Jail Chlamydia Study, n=604 women
- 11% among sex workers vs. 9% non-sex workers (p>0.05)

- ▶ **Gonorrhea 0.8%**

- **Culture neg PID 0.8% (2/253)**

- **Symptomatic UTI 2.8% (7/253)**

Health Care Needs

- **Primary care visits 40% (n=317)**
- **Mental health requests 36% (n=70)**
- **Tobacco Use 36% (n=70)**

Study Limitations

- **Self-reported behavior**
- **Selection bias**
 - ▶ **Municipal STI clinic**
 - ▶ **Non-random recruitment**
 - ▶ **Near Hall of Justice**
 - ▶ **Selective screening for STI's**

Conclusions

- **Diversity in sex worker community**
- **High prevalence of workplace violence**
- **High prevalence of drug use**
- **Risky behavior with intimate partners**
- **Health problems broader than just STI's**
- **Importance of community involvement**

Acknowledgements

- **Jeff Klausner, MD, MPH**
- **San Francisco Dept of Public Health,
STD Prevention and Control Division**
- **Margo St. James, COYOTE**
- **Johanna Breyer, EDA**
- **St. James Infirmary volunteers**