

“AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF MALE ESCORTING WEBSITES”

Phil Eaglesham



Background

- In Scottish policy, female sex work is considered to be violence against women and exit from sex work is explicitly encouraged.
- Clear links with substance use, domestic violence and homelessness appear in both evidence and practice.
- Male population is considerably smaller and intervention has mainly been focused on ‘street-based’ men – a group that has appeared to be in decline in recent years.
- While women appeared to now sell sex via ‘indoor’ settings such as saunas and flats, no equivalent sex work appeared to have occurred among men.



Literature: Key Themes (Men)

- Greatly increased contact among gay & bisexual men through the internet.
- Quantitative, epidemiological bias towards HIV and associated harm reduction research.
- No obvious focus on the ‘culture’ of such masculinity or explicit promotion of exit as with women.
- Assertive harm reduction outreach and health promotion occurs in ‘health-hostile’ environments.
- Less consideration of the ‘occupational’ risks attached to men selling sex.

(Bolding et al., 2005) (Browne & Minichiello, 1995), (Connell and Hart, 2003),
(European Network Male Prostitution- www.enmp.org, 2003), (Health Protection Scotland, 2007),
(Morrison & Whitehead, 2007). (Parker, 2006), (Uy et. al., 2004)



Literature: Key Themes (Men)

- In street work, ‘cruising’, ‘pimping’ and ‘grooming’ are recognised entry routes into prostitution.
- Entry to ‘indoor’ settings – LGBT press? Internet? Moving away from street-based activity?
- Selling sex has a negative impact on emotional health and wellbeing / relationships.
- Practical, stigma-free, harm reduction support by specialist projects has been developed in the UK.
- But...no obvious promotion of exit, unless considered as a ‘child protection’ issue.

(Abramovich, 2005), (Allman, 1999), (Brown, 1994, Dowsett, 1996, Gibson, 1995),
(Connell and Hart, 2003), (Inciardi & Surratt, 1997), (Minichiello et.al, 1999),
(Morrison & Whitehead, 2007), (Uy et. al., 2004) , SW5 Project (www.sw5.info),
Working Men Project (www.wmplondon.org.uk)



Study Aims

- To examine how websites through which men sell sex are structured and function to create a 'contact culture' in Scotland
- To utilise online male escort profiles as 'cultural artefacts' to considering barriers challenges to future health outreach to websites and indoor sex workers.



Methods

- A focused ethnographic approach (*Morse 1987*), capturing both qualitative and quantitative data on online culture of selling sex in the ‘virtual’ environment of the internet (*Hine 2000*).
- Data collection tools were developed to sample online material from websites and from escort profiles. This was then coded, categorised and analysed (*Roper & Shapira 2000*).



Inclusion Criteria

Website Inclusion:

- Publicly accessible, contact with Scottish escorts or searchable facilities.

Escort Profiles Inclusion:

- Scottish residents or those with temporary residency.
- those stated as visiting Scotland to offer sexual services.
- Stated age was 'over 18yrs'.
- Indoor settings: home, hotels, shared accommodation and via escort agencies.



Exclusion Criteria

- Escorts who provided services ‘worldwide’ or ‘UK wide’ but were neither based in Scotland nor specifically mention Scottish locations.
- Escorts who advertised that they offered sexual services exclusively to women.
- Those who advertised as ‘*masseurs*’ and did not offer sexual services of any kind.
- Escorts who advertised out-with the internet. (i.e. press adverts, calling cards, ‘street-based’ men)

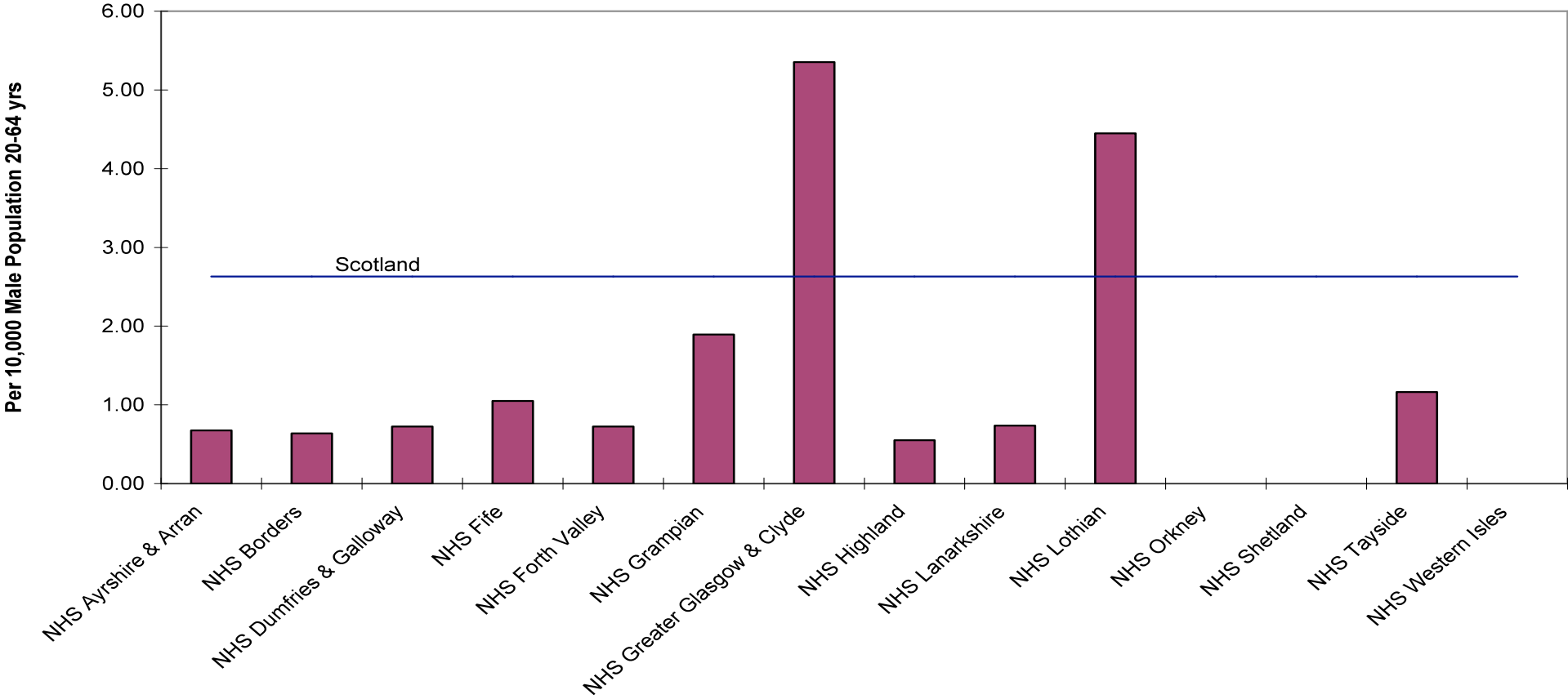


Initial Findings (Nov 07)

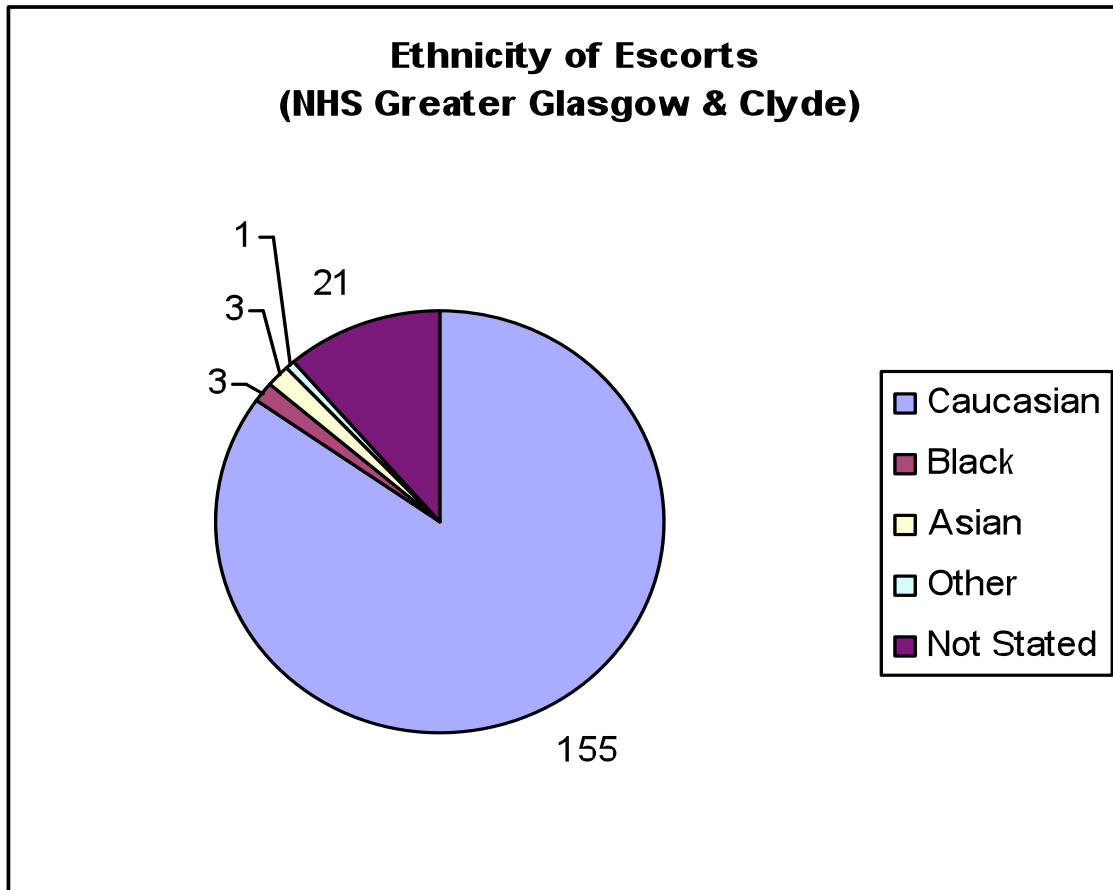
- 20 Websites, 398 Escort Listings for Scotland
- 5 key websites contained 70% of the listings
- Overall 82% ($n=398$) stated their residence within;
 - | Greater Glasgow & Clyde (47%)
 - | Lothian (27%)
 - | Grampian (8%)
- Increase in Glasgow & Clyde ($n=183$) listings in 2005-07 of 96%, 15% more since Aug 07

Prevalence of escort listings by NHS Board Area and comparison with Scottish male census data (n=398)

Prevalence of Escort Listings by NHS Board Area



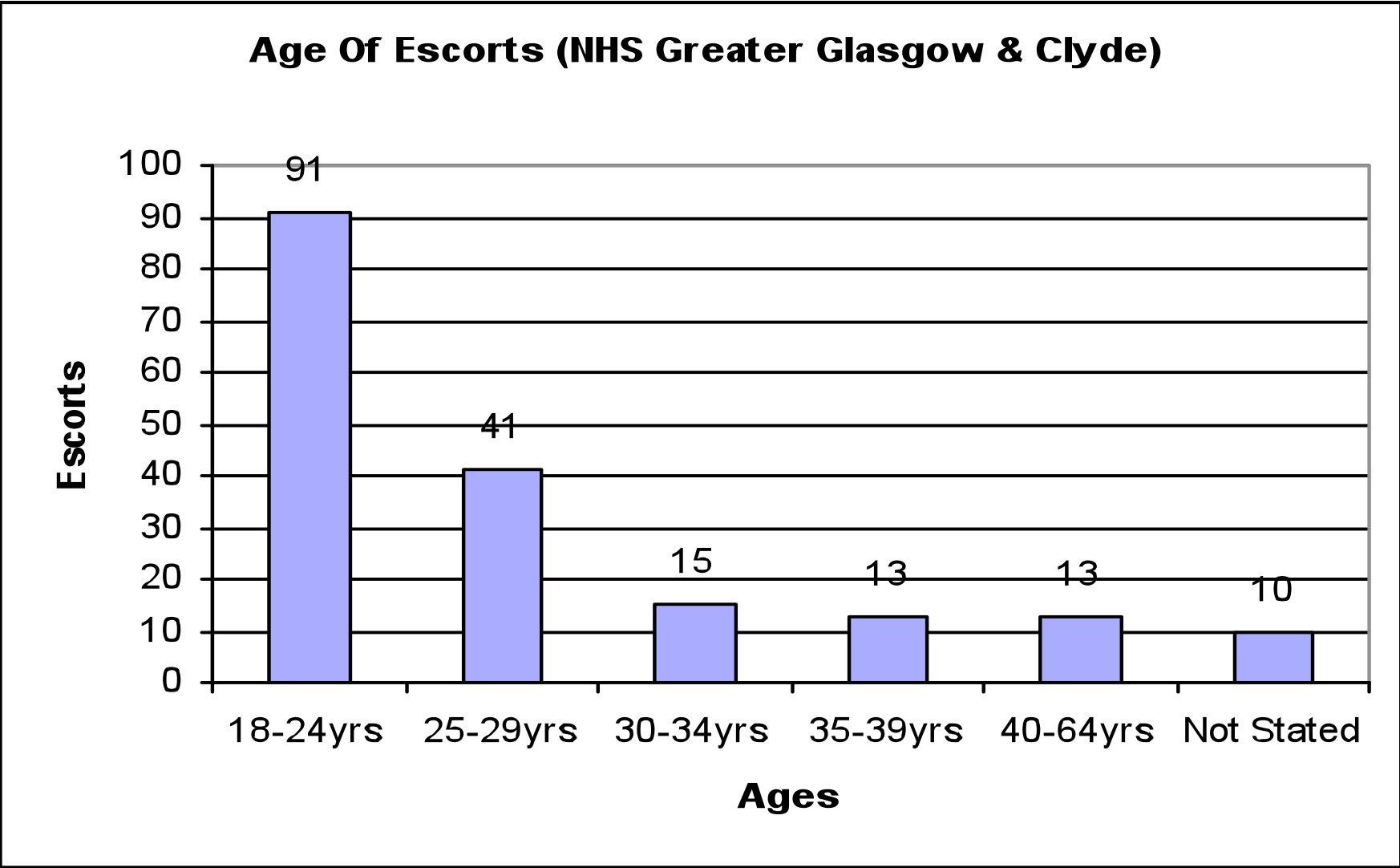
Stated ethnicity of escort profiles listed as resident
in Greater Glasgow & Clyde (*n*=183)



Caucasian (84%)
Black (1.7%)
Asian (1.7%)
Other (1.7%)
Not Stated (11%)



Stated age of escort profiles listed as resident in Greater Glasgow & Clyde (n=183)



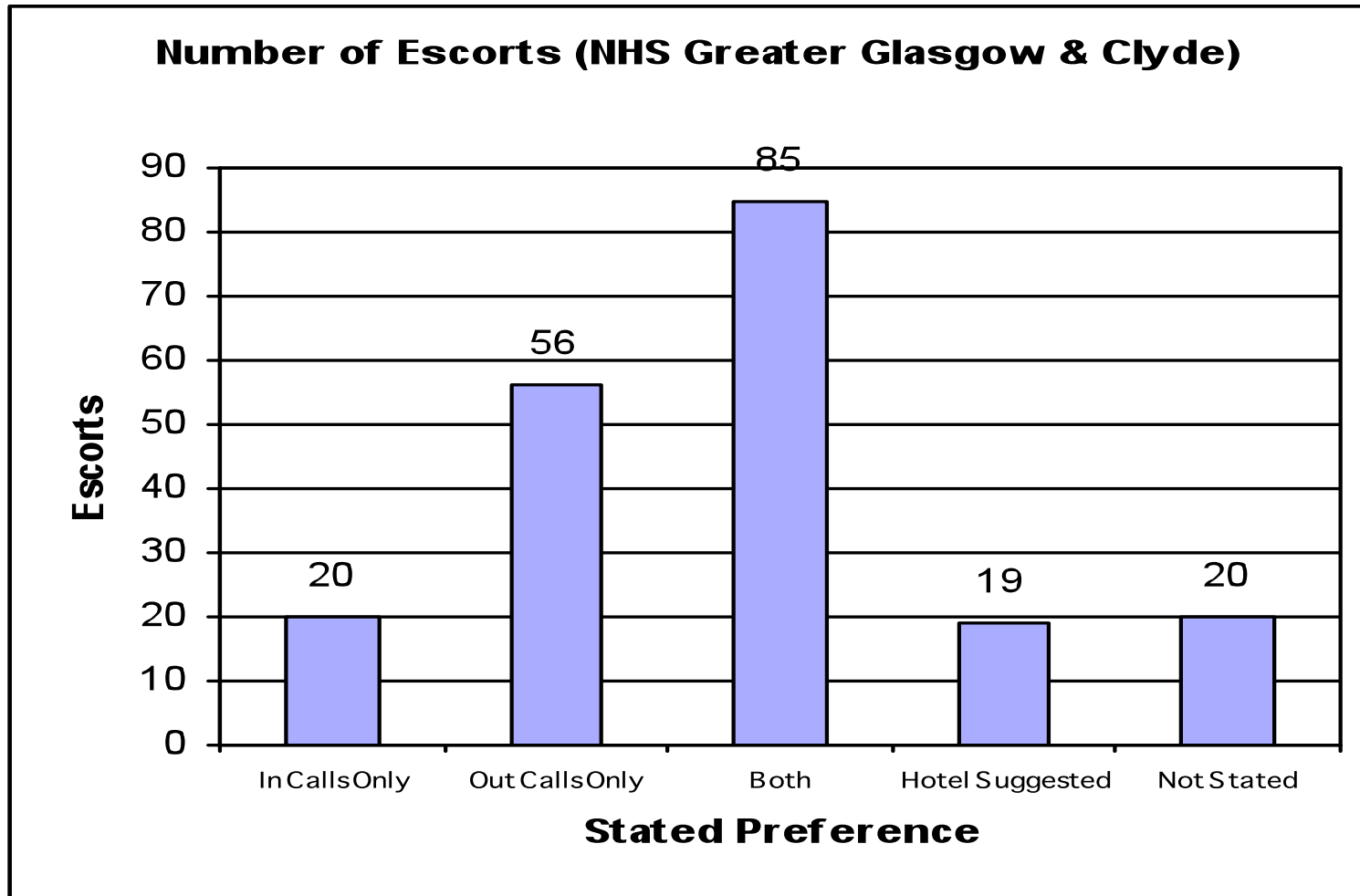


Findings: Stated Charges

- Charges for sex were stated by 62 escorts.
- Charges varied between 'in calls' & 'outcalls'.
- Ranged from £30 to £200 per hour.
- Average £91 for 'in call', £99 for 'out call'.
- Overnight charges where stated: £515 average, increasing to £1,500.
- Escorts trading on 'intimacy' as well as sex.
- Higher charges stated on escort agency website, but no indication of proportion given over as 'fee'.

(n= 183)

**Locus identified in escort profiles listed stated as resident in
NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde (n=183)**





Use Of Disclaimers For Website Access

“(Website B) is a directory of adult service providers and likeminded adults seeking those services.

(Website B) is not an escort agency. It does not negotiate or play any part in the booking of any services.

The members listed are totally independent of the site owner and each other.

This site is for adult services providers, including but not limited to, independent escorts, web-cam performers, phone sex operatives and adult content providers to advertise their services free of charge. The site owner receives no payment of any kind from persons wishing to be listed, either in the form of commission, one off payments, gifts, loans, favours or benefits in kind.

Any money paid to the adult escorts listed on this website is for their time and companionship only. Whatever else that may occur if and when contact is made is the choice of consenting adults.

Anything implied or inferred within these pages, however vivid anyone's imagination, is not to be taken as an inducement for payment for anything other than already stated.

The proprietors of this website accept no responsibility or liability for any circumstance that may arise as a result of anything stated or inferred, in, or from, the content of the pages within this website or its use.”



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Escort Demographic and Identity

- Predominant identity was Caucasian, young, working class, slim, hyper-masculine (*Johnson 2008*).
- Bisexuality stated as sexual orientation in 38% of escorts and 26% sold sex to either gay or straight couples.
- Key ‘constructs of masculinity’ were employed (*Adams & Savran 2002*);
 - | *Physical Body Type*
 - | *Youth*
 - | *Hyper-masculinity or Hyper-sexuality*
 - | *Friendliness*
 - | *Vigour*
- ‘Subcultures’ via use of ‘manufactured identities’ (*Atkinson & Hammersley 1994*);
 - | *Agency Based Escorts*
 - | *Independent ‘Sex’ Escorts*
 - | *Independent ‘Companion’ Escorts*

(n=183)



Agency Based Escort

HOT CZECH ESCORT - BOOKING NOW FOR NOVEMBER!! (Escort 3) is a beautiful young man with a body and looks to die for! Devestatingly(*sic*) handsome, the body of an athlete, and a gorgeous smile - what more could you want? But you have to meet Escort 3 to really experience all the facets of him that make him such a Dreamguy. Modest, even a little shy about his looks, he's very sweet and totally charming to talk to, this guy is really something special and with his sexy, masculine voice and commanding presence, you will think you've died and gone to heaven! I can't urge you strongly enough - if you only book one escort ever from (Website G)- make it this guy! A face pic is available on request

WEBSITE G, Escort 3: Key text underlined

Youth, Body-type and Friendliness with emphasis on Hyper-sexuality



Independent 'Sex' Escorts

(Escort 25) a sexy young sexy (sic) escort with a smooth & toned body, a cute smile & charming personality. tactile, affectionate. good massage to get things started, active guy, very well hung. stunning looks & open minded personality, i have the complete package, 9 incheun cut 4 inche (sic) circum.

Website F, Escort 25: Key text underlined

Youth, Body-type and *Friendliness* emphasis on *Hyper-sexuality*



Independent 'Companion' Escorts

I am Escort 15 and thank-you for visiting my profile. I am a professional escort, good cock and bubble butt, I am not so good with words cause I like to make things happen and I would like ~~to make something special happen for you now!~~ So if you are in the mood to spend some time with a young guy... give me a call... If you're looking for a complete package of versatile sexual pleasure look no further. I'm a sexy, masculine and passionate ~~well-defined and muscular guy with strong legs~~ and a great cock and bubble butt. A genuine, honest, discrete and friendly escort.... I am here....and you are just a phone call away.....If you go on long holidays to exotic places feel free to give me a call or leave message. I will try my best to find time for GREAT COMPANIONSHIP.

I love so much to spent evening with good bottle of wine and nice conversation with elegant person who likes pleasures of our life. ~~Maybe opera or cinema, Theatre or art gallery? Good restaurant...Im well educated and elegant...Smiling and with nice sense of humor...~~

MILAN-ITALY (dates)

DUBLIN (dates)

INCALLS

OUTCALLS

OVERNIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AS WELL!!!NO SMS...PLEASE

ASK ME FOR PRIVATE PICS

HIGH INTERNATIONAL ESCORT FOR YOU!!!NO SMS

DINNER, THEATRE DATE*** - welcome too

NO BAREBACK

DO NOT MESSAGE ME IF UR NOT READY TO MEET, IF U NEED TO CHAT WITH SOMEONE GO TO THERAPY IM NOT A SHRINK IM HERE WORKING!! OTHER THAN THAT IM A VERY EASY GOING MAN WHO LIKES TO RESPECT AND GET THE SAME THING IN

RETURN

Website F, Escort 15: Key text underlined

Hyper-sexuality and *Friendliness* less use of *Body-Type* or *Youth*.



Barriers to Access - Websites

- Websites that charge membership fees for access to contact information.
- Those that employ disclaimers and ‘terms of use’ that prohibit contact with members.
- Websites that use banner advertising or offer potentially ‘health-toxic’ services; hardcore ‘bareback’ pornography, sex tourism.
- Claims to be ‘community resources’ and ‘liberating’ but clear commercial interests and potential exploitation.

*‘a true community. Our members help one another
and help their communities to grow in their
understanding of their erotic lives’ (Website C)*



Barriers To Access – Escort Listings

- No consistent Scottish health service approach to this population, or one which promotes ‘exit’ from selling sex.
- Escorts who join websites that demand fees for any contact information.
- Escorts who do not ‘identify’ as openly in this role and are less available.
- Escort ‘rationalisation’ culture:

"Money is power...Sex is power...Therefore, getting money for sex is simply an exchange of power."

(Samantha Jones - Sex and the City)

(Website F, Listing 15)



Health Service Opportunities

- Access to a previously under-studied group of gay and bisexual men.
- Low cost research that can be delivered quickly.
- Future substantive research on the ‘lived experience’ of Scottish men who ‘escort’.
- Focus on negotiation with key websites and men within urban areas.
- No apparent link with ethnicity, but this may change or could be ‘hidden’.
- Bias towards travel to client’s location; personal safety may be a key health issue.
- Lack of current promotion of ‘exit strategy’.



Limitations of Study

- Variance in the quality of data that can be collected across websites.
- Integrity of data available is subject to original entry by male escorts and approval by website.
- More time to fully analyse and decipher data.
- Over-simplification/error possible without a true understanding of the 'culture' of selling sex.
- Recent editing or visit to profile by male escorts.



Recommendations

- Repeated research to monitor an apparently increasing trend in online selling of sex by men.
- Repeated research to confirm the locus and characteristics of local online male escorts.
- Strengthening of online methods of giving public health information and interventions for men who sell sex.
- Collaborative dialogue with websites who promote the selling of sex within Scotland.
- Further research to qualify the 'lived experience' of men who sell sex as escorts.
- Further research to develop a new theory-base that may inform interventions on male escorts and potential for exit strategies.



Conclusions

- An online population of men who sell sex exists within Scotland and can be quantified quickly without great cost.
- They appear to be mainly urban, Caucasian, aged 18-30yrs old and prefer to visit client's homes to sell sex.
- These men could potentially be targeted and offered support, although ethical dilemmas exist.
- The 'commercial' and 'exploitative' culture of websites that promote the selling of sex present an ethical barrier to any health intervention.
- Key 'constructs of masculinity' are used as 'commodities' to sell sex and these vary across 3 apparent 'sub-cultures'.
- The more 'professional' escorts use websites where membership is required but may be more likely to disclose contact details and hence easier to reach.



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