

Demand Abolition

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Prostitution Is Not A Victimless Crime

Men Who Buy Sex Tend Toward Violence Against Women And Other Criminal Behavior

BOSTON, MA – July 19, 2011 – A groundbreaking report by a renowned prostitution researcher finds that Boston-area men who buy women for sex are far more likely than non-sex buyers to commit crimes related to violence against women, substance abuse, assaults, weapons, and crimes against authority.

Dr. Melissa Farley of Prostitution Research and Education, with financial support from Hunt Alternatives Fund and logistical support from Demand Abolition, conducted a study of the sexual attitudes of men in the Greater Boston area based on face-to-face interviews with 202 men. Buyers and non-buyers of commercial sex were paired by age, education level, and ethnicity to compare their attitudes and perceptions toward women and to build a more complete picture of the harmful effects of commercial sex on prostituted individuals, the community, and the buyers themselves.

The report brings to light significant differences between men who buy women and those who do not.

- Men who buy women for sex differ in their self-reported likelihood to rape and acknowledge having committed significantly more sexually coercive acts against women than non-buyers.
- Men know about the damage and violence of prostitution, yet remain largely indifferent. Two thirds (66%) of both sex buyers and non-sex buyers recognize that a majority of women are lured, tricked, or trafficked into prostitution. Although half of the study's sample does not buy sex, many of the non-sex buyers voice tolerance for men who do.
- Although sex buyers note the coercive nature of prostitution, they justify their involvement in the sex industry in contradictory terms, declaring women in prostitution are essentially different than non-prostituted women.
- Compared to non-sex buyers, significantly fewer sex buyers (46% to 70%) reported that they were taught about respect in sex education classes.
- Ultimately, buyers of sex exhibit a number of behaviors and preferences that, according to other studies cited in this report, interact to increase the likelihood of future violence against women.
- The study suggests that there are many ways to deter men from purchasing sex: enforcing the laws on the books and arresting men for buying, increased fines, significant jail time, public recognition of the crime (such as being placed on the sex offender registry), and education about harms of prostitution on the women and children they buy.

In one salient quote, a man who does not buy sex noted: "On the face of it, the prostitute has agreed to it. But deeper down, you can see that life circumstances have kind of forced her into that...It's like someone jumping from a burning building. You could say they made their choice to jump, but you could also say they had no choice."

Lina Nealon, director of the Demand Abolition program, notes that men of all ages, ethnicities, income brackets, and education levels purchase sex.

“We know these men. They work with us. They attend our churches. They are our family members,” says Nealon. “Ultimately, though, this study is encouraging because the men themselves told us that there are ways to deter them from buying sex.”

Individuals who purchase human beings for sex fuel the market that traffickers and pimps supply with victims. Until we eliminate demand, the sexual enslavement of our society’s most vulnerable children and women will continue unabated.

Prostitution Research & Education conducts research on prostitution, pornography and trafficking, and offers education and consultation to researchers, survivors, the public, and policymakers.

Hunt Alternatives Fund advances innovative and inclusive approaches to social change at local, national, and global levels. Demand Abolition supports the movement to end modern-day slavery by combating the demand for illegal commercial sex in the US.