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Men who sell sex in Peru: evolving technological and sexual cultures

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Men who sell sex in Peru today comprise an extremely diverse group. The ways in which they work, and the meanings their work carries, are similarly varied. Moreover, these men have adapted rapidly to recent changes in communication technologies with concomitant effects on aspects of sexual culture.

That said, evidence about men who sell sex remains largely anecdotal, except in the case of a relatively small number of quantitative and qualitative studies. Most available information in Peru reflects local realities in the capital city, Lima, with limited additional information from other settings including the jungle cities of Iquitos and Pucallpa, and the coastal city of Trujillo. A broader body of literature, primarily epidemiological but encompassing some qualitative research, has explored aspects of compensated sex among larger populations of men who have sex with men, including their sexual and sex-work-related identities (e.g. as sex workers or *fletes*, one of the local terms with similar connotations).

In this chapter, we offer an overview of recent and current research. It is important to stress at the start, however, that participants in studies focused on men who sell sex were those individuals who felt able to openly affirm that this was the case at the outset. Not all men who comprise the larger universe of 'male sex workers' may be willing to do so, particularly since stigma against men who have sex with men and against sex workers remains strong in Peru. In contrast, male sex worker participants recruited from larger studies of men who have sex with men were those individuals who reported engaging in compensated or transactional sex, or identifying as male sex workers, in response to questions posed during study participation. Having been designed primarily for other purposes, these studies cannot be seen as offering a representative picture of male sex workers in Peru. Moreover, many of these studies included transgender women, and most failed to disaggregate data

by gender identity. Both of these factors should be taken into account when interpreting findings.

Legal and social context

Peru has adopted a regulationist approach with regard to sex work (Arbulú Bramon, 2004). Sex work is not illegal, but local government authorities are responsible for issuing licenses for premises on which sex is sold, in a context of persistent legal ambiguity. A local authority, for example, may categorise one group of sex workers as 'legal' and another as 'clandestine' and susceptible to prosecution, hence contradicting the law and violating constitutional rights (Arbulú Bramon, 2004). Importantly, other practices related to sex work, such as sex trafficking, pandering (*proxenetismo*) or procuring a person for sex work, are illegal. Moreover, having sex with a minor in exchange for money or any other type of advantage is a criminal offence (Arbulú Bramon, 2004).

Public perceptions of male sex work in Peru are shaped by wider cultural norms regarding gender and sexuality. Homosexuality remains widely censured and homophobia and transphobia are concerningly common (MINSa and CONAMUSA, 2012; Silva-Santisteban *et al.*, 2012). Fuelled by sensationalist media reports, 'male sex work' (which is often interpreted as transgender women's sex work) is typically considered an immoral, street-based activity linked to crime, poverty and social marginalisation (Cosme *et al.*, 2007). Mention of male (non-transgender) sex work in the media is rare and often presumes female clients. While some gay men pay for sex, it is commonly believed, as reported by Scott *et al.* (2005) for other contexts, that they pay informal, occasional providers who are taking advantage of them, rather than providing services.

Forms of male sex work

Principally a phenomenon of larger cities, male sex work is less visible than its female equivalent. Additionally, while for women there exist efforts to enhance recognition of sex work as an occupation (CARE-Peru, 2008a and b), for men the situation is different – with

the majority of those involved viewing male sex work as an informal, supplementary, income-generating activity. Because of this, the use of the term 'male sex worker' is somewhat problematic. This has implications not only for self-identification, but also for community mobilisation, and the emergence of any form of rights activism.

There exists much variation in male sex work practices in Peru. The vast majority of male sexual services are provided to other men, although a recent study suggests that at least a minority of men also have female clients ([Bayer et al., 2014](#)). Both in Lima and in jungle cities, men may seek clients in public spaces, nightclubs and bars and through Internet websites, chat rooms, classified ads and agencies (Nureña et al., 2011). In urban areas, men working out of bars, nightclubs and porn video clubs tend to be hired as hosts (*anfitriones*) or waiters (*mozos*) and men based in saunas tend to be hired as masseurs (*masajistas*) (Nureña et al., 2011).

The term *flete* has traditionally been used both by themselves and by others to refer to gay- and non-gay-identified lower-income men who sell sex in and around parks and other public places. In contrast, higher-income men who advertise their sexual services through agencies or the media may present themselves as *escorts* and *strippers*. Indeed, evidence from recent studies suggests that men of different economic backgrounds seek clients in distinct ways ([Bayer et al., 2013](#); [Nureña et al., 2011](#)). In Lima, lower-income men sought clients in particular plazas or streets, as well as in certain nightclubs, bars, gay saunas, porn video clubs and theatres – nearly always in the centre of the city. Higher-income men, on the other hand, used commercial settings in nearby suburban neighbourhoods, and media such as Internet websites, chat rooms and classified newspaper ads, agencies and personal contacts to contact clients ([Bayer et al., 2014](#); [Nureña et al., 2011](#)). As might be expected, men working in public spaces encounter higher levels of stigma and social vulnerability.

In jungle cities such as Iquitos and Pucallpa, young men also engage in sex work in rather different ways, including offering sex to travellers on Amazon river-boats or to workers on remote construction sites. In the timber industry, young men from urban areas are often sent deep into the forest for several months at a time. The cook, who may be a woman or a

feminised gay man, often provides sexual services to the male workers. S/he may maintain a notebook of the services provided with the logging company, which then deducts a portion of the workers' payments, often as a charge for 'laundry' (Nureña *et al.*, 2011).

Qualitative research in coastal Peruvian cities has described how compensated sex may become a commodity to help with limited work opportunities in low-income urban areas. In one study, street guys or *vagos* were found to use compensated sex with gay men and transgender women as a daily survival strategy (Salazar *et al.*, 2005). Another study, set in Lima and the coastal city of Trujillo, described the dynamics of compensated sex between feminised gay men (*mariconas*) and heterosexually-identified men who agreed to have sex with them (Fernández-Dávila *et al.*, 2008).

In coastal Peru and other parts of the country, gay men may use the term *pechar*, literally to breastfeed, to refer to their purchase of company or sexual favours in exchange for material or economic compensation from poor, heterosexually-identified men. Through such forms of exchange, which may involve manipulating gay men's feelings to obtain greater benefits, low-income heterosexually-identified men can, to a limited extent, participate in the forms of consumerism that would otherwise be beyond their means (Fernández-Dávila *et al.*, 2008).

Increased access to mobile phones and the Internet has transformed the marketplace for many men who sell sex in Peru. While men previously depended more on the use of public spaces or on intermediaries such as agencies, they are now able to contact clients directly, remaining anonymous and avoiding some of the dangers related to street-based sex work. Moreover, the influence of international models of male sex work has opened up the possibility of new forms of male sexual services, offering higher standards of professionalism, quality and security, and provided by more-educated men of higher socio-economic status (Nureña *et al.*, 2011; see also Chapter by Özbay, xxxx in this volume).

These new forms of sex work have often been developed for a wealthier public, including overseas tourists, who are reached through advertisements on international websites,

through web portals customised with similar information, or via personal websites utilising often quite sophisticated graphic design (Nureña *et al.*, 2011). In each of these settings, men may provide information about their age, their body features, the sexual roles adopted, the extra services they will provide (e.g. offering to perform ‘as a partner,’ often meaning being willing to kiss), places where services are offered, and a mobile number. Prices are rarely listed and have to be discussed by phone. In this virtual space, men’s bodies and the characteristics of the services they provide become a full ‘product’, for which pricing varies substantially according to perceived quality, usually reflecting both the differential educational and ethnic background of the men concerned. This virtual space is regulated by the market but men here usually attract higher prices than men engaging in street-based sex work (Mimiaga *et al.*, 2008).

Magnitude and characteristics of the population of men who sell sex

Given the individual, variable and loosely-defined nature of male sex work, and the way it remains stigmatised and often concealed from public sight, estimating the total number of male sex workers presents major challenges. Approaches such as the ‘capture-recapture’ method (Geibel *et al.*, 2007), which may help in estimations of particular forms of male sex work in specific settings, have yet to be undertaken in Peru. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 1, a small number of quantitative studies provide estimates of the frequency of reported compensated sex, and self-identification as a male sex worker among larger groups of men who have sex with men. It is important to stress, though, that all of these studies included transgender women, who tend to report both compensated sex and self-identifying as a sex worker in higher proportions than gay-, bisexually- and heterosexually-identified men (Konda *et al.*, 2008).

Table 1: Recent studies of men who have sex with men, and of transwomen, exploring the frequency of compensated sex

Year	Population	N	% reporting compensated sex	% identifying as sex worker	Reference
2001-2002	Men reporting ever having sex with other males, in population-based sample in 3 cities	581	36.5% (lifetime)	Not explored	Clark <i>et al.</i> 2007
2002-2003	Community- and clinic-recruited men and transwomen in 6 cities	3280	31.1% (lifetime)	10.8%	Lama <i>et al.</i> 2006
2007	Men and transwomen STI clinic clients in Lima	547	31.0% (last 6 months)	24% (76% if recent compensated sex)	Konda <i>et al.</i> 2008
2007-8	Community- and clinic-recruited men and transwomen in Lima	532	30.8% (last 6 months)	24.4%	Clark <i>et al.</i> 2013

Overall, men who sell sex in Peru comprise a young population with varied educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Bayer *et al.*, 2014; Konda *et al.*, 2008; Nureña *et al.*, 2011). Most male sex workers in Lima have multiple sources of income, of which sex work is generally the most lucrative. Weekly earnings from sex work are, however, different for lower- and higher-income men (USD 43 versus USD 72 in 2010, $p = 0.04$), as are their average earnings per client (USD 9 versus USD 24 in 2010, $p = 0.01$) (Bayer *et al.*, 2014).

Informal conversations reveal that lower-income male sex workers in central Lima report clients of between 30 and 70 years of age, some of whom use drugs and ask men to share

them during the provision of sexual services. A few clients were violent and others may wish to make porn videos involving the men selling sex, but most simply sought sexual services and/or company. On 'good days,' lower-income men said they could have between 6 and 7 clients; in certain circumstances these men may agree to have unprotected sex with clients (Salazar, unpublished data).

Meanings of male sex work, views of the future, vulnerability and activism

Poverty and other forms of vulnerability, such as ethnic exclusion, limited family support and lack of work opportunities, characterise the experiences of many lower-income men who sell sex. Research among this group suggests that entry into sex work is usually catalysed by a difficult event in the individual's life. These events may include the loss of a job, the death of a close family member, abuse and violence in the family, and separation from the family ([Bayer et al., 2013](#)).

Given their disadvantaged background, lower-income men often lack the awareness, resources and connections needed to access a higher-income male sex work market. In the lower-income sectors of this market, earning capacity per client is poor and competition is high, and so selling sex becomes central to the lives of many. Although a number of men who sell sex have multiple jobs, many engage in sex work to meet basic needs such as food and nightly (less than USD 1/night) or monthly temporary shelter. They often spend their days and nights struggling to find clients to meet these needs or to find a place to sleep ([Bayer et al., 2013](#)).

In contrast, some higher-income men may become involved in sex work out of curiosity, or as a hobby, to find sexual pleasure (Nureña et al., 2011), to explore same-sex sexual interactions in a less committed framework ([Bayer et al., 2013](#)), and/or as a calculated option to earn money quickly based on their perceived good looks and their willingness to approach sex as a business (Mimiaga et al., 2008). Some enter sex work almost by chance – for example, a young man may go out for the night, engage in compensated sex with another man, be contacted by that same man for compensated sex on subsequent

occasions, and later be contacted by the man's friends for the same purposes. Only at some point later does he identify as a male sex worker (Bayer *et al.*, 2013). Among higher-income men, life is more multi-faceted and includes family, friends, romantic partners and often higher education, fitness training and leisure activities that sex work helps to finance (Nureña *et al.*, 2011; Bayer *et al.*, 2013).

Details of male sex workers' future expectations, derived from a small number of qualitative studies, offer useful insight into the meanings of sex work for these men. A qualitative study with 40 lower- and higher-income men who sell sex in Lima asked participants about whether or not they planned to continue in sex work and about their overall plans for the future (Bayer *et al.*, 2013). Both groups stated that they planned to leave sex work in the near future, but for different reasons. Lower-income men reported they wanted to leave because their income was low and they did not like sex work. Higher-income men reported they would leave because they were either already using or planned to use their earnings from sex work to invest in their futures, including education and their own businesses (Bayer *et al.*, 2013).

Participants also had different perspectives on how they would exit sex work. Perhaps in contrast to their previous accounts, lower-income men stated that it would be difficult to leave sex work since their low earnings prevented them from investing in education or saving money, and therefore they were unable to obtain other jobs. Despite these challenges, these men held high expectations for their futures and expressed great interest in vocational training and alternative job opportunities. Higher-income men, on the other hand, felt that leaving sex work would be feasible and that, after saving more money thanks to their supplementary earnings from sex work, they would move on to other professional opportunities (Bayer *et al.*, 2013).

The international literature highlights the multilayered stigma associated with male sex work but also stresses the historical tendency to assume that all men who sell sex are marginalised, vulnerable and exposed to violence (Scott *et al.*, 2005). In Peru, little research has directly explored male sex workers' perceptions and experiences of stigma and violence,

but two studies point to mistreatment in certain contexts. Street-based sex work is often conducted in highly competitive environments and street-based male sex workers, like their female and transgender counterparts, may experience violence at the hands of law enforcement authorities, as well as other sex workers, pimps, or street-based youth, whereas indoor work is generally seen as considerably safer (Nureña *et al.*, 2011). In one Lima-based study, 40 per cent of men who identified as male sex workers reported police mistreatment but only 17 per cent had informed the authorities of this mistreatment (Konda *et al.*, 2008). This parallels findings in other settings, where men are unwilling to report police violence due to fear of being identified as sex workers or of further mistreatment (Scott *et al.*, 2005).

For the reasons stated above, though men may form small networks of friends to exchange clients and seek help in the event of need, there is little visible activism among male sex workers in Peru, nor are there many community-based organisations working with this group (WHO, 2012). This is in distinct contrast to activism among female and transgender women sex workers in Peru. In some cases, however, individual community leaders may engage in collaboration with specific organisations to work for their own individual rights. Furthermore, community organisations working with both LGBT people and female sex workers are beginning to focus on demanding rights for sex workers as a whole – regardless of gender. In December 2007, a group of gay- and heterosexually-identified men engaged in sex work attended a National Consultation on Sex Work and Human Rights. Consultation participants indicated that vulnerability differs between those engaged in street sex work and sex work by phone or Internet, and that male sex workers engage in sex work with less guilt than women. Major occupational risks included clients offering more money for sex without a condom, being forced by a client to use drugs and alcohol, or meeting a client who is on drugs, especially cocaine. Men also claimed they are often subjected to stigma and discrimination by health care providers (MINSa, 2007).

Sexual practices and identities

As in many other cultures and much of Latin America, gender strongly influences the development and expression of sexual identity among men who have sex with men in Peru, including men who sell sex. Especially in traditional lower-income settings, sexual penetration is aligned with masculine heterosexuality and being penetrated with feminised homosexuality. *Activo* (insertive) partners during anal and oral sex are able to maintain their position of masculine dominance in the sexual dyad and among their peers, and are not necessarily seen by themselves or others as gay or homosexual. The *pasivo* (receptive) role, however, is interpreted as feminising and transgressive of masculinity norms, and is more closely associated with sexual difference. While upper-middle class sectors may stigmatise both roles, lower-income sectors may be more willing to accept *pasivos* as a distinct part of the community, while *activos* are not distinguished from other men, especially when young (Cáceres and Jimenez, 1999; Cáceres and Rosasco, 2000). Finally, people adopting both roles – *versátiles* (versatile) or *modernos* (modern) – break with traditional gender-dyadic views of homosexual relations, creating a new norm among younger generations (Cáceres and Rosasco, 1999; Fernandez-Davila *et al.*, 2008, Clark *et al.*, 2013). Despite this, the *activo* role, or at least the presumption of heterosexuality, is associated with higher erotic value in many aspects of gay culture (Carballo-Diéguez *et al.*, 2004).

Several studies have estimated the frequency of different sexual identities among male sex workers. In 2002, a study with 2,655 men who have sex with men in six Peruvian cities found that reporting engagement in sex work was associated with identifying as *moderno* or *versatile* (Peinado *et al.*, 2007). Bayer *et al.*'s study among lower- and higher-income male sex workers in Lima also asked participants about their sexual identity and recent sexual behaviours with male or transgender and female sex partners. Most lower-income men identified as bisexual (45 per cent) or homosexual (34 per cent) and fewer identified as heterosexual (21 per cent). The majority of higher-income men, on the other hand, identified as bisexual (81 per cent), with just 4 per cent identifying as homosexual and 15 per cent as heterosexual ($p < 0.01$) (Bayer *et al.*, 2014). All lower- and higher-income male sex workers reported having male or transgender women sex partners in the last 3 months.

Overall, lower-income men reported only insertive anal intercourse (52 per cent), both insertive and receptive anal intercourse (45 per cent), or only receptive anal intercourse (3 per cent) in the last 3 months. By contrast, higher-income male sex workers overwhelmingly reported only insertive anal intercourse (81 per cent), and the remaining 19 per cent reported both insertive and receptive anal intercourse ($p = 0.03$) (Bayer *et al.*, 2014). These figures should be taken with caution, though, as they were self-reported, and since self-publicity as *activo* is a marketing strategy and may reflect an element of self-promotion according to clients' preferences (Clark *et al.*, 2013). In Bayer *et al.*'s (2014) study, consistent condom use with male or transgender women sex partners was low for both receptive and insertive anal intercourse, and for both sub-groups, with half or fewer participants reporting always using a condom. Lower-income male sex workers reported that their last sex partners were: primarily male non-clients (47 per cent) and male clients (48 per cent); while for higher-income men, last sex partners were male clients (50 per cent), male non-clients (27 per cent) and transgender clients (15 per cent) ($p = 0.03$) (Bayer *et al.*, 2014).

Two studies offer information regarding men's female partners, including clients. Among 1,206 male sex workers in 10 cities outside of Lima, who had an average of 11.5 male sexual partners in the past three months, just over one-fifth had also had a female sexual partner in this period (Valderrama *et al.*, 2008). In Bayer *et al.*'s (2014) more recent study in Lima about half of lower-income (48 per cent) and most higher-income male sex workers (89 per cent) reported recent female sex partners ($p < 0.01$). As with male and transgender partners, consistent condom use was low: only 25 per cent of lower-income men and 53 % of higher-income participants reported always using a condom during anal sex, and fewer still for vaginal sex. Thirteen per cent of lower-income and 26 per cent of higher-income men also reported that their last female sex partner was a client (Bayer *et al.*, 2014).

HIV/STI epidemiology, risk and access to health care

In Peru, there is some evidence that male sex workers and their paying and non-paying partners may be at heightened risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), compared with other men who have sex with men. Valderrama *et al.* (2008) found HIV

prevalence to be highest among men who sell sex in the Amazon region (13.9 per cent), versus 9.1 per cent in the coastal cities and 4.1 per cent in the Andes. Syphilis prevalence showed a similar geographic pattern: 35.1 per cent in the Amazon, 13.7 per cent in coastal cities, and 5.6 per cent in the Andes (Valderrama *et al.*, 2008). Compared by income level, lower- and higher-income male sex workers in Lima had very different prevalence rates of HIV (i.e. 23 per cent versus 4 per cent, $p = 0.04$) and syphilis (i.e. 22 per cent versus 0 per cent, $p = 0.02$) (Bayer *et al.*, 2014).

Several larger quantitative studies have measured the prevalence of HIV and other STIs among men who have sex with men who identify as sex workers. However, again, these studies included transgender women and most analyses were unstratified, making interpretation difficult. In the most recent surveillance study, carried out in Lima and only among those with no previous HIV diagnosis, HIV prevalence was highest in transgender women (20.8 per cent), followed by gay-identified (15.1 per cent), bisexually-identified (6.6 per cent) and heterosexually-identified men who have sex with men (3.4 per cent) (MINSa and ONUSIDA, 2012). A recent DNA sequencing study suggests that men who sell sex are often reinfected with different strains of HIV, and that contact with foreign clients is associated with mixed HIV infection (Yabar *et al.*, 2008).

Evidence regarding perceptions of risk, and associated indicators of condom use and HIV testing, is limited. However, Bayer *et al.* (2014) found that most (57 per cent) lower-income male sex workers in Lima perceived themselves to be at high to very high risk for HIV since they sometimes – and in a significant minority of cases, often – have sex without a condom, mainly due to their clients' requests and the highly valued possibility of earning more. Fewer higher-income men selling sex perceived themselves at high to very high risk (42 per cent). Many reported not agreeing to clients' requests not to use condoms since they considered it was not worth the additional compensation, given that their earnings from sex work were not essential to their survival (Bayer *et al.*, 2013; Bayer *et al.*, 2014). In terms of HIV testing history, one quarter of both sub-groups had never been tested, while about 40 per cent had been tested in the last 6 months (Bayer *et al.*, 2014). Finally, participants' discussions about HIV with sex partners were limited. Only 28 per cent had talked about HIV with their most

recent male or transgender partner, and only 25 per cent of those with female partners had engaged in this discussion with their most recent female partner (Bayer *et al.*, 2014).

Four other studies provide information regarding male sex workers' HIV testing and condom use with clients. Valderrama *et al.*'s survey of men in sex work venues (2008) found that 42 per cent of participants had never had an HIV test, that only just over half of participants had used a condom with their last client, and that 43 per cent had not been given condoms in the past year, either by a government or non-government agency.

Although data on male sex workers' use of health services in Peru is extremely limited, they appear to face considerable barriers to accessing sexual health care (WHO, 2012). While all sex workers are offered free medical check-ups at public health clinics in Lima (Quinn *et al.*, 2012), anecdotal evidence suggests that most (and particularly men) may prefer not to reveal their status as sex workers, in order to avoid the stigma and discrimination described above. In such cases, they may have lower access to periodic screening, prevention and care services for HIV and STIs, and may need to seek other means of STI treatment, such as self-medication.

Most existing research on male sex work in Peru has focused on sexual health. However, recent studies are beginning to explore other practices that may be linked to sexual risk. Two recent studies found that male sex workers reported high levels of alcohol consumption, in comparison with other men who have sex with men (Ludford *et al.*, 2013; Deiss *et al.*, 2013). The first study, a survey of 5,148 men who have sex with men and transgender women in five cities, found that 63 per cent of participants exhibited problem drinking, measured using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). Men and transgender women who reported participation in sex work had 1.6 times the odds of problem drinking as those who didn't report sex work. The authors suggest possible explanations for this, including clients urging sex workers to drink with them and sex workers spending considerable time in alcohol-serving venues while working (Ludford *et al.*, 2013). A smaller study of men who have sex with men and transgender women in 24 neighbourhoods of Lima showed a similarly high level of 'problem drinking' (58 per cent

overall) and found that problem drinkers were 1.6 times more likely to have been compensated for sex in the last year than non-problem drinkers (Deiss *et al.*, 2013). Ludford *et al.* (2013) also examined recent drug use, primarily the use of cocaine, cocaine paste (pasta) and marijuana. Among men and transgender women, drug use was much less common (9 per cent) than problem drinking. However, both men and transgender women reporting sex work had a twofold higher odds of drug use as those not involved in transactional sex (Ludford *et al.*, 2013).

Conclusions

This review has pointed to two important bodies of literature: studies focused on men who sell sex; and studies among men who have sex with men and transgender women, a proportion of whom report transactional sex or identifying as a sex worker. In contrast to our previous work (Cáceres and Jimenez, 1999), in which male sex work was shown to be an essentially street-based activity, the current review suggests that the communications revolution of the past 15 years has radically transformed the landscape of male sex work in Peru, by increasing the options available to men to contact or be contacted by potential clients. To a lesser extent, the emergence of previously non-existent commercial gay venues (i.e. porn video arcades and gay saunas) has also provided alternatives to street-based male sex work.

Such a transformation has resulted in the further segmentation of both the supply of and demand for male sex work, most significantly by income, fees charged and social class. While in reality this is more a continuum than a polarity, two contrasting spheres of male sex work can be delineated. First, there is a lower-income sphere, more clearly linked to inequality and vulnerability, in which men become involved in sex work for survival. Such men tend to be less educated and have fewer connections to a broader, wealthier gay sex work market. They also have lower levels of contact with technology and other resources to access new, higher-income purchasers. As a result, many lower-income men who sell sex continue to occupy the traditional street-based sex work circles, now restricted to lower-income areas of the city, where health and security risks are higher and where earnings are

much lower. A second higher-income sphere is increasingly visible in gay cyberspace in Peru, as in many other countries. This type of male sex work provides a new option for quick earnings and glamour for men who meet the physical (i.e. valued body features) and symbolic (i.e. education, a certain personality and the ability to market themselves) requirements to succeed within this world. The prospect of relatively high income without sacrificing confidentiality, and with manageable risks, attracts young men who are not poor but can take advantage of this opportunity to earn comparatively more and finance a more expensive lifestyle.

While male sex work services are mostly purchased by men, the men who sell sex are of various sexual identities, and many report having primarily non-paying and some paying female partners.

While not illegal, male sex work is more severely socially sanctioned than female sex work, and the men involved appear less willing to mobilise collectively to fight for shared interests. Generally men who sell sex view their involvement in sex work as a temporary side activity, for survival or supplementary income, and expect to move on to different things in due course. Based on their income levels and parallel ability to study or to save money, however, they know that moving on will be more difficult for some (i.e. lower-income men) than for others (i.e. higher-income men).

Sexual health risks among men who sell sex are as diverse as forms of male sex work themselves, as illustrated by reported sexual risk taking, HIV risk perception and HIV/STI prevalence. Generally speaking, higher-income men appear to be safer due to sex work income not being essential for survival, and because they work in more controlled, 'professional' environments, while higher sexual risk taking (often to earn more) adds to the precarious conditions of sex work among lower-income men. HIV testing is generally low among members of both groups.

Finally, male sex work in Peru continues to take place in an ambiguous legal context. Many men report police mistreatment, and stigma and discrimination lead to social isolation and

the under-utilisation of health services. This in turn causes increased vulnerability. These factors are most significant for lower-income male sex workers but are also experienced by other male sex workers and men who have sex with men more broadly.

Research is needed to better understand the diverse realities of male sex work, and to further investigate issues of access, discrimination and mistreatment in health and other public services. This work should be undertaken with careful consideration of confidentiality and autonomy, and with a focus on men's own benefit. Special efforts should be made to identify the best ways to involve men who sell sex in appropriate HIV/STI prevention and care provision, including periodic testing linked to access to care and support. There is also a clear need for broad-based programmes that address male sex workers' wider health and social care needs, particularly for those living in conditions of poverty and social isolation, and for men with substance dependence and mental health problems. At a structural level, there is a need for a clear legal framework that seeks to protect men who sell sex from abuse and discrimination, and which respects broader LGBT and sex workers' rights.

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