

# Sex Markets

A denied industry

**Marina Della Giusta,  
Maria Laura Di Tommaso  
and Steinar Strøm**

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## Sex Markets

This is the first study by economists that tackles the complex subject of sex work, which irrespective of its legal status lies at the centre of a globalised service industry, deeply connected with the entertainment and tourism industries as well as with illegal activities. The sheer numbers of human beings involved and the underlying social and policy issues, as well as the revenues generated, demand attention from economists, who, as this book shows, can make a useful contribution to understanding the issues and informing policy design.

The authors begin by presenting a synthesis of the economic and sociological approaches to prostitution and the main feminist debates around the issue. In the second part of the book, they develop an original economic model of the exchange of paid sex including the effect of stigma, which is used to describe the possible consequences from adopting different policy regimes, giving concrete country cases as examples. The final part includes an empirical study of the demand for paid sex that offers empirical support to the model's claims, and points to several possible further research avenues. Whilst retaining many of the assumptions of the economists' toolbox (rational action, representative agents with optimising behaviour, and equilibrium), this work also enriches the economists' approach by considering socially aware agents, that is, individuals who derive both material and immaterial rewards from their actions.

Covering areas such as sex work, trafficking and social stigma, this empirical and mathematically rigorous book is essential reading for students and researchers in the areas of gender economics and gender and development.

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All of us, with the exception of wealthy and unemployed, take money for the use of our body. Professors, factory workers, lawyers, opera singers, sex workers, doctors, legislators – we all do things with parts of our bodies, for which we receive a wage in return. Some people get good wages and some do not; some have a relatively high degree of control over their working conditions and some have little control; some have many employment options and some have very few. And some are socially stigmatised and some are not.

[Martha Nussbaum, *Sex and Social Justice*, 1999]

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