

Korean sex workers head to NZ

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Korean sex workers are heading here to work after a backlash against them in Australia, a Korean expert says.

With jobs scarce in South Korea, more women were turning to prostitution, University of Auckland Korean studies senior lecturer Changzoo Song said.

Immigration New Zealand confirmed that in the 12 months to November, 13 South Korean people were refused entry at the border after being assessed as being likely to be travelling here to work in the sex industry. This was up from 10 in the same period last year.

"... prostitution is considered extremely shameful in Korea," said Dr Song. "For Korean women who become prostitutes, they preferred to travel overseas to work so as not to lose face or bring shame to their families."

Under the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, only New Zealand citizens and residents can work in the sex industry. Of the 42 foreign nationals on temporary visas found working as sex workers in the last financial year, 18 were from China, 14 from Hong Kong, three from Taiwan and one was from South Korea.

But in the past three months, at least six South Korean nationals were found to be working unlawfully in the local sex industry.

"Australia used to be a popular choice, but recent campaigns and crackdown may have put them off going there," added Dr Song.

"The Korean communities in Australia considered Korean prostitutes a community and national disgrace."

A Korean woman facing immigration and other charges was told she could make \$1000 working as a prostitute.

After being recruited through a Korean website, she was paid \$600 towards her airfare to Auckland. She was picked up at the airport by a Korean taxi driver and sent to an apartment in Hobson St where she was given a short induction into the sex industry.

According to police records, clients were charged \$220 an hour or \$180 for half an hour, of which \$80 was paid to the brothel operators, who are also Korean nationals.

Catherine Healy, Prostitutes Collective national co-ordinator, said most sex workers would not state on official documents that they worked in the industry.

"It is common sense for most sex workers to avoid stigma and discrimination by not stating that they are sex workers in official documents."

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<http://www.odt.co.nz/news/national/368286/korean-sex-workers-head-nz>