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## Selling Sex in Honolulu: Police Focus Prostitution Arrests on Women, Not Men

By Sara Lin and Robert Brown | 11/22/2010

**Editor's Note:** This article is part of Civil Beat's ongoing coverage of prostitution and human trafficking in Honolulu. Read our related coverage:

- [Selling Sex in Honolulu: Prostitution Busts for Men Turn Up Mostly Locals, Few Tourists](#)
- [Selling Sex in Honolulu: Unlicensed Massage Parlors Lack Enforcement Scrutiny](#)



Rj Brown - Civil Beat

The Honolulu Police Department targets women twice as often as men when enforcing prostitution laws, a Civil Beat investigation found.

It also arrests suspects in just two areas of the island: Waikiki and Downtown. An analysis of all 49 prostitution arrests in the three-month period between July 8 and Oct. 8 revealed:

- Two-thirds of those arrested were women
- Only one pimp was arrested
- Only one arrest (at the airport) was made outside Waikiki or Downtown

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The investigation also revealed that when police arrested men for prostitution-related offenses, they appeared to be [targeting locals](#) instead of tourists.

Civil Beat decided to review three months of prostitution-related arrests in Honolulu as part of our coverage of human trafficking, which includes sex slavery and forced prostitution.

Using information taken from the police department's daily arrest log, which is a public document, Civil Beat created a database tracking individuals who were arrested and charged with prostitution-related offenses, where and what time they were arrested, their gender, age and home address.

The data offers a glimpse into what local law enforcement is doing to enforce prostitution laws and investigate human trafficking in Honolulu. One thing the Civil Beat study makes clear: Police are not focusing on the demand side of the problem. Their enforcement emphasis is on the supply side.

Getting that picture is difficult because the department doesn't share its data and has been resistant to a Civil Beat request to review all prostitution arrest reports for 2009. Last week, we ran into [more roadblocks](#) when trying to track the arrests through the court system via public court documents.

The subject of human trafficking in Hawaii — both labor and sexual — has taken on national prominence after federal prosecutors in Hawaii [filed the biggest case](#) in U.S. history involving 400 foreign farm workers. Hawaii remains [one of six states](#) that doesn't have a human trafficking statute after Gov. Linda Lingle vetoed what would have been the state's first anti-human trafficking law this summer. The bill was widely opposed by law enforcement, which said it contained many flaws.

### One Arrest Every Other Day

Civil Beat offered to sit down and discuss our findings with Honolulu police, but the department declined a request for an interview. A spokeswoman instead offered to answer questions submitted in writing.

There are 90 officers assigned to HPD's Narcotics/Vice Division, which is responsible for enforcing anti-prostitution laws.

"Since we have separate units dedicated to narcotics and vice offenses, we enforce both on a full time basis,"

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### Quick Take

- Police made 49 arrests in three months
- They arrested only one pimp
- The majority of arrests were women
- Arrests were concentrated in Waikiki and Downtown

### Media



### Related Content

#### Articles

- Why Is Hawaii Soft On Human Trafficking?
- Largest Human Trafficking Case in U.S. History Filed in Honolulu
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- Discussion: Human Trafficking In Hawaii

wrote Maj. Susan Dowsett, head of the division. "Officers from other divisions also participate in the enforcement of narcotics and prostitution laws."

Yet 49 arrests over a three-month period amounts to one arrest every other day. Extrapolated over one year, that's 196 prostitution arrests — nearly a third less than a year earlier.

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15 men. Two 19-year-old women were the youngest arrested while the oldest were two 51-year-old women.

### Female Arrests

Age Range	Number of Arrests
Teenager	2
20s	15
30s	8
40s	5
50+	4

To be sure, it's not unusual to see more women arrested for prostitution than men.

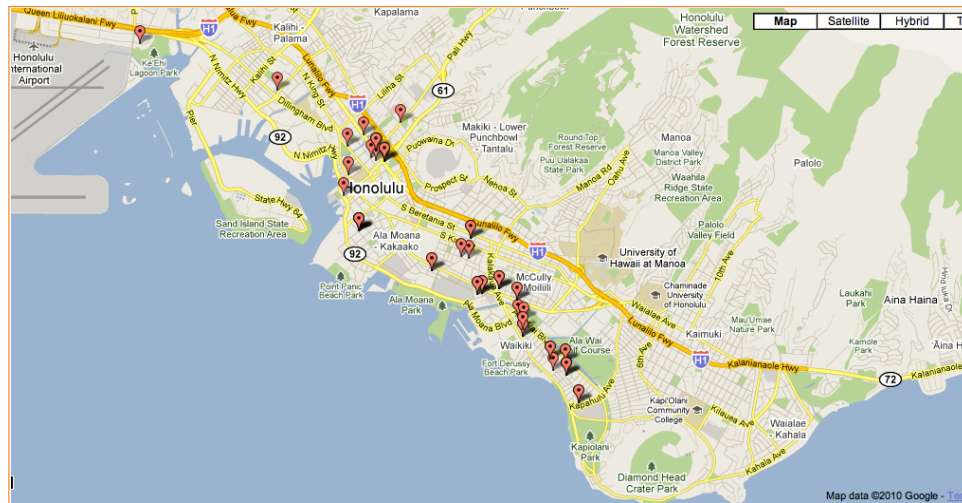
"Prostitution has traditionally been one of those offenses where the number of women arrests always exceeded the number of male arrests. That's national as well as local," said Meda Chesney-Lind, a criminologist and Professor of Women's Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa.

"Who's vulnerable to arrest for the selling of sex are typically, mostly women because it's one of the few assets you have to sell if you're out on the streets," she said.

Another reason Honolulu police arrest more women than men is because prostitution happens in a variety of venues — street, massage parlor, on the Internet. It's difficult to place undercover female officers in all of them.

"Normally if we go after johns, it'll be often on the streets," said former police chief Lee Donohue. "I don't think there is any way we can go to a massage parlor operator and ask them 'Can you hire one of our female police officers to catch a john?' It's too much of a risk for the operator. That's the history of why we stayed on the streets."

In three months, with one exception, police made prostitution arrests in just two areas: Waikiki and Downtown, near Fort Street Mall and near Restaurant Row.



Maj. Susan Dowsett, head of the Narcotics/Vice Division, in a written statement, explained the department's focus on those two areas:

"We enforce prostitution laws islandwide. Waikiki and Downtown have traditionally been the areas with the most prostitution activity. They are also the areas where we get the most complaints from the public."

Civil Beat asked the department to provide the number of arrests it has made outside of Waikiki or Downtown. It