



UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL  
DO RIO DE JANEIRO

## **OBSERVATÓRIO DA PROSTITUIÇÃO**

LeMetro/IFCS-UFRJ

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Who We Are**

The [Observatory of Prostitution](#) is an extension project of the Metropolitan Ethnographic Lab – LeMetro/IFCS-UFRJ, which unites professors, researchers and students of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro-UFRJ, the Gender Studies Center PAGU from the State University of Campinas-UNICAMP, and the Fluminense Federal University-UFF. The project is conducted in partnership with ONG Davida – Prostitution, Civil Rights and Health; the Brazilian Interdisciplinary Association of AIDS-ABIA; the Public Archive of the State of Rio de Janeiro-APERJ and the Brazilian Network of Prostitutes.

#### **About the Project**

For each of the 32 days of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, the Observatory of Prostitution conducted ethnographic research in the principal zones of prostitution in Rio de Janeiro (Copacabana Beach, Ipanema Beach, Centro, Lapa and Vila Mimosa), Fortaleza and Recife<sup>1</sup>, in order to monitor the impact World Cup has in areas of prostitution in certain regions of these cities for the presence of foreigners; and to monitor the actions of police, governmental organizations and NGOs that are working in these areas either to combat the sexual exploitation of children or to promote their policies concerning sex work.

We also observed the working conditions in these areas during World Cup and the networks formed to facilitate sex work during this period, in addition to keeping track of national and international news on prostitution in Brazil during World Cup, which will be the subject of analysis in a forthcoming paper. To access our published research visit: <https://www.facebook.com/observatoriodaprostituicao>

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<sup>1</sup> In collaboration with researchers from the study, “A stadium for Pernambuco: Impacts and evaluations of promoters, neighbors, beneficiaries and those affected by the construction”. Coordinator: Dr. Parry Scott, (UFPE/PPGA/FAGES) and Researcher: Ma. Fernanda Maria Vieira Ribeiro (UFPE/FAGES/UVA). CNPQ number: PQ400083/2013-2 CNPQ.



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### **Methodology**

The research of the Observatory of Prostitution is based on almost a decade of prior investigations into sex tourism and prostitution in Rio de Janeiro by academics, journalists, LGBT activists and sex workers.

In 2012, two members of the Observatory concluded an extensive mapping of points of prostitution in the city of Rio de Janeiro, the fruit of eight years of ethnographic and sociological research. This mapping permitted us to identify the principal points of prostitution frequented by Brazilians and foreigners in Rio.

Also in 2012, researchers collaborating with the Observatory visited these points at different moments of the city's seasonal cycle of sex work. In 2013, these researchers intensified their visits, concentrating on the 20 points of commercial sex most frequented by foreign clients, the 20 busiest points in downtown Rio, and also Vila Mimosa, Rio's only established red light district. From November 2013 to May 2014, these venues were visited at least once per month, usually during the first part of the month (immediately after salaries are paid) in order to get an average count of the number and type of sex workers and clients active at these locations. During these visits, researchers interviewed clients, sex workers, venue managers, security personnel, and other types of workers at these locations about their plans and expectations for the World Cup.

During the World Cup, the Observatory divided its researchers into three groups: one team being responsible for Copacabana, with two more dedicated to downtown Rio and Vila Mimosa. During the 32 days of World Cup, these teams maintained a presence in these locations every time Brazil was playing and also on the days there were games in Rio's Maracanã Stadium. The teams also conducted observations during moments we considered strategic, including the quarter-final and semi-final games. Individual researchers also visited these areas almost every day of the World Cup.

The research teams generally concentrated their activities between noon and 3am, the following day. Over the course of the Cup, as we observed a significant drop-off in commercial sexual activity in Vila Mimosa and downtown Rio, we concentrated more researchers at night in Copacabana, while maintaining smaller teams in Vila Mimosa and downtown Rio until the end of the World Cup.

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Observatory researchers also circulated in recreational and nocturnal spaces associated with the World Cup, but not necessarily linked to prostitution, such as the neighborhood of Lapa and the bars of Ipanema Beach. We also visited a number of heterosexual and homosexual brothels and saunas during the games. Finally, one of our researchers is also a sex worker who worked at a luxury brothel during the Cup. Other collaborators worked in Vila Mimosa and Copacabana.

We estimate that the members of our research teams logged more than 2,000 hours of ethnographic research and participant-observation in the main commercial sex zones of Rio de Janeiro during the World Cup. During the final days of the games and the weeks immediately following, we conducted 116 formal interviews and surveys with sex workers who were active during the Cup, asking them about their expectations and experiences.

We shared information about the objectives of our research group with every woman we interviewed and clarified their rights (including to privacy) as participants of our research. In partnership with sex worker rights NGO Davida, we produced and distributed a pocket version of *Beijo da rua* magazine called *Beijinho da rua* ("Little kiss from the street") to sex workers and their clients, with information about legal rights and health in Portuguese and English.

The Observatory of Prostitution conducted weekly meetings with all collaborators from May to July in order to better coordinate our teams, share data and observations, adjust the parameters of the research, and define strategies of dialog with public entities and the media. The Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA), a partner in the research project and the Observatory, generously offered their space as a headquarters for our research during the World Cup.

The following report presents the preliminary findings of our research.

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Figure 1: Two teams of girls (many of them daughters of sex workers) play football in the streets near Vila Mimosa - July 9, 2014.

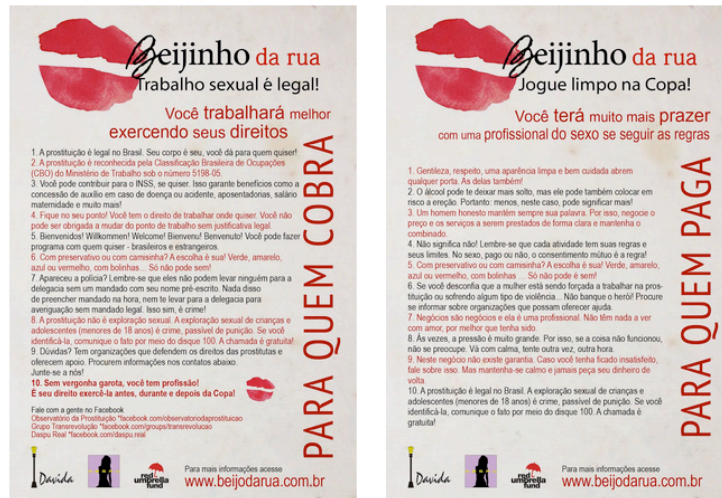


Figure 2: Pamphlets distributed by our research teams to sex workers.

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The vast majority of sex workers we spoke with in Rio de Janeiro considered the World Cup to be bad for business. Despite the presence of significant numbers of Brazilian and foreign tourists in Rio, there was a general decline in sexual commerce during the 32 days of the event. Of the 83 points of prostitution we visited, only six maintained a normal flow of customers during the games. Another 17 experienced an increase in business. Sixty points, including Vila Mimosa, where some 1,000 women work, experienced an estimated decline of 30-50%, in terms of the number of clients frequenting these points, during the 32 days of the games from June 12 to July 13.

We attribute this decline to six factors:

1. The closure of commerce in downtown Rio due to a series of government-declared holidays during the World Cup.
2. The dependence of prostitution in downtown Rio (home to the largest concentration of prostitutes and sex work venues in the city) and Vila Mimosa (the city's only concentrated red light district) on local clients who work in city center and who did not circulate through downtown Rio during these holidays.
3. The absence of foreign clients, who did not replace local clients at these venues. Foreign tourists largely restricted their movements in Rio to the South Zone neighborhoods of Copacabana and Ipanema, to Lapa and to the Maracanã Stadium, avoiding downtown and Vila Mimosa all together.
4. The fact that many foreign tourists who visited Rio were from Latin American countries that are as poor or poorer than Brazil. These tourists had little money to spend in Rio.
5. The high prices throughout Rio and particularly in the South Zone, which prohibited many tourists from spending their money on non-essentials.
6. Many of the single men who visited Rio during the World Cup were much more interested in spending their time and money conversing and drinking with male friends than in purchasing sexual services.

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The concentration of tourists in Rio's South Zone and the neighborhood of Lapa caused an internal migration of sex workers within Rio. Many sex workers left downtown Rio and the North Zone (where Vila Mimosa is located) during the World Cup to visit Copacabana's beachfront. A small strip of this neighborhood wound up concentrating a large portion of commercial sexual activities in Rio during the World Cup, giving some people the impression that prostitution increased in the city. If Copacabana saw the number of sex workers almost double, however, Vila Mimosa and downtown Rio, areas that normally account for the majority of sex workers in Rio, saw drastic declines.

In the months leading up to the World Cup, the national and international media, as well as many state and civil society actors, systematically propagated rumors that the 2014 World Cup would drastically increase the sexual exploitation of women, children and adolescents. This view of things, in large part based upon the logic of moral panic, led to an emphasis on governmental actions that focused on repressing "sexual exploitation" (and not the promotion of rights or health), with this concept being defined in an excessively wide and vague manner.

However, the evidence we have gathered to date, after more than 2,000 hours of fieldwork in the principal sex zones of Rio de Janeiro and partial observations in Fortaleza and Recife, indicates that there was no substantial increase in prostitution, nor the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, that can be attributed to the growth in sexual commerce in these cities due to the massive presence of tourists (sexual or otherwise). In fact, as we have stated above, in the case of Rio de Janeiro, prostitution generally appears to have declined during the World Cup. Observatory collaborators in Fortaleza and Recife report similar conclusions.

Researchers involved in investigations in Rio de Janeiro noted a small number of potential cases of adolescents under the age of 18 offering sexual services (involving females and transfemales who appeared to be 16 or 17 years old), but did not encounter a single case of sexual exploitation of children. The Child Welfare Council of the South Zone (*Conselho Tutelar da Zona Sul*) of Rio did not register a single case of sexual exploitation of children or adolescents related to the World Cup. A police operation against the supposed "exploitation of vulnerable subjects" that led to the closure of Balcony Restaurant and Hotel Lido on the first day of World Cup did not restrict the circulation of children and adolescents in the adjacent areas where sexual commerce took place. No arrests were made and both establishments were re-opened immediately after the Cup.

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On the other hand, an anti-sexual exploitation operation in the neighboring city of Niterói, which took place a few weeks before the World Cup, resulted in the illegal imprisonment of some hundred sex workers and police violence, including robbery and rape. This operation was almost completely ignored by the government agents and members of civil society involved in the fight against sexual exploitation during the Cup.

Brazil's World Cup host cities were overtaken by numerous and heavily armed police contingents before and during the games. Our research indicates that this ostensive police presence was concentrated in Copacabana and was focused on the protection of tourists, and the control of conflicts between football fans. Downtown Rio was practically stripped of public security forces, except on days there was an anti-World Cup protest and the area was overtaken by Rio's Riot Battalion (*Batalhão de Choque*).

Finally, but no less important, our research reveals that in the case of Rio de Janeiro, there was little to no investment on the part of government institutions of public health to promote sexual health, especially with respect to the prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS. This is in strong contrast with public policy measures implemented in the past for mega-events in Rio de Janeiro.

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Figure 3: Eight of dozens of houses of prostitution in downtown Rio that closed their doors on game days due to a lack of clients.

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### PRELIMINARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 1. A decline in prostitution in Rio de Janeiro during World Cup.

*“Thank God it’s over so business can get back to normal.”*

- Caroline, 28, masseuse at a massage parlor in a building on Av. Rio Branco

*“The World Cup was absolute shit!”*

- Deusa, 23, sex worker at a club on Rua Buenos Aires in downtown

*“I usually bring home 700 reais a week, every week. During the last two weeks [of June], I made a total of only 500 reais. And check this out: I couldn’t pay for my son’s [grammar school] tuition.”*

- Simone, 32, sex worker at a house in the port region of downtown

*“The World Cup did nothing for the Vila.”*

- Ariel, ten year sex work veteran, moving between Vila Mimosa and Copacabana

*“The World Cup will be the end of us here.”*

- Catarina, 35, sex worker and manager of a bar in Vila Mimosa

*“Rio didn’t get any of the good games. There are a lot of gringos here in Copacabana, but they’re almost all Latino gringos: Argentines, Chileans... poor gringos. They want to negotiate programs [tricks] for 100 reais, or even 50. Dearie, I won’t even walk from here to the corner for 50 reais!”*

- Priscila, 35, sex worker Praça do Lido (Lido Plaza), Copacabana

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*“There are a lot of men on the boardwalk, but they don’t want to pay for a program. They want to spend the money they have drinking beer with their friends and talking about football.”*

- Diana, 19, sex worker Prado Junior, Copacabana

*“It would have been better if there were more paus duros [hard-ons] and less pão duro [“hard bread”, or cheapskates].”*

- Leila, 35, sex worker at a club on Rua Buenos Aires, downtown

The Observatory of Prostitution monitored 83 commercial sex venues in Rio de Janeiro before and during the World Cup. The workforce of these venues represents approximately 75% of the prostitutes that work in Rio’s houses, clubs, spa brothels, privês, bars, beaches, massage parlors, and street corners during a normal July (see “Methodology” for more details on establishing a baseline for our numbers).

During the World Cup, we observed that the flow of clients fell in 60 of the venues we frequented, most of which were in downtown, the region of Rio that has the highest concentration of sex workers. Most of these venues closed on their own initiative for at least one day of the week during the Cup due to an insufficient number of clients and/or workers. In Vila Mimosa, Rio’s only concentrated red light district (which despite consisting of some 60 houses is counted as only one point on our map of sex venues, thus being counted as one of the 83 venues we researched), we saw the same phenomenon, with a number of houses closing on game days.

Based on our own counts of sex workers and on the record books of programs (*programas* - “tricks”) we viewed at a number of venues we visited, we can affirm that Rio’s sex industry shrunk by at least 30% in Rio de Janeiro’s downtown and North Zone neighborhoods during the month of the World Cup.

Only six of the 83 locations of prostitution we monitored maintained a more or less stable number of clients. Most of these venues were in the Copacabana neighborhood, although some sauna brothels in downtown Rio also did not register a decline.

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Seventeen locations saw an increase in clients during World Cup. All of these venues are located in Copacabana. In the 23 locations that registered a stable or augmented flow of clients during the games, the number of prostitutes working increased by about 25%. Meanwhile, at the locations where the flow of clients decreased, the number of women working appears to have decreased by at least 30%. While we observed a migration of prostitutes from other locations in the city to Copacabana, the quantity of prostitutes frequenting the neighborhood's venues was significantly less than the quantity that normally work in Rio's downtown and North Zone neighborhoods (including Vila Mimosa).

Taking all of the principal commercial sex zones of Rio into consideration, it appears that there was a 15% decline in the number of women doing sex work during the month of World Cup, despite the temporary increase in prostitution in a small section of Copacabana.

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Figure 4: In the deserted streets of downtown Rio during a game day at Maracanã Stadium, a house of prostitution (blue light) maintains its doors open in the hope of attracting tourist clients.

Figure 5: Closed commerce in downtown Rio on the day the Brazilian selection played a game.

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### **2. Sex workers in Rio expected to make a lot of money during the World Cup, but many were disappointed.**

*“I thought I would make an easy 30,000 reais during the Cup. I ended up making 10,000, because there were are a lot of clients, but many more women.”*

- Nayara, a sex worker at a luxury sauna brothel in the South Zone

*“One day I brought 1000 reais home, but there were also days I didn’t do a single program. I usually made 200 to 4000 a night in Copacabana, and about 300 downtown..... Things were good, but not great.”*

- Keyla, sex worker at a house in downtown Rio who migrated to Copacabana during the World Cup

Even in the luxury sauna brothels of Rio’s South Zone, where the number of clients increased, the money sex workers made was less than they had expected. In many places, the number of women working went up as the number of clients increased, meaning that the total number of programs (*programas* - “tricks”) per sex worker remained more or less stable. In many cases, clients came to drink and talk, but did not pay for programs.

Even in beachfront Copacabana, near the FIFA Fan Fest - “ground zero” for prostitution during the World Cup - the number of programs per sex worker did not increase and, in fact, decreased for many. What increased was the amount some sex workers charged gringos for programs.

For example, many of the women who migrated to Copacabana from downtown and Vila Mimosa generally make 120 reais an hour (\$60 USD), earning 100-300 reais daily (\$50-150) for 15-20 minute programs with five to twelve men per day.

In Copacabana, the same women charged 200-300 per hour (\$100-150), doing one to five hour-long programs per day. Some women were able to charge more, relating that some Europeans and North Americans paid 500 to 1,000 reais (\$250 to \$500) for a program.

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The number of clients in Copacabana was higher at the beginning of the World Cup and decreased over the 32 days of games. At the beginning of the games, there were men from many different countries in Rio's South Zone. However, after the quarter-finals, Argentines dominated the streets, plazas and bars, and few Argentines wanted to pay 300 reais per hour for sex. During the days surrounding the final game, when Argentina played Germany on July 13 in Rio's Maracanã Stadium, sex workers in Copacabana - the only region of the city that demonstrated an increase in the number of sex workers and the values they charged over World Cup - saw a considerable drop in earnings.

Vila Mimosa is the location that suffered the most disappointment. The Vila is located less than 2 kilometers from Maracanã Stadium and the expectation of many people, including the municipal authorities, was that the flow of clients would increase geometrically after the crowds left the stadium. Even the association that controls Vila Mimosa, Amocavim, believed that this would occur, investing heavily in renovations for the red light district which, in recent years, has been going to seed. Amocavim cleaned up the streets (technically the responsibility of COMLURB, Rio's municipal urban cleaning department), printed and posted a massive banner on the Vila's main building, and installed a 6-meter-high fiberglass statue of Zé Pilintra (a modern avatar of Afro-Brazilian religion, known as a trickster and as a protector of prostitutes) in the middle of Vila Mimosa. The high expectations among bar owners and sex workers in the Vila before the World Cup were palpable. Some bar owners purchased hundreds of crates of beer to slake the thirst of the hordes of tourists who would presumably fill up the Vila's street after the games.

However, sexual commerce in Vila Mimosa fell 30-50% during the month of World Cup. Few tourists ventured out to the Vila and a number of the men who did caused headaches for the women working there.

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### 3. Sex workers migrated within Rio de Janeiro during the World Cup, but few arrived from outside the city.

*“I should have stayed in Peru. I would have made a lot more than I made here.”*

- Paolla, 29, Peruvian sex worker working in a sauna downtown

*“The World Cup was good for me, but to be honest, I think I should have stayed in São Paulo. I would have made the same amount.”*

- Priscila, 35, a sex worker from São Paulo in Copacabana

As we observed in the Observatory's [first World Cup report](#), issued on June 29 2014, the World Cup radically altered the work calendar in Rio de Janeiro, since game days in Rio and also the days the Brazilian selection played were declared to be holidays. As a result, sex professionals who work in Rio's downtown and North Zone (predominantly in Vila Mimososa and in small downtown venues) saw a significant decline in terms of the number of clients. Women who usually work in these areas migrated to Rio's South Zone in search of clients, above all to Copacabana Beach, where one found the largest concentration of tourists during the World Cup. This migration didn't happen immediately, but after a week or so of the women waiting at their normal places of work for clients who failed to materialize.

Our research identified a few sex workers (about 20-25) arriving in town from other cities within the greater State of Rio de Janeiro, fewer still (around a dozen) arriving from other states in Brazil, and only one immigrant sex worker from another country. Generally, the sex workers who came to Rio from other cities were dissatisfied. Maria, for example, came from the Brazilian state of Goiânia with the objective of making a lot of money during World Cup. It was her first time visiting Rio and she was disappointed with the result of her gamble: “I thought it would be better here, that I would do more programs and for a better price, but I didn't manage to.... It was a delusion.”

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We found only one woman who arrived from outside of Brazil to sell sex at the World Cup: a Peruvian, who migrated on her own volition without the help of third parties. She was also disappointed with her decision, saying that she would have made a lot more money if she'd stayed in Peru:

*In my city, Lima, I make more money than in Rio! There I charge \$100 USD per program and I don't have any travel expenses. Here there are a bunch of latinos and a lot of Argentineans! They aren't such good clients...*

As we have already observed, the vast majority of “migrants” who circulated in Copacabana were from downtown Rio or Vila Mimosa. The new working conditions in which they were inserted caused a certain amount of discomfort for these women, who were generally used to working with Brazilian clients in closed venues where they could rely on security and anonymity. In Copacabana, they were “exposed” on the streets, had to negotiate with clients in a foreign language, and have sex in places they were not familiar with (for example clients' hotel rooms or apartments), most of them without security.

Ariel, a veteran sex worker who has worked between Vila Mimosa and Copacabana over the last decade, said she stopped working in Copacabana after the famous Help discotheque closed in 2009. The closure pushed many of the neighborhood's sex workers to work on the streets near Prado Junior a few blocks away, but Ariel informed us she did not want to be exposed working in public. Business was so bad for her in Vila Mimosa during the World Cup, however, that Ariel joined some of her colleagues to take taxis to the busiest part of Copacabana: Lido Plaza. After working until midnight or so in Vila Mimosa, she would charge 200 reais per hour in Lido Plaza next to Balcony Restaurant (closed by the police the opening day of World Cup - see Section 4, below):

*Between Vila and Copacabana, it's much better in Copacabana. But I had stopped working here because you are so exposed. And I can't sit down and have a beer now that Balcony is closed. Now I have to stand up the whole time in the plaza next to Balcony waiting for men to come up to me and talk, and it's very tiring. I don't have the patience for it. I have to spend the whole night here waiting. [But] in Copacabana, I can charge more - 200 an hour [versus 60 reais per half hour in Vila Mimosa]. And it doesn't even last a whole hour.*

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The majority of sex workers who said that they were “doing well” during the World Cup were women who usually work in Copacabana, already accustomed to the rhythm of commercial sex and sex tourism in the neighborhood. Many women who migrated from downtown and Vila Mimosa were not accustomed to the new working conditions on the street in Copacabana, and this limited their earnings. A number of our informants from downtown reported to have only gone two or three times to the South Zone, precisely because they didn’t feel comfortable with the working conditions in the neighborhood.

Our observations suggest that the expectations of big profits during the World Cup also brought a new generation of prostitutes to the streets: younger women (in the range of 18-25 years old) -- a small minority compared to the veterans, but always present during the games, particularly in Lido Plaza in Copacabana. These young women said they were impressed by media reports before World Cup that predicted there would be “a lot of sex tourism” during the games. Ironically then, it was precisely the media’s exaggeration regarding the expected enormous increase in the number of men seeking prostitutes that helped recruit new women for the streets. Few of these new prostitutes reported having positive experiences with prostitution during World Cup and most claimed they would quit as soon as the games were over.

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**4. There was a large increase in the police presence on Copacabana Beach and a small increase in the police presence around Vila Mimosa, but many sex workers in downtown Rio complained about the absence of police during the World Cup.**

*“Are you seeing this? [Pointing to the police] This is all just for show for the gringos. As soon as the tourists head home, it’s going to be ‘tchau, adeus, bye-bye’ and the security is going to go back to being shit for us.”*

- Priscila, 35, talking about the police presence in Praça do Lido (Lido Plaza)

*“We’re here to protect people like you.”*

- Military Policeman to a blond, female American researcher with the Observatory of Prostitution in Lido Plaza

In Vila Mimosa, we observed a small increase in the police presence during the World Cup: one or two cars occasionally driving around the area, whereas the normal police presence in Vila is practically nonexistent.

*It would be good if the city maintained the police presence after the World Cup. We have a lot of problems in the neighborhood around Vila with crack addicts. But we know that they’re just going to leave after the games are over. - Rachel, Vila Mimosa*

Ariel, the sex worker in Vila Mimosa mentioned above, was attacked and bitten on the face by an Argentinean client during the World Cup. She didn’t go to the police:

*“Because of the World Cup, the police don’t want to risk something serious happening to a gringo and having to be responsible for it. The gringos are really protected. So why would I call the police [if I were abused by a foreign client]?”*

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Police were absent in downtown Rio, particularly on the days there were games at Maracanã Stadium, except for when protests were organized. A number of sex workers in this area complained that they were afraid of being assaulted because the neighborhood was so deserted. They also claimed that the lack of police presence downtown was one of the reasons they weren't working on game days. The lack of police presence was also mentioned by several managers of venues downtown as the reason they closed their doors on the days there were games in Maracanã Stadium.

In Copacabana, where the presence of tourists was intense and constant, the police presence was ostentatious and systematic. At nighttime in busiest area of prostitution near FIFA Fan Fest, there were generally more police than prostitutes on the street. These officers were from all divisions of Brazil's public security forces: the Civil, Military and Municipal Guard, in addition to the National Security Force and even the Federal Police. In the words of one of our informants, there were "more police than pigeons - even more police than Argentines!" This presence increased when the FIFA Fan Fest closed after games and during the final games of World Cup, when Argentinian fans dominated the beachfront and surrounding areas of Copacabana. We observed a number of conflicts between police and Argentinian fans.

### **"Anti-exploitation" police operations**

During the World Cup, the biggest police operation related to prostitution was the [closure of Balcony Restaurant and Hotel Lido](#) in Copacabana two hours before the first game kicked off on June 12<sup>2</sup>. The justification for the operation was that these establishments supposedly "exploited vulnerable subjects" (an accusation that is not a crime under Brazilian law). Despite the high visibility of this operation, the women and transgender prostitutes who use Balcony as a place to meet clients did not leave the area. They circulated around the adjacent Lido Plaza, "ground zero" for commercial sex in Rio de Janeiro during the World Cup.

During our observations in the streets of Copacabana, we saw police directing tourists to other sex venues and clubs in the neighborhood – places that compete with Balcony during the normal course of events. It's worth noting that these clubs and venues were among the few locations that saw business

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<sup>2</sup> Both establishments were re-opened in less than a week after the World Cup concluded.



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increase during the games. Some sex workers we interviewed also commented on the fact that these establishments were open as usual while Balcony had been closed. These women raised the hypothesis that this may have happened because Balcony had not paid bribes to the police.

We also registered what may have been a “clandestine police intervention” at another bar/club in Copacabana. The house in question is a small establishment near the beach that rents rooms for prostitution, a practice that was particularly repressed during the [major police operations against prostitution](#) in Rio’s South Zone in 2012. During the games, and because of the temporary closure of Hotel Lido, the club offered prostitutes working in the neighborhood the possibility to rent rooms for 70 reais per hour.

One of the Observatory’s researchers witnessed the following situation in front of this venue during the third week of the World Cup. Two military police walked up to the club, which was closed, and observed its front door for about five minutes. They then returned to the beachfront, talking to each other in low tones. When they passed by the researcher, she heard the following piece of the conversation: “Yes. I agree. We could get some good money out of them.”

The next night, five members of our research team returned to the club. A number of previously intact mirrors inside had been broken and the entrance door to had been damaged. The manager of the establishment informed the researchers that a sex worker had broken the mirrors by accident, and that the door had been hammered upon by a client who tried to leave the club quickly without paying.

Neither explanation made sense (the mirrors in question were widely separated and the door was damaged on the *outside*) and the researchers felt that the establishment looked like it had suffered a lightning police blitz (*blitz relâmpago*). The venue remained open and functioning for the remainder of the World Cup, but the club’s workers did not want to talk about the damage and told conflicting stories when they talked about it.

It is important to note that police generally did not intervene in the activities of the prostitutes. Despite the official allegation of the recruitment of minors for sexual exploitation around Balcony, we never saw police asking for the identification of any of the several adolescents and children (mostly street vendors or the sons and daughters of street vendors) who frequented Lido Plaza at night. Sex workers in the area also complained that they didn’t feel like they could count on the police for support in case of an emergency.

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As one of them said, “The police are only here for the foreigners, to have a presence, and to pick up their bribes. They aren’t here for us.”

According to another sex worker in Lido Plaza, “The police come here and don’t do anything. They just look and walk around and pick up their bribes and that’s it! Here in the plaza, people are selling drugs right next to them. Sometimes there’s even a robbery and they don’t do anything.” A number of our sex worker informants reported that they had heard sex workers were being assaulted along the beachfront of Copacabana and that the area was “dangerous.” They also commented that the organizers of the World Cup were “concerned about making Rio pretty, but not concerned about our safety.” As one said, “it’s full of police making their rounds and leaving everything all pretty. They’re providing security for FIFA, not for us!”

The general sentiment of sex workers we spoke with during the Cup was that “the police are here to protect the gringos.” This was confirmed, to a certain extent, by a young Military Police officer in Lido Plaza who, while speaking with a blond American researcher (whom he mistook for a tourist), said “we’re here to protect people like you.”

There were few open confrontations between sex workers and the police. However, when there were conflicts between clients and prostitutes (a frequent component of the commercial sex scene in Copacabana), police were “always taking the tourists’ side,” according to the women. This was seen as new behavior in Copacabana, where police frequently support prostitutes when there are fights between them and their clients (and often take the opportunity to extort money from foreign tourists).

A couple weeks before the World Cup, for example, we witnessed a typical conflict of this nature involving three American tourists and a sex worker in front of Balcony Restaurant. The tourists accused the woman of having robbed one of their iPads after she had done a program with them the day before. The men stopped the woman and called a police officer over, insisting he arrest her. The police officer refused and tried to calm the situation down. The researcher witnessing the confrontation, who helped serve as a translator while it was happening, talked to the police officer after it was over and received the following explanation:

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*They [the tourists] were really drunk and lost their iPad. They see this woman 24 hours later and think that she could be the culprit. They didn't file a police report, they didn't speak with the Tourism Police -- nothing. And they wanted me to take this girl in solely on the basis of their accusations. For the love of Jesus...*

By contrast, three weeks later in Vila Mimosa, an informant related a grave case of violence when we asked her if she'd had any problems with clients during the World Cup. She had seen a Swiss client hit a sex worker in Vila Mimosa who insisted he should pay her the price of a program, since he had been sitting with her for hours and feeling her up before he decided he didn't want sex. After the man hit her, a number of the woman's colleagues came to her defense and the situation quickly devolved into a fight. The Swiss man then called the police, who took all of the prostitutes involved – even those who'd witnessed the fight but had not gotten involved (including our informant) -- down to the precinct house. The women were released only when tourist ran out of the precinct house when he was asked to sign an official statement.

However, the only case of open aggression and prejudice by a police officer against a sex worker that we managed to register during the World Cup was related by a young transgender woman, who complained that she was the subject of constant harassment by a Military Police officer working in Lido Plaza. Ironically, according to this young woman, the officer in question openly identifies himself as a homosexual.



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### 5. Cases of violence against sex workers at the hands of foreign tourists: few but significant

*“There are only Argentines here and they are incredibly racist. They said I should charge less because I’m ‘negrita.’”*

- Natasha, 20, Lido Plaza in Copacabana

*“A girl from here [a sex venue downtown] went to Copacabana and got fucked over. An Italian took her to a chique motel, and when it was time to pay the bill for the room, he disappeared. They had consumed who knows how many bottles of wine and stuff like that.... She had to pay for everything by herself and the bill was more expensive than what she had charged for the program.”*

- Janinha, 32, sex worker at a club downtown

In general, sex workers in Rio evaluated foreign clients in Copacabana – particularly Europeans, Australians and North Americans – as *programas finas* (“classy programs”). In other words, clients who pay well, take care of themselves, and treat prostitutes with respect. During the World Cup, however, we recorded cases of violence against sex workers in the hands of these foreign tourists. While few, they are significant because they point to structural characteristics in the sex industry and the ways in which the Brazilian government has chosen to deal with mega-events.

A sex worker in Vila Mimosa reported that she was bitten on the face by an Argentinean. Others described constant arguments with foreign clients over the price of the program. The majority of these cases appear to be the result of poor communications between sex workers and clients while they negotiated services. In Vila Mimosa, the price per program is often communicated separately from the price for renting the room. A client can thus think that they are paying only 50 reais (the standard price of a program), only to find out that they owe 60 (ten more for room rent).

Since few sex workers in Vila Mimosa speak a second language and since few foreigners frequent the Vila, these misunderstandings can happen quite easily and they have the potential to escalate into violence.

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Ariel gave us an example of how lack of communication in a common language can provoke conflicts between sex workers and clients:

*The men call the police for everything. They think that they're being robbed because they don't understand that the house also charges for use of the room. They think we're asking for more money after agreeing on a deal. Sometimes, the price of the room is only 10 reais, but it causes confusion because they don't understand.*

Situations like this testify to the relevance of projects like one promoted by Aprosmig, the Association of Prostitutes of Minas Gerais, in the World Cup host city Belo Horizonte. Aprosmig [offered English classes](#) to sex workers from poor zones of the city. While these classes didn't guarantee fluidity, they improved women's abilities to say and understand certain words, especially those directly related to sex work, and this, in turn, lowers the chance of misunderstandings and confrontations.

The most significant of stories we registered of client violence involved episodes of foreign clients robbing sex workers. This happened particularly to sex workers who had migrated from downtown Rio to Copacabana, who were used to working in closed environments where the house handles charging the clients and where the women can call security in case of a conflict. A number of these "migrant" women related that they had their purses stolen by clients and rumors that "prostitutes are being assaulted in Copacabana" ran freely in downtown sex venues. Another sex worker reported that she was forced to pay the hotel bill after a client ran out in the middle of a program.

That said, the interactions between tourists and sex workers was by and large cordial in Rio during the World Cup. Excluding constant complaints of "penny-pinching," the situations described above can be understood as exceptions to a general rule of cordiality. The vast majority of our informants reported having had "a mellow World Cup," albeit not as lucrative an experience as they had expected. Even the Argentineans and Chileans -- the "Latino gringos" -- were generally perceived as gentlemen in bed. Talita, 29, working in Lido Plaza, expressed the perception of many of her colleagues when she reported that "My clients treat me better than my own family does".

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The same can't be said of the relations between foreign men and Brazilian women in general that we observed during the World Cup, however. Take, for example, what we observed at a middle-class bar in Ipanema. Women in their twenties comprised the majority of the establishment's 12 visible workers and they were working shifts from the early afternoon to 3am, every day, each earning a total of about 1,600 reais over the entire World Cup (more or less what a sex worker in Lido Plaza would make in two to four nights during the games).

The bar filled up every day during the Cup with clients who were almost entirely masculine, foreign, and English-speaking. On two occasions when we visited the venue -- which occasionally serves as a meet-up destination for gringos and sex workers, although it did not seem to serve this purpose during World Cup -- we witnessed several scenes of violence, both physical and symbolic in nature. On the first occasion, we saw a young American, irritated by the slow service, throw a bucket of beer bottles at the feet of the bartenders. During another visit, we saw a waitress break up a fight by throwing herself on top of a drunk client (who was about twice her size) and using a choke hold.

The bar seemed to be constantly at risk of explosion due to the drunk and aggressive tourists who frequented it. In this establishment, we could identify almost all of the kinds of "machismo" popularly associated with mega-sports events in the feminist imagination, but there were no prostitutes present (at least as far as we could tell). This heavy climate of incipient violence was a contrast to what we observed in Vila Mimosa, a neighborhood perceived as "hard core," where the public comportment of the male clients was generally (with some exceptions, as we've detailed above) calm.

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Figure 6: A foreign tourist ordering shots at a bar in Ipanema.

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### 6. “Gringos pão duros”: Foreign tourists who didn’t want to pay the stipulated price for a program

The problem that was most constantly reported by sex workers was not physical violence, but clients’ inability or unwillingness to pay the stipulated price for a program. This was especially the case in Copacabana. We heard many stories of clients who agreed to 300 real (approximately \$150 USD) programs, but when it was time to hand over the money, only wanted to pay 50; clients who used counterfeit money; and clients who refused to pay for the hotel room, thinking it was included in the program price. All of these problems were aggravated by the fact that a good part of the sex workers in Copacabana during the World Cup were not used to working in a public area, without security, and without someone to handle receiving payments from clients.

But the biggest complaint by prostitutes was irritation with clients who insisted on “pinching pennies.” Women reported that many foreign clients did not want to pay more than 100 reais per program (while the standard price for a program in Copacabana varies between 200 and 300 reais per hour). Complaints about “cheapskate gringos” were constant and focused, particularly, on Argentines, Chileans and Uruguayans, the “Latino gringos.” As Priscila (35, a sex worker from São Paulo who came to Lido Plaza to work during the games) put it:

*Eduardo Paes [the mayor of Rio] didn’t fight enough for Rio for the World Cup, which is why we’re hosting all the less important games, like Argentina, Chile... These people are poorer than Brazilians!*

A number of dark-skinned sex workers described being the targets of racist verbal aggressions, particularly when it was time to negotiate the price of the program. Natasha (cited at the beginning of this section) reported having been called a *macaquita* (“little monkey”) a number of times by an Argentinean in Copacabana Beach: “*Macaquitas* can’t charge 300 reais! You have to charge 100!” During the last nights of games, along the beachfront in Copacabana, our researchers witnessed a number of similar aggressive interactions.

Consensus among sex workers in Copacabana about the Argentines who traveled to Rio for the World Cup final on July 13 (where Argentina lost 0-1 to Germany) was well-illustrated by Priscila:

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*The Argentineans are really bad. They have no money, they're dirty, and they always want a discount. They complain about the price! If you don't have money, don't come to Copacabana!*

Speaking with clients, however, we heard another side of the story. “Latino gringo” men complained that all prices were too expensive in Rio, much higher than their expectations. Above all, the “price for sex” was two or three times more than they were used to paying in their countries of origin.

Even the *gringos finos* (“good gringos,” in other words, those from countries considered to be economically privileged) thought the price for a program was much more expensive than they had expected. Curiously, however, the “price shock” did not push tourists to the cheaper sex venues of Vila Mimosa and downtown (where a 15-minute program can cost 30 reais, or \$15 USD). The vast majority of gringos we spoke with had not heard of these places and the ones who had heard of them thought they were “dirty and dangerous.” In general, foreign tourists of all types stayed in the South Zone with few venturing further north other than Lapa to watch the games at Maracanã Stadium.

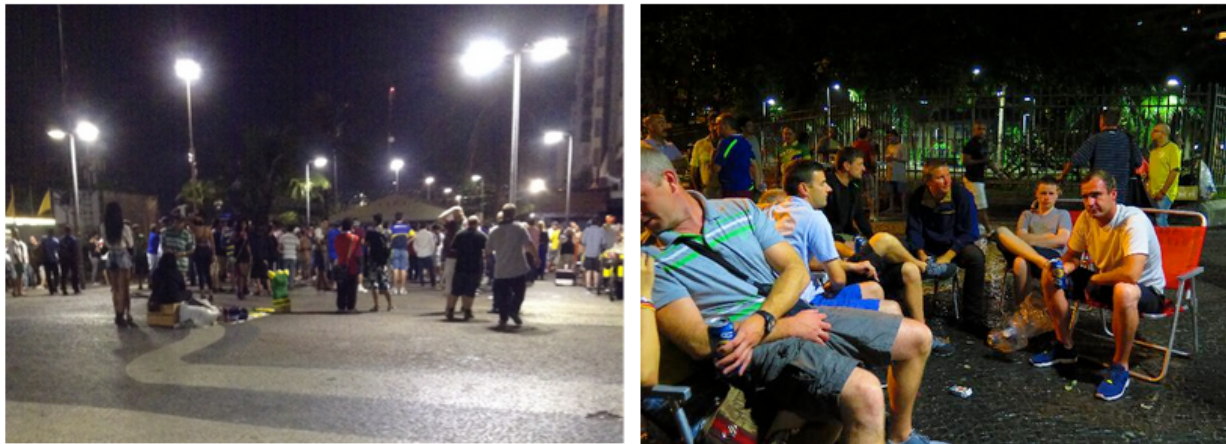


Figure 7: Lido Plaza in Copacabana, full of sex workers, homeless people, and street vendors, in front of Balcony Restaurant, which was closed by the police on the first day of the World Cup.

Figure 8: Some tourists frequented Lido Plaza in order to observe a different sort of prostitution than they could see in their nations of origin. As an American said, “It’s crazy here, you see prostitutes right next to families!” In this image, a group of foreign tourists have brought lawn chairs to Lido Plaza to drink beers and observe the scene.

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### **7. The most serious case of sexual violence -- before, during or after World Cup -- happened in the neighboring city of Niterói.**

*“They stole 500 reais from me and 900 from her, and forced girls to perform oral sex on them. All of this. The two cases of beer that were in my fridge disappeared and they joked around saying they were going to make a barbeque with it. They did programs but didn’t pay, and after that, started the raid. Scumbags... we aren’t robbing anyone, just selling what is ours to sell. As far as I know, prostitution is not a crime. The crime is what they did to us.”*

- Nilvana, a prostitute working at the Caixa building in Niterói during the May 23 police raid

*“They didn’t show us warrants or anything. They told us all to take our clothes off so they could examine us, made each of us squat three times [to see if we had drugs inside]. They messed up everything up, took everything... One police officer put her hand inside of all of us using the same glove.... And a detail: the money that was there disappeared. They asked for 1,000 reais to leave us alone, so we could wait locked downstairs [until the end of the raid].”*

- Carola, a prostitute working at the Caixa building in Niterói during the May 23 police raid

*“I feel humiliated every time I go somewhere with the hope I’m going to walk out with someone’s help, and people respond that they’ve never worked with prostitutes, as if I am worse than any other citizen and discouraging my activism. But I’m always thinking, ‘Even with all these challenges, I’m not going to give up.’”*

- Isabel, a sex worker raped by police on May 23, who was kidnapped and threatened after testifying against the police

*“There was no legal motivation [for the police invasion], but maybe they had a moral motivation in their heads.”*

- Clara Prazeres, state public defender, at the public hearing regarding the police invasion

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On May 23, 2014, over 100 police from thirteen precincts invaded the Caixa Econômica Federal, a building in downtown Niterói where approximately 400 women worked as prostitutes. Police extorted, robbed, and raped sex workers during the raid, and over 100 women were detained for questioning. All of the apartments (more than 90) where the women worked in were closed off and marked with crime scene tape, despite the fact that there was no judicial authorization for the police to do this. Attempts to register complaints at the Precinct for Women (DEAM - Delegacia das Mulheres) on the day of the raids were denied, as was the right of the women to have lawyers present at the time they gave statements at the precinct house.

On July 4, at a public hearing convened by the Human Rights Commission of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Comissão de Direitos Humanos da Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro) the theft, extortion, and rapes were denounced and the illegality of the police actions was highlighted by the state public defenders office and the Brazilian Order of Lawyers (OAB).

After the public hearing, "[Isabel](#)," one of the prostitutes that had most publicly spoken out against the police violence, began to notice that she was being followed and photographed by men who appeared to be police officers. On June 21, she was kidnapped by four men in a plaza near the building where she lived and worked. The men showed her a photo of her son leaving school and told her to stop talking or her and her son's life would be at risk. They threatened Isabel with a knife, cut her neck and arm, and let her out on the street after about 20 or 30 minutes.

Isabel returned to the precinct house to register the violence she had suffered. The police didn't take her case seriously, however, registering it as a minor misdemeanor. They did not open an investigation.

A few days later, Isabel left Niterói with only the clothes she was wearing and without a place to stay. She was provided shelter by a group of human rights activists and is currently surviving solely off the financial support of individual donations while she endures a long journey through state and federal government services in search of support and safety. She is resolved to continue her activism and speak out against what happened, and continues to fight for justice, for herself and her colleagues.

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As we have accompanied this case very closely since May 23, we have observed that there is not a single network of institutional support for sex workers who suffer and speak out against violence -- above all, violence committed by the police. The options offered by the state apparatus have been insufficient or inaccessible and require that Isabel be silenced and classified as a victim of prostitution, but not a victim of the police violence she has suffered.

The case of Niterói was not directly caused by the World Cup, but it is linked to two factors that the Cup catalyzed: on one hand, real estate speculation in Rio and Niterói and, on the other hand, the intensification and militarization of police operations across the country and particularly in Rio. The value of real estate has risen considerably in the last five years around the sites of urban renovation projects carried out by the City Halls of the respective cities hosting the mega-event. Sex workers, along with traditional local merchants and the irregular commerce that populate the downtown zones, are under ever greater pressures to leave these spaces, which are gradually being sanitized and gentrified.

These tendencies apply to the Caixa Econômica Federal building in Niterói, as the city had no legitimate way to evict the almost 400 women who rented apartments in the building. The growing militarization of Brazil's public security forces encourages police to perceive citizens as enemies to be defeated and not as people bearing rights. This has long been a problem in Brazil, but it disproportionately affects prostitutes, since prostitution, while in and of itself not a crime, is surrounded by criminalized activities and, generally speaking, sex workers are considered second class citizens by the police.

NGOs partnered with the Observatory of Prostitution (including Davida and ABIA, along with international organizations like Frontline Defenders and Amnesty International, which has released an [Urgent Action campaign](#)) have publicly positioned themselves against the illegal invasion of the building and have called for an impartial investigation into the actions of police on May 23, as well as into the kidnapping of Isabel and the threats she is suffering. We consider it inadmissible that, over three months after the invasion, these situations continue unresolved.

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While we seek justice for Isabel and the women in the May 23 police raids, we organized a campaign to raise emergency funds for Isabel and her family:

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/support-sex-worker-activist-isabel-fight-violence> (in English)

<http://www10.vakinha.com.br/VaquinhaE.aspx?e=274749> (in Portuguese)



Figure 9: Doors broken by police the day of the May 23 raids. Prostitutes said that, in some cases, police asked them to close their doors, so that they could break them down.

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### 8. Sexual exploitation of children and adolescents: Where?

*“For the love of God, why does everyone think I’m a minor?”*

- Gisele, 18 years old, in Lido Plaza, passing her identification document to an Observatory researcher in order to prove her age

In the zones of Rio de Janeiro dedicated to prostitution during the World Cup, we saw few people who appeared to be adolescents. In those places where prostitution happened in closed spaces with management – Vila Mimosa, the houses and clubs downtown, the brothels and clubs in the South Zone, the luxury saunas – we did not see anyone who appeared to be under 18 years old. In all of these venues, women were required to present their identity cards before being allowed in. Managers of some of the downtown houses went so far as to keep photocopies of the ID cards of all the women working there.

It’s worth noting that the price per program in these venues is standardized and the house wouldn’t make any more money off of a sex-working minor. A number of prostitutes, managers, bartenders, and house security personnel at sex venues downtown and in Vila Mimosa emphasized this in their conversations with us:

*I don’t know why the media lies so much about this subject. Look, nobody hires minors knowingly. Why would you? They only put your house at risk! If the police come in and there’s a minor, at a minimum, the manager or owner is going to have to pay a big bribe to stay open. But more likely, they’ll arrest everyone: prostitutes, clients... everyone. The risk isn’t worth it compared to the little money the house could make. And we have a lot more women working than we need today. Nobody needs to be out recruiting children.*

*The problem is that you have girls – these 16 and 17 year olds - who want to work and get a false ID so they can trick the house. I look carefully at all the IDs of the girls who work here and xerox them and everything, but not everyone is as meticulous as I am. So every once in a while, the police come into a brothel and find a minor.*

-- Brothel owner in downtown Rio

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In Copacabana, Balcony Restaurant used to exercise a similar I.D. control, especially during busy moments like Carnival and New Year's. In the past, some beachfront restaurants would erect barriers on the sidewalk and young people could only enter the restaurant if they showed I.D. Mabs, another bar on the beachfront frequented by prostitutes and clients during the World Cup, adopted the same system.

However, the closure of Balcony the first day of the Cup eliminated the possibility of controlling the presence of minors. The prostitutes expelled from the closed restaurant occupied the adjacent Lido Plaza and continued their commercial sex activities there, sharing space with residents of the neighborhood, street vendors, homeless people and the children and adolescents that were in the plaza with these people. In other words, an almost completely unregulated prostitution zone emerged. Even so we did not identify a significant number of women who appeared to be minors offering sexual services in Lido Plaza during the World Cup.

Among the 100-200 women in Lido Plaza during late nights, when it was busiest, at most five or six appeared to be 15-17 years old. And it's worth noting that many of these girls already frequented Lido Plaza before World Cup, when researchers with the Observatory first noted their presence. Nothing suggests that this location, where sex commerce intensified during the Cup, saw an increase in the number of underage sex workers.

Obviously, it is important to stress that our counts are based on visual observations and not a systematic survey. This is without a doubt a limitation. Aside from this, the young women we observed in Lido Plaza were all portraying themselves as above 18 years of age. But even after many conversations with prostitutes who appeared to be younger, we could not confirm the presence of any prostitutes under the age of 18 in Lido Plaza. In a number of cases, after a bit of conversation, the women in question showed their ID cards to our researchers.

Among the population of transgender sex workers in the plaza, however, we believe that some were underage. Observatory researchers as well as prostitutes in the plaza noticed a distinct group of five or six underage transgender sex workers active in Lido Plaza during the World Cup. Despite the heterogeneous age range of people who frequented Lido Plaza, we only observed police asking for ID a single time over the 32 days of the games.

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The two most significant facts we discovered with respect to the subject of prostitution of children and adolescents during the World Cup are:

1. As mentioned before, Balcony Restaurant and Hotel Lido were closed, under accusations that they were “exploiting vulnerable subjects.” However, we can confirm that Rio police did not arrest anyone at either establishment for the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, and that both Balcony and Hotel Lido were reopened shortly after the Cup.
2. Furthermore, the Child Welfare Council of the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro (Conselho Tutelar da Zona Sul do Rio de Janeiro) maintained an outpost in Copacabana, about 200 meters from Lido Plaza during the games. The workers at this outpost were trained to combat child sexual exploitation and -- based on the posters, banners and flyers distributed by them -- this was the primary focus of their presence in the area. However, they informed us they did not register a single complaint of sexual exploitation of minors in Copacabana. They registered two cases in all of Rio’s South Zone, neither of which was related to the games.

That said, it is important to note that we witnessed a number of potential cases of exploitation of children and adolescents, as well as the increased risk and vulnerability of minors as a result of World Cup. Most of these cases were situations involving child labor *lato sensu*, in other words, involving minors working in activities unrelated to commercial sex.

In Vila Mimosa, for example, a small legion of boys was employed in the delivery and transport of cargo loads, in street commerce, and even in the management of some bars and food stands. In downtown, minors -- generally boys -- were a constant presence in street commerce and also in collecting paper and aluminum cans for recycling. Finally, all over Rio, but particularly in Copacabana, children and adolescents were involved in selling food, drinks and trinkets to tourists. The Copacabana outpost of the Child Welfare Council registered at least one case of a boy being arrested for selling counterfeit goods at the FIFA Fan Fest. The outpost also registered numerous cases of lost children and drunk adolescents.

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Figure 10: Prostitutes working next to a homeless family near the closed Balcony Restaurant, in Lido Plaza, Copacabana, July 4 2014.

Figure 11: Midnight in Lido Plaza: a young girl works as a living statue.

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### **9. There was a mixture of sexual, affective, social, and economic interests in the nocturnal spaces in Rio de Janeiro where foreigners interacted with Brazilian women. This complicates a clear definition of “sexual exploitation.”**

During the World Cup, we witnessed a number of interactions between adult foreigners and young Brazilian women who appeared to be about 16-17 years old. These interactions were particularly common and visible in the bohemian neighborhood of Lapa, where thousands of young people from around the world gathered every night during the games. We also observed two girls who appeared to be about 16 or 17 years old, flirting with two Colombian tourists near FIFA Fan Fest in Copacabana. This situation demonstrates the limits of this type of observation of sexual-affective transactions and thus deserves a more detailed description.

Four researchers with the Observatory were sitting at a bar on Prado Junior Street in Copacabana, a region associated with prostitution since the 1950's. The two young women in question arrived with two Colombian men and sat at the next table over. The researchers ended up talking with the two young women and helping them with problems they were having with their cell phones. The two peremptorily declared they were not sex workers. They said they were from Rio's suburbs and had come to FIFA Fan Fest to have fun. They had met the two young Colombians (who appeared to be about 25 years old) on Copacabana Beach. The girls did not state their age, despite a number of attempts by the researchers to find this out (we generally considered this sort of reticence an indication that the person is underage). Both of the Colombians were using Tinder, an app created specifically to find romantic partners, on their smartphone. One of their cell phones had more than 20 conversations open with Brazilian women, all of them appearing to be 25 years or younger.

After an hour of kisses and public displays of affection with the Colombians, interspersed with conversation with two of the researchers, the girls got up from the table and got ready to leave. At that moment, one of the girls called her partner over and started talking to him. With an expression of extreme sincerity while she spoke (eyes open wide, smiling, open arms and hands gesticulating, head looking up and tilted to the right), she asked him something. We could not hear the content of what she said, but shortly after, the Colombian took out his wallet, counted his money and cautiously nodded his head affirmatively. The girl laughed happily and, throwing her arms around the man, kissed him passionately. After two or three more minutes of kissing, the couple left, arm in arm, in the direction of a taxi stand.

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Sincere dating (legal for minors above 14 in Brazil) or prostitution (understood to be sexual exploitation for people between the ages of 14 and 18)? The long experience of some of the Observatory researchers with Rio's nightlife suggests that this was neither entirely one thing nor the other. The girl was probably looking for romantic adventures in Copacabana and sought out a gringo partner in order to have some fun, pay for her night, and --who knows -- maybe give her a little extra cash. If the final conversation was anything like numerous ones we've heard in other moments outside of the World Cup, the girl was saying she wanted to go to the tourist's hotel, but she'd need a certain amount of money to "pay my taxi home afterwards, because my mom worries about me and I can't stay out all night." The quantity requested was probably less than 100 reais and the girl probably took a bus or train home. Neither member of the couple would classify the interaction as "prostitution," and the girl gave every signal she was "sincerely" interested in the Colombian as a sexual/affective partner. At the most, this relationship or contract should be called transactional sex.

This intersection of sexual, affective, social, and economic interests is standard in spaces of Rio de Janeiro nightlife where foreign tourists interact with Brazilian women. A particular interaction is generally understood by Brazilians as "child sexual exploitation" or "an adolescent's normal and healthy exploration of her sexuality," depending on markers of race, gender, class and nationality of the parties involved in the flirtation. Putting it bluntly, the whiter and more upper class the girl appears, the less likely it will be that people will classify her as a prostitute.

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Figure 12: This photo illustrates the difficulties inherent in trying to guess the age and situation of women without any other information. The young woman at this table, talking with a foreign tourist, was 20 years old and affirmed she was not a sex worker, but was called an “adolescent prostitute” by a number of Brazilians surrounding the table.

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### **10. The panic over sexual exploitation superseded policies for the prevention of STDs and HIV/AIDS in contexts of prostitution.**

A number of Brazilian NGOs received considerable funding to combat sexual exploitation of children and adolescents and trafficking in persons during the World Cup. However, their presence in the main commercial sex zones of Rio during the games was scarce, if not practically non-existent. Outside of these zones, all we observed was the distribution of pamphlets against sexual exploitation by the NGO Promundo near Maracanã Stadium on a game day.

Downtown, where Rio normally has the largest concentration of sex workers, these organizations were completely absent. But one block from Vila Mimosa, the Secretary of Social Assistance and Human Rights (Secretaria de Assistência Social e Direitos Humanos - SEASDH), in partnership with the international NGO STOP THE TRAFFIK, UN.GIFT and with the collaboration of Amocavim, the governing organization of Vila Mimosa, installed a "Gift Box." The installation looked like a present from the outside, but inside it offered up various stories of people who were tricked and trafficked for the purposes of sexual exploitation. A team of volunteers circulated Vila Mimosa, inviting people to enter the Gift Box, but on days our research team was present, we observed that the box was empty most of the time, largely ignored by the people who frequented the Vila.

In Copacabana on July 6, the activist collective "Bastardxs" staged a [topless protest against sex tourism](#) and FIFA's presumed passivity regarding the issue. Also in Copacabana, as we mentioned above, the Child Welfare Council of the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro installed a trailer, covered in posters for Disque 100 (Brazil's national human rights abuse hotline), to handle accusations of violence against children and adolescents during the World Cup, although it's worth noting the trailer only stayed open until 8pm, while the high point of sexual commerce in Copacabana was always after 10pm during the games.

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The members of the Child Welfare Council themselves criticized the functioning of the Disque 100 system during the Cup:

*The problem with Disque 100 is that it is a way to denounce something but not a defense. Abuse or sexual exploitation of children is, in fact, a crime. When a citizen discovers this, she should call the police and not Disque 100. Disque 100 only passes cases to us and other organizations involved in protecting human rights, but that usually happens a while after the violation. Disque 100 can't resolve problems of human rights abuses while they are actually happening -- that's the police's job.*

Despite its limitations, the “first line of defense” prioritized and implemented by the Brazilian government against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents during the World Cup was Disque 100. It is not an exaggeration to affirm that, as a result of campaigns preceding the Cup, the common perception of the state and NGO agents active on sexual exploitation issues during the games was that “sexual exploitation” was basically a synonym for “the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents by foreign tourists.”

This almost exclusive focus on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents ended up concealing or burying other social and sexual dimensions of the World Cup that should have been the object of attention by the government and NGOs. One of them, for example, is a larger emphasis on the protection of human rights of all people, including sex workers. It's worth mentioning that various actors in the state government and civil society, when asked about the glaring violation of human rights that happened during the police raids in Niterói, responded that their focus was solely on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. As a result, with very few exceptions, the organizations and individuals involved in the anti-exploitation campaigns did not establish contacts with people or organizations directly engaged in the sale of sex. This is troublesome because, as we've remarked above, most sex workers, managers, brothel workers, and bar employees have a direct and urgent interest in keeping minors *out* of their places of work and are thus potential allies in any efforts to educate about and repress the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Another glaring “victim” of the excessive focus on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents was without a doubt the field of STD and HIV/AIDS prevention.

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In many closed venues we visited during World Cup, the available condoms were provided by the Ministry of Health. However, this was not because the Municipal Secretary of Health had made a special effort to help commercial sex venues secure access to a larger number of condoms during the World Cup, but because the owners or managers of the venues themselves had gone to pick the condoms up at clinics and hospitals. We did not see any health professionals distributing condoms or information about STDs or HIV/AIDS at any house, beach area, bar, massage house, club, brothel, strip club, or point of street prostitution... indeed, at any venue related to sexual commerce that we visited during the World Cup.

Our researchers and informants registered the distribution of condoms on only three occasions. On the first day of the World Cup, an unidentified group was seen distributing condoms at Central Station, downtown. At Lido Plaza, some sex workers mentioned that a group of evangelicals had distributed condoms and make-up on one occasion during the first week of the Cup, while inviting women to attend their religious events. Also, during the first games of the World Cup, an NGO that works in the area of HIV/AIDS distributed condoms to people in line to enter the FIFA Fan Fest. On the other hand -- and quite problematic from our perspective -- our research team visited medical outposts in and around FIFA Fan Fest where there were no condoms available.

A number of sex workers -- particularly older women, who remember the close collaboration between the Ministry of Health and sex worker groups at large events of the past -- openly criticized the apparent abandonment of measures to promote sexual health during the World Cup of 2014.

*It's absurd. The media and the government talked so much about prostitution before the event, it was in every paper! "Ah, the gringos are coming! Ah, sexual tourism! Ah, it's going to be an orgy and everything!" All that blah-blah-blah about prostitutes... and nothing -- nothing about condoms. Nobody distributing condoms. Nothing! We have to go, ourselves, to the medical outposts to pick them up. OK, it's all good. That's great, if you have time.*

*But what about the women who don't? And what about the naïve women who are just starting now and don't know where the outposts are, much less how to put a condom on properly? Whores also pay taxes and we want to do our part, but it's as if the Ministry of Health forgot about us.-- Lana, sex worker at a venue in downtown Rio*

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Lana's sentiments echo what many other sex workers said in other parts of Rio. Our observations indicate that the right of people, especially of sex workers, to information and means to promote their sexual health was almost completely disregarded by the government and its NGO allies in Rio during the World Cup.



Figure 13: The advanced outpost of the Child Welfare Council in Copacabana, with posters against sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Balcony Restaurant and Lido Plaza are located just past the palm trees, in the right margin of the photo.



Figure 14: T-shirt of a worker at the advanced outpost. No case of sexual exploitation of children or adolescents related to the World Cup was received by the Council.

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### **11. The World Cup effect on prostitution in the host cities of Fortaleza and Recife was similar to that observed in Rio de Janeiro.**

The scene observed in Fortaleza demonstrates a number of things in common with what we observed in Rio de Janeiro. Fortaleza also saw strong repressive action by the police during World Cup: one [raid on eight houses of luxury prostitution](#) arrested venue owners and management and shuttered some of the venues.

There was also a migration of women who worked in other areas of the city to Fortaleza's Iracema Plaza. However, these sex workers experienced difficulties with aesthetic barriers, as well as from a lack of experience with foreigners. Despite the strong presence of foreigners, women in Iracema also complained that the tourists didn't want to pay the full price per hour for a program during the games (200-300 reais during the World Cup; 150-200 reais before the Cup), or wanted the women's company for the whole night, but only wanted to pay for the first hour. The police occupied Beira-Mar and Abolição Avenues, traditional points of prostitution, causing women to migrate to less busy streets or mix in with football fans on the sidewalk, where there were women who, while not participants in the sex industry, were also looking for "profitable encounters" with gringos. In this area near the FIFA Fan Fest, there was also a marked presence of government agents and NGOs pushing campaigns against the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

Downtown Fortaleza emptied out (as the downtown did in Rio) due to World Cup holidays. Regular clients reduced their visits to the city's downtown sex zones and tourists did not seek out services in these areas. The women of the "downtown zone," however, did not migrate because they anticipated difficulties in inserting themselves into beachfront sexual commerce. These women therefore suffered substantial financial losses during the month of the games. The "poor" prostitution that has long existed around Castelão Stadium was also heavily affected, in this case by hyper-visibility. Many journalists and documentary teams came to this area to film, photograph, and register evidence of sexual tourism, the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, human trafficking and an increase in prostitution. In broad strokes, it is possible to estimate that prostitution declined across Fortaleza, except in Iracema Plaza and Beira-Mar, where the presence of foreigners and sex workers increased but did not translate to an increase in the number of programs.

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In Recife, the effect of World Cup was similar. Expectations of a large quantity of tourists willing to pay for sex did not materialize during the World Cup. Some women reported that the Cup “wasn’t as good as we’d expected” and that “there were tourists, it was good for local commerce, but not for sexual commerce.” As in Rio de Janeiro and Fortaleza, downtown Recife was empty and the movement of tourists was concentrated along the beaches of Recife’s South Zone. According to a woman who works in downtown Recife, “The Cup didn’t even come through here.”

The emphasis on the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents was also the central focus of discussions and government actions in Recife. The World Cup was used by authorities as an opportunity to give visibility to the institutions that work in this field. As one authority stated, “I always wanted to do something like this, but now I have the opportunity!”. As in Rio de Janeiro, these actions drew more water to the mills of moral panic in the face of prostitution and subsidized ideologies of “humanizing and sanitizing the city.”

Several of the bars along Belmino Correia Avenue, which runs up to the stadium constructed for the World Cup, were closed before the event started. Aside from this measure, however, we have as of yet received no word of repressive police measures in Recife and, as far as we know, no other prostitution points were closed during the games.

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### **A conceptual note about terminology: sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and prostitution**

The researchers associated with the Observatory of Prostitution are against the sexual exploitation of minors and the trafficking of persons. However, we think it is important to differentiate between these concepts. First, the sexual exploitation of minors and the trafficking of persons should not be confused with the activities of adults exercising free will and consenting to prostitution, whether they are Brazilians or foreigners. Paid sex between consenting adults is legal in Brazil, whether it's with Brazilians or foreigners. Considering that the United Nations and the National Tourism Organization define sexual tourism as an activity realized by “people who use the infrastructure of tourism to travel to foreign countries and involve themselves in commercial sexual relationships with local residents,” this signifies that sexual tourism in Brazil is not illegal.

Commercial sex with people younger than 18 years old is not considered sexual tourism – it is the sexual exploitation of minors, and it is a crime in Brazil, whether practiced by Brazilians or foreigners. Similarly, forcing someone to involve themselves in sexual activity is not sex tourism or prostitution; it is rape and/or sexual exploitation.

The Brazilian government has never published coherent statistics on the number of cases of sexual exploitation that have involved foreign visitors in Brazil. Data obtained from Disque 100, Brazil's federal hotline to report human rights abuses, indicates that the number of these cases is relatively small. In a report published by the Secretary of Human Rights in 2008, of 6,817 calls reporting the sexual exploitation of children or adolescents reported to Disque 100 from 2003-2007, only 47 (0.7%) involved “sex tourism,” denouncing the involvement of foreign tourists. Considering that Disque 100 registered 67,104 cases of violence against children and adolescents during this same period – of which some 16,500 were cases of sexual violence – the available evidence indicates that Brazilians conduct the large majority of acts of sexual aggression against Brazilian children and adolescents.

This data is even more worrisome when we consider a 2004 investigation by Brazil's National Congress into the sexual exploitation of minors. Of 79 cases cited as “exemplary” for this study, only three involved foreign tourists. Fourteen cases involved government officials from the municipal to federal level; eight involved police, judges or other law enforcement agents; and five cases involved religious leaders. Thus

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we believe that the outcry against the supposed threat of “sex tourism” detracts the public’s attention from the real threats that Brazilian children face and contributes to the government focusing resources and attention on temporary operations against prostitution, and not on projects aiming to effectively reduce the abuse and exploitation of children and adolescents in Brazil.

To read more about sexual exploitation, sex trafficking and mega-events, see:

Recomendação Comitê Nacional de Enfrentamento ao Tráfico de Pessoas (CONATRAP) 01/2014. Documento de Trabalho/Recomendações às instituições que pretendem realizar ações relacionadas à Copa do Mundo. [*Recommendation of the Brazilian National Committee to Confront Human Trafficking (CONATRAP). Working Document/Recommendations to institutions that plan to conduct actions during the World Cup.*] <http://pt.slideshare.net/justicagovbr/resolucao-conatrap-trfco-de-pessoas-grandes-eventos>

*What’s the Cost of a Rumor? A Guide to Sorting out the Myths and the Facts about Sporting Events and Trafficking.* Global Alliance Against Trafficking in Women (GAATW) 2011.  
<http://www.gaatw.org/publications/WhatstheCostofaRumour.11.15.2011.pdf>

*Exploitation and Trafficking of Women: Critiquing Narratives During the London Olympics 2012.* Kate Cooper and Sue Brandford, Central America Women’s Network.  
<http://www.cawn.org/assets/Exploitation%20and%20Trafficking%20of%20Women.pdf>

*Child Exploitation and the FIFA World Cup: A review of risks and protective interventions.* 2013. Bruno Center for Sport, Health and Wellbeing.  
[http://www.brunel.ac.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/316745/Child-Protection-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-FINAL.pdf](http://www.brunel.ac.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/316745/Child-Protection-and-the-FIFA-World-Cup-FINAL.pdf)

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