

**AIDS
2020**

**Sex Workers In
Singapore**
SHERRY SHERQUESHAA

PRE-CONFERENCES
30 JUNE - 3 JULY

VIRTUAL



Project X - Singapore

We are the only organization that is **dedicated to protecting the rights and welfare of sex workers** in Singapore. We advocate and provide services for sex workers, covering issues like safe sex, abuse, and legal cases.

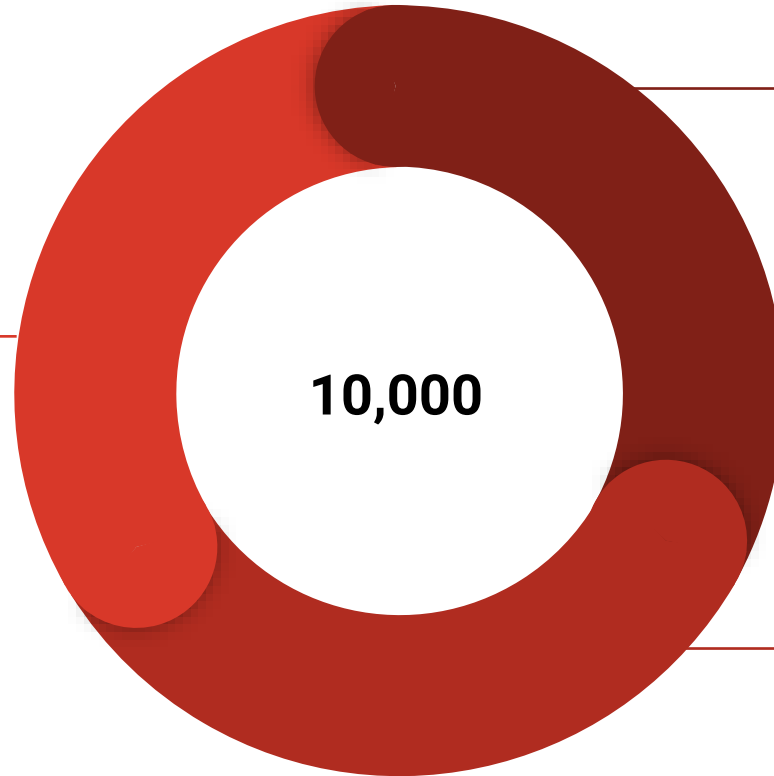


- **Categories of Sex Workers;**
- **The impact of Covid-19 lockdown on Sex Workers;**
- **How Project X has been helping;**
- **What more needs to be done;**
- **Moving forward**

IDENTITY & TYPES OF SEX WORKERS



Entertainment Workers
KTV/PUBS
Massage parlour



10,000

Unlicensed Sex Workers
Street based
Online based

Licensed Sex Workers
Regulated brothel



SEX WORKERS IN SINGAPORE

Licensed Sex Workers and Entertainment Workers

- Put out of work since 26th March 2020.

Street-based Sex Workers, Masseuse

- May have worked up till 6th of April.
- Transient workers may have returned to their home countries before the respective lockdowns.



SUPPORT FOR SINGAPOREANS AFFECTED BY COVID-19



[Click here for more info](#)

To provide relief and assistance to Singaporeans, the Government introduced various schemes to provide financial support during this time:

- COVID-19 Support Grant
- Support for Self-Employed Persons

Our Three Main Initiatives



- Mailed out 134 sets of \$50 local supermarket vouchers to sex and entertainment workers
- Partnered with non - profit organization to deliver cooked food to beneficiaries on a daily basis
- Aims to help sex and entertainment workers in Singapore with their emergency needs during COVID-19 and Circuit Breaker period

Recipient of Emergency Safety Net Program

51.8%

Singaporean & PR SW

Masseuse
sex workers

UNIQUE NEEDS

- Difficulties in receiving government schemes and grants
- Lack of support due to independence

48.2%

Non-Singaporean

Entertainment workers
Sex workers

UNIQUE NEEDS

- Difficulties going back to their country
- Difficulty paying rent during COVID-19
- Unable to apply for jobs due to permit restrictions
- Difficulty sending money to support their families in their hometowns
- Come from low income households

Recipient of Emergency Safety Net Program

63.3%

Cisgender Female

- 65.7% Work Permit and Long-Term Pass Holders
- 34.3% Singaporeans and PRs

7.3%

Cisgender Male

- 4 in total; 2 Singaporean, 2 Long-Term Pass Holders

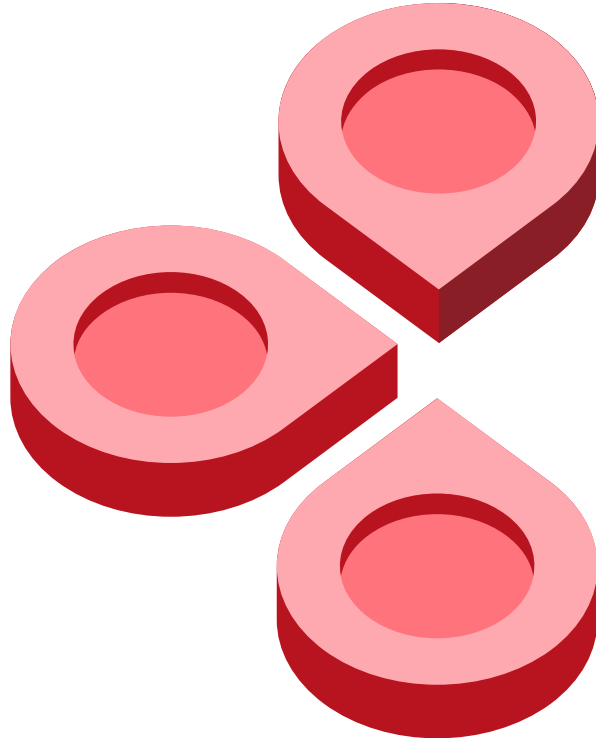
29.1%

Transgender Female

- 16 in total; all Singaporean

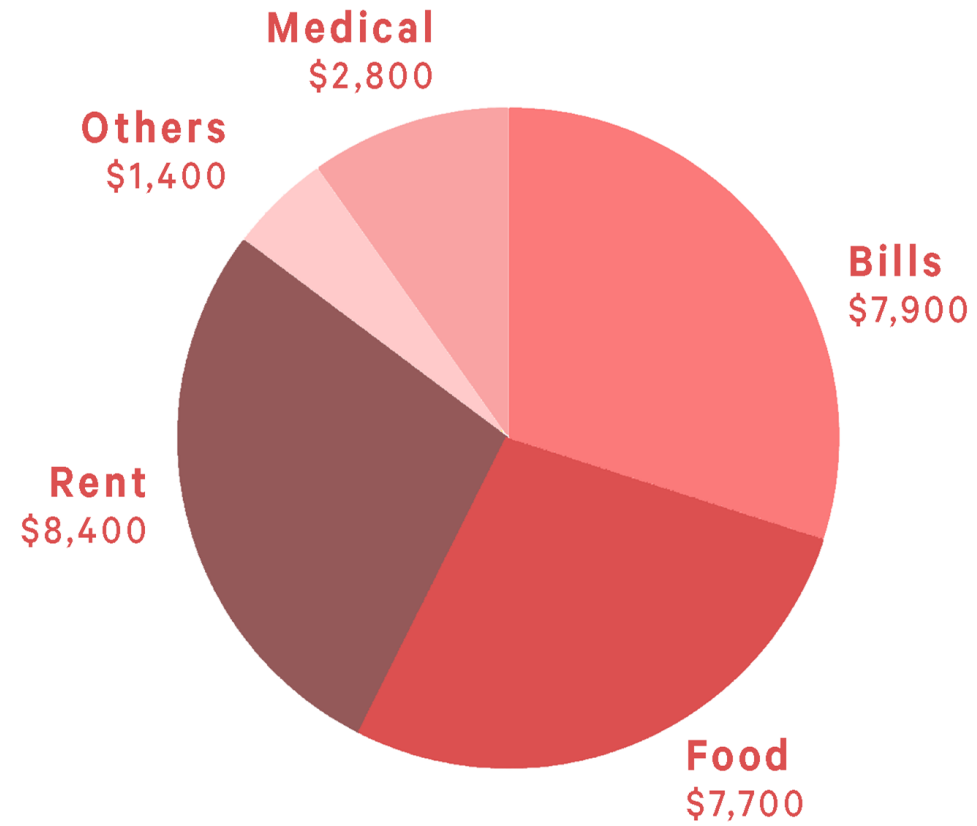


MEDICAL COSTS



**RENT AND HOUSEHOLD
BILLS**

FOOD





Stories from Applicants: Elizabeth (Transgender Female, Singapore Citizen)

- Elizabeth, an independent transgender woman from the age of 20.
- Lacking of job experience and education, she turned to sex work to survive and has remained in the industry for the 25 years since.
- However, the business has deteriorated in recent years, and Elizabeth began to find herself in an increasingly difficult financial situation.
- She is not eligible to receive an Income Supplement Scheme by the government as there was no contribution to her medical scheme (Medisave). Losing almost 3K payout.
- Project X has reached out to Elizabeth and provided some assistance for her rent and bills while providing her with some options for alternative income sources.

Project X has also created a **personal fundraising campaign** for her to raise funds for her outstanding Medisave contributions.

Stories from Applicants: Jessica (Cis Female, Work Permit Holder)



- For migrants workers, their struggle also includes the absence of emotional support from the family and loved ones
- Having lost her entire income, Jessica has not only lost her ability to support her aging parents financially, but has to rely on her own savings to sustain herself

Project X reached out to Jessica and has been alleviating her worries over basic necessities by providing daily food groceries, grocery vouchers and prepaid phone cards.



SEX WORKERS ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE SERVICES DURING COVID 19

Closure of healthcare services

- Drop in clinic providing condom distribution
- Safe and heavily subsidized clinic for STI and HIV testing
- Mental health support

Not essential services

- Project X
- DSC Clinic
- Oogachaga



Future of Sex Work in Singapore

Moving in Phases 1, 2, and 3

- **Active businesses in Phase 1?**
 - HDB Brothels
 - Online sex work
- **Reopening of spas and massages in Phase 3**
 - an estimated 4 - 7.5 months later minimum
 - potentially include other businesses in the entertainment industry

Sex workers to look into other options

- Online sex work - camming, sexting, etc
- Going overseas for work
- Shifting the local industry underground
- Failed after interview: lack of job experience, gap of experience, and age factors



Government need to reach out to workers out of the formal economy:

- Increase sex workers' access to government-based outreach health and social services to protect them from COVID-19
- Provide financial support to sex workers; provide part-time employment
- Develop and provide educational resources on safer sex in the context of COVID-19