Sex Work Population Project

Digital Desirability: Analyzing Client Preferences and Success Metrics in Canadian Classified Ads for Sex Work

Sean Strygg (presenter) with Annie Temple, and Susan Davis

Sex Work Population Project

Overview

About Me

What is the Sex Work Population Project?

The Study: Playing the Name Game

Sex Work Population Project

About Me: Dating Profile/Background

Image source: https://liartownusa.com/

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About Me: What made you interested in this research?

Image source: https://liartownusa.com/

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About Me: What do you hope will happen with this research?

Image source: https://liartownusa.com/

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What is the Sex Work Population Project?

Started: **2021**

Added new datasets: **2022**, **2023**

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What is the Sex Work Population Project?

Goals:

- **Collaborate** with other researchers
- Make data **available**
- **Involve industry participants** in research

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Anonymized Data is Available!

https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/ZG9HP

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Paper: The silent majority

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0277550

2014-2016 populations

- **Monthly** estimate: **26,326** (SD 5481)
- **Biannual** estimate: **169,473** (95% CI 166870–172226)

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Previous Papers

Paper: Estimating Turnover and Industry Longevity

https://populationproject.ca/Turnover

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Previous Papers

Paper: The Changing Meaning of “No”

https://populationproject.ca/No

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Previous Papers

Paper: Power users: Tech, trust & social networks

https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/u5kd2

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Paper: What was the effect of PCEPA?

https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/87u29

2023 populations

- **Monthly** estimates: **16,470** to **19,496**
- **Annual** estimate: **87,736** (95% CI 87,288 – 88,184)

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TODAY'S PAPER: Playing the Name Game

Authors: Sean Strygg, Susan Davis, and Annie Temple

https://populationproject.ca/NameGame

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Playing the Name Game: Anatomy of the Source Site

The source site has been in existence for **over a decade** and is one of the **main venues** where sex workers **advertise in Canada**

Source site layout:

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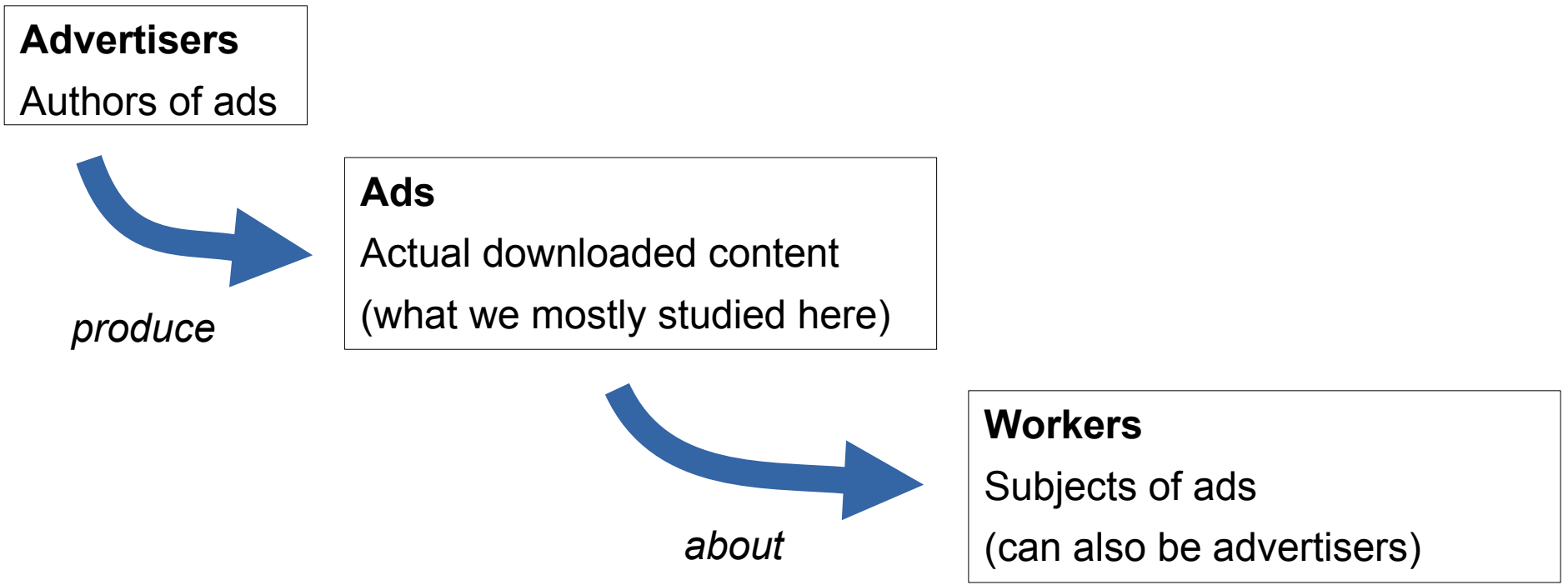
Playing the Name Game: Anatomy of the Source Site

When analyzing classified sites we distinguish between **3 entities**:



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Playing the Name Game: Daily Views

Median daily views: 128 (IQR 64-128)

Mean daily views: 195 (SD 234)

Some ads could have **thousands of daily views**

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Playing the Name Game: Demographic Variables

All demographic variables studied were significant but only *Service Type* showed a **large effect size**.

- **Cis/Trans Female Escorts** tended to get **many more views** than other service types

There were **significant interaction effects** between *Service Type*, *Ethnicity*, and *Age Group*

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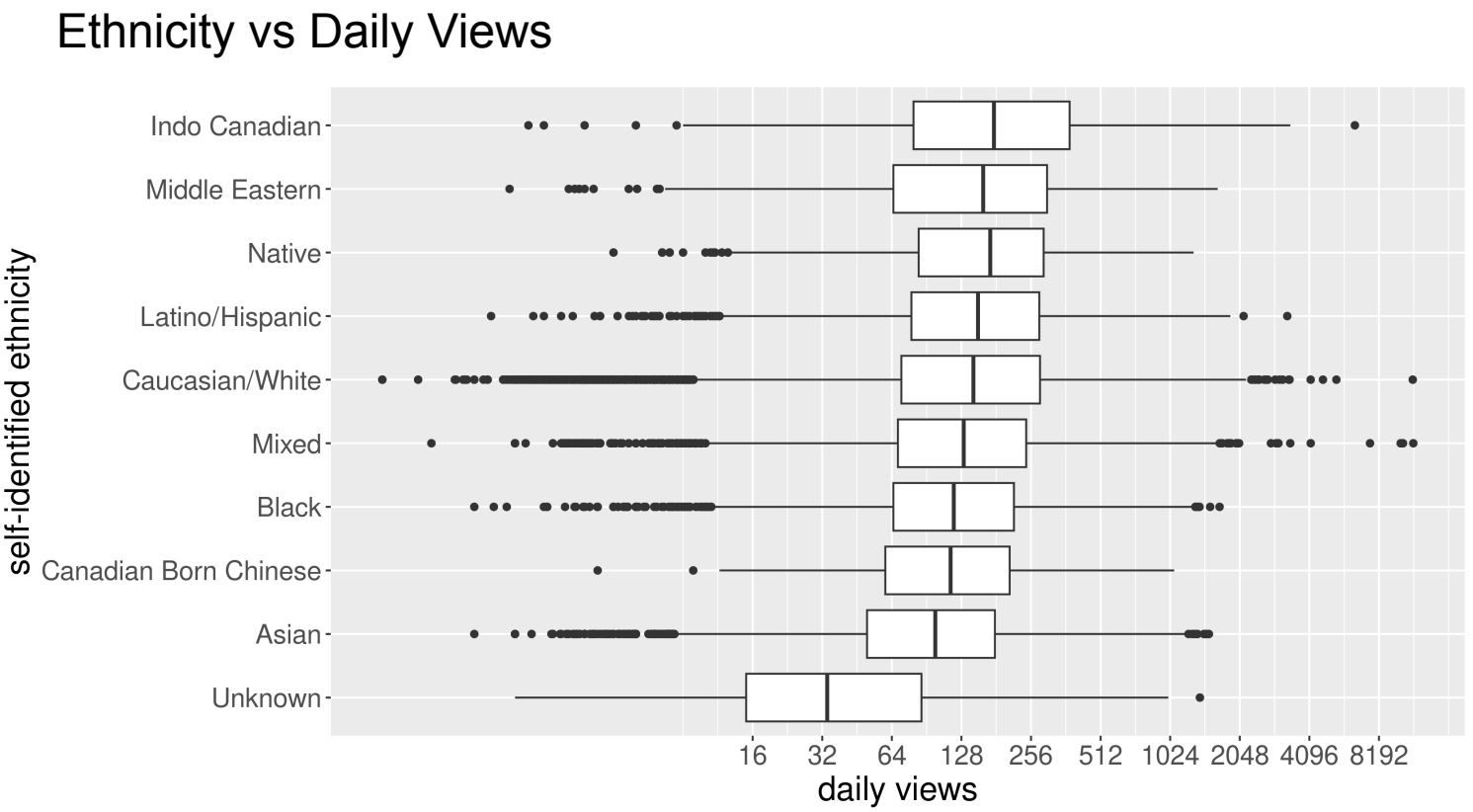
Playing the Name Game: Ethnicity



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Playing the Name Game

Why do ads for some ethnic groups tend to get fewer views?

Black ads tended to have **higher hourly rates**, more **Male Escorts** ads

Asian advertisers tended to **have more ads**, more **Female Massage** ads

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Playing the Name Game: Other Variables

We did not find strong support for the findings of earlier work.

- **BMI** vs **Rates (strongest relationship:** pearson correlation **0.2)**
- **Most correlations** were between **0.05 and 0.09**

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Playing the Name Game: Other Variables

Advertisers with **more ads** were **negatively correlated** with average **daily views:** -0.2

Daily views were **not strongly correlated** with:

- **Hourly rates:** 0.02
- **Face images:** 0.02
- **More images:** -0.02

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Playing the Name Game: Male Advertisers

Out of **1210 male escorts, 593** catered to **women** and **261** catered to **couples**

Up to **5181 prospective clients** may have viewed ads from **these workers** in any given day

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Playing the Name Game: Content Analysis

Comparing ads having **more views** with ads having **less views**

Samples:

- **584 or more daily views** (top 7%) versus
- **32 or fewer daily views** (bottom 7%)

Used **log likelihood** to identify unique terms (Dunning 1993, Rayson 2003, 2008)

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Playing the Name Game: Content Analysis

"**Black**" generally used when the advertiser won't accept Black men

"**Party**" getting high as a service (GHAAS)

Low view ads tended to be for **online** or **massage** services

a) High daily views

b) Low daily views

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Playing the Name Game: Who Pays the Most for Advertising?

Spending was estimated with these formulas:

$$Ad_n \text{ cost} = \text{base bump cost} \times \text{days } ad_n \text{ visible in 2023}$$

$$\text{Advertiser spending} = \textbf{sum}(Ad_1 \text{ cost}, Ad_2 \text{ cost}, \ldots)$$

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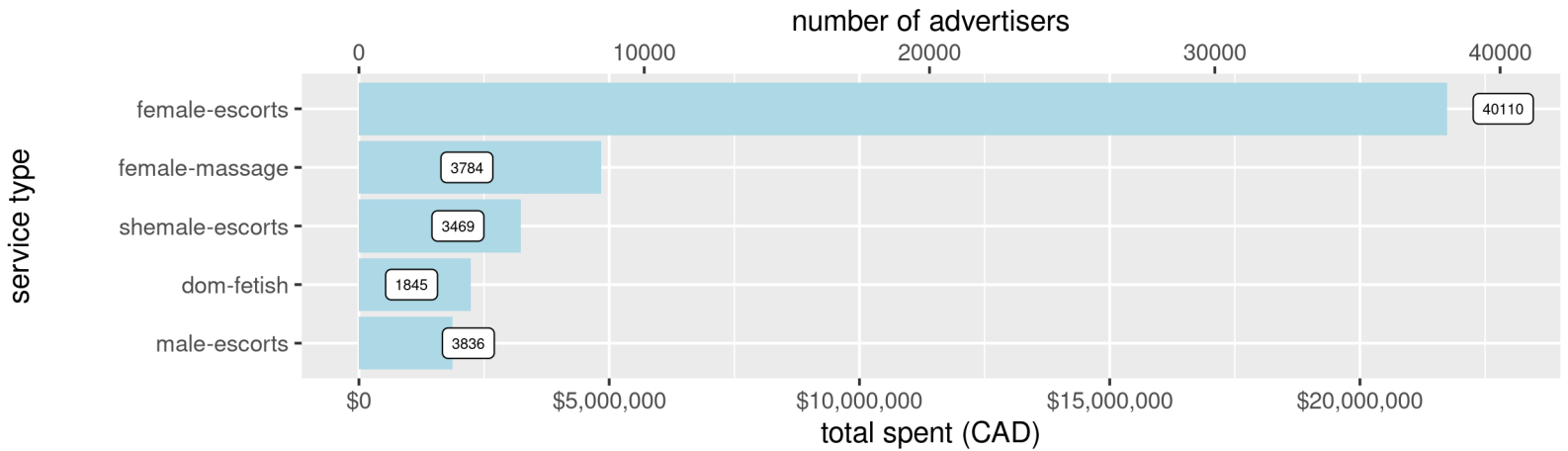
Playing the Name Game: Who Pays the Most for Advertising?

Average per capita spending by **Service Type** (most vs least):
Female Massage $1280, **Female Escorts** $542, **Male Escorts** $486



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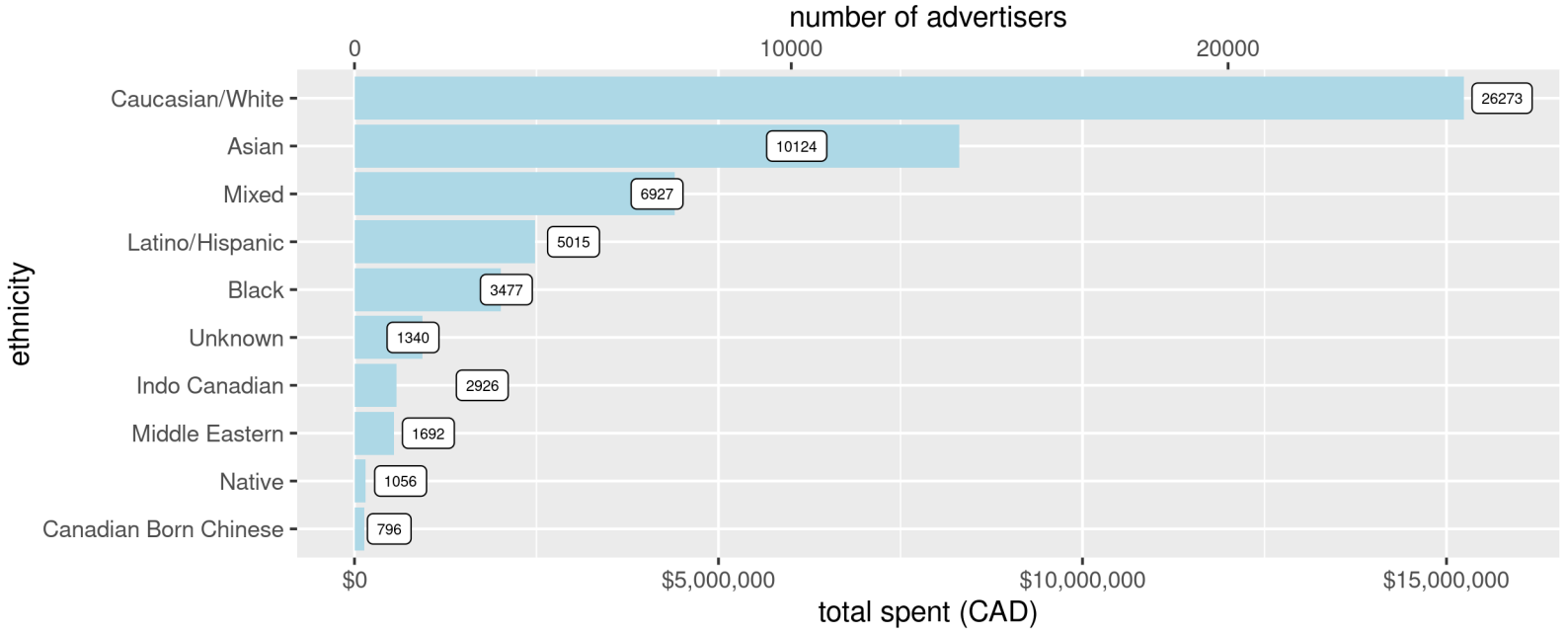
Playing the Name Game: Who Pays the Most for Advertising?

Average per capita spending by **Ethnicity** (most vs least):
Asian $820, **Indo Canadian** $197, **Canadian Born Chinese** $170



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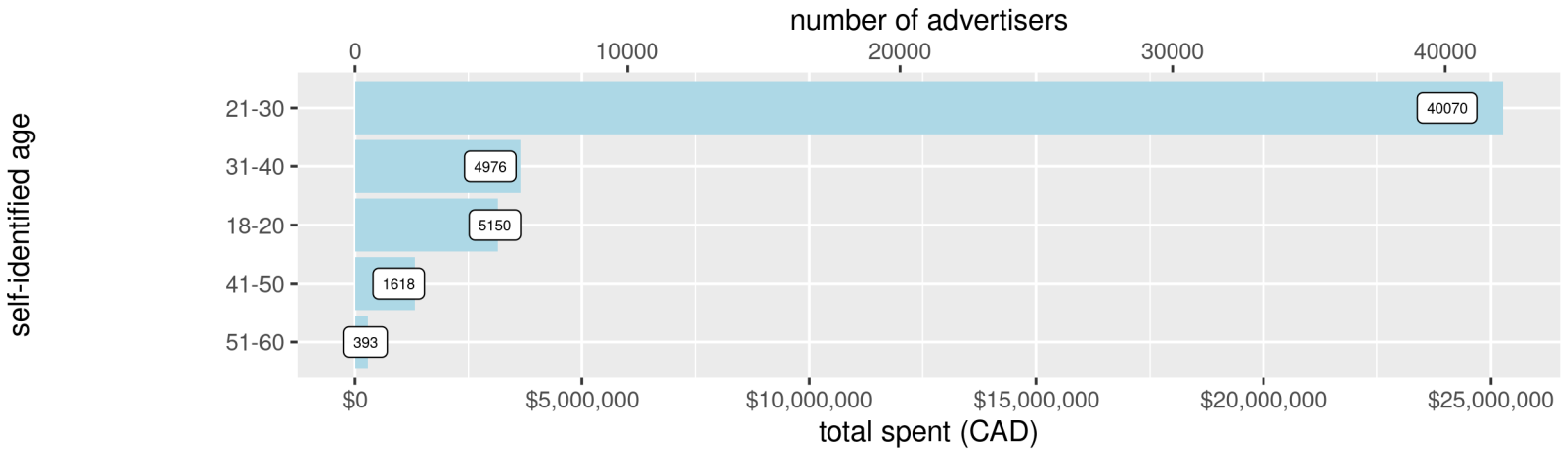
Playing the Name Game: Who Pays the Most for Advertising?

Average per capita spending by **Age Group** (most vs least):
41-50 $819, **21-30** $630, **18-20** $613



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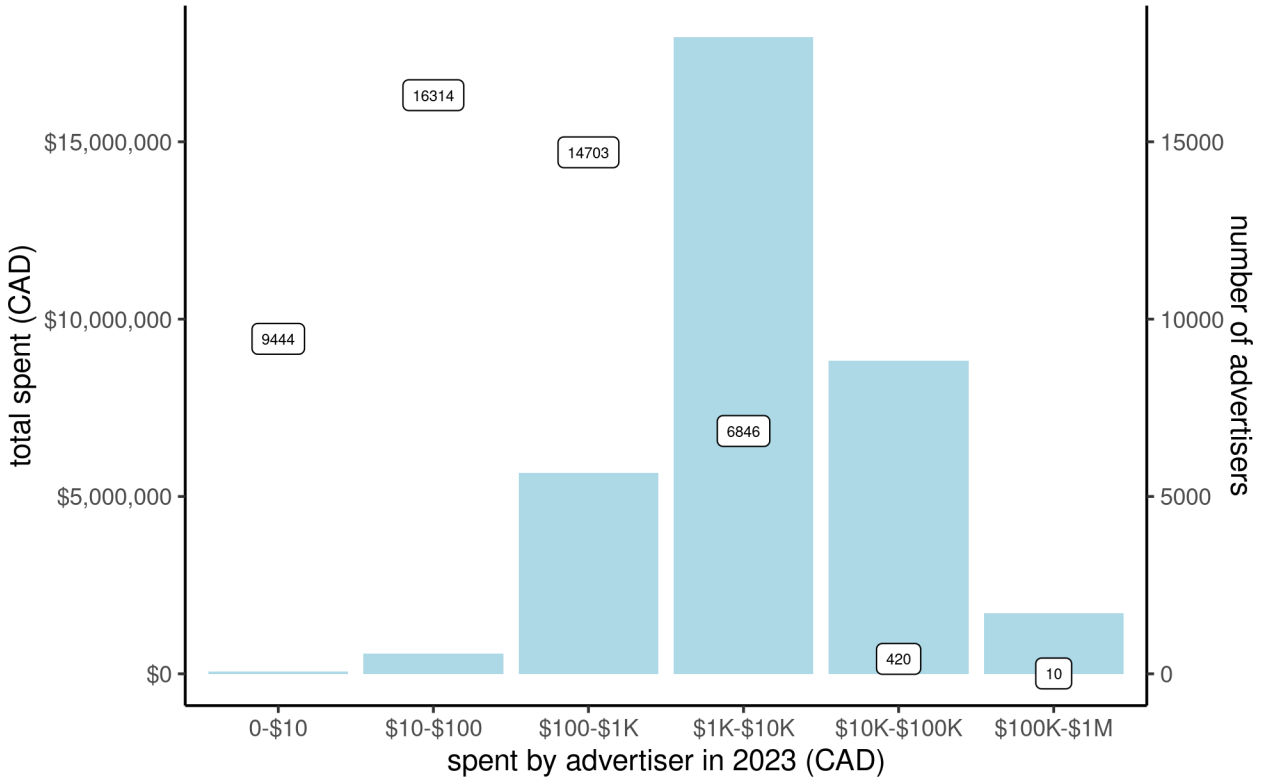
Playing the Name Game: Who Pays the Most for Advertising?

Ten advertisers **spent over $100k** with the top spending **over $350k**



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Playing the Name Game: Conclusions

What are my take-aways from the study?

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Thank You!

More information:

Main site: https://populationproject.ca/
Preprint: https://osf.io/preprints/osf/69nfg

Further reading:

Sanders, T. (2020). Paying for sex in a digital age: US and UK perspectives / Teela Sanders, Barbara G. Brents and Chris Wakefield. Routledge.