

Sex workers in Japan to get financial aid during coronavirus crisis

By [Amanda Woods](#)

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Japan is trying to give sex workers a leg up during the coronavirus pandemic.

The nation is offering financial aid to members of the oldest profession whose job prospects have gone limp amid social distancing — but regulations make it difficult for those in the stigmatized industry to apply without outing themselves, according to a new report.

The country's central government [launched a massive stimulus package](#) worth about 108 trillion Japanese yen — nearly \$1 trillion — to bolster the country during the impending economic downturn.

Initially sex workers weren't included — sparking a massive pushback from activists and opposition members — as the hashtag [#NightWorkIsAlsoWork](#) went viral on social media, [according to CNN](#).

"I wonder when this country started ranking people's lives," said one tweet. "Do you abandon single mothers who work in the night business and people who need to work for a living? Stop being prejudiced, stop discriminating based on people's

jobs, stop being misogynistic.”

While prostitution is illegal in Japan, other types of sex work that stop short of intercourse are permitted.

The government relented and allowed the proposed plan to include those working legally in the sex industry, the network reported.

The drafted guidelines state that sex work agencies and employers can receive subsidies for those who have to care for their children at home during school closures.

Sex workers are also permitted to apply for a cash handout, available for people who have lost income during the outbreak, according to the report.

But many say that the government’s rules are opaque. It’s unclear whether the handout is available only to workers who have lost a certain amount of their income, or have been entirely dismissed from their jobs — meaning that they lost the agents who connect them to clients, the outlet reported.

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Some workers say they don’t list their occupation or salary on their tax returns because of the shame and stigma associated with the industry. One worker who used the pseudonym Mika said she hasn’t even told her family what she does for a living.

“It’s not clear how freelance workers whose income has not been reported to the government can get approved for the stimulus,” Mika told the outlet. “I want to apply for it, but it is not clear how to do it. I’m stuck.”

Mika works in the “delivery health” industry, referring to escort services that stop short of intercourse.

So-called “fashion health,” in which workers provide services like oral sex in massage parlors, is also legal in the country.

“I’m worried if I will have a place to live or if I can find a job to get money to live,” Mika, who is living off borrowed money, told CNN. “I worry about [my health] of course, but now I worry more about how to survive.”

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Japan **declared a state of emergency** last week. A total of 10,797 cases and 236 deaths have been reported in the country, according to Johns Hopkins University data.

Big Apple sex workers **are also struggling to make ends meet** as johns stay inside, sex workers previously told The Post.

Meanwhile, in Thailand, where sex work is criminalized, the government moved for the first time to allow sex workers to apply for unemployment benefits and assistance grants, under its pandemic relief package.

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“We went through tsunamis and floods and natural disasters and been left out every time,” Liz Hilton, a member of the Thai sex worker advocacy organization Empower Foundation, told CNN.

Finally, she said, “sex workers are not being excluded from government help.”

A total of 2,792 coronavirus cases and 47 deaths have been reported there.

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