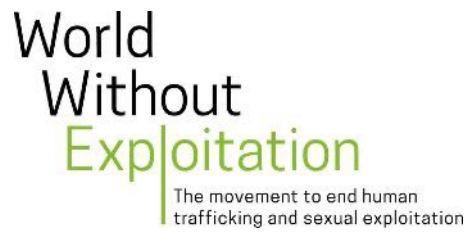


Get the facts.

What we know about sex trafficking, sexual exploitation
and prostitution in the United States.

Originally published February 2017.
Updated with new data January 2020.

World
Without
Exploitation
The movement to end human
trafficking and sexual exploitation



Get the Facts.

What we know about sex trafficking, prostitution, and sexual exploitation in the U.S.

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Originally published: February 2017.

Updated with new data: January 2020.

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Get the Facts.

What we know about sex trafficking, prostitution, and sexual exploitation in the U.S.

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Get the Facts.

What we know about sex trafficking, prostitution, and sexual exploitation in the U.S.

Introduction

These fact sheets are designed to present, in one place, valid, reliable data on topics related to human trafficking and sexual exploitation in the U.S. The methodologies and findings have been carefully vetted, and can be utilized with utmost confidence.

Why is this so important to note? In truth, generating valid, reliable, and current data is challenging. The sex industry in the U.S. is, for the most part, illegal. Those who buy and those who sell their bodies for sexual exploitation are often reluctant to admit to their behavior, and thus difficult to reach with normal research methods such as random sampling surveys. This makes it quite difficult to ascertain answers to even the most basic questions, such as “What is the scope of the sex trade?” “How many people in this country are trafficked for sexual exploitation?” “How many people are buying sex?”

We often see citations from outdated studies: Pre-Internet, pre-Backpage.com and Craigslist. We also see data from well-done research whose findings are wrongly extrapolated beyond the limits of the research. We often confront findings from studies that are methodologically flawed to the point where no findings should be cited, and yet they are. And of course, advocacy groups and social service providers make guesses and estimates based on their perceptions or beliefs.

All of the misguided and incorrect uses of research findings can have dire consequences for policy, and for the people who are impacted by sex trafficking and sexual exploitation. Utilizing only reputable data, being willing to say “we don’t know” when we don’t, and funding more and better research are the only ways we can overcome this fundamental problem.

A final point to make is that we are not arbitrarily selecting from reports that support a particular policy position in these fact sheets. If we had found sound research with contrary findings, we would cite it. This 2020 update adds findings from new research that has been published since our 2017 book was developed.

We encourage you go beyond the summary of findings, into the detailed findings and discussion, and to delve into the studies themselves. All of the studies are clearly sourced.

Note: We report data primarily on women and girls. There exists evidence that boys and men and transgendered individuals are involved in prostitution and are trafficked, but this is a little-studied area, and even less information is available on these populations. It has been commonly believed that girls and women make up the majority of prostituted and trafficked people; this belief, however, is currently being challenged. We expect and hope that in the coming years there will be more research done among these often-ignored populations.

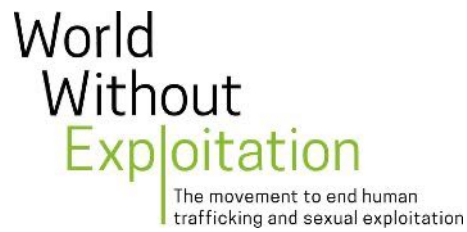
Definitions

PROSTITUTION

Prostitution is a sexual act in exchange for money or anything of value (drugs, shelter, etc.).

TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION/SEX TRAFFICKING

The 2015 Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act amends the definition of the 2000 Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA), defining sex trafficking as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act, in which the commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not obtained 18 years of age.



Coercion as defined in the TVPA: threats of serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; any scheme, plan, or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

In these fact sheets we use “prostitution” interchangeably with “sex trade industry,” “sex trade,” and “commercial sexual exploitation.”

PIMP/TRAFFICKER/FACILITATOR

These terms refer to the person/s using force, fraud, or coercion for commercial sexual exploitation and collaborators who benefit financially.

The Prevalence of Sex Trafficking, Prostitution, and Sexual Exploitation in the U.S.

Originally published: February 2017.

Updated with new data: January 2020.

Overview: Issues with Prevalence Data

The bad news is...we actually have no clear idea how many individuals participate in the sex industry, nor do we know their demographics – race, sex, ethnicity, or age.

To obtain information about prevalence, researchers must construct a representative sample and then query participants in the sample. If the sample is representative, the results can then be extrapolated to the entire study population.

Because sex trafficking and sexual exploitation, including prostitution, is mostly an illegal and clandestine industry in the U.S. it is not possible to construct a representative sample of those trafficked or otherwise involved. Therefore, traditional research methods are not available to answer the prevalence question. This state of affairs has led to an impasse between those who argue that very few persons are involved in trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, and those who assert that many are.

Most of the often-cited statistics about trafficking prevalence are estimates from advocacy groups and social service providers. These estimates are not based on any rigorous or discernible methodology. Other studies, including some based on surveys done among small samples of sex trade participants (both within and outside the U.S.), contain data from small and non-representative samples and thus are not generalizable. Some of these studies have interesting information, but do NOT provide valid data on prevalence.

Many research projects analyze arrest data to ascertain information about the number of those involved in the sex trade, including buyers, pimps, traffickers, and

exploited and trafficked people. We do not cite these data because arrests represent only those cases coming to the attention of law enforcement. These data cannot provide accurate information about the large majority of those in the sex trade who do not come into contact with the police. Furthermore, arrests are not made on a random basis, among representative groups. The biases inherent in arrest data – for example, police are far more likely to arrest those in outdoor prostitution than indoor venues simply due to lack of resources – further compromises the representativeness of arrest data.

The good news is...recently, investigators have begun to use research strategies employed in the public health field to learn about previously hidden populations.

Findings from these new research projects can be extrapolated with confidence to the entire geographical area of the project but not beyond it. Hopefully more studies in discrete geographical areas employing these research methods will be conducted in the coming years.

We can also begin to gauge prevalence by examining data from prosecuted trafficking cases, reports to law enforcement, and national hotline calls. This fact sheet provides information from all of these sources.

The data contained in this fact sheet are based on a comprehensive survey of prevalence research reports available through September 2019, vetted by several research experts in the field.

Summary of Findings

Note: “Human trafficking” includes trafficking for sex and for labor exploitation.

51,919 potential human trafficking cases have been reported by the public to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) Hotline between December 2007 and December 31, 2018; the vast majority are cases involving trafficking for sexual exploitation.¹

7,859 potential cases of human trafficking came to the attention of the National NHTRC Hotline in 2018. ⁱⁱ

3,218 victims called, emailed, or texted the NHTRC Hotline in 2018. ⁱⁱⁱ

3,048. The number of human trafficking active investigations reported to the FBI by local law enforcement agencies 2013 through 2017. ^{iv}

7,000. Potential human trafficking victims reported to the federal government by local task forces 2008-2014. Note: these task forces cover only 19% of the country and these data are not nationally representative. ^v

1,032 known victims of trafficking were found in Ohio between 2013-2018. The vast majority were victims of sex trafficking (87%) and U.S. citizens (91%).^{vi}

3,714-8,108. The estimated range of female sex trafficking victims controlled by pimps in San Diego County in 2015. This estimate is based on interviews with a small number of incarcerated pimps/facilitators and arrest records.^{vii}

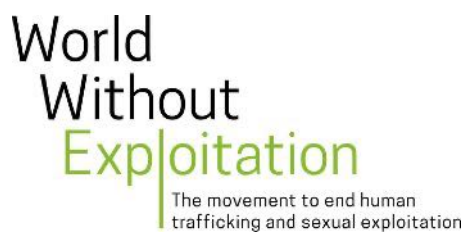
510 survivors in San Diego County, representing 51% of those in eight social services programs, and a court diversion program for those arrested for prostitution 2005-2015, met the legal definition of trafficking.^{viii}

2,652 cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (under 18) were identified within a year (2006) in the state of New York. Note: This represents an undercount, as only seven upstate New York counties and four New York City Boroughs' law enforcement agencies and those serving children were sampled and only cases coming to the attention of agencies were captured. ^{ix}

Detailed Findings and Discussion

NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER HOTLINE

Between December 2007 and December 31, 2018, 51,919 human trafficking cases have been reported to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, the majority of which involved trafficking for sexual exploitation. Although the hotline believes these cases contain strong indicators of human trafficking, there is no way to obtain



confirmation because law enforcement may have difficulty in locating suspected victims. However, self-identified victims do call the hotline; in 2018, 3,218 individual survivors contacted it. In 2018, 7,859 cases of sex trafficking were called into the hotline. These data represent only those cases coming to the attention of the hotline and cannot be used for definitive U.S. sex trafficking prevalence figures. However, they are real figures and not estimates.

2018 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics (2019). A report from Polaris. Accessed at https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris_National_Hotline_2018_Statistics_Fact_Sheet.pdf

U.S. FEDERAL TRAFFICKING PROSECUTIONS

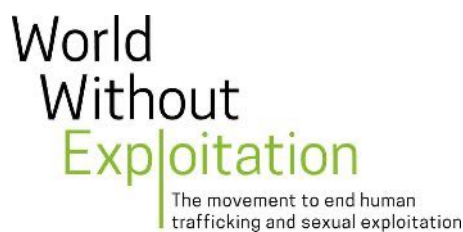
In 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a report on the federal prosecution of human trafficking cases between 2011 and 2015. These data cannot be used for a definitive tally of human trafficking cases as they include only those cases coming to the attention of law enforcement and prosecuted by the *federal* government (which does not prosecute the majority of trafficking cases).

In fiscal year 2015, 1,923 suspects were referred to U.S. attorneys for human trafficking offenses, a 41% increase from those referred in 2011. Between 2011 and 2015, 8,314 cases were referred for prosecution, the majority of which involved sex trafficking.

Motivans, M. (2018). *Federal Prosecution of Human-Trafficking Cases, 2015*. Report from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics. Accessed at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fphtc15.pdf>

LOCAL TRAFFICKING INVESTIGATIONS

Beginning in January 2013, the U.S. Congress has required law enforcement to report the crime of human trafficking into the FBI Uniform Crime Reports, its annually updated database. These data reflect only those cases coming to the attention of law enforcement. Reporting began slowly and has been hampered because the populous states of California and New York are still not fully participating. In 2016, 1,007 cases were reported to the FBI, and 994 in 2017 (representing the most recent available), for a total of 3,048 total since 2013.



Although these are not general prevalence figures, they are real cases, not estimates.

2017 Crime in the United States. Report from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports. Accessed at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017/additional-data-collections/human-trafficking/human-trafficking.pdf>

LOCAL TRAFFICKING TASK FORCES REPORTS TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

Federally funded but locally run trafficking task forces report activity to the federal government. Between 2008 and 2014, they identified just over 7,000 potential human trafficking victims. Note: these task forces cover only 19% of the country and these data are not nationally representative.

Bureau of Justice Assistance. Anti-human Trafficking Task Force Initiative. Accessed at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf>

OHIO DATA ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Researchers in Ohio gathered data from existing governmental data systems to determine the prevalence of human trafficking in the state. Data were collected from records dating from 2013 to 2018, with most of the data from calendar years 2014, 2015, and 2016. These only represent cases coming to the attention of law enforcement and state and local agencies responding to child abuse. The data do not represent a complete picture of the prevalence of human trafficking in Ohio, but they are real numbers and not estimates. Researchers were able to remove duplicate cases.

One thousand thirty-two known victims were found, the majority of whom were involved in sex trafficking (86.8%). Most of the victims were female (82.6%) and U.S. citizens (91.2%). The vast majority (81.2%) came from urban areas of the state.

Anderson, V.A., Kulig, T.C. & Sullivan, C. J. (2019). *Estimating the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in Ohio. Report from the School of Criminal Justice, University of Cincinnati.* Accessed at

https://www.humantrafficking.Ohio.gov/links/Ohio_Human_Trafficking_Prevalence_Study_Executive_Summary.pdf

OHIO SURVEY OF PROSTITUTED PERSONS

Researchers in Ohio used respondent-driven sampling¹ to recruit individuals currently involved in the sex trade in five cities in Ohio to assess trafficking for sexual exploitation at the state level. They recruited 328 participants over a period of six months. Thirty-five percent entered prostitution under the age of 18, and based on this research 13% of participants in Ohio could be classified as trafficking victims.

Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). *Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio*. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY STUDY OF GANG INVOLVEMENT IN SEX TRAFFICKING

In interviews with 46 incarcerated and ten in-community traffickers, law enforcement, victims of trafficking, and school personnel in San Diego county, researchers identified 110 individual gangs in San Diego County from a wide variety of neighborhoods and racial/ethnic backgrounds that have members engaged in profiting from trafficking for sexual exploitation. In addition, researchers determined that 85% of identified traffickers were affiliated with a gang. Using a range of five to eight females trafficked per pimp, researchers arrived at an

¹ RDS is a study methodology in which participants to be interviewed receive financial incentives both for their participation in the study and their recruitment of others to the study. The initial seed provides peers with referral coupons that provide contact information for the study. This is said to prevent participants from becoming reluctant to provide information about others and widens the network of individuals recruited by other methods, resulting in the recruitment of interviewees previously hidden. RDS studies cannot produce national estimates, only local or regional-level estimates confined to the boundaries in which participants were recruited.

estimated range of 11,724 to 20,736 victims of trafficking from this very limited and small sample.

Carpenter, A. C. and Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. San Diego, CA: University of San Diego and Point Loma Nazarene University. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

NEW YORK – UPSTATE AND NEW YORK CITY BOROUGHES

Researchers surveyed a sample of seven upstate counties and four New York City boroughs' law enforcement agencies and agencies serving children to obtain an estimate of the annual number of cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (those under the age of 18) they had uncovered. In total, 2,652 cases were identified in a year (2006). This figure is an undercount, in that all counties were not surveyed and only cases coming to the attention of the agencies were captured.

Gagg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children*. A WESTATE Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

ⁱ Polaris. 2018 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics (2019). A report from Polaris. Accessed at https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris_National_Hotline_2018_Statistics_Fact_sheet.pdf/

ⁱⁱ Polaris. 2018 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics (2019). A report from Polaris. Accessed at https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris_National_Hotline_2018_Statistics_Fact_sheet.pdf/

ⁱⁱⁱ Polaris. 2018 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Statistics (2019). A report from Polaris. Accessed at https://polarisproject.org/sites/default/files/Polaris_National_Hotline_2018_Statistics_Fact_sheet.pdf/

^{iv} 2017 Crime in the United States. Report from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports. Accessed at <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s./2017/crime-in-the-u.s.-2017/additional-data-collections/human-trafficking/>

^v Bureau of Justice Assistance, n.d. Anti-human Trafficking Task Force Initiative. Accessed at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf>

- ^{vi} Anderson, V.A., Kulig, T.C. & Sullivan, C. J. (2019). *Estimating the Prevalence of Human Trafficking in Ohio. Report from the School of Criminal Justice, University of Cincinnati*. Accessed at https://www.humantrafficking.Ohio.gov/links/Ohio_Human_Trafficking_Prevalence_Study_Executive_Summary.pdf
- ^{vii} Carpenter, A. & Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>
- ^{viii} Carpenter, A. & Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>
- ^{ix} Gagg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children*. A WESTATE Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Men Who Buy Sex in the U.S.

Originally published: February 2017.

Updated with new data: January 2020.

Overview

To obtain information representative of all sex buyers, researchers must construct a representative sample and then query participants in the sample. If the sample is representative, the results can then be extrapolated to the entire study population.

Because prostitution is an illegal and clandestine industry in the U.S., it is quite challenging to construct a truly representative sample. Those who buy people's bodies for sexual exploitation are often reluctant to admit to their behavior, and thus difficult to reach with normal research methods such as random sampling surveys.

Therefore, most research studies are done with "convenience" samples: those who've been arrested for trying to buy sex, or buyers who frequent Internet prostitution chat rooms and are willing to speak to researchers, are some examples. Findings drawn from these studies can reliably represent a *part* of the whole, but are not necessarily representative of the whole. Note also that self-reported behavior may be somewhat inaccurate. For this reason, it is critical that users understand and cite the source of the findings being reported.

In addition, we do not report on the demographics of arrested buyers, who represent only those coming to the attention of law enforcement and may over-represent those buying on the street, as opposed to the more hidden customers buying sex indoors, who represent the majority of the customers.

What we know is that there is no credible evidence to support the idea that paying for sex is a common or conventional aspect of masculine behavior of men in the U.S. A small proportion of men purchase sex in this country.

Summary of Findings

PREVALENCE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MEN PURCHASING SEX IN THE U.S.

- A groundbreaking, nationally representative survey found that only 21% of men reported paying for sex in their lifetimes.ⁱ
- Only 6% of men reported paying for sex in the past year, according to a 2018 study.ⁱⁱ
- Another study found that only 2% of men reported paying for sex in the previous three years.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Buyers are found across all income groups; however, currently active, high-frequency buyers are much more likely than other men to make \$100,000 or more annually.^{iv}
- A disproportionately high percentage (34.5%) of former buyers – who hadn't paid for sex in the past six years or agreed that they would be unlikely to do so in the future – had their first paid sex transaction while serving in the military.^v
- A disproportionately high percentage of active, high-frequency buyers had their first paid sex transaction set up by a friend, colleague, or family member. And nearly 20% engaged in this experience while still a juvenile.^{vi}
- The practice of paying for sex during a lifetime has declined over time, according to one study, from 16% of men saying they've done so (1991-2000) to 13.9% (2001-2010).^{vii}

- Active sex buyers are 25% of the total buyer population and account for 75% of reported paid sex transactions.^{viii}
- A study covering the years 1972–2010 determined that only about one percent reported paying for sex within the previous year.^{ix}
- Repeat customers arrested for trying to pay for sex surveyed in a 2005 study were more likely than non-customers to have purchased pornography and visited nude establishments. They were much less likely to be married than non-customers. There were no significant age differences between the two groups.^x
- Internet prostitution chat room members surveyed in 2014 were older, more highly educated, and had higher incomes than men arrested for buying sex.^{xi}

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR OF MEN WHO PURCHASE SEX IN THE U.S.

- Active buyers are far more likely than non-buyers to believe that: prostitution is a mostly victimless crime where no one is harmed; that prostituted people enjoy the act of prostitution; and that they chose the “profession.”^{xii}
- From a 2008 study of Chicago sex buyers:
 - 43% of buyers stated that if men pay for sex, the women should do anything they ask.^{xiii}
 - 13% of buyers said they would rape a woman if they knew they could get away with it and 19% said they had raped a woman.^{xiv}
 - Nearly half of sex buyers have paid for sex with women they knew to be under the control of a pimp or trafficker.^{xv}
- Buyers in online chat rooms in Illinois admitted to being violent or aggressive to women in prostitution; recognize the harm they and pimps/traffickers do to women but continue to buy sex despite the harm; recognize the extreme youth of some prostituted women but are not deterred from buying (raping) children.^{xvi}

Detailed Findings and Discussion

HOW MANY MEN BUY SEX IN AMERICA? (PREVALENCE)

The practice of paying for sex has declined over time.

Current survey research demonstrates there is no credible evidence to support the idea that paying for sex is a common or conventional aspect of masculine behavior of men in the U.S.

NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY OF SEX BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MEN - 2018

A national online survey was conducted with adult men between December 2016 and January 2017. The survey yielded 8,201 respondents. Findings were weighted for current demographics as measured by the U.S. Census. Most men stated they have never paid for sex. Only 6.2% of respondents had bought sex within the past 12 months, and 20.6% did so at least once in their lifetimes. About half of men who have ever purchased sex did so between two and ten times, and fewer than one-quarter bought only once. About 25% of active buyers reported purchasing weekly or monthly.

Demand Abolition November 2018, Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY OF SEX BUYING BEHAVIOR – 2017

Between January 10 and 14, 2017, researchers surveyed 2,525 adult males about whether they had purchased sex within the last three years. Findings were weighted to match national demographics. Researchers found that one in every 50 adult American men (2%) had purchased sex, with 57% having done so more than once within the past three years.

The average amount paid in the most recent encounter was approximately \$120. Most men (66%) located the seller offline (on the street, at a bar, or in a massage parlor), while roughly 34% found the prostituted person online.

Roe-Sepowitz, D., Bontrager, S., Pickett, J.T. & Kosloski, A.E. (2019). Estimating The Sex Buying Behavior of Adult Males in the United States: List Experiment and Direct Question Estimates. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 63, 41-4

GENERAL SOCIAL SURVEY

The General Social Survey (GSS), conducted by the National Opinion Research Center, queried a nationally representative sample of U.S. households between 2001 through 2010 (4,581 men). Interviewees were asked whether they ever had sex for pay in their lifetime and whether they had paid for sex within the last year. During the years 1972-2010, it was determined that only about one percent reported paying for sex within the previous year.

Smith, Tom W., Hout, Michael, and Marsden, Peter V. *General Social Survey, 1972-2012 [Cumulative File]*. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2013-09-11. Accessed at <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR34802.v1>

CHARACTERISTICS AND BEHAVIOR OF MEN WHO BUY SEX IN THE U.S.

To answer the question about buyers' characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors definitively, it would be necessary to construct a nationally or locally representative sample of customers. Given the illegal and relatively clandestine nature of the sex industry, obtaining such a sample is quite challenging. A 2018 study by Demand Abolition has accomplished this goal; it is the only one of which we are aware.

Instead, most researchers have surveyed samples of customers to which they have access, many of them volunteers. Although findings cannot be extended beyond the sample, the information about some of the customers buying sex is useful in gaining an accurate picture of one part of the sex industry. In general, research with customers who buy sex has not been a priority for prostitution researchers. We are indebted to Martin Monto at the University of Portland for a great deal of the information that we do have about some of the customers.

NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY OF SEX BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MEN - 2018

A national online survey was conducted with adult men between December 2016 and January 2017. The survey yielded 8,201 respondents. Findings were weighted for current demographics as measured by the U.S. Census.

Buyers are found across all income distributions; however currently active high frequency buyers are much more likely than other men to make \$100,000 or more annually.

- U.S. sex buyers claim to spend about \$100 per transaction, on average.
- About 25% of active sex buyers account for 75% of sex buying transactions.
- Buyers utilized many different venues for sex buying, with no single venue predominating. Street prostitution, “massage” brothels, and strip clubs were among the more common venues for buyers’ most recent transactions.
- A disproportionately high percentage (34.5%) of former buyers – who hadn’t paid for sex in the past six years or agreed that they would be unlikely to do so in the future – had their first paid sex transaction while serving in the military.
- A disproportionately high percentage of active, high-frequency buyers had their first paid sex transaction set up by a friend, colleague, or family member. And nearly 20% engaged in this experience while still a juvenile.
- About a third of active buyers wish to stop.
- Only about six percent of men who purchase sex illegally report ever having been arrested for it.
- Perceiving a risk of arrest has a diminishing effect on sex buying.

Demand Abolition November 2018, Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand.
Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

REPEAT BUYERS IN THREE CITIES COMPARED TO 2005 REPORTED NON-BUYERS NATIONALLY

Monto has compared attributes of 1,672 men arrested for trying to buy sex on the streets in three U.S. cities (San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Portland, OR) with those in the General Social Survey (GSS) between 1993 and 1996. National sample members (GSS) were sorted, depending on whether they had reported ever purchasing sex. This study is limited in that those arrested on the streets in the three cities may not be representative of all the men who buy sex on the streets or in other venues, and questioning them after arrest may have shaped their responses.

When repeat customers in the arrested sample were compared with non-customers in the national sample, they were no more likely to have served in the military, to have been sexually assaulted as children, or to have sexually assaulted women. Repeat customers were more likely to have purchased pornography and twice as likely to have visited nude establishments than non-customers. Repeat users were much less likely to be married than non-customers but were no younger than non-customers.

Monto M., & McRee, J. (2005). A Comparison of the Male Customers of Female Street Prostitutes with National Samples of Men. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology, 49(5), 505-29.

REPEAT BUYERS COMPARED TO PROSTITUTION REVIEW CHAT ROOM BUYERS 2015

Using updated data from the General Social Survey (4,581) Monto later compared these men with his data set of arrested customers (1,817) and with a convenience sample of men solicited on 43 discussion boards of the prostitution review website TER (584 participants). *Note: These 584 chat room buyers cannot represent the general universe of men who buy sex. This sample is limited to those with a computer, literacy skills, and the interest in being part of a chat room. They also appear to be frequent users, which means they represent only a segment of the customers.*

This analysis demonstrates large differences among the Internet sample and the rest. The men participating in Internet prostitution chat rooms are older, (more likely to be between 50-59 years of age) and have higher educational attainment and higher salaries. Forty-three percent earned more than \$120,000 a year. They are

more likely to be married, whereas arrested offenders are unmarried and younger. However, there are limitations in that these men are part of an online community that endorses prostitution as a legitimate form of sexual activity, and men participating in on-line forums may be only a subset of male customers.

Monto, M. & Milrod, C. (2014). *Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes With a Nationally Representative Sample of Men. International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 58(7), 802-820.

ATTITUDES OF MALE BUYERS

NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY OF SEX BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MEN - 2018

A national online survey was conducted with adult men between December 2016 and January 2017. The survey yielded 8,201 respondents. Findings were weighted for current demographics as measured by the U.S. Census.

Active buyers are far more likely than non-buyers to believe that: prostitution is a mostly victimless crime where no one is harmed; that prostituted people enjoy the act of prostitution; and that they chose the “profession.”

Assessing buyer motivations, active buyers are far more likely than non-buyers to believe that: buyers are just “guys being guys;” “guys taking care of their needs;” and that their actions do not exploit or abuse others.

Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

Three recent research studies document buyers’ attitudes about the sex trade and those who sell sex. Like most studies in this field, findings are limited because researchers can work only with samples of volunteer participants who may not represent the entire universe of men who buy sex. Those who answer advertisements seeking research participants may differ from the general population of buyers. They certainly, however, represent a subset of buyers whose attitudes should influence our views of the sex industry as a whole.

ANALYSIS OF ILLINOIS PROSTITUTION CHAT ROOM POSTS

One researcher has monitored posts made on the USA Sex Guide, an online chat room for frequent customers. 1,684 posts made between June 1, 2010, and August 31, 2010, for sites in Illinois were analyzed.

Among the key findings from this analysis:

Many men admit to being violent or aggressive toward the women in prostitution.

“Once with a petite little spinner abt 40 who told be [sic] no bj [blowjob], but then I simply insisted firmly ‘yes. You suck.’ and I grabbed her head and she didn’t resist. That was one of the wildest mp [massage parlor] experiences I’ve had because I completely face fucked her to where she puked on the floor twice and would clean it up then come back to me where I would fuck her face silly again. I even had her licking my asshole that time...I think I gave her .80.”

The majority of the posts express contempt for prostituted women and girls, often referring to them as “meat” or “merchandise.”

(A user attaches a photo of a prostituted woman) “Where’s the prime meat? Why does it seem that this is all there is left on the streets of Rockford?”

“At [strip club] all I found were large slabs of beef. Smallest girl must have been at least 35 lbs over weight.”

They mention the extreme youth of some of the girls, cautioning they may not be “legal” but they continue the encounter and say they will return to buy more sex with this individual and recommend her to others.

“BTW saw my Latino friend out on 120 again last week. I’d be careful with this one. I think she only comes out for a short time to get some quick cash for her high. She’s awful young. Be safe!”

All recognize the harm being done to the women by customers and pimps/traffickers but they continue to buy sex in spite of the harm.

“I tell her to come outside to my car so I can get a look at her. She has a nice bod so I go for it and tell her I’m ony [sic] doing \$60 and she was cool w it. CBJ cowgirl mish doggie then I was out. She had glasses on when I askd [sic] her to take them off she had two black eyes. Ridiculous.”

They observe and describe pimps and traffickers who are with the girls and women.

“I’m off to her apartment. She jumps in but leaves the door open. ‘I have a favor to ask.’ ‘Can I give the ‘contribution’ (my term not hers) to X#*x&& (her significant other, whom I wouldn’t name here)?’ She’ll wait in the car and he’ll come and get it. What the fuck can I say? I’m literally in the driver’s seat if not figuratively. I’ve seen her ‘other’ before and he don’t scare me no how (intentional poor English). He’s a little wigger wanna-be [a male Caucasian, often suburban, who emulates African American hip-hop culture and style]. Ok I sezz. He steps out of the shadows of her door way and does that little hunched shoulders grab his pee-pee walk that all good wiggers work so hard to perfect. She hands him the dead presidents and shuts the door. Off we go...”*

Time after time the men describe women who did not appear to want to be there and resisted performing the sex act. Yet the men persisted and often punished them for their attitudes with violence and aggression.

“There is a new lady there. I could not understand her name. She is older, looks ok, but everything else was bad. She did not want to be there doing this at all. That was evident. The massage was bad, extras were bad, nothing good about it. I am going to stay away for a while. Looks 7, Body 6, English 2, Massage 3, Extras 2, Atitude [sic] 2”

Janson, L. (2013). “Our Great Hobby:” An Analysis of Online Network for Buyers of Sex in Illinois. Accessed at <http://media.virbcdn.com/files/b7/a87546ef7331b5da-OurGreatHobby.pdf>

BUYER INTERVIEWS, CHICAGO 2008

Researchers interviewed 113 self-reported male buyers face-to-face, recruited in advertisements in free publications and on Craigslist. Of these, 53% were frequent customers, buying weekly, monthly, or several times a month. Their comments indicated the degree to which many objectified prostituted women and believed that those women gave up all human rights to dignity and freedom from harm.

Attitudes and Behavior	Men Who Purchase Sex
Purchased sex to obtain acts they felt uncomfortable asking of their partner or which their partner refused to engage in, including oral and anal sex.	46%
If men pay for sex, the women should do anything they ask.	43%
Would rape a woman if they knew they could get away with it.	13%
Admitted to raping a woman.	19%
Believed the majority of women in prostitution had experienced some type of childhood sexual abuse.	57%
Thought the majority had entered prostitution before the age of 18.	32%
Thought they had bought sex from women who were trafficked from other countries.	20%
Have seen women with a pimp.	75%
Knowingly bought a woman in prostitution who was under pimp/trafficker control.	40%

TRIGGER WARNING. VERBATIM COMMENTS FROM BUYERS INCLUDED BELOW MAY BE DISTURBING TO SOME READERS.

“She has no rights because you are paying for a sex act- she gives up the right to say no.”

“...she gave up her rights when she accepted my money.”

“Prostitutes are like a product, like cereal. You go to the grocery, pick the brand you want, and pay for it. It’s business.”

“She feels a lot of force between her legs, because I’m not going to be lenient. I’m going to give her everything I’ve got. You can pound them, she don’t mind.”

“Something at your job makes you mad, you can’t beat your wife, you can’t beat your kids, and so you go out and have sex to take your frustration out.”

“I almost killed a hooker because she tried to run off with my money and I wasn’t going to let her. I used the blunt side of the knife. She tried to leave the car. We struggled for awhile. I wanted to scare her, so I put the blunt side of the knife to her throat. Somehow there was blood, and she gave the money back. I left her lying down in the street. I didn’t even want the money no more.”

Durchslag, R. & Goswami, S. (2008). *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*. Accessed at <http://media.virbcdn.com/files/40/FileItem-149406-DeconstructingtheDemandForProstitution.pdf>

ⁱ Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

ⁱⁱ Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Roe-Sepowitz, D., Bontrager, S., Pickett, J.T. & Kosloski, A.E. (2019). *Estimating The Sex Buying Behavior of Adult Males in the United States: List Experiment and Direct Question Estimates*. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 63, 41-4

^{iv} Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

^v Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

^{vi} Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

^{vii} Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

^{viii} Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

^{ix} Smith, T.W., Marsden, P.V., & Hout, M. *General Social Survey, 1972-2010*. Data can be accessed at <http://gss.norc.org/>

^x Monto M., & McRee, J. (2005). *A Comparison of the Male Customers of Female Street Prostitutes with National Samples of Men*. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 49(5), 505-29.

^{xi} Monto, M. & Milrod, C. (2014). *Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes With a Nationally Representative Sample of Men*. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 58(7), 802-820.

^{xii} Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

^{xiii} Durchslag, R. & Goswami, S. (2008). *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*. Accessed at www.caase.org/

^{xiv} Durchslag, R. & Goswami, S. (2008). *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*. Accessed at www.caase.org/

^{xv} Durchslag, R. & Goswami, S. (2008). *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*. Accessed at www.caase.org/

^{xvi} Janson, L. (2013). "Our Great Hobby." *An Analysis of Online Network for Buyers of Sex in Illinois*. Accessed at www.caase.org

Sex Traffickers and Pimps in the U.S.

Originally published: February 2017.

Updated with new data: January 2020.

Overview

To obtain information representative of all traffickers for sexual exploitation, researchers must construct a representative sample and then query participants in the sample. If the sample is representative, the results can then be extrapolated to the entire study population.

Because trafficking for sexual exploitation is an illegal and clandestine industry in the U.S., it is not possible to construct a representative sample. Therefore, research studies are done with “convenience” samples.

We have three sources of information about sex traffickers. First, court cases can be analyzed for valuable information about perpetrators. Second, traffickers can be located and interviewed. Third, trafficking victims can provide information about perpetrators.

We do not present information about the race of traffickers, in samples of prosecuted or identified cases. These are cases that come to the attention of law enforcement. They cannot provide accurate information about the large majority of pimps and traffickers who do not come into contact with the police. Furthermore, arrests are not made on a random basis, among representative groups. For a variety of reasons police may have greater access to minority traffickers and pimps, given the greater scrutiny occurring in inner-city neighborhoods. Therefore, the data are unlikely to be representative, and may in fact be significantly racially biased. Drawing conclusions from these data is inadvisable.

Findings in this fact sheet are limited to the research samples; because they are in no way representative, their conclusions cannot be extended to the entire population of traffickers.

Summary of Findings

- While the vast majority of human traffickers, and pimps and sex traffickers are male, a significant minority (15%-32%) are female, according to several recent studies.^{i ii iii iv v vi}
- Human traffickers exist in all age groups. Several studies report a mean age of perpetrators of 37/38.^{vii viii ix} One study of human traffickers found that 77% of perpetrators were 18-34.^x
- Multiple research studies have found that a significant percentage of sex traffickers (3-36%) of juveniles are family members of the victim.^{xi xii xiii xiv xv xvi}
- Several studies also found that juvenile sex trafficking victims (27-60%) are also frequently trafficked by their boyfriends.^{xvii xviii xix xx}
- Several studies detail the common methods pimps and traffickers employ to control their victims. Force is utilized (in one study among 32-58% of victims). Psychological coercion (social and emotional isolation, induced emotional exhaustion, and degradation, including humiliation, denial of the victim's power, and name-calling), and economic coercion (taking 50% or more of prostituted person's earnings) are other common means sex traffickers employ for controlling victims.^{xxi xxii xxiii}
- A 2016 study in San Diego County provided several key findings about pimps and traffickers in that county.
 - Pimps reported an average income of \$670,625.^{xxiv}
 - Researchers determined that middle schools and high schools were significant/frequent places for recruiting girls who become victims of sexual exploitation, and not just in low-income neighborhoods.^{xxv}

- While pimps interviewed in Chicago have been reported to control between two and 30 victims,^{xxvi} one San Diego study found an average number of victims/survivors a pimp controlled was 4.5.^{xxvii}
- Pimps frequently begin trafficking and prostituting people at a young age. In one 2016 study, 37% began when they were younger than 18.^{xxviii} Another study done in Chicago reported the average age of entry into pimping was 22.48.^{xxix}

Those who choose to pimp and traffic others for sexual exploitation often have backgrounds that include physical and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, and family members who were in the sex trade.^{xxx xxxi} *Please see detailed findings for more specifics.*

Detailed Findings and Discussion

ANALYSIS OF TRAFFICKER CHARACTERISTICS FROM CRIMINAL CASE DATABASES

ACTIVE FEDERAL SEX TRAFFICKING CASES

A 2019 report on civil and criminal trafficking cases in the federal court system in 2018 provides some information about the traffickers in these cases. In 2018 there were 771 active criminal and civil human trafficking cases working their way through the federal court system, involving 1,437 defendants. The majority of cases involved sex trafficking.

The number of cases initiated in 2018 was 202, down from 270 initiated in 2017, and 248 initiated in 2016.

In the majority of criminal cases (87.7%) defendants relied on the Internet to solicit purchasers for sexual services, mainly Backpage.com (which shut down in April, 2018).

The majority of criminal defendants were male (79.2%), with the average age for sex trafficking defendants 33 years.

In most of the cases information was available to reveal the relationship between the defendant and the victim. The most common relationship between defendant and victim was intimate partner (30.4%). And nearly five and a half percent of defendants were parents or extended family members of those they trafficked.

Public court documents indicated evidence of force, threats of force, fraud, or coercion in 62.5% of the sex trafficking cases. Methods of coercion included the following:

- Withholding pay: 58.1%
- Physical abuse: 56.2%
- Threats of physical violence: 42.6%
- Exploiting or inducing substance abuse (using addictive substances to control the victim): 36.2%
- Verbal/emotional abuse: 25.4%
- Sexual Violence: 24%
- Physical isolation: 23.3%

Currier, A & Feehs, K.E. (2019). 2018 Federal Human Trafficking Report. Report from the Human Trafficking Institute. Accessed at <https://www.traffickingmatters.com/2018-federal-human-trafficking-report/>

TRAFFICKERS OF MINORS ARRESTED IN THE U.S.

Through Internet searches, researchers identified 1,416 persons arrested for sex trafficking of a minor in the United States between 2010 and 2015. Although this method does not allow researchers to definitively identify all prosecuted cases during these years, [making prevalence or trend analysis problematic], the sample is large enough to be of interest.

The average age of the sex traffickers of minors was 28.5 years old.

Women comprised 24.4% of the traffickers. Of those female traffickers arrested, 53.4% had been previous trafficking victims, now responsible for recruiting other

individuals and teaching them the business. (Note: these females may not have been undertaking these duties voluntarily.)

Twenty four percent of the arrested sex traffickers had a previous criminal history, most often involving a violent crime.

During recruitment, 15.7% provided their minor victims with drugs and/or alcohol. During recruitment, 18% sexually assaulted and 19.8% physically assaulted their minor victims.

After recruitment, drugs were involved in 28.6% of the cases, thought to be used to control victims. After recruitment, firearms were also involved in 11.1% of the cases to intimidate victims, with physical violence after recruitment used in almost one-third of the cases (32.9%).

Roe-Sepowitz, D., Gallagher, J., Hogan, K., Ward, T., Denecour, N. & Bracy, K. (2019). A Six-Year Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Minors: Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29, 608-629.

FEDERAL TRAFFICKING DEFENDANT CHARACTERISTICS IN 2015

A 2018 report gives some information about defendants prosecuted by federal prosecutors for human trafficking in 2015:

- Nearly 90% (88.3%) were male.
- The majority were under 35 years of age.
- Almost 94% (93.9%) were U.S. citizens. More than half had only a high school degree or less (22.2% had less than a high school degree; 34.6% were high school graduates.
- Almost 50% (49.9%) were single.
- Almost 50% had no prior criminal convictions, while 19.6% had a misdemeanor conviction and 30.8% had a prior felony conviction.

Motivans, M. (2018). *Federal Prosecution of Human-Trafficking Cases, 2015. Report from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics.* Accessed at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fphtc15.pdf>

TRAFFICKERS OF MINORS IN THE U.S.

Researchers created a database of arrests in the United States for sex trafficking of minors. Data were collected through a structured online search of cases charged that identified 1,416 persons arrested for sex trafficking of a minor in the U.S. from 2010-2015.

The average age of the sex traffickers was 28.5 years, with the average age decreasing significantly from 2010-2015.

Twenty percent involved a person who was gang involved.

The trafficker was known to the victim in the overwhelming majority of cases:

- 47% of cases involved a “friendly stranger.”
- 14.6% a friend.
- 13.7% a boyfriend.
- 3.1% involved a family member.

Twenty-four percent of the traffickers were found to have a criminal history, with the most common type of crime assault, battery, or robbery.

The Internet was used by the sex trafficker to advertise in 41.8% of the cases. The majority of the assignments were in hotel rooms.

The victim’s age at exploitation ranged from age 4-17, with an average age of 15 years old.

Roe-Sepowitz, D., Gallagher, J., Hogan, K., Ward, T., Denecour, N. & Bracy, K. (2017). A Six-year Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Minors: Exploring Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns. A report from the Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research and the McCain Institute for International Leadership accessed at <https://www.mccaininstitute.org/six-year-analysis-of-sex-traffickers/>

CHARACTERISTICS OF CONVICTED TRAFFICKERS IN OREGON

Researchers examined records of 28 males with an arrest, charge, and or conviction for domestic trafficking for sexual exploitation between 2004 and 2015, the records compiled while they were on community supervision in Multnomah County,

Oregon. Although this is in no way a representative sample of perpetrators, this study highlights the frequent use of violence by this one group of traffickers.

Of the perpetrators:

- 37 was the mean age.
- 61% were dropouts during high school; of these 59% later obtained a GED.
- 18.5% experienced physical abuse as children.
- 26% experienced childhood sexual abuse.
- 41% were removed from their parents' home as a child.
- 33% began trafficking between the ages of 14 and 17, 63% were 18 and older. Four percent began in preadolescence.
- 11% reported family involvement in the sex trade, often a parental figure, but this information was unknown in the majority of the cases. The majority (96%) had not sold their own bodies.
- 22% had known gang involvement, although this category had a large number of unknowns related to gang involvement.
- 71% had a documented history of intimate partner violence.
- 46% had a documented history of perpetrating forcible rape.

Gotch, K. (2016). *Preliminary Data on a Sample of Perpetrators of Domestic Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: Suggestions for Research and Practice*. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 2(1): 99-109/

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE DATA

In 2011 the U. S. Department of Justice reported on the characteristics of 2,515 suspected cases of human trafficking investigated between January 2008 and June 2010 by federally funded human trafficking task forces. The vast majority (82%) involved trafficking for sexual exploitation.

In cases confirmed as human trafficking, 488 perpetrators were identified.

Most confirmed human trafficking suspects were male (81%). Eighty-one percent of all female suspects were involved in trafficking for sexual exploitation rather than labor trafficking.

Seventy-seven percent of suspects were between the ages of 18 and 34. Two percent were 17 or younger, and 30% between 18 and 24.

Sixty percent of all suspects were U.S. citizens or permanent U.S. residents. Sixty-six percent of suspects in trafficking for sexual exploitation were U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Banks, D. & Kyckelhahn, T. (2011). Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010. Special Report, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

EXAMINATION OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING COURT CASES

Researchers examined U.S. human trafficking court cases (both state and federal) resulting in a conviction or a plea bargain between January 2006 and December 2011 throughout the U.S., identifying the cases through a number of Internet data bases. One hundred and sixteen cases were examined, involving 382 perpetrators. Sixty-five percent of the cases involved transnational trafficking, with the remainder regional or local.

- The mean age of the perpetrators was 38.43.
- 68% were male, and 32% female. Females occupied core roles in 47% of the cases.
- 302 perpetrators, or 79%, were involved in a network with three or more perpetrators. Networks could include brothel owners who used one main contact to procure women, and rings co-led by perpetrators.

Researchers found that the victim was likely to be trafficked by someone from within her (his) own community (93%), regardless of whether she (he) was trafficked regionally or transnationally.

- 44% of perpetrators used violence on the victim. Ninety-five percent used coercion and or threats of violence.

Denton, E. (2016). Anatomy of Offending: Human Trafficking in the United States, 2006-2011. Journal of Human Trafficking 2(1): 32-62.

SURVEY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

Through mail surveys of 2,598 law enforcement agencies throughout the U.S., researchers established that there were 1,450 arrests of juveniles by these entities for prostitution-related offenses in 2005. In follow-up research, surveyors obtained information on 711 cases in the sample. The victim sample was exclusively female. Almost half of the juveniles were 16 or 17 years old; 46% were 14 and 15 years old.

- 57% of these cases involved a pimp, called a third-party enforcer.
- Information was available for 97 perpetrators. Eighty-five percent were male and 15% female.
 - 3% were a family member.
 - 14% were acquaintances.

Mitchell, K., Finkelhor, D., & Wolak, J. (2010). *Conceptualizing Juvenile Prostitution as Child Maltreatment: Findings from the National Juvenile Prostitution Study*. *Child Maltreatment*: 18-36.

NEW YORK – UPSTATE AND NEW YORK CITY BOROUGHS

Researchers surveyed a sample of seven upstate counties and four New York City boroughs' law enforcement agencies and those serving children to obtain an estimate of the number of annual cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (those under the age of 18) they had uncovered. In total, 2,652 cases were identified in a year. This figure is an undercount of the total number of cases in New York, in that not all counties were surveyed and only cases coming to the attention of the agencies were captured.

Researchers did, however, obtain information about the perpetrators and there were wide differences between upstate New York counties and New York City.

- 16% of the sample of trafficked minors were trafficked by parents, parents' partners, or family members. The figure in New York City was seven percent.
- 24% in New York City and 58% in upstate New York were trafficked by an adult friend or acquaintance.

- 1% in New York City and 22% in upstate New York were trafficked by a minor friend or acquaintance.
- 75% in New York City and 28% in upstate New York were trafficked by an adult stranger. None were trafficked by a minor stranger.
- Force was used in 58% of the cases in New York City and 32% of the cases in upstate New York.

Gragg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children*. A WESTAT Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

ANALYSIS OF CHARACTERISTICS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH PIMPS AND TRAFFICKERS

CONVICTED TRAFFICKER INTERVIEWS

Researchers interviewed 46 individuals in Federal Bureau of Prison facilities from July to October 2015 who were convicted of trafficking offenses. The sample is not representative and those more recently convicted (and still in prison) would be over-represented.

Fifty-seven percent of the human trafficking cases involved lone offenders, with no known organizational support or collaboration. When others were involved, it was mostly just one to three other individuals whom they knew through social or family ties.

Six of the nine female prisoners interviewed were drawn into assisting traffickers while also being victimized.

All but two of the respondents admitted committing criminal offenses but denied that those offenses constituted human trafficking. Most offered justification and rationalizations for their behavior, alleging the victims were engaged voluntarily and that they were ignorant of the true age of the victims.

Shively, M., Smith, K., Jalbert, S. & Drucker, O. (2017). *Human Trafficking Organizations and Facilitators: A Detailed Profile and Interviews with Convicted Traffickers in the United States*. Report from Abt Associates, accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251171.pdf>

SAN DIEGO COUNTY STUDY OF GANG INVOLVEMENT IN SEX TRAFFICKING

In interviews with 46 incarcerated and ten in-community traffickers, law enforcement, victims of trafficking, and school personnel in San Diego county, researchers identified 110 individual gangs in San Diego County from a wide variety of neighborhoods and racial/ethnic backgrounds that have members engaged in profiting from trafficking for sexual exploitation. In addition, researchers determined that 85% of identified traffickers were affiliated with a gang.

Traffickers in this study made, on average, \$670,625 annual income, and controlled four and a half victims/survivors, on average.

The most common form of coercion used by traffickers was economic coercion (taking 50% or more of prostituted person's earnings), followed by psychological coercion (*social and emotional isolation, induced emotional exhaustion, and degradation, including humiliation, denial of the victim's power, and name-calling*), and chemical coercion (supplying or forcing drugs). Only 12% of traffickers reported using physical or sexual violence as a coercion method.

Facilitators/traffickers were classified into four broad categories, based on how they, themselves, identified their roles:

- 1) Enforcer/Contractors (67% of traffickers) were most common. They reject the “pimp” label and claim to act mostly as drivers, and security against buyers’ violence and rape. They also claim to split revenue with the prostituted women.
- 2) Traditional traffickers (28%) were most likely to refer to themselves as “pimp.” They see the label as a sign of status. They are most likely to claim to keep all or most of the money made by the prostituted woman.
- 3) Vicious/Violent traffickers (four percent) use tactics of extreme physical and psychological control to wrest the maximum financial quotas. They were most likely to recruit minors.
- 4) Organized Trafficking Groups (OTGs) were the fourth type of sex-trafficking facilitator identified in San Diego. OTGs are structured as clandestine, closed networks, run by a small core group of individuals. Examples include a multinational “black book” ring that trades in adults and minors; a child prostitution ring

controlling both domestic and international individuals; a residential brothel trafficking children from the Philippines; and a MS-13 clique operating as a closed group that traffics individuals – minors and adults from southern Mexico. None of the study’s interviewees admitted to being involved in OTGs, but numerous interviewees gave details indicating specific knowledge of such activities.

Carpenter, A. C. and Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. San Diego, CA: University of San Diego and Point Loma Nazarene University. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

INTERVIEWS WITH EX-PIMPS IN CHICAGO

Interviews with 25 ex-pimps in the Chicago metropolitan area in 2009-10, another non-representative sample of volunteers, as in the Oregon research cited above, revealed similar childhood experiences of those who were trafficked for sexual exploitation.

- 72% were male and 28% were female.
- 61% of the males and 71% of the women had no high school degree.
- The average age at onset of pimping/trafficking was 22.48.
- The average number of years of pimping was 15.6, with a range of 4-28 years.
- 56% of the men and 100% of the women sold sex prior to pimping. The average onset of selling sex was 14.4 years for the women and 16 years for the men.
- The number of women trafficked at any given time was 2-30. The total number of women trafficked over the years was a minimum of 4,135.
- 20% were addicted to alcohol while pimping and 16% were addicted to drugs.
- 88% experienced physical abuse while growing up.
- 76% experienced childhood sexual assault, with the average age of onset nine and a half years.
- 88% experienced domestic violence in the home.
- 84% experienced drugs and alcohol abuse in the home while growing up.

- 60% had family members involved in the sex trade.
- 84% used alcohol as a child, with the average age of onset 12.5 years.
- 24% had been committed to foster care.
- 48% ran away from home due to physical or sexual abuse.

Raphael, J., & Myers-Powell, B. *From Victims to Victimiziers: Interviews with 25 Ex-Pimps in Chicago. A Report from the Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University College of Law.*

CHARACTERISTICS OF TRAFFICKERS FROM INTERVIEWING VICTIMS ABOUT THEIR TRAFFICKERS

NEVADA CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION SURVIVOR INTERVIEWS

Researchers interviewed 26 survivors of commercial sexual exploitation of children located within the state of Nevada between the ages of 18-24 who were commercially sexually exploited before age 18 to determine pathways that led to exploitation in the sex trade.

Four reported family members were involved with trading sex.

Eight indicated it was their relationship with their boyfriend that led to their exploitation through coercion and violence.

Fourteen stated it was friends who influenced involvement through peer pressure and role models.

Reed, S. M., Kennedy, M. A., Decker, M.R. & Cimino, A.N. (2019). *Friends, Family, and Boyfriends: An Analysis of Relationship Pathways into Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Child Abuse & Neglect* 90, 1-12.

FAMILIAL SEX TRAFFICKING AMONG CHILD MALTREATMENT PATIENTS

This research sample consists of 31 youth who were referred to an outpatient, academic medical center in a predominately rural state for clinical services related to child maltreatment. These 31 cases were identified as involving commercial sexual exploitation.

All of the cases in the study involved familial sex trafficking, even if other types of traffickers were also identified.

The mother was the trafficker in 64.5% of the cases; in these cases, a second trafficker was involved 65% of the time, most likely an acquaintance or paramour. The traffickers were mostly middle-aged (median 42.6 years).

A high percentage of the cases involved parents who used illicit drugs (81.8%).

Just under half of trafficking cases originated in rural areas.

Over one-third of the survivors had a psychiatric hospitalization subsequent to the trafficking, and almost half reported they had attempted suicide during their lifetime. Eighty percent suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Sprang, G. & Cole, J. (2018). Familial Sex Trafficking of Minors: Trafficking Conditions, Clinical Presentation, and System Involvement. Journal of Family Violence, 33 (3), 185-195.

INTERVIEWS WITH ADJUDICATED TRAFFICKED GIRLS

Researchers conducted interviews with 40 adjudicated juvenile females in a southern state, ranging in ages from 14 to 19.

Thirty-one percent stated they traded sex due to threats or coercion. Rural victims were all trafficked by family members, while the urban victims were trafficked by a female friend, a boyfriend, or a boyfriend of friend.

Perkins, E. B. & Ruiz, C. (2017). Child Adolesc Soc Work J 34, 171-180.

TRAFFICKED GIRLS IN FLORIDA

Researchers reviewed case files of trafficked girls gathered from social service agencies providing case management and counseling to trafficked female youth located in two large metropolitan areas of Florida, supplemented by interviews of agency personnel between 2012 and 2013. Seventy-nine cases were reviewed.

Reported ages of traffickers ranged from 15 to 45 years, with three being minors and non-relatives. The types of relationships between the victims and traffickers were as follows:

- 28% stranger
- 28% boyfriend
- 10% girlfriend
- 29% relative.
- 3% drug dealer
- 2% employer

Sixty-seven percent of the traffickers were males and 33% female.

Reid, J.A. (2016). *Entrapment and Enmeshment Schemes Used by Sex Traffickers*. *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment*, 28(6), 491-511.

YOUTH IN HOMELESS SHELTERS IN NEW YORK

Interviews were conducted with 185 youth in the Covenant House Crisis Center and drop-in programs in New York City between the ages of 18-23.

Twelve percent were trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Of these, 36% were trafficked by their immediate families. Twenty-seven percent were trafficked by boyfriends.

Bigelsen, J. & Vuotta, S. (2013). *Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York*.

OHIO VICTIMS TRAFFICKED UNDER 18 YEARS OLD

Researchers surveyed 115 individuals who became involved in the sex trade when under the age of 18. Of the subset who were trafficked:

- 9.6% were trafficked by a male member of a foster family.
- 7% were trafficked by a male family member who did not sell himself.
- 18.3% were trafficked by a male friend who did not sell himself.

The majority of trafficked people were recruited by a female who acted like a friend.

Of the 25 people who were trafficked by force, 60% were trafficked by a boyfriend and 18.3% by a male friend.

Williamson, C., & Perdue, T. (2012). Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio. A report of the Ohio Human Trafficking Commission.

CHICAGO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION DISCUSS THOSE WHO TRAFFICKED THEM

Researchers interviewed 100 young women up to the age of 25 who were under the control of a pimp/trafficker at the time of the survey in 2007.

- 23% said they considered their pimp their boyfriend.
- 10% said they were recruited by a family member.
- 19% were recruited by friends.
- 12% were recruited by a pimp.

Raphael, J. & Ashley, J. (2008). Domestic Sex Trafficking of Chicago Women and Girls. A Report from the Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University College of Law, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

ⁱ Banks, D. & Kyckelhahn, T. (2011). *Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010. Special Report, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.*

ⁱⁱ Denton, E. (2016). *Anatomy of Offending: Human Trafficking in the United States, 2006-2011. Journal of Human Trafficking 2(1): 32-62.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Mitchell, K., Finkelhor, D., & Wolak, J. (2010). *Conceptualizing Juvenile Prostitution as Child Maltreatment: Findings from the National Juvenile Prostitution Study. Child Maltreatment: 18-36.*

- ^{iv} Motivans, M. (2018). *Federal Prosecution of Human-Trafficking Cases, 2015. Report from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Accessed at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fphtc15.pdf>
- ^v Currier, A & Feehs, K.E. (2019). *2018 Federal Human Trafficking Report. Report from the Human Trafficking Institute*. Accessed at <https://www.traffickingmatters.com/2018-federal-human-trafficking-report/>
- ^{vi} Roe-Sepowitz, D., Gallagher, J., Hogan, K., Ward, T., Denecour, N. & Bracy, K. (2019). *A Six-Year Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Minors: Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns*. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29, 608-629.
- ^{vii} Gotch, K. (2016). *Preliminary Data on a Sample of Perpetrators of Domestic Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation: Suggestions for Research and Practice*. *Journal of Human Trafficking*, 2(1): 99-109/
- ^{viii} Denton, E. (2016). *Anatomy of Offending: Human Trafficking in the United States, 2006-2011*. *Journal of Human Trafficking* 2(1): 32-62.
- ^{ix} Motivans, M. (2018). *Federal Prosecution of Human-Trafficking Cases, 2015. Report from the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics*. Accessed at <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/fphtc15.pdf>
- ^x Banks, D. & Kyckelhahn, T. (2011). *Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010. Special Report, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics*.
- ^{xi} Mitchell, K., Finkelhor, D., & Wolak, J. (2010). *Conceptualizing Juvenile Prostitution as Child Maltreatment: Findings from the National Juvenile Prostitution Study*. *Child Maltreatment*: 18-36.
- ^{xii} Gragg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. A WESTAT Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family Services*.
- ^{xiii} Raphael, J. & Ashley, J. (2008). *Domestic Sex Trafficking of Chicago Women and Girls. A Report from the Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University College of Law, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority*.
- ^{xiv} Bigelsen, J. & Vuotta, S. (2013). *Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York*.
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- ^{xvi} Sprang, G. & Cole, J. (2018). *Familial Sex Trafficking of Minors: Trafficking Conditions, Clinical Presentation, and System Involvement*. *Journal of Family Violence*, 33 (3), 185-195.
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^{xxx} Roe-Sepowitz, D., Gallagher, J., Hogan, K., Ward, T., Denecour, N. & Bracy, K. (2017). *A Six-year Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Minors: Exploring Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns*. A report from the Arizona State University, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research and the McCain Institute for International Leadership, accessed at <https://www.mccaininstitute.org/six-year-analysis-of-sex-traffickers/>

^{xxxi} Carpenter, A. C. and Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. San Diego, CA: University of San Diego and Point Loma Nazarene University. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

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^{xxxvii} Carpenter, A. C. and Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. San Diego, CA: University of San Diego and Point Loma Nazarene University. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

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^{xxxx} Raphael, J., & Myers-Powell, B. *From Victims to Victimiziers: Interviews with 25 Ex-Pimps in Chicago*. A Report from the Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University College of Law.

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Women and Girls Who Are Trafficked in the U.S.

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Overview

We have information about victims of sex trafficking, but generalizations cannot be made because none of the research was done among representative samples. However, the characteristics of victims in these various samples are often similar in their vulnerabilities. They often, for example, became victims of commercial sexual exploitation at a young age, and have frequently experienced abuse in their families of origin.

When a number of research studies converge on similar findings about characteristics of victims/survivors of sex trafficking, it can be appropriate to summarize them into a general finding, so long as the user is mindful to clarify that the statement is not conclusively true. It is the difference between stating “Three studies done in New York found that prostituted women typically experienced abuse in their families of origin,” versus “Research shows that the majority of prostituted women experienced abuse in their families of origin.” The former is an accurate statement. The latter is not.

A word about statements on the “average age of entry” that are often bandied about as if they were conclusive – they are NOT. We often see the blanket statement made, “The average age of entry into prostitution is 14 (or 12, or 15).” Any blanket statement like this is incorrect because we do not have empirical data to support this conclusion.

Why? Because every single study that asks sexually exploited people when they were first prostituted or exploited is done among a convenience sample.

Researchers ask girls who are in homeless shelters, or women who are incarcerated. None of those samples are representative of the universe of those who are sexually exploited in this country. Each of those studies is biased by the ages and types of people who are questioned.

One research study, for example, found that the median age of entry into prostitution was 14. However, the sample was comprised of girls all under the age of 16. Another study of women under 25 found the average age of entry was 16. When research samples have older women in them, then the age of entry tends to be higher. It is simply a question of math.

There are some data indicating that juveniles in this country are trafficked. The most reliable of that data are summarized here. However, we simply cannot extrapolate from these, or any other convenience samples, to an overall fact about the average age of entry into prostitution.

Summary of Findings

Children are trafficked for sexual exploitation in this country, and many adults who are sexually exploited first became exploited while they were children.

- A study done among sex trafficking victims in Hawaii found that the average age of first sex trafficking experience among the sample was 14.7 years old, with a range of 11–20.ⁱ
- Minors in San Diego county in a program for first time prostitution offenders, across several years, began being trafficked at an average age of 14.5. For adults in the same program, the average age of entry was 17.8.ⁱⁱ
- In a study done among 112 Ohio children who became involved in the sex trade while under the age of 18, 12% were sold before age 12 and 26% between the ages of 16 and 17.ⁱⁱⁱ

- A 2007 study in New York found that 16% of upstate New York girls trafficked for sexual exploitation were 13 or younger. Four percent of those in New York City were 13 or younger.^{iv}

Multiple studies found that survivors of trafficking for sexual exploitation are likely to have experienced conditions that may have made them more vulnerable to being trafficked. These include, but are not limited to:

- History of childhood abuse and neglect (85-89% in New York,^v (59-73% in Hawaii,^{vi} 58% in Nevada).^{vii}
- Witnessing domestic violence in their home as a child (40% in a southwestern state).^{viii}
- History of sexual abuse by family members (40% in Ohio).^{ix}
- Placement in foster care (64% in Hawaii^x, 50-75% in New York^{xi}; 28% in San Diego^{xii}).
- Homelessness (55% in San Diego).^{xiii}
- Having run away from home at least once (63% in Ohio),^{xiv} (77% in Nevada).^{xv}
- Children trafficked by a family member were first trafficked at a younger age (11.5 vs 14.73 years old) and had experienced higher rates of physical and sexual abuse than children trafficked by a non-family member, according to one Florida study.^{xvi}
- One study comparing prostituted adult women who had been trafficked as juveniles to those who had not been trafficked found that those who had been child trafficking victims were far more likely to have been raped, to have had social service involvement in their lives and to have run away from home. ^{xvii}
- Among teens in a group home, all of whom were dealing with complex adverse childhood experiences, those who were victims of childhood sexual exploitation were more likely to have experienced certain adverse experiences such as drug use, gang involvement, juvenile justice system involvement, and dating violence.^{xviii}

- Trauma among children who had been trafficked was found to be significantly higher than for a matched sample of children who had been sexually abused but not trafficked, according to one study. With a median age of 15, the prevalence of PTSD was 54% vs 43%; prevalence of dissociation was 42% vs 22%; and prevalence of suicide attempts were 51% vs 37%.^{xix}
- Victims of sexual exploitation ages 12-18 in one study had high rates of physical abuse, involvement with child protective services, running away from home, multiple drug use, alcohol abuse, a history of sexual violence, and higher rates compared to those who were not trafficked but were victims of child sexual abuse.^{xx}
- Survivors of trafficking for sexual exploitation ages 14-60, interviewed for a 2012 study, reported experiencing numerous mental and psychological conditions.^{xxi} These included:
 - Depression (88.7%)
 - Anxiety (76.4%)
 - Nightmares (73.6%)
 - Flashbacks (68%)
 - Feelings of shame or guilt (82.1%)
 - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (54.7%)
 - Suicide attempts (41.5%)
- A substantial number of survivors interviewed for that study suffered from other psychological disorders, including bipolar, multiple personality, and borderline personality disorders.

Children and adults who are trafficked for sexual exploitation commonly experience violence at the hands of their pimps and the men who buy them.

- A 2007 Chicago study of 100 prostituted women 25 and younger found that 48% had been punched, 47% had been raped, 63% experienced threats of harm.^{xxii}

- Among 107 survivors of trafficking ages 14-60 from 11 major U.S. cities, 92.2% reported being the victim of at least one of 12 forms of physical violence (threatened with a weapon, shot, strangled, burned, kicked, punched, beaten, stabbed, raped or penetrated with a foreign object). Many survivors suffered more than half of these experiences; respondents reported an average of 6.25 of the 12 forms of violence.^{xxiii}
- Forty-two percent of those first sold for sex under the age of 18 in Ohio, according to a 2012 study, had been victims of customer-related or pimp-related violence and had been to the emergency room at least once as a result.^{xxiv}
- Children who were trafficked by those with gang involvement were significantly younger on average (14.6) than those trafficked by people without gang involvement (15.2).^{xxv}

Detailed Findings and Discussion

AGES OF TRAFFICKING VICTIMS WITH GANG INVOLVED TRAFFICKERS

Through Internet searches, researchers identified 1,416 persons arrested for sex trafficking of a minor in the United States between 2010 and 2015. Although this method does not allow researchers to definitively identify all prosecuted cases during these years, [making prevalence or trend analysis problematic], the sample is large enough to be of interest.

Nearly one out of five arrests involved a person who was gang involved. Victims of sex traffickers who were affiliated with a gang were significantly younger (14.6 years old) as compared to victims of sex traffickers who were not gang affiliated (15.2 years old). Child sex trafficking victims of gang affiliated sex traffickers were more likely to be addicted to drugs when they were recruited, in foster care, or homeless than victims of sex traffickers not affiliated with a gang.

Roe-Sepowitz, D., Gallagher, J., Hogan, K., Ward, T., Denecour, N. & Bracy, K. (2019). A Six-Year Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Minors: Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29, 608-629.

NEVADA SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Researchers interviewed 26 survivors between the ages of 18-24 who were commercially sexually exploited before age 18 in Nevada. They uncovered common characteristics of the victims:

- 27% had family members addicted to drugs or alcohol.
- 38% had parents, either mothers or fathers, missing from the home.
- 58% had experienced abuse (physical sexual, or emotional) in the home from a family member.
- 77% had run away from their homes, a decision often related to abuse issues.
- 19% lived in poverty during their youth.
- 23% had substance abuse issues of their own.
- 38% had some involvement with Child Protective Services or the foster care system.

Reed, S.M., Kennedy, M.A., Decker, M.R., & Cimino, A.N. (2019) Friends, Family and Boyfriends: An Analysis of Relationship Pathways into Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Child Abuse & Neglect 90, 1-12.

HAWAII SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Twenty-two Hawaii sex trafficking victims were interviewed using both structured and unstructured interview techniques. Among this sample, 100% reported using drugs, with the average age of introduction to drugs being 12.7 years old.

A family member was involved in prostitution or trafficking for 45.5% of the sample. The majority of victims (13 of 22) indicated that their first trafficker was a boyfriend.

Abuse – sexual, physical and emotional – was pervasive among this sample of trafficking victims. Involvement with foster care and child protective services was also common.

Researchers learned that among this sample, the time between first trafficking and final exiting ranged from 5 months to 32 years, with victims trying to exit multiple times (5.8 on average).

Childhood Experience	Trafficking Victim
Sexual molestation	72.7%
Rape	59.1%
Childhood physical abuse	59.1%
Child welfare involvement	68.2%
Emotional abuse	50.0%
Placed in foster care	63.6%
Close family member in jail or prison	81.8%

Roe-Sepowitz, D., & Jabola-Carolus, K. (January 2019). *Sex Trafficking in Hawaii: Part II, The Stories of Survivors*. Arizona State University, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women. ASU STIR.

COMPARISON BETWEEN TRAFFICKED AND NON-TRAFFICKED GIRLS IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

The subjects of this research were 135 girls aged 11-17 who lived in a large group home program in a southwestern city between 2012-2014. They were placed in the home due to challenges with behavior, mental health, or substance abuse. Case file analysis was done comparing 73 girls who'd experienced commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC) and 62 who had not.

Analysis showed that all of the girls experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences. The two groups were not significantly different in terms of the age at which sexual abuse first occurred, experiences of physical abuse, age of first drug use, and other measures. However, those who were victims of commercial sexual exploitation were more likely to have abused drugs, had gang involvement, juvenile justice system involvement, and intimate partner violence.

Childhood Experience	Girls with CSEC Victimization	Girls with no CSEC Victimization
Drug use	76.7%	51.6%
Sexual abuse	56.2%	43.5%
Juvenile justice system involvement	49.3%	27.4%
Risk taking behaviors	42.4%	9.7%
Dating violence	27.4%	14.5%
Gang involvement	24.6%	9.7%

Hickle, K., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2018). *Adversity and Intervention Needs among Girls in Residential Care with Experiences of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 93, 17-23.

COMPARISON BETWEEN TRAFFICKED AND NON-TRAFFICKED PROSTITUTED WOMEN

Researchers surveyed 478 adult women enrolled in a prostitution diversion program in a large southwestern state between the years 2012 and 2014. Among the sample, 161 were sex trafficked and 317 were not. Because not all women had been sex trafficked, researchers were able to compare women who had been trafficked with those who were not:

Women who described being victims of sex trafficking as a child were significantly more likely to have ever participated in both indoor and outdoor prostitution venues, while those not sex trafficked were more likely to have engaged in only indoor venues.

Hickle, K & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2017). "Curiosity and a Pimp:" *Exploring Sex Trafficking Victimization in Experiences of Entering Sex Trade Industry Work among Participants in a Prostitution Diversion Program*. *Women & Criminal Justice* 27(2), 122-138.

COMPARISON BETWEEN COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC) VICTIMS AND SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS

Researchers compared characteristics of 43 youth with reported exploitation in commercial sex with a sample of 172 youth who were not reported to be exploited in commercial sex but had been sexually assaulted. Both samples were predominantly female with the median age 14.5 years (for those in the sex trade) to 15 years for those not in the sex trade. Youth in the sex trade reported greater levels of trauma symptoms compared with the matched sample of sexually abused youth:

	CSEC Victims	Sexual Abuse Victim
Run away from home	71.4%	25.0%
Dissociation	41.5%	22.4%
PTSD	53.7%	42.7%
Suicide attempt	51.2%	37.0%
Self-injury	39.5%	28.7%
Alcohol use	60.0%	23.0%
Substance abuse - other	68.3%	26.1%

Cole, J., Sprang, G., Lee, R. & Cohen, J. (2016). *The Trauma of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth: A Comparison of CSE Victims to Sexual Abuse Victims in a Clinical Sample*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31(1), 122-146.

EXPERIENCES OF TRAFFICKED VS NON-TRAFFICKED HOMELESS YOUTH

Researchers surveyed 131 homeless youth of multiple genders aged 12-25 years recruited from youth service providers in a region of Kentucky and Indiana called Kentuckiana. 41.2% were victims of sex trafficking in this convenience (non-representative) sample. Almost half (48.1%) were female. Just under half of the

homeless females (47.6%) indicated they were sex trafficked, while 32.3% of the males reported being sex trafficking victims. Researchers were able to compare the experiences of the trafficked and non-trafficked groups.

The following chart demonstrates how those that were sex trafficked had more adverse physical and mental effects as well as more serious in-home experiences:

	Trafficked Youth	Non-trafficked Youth
Suicide attempt	82.9%	46.2%
Anxiety	78.7%	33.9%
Depression	72.3%	37.0%
Self-harming behavior	71.7%	37.7%
Bipolar disorder	70.2%	35.1%
Run away from home	60.4%	50.0%
Sexually abused (ages 13-17)	45.8%	19.0%
Physical abuse by parent	43.8%	34.5%
Substance abuse – other	38.8%	11.3%
Sexually abused (12 and under)	37.5%	20.7%
PTSD	36.2%	16.1%
Alcohol abuse	22.4%	9.5%

Middleton, J.S., Gattis, M.N., Frey, L.M. & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2018). Youth Experiences Survey (YES): Exploring the Scope and Complexity of Sex Trafficking in a Sample of Youth Experiencing Homelessness. *Journal of Social Service Research* 44 (2), 141-157.

MEDICAL RECORDS EXAMINATION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Researchers examined a total of 25 medical records of patients under the age of 18 who disclosed being trafficking victims to medical providers between August 2013 and November 2015. The majority of patients were female with the mean age of 15.4 years. The records revealed complicated psychosocial histories that may have rendered them susceptible to exploitation:

- 92% - Alcohol/substance abuse
- 60% - Running away
- 55% - Sexual abuse
- 14% - Physical abuse
- 32% - Exposure to domestic violence
- 64% - Parental substance abuse

Moore, J. L. Houck, C., Hirway, P., Barron, C. & Goldberg, A.P. (2017). *Trafficking Experiences and Psychosocial Features of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking Victims*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-16.

FAMILY FACILITATED TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

Researchers reviewed 62 case files of trafficked girls where there was information about the traffickers. The information was gathered from social service agencies providing case management and counseling to trafficked female youth in two large metropolitan areas of Florida. The case files covered 2007-2013. Case file review was supplemented by interviews of agency personnel between 2012 and 2014.

Researchers found that girls with relative traffickers had an earlier age of entry into the sex trade (11.50 years) as compared with girls with nonrelative traffickers (14.73 years).

Of the relative traffickers, 63% were female and 37% male. Mothers were the overwhelming majority of these traffickers.

Researchers found that the primary motivation for the trafficking was the need for money or drugs to support a drug habit.

Girls trafficked by a relative were far more likely to have experienced many different kinds of abuse.

	Girls with Relative Trafficker	Girls with Non-Relative Trafficker
Sexual Abuse	88%	35%
Child Neglect/Abandonment	83%	43%
Physical Abuse	71%	30%
Witnessed domestic violence	67%	27%
Poly-victimization (all four kinds of abuse)	59%	18%

Reid, J.A., Huard, J. & Haskell, R.A. (2015). *Family-Facilitated Juvenile Sex Trafficking*. *Journal of Crime and Justice* 38 (3), 361-376.

NEW YORK – UPSTATE AND NEW YORK CITY BOROUGHES

Researchers surveyed a sample of seven upstate counties and four New York City boroughs' law enforcement agencies and those serving children to obtain an estimate of the number of annual cases of commercial sexual exploitation of children (those under the age of 18) they had uncovered. In total, 2,652 cases were identified in a year. This figure is an undercount, in that all counties were not surveyed and only cases coming to the attention of the agencies were captured.

Important differences were noted between the urban (New York City) and rural (upstate) case samples.

- Girls in upstate counties were younger. Girls aged 13 or younger comprised four percent in New York City and 16% upstate were girls; over half in New York City and one-third upstate were girls 16 or 17 years old.

- For half of the upstate children, the age at the time of the first sexual exploitation was 11 years of age or younger. None of the New York City children were known to be exploited at this age; the most frequent age in New York City was 14-15 (43%).
- The most frequent age group of girls exploited in upstate counties was 10 to 11 (43%).
- The victims had histories of child abuse and neglect. In New York City, 85% had prior child welfare involvement, while upstate, 89% had child welfare involvement.
- Over two-thirds in New York City and 54% upstate were known to be the subject of a child abuse/neglect investigation.
- Three-quarters in New York City and nearly half of upstate girls had experienced placement in foster care. Over half in New York City and 44% upstate had a juvenile placement, defined to include stays in detention facilities.

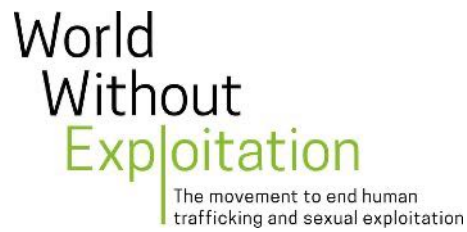
Gragg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children*. A WESTAT Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family services.

OHIO SURVEY OF PROSTITUTED PERSONS

In a sample of 115 individuals who became involved in the sex trade in Ohio while under the age of 18, 12% were sold before age 12 and 26% between the ages of 16 and 17.

Of these, 40% were victims of family sex abuse. Those trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation suffered higher rates of sexual abuse than did other victims of abuse reported in Ohio.

- 24% were victims of physical abuse in their families.
- 33% had a close family member in the sex trade.
- 63% had run away from home once or more than once.



Forty-two percent of those first sold under the age of 18 had been victims of customer-related or pimp-related violence and had been to the emergency room at least once as a result. Twenty-six percent had been hit and 21% beaten; ten percent had been stabbed; almost 15% had been held against their will by someone; 14% had been held at gunpoint, and nine percent at knife point. Almost half (49%) had been diagnosed with a mental health issue.

Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report.

CHICAGO VICTIMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION DISCUSS THOSE WHO TRAFFICKED THEM

In 2007, 100 females up to the age of 25 who were currently under the control of a pimp/trafficker were interviewed in Chicago. The young women reported high levels of coercion and violence from their traffickers.

- 29% said they were provided drugs to encourage addiction, and 23% reported drugs withheld by the pimp to coerce them. Sixty-one percent experienced threats to end the romantic relationship and 63% experienced threats of harm.
- 43% reported they could not leave without physical harm and an additional 20% were unsure if they could leave without physical harm. Thirty-seven percent were not allowed to leave and visit friends and family. Forty percent said their pimp watched them when they were not trading sex with customers and another 20% were not sure if they were watched.

The young women also experienced high levels of violence from their traffickers.

- 48% had been punched
- 26% spanked
- 43% kicked
- 47% were raped

Weapons used by pimps included fists (71%), knives (eight percent), guns (38%), matches and cigarettes (32%).

Raphael, J. & Ashley, J. (2008). Domestic Sex Trafficking of Chicago Women and Girls. A Report from the Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University College of Law, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY STUDY OF GANG INVOLVEMENT IN SEX TRAFFICKING

Researchers interviewed 302 adult victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation who were in a prostitution first time offender program. An additional 321 minors in the program were noted, but were not interviewed. Information was also gleaned from the standardized intake forms of 167 human trafficking survivors (140 were survivors

of trafficking for sexual exploitation) served by eight different non-profits who offer direct services to victims of human trafficking.

Among the first time arrestees for prostitution in this sample, researchers concluded that 50% met the federal definition for classification as victims of human trafficking.

There was a strong correlation between this victimization and current or previous homelessness (55%) as well as having been in foster care (28%).

The average age of entry into prostitution for adults in the first time offender program was 17.8. Among minors, the average age of entry into prostitution was 14.5. Researchers combined these into an overall average age of entry of 16.1 years old.

Carpenter, A. & Gates, J. (2016). The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

CHARACTERISTICS OF PATIENTS IN PEDIATRIC ERS SUSPECTED OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Researchers identified characteristics of patients in three pediatric emergency departments who were thought to be suspected victims of child sexual exploitation. Twenty-seven children aged 12-18 were identified and compared with a group of 57 who were victims of childhood sexual assault.

Victims of sexual exploitation had high rates of physical abuse, involvement with child protective services, running away from home, multiple drug use, alcohol abuse, and a history of sexual violence, with higher rates as compared with those who were not trafficked. For example, 69.9% had a history of drug use as compared with 19.2% of the control group. 30.8% had a history of violence connected with sex as compared with 3.8% of the control group.

Notably, 46% of the trafficked children had been to a medical provider within the past two months, providing an opportunity for intervention.

Varma, S., Gillespie, S., McCracken, C. & Greenbaum, V. (2015.) Characteristics of Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking Victims Presenting for Medical Care in the United States. Child Abuse & Neglect 44, 98-105.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH SURVIVORS OF SEX TRAFFICKING AGES 14-60

Researchers conducted focus groups with 107 participants in eleven U.S. cities including Chicago, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, San Francisco and more; all domestic survivors of sex trafficking ranging in age from 14 to 60 in 2012. Participants reported numerous psychological and mental conditions, including depression (88.7%), anxiety (76.4%), nightmares (73.6%), flashbacks (68%), and feelings of shame or guilt (82.1%).

A substantial number of survivors suffered from other psychological disorders, including bipolar, multiple personality, and borderline personality disorders. 41.5% had attempted suicide and 54.7% suffered from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Survivors were asked whether they had been threatened with a weapon, shot, strangled, burned, kicked, punched, beaten, stabbed, raped or penetrated with a foreign object. Nearly all (92.2%) reported being the victim of at least one form of physical violence and many survivors suffered more than half of these experiences; respondents reported an average of 6.25 of the 12 forms of violence. Substance abuse was also rampant. 84.3% used alcohol, drugs, or both during their captivity and more than a quarter (27.9%) said that forced substance use was a part of their trafficking experience. Alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine were the most common substances.

Lederer, L. & Wetzel, C. (2014). The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities. Annals of Health Law 23, 61-91.

CHILD WELFARE INVOLVEMENT AMONG TRAFFICKING SURVIVORS

Rights4Girls compiled the following findings from several research reports. Sources for each statistic are below.

- “In 2013, 60% of the child sex trafficking victims recovered as a part of an FBI nationwide raid from over 70 cities were children from foster care or group homes.”^{iv}

- In 2012, Connecticut reported 88 child victims of sex trafficking. Eighty-six were child welfare involved, and most reported abuse while in foster care or residential placement.^v
- In 2012, Los Angeles County, California reported that of the 72 commercially sexually exploited girls in their Succeed Through Achievement and Resilience (STAR) Court Program. 56 were child-welfare involved. (STAR is a program offering alternatives to detention for girls arrested for involvement in prostitution or other forms of commercial sexual exploitation. It provides a range of comprehensive services and support designed to allow minors to be supported as victims vs criminals)^{vi}
- In 2013, 85% of trafficking victims in New York had prior child welfare involvement.^{vii}
- In Alameda County, California, a one-year review of local CSEC (Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children) victim populations found that 53% had lived in a group home, and 83% had previously run away from home.^{viii}

Rights4Girls (2015) Accessed at <http://rights4girls.org/resources/?filter=Fact%20Sheet>

^{iv} “Finding and Stopping Child Sex Trafficking.” NPR, August 1, 2013. Available at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=207901614>

^v Connecticut Department of Children and Families, *A Child Welfare Response to Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* (2012).

^{vi} Walker, K., *California Child Welfare Council, Ending the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children: A Call for Multi-System Collaboration in California* (2013), p. 10.

^{vii} House Ways and Means Hearing on “Protecting Vulnerable Children: Preventing & Addressing Sex Trafficking of Youth in Foster Care” Representative Louise M. Slaughter Human Resources Subcommittee Testimony October 23, 2013, available at <https://gop-waysandmeans.house.gov/hearing-on-preventing-and-addressing-sex-trafficking-of-youth-in-foster-care/>

^{viii} *Motivating, Inspiring, Supporting, and Serving Sexually Exploited Youth (MISSEY)*, MISSEY Data Report (June 2009).”

TRAFFICKING CASES INVESTIGATED BY FEDERALLY FUNDED TASK FORCES

Of confirmed human trafficking cases investigated by federally-funded task forces between 2008 and 2010, 54% of victims were 17 years of age or younger and 31% were between the ages of 18 and 24.

All but a handful of victims were U.S. nationals.

Banks, D. & Kyckelhahn, T. (2011). *Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010. Special Report*, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

POTENTIAL TRAFFICKING CASES REPORTED TO NATIONAL HUMAN TRAFFICKING RESOURCE CENTER HOTLINE

In 2018 a total of 10,949 unique cases of potential human trafficking were reported to the hotline. Of these:

- 22% of potential victims were minors
- 14% of victims were U.S. citizens or legal permanent residents

Polaris. (2019). 2018 Statistics. Accessed at <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/states>

ⁱ Roe-Sepowitz, D., & Jabola-Carolus, K. (January 2019). *Sex Trafficking in Hawaii: Part II, The Stories of Survivors*. Arizona State University, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women. ASU STIR.

ⁱⁱ Carpenter, A. & Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). *Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report*.

^{iv} Gragg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. A WESTAT Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family services*.

^v Gragg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children. A WESTAT Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family services*.

^{vi} Roe-Sepowitz, D., & Jabola-Carolus, K. (January 2019). *Sex Trafficking in Hawaii: Part II, The Stories of Survivors*. Arizona State University, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women. ASU STIR.

^{vii} Reed, S.M., Kennedy, M.A., Decker, M.R., & Cimino, A.N. (2019) Friends, Family and Boyfriends: An Analysis of Relationship Pathways into Commercial Sexual Exploitation. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 90, 1-12.

^{viii} Hickle, K & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2017). "Curiosity and a Pimp:" Exploring Sex Trafficking Victimization in Experiences of Entering Sex Trade Industry Work Among Participants in a Prostitution Diversion Program. *Women & Criminal Justice* 27(2), 122-138.

^{ix} Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). *Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio*. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report.

^x Roe-Sepowitz, D., & Jabola-Carolus, K. (January 2019). *Sex Trafficking in Hawaii: Part II, The Stories of Survivors*. Arizona State University, Hawaii State Commission on the Status of Women. ASU STIR.

^{xi} Gragg, F., Petta, I., Bernstein, H., Eisen, K., & Quinn, L. (2007). *New York Prevalence Study of Commercially Sexually Exploited Children*. A WESTAT Report prepared for the New York State Office of Children and Family services.

^{xii} Carpenter, A. & Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

^{xiii} Carpenter, A. & Gates, J. (2016). *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County*. Accessed at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249857.pdf>

^{xiv} Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). *Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio*. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report.

^{xv} Currier, A & Feehs, K.E. (2019). *2018 Federal Human Trafficking Report*. Report from the Human Trafficking Institute. Accessed at <https://www.traffickingmatters.com/2018-federal-human-trafficking-report/>

^{xvi} Reid, J.A., Huard, J. & Haskell, R.A. (2015). *Journal of Crime and Justice* 38 (3), 361-376.

^{xvii} Hickle, K & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2017). "Curiosity and a Pimp:" Exploring Sex Trafficking Victimization in Experiences of Entering Sex Trade Industry Work among Participants in a Prostitution Diversion Program. *Women & Criminal Justice* 27(2), 122-138.

^{xviii} Hickle, K., & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2018). *Adversity and Intervention Needs Among Girls in Residential Care with Experiences of Commercial Sexual Exploitation*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 93, 17-23.

^{xix} Cole, J., Sprang, G., Lee, R. & Cohen, J. (2016). *The Trauma of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth: A Comparison of CSE Victims to Sexual Abuse Victims in a Clinical Sample*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31(1), 122-146.

^{xx} Varma, S., Gillespie, S., McCracken, C. & Greenbaum, V. (2015.) *Characteristics of Child Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Sex Trafficking Victims Presenting for Medical Care in the United States*. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 44, 98-105.

- ^{xxi} Lederer, L. & Wetzel, C. (2014). *The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities*. *Annals of Health Law* 23, 61-91.
- ^{xxii} Raphael, J. & Ashley, J. (2008). *Domestic Sex Trafficking of Chicago Women and Girls. A Report from the Schiller DuCanto & Fleck Family Law Center, DePaul University College of Law, and the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority*.
- ^{xxiii} Lederer, L. & Wetzel, C. (2014). *The Health Consequences of Sex Trafficking and Their Implications for Identifying Victims in Healthcare Facilities*. *Annals of Health Law* 23, 61-91.
- ^{xxiv} Williamson, C., Perdue, T., Belton, L., & Burns, O. (2012). *Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio. Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Final Report*.
- ^{xxv} Roe-Sepowitz, D., Gallagher, J., Hogan, K., Ward, T., Denecour, N. & Bracy, K. (2019). *A Six-Year Analysis of Sex Trafficking of Minors: Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns*. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29, 608-629.

Characteristics of Women in the Sex Trade in the U.S.

Originally published: February 2017.

Updated with new data: January 2020.

Overview

In this fact sheet we provide information garnered from research with women and girls in prostitution. These research studies, and this fact sheet, do not differentiate between trafficked and non-trafficked individuals. We have devoted a separate fact sheet, titled “What We Know About Victims of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation in the U.S.” to research done among trafficking victims; primarily those under 18 when they were first exploited.

None of the findings can be construed to be true for the universe of women and girls in the sex trade in the U.S. for the simple reason that none of the research was done among representative samples. However, the characteristics of victims in these various samples are often similar, and there are no reliable data that contradict what these studies have found.

The facts and findings we have are based only on the “tip of the iceberg.” We can only measure what and who we can see. Who is missing from most of the research findings? We are missing, for example, those involved in some parts of the “indoors” sex trade, such as phone sex and call-out prostitution. In addition, people who are so controlled by a pimp/trafficker that they cannot be interviewed, are not represented.

Bear in mind, then, that the numbers of people involved in the sex trade are greater – by how much we cannot know – than what research reports. And the characteristics we report for those involved in the sex trade – like age of entry – might be somewhat different if we were able to interview more people who are involved in the least accessible parts of the industry.

A word about statements on the “average age of entry” that are often bandied about as if they were conclusive – they are NOT. We often see the blanket statement made, “The average age of entry into prostitution is 14 (or 12, or 15).” Any blanket statement like this is incorrect because we do not have empirical data to support this conclusion.

Why? Because every single study that asks sexually exploited people when they were first prostituted or exploited is done among a convenience sample. Researchers ask girls who are in homeless shelters, or women who are incarcerated. None of those samples are representative of the universe of those who are sexually exploited in this country. Each of those studies is biased by the ages and types of people who are questioned.

One research study, for example, found that the median age of entry into prostitution was 14. However, the sample was comprised of girls all under the age of 16. Another study of women under 25 found the average age of entry was 16. When research samples have older women in them, then the age of entry tends to be higher.

There are some data indicating that juveniles in this country are trafficked. The best of that data is summarized here. However, we simply cannot extrapolate from these, or any other convenience samples, to an overall fact about the average age of entry into prostitution.

Summary of Findings

AGE OF ENTRY INTO THE SEX TRADE

Many research studies show large percentages of participants entering the sex trade before they are 18 years of age.

- Three percent of women in a Chicago study first exchanged sex for money before they were 11 years old. An additional 33% did so between the ages of 12-15.ⁱ
- Several studies have found that girls of color enter the sex trade at an earlier age than white girls in research samples.^{ii iii}
- Research has found that a majority of individuals in the sex trade have been victims of childhood sexual assault. In 21 studies on prostitution, the lowest percentage of women found to have been sexually abused as children is 33%, with a high of 84%. Please refer to the fact sheet “What We Know About Victims of Trafficking” for specific findings.
- For comparison, multiple research studies support the finding that the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse of girls in the general U.S. population is nearly 10 percent.^{iv} Thus, the prevalence of childhood sexual abuse in samples of prostituted females is three to nine times higher than that of the general population.

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ASSAULT AND PROSTITUTION

The link between childhood sexual assault and entering prostitution is clear. However, many child sex abuse victims do not become involved in prostitution. Several studies have found that childhood sexual assault is not an independent predictor of initiation into the sex trade.*

- Research suggests that running away from home, or homelessness, may be an intervening variable, combining with early childhood sexual assault to create the conditions for prostitution entry.
- One study determined that a significantly greater proportion of prostituted youth who were sexually abused could be classified as runaways (87% compared to 61% of sexually abused youth who were not prostituted).^v

*See also p. 39, “Women and Girls Trafficked in the U.S.”

HOMELESSNESS AND PROSTITUTION

Indeed, several studies have found that those who entered the sex trade at a younger age were more likely to have run away from home or been homeless than those who entered the sex trade as adults.*^{vi vii}

- Several studies confirm links between childhood sexual abuse, being homeless, and involvement in the sex trade, often as a way to procure money for food, shelter, and drugs.^{viii ix}
- Among homeless adolescents in one study, researchers found that gay males and heterosexual females were the most likely teens to engage in “survival sex.”^x NB There are very little reliable data on transgender people, and little on gay and lesbian people at this time.
- A study done among Native American women in Minnesota found that 98% of prostituted women were currently or formerly homeless.^{xi}

*See also p. 39, “Women and Girls Trafficked in the U.S.”

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PROSTITUTION

Multiple research studies confirm that drug and alcohol use, abuse, and addiction are quite common among those in the sex trade.^{xii xiii xiv xv}

- Research also confirms that drug/alcohol use and abuse can both precede a woman’s entry into the sex trade, and develop as a consequence of involvement in the sex trade. In other words, some people enter the sex trade to pay for drugs; others consume drugs to cope with their involvement in the sex industry.^{xvi}
- Those who enter the sex trade as juveniles have been found, in multiple studies, to start drug use at a younger age than those who enter as adults. However, juveniles were found to start after they entered the sex trade, whereas adult drug users in the sex trade began drug use prior to entering the industry.^{xvii xviii}

- There has been some speculation as to whether drug use is more prevalent among those who are involved in the sex trade in the streets, versus those who are involved in indoor venues. Although on the whole there is very little research, a few studies indicate that substance abuse in indoor venues may be as much of a problem as it is on the street. ^{xix xx xxi}

Detailed Findings and Discussion

AVERAGE AGE OF ENTRY

It will never be possible to answer the question about the average age of entry into the sex trade in the U.S., since we cannot construct a representative sample. Many research studies are done among young people who are in custody or in social services programs, because they are “convenient”: we can find and interview them. This is one reason why the average age of entry cited in many research studies is 12-14. An average age of 14 can come from a sample of girls 16 or younger; since the sample is made up of quite young people, it will be lower than the average age of entry in samples containing older girls and women.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that all research studies show large percentages of participants entering the sex trade before they are 18 years of age.

WOMEN WHO ENTERED PROSTITUTION PRIOR TO 18

Those entering the sex trade as juveniles appear to start very young. When researchers questioned women, all of whom had begun in prostitution before age 18, they found that almost two-thirds began their regular involvement when they were fifteen years old or less. Over a third were between the ages of 11 and 13, and another third were between 14 and 15.

Nixon et al. (2002). The Everyday Occurrence: Violence in the Lives of Girls Exploited through Prostitution. Violence against Women 8 (9): 1016-43.

JUVENILES IN PROSTITUTION

In a sample of 44 juveniles ranging in age from 13 to 18 years of age in prostitution, 89% were 16 or younger when they began.

Nadon et al. (1998). *Antecedents to Prostitution: Childhood Victimization*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 13 (2), 206-221.

WOMEN IN THE SEX TRADE IN CHICAGO

Research with a sample of 222 women in the sex trade in Chicago found that three percent reported they first exchanged sex for money before they were 11 years of age. Almost 33% first exchanged sex for money between the ages of 12 and 15.

Raphael & Shapiro (2002). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago: A Research Study Report*, Chicago, 2002.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN IN PROSTITUTION - GENERAL

SURVEY OF ADJUDICATED PROSTITUTED WOMEN

Researchers surveyed 478 adult women in a prostitution diversion program in a large southwestern state between the years 2012 and 2014. All had been charged with a prostitution-related crime and signed a plea agreement, which required them to complete a diversion program.

- 30% of participants entered the sex trade industry before age 18.
- 40% reported experiencing both indoor and outdoor sex trade activities, 38% reported only indoor experience, and 22.3% reported exclusively working outdoors.
- Nearly half (48.1%) disclosed physical abuse by a parent or guardian.
- 53.2% reported being sexually molested and 40% reported being raped as a child.
- Half of participants reported having a parent or guardian who had a problem with drugs or alcohol.

- 36% reported social service involvement with their family, and one quarter (25.7%) had been placed in foster care as a child.
- 58.3% reported running away from home.
- 29% reported ever attempting suicide.
- 10% reported gang involvement.

Hickle, K. & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2017). "Curiosity and a Pimp:" Exploring Sex Trafficking Victimization in Experiences of Entering Sex Trade Industry Work among Participants in a Prostitution Diversion Program. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 27(2), 122-138.

EXPERIENCES OF NATIVE AMERICAN PROSTITUTED WOMEN

Researchers interviewed 105 Native women who were in prostitution in Minneapolis, Duluth, and Bemidji, Minnesota, in a non-representative sample that can, however, provide useful information about the experiences of these women. The average age when they began in the sex trade industry was 21 years, but 39% had been used in prostitution when they were younger than 18 years.

- 59% were hit or beaten by a caregiver until injured or bruised.
- 63% were sexually abused as a child.
- 57% had family members also involved in prostitution.
- 49% gave most of their money from prostitution to pimps.
- 98% of the women were currently or previously homeless.
- 78% had been diagnosed with depression.
- 28% had been diagnosed with PTSD.
- 33% had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder.
- 40% had been psychiatrically hospitalized.

Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark, C. & Hudon E. (2011). *Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota. Report from the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Prostitution Research & Education*, accessed at <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/garden-truth-prostitution-and-trafficking-native-women-minnesota/>

RACE/ETHNICITY

In several research samples, findings showed that girls of color began in the sex trade earlier than others in the sample.

AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN IN COOK COUNTY JAIL

African American women in one Cook County jail sample entered prostitution earlier than the other women in the sample.

McClanahan et al. (1999). *Pathways into Prostitution among Female Jail Detainees*. *Psychiatric Services* 50(2): 1606-13.

VICTORIA, BRITISH COLUMBIA RESEARCH

Researchers in Victoria, B.C. found that the female respondents' median age of entry was 18 years, with that of Aboriginal women still younger at the median age of 17.

Benoit, C. & Millar, A. (2001). *Dispelling Myths and Understanding Realities: Working Conditions, Health Status, and Exiting Experiences of Sex Workers*. Report, Victoria, B.C., 2001.

WOMEN WHO ENTERED PROSTITUTION PRIOR TO 18

Although there were no differences in the average age of entry in prostitution in another Canadian sample, Aboriginal respondents were significantly more likely to be involved in prostitution for longer lengths of time.

Nixon et al. (2002). *The Everyday Occurrence: Violence in the Lives of Girls Exploited through Prostitution*. *Violence against Women* 8 (9): 1016-43.

ENTERING THE SEX TRADE AS AN ADULT VS AS A CHILD

Researchers have also found differences between adult women who first traded sex as a juvenile and those who began as adults.

WOMEN IN THE SEX TRADE IN CHICAGO

In a sample of 222 adults currently in prostitution in metropolitan Chicago, “early starters,” those who first traded sex before the age of 15, were more likely to have run away from home, used drugs or alcohol as a teen, grown up with someone who was involved in prostitution, been involved in a wider range of prostitution activities, have greater health problems as adults, and were less likely to graduate from high school.

Raphael & Shapiro (2002). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago*. Research report.

MINNEAPOLIS STUDY OF WOMEN IN THE SEX TRADE

In research with 103 respondents in Minneapolis, the median age of juvenile “starters” in the sex trade was 15 years of age and for adult “starters” it was 22 years of age. Juvenile “starters” were more likely to have reported running away from home and to have used drugs at an earlier age. Participants who first traded sex as adults were 3.44 times more likely to have used drugs prior to first trade compared with those who first traded sex as youth, indicating that involvement in the sex trade for the older starters may have been prompted by the need for money to buy drugs.

Martin et al. (2010). *Meaningful Differences: Comparison of Adult Women Who First Traded Sex as a juvenile Versus as an Adult*. *Violence Against Women* 16 (11) 1252-1269.

VANCOUVER, CANADA RESEARCH

In a sample of almost 200 women in Vancouver, the average age of entry into the sex trade was 16.98 years of age.

Cler-Cunningham Leonard and Christine Christensen (2001). *Violence Against Women in Vancouver’s Street Level Sex Trade and the Police Response*. Vancouver, B.C.: Prostitution Alternatives Counseling Education (P.A.C.E.), 2001. <https://www.vcn.bc.ca/pacekids/report/>

CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ASSAULT AND PROSTITUTION

WOMEN INVOLVED IN STREET PROSTITUTION, 2003

In a sample of 43 women involved or formerly involved in prostitution on the streets recruited via multiple methods (word of mouth, enrolled in an intervention program, and incarcerated), 74% reported experiencing childhood sexual abuse. For eight women, molestation began during infancy or before age three.

Dalla et al. (2003). "You Just Give Them What They Want and Pray They Don't Kill You." Violence against Women 9(11): 1367-1394.

MIAMI RESEARCH WITH PROSTITUTED WOMEN

In a large sample of 294 prostituted women on Miami's streets, 70.4% were sexually abused as children.

Kurtz et al. (2004). Sex Work and "Date" Violence. Violence against Women, 10(4): 357-385.

WOMEN IN STREET PROSTITUTION, WASHINGTON, D.C.

Forty-four percent of a sample of 100 women in street prostitution in Washington, D.C. reported unwanted sexual contact as children.

Valera et al. (2001). Perceived Health Needs of Inner-City Street Prostitutes: A Preliminary Study. American Journal of Health Behavior 25(1): 50-59.

FLORIDA WOMEN INVOLVED IN STREET PROSTITUTION

Sixty-nine percent of a sample of 102 women in prostitution on the streets in Florida said they had been sexually abused as children.

Arnold et al. (2001). Perpetrators as Victims: Understanding Violence by Female Street-Walking Prostitutes. Violence and Victims 16(2): 145-59.

ADOLESCENTS INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION

Researchers compared the characteristics of 45 female adolescents in the sex trade with 37 female adolescents not in prostitution, recruited from similar racial and family socio-economic backgrounds. Sixty-eight percent of those in the sex trade were victims of childhood sexual abuse, while 57% of those not in prostitution had been affected by childhood sexual abuse. This is a small difference. In both groups the perpetrator of the abuse was reported to be a family member. The average age of onset of the victimization was 7.8 years for the prostituted girls and 6.6 years for those not in the sex trade. However, a significantly greater proportion of prostituted youth could be classified as runaways (87% of prostituted youth compared to 61% who were not). Running away, or homelessness, may be an intervening variable, combining with early childhood sexual assault to create the conditions for prostitution entry.

Nadon et al. (1998). *Antecedents to Prostitution: Childhood Victimization*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 13(2): 206-221.

HOMELESSNESS AND PROSTITUTION

The connections between prostitution and homelessness are self-evident. Homeless individuals may trade sex for money, food, shelter, alcohol, or drugs. While on the streets they may also be prey to pimps and traffickers who recruit them into the sex trade, or to customers who proposition them for paid sex.

NB Research in this area does not produce necessarily accurate results. Researchers usually obtain access to youth on the streets or in youth shelters. Those under the control of a pimp/trafficker will not be available to researchers at these locations. The figures produced by this research thus cannot be said to be in any way definitive.

HOMELESS YOUNG ADULTS IN THREE MIDWESTERN CITIES

One hundred forty-four homeless young adults were interviewed in three Midwestern cities. Sixteen percent reported selling sex and 32% had friends who have done so.

Tyler & Beal (2010). *The High-Risk Environment of Homeless Young Adults: Consequences for Physical and Sexual Victimization*. *Violence & Victims* 25(1):101-15.

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH HOMELESS YOUTH IN THE MIDWEST

Forty homeless youth in several Midwestern states participated in in-depth interviews in homeless youth shelters and on the streets. Seven youths (18%), all female, in the study had direct experience with trading sex for food, shelter, money, or drugs. Six of the young girls were coerced or pressured to trade sex by boyfriends or female friends.

Tyler & Johnson (2006). *Trading Sex: Voluntary or Coerced? The Experiences of Homeless Youth*. *Journal of Sex Research* 43: 208-216.

In quite a few studies, between 10% and 20% of homeless youth interviewed in social services settings or on the street have been found to have traded or been selling sex. Two research examples suffice to demonstrate the finding.

FEMALE HOMELESS AND RUNAWAY YOUTH - 2004

Three hundred sixty-one female homeless and runaway adolescents from five Midwestern cities were interviewed in a 2004 research report. Thirty-two percent said they had been sexually abused by adult caretakers. Those abused were more likely to run away from home at an earlier age and spent more time on the street. They were also more likely to trade sex for food, money, shelter, and drugs.

Chen et al. (2004). *Early Sexual Abuse, Street Adversity, and Drug Use among Female Homeless and Runaway Adolescents in the Midwest*. *Journal of Drug Issues* 34(1): 1-21.

RESEARCH WITH 372 HOMELESS YOUTH

A total of 372 homeless youth were interviewed, half male and with a median age of 17 years, in Seattle. Eleven percent of the adolescents reported trading sex at least once.

Tyler et al. (2001). *The Effects of a High-Risk Environment on the Sexual Victimization of Homeless and Runaway Youth*. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16(4):151-176.

Researchers have also confirmed earlier findings about the relationship between childhood sexual assault, homelessness, and sex trade involvement.

TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION AMONG HOMELESS YOUTH IN NEW ORLEANS

Among a convenience sample of 99 homeless youth ages 18-24 who were present at a shelter in New Orleans over four months in 2014, 25% had participated in the sex trade. Eleven percent of the sample had been trafficked for sex.

Murphy, Laura T, Taylor, Rae, Bolden, Christian L. (2015). *Trafficking and Exploitive Labor Among Homeless Youth in New Orleans*, *Modern Slavery Research Project*, Loyola University, New Orleans

TRAFFICKING AND PROSTITUTION AMONG HOMELESS YOUTH IN NEW YORK CITY

Among a sample of 174 homeless youth aged 18-23 who attended a New York crisis center or drop-in programs, researchers found that 20.1% had been trafficked for sex (12%) or prostituted (12%).

Bigelsen, Jayne, et.al. (2013). *Homelessness, Survival Sex and Human Trafficking: As Experienced by the Youth of Covenant House New York*.

MONTREAL FEMALE YOUTH LIVING ON THE STREETS

In a study of 330 female street youth in Montreal, in a sample that contained both those in the sex trade and those not, large percentages of those not in the sex trade were victims of childhood sexual assault (63%). In this sample, childhood sexual assault was not an independent predictor of initiation into the sex trade. However, being on the street younger than 16 years old predicted prostitution involvement.

Weber et al. (2004). *Predictors of Initiation into Prostitution among Female Street Youths*. *Journal of Urban Health: Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine*, 81(4): 584-595.

HOMELESS ADOLESCENTS IN EIGHT MIDWESTERN CITIES

A large sample of 428 homeless adolescents on the streets and in shelters, ranging from 16-19 years old, were interviewed. Researchers found that gay males and heterosexual females were most likely to engage in survival sex. For each year of increase in age, the likelihood of engaging in survival sex increased 1.5 times. Having been sexually abused by a caretaker, and having spent time directly on the streets, each increased the likelihood by two times. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual runaways were more likely to have been sexually abused by caretakers than were heterosexual runaways.

Whitbeck, et al. (2004). *Mental Disorder, Subsistence Strategies, and Victimization among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Homeless and Runaway Adolescents*. *Journal of Sex Research*, 41(4): 329-342.

CORRELATION BETWEEN RUNAWAY EPISODES AND “SURVIVAL SEX”

In another research study, Tyler et al. found that participation in the sex trade correlated with a great number of runaway episodes for homeless youth.

Tyler et al. (2001). *The Effects of a High-Risk Environment on the Sexual Victimization of Homeless and Runaway Youth*. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 16(4): 151-176.

INTERVIEWS WITH HOMELESS FEMALES IN THE MIDWEST

Interviews with 361 homeless females were interviewed in the Midwest. The median age at the first time they ran away was 14 years. Thirty-two percent had been sexually abused while still living at home. Researchers found that young women from sexually abusive family backgrounds were likely to have spent a greater portion of their time on the streets as compared to their non-abused counterparts. Young women who were previously sexually abused were also more likely to have engaged in trading sex. Age by itself positively predicted sex trading; older adolescents were more likely to have traded sex for food, shelter, money, or drugs compared to their younger counterparts.

Tyler et al. (2000). *The Effects of Early Sexual Abuse on Later Sexual Victimization among Female Homeless and Runaway Adolescents*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15: 235-250.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PROSTITUTION

Only very small percentages of participants did not use alcohol or drugs while engaged in prostitution, in research samples with women in the sex trade.

There are two research issues to bear in mind when considering these findings.

First, it is important to remember that most research with girls and women in prostitution occurs with individuals in street venues, as it is difficult and often impossible to obtain access to those who operate indoors. A few research studies with women in indoor venues do find similar addiction to alcohol and drugs.

Furthermore, obtaining access to girls and women in the sex trade under control of a pimp/trafficker is difficult, so these research samples may underrepresent these individuals.

A second research issue involves sequencing: do women and girls become involved in prostitution to make money to support a pre-existing addiction, or do they turn to alcohol and other drugs after being active in the sex trade to cope with the trauma related to prostitution? Research has well established the existence of both scenarios.

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HOENIX - RESEARCH WITH FEMALES IN DIVERSION PROGRAM

Research with 389 female attendees of a city-sponsored diversion program for adults arrested for prostitution in Phoenix, Arizona between the years 2004 and 2006 found that 41% were using crack/cocaine, 39.8% alcohol, and 29% other substances, including speed and heroin. These individuals were involved in a variety of indoor and outdoor prostitution venues.

Clarke et al. (2012). *Age at Entry into Prostitution: Relationship to Drug Use, Race, Suicide, Education Level, Childhood Abuse, and Family Experiences*. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 22 (3). [No pages-this is an online publication]

DRUG USE AMONG WOMEN IN THE MINNEAPOLIS SEX TRADE

In research with 117 women in Minneapolis, 87% of those who started in the sex trade before the age of 18 and 80% who began at 18 years or older were drug users.

Martin et al. (2010). Meaningful Differences: Comparison of Adult Women Who First Traded Sex as a Juvenile Versus as an Adult. Violence Against Women 16(11): 1252-1269.

DRUG USE BY PROSTITUTED WOMEN ON THE STREET IN MIAMI

In research with 294 women on the street in Miami, researchers found that 78% used crack, 37.4% cocaine, and 20.1% heroin. Alcohol was used by 75% of the women.

Kurtz et al. (2004). Sex Work and "Date" Violence. Violence against Women 10(4): 357-385.

CHICAGO WOMEN IN THE SEX TRADE

In a Chicago study of 222 women in the sex trade, 100% of the women used drugs and alcohol while on the streets.

Raphael & Shapiro (2003). Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago: A Research Study. Report, Chicago.

WOMEN INVOLVED IN STREET PROSTITUTION

Among a smaller sample (43 individuals) of women in the Midwest, 95% reported routine drug use.

Dalla (2000). Exposing the "Pretty Woman" Myth: A Qualitative Examination of the Lives of Female Streetwalking Prostitutes. Journal of Sex Research 37(4): 344-53.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN ADDICTED TO CRACK COCAINE

Researchers interviewed 203 urban African-American women in two drug treatment programs in two large metropolitan cities. All of the women were addicted to crack cocaine but not all were active in the sex industry, enabling researchers to compare the drug use of both groups. They found that the women in prostitution were more severely addicted than those who were not prostituted, and they were using a greater number of drugs to cope with experiences associated with prostitution, specifically feelings of guilt and sexual distress.

Young et al. (2000). *Prostitution, Drug Use, and Coping with Psychological Distress*. *Journal of Drug Issues* 30(4): 789-800.

Research studies establish the existence of two scenarios: women and girls become involved in prostitution to make money to support a pre-existing addiction. In addition, women turn to alcohol and other drugs after being active in the sex trade to cope with prostitution.

EXOTIC DANCERS IN BALTIMORE

Researchers in Baltimore interviewed 25 exotic dancers and 15 staff members in a Baltimore strip club. One third of the dancers said that drug use played a pivotal role in their initiation of dancing – a desperate solution for funding their drug addictions. The majority did not use drugs when they began to dance.

Lilleston, Pamela S., Rueben, Jacqueline & Sherman, Susan G. (2015). *Exotic Dance in Baltimore: From Entry to STI/HIV Risk, Women & Health*, 55:5, 595-611, DOI: 10.1080/03630242.2015.1022812

CHICAGO WOMEN IN THE SEX TRADE

In research with 222 women in Chicago engaged in the sex trade in a variety of indoor venues as well as outdoors, researchers asked whether the women had stepped up drug usage during prostitution. The overwhelming majority increased drug usage during their time in the sex trade.

Raphael & Shapiro (2003). Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago: A Research Study. Report, Chicago.

WOMEN INVOLVED IN STREET PROSTITUTION

In a sample of 43 women in prostitution on the streets in a midsized Midwestern city, 95% were addicted to drugs, mostly alcohol and crack cocaine. Thirty-nine percent reported that they had turned to prostitution to support an established drug habit; nearly one in five (19.5%) said prostitution entry and drug abuse occurred simultaneously.

Dalla (2000). Exposing the “Pretty Woman” Myth: A Qualitative Examination of the Lives of Female Streetwalking Prostitutes. The Journal of Sex Research 37(4): 344-353

JAILED WOMEN IN CHICAGO

Researchers with a large sample of female jail detainees in Chicago between 1991 and 1993 concluded that drug abuse was as likely to follow the onset of prostitution as it was to precede it.

McClanahan et al. (1999). Pathways into Prostitution among Female Jail Detainees. Psychiatric Services 50(12): 1606-13.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN PROSTITUTION: JUVENILE VS ADULT ENTRY

PHOENIX - RESEARCH WITH FEMALES IN DIVERSION PROGRAM

Researchers who investigated 389 female attendees at a Phoenix, Arizona diversion program who were arrested for prostitution corroborated the finding. For early starters, age of entry and prostitution involvement were roughly similar, while for

older starters, there was a ten-year difference between first drug use (18 years) and prostitution entry (28 years).

Clarke et al. (2012). *Age at Entry into Prostitution: Relationship to Drug Use, Race, Suicide, Education Level, Childhood Abuse, and Family Experiences*. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 22(3).

DRUG USE AMONG WOMEN IN THE MINNEAPOLIS SEX TRADE

In interviews with 117 individuals in the sex trade, investigators found that participants who first traded sex as adults were 3.44 times more likely to have used drugs prior to first sex trade compared with those who first traded sex as youth. Juvenile starters first used drugs, on average, at an earlier age than adult starters did, but they tended to first use drugs *after* entering the sex trade. They conclude that drug use did not generally lead to sex trading for juvenile starters.

Martin et al. (2010). *Meaningful Differences: Comparison of Adult Women Who First Traded Sex as a Juvenile Versus as an Adult*. *Violence against Women* 16(11): 1252-1269.

WOMEN ARRESTED OR CONVICTED FOR PROSTITUTION OFFENSES

One hundred and six women either serving time or awaiting trial for prostitution offenses were interviewed in a northeastern city jail. The median age for first paid sex was 18, but the median age for heroin use was 18.5, and 20 years for cocaine, indicating that serious drug addiction occurred after involvement in prostitution.

Norton-Hawk, Maureen A., *Drugs and Prostitution: A Complex Equation*. Unpublished paper.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PROSTITUTION IN INDOOR VENUES

As most research has been done with women engaged in street prostitution, the question is often asked whether substance abuse is as major a problem for women and girls working indoors – in escort agencies, massage parlors, and strip clubs. Although on the whole there is very little research, a few studies indicate that substance abuse in indoor venues may be as much of a problem as it is on the street.

WOMEN ARRESTED OR CONVICTED FOR PROSTITUTION OFFENSES

Norton-Hawk found that the heroin-addicted women in her sample were more likely to have engaged in an indoor venue of the sex industry, such as stripping or escort services. Heroin-addicted women generally said that the reason they first sold sex was to finance their drug addiction, but the researcher found a difference between Whites and the African-Americans, the latter who turned to drugs only after being involved in prostitution.

Norton-Hawk, Maureen A., Drugs and Prostitution: A Complex Equation. Unpublished paper.

EXOTIC DANCERS IN BALTIMORE

Of the 25 exotic dancers and 15 staff members in a Baltimore strip club, marijuana was used by over one-third of the dancers and 20% of staff. One-fifth of the dancers and ten percent of staff reported current use of heroin or crack/cocaine.

Sherman et al. (2011). More than a Dance: The Production of Sexual Health Risk in the Exotic Dance Clubs in Baltimore, USA. Social Science & Medicine 73: 475-481.

CHICAGO WOMEN IN THE SEX TRADE

In a sample of 222 women in the sex trade in Chicago, no women involved in escort services or the streets *never* used drugs or alcohol during their involvement in the sex trade. Only 4.7% of exotic dancers were free of these substances during prostitution. On the contrary, the majority of women engaged in exotic dancing, escort services, and street prostitution increased the frequency and/or the number of different substances used during their involvement.

Use During...	Exotic Dancing	Street Prostitution	Escort
No drugs/alcohol	4.7%	0%	0%
Same drugs, more frequently	27.9%	25.7%	42.9%
More kinds of drugs	9.3%	14.9%	3.6%
More kinds of drugs, more frequently	18.6%	58.4%	46.4%
No change in drug/alcohol use	16.3%	4.0%	3.0%
Same drugs, less frequently	11.6%	0%	3.6%
Fewer drugs, less frequently	4.7%	0%	3.6%
Fewer kinds of drugs	2.3%	1.0%	0%

Raphael & Shapiro (2003). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago: A Research Study*. Report, Chicago.

MUSTANG RANCH, NV BROTHEL RESEARCH

In her research at Mustang Ranch, a legal Nevada brothel, one researcher found that all the women were addicted to drugs, with “quite a few” embarking on their substance abuse once at the ranch.

Albert, A. (2001). *Brothel: Mustang Ranch and Its Women*. New York: Random House.

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- i Raphael & Shapiro (2002). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago: A Research Study Report*, Chicago, 2002.
- ii McClanahan et al. ((1999). *Pathways into Prostitution among Female Jail Detainees*. *Psychiatric Services* 50(2): 1606-13.
- iii Benoit, C. & Millar, A. (2001). *Dispelling Myths and Understanding Realities: Working Conditions, Health Status, and Exiting Experiences of Sex Workers*. Report, Victoria, B.C., 2001.
- iv Finkelhor et al. (2005). *The Victimization of Children and Youth: A Comprehensive, National Survey*. *Child Maltreatment* 10(1): 5-25.
- v Nadon et al. (1998). *Antecedents to Prostitution: Childhood Victimization*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 13 (2): 206-221.
- vi Raphael & Shapiro (2002). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago*. Research report.
- vii Martin et al. (2010). *Meaningful Differences: Comparison of Adult Women Who First Traded Sex as a Juvenile Versus as an Adult*. *Violence against Women* 16 (11) 1252-1269.
- viii Tyler et al. (2000). *The Effects of Early Sexual Abuse on Later Sexual Victimization among Female Homeless and Runaway Adolescents*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 15: 235-250.
- ix *Early Sexual Abuse, Street Adversity, and Drug Use among Female Homeless and Runaway Adolescents in the Midwest*. *Journal of Drug Issues* 34(1): 1-21.
- x Whitbeck et al. (2004). *Mental Disorder, Subsistence Strategies, and Victimization among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Homeless and Runaway Adolescents*. *Journal of Sex Research*, 41(4): 329-342.
- xi Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark, C. & Hudon E. (2011). *Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota*. Report from the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Prostitution Research & Education, accessed at <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/garden-truth-prostitution-and-trafficking-native-women-minnesota/>
- xii Kurtz et al. (2004). *Sex Work and "Date" Violence*. *Violence against Women* 10(4): 357-385.
- xiii Martin et al. (2010). *Meaningful Differences: Comparison of Adult Women Who First Traded Sex as a Juvenile Versus as an Adult*. *Violence against Women* 16 (11): 1252-1269.
- xiv Hickley, K. & Roe-Sepowitz, D. (2017). "Curiosity and a Pimp:" Exploring Sex Trafficking Victimization in Experiences of Entering Sex Trade Industry Work among Participants in a Prostitution Diversion Program. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 27(2), 122-138.
- xv Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark, C. & Hudon E. (2011). *Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota*. Report from the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Prostitution Research & Education, accessed at <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/garden-truth-prostitution-and-trafficking-native-women-minnesota/>

^{xvi} McClanahan et al. (1999). *Pathways into Prostitution among Female Jail Detainees*. *Psychiatric Services* 50(12): 1606-13.

^{xvii} Martin et al. (2010). *Meaningful Differences: Comparison of Adult Women Who First Traded Sex as a Juvenile Versus as an Adult*. *Violence against Women* 16(11): 1252-1269.

^{xviii} Clarke et al. (2012). *Age at Entry into Prostitution: Relationship to Drug Use, Race, Suicide, Education Level, Childhood Abuse, and Family Experiences*. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 22(3).

^{xix} Norton Hawk. *Drugs and Prostitution: A Complex Equation*. *Unpublished paper*.

^{xx} Raphael & Shapiro (2003). *Sisters Speak Out: The Lives and Needs of Prostituted Women in Chicago: A Research Study*. Report, Chicago.

^{xxi} Albert, Alexa (2001). *Brothel: Mustang Ranch and Its Women*. New York: Random House.

Violence Against Women in the Sex Trade in the U.S.

Originally published: February 2017.

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Overview

In this fact sheet we provide information garnered from research with women and girls in prostitution. These research studies, and this fact sheet, do not differentiate among trafficked and non-trafficked individuals.

None of the findings can be construed to be true for the universe of women and girls in the sex trade industry in the U.S. for the simple reason that none of the research was done among representative samples. However, the characteristics of victims in these various samples are often similar, and there are no reliable data that contradict what these studies have found.

The facts and findings we have are based only on the “tip of the iceberg.” We can only measure what and who we can see. Who is missing from most of the research findings? We are missing, for example, those involved in some parts of the “indoors” sex trade, such as phone sex and call-out prostitution. As well, people who are so controlled by a pimp/trafficker that they cannot be interviewed, are not represented.

There are over 25 reliable research studies documenting the violence done to women in street prostitution. We have cited the most recent and those with the largest sample sizes. We are not summarizing all of the studies because the findings are so similar.

Summary of Findings

Research has conclusively demonstrated that women selling sex on the streets experience unimaginably high levels of violence.

- Several studies have found that 50-72% of women in street prostitution have experienced severe violence at the hands of buyers, pimps/traffickers, and police officers.^{i ii iii}
- PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) rates among samples of prostituted women are also quite high. One study done in Washington, D.C. found 42% met the criteria for PTSD diagnosis.^{iv}
- Women in prostitution experience many forms of violence including being beaten, threatened with a weapon, and rape.^{v vi}
- A New York study found that being homeless increased the likelihood of women in prostitution experiencing violence.^{vii}
- Research done in Chicago found that moving prostitution indoors does not make prostitution “safe.” The severity of violence in indoor venues in this study was high, and in some types of violence even higher than for street prostitution.^{viii}
 - 50% of escorts and 64% of those prostituted in the streets had *ever* experienced forced sex while involved in the sex trade, according to one study.
 - Similar percentages – 21-22% – of both escorts *and* those who were involved in street prostitution experienced forced sex ten or more times while involved in the sex trade.

Detailed Findings and Discussion

VIOLENCE IN STREET PROSTITUTION

There are more than 25 reliable research studies documenting the violence done to women in street prostitution in the U.S. We have cited the most recent and those with the largest sample sizes. We are not summarizing all of the studies because the findings are so similar. They do not expand or deepen the overall findings on this topic.

EXPERIENCES OF NATIVE AMERICAN PROSTITUTED WOMEN

Researchers interviewed 105 Native women who were in prostitution in Minneapolis, Duluth, and Bemidji, Minnesota, in a non-representative sample that can, however, provide useful information about the experiences of these women. The average age when they began in the sex trade industry was 21 years, but 39% had been used in prostitution when they were younger than 18 years.

- 92% of the women said they had been raped in prostitution, with more than half of the women (53%) raped five to 10 times, and 15% more than 20 times.
- 84% had been physically assaulted while in prostitution, with the most frequent perpetrator being the buyer (44%), and pimps (15%).
- 78% of the women had been threatened with a gun, knife, or other weapon, 21% within the past month.
- 72% of the women had suffered head injuries.

Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark, C. & Hudon E. (2011). *Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota. Report from the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Prostitution Research & Education*, accessed at <http://www.niwrc.org/resources/garden-truth-prostitution-and-trafficking-native-women-minnesota/>

MIAMI SURVEY OF DRUG-INVOLVED WOMEN

In a research sample of 315 drug-involved females selling sex on the streets in Miami, Florida, 41.5% had encountered a violent customer in the past year, and 21% within the past month. Twenty-five percent said they had been beaten in the last year, 14% had been threatened with a weapon, and 13% had been raped. 15% had jumped from cars and 24% ran away from violent dates.

Surratt et al. (2004). Sex Work and Drug Use in a Subculture of Violence. Crime & Delinquency, 50(1): 43-59.

ADULT WOMEN INVOLVED IN STREET PROSTITUTION

In a sample of 43 women on the streets, 18 years and older, 72% relayed incidents of severe abuse suffered at the hands of their partners, clients, and/or pimps. Many reported having been beaten with objects, threatened with weapons, and abandoned in remote regions. Rape was commonly reported, and seven percent described being victims of gang rape.

Dalla et al. (2003). "You Just Give Them What They Want and Pray They Don't Kill You." Violence against Women 9(11): 1367-1394.

WASHINGTON, D.C. SURVEY OF STREET INVOLVED PROSTITUTED WOMEN

In a sample of 100 women on the streets of Washington, D.C., 42% met the criteria for PTSD. Sixty-one percent reported being physically assaulted, nearly 80% reported being threatened with a weapon, and 44% had been raped in prostitution, with 60% of these rapes by customers.

Valera et al. (2001). Perceived Health Needs of Inner-City Street Prostitutes: a Preliminary Study. American Journal of Health Behavior 25(1): 50-59.

SURVEY OF DRUG-USING WOMEN IN HARLEM

The finding on PTSD in prostituted women was corroborated in a study of 346 drug-using women in New York City's East and Central Harlem, where it was found that women in prostitution had higher mean scores of psychological distress measured by two mental health indices than those who were not involved.

Women in the prostitution sub-sample of drug using women had higher distress scores than did samples of psychiatric in-and-outpatients.

El-Bassel et al. (1997). Sex Trading and Psychological Distress among Women Recruited from the Streets of Harlem. American Journal of Public Health 97(1): 66-70.

Researchers have also found correlations of violence and history of childhood sexual assault and drug use.

MIAMI SURVEY OF DRUG-INVOLVED WOMEN

In one sample of 325 females selling sex in Miami, Florida, researchers found that the severity of childhood abuse history was consistently associated with more incidents of violence of all types in the past year.

Surratt et al. (2004). Sex Work and Drug Use in a Subculture of Violence. Crime & Delinquency 50(1): 43-59.

NEW YORK CITY STREET-BASED PROSTITUTED WOMEN

In a sample of 106 women selling sex on the streets in New York City, more than 50% experienced physical or sexual abuse from customers. Being homeless significantly increased the risk of being abused by customers, and childhood physical abuse and childhood sexual abuse were both significantly associated with sexual abuse by customers, although current physical abuse from customers was not. Injection drug use was positively associated with abuse from customers.

El-Bassel et al. (2001). Correlates of Partner Violence among Female Street-Based Sex Workers: Substance Abuse, History of Childhood Abuse, and HIV Risks. Aids Patient Care and STDS 15(1): 41-51.

VIOLENCE IN INDOOR PROSTITUTION VENUES

Over the past 25 years, researchers have established that women and girls in prostitution experience violence from buyers, pimps/traffickers, and police officers. As researchers have more access to those selling sex on the streets, some have questioned whether these same levels of violence occur in indoor prostitution venues, where conditions are thought by some to be safer.

Existing research on women in the sex trade in indoor venues demonstrates that there is violence, but it can be of a different nature.

COMPARISON OF VIOLENCE IN VARIOUS PROSTITUTION VENUES - CHICAGO

A research sample of 222 women in prostitution in Chicago is one of the few research projects able to compare violence experiences across prostitution venues. There were some notable differences in the prevalence of the types of violence experienced in different venues. For example:

- Those selling sex on the streets had the greatest prevalence of being slapped, punched, hair pulled, kicked, clothes ripped, and threatened with a weapon.
- Being pinched and having something thrown at the women were most often experienced in exotic dancing.
- Being spanked was most prevalent in escort services.
- Rates of violence were significant in some indoor venues.

However, researchers found that 50% of women in escort services in this study reported forced sex. And slightly over half of the women working as exotic dancers had been threatened with a weapon.

Ever Experienced	Escort	Exotic Dancing	Own Residence	Street Prostitution
Forced sex	50.0%	23.3%	37.5%	64.4%
Punched	39.3%	23.3%	21.8%	70.3%
Threatened with weapon	39.3%	51.2%	16.7%	79.2%
Threatened with rape	39.3%	48.8%	37.5%	55.4%
Something thrown at them	28.6%	62.8%	16.7%	52.5%

The chart below looks at some of the findings regarding the *frequency* with which women working in the sex trade experienced various types of violence in different venues.

Significant percentages of those who worked in indoor venues experienced violence frequently (10 or more times).

Looking at the frequency of the violence, 21% of women in escort services stated they had forced sex more than 10 times, virtually the same percentage for women in the streets and in their own private homes.

Experienced 10+ Times	Escort	Exotic Dancing	Own Residence	Street Prostitution
Forced sex	21.4%	7.0%	20.8%	21.8%
Punched	17.9%	9.3%	8.3%	32.7%
Threatened with weapon	7.1%	7.0%	0%	19.8%
Threatened with rape	7.1%	11.6%	12.5%	14.9%
Something thrown at them	14.3%	14.0%	8.3%	23.8%

Raphael & Shapiro (2004). *Violence in Indoor and Outdoor Prostitution Venues*. *Violence against Women* 10(2): 126-139.

WOMEN IN STRIP CLUBS – MINNEAPOLIS

Research with 18 women who worked in strip clubs in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area found that 100% of the women were physically abused in the clubs, ranging from three to 15 times, with a mean of almost eight occurrences in the course of their involvement in exotic dancing. Forty-four percent reported that men in the clubs threatened to hurt them. The violence included attempted vaginal penetration with fingers (61%), penetration with objects (33%), and attempted rape (17%).

Holsopple (1999). *Stripclubs According to Strippers: Exposing Workplace Sexual Violence*. In Hughes and Roche (Eds). *Making the Harm Visible: Global Sexual Exploitation of Women and Girls, Speaking Out and Providing Services* (pp.252-276). Kingston, RI: Coalition against Trafficking in Women.

These findings were corroborated by Maticka-Tyndale et al. (2000). *Exotic Dancing and Health*. *Women & Health* 31: 87-108 and Wesley (2002). *Growing Up Sexualized: Issues of Power and Violence in the Lives of Female Exotic Dancers*. *Violence against Women* 8(10): 1186-1211.

ⁱ Dalla et al. (2003). "You Just Give Them What They Want and Pray They Don't Kill You." *Violence against Women* 9(11): 1367-1394

ⁱⁱ Valera et al. (2001). *Perceived Health Needs of Inner-City Street Prostitutes: a Preliminary Study*. *American Journal of Health Behavior* 25 (1): 50-59.

ⁱⁱⁱ Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark, C. & Hudon E. (2011). *Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota*. Report from the Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition and Prostitution Research & Education, accessed at <http://www.niwr.org/resources/garden-truth-prostitution-and-trafficking-native-women-minnesota/>

^{iv} Valera et al. (2001). *Perceived Health Needs of Inner-City Street Prostitutes: a Preliminary Study*. *American Journal of Health Behavior* 25(1): 50-59.

^v Surratt et al. (2004). *Sex Work and Drug Use in a Subculture of Violence*. *Crime & Delinquency*, 50(1): 43-59.

^{vi} Valera et al. (2001). *Perceived Health Needs of Inner-City Street Prostitutes: a Preliminary Study*. *American Journal of Health Behavior* 25(1): 50-59.

^{vii} El-Bassel et al. (2001). *Correlates of Partner Violence among Female Street-Based Sex Workers: Substance Abuse, History of Childhood Abuse, and HIV Risks*. *Aids Patient Care and STDS* 15(1): 41-51.

^{viii} Raphael & Shapiro (2004). *Violence in Indoor and Outdoor Prostitution Venues*. *Violence against Women* 10(2): 126-139

Internet-Facilitated Sexual Exploitation in the U.S.

January 2020.

Overview

It is impossible to measure the size of the online sex industry. Because of the clandestine nature of the sex industry, there are no nationally representative surveys or transaction measurements that can tell us how many transactions happen online. Likewise, there are no nationally representative surveys that can measure how many sex buying transactions occur offline.

One of the many challenges the lack of data present is that it is therefore impossible to know the proportion of sex buying/selling transactions that occur online vs offline. There are many who assert that “most sex buying now occurs online.” This may be true; but there are no data to support the assertion. All we have are anecdotes and suppositions.

We do know that as the Internet expands and as we develop more and more tools to facilitate interactions seamlessly and securely, opportunities for buying and selling sex online will grow and change in ways we can't predict. The implication for utilizing research studies that assess the online sex industry is that users must be alert to when the data were gathered for a study. It is fair to say, for example, that any research relying on data gathered more than ten years ago has little relevance to today.

Related to the quickly evolving nature of Internet buying and selling is the significance of the passage of FOSTA/SESTA. That federal law, passed in April 2018, closed a loophole in the Communications Decency Act. FOSTA/SESTA makes websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking accountable, subject to prosecution. Prior to the law's passage, websites were not accountable for any content they hosted, no matter how criminal, no matter if they knowingly facilitated the crime or not. In April 2018, the largest sex buying website, Backpage.com, was

shut down. Many other similar sites shut down as well in the wake of the law's enactment. Others have arisen to take some of the business, but the online sex buying industry has become significantly different since April 2018. Once again, we urge readers to consider whether research findings they wish to utilize are based on data collected before or after FOSTA/SESTA passage. Depending on what the data measure, they may or may not be relevant for today.

We are beginning to see that some of the same tech tools that fuel Internet growth and sophistication are also being utilized to help measure how even clandestine activities like sex buying and selling happen. For example, researchers are increasingly turning to artificial intelligence tools to collect and help analyze massive amounts of online data.

At present, this fact sheet is quite short. However, the future of measuring and understanding how online sex buying works appears bright. Therefore, we fully expect to have a great many more reliable, valid research studies to summarize in the near future.

Summary of Findings

- A 2016 national study of sex buyers found that 92% of active, high-frequency sex buyers had browsed online for paid sex.ⁱ
- One study found that among several hundred online prostitution ads emphasizing youth, where the stated age of the prostituted woman was 18-26, the verified actual ages ranged from 14 to 18, with the average age of 16 years.ⁱⁱ
- Artificial-intelligence-based research found that in the months following passage of FOSTA-SESTA, (April 2018) search volume for websites in the Underground Commercial Sex Economy (UCSE) declined approximately 90%.ⁱⁱⁱ
- That same study found that remaining sites reach only 5-8% of the audience Backpage commanded at its height in 2016.^{iv}

Detailed Findings and Discussion

NATIONAL ONLINE SURVEY OF SEX BUYING BEHAVIOR AMONG MEN - 2018

A national online survey was conducted with adult men between December 2016 and January 2017. The survey yielded 8,201 respondents. Findings were weighted for current demographics as measured by the U.S. Census. Among active, high-frequency buyers, who account for 75% of paid sex transactions, 92% browsed for paid sex online in the past year. Nearly as many – 89% – contacted an online paid sex ad. In fact, 17% of men overall, including former buyers and non-buyers, have browsed for paid sex online in the past year.

Demand Abolition November 2018, Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand.
Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

MINORS POSING AS ADULTS IN ONLINE ADS FOR SEX BUYING

Researchers explored the content of 461 online advertisements selling sex from 2009–2016 that appeared to be emphasizing youth. These advertisements were sent to law enforcement partners who would attempt to make contact and provide the real age of the victim. These advertisements were found in 31 cities in 17 states.

The age listed in the advertisements ranged from 18–26 years old, with an average age of 20.36 years. The actual age of victims in the advertisements was verified for 400 of them. The actual age ranged from ages 14 to 18, with the average age of 16.47 years.

Researchers examined 320 advertisements posted on Backpage.com from 26 major U.S. cities. The age listed on the advertisement ranged from ages 18–26, while the actual age ranged from ages 14–18, with an average age of 16.61 years.

Researching online advertisements allows tracing the movements of the victims. In one case study involving a 16-year-old, the young woman was moved more than 1,300 miles between three different states, with advertisements in Oregon, California, and Nevada.

Roe-Sepowitz, D., Hogan, K., Bracy, K. & Lul, B. (2018). Online Advertisement Truth Set: Sex Trafficking Matrix: A Tool to Detect Minors in Online Advertisements. A research brief from the Arizona State University School of

Social Work, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, accessed at https://www.academia.edu/38071256/Online_Advertisement_Truth_Set_Sex_Trafficking_Matrix_A_Tool_to_Detect_Minors_in_Online_Advertisements

ONLINE SEX BUYING AND SELLING POST-FOSTA/SESTA

In 2019, researchers using artificial intelligence monitored usage of commercial sex marketplace web sites after FOSTA/SESTA was passed. This new federal law holds websites that knowingly facilitate sex trafficking accountable. The Department of Justice seized and closed the dominant online commercial sex marketplace Backpage.com shortly before the law passed. Researchers found that sites are now fragmented across dozens of websites that do not have the volume of Backpage. Following immediate online disruption in April 2018, childsafe.ai reported the following:

- Nine web sites shut down, and five discontinued service in the United States.
- In the months following passage of FOSTA-SESTA, search volume for websites in the Underground Commercial Sex Economy (UCSE) declined approximately 90%.
- The remaining sites reach only 5-8% of the audience Backpage commanded at its height in 2016. Since October 2018, eight of the nine remaining sites demonstrated either flat or declining growth. To date, a replacement for Backpage’s market share dominance has not emerged.
- 73.6% of advertisements fit the definition of spam, an automated post that does not represent a legitimate provider and is structured to fleece the buyer by phishing banking credentials, stealing identities, or coercing him into providing gift and stored value cards.
- There are signs that “Sugar Daddy” websites are beginning to emerge as online marketplaces to facilitate transactions between prostituted people and buyers. They position themselves in the general market as ways for “generous men” to meet attractive women. On hobby boards and UCSE websites, however, they are positioned as “an alternative to escorts.”

- Given reduced supply, buyers in major markets nationwide have been reporting steep increases in the hourly rate for commercial sex. The price has doubled or tripled since October 2018 in some markets. Monthly advertising costs for suppliers and traffickers have greatly increased, and suppliers have to maintain advertising accounts on a dozen advertising channels instead of one.
- In New York, where the childsafe.ai Demand Deterrence Platform operates (sending messages of deterrence to buyers), observed buyers dropped 67% in May 2018.

Spectre, R. (2019). *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later*. Report from childsafe.ai, accessed at <https://childsafe.ai/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later/>

ⁱ Demand Abolition November 2018, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. Accessed at <https://www.demandabolition.org/who-buys-sex/>

ⁱⁱ Roe-Sepowitz, D., Hogan, K., Bracy, K. & Lul, B. (2018). *Online Advertisement Truth Set: Sex Trafficking Matrix: A Tool to Detect Minors in Online Advertisements*. A research brief from the Arizona State University School of Social Work, Office of Sex Trafficking Intervention Research, accessed at https://www.academia.edu/38071256/Online_Advertisement_Truth_Set_Sex_Trafficking_Matrix_A_Tool_to_Detect_Minors_in_Online_Advertisements

ⁱⁱⁱ Spectre, R. (2019). *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later*. Report from childsafe.ai, accessed at <https://childsafe.ai/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later/>

^{iv} Spectre, R. (2019). *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later*. Report from childsafe.ai, accessed at <https://childsafe.ai/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later/>