Human Trafficking: The Men?

Most Traffickers Are Men

The 2018 Federal Human Trafficking Report provides an exhaustive account of all criminal and civil human trafficking cases handled by federal courts during 2018. The Report does not capture data from state prosecutions, state civil suits, or unreported human trafficking cases, but only what the federal government has done.

“As in 2017, most (78.1%, 949) defendants active in criminal cases in 2018 were males. The rate of males was highest among sex trafficking defendants, at 79.2% (914), compared to only 56.5% (35) among labor trafficking defendants. The percent of female defendants in labor trafficking cases was up to 43.5% (27) from 40% (22) in 2017. However, only 32.4% (220) of criminal cases active in 2018 involved female defendants, and only 16.4% (36) of those cases had no male co-defendants.

Who Buys Sex?

Demand Abolition commissioned a survey completed by 8,201 adult males across the U.S. between December 2016 and January 2017 to ascertain why some men buy sex and what can be done to reduce this exploitative behavior. They explain the reason behind the study. “Much of the research on prostitution and sex trafficking in the U.S. focuses on the “supply” side of the market: prostituted and trafficked persons, the great majority of whom are women and girls. While it is critically important to understand supply-side realities and effective approaches to victim services, the other half of the market—the “demand” side, defined almost entirely by the actions of men—has been woefully understudied by comparison.”

Stop Trafficking! Anti-Human Trafficking Newsletter

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This issue highlights the situation of men in human trafficking

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Men cont. from pg. 1

“The active criminal defendants in 2018 spanned a broad age range, from 18 to 80 years old at the time of arrest. The youngest defendant was in a sex trafficking case, and the oldest was in a labor trafficking case. The average age of a sex trafficking defendant in 2018 was 33 years old, but the average jumped to 40 years old when limited to only buyer-defendants. The average age of a labor trafficking defendant was even higher, at 47 years old.” (Report, pg. 17)

Buyers cont. from pg. 1

Who Are the Buyers? Most men have never paid for sex. Of 20% who have, only 6.2% bought sex within the past 12 months. Buyers purchase so often that their actions account for a disproportionately large share of the illegal sex trade. About 25% of active buyers report purchasing weekly or monthly, and their activity accounts for nearly 75% of market transactions. These buyers are more likely to have started at a young age and with the help or encouragement of others in their social networks. Demographic traits are poor predictors of sex buying. Buyers are found across the income distribution with one important exception: currently active high-frequency buyers are much more likely than other men to make $100,000 or more annually. Plenty of would-be sex-buyers are not currently active, including about one in five men who have never bought before but who “could envision buying sex in the future if the circumstances were right.”

The Market? On average, U.S. sex buyers spend more than $100 per transaction. A very small number of survey respondents reported spending thousands of dollars on their most recent “transaction.” The survey estimated the annual size of the U.S. commercial sex market at $5.7 billion. Buyers visit a range of venues and use a similarly diverse number of information channels to purchase sex. Prominent methods include visiting “massage” brothels—known to law enforcement as Illicit Massage Businesses (IMBs), arranging “dates” online, visiting “adult establishments,” and going to well-known “tracks” for street prostitution. No single location dominates, though high-frequency buyers list IMBs as a frequented venue.

Why Do They Buy? Active buyers are more tolerant of cheating on a “significant other” and differ markedly from non-buyers on measures of impulse control. Active buyers are more likely to say that prostitution is a “mostly victimless” crime and are less likely to say that prostitution is a crime “where someone is harmed.” They are also more likely to say that prostituted persons “enjoy the act of prostitution” and “choose it as a profession.”

Buyers and non-buyers hold strikingly different views on masculinity and sex buying. Non-buyers are much more likely than active ones to say that purchasing someone for sex involves treating females as objects, and that those actions exploit others. Active buyers are very likely to say they are “just guys being guys” or “taking care of their needs.”

Many men who have bought sex in the past wish to stop. About one-third of active buyers “strongly agree” that they do not want to do it again, a sentiment shared by most former buyers.

Active buyers value their personal safety, sexual health, and freedom from arrest above most other priorities; they are generally unconcerned about breaking the law but preoccupied by the need to avoid getting caught. Active and former buyers are much more likely than non-buyers to say police “should not arrest anyone” involved in prostitution. The strongest bloc of male support for legalizing the U.S. sex trade comes from buyers themselves. Only about 6% of men who purchase sex illegally report ever having been arrested for it. When buyers do perceive that risk, it can lead them to alter their activities. High-frequency buyers are more sensitive than low-frequency buyers to police presence and are more likely to react by shifting to a different location and diminishing their behavior. About one-quarter of buyers “strongly agree” that “the risk of arrest is so high I might stop.”

Perceiving a risk of arrest has a diminishing effect on sex buying. Two factors increase this perception: (1) a buyer’s own arrest history, and (2) the extent to which he shifts his purchasing activities in response to police presence.

The main driver of sex buying, “normalized beliefs” about the commercial sex trade, combines interrelated ideas: prostituted women enjoy the act, it is mostly a victimless crime, buyers are merely taking care of their needs, and they are just “guys being guys.”

To learn more from the report, as well as what the researchers recommend policy makers, should do to lessen demand, go to: https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf
U.S. Labor Trafficking Cases: Characteristics & Patterns

The scope of labor trafficking in the United States has been difficult to estimate due to a number of factors including the hidden nature of the crimes of labor trafficking.

In an article published in August 2019 authors, Kristen Bracy, Bandak Lul and Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, explored the arrests of 125 labor traffickers within 47 cases occurring from 2013 to 2016.

Labor trafficking arrests were found in 20 states over the four years with Texas (34.4%) having the highest percentage of arrests. Victims of labor trafficking were from 16 countries, with Mexico being the country where most victims originated. Victims experienced labor trafficking in homes (35.2%), restaurants (34.4%), hotels (8%), apartments (6.4%), agriculture fields (4.8%), and group homes (4.8%). Staffing agencies were used prominently as recruiting tools by labor traffickers and violence was often used to retain the victim in the trafficking situation. Gender differences and differences between independent labor traffickers and criminal organizations were explored.

Recommendations include the need for increased trainings for law enforcement and community members to improve detection as well as the need to enhance the current level of services available to labor trafficking victims.

One can purchase the full study at: https://tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/23322705.2019.1638148

Porn and Kids

The president and CEO of Culture Reframed, researcher Gail Dines says parents worry that their kids might be surfing free porn sites such as Pornhub. Dines points out that most parents are unaware that porn is infiltrating mainstream social media sites such as Snapchat and Instagram.

One study reported that “teens visit Snapchat more than 20 times a day” and spend at least 30 minutes on the platform, while 63% of 13- to 17-year-olds use Instagram daily, spending an average of 32 minutes a day scrolling through photos and videos. On Instagram, porn is often hidden behind hashtags and emojis that appear innocuous but are used as secret code to tag and search for particular types of porn. If teens type a specific fruit or vegetable emoji into the search bar, a list of links pops up to images ranging from women barely clothed to women in sexual bondage restraints. Those images lead directly to pornographic accounts, used by many porn performers to build their fan bases. Instagram says it uses automated technology to detect and remove nudity and pornographic content, but their platform

Means of Control Used on Male Victims

Boys: Hardcore Porn for Free

Porn has become "the public health crisis of the digital age." Porn is widely available for free via Snapchat and Instagram or by clicking directly on porn sites. While watching porn kids learn that violence, degradation, and humiliation are central to relationships and sex. Studies show that porn shapes how we think about gender, sexuality, relationships, intimacy, sexual violence, and gender equality. Just as the tobacco industry argued there was no proven connection between smoking and lung cancer, so the porn industry has denied the existence of the 40+ years of empirical research on the negative impact of porn products on human behavior.

Facts
• Porn sites get more visitors each month than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined;
• About one-third of all web downloads in the U.S. are porn-related;
• Pornhub — self-described as "the world’s leading free porn site" — received 33.5 billion visits in 2018;
• In analyzing the best-selling and most-rented porn films, researchers found 88% of analyzed scenes contained physical aggression: gagging, choking, spanking, and slapping;
• Free and widely available pornography is often violent, degrading, and extreme.
• A meta-analysis of 22 studies between 1978 and 2014 from seven different countries concluded that pornography consumption is associated with an increased likelihood of committing acts of verbal or physical sexual aggression, regardless of age;
• A meta-analysis found "an overall significant positive association between pornography use and attitudes supporting violence against women";
• In a study of U.S. college men, researchers found that 83% reported seeing mainstream pornography, and that those who did were more likely to say they would commit rape or sexual assault (if not caught) than men who had not seen porn in the past 12 months;
• Thirty peer-reviewed studies since 2011 reveal pornography use has negative and detrimental impacts on the brain.

Free Access -- Free Education
Much of online porn is free and unfiltered, so the average age of first viewing of porn, intentionally or accidentally, is estimated by some researchers to be 12.
• 50% of parents underestimate how much porn their teens have seen;
• Porn has become the de facto sex education for young people, since comprehensive sex-education is absent from many schools.
• A survey from the UK found that 44% of males ages 11–16 who consumed pornography reported that online porn gave them ideas about the type of sex they wanted to try.
• Porn is radically undermining the healthy development of children and youth, and contributing to increasing levels of sexual inequality, dysfunction, and violence.

Effects of Porn on Boys
Extensive research has revealed that boys exposed to porn from a young age are more likely to:
• have decreased empathy for rape victims;
• have increasingly aggressive behavioral tendencies;
• pressure their partners to engage in porn-style sex (harmful, painful, degrading, aggressive, etc.);
• experience difficulty in developing intimate relationships;
• develop sexual preoccupation and compulsive internet use;
• experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem and loss of intimacy.
Boys  cont. from pg. 4

Facts About Kids and the Porn Crisis

- 39% of 14-year-olds report having seen porn, with about one-third of young people saying they had seen it for the first time at age 12 or younger (anecdotal evidence suggests age 8).
- Minors who view porn and other sexualized media are more accepting of sexual violence, and more likely to believe “rape myths” such as “women enjoy being raped”.
- Increased use of online porn decreases boys’ academic performance six months later.
- 15 is the average age of receiving a sext.
- 70% of 18-year-olds say “pornography leads to unrealistic attitudes” about sex and that “pornography can have a damaging impact on young people’s views of sex or relationships.”
- In a study of young teens, 66% of boys reported porn consumption in the past year; this early porn exposure was correlated with perpetration of sexual harassment two years later. (https://www.culturereframed.org/the-porn-crisis/)

Digital Transactions Reveal Human Trafficking

When human traffickers check into a hotel, the last thing they want is for the staff to notice them. But thanks to efforts by the banking and credit card industries, it is getting harder for them to keep a low profile.

Their digital transactions tell the story. They may secure a room with a credit card, but then pay cash for it. They may frequently book rooms in different cities, like a business traveler does, but simultaneously be receiving public assistance payments. They may use their credit card to book online ads on adult sites. They may make frequent email money transfers. Once in a room, they may use a credit card to purchase frequent fast-food deliveries. They may deposit large amounts of money in a bank account via an ATM in the wee hours of the night.

The activity may move from one city to another, from one day to the next, down the corridors of human trafficking. Along the way, they may book a ride-sharing service or multiple train tickets to a single destination, for themselves and their victims.

None of these behaviors is illegal or necessarily even suspicious in many circumstances. But, when they take place in concert, they can be a red flag signaling sex trafficking, in which a victim is being sold.

Peter Warrack, a board member for the Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking, got involved in starting Project Protect after attending an Association of Certified Anti-Money Laundering Specialists Conference, where he heard two speakers talk about human trafficking (including Timea Nagy, a victim turned advocate who was interviewed in the June issue of The Meeting Professional. She said human trafficking was already seen as being linked to money laundering.).

When the speakers asked the financial institutions in the audience to help them uncover the trafficickers’ financial transactions, given their mandate to report suspicious financial transactions to the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Center of Canada (FINTRAC), Warrack volunteered to help. He happened to be sitting next to a colleague at FINTRAC, who offered to help him.

FINTRAC compiled a list of possible indicators of human trafficking, which was distributed to all reporting institutions across Canada and led to a significant uptick in filing of the Suspicious Transaction Report (STR) form, according to data from Project Protect. During 2015 400 forms had been submitted. After the Project Protect was launched on Jan. 1, 2016. The number of forms submitted rose to more than 2,500 between January and September 2017. One trend participants are now studying is the use of cryptocurrencies in transactions by traffickers.

Warrack noted that technology can be used to aid investors at banks. Algorithms can be set up to identify suspicious transactions. “They spit out alerts that are worked manually by investigators. If it’s trafficking, we file a ‘suspicious act.’ The bank’s intelligence goes to FINTRAC.”

Warrack now works to raise awareness among other financial professionals about the signs of trafficking and what to do about them. In some cases, it may make sense for a bank to close down a suspicious account and when trafficking is suspected at a hotel, reporting it to the local police is often warranted. Warren noted. “The problem is widespread in the hospitality industry,” according to Warrack. “This goes on at all the major hotels—not just the sleazy ones.”
Are U.S. Anti Human Trafficking Efforts Credible?

John Cotton Richmond, Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, was appointed in 2018. At the same time Anne Gallagher, President, International Catholic Migration Commission, and Luis C. deBaca, Robina Fellow, Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, & Abolition, Yale University, wrote an article highlighting the role the Ambassador needs to play.

Their article is reproduced here in order to help the reader ascertain if the work of Amb. John C. Richmond, the current Ambassador-at-Large to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, is implementing the important roles the authors lay out. If not, perhaps a letter to Amb. John C. Richmond may be an important advocacy action.

They cited four issues:

1. Rebuild U.S. credibility and influence

“American influence in this area has been steadily eroding, coinciding with the post of ambassador being under-occupied for several years. While the report has continued to be produced, there is evidence to suggest an increased ‘gaming’ of the assessment system: that countries under scrutiny and their defenders are becoming ever more adept at presenting an illusion of progress, without undertaking the root and branch reforms necessary to address exploitation meaningfully. The ambassador and his team will need to reassert proactively the integrity of the assessment process.

“This will also require attention to the perception that the process has become increasingly politicized. The report’s function as a diplomatic tool makes reasonable the expectation that there will be some correlation between the attitude of the U.S. towards a particular country and the ranking allocated to it. But when a ranking seems more instrumental than based on fact, as has been alleged in respect of a number of countries in recent years, including China, Cuba and Malaysia, the report risks losing credibility and thereby its power to influence change.

2. Maintain focus on all forms of trafficking

“It is now well-understood that trafficking is an umbrella term, covering a wide range of exploitative practices. But for many reasons, including the historical roots of the anti-trafficking movement, there has always been a disproportionate focus on trafficking for sexual exploitation. This is true at the international level and in most countries’ responses. In the U.S. itself, the political and rhetorical space has narrowed even further, with child sex trafficking emerging as the dominant priority. With some occasional missteps, particularly in its early years, the report has remained true to the broader understanding of what exploitation in the context of trafficking actually means. A continuation and consolidation of that position is critical.

“In its outreach, the ambassador’s office needs to hold firm against a dangerous slippage that conflates vice crimes (pimping, etc.) with trafficking, and to resist being drawn into disputes about local prostitution policies. The office also needs to demonstrate a firm commitment to confronting the many forms of exploitation, from forced labor to the global organ trade, that are still not receiving the attention and response they deserve.

3. Affirm government responsibility for corporate complicity

“The frustratingly slow pace of change has encouraged those involved in the movement against human exploitation to broaden their horizons. Corporate leadership and supply chain transparency are increasingly seen to be the magic bullets in dealing with trafficking, especially in respect of forced and exploited labor. The U.K. and California have both legislated to require companies of a certain size to lodge a ‘compliance statement’ detailing their efforts to uncover and deal with exploitation in their supply chains. The idea has caught on and others are likely to follow suit soon.

“In key sectors including fisheries and manufacturing, business groups are taking the initiative, developing standards and codes of conduct to guard against complicity in exploitation. The new ambassador should strongly support efforts to bring the private sector in as key partners. But he also needs to be clear that the recent wave of action is nowhere near enough.

“For example, legislatively imposed reporting requirements will be of limited value unless and until they are attached to a meaningful, government-administered monitoring and sanctioning mechanism. And experience has taught us the hard lesson that voluntary or self-regulation is unlikely to make a long-term positive impact.

“The ambassador must make clear the legal and ethical responsibility of all governments to structure an effective response through appropriate regulation and adequately resourced monitoring. That responsibility cannot be displaced to business. His office has been at the forefront in fighting for maximum transparency in both corporate supply chains and government procurement. U.S. leadership will

Credibility cont. on pg. 7
4. Prioritize prosecution and justice for victims

“The record of just about every country when it comes to prosecuting traffickers is shocking. According to the most recent Trafficking in Persons report, just over 7,000 convictions for trafficking offenses were reported in 2017 - worldwide. More than 90% of these cases related to just one single form: trafficking for sexual exploitation. Only 332 convictions for labor trafficking were recorded across the globe over that same period. With some studies placing the number of victims of trafficking upwards of 40 million, these figures are truly astonishing, confirming both virtual impunity for offenders at a scale unmatched by any other crime, and an unconscionable lack of justice for victims.

(Ed. Note: The statistics in the 2018 TIP Report indicate in 2017 there were 17,471 (869) prosecutions; 7,135 (332) convictions; and 96,960 (23,906) victims identified. In the 2019 TIP report for the 2018 period, there were 11,096 (457) prosecutions; 7,481 (259) convictions; 85,613 (11,009) victims indentified. Labor stats are in parentheses.)

“Not everyone is in favor of prioritizing prosecutions and it is true that a rigid focus on this aspect of the anti-trafficking response can cause real harm, especially in countries with dysfunctional or poorly developed criminal justice systems. But the ambassador and his office must be clear on the point that trafficking is a serious crime and that failure to prosecute and punish offenders makes a government complicit in the harm. It is hard to make the criminal justice process work well for victims, but our professional experience confirms that measures can be put in place to minimize trauma and support trafficked persons to cooperate in the prosecution of their exploiters.

“Countries should also be pushed to institute effective labor inspections; provide protection for those who come forward or seek protection through collective action; compensate victims; and enact robust measures to seize and impound slave-made goods in international commerce. While advocating technical responses to inadequate prosecution efforts, the ambassador must be prepared to expose the stark disconnect between what governments say and what they do. Like so many other crimes that predominantly affect women, the marginalized and the powerless, trafficking is just not a high priority in the criminal justice system of any country. Until that uncomfortable truth is openly acknowledged and addressed, meaningful change will be impossible.

“The ambassador must be prepared for resistance to a rigorous, principled approach to trafficking that inevitably requires strong commitment to universal human rights and the rule of law.”

New Year 2020 - Announcement

The creation of the ‘Stop Trafficking’ e-newsletter began in 2003 as an intuitive idea of mine. I imagined it would be a practical way to ‘get the word out’ in the early days of anti human trafficking awareness raising.

My hope was to be of service to those persons who needed current information about topics that underscored what human trafficking entailed and how it affected people (awareness), what could be done to stand with victims (advocacy), and what concerned citizens could do to assist in its eradication (action).

Now, 17 years later, much has been done to achieve these hopes locally, nationally, and internationally. Yet, sadly, the exploiting of vulnerable persons continues, so our efforts must continue. In order to assure that ‘Stop Trafficking’ remains a strong voice in education outreach, I am passing the editorship to Maryann Mueller CSSF. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT) and Chair of its Education Committee. I am confident the work is in good hands!

As with any transition, there will be changes in how the newsletter looks and what it covers. Its mission will remain the same: to foster the exchange of information and promote collaboration among many organizations working to eliminate all forms of human trafficking and to support its survivors.

I take the opportunity to especially thank the sponsoring congregations whose financial contributions have enabled ‘Stop Trafficking’ to continue its mission. I am grateful for the feedback and critiques that helped make each issue of the newsletter relevant and helpful to its readers.

I treasure the friendships that developed through readership connections over seventeen years.

I thank all who have used the newsletter as a tool in their efforts to educate others and urge citizens to join in the work of anti-trafficking in whatever ways they can. Our work is surely not finished and I too will continue to use ‘Stop Trafficking’ for that purpose!

Stay tuned for January 2020 Vol. 18 No.01! S. Jean Schafer SDS