

THE NATIONAL REPORT ON DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

America's Prostituted Children

Shared Hope International conducted investigations in more than a dozen locations throughout the United States and found American children being used in the commercial sex industry. Children who are exploited through prostitution, pornography and sexual entertainment are victims of domestic minor sex trafficking. Due to misidentification, ignorance, or efforts to keep victims safe from traffickers these minors are often labeled as delinquents and placed in detention facilities. The business of sex trafficking of America's youth is flourishing. Growing demand for commercial sex with young, innocent girls and boys is fueled by a glorification of pimping and normalization of sexual exploitation.



SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

- At least 100,000 children are used in prostitution every year in the United States.
- The average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years old.
- Prostituted girls are often controlled by a pimp who recruits them into sex trafficking by posing as a boyfriend, caretaker, and protector.
- The three primary manifestations of child sex trafficking in America are: pimp-controlled prostitution, familial prostitution, and/or survival sex.



THE BUSINESS OF DOMESTIC MINOR SEX TRAFFICKING

Sex trafficking of America's children is driven by demand for the commercial sex acts they perform. Demand of buyers – people who rent the body of a child for sexual purposes or entertainment – allows the business of child sex trafficking to continue. The industry grows as traffickers seek to fulfill the demand by targeting and recruiting more of America's youth for sexual exploitation.

- **AMERICAN CHILDREN ARE THE VICTIMS.** American children are easy targets for sex traffickers. The vulnerability is the child's *age*. Pre-teen and adolescent girls are especially susceptible to the deception and manipulation of traffickers. Traffickers target locations that commonly attract youth like schools, malls, parks, even shelters and group homes.
- **WHO ARE THE TRAFFICKERS?** A trafficker is anyone who profits by receiving cash or other benefits in exchange for sex with a minor. These criminals are often called pimps. Across the United States, family members, friends, and "boyfriends" were identified as pimps.
- **WHO ARE THE BUYERS?** Many buyers are men; however, the buyers can be anyone - young and old, locals and tourists, military and civilian, students and professionals, family and strangers.



VICTIMS, NOT CRIMINALS

Exploited children are often labeled “child prostitutes” or juvenile delinquents and punished for the crime that is committed against them. Victims of domestic minor sex trafficking are in detention facilities across the country for charges of prostitution while those who buy sex from them are free and their traffickers frequently escape detection.

“ I always felt like a criminal. I never felt like a victim at all. Victims don’t do time in jail, they work on the healing process. I was a criminal because I spent time in jail. I definitely felt like nothing more than a criminal.
-- “Tonya,” Survivor of domestic minor sex trafficking ”



DETECTING DEMAND

Buyers receive little or no penalty for purchasing commercial sex from a minor though laws are in place to prosecute them. Despite their integral role in fueling the commercial sex industry, little priority is placed on arresting and prosecuting the “johns.” As long as there is a buyer of commercial sex, there will be child victims of commercial sexual exploitation.



RECRUITMENT & PIMP CONTROL

Traffickers learn the psychology of their young victims and master the manipulation methods necessary to deceptively lure children into sexual exploitation. The trafficker’s goal is to create and exploit vulnerabilities which will make a child completely dependant and bonded to their exploiter. The trafficker’s ultimate goal is *profit*.



NEXT STEPS

- Child victims of sex trafficking must be identified and treated as victims.
- The arrest and prosecution of buyers must be made a priority.
- Appropriate protective shelter and services are needed for the protection and restoration of child sex trafficking victims.



ABOUT SHARED HOPE INTERNATIONAL

Shared Hope International exists to prevent, rescue and restore women and children in crisis. For more than a decade, Shared Hope International has worked around the world in partnership with local groups to prevent trafficking and to rescue and restore the victims of sexual slavery.



www.sharedhope.org