

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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Is child sex trafficking happening in the United States?

YES. Domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST), which is the commercial sexual exploitation of US born children through buying, selling, or trading their sexual services, is happening in the United States. Forms of DMST include prostitution, pornography, stripping and other sexual acts.

What is sex trafficking?

Sex trafficking is when a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion OR when the person induced to perform the act is under 18 years old. A commercial sex act means any item of value is traded for any sexual service (prostitution, pornography, or sexual performance). Domestic minor sex trafficking is the commercial sexual exploitation of American children within U.S. borders for monetary or other compensation (shelter, food, transportation, protection, drugs, etc.). This is synonymous with child sex slavery, sex slavery, child sex trafficking, prostitution of children, and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

How big is the problem of child sex trafficking in America?

It is estimated at least 100,000 American children are being exploited through pornography or prostitution every year. (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children)

How old are the children exploited through sex trafficking in the United States?

The age of trafficked children vary. The common age a child is first exploited through prostitution is 14-16 years of age, though children as young as infants have been identified in pornography.

What about the girls who choose prostitution? Are they victims of trafficking too?

Desperation causes poor decisions. What appears to be a choice, can often be found not to be. But remember, if a victim is a MINOR, and they are exchanging sex acts for something of value, it is considered trafficking, under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) Any minor used in a commercial sex act (the exchange of any item of value for a sex act) IS a victim of trafficking, regardless of their willingness or desire to engage in the sex act. Minors are unable to legally enter into a contract of any kind. There is no such thing as a child prostitute. They are prostituted children.

Why don't victims escape when they have the opportunity?

Traffickers and pimps use physical, emotional and psychological abuse to coerce victims into a life of sex trafficking. Traffickers are master manipulators and employ tactics to create a trauma bond between the victim and trafficker. Traffickers often use the threat of violence against victim or a victim's loved one to secure their submission. Sometimes there is forced drug addiction so the victim becomes more compliant and needs the drugs, so allows control by the trafficker.

How do traffickers or pimps recruit victims?

In the USA pimps commonly use a "lover-boy" technique to recruit female victims who are still in middle/high school or young college students. A trafficker will present himself as a boyfriend and woo the girl with gifts, promises of fulfilled dreams, protection, adventure – whatever he perceives she is lacking. After securing her love and loyalty, he will force her into prostitution. She may believe that it was her choice because she 'chose' him, not realizing the relationship is a fraud to gain control of her.

Boys are victims as well, most commonly recruited through survival sex, where they need housing or basic needs to be met. The trafficker arranges for their needs to be met and in exchange demands they commit sex acts

What makes a child vulnerable to child sex trafficking?

Age. Age is the primary factor of vulnerability. Pre-teen or adolescents are more susceptible to the calculated advances, deception, and manipulation tactics used by traffickers/pimps – no youth is exempt from falling prey to these tactics. Traffickers target vulnerable youth through online friendships, gaming and chat rooms. They watch for disconnected, angry, lonely and needy young people and begin to make promises to fulfill their dreams. Physical locations pimps frequent are where kids hang out: coffee shops, malls, parks, bus stops, shelters and group homes. Disconnected children looking for a family, such as foster children, are susceptible to the promises of ‘belonging.’ Runaway or homeless youth, as well as those with a history of physical and sexual abuse, have an increased risk of being approached by a trafficker.

What is the difference between a trafficker and a pimp?

There is no difference. A pimp is another name for a trafficker. A pimp or trafficker is anyone who makes a profit from the commercial sexual exploitation of a minor. They are predators.

Who buys sex?

The buyers of sex from juveniles can be anyone, as established in news articles across the nation: professionals, students, tourists, military personnel, a family member. They can be Hall of Fame football stars like Lawrence Taylor, business leaders like Sunflower Markets CEO Michael Gilliland, or politicians like former New York Governor Elliott Spitzer. Because buyers often pay in cash and may interact with a victim for as little as five minutes, buyers are difficult to identify. Law enforcement is increasingly utilizing sting operations where an ad is placed online for sex with a minor and arrests are made based on those who appear at the location expecting to have sex with a child. These operations are very effective and allow multiple buyers to be arrested in a short amount of time, without the actual victimization of a child.

What is the difference between human smuggling and human trafficking?

Human smuggling is a crime against a country by illegal movement of people by the destination country into another country. Human trafficking is a crime against a person by using force, fraud or coercion to induce commercial sex exploitation or forced labor. Trafficking does not require transportation or movement of a person.

How does pornography affect the trafficking industry?

Viewing pornography may be a solo act; however, the production of the material and the social and relational consequences of the behavior extends far past the individual. Children and adults endure brutal rape and abuse at the hands of pornographers and may require years of specialized therapy to heal from the intense trauma inflicted on them. The effects of pornography can skew the viewer’s perception of healthy sexual behavior and boundaries, impacting the viewer’s personal relationship with a spouse or significant other. Trafficked women and children may face an increased risk of violence or degradation due to the normalization of deviant sex acts propagated through pornography.

How do I know if someone I know is being groomed for trafficking or is being trafficked?

Visit www.elitefundsforfreedom.org to learn the signs and find out where to report trafficking.