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2009

## Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors

U.S. Department of Justice

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U.S. Department of Justice, "Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors" (2009). *Human Trafficking: Data and Documents*. 13.

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[Child Pornography](#)

## Child Prostitution

[Child Prostitution](#)

### Domestic Sex Trafficking of Minors

[Obscenity](#)

The trafficking section of this web page provides information on the international problem of cross-border transportation of children for sexual purposes. It is important to note that United States not only faces an influx of international victims of sex trafficking, but also the United States has its own homegrown problem of interstate sex trafficking of minors.

[Trafficking and Child Sex Tourism](#)

[International Parental Kidnapping](#)

Although comprehensive research to document the number of children engaged in prostitution in the United States is lacking, it is estimated that about 293,000 American youth are currently at risk of becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico*, University of Pennsylvania, Executive Summary at 11-12 (2001) (available at <http://caster.ssw.upenn.edu/~restes/CSEC.htm>); see also Mia Spangenberg, *Prostituted Youth in New York City: An Overview* (available at [http://www.ecpatusa.org/child\\_prosti\\_us.asp](http://www.ecpatusa.org/child_prosti_us.asp)). The majority of American victims of commercial sexual exploitation tend to be runaway or thrown away youth who live on the streets who become victims of prostitution. *Id.* at 11-12. These children generally come from homes where they have been abused, or from families that have abandoned them, Richard J. Estes and Neil Alan Weiner, *Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in the U.S., Canada and Mexico*, University of Pennsylvania, at 3 (2001) [hereinafter Estes Report], and often become involved in prostitution as a way to support themselves financially or to get the things they want or need. *Id.*

[Child Support Enforcement](#)

Other young people are recruited into prostitution through forced abduction, pressure from parents, or through deceptive agreements between parents and traffickers. Francis T. Miko & Grace Park, *Trafficking in Women and Children: The U.S. and International Response*, at 7 (Updated July 10, 2003), at <http://www.usembassy.it/pdf/other/RL30545.pdf>. Once these children become involved in prostitution they are often forced to travel far from their homes and as a result are isolated from their friends and family. *Id.* Few children in this situation are able to develop new relationships with peers or adults other than the person who is victimizing them. *Id.* The lifestyle of such children revolves around violence, forced drug use and constant threats. *Id.*

Among children and teens living on the streets in the United States, involvement in commercial sex activity is a problem of epidemic proportion. Approximately 55% of street girls engage in formal prostitution. Estes Report, Executive Summary at 7. Of the girls engaged in formal prostitution, about 75% worked for a pimp. *Id.* Pimp-controlled commercial sexual exploitation of children is linked to escort and massage services, private dancing, drinking and photographic clubs, major sporting and recreational events, major cultural events, conventions, and tourist destinations. *Id.* About one-fifth of these children become entangled in nationally organized crime networks and are trafficked nationally. *Id.* at 8. They are transported around the United States by a variety of means – cars, buses, vans, trucks or planes, *Id.*, and are often provided counterfeit identification to use in the event of arrest. *Id.* The average age at which girls first become victims of prostitution is 12-14. Estes Report at 92. It is not only the girls on the streets that are affected -- for boys and transgender youth, the average age of entry into prostitution is 11-13. *Id.*