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FAQs

Who are the victims?

- Most of the children in the U.S. being commercially sexually exploited are U.S. citizens. Foreign nationals, while still subjected to sex trafficking are brought here primarily for forced labor;
- Poor or affluent, any race or nationality;
- The majority of victims are female however; there are certainly male victims as well. With boys and men, the problem is even more hidden and highly stigmatized, and victims are usually reluctant to come forward and seek help;
- Runaways escaping abuse or neglect;
- "Throw away" children- a term used to describe children who are forced to, asked to or leave their homes of their own choice, but are never reported missing;
- Children can be trafficked in their own homes, often by family members;
- Those involved with or who have fallen prey to cults;

Who are the Traffickers/Pimps/Perpetrators?

- Anyone who attains anything of value, be it financial or other, through the sexual exploitation of another;
- Large nationwide gangs and criminal organization;
- Local street and motorcycle gangs;
- Individuals with no affiliation with any group;
- Family members;
- All genders and ages: men and women and older teens;
- Pimps can blend in with mainstream society and often appear to have normal lives. Often, girls refer to their pimp as a "boyfriend" and can have strong "trauma bond" relationships with their pimp, similar to Stockholm Syndrome;
- Peers and friends of the child;
- Predators who find children online;
- Pornographers

How are children recruited?

- Online contact
- Deception, false promises of some reward, opportunity, or by meeting emotional or physical needs;
- Coercion
- Psychological manipulation
- Drugs/substance abuse
- By their peers
- Through "romantic relationships" in which the perpetrator is pretending to care for the victim in order to gain their trust and loyalty. Perpetrators will spend weeks and months "grooming" a potential victim in order to achieve this goal;
- Threat of violence to victim or victim's family or friends
- Abduction

Where are children recruited?

- Online relationships that lead to an in-person encounter;
- School
- Malls or other places where youth hang out without parental supervision;
- Bus stops
- It can be anywhere!

Where is exploitation happening?

- Hotels
- Private residences
- strip clubs
- Fake massage parlors
- Private parties
- Escort services
- Truck stops
- Illegal and legal brothels (brothel are illegal in all U.S. states except some counties in Nevada);
- "Cantinas" – a bar where a customer can pay extra for a girl with purchase of beverage;

How Big of a Problem is this?

To understand how big the problem is, consider this:

* Sex trafficking is a **supply and demand business**, and demand in Kansas City is high. A 2013 study found that **14.5% of adult men** (that's over 106,000 men) in KC are respondents to online advertisements offering commercial sex acts. This is creating demand for sex trafficking. The product being sold is men, women and children.

Source: Roe-Sepowitz et. al, 2013. Invisible Offenders: A study estimating online sex customers

* In 2009, the FBI, in partnership with the Independence Police Department, posted decoy advertisements online offering sexual activities that described the females as "little girls" and "young". Over **500 phone calls were received within the first 24 hours** of posting the ads.

Source: Morris, M. (2013, August 29). Kansas City ranks second in academic study of men looking for prostitutes online. *The Kansas City Star*

* Kansas City is conducive to sex trafficking due to our geographic middle location within the U.S.; on the crossroads of two major highway systems, **the I-70 and I-35 corridors**. Traffickers tend to move their victims frequently to avoid detection along nationwide "**prostitution tracks**".

Terminology

What is DMST?

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) is a form of Human Trafficking involving minors. Specifically, it is the sexual exploitation of an individual minor (under 18 years of age) for commercial financial gain or in exchange for anything of value (such as drugs, food or housing) within the domestic United States. DMST includes physical abuse, pornography, prostitution, erotic type entertainment, stripping and the smuggling of individuals. The exchange of something of value be it monetary or other, is what distinguishes DMST from other forms of child abuse.

Human Trafficking in all its forms is an enormously complex issue. Its eradication requires a multi-faceted battle strategy that incorporates preventative actions, such as awareness, prevention, and rescue, as well as the prosecution of perpetrators, and the protection and restoration of victims. It is not enough to focus on victims and their traffickers; we must address the ocean of demand—both sexual and monetary—that feeds this atrocity.

It is a commonly held belief that slavery was abolished 150 years ago, reality reveals that more people live in slavery today than in any time in human history. Its impact is felt in every nation across the world with some victims being exported across borders to other nations, some nations being destination countries for victims from other countries, and many victims being trafficked within their home country. It does not require transport or movement of victims as some victims are sold within their own homes by their own families.

Human Trafficking

The most widely-accepted formal definition is from the United Nations' *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons* which defines Human Trafficking as: "The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation." [1]

Put simply, it is modern day slavery. People are trafficked for the purpose of forced labor, sexual exploitation and even organ harvesting.

Forced Labor/Labor Trafficking

A form of Human Trafficking in which victims are held by force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of labor. Today forced labor victims are typically used in agriculture, mining, factory work and domestic servitude.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or Sex Trafficking

A form of Human Trafficking that involves the sexual exploitation of an individual for commercial/financial gain or in exchange for something of value. It includes physical abuse, pornography, prostitution, erotic type entertainment, stripping and the smuggling of individuals for the purpose of sexual exploitation. This term makes no distinction to the age or nationality of the individual. It can be anyone, anywhere. Commercial Sexual Exploitation is defined by the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, (reauthorized in 2008), as "the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial sex act" [2]

Commercial Sexual Exploitation of a Child (CSEC)

CSEC carries the same definition as DMST, however it carries no distinction to nationality. It could be any child anywhere in the world from anywhere in the world.

Forced Prostitution/Prostitution

Prostitution is overwhelmingly not an individual's "choice" and as a result is greatly misunderstood. It is never the choice of a mentally, physically, and spiritually healthy person. Studies have shown that when presented with another option a person would almost without exception choose an alternative to prostitution. Other research of prostituted persons reveal that nearly all want to escape that life but, may not know how or have any other choices.

A person can be physically forced into prostitution, tricked or coerced, or feel that they simply have no other options either through circumstances of limited opportunities or through a lifetime of systematic abuse and trauma. Making a distinction between Sex Trafficking, "Forced Prostitution" and "Prostitution" is a stumbling block to really solving this problem. As stated by a well known expert in prostitution research "Prostitution and sex trafficking are the same human rights catastrophe," [3]

What Factors Contribute to DMST?

It is a spiritual problem

DMST and other forms of Commercial Sexual Exploitation exist around the world in every country on earth, across cultures and demographics. As Christians, we see this issue as a spiritual problem at its core and the only answer is the power of Jesus Christ! Its insidious and pervasive nature reveals a great darkness that the enemy Satan has spread about the earth.

Vulnerability

The universal trait perpetrators seek as they search for victims is vulnerability. Vulnerability can be many things. Children who come from broken, dysfunctional or abusive families are vulnerable. Children who are left to navigate social media and the internet without parental supervision are vulnerable. Children seeking love, affection, attention and affirmation outside of a loving family are vulnerable. Children who have already experienced sexual abuse and trauma are misunderstood, discriminated against, subjected to victim blaming and stigmatized, making them vulnerable to re-victimization. The simple innocent naivety of children makes them vulnerable. Minorities are at a greater risk for vulnerability. Poverty, homelessness, peer group, lack of opportunity, substance abuse, disabilities and many more reasons all can make one vulnerable.

Lack of awareness

Some horrors are so great that we want to look away. We must be willing to open our eyes to the suffering and violence around us. This is often a problem that is hidden in plain sight. A basic education of awareness can equip ordinary people in all walks of life to recognize the signs of human trafficking and know what action to take. Inaction and willful ignorance allows these victims to continue to be isolated and marginalized, and for this darkness to spread.

Weaknesses in law enforcement and legislation

Many law enforcement officers lack training and proper understanding of DMST, and frequently misidentify the victims and crimes. The disproportionate arrest rates of victims when compared to their exploiters are evidence of this. There is also a terrible lack of appropriate treatment facilities, e.g., restoration homes, to take in and help these individuals.

There is good news in Kansas! In April of 2013, the state of Kansas increased penalties for the purchase of sexual services of a minor child and de-criminalizes the act or associated crimes of a minor while being exploited as a DMST victim. In essence, it brings state laws into sync with Federal law. However, there is much work that needs to be done to educate and equip law enforcement to identify and help these children.

Debunking the Myths Surrounding DMST

Pornography is harmless.

Pornography is the leading driving engine of demand for today's commercial sex industry. The science behind pornography addictions are real and present real dangers that must be understood. It is at the very root of this problem. The pornography industry and trafficking industry are inextricably linked. Plain and simple, pornography is marketing for commercial sexual exploitation and most often is commercial sexual exploitation. Through pornography, deviant sexual behaviors and attitudes are normalized in the human mind. Pornography addictions are created when dopamine is released with the brain and a rush is experienced upon viewing sexually-oriented material. This "rush" is a normal reaction within the human brain to sexual stimuli. However, in the context of pornography consumption, one must seek increasingly extreme, more frequent and even deviant content in order to get that same feeling. Experts on pornography addictions cite the following:

- 1 out of every 5 pornographic images is of a child [8]
- By definition, 100% of children used in child pornography are victims of Commercial Sexual Exploitation. Because we are discussing minors, any consent given or implied is irrelevant
- "Sexting" photos of children is child pornography
- 74% of sex purchasers said they first learned about sex from pornography [9]
- Between 2005 and 2009 there was a 432% increase in pornography content containing child pornography [7]
- Pornography use over time leads to neurological damage in the brain, sexual dysfunctions such as erectile dysfunction, and lowered levels of overall happiness within marriages [12]
- Individuals who use pornography report that their sexual fantasies become more deviant, hostile and violent over time.[12]
- Trafficking victims report having their exploitation filmed and photographed for use in pornography.

Prostitution is different because it's a woman's choice, right?

The reality of prostitution reveals an entirely different picture. Prostitution is not a humane or acceptable means for anyone to make a living. Even if it is a "choice", it is a choice born of desperation. We reject the idea that is the "world's oldest profession" and that nothing can be done about it. It is the exploitation of a human being and a form of violence.

- It is estimated that 65% to 95% of prostituted women and men have a history of early childhood sexual abuse and associated trauma. [14] As one victim explained, "We've all been molested. Over and over, and raped. We were all molested and sexually-abused as children, don't you know that?" [15] Our utmost compassion is called for here, not our disdain or indifference.
- The average age of entry into prostitution is 13 years old [5], below the age of consent. This makes it hard to say that prostitution is a choice that a woman makes with her body.

- Most girls and women who are prostituted are being controlled, manipulated, and subjected to frequent abuse, torture, gang rape and threats of violence.
- Nearly 90% of prostituted persons are controlled by a pimp [16]
- Studies cite that the mortality rate of prostituted individuals is between 40 and 70 times that of the general population[13]
- Prostituted individuals suffer from a myriad of trauma related mental disorders including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Prostituted individuals often turn to or are forced to use drugs as a coping mechanism or way to be kept compliant

Why can't victims just escape?

- Physical restraint
- Psychological restraint- i.e. trauma bonding
- Threat of violence – to self or others
- Drug use – used as a coping mechanism or given forcibly to keep victims compliant
- Victims are taught by their perpetrators (and unfortunately sometimes through their own experiences with negative law enforcement encounters) not to trust law enforcement.
- Hopelessness, depression, despair
- They often have nowhere to go and no one to turn to.
- They are marginalized and isolated.

And the biggest myth of all...

There is nothing I can do. This problem is just too big!

For this atrocity to be wiped out and for the victims and perpetrators to experience healing, we as the church and community must act with intention. As Christians, we are called to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Each of us has a unique set of God given gifts and talents. We are called to reach out to the vulnerable among us.

Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world. James 1:27

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