

Mapping the Demand

Sex Buyers in the State of Minnesota

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
Driven to DiscoverSM

WOMEN'S
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OF
MINNESOTA

OVERVIEW

This report deepens our understanding of Minnesotans who pay for sex. The goal of this study is to help close a significant gap in research, practice, and policy related to sex buyers and provide empirical evidence to support action. We sought to understand who they are, where they live and purchase sex, how they approach the marketplace for sex, and what they seek to purchase.

The study builds on findings from “Mapping the Market for Sex with Minor Trafficked Girls in Minneapolis” which documented the processes – rooted in exploitation, violence and manipulation – through which a supply of trafficked girls is developed and brought to the marketplace by sex trafficking operations.¹ “Mapping the Demand” provides a critical next step for understanding the market for sex in Minnesota by focusing on sex buyers in Minnesota.

DATA COLLECTION

Sex buying is hidden, illegal, highly stigmatized, and often dangerous. Research is difficult because there is currently no way to generate a representative sample of people who purchase sex. Therefore, the research team used a mixed-methods and community-based approach to surface stakeholder knowledge across jurisdictions, professions, geography, and experience.

1. QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS were conducted with 157 people across Minnesota and border towns in neighboring states. They were selected based on having first-hand knowledge of individuals who have purchased sex.

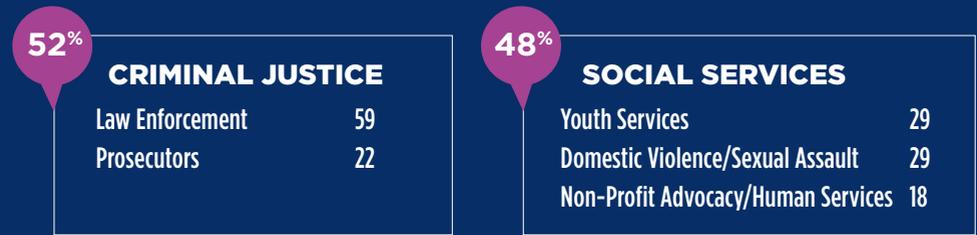


Table 1: Number of People Interviewed (N=157)



Fig. 1: Interviews Conducted by Region

2. MINNESOTA COURT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MNCIS) provided all cases of prostitution that were charged and filed in the court system, from 2010-2015 (N=332). NOTE: Most prostitution cases are not referred to MNCIS.

3. PRINT MEDIA COVERAGE coverage of sex trafficking and prostitution in Minnesota from 1995-2014 was collected and comprehensively reviewed for information about sex buyers in Minnesota. We identified a total 1,565 total articles with 377 articles pertaining to sex buyers.

4. ONLINE ADVERTISEMENTS were analyzed to explore and verify information provided in interviews.

Language used to describe sex trafficking and commercial sex can be confusing and potentially stigmatizing. This report uses terms in relation to Minnesota State Statutes on prostitution (609.324) and sex trafficking (609.322) and the Minnesota Safe Harbor and No Wrong Door Model that was enacted in 2014. Terms used here denote the role of individuals in the commercial sex market.



SEX BUYER

People who obtain sex or sexual activity with money or a trade for something of value (e.g. food, place to stay, goods, drugs).



PROVIDER/VICTIM

People who provide sex or sexual activity include victims of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, as well as people who are not involved with a trafficker.



TRAFFICKER

People who profit from connecting sex buyers to provider/victims (including pimps and third-party facilitators).

WHO purchases sex in Minnesota?

Sex buyers are the least understood aspect of the marketplace for sex. **Our data confirms that sex buyers are predominantly middle-aged, white, married men from across the whole state of Minnesota.** They are representative of men in the general population of Minnesota, which is about 85% white. We found that women and men of color also purchase sex, but in much lower numbers.

“A good majority of them are going to be your middle-aged to older white males as a demographic on them. A little bit, I would say, higher up on the economic scale - they have a little extra money to spend. A good majority of them, I would say 80-90 percent are married with children.” - Law Enforcement

Our data described sex buyers from a wide variety of employment sectors, including businessmen, doctors, lawyers, dentists, judges, professors, police officers, correctional officers, pastors, executives, truck drivers, manual laborers, farmers, and sailors.

“I would say most [sex buyers] are hard-working, probably educated people. But I would say 95% of them definitely have decent jobs. A lot of them are like on their lunch break or on their way home... I think we’ve only had one or two that I was like for sure they just scraped together enough money and they probably weren’t in the best home situation” - Law Enforcement

This study is not a prevalence study. However, a recent national study on men who purchase sex estimated that “about 14% of men in the United States report having ever paid for sex, and only 1% report having done so during the previous year.”² To provide a sense of scale, in Minnesota that means that approximately 26,000 men may have purchased sex in the past year.

WHERE sex buyers live and purchase sex?

Sex buyers identified by law enforcement live across the entire state of Minnesota. It is likely that law enforcement has identified less than 1% of people who have purchased sex in Minnesota. Sex buyers typically do not purchase sex in their hometowns. Our data suggest that most sex buyers travel between 30-60 miles to purchase sex. Some travel much longer to purchase juveniles or individuals in specialty market-segments.

Travel to purchase sex is a key part of sex buyer behavior. Travel was most commonly linked to the work day (the commute and lunch hour). Business trips and male-focused vacations (e.g. hunting, fishing, and overnight bachelor parties) were also identified. Travel protects anonymity and privacy, helps sex buyers hide the behavior from family and law enforcement, and fosters variety and convenience.



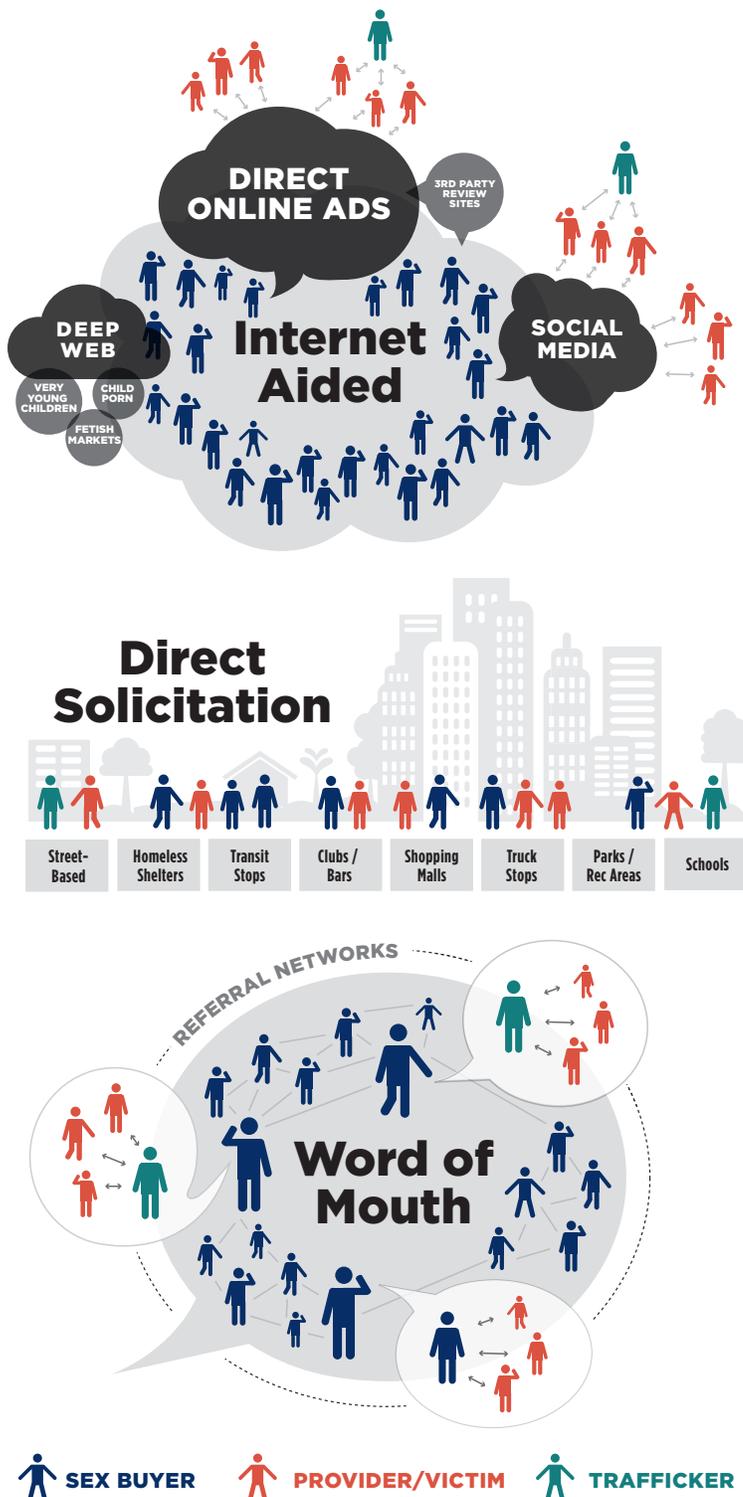
Fig 2: Where Sexual Transactions Occur



HOW do sex buyers enter the marketplace?

The marketplace for commercial sex is structured by development of a “supply” of people to provide sexual experiences and the “demand” or willingness to pay for sexual experiences.³ In this marketplace, the “supply” is people. It includes children, adult women and men, and transgender people. Some are in the marketplace unwillingly or due to economic and social pressures of poverty, racism, sexism, homelessness, and more. Many provider/victims are compelled by a sex trafficker; some are not. Research and practice have demonstrated that exploitation is embedded in significant portions of the market.⁴

Fig 4. Three primary ways that sex buyers enter the market to find a provider/victim



INTERNET-AIDED Our data suggest that most sex buyers use the internet to identify and connect with a provider/victim. Online escort ads such as Backpage.com allow a sex buyer to shop online for a provider/victim. We identified at least 37 online sites where advertisements for sex are posted. Social media is a growing location where sex buyers seek paid sex from youth. The deep web is used by a distinct subset of sex buyers linked to child pornography and sex offenses with very young children.

DIRECT IN-PERSON SOLICITATION Some sex buyers solicit sex from provider/victims in person, including street-based prostitution, which we identified in the Twin Cities and Duluth, but not in other parts of Minnesota. A subset of sex buyers display predatory behavior by directly soliciting sex from young people at transit hubs, parks, schools, homeless shelters, and places where homeless youth hang out.

WORD-OF-MOUTH NETWORKS Some sex buyers connect with provider/victims through people in the commercial sex market, such as traffickers and other sex buyers. They are “in the know” and may be connected to sex trafficking operations, including ones that are family-based or gang-related. These networks are underground, hidden, and very difficult to investigate.

The most common points of entry for sex buyers into the marketplace obscure trafficking, economic pressures compelling provider/victims, and true age of the provider/victim. This thin veil – motivated by sex buyers’ desires – hides trafficking and the violent and brutal sex trafficking operational processes that deliver victims to the marketplace. However, some sex buyers understand and participate in sex trafficking operations and specifically seek out juveniles.

WHAT sex buyers seek to purchase?

Common wisdom suggests that it is obvious that sex buyers seek to purchase sex. However, our data indicate that sex buyers purchase a sexual experience that is structured by the ability of sex buyers to use money (purchasing power) to control the details of the experience. There is no singular profile of what sex buyers seek in the market.

Most sex buyers seek quick and anonymous sex with no emotional connection. We identified a wide variation in how control is exerted and in the specific sexual requests and experiences. The types of sex acts in the marketplace include oral sex, vaginal penetration, anal sex, acts found in pornography (the so-called “porn star experience”), and some so-called fetish acts. Some sex buyers offer to pay more money for sex without a condom. Some want to pay to be violent.

The market is skewed toward seeking young adult provider/victims, with some sex buyers willing to obtain a sexual experience from a minor. Some sex buyers specifically seek out juveniles.

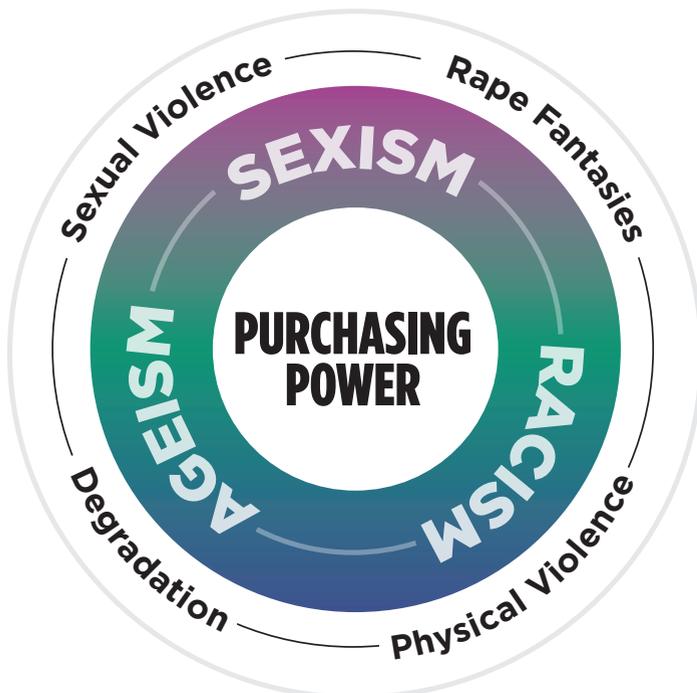


The average transaction takes 30 minutes

In interviews across Minnesota, law enforcement and social service providers described that some sex buyers seek acts that humiliate and harm the provider/victim, such as derogatory language, defecation and urination, rough sex, physical assault, sexual assault, rape, and in rare cases murder. Provider/victims’ ability to negotiate may be limited. Violence and fear of a trafficker or much-needed income from a sex buyer may override safety. Some proportion of sex buyers take what they want by force. We also identified a trend of racialized sexual violence among some sex buyers who seek specific provider/victims of color to reenact slavery or colonization and transgender women or gay men to specifically harm them due to transphobia and homophobia.

The market accommodates a wide range of sexual experiences. The full report provides much greater detail about what sex buyers seek to purchase.

Fig 5. Purchasing power combined with sexism, racism, and ageism in the market



“There’s a lot of men [sex buyers] that will tell you right up front- you’ll get an extra hundred dollars, but I’m going to beat the shit out of you.”

- Social Service Provider

“It depends on the mentality of the john... they have a complete agenda of exactly how it’s going to go. And they’re paying you for it to go that way. And so you’ll do what they say or else.”

- Social Service Provider

“It’s super empowering for him [sex buyer] and super control-filled and super like, glorifying to rape a black woman and be her owner....she has to play that role and how degrading to say like, ‘I’m your slave.’”

- Youth Services Provider

“I think more often than not they’re calling and looking for an adult. But when you suggest that a juvenile would be available...there’s often a willingness to go there.”

- Law Enforcement

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. For more resources and ways to help end sex trafficking in Minnesota, visit the Women's Foundation of Minnesota's MN Girls Are Not For Sale page: www.mngirls.org.
2. To learn how to reduce demand, Men as Peacemakers developed educational resources called the Don't Buy It Project.* This free prevention curriculum helps increase awareness about sexual exploitation, its root causes, and how men can help end demand in their own communities. More at www.dontbuyitproject.org.
3. The Link developed "I am priceless,"* a public awareness campaign to reduce sexual exploitation of children (ages 8-12). Through a multi-channel campaign that reaches children where they are—in the city streets, on transit, on social media, and at school—the campaign seeks to counter the negative self-image that can lead to exploitation. Learn more at www.thelinkmn.org.

*Funding provided by the Women's Foundation of Minnesota

For more information on this project and to view/download the full report:

uroc.umn.edu/sextrafficking

Lauren Martin, Christina Melander, Harshada Karnik, & Corelle Nakamura. (2017). "Mapping the Demand: Sex Buyers in the State of Minnesota", (Available at: uroc.umn.edu/sextrafficking). August 2017.

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Lauren Martin, PhD, was the Principal Investigator and lead author of the full report and executive summary. She is director of research at the University of Minnesota's Urban Research and Outreach Engagement Center (UROC) where she leads the Sex Trading, Trafficking and Community Well-Being Initiative. Christina Melander, MSW, is a research fellow at UROC. Harshada Karnik, MPP, is a PhD candidate at the University of Minnesota, Applied Economics. Corelle Nakamura, MPH, was a graduate student at the University of Minnesota. Thank you to Alexandra "Sandi" Pierce for her contributions to project design.

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1 Martin & Pierce (2014) Mapping the Market for Sex with Trafficked Minor Girls in Minneapolis. Full report and executive summary available at: uroc.umn.edu/sextrafficking.

2 Monto & Milrod (2014) "Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes With a Nationally Representative Sample of Men." International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology 2014, Vol. 58(7) 802-820.

3 Michael Shively, Kristina Kliorys, Kristin Wheeler, Dana Hunt (2012) A National Overview of Prostitution and Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report. Document #: 238796, Grant number: 2008-IJ-CX-0010.

4 Martin & Pierce, 2014.



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