



YOUTH SEX TRAFFICKING



What is Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking?

Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST) is the "recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for the purpose of a commercial act" where the victim is a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident under the age of 18.¹

Prevalence Rates of DMST

One study found that racial and ethnic minorities have more than twice the odds of being trafficked as minors compared with White non-Hispanics (Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2019).

According to the FBI, African American children comprise 53% of all prostitution arrests for those under 18—Clearly showing more trafficking occurring than in any other racial group.²

In a two-year review of all suspected human trafficking incidents, 40% of victims of sex trafficking were Black women.³

Risk Factors

Experienced and Witnessed Abuse.

Childhood sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and physical violence, and rape have been found to be associated with sex trafficking at early ages (Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2019).

Urban African American adolescent women, the cluster profile with the highest level of severe family violence (e.g., witnessing family violence, experiencing familial physical abuse by a parent or adult caregiver), were associated with the highest rate of intimate partner victimization and sex trade (Kennedy et al., 2012).

History of physical and sexual violence.

In case studies, adolescent dating relationships that were characterized by physical and sexual violence were associated with sex trafficking victimization among Black adolescent girls (Rothman, Bazzi, & Bair-Merritt, 2015).

Race intersects with other forms of subordination including gender, class, and age to push African American women disproportionately into prostitution and keep them trapped in the commercial sex industry (Butler, 2015).

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Family and Friends in Sex Trafficking.

Youth with family and friends involved in the commercial sex industry are at greater risk for DMST (Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2019).

Runaway Behaviors. Running away has been found to be the strongest predictors for DMST (Fedina, Williamson, & Perdue, 2019). Black girls have an increased likelihood to run away from foster care settings compared to girls of other racial backgrounds. Sex traffickers are more likely to target Black girls who have run away from home. 4

Internalized Racism Internalized racism or colorism can increase Black girls' vulnerability to sex trafficking (Hurst, 2015).

Poverty. In a sample of African American youth living in urban public housing, 28% reported having traded sex for money. Maternal incarceration and parental substance use were associated with a higher likelihood of trading sex for money (Nebbitt, 2013).

“Adultification” of Black Girls. The sexualization and “adultification” of Black girls contributes to the overrepresentation of Black girls in DMST. One study found that Black girls were perceived to be in need of less nurturing, protection, support, and comfort than White girls their same age. Additionally Black girls were viewed as more independent and knowing more about adult topics such as sex. The “adultification” of Black girls can lead to the criminalization of Black girls who have experienced DMST instead of viewing them as victims.⁵

School-to-Prison Pipeline. African American girls who drop out of school, or who are forced out of school, are at increased risk for being involved in DMST and being involved with the juvenile justice system (Morris, 2016).

Endnotes

- 1 Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 <https://www.congress.gov/bill/106th-congress/house-bill/3244>
- 2 Federal Bureau of Investigation, Crime in the United States 2017, Table 43B
- 3 Banks, Duran and Kyckellhahn, Tracey, “Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008-2010”, The Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2011
- 4 Snapshot on the State of Black Women and Girls: Sex Trafficking in the U.S. <https://www.cbcbfinc.org/publication/snapshot-on-the-state-of-black-women-and-girls-sex-trafficking-in-the-u-s/>
- 5 Snapshot on the State of Black Women and Girls: Sex Trafficking in the U.S. <https://www.cbcbfinc.org/publication/snapshot-on-the-state-of-black-women-and-girls-sex-trafficking-in-the-u-s/>

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This publication is supported by Grant No. 09EV0432 awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration of Children and Families, Family Violence Prevention and Services Administration. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the United States Department of Health and Human Services.