

Snapshot on the State of
Black Women and Girls:
**Sex Trafficking
in the U.S.**

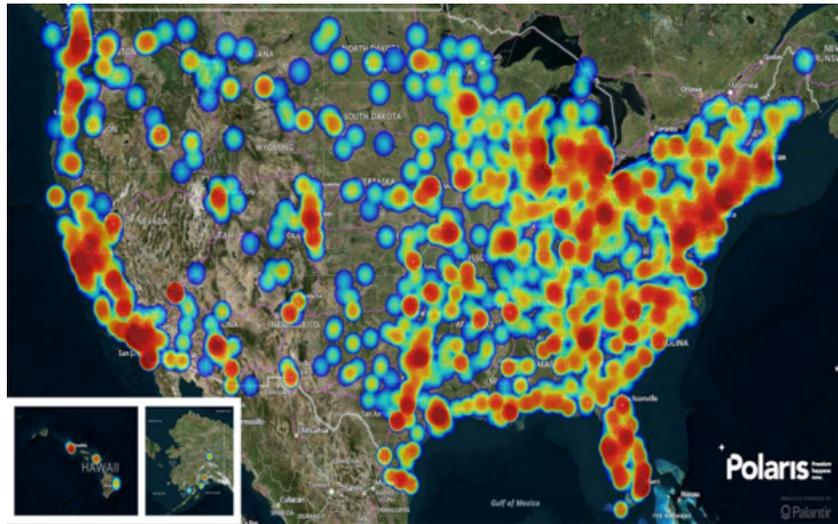
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Map of Sex
Trafficking in the U.S.
Source: Polaris



OVERVIEW OF FACT SHEETS

To better understand the high rates of sex trafficking among Black women and girls, research has indicated the continued sexualization of Black women and girls' bodies which has played out since slavery. The myths around Black women and girls' hypersexuality cannot be ignored when researching sex trafficking. Furthermore, the continued treatment of Black girls as older than their age must be explored when looking at the data surrounding the prevalent rates of domestic sex trafficking of Black girls. In addition, the intersecting factors like low socioeconomic status, child welfare involvement, detachment from education, criminal justice involvement, and history of physical/sexual abuse must be addressed. These factors contribute to the increased vulnerability of sex trafficking. Compared to their racial counterparts, Black women and girls suffer higher rates of these combined factors.

The importance of analyzing sex trafficking is evident, but the factors discussed above which contribute to the likelihood of being trafficked are often ignored or overlooked. In order to create a more comprehensive approach to studying the high rates of sex trafficking among Black women and girls, the intersecting factors must be studied all together. By studying the racial disparities across these particular factors, the blame is placed off victims and the larger structural implications are revealed.

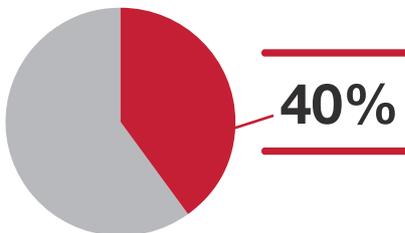
The objective of these series of fact sheets is to address the issue of sex trafficking, specifically among the population of Black women and girls. Throughout this series, the fact sheets also aim to highlight the importance of promoting policies which safeguard Black women and girls.

SEX TRAFFICKING

Compared to their racial counterparts, Black girls are more likely to be trafficked at a younger age.



According to the FBI, **57.5% of all juvenile prostitution arrests are Black children.**



Through a two-year review of all suspected human trafficking incidents across the country, **40% of sex trafficking victims were identified as Black women.**



In an interview with the Urban Institute, traffickers admittedly believe **trafficking Black women would land them less jail time than trafficking White women if caught.**

Source: *Rights 4 Girls, Urban Institute*

SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Socioeconomic status is one of the top contributors in increasing the chances of sex trafficking.



Black girls are **more likely to experience poverty** than their racial counterparts.



Traffickers tend to **target individuals with Black women with a low socioeconomic status.**



Due to unemployment, debt, and need to provide for themselves and their children, **many victims are less likely to leave the situation to make ends meet.**

Source: Rights 4 Girls, Institute for Women's Policy Research, Polaris

SEXUAL ABUSE

Sexual and physical abuse are two of the top contributors in increasing the chances of sex trafficking.

- Black girls are more likely to experience **sexual and physical abuse than their racial counterparts.**
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- Women who experience partner violence pose a higher risk of being sex trafficked. Of women who called the National Hotline, **36.9 percent were trafficked by their partners.**
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- Along with psychological and economic abuse, sex traffickers are likely to employ **physical and sexual violence over women to maintain control.**
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Source: Rights 4 Girls, Polaris

TRAFFICKING & TRAFFICKER RELATIONSHIP

- Research conducted in 2012 showed that around 85% of those who bought sex on the internet were White men.
- In Pennsylvania, 22% of arrests are for purchasing sex, but only 78% of prostitution arrests are for selling sex.

*Source: Grantmakers for Girls
of Color, Rights 4 Girls*





THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Child welfare involvement, specifically out-of-home foster care placement, is one of the top contributors in increasing the chances of sex trafficking.

- Black children are overrepresented in the foster care system. Although they make up fourteen percent of children in the U.S., **Black children make up twenty three percent of the foster care system.**
- More than 23,000 children will age out of the U.S. foster care system every year. **After reaching the age of 18, 20% of the children who are in foster care will become instantly homeless**
- A report conducted in 2016 by NCMEC found that **86% of the likely sex trafficking victims were in the care of social services when they went missing.**

Source: Rights 4 Girls, Child Trends, National Foster Youth Institute, National Center for Missing and Exploited Children

INEQUALITIES IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

Not only are Black girls overrepresented in foster care, but they are structurally disadvantaged by systematic racial disparities within the foster care system.

- Black girls are more likely to experience **family instability, poverty, disconnection from the education system, and physical and sexual abuse.**

10X

Foster children are 10 times more likely to be sexually abused. **Black children are sexually abused twice as much as their White counterparts in the foster care system.**

92%

California is ranked as having the highest number of reported cases of human trafficking in the U.S. The largest county in California, Los Angeles County, reported **92% of girls in the juvenile justice system identified as victims of sex trafficking are Black. Of those, 62% were from the child welfare system.**



MISSING AND MURDERED BLACK WOMEN

Black women and girls are disproportionately effected in missing and murder statistics.



Black girls are more likely to **run away from foster care than their racial counterparts.**



Black girls who are runaways are more likely to **be targeted by sex traffickers.**

4.41
PER
100,000

In 2014, the homicide rate for **Black women was 4.41 per 100,000.**

Source: AFCARS, Polaris, Violence Policy Center

“ADULTIFICATION” AND SEXUALIZATION OF BLACK GIRLS

The Center on Poverty and Inequality created a study which found that adults viewed Black girls less innocent and more adult like than white girls. The sexualization and “adultification” of Black girls contributes to a school to prison pipeline.

- The study found that compared to White girls of the same age Black girls were viewed as in need of less nurturing, less protection, less support, less comfort, are more independent, know more about adult topics, and know more about sex.
- Due to attributing these characteristics to Black girls, there may be a suggested influence for law officials to criminalize Black girls, rather than seeing them as victims.
- In the context of sex trafficking, discretion “enables racial bias—implicit or explicit—to shape who is viewed as a perpetrator and who is viewed as a victim.”

Source: The Center on Poverty and Inequality





DISCIPLINE POLICIES IN SCHOOLS

Black girls are more likely to be disconnected from the education system and be off track for achievement than their racial counterparts.

- Black girls are two times more likely to be disciplined for minor infractions like dress-code violations or loitering. Black girls are two-and-a-half times more likely to be punished for disobedience, and three times more likely to be cited for being disruptive.

- Black girls were six times more likely to be suspended as their white counterparts. Only 2 percent of white females were subjected to exclusionary suspensions in comparison to 12 percent of Black girls.

- In New York City, Black girls represented 56 percent of all girls disciplined, compared to white girls. In Boston, Black girls are 11x more likely to be disciplined than their white female peers.

Source: The Center on Poverty and Inequality, National Black Women's Justice Institute, Atlantic Philanthropies Black Girls Matter Report

JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Due to discipline policies which push Black girls out of the education system, they are more likely to enter the juvenile justice system.

- Nationally, the imprisonment rate for Black women is twice that of White women.
- Black children represent 53% of all juvenile prostitution arrests.
- California is ranked as having the highest number of reported cases of human trafficking in the U.S. The largest county in California, Los Angeles County, reported 92% of girls in the juvenile justice system identified as victims of sex trafficking are Black.

CBCF ON THE ISSUE

CBCF has been dedicated to focusing on research to highlight the importance of promoting policies to safeguard Black women and girls.



CBCF has partnered with Rights 4 Girls to collaborate on **research, education and outreach to communities.**



CBCF will be creating a panel for ALC designed to **educate and create solutions that counter sex trafficking.**



CBCF will be partnering with CBC members to focus on policies designed to **combat sex trafficking against Black women and girls.**



The Untold Story
Trafficking in the
Black Community
ALC'19

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Enforce laws in place decriminalizing sex trafficking

5 More development of diverse work forces in child care services

2 Replace zero-tolerance in schools with restorative justices policies

6 Create partnerships between communities, agencies, and other organizations to address racial disparities

3 Educate law enforcement on how to identify victims of sex trafficking

7 Educate communities about sex trafficking

4 Extend more resources to Black girls in the foster care system

8 More legal services and protections extended to Black women and girls

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As discussed in the supporting fact sheets, Black women and girls face higher rates of sex trafficking due to institutional barriers within social systems. However, this issue cannot be addressed without particular attention to the inequalities which persist in institutions. The fact sheets discuss the staggering statistics Black women and girls face within the systems of foster care, education, and criminal justice.

Although the statistics and experiences of sex trafficking are concerning in themselves, policies aimed at focusing on victims are a solid place to start in decreasing sex trafficking. The Violence Against Women's Act (VAWA) passed in 1994, has been instrumental in protecting victims of sexual violence while giving them more access to resources once unavailable when escaping sex trafficking. To build upon this type of legislation, policies like *The Reducing the Demand for Human Trafficking Act of 2017* co-introduced by Robin Kelly would promote the safeguarding of Black women by targeting traffickers for their crimes.⁴ Additionally, continued research and proposed legislation has been principle in providing a pathway to treating children as victims of sex trafficking, rather than perpetrators.⁵ In order to continue to combat sex trafficking, policies need to target the purchasers of sex trafficking and hold them accountable for their actions while increasing support services for those who have been trafficked.

Despite the progress through progressive legislation, there is still much work to be done. While it is necessary to create legislation to combat sex trafficking, it is equally important to identify the negative policies which systematically discriminate and exclude Black women and girls from systems which are supposed to protect and include them. Zero-tolerance school disciplinary policies

promulgate high suspension and expulsion rates among Black girls and continue to push them out of the classroom, increasing their vulnerability to sex trafficking. Research shows that by replacing zero-tolerance policies with restorative justice in schools, classrooms become more inclusive and learning outcomes improve. Specific strategies of restorative justice in schools include teaching social-emotional skills, providing training to teachers on implicit bias, developing policies which distinguish between school discipline and law enforcement discipline, and facilitating community engagement in schools.⁶ By implementing these practices, schools have been shown to become more inclusive and safe, creating increased possibilities for success among Black female students. Despite this being the case, the present administration has rolled back on voluntary anti-discriminatory practices that were instituted under the Obama administration. By not addressing the systematic inequalities which persist in the combined effort of the education and criminal justice system, Black girls have a higher likelihood of being pushed out of school. Therefore, Black girls have a higher chance of being sex trafficked and criminalized by law enforcement.

⁴ Reps. Kelly & Kinzinger Introduce Anti-Trafficking Bill." Congresswoman Robin Kelly

⁵ Rights 4 Girls

⁶ Protecting Students' Civil Rights: The Federal Role in School Discipline", Learning Policy Institute

Another recommendation includes educating law enforcement on how to identify women who are victims of sex trafficking. Rather than criminalizing Black women and girls through arrests, victims should be supplied with resources. Law enforcement continues to arrest high numbers of Black women for sex trafficking compared to the men who actually pay money for the “service”. Furthermore, the law needs to protect Black women and girls who are victims of sex trafficking. Despite legislation aimed at decriminalizing victims of sex trafficking, law enforcement does not always enforce the laws in place dealing with decriminalizing sex trafficking. Often times, criminal justice institutions focus on blaming the women themselves rather than viewing them as worthy of receiving help. Instead, law enforcement must provide necessary resources, like social services to help victims receive the help and justice they deserve.

An additional recommendation is to improve the child welfare system in which a disproportionate amount of Black girls are part of, and a source for traffickers. In order to do so, the foster care system must extend more resources to African American communities. Studies have shown that implicit bias is prevalent in the child welfare system. In order to counter this bias, more training in social services needs to be implemented, as well as the

development of diverse work forces in child care services. In addition, community based programs have been shown to improve a child’s likelihood for success. Family Group Decision Making (FGDM) is designed to bring together extended family members and community members to create success for a child in the foster care system. By creating partnerships between communities, agencies, and other organizations, racial disparities in the foster care system can be discussed and social service providers can connect, educate, and build trust within communities.⁷

Although there has been recent progressive legislation focused on combatting sexual violence against Black women and girls, there needs to be a continued education within communities to understand what commercial sexual exploitation is.⁸ By educating law enforcement, teachers, social service providers, and other community members about the sexual exploitation Black women and girls’ face, more awareness can be raised and these victims will be able to feel more supported. In addition, legal services and protections they are inclined to receive must continue to be extended to them.⁹

⁷ “Racial Disproportionality and Disparity in Child Welfare” *Child Welfare Information Gateway*

⁸ *Rights 4 Girls*

⁹ *Rights 4 Girls*



 *Congressional Black Caucus*®
FOUNDATION