Isolating Trafficking Data

Underreporting Bias

Why Underreporting Happens

Common reasons include:

- **Shame or embarrassment** (e.g., sexual assault, domestic violence)

- **Fear of consequences** (legal trouble, retaliation, job loss)

- **Social or racism stigma**

- **Distrust of authorities**

- **Not recognizing something as reportable**

- **Poor data collection systems**

Know the data:

1. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cshti0810.pdf

2. https://digitalcommons.law.byu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1490&context=jpl

3. https://www.mccaininstitute.org/resources/reports/a-six-year-analysis-of-sex-traffickers-of-minors/

Demographic Data on Individuals Who Purchase Sexual Services ("Johns")

Overview

Demographic data on individuals who purchase sexual services primarily comes from:

- Anonymous national health and behavior surveys

- Academic interview-based research

- Criminal justice arrest records

- Public health and epidemiological studies

Because purchasing sex is often illegal and socially stigmatized, data is subject to underreporting and sampling limitations. Despite these limitations, several demographic patterns consistently emerge across U.S. and Western studies.

Gender

- Approximately 90–99% of purchasers are male.
- A small minority are women purchasing services from men or other women.
- Most purchasers identify as heterosexual.

This is the most consistent finding across datasets.

Age

- Most common age range: 30–60 years old.
- Median age in arrest-based studies: early 40s.
- Lifetime likelihood increases with age (older men are more likely to report having paid at least once).

Participation among men in their 20s exists but is generally lower than among middle-aged men.

Employment and Income

- The majority are employed full-time.
- Represent both white-collar and blue-collar occupations.
- Many report moderate to above-average disposable income.
- Not disproportionately unemployed or economically marginalized.

Marital Status

- Approximately 40–60% are married or cohabiting at the time of purchase.
- Others are single, divorced, or separated.
- Married men consistently represent a significant portion of buyers.

Race and Ethnicity (United States)

- Generally reflects local population demographics.

- *Please see articles above for information*.

Prevalence Estimates (United States)

- Approximately 10–20% of men report having paid for sex at least once in their lifetime.

- Past-year prevalence is typically much lower (around 1–3%).

- Rates vary across countries and tend to be higher where prostitution is legal or regulated.

Behavioral and Social Characteristics (Research Findings)

Compared to non-buyers, purchasers are:

- Slightly more likely to report multiple sexual partners.

- More permissive toward commercial sex.

- Not consistently more socially isolated than the general male population.

"It's doctors, it's lawyers, it's politicians, it's activists."

"It's truck drivers, it's clothing store owners, it's corporate VIPs."

Please review the articles above for a more "isolated," view.

TABLE 5
Victim characteristics in cases confirmed to be human trafficking by high data quality task forces, by type of trafficking

Victim characteristic	Total[a]	Sex trafficking	Labor trafficking
Sex			
Male	49	27	20
Female	477	432	43
Age			
17 or younger	257	248	6
18-24	159	142	17
25-34	68	46	22
35 or older	27	12	15
Unknown	16	12	3
Race/Hispanic origin			
White[b]	106	102	1
Black/African American[b]	167	161	6
Hispanic/Latino origin	129	95	34
Asian[b, c]	26	17	9
Other[b, d]	35	23	11
Unknown	63	61	2
Citizenship			
U.S. Citizen/U.S. National	346	345	1
Permanent U.S. resident[e]	6	6	0
Undocumented alien[f]	101	64	36
Qualified alien[e]	19	1	15
Temporary worker	2	0	2
Unknown	50	41	9
Number of victims identified	527	460	63

Note: Analysis restricted to cases opened and observed between January 2008 and June 2010 in high data quality task forces. See definition of high data quality task forces on page 5.

[a]Includes cases of unknown trafficking type.

[b]Excludes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

[c]Asian may include Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders or persons of East Asian or Southeast Asian descent.

[d]Includes persons of two or more races.

[e]Permanent residents and qualified aliens are legal residents in the U.S., but do not have citizenship.

[f]Undocumented aliens reside in the U.S. illegally.

TABLE 6
Suspect characteristics in cases opened between January 2008 and June 2010 and confirmed to be human trafficking by high data quality task forces, by type of trafficking

Suspect characteristic	Total[a]	Sex trafficking	Labor trafficking
Sex			
Male	368	314	54
Female	88	71	17
Unknown	32	25	7
Age			
17 or younger	11	10	1
18-24	147	145	2
25-34	114	105	9
35 or older	100	65	35
Unknown	116	85	31
Race/Hispanic origin			
White[b]	24	22	2
Black/African American[b]	224	219	5
Hispanic/Latino origin	119	89	30
Asian[b, c]	28	18	10
Other[b, d]	20	5	15
Unknown	73	57	16
Citizenship			
U.S. Citizen/U.S. National	276	269	7
Permanent U.S. resident[e]	12	2	10
Undocumented alien[f]	44	39	5
Qualified alien[e]	8	2	6
Unknown	148	98	50
Number of suspects identified	488	410	78

Note: Analysis restricted to cases opened and observed between January 2008 and June 2010 in high data quality task forces. See definition of high data quality task forces on page 5.

[a]Includes cases of unknown trafficking type.

[b]Excludes persons of Hispanic or Latino origin.

[c]Asian may include Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders or persons of East Asian or Southeast Asian descent.

[d]Includes persons of two or more races.

[e]Permanent residents and qualified aliens are legal residents in the U.S., but do not have citizenship.

[f]Undocumented aliens reside in the U.S. illegally.

TRAFFICKERS