

Special Populations

CSEC Who Are Boys

Recent studies suggest that the number of boys and girls involved in child sex trafficking is likely similar. Contributing factors as to why CSEC boys are not identified or served include:

- The unwillingness of boys to identify as sexually exploited due to shame and stigma.
- Lack of appropriate screening and intake by first responders based on the belief that boys are not victims.
- Limited outreach by anti-trafficking organizations.

Many CSEC boys share the same risk factors for involvement in sex trafficking as do girls, such as child maltreatment and family violence. They also suffer the same types of abuse and trauma as a result of their exploitation.

CSEC Who Are LGBTQ

LGBTQ youth are at increased risk of sex trafficking because of:

- Family Rejection.
- School bullying.
- Discrimination.

Studies have shown that LGBTQ youth are overrepresented among runaway and homeless youth. Nearly 40% of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ in comparison to 7% of the general population.

CSEC with Intellectual, Mental and Physical Disabilities

Individuals with physical, cognitive, or emotional disabilities are at increased risk for commercial sexual exploitation. There are several factors that make individuals with disabilities vulnerable:

- They are dependent on caregivers and might become submissive to their wishes.
- They are isolated.
- They may have limited formal sex education.
- Sometimes, their level of care requires close intimate physical contact and they might become desensitized to touch or be unaware of appropriate boundaries.
- They might not be believed if they report abuse and violence.

CSEC Who Are African American

African American youth are overrepresented in child sex trafficking cases. According to the FBI, 52% of all juvenile prostitution arrests are African-American children. Their age when first prostituted is younger and they are arrested at higher rates than their white counterparts.

Studies have firmly linked African Americans involvement in sex trafficking to sociocultural issues, including:

- Pervasiveness of poverty.
- Homelessness.
- Limited education and job skills.

African Americans are overrepresented in poverty and the child welfare system, two known factors for a youth being at greater risk of sexual exploitation.

Youth in Foster Care and Runaways

Children in foster care are at particularly high risk of being trafficked. A 2013 report by the HHS Administration on Children, Youth and Families cited several studies showing that 50 to more than 90 percent of children who were victims of child sex trafficking had been involved with child welfare services. In 2017, an estimated 1 out of 7 endangered runaways reported to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children were likely sex trafficking victims; eighty-eight percent of these were in the care of social services or foster care when they went missing. Many foster children experience:

- Separation and isolation from family and friends.
- Abusive and/or neglectful caregivers.
- Multiple foster homes and/or caregivers.
- Repeated school changes.

The instability experienced by foster youth and their lack of a consistent relationship with a reliable, caring adult makes foster children particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Traffickers target children in foster care because of this increased vulnerability, seemingly offering them the stability and love they seek.

CSEC Who Are American Indian

Youth who are American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) are one of the most vulnerable groups for commercial sexual exploitation. The following risk factors for CSEC converge to create the “perfect storm” of vulnerability and risk for these youth. While data for AI/AN youth is limited, the statistics presented are derived from one or more studies.

- Historical, generational trauma of AI/AN communities related to government-sponsored involuntary relocations, sterilizations and boarding school attendance.
- A poverty rate of 28 - 32.4% (one in three AI/AN children) and unemployment rate of twice the national average, contributing to homelessness and financial need.
- Child sexual abuse and child physical abuse for AI/AN girls at twice the rate of the general population, with 79% of women in one study being sexually abused as children.
- Runaway, thrown-away and/or homeless AI/AN youth representing 20 - 40% of youth served.
- Overrepresentation of AI/AN youth in foster care by nearly 2.5 times the general population.
- Emotional vulnerability of AI/AN youth related to exposure to an average of 4.1 traumas, with threat or witnessing of injury being the most common; and a PTSD rate of 22% – equivalent to war veterans.
- Physical/sexual abuse of AI/AN teens/adults, with one in three AI/AN women raped and 6 in 10 physically assaulted in their lifetime.
- Normalization of violence through exposure at home and in the community, with crime and sexual assault rates 2.5 times the national rate, and 39% of AI/AN women being victims of domestic violence.
- Family alcohol and drug use that cause family, health, job or legal problems for 27 to 43% of 12th grade AI/AN youth, respectively; and reported by over half of AI/AN youth as a reason for running away.
- Personal substance abuse by up to 35 - 55% of AI/AN youth/adults prior to entering the sex trade.
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, at rates 30 times the rate for whites, cause impaired judgment and impulsiveness and vulnerability to threats by traffickers.
- AI/AN girls may also be targeted because of their perceived marketability as “exotic” and because of the barriers to effective law enforcement on tribal lands.

CSEC Who Are Foreign Nationals

A foreign national is a foreign-born individual who is a non-citizen and residing in the United States, regardless of their immigration status. CSEC who are foreign nationals are particularly vulnerable and may pose unique challenges including:

- Lack of legal identification.
- Language barriers.
- Social isolation.
- Fear of deportation.

CSEC Who Are Parents

There is limited data on CSEC who are parents, with most information obtained from surveys related to the health of sex trafficking victims. For many CSEC who become pregnant, intolerant traffickers force abortions due to the loss of revenue from a pregnancy. One study found that at least 55% of trafficked women indicated they had one abortion and 55% had multiple abortions. Other CSEC who give birth may be forced to abandon the child to family or social services. In instances when a CSEC is able to parent, they suffer problems associated with teen parenting, such as:

- Maternal and infant health problems.
- Poverty.
- Lack of educational opportunities.
- Inadequate family support.
- Increased risk for domestic violence.
- Child abuse and neglect.

Children are also used by the trafficker to coerce CSEC into staying with the trafficker and following the trafficker's wishes. CSEC must remain with the trafficker to protect their relationship with their children, as well as protect their children from threats of physical harm.