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National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts, Part II: New Developments in the Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking

Final Report



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Institute of Justice**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
Project Goals and Objectives	6
Research Questions	7
Research Design, Methods, Key Findings	8
Expected Applicability of the Research	10
Acknowledgments	11
CHAPTER 1: SUMMARY OF THE PROJECT	12
Overview of the Problem	13
Demand Forum Original Design and Implementation	25
Emergence of New Tactics Leveraging Information Technology	26
Project Goals and Objectives	26
Research Questions	27
Research Design, Methods, Key Findings	27
Participants and Other Collaborating Organizations	33
Artifacts	35
Expected Applicability of the Research	36
Changes in Approach from Original Design	37
Limitations	38
Acknowledgments	38
ARREST TACTICS	39
CHAPTER 2: REVERSE STINGS	40
Overview	40
Cook County Sheriff’s Office: “National Johns Suppression Initiative”	42
Street-Level Reverse Stings	43
Declining Number of Arrestees Per Reverse Sting	46
National Center on Sexual Exploitation	1
NIJ Grant # 2020-75-CX-0011	1

Street Prostitution Resurgence	48
Community Complaints Drive Many Reverse Stings	49
Variations and Innovations in Reverse Stings	51
Evidence of Effectiveness	51
Additional References	57
CHAPTER 3: WEB-BASED REVERSE STINGS	58
Overview	58
Variation on the Basic Web-Based Reverse Sting Model	59
Evidence of Effectiveness	61
Additional References	62
CHAPTER 4: OTHER SEX BUYER ARRESTS	63
Overview	63
Circumstances of Other Sex Buyer Arrests	64
Additional Examples	68
Evidence of Effectiveness	75
Additional References	76
POST-ARREST TACTICS	77
CHAPTER 5: IDENTITY DISCLOSURES	78
Overview	78
Variations in identity disclosure tactics	82
Challenges and Concerns	85
Evidence of Effectiveness	86
Additional References	90
CHAPTER 6: AUTO SEIZURES	92
Overview	92
National Center on Sexual Exploitation	NIJ Grant # 2020-75-CX-0011
	2

Evidence of Effectiveness	95
Additional References	97
CHAPTER 7: DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSION	98
Overview	98
Evidence of Effectiveness	99
Additional References	101
CHAPTER 8: STAY OUT OF AREAS WITH PROSTITUTION (SOAP) ORDERS	102
Overview	102
Evidence of Effectiveness	106
Additional References	107
CHAPTER 9: JOHN SCHOOLS	108
Overview	108
Targeting the Educational Intervention	109
Prevalence of John School Programs	110
Community Impact Panels	115
More Recent Sex Buyer Education Programs	116
Common Misconceptions about John Schools	118
Evidence of Effectiveness	120
Additional Observations about John Schools	123
Additional References	124
CHAPTER 10: COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAMS	125
Overview	125
Applications of Community Service Programs Used for Arrested Sex Buyers	126
Evidence of Effectiveness	129
Additional References	131
National Center on Sexual Exploitation	NIJ Grant # 2020-75-CX-0011
	3

DISRUPTIVE TACTICS	132
CHAPTER 11: INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY-BASED TACTICS	133
Overview	133
The Online Sexual Exploitation Marketplace	135
Conventional Reverse Stings	140
Overview of Selected Technologies	141
Technology and Ethics	160
Cost and Usage Fees	161
Summary	161
Additional References	164
CHAPTER 12: EMPLOYMENT LOSS	165
Overview	165
Ad Hoc Versus Policy-Driven Employment Loss	166
Types of Employment Loss Due to Arrest for, or Allegations of, Buying Sex	168
Examples of the Circumstances of Sex Buyer Employment Loss	175
Evidence of Effectiveness	184
Additional References	186
CHAPTER 13: NEIGHBORHOOD ACTION	187
Overview	187
Selected applications	188
Additional Examples	190
Evidence of Effectiveness	193
Additional References	195
Neighborhood Action Information and Resources	195
CHAPTER 14: CAMERAS AND VIDEO EVIDENCE	196
National Center on Sexual Exploitation	NIJ Grant # 2020-75-CX-0011
	4

Overview	196
Circumstances of Camera Use to Deter or Sanction Sex Buyers	198
Evidence of Effectiveness	200
Additional References	202
CHAPTER 15: LETTERS	203
Overview	203
Types of Letters	203
Evidence of Effectiveness	206
Additional References	207
Sample Letters from Police Departments	207
CHAPTER 16: PUBLIC EDUCATION	209
Overview	209
Examples of Public Education	213
Evidence of Effectiveness	215
Additional References	216
DISCUSSION	218
Emergent Themes Concerning Prostitution and Sex Trafficking	218
Demand Reduction Tactics	219
Augmented Intelligence and the Future of Demand Reduction	223
Demand Reduction and Primary Prevention	224
Conclusion	225
APPENDIX A: BIBLIOGRAPHY	226
APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES	270
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW DISCUSSION GUIDE	275

Executive Summary

Project Goals and Objectives

To combat prostitution and sex trafficking, criminal justice strategies and collaborative programs have emerged that focus on divesting these illicit markets of their sole revenue source: consumer-level demand. From 2008 to 2012, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) sponsored a study entitled “National Assessment of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts,”¹ that featured the systematic collection of information to determine the types and distribution of demand reduction tactics implemented throughout the United States. These efforts gave rise to a typology of law enforcement and community-based tactics identifying 12 different methods for deterring people (mostly men) from buying sex or which sanction those individuals who solicit sex acts. The study found that these tactics were used by law enforcement and community action groups in more than 800 U.S. cities and counties in efforts to deter this behavior and to hold perpetrators accountable.

The essential product of that study was the [Demand Forum](#) website, launched in January 2013. In the years that followed, Demand Forum provided information about demand reduction interventions in the United States, and its content was updated and expanded through daily web searches, and supplemented by periodic literature reviews or direct contact with a network of practitioners and other experts. During the website’s first seven years of operation, it was viewed by more than 262,000 individuals from 179 countries and was used to shape policy and practice within the United States.²

While Demand Forum continued to be a useful tool, much has changed since its launch in 2013 (and conception years before). The most significant development has been the advent of new tactics using information technology (IT) to deter buyers and develop evidence to apprehend those actively seeking to purchase sex. The current study builds upon the methodology and knowledge base of the first National Assessment with the objective of keeping the field informed of innovations and evolving responses to buyer behaviors and to continue to provide support for practice and policy.

The National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE), which now maintains Demand Forum, proposed a systematic assessment of current demand reduction tactics and an expanded tactic typology to reflect recent

¹ Michael Shively et al., *A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, April 30, 2012), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238796.pdf>.

² Arkansas Attorney General’s State Task Force for the Prevention of Human Trafficking, *Report of The Arkansas Task Force For the Prevention of Human Trafficking* (Little Rock, AR: Arkansas Attorney General’s Office, 2014), https://arkansasag.gov/wp-content/uploads/humantraffickingtask_force_report_2014.pdf; U.S. Department of Justice, *Attorney General’s Annual Report to Congress on U.S. Government Activities to Combat Trafficking in Persons* (Department of Justice, 2020), <https://www.justice.gov/media/1214871/dl?inline=>; Staff Writer, “Councilors Want to See Johns Targeted in Sting Operations,” *Worcester Magazine*, January 11, 2018, <https://www.worcestermag.com/story/news/2018/01/11/councilors-want-see-johns-targeted/10930462007>; Bryan Barlow and Brenda Stanfill, *The Governor’s Council on Human and Sex Trafficking (CHST): Recommended Strategies to Prevent and Respond to Trafficking in Alaska (Labor Trafficking, Sex Trafficking, and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children)* (Governor’s Council on Human and Sex Trafficking, 2022), <https://dps.alaska.gov/getmedia/d845613a-c728-4f67-9cd5-33a8796fa1cc/GCHST-Final-Report-Sept2022.pdf>; Catherine Marcum et al., “Police Department Perceptions of the Mobility and Safety of Online vs Offline Prostitutes: An Exploratory Study,” *Policing: An International Journal* 43, no. 1 (2020): 167-182, doi:10.1108/PIJPSM-07-2019-0105.

innovations intended to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking markets. The project also aimed to provide updated information and resources that could be used by practitioners.

Research Questions

New IT-based demand deterrence tactics utilizing chatbots first emerged circa 2015 and were subsequently improved with artificial intelligence capabilities circa 2018, well after the launch of Demand Forum. We recognized that this tactic and the technology it relies on was likely unfamiliar to many law enforcement agencies and that there was no central source of information for them about how such technology could be effectively implemented and adapted to meet local needs and resources.

Thus, we proposed that one of the critical products of this study would be an easily understood overview of IT-based tactics, containing a summary of the different types of technology being applied in this way and how such technology may be deployed either autonomously or integrated into law enforcement operations. Our objective was to present agencies with enough information about the distinctives of the various emerging tools to enable informed decisions about their feasibility for local use.

The set of questions that we believed law enforcement agencies and others may have about innovative IT-based tactics served as our key research questions about this new type of intervention:

- Does the technology need to be acquired and run by our agency, or is it deployed by a third party and coordinated with our operations?
- Does the technology require purchase or licensing fees?
- Is training required to operate the technology, and if so, what are the costs, time commitments, and availability?
- If they acquire and use the software, is technical assistance provided?
- What are the technical requirements of the software or application (e.g., operating system)?
- Are there restrictions or limitations regarding its use?
- When suspects are targeted using this technology, are there legal implications that may affect prosecutions, such as questioning probable cause?

In addition to these questions about technology-driven demand reduction tactics, other key research questions driving the design and execution of the study included:

- What other tactics have been used, aside from those we have already identified, in cities and counties we have previously documented in Demand Forum?
- What other cities and counties, in addition to those previously identified, have used any demand reduction tactic?
- In addition to the original typology of 12 tactics and the newer IT-based tactics, what other demand reduction approaches have been used?

Research Design, Methods, Key Findings

In January 2021, work began on a new grant to NCOSE from NIJ that supported the current study.³ The methodology for identifying new information about existing tactics and their implementation in U.S. cities and counties featured a web-based survey distributed to more than 3,200 law enforcement agencies, more than 50 interviews with expert practitioners and survivors, searches of thousands of open source reports, reviews of the research and practice literature, and reviews of prostitution laws within all 50 states. The research was guided by input from a panel of nine content experts who are survivors of sex trafficking and prostitution. These experts reviewed and provided feedback on materials and participated in eight quarterly meetings and other communications.

Much of the project's effort was directed toward understanding and documenting the newest tactic category: information technology-based tactics designed to detect, investigate, apprehend, and deter sex buyers. This tactic had emerged as a distinct and new class of intervention which was prompted by a shift in illicit sex markets away from in-person solicitation, and toward various advertising websites and social media platforms. A detailed description of that innovation is provided in our summary document on "[IT-Based Tactics](#)."

Two additional tactics were also added to the demand deterrence typology: "[Other Sex Buyer Arrests](#)" and "[Employment Loss](#)," thus bringing the total number of identified tactics to 15 types. The former refers to sex buyer arrests that are *not* the result of sting operations using police decoys, but which result from investigations of sex trafficking or other offenses against persons exploited in the sex trade. The latter refers to known or alleged sex buyers losing their employment as a consequence of that behavior. Neither of these tactics recently developed or is an innovation. They were added due to a realization that formed over the years since Demand Forum was launched that these tactics should have been included in the original typology. The current project to update and enhance the website provided the opportunity to make these additions.

In addition to adding these three new tactics to the core structure of Demand Forum, the performance of the research tasks described in this report resulted in the identification of **more than 530 additional U.S. cities and counties** which have engaged in demand reduction and **more than 6,000 substantial updates** to the website's city- and county-level pages.

A summary of key project tasks and findings follows and are described more fully in the remainder of the report, the tactic summaries, and the site-level web pages of Demand Forum.

- **Online survey of law enforcement agencies.** A total of **3,206** questionnaires were distributed via email to municipal police departments and sheriff's offices, and **249** completed forms were received from agencies within 22 states.⁴ The survey allowed us to identify **40** cities and counties

³ Michael Shively, Marcel van der Watt, Lisa Thompson, Jordan Marshall, and Victoria Rousay, *National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts, Part II: New Developments in the Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking*, (Washington DC, National Center on Sexual Exploitation), Award #:2020-75-CX-0011, 2020.

⁴ A low response rate was expected and is not problematic given the objectives of the survey and how the results are used. The study was not intended to provide estimates or rates of demand reduction tactic use, nor did we intend to claim that our survey would represent the population of agencies within the United States. The survey was intended to be one of several means of reaching agency representatives, to update information about the use of tactics in

not identified in the prior NIJ study or subsequently found using open source searches and provided evidence of additional tactics used in **42** communities previously known to have used other demand reduction tactics. It also corroborated our previously collected data on demand reduction tactics used in **167** cities and counties.

- **Interviews with representatives of law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders in demand reduction initiatives.** Interviews were completed with **52** individuals to identify and gather descriptive information about demand reduction operations. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify or expand upon the information provided in the online survey and gather additional details about specific types of tactics and how they are implemented in specific cities and counties. The individuals interviewed cannot be identified, but we can disclose that they represent a variety of criminal justice agencies (e.g., municipal police departments, county sheriff’s offices, city attorney’s offices, district attorney’s offices, state attorney general’s offices), collaborative initiatives (e.g., human trafficking task forces, regional and state-wide anti-trafficking coalitions), and programs (e.g., John schools, victim service providers).
- **More than 800 internet searches were conducted to find law enforcement press releases, reports, and news coverage on contemporary demand reduction events** in the United States.
- **Eight quarterly meetings were held with a panel of nine survivor expert advisors.** The panel provided invaluable feedback about all of the project’s critical decisions and products, including the decisions to add the three new tactics to the original 12 categories; providing a summary of state prostitution laws and make it available on Demand Forum city and county web pages; and changing the terminology for the tactic originally called “Shaming” to the more accurate and appropriate term, “[Identity Disclosure](#).”
- **Three new tactics were added to the typology forming the structure of Demand Forum.** Our team produced new web pages and summary documents for each and documented where each new tactic has been used in the U.S. We added descriptions of implementation and links to source documentation to the following number of site-level web pages of Demand Forum.
 - Other Sex Buyer Arrests: **895** cities/counties
 - Employment Loss: **488** cities/counties
 - IT-based Tactics: **78+** cities/counties
- **New web pages for 534 additional cities and counties** were added to Demand Forum boosting the number documented on the website from **2,130** to **2,663**. Also added were descriptions of the use of each type of tactic to the web pages of numerous previously identified sites.
- **More than 6,000 substantial updates were made** to the city and county web pages on Demand Forum.
- **To provide additional context for our findings about the prevalence of demand reduction efforts throughout the U.S., we estimated the number of sources we have gathered to provide information about their use.**

communities already described in Demand Forum, and to learn about demand reduction tactic use in communities we had not yet documented. The online survey was successful in achieving these objectives.

- We drew a random sample of 100 city- and county-level web pages and hand counted the number of source documents cited. The sample of web pages had a mean of 26.54 source documents cited. Applied to the complete set of 2,664 site-level web pages, we estimate that those pages contain links to more than **70,000** source documents.
- **To disseminate research findings**, the main deliverable of this grant is the [Demand Forum](#) website, which has been used to share research findings in real-time on a continuous basis. Throughout the grant’s performance period, daily updates were made to the city and county-level web pages, and periodic updates were made to the tactic summaries. During this project’s timeframe (1/1/21 to 3/26/23), Demand Forum received **66,020** visits and had **110,253** page views. Since the website’s original launch in January 2013, Demand Forum received **331,422** visits and **581,729** page views from individuals in 179 countries.
- **Additional dissemination activities and products include:**
 - The manuscript, “*Discouraging the Demand That Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration Through Augmented Intelligence*” was submitted to the peer-reviewed journal *Societies*. It was accepted for publication on March 24, 2023.
 - Thirteen presentations at conferences and professional meetings, including three papers based on the project presented at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, a presentation at the U.S. Senior Policy Operating Group’s Ad Hoc Committee on Demand, and presentations to regional and state-wide human trafficking task forces and coalitions.
 - Four interviews about demand reduction methods for radio programs, print media, and documentary film.
 - Two training presentations on demand reduction tactics were hosted by a municipal police department and provided to an audience of 55 professionals from throughout the state, including state and local law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocates.

Expected Applicability of the Research

The purpose of this project was to identify, curate, and disseminate information of practical value to those operating, planning, or considering implementing initiatives designed to apprehend and deter those seeking to purchase sex. The essential product of the study is a new “2.0” version of Demand Forum, with an expanded typology that includes IT-based methods. The primary function of the website and other products of the study is to provide practitioners with access to information so they may learn how other jurisdictions have attempted to address similar problems and to foster an ongoing exchange of information. Since the website was launched in January 2013, law enforcement agencies, task forces, and collaborating institutions have widely used the resource to design, improve, and sustain programs, and by state and federal legislatures in crafting sex trafficking and prostitution statutes. Before the project began, it had been used **by over 260,000 people from all 50 states and over 175 other nations**. The presence of Demand Forum has also facilitated ad hoc requests for technical support from law enforcement agencies, prosecutors’ and Attorney General’s offices, legislators, local governments, and others seeking to respond to sex trafficking and prostitution. During the course of this study, it has received **an additional 66,000 visits and averages about 100 new sessions per day**, and project staff has continued to field requests for technical assistance

about demand reduction methods. The current project was designed to ensure that the website and related products continue to meet the needs of local law enforcement, policymakers, and their collaborators with up-to-date, comprehensive, and accessible information.

Acknowledgments

The Demand Forum website was originally developed under grant #2008-IJ-CX-0010 to Abt Associates from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), U.S. Department of Justice. In January 2020, the website transferred to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE). In January 2021, work began on a new grant from NIJ (#2020-75-CX-0011) to update and expand the content presented on Demand Forum. We wish to convey our gratitude to the panel of nine survivor experts who provided guidance for this project, as well as to the 249 survey respondents and 52 interview subjects. Neither Abt Associates, NIJ, our survivor expert panel, nor our research respondents are responsible for the content of the Demand Forum website or this project's final report. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions of the research presented in this report and on Demand Forum are the responsibility of the Project Director and the NCOSE Research Institute and do not necessarily represent those of NIJ, NCOSE, Abt Associates, or study participants.

Chapter 1: Summary of the Project

To combat prostitution and sex trafficking, criminal justice strategies and collaborative programs have emerged that focus on depriving illicit sex markets of their sole revenue source: consumer-level demand. Research supported by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) found that in one city, an educational intervention for arrested sex buyers significantly reduced recidivism.⁵ The study also found that little descriptive information was readily available about the dozens of other “John school” programs throughout the U.S. or other types of interventions pursuing the same objective of reducing demand. An exploratory search quickly found a wide range of tactics used to deter and apprehend sex buyers in numerous cities and counties, but for those seeking to implement such methods, information for designing programs and guiding operational decisions was scarce. With little guidance from the collective experience of others, some programs struggled or failed when faced with problems that had been solved elsewhere, and others were never launched when challenges were encountered.

To fill this gap in knowledge about the range of demand reduction tactics that had been developed and implemented, NIJ sponsored a subsequent study, the “National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts,”⁶ which involved systematically gathering information to determine the types and distribution of demand reduction tactics implemented throughout the United States. The purpose was to identify, curate, and disseminate information of practical value to those operating, planning, or considering implementing initiatives to apprehend and deter those seeking to purchase sex. The project developed a typology of 12 major categories of demand reduction interventions, and through several data collection tasks compiled and reviewed thousands of source documents, as well as information provided directly by hundreds of law enforcement agencies. The study found that these tactics had been implemented in more than 800 U.S. cities and counties, and written summaries of the implementation of these tactics in every identified city and county were produced. In addition to a detailed project final report and numerous briefings and presentations, the findings and products of the National Assessment were disseminated primarily through its primary deliverable, the Demand Forum website.

Demand Forum was developed to provide overviews of each deterrence tactic and summaries for every jurisdiction where specific deterrence tactics had been implemented. In the years after its launch in January 2013, the resource was widely used by law enforcement agencies, task forces, and collaborating institutions to design, improve, and sustain programs. It has also been utilized by state and federal legislatures to craft sex trafficking and prostitution statutes. By the end of 2019, the website had been used by over 260,000 people from all 50 states and over 175 other nations.

While Demand Forum continued to be a helpful tool, by 2020 much had changed since it was conceived. The most significant development has been the emergence of new tactics using information technology (IT) and artificial intelligence (AI) (IT-based tactics) to deter buyers and develop evidence to apprehend those

⁵ Michael Shively, Sarah Kuck Jalbert, Ryan Kling, et al., *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., March 7, 2008), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf>.

⁶ Michael Shively, Kristina Kliorys, Kristin Wheeler, et al., *A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, April 30, 2012), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238796.pdf>.

actively seeking to purchase sex. To keep pace with innovations and effective responses to emerging trends and continue to provide helpful support for practitioners, our team at the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) proposed a study to build upon the methodology used in the first National Assessment conducted from 2008 to 2012. We proposed to systematically gather information and source documents about current tactics and expand the typology to include innovations. The objective was to provide summaries and other resources regarding newer tactics leveraging information technology and update summary reports on established tactics. Data and information collection would involve web searches, an online survey distributed to 2,150 law enforcement agency representatives, phone interviews with law enforcement and other agencies, county-level case studies involving site visits, program observation, and document curation. The key product of the study would be a new “2.0” version of Demand Forum, with an expanded typology including IT-based methods. We would also provide summary reports about each tactic, an omnibus project Final Report, webinars and briefings geared toward practitioners and policymakers, at least one conference presentation, and peer-reviewed journal articles.⁷

Overview of the Problem

A natural place to begin an overview of the problem of sex buying is to consider the scale of the problem. While a complete review of the literature concerning historic estimates of sex buying in the US is beyond the scope of this research, we wish to draw attention to recent research on this topic. Dank et al. (2014) estimated the size of the underground commercial sex economy (UCSE) of seven US cities, in part, by using estimated weekly earnings of pimps/sex traffickers operating in those cities. According to the study’s calculations, the estimated UCSE of these cities in 2007 ranged in millions of dollars as follows: \$39.9 Denver, CO; \$96.6 San Diego, CA; \$98.8 Dallas, TX; \$103 Washington, DC; \$112 Seattle WA; \$235 Miami, FL; to \$290 Atlanta, GA;⁸ the combined total of which was \$975.30 million. In Atlanta, Miami, San Diego, and Seattle, the 2007 USCE estimates exceeded both the estimated underground economies for drugs and guns.⁹ The study also reported that sex buyers paid as little as \$5 to as much as \$4,500 per prostitution contact.¹⁰

However, in a subsequent study of only San Diego, CA, the size of its UCSE in 2013 was estimated to be \$810 million *alone*¹¹—83% of the total USCE revenue estimated for seven cities in Dank et al. (2014).

⁷ A manuscript entitled, “Discouraging the Demand That Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration Through Augmented Intelligence” was submitted to the peer-reviewed journal *Societies*. It was accepted for publication on March 24, 2023. See: <https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/13/4/94>. A second peer-reviewed article entitled, “Demand Reduction as Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking: Insights from a National Study in the United States” is currently being drafted and will report on the aims and findings of the concluded NIJ Report.

⁸ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

⁹ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

¹⁰ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

¹¹ Ami Carpenter and Jamie Gates, *The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego County* (April 2016)

Even allowing for substantial growth in San Diego’s UCSE from 2007–2013, this research suggests that the UCSE in San Diego and elsewhere may greatly exceed, Dank et al.’s (2014) initial estimates.

Considering this information, the important point to make is that UCSE revenue is generated entirely by individual sex buyers. Given the scale of the estimated UCSE in these cities there were clearly many active sex buyers fuelling it, but surprisingly, estimates of how many men were contributing to the UCSE of these cities were not provided in these analyses. For data on how many US men are engaging in sex buying, we must turn to other analyses.

Monto and Milrod (2014), utilizing data from General Social Survey obtained from 2002–2010 found that 14% of US men aged 18–75 had purchased sex within their lifetimes, but among men who had served in the military the rate was substantially higher—23%.¹² Contrasting GSS data between the periods of 1991–2001 and 2002–2010, they also observed a decline in lifetime sex buying rates from 16% to 14%.¹³ To the best of our knowledge, this is the only *peer-reviewed* study conducted recently that provides a nationally representative estimate of *lifetime* sex buying among US men. The group Demand Abolition conducted a nationally representative survey of 8,201 US men utilizing data collected more recently (between December 2016 and January 2017) and reported that 20.6% had ever purchased sex in their lifetimes, 6.2% having done so within the past 12 months.¹⁴ They also reported that while “high-frequency” buyers—those who purchase sex weekly or monthly—constitute only 25% of active buyers, their transactions make up nearly 75% of the market.¹⁵ This observation may help explain the apparent incongruence between the high USCE estimates we reported above and relatively low sex buyer prevalence rates.

In 2007, a capture-recapture analysis estimated that 2% to 3% of US men in local to large metropolitan areas had purchased sex from people in street prostitution *within a 2-to-5-year period*.¹⁶ Twelve years later, a nationally representative survey of 2,525 adult males, found that 1 in every 25 men (roughly 4 million) responded affirmatively to a direct question indicating they purchased sex *within the prior three years*.¹⁷

¹² Martin A. Monto and Christine Milrod, “Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes with a Nationally Representative Sample of Men,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 58, no. 7 (2014): 802–820, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X13480487>. Note: The GSS survey question asked whether the respondent paid *or received* pay for sex, so the actual percentage of men who pay for sex may be smaller.

¹³ Martin A. Monto and Christine Milrod, “Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes with a Nationally Representative Sample of Men,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 58, no. 7 (2014): 802–820, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X13480487>.

¹⁴ *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*, (Demand Abolition, November 2018), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf>. Note: The Demand Abolition report was not peer-reviewed, but Martin Monto, a noted scholar of sex buyers, collaborated with Demand Abolition on the survey design. He discusses the survey and his involvement with it in Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, ed. T. J. Holt and A.M. Bossler, 1177–1201 (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90307-1>.

¹⁵ *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*, (Demand Abolition, November 2018), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf>.

¹⁶ Devon D. Brewer, John J. Potterat, Stephen Q. Muth, John M. Roberts, Jr., et al., *Clients of Prostitute Women: Deterrence, Prevalence, Characteristics, and Violence*, (April 2007), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/218253.pdf>.

¹⁷ Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Stephanie Bontrager, Justin T. Pickett, and Anna E. Kosloski, “Estimating the Sex Buying Behavior of Adult Males in the United States: List Experiment and Direct Question Estimates,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 63 (2019): 41–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2019.04.005>.

More than half (57%) of those men reported paying for sex multiple times, and well over three-quarters (81%) paid for sex from a female—findings which shine light on the significant level of repeat offending among sex buyers, as well as the disproportionate sex ratio between those paying for sex and those being purchased.¹⁸ Sixty-six percent of these buyers indicated that they located the person they paid for sex offline in places such as bars, massage parlors, or on the streets, while nearly 34% identified someone in prostitution online via means such as online ads, escort advertising, or social media.¹⁹

Cumulatively these findings may give the impression that the number of men engaging in prostitution has increased only slightly in recent years. Yet, the number of men buying sex may be larger than the figures above suggest. Researchers who placed decoy ads on the website Backpage in 15 major US cities (i.e., Atlantic City, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Kansas City, Las Vegas, Miami, Minneapolis, New York City, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Diego, and San Francisco) and utilized capture/recapture analysis, estimated that on average 1 out of every 20 males in these cities over the age of 18 solicited sex online.²⁰ However, in Houston, one out of every five males (21.4%) was estimated to solicit sex online.²¹ Other cities making the top five for highest estimated rates of online solicitation were Kansas City (14.5%); Las Vegas (13.5%), Boston (7.6%), and Miami (6.6%).²² Thus, rates of sex buying, at least online, may be significantly higher and vary considerably based on location.

The negative consequences of commercial sexual exploitation for all parties directly and indirectly involved are well documented. Those involved in the sex trade, their “buyers,” and residents and businesses in areas in which prostitution occurs all suffer substantial harm, and prostitution further places burdens on criminal justice and public systems (see reviews by Shively et al., 2010).²³ The market forces of street prostitution also create a demand for both domestic and international sex trafficking.²⁴ Where segments of the public

¹⁸ Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Stephanie Bontrager, Justin T. Picket, and Anna E. Kosloski, “Estimating the Sex Buying Behavior of Adult Males in the United States: List Experiment and Direct Question Estimates,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 63 (2019): 41–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2019.04.005>.

¹⁹ Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Stephanie Bontrager, Justin T. Picket, and Anna E. Kosloski, “Estimating the Sex Buying Behavior of Adult Males in the United States: List Experiment and Direct Question Estimates,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 63 (2019): 41–48, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2019.04.005>.

²⁰ Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Stephanie Bontrager Ryon, Kristine Hickle, James, M. Gallagher, et al., “Invisible Offenders: Estimating Online Sex Customers,” *Journal of Human Trafficking* 2, no. 4 (2016): 272–280, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1107711>.

²¹ Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Stephanie Bontrager Ryon, Kristine Hickle, James, M. Gallagher, et al., “Invisible Offenders: Estimating Online Sex Customers,” *Journal of Human Trafficking* 2, no. 4 (2016): 272–280, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1107711>.

²² Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, Stephanie Bontrager Ryon, Kristine Hickle, James, M. Gallagher, et al., “Invisible Offenders: Estimating Online Sex Customers,” *Journal of Human Trafficking* 2, no. 4 (2016): 272–280, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23322705.2015.1107711>.

²³ Michael Shively, Kristina Kliorys, Kristen Wheeler, et al., *A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, April 30, 2012), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238796.pdf>; Michael Shively, Karen McLaughlin, Rachel Durchslag, et al., *Developing a National Action Plan for Eliminating Sex Trafficking, Final Report* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, August 16, 2010), <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/27770/1/Developing%20a%20National%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Eliminating%20Sex%20Trafficking.pdf>.

²⁴ Seo-Young Cho, Axel Dreher, and Eric Neumayer, “Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?,” *World Development* 41 (2013), [doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.023](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.023); Niklas Jakobsson and Andreas Kotsadam, “The Law and Economics of International Sex Slavery: Prostitution Laws and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation,”

have traditionally viewed prostitution as a “victimless” public nuisance crime, research shows that the majority of survivors of street prostitution enter the illicit sex trade as minors, are usually coerced, defrauded, or forced to engage in sex by sex traffickers, and the vast majority become victims of all manner of violence and sex crimes committed by buyers and traffickers.²⁵ Drug usage is another major vulnerability factor for involvement in street-level prostitution.²⁶ Described as “overrepresented yet overlooked,”²⁷ members of the LGBTQ community, and in particular LGBTQ youth²⁸, are also vulnerable to sex trafficking. In one study,²⁹ among 215 homeless young adults aged 18 to 25, more than one-third of the sample reported being sex trafficked, with over half being LGBTQ. Among the sample, the likelihood of being LGBTQ and being a victim of sex trafficking was two times higher than for heterosexual young adults. LGBTQ sex-trafficked young adults also reported significantly higher rates of exchanging sex for money compared to heterosexual young adults.

In the 20+ years since human trafficking was codified as a distinct category of federal crime in the United States by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, the trafficking of people for forced labor and sexual exploitation has been a critical challenge to law enforcement agencies, victim service providers, and human rights advocates. Thousands of law enforcement agencies across the nation have concluded that their efforts to reduce sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation

European Journal of Law and Economics 35, no. 1 (2013), [doi:10.1007/s10657-011-9232-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10657-011-9232-0); Andreas Kotsadam and Niklas Jakobsson, “Shame on You, John! Laws, Stigmatization, and the Demand for Sex,” *European Journal of Law and Economics* 37, (2014): 393-404, doi: 10.1007/s10657-012-9339-y.

²⁵ Debra Boyer, *Who Pays the Price?: Assessment of Youth Involvement in Prostitution in Seattle*, The Firm, Commissioned by City of Seattle, Department of Human Services, Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Prevention Division (2008), <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/Boyer%20Who%20Pays%20the%20Price.pdf>; Devon D. Brewer et al, “Extent, Trends, and Perpetrators of Prostitution-related Homicide in the United States,” *Journal of Forensic Sciences* 51, no. 5 (2006): 1101-1108; [doi: 10.1111/j.1556-4029.2006.00206.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1556-4029.2006.00206.x); Jennifer Cole et al., “The Trauma of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Youth: A Comparison of CSE Victims to Sexual Abuse Victims in a Clinical Sample,” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 31, no. 1 (2016): 122-146, [doi: 10.1177/08862605145555133](https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605145555133); Emily J. Tweed et al., “Health of People Experiencing Co-occurring Homelessness, Imprisonment, Substance Use, Sex Work and/or Severe Mental Illness in High-income Countries: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis,” *Journal of Epidemiology Community Health* 75, no. 10 (2021): 1010-1018, [doi: 10.1136/jech-2020-215975](https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2020-215975); Helen W. Wilson and Cathy Spatz Widom, “The Role of Youth Problem Behaviors in the Path from Child Abuse and Neglect to Prostitution: A Prospective Examination,” *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 20, no. 1 (2010): 210-236, [doi:10.1111/j.1532-7795.2009.00624.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1532-7795.2009.00624.x); Kristin Hickie & Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, “Curiosity and a Pimp’: Exploring Sex Trafficking Victimization in Experiences of Entering Sex Trade Industry Work among Participants in a Prostitution Diversion Program” *Women and Criminal Justice* 27, no. 2 (2017): 122–138, [doi: 10.1080/08974454.2015.1128376](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2015.1128376); Joan R. Reid, “Risk and Resiliency Factors Influencing Onset and Adolescence-limited Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Disadvantaged Girls,” *Criminal Behavior and Mental Health* 24 (2014): 332–344, doi.org/10.1002/cbm.1903; Clarke et al., “Age at Entry into Prostitution: Relationship to Drug Use, Race, Suicide, Educational Level, Childhood Abuse, and Family Experiences,” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 22 (2012): 270–289, [doi: 10.1080/10911359.2012.65583](https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2012.65583).

²⁶ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

²⁷ Claire Mooney. "Overrepresented Yet Overlooked: LGBTQ Survivors of Trafficking and the Imperative for the Nordic Approach to Sex Trafficking Laws in the United States." *Cardozo J. Equal Rts. & Soc. Just.* 26 (2019): 261.

²⁸ Polaris. “Sex Trafficking and LGBTQ Youth.” (2019), <https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/LGBTQ-Sex-Trafficking.pdf>.

²⁹Kimberly A Hogan., and Dominique Roe-Sepowitz. "LGBTQ+ homeless young adults and sex trafficking vulnerability." *Journal of Human Trafficking* 9, no. 1 (2023): 63-78.

must do more than apprehend sex traffickers and identify victims. To impact these illicit markets, they must address their key motivation: the revenue provided by consumers. Without the demand for prostitution, there would be no market forces producing and sustaining the roles of pimps and traffickers as “distributors,” nor would there be a force driving the production of a “supply” of people to be sexually exploited.

The necessity of combating demand to stymie sex trafficking has also been recognized by the international community. Article 9(5) of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime (United Nations, 2000) (hereafter Palermo Protocol) adopted by the UN in November 2000 mandates the strengthening of legislative and other measures such as “educational, social or cultural measures” that seek to “discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children, that leads to trafficking.”³⁰ The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) echoed this call in its report, *Discouraging Demand that Fosters Sex Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation*.³¹

The widespread practice of repeatedly arresting persons in prostitution has been demonstrably ineffective,³² leading many cities to employ enforcement policies and other initiatives to curb demand for paid sex (and thus sex trafficking and other crime that typically accompanies prostitution). However, before the completion of the 2012 National Overview, there were no central sources of information or comprehensive reviews of demand reduction approaches that provided enough detail to be of practical use to practitioners. In a pioneering exploration of demand reduction efforts, Hughes provided an excellent conceptual overview of the range of approaches that had been implemented and provided illustrative capsule descriptions of a small number of programs.³³ Others made valuable contributions in helping to frame the issue of demand reduction but again were of limited value for practitioners due to providing few examples of each type of approach and insufficient detail about how these efforts operated.³⁴

³⁰ United Nations, *Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime*. General Assembly Resolution 55/25, (Vienna, Austria: United Nations, November 15, 2000), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/protocol-prevent-suppress-and-punish-trafficking-persons>.

³¹ OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking Human Beings, *Discouraging the demand that fosters trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation*. Occasional Paper, No. 11, (Vienna: Austria, OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking Human Beings, 2021), https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/7/f/489388_2.pdf.

³² Maureen A. Norton-Hawk, “The Counterproductivity of Incarcerating Female Street Prostitutes,” *Deviant Behavior* 22 (2001): 403–417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620152472804>; Shively et al. “Developing a National Action Plan for Eliminating Sex Trafficking,” Abt Associates Inc, Final Report, August 16, (2010), <https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/27770/1/Developing%20a%20National%20Action%20Plan%20for%20Eliminating%20Sex%20Trafficking.pdf>.

³³ Donna M. Hughes, *Best Practices to Address the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* (University of Rhode Island, Women’s Studies Program, August 2004), 1-69, https://www.popcenter.org/sites/default/files/problems/trafficked_women/PDFs/Hughes_2004a.pdf.

³⁴ Elizabeth Bernstein, “The Meaning of the Purchase: Desire, Demand, and the Commerce of Sex,” *Ethnography* 2, no. 3 (2001): 389-420, [doi:10.1177/14661380122230975](https://doi.org/10.1177/14661380122230975); Michael S. Scott and Kelly Dedel, *Street Prostitution 2nd Edition*, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, November 2006), <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-p011-pub.pdf>.

Before the completion of the *National Overview* in 2012 and the subsequent launch of the Demand Forum website, little information was available about these initiatives' structure, operation, or performance. For example, descriptive information was available on only a few John school programs (most notably, those in [San Francisco](#) and [Fresno, CA](#); [Buffalo, NY](#); [Indianapolis, IN](#); [St. Paul, MN](#); and [Portland, OR](#)). Overviews or analyses of reverse stings, identity disclosure, auto seizure programs, and other demand reduction approaches were even less common. While there had been conceptual overviews and descriptions of a small number of sex trafficking demand reduction approaches³⁵, there were no attempts to systematically describe nor assess the broad spectrum of extant programs. Brewer and colleagues³⁶ studied the deterrent effect of arresting sex buyers, and other studies provided assessments of sex buyer traits.³⁷ Still, this work did not provide descriptive information about reverse stings or other law enforcement strategies in sufficient detail to inform practitioners interested in implementing or improving these operations.

The result of this information scarcity was that almost all demand reduction initiatives were developed de novo, without the practical guidance that can be provided by the experiences of those implementing similar approaches elsewhere. For example, we found that most John school programs had been designed using just one program—San Francisco's First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP)—as a model, due in part to it being one of the first programs and the one that had received the most publicity.³⁸ However, we also found that all of the other 70+ John school programs in the U.S. have deviated from the FOPP model in one way or another to meet local needs and to accommodate available resources. When practitioners determined that the FOPP model must be modified, their decisions were made in a virtual information vacuum, without the benefit of knowing the range of solutions that other programs had developed when faced with similar circumstances or how the modified program had fared. For example, an effort to establish a John school in [Vallejo, CA](#), was abandoned when their DA's office was unsupportive. However, [Waco, TX](#), had previously encountered the same obstacle in their attempt to implement a John school. However, they structured the program so that arrestees were processed by a municipal court rather than through the DA's office. The Waco program has operated for over ten years without the DA's office involvement. If law enforcement personnel in Vallejo had access to information about other jurisdictions' prior success in meeting challenges similar to their own, it is likely to have increased their chances of success in establishing and sustaining their initiative. In the 2012 National Assessment, numerous examples were found where one community had found ways to overcome obstacles that had defeated or hampered the development of programs in others. Therefore, Demand Forum was designed to provide detailed information on the full range of options

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Devon D. Brewer et al., "A Large Specific Deterrent Effect of Arrest for Patronizing a Prostitute," *PLoS ONE* 1, no. 1 (2006): e60, [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000060](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0000060).

³⁷ Martin A. Monto, "Holding Men Accountable for Prostitution: The Unique Approach of the Sexual Exploitation Education Project (SEEP)," *Violence Against Women* 4, no. 4 (1998): 505-517, [doi:10.1177/10778012980040040](https://doi.org/10.1177/10778012980040040) (accessed March 30, 2023); Martin A. Monto, *Focusing on the Clients of Street Prostitutes: A Creative Approach to Reducing Violence Against Women – Final Report* (Portland, OR: University of Portland, 2000), <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=5bde0f703a0537bc10cd17ec38a079b6b628eea2>; Martin A. Monto and N. McRee, "A Comparison of the Male Customers of Female Street Prostitutes with National Samples of Men," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 49, no. 5 (2005): 505-529, [doi:10.1177/0306624X04272975](https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X04272975).

³⁸ Michael Shively, Kristina Kliorys, Kristin Wheeler, et al., *A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, April 30, 2012), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238796.pdf>.

for program structures and modes of delivery, allowing localized knowledge accumulated by the experiences of hundreds of other efforts to be an easily accessible resource for policy decisions and for practitioners tasked with implementation.

The NIJ awards in 2005 to evaluate the John school program in San Francisco and in 2008 to conduct a national overview of demand reduction efforts were intended to address such research gaps and generate information useful to policymakers and practitioners. For the first National Assessment, the research team conducted a literature review, web searches, and interviews with over 200 experts, researchers, and practitioners, conducted 22 site visits, including program observations and interviews, and gathered over 5,000 source documents regarding different types of demand reduction efforts. That research team initially produced a typology with 12 categories of demand reduction interventions:

1. Police decoy operations designed to apprehend sex buyers (“reverse stings”)
2. Police sting operations involving decoy online advertisements (“web-based reverse stings”)
3. Publicizing the identities of sex buyers (“shaming”)
4. Letters or other messages sent to the homes of suspected or confirmed sex buyers
5. Seizing vehicles used in attempting to purchase sex
6. Suspending driver’s licenses of sex buyers
7. Geographic restrictions or restraining orders (“SOAP Orders,” for Stay Away from Areas with Prostitution)
8. Community service as a sanction for arrested or sentenced buyers
9. Public education campaigns
10. Neighborhood action targeting sex buyers
11. Surveillance cameras or video recordings used to deter sex buyers or provide evidence for prosecution
12. Education or treatment programs for arrested sex buyers (“John schools”)

By the end of the *National Overview* in 2012, the Abt Associates research team had identified more than 900 U.S. cities and counties in which these demand reduction approaches had been implemented. Demand reduction efforts were known to have occurred in 47 states (all but Idaho, Wyoming, and South Dakota) and in communities of all sizes. In the eight years following the completion of the *National Overview*, frequent searches continued to be conducted, tracking the use of demand reduction tactics and updating the content on Demand Forum. In that timeframe, the number of cities and counties known to have employed any of the 12 demand reduction tactics more than doubled to over 2,100. But the growth was not evenly distributed across the different tactics. The most significant increase from 2012 to 2023 was in web-based reverse stings, from 286 to 1,610 jurisdictions.

That change in law enforcement methodology was a response to a shift in the market for prostitution and trafficked sex, away from in-person and toward online solicitation. In the decade beginning in 2000, police departments nationwide observed sharp increases in Internet use for soliciting prostitution and a decline in their yield of arrests made in street-based stings and reverse stings.³⁹

³⁹ Michael Booth, “Craigslist Develops a Dark Side,” *The Denver Post*, December 3, 2007, <https://www.denverpost.com/2007/12/03/craigslist-develops-a-dark-side>; Donna M. Hughes, *Best Practices to Address the Demand*, 2004, https://works.bepress.com/donna_hughes/20/; Leonora LaPeter Anton, “‘Escorts’ Leave the Streets to Get on the Superhighway,” *Tampa Bay Times*, July 6, 2006, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/2006/07/02/escorts-leave-the-streets-to-get-on-the-superhighway>; Kit R. Roane,

The migration of prostitution advertising and even the provision of paid sex acts from offline to online platforms has been underway since the mid-1990s.⁴⁰ As one report found, “The widespread availability and rapid expansion of the Internet . . . redefined the spatial and social limitations of the sex market by introducing new markets for both recruitment and advertisement.”⁴¹ For several years, the now defunct “Erotic Services” section of Craigslist and the now shuttered, classified-advertising website Backpage were the principal platforms which facilitated that transition and gave rise to a flourishing online prostitution marketplace.⁴²

Craigslist, an online classified advertiser, got its start in 1995 and launched its “Erotic Services” section—a portion of the website dedicated to prostitution advertising—in 2001.⁴³ The site became a major online destination for prospecting sex buyers, with one law enforcement official calling it, “the single largest source of prostitution in the nation.”⁴⁴ After coming under significant public pressure, in part resulting from

“Prostitutes on Wane in New York Streets but Take to Internet,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/02/23/nyregion/prostitutes-on-wane-in-new-york-streets-but-take-to-internet.html>; M. Ross, “How the Internet is Bringing the World’s Oldest Profession to a Neighborhood Near You,” *Diablo Magazine*, June, 2005; Jacob Quinn Sanders, “Prostitution Hits Web in State,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, February 10, 2008, <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2008/feb/10/prostitution-hits-web-state-20080210>; Josh Shaffer, “Internet’s Anonymity Fuels Surge in Sex Traffic,” *Raleigh News Observer*, March 4, 2008, https://tucson.com/news/national/internets-anonymity-fuels-surge-in-sex-traffic/article_5e946b27-23d2-5548-aec9-061fef975a0a.html; Michael Shively, Sarah Kuck Jalbert, Ryan Kling, et al., *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., March 7, 2008), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf>; Sudhir Venkatesh, “How Tech Tools Transformed New York’s Sex Trade,” *Wired*, January 31, 2011, https://transmarcations.constantvzw.org/texts/Peggy_sexworkers.pdf; Melissa Farley, Kenneth Franzblau, and M. Alexis Kennedy, “Online Prostitution and Trafficking,” *Albany Law Review* 77, no. 3 (2014): 101–157.

⁴⁰ Donna Hughes, “Prostitution Online,” in *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, ed. Melissa Farley (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press, 2003), 115–131.

⁴¹ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014. P. 286), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

⁴² Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>; Helen Shuxuan Zeng, Brett Danaher, and Michael D. Smith, Internet Governance through Site Shutdowns: The Impact of Shutting Down Two Major Commercial Sex Advertising Sites, *Management Science* 68, no. 11 (2022): 7793–8514, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/full/10.1287/mnsc.2022.4498>; United States Senate, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Backpage.com’s Knowing Facilitation of Online Sex Trafficking*, Staff Report (2017), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/imo/media/doc/Backpage%20Report%202017.01.10%20FINAL.pdf>; Thomas J. Holt, Kristie R. Blevins, and Joseph B. Kuhns, “Examining Diffusion and Arrest Avoidance Practices among Johns,” *Crime & Delinquency* 60, no. 2 (2014): 261–283, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128709347087>; Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, eds. T. J. Holt, and A.M. Bossler (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020) 1177–1201, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_54.

⁴³ Greg Kidd, *Craigslist: By the Numbers*, 3 taps, June 6, 2011, <https://3taps.com/papers/Craigslist-by-the-Numbers.pdf>; Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>

⁴⁴ CNN.com, “Lawsuit Accuses Craigslist of Promoting Prostitution,” (March 5, 2009), <https://www.cnn.com/2009/CRIME/03/05/craigs.list.prostitution/index.html>.

a lawsuit filed by Cook County, IL, Sheriff Tom Dart,⁴⁵ the company announced in May 2009 that it was replacing its “Erotic Services” with an “Adult Services” category and that new ads would be manually reviewed before being posted to its site.⁴⁶ However, concerns that Craigslist was not adequately blocking ads promoting prostitution and child sex trafficking led 17 US Attorney’s Generals⁴⁷ and others⁴⁸ to put continued pressure on the company. Craigslist permanently closed the “Adult Services” (i.e., prostitution advertising) section of its website in September 2010.⁴⁹

Village Voice Media, a company which at one time operated nearly a dozen alt-weekly papers, launched Backpage.com in 2004 in an effort to compete with what it believed was a threat posed by Craigslist.⁵⁰ The website became the leading website for prostitution advertising (or as some described it, the “world’s top online brothel”⁵¹). Backpage’s impact on the sex trade has been described as the “Walmartization of the online sex industry in the United States.”⁵² However Backpage’s “Walmartization” effect extended far beyond the US. At its height the company was reportedly running operations at 943 locations on six continents, operated in 97 countries and 17 languages.⁵³ Its annual revenues grew from \$5.3 million in 2008, to \$71.2 million in 2012, to \$135 million in revenue in 2014.⁵⁴ These profits were driven by the website’s prostitution advertising, as evidence from a report from the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the U.S. Senate affirms:

Backpage’s adult section dwarfed other categories on the site in the number of paid ads, with over 700,000 as of May 2011, compared to just over 3,000 for “Jobs” and 429 for “Automotive.” Adult ads also received significantly more page views than the ads in other categories: As of May 2011,

⁴⁵ Associated Press, “Illinois: Sheriff Sues Craigslist,” *New York Times*, March 5, 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/06/us/06brfs-SHERIFFSUESC_BRF.html

⁴⁶ Brad Stone, “Under Pressure, Craigslist to Remove ‘Erotic’ Ads” *New York Times*, May 13, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/05/14/technology/companies/14craigslist.html>; Jason Szep, “Craigslist to Drop ‘Erotic Services’ Ads,” *Reuters* (May 13, 2009), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-craigslist/craigslist-to-drop-erotic-services-ads-idUSTRES54C4YP20090513>; Bobbie Johnson, “Craigslist to Close Erotic Services Category” *The Guardian* (May 13, 2009), <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2009/may/13/craigslist-erotic-services>.

⁴⁷ Associated Press, “17 State Attorneys General Call for Craigslist to Drop Adult Ads,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, August 24, 2010, <https://www.dailynews.com/2010/08/24/17-state-attorneys-general-call-for-craigslist-to-drop-adult-ads/>.

⁴⁸ Lance Whitney, “Craigslist Urged to Shut Erotic-Services Ads Worldwide,” CNET.com, September 15, 2010, <https://www.cnet.com/tech/tech-industry/craigslist-urged-to-shut-erotic-services-ads-worldwide>; “Craigslist Responds to ‘Prostitution’ Claims,” BBC.com, August 9, 2010, <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-10914334>; ABC7, “Protesters Gather Outside Craigslist Headquarters,” July 8, 2010, <https://abc7news.com/archive/7544224/>.

⁴⁹ Claire Cain Miller, “Craigslist Says It Has Shut Its Section for Sex Ads,” *The New York Times* (September 15, 2010), <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/business/16craigslist.html>.

⁵⁰ Kate Knibbs, “Digital Pimps or Fearless Publishers?” *TheRinger.com*, December 2, 2016, <https://www.theringer.com/2016/12/2/16042908/backpage-pimping-lawsuit-c4577180c95e>.

⁵¹ David Kravets, “Backpage CEO Arrested, Accused of Running ‘World’s Top Online Brothel,’” *Ars Technica*, March 7, 2016, <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2016/10/backpage-ceo-arrested-accused-of-running-worlds-top-online-brothel/>.

⁵² Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, eds. T. J. Holt, and A.M. Bossler (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020) p. 1191, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_54.

⁵³ Edouard Morton, “How Chance Discovery of a Philippine Child-Sex Ring Helped the FBI Close Book on Backpage.com” *South China Morning Post*, April 21, 2018, <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/society/article/2142663/how-chance-discovery-philippine-child-sex-ring-helped-fbi-close>.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

ads in the “Jobs” section had approximately 2 million page views and “Automotive” had approximately 580,000. By contrast, adult ads had over one *billion* page views, and no other single category had more than 16 *million* page views.⁵⁵

Perusing sex buyers would have made up a sizeable percentage of those more than one billion prostitution ad page views.

Like its predecessor Craigslist, Backpage came under intense scrutiny for facilitating prostitution and sex trafficking.⁵⁶ It and its affiliated websites (e.g., Evilempire.com, Nakedcity.com) were ultimately seized and terminated in April 2018, following an investigation by the US Department of Justice and a joint operation of the FBI, the US Postal Inspection Service, the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigation Division, and other agencies.⁵⁷ However, Craigslist and Backpage were certainly not lone actors. A host of other prostitution advertisers such as Adultsearch.com, Bedpage.com, Cityxguide.com, Eros.com,⁵⁸ SeekingArrangements.com, and others⁵⁹ had emerged and comprised part of the online prostitution ecosystem. At least 19 prostitution advertising websites—the primary of which was Backpage—were known to law enforcement authorities and the US Congress to advertise sex trafficked girls and boys.⁶⁰

At the same time, sex buyers benefited from the online prostitution marketplace’s expansion beyond classified advertising to include a broad array of other web-based platforms and technologies. This expansion included sex buyer review forums, webcam platforms, payment processors, streaming platforms (e.g., Twitch, Youtube, and Discord), social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat), crowd-patronage platforms (e.g., OnlyFans), and more.⁶¹ Among these developments, the emergence of sex buyer review forums (e.g., The Erotic Review) was particularly important as such sites afford sex buyers the opportunity to exchange information about and “rate” people from whom they purchase sex, warn other buyers about possible police enforcement actions, and foster a sense of community that normalizes their behavior.⁶²

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Department of Justice, Office of Public Affairs, “Justice Department Leads Effort to Seize Backpage.com, the Internet’s Leading Forum for Prostitution Ads, and Obtains 93-Count Federal Indictment, April 9, 2018, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-leads-effort-seize-backpagecom-internet-s-leading-forum-prostitution-ads>; Charles Savage and Timothy Williams, “U.S. Seizes Backpage.com, A Site Accused of Enabling Prostitution,” *New York Times*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/07/us/politics/backpage-prostitution-classified.html>.

⁵⁸ Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later*, ChildSafe.AI (2019).

⁵⁹ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

⁶⁰ “Proceedings and Debates of the 114th Congress, First Session,” *Congressional Record* 161, no. 46 (March 18, 2015): H 1725, <https://www.congress.gov/114/crec/2015/03/18/CREC-2015-03-18.pdf>.

⁶¹ Jon Swords, Mary Laing, and Ian R. Cook, “Platforms, Sex Work, and Their Interconnectedness,” *Sexualities* 26, no. 3 (2021): 277–297, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607211023013>.

⁶² Aidan Wilcox, Kris Christmann, Michelle Rogerson, and Philip Birch, *Research Report 27. Tackling the Demand for Prostitution: A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Published Research*, (The Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office, December 2009); Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, eds.

But it was web-based prostitution advertising that played an especially important, if not the primary, role in broadening the opportunities for sex buyers to identify and engage with people in prostitution, and ultimately greatly expanded the scope of the sex trade. The significance of its role in expanding the sex trade has been demonstrated by researchers who analysed prostitution advertisements formerly provided in the “Erotic Services” section of Craigslist. Analysing data from 1,796 US counties from 1999 to 2008, researchers found that conservatively entry of Craigslist into a county led to a 17.58%⁶³ increase in prostitution cases, increased transactions among those already involved in prostitution, and “attracted” more people to offer paid sex.⁶⁴ The research also demonstrated that the market share of “organized vice groups” on Craigslist was at least two times greater than of those not involved with organized prostitution, and that Craigslist created a prostitution “spillover” effect in counties without Craigslist.⁶⁵ Also noteworthy, the research showed that while law enforcement agencies used Craigslist to facilitate prostitution-related arrests, the number of arrests did not keep pace with the growth in prostitution facilitated by Craigslist.⁶⁶

The growth in the sex trade facilitated by online platforms is, in part, attributable to the advantages it provided sex buyers. For instance, online prostitution advertising allows them to conduct their search from the convenience of their own home (or anywhere with Internet access), while maintaining their anonymity and privacy, thus reducing their physical exposure to possible arrest.⁶⁷ Searching online also provides potential buyers with the opportunity to “better assess” physical attributes of people advertised as available for sex, the ability to engage in comparisons regarding price and the sexual acts provided, and the sharing of other transaction information.⁶⁸

Advantages accrued to sex traffickers as well. They utilize the advertising platforms to reach a wider range of potential buyers⁶⁹ as a recruitment/grooming tool allowing them to reach women and girls who may already be in prostitution or via fraudulent job advertisements, and to assess the level of demand in a particular city before travelling there.⁷⁰ Another example is OnlyFans.com, primarily an adult content, subscription-based social media platform where crimes of sexual exploitation of both minors and adults

T. J. Holt, and A.M. Bossler (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020) 1177–1201, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_54.

⁶³ This estimate is based on their most conservative model. Their least conservative model yielded a 47.69% increase in prostitution trends due to Craigslist entry.

⁶⁴ Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools* (Vienna, Austria: OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, May 2020), https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf.

⁷⁰ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

have been documented.⁷¹ The payments for the content of OnlyFans.com are processed and cleared through Visa, Mastercard, other payment processors, and major U.S. banks. In an expert analysis⁷² of open-source material relating to Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and sex trafficking occurring on OnlyFans.com, the Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative, in consultation with veteran law enforcement officials, found that OnlyFans.com facilitates crimes by providing sex predators and traffickers with the technological means to identify and recruit victims and exploit them. The report notes that within 1.5 hours, two ATII researchers discovered a high volume of profiles on OnlyFans.com that possess “commonly understood indicators of CSAM and/or sex trafficking.”⁷³ Furthermore, age and/or consent verification measures to verify age and/or consent by OnlyFans.com or by the Trust and Safety teams responsible for doing so at companies doing business with the platform appear to be ineffective. The paywall model at OnlyFans.com enables sex predators and traffickers to monetize their crimes while remaining undetected to law enforcement. OnlyFans.com’s paywall structure reduces the efficacy of traditional law enforcement tools used for CSAM and sex trafficking investigations. Undertaking these investigations is, therefore, time-consuming and expensive for law enforcement and anti-trafficking organizations.

The growth of online prostitution advertising and the expansion of the online prostitution marketplace is also connected to the immunity of online platforms which host content posted by third parties from civil liability or enforcement of state sex trafficking laws which arose out of the jurisprudence connected with the Communications Decency Act (CDA).⁷⁴ Passed by the US Congress in 1996, the CDA was intended to prevent children’s exposure to obscene material online.⁷⁵ A provision known as Section 230 was included in the bill, with the aim of creating “Good Samaritan” protections for online platforms that implemented policies and used new technologies to block and filter children’s access to inappropriate online material.⁷⁶

However, as Chan et al. (2019) explained in their investigation of Craigslist, Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act shielded website owners providing prostitution advertising (i.e., “online intermediaries”) from any legal liability in facilitating prostitution.⁷⁷ While Congress passed the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Trafficking Act 2018 (FOSTA) in 2018 with the aim of addressing this

⁷¹ Anti-Human Trafficking Intelligence Initiative. “Expert Analysis of Open Source Material relating to Child Sexual Abuse Material and Sex Trafficking occurring on OnlyFans.com,” (2022), <https://followmoneyfightslavery.org/expert-analysis-ofbopen-source-material-relating-to-child-sexual-abuse-material-and-sex-trafficking-occurring-on-onlyfans-com/>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Mary Graw Leary, “The Indecency and Injustice of Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act,” *Harvard Journal of Law and Public Policy* 41 (2018): 553–622, https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3160055.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>.

problem,⁷⁸ court opinions thus far have preserved immunity for interactive websites hosting content produced by third-parties.⁷⁹

Efforts to deter sex buying behavior and its resulting harms are undoubtedly hampered by the lack of legal means to rein in the online platforms that facilitate their crimes. Nevertheless, as Demand Forum documents, there are many means at the disposal of local law enforcement and communities to both deter and hold sex buyers accountable for their actions. One of these means—technology-based tactics—utilizes the very online spaces used by sex buyers to seek sex as a vehicle for engaging them with deterrence messages. This report will explore this, as well as 14 other wide-ranging measures employed across the US to deter sex buying.

Demand Forum Original Design and Implementation

Prior research on the National Assessment and subsequent sustainment of the Demand Forum website catalogued local efforts to combat demand in communities throughout all 50 states. The website was developed to disseminate information intended to be of practical use to practitioners (e.g., law enforcement, public health, social services), policymakers (e.g., legislators, agency heads, leaders of professional associations, and multijurisdictional, and joint task forces), researchers, and the general public.

Its development was supported by a National Institute of Justice grant (2008-2012) to Abt Associates, which subsequently hosted the website after its launch on January 15, 2013, through January 20, 2020. The current grant's Project Director worked at Abt Associates while leading the first National Assessment and then maintained Demand Forum for the following seven years. In January 2020, he left his position at Abt Associates to join NCOSE, and Abt Associates agreed to release the Demand Forum domain name and website content so that NCOSE could host the website. In 2020, Demand Forum was cosmetically revised for rebranding purposes and resumed operation in May of that year with the same structure and functions it had since it was initially developed. That structure was designed to make information accessible by type of intervention and by the locations where they have been implemented.

As of 2020, at least one of the previously identified demand deterrence tactics had been used in more than 2,130 U.S. cities and counties. Descriptions and links to source documents were provided via separate web pages for every location. Locations can be identified and the web page for each site could be accessed by either a mapping function or a listing function. Both the list and the map can filter by type of tactic, by state, or by other criteria. Between the website's launch in January 2013 and January 2020, **it had been visited more than 262,000 times and had over 467,000 page views, from individuals in 179 countries.** About 95% of all visits to the website were from the United States; every state had between 250 and 30,000 individuals visit the website.

⁷⁸ Helen Shuxuan Zeng, Brett Danaher, and Michael D. Smith, Internet Governance through Site Shutdowns: The Impact of Shutting Down Two Major Commercial Sex Advertising Sites, *Management Science* 68, no. 11 (2022): 7793–8514, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/full/10.1287/mnsc.2022.4498>

⁷⁹ Heather Zhou, "Doe v. Reddit: Ninth Circuit's Narrow Reading of Sex Trafficking Exception Further Complicates Debate over Section 230 Immunity," *Jolt Digest*, November 16, 2022, <https://jolt.law.harvard.edu/digest/does-v-reddit-ninth-circuits-narrow-reading-of-the-sex-trafficking-exception-further-complicates-debate-over-section-230-immunity>.

While we have not collected user information or testimonials, we are aware of many ways the website has been used and numerous examples of its impact between January 2013 and December 2019. For instance, Demand Forum was used as a key resource shaping legislation (e.g., state laws including Colorado, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Texas, and Virginia); federal legislation and policy in the U.S. (providing input used by the Senior Policy Operating Group; National Academy of Sciences, and the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act); federal legislation and policy in Canada, Israel, Ireland, South Korea, and France; and state and local policy and practice (e.g., [Albuquerque, NM](#); [Seattle, WA](#); [Cook County, IL](#); [Boston, MA](#); [Phoenix, AZ](#); [Reno, NV](#); [Travis County, TX](#); [Hattiesburg, MS](#)). It was used as a primary resource used to launch new programs (e.g., John schools in [Seattle, WA](#); [Cook County, IL](#); [Newport News, VA](#); [Greensboro, NC](#); [New Orleans, LA](#); [Los Angeles, CA](#); [Murfreesboro, TN](#); [Shreveport, LA](#); [Richmond, VA](#); [Austin, TX](#); and [Waco, TX](#)), and to inform the agendas of professional organizations, (e.g., National Association of Attorneys General; International Academy of Trial Lawyers; International Association of Human Trafficking Investigators; Massachusetts Bar Association). In addition, the resource has been referenced or featured in over 500 news reports and films (e.g., radio and television interviews including NPR, PBS, CNN, Huffington Post, Dan Rather Reports); documentary films (e.g., A Path Appears, Red Light/Green Light); and print media (e.g., Los Angeles Times, Associated Press, the Atlantic, Chicago Tribune, Bloomberg News).

Emergence of New Tactics Leveraging Information Technology

Information about demand reduction interventions on Demand Forum had been tracked and updated through daily web searches for over 10 years and supplemented by periodic literature reviews or direct contact among a network of practitioners and other experts. In March and April of 2020, we conducted a preliminary scan and assessment of IT-focused products and their application in demand reduction operations and found multiple products in use and variations in how they were deployed. It was evident that a new category must be added to the original typology, and information about this type must be collected, summarized, and resources made available to practitioners. However, it was observed that the structure of the website would not permit changes to the original typology. It became evident that the website must be expanded to account for this and possibly other tactics, and that a rigorous and systematic collection process was necessary to properly document IT-based tactics and where they had been implemented. Accordingly, we proposed a study to NIJ in which we would conduct a systematic scan to identify, describe, and compare IT-based tactics and make the information available through the Demand Forum website and several reports and presentations.

Project Goals and Objectives

NCOSE proposed a systematic assessment of variations in program structure, operations, evidence of effectiveness, and lessons learned by those previously designing and implementing IT-based tactics intended to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking markets. The goal was to provide resources for sustaining and improving current practices, as well as for implementing new programs efficiently. Our proposed study was intended to update, expand, and improve upon the previous work resulting in the development of Demand Forum.

When the current study began, we knew that law enforcement agencies and others seeking to disrupt online sex trafficking had no central source of information about innovative technologies or how they could be effectively implemented and adapted to meet local needs and resources. IT-based tactics are relatively new,

and many law enforcement agencies may not be aware of them, or the technology on which they rely. One of the key products of our proposed study would be an easily understood overview of this general approach, containing summaries of the different types of technology and how they may be deployed either autonomously or integrated into law enforcement operations. Our objective was to present agencies with a range of options, with enough information about each to make informed decisions about their feasibility for local use.

Research Questions

The set of questions that we believed law enforcement agencies and others may have about innovative IT-based tactics served as our key research questions about this new type of intervention:

- Does the technology need to be acquired and run by our agency, or is it deployed by a third party and coordinated with our operations?
- Does the technology require purchase or licensing fees?
- Is training required to operate the technology, and if so, what are the costs, time commitments, and availability?
- If they acquire and use the software, is technical assistance provided?
- What are the technical requirements of the software or application (e.g., operating system)?
- Are there restrictions or limitations regarding its use?
- When suspects are targeted using this technology, are there legal implications that may affect prosecutions, such as questioning probable cause?

In addition to these original questions about technology-driven demand reduction tactics, other key questions emerged in the process of executing the research, which included:

- What other tactics have been used, aside from those we have already identified, in cities and counties we have already documented in Demand Forum?
- What other cities and counties, in addition to those previously identified, have used any demand reduction tactic?
- In addition to the original typology of 12 tactics and the newer IT-based tactics, what other demand reduction approaches have been used?

Research Design, Methods, Key Findings

The study was designed to fill current gaps in knowledge about sex trafficking demand reduction efforts through nationwide, systematic data collection and assessment. The purpose is to inform practitioners and policymakers about the range of options that have been successfully—and sometimes unsuccessfully—employed.

Project Start-up and Design

Develop Instruments. The project's first steps were developing survey instruments and finalizing the data collection protocols and procedures. The development involved revising and updating materials previously used successfully in the first National Assessment. The most substantial area for growth was the materials needed to gather information about the newer technology-based tactics. The protocols for the survey and interviews are presented in Appendices B and C. No statistical data was gained from the survey, rather we

sought to identify where specific demand-deterrence tactics had been utilized, most especially in which locations IT-based tactics had been implemented.

Human Subject Protection Review. During the second month of the project, we submitted a package for review by Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved by the NIJ project Officer and Human Subjects Protection Officer (HSPO). The package contained drafts of all instruments, consent forms, and descriptions of procedures for collecting and protecting data and for the ethical treatment of research participants. We received IRB approval on March 11, 2021, and submitted the materials and IRB decision to NIJ. On March 25, 2021, the project was approved by the HSPO, and work could begin. **The decision of the IRB was that the study was exempt from IRB oversight.** Participants in the study, such as the survey and interview respondents, did not meet the criteria for classification as “human subjects.”

Literature Review. One of the primary objectives of the literature review was to identify sites and programs. We built upon our previous review of the professional and research literature, governmental reports, and other pertinent documents and data on sex trafficking, prostitution, and relevant criminal justice and social service programs geared toward addressing prostitution and sex trafficking.

Sampling. Our sample of communities known to have used demand reduction tactics was the starting point for our data collection. The project began with 2,130 sites already identified and described, and at the outset of the grant, we expected the final list to expand by, at most, 50 to 100 additional cities and counties. However, soon after work began, some developments grew the range of tactics to be studied, leading to more cities and counties being identified during the project.

Based on research in the grant’s first quarter, our project staff and the survivor experts agreed that adding *three* new tactics to the basic framework of Demand Forum rather than the originally proposed *one* new tactic (IT-Based) was necessary. This expanded not only the number of tactics to be investigated but resulted in the addition of far newer city and county web pages (documenting where the additional tactics had been implemented) than expected. With the expanded set of tactics, we identified **534 new cities and counties** and published a new web page for each. The city and county web pages on Demand Forum average more than 26 source documents, so this expansion resulted in the project team reviewing and providing links to more than 10,000 source documents beyond our original expectation of only one tactic being added to the typology. In addition to contributing to identifying more new sites, adding two, new tactics (i.e., Employment Loss and Other Sex Buyer Arrests) also necessitated going back to previously identified cities and counties and documenting these tactics on existing Demand Forum web pages. Further, each site-level page includes a narrative description of how and when the tactic was employed and links to source documents. While we documented the use of IT-based tactics (the only tactic we initially expected to add during the grant) in just 31 city and county web pages, there are over 1,000 sites that have implemented either the employment loss or other sex buyer arrest tactics. These additional updates were not expected at the start of the grant. Adding the two new tactics also required the production of triple the number of new tactic summary documents we had expected to produce. Adding the employment loss and other buyer arrest tactics increased the effort needed to document newly identified communities by more than 500% conservatively, and additional work was required to register those tactics on existing sites.

It was also determined in the grant's first year that online Survey 1 was productive and should be expanded. While we anticipated surveying 2,150 police departments and sheriff's offices, we ultimately distributed surveys to more than 3,200 agencies. We decided to focus the online survey on identifying new cities and counties that had engaged in demand deterrence activities and to reach out to all primary law enforcement agencies within a subset of 22 states purposively selected to fill gaps in strategically important and under-represented states. To compensate for these added tasks and the level of effort required to do them, the resources that were initially to be devoted to site visits and interviews were reduced, affecting sampling. We, therefore, reduced the number of site visits from three to one and reduced the scope of that one visit.⁸⁰ We also cut the number of phone and site visit interviews from approximately 200 to 52 and eliminated a planned Practitioners' Guide. A comprehensive overview of prostitution and solicitation laws in the United States was drafted and uploaded to the Demand Forum website. These changes (e.g., adding the summary of prostitution laws and adding a total of three new tactics to Demand Forum's typology) were determined by NIJ to fit within the project's original objectives and scope of work and were responsive to input from survivor consultants.

Phone and Web Surveys

The titles and roles of people providing information about each demand deterrence initiative varied according to program type and structure. In general, a person from each government agency (e.g., police department, sheriff's office, district attorney's office, department of public health) and NGO (e.g., counseling centers, neighborhood groups) most directly responsible for their organization's role in the initiative was asked to serve as a respondent. For example, reverse sting operations and vehicle seizure programs are policing efforts. In larger police departments, the best respondents will usually oversee the department's vice unit, or other administrative subdivisions tasked with prostitution or sex trafficking operations. In smaller departments, it may be the Chief of Police, Director of Operations, or another member of the command staff. John school programs are usually collaborations among police, courts, and service providers, so the staff of a law enforcement agency, prosecutor's office, or non-governmental organization could serve as a respondent. For the new IT-based tactics, we gathered information from the technology developers and representatives of agencies or organizations that have employed the technology.

We expected phone interviews with key respondents to take an average of 30 minutes each. The Project Director and a senior-level researcher at NCOSE conducted most of these interviews with assistance from other staff. A list of topics that could be discussed in the phone interviews is presented in Appendix C. We wanted to understand how the demand reduction operations or programs progressed from the initiation of problem assessment and planning to implementation, challenges, and successes. We also inquired about program costs and inputs (such as equipment, labor, licensing fees, or software costs) and asked questions about whether their information systems or other data sources could provide metrics about program operations and performance. Finally, we asked for available program documentation (such as program mission statements, periodic reports, grant proposals, budgets, local process or outcome evaluations, recidivism rates, etc.). An illustrative draft protocol for requesting data and documents is also presented in Appendix C.

⁸⁰ Los Angeles was purposively selected and a NCOSE researcher conducted five interviews to gather information about the city's use of reverse stings and its john school program. The results of that work are incorporated in the web page for Los Angeles and the tactic summaries.

All interview and administrative data were kept confidential. We did not gather any identifiable, individual-level data for research purposes. For a small number of individuals who worked for or founded organizations that utilize IT-based, demand deterrence tactics, we received written permission to include their identities in the products of this study. For all others, the interview (and survey) results are presented in such a way that individual respondents are not identifiable. Respondent names were not disclosed and were kept only to contact them and track survey progress. When the project was completed, all records of respondent identities were destroyed.

Data Collection, Activities, Key Findings

In late March 2021, after receiving IRB and NIJ HSPO approval to proceed, work began on the new grant from NIJ that supported the current study entitled, “*National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts, Part II: New Developments in the Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking*.”⁸¹ Much of the project’s effort was directed toward understanding and documenting the newest category of tactic: information technology designed to detect, investigate, apprehend, and deter sex buyers that have emerged as a distinct and new class of intervention that was prompted by a shift in the illicit market away from in-person solicitation, and toward various advertising websites and social media applications. A detailed description of that innovation is provided in our summary document on “[IT-Based Tactics](#).”

Two additional tactics were added to the typology that provided the structure of the Demand Forum website: “[Other Sex Buyer Arrests](#)” and “[Employment Loss](#).” The former refers to sex buyer arrests that are the product of investigations of allegations of offenses against people exploited in prostitution or sex trafficking, rather than the result of sting operations using police decoys. The latter refers to known or alleged sex buyers losing their employment as a consequence of that behavior. Neither of these is a recently-developed tactic or innovation. However, they were added to the typology as a response to the realization that formed over the years since Demand Forum was launched that these demand deterrence tactics were being widely used, and therefore should be included in the typology. The current project to update and enhance the website provided that opportunity.

In addition to adding three new tactics to the core structure of Demand Forum, the performance of the research tasks resulted in the identification of more than 530 additional U.S. cities and counties that have engaged in demand reduction and more than 6,000 substantial updates were made to the website’s city- and county-level pages.

A summary of key findings from the research tasks follows, and are described more fully in the tactic summaries and the site-level web pages of Demand Forum:

- **Online survey of law enforcement agencies.** A total of 3,206 questionnaires were distributed via email to municipal police departments and sheriff’s offices, and 249 completed forms were received from agencies within 22 states.⁸² The survey allowed us to identify 40 cities and counties

⁸¹ Michael Shively, Marcel van der Watt, Lisa Thompson, Jordan Marshall, and Victoria Rousay, *National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts, Part II: New Developments in the Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking* (Washington, DC: National Center on Sexual Exploitation, 2020), Award #:2020-75-CX-0011.

⁸² A low response rate was expected and is not problematic given the objectives of the survey and how the results are used. The study was not intended to provide estimates or rates of demand reduction tactic use, nor did we intend to claim that our survey would represent the population of agencies within the United States. The survey was intended

that were not previously identified in the prior NIJ study or by subsequently using open source searches, and provided evidence of additional tactics used in 42 communities that we had previously known to have used other demand reduction tactics. It also corroborated our previously collected data on demand reduction tactics used in 167 cities and counties.

- **Interviews with representatives of law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders in demand reduction initiatives.** Interviews were completed with 52 individuals to gather more in-depth information about demand reduction operations. The main purposes of the interviews included 1) clarifying or expanding upon the information provided in the online survey and 2) gathering additional details about specific types of tactics, and how they are implemented in specific cities and counties. The individuals interviewed cannot be identified, but we can disclose that they represent a variety of criminal justice agencies (e.g., municipal police departments, county sheriff's offices, city attorney's offices, district attorney's offices, state attorney general's offices), collaborate initiatives (e.g., human trafficking task forces, regional and state-wide anti-trafficking coalitions), and programs (e.g., John schools, victim service providers).
- **More than 800 internet searches were conducted to find law enforcement press releases, reports, and news coverage on contemporary instances of demand reduction events** in the United States.
- **Eight quarterly meetings were held with our panel of nine survivor expert advisors.** The panel provided invaluable feedback about all of the project's key decisions and products. For example, the panelists:
 - Suggested that Demand Forum include accessible information about state prostitution laws, particularly those statutes used to charge individuals for soliticing prostitution. The objective of this suggestion was to put the use of demand reduction tactics at the local level into the context of each state's legal framework regarding prostitution offenses. NCOSE staff, therefore, produced a [document](#) summarizing the relevant sections from each state's criminal statutes, and the website modified to provide a link to that document on all of Demand Forum's city and county web pages.
 - Were involved in and supported the decision to add the two additional tactics to the structure of Demand Forum ([Sex Buyer Arrest](#) and [Employment Loss](#)). Based on our research and consultations during the grant's earliest months, our project staff and expert advisors all agreed that it was necessary to add the three new tactics to the basic framework of Demand Forum, rather than the one new tactic that had been proposed initially.
 - Another important decision guided by the survivor panel was to change the name of one of the tactics in the typology. The original typology tactic "Shaming" was renamed "[Identity Disclosure](#)." The reason for this change is that the original term mischaracterized the intent behind its use. There are some examples where disclosing the identities of arrested sex buyers was explicitly designed to result in shame and social censure, but in the majority of cases, revealing the identities of arrested sex buyers is a matter of routine reporting on crime and police activity, and is not part of an approach meant to punish or negatively affect them. The survivor advisors agreed that the term "shaming" is unnecessarily

to be one of several means of reaching agency representatives, to update the use of tactics in communities already described in Demand Forum, and to learn about demand reduction tactic use in communities we had not yet documented. The online survey was successful in achieving both objectives.

punitive, and inaccurately characterizes the intent of those publicly reporting the identities of alleged or convicted sex buyers.

- **New web pages and summary documents were produced for each new tactic, and we documented where each new tactic has been used in the U.S.** We added descriptions of implementation and links to source documentation to the following number of site-level web pages of Demand Forum.
 - Other Sex Buyer Arrests: 894 cities/counties
 - Employment Loss: 488 cities/counties
 - IT-Based Tactics: 31 cities/counties
- **New web pages for 534 additional cities were added to Demand Forum**, boosting the number of communities documented on the website from 2,130 to 2,663, and adding a description of the use of each type of tactic to the web pages of numerous previously-identified sites. A tally of the number of cities and counties that have employed each type of tactic is presented below and lists the number of sites added during the current grant as well as the cumulative totals dating back to the launch of Demand Forum in 2013.
- **During the grant’s full performance period, we made 6,023 substantial updates** to 2,477 of the 2,664 city/county web pages on Demand Forum.

**U.S. Cities and Counties Employing Demand-Reduction Tactics – Additions During the NIJ Grant
Performance Period, 1/1/21 to 3/31/22**

Demand Reduction Tactics	U.S. Cities and Counties Identified		Change
	Jan 1, 2021	Mar 26, 2023	
Arrest Tactics			
Reverse Stings	2,055	2,196	+ 141
Reverse Stings - Web-based	1,338	1,601	+ 263
Other Sex Buyer Arrests*	0	895	+ 895
Post-Arrest Tactics			
Identity Disclosure (formerly “Shaming”)	1,796	2,403	+ 603
Vehicle seizure	251	296	+ 45
John schools	196	236	+ 40
Community service	183	236	+ 53
Geographic exclusion zones (“SOAP” orders)	120	140	+ 20
Driver’s license suspension	25	35	+ 10
Other Tactics			
IT-Based Enforcement & Deterrence**	0	78+	+ 78
Loss of Employment	0	488	+ 488
Neighborhood Action	209	266	+ 57
Surveillance Cameras & Video Evidence	137	266	+ 129
Public Education	111	213	+ 102
“Dear John” Letters	85	101	+ 16
Any Anti-Demand Tactic	2,130	2,664	+ 534

* Red text indicates a new tactic added during the grant’s performance period.

** This count represents a lower limit. The number of cities and counties where sex buyers have been exposed to deterrence messages via IT-based tactics is undoubtedly in the hundreds, if not more. We base this count of 78 cities and counties on the number of jurisdictions in which Street Grace has deployed these tools in collaboration with local law enforcement partners. Many collaborators using IT-based tactics do not wish the jurisdictions to be identified, believing that doing so would undermine their effectiveness. We have documented the use of IT-based tactics in 31 cities and counties using open sources, supplemented with our survey and interviews, and provide summaries for each on [Demand Forum](#).

Participants and Other Collaborating Organizations

NCOSE recognized that the study would be immeasurably strengthened by leveraging the knowledge and experience of subject matter experts who have survived sex trafficking, as their insights would help ensure that the project findings are relevant and lead to tangible advances in sex trafficking prevention and the **National Center on Sexual Exploitation** **NIJ Grant # 2020-75-CX-0011** **33**

well-being of survivors. Survivors are key stakeholders, and those selected to serve as advisors on this project are subject matter experts with a deep understanding of sex trafficking, the needs of organizations and providers focusing on preventing and responding to sex trafficking, and how to improve the lives of those who have survived these crimes. They have taken leadership roles by founding or serving within a wide array of organizations and have advised agencies and legislative bodies at all levels of government about laws, policies, and tactics seeking to prevent sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation by reducing consumer-level demand. We sought to implement the project in a way that survivors and other stakeholders would find transparent, credible, relevant, valuable, and actionable so that practitioners will use the products of this study to inform the development of their own sex trafficking strategies and practices. Survivor input was crucial to pursuing those core objectives.

Our team engaged an impressive group of survivor leaders to serve as expert advisors, providing input on all key decisions and deliverables produced during this project. They were frequently consulted about the project research design, data collection methods, interpretation of findings, and dissemination products. The panel included the following individuals, and below we provide a very brief description of their positions and key items of their biographies at the time they began serving on the Advisory Panel:

- **Dr. Brook Bello**, is the founder and CEO of More Too Life, Inc., and was awarded the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award from the 44th President of the United States, and declared Advocate of the Year by the Human Trafficking Council of the State of Florida.
- **Alisa Bernard** had served as co-director of the Organization for Prostitution Survivors (OPS), and as a member of King County's Ending Exploitation Collaborative, the King County CSEC Taskforce, and the Washington State Anti-Trafficking Task Force.
- **Autumn Burris** is the founder and director of Colorado-based Survivors for Solutions, and her experience includes addressing the demand side of sexual exploitation on behalf of the First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP), in addition to assisting other jurisdictions in the replication of both Standing Against Global Exploitation (SAGE) and FOPP programs. (Ms. Burris provided input in the early stages of the project, but later stepped down due to constraints on her availability.)
- **Rebekah Charleston** is a consultant with the National Justice Training Center, and has won numerous awards for her work, including 2016's Survivor Leader Award.
- **Kelly Dore**⁸³ is the Executive Director of the National Human Trafficking Survivor Coalition, formed with other professional survivor leaders in 2016, to help obtain emergency funding for survivors and to advocate, educate, and raise awareness about the degree of sex and labor trafficking across the United States. She is also an Ambassador for Shared Hope International and authored a familial trafficking identification guide for medical professionals and educators.
- **Cristian Eduardo**⁸⁴ is a Survivor Leader at Sanctuary for Families and is a member of ECPAT-USA's Survivors' Council. He is an advocate, speaker, and educator for anti-trafficking initiatives, including the Equality Model, which features the enforcement of laws against purchasing sex.
- **Josephine Feemster** is a founding member of the RISE Drop-In Center for young survivors of sex trafficking in the California Bay Area and an Advisory Board member of the CSEC Action Team for the state of California.

⁸³ Ms. Dore was invited to join the panel subsequent to the panel's initial meeting.

⁸⁴ Mr. Eduardo was invited to join the panel subsequent the panel's initial meeting.

- **Reverend Dr. Marian Hatcher** has served as Policy Analyst & Victim Advocate for the Sheriff’s Human Trafficking & Initiatives, of the Cook County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO), and coordinated the “National Johns Suppression Initiative.”
- **Melanie Thompson** serves as the Youth Outreach Coordinator at the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW) and is a survivor leader in the global fight to end commercial sexual exploitation.

These content experts participated in the project “kick-off” meeting and strategy session, assisted in developing data collection instruments and protocols, reviewed and discussed draft reports and presentation materials, and contributed to the final dissemination plan. In addition, they participated in quarterly teleconference meetings held to gather and discuss new ideas, assess progress, corroborate key decisions, interpret findings, review products, and solve problems.

In addition to our panel of content experts, the project relied heavily on the contributions made by 247 survey respondents and 52 interview subjects. The survey respondents were from 22 states and worked for a variety of municipal police departments and county sheriff offices. The interview subjects included police officers, sheriff’s deputies and members of city attorneys’ offices, district attorneys’ offices, attorneys general offices, victim service organizations, and members of regional and state coalitions seeking to eliminate human trafficking.

Artifacts

To disseminate research findings, the main deliverable of this grant is the [Demand Forum](#) website, which has been used to share research findings on a continuous basis. This is unusual as research projects typically have a data collection and analysis phase followed by the production and dissemination of findings. This has occurred for the current project due to its cumulative nature, building upon a study completed a decade before that produced a website to disseminate findings and which has been in continuous operation since January 2013.⁸⁵ Throughout the grant’s performance period, daily updates were made to the city and county-level web pages, and periodic updates were made to the tactic summaries. During this project’s timeframe (1/1/21 to 3/26/23), Demand Forum received 66,020 visits and had 110,253 page views.⁸⁶ Since the website’s original launch in January 2013, Demand Forum has had 331,422 visits and 581,729 page views from individuals in 179 countries.

Additional dissemination activities and products include presentations at conferences and professional meetings, including three papers based on the project presented at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology; interviews about demand reduction methods for radio programs, print media, and documentary film; and training presentations on demand reduction tactics hosted by a municipal police department and provided to an audience of professionals from throughout the state, including state and local law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim advocates. Examples of key dissemination activities include the following, listed in reverse chronological order:

⁸⁵ Demand Forum was “soft launched” in June 2012, to complete the development and troubleshooting processes. It was accessible to users who found it through organic searches, but there were no announcements about its presence nor campaign or direct links provided to promote its utilization. Its official launch was announced in January 2013. The website operated continuously through January 20, 2020, under the domain name demandforum.net, and was hosted by Abt Associates (Cambridge, MA). On that date it went offline, the domain name expired, and its hosting transitioned to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE, Washington, DC). In June 2020, the website was re-launched under a new domain name www.demand-forum.org, and has operated continuously since then, as of the time of this report produced in March 2023.

⁸⁶ These counts included only visitors to the website and exclude staff updates to Demand Forum.

3/1/23 Demand Deterrence Tactics Summaries Published on Demand Forum

New documents containing summaries for each of the 15 demand reduction tactics were posted on the Demand Forum website.

1/19/23 Journal Article Manuscript

A manuscript entitled “*Discouraging the Demand That Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration Through Augmented Intelligence*” was submitted to the peer-reviewed journal *Societies*. It was accepted for publication on March 24, 2023.

11/16-17/22: Presentations

Project staff presented three papers at the Annual Meeting of the *American Society of Criminology*, Atlanta, GA

- *Lessons Learned from 15 Years of Research on Sex Trafficking and Prostitution Demand Reduction Efforts*
- *A.I. et al.: Sailing the Internet’s Oceans to Deter Sex Buyers*
- *Sex Buyer Education Programs: A Roadmap to Improvement*

12/23/21 Presentation

Project Director presented at a *Policeone* podcast on law enforcement tactics for demand reduction, “*Policing Matters.*”

11/11/21 Presentation

Project Director made a presentation about prostitution and sex trafficking demand reduction tactics at a meeting of the *Southwest Florida Coalition Against Human Trafficking*.

Expected Applicability of the Research

The purpose of this project was to identify, curate, and disseminate information of pragmatic value to those operating, planning, or considering implementing initiatives designed to apprehend and deter those seeking to purchase sex. The key product of the study is a new “2.0” version of Demand Forum, with an expanded typology that includes IT-based methods. The primary function of the website and other products of the study is to provide practitioners with access to information so they may learn how other jurisdictions have attempted to address similar problems and to foster an ongoing exchange of information. Since the website was launched in January, 2013, law enforcement agencies, task forces, and collaborating institutions have widely used the resource to design, improve, and sustain programs, and by state and federal legislatures in crafting human trafficking and prostitution statutes. Before the project began, it had been used by over 260,000 people from all 50 states and over 175 other nations. Information available on Demand Forum has also aided law enforcement agencies, prosecutors’ and Attorney General’s offices, legislators, local governments, and others seeking to respond to sex trafficking and prostitution. During this study, Demand Forum has received an additional 66,000 visits and averages about 100 new sessions per day, and project staff have continued to field requests for technical assistance about demand reduction methods. The current project was designed to ensure that the website and related materials continue to meet the needs of local law enforcement, policymakers, and their collaborators with up-to-date, comprehensive, and accessible information.

Changes in Approach from Original Design

As discussed above, our research and consultations with survivors and law enforcement experts during the grant's earliest months led our project staff to determine that it was necessary to not only add IT-based tactics to the tactic typology, but also two other tactics: "Other Sex Buyer Arrests" and "Employment Loss." Doing so greatly expanded the number of new cities and counties added to Demand Forum, beyond what would have been necessary without adding the two extra tactics. Building on the original typology of 12 tactics, we had expected to identify between 50 and 100 new sites during the project by adding IT-based tactics. However, with the set of tactics expanded to include Other Sex Buyer Arrests and Employment Loss, we identified 534 new cities and counties, many of which would not have been added because they did not use any of the original 12 tactics. We researched, drafted, and published a new web page for each newly identified city and county. The city and county web pages on Demand Forum average over 26.5 source documents, so this expansion resulted in the project team reviewing and providing links to thousands of source documents beyond expectations based on a smaller set of tactics.

In addition to contributing to identifying more new sites, adding three new tactics also necessitated going back to previously identified cities and counties, and documenting whether or not they had ever been used by cities and counties with existing pages on Demand Forum. Further, each site-level page includes a narrative summary describing how and when the tactic was employed, and links to source documents. While we documented the use of IT-based tactics (the only tactic we initially expected to add during the grant) in just 31 city and county web pages, there were more than 1,000 sites that have implemented either the Employment Loss or Other Sex Buyer Arrests tactics, and these additional updates were not expected at the start of the grant. The addition of three tactics instead of one, also impacted the project by requiring the production of triple the number of new tactic summary documents we had expected to produce. Thus, adding the Other Sex Buyer Arrests and Employment Loss tactics increased the effort needed to document newly identified communities by more than 500%, conservatively, and much additional work was also required to document those tactics on existing sites.

It was also determined in the grant's first year that the online Survey 1 was productive and should be expanded. While we anticipated surveying 2,150 police departments and sheriff's offices, we ultimately distributed surveys to more than 3,200 agencies. We decided to focus the online survey on identifying new cities and counties, and to reach out to all primary law enforcement agencies within a subset of 22 states, which were purposively selected to fill gaps in strategically important or under-represented states. The other substantial change that was not in our original proposal was the renaming of "shaming" (one of the original 12 tactics) to "identity disclosure." The reason for this change was discussed above, and like the other changes, was approved by NIJ. As a consequence of this change, a great deal of effort was devoted to manually editing more than 2000 city and county pages, as well as revising the shaming tactic summary page of Demand Forum. It was also necessary to reprogram the website's infrastructure to replace "shaming" with "identity disclosure" in the site's mapping and listing functions.

Finally, at the recommendation of our survivor expert advisors, we produced a summary of state prostitution laws and linked it to all of the city and county-level web pages. These changes (adding the summary of prostitution laws, adding three new tactics to Demand Forum's typology, and renaming the shaming tactic) resulted in a significant increase in the level of effort necessary to complete the project not anticipated in the original proposal. To compensate for these added tasks, the level of effort devoted to the site visits and interviews was reduced. The proposed 200 interviews were reduced to 52. We had also proposed to conduct

two or three intensive case studies, each involving multiple-day site visits and observations of program activities and enforcement operations, and to include written reports about each case study. We eliminated the case studies and conducted one site visit, the findings of which were incorporated in to the city-level web page and in our tactic summaries. We also eliminated the Practitioner’s Guide we intended to create that would have provided brief, practical guidance about implementing and sustaining each type of tactic.

All of these changes were discussed with NIJ and determined by them to fit within the project’s original objectives and scope of work. The changes did not require a change to the project’s scope of work but required budget modifications approved by NIJ prior to implementation.

Limitations

We acknowledge limitations in our research, primarily regarding representativeness. Many of the choices made in how data and information were collected were accommodations responsive to resource limitations. For example, it would be ideal to have drawn a large random sample of all law enforcement agencies and then take the steps necessary to produce high response rates, and then conduct an extensive survey that gathered a great level of detail about every demand reduction tactic that had ever been used within each community. Such a survey would far exceed available resources. The cost-effective alternative we chose was to rely largely upon open-source materials such as police and court press releases about operations resulting in the arrest of sex buyers, and news coverage which often incorporates and responds to agency press releases. Our team is aware that there are police and court activities that do not result in press releases and news coverage, hence our searches certainly missed an unknown number of additional applications of demand reduction tactics. There are certainly more cities and counties than we have documented that have used demand deterrence tactics. As discussed above, we supplemented ongoing searches of open sources with online surveys and interviews. However, neither our online survey nor our interviews were obtained through random or representative sampling. As a result, we cannot claim that the findings about the prevalence of demand reduction tactics and the range of tactics used within each community, accurately represent the true scope of their use throughout the United States.

Acknowledgments

The Demand Forum website was initially developed under grant #2008-IJ-CX-0010 to Abt Associates from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), U.S. Department of Justice. In January 2020, the website was transferred to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE). In January 2021, work began on a new grant from NIJ (#2020-75-CX-0011) to update and expand the content presented on Demand Forum. We wish to convey our gratitude to the panel of survivors who served to guide this project as content experts, as well as to the survey respondents and interview subjects. Neither NCOSE, Abt Associates, NIJ, our survivor expert panel, nor our research respondents are responsible for the content of the demand forum website or this project’s final report. Findings, interpretations, and conclusions of the research presented in this report and on Demand Forum are those of the Project Director and do not necessarily represent those of NIJ, Abt Associates, NCOSE, or study participants.

ARREST TACTICS

[Tactics that are used to apprehend and take into custody people who *have committed* or who are *suspected of committing* a crime related to prostitution or sex trafficking]

Chapter 2: Reverse Stings

Overview

The second most common strategy employed to decrease the demand for prostitution is “[Reverse Stings](#).” When we began this project, reverse stings were the most common tactic in use. However, during our update we identified a substantial number of additional uses of “[Identity Disclosure](#),” and it rose to become the most employed strategy. We have recorded 2,403 communities using identity disclosure versus 2,196 reverse sting operations in cities and counties across the United States.

Reverse sting operations typically involve the participation of one or more female police officers who act as decoys,⁸⁷ assuming the role of individuals being prostituted to attract men seeking to buy sex.⁸⁸ There are three categories of reverse stings: those conducted to combat street-level prostitution, those conducted online (i.e., web-based) to combat prostitution facilitated by online platforms, and those that target brothel-based prostitution.

As observed by Shively et al. (2012), the term “reverse sting” is a product of the historical gender inequality present in the enforcement of prostitution laws within the United States.⁸⁹ Until recently, the majority of law enforcement efforts concerning prostitution were directed at apprehending the individuals purchased in prostitution. Over the course of several decades, the prevailing police strategy to combat prostitution involved the use of undercover male officers in plain clothes to solicit offers for commercial sex from women involved in prostitution—operations popularly known as “prostitution stings.” Beginning in the 1960s, but not becoming widely adopted until the 1980s, there emerged operations with a focus on arresting buyers rather than the individuals exploited as commodities in the commercial sex trade. To differentiate between these types of operations, “reverse stings” is used to describe operations targeting male sex buyers.

The term “reverse stings” is considered controversial by some, particularly those who advocate for approaches such as the Nordic⁹⁰ or Equality⁹¹ Models, in which the default target for prostitution arrests is the sex buyer, and those being sold for sexual exploitation are not arrested at all. Some in the movement to

⁸⁷ In extremely rare instances, male officers have posed as prostituted persons to draw the attention of sex buyers. Out of more than 7,000 reverse stings we have documented in more than 2,000 U.S. jurisdictions, we are aware of less than 10 agencies that have ever used male officers as prostitution decoys.

⁸⁸ Mary Dodge, Donna Starr-Gimeno, and Thomas Williams, “Puttin’ on the Sting: Women Police Officers’ Perspectives on Reverse Prostitution Assignments,” *International Journal of Police Science and Management* 7 (2005), [doi:10.1350/ijps.7.2.71.65778](https://doi.org/10.1350/ijps.7.2.71.65778); Larry Jetmore, “The Oldest Profession: Investigating Street-Level Prostitution,” *Law Officer Magazine* 4, no. 10 (2008); Lynda Baker, “The Information Needs of Female Police Officers Involved in Undercover Prostitution Work,” *Information Research* 10, no. 1 (2004), <http://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper209.html>; Bruce Hay, “Sting Operations, Undercover Agents, and Entrapment,” *Missouri Law Review* 70, no. 2 (2005): 387-431. <https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr/vol70/iss2/2>; Gerry Long, “How to Plan a ‘John’ Sting,” *Women in Law Enforcement, Police Magazine*, April 18, 2012, <https://www.policemag.com/374063/how-to-plan-a-john-sting>; Gerry Long, “How to Stay Safe During a John Sting,” *Women in Law Enforcement, Police Magazine*, July 2, 2012, <https://www.policemag.com/374107/how-to-stay-safe-during-a-john-sting>; Graeme R. Newman and Kelly Socia, *Sting Operations, Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Response Guides Series No. 6* (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, October 2007), <https://cops.usdoj.gov/ric/Publications/cops-p134-pub.pdf>

⁸⁹ Shively et al., *National Overview*.

⁹⁰ Nordic Model Now, “What is the Nordic Model?” Nordic Model Now, <https://nordicmodelnow.org/what-is-the-nordic-model/>, (accessed March 6, 2023).

⁹¹ Equal Not Exploited, “What is the Equality Model?” Equal Not Exploited, <https://www.equalitymodelus.org/why-the-equality-model/>, (accessed March 6, 2023).

eradicate sexual exploitation have promoted the term “sting” rather than “reverse sting” as a means of elevating the importance of operations aimed at buyers and discouraging operations that arrest prostituted people. However, because in Demand Forum website materials and its supporting documents, the term “reverse sting” is widely used, we are continuing its use.

In the web-based version of reverse stings law enforcement uses an online advertisement or message to engage those seeking to exchange money for sex and arranges a meeting with the sex buyer to complete the transaction. Once buyers have been engaged and solidified plans to meet, a sting is arranged that typically involves placing an undercover decoy in a hotel room, a support team in an adjacent room, and making arrests when the buyers arrive as planned and demonstrate an intent to complete the illegal transaction. Web-based reverse stings are a popular demand deterrence tactic. We have documented its use by more than 1,600 cities and counties across the US, making it the third most common approach to combat demand. Given the high volume of web-based reverse stings and the unique aspects of conducting them, we have separated web-based reverse stings from traditional reverse stings in our typology and provide a full chapter in this report discussing their use.

Brothel-based stings are stings in which investigations center on the physical establishments used for purposes of prostitution. Typically, such establishments use any of a wide range of business fronts to help mitigate detection as hubs of prostitution and sex trafficking, the most common of which is likely illicit massage businesses. In 2018, the anti-trafficking organization Polaris, reported that there were more than 9,000 illicit massage businesses in the United States generating an estimated \$2.5 billion in annual revenue.⁹² Brothel-based stings are an area that Demand Forum researchers have yet to study closely and will not be addressed in detail further in this report. The remainder of our discussion on “reverse stings” will focus on street-based or other in-person engagements with police decoys, which concentrate on prostitution among adults.

The past two decades have been characterized by increased discontentment with law enforcement actions aimed at the arrest of those in prostitution and growing concern about the exploitation of people in prostitution and sex trafficking victims, including children, that are hidden among this population of arrestees.⁹³ Reverse stings remain an active type of law enforcement operation. In a relatively recent county-level analysis⁹⁴ examining structural determinants of human trafficking arrests in 67 Florida counties between 2013 and 2017, it was found that most counties had at least one active demand reduction strategy, with reverse stings as the one most utilized across the state. In 2023, we have continued to see press releases and news reports of reverse sting operations on a nearly daily basis in the U.S.⁹⁵

⁹² Rochelle Keyhan, Meghan Carton, Anna Kegler, et al., *Human Trafficking in Illicit Massage Businesses*, (Washington, DC: Polaris, 2018).

⁹³ Kylie McGivern, “Kids Sold for Sex and Arrested for Prostitution in Florida,” *ABC Action News*, January 21, 2020, <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/local-news/i-team-investigates/kids-sold-for-sex-and-arrested-for-prostitution-in-florida>.

⁹⁴ Madelyn Diaz, Lin Huff-Corzine, and Jay Corzine, “Demanding Reduction: A County-Level Analysis Examining Structural Determinants of Human Trafficking Arrests in Florida,” *Crime & Delinquency* 68, no. 1 (2020): 28-51, doi:10.1177/0011128720962710.

⁹⁵ Caitlyn Rooney, “Lubbock Police Arrest 17 people in ‘Operation March Madness,’” *Everything Lubbock*, March 2, 2023, <https://www.everythinglubbock.com/news/local-news/lubbock-police-arrest-17-people-in-operation-march-madness/>; Fontana Herald News, “Fontana Man is One of 19 Suspects Arrested by Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force,” *Fontana Herald News*, March 2, 2023, <https://www.fontanaheraldnews.com/news/fontana-man-is-one-of->

“The only and best way to try to get involved to identify the victims is doing an operation like this . . . I believe the only way we are going to combat human trafficking is by targeting the desire [demand]. By reducing the desire [demand].”

Sheriff Chad Chronister, Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office, Fla,
2019⁹⁶

Cook County Sheriff’s Office: “National Johns Suppression Initiative”

While most reverse stings are initiated locally in response to investigative leads or community complaints, there have been efforts to coordinate periodic reverse stings across the United States. The “**National Johns Suppression Initiative**” (NJSI) is an effort led by the [Cook County](#), IL, Sheriff’s Office, which has been coordinating operations occurring simultaneously in multiple cities since 2011.⁹⁷ The collaborative effort was initially called the “National Day of John Arrests;” the present name was adopted in 2015. The coalition of agencies that participate in these coordinated enforcement efforts has grown from eight to more than 50 for a single operation. For example, the National Johns Suppression Initiative (NJSI) event occurring in July of 2017 involved 37 law enforcement agencies in 17 states that conducted sting operations producing the arrests of 1,020 sex buyers and 15 sex traffickers; 81 individuals involved in commercial sex were offered services.⁹⁸ **The 18 NJSI operations from 2011 through July, 2019 have involved the collaboration of more than 140 law enforcement agencies, and have collectively produced the arrests of over 9,500 sex buyers.**⁹⁹ Also produced in these operations has been evidence leading to additional charges such as adult and juvenile felony sex trafficking, criminal solicitation of a minor, pimping, promotion of adult and juvenile prostitution, human trafficking, drug trafficking, possession of illegal firearms, and arrests for outstanding warrants. These operations have also led to the rescue of child sex trafficking victims, the seizure of numerous vehicles used in the commission of crime, and the imposition of thousands of dollars in fines. In many jurisdictions, the arrested sex buyers are shown a brief video version of a “John school” presentation while they are being processed. Since 2019, the NJSI operations

[19-suspects-arrested-by-anti-human-trafficking-task-force/article_b561c8f0-b936-11ed-a135-0b44e062dea9.html](#); TownHubAdmin, “MCTX Sheriff Completes Operation Happy Valentines Day,” *Kingwood.com*, January 31, 2023, https://www.kingwood.com/msg/news.php?news_id=4665759; Chuck Morris and Carley Gordon, “4 Arrested in Sumner Co. after Multi-agency Operation Targeting Human Trafficking,” *WSMV4*, February 21, 2023, <https://www.wsmv.com/2023/02/22/4-arrested-sumner-co-after-multi-agency-operation-targeting-human-trafficking/>

⁹⁶ Isabel Rosales and WFTS Digital Staff, “Hillsborough Co. Human Trafficking Sting Leads to 85 Arrests,” *ABC Action News*, June 25, 2019, <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/region-hillsborough/hillsborough-co-human-trafficking-sting-leads-to-more-than-80-arrests>.

⁹⁷ Villanova Law Institute to Address Commercial Sexual Exploitation, “The 17th National Johns Suppression Initiative Operation Nets over 370 Arrests,” February 18, 2019, <https://cseinstitute.org/the-17th-national-johns-suppression-initiative-operation-nets-over-370-arrests/>.

⁹⁸ CNN Wire, “1,000 Arrests in Sex Trafficking Sting,” *wtvr.com*, August 4, 2017, <https://www.wtvr.com/2017/08/04/sex-trafficking-sting-arrests-national-johns-suppression-initiative>.

⁹⁹ David Stuetz, “500 Sex Buyers Arrested in National Sting Involving AI Chat Bot,” *Chicago Sun Times*, July 31, 2019, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/crime/2019/7/31/20748945/sex-trafficking-national-johns-suppression-initiative-ai-childsafe>.

have also deployed decoy internet ads linked to artificial intelligence (AI) bots that interact with thousands of Johns, providing messages meant to deter their behavior.

“Many victims — primarily women — suffer violence and abuse, and my office is committed to offering them the assistance they need while making it very costly for those who seek to purchase sex.”

Sheriff Tom Dart, Cook County, IL, 2021¹⁰⁰

Street-Level Reverse Stings

As noted previously, this report builds upon the previous work of Shively et al.’s (2012) *National Overview of Demand Reduction Efforts*. That report provides a detailed overview of how street-level reverse sting operations are typically conducted. Accordingly, this chapter will not reprise those details except to give a broad overview of reverse stings.

Years of data collection on this tactic from daily news reports and other sources¹⁰¹ shows that it is typical for reverse stings to take place in areas known for street prostitution and for five or more officers to be involved in the operation, which includes a female officer or officers acting as decoys and other undercover officers fulfilling supportive roles. Decoys are accompanied to predetermined drop-off points situated in close proximity to the upcoming operations, and an unmarked police van, which functions as a movable facility for screening or booking, is typically positioned nearby but is kept out of view from the street operation. In certain areas, the presence of nearby police stations or substations renders a mobile unit optional. Typically, the decoy officer is equipped with a concealed recording device and a cell phone—the former for gathering evidence and the latter for safety precautions in the event of an abduction. In certain instances, police departments discreetly record the reverse stings using digital means from an unmarked police vehicle.

Reverse stings are the primary means by which sex buyers enter the justice system and by which they encounter the various interventions focused on holding them accountable and preventing their behavior in the future.¹⁰² Tactics such as community service programs, Johns schools, and geographic exclusion zones

¹⁰⁰ FOX 32 Digital Staff, “22 Men Arrested in Cook County Sting Targeting Sex Buyers,” *FOX 32 Chicago*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/22-men-arrested-in-cook-county-sting-targeting-sex-buyers>.

¹⁰¹ Larry Jetmore, “The Oldest Profession: Investigating Street-Level Prostitution,” *Law Officer Magazine* 4, no. 10 (2008); Graeme R. Newman and Kelly Socia, *Sting Operations*, Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Response Guides Series No. 6 (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, October 2007), <https://cops.usdoj.gov/ric/Publications/cops-p134-pub.pdf>; Thomas W. Nolan, “Commentary: Galateas in Blue: Women Police as Decoy Sex Workers,” *Criminal Justice Ethics* 20, no. 2 (2001): 63-67, doi.org/10.1080/0731129X.2001.9992104; G.G. Scott, “Winning the Prostitution Clean-up Campaign: Teamwork, Routine, and Danger,” in *Field Study on the Vice/Prostitution Unit in Oakland* (presentation, Citizen’s Police Academy Alumni Association, Behavior Research Associates, 1999); R. Spruill, “Undercover Operation: Deputy Poses as Prostitute,” *Independent Mail*, 2009.

¹⁰² Shively et al., *National Overview*.

can only be implemented post-arrest. This also means that robust and successful demand deterrence programs may cease to be viable if, for some reason, there is no longer a steady stream of sex buyers to participate in them.

Also noteworthy, Shively et al. (2012), documented that as early as the 1960s four cities, and 11 more by 1974, had begun conducting reverse stings (see Table 1 below). It was their assessment that this change in approach, from arresting the women in prostitution to the men who exploited them, was the result of a growing recognition of 1) the injustice of arresting only the women, 2) that current approaches were proving ineffective at diminishing prostitution, and 3) the negative impacts of street prostitution on communities had resulted in a crescendo of complaints to law enforcement authorities which spurred them to action. Shively et al.’s *National Overview* also documented that in a few communities, police authorities were arresting significantly more male sex buyers than women in prostitution. Thus, the idea of combating demand—detering sex buyers—is an approach to prostitution and sex trafficking crimes that has now been operation in varying forms for more than 50 years.

Table 1: U.S. Cities and Counties with Earliest Known Use of Reverse Stings ¹⁰³		
Year	City or County	State
1964	Nashville	TN
1967	Grand Rapids	MI
1968	Salt Lake City	UT
1969	Louisville	KY
1970	Detroit	MI
1970	Washington	DC
1971	Dallas	TX
1972	New York	NY
1973	Chicago	IL
1973	Los Angeles	CA
1973	Miami	FL
1974	Baltimore	MD
1974	Columbus	OH
1974	Fresno	CA
1974	New Haven	CT

¹⁰³ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 40. During our update, we did not identify any additional early adopters of reverse stings.

Figure 1a: Cities and Counties that had Conducted Reverse Stings in the Contiguous United States as of 2012¹⁰⁴

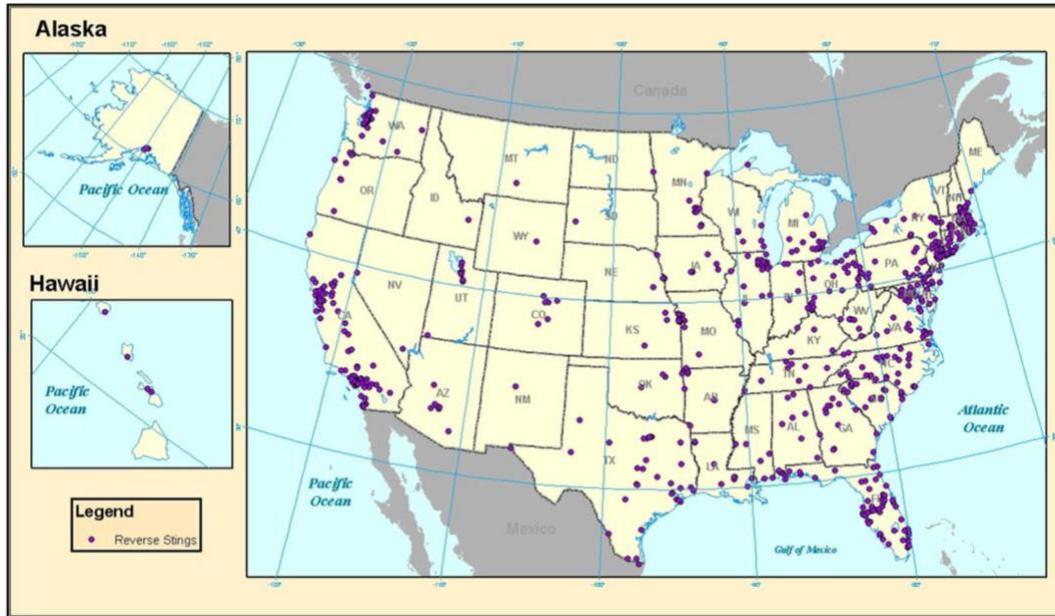
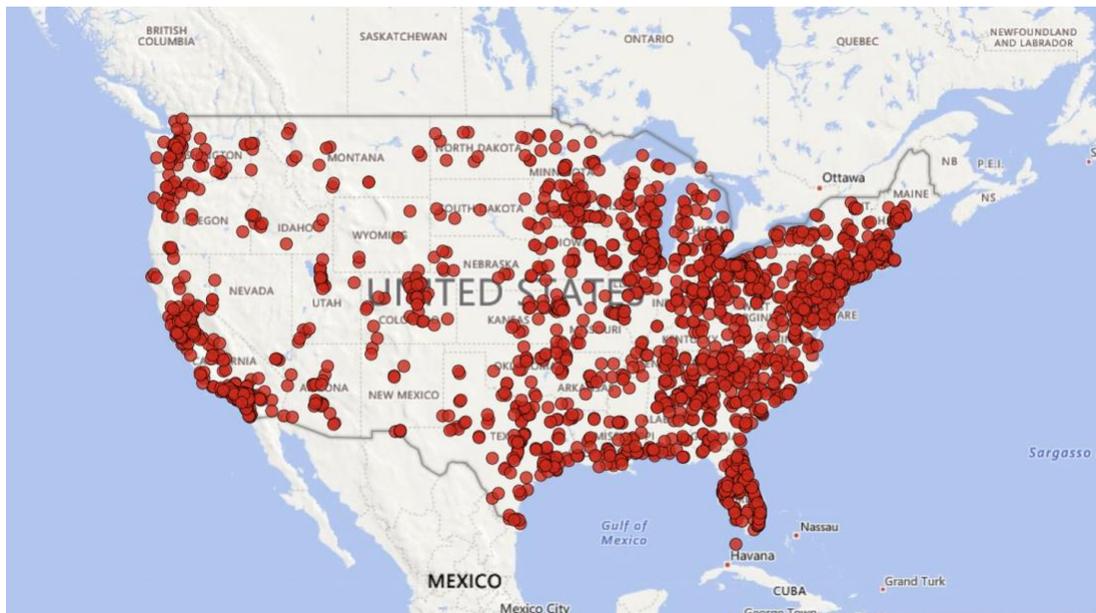


Figure 1b: Cities and Counties that have Conducted Reverse Stings in the Contiguous United States¹⁰⁵



¹⁰⁴ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 40.

¹⁰⁵ [Demand-Forum.org](https://demand-forum.org), 2023.

Declining Number of Arrestees Per Reverse Sting

Since the 2012 *National Overview* there appears to be a trend toward smaller numbers of arrests for each street-level reverse sting. The number of arrestees is primarily a function of (a) the level of resources the police department commits to reverse sting operations and (b) the extent to which men are soliciting street prostitution in areas where those police operations occur. Personnel from several police departments provided the following explanations for the declining number of arrestees:

- **Crime Displacement.** Obtaining a lower yield of arrests per operation, with fewer men soliciting sex on the streets and more using websites to arrange contact with prostituted women.
- **Declining Police Resources for Reverse Stings.** Police departments have devoted fewer resources to reverse stings due to staff reductions and discretionary decisions to devote more of their resources to other problems, such as enforcing drug and gambling laws.
- **Improved Ability of Sex Buyers to Avoid Arrest.** A general increase in offenders' knowledge of police undercover techniques has made it possible for many men to continue soliciting sex locally while avoiding arrest.

Sex buyers employ multiple strategies to evade law enforcement when soliciting street-based persons in prostitution. These include the use of "Hobby boards," web forums where potential and experienced sex buyers share information and tips and monitor both the geographical area and potential women in prostitution for indicators suggestive of law enforcement presence in an area.¹⁰⁶ Obeying traffic laws to reduce visibility while soliciting is also considered, as well as taking precautions to avoid informal threats from pimps, assaults, and theft.¹⁰⁷

"These guys, they don't do this just once. They know what to watch for and they come into the area looking for cops. It's all normal to them."

Sgt. Justin Cramer, Hilliard Police Department, OH, 2021¹⁰⁸

Fluctuations in law enforcement resources devoted to any particular problem are common. Police have finite resources and are responsible for enforcing a wide array of laws and pursuing other civic order and quality of life issues. Police managers have discretion in establishing priorities, and these priorities can change in response to changing crime trends, pressure from the media and the public, and changes in political and organizational leadership. Several John school programs have been suspended or have had their flow of offenders substantially reduced because police shifted their focus away from prostitution and toward other issues. For example, staff at the [Tampa, FL](#), John school program were told by police in 2006

¹⁰⁶ Thomas J. Holt, Kristie R. Blevins, and Joseph B. Kuhns, "Examining Diffusion and Arrest Avoidance Practices Among Johns," *Crime & Delinquency* 60, no. 2 (2014): 261-283, [doi:10.1177/0011128709347087](https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128709347087); Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later* (ChildSafe.ai, 2019), <https://childsafefai.com/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later>.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Holly Zachariah, "Central Ohio Law Enforcement Arrest 93 as Johns Targeted in Human Trafficking Stings at Hotels," *The Columbus Dispatch*, April 16, 2021, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/crime/2021/04/16/ohio-attorney-general-columbus-suburban-police-tackle-human-trafficking-prostitution/7203508002>.

that the agency was reducing or suspending its prostitution sting operations indefinitely to devote more time to combating drunk driving. Staff associated with John school programs in [Ypsilanti](#), MI, and [Buffalo](#), NY, reported that police resource constraints made it difficult to field as many reverse stings as they would like, and as a result they had to reduce the number of John school sessions conducted. In addition to changing crime trends and police budgets, the personal values of police command staff about what crimes deserve the greatest attention from law enforcement can also affect how police are deployed. These discretionary decisions can be made independent of any objective reality concerning local crime problems.

Over the past two decades, police departments nationwide have noticed a sharp increase in the use of the Internet for soliciting prostitution.¹⁰⁹ In [San Francisco](#), CA, vice unit officers argued that there was a shift in prostitution from the street and toward the web during the 2000s, which resulted in fewer solicitations made through contact on the street. This perception is correct. As we reported earlier, using data from 1,796 US counties from 1999 to 2008 researchers found that *conservatively* entry of Craigslist, an Internet-based classified advertising platform which hosted prostitution advertisements, into a county led to a 17.58%¹¹⁰ increase in prostitution cases, increased transactions among those already involved in prostitution, and “attracted” more people to offer paid sex.¹¹¹ So, while street prostitution in some jurisdictions may have decreased, prostitution continues to flourish and expanded via the advantages it is afforded by the Internet. It is also apparent that sex buyers’ perceptions of risk and “provider quality” appear to inform their movement between physical (i.e., street-based) and Internet-based prostitution markets.¹¹²

It is important here to reemphasize that in addition to providing an avenue for solicitation, the web is also used by buyers to communicate with one another.¹¹³ The Internet has given rise to virtual sex buyer

¹⁰⁹ Michael Shively et al., *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., March 7, 2008), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf>; Sudhir Venkatesh, “How Tech Tools Transformed New York's Sex Trade,” *Wired*, January 31, 2011, https://transmarcations.constantvzw.org/texts/Peggy_sexworkers.pdf; Michael Booth, “Craigslist Develops a Dark Side,” *The Denver Post*, December 3, 2007, <https://www.denverpost.com/2007/12/03/craigslist-develops-a-dark-side/>; Donna M. Hughes, “Prostitution Online,” in *Prostitution, Trafficking, and Traumatic Stress*, ed. Melissa Farley (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press, Inc., 2003), 115-131; Leonora LaPeter Anton, “‘Escorts’ Leave the Streets to Get on the Superhighway,” *Tampa Bay Times*, July 6, 2006, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/2006/07/02/escorts-leave-the-streets-to-get-on-the-superhighway/>; Kit R. Roane, “Prostitutes on Wane in New York Streets but Take to Internet,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/02/23/nyregion/prostitutes-on-wane-in-new-york-streets-but-take-to-internet.html>; M. Ross, “How the Internet is Bringing the World’s Oldest Profession to a Neighborhood Near You,” *Diablo Magazine*, June 2005; Jacob Quinn Sanders, “Prostitution Hits Web in State,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, February 10, 2008, <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2008/feb/10/prostitution-hits-web-state-20080210>.

¹¹⁰ This estimate is based on their *most* conservative model. Their *least* conservative model yielded a 47.69% increase in prostitution trends due to Craigslist entry.

¹¹¹ Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>.

¹¹² Thomas J. Holt, Kristie R. Blevins, and Joseph B. Kuhns, “Examining Diffusion and Arrest Avoidance Practices Among Johns,” *Crime & Delinquency* 60, no. 2 (2014): 261-283, [doi:10.1177/0011128709347087](https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128709347087).

¹¹³ Alexa Albert, *Brothel: Mustang Ranch and its Women* (New York: Random House, 2001); Teela Sanders, *Paying for Pleasure: Men Who Buy Sex* (London: Willan Publishing, 2008); Loretta J. Stalans and Mary A. Finn, “Consulting Legal Experts in the Real and Virtual World: Pimps’ and Johns’ Cultural Schemas about Strategies to Avoid Arrest and Conviction,” *Deviant Behavior* 37, no. 6 (2016): 644-664, [doi:10.1080/01639625.2015.1060810](https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2015.1060810); Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later* (ChildSafe.ai, 2019), <https://childsafes.ai/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later>.

communities, so-called “Hobby boards,” which not only normalize sex buying behavior, but which also help them evade law enforcement.¹¹⁴ Websites catering to sex buyers (e.g., usasexguide.nl; rubmaps.ch, theeroticreview.com (TER))¹¹⁵ include forums for posting tips on how to avoid arrest and sharing information about police decoy operations.¹¹⁶ Sophistication and craftiness on the part of sex buyers and their political economies can also be gleaned from conversations and threads from the “Legal Corner” of TER, a dedicated forum containing specialized discussions on legal issues arising from participation in the illegal sex trade.¹¹⁷ The website hosting TER is based in the Netherlands, focuses primarily on the United States, and according to a 2012 study, has reported more than 1,000,000 registered members.¹¹⁸ The online deliberations include strategies to reduce the likelihood of arrest or conviction.

“Salty: Took a cruise . . . and saw nothing except LE pretty much everywhere. Was a cruiser sitting on a the corner. . . . Looks like he was checking for cars blowing off the stop sign there. Also a couple of SUV riding cops here and there.”

Member of Hartford, CT, Sex Buyer Forum¹¹⁹

SFPD vice officers at the police station have monitored commercial sex websites while reverse stings are occurring and have seen buyers post warnings describing the undercover officers and the location of the operation. Sometimes these alerts about reverse stings are posted within an hour of the start of an operation. SFPD officers have learned that sex buyers can identify the unmarked van. The First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP) has received a great deal of publicity since it was implemented in 1995, and for 20 years, many men were aware of how and where the SFPD conducted reverse stings in San Francisco.

Street Prostitution Resurgence

While prostitution has moved largely online, street prostitution in some jurisdictions is experiencing a strong comeback. In 2022, California took a step towards decriminalization of prostitution when the Governor signed Senate Bill 375,¹²⁰ a bill to repeal its prostitution loitering law, over police objections that the law was one of the key weapons at their disposal for apprehending pimps/sex traffickers and provided

¹¹⁴ Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later* (ChildSafe.ai, 2019), <https://childsafefai.com/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later>.

¹¹⁵ Josh Shaffer, “Internet’s Anonymity Fuels Surge in Sex Traffic,” *Raleigh News Observer*, March 4, 2008, https://tucson.com/news/national/internets-anonymity-fuels-surge-in-sex-traffic/article_5e946b27-23d2-5548-acc9-061fe975a0a.html; Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later* (ChildSafe.ai, 2019), <https://childsafefai.com/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later>; Lara Janson et al., “Our Great Hobby”: *An Analysis of Online Networks for Buyers of Sex in Illinois* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, January 2013), 1-112, <https://www.caase.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/OurGreatHobby.pdf>.

¹¹⁶ Thomas J. Holt and Kristie R. Blevins, “Examining Sex Work from the Client’s Perspective: Assessing Johns Using Online Data,” *Deviant Behavior* 28, no. 4 (2007): 333-354, [doi:10.1080/01639620701233282](https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620701233282).

¹¹⁷ Loretta J. Stalans and Mary A. Finn, “Consulting Legal Experts in the Real and Virtual World: Pimps’ and Johns’ Cultural Schemas about Strategies to Avoid Arrest and Conviction,” *Deviant Behavior* 37, no. 6 (2016): p. 645, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01639625.2015.1060810?journalCode=udbh20>.

¹¹⁸ Christine Milrod and Martin A. Monto, “The Hobbyist and the Girlfriend Experience: Behaviors and Preferences of Male Customers of Internet Sexual Service Providers,” *Deviant Behavior* 33, no. 10 (2012): <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.2012.707502>.

¹¹⁹ Stalans and Finn, *ibid.*

¹²⁰ California Legislative Information, *Senate Bill No. 357: Loitering for the Purpose of Engaging in a Prostitution Offense*, July 5, 2022, https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220SB357.

the foundation for probable cause to start investigations that lead to identifying and supporting victims. One former San Diego chief of police weighed in and warned that the bill “will put human trafficking victims at risk and degrade disadvantaged neighborhoods.”¹²¹ Although the bill went into effect in 2023, the message sent to police throughout the state to stop the enforcement of prostitution laws, was a message not lost on those profiting from the sex trade and those seeking to buy sex. As early as October 2022, a “parade” of street prostitution and the inevitable violence that accompanies it was creating significant problems for [National City, CA](#).¹²² The city’s mayor directly linked the relaxation of prohibitions to the escalating problems the city was experiencing.¹²³ Street prostitution in [San Francisco, CA](#),’s Mission District recently escalated to such a degree that streets had to be barricaded to deter sex buyers from cruising the area.¹²⁴ Similarly, in other regions of the country where prosecutors are no longer prosecuting prostitution cases, street prostitution is seeing a strong resurgence. One such case is [Brooklyn, NY](#), where the District Attorney dismissed all prostitution-related cases.¹²⁵ In 2018 police in Brooklyn made 279 arrests for patronizing a prostitute in the third degree as the top charge; by June 2021 that figure had dropped to four.¹²⁶ The state of “de facto decriminalization” of the sex trade has resulted in an open air prostitution market.¹²⁷

Community Complaints Drive Many Reverse Stings

A common point of contention in discussions surrounding the legalization, decriminalization, or continued prohibition of prostitution is the assertion that it is a victimless crime. Those advocating against prohibition typically embrace the libertarian notion that if prostitution involves consenting adults, government interference should be minimized. On the other hand, proponents of prohibition argue that prostitution tends to be harmful, either inherently or in most cases, to both those directly participating and to others indirectly impacted.

While that debate is beyond the scope of this report, we like Shively et al. (2012), are struck by: 1) the role of community complaints in spurring law enforcement action, and 2) the range of detrimental impacts inflicted by street prostitution on the communities where it occurs. We have read of people engaging in sex in front of people’s homes or on their property; debris such condoms, needles, and women’s underwear

¹²¹ Shelly Zimmerman, “Opinion: I have firsthand experience policing prostitution crimes. Here’s why Senate Bill 357 won’t work,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, August 23, 2022, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/community-voices-project/story/2022-08-23/opinion-why-senate-bill-357-wont-work>.

¹²² Keristen Holmes, “‘Sex Workers are Now Emboldened’ | National City Prostitution Out of Control,” *CBS8.com*, October 5, 2022, <https://www.cbs8.com/article/news/local/sex-workers-now-emboldened-says-national-city-mayor/509-68cd3a25-d059-46b0-8341-47f97e3c70fd>.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Alyssa Guzman, “‘It’s out of Control and Dangerous’: Furious California Residents Rage at Prostitutes being Allowed to Linger on Streets – with Women in Thongs on Street Corners, Twerking at Traffic and Pimps Following Mothers to School after Gov. Newsom Passed Work Laws,” *Dailymail.co.uk*, February 9, 2023, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11731621/Furious-California-residents-rage-thong-clad-prostitutes-allowed-linger-streets.html>.

¹²⁵ Post Editorial Board, “A Brooklyn Outdoor Sex Market: How Decriminalization Leads to More Crime” *New York Post*, July 16, 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/07/16/a-brooklyn-outdoor-sex-market-how-decriminalization-leads-to-more-crime/>; Larry Celona, Steven Vago, Gabrielle Fonrouge, et al., “NYC Sex Workers Rampant in Open-Air Prostitution Market Amid Lax Enforcement,” *New York Post*, July 15, 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/07/15/prostitution-runs-rampant-in-brooklyn-amid-declining-enforcement/>.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

littering streets and yards; children playing with condoms they thought were balloons; children and women who live neighborhood where prostitution occurs being solicited for sex; theft of homeowner's property; violence including assaults, shootings, and homicides; drug dealing; and noise complaints stemming from verbal and physical fighting.

In addition, in areas where there is street prostitution there are frequent complaints of women and girls not involved in that activity who are solicited by male sex buyers,¹²⁸ and men who live or work in those areas who do not welcome offers from those selling sex. Another but less frequently reported problem experienced in some communities (e.g., San Diego, CA; [Worcester](#), MA) “was from women whose ethnic or cultural heritage was such that they would face serious repercussions if they were seen to have been solicited by a sex buyer, even if a woman or girl did nothing to provoke it, did not welcome it, and did not respond to it.”¹²⁹

“She comes home, she walks in the door every day crying because some guy followed her home or harassed her (saying) ‘You want to make some money?’”

Suzanne Pocius-Ford, [Brockton](#), MA, mother discussing her 16-year-old daughter being harassed by sex buyers, 2012¹³⁰

“The people who are actually with the girls, they think they can come into our neighborhood. They think they can do this and get by with it. I think they’re starting to figure out they’re not going to get by anymore...”

Joyce Jones, Business owner, [Kansas City](#), MO, 2019¹³¹

“We feel like prisoners in our homes . . . We’ve seen the girls get beat, shot at by the pimps. That’s not right. What’s the city doing about it?”

Anonymous Resident, [San Jose](#), CA, 2019¹³²

“It’s like every night pimps and prostitutes come and take our street hostage and neighbors are shut in.”

Paula, Resident, [San Francisco](#), CA, 2023¹³³

¹²⁸ Maria Papadopoulos, “Brockton Women Protest Prostitution in Neighborhood,” *The Enterprise*, August 2, 2012, <https://www.enterpriseneews.com/story/news/crime/2012/08/02/brockton-women-protest-prostitution-in/40060602007/>.

¹²⁹ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 44.

¹³⁰ Maria Papadopoulos, “Brockton Women Protest Prostitution in the Neighborhood,” *The Enterprise*, August 2, 2012, <https://www.enterpriseneews.com/story/news/crime/2012/08/02/brockton-women-protest-prostitution-in/40060602007/>.

¹³¹ Jessica Eley, “KCPD Makes Six Arrests in Prostitution Sting on Independence Avenue,” *FOX 4*, June 19, 2019, <https://fox4kc.com/news/kcpd-makes-six-arrests-in-prostitution-sting-on-independence-ave/>.

¹³² Cheryl Hurd, “San Jose Neighborhood Fed Up with Alleged Prostitution,” *NBC Bay Area*, September 4, 2019, <https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/san-jose-neighborhood-fed-up-with-alleged-prostitution/1959480/>.

¹³³ Luz Pena, “Exclusive: SF Residents Say This Street has Turned into ‘Las Vegas Strip’ with Alleged Sex Workers” *ABC 7 News*, February 3, 2023, <https://abc7news.com/san-francisco-sex-workers-prostitution-neighbors-speak-out-capp-street-sf/12764865/>.

Variations and Innovations in Reverse Stings

As described in Shively et al. (2012), variations on the basic model of reverse stings have been developed to meet challenges or to take advantage of opportunities. The examples below illustrate these adaptations.

- ***Replacing prostituted women with police decoys.*** In such scenarios law enforcement engaged in prostitution investigations may send personnel to “strips” or “strolls” where they apprehend women involved in prostitution. These women are then substituted with police decoys, a practice which has been observed in locations like [Cleveland](#), OH, and [Fountain Valley](#), CA. A similar strategy is sometimes applied to apprehend individuals seeking prostitution from brothels. Raids on brothels typically seek to establish whether prostitution is taking place. If sufficient evidence is gathered, the focus is typically on arresting the female sellers of sex along with the pimps/sex traffickers operating the brothel. Usually, little attention is given to the buyers; buyers present during the raid or “take-down” might be detained, but there often is no concerted effort to apprehend more buyers beyond those immediately present. Nevertheless, in certain communities, law enforcement agencies have capitalized on the opportunity to identify and arrest additional buyers. For instance, in storefront brothels such as nail salons or massage establishments, the existing staff and individuals involved are removed and substituted with undercover police officers. These officers then continue to schedule appointments and arrest individuals seeking sexual services until word spreads that the brothel is under police control. A recent case of this occurred in May 2021 when the [Phoenix](#), AZ, Police Department arrested 47 men.¹³⁴ In this operation, detectives posed as massage workers and advertised their services on websites known for facilitating prostitution.
- ***Borrowing decoys from other police agencies.*** Numerous police departments, especially those of small size, encounter challenges in conducting reverse sting operations. These challenges arise due to a scarcity of female police officers willing to participate as decoys, or because these decoys become too recognizable to potential buyers, undermining their effectiveness. To address this predicament, certain law enforcement agencies have adopted a solution of “borrowing” personnel from other departments. As an illustration, the municipalities of [Bluefield](#) and [Princeton](#), WV, have engaged in the practice of exchanging decoys and occasionally other members from their reverse sting teams. Similarly, in places like [Wilkes-Barre](#), PA, and neighboring communities such as [Reading](#) and [Allentown](#), there has been a practice of borrowing or exchanging personnel. In the state of Pennsylvania, the State Police also established the capability to support any community across the state in executing reverse sting operations by providing both decoys and assisting officers.

Evidence of Effectiveness

When compared to evidence of the effectiveness of interventions addressing supply and distribution in curtailing commercial sex markets, evidence supporting the impact of demand-reduction initiatives is strong. There is very little in the way of an empirical case for supply or distribution-focused interventions to produce more than temporary suppressions or displacement. Evidence that anti-demand tactics (or comprehensive approaches that include addressing demand) can effectively suppress commercial sex markets is slowly accumulating and is robust in relation to evidence of the effectiveness of other

¹³⁴ Molly Jirasek, “Phoenix Police Arrest 47 in Undercover Prostitution Sting,” *NewsNation Now*, May 28, 2021, <https://www.newsnationnow.com/us-news/southwest/phoenix-police-arrest-47-in-undercover-prostitution-sting>.

approaches. However, formal evaluations are still confined to evaluations of anti-demand approaches implemented in a few locations.

The emerging evidence-based model for demand reduction features sex buyer arrests, most often made during reverse sting operations.

Results from Formal Evaluations

- ***Arresting sex buyers reduced likelihood of future solicitation for prostitution by nearly 70%.***¹³⁵ Brewer et al., 2006, found a large deterrent effect of arrest of sex buyers. Their analyses showed that arrest reduced the likelihood of future arrest for soliciting prostitution by approximately 70%. They stated, “our results suggest that apprehending clients decreases their patronizing behavior substantially.”¹³⁶
- ***In San Francisco, arresting and educating sex buyers reduced recidivism by over 40%.***¹³⁷ An NIJ-sponsored evaluation of the FOPP found that the annual one-year recidivism rate for arrested Johns fell from 8.8 percent to 4.5 percent after the program began operating. The shift was immediate and was sustained for the subsequent decade. The impact could not be attributed to the effect of arrest since all those in the “treatment” and statewide “comparison” groups were arrested. The impact could not be attributed to displacement to other cities since the data allowed the research team to detect subsequent arrests anywhere in the state. The impact was also not attributable to a larger trend since no substantial trend was observed in the statewide rearrest data. Finally, the impact is unlikely to be attributable to sex buyers moving their activities online. While it is true that commercial sex solicitation has been shifting from the streets to online venues, the shift to online solicitation has been gradual rather than abruptly occurring in one year. It has been widespread rather than occurring only in San Francisco in 1995.
- ***A comprehensive approach including reverse stings reduced prostitution by 75% in a controlled experiment in Jersey City, NJ.***¹³⁸ In a rigorous field study, Weisburd et al., 2006, found a 75% reduction in observed and reported prostitution from a comprehensive approach that included combating demand through reverse stings. The evaluation design tested for displacement effects, and the researchers concluded that the reductions were not attributable to simply pushing the problem to other city areas. However, the comprehensive nature of the intervention prevents attributing the positive effects to the demand piece or any other component of the program.
- ***Comprehensive effort including “kerb crawler” arrests and education reduced prostitution in Ipswich, England by 40% to 80%.***¹³⁹ A 2008 study by Poland and colleagues concluded that a large

¹³⁵ Devon D. Brewer et al., “A Large Specific Deterrent Effect of Arrest for Patronizing a Prostitute,” *PLoS ONE* 1, no. 1 (2006): e60, [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000060](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0000060).

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹³⁷ Shively et al., *Final Report*.

¹³⁸ David Weisburd et al., “Does Crime Just Move around the Corner? A Controlled Study of Spatial Displacement and Diffusion of Crime Control Benefits,” *Criminology* 44, no. 3 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.2006.00057.x>.

¹³⁹ Fiona Poland, Gwyneth R. Boswell, and Anne M. Killet, *Evaluation Research Report: Ipswich Street*

reduction in street prostitution in Ipswich, England, resulted from an intensive and multifaceted intervention. The program featured enforcement and education aimed at demand (arresting “kerb crawlers” and having them attend the “Change Course,” or John school) and a social service/therapeutic (rather than punitive) approach for providers of commercial sex. The study found 40% to 80% reductions in calls for police service and the number of persons involved in prostitution.

- ***Enactment of Swedish law that focused on demand reduction reduced street prostitution by 50% to 75%.***¹⁴⁰ In 1999 Sweden passed national legislation decriminalizing the sale of sex while simultaneously criminalizing the purchase of sex. The innovation of the “Swedish Model” law was in place in the entire legal burden for prostitution on the buyer rather than the provider. An evaluation of the law’s impact found a 50% to 70% reduction in street prostitution through focusing on demand.

Police Research and Case Studies

- ***In St. Petersburg, FL, a comprehensive approach emphasizing arresting and disclosing the identities of arrested sex buyers was associated with a 24% reduction in calls for police service.***¹⁴¹ Concluding that arresting women involved in prostitution was ineffective in reducing the illicit business and the crime and disorder surrounding it, the city focused on a multifaceted effort that featured tactics aimed at demand. Reverse stings were conducted in 1993, and a letter that included information about sexually transmitted diseases was sent to the home address of all arrested sex buyers. Prostitution-related calls for service from police decreased by 24 percent between 1993 and 1994.
- ***In Raleigh, NC, a comprehensive approach emphasizing arresting and shaming Johns was associated with a 38% reduction in calls for police service.***¹⁴² In response to persistent prostitution-related problems in the city, a study of prostitution was conducted, which concluded that police and other agencies city should prioritize arresting buyers and addressing the service needs of providers (Weisel, 2004). An initiative—Operation Dragnet—featuring those elements was launched. Among other outcomes, over 85% of the citizens surveyed were aware of the anti-prostitution effort, and citizen-initiated calls for service initially increased due to increased awareness, then declined steadily by 38% compared to the pre-intervention baseline.

Prostitution Strategy 2007-8 (Norwich: University of East Anglia, October 1, 2008), <https://ueaeprints.uea.ac.uk/id/eprint/15007/>.

¹⁴⁰ Endrit Mujaj and Amanda Netscher, *Prostitution in Sweden 2014. The Extent and Development of Prostitution in Sweden*, (Stockholm, Sweden: County Administrative Board of Stockholm, 2015), <https://www.dashboard.communitieswhoknow.com/Trafficking/Resources/files/original/020213986ca7529159f478ed9fa2b1c0.pdf>.

¹⁴¹ Sandra L. Minor, *Prostitution: 1997 Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award*, (St. Petersburg, FL: St. Petersburg Police Department, 1997), <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/awards/goldstein/1997/97-65.pdf>.

¹⁴² Deborah Lamm Weisel, *Street Prostitution in Raleigh, North Carolina: A Final Report to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services on the Field Applications of the Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Project*, 2004, <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/researcherprojects/streetProstitution.pdf>.

- ***Reduced street prostitution in Salt Lake City, UT in 1971 and 1976 was attributed by police to reverse stings.*** A three-month effort in 1971 to combat prostitution by concentrating on male buyers led police to conclude that nearly all of the 75 known street prostitutes appeared to have left town.¹⁴³ In the crackdown on demand, 139 men were arrested during reverse stings.¹⁴⁴ Subsequent reports stated that through 1976 the reverse sting program had arrested 1,129 male sex buyers, and that prostitution in the city had declined by approximately 50% soon afterward.¹⁴⁵
- ***In Buffalo, NY, a 60% drop in 911 calls for service was associated with a comprehensive approach emphasizing arresting and educating sex buyers.***¹⁴⁶ From 1996 to 1997, the city increased sex buyer arrests 85 percent. Arrested men were sent to a John school program modeled after the one in San Francisco. Arrested women involved in prostitution were referred to an organization for support and treatment. 911 calls and arrest data were analyzed to assess the initiative’s impact, and interviews were conducted with community members. They found that 911 calls fell 60% from 1996 to 1997, police observed fewer women engaging in street prostitution, and community members interviewed reported less prostitution activity.
- ***Reverse stings and shaming reportedly removed Wilkes-Barre, PA, from a domestic sex trafficking circuit, and reduced the number of women engaged in street prostitution locally by 75%.*** In interviews conducted as part of the Shively et al., 2012, *National Overview*, police department staff said that Wilkes-Barre had been a stop on a domestic sex trafficking circuit operating in upstate New York and central Pennsylvania. Through the mid-1980s, traditional interventions had been tried and found ineffective: arresting prostituted women accomplished little (sex trafficked women soon left for the next stop on the circuit, and local women simply returned to the streets), and prosecution of pimps had been attempted, but never successfully. In 1986, Wilkes-Barre police tried a new approach, conducting large-scale reverse stings and publicizing arrestee identities. In each of the first several operations, they arrested 50 to 100 men who were issued citations and were ordered to pay fines. Arrestee identities were included in press releases in the local Sunday newspaper. After two years of these efforts, police concluded that Wilkes-Barre had been taken off the “pimp circuit.” The number of women known to engage in street prostitution fell from 20 to five, with the rotating circuit survivors gone and the remaining five being local women suffering from severe substance addictions. The existence of the domestic sex trafficking circuit and the level of police reverse sting activity in the 1980s and 1990s were corroborated by news archives and interviews with police from other cities on the circuit. However, the stated impact on the number of street-level survivors could not be confirmed due to a lack of data from the period (e.g., arrest data were not kept by the police department beyond seven years).

¹⁴³ Gordon Kirby, “2nd Sound Decoys ‘Eliminate Pros’” *Deseret News*, September 20, 1971, Page B 1-2, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=vbVSAAAIBAJ&sjid=fH8DAAAIBAJ&pg=3749%2C4684978>.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Grace Lichtenstein, “Prostitute Decoys,” *New York Times Archives*, June 17, 1976, <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/06/17/archives/women-and-rights-units-assail-prostitute-decoys.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Buffalo Police Department, “Workable Solutions to the Problem of Street Prostitution in Buffalo, NY,” *Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing*, nd, <https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Buffalo.Prostitution.Report.pdf>.

Prostitution Escalates When Enforcement and Arrests Decline

While it is evident from the research and the historical record summarized above that arresting sex buyers (especially when followed by education and sanctions) appears to reduce reoffending and decrease prostitution activity, the empirical case for sex buyer arrest as a deterrent is strengthened by observing what happens when prostitution laws are not enforced. For example, prostitution “Tolerance Zones” have been tried and have failed to reduce harm or make communities or prostituted persons safer. For example, [Boston](#), MA, sought to manage its rampant prostitution problems in the 1960s and 1970s by allowing prostitution within a few square blocks. The area quickly became known as the “Combat Zone” and became one of the most dangerous areas in the state; abuses against sex trade survivors flourished.¹⁴⁷ This same basic story is being repeated in current times. Since 2020, prosecutors in several U.S. cities and the state of California declared policies of de facto decriminalization by refusing to prosecute prostitution, along with other select crimes. The results have been, predictably, negative. As discussed above, communities in California and New York have been particularly hard hit, experiencing an alarming resurgence of street-level prostitution as a consequence.

Corroborating Evidence

In addition to the direct evidence of reverse stings having positive outcomes, there are three additional kinds of evidence which reflect favorably on the tactic:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that behavior in the future and were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are consequences following arrest, such as jail time, being listed on a sex offender registry, and the public disclosure of their arrest. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.¹⁴⁸ A 2018 is particularly noteworthy. In this nationally representative survey of 8,201 US men conducted between December 2016 and January 2017, 20.6 % reported that they had ever purchased sex in their lifetimes, and that **more than 18% of former sex buyers stopped buying sex due to concerns that they might**

¹⁴⁷ Dave O’Brian, “Boston Apparently Has Lost War with Sex in ‘Combat Zone,’” *Washington Post*, November 17, 1977, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/11/17/boston-apparently-has-lost-war-with-sex-in-combat-zone/5d7be194-c67a-4b82-b0f3-42f66f607b0f/>.

¹⁴⁸ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

be arrested.¹⁴⁹ Another **16%** of former sex buyers from the same survey expressed that they stopped sex buying because they **were afraid someone might find out.**¹⁵⁰

2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence¹⁵¹ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities, which is something sex buyers seek to avoid.
3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement about sex buyer statements is further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on general and specific deterrence that finds that both **“legal sanctions”** (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and **“extra-legal sanctions”** (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending.**¹⁵²

Collectively, the evidence is strong that arresting and sanctioning sex buyers is likely to deter reoffending and advance “general deterrence,” in which awareness of the risk of sanctions can deter crime in the general population—and not just among those arrested and punished.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Demand Abolition, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. (Demand Abolition, November 2018), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf>. Note respondents could endorse more than reason for stopping sex buying. For additional information about this survey see also, Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, eds. T. J. Holt, and A.M. Bossler (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020) p. 1191, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_54.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/>; Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

¹⁵² Thomas A. Loughran et al., “Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex Piquero (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 50-74, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/978135112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

¹⁵³ Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “General Deterrence: A Review of Recent Evidence,” in *Crime and Public Policy*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (2011), 411-436; Braga, Anthony A., and David L. Weisburd, “The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2012): 323-358, [doi:10.1177/0022427811419368](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811419368).

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Reverse Stings](#)” have occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “[Browse Locations](#)” window, and then select “Reverse Stings” from the “Tactics” list. The U.S. locations where these operations occurred may be [mapped](#) on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Reverse Stings” from the list.

Chapter 3: Web-Based Reverse Stings

Overview

Since the late 1990s, the Internet has been used with increasing frequency to transact commercial sex and facilitate sex trafficking. Ads are posted on websites devoted to commercial sex (e.g., cityxguide.com, skipthegames.com, eros.com) or on advertising websites and message boards serving as a venue for a broader spectrum of transactions, such as Craigslist and the now defunct Backpage.com, and local weekly entertainment-oriented periodicals and websites. Many police agencies across the country have utilized online commercial sex ads to their benefit. Most police agencies known to conduct street-level reverse stings also conduct operations aimed at disrupting online solicitation of prostitution. A web-based version of a reverse sting involves posting an online ad or message to engage buyers looking to trade money for sex and then arranging a face-to-face meeting to finalize the exchange. Once buyers have agreed to meet and have formed a plan to do so, a sting is executed that typically involves putting an undercover decoy inside a hotel room, having a support team in the room next door, and then making arrests when buyers show up as scheduled and show intent to complete the money-for-sex transaction.

“[Web-based Stings](#)” evolved to keep pace with the market, which increasingly has moved online. These operations have advantages beyond simply keeping up with market shifts; they also opened the possibility of targeting those seeking to pay to sexually abuse minors. Street-based reverse stings are limited by the fact that the undercover decoy is an adult woman, even if they are stating or implying that they are younger. It is difficult to prosecute charges against someone seeking to buy a minor for sexual abuse when the person they solicited was an adult; such charges can be easily defended in court. Any sting operation that begins with solicitation in a face-to-face encounter between adults is virtually always confined to yielding lower-level charges for soliciting prostitution. Conversely, undercover online solicitations allow law enforcement personnel to pose as minors, and responding suspects who explicitly state that they wish to pay for sexual access to them and then appear as planned to demonstrate the intent to follow through, can be successfully prosecuted for soliciting sex with a minor, or equivalent felony-level prostitution or sex trafficking charges.

Web-based stings typically begin with an ad that strongly suggests that the person is young, using terms that are known among sex to indicate that the person being sold is a teen or younger, such as “barely legal,” “fresh,” or “new.” Such terminology is necessary due to legal restrictions on explicitly stating in an online ad that a minor is being sold for sex. In many web-based stings, decoy ads imply that the sexually exploited person is a minor. When buyers communicate with undercover officers, the officers can then clearly state in text messages or phone conversations that the person to be purchased is underage (typically between the ages of 14 and 16, but sometimes far younger).

Web-based reverse stings have been conducted in more than **1,600** U.S. cities and counties, and the first began doing so in 1995, if not earlier. A list of “early adopter” communities and the year in which they first conducted web-based reverse stings is presented in Table 1. Web-based stings are relatively easy for police to initiate. The typical operation begins with police posting their decoy ad. When potential sex buyers respond with a phone call, text message, or email, the officers pose as prostituted persons or sex traffickers/pimps and arrange a meeting. Men who arrive and confirm their intention to buy sex may be arrested and charged with soliciting prostitution. Often, evidence from the messages or phone calls between the decoy police and the suspected buyers may be used to corroborate the suspect’s intention to engage in

prostitution. For example, a specific price is usually negotiated, and police may ask the buyer to send pictures before the meeting or arrive at the meeting with specific drugs, foods, or personal items. When buyers arrive with the agreed-upon amount of cash, drugs, and other items mentioned in text messages or voice recordings, it provides compelling evidence that the person who arrived is the one who made the arrangements and that the man intended to act upon the stated intention to purchase sex. In addition, when in the presence of the sex buyer, police will often call or text the number that had been used during negotiations; when the phone rings, they will ask to see it and usually find that the texts or calls between the sex buyer’s phone match those on the phone used by the police decoy.

Variation on the Basic Web-Based Reverse Sting Model

In a web-based reverse sting, the basic approach is to post a fake advertisement on websites used for prostitution transactions and place a female undercover officer and a support team in the hotel room or apartment to meet with sex buyers. This requires substantial planning, such as getting a phone for the police to use that can’t be identified as a police phone, as well as creating a realistic ad. Obtaining hotel or apartment space can be a challenge due to the cost of renting and convincing hotel or apartment owners to cooperate in a police operation that could disrupt their business.

A variation of the basic model, designed to address some of these issues, starts with police looking for real commercial sex ads on the internet instead of placing their own decoy ads. The real ads are then responded to by undercover male officers pretending to be sex buyers. The women or girls involved in prostitution or who are trafficked are removed and a police decoy is installed that continues to meet buyers on the survivor's phone. Typically, a support team is stationed in an adjoining room. Another variation involves female police decoys responding to online ads placed by sex buyers seeking prostituted persons, but this tactic is less frequently used.

Year	City or County	State
1995	Everett	WA
1998	Kissimmee	FL
1999	Lexington	KY
2000	Charlotte	NC
2000	Horry County	SC
2000	Kansas City	KS
2000	Oklahoma City	OK
2000	Roanoke	VA
2000	Travis County	TX
2000	Tucson	AZ
2001	Blue Ash	OH
2001	Orange County	CA
2001	San Jose	CA
2002	Lenexa	KS
2002	Portland	OR

¹⁵⁴ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 40. During our update, we found no additional early adopters of reverse stings.

Events occurring early in 2018 led to some publicly accessible online advertising websites being dismantled or changing how they operated, making open-source advertising sites less readily available for use by law enforcement to conduct reverse stings as they had been previously. In February 2018, a federal bill entitled “Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017,” or “FOSTA,” was signed by both the House and Senate.¹⁵⁵ Known in a previous form as SESTA (Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act), FOSTA amends Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act, which has been widely interpreted as providing tech companies and social media platforms immunity from most liability for publishing third-party content. Within days, Craigslist (at the time, a widely used platform for commercial sex advertising) announced it would drop all personal and “erotic services” ads. In April 2018, the U.S. Department of Justice seized the Backpage.com website (at the time, the most popular site for prostitution ads) and raided the home of its co-founder.¹⁵⁶ All indications suggest¹⁵⁷ the commercial sex market shifted from the defunct Backpage to other open-source advertising websites and to restricted access venues and social media platforms requiring membership fees or where sex buyers must be invited and registered by prostituted persons. History shows that when consumer demand remains strong, the market for anything – including commercial sex – will adapt by finding other means of advertising and arranging transactions. When Craigslist eliminated its “Erotic Services” section in 2009, the market quickly adapted by migrating from Craigslist to Backpage and other websites. If those kinds of generic advertising websites stop carrying listings that facilitate prostitution and sex trafficking, other options that may be pursued by prostituted persons and sex traffickers/pimps include focusing on developing “client lists,” closed networks of “buyers,” “pop-up brothels” announced to closed client and predator networks, and using texts, emails, social media apps (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), the dark web, or the communication facilities of gaming systems to market and arrange commercial sex transactions.

While web-based reverse stings are typically proactive operations intended to draw in any individual seeking to buy sex, using online advertisements as decoys, other modes of sting operation use electronic communication to arrest those seeking to purchase minors for sexual abuse, but are more narrowly targeted. They are extensions of investigations into allegations against specific individuals, and a sting is used to gather evidence and provide the context for an arrest. For example, in March, 2023, the Canadian County (OK) Sheriff’s Office announced that their personnel had arrested an Oklahoma City-based attorney after he allegedly drove to a [Mustang](#), OK, residence with the intent of paying to sexually assault a five-year-old

¹⁵⁵ “H.R.1865 - Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017,” U.S. Congress, last modified April 11, 2018, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1865>.

¹⁵⁶ Sarah N. Lynch and Lisa Lamber, “Sex Ads Website Backpage Shut Down by U.S. Authorities,” *Reuters*, April 6, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-backpage-justice/sex-ads-website-backpage-shut-down-by-u-s-authorities-idUSKCN1HD2QP>; Tom Porter and Reuters, “Backpage Website Shut Down, Founder Charged With 93 Counts By FBI In Sealed Indictment,” *Newsweek*, April 7, 2018, <https://www.newsweek.com/sex-ads-website-backpagecom-co-founder-charged-after-fbi-raid-876333>.

¹⁵⁷Zeng, Helen Shuxuan, Brett Danaher, and Michael D. Smith. “Internet Governance Through Site Shutdowns: The Impact of Shutting Down Two Major Commercial Sex Advertising Sites.” *Management Science* 68, no. 11 (2022): 8234-8248, doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.2022.4498; Wiesner, Lucy. “Good Intentions and Unintended Consequences: SESTA/FOSTA’s First Two Years,” *Temple Law Review* 93, (2020): 151-180, [https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/temple93&div=9&id=&page=](https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/temple93&div=9&id=&page=;); Mike Tobias, “How the Backpage Shutdown Impacted the Commercial Sex Industry and Trafficking,” *Nebraska Public Media*, August 21, 2018, <https://nebraskapublicmedia.org/en/news/news-articles/how-the-backpage-shutdown-impacted-the-commercial-sex-industry-and-trafficking/>.

girl.¹⁵⁸ Investigators confirmed that they were contacted by a confidential informant (CI) who reported that the man had contacted her and [requested](#) “to arrange a meet for sex with an underaged child.” The CI worked with Sheriff’s investigators and assisted in a sting operation. Officials said the man communicated in detail with the CI via text messages and phone calls about wanting to sexually abuse an underage girl. The negotiations led to the man arriving to meet at a home in Mustang. Investigators installed hidden cameras, and deputies were staged inside of the home. The man was taken into custody after he allegedly gave the informant \$400.00 to be allowed to sexually assault a five-year old child. Investigators were able to obtain and execute a search warrant for the man’s residence, where they seized several electronic devices, including an Ipad, laptop computers and his personal cell phone. The suspect was arrested for “Lewd Acts with a Child Under 12” and “Soliciting Child Prostitution.” He was transported to the Canadian County Detention Facility, and his bond was set at \$200k. Investigators continued their investigation to determine whether there were more victims.

Another variation on the basic web-based reverse sting model includes using social media platforms such as Facebook to place ads and facilitate communications instead of basic online advertising sites or local entertainment magazines. In another example of a more narrowly targeted sting operation, a 15-year-old girl called the [Charleroi](#), PA Regional Police in April 2014 to report that a man she had been communicating with through Facebook offered her \$500 for sex. The girl showed police numerous texts and Facebook messages allegedly sent to her by the man, and in response surveillance was established at the location of the arranged meeting. He was arrested when he arrived and took steps toward completing the crime. In a similar case, [Putnam County](#), FL, Sheriff’s Deputies arrested a man in March 2018, who had solicited sex from an undercover detective via Facebook Messenger.

Evidence of Effectiveness

In addition to the direct evidence of web-based reverse stings having positive outcomes, there are three additional kinds of evidence all reflecting favourably on the tactic:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that behavior in the future, and were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are consequences following arrest, such as jail time, being listed on a sex offender registry, and the public disclosure of their arrest. Such responses were made more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Terre Gables, “Metro Attorney Arrested for Offering to Pay \$400 for Sex with Child,” *KFOR*, March 3, 2023, <https://kfor.com/news/local/metro-attorney-arrested-for-offering-to-pay-400-for-sex-with-child/>; News9, “Okla. Attorney Arrested after Operation to Catch Him Attempting to Meet with 5-year-old,” *News9*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.news9.com/story/640286ae10e61e759ec09243/okla-attorney-arrested-after-operation-to-catch-him-attempting-to-meet-with-5-year-old>.

¹⁵⁹ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sex-buyersEnglish-11-8-2022pdf.pdf>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20->

2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence¹⁶⁰ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest** – especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities, which is something sex buyers clearly seek to avoid.
3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement about sex buyer statements are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on general and specific deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending**.¹⁶¹

Collectively, the evidence supports the view that arresting and sanctioning sex buyers is likely to deter reoffending and advance “general deterrence” in which awareness of the risk of sanctions can deter crime in the general population – and not just among those arrested and punished.¹⁶²

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Web-based Stings](#)” have occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Web Stings” from the “Tactics” list. The U.S. locations where these operations occurred may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Web-based Stings” from the list.

[%20CAASE.pdf](#); Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

¹⁶⁰ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/> (accessed February 28, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

¹⁶¹ Thomas A. Loughran, Ray Paternoster, and Douglas B. Weiss, “Chapter 4: Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex R. Piquero (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 50-74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4> (accessed March 2, 2023); Raymond Paternoster, “Chapter 3: Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 81-106, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351112710>, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster> (accessed March 2, 2023); Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 7: Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers, 6 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

¹⁶² Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “General Deterrence: A Review of Recent Evidence,” in *Crime and Public Policy*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (2011), 411-436; Anthony A. Braga and David L. Weisburd, “The effects of focused deterrence strategies on crime: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical evidence,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2012): 323-358, [doi:10.1177/0022427811419368](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811419368).

Chapter 4: Other Sex Buyer Arrests

Overview

Most arrests of sex buyers are the result of “[Reverse Sting](#)” operations using fictional online ads or undercover police posing as prostituted persons. However, sex buyers may also be arrested as the result of investigations or enforcement actions in response to offenses against real victims. In more than **880** U.S. cities and counties, arrests for soliciting prostituted persons have occurred on an ad hoc or opportunistic basis, such as when police witness suspicious activity or disturbances and then learn that the people are engaged in prostitution. For Demand Forum, the creation of this category of tactic, which we have called “[Other Sex Buyer Arrests](#),” was intended to acknowledge and document events in which police decide to arrest those buying sex, rather than just ignoring their role as the funding source and driving force for all prostitution and sex trafficking.

Specific programs, techniques, or criminal codes are not needed for sex buyers to be arrested without using evidence of their culpability produced from reverse stings. This category within our typology captures a wide range of circumstances and methods for arresting sex buyers that are not dependent upon proactive sting operations. As we documented Other Sex Buyer Arrests in hundreds of U.S. cities and counties, patterns became evident. Types of scenarios in which sex buyers have been arrested without police having conducted reverse stings include:

- investigations of sex trafficking, child sexual abuse
- investigations of other crimes (e.g., rape, robbery, drug trafficking)
- investigations of suspicious activity or sexual conduct in public view
- investigations of reports of disturbances
- traffic stops
- brothel raids

When reverse stings have not been conducted, arresting and sanctioning sex buyers is dependent upon the awareness and will of police and prosecutors to pursue prostitution solicitation charges when that crime is encountered during their other work. Although progress has been made toward equity, it is still not uncommon for investigators pursuing prostitution and sex trafficking cases to encounter sex buyers in brothels or clubs and interview them to corroborate the allegations of commercial sex and then simply let them go, while they arrest and prosecute brothel managers, sex traffickers, as well as prostituted or sex trafficked women.¹⁶³

By capturing information concerning hundreds of instances in which police decided to enforce prostitution laws against purchasing sex while pursuing other crimes, we hope to provide practitioners with evidence that it is possible to do so and to document the range of circumstances in which it can be done. Our research

¹⁶³ Carl Hamilton, “Woman Linked to Elkton Road Spa Charged with Sex Trafficking,” *Newark Post*, December 18, 2020, https://www.newarkpostonline.com/news/woman-linked-to-elkton-road-spa-charged-with-sex-trafficking/article_01c629b5-ae77-5c0f-b408-263739f1ae20.html; Tom Fitzgerald, “Former Montgomery County State’s Attorney’s Office Employee Found to be Customer in Rockville Massage Parlor Bust: Report,” *Fox 5 Washington DC*, August 12, 2019, <https://www.fox5dc.com/news/former-montgomery-county-states-attorneys-office-employee-found-to-be-customer-in-rockville-massage-parlor-bust-report>.

also found that the same sanctions and post-arrest programs applied to buyers arrested in stings can be, and often are, applied to sex buyers arrested by other means.

Circumstances of Other Sex Buyer Arrests

This category of tactic is best illustrated with examples. To illustrate the application of post-arrest programs and sanctions that have also been used for those that have been arrested, we begin by providing a few examples of each of the major categories of other investigations introduced above. We then offer a set of additional examples that demonstrate the variability of situations and methods that are used to arrest sex buyers, the range of criminal charges by which buyers are arrested and prosecuted, and the geographic breadth and prevalence of the use of this tactic.

Investigating Sex Trafficking, Child Sexual Abuse

In January 2023, the [Chautauqua County](#), NY, Sheriff's Office collaborated with Homeland Security Investigations on an investigation that led to a man being arrested and charged with transportation of a minor with intent to engage in criminal sexual activity and sex trafficking of a minor. The Chautauqua County Sheriff's Office had received a complaint that the suspect had been sexually abusing two children over the prior eight years. A subsequent investigation identified a total of four minor victims. During interviews with investigators, the victims stated that the man raped or attempted to rape and sexually abused them. The suspect threatened them with violence or threatened to hurt their families if they disclosed what he was doing. The complaint also stated that the man had regular sexually abusive contact with one minor victim beginning when she was eight years old, as often as three to four times each week. That victim also told investigators that the man started paying her in exchange for sexual abuse, beginning when she was 13 years old until age 16 years old. On one occasion, the man took her to Erie, PA, to pick up drugs. Before returning home, the man stopped at a motel to repeatedly rape and physically abuse her.

A 46-year-old [Scottsbluff](#), NE, man was accused of asking a 17-year-old girl to send him nude photos in exchange for money in August 2021. The man was charged with sex trafficking of a minor, a Class IB felony; possession of child pornography, a Class IIA felony; and attempted incest, a Class IIA felony. Scottsbluff Police were contacted in December 2020 by a local counselor who had a 17-year-old client who had reported messages that were sexual in nature involving the suspect. The teen said a man on Facebook had asked her for nude photos in return for money. The girl admitted to sending photos, though she had covered her "private parts." The girl said she questioned the man's identity, believing she had determined the man to be a family member due to their conversation. Police had previously investigated reports involving the man making sexual comments to the girl. The girl then messaged the man's actual account, and he sent the girl sexual comments. Police obtained a search warrant and were able to tie both accounts to the suspect's cell phone. A search of his account also showed multiple screenshots of a nude female with digital markings over portions of her body to conceal them. A warrant for the man's arrest was issued, he was arrested, and then arraigned in Scotts Bluff County Court.¹⁶⁴

In April 2021, law enforcement officials arrested a man in [Belton](#), TX, after he tried to pay money to sexually abuse a child, solicit sexually explicit images from two underage girls, and subsequently sent

¹⁶⁴ Maunette Loeks, "Scottsbluff Man Charged with Sex Trafficking, Other Counts," *Star Herald*, August 13, 2021, https://starherald.com/news/local/scottsbluff-man-charged-with-sex-trafficking-other-counts/article_f4274bdf-e1b7-54a7-bcfa-f31759e5daa8.html.

“child pornography” (child sexual abuse materials, or CSAM) to their mother. The children’s mother reported that the man with whom she had a relationship with in 2015, started sending her messages on Facebook with sexually explicit requests involving her and her daughters. He sent a message soliciting oral sex from one of the daughters in exchange for money, then sent a message containing CSAM, the affidavit stated. The mother reported the first incidents to the Belton Police Department, and the message containing CSAM triggered a National Center for Missing and Exploited Children cyber tip that identified the man as the person who sent the image, according to the document. The man was arrested on a second-degree felony charge of prostitution of a minor and a second-degree felony charge of possession of “child pornography.”¹⁶⁵

Investigating Other Violent Crimes (e.g., Rape, Robbery, Drug Trafficking, Assault, Homicide)

Police in Long Island, NY, arrested the man they believed was responsible for murdering a 39-year-old mother he met online for paid sex on Valentine’s Day and then dumping her body next to a dumpster behind an auto parts store in March 2023. [Nassau County](#) police said the pair met through a “dark web” site where users exchange money for sex. The woman was known to police for struggling with drug addiction and was resorting to prostitution to support herself and her children. In the early hours of Valentine’s Day, police said the man picked up the victim in his car and parked behind a business in Mineola when an argument broke out. The man made demands regarding purchasing sex when she objected and wanted more money. The man didn’t have enough money and then became violent. Police alleged that the man strangled the victim, then drove to dump her body behind an auto parts store in South Hempstead, and there dumped her nude body. Afterward, the man went about his daily routine, going home and then to work. Detectives used surveillance cameras and license plate readers to identify the vehicle, the registered owner (the homicide suspect) and his address, eventually arresting him. Police continued by investigating his online history to determine whether he had attacked other women he’d met online.¹⁶⁶

In January 2023, a male sex buyer was arrested on charges stemming from allegedly raping a prostituting woman at gunpoint and beating her with a second weapon in [East Hartford, CT](#). After the assault, the woman walked to the nearest hotel on East River Drive and reported the incident to East Hartford police. Responding police reported that the woman had been bleeding from a large cut on her forehead and was taken to Hartford Hospital. The victim told police she had been trying to “make some money” on Wethersfield Avenue in Hartford when a man in a vehicle approached her. She got in his car to discuss the price of sex acts, and he then drove her to East Hartford and stopped on East River Drive to complete the transaction. She said the man instead raped her at gunpoint and beat her all over her body with a baton. In a subsequent interview at the East Hartford police station, the alleged offender acknowledged to police that the woman in the incident had agreed to have sex with him for money. The man was charged with aggravated first-degree sexual assault, second-degree assault, and brandishing a facsimile firearm.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Amaris E. Rodriguez, “McGregor Man Arrested on Child Prostitution, Child Pornography Charges,” [wacotrib.com](https://wacotrib.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/mcgregor-man-arrested-on-child-prostitution-child-pornography-charges/article_43e38c74-9d70-11eb-964b-5771c533a168.html), April 14, 2021, https://wacotrib.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/mcgregor-man-arrested-on-child-prostitution-child-pornography-charges/article_43e38c74-9d70-11eb-964b-5771c533a168.html.

¹⁶⁶ Melissa Colorado, “Suspect Killed Woman He Met Online, Left Body Next to Dumpster on Valentine’s Day,” *4 NBC New York*, March 3, 2023, <https://www.nbcnewyork.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/suspect-killed-woman-he-met-online-left-body-next-to-dumpster-on-valentines-day-cops/4134674/>

¹⁶⁷ Jesse Leavenworth, “Warrant: Hartford Man Seeking ‘Revenge’ on Wife Sexually Assaulted and Beat Prostitute at Gunpoint,” *Shelton Herald*, February 22, 2023, <https://www.sheltonherald.com/news/article/east-hartford-sexual-assault-east-river-drive-17796952.php>.

A man arrested in April 2022 faced felony charges after police alleged that he forced a prostituted woman to perform a sexual act and then robbed her at an [Allegheny Township, PA](#), motel.¹⁶⁸ The man had responded to the woman’s online ad, and she agreed to have sex with him for \$80. They met at the motel, had sex, and he paid her \$50 and with crack cocaine. They met again the next day for another transaction, and the man held a knife against the woman forcing her to perform oral sex on him. The man then stole her money and left. The woman called 911 just after the man drove away and gave police a description of what he was wearing as well as the license plate number of his car. When police found the man in the vehicle she had described, he had exactly the amount of money in his possession that the woman reported stolen. Police also found the discarded knife the offender had used to threaten the victim. The man was charged with felony robbery and involuntary deviant sexual intercourse by forcible compulsion, as well as misdemeanor counts of theft, receiving stolen property, and patronizing a prostituted person.

Investigating Suspicious Activity

A 21-year-old man was arrested¹⁶⁹ on a prostitution charge after a police officer approached a vehicle parked at a gas station in [North Conway](#), NH, in February 2019. A Conway police officer was on patrol in North Conway and approached the car because the circumstances seemed suspicious. Police said the woman was behind the wheel of a car, and the man was in the passenger seat. An investigation determined their identities and that the pair had previously arranged online to meet and exchange money for sex. The woman in the car was charged with two counts of prostitution and several other charges. The man was arrested for soliciting prostitution, and his identity was publicly disclosed.

In February 2018, police in [Ansonia](#), CT, stopped two men who were leaving a home on Beverly Drive that was being investigated for prostitution activity and other potential crimes in response to numerous complaints to police about suspicious activity. The men were both charged with “patronizing a prostitute” and were released on \$500 bond pending a subsequent appearance in Derby Superior Court. In March 2018, police again responded to complaints about the same residence and arrested another sex buyer.

Three people were arrested in [Atlantic Beach](#), SC, in March 2014, after police were called to a hotel to check on a man lying naked in a truck. According to a Horry County Police report, two men at the hotel on South Highway 17 in the Atlantic Beach area had paid \$40 each to have sex with a woman in a truck. Police arrested all three people involved, and each was charged with one count of prostitution.

Investigating Disturbances

Officials with the [Jefferson Parish](#) LA Sheriff’s Office arrested a man in December 2022 after he had been shot in the neck following his attempt to rob a prostituted woman he met at a motel in Harvey. Police had responded to a disturbance that appeared to involve violence and a potential firearm discharge. The responding officer determined that the sex buyer had arrived to meet a 21-year-old woman at the Travelodge motel at the 2200 block of Westbank Expressway in Harvey for purposes of prostitution. When he arrived at the motel, the woman was in the room, as expected, but there was also a 26-year-old man hiding in the

¹⁶⁸ Greg Bock, “Hollidaysburg Man Charged: Woodson Accused of Patronizing a Prostitute, Robbery,” *Altoona Mirror*, April 1, 2020, <https://www.altoonamirror.com/news/local-news/2020/04/hollidaysburg-man-charged>.

¹⁶⁹ Daymond Steer, “Vehicle Stop Leads to Prostitution Arrest,” *The Conway Daily Sun*, May 1, 2019, https://www.conwaydailysun.com/news/local/vehicle-stop-leads-to-prostitution-arrests/article_a6d707c4-6c31-11e9-b310-dbe702b5c7b0.html.

bathroom of which he was unaware. When the sex buyer arrived, he allegedly pulled out a gun, demanded the woman's belongings, and forced her into the bathroom at gunpoint. At that point, the unidentified man in the bathroom, who was also armed with a gun, confronted the sex buyer and shot him in the neck. The sex buyer was arrested and charged upon his release from the hospital.¹⁷⁰

Police were called to a room at a hotel in [Beachwood](#), OH, in November 2020, where a man and woman were reportedly creating a disturbance. They were still physically fighting when officers arrived. Police determined that the pair had met in the room to complete a prostitution transaction when a disagreement led to the altercation. Both were arrested and charged with assault. The woman was also charged with prostitution and the man was charged with soliciting prostitution.¹⁷¹

Brothel Raids

Enforcement actions targeting establishments serving as brothels have been conducted in the U.S. for over 100 years, dating back to at least the 1880s.¹⁷² Most individuals arrested as a result of these actions have been either running the illicit businesses or the prostituted women and sex trafficked girls serving as the brothel's commodities.¹⁷³ Occasionally, however, sex buyers have been arrested during these operations. For example, in 1959, the Mayor of [Aberdeen](#), WA, ordered a raid on the largest brothel in the city, resulting in the arrest of 18 male sex buyers and five prostituted women.¹⁷⁴ The operation was conducted as the result of citizen complaints to the City Council. It was also reportedly responsive to accusations of pervasive corruption between politicians, police officers, and brothel owners. According to local news reports, police officers and politicians were allegedly bribed by brothel owners to remain in operation. The citizens' committee signed an anti-prostitution petition demanding the closing of Aberdeen's largest brothels. The

¹⁷⁰ Kenny Kuhn, "Report: Man Shot in the Neck Attempting to Rob a Sex Worker in a Harvey Motel," *4WWL*, December 6, 2022, <https://www.wwtv.com/article/news/local/man-shot-in-the-neck-attempting-to-rob-a-prostitute-in-a-harvey-motel/289-101bb8cc-e4eb-493f-be9f-34225a3e37f8>; Michelle Hunter, "Man Who Tried to Rob Sex Worker Shot When Holdup Goes Awry, JPSO says," *Nola.com*, December 5, 2022, https://www.nola.com/news/crime_police/man-shot-harvey-hotel-robbery-sex-worker-jpso/article_59beb922-74d0-11ed-aad4-03072e48a387.html.

¹⁷¹ Jeff Piorkowski, "Couple Assault Each Other at Hotel; Charged with Prostitution, Soliciting: Beachwood Police Blotter," *Cleveland.com*, December 3, 2020, <https://www.cleveland.com/community/2020/12/man-woman-charged-at-hotel-for-assaulting-each-other-prostitution-soliciting-beachwood-police-blotter.html>.

¹⁷² John Putman, "The Historic Gaslamp Quarter and Stingaree," *Perspectives on History* 47, no. 8 (2009) <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/november-2009/the-historic-gaslamp-quarter-and-stingaree>; Joel Best, "Careers in Brothel Prostitution: St. Paul, 1865-1883," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 12, no. 2 (1982): 597-619, [doi:10.2307/203547](https://doi.org/10.2307/203547); Neil Larry Shumsky and Larry M. Springer, "San Francisco's Zone of Prostitution, 1880-1934," *Journal of Historical Geography* 7, no. 1 (1981): 71-89, [doi:10.1016/0305-7488\(81\)90085-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0305-7488(81)90085-2); Mary Lang, "San Diego Prostitutes after the Stingaree Shut Down," *San Diego Reader*, July 15, 1993, <https://www.sandiegoreader.com/news/1993/jul/15/feature-prostitution/>.

¹⁷³ Joe Donlon, "Inside a Brothel Raid with the Cook County Sheriff's Police, and Their Efforts to Help Sex Trafficking Victims," *CBS Chicago*, August 30, 2022, <https://www.cbsnews.com/chicago/news/inside-a-brothel-raid-with-the-cook-county-sheriffs-police-and-their-efforts-to-help-sex-trafficking-victims/>.

¹⁷⁴ The Daily Olympian, "Vice Raid Ires Aberdeenites," *The Daily Olympian*, February 5, 1959, https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/The_Daily_Olympian_1959_Vice-Raid-Ires-Aberdeenites.jpg; Longview Daily News, "Prosecutor Asks Closure of Aberdeen Vice Location," *Longview Daily News*, March 19, 1959, https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Longview_Daily_News_1959_Prosecutor-asks-closure-of-Aberdeen-vice-location-scaled.jpg.

petition was successful, and after the raid, the building was ordered to close for all activities for at least six months.

In April 1986, the [Beaver Falls, PA](#), Police Department investigated what officers believed was a “sex club,” operating above a local restaurant.¹⁷⁵ According to reports, police initiated the investigation after an increase in residential reports to the station regarding suspected prostitution activity occurring at the club. Beaver Falls Police officers conducted a raid at the establishment that resulted in the arrest of 25 male sex buyers charged with patronizing prostitution. Police photographed the arrested men and the devices they were using as evidence. The Beaver Falls Mayor at the time commended the BPD and the officers assisting in the raid for doing “a fine job in getting rid of what was a real cancer in our city.”

Traffic Stops

A man confessed to paying a woman for sex after being pulled over by a police officer for speeding through downtown [Brownsville](#), TX, in October 2022.¹⁷⁶ The Brownsville Police Department alleged that the man was seen on a downtown surveillance camera picking up a woman at the 900 block of East Washington Street and that his vehicle then traveled toward Palm Boulevard prior to the traffic stop. During the traffic stop, police said the man confessed to picking up the woman to take her to his residence to pay her in exchange for sex and that the incident was not the first time he picked up the same woman for paid sex. The man was arrested and charged for solicitation of prostitution, and the woman for prostitution.

A motor vehicle stop was made in June 2018, in [Norwalk](#), CT, after local police patrolling the area of South Main Street observed a man known to them as having a suspended license driving toward them.¹⁷⁷ The driver had been arrested multiple times and had contact with police just three weeks earlier. The man had two passengers—a male and a female—in the car. When officers stopped the car, police said the man in the back seat attempted to flee but was detained. An investigation determined there was probable cause supporting charges of the male passenger soliciting prostitution and the female passenger offering prostitution. All three occupants of the vehicle were arrested, the passengers on prostitution charges, and the driver on charges of driving with a suspended license and drug possession.

Additional Examples

Below are brief descriptions of additional cases that we are providing to illustrate the range of circumstances under which sex buyers have been arrested, the charges they faced, and the geographic scope and prevalence of the application of this type of tactic. The examples are from the past decade, from 2013 to 2023, and are listed in reverse chronological order.

¹⁷⁵ Grace Rishell, “Beaver Falls Raid Nets 26 Arrests, Sexual Devices,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 7, 1986, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1129&dat=19860407&id=LYNIAAAAIBAJ&sjid=RW4DAAAIBAJ&pg=6841.1803194>; Beaver County Times, “Beaver Falls Commends Police,” *Beaver County Times*, April 9, 1986, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=2002&dat=19860409&id=nmEuAAAIBAJ&sjid=BNofAAAIBAJ&pg=4785.1630756>; Grace Rishell, “Sex Club Charges Dropped,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 7, 1987, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1129&dat=19870107&id=S89RAAAAIBAJ&sjid=9m0DAAAIBAJ&pg=2463.994020>.

¹⁷⁶ Alejandra Yanez, “BPD: Driver, Prostitute Arrested in Traffic Stop,” *ValleyCentral.com*, October 10, 2022, <https://www.valleycentral.com/news/local-news/bpd-driver-prostitute-arrested-in-traffic-stop/>.

¹⁷⁷ Leslie Lake, “Car Stop Leads to Prostitution Charges,” *The Hour.com*, June 4, 2018, <https://www.thehour.com/news/article/Car-stop-leads-to-prostitution-charges-12966220.php>.

Gainesville, FL

In March 2023, a man was arrested and charged with attempted sexual battery, felony battery, soliciting prostitution, and drug possession after allegedly trying to pay a homeless woman for oral sex and then assaulting her. A Gainesville Police Department officer was flagged down by a woman walking down the road at Butler Plaza; the woman reportedly had blood covering her face and running down her neck. The officer called an ambulance and later reported that the woman had a broken nose and had lost a tooth. The woman told police that after her boyfriend entered a store, the sex buyer asked her if she wanted to make some money and offered to pay her for oral sex. She said he was very persistent and offered her \$400, but she continually refused. She said he then pulled his pants down while she was sitting on a bench and put his penis in her face, so she got up and told him to leave her alone. He then punched her in the face. The man's identity was included in news reports.¹⁷⁸

Winneconne, WI

In October 2022, a local high school teacher was arrested and charged with child enticement for messages he shared with students he knew from working at Winneconne High School. The man faced charges in Winnebago County for child enticement-prostitution, soliciting intimate representation from a minor, exposing a child to harmful material, and disorderly conduct.¹⁷⁹ The Winneconne Police Department arrested him. School administrators announced they had placed the man on administrative leave soon after the allegations surfaced.¹⁸⁰ Two days before, the Winneconne High School principal contacted Winneconne police to discuss screenshots of Snapchat messages sent by the man to a 16-year-old high school student, according to a criminal complaint. The girl had shared five screenshots with the principal. The pictures showed a shirtless man, whom officers identified as the suspect, each with sexually suggestive captions. The student told the principal that the man had sent the Snapchat images directly to her over the summer. Two other teens reported similar Snapchat messages from the man, including one asking her for sex and offering to pay her \$40 to come to his residence. The man asked one girl to send a photo of her chest, and he sent her a picture of a penis. When apprehended by police, the man admitted to inviting each of the three students to come to his apartment and sending the nude photo while knowing that all three girls were under 18.

Nanticoke, PA

A man was arrested in January 2022 charged for sending nude pictures of himself and soliciting paid sexual abuse of a child. He was convicted and sentenced in Luzerne County Court. Newport Township police and

¹⁷⁸ Jennifer Cabrera, "Gainesville Man Arrested for Felony Battery, Attempted Sexual Battery, and Soliciting Prostitution," *Alachua Chronicle*, March 5, 2023, <https://alachuachronicle.com/gainesville-man-arrested-for-felony-battery-attempted-sexual-battery-and-soliciting-prostitution/>.

¹⁷⁹ Alice Reid, "Kimberly Teacher Accused of Sending Sexual Snapchat Messages to Teen Students," *NBC 26*, October 7, 2022, <https://www.nbc26.com/news/local-news/kimberly-teacher-accused-of-sending-sexual-snapchat-messages-to-teen-students>; Devin Willems, "Ex-Winneconne High School Teacher Accused of Sending Inappropriate Snapchats to Students," *WeAreGreenBay*, October 6, 2022, <https://www.wearegreenbay.com/news/local-news/former-winneconne-high-school-teacher-accused-of-sending-inappropriate-snapchats-to-students>.

¹⁸⁰ AnnMarie Hilton, "Kimberly High School Teacher Placed on Leave after Allegations of Inappropriate Conduct at Another School District," *Appleton Post-Crescent*, September 30, 2022, <https://www.postcrescent.com/story/news/education/2022/09/30/kimberly-teacher-leave-after-misconduct-alleged-another-district/8138181001>.

Luzerne County detectives arrested the man at his home in Nanticoke after an investigation revealed he had been having “inappropriate contact” with a minor female. The man was aware he was twice the girl’s age and that she was a minor. Still, he sent her multiple sexually explicit images of himself. He offered the girl cash and gifts in exchange for nude photos of herself and for being allowed to sexually assault her. The man was later convicted on charges of criminal solicitation to commit statutory sexual assault, corruption of minors, and possessing “child pornography” (i.e., the term often used in criminal laws for child sexual abuse materials or CSAM).¹⁸¹

Arcadia, FL

Police arrested an Arcadia man in August 2021 who was accused of following a girl under 16 years of age and offering to give her money in exchange for sexual acts. The victim told officers with the Arcadia Police Department that the suspect followed her for about half a mile while making sexual advances and offering her money. The suspect was not at the scene when police arrived, but he was found the next day and admitted to the crimes, police said. Officers arrested him, and he was later charged with “force/compel/coerce another to become a prostitute,” “contributing to the delinquency or dependency of a child,” and “stalking a minor.” He was held without bond at the DeSoto County Jail.¹⁸²

Stearns County, MN

In August 2021, a Glenwood man was charged with three felonies in Stearns County after allegedly soliciting a minor for paid sexual abuse and possessing child sexual abuse materials. According to the criminal complaint, police were called to a home in Avon for a welfare check after the foster parent of a 13-year-old girl said she discovered troubling conversations with adult men on several different phone applications. In one conversation, the girl said she met up with a man she met on a chat app and agreed to perform sex acts with him in exchange for \$90. Investigators identified and located several adult men who had solicited the teen for sex. A Central Minnesota Human Trafficking Task Force member allegedly found a conversation between the girl and someone on the TextMe app. Investigators then tracked the phone’s IP address and subscriber information registered to a 22-year-old man, who the girl had told that she was 15 before he agreed to exchange drugs for sex and asked for nude pictures in exchange for marijuana. The man was charged with possession of child pornography (i.e., CSAM), solicitation of a child to engage in sexual conduct and prostitution.¹⁸³

Ooltewah, TN

A man was arrested and charged with aggravated rape in July 2021 after he allegedly picked up a prostituted woman in downtown Chattanooga, then took her to his home in Ooltewah and told her she was going to be his “sex slave.” The man was charged with aggravated kidnapping, two counts of rape, aggravated assault, patronizing prostitution, and possession of drugs without a prescription. The woman said he held her captive

¹⁸¹ Ed Lewis, “Nanticoke Man Sentenced for Soliciting Minor for Sex,” *Times Leader*, October 7, 2022, <https://www.timesleader.com/news/1578293/nanticoke-man-sentenced-for-soliciting-minor-for-sex>.

¹⁸² Derrick Shaw, “Arcadia Man Accused of Soliciting Underage Girl for Sex,” *Wink News*, August 9, 2021, <https://www.winknews.com/2021/08/09/arcadia-man-accused-of-soliciting-underage-girl-for-sex>; Erin O’Brien, “Arcadia Man Arrested for Stalking, Soliciting Underage Girl,” *NBC 2*, August 10, 2021, <https://nbc-2.com/news/2021/08/09/arcadia-man-stalked-underage-girl-offered-her-money-for-sex-police-say>.

¹⁸³ Jennifer Lewerenz, “Glenwood Man Charged for Allegedly Possessing Child Pornography and Soliciting a Teen Girl for Sex,” *KNSI*, August 17, 2021, <https://knsiradio.com/2021/08/17/glenwood-man-charged-for-possession-of-child-pornography-and-soliciting-a-teen-girl-for-sex>.

for 18 hours and that he drugged her and violently raped her repeatedly until she could finally get away. A mail carrier spotted her leaving the residence, and he took her to a nearby church, where she called the Sheriff's Office. The woman was taken to a hospital and was found to have suffered numerous physical injuries. Detectives corroborated details of the woman's version of the events after getting a search warrant and entering the suspect's residence.¹⁸⁴

Lawrence, MA

In July 2021, a man was arrested for raping young girls and coercing them to allow his sexual abuse in exchange for food, shelter, alcohol, and drugs. The 49-year-old man was charged with 19 criminal counts, including rape, aggravated rape, human trafficking, involuntary manslaughter, and providing illegal drugs. His purported victims include three women and seven minor girls. He was held without bail at Middleton jail. A mechanic and drug dealer, the man preyed on vulnerable young girls, giving them alcohol, drugs, gifts, and food, raping them, demanding nude photos, and more. On May 20, 2019, a 13-year-old girl spent time at his Bellevue St. apartment and that night, the offender and another girl dumped the victim's body at Lawrence General Hospital and left. The girl was pronounced dead, and an autopsy listed the cause of her death as acute intoxication from a combination of fentanyl, cocaine, and other drugs.¹⁸⁵

Council Bluffs, IA

In July 2021, a Council Bluffs restaurant owner was convicted of federal sex trafficking charges for paying to sexually abuse minors. The 71-year-old man was found guilty of four counts of sex trafficking minors, two counts of sex trafficking adults, and two counts of distributing a controlled substance to a person under 21. He was convicted after a four-day trial. Over the prior ten years, the offender had exchanged money, drugs, and other material goods with minor girls in exchange for acts of sexual abuse at his house. He had also provided access for friends to sexually assault adult women using force and coercion. The Council Bluffs Police Department conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Chattanooga, "Ooltewah Man Charged With Rape, Kidnapping Of Prostitute He Allegedly Made His 'Sex Slave'; Had Similar Incident In 2012," *Chattanooga*, July 27, 2021,

<https://www.chattanooga.com/2021/7/26/431884/Ooltewah-Man-Charged-With-Rape.aspx>; WRCB Staff, "Ooltewah Man Charged with Aggravated Rape and Kidnapping," *Local3News*, February 15, 2022, https://www.local3news.com/ooltewah-man-charged-with-aggravated-rape-and-kidnapping/article_40ada619-4e0d-5e3f-b407-927be7d3d46a.html.

¹⁸⁵ Jill Harmacinski, "Rape, Manslaughter, Human Trafficking Case Drags On," *The Daily News*, August 30, 2021, https://www.newburyportnews.com/news/local_news/rape-manslaughter-human-trafficking-case-drags-on/article_d6abec2e-b4c4-57bc-bb4a-4dbe3c80e627.html; Alberto Luperon, "Massachusetts Man Pleads Guilty to Raping 13-Year-Old Girl, Giving Her Drugs that Killed Her," *LawandCrime.com*, February 13, 2022, <https://lawandcrime.com/crime/massachusetts-man-pleads-guilty-to-rape-13-year-old-girl-giving-her-drugs-that-killed-her/>.

¹⁸⁶ Ryan Matheny, "CB Restaurant Owner Convicted of Sex Trafficking Minors, Adults," *KMA Land*, July 23, 2021, https://www.kmaland.com/news/cb-restaurant-owner-convicted-of-sex-trafficking-minors-adults/article_ef333566-ebfe-11eb-ba06-c7aed822e35a.html; KETV Omaha, "Council Bluffs Businessman Sentenced to 30 Years for Sex Trafficking," *ABC 7 KETV*, December 21, 2021, <https://www.ketv.com/article/council-bluffs-businessman-convicted-of-sex-trafficking/37117011>; Andrea May Sahouri, "Council Bluffs Restaurant Owner Found Guilty of Sex Trafficking Minors, Adults," *Des Moines Register*, July 23, 2021, <https://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/crime-and-courts/2021/07/23/council-bluffs-iowa-jimmys-all-american-malt-shop-owner-found-guilty-sex-trafficking-minors-drugs/8076538002>.

Oneida County, WI

An Oneida County corrections officer (CO) was charged in January 2021 with soliciting prostituted women and misconduct in office. He allegedly traded information about drug investigations for sex from an incarcerated woman drug dealer. He was arrested in January by the Department of Justice–Division of Criminal Investigations and Oneida County investigators. The filed criminal complaint stated that in January 2018, an inmate told a corrections sergeant that the CO agreed to give her information about a drug task force in exchange for sex. The criminal complaint showed that the CO had previous sexual contact with women who had been incarcerated. The Oneida County Circuit Judge agreed to amend the solicitation charge to a misdemeanor count of lewd and lascivious behavior and dismiss the misconduct charge as part of a plea agreement. After reaching a plea deal with prosecutors, the offender was ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine and thus avoided prison time.¹⁸⁷

Butte, MT

A Butte man was arrested after police responded to a disturbance call and possible sexual assault in December 2020. He was held on \$75,000 bond in the Butte jail for suspected felony sexual assault and felony patronizing prostitution. According to justice court documents, the man allegedly subjected a 15-year-old female to sexual contact with a 13-year-old female while both were in his vehicle. He also attempted to convince the 15-year-old to allow him to sexually abuse her in exchange for money and drugs. Both alleged offenses occurred in Butte-Silver Bow County. Felony sexual assault is punishable by a term of not less than four years or more than 100 years. The mandatory minimum sentence for felony-level patronizing prostitution is 25 years without parole.¹⁸⁸

Kennesaw, GA

In June 2020, a local man was arrested in Kennesaw in response to allegations that he had used Snapchat to solicit teenage girls for paid sexual abuse. The man allegedly used the social media app to offer girls

¹⁸⁷ Karen Madden, “Oneida County Corrections Officer Faces Charges after Prosecutors say He Traded Information for Sexual Favors,” *Wausau Daily Herald*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.wausaudailyherald.com/story/news/crime/2021/01/15/oneida-county-corrections-officer-traded-information-sex-records-say/4165242001>; Sierra Rehm, “UPDATE: Oneida Co. correctional officer accused of soliciting prostitution out on bond,” *ABC 9 WAOW*, January 12, 2021, https://www.waow.com/archive/update-oneida-co-correctional-officer-accused-of-soliciting-prostitution-out-on-bond/article_6ca2d5a8-31b9-56e8-a88f-8d5931b74e66.html; Shereen Siewert, “Former Oneida Co. Corrections Officer Convicted of Lesser Charge in Plea Deal,” *Wausau Pilot & Review*, June 21, 2021, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2021/06/21/former-oneida-co-corrections-officer-convicted-of-lesser-charge-in-plea-deal>; Tomahawk Leader, “Oneida County Corrections Officer Charged with Solicitation of Prostitution, Misconduct in Office,” *Tomahawk Leader*, January 14, 2021, <https://tomahawkleader.com/2021/01/14/oneida-county-corrections-officer-charged-with-solicitation-of-prostitution-misconduct-in-office>.

¹⁸⁸ Hunter Pauli, “Butte Man Arrested for Sexual Assault, Purchasing Prostitution,” *Montana Standard*, June 14, 2017, https://mtstandard.com/crime-and-courts/blotter/butte-man-arrested-for-sexual-assault-purchasing-prostitution/article_3ed7a10a-fec3-522d-92d9-dc06a31c1957.html; Hunter Pauli, “Montana Man Arrested on Suspicion of Sexual Assault and Purchasing Prostitution,” *Billings Gazette*, April 24, 2017, https://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/montana-man-arrested-on-suspicion-of-sexual-assault-and-purchasing/article_94b29c0e-50de-5781-b7ae-0cf54a12aae3.html; Tracy Thornton, “Butte Man Jailed for Suspected Felony Sex Crimes,” *Montana Standard*, December 16, 2020, https://mtstandard.com/news/local/butte-man-jailed-for-suspected-felony-sex-crimes/article_7d93bfdd-f019-5012-9b69-f83ebe88b931.html; Hunter Pauli, “Montana Man Arrested for Sexual assault and Purchasing Prostitution,” *AP News*, April 24, 2017, <https://apnews.com/article/arrests-montana-sexual-assault-butte-41a032a7071647099826c771f08ac65a>.

ages 13 to 19 money for various sex acts. The investigation began when a 14-year-old girl reported the messages she had received to a children’s advocacy group. The suspect had given the teenagers his cell phone number, and investigators were able to locate him through his IP address. His cell phone records were then searched, and it was found that multiple underage girls had been offered money in exchange for sex, sexual photos, and/or videos. The suspect was arrested at his Kennesaw home. He was charged with 12 counts of sex trafficking, two counts of computer pornography, and sexual exploitation of a child.¹⁸⁹

Eau Claire, WI

In July 2019, an investigation into prostitution at a local “massage” businesses was initiated in response to community complaints. Three different premises were the focus of the investigation, and surveillance on one of these revealed that 223 sex buyers frequented the business in approximately one month. The allegations and evidence of prostitution were confirmed. One of the arrests included a man charged with “patronizing prostitutes” under Wisconsin state statute 944.31. The man’s identity was included in a police press release.¹⁹⁰

McAllen, TX

Investigators arrested a custodian at Sharyland North Junior High in April 2019 after two male students said he touched them inappropriately and offered to pay them for oral sex. A third boy witnessed the incidents. Investigators arrested the man and charged him with two counts of prostitution: soliciting a person younger than 18 years old, a second-degree felony, and one count of making a terroristic threat, a Class B misdemeanor.¹⁹¹

Honolulu, HI

In May 2016, a Kapolei High School counselor was accused of soliciting prostitution from one of his former students. The man was indicted for allegedly responding to a girl advertised online who was a runaway and a minor. At his house, the man asked the child if she recognized him, then told him who he was and showed her his school identification badge. The accusations against the teacher did not come to light until after the girl was arrested for prostitution in a separate undercover sting. Prosecutors said the victim was sent to a juvenile detention center, where she told a counselor what happened with the teacher. The counselor contacted police. Officials with the state Department of Education said the man was initially placed on paid leave pending an investigation. The man was later terminated from employment and pleaded guilty to soliciting a minor for prostitution. In a plea agreement with the prosecutor, the man was ordered to spend three months behind bars but was credited with time served and did not spend another day in jail. He was also placed on probation for five years and required to register as a sex offender, where he was prohibited from being in close contact with minors at all times and was not allowed to possess or view pornography. The court also ordered the man to write an apology to the victim and the victim’s family.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Alexis Stevens, “Police: Cobb Man Used Snapchat to Solicit Teenage Girls for Sex,” *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, June 30, 2020, <https://www.ajc.com/news/crime--law/police-cobb-man-used-snapchat-solicit-teenage-girls-for-sex/Cl0ntEmI8XUMAFhWHiwznJ/>.

¹⁹⁰ Eau Claire Police Department, “Human Trafficking Media Release,” News Release, July 17, 2019, <https://www.eauclairewi.gov/Home/ShowDocument?id=28945>.

¹⁹¹ Editor, “Police Arrest Former Sharyland ISD Custodian Accused of Soliciting Students for Sex,” *Progress Times*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.progresstimes.net/2019/04/03/police-arrest-former-sharyland-isd-custodian-accused-of-soliciting-students-for-sex>.

¹⁹² Allyson Blair, “Kapolei High Counselor Indicted for Soliciting Underage Prostitute,” *Hawaii News Now*, May 14, 2016, <https://www.hawaiinewsnow.com/story/31972127/kapolei-counselor-indicted-for-soliciting-underage->

Kansas City, MO

In 2016, the Missouri Court of Appeals unanimously upheld the conviction of a Kansas City police officer whom prosecutors said had sex with a woman in return for not arresting her for prostitution and drug charges. In April 2014, a Jackson County jury had convicted the man of corruption. He was initially charged with two counts of sexual assault and one count of deviant sexual assault, but the jury convicted him of one count of “acceding to corruption.” According to prosecutors, the man had sex with a prostituted woman in a south Kansas City motel room in the spring of 2012 in exchange for not placing her under arrest. Detectives said an area motel had hired the man as an off-duty security officer to combat drugs, violence, and prostitution. The 13-year veteran of the KCPD had been assigned to the South Patrol Division. The evidence presented at trial was sufficient to establish that the man both solicited and knowingly accepted sex from the woman in exchange for his not arresting her for prostitution. The man was sentenced to 15 days in county jail and a \$2,500 fine.¹⁹³

Phoenix, AZ

In February 2015, a former NFL player was fired from his job as an analyst for the NFL Network, headquartered in Atlanta, several days after being arrested while in Phoenix to cover that year’s Super Bowl. He was booked on one count of soliciting prostitution and two counts of assault, both misdemeanor offenses, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office. According to a statement released by the Phoenix Police Department, officers working security at a downtown Phoenix hotel were investigating a noise disturbance when they were contacted by a woman alleging she had been assaulted. The incident occurred in a guest room at the hotel where an argument ensued over money. The altercation allegedly turned physical, spilling out into the hallway. The sex buyer was arrested and then transported to Phoenix Police Headquarters, where he admitted involvement in the act of prostitution but denied assaulting the woman.¹⁹⁴

Lufkin, TX

A man was arrested and booked in Angelina County Jail in March 2013 for solicitation of prostitution as a result of civilian reports on two separate occasions within the same week. According to reports, a woman was walking her dog along the Azalea Trail (a local walking trail), when she passed a man who began following her and making sexual comments to the woman. The second instance occurred five days later when the same man ran along the trail and passed a woman, turned around and began make sexual comments to her. The woman told police that as she was running away from the offender, he offered to pay her for sex. The same offender was arrested later that same year, in July 2013, for indecent exposure after he exposed and touched himself suggestively while telling a woman to look at him doing so. The offender was sentenced to 120 days in jail. In 2014, the offender again exposed himself as he was masturbating while riding his bike in Kiwanis Park. A woman reported the incident to the Lufkin Police Department. According

[prostitute](https://www.staradvertiser.com/2016/05/04/breaking-news/kapolei-high-counselor-arrested-for-soliciting-minor-for-prostitution); Nanea Kalani, “Kapolei High Counselor Arrested for Soliciting Minor for Prostitution,” *Star Advertiser*, May 4, 2016, <https://www.staradvertiser.com/2016/05/04/breaking-news/kapolei-high-counselor-arrested-for-soliciting-minor-for-prostitution>; “Former Kapolei High Counselor Pleads Guilty for Soliciting Minor for Prostitution,” *Khon 2*, April 18, 2017, <https://www.khon2.com/local-news/former-kapolei-high-counselor-pleads-guilty-for-soliciting-minor-for-prostitution>.

¹⁹³ FOX 4 Newsroom, “Conviction Upheld for KCMO Police Officer Who had Sex with Prostitute,” *FOX 4*, April 5, 2016, <https://fox4kc.com/news/conviction-upheld-for-kcmo-police-officer-who-had-sex-with-prostitute>.

¹⁹⁴ NFL, “Sapp Fired from Job at NFL Network Following Phoenix Arrest,” *NFL News*, February 2, 2015, <https://www.nfl.com/news/sapp-fired-from-job-at-nfl-network-following-phoenix-arrest-0ap3000000467830>.

to officials, the offender was arrested and charged with public lewdness and criminal trespass. The sex offender had a criminal trespass warning against him, barring him from being in any city park after the 2013 incidents. The offender's identity, photo, age, location, and charges were released by local news sources.¹⁹⁵

Evidence of Effectiveness

There has been no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of arresting sex buyers by means other than reverse stings as a tactic to deter demand for prostitution. Nevertheless, compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a case can be made for Other Sex Buyer Arrests being an effective tactic, with three distinct kinds of evidence all reflecting favourably on the approach:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers (or "clients" of prostitution) asked what would deter them from buying in the future and were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are consequences following arrest, such as jail time, being listed on a sex offender registry, and the public disclosure of their arrest. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.¹⁹⁶
2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence¹⁹⁷ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex

¹⁹⁵ Jessica Cooley, "Lufkin Police Arrest, Charge Suspect in Azalea Trail Incident," *The Lufkin Daily News*, June 30, 2014, https://lufkindailynews.com/news/community/article_f51487a6-9323-11e2-b308-001a4bcf887a.html; Jessica Cooley, "Man Serving 90 Days for Incidents on Azalea Trail," *The Lufkin Daily News*, June 30, 2014, https://lufkindailynews.com/news/local/article_99a45c92-9685-11e2-b620-0019bb2963f4.html; Andy Adams, "Lufkin's Azalea Trail Flasher Taken to Jail after Kiwanis Park Incident Today," *The Lufkin Daily News*, June 30, 2014, https://lufkindailynews.com/news/article_b55e8fb8-0068-11e4-95f9-001a4bcf887a.html; Andy Adams, "Man Arrested for Flashing Women on Azalea Trail Again," *The Daily Sentinel*, June 30, 2014, https://www.dailysentinel.com/news/local/article_e620678e-00c2-11e4-ad06-001a4bcf887a.html.

¹⁹⁶ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, "The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences," *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible 'Freiers'* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lsidocs/Mensex.pdf>.¹⁹⁶ Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*, (Chicago: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, 2008), https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/Durchschlag-Goswami_2008_Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution.pdf.

¹⁹⁷ Charlotte Alter, "Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex," *Time*, <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/>; Nicholas Kristof, "Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade," *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik "Miami Vice: Inside 'John Stings' and Escort Stings," *ABC News*, March 21, 2008,

buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities.

3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement are further corroborated by a strong body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as social censure and negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending**.¹⁹⁸

Collectively, the evidence supports that arresting sex buyers, by whatever means, is likely to deter reoffending and also to advance “general deterrence,” in which awareness of the risk of sanctions can deter crime in the general population—and not just among those who have been arrested.¹⁹⁹

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Other Sex Buyer Arrests](#)” have occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Other Sex Buyer Arrests” from the “Tactics” list. Similarly, the U.S. locations in which Other Sex Buyer Arrests have occurred may be mapped on Demand Forum by choosing “Other Sex Buyer Arrests” from the list.

<https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

¹⁹⁸ Thomas A. Loughran et al., “Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex Piquero (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 50-74, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

¹⁹⁹ Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “General Deterrence: A Review of Recent Evidence,” in *Crime and Public Policy*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (2011), 411-436; Braga, Anthony A., and David L. Weisburd, “The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2012): 323-358, [doi:10.1177/0022427811419368](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811419368).

POST-ARREST TACTICS

[Tactics that are used as an *official sanction or intervention after the arrest of sex buyers*. They may serve a variety of purposes, including as part of a punishment and sentencing arrangement, sex buyer rehabilitation and education, a revenue stream for law enforcement or victim services, and as a *general deterrence* by creating public awareness and societal aversion for crimes and behaviors associated with prostitution and sex trafficking activities]

Figure 2: Frisco, TX, Police Department Press Release Disclosing Identities of Arrested Sex Buyers²⁰²



MEDIA RELEASE

FRISCO POLICE DEPARTMENT
WWW.FRISCOPD.COM

NAME	AGE	CITY	CHARGE	FRISCO PD SERVICE#
[REDACTED]	41	Plano (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004438
[REDACTED]	54	Carrollton (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004469
[REDACTED]	31	McKinney (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004404
[REDACTED]	64	Carrollton (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004398
[REDACTED]	63	Frisco (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004179
[REDACTED]	49	Frisco (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004558
[REDACTED]	44	Irving (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004477
[REDACTED]	56	Prosper (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004535
[REDACTED]	49	The Colony (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004428
[REDACTED]	27	Little Elm (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004423
[REDACTED]	42	Frisco (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004599
[REDACTED]	24	Savannah (TX)	Solicitation of Prostitution	23004554



Dissemination methods can include police department press statements; websites hosted by police, district attorneys, or municipal authorities which sometimes include pages specifically designated for highlighting sex buyer arrests (e.g., [El Cajon, CA](#); [Nashville, TN](#)); social media posts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter); billboards, and even cable television channels.²⁰³ Identity disclosure of arrested sex buyers may also be part of a concerted public awareness campaign intended to draw to attention the role of demand in fueling the sex industry. A case in point is [Dayton, OH](#)'s, "Buyer's Remorse" campaign which involves the publication of sex buyer's names and addresses on the website [buyersremorsecampaign.com](#).²⁰⁴

²⁰² Friscotexas.gov, "Frisco Police Participate in Multi-Agency Operation Demand Suppression," January 24, 2023, <https://www.friscotexas.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=1856>. Note: the image above is a partial screen capture of the full press release.

²⁰³ Courtney Guyton Persons, "Sex in the Sunlight: The Effectiveness, Efficiency, Constitutionality, and Advisability of Publishing the Names and Pictures of Prostitutes' Patrons," *Vanderbilt Law Review* (1996), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/vanlr49&div=51&id=&page=>.

²⁰⁴ Grace James, "Buyer's Remorse: City to Begin Publicizing the Names of Individuals Who Purchase Sex," University of Dayton Blogs, Let's Talk Human Rights, March 20, 2019, <https://udayton.edu/blogs/udhumanrights/2019/19-03-20-buyers-remorse.php>.

Figure 3: Identity Disclosure Via News and Social Media



Revealing arrestee identities is done, in part, to deliver a punishment that is intended to deter future sex buying behavior. A press release about arrests made during a reverse sting in the city of [Inglewood](#), CA, in 2005 contained the following message, which leaves no doubt about the intent of publicizing sex buyer identities in order to deter their criminal activity:

“The Inglewood Police Department has implemented a policy to post the names of individuals arrested during certain anti-prostitution operations, such as John Stings, in a continuing effort to deter this type of activity in the City. The arrestees’ names, along with their sex, race, age and city of residence, will be provided to local newspapers and other media sources after the conclusion of these operations.”²⁰⁵

Identity disclosure also serves to promote deterrence on a larger scale, communicating a potent message to potential sex buyers that their identities will be revealed if they are arrested for sex buying. An initiative spearheaded by police in [Huntington](#), WV, provides a useful illustration. In 2015, the police department sponsored an electronic billboard (Figure 4) that displayed the faces of men convicted of soliciting prostitution.²⁰⁶ Noting that the four most recent arrests of sex buyers had been of individuals travelling to Huntington from Ohio, the police chief explained that one of the purposes of the billboards was to send a deterrence message to sex buyers who were seeking anonymity by travelling away from their local communities to engage in sex buying in Huntington.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ City of Inglewood, “15 People Arrested for Prostitution Activity,” News Release, April 9, 2005, <https://www.cityofinglewood.org/DocumentCenter/View/925/April-9-2005---15-People-Arrested-for-Prostitution-Activity-PDF>.

²⁰⁶ Bishop Nash, “Billboard to Display Solicitors of Prostitution,” *Herald-Dispatch*, October 30, 2015, <https://wvpress.org/wvpa-sharing/billboard-to-display-solicitors-of-prostitution/>.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

For some law enforcement agencies, publicizing the identities of sex buyers is not an organized initiative or part of a consistent, deliberate strategy to penalize and discourage sex buying. Instead, they make sex buyer identities publicly available as a part of routine crime reporting, irrespective of the nature of the offense. For instance, the names of those arrested can sometimes be found in local news “crime logs” or “police blotters,” where the identities of sex buyers are listed along with those of other individuals involved in activities such as burglary, vandalism, and driving under the influence. Nevertheless, the potential for this approach to function as a deterrent remains irrespective of an agency’s intentions.

Figure 4: Huntington, WV, Identity Disclosure Billboard²⁰⁸



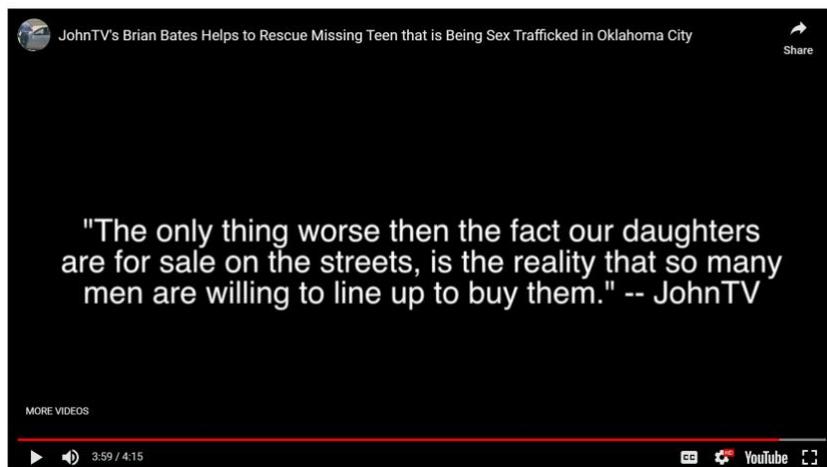
In some communities, citizens initiate and maintain websites identifying sex buyers. Examples include www.johntv.com, ([Oklahoma City](#), OK), and the now defunct trickthejohns.com²⁰⁹ (Chattanooga, TN) and shamingjohns.com²¹⁰ ([Columbus](#), OH) websites.

²⁰⁸ Photo source: Bishop Nash, “Billboard to Display Solicitors of Prostitution,” *Herald-Dispatch*, October 30, 2015, <https://wvpress.org/wvpa-sharing/billboard-to-display-solicitors-of-prostitution/>. No photo credit attribution was provided.

²⁰⁹ WDEF News 12, “Trick the Johns (more prostitutes)” June 3, 2008, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxY2gynDy6E>

²¹⁰ Jessica Ralson, “Website Aims to ‘Shame Johns’ out of West Columbus Neighborhood,” ABC 6, August 9, 2016, <https://abc6onyourside.com/news/local/website-aims-to-shame-johns>.

Figure 5: JohnTV.com²¹¹



“The first thing attorneys for these guys say is, ‘What can we do about the picture on the Web site?’ Their clients are willing to do more time and pay bigger fines rather than having their photo [on display].”

Lt. Rick Edwards, Akron, Ohio Police Department, 2005²¹²

Variations in identity disclosure tactics

Bumper Sticker

In 1998, [Corpus Christi](#), TX, instituted an unusual penalty for convicted sex buyers. They were mandated to place a bumper sticker on their car which stated, “Stop Sex Offenders.”²¹³

Employer Notification

The concept of identity disclosure as a source of pressure to inhibit sex buyers does not necessarily mean widespread dissemination of identities. It can also be applied through the notification of employers or other institutions with leverage over sex buyers. For example, the [National City](#), CA, Police Department found that many sex buyers were Navy personnel, estimating that they comprised up to 50 percent of sex buyers in the city.²¹⁴ Police considered asking the Navy to make off-limits the “strip” known to be a center of street prostitution but decided to look at other options since such a restriction would also inhibit legitimate activity

²¹¹ Screenshot from video “JohnTV’s Brian Bates Helps to Rescue Missing Teen that is Being Sex Trafficking in Oklahoma City,” www.johntv.com, n.d.

²¹² This quote appeared in Shively et al, *National Overview*, 51. Robert MacMillan, “Dear John: You’re Online,” *The Washington Post*, June 22, 2005, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/22/AR2005062200514.html>.

²¹³ Rosemary Barnes, “Crackdown on Prostitution Planned. Stretch of Leopard Street with be Targeted,” *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, September 15, 1998, https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Corpus-Christi-Caller_1998_Crackdown-on-Prostitution-planned.pdf.

²¹⁴ Rana Sampson and Michael S. Scott, *Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing, 1999), <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/reading/PDFs/1Tackling.pdf>.

in the area and hurt local businesses. Instead, they developed a procedure for notifying the Navy and involving them in applying sanctions for arrestees. Police would turn arrestees over to the Navy's Shore Patrol, and their command would be notified to eliminate sex buyers' anonymity. They also attempted to educate and deter Navy men from seeking prostitution by developing a letter, with the Navy Base Safety Committee's help, about the dangers and other negative consequences of commercial sex. The letter was distributed to all commands with the intent that the messages would be communicated to all Navy personnel.

Letters

A further variation of identity disclosure is the use of letters sent to the homes of alleged buyers of commercial sex, or to the homes of registered owners of vehicles used in known or suspected instances of soliciting commercial sex (these "Letters" are described elsewhere). The city of [Lubbock](#), TX, has initiated the use of social media for identity disclosure. In 2012, the Lubbock Police Department launched a concerted "identity disclosure" effort, posting the names and photos of arrested sex buyers on the Lubbock Police Department website. Lubbock police posted a group photo on its Facebook page of eight male sex buyers who had been arrested in reverse stings.

Mobile Electronic Sign

Police in [Albany](#), NY, parked a mobile electronic sign on a major thoroughfare in the city with the intent of using it to display the names of men arrested soliciting prostitution.²¹⁵

Release of Brothel Client Lists

In [Odessa](#), TX, a 2004 case involved an effort to address sex buyers, but not through traditional street or web-based reverse stings. Instead, police leveraged a list of sex buyers for a prostitution operation fronting in the town as a massage therapy business. After an investigation and a take-down of the business, a sex buyer list was discovered, with over 60 sex buyers identified. While it is not unusual to find sex buyer lists in raided brothels, the lists often are not used by law enforcement since they alone constitute insufficient evidence that sex exchanged directly for money actually occurred. In this case, the list was reportedly supplemented by surveillance of the brothel and other intelligence from the investigation, including interview disclosures about prostitution activity. The sex buyer list was released to the public and 68 men were arrested.²¹⁶

A similar case in [Kennebunk](#), ME, in 2012-2013 involved addressed sex buying, with police using a sex buyer list for a brothel which operated out of exercise studio storefronts. In September 2012, a takedown of the studios after an investigation of several months uncovered a sex buyer list with over 150 individuals. The list was reportedly supplemented by videotapes and still shots that recorded many of the commercial sex encounters, providing corroboration that the men listed were, in fact, sex buyers. Police prepared to charge the men on the list with soliciting prostitution and began to issue summons in early October 2012,

²¹⁵ *Times Union*, "Police Sign of Shame Set for its First John," October 3, 2009,

<https://www.timesunion.com/local/article/Police-sign-of-shame-set-for-its-first-john-546412.php>.

²¹⁶ Katy Vine, "She Had Brains, a Body, and the Ability To Make Men Love Her," *Texas Monthly*, January 2005,

<https://www.texasmonthly.com/articles/she-had-brains-a-body-and-the-ability-to-make-men-love-her>; MyPlainview,

"More Than Six Dozen Suspected in Odessa Ring Rounded Up," *MyPlainview*, July 26, 2004,

<https://www.myplainview.com/news/article/More-than-six-dozen-suspected-in-Odessa-ring-8942538.php>.

when the district court released a list of 21 names of male sex buyers who were all summoned to appear in court the following December. The remainder was scheduled to be released in batches over the following months.²¹⁷

Sex Buyer Registry

Another method of dissemination, so far implemented in only one state, is a sex buyer registry modeled after sex offender registries. In June 2019, the Governor of Florida signed a bill into law that created a registry (<https://www.fdle.state.fl.us/SFPDB>) of convicted sex buyers and provides a publicly accessible listing of their identities, including photos, names, and addresses.²¹⁸

Sharing Hearing and Trial Information with Community Residents

A variation in identity disclosure tactics reported in Shively et al (2012), arose from an effort in [Baltimore County](#), MD, in which police informed residents of court dates for prostitution-related cases, encouraging them to appear at hearings and trials. The tactic is intended to expose offenders by bringing residents to witness the men being accused in court and encourage judges and prosecutors to follow through with charges and impose fair penalties.

Table 1: Sites with Earliest Known Use of Identity Disclosure²¹⁹		
Year	City or County	State
1975	Eugene	OR
1976	Joliet	IL
1976	Detroit	MI
1976	Atlanta	GA
1977	Fort Pierce	FL
1977	Poughkeepsie	NY
1977	Trenton	NJ
1978	Des Moines	IA
1978	Norwalk	CT
1978	Oxnard	CA
1978	Westport	CT
1978	Harrisburg	PA
1979	New York	NY
1979	Pasco	WA
1981	Newburgh	NY

²¹⁷ Ann S. Kim, “Police Name 21 Alleged Kennebunk ‘Johns,’ but Confusion Follows,” *Central Maine*, October 15, 2012, <http://www.kjonline.com/news/kennebunk-maine-court-johns-prostitution-list-clients-wright-strong.html>; Freya Petersen, “Maine Court Releases Names of 21 ‘Johns’ in Kennebunk Zumba Prostitution Case,” *The World*, October 16, 2012, <https://theworld.org/stories/2012-10-16/maine-court-releases-names-21-johns-kennebunk-zumba-prostitution-case>; Sam Dwyer, “Alexis Wright Client List: 15 More Johns Released in Zumba Prostitution Case,” *Bost Inno*, November 9, 2012, <https://www.americaninno.com/boston/alexis-wright-client-list-more-johns-released-in-zumba-prostitution-case-photos>.

²¹⁸ Lyn Hatter, “New Florida Law Establishes ‘Johns Registry’ to Shame People Convicted of Paying for Sex,” *WFSU Public Media*, June 28, 2019, <https://news.wfsu.org/state-news/2019-06-28/new-florida-law-establishes-johns-registry-to-shame-people-convicted-of-paying-for-sex>.

²¹⁹ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 49. During our update, we did not identify any additional early adopters of identity disclosure.

Challenges and Concerns

Implementation of identity disclosure has led to concerns about unintended consequences and efforts to mitigate them.

Unintended Consequences, Collateral Harm

Opponents of identity disclosure argue that its effect as a deterrence method is unproven, that because the identities of those arrested are typically publicized upon arrest and prior to adjudication that it violates their due process, and finally, that it negatively affects families of arrestees.²²⁰ Shively et al, 2012, reported that some cities which have been firmly committed to combating demand (e.g., [San Francisco](#), CA, from 1995 to 2015) did not pursue identity disclosure as a policy precisely because of the impact it may have on children, spouses, and others close to alleged sex buyers. Some news outlets receive the information from police but do not include it in their reports for various reasons. For example, some feel that identity disclosure after arrest but before a court disposition violates due process, constituting punishment before conviction. Others have been concerned about collateral damage to families of arrestees or worry about liability issues for publicizing the identities of arrestees who may later be acquitted in the adjudication process.²²¹ Perhaps the greatest concern about identity disclosure tactics, is the claim that they infringe on the constitutional right to a fair trial. This is particularly pertinent in cases where the names of all detainees are disclosed to the public. Identity disclosure is widely viewed as a form of punishment, but is conducted prior to conviction in most jurisdictions.

In response to these concerns, some jurisdictions, such as [Minneapolis](#), MN, post on their police websites the identities of men only after they have been convicted of soliciting.²²² Most police websites that post identities of arrestees include statements or disclaimers that include mention of the presumption of innocence of the men identified as having been arrested. For example, the [Fresno](#) Police Department's "Operation Reveal" webpage²²³ posts this statement:

"The Fresno Police Department now provides information online concerning arrests involving loitering for purposes of prostitution, or patronizing/soliciting for prostitution. By using this website, you will be able to view public records on individuals who have been arrested and charged for either loitering for purposes of prostitution or for patronizing/soliciting for prostitution. The names, identities, and citations appear here as

²²⁰ Cole Kazdin, "Does Shaming Men Who Buy Sex Stop Prostitution?" *Vice*, June 28, 2016, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/qkg7q3/does-shaming-men-who-buy-sex-stop-prostitution>; Bridget Noel, "'John Shaming' Is Actually Putting Sex Workers at Risk," *Vice*, September 29, 2015, <https://www.vice.com/en/article/xd74qq/john-shaming-is-actually-putting-sex-workers-at-risk>.

²²¹ There are more mundane reasons as well, such as publishers feeling the arrests are not newsworthy. Some news outlets have policies of not releasing identities of either the sex buyers or prostituted persons, although may make exceptions for particularly large-scale operations or when there are high profile arrestees. (e.g., see news report from [Brockton](#), MA, in an August 2012 reverse sting: "While it is not the policy of The Enterprise to regularly run the names of those charged with prostitution or solicitation of prostitution, the newspaper believes the number of arrests this week and the goal of the Brockton Police Department to raise awareness of this community issue warrant an exception."); Justin Graeber, "Brockton Sex Workers Feeling the Heat," *The Enterprise*, August 25, 2012, <https://www.enterpriseneeds.com/story/news/2012/08/25/brockton-sex-workers-feeling-heat/40092299007>.

²²² "Police Department," Minneapolis: City of Lakes, accessed November 15, 2022, <http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/police/prostitution-convictions/convictions.asp>.

²²³ "Operation Reveal," City of Fresno Police Department, accessed November 7, 2022, <https://www.fresno.gov/police/crime-and-victim-resource-center/sexual-assault-unit/operation-reveal>.

they were provided to police officers in the field at the time of arrests. These individuals are presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.”

As reported in Shively et al (2012), *National Overview*, one of the challenges for police in implementing identity disclosure is ensuring that information about alleged offenders is not used inappropriately. In a case involving the [Wichita, KS, Police Department](#), the department decided to suspend its practice of posting information about arrested sex buyers when it was learned that the information was being used in “inappropriate” ways. The case of [New Haven, CT](#), discussed earlier in this report (see chapter on “Neighborhood Action”) provides an excellent illustration of the challenges that can emerge when communities take identity disclosure measures into their own hands.

Evidence of Effectiveness

An investigation by Persons, 1996, explored a range of tactics used to disclose the identities of sex buyers.²²⁴ She noted that there can be retributive element to this tactic, in which the community intends to inflict pain on the offender as a result of the harm that the individual has imposed on it. Because many of those who solicit prostitution are married, middle-class, and working people, the loss of reputation they experience is considered a penalty that satisfies “vengeful” urges.

Persons also considered the rehabilitation, incapacitation, and deterrence capacities of identity disclosure (which she frames as “shame punishments”).²²⁵ In her view, rehabilitative impacts were unlikely, as society is not currently structured to facilitate restorative, reintegrative processes. However, the ability of identity disclosure to incapacitate—a punishment which deprives offenders of their ability to repeat their crimes—seemed possible, as family members and others would be more likely to “keep a tighter reign” on the offender. In her estimation, the greatest potential for benefit from this tactic fell under the category of “general deterrence” of would-be sex buyers, since those who have not already lost their status in the eyes of family and friends are more susceptible to the deterrent threat. Yet, as she observed, there were no specific empirical evaluations available which would shine light on these hypotheses.

While it continues to be the case that specific empirical evaluations remain lacking, diverse evidence supports the view that identity disclosure has an important role in preventing the harms of the sex trade and reducing its scope. It is important to point out that the arrest of sex buyers invariably involves some degree of identity disclosure as arrest records are public and are frequently publicized by local media. Thus, the arrest and identity disclosure tactics are closely associated in terms of their potential deterrent effect.

What follows are summaries of a sampling of evidence of demand reduction effectiveness that feature or include, publicizing the identities of sex buyers.

²²⁴ Courtney Guyton Persons, “Sex in the Sunlight: The Effectiveness, Efficiency, Constitutionality, and Advisability of Publishing the Names and Pictures of Prostitutes’ Patrons,” *Vanderbilt Law Review* (1996), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/vanlr49&div=51&id=&page=>.

²²⁵ Ibid.

Police Research and Case Studies

- ***In St. Petersburg, FL, a comprehensive approach emphasizing arresting sex buyers and disclosing their identities was associated with a 24% reduction in calls for police service.***²²⁶ Concluding that arresting women involved in prostitution was ineffective in reducing the illicit business and the crime and disorder surrounding it, the city focused on a multifaceted effort that featured tactics aimed at demand. Reverse stings were conducted in 1993, and a letter that included information about sexually transmitted diseases was sent to the home address of all arrested sex buyers. Prostitution-related calls for service from police decreased by 24 percent between 1993 and 1994.
- ***In Raleigh, NC, a comprehensive approach emphasizing arresting sex buyers and publicizing their identities was associated with a 38% reduction in calls for police service.***²²⁷ In response to persistent prostitution-related problems in the city, a study of prostitution was conducted, which concluded that police and other agencies city should prioritize arresting buyers and addressing the service needs of providers. An initiative, Operation Dragnet, featuring those elements was launched. Among other outcomes, over 85% of the citizens surveyed were aware of the anti-prostitution effort, and citizen-initiated calls for service initially increased due to increased awareness and then declined steadily by 38% compared to the pre-intervention baseline.
- ***Reverse stings and identity disclosure reportedly removed Wilkes-Barre, PA, from a domestic sex trafficking circuit, and reduced the number of women engaged in street prostitution locally by 75%.*** In interviews conducted by Shively et al., for the 2012 *National Overview*, police department staff said that Wilkes-Barre had been a stop on a domestic sex trafficking circuit operating in upstate New York and central Pennsylvania. Through the mid-1980s, traditional interventions had been tried and found ineffective: arresting prostituted women accomplished little (trafficked women soon left for the next stop on the circuit, and local women simply returned to the streets), and prosecution of pimps had been attempted, but never successfully. In 1986, Wilkes-Barre police tried a new approach, conducting large-scale reverse stings and publicizing arrestee identities. In each of the first several operations, they arrested from 50 to 100 men who were issued citations and ordered to pay fines. Arrestee identities were included in press releases which ran in the local Sunday newspaper. After two years of these efforts, police concluded that Wilkes-Barre had been taken off the “pimp circuit.” The number of women known to engage in street prostitution fell from 20 to five, with the rotating circuit survivors gone and the remaining five being local women suffering from severe substance addictions. The existence of the domestic trafficking circuit and the level of police reverse sting activity in the 1980s and 1990s were corroborated by news archives and interviews with police from other cities on the circuit. However, the stated impact on the

²²⁶ Sandra L. Minor, *Prostitution: 1997 Herman Goldstein Excellence in Problem Solving Award*, (St. Petersburg, FL: St. Petersburg Police Department, 1997), <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/awards/goldstein/1997/97-65.pdf>.

²²⁷ Deborah Lamm Weisel, *Street Prostitution in Raleigh, North Carolina: A Final Report to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services on the Field Applications of the Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Project*, 2004, <https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/researcherprojects/streetProstitution.pdf>. Publicizing of identities included photographs of arrested offenders being placed on the police department’s website and cable television, as well as letters sent to the residences of licensed vehicle owner’s whose vehicles were seen in areas known for prostitution.

number of street-level survivors could not be confirmed due to a lack of data from the period (e.g., arrest data were not kept by the police department beyond seven years).

Corroborating Evidence

In addition to the direct evidence of sex buyer arrest and identity disclosure effectively serving to prevent or suppress prostitution and sex trafficking, there are three additional types of evidence all reflecting favourably on demand reduction tactics:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that buying sex in the future, and the men were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are consequences following arrest, such as jail time and the public disclosure of their identities. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers in published research.**²²⁸ A survey of 8,201 US men conducted between December 2016 and January 2017 reported that 20.6 % had ever purchased sex in their lifetimes, and that **more than 18% of former sex buyers stopped buying sex due to concerns that they might be arrested.**²²⁹ Another **16%** of former sex buyers from the same survey expressed that they stopped sex buying because they **were afraid someone might find out.**²³⁰ Further illustrating the importance of this tactic, the Stop Demand School (SDS), a sex buyer education program in [Waco, TX](#), regularly asks participants what they believe is the most significant deterrent to purchasing sex. Program operators have found that “close to 100%” of surveyed participants identify public disclosure as the most important system response to buying sex for advancing its deterrence.
2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence²³¹ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex

²²⁸ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sex-buyersEnglish-11-8-2022pdf.pdf>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

²²⁹ Demand Abolition, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*. (Demand Abolition, November 2018), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf>. Note respondents could endorse more than reason for stopping sex buying. For additional information about this survey see also, Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, eds. T. J. Holt, and A.M. Bossler (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020) p. 1191, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_54.

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/> (accessed February 28, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014,

buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities, which is something sex buyers seek to avoid. Those operating programs for arrested sex buyers report similar findings. For example, participants of the S.T.O.P. sex buyer education program in [Dallas County](#), TX, have said that identity disclosure is an effective deterrent for purchasing sex. Sex buyers in that program have stated that knowledge of their arrest by others negatively impacted their lives, often in multiple ways in addition to social disapproval. A participant from the county’s Stop Demand School (SDS) was a local business owner and reported a 50% reduction in profits as a result of the public disclosure of his identity as a sex buyer after he was arrested in a reverse sting.

3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement about sex buyer statements are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on general and specific deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending.**²³²

While it is evident from the research and the historical record summarized above that arresting sex buyers (and the accompanying impact of identity disclosure) appears to reduce reoffending and decrease prostitution activity, the empirical case for identity disclosure as a deterrent is strengthened by observing what happens when prostitution laws are not enforced. For example, prostitution “Tolerance Zones” have been tried and have failed to reduce harm or make communities or prostituted persons safer. [Boston](#), MA, sought to manage its rampant prostitution problems in the 1960s and 1970s by allowing prostitution within a few square blocks. The area quickly became known as the “Combat Zone” and became one of the most dangerous areas in the state; abuses against sex trade survivors flourished.²³³ This same basic story is being repeated in current times. Since 2020, prosecutors in several U.S. cities and the state of California declared policies of de facto decriminalization by refusing to prosecute prostitution, along with other select crimes. The results have been, predictably, negative. As discussed in the “Reverse Stings” segment of this report,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

²³² Thomas A. Loughran, Ray Paternoster, and Douglas B. Weiss, “Chapter 4: Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex R. Piquero (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 50-74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Chapter 3: Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 81-106, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351112710>, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster> (accessed March 2, 2023); Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 7: Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers, 6 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

²³³ Dave O’Brian, “Boston Apparently Has Lost War with Sex in ‘Combat Zone,’” *Washington Post*, November 17, 1977, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1977/11/17/boston-apparently-has-lost-war-with-sex-in-combat-zone/5d7be194-c67a-4b82-b0f3-42f66f607b0f/>.

communities in California and New York have been particularly hard hit, consequently experiencing an alarming resurgence of street-level prostitution.

Thus, collectively, the evidence is strong that arresting sex buyers and disclosing their identities deters reoffending, as well as advances “general deterrence” (referring to how awareness of the risk of sanctions deters crime in wider populations, and not just among those who have been arrested and punished).²³⁴

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which sex buyer “[Identity Disclosure](#)” has occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Identity Disclosure” from the “Tactics” list. The U.S. locations where these operations occurred may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Identity Disclosure” from the list.

To learn more about this demand reduction tactic, please access the resources below:

City Council Motion Authorizing Identity Disclosure of Arrested Sex Buyers

- [Cincinnati City Council Motion](#)

Florida Registry of Convicted Sex Buyers

- [New Florida Law Establishes 'Johns Registry' to Shame People Convicted of Paying for Sex](#) (2019)
- [A Review of the Soliciting for Prostitution Public Database](#) (2022)
- [Soliciting for Prostitution Public Database](#) (accessed March 5, 2023)

Police Press Releases

- [Bakersfield CA Information About Arrestees](#)
- [Costa Mesa, CA Police Press Release](#)
- [Federal Way, WA Police Press Release](#)
- [Mount Laurel, NJ Police Press Release](#)

Private Websites Intended to Shame Sex Buyers:

- [Columbus, OH](#)
- [Oklahoma, OK](#)

²³⁴ Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “General Deterrence: A Review of Recent Evidence,” in *Crime and Public Policy*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (2011), 411-436; Braga, Anthony A., and David L. Weisburd, “The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2012): 323-358, [doi:10.1177/0022427811419368](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811419368).

Billboards Displaying Identities of Arrested Sex Buyers

- [Huntington, WV](#)
- [Oakland, CA](#)

Media Ads with Arrestee Identities

- [Dayton, OH Print Advertisement Purchased by Dayton Police Department](#)

Chapter 6: Auto Seizures

Overview

Most state criminal codes allow for the seizure of vehicles used in the commission of crimes. This is often applied to the use of vehicles in felonies, such as armed robbery, kidnapping, drug smuggling, etc. Many jurisdictions also permit the seizure of vehicles used by those soliciting sex. Once impounded, to retrieve their vehicle, a sex buyer must pay an impound or tow fee and/or a fine ranging from approximately \$250 to \$2000. In some communities, seized vehicles can be forfeited and sold at an auction as part of the penalty for the offense. Forfeiture can also happen if the offender fails to pay the fees and fines necessary to repossess their vehicle. At least 296 of the 2,650+ U.S. cities and counties that have arrested sex buyers have seized vehicles used in the commission of that crime. In our tactic typology we refer to this as “[Auto Seizures](#).”

In many communities that seize the autos of men attempting to purchase sex, the fees or fines tied to the seizures are generally less than \$1,000. These penalties—even at the lower end of the scale—represent a substantial increase in fees and fines paid related to arrest for buying sex. The fines meted out to sex buyers for soliciting sex are typically no more than \$500 in the absence of additional fees or fines, such as impound fees, fees for community service supervision, or “John school” education program participation. There are a few examples of cities imposing a civil fine or impound fee of \$1000 or more on those arrested for soliciting prostitution, such as:

- In [Genesee](#) and [Wayne](#) Counties (MI), arrested sex buyers who are first-time offenders pay a \$900 impound fee as well as towing and storage fees to retrieve their vehicles.²³⁵ The penalties can rise to \$1,800 and then \$2,700 for second and third offenses.
- In [Memphis](#) (TN), arrested sex buyers may retrieve their seized vehicles by paying a \$2,500 fine, according to a local police respondent to the National Assessment survey.
- In October 2014, the [Cincinnati](#) (OH) Police Department announced that they were doubling the fine for using a vehicle to buy sex from \$500 to \$1,000; for repeat offenders, the fines can reach \$2,500.
- In October 2011, Oklahoma City’s (OK) city council voted to impose a \$1,900 impound fee for vehicles seized while being used to buy sex.

While most communities impound vehicles and return them upon payment of fees and fines, a few communities have instituted forfeiture programs in which cars used by men to solicit sex with prostituted persons may be forfeited and sold at an auction, and the proceeds retained by law enforcement to fund their prostitution law enforcement operations.

For example, the [Easton](#), PA, city council passed an ordinance in 2008 allowing for forfeiture of vehicles within one year of arrest, allowing time for due process. However, the first set of men arrested in reverse stings who had their autos seized filed suit, challenging the forfeitures as excessive punishment since the penalty of the local ordinance exceeded misdemeanor penalty standards for prostitution violations. Within

²³⁵ Kristin Longley, “Neighbors Fight Prostitution on Flint’s East Side,” *MLive*, October 4, 2009, https://www.mlive.com/flint-city-beat/2009/10/neighbors_fight_prostitution_o.html.

two months of the ordinance’s passage and following the first set of arrests which originated from it, all of the autos of those caught soliciting for prostitution in Easton were returned and forfeitures suspended pending the lawsuit’s outcome. In our efforts to determine the outcome of this case, we learned that the court ruled in favor of a preliminary injunction requiring the city to return the vehicles, but that the law has not been repealed and that the case was still listed as open in 2023.

In Genesee and Wayne Counties, MI, if those whose vehicles were impounded do not pay the imposed fines and fees, the vehicle may be sold at auction. Similarly, in Memphis, TN, sex buyers arrested for a second or subsequent offense may be required to forfeit their seized vehicle if they do not pay the aforementioned \$2,500 fine.²³⁶ [Stockton](#), CA, had a program called the Special Prostitution Enforcement Reporting System (SPERS) which encouraged citizens to report the license plate number of vehicles involved in prostitution. The registered owner of an identified vehicle would receive a letter saying the car was seen in an area known for prostitution. Additionally (through 2007), Stockton police could seize the vehicles of those accused of soliciting prostitution and hold the vehicles for up to a year without a hearing, trial, or finding of guilt.²³⁷ The measure generated legal controversy and ultimately the California Supreme Court ruled in a 4–3 decision on July 25, 2007, that the city’s program conflicted with existing state law.²³⁸ Among the reasons for the Supreme Court’s decision was that the city ordinance underlying the vehicle seizures was too vaguely stated. This decision essentially led to the suspension of auto seizure programs for prostitution offenses in 2008, until cities could re-write their ordinances. Many California cities have resumed auto seizures under new ordinances.

Year	City or County	State
1980	Roanoke	VA
1987	Birmingham	AL
1988	Detroit	MI
1990	Milwaukee	WI
1990	Harrisburg	PA
1990	Portland	OR
1990	Long Beach	CA
1991	Toledo	OH
1991	New York	NY

²³⁶ Municipal Technical Advisory Service, “Seizure of Property,” Institute for Public Service, University of Tennessee, last modified September 24, 2021, <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/reference/seizure-property>; Shively, et al., *A National Overview*.

²³⁷ The ordinance also allowed police to impound the cars of those using vehicles “to acquire or attempt to acquire any controlled substance.” See: “California Supreme Court Overturns Car Seizure Ordinance,” *TheNewspaper.com*, July 27, 2007, <https://www.thenewspaper.com/news/18/1883.asp>; Associated Press, “Cities Can No Longer Size Cars, Court Says,” *Press-Telegram*, July 26, 2007, updated September 1, 2017, <https://www.presstelegram.com/2007/07/26/cities-can-no-longer-seize-cars-court-says/>.

²³⁸ “California Supreme Court Overturns Car Seizure Ordinance,” *TheNewspaper.com*, July 27, 2007, <https://www.thenewspaper.com/news/18/1883.asp>; Associated Press, “Cities Can No Longer Size Cars, Court Says,” *Press-Telegram*, July 26, 2007, updated September 1, 2017, <https://www.presstelegram.com/2007/07/26/cities-can-no-longer-seize-cars-court-says/>.

²³⁹ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *A National Overview*, 56. During our update, we did not identify any new early examples of auto seizure.

1993	Bridgeport	CT
1993	South Bend	IN
1994	Waukegan	IL
1995	Rochester	NY
1995	Kissimmee	FL
1997	Hollywood	FL

“The vehicle is where most if not all the activity occurs, at least for street-level prostitution”²⁴⁰.”

Assistant City Attorney Jennifer Cacciapaglia, Rockford, IL

Vehicle seizures occurring during prostitution stings continue to garner support and execution across the country. In 2013, an ordinance allowing law enforcement officers to seize any motor vehicle used in a prostitution crime was approved by city councilors in [Albuquerque](#), NM, by a vote of 8 to 1.²⁴¹ In 2015, Cincinnati, OH, police reported the arrest of 42 people, 11 cars impounded, and 17 civil citations issued for crimes relating to the use of a motor vehicle for prostitution and/or drug-related offenses.²⁴² Police in [Battle Creek](#), MI, seized six vehicles and one bicycle from men who solicited prostitution in August 2020; \$500 was the amount payable to retrieve their vehicles.²⁴³ Twenty-two men were each issued a \$1,000 citation and 19 vehicles were towed after a successful [Cook County](#), IL, sex-buyer sting in February 2021.²⁴⁴ Vehicle owners were required to pay \$500 to reclaim possession thereof. As noted above, auto seizures have been successfully challenged in court. The primary objections include whether vehicle seizure constitutes a penalty exceeding the maximum for misdemeanors in jurisdictions where soliciting someone in prostitution is a misdemeanor offense. In other instances, there has been opposition to local ordinances that were too vaguely written or which conflicted with state law. For example, as noted previously, the California State Supreme Court in 2007 overturned the city of [Stockton’s](#) ordinance on this basis, causing the practice to be suspended throughout the state while ordinances were reviewed or revised. Seizures resumed in California cities in 2008 (e.g., [Riverside](#), [Sacramento](#)). Similarly, a [Miami, FL](#), ordinance passed by the city council in 1997 was declared unconstitutional in response to a 1999 case, and that decision was upheld on appeal. Similarly, [Washington, DC](#), had a seizure program that was declared unconstitutional and suspended in 2003 and later resumed after revision.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Matt Williams, “Proposed ordinance targets cars in prostitution fight,” *Rockford Register Star*, August 26, 2010, <https://www.rstar.com/story/lifestyle/public-safety/2010/08/26/proposed-ordinance-targets-cars-in/44604000007/>.

²⁴¹ Dan McKay, “City Council OKs Seizing Cars Used in Prostitution Crime,” *Albuquerque Journal*, November 4, 2013, <https://www.abqjournal.com/294653/city-council-oks-seizing-cars-used-in-prostitution-crime.html>.

²⁴² Jackie Congedo, “Dozens Arrested in 3-week Prostitution Blitz in McMicken Corridor,” *WLWT5*, April 24, 2015, <https://www.wlwt.com/article/dozens-arrested-in-3-week-prostitution-blitz-in-mcmicken-corridor/3553585>.

²⁴³ Trace Christenson, “12 People Arrested, Vehicles Seized, in Battle Creek Prostitution Sting,” *Battle Creek Enquirer*, August 21, 2020, <https://www.battlecreekenquirer.com/story/news/2020/08/21/12-people-arrested-vehicles-seized-battle-creek-prostitution-sting/3408369001>.

²⁴⁴ FOX 32 Digital Staff, “22 Men Arrested in Cook County Sting Targeting Sex Buyers,” *FOX 32 Chicago*, February 25, 2021, <https://www.fox32chicago.com/news/22-men-arrested-in-cook-county-sting-targeting-sex-buyers>.

²⁴⁵ Shively et al., *A National Overview*.

“With that fee [\$ 900], usually the spouse finds out . . . We haven’t had a lot of repeat customers.”

Genesee County Prosecutor David S. Leyton²⁴⁶

“The biggest deterrent for the Johns is the \$500 to get their car back . . . And to explain how it was seized.”

Sgt. Kurt Roth, Battle Creek Police Department, 2020²⁴⁷

Evidence of Effectiveness

Studies on the impact of vehicle seizures have focused largely on vehicle or driving-related outcomes, and attribute vehicle impoundment with reductions in fatalities and hospital admissions for road trauma,²⁴⁸ speeding,²⁴⁹ and drunk driving incidents.²⁵⁰ For instance, a specific deterrent effect was found in a study which showed that drivers who had their driver’s licenses suspended/revoked, *and* their vehicle impounded. The study’s results showed reductions of 1-year subsequent DUI convictions (24%), moving violation convictions (18%), and crashes (25%), than drivers who had their driver’s licenses suspended/revoked but whose vehicles *were not* impounded.²⁵¹

There have been no formal evaluations of the effectiveness of seizing the vehicles of arrested sex buyers as a tactic to deter demand for prostitution or sex trafficking. Nevertheless, compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a case can be made for auto seizure being an effective tactic, with four distinct kinds of evidence reflecting favorably on the approach:

²⁴⁶ Kristin Longley, “Neighbors Fight Prostitution on Flint’s East Side,” *MLive*, October 4, 2009, https://www.mlive.com/flint-city-beat/2009/10/neighbors_fight_prostitution_o.html.

²⁴⁷ Trace Christenson, “12 People Arrested, Vehicles Seized, in Battle Creek Prostitution Sting,” *Battle Creek Enquirer*, August 21, 2020, <https://www.battlecreekenquirer.com/story/news/2020/08/21/12-people-arrested-vehicles-seized-battle-creek-prostitution-sting/3408369001>.

²⁴⁸ Jeffrey R. Brubacher, Herbert Chan, Penelope Brasher, Shannon Erdelyi et al., “Reduction in Fatalities, Ambulance Calls, and Hospital Admissions for Road Trauma after Implementation of New Traffic Laws,” *American Journal of Public Health* (2014), <https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/full/10.2105/AJPH.2014.302068>.

²⁴⁹ Angela Watson, Sherrie-Anne Kaye, Judy Fleiter, and James Freeman, “Effectives of Vehicle Impoundment for High-Range Speeding Offences in Victoria, Australia,” *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 145 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2020.105690>.

²⁵⁰ David J. DeYoung, “Controlling Risk of Impaired Drivers through Use of Vehicle-based Sanctions,” *Transportation Research Circular E-C174, Countermeasures to Address Impaired Driving Offenders. Toward and Integrated Model*, (Symposium, Beckman Conference Center, Irvine, CA, August 15–16, 2011): 20-31, <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/circulars/ec174.pdf>; Patrick Byrne, Tracy Ma, and Yoassry Elzohairy, “Vehicle Impoundments Improve Drinking and Driving License Suspension Outcomes: Large-scale Evidence from Ontario,” *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 95, part A (2016): 125–131, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001457516302342?via%3Dihub>.

²⁵¹ David J. DeYoung, “An Evaluation of the Specific Deterrent Effects of Vehicle Impoundment on Suspended, Revoked, and Unlicensed Drivers in California,” *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 31 (1), 45–53.

1. As discussed above, vehicle impoundment has been shown to have positive impacts in other areas of public concern, particularly in reducing DUIs.²⁵² It is possible that the deterrent effects of vehicle impoundment extend to other criminal behaviors such as sex buying.
2. In a survey of 113 sex buyers in Chicago, IL, **70% reported** that having their car impounded would deter them from buying sex.²⁵³ Other surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that behavior in the future presenting them with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to discourage them are consequences following arrest, such as jail time, being listed on a sex offender registry, and the public disclosure of their arrest. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.²⁵⁴ Although not specified in these surveys, it is reasonable to assume that post-arrest sanctions such as vehicle seizure and driver’s licenses suspension are within the same general category of negative consequences that would serve as a deterrent for sex buyers.
3. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence²⁵⁵ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities. Vehicle

²⁵² David J. DeYoung, “Controlling Risk of Impaired Drivers through Use of Vehicle-based Sanctions,” *Transportation Research Circular E-C174, Countermeasures to Address Impaired Driving Offenders. Toward and Integrated Model*, (Symposium, Beckman Conference Center, Irvine, CA, August 15–16, 2011): 20-31, <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/circulars/ec174.pdf>; Patrick Byrne, Tracy Ma, and Yoassry Elzohairy, “Vehicle Impoundments Improve Drinking and Driving License Suspension Outcomes: Large-scale Evidence from Ontario,” *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 95, part A (2016): 125–131, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0001457516302342?via%3Dihub>.

²⁵³ Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*, (Chicago: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, 2008), https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/Durchslag-Goswami_2008_Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution.pdf.

²⁵⁴ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

²⁵⁵ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men Who Buy Sex,” *Time*, n.d., <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/>; Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in Sex Trade,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik, “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

seizure and payment of substantial fees and fines to retrieve them, can be disruptive and require adjustments that can, in turn, require explanation to friends, families, and employers – which is something sex buyers clearly seek to avoid.

4. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending.**²⁵⁶

Collectively, the evidence supports the view that sanctioning arrested sex buyers is likely to deter reoffending and to also advance “general deterrence” in which awareness of the risk of sanctions can deter crime in the general population—and not just among those who have been arrested and punished.²⁵⁷

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Auto Seizures](#)” have been used as a tactic to deter sex buyers, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Auto Seizure” from the “Tactics” list. In addition, the U.S. locations where auto seizures have occurred may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Auto Seizure” from the list.

²⁵⁶ Thomas A. Loughran, Ray Paternoster, and Douglas B. Weiss, “Chapter 4: Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex R. Piquero (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 50-74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Chapter 3: Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 81-106, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351112710>; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 7: Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

²⁵⁷ Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 14: General Deterrence: A Review of Recent Evidence,” in *Crime and Public Policy*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 411-436; Anthony A. Braga and David L. Weisburd, “The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2012): 323-358, [doi:10.1177/0022427811419368](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811419368).

Chapter 7: Driver’s License Suspension

Overview

“[Driver’s License Suspension](#)” is the least frequently used of the tactics identified to combat demand. The first known use of suspending the licenses of sex buyers occurred in [Beardstown](#), IL in 1960 (Table 1). Few cities have followed this example. As of March, 2023, we knew of just 35 communities that have suspended the driver’s licenses of arrested sex buyers. That represents an increase of just 10 additional cities and counties identified since Demand Forum was first launched in January, 2013, even though the total number of U.S. jurisdictions represented in Demand Forum has increased from 900 to more than 2,660.

To implement this tactic a local ordinance or a state statute must be in place to support driver’s license suspensions for misdemeanor offenses (or ordinance violations), including soliciting prostitution. If so, judges or magistrates can choose to impose that punishment on arrested sex buyers. A state law in California (California Vehicle Code 13201.5) specifically allowed for driver’s license suspensions for those who solicit prostitution, but that law was repealed Jan. 1, 2020 (through SB 485). Other states allow license suspensions for those using motor vehicles for those engaged in several prostitution-related offenses, including sex buying. For example, New Jersey law ([NJ Rev Stat § 2C:34-1 \(2013\)](#)) includes:

...where a motor vehicle was used in the commission of any offense under paragraph (1) of subsection b. the court shall suspend for six months the driving privilege of any such offender who has a valid driver's license issued by this State. Upon conviction, the court shall immediately collect the offender's driver's license and shall forward it, along with a report stating the first and last day of the suspension imposed pursuant to this paragraph, to the New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission.

It is unknown how often this provision has been applied to sex buyers in New Jersey or prostituted persons or facilitators (i.e., pimps). For more information on key elements of state prostitution laws that apply to sex buyers, including the sanctions imposed for arrested buyers, please see our [summary](#) posted on [Demand Forum](#).

Among the few cases we could identify, driver’s license suspensions are not imposed for long—usually less than one year. For example, in [Casselberry](#), FL, a sex buyer may have their license suspended for up to one year, but it is reportedly rare for the maximum suspension to be imposed. The New Jersey state law specifies suspension for a period of six months.

The concerns raised in relation to the suspension of licenses for individuals purchasing sex are akin to those associated with having one’s identity revealed or their vehicles confiscated. Since a significant number of male sex buyers are married, in committed relationships, and hold jobs, any measures that endanger the offender’s earnings or means of transportation can have adverse effects on their partners and families. To illustrate, if a father’s license is suspended, it can create difficulties for any children who depend on him for transportation, particularly if he is the sole family member possessing a driver’s license.

A response to such concerns in jurisdictions that have chosen to suspend the driver’s licenses (or seize the vehicles) of sex buyers is that the offender’s criminal acts jeopardize others, rather than the actions of the criminal justice system that is simply enforcing the law. Using the impact on offender families as a

justification for withholding criminal justice sanctions would result in the withholding of the vast majority of punishments for the majority of offenders.

Year	City or County	State
1960	Beardstown	IL
1985	Tampa	FL
1989	Boynton Beach	FL
1989	West Palm Beach	FL
1991	Tallahassee	FL
1993	Lakeland	FL
1995	Delray Beach	FL
1997	Clearwater	FL
1999	Trenton	NJ
2000	Kissimmee	FL
2000	Daytona Beach	FL
2006	Richmond	CA

Evidence of Effectiveness

Initially designed as a penalty to tackle poor or irresponsible driving conduct in the United States, the suspension of driver's licenses is now a frequently employed method to penalize individuals involved in criminal activities or other socially undesirable actions that have no connection to operating a motor vehicle.²⁵⁹ In a small number of communities, engaging in sex buying is among the examples of "criminal activities" for which a person may have their driver's license suspended. Enforcing driver's license suspension is difficult ". . . because driving while disqualified is essentially an invisible offense."²⁶⁰ While there have been studies on the impact of driver's license suspensions, they have focused on vehicle-related outcomes, such as subsequent accidents, traffic violations, or drunk driving incidents.²⁶¹ There have been no formal evaluations of the effectiveness of suspending driver's licenses of arrested sex buyers as a tactic

²⁵⁸A version of this table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 57. During our update, we identified other communities that were early adopters of the Driver's License Suspension tactic and updated the table accordingly.

²⁵⁹ Jon A. Carnegie and Robert J. Eger, III, *Reasons for Drivers License Suspension, Recidivism and Crash Involvement among Suspended/Revoked Drivers: Final Report*, (Washington, DC: US Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, January 2009), https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/documents/811092_driver-license.pdf.

²⁶⁰ David J. DeYoung, "Controlling Risk of Impaired Drivers through Use of Vehicle-based Sanctions," *Transportation Research Circular E-C174, Countermeasures to Address Impaired Driving Offenders. Toward and Integrated Model*, (Symposium, Beckman Conference Center, Irvine, CA, August 15–16, 2011): 21, <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/circulars/ec174.pdf>.

²⁶¹ David J. DeYoung, "An Evaluation of the General Deterrent Effect of Vehicle Impoundment on Suspended and Revoked Drivers in California," *Journal of Safety Research* 31, no. 2 (2000): 51-59, [doi:10.1016/S0022-4375\(00\)00024-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4375(00)00024-4); Jaeyeong Lee, Byung-Jung Park, and Chungwon Lee, "Deterrent Effects of Demerit Points and License Sanctions on Drivers' Traffic Law Violations Using a Proportional Hazard Model," *Accident Analysis & Prevention* 113, (2018): 279-286, [doi:10.1016/j.aap.2018.01.028](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aap.2018.01.028).

to deter demand for prostitution. Compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a case can be made for license suspensions being an effective tactic, with three distinct kinds of evidence all reflecting favourably on the approach:

1. In a survey of sex buyers in the US, **75% reported that having their driver's license suspended would deter them from buying sex.**²⁶²
2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence²⁶³ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities. Driver's license suspension can be disruptive and require adjustments that can, in turn, require explanation to friends, families, and employers—which is something sex buyers clearly seek to avoid.
3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement is further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both **“legal sanctions”** (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and **“extra-legal sanctions”** (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending.**²⁶⁴

Collectively, the evidence suggests that sanctioning arrested sex buyers is likely to deter re-offending, and to also advance “general deterrence” in which awareness of the risk of sanctions can deter crime in the general population—and not just among those who have been arrested and punished.²⁶⁵

²⁶² Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible 'Freiers'* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), <https://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sex-buyersEnglish-11-8-2022pdf.pdf>.

²⁶³ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men Who Buy Sex,” *Time*, n.d., <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/> (accessed March 2, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in Sex Trade,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik, “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

²⁶⁴ Thomas A. Loughran, Ray Paternoster, and Douglas B. Weiss, “Chapter 4: Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex R. Piquero (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 50-74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Chapter 3: Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 81-106, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351112710>, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 7: Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

²⁶⁵ Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 14: General Deterrence: A Review of Recent Evidence,” in *Crime and Public Policy*, eds. James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 411-436; Anthony A. Braga and David L. Weisburd, “The Effects of Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime: A

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Driver's License Suspension](#)” has been applied to sex buyers, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “[Driver's License Suspension](#)” from the “Tactics” list. Similarly, the U.S. locations where [Driver's License Suspensions](#) have been used may be mapped on Demand Forum by choosing “[Driver's License Suspension](#)” from the list.

Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of the Empirical Evidence,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 49, no. 3 (2012): 323-358, [doi:10.1177/0022427811419368](https://doi.org/10.1177/0022427811419368).

Chapter 8: Stay Out of Areas with Prostitution (SOAP) Orders

Overview

“[SOAP Orders](#)” have been used as a restriction for arrested sex buyers in at least **140** U.S. cities and counties. This tactic involves prohibiting or restricting arrested buyers from visiting areas with known prostitution activity and/or the vicinity of their arrest. The general approach—called geographic “exclusion zones” or “restraining orders” when applied to other kinds of offenders—are often identified as “Stay Out of Areas with Prostitution” or “SOAP” orders when applied to sex buyers (as well as to prostituted women). For example, in 1995 a “prostitution-free zone” was established in [Portland](#), OR in a corridor that has long been known as the city's hotspot for street prostitution. The exclusion zone specifications were described in the city ordinance establishing the zone, and presented in the “[SOAP Orders](#)” page of the [Demand Forum](#) website. In essence, this meant that judges could order those arrested on prostitution charges (which included sex buyers) to stay out of the designated area. The ordinance also provided for several consequences to be imposed on those who violated it. While the ordinance was widely considered successful, Portland Police Department budget cuts made it impossible for the department to properly enforce the zone, and the city council allowed the order to lapse in 2007. Residents and businesses in the area soon noticed an increase in prostitution and prostitution-related incidents. In 2011, the mayor proposed to reinstate a prostitution-free zone.²⁶⁶

Year	City or County	State
1975	Beaver Falls	PA
1980	Washington	DC
1985	Newport News	VA
1990	SeaTac	WA
1990	Santa Monica	CA
1991	Tulsa	OK
1991	Miami	FL
1991	Tallahassee	FL
1992	Pierce County	WA
1993	Portland	OR
1993	Everett	WA
1994	Tacoma	WA
1995	Oakland	CA
1995	Wichita	KS
1995	Anchorage	AK

Arrested sex buyers can be ordered to stay out of specified areas as a sentence condition or as an element of a diversion program. SOAP orders are imposed mostly for misdemeanor-level charges of soliciting

²⁶⁶ David A. Graham, “A No-Go Area for Those Arrested?” *The Atlantic*, October 15, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/10/charlotte-exclusion-zones-prostitution/410635>.

²⁶⁷ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 58. During our update, we did not identify any additional early adopters of SOAP Orders.

prostitution involving adult victims or police decoys. They may be combined with other sanctions such as fines, fees, vehicle seizures, probation, and/or completion of “John school” education or treatment programs. For those arrested for paying to sexually abuse minors, the charges are far more severe felony-level offenses resulting in felony convictions and prison terms, and SOAP orders are not offered as a diversion option or a requirement of a sentence (except as part of a post-incarceration condition of community supervision).

Geographic exclusion zones are sometimes opposed as unnecessary and unjustified restrictions on people’s freedom of movement.²⁶⁸ However, SOAP orders are seldom successfully challenged as long as the restrictions apply only to convicted felons or are agreed upon as part of a diversion program.

Example 1: Houston, TX

For years, the City of [Houston](#) has implemented multiple tactics to reduce the demand for commercial sex along the Bissonnet Track, Houston’s most notorious area for prostitution and sex trafficking. In 2018, Harris County courts implemented a civil injunction against 86 individuals, 50 prostituted persons, 23 sex buyers, and 13 pimps/sex traffickers frequently arrested for prostitution-related offenses along Bissonnet Track.²⁶⁹ If named individuals were found violating the injunction, they could face fines from \$1,000 to \$10,000 and up to 30 days in jail. Additionally, the injunction deemed the area an “Anti-Prostitution Zone,” with the intention of banning named individuals from engaging in certain “prostitution-related activities.” The Bissonnet Anti-Prostitution Zone occupies a small triangle in the city, less than a half mile across, bound by the intersection of two major highways and its main through street, Bissonnet Street. Local business owners had openly expressed concerns for the safety of their lives and businesses as public instances of violence, gang-related activities, drugs, and prostitution plague the community. According to the Houston Police Department, between 2016 and 2018 approximately 4,000 instances of crime were reported along Bissonnet Track, and 25% of reports were for prostitution-related offenses.

Example 2: Portland, OR

Like most greater metro regions, [Portland](#) contains a street with a long history of being a focal point for prostitution and sex trafficking, with high concentrations of sexually oriented businesses, storefront brothels, and motels catering to (or tolerating) prostitution. In Portland and beyond, this is 82nd Avenue and is akin to strips such as the Miracle Mile in Tucson, AZ, and Mannheim Boulevard in Cook County, IL. In 1995, the city passed an ordinance (Portland City Code Sec. 14B.30), and police began enforcing the “Prostitution Free Zone” that focused on 82nd Avenue and the surrounding area. The geographic exclusion zone was broadly written and enforced to include both sex buyers and sellers. More orders were applied to prostituted women than to male buyers. However, it was a tool to punish and discourage arrested sex buyers. In simplest terms, those arrested for prostitution offenses could be ordered to stay out of the defined zone, and violations of this restriction could result in enhanced penalties. Portland’s ordinance and other

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Roxanna Asgarian, “Houston tries to banish sex workers,” *Slate*, November 11, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/11/houston-banish-sex-workers.html#:~:text=The%20county%20filed%20a%20civil%20lawsuit%20against%2050%20alleged%20sex%20workers%2C%2023%20alleged%20buyers%2C%20and%2013%20alleged%20pimps>.

reference materials about the Prostitution Free Zone can be found on the Portland on Demand Forum site page.²⁷⁰

The Prostitution Free Zone was challenged as an inappropriate restriction on individual freedoms and for being unevenly applied across races, and for incurred costs in its enforcement. Due to budget cuts to law enforcement agencies and other concerns, the Zone was allowed to expire or “sunset” in September 2007.²⁷¹ Reportedly, soon after the Zone expired, residents, businesses, and those traveling through the area observed a rapid and substantial increase in prostitution in the area and problems associated with it (e.g., a rise in street crime rates, harassment of residents and business patrons by sex buyers, prostituted persons, and pimps, and calls for service to police from the area). Police attempted to compensate for the loss of the zone by increased patrols and enforcement efforts. Community groups mobilized and formed a Prostitution Advisory Council, which wrote a report and, in late 2009, presented to city officials recommendations for reinstatement of the Zone and other measures such as re-establishing a John school (which was not active at that time).

Example 3: Wichita, KS

The creation of SOAP orders via city ordinance was described in a report by the [Wichita](#) Police Department regarding the city’s anti-prostitution effort in the early and mid-1990s.²⁷² In response to longstanding problems associated with prostitution that were concentrated in some regions of Wichita, a collaborative effort was launched involving WPD community policing officers, the Municipal Court, the City Manager, and the city’s Law Department. Old city ordinances were modified, and new ones were drafted and then enacted.²⁷³ One of the critical ordinances was a modification that allowed the arrest of men for loitering when their intent was to solicit a prostituted person. Before this time, women could be arrested for loitering with the intent to commit an act of prostitution. Still, men who were loitering with the intent to buy sex from a woman engaged in prostitution could not be arrested. In addition to the modified ordinance, two new ones were created. The first ordinance created an “Anti-Prostitution Emphasis Zone,” which increased fines and jail time for anyone arrested within specified blocks of the city. Prostitution arrest data were used to set the zone’s boundaries. The standard fine and jail time were applied to those arrested outside the zone. Drug offenders were given alternative sentences if they agreed to enter drug treatment and perform community service. A second conviction in the area would result in a jail term of no less than 30 days. The second ordinance was more controversial. A “mapping area” was established inside the Anti-Prostitution Emphasis Zone, which covered the area where the heaviest concentration of prostitution offenses occurred. The ordinance made it illegal for a convicted offender arrested in the “mapping area” to return to the area.

²⁷⁰ “Portland, OR,” Demand Forum, accessed November 4, 2022, <https://demand-forum.org/site/portland-or>.

²⁷¹ Lee Perlman, “Crime-Free Zone Renewal Abolished,” *The Mid-County Memo*, October 2007, https://midcountymemo.com/oct07_crimefreezone.html.

²⁷² Wichita Police Department, *South Central Prostitution Project* (Wichita, KS: Wichita Police Department, 1996), 1-6, [https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/awards/goldstein/1996/96-59\(F\).pdf](https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/library/awards/goldstein/1996/96-59(F).pdf).

²⁷³ “Code of Ordinances Supplement 28,” Wichita, KS, last modified July 28, 2022, <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=14166>.

Example 4: Tacoma, WA

For decades, the city of [Tacoma](#), WA has had a great deal of community involvement in its efforts to address prostitution and sex trafficking. The “Make Tacoma Safe, Clean, and Attractive” initiative was a collaboration between community organizations (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood groups such as Citizens Against Prostitution) and government agencies at the city, county, and state levels (e.g., Tacoma Police Department, Pierce County jail, the Washington State Department of Corrections). The Make Tacoma Safe, Clean, and Attractive (MTSCA) team targeted street-level prostitution and related crime within Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution (SOAP) zones. Community involvement and the facilitation of a new state vehicle impound law were regarded as critical components in this effort. The MTSCA team researched best practices with the goal of creating more disincentives for prostituted women and sex buyers to operate in Tacoma.²⁷⁴

The initiative hoped to impact positive changes in enforcement and prevention. The team worked on forging connections with key stakeholders in the community, like the Pacific Avenue Business District. They also worked on gathering data on the correlation between prostitution and the spread of disease, best practices from other municipalities on what it took to make prostitution less profitable, and current prostitution data for benchmarking purposes.

Example 5: Tampa, FL

In February 2012, [Tampa](#) established an exclusion zone for sex buyers and those providing commercial sex. The Prostitution Enforcement Zone covered the area from Fowler Avenue to the north, Seventh Avenue to the south, North 15th Street to the east, and Florida Avenue to the west. The zone applied to people who had been charged for the third time (or more) with a prostitution offense. Upon a third arrest, the misdemeanor prostitution charge could be upgraded to a felony, and the State Attorney’s Office could ask judges to put offenders on probation and ban them from the area. Exceptions would be limited to activities like visiting a doctor or buying groceries.

Example 6: Yakima, WA

In April 2013, [Yakima](#) announced a new municipal ordinance establishing SOAP orders. The new law worked by banning convicted sex buyers (as well as prostituted persons) from areas of the city known for commercial sex sales. People caught violating a SOAP order could be arrested on the spot for a misdemeanor and jailed for up to 90 days and/or be forced to pay a fine of up to \$1,000.

Example 7: Elk Grove, CA

In a reverse sting in 2018, [Elk Grove](#) police arrested three men who showed up at a local hotel to solicit a prostituted person. The article reporting on their arrests stated that if convicted, these men could face up to 180 days in jail and could be ordered by a judge to stay away from areas where they were arrested.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁴ *Make Tacoma Safe & Clean* (Tacoma: Tacoma City Council, 2009), <https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Round-2-Safe-and-Clean-Effort-Fact-Sheet.pdf>; “Neighborhood and Community Services,” City of Tacoma, Washington, accessed November 4, 2022, https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/neighborhood_and_community_services.

²⁷⁵ Cameron Macdonald, “Three Suspects Arrested in Local Prostitution Sting: EGPD Joins Regional Sweep,” *Elk Grove Citizen*, September 5, 2018, http://www.egcitizen.com/news/three-suspects-arrested-in-local-prostitution-sting/article_c627859e-b139-11e8-baec-1fb25c0b9734.html.

Example 8: Milwaukee County, WI

In April 2019, [Milwaukee County](#) proposed increasing fines for anyone caught attempting to solicit prostituted persons. The measure proposed increasing penalties for sex buyers from the previous range of \$500 to \$5,000 to a range of \$5,000 to \$10,000. These fines would target anyone caught soliciting prostitution as well as those loitering in a “known area of prostitution” or a public place where people had been convicted for soliciting in the last five years. The measure was passed unanimously by the Public Safety and Health Committee.²⁷⁶ The ordinance was passed in the Common Council, increasing fines for solicitation to a range of \$2,500 to \$5,000.²⁷⁷

Evidence of Effectiveness

While there is substantial research on SOAP orders and similar geographical restrictions for offenders,²⁷⁸ studies have focused in a wide range of crime types and outcomes. There have been no focused evaluations whose methodology allows for isolating the impact of SOAP orders on demand reduction (such as reducing sex buyer recidivism or specific deterrence) or on solid measures of prostitution or sex trafficking in communities where they have been issued. But hard evidence of impact from formal evaluations is rarely available in assessing the value of criminal justice interventions of any kind. Compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a solid case can be made for beneficial effects of SOAP orders for sex buyers, with three distinct kinds of evidence all reflecting favourably on the approach:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that behavior in the future, and were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are having their behavior become known to others (including families, partners, friends, and employers) and other consequences following arrest, such as jail time being listed on a sex offender registry. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁶ Mary Spicuzza, “‘We’re Holding the Johns Accountable’: Milwaukee Common Council Set to Increase Penalties for Those Who Solicit Prostitutes,” *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, April 16, 2019, <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2019/04/05/sex-trafficking-milwaukee-may-raise-fines-soliciting-prostitutes/3375156002>.

²⁷⁷ Evan Casey, “Common Council Unanimously Approves 500 Percent Increase in Prostitution Fines,” *Shepherd Express*, April 17, 2019, <https://shepherdexpress.com/news/features/common-council-unanimously-approves-500-percent-increase/#/questions>.

²⁷⁸ Katherine Beckett and Steve Herbert, “Penal boundaries: Banishment and the expansion of punishment,” *Law & Social Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2010): 1-38, doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-4469.2009.01176.x; Steve Herbert and Katherine Beckett, “Banishment and the post-industrial city: Lessons from Seattle,” *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 23 (2017): 27-40, doi.org/10.1007/s10610-016-9316-z; Karen Struening, “Rounding Up the Undesirables,” *Social Justice* 47, no. 1/2, 159/160 (2020): 39-62, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27094573>.

²⁷⁹ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and*

It is reasonable to assume that having to adhere to SOAP orders would increase the likelihood that others close to sex buyers would learn of sex buyer's behavior, and their arrest for it, which is something they clearly wish to avoid.

2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence²⁸⁰ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest** – including legal sanctions, and knowing their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities.
3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending**.²⁸¹ To the extent that SOAP Orders may increase the risk of their behavior being disclosed, or negatively impact their ability to get to work or move about the community, it would contribute to deterrence.

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which use of “[SOAP Orders](#)” has occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “[SOAP Orders](#)” from the “Tactics” list. The U.S. locations where these operations occurred may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “[SOAP Orders](#)” from the list.

What They Know (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

²⁸⁰ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/> (accessed March 5, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside 'John Stings' and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

²⁸¹ Thomas A. Loughran et al., “Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex Piquero (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 50-74, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

Chapter 9: John Schools

Overview

“[John School](#)” is a general term commonly used to describe education or restorative justice programs for individuals arrested for soliciting commercial sex designed to deter them from that behavior in the future. The term covers a broad range of content, delivery modes, and how the programs fit within justice system options for sanctioning and educating offenders. For instance, John Schools can be structured as a condition of a criminal sentence, in which mandatory participation may be combined with other criminal sanctions or offered as a diversion option, resulting in reduced penalties or dismissed charges if successfully completed. John schools can be one-day education classes or designed as multiple-session counseling programs. The programs are financed by the fees or fines that the arrested sex buyers must pay (typically about \$400 and ranging from \$0 to \$1,500) for soliciting sex. The fees or fines usually cover all program costs, often producing excess revenue to fund survivor support programs. In addition to on-site classroom participation, some John Schools can be accessed from any location as online courses. Several online versions of John School courses are now available nationwide, and courts in any jurisdiction can choose to accept online courses as meeting sentencing or diversion requirements.

Various programs are often grouped and labeled as “John Schools.” These programs vary on several dimensions, including the number of sessions needed for completion, whether they are offered as diversion options versus sentencing requirements, and in the range of associated fees and fines. John Schools vary greatly—and in important ways—in their program content and curricula. Traditionally, the common elements found in most John Schools are that they discuss (a) negative health, safety, and legal consequences that sex buyers may face if they continue engaging in commercial sex, (b) the negative impact on prostituted and trafficked persons exploited within the sex trade, and (c) the negative effects of the sex trade on communities and their residents. With that common foundation, additional topics may be addressed. For example, the [Indianapolis](#) “Red Zone” program featured a community impact panel discussion, followed by participants spending three hours doing community service by picking up trash on city streets with high levels of prostitution activity.²⁸² Other prevalent curriculum components traditionally offered by John School programs include discussions of healthy relationships, anger management, sexual addiction, pimping and pandering, human trafficking, impact on spouses of sex buyers, and sex buyer vulnerability to criminal victimization while engaged in commercial sex.

For us to classify an education program as a John School, it must cover multiple topics designed to dissuade or deter men from buying sex. For example, Court-ordered or diversion programs that focus only on health education would not be considered John Schools. Some states and municipalities within the United States have mandated health education sessions (usually focused on sexually transmitted diseases) for prostitution arrestees—including sex buyers—but we would not consider those to be John School programs since the objective of the health classes is avoiding infection, and not necessarily to convince sex buyers not to patronize prostituted or trafficked persons sex because of the harm it causes (which is the intent of John School programs).

²⁸² Michael Shively, Kristina Kliorys, Kristin Wheeler, et al., *A National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report*. (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, April 30, 2012). <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/238796.pdf>.

Targeting the Educational Intervention

Shively et al. in their 2012 *National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts, Final Report* reported that John School directors operate their programs on the premise that key attitudes and beliefs cause or allow men to solicit sex, and that the programs reach at least some of the men by countering erroneous and “permission-giving” beliefs and by filling gaps in knowledge. As the report noted, the programs address some or all of the following:²⁸³

- The perception that the likelihood of arrest and legal penalties is minimal.
- Lack of recognition or knowledge regarding the potential risk of contracting STDs or HIV through purchased sexual activities.
- Lack of awareness about the possibility of being subjected to robbery or assault by individuals involved in prostitution or sex trafficking.
- Failure to acknowledge or unawareness of the detrimental impact that prostitution has on the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Lack of understanding about the connections between street-level prostitution and larger, organized networks of sex trafficking.
- Lack of recognition or awareness of the underlying factors motivating their engagement in soliciting prostituted women or girls (e.g., addictions, compulsions, etc.).
- Failure to acknowledge or unawareness of the adverse consequences to individuals who are prostituted.
- Misguided belief that the women men solicit for sex hold genuine concern for them and that they share a kind of relationship with them.
- A lack of understanding of how to have healthy relationships that could displace their dependence on prostitution.

Also of vital importance, an essential requirement for an enduring John School initiative is a consistent influx of eligible participants. As explained in Shively et al. 2012, this necessitates a proactive approach from law enforcement, involving targeted operations to apprehend men involved in soliciting. In some instances, the continuity of certain John School programs has been disrupted or halted due to an insufficient number of participants (for example, in [Buffalo, NY](#); [San Francisco, CA](#); [Tampa, FL](#)). This occurred despite the programs being fully operational and capable of educating arrested sex buyers mandated by local courts.

The flow of participants primarily hinges on whether the police possess the necessary resources and opt to allocate them to conduct reverse sting operations. Programs that rely solely on their fees to sustain John school classes can manage with minimal numbers (sometimes as few as 10 to 20 individuals annually, sufficient for one class per year). However, for programs that use fee revenue to support initiatives for survivors of prostitution and sex trafficking, a dependable and substantial volume of program participants

²⁸³ Ibid.

becomes crucial. Presently, a pressing challenge faced by all John Schools stems from reductions in police budgets, leading to fewer reverse sting operations and subsequently diminishing the number of offenders available for treatment or education.

Prevalence of John School Programs

In-person programs have been established that have served arrested sex buyers in more than **230** cities and counties in the United States. In addition to on-site classroom participation, John Schools can be accessed from any location as online courses or as a recorded presentation. At least seven online versions of John School courses are available nationwide,²⁸⁴ and courts in jurisdictions without traditional programs may choose to accept online courses to meet sentencing or diversion requirements.

Year	City or County	State
1981	Grand Rapids	MI
1988	Minneapolis/St. Paul	MN
1988	Rochester	NY
1991	West Palm Beach	FL
1992	Kansas City	KS
1995	San Francisco	CA
1995	Portland	OR
1996	Nashville	TN
1997	Las Vegas	NV
1997	Pittsburgh	PA
1997	Santa Clara	CA
1997	Buffalo/Erie County	NY
1997	Phoenix	AZ
1997	Oklahoma City	OK
1998	Fresno	CA

There are approximately 70 separate programs in the United States. We cannot be more precise about the number of programs because there are questions about whether some that have not been active recently are still intact and available or have been disbanded. However, the number of cities and counties that have ever used John Schools as a demand reduction measure is far greater than 70 since many programs have served multiple communities. At least 235 U.S. cities and counties have sent arrested sex buyers to John Schools. Examples of John Schools that are convened in one city but accept arrestees from multiple jurisdictions include the program in [Cincinnati, OH](#), which serves the host city and those arrested throughout [Hamilton County](#). [Kansas City's](#) program has served men arrested there, as well as those arrested in Lenexa, Prairie Village, Johnson County, Wyandotte County and arrestees from [Kansas City, MO](#). [Salt Lake City, UT](#), serves both the city and [county](#) of Salt Lake, and the John school in [Tacoma, WA](#) serves that city, plus [Lakewood](#), [Fife](#), and [Pierce County](#). The John School in [Toledo, OH](#), serves Lucas County and the host city. The “Men Breaking Free” program in the twin cities of [Minneapolis/St. Paul](#) also serves the city of

²⁸⁴ [American Integrity Courses](#); [Court Solutions Online](#); [Logan Social Services](#); [Life Wisdom Foundation](#); [North American Learning Institute](#); [ProProfs Store](#); [Online Court Ordered Classes](#).

²⁸⁵ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 56. During our update, we did not identify any new early examples of John Schools.

[Rochester, MN](#), and [Olmsted County](#). Some John Schools do not place geographic limits on participants. The S.T.O.P. (Solicitors, Traffickers, & Offenders of Prostitution) in [Dallas County](#), TX, accepts sex buyers from any jurisdiction within all 50 states.

Over time, some cities have had more than one program in succession. For example, [Portland](#), Oregon has had at least three distinct John school programs over a period of more than 25 years:

#1: Sexual Exploitation Education Project. The city’s first sex buyer education program was the Sexual Exploitation Education Project (SEEP). It was active from 1995 to 1997 and was run by the Council for Prostitution Alternatives through an informal agreement with [Multnomah County](#) District Attorney and the District Court. SEEP was a three-day classroom program, established as a condition of a sentence rather than as a diversion option resulting in dismissed charges. The program was canceled due to a lack of support by local law enforcement agencies, including the courts that stopped referring men to the program.

#2: Portland Prostitution Offender Program. The city’s second John School was the Portland Prostitution Offender Program (PPOP). It operated from 2003 to 2006 and was led by the Lola Greene Baldwin Foundation, in partnership with the Multnomah County Community and Circuit Courts. The program was designed as a condition of a sentence, rather than a diversion, as was its predecessor—SEEP. In the PPOP, successful completion of the John school would reduce the number of hours offenders were required to perform community service (another standard condition of their sentence). One of the reasons the program was discontinued after two years was that an unusually small program fee was charged to offenders, which resulted in the PPOP not being financially self-sustaining, as are most John schools. The PPOP charged \$83, while the national average John school fee or fine is approximately \$400 and can range as high as \$1,500 ([Norfolk](#), VA).

#3: Sex Buyer Accountability Diversion program. Five years after the PPOP ended, the city of Portland and the Multnomah County District Attorney’s Office initiated a third John school program, the Sex Buyer Accountability Diversion program (SBAD). Launched in January 2011, the program was modeled explicitly after [San Francisco](#)’s FOPP, unlike its two predecessors. It is a diversion program, where meeting all of the requirements results in a case dismissal. The fee is \$1,000, with provisions for a sliding scale based on ability to pay. The program is financially supported entirely by fees from the offenders, and excess revenue is used to support programs for survivors of commercial sex and sex trafficking. In the first two years of the program (January 2011 to May 2013), administered by Lifeworks Northwest and the Multnomah County DA’s Office, it served over 200 participants. As of May 2022, the SBAD program was still operating.

San Francisco has also used three separate John school programs between 1995 and 2023:

#1: First Offender Prostitution Program (SAGE, San Francisco District Attorney’s Office, San Francisco Police Department). In 1995, the city launched the First Offender Prostitution Program (FOPP), a program that later became known by the generic term “John School.” The FOPP is widely regarded as the first John School, although it was not (e.g., programs were active in [Grand Rapids](#), MI, and [St. Paul](#), MN a decade before). However, it did serve as the model or starting point for most of the 70+ programs that followed in the U.S. (plus over a dozen in Canada, approximately 20 in the United Kingdom, and a nationwide program that operated in over 30 sites throughout South Korea). The FOPP’s managing partner was the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office, which led a partnership with the San Francisco Police Department and a non-profit organization (SAGE), formalized by

a [memorandum of understanding](#). The FOPP also had key collaborators that contributed to the program for years, including a neighborhood organization, Save our Streets (SOS), and the San Francisco Department of Public Health. In addition, important classroom contributions were made by survivors of commercial sex, most of whom were current or former clients of the SAGE program. The FOPP was the subject of an evaluation sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice), which in 2008 found the FOPP to be effective in reducing recidivism by more than 40%.²⁸⁶ The FOPP was [discontinued](#), and SAGE was disbanded by the fall of 2014.

#2: *First Offender Prostitution Program (Community West Works)*. In 2015, [Community Works West](#) (CWW) began developing a John school to replace the previous program operated in the city for 20 years by SAGE. In 2018, the CWW website described their [second-generation](#) John School in San Francisco, still describing it as the *First Offender Prostitution Program and a court diversion program that seeks to reduce recidivism among first time buyers of prostitution*. A news report in July 2019 about the [second](#) John school in San Francisco noted that local police supplied the program with a robust stream of arrested sex buyers.²⁸⁷ However, by 2020 the District Attorney’s Office had announced it would no longer prosecute prostitution charges and there were very few sex buyer arrests made and no flow of participants for a John school.

#3: *American Integrity Courses online John School*: In 2022, the District Attorney who championed the de facto decriminalization of prostitution was removed from office in a recall vote,²⁸⁸ and in early 2023 reverse stings were resumed in the city. San Francisco began sending arrested or cited sex buyers to an online version of a John School. The program the city currently uses (as of March 2023) is produced by American Integrity Courses (AIC), which hosts a 10-hour john school as part of its Human Trafficking Awareness & Prevention Program. The AIC John School covers the legal, social and health ramifications of purchasing sex to deter individuals from solicitation in the future. The San Francisco DA’s Office said that the AIC John School had been available as a virtual online course to first-time offenders in the city since the Covid pandemic began (March, 2020). Solicitation suspects in San Francisco are now directed to neighborhood courts, where convicted offenders may be required to enroll in the John school for a \$50 fee. Through February 2023, only 14 local sex buyers had taken the AIC John School course.

Other cities that have had more than one John school program include the following examples:

- [Columbus/Franklin County, Ohio](#) has had two John School programs. The *Columbus John Education Program*, operated by the Columbus City Attorney’s Office and the Franklin County Municipal Court, was launched in 2005. At the end of 2012, the Columbus City Attorney’s Office reported that the program conducted three or four John school sessions per year, depending upon the flow of men provided by police operations. The program functioned as both a diversion and a

²⁸⁶ Michael Shively, Sarah Kluck Jalbert, Ryan Kling, William Rhodes, et al, *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program, Report Summary*, (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, March 7, 2008), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/222451.pdf>.

²⁸⁷ Holly J. McDede, “Johns’ in San Francisco Sit Down for a Class on the Sex Trade,” KALW Public Media, 91.7 FM Bay Area, June 20, 2019, <https://www.kalw.org/show/crosscurrents/2019-06-20/johns-in-san-francisco-sit-down-for-a-class-on-the-sex-trade#stream/0>.

²⁸⁸ Janie Har, “San Francisco Recalls Progressive Prosecutor Chesa Boudin,” PBS Newshour.org, June 8, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/san-francisco-recalls-progressive-prosecutor-chesa-boudin>.

sentencing option. Some sex buyers were sent to the school as part of a plea agreement arranged by their attorneys, and others were ordered to attend as a condition of their probation. Between 2005 and 2018, the program had over 1,000 participants and only 12 repeat offenders on record, for a recidivism rate of less than 1%. In 2016, the non-profit organization “She Has a Name” launched a John school program called, *Reduce Demand*. The program served individuals arrested in central Ohio and focused on Columbus and Franklin County. From 2016 to 2019, over 200 men completed the Reduce Demand program. More recently, classes were larger and have included men arrested in other communities in the Franklin County area. For example, in July of 2021, a *Reduce Demand* class had 58 male sex buyers in attendance.

- **Chicago, Illinois**, has had two John Schools. The first was operated by Genesis House and Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and was disbanded in 2005. The second began in 2005 and was operated by Amend and the Chicago Police Department. That John School was still functioning into 2013. As of March 2023, we have had no confirmation of its continued operation over the prior 10 years, but also have not seen notice of its cancellation.
- **Waco, Texas**, has had two distinct John school programs. The first program was approved in 2000, and its first class was held in 2002. The program was launched by a Waco Police Department Officer, Anita Johnson, and was modeled after [San Francisco](#)’s FOPP. At the time of the first program, the police department conducted a small number of reverse stings each year; therefore, WPD decided to hold just one John School class per year. The program shut down in 2013 due to a lack of funding and a sufficient flow of participants. In 2017, a second program was initiated by Jesus Said Love, a faith-based organization, and The Heart of Texas Human Trafficking Coalition. The Stop Demand School program is designed as a sex buyer education program, focused on accountability and positive behavior change. Classes are offered both in-person and online. In-person classes are conducted six to eight Tuesdays annually for eight hours. The online course requires participants to pass a final exam with a 70% or higher score to receive their certificate of completion.
- **Kansas City, Kansas** had a program starting in 1992 that was discontinued sometime between 1997 and 2000. Then a new John School program was started in 2000 by Veronica’s Voice in [Kansas City, MO](#), that serves Kansas City, KS, as well as several other communities and counties in the region. The Veronica’s Voice John School was an adaptation of the basic [San Francisco](#) FOPP model. The program was redesigned in 2018 as a multi-session sex buyer education program focused on accountability and positive behavior change. The second [Kansas City](#) program was modeled after [Seattle’s](#) Stopping Sexual Exploitation: A Program for Men.
- **Minneapolis / St. Paul, Minnesota** has three John School programs. The Restorative Justice Program Prostitution Patrons, begun in 1988 by Project Pathfinder Inc., and the Offenders Prostitution Program, operated by Breaking Free since 1999. The latter program was modeled after [San Francisco](#)’s FOPP, while the former pre-dates the FOPP. The third program began in 2012 and is still operational as of 2022. This program was redesigned in 2018 to more closely model sex buyer education programs focusing on accountability and positive behavior change. Sawyer Solutions provides an individualized intervention program for men who buy sex. The sex buyer education program begins with an introduction and initial assessment session and consists of six

weekly group sessions designed to help male sex buyers to choose more productive coping methods.

- ***Tucson, Arizona***, has had two programs: (1) the STD Program (Safety Through Deterrence), operated in 2004 by the Tucson Police Department, and (2) Odyssey, operated since January 2007 by the Tucson’s District Attorneys and Police Department, Southwest Intervention Services, and Cactus Counseling.

One of the difficulties in counting the number of currently active John Schools is determining what it means to be “active.” Most programs go through periods of greater and less activity, so they may schedule classes monthly or bi-monthly, but postpone them if police activity has been low and the numbers need to be increased. Some programs that had been robust and met frequently have gone through fallow periods of one or two years where no classes have been held (e.g., [Buffalo, NY](#); [Waco, TX](#); [Tampa, FL](#)). If the program is hardwired into the system, the capacity to hold classes remains. If classes have not occurred due to an absence of participants delivered by police, we regard it as active. For example, the S.T.O.P. program in [Dallas County, TX](#), halted classes during the pandemic due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. The class referred participants to Waco’s online version of the Stop Demand School (SDS) during 2020-2021, while social distancing restrictions did not permit in-person classes to operate. As of 2022, the S.T.O.P. program has resumed live classes. We define as “discontinued” only those programs that have been explicitly cancelled, or that have not been held for many years and there is no remaining infrastructure or intent for the program to hold another class (e.g., [Rochester, NY](#)). Another challenge in keeping current on John School programs that are active “now” is that would require an ongoing surveillance or reporting system, which would need resources that have not been made available for that task.

Staff at most of the John School programs launched between 2000 and 2015 have said that they used [San Francisco](#)’s FOPP as a model, but all new programs adapted from others require some modifications to accommodate differences in local needs and resources. When Shively et al. (2012) examined other John School’s major features, none was found to be structured exactly like the FOPP along all dimensions²⁸⁹. For example, the majority of the other programs collect just enough fee revenue to support the John school classes and are not designed to generate revenue for survivor programs. The FOPP staff (particularly from SAGE) regarded that “restorative justice” component as one of the most crucial elements of their program and believed that it is a serious shortcoming to omit that feature. Other programs are explicitly not modeled on the FOPP, such as the three-day SEEP program that ran in Portland, OR from 1995 to 1997, and [Seattle](#)’s 10-week “[Stopping Sex Exploitation](#)” program.

Since the inception of Demand Forum, its administrators have gathered information on every John School known to be implemented in the United States, but for some programs details are scarce. For example, regarding the John Schools in [Rochester, NY](#), (established circa 1988) and [South Bend, IN](#), (circa 2000) we have information obtained only through one or two stories in news archives which provided little detail and we have been unable to verify or expand upon that information through interviews. In contrast, the Principal Investigator of this report spent more than three years evaluating San Francisco’s FOPP as part of a separate study funded by the National Institute of Justice.²⁹⁰ A great deal of detailed information about that program is presented in the evaluation Final Report²⁹¹ and posted on the [city’s](#) webpage on Demand Forum. Most of

²⁸⁹ See Shively, et al., *National Overview*, page 68, for key characteristics of select John Schools Programs.

²⁹⁰ Shively, et al., *Final Report*.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

the available information falls between these extremes. For example, as part of the Shively et al. (2012) study information was acquired through interviews, site visits, and observations of programs in [Indianapolis](#), IN, [Los Angeles](#), [Norfolk](#), [Phoenix](#), [San Diego](#), and [Worcester](#) MA.

“When the Red Zone Program was created, it was because we wanted to change these defendants’ behavior. That’s what you really want to instill in a traditional prosecutor; you want them to start thinking about impacting this person’s behavior in low-level cases so that they’re not back in front of us again.”

Deputy Prosecutor Michelle Waymire, chief of the Marion County Community Prosecution Unit, 2007²⁹²

Community Impact Panels

In numerous communities, John schools and local residents and community representatives have collaborated to directly address sex buyers, aiming to discourage such behavior. Within a John School format, this approach is typically implemented in a setting where an audience of known sex buyers are required to listen to community perspectives. As part of Shively et al.’s 2012 National Assessment, researchers observed John School sessions conducted in [Indianapolis](#), IN; [Norfolk](#), VA; [Phoenix](#), AZ; [San Diego](#), CA; [San Francisco](#), CA; and [Worcester](#), MA. Community representatives from local organizations delivered discussions regarding the various adverse impacts of prostitution on communities.

Among the common repercussions of prostitution conveyed by community residents and business owners were:²⁹³

- Sex buyers soliciting sex from female residents and patrons of local businesses.
- Instances of public illicit drug use, violence, and general neighborhood disorder.
- Presence of condoms, syringes, and broken glass on sidewalks and in parks, posing risks to children and others.
- Disturbances such as shouting, altercations, and loud cursing occurring late at night.
- Intoxicated individuals sleeping in doorways of residences and businesses.
- Incidents of people defecating and urinating in yards, on sidewalks, and near home entrances.
- Instances of individuals engaging in sexual activity in parked vehicles, on sidewalks, in yards, and near residential doorways.
- Occurrences of sex buyers and sex traffickers/pimps assaulting individuals involved in prostitution.
- Instances of prostituted women, trafficking victims, and pimps assaulting those buying sex.

²⁹² Robert V. Wolf, *Breaking with Tradition: Introducing Problem Solving in Conventional Courts* (Center for Court Innovation, 2007), http://www.courtinnovation.org/sites/default/files/Breaking_With_Tradition1.pdf.

²⁹³ Shively, et al., *National Overview*.

In most communities, residents complain of fear of personal safety, property damage, and sleep deprivation because people choosing to commit violent and destructive crimes there. There can also be repercussions for women and girls who have been propositioned by sex buyers. Community representatives have asserted that women and girls within specific ethnic groups may face dire consequences from their husbands, fathers, or brothers if it was learned that they had been propositioned by a male sex buyer, even if they did nothing to encourage it and it was unavoidable. Residents argue that sex buyers “can do their business there and leave,” but residents must stay in their neighborhood and deal with the aftermath.²⁹⁴ In one presentation observed by the 2012 Shively et al. research team, the community representative asked whether the male sex buyers in the class were arrested in the neighborhood in which they lived—none of the 27 men in class that day said they had been arrested in their home neighborhood.²⁹⁵ Demographic information provided by evaluations of other programs demonstrates similar sentiments. A 2015 evaluation of [Kansas City’s Johnz School](#) (now *SSE: A Program for Men in Kansas City*) revealed that among the 200+ *Johnz School* participants about whom residence and arrest county data were available, 102 participants, or almost half (49.3%), had travelled outside of their counties of residence to purchase commercial sex.²⁹⁶ Members of the communities also emphasized that sex buyers contribute to the problems of prostitution and neighborhood degradation and are the chief cause of these problems since without sex buyers there would be no prostituted persons or sex traffickers/pimps.

More Recent Sex Buyer Education Programs

Since the first National Assessment report was published in 2012,²⁹⁷ there has been an increase in the number of John School programs offered in the United States and a shift in the types of formats used. Many of the newer programs have been structured as therapeutic or educational interventions involving multiple group sessions. Some of the operators of these newer programs also specifically avoid calling them “John School” or any “school,” instead stressing that they seek a therapeutic intervention involving interactivity, personal processing, and accountability, rather than a one-way or didactic communication of information in a classroom format.

One of the first sex buyer education programs launched after the publication of the 2012 National Assessment report began in [Seattle](#), WA, in 2013. “*Stopping Sexual Exploitation: A Program for Men*” (SSE), a 10-week program developed by Peter Qualliotine,²⁹⁸ served all of [King County](#) and focused on promoting sex buyer accountability and positive behavior change, examined the root causes of sex buying behaviors, and involved conducting longitudinal assessments of participant behaviors. The program continues today under the operation of Washington Trafficking Prevention.²⁹⁹ Subsequent programs in four states were modeled after SSE (CO, KS, MO, and WA). The other programs are not exact replicas of SSE but are local adaptations guided by the SSE as a model. The subsequent programs vary on several dimensions, including (1) the number of sessions, (2) their place within local justice systems as diversion

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Kristy Childs and Alexandra Pierce, *Veronica’s Voice Johnz School Evaluation Report: Program Operations November 2008-September 2014* (Othayonih Research, 2015), <https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Johnz-School-2008-2014-Evaluation-Report.pdf>.

²⁹⁷ Shively, et al., *National Overview*.

²⁹⁸ World Without Exploitation, “Peter Qualliotine,” n.d., <https://www.worldwithoutexploitation.org/co-chairs/peter-qualliotine>.

²⁹⁹ Washington Trafficking Prevention “Stopping Sexual Exploitation (SSE),” n.d., <https://traffickingprevention.org/mens-accountability>.

versus sentencing options, (3) associated fees or fines, (4) course evaluations, and (5) program curricula and session content.

Encouraging accountability among participants is a core concept common across these programs. SSE promoted accountability through an inflexible course fee (i.e., no sliding scales), mandatory group participation/discussion, strict attendance policy, and sharing personal reflections of their actions and the harm they have caused. However, not all programs promote accountability in the same manner. One of [Houston](#)'s sex buyer education programs, "*Sex Buyer Transformation and Restoration* (S.T.A.R.)," requires participants to bring a family member/friend (18+) to register for the course and to each class session as an "accountability partner."

While sex buyer education programs similarly seek to reduce demand for commercial sex, these programs have somewhat different processes and objectives than the FOPP-based John Schools. The newer multiple-session programs are designed to support three process-based goals aimed at creating a personal decision by participants to not purchase sex again by:

1. Reframing sex buying from a "victimless crime" to a practice of gender-based exploitation and violence.
2. Changing beliefs and attitudes regarding the cultural construction of masculinity and promote men's accountability in stopping the harm of prostitution.
3. Supporting healthy alternative conceptions of masculinity.

Many of the newer sex buyer education programs are successors to previous FOPP-based John Schools that served the same areas. For example, beginning in 2002, [Kansas City](#) had a John School program modeled after the FOPP. In 2018, Modeling Equality and Veronica's Voice partnered with Peter Qualliotine to replicate a more extensive model of the program SSE he had implemented in [Seattle](#) through the Organization for Prostitution Survivors (OPS). Since 2018, the program has been known as *SSE: Program for Men in Kansas City*. More details about this transformation can be found [here](#).

Similarly, the [St. Paul/Minneapolis](#) program, *Men Breaking Free*, which originated in 1999 as a FOPP-based John School, was known as *The John School at Breaking Free* until its transformation to a revised sex buyer education program in 2018. At that time, Breaking Free partnered with the organization [Building Peaceful Community](#) to review and revise the then-current John school approach. The re-conceptualized program was called "[Men Breaking Free](#)." A more detailed explanation of this transformation is provided in the document "Building Authentic Partnerships to Reduce Sex Trafficking and Heal and Rebuild Lives, Families, and Communities."³⁰⁰ John school curricula vary, as one would expect. The FOPP curriculum³⁰¹ and an exposition of John School curriculum items³⁰² have been detailed elsewhere. Other John schools have shorter educational programs than the eight-hour day of the FOPP. [Norfolk](#)'s John School was only one to two hours, and covered just three topics (health, community impact, survivor impact).

Other programs have multiple sessions and more total hours of instruction or therapy. The Louisiana John School's *John School Recovery Skills Program*, located in [Shreveport](#), LA, was a multi-day intervention

³⁰⁰ Donald Gault, "Building Authentic Partnerships to Reduce Sex Trafficking and Heal and Rebuild Lives, Families, and Communities," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 7, no. 1 (2020): 5, [doi:10.24926/ijps.v7i1.2973](https://doi.org/10.24926/ijps.v7i1.2973).

³⁰¹ See Shively et al., *Final Report*; Shively et al., *National Overview*.

³⁰² See Shively, et al., *National Overview*, page 70, for John School Curriculum Items.

offered to “habitual offenders” (those with two or more “soliciting prostitution” charges) as part of their pre/post-sentencing or probation. The program length varied and was based on case-by-case evaluation and assessment results. The Sexual Exploitation Education Program (SEEP) operated in Portland, Oregon, from 1995-1997 was a three-day, 15-hour intervention. One of the most extensive program, in terms of the number of sessions, was the 10-week program in [Salt Lake City, UT](#). It involved 10 weeks of group counseling work, with each week having a theme. Admission to the program was on a rolling basis, and new participants would enter at any point in the cycle of sessions.³⁰³

Sex buyer education programs vary in the number of sessions needed for completion, being offered as diversion versus sentencing options, associated fees or fines, and the program content and range of curricula items. Sex buyer education programs are usually eight-to-ten-week intervention programs, such as those implemented in [Seattle](#), WA, [Kansas City](#), MO, and [Houston](#), TX. These programs share common elements, such as beginning with two individual 60-minute sessions of Motivational Interviewing (MI) before participating in the group. Eight weekly group classes follow. The group size is limited, and the eight three-hour learning modules are highly interactive, utilizing exercises and group discussion to engage participants in a process of self-reflection and critical analysis.

The most repeated feedback the men give the program . . . Why didn't people tell us this before?

Terry Cosgrove, Men's Education Program, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2015³⁰⁴

Online John Schools

There have been at least seven³⁰⁵ online versions of John School programs that have been established in the United States. They each have brief descriptions on their websites. Details about the content of these courses are proprietary and behind paywalls and typically offered only to arrested sex buyers, so we are unable to access detailed information about their content. This model of the program has not been evaluated, and we do not have an empirical basis for determining the relative effectiveness of online programs.

Common Misconceptions about John Schools

The John School model has stirred controversy, eliciting strong proponents as well as fervent critics. Our examination of the literature concerning prostitution and sex trafficking reveals that several discussions surrounding John Schools stem from misconceptions regarding the diversity in program structure and content, the types of individuals targeted, and the challenge in discerning between weaker and stronger forms of evidence regarding their effectiveness. While below we provide an update on “Misconception #1” from Shively et al.’s 2012 *National Assessment*, for a discussion of the full range of common misconceptions see Shively et al. 2012.³⁰⁶

³⁰³ For more detail about this program see Shively et al, *National Overview*, 70-71.

³⁰⁴ Jona Ison, “Buying Sex Lands Some Ohio Johns in School,” *Cincinnati.com/The Enquirer*, September 21, 2015, <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2015/09/21/buying-sex-lands-ohio-johns-school/72555548/>.

³⁰⁵ [American Integrity Courses](#); [Court Solutions Online](#); [Logan Social Services](#); [Life Wisdom Foundation](#); [North American Learning Institute](#); [ProProfs Store](#); [Online Court Ordered Classes](#).

³⁰⁶ Shively, et al., *National Overview*.

Misconception #1: All John schools are, and must be, diversion programs, allowing arrested sex buyers to avoid a criminal record or punishment.

The most frequent critique of John schools is that they serve as diversion programs, allowing men who have been apprehended for attempting to purchase sex to evade an arrest record and/or criminal penalties. While it holds true that the commonly referenced model program for John Schools ([San Francisco's FOPP](#)) operated as a diversion program that led to charges being dropped upon successful completion, the classification of these programs as diversionary or punitive options stands independent from the central educational aspect that defines the John school model. It is a misconception to assume that all John Schools are exclusively structured as diversion programs.

In a significant number of U.S. John Schools, attendance is not a voluntary decision. Courts can mandate men to partake in the program as a form of treatment or punishment, making participation obligatory and charges not dismissible upon program completion. The Principal Investigator's research spanning the past 15 years, finds that approximately half of the programs (52%) in the United States are exclusively designed as diversion programs, where participation is voluntary and successful completion leads to the dismissal of charges. Contrary to this, the [Norfolk, VA](#), John School model involved compulsory class attendance and encompassed a blend of punitive and rehabilitative elements. The program required a fine of \$1,500, mandated community service, imposed a supervision fee of \$40 per day during community service, and necessitated the completion of the John school class. Fulfilling the John school course did not result in charges being dropped. The program incorporated an educational intervention while simultaneously imposing relatively severe criminal sanctions, particularly notable for an offense classified as a misdemeanor, targeting those arrested for soliciting individuals involved in prostitution.

For the remaining half of John schools, the type of entry into the program is at the discretion of the local courts: participation can be either a mandatory condition of a sentence, or can either be a required or voluntary and in any given class there may be some ordered to attend and others who opted in through a plea agreement or a diversion program.

In April 2021, a new state law in Ohio established the crime of "engaging in prostitution." Previously, Ohio had a single statute addressing prostitution, one that focused on penalizing prostituted persons rather than sex buyers. Under the new statute ([Ohio Revised Code Section 2907.231](#)), sex buyers are required to attend an education or treatment program "aimed at preventing [them] from inducing, enticing, or procuring another to engage in sexual activity for hire in exchange for the person giving anything of value to the other person." The passage of this new law required the state to create a set of standards for Sex Buyer Education (SBE) programs. In 2022, the Ohio Attorney General's Office created a guide for cities and counties to create Sex Buyer Education programs in accordance with statewide regulations. The report outlines two types of programs: single day programs and lengthier, therapy-based programs. Cities/counties interested in implementing a program, could apply for funding from the AGO by filling out this application: [John School Funding Application](#) For further information, click here: [John Schools: Guidelines for Sex Buyer Education Programs](#).

As noted in Shively et al. 2012, when deliberating the merits of John Schools, it becomes crucial to contemplate whether it is equitable or justifiable for men apprehended for solicitation to have access to a program enabling the dismissal of their charges and the avoidance of a criminal record. In cases where jurisdictions grant men arrested for solicitation the diversion option while not extending equivalent

alternatives to women arrested for prostitution, the inequality is evident. Nevertheless, it is not reasonable to reject all John Schools solely due to disapproval of diversion programs. The educational aspect of John Schools stands independently from whether they are structured as diversionary or punitive choices. Individuals who believe that diversion programs like the FOPP allow men to evade significant consequences should advocate against making John School participation voluntary and permitting participants to sidestep criminal charges and convictions. Such features do not serve as a valid foundation for opposing the fundamental concept of John Schools, which center around educating men arrested for purchasing sex about the detrimental implications of their conduct.

New developments in Texas, are pertinent to this discussion. On September 1, 2021, a Texas state law took effect which made simple solicitation of prostitution between adults a felony level crime and was the first state to do so. [HB 1540](#) made solicitation of prostitution a state jail felony on the first offense and made it punishable by up to two years in jail upon conviction. One year afterward, a KHOU 11 Investigations analysis of court records showed that the Harris County District Attorney's Office ([Houston](#), TX) rarely obtained felony convictions in those cases.³⁰⁷ Still, the leverage created by the felony charge resulted in most of the sex buyers agreeing to participate in an educational program and pay a substantial fine or donate to a survivor program. In the year after the law took effect, an analysis of court records showed that 518 felony solicitation of prostitution cases had been filed. Of the 232 cases that had been disposed of, just 11 (5%) ended in felony convictions, while 178 cases (77%) of those disposed of were dismissed under a pretrial diversion program. In those deals offered by prosecutors, defendants were generally required to take a "John School" class, and either pay a fine or donate to the [Houston Area Women's Center](#). In return, those sex buyers were later given an opportunity to have the criminal charge expunged from their record. In [Montgomery County](#), TX ([Houston](#), TX extends into three counties [Harris](#), [Montgomery](#), and [Fort Bend](#) Counties) according to the Assistant District Attorney, of the 39 disposed of cases since the law went into effect, 33 resulted in criminal convictions.

Evidence of Effectiveness

The overarching objective of John Schools is to diminish the demand for commercial sex, thereby leading to a decrease in the occurrence of sex trafficking and prostitution. The John school approach boasts robust empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness. Some researchers and other critics have argued that evidence of the impact of John Schools on reoffending is either absent or inconclusive. While there have been several studies of John Schools,³⁰⁸ there have been few formal evaluations capable of assessing the key outcomes of these programs, such as their impact on reoffending (e.g., measured via recidivism rates or longitudinal self-reports). As was explained by Shively et al. 2012, the first evaluation of program effects on recidivism was conducted by Monto and Garcia, who examined a sample of 91 participants in the Sexual

³⁰⁷ Jeremy Rogalski, "Texas Made Sex Buying a Felony. Harris County DA's Office Rarely Gets Felony Convictions," KHOU 11, October 19, 2022, <https://www.khou.com/article/news/investigations/sex-solicitation-prostitution-crime-felony-texas/285-acb989d8-e5f9-4e15-89a6-4900824cf51f>.

³⁰⁸ Alexandra Pierce, *John School Evaluation Report*, Othayonih Research, https://www.veronicasvoice.org/files/ugd/b1dc72_502c2a499ce64886b6ae2cd0fcc8392a.pdf; Scot Wortley, Benedikt Fischer, Cheryl Webster, "Vice Lessons: A Survey of Prostitution Offenders Enrolled in the Toronto John School Diversion Program," *Canadian Journal of Criminology* 44.4 (2002): 369-402, [doi: 10.3138/cjcrim.44.4.369](https://doi.org/10.3138/cjcrim.44.4.369); Robin Valenzuela, "The Nashville John School: Affective Governance and the Reintegrative Shaming Approach," *Human Organization* 75.3 (2016): 249-257, [doi: 10.17730/1938-3525-75.3.249](https://doi.org/10.17730/1938-3525-75.3.249).

Exploitation Education Project (SEEP).³⁰⁹ This John School program operated in Portland, Oregon from 1995 to 1997 and was then discontinued. The recidivism rates of the SEEP participants were compared to a group of 100 men arrested locally for soliciting sex who did not attend the program. Monto and Garcia found no significant difference in the recidivism rates of the two groups, but the data were insufficient to support any conclusion about the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of SEEP. The chief limitation of the study was that “*there were only three recidivists in the treatment and comparison group combined.*”³¹⁰ There was insufficient statistical power to detect any program effect: three offenders could not be distributed in a way that would attest to a treatment effect or support a conclusion of no effect. The SEEP program also did not provide a sound basis on which to assess the efficacy of the John school model, because the Portland program studied by Monto and Garcia was atypical of John Schools in the U.S. (or anywhere else), being a 15-hour, three-day program that was discontinued in 1997 due to disagreements between the program staff and the government sponsors,³¹¹ and amid complaints that it was an ideological presentation rather than an educational program.³¹²

Shively et al. (2012) also reported that Brewer and colleagues³¹³ and others³¹⁴ have used the Monto and Garcia study results³¹⁵ to argue that John School programs do not add any independent deterrent effect, and that there is likely little additional deterrence to be achieved by post-arrest interventions such as Johns schools. When Brewer and colleagues’ research was underway, the prior study of the SEEP program was the only evaluation of a John School’s impact on recidivism, and it is true that Monto and Garcia did not find a program effect. But *failing to find an effect is not the same as finding no effect*. Given the acknowledged limitations of a comparison group study of one, discontinued John School program,³¹⁶ when the study had a sample of three recidivists to study across both treatment and comparison groups, it was premature for anyone to use those findings to conclude that the John School approach has been demonstrated to be ineffective in lowering recidivism. “It is also a misrepresentation of the Monto and Garcia results to say that they found the program to be ineffective; instead, the data were insufficient to find any program effect, either positive or negative.”³¹⁷

³⁰⁹ Martin A. Monto and Steve Garcia, “Recidivism among the Customers of Female Street Prostitutes: Do Intervention Programs Help?” *Western Criminology Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 1-10, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/recidivism-among-customers-female-street-prostitutes-do>.

³¹⁰ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, *ibid*, p. 74.

³¹¹ Donna M. Hughes, *Best Practices to Address the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* (University of Rhode Island, Women’s Studies Program, August 2004), 1-69, https://www.popcenter.org/sites/default/files/problems/trafficked_women/PDFs/Hughes_2004a.pdf; Melissa Farley et al., “Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Don’t Buy Sex: ‘You Can Have a Good Time with the Servitude’ vs. ‘You’re Supporting a System of Degradation’” (Paper presented at Psychologists for Social Responsibility Annual Meeting, Boston, MA, July 15, 2011), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/ComparingSexBuyersReport.pdf>.

³¹² R. Franzen, “New Program Gives Johns an Education,” *The Oregonian*, November 3, 2003.

³¹³ Devon D. Brewer et al., “A Large Specific Deterrent Effect of Arrest for Patronizing a Prostitute,” *PLoS ONE* 1, no. 1 (2006): e60, [doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0000060](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0000060).

³¹⁴ Farley et al., *You Can Have a Good Time*.

³¹⁵ Martin A. Monto and Steve Garcia, “Recidivism among the Customers of Female Street Prostitutes: Do Intervention Programs Help?” *Western Criminology Review* 3, no. 2 (2001): 1-10, <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/recidivism-among-customers-female-street-prostitutes-do>.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*.

³¹⁷ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 74.

From 2005 to 2008, an evaluation of San Francisco’s FOPP John school **found a substantial program impact, reducing recidivism among arrested sex buyers in the city by at least 40%.**³¹⁸ The research methodology and findings are presented in the project’s *Final Report* to the National Institute of Justice (U.S. Department of Justice).³¹⁹ To evaluate the program’s impact on recidivism, researchers analyzed time series data for San Francisco and the rest of California for 10 years before implementation (1985-1995) and 10 years after implementation (1995 through 2005). In San Francisco, there was a sharp drop in recidivism rates in the year of implementation (1995), and these lower levels were sustained over the subsequent ten years. **The 10-year average annual recidivism rate in the city before 1995 was 8.8%, immediately fell sharply in 1995 when the program was launched, and then stayed at the far lower rate (4.5%) during the following decade when the FOPP being was continuously implemented in the city.** A similar pattern was observed in San Diego, where recidivism rates following implementation of a John school in 2000 were less than half of the pre-program levels. There were no significant statewide shifts in either 1995 or 2000 that might explain the recidivism declines in either San Francisco or San Diego as simply being part of a wider pattern. The results were repeatedly confirmed when applying various statistical modeling techniques and examining different subsets of arrestees over different timeframes. Alternative explanations that were analyzed and dismissed as unable to explain the recidivism findings included (a) displacement of prostitution from San Francisco to other cities, and (b) sex buyers in the city shifting their soliciting activities online rather than the streets.

The collective evidence strongly supports the conclusion that the FOPP significantly reduced recidivism, and alternative explanations, such as displacement online or to other communities, are unsubstantiated. As explained by Shively et al. 2012, one could contend that the arrest procedure in isolation, rather than the John School initiative, was responsible for helping men learn to evade reapprehension. However, the decrease in recidivism noticed in the FOPP assessment cannot be attributed solely to arrests.

Firstly, the arrest rate remained consistent across all cases in the database used for program evaluation. Given that all 84,000+ men in the samples had encountered arrest between 1985 and 2005, it becomes evident that factors other than arrest led to the sustained decline in post-1995 recidivism rates in San Francisco, a trend not observed elsewhere in the state.

Further, while the drop-in recidivism rates might be due to FOPP graduates relocating their involvement in commercial sex activities (displacement), this is unlikely to account for a significant portion, if any, of the observed impact. The data from the California Criminal Justice Statistics Center allowed Shively et al. (2008) to track re-arrests anywhere in the state, enabling the measurement of recidivism that may have been shifted outside of San Francisco due to the FOPP (except for out-of-state displacement). It is also worth questioning whether the FOPP would cause more crime displacement than what would occur without the program. The FOPP operates as a voluntary initiative allowing offenders to have their charges dropped. Participants must perceive the program as less punitive compared to traditional adjudication, or they would not opt for it. In this context, it is reasonable to inquire why the less punitive FOPP would lead to more significant crime displacement than the more punitive conventional sanctions. One possibility is that the program educates men about the increasingly severe penalties they would face for future offenses. Those

³¹⁸ Shively et al., *Final Report*.

³¹⁹ *Ibid*.

who are ineligible for the FOPP or reject the option might not receive the same information about the harsher consequences of re-offending.

Finally, the FOPP could motivate participants to cease engaging in street-based commercial sex and instead use escorts, patronize prostitutes in brothels, or seek services online. This transition indoors or online is a plausible explanation and could explain some of the FOPP's effects. Given that the SFPD predominantly conducts reverse stings as street operations, individuals soliciting sex online have little chance of being arrested in San Francisco. However, there is no inherent reason to assume that the FOPP would drive crime to be displaced online beyond any displacement resulting from arrests alone. Since presenters in the John School inform participants that police monitor online prostitution, a message not communicated to those undergoing regular adjudication, we would anticipate the opposite effect: if influenced at all, FOPP participants would be less inclined than others to shift their activities online.

“The point of this program is to educate them and let them know that this is not a victimless crime.”

Columbus Assistant City Attorney Michael C. Allbritain, speaking about the Columbus Ohio John School, December, 2012³²⁰

Additional Observations about John Schools

Most of the other tactics examined in this report involve standard methods from the criminal justice realm applied to the act of buying sex, such as seizing vehicles used in the commission of the offense, community service programs, and fines. These approaches are not explicitly designed to tackle the issue of prostitution demand. However, the inception of John Schools introduces an approach specifically developed to interact with identified buyers of commercial sex, with the objective of reducing the recurrence of such activities through educational or rehabilitative means.

John Schools have generated controversy within circles dedicated to addressing sexual exploitation and sex trafficking. While each response to criminal activity has its strengths and weaknesses, several concerns regarding these programs appear to arise from misunderstandings or incomplete information.

Diversity characterizes the spectrum of John School programs, highlighting the necessity to collect and disseminate insights into the rationale behind various models and their operational aspects. This includes aspects such as diversion versus sentencing, the entities leading and participating in the programs, presenters, the content of presentations, and the structure of the sessions—whether they are concise single-classroom encounters or counseling initiatives spanning up to 10 weeks. The proliferation of online versions of sex buyer education programs also warrants further study to ascertain whether this avenue effectively engages sex buyers and triggers behavioral change.

³²⁰ Theodore Decker, “‘John School’ Lesson: Prostitution has Victims,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, December 17, 2012, <https://www.dispatch.com/story/news/crime/2012/12/17/john-school-lesson-prostitution/23759469007>.

“Both the disease aspect and the safety aspect were huge to me. It wasn’t judgmental. It was about understanding the situation, and I appreciated that. I can’t say it’s going to work for everyone. You’re going to reach some, and that’s better than not doing it at all.”

Anonymous sex buyer, speaking about the
Columbus, Ohio John school, December 2012³²¹

Additional References

To access additional information about specific programs and the U.S. cities and counties where “[John Schools](#)” have been used, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “John School” from the “Tactics” list. Similarly, the locations where John Schools have been used may be mapped on Demand Forum by choosing “John School” from the list.

³²¹ Decker, *ibid.*

Chapter 10: Community Service Programs

Overview

“[Community Service Programs](#)” are those in which convicted offenders are placed with nonprofit organizations or government agencies for the performance of unpaid work for a specified period of time as a condition of their sentencing.³²² Longitudinal research shows, that in both the short and long term, offenders recidivate significantly less if they performed community service rather than being imprisoned.³²³

While community service programs are a less frequently used intervention to target sex buyers than others, they have a relatively long history of being used in some areas. We have documented more than **230** U.S. cities and counties that have used this tactic to address consumer demand for prostitution. Arrested sex buyers can be ordered to perform community service as a condition of a sentence or a diversion program. Service may include such activities as cleaning streets where prostitution is known to occur. For most people sentenced on charges related to buying sex with adults, community service obligations range from four to 250 hours and are often combined with other sanctions such as fines, fees, probation, and/or completion of “John school” education or treatment programs. For those arrested for paying to sexually abuse minors, the charges are far more serious felony-level offenses, and community service as part of a prosecution diversion program is not applicable (although fines, fees, identity disclosure, and community service may be applied as conditions of sentences in addition to terms of incarceration).

In most of the cities and counties known to impose community service on arrested sex buyers, the service programs were not solely targeted toward addressing demand but are instead sanctions applied to misdemeanors in general. Judges may require sex buyer misdemeanants to perform community service as a sentence condition or fulfill voluntary diversion options’ obligations. For example, in 2017 a man caught attempting to purchase sex from two prostituted women in [Aurora](#), CO, pleaded guilty to one count of soliciting prostitution, a Class 3 misdemeanor, and was sentenced to six-months probation and to perform 60 hours of community service.³²⁴

In other cities and counties, such as [Indianapolis](#), IN, [Columbiana County](#), OH, and [Norfolk](#), VA, community service is designed specifically for men arrested for soliciting prostitution. It is combined with other measures such as education programs and probation. The objectives of this approach combine elements of service with restorative justice, educational, and punitive components intended to advance deterrence.

³²² Hilde Wermink, Arjan Blokland, Paul Nieuwbeerta, Daniel Nagin, et al., “Comparing the Effects of Community Services and Short-Term Imprisonment on Recidivism: A Matched Sample Approach,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 6 (2010): 325–349, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9097-1>.

³²³ Hilde Wermink, Arjan Blokland, Paul Nieuwbeerta, Daniel Nagin, et al., “Comparing the Effects of Community Services and Short-Term Imprisonment on Recidivism: A Matched Sample Approach,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 6 (2010): 325–349, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9097-1>.

³²⁴ Jesse Paul, “Aurora Code Enforcement Officer Recorded Himself Soliciting Prostitutes on Body Camera,” *The Denver Post*, March 27, 2017, <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/03/27/aurora-prostitute-solicitation-body-camera>.

Table 1: Sites with Earliest Known Use of Community Service for Sex Buyers ³²⁵		
Year	City or County	State
1975	Miami	FL
1980	High Point	NC
1981	Grand Rapids	MI
1981	Little Rock	AR
1985	Chattanooga	TN
1991	Eugene	OR
1991	Pawtucket	RI
1992	Kingsport	TN
1993	Coffee County	TN
1993	Palm Beach County	FL
1994	Austin	TX
1995	Santa Cruz	CA
1997	Waynesville	NC
1998	Tucson	AZ
1999	Wichita	KS

Applications of Community Service Programs Used for Arrested Sex Buyers

This type of tactic is best illustrated with actual examples to convey the range of ways in which community service programs are structured and used singly or in combinations with other sanctions and programs. Source documents can be accessed by clicking the linked name of each city or county discussed below.

Community Service Program for Sex Buyers in Norfolk, Virginia

In a program run by the [Norfolk](#) Sheriff’s Office, sex buyers were required to serve eight hours of community service. It usually occurred on a Sunday and began between 7:30-8:00 AM. The community service program for sex buyers was coupled with the John school, a brief educational intervention that occurred on the previous day. If the John school got out early on Saturday, then the sex buyers would sometimes pick up trash downtown for an hour or so and then continue the next day. On the full day of community service, offenders were added to community service details for other kinds of low-level crimes and performed a range of jobs such as painting buildings and cleaning public areas.

Civic leagues and other feedback from the community drove the kinds of service details that occurred. The Sheriff’s Office sent press releases and mass emails every six months about whom to contact at the Sheriff’s Office about community service that would benefit the men to perform. The civic league president would request community service, and the properties that could utilize this community service labor were required to be those of the city, the state, or certified nonprofit 501c3 organizations. A Norfolk Sheriff’s Office Major and other supervisors reviewed the requests. They used GIS and mapping to ensure the sites selected met the requirements for the community service program—that it was a city, state, or nonprofit 501c3. When a candidate site was questionable, the Major went on-site to examine the situation. For example, with requests

³²⁵ Table originally appeared in Shively et al., *A National Overview*. During our update, no additional early examples were identified.

for landscaping, carpentry, or cutting down trees in wetlands, they tried to ensure a valid permit was in place for that action.

Also noteworthy was making the best use of community service labor and ensuring public safety while it was being performed. When the sex buyers (and others) showed up for community service, they had to sign in and complete an application/interview. The Sheriff's Office staff would determine if the men had some particular skill and could assign them to suitable tasks (especially where carpentry, painting, or operating equipment were concerned). Types of community service to which sex buyers could be assigned include:

- cleaning the grounds of schools, parks, soccer fields, and football fields
- painting
- carpentry
- unloading food and supplies for the local zoo and some zoo cleanup
- putting up tents, tables, and chairs for public events.

Norfolk usually had about 75 individuals doing community service every Saturday and Sunday and about 60 every weekday. Every second month or so, the details included approximately 10 to 15 men who were convicted sex buyers who had attended the John School. Sex buyers were charged \$15 per day for a supervision fee while performing community service.

The Sheriff's Office designed the community service program for all types of offenders; it was not a service program that was created for sex buyers specifically. Sex buyers were funneled into the Sunday weekend crew of the larger community service program after attending the John school class on the previous Saturday. However, the Sheriff's Office would often assign sex buyers to community service details in the areas where they were arrested so they would have to give back to the community they harmed in attempting to purchase sex, as their actions had provided the revenue stream for the local commercial sex market and drew pimps and drug dealers to those neighborhoods. They would also avoid sites that were sensitive to having arrested sex buyers on their grounds, such as a public daycare center or domestic violence shelter.

Community Service, "John School" Education, Fines, and Probation as Sentencing Conditions for Sex Buyers in Columbiana County, OH, and Indianapolis, IN

Several cities within [Columbiana County](#), OH, stage frequent reverse sting operations and arrestees are prosecuted through the Columbiana County Municipal Court. The municipalities include [East Palestine](#), [Salem](#), and [Hanoverton](#), and the Court posts regular updates of court activity that include the dispositions of cases stemming from reverse stings and the identities of the arrested sex buyers. These updates routinely list cases in which arrested sex buyers are ordered to perform community service, complete an education program, pay fines, and serve terms of probation. For example, in August 2022, a man responded to an online ad and solicited sexual conduct from an undercover officer posing as a prostituted woman in exchange for \$140. He traveled to East Palestine to an arranged location to complete the transaction. In Columbiana County Municipal Court in February 2023, the sex buyer was fined \$750 and sentenced to a suspended 90-day jail term for engaging in prostitution and possessing criminal tools. He was also ordered to perform 20 hours of community service and complete a 12-hour education course.³²⁶

³²⁶ "Columbiana County Municipal," *The Review*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.reviewonline.com/news/police-courts/2023/03/columbiana-county-municipal-712/>.

In December 2022 and January 2023, more than a dozen men traveled to Salem and East Palestine in response to police decoy ads. They were arrested and their identities publicly disclosed. Penalties imposed by the Columbiana County Municipal Court included \$750 fines and 40 hours of community service.

The Red Zone program in [Indianapolis, IN](#), combines a “John school” educational intervention with community service specifically designed for arrested sex buyers. It was a one-day program in which the first half of the day was an education session, and the second half was a required community service detail. After four hours of hearing from a community impact panel and a health educator in the John school component, the men were required to pick up trash around the city streets known as “the track” area where very high levels of prostitution activity occur. The program was specifically designed so that sex buyers would perform their community service in areas where they would directly encounter some of the consequences of the commercial sex trade. Men would frequently pick up used condoms and discarded syringes that often are found where there is street prostitution. Some men had trolled the same area seeking to buy sex, and while performing community service some would see the same women from whom they had purchased sex.

Community Service as a Condition of Sentences for Sex Buyers in Ashland, Ohio

Fifteen sex buyers were arrested in May 2015 by a joint task force, including officers in the [Ashland](#) and [Mansfield](#), OH, police departments. Sentences for the 15 men included jail time, suspension of driver’s licenses, community service, and probation. For example, one man appeared in Ashland County Municipal Court for a scheduled bench trial. Before the trial could begin, his attorney asked to change his plea to guilty for his two charges, which were soliciting sexual acts for hire and possessing criminal tools (both misdemeanors). After accepting the guilty pleas, the court sentenced the defendant to 60 days in jail for the soliciting count. The court also suspended his driver’s license for six months, fined him \$650 between the two charges, placed him on one year of probation, and ordered him to complete 100 hours of community work service. At least nine others arrested in this operation were sentenced to 30-60 days in jail, one year of probation, 200 hours of community service, and pay a fine of \$250-\$400.³²⁷

Community Service Program with Diversion and Sentencing Applications in Marshall, Minnesota

In May 2019, a man arrested as part of an October 2018 web sting in [Marshall](#), MN, pleaded guilty to charges of hiring or agreeing to hire a minor for prostitution. He responded to an online advertisement posted by an undercover agent posing as a 15-year-old girl. The man received a stay of imposition of sentence, and 10 years’ supervised probation, with conditions that he serve 75 days in jail, complete 120 hours of “Sentenced to Service,” have no contact with minor females without approval from a probation agent, and that he does not access the internet without approval from probation.³²⁸ Sentencing to Service is a program operated throughout Minnesota, with almost 80% of the state’s counties participating. The program was established in 1986 to provide sentencing alternatives for courts throughout the state. The Minnesota Department of Corrections operates sentencing to Service (STS) in partnership with sheriff’s

³²⁷ Dan Kubaeki, “Mansfield Man is Latest Defendant Sentenced from May Prostitution Bust,” *Times-Gazette*, August 13, 2015, <https://www.times-gazette.com/story/news/2015/08/13/mansfield-man-is-latest-defendant/19046178007>.

³²⁸ Deb Gau, “Sioux Falls Man Pleads Guilty in Marshall Sex Sting,” *Marshall Independent*, May 8, 2019, <https://www.marshallindependent.com/news/local-news/2019/05/sioux-falls-man-pleads-guilty-in-marshall-sex-sting>.

departments, community corrections, courts, and local governments. STS can be used as an alternative to jail or fines, in combination with jail time, or as a probation sanction. Judges can order offenders to be placed on an STS work crew and specify the number of hours required to be worked.

The program is not specific to sex buyers but is an option for carefully selected non-violent offenders to work on community improvement projects, including litter pickup, river cleanup, trail development, flood control, and storm damage cleanup, and work for nonprofits. Offender work crews are closely supervised as they work in parks and other public areas. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, local counties, and other agencies identify work activities and supply equipment.³²⁹

Community Service as a Diversion Option in La Crosse, Wisconsin

Police in [La Crosse](#), WI posted a decoy internet ad for paid sex and placed an undercover team in a hotel in August 2012. Five men who responded to the ad and offered to pay for sex with the police decoy were arrested when they appeared at an arranged location to complete the transaction. The arrestees were released from custody by posting a \$200 bond meant to assure their court appearance. In October 2012, the first man to plead guilty was fined \$505. In November 2012, one of the arrested men entered a plea agreement allowing him to avoid a conviction if he complied with a diversion agreement.³³⁰ The man pleaded guilty in La Crosse County Circuit Court to misdemeanor prostitution, but the charge would be dismissed in one year if he paid a fine, completed 25 hours of community service, attended both individual and group treatment sessions, wrote an essay about what he learned, and avoided new crimes. We do not know enough about the group treatment portion of the program to determine whether it would qualify as a “John school.” If the conditions of the diversion agreement were not met, the sex buyer could face up to a \$10,000 fine, nine months in jail, or both.

Evidence of Effectiveness

While there is research on community service programs,³³¹ and longitudinal research showing strong positive results,³³² studies have focused on a wide range of crime types and outcomes. There have been no focused evaluations of the effectiveness of arrested sex buyers performing community service in reducing demand (such as reducing sex buyer recidivism or specific deterrence) or for measuring prevalence of prostitution or sex trafficking in communities where community service has been used. Nevertheless, compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a case can be made for beneficial effects

³²⁹ Sentencing to Service, Minnesota Department of Corrections, (2013), https://mn.gov/doc/assets/2-7_STS_tcm1089-275845.pdf.

³³⁰ Tribune Staff, “Third Man Gets Diversion Deal in Prostitution Sting,” *La Crosse Tribune*, November 13, 2012, http://lacrosetribune.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/rd-man-gets-diversion-deal-in-prostitution-sting/article_03057d1e-2d55-11e2-ad0b-0019bb2963f4.html.

³³¹ Sarah Picard, Jennifer A. Tallon, Michela Lowry, and Dana Kralstein, “Court-Ordered Community Service: A National Perspective,” *Center for Court Innovation*, (2019), <https://www.innovatingjustice.org/publications/community-service>; Signe Hald Andersen, “Serving Time or Serving the Community? Exploiting a Policy Reform to Assess the Causal Effects of Community Service on Income, Social Benefit Dependency and Recidivism,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 31, (2015): 537-563, doi.org/10.1007/s10940-014-9237-2.

³³² Hilde Wermink, Arjan Blokland, Paul Nieuwbeerta, Daniel Nagin, and Nikolaj Tollenaar, “Comparing the Effects of Community Service and Short-Term Imprisonment on Recidivism: A Matched Samples Approach,” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 6, (2010): 325-349, doi.org/10.1007/s11292-010-9097-1.

of community service programs for sex buyers, with four distinct kinds of evidence all reflecting favorably on the approach:

1. As discussed previously, existing longitudinal research comparing community service programs with incarceration showed significant positive results. It is reasonable to surmise there may be at least some, similar, positive effect for criminal behavior such as sex buying.
2. In a survey of 113 sex buyers in Chicago, IL, **58% reported** that being required to do community service would deter them from buying sex.³³³ A study of sex buyers including **data from four countries (Germany, US, UK, and Cambodia)** found that an **average of 59% of sex buyers** said community service would deter them from buying sex.³³⁴ Other surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that behavior in the future, and were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are having their behavior become known to others (including families, partners, friends, and employers) and other consequences following arrest, such as jail time and being listed on a sex offender registry. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.³³⁵ It is reasonable to assume that performing community service would increase the likelihood that others in the community would learn of sex buyers' behavior, and their arrest for it, which is something they wish to avoid.
3. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence³³⁶ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities. Most community service is performed within or near the communities where the offender lives and occurs in public spaces.

³³³ Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing the Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights from Interviews with Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex*, (Chicago: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, 2008), https://endsexualexploitation.org/wp-content/uploads/Durschslag-Goswami_2008_Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution.pdf.

³³⁴ Melissa Farley, Inge Kleine, Kerstin Neuhaus, and Yoanna McDowell, *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible 'Freiers'* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), <https://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sex-buyersEnglish-11-8-2022pdf.pdf>.

³³⁵ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, "The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences," *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

³³⁶ Charlotte Alter, "Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men Who Buy Sex," *TIME USA, LLC.*, n.d., <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/>; Nicholas Kristof, "Targeting the Johns in Sex Trade," *The New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik, "Miami Vice: Inside 'John Stings' and Escort Stings," *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, "Prostitute Customers Posterized," *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

4. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement is further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending**.³³⁷ To the extent that community service may increase the risk of public disclosure, it would contribute to the extra-legal sanction of public censure and thus advance deterrence.

In addition to the possibility of deterrent effects resulting from community service programs eliciting extra-legal sanctions through identity disclosure, a case can be made that the service performed is a tangible and undeniable benefit as a community-level restorative justice measure. The behavior of sex buyers is responsible for all sex trafficking and the negative impacts of prostitution since consumer-level demand is a primary motivation for these crimes. When constructively applied and adequately monitored, sex buyer service can mitigate or offset some of the harms that their crimes have caused.

Additional References

To access information about specific “[Community Service](#)” approaches used in U.S. cities and counties for demand reduction purposes, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Community Service” from the “Tactics” list. Doing so will return lists of cities and counties that have used community service for arrested sex buyers. In addition, U.S. locations in which community service programs have been used may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Community Service” from the list.

³³⁷ Thomas A. Loughran, Ray Paternoster, and Douglas B. Weiss, “Chapter 4: Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex R. Piquero (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 50-74, doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4; Raymond Paternoster, “Chapter 3: Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 81-106, doi.org/10.4324/9781351112710; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 7: Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers, 6 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

DISRUPTIVE TACTICS

[A combination of proactive and reactive deterrence tactics that can augment arrest and post-arrest tactics. These tactics can be used proactively to disrupt sex buyers at the point of purchase, or they can be used reactively after evidence of sex buying arrests or evidence of sex buying activities in a specific community becomes available]

Chapter 11: Information Technology-based Tactics

Overview

Following the launch of Demand Forum in January 2013, the sophisticated use of technology to detect, investigate, apprehend, and deter sex buyers emerged as a distinct and new class of demand intervention we call “[Information Technology-based Tactics](#)” (or IT-based tactics). The development of technology-based sex buyer deterrence methods was prompted by a shift in the market for illicit commercial sex away from in-person solicitation and toward various advertising websites and social media applications on the Internet.

The shift to Internet-facilitated prostitution required law enforcement agencies across the United States to adapt to a novel commercial sex and exploitation marketplace. As early as 2000, police departments nationwide began observing sharp increases in the use of the Internet for soliciting prostitution and a decline in their yield of arrests made in street-based stings and reverse stings.³³⁸ For several years, the now defunct “Erotic Services” section of Craigslist and the now shuttered, classified-advertising website Backpage were the principal platforms which facilitated that transition and gave rise to a flourishing online prostitution marketplace.³³⁹ However, Craigslist and Backpage were certainly not lone actors. A host of other prostitution advertisers such as Adultsearch.com, Bedpage.com, Cityxguide.com, Eros.com,³⁴⁰ SeekingArrangements.com, and others³⁴¹ had emerged and comprised part of the online prostitution

³³⁸ Michael Shively et al., *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates Inc., March 7, 2008), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf>; Sudhir Venkatesh, “How Tech Tools Transformed New York’s Sex Trade,” *Wired*, January 31, 2011, https://transmarcations.constantvzw.org/texts/Peggy_sexworkers.pdf; Michael Booth, “Craigslist Develops a Dark Side,” *The Denver Post*, December 3, 2007, <https://www.denverpost.com/2007/12/03/craigslist-develops-a-dark-side>; Donna M. Hughes, *Best Practices to Address the Demand Side of Sex Trafficking* (August 2004), https://popcenter.asu.edu/sites/default/files/problems/street_prostitution/PDFs/Hughes_2004.pdf; Leonora LaPeter Anton, “‘Escorts’ Leave the Streets to get on the Superhighway,” *Tampa Bay Times*, July 6, 2006, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/2006/07/02/escorts-leave-the-streets-to-get-on-the-superhighway>; Kit R. Roane, “Prostitutes on Wane In New York Streets But Take to Internet,” *The New York Times*, February 23, 1998, <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/02/23/nyregion/prostitutes-on-wane-in-new-york-streets-but-take-to-internet.html>; M. Ross, “How the Internet is Bringing the World’s Oldest Profession to a Neighborhood Near You,” *Diablo Magazine*, June, 2005; Jacob Quinn Sanders, “Prostitution Hits Web in State,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, February 10, 2008, <https://www.arkansasonline.com/news/2008/feb/10/prostitution-hits-web-state-20080210>.

³³⁹ Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>; Helen Shuxuan Zeng, Brett Danaher, and Michael D. Smith, Internet Governance through Site Shutdowns: The Impact of Shutting Down Two Major Commercial Sex Advertising Sites, *Management Science* 68, no. 11 (2022): 7793–8514, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/full/10.1287/mnsc.2022.4498>; United States Senate, Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Backpage.com’s Knowing Facilitation of Online Sex Trafficking*, Staff Report (2017), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/imo/media/doc/Backpage%20Report%202017.01.10%20FINAL.pdf>; Thomas J. Holt, Kristie R. Blevins, and Joseph B. Kuhns, “Examining Diffusion and Arrest Avoidance Practices among Johns,” *Crime & Delinquency* 60, no. 2 (2014): 261–283, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001128709347087>.

³⁴⁰ Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying and Selling Sex in the United States One Year Later*, ChildSafe.AI (2019).

³⁴¹ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Commercial Sex Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

ecosystem. At least 19 prostitution advertising websites—the primary of which was Backpage—were known to law enforcement authorities and the US Congress to advertise sex trafficked girls and boys.³⁴² Sex buyers benefited in several ways from the development of Internet-based prostitution advertising and other technologies. For instance, online prostitution advertising allows them to conduct their searches from the convenience of their own home (or anywhere with Internet access), while maintaining their anonymity and privacy, thus reducing their physical exposure to possible arrest.³⁴³ Searching online also provides potential buyers with the opportunity to “better assess” the physical attributes of those advertised as available for sex, the ability to engage in comparisons regarding price and the sexual acts provided, and the sharing of other transaction information.³⁴⁴ Advantages accrued to sex traffickers as well. They utilize Internet-based prostitution advertising platforms and other technology to reach a wider range of potential buyers,³⁴⁵ as a recruitment/grooming tool allowing them to reach women and girls who may already be in prostitution or via fraudulent job advertisements, and to assess the level of demand in a particular city before travelling there.³⁴⁶

A broad array of other web-based platforms and technologies now exist which further facilitate sex buying including sex buyer review forums, webcam platforms, payment processors, streaming platforms (e.g., Twitch, YouTube, and Discord), social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat), crowd-patronage platforms (e.g., OnlyFans), and more.³⁴⁷ Among these developments, the emergence of sex buyer review forums (e.g., The Erotic Review) was particularly important as such sites afford sex buyers the opportunity to exchange information about and “rate” people from whom they purchase sex, warn other buyers about possible police enforcement actions, and foster a sense of community that normalizes their behavior.³⁴⁸ Given its range of benefits, it, therefore, comes as no surprise that the use of technology by sex traffickers and sex buyers has been widely adopted. In tandem with other information and communication technology, the Internet allows individuals to stay connected interminably from any geographic location. Technology’s provision of immense access to information, commodities, and people—much of which was

³⁴² “Proceedings and Debates of the 114th Congress, First Session,” *Congressional Record* 161, no. 46 (March 18, 2015): H 1725, <https://www.congress.gov/114/crec/2015/03/18/CREC-2015-03-18.pdf>.

³⁴³ Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>.

³⁴⁴ Jason Chan, Probal Mojumder, and Anindya Ghose, “The Digital Sin City: An Empirical Study of Craigslist’s Impact on Prostitution Trends,” *Information Systems Research* 30, no. 1 (2019): 219–238, <https://pubsonline.informs.org/doi/abs/10.1287/isre.2018.0799>.

³⁴⁵ Office of the Special Representative and Co-Ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools*. (Vienna, Austria: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Tech Against Trafficking, May 2020). https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf#page=19.

³⁴⁶ Meredith Dank, Bilal Khan, P. Mitchell Downey, Cybele Kotonias, et al., *Estimating the Size and Structure of the Underground Sexual Economy in Eight Major US Cities*, (Washington, DC: The Urban Institute, March 2014), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/245295.pdf>.

³⁴⁷ Jon Swords, Mary Laing, and Ian R. Cook, “Platforms, Sex Work, and Their Interconnectedness,” *Sexualities* 26, no. 3 (2021): 277–297, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607211023013>.

³⁴⁸ Aidan Wilcox, Kris Christmann, Michelle Rogerson, and Philip Birch, *Research Report 27. Tackling the Demand for Prostitution: A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the Published Research*, (The Research, Development and Statistics Directorate, Home Office, December 2009); Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, eds. T. J. Holt, and A.M. Bossler (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020) 1177–1201, https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-78440-3_54.

previously out of reach—are the same features that support its growing popularity in domestic minor sex trafficking,³⁴⁹ as well as in facilitating international sex and labor trafficking³⁵⁰ (among other crimes). It has been argued that buyers who solicit prostitution via Internet platforms face “minuscule” risk of arrest and are insulated from deterrence tactics by their socioeconomic status, education, and ability to pay high amounts (\$1,000 per hour) for sex acts performed indoors.³⁵¹ Thus, investigating the application of online deterrence tactics on sex buyers takes on added significance, as it may enable law enforcement to direct their efforts at a privileged class of buyers.

Accordingly, under the auspices of NIJ support provided under the project “National Assessment of Demand Reduction Efforts, Part II: New Developments in the Primary Prevention of Sex Trafficking,” we have reviewed technology-based demand deterrence methods. This report presents an overview of our findings. It is augmented by a peer-reviewed journal article, “Discouraging the Demand that Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence” that elucidates the methodology followed for data collection.³⁵² It also presents existing scholarship and grey literature that undergird technology-based demand reduction tactics.

To gather content about this relatively new tactic, a comprehensive literature search was conducted and complemented by an iterative cycle of conversations, emails, and information exchange with four organizations and their leaders³⁵³ about the development and use of technology-based demand reduction tactics. These organizations and the technology they employ are at the forefront of what can be considered a never-ending battle of wits between them, and criminals engaged in the online commercial sex ecosystem. This practitioner-led approach to data collection also included an iterative cycle of conversations, emails, and information exchange with two³⁵⁴ former law enforcement leaders familiar with demand reduction tactics and their overlap with technology-based demand reduction methods.

The Online Sexual Exploitation Marketplace

When considering the increasing shift from street-based prostitution to the rapidly growing online environment, these technologies and their acute focus on consumer-level demand reduction have the potential to add value beyond augmenting traditional stings’ efficacies. In a seminal reference to the burden

³⁴⁹ Vanessa Bouché, *Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* (THORN, January 2018), https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Thorn_Survivor_Insights_090519.pdf.

³⁵⁰ Office of the Special Representative and Co-Ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools*. (Vienna, Austria: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Tech Against Trafficking, May 2020). https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf#page=19.

³⁵¹ Martin A. Monto and Christine Milrod, “Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes with a Nationally Representative Sample of Men,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 57, no 7 (2013): 802–820; <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X13480487>.

³⁵² Marcel van der Watt, “Discouraging the Demand that Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence,” *Societies* 13, no. 4 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13040094>.

³⁵³ Tom Perez, Founder and CEO, EPIK Project, in discussion with the author (2022); Justin Euteneier, Program Director, EPIK Project, in discussion with the author (2022); Jamie Caruthers, Director, Demand Reduction and Policy, Street Grace, in discussion with the author (2022); Tiffany Davis, Program Manager, The Lantern Project (Formerly Seattle Against Slavery), in discussion with the author (2022); Rob Spectre, Technologist and Founder, Childsafe.ai, in discussion with the author (2022).

³⁵⁴ Dr. Stephany Powell, Former Law Enforcement Officer, in discussion with the author (2022); Dr. Marian Hatcher, Policy Analyst, Cook County Sheriff’s Office of Public Policy, in discussion with the author (2022).

that society has placed on police departments to investigate “computer crimes,” Goodman (1997)³⁵⁵ warned against shying away from investigating and prosecuting a “whole new class of criminal activities” (Goodman, 1997: 494). Rather than simply meeting the expertise of their criminal counterparts, Goodman called on law enforcement “to exceed their knowledge and skills” (p. 494) if they are to obviate a perpetual shortfall by the criminal justice system. Byrne and Marx (2011:32)³⁵⁶ noted developments in technology in general and changes in the specific area of information technology that “have been so dramatic and profound that they deserve special attention and critical review.” Law enforcement agencies around the globe are increasingly at the forefront of navigating technology and its convoys of vices. Even though digital technologies such as mobile phones, social media, and the Internet have added significant benefits to every stratum of society at large, new opportunities and conduits for exploitation have become equally diffused.³⁵⁷ The expansion of online prostitution with its manifold manifestations³⁵⁸ and the increasingly indiscernible distinction between prostitution and sex trafficking³⁵⁹ have made the online environment a flourishing ecosystem of sexual exploitation.

Latonero and colleagues refer to technology-facilitated trafficking in persons as the “social and technical ecosystem wherein individuals use information and communication technologies to engage in human trafficking and related behaviors.”³⁶⁰ These technologies increasingly impact every aspect of the sex trafficking cycle, and a functional understanding of its uses is a critical component for the multidisciplinary response to sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children.³⁶¹ Finn and Stalans interviewed pimps in Atlanta and Chicago to study the impact of targeted police interventions.³⁶² Instead of

³⁵⁵ Marc D. Goodman, “Why the Police Don’t Care about Computer Crime ” *Harvard Journal of Law & Technology* 10, no. 3 (1997), <http://jolt.law.harvard.edu/articles/pdf/v10/10HarvJLTech465.pdf>.

³⁵⁶ James Byrne and Gary T. Marx, “Technological Innovations in Crime Prevention and Policing. A Review of the Research on Implementation and Impact,” *Journal of Police Studies* 3, no. 20 (2011), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/238011.pdf>.

³⁵⁷ Mark Latonero et al., *The Rise of Mobile and the Diffusion of Technology-Facilitated Trafficking*, University of Southern California (USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, November 2012), https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.usc.edu/dist/e/695/files/2012/11/HumanTrafficking2012_Nov12.pdf.

³⁵⁸ Sunny Jiao, Vicky Bungay, and Emily Jenkins, “Information and Communication Technologies in Commercial Sex Work: A Double-Edged Sword for Occupational Health and Safety,” *Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2021), [doi:10.3390/socsci10010023](https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10010023); Megan Lundstrom, *OnlyFans: A Case Study of Exploitation in the Digital Age* (The Avery Center, December 2021), <https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf>; Alexandra K. Murphy and Sudhir Alladi Venkatesh, “Vice Careers: The Changing Contours of Sex Work in New York City,” *Qualitative Sociology* 29, no. 2 (2006), [doi:10.1007/s11133-006-9012-2](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11133-006-9012-2); Mamacos, “Camming in Suburbia: It’s More Common, and More Dangerous, than You Think.”

³⁵⁹ M.P. Daggett et al., *The Human Trafficking Technology Roadmap: A Targeted Development Strategy for the Department of Homeland Security*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Lincoln Laboratory, July 2019), <https://www.ll.mit.edu/sites/default/files/publication/doc/2021-04/human-trafficking-technology-roadmap-daggett-127172.pdf>.

³⁶⁰ Mark Latonero et al., *The Rise of Mobile and the Diffusion of Technology-Facilitated Trafficking*, University of Southern California (USC Annenberg Center on Communication Leadership & Policy, November 2012), https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.usc.edu/dist/e/695/files/2012/11/HumanTrafficking2012_Nov12.pdf.

³⁶¹ Office of the Special Representative and Co-Ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools*. (Vienna, Austria: Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and Tech Against Trafficking, May 2020). https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf#page=19.

³⁶² Mary A. Finn, and Loretta J. Stalans. "How targeted enforcement shapes marketing decisions of pimps: Evidence of displacement and innovation." *Victims & Offenders* 11, no. 4 (2016): 578-599, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2016.1187694>.

being displaced, pimps continued to use high-risk online platforms like Backpage and Craigslist to engage in criminal activity and even developed new tactics to increase their use of these platforms. Some pimps also expanded their online presence to other specialized websites (including the deep web) and used different technological tools to minimize detection risks. They adopted more interactive marketing tactics that allowed them to stay in the areas where they were familiar but also tapped into dimensions of the online marketplace that had not been used before. Evidence for tactical displacement was evident as pimps increased their online presence, accessed the deep web, and used interactive marketing tactics in social media to grow and attract sex buyers. Some pimps' direct marketing methods included using dating websites and innocuous website ads posted by people looking for romantic encounters as an opportunity to recruit those who are considered 'easy to target' because they are willing to advertise.

Roe-Sepowitz explored the behavior and characteristics of a national cross-sectional sample of sex traffickers arrested for the sex trafficking of a minor in the United States.³⁶³ 1,416 sex traffickers were identified in six years from 2010 to 2015. The number of arrests and the use of technology progressively increased annually during this period. Technology was used during the minor's sexual exploitation in more than two-thirds of cases (n=950, 67.1%) by either advertising victims online or by furnishing a mobile phone to the victim. Online ads were used in nearly two-thirds of the cases (n=889, 63.5%). The website Backpage.com was specifically used in more than one-third of these cases (n=592, 41.8%), though the name of the advertising website was not always provided in reports, so the incidence rate may have been higher.

A troubling finding in this study was the fact that there exists such a significant market for sexual exploitation of minors. Roe-Sepowitz notes:

*"While the demand for sex is significant, the demand for sex with minors is especially important to note. Sex traffickers of minors are intentionally offering children for sex, and adults are intentionally engaging in sex with children with no compunction or inhibition."*³⁶⁴

A 2018 study³⁶⁵ by Thorn provides further evidence of the scope of the online sexual exploitation marketplace. A total of 260 survivors of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST), involved with 24 survivor organizations which spanned 14 states, completed a survey that focused on understanding what role technology played in a victim's recruitment into, time spent in, and exit from DMST. One of the central themes from survey responses was that technology plays a major role in the grooming and controlling of DMST victims. Findings included that 1 in 6 victims were sex trafficked under the age of twelve and that 75% of those who entered "the life" in 2004 or later were advertised online. Noteworthy, were the study's findings related to interactions with sex buyers. Phone calls and texting were the foremost methods of communicating with sex buyers. The study found that most respondents said they communicated with the buyers themselves (56%; n=139). Among those with a sex trafficker, 42% (n=85) stated that their trafficker communicated with the buyers, while 51% (n=104) said they communicated with buyers themselves. When sex traffickers control the communications with buyers, there is a strong indication that the victim's age is

³⁶³ Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, "A Six-Year Analysis of Sex Traffickers of Minors: Exploring Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29, no. 5 (2019), [doi:10.1080/10911359.2019.1575315](https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2019.1575315).

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Vanessa Bouché, *Survivor Insights: The Role of Technology in Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking* (THORN, January 2018), https://www.thorn.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Thorn_Survivor_Insights_090519.pdf

likely to be younger than 13 years old. Of the 104 respondents with a sex trafficker who communicated with buyers themselves, 87% were 13 to 17 years old when they entered the life. Conversely, those who reported that their sex trafficker controlled the communications with the buyers were significantly more likely to be younger when they entered the sex trade. Specifically, 40% were 12 or younger.

The online commercial sexual exploitation marketplaces of the United States have expanded beyond their national confines to create a global footprint with global ramifications. For instance, a U.S.-based live “camming” website (streamatemodels.com³⁶⁶) was implicated during the successful prosecution³⁶⁷ of two sex traffickers, both Lesotho nationals, in a South African High Court for the sexual exploitation of a 16-year-old minor in December 2019 (*State v Seleso*). The Pretoria Office of Homeland Security Investigations provided investigative support to a national South African law enforcement agency as the website was hosted in the United States. The investigation revealed that the account used by the traffickers to exploit the victim had more than 6,000 logins by sex buyers from across the globe granting them access to direct the actions of the victim and to view her over the two-year period during which she was exploited. The global footprint and the egregious nature of crimes associated with the online sexual exploitation marketplace, the often-indistinct line between prostitution and sex trafficking, and the fact that some online prostitution platforms provide a way to advertise that are not as easily detected by law enforcement,³⁶⁸ necessitated the bridging of the gap between human capabilities and technological innovations.

Several NGOs, technology experts, and private corporations have bridged that gap by taking the lead in developing sex buyer deterrence platforms that automate aspects of traditional sex buyer sting operations. Four of these platforms are discussed below. Across these platforms, the technologies utilized combine “a text message back-end with an autonomous chatbot trained on conversations between sex buyers and undercover agents.”³⁶⁹ Once a sex buyer engages via text with a number from an online decoy sex advertisement, the chatbot connects with the most appropriate response from the information and transcripts it was trained on. Implicit to this approach is the risk to sex buyers of possible law enforcement action should they respond to an ad.³⁷⁰ It is also typical for chatbots to have conversations with buyers to raise awareness about the harms of sex trafficking with the goal of bringing about an attitude change towards buying sex.³⁷¹ Notwithstanding the significant technological breakthroughs in detecting and addressing consumer-level demand for illicit commercial sex online, the impact remains difficult to measure.

³⁶⁶ A website called ‘Streamate’ was implicated by one respondent in the 2018 study by Thorn. It could not be confirmed whether this is the same website implicated in the South African child sex trafficking case.

³⁶⁷ Case References (South Africa): Westonaria Police CAS 150/10/2017 and Johannesburg High Court Case no 41/2017.

³⁶⁸ Murphy and Venkatesh, “Vice Careers: The Changing Contours of Sex Work in New York City.”

³⁶⁹ Daggett et al., *The Human Trafficking Technology Roadmap: A Targeted Development Strategy for the Department of Homeland Security*.

³⁷⁰ Tina Rosenberg, “A.I. Joins the Campaign Against Sex Trafficking,” Opinion, *The New York Times*, April 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/09/opinion/ai-joins-the-campaign-against-sex-trafficking.html>.

³⁷¹ Shane Downing, “How to Scare a Predator: Neutering the Sex Industry One Buyer at a Time,” *The Imprint*, February 12, 2018, <https://imprintnews.org/news-2/how-to-catch-a-predator-neutering-the-sex-industry/29426>

Moreover, the continuing presence of Internet-based prostitution platforms “readily available to sex traffickers and buyers” contributes to the enduring nature of sex trafficking of children in the U.S.³⁷²

In the next section, the conventional counterpart of technology-based tactics in the offline arena, reverse stings, will be explored and followed by an overview of four technology platforms and their overlapping and distinct approaches to consumer-level demand reduction. A brief overview of other technologies that address aspects of sex trafficking and child sexual abuse material (CSAM) is then provided before concluding with a summary of the main themes stemming from our review of technology-based demand reduction tactics.

Figure 1: A New York City Police Department computerized text message in response to sex buyers after their sex solicitation engagements with artificial intelligence chatbots



³⁷² Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, “A Six-Year Analysis of Sex Traffickers of Minors: Exploring Characteristics and Sex Trafficking Patterns,” *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 29, no. 5 (2019): 608-629, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2019.1575315>.

Conventional Reverse Stings

At least 15 major types of law enforcement and community-based tactics that aim to deter people from buying sex or to identify and sanction those who do solicit sex acts have been used in more than 2,660 U.S. cities and counties. These tactics can be broadly categorized into three groups:

- Arrest Tactics (e.g., Reverse Stings and Web-Based Reverse Stings)
- Post Arrest Tactics (e.g., Identity Disclosures, John Schools, Vehicle Seizures)
- Disruptive Tactics (e.g., Loss of Employment, Surveillance Cameras)

When considering technology-based demand reduction tactics and their purpose to identify, deter, and arrest sex buyers proactively, it is important to consider their conventional counterpart in the offline arena. Reverse stings have been covered extensively in academic scholarship, law enforcement literature, and the media.³⁷³ By no means flawless or without criticism in its general application by law enforcement when targeting the demand side of prostitution,³⁷⁴ reverse stings continue to show formidable success with over 5,000 reverse stings occurring in the United States since 1964 resulting in the arrest of over 50,000 sex buyers.³⁷⁵

Reverse stings are law enforcement operations targeting sex buyers who purchase in-person commercial sex services. Here police officers pose as adult women involved in street prostitution. The average police support team consists of approximately seven officers for every decoy. Some smaller departments may borrow female officers from other departments if they lack enough officers to act as effective decoys. Locations are generally selected based on complaints from local residents or businesses, and sometimes based on police observations of problem areas. Some police departments carry out reverse stings in areas where large crowds of men congregate, such as at truck stops or at male-centric events (e.g., business conventions, sports events, or hunting season). Reverse stings are generally very labor-intensive and require substantial planning. Even law enforcement agencies philosophically firmly committed to addressing the consumer-level demand component of illicit sex markets cannot field these operations with great frequency.

³⁷³ Lynda Baker, “The Information Needs of Female Police Officers Involved in Undercover Prostitution Work,” *Information Research* 10, no. 1 (2004), <https://informationr.net/ir/10-1/paper209.html>; Bruce Hay, “Sting Operations, Undercover Agents, and Entrapment,” *Missouri Law Review* 70, no. 2 (2005), <https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/mlr/vol70/iss2/2/>; Gerry Long, “How to Plan a ‘John’ Sting,” *Women in Law Enforcement, Police Magazine*, April 18, 2012, <https://www.policemag.com/374063/how-to-plan-a-john-sting>; Gerry Long, “How To Stay Safe During a John Sting,” *Women in Law Enforcement, Police Magazine*, July 2, 2012, <https://www.policemag.com/374107/how-to-stay-safe-during-a-john-sting>; Graeme R. Newman and Kelly Socia, *Sting Operations, Problem-Oriented Guides for Police, Response Guides Series* (U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, October 2007), <https://cops.usdoj.gov/ric/Publications/cops-p134-pub.pdf>.

³⁷⁴ Mary Dodge, Donna Starr-Gimeno, and Thomas Williams, “Puttin’ on the Sting: Women Police Officers’ Perspectives on Reverse Prostitution Assignments,” *International Journal of Police Science and Management* 7 (2005), [doi:10.1350/ijps.7.2.71.65778](https://doi.org/10.1350/ijps.7.2.71.65778); Gary T. Marx, “Under-the-Covers Undercover Investigations: Some Reflections on the State’s Use of Sex and Deception in Law Enforcement,” *Criminal Justice Ethics* 11, no. 1 (1992), [doi:10.1080/0731129X.1992.9991907](https://doi.org/10.1080/0731129X.1992.9991907); Thomas Nolan, “Commentary: Galateas in Blue: Women Police as Decoy Sex Workers,” *Criminal Justice Ethics* 20 (2001), [doi:10.1080/0731129X.2001.9992104](https://doi.org/10.1080/0731129X.2001.9992104); Phillip Walters, “Would a Cop Do This: Ending the Practice of Sexual Sampling in Prostitution Stings,” *Minnesota Journal of Law & Inequality* 29, no. 2 (2011), <https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/lawineq/vol29/iss2/6/>.

³⁷⁵ Demand Forum, “Reverse Stings,” National Center on Sexual Exploitation, accessed September 14, 2022, <https://demand-forum.org/reverse-stings>.

Most agencies face their wide range of local needs and obligations with scarce resources and prioritize prostitution and sex trafficking operations infrequently (or not at all). As pointed out by practitioners, reverse stings are a fairly expensive proposition. In addition to the undercover officer, the wider team includes multiple law enforcement officers that protect the undercover officer. The surveillance on reverse stings is extensive and can involve as many as 15 to 20 officers. Additionally, administrative support and relevant logistics in web-based reverse stings (i.e., posting the ads, operating the phones) may require anything between 4 to 6 officers. In web-based reverse stings decoy sex advertisements are posted on a prostitution advertising platform by a law enforcement agent who poses as a prostituted person when transacting with the targeted buyer to set up a “date.” This usually takes place via text message or voice phone call. Law enforcement will call and text buyers from their official phones using concealed or altered identities. An in-call service (i.e., term for prostitution arrangements where the sex buyer agrees to meet at a location established by the prostituting person) is negotiated between an undercover officer and the sex buyer with the agreed-upon location for the solicited sex acts usually taking place at a hotel room or law enforcement-controlled premises. When the sex buyer arrives, he is detained and processed. Reverse stings can also be extremely hazardous with law enforcement officers exposed to a variety of threats such as robberies or physical violence. These hazards spill over to the undercover officer and the team that supports the undercover officer.

Modest successes may include anything from between 6 to 17 arrests of sex buyers per operation. In some areas, solicitation of prostitution offenses are a “civil ordinance” violation in which even speeding tickets can carry a more substantial penalty than prostitution-related charges. Several practitioners interviewed for the IT-Based tactics component of this research commented on the overwhelming response that decoy advertisements elicit from sex buyers. Rob Spectre (Childsafe.ai) specifically highlighted that “the threat of actually getting caught is very low.” Law enforcement penetration in the commercial sex and sexual exploitation ecosystem is therefore deficient.

Thus, the technologies discussed in what follows are an alternative means of pursuing primary prevention that is far less labor intensive and can be applied at a vastly expanded scale. As pointed out by one technologist consulted in this research: “For the cost of one undercover asset, you can have as many undercover assets as you want, all the time talking to buyers in a specific area, collecting meaningful data and creating meaningful deterrence, for the entire commercial sex marketplace – why would you not choose that?” These technologies and their synthesis of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and natural language processing have taken on a somewhat mystical and obscured “persona” among many sectors who could benefit from its capabilities. The next section aims to demystify these aspects.

Overview of Selected Technologies

Four organizations and their respective technologies used in technology-based demand reduction tactics were selected and described below.

*Childsafe.ai*³⁷⁶

Childsafe.ai is a software startup that deploys machine learning and active collection networks that monitor actors that “buy and sell human beings from within the surface, deep and dark web marketplaces in which those transactions occur.”³⁷⁷ Childsafe.ai delivers a Demand Deterrence Platform serving law enforcement human trafficking units around the country to reduce the illicit finances pouring into their local sex trafficking economies. The platform has identified tens of thousands of buyers and prostituted persons through its networks and its team actively monitors, graphs, and models the online ecosystems fueling human trafficking.

At its core, ChildSafe.ai amplifies the ability to identify and respond to online abuse by mobilizing chatbots. Prostitution ads are searched to obtain information on sex buyers and providers of illicit sex services, including details about price and location of transactions. Voice recognition tools are also used to examine and identify the voices of potential sex buyers and prostituted persons. Following the conversations of a potential sex buyer with its chatbot, ChildSafe.ai delivers a customized deterrence message in which it warns the sex buyer of the legal and social ramifications of buying sex. In a 2020 example, several law enforcement agencies had implemented the ChildSafe.ai platform, which resulted in the cumulative engagement of 1,477 potential sex buyers, with an estimated total of 8,500 customized deterrence messages being sent.³⁷⁸

According to Rob Spectre, CEO and founder of Childsafe.ai, it is “important to first understand the problem of demand before trying to solve the problems you identify in the sexual exploitation ecosystem.”³⁷⁹ He pointed out that demand is what makes sex trafficking a profitable business proposition, and law enforcement agencies have struggled to enforce demand reduction in any way that would “meaningfully move the needle”³⁸⁰ based on the amount of resource investment that demand reduction tactics require. Spectre noted that sex buyers significantly outnumber those provided for commercial sex in the United States by as much as 25 to 1 and observed that doing stings within a locale “is a fairly expensive proposition.”³⁸¹

Through a conversation with a New York law enforcement agency, Spectre explored the possibility of expanding conventional stings through the use of technology. It became apparent that even though law enforcement arrested between 15 and 17 people per night in reverse sting operations, they were engaging up to 150 people at one time. Posted ads would elicit voluminous responses, but few of the sex buyers would openly show up. The problem was that law enforcement officers would be texting with several people, but only a few of them would arrive in person and be arrested. Reasons for “no shows” include either too high or too low prices. What became an important part of the conversation was the idea of

³⁷⁶ ChildSafe.ai, “The Artificial Intelligence Platform Protecting Kids Online,” ChildSafe.ai, 2020, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://childsafef.ai>.

³⁷⁷ Rob Spectre, *Beyond Backpage: Buying And Selling Sex In The United States One Year Later*, ChildSafe.ai (ChildSafe.ai, 2019), <https://childsafef.ai/beyond-backpage-buying-and-selling-sex-in-the-united-states-one-year-later>.

³⁷⁸ Rob Spectre, “ChildSafe.ai: World’s First AI-Platform Combating Online Child Abuse,” CIO Review, 2020, <https://law-enforcement.cioreview.com/vendor/2020/chidsafef.ai>.

³⁷⁹ Rob Spectre, Technologist and Founder, Childsafe.ai, in discussion with the author, February 3, 2022.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

“creating a meaningful deterrent that targets the 90% of people who spoke to law enforcement but never openly showed up.”³⁸²

This led to the creation of Childsafe.ai, a consumer-level demand deterrence platform. Instead of an undercover officer who posts a single add and documents all the conversations on a single phone, the Childsafe.ai platform allows for posting as many decoy phone numbers and as many locations as desired, with as many advertisements as needed, while conducting the communications through the Childsafe.ai communications platform. Moreover, law enforcement officers can engage in several conversations with sex buyers at one time. Over the course of these conversations, the platform allows for record keeping of the phone numbers of the individuals who are texting and allows law enforcement to send a deterrence message (an MMS message) to all the individuals that were seeking to purchase sex in a given period. The deterrence message informs recipients that their activities were observed by an actual member of law enforcement and that they run the risk of criminal liability for their activities and for harming a potential sex trafficking victim. These operations can run continuously or periodically depending on the operational posture of the law enforcement agency. It can also be automated either partially or fully.

In addition to charges related to purchasing sex leveled against those identified and arrested by law enforcement agencies, several additional charges stemming from online engagements have been documented in these operations. These include sex traffickers who respond to ads and try to recruit others for the purpose of sexual exploitation, predators who look specifically for children when engaging with the ads, registered sex offenders, and others in violation of probation (including those explicitly prohibited from engaging on these sites). When Childsafe.ai is contacted by a law enforcement agency wanting to use the technology, an account is opened, and the new user is connected with other law enforcement experts with experience in these types of operations. Ideas are shared and the new law enforcement agency users are assisted in formulating a technology-based demand reduction plan. Childsafe.ai facilitates this process but is not involved in the granular details of operational matters. Depending on the number of ads posted, the number of conversations that take place, and the number of deterrence messages that are sent out, operational costs for using the technology amount to approximately two-thirds of what one undercover asset would cost in a particular area.

Street Grace and Transaction Intercept

Street Grace, a nonprofit, was founded in 2009. Based in Atlanta, GA, Street Grace has offices in TN and in TX and provides help to several areas in the United States. Transaction Intercept,³⁸³ an initiative of Street Grace, seeks to identify the buyers of sex with minors and strip away their cloak of anonymity. According to Jamey Caruthers, Director of Demand Reduction and Policy, reducing the demand for commercial sexual exploitation in the online marketplace through technology is considered by Street Grace as “the most effective, scalable counter-demand tactic in the fight against minor sexual exploitation.”³⁸⁴ When potential sex buyers are identified by their having contacted a decoy ad placed by Street Grace, Street Grace subsequently communicates with these individuals through “Gracie”—an artificial intelligence chatbot—who communicates the risks and consequences of the potential buyer’s actions when Gracie confirms the

³⁸² Ibid

³⁸³ Street Grace, “Transaction Intercept,” Street Grace, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://www.streetgrace.org/transaction-intercept>.

³⁸⁴ Jamie Caruthers, Director, Demand Reduction and Policy, Street Grace, in discussion with the author, February 25, 2022.

intent to purchase a minor. Gracie was launched manually (without AI) in 2015 and as an AI chatbot in 2018. In 2021, Gracie was relaunched after law enforcement input. Transaction Intercept, an enhanced version of Gracie’s platform available only to law enforcement, was then established. Since mid-2022 Transaction Intercept and Gracie have been fully automated as a technology platform. Gracie mimics human behavior in an SMS (text messaging) environment. Gracie is not merely a chatbot but rather a collection of technologies that operate in tandem to automate the demand reduction process. This automatization removes the cumbersome efforts of conventional human efforts to monitor ads, respond to incoming messages, document outcomes, and interpret the data. Several technologies are intrinsic to this process and make up an ever-scaling and artificially intelligent chatbot that actually learns.

Ads are placed and maintained across the online prostitution marketplace, where Gracie is employed and intercepts conversations by harnessing SMS technology. Gracie, utilizes 112 distinct adolescent personas, interprets these conversations, and then responds in a typically human manner that includes “convincing slang and SMS lingo.”³⁸⁵ Conversations and the phone numbers of sex buyers are logged in a database. Upon confirmation of an appointment for a commercial sexual exchange, Gracie sends out a deterrence message to warn the sex buyer of the malfeasance being documented and the potential consequences of the putative buyer’s actions. A follow-up message is sent that offers the sex buyer resources that they can use to help them stop their behavior, and the number of clicks on those resources is tracked. All actions are methodically captured and displayed by Gracie on a dashboard. The data is made available to law enforcement and relevant role-players and geared towards helping to end the exploitation of both children and adults online.

Street Grace has constructed a “custom dashboard from the ground up to maintain all of the data”³⁸⁶ and to fuse the “powerful stack of technologies”³⁸⁷ used by Gracie. The dashboard is constantly kept up to date. They utilize cloud-based data storage services that enable the storage of all sex buyer interactions with Gracie, and a special communications platform is used for SMS communications which has the capacity to link local phone numbers to the Gracie tech stack. NodeJS, a leading programming language for next-generation web projects, is used to code conversations, and Google is used for Natural Language Processing (NLP). NLP allows Street Grace to elucidate all incoming messages from sex buyers. Street Grace describes³⁸⁸ the power of Google’s NLP:

“Google’s NLP is constantly learning, using data from Google web and voice search. These technologies make for a human-like bot that can handle boundless conversations in real time.”

Transaction Intercept “enables law enforcement to monitor an exponentially greater number of conversations with potential purchasers of minors.”³⁸⁹ This capacity far exceeds what would be possible if unaided by the technology, and law enforcement can “step in” and take control of a given exchange once they identify a sex buyer who is interested in a child. They can then begin to build a case which may result in a physical meet-up between law enforcement officials and a prospective child sex abuse perpetrator.

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Street Grace, “Meet Gracie” brochure, n.d., <https://www.streetgrace.org>.

³⁸⁹ Jamie Caruthers, Director, Demand Reduction and Policy, Street Grace, in discussion with the author, February 25, 2022.

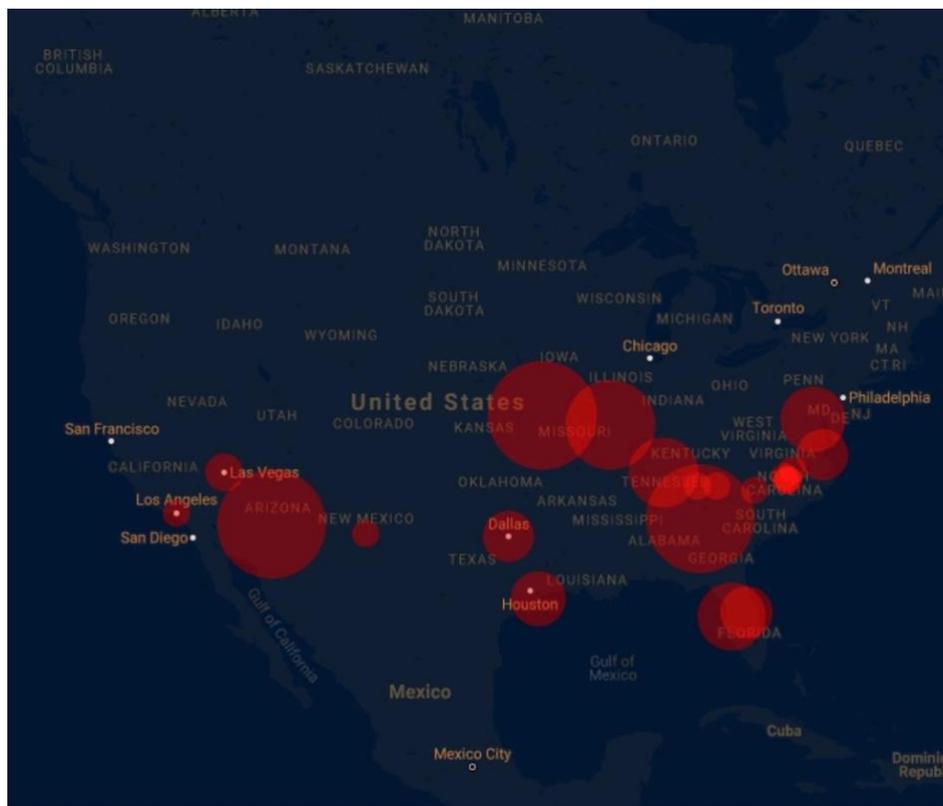
There are several challenges that the Street Grace team continues to navigate. One challenge is getting ads onto and keeping ads on sites frequented by sex buyers. Many sites, albeit for liability reasons, actively police the ads and in doing so, they put security measures in place in an effort to keep minors off their platforms. Some sites have intense verification systems in place which, and according to Jamey Caruthers this “is hard to criticize because you do want vetting of the ads although, ultimately, we also want the sites to not exist at all.”³⁹⁰ Verification sometimes includes a picture of the person in the ad holding their state-issued ID document or a request of an actual copy of their state-issued ID document.

Despite this challenge, Transaction Intercept is currently being enhanced with a multitude of new add-ons and features to further improve its use as a counter-demand tool that minimizes the expenditure of law enforcement resources and maximize reach and impact.

In a five-month period Gracie reached:

- 25 States and 78 Cities
- Over 1,000 intercepts a month
- More than 54,000 messages exchanged
- More than 6,000 would-be predators reported

Figure 2: Visual Sample of Gracie in the United States



³⁹⁰ Ibid.

Early on, Street Grace made the strategic decision to remain focused on using technology to increase the number of successful arrests and prosecutions of sex buyers, rather than on identity disclosure tactics. Gracie’s conversations and phone numbers are only made available to law enforcement agencies, and no other entities have access to this data.

Phone and conversation data can be used effectively by law enforcement agencies for various purposes, including identifying where sex buyers emerge in overlapping law enforcement systems and interventions (i.e., traffic stops, other sex offences, crimes, or misdemeanors). There are instances where the same number could be logged 5 times, and law enforcement would be most interested in trying to ascertain who these callers are.

Another consideration navigated by the Street Grace team is the ethical use of photographs for ads that are posted on sites. Street Grace only uses photos from adult volunteers that are digitally altered so that they cannot be connected to the original source.

The comprehensive tech stack and tools used by Street Grace enabled the in-house development of Gracie’s AI component. Street Grace calls upon outside sources for technical and development expertise (including programming knowledge). This includes for-profit professionals volunteering their services.

It is important to re-highlight the fact that Gracie also offers trauma and therapy resources to individual sex buyers to assist them in taking the first step toward receiving help.

After beta-testing with several law enforcement agencies, Street Grace is continuing to raise funds to enable Transaction Intercept to be used nationally with no subscription fees, dues, or costs to law enforcement (outside of incidental costs such as ad purchases). Transaction Intercept is available to any jurisdiction or agency that wants to use it.

Jamey Caruthers summarized the value of Gracie as follows:

“Every conversation that a would-be sex buyer has with Gracie is a conversation that he/she isn’t having with a real minor, and some of the conversations will result in a buyer being brought to justice.”³⁹¹

The EPIK Project

Based in the Portland/Vancouver area, the EPIK Project³⁹² (hereafter EPIK) was founded in 2012 in response to sex trafficking in the United States and actively utilizes technology to disrupt the buying of sex at the point of sale. The founders of EPIK were concerned about how technology was used to sexually exploit people and asked the question: “How can we use the same technology being used to exploit people to fight the demand fueling that exploitation?”³⁹³

In the early days of online prostitution platforms, sites like Backpage were an open marketplace for sex buying and anybody looking for anything related to the purchase of sex would start there. The evolution of EPIK started with a burner phone and a donated laptop. EPIK posted ads without pictures on Backpage,

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² EPIK Project, “Disrupting the Demand that Drives Sexual Exploitation. Dismantling the Forces that Perpetuate It.,” EPIK Project, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://epikproject.org>.

³⁹³ Tom Perez, Founder and CEO, EPIK Project in discussion with the author, June 17, 2022.

and it was clear that getting a response from sex buyers was not a challenge. The “phone blew up and we were furiously writing numbers down on a writing pad, but we just couldn’t keep up.”³⁹⁴ During its first three years of operations, EPIK became part of the CEASE Network (Cities Empowered Against Sexual Exploitation), a project launched by Demand Abolition in 2014. As part of this project, Demand Abolition provided financial and technical assistance to cities that were developing local demand-reduction strategies, tactics, and partnerships. Twelve cities participated in the initiative, and important lessons were learned that continue to guide efforts to reduce demand for illegal purchased sex and hold buyers accountable across the United States.

Since then, EPIK has developed a technology platform that utilizes custom-built, commercial grade call center software, markets leading database tools, and leverages machine learning to continually optimize the impact of volunteer efforts (which will be discussed shortly). EPIK’s program functions as a “highly trained and sophisticated neighborhood watch program”³⁹⁵ by providing law enforcement with specific information related to the illegal activity of prostitution and sex trafficking. “There is a well-established flow (and boundaries) of technical intelligence from EPIK to law enforcement” that is credited by Tom Perez as “*keeping the boundary clear between Agents of law enforcement and us as Allies.*”³⁹⁶

A major component of EPIK’s model seeks to mobilize male allies to disrupt the illicit commercial sex market by equipping them to confront the roots of exploitation—male sex buyers—and encouraging them to effectively collaborate within the broader anti-trafficking movement. Sex buyers are connected via text and phone at the attempted point of purchase with one of nearly 200 active, male volunteers who seek to educate them about the harms of the sex trade while also helping buyers to discover why they are seeking to buy sex acts. EPIK’s male volunteers have had tens of thousands of calls and texts with buyers, eliciting a broad range of responses. EPIK volunteers are trained to avoid the use of shaming language.

More than 300 men have been trained to disrupt the demand for sexual exploitation in 21 U.S. cities, and these teams conduct “Cyber Patrols” over 20 nights per month. The training sets the foundation of the long game of demand reduction and is rooted in the leadership of the Survivor community. EPIK recognizes the power of automation but sees technology as a way to help scale what humans can do. Justin Euteneier, Program Director and the architect of Cyber Patrols, said, “trafficking cannot end until demand ends. And demand cannot end by technology alone. Humans change culture.”³⁹⁷ EPIK leverages technology to scale, improving how engagement with buyers takes place. They endeavor to find “the sweet spot of using both technology and humans to engage with sex buyers.”³⁹⁸ This has proven to be very efficient when engaging men:

*“We have identified roughly 125,000 active sex buyers just through our work. We know that a significant number of these guys might be open to further dialogue... We’ve learned a lot about how to talk to guys about these issues.”*³⁹⁹

³⁹⁴ Ibid.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Justin Euteneier, Program Director, EPIK Project, in discussion with the author, August 17, 2022.

³⁹⁸ Ibid.

³⁹⁹ Tom Perez, Founder and CEO, EPIK Project in discussion with the author, June, 17, 2022.

In addition, EPIK’s model takes into account research that indicates that many active sex buyers would like to stop.⁴⁰⁰ After nearly a decade of direct buyer engagement, EPIK has realized the need for proactive outreach to sex buyers and here is where technology plays a substantial role. By leveraging technologies such as AI and NLP, EPIK is able to focus on those buyers who are more open to change and continually learns what works and what does not. The organization combines the power of technology and volunteers trained to use non-shaming tactics and use their copious opportunities to help active buyers become former buyers.

As for buyer accountability, EPIK is playing the long game. Buyers’ behavior is never excused, and the harm they cause is never minimized. But instead of focusing on the singular act on a given night, volunteers are trained to invite buyers into the bigger picture of what they’re doing. “Shaming language is replaced with questions. Questions open doors. Open doors lead to discoveries. Discoveries lead to change,”⁴⁰¹ stated Euteneier. He continued:

“We talk about leaving the baseball bat at the door. That is also why we talk about technology and the human connection. This method has allowed us to make real connections with buyers for a significant impact.”⁴⁰²

Calls as long as an hour are not uncommon, with buyers trying to make sense of their actions. To date, the EPIK Project has logged over 250,000 attempts by an estimated 125,000 men intent on buying sexual access to another person. These interruptions have led to tens of thousands of meaningful conversations. EPIK enjoys support from survivors, advocates, and city officials and is recognized as a leader in demand reduction efforts. A contributing factor to the EPIK Project’s success is its collaboration with law enforcement agencies. “We want to be allies to law enforcement, not agents” and “we want to make sure to draw that line.”⁴⁰³ In the first few years EPIK was encountering the same sex buyers that were repeatedly engaging with ads. Information about high frequency buyers was shared with law enforcement. This helped law enforcement to use their resources more efficiently when conducting their own buyer operations. Having the numbers of known active buyers provides insight when decisions are made about which buyers to pursue.

While no formal technical qualifications are needed to serve as an EPIK volunteer, they undergo a vetting process that involves passing a criminal background check and a sex addiction screening test. EPIK has had interested volunteers disqualify themselves from the role saying they were not ready. It is made very clear to volunteers that they are not “going after”⁴⁰⁴ buyers as they have no legal authority to do so. Instead, they are trained to provide an offramp to sex buying. Thus, the relationship with law enforcement is such that

⁴⁰⁰ Demand Abolition, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*, (Demand Abolition, November 2018), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf>; Christine Milrod and Martin Monto, “Prostitution and Sex Work in an Online Environment,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of International Cybercrime and Cyberdeviance*, ed. T. J. Holt and A.M. Bossler, 1177–1201 (Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-90307-1>.

⁴⁰¹ Justin Euteneier, Program Director, EPIK Project, in discussion with the author, August 17, 2022.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Tom Perez, Founder and CEO, EPIK Project in discussion with the author, June 17, 2022.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

EPIK works to help buyers who are ready to stop buying, while those in authority handle buyers who will only be willing to change when arrested.

EPIK has three ways of collaborating with law enforcement. First, law enforcement agencies are offered information about local buyer activity. This includes phone numbers and any relevant information that could be useful to them. Second, law enforcement may invite EPIK to do undercover operations with them. This includes having trained and vetted EPIK volunteers engaging with actual sex buyers who are arrested following their processing. After police process the arrested sex buyers, they are given the option to speak to the volunteers from EPIK. Many of those arrested agree to engage in a conversation even though they are free to go. Third, EPIK also participates in sex buyer diversion programs in some cities.

The technology stack used by EPIK can therefore be summarized as follows:

- Web-based call center software: This requires minimal tech savviness and anyone with basic technology skills can answer calls and texts and start engaging buyers.
- Database management tools: This is used to keep track of all buyer activity which allows for larger scale data analysis.
- Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing: This allows for deep analysis of effective and/or ineffective communications (i.e., text messages) and improved training.
- Artificial Intelligence: Machine Learning and Natural Language Processing is leveraged to build tools that will optimize volunteer effort and buyer engagements.

Tom Perez states, “the sexual exploitation ecosystem has changed substantially in recent years. There is no longer anything subtle about the commercial sex marketplace—it is in your face.”⁴⁰⁵ Not only has the ecosystem radically changed, but it is diffused into apps and numerous other subsystems.

Ethical decision-making is a constant consideration. EPIK takes its cues from the wisdom and leadership of people with lived experience in systems of prostitution. Working to end demand requires tact and thoughtfulness about how people are impacted: buyers, survivors, volunteers, and everyone. Collaboration is a significant value at EPIK.

Seattle Against Slavery (SAS) and Freedom Signal

Freedom Signal⁴⁰⁶ is an online platform built by the technology team at Seattle Against Slavery⁴⁰⁷ that currently supports outreach to victims via direct automated texting service, and which formerly also connected with would-be buyers via artificial intelligence (AI)-powered, intercept chatbots.

Outreach to Potential Victims

Freedom Signal enables advocates and service providers to develop ongoing relationships through texting with those potentially experiencing online sexual exploitation. In response to the expansion of the online sex trade, Seattle Against Slavery recognized the need for innovative ways to reach those who were being

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁶ Freedom Signal, “Reach Victims of Sexual Exploitation with Cutting-Edge Technology,” Freedom Signal, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://www.freedomsignal.org>.

⁴⁰⁷ Tech Against Trafficking, “Tech Against Trafficking Launches Second Accelerator Program,” Tech Against Trafficking, updated June 30, 2021, accessed January 5, 2023, <https://techagainstrafficking.org/accelerating-the-use-of-technology-to-combat-human-trafficking>.

bought and sold online. While traditional methods of intervention, through outreach on the streets, in strip clubs, brothels, etc., worked, they were not efficient. Additionally, traditional models of providing support to those experiencing sexual exploitation is largely reactive. The onus falls on the individual experiencing sexual exploitation to find a hotline number or reach out to a service provider to get their needs met. In contrast, Freedom Signal allows direct service providers to proactively reach out to those potentially experiencing exploitation through an SMS text.

Direct services organizations can send targeted, text-based outreach messages to potential sex trafficking victims identified through web scraping. This is done with web crawlers that comb commercial sex ads to gather information such as name, age, sex, and location. Freedom Signal currently crawls 19 websites weekly, meaning that any new ads posted within the past week are captured during the crawl. When a potential victim replies, advocates can reach out and build trust with vulnerable individuals in possible crises.

The outreach technology was designed by software engineers and survivors of online sex trafficking in response to the specific needs of this population. It ensures a safe, direct channel of communication. Since 2017, more than 175,000 potential victims across North America have received proactive outreach from service providers using Freedom Signal. Moreover, compared to in-person or street outreach, victims who were sent direct text outreach were significantly more likely to engage with services. In one example, Amanda Hightower, executive director of the Seattle-based, nonprofit Real Escape from the Sex Trade (REST), shared experiences that stemmed from their partnership with SAS. Their use of the victim text outreach service led to a 40% increase in the number of victims who reached out to REST for help in a two-year period. According to Hightower, REST would see one victim engage their services for every 60 hours of street outreach they did. Conversely, with text outreach, one victim will engage for every 6 hours of outreach.⁴⁰⁸

Online Demand Deterrence

Technology has also been used effectively by Seattle Against Slavery to engage in two forms of demand deterrence in the online prostitution marketplace. Seattle Against Slavery's first approach to demand deterrence was to post fake online ads that connected potential sex buyers with chatbots, which are perceived to be persons in prostitution by the potential buyer. Once a "conversation" was engaged, a follow-up deterrence message was delivered to the prospective buyer.

Sites, where online ads were placed, include 'Craigslist type' sites and sites like SkipTheGames.com and CityXGuide.com. Between 2014 and 2016, 2.1 million ads were placed by Seattle Against Slavery that contained simple deterrence messages such as, "You could be arrested for buying sex online" or "By buying sex online you could be causing harm to a victim."⁴⁰⁹ These messages included links to counselling services and other support groups. Seattle Against Slavery reported a 40-60% decline in keyword searches (e.g.,

⁴⁰⁸ Meagan Phelan, "Technology Disrupts Child Sex Trade, Aiding Victims and Blocking Buyers," *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, February 14, 2020, <https://www.aaas.org/news/technology-disrupts-child-sex-trade-aiding-victims-and-blocking-buyers>.

⁴⁰⁹ Hannah Devlin, "Trafficking Industry Hit as 'Sex Worker' Chatbots Fool Thousands," *The Guardian*, February 13, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/feb/13/sex-worker-chatbots-fool-thousands-to-hit-trafficking-industry>.

“teen escort”) during this period⁴¹⁰. This was a statistically significant decline when Seattle was compared with other US cities where the campaign had not taken place.⁴¹¹

This was followed, between 2016 and 2018, by a second approach in which the organization posted fake ads offering sex which were prompted by specific keyword searches by potential sex buyers. Keywords triggered a chatbot designed to pose as a prostituted person, which resulted in about 19,000 conversations with 15,000 people. The impact of the deterrence messages was tested by the bot’s disappearance after a short chat. In other cases, the chatbot would post a message stating the risks of buying sex online. It was found that those who received such a message were 30% less likely to click on one of the ads in the future.⁴¹² The chatbots “posed as trafficking victims, primarily underage,” and “would engage with buyers to waste their time and track the online demand.”⁴¹³

These bots were initially used as a deterrence mechanism and would send educational messages at the end of a conversation. A pilot program later followed in which law enforcement agents could “take over” a conversation from an active chatbot and begin texting with the buyer from the same phone number as the bot to facilitate in-person “reverse sting” operations. The software was made available to law enforcement agencies who would pay for the service. This helped offset operational costs.

In February 2018, the Cook County Sheriff’s Office (IL) reported on its partnership with Seattle Against Slavery during the 15th National Johns Suppression Initiative (NJSI) operation which ran from January 7 to February 4 and included more than 30 law enforcement agencies across 16 states. Ads were posted online that connected to bots posing as sex trafficking victims. The bots, with names such as ‘Ariel,’ ‘Brook,’ and ‘Cari,’ were said to “fluidly interact via text message with individuals seeking to buy sex.”⁴¹⁴ If a price for the service was eventually set and agreed upon, the bot sent a deterrence message informing the sex buyer that soliciting sex is a crime. During the campaign, the bot was activated in Boston, MA, King County (Seattle), WA, Los Angeles County, CA, and Phoenix, AZ. A total of 9,114 potential sex buyers were engaged, and more than 60% of sex buyers received the deterrence message.

“This incredible technology helps to further the work done by law enforcement to bring attention to the exploitive nature of the sex trafficking industry and reduce the demand for purchased sex that serves to perpetuate a cycle of violence, mental illness and drug addiction for victims.”⁴¹⁵

Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart

⁴¹⁰ This data was not publicly available.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Ibid.

⁴¹³ Tiffany Davis, Program Manager, The Lantern Project (Formerly Seattle Against Slavery), Email communication on August 25, 2022.

⁴¹⁴ Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Trafficking Sting Nets over 630 Sex Buyers and Pimps/Traffickers,” news release, February 6, 2018, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-trafficking-sting-nets-630-sex-buyers-pimps-traffickers>.

⁴¹⁵ Ibid.

Figure 3: Seattle Against Slavery Feature⁴¹⁶



As part of Seattle Against Slavery’s demand deterrence technology stack, they used “Azure App Service and Azure SQL Database for the Freedom Signal platform, giving advocates and law enforcement a simple UI [user interface] using .NET Core and ASP.NET Core, easily hosted in Azure. To help safeguard against data breaches, Seattle Against Slavery used Azure Active Directory B2C to store sensitive or private data outside the system.”⁴¹⁷

In 2020, Seattle Against Slavery decided to end their demand deterrence program. The “inability to gather any data to demonstrate the actual impact of the work on demand strategies which used ads for deterrence” was cited by Seattle Against Slavery as a challenge. The use of bots also led to disproportionate outcomes for buyers of color due to glitches and other technology errors which would be more obvious to those with access to higher education. Moreover, the use of bots still required the use of “real” photos of an individual who could attract the buyer, which was considered exploitative of the persons whose photos were used. The following are some of the key factors considered by Seattle Against Slavery in their decision to sunset the chatbot program in 2020:

Cost of operations: To be effective, the chatbots had to have ads posted on websites frequently. The amount of money paid to dubious websites that often facilitated sex trafficking was problematic. Additionally, the amount of time and effort it takes to keep ads at the top of the listings page was prohibitive for the small Seattle Against Slavery team. Another competitor in the technology and demand reduction space ran into similar issues. Additionally, buyers would flag ads as spam whenever they were able to identify the bots, adding another layer of ad re-posting that an employee needed to do.

Ethical issues regarding fake sex trafficking victims: Each chatbot needed to have ads posted with photos. SAS initially used a set of photos without verified model releases. The oral history

⁴¹⁶ Microsoft, “Seattle Against Slavery.” [Seattle Against Slavery Feature no longer available on Microsoft website].

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

regarding the images was that they came from an anti-trafficking researcher who did have model release forms. Possible solutions to this problem were explored and it was found that stock photography companies all explicitly banned the use of their images in prostitution, sexual ads, etc. A decision was made not to create a similar photo bank thereby creating pornography for the purpose of decoy ads. Additionally, the sheer volume of images that would be needed as ads got flagged for being spam or as buyers became familiar with the decoy photos made this seem like a project too cumbersome to explore.

Lack of evidence about the efficacy: When the program was started, there were claims made about its efficacy (i.e., “80% of buyers who got deterrence messages never messaged again”), but Seattle Against Slavery was not able to measure the ability of the bots or deterrence messaging in reducing men’s rates of sex buying. Additionally, by only posting occasionally on one or two sites, the SAS team knew that they were not getting an accurate picture of the online market. The need for an empirical study would have required significant investment of time and money, as well as the risk of not finding any evidence-based reason to claim that the chatbots reduced demand for sex.

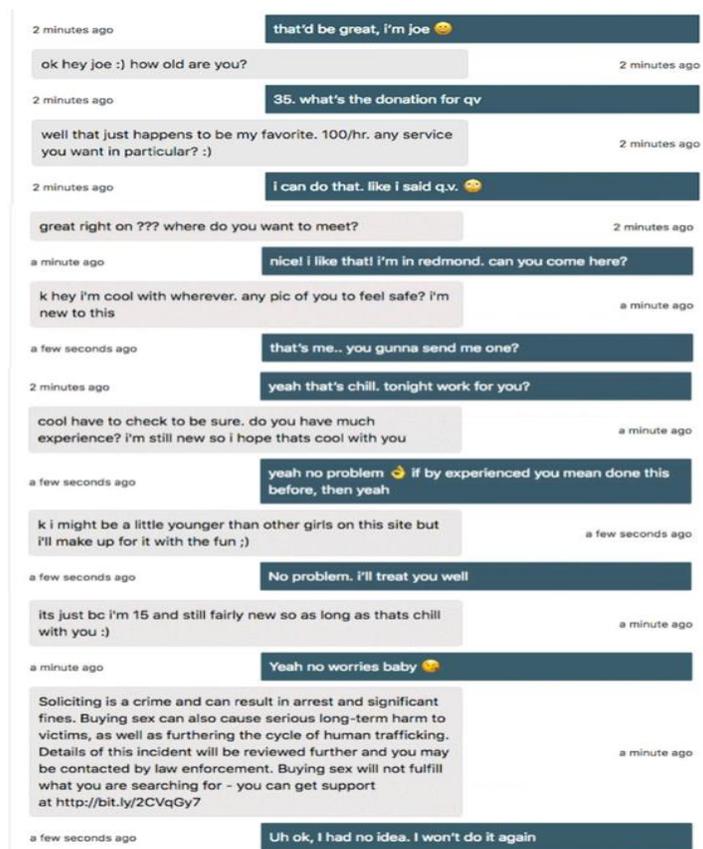
Inability to determine equitable outcomes resulting from chatbot/law enforcement engagement: Studies show that most online buyers are white, upper/middle class, and educated men. Seattle Against Slavery was unable to determine if the buyers who were most frequently tricked by the decoy bots or pursued by law enforcement actually represented the buyers doing most harm.⁴¹⁸ The SAS team was concerned by the likelihood that the tool allowed law enforcement to disproportionately target people of color, regardless of intent.

Below is a Seattle Against Slavery example of a conversation between a sex buyer and a chatbot, and the computerized text message in response to sex buyers after their sex solicitation engagements with chatbots.⁴¹⁹

⁴¹⁸ Demand Abolition, *Who Buys Sex? Understanding and Disrupting Illicit Market Demand*, (Demand Abolition, November 2018), <https://www.demandabolition.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Demand-Buyer-Report-July-2019.pdf>; Lauren Martin et al., *Mapping the Demand: Sex Buyers in the State of Minnesota*, Women’s Foundation of Minnesota (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, August 2 2017), <https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/226521/MappingtheDemand-FullReport%20-%20FINAL%20July%2031%202017.pdf?sequence=1>.

⁴¹⁹ Tina Rosenberg, “A.I. Joins the Campaign Against Sex Trafficking,” Opinion, The New York Times, April 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/09/opinion/ai-joins-the-campaign-against-sex-trafficking.html>.

Figure 4: A conversation between a sex buyer and a chatbot – Seattle Against Slavery



In 2021 Seattle Against Slavery was renamed The Lantern Project, and after 12 years of working to end trafficking and exploitation, effectively closed on August 31, 2022. However, their work will continue through their three flagship programs: Freedom Signal, Stopping Sexual Exploitation, and Trafficking Prevention for Schools. Freedom Signal’s outreach to potential victims in the online prostitution marketplace will continue operations under [Scarlet Hope](#),⁴²⁰ and Stopping Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Prevention for Schools will continue with [Washington Trafficking Prevention](#).⁴²¹

The National Johns Suppression Initiative, an operation aimed at deterring buyers and disrupting the online facilitation of sex trafficking, has utilized the AI chatbot technologies made available by Seattle Against Slavery⁴²² and Childsafe.ai.⁴²³ The value and efficiency of these technologies have also been lauded by Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart, who initiated the NJSI operations in 2011 to “bring attention to the

⁴²⁰ Scarlet Hope, “Share Hope + Bring Love: A Gospel Response to Exploited and Trafficked Women,” Scarlet Hope, 2022, <https://scarlethope.org>.

⁴²¹ Washington Trafficking Prevention, “Our Mission,” Washington Trafficking Prevention, <https://traffickingprevention.org>.

⁴²² Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Trafficking Sting Nets over 630 Sex Buyers and Pimps/Traffickers,” Press Release, February 6, 2018, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-trafficking-sting-nets-630-sex-buyers-pimps-traffickers/>.

⁴²³ Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Buyer Sting Nets More Than 450 Arrests,” news release, August 29, 2018, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-buyer-sting-nets-more-than-450-arrests/>.

exploitive nature of the sex trafficking industry and reduce the demand for purchased sex that serves to perpetuate a cycle of violence, mental illness and drug addiction for victims.”⁴²⁴

Table 1 below reflects the number of sex buyers arrested or engaged by bots in NJSI operations for the period 2017-2020.

Table 1: Number of Sex Buyers Arrested or Engaged by Bots in National Johns Suppression Initiative Operations, 2017-2020⁴²⁵

NJSI Operations	# Agencies Participating in NJSI	# Jurisdictions Deploying Bots	# Sex Buyers Arrested	# Potential Buyers Engaged by Bots
August 2017	37	3	1,020	454
February 2018	30	5	638	9,114
August 2018	24	5	473	1,576
February 2019	24	7	390	1,477
July 2019	26	6	503	3,097
February 2020	22	9	451	1,627
Total			3,475	17,345

Other Technologies: National and International

C3-Sex

The potential of technology-based tactics to disrupt sexual predators and sex buyers is also gaining traction further afield. Developed by computer engineering and computer science scholars in Colombia and Spain, the C3-Sex⁴²⁶ is an automatic software-controlled conversational agent that is deployed online and interacts with users autonomously. It similarly uses NLP and is deployed on websites or in scenarios where it profiles the interests of suspects regarding online child sexual abuse. Thus far, C3-Sex operates in Omegle online chat rooms and has the capability to seamlessly migrate to Snapchat or Telegram sessions. After

⁴²⁴ Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Trafficking Sting Nets Over 1,000 Sex Buyers and Pimps/Traffickers,” news release, August 2, 2017, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-trafficking-sting-nets-1000-sex-buyers-pimpstraffickers>.

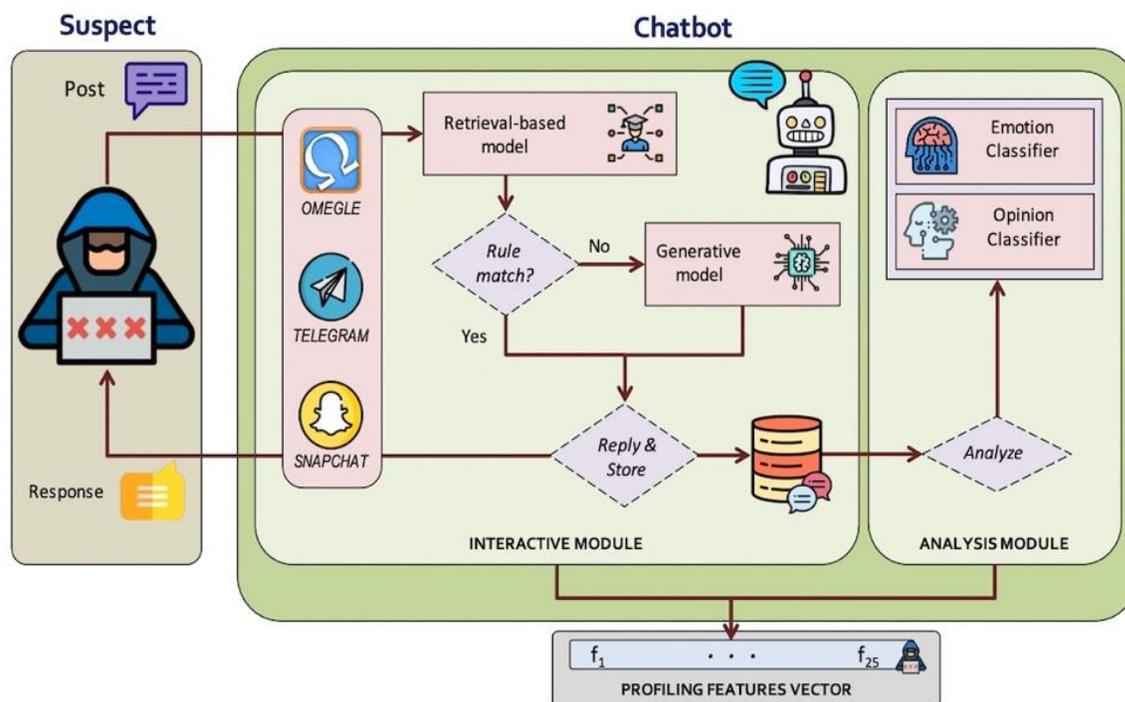
⁴²⁵ Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Buyer Stings Reach 10,000 Arrests,” news release, February 5, 2020, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-buyer-stings-reach-10000-arrests>; Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Buyer Sting Nets More Than 500 Arrests,” news release, July 31, 2019, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-buyer-sting-nets-more-than-500-arrests>; Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Buyer Sting Nets More Than 390 Arrests,” news release, February 6, 2019, <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-buyer-sting-nets-more-than-390-arrests>; Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Buyer Sting Nets More Than 450 Arrests”; Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Trafficking Sting Nets over 630 Sex Buyers and Pimps/Traffickers,” <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-trafficking-sting-nets-630-sex-buyers-pimps-traffickers/>; Cook County Sheriff’s Office, “National Sex Trafficking Sting Nets Over 1,000 Sex Buyers and Pimps/Traffickers,” <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/national-sex-trafficking-sting-nets-1000-sex-buyers-pimpstraffickers>.

⁴²⁶ John Ibañez Rodríguez et al., “C3-Sex: A Conversational Agent to Detect Online Sex Offenders,” *Electronics* 9, no. 11 (2020), [doi:10.3390/electronics9111779](https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics9111779).

deployment, the entire record of completed conversations in both Omegle and Snapchat platforms is analyzed to extract metrics about a suspect’s interest in child sexual abuse material (CSAM). Figure 3 (below) shows an overview of the workflow of posts and replies by C3-Sex.

In a 50-day experiment conducted by researchers between April and June 2020, C3-Sex connected to the online chat platform Omegle and typed “sex” as a conversational topic of interest. When a conversation between a user (suspect) and the chatbot ensued, the suspect’s willingness to exchange multimedia content was confirmed. C3-Sex then proceeded to suggest Snapchat as the platform to exchange the multimedia content. Once the suspect left the chat room, C3-Sex closed the conversation and continued to analyze the interaction using the profiling metrics and AI models (see Figure 5). The 50-day experiment revealed that, on average, the C3-Sex smart chatbot can interact with 900 suspects weekly. In the seventh week of the experiment, the chatbot engaged with more than 500 users, and in weeks 2, 3, and 5, it surpassed 1,500 suspects. In the second week, C3-Sex was able to maintain contact with nearly 2,500 network users and was able to stay online throughout the eight weeks of the experiment, with a total of 7,199 users contacted.

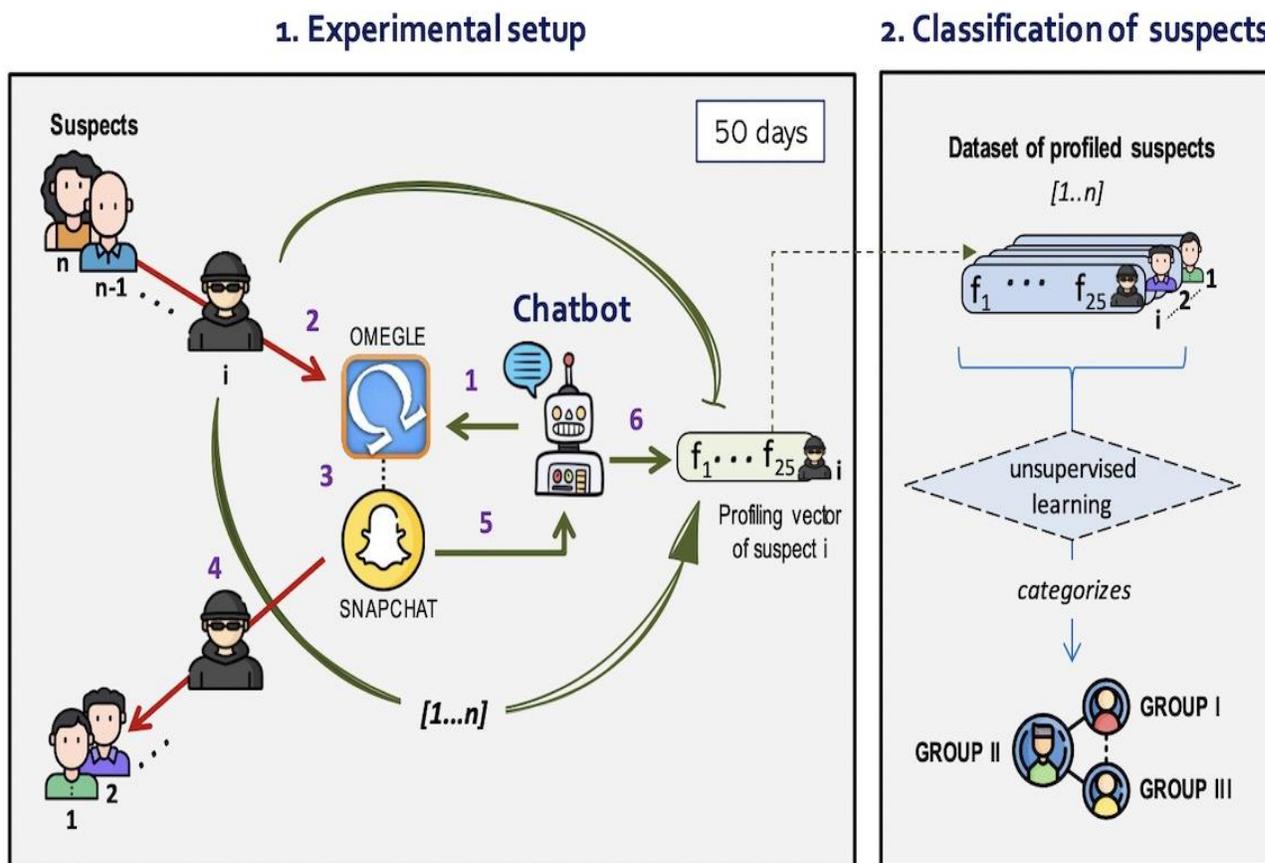
Figure 5: C3-Sex overview depicting the workflow of posts and replies⁴²⁷



C3-Sex developers expect to deploy this technology to other types of sexual crimes, including sexual exploitation, sexting, sextortion, sex scam, or sex trafficking. They note that these types of sexual crimes would require C3-Sex to manage more complex conversations for a more protracted period.

⁴²⁷ Figure from John Ibañez Rodríguez et al., “C3-Sex: A Conversational Agent to Detect Online Sex Offenders,” *Electronics* 9, no. 11 (2020), [doi:10.3390/electronics9111779](https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics9111779).

Figure 6: Experiments launched with C3-Sex⁴²⁸



Wilber.ai by Buyer Resist

Wilber.ai is an AI-powered chatbot developed by the Canadian-based group Buyer Resist⁴²⁹ and promoted by The BreakFree Collective.⁴³⁰ It has engaged with nearly 500 sex buyers and has shown potential for reducing demand for commercial sex. Similar to other chatbot-based previously discussed, the strategy involves posting online ads targeting sex buyers with a phone number linked to the chatbot. When sex buyers contact the chatbot, it takes them on a discussion that leads prospective buyers to understand the legal consequences of purchasing sex, the associated health consequences, and the cruel realities of the sex trafficking. By the end of this educational experience, some sex buyers recognize the harms of sex buying and are provided with supplementary resources like information on counselling or local sex addict anonymous groups so they can receive the help they need to overcome their addictions and regain a hold on their lives.

⁴²⁸ Figure from John Ibañez Rodríguez et al., “C3-Sex: A Conversational Agent to Detect Online Sex Offenders,” *Electronics* 9, no. 11 (2020), [doi:10.3390/electronics9111779](https://doi.org/10.3390/electronics9111779).

⁴²⁹ Buyer Resist Education Society, “Do You Have a Sex Problem?” HTBS, 2021, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://www.buyerresist.ca>.

⁴³⁰ The BreakFree Collective, “Partner with The BreakFree Collective and help stop Human Trafficking in Canada,” BreakFree, 2022, accessed September 13, 2022, <https://www.breakfreecollective.org>.

Other Applications

Spotlight by Thorn

Thorn⁴³¹ aids and accelerates law enforcement’s ability to identify victims of child sex trafficking online. Through their principal technology tool Spotlight, Thorn’s 2021⁴³² impact report stated they identified 3,977 children and reduced law enforcement investigation time by 61%. More than 2,700 agencies are reported to be using Thorn tools, with the number of children identified since inception of the technology totaling 24,366. Police investigators laud⁴³³ the value and efficiency of Spotlight. According to Kyle Woods and Kyle Hartsock, detectives inside the Ghost Unit with the Bernalillo County Sheriff’s Office, Spotlight is used to aggregate online data and enables the use of data gathered from websites. Apart from utilizing Spotlight for victim interviews, it provides much value in tracking “a victim’s movement across the country, with exact dates and times of posts as well as when phone numbers changed (the trafficker picked her up, etc.). We have identified ads 6 months after the incident utilizing Spotlight, which, in one case, cracked open the case and lead to a successful prosecution of a child sex trafficker.”⁴³⁴

DeliverFund

DeliverFund⁴³⁵ is a non-profit “private intelligence organization” heavily involved in the utilization of technology to combat sex trafficking.⁴³⁶ DeliverFund’s approach does not focus on demand deterrence but uses the “same technology that human traffickers use to scale their business to tear down their networks.” Through its International Human Trafficking Analysis Center, the DeliverFund identifies advertisements for sex trafficking victims online and uses a variety of technology tools and special operations methodologies to identify and locate sex traffickers. The gathered information is shared with law enforcement agencies to verify and arrest traffickers. In December 2022, its website reported that more than 3,459 intelligence reports have been generated by the organization.

In March 2022, Deliver Fund announced⁴³⁷ its participation in California’s seventh annual anti-human trafficking operation that included simultaneous operations among local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies. The effort resulted in 413 arrests, including 30 suspected traffickers and exploiters, and the recovery of 72 trafficking victims, of whom 7 were minors. More than 80 participating federal, state, and

⁴³¹ Thorn, “Spotlight Helps Find Kids Faster,” THORN, 2022, accessed 2022, October 31, <https://www.thorn.org/spotlight>; Thorn, “We Are Thorn,” YouTube, November 14, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Se4OvAGJu4U>.

⁴³² Thorn, “Building What We Believe: THORN’S 2021 Impact,” THORN, 2021, <https://www.thorn.org/impact-report-2021>.

⁴³³ Kyle Woods and Kyle Hartsock, “Using Spotlight to Investigate Human Trafficking,” THORN, August 9, 2018, <https://www.thorn.org/blog/using-spotlight-to-investigate-human-trafficking>; Matt Blumenthal, “Inside Human Trafficking Investigations,” THORN, April 24, 2018, <https://www.thorn.org/blog/what-human-trafficking-investigations-look-like>.

⁴³⁴ Woods and Hartsock, “Using Spotlight,” 2018.

⁴³⁵ DeliverFund, “How DeliverFund Combats Human Trafficking,” DeliverFund, 2021, <https://deliverfund.org/how-deliverfund-is-fighting-human-trafficking-in-america>; DeliverFund, “DeliverFund: How we Hunt Human Traffickers Online,” YouTube, April 13, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R2S_BeeJP4.

⁴³⁶ DeliverFund, “Operation Reclaim and Rebuild: DeliverFund Announces 413 Arrests and 72 Victims Rescued During Multi-‘County’ or ‘Agency’ Anti-Human Trafficking Operation,” *PR Newswire*, March 2, 2022, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/operation-reclaim-and-rebuild-deliverfund-announces-413-arrests-and-72-victims-rescued-during-multi-county-or-agency-anti-human-trafficking-operation-301494255.html>.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

local law enforcement agencies and task forces from across California were involved in a week-long statewide effort from February 6-12, 2022. Assistance was provided to law enforcement in multiple trafficking and several traveler and child exploitation cases. Investigators from multiple agencies and task forces collaborated to “better address the supply and demand side of the trafficking market as well as underage sexual exploitation market by finding traffickers, including pimps...Over 100 escort ad contacts were conducted by the investigative team.”⁴³⁸

ShadowDragon.io

ShadowDragon.io⁴³⁹ endeavors to make the world a safer place by developing easy-to-use digital investigation tools that address the complexities of modern online investigations and augment the capabilities of in-house teams. The organization is partnering with nonprofits that share the common goal of ending human trafficking by using sophisticated digital tools and tested investigative methods. As with DeliverFund, its approach does not expressly seek to deter consumer-level demand, but rather focuses on identifying sex traffickers and their victims. In 2015,⁴⁴⁰ ShadowDragon provided DeliverFund with OIMonitor⁴⁴¹ and SocialNet,⁴⁴² which formed part of the investigation tools that led to the solving of a case in New Mexico involving a known trafficker and a 22-year-old woman.

Relevant tools by ShadowDragon enable human trafficking investigators⁴⁴³ to identify where information is being talked about and enables the monitoring of specific areas of interest including the DarkNet, online forums, chat rooms, data dump sites, and online marketplaces. These sites can be monitored “to pick up new leads and chatter.” The tools also enable a “robust intelligence product output, enabling attribution, action and disruption.” In a 2019 ShadowDragon blog entitled “It’s Hard Out There for a Pimp,”⁴⁴⁴ the organization asserts that sex traffickers are using the expansion of escort websites to “advertise their products to the world.” An example of an online investigation using their OIMonitor tool was then showcased by employing it on some of the largest escort sites in operation and searching them for potential sex trafficking ads. They reported that one data point has the potential to unveil hundreds of posts—many of which will be the same and possibly in different cities. ShadowDragon.io points out that a reason for repeated data could be that changing information in online posts has cost implications, thus pimps may only purchase a limited number of ads. Posting the same data is also easier than creating new language for each post. When potential sex traffickers are identified by specific data points, they are added to an OIMonitor project that alerts the user when that data is posted. OIMonitor’s historical search and alerting functionalities

⁴³⁸ Ibid.

⁴³⁹ ShadowDragon, “OSINT Software, Data, and Training for Modern Investigations,” ShadowDragon, 2022, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://shadowdragon.io>.

⁴⁴⁰ Daniel Clemens, “ShadowDragon and DeliverFund Partner to Catch Human Traffickers,” ShadowDragon, December 16, 2016, <https://blog.shadowdragon.io/shadowdragon-io-and-deliverfund-org-partner-to-catch-human-traffickers-2>.

⁴⁴¹ ShadowDragon, “OIMonitor / Open Source Intelligence Monitoring and Alerting,” ShadowDragon, 2022, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://shadowdragon.io/oimonitor>.

⁴⁴² ShadowDragon, “SocialNet / Social Media Monitoring and Investigations,” ShadowDragon, 2022, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://shadowdragon.io/socialnet>.

⁴⁴³ Daniel Clemens, “Alabama Cyber Now: Disrupting Human Trafficking Using Digital Forensics & Social Media Forensics,” ShadowDragon, May 7, 2018, <https://blog.shadowdragon.io/alabama-cyber-now-disrupting-human-trafficking-using-digital-forensics-social-media-forensics>.

⁴⁴⁴ M. Brooks, “It’s Hard Out There for a Pimp,” ShadowDragon, June 24, 2019, <https://blog.shadowdragon.io/its-hard-out-there-for-a-pimp>.

are therefore able to locate potential sex traffickers and setup alerts. The specific online investigation that was showcased in the blog was “put together in just under an hour” and highlights the indelible contribution of technology to sex trafficking investigations.

Tech Against Trafficking (TAT)⁴⁴⁵

Tech Against Trafficking was jointly founded by Microsoft, Nokia, and British Telecoms in 2018 with one of its first initiatives leading to the development of the TAT Interactive Map,⁴⁴⁶ encompassing 300 counter-trafficking technology tools developed to combat both sex and labor trafficking. The interactive map and corresponding tool survey have been jointly published⁴⁴⁷ with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). Of the 300 tools identified, only three—Street Grace’s “Transaction Intercept” and Seattle Against Slavery’s “Freedom Signal” and “Intercept”—were expressly aimed at disrupting consumer-level demand for sex trafficking. Other noteworthy mentions of organizations who use technology to address distinct and overlapping aspects of sex trafficking, CSAM, and the broader dimensions of human trafficking include Giant Oak,⁴⁴⁸ Marinus Analytics,⁴⁴⁹ and IBM.⁴⁵⁰

Technology and Ethics

Technological tools, increasingly used by the government, civil society, and private sector to counter sex trafficking, have not been immune from scrutiny.⁴⁵¹ The increasing use of technology has brought into focus issues of data privacy, ethics, transparency, accountability, and informed consent. Data collection, storage, sharing, and analysis is inevitable; however, each comes with inherent risks requiring protocols and safeguards. In developing technological solutions to combat sex trafficking, technology companies and NGOs need to address several essential aspects.⁴⁵² Organizations that actively use artificial intelligence in

⁴⁴⁵ Tech Against Trafficking, “Companies Collaborating with Global Expert to Help Eradicate Human Trafficking Using Technology,” Tech Against Trafficking, 2020, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://techagainstrafficking.org>.

⁴⁴⁶ Tech Against Trafficking, “Interactive Map of Anti-Trafficking Tech Tools,” Tech Against Trafficking, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://techagainstrafficking.org/interactive-map>.

⁴⁴⁷ OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools*. (Vienna, Austria: OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, May 2020), https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf#page=19.

⁴⁴⁸ Giant Oak, “Introducing GOST Fall 2022 Release: Your Solution for Confidence in Coverage,” Giant Oak, 2019, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://www.giantoak.com/giant-oak-technology-for-screening-and-vetting-1>.

⁴⁴⁹ Marinus Analytics, “Creating AI Solutions for Social Impact,” Marinus Analytics, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://www.marinusanalytics.com>.

⁴⁵⁰ IBM, “Impact in Practice,” IBM, accessed October 31, 2022, <https://www.ibm.com/impact/initiatives>.

⁴⁵¹ Jennifer Musto, Mitali Thakor, and Borislav Gerasimov, “Between Hope and Hype: Critical Evaluations of Technology’s Role in Anti-trafficking,” *Anti-trafficking Review* 14 (2020): 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.201220141>; Jennifer Musto, *Control and Protect: Collaboration, Carceral Protection, and Domestic Sex Trafficking in the United States*, Univ of California Press, 2016.

⁴⁵² Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons, *Human Trafficking and Technology: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities*, (Vienna, Austria: Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons, 2019, <https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/report/human-trafficking-and-technology-trends-challenges-and-opportunities/>); OSCE Office for the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, *Leveraging Innovation to Fight Trafficking in Human Beings: A Comprehensive Analysis of Technology Tools*, (Vienna, Austria: OSCE Office for the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Tech Against Trafficking, May 2020), https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/9/6/455206_1.pdf.

their demand reduction operations (Childsafe.ai, Street Grace, EPIK) explained that they have iterative processes that consider risks, ethics, data storage, and privacy and that comprehensive human guidance and oversight are involved. All information is deidentified and securely stored unless shared with law enforcement agencies. Established best practices concerning technology use in human trafficking combating efforts⁴⁵³ are followed and are congruent with ethical principles identified from the global corpus of principles and guidelines on ethical AI: responsibility, privacy, transparency, justice and fairness, and non-maleficence.⁴⁵⁴

Cost and Usage Fees

The issue of costs and fees related to the employment of these technologies were specifically probed with the organizations that participated in this study as cost implications were not discernible from available open-source and public facing information that were used to compile their initial organizational profiles. From our research it was clear that a generic cost template was not available (or even possible) due to several variables that must be factored in for the entire cycle of functionalities and activities—for humans and “machines”—before, during, and after operations. The geographical area and locations of operations, the number of websites accessed, the number of adds being posted, the number of deterrence messages, and how many active conversations are being pursued, are but some of the variables that may have cost implications.

One organization makes use of volunteers and pro-bono technologists that help with development and operational aspects, while actively engaging in fundraising to make available their technologies on a national basis, with no subscription fees, dues, or costs to law enforcement. Incidental costs such as ad purchases, are a cost that users of the technology will generally have to cover at present. However, other organizations operate on a for-profit model. One such organization indicated that estimated costs may amount to two-thirds of what an undercover asset would cost in a particular area, but that use of their tools would generate an exponentially wider reach and considerably more sex buyer engagements than was possible by one undercover team. As pointed out by Rob Spectre: “For the cost of one undercover asset, you can have as many undercover assets as you want, all the time talking to buyers in a specific area, collecting meaningful data and creating meaningful deterrence . . .” Granular details related to operations and exact line items that incur costs, were not available or judiciously not shared with the research team for reasons that may include security, confidentiality, and the operational posture of the organizations.

Summary

The spectrum of technology-based products identified have several common elements, but also vary in their capabilities, purpose, and how they are being deployed. The scraping of data, identification and monitoring of open-source electronic communications, analysis of raw data, and flagging of communications that actually or potentially illustrate a commercial sex offer or transaction are some of these tools’ common features. Artificial Intelligence and its subsets of machine learning and natural language processing are intrinsic to most of these technologies and through sets of algorithms, make up the “DNA” of bots (also

⁴⁵³ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁴ Anna Jobin, Marcello Ienca, and Effy Vayena, “The Global Landscape of AI Ethics Guidelines,” *Nature Machine Intelligence* 1, no. 9 (2019): 389-399, <https://doi.org/ufs.idm.oclc.org/10.1038/s42256-019-0088-2>.

known as chatbots). Bots are essentially software programs that can mimic or simulate human behavior through voice commands, text chats, or both. A bot represents a virtual conversation in which one party is an online “chatting” robot. The chatbot is programmed to interpret the input data into a desired output value.⁴⁵⁵ The software program is continuously fed with large volumes of information that prompts “the machine” to trace relationships between data points that are too intricate for the human brain to identify. “Learning” takes place and AI makes informed guesses about the potential outcome of a new question.⁴⁵⁶

These capabilities hold much promise for efforts to combat consumer-level demand for prostitution and sex trafficking. The dimensions of variation among the separate products and how they are used to reduce demand for commercial sex begin with their focus. Some target the identification and deterrence of sex buyers, while other programs are used primarily to (a) identify pimps/ sex traffickers posting online ads or infiltrating social media, (b) identify victims, or (c) analyze local commercial sex and trafficking markets. Other aspects of variation are how the technology fits within the activities that constitute the initiative and how it interfaces with the people operating the programs.

Technologies used to target sex buyers can be used in several distinct modes of interaction with both the buyers and with law enforcement or others seeking to deter them. First, they can operate in fully automated mode, constantly scanning ad websites, search terms, or social media communications, identifying potential sex buyers, and then responding with deterrence messages. Second, they may continuously scan and then alert law enforcement personnel when cases are identified that meet the criteria set (e.g., individuals seeking to purchase sex with children), at which point police may respond by launching an investigation or a sting operation. Third, the technology may be programmed to scan during a set period like a sting or deterrence operation; the program identifies potential sex buyers, and then program personnel respond by delivering deterrence messages. While the programming which has been developed to identify and respond to online messages contains different algorithms, they all appear to have the same essential capacity to function at different levels of automation and the flexibility to coordinate with humans in different modes and for different kinds of operations.

All four technologies reviewed provide an automated means of scanning online communications and advertising, identifying instances of commercial sex, and then identifying individual sex buyers who have responded to online ads or social media messages. Each also engages prospective buyers in some form of interaction designed to deter them from attempting to purchase sex at the present “point of purchase” moment and in the future. Each can operate in a fully automated mode and be deployed at all times. Bots are programmed to identify communications indicative of commercial sex or sex trafficking and obtain contact information based on the accounts used by buyers via voice, text, email, or chat function to initiate a commercial sex transaction. Through extensive testing, development, and live deployment, artificial intelligence supports the evolution of the automated messaging pushed out to the sex buyers so that the language used, pacing, and local dialects become tailored to appear authentic rather than computer-generated. These and other capabilities allow the constant deployment of the technology to gather

⁴⁵⁵ Mai-Hanh Nguyen, “How Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning Produced Robots we Can Talk To,” *Insider*, January 27, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/chatbots-talking-ai-robot-chat-machine>.

⁴⁵⁶ Aubrey Calaway, “Artificial Intelligence and the Fight Against Human Trafficking,” Business & Human Rights Resource Centre, January 12, 2021, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/blog/artificial-intelligence-and-the-fight-against-human-trafficking>.

unprecedented levels of data about patterns in local illicit markets and have the capacity to identify activity consistent with attempting to purchase sex. Automated scanning and identification, coupled with realistic automated responses to sex buyers, thus provides the only feasible means of constantly (rather than periodically) attempting to disrupt markets for sexual exploitation by dissuading sex buyers at points of purchase. In addition to cost effectiveness and scalability in addressing demand, the technologies also have appealed to law enforcement agencies and collaborative efforts by providing methods for addressing both the “supply” and distribution components of local markets. The constant scanning and analytic capabilities of these products also identify likely cases of child sex trafficking and other exploitation and has successfully aided law enforcement agencies in identifying victims, as well as sex traffickers and sex trafficking networks.

Despite the significant opportunities and potential of chatbots and AI supplements, the foreseeable future will likely see the continuation of humans *and* machines utilizing each other’s strengths (augmented intelligence). As noted recently within the field of mental healthcare, AI chatbots are not yet able to fully replace human interactions. Albeit having the capacity to improve efficiency, affordability, convenience, and patient-driven access, AI interfaces and chatbots “cannot be expected to provide the feelings of respect and subtle constellations of interpersonal supports necessary for a sense of social agency, inclusion and equity.”⁴⁵⁷

Among the ways the different demand deterrence products vary is how they interface with humans. What has been referred to as “Augmented Intelligence”⁴⁵⁸—in which humans and machines utilize each other’s strengths—is a tenet of some technologies that alert law enforcement when certain criteria are met. Law enforcement, in turn, may then choose to launch an investigation or stage a sting operation. Notably, the EPIK approach features a consistent use of human labor where technology identifies people actively seeking to purchase sex, and then trained volunteers to step in to provide deterrence messages. As highlighted by EPIK’s Justin Euteneier:

*“An over dependence on technology undermines the story we tell victims and survivors; that they are valued. If so, then they are worthy of our time, not just our capacity to create technology.”*⁴⁵⁹

What has been communicated by a number of technology experts is that technology is not the panacea for ending consumer-level demand or eradicating the online commercial sexual exploitation infrastructure. Ending demand “requires humans who will change cultural norms that make sexual exploitation so easy and accepted.”⁴⁶⁰ In a similar vein, Rob Spectre noted:

*“Distribution is important to consider, but until we do something about all these white guys that wants to purchase kids online, we will not be making progress. Technology is an important part of that, it is also only one part of that.”*⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ Julia E. H. Brown and Jodi Halpern, “AI Chatbots Cannot Replace Human Interactions in the Pursuit of More Inclusive Mental Healthcare,” *SSM - Mental Health* 1 (2021), [doi:10.1016/j.ssmmh.2021.100017](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2021.100017).

⁴⁵⁸ Lynn Heidmann, “What Is Augmented Intelligence?,” *Scaling AI, Dataiku*, August 3, 2021, <https://blog.dataiku.com/augmented-intelligence>.

⁴⁵⁹ Justin Euteneier, Program Director, EPIK Project, in discussion with the author, August 17, 2022.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Rob Spectre, Technologist and Founder, Childsafe.ai, in discussion with the author, February 3, 2022.

Finally, the confluence of complexities intrinsic to the ever-expanding capabilities of technology and the online environment continue to eclipse operational responses by law enforcement agencies when dealing with the technology strand in crime.⁴⁶² Furthermore, not staying current with market trends and spending resources on outdated technology may do more harm than good. Ultimately, technology tools have the ability to scale and catalyze the work that humans are already doing and can provide macro-level intelligence about the commercial sex market. Embracing and optimally using available technology tools to constrain consumer-level demand for commercial sex is no longer optional. Parents, families, communities, law enforcement agencies, and corporations across the United States are all concerned and affected, directly and indirectly, by the sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of adults and children. Similar to what has been pointed out⁴⁶³ in the context of available police technologies, citizens and society at large know that these technology tools exist and expect law enforcement agencies and leaders to employ them in their efforts to protect people and create safer communities—both online and offline.

Additional References

To learn more about “[IT-Based Tactics](#)” and how they have been implemented, you may locate where in the United States that this tactic has been used by visiting www.demand-forum.org’s mapping or **listing** functions, and selecting from the list of tactics. By clicking on each of the cities and counties listed or mapped, you may access brief summaries of the implementation of each tactic in that community, and links to source documentation. Unlike the other 14 tactics, detailed information about the implementation of the tactic in each separate city or county has not been made public, so we cannot provide links to all of the communities in which IT Based Tactics have been used. We know of at least 78 U.S. cities and counties where the tactics have been used, but information for only 31 of these sites, are included.

⁴⁶² Jack Karsten, “As Criminals Adapt to New Technology, so Must International Law,” *The Justice Stephen Breyer Lecture Series on International Law*, Brookings, April 21, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2017/04/21/as-criminals-adapt-to-new-technology-so-must-international-law>.

⁴⁶³ Police1 Staff, “The Biggest Technology Challenges Facing Police Leaders: How to Chart a Roadmap to Future-Proof your Agency’s Technology Needs,” *Police1*, updated March 22, 2022, <https://www.police1.com/chiefs-sheriffs/articles/the-biggest-technology-challenges-facing-police-leaders-7QFimpOSEgJZROyX>.

Chapter 12: Employment Loss

Overview

Among the potential consequences of buying sex in the United States is “[Employment Loss](#).” In more than 485 U.S. cities and counties, people employed in a wide range of economic sectors and job types have resigned or been fired in response to arrests for, or allegations of, paying for sex. Examples include teachers, firefighters, doctors, police officers, coaches, elected officials, and business owners who had been arrested and charged with soliciting prostitution or the paid sexual abuse of children. In most cases, the loss of employment occurs when people are in positions of trust, in which criminal offenses of any kind violate codes of conduct and may be grounds for dismissal. Often, the nature of the job makes it untenable to remain in the position after violations of prostitution or sex trafficking laws have been publicized. For example:

- A teacher and football coach in Lewisville, TX, resigned from both positions after his arrest in a prostitution sting in January 2023.⁴⁶⁴
- The president of Winter Haven (FL) Hospital and Winter Haven Women’s Hospital resigned in November 2022 following his arrest on a charge of soliciting for prostitution, after approaching an undercover officer on South Orange Blossom Trail in Orlando, FL, and offering to pay for a sex.⁴⁶⁵
- In December, 2022, a North Carolina state trooper was caught having sex with a prostituted person and resigned from his position on same day of his arrest.⁴⁶⁶
- In April 2021, the mayor of Severance, CO, was arrested and faced a felony charge for allegedly patronizing a sex trafficked child and resigned the day after the alleged offense occurred.⁴⁶⁷
- In February 2021, a Jersey City, NJ, police officer was arrested in the parking lot where he admittedly arranged to buy access to sexually assault a woman and a girl, ages 19 and eight, for \$200.⁴⁶⁸ The officer was suspended from the police department immediately following his arrest, and later was fired and agreed to serve eight years in prison as part of his plea agreement.

⁴⁶⁴ Sarah Rumpf, “Texas High School Teacher, Youth Pastor among Nearly 50 Arrested in Prostitution Sting: ‘Scourge of the Earth,’” *Fox News*, January 24, 2023, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/texas-high-school-teacher-youth-pastor-among-arrested-prostitution-sting>.

⁴⁶⁵ Gary White, “Winter Haven Hospital CEO resigns after arrest,” *The Ledger*, November 23, 2022, <https://www.theledger.com/story/news/local/2022/11/23/winter-haven-hospital-ceo-resigns-after-arrest-polk-county-fl/10762159002/>.

⁴⁶⁶ WSOCTV.com News Staff, “NC Trooper Arrested While with Prostitute, Warrant Says,” *WSOC-TV*, December 28, 2022, <https://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/nc-trooper-arrested-while-with-prostitute-warrant-says/STJMHFPKZZGBOYHKTNTLX6ZEI/>.

⁴⁶⁷ Scruggs, “Former Severance Mayor Faces Felony Charge: Allegedly Solicited Child Prostitute,” *K99*, September 16, 2021, <https://k99.com/former-severance-mayor-faces-felony-charge-allegedly-solicited-child-prostitute>.

⁴⁶⁸ New Jersey Globe Staff, “Jersey City Cop Pleads Guilty to Seeking Sex with Minors,” *New Jersey Globe*, September 16, 2021, <https://newjerseyglobe.com/local/jersey-city-cop-pleads-guilty-to-seeking-sex-with-minors>.

- The pastor of an Upper Township, NJ, church was arrested and charged with loitering to engage a prostituted person in May 2012. He announced his resignation days after parents at the church’s preschool demanded he step down.⁴⁶⁹

While most terminations and resignations occur after an arrest has become known to employers (and often to the public), there have been many instances where sex buyers have been forced out of their jobs in response to allegations that did not result in an arrest. For example,

- In September 2019, a Florida teacher was fired when a student discovered during a Google search that the man had been fired years earlier by a school district in another Florida county for using a school computer to solicit sex online with prostituted women. The man was not arrested in either of the incidents resulting in his termination.⁴⁷⁰
- A Utah State Representative resigned in February 2018 after it was announced that he had allegedly used taxpayer funds to pay for at least two hotel rooms used for prostitution during the prior year.⁴⁷¹
- In July 2015, the Interim Assistant Superintendent of Finance of the Poughkeepsie, NY, school district reached a settlement agreement and was allowed to resign after allegations surfaced that he asked a prostituted woman to “service him” on school district grounds.⁴⁷²

Tracking the loss of employment as a consequence of—and deterrent to—buying sex is a recent development at Demand Forum. In the first two years of researching this tactic, NCOSE staff learned of more than 485 U.S. cities and counties in which an employer has either fired or accepted an employee’s resignation in response to learning that they had purchased sex. There are certainly more communities where buying sex has led to employment losses. This document provides initial findings on employment loss in response to soliciting prostitution or purchasing access to sexually abuse sex trafficked persons.

Ad Hoc Versus Policy-Driven Employment Loss

A theme that became more clearly evidence as we researched employment loss is that the termination of employment for purchasing sex often appears to be determined on an ad hoc basis, without reference to policies or guidelines that specifically prohibit purchasing sex. The terminations usually appear to be based on generic codes of conduct that allow employees to be fired if they commit any crime or engage in

⁴⁶⁹ Lee Procida, “Marmora Pastor Resigns After Prostitution Arrest in Millville,” *The Press of Atlantic City*, May 8, 2012, https://pressofatlanticcity.com/news/breaking/marmora-pastor-resigns-after-prostitution-arrest-in-millville/article_4bbdb2b2-9870-11e1-b13c-001a4bcf887a.html.

⁴⁷⁰ Click Orlando, “Seminole Teacher Accused of Using School Computer to Meet Prostitutes,” *Click Orlando*, November 15, 2012, <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/2012/11/16/seminole-teacher-accused-of-using-school-computer-to-meet-prostitutes/>; Leslie Postal, “Orange Charter School Fires Teacher after Learning of His Ties to 2012 Prostitution Scandal,” *Orlando Sentinel*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/education/os-ne-cornerstone-charter-teacher-prostitution-20190926-fn3hs5s3mzd7hi6rpquu6uyezu-story.html>.

⁴⁷¹ CBS News, “Taxpayers Funded Hotel Tied to Prostitute Report, Records Show,” *CBS News*, February 9, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/jon-stanard-utah-lawmaker-hotel-paid-by-public-records-show-prostitute-report-brie-taylor>.

⁴⁷² Nina Schutzman, “City School Official Resigns After Prostitution Allegation,” *Poughkeepsie Journal*, July 13, 2015, <https://www.poughkeepsiejournal.com/story/news/2015/07/13/school-admin-district-grounds/30066989>.

“conduct unbecoming” for their position, or that is considered detrimental to their business, agency, or non-governmental organization (NGO). However, there are examples of policies, codes, and state laws that specifically prohibit the purchase of sex. For example, the organization Businesses Ending Sex Trafficking (BEST) has created sample language for organizational policies explicitly prohibiting sex buying while employees are conducting company or organizational business, or while using company resources:

“It is strictly against our organization’s policy for any employee to engage in any sex buying activities of any kind during company time, while working on company business, or while engaged in any work-related activities (including during business travel), or using any company or work properties or resources whatsoever (including, without limitation, company credit cards, expense accounts, buildings, parking lots, grounds, equipment, computers, storage devices, software, websites, social media channels, networks, vehicles, and phones). This prohibition applies regardless of whether the activity is legal or tolerated in a particular jurisdiction, foreign or domestic.”⁴⁷³

The Amazon corporation has included similar concepts in its policy:

“It is against Amazon’s policy for any employee or Contingent Worker to engage in any sex buying activities of any kind in Amazon’s workplace or in any work-related setting outside of the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings or business-related social events. When Amazon suspects that an employee has used company funds or resources to engage in criminal conduct, the company will immediately investigate and take appropriate action up to and including termination. The company may also refer the matter to law enforcement.”⁴⁷⁴

Under the Code of Ethics (KCC 3.04) for King County, WA, the behaviors covered under the prohibition of purchasing sex are expanded to include patronizing websites that facilitate commercial sexual exploitation:

“...employees are prohibited from sexual exploitation, and buying or selling sex during work time or while on county business. Included in this prohibition are: (a) viewing or searching online advertisements for commercial sex during work hours, (b) viewing or searching websites where adult entertainment is offered, whether or not for sale, during work hours, (c) soliciting prostitution during work hours, and (d) exchanging money, employment, goods, or services for sex or sexual acts.”⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷³ “Employer Policies,” BEST, accessed November 16, 2022, <https://www.bestalliance.org/internal-policies-and-practices>.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid; Rob Thubron, “Workers from Microsoft and Amazon Caught Buying Sex Services from Trafficked Women,” *Tech Spot*, December 26, 2017, <https://www.techspot.com/news/72448-workers-microsoft-amazon-caught-buying-sex-services-trafficked.html>.

⁴⁷⁵ Human Resources, *Sex Trafficking and Buying Sexual Services Policy* (King County Code of Ethics, September 2015), https://kingcounty.gov/~media/audience/employees/policies-forms/hr-policies/New-Policy-Documents/Sex_Trafficking_and_Buying_Sexual_Services_Policy_-_FINAL.ashx?la=en.

In April 2015, Attorney General Holder issued a memo to all U.S. Department of Justice employees stating that buying sex could be grounds for suspension or termination:

“Regardless of whether prostitution is legal or tolerated in a particular jurisdiction, soliciting prostitutes creates a greater demand for human trafficking victims and a consequent increase in the number of minor and adult persons trafficked into commercial sex slavery. For these reasons, I want to reiterate to all Department personnel, including attorneys and law enforcement officers, that they are prohibited from soliciting, procuring, or accepting commercial sex. This rule applies at all times during an individual’s employment, including while off duty or on personal leave, and applies regardless of whether the activity is legal or tolerated in a particular jurisdiction, foreign or domestic. Department employees who violate these prohibitions will be subject to suspension or termination.”⁴⁷⁶

Legislation in Illinois was passed in 2021 that contains provisions specifically targeting the ability to terminate the employment of individuals convicted of purchasing sex.⁴⁷⁷ The SAFE-T Act (House Bill 3653) covers a broad range of criminal justice and police reforms and took full effect on Jan. 1, 2023. The bill was approved by the Illinois General Assembly and signed by the governor in 2021, bringing significant changes to police training policies and police accountability. The bill established new guidelines for “decertification” of police officers for various offenses, including prostitution-related misdemeanors. The list of misdemeanors that would result in decertification for police officers, should they be convicted, found guilty, or enter a no contest (or “nolo contendere”) plea, included several charges that can be used against sex buyers in different circumstances. These charges include: prostitution; solicitation of a sexual act; sexual exploitation of a child; indecent solicitation of a child; indecent solicitation of an adult; solicitation to meet a child; transmission of obscene messages; criminal sexual abuse; and public indecency.⁴⁷⁸

Types of Employment Loss Due to Arrest for, or Allegations of, Buying Sex

The list below illustrates the breadth and scope of sex buyers losing their employment as a consequence of the crime. A review of the list shows that sex buyers come from all walks of life and occupy positions from a wide range of employers, from blue-collar and white-collar positions, from public and private sectors, from high-profile elected officials and celebrities to anonymous workers and public servants. It also shows

⁴⁷⁶ Eric H. Holder, *Prohibition on the Solicitation of Prostitution* (Washington, DC: Office of the Attorney General, April 2015), <https://www.justice.gov/file/1047646/download>; Eyder Peralta, “Attorney General To Employees: You Can’t Solicit Prostitutes, Ever,” *NPR*, April 10, 2015, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/04/10/398827933/attorney-general-to-employees-you-cant-solicit-prostitutes-ever>.

⁴⁷⁷ NBC Chicago, “HB 3653: Police, Criminal Justice Reforms Bill Passed by Illinois General Assembly,” *NBC Chicago*, January 13, 2021, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-politics/hb-3653-police-criminal-justice-reforms-bill-passed-by-illinois-general-assembly/2415799>; NBC Chicago, “When Does the SAFE-T Act Take Effect in Illinois?” *NBC Chicago*, October 7, 2022, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-politics/when-does-the-safe-t-act-take-effect-in-illinois/2961429>; Marsha Heller, “Gov. Pritzker Signs Controversial Justice Reform Bill,” *KFVS12.com*, February 22, 2021, <https://www.kfvs12.com/2021/02/22/gov-pritzker-set-sign-controversial-justice-reform-bill-noon/>.

⁴⁷⁸ NBC Chicago, “When Does the SAFE-T Act Take Effect in Illinois?” *NBC Chicago*, October 7, 2022, <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-politics/when-does-the-safe-t-act-take-effect-in-illinois/2961429>.

that employers throughout the United States have seen fit to cut ties with employees who have chosen to contribute to sexual exploitation and sex trafficking by purchasing sex.

Each case of sex buyer employment loss is described in the Demand Forum web page for the city or county in which it occurred. For this tactic, we have located its use in the city or county where the sex buyer's employer was located rather than where the purchase of sex or the person's arrest occurred. For example, in a recent case⁴⁷⁹ a man was arrested in a reverse sting in Polk County, Florida, and served on a school board in Del Mar, California. The school district announced that they had accepted his resignation several days after his arrest. The sex buyer's loss of employment and the public disclosure of his identity are described on the Demand Forum web page for [Del Mar](#), CA, and the reverse sting that produced his arrest is described on the Polk County, FL web page. The name of each city and county listed below is hyperlinked to its Demand Forum web page. To access the descriptions of each incident and the source materials documenting each case of termination of sex buyer employment, please click on the city or county listed below.

- **Law Enforcement**

- Municipal Police Departments

- *Albany, NY; Andalusia, AL; Aurora, CO; Beaumont, TX; Boynton Beach, FL; Bulverde, TX; Burlingame, CA; Cement, OK; Charlotte, NC; Chataignier, LA; Chattanooga, TN; Cincinnati, OH; Cleveland, OH; Colchester, VT; Columbia, SC; Columbus, OH; Delray Beach, FL Fair Haven, CT; Fairview, TN; Fort Myers, FL; Fort Smith, AR; Fort Worth, TX; Gauley Bridge, WV; Glendale, CA; Greensboro, NC; Haines City, FL; Honolulu, HI; Jersey City, NJ; Johnston, RI; Kalamazoo, MI; Kaplan, LA; Melbourne, FL; Memphis, TN; Miami Gardens, FL; Millry, AL; Milwaukee, WI; New Haven, CT; New York, NY; Norcross, GA; North Chicago, IL; Oakland, CA; Oklahoma City, OK; Palatka, FL; Phoenix, AZ; Pittsburgh, PA; Pompano Beach, FL; Robbinsdale, MN; Rose Hill Acres, TX; St. Charles, MN; Temple Terrace, FL; Tucson, AZ; Upper Arlington, OH; Washington, DC; Yukon, OK*

- County Sheriff's Offices, Police Departments

- *Alameda County, CA; Ann Arundel County, MD; Brevard County, FL; Broward County, FL; Brunswick County, NC; Burke County, NC; Caledonia County, VT; Charles County, MD; Citrus County, FL; Clark County, NV; Craven County, NC; Dorchester County, SC; Gwinnett County, GA; Horry County, SC; Lake County, FL; Lancaster County, VA; Los Angeles County, CA; Loudon County, VA; Maricopa County, AZ; Marion County, FL; McLennan County, TX; Norfolk, VA; Orange County, FL; Ouray County, CO; Polk County, FL; Rapides Parish, LA; Richland County, SC; Smith County, TX; Taylor County, TX; Washington County, VT; West Baton Rouge Parish, LA; Winona County, MN*

- State Police Departments

- *Albuquerque, NM; Raleigh, NC; Salem, OR; Springfield, IL*

- Task Forces

⁴⁷⁹ WKRC, "School Board Member Arrested in Undercover Human Trafficking Operation," *Dayton247Now*, February 19, 2023, <https://dayton247now.com/news/nation-world/school-board-member-arrested-in-undercover-human-trafficking-operation-education-classroom-bail-traffic-undercover-cop-detective-polk-county-cincinnati-ohio>.

- Mercer County, PA
 - State Chiefs of Police Association
 - Baltimore, MD
 - District Attorney, City Prosecutor Offices
 - Bartow, FL; Bradford County, PA; Clark County, WA; Gwinnett County, GA; Ingham County, MI; Johnson City, TN; Riverside County, CA; Shreveport, LA
 - Corrections
 - Bristol County, MA; Houston County, AL; Lake County, FL; Oneida County, WI; West Baton Rouge Parish, LA
- **Law**
 - Federal Judges
 - Denver, CO
 - Circuit Court Judges
 - Lee County, FL
 - President of State Bar Associations
 - Luzerne County, PA
 - State Judicial Marshals
 - Waterbury, CT
 - City Attorneys
 - Lakeland, FL
 - Private Attorneys
 - Erath County, TX; Tampa, FL
- **Higher Education**
 - University Presidents
 - Clinton, MS; Orlando, FL; Peach County, GA
 - University Vice Presidents
 - Harrisonburg, VA; Tuscaloosa, AL
 - Deans
 - Los Angeles, CA; Philadelphia, PA; Syracuse, NY
 - Department Chairs
 - Kearney, NE
 - Faculty
 - Bridgewater, MA; Gainesville, FL; San Angelo, TX; San Bernardino, CA; Seattle, WA
 - Researchers

- *Seattle, WA*
 - Coaches
 - *Clarksville, TN; Golden, CO; Storrs, CT; Waco, TX*
 - Community College Board of Education
 - *Oregon City, OR*
 - Alumni Association Vice Presidents
 - *Tallahassee, FL*
 - Directors of Corporate and Government Affairs
 - *Peach County, GA*
 - University Police Departments
 - *Kalamazoo, MI*
 - Program Administrators
 - *Clark County, NV*
- **Primary & Secondary Education**
 - School Board Members
 - *Blackstone, MA; Del Mar, CA; East Brunswick, NJ; Menomonie, WI; Mustang, OK; Manchester, NH; Rochester, PA*
 - School District Superintendents
 - *Marcola, OR; Wetzel County, WV*
 - School District Financial Officers
 - *Poughkeepsie, NY*
 - School District Tutors
 - *Waco, TX*
 - School District IT Directors
 - *Coachella, CA*
 - Principals, Assistant Principals
 - *Charleston, SC; Clark County, NV; Fort Smith, AR; Fruitland, ID; Hanover, NH; Houston County, GA; Lakeland, FL; Platte County, MO; Seminole County, FL; Virginia Beach, VA*
 - Deans
 - *Oviedo, FL; Portland, OR; Syracuse, NY*
 - Teachers
 - *Abilene, TX; Altamonte Springs, FL; Aiken County, SC; Belle Isle, FL; Byron Center, MI; Cheyenne, WY; Concord, NH; Denver, CO; Crystal Lake, IL; El Paso, TX; Forest Grove, OR; Harford County, MD; Hillsborough County, FL; Guilford County, NC; Lakeland, FL; Lewisville, TX; Lincoln, NE; Mayfield, OH; Medina,*

OH; [Miami, FL](#); [Minneapolis, MN](#); [Northwood, OH](#); [Rainier, OR](#); [Richmond, VA](#); [Riverside County, CA](#); [Socorro, TX](#); [Scottsdale, AZ](#); [Steelton, PA](#); [Wausau, WI](#)

- Coaches/Athletic Departments
 - *[Antioch, IL](#); [Oberlin, OH](#); [Cuyahoga Falls, OH](#); [Jackson Center, OH](#); [Jacksonville, FL](#); [Lewisville, TX](#); [Maplewood, MN](#); [Nashville, TN](#); [Odessa, TX](#); [Ranger, TX](#); [San Antonio, TX](#); [St. Johns County, FL](#); [Stafford, VA](#); [Tempe, AZ](#); [Tooele County, UT](#); [Windsor Locks, CT](#)*
- Music Directors
 - *[Fayetteville, GA](#); [Panama City, FL](#)*
- Guidance Counselors
 - *[Hamburg, PA](#); [Kapolei, HI](#)*
- Program Administrators
 - *[Clark County, NV](#); [Pickens County, SC](#)*
- Program Assistants
 - *[Antioch, IL](#)*
- Custodians
 - *[McAllen, TX](#)*
- Bus Drivers
 - *[Manatee County, FL](#)*
- Other School District Employees
 - *[Shallowater, TX](#)*
- **Elected Officials**
 - State Legislators
 - *[Florida](#); [Oklahoma](#); [Utah](#)*
 - Governors
 - *[New York](#)*
 - Mayors
 - *[Batesville, IN](#); [Bloomsburg, PA](#); [Front Royal, VA](#); [Mason, OH](#); [Medford Township, NJ](#); [Ottawa, OH](#); [Sandwich, IL](#); [Severance, CO](#); [Sharonville, OH](#); [Shepherdsville, KY](#); [Waldron, AR](#); [Webb, AL](#)*
 - City Council/Town Board Members/County Commissioners
 - *[Amsterdam, NY](#); [Burlington, IL](#); [Cincinnati, OH](#); [Dallas Center, IA](#); [Fall River, MA](#); [Greene County, TN](#); [Southaven, MS](#); [South Point Village, OH](#)*
- **Political Appointees and their Staff**
 - Aids to Federal Legislators
 - *[Baton Rouge, LA](#); [Lafayette Parish, LA](#); [Nashua, NH](#)*
 - Local Political Party Treasurers

- *Iron County, UT*
- **Government**
 - Congressional Aids
 - *Nashua, NH*
 - State Fair Commission
 - *Madison County, MS*
 - County Commissioners
 - *Clermont County, OH; Pamlico County, NC*
 - County Fair Board
 - *Montgomery County, OH*
 - County Human Resources Director
 - *San Bernardino County, CA*
 - County Road Commissioner
 - *Calhoun County, MI*
 - County Solid Waste Manager
 - *Washington County, VA*
 - County Treasurer
 - *Dubuque County, IA*
 - Municipal Transit Authority CEO
 - *Memphis, TN*
 - County Public Transportation
 - *Sarasota County, FL*
 - Public Works Superintendent, Employees
 - *Jersey City, NJ; Morton, IL*
 - City Director of Information
 - *Vail, CO*
 - State Department of Commerce
 - *St. Paul, MN*
 - City Managers
 - *Daytona Beach, FL; El Monte, CA; Newburgh, NY*
 - Community Action Agency
 - *Lorain County, OH*
 - Secret Service Agents
 - *Washington, DC*
- **Private Sector**
 - Business owners
 - *Boston, MA*
 - Business CEOs, Presidents, Executives

- *Los Angeles, CA; Ontario, CA; Palm Beach Gardens, FL; Phoenix, AZ*
- Oil pipeline workers
 - *Duluth, MN*
- Audio/visual contractors
 - *Tarrant County, TX*
- Radio DJs
 - *New York, NY*
- National Football League (NFL) Assistant Coaches
 - *Tempe, AZ*
- Television News Anchors, Sport Analysts, Sports Directors
 - *Atlanta, GA; Beaumont, TX New York, NY; Seattle, WA; Tampa, FL*
- Security Guards:
 - *Spokane, WA*
- Athletic Clubs
 - *Ann Arbor, MI*
- Counselors, Therapists
 - *Latrobe, PA*
- **Philanthropy, Non-Profit Organizations**
 - Public health foundation
 - *Brevard County, FL*
 - Boys & Girls Club board of directors
 - *Grants Pass, OR; Indian River County, FL*
 - Boys & Girls Club
 - *Haverhill, MA*
 - Space Education and Research
 - *Melbourne, FL*
 - Community Youth Athletics Programs
 - *Ann Arbor, MI; North Port, FL*
- **Military**
 - Air Force Academy
 - *Colorado Springs, CO*
 - U.S. Navy
 - *Washington, DC*
 - U.S. Army
 - *Killeen, TX*

- **Clergy**
 - Pastors/Ministers
 - *Amarillo, TX; Bentonville, AR; Canyon, TX; Cedar Rapids, IA; Cleveland, OH; Colorado Springs, CO; Findlay, OH; Lehighton, PA; Lindale, TX; Karns, TN; Medford Township, NJ; Midlothian, VA; Paris, TN; Oak Ridge, TN; Virginia Beach, VA; The Woodlands, TX*
 - Private School Headmasters
 - *Charleston, SC*
- **Fire Departments**
 - Chiefs, Captains
 - *Keene, NH; Las Vegas, NV; Sharonville, OH*
 - Firefighters
 - *Henderson, NV; Hillsborough County, FL; Nashville, TN; Omaha, NE; Scottsbluff, NE*
- **Health Care**
 - Hospital Administrators
 - *Winter Haven, FL*
 - Doctors
 - *Austin, TX; Gaylord, MI; Lebanon, OR; Los Angeles, CA; Roseburg, OR; Toledo, OH; Zanesville, OH*
 - Pharmacists
 - *Tacoma, WA*
 - Hospital Staff
 - *Akron, OH*
 - Emergency Medical Services
 - *Allegany County, MD*
 - Medical Assistants
 - *Spokane County, WA*

Examples of the Circumstances of Sex Buyer Employment Loss

Below are brief descriptions of cases that illustrate the wide range of circumstances under which employees have had their positions terminated in response to arrests for—or allegations of—buying sex and the types of employers that have either fired them or accepted their resignations. The examples range from 1974 to 2023 and are listed in reverse chronological order.

Del Mar, CA

A longtime school board member resigned hours after officials announced he had been arrested in February 2023 on suspicion of soliciting prostitution. The man was one of 213 people arrested during a seven-day operation—Operation Traffic Stop—that aimed to crack down on human trafficking in [Polk County, FL](#).

He was reportedly in the area to assist his parents, and while there, he allegedly solicited sex from an undercover policewoman for \$200. The man had been elected to the [Del Mar](#) Union School District board in 2010 and was re-elected in November 2022. While campaigning, the sex buyer told the Del Mar Times that he had been married for 23 years, had two children, and lived in San Diego for two decades. Del Mar Union school district officials said they learned of the arrest on February 16, 2023, and they released a statement that same afternoon saying that the man had resigned from his post, effective immediately.⁴⁸⁰

Luzerne County, PA

A [Luzerne County](#) attorney resigned from his position as the president of the Pennsylvania Bar Association after he was charged with patronizing prostituted persons in July 2021. The man was accepted into a diversion program (ARD or Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition) that allows first-time offenders to enter a treatment program as a disposition of his third-degree misdemeanor charge of patronizing prostituted persons. According to the Luzerne County District Attorney's Office, the sex buyer was required to enroll in the program for a year, during which he would complete 30 hours of community service. The charge could be expunged upon completion of the ARD program. The man reported to Luzerne County detectives that he had a sexual encounter with a prostituted woman, and the sex buyer accused her of recording their encounter and threatening to release the video unless he paid her. He was investigated when it was confirmed that he had paid for sex. The man resigned his position as PBA president when he was charged and was also placed on administrative leave from his position as an assistant solicitor for Luzerne County.⁴⁸¹

Oklahoma City, OK

An [Oklahoma City](#) police sergeant was fired after he was arrested for engaging in prostitution and assaulting staff at a local massage parlor. An Oklahoma City Police Department administrative investigation sustained 12 allegations against the officer after he was criminally charged by the Oklahoma County District Attorney's Office. The allegations began when police were called to a massage parlor, and the suspect allegedly requested through a text message a sex act in exchange for \$120. The women reportedly told the suspect that the request was illegal and that they called the police. The man allegedly went into the business and showed his identification card with "Police Officer" in bright red letters. The women said the officer became physically aggressive and attempted to steal money from the cash register. In addition to allegedly requesting illegal paid sex, the officer did not provide his name or badge number when the employees asked him, and the officer also abused his power by claiming he was investigating the business and used police dispatch and records for his personal use. The officer was charged with one count of engaging in prostitution and one count of assault and battery. In September 2021, the police department publicly released the

⁴⁸⁰ City News Service, "Del Mar School Board Member Arrested in Florida Resigns," *KPBS*, February 17, 2023, <https://www.kpbs.org/del-mar-school-board-member-arrested-florida-prostitution-sting-operation>; Lindsay Winkley, "Del Mar Union School Board Member Resigns after Arrest During Human Trafficking Operation in Florida," *Del Mar Times*, February 16, 2023, <https://www.delmartimes.net/del-mar-union-school-board-member-arrested-in-florida-during-human-trafficking-operation>.

⁴⁸¹ Debra Cassens Weiss, "Pennsylvania Bar President Resigns after He's Charged with Patronizing a Prostitute," *ABA Journal*, April 29, 2021, <https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/pennsylvania-bar-president-resigns-after-he-is-charged-with-patronizing-a-prostitute>.

termination letter the man received from the Police Chief. The termination letter stated that the officer admitted to all of the misconduct allegations.⁴⁸²

Oneida County, WI

In January 2021, an [Oneida County](#) corrections officer (CO) resigned after prosecutors charged him with soliciting prostituted women and misconduct in office. He allegedly traded information about drug investigations for sexual favors from an incarcerated woman drug dealer. He was arrested in January by the Department of Justice-Division of Criminal Investigations and Oneida County investigators. After his arrest, an Oneida County Circuit Judge set a \$1,000 cash bond for the CO during his initial court appearance. According to the Oneida County Sheriff's Office, he resigned later that same day. The filed criminal complaint stated that in January 2018, a 31-year-old inmate told a corrections sergeant that the CO agreed to give her information about the Northcentral Drug Enforcement Group in exchange for sexual favors. The group is a drug task force that includes multiple police agencies, including the sheriff's office and the Rhineland Police Department. The criminal complaint showed that the CO had previous sexual contact with women who had been incarcerated. The Oneida County Circuit Judge agreed to amend the solicitation charge to a misdemeanor count of lewd and lascivious behavior and dismiss the misconduct charge as part of a plea agreement. After reaching a plea deal with prosecutors, the offender was ordered to pay a \$2,000 fine and thus avoid prison time.⁴⁸³

Orange County, CA

In October 2020, the Haliburton International Foods CEO faced multiple felony and misdemeanor charges for soliciting prostitution of a minor. The Newport Beach resident resigned as the company's chief executive. The sex buyer was arrested and charged the prior month by the Orange County district attorney's office with engaging in the prostitution of two teenagers. He faced six felony counts associated with unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor and two misdemeanor charges for soliciting prostitution of a child. If convicted on all counts, the man would face a maximum sentence of eight years in state prison and almost two years in county jail.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² Jennifer Pierce, "(Update: Charges Dismissed) OKC Police Sergeant Fired After Being Accused of Engaging in Prostitution, Assault," *News 9*, June 8, 2022, <https://www.news9.com/story/612e816b78225a0be810958b/okc-police-sergeant-fired-after-being-accused-of-engaging-in-prostitution-assault>.

⁴⁸³ Karen Madden, "Oneida County Corrections Officer Faces Charges After Prosecutors Say He Traded Information for Sexual Favors," *Wausau Daily Herald*, January 15, 2021, <https://www.wausaudailyherald.com/story/news/crime/2021/01/15/oneida-county-corrections-officer-traded-information-sex-records-say/4165242001>; Sierra Rehm, "UPDATE: Oneida Co. Correctional Officer Accused of Soliciting Prostitution Out on Bond," *ABC News 9 WAOW*, January 12, 2021, https://www.waow.com/archive/update-oneida-co-correctional-officer-accused-of-soliciting-prostitution-out-on-bond/article_6ca2d5a8-31b9-56e8-a88f-8d5931b74e66.html; Shereen Siewert, "Former Oneida Co. Corrections Officer Convicted of Lesser Charge in Plea Deal," *Wausau Pilot & Review*, June 21, 2021, <https://wausaupilotandreview.com/2021/06/21/former-oneida-co-corrections-officer-convicted-of-lesser-charge-in-plea-deal>; Tomahawk Leader, "Oneida County Corrections Officer Charged with Solicitation of Prostitution, Misconduct in Office," *Tomahawk Leader*, January 14, 2021, <https://tomahawkleader.com/2021/01/14/oneida-county-corrections-officer-charged-with-solicitation-of-prostitution-misconduct-in-office>.

⁴⁸⁴ Los Angeles Times, "Haliburton International Foods CEO Charged for Engaging in Child Prostitution: OCDA," *KLTA*, October 6, 2020, <https://ktla.com/news/local-news/haliburton-international-foods-ceo-charged-for-engaging-in-child-prostitution-ocda>; Lilly Nguyen, "Newport Beach CEO Steps Down from Company After Being Charged with Child Prostitution," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-12/newport-beach-ceo-steps-down-from-company-after-being-charged-with-child-prostitution>.

Harford County, MD

A [Harford County](#) Public Schools teacher’s employment was terminated in response to his being arrested and charged with soliciting sex from one of his underage students. The man was charged with soliciting prostitution, sexual solicitation of a minor, and three counts of human trafficking, according to online court records. He had worked at Edgewood Middle School when he allegedly took a photo of a student’s body part at his residence and uploaded it to a “fetish social media account” that he ran. He later paid the student to perform a sex act on him, which the student did not do; instead the student contacted the Harford County Sheriff’s Office. The man taught vocal music at the middle school. He was hired in August 2017 and placed on paid leave in August 2019, and on September 25, 2019, he was terminated. The man was released on a \$5,000 bond from the Harford County Detention Center after an initial appearance with a district court commissioner.⁴⁸⁵

McAllen, TX

Investigators in McAllen arrested a custodian at Sharyland North Junior High in March 2019 after two male students said he touched them inappropriately and offered to pay them for oral sex, according to [court records](#). A third boy witnessed the incidents. Investigators charged the man with two counts of prostitution—soliciting a person younger than 18 years old, a second-degree felony, and one count of making a terroristic threat, a Class B misdemeanor. The Sharyland Independent School District initiated an immediate investigation after learning of specific allegations. The custodian was terminated, and the allegations were reported to the Texas Education Agency and Child Protective Services as required by law. The former employee was subsequently arrested.⁴⁸⁶

Palm Beach Gardens, FL

The president of a home building business resigned in March 2019 after being arrested as part of an ongoing investigation into human trafficking and prostitution at day spas in Jupiter and Martin County. Martin County sheriff’s deputies had arrested him a few days earlier on charges of soliciting prostitution and use of a structure for prostitution. The man did not stay in jail for long . His bond was set at \$1,500. The company’s CEO released a statement saying that company leaders had received and accepted the resignation of the sex buyer.⁴⁸⁷

Chattanooga, TN

In December 2018, a Sergeant with the [Chattanooga](#) Police Department turned in his resignation. The CPD had opened an internal investigation after he was taken into custody for solicitation of prostitution. The

⁴⁸⁵ James Whitlow, “Former Harford Middle School Teacher Charged with Soliciting Sex from Student,” *The Baltimore Sun*, June 17, 2020, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/maryland/harford/aegis/cng-ag-teacher-solicitation-charges-20200617-3j55ofr4hjfi7mnz4vsanlzc2e-story.html>.

⁴⁸⁶ Editor, “Police Arrest Former Sharyland ISD Custodian Accused of Soliciting Students for Sex,” *Progress Times*, April 3, 2019, <https://www.progresstimes.net/2019/04/03/police-arrest-former-sharyland-isd-custodian-accused-of-soliciting-students-for-sex/#:~:text=Police%20arrest%20former%20Sharyland%20ISD%20custodian%20accused%20of%20soliciting%20students%20for%20sex,-By%20Editor%20%7C%20April&text=Investigators%20arrested%20a%20former%20custodian.pay%20them%20for%20oral%20sex>.

⁴⁸⁷ Ted White, “Kolter Homes President Resigns after Arrest in Day Spa Sting,” *ABC 25 WPBF News*, March 11, 2019, <https://www.wpbf.com/article/president-of-kolter-homes-arrested/26726760#>.

arrest came during a joint enforcement operation between the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation and the Chattanooga Police Department's Vice Unit.⁴⁸⁸

Socorro, TX

In September 2018, a [Socorro](#) High School teacher resigned after being arrested in a prostitution sting the prior week. The man was arrested during a Texas Department of Public Safety operation targeting suspects who allegedly agreed to pay for sex. A spokesman for the Socorro Independent School District confirmed that the man had been a social studies teacher at Socorro High School and had been employed by the Socorro school district for 20 years. He was initially placed on paid administrative leave but then submitted his resignation days later. The teacher was one of 13 men arrested on prostitution charges during a four-day operation in August conducted by the DPS Criminal Investigations Division.⁴⁸⁹

Peach County, GA

In October 2018, investigators uncovered a sex ring involving top administrators at [Fort Valley State University](#) in [Peach County](#). At least three FVSU employees were named in the arrest warrants, including men charged with soliciting prostituted persons and sodomy. Before being fired in September 2018, one of the men had served as Director of Corporate and Government Affairs at Fort Valley. His university biography said he also previously served as FVSU's Director of the Public Service Center, Chief Legal Officer, and Director of Government Relations. He had been employed by the University since 2011.⁴⁹⁰

Gaylord, MI

An Otsego County surgeon was arrested in a prostitution sting operation set up by Michigan State Police narcotics officers in April 2018. The suspect responded to an online advertisement and called an undercover officer posing as a prostituted woman to set up a meeting at a hotel at an undisclosed location within Otsego County. The man was charged with solicitation of prostitution and using a computer to commit a crime. He was also fired from his job at Otsego Memorial Hospital and had his identity disclosed to the media by law enforcement officials. The Assistant County Prosecutor said that the local narcotics team had been given a directive to do stings targeting prostitution, specifically looking for sex buyers. The arrest was part of a statewide initiative to fight human trafficking in Michigan.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Chattanooga, "Chattanooga Police Sergeant Peter Turk Resigns After Arrest For Soliciting Prostitution," *Chattanooga*, December 19, 2018, <https://www.chattanooga.com/2018/12/19/381793/Chattanooga-Police-Sergeant-Peter-Turk.aspx>.

⁴⁸⁹ Daniel Borunda, "Socorro High School Teacher Resigns After Arrest on Prostitution Charge," *El Paso Times*, September 25, 2018, <https://www.elpasotimes.com/story/news/crime/2018/09/05/socorro-high-school-teacher-arrested-el-paso-prostitution-sting-texas-dps-mark-robert-williams/1204808002>.

⁴⁹⁰ Kristen Reed, "These are the Men Charged in the Fort Valley University Pimping and Prostitution Scandal," *11 Alive*, October 23, 2018, <https://www.11alive.com/article/news/local/these-are-the-men-charged-in-the-fort-valley-university-pimping-and-prostitution-scandal/85-607302612>.

⁴⁹¹ Brian Bliss, "Gaylord Doctor Arrested on Soliciting Prostitution, Narcotic Charges," *Petoskey News-Review*, May 27, 2018, <https://www.petoskeynews.com/story/news/crime/2018/05/27/gaylord-doctor-arrested-on-soliciting-prostitution-narcotic-charges/44875581>; Connor Hansen, "Surgeon Arrested in Prostitution Sting," *Up North Live*, June 14, 2018, <https://upnorthlive.com/news/local/surgeon-arrested-in-prostitution-sting>; 9&10 News, "Former Gaylord Surgeon Receives Probation After Having Percocet, Soliciting A Prostitute," *9&10 News*, June 25, 2018, <https://www.9and10news.com/2018/06/25/former-gaylord-surgeon-receives-probation-after-having-percocet-soliciting-a-prostitute>.

Sharonville, OH

In September 2016, the city of [Sharonville](#) asked its fire chief to step down in response to prostitution allegations. The city's Mayor held a news conference at City Hall to discuss the Fire Chief's involvement in a prostitution investigation by the Reading Police Department. Police said the Chief admitted to paying a woman \$60 for sex through an adult classified ad website in June 2016. A Reading police report said the man was observed leaving an apartment complex that was being monitored because of prostitution complaints. When interviewed by police, the man admitted to paying \$60 for sex from a woman he met on an adult website. He was put on paid leave and soon afterward agreed to resign. The sex buyer was not arrested or charged. After his resignation, the man was later re-hired by the city as a consultant to the fire department at minimum wage and without benefits.⁴⁹²

Ranger, TX

In February 2016, a [Ranger](#) High School coach submitted a letter of resignation the morning after he was arrested during an online prostitution sting in McClennan County. The coach was charged with prostitution after allegedly attempting to meet with an undercover detective posing as a prostituted person while operating a Ranger Independent School District (ISD) work vehicle. The Ranger ISD Superintendent was informed of the man's arrest and confirmed the facts with the Sheriff's Department. Once the facts were established, the coach was placed on administrative leave and submitted his resignation letter the next morning. He served as the head baseball and assistant football coach at Ranger ISD. The coach was among 46 suspects accused of prostitution and human trafficking related crimes who were arrested in the sting operation. The month-long sting targeted prostituted persons, pimps, and those seeking to buy sex. Detectives contacted the suspected sex buyers by posing as underage sex trafficking victims and adults in prostitution, according to the McClennan County Sheriff's Office.⁴⁹³

Lindale, TX

A [Lindale](#) pastor resigned in January 2016 after being arrested on a prostitution charge and booked into Smith County Jail. He was later released on \$500 bond. A Tyler Police Department spokesperson said the man had been communicating with a woman on social media earlier in the week and agreed to meet her at a hotel on Loop 323 in Tyler. Police were tipped off about the meeting by an anonymous source and sent an undercover officer to meet with the pastor. The undercover officer was given enough information to have the man arrested at the scene for soliciting prostitution. The sex buyer was a senior adult pastor with First

⁴⁹² WLWT 5, "Sharonville Fire Chief Agrees to Resign Amid Prostitution Scandal," *WLWT 5*, September 14, 2016, <https://www.wlwt.com/article/sharonville-fire-chief-agrees-to-resign-amid-prostitution-scandal-3/3613511>; Kelly McBride, "Sharonville Fire Chief Resigns Amid Prostitution Scandal, but Isn't Leaving Yet," *The Enquirer Cincinnati*, September 13, 2016, <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/local/sharonville/2016/09/13/sharonville-fire-chief-resigns-leaving-yet/90329524>; FOX 19 Digital Media Staff, "Sharonville Fire Chief Resigning After Prostitution Investigation," *Fox 19 Now*, September 28, 2016, <https://www.fox19.com/story/33086920/sharonville-fire-chief-resigning-after-prostitution-investigation>.

⁴⁹³ KTAB News Staff, "Ranger ISD Coach Submits Letter of Resignation after Sex Sting Bust," *KTAB News*, February 3, 2016, <https://www.bigcountryhomepage.com/news/ranger-isd-coach-submits-letter-of-resignation-after-sex-sting-bust>.

Baptist Church of Lindale. According to the church's website, he had been affiliated with the church since 1990 and served as the music pastor for 20 years.⁴⁹⁴

San Bernardino County, CA

In November 2015, a man who served as the human resources director for [San Bernardino County](#) resigned after his arrest in a reverse sting and the publicity that followed. A settlement allowed the sex buyer to be on paid administrative leave for at least six months. However, he could not work for the county in any capacity, and his resignation became effective when that paid time ended. The man was arrested in March 2015 and had entered a guilty plea for engaging in prostitution, a misdemeanor, to the Orange County Superior Court. He served ten days of community service in lieu of jail time and was placed on three years' probation. He was ordered to undergo AIDS testing and education and submit a DNA sample. Initially, his immediate job supervisor had docked the man's pay and notified him that any further missteps in his personal or professional life would result in immediate termination. After news of the man's arrest was posted on a blog, county supervisors found out about his arrest and conviction. A county spokesperson said that non-work-related misdemeanors did not usually result in disciplinary action, but that this sex buyer was punished because of the nature of the incident and his position as head of human resources.⁴⁹⁵

Los Angeles, CA

In court filings made in California Superior Court in [Los Angeles](#) in April 2015, the executive search firm Korn/Ferry International said it had fired one of its high-level executives (Executive Chairman for the Americas) for allegedly using his company email address repeatedly "to solicit and arrange for meetings with at least 20 different call girls and escorts." In addition, Korn/Ferry alleged that the man used his company email "to receive and distribute photographs of nude and seminude women." In March 2016, the Dean of the Keck School of Medicine (University of Southern California) and a renowned eye surgeon resigned after public allegations of improper conduct including his patronizing a prostituted woman. He was initially placed on administrative leave before his eventual resignation.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹⁴ Tyler Morning Telegraph, "Lindale Pastor Resigns After Prostitution Arrest," *Tyler Morning Telegraph*, October 24, 2017, https://tylerpaper.com/news/local/lindale-pastor-resigns-after-prostitution-arrest/article_18fc2ea6-8316-5f04-8603-375589518c5a.html; KLTV Digital Media Staff, "Lindale Pastor Resigns After Prostitution Charge," *ABC 7 KLTV*, January 8, 2016, <https://www.kltv.com/story/30918457/lindale-pastor-resigns-after-prostitution-charge>.

⁴⁹⁵ Janet Zimmerman, "San Bernardino County: HR Director Caught in Prostitution Sting Resigns," *The Press Enterprise*, November 12, 2015, <https://www.pressenterprise.com/2015/11/12/san-bernardino-county-hr-director-caught-in-prostitution-sting-resigns>; Laren Leichter and Randy Korgan, "Failures at SB County HR Department Offer Clean Slate for Future: Guest Commentary," *Inland Valley Daily Bulletin*, August 10, 2017, http://www.sbcounty.gov/Uploads/CAO/NewsClips/Content/NewsClips_8-11-17.pdf.

⁴⁹⁶ Joann S. Lublin, "Korn/Ferry Says It Fired Former Executive For Allegedly Soliciting Escorts," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 9, 2015, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/korn-ferry-says-it-fired-former-executive-for-allegedly-soliciting-escorts-1428618378>; Paul Pringle et al., "An Overdose, a Young Companion, Drug-Fueled Parties: The Secret Life of a USC Med School Dean," *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-usc-doctor-20170717-htlstory.html>; Hannah Alani, "U.S.C. Moves to Fire Former Medical School Dean Over Drug Allegations," *The New York Times*, July 22, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/22/us/usc-medical-school-dean-drugs.html>; Katherine Mangan, "Medical-School Dean Is Said to Have Led a Secret Life With Illicit Drugs and Prostitutes," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.chronicle.com/article/medical-school-dean-is-said-to-have-led-a-secret-life-with-illicit-drugs-and-prostitutes>; CBS Los Angeles, "Former USC Medical School Dean Accused of Being Involved With Prostitute,

Atlanta, GA

A former NFL player was fired from his job as an analyst for the NFL Network (headquartered in [Atlanta](#)) after being arrested in February 2015 while in Phoenix to cover that year's Super Bowl. He was booked on one count of soliciting prostitution and two counts of assault, both misdemeanor offenses, according to the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office. He was held on a \$1,500 bond. The NFL Network spokesman said in a statement, "Warren Sapp's contract has been terminated and he no longer works for NFL Network." According to a statement released by the Phoenix Police Department, officers working security at a downtown Phoenix hotel were investigating a noise disturbance when they were contacted by a woman alleging she had been assaulted. The incident occurred in a guest room at the hotel, where an argument ensued over money. The altercation allegedly turned physical and spilled out into the hallway. The sex buyer was arrested and then transported to Phoenix Police Headquarters, where he admitted involvement in the act of prostitution but denied assaulting either of the two involved females.⁴⁹⁷

Webb, AL

The Mayor of the city of [Webb](#) resigned in November 2014 after being arrested in an undercover prostitution operation conducted by the Dothan Police Department. The Webb mayor's resignation was accepted during a town hall meeting. The sex buyer was taken into custody and charged with soliciting prostitution, along with twelve other suspects. City officials declined to make any comment or statement when asked about the mayor's arrest and resignation. The Dothan Police Department released the names of each suspect, but said due to the nature of the case, investigators would not discuss specifics details regarding the operation.⁴⁹⁸

Altamonte Springs and Belle Isle, FL

A Florida teacher lost two jobs in two different school districts based on allegations that he had purchased sex. In November 2012 the chemistry teacher was fired after he admitted to using his work computer to hire prostituted women and to view pornography. The Lake Brantley High School (located in [Altamonte Springs](#)) teacher admitted to the accusation after his name appeared on a client list for an alleged brothel. Seminole County School District officials did not say exactly how they learned the man had hired a prostituted woman, but they were tipped off and then looked at his work computer and found the evidence leading them to terminate his employment. When district officials learned the teacher was on the prostitution client list, they immediately put him on paid leave. A few days later, they removed him from his teaching duties and formally terminated his employment. The teacher was later hired to teach at a Florida charter school in Orange County that had not uncovered his prior termination in its background check. When the prior allegations and termination were uncovered in 2019 by students doing Google searches, the teacher was fired from his seventh grade teaching position at Cornerstone Charter Academy in [Belle Isle](#), FL. When the man applied for the charter school position, administrators discovered he had failed to

Illegal Drugs," *CBS Los Angeles*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/usc-dean-prostitute-illegal-drugs>.

⁴⁹⁷ NFL, "Sapp Fired from Job at NFL Network Following Phoenix Arrest," *NFL News*, February 2, 2015, <https://www.nfl.com/news/sapp-fired-from-job-at-nfl-network-following-phoenix-arrest-0ap3000000467830>.

⁴⁹⁸ WSFA News Staff, "Mayor of Webb Resigns after Arrest in Prostitution Sting Operation," *WSFA 12 News*, December 26, 2014, <https://www.wsfa.com/story/27488374/mayor-of-webb-resigns-after-arrest-in-prostitution-sting-operation>.

disclose “pertinent information” on his employment application, which became the basis for his termination in September 2019.⁴⁹⁹

Lorain, OH

A man resigned from his position as director of community service with the Lorain County Community Action Agency (LCCAA; based in Lorain, OH) in July 2011 after he was arrested in a [Wood County](#) Sheriff’s Office Internet prostitution sting in Bowling Green. The man had previously served as the Mayor of Avon Lake. He was one of five people arrested by the Wood County Sheriff’s Department at a Bowling Green hotel. The LCCAA employee faced solicitation charges after answering an ad on a website by undercover officers posing as women selling sex. Reports indicate the [Lorain](#) man agreed to pay \$100 to have sex with the undercover officer. The sex buyer pleaded no contest in [Bowling Green](#) Municipal Court and was fined \$500. Days later, he resigned from his position as director of community service with the LCCAA.⁵⁰⁰

Omaha, NE

In March 2010, the firing of an [Omaha](#) firefighter amid allegations that he was involved in soliciting prostitution was upheld. A grievance filed by the man was denied. He had appealed his firing and the matter went into arbitration. The man was arrested the prior year for soliciting prostitution after he was arrested in a reverse prostitution sting conducted in a Council Bluffs motel. He had paid the woman, who was an undercover informant, \$150 before he was arrested.⁵⁰¹

Denver, CO

A federal judge in Colorado resigned from his position in October 2008 amid allegations of misconduct, specifically, that he had patronized persons in a [Denver](#) prostitution ring, according to court documents. The 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals dismissed the complaints against the judge contingent upon his resignation. In a court order, the Chief Circuit Judge said further pursuit of the complaints was unnecessary in light of the man’s resignation. He said that misconduct procedures applied only to active federal judges,

⁴⁹⁹ Click Orlando, “Seminole Teacher Accused of Using School Computer to Meet Prostitutes,” *Click Orlando*, November 15, 2012, <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/2012/11/16/seminole-teacher-accused-of-using-school-computer-to-meet-prostitutes>; Leslie Postal, “Orange Charter School Fires Teacher After Learning of His Ties to 2012 Prostitution Scandal,” *Orlando Sentinel*, September 26, 2019, <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/education/os-ne-cornerstone-charter-teacher-prostitution-20190926-fn3hs5s3mzd7hi6rpquu6uyezu-story.html>.

⁵⁰⁰ Michael Sangiacomo, “Former Avon Lake Mayor Vincent Urbin Arrested, Fined in Prostitution Sting,” *Cleveland*, July 6, 2011, https://www.cleveland.com/metro/2011/07/former_avon_lake_mayor_arreste.html; Lori E. Switaj, “Former Mayor Vince Urbin Busted in Prostitution Sting,” *Patch*, July 6, 2011, <https://patch.com/ohio/avon-oh/former-mayor-vince-urbin-busted-in-prostitution-sting>; Morning Journal, “Urbin Resigns from LCCAA Following Prostitution Sting Arrest,” *The Morning Journal*, July 12, 2011, <https://www.morningjournal.com/2011/07/12/urbin-resigns-from-lccaa-following-prostitution-sting-arrest>.

⁵⁰¹ Source, “Nebraska FF in Prostitution Sting Fired,” *Firehouse*, March 25, 2010, <https://www.firehouse.com/leadership/news/10469059/nebraska-ff-in-prostitution-sting-fired>.

noting that the Judge had resigned. The sex buyer also faced an allegation from a prostituted woman that he had asked her to lie to investigators.⁵⁰²

Tampa, FL

In March 1991, a veteran television news anchorman with station WTVT resigned after admitting his guilt on charges of “procuring prostitution” from a teenage girl, his second prostitution-related arrest. The Hillsborough County State Attorney’s Office filed charges regarding the suspect procuring a person under the age of 16 for prostitution, soliciting for prostitution, and engaging in prostitution. The charge involving the minor was a second-degree felony, punishable by up to 15 years in prison. The other two charges were second-degree misdemeanors, punishable by up to 60 days in jail for each. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by [Tampa](#) police and the Hillsborough County Sheriff’s Office. All of the alleged crimes occurred in June 1990. The girl’s age was not disclosed except to say she was “under 16.” The 56-year-old anchorman surrendered to face the charges. Before his 1991 resignation, the man had been employed for more than 27 years at WTVT. In 1982, the same man publicly apologized after pleading guilty to a charge of soliciting prostitution after propositioning an undercover vice officer.⁵⁰³

Cincinnati, OH

A [Cincinnati](#) city councilman resigned when allegations of his buying sex became public in 1974. A political columnist reported on *The Cincinnati Enquirer*’s front page that a “Cincinnati politico” was involved in a two-state VICE probe. The City Council member went unnamed, but prostitution was mentioned. Later that day, the man resigned. Then, the man’s involvement in purchasing sex became public when he voluntarily testified in court in Kentucky. He said his conscience drove him to contact the FBI after he paid for prostituted women with personal checks in December 1973 and January 1974. The following year he won re-election to his Council seat after directly addressing the issue of his buying sex in campaign ads.⁵⁰⁴

Evidence of Effectiveness

There has been no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of employment loss as a tactic to deter demand for prostitution. Compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a case can be made for employment loss being an effective tactic, with three distinct kinds of evidence all reflecting favorably on the approach:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers (or “clients” of prostitution) asked what would deter them from buying in the future and were presented with a list of options. Over **80% listed that**

⁵⁰² The Associated Press, “Judge Who Faced Prostitution Allegations Resigns,” *Summit Daily*, October 30, 2008, <https://www.summitdaily.com/news/judge-who-faced-prostitution-allegations-resigns>; *Denver Post*, “District Judge Nottingham Resigns, Apologies,” October 21, 2008, <https://www.denverpost.com/2008/10/21/district-judge-nottingham-resigns-apologizes/>.

⁵⁰³ UPI Archives, “TV Anchor Admits Soliciting Teen Prostitute,” *UPI*, March 14, 1991, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1991/03/14/TV-anchor-admits-soliciting-teen-prostitute/1122668926800>.

⁵⁰⁴ Cameron Knight, “Jerry Springer in the News: How the Prostitution Scandal Broke,” *Cincinnati Enquirer*, June 15, 2018, <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2017/06/02/jerry-springer-news-how-prostitution-scandal-broke/366721001>.

having their behavior found out and made public would deter them.⁵⁰⁵ It is reasonable to assume that one of the consequences of this public disclosure is the negative consequences that would result, including the potential for employment loss.

2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence⁵⁰⁶ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that **the most significant concern expressed by sex buyers at the moment of their arrest** is not jail or fines but is instead about **their being found out by their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities.**
3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that **“extra-legal sanctions”** (such as social censure and negative consequences for relationships and employment) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending equal to, or greater than, legal sanctions** (such as incarceration or probation).⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁵ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

⁵⁰⁶ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/> (accessed February 28, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

⁵⁰⁷ Thomas A. Loughran et al., “Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex Piquero (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 50-74, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Employment Loss](#)” occurred, you may visit www.demand-forum.org, open the “**Browse Locations**” window, and then select “Employment Loss” from the “Tactics” list. Similarly, the U.S. locations where employees have lost their jobs due to buying sex may be **mapped** on Demand Forum by choosing “Employment Loss” from the list.

Chapter 13: Neighborhood Action

Overview

“[Neighborhood Action](#)” involves organized, community-led action, such as routinely and systematically forwarding tips to police about sex buyers, conducting citizen patrols targeting demand, operating citizen-led blogs or websites, or launching billboard campaigns featuring messages meant to deter consumers of commercial sex. We have identified more than **265** U.S. cities and counties which have used in some form of neighborhood action to deter demand for prostitution. Such approaches are highly variable and customized extensively to suit local needs and resources, therefore we cannot distinguish a “basic” model.

Ways that neighborhoods become involved with efforts to curb prostitution can be indirect and non-programmatic. Community complaints and pressure often result in police employing whatever traditional tactics they feel are appropriate to address prostitution and sex trafficking. For example, in [Anaheim, CA](#), a persistent set of problems led residents and business leaders to call the police department with hundreds of complaints and tips about prostitution and related crime, such as open drug dealing and abuse.⁵⁰⁸ Persistent community input led police to meet with members of the public to develop collaborative solutions and to discuss potential strategies and tactics that might be pursued and the resources available to do so.

Year	City or County	State
1975	Knoxville	TN
1975	Jackson	TN
1975	Miami	FL
1980	Atlantic Beach	FL
1980	Vallejo	CA
1980	Rochester	NY
1981	Horry County	SC
1982	Evansville	IN
1984	Milwaukee	WI
1985	Erie County	NY
1985	Chattanooga	TN
1985	Newport News	VA
1985	Tampa	FL
1985	Phoenix	AZ
1985	El Paso	TX

In other cases, neighborhood organizations develop independently and focus on creating strategies for combating prostitution-related problems—including demand—and subsequently coordinate their efforts with the police. Such was the case with the West Side Neighborhood Congress, [Buffalo, NY](#), which formed a Prostitution Task Force in 1995 and developed objectives for addressing prostitution in their community,

⁵⁰⁸ Eric Carpenter, “Anaheim Residents Sick of Drugs, Prostitution,” *The Orange County Register*, July 24, 2012, <https://www.ocregister.com/2012/07/24/anaheim-residents-sick-of-drugs-prostitution/>.

⁵⁰⁹ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 59. During our update, we did not identify any additional early adopters of this tactic.

including that of establishing linkages with key stakeholders, including law enforcement.⁵¹⁰ This led to the launch of “Operation Johnny,” in which Buffalo’s Police Narcotics and Vice Unit began a concerted campaign to combat street prostitution.

As explained in Shively et al., 2012, a common objection to community-led initiatives is their potential to incorporate vigilante efforts that impose on the rights of who are not engaged in sex buying activity. Additionally, citizens (who are typically untrained and unarmed) place themselves at risk of potential violence if they are seen by or confront sex buyers, such as when citizen engage in video recording of sex buyers engaged in prostitution. It is also possible for community action to interfere with police operations or investigations, or to produce information that investigators cannot use. Sometimes vigilante efforts are not part of a formal community-led action but are the result of lone citizens acting independently to deter prostitution. A well-known instance of this involves a man in Oklahoma City, OK, dubbed the “Video Vigilante,” who for decades has made video recordings (in recent years with the assistance of drones) of prostitution interactions and uploaded them on his “John TV website.”⁵¹¹

Selected applications

Two examples from the early 1990s and one currently in use illustrate many elements incorporated in neighborhood actions targeting the demand for prostitution and sex trafficking.

New Haven, CT, 1992: The “John of the Week” Campaign

A neighborhood-led identity disclosure campaign in [New Haven](#) illustrates some objections to community-led action. In 1992, a neighborhood negatively affected by street prostitution mobilized to put pressure on buyers as a deterrent. Residents obtained information about arrested buyers from police. They also conducted amateur surveillance on vehicles, recording license plate numbers and obtaining names and addresses of registered owners from the Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles. They would use this information to mail letters to the vehicle owners, saying they had seen the car being used by someone soliciting a prostituted person. They also placed posters on telephone poles and trees, naming the area’s new “John of the Week.” The signs stated the name and address of a man arrested for soliciting a prostituted woman in their neighborhood and warned, “*Johns! Stay out of our neighborhood or your name will be here next week.*” Other community members objected to the posters and routinely ripped them down soon after they went up. Association members would replace them the next day.⁵¹²

Two of the first five men named on posters planned to sue, saying their lives had been ruined. Police said they saw a decline in the level of prostitution activity in the area but were not “in full agreement with the tactic of John of the Week.” A local civil rights lawyer representing the men who had planned to sue the Edgewood Neighborhood Association said that the phone number of the first sex buyer was listed on the posters, leading to the man’s wife and children receiving “dozens” of harassing phone calls. In both cases,

⁵¹⁰ Prostitution Task Force, “Workable Solutions to the Problem of Street Prostitution,” Prostitution Task Force, October, 1999, <https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Buffalo-Neighborhood-Action-1999.pdf>.

⁵¹¹ Andrew Knittle, “Oklahoma City’s ‘Video Vigilante’ Now Using Drones to Catch Hookers, Johns in Action,” *The Oklahoman*, August 30, 2015, <https://www.oklahoman.com/story/news/local/oklahoma-city/2015/08/30/oklahoma-citys-video-vigilante-now-using-drones-to-catch-hookers-johns-in-action/60726506007/>.

⁵¹² New York Times Archives, “NEW HAVEN JOURNAL; Curbing Prostitution on Demand Side,” *The New York Times*, April 20, 1992, <http://www.nytimes.com/1992/04/20/nyregion/new-haven-journal-curbing-prostitution-on-demand-side.html>.

the community was putting up signs before the men were arraigned. Based on the objections of sex buyers, the group stopped including the men's phone numbers on the posters.⁵¹³

Residents argued that such measures were necessary, as they feared for their children's safety and the safety of women living in the neighborhood who frequently had men pulling up to solicit them for sex. Members of the association said they had exhausted other options, such as unsuccessfully asking the New Haven Register (a local newspaper) to print the names of men caught soliciting prostituted persons, before they finally opted to start "outing" buyers with the posters.⁵¹⁴ In defense of their "John of the Week" campaign, one of the activists involved said:

*"I think it's a horrible situation to have a husband and father arrested for soliciting a prostitute and having his name publicized. It is a tragedy. It's also tragic for little schoolgirls to have to wait for the school bus next to hookers. It's a tragedy to find used condoms in the sandbox and in the grass where the kids play outside. These are I.V. drug users, and the highest risk category for AIDS."*⁵¹⁵

The community group, which represented about 300 families living in the Edgewood Avenue area of New Haven, retained their own lawyer. The attorney threatened a countersuit if the buyers filed a suit against the campaign, contending that the campaign was simply re-conveying public information, having obtained names from court dockets of men arrested for soliciting prostitution.

Gordon Heights, NY, 1991-1993: Citizen Patrols, Letter Writing, and Video Recording

[Gordon Heights](#) occupies an area in Suffolk County, on Long Island, New York. In 1991, a news outlet reported that a Gordon Heights Community Watch group started writing letters to the wives and mothers of those arrested for soliciting prostituted women.⁵¹⁶ A portion of the group's letter to families of arrested sex buyers included in all capital letters the message, "GORDON HEIGHTS IS NOT A PLAYGROUND BUT THE LOCUS OF PEOPLE'S HOMES."⁵¹⁷ Two family members in Gordon Heights said they had been videotaping prostituted women and sex buyers for two and half years, using the taping to scare sex buyers out of the neighborhood.⁵¹⁸ Residents were concerned for children walking to and from school, as well as for women who lived in the neighborhood, who were being propositioned by sex buyers.⁵¹⁹

San Jose, CA: Community Walks and the Report John Program

In an organized effort to combat the presence and harms of the local sex trade, residents of the Guadalupe-Washington neighborhood of [San Jose, CA](#), began holding monthly walks in areas known for prostitution.⁵²⁰ According to an unofficial estimate, more than 80% of the city's street prostitution was

⁵¹³ Ibid.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Jerry Cassidy, "Tape-a-John Plan Working," *Daily News (Long Island)*, September 29, 1991, https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Daily_News_Sun_Sep_29_1991_Tape-a-John-plan-working-scaled.jpg.

⁵¹⁷ *Newsday*, "Dear John Letters Battling Prostitution by Writing to Wives of Men Arrested," *Newsday*, June 13, 1991.

⁵¹⁸ *New York Times*, "Town Puts Prostitutes on Videotape," March 21, 1993,

<https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/21/us/town-puts-prostitutes-on-videotape.html>.

⁵¹⁹ *Newsday*, "Dear John Letters Battling Prostitution by Writing to Wives of Men Arrested," June 13, 1991.

⁵²⁰ Jason Green, "San Jose Neighborhood Bands Together to Push out Prostitution," *East Bay Times*, June 30, 2017, <https://www.eastbaytimes.com/2017/06/30/san-jose-neighborhood-bands-together-to-push-out-prostitution/>.

occurring in this area.⁵²¹ Having a large group of residents walk the street was intended to build community relationships and drive out sex buyers, pimps, and sex traffickers. As a result of the walks, the number of prostitution-related incidents dropped from 144 reported incidents in 2015 to 43 reported incidents in 2016.⁵²² According to then Santa Clara County deputy district attorney Josue Fuentes, “It’s working . . . Families are out on their porches. Children are riding their bikes, they’re playing on their front lawns,” something not seen two years before the launch of the initiative.⁵²³

Additionally, in September 2019, the [San Jose](#) Police Department launched the “Report John Program” designed to combat sex trafficking and prostitution by reducing consumer-level demand in September 2019. Community members were invited to participate by reporting suspected sex buyers via an online form accessible to community members via their smartphones, tablets, or desktop computers enabling the crowdsourcing of “eyes and ears on the street.”⁵²⁴ Residents could also upload a photo and provide vehicle and other identifying information on a potential sex buyer. The SJPD’s Human Trafficking Unit then evaluated the information and determined whether further investigation warranted. If appropriate, a Public Safety Announcement (PSA) letter was sent to the registered owner’s address, alerting the registered owner that his or her vehicle was seen in an area known for high levels of commercial sex activity. This letter also educated the registered owner about the dangers of prostitution and related illicit activities. The letters make it clear that police do not assume that the registered owner of the vehicle was necessarily driving the car when the suspected sex buying behavior was observed, but that suspicious behavior may have occurred while someone other than the registered owner was driving, suggesting that the vehicle was being used improperly and that the owner should not allow others to use their vehicle for such purposes.

Additional Examples

Baltimore, MD:

The “[Baltimore John Watch](#)” program encouraged residents to record license plate numbers of vehicles and to submit descriptions of the vehicles’ make, model, and license numbers and descriptions of the drivers.⁵²⁵ Photos and descriptions were then posted on a website. “Pigtown John Watch” had a similar focus (<http://pigtownjohnwatch.blogspot.com>). “Pigtown John Watch” was a “watchdog” blog that maintained reports of prostitution incidents and sightings of sex buyers submitted by blog participants. There is no longer activity on this website, but it is referenced here as an illustration of a neighborhood-led effort to focus on demand.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Ibid.

⁵²³ Ibid.

⁵²⁴ San Jose Police Department, “Press Release: SJPD Launches the Report John Program to Reduce Human Trafficking and Prostitution,” *Press Release Listing Archive*, September 3, 2019, p. 122, <https://www.sjpd.org/home/showpublisheddocument/646/637481369863270000>; CBS Bay Area, “San Jose Police Announce ‘Report John Program’ to Combat Prostitution, Human Trafficking,” September 8, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/san-jose-police-announce-report-john-program-to-combat-prostitution-human-trafficking/>.

⁵²⁵ Information about use of this tactic in Baltimore, MD, originally appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 58.

Chattanooga, TN:

A neighborhood-led effort in [Chattanooga](#), TN, publicized the identities of sex buyers (in addition to pimps and prostituted persons), based on public submissions of photos which were posted on an independent website: www.trick.the.johns.com (which is no longer active).⁵²⁶ The website was started after a local resident became angered after his wife was propositioned by a sex buyer who was circling their home in his vehicle.

Cleveland, OH:

A variety of community-led initiatives that have addressed the demand for commercial sex in [Cleveland](#), OH. For example, the “The Montgomery County’s Neighbors Against Drugs” (NAD) Program organized groups of citizens’ patrols on city streets (especially one area known for prostitution), with individuals carrying posters saying “*Dear Johns, your plate number is being recorded. Yours truly, The Neighbors.*”⁵²⁷

Lansing, MI:

Residents of neighborhoods within [Lansing](#), MI developed the “hot spot card program”⁵²⁸ which involved the distribution of cards that encourage residents to record information about known or suspected vice crimes (including the activities of sex buyer) and provide that information to police without fear of reprisal.⁵²⁹

Los Angeles, CA:

Residents of the Adams neighborhood in [Los Angeles](#) organized protests against prostitution in their community.⁵³⁰ One such protest occurred while stakeholders and residents gathered nearby to discuss new initiatives to reduce prostitution in the area. Initiatives under consideration included creating publicity and communications, increasing lighting, tree trimming, creating a website to publicize photos of sex buyers, instillation of surveillance cameras, city services, church outreach, and sex buyer letter-writing committees within the community to increase vigilance and create a safer community.

Minneapolis, MN:

In 1993, residents in [Minneapolis](#)’ 3rd Precinct, an area with the highest number of prostitution arrests in the city, organized the Southside Prostitution Task Force. The area was plagued by nearly a dozen brothels operating as “saunas.” Among other activities, the group purchased a minivan, which it would park in front of brothels with a dummy inside. This deterred sex buyers from visiting the brothels because sex buyers thought they were being watched. Additionally, the group painted the van with anti-prostitution slogans and would drive through the neighborhood looking for sex buyers. When they saw a sex buyer pick up

⁵²⁶ Information about use of this tactic in Chattanooga, TN, originally appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 58. See also, WDEF News 12, “Trick the Johns (more prostitutes)” June 3, 2008,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxY2gynDy6E>.

⁵²⁷ Leila Atassi, Rachel Dissell, Stan Donaldson, et al., “Inequality of Life: One Step at a Time” *Plain Dealer*, September 4, 2007, https://blog.cleveland.com/pdworld/2007/09/life_on_the_streets_of_cleveland_2.html.

⁵²⁸ Gordon F. Weller, “ACTION of Greater Lansing,” *St. Paul’s News*, November 2007, p. 14, https://docshare.tips/st-paul39s-news-november-2007_575219e0b6d87f8c1e8b5c21.html.

⁵²⁹ Information about use of this tactic in Lansing, MI, originally appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 59.

⁵³⁰ Melissa E. Leu, “South LA Neighborhood Moves to Action against Prostitution,” *Intersections South LA*, (Los Angeles: University of Southern California, Annenberg Media Center, February 22, 2012), http://intersectionssouthla.org/story/south_la_neighborhood_moves_to_action_against_prostitution/.

someone in prostitution, they would shine a spotlight on their vehicles and write down their license plate numbers and turn them over to the police. The police would follow up by sending letters to the owners of vehicles. The letters reported to the owners that the vehicle may have been used to solicit prostitution. The task force's efforts resulted in the closure of seven of 11 brothels, some more than once.⁵³¹

Mount Clemens, MI:

[Mount Clemens](#) was home to the “North Gratiot Neighborhood Watch” program in which community members spent two days posing as prostituted women in an area north of the Mount Clemens downtown section known for its street crime. When potential buyers pulled over, the activists handed out a flier that said, “*If you're soliciting sex and/or drugs in this neighborhood, you are being videotaped. Stay tuned for the 11 (o'clock) news. Zero tolerance. Any videos taken by the group were turned over to the police. One Mount Clemens neighborhood chose to fight prostitution by erecting signs warning potential buyers that area residents were watching them. In 2005 a sign was put up by the Gratiot Corridor Watch, a group of local activists who have hosted several anti-crime demonstrations. The group erected a sign with reflectors that read: “Prostitution Zone – If you are looking, we are watching,” in front of a vacant house on Euclid, near Gratiot. Some residents opposed the signs, believing they sent a negative message about the neighborhood. A grandmother who lived near the vacant structure tore the sign down, contending that the sign accidentally served as an advertisement for street-level prostitution in the area.*⁵³²

Oakland, CA:

In 2012, neighborhoods mobilized to launch the “Dear John letter campaign,” a community initiative supported by the City of [Oakland](#), the Oakland Police Department (OPD), and a variety of community organizations. The initiative aimed to combat demand using a number of tactics. Residents were trained to identify and report the license plate numbers and state of origin of vehicles driven by people believed to be soliciting prostitution. That information was then sent anonymously to the OPD, whether directly to the police or via collaborating community groups such as the East Bay Asian Youth Center or Oakland Community Organizations (a coalition of churches, schools, and neighborhood groups). After checking that the car's license plate matched the reported make and model, the OPD sent a form letter to the owner of the vehicle, informing the recipient that they were seen in an area of high prostitution and that such activity was illegal, dangerous, and unacceptable to residents.⁵³³

Richmond, CA:

Residents of the 23rd Street commercial corridor in [Richmond](#), CA, have banded together to reduce prostitution in their area by bettering their community. Community meetings organized workshops to combat the problem of prostitution by training residents on how to spot human trafficking and when to contact the police. In addition, nonprofit groups like Calle 23 and Project Xochitl worked with residents to clean up an alleyway frequented by prostituted women and sex buyers beginning in 2016. These efforts

⁵³¹ Joanna Dornfeld, “Local Groups Battle Prostitution,” *The Minnesota Daily*, April 9, 2002, <https://mndaily.com/191930/uncategorized/local-groups-battle-prostitution/>.

⁵³² Mitch Hotts, “Anti-prostitute Sign Gets Mixed Response,” *Macomb Daily*, February 10, 2005, <https://freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1340334/posts>.

⁵³³ Samantha Masunga, “Dear John: Oakland Residents are Sending Your License Plate Number to the Cops,” Oakland North, October 11, 2012, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2012/10/11/dear-john-oakland-residents-are-sending-your-license-plate-number-to-the-cops/>.

included adding streetlights, picking up trash, and paving the alleyway so it was more useable for residents.⁵³⁴

Tacoma, WA:

For decades, there has been substantial community involvement in combating prostitution and sex trafficking in [Tacoma](#), WA. One initiative was a collaboration between community organizations (e.g., the Chamber of Commerce, neighborhood groups such as Citizens Against Prostitution) and government agencies at the city, county, and state levels (e.g., Tacoma Police Department, Pierce County Jail, the Washington State Department of Corrections). The Make Tacoma Safe, Clean, and Attractive (MTSCA) team targeted street-level prostitution and related crime within [Stay Out of Areas of Prostitution](#) (SOAP) zones.⁵³⁵ Community involvement and the facilitation of the new state vehicle impound law were critical components in their effort. The team researched best practices to create more disincentives for prostituted persons and sex buyers to operate in Tacoma.

The initiative was intended to impact positive changes in the realms of enforcement as well as prevention, and they were aware that the program and any positive changes it produced must be sustainable within the community. The team worked on forging connections with key stakeholders in the community, like the Pacific Avenue Business District. It also worked on gathering data on the correlation between prostitution and the spread of disease, best practices from other municipalities on what it takes to make prostitution less profitable, and current prostitution data for benchmarking purposes.⁵³⁶

While researching what other municipalities around the country did to combat street prostitution, the team observed what [Kent](#), WA, was doing regarding enforcing the new state law, HB1362. MTSCA leaders made a presentation to Tacoma’s Public Safety Committee on the new state vehicle impound law related to prostitution activity. As a part of the preparation for the unveiling of the anti-prostitution community signs, team members made presentations on TV Tacoma’s “CityLine,” at a Tacoma Police Department staff meeting, and at a meeting of the Tacoma City Council Subcommittee on Public Safety. These presentations were credited with motivating City officials to focus resources on the problems associated with street prostitution. The team examined the possibility of having public service announcements on local radio stations warning of increased prostitution enforcement on the city streets, but it is unclear if that occurred. The PSAs would have also announced the enforcement of the newer state law involving impounding vehicles used by sex buyers and the \$500 fee that must be paid for their recovery.⁵³⁷

Evidence of Effectiveness

There have been no formal evaluations demonstrating that neighborhood initiatives produce reductions in sex trade activity or reduce offending or reoffending among sex buyers but compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution,

⁵³⁴ Andre Richards, “Richmond Improvement Projects Stalled,” *Richmond Confidential*, November 27, 2020, <https://richmondconfidential.org/2020/11/27/richmond-improvement-projects-stalled/>.

⁵³⁵ Dan Hensley, “City of Tacoma Safe and Clean Work Plan Update,” Citizens against Prostitution, March 24, 2010, <https://demand-forum.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/City-of-Tacoma-Safe-and-Clean-Initiative-Round-2-2010.pdf>.

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), there is a case to be made for neighborhood actions being an evidence-based tactic. Three distinct kinds of evidence all reflect favorably on the approach:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers (sex buyers or “clients” of prostitution) asked what would deter them from buying in the future and presented them with a list of options. Over **80% said that having their identities disclosed to others or being arrested and then sanctioned would deter them.**⁵³⁸ Many of the neighborhood actions would increase the likelihood of an arrest or to have sex buyer households become aware of that crime, something that they prefer to avoid.
2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence⁵³⁹ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that **the greatest concern expressed by sex buyers at the moment of their arrest is being found out by their families and partners** (as well as by friends, employers, and other in their communities). To the extent that neighborhood actions and their collaborations with police increases the likelihood of an arrest or of having offender households become aware of that crime, this type of tactic would advance deterrence.
3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement is further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both legal and “extra-legal sanctions” (such as social censure) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending.**⁵⁴⁰

⁵³⁸ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sex-buyersEnglish-11-8-2022pdf.pdf>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

⁵³⁹ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, n.d., <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes> (accessed March 3, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

⁵⁴⁰ Thomas A. Loughran et al., “Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex Piquero (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 50-74, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>.

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Neighborhood Action](#)” has occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Neighborhood Action” from the “Tactics” list. Similarly, the U.S. locations where this tactic has been used may be mapped on Demand Forum by choosing “Neighborhood Action” from the list.

Neighborhood Action Information and Resources

Community Feedback from Town Hall Meeting

Portland, OR:

- [Compilation of Community Complaints about Prostitution, Portland, OR: 82nd Ave Summary of Feedback on Prostitution Problems](#)

Letter to Mayor From Neighborhood Organization

Madison, WI:

- [Prostitution Letter from Mount Royal Improvement Association](#) (2002)

Materials from Neighborhood Group

Rochester, NY:

- [Form for Residents to Provide Johns' License Plates and Tips to Police: Lyell 230 Tip Sheet](#)
- [Press Release about Rochester's "Dear John" Campaign: Lyell Press Release](#) (July 6, 2009)
- [Print Image for Rochester's "Dear John" Campaign: Lyell 230 Sign 8.5x14](#)

Neighborhood-Led Task Force Reports on Prostitution & Demand

Buffalo, NY:

- [Buffalo Prostitution Task Force Report: Workable Solutions \(1999\)](#)

Vallejo, CA:

- [Vallejo Prostitution Task Force Report to City Council \(2011\)](#)

Chapter 14: Cameras and Video Evidence

Overview

“[Cameras](#)” and video surveillance in the form of closed-circuit television (CCTV) is used to prevent crime by increasing a potential offender’s perceived risk of getting caught if they were to commit a crime, and also is used to detect crimes after the fact.⁵⁴¹ Research shows the CCTV has a modest, positive impact in preventing crime, and is most effective at combating property offences rather than crimes of public disorder, and that it works best in small, well-defined areas.⁵⁴² Regarding crime detection, CCTV can help police not only detect and arrest offenders in a variety of personal and property crimes, but can also help them to identify potential witnesses, narrow the time when a crime occurred, establish the sequence of events, and record images of vehicles used in the commission of a crime.⁵⁴³

Surveillance cameras and other video technology can also be used to discourage sex buyers or to provide evidence against them. Openly used cameras serve as a deterrent, and those used covertly help to gather evidence for police and prosecutors. In some instances, members of communities have used video cameras and have posted footage of sex buyer activity on websites or forwarded the evidence to police. Cameras have been used in these ways in more than **260** U.S. cities and counties. A few examples of the use of surveillance cameras are included below, followed by more detailed examples and sources:

Aurora, CO

Cameras have been used to gather evidence and prosecute sex buyers in [Aurora](#), CO. For example, a 2012 news report discussed how Aurora police used cameras on Colfax Avenue to capture evidence of purchasing sex and other crimes.⁵⁴⁴ In 2017, the body camera of a code enforcement officer in Aurora captured two separate exchanges in which the officer tried to purchase sex from women in prostitution. He was wearing a body camera as part of a testing phase when a supervisor, watching the officer’s footage, spotted the solicitations. The man pleaded guilty to one count of soliciting prostitution, a Class 3 misdemeanor, in Arapahoe County court and was sentenced to six months’ probation and 60 hours of community service in the case.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴¹ Jerry H. Ratcliffe and Jessica M. Rosenthal, “Video Surveillance of Public Places, 2nd Edition,” *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response Guide Series*, no. 4, (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and Arizona State University Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, June 2021).

⁵⁴² Jerry H. Ratcliffe and Jessica M. Rosenthal, “Video Surveillance of Public Places, 2nd Edition,” *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response Guide Series*, no. 4, (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and Arizona State University Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, June 2021).

⁵⁴³ Jerry H. Ratcliffe and Jessica M. Rosenthal, “Video Surveillance of Public Places, 2nd Edition,” *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response Guide Series*, no. 4, (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and Arizona State University Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, June 2021).

⁵⁴⁴ The Sentinel, “Filming the Hard, Colfax: Fighting Crime with Cameras,” *The Sentinel*, May 24, 2012, <https://sentinelcolorado.com/metro/filming-the-hard-colfax>.

⁵⁴⁵ Jesse Paul, “Aurora Code Enforcement Officer Recorded Himself Soliciting Prostitutes on Body Camera,” *The Denver Post*, March 27, 2017, <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/03/27/aurora-prostitute-solicitation-body-camera>; The Sentinel, “Aurora Code Officer’s Body Camera Catches Him Calling Prostitute,” *The Sentinel*, March 27, 2017, <https://sentinelcolorado.com/metro/aurora-code-officers-body-camera-catches-calling-prostitute>.

Columbia, SC

Cameras have been used to gather evidence against sex buyers during reverse sting operations in [Columbia, SC](#). For example, in May 2019, the Richland County Sheriff’s Department conducted a six-hour operation at a local hotel, focusing on sex buyers using various websites to search for prostitution in the Columbia area. The operation resulted in the arrest of sixteen men, who were each charged with solicitation of prostitution. The Sheriff thanked community partners who donated the use of the hotel room and cameras to record evidence during the operation.⁵⁴⁶

Lodi, CA

Police in [Lodi, CA](#), conducting reverse stings have supplemented hidden microphones on police decoys with video recordings of interactions between suspected sex buyers and undercover policewomen, and the video evidence is used to support prosecutions for soliciting prostitution.⁵⁴⁷

Year	City or County	State
1983	Indianapolis	IN
1989	Horry County	SC
1990	Harrisburg	PA
1991	Tallahassee	FL
1993	Gordon Heights	NY
1994	Monroe	NC
1994	Tacoma	WA
1997	Everett	WA
1999	El Cajon	CA
1999	Lafayette	LA
2000	Erie County	NY
2000	Woonsocket	RI
2002	Lodi	CA
2003	Brockton	MA
2003	Kissimmee	FL
2005	Athens	GA
2005	Dodge County	MN
2005	Kingsport	TN

⁵⁴⁶ Terry Ward, “16 Men Arrested by Richland County Sheriff’s Deputies in Prostitution Sting,” *Cola Daily*, June 1, 2019, https://www.coladaily.com/communities/columbia/archive/16-men-arrested-by-richland-county-sheriff-s-deputies-in-prostitution-sting/article_a053e4f4-28d3-55e1-93e8-cff28fac28aa.html.

⁵⁴⁷ Layla Bohm, “Police Arrest 5 in Prostitution Sting,” *Iodinews.com*, September 5, 2002, https://www.lodinews.com/article_3f0f9c20-d854-5401-b992-0b31cb03ff64.html.

⁵⁴⁸ Original table appeared in Shively et al., *A National Overview*. We located additional examples and updated the table.

Circumstances of Camera Use to Deter or Sanction Sex Buyers

This category of tactic is best illustrated with actual examples. To convey the range of camera and video recording applications to demand reduction, we provide a few examples of each of the major ways they are used. These examples demonstrate the variability of situations and methods that are used to either deter sex buyers or to bolster evidence supporting arrest and prosecution. They also show the geographic breadth and prevalence of this type of tactic.

Houston, Texas

In 2021, the state of Texas unanimously passed HB1540, which was signed into law in June and went into effect on September 1.⁵⁴⁹ The law was the first in the nation to declare prostitution or solicitation of prostitution a felony offense. In [Houston](#), along Bissonnet Street in a section called The Track, which is well-known for the commercial sex trade, billboards were installed that read: “Solicitation of prostitution is a felony. Punishable up to two years in jail. Cameras are recording. Violators will be prosecuted.”⁵⁵⁰ This is an example of cameras being used both as a deterrent and to help gather evidence that may be used to support arrest and prosecution.



Photo Credit: ABC13 Eyewitness News, August 23, 2021.

⁵⁴⁹ Safia Samee Ali, “Texas is the First State to Make Buying Sex a Felony. Will this Help Trafficking Victims?” *NBC News*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/texas-first-state-make-buying-sex-felony-will-help-trafficking-n1276617>.

⁵⁵⁰ Anthony Akaeze, “As Texas Becomes First State to Make Prostitution a Felony, Houston Officials Crack Down on a Notorious Roadway Known as The Track,” *Baptist News Global*, September 27, 2021, <https://baptistnews.com/article/as-texas-becomes-first-state-to-make-prostitution-a-felony-houston-officials-crack-down-on-a-notorious-roadway-known-as-the-track/#.Y1FkX-zMJNv>; Gabrielle Banks, “New Bright-Orange Signs up along Bissonnet Track in Latest Attempt to Combat Houston’s Sex Trade Hub,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/New-signage-up-on-Bissonnet-in-going-attempt-to-16405737.php>.

Vancouver, WA

A 32-year-old man was arrested in March 2021 for allegedly soliciting two teenage girls, one of whom was a minor, for sex in the parking lot of a shopping mall near the city of [Vancouver](#), WA. According to the affidavit, the pair of friends were sitting in the younger girl's car when the man reportedly entered the car without permission. He pulled out a stack of cash and asked the teenage girls to go to a hotel room to engage in sex with him in exchange for money. When the teenagers declined, he became upset and left. An investigation occurred after the teenagers reported the incident to police. Video surveillance from the mall captured the offender entering the victim's car. Police found the suspected sex buyer at a local hotel and arrested him for suspicion of commercial sex abuse of a minor, fourth-degree assault, second-degree vehicle prowling, and "patronizing a prostitute."⁵⁵¹

Wichita, KS

In January 2021, a truck driver was arrested and faced homicide charges after allegedly murdering a prostituted woman in a [Wichita](#) motel room.⁵⁵² The man allegedly parked his truck in a motel lot and negotiated with the victim for a \$40 sexual encounter along with his friend. The men arrived at the motel room to complete the transaction. The first man alleged that three unknown males had robbed him and that he'd been attacked with mace. Motel video footage showed the prostituted woman and the men speaking outside and then showed the first man and the woman entering the motel room. Footage further showed the man running barefoot from the room 20 minutes later, carrying his pants on his right arm. The motel owner discovered the woman's body inside the room the next morning. Her body showed signs of being beaten and choked, and authorities discovered a blood-covered glass candle holder on the floor. The video recording allowed police to subsequently identify and apprehend the suspect.

Palm Beach County, FL

A Boynton Beach, FL, police officer was arrested during a reverse sting conducted by the [Palm Beach County](#) Sheriff's Office.⁵⁵³ The BBPD received video evidence of the officer soliciting an undercover Palm Beach County Sheriff's Deputy for commercial sex during the sting operation.⁵⁵⁴ The sex buyer was initially placed on paid administrative leave, was suspended for 80 hours, and was required to complete a public corruption course. The officer was officially fired in April 2016 by the BBPD three months after the incident and was determined to have violated two department policies: conduct unbecoming a police officer and conformance to the law.

⁵⁵¹ Jessica Prokop, "Man, 32, Accused of Approaching Teens at Vancouver Mall, Offering Cash for Sex," *The Columbian*, March 12, 2021, <https://www.columbian.com/news/2021/mar/12/man-32-accused-of-approaching-teens-at-vancouver-mall-offering-cash-for-sex/>.

⁵⁵² Wimberly Patton, "Truck Driver Charged with Murder of Prostitute after Leaving Shoes Beneath Motel Bed," *CDL Life*, January 13, 2021, <https://cdllife.com/2021/truck-driver-charged-with-murder-of-prostitute-after-leaving-shoes-beneath-motel-bed/>.

⁵⁵³ Amanda Batchelor, "Boynton Beach Police Officer Fired after Arrest during Prostitution Sting. Vintyre Finney Accused of Paying \$20 to Undercover Detective for Oral Sex," *local10.com*, April 19, 2016, <https://www.local10.com/news/2016/04/19/boynton-beach-police-officer-fired-after-arrest-during-prostitution-sting/>.

⁵⁵⁴ Al Pefley, "Boynton Beach Cop Nabbed in Undercover Prostitution Sting, Fired," *CBS12.com*, April 19, 2016, <https://cbs12.com/news/local/boynton-beach-cop-nabbed-in-undercover-prostitution-sting-fired>.

Hobart, Indiana

The [Hobart](#) Police Department conducted a reverse sting in 2011 in response to tips and complaints of alleged prostitution activity in a local home.⁵⁵⁵ Upon questioning a woman suspected of prostitution, she told police she had been exchanging sex acts for money. The woman agreed to serve as a decoy in a reverse sting and continued arranging appointments with sex buyers. Police placed hidden cameras and audio recorders in the house. Five men, in addition to the initial man apprehended by police, were arrested when they appeared at the home and attempted to buy sex. The video recordings served to bolster evidence against the arrested sex buyers.

Gordon Heights, New York

[Gordon Heights](#) lies within Suffolk County on Long Island, New York. In response to widespread concerns about prostitution in the community, a Gordon Heights Community Watch group started writing letters in 1991 to the wives and mothers of men arrested for soliciting prostituted women. In 1993, local reports indicated that prostitution had “invaded” residential streets and schoolyards, and members of the neighborhood watch group began patrolling their streets with video cameras as part of a community policing program.⁵⁵⁶ Two family members in Gordon Heights said they had been video recording prostituted women and sex buyers for two and half years, using the threat of the videos to scare sex buyers out of the neighborhood. The video recording by community volunteers was done with the approval and guidance of the police. Twelve volunteers patrolled the neighborhood in teams of two and were required to call police before going out to record so cruisers could be in the area. The volunteers were primarily parents of school-aged children. As they patrolled, one volunteer wrote down license plate numbers and car descriptions while the other recorded situations appearing to be prostitution transactions. The teams were instructed by police to leave the area after witnessing these situations to avoid confrontations.

Evidence of Effectiveness

There have been no evaluations of the effectiveness of using surveillance and video evidence to deter, apprehend, or convict sex buyers to reduce demand for prostitution or sex trafficking. However, in light of research showing the CCTV has a modest, positive impact in preventing crime, and that there is an investigative benefit of CCTV once a crime has been committed, it is reasonable to expect that such benefits extend to the application of the method to sex buyer deterrence. Compared to other ways of combating prostitution and sex trafficking (e.g., victim rescues, trafficker arrest and prosecution, legalization or decriminalization of prostitution), a solid case can be made for the effectiveness of using cameras and video recordings, with four distinct kinds of evidence all reflecting favorably on the approach:

1. Existing research on CCTV used to prevent and detect other crimes suggests modest, positive results—particularly when using active systems rather than passive ones and when used in small, well-defined areas.⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁵ Imachak, “Six Men, Alleged Prostitute Charged in Sting Operation,” nwi.com, December 16, 2011, <https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/illinois/10997faf-ff46-5624-8458-b509aace009d.html>.

⁵⁵⁶ New York Times Archive, “Town Puts Prostitutes on Videotape,” *The New York Times*, March 21, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/03/21/us/town-puts-prostitutes-on-videotape.html>.

⁵⁵⁷ Jerry H. Ratcliffe and Jessica M. Rosenthal, “Video Surveillance of Public Places, 2nd Edition,” *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Response Guide Series*, no. 4, (Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and Arizona State University Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions, June 2021).

2. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers have asked what would deter them from that behavior in the future, and were presented with a list of options. The things most commonly listed as likely to deter them are having their behavior become known to others (including families, partners, friends, and employers) and other consequences following arrest, such as jail time and being listed on a sex offender registry. Such responses were made by more than **80% of surveyed sex buyers**.⁵⁵⁸ Although not specified in the surveys, it is reasonable to assume that video evidence strengthening cases against sex buyers (increasing the likelihood of identification, arrest, and successful prosecution) would increase the likelihood of triggering negative consequences that sex buyers say would serve to deter them.
3. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence⁵⁵⁹ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that once arrested, sex buyers express great **concern about the consequences of that arrest**—especially that their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities. Video evidence can be compelling, making it harder to deny involvement and increasing the probability of law enforcement actions leading to public disclosure of their offenses—something sex buyers seek to avoid.
4. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that both “**legal sanctions**” (such as incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending**.⁵⁶⁰ To the extent that video

⁵⁵⁸ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), 46-47, <https://prostitutionresearch.com>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

⁵⁵⁹ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men Who Buy Sex,” *TIME USA, LLC.*, n.d., <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes/>; Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in Sex Trade,” *The New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik, “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

⁵⁶⁰ Thomas A. Loughran, Ray Paternoster, and Douglas B. Weiss, “Chapter 4: Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex R. Piquero (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2016), 50-74, doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4; Raymond Paternoster, “Chapter 3: Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson, (New

evidence supports allegations of sex-buying behavior and promoting the identification, apprehension, and prosecution of buyers, it would contribute to both legal and extra-legal sanctions and thus advance deterrence.

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Cameras](#)” have been used for demand reduction purposes, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Cameras” from the “Tactics” list. In addition, the U.S. locations in which cameras have been used may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Cameras” from the list.

York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis, 2018), 81-106, doi.org/10.4324/9781351112710; Robert Apel and Daniel S. Nagin, “Chapter 7: Perceptual Deterrence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Offender Decision Making*, eds. Wim Bernasco, Jean-Louis van Gelder, and Henk Elffers, 6 (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017), 121-140.

Chapter 15: Letters

Overview

A tactic employed in nearly 100 U.S. cities and counties involves sending “[Letters](#)” or other messages to the homes of known or suspected buyers of commercial sex. Most versions of these letters, known colloquially as “Dear John Letters,” provide information about the risks and harms of prostitution, including health and crime victimization risks for both sex buyers and those exploited as commodities in the sex trade. They also explain why the letter has been sent to the recipient, usually stating that the person or their registered vehicle was seen in an area known for prostitution and behaving in a way consistent with the actions of seeking to purchase sex. The letters also contain assurances about the presumption of innocence and that the message does not constitute an allegation or criminal charge.

For example, in September, 2019, the [San Jose](#) and [Oakland](#), CA, Police Departments launched the “Report John Program” designed to reduce human trafficking and prostitution by reducing consumer-level demand. Community members were invited to participate by reporting “Johns” they suspect of soliciting providers of commercial sex or trafficking victims. Reporting was facilitated by a simple website form used on phones, tablets, or desktop computers that crowdsource feedback from the community. Residents could upload photos and provide vehicle and other identifying information on a potential sex buyer. The Department’s Human Trafficking Unit then evaluated the information and determined if further investigation was warranted. If appropriate, a Public Safety Announcement (PSA) letter was sent to the registered owner’s address, alerting the registered owner that their vehicle was seen in an area known for high levels of prostitution. This letter also educates the registered owner about the dangers of prostitution and related illicit activities. The Report John Program was later implemented in [Vallejo](#), CA, in 2022.

Law enforcement representatives interviewed by Shively et al. for the 2012 *National Overview* and for the present study said that the primary reasons for using this tactic are: (1) to alert partners and others close to sex buyers about the possibility of the subject engaging in high risk behavior, (2) to deprive buyers of the secrecy and anonymity that most desire in their pursuit of paid sex, and (3) to elicit the “extra-legal sanction” of social censure from those closest to sex buyers, to help discourage them from that criminal activity.

The use of Dear John Letters has prompted objections similar to those about publicly disclosing the identities of sex buyers. The messages can be argued to violate due process protections if they are assumed to constitute punishment, especially if that punishment is applied prior to conviction. To date, we know of no instances of any court upholding such objections and ruling against the use of notifications sent to the homes of arrested sex buyers, or to the owners of vehicles exhibiting suspicious behavior. The letters and other messages we have encountered were carefully crafted to address concerns about due process, but the objections would be valid if the letters are not properly constructed and processed.

Types of Letters

Letters to Registered Owners of Vehicles

As explained in Shively et al., 2012, there are two main variants of this approach. The first approach involves sending letters to the registered owners of vehicles observed in areas known for prostitution and in which the driver’s driving pattern suggests intent to seek sex from individuals engaged in prostitution.

Typical suspicious conduct involves vehicles circling a city block repeatedly, eventually coming to a halt so that the driver can converse with individuals who seem to be involved in street prostitution or who are known to police to have been previously arrested for prostitution. Similarly, law enforcement may have witnessed persons known for prostitution frequently entering vehicles that pull up to the curb, only to return a few minutes later in a repetitive manner.

Despite the evident nature of these interactions, in most jurisdictions, these observations do not offer adequate grounds for apprehending the suspected buyer of sexual services on solicitation charges. This limitation arises from the absence of concrete evidence indicating that a sexual transaction occurred, and if it did, whether payment was involved. Thus, some jurisdictions have adopted the practice of recording the vehicle's license plate number and subsequently sending letters to the registered owners of these vehicles in an effort to discourage such activity.

Some jurisdictions have employed electronic messages used in the same way as mailed letters. For example, in 2014, detectives in [Santa Rosa, CA](#), traced phone calls and texts that had responded to their decoy online ad for a web-based reverse sting and sent the suspected sex buyer letters or messages to the identified accounts and addresses. In 2018, the [Brown County, WI](#), Sheriff's Office used a similar electronic variation of the letter tactic: during a week-long, web-based reverse sting, wherein over 400 individuals who had contacted with police online (but did not incriminate themselves enough to warrant charges) were sent written warning messages by police. Often, these letters or electronic messages included warnings about health risks and the harm of prostitution to sex buyers, the communities in which it occurs, and to those exploited as commodities in the sex trade.

Sometimes the observations of sex buying behavior were made not by the police, but rather by members of the community who observed this kind of activity, recorded license plate numbers, and made reports to police departments. For example, police in [Minneapolis, MN](#), and [Oakland, CA](#),⁵⁶¹ have had residents record license plate numbers and descriptions of known or suspected sex buyers and their vehicles and forward the information to their respective police department so police can send letters to the alleged offenders (or the registered owners of vehicles appearing to be used by sex buyers). Some police departments had forms for recording the information, which asked community members to record the event's location, the time, the make, model, and color of the vehicle, and most importantly, the license plate number.

Once the police had been given this information, they followed the same procedure use when officers make the observations themselves. As discussed above, in September 2019, the San Jose Police Department ([San Jose, CA](#)) launched the "Report John Program" designed to combat sex trafficking and prostitution by reducing consumer-level demand. Community members were invited to participate by reporting suspected sex buyers and/or sex traffickers. Reporting was facilitated by an online form, accessible to community members via their smart phones, tablets, or desktop computers that crowdsource community feedback.

⁵⁶¹ Joanna Dornfeld, "Local Groups Battle Prostitution," *The Minnesota Daily*, April 9, 2002, <https://mndaily.com/191930/uncategorized/local-groups-battle-prostitution/>; CBS Bay Area, "Oakland Residents Hope 'Dear John' Letters Help Curb Prostitution," *CBS News*, June 22, 2011, <https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/oakland-residents-hope-dear-john-letters-help-curb-prostitution>; Samantha Masunaga, "Dear John: Oakland Residents are Sending Your License Plate Number to the Cops," *Oakland North*, October 11, 2012, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2012/10/11/dear-john-oakland-residents-are-sending-your-license-plate-number-to-the-cops>.

Residents could upload a photo and provide vehicle and other identifying information on a potential sex buyer.

The SJPD’s Human Trafficking Unit then evaluated the information and determined whether further investigation was warranted. If appropriate, a Public Safety Announcement (PSA) letter was sent to the registered owner’s address, alerting them that their vehicle was seen in an area known for high levels of commercial sex activity. This letter also served to educate the registered owner about the dangers of prostitution and related illicit activities. The letters typically strived to make it clear that police do not assume that the registered owner of the vehicle was necessarily driving the car when the suspected sex-buying behavior was observed. The letter also did not constitute being charged with a crime. Some of the letters explicitly addressed the fact that the suspicious behavior may have occurred while someone other than the registered owner was driving. The tone was even friendly, suggesting that the registered owner’s vehicle was being used improperly, and that they should not allow others to use their vehicle for such purposes.

Letter (or other Communications) to Arrestees

The second type of application of this tactic is sending letters to the homes of arrestees. Such letters do not say that sex buying occurred, but confirm that the suspect was arrested for soliciting prostitution. Again, the letters contain assurances about due process and the presumption of innocence. Communities that were “early adopters” of this tactic are presented in Table 1 below. A sample letter used by the Sarasota Police Department ([Sarasota](#), FL) is shared in Figure 1 below. Other examples, including English and Spanish versions of similar letters from [Raleigh](#), NC, are provided on the Demand Forum website’s “[Letters](#)” tactic page and are listed in the “References” Section below.

Table 1: Sites with Earliest Known Use of “Dear John” Letters ⁵⁶²		
Year	City or County	State
1982	Aberdeen	MD
1975	Boston	MA
1982	Baltimore	MD
1982	Evansville	IN
1985	Portland	OR
1988	Allentown	PA
1988	Newark	NJ
1991	Gordon Heights	NY
1991	Wyandanch	NY
1993	South Bend	IN
1995	Brooklyn Park	MD
1997	Hollywood	FL
2000	High Point	NC
2005	Charlotte	NC
2006	Reading	PA

⁵⁶² This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 54. During our update, we did not identify any new early examples of John Schools.

Most applications of this tactic have used paper letters or postcards mailed to residential addresses of known or suspected sex buyers. Some jurisdictions have employed electronic messages used in the same way as mailed letters. For example, in 2018, the [Brown County](#), WI, Sheriff’s Office conducted a week-long, web-based reverse sting, during which over 400 individuals had responded to online advertisements for prostitution, making inquiries to undercover police but not incriminating themselves sufficiently to warrant arrest.⁵⁶³ Police would send text messages containing notifications and warnings about the risks and harms of prostitution. In 2020, the [Sonoma County](#), CA Sheriff’s Office began tracing the phone calls and texts made to the number in their decoy online ad used for reverse stings. Detectives identified the addresses linked to those phone numbers, and 200 “Dear John” letters were then sent out informing the owners that those numbers had been linked to the solicitation of commercial sex, and explaining why they should be concerned about the potential connection between prostitution and human trafficking.⁵⁶⁴

Evidence of Effectiveness

While there is no formal evaluation of the effectiveness of letters as a tactic to deter sex buying compared to other tactics, there is a case for letters to sex buyers being an evidence-based tactic. Three distinct kinds of evidence reflect favorably on the approach:

1. Surveys of hundreds of admitted sex buyers **have found that 67-79% report that a letter to their family notifying them that they were arrested for soliciting prostitution would deter them from buying sex.**⁵⁶⁵
2. The survey data is aligned with extensive anecdotal evidence⁵⁶⁶ from the field of law enforcement vice operations and investigations, which consistently finds that **the greatest**

⁵⁶³ Paul Srubas, “Cops Send Warning to Would-be Online Johns,” *Green Bay Press Gazette*, September 7, 2008, [Prostitution warning to would-be Johns: Sex for money is a crime \(greenbaypressgazette.com\)](#).

⁵⁶⁴ Mary Callahan, “Sonoma County Sting Shows a Changing Approach to Prostitution,” *The Press Democrat*, February 9, 2014, <https://www.pressdemocrat.com/article/news/sonoma-county-sting-shows-a-changing-approach-to-prostitution/>

⁵⁶⁵ Anna E. Kosloski and Bridget Diamond-Welch, “The Men and Women Who Purchase Sex in the United States: Understanding Motives, Practices, and Preferences,” *Women & Criminal Justice* 32, no. 3 (2022): 306-324, [doi:10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424](https://doi.org/10.1080/08974454.2021.1993424) (note: due to the type of scale used in Figure 2 of this study we are approximating that the figure is 67%); Melissa Farley et al., *Men Who Pay for Sex in Germany and What They Teach us about the Failure of Legal Prostitution: A 6-Country Report on the Sex Trade from the Perspective of the Socially Invisible ‘Freiers’* (Berlin: Prostitution Research & Education, November 2022), <https://prostitutionresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Sex-buyersEnglish-11-8-2022pdf.pdf>; Rachel Durchslag and Samir Goswami, *Deconstructing The Demand for Prostitution: Preliminary Insights From Interviews With Chicago Men Who Purchase Sex* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation, May 2008), 1-34, <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Melissa Farley, Julie Bindel, and Jacqueline M. Golding, *Men Who Buy Sex: Who They Buy and What They Know* (London: Eaves and Prostitution Research & Education, December 2009), 1-32, <https://documentation.lastradainternational.org/lisidocs/Mensex.pdf>.

⁵⁶⁶ Charlotte Alter, “Catching Johns: Inside the National Push to Arrest Men who Buy Sex,” *Time*, n.d., <https://time.com/sex-buyers-why-cops-across-the-u-s-target-men-who-buy-prostitutes> (accessed March 3, 2023); Nicholas Kristof, “Targeting the Johns in the Sex Trade,” *New York Times*, February 26, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/kristof-targeting-the-johns-in-sex-trade.html>; Kristin Pisarcik “Miami Vice: Inside ‘John Stings’ and Escort Stings,” *ABC News*, March 21, 2008, <https://abcnews.go.com/2020/story?id=4488667&page=1>; The Associated Press, “Prostitute Customers Posterized,” *The Gainesville Sun*, October 13, 2012, <https://www.gainesville.com/story/news/2012/10/14/prostitute-customers-posterized/31836219007/>.

concern expressed by sex buyers at the moment of their arrest is not jail or fines but is instead about their **being found out by their families and partners** (as well as by friends, employers, and other in their communities).

3. The survey findings and anecdotal evidence provided by law enforcement are further corroborated by a vast body of criminological research on deterrence that finds that “**extra-legal sanctions**” (such as social censure) **have a deterrent effect on re-offending equal to, or greater than, legal sanctions** (such as incarceration or probation).⁵⁶⁷

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Letters](#)” have been sent to sex buyers, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Letters” from the “Tactics” list. Similarly, the U.S. locations where letters have been used may be mapped on Demand Forum by choosing “Letters” from the list.

Sample Letters from Police Departments

- [Arlington, TX, “Dear John” Postcard](#) (2007)
- [Raleigh, NC, “Dear John Letter” Templates](#) (2006)
- [Escambia County CA Sheriff’s Office “Dear John” Letter](#) (2009)
- [Oakland, CA, Police Department “Dear John” Letter](#) (2016)
- [Orange County, CA, Prostitution Letter](#) (2016)
- [Sanford, FL, Sample Community Safety Letter](#) (2011)
- [Sarasota, FL, Sample “Advisory Letter” from Sarasota Police Department](#) (2014)

⁵⁶⁷ Thomas A. Loughran et al., “Deterrence,” in *The Handbook of Criminological Theory*, ed. Alex Piquero (John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 50-74, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/9781118512449.ch4>; Raymond Paternoster, “Perceptual Deterrence Theory,” in *Deterrence, Choice, and Crime, Volume 23*, eds. Daniel S. Nagin, Francis T. Cullen, and Cheryl Lero Jonson (New York: Routledge, 2018), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351112710-3/perceptual-deterrence-theory-raymond-paternoster>.

Figure 1: Sample "Dear John" Letter, Sarasota Police Department, Florida



Bernadette A. DiPino
Chief of Police

SARASOTA POLICE DEPARTMENT
2099 Adams Lane • Sarasota, FL 34237
Post Office Box 3528 • Sarasota, FL 34230

Phone: (941) 954-7001
Fax: (941) 954-7034

March 4, 2014

Greetings Registered Vehicle Owner,

This letter is being sent to you because on _____ your vehicle was identified as a vehicle that may have been involved in criminal activity. Your vehicle was observed at _____ an area within the city limits of Sarasota known for prostitution related crimes. The driver or occupant of your vehicle engaged in conversation with either: (1) a known prostitute (an individual who has been previously convicted of a violation of Florida Statutes §796.07), or (2) an undercover law enforcement officer posing as a prostitute.

The Sarasota Police Department has a "NO TOLERANCE" policy regarding any prostitution related crimes within the City of Sarasota. Vehicle owners may suffer consequences if their vehicles are used in violation of Florida's criminal statutes, including substantial fines under Sarasota City Code §33-271 or forfeiture of the vehicle under Florida's Contraband Forfeiture Act.

Prostitution is not a victimless crime. Quality of life issues are high priorities in our community and prostitution leads to many other crimes including drug violations, nuisance crimes, theft, battery and sexual assaults. We care about the health and well being of all of our citizens.

Those who personally engage in prostitution related activities within the City of Sarasota subject themselves to arrest and criminal prosecution. Arrest reports, booking information, and booking photos are public records and are routinely released to newspapers and other media outlets and published on social media services.

This letter is advisory and for informational purposes only. There are no criminal charges pending, nor will the Sarasota Police Department be taking further action in relation to your vehicle at this time.

Any questions or comments relating to this matter can be directed to Street Crimes Unit Sergeant Demetri Konstantopoulos, who may be contacted at 941-954-7083. SPD Case # _____ was generated documenting this incident.

Be safe,

Bernadette A. DiPino
Chief of Police

BAD/DK/dk

Chapter 16: Public Education

Overview

“[Public Education](#)” as a demand deterrence tactic involves educating people to encourage them not to contribute to sexual exploitation by purchasing sex or by tolerating or supporting this criminal behavior in others. Some education efforts are broadcast widely to the public, while others more narrowly target active sex buyers or boys to prevent them from becoming men who believe it is acceptable to buy sex. More than **210** cities and counties in the U.S. have launched some form of public education initiative focused on reducing demand for commercial sex.

We define “public education” broadly and count as an awareness program *any* attempt to focus attention on the role of sex buyers in contributing to problems associated with prostitution and/or sex trafficking. We do not include campaigns that are more generally focused on raising awareness about the harms of prostitution or sex trafficking as human rights concerns, such as the well-known “Journey” exhibit that educated the public about sex trafficking.⁵⁶⁸ Typical means of providing education include billboards and signs, presentations at community meetings, media interviews, and prevention education programs involving a curriculum and a sustained presentation to target audiences that convey substantial amounts of information.⁵⁶⁹

In some communities, public education campaigns involve posting signs or billboards informing sex buyers about police activity or penalties for buying sex. For example, in [Cleveland, OH](#), there was a neighborhood-initiated campaign targeting sex buyers. Residents took turns carrying signs in troubled neighborhoods stating, “*Dear Johns, your plate number is being recorded. Yours truly, the neighbors.*”⁵⁷⁰

Other communities have also used billboards, such [Kansas City, MO](#), where a coalition of law enforcement and community organizations put up a billboard stating, “*This community does not tolerate buying prostitution.*”⁵⁷¹ Sending a narrower message, billboards in [Los Angeles County, CA](#), have featured messages such as, “*Buying a teen for sex is child abuse. Turning a blind eye is neglect.*”⁵⁷² Addressing another aspect of the harms resulting from sex buying, specifically the connection between sex buying and syphilis, the [Toledo Lucas County](#) Health Department sponsored billboards with the message, “*PAYING for SEX? GET TESTED!*”⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁸ Marcia Stepanek, “Emma Thompson’s ‘Journey’ into Sex Slavery. British Actress Emma Thompson is Using a Controversial New Art Exhibit to Unmask the Horror of Human Sex Trafficking,” nbcnews.com, November 13, 2009, <https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna33913920>.

⁵⁶⁹ Shively et al., *National Overview*.

⁵⁷⁰ Information about use of this tactic in Cleveland, OH, originally appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 29.

⁵⁷¹ Charlie Keegan, “New Anti-Prostitution Initiative Targets ‘Johns’ in Historic Northeast Kansas City,” KSHB.com, April 28, 2021, <https://www.kshb.com/news/local-news/new-anti-prostitution-initiative-targets-johns-in-historic-northeast-kansas-city>.

⁵⁷² Christina Villacorte, “Billboard Campaign Aimed at Fighting Child Sex Trafficking,” *San Gabriel Valley Tribune*, April 14, 2014, <https://www.sgvtribune.com/2014/04/11/billboard-campaign-aimed-at-fighting-child-sex-trafficking/>.

⁵⁷³ WTOL11, “Health Department Uses Billboards to Warn of STI Dangers When Buying Sex,” December 7, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lyS3wjj9_mA.

In 2021, the state of Texas unanimously passed HB1540, which was signed into law in June and went into effect on September 1.⁵⁷⁴ The law was the first in the nation to declare prostitution or solicitation of prostitution a felony offense. In [Houston](#), along Bissonnet Street in a section called “The Track,” which is well-known for the commercial sex trade, billboards were installed which read: “*Solicitation of prostitution is a felony. Punishable up to two years in jail. Cameras are recording. Violators will be prosecuted.*”⁵⁷⁵ This approach is designed to deter buyers and, secondarily, to send a general message to the public about police action to address the problem rather than to educate about demand in real depth.

Other groups are taking their education efforts online. Illustrating this approach, a [Tampa](#), FL, group reached more than 100,000 potential local sex buyers each month with Facebook ads communicating the potential risks of sex buying including arrest, car impoundment, and the disclosure of sex buying activities to family members.⁵⁷⁶ Enabled by \$41,000 in grant funding, the [Boston](#) Police Department took a similar approach, running targeted Facebook ads intended to deter sex buying.⁵⁷⁷

Figure 1: Boston Police Department Social Marketing Campaign Ad⁵⁷⁸



⁵⁷⁴ Safia Samee Ali, “Texas is the First State to Make Buying Sex a Felony. Will this Help Trafficking Victims?” *NBC News*, August 12, 2021, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/texas-first-state-make-buying-sex-felony-will-help-trafficking-n1276617>.

⁵⁷⁵ Anthony Akaeze, “As Texas Becomes First State to Make Prostitution a Felony, Houston Officials Crack Down on a Notorious Roadway Known as The Track,” *Baptist News Global*, September 27, 2021, <https://baptistnews.com/article/as-texas-becomes-first-state-to-make-prostitution-a-felony-houston-officials-crack-down-on-a-notorious-roadway-known-as-the-track/#.Y1FkX-zMJNv>; Gabrielle Banks, “New Bright-Orange Signs Up Along Bissonnet Track in Latest Attempt to Combat Houston’s Sex Trade,” *Houston Chronicle*, August 23, 2021, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/New-signage-up-on-Bissonnet-in-ongoing-attempt-to-16405737.php>. For more background on “The Track” see also: Gabrielle Banks, “The Track. Open-air Sex Trade Permeates Daily Life on Houston’s Outskirts,” *Houston Chronicle*, May 2, 2019, <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/news/houston-texas/houston/article/Houston-prostitution-human-trafficking-Bissonnet-13780542.php>.

⁵⁷⁶ Jackie Callaway, “Tampa Bay Area Group Uses Technology, Social Media to Target Sex Buyers,” *ABC Action News, WFTS Tampa Bay*, January 21, 2020, <https://www.abcactionnews.com/news/local-news/i-team-investigates/tampa-bay-area-group-uses-technology-social-media-to-target-sex-buyers>.

⁵⁷⁷ Dan Atkinson, “Boston Polic Put Out Word: Buying Sex Can Cost You Big,” *Boston Herald*, April 27, 2017, <https://www.bostonherald.com/2017/04/27/boston-police-put-out-word-buying-sex-can-cost-you-big/>.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid.

A separate online campaign in [San Diego](#), CA, involved the “Bunch of Guys Cyber Patrol.” The men who volunteered for this online “patrol” would speak via phone to sex buyers who responded to phony online prostitution ads with the goal of educating would-be sex buyers about their harmful behavior and encouraging them to stop it.⁵⁷⁹ In a 4-day operation dubbed “Jamming the Johns,” [Phoenix](#), AZ, police also used fake online prostitution ads to identify would-be sex buyers.⁵⁸⁰ When men called seeking to arrange prostitution, they were greeted by one of five female officers who explained to them the Phoenix Police Department’s new policy of jailing those arrested for buying sex (a change from only issuing tickets) and referred them to the website [azbuyerbeware.com](#) for more information. Of the 229 callers to the fake ads, only 6 hung up after the officers disclosed their identity and 68% of calls received positive responses such as, “Thank you for the warning; I will not be doing this anymore.”⁵⁸¹

“If you’re attacking this, you have to go after the demand element. We know that through the years, the customer has gotten off easy. . . .”

Phoenix Sgt. Clay Sutherland, June 2015⁵⁸²

As Shively et al. (2012) explained, another approach aims awareness efforts at the public rather than to actual or potential sex buyers. This usually involves placing signs or posters for the public to see, or brief presentations about demand at meetings of community groups. We view education programs to be a more intensive and sustained effort to convey more information, such as a curriculum developed to teach high school students or employees of a company about how buying sex drives prostitution and sex trafficking and the negative consequences of commercial sex.

⁵⁷⁹ Kristina Davis, “Men Go on Cyber Patrol to Educate Sex Buyers about the Realities of Human Trafficking,” *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, January 27, 2018, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/public-safety/sd-me-cyber-patrol-20180127-story.html>.

⁵⁸⁰ Megan Cassidy, “Phoenix Police Issue PSA to Would-be Johns,” *azcentral.com*, June 7, 2015, <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/2015/06/08/phoenix-police-issue-psa-johns/28670699/>.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid.

⁵⁸² Ibid.

Figure 2: Signs Posted Along “The Track” in Houston Warning Sex Buyers of Patronizing Prostitution as a Texas State Jail Felony Offense⁵⁸³



Of the cities and counties that we know have engaged in some form of education or awareness intervention targeting demand, the vast majority are designed to raise awareness. There are very few efforts that would meet the more rigorous standard of programs with substantial educational content. A set of curricula or “toolkits” developed by the [Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation \(CAASE\)](#) and a program developed by the U.S. Department of Defense are among the few true education programs we have found. Examples of such programs are discussed below.

⁵⁸³ Photo credit information. Photo 1: Anothy Akaeze, “As Texas Becomes First State to Make Prostitution a Felony, Houston Officials Crack Down on a Notorious Roadway Known as The Track,” *Baptist News Global*, September 27, 2021, <https://baptistnews.com/article/as-texas-becomes-first-state-to-make-prostitution-a-felony-houston-officials-crack-down-on-a-notorious-roadway-know-n-as-the-track/>; photo credit 2: The Office of Ted Heap, Harris County Constable Precinct 5, August 31, 2021, <https://www.facebook.com/TheOfficeofConstableTedHeap.HCCOPCT5/photos/pb.100064488590647.-2207520000/2078051099000798/?type=3>.

The best-known and most ambitious public awareness campaign focused on demand was the “Dear John” campaign implemented in the greater [Atlanta](#) area and discussed in more detail below. Most other communities have engaged in less extensive campaigns and have used simpler methods, such as the use above of billboards and signs in [Rochester](#), NY, [Cleveland](#), OH, and [Houston](#), TX.

Year	Table 1: Sites with Earliest Known Use of Public Education Programs Targeting Demand ⁵⁸⁴	State
1980	Roanoke	VA
1982	Portland	OR
1985	Tampa	FL
1988	Pawtucket	RI
1988	Miami	FL
1995	San Francisco	CA
1995	Oklahoma City	OK
1996	Wichita	KS
1997	Tucson	AZ
1998	Kissimmee	FL
1998	Athens	GA
1999	Orlando	FL
2000	Baltimore	MD
2000	Fitchburg	MA
2000	Travis County	TX

Examples of Public Education

Atlanta’s “Dear John” Public Awareness Program

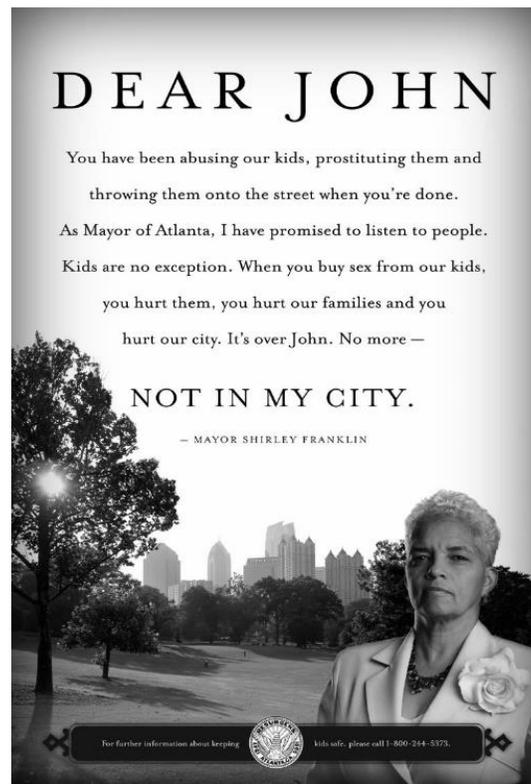
As discussed in Shively et al., 2012, the best-known and most ambitious public awareness campaign in the US targeting sex buyers was the “Dear John” campaign implemented in [Atlanta, GA](#). The campaign was conducted from 2006 to 2008 and was launched by the City of Atlanta’s Mayor’s Office. The campaign featured a series of public service announcements (PSAs) and media images circulated via the web, television, print media, and signs posted in public areas in Atlanta. One of the public service announcements won an Emmy award for “Best PSA,” and Atlanta was awarded the top prize from the World Leaders Forum in the Law-and-Order category for the “Dear John” campaign in 2007.

⁵⁸⁴ This table first appeared in Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 30. During our update, we did not identify any additional early adopters of this tactic.

Links to the PSAs are provided in the footnote below and print messages used for paper ads, billboards, and elsewhere are presented in Figures 2 and 3.⁵⁸⁵ For additional background concerning the Atlanta campaign, see Shively et al., 2012.⁵⁸⁶

The “Dear John” campaign was not formally evaluated, so its impact on the demand for prostitution or sex trafficking in Atlanta is unknown. Critics have expressed concern that the campaign was too narrowly focused on girls and young women as “victims,” and that it created a “victims and villains” policy narrative.⁵⁸⁷

Figure 3: Main Print Media Message for Atlanta’s “Dear John” Public Education and Awareness Campaign⁵⁸⁸



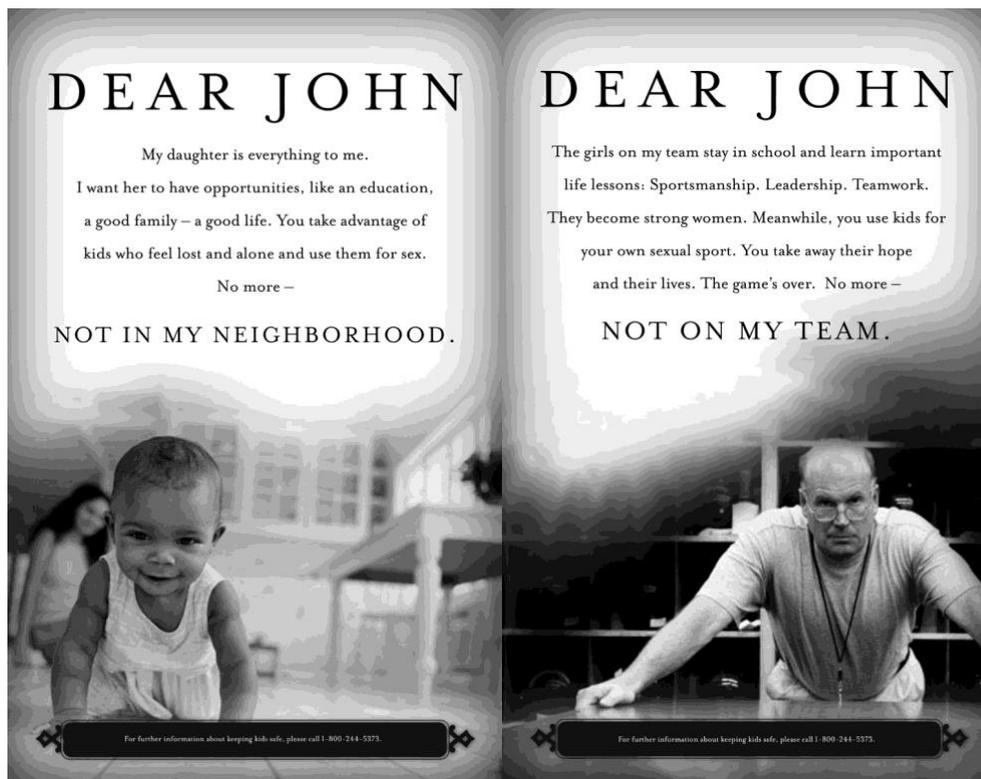
⁵⁸⁵ WIFTAtlanta, “Dear John Campaign: John,” YouTube, April 5, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O9erzIB1W4>; WIFTAtlanta, “Dear John Campaign: Mayor Shirley Franklin,” YouTube, April 5, 2009, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fRsbo6g21hU>; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1TzUyySQPlk>.

⁵⁸⁶ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 30–33.

⁵⁸⁷ Samantha Majic, “Sending a Dear John Letter: Public Information Campaigns and the Movement to ‘End Demand’ for Prostitution in Atlanta, GA,” *Social Sciences* 6, no. 138 (2017), <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci6040138>.

⁵⁸⁸ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 31.

Figure 4: Additional Print Media Messages for Atlanta’s “Dear John” Public Education and Awareness Campaign⁵⁸⁹



Chicago and Cook County and the US Military

Another important illustration of public education efforts aimed at combating demand for prostitution derives from [Cook County](#) and [Chicago, IL](#). See Shively et al., 2012, for a full discussion to those activities.⁵⁹⁰

U.S. Military Program to Combat Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking

There is a long history of the US military contributing to prostitution and sex trafficking in the US and overseas.⁵⁹¹ As discussed in Shively et al., 2012, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has recognized the problem and taken robust actions to reduce or eliminate military personnel’s role in fueling prostitution and sex trafficking. For a full explication of those activities, see Shively et al. (2012).⁵⁹²

Evidence of Effectiveness

Recent research suggests that the effectiveness of public education campaigns aimed at deterring sex buying depends on the nature of the message being conveyed. In an experimental study which presented 155 male

⁵⁸⁹ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 33.

⁵⁹⁰ Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 33–35.

⁵⁹¹ Kathryn Bolkovac and Cari Lynn, *The Whistleblower: Sex Trafficking, Military Contractors, and One Woman's Fight for Justice* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Victor Malarek, *The Johns: Sex for Sale and the Men Who Buy It* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2009).

⁵⁹² Shively, et al., *National Overview*, 34–37.

participants with real advertisements used in real campaigns, researchers found that advertising campaigns which focused on men who purchase sex, verses those which focused on creating empathy toward women exploited in prostitution, had a larger effect on men’s social attitudes toward those exploited in prostitution.⁵⁹³ Additionally, **significant effects on both attitudes about prostitution and attitudinal change toward those in prostitution** occurred for men shown sex buyer-focused advertisements, compared with men in the no-advertisement control group. The researchers explained that “showing the woman as a victim, far from encouraging empathy, might become a pathway to a greater rejection of the message and greater psychological distance” and campaigns in which the central theme mirrors the target audience may increase the probability that the persuasive process will begin.⁵⁹⁴

Additionally, robust literature from more than **50 years of research on public education and “social marketing” interventions finds that, when adequately targeted and well-executed, they produce significant impacts in achieving their intended changes in behavior.**⁵⁹⁵ There is no reason to believe that sex buying behavior is immune from being influenced by accurate and persuasive information about its negative consequences. Findings of sex buyer education (i.e., Johns schools) significantly reducing recidivism suggests that support for this particular type of crime in broader audiences can be reduced with well-designed and executed messages.⁵⁹⁶

Additional References

To access information about specific cases and the U.S. cities and counties in which “[Public Education](#)” has occurred, you may go to www.demand-forum.org, open the “Browse Locations” window, and then select “Public Education” from the “Tactics” list. The U.S. locations where these operations occurred may be mapped on Demand Forum by clicking on the “Choose a Tactic” box and choosing “Public Education” from the list.

Public Education Efforts Resources: City Led

Atlanta’s “Dear John” Campaign

- **Video (2005-2008)**
 - [YouTube: Dear John Campaign: John](#)
 - [YouTube: Dear John Campaign: Mayor Shirley Franklin](#)

⁵⁹³ Gemma Sáez, José Antonio Muñoz-Velázquez, Guido Corradi, et al., “Are Anti-Prostitution Advertising Campaigns Effective? An Experimental Study,” *Spanish Journal of Psychology* 25, e21 (2022): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1017/SJP.2022.17>.

⁵⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁵ Jeffrey A. Butts, Caterina Gouvis Roman, Lindsay Bostwick, and Jeremy R. Porter, “Cure Violence: a Public Health Model to Reduce Gun Violence,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 36, (2015): 39-53, <https://issuelab.org/resources/22700/22700.pdf>; Peter Homel and Tom Carroll, “Moving Knowledge into Action: Applying Social Marketing Principles to Crime Prevention,” *Trends & Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no. 381 (2009): 1-6, <https://www.ojp.gov/nij/virtual-library/abstracts/moving-knowledge-action-applying-social-marketing-principles-crime>; M. Bilal Akbar, Liz Foote, Clidna Soraghan, Rachael Millard, and Fiona Spotswood, “What Causes Social Marketing Programs to Fail? A Qualitative Study,” *Social Marketing Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2021): 99-116, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/15245004211010202>; William A. Smith, “Social Marketing: An Overview of Approach and Effects,” *Injury Prevention* 12, no. 1 (2006): i38-i43, <http://doi.org/10.1136/ip.2006.012864>.

⁵⁹⁶ Michael Shively et al., *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program*, Abt Associates Incorporated, 2008, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf>.

- [YouTube: Dear John Campaign: Girl](#)
- **Print Images (2005-2008)**
 - [The Juvenile Justice Fund asked for help](#)
 - [Youth Spark](#)

Miami’s “Dear John” Campaign

- News Reports
 - [‘Dear John’ campaign aims to protect kids](#)

Public Education Efforts Resources: Other

Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) Toolkits for Training and Education

- [Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation \(CAASE\) Toolkits for Training and Education](#) (2010)

Indiana Attorney General’s Office

- [“Not a John”: Wallet Size Card](#)

U.S. Department of Defense TIP Training

- [Trafficking in Persons: U.S. Department of Defense Awareness Initiative](#)

Discussion

This project aimed to identify, curate, and disseminate information that could be of practical value to those operating, planning, or considering initiatives designed to apprehend and deter people, mostly men, seeking to purchase sex. Its primary objectives were: 1) updating Demand Forum, a website documenting the use of demand deterrence tactics across the United States, and 2) investigating the use of recently emerged “IT-based Tactics” to deter sex buying. Readers of this report are encouraged to visit demand-forum.org, as it is the principal product of this study. The website provides comprehensive information concerning the use of demand deterrence tactics by 2,690 cities and counties across the country. This study did not evaluate the efficacy of any of the demand reduction tactics we identified and discussed in this study, although outside evidence of each tactic’s effectiveness is provided when possible. This evidence points to the vital importance of demand deterrence tactics in responding to prostitution and sex trafficking crimes. In the US, the conduct of sex buyers in prostitution and sex trafficking is proscribed by various state and federal laws, while persons under 18 who are exploited in prostitution are victims of child sex trafficking. While an established legal framework undergirds efforts geared towards apprehending and deterring people seeking to purchase sex, a complex mix of legal, political, and social factors determines whether legal obligations to discourage demand are enforced at the state, county, and local levels. While analyzing the constellation of circumstances that impact law enforcement demand reduction actions, inaction, and/or a combination of the two was not the purpose of this study, five emergent themes concerning prostitution and sex trafficking were identified from our research. They are briefly discussed below as a preface to the concluding remarks of this report. These themes inevitably contribute to the situational awareness of sex buying activities and/or the type and nature of demand reduction tactics that are employed. They can also be considered as the “arena” within which the 15 demand reduction tactics documented in this research are used.

Emergent Themes Concerning Prostitution and Sex Trafficking

First, the system of prostitution is not benign, nor is it a “victimless” public nuisance crime. Prostitution is inextricably linked to multilayered physical, psychological, and sexual violence, and the impacts of these harms are dispensed beyond the person and parties directly involved in it. Harms documented in the 2690 cities and counties are multifarious. They diffuse into families, businesses, neighborhoods, and communities and include adult and child sex trafficking, drug-related crimes, serial murder, prostitution-related homicides, rapes, robberies, assaults, child sexual abuse material (CSAM), child endangerment, and community complaints (e.g., sexual harassment of children and adults who reside in communities where street prostitution is prevalent). Further, many people involved in prostitution (whether occurring online or offline) become victims of wide-ranging forms of physical and/or psychological violence, and drug usage remains an acute vulnerability factor for involvement in street-level prostitution. The burden these harms place on psychosocial service providers, law enforcement agencies, and health and criminal justice systems is substantial. The primary force propelling these harms is sex buyers.

Second, prostitution and sex trafficking systems seamlessly overlap, and sex buyers are a universal feature of both. Demand Forum identified adult sex trafficking victims in 944 cities/counties, while child sex trafficking was identified in 1171 cities/counties. The market forces of street prostitution create demand for both domestic and international sex trafficking. Many adult persons in prostitution enter the illicit sex trade as minors who either fell prey to sex crimes at the hands of sex buyers, or who were groomed to engage in sex by sex traffickers. Sex trafficking victims rarely self-identify and are found indoors, outdoors,

offline, and in online prostitution systems. Sex trafficking occurs in locations where prostitution is legal (NV), in places where prostitution is criminalized and garners a strong law enforcement response (Houston, TX), and in areas where a de facto decriminalized legal environment has become the order of the day and where little to no law enforcement intervention exists (Brooklyn, NY; CA). No matter the setting or the operational posture law enforcement takes in response to prostitution and sex trafficking systems, sex buyers are behind every transaction. They are the source of every payment, irrespective of whether it is pocketed by a person in prostitution or by a sex trafficker.

Third, the online illicit sex trade and the sexual exploitation marketplace it enables are flourishing and largely unpoliced. Facilitating and fueling the expansion of the online illicit sex trade are numerous systems and technologies such as classified advertising sites, cellular technology, web-based interactive technologies such as sex buyer “Hobby” boards, online gaming systems, social media and e-commerce platforms, and payment processors. Not only are information and communication technologies central to this vast virtual landscape wherein prostitution and sex trafficking activities are embedded, but they impact every aspect of its operations—from advertisement, recruitment, and solicitation of potential victims to online sexual exploitation via websites or live-streaming services. The online dimension of prostitution obfuscates sex trafficking activities. It conveniently moves transactions and advertisements from offline public (e.g., streets) and private (e.g., residences) and semi-private settings (e.g., strip clubs, massage parlors, hotels) to Internet-based forums, averting easy law enforcement detection, investigation, and prosecutions. The growth of the online illicit sex trade is buoyed by the advantages it provides sex buyers—convenience, anonymity, privacy, the easy sharing of transaction information, and the opportunity to “weigh up” their options concerning the physical attributes of people advertised as available for sex.

Fourth, the growth of the online illicit sex trade has outpaced law enforcement’s ability to respond. As prostitution markets moved online, they also rapidly expanded. Factors such as convenience, relative anonymity, ease of identifying persons in the sex trade via classified advertising, as well as ease of sharing tips to evade detection supplied via “Johns” boards enabled the behavior of existing buyers and drew new sex buyers (and sex traffickers) into the marketplace. While some advertising platforms have provided an easy avenue for law enforcement to conduct web-based reverse stings, the sheer volume of online prostitution created by online advertising platforms has made engaging in online sex buying a low-risk behavior, particularly if the buyer refrains from seeking to sexually exploit minors. The sheer volume of online prostitution advertising makes impactful online demand deterrence efforts by law enforcement beyond the capacity of traditional methods (i.e., non-AI augmented).

Fifth, while prostitution markets have moved largely online, street prostitution in some jurisdictions is experiencing a strong resurgence. In regions of the country where prosecutors are no longer prosecuting prostitution cases or where states have passed legislation prohibiting the enforcement of loitering laws, street prostitution is burgeoning. The state of “de facto decriminalization” of the sex trade in these areas has resulted in open-air prostitution markets and unleashed the litany of harms that are intractable features of the sex trade.

Demand Reduction Tactics

To combat prostitution and sex trafficking, criminal justice strategies and collaborative programs have emerged that focus on divesting illicit markets of consumer-level demand as their sole source of revenue.

Tactics aimed at deterring demand have been implemented in the US for over 50 years. Such tactics are typically implemented locally and ad hoc rather than as part of a regional or wide-ranging geographic and sustained strategy and are, therefore subject to considerable fluctuation. Twelve demand reduction tactics were identified from the evidence collected from the 2012 *National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts: Final Report*. Our work added three additional tactics to the original typology: “Employment Loss,” “IT-based Tactics,” and “Other Sex Buyer Arrests.” These 15 demand reduction tactics can be likened to a “toolbox” of strategies, each providing unique options for confronting consumer-level demand. Any one or a combination of tactics can be employed to meet the particular challenges and capacities of communities. The diverse interactions between sex buyers and actors in prostitution and sex trafficking systems, as well as the interpenetration of dynamic circumstances, contexts, risks, space, and time that must be factored into law enforcement operational decision-making, do not allow for a generic or one size fits all approach to demand reduction.

The typology of 15 demand reduction tactics can be divided into three main categories: Arrest Tactics, Post-Arrest Tactics, and Disruptive Tactics.

Figure 1: Arrest-, Post Arrest-, and Disruptive Demand Reduction Tactics



Arrest Tactics are used to apprehend and take into custody people who have committed or who are suspected of committing a crime related to prostitution or sex trafficking. These tactics include Reverse Stings, Web-Based Reverse Stings, and Other Sex Buyer Arrests.

Post-Arrest Tactics are typically used as an official sanction or intervention after the arrest of sex buyers. They may serve a variety of purposes, including as part of a punishment and sentencing arrangement, sex buyer rehabilitation and education, a revenue stream for law enforcement or victim services, and as a general deterrence by creating public awareness and societal aversion for crimes and behaviors associated with prostitution and sex trafficking activities. These tactics include Identity Disclosure, Vehicle Seizure, John Schools, Community Service, Geographic Exclusion Zones, and Driver’s License Suspension.

Disruptive Tactics are a combination of proactive and reactive deterrence strategies that can also augment the aforementioned arrest and post-arrest tactics. These tactics can be used proactively to disrupt sex buyers at the point of purchase (i.e., IT-Based Enforcement and Deterrence, Surveillance Cameras and Video Evidence, Neighborhood Action), or they can be used reactively after evidence of sex buying arrests or evidence of sex buying activities in a specific community become available (i.e., Loss of Employment, Public Education, “Dear John” Letters).

Available scholarship, police research, and several case studies have shown that deterrence works. Most sex buyers do not want to go to jail, they do not want to be listed on a sex offender registry, and they do not want their identities (as sex buyers) to be disclosed in public, especially if their behavior will be exposed to their families, partners, friends, employers, and others in their communities. Strong criminological research also supports the fact that both “legal sanctions” (i.e., incarceration or probation, which require a prior arrest and prosecution) and “extra-legal sanctions” (negative consequences for relationships and employment, which also are usually triggered by arrest) have a deterrent effect on re-offending. At the same time, available evidence also shows that prostitution escalates when enforcement and arrests decline. Observing what happens when prostitution laws are not enforced, therefore, strengthens the empirical case for arresting sex buyers as a deterrent.

This study expanded the available information concerning the typology of demand reduction tactics documented in the 2012 *National Overview of Prostitution and Sex Trafficking Demand Reduction Efforts: Final Report*. As noted above, it included three additional tactics, increasing the number of demand reduction tactics from 12 to 15. The addition of “Other Sex Buyer Arrests” and “Employment Loss” to the original typology was due to the realization in the years following the 2012 *National Overview* that these tactics should have been included in the original typology. Neither of these tactics is a recent development nor an innovation. IT-based Tactics was added to the typology in response to the emergence of new tactics in the mid-2010s that employed sophisticated technologies (i.e., chatbots) to both deter and arrest online sex buyers.

“Other Sex Buyer Arrests” refers to arrests that do not involve sting operations using fake police decoys but rather involve investigations of other offenses. A wide range of scenarios exist where sex buyers have been arrested without police conducting a reverse sting operation. Such circumstances include investigations of sex trafficking and child sexual abuse; investigations of crimes such as rape, robbery, and drug trafficking; investigations of suspicious activity or sexual conduct happening in public view; investigations of disturbances, as well as traffic stops and brothel raids. Documentation of this tactic is important for its exposure of sex buyer engagement in a wide range of other criminal behaviors and to encourage the enforcement of prostitution laws against purchasing sex even when other charges are also applicable.

“Employment Loss” refers to known or alleged sex buyers losing employment due to that behavior. This penalty for sex buying is implemented by a wide range of employers (e.g., businesses, government agencies, non-governmental organizations). Its practice is especially common in cases where the employee was in a position of trust (e.g., law enforcement or government official, teacher). Most often, such firings do not result from violations of policies specifically prohibiting the purchase of sex but rather from violations of “generic” codes of conduct

that permit the firing of personnel who engage in criminal acts or engage in “conduct unbecoming” to their position. However, some employers, including the US Department of Justice, have developed employment policies that specifically prohibit purchasing sex.

“**IT-based Tactics**” utilizing chatbots first emerged circa 2015 and was subsequently improved with artificial intelligence capabilities circa 2018. This was well after the conclusion of the 2012 *National Overview* and the launch of the Demand Forum website. An overview of IT-based tactics was one of the key outputs of this study.⁵⁹⁷ This tactic and the technology underpinning it remains unfamiliar to many law enforcement agencies. Developing a central source of information about how such technology could be effectively implemented and adapted to meet local needs and resources was an important objective of this research.

Evidence for the effectiveness of demand-reduction activities is rather high when compared to the evidence for the efficacy of interventions addressing supply and distribution in reducing commercial sex markets. There is little empirical evidence that actions that are supply- or distribution-focused result in much more than brief suppressions or displacements.⁵⁹⁸ Evidence that demand reduction strategies can successfully decrease commercial sex markets is steadily growing and is substantial when compared to evidence of the efficacy of other strategies.⁵⁹⁹ Formal evaluations, however, are still limited. It is also essential to reinforce

⁵⁹⁷ See Chapter 7 of this report and Marcel Van der Watt, “Discouraging the Demand That Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence,” *Societies* 13, no. 4 (2023): 94, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13040094>.

⁵⁹⁸ Melanie Shapiro and Donna M. Hughes, “Decriminalized Prostitution: Impunity for Violence and Exploitation,” *Wake Forest Law Review* 533 (2017), <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/wflr52&div=22&id=&page=>; Meredith Dank, Jennifer Yahner, Lilly Yu, et al., *Consequences of Policing Prostitution. An Analysis of Individuals Arrested and Prosecuted for Commercial Sex in New York City*, (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2017), <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/89451/consequences-of-policing-prostitution.pdf>; Liz Kelly, Maddy Coy, and Rebecca Davenport, *Shifting Sands: A Comparison of Prostitution Regimes Across Nine Countries* (UK, London: London Metropolitan University, 2009), <https://cwasu.org/project/shifting-sands-a-comparison-of-prostitution-regimes-across-nine-countries/>; Samir Goswami and Anice Schervish, *Unlocking Options for Women: A Survey of Women in Cook County Jail*, (Chicago, IL: Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 2002), <https://search.issuefab.org/resource/unlocking-options-for-women-a-survey-of-women-in-cook-county-jail.html>; Maureen A. Norton-Hawk, “The Counterproductivity of Incarcerating Female Street Prostitutes,” *Deviant Behavior* 22 (2001): 403–417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01639620152472804>.

⁵⁹⁹ Endrit Mujaj and Amanda Netscher, *Prostitution in Sweden 2014. The Extent and Development of Prostitution in Sweden*, (Stockholm, Sweden: County Administrative Board of Stockholm, 2015); Andreas Kotsadam and Niklas Jakobsson, “Shame on You, John! Laws, Stigmatization, and the Demand for Sex,” *European Journal of Law and Economics* 37, (2014): 393-404, [doi: 10.1007/s10657-012-9339-y](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10657-012-9339-y); Monica O’Connor and Ruth Breslin, *Shifting the Burden of Criminality: An Analysis of the Irish Sex Trade in the Context of Prostitution Law Reform* (Dublin: The Sexual Exploitation Research Programme UCD (SERP), 2020), 26, https://www.ucd.ie/geary/static/serp/Shifting_the_Burden_Report.pdf; Seo-Young Cho, Axel Dreher, and Eric Neumayer, “Does Legalized Prostitution Increase Human Trafficking?,” *World Development* 41 (2013), [doi:10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.023](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2012.05.023); Niklas Jakobsson and Andreas Kotsadam, “The Law and Economics of International Sex Slavery: Prostitution Laws and Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation,” *European Journal of Law and Economics* 35, no. 1 (2013), [doi:10.1007/s10657-011-9232-0](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10657-011-9232-0); Ingeborg Rasmussen, Steinar Strøm, Sidsel Sverdrup, et al., *REPORT Evaluation on the Ban on the Purchase of Sexual Services*, (Oslo, Norway: Vista Analysis, 2014); Michael Shively, Sarah Kuck Jalbert, Ryan Kling, et al., 2008, *Final Report on the Evaluation of the First Offender Prostitution Program* (Cambridge, MA: Abt Associates, Inc., March 7, 2008), www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221894.pdf; Devon D. Brewer, John J. Potterat, Stephen Q. Muth, and John M.

the concept of “dosage” when evaluating the usefulness of evidence and insights from this study. The scope and frequency of operations are crucial factors in determining the impact of any criminal justice intervention intended to address issues and deter crime. In medicine, the term “dosage” is frequently used as a metaphor to explain the idea. Even when a medication’s effectiveness has been amply proved, its advantages will only materialize if taken frequently and in large enough doses. Although aspirin is a potent painkiller, it cannot keep pain at bay for an entire year. This idea is relevant to law enforcement. The dread of being arrested is a proven, fact-based deterrent. Still, arrests must happen frequently enough for potential criminals to understand that there is a high possibility they will be detained if they commit a crime.

Augmented Intelligence and the Future of Demand Reduction

One of the ways in which practitioners are expanding their capacity is incorporating both human and “machine” interactions into their operations, which allows for the mitigation of implicit weaknesses and the augmentation of the strengths of each. Augmented intelligence is the process of combining AI with human strengths by integrating AI systems into people’s daily lives to help them make more informed decisions. The coexistence of practitioners and technology and the application of artificial intelligence in efforts to combat sex trafficking are here to stay. The concept of augmented intelligence differs from AI in that most models of AI assume that it will replace human knowledge entirely. IT-Based Tactics and the technology that powers it, have the ability to scale and catalyze the work that law enforcement is already doing to combat sexual exploitation and can provide macro-level intelligence about the illicit commercial sex market. As the scale of the online prostitution marketplace has outpaced the ability of law enforcement communities to provide adequate responses to criminal behavior, law enforcement leaders have few viable options but to embrace and optimally use available technology tools to deter sex buyers and discourage the demand that fosters sex trafficking and the online sexual exploitation marketplace. Society is becoming increasingly aware of these technologies and their capabilities to deter crime and protect people; law enforcement agencies will likely face increased pressure from society to use innovative technology.

In two case studies⁶⁰⁰ from our research (Street Grace and EPIK), the untapped potential of augmented intelligence for a multi-sector collaborative demand reduction strategy is clear. Both case studies show that technology is not the panacea for ending consumer-level demand or eradicating the online commercial sexual exploitation infrastructure. Instead, the operational postures of Street Grace and EPIK were characterized by a system-wide collaboration of their human team with technology, innovation, and

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⁶⁰⁰ Marcel Van der Watt, “Discouraging the Demand That Fosters Sex Trafficking: Collaboration through Augmented Intelligence” *Societies* 13, no. 4 (2023): 94, <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc13040094>.

development, which includes collaboration with law enforcement and other partners in combating sex trafficking, as well as a relational collaboration with the survivor community. Both organizations consider a relationship of trust with law enforcement agencies and survivors as being at the core of their tactical and strategic success. Our research into IT-Based Tactics shows much potential for operational scaling and serves as template that the broader multidisciplinary counter-trafficking community, law enforcement agencies, and criminal justice systems can consider. IT-Based Tactics as a demand reduction intervention are primed for further expansion, while artificial intelligence and emerging technologies provide copious opportunities to scale demand reduction at the national level and open new frontiers in efforts to map and measure the online sexual exploitation marketplace. Every effort that leans into artificial intelligence and associated technological advancements must remain cognizant of the ever-present concerns related to data privacy, ethics, transparency, accountability, and informed consent. Risks associated with collecting, storing, sharing, and analysis of data must be mitigated by protocols and protections that accord with the global corpus of principles and guidelines on ethical AI, including transparency, justice and fairness, non-maleficence, responsibility, and privacy. Taking advantage of the benefits of AI while mitigating its risks will have to include comprehensive human guidance and oversight.

Demand Reduction and Primary Prevention

As this report has expounded, there is extensive evidence that demand reduction is crucial to preventing the harms of the sex trade and reducing its scope. Omitting sex buyers from law enforcement strategies intended to deter prostitution and sex trafficking fosters acute disequilibrium in the application of justice, allowing those most responsible for severe harms to individuals and communities to escape accountability for their actions. As pointed out in the first *National Overview of Prostitution and Demand Reduction Efforts*, primary prevention, instead of treating a condition's symptoms, refers to preventing events or ensuring that individuals are not affected by crime (or disease). While tertiary prevention deals with rehabilitation from fully manifested harms, secondary prevention refers to early detection in an effort to reduce harm. In the United States, most initiatives categorized as preventive use secondary or tertiary strategies. A minimal amount of money has been spent on primary prevention strategies. There is no reason to believe that markets cannot be significantly decreased if the core causes are addressed, leading to fewer victims—which is the signature of primary prevention. A strong case for demand reduction as primary prevention has also been furthered by Shively et al (2010)⁶⁰¹, who found “no evidence to suggest that focusing on prosecuting pimps and traffickers will produce a greater impact on commercial sex markets than will combating demand.” Ignoring the demand component and focusing solely on curtailing supply and distribution channels for any illicit product or service has proven ineffective. While interventions that target supply and distribution channels may bring about transient effects (i.e., localized effects, crime displacement), “they do not reduce the overall size of the markets, nor do they ameliorate collateral problems⁶⁰².” Conversely, primary prevention can lead to diminished markets, lowered incidence and prevalence, and reduce the number and capabilities of pimps and traffickers.

⁶⁰¹ Shively et al. “Developing a National Action Plan for Eliminating Sex Trafficking,” Abt Associates Inc, Final Report, August 16, (2010), p 2-54.

⁶⁰² *ibid*

From a complex systems⁶⁰³ perspective, the value of demand reduction tactics is more than the sum of its parts (i.e., the effectiveness of individual tactics) and represents a system's response that mimics the system that fuels the demand for sex trafficking and that perpetrates it. It "shows up" in the online and offline environment and informs sex buyers and society at large that buying sex causes harm and has consequences. It is an agile retort to the subversion of prostitution laws and generates evidence and "information" about the harms implicit in the sex trade and the consequences of buying sex. This "information," through feedback loops, chips away at the momentum that drives consumer-level demand. Thus, demand reduction, with its component parts (arrest, post-arrest, and disruptive tactics) and the application of dosage, is primary prevention and a system's response to consumer-level demand.

Conclusion

The consequences of sex buying are far-reaching. It not only perpetuates a cycle of physical, psychological, and sexual violence experienced by those trapped in prostitution and sex trafficking systems, but adversely impacts communities while also enabling and perpetuating domestic and international sex trafficking. Many law enforcement agencies across the country have come to the conclusion that reducing sex trafficking and other types of commercial sexual exploitation requires more than simply apprehending sex traffickers and finding victims. Their solution is to address consumer level demand and disrupt the income stream of sex buyers. Our research shows that demand reduction strategies have been in place for more than half a century and have demonstrated their feasibility and effectiveness. The information presented here gives communities and stakeholders a wide range of tools to hold sex buyers accountable. Reducing consumer-level demand is primary prevention, and sustained, and concerted efforts to combat it are essential.

⁶⁰³ Marcel van der Watt, "A Complex Systems Stratagem to Combating Human Trafficking". In: Winterdyk, J., Jones, J. (eds) *The Palgrave International Handbook of Human Trafficking*. Palgrave Macmillan, (2020): 763-782, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-63058-8_46; Marcel van der Watt and Amanda van der Westhuizen. "(Re) configuring the criminal justice response to human trafficking: a complex-systems perspective." *Police Practice and research* 18, no. 3 (2017): 218-229, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15614263.2017.1291560>.

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Survey I – Online Survey of Local Law Enforcement Agencies

National Center on Sexual Exploitation

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Department of Justice awarded a grant (NIJ #2020-75-CX-0011) to the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) to conduct this study on law enforcement and related efforts to reduce demand for prostitution and sex trafficking. The tactics we are studying include:

- “Reverse stings” using female police officers as decoys to arrest sex buyers or “Johns.”
- Publicizing the names or seizing the vehicles of arrested buyers.
- Education programs, often known as “John schools.”
- The use of “bots” and other information technology to identify and respond to sex buyers.

Your agency has been selected to participate in this study. The survey will take about 10 minutes. The study is designed to gather information from approximately 2,300 cities and counties throughout the United States. The purpose of the project is to produce and distribute updated “best practice” guidance about demand reduction tactics, to be distributed through the website www.Demand-Forum.org.

The information you provide will be kept strictly confidential: No specific individuals will be quoted or identified in any reports produced from this survey.

Your participation is completely voluntary: You may decline to answer any particular question, or stop altogether at any time. Your refusal to participate will not jeopardize your relationship with the Federal Government or with your agency or organization.

SECTION 2: INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENT, ORGANIZATION, AND JURISDICTION

This information for contacting and tracking purposes only – the information will be discarded when interviews are completed

Date: _____/_____/_____

Name: _____

Site (city or county): _____

Agency or organization: _____

Your job title or position within this agency/organization: _____

SECTION 3: INFORMATION ABOUT LOCAL PROSTITUTION OR SEX TRAFFICKING DEMAND REDUCTION EFFORTS

“Demand reduction” refers to practices or programs targeting sex buyers (often called “Johns” or “customers” of prostituted or sex trafficked persons).

1. Which of the following demand reduction tactics are used in your jurisdiction?

[please check all that apply]

1. Street level reverse stings (use of undercover decoys)
2. Web-based reverse stings (use of decoy ads posted online)
3. Shaming (publicizing names and/or photos of arrestees)
4. Other buyer arrests (when found during investigations, brothel raids, etc., but not involving stings)
5. **“Dear John” letters to homes of arrested or alleged sex buyers**
6. Auto seizure
7. **Driver’s license suspension**
8. **Geographic restraining orders or “stay-away” zones**
9. Public education/awareness campaigns
10. Neighborhood programs targeting buyers
11. Surveillance cameras meant to deter buyers or gather evidence
12. Community service programs
13. **“John school” education programs for sex buyers**
14. **“Bots” or other information technology & automated responses to sex buyers**
15. Loss of employment due to arrest or allegations of buying sex
16. Other _____

2. What year did these efforts begin in your jurisdiction, to the best of your knowledge?

For each tactic, please type the year it was first used locally, mark DK for “Don’t know,” or NA for “Not Applicable if the tactic has never been used locally

	<u>Year Began</u>	Don’t Know	Not Applicable
1. Street level reverse stings	_____	DK	NA
2. Web-based reverse stings	_____	DK	NA
3. Shaming / identity disclosure	_____	DK	NA
4. Other buyer arrests	_____	DK	NA
5. “Dear John” letters to homes of sex buyers	_____	DK	NA
6. Auto seizures	_____	DK	NA
7. Driver’s license suspensions	_____	DK	NA
8. Geographic restraining orders or restriction zones	_____	DK	NA
9. Public education and awareness campaigns	_____	DK	NA
10. Neighborhood programs	_____	DK	NA
11. Surveillance cameras	_____	DK	NA
12. Community service	_____	DK	NA

13. "John school" education programs for sex buyers	_____	DK	NA
14. "Bots" or other automated responses to buyers	_____	DK	NA
15. Loss of employment	_____	DK	NA
16. Other _____	_____	DK	NA

3. For each of the following demand reduction tactics used in your jurisdiction, how often per year do they occur, to the best of your knowledge?

		<u># per year</u>	
1. Street level reverse stings	_____	DK	NA
2. Web-based reverse stings	_____	DK	NA
3. Shaming / identity disclosure	_____	DK	NA
4. Other buyer arrests	_____	DK	NA
5. "Dear John" letters	_____	DK	NA
6. Auto seizures	_____	DK	NA
7. Driver's license suspensions	_____	DK	NA
8. Geographic restraining orders or restriction zones	_____	DK	NA
9. Public education and awareness campaigns	_____	DK	NA
10. Neighborhood watch programs	_____	DK	NA
11. Surveillance cameras	_____	DK	NA
12. Community service	_____	DK	NA
13. "John school" education programs for sex buyers	_____	DK	NA
14. "Bots" or other automated responses to buyers	_____	DK	NA
15. Loss of employment	_____	DK	NA
16. Other _____	_____	DK	NA

4. Do you know of other nearby communities that use any of these demand reduction tactics? (please list the communities in the space provided)

	<u>Communities</u>	
1. Street level reverse stings	_____	_____
2. Web-based reverse stings	_____	_____
3. Shaming / identity disclosure	_____	_____
4. Other buyer arrests	_____	_____
5. "Dear John" letters	_____	_____
6. Auto seizures	_____	_____
7. Driver's license suspensions	_____	_____
8. Geographic restraining orders or restriction zones	_____	_____
9. Public education and awareness campaigns	_____	_____
10. Neighborhood watch programs	_____	_____
11. Surveillance cameras	_____	_____
12. Community service	_____	_____
13. John schools	_____	_____
14. "Bots" or other automated responses to buyers	_____	_____
15. Loss of employment	_____	_____
16. Other _____	_____	_____

5. When conducting reverse sting operations in your jurisdiction, are males ever used as the **decoy "prostitute" or trafficked person?**

1. Not ever, to my knowledge _____
2. Yes, at least once _____
3. Yes, in more than one operation _____
4. **Don't know** _____
5. Not applicable (stings not used here) _____

6. When conducting reverse sting operations in your jurisdiction, have females ever been arrested for trying to buy sex from a law enforcement **decoy "prostitute" or trafficked** person?

1. Not ever, to my knowledge _____
2. Yes, at least once _____
3. Yes, during more than one operation _____
4. **Don't know** _____
5. Not applicable (stings not used here) _____

7. To the best of your knowledge, approximately how many people have been arrested in your jurisdiction for prostitution in the past 12 months?

1. Number of women arrested for prostitution _____
2. Number of men arrested for buying sex _____
3. **Don't Know** _____

8. When sex buyers are apprehended in your jurisdiction, with what offense are they charged?

1. Charged with violating state law for soliciting prostitution _____
2. Cited for violating a local prostitution ordinance _____
3. **Don't know** _____
4. Not applicable (sex buyers are not arrested here) _____

SECTION 4: ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Is there any additional information about local prostitution or sex trafficking demand reduction efforts that you think is important for us to know? [please type response in the pace provided]

SECTION 5: CONTACT INFORMATION FOR POTENTIAL FOLLOW-UP CALL

Once we analyze the information from these brief "screening interviews," we will select some jurisdictions to acquire additional information. If yours were selected for further research, would you be willing to do an interview of approximately 30-45 minutes that would ask for more details about local demand reduction efforts?

- Yes
No

If yes, please provide contact information (email and phone) for yourself and/or others involved in demand reduction programs or practices.

Name	Affiliation	Phone #	Email
_____	_____	_____	_____

Thank you for participating. The information you provided will be very helpful. If you have questions about the study or wish to add information, please feel free to contact the Project Director at XXX-XXX-XXX, or Project Manager at XXX-XXX-XXX.

Appendix C: Interview Discussion Guide

(What follows is the discussion guide to be used after informed consent has been received)

1. Confirm the Range of Local Demand-Reduction Initiatives

In our first survey we learned that in this community some of the following tactics are used that focus on the buyers of commercial sex. We want to confirm that we understand which of the different types of tactics are used locally:

Approach	Occurs locally (Yes / No)	Year Began	# Per Year
Street level reverse stings			
Web-based reverse stings			
Other reverse stings (e.g., print media escort ads; CB radio)			
Shaming (publicizing names/photos of arrestees, sending letters home)			
Auto seizure			
Driver's license suspension			
Geographic restraining orders or "stay-away" zones			
Public education/awareness campaigns			
Neighborhood watch programs			
Surveillance cameras			
Community service programs			
Letters to homes ("dear John" letters)			
John schools			
"Bots" or other automated responses to buyers			
Other			

In the rest of this discussion, we would like to ask you about:

- **The history of these efforts locally:** when they started, how and why they were initiated.
- **Structure and operational details:** e.g., how often reverse stings are run, staffing needed, penalties for arrestees, etc.
- **Program activity and performance:** e.g., tracking data, performance measures, annual reports, program evaluations.
- **Whether the program could be evaluated:** e.g., whether data exist that could support an evaluation, and whether they would be interested in collaborating with evaluators.
- **Collecting and displaying program documents**
- **Interest in participating in further research and evaluation:** e.g., additional interviews, allowing research staff to visit and observe.

2. Program Origins

How the program was planned and implemented? Prompts:

- Why was the program initiated?
- Who was involved in program planning?
- How were the needs for the program determined
 - Was a formal needs assessment conducted?
 - If so, what data were used, and how?
- What specific problems were initially targeted?
- How were these problems identified?
- What challenges occurred in implementing the program.
 - How were these challenges overcome?

3. Program Structure and Operations

3.a. Questions for all program types:

- Who currently runs the program/activity?
- Lead agency, title of project leader or program director, etc.:
- Are there other agencies or groups that participate? Probe for:
 - Police department
 - vice unit
 - other _____
 - Prosecutor's office (city, county, State, Federal)
 - Probation department
 - NGO/CBO
 - Department of public health
- Can you give me a contact person for each of the agencies/organizations and his or her e-mail address and telephone number?
- What contracts or collaboration agreements are in place among program partners?
 - Formal (MOU, interagency agreement, contract)?
 - Informal working arrangement?
 - What does each agreement specify as each party's role and obligations?
- Does the program have regularly scheduled meetings of staff? If so, ask about:
 - how frequently
 - the nature and topics of the meetings
 - who attends

- whether meeting minutes, agendas, schedules, presentation materials are produced, and if so, whether they could be made available to us.
- What facilities, if any, does the program use?
 - Did they already exist, or were they rented or leased or purchased specially for the program?
- What equipment (e.g., vehicles, clothing, computers, office equipment), if any, does the program use?
 - Did they already exist, or were they rented or leased or purchased specially for the program?
- Is there specialized training of any staff (e.g., the undercover officers in reverse stings; John school presenters)?
 - What topics are covered in training? E.g.,
 - how to avoid entrapment in reverse stings
 - what constitutes a verbal interchange that qualifies as intent to purchase sex in reverse stings.
 - Presenting on health risks in John schools.
 - Who are the training providers?
 - Could training materials be made available to us?
- Does the initiative have an annual budget? If so, what was it for the last calendar or fiscal year?
 - Has its budget changed over time?
 - What is the money used for? Probe for, e.g.:
 - overtime for officers, other agency personnel
 - stipends or salaries for non-government staff
 - concealed tape recorders, other equipment
 - court time
 - Where does the money come from?
 - Have the sources changed over time, and if so, why?
 - Is the program financially self-sustaining?
 - Has this changed over time, and if so, why?
 - Have there ever been problems securing funding?
 - Has your program ever been financially audited?
 - Do you have any program budgets or audits that you can send me?

3.b. Street-Level Reverse Stings

Can you tell me how you go about conducting reverse stings? Perhaps you can walk me through a typical sting operation from start to finish. Probe:

- How are the target areas selected for the reverse stings?
- Do the undercover “decoy” officers initiate conversation with the Johns or wait for the Johns to approach them?
- What are the critical elements necessary to make a good case against a John? E.g.,
 - Explicit offer of money for sex
 - An act in furtherance of the crime (reaching for a wallet, opening the door to let decoy in car, etc.)
- How many officers are on the reverse sting team, besides the decoy?
 - ___ plainclothes pedestrians
 - ___ officers in an unmarked car or cruiser
 - ___ officers listening to the wire
 - ___ officers handling background checks, custody, transport, autos.
- Are the officers wired?
- How do the decoys signal that they have a “good case?”
- What happens to the Johns after they have been caught?
- Are they always arrested?
 - If arrested, what are the penalties for first, second, etc. offense?
 - Do the undercover officers testify in court?
 - What is the typical punishment?
- If some of them are not arrested, what happens to them?
 - Cited and released; ordered to make contact with prosecutor?
- Are the officers part of the department’s vice unit, or drawn from other patrol or investigative units?
 - Are civilians ever used as decoys?
 - Are decoys ever borrowed from or exchanged with officers from other police departments?
 - If so, what are those arrangements like (e.g., only the female decoy is borrowed, versus the whole reverse sting team)?

3.c. Web-Based and Print Media Reverse Stings

Can you tell me how you go about conducting web-based or print media reverse stings? Perhaps you can walk me through a typical sting operation from start to finish. Probe for the following:

- How are the websites, newspapers or periodicals, or “yellow pages” selected for the decoy ad?
- Who writes the copy for the decoy ads?
 - Are real ads ever used verbatim?

- Are real ads the model for the decoy ads?
- What featured make for an effective decoy ad?
- Are photographs necessary or desirable?
- How are photos acquired for the ads?
 - From prior actual ads? Photos of police decoy? Other?
- Is approval sought, or notification given, to the website or print media before posting the ad, or is the media outlet/website unaware it is a police decoy ad?
- For commercial websites and papers, how much is spent to place the ads?
- Who handles responding to the web ads?
 - Sworn officers, or civilian staff?
 - Specialized vice unit staff, or other?
 - Do they respond via phone, texting, or email to negotiate meetings with Johns?
- Where do the in-person meetings between decoys and Johns take place?
 - Hotels, apartments, “outcalls” (Johns’ homes, hotels, cars, etc.)
- How are locations for the meetings with Johns selected?
 - For hotels, what makes a good location for a reverse sting (e.g., adjoining rooms or suites? Is one room enough?)?
- What arrangements are necessary to do reverse stings at hotels?
 - Pay for rooms?
 - Prior hotel management approval required?
- What are the critical elements necessary to make a good case against a John? E.g.,
 - Are they the same as for street-based reverse stings? If different, how?
- How many officers are on the reverse sting team, besides the decoy?
 - ___ officers in an adjacent hotel room or apartment
 - ___ plainclothes pedestrians
 - ___ officers in an unmarked car or cruiser
 - ___ officers listening to the wire
 - ___ officers handling background checks, custody, transport, autos.
- Are the officers wired?
 - Are other officers physically listening “on site” rather than using technology?
- Remaining questions after the point of the meeting are same as for street-level reverse stings (what happens to Johns after arrest, etc.).

3.d. “Shaming” Approaches (public release of sex buyer identities)

Can you walk me through a typical case from how you first identify the sex buyer to posting the photo or sending the letter? Prompts:

For the letters sent to sex buyers' homes, how are they buyers identified? E.g.,

- From arrest reports?
 - Does someone need to look them up, or are their names forwarded to you automatically?
 - How often does this happen?
- From court records regarding convictions?
 - Does someone have to look them up, or are their names forwarded to you automatically?
 - How often does this happen?
- Public initiated tips? If so, via:
 - A tip line (online form or a phone number)
 - Paper form
 - Photos or videos showing license plates
 - Business surveillance cameras showing license plates
- Police surveillance cameras showing license plates
- To whom are the letters addressed: the John, registered owner of auto, spouse or partner?
- Do you include any materials with the letters, e.g., information about referrals for services available in the community?

For the public release of sex buyer identities:

- How/where are they displayed?
 - Police web page
 - Police press release
 - News outlets
 - TV news, newspapers, online news sites or blogs
 - Where in the publication do they appear—e.g., the local news section of the newspaper?
 - Billboards
 - Public access TV
 - Community-operated websites
- What information do you include in the postings? E.g.,
 - Name, age, gender, town or residence, home address
 - A description of the solicitation effort, its time and place
 - Photos
- Have there been problems getting the publications to agree to print them?
- Have you received objections for doing this?
 - E.g. Johns, family members, editorials, defense attorneys, civil liberties groups
 - How have you responded to them?
- Do you engage in follow-up with Johns after sending letters or publicizing identities?

3.e. Seizing Vehicles

Can you describe for me your auto seizure process for cases linked to prostitution? Prompts:

- Can law enforcement seize vehicles that are used in the commission of a crime in your community?

- How do you document or establish that the vehicle has been used in the commission of the crime of prostitution?
- What conditions must be met before a vehicle can be seized?
 - Arrest? Conviction?
- Do vehicle seizures often occur in conjunction with arresting Johns that use them to solicit?
- Are seized vehicles towed or driven from the arrest location?
 - If driven, who does the driving?
 - Does an officer have to be present while the vehicle is towed?
- When is a seized vehicle returned to the owner (what conditions must be met)?
- Do some Johns decline to reclaim their vehicles?
 - If so, what happens to the vehicles?
- Do you have the ability to do vehicle forfeitures?
 - What proportion of seized cars are forfeited?
 - What conditions must be met before a car can be forfeited? Arrest? Conviction?
 - Do Johns ever contest the allegation that their vehicle was used in the commission of the crime?
 - What statutes or local ordinances are used to support forfeiture of vehicles that is relevant for defendants charged with buying sex.
 - How do you go about getting authorization to have impounded vehicles used in prostitution forfeited?
 - What happens to forfeited vehicles? Liquidated at auction? Claimed and used by public agencies?
 - If forfeitures result in liquidation, where do the proceeds go? (e.g., to victims funds, city or county government general budgets, law enforcement agency budgets)
- Does it matter if the owner of the vehicle is not owned by the sex buyer? I.e., does your agency still seize the vehicle? Can it still be impounded? Are fees and fines still required to be paid to recover it? Can the vehicles still be forfeited if not owned by the sex buyer?
- Have there been local lawsuits challenging seizures and/or forfeitures for buyers in prostitution cases? If so, have they been successful in stopping vehicle forfeitures?

3.f. Driver's License Suspensions

Can you describe for me your license suspension guidelines and processes? Prompts:

- Can you only suspend license when the sex buyer used a vehicle to solicit?
- What statutes or ordinances allow for or stipulate the conditions of the license suspension?
 - May we have a copy of (or link to) the statute, ordinance, guidelines, and/or requirements?
- Are the policies for sex buyers different than for other offenders? If so, how?

3.g. Surveillance Cameras

Can you describe for me how surveillance cameras are used to pursue Johns? Prompts:

- Are these cameras placed specifically for addressing prostitution?
 - Are they used specifically to identify Johns and/or their vehicles?
- Where are the cameras placed?
- By what process, or using what guidelines, is their placement decided?
- Who "owns" these cameras? (police? businesses?)
- How frequently are the recordings reviewed?

- Are the recordings made in coordination with street reverse stings, or are the cameras recording constantly and reviewed as needed or periodically?
- Are still images used in prosecutions?
- Are vehicle tag photos used to locate registered owners to serve warrants, or to send “dear John” letters?

3.h. SOAP Orders, “Stay-Away Zones”

Can you describe for me your geographic restraining orders or stay-away zones? Prompts:

- What evidence does the court require to issue an order?
- Are they issued in conjunction with an arrest, conviction, condition of sentence, suspended sentence?
- How long do the orders last?
 - Are they renewable?
 - Are they initially temporary orders that can become “permanent”?
- How often do Johns challenge them in court?
- What is the penalty for violating the orders?
- How often are they violated?
- How are the zones determined? Are community members involved in establishing them?

3.i. Community Service Programs for Johns

Can you describe for me your community service programs for Johns? Prompts:

- At what point is community service imposed—condition of probation? Sentence?
- Who decides whether community service will be requested? Probation officer as part of the PSI (pre-sentence investigation report)? Police if there’s a police prosecutor system?
- Who requests (prosecutor?) and who sets (judge?) the number of hours required?
- Who requests the time frame required?
- What kinds of community services have been used (e.g., cleaning streets)?
- Who sets up the arrangement between the service provider and the John
 - E.g., if it is cleaning up a highway, who works with the highway department to arrange for the John to participate? Or does the court or probation office already have a stable of agencies and CBOs with whom to coordinate?
- Does the agency or CBO charge a fee for supervising the John?
 - If so, who pays? The John, or the court, etc.?
- Who monitors compliance, and how? Probation officer? DA’s office staff? CBO?
- What happens if the John fails to comply?
 - Return to court for another probation hearing or for re-sentencing?
 - How often does this happen?

3.j. Public Education or Awareness Campaigns

Can you describe for me your demand-oriented Public Education or Awareness Campaigns?

Prompts:

- What kinds of campaigns does your community, organization, agency, or program engage in?

E.g.,

 - Public service messages
 - Group presentations

- Posting messages in the community
- What are the campaigns' messages?
 - what information or warnings do they include?
 - is different information included in different campaigns or modes of communication (e.g., bus posters, radio spots, billboards, town meetings)?
- Who are the target audiences—Johns, and/or their family members? affected communities?
- For community meetings:
 - Who are the presenters?
 - Who is the target audience?
 - Who developed the messages or curriculum(s)?
 - What are the venues where presentations or meetings occur?
 - Who selects the venues?
 - Who lines up the venues?
 - How are the presentations advertised?

3.k. Neighborhood Action Targeting Johns

(photographing cars, recording license plate numbers, citizen patrols, posters, websites)

Can you describe for me your neighborhood action programs targeting Johns? Prompts:

- How are the neighborhoods selected, or self-select?
- How many members are there in each neighborhood?
- How are community members recruited? Who recruits them?
- To whom is the information reported?
- What happens after it has been reported?
- Is there training for community members? E.g.,
 - how to remain inconspicuous, how to respond to a John who confronts them, or how to report what they see, record, or photograph?
- Are community members ever afraid of Johns retaliating?
 - Have there been attempts at retaliation?
- Would we be able to observe neighborhood actions?

3.l. John Schools and Counseling Programs

Can you describe for me your John school program? Prompts:

- Is the program structured as diversion or a sentencing option?
- Is there an aftercare program component?
- Is the John school a one-day class or multiple-session experience?
- If a counseling program, is it a single session or multiple sessions?
 - How many sessions are there, how long is each, and over what period of time are they held?]
 - Is it group counseling, or individual?
- What topics are covered in the curriculum [or counseling sessions]? E.g.
 - health and legal consequences for participants
 - negative consequences for prostitutes and communities
 - sexual addiction
 - healthy relationships
- Who serves as presenters [counselors]? E.g.,
 - police, former prostitutes, Johns, public health educators, prosecutors?

- How is the curriculum delivered? E.g.,
 - lecture, handouts, multimedia presentations, discussion groups, one-on-one counseling sessions?
- Would we be able to observe a John school class?
 - Are the classes public criminal justice proceedings?
 - What approvals are necessary (e.g., verbal approval of DA, or written release form)?

3.m. “Bots” or Other Automated Responses to Deter Buyers

Can you tell me how you go about conducting operations that involve information technology to identify online sex buyers and attempt to apprehend or deter them? Perhaps you can walk me through a typical operation from start to finish that uses “bots” to disrupt commercial sex transactions, or refer detected sex buying activity to law enforcement personnel for sting operations? Probe for the following:

- What is the name of the technology or program used?
- Does your agency acquire the IT and receive training for its use, or does another organization or vendor run the IT?
- Does the technology run periodically, or continuously?
- Does the technology provide alerts that trigger human responses (for example, for a police investigation or sting, or people who communicate directly with the sex buyers), or simply run in automated form (for example, automatically sending deterrence messages when the technology suspects an active sex buyer)?
- For IT that involves posting ads to elicit sex buyer responses, how are the online ad websites or social media platforms selected (or programmed) for the decoy ads to be placed? Please provide examples of selected websites and platforms.
- For IT that involves scanning or “scraping” data in online chats and comments sections, how are those social media and communications platforms selected? Please provide examples of selected websites and platforms.
- Who determines the content of the decoy ads?
 - Are the ads generated by the technology, or is there human input?
 - What features make for an effective decoy ad?
 - Are photographs of the decoy person being advertised or chatting necessary or helpful?
 - When photos are used, how are they acquired or built for the ads?
 - If pictures of real people used, who are they (for example, police women, volunteers), how are they selected, and what safety measures must be in place before using them?
 - If images are constructed, how is that done? For example,
 - Are real photos photo shopped, or do artists construct completely fictional images?
 - If images are acquired from a third party provider (e.g., another law enforcement agency, a commercial vendor), please provide examples.

- When the technology does not use ads, but scours online or social media communications, what criteria are used to conclude a buyer has been identified?
- Who provided training to use the technology?
- How are the people in your agency selected to receive the training to operate the technology?
- Is there technical support and assistance provided?
- Are there costs for the IT? If so,
 - How much? Is it one time cost, or a subscription or licensing fee?
- How many officers are (or amount of an officer's time is) required to monitor or operate the technology
 - During an active operation that involves people (such as a sting)?
 - During deployment of the technology in automated mode?

4. Acquiring Documents and/or Data

Do you have printed documents or links to source materials that describe the kinds of local programs or practices we have discussed? Probe for:

- Documented planning activities, such as needs assessments, initial program outlines, early mission statements, program proposals
- Meeting agendas, notes, minutes, schedules
- Current program goals, mission statements, logic models
- Collaboration agreements, MOUs
- Quarterly, semi-annual, or annual reports
- Formal studies or evaluations
- Documentation of staff training (e.g., course descriptions, curricula, completion certificates, personnel records, reimbursements)
- Business surveys or other kinds of feedback from businesses
- Public surveys or other kinds of feedback from public
- Reverse sting tactical plans
- Reverse sting after-action reports
- Decoy advertisements/postings for web-based & print media reverse stings
- Materials provided to arrested Johns about resources available in the community

Acquiring documents, and permission to disseminate them:

- Would you be able to send me a copy of any or all of these aforementioned documents?
 - Which of these materials could we include in an appendix to our report? If any, we will send you a permission form for you to complete and sign.
 - Which documents could we post on our Web site? [we will send permission form]

- Which documents could we include in our Guide? [we will send permission form]

Acquiring statistics and/or data:

Please tell us about the existence and availability of data about or related to the program, such as:

- number of Johns arrested (if not all Johns are arrested)
- number of Johns issued citations
- number of “Dear John” letters sent
- arrest and recidivism data
- court dispositions
 - dismissals, pled bargains, convictions, suspended sentences
- number of Johns whose cars have been seized and forfeited
- number of SOAP orders issued
- number of SOAP order violations of orders
- citizen complaints about SOAP order violations
- number of Johns assigned or sentenced to community service
- number of Johns completing program
- fees collected for community service, court costs, supervision, John school, auto impound
- number of calls for service for prostitution-related complaints
- number of tips received via tip lines, hotlines
- number of participants in public education presentations
- readership levels of publications in which materials appear; web hits on equivalent websites
- requests for public education presentations
- number of community member who participate actively in neighborhood watch or action programs
- Statewide and/or local data on offender criminal histories
- mapping (e.g., of arrests, reverse stings, auto seizures, calls for service, SOAP order violations)

Are any of the above data tracked over time?

- If so, how often are the measures taken, and when did the data series begin?
- Who “owns” and/or controls access to the above data?
- How are the data collected—is there a data management or management information system?
- Which of the data sets would we be able to acquire?
- If any are accessible, what is the process for acquiring them?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me. The information you provided will be very helpful to us in producing updates to our [Demand Forum](#) website, and in selecting sites for case studies.

If you have questions about the study or wish to add information, please feel free to contact me [_____ interviewer name] at [_____ interviewer phone number] or the Project Director, XXXX XXXXXX, at (XXX) XXX-XXXX