

Human Trafficking in Montana. Protecting Our Children.

Prepared for the Montana Criminal Justice
Oversight Council
September 11, 2025

Thank you to the following for providing data
and information for this report:

MT DOJ, MT DOC, FBI, USAO, Billings
Police Department, Missoula Police
Department, The Network, University of
Alabama, Rights4Girls, Street Grace, Polaris,
Digital Childhood Alliance, and Culture
Reframed.





**“Her pain became
My purpose.”**

The Global Scale of Financial Crime

- \$3.1 trillion in global illicit funds (2023)
- **\$346.7 billion: human trafficking**
- \$782.9 billion: drug trafficking
- \$11.5 billion: terrorism

“Human trafficking is not just a crime—it’s an industry.”

Source: Nasdaq Verafin 2024

A Humanitarian Crisis

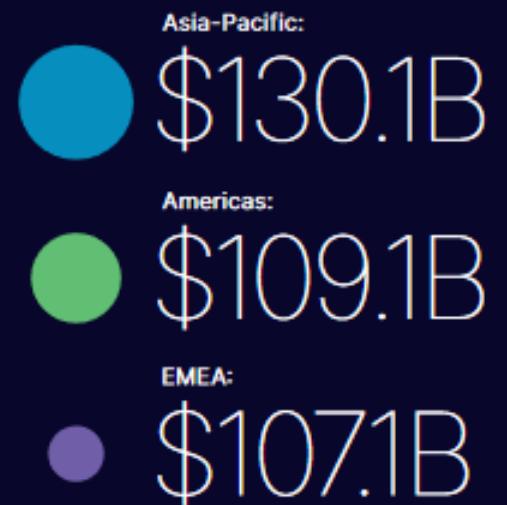
At any time, tens of millions of people are coerced into labor or sex work.¹³

In 2023, an estimated

\$346.7B

of illicit funds was linked to Human Trafficking.

Human Trafficking by Region



of Survey Respondents ranked Human Trafficking as a Top Concern, and in deep dive interviews it was elevated as a top concern.

Defining Human Trafficking

The White Slave Traffic Act of 1910

Mann Act Amended 1986 to further protect minors and adult males.

The Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000 provides a three-pronged approach that includes prevention, protection, and prosecution.

U.S. federal law defines human trafficking as the use of force, fraud, or coercion to compel a person into commercial sex acts or labor against their will.

THE A-M-P MODEL

Action	Means*	Purpose
Induce Recruits Harbors Transports Provides or Obtains	Force Fraud or Coercion	Commercial Sex (<i>Sex Trafficking</i>) or Labor/Services (<i>Labor Trafficking</i>)

*Minors induced into commercial sex are human trafficking victims— regardless if force, fraud, or coercion is present.

How Traffickers Maintain Control

- **Force:** violence, confinement, starvation, rape
- **Fraud:** false job, love, or marriage promises
- **Coercion:** threats, debt, blackmail, deportation, **FEAR**

"Fear is the currency of trafficking. If they control your fear, they control your freedom."

Who's at Risk?

- Risk Factors: poverty, abuse, low self-esteem, **substance abuse**
- Youth Populations: foster care, LGBTQ2S+, runaways
- Family Dynamics: neglect, absence, poor communication
- **The intersection of substance abuse, trauma, and trafficking:** Traffickers often target people with substance use disorders, using their addictions as a method of control. A high percentage of trafficking survivors also experience addiction and co-occurring mental health disorders like PTSD.

“Traffickers don’t look for strength—they look for need.”

Source: National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center

Data on Human Trafficking

Challenges

- Many victims are mislabeled as criminals
- Victims rarely report
- Cases spread across agencies
- Cases may be prosecuted under related offenses/plea bargain

“Lack of data doesn’t mean lack of danger, and when we mislabel victims, justice gets lost.”

Sex Trafficking. Labor Trafficking.

“It’s not just locked rooms—it’s your neighborhood.”

Polaris Study: 25 Distinct Business Models

Sex trafficking

- Commercial Sex
- Pornography/CSAM
- Phone sex lines
- Stripping, live sex shows
- Mail-order brides
- Truck stops
- All ages
- 90%+ are female victims
- Up to 50% are minors

Can be hidden & locked away or **hidden in plain sight**

Labor trafficking

- Domestic servitude (housework/childcare)
- Service industry (restaurants, hotels)
- Hair, nail salons
- Construction
- Small businesses, factories & “sweatshops”
- Agriculture, ranch
- Landscape workers
- Janitorial
- Door-to-door sales
- Panhandling

History Before 2019

- No full-time MT DOJ investigators.
- Minimal Coordination.

2019 MT State Legislature

SB 147

- Criminalized all sexual acts for pay—not just intercourse
- Added enhanced penalties for trafficking and knowingly purchasing from victims
- Classified sex trafficking as a **Crime of Violence**

HB 749

- Allowed city & board officials to verify massage licenses
- Funded **Montana DOJ's first dedicated anti-trafficking agents**

*“No more excuses. No more leniency.
These laws turned policy into protection.”*



Montana Snapshot

Trafficking is ongoing, not isolated.

143 DOJ Cases in 2023.

VICTIMS (POLARIS HOTLINE)

Since 2007	1,777 Signals	319 Cases	641 Victims
2022	120 Signals	30 Cases	69 Victims
2023	97 Signals	29 Cases	43 Victims
2024	84 Signals	43 Cases	87 Victims

INVESTIGATIONS & TIPS

- 91 Cases since 2022
- 317 Tips since 2022
- 40 arrests from sting operations

FEDERAL PROSECUTIONS

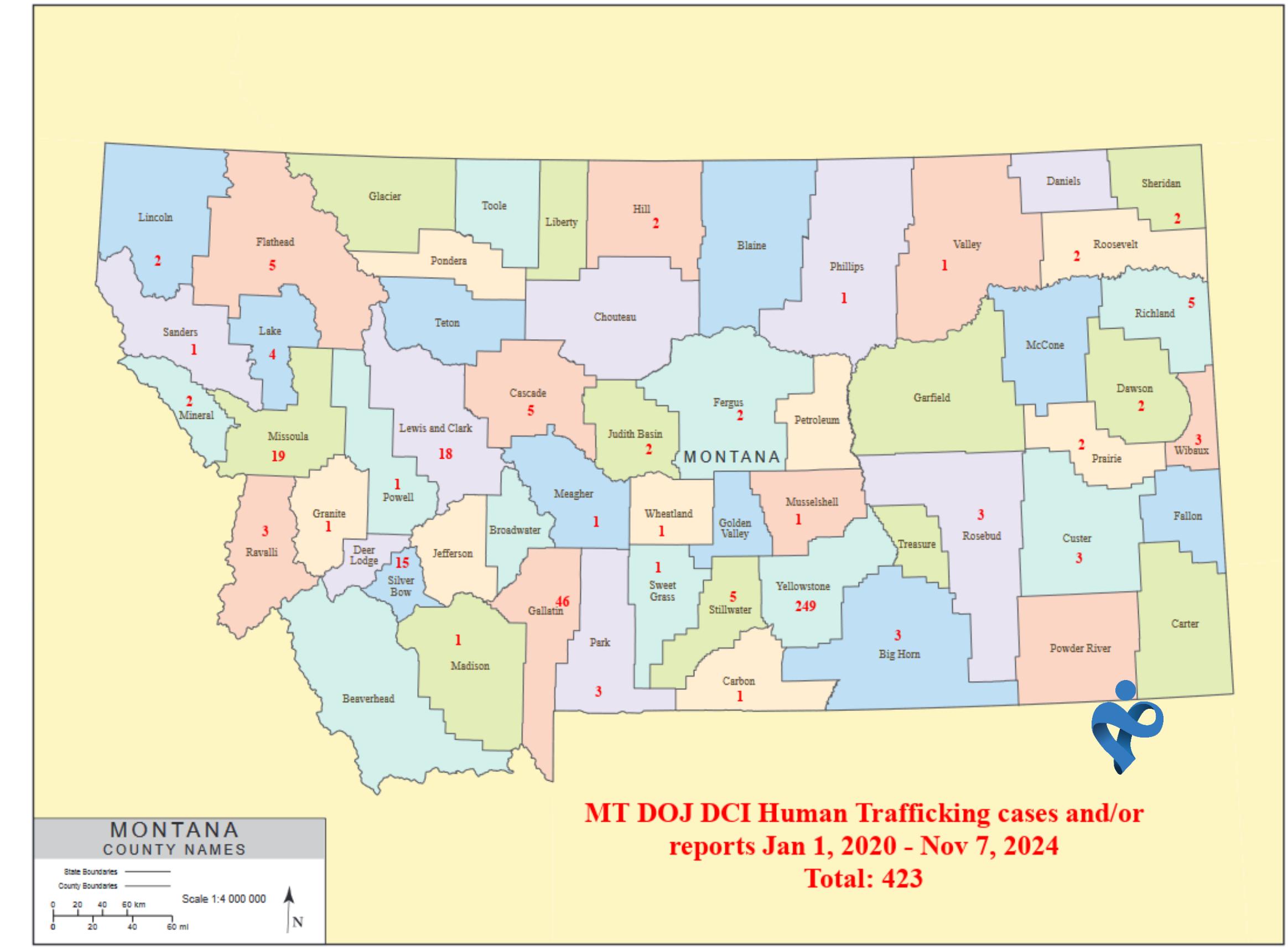
2000-2025:

- 16 cases,
- 22 defendants,
- 84 victims

BPD SNAPSHOT

- 22 Prostitution/Trafficking
- 278 child sex abuse cases
- 9 trafficking arrests
- 13 sextortion/online grooming

“In one Montana sting operation, buyers included a veteran, a school staff member, and a man who brought his child with him.”



© Copyright 2009-2020 by World Trade Press. All Rights Reserved.

- Data is incomplete
- Local agencies didn't have to report to DOJ
- Lack of training of law enforcement and the public

LEA WETZEL, SURVIVOR ADVOCATE



SURVIVOR VOICES

No Buyers No Business No Victims

Human trafficking doesn't begin with a trafficker.
It begins with a **buyer**.

The real root of trafficking?

Demand for sex and cheap labor--not race, immigration, or runaway youth.

"We cannot stop supply without confronting demand."

What Buyers Say Behind Closed Doors

Rights4Girls studied 89 conversations divided by region amongst buyers on “Hobby boards.” The report revealed:

- Showed indifference to violence and drug dependency
- Expressed racism and misogyny
- Admitted knowing the people they bought were vulnerable

“These are not men unaware. These are men who know—and buy anyway.”

Source: Rights4Girls, [Buyers Unmasked \(2025\)](#)

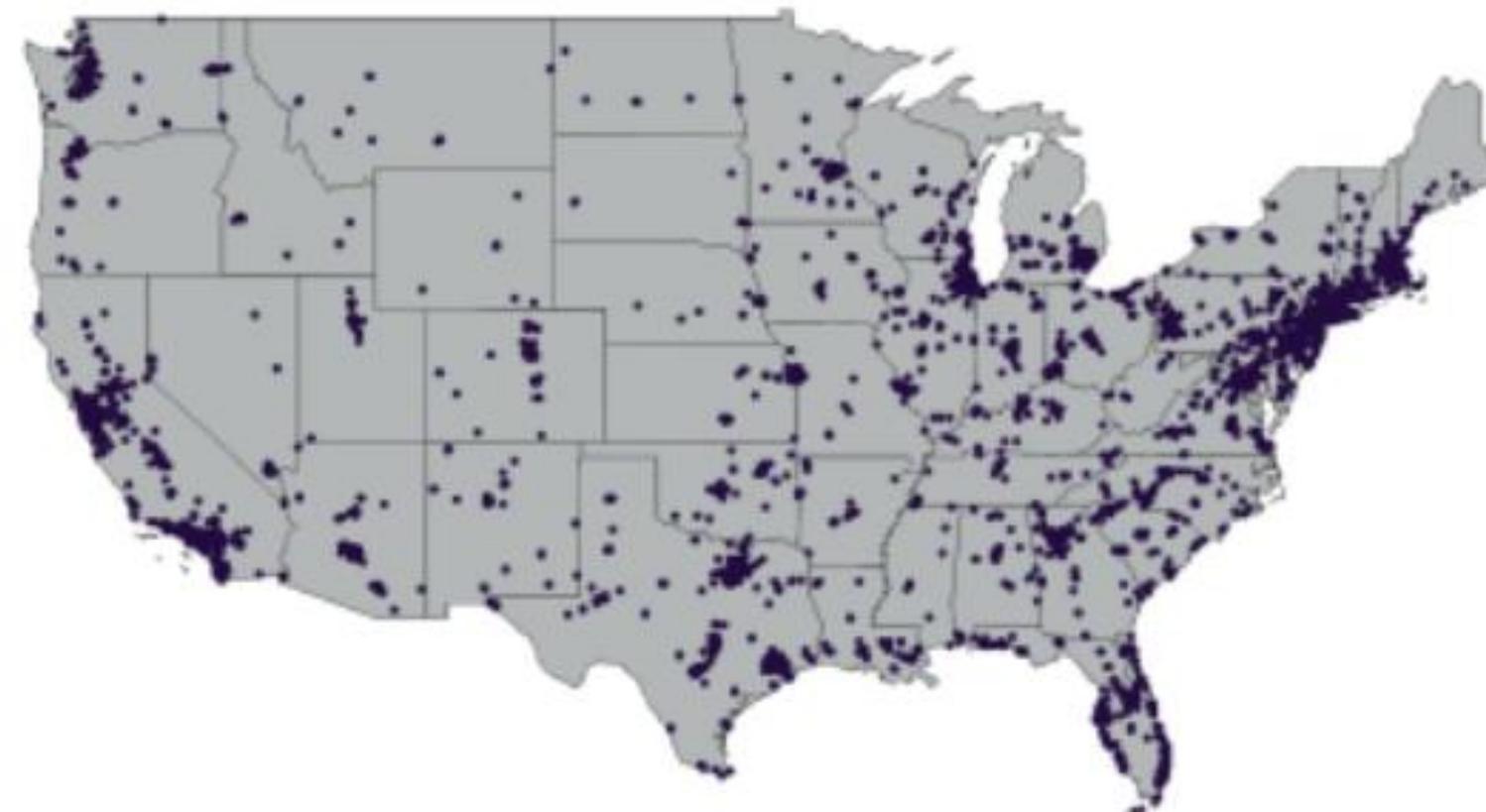
2023 Montana Flips the Script on Buyers

HB112

- **Sellers:** Misdemeanor, max 6 months jail
- **Buyers:** Now face **felony** charges
 - 1st offense: up to 5 years
 - 2nd: up to 10 years

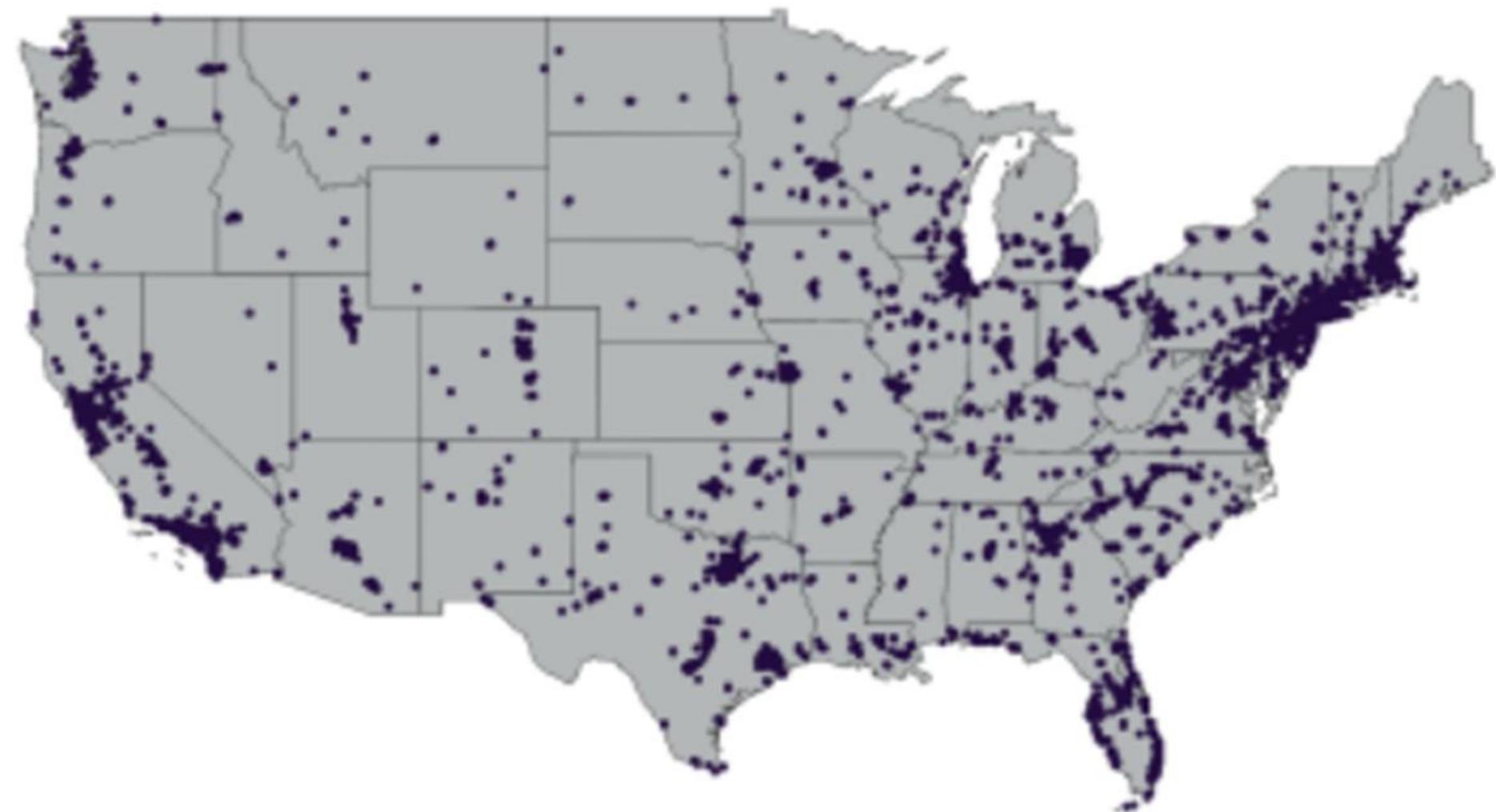
“We started holding the buyers accountable for the violence they committed.”

25 IMBs in MT



**15,000+ IMBs
in all 50 states¹**

"Sex trafficking is a massive, worldwide problem that can take many forms. One of the most prolific: America's multibillion-dollar illicit massage industry." - USA TODAY²



**15,000+ IMBs
in all 50 states¹**

**"Sex trafficking is a massive, worldwide problem that can take many forms. One of the most prolific:
America's multibillion-dollar illicit massage industry." - USA TODAY²**

25 IMBs in MT

Source: The Network

Montana Statistics Gathered by FBI

October 2016 – October 2017

Ad Numbers for 6 Top Websites

- Billings 19,226
- Bozeman 5,133
- Missoula 4,615
- Great Falls 2,931
- Butte 2,548
- Helena 2,274
- Kalispell 2,223

September 2020 – September 2021

Ad Numbers for 6 Top Websites

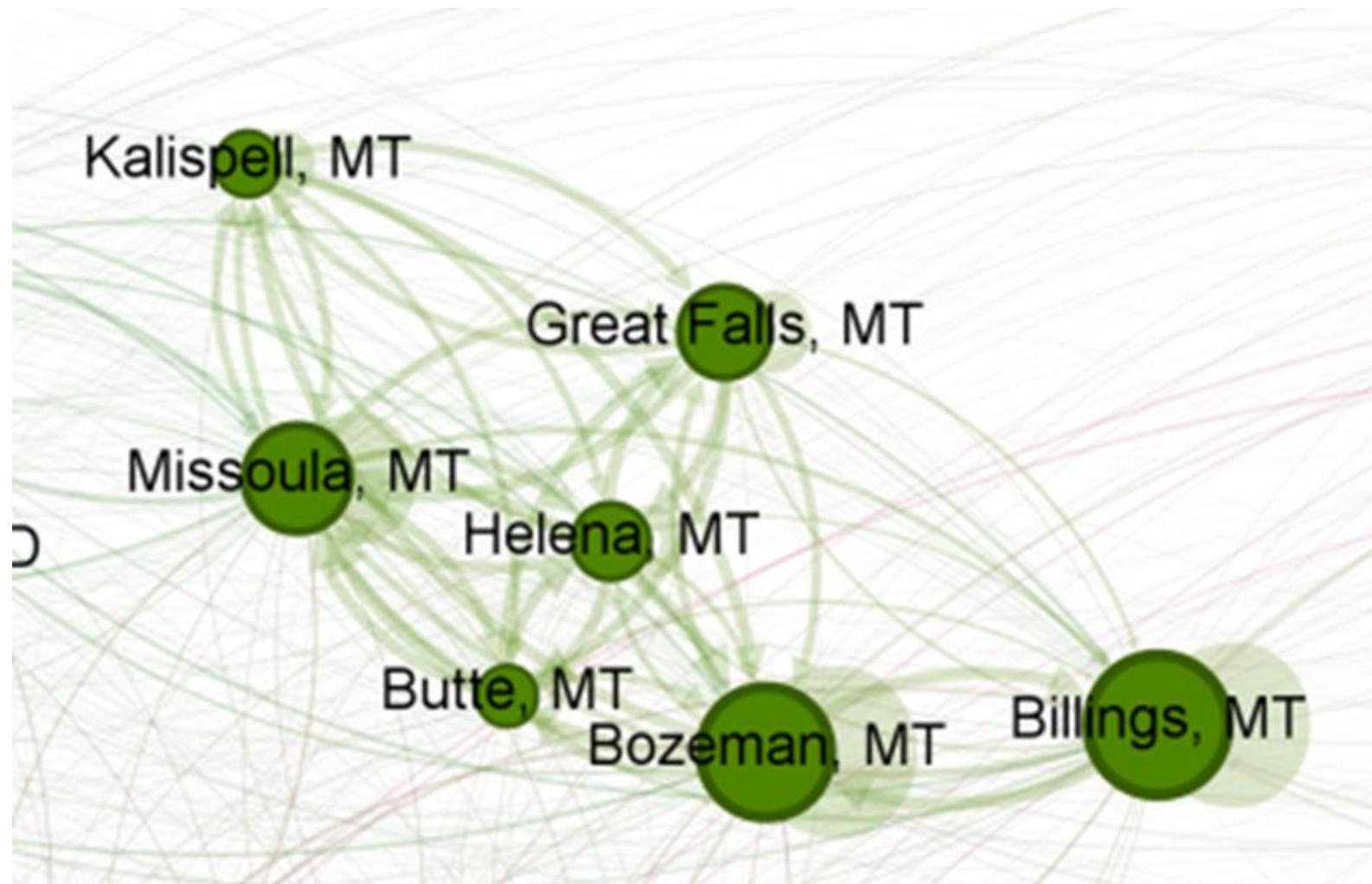
- Billings 11,853
- Bozeman 7,663
- Missoula 7,642
- Helena 7,052
- Great Falls 6,400
- Butte 4,165
- Kalispell 3,804

May 2021 – May 2022

Ad Numbers for 6 Top Websites

- Billings 5,703
- Bozeman 4,116
- Missoula 3,629
- Great Falls 2,726
- Helena 2,465
- Kalispell 1,882
- Butte 1,820

Online Exploitation



282 sex ads/day in MT

B	C	D	E	G
Observation	Target	Top Site	Top State	Recent Post
159	100	skipthegames (159)	Montana (159)	Cheap Asian Escort XOXO Bi Gfe 69 Nure 406
161	100	skipthegames (161)	Montana (161)	GFE 406-952-9066 Kiss & Touch New
34	100	skipthegames (34)	Montana (34)	PRETTY / SWEET 406-215-1074 asian
97	25	skipthegames (97)	Montana (24)	All holes open 406-446-7321 erotic nuru BBBJ
174	98	skipthegames (174)	Montana (174)	hot like fire 406-224-6892 top service
154	100	skipthegames (154)	Montana (154)	100 new girl erotic b2b nuru bodyslide 406
159	100	skipthegames (159)	Montana (159)	406-287-1599 THE BEST GIRL=BEST
76	86	skipthegames (76)	Montana (76)	Let me blow your mind. 406 559 0942
159	100	skipthegames (159)	Montana (159)	Asian HOT GIRL GFE BBBJ 4:
131	18	skipthegames (131)	New York (51)	Book the best Come&Get Your Sweet Piece Of F
33	73	skipthegames (33)	Montana (24)	HOT B2B NURU MASSAGE 209-323-2664-7pm
33	76	skipthegames (33)	Montana (25)	HOT B2B NURU MASSAGE 719-316-0371-9am
134	63	skipthegames (134)	Montana (84)	New Opening B.2.B G.F.E BBBJ N.U.R.U
104	100	skipthegames (104)	Montana (104)	406-797-4969 -9.30
40	80	skipthegames (40)	Montana (40)	BRING IN YA FANTASY !! 406-430-4733 zt2
618	35	skipthegames (618)	Montana (216)	SEXY Asian Escort BBBJ B2B all u need 40
63	11	megapersonals (55)	North Carolina (25)	Available now hit me up Incall or Outcall Carfun, Ho
87	100	skipthegames (87)	Montana (87)	406-266-6061 b2b full service sexy Asian I
820	19	skipthegames (820)	Virginia (479)	soft skin b2b nuru kiss gfe 69 727-29
69	17	skipthegames (68)	Colorado (17)	SEXY Asian Escort BBBJ B2B all u need 40
100	99	skipthegames (100)	Montana (99)	PRETTY / SWEET 406-401-7387 asian
745	20	skipthegames (745)	Ohio (277)	406-401-3488 Asian Babes Know Men Needed
174	90	skipthegames (174)	Montana (157)	Sexy Asian Girls 210-600-1801 Full Service GF
280	68	skipthegames (279)	Montana (189)	new girls asia please call me 563-742-1862
33	12	megapersonals (31)	Idaho (5)	Latina super caliente

Illicit Massage Businesses

Victims

- Live on-site, 24 hours a day
- Victims typically 30 – 75 years old
- \$60 house fee
- Sex and labor trafficking
- IMB has a state license
- One female victim = \$3,800 - \$18,000 a month for IMB
- Victims may be mail-order brides; domestic violence victims; smuggled into the country; debt-bondage victims

IMBs

- Located in strip malls; converted houses; office buildings
- Security cameras
- Locked doors; buzzer system
- Windows covered or darkened
- Sexually suggestive advertising
- Neon OPEN sign; ATM machine
- Open 10 AM – 2 AM or 24 hours



“These women don’t clock out—they’re trapped. Behind neon signs and wellness words are lives held hostage.”

Source: FBI, MT DOJ, USAO

Facebook Ad for Health Massage



♥ Don't keep your body in pain!
relieve build up stress! ♥

Dec 30, 2020 - Feb 28, 2021

★ 🌸 ❤️ Health Massage ❤️ 🌸 ★



Posted on Dec 30, 2020
★ 🌸 ❤️ Health Massage ❤️ 🌸 ★

(Licensed massage Therapist)

🎉 GRAND OPENING! 🎉



♥ Have muscle pain? Asian Massage
may be right for you! ♥

Dec 30, 2020 - Feb 28, 2021

★ 🌸 ❤️ Health Massage ❤️ 🌸 ★

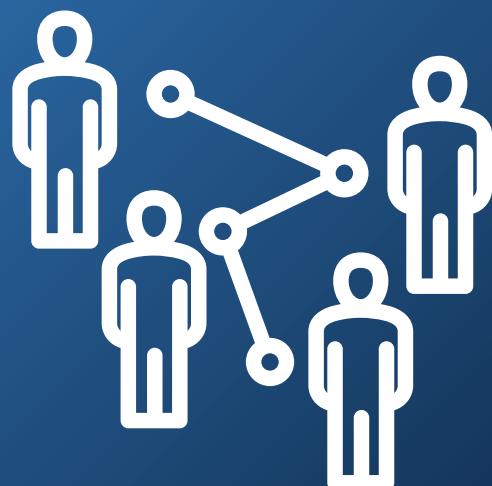
COMMON EMOJIS IN TRAFFICKING

Common Emojis in Trafficking

Source: Collective Liberty

	Money, Bag, or Trap		Vagina
	Money, Dollars, or Cost of Service		Penis
	Money, symbol often used by pimps		Buttocks
	Pimp, can be accompanied by initials		Male ejaculation
	Victim is a minor		Seeing something X-rated
	Victim is young or near 18th birthday		Condom
	Underage		Wifey or sister prostitute
	Victim is a minor and/or a virgin		Prostitute
	Victim is white female		Red light special or prostitution
	The victim may be new to the area or in a town for a limited time. Can also mean the buyer must travel for services.		Kissing or oral sex
			69 sex act

CASSANDRA HAMMOND, SURVIVOR ADVOCATE



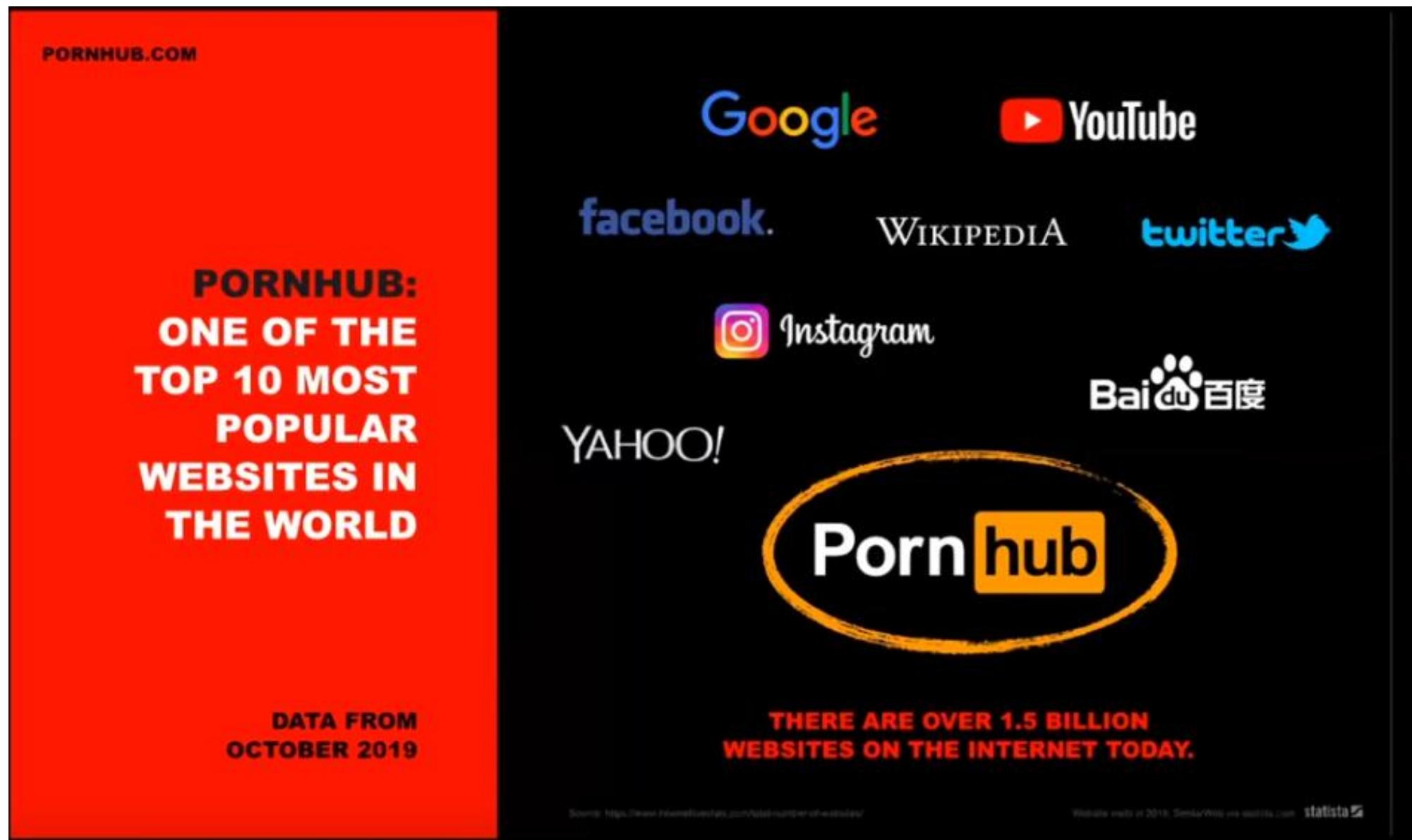
SURVIVOR VOICES

Strangulation Trend

Montana is experiencing an increase in child-on-child sexual violence involving choking and strangulation.

“When children learn about sex through violence, they repeat what they see.”

PORNHUB



“This isn’t just porn. It’s evidence of crimes—monetized, normalized, and streamed worldwide. If we wouldn’t allow it in real life, why is it hosted online for profit?”

6 CORE AREAS OF CRIMINAL CONTENT ON PORNHUB include:

1. Sex Trafficking
2. Child Sexual Abuse Material and Child Sex Trafficking
3. Rape
4. Incapacitated Sexual Assault where the Victim is Drugged or Drunk
5. Image-Based Sexual Abuse
6. Hidden Camera/Spycam

Source: Traffickinghub Movement

Pornography by the Numbers

- **40 MILLION** Americans are regular visitors to porn sites
- **25%** of all online searches are porn-related
- **35%** of internet downloads are pornographic
- **9 – 11 YEARS: Average age of first Internet porn exposure**

“We are not protecting our children—we are handing them a screen.”

Source: Culture Reframed

The Cost of Early Exposure

- 1 in 3 kids sees **hardcore** porn by age 12
- Platforms: **Roblox, Fortnite, TikTok**
- Children aged 6–12 see more **non-photographic sexual content** than adults
- Kids exposed are **3.3x more likely** to engage in sexual harassment or violence
- Rising **child-on-child abuse**, often recorded and shared

“When children learn about sex through violence, they repeat what they see.”

Source: Culture Reframed

What are Kids Seeing?

Top Acts in Popular Porn:

- Gagging (the #1 act)
- Strangulation
- Rough anal sex
- Ejaculation/spitting on face
- Hair pulling
- Spanking

“What’s normalized in porn is often criminal in real life.”

Source: Culture Reframed

What Porn Teaches Boys

- Frequent porn use is linked to:
- Buying sex
- Believing abuse is normal
- Expecting domination
- Porn frames **violence as desire and abuse as pleasure**

“The message isn’t just sexist—it’s dangerous.”

Source: Culture Reframed

What Are Girls Learning?

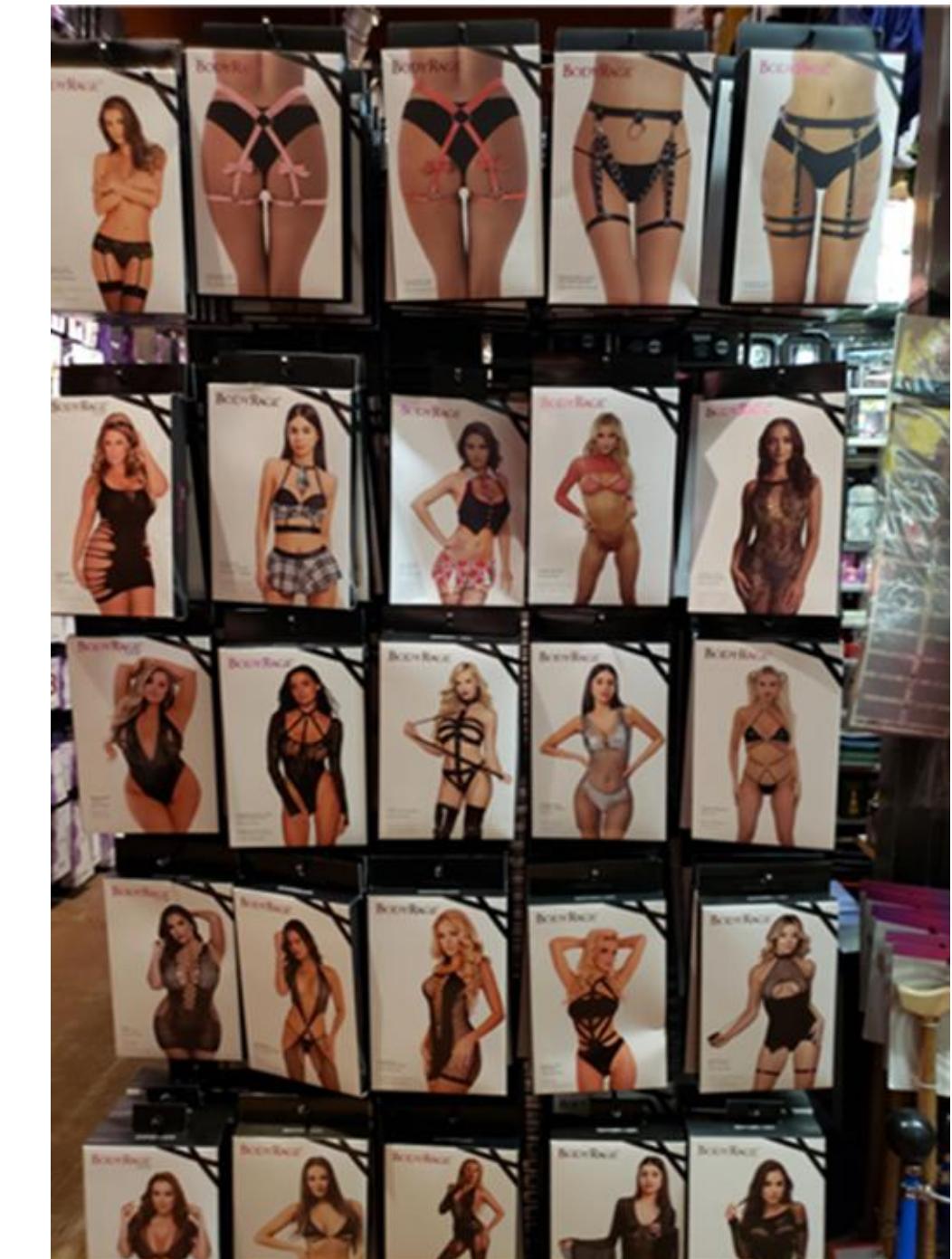
Online content teaches young girls:

- Your value is in how you look
- Being hurt means being wanted
- Violence is love

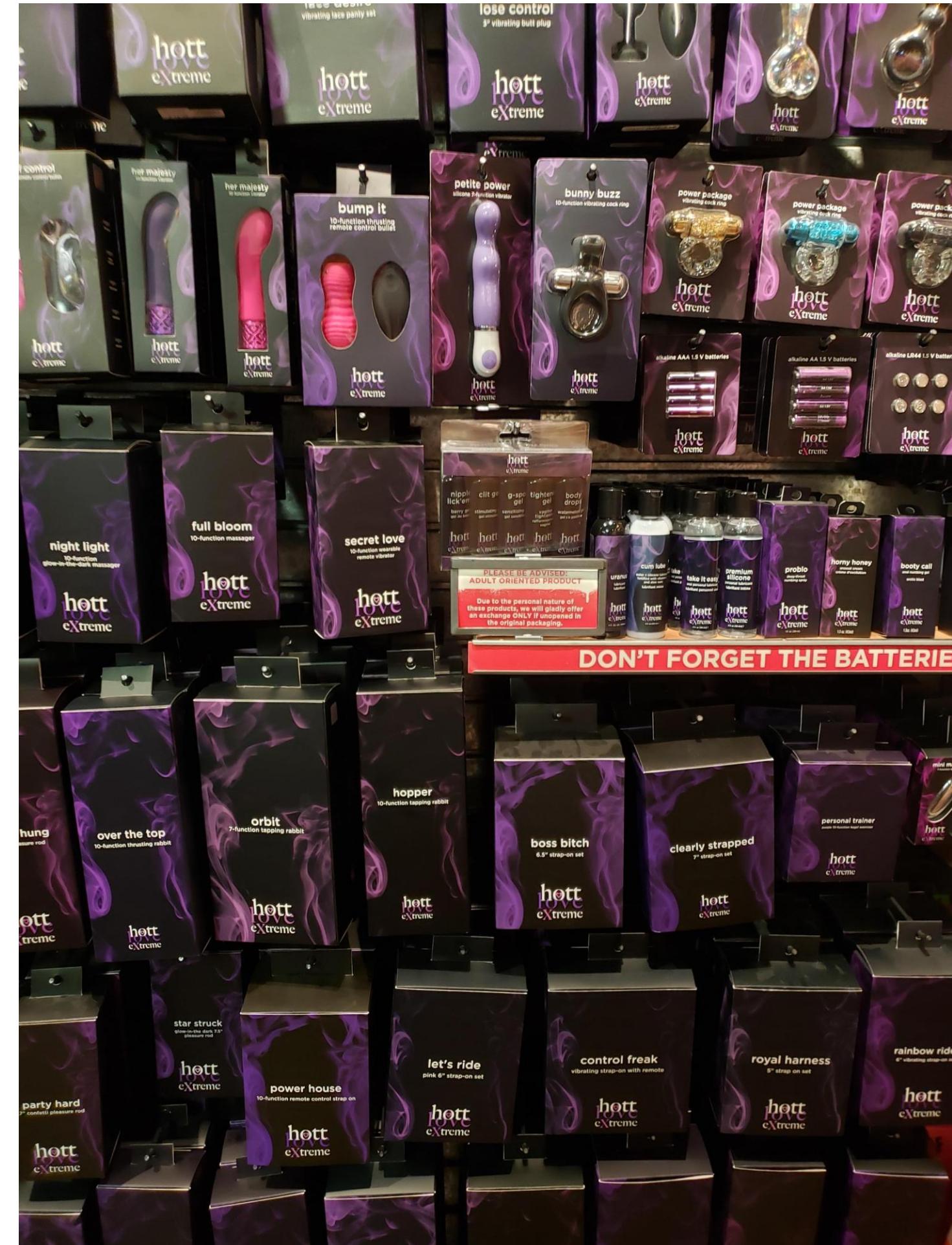
“We’re raising girls to be victims—that is not empowerment.”

Source: Culture Reframed

Spencers in Rimrock Mall



Spencers in Rimrock Mall



Tech Threats

**AI can turn
photos of
children
into CSAM in
seconds.**



AI COMPANIONS

- 72% of teens have used AI companions
- 33% use for relationships
- 24% share personal information
- 34% report unsafe experiences

Source: Culture Reframed

Forms of Labor Trafficking

Bonded labor

Victims are told they must work to repay a debt—but:

- The **terms are unclear or manipulated**
- The debt is **never reduced**, no matter how long they work
- They are **trapped in a cycle** of unpaid, coerced labor

Common in Illicit Massage Businesses (IMBs), where debt is used as a weapon.

Forced Labor

Victims are **forced to work against their will**, under threats of:

- Violence
- Punishment
- Loss of freedom

Industries often include:

- Domestic work
- Agriculture
- Factories
- Food & janitorial services
- IMBs
- Street begging

“This isn’t bad employment. It’s enslavement.”

Child Labor

Affects children as young as **5 years old**, often:

- Dangerous to their health and development
- Interferes with education and future opportunity
- Tied to **sex trafficking, drug trade, and armed conflict**

246 million children are currently exploited in labor trafficking around the world.

Source: US Department of Health & Human Services

It Begins with a Lie

Traffickers lure victims through **false promises** of:

- High-paying jobs
- Free housing, education, **recovery services**
- Legal immigration support
- Financial help for families
- Romantic relationships or marriage

“What looks like opportunity is often a trap.”

LAWS & PROGRESS 2019 - 2025

2019

- SB 147
- HB 749

2021

- Billings Massage Ordinance

2023

- HB 112

2025

- SB 107
- SB 245
- SB 413
- HB 82
- HB 104
- HB 514
- HB752

Future

- Victim Protection
- App Protections
- Target Demand

Survivor/Equality Model (Maine)

Recommendation

This Model ends the arrests and incarceration of all individuals bought and sold in the sex trade, and offers them essential medical, mental health, housing, and legal services. Sex buying, pimping, brothel-owning remain illegal. This is the legislative framework in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Northern Ireland, France, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Israel, and the state of Maine in the U.S.

“The Swedish market for human trafficking is practically dead.”
THE SWEDISH AMBASSADOR FOR COMBATTING HUMAN TRAFFICKING,
2021

Source: Rights4Girls

Transaction Intercept

Recommendation

- **526,971 Texts Intercepted**
- **20,933 Buyers flagged**

In 2022, over 32 million reports of child sexual abuse material online.

97.5% increase in incidents of online enticement of children from 2019 to 2020.



Source: Street Grace

APP STORE ACCOUNTABILITY

Recommendation

**Montana can follow
Utah's lead.**



Funding

Recommendation

- Funding for more DCI agents and victim specialists.
- \$300,000 for mandatory training & CEUs.

CALL TO ACTION

Fund it. Pass it. Protect them.

Thank you!