

Facebook “Overwhelmingly” Being Used For Online Recruitment In Active Sex Trafficking Cases

Description

USA: A stunning new report ties social media platforms – the most prominent of which is Facebook – to “the majority” of online recruitment in active sex trafficking cases.

The data was revealed in the Human Trafficking Institute’s 2020 Federal Human Trafficking Report, according to [CBS](#).

Human Trafficking Institute CEO Victor Boutros said on CBSN Wednesday: “The internet has become the dominant tool that traffickers use to recruit victims, and they often recruit them on a number of very common social networking websites. Facebook overwhelmingly is used by traffickers to recruit victims in active sex trafficking cases.”

The report uses data from every criminal and civil human trafficking case that’s active. “This report actually looks at the last 20 years of trends in the federal government,” Boutros continued.

KEY TAKEAWAYS *from 2020*



Self-reporting by a victim was the most common way that a case was reported to law enforcement in 2020. **OVER ONE-THIRD** of case referrals that resulted in a prosecution involved a victim who contacted law enforcement for assistance, either directly or through the support of a non-profit or hotline. Moreover, **88%** of the new human trafficking cases in 2020 involved multi-agency collaboration in the investigation of the case.

Many human traffickers **OPERATE INDEPENDENTLY** of large-scale “trafficking rings,” instead exploiting vulnerable individuals with whom they have a personal connection. **ONLY 5%** of active sex trafficking cases involved exploitation directed by gangs or more formal organized crime groups. Instead, most cases involved individual traffickers acting as “pimps,” operating without direction from or connection to a larger criminal network, even exploiting victims within their own families.

Prosecutors filed more human trafficking cases in 2020 than in 2019, but charged fewer defendants. The number of cases filed in 2020 **INCREASED 11%** to 165 following two years of decline. In contrast, the number of defendants charged dropped to 257, **DOWN 8%** from 2019.

The internet is a major platform for traffickers to recruit sex trafficking victims and solicit buyers of commercial sex. In 2020, 59% of **ONLINE VICTIM RECRUITMENT** in active sex trafficking cases occurred on **FACEBOOK**.

59%



In 2020, federal courts convicted the lowest number of defendants in human trafficking cases since 2012. In 2020, **163 DEFENDANTS** were **CONVICTED**—an **89% CONVICTION RATE**. This is a 51% decline in convicted defendants from 2019.

The report revealed that 30% of all victims identified in federal sex trafficking cases since 2000 were recruited online. In 2020, 59% of online recruitment in active cases took place on Facebook. 65% of identified child sex trafficking victims recruited on social media were also attributed to Facebook.

Children accounted for 53% of identified victims in active criminal human trafficking cases in 2020, the report says, and a “large majority” of them were women.

An active case is defined as one where defendants were charged in 2020, or had charges pending in 2020 from previous years.

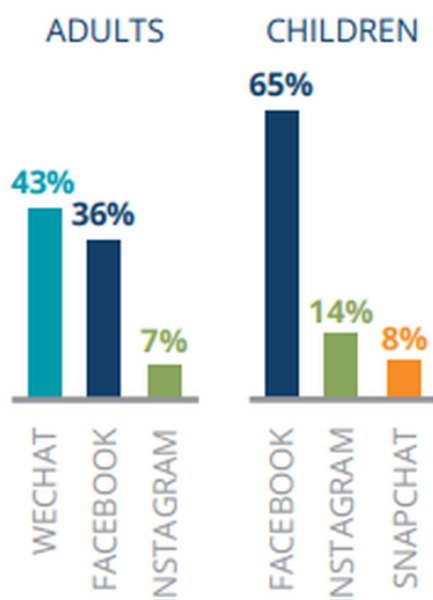
Facebook told CBS: “Sex trafficking and child exploitation are abhorrent and we don’t allow them on Facebook.” (*Well, that solves *that* problem*).



The tech giant continued: “We have policies and technology to prevent these types of abuses and take down any content that violates our rules. We also work with safety groups, anti-trafficking organizations and other technology companies to address this and we report all apparent instances of child sexual exploitation to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.”

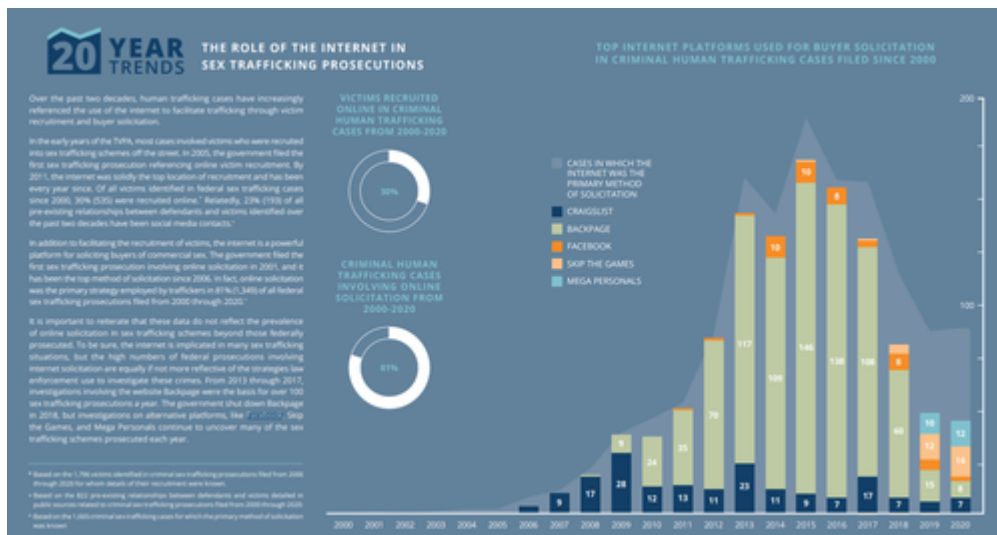
In addition to Facebook, both Instagram and Snapchat were the most frequently cited platforms for recruiting child victims.

VICTIMS RECRUITED ONLINE IN 2020 ACTIVE CRIMINAL SEX TRAFFICKING CASES BY AGE



The report stated: “These data do not reflect the prevalence of online solicitation in sex trafficking schemes beyond those federally prosecuted. To be sure, the internet is implicated in many sex trafficking situations, but the high numbers of federal prosecutions involving internet solicitation are equally if not more reflective of the strategies law enforcement use to investigate these crimes.”

Boutros concluded: “Traffickers often prey on existing vulnerabilities of victims. A lot of times we imagine that traffickers are these large group syndicates or networks, exploiting a huge number of victims. But actually most traffickers are not operating as an organized crime enterprise. It is mostly individual traffickers that are operating individually and often exploiting a small handful of victims at a time.”



The Human Trafficking Institute “exists to decimate human trafficking at its source by empowering police and prosecutors to stop traffickers.”

“Working inside criminal justice systems, the Institute provides the embedded experts, world-class training, investigative resources, and evidence-based research necessary to free victims,” the report says.

You can read the full 2020 Federal Human Trafficking report [here](#).

by Tyler Durden

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