

# analysis

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## HOW MANY JUVENILE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING ARE THERE?

*Estimating the Population of Juvenile Trafficking Among Runaway, Homeless, and Throwaway Youth*

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In the United States, the most likely juvenile victims of human trafficking through involvement in commercial sexual exploitation (CSE) are runaway, homeless, and throwaway (RHT) youth. Understanding the true scope of RHT behavior among minors is difficult because RHT youth are a transient population, because they often avoid adults they are not familiar with, and because they congregate in areas that may be dangerous to reach. Studying RHT youth victimized by CSE is even more difficult since exploitative adults often control and hide them, they do not readily admit their involvement in commercial sex, and they are less likely to utilize services provided for runaway or homeless youth (e.g., shelters). Although numerous estimates of minors victimized by CSE exist, very few have scientific merit.

This report, sponsored by the Renewal Forum, has three specific aims:

1. Generate estimates of the RHT population in the U.S.
2. Estimate the number and percent of minor victims of Human Trafficking in the U.S.
3. Estimate the number/percent of RHT youth victimized by Human Trafficking.

This report is unique because its estimates are based on peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, and scholarly reports. Articles and reports with sound sampling and statistical methods were selected and used to help generate the estimates. Specifically, the articles and reports used in generating these estimates interviewed both RHT youth in shelters and samples of “street” RHT youth, interviewed parents and workers associated with RHT youth, and drew their samples from multiple cities and towns across the U.S.

The findings are as follows:

- The number of RHT youth is nearly 1,740,000 per year.
- Between 206,700 and 374,115 adolescents are involved in CSE yearly.
- RHT youth make up between 123,000 and 290,400 (between 60% and 77.6%) of adolescents victimized by CSE<sup>1</sup>. The range comes because the youth themselves report much lower rates of CSE than the adults that work with them report (see Footnotes 5 & 6 on page 2).
- Of the total population of RHT youth between 7% and 17% are victims of CSE. Although this estimate may appear low, it occurs because the large majority of runaway and throwaway youth do not end up on the streets, 86% of them return home within a week, and they are probably not at risk for CSE if they return home within a week<sup>2</sup>.
- By way of comparison, the number of non-RHT adolescents involved in CSE represents only at most .2% (e.g. 2/10 of 1%) of the general population of adolescents in the U.S.

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<sup>1</sup> Other minors that are victims of CSE include juveniles in the general population, juveniles in public housing, female gang-members, and foreign-born youth in the United States.

<sup>2</sup> (Estes & Weiner, 2001; Hammer, Finkelhor, & Sedlak, 2002)

## ESTIMATING THE SIZE OF THE POPULATION OF JUVENILE TRAFFICKING VICTIMS

<b>Population Description</b>	<b>Population Size Estimates</b>	<b># Undomiciled For 1 Week or More</b>	<b># of minors involved in CES (Greene et al, 1999, 2002 assumptions)</b>	<b># of minors involved in CES (Estes et al. 2001 assumptions)</b>
Runaway/Throwaway Youth	1,682,900 <sup>3</sup>	387,067 <sup>4</sup>	105,900 <sup>5</sup>	250,510 <sup>6</sup>
Homeless/ "Street" Youth <sup>7</sup>	57,000 <sup>8</sup>	57,000 <sup>9</sup>	17,100 <sup>10</sup>	39,000 <sup>11</sup>
<b>TOTAL RHT</b>	<b>1,739,900</b>	<b>444,067</b>	<b>123,000</b>	<b>290,410</b>
Minors aged 10 – 17 in the General Population	29,006,062 <sup>12</sup>	N/A		72,515 <sup>13</sup>
Minors in Public Housing	440,000 <sup>12</sup>	N/A		4,400 <sup>13</sup>
Female Gang Members	27,000 <sup>12</sup>	N/A		6,750 <sup>13</sup>
Foreign-Born youth involved in CSE		N/A		16,500 <sup>13</sup>
<b>Total Non-RHT Victims of CSE</b>				<b>83,705</b>
<b>Total Minors Victimized by CSE</b>			<b>206,700</b>	<b>374,115</b>
% of CSE Victims that are RHT			59.5%	77.6%
% of CSE Victims that are not RHT			40.5%	22.4%
% of RHT minors that are victims of CSE			7.31%	17.3%
% of Non-RHT youth that are victims of CSE				.2% or less

<sup>3</sup> (Sedlak, Finkelhor, Hammer, & Schultz, 2002)

<sup>4</sup> About 23% of R/T youth do not return home for 1 week or more. (Hammer et al., 2002)

<sup>5</sup> This calculation is from street/shelter youth self-reports that 10% of youth in shelters and 30% of street youth engage in trading sex for commodities (Greene, Ennett, & Ringwalt, 1999; Greene & Sanchez, 2002), and assumes that only 13% of RT youth use runaway shelters (Ringwalt, Greene, Robertson, & McPheeters, 1998)

<sup>6</sup> This calculation is from adult reports (e.g., shelter workers, etc.) that 30% of youth in shelters and 70% of street youth engage in trading sex for commodities (Estes & Weiner, 2001), and assumes that only 13% of RT youth use runaway shelters (Ringwalt et al., 1998).

<sup>7</sup> Homeless youth are a distinct population from runaway and throwaway youth in this report. The main difference is that homeless youth do not have a domicile to return to whereas RT youth do.

<sup>8</sup> (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996) estimated that nearly 57,000 minors have been permanently abandoned. Estes & Weiner, 2001 also came to a very similar number using different estimating techniques Footnote 8 (page 156).

<sup>9</sup> By definition these individuals have not had a domicile for over a week.

<sup>10</sup> See footnote 5 (e.g., 30% of homeless youth involved in CSE).

<sup>11</sup> See footnote 6 (e.g., 70% of homeless youth involved in CSE).

<sup>12</sup> (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Minors in public housing, female gang members, and foreign youth were not double counted in the general population estimate.

<sup>13</sup> Uses Estes & Weiner (2001) estimate that .25% of the general population of minors in the U.S., 1% of minors in public housing, 25% of female gang members, and 16,500 foreign youth in the U.S. are at risk of CSE.

## References

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