



Adolescent Girls in the United States Sex Trade

Tracking Study Results for August, 2010

Report prepared for:



Executive Summary

- This report details the results of several statewide studies of commercial sexual exploitation of female children in the United States. The results indicate a significant number of girls under age 18 are involved in the sex trade, with rates varying state-by-state. The results are part of a multi-year quarterly tracking study.
- The study is designed to count adolescent girls using scientific probability methods when they are encountered through two sources: ads on Internet classifieds websites and escort services. These are two of the main sources by which johns find girls to exploit sexually. In Georgia, where the research has been conducted since 2007, activity on the streets and in major hotels is included in the counting methodology.
- The study is not designed to count organized, underground commercial sexual exploitation of children. In some states, this type of exploitation appears to affect Hispanic, Asian, and Native American girls at disproportionately high rates.
- It is safe to say that this research methodology is designed to count, over a one-month period, the number of adolescent females who are acutely commercially sexually exploited, and actively marketed within the local sex trade.
- Collectively the results indicate a significant number of adolescent girls caught in the U.S. sex trade. The most recent state-by-state results from escort services are as follows:
 - Georgia: 18¹
 - Michigan: 17
 - Minnesota: 12
 - New York: 39
- The most recent state-by-state results from Internet classifieds websites are as follows. Note that shortly *after* data were collected, Craigslist closed the “Adult Services” section of its website.
 - Georgia: 307²
 - Michigan: 142
 - Minnesota: 112
 - New York: 3,415

¹ Georgia CSEC tracking study results from August 2009 - current generously shared by the Governor’s Office For Children and Families, with the aim of better informing the national CSEC incidence estimate. Georgia results are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women’s Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

² Same as previous footnote.

Table of Contents

Introduction and Methodology	3
The Difficulties of Studying CSEC	
Guiding Principles	
Age Identification	
Overall Results.....	8
Escort Services	
Internet Classifieds Websites	
Additional Counting Methodologies	
National Estimate of CSEC Incidence	
Statewide Results: Michigan.....	16
Statewide Results: Minnesota	18
Statewide Results: New York.....	20
Summary of Findings	22
Researcher Observations	
Using Data to Drive Change	



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Introduction and Methodology

The commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) is a societal phenomenon receiving growing attention from researchers, policy makers, and a wide array of advocates. Rightfully so, many wonder how it could be the case that children are sold for sex in the United States today. Unfortunately, it is an issue area fraught with mystery, misconception, and a general lack of scientific data.

One fundamental question looms over everyone who tries to put an end to CSEC in their community: how prevalent is the problem, anyway? This research is designed to answer exactly this question in states across the U.S. It involves a series of state-level scientific investigations into the incidence of CSEC among females under age 18.

Why state-level, why female only, and why victims under age 18?

- We measure CSEC incidence state-by-state because community and state-level factors appear to influence greatly the magnitude of the problem, particularly local permissiveness of the commercial sex industry.³
- This study focuses only on female CSEC victims for a variety of reasons, chief among them that it is far less common to encounter blatant advertisements for sex with boys than it is for girls. A different methodological approach might be necessary to estimate CSEC incidence among boys.
- There are several ways to define a “child” according to federal and state laws. Not only does “under age 18” align with important federal laws defining childhood, but it is a definition widely accepted among the general public.

The Difficulties of Studying CSEC

To understand why it is difficult to study CSEC, it is instructive to define it, as CSEC is both simple and challenging to define. A simple definition of CSEC is when a person provides money or anything else of value in exchange for sex with a child. Practically, however, CSEC manifests in many different ways, ranging from survival sex—when a desperate child is forced to exchange sexual favors for basic necessities such as food or shelter—to instances where a child is kidnapped and pimped in underground sex trades. No single research methodology can measure victims of all of these manifestations of exploitation.

³ We are actively examining this issue as we work toward developing a national estimate of CSEC incidence based on patterns among state-level study results.

There have been documented attempts to quantify the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children in the United States, however very few of these involve direct empirical investigations.⁴ Most academic and government quantifications represent educated guesswork.⁵ Several local victims services advocacy organizations have sought to measure the problem in their areas, yet many are forced to rely on second-hand information and estimates from social workers and other victims services providers, thus limiting their estimates to CSEC victims who have already come in contact with sources of help. A thorough review of this research is beyond the scope of the current report, but is readily available in the Estes and Weiner study.⁶

While the available evidence contained in these reports indicates definitively that the problem of adolescent girls' sex services being sold to men does indeed exist, none is designed to use measurable, empirical methodologies to put a hard number on how many girls it affects. There are many reasons why this is the case, not the least of which is the difficulty of ensuring the safety of researchers and subjects. Beyond concerns about safety, though, are methodological challenges related to the nature of the problem itself. One of these challenges in particular—properly identifying age—is important to address briefly at the outset of this report.

⁴ A noteworthy exception to this generalization is a recent scientific study in New York City that used respondent-driven sampling (RDS) to estimate the incidence of CSEC among boys and girls. While we believe the use of RDS will always systematically and significantly bias a sample of CSEC victims to the point that it is unfit for incidence estimation, we nevertheless believe this study yielded important findings about CSEC victimhood. For more information, see:
Curtis, R., K. Terry, M. Dank, K. Dombrowski, and B. Kahn (2008). *The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in New York City*. Center for Court Innovation.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2005). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey*. Available at: www.cdc.gov/yrbs. Accessed on 5/16/10.
Clawson, H. J., M. Layne, and K. Small. (2006). *Estimating human trafficking into the United States: Development of a methodology*. Fairfax, VA: Caliber.
Edward, J.M., Iritani, B.J., & Hallfors, D.D. (2005). Prevalence and correlates of exchanging sex for drugs or money among adolescents in the United States. *Sexually Transmitted Infections* 82(5): 354-358.
Estes, R.J. & Weiner, N.A. (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the US, Canada and Mexico*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.
Finkelhor, D. & Jones, L. (2006). Why have child maltreatment and child victimization declined? *Journal of Social Issues*, 62(4), 685-716.
Gelles, R.J. (1980). Violence in the family: A review of research in the seventies. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 42(4): 873-885.
General Accounting Office. (1982). *Sexual exploitation of children—A problem of unknown magnitude*. Washington, DC: General Accounting Office.
Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D., & Sedlak, A. (2002). Runaway/throwaway children: National estimates and characteristics. *Juvenile Justice Bulletin – NCJ196469*, (pgs. 1-12). Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.
United States Department of Justice, Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section. (2007). *Child prostitution*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved 5/16/10 from (<http://www.usdoj.gov/criminal/ceos/prostitution.html>).
Snyder, H.N., & Sickmund, M. (2006). *Juvenile offenders and victims: 2006 national report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

⁶ Estes, R.J. & Weiner, N.A. (2001). *The commercial sexual exploitation of children in the US, Canada and Mexico*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.

While there are documented cases of girls as young as elementary school age involved in the sex trade, the majority of girls trapped in the industry are in their teenage years. Johns soliciting these girls are engaging in a despicable act, but typically *not* because the johns are pedophiles. It seems that most of the girls they solicit are, in a biological sense, sexually mature.

In fact, it is distinctly possible that johns looking for “young” girls sometimes do not know that the young woman they are soliciting is actually under age 18. One critical aspect of this study shows just how dramatically people fundamentally overestimate the ages of girls posing in mildly provocative ways. Adolescent girls still appear quite young—which we also document as central to their appeal to johns—but often do not appear to be unambiguously younger than 18. The current study involves methodologies that address this and other quantification challenges. The guiding principles of these methodologies are described next.

Guiding Principles

The foundation of the study is comprised of the following guiding principles and assumptions:

- There is no way to study directly—to make contact with—girls being commercially sexually exploited. Even if it were possible to keep researchers safe, it would be absolutely impossible to ensure the safety of the child subject.
- Commercial sexual exploitation of children is, by definition, a commercial practice. Though it is crude to even make the comparison, it is methodologically important to recognize that its enterprises operate under basic rules governing all types of businesses: they must be accessible to current and prospective customers, they must advertise, and they are subject to the law of supply and demand.
- When children are commercially sexually exploited, they are regarded as nothing more than assets to their exploiters. For all intents and purposes, every girl who is being commercially sexually exploited is findable by johns; if not, a girl is no longer an asset to her exploiter.
- Therefore, it is safe to say that this research methodology is designed to count adolescent females who are acutely commercially sexually exploited, and actively marketed within the local sex trade.

Is there any way to ensure that the methodologies based on these principles yield perfect measurements? No, of course not. While the accuracy of the study results overall is helped by having multiple methodologies that approach different facets of the problem simultaneously, there are nevertheless some important caveats to bear in mind when evaluating the results.

One of these is that the study is unable to count organized, underground commercial sexual exploitation of children. This type of exploitation appears to affect Hispanic, Asian, and Native American girls at disproportionately high rates. Research suggests that Hispanic and Asian girls, particularly in ethnic enclaves, become trapped in commercial sexual exploitation of children differently altogether.⁷ Nevertheless, we do encounter a comparatively small number of Asian and Hispanic females while monitoring internet service postings.

⁷ A report titled *DEMAND* by Shared Hope International provides an in-depth explanation of how young Hispanic and Asian girls get caught in the sex trade within the United States.

The most important fact to keep in mind is that the study is a quantum leap forward in determining—objectively and in a replicable fashion—the magnitude of the problem of commercial sexual exploitation of children. Over time, as the study is replicated and the problem tracked objectively, the picture of the problem will become clearer.

Age Identification

When researchers count events that occur at varying degrees of uncertainty, they typically count probabilities rather than discrete cases. For a simple example, consider a drawer of 40 identically-shaped red and blue marbles. Imagine trying to count the number of red marbles while wearing a blindfold. This, obviously, is an impossible task. If we knew from previous experience, however, that 25% of the marbles are red, we would count each marble—without seeing its true color—as .25 red. We count each of the 40 marbles in the drawer this way, and sum up the red probabilities to arrive at a red count of 10 marbles.

Instead of trying to determine precisely whether or not each individual marble was or was not red, which is impossible while blindfolded, we arrive at the most precise count by acknowledging that—while we cannot know exactly the color of any one marble—each has a 25% chance of being red. This, in essence, is how we count the number of girls under 18 in each of the study’s individual methodologies; it is the most scientifically sound way to deal with the inherent uncertainty of estimating girls’ ages.

The key to the technique described in the marble example comes from the phrase “if we knew from previous experience.” The problem is, there is no scientifically reliable previous experience on which to base the probability that a girl selling sex who looks quite young is, indeed, under 18 years. Therefore, we conducted a separate study to serve as this previous experience.

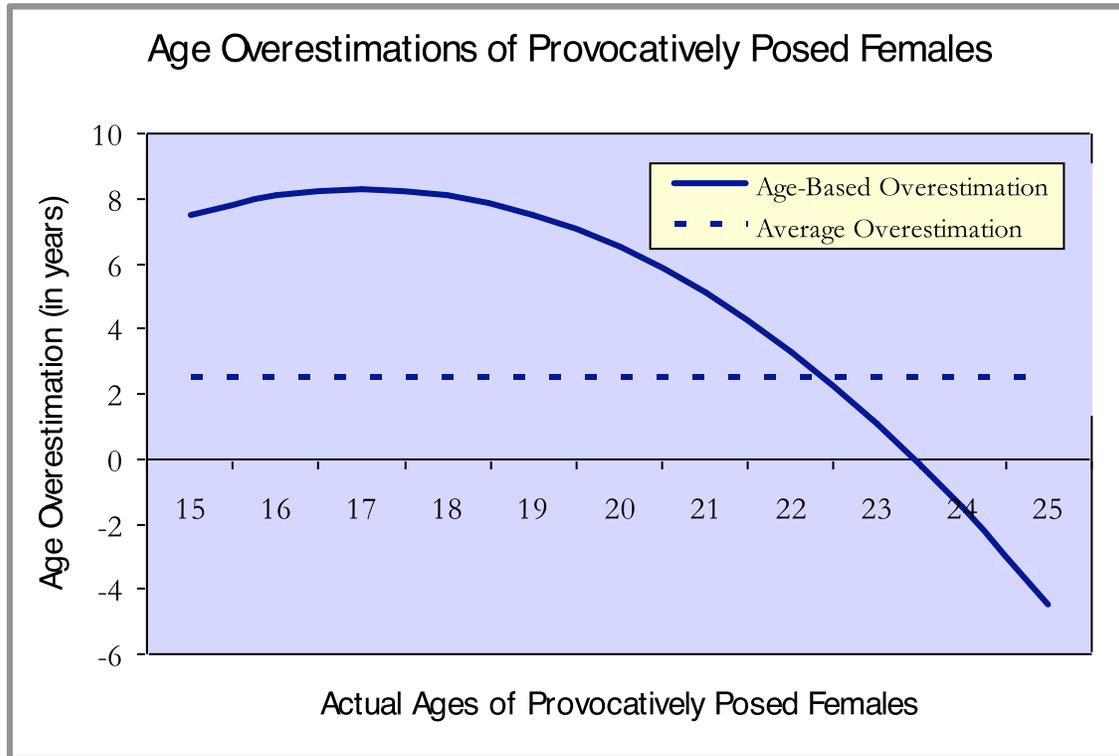
Basically, the study involved asking a random sample of 100 adults to guess the ages of a variety of females in photographs. Some of these pictures were of females whose ages were known (teenagers to young adults), and some were not. Half the pictures were of Black females, the other half White. The pictures of unknown girls came from erotic services postings on the Atlanta Craigslist web site. All pictures were of shoulders and above. Each picture was decent, though subjects were posed provocatively (e.g., a picture of a female licking her lips). Pictures of females of unknown ages were selected because the subject appeared “young.” In selecting the pictures, multiple reviewers agreed that there was at least some chance that each of the females of unknown ages in the pictures was actually under 18. This is how we operationalize “young” throughout the study.

Study participants viewed each of these pictures and estimated the age of each pictured female. Importantly, study participants rated the average age of females from Craigslist (whose ages we did not know) the same as the average age of pictured females whose ages we did know. Study participants were balanced by race and gender, though the results indicated conclusively that participant demographics did not have an impact on age estimations, nor did the demographics of the pictured females have an effect.

Figure 1 shows how study participants tend to overestimate the ages of provocatively posed females. The dotted line represents the average overestimation of 2.5 years. That is, across all ratings of known-age females, participants tended to assume the females were 2.5 years older than they actually were. This is not the whole story, though.

There are other ways to describe this overestimation bias than as a constant overestimate of 2.5 years. What if, for example, people overestimate the ages of adolescent girls more so than they do women in their 20s? The data showed convincingly that this was exactly the case. The solid line in Figure 1 shows how this bias manifests. When a girl under 18 poses provocatively, participants tended to overestimate her age by 7-8 years, whereas when the subject was closer to age 22 or 23, the age estimate was much more accurate than the average overestimate of 2.5 years. In fact, women age 24 and over tend to be estimated as younger than they actually are when posed provocatively.

Figure 1.



This effect, which is represented by a curvilinear mathematical equation, allows us to speak definitively about the probability that a female of a given estimated age is actually under age 18. In fact, the study showed that any given “young” looking girl who is selling sex has a 38% likelihood of being under age 18. Put another way, for every 100 “young” looking girls selling sex, 38 are under 18 years of age. We would compute this by assigning a value of .38 to each of the 100 “young” girls we encounter, then summing the values together to achieve a reliable count.

With this “previous experience” in hand, we can reliably determine how many of the “young” girls we record through the various study methodologies are actually under age 18, and thus victims of commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Overall Results

Our probability-based empirical approach to counting CSEC victims was first implemented in Georgia in 2007, and has since spread to new states across the country. The research is designed to count the total number of female CSEC victims within a state over the course of a 4-week month using several methodologies. Table 1 shows which states are included in the research results, and which counting methodologies have been employed in each.

Table 1. States Included in the CSEC Tracking Study

State	Beginning Count Date	Most Recent Count Date	Tracking Methodologies Employed
<i>Georgia[†]</i>	<i>Aug. 2007</i>	<i>Aug. 2010</i>	<i>Escort Services, Internet Classifieds, Major Hotels, Street Activity</i>
Michigan	Feb. 2010	Aug. 2010	Escort Services, Internet Classifieds
Minnesota	Feb. 2010	Aug. 2010	Escort Services, Internet Classifieds
New York	Feb. 2010	Aug. 2010	Escort Services, Internet Classifieds

[†] *Important note:* Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women’s Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

Data are collected quarterly during the months of February, May, August, and November. The following sections describe the specific methodologies implemented in states other than Georgia. Georgia data collection and reporting are sponsored by the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, which has generously agreed to allow us to share findings for the sake of an improved nationwide assessment.

Escort Services

In order to count adolescent girls whose paid sex services are offered through escort services within a state, we place calls into each of the state’s listed escort service phone numbers over the course of the one-month study period. Calling is necessary since most advertised escort services do not provide information about age in ads. The main goal of these calls was to determine whether the escort service offered “young” girls, defined in this methodology as any escort age 21 and younger.

For many escort services, 21 is the youngest escort they say they have available, though quite a few say they have 18 year-old escorts as well. Many also indicated they have girls who are 18 years or slightly older, but who “look younger than that.” Escort service operators have told our callers they have 17 year-old escorts specifically, and that if we want “full service” (industry code for sex), we

needed to “negotiate that with the girl herself.” Table 2 shows how many escort service phone numbers we found in each state.

Table 2. Escort Service Phone Listings, August 2010

State	Escort Service Phone Numbers	Percent of Working Numbers Connecting to Confirmable, “Full Service” Agencies	Percent of “Full Service” Agencies Offering “Young” Females
<i>Georgia</i> [†]	362	90%	23%
Michigan	169	92%	37%
Minnesota	169	100%	48%
New York	393	99%	48%

[†] *Important note:* Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women’s Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

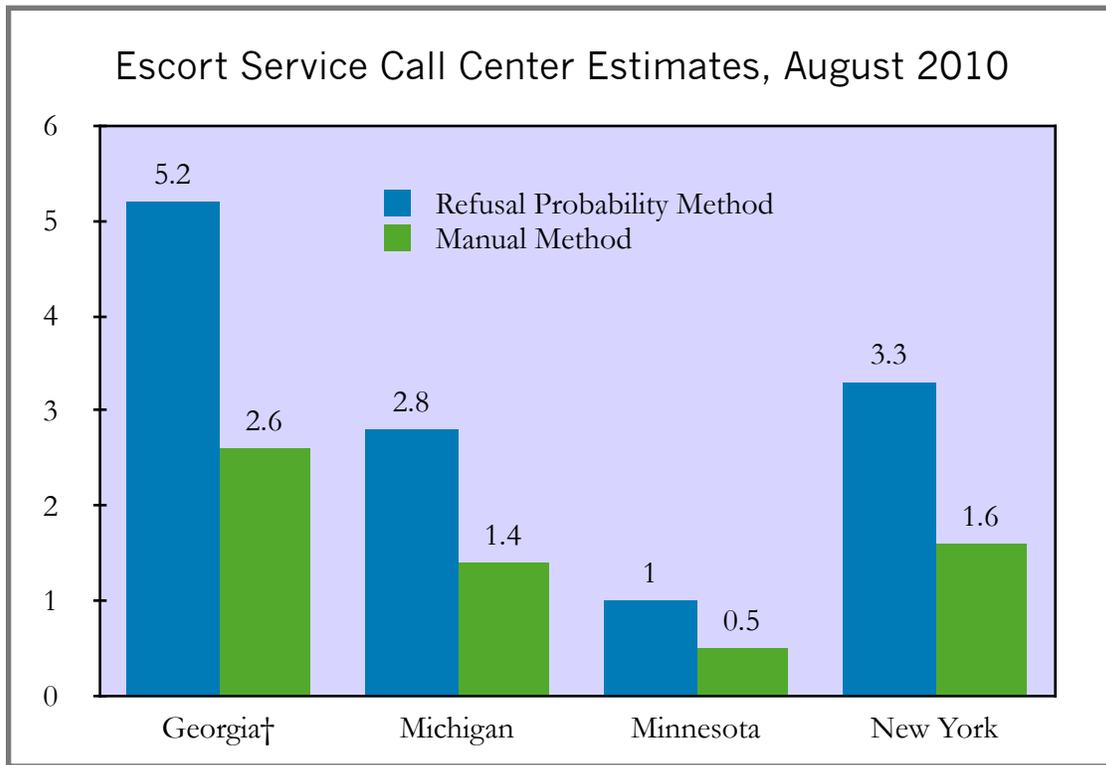
The Problem of Call Centers. We also know that many of these phone numbers go to just a handful of call centers; one operator told us there were more than 50 phone numbers for her call center alone. It is important to know how many call centers we called in order to make calculations properly, since call centers likely correspond to significantly more escorts than non-call centers. We used two separate methods to determine how many call centers we dialed versus non-call centers. The “manual” method involved removing duplicate phone numbers and business names from the list of valid escort service calls, as well as instances when the caller is able to identify a phone operator across multiple calls. This is a very conservative way to estimate unique call sites.

A more reliable way to estimate the number of call centers in the list of valid escort numbers is to mathematically determine how many there are based on how often *they identify us*. We refer to this as the “Refusal Probability” method, and it is based on what we discovered after making numerous calls in a row to supposedly different escort services (each had a unique phone number) from a single phone line with caller ID (most escort services will not pick up the phone if caller ID is disabled).

This is what tended to happen when we unknowingly called the same call center—referred to as call center X—multiple times in close succession: the first call to call center X was successful; the second call was also successful but the operator (usually a woman) recognized our caller’s voice; on the third call the operator usually hung up on us and noted our caller ID number; the fourth and subsequent calls went straight to voicemail.

After we placed 30 calls into our list of phone numbers, practically all of our calls went straight to voicemail. Of course we could not know whether any call we made went to call center X or another one. We are, however, able to deduce mathematically—based on “3 calls then voicemail” in combination with “30 calls from one caller ID then nothing but voicemail”—how many call centers we likely encountered during the month of data collection. Figure 2 displays the results state-by-state.

Figure 2.



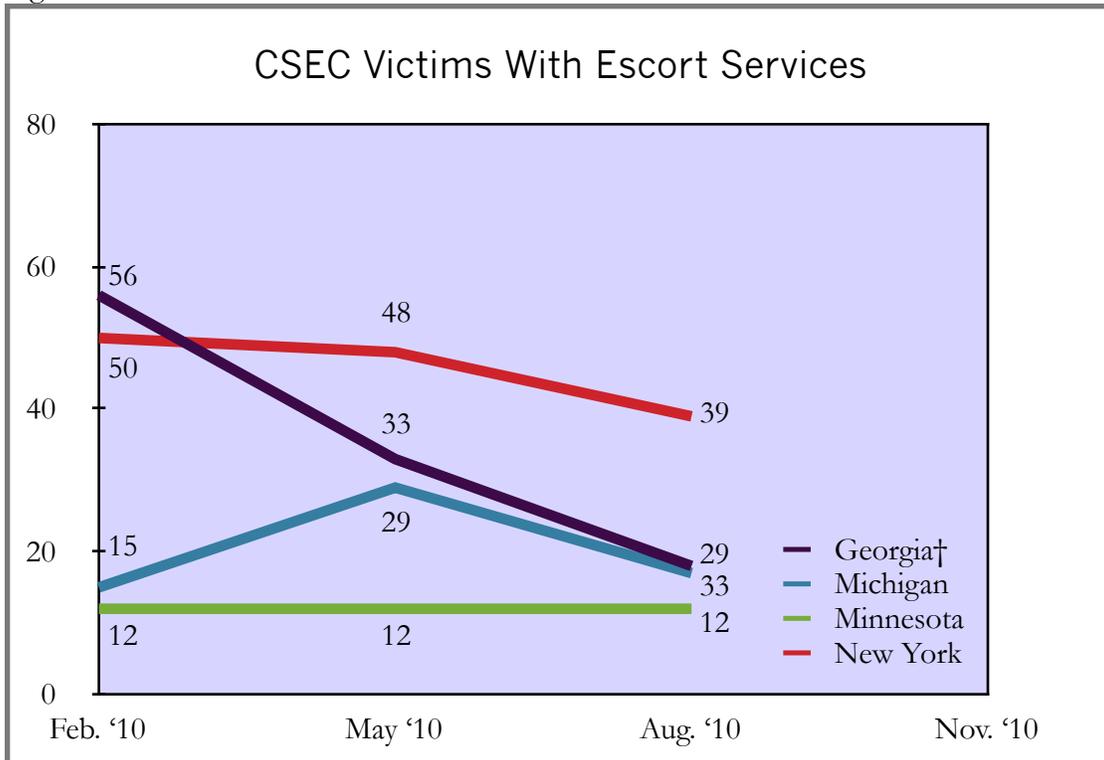
† Important note: Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women’s Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

Using the more reliable “Refusal Probability” method to identify call centers, and knowing how many confirmable “full service” escort services provide “young” females, we are able to calculate the number of CSEC victims statewide under various scenarios:

- If non-call center escort services average 1 escort per service and call center escort services average 10 escorts per service, then we encountered the following numbers of CSEC victims through escort services during the month:
 - Georgia: 8
 - Michigan: 8
 - Minnesota: 5
 - New York: 17
- If non-call center escort services average 5 escorts per service and call center escort services average 30 escorts per service, then we encountered the following numbers of CSEC victims through escort services during the month:
 - Georgia: 31
 - Michigan: 31
 - Minnesota: 22
 - New York: 72

- If non-call center escort services average 2.5 escorts per service and call center escort services average 20 escorts per service, then Figure 3 shows how many CSEC victims we encountered escort services during the month compared to previous study periods. In our opinion—and based on our callers’ experiences speaking with call center operators—this pair of assumptions is most tenable, and thus produce the most accurate count.

Figure 3.



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While a weaker and more conservative estimate of call centers, the “Manual” method of call center determination actually produces *higher* estimates of adolescent girls because of the large number of non-call center escort services. The highest estimate of adolescent girls involved in escort services uses the “Manual” method: if non-call center escort services average 5 escorts per service and call center escort services average 30 escorts per service, then we encountered the following numbers of CSEC victims through escort services during the month:

- Georgia: 43
- Michigan: 45
- Minnesota: 32
- New York: 87

Internet Classifieds Websites

Over the course of the month we also monitored user-added content to Internet classifieds websites such as Craigslist, Backpage, Eroticmugshots, and others. Among other things, these websites are used to advertise sex services. For some of these websites, advertising sex services is all that they do. In today's market, johns have many choices for "shopping" for sex. Shortly *after* data were collected, Craigslist closed the "Adult Services" section of its website.

As recently as May 2009, the story was different. There were many websites, but only one main source for paid sex services ads in states across the U.S.: Craigslist. Starting in 2008, however, Craigslist made a number of changes to its paid sex services ad policies.

At the end of 2008, Craigslist changed its policy for posting erotic services ads on its site. Users now had to "verify" their account with a credit card number, as well as pay \$5 per ad. This was a major shift in Craigslist policy, and as a result there was a sudden dramatic drop in Craigslist ads for erotic services.

In May 2009, Craigslist eliminated the erotic services section of its website completely. At the same time, it created an "adult services" section of its website to house "legitimate" ads, which would cost \$10 each. At the time, advocates' hopes were high that this change would finally spell the end for paid sex services ads on Craigslist, and would completely eliminate ads for young females.

Some things did indeed change – the number of ads posted each day on Craigslist is down, and the pictures associated with ads are no longer crudely pornographic. Looking past this veneer, however, the research shows that little really changed. Table 3 shows the number of ads per month on Craigslist and all other major websites for each state in the study.

Table 3. Ads for Paid Sex Services on Internet Classifieds Websites, August 2010

State	Total Ads Across All Sites	Percent of Females Advertised 2 Weeks or Longer
Georgia [†]	15,400	21%
Michigan	5,040	20%
Minnesota	7,560	22%
New York	126,000	66%

[†] *Important note:* Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor's Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women's Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

As the number of ads plunged on Craigslist, the number of ads on Backpage, and others rose dramatically, such that now there is enough content on these sites to include them in the counts. Very few of the ads on these sites are duplicates of Craigslist advertisers: less than 5% in most of our tests. Clearly, changes at Craigslist have pushed *posters* to other websites, though this is not to say that johns have necessarily followed in droves. Subsequent data collection will help determine the impact of Craigslist's closure on the overall number of CSEC victims.

Table 4 summarizes the ad makeup in each of the states in the study, as well as the number of CSEC victims advertised each day across each state. In this case, “unique” pictured females means the number of different females, rather than the number of ads of females, pictured on websites.

Table 4. Ad Makeup on Internet Classifieds Websites, August 2010

State	Percent of Ads Featuring Unique Pictured Females	Percent of Unique Pictured Females Classified as “Young”	Daily Count of CSEC Victims
Georgia [†]	63%	36%	89
Michigan	63%	40%	51
Minnesota	69%	31%	22
New York [‡]	77%	39%	1,646

[†] *Important note:* Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women’s Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

[‡] *Important note:* Thus far, New York and Georgia are the only states where the volume of ads for “massage parlors” on Internet classifieds websites is large enough to demand its own counting consideration. Thus, the daily count value for these states includes massage parlor data.

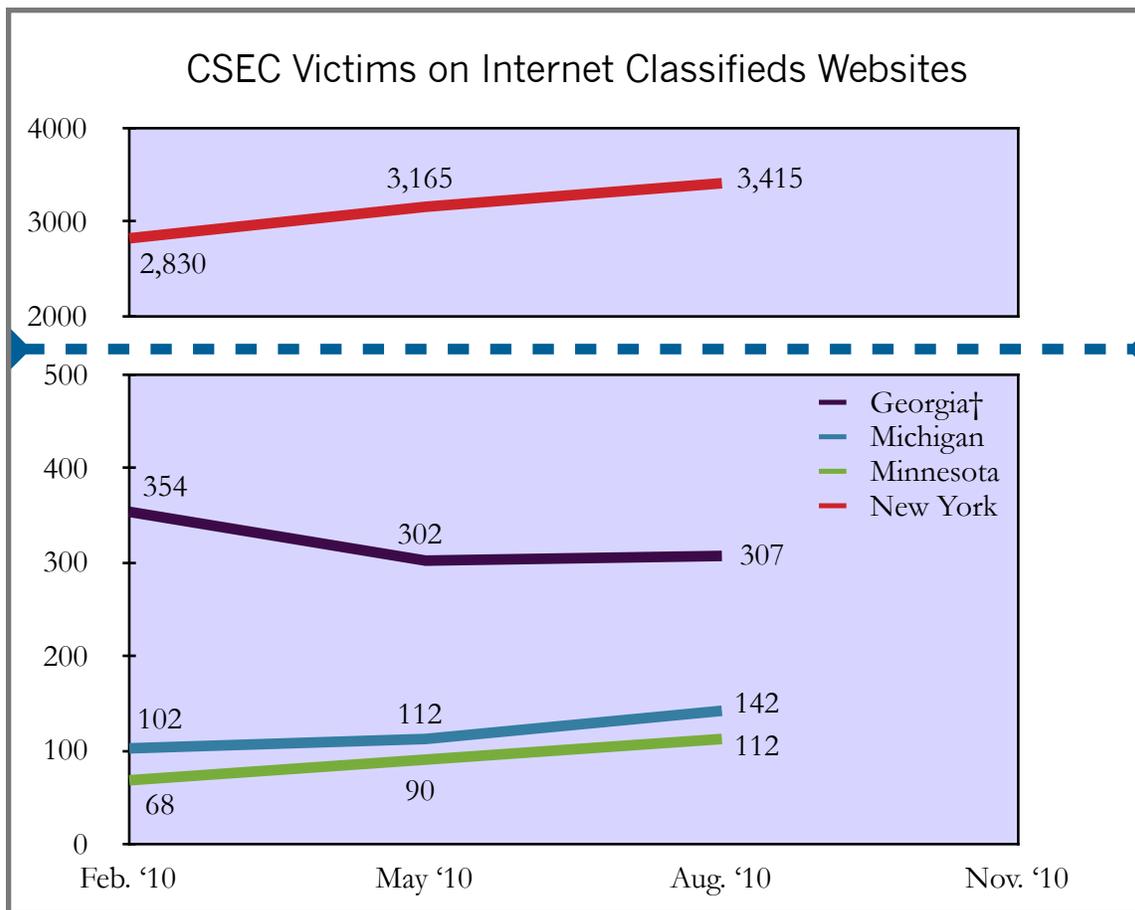
Table 3 showed that many of these girls do not “stay” long on these sites, a finding that is consistent with the notion that many girls are trafficked state-to-state. Our own calls into young females listed on these websites found that some were no longer in the posted city after as little as one week’s time, though it is unlikely that one week is the average length of time.

By combining the daily count of CSEC victims with the percent of females who continue to be advertised for paid sex services in the same state two weeks later, we are able to calculate the number of CSEC victims statewide under various scenarios.

- If the remaining “young” girls who *do not* appear on these websites for the full month are advertised for an average length of 2 weeks, and their ads appear each day during those weeks, then we actually encountered the following number of CSEC victims through Internet classifieds websites during the month:
 - Georgia: 184
 - Michigan: 97
 - Minnesota: 56
 - New York: 2,557
- If the remaining “young” girls who *do not* appear on these websites for the full month are advertised for an average length of 1 week, and their ads appear each day during those weeks, then we actually encountered the following number of CSEC victims through Internet classifieds websites during the month:
 - Georgia: 259
 - Michigan: 125
 - Minnesota: 90
 - New York: 2,901

- If the remaining “young” girls who *do not* appear on these websites for the full month are advertised for an average length of 1 week, and their ads appear 4 days out of 7 during those weeks, then we actually encountered the following number of CSEC victims through Internet classifieds websites during the month:
 - Georgia: 457
 - Michigan: 199
 - Minnesota: 180
 - New York: 4,104
- If the remaining “young” girls who *do not* appear on these websites for the full month are advertised for an average length of 2 weeks, and their ads appear 4 days out of 7 during those weeks, then Figure 4 shows how many CSEC victims we actually encountered through Internet classifieds websites during the month compared to previous study periods. In our opinion, this assumption is most tenable, and thus produces the most accurate count.

Figure 4.



† Important note: Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor’s Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women’s Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

Additional Counting Methodologies

Currently only Georgia is employing counting methodologies other than Internet classifieds and escort services. These two methodologies are street activity—which involves monitoring and videotaping designated driving routes—and major hotels—which involves monitoring activity in very large hotels in public spaces such as atriums and bars. Information on these two methodologies is available from the Governor’s Office for Children and Families (<http://children.georgia.gov>).

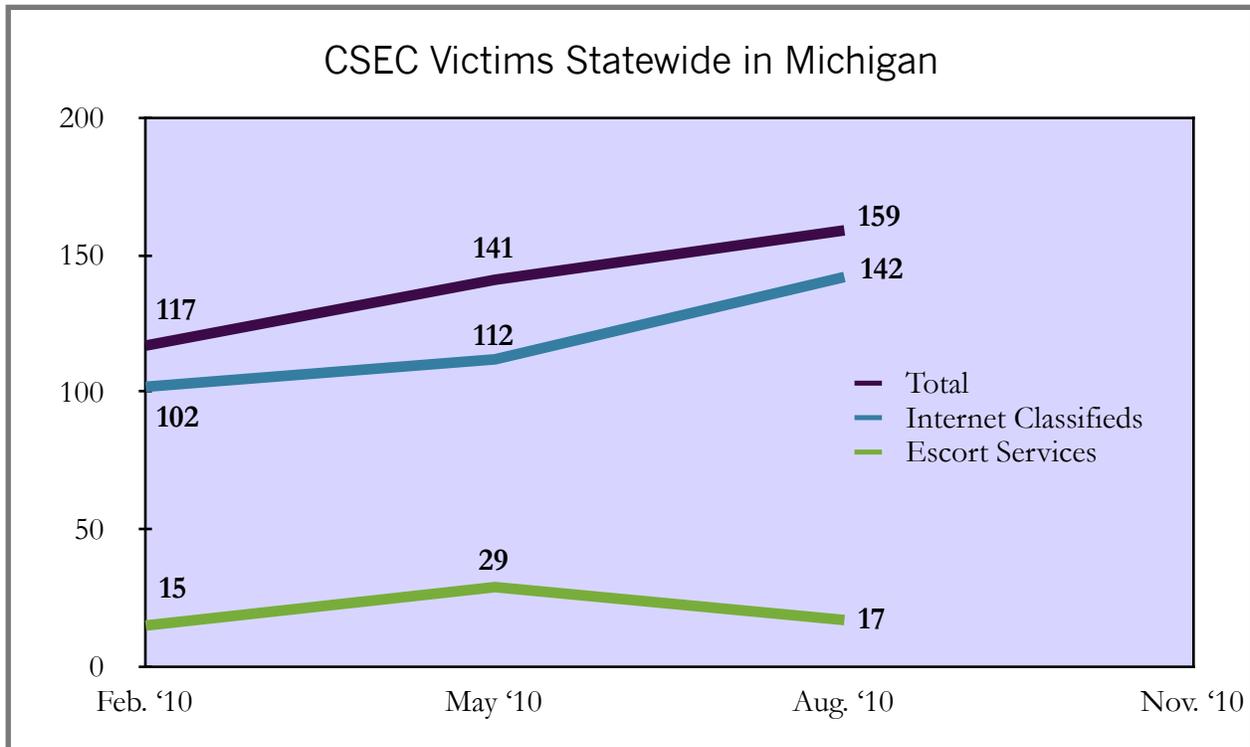
National Estimate of CSEC Incidence

One of the goals of this state-by-state investigation is to develop a national estimate of CSEC incidence without having to collect empirical data in each of the 50 U.S. states simultaneously. As we collect data in more states over time, we will be looking for patterns that can help us impute estimated results for states where we did not collect data firsthand. At present we do not have enough data to facilitate this analysis.

Statewide Results: Michigan

Figure 5 summarizes the latest CSEC tracking study results for Michigan.

Figure 5.



Girls Per Typical Weekend Night

- While it is important to quantify this problem over the course of a full month, it is also valuable to estimate how many girls are victimized through CSEC on any given weekend night—the time when activity peaks. This calculation involves re-examining each methodology and its assumptions to see which computation most closely aligns with a one-day count. For Michigan, the latest data suggest **57 girls under 18** are commercially sexually exploited on a typical weekend night via Internet classifieds websites and escort services.
 - Since our Internet classifieds methodology is derived from a collection of one-day counts, our research indicates that **on any given weekend night, there are 51 girls under age 18 commercially sexually exploited through ads posted on these websites.**

- Absent an empirically-derived method of determining a daily count from escort service results, we are compelled to assume that the pattern governing daily counts on Internet classifieds websites applies to escort services as well. Using this method, our count indicates that **on any given night, there are 6 girls under age 18 commercially sexually exploited through escort services.**

Observations and Considerations

- The percentage of Michigan escort services offering “full service” (industry code for sex), as well as the percentage offering “young” females is consistent with other states during the current study period, but previously was comparatively quite low. Some advocates believe this low period was attributable to aggressive police monitoring of escort services, particularly in Detroit, thus producing an artificially low statewide escort service CSEC count. Our experiences collecting the data during this previously low period might confirm this belief at some level. First, our escort service callers reported at the time that many agencies simply would not service johns in the Detroit area. Second, Michigan Internet classifieds websites at the time had the highest percentage of “young” females of any of the states in the study, rejecting the hypothesis that Michigan johns are uninterested in young females altogether.
- Michigan consistently has the lowest “tenure” rate of commercially sexually exploited females on Internet classifieds websites (20% still advertised two weeks later) of any of the states in the study. Indeed, this is the lowest tenure rate we have observed since we began data collection in 2007. High turnover rates imply high rates of interstate sex trafficking, among other things.
- A problem like CSEC is abhorrent and intolerable regardless of its incidence. Nevertheless, it can be helpful to compare CSEC incidence to other social problems in Michigan for an improved sense of scope of the issue.⁸ For example, more adolescent girls are commercially sexually exploited *in one month* in Michigan than...
 - ...there are females under age 25 who committed suicide in one year (31)
 - ...there are women who died from complications due to AIDS in one year (60; *estimated*)
 - ...there are infants who died from SIDS in one year (46)
 - ...there are females under age 25 who were killed in car accidents in one year (106)

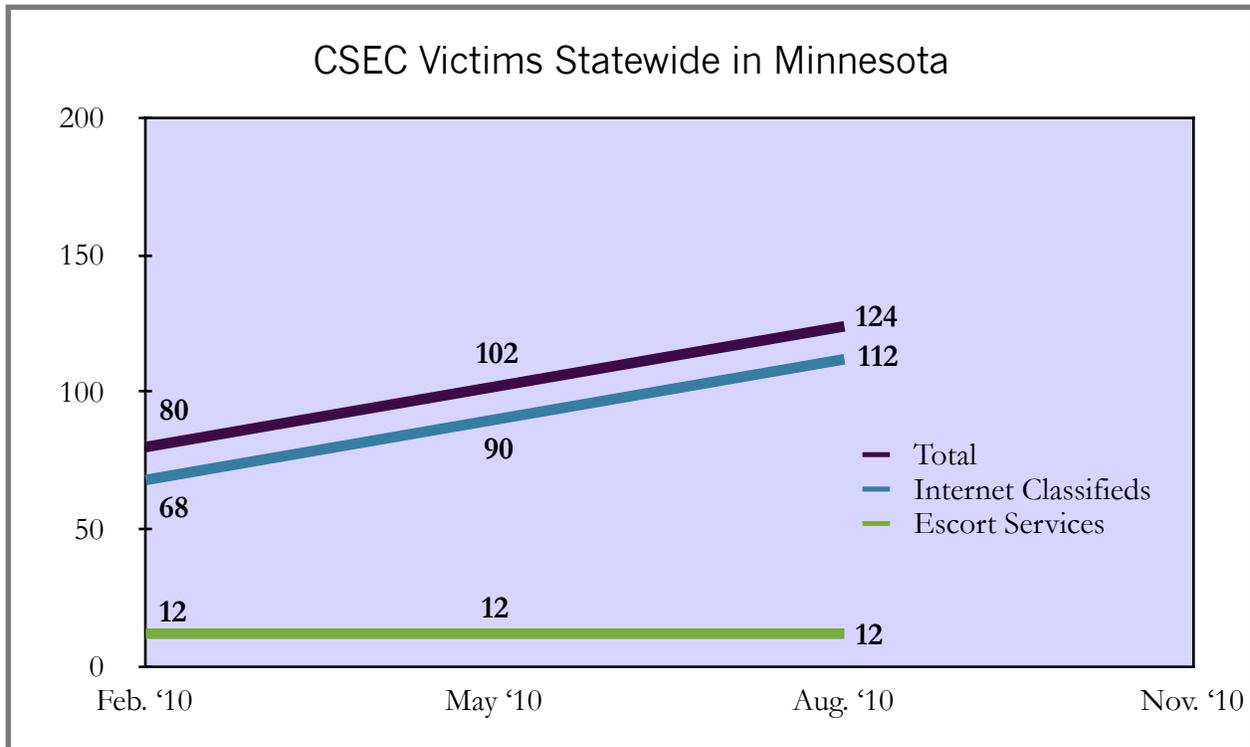
Each of these problems is widely regarded as too prevalent to ignore. By prevalence alone, the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Michigan belongs in the same category.

⁸ All Michigan comparison data are from the Michigan Department of Community Health, 2007—the latest year for which data are available.

Statewide Results: Minnesota

Figure 6 summarizes the latest CSEC tracking study results for Minnesota.

Figure 6.



Girls Per Typical Weekend Night

- While it is important to quantify this problem over the course of a full month, it is also valuable to estimate how many girls are victimized through CSEC on any given weekend night—the time when activity peaks. This calculation involves re-examining each methodology and its assumptions to see which computation most closely aligns with a one-day count. For Minnesota, the latest data suggest **24 girls under 18** are commercially sexually exploited on a typical weekend night via Internet classifieds websites and escort services.
 - Since our Internet classifieds methodology is derived from a collection of one-day counts, our research indicates that **on any given weekend night, there are 22 girls under age 18 commercially sexually exploited through ads posted on these websites.**

- Absent an empirically-derived method of determining a daily count from escort service results, we are compelled to assume that the pattern governing daily counts on Internet classifieds websites applies to escort services as well. Using this method, our count indicates that **on any given night, there are 2 girls under age 18 commercially sexually exploited through escort services.**

Observations and Considerations

- Minnesota advocates have amassed strong evidence that Native American girls are victimized by CSEC at high rates in the state.⁹ While we did encounter some females advertised as being Native Americans, there may well be Native American CSEC victims we were unable to count in the study.
- In previous study periods, the percentage of “young” females on Minnesota’s Craigslist websites was quite low compared to other states, as well as compared to Minnesota Backpage websites. We suspected this was because the overall number of ads on Minnesota Craigslist websites is too low to provide the “safety in numbers” effect, whereby ads with very young girls are too difficult for police and other investigators to monitor on a consistent basis. Indeed, the percentage of “young” females on Minnesota Backpage websites was considerably higher; we speculated this was because there were more ads among which to hide adolescents. This was the only state in the study where the percentage of “young” females on Craigslist is lower than on Backpage. However, the latest round of data collection suggests this might have been an aberration, as the percentage of “young” females on Minnesota Craigslist websites is currently comparable to Backpage and other websites. Additionally, the overall number of ads on Minnesota websites increased dramatically during this study period.
- A problem like CSEC is abhorrent and intolerable regardless of its incidence. Nevertheless, it can be helpful to compare CSEC incidence to other social problems in Minnesota for an improved sense of scope of the issue.¹⁰ For example, more adolescent girls are commercially sexually exploited *in one month* in Minnesota than...
 - ...there are teens girls who died by suicide, homicide, and accidents combined in one year (29)
 - ...there are women who died from complications due to AIDS in one year (11)
 - ...there are female infants who died from SIDS in one year (6)
 - ...there are women of all ages murdered in one year (37)

Each of these problems is widely regarded as too prevalent to ignore. By prevalence alone, the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Minnesota belongs in the same category.

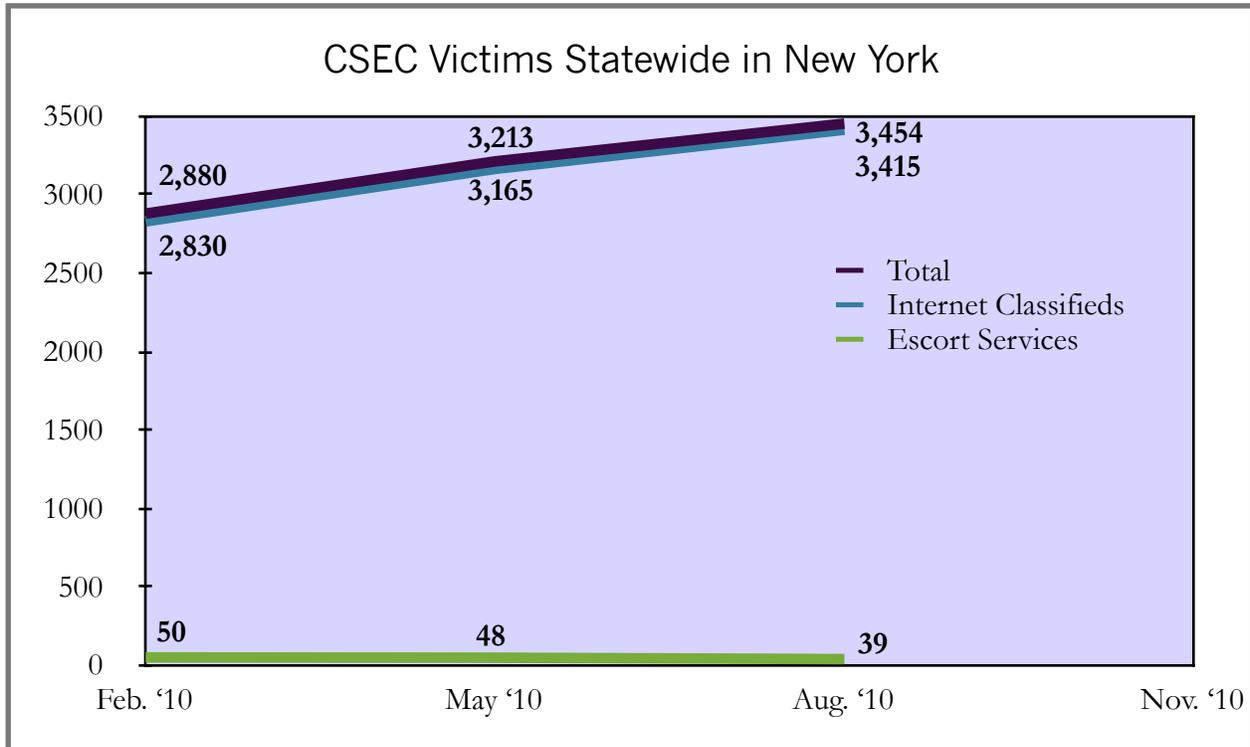
⁹ See *Shattered Hearts*, a 2009 report commissioned by the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center.

¹⁰ All Minnesota comparison data are from the Minnesota Department of Health, Center for Health Statistics, 2007—the latest year for which data are available.

Statewide Results: New York

Figure 7 summarizes the latest CSEC tracking study results for New York.

Figure 7.



Girls Per Typical Weekend Night

- While it is important to quantify this problem over the course of a full month, it is also valuable to estimate how many girls are victimized through CSEC on any given weekend night—the time when activity peaks. This calculation involves re-examining each methodology and its assumptions to see which computation most closely aligns with a one-day count. For New York, the latest data suggest **1,665 girls under 18** are commercially sexually exploited on a typical weekend night via Internet classifieds websites and escort services.
 - Since our Internet classifieds methodology is derived from a collection of one-day counts, our research indicates that **on any given weekend night, there are 1,646 girls under age 18 commercially sexually exploited through ads posted on these websites.**

- Absent an empirically-derived method of determining a daily count from escort service results, we are compelled to assume that the pattern governing daily counts on Internet classifieds websites applies to escort services as well. Using this method, our count indicates that **on any given night, there are 19 girls under age 18 commercially sexually exploited through escort services.**

Observations and Considerations

- On Super Bowl Sunday 2010, there were 80% more paid sex ads on Craigslist in New York than the typical Sunday. The Super Bowl was played in Miami.
- Many of the females advertised on Super Bowl Sunday did not appear two weeks later, producing what we now believe was a low tenure rate. Tenure rates during subsequent data collection periods is significantly higher, currently over 60%.
- It is somewhat difficult to figure out if New York's Internet classifieds tracking results are shockingly high, or if its escort service tracking results are shockingly low. Given the size of the state—in particular its metropolitan area—we are inclined to believe the latter. Further investigation should help reveal why escort service activity is comparatively rare in New York.
- Ads for so-called “massage parlors”—which are widely recognized as incognito brothels—are plentiful on New York Craigslist websites, much more so than any other state in the study. These ads often brazenly advertise “your choice of young girls,” particularly Asian girls.
- A problem like CSEC is abhorrent and intolerable regardless of its incidence. Nevertheless, it can be helpful to compare CSEC incidence to other social problems in New York for an improved sense of scope of the issue.¹¹ For example, more adolescent girls are commercially sexually exploited *in one month* in New York than...
 - ...there are teens who committed suicide (54) or were hospitalized for self-inflicted injury (1,222) in one year
 - ...there are those who died from complications due to AIDS in one year (1,327)
 - ...there are women of all ages killed by breast cancer in one year (2,715)

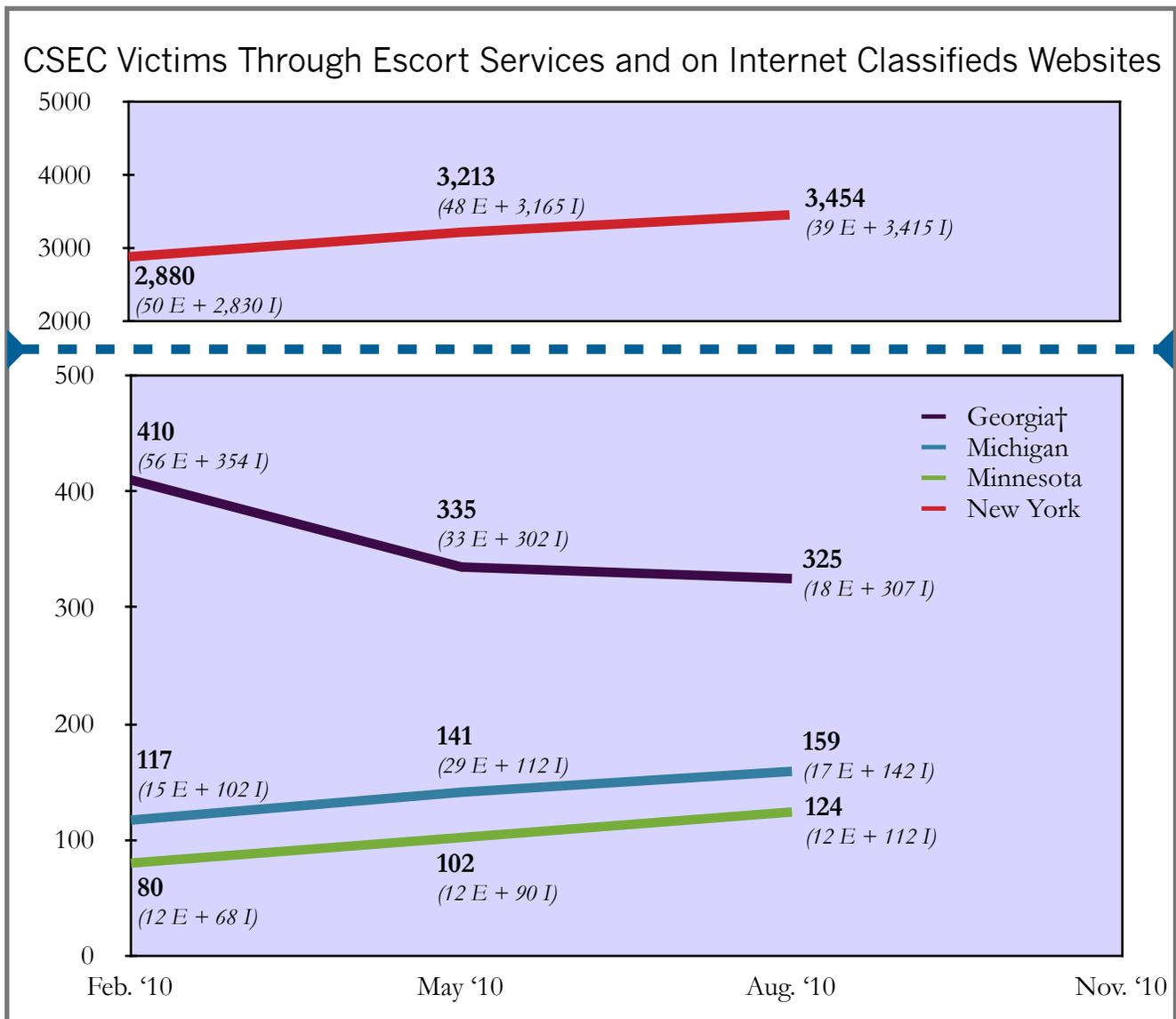
Each of these problems is widely regarded as too prevalent to ignore. By prevalence alone, the commercial sexual exploitation of children in New York belongs in the same category.

¹¹ All New York comparison data are from the New York State Department of Health, 2007—the latest year for which data are available.

Summary of Findings

Figure 8 shows the results of the most recent research to quantify the number of adolescent females commercially sexually exploited in states across the country. The number of victims counted through escort services (E) and on Internet classifieds websites (I) is noted parenthetically, next to the total number of victims in boldface.

Figure 8.



† Important note: Georgia data from August 2009 to current shared courtesy of the Governor's Office for Children and Families, and are not to be reported as owned or sponsored by the Women's Funding Network or *A Future. Not A Past*. Published findings are available for download at <http://children.georgia.gov>.

Researcher Observations

- The percentage of Michigan escort services offering “full service” (industry code for sex), as well as the percentage offering “young” females is consistent with other states during the current study period, but previously was comparatively quite low. Some advocates believe this low period was attributable to aggressive police monitoring of escort services, particularly in Detroit, thus producing an artificially low statewide escort service CSEC count. Our experiences collecting the data during this previously low period might confirm this belief at some level. First, our escort service callers reported at the time that many agencies simply would not service johns in the Detroit area. Second, Michigan Internet classifieds websites at the time had the highest percentage of “young” females of any of the states in the study, rejecting the hypothesis that Michigan johns are uninterested in young females altogether.
- Michigan consistently has the lowest “tenure” rate of commercially sexually exploited females on Internet classifieds websites (20% still advertised two weeks later) of any of the states in the study. Indeed, this is the lowest tenure rate we have observed since we began data collection in 2007. High turnover rates imply high rates of interstate sex trafficking, among other things.
- Minnesota advocates have amassed strong evidence that Native American girls are victimized by CSEC at high rates in the state.¹² While we did encounter some females advertised as being Native Americans, there may well be Native American CSEC victims we were unable to count in the study.
- In previous study periods, the percentage of “young” females on Minnesota’s Craigslist websites was quite low compared to other states, as well as compared to Minnesota Backpage websites. We suspected this was because the overall number of ads on Minnesota Craigslist websites is too low to provide the “safety in numbers” effect, whereby ads with very young girls are too difficult for police and other investigators to monitor on a consistent basis. Indeed, the percentage of “young” females on Minnesota Backpage websites was considerably higher; we speculated this was because there were more ads among which to hide adolescents. This was the only state in the study where the percentage of “young” females on Craigslist is lower than on Backpage. However, the latest round of data collection suggests this might have been an aberration, as the percentage of “young” females on Minnesota Craigslist websites is currently comparable to Backpage and other websites. Additionally, the overall number of ads on Minnesota websites increased dramatically during this study period.
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¹² See *Shattered Hearts*, a 2009 report commissioned by the Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center.

Using Data to Drive Change

- An effective campaign to end the commercial sexual exploitation of children statewide should have at its foundation reliable, scientific data on the state of the epidemic locally. This foundational resource should be a part of all of your advocacy efforts, and should be shared widely and freely with local advocates for maximum effectiveness. Reliable data such as these are crucial for gaining traction with legislators and other policy makers, as well as for leveraging public funding—particularly in reallocating existing victims services dollars.
- Research data are also important in raising public awareness of the realities of CSEC in your state. Doing so will set your campaign apart from many others, and will provide you with a high degree of perceived credibility among various audiences. Relying on empirical scientific data will cause others to perceive you as a credible expert, whereas inflated “guesstimates” will often lead others to perceive you as having a personal agenda.
- We strongly encourage advocates to talk about CSEC incidence in their states relative to the incidence of more widely known social ills such as teens killed in car accidents, etc. Doing so helps audiences understand an incidence figure on a more personal level.
- Not only does this research approach provide tracking data over time, it also consistently yields valuable, if unexpected, findings. For example, in Michigan we previously observed a sharp uptick in the number of CSEC victims through escort services. The reasons for this uptick (a higher percentage of escort services offering both “full service” and “young” females) more so than the uptick itself suggest that perhaps these services perceive a decline in the aggressiveness of local law enforcement. This information is valuable to share collaboratively with local law enforcement.
- We recommend making a campaign commitment to tracking CSEC incidence scientifically over time, as it greatly increases advocates’ knowledge of the macro-level trends in the issue and the perceived credibility as a campaign. Additionally, a firm commitment to tracking data over time will eventually allow you to forecast CSEC incidence in the future.