New Sex Trafficking Survey: Among Other Insights, Americans Say Issue Tops Hate Crime And Terrorism

Sex trafficking and human exploitation in America is seen as one of the most problematic crimes in the U.S. and education is key to preventing the rise of this epidemic that affects every state, according to a new national survey released today. The Selah Way Foundation and Selah Freedom - America's largest anti-sex trafficking service organizations - commissioned the survey through Opinium - a strategic insight agency.

SARASOTA, Fla. (PRWEB) February 03, 2020 -- Sex trafficking is seen as one of the most problematic crimes within the U.S. according to Opinium, a strategic insight and market research firm and The Selah Way Foundation/ Selah Freedom - the largest national anti-sex trafficking service organization.

While more than half of the 2005 American adults recently surveyed (53%) see sex trafficking as a problem within their country, this was higher than hate crime (47%) and terrorism (41%).

The awareness of this national problem is reiterated when asked the question, "where do you think sex trafficking occurs"? The USA was the number one answer at 76%, followed by Africa (58%) and Russia (57%). When it comes to knowing about the risk of sex trafficking in their local area, over half think that there is a high to medium risk (59%), rising to 64% in the South Atlantic region, and seemingly less of a risk among those in North East – New England (48%).

Highlights of the survey results include:
- 2 in 5 Americans feel they have very little or no knowledge about sex trafficking, and while the awareness of the issue around sex trafficking is high, the knowledge and understanding on the matter is less so. Two thirds state they do not feel confident in their ability to detect someone may be a sex trafficker (68%), and a similar amount feel they would not be able to detect if someone was being used for sex traffic (63%).
- Confidence grows in two thirds of American adults, as they feel they know who to contact if they suspected that sex traffic was occurring (67%). A similar amount feel they would know how to explain sex traffic and the associated risks (66%). Furthermore 7 in 10 are confident that they can protect themselves from sex traffickers (71%), this reaches a high of 80% in North East New England, and lowest in South East Central and West pacific (both 67%).
- For those who have at least a little or no knowledge on the topic of sex trafficking, the majority are getting this from media sources (news 61%, and television 54%) while the role of social media also plays a pivotal role in educating American on the matter as well (social media 37%, and friends & family 24%). Social Media is the number one source of information for 18 - 24-year olds (61%)

Sex Trafficking Misconceptions

This lack of knowledge outlined above is further echoed in the misconceptions and misunderstandings of sex trafficking. The most misconceived idea from those polled tell us prostitution and sex trafficking are not the same thing, with over three quarters thinking this (76%). Secondly more than half don’t think - or do not know - there is a direct link between pornography and sex trafficking (58%), and for a sixth of the population, women and girls enter prostitution by choice (16%).

Other salient points gleaned from the survey:
- 7 in 10 Americans think sex trafficking happens through kidnapping. Kidnapping is believed by most Americans to be a way in which people become victims of sex trafficking (71%). This is closely followed by means of social media (60%), through gangs (55%) and the glamorization for the sex industry (49%).
- There are less than half who think sex trafficking occurs through pornographic sites (45%); the younger generations (18-34 age group) think this is even less of a gateway to becoming a victim (38%) than their older counterparts; 35-54 year old's (42%) and 55+
- Only 24% think that buyers of sex are typically 40-50 males.
- When asked to explore the type of persons who may be vulnerable to becoming a victim of sex trafficking, two thirds feel young girls are most at risk (66%). This is followed by children who have run away from home, (61%) or are/have been in the foster system (54%). Although, a sixth of people think that there are no demographics or circumstances which put one group more at risk more than any other (16%).
- Just over a third of people (37%) believe it is everyone’s responsibility to help tackle sex trafficking.
- The FBI is seen as being at the forefront for tackling sex trafficking within the US, as 42% said it should be their responsibility to tackle the issue. This is closely followed by local police/ sheriffs (39%); everyone (37%) and the Government (36%).
- Those polled believe that on average, children should be educated about sex trafficking at around the age of 10 and a half years old through the school and education system (78%). For those who do think children should receive education regarding sex trafficking, 9 in 10 think they should be given the knowledge on how to spot predatory behavior (90%). This is followed by learning the tools needed to stay safe online (84%), and who to contact if they suspect a sex trafficker (77%).

James Endersby, CEO of Opinium, the research agency behind the study, commented “Our nationwide study exposes the high levels of misunderstanding around the issue of sex trafficking in America. There is a very clear need for vastly improved levels of education nationally on the dangers and signs of sex trafficking, as well as increased impetus to arm children with a toolkit to improve their awareness too, and to protect themselves and others.”

Elizabeth Melendez Fisher Good, CEO/Co-Founder of The Selah Way Foundation/Selah Freedom adds “we are so grateful to Opinium for partnering with us in our mission to bring greater awareness to the public about sex trafficking. This survey will be one of several we hope to generate in 2020 to bring light into the darkness of sex trafficking and lead America in finding solutions to eradicate exploitation.”

Selah Freedom is a national organization with the mission to end sex trafficking and bring freedom to the exploited through their four strong proven programs: Advocacy & Awareness, Prevention, Outreach and Residential with a holistic approach that reaches this demographic at every point possible - on the streets, in the jail system, and as a first point of contact for law enforcement, fellow NPOs, the FBI and United States Attorney's Office. Through their Prevention Program, they have created customized, cutting edge curricula for students K-12th grade and interlocuers which has proven to educate and empower them on this issue and equip them with practical ways to stay protected. The Selah Way Foundation, the first of its kind - is a global network of leading anti-sex trafficking service providers dedicated to eradicating this issue on a global scale. The Selah Way Foundation creates a solid system of care for survivors of sex trafficking. Anyone who suspects signs of sex trafficking and victims in need of help can contact Selah Freedom at: 1-888-8-FREE-ME (888-837-3363). Visit www.selahfreedom.com and www.TheSelahWay.org and follow on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/selahfreedominc Instagram @selahfreedom.

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