

## **MEDIA CONTACTS:**

Patrick Stumpf, University Relations, [pcstumpf@umn.edu](mailto:pcstumpf@umn.edu), 612-624-2801;

Nina Shepherd, Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center, [sheph001@umn.edu](mailto:sheph001@umn.edu), 612-625-5716;

Jen Day, Women's Foundation of Minnesota, [Jen@wfmn.org](mailto:Jen@wfmn.org), 612-236-1828

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



### **NEW REPORT EXPLORES SEX BUYERS IN STATE OF MINNESOTA**

*First-of-its-kind research provides insight toward national model to combating sex trafficking*

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL—First-of-its-kind research on sex buyers provides insight toward developing a nationwide model to combat human trafficking, according to a study released by researchers at the [University of Minnesota's Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center \(UROC\)](#). The study was funded by the [Women's Foundation of Minnesota](#) as part of its [MN Girls Are Not for Sale](#) campaign to end sex trafficking in Minnesota.

Aided by more than 150 qualitative interviews of law enforcement, prosecutors and social service personnel in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, the report examines the demographics of Minnesota's sex buyers, their buying tendencies, and methods of entry into the marketplace. The market includes victims of sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.

"The market for sex buying is hidden, illegal, highly stigmatized, and often dangerous," said Dr. Lauren Martin, the study's primary investigator and UROC's director of research. "There's no phone book or listing of sex providers, which complicates the research. However, this study is an important step in developing a knowledge-base that will help end sex trafficking in Minnesota and beyond."

Findings include:

- Sex buyers are predominantly middle-aged, white, married men from across the whole state of Minnesota, which is representative of Minnesota's general population. It was found that women also purchase sex; however, in much lower numbers. Most buyers enter the marketplace via Internet and online ads; direct solicitation from street-based prostitution or at transit hubs, parks, schools and places where homeless youth hang out; or word-of-mouth networks which are often underground and hard to verify.
- Sex buyers typically do not purchase sex in their hometowns—a finding particularly prevalent in small towns and rural areas. Instead, most buyers travel between 30 and 60 miles to purchase sex, with traveling often done during the work commute or over the lunch hour.
- Sex buyers in Minnesota are not necessarily purchasing a person or sex act, but rather a sexual experience that is shaped by the power and control derived from their

purchasing power. Additionally, researchers identified a range of exertion in power and control techniques to obtain fulfillment—including acts of fantasy and domination, as well as the use of violence and even attempted murder.

- A significant portion of sex buyers do not know whether the person they purchase sex from is a trafficked individual or not. The way most buyers enter the marketplace is designed to obscure transactional mechanisms and create a veil between trafficking operations and sex buyers.

“This study is key to creating targeted strategies to disrupt the sex-trafficking market, end the demand, and decrease gender-based violence,” said Mary Beth Hanson, vice president of external relations, Women’s Foundation of Minnesota. “To be successful, we must educate and engage boys and men as leaders in this movement, and commit to a future of safety, opportunity, and respect for all girls and women in Minnesota.”

The report is a follow-up to a previous University study also funded by the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota, [Mapping the Market for Sex with Trafficked Minor Girls in Minneapolis \(2014\)](#), which charted the overall market for juvenile sex trafficking within communities in one city (Minneapolis).

To see the full, 130-page report, titled, *Mapping the Demand: Sex Buyers in Minnesota*, click [here](#). \*Disclaimer: the contents of the report are often graphic in nature.

###

### **About the Research Partners**

The research was designed and conducted by Dr. Lauren Martin, director of research at the University of Minnesota’s [Urban Resource Outreach-Engagement Center \(UROC\)](#). The research was commissioned and funded by the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota.

UROC’s work on this project is part of “Sex Trading, Trafficking and Community Well-Being,” its academic-based initiative that is on the forefront of addressing sex trading, prostitution, and sex trafficking through research. UROC connects the University of Minnesota in partnership with communities on critical urban issues and is a unit of the University’s Office for Public Engagement.

The [Women’s Foundation of Minnesota](#) is a statewide community foundation that invests in innovation to drive gender equity. The Foundation funded this research as part of MN Girls Are Not For Sale campaign, its eight year, \$7.5 million campaign to end sex trafficking and reduce the demand through grantmaking, research, and public education.