

# Teenage prostitution

[Law](#), [Crime](#)



Teenage Prostitution “ I had been sleeping on a park bench for three nights.... The fourth night...I met a man named Troy, who was really good to me at first.... Little did I know that my problems were about to begin”

(Flowers 108). Prostitution can be a dangerous and scarce lifestyle for many teenage girls, but exists within the United States. These girls grow up very quickly and their innocence may be shattered through this profession, but many lack the knowledge of the true meaning behind prostitution.

Teenage girls who prostitute in America are living very dangerous lifestyles through this profession and face detrimental experiences in their young lives. A Prostitute is one who involves herself in sexual activity for pay (Webster 518). There are many aspects to prostitution including the prostitutes themselves, the pimps, and the johns. The pimps are generally men who get customers for their prostitutes as a means of making money for themselves ( Flowers 121). The Johns are the people who pay a prostitute for sexual activity.

These men are the prostitute’s customers, and the men who provide the money for the pimps and prostitutes. (Flowers 125). The exact number of teenage prostitutes is never clear, however, it is estimated that there are more than 300, 000 teenagers in the United States, who are exposed to prostitution (Vincent). For teenage girls in America the average age to begin prostituting is by the age of fourteen years old. It is estimated that at least one fifth of all the prostitutes on the streets are teenage girls.

As many as ninety percent of these girls were charmed and pressured into selling sexual favors by a pimp. Another twenty percent of these girls were

runaways, becoming prostitutes through their association with other street children and teenage prostitutes. In most cases, these young girls are recruiting for their pimps (Flowers, 108-109) There are many teenage girls in prostitution, but one of the most frequently asked questions is: What kinds of girls are subjected to prostitution?

The kinds of girls that are prostituting are some who have broken homes, an abusive history, a promiscuous mother, bad relationships with one or both parents, and a history of running away, which is the biggest aspect leading a girl into the life of prostitution (Vincent). Commonly one might assume that a young prostitute would come from a lower class environment. However, there has been much research that has shown a mix of results with the relationship between teenage prostitution and class. Studies, which involve higher samples, have found that many of these adolescent female prostitutes come from middle to upper class families.

In one of recent samples of teenage prostitutes, they found that seventy percent of these girls were from average to above average income levels. Most of these girls have come from families characterized by divorce, separation, and pure dysfunction (Flowers 111). Contrary to these results, teenage prostitution can come from many different types of families and income status'. " Some of these girls come from loving homes. Others have fled sexual abuse at home or fallen into drug addiction" (Pulkinnen). The girls who prostitute are usually ones that run away from home, because of a bad home life.

Teenage girls usually run away from home due to an unstable family situation including: physical or sexual abuse, absence of one or both of the parents, poverty, or drug abuse. Some runaways leave because of school problems, sexual identity issues, peer pressure, boredom, or even mental illnesses. Many runaway teenagers are actually thrown out of their home or abandoned by their parent or guardians. Lastly, there is the group of runaways that leave home for the thrill, adventure, sexual experiences, or lured by others through the Internet (Flowers 57).

One of the biggest problems with prostitution is the male pimp involved. Pimps play a crucial role in the dynamics of teenage prostitution. Most of the girls who enter into the prostituting world are persuaded by the powers of a pimp. Many of the girls who are persuaded by Pimps are the ones who are insecure, have a low self-esteem, and ones who are starved for the attention of a male. Often pimps will not go for the girls who are secure and confident with themselves, but seek out girls who are unattractive, highly insecure, and not what they see as “ sexy” (Flowers 120-121). That’s common. Girls who are starved of self-esteem finally meet a man who showers them with gifts, drugs and dollops of affection. That, and a lack of alternative, keeps them working for them—and if that isn’t enough, he shoves a gun in the girl’s mouth and threatens to kill her” (Kristof). Pimps have many aspects to their jobs. The first part of their job is recruiting girls, sending other prostitutes to do the work. They call these girls “ Runners. ” Pimps may recruit themselves, but safer with the law enforcement if others do it for them.

Runners scour bus and train stations, shopping malls, coffee shops, arcades, street corners, and anywhere that a runaway or a lost kid would hang out. Looking hungry, disheveled, confused, distant, scared, disoriented, or just in need of a friend, prospects for sex workers are usually easy to spot. Some of these runaway girls are from broken homes, easy for the pimp to be the caring adults who are willing to be everything the girl never had at home. Winning over the girls' hearts, pimps make these girls feel confident, loved, and a sense of loyalty. (Flowers 120-121). When the pimps have these young teenage girls, their next job is to flatter them. Many pimps to this day are younger and are associated to what is "hip", looking as if they have a lot of money. Girls quickly become excited by the idea of having a man buy them gifts, provide food for them, and feel that sense of love and attention that the pimp gives them. Now that the pimp has won over his girl, he may pressure her into prostituting, force her, or make her feel obligated to do so as a means of making her ends meet (Vincent).

The pimp has a job to do and that is to make sure the prostitute is bringing in money and that the prostitute does not leave him. Many of these times the pimps will force the girls to work everyday of the week, and typically take every penny the girl earns (Pulkinnen). Pimp violence is very common among prostitutes and once a girl becomes part of a pimp's stable she is subjected to his rules, regulations, and manipulations. Many of the incidents where there is violence from the pimps are by verbal abuse, physical abuse, rape, and threats to keep the girls from not leaving (Flowers 122).

Jasmine, an African-American former prostitute, was a victim of abuse by her pimp. Leaving her abusive home at the age of thirteen, Jasmine stayed with her pimp because of the manipulation. “ If you say something you’re not supposed to, you get beat. If you stay too long with a customer, you get beat. And if you try to leave the Pimp, you get beat. ” (Kristof). Teenage prostitutes may carry a number of physical health risks. Some of these health hazards include: bodily harm, internal injuries, drug and alcohol abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, eating and sleeping disorders, pregnancy, and suicide.

Many teenage prostitutes fail to eat correctly and lack a balanced diet. Instead of using their money towards proper nutrition, some use their money for alcohol, drugs, and cigarettes. Due to multiple sex partners they are at high risk of sexually transmitted diseases as well including: gonorrhea, herpes, syphilis, hepatitis B, and HIV/AIDS infection. One in three teenage prostitutes do not use any form of protection against these diseases. Half of all female teenage prostitutes have been pregnant at least once (Flowers 90).

Along with their physical health, teenage prostitutes deal with a lot of mental health issues as well. Some of these health hazards include: depression, personality disorders, thought disorders, and risk of suicide. Personality disorders are used to turn on and off personalities to clients. These are survival mechanisms to attract new clients, or to avoid criminal records. Clinical depression is a huge health risk for teenage prostitutes. These

teenagers are twice as likely to have a serious mental disorder. Lastly, suicide is one of the biggest factors that plays in with teenage prostitutes.

Seven out of ten girl prostitutes have tried to commit suicide due to depression and the unbearable realities of their profession (Flowers 90-91).

Teenage Prostitutes not only endure these health hazards, but face the major risk of being arrested, and may be charged on different accounts.

Many teenagers involved with prostitution are arrested for related offenses including: being a runaway, drug problems, theft, alcohol laws, and curfew.

Many of these girls are arrested multiple times, returning to sell their bodies for food, shelter, drugs or money.

The older teenage girl prostitutes are more likely to be arrested, than boy prostitutes and younger teenagers. Teenage prostitutes are also way more likely to become arrested than their customers and their pimps (Flowers 103-104). Prostitution is a dangerous profession, especially for a teenage girl who is still discovering who she is. There are many obstacles that a teenager must go through in this profession, and many face harm on a daily basis. Whether it is from their pimps, their clients, law enforcement, bodily and mental health hazards, they are facing them frequently.

One might agree with the idea that it is a terrible profession, or others might presume it's a matter of choice and lifestyle. Whether it be the case, prostitution is illegal and teenage prostitutes are put in harms way through this hazardous lifestyle, and jeopardizing their youth. " They're people. They're girls. They should be worrying about what they're wearing to their high school dance and not whether they're going to bring in quota"

(Pulkinnen). Work Cited Flowers, Barri. Runaway Kids and Teenage Prostitution. Connecticut: Praeger. 001. Print. Kristof Nicholas. " Girls on our Streets: [Op-Ed]. " New York Times. 7 May 2009, Late Edition (East Coast). Banking Information Source, Proquest. Web. 5 April 2010. " Prostitute. " Webster's New World Dictionary. New York. 1999. 518. Print. Pulkkinen, Levi. " Child Prostitution out of Shadows in Seattle. " Seattlepi. com 13 Jan. 2010, ProQuest Newsstand, ProQuest. Web. 5 Apr. 2010 Vincent, Karen. " Teenage Prostitution- A serious Issue in the United States. " Ezine Articles. Ezine Articles, n. d. Web. 7 April 2010.