

The Akron/Canton Backpage.com Report

An Analysis of the Online Commercial Sex Industry as it Relates

To Sex Trafficking In Northeast Ohio

A Quantitative Research Project Between the Imagine Foundation, AmeriCorps Members,  
Victim Assistance Program, Partners Against Trafficking Humans Stark, and Summit County  
Collaborative Against Human Trafficking

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this quantitative study is two-fold. The first purpose is to raise awareness of sex trafficking, a form of human trafficking, specifically as advertised online within the commercial sex industry in Northeast Ohio (Akron/Canton). The second is to provide a glimpse into the commercial sex industry as it relates to sex trafficking in the Akron/Canton area. No study of this kind has been conducted in this particular region, and no statistics exist which are specifically related to Akron/Canton.

This report includes the findings from December 15, 2014 through March 23, 2015. The research resulted in a total of 34,416 independent data points, from the 2,868 advertisements placed in the escort section on AkronCanton.backpage.com. During this period, 556 distinct phone numbers and 81 distinct area codes were identified. The four most frequently identified area code origins were from the Northeast Ohio region (330, 234, 216, and 440, respectively). Additionally, area codes outside of Northeast Ohio were represented. The most frequent secondary and tertiary locations listed on advertisements were Fairlawn, Cleveland, North Canton, and East Ave. When the top ten secondary and tertiary locations were plotted on a map, they corresponded with the interstate highway system. Throughout the data collection process, researchers reported advertisements featuring suspected minors to the National Human Trafficking Hotline (Polaris Project) and/or local authorities.

Recommendations include improved awareness and prevention efforts and expanding outreach to both the general public and private sectors. A partnership between concerned citizens and frontline personnel is required to effectively and simultaneously end the demand of the commercial sex industry and human trafficking the Akron/Canton area.

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The Imagine Foundation

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The mission of the Imagine Foundation ([www.imaginefreedom.org](http://www.imaginefreedom.org)) is to spread awareness and promote solutions for ending child slavery worldwide. The Imagine Foundation came together as an organization to equip and empower individuals and organizations to end the worst human rights violation in history, modern-day slavery.

The mission of the AmeriCorps Corporation for National & Community Service ([www.nationalservice.gov](http://www.nationalservice.gov)) is to strengthen communities and develop leaders through team-based national and community service.

The mission of Victim Assistance Program (VAP; [www.victimassistanceprogram.org](http://www.victimassistanceprogram.org)) is to empower our community to restore lives impacted by crisis, violence, and tragedy.

The mission of Partners Against Trafficking Humans Stark (PATHS; [www.pathstark.org](http://www.pathstark.org)) is to educate and advocate for the prevention and abolition of human trafficking while connecting services on behalf of trafficked persons.

The mission of Summit County Collaborative Against Human Trafficking (SCCAHT; [www.endslaverysummitcounty.org](http://www.endslaverysummitcounty.org)) is to increase our community's knowledge of human trafficking through education and awareness while ensuring the community is prepared to properly assist victims of human trafficking.

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	6
Human Trafficking in Ohio.....	8
Research Methodology.....	13
Research Findings.....	15
Day of the Week.....	16
Advertisement Location – Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary.....	17
Fairlawn.....	18
Cleveland.....	18
North Canton.....	19
East Avenue.....	19
Secondary and Tertiary, Collectively.....	19
Post Identification Number.....	21
Phone Number – Area Code Origin.....	22
Advertised Persons’ Face Shown or Not Shown.....	23
Cost per Hour and Racial Breakdown .....	24
People per Advertisement.....	25
Economic Impact.....	25
Recommendations.....	26
Awareness and Prevention.....	27
General Public.....	27
Schools.....	27
Healthcare Services.....	28
Legal and Prosecution Services.....	28
Hotels/Motels.....	29
Tattoo Parlors.....	29
The Internet.....	29
Appendix A: Possible Indicators of Human Trafficking.....	31
References.....	32

## Introduction

President Lincoln issued an executive order, the Emancipation Proclamation, on January 1, 1863 to abolish slavery in the United States. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, passed by Congress in 1865 stated, “neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction” (U.S. Const. amend. XIII, § 1). Despite slavery and involuntary servitude being illegal for more than 150 years, this form of oppression continues to exist and is now termed human trafficking (Dalton & Bach, 2011).

Human trafficking in the United States and abroad occurs in two distinct forms: sex trafficking and labor trafficking. Sex trafficking includes “...various forms of commercial sexual exploitation including prostitution, pornography, stripping, live-sex shows, mail-order brides, military prostitution and sex tourism” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Refugee Settlement, 2012a, para. 10). Labor trafficking “...can include domestic servitude, agricultural labor, sweatshop factory labor, janitorial, food service and other service industry labor, and begging” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children & Families, Office of Refugee Settlement, 2012b, para. 2). Globally, the International Labour Organization (2014) estimates that 20.9 million humans are victims of labor trafficking, with an estimated \$150 billion of illegal profits annually. These estimates are subject to question, however, as there are no exact means of calculating or quantifying global exploitation. While the estimated number of people enslaved today is more than double the number of people enslaved during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the percentage of people enslaved is smaller, based on total population (Bales, 2007).

In 2000, the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) was passed by the United States Congress to better address modern-day slavery. It originally focused on three approaches: Prevention, Protection and Prosecution. In 2009, the Partnerships approach was added to address the gaps in combating this problem through collaboration between law enforcement and nongovernmental organizations. Since its original instatement, TVPA was reauthorized in 2003, 2005, 2008 and 2013. The TVPA also introduced the “Severe Forms of Trafficking in Persons” found in section 103 of the document, which defines it as: (Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000, 2000):

(a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or (b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery.

The Polaris Project, funded by the United States Department of Health and Human Services, was founded in February 2002. The Polaris Project operates the National Human Trafficking Hotline and Resource Center for the United States. An annual report is published each year and provides insight into the trade of humans within the United States. Between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014, there were 3,598 sex and 818 labor trafficking cases reported to the hotline. When comparing Polaris Project annual reports of labor trafficking to sex trafficking cases, sex trafficking cases occur in higher frequency than labor trafficking cases. In 2012, sex trafficking cases accounted for 72% of cases; in 2013, 69% of cases; and in 2014, 71%

of cases (NHTRC, 2015). It can be concluded that sex trafficking is reported much more often in the United States than labor trafficking.

According to the TVPA (U.S. Department of State, 2011), domestic minor sex trafficking (DMST) occurs when any person under the age of eighteen engages in a sex act in exchange for something of value. For example, "...Children can be commercially sexually exploited through prostitution, pornography, and/or erotic entertainment" (Smith, Healy Vardaman, & Snow, 2009, p.4). There have been a number of research studies conducted to determine the extent of DMST. It was estimated that up to 300,000 American minors are at risk for sex trafficking (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes International, 1996), but other sources dispute the actual numbers (Kessler, 2015). This past year the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children estimated that one in six runaways in 2014 were likely sex trafficking victims (NCMEC, 2015).

### **Human Trafficking in Ohio**

The State of Ohio recognizes human trafficking under a slightly different definition than the TVPA. The Ohio Revised Code provides this definition of human trafficking (130<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, HB 130, § 1):

(A) No person shall knowingly recruit, lure, entice, harbor, transport, provide, obtain, or maintain... another person knowing that the person will be subjected to involuntary servitude or be compelled to engage in sexual activity...

(B) For a prosecution under division (A)(1) of this section, the element "compelled" does not require that the compulsion be openly displayed or physically exerted. The element "compelled" has been established if the state

proves that the victim's will was overcome by force, fear, duress, intimidation, or fraud.

Ohio's law differs from the federal human trafficking statute in that it identifies that age of consent as 16 years of age, rather than 18 years of age (Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, n.d.). The Ohio statute limits when prosecutors can bring charges of human trafficking against suspects. This issue was recently addressed in 2014, when Ohio enacted its three-tiered legal definition of sex trafficking as it relates to individuals 16 and 17 years of age and those with developmental disabilities. The table below outlines the law and specifies what needs to be proven in order for a prosecutor to make a sex trafficking conviction involving a minor victim and/or a person(s) with a developmental disability.

Table 1		
<i>Ohio Human Trafficking Law Three Tiered Definition</i>		
<u>Minors Under the Age of 16</u>	<u>Minors 16 – 17 year olds</u>	<u>Developmental (Dis)abilities</u>
Does not need to prove that the minor was compelled to engage into commercial sexual activity.	If the trafficker is in a position of authority over a victim, compulsion to engage in commercial sexual activity does not need to be proven.	Does “not need to prove the [individual] was compelled to engage in commercial sexual activity.”

In August 2011, Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine established the Ohio Human Trafficking Commission in response to a previous study submitted to former Attorney General Richard Cordray, stating that sex and labor trafficking is problematic within Ohio (Williamson, et al., n.d.). This commission is comprised of both elected and appointed officials, members of local, state, and federal law enforcement, public and private social agencies, religious groups and schools. In March 2012, the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, limited to state agencies, was formed. In a June 2012 report released by the Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force, an estimated

1,078 Ohio children are victims of human trafficking and 3,016 more are at-risk for being victimized.

In addition to research at the state level, The Imagine Foundation, an Ohio-based non-profit organization released its first Backpage Research Report in October 2011. It examined the commercial sex industry in Cleveland (Northeast Ohio); specifically the areas triangulated by “Elyria to the west, Ashtabula to the east, and Akron to the south” (Bach, 2014, p.8). The goal of the Cleveland Backpage report was to bring awareness of sex trafficking to the aforementioned area. This current study utilizes comparable research methods. It is important to note that during the Cleveland Backpage research study, researchers notified federal authorities when they suspected the presence of a minor in advertisements. Findings from this research assisted federal authorities in the arrest of Tim Davis, a convicted sex trafficker in Elyria. Since this report, the Imagine Foundation has provided direction for additional studies throughout the United States.

Judge Paul Herbert with the Franklin County Municipal Court recognized a gap in the justice system. Through his docket, he uncovered that many of the persons arrested for solicitation and/or prostitution were frequently victims of human trafficking. (Herbert, 2014) Due to this observation, he established a program called Changing Actions to Change Habits, also known as the CATCH program or CATCH Court. CATCH Court is a two-year probation program that requires adult victims of human trafficking to make behavioral adjustments thereby fostering positive lifestyle habits. Once the adult sex trafficking victims have completed the two year course, they receive a dismissal of charges and sealing of their prior convictions related to prostitution and solicitation. Since the inception of this program in 2009, 18 women successfully completed the CATCH Court program. In addition, since 2009, the number of solicitation arrests in Franklin County have decreased (McEntyre, 2013).

The Ohio Human Trafficking Commission's Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio Research and Analysis Sub-Committee conducted a research study (Williamson et al., n.d.). This study was the first of its kind in Ohio and looked at the three components of domestic sex trafficking: the victims, buyers, and traffickers. From a sample size of 328 individuals, 115 individuals were identified as becoming involved in the sex trade as a minor. Of the 115 minors whose involvement in the sex trade began before age 18, 54% were living in an Ohio city during their first involvement. The reported ages that the person interviewed first became involved in the sex trade are as follows:

- 12% were first sold before 12 years old;
- 26% were first sold between 12 and 13 years old;
- 30% were first sold between 14 and 15 years old;
- 34% were first sold between 16 and 17 years old.

Williamson, et al. (n.d.) also reported information collected on the experiences of Ohio youth before they became involved in the sex trade. These findings are significant because they identify high-risk factors and possible indicators that may be used to develop effective preventive measures. The following are the high risk factors/ indicators identified during this study:

- Child abuse & neglect
  - 41% were victims of neglect
  - 44% were victims of abuse
  - 40% were victims of sex abuse
  - 37% were victims of emotional abuse/psychological maltreatment
  - 24% were victims of physical abuse
- 33% had a family member in the sex trade
- 30% had depression
- 47.6% were raped more than a year before being trafficked
- 35.6% had friends who purchased sex
- 30% were involved in selling others
- 59% were involved in selling themselves
- 50% had a much older significant other
- 63% ran away from home
- 39% had difficulty in school

The Ohio Human Trafficking Commission's Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio Research and Analysis Sub-Committee research study (Williamson et al., n.d.) also produced findings on individuals who purchased commercial sex acts (buyers). Likewise, Raymond (2004) reported the most common occupations of American buyers of females in prostitution. Specifically, the studies identified the occupation of buyers which included law enforcement, businessmen, drug dealers, truckers, lawyers, doctors, managers, politicians, sports players, construction workers, military men, teachers, government employees, factory workers, city employees, judges, postal workers, retail workers, social workers, state employees, and pastors/ministers (Williamson et al., 2012; Raymond, 2004).

The individuals who were identified to be recruiters and traffickers in the Ohio Human Trafficking Commission Domestic Sex Trafficking in Ohio Research and Analysis Sub-Committee had varying methods of recruitment, including "recruitment by female friend who was selling herself (59%), recruitment by a male friend who was not involved in selling himself (18.3%), forced by an unrelated female friend who first acted like a friend (22.6%), recruitment by an unrelated female who the victim did not know that threatened or beat the victim (14%), recruitment by a male member of their foster family (9.6%), recruitment by a female who was not involved in selling herself (15%), and recruitment by a male family member who did not sell himself (8.7%)" (Williamson, et al., 2010, p. 11). These particular findings demonstrate that females are more likely to be recruiters over males, while males are more than likely to act as both a recruiter and trafficker.

The Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers (ONCAC) has played an important role in identification of Ohio's minors being trafficked. Between July 2013 and April 2015, they have identified 131 sex trafficking victims and four labor trafficking victims (ONCAC, 2015).

Of the 135 victims identified, 131 were females and four were males. The majority of victims identified through the ONCAC were between the ages of 13 and 18, specifically 98 of the identified 135 victims (approximately 73%).

In 2014, the Polaris Project received 809 human trafficking calls originating from Ohio (NHTRC, 2015). The types of human trafficking calls received include: the report of a human trafficking tip, request for a human trafficking service referrals, request for crisis assistance, and request of general human trafficking information (NHTRC, 2015). Of the 809 calls originating from Ohio, 164 were identified as human trafficking cases. The following is the breakdown of the human trafficking case types by percentage:

- 72% sex trafficking;
- 13.4% labor trafficking;
- 10.9% did not specify what type of trafficking; and
- 3% were both sex and labor trafficking.

In addition, of the sex trafficking cases in 2014, 93.13% were identified as female, 4.84% were identified as male, and 42.74% were under the age of eighteen.

### **Research Methodology**

From December 15, 2014 through March 23, 2015, a group of nine volunteer researchers from AmeriCorps Prevention and Awareness of Trafficking in Humans (PATH) Program, Victim Assistance Program, Summit County Collaborative Against Human Trafficking, and Partners Against Trafficking Humans Stark logged onto the Escorts webpage under the Adult Entertainment category of AkronCanton.backpage.com (Backpage), daily. Advertisements were reviewed and specific information from each advertisement was recorded in a secure online shared spreadsheet document. The information recorded included: Weekday of the Advertisement Posting; Date of the Advertisement Posting; Primary Location (Akron/Canton); Secondary Location; Tertiary Location; Time of Post; Advertisement Post Identification

Number; Telephone Number; Secondary Telephone Number; Area Code; Race of the Advertised Escort; Whether the Face of the Advertised Person was Shown or Obscured; Incall Price (per hour); Outcall Price (per hour); The Number of People Advertised in each Posted Advertisement; and any additional Notes or Comments.

During the aforementioned research time period, researchers reviewed the escort advertisements daily and recorded information within 24 to 48 hours subsequent to posting. Each researcher was responsible for recording the information for one day of the week, Monday through Sunday. Researchers documented the date of posting, not the date the information was reviewed and recorded. The primary location was noted as Akron/Canton. The secondary and tertiary location(s), when provided, were recorded as actual physical locations listed in the advertisements and not necessarily cities. Researchers noted the actual time the advertisement was posted on the website, the post identification number (Post ID), and the proprietary number issued by Backpage when a person purchases an advertisement. The escort name (if/when provided) in the advertisement was documented but it is important to note that this is most likely not the legal name of the person in the advertisement. The telephone number/contact number and alternative contact numbers if/when provided in the advertisement were recorded. The area codes were also documented as a sub-category and used for determination of the area code origin. The race was recorded as: White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle-Eastern, Native American, Indian, none or other. Some advertisements listed the specific race of the individuals. However, if a race was not identified by the advertiser, researchers used the advertisement description and/or pictures to determine the race of the individual. If the advertisement did not identify the race, or the researcher could not identify the race in posted pictures, the race was listed as "other". If a picture was not included in the advertisement and a

written race description was not provided, researchers recorded the race as “none.” Further, it was documented if photograph(s) within each advertisement were provided and if so, whether the face was easily visible or obscured. The incall and/or outcall prices were documented as an hourly rate. If pricing was not provided, “0” was recorded. Incall refers to the buyer traveling to the escort’s location. Outcall refers to the escort traveling to the buyer’s location. The number of person(s) per advertisement was also recorded. In addition, researchers recorded specific information about the advertisement and the escort in the additional notes section. The additional notes include information specific to the person(s) being advertised and the photograph(s) background; this includes, but is not limited to: discernible tattoos; bruises; scars; piercings; email addresses; and other advertisement post identification numbers used by the same advertisement poster.

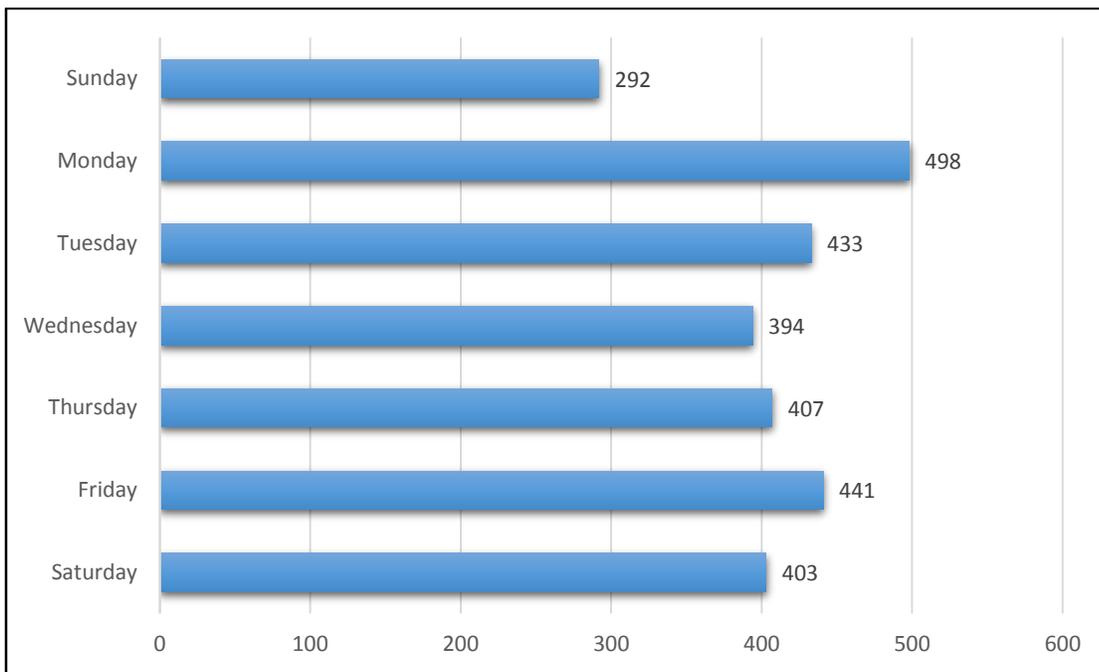
Subsequent to the three-month data collection time frame, all of the aforementioned input data was coded, then converted to numeric values to be evaluated for descriptive statistics using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM data analytical program version 23.0. Complete coding procedures are available via written request to [jesse@imaginefreedom.org](mailto:jesse@imaginefreedom.org).

### **Research Findings**

Data collected daily from December 15, 2014 through March 23, 2015, resulted in a total of 34,416 independent data points, from 2,868 advertisements posted on Backpage. Northeast Ohio has an existing online commercial sex industry; however, it cannot be concluded that all of the advertisements involve trafficked individuals. Through investigative research, local law enforcement and Federal Bureau of Investigation agents have determined the presence of trafficking victims in online commercial sex advertisements (Report, 2010).

**Day of the Week**

The number of advertisement postings per day of the week were fairly consistent, with an average number of 410. Mondays had the greatest number of posted advertisements with 498 advertisements, which constituted 17.36% of all advertisements. Friday was identified as the second most frequent post day with a total of 441 advertisements or 15.38% of all advertisements. Tuesday followed closely with a total of 433 posts or 15.10% of advertisements. In contrast, Sunday was identified to have the least number of posts, with a total of 292 advertisements or 10.18% of total advertisements posted.



Graph 1: Advertisements per Day of the Week

Table 2		
<i>Advertisements per Day of the Week</i>		
<u>Day of the Week</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Sunday	292	10.18%
Monday	498	17.36%
Tuesday	433	15.10%

Wednesday	394	13.74%
Thursday	407	14.19%
Friday	441	15.38%
Saturday	403	14.05%
Total Ads	2686	100%

### **Advertisement Location – Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary**

The advertised locations identified in this study provide a clear picture that although popular discourse identifies commercial sex and prostitution as occurring within the inner city, the presence of escorts more commonly occurs within the suburbs and rural areas of our data capture area. Specifically, commercial sex is commonly found in areas where an impoverished location is in close proximity to an area of affluence bordered by the interstate system (Imagine Foundation, 2014a).

The data collected indicates that advertised locations are near major highway systems. Highway systems are ideal means for escort travel allowing a cost effective means of travel, ease of relocation, rapid travel to major cities and towns, and anonymity. In addition, many hotels and motels are located in close proximity to interstate exits for ease of access for both escorts and buyers.

The Akron-Canton Airport is located geographically within the research data collection area. There is only one hotel in close proximity to this Airport, necessitating the need for travelers to find alternative nearby locations. The Cleveland Hopkins International Airport is also located nearby the research data collection area. In addition, many hotels are located within the vicinity of this airport.

The study parameters allowed for the identification of up to two separate advertised secondary and tertiary locations (additional locations mentioned in the advertisements) in

addition to Akron/Canton. Most of the secondary and tertiary advertised locations were in close proximity to one another and/or the primary location, Akron/Canton. In addition to Akron/Canton, the following areas/locations were identified most frequently as secondary and/or tertiary locations in the study advertisements. When defining the areas/locations, defined city borders were used.

**Fairlawn.** Fairlawn, located south of Cleveland, north of Canton and west of Akron was identified in 232 advertisements during the three month research recording period. According to the 2013 census (United States Census Bureau, 2015) there were 7,431 people living in this urban area. The estimated median annual household income was \$62,115. Interstate 77 is located approximately three miles from Fairlawn and is close to interchanges for I-80, I-271, and State Route 224. In addition, there are two hotels/motels located within Fairlawn, and fifteen hotels located within a five mile radius of the city border.

**Cleveland.** Cleveland is located in Northeast Ohio and is the second most populous city in the state. It was identified as a sub-location in 130 advertisements for escorting services. It is home to many large corporations, international conventions, attractions, and the Cleveland Hopkins International Airport. The city of Cleveland and neighboring Cleveland suburbs frequently termed collectively as Cleveland are home to a wide variety of nationalities, socioeconomic statuses and traditions. According to the 2013 census (United States Census Bureau, 2015), the population of Cleveland was 390,113 and the median household income was \$26,217. It has extensive highway systems, including I-71, I-77, I-80 and I-90. These interstates allow for ease of travel throughout the state and to bordering states. It is important to note that Cleveland has been chosen to host the 2016 Republican National Convention, July 18-21, 2016 at the Quicken Loans Arena. The event necessitates overnight travel of a large number of people

to northeast Ohio. Although it cannot be concluded that events such as this (requiring large numbers of people traveling to a designated location for overnight stays) will result in an increase in the activity of escort services and human trafficking, it is important to consider this event for future studies to determine if such an event is clearly indicative of an increased demand for escorting services and human trafficking.

**North Canton.** North Canton is located between the cities of Akron and Canton and is within approximately two miles of the Akron-Canton Airport. It was identified as a unique sub-location in 117 of the escort advertisements. The city is located within half a mile of Interstate 77 and is easily accessible to State Routes 30, 62, and 224. It is also home to, or is in close proximity to the Pro-Football Hall of Fame, Kent State University Stark Campus, Stark State University, Walsh University, Belden Village Mall, the Timken Company, and the Diebold Company. In 2013, the census reported North Canton to have an estimated population of 17,496 and the median household income of \$50,728 (United States Census Bureau, 2015). There is one hotel/motel located within the city of North Canton and approximately twenty hotel/motels located within a ten minute drive from North Canton. It should also be noted that North Canton is located on the border between Summit County and Stark County.

**East Avenue.** East Avenue is located in the City of Akron (fifth largest city in Ohio), and is easily accessible to Interstate 76 and 77. This sub-area location was identified in 108 advertisements with a specific address that is not subject to disclosure.

**Secondary and Tertiary, collectively.** In northeast Ohio, the sheer number of neighborhoods makes it commonplace for residents to refer to a general geographic location with the name of another nearby community or use the names interchangeably. For example, the general geographic location of Fairlawn is commonly referred to as Montrose and West Akron.

Therefore, it can be deduced that this area had 307 advertisements. Furthermore, the general geographic location of North Canton is also commonly referred to as Belden Village and The Strip, thereby accounting for a total of 152 advertisements.

Table 3	
<i>Secondary and Tertiary Sub-Area Locations</i>	
<u>Sub Area Location Description</u>	<u>Frequency of Advertisement</u>
Fairlawn	232
Cleveland	130
North Canton	117
East Ave.	110
Kenmore	69
Barberton	62
Montrose	45
Kent	40
East Akron	36
Stow	31
West Akron	30
Southwest Akron	28
Arlington Road	23
Dover	23
Wooster	23
Belden Village	22
Highway 77	19
Youngstown	16
Green	14
The Strip	13
Ravenna	12
Medina	11
Tallmadge	11
Cuyahoga Falls	9
Portage Street	9
Aurora	8
CAK	8
Ellet	8
Portage Lakes	8
Akron University	6
North Akron	5
South Akron	5
South East Akron	4
Massillon	4
Akron West	3
Coventry	3
Hudson	3
New Philadelphia	3
Wooster Road	2
Streetsboro	2
Northfield Road	2
East Side	2
East Canton	2
Downtown	2
Columbus	2



during the three month data collection period. Backpage advertisers have the ability to post multiple advertisements under one Post ID with a package deal or advertisement renewal.

### Phone Number – Area Code Origin

There were a total of 81 different advertisement area code origin locations identified during the data collection period. The origin areas were located throughout the United States including the far reaching cities of Seattle, Los Angeles, Miami, and Boston. The most frequently used and identified area codes in advertisements are outlined in Table 4. The results indicate that the advertisement origins were most commonly from the Northeast Ohio area. Some researchers believe traffickers use disposable phones and alternative phone numbers for illegal business, such as the commercial sex industry. However, the use of the same phone number in multiple advertisements over time indicates traffickers may not be relying on burner phones to conduct business.

Table 4		
<i>Top 23 Represented Origin Area Codes</i>		
<u>Area Code</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Origination of Area Code</u>
330	1495	Northeast Ohio
234	356	Northeast Ohio
216	240	Cleveland, Ohio
440	112	Cleveland, Ohio
504	69	Southeastern Louisiana
661	60	Southern California
567	43	Northwestern Ohio
321	37	Orlando, Florida
206	34	Seattle, Washington
419	34	Northwestern Ohio
614	34	Columbus, Ohio
740	33	Southeastern and Central Ohio
301	23	Northern Maryland
937	17	Southwestern Ohio
857	15	Boston, Massachusetts
240	14	Northern Maryland
305	14	Miami, Florida
337	14	Southwestern Louisiana

404	14	Atlanta, Georgia
702	14	Las Vegas, Nevada
304	11	West Virginia
303	10	Denver, Colorado
323	10	Los Angeles, California

A total of 81 area codes were represented.



Map 2: Top 23 Represented Origin Area Codes

**Advertised Persons’ Face Shown or Not Shown**

The majority (66%) of the advertisements included a picture with a face clearly visible/identifiable. In contrast, 34% of the advertisements did not include a photograph or included photographs with obscured faces of the person being advertised for escort services. Several reasons can be hypothesized to explain why a face is not shown or is obscured. The person in the advertisement could be under age, the person in the advertisement may not be aware they are being advertised, and/or the person in the photograph may not want someone to

identify them as an escort. All of the aforementioned reasons could be attributed to sex trafficking.

Table 5	
<i>Advertised Persons' Face Shown or Not Shown</i>	
<u>Picture Description</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
Face Shown	1894
Face Not Shown or Obscured	974

### Cost Per Hour and Racial Breakdown

The study results indicate most advertisements for commercial sex in the Akron/Canton area depict white females with 1773 total advertisements (61.8%), at an average median hourly rate of \$150. Researchers identified the incall as the most frequent type of commercial sex business, likely because incalls are thought to provide safe locations for the escorts while minimizing travel expenses and risks. Black females were the second most frequently identified escort with 746 total advertisements, (26%) and an average incall price of \$120 per hour. Hispanic females were the third most frequently identified group, with a total of 83 advertisements at an average incall rate of \$100 per hour. As evidenced above, Backpage advertisements most frequently feature white females with the highest quoted prices.

Table 6				
<i>Incalls/Outcalls Price per Hour</i>				
<u>Race</u>	<u>Advertisement Frequency</u>	<u>Advertisement Percentage</u>	<u>Incalls Median Price Per Ad</u>	<u>Outcalls Median Price Per Ad</u>
White	1773	61.8%	\$150	\$150
Black	746	26%	\$120	\$120
Asian	43	1.5%	\$160	\$160
Hispanic	83	2.3%	\$100	\$200
Pacific Islander	13	.5%	NA	NA
Middle Eastern	8	.3%	NA	NA
Native American	16	.6%	\$200	NA
Indian	1	0	NA	NA
None	5	1.9%	\$150	\$25
Other	130	4.5%	\$150	\$150

\*NA = Not applicable

### People per Advertisement

The vast majority of the advertisements (92.5%) featured only one person. This is consistent with the findings of previous research conducted in Cincinnati (Bach, 2014). Small percentages of the advertisements featured zero (.5%), two (6.6%), and three persons (.4%).

People per Advertisement		
<u>Number of Person(s) Advertised</u>	<u>Number of Advertisements</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0	15	.5%
1	4654	92.5%
2	188	6.6%
3	11	.4%

### Economic Impact

During the data collection period, the rate for an adult service advertisement on Backpage costs the advertiser \$7.00 per ad (Akron/Canton Backpage, 2015), earning Backpage a profit of \$20,076 for the 2,868 advertisements posted between December 15, 2014 and March 23, 2015. Since researchers recorded observations during a three month period, it cannot confirm the annual amount Backpage earns in paid advertising posts based on advertisements placed within the data collection period. However, researchers estimate that Backpage will make a profit of \$80,304 by the end of the year from the Akron/Canton page alone. It is a common misconception that the cessation of online advertised escort service profit will resolve the problem. As evidenced by the closing of Craigslist's escort section, this action results in the unintended consequence of relocating the advertisements to other sites.

According to CNN Child Sex Trafficking Documentary Report (Lyon, 2012), "Selling the Girl Next Door," Craigslist, which in the past has been commonly referred to as the leader of online commercial sex advertisements, shut down after intense pressure from outraged attorney

generals across the country. Subsequent to Craigslist discontinuing the sale of advertisements for online commercial sex, advertisements moved to the next most popular website, Backpage.

According to Advanced Interactive Media Group (AIM), an internet research firm, the monthly earnings of Backpage increased one million dollars in adult services alone after this change (CNN, 2012). From February 2012 to February 2013, AIM Group researchers tracked five online classified advertisement websites and found that Backpage generated \$31.4 million in prostitution advertisements (Whittaker, 2013). Prior to Craigslist ending their online advertisements in September 2010, Backpage made \$13.2 million less than Craigslist.

The Backpage advertisements pose a significant risk of illegal financial impact. The national hourly average incall price in the commercial sex industry is \$150 with an average of three acts per day (Dank, et al., 2014). Based on the 2,868 advertisements placed between December 15, 2014 and March 23, 2015, researchers estimate a potential illegal financial impact of \$1,290,600 in the Akron/Canton area alone, a fairly significant criminal enterprise.

### **Recommendations**

This research provides a glimpse of the online commercial sex industry in the Akron/Canton area. With combined efforts from frontline agencies, advocacy organizations and the general public, the community can significantly decrease the demand for commercial sex thereby decreasing the presence of sex trafficking. The commercial sex industry is a business that thrives when there is a demand for a service. If a community can end the demand for commercial sex in the area, it will ultimately end the need for supply. In addition to ending the demand for commercial sex, advocates should address the following underlying risk factors associated with sex trafficking in an effort to eliminate human trafficking altogether: poverty; lack of education; child abuse and neglect; violence and drugs.

## **Awareness and Prevention**

Awareness and prevention efforts are essential to ending human trafficking locally, nationally, and globally. If communities can reduce the demand for sex trafficking while simultaneously protecting those vulnerable to potential traffickers, the incidences of trafficking could be greatly reduced. Awareness and prevention programs should address the following: the types of human trafficking, examples of force, fraud and coercion, current statistics of trafficking (local and global); risk factors; traffickers and buyers; and personal empowerment. The following is a list of key populations toward which awareness and prevention programs should be focused.

### **General Public**

- Volunteer or offer your professional services and skills to a local anti-trafficking organization(s).
- Participate in existing prevention programs that address the vulnerability factors associated with human trafficking.
- Facilitate education for social, civic and faith-based organizations to bring about awareness of domestic and international human trafficking.
- Support local law enforcement efforts by reporting potential human trafficking.
- Educate the male population about the negative impacts of purchasing commercial sex. The Renaissance Male Project Inc. brochure, “Ten Things Men & Boys Can do to Stop Human Trafficking” (Renaissance Male Project Inc., 2010) can be used as a resource.
- Be a conscientious consumer by purchasing goods and services from companies that have taken steps to eliminate slavery in their supply chain. A great starting point is taking the online Slavery Footprint quiz (Slavery Footprint, 2015) or learning more about the California Supply Chain Transparency Act (United States Department of State, 2012). While this recommendation is not directly related to sex trafficking, it is an important education tool that all can do to help increase awareness of the presence of trafficking and offer slave-free alternatives.

### **Schools**

- Develop and implement programs for middle and high school students that are tailored to appropriate age groups and conducted by human trafficking education specialists. The Imagine Foundation has created a middle and high school curriculum that can be utilized, entitled Project S.A.F.E.-Saving our Adolescents from Exploitation (Imagine Foundation, 2014).

- Develop and implement programs that are specifically geared toward school staff, teachers, counselors, principals, superintendents, lunch aides, and others who interact with children on a daily basis. “Human Trafficking in America’s Schools” (U. S. Department of Education, 2015) is a recommended resource to be used to develop school training programs that include, at a minimum, information on risk factors and indicators, what to do if school personnel suspect trafficking or recruitment, impact on the learning environment, awareness, policies and protocols.

### **Healthcare Services**

- Host multi-disciplinary anti-human trafficking trainings for social workers, victim advocates, health care employees, hospital emergency room personnel, dispatch employees, and other frontline personnel.

Once human trafficking is identified within a geographic area, local practitioners will need to establish holistic long-term services for victims. At a minimum, include:

1. The identification of required long-term services necessary for victims that will provide adequate best practices for long-term rehabilitation and support.
2. The development and adaptation of a county-wide, agency-specific protocol/service matrix from applicable agencies for use when encountering a victim of human trafficking. The Summit County Collaborative Against Human Trafficking can provide assistance to communities seeking to create a human trafficking protocol/service matrix.
3. Establishment of employment services for survivors, the at-risk, and the perpetrators. Trafficking is a crime for financial gain and manifests through human rights violations. The establishment of long-term gainful employment could mitigate their involvement within the exploitative system.

### **Legal and Prosecution Services**

- Provide federal and local human trafficking law (including the Safe Harbor Law) training for judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys, who may represent trafficking victims and/or are practicing within the Akron/Canton area. The researchers’ suggestions are Judge Paul Herbert with CATCH Court and/or Megan Mattimoe, Esq., Executive Director of Advocating Opportunity in Toledo, Ohio.
- Implement training conducted by human trafficking law enforcement experts for law enforcement officials and dispatchers. The researchers’ suggestions for experts are George Kwan, a Cleveland Police Academy training instructor, and/or Ken Lawson, a Columbus Police Officer who specializes in sex trafficking investigations and trainings.
- Provide police officers with “The Crime of Human Trafficking: A Law Enforcement Guide to Identification and Investigation” (International Association

of Chiefs of Police, 2000) booklet and training video for use during ongoing in-service trainings.

- Create and/or support ordinances authorizing the requirement of John School programs (Abt Associates, n.d.). These programs can be used as a sentencing option and combined with other criminal sanctions or as diversion programs resulting in dismissed charges. The programs may be financed by the fines/fees that the arrested John must pay as restitution. Further information about John Schools can be found at: <http://www.demandforum.net/john-school/>
- Legal and legislative groups are encouraged to support the creation and passing of laws, including harsher penalties for people who purchase sex and/or are involved in the exploitation of minors. Efforts should also support the creation of laws that will enable trafficking victims to become subsequent survivors and thrive in communities by assisting in the expungement of criminal records and assistance with the child custody reinstatement, when deemed appropriate.
- Provide Bench Cards for judges such as The National Children Traumatic Stress Network Judge Bench Cards (National Children Traumatic Street Network, 2015).

### **Hotels/Motels**

- Develop and implement human trafficking awareness training specific to hotel and motel managers, housekeeping staff and front desk personnel.
- Provide door hangers for each local hotel/motel room with information on the potential red flags of human trafficking and the national human trafficking hotline number.
- Implement outreach projects with the local coalition to provide hotels and motels with the human trafficking hotline number.

### **Tattoo Parlors**

- Develop and implement a human trafficking awareness training program specific to tattoo artists and shop owners to provide industry-related information about the use of branding on victims of sex trafficking.

### **The Internet**

This research study outlines that the internet is an effective tool for the advertisement and sale of commercial sex/human trafficking. Consequently, it is imperative that we teach children of the dangers involved in internet use. Malesky (2007) reveals that child predators use the internet as a means to lure children. Specifically, chat rooms and child profiles are used to determine which children can be lured easily. Parents and guardians need to limit and closely monitor children's use of the internet.

It is a common misconception that the online commercial sex industry would be eliminated by the discontinuation of Backpage adult advertisements. Based on the complexity of the online commercial sex industry as it relates to sex trafficking and the multitude of factors involved in the sale of another human, it is not advised that Backpage cease operation of its adult advertisements. One important reason is because law enforcement monitors the website in an effort to find lost or missing children as well as investigate probable human trafficking cases. Secondly, if the website were to close, the sales of escorts would likely be transferred, albeit as a temporary means, to another online site as previously observed when Craigslist adult services ceased operation. Finally, if society works as a united front, facilitating the aforementioned recommendations and specifically addressing issues of poverty, lack of education, child abuse and neglect, violence, and drugs, the demand for online escort advertisements would drastically decrease.

## Appendix A

**Possible Indicators of Human Trafficking**

The person may:

- Be submissive, afraid, nervous, depressed.
- Appear malnourished.
- Show signs of physical or mental abuse.
- Show evidence of confinement.
- Not speak for him/herself. Another person always speaks for him/her.
- Avoid eye contact or conversations.
- Speak very little English.
- Work long hours or unusual hours.
- Be unpaid or paid very little.
- Have little control over his or her schedule, money and identification documents.
- Be unable to leave his or her job because he/she is in debt to the employer or manager.
- Live where he or she works - or is transported to and from work.
- Not be free to socialize with others.
- Have many inconsistencies in his/her story.
- Be fearful of law enforcement.
- Have expensive clothing and jewelry that does not “fit” for her/his age/story.
- Have hotel keys that she/he should not have at this age.
- Have credit cards in someone else’s name.
- Have a much older “boyfriend” or “girlfriend.”
- Have claims of just visiting and inability to clarify where he/she is staying.

The work or living location has high security measures:

- Cameras
- Barbed wires
- Covered windows
- Excessive amounts of traffic in and out of a residence during odd hours

To report suspected human trafficking or for more information about human trafficking, contact the Polaris Project **Confidential** Human Trafficking Hotline Number 1-888-3737-888, or text 233733, and type in “help” or “info.” If you believe you have encountered a human trafficking victim, **do not intervene**, instead call 911.

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