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Beyond Borders. *Exploited Girl*. 2014. *CBC News*. Web. 24 Oct. 2014. <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/child-sex-tourism-targeted-with-air-canada-in-flight-videos-1.2551926>>.

Sex Tourism: The Industry of Buying Souls

How does sex tourism affect sex workers and society? What is being done to stop it?

By: Gianna Ramirez and Leigh Wynveen

Introduction

Sex Tourism is the act of traveling from one's nation of origin to another nation with the primary motivation of having commercial sexual relations.¹ The sex workers involved in these events often include men, women, and children from a plethora of nations. In an attempt to help improve their economies, several countries have made tourism a key portion of their income.² Thus, as the tourism industry expands and increases in power, so does the sex tourism industry. Nations with the largest tourism prostitution industries are in Southeast Asia, Latin America, Eastern Africa, and Eastern Europe.¹

The prostitutes in sex tourism are often young women between the ages of about 17 to 25. In most places, they are attracted to these prostitution jobs with promises of wealth and an escape. Coming from poor neighborhoods, these women believe they must support their families and are persuaded by pimps to join the sex industry.⁴ In wealthy nations, the prostitutes involved in sex tourism are often migrants looking for a successful life, but find that the only job open to them is selling their bodies and souls. Western men are typically the consumers driving this industry.⁵

Sex workers often suffer from serious physical, reproductive, and mental health problems. Physical injuries include broken bones, concussions, bruising, burns, and sexual abuse. The sex workers and tourists are likely to contract sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV-AIDS. The victims do not have the choice whether to use a condom or birth control, contributing to a high risk of unwanted pregnancies and miscarriages. These women are often diagnosed with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and addictions to narcotics and alcohol.⁶ The working and living environment fosters disease and filth.⁷

Key Statistics

Author Daniel Bunn, author of "The Long Tail of Tourism," writes:⁸

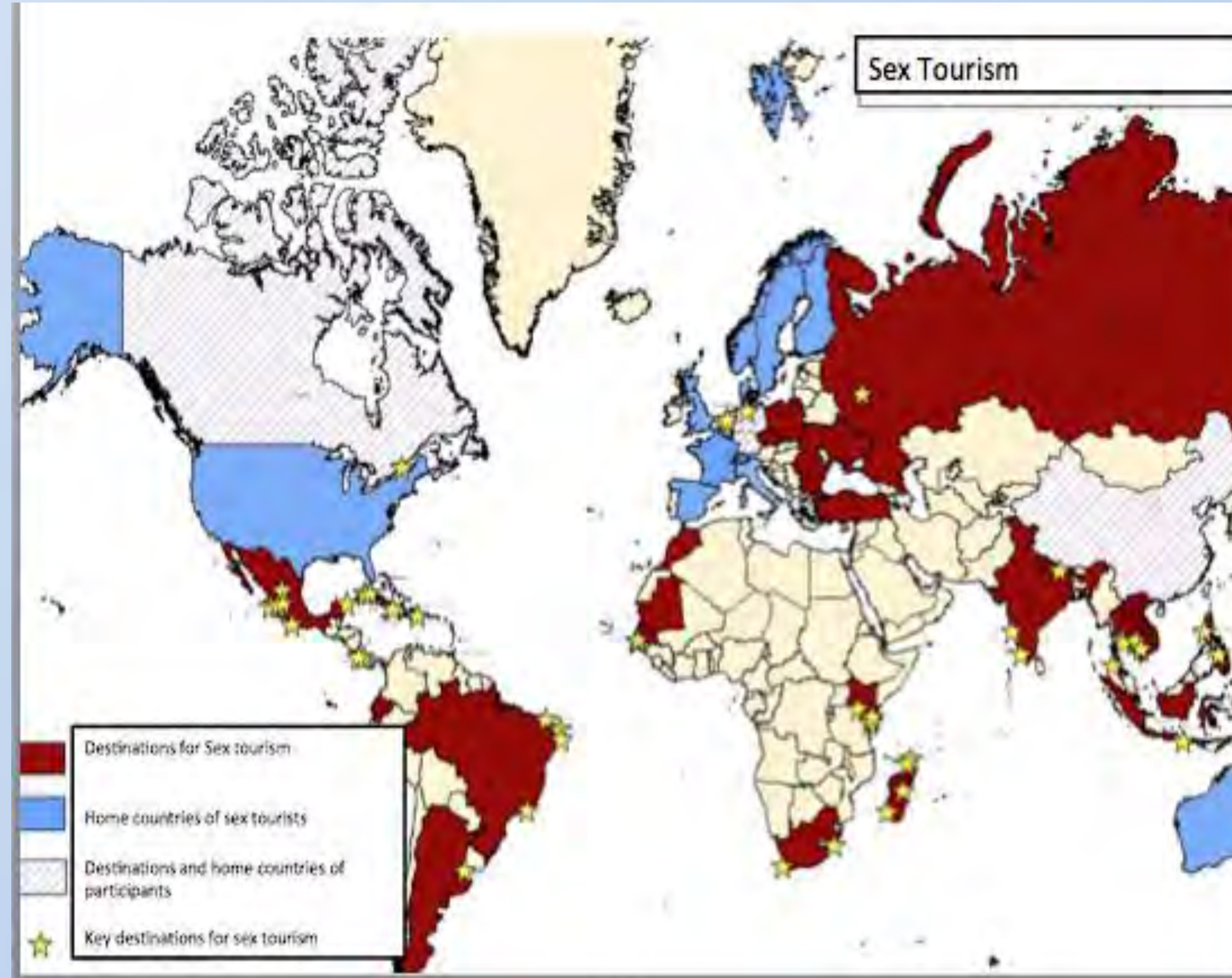
- Between 44,134 - 264,804 women are part of the prostitution business in Thailand.
- In 2008, The U.S. State Department listed over 150 countries that are part of or under the threat of human trafficking. Sex tourism is a worldwide issue and can be found in multiple places. Destinations include Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe, and South America.
- Thailand, in 2002, received about 10.8 million tourists creating \$10.39 million in revenue.

The Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health discusses the connection between AIDS and sex tourism:⁹

- Only 34% percent of Switzerland's sex tourists use a condom. STDs were found in 73% of male sex tourists who were observed by a doctor.
- In an article on the website LAWS.com, Lawyers outline the effect of sex tourism:¹⁰
- Currently, about 2 million victims are part of the sex industry.
- The Sex Tourism and Human trafficking industries make a profit of about \$30 billion annually.

Case Study: Thailand

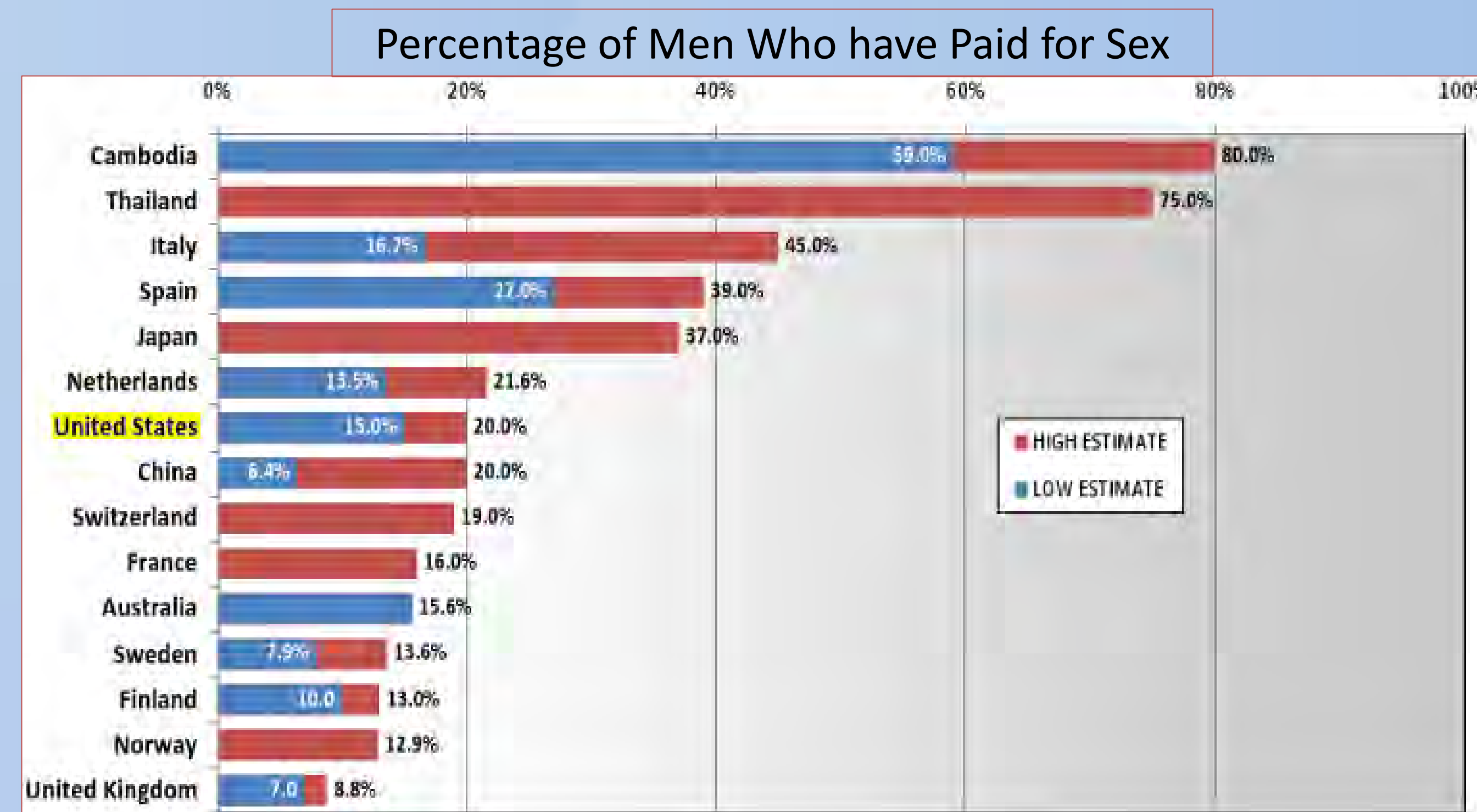
- Bangkok has become infamous as the "Disney World for men."¹¹
- Sex work closes a gap in Thailand's economy as it fills a demand and factory jobs no longer support families.
- The World Bank's policies stressing exporting goods to foreigners unintentionally props up the sex industry. The policies encompass all goods, while not explicitly prohibiting human labor. The Thai government, therefore, reports sex tourism profit along with other exports.
- The Thai government does not monitor sex tourism.
- The annual Thai revenue from sex tourism: \$5 billion.¹²



"Le Tourisme Sexual." *Geographic Travels*. N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. Translated from French to English by Leigh Wynveen. <<http://www.geographictravels.com/2012/01/maps-of-sex-industry-worldwide.html>>.

Case Study: Netherlands

- Some sex workers choose their profession, but they are still at risk for the same abuse as other sex workers.
- Many women, however, are forced into the work by their situation or trafficking.
- Most are migrants from the Caribbean, former Dutch colonies, and Eastern Europe.⁵
- Many Dutch citizens view sex tourism as morally wrong, but support the legality as it provides revenue to other tourist industries.
- The legality of sex tourism makes it more affordable.⁴
- The migrant workers are illegal sex workers as a brothel cannot have trafficked workers. Many, however, do.
- It is illegal to force a sex worker to have sex. Therefore, if s/he is trafficked, whether the customer knows it or not, the customer is committing a crime.¹⁴



"Percentage of Men per Country Who Paid for Sex at Least Once." *ProCon.org*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Oct. 2014. <<http://prostitution.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=004119>>.

Non-Governmental Organizations: Are They The Solution?

Non-governmental organizations have been established to help diminish the commercial sexual industry. These organizations work to prevent commercial sex trade, rescue sex workers, and prosecute those who initiated the sex trade.¹⁴ Although not many NGOs have been established with sex tourism as the focus, many attempt to solve international sex trade issues and indirectly attempt to resolve the issue of sex tourism. As the tourism industry expands, with about 15% of the world's population becoming tourists annually (as of 2012), there has been an increase in commercial sex.¹⁵ NGOs' work depends on the country and the presence of sex tourism within that country. For example, in Thailand, the Australian NGO, Zoe Foundation, and the Goodwill Group Foundation, focus on preventing women from entering the commercial sex trade by teaching them occupational skills and supplying them with career services¹⁶ and rehabilitate (health services, education, and financial support) sex trafficking survivors.¹⁷

How Effective Are Governments Regarding Sex Tourism?

According to the 2013 Trafficking In Persons Report (TIP), despite the laws and preventative measures taken by the Thai government, officials in Thailand and neighboring nations support the smuggling of undocumented individuals into Thailand for the purpose of joining the commercial sex industry. A large majority of the sex workers in Thailand are migrants from neighboring countries who are coerced or forced into the sex industry. The Thai government does not follow or comply with the minimum preventions against trafficking. There has not been an increase or a significant effort to combat trafficking.¹⁸ The Netherlands 2013 TIP profile reports that it is one of the top seven countries of origin for victims who were forced into prostitution. It also notes that the Dutch government meets the minimum standards for the elimination and prevention of trafficking fully. Thus, the Netherlands has made a low level effort to prevent sexual crime and protect women, children and men from exploitation though proper investigation of forced sex trafficking cases and creative methods of prevention.¹⁹

Conclusion

Sex Tourism is an international issue that affects sex workers and societies. The clinical definition of sex tourism is when a person travels to another country with the explicit purpose of having sex with a prostitute. This definition does not encompass the lies the sex workers believe, the abuse they suffer, and how governments blindly ignore the industry. As evidenced by Mila's story and countless of other women, these sex workers are largely trafficked and forced to have sex with multiple men every day. The U.S. currently does not have any laws or NGOs addressing sex tourism in the context of human trafficking. If you would like to support this cause, education is key. Women need to be educated to prevent themselves from becoming victims. Men need to be educated on the cruelties and illegalities behind sex tourism. Finally, the general population needs to be educated in order to take a stand against sex tourism. If you would like to make a monetary donation to an NGO fighting sex tourism, you can visit the Australian NGO's Zoe Foundation's website, www.zoefoundation.org.au.

Mila, a Filipino prostitute, was told to leave her home and work in the city in order to send money to her family. Believing she would be working in a restaurant, Mila left her small town behind. She became a sex worker within a sex tourist brothel. The pimps convinced her that a Westerner would come, fall in love with her, and take her back to their prosperous country. Mila was only paid minimum wage and her pimp forced her to pay for weekly STD tests. These tests do not check for HIV. Mila became pregnant by an American tourist. She believed he would marry her, but he left. Mila gave birth to a baby boy and was diagnosed with HIV. She was kicked out of the brothel and alienated by her community.⁴

¹ Omondi, Rose K. "Gender and the Political Economy of Sex Tourism in Kenya's Coastal Resorts." *Gender and the Political Economy of Sex Tourism in Kenya's Coastal Resorts* (2003): 1-2. Web. <http://www.arsrc.org/downloads/features/omondi.pdf>.

² Jacqueline, Sanchez Taylor. "Female Sex Tourism: A Contradiction in Terms?" *Feminist Review*.83 (2006): 42-59. *ProQuest*.Web. 14 Oct. 2014. <http://o-search.proquest.com.lib.hope.edu/docview/212053789/fulltext?accountid=11471>.

³ Papathanassis, Alexis. "Chapter 3:0 Sex Tourism The Economic Impact of Prostitution in the Tourism Industry with a Focus on Sex Tourism in Asia." *The Long Tail of Tourism Holiday Niches and Their Impact on Mainstream Tourism*. Wiesbaden: Betriebswirtschaftlicher Verlag Gabler, 2011. 17+. Print.

⁴ Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. "Selling Sex in Heaven - Philippine Documentary Movie." *YouTube*. YouTube, 2013. Web. 14 Oct. 2014. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=05BkzGEE5Y>.

⁵ Wonders, Nancy A., and Raymond Michalowski. "Bodies, Borders, and Sex Tourism in a Globalized World: A Tale of Two Cities— Amsterdam and Havana." *JSTOR*. University of California Press, n.d. Web. 14 Oct. 2014. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/10.1525/sp.2001.48.4.545.pdf?acceptTC=true&pdConfirm=true&acceptTC=true>.

⁶ SVAW - Trafficking in Women: Explore the Issue." *SVAW - Trafficking in Women: Explore the Issue*. Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2014. <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/svaw/trafficking/explore/4effects.htm>.

⁷ Bryant, Clifton D. "The Routledge Handbook of Deviant Behaviour." *Google Books*. Routledge, 2011. Web. 14 Oct. 2014. <http://books.google.ca/books?hl=en&lr=&id=VJisQx8Fxa8C&oi=fnd&pg=PA383&dq=sex+tourism&ots=4qUkOKjGGV&sig=N0uCl2bkYOMhze5NZicrB-7QFPu#v=onepage&q=sex%20tourism&f=false>.

⁸ Bunn, Daniel. "Login." *Millennium Web Catalog*. N.p., 2011. Web. 14 Oct. 2014. http://o-link.springer.com.lib.hope.edu/chapter/10.1007/978-3-8349-6231-7_3.

⁹ AIDS and Sex Tourism. *POPLINE.org*. N.p. 1994. Web. 14 Oct. 2014.

¹⁰ "Facts That You Need to Know about Sex Tourism." *Laws.com*. Unknown, n.d. Web. <http://sex-crimes.laws.com/prostitution/4-facts-that-you-need-to-know-about-sex-tourism>.

¹¹ Van Son, Chaunsuay. "How Did Sex Tourism Become an Important Economic Source in the Coastal Region of Kenya." *Wageningen University*. Wageningen University, Aug. 2012. Web. 20 Oct. 2014. <<http://3A%2F%2Ffedepot.wur.nl%2F22516>>.

¹² Kempadoo, Kamala. "Globalizing sex workers' rights." *Canadian Woman Studies* 22.3 (2003). <http://pi.library.yorku.ca/ojs/index.php/cwvs/article/viewFile/6426/5614>.

¹³ "100 Countries and Their Prostitution Policies." *ProCon.org Headlines*. ProCon.org, 2014. Web. 23 Oct. 2014. <<http://prostitution.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=000772>>.

¹⁴ HumanTrafficking.org | NGO Corner." *HumanTrafficking.org | NGO Corner*. Human Trafficking.Org, n.d. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

¹⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime." *United Nations Organizations Cooperate to Stamp out Human Trafficking and Sex Tourism*. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 24 Apr. 2012. Web. 22 Oct. 2014.

¹⁶ "A Volunteer-Based Charity in Thailand." *A Thailand Registered Charity for Disadvantaged Women*. Goodwill Group Foundation, n.d. Web. 24 Oct. 2014.

¹⁷ "Who We Are." *Www.zoefoundation.org.au*. Zoe Foundation Australia, n.d. Web. 24 Oct. 2014.

¹⁸ United States. Office of the Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. *Trafficking in Persons Report: June 2013*. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, 2013. Web. 24 Oct. 2014.