

WHAT STUDIES?????

The study these politicians and faith based organizations like to quote was of JUVENILE PROSTITUTES

<http://www.politifact.com/oregon/statements/2013/mar/02/diane-mckeel/Is-average-age-entry-sex-trafficking-between-12-an/>

by Janie Har

“Statistics about sex trafficking, especially about minors, are notoriously difficult to document. For example, this newspaper once tried to show whether Portland is the child sex trafficking hub that elected officials and national media say it is, **only to find that nobody really knew.**

... Multnomah County Commissioner Diane McKeel, an east county resident who has made combating human trafficking, especially child sex trafficking, a priority. McKeel told columnist Elizabeth Hovde, who writes for The Oregonian's editorial page, **that the average age of entry into the sex trade industry is 12 to 14.** It's not the first time McKeel has cited the statistic. In a 2010 guest column about at-risk girls, she also wrote that **"studies show the average age of entry into prostitution is 12 to 14 years old."** A statistical average between 12 and 14? Wouldn't that mean a large number under 12? Also, was she talking about the average age of entry for all trafficked prostitutes, including adults? Or just juveniles?

The analysis

The commissioner's office provided us with numerous links. Many of the sources go back to a 2001 University of Pennsylvania study...the number in question is on page 92, under the section **"ages of first intercourse and entry into juvenile prostitution."** The age range of entry for boys "was somewhat younger than that of the girls, i.e. 11-13 years vs. 12-14 years, respectively." We emailed Dr. Richard Estes, the lead author, to learn more about sample size and methodology. His response was not illuminating. **"Any numbers you come across, even mine, represent best estimates of the situation. Because of the secretive and hidden nature of the problem it simply is not possible to get an accurate 'head count.'"**

Another widely cited report comes from a Vancouver, Wash., based group called **Shared Hope International**. The 2009 report states that **"research has shown that the average age of entry into prostitution and pornography is 12 to 14 years old in the United States."**

There's no research citation, but there is a pie chart breaking down age of entry into prostitution, based on a Clark County, Nevada, survey of girls arrested for prostitution-related offenses. **The 96 girls were ages 11 to 17. We did the math, and the average we got was 14.96, almost 15 years old. That's young, but not 12 or 13...**

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“What about the children?”

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... We scoured the Internet for more sources, reading abstracts and tracking down anyone who might have a clue. A criminology professor we queried wrote back saying that "good estimates are hard to find, and good data are harder yet" and wished us luck. He directed us to yet another paper, which we read, diligently...

We queried the U.S. Department of Justice. McKeel's office provided links to testimony and a report tied to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which state the average ages as 11 to 14, or 12. But a spokeswoman at the Bureau of Justice Statistics said those are not bureau numbers and that the bureau has no average age for entry into sex trafficking...

Eventually, we spoke with David Finkelhor, director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire, and a respected researcher in the area. He, too, had nothing concrete but offered skepticism. The average age is higher if adults are included. Older teens simply may escape survey. **"There isn't a lot of good research on this; they're relatively small samples,"** he said.

But he did suggest another academic article, which led us to Dominique Roe-Sepowitz, a professor at the School of Social Work at Arizona State University.

Is the average age of entry into prostitution and sex trafficking between 12 to 14 years old?

"That is statistically impossible," the professor said. "If she were to say, minor trafficking often starts between the ages of 12 and 14 across the country, that is somewhat supported."

**In the end, the Oregonian PolitiFact rated the statement "Half True"
To which we say, *REALLY?* How can it be 'half true' *if it isn't true at all?*
And we have the stats from the FBI arrest records for the past 32 years to prove it!**

"What about the children?"