



FBI: Prostitution Arrests Outnumber Trafficking Arrests 38 to 1

NEW YORK, NY (September 30, 2021) — There were 12,895 arrests for prostitution-related offenses reported to the FBI in 2020, and only 340 for sex trafficking offenses, says a newly released report from the FBI’s Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program. The UCR notes that “law enforcement agencies participate voluntarily and submit their crime data either through a state UCR program or directly to the FBI’s UCR Program.”

Arrests for prostitution-related offenses outnumber those for sex trafficking by nearly 38 to 1. The FBI defines sex trafficking as “inducing a person by force, fraud, or coercion to participate in commercial sex acts, or in which the person induced to perform such act(s) has not attained 18 years of age.”

The vast majority of individuals involved in the commercial sex industry are consenting adults. Policy makers and law enforcement often target consensual adult sex work under the guise of combatting human trafficking, an egregious human rights abuse. “When trafficking and prostitution are conflated, human trafficking victims are treated like criminals and consenting adults are needlessly arrested,” said Ariela Moscovitz, director of communications at Decriminalize Sex Work (DSW).

Prostitution-related arrests are ranked third on the list of arrests for victimless crimes, only behind drug violations and “drunkenness.” “The harms caused by the criminalization of consensual adult sex work are numerous and severe,” said Moscovitz. “Adults should not be arrested for engaging in private activities that do not harm others. Law enforcement should devote their resources to combatting real crimes,” she continued.

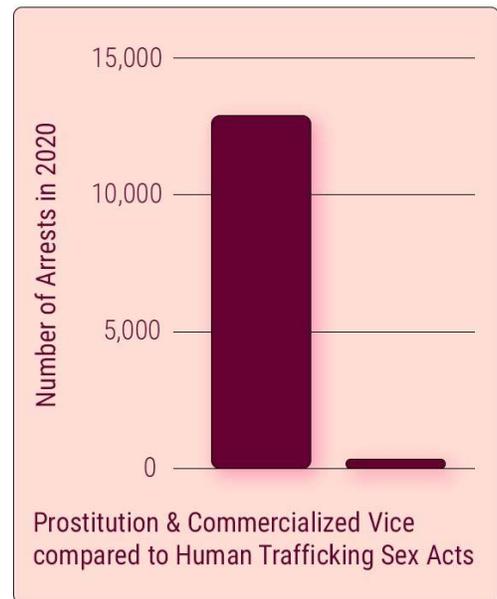
Both prostitution arrests and sex trafficking arrests in 2020 were down almost fifty percent from 2019. While the FBI does not attempt to explain the decrease in arrests, several factors could be responsible for the shift, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Decriminalize Sex Work is a national organization pursuing a state-by-state strategy to end the prohibition of consensual adult prostitution in the United States. We work with local organizations, advocates, and lobbyists to build community support and convince legislators to stop prostitution-related arrests. Evidence shows that decriminalizing sex work will help end human trafficking, improve public health, and promote community safety.

FBI Uniform Crime Report

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Source: 2020 FBI UCR Crime Report