

# Stop Trafficking! AwarenessAdvocacyAction

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# Why the *Dirty Dozen* List?



No corporation should profit from or facilitate sexual exploitation. Unfortunately, many well-established brands, companies, and organizations in the United States profit as major mainstream contributors of sexual exploitation.

Since 2013, the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) has published an annual Dirty Dozen List to expose companies that perpetuate sexual exploitation—whether that be through pornography, prostitution, sexual objectification, sexual violence and/or sex Trafficking.

The Dirty Dozen List has created easy online actions that give back power to individuals who want a voice in the culture. The Dirty Dozen List is a highly successful tool to

this end, already changing culture with more than 50 policy changes at major corporations. When a company makes a positive change to stop promoting sexploitation, it has a ripple effect that influences countless lives.

This year, for the first time ever, the Dirty Dozen List has become a Dirty 'Baker's Dozen' List, with the addition of Wyndham hotels, which are currently being sued by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation Law Center on behalf of a child sex trafficking survivor who was serially raped in these hotels.

#### 1. Amazon

Amazon, the world's largest online marketplace, focuses on e-commerce, cloud computing, digital streaming, and artificial intelligence. It also markets endless amounts of sexual exploitation.

As an online retailer, Amazon is in the business of selling incest-themed pornography, sex dolls, photography books with eroticized child nudity, pornographic magazines, and more. As a media creator, Amazon Prime Video inserts unnecessary, gratuitous nudity and simulated sex scenes into many of its original programs. Amazon S3 and Amazon Web Services also host thousands of hardcore violent pornography and prostitution websites — all this without providing sound parental controls.

Amazon.com promotes material that sexualizes children and normalizes the dehumanization and sexual commodification of women. It sells "eroticized" incest-themed pornographic books with themes of stepdaughters, sexual slavery, and violence, sex dolls,

photography books with "eroticized" child nudity, and pornographic magazines despite a corporate policy that seemingly prohibits the sale of pornography.

While Amazon took strict measures to rid the Kindle of hardcore pornography and explicit erotica in previous years, thousands of self-published pornographic books are for sale and even included for free in the monthly subscription service KindleUnlimited. A search conducted by NCOSE of "Teen Books" yielded both e-books for a toddler, as well as pornography. Unfortunately, a 12-year-old girl did this same search.

While Amazon often has strong written policies against this kind of material, it appears that their focus is solely on growing the business, and not maintaining the values they set forth from the beginning. As one of the most powerful companies in the world, Amazon not only influences global economic markets, but also influences the goods we buy, the media we consume, and businesses small and large.

# Awareness

#### Focus of this issue:

The National Center for Sexual Exploitation annual list.

# 2. Google

With 87 % of the search engine market share globally and a network that touches the lives of most people alive today, Google has a responsibility to eliminate sexual exploitation rather than serving as a party and facilitator to it. Google has a list of problems to respond to including unfiltered Chromebooks exposing school children to hardcore porn, pedophiles networking on You Tube, pornographic results for educational search terms in Google images, and encryption efforts that could make identifying and prosecuting child abusers more difficult.

Google has taken some important steps to combat sexual exploitation, including responses to NCOSE activism to remove pornographic apps from GooglePlay, ceasing pornographic Google Ads, improving WIFI filtering tools, and improving the visibility of the SafeSearch filtering option in Google Images.

Nevertheless, Google has been named to the Dirty Dozen List because it has failed to proactively address serious digital harms flourishing on YouTube, Google Chromebooks, and Google Images. Further, Google is currently working on large-scale encryption programs that could interfere with law enforcement efforts to find and intercept sexual exploiters of children. This could also impact filtering for families and schools.

## 3. Massage Envy

is the largest massage chain in America with more than 20,000 therapists and 1,200 locations. Massage Envy has been and is being sued by hundreds of women for failing to take appropriate measures when a massage therapist sexually harasses or assaults a client and currently forces its customers to wave any right to bring forward claims against the company, even in cases of unlawful conduct

Massage Envy claims that it "will never stop working to have industry-leading safety policies." However, the company has hidden clauses in customer agreements that force women to surrender their rights. There are several cases against Massage Envy that involve prior complaints of sexual assault by customers being made to management and them doing nothing about it, thus allowing perpetrators to continue preying on vulnerable clients. Former employees report being trained to do all in their power not to encourage police to show up at their locations.

#### 4. Netflix

has over 150 million subscribers globally and is considered prime at-home entertainment. The streaming platform provides hours of entertainment with both existing and original programming; however, a Netflix subscription also includes sexually graphic and degrading content. Netflix currently provides over 300 original productions, ranging from serious dramas, laugh-outloud comedies, to animation. Most of Netflix's most popular original shows are rated TV-MA (mature audiences only.) These

include graphic sex scenes, nudity, and violence. Netflix shows depict thousands of instances of nudity and on-screen simulated sex. By portraying these issues so graphically, it decreases the likelihood that viewers will thoughtfully analyze the harms of sexual exploitation. Netflix self-rates itself as suitable for ages 4+ on the Apple App Store. This is a misleading rating considering the high rate of content on Netflix containing graphic sex acts, gratuitous nudity, and extreme depictions of sexual assault. It is recommended that Netflix change its self-rating on the App Store to be 17+.



## 5. Nevada

is the only state in the United States with legalized brothel prostitution in select counties. Some people believe that legalization of prostitution improves regulation and increases safety. However, research confirms that prostitution (whether legalized, unregulated, or criminalized) is related to a high incidence of sexual violence, racism and economic disadvantages.

Legalizing prostitution increases the demand for prostitution. Legalized prostitution in Nevada

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has led to a massive sex industry in the state. When compared to other states, Nevada's sex trade (both legal and illegal) is at a minimum 63% higher than the next highest state of New York, and double that of Florida.

This increased demand is a great incentive for sex traffickers to push more people into prostitution both within and outside of legal prostitution frameworks. An inspection of Nevada's legal brothels in Lyon County found that 30% of the women had red flags for being victims of sex trafficking.

Instead of legalizing and embracing sexual exploitation, prostitution policies should work to combat demand by penalizing and reducing sex buyer behavior. Policies should also offer social services and job training opportunities to the women engaged in prostitution to enable them to leave the industry.

# 6. Seeking Arrangement

As commercial sexual exploitation continues to increase, "sugar dating" appears to have become the latest trend. Sugar dating is promoted as "relationships" in which a young, attractive woman can meet an "experienced man" who will provide everything from mentorship to all expenses paid vacations. Men thus are encouraged to engage in no strings attached relationships with beautiful young women while the "sugar babies" are advised that these relationships will benefit them both financially and experientially.

The website Seeking Arrangement, with over 20 million members, is at the center of this form of

sexual exploitation. Seeking Arrangement describes itself as creating "relationships on your terms." The website targets college aged women who are struggling with student debt to form a relationship with more socioeconomically advantaged men. "Both prostitutes and sugar babies are bought by men willing to pay them to be sexually available, and they're both damaging acts," says Kathleen Barry, PhD, author of The Prostitution of Sexuality. "Unlike [prostituted persons], sugar babies have a delusion about their autonomy. They believe that paying their tuition without loans or carrying a Prada bag makes up for whatever they're giving away. These young women may act with bravado, but they often feel shame. The power inequality mostly benefits the daddy," she says, "leaving the 'baby' as powerless and dependent as her namesake."

# 7. SportsIllustrated

Since 1964 the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue has sexually objectified women for sport and profit. The magazine sends the message that women's bodies are for public consumption. Retailers that display and sell this magazine condone the culture of entitlement of the female body. The images are designed to portray women as sexually desirable and available to the male consumer.

Research found that the "frequency of exposure to men's lifestyle magazines that objectify women, reality TV programs that objectify women, and pornography predicted more objectified cognitions about women, which, in turn, predicted stronger attitudes supportive of violence against

women." Further, this study reported that "Consumption of reality TV, sports programming, and pornography was each associated with greater acceptance of objectification of women, which in turn was associated with greater rape myth acceptance and more frequent acts of sexual deception."

#### 8. Steam

is a popular gaming platform with over 90 million active users, and approximately 35 million users who are minors. The platform sells many popular games that promote gratuitous sexual content, violence, and harassment. The popular tag pages include "nudity" and "sexual content" along with the "action", "strategy", and "racing" games.

Steam has implemented an "anything goes" policy as far as filtering or parental controls and is a major contributor to sexual exploitation in one of society's most popular sectors—gaming. In 2020 there are 3,911 games tagged for the keyword nudity. Some of these games are worse than others, but all share a common theme: sexual exploitation is ok. if it's "fake". Even when account users register as a minor, it only takes one click to get past the age blocking walls to see and subsequently buy these games.

Our society continues to suffer from the consequences of the trafficking of children, women and men, of campus sexual assault, military sexual assault, and rising child-on-child sexual abuse. When video games include sexually graphic and degrading themes the user is not only a voyeur but an active participant which normalizes the sexual use (and often abuse) of others.

# Awareness

## 9. Tik Tok

TikTok is a social media video app for creating and sharing short videos, which is popular among elementary and middle schoolaged children. With more than 500 million active users worldwide, TikTok has facilitated a space for sexual grooming by abusers and sex traffickers. Traffickers utilize TikTok to view minor users and either comment and/or message these minors, often requesting sexually explicit videos or pictures.

An advocacy group accurately called TikTok a "hunting ground" for predators to abuse children and Forbes identified TikTok as a "magnet to sexual predators."

#### 10. Twitter

As many as 10 million Twitter accounts may include explicit sexual content and Twitter has done little to stem the tide of sex trafficking, prostitution and pornography accounts on its site.

Twitter advertises prostituted persons and sex trafficking victims for purposes of commercial sexual exploitation, often via pornographic images or webcamming. At times these tweets include offers to meet in person for "escorting" services, and sometimes they ask users to follow and pay for nude images, videos, or live streaming. It has been documented by law enforcement that pimps and sex traffickers often either coerce trafficking or child sexual abuse victims into making such social media or advertising posts or create the posts themselves in their victim's name.



Twitter is known for the vast amount of cyber-based sexual harassment, revenge pornography, and even sexually exploited images of children. The platform includes ads for prostitution webcamming and in-person encounters, pornography that supports rape myths, normalizes adult-withteen-themed and incest-themed exploitation, and reinforces degrading racially charged sexual stereotypes. Recent news reports indicate that pedophiles have also begun migrating to Twitter to share information about accessing child sexual abuse images (i.e., child pornography).

In short Twitter, which prides itself as being a platform for "free expression," refuses to remove accounts posting likely advertisements for sex trafficking.

#### 11. VISA

Despite being a credit card network with one of the largest market shares, is partnering with the pornography industry. Visa processes payments for pornography with themes of sexual violence, racism, incest, and the fetishization of minors and by doing so, supports and normalizes the pornography industry.

Mainstream pornography websites like PornHub, which Visa partners with, have hosted videos of sextrafficked women and of a child being sexually abused.

Is this the kind of content Visa is willing to endorse?

#### 12. Wish

As of January 2020, Wish was the #2 shopping app on iPhones. Wish is a retail shopping website and app and is used by over 500 million people. The shopping platform, unlike Amazon, was built specifically for smartphones. The platform connects customers directly to Chinese manufacturers who provide "dirt cheap prices, from \$7 sweatpants to \$15 smartwatches, but also the long delivery times of two to three weeks."



Regrettably, Wish's rise in the world of retail depends on child-like sex dolls, spycams sold for filming women nude without their permission, and misogynistic apparel. The sex dolls being sold by Wish literally turn women and children into sex objects. As Dr. Maras and Dr. Shapiro note in the Journal of Internet Law, sex dolls "have the potential of altering individuals' views and perceptions of relationships, ultimately, having them interact with humans as they would with the dolls and robots"

Wish promotes products that have marketing imagery specifically advertising the use of spycams and nanny cams to stalk women and spy on them while they undress or have sex. Wish also sells clothing items, such as t-shirts, featuring female nudity. When shopping apps normalize the degradation of women and minimize women as two-dimension sex objects, it impacts not only the consumers but also the whole marketplace. The apparent success of Wish could open the door for other rising shopping apps and websites to follow suit.

## 13. Wyndham Hotels & Resorts

which also owns the hotel brand Super 8 among others, is being sued by the National Center on Sexual Exploitation (NCOSE) Law Center for facilitating underage sex trafficking. Wyndham continues to sell on-demand pornography, despite customer complaints. Themes of pornography sold by Wyndham include teen, incest, racism, and extreme violence. Research shows that pornography is linked to increased sexual violence as well as other public health issues. Federal laws prohibit much of the hardcore pornography Wyndham profits from.

In addition, NCOSE is co-counsel on a case that was filed against Wyndham and others for knowingly facilitating the sex trafficking of a 16-year-old girl beginning in 2014. They allege that for years, the girl was trafficked in and out of several hotels owned by Wyndham and other chains in Santa Clara County, California. The young girl was forced to perform commercial sex acts with ten to fifteen men a day. Through hotel staff and employees, Wyndham and the other hotels knew or should have known that the plaintiff was being trafficked for sex due to, but not limited to:

- large amounts of used condoms, empty lube bottles, and other sexrelated items in the hotel room; payments for the rooms in cash;
- Plaintiff's physical appearance (malnourished, bruised, beaten)
- a continuous procession of older men entering and leaving minor Plaintiff B.M.'s room;
- excessive requests for sheets, cleaning supplies, room service
- the personal relationship between the front desk employees and Plaintiff's traffickers

Wyndham financially benefited from the sex trafficking of this young woman and other victims like her. Wyndham maintained business models that attract and foster the commercial sex market for traffickers and buyers alike. In recent months, many other lawsuits have been filed against Wyndham Hotels for facilitating and profiting from the sex trafficking/prostitution of dozens of women and girls.



After advocacy from NCOSE, Hilton Worldwide, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Marriott Hotels, and Starwood Hotels and Resorts have all made the decision to remove on-demand, in-room pornography from all their hotels. InterContinental Hotels Group has made it a brand standard to prohibit the distribution of pornography in all its hotel chains, globally.

# Advocacy

# The Watch List

The Dirty Dozen Watch List puts entities on notice that they may soon find themselves named as a major contributor to sexual exploitation unless they show significant and sustained efforts to address their role in promoting sexual exploitation. In other cases, by placing an organization on the Watch List, NCOSE is affirming an entity's positive step towards addressing its role in sexual exploitation. However, because this may represent only small progress in terms of the entity's total contribution to sexual exploitation, or because of concerns about the entity's intent to carry through with its progress, placement on the Watch List also signals concerns about their commitment to ending sexual exploitation.

### 1. Snapchat

Founded in May 2011, Snapchat is one of the most popular social media tools with 100 million daily active users. The Snapchat app is perhaps the most popular smartphone app used by young teens. Unfortunately, Snapchat repeatedly exposes children as young as 13 years old to graphic sexual content in its Discover stories, such as articles on "oral sex etiquette," "Kylie nudes hacked," "flashing the flesh," and more. Snapchat also fails to proactively remove pornography producing Snapchat accounts. These accounts are often used as advertisements for prostitution and sex trafficking.

The Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) estimates that 88% of self-made sexually explicit images are "stolen" from their original upload location such as laptop webcams or phones. With Snapchat the photo "snaps" can be recovered or hacked, and the receiver can take a screen shot and share it with others. Many Snapchat images have found their way on "revenge" porn sites. Sexting among those under 18 in legal terms is considered self-produced softcore

or hardcore child pornography depending on what is depicted and is liable to criminal or civil prosecution. Individuals are frequently enticed, pressured, and even bullied by their peers to create and send sexts. In many other instances, predatory adults prime minors by seeking sexual images of, and even sexual encounters with, underage boys and girls.

Snapchat has made improvements to allow Discover publishers to age-gate content and allowing users to delete specific Discover publishers. Snapchat also terminated Snapcash—which was being used to buy and sell pornographic images and videos. Another change Snapchat has made is to provide prominent inapp reporting systems for users to report other users that send or promote sexually exploitive content.

#### 2. EBSCO

Information Services offers online library resources to public and private schools (K-12), colleges and universities, public libraries, and more. Unfortunately, its Explora, Science Reference Center, Literary Reference Center, and other

#### How to download an EBSCOhost e-book



products, sometimes provide easy access to hardcore pornography sites and extremely graphic sexual content. Some of this material has direct links to hardcore pornography websites staying within the EBSCO database bypassing school filters.

The presence of such explicit material in a platform meant for children and teenagers to use while at school or for homework sends a particularly damaging message to young people that the behavior featured (examples include: group or hook-up sex, incest, "sugar dating" and prostitution in order to pay for college) is normal and expected adult behavior.

EBSCO states that it places most of the responsibility for removing such content on school and library administrators. However, EBSCO doesn't effectively warn these

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administrators that the content is available so easily on its systems.

EBSCO has made significant progress over the last two years. Educational databases meant for elementary students and those meant for middle school students no longer yield pornographic material. Just two years ago basic searches for innocent search terms like "7th grade biology" or "respiration" would yield results

with pornographic images or explicit instructions on risky sex acts. Current searches for even pornographic terms often yield no result in these databases.

#### 3. Facebook

is undoubtedly the world's most popular social networking site. Facebook has taken measures to improve efforts to block and report child pornography on its site, but it still has a long way to go. Today, Facebook has become the principle place to trade pornography and child pornography, as well as a place to promote prostitution and sex trafficking.

Of concern is Facebook's plans to roll out sweeping encryption which would aid child abusers and sex traffickers from detection and accountability by law enforcement.

# **Advocacy Victories**

#### **United Airlines**

United Airlines has been removed from the 2019 Dirty Dozen List where it was previously listed due to improved training for flight crews regarding in-flight pornography-use. A United Airlines spokesperson recently confirmed that United has now begun training staff on how to respond to passengers viewing pornography in-flight. This was validated by United flight attendants.

#### Google Play

The two billion+ monthly active devices subscribing to Google Play are no longer able to download pornographic and sexually explicit apps through Google's sanctioned online store.

#### **Twitter**

As of November 2019, Twitter requires pornography to be labeled as "sensitive media" to limit inadvertent exposure to it. Also, Twitter blocks direct searches for porn within the "Photos" and "Videos" tabs, although not in the general search tab. Twitter still must do much more to curb sexually exploitive content, but these are steps in the right direction.

#### **Walmart**

In 2018, after collaborative dialogue with the National Center on Sexual Exploitation, Walmart committed to removing Cosmopolitan magazine from checkout lines in all its stores across the country. Cosmopolitan, like Playboy, places women's value primarily on their ability to sexually satisfy a man and therefore feeds a culture of male sexual entitlement. NCOSE is grateful for Walmart's leadership to reduce the amount of unsolicited sexually objectifying material that bombards youth and adults alike.

Thank Walmart for Removing Exploitive and Objectifying Content! Click here.

#### TikTok Adds Safety Features

As of February 20, 2020 TikTok announced it will address concerns about the lack of safety features. These safety features, which will limit sexual grooming by abusers or potentially sex traffickers, will be first rolled out in the United Kingdom and then the United States

"These improvements were vital because TikTok has historically employed some of the weakest safety features in the social media ecosystem, which has caused it to become a breeding ground for sexual abuse and sextortion," said Haley McNamara, Vice President of Advocacy and Outreach at the National Center on Sexual Exploitation. "For example, TikTok's Restricted Mode had to be re-set every 30 days, thus putting undue burden on children to re-protect themselves over and over again from seeing sexually exploitive or other inappropriate content. We applaud TikTok for their new release of Family Safety Mode, which addresses many of the concerns our organization has brought to their attention. This Family Safety Mode will allow parents to set up Restricted Mode and to set limits on strangers direct messaging their children, a feature that has often been used by predators to groom children for sexual abuse or trafficking. While more improvements are necessary, we are glad that TikTok is beginning to address the issues we have raised in a tangible way."



# Learn About Parental Controls on Steam

By default, when a person sets up a Steam account they have full access to see advertisements for every kind of game, including those with sexual content, which puts the burden on families to avoid sexually exploitive material on Steam.

In addition to asking Steam to improve that current policy, you can learn about the existing parental controls to keep your child safe.

Click <u>here</u> to learn more about parental controls on Steam, and share them with a friend.

# Pornography and Sex Trafficking

The increasing demand for trafficked women and children in recent years is due in part to the proliferation of pornography. There is a need through research and personal accounts to help the public understand one of the major factors creating and driving the demand for trafficked women and children.

Government officials, leaders, celebrities and the general public are calling for increased efforts to stop sex trafficking. However, it must be recognized that unless something is done to curb the demand, we will never solve the problem of this exploitation. Instead, the problem will continue to overwhelm our society.

The different types of sexual exploitation are seamlessly intertwined. Pornography, sexually oriented businesses, strip clubs, prostitution and sex trafficking are all incontestably linked. It is time we stop ignoring the continuum of exploitation in order to start solving the problem

Click <u>here</u> to learn more about pornography and sex trafficking.

# TikTok: Review Safety Tips for Your Kids

While TikTok has insufficient safety controls, there are initial steps you can take to protect your children, including setting accounts on private, limiting comments, and more. You can learn more about these options on Common Sense Media. Please click *here*.

# Sports Illustrated



Send an email to corporate executives at Target, Walgreens, and Kroger to ask them to remove Sports Illustrated's Swimsuit Issue from checkout aisles so customers are not forced to see sexually objectifying messages about women.

Click <u>here</u> and fill out a short form to send a pre-made email.

Also, Authentic Brands Group is a company that recently purchased the brand of Sports Illustrated. They have the power to issue a new directive to the magazine to halt the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit Issue.

Click <u>here</u> to email the new brand owners of Sports Illustrated.

# Wyndham

Pornography in hotels not only facilitates harms to the user and their relationships, but it also increased demand for sex trafficking and prostitution. All individuals and organizations are invited to take the pledge to refuse to patronize any hotel or motel that sells and profits from pornography.

Please click <u>here</u> to learn more and to take the pledge.

## Wyndham Action

Last year, the NYU International Hospitality Industry Investment Conference presented Wyndham president and CEO Geoff Ballotti with the Stephen W. Brener Silver Plate Award.

This award honors an executive, entrepreneur, company or association in the hospitality industry that has shown exemplary efforts in promoting the hotel and tourism business.

Take action and email the conference to recommend that they rescind this award considering the Wyndham policies that allow and facilitate sexual exploitation. Click <u>here</u>.

## Take Action

To Demand Amazon Remove "Eroticized" Incest Books, Email Amazon Executives To Remove Sex Dolls. Email Amazon Executives to Improve Amazon Studio Content and Parental Controls. Please click here.

Tell Google to Remove Graphic Pornography from Images Search. To Petition: Slow Down Google's Large-Scale Encryption Efforts to Ensure Online Safety, click *here*.

Tell Massage Envy to Improve Their Policies Regarding Sexual Assault, click *here*.

Email executives about improving Netflix parental controls in addition to reducing graphic depictions of sexual assault. Click *here*.

Tell Nevada legislators to end legal brothels, click <u>here</u>.

Tell These Companies to Stop Advertising with SeekingArrangement. Staples, Zillow, and Xfinity have placed ads on SeekingArrangement (and therefore helped fund its sexually exploitive message).

Email the Google Play App Store. While the Apple app store does not carry an app for the pseudodating prostitution site SeekingArrangement, the Google Play app store does! Click *here*.

Tell TikTok to fix their policies and practices to make their app safe – send a tweet to their company and executives! Click <u>here</u> to see pre-written tweets that you can send with just one click.

Companies like Visa monitor their social media closely and care about their online reputations. Please click *here* to tweet or email.

Companies pay attention to their reputation on Twitter!

You can help pressure Wish to instill more socially responsible retail policies by clicking <u>here</u> to find prepared tweets you can send with just one click!

Sign the Petition for Wyndham to Change Its Policies Click *here*.

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