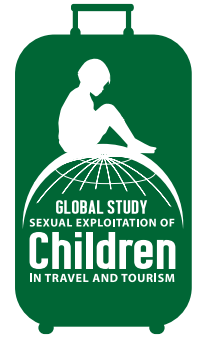


# NORTH AMERICA



## TRAVEL AND TOURISM

The travel and tourism industry plays an important role in the region's economies, contributing **CA\$84.3 billion** (4.5%) to Canada's GDP; in the U.S the industry yielded around **US\$2.16 trillion**. In 2013 Americans spent US\$748 billion on domestic travel, a figure expected to reach US\$903 billion by 2017. A main concern in relation to SECTT is the **extensive infrastructure available** (multiple lodging and transportation alternatives), providing an enabling environment for travelling child sex offenders (TCSOs), including foreign tourists and domestic travellers.

Both countries "send" TCSOs, particularly to Latin America and the Caribbean, and appear to also be becoming destinations: TCSOs from Europe have been identified in both countries. Both foreign TCSOs in the region and North Americans abroad abuse positions as teachers, volunteers or humanitarian workers and engage in volunteerism to find victims. American and Canadian offenders have victimised children in orphanages in countries as diverse as Cambodia, Haiti, Honduras, Kenya and Nepal.

## CURRENT AND EMERGING TRENDS

Neither country maintains reliable data on the incidence of SECTT or number of child victims, in part because the vast majority of incidents go unreported. Available evidence suggests that **children are being victimised at a younger age**, and that some children and youth in both countries engage in commercial sex for survival.

**Native Americans in the U.S. and Aborigines in Canada are at high risk for SECTT.** In some Canadian cities as many as 90% of sexually exploited children are Aborigines; Native American children in the U.S. have been found to be more vulnerable than their peers to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

**U.S. military servicemen deployed overseas** continue to be a source of demand for sexual services from local populations, especially in Asian countries and usually as situational offenders.

The involvement of **domestic travellers** in child sexual exploitation is another important trend, ranging from businesspersons attending events in another city to mining and oilfield workers assigned to a remote location. **Trafficking** is closely linked to SECTT in North America. Canadian Aboriginal girls are shuttled back and forth to meet demand from men who travel for short-term work on oil rigs or in uranium mines. SECTT began to flourish in the U.S. state of North Dakota when oil production boomed in 2012 and thousands of men flocked there to work. **Transport hubs** are another environment where children and adolescents are vulnerable to exploitation by domestic offenders, especially truckers.

A 2007 U.S. study found evidence of particularly high levels of child sexual exploitation through prostitution and trafficking across state lines – mainly of young African Americans – in both Las Vegas and Atlanta (U.S. gambling and business hubs, respectively). Montreal is a hotspot for SECTT due to its proximity to the U.S. and the many sporting and cultural events it hosts. The

large number and type of lodgings available have allowed SECTT to migrate from the street to more discrete locations, where offenders are less visible to law enforcement.

SECTT in North America is also facilitated by **widespread access to and use of the Internet and other mobile technologies**, which help TCSOs make arrangements for offending, either through specialised websites, via intermediaries or directly with children and adolescents. North American TCSOs also use **ICT tools** to discover where children are available by networking with like-minded individuals, and have been convicted for managing websites advertising tours in other regions involving sex with children.

## LEGAL ENVIRONMENT

Canada and the U.S. both have **strict laws governing child sexual exploitation** both at home and abroad (through extraterritorial legislation). Several U.S. agencies cooperate to identify and prosecute Americans who offend abroad under the 2003 'Protect Act', which specifically prohibits travel for the purpose of child sexual abuse and operating sex tours. The Department of Homeland Security's flagship initiative targeting sex offenders, 'Operation Predator', has led to over 8,000 arrests since 2003.

In 2016, the U.S. government adopted the International Megan's Law, which will create a reciprocal notification system between the US and foreign law enforcement regarding the travel of U.S. registered sex offenders. The law which was 8 years in the passing, is a critical step towards protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation by travelling sex offenders from and to the U.S.

Canada's legal framework for SECTT has several loopholes, but amendments to Canadian law to address this.

After laws were passed in the two countries related using the Internet for SECTT (Canada, 2002; U.S., 2006) a rapid rise occurred in the number of prosecutions for this offense.

## RESPONSE

Several **cross-sectoral partnerships** were developed in North America between governments, NGOs and the travel and tourism sector to counteract SECTT, often under the umbrella of **corporate social responsibility**. Many were inspired by the **Guiding Principles** set out by the UN Human Rights Commission, which call on companies to respect human rights and be proactive in preventing, mitigating and, where appropriate, remediating their adverse human rights impacts.

The U.S. government is in the process of drafting a **National Action Plan on Responsible Business Conduct**, with inputs by ECPAT USA on the use of

voluntary instruments to prevent child rights violations, including in the hospitality industry. Private U.S. companies have also launched initiatives, such as the Global Business Coalition against Trafficking. In Canada the impact of the UN **Guiding Principles** is less clear. Leading child rights NGOs in Canada have offered suggestions on how child rights could be incorporated into such a strategy and the potential benefits to businesses.

Because of the critical role of the travel and tourism industry in addressing SECTT, the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism has been, to date, the main vehicle for involving the private sector in efforts to combat SECTT in North America. Some 40 industry leaders, including Hilton Worldwide and Wyndham Worldwide, have signed the Code. In Canada membership is limited to the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies.

Airlines such as Delta signed The Code, informing travellers about laws against SECTT and its impact on children through in-flight videos. Canada's WestJet uses its social media, web and in-flight platforms to call attention to SECTT. The U.S. "Blue Lightning" initiative and Canada's Transat provide training to front-line personnel to recognise SECTT. Truckers against Trafficking is a U.S. initiative that educates and mobilises individual truckers to combat domestic sex trafficking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS (SAMPLE ONLY):

1. Address the lack of data on SECTT
2. Address critical gaps in national laws against child sexual exploitation
3. Support the continued involvement of the travel and tourism industry and transportation services of North America in the fight against SECTT, through cross-sector collaboration
4. Address the increasing use of private accommodations as venues for SECTT
5. Continue bilateral and multilateral projects through partnerships between "sending" and "receiving" countries
6. Strengthen law enforcement and international cooperation to combat SECTT
7. Improve care and support services for child victims of SECTT
8. Address corruption at all levels
9. Strengthen the capacity of families and communities to prevent and address SECTT
10. Conduct awareness raising campaigns about the dangers of children's exposure to SECTT, including the online safety and potential dangers of ICT
11. Ensure that volunteer-receiving organisations have adequate child protection systems in place