

# A Snapshot in Safety and Risk

## Human Trafficking: Myths, Facts, and How You Can Help

*Today, human trafficking has grown to a \$99 billion-dollar international criminal enterprise with an estimated 24.9 million victims each year. Of them, about 20.1 million are victims of forced labor and 4.8 million are victims of forced sexual exploitation. Worldwide, almost 20% of all trafficking victims are children.*

### So what is human trafficking?

Human trafficking occurs when a perpetrator, often referred to as a trafficker, takes an action (induces, recruits, harbors, transports, provides), and then employs the means of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of compelling the victim to provide commercial sex acts (sex trafficking) or labor/services (labor trafficking).

### Myths versus Facts about human trafficking:

Even though there's so much information available about human trafficking, many myths persist. To understand and help fight back it's important to know the facts about human trafficking. One example of this misinformation is that those involved in trafficking are children and adults who have been abducted. The truth is, victims often know the person who traffics them. Below is a list of other myths vs facts from the Human Trafficking Hotline.

Myth	Reality
<b>It's always or usually a violent crime</b>	By far the most pervasive myth about human trafficking is that it often involves kidnapping or otherwise physically forcing someone into a situation. In reality, human traffickers use psychological means such as tricking, defrauding, manipulating, or threatening victims into providing commercial sex or exploitative labor.
<b>Human trafficking only happens in illegal or underground industries</b>	Human trafficking cases have been reported and prosecuted in industries including restaurants, cleaning services, construction, factories, and more.
<b>Only women and girls can be victims and survivors of sex trafficking</b>	One study estimates that as many as half of sex trafficking victims and survivors are male. Advocates believe that percentage may be even higher but that male victims are far less likely to be identified. LGBTQ boys and young men are seen as particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

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**Human trafficking involves moving, traveling, or transporting a person across state or national borders**

Human trafficking is often confused with human smuggling, which involves illegal border crossings. In fact, the crime of human trafficking does not require any movement whatsoever. Survivors can be recruited and trafficked in their own hometowns, even their own homes.

**People being trafficked are physically unable to leave their situations/locked in/held against their will**

That's sometimes the case. More often, however, people in trafficking situations stay for reasons that are more complicated. Some lack the basic necessities to physically get out - such as transportation or a safe place to live. Some are afraid for their safety. Others use debt as a means to compel labor or commercial sex.

**Traffickers target victims they don't know**

Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents.

## Where does it happen?

Human trafficking is a pandemic that has spread throughout the world and can be found across the United States. While trafficking can happen anywhere some of the industries that are most impacted by this problem include:

- Healthcare
- Hotels and motels
- Trucking
- Familial
- Agriculture, forestry, and construction
- Nannies, house cleaners, home health aides

## How can we help fight human trafficking?

***Do not at any time attempt to confront a suspected trafficker directly or alert a victim to your suspicions.*** Your safety as well as the victim's safety is important. Instead, please contact local law enforcement directly.

1. **Pay Attention!** [Learn the indicators](#). Chances are there's going to be nothing visible, nothing that you can see from across the room, or even from up close, that should alert you that a stranger is being trafficked. Awareness training is available for individuals, businesses, first responders, law enforcement, educators, and federal employees.

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2. **Know the Laws in Your State.** All 50 states and Washington, D.C have laws criminalizing sex trafficking. Some states punish traffickers the same as purchasers.
3. **Educate your staff.** There are several government agencies that offer free training. Learning the basics will help your employees be better prepared to combat this growing epidemic.
4. **[Learn how traffickers often target and recruit youth.](#)** Safeguard children in your community by talking with schools, law enforcement, and community members.
5. **Educate Health Care Providers** with the [SOAR \(stop, observe, ask, respond\) training.](#)

## What to look for:

**Recognizing key indicators of human trafficking is the first step in identifying victims and can help save a life. Here are some common indicators to help recognize human trafficking:**

- Showing signs of physical injuries and abuse
- Avoiding eye contact, social interaction, and authority figures/law enforcement
- Seeming to adhere to scripted or rehearsed responses in social interaction
- Lacking official identification documents
- Being submissive or fearful
- Living at the place of employment
- Checking into hotels/motels with older males, and referring to those males as a boyfriend or “daddy,” which is often street slang for pimp
- Poor physical or mental health
- Untreated sexually transmitted diseases
- Security measures that appear to keep people inside an establishment - barbed wire inside of a fence, bars covering the insides of windows
- Not allowing people to go into public alone, or speak for themselves

[Click here](#) to learn more about indicators and questions to ask.

## **Resources:**

- **[U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)** (Live Chat web, 1-888-373-7888, Text “BeFree” 233733)
- Understanding Human Trafficking – Fact Sheet <https://www.state.gov/what-is-trafficking-in-persons/>
- Polaris Project: <https://polarisproject.org/recognizing-human-trafficking/>
- Department of Homeland Security: To report suspected human trafficking to Federal law enforcement: [1-866-347-2423](tel:1-866-347-2423) Website: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign>
- Human Trafficking Indicator Card: <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/materials/indicator-card>
- Human Trafficking Hotline: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/what-human-trafficking/myths-misconceptions>

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- Trafficking in the Hospitality Industry - <https://www.ecpatusa.org/hotel>
- [Anti-trafficking Hotel Checklist](#)

## ***Free Training Resources***

- National Human Trafficking Hotline and HHS Online Trainings: <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/nhth-hhs-online-trainings>
- Polaris Project: <https://polarisproject.org/training/>
- Combatting Human Trafficking in Tribal Communities (U.S. Department of Homeland Security) <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/law-enforcement-awareness-training>