

Here are 7 facts about human trafficking you may not know, plus 3 ways you can help. [Crs.org/stories/stp-human-trafficking](https://crs.org/stories/stp-human-trafficking)

1. The real definition of human trafficking.

Human trafficking is the act of recruiting, harboring, transporting, providing or obtaining a person for compelled labor or commercial sex acts through the use of force, fraud or coercion. It's important to note, though, that human trafficking can include, but does not require, movement. You can be a victim of human trafficking in your hometown. At the heart of human trafficking is the traffickers' goal of exploitation and enslavement.

2. Types of human trafficking.

Sexual exploitation and forced labor are the most commonly identified forms of human trafficking. More than half of the victims are female. Many other forms of exploitation are often thought to be under-reported. These include domestic servitude and forced marriage; organ removal; and the exploitation of children in begging, the sex trade and warfare.

3. Causes of human trafficking: It's complicated.

The causes of human trafficking are complex and interlinked, and include economic, social and political factors. Poverty alone does not necessarily create vulnerability to trafficking, but when combined with other factors, these can lead to a higher risk for being trafficked. Some of those other factors include: corruption, civil unrest, a weak government, lack of access to education or jobs, family disruption or dysfunction, lack of human rights, or economic disruptions.

4. It's a lucrative industry.

Along with illegal arms and drug trafficking, human trafficking is one of the largest international crime industries in the world. A report from the International Labor Organization (ILO) says forced labor generates \$150 billion in illegal profits per year. Two-thirds of that money came from commercial sexual exploitation, while the rest is

from forced economic exploitation, including domestic work, agriculture, child labor and related activities.

5. Believe it. Human trafficking is everywhere.

Every continent in the world has been involved in human trafficking. In the United States, it is most prevalent in Texas, Florida, New York and California. Human trafficking is both a domestic and global crime, with victims trafficked within their own country, to neighboring countries and between continents. Victims of trafficking can be of any age and any gender. Women and children are often used for sexual exploitation, while men are more likely to be used for forced labor. Globally, about one in five victims of human trafficking are children. Children are also exploited for the purposes of forced begging, child pornography or child labor. Their smaller hands may also be used in tasks like sewing or untangling fishing wire.

6. We need to do more for migrants.

All over the world, people are on the move. Many have been forced to become migrants because of conflict, a changing climate and economic instability. Some of these migrants are vulnerable to human trafficking. A United Nations rights expert is warning a new approach is needed. "Trafficking in people in conflict situations is not a mere possibility but something that happens on a regular basis," said Maria Grazia Giammarinaro, the United Nation's special rapporteur on human trafficking, in a speech to the U.N. General Assembly. "This means anti-trafficking measures must be integrated into all humanitarian action and all policies regarding people fleeing conflict."

7. How to stop human trafficking: The three P's, plus a little more

The U.S. government is at the forefront of efforts to address human trafficking. Its policy surrounds the three P's: prevent trafficking, protect victims and prosecute traffickers. The number of convictions for human trafficking is increasing, but unfortunately not proportionately to the growing awareness and extent of the problem. There are several reasons for that. There is an absence of anti-trafficking legislation in some countries. Sometimes the legislation exists, but law enforcement officials and prosecutors may not know how to use it. In some

instances, victims may not cooperate with the criminal justice system because they have been threatened by a trafficker.

The United States, along with Mexico and the Philippines, was ranked one of the world's worst places for human trafficking in 2018. In the US, there is no official number of human trafficking victims, but estimates place it in the hundreds of thousands.

[Businessinsider.com/human-trafficking-in-the-us-facts-statistics-2019](https://www.businessinsider.com/human-trafficking-in-the-us-facts-statistics-2019)

Human trafficking can happen to anyone but some people are more vulnerable than others. Significant risk factors include recent migration or relocation, substance use, mental health concerns, involvement with the child welfare system and being a runaway or homeless youth. Often, traffickers identify and leverage their victims' vulnerabilities in order to create dependency. Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents. The most pervasive myth about human trafficking is that it always, or often, involves kidnapping or physically forcing someone into a situation. In reality, most traffickers use psychological means such as, tricking, defrauding, manipulating or threatening victims into providing commercial sex or exploitative labor.

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. [Polarisproject.org](https://www.polarisproject.org)

United Nations (UN) www.un.org United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) www.unodc.org

Human Trafficking Knowledge Portal: <https://www.unodc.org/cld/en/v3/htmls/index.html> UNODC

Global Report on Trafficking in Persons <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/data-and-analysis/glotip.html>

Countering Trafficking in Persons in Conflict Situations (2018)

<http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/publications.html> UNODC Evidential Issues in

Trafficking in Persons Cases: Case Digest [http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2017/](http://www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/2017/Case_Digest_Evidential_Issues_in_Trafficking.pdf)

[Case_Digest_Evidential_Issues_in_Trafficking.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/humantrafficking/2017/Case_Digest_Evidential_Issues_in_Trafficking.pdf) Case Digest on Evidential Issues on Trafficking in Persons Cases (2017):

https://www.unodc.org/documents/humantrafficking/2017/Case_Digest_Evidential_Issues_in_Trafficking.pdf

Sharing Electronic Resources and Laws on Crime (SHERLOC):

<https://www.unodc.org/cld/v3/sherloc/> United Nations Security Council (UNSC)

<http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/2388> <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sc12647.doc.htm>

<https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12165.doc.htm> United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights www.ohchr.org International Labour Organization (ILO) www.ilo.org
<http://www.ilo.org/sapfi/Informationresources/ILOPublications/Byregion/Global/lang--en/index.htm>
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:1:0>

The government continued public outreach measures on the causes and consequences of human trafficking and continued efforts to increase victim identification among vulnerable populations and sectors and to seek and incorporate survivor input into policies and programs. HHS awarded \$1.75 million to an NGO to operate the national human trafficking hotline. In FY 2018, the hotline received 116,940 calls, texts, chats, online tips, and emails, identified 10,658 potential human trafficking cases, and provided resources and referrals to 9,365 potential victims. The hotline also received information on

Victims originate from almost every region of the world; the top three countries of origin of federally identified victims in FY 2018 were the United States, Mexico, and the Philippines. Populations in the United States vulnerable to human trafficking include: children in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, including foster care; runaway and homeless youth; unaccompanied foreign national children without lawful immigration status; American Indians and Alaska Natives, particularly women and girls; individuals with drug addictions; migrant laborers, including undocumented workers and participants in visa programs for temporary workers; foreign national domestic workers in diplomatic households; persons with limited English proficiency; persons with disabilities; LGBTI individuals; and participants in court-ordered substance use diversion programs. Advocates reported a growing trend of traffickers targeting victims with disabilities and an increase in the use of online social media platforms to recruit and advertise victims of human trafficking. Some U.S. citizens engage in child sex tourism in foreign countries. Trafficking in persons report, June 2019

the United States is ranked as one of the worst countries in the world for human trafficking. It is estimated that 199,000 incidents occur within the United States every year.

<https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/human-trafficking-statistics-by-state/>

Trafficking can involve school-age youth, particularly those made vulnerable by challenging family situations, and can take a variety of forms including forced labor, domestic servitude, and commercial sexual exploitation.

The children at risk are not just high school students—pimps or traffickers are known to prey on

victims as young as 9. Traffickers may target minor victims through social media websites, telephone chat-lines, after-school programs, at shopping malls and bus depots, in clubs, or through friends or acquaintances who recruit students on school campuses.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/oshs/factsheet.html>

“This is not only a dominant issue, it’s an epidemic issue,” Cindy McCain, who chairs the McCain Institute’s Human Trafficking Advisory Council said. “It’s also something that is hiding in plain sight. It’s everywhere—it’s absolutely everywhere.”

The most human trafficking cases have been reported in California, Texas, and Florida, according to the hotline. Las Vegas is also a hot spot due to the city’s culture and high rates of homelessness. But every state in the US has reports of human trafficking. Children are more vulnerable than adults. They’re easier to control, cheaper, and less likely to demand working conditions, researchers explained. More than 300,000 young people in the US are considered “at risk” of sexual exploitation.

Children raised in foster care have a greater chance of becoming victims. In 2013, 60% of child victims the FBI recovered were from foster care. In 2017, 14% of children reported missing were likely victims of sex trafficking, and 88% of those had been in child welfare, the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children reported.

<https://www.businessinsider.com/human-trafficking-in-the-us-facts-statistics-2019-7?op=1#a-2014-study-of-sex-trafficking-by-the-urban-institute-a-washington-think-tank-found-71-of-labor-trafficking-victims-entered-the-us-legally-10>

Native American women are at particular risk. In 2016, a reported 506 Native American women disappeared or were killed in American cities. In Phoenix, another of the top trafficking jurisdictions in the US, it was estimated that 40% of sex trafficking victims in 2015 were Native American.



Dawn Stenberg, from the Junior League of Sioux Falls, stands near the group’s anti-human trafficking billboard in Sioux Falls. Jay Pickthorn / AP

Sources: Urban Indian Health Institute, The New York Times, Indian Country Today

In 2016, after US Immigration and Customs arrested 2,000 human traffickers and identified 400 victims, airlines started training staff to spot signs of human traffickers. Some of the signs that someone is a victim are not being in control of their own boarding pass or money and if they seem "disoriented and lost."

Mike Blake / Reuters

Source: Dallas News, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement

Other than the sex trade, trafficking victims often work in private residences, on farms, in the hospitality industry, and in the health and beauty service industry. Seen here is the Orchids of Asia Day Spa. In 2019, its owners were arrested on prostitution charges, which was part of a larger investigation on the role of human trafficking in massage parlors.

The front entrance of the Orchids of Asia Day Spa in 2019. Brynn Anderson / AP

Source: Global Slavery Index, Business Insider

Migrant farm workers can become trafficking victims because their legal status in the US is often tied to employment. According to a 2017 report, the most commonly worked crop for victims was tobacco, followed by cattle and dairy, oranges, tomatoes, and strawberries.

A worker is seen inside an empty grain bin in Illinois, 2014. Jim Young / Reuters

Source: Polaris Project

Ashton Kutcher and Demi Moore started a non-profit to help combat sex-trafficking, called Thorn. He reported that they identified 5,791 child victims, and rescued 103 in 2017.

Frazer Harrison/Getty

Source: Faithwire

Trafficking is no longer just on the street — it's gone online. Fifty women said in March that they were sexually abused as victims of Backpage, an online sex marketplace that pleaded guilty to the human-trafficking charges.

Backpage.com CEO Carl Ferrer, former owner James Larkin, COO Andrew Padilla, and former owner Michael Lacey. Cliff Owen/AP

Source: Business Insider

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children said 73% of 10,000 child sex trafficking reports it received per year involved ads from Backpage.

People opposed to child sex trafficking rally outside of the Washington state Supreme Court in 2015. Rachel La Corte / AP

Source: Washington Post

In 2018, the US Department of Justice funded 45 victim service providers with \$31 million, almost doubling its budget from 2017, when it provided \$16 million to 18 organizations.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement's (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) officers. US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement / Reuters

Sources: Reuters, World Politics Review

There's no accurate estimate on how much money trafficking makes in the US, since victims are often guarded by captors, lack proper documentation, and work behind the scenes.

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