



16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Day 4



Human trafficking is the business of stealing freedom for profit. In some cases, traffickers trick, defraud or physically force victims into providing commercial sex. In others, victims are lied to, assaulted, threatened or manipulated into working under inhumane, illegal or otherwise unacceptable conditions. According to the International Labor Organization, human trafficking is a 150 billion dollar criminal industry that denies freedom to over 40.3 million people around the world, including here in the United States. More than 79% of these victims are women and girls exploited for sexual purposes. Thirty-three percent of sex trafficking cases and 16% of labor trafficking cases involved children.

Although human trafficking violates international and national laws, it is a burgeoning criminal industry. The two most commonly known forms of human trafficking are sexual exploitation and forced labor. Any instance in which an individual engages in a commercial sex act (such as prostitution) as the result of force, fraud, or coercion, is

considered sex trafficking. Sex trafficking also includes the commercial sexual exploitation of children or minors. Forced labor can occur within any form of labor or services, and it is defined as the subjection of individuals to involuntary servitude, debt bondage, or slavery. In all instances of forced labor, the individual works against his or her will, for little or no pay, under the threat of some sort of punishment. While statistics are difficult to assess, the International Labor Organization estimates that **the 40.3 victims of trafficking** that are subjected to forced labor are exploited in activities such as agriculture, construction, domestic work, garment and textile manufacturing, catering and restaurants, entertainment and for sexual purposes. Some examples include factories, "sweatshops," fields, brothels, "massage" parlors, online escort services, on street corners, as child soldiers, or in private homes. While human trafficking spans all demographics, trafficked persons most often come from positions of vulnerability. Prior to their trafficking situation, individuals may:

- Come from a low socio-economic background
- Be homeless or have run away from home
- Be an immigrant seeking a better life or opportunity
- Have a history of sexual abuse, rape, or domestic violence an any socio-economic level
- Be in foster care
- Have been subject to natural disasters, conflict, or political turmoil

Traffickers use these vulnerabilities to their advantage and use a number of tactics to establish control over victims. Violence, isolation, threats, deception, manipulation, debt bondage, prospects of an education, and romance are just a few methods used. Traffickers may operate alone with one or many victims or may be a part of an extensive criminal network.

For the United States, statistics from the National Human Trafficking Hotline and Polaris Be Free Textline include the following:

- As of December 31, 2018, in the U.S. more than **51,919 total cases of human trafficking** have been reported to the Hotline since 2007. This is a very small fraction of trafficking which is actually happening.
- The Hotline annually receives multiple reports of human trafficking cases in each of the 50 states and D.C.
- The number of human trafficking cases that Polaris learns about in the U.S. increases every year. From 2017 to the end of 2018, there was an increase of 25%.
- The Hotline receives an average of 150 calls per day.

RISK FACTORS FOR HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Recent migration/relocation **3,516**

Substance use **710**

Unstable housing **593**

Runaway/homeless youth **569**

Mental health concern **530**

METHODS OF FORCE, FRAUD, COERCION

Isolation/confinement **5,353**

Economic abuse **5,019**

Threats of any kind **4,677**

Emotional abuse **4,007**

Physical abuse **3,159**

Top recruitment tactics

SEX TRAFFICKING

Intimate partner/marriage proposition **1,078**

Familial **893**

Posing as a benefactor **491**

Job offer/advertisement **479**

False promises/fraud **402**

LABOR TRAFFICKING

Job offer/advertisement **2,221**

False promises/fraud **743**

Smuggling-related **500**

Coercion (threats/blackmail) **194**

Familial **145**

Human trafficking is a form of violence against women. Join the conversation and speak out against human trafficking. Let the world know that this is not acceptable. Help pass legislation to aid and assist the victims and punish those perpetrating the crime.

