**What is Human Trafficking?**

Article 3, paragraph (a) of the [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CTOC/index.html) defines Trafficking in Persons as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/what-is-human-trafficking.html>

# What Is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is modern-day slavery and involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.

Every year, millions of men, women, and children are trafficked in countries around the world, including the United States. It is estimated that human trafficking generates many billions of dollars of profit per year, second only to drug trafficking as the most profitable form of transnational crime.

Human trafficking is a hidden crime as victims rarely come forward to seek help because of language barriers, fear of the traffickers, and/or fear of law enforcement.

Traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to lure their victims and force them into labor or commercial sexual exploitation. They look for people who are susceptible for a variety of reasons, including psychological or emotional vulnerability, economic hardship, lack of a social safety net, natural disasters, or political instability. The trauma caused by the traffickers can be so great that many may not identify themselves as victims or ask for help, even in highly public settings. <https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/what-human-trafficking>

# Myths and Misconceptions

Here are some common myths and misconceptions about human trafficking:

## [Myth: Human trafficking does not occur in the United States. It only happens in other countries.](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions)

**Fact:** Human trafficking exists in every country, including the United States.  It exists nationwide—in cities, suburbs, and rural towns—and possibly in your own community.

## [Myth:  Human trafficking victims are only foreign born individuals and those who are poor.](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions)

**Fact:** Human trafficking victims can be any age, race, gender, or nationality.  They may come from any socioeconomic group.

## [Myth: Human trafficking is only sex trafficking.](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions)

**Fact:** Sex trafficking exists, but it is not the only type of human trafficking. Forced labor is another type of human trafficking; both involve exploitation of people.  Victims are found in legitimate and illegitimate labor industries, including sweatshops, massage parlors, agriculture, restaurants, hotels, and domestic service.

## [Myth:  Individuals must be forced or coerced into commercial sex acts to be victims of human trafficking.](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions)

**Fact:** Under U.S. federal law, any minor under the age of 18 who is induced to perform commercial sex acts is a victim of human trafficking, regardless of whether he or she is forced or coerced.

## [Myth: Human trafficking and human smuggling are the same.](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions)

**Fact:** Human trafficking is not the same as smuggling.  “Trafficking” is based on exploitation and does not require movement across borders.  “Smuggling” is based on movement and involves moving a person across a country’s border with that person’s consent in violation of immigration laws. Although human smuggling is very different from human trafficking, human smuggling can turn into trafficking if the smuggler uses force, fraud, or coercion to hold people against their will for the purposes of labor or sexual exploitation.  Under federal law, every minor induced to engage in commercial sex is a victim of human trafficking.

## [Myth: Human trafficking victims will attempt to seek help when in public.](https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions)

**Fact:** Human trafficking is often a hidden crime.  Victims may be afraid to come forward and get help; they may be forced or coerced through threats or violence; they may fear retribution from traffickers, including danger to their families; and they may not be in possession of or have control of their identification documents. https://www.dhs.gov/blue-campaign/myths-and-misconceptions