

7 facts about human trafficking you may not know

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. There are many types of human trafficking

Sexual exploitation and forced labor are the most commonly understood and reported forms of human trafficking. More than half of the victims are female, and about 25% are boys. Many other forms of exploitation are often thought to be under-reported. These include domestic servitude and forced marriage; organ harvesting; and the exploitation of children in begging, the sex trade, and warfare.

3. The 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, it creates a higher risk for being trafficked. Other factors include corruption, civil unrest, weak government, lack of access to education or jobs, family disruption or dysfunction, natural disasters, 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 activities in the world. A recent report says forced labor generates \$150 billion in illegal profits per year. Two-thirds of that money comes from commercial sexual exploitation, while the rest is from forced economic exploitation, including domestic work, agriculture, child labor and related activities.

5. Human trafficking is everywhere

People are trafficked to and from every continent in the world. It's the contemporary name for an age-old evil: slavery. In the United States, it is most prevalent in—but not limited to—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, gender or race. 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 are valued for tasks such as sewing or in manufacturing.

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, or economic instability. Some of these migrants are vulnerable to human trafficking. “Trafficking in people in conflict situations is not a mere possibility but something that happens on a regular basis,” according to the United Nation's special rapporteur on human trafficking. “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 Ps, plus a little more

The U.S. government is at the forefront of efforts to address human trafficking. Its policy is to **prevent** trafficking, **protect** victims and **prosecute** traffickers—the Three Ps. The number of convictions for human trafficking is increasing, but unfortunately not proportionate to the problem. Many countries lack anti-trafficking legislation. Sometimes the legislation exists, but law enforcement officials and prosecutors may not know how to use it, do not recognize the problem, or are complicit in the crime, sharing profits with organized criminals doing the trafficking. In some instances, victims may not cooperate with the criminal justice system because they have been threatened by a trafficker or do not trust those tasked with enforcement.

Knowing the facts about human trafficking is great, but even greater is the realization that you can do something to fight it. Here are 3 ways you can do that:

1. Support the work of organizations fighting human trafficking

Search out worthy non-profit organizations involved in the rescue and restoration of victims of human trafficking and support them financially and in other ways, if possible. Make certain they also work to prevent those at-risk from becoming victims. Avoid organizations that present their workers as Rambo-like heroes who risk their lives to free women and children from brothels, etc., but mention little if anything about restoring victims once liberated. Those types make for exciting movies, perhaps, but true freedom happens over time, with great effort, and through meaningful relationship with the victim. Emotional and spiritual healing take months, even years—much longer than physical healing, and some victims are worse off after they've been rescued and turned out on their own after completing a packaged program that's designed to impress donors but does little for the victim.

2. Prevent human trafficking

The best response to human trafficking is to prevent people from being trafficked in the first place. This can happen through awareness training, academic education or skills training, economic empowerment, and correcting false cultural norms that cheapen the lives of certain individuals. All of these measures greatly reduce the false enticements used by traffickers.

3. Take action

If you witness suspected human trafficking or other forms of exploitation, speak up. Share your knowledge (see additional resources below) with family, friends, coworkers, and others. Warn about the dangers of social media and other modern methods that people can be tracked, “friended” and deceived, even in wealthy communities. Be watchful for the signs of trafficking where you live and travel. Know the hotline (888-373-7888 in the US) and other resources in your area that can help.

Resources:

10 Ways to Protect Your Child from Human Trafficking

22 Places You Don't Suspect Human Trafficking

30 Ways to Identify a Victim of Human Trafficking