



Human Trafficking 101

What is human trafficking?

Human trafficking is the commerce and trade of people, legal or illegal, for modern-day slavery, forced labor, and servitude. Another way to put it is, the recruitment, transportation, harboring, or receipt of people for the purposes of slavery, forced labor (including bonded labor or debt bondage), and servitude. There are generally two different forms of trafficking:

1. Sex trafficking—Victims are often found in the streets or working in establishments that offer commercial sex acts (i.e., brothels, strip clubs, pornography production houses). Such establishments may operate under the guise of massage parlors, escort services, adult bookstores, modeling studios, or bars.
2. Labor trafficking—People are forced into indentured servitude and can be found in sweatshops (where abusive labor standards are present), commercial agricultural situations (fields, processing plants, canneries), domestic situations (maids, nannies), construction sites (particularly if public access is denied), restaurant and custodial work.

How do people get trapped into sex or labor trafficking?

No one volunteers to be exploited. Traffickers frequently recruit people through fraudulent advertisements promising legitimate jobs as hostesses, domestics, or work various industries. Trafficking victims of all kinds come from rural, suburban, and urban settings.

Profile of a trafficked person

Most trafficking victims will not readily volunteer information about their status because of fear and the abuse they have suffered at the hands of their trafficker. They may also be reluctant to come forward with information from despair, discouragement, and a sense that there are no viable options to escape their situation. *Even if pressed, they may not identify themselves as someone held in bondage for fear of retribution to themselves or family members.*

The following are indicators that often point to a person held in a slavery condition.

Trafficked individuals may be treated as disposable possessions without much attention given to their mental or physical health. They may suffer from malnutrition, dehydration, or poor personal hygiene; have sexually transmitted diseases; have evident signs of rape or sexual abuse; have bruising, broken bones, or other signs of untreated medical problems. They may also suffer from critical illnesses including diabetes, cancer, or heart disease; post-traumatic stress; or psychological disorders.

Why does a person remain in bondage?

Traffickers use various techniques to instill fear in victims and to keep them enslaved. Some traffickers keep their victims under lock and key and allow no outside access. However, more frequently the traffickers use less obvious techniques such as

- Debt bondage—hold financial obligations over the person’s head, making him or her honor-bound to satisfy debt (which will never be satisfied)
- Isolation from the public—limit contact with outsiders, making sure that any contact is monitored or superficial in nature
- Isolation from family members and members of their ethnic and/or religious community
- Confiscation of any identification documents, such as passports or visas
- Use of or threat of violence toward victims and their families
- Threatened shaming of the victims by exposing circumstances to their families
- Telling victims they will be imprisoned or deported for immigration violations if they contact the authorities
- Controlling the victim’s money so that the victim has no money of his or her own