

Overview

What is human trafficking?

Commonly referred to as modern-day slavery (Clawson, Dutch, Solomon, & Grace, 2009), human trafficking takes place in virtually every country in the world. The United Nations' International Labour Organization estimated that there are at least 12.3 million adults and children being trafficked throughout the world at any given time (ILO, 2008). Human trafficking is the fastest-growing criminal industry and is currently tied with the illegal arms trade as the second largest criminal industry in the world today (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [HHS], n.d.b).

Global issue

The common elements found in each of these crimes are the use of force, fraud and coercion to enslave. However, force, fraud, and coercion do not need to be present in cases involving child/teen victims. Traffickers treat victims as commodities, buying and selling them repeatedly, for profit. Traffickers use a pattern of rape, beatings, and social isolation to control victims (Brown, 2002). This is known as the "seasoning process" (HHS, n.d.b).

Trafficking is defined within the United States by the *Victims of*

Major forms of trafficking

- Forced labor
- Sex trafficking
- Bonded labor
- Debt bondage among migrant laborers
- Involuntary domestic servitude
- Forced child labor
- Child soldiers
- Child sex trafficking

Source: U.S. Department of State, 2010

Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 or *TVPA*. The *TVPA* created two categories of trafficking – sex trafficking and labor trafficking ("Victims of Trafficking," 2000).

- **Sex trafficking:** When a person does a sex act in exchange for money, and he or she is either under the age of 18 or forced, tricked, misled, threatened, or pressured into the sex act.
- **Labor trafficking:** When a person is forced, tricked, misled, threatened, or otherwise pressured into working or providing services.

Under the U.S. definition of





human trafficking, transportation or physical movement of the victim does not need to be present in order for the crime to occur; instead, it is the presence of exploitation (force, fraud, or coercion) that indicates whether a trafficking crime has occurred (HHS, n.d.b).

How common is human trafficking?

- Globally, nearly 12.3 million adults and children are in forced labor, bonded labor, and forced prostitution (U.S. Department of State, 2010).
- An estimated 246 million children between the ages of five and 17 are involved with debt bondage, or forced into armed conflict, prostitution, pornography, the illegal drug trade, the illegal arms trade, and other illicit activities (HHS, n.d.c).

- Between 14,500 and 17,500 people are trafficked into the United States every year (U.S. Department of Justice, 2006).
- About 800,000 people are trafficked across country borders every year, although a great deal of human trafficking does not involve moving a victim across country borders (U.S. Department of State, 2008).
- Much of cross-border trafficking is between neighboring countries, although intercontinental trafficking does exist. Victims from East Asia were detected in more than 20 countries around the world, including nations in Europe, the Americas, the Middle East, Central Asia, and Africa. African victims are often trafficked to locations in Europe and North America; Latin American victims are often trafficked to North

America and Europe; Central European, Eastern European and Central Asian victims are often trafficked to Europe and the Middle East; and South Asian victims are often trafficked to the Middle East (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2007).

- Estimates of the percentage of victims trafficked for the purposes of sex work range from 46% to 80% (UNODC, 2006).

Who are the victims?

Human trafficking victims include men, women, and children of all ages (Clawson et al., 2009). Trafficking victims often share risk factors involving poverty, young age, lack of access to education, lack of work opportunities, history of previous sexual abuse, health or mental health challenges, living in areas with police corruption and high crime, and lack of family support (Clawson et al., 2009). Also, victims experience homelessness or being “thrown away,” or denied housing by parents or guardians. Victims are frequently from countries where women do not have equal status to men.

Trafficking into and within the United States

The United States is known as a destination country for transnational trafficking. Traffickers target transnational victims who are often living in economically disadvantaged countries. Traffickers promise a better life in the United States. Once here, traffickers often destroy victims’ legal documents, threaten to harm victims’ families, and trap victims in unrepayable debt (humantrafficking.org, n.d.). Transnational trafficking victims are brought

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Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

into the U.S. for both sex and forced labor.

Research shows a strong correlation between running away and domestic commercial sexual exploitation (Clawson et al., 2009). According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s *Uniform Crime Report*, 36,402 boys and 47,472 girls under age 18 were picked up across the United States by law enforcement in 2006 and identified as runaways (U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2006).

Effects of trafficking on victims

- **Physical effects**

Trafficking victims experience serious physical health problems due to the inhumane living conditions and violence inflicted upon them by traffickers, employers, and customers. Sleeping problems and eating disorders are common. Sex industry workers may suffer from physical health problems, including sexually transmitted infections, anal trauma, unwanted pregnancy, infertility as a result of botched or unsafe abortions, and a variety of gynecological problems (HHS, n.d.a).

• Emotional effects

Psychological trauma from isolation and daily mental abuse and torture may result in depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), disorientation, confusion, phobias and panic attacks. Feelings of helplessness, shame, shock, denial and disbelief are commonplace.

Victims of sexual violence and human trafficking may also experience blame or rejection by their family or community (U.S. Department of State, 2008). Substance abuse is common among victims as a way to cope. Additionally, traffickers may coerce victims into alcohol or drug use, to make them more “compliant,” uninhibited, or to lower their defenses.

To learn more about human trafficking, visit www.nsvrc.org or email resources@nsvrc.org

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