

# Understanding Human Trafficking

**The reality behind one of the world's fastest-growing crimes.**

Human Trafficking is the exploitation of a person for labor, services, or commercial sex by means of force, fraud, or coercion. A human trafficking victim can be any age, gender, race, or origin, and exploitation typically involves deceptive tactics such as false recruitment promises and manipulating a victim through family, friends, or dating. Exploitation can be physical or it can take place virtually through social media sites, online games, chat apps and by creating a fake job recruitment online.

## **Who Is Most at Risk?**

### **Children**

Young children may not recognize unsafe behaviors or manipulation. Traffickers often exploit trust, authority, or unmet emotional needs.

#### **Common concerns**

- Unsafe or inappropriate touching
- Online games and chat platforms
- Gifts or secret relationships
- Trusted adults and safe boundaries

### **Teenagers**

Many traffickers target teens through friendships, dating relationships, social media, or false opportunities.

#### **Common concerns**

- Online grooming
- Sextortion
- Fake modeling or job offers
- Peer pressure
- Warning signs in unhealthy relationships

### **Adults**

Adults can experience trafficking through both labor and commercial sexual exploitation.

#### **Common concerns**

- Wage theft and forced labor

- Domestic servitude
- Fraudulent employment agencies
- Debt bondage
- Coercive or controlling relationships

### Myths vs. Facts

| Myth                                          | Fact                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Human trafficking always involves kidnapping. | Most victims are recruited through manipulation, deception, or someone they know.               |
| It only happens in other countries.           | Human trafficking occurs in every U.S. state and around the world.                              |
| Only women and girls are trafficked.          | Men, women, boys, and girls can all be victims.                                                 |
| Victims can simply leave.                     | Fear, threats, trauma, financial dependence, or control often make leaving extremely difficult. |
| Trafficking only involves commercial sex.     | Labor trafficking is also widespread and occurs in many industries.                             |
| You can always identify a victim.             | Many victims show no obvious signs and may appear to be living ordinary lives.                  |

### Stay Safe Online

#### Before You Click

- ✓ Think before sharing personal information.

#### Before You Trust

- ✓ Be cautious of strangers who quickly become emotionally attached.

### **Before You Meet**

- ✓ Never meet someone from the internet alone.

### **Before You Accept**

- ✓ Be skeptical of offers that seem too good to be true.

### **Before You Share**

- ✓ Never feel pressured to send photos or videos.

### **Watch For**

- Fake scholarships
- Fake internships
- Modeling opportunities
- Influencer recruitment
- Sugar dating scams
- Cryptocurrency or investment scams
- Gaming gift scams
- Fake travel opportunities