



# Human Sex Trafficking

## Myths vs. Facts

**Myth:** Traffickers are only men.

**Fact:** Traffickers can be both men and women. On a fairly regular basis, it happens that women who have been sexually exploited first, later join the criminal partnership and start to exploit other women themselves. Women are often involved in the recruitment process because they are seen as more trustworthy.

**Myth:** Victims are only young girls.

**Fact:** There is no single victim profile. Victims of human trafficking can be male, female, young and old. They can also be from a variety of different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, children are most vulnerable to traffickers.

**Myth:** Traffickers target victims they do not know.

**Fact:** Many victims of human trafficking are trafficked by family members, romantic partners, and friends.

**Myth:** Traffickers only use drugs to keep their victims captive.

**Fact:** Traffickers do use drugs to control their victims, but they also use other tactics such as physical and emotional abuse, isolation from friends and family, and economic abuse.

*Citation: Polaris Project. (2020, January 17). "Myths, Facts, and Statistics."*

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**Myth:** People have to be kidnapped in order to be trafficked.

**Fact:** Less than 1 percent of people who are kidnapped are actually kidnapped for the purposes of human trafficking, being sold into sex trafficking here in the U.S. Many traffickers use methods of manipulation, defrauding, or threatening to force victims into providing commercial sex or exploitative labor.

**Myth:** Human trafficking only happens in illegal or underground industries.

**Fact:** Human trafficking cases have been reported in industries like restaurants, cleaning services, construction, and factories.

**Myth:** Human trafficking mainly happens outside the United States.

**Fact:** The United States has extremely high rates of sex trafficking. Large events in the United States, such as the Super Bowl and the Kentucky Derby, are among some of the top hotspots for sex trafficking.

**Myth:** Victims will be easy to identify or they will self-identify.

**Fact:** Every trafficking situation is unique and self-identification as a trafficking victim or survivor happens along a continuum. Fear, isolation, guilt, shame, misplaced loyalty and expert manipulation are among the many factors that may keep a person from seeking help or identifying as a victim even if they are, in fact, being actively trafficked.