

## Human Trafficking

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### What is human trafficking?

Trafficking in persons — also known as human trafficking or modern slavery — is described by the U.S. Department of State as 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 is estimated that 21 million people are currently being trafficked worldwide. Of these 21 million individuals, approximately 68% are subjected to forced labor, 22% to sexual exploitation and 10% are in some form of state-imposed forced labor. An example is working in prisons under conditions that violate labor standards or being forced to participate in rebel armed forces.

To put this into context 12.5 million Africans were enslaved and brought to the Americas during the entirety of the transatlantic slave trade from 1525-1866. Many experts agree that it is likely that the actual number of people being trafficked in the world is higher than the estimated 21 million because modern slavery is so hard to track.

According to the United Nations every country in the world is affected by trafficking whether as a country of origin, transit, or destination for victims.

The US Department of Homeland Security has created this short (less than 5 minute) video to help explain what human trafficking is and why it is an important, relevant issue for people everywhere to be aware of. <https://youtu.be/35uM5VMrZas0>

A popular documentary on human trafficking is In Plain Sight: Stories of Hope and Freedom. This feature-length documentary focuses on the fight against sex trafficking across the United States. <http://www.inplainsightfilm.com>

### People trafficked for labor

The movement of people for the purpose of forced labor and services usually involves an agent or recruiter, a transporter, and a final employer. In some cases, the same individual performs all three of these functions, but more often, the functions are split between two or three people.

Farms and fishing boats are two of the main places people are being trafficked for the purpose of labor. Historically these workplaces have had a high need for low cost laborers. Combined with the highly migrant nature of their employee base, this has led to little risk of being caught in human trafficking violations for the employers. In the United States, there are laws in place that are meant to help regulate the employment of day-laborers and farm hands. While these laws have made human trafficking more difficult, they have not offered the level of protection to the victims necessary to

completely eradicate the problem in these settings.

The documentary Food Chains takes a closer look at this problem in the farming industry. (Also, available on Netflix).

<http://www.foodchainsfilm.com>

A popular form of exploitation for labor is “debt bondage” or “bonded labor”. This is the modern version of indentured servitude in which a person is enslaved to work off a debt owed to the employer. Often the debt is owed not by the person being exploited, but instead they are working off the debt of another, usually a parent or sibling. In South Asia, there is a huge number of people who are enslaved from generation to generation.

Most countries have laws that regulate the type of work children may be engaged in. However, the worst forms of child labor are found within human trafficking situations. Children are sold and forced into hazardous types of work, often serving as child soldiers in armed conflict. Children in forced labor situations often suffer from physical as well as psychological harm and many of them suffer sexual abuses and rape. It is also very common for both male and female children to be sold into sex trafficking situations.

### **People trafficked for sex**

Sex trafficking is by far the most prevalent form of human trafficking in the United States. Approximately 75-80% of all human trafficking in the world is for sex, and researchers have noted that sex trafficking plays a major role in the spread of HIV.

This is especially a problem in areas like Hampton Roads where there is a high turnover of the population and easy access to multiple forms of international and domestic transportation offered by the ports, railways, airports, and interstate system.

This three-part documentary series focuses on human trafficking in Hampton Roads. Each video is about 15-20 minutes.

<https://youtu.be/JUbY23FVDjI>

<https://youtu.be/qD6zw4RtNbk>

<https://youtu.be/VLDOshmgkLE>

Human traffickers often use a Sudanese phrase “use a slave to catch slaves,” meaning traffickers send “broken-in girls” to recruit younger girls into the sex trade. Sex traffickers often train girls themselves; raping them and teaching them sex acts. One convicted trafficker, Ludwig Fainberg, said, “You can buy a woman for \$10,000 and make your money back in a week if she is pretty and young. Then everything else is profit.”

A human trafficker can earn 20 times what he or she paid for a girl, a 2003 study in the Netherlands found that on average a single sex slave earned her pimp at least \$250,000 per year.

### **Other ways people are trafficked**

Many people are also trafficked for organ harvesting. On average, an individual will wait three

and a half years for an organ to become available for transplant. Because there is a worldwide shortage of organs available for transplantation, the illegal organ trade industry was born. All nations have some form of legislation meant to prevent the illegal trading of organs and the United States has a federal law prohibiting the sale of organs. Worldwide there is a trend towards legalizing financial compensation for living organ donors while regulating the trade to ensure minimum safety standards are met for both the donor and the recipient of the transplanted organ.

### **What can you do?**

Educate yourself on legislation currently pending in Congress, like the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act of 2015. This legislation would require large corporations to publicly disclose what anti-human trafficking and anti-child labor steps they are taking in their businesses. Writing your congressional representatives about legislation you support is a way to bring the issues that matter to you to someone in political power.

Be a conscious shopper--Support slave-free trade by buying locally and knowing how most of the products you buy are manufactured and sourced. Sites like KnowTheChain.org are available to track a corporation's policies.

### **References and Sources of Additional Information:**

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