

# MYTHS BUSTER



### MYTH

**Human trafficking requires movement.**

### TRUTH

Movement or transportation is not a required element of human trafficking. While some victims may be transported or relocated, others may never leave their original environment. Trafficking can occur entirely within a single location—such as a residence, business, or private property—so long as force, fraud, or coercion are present. Transportation may occur in trafficking cases, but it is not essential.

### MYTH

**All human trafficking involves sex work.**

### TRUTH

Although sex trafficking receives greater public attention and is more frequently reported and prosecuted, labor trafficking is believed to be the more widespread form of exploitation. It is found across everyday industries such as food service, hospitality, cleaning, caregiving, agriculture, construction, manufacturing, and many other sectors. Other forms of trafficking include domestic servitude, forced begging, forced criminal activity, and, in some jurisdictions, trafficking for the purpose of organ removal.

### MYTH

**Traffickers only target people they do not know.**

### TRUTH

Human trafficking is often imagined as a crime involving abduction by strangers, but in reality, most victims are recruited and exploited by people they know and trust—such as family members, caregivers, intimate partners, or employers. Research suggests that roughly 40% of trafficking victims are trafficked by a family member or close acquaintance.

### MYTH

**Human trafficking victims are foreign nationals.**

### TRUTH

Human trafficking can affect anyone, regardless of age, race, gender, nationality, or socioeconomic status. While often assumed to target foreign nationals, most victims are citizens or permanent residents of their own countries. Migrants with temporary or undocumented status, however, face heightened risks that traffickers exploit.

## MYTH

**Only women and girls are victims and survivors of sex trafficking.**

## TRUTH

Women and girls are not the only victims of sex trafficking. While they are disproportionately affected, men, boys, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community are also targeted. Traffickers exploit individuals of all genders, ages, and backgrounds.

## MYTH

**Human trafficking always involves physical violence or kidnapping.**

## TRUTH

Human trafficking is often mistaken as always involving physical force or kidnapping, but traffickers more often rely on psychological manipulation, fraud, and coercion to maintain control. They exploit victims' emotional, economic, and social vulnerabilities, making many feel unable to leave due to dependence, lack of alternatives, or even not recognizing the abuse. Common tactics include false promises, threats, and fear—often without the use of physical restraint.

## MYTH

**People being trafficked are physically unable to leave their situation.**

## TRUTH

That can sometimes be the case. More often, however, people in trafficking situations remain for far more complex reasons. Some lack basic necessities to leave safely, such as transportation or housing. Others fear for their safety, while many have been so deeply manipulated that they no longer recognize they are under another person's control.

## MYTH

**Victims do not make money during the human trafficking experience.**

## TRUTH

The economic aspect of trafficking varies widely. Victims may receive no pay, irregular pay, or small amounts for basic needs, but traffickers control all aspects of payment.

## MYTH

**Sex trafficking and sex work / prostitution are the same thing.**

## TRUTH

All sex work involving a child (under 18) is considered human trafficking. For adults, sex work or prostitution constitutes human trafficking only when it occurs against a person's will due to force, fraud, or coercion.

## MYTH

**If there was consent, it's not human trafficking.**

## TRUTH

Human trafficking can occur even if victims initially consented to the work or situation. Consent is never valid once force, fraud, or coercion is involved. Victims may feel shame or self-blame, which can prevent them from seeking help. It is essential to avoid victim-blaming and remember that responsibility lies entirely with the trafficker—no one can consent to the loss of their fundamental human rights.

## MYTH

**Human trafficking only happens to individuals from a low socioeconomic level.**

## TRUTH

While factors like poverty can increase vulnerability to trafficking, individuals from any socioeconomic background can be trafficked. Exploiters target a wide range of vulnerabilities—not just financial ones—when grooming victims. Like other forms of abuse, human trafficking affects people across all economic and social groups.

## MYTH

**Human trafficking is the same as smuggling.**

## TRUTH

Human smuggling involves facilitating, transporting, or attempting to transport a person across national or international borders illegally—it is essentially an illicit transportation service. Smuggling is a crime against a nation's borders, whereas trafficking is a crime against an individual. While smugglers may exploit those they transport using force, fraud, or coercion—such as through debt bondage or additional fees—smuggling alone does not constitute trafficking. However, under such circumstances, smuggling can evolve into trafficking.

SCAN ME



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