



QUICK FACTS

Human Trafficking

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AAUW believes that global interdependence requires national and international policies against human trafficking and that promote peace, justice, human rights, sustainable development, and mutual security for all people.

What Is Human Trafficking?

In the past decade, human trafficking has emerged as one of the fastest-growing criminal activities in the world. This modern-day form of slavery claims an estimated 20.9 million victims internationally and is a serious violation of human rights.¹ Traffickers use violence, debt bondage, and other forms of coercion to manipulate victims into engaging in commercial sex acts or labor services against their will.² Though awareness of and concern about this industry have increased in recent years, human trafficking is consistently underreported due to its covert nature, low community awareness, lack of law enforcement, limited resources for victim recovery, and social blaming of victims.³

Sex Trafficking

Sex trafficking is a growing global industry and occurs in a wide variety of venues within the sex industry, including residential brothels, online escort services, fraudulent massage businesses, strip clubs, and on the streets.⁴ Under federal law, any minor under the age of 18 who has engaged in commercial sex is a victim of sex trafficking — regardless of whether or not the trafficker used force, fraud, or coercion.⁵ The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reports that almost 6 in 10 survivors of human trafficking were trafficked for sexual exploitation.⁶

Labor Trafficking

Similar to sex trafficking, labor-trafficked victims are coerced; however, instead of being sexually exploited, victims are abused in a variety of labor settings including domestic work, small businesses, large farms, and factories.⁷ Trafficked victims in every industry work long hours for little to no pay, but the physical and psychological control employers have over victims often forces them to assume they have no other option but to stay. The International Labor Organization estimates

that there are 14.2 million people trapped in forced labor all over the world.⁸

Human Trafficking Worldwide

Trafficking affects an estimated 161 countries worldwide,⁹ although currently the majority of victims are trafficked in Asia and Latin America.¹⁰ U.N. data indicates that people are trafficked from 127 countries to be exploited in 137 countries, affecting every continent and every type of economy.¹¹ Trafficking for sexual exploitation is more common in Europe, Central Asia, and the Americas. Trafficking for forced labor is more frequently detected in Africa and the Middle East, as well as in South and East Asia and the Pacific.¹²

Human Trafficking in the United States

Contrary to popular belief, human trafficking also occurs domestically, and it is a growing problem for every U.S. state. Federal reports estimate that 14,500–17,500 victims are trafficked into the United States annually, excluding the number of victims who are trafficked within the country each year.¹³ The National Human Trafficking Resource Center reported that of cases reported in the United States from 2007 to 2012, 41 percent of sex trafficking cases and 20 percent of labor trafficking cases identified U.S. citizens as victims.¹⁴

Human Trafficking Impacts Women

Though this epidemic affects people from all cultures, social classes, and backgrounds, human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls. Resulting from a global tendency to devalue women, women who lack the rights to own land, property, and inheritance become more vulnerable to trafficking. Women and girls account for 55 percent of forced labor¹⁵ and, even more upsetting, for 75 percent of all trafficked victims detected globally.¹⁶

The National Human Trafficking Resource Center reported that women were the victims in 85 percent of sex trafficking cases reported in the United States from 2007 to 2012.¹⁷

Current Efforts to End Human Trafficking

The main federal legislation in the United States used to combat trafficking is the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA). TVPA was recently reauthorized as part of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act in 2013. The law includes invaluable specialist services for survivors of human trafficking, grants prosecutors new tools to go after traffickers for exploiting others, and enhances partnerships with focus countries to protect children and prevent child trafficking.

Much work is still left to be done at the state level. All states should have statutes in place that address protection of victims, prosecution, and prevention.¹⁸ Protection must include provisions that cover safe harbor, victim assistance, civil remedies, the ability to vacate convictions for survivors, and strict hotline posting requirements.

AAUW advances equity for women and girls through advocacy, education, and research. Since 1881, AAUW has been one of the nation's leading voices promoting education and equity for women and girls. AAUW has a nationwide network of more than 170,000 members and supporters across the United States, as well as 1,000 local branches and 800 college and university partners.

Additional Resources

National Human Trafficking Resource Center
www.traffickingresourcecenter.org

2014 State Ratings on Human Trafficking Laws
Polaris Project
www.polarisproject.org/2014stateratings

State Policies to Assist Victims
Polaris Project
www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/assisting-victims

Human Trafficking Legislative Updates
Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST)
www.endslaveryandtrafficking.org/legislative_updates

United Nations on Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
www.unodc.org/unodc/human-trafficking/

¹ International Labour Organization (2012). *New ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour: 20.9 million victims*. www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_182109/lang-en/index.htm

² National Human Trafficking Resource Center. *What Is Human Trafficking?* www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/type-trafficking/human-trafficking

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Polaris Project. (2014). *Sex Trafficking in the U.S.* www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/sex-trafficking-in-the-us

⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (2012). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

⁷ National Human Trafficking Resource Center. *What Is Human Trafficking?* www.traffickingresourcecenter.org/type-trafficking/human-trafficking

⁸ International Labour Organization (2012). *New ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour: 20.9 million victims*. www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_182109/lang-en/index.htm

⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2006). *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*. www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf

¹⁰ International Labour Organization (2012). *Behind the figures: Faces of forced labour*. www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_181915/lang-en/index.htm

¹¹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2006). *Trafficking in Persons: Global Patterns*. www.unodc.org/pdf/traffickinginpersons_report_2006ver2.pdf

¹² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

¹³ State of California Department of Justice (2014). *What Is Human Trafficking?* oag.ca.gov/human-trafficking/what-is

¹⁴ Polaris Project. (2007). *Human Trafficking Trends in the United States*. www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/overview/human-trafficking-trends

¹⁵ International Labour Organization (2012). *New ILO Global Estimate of Forced Labour: 20.9 million victims*. www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_182109/lang-en/index.htm

¹⁶ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2012). *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/glotip/Trafficking_in_Persons_2012_web.pdf

¹⁷ Polaris Project. (2007). *Human Trafficking Trends in the United States*. www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/overview/human-trafficking-trends

¹⁸ Polaris Project. (2010). *Model Provisions of Comprehensive State Legislation to Combat Human Trafficking*. www.polarisproject.org/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/capacity-building/model-provisions-of-comprehensive-state-legislation-to-combat-human-trafficking