



FREEDOM FROM SEXUAL VIOLENCE

# Human Trafficking and Sexual Assault

## Fact Sheet

### What are the facts about human trafficking?

- **Human Trafficking** is defined as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery. It also refers to sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act is under 18 years of age.<sup>1</sup>
- **2.4 million** individuals are trafficked globally. The majority of victims (80%) are women and children. Human trafficking is one of the **largest criminal industries in the world.** <sup>2</sup>
- **1 in 3 teens on the street** in the U.S. are lured towards prostitution within 48 hours of leaving home.<sup>3</sup> The average age of entry into prostitution is **12-13 years old.**<sup>4</sup>
- The Colorado Network to End Human Trafficking reports a **300% increase from 2008 to 2009** in the number of human trafficking survivors

### What is the connection with trafficking and sexual assault?

Both trafficking and sexual assault are traumatic crimes. Perpetrators of sexual assault and traffickers (or pimps when dealing with commercial sexual exploitation) seek out and “groom” their victims.

Traffickers may prey upon undocumented migrants, displaced peoples, populations experiencing poverty, individuals who have previously experienced a victimization, LGBTQ youth, and sex workers.

Victim blaming mentality may be evident in both crimes. For example, sexual assault victims may be blamed for alcohol and drug use, relationship history, appearance, etc. Trafficking victims may be blamed for their immigration

status, accepting a job, previous criminal history, involvement in the sex industry, or earning any money.

With both crimes, victims may not reach out for help or report what happened to them— partially due to social stigma and victim-blaming mentality. In both situations, victims may be unaware of their rights.

### Myths and Facts

- **Myth:** Trafficking victims are mostly young women of color recruited into the sex industry.  
**Fact:** There are well-documented trafficking cases involving all ages and genders, and include migrant farmworker labor, domestic servitude, magazine crews, and agriculture laborers.
- **Myth:** All traffickers are scary-looking men.  
**Fact:** There is no “typical” profile of a trafficker. The trafficker could be any age or gender, and may have a complex relationship with the victim, as well as a similar background.
- **Myth:** Trafficking victims are physically unable to flee the situation.
- **Fact:** Psychological, emotional, and economic control and coercion can be used to maintain the victimization.

### Where can I learn more?

Colorado Network to End Human Trafficking  
(p) 303.861.1160  
24 Hour Hotline: 1.866.455.5075  
[www.coloradocrimevictims.org](http://www.coloradocrimevictims.org)

Polaris Project (National)  
(p) 1.866.3737.888  
[www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)

### References

1. *Trafficking Victims Protection Acts of 2000 and reauthorizations*
2. *FBI, 2009*
3. *Estes & Weiner, 2001*
4. [www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)

For more information, please contact:

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