



The Nexus between Gender and Human Trafficking

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking (USCSAHT), a faith-based, national network that works to eradicate modern-day slavery, deplors the increase in human trafficking in the United States and around the world. Trafficking in persons is a human rights violation that affects the lives of millions of people worldwide. The International Labor Organization estimates that there are 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally, with hundreds of thousands in the United States.

Globally, men and boys represent about 29 percent of trafficking victims, while women and girls account for 71 percent of all trafficked persons. “The harms of trafficking are known to be more severe for women and girls... given their exposure...to specific forms of exploitation such as sexual exploitation and violence, domestic servitude and forced marriage...Females represent 96 percent of victims trafficked for sexual exploitation¹.” Labor trafficking victims are predominantly males. Boys and men account for 63 percent of those in forced labor, and 82 percent of persons trafficked for organ removal.

Nevertheless, gender figures significantly among the root causes of human trafficking. Gender inequality, gender-based violence, discriminatory labor or migration laws, gender-blind policies, and conflict or post-conflict settings and humanitarian crises all contribute to human trafficking and all disproportionately affect women and girls.²

One of the United Nations’ Sustainable Goals is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.³ It emphasizes that gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large. Implementing new legal frameworks regarding female equality in the workplace and the eradication of harmful practices targeted at women and girls are crucial to ending the gender-based discrimination prevalent in many countries around the world and limiting their vulnerability to human trafficking.

The Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons 2017 report provides recommendations for a gendered approach to prevention and response to trafficking. This report recommends an approach that responds to the tailored needs of men, women, girls and boys as different groups with specific needs. It also recommends stronger support for victims

¹ <https://icat.network/sites/default/files/publications/documents/ICAT-IB-04-V.1.pdf>, issue 04.09/2017

² <https://icat.network/sites/default/files/publications/documents/ICAT-IB-04-V.1.pdf>, issue 04.09/2017

³ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>



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and survivors; multiple prevention strategies such as addressing the root causes and risk factors that increase vulnerability, unequal power relationships, poverty, migration, processes or discrimination in general; racism; policy coherence; and integration of gender specific anti-trafficking measures into broader programs. There is a role for states, professionals, research and data in addressing the nexus of gender and human trafficking.⁴

We call on all government officials and civil servants to ensure that laws and policies promote and protect the dignity and rights of women and girls. Ending violence against women and protecting victims of gender based violence is fundamental in the work to end human trafficking.

For additional information on trafficking and gender we encourage you to read our educational module on Human Trafficking and the Objectification of Women⁵, found on our website, and also visit the Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative.⁶

⁴ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality>

⁵ <https://www.sistersagainsttrafficking.org/education/modules>

⁶ <https://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends>