



### Awareness

Human trafficking, also known as trafficking in persons, is a modern-day form of slavery. It is a crime under state, federal and international law. It is currently the second-largest type of criminal activity.

There are two major types of human trafficking:

#### *Sex trafficking*

- in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud or coercion
- in which the person induced to perform such an act is under 18 years of age

#### *Labor trafficking*

- which is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services using force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage or slavery

The links between human trafficking and other social justice issues, such as poverty, immigration, and violence against women and children, are complex. Human trafficking is largely a hidden crime, making accurate numbers of trafficking incidents difficult to determine.

Studies and experience have shown that there is a growing demand for both labor and commercial sex services. Due to this, egregious abuses occur. In labor trafficking, the abuses may be wage theft, unsafe working and living conditions, and a lack of access to state-guaranteed social services that affect migrant and foreign workers in particular. In sex trafficking, the abuses may be drug addiction, use of physical and psychological violence, malnutrition, and lack of medical care.

A lack of access to appropriate social services such as safe housing, employment, addiction rehabilitation, and mental health services directly impacts victims of labor and commercial sex trafficking.

The demand for inexpensive and easily available goods is a major contributor to labor trafficking, while pornography has increased the demand for, and purchase of, commercial sex. Consuming pornography also exacerbates the violence of human trafficking when traffickers and buyers desire to experience what they view.

There is a strong correlation between social media and an increase in sex trafficking. Social media allows for easy and anonymous purchase of another person for buyer's selfish satisfaction.

In 2018, Backpage.com was shut down by U.S. law enforcement agencies. It was one of the most active and widely used sites for purchasing sex. While a victory, it was only one small step to ending human trafficking via social media. Almost immediately fifteen new Backpage alternative websites became more active and remain so. These include: Penals, Doublelist, Bedpage, Hoobly and ClassifiedAds.

### Other Reasons Human Trafficking Happens

An increase in tourists seeking entertainment, including commercial sex, increases the potential risk for exploitation and human trafficking. Traffickers are opportunistic hunters and see major crowds of people who flock to concerts, sporting, or other large-gathering events and venues as an opportunity for huge profits with very little risk of penalty or punishment. Human trafficking is a business, and traffickers will take advantage of what they perceive to be good business opportunities. Traffickers "advertise"

the availability of commercial sex using online escort ads and social media sites.

In monitoring these sites, law enforcement officials have observed that as the date of a major sporting events nears, ads for escorts and commercial sex services increase on a weekly (and sometimes daily) basis. The internet is a major source for predators' hunting, recruitment and trapping unsuspecting and/or innocent victims. Education is a key factor in reducing public ignorance on this issue and the ability of predators to meet their demands. If the children (or adults) are aware, they are better able to avoid being trapped.

However, no one action, event, or internet site is the root cause of human trafficking. The root causes that allow trafficking to flourish are:

1. a culture that accepts treating people, especially women and children, as objects that can be bought and sold;
2. poverty, lack of access to education and health care, and desperation, which maintain a pool of vulnerable victims; and
3. the ready market for cheap labor and cheap goods.

Human trafficking is a crime that preys on society's most vulnerable people. Viewing human trafficking from a business perspective requires that we consider the relationship of supply and demand to the driving force of profit. No matter how many criminals are prosecuted, there will be other opportunists to step into their shoes. No matter how many victims are rescued, there will still be a steady supply at the ready. So long as the supply, demand, and profit remain unchanged, human trafficking will continue. In order for this to change, society must fundamentally alter the equation and make the business of human trafficking



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the opposite of what it is today. It must be turned into a high-risk, low profit, readily recognizable crime. People of all ages, races, religions and nationalities, of all political outlooks – people across every conceivable divide are coming together to address this issue. Human trafficking is a crime against the dignity of the human person. The profit must be eliminated from both the supply and demand of this equation and replaced by justice and hope.

## The Facts

Traffickers earn hundreds of billions of dollars in profits by trapping millions of people in horrific situations around the world, including here in the U.S. Traffickers use violence, threats, deception, debt bondage, and other manipulative tactics to force people to engage in commercial sex or to provide labor or services against their will.

While more research is needed on the scope of human trafficking, below are a few key statistics:

### *The International Labour Organization*

- 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally;
- 81% of them are trapped in forced labor;
- 25% of them are children;
- 75% are women and girls.

The International Labor Organization estimates that forced labor and human trafficking is a \$150 billion industry worldwide.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Labor identified 148 goods from 76 countries made by forced and child labor.

## Actions & Resources

Shared Hope International ([www.sharedhope.org](http://www.sharedhope.org)) notes that child protection organizations have developed safety tools to help combat children's ignorance and vulnerability to online predators.

One example is **The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC)**. They have developed

*NetSmartz* ([www.netsmartzkids.org](http://www.netsmartzkids.org)), a program that creates interactive, educational safety resources for children ages five to seventeen that prepares children to respond effectively when confronted with issues such as cyber bullying, inappropriate content, online exploitation, revealing too much information, sexting and scams.

In addition, NCMEC has created *NetSmartz411*, an online service to answer questions about internet safety, computers and the web. The site provides an online library for parents to find answers to their online safety questions. Visit [www.netsmartz411.org](http://www.netsmartz411.org) for more information.

**End Child Prostitution and Trafficking, ECPAT-USA**, ([www.ecpatusa.org](http://www.ecpatusa.org)) is another organization that protects children from commercial sexual exploitation. They undertake research, training, awareness raising, policy development and advocacy to protect children. Their website includes the code of conduct and urges hospitality industry organizations to sign. *The Tourism Child-Protection Code of Conduct* is the only voluntary set of business principles that travel and tour companies can implement to prevent child sex tourism and trafficking of children. The Code is a joint venture between the tourism private sector and ECPAT companies. The code can be found at [www.ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-childprotection-code-of-conduct](http://www.ecpatusa.org/wp/what-we-do/tourism-childprotection-code-of-conduct)

While Shared Hope International, NCMEC and ECPAT-USA are focused on children, there are resources for human trafficking of adults as well.

**The Polaris Project** ([www.polarisproject.org](http://www.polarisproject.org)) contains valuable information along with access to a 24/7 hotline (1-888-3737-888 ) and text message “BeFree” (233733) to report incidents of trafficking anywhere in the U.S.

Another group working to break the demand for human trafficking is **Truckers Against Human Trafficking** ([www.truckersagainsthumantrafficking.org](http://www.truckersagainsthumantrafficking.org)). Their website includes short videos, informational materials and flyers. They are a 501(c)3 not-for profit organization that educates, equips, empowers and mobilizes members of the trucking and travel plaza industry to combat domestic sex trafficking.

With more than 40 million human trafficking victims around the world, the Sisters of Mercy's concern for women and children extends to these victims. **Mercy Investment Services**, ([www.mercyinvestmentservices.org/human-trafficking-resources](http://www.mercyinvestmentservices.org/human-trafficking-resources)) actively works with corporations to improve their policies and identify human trafficking victims within their industries. The resources provided on the Mercy Investment Services website are intended to help you, whether as a consumer or hotel staff member, to take an active role in ending this global tragedy.

Resources include:

Letter to deliver to hotels at which you are a guest, fact sheet to share with hotels, guide for meeting planners, survey for hotel management, Trafficking in Persons Report, ECPAT Code, International Labour Organization 2012 Global

Estimate of Forced Labour, and corporate strategies to address human trafficking.

**The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) Human Trafficking Group** offers a *Celebration without Exploitation* toolkit for planning trafficking-free sporting (and other) events ([www.iccr.org/resources/2012/CelebrationWithoutExploitationToolkit.pdf](http://www.iccr.org/resources/2012/CelebrationWithoutExploitationToolkit.pdf))

**The Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center**, ([www.ipjc.org](http://www.ipjc.org)) is sponsored by eighteen religious communities. Their website provides classroom webinars, prayer resources and faith based presentations on human trafficking.

**Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution (S.O.A.P.)** ([www.free-international.org/soap.html](http://www.free-international.org/soap.html)) is an outreach that distributes thousands of bars of soap with the National Human Trafficking Hotline number and key identifying questions FREE to local motels.

**I'm Not Buying It** ([www.traffick911.com/page/im-not-buying-it](http://www.traffick911.com/page/im-not-buying-it)) is a national campaign to raise awareness about the trafficking of children.

**Alliance to End Human Trafficking (AEHT)** ([alliancetoendhumantrafficking.org](http://alliancetoendhumantrafficking.org)) is a collaborative, faith-based network that offers educational programs and materials, supports access to survivor services, and engages in legislative advocacy to eradicate human trafficking.

## Reflection

### What resources from our faith tradition reinforce and strengthen us in our work to end human trafficking?

*Leviticus 25:39-43*

If any of your neighbors are reduced to such poverty that they sell themselves to you, you must not treat them as bonded workers. Their status is to be that of hired hands or resident laborers with you, and they will be subject to you only until the jubilee year. They may then leave your service with their children and return to their own ancestral property. You were all bonded workers in Egypt, and I freed you from your bondage. They must not be sold as bonded workers are sold. You are not to work them ruthlessly; you are to revere Yahweh.

Other Scripture references: *Genesis 37:23-28, Lamentations 5:1, 11, 13, 15, Acts 16:16-19, 23*

Other faith-based resources:

Pope Francis, December 12, 2013 in his address to new ambassadors to the Holy See:

What is human trafficking? "...a crime against humanity. We must unite our efforts to free the victims and stop this increasingly aggressive crime which threatens not only individuals, but the basic values of society and of international security and justice, to say nothing of the economy, and the fabric of the family and our coexistence."

Pope Paul VI, 1965 *Guadium et Spes*, Part I, Chapter II, Section 27.

27. Coming down to practical and particularly urgent consequences, this council lays stress on reverence for man; everyone must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all His life and the means necessary to living it with dignity,(8) so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus.(9)

In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of every person without exception and of actively helping him when he comes across our path, whether he be an old person abandoned by all, a foreign laborer unjustly looked down upon, a refugee, a child born of an unlawful union and wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a hungry person who disturbs our conscience by recalling the voice of the Lord, "As long as you did it for one of these the least of my brethren, you did it for me" (*Matt. 25:40*).

Furthermore, whatever is opposed to life itself, such as any type of murder, genocide, abortion, euthanasia or willful self-destruction, whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, torments inflicted on body or mind, attempts to coerce the will itself; whatever insults human dignity, such as subhuman living conditions, arbitrary imprisonment, deportation, slavery, prostitution, the selling of women and children; as well as disgraceful working conditions, where men are treated as mere tools for profit, rather than as free and responsible persons; all these things and others of their like are infamies indeed. They poison human society, but they do more harm to those who practice them than those who suffer from the injury. Moreover, they are supreme dishonor to the Creator.

*Note: Guadium et Spes was written in 1965; language is not inclusive.*

Catechism of the Catholic Church:

"The seventh commandment forbids acts of enterprises that for any reason – selfish or ideological, commercial, or totalitarian – lead to the enslavement of human beings, to their being bought, sold, and exchanged like merchandise, in disregard for their personal dignity. It is a sin against the dignity of persons and their fundamental rights to reduce them by violence to their productive value or to a source of profit."

Pope Francis, Conference on Human Trafficking, as reported by Vatican News, April 2019:

Pope Francis condemned trafficking in human beings as one of the most dramatic manifestations of the "commercialization of the other," a crime against humanity that disfigures both the victims as well as those who carry it out...The Holy Father lamented the "growth of individualism and egocentricity" in our times, that tend to consider others in a merely utilitarian perspective, attributing value to them according to criteria of convenience and personal advantage. This is essentially a question of a "tendency towards the commercialization of the other," which the Pope said he



has repeatedly denounced. And “among the most dramatic manifestations of this commercialization is the trafficking in persons,” the Pope said.

Using the words of Jesus in John’s Gospel as the yardstick of the Church’s mission of mercy – “I have come that they may have life and have it in abundance” (*John 10:10*) – Pope Francis said that “trafficking disfigures the humanity of the victim, offending the person’s freedom and dignity.” “At the same time, it dehumanizes those who carry it out, denying them access to ‘life in abundance.’”

Pope Francis, on the occasion of the celebration of the World Day of Consecrated Life, in St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican, Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020, as reported by CRUX:

“The hands of those who engage in human trafficking are stained with the blood of countless victims whose lives and dignity were sacrificed,” Pope Francis said.

In a video message released by the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network, the Pope offered his prayer intention for the month of February, which is titled, “Listen to the migrants’ cries.”

Migrants and refugees, he said, often fall victim to trafficking caused by “corruption on the part of people willing to do anything for financial gain.” The money obtained by human traffickers “from their dirty, underhanded business is blood money. I’m not exaggerating. It’s blood money,” he said.

At the start of each month, the Pope’s Worldwide Prayer Network posts a short video of the Pope offering his specific prayer intention.

The February 2020 theme and the Pope’s reflection on it coincide with the February 8 commemoration of the World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against Human Trafficking. Reciting his intention, the Pope prayed “that the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal human smuggling and human trafficking, may be heard and considered.”

#### Source Notes:

1. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/the-connection-between-sex-trafficking-and-pornography/?gclid=CjwKCAjw8df2BRA3EiwAvfZWaF SsZLGEsQ05vvoY6 e414uk7fV3H1uCzDQFTzN3e6ji9VJS-FaPhoCNGgQAvD BwE>
2. *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000*, Pub. L. No. 106386 (2000), available at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/10492.pdf>.
3. Klaas Kids Foundation, *Backpage.com Multi-State Monitoring Report* (Dec. 2011- Jan. 2012); Klaas Kids Foundation, *Tackle the Traffickers Outreach and Monitoring Initiative* (Feb. 2, 2012 and Feb. 3, 2012).
4. “Economics of Human Trafficking: The Common Thread.” September 2012; Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana. *In order to protect the identity of trafficking victims, models have been used in identifiable photos.*