

Human Trafficking Awareness Month

HUMAN TRAFFICKING MYTHBUSTERS



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

MYTH:

Human trafficking only consists of coerced or forced commercial sex acts, known as sex trafficking.

FACT:

Human trafficking includes both sex and/or labor trafficking, where people are coerced or forced to work, provide services or perform illegal acts. In the U.S., labor trafficking happens in all kinds of industries, including domestic work, restaurants, agriculture, construction, and hotels and hospitality. It impacts people born in the U.S. and immigrants, including unaccompanied minors, and people who lack stable housing are most commonly impacted.



MYTH:

Traffickers target people they don't know.

FACT:

Most people are recruited into trafficking by people they know, including family members (parents, aunts/uncles, siblings, cousins, etc.); romantic partners, including spouses; or by friends and acquaintances.



MYTH:

Trafficking occurs just to women and girls.

FACT:

People of all genders experience trafficking, including women and men, girls and boys, and gender-diverse people of all ages. Transgender and gender non-conforming people face increased risk for trafficking due to the stigma and marginalization they face in society.



MYTH:

Only undocumented immigrants are at risk for trafficking.

FACT:

Most trafficking survivors in the U.S. are people born in the U.S. But people who have migrated, including immigrants with visas or other forms of legal documentation, face increased risk for trafficking.



MYTH:

Children are usually trafficked by strangers.

FACT:

Child kidnapping is very rare, occurring in less than 0.5% of trafficking cases. Research shows that children and youth who are trafficked are usually recruited by family, intimate partners, friends, or people they meet online. Recruitment methods include promising financial or educational opportunities, a place to live, or a sense of belonging and feelings of love and support.



MYTH:

Survivors of human trafficking are always considered victims by law enforcement and the justice system.

FACT:

Unfortunately, many people who experience trafficking are subject to arrest or prosecution because they are coerced or forced to work in illegal industries, including in producing or selling drugs, selling sex, peddling, or committing other crimes. These victims, who experience forced criminality, are commonly arrested and prosecuted for illegal acts their traffickers make them commit.



MYTH:

We can mostly help people who are trafficked by arresting “bad guys.”

FACT:

Trafficking survivors need access to stable housing, food security, legal services, social services, education, employment, peer support, debt relief, and long term health and mental health care.



MYTH:

Human trafficking can't be prevented.

FACT:

We can prevent human trafficking by:

- Reducing poverty by increasing living wages
- Ensuring access to affordable housing and childcare
- Increasing worker protections and support
- Strengthening family supports in child welfare systems
- Implementing fair immigration policies and protections
- Providing comprehensive sex education (teaches consent!)



If you or someone you know is a victim of human trafficking, help is available. Contact the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, toll-free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at:

1-888-539-2373