

Human Trafficking Myths to Dispel

Myth: ~~Sex trafficking is just prostitution by a different name.~~

Fact: Sex trafficking occurs when someone facilitates a minor or an unwilling adult to participate in commercial sex activities.¹

Myth: ~~Traffickers target victims they don't know.~~

Fact: Many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents.

Myth: ~~The average age of entry into the commercial sex market is 12-14 years old.~~

Fact: Many attempts to verify this statistic have failed. Some experts now believe the average age is somewhere between 15 and 19 years old, but no adequate data exists to definitively settle it.² Whatever the age of entry, those under 18 and those not willingly entering it are victims of sex trafficking.

Myth: ~~Traffickers typically kidnap people out of stores or off the street.~~

Fact: While abductions for human trafficking have occurred, they are extremely rare.³ Instead, traffickers tend to groom their victims over time to avoid attention.

Myth: ~~Human trafficking only happens in big cities like Omaha.~~

Fact: In Nebraska, 51 different cities and towns have had at least a preliminary investigation of human trafficking, covering every corner of the state.⁴

Myth: ~~Human trafficking is the same as sex trafficking.~~

Fact: Human trafficking also includes forced labor, otherwise known as labor trafficking.⁵ Experts believe there is at least as much labor trafficking as sex trafficking in the US.

Myth: ~~If someone truly is a human trafficking victim, they will run away as soon as possible and certainly wouldn't help the trafficker.~~

Fact: Traffickers use isolation and other coercive or threatening tactics to keep victims from being able to leave. They may groom their victims to believe that they have a say in what happens or that their situation is normal. Traffickers might otherwise convince victims that they deserve it or that no one would help them if they did run away.

Myth: ~~Human trafficking is only when transporting people across a border.~~

Fact: Sex or labor trafficking does not require the victim to be transported from one location to another, much less across a state or international border. Instead, sex or labor trafficking simply occurs whenever a person: (1) gets a minor to engage in forced labor or commercial sex activities; or (2) compels an adult to unwillingly work or participate in commercial sex activities.⁶