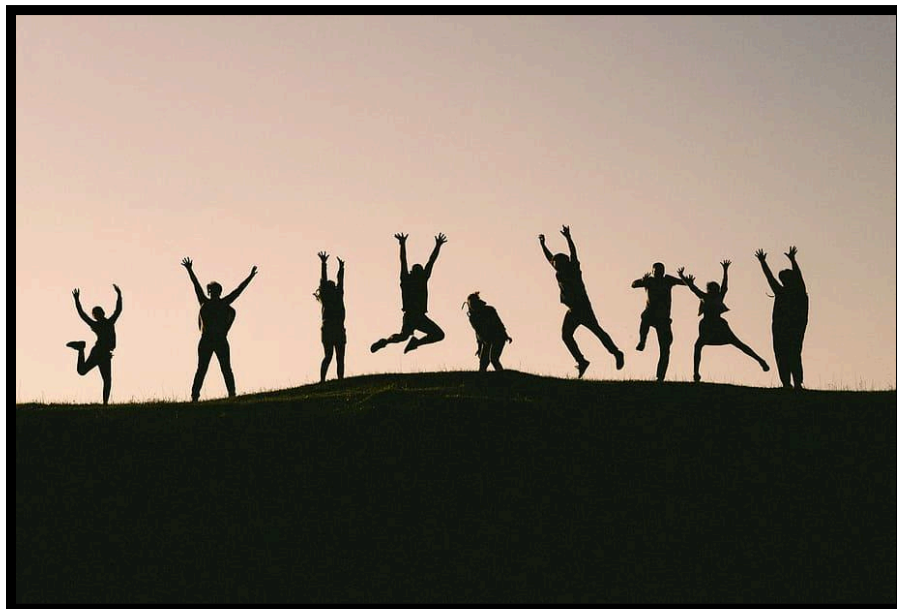


Human Trafficking 101

Awareness to Action



Overview of Human Trafficking

Human trafficking isn't what the media often makes it out to be. It rarely involves white vans or dramatic kidnappings. It rarely involves visible chains. But the chains? They're still there—just invisible. Trafficking thrives in plain sight, happening all around the world every day. It can happen to anyone. It often starts with false promises: love, job opportunities, shelter, or a way out of a difficult situation. Traffickers don't prey on strength—they search for vulnerabilities. They look for low self-esteem, survivors of abuse, and anyone they can manipulate. To them, people are not human; they're something to own, control, and exploit. Using force, fraud, and coercion, traffickers trap their victims in a living hell—a hell that is easy to fall into but feels nearly impossible to escape. But awareness is the first step toward change. Together, we can shine a light on this hidden crime and work to dismantle the systems that allow it to thrive.

Definition

Human trafficking is the act of recruiting, transporting, harboring, or receiving people through force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of exploitation. It is a serious crime and a grave violation of human rights that occurs in every country, including Canada.

Key Elements:

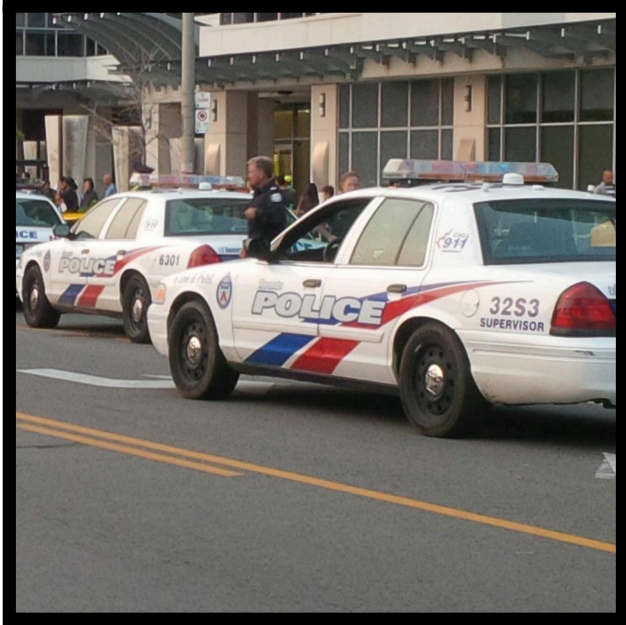
1. **Act** – What is done?
 - Recruiting, transporting, transferring, harboring, or receiving a person.
2. **Means** – How is it done?
 - **Force** (physical violence, abduction, restraint).
 - **Fraud** (false promises of jobs, education, or a better life).
 - **Coercion** (threats, blackmail, psychological manipulation, debt bondage).
3. **Purpose** – Why is it done?
 - **Exploitation**, which can include:

- **Sex trafficking** – Forced or coerced prostitution, escort services, pornography.
- **Labour trafficking** – Forced or exploitative work in factories, farms, or homes.
- **Forced criminality** – Being made to commit crimes (e.g., drug trafficking).
- **Organ trafficking** – Selling or removing organs against a person's will.
- **Forced marriage** – Being trafficked for marriage without consent.

Important Distinction:

- If the victim is a **minor (under 18)**, **force, fraud, or coercion do not need to be proven** for it to be legally considered trafficking. Any form of **commercial sexual exploitation of a minor is automatically human trafficking**.

Getting Help



Contact the Police

If in immediate danger, call 9-1-1. Alternatively, many cities have specialized units, such as Toronto's anti-human trafficking unit which can be reached at 416-808-4838.

**THE CANADIAN HUMAN
TRAFFICKING HOTLINE
1 833 900 1010**
CANADIANHUMANTRAFFICKINGHOTLINE.CA

Canadian Centre to End Human Trafficking

Operates a 24/7 hotline at 1-833-900-1010. A 24/7 online texting hotline is also available at canadianhumantraffickinghotline.ca

“No one asks to be trafficked. No one invites their own suffering. The blame lies only with the trafficker—never the victim.”

— Anonymous Survivor



Canadian Criminal Codes

In Canada, human trafficking is addressed through specific provisions in the **Criminal Code** and the **Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)**.

The **Criminal Code** includes several sections that specifically target human trafficking offenses:

- **Section 279.01: Trafficking in Persons**
 - This section criminalizes the recruitment, transportation, transfer, receipt, holding, concealing, or harboring of a person, or exercising control, direction, or influence over their movements, for the purpose of exploitation.
 - **Penalties:**
 - Maximum penalty of life imprisonment.
 - Mandatory minimum penalties apply, especially if the offense involves aggravating factors such as kidnapping, aggravated assault, aggravated sexual assault, or death.
- **Section 279.011: Trafficking of a Person Under the Age of Eighteen Years**
 - Targets trafficking involving minors, with stringent penalties to reflect the severity of exploiting children.
 - **Penalties:**
 - Maximum penalty of life imprisonment.
 - Mandatory minimum penalties are higher when the victim is under 18, especially with aggravating factors.
- **Section 279.02: Material Benefit from Trafficking**
 - Prohibits receiving financial or other material benefits from committing or facilitating human trafficking.
 - **Penalties:**
 - For adult victims: Maximum of 10 years imprisonment.
 - For child victims: Maximum of 14 years imprisonment, with a mandatory minimum of 2 years.
- **Section 279.03: Withholding or Destroying Identity Documents**

- Makes it an offense to withhold or destroy identity documents, such as passports, to facilitate human trafficking.
- **Penalties:**
 - For adult victims: Maximum of 5 years imprisonment.
 - For child victims: Maximum of 10 years imprisonment, with a mandatory minimum of 1 year.

Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA) Provision

- **Section 118: Trafficking in Persons**
 - Addresses human trafficking offenses involving the cross-border movement of individuals into Canada.
 - **Penalties:**
 - Fines up to \$1 million.
 - Life imprisonment.
 - Or both.

These legislative measures reflect Canada's commitment to combating human trafficking by imposing severe penalties on offenders and providing legal tools to prosecute such crimes effectively.

**“Silence lets traffickers win.
Awareness and action take
that power away.”**

— Anonymous



Why Myths about Trafficking are Harmful

Myths about human trafficking are harmful because they push the crime further underground, make victims afraid to come forward, and create barriers to effective prevention and intervention.

When people believe in myths about human trafficking, such as the idea that it always involves physical chains or dramatic kidnappings, they fail to recognize the subtle and pervasive ways traffickers operate. These misconceptions divert attention from the real tactics traffickers use—manipulation, coercion, and psychological control—which thrive in plain sight.

For victims, these myths add to their fear and isolation. If a victim's experience doesn't match the media's sensationalized portrayal of trafficking, they may feel invalidated or worry that they won't be believed. This can lead to shame and silence, making it even harder for them to seek help or escape their situation.

Myths also affect how society responds to trafficking. Law enforcement, service providers, and even the public may focus their efforts on stereotypical scenarios while missing the diverse realities of trafficking. This leads to inadequate policies, under-resourced support systems, and a failure to address root causes like poverty, abuse, and systemic inequality.

Dispelling myths is critical not only for awareness but also for empowering survivors to come forward, improving support systems, and preventing trafficking before it begins. Truth, education, and empathy are our best tools in the fight against human trafficking.

Myth: Trafficking always involves kidnapping or physical force.

- Reality: While abduction happens in some cases, most victims are manipulated or coerced through emotional or psychological means

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Myth: Only women and girls are victims of sex trafficking.

- Reality: Men, boys, and nonbinary individuals are also victims, particularly in LGBTQ+ communities or among homeless youth.

Myth: Trafficking always happens in secretive or shady locations.

- Reality: Trafficking occurs in plain sight — in hotels, massage parlours, private homes, and even through legal businesses.

Myth: Traffickers are strangers or organized criminals.

- Reality: While criminal networks are involved, many traffickers are individuals who build personal relationships with victims to exploit them.

Myth: Victims can just leave if they want to.

- Reality: Traffickers use threats, violence, and emotional manipulation to trap victims. Many feel they have no safe place to go or fear harm to themselves or loved ones.

Myth: Trafficking is always about crossing borders.

- Reality: Most trafficking happens within a victim's own country. Domestic trafficking is as common as international trafficking.

Myth: Trafficking is obvious and easy to spot.

- Reality: Trafficking often goes unnoticed because victims may appear to be living normal lives, and traffickers are skilled at hiding their operations.



Human Trafficking is One of the Most Profitable Business Worldwide, Yet Statistics Can be Unreliable

Why the True Scope is Unknown

1. Underreporting:

Victims may not come forward due to fear of retaliation, lack of trust in authorities, or stigma.

Traffickers use manipulation and coercion to ensure victims remain silent.

2. Misclassification:

Many trafficking cases are misidentified as other crimes, such as prostitution or illegal immigration.

Inconsistent definitions of trafficking across jurisdictions lead to gaps in data collection.

3. Hidden Nature of the Crime:

Trafficking occurs in industries and settings that are often out of public view, such as domestic servitude, agricultural work, or underground sex markets.



We invite you to join our growing community of human trafficking survivors, advocates, and allies.. Visit our website, reach out to our socials and emails, and sign up for our blog to stay in touch for exciting activities going on in our community and mentorship program!

Share & follow

Instagram: [@voiceforthesilent.ca](https://www.instagram.com/voiceforthesilent.ca)



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