

# Profile of The Female Trafficker

Union of Saints

## Typical background and roles

- Age range varies, often 20s to 40s, though can be younger or older.
- May be a former victim themselves, sometimes recruited and later becoming a controller.
- Can be lone operators, members of small networks, or part of larger criminal organizations.
- May present as a girlfriend, friend, manager, recruiter, roommate, employer, or caregiver to victims.
- Often occupies roles that provide direct access to victims, for example recruiter, handler, or front person for a business.

## Common motivations

- Financial gain, sometimes substantial.
- Desire for power and control.
- Survival strategies in contexts of poverty, coercion, or manipulation.
- In some cases, substance dependency drives decisions and behavior.

## Recruitment and grooming tactics

- Befriends targets online or in person, offers affection, attention, or a sense of belonging.
- Offers job opportunities, housing, or quick money that seem legitimate at first.
- Uses sympathy narratives, fake relationships, or promises of travel and work.
- Introduces dependency, for example controlling access to money, ID, or housing.
- Gradual escalation from favors and persuasion to coercion and threats.

## Control methods

- Emotional manipulation, gaslighting, threats to the victim or victim's family.

- Isolation from friends, family, or support networks.
- Financial control, stealing documents, or forcing debt.
- Use of drugs or alcohol to weaken resistance, in cases where abusers are willing to harm.
- Threats of violence, exposure, or legal consequences to force compliance.

## **Behavioral indicators in public or work settings**

- Appears overly controlling of someone else, speaking for them or insisting on being present.
- Frequent changes in who accompanies a person, or one person always present even in private meetings.
- A person kept from interacting freely with colleagues or friends.
- Signs that a person lacks personal documents, money, or freedom of movement.
- Workplaces with locked doors, unusual schedules, or isolated locations.

## **Online and communication signs**

- Recruiting through social media, messaging apps, dating platforms, classifieds.
- Fast moving relationships online, quick promises of jobs or relocation.
- Use of multiple accounts, burner phones, or pressure to move conversations off public platforms.
- Scripts or identical language used across different victims, suggesting coordinated recruitment.

## **Psychological and interpersonal traits**

- Charismatic, persuasive, attentive at first, then coercive.
- Able to feign care and victimhood when useful.
- Manipulative, skilled at reading vulnerability and exploiting it.
- May display signs of impulsivity, risk taking, or criminal sophistication, depending on role and network.

## How female traffickers may differ from male traffickers

- More likely to use emotional manipulation and relational grooming, presenting as friend or partner.
- May be more effective recruiting other women due to perceived shared experience or trust.
- Can operate within domestic or informal sectors, for example caregiving, hospitality, or private homes.

## Red flags to watch for in potential victims

- Someone who is unusually fearful, submissive, or shows signs of trauma.
- Limited or scripted answers about their situation, delayed eye contact, or physical signs of abuse.
- Restricted access to personal ID, finances, or phone.
- Frequent indicators of control from another individual, especially a person who seems to always accompany them.

## What to do if you suspect trafficking

- Prioritize safety, do not confront suspected traffickers directly if that could put someone at risk.
- Document observations, dates, times, and any identifying details, without putting yourself in danger.
- Contact local authorities, local anti trafficking organizations, or national hotlines.
- If in the United States use the National Human Trafficking Hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text 233733, or visit [traffickingresource](https://traffickingresource.org) sites in your country.
- For professionals, follow mandated reporting laws, and use trauma informed approaches when engaging with possible victims.

## Notes for professionals and community responders

- Use trauma informed interviewing, avoid retraumatizing questions, build trust gradually.

- Coordinate with social services, law enforcement, medical providers, and specialized NGOs.
- Recognize that some traffickers may also be victims, and that exit needs vary greatly.