

7 Years: Human Trafficking Victims

Sources:

1. <https://www.safehouseproject.org/blog/child-trafficking-every-2-minutes-a-child-is-sold/>
2. <https://www.ice.gov/news/releases/using-financial-attack-strategy-combat-human-trafficking>
3. <https://www.dhs.gov/human-trafficking-quick-facts>

A widely cited claim states that the average lifespan of a human trafficking victim is only seven years after being trafficked.

Human trafficking is severely underreported, making accurate long-term mortality tracking extremely difficult. Survivors often disappear from formal systems, and many cases are never officially identified as trafficking-related.

Approximately 30,000 victims of sex trafficking are estimated to die each year from abuse, disease, torture, and neglect.

Key Facts Regarding Deaths and Violence in Trafficking

- **Total Victims:** Globally, an estimated 27.6 million people are in forced labor or sex trafficking at any given time.
- **Causes of Death:** Victims often die as a result of brutal treatment, including starvation, torture, violence, and untreated health conditions.
- **Life Expectancy:** The average victim of sex trafficking is often cited as having a life expectancy of just seven years.
- **High Risk in Captivity:** A significant percentage of girls born into red-light districts who are trafficked may die in captivity.
- **Violence Exposure:** Up to 71% of victims in certain trafficking situations experience physical or sexual violence.

Human trafficking remains highly underreported, meaning the number of deaths related to trafficking may be higher than recorded estimates.

Documented Long-Term Health Risks

Survivors of trafficking often face significant and long-lasting health challenges, including:

- Chronic, untreated physical injuries
- Sexually transmitted infections and reproductive health complications
- Malnutrition and weakened immune systems
- Substance dependency resulting from coercion or coping mechanisms
- Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (C-PTSD)
- Major depressive disorder and increased suicide risk
- Organ failure related to prolonged substance abuse or overdoses

Without trauma-informed care and long-term support, these conditions can significantly increase the risk of premature mortality.

Violence and Instability After Exit

Escaping trafficking does not automatically eliminate risk. Survivors may face homelessness, retaliation, criminalization, poverty, and significant barriers to employment or healthcare access. These structural challenges contribute to ongoing vulnerability and instability.

A More Accurate Framing

Human trafficking significantly increases long-term physical and psychological health risks. Early intervention, safe housing, legal advocacy, and trauma-informed therapy dramatically improve long-term outcomes.

Hope and Recovery

Many survivors go on to live long, meaningful, and empowered lives. With proper support systems, community protection, and comprehensive healthcare access, recovery is not only possible but common.

While the exact number of human trafficking victims who are killed each year is difficult to determine due to the hidden nature of the crime, available data consistently show that trafficking substantially elevates the risk of violence, severe health complications, and premature death.
