



**HOPE.  
INSPIRE.  
LOVE.™**

# **SPOT THE SIGNS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION**

**16**

**KEY INDICATORS**

**+**

**WHAT YOU CAN DO  
IF YOU SPOT IT**

**+**

**ONLINE SAFETY FOR  
KIDS & TEENS**



# LOOK FOR **16** KEY INDICATORS

Recognizing potential red flags and knowing the key indicators of human trafficking and sexual exploitation is an essential step in identifying more victims and helping them find the assistance they need.

## HAS THE PERSON EXPERIENCED ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>1</b> IS UNPAID OR PAID VERY LITTLE                 | <b>7</b> ABUSIVE OR SEXUAL VIOLENCE                        | <b>13</b> DRUGS OR ALCOHOL ADDICTION                                   |
| <b>2</b> SECRETIVE FRIENDSHIPS                         | <b>8</b> COERSION, INTIMIDATION & THREATS                  | <b>14</b> LIMITED FAMILY OR SOCIAL CONTACT WITH OTHERS                 |
| <b>3</b> NOT FREE TO COME AND GO                       | <b>9</b> OWES LARGE DEBT & UNABLE TO PAY                   | <b>15</b> OFTEN GOES MISSING FOR SHORT PERIODS OF TIME OR SKIPS SCHOOL |
| <b>4</b> WORKS EXCESSIVE LONG HOURS                    | <b>10</b> LOSS OF CONTROL OF ID DOCUMENTS                  | <b>16</b> HUMILIATING WORKING OR LIVING CONDITIONS                     |
| <b>5</b> LIED, COERSED OR DECEIVED                     | <b>11</b> ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR OR FEAR                        |  |
| <b>6</b> RELATIONSHIPS WITH SIGNIFICANTLY OLDER PEOPLE | <b>12</b> ENTERING OR LEAVING VEHICLES WITH UNKNOWN ADULTS |  |

If you are working with children or young teens, pay attention, especially to sudden changes of behavior—particularly withdrawal, fearfulness, isolation, anger, anxiety, and depression.

Look for the presence of an older girlfriend or boyfriend. A sudden appearance of expensive possessions that feel out of place (watches, jewelry, clothing, shoes, phones, or nails done).



It is imperative that you try to get to know their story, not just the signs. Without knowing the story, “signs” of human trafficking can lead to judgments formulated from unconscious bias or harmful stereotypes. They can also lead to situations where a person in a trafficking situation is actually put in a dangerous position by a well-meaning stranger.

## A TRAFFICKED VICTIM COULD SHOW ONE OR MORE OF THESE RED FLAGS:

This list of red flags is not exhaustive and represents some of the most common signs of suspected human trafficking victims. These red flags could also not be present in all trafficking cases, and only some of these indicators may be noticeable.

- Avoids eye contact.
- Is sometimes accompanied by someone who is controlling their actions or words and lacks control of their interactions.
- Someone may speak on their behalf and defer answers to another person.
- Are frightened to talk to authorities or strangers, and they are closely monitored and controlled.
- Is not in control of their own money, identification documents, or other forms of ID.
- Has inconsistencies in their story of where they are from or where they are staying. They don't know their address and have a lack of knowledge of their current whereabouts.
- They are transported to or from work and sometimes live and work at the same place.
- They might have poor mental health or abnormal behavior.
- Looks sluggish as if in a constant high or under the influence of substances such as drugs or alcohol.
- They may have signs of abuse or poor physical health. Appears malnourished, hungry, lack sleep, or shows signs of physical and/or sexual abuse and torture.
- They are fearful, depressed, nervous, and have anxious behavior.
- They may have scars or bruises on their arms and lower backs.
- They are suspicious and distrustful of people who offer them help or assistance.
- Works excessively long or unusual hours.
- The places where they live or work have high measures of security: opaque windows, boarded-up windows, bars on windows, and security cameras.
- Victims may demonstrate affection towards the abuser, becoming sympathetic to their captors through possible “Stockholm” syndrome.
- Owes a large debt and is unable to pay it off.
- Was recruited through false promises of work.

IF YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED A VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, PLEASE CONTACT THE NATIONAL HOTLINE AND LET THEM KNOW AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE. YOU MAY BE SAVING SOMEONE'S LIFE.

TO REQUEST HELP OR REPORT A CONCERN, CALL THE U.S. NATIONAL HOTLINE 888.373.7888 OR TEXT “BEFREE” TO 233733

IMPORTANT: IF YOU HAVE A REASON TO BELIEVE A PERSON IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 911 FIRST

For additional information, visit [HopelnspireLove.org](http://HopelnspireLove.org)

# ONLINE SAFETY FOR KIDS & TEENS

## The role of parents & caregivers

Open, judgment-free conversations about online safety are essential. Young people must know they can come to trusted adults if something goes wrong online, without fear of punishment or losing access to their devices. These conversations should:

- Start early, before children are actively independent online
- Include clear discussions about sextortion and how it happens
- Focus on building trust rather than instilling fear
- Emphasize that victims are never to blame for their exploitation

**70% of kids have communicated with strangers online**, many of whom they've never met in person. These digital interactions typically start on social media and gaming platforms between a minor and an adult pretending to be a minor.

Human trafficking is an organized crime. It is strategic, calculated, and constantly evolving. It generates an estimated **236 billion dollars annually** and affects millions of lives daily.

There is a demand from men to buy sex, so traffickers are incentivized to target, groom, and prey on the vulnerable to meet the demand and generate profit.

**Simply put, buyers are fueling the demand for sex trafficking.**

One of the most significant factors influencing this crisis today is the rapid rise of technology. While it has enhanced connection and access to information, it has also created new ways to exploit vulnerable children and adults. And vulnerability is exactly where exploitation thrives.

Together, we need to protect our children and the generations to come. This is an urgent call to action. Prevention is where the solution starts. Education is how we get ahead of exploitation, protect children, equip communities, and safeguard future generations.

**DID YOU KNOW?**

**1 IN 3 BOYS** aged 9-12 have received unsolicited requests for explicit images.

**1 IN 3 MINORS** consider someone they met online to be one of their closest friends.

**1 IN 2 MINORS** have had an unsettling experience messaging online with a man aged 30 or older.

## The Stages of Grooming

STAGE	DESCRIPTION
Targeting the Child	A groomer targets children by creating false profiles on the internet. Often, they pretend to be a child within the same age group and initiate contact online. Oftentimes, groomers will target children within their close friend or family circle.
Gaining Access	The groomer establishes trust with the child by making them feel special, sometimes through gifts or excessive compliments and attention. This is especially dangerous for vulnerable children who do not receive attention in their daily lives.
Developing Trust	The groomer becomes a consistent presence in the child's life and establishes the appearance of a friendly or even romantic relationship. Children are mostly oblivious to the dangerous nature of these relationships as the groomer actively works to blur the lines between normal and abnormal relationships.
Desensitizing to Sexual Content	When a certain level of trust is established, the groomer starts to desensitize the child to sexual content—e.g., by exposing the child to sexual content—in order to facilitate an environment for child sexual abuse (CSA) and child sexual exploitation.
Targeting the Child	Groomers often use secrecy and feelings of shame to maintain control over the child. In some cases, groomers might utilize self-generated intimate content to extort children into prolonging the abusive relationship.

Source: InHope - The Stages of Grooming

**Never before has it been easier for perpetrators to make contact with children and teenagers while avoiding physical contact. They identify potential victims and establish a relationship of trust with the sole purpose of exploiting them. This process of recruitment can be a stepping stone to trafficking and exploitation.** Source: UNODC

**There's been an 87% volume of increased child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in recent years. That includes over 111,000 individuals downloading, sharing, and distributing child abuse and rape images of kids under the age of 12 just in the United States in the last 30 days.**

Source: Tim Tebow Foundation

# The Current Landscape of Sextortion:

**SEXTORTION** is a form of abuse where someone threatens to share private sexual images or videos unless their demands are met. It's not just about money—it's about power, control, and causing fear—many cases involving physical violence against victims. For the victim, it can feel like being trapped with no way out.

Perpetrators are leveraging social media and gaming platforms designed to help people connect and build relationships, turning these very tools into instruments of isolation and exploitation.

Sextortion abuse takes many forms, at times overlapping:

**Relational sextortion:** When someone the victim feels they know—often a romantic partner, friend, or even family member—uses intimate images to control or manipulate them. The demands usually require the victim to remain in or return to a relationship with the perpetrator.

**Exploitative content sextortion:** Demands the victim share more intimate photos, videos, or other material.

**Financial sextortion:** The extortionist demands money to prevent images from being shared, often perpetrated by organized criminal networks that frequently target young men.

**Sadistic sextortion:** Recently on the rise, these demands include suffering or submission through violence, self-harm, or destruction. Often coordinated through organized, online groups.

While the specifics of each abusive interaction differ, they share a common thread: technology is almost always involved. Our research found that **81% of sextortion threats happened exclusively online, with only 6% occurring entirely in person.**

- Report sextortion to the platform(s) and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children via their [cybertipline](https://report.cybertip.org) at [report.cybertip.org](https://report.cybertip.org)

**One in five teens reported experiencing sextortion.** That's not just a statistic—it's an alarming problem that represents millions of young people facing threats that have real consequences on their mental health and put them at risk for further harm.

Age is another critical factor. Our research found that **1 in 6 victims were age 12 or younger** when they first experienced sextortion. These younger children are particularly vulnerable, as they often lack the emotional tools to recognize manipulation and may not know how to seek help when targeted.

Even if the perpetrator knows the victim offline, sextortion threats often begin with online contact, either through social media, gaming platforms, or messaging apps. Perpetrators may use fake profiles, pose as peers, or leverage existing in-person relationships to build trust with potential victims. In some cases, the abuser spends time getting to know the young person before making any demands. In others, especially financial sextortion schemes, they move quickly to manipulation.

In nearly three-fourths of cases, the perpetrator used the threat of sharing sexual images or personal information with others to pressure the victim into complying with demands. Perpetrators often threaten to send images to family members, friends, or classmates—people whose opinions matter deeply to the young victim. This targeted approach makes sextortion particularly effective at controlling victims through fear and shame, keeping them trapped and isolated while the abuse continues.

Despite the severity of sextortion, many young victims suffer in silence. Our research found that **16% of victims never told anyone about their experience.** This silence prevents them from getting the help they need and allows the abuse to continue.

Source: THORN - The State of Sextortion



**Hope Inspire Love** is a community-impact, faith-centered nonprofit dedicated to combating human trafficking

and sexual exploitation through four programs: Trauma-Informed Mentorship, Social Enterprise, Prevention and education, and Outreach and awareness.

At Hope Inspire Love, our Restorative Care services for survivors of human trafficking are rooted in a survivor-informed, trauma-informed, and evidence-based approach. We walk alongside survivors as they heal, rebuild, and reclaim their lives at their own pace in ways that reflect their individual needs, goals, and timing. Our non-residential program is designed to support each

individual's autonomy, recognizing that every survivor's journey is unique. Survivors are empowered to take one step at a time, celebrate milestones, and make choices that align with their goals and values.



Learn more about Hope Inspire Love's Restorative Care Services by going to [HopelInspireLove.org/restorativecare](https://HopelInspireLove.org/restorativecare)

**Interested in having us share at your church, business, or school to provide education and training on human trafficking and exploitation? Scan the QR Code to request our training and seminars, or go to: [HopelInspireLove.org/book-a-speaker](https://HopelInspireLove.org/book-a-speaker)**



# HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE U.S.

There are an estimated 400,000 victims of Human Trafficking in the United States today.

Sex Trafficking is what most people are familiar with. This takes place when one person is sold for sexual services, and someone else benefits in some way. It also takes place anytime a minor under the age of 18 is involved in commercial sex.

Sex Trafficking can affect any American community, especially teen runaways, LGBTQI+ youth, children without strong support systems, homeless women and men, those struggling with addictions or mental health, undocumented workers, and young people in the foster care system.

**Traffickers target those who are vulnerable and in need. This can be anything from a physical need, such as money or food, to an emotional need, such as love or attention.**

## 4 THINGS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT SEX TRAFFICKING

- 1 Many people caught in sex trafficking personally know their traffickers. Sadly, abusers are often family members or friends.  
  
Because of movies, we often assume that trafficking involves a dramatic kidnapping by a stranger, but that's actually very rare.
- 2 Sex trafficking can start online. There is an increase in digital exploitation, and shows up in sexting, chat rooms, on the darknet, and on social media, where victims are groomed.
- 3 Most individuals caught in sex trafficking don't realize they are victims of a crime. Many are in a highly manipulative relationship with their trafficker. In some cases, the victim will not run away and will actually protect the trafficker from arrest or punishment.
- 4 Teens in the foster care system are especially high-risk. Half of all foster children will end up homeless within two years of aging out of the foster care system.

**DID YOU  
KNOW?**

**ONE** in **SEVEN** runaway teens will become victims of sexual exploitation.

**88%** of those who ran were in the foster care system. Teens in the foster care system and runaway kids are perhaps the most vulnerable population in the U.S. today.

**SCAN CODE TO  
LEARN MORE,  
DONATE, REPORT  
A CONCERN, OR  
DOWNLOAD FREE  
RESOURCES.**

Help us continue to empower survivors of sex trafficking to flourish & thrive. Give today!



**Sex trafficking is the business  
of stealing freedom for the  
purpose of profit.**



~~she's someone's sister/mother/daughter/wife~~

**1.2** MILLION CHILDREN ARE EXPLOITED INTO THE SEX TRADE EACH YEAR



**60%** OF CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING VICTIMS HAVE BEEN WITHIN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

**11K+**

IN 2024, **11,999** CASES OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED IN THE U.S. ALONE (**21,865** VICTIMS INVOLVED)

**87%** volume of increased child sexual abuse material (CSAM) in recent years

**150.2 BILLION** ESTIMATED \$\$ HUMAN TRAFFICKING GENERATES PER YEAR

**98%** OF TRAFFICKERS ARE NEVER CONVICTED

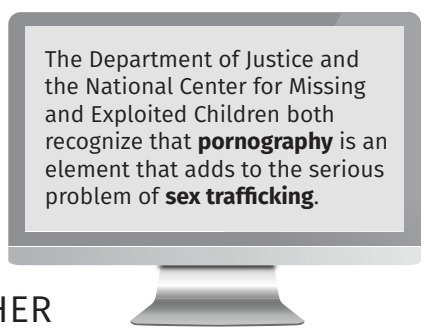
**1 in 4** REPORTED THEY WERE **13 OR YOUNGER** WHEN THEY WERE **SEXTORTED.**

**1 IN 6 BOYS & 1 IN 4 GIRLS WILL BE SEXUALLY ABUSED BEFORE THE AGE OF 18**

# HUMAN TRAFFICKING & SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Data by Polaris Project, Shared Hope International, A21, International Labour Organization, U.S. Department of State, Walk Free Foundation, and National Center for Missing & Exploited Children.

**14-16** COMMON AGES A VICTIM ENTERS TRAFFICKING



OF CHILDREN, **ONE THIRD** OF VICTIMS ARE MALE



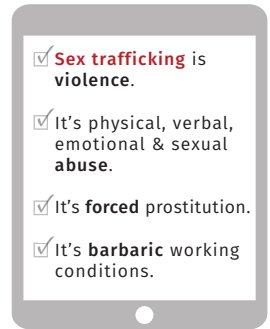
**71** PERCENT OF TRAFFICKED ARE **WOMEN** AND **25%** ARE **CHILDREN**



ANOTHER PERSON IS TRAFFICKED

**300,000** CHILDREN ARE AT RISK OF TRAFFICKING EACH YEAR

**76%** OF TRANSACTIONS FOR SEX TRAFFICKING WITH UNDERAGE GIRLS, START ON THE INTERNET.



**27.6** THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY **27.6** MILLION VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORLDWIDE.

**1 in 4** victims of human trafficking are children.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS **2ND** LARGEST AND FASTEST GROWING CRIMINAL INDUSTRY

**99%** OF VICTIMS ARE **NEVER** RESCUED

~~he's someone's brother/father/son/husband~~

**TOGETHER, WE WILL CHANGE THESE STATISTICS. PARTNER WITH US TODAY. HOPEINSPIRELOVE.ORG**



## **DOWNLOAD**

### **31 Days of Prayer Journal for Human Trafficking**

**GO TO:** [HopelnspireLove.org/resources](https://HopelnspireLove.org/resources)

## **SAVE THE DATE**



### **HOPE GALA & AWARDS CEREMONY**

**Friday, April 10, 2026**

**Eden Resort & Suites**

222 Eden Road, Lancaster, PA, 17601



### **FREEDOM WALK**

**October, 2026**

**Musser Park**

135 N Lime St, Lancaster, PA 17602