

# Myth vs Reality



Common Misconceptions  
About  
Human Trafficking

# Common Misconceptions About Human Trafficking

**Myth:** All commercial sex is human trafficking

**Reality:** All commercial sex involving a minor is legally considered human trafficking. Many believe that commercial sex work and human trafficking are the same. Commercial sex work consists of a transaction between two consenting adults. Human trafficking involves someone who is being forced to participate. The secret nature of human trafficking makes it difficult for police to determine its true extent. Commercial sex involving an adult is human trafficking if the person providing commercial sex does it against their will due to force, fraud or coercion.

**Myth:** Only females can be victims of human trafficking.

**Reality:** People of all cultures, races, gender identities, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, education levels, and other vulnerabilities can make you more susceptible to being a victim of Human Trafficking. It can happen to anyone!

**Myth:** Human trafficking only happens in illegal or black-market industries.

**Reality:** Human trafficking cases have been reported and prosecuted in restaurants, cleaning services, construction, factories, trucking, farming and more.

**Myth:** Human trafficking is generally a violent crime.

**Reality:** The most common myth about human trafficking is that it always involves kidnapping or otherwise physically forcing someone into a situation. In actuality, most human traffickers use psychological means such as tricking, defrauding, manipulating, coercing or threatening victims into providing commercial sex.

**Myth:** People trafficked are physically unable to leave their situations because they are often held against their will.

**Reality:** Although it is rare, in some cases, this does occur. More often, however, people in trafficking situations stay for more complicated reasons. Some lack the necessities to physically get out - such as transportation or a safe place to live. Some are afraid for their safety and the safety of their loved ones. Some victims have been effectively manipulated to the point that they do not recognize that they are under the control of another person.

**Myth:** Human trafficking only takes place in big cities/urban centres.

**Reality:** Human trafficking is active in many rural communities. Rural neighbourhoods have characteristics that can make trafficking more challenging to recognize and address. In rural areas, long distances between homes don't guarantee safety and mean that victims services and support may be less accessible. Rural poverty and fewer jobs can make young people more willing to trade sex for money or drugs. In small, close-knit communities, traffickers may be familiar faces, making disclosure of abuse incredibly complicated.

**Myth:** Victims will be desperate to escape their trafficker and ask for help when they need it.

**Reality:** Victims who experience trafficking may not immediately seek help for several reasons, including shame, self-blame, fear, or even specific instructions from their traffickers regarding how to behave when interacting with others. They do not always self-identify and may not realize that they have rights.

**Myth:** Trafficking primarily occurs in developing countries.

**Reality:** Human trafficking is happening in communities across Canada. Between 2009-2019, over 2/3 of reported incidents of human trafficking were reported in Ontario.

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

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

**Myth:** If the trafficked person consented to be in their initial situation, then it cannot be human trafficking or against their will because they "knew better."

**Reality:** Initial consent to commercial sex or a labour setting before acts of force, fraud, or coercion (or if the victim is a minor in a sex trafficking situation) is not relevant to the crime, nor is payment. You can say NO at any time.

**Myth:** Human trafficking involves moving, travelling, or transporting a person across the province or national borders.

**Reality:** Human trafficking is often confused with human smuggling, which involves illegal border crossings. The crime of human trafficking does not require any movement of any kind. Survivors can be recruited and trafficked in their hometowns, even their own homes.

This document was produced for the purpose of creating awareness about Human Trafficking in Wellington County.

If you are aware of someone trafficking individuals, report it to the Wellington County OPP at 1-888-310-1122.

If you wish to remain anonymous, contact Crime Stoppers Guelph Wellington on their website [www.csgw.tips](http://www.csgw.tips), or you can also call and leave an anonymous tip at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477). If your information leads to an arrest, you may be eligible for a cash reward of up to \$2,000.

Victims of Human Trafficking are encouraged to seek support from Victim Services Wellington via email at [victim@vswguelph.on.ca](mailto:victim@vswguelph.on.ca) or by calling (519) 824-1212 Ext. 7304.

### We Stand With You

