



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION EDUCATION

MYTHS & REALITY LESSON #1



NOTE

Log in to WalkingWise.com and refer to the Implementation Toolkit for classroom teaching tips.

Most importantly:

DEFINE SCHOOL POLICY

Establish a sexual exploitation reporting protocol with a trauma-informed response. The Walking Wise Implementation Toolkit provides a sample protocol.

AGE & AUDIENCE

This presentation can be edited by following the procedures on page 3 to align with your school policies, specific age groups, and the involvement of at-risk audiences.

SUPPORT PROCEDURE

Provide your students with guidance on accessing immediate help or arranging a private meeting with a social worker, counselor, nurse, school resource officer, or another trustworthy staff member to report concerns for themselves or a peer.

SECOND SAFE ADULT

Ensure a second trustworthy adult, such as a teacher, is present in the learning setting to observe student reactions and identify those who may benefit from a follow-up meeting. This person should remain focused and free from other duties during the presentation.

IMPLEMENT SLIDO.com

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NOTE TO PRESENTER

This PDF contains the same content as the PowerPoint presentation but has been condensed into fewer pages for easier reference. For live presentations, please use the PowerPoint version. It reveals bullet points one at a time.

Meaningful learning takes time. By introducing topics gradually over several years, schools can create steady growth in awareness and understanding.

Our recommended three- to five-year teaching plan offers a long-term path for middle and high school students to build knowledge and confidence. Parts of lesson #2, Trustworthy vs. Unsafe Adult, may begin in the 5th grade. 

Download our [Teaching Track](#).



3-YEAR TRACK

PARENTS & STAFF

#1 Myths & Reality

6th GRADE

#2 Trustworthy vs. Unsafe Adult

#3 Grooming Process

#4 Pornography Link

7th GRADE

#5 Sextortion Scheme

#6 Male Victims

#7 Runaways as Targets

#8 Rural Risks

8th GRADE

#9 Human Traffickers

#10 Female & Peer Recruiters

#11 Family Secret

#12 Hidden Buyers

5-YEAR TRACK

PARENTS & STAFF

#1 Myths & Reality

6th GRADE

#2 Trustworthy vs. Unsafe Adult

#3 Grooming Process

7th GRADE

#4 Pornography Link

#5 Sextortion Scheme

#6 Male Victims

8th GRADE

#7 Runaways as Targets

#8 Rural Risks

9th GRADE

#9 Human Traffickers

#10 Female & Peer Recruiters

10th GRADE

#11 Family Secret

#12 Hidden Buyers

NOTE TO PRESENTER

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- Always add your organization's name or logo to each new slide.

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NOTE

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support@WalkingWise.com.

STATISTICS

Study Results Are Only Estimates

- Many crimes are never reported, so study results may not fully reflect what is really happening.
- Studies collect information in different ways, which can lead to different results.
- Some studies include small groups of people, and those groups may not represent everyone.



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In this presentation, we'll discuss statistics, but it's important to note that while statistics provide valuable insights into an issue, they cannot be relied upon entirely.

Here are a few reasons:

UNREPORTED

Victims may stay silent due to fear, shame, or manipulation.

INCONSISTENT COLLECTION

Geographical areas have different legal definitions for sexual crimes, making data hard to compare.

FOCUS GROUPS

Small or specific focus groups participating in a study or survey may not accurately reflect the diversity or experiences of the broader population.

DIGITAL PARTICIPATION



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NOTE

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Please verify that the Q&A feature is enabled before presenting to audiences. An adult should monitor questions and comments to ensure they are appropriate. Slido has a feature that allows you to delete unwanted questions and comments.

SENSITIVE DISCUSSION AHEAD

CONTENT ALERT

We'll be discussing serious safety issues today.

Some topics may be difficult to hear.

If you ever feel uncomfortable, you can step out and speak with a trustworthy adult for support.

You're not alone—help is available.

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NOTE TO PRESENTER

Presenter Guidelines for Delivery

Present the information in a calm, matter-of-fact way and avoid sensational language.

Avoid graphic details. Focus on understanding behaviors and staying safe.

Never blame victims. Responsibility always belongs to the person who caused harm.

Maintain a steady tone. Students often mirror the presenter's emotional cues.

Do not ask students to share personal experiences.

If students laugh or react awkwardly, stay calm and continue teaching.

Always pair risk information with solutions and support.

Remind students they are not alone and help is available.

CONFRONTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WALKING WISE



KNOWLEDGE serves as a powerful defense against sexual predators.

CONFRONTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WALKING WISE



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

includes grooming,
sextortion, pornography
& sex trafficking.

VOCABULARY



VOCABULARY

- **Child Exploitation**
- **Sex Trafficking**
- **Myth**
- **Reality**
- **Coercion**
- **Manipulation**
- **Intimidation**

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NOTE

Understanding vocabulary terms related to the behaviors of sexual predators can empower young people to recognize warning signs of harmful situations.

Knowing terminology helps them identify manipulative tactics predators use to build trust and exploit vulnerabilities.

With this knowledge, young people are better equipped to spot red flags, understand that these behaviors are abusive, and feel more confident reporting predators to trusted adults or authorities, potentially preventing further harm.

VOCABULARY

CHILD EXPLOITATION

The use of a child for someone else's benefit, often in an abusive, unfair, or harmful manner.

Includes: Sexual exploitation (grooming & sex trafficking), sextortion, labor trafficking, and criminal activity (such as drug dealing & theft).



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

10

Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOlVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim>

Criminal Division, U.S. Department of Justice. Citizen's Guide To U.S. Federal Law On Child Sex Trafficking. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://www.justice.gov/criminal/criminal-ceos/citizens-guide-us-federal-law-child-sex-trafficking>

VOCABULARY

CHILD SEX TRAFFICKING

A child (under age 18) is made to take part in sexual activity for money or something of value, like food, shelter, or gifts.



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from

[https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOIVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim)

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[chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOIVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOIVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim)

VOCABULARY

SEX TRAFFICKING OF ADULTS

An adult is made to take part in sexual activity in exchange for something of value (like money, food, or housing), through the use of **FORCE, FRAUD, or COERCION**.



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

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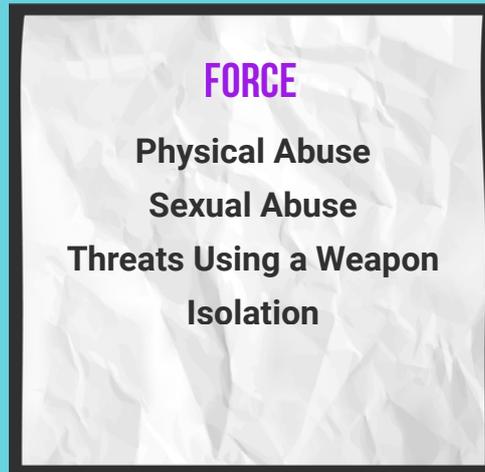
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OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse. Retrieved January 3, 2025, from <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?hl=false&edition=prelim&path=%2Fprelim%40title22%2Fchapter78&req=granuleid%3AUSC-prelim-title22-chapter78&num=0&saved=L3ByZWxpbUB0aXRsZTIyL2NoYXB0ZXI3OA%3D%3D%7CZ3JhbNvsZWlkOlVTQy1wcmVsaW0tdGl0bGUyMi1jaGFwdGVyNzg%3D%7C%7C%7C0%7Cfalse%7Cprelim>

FORCEFUL TACTICS



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2020-2022 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Report

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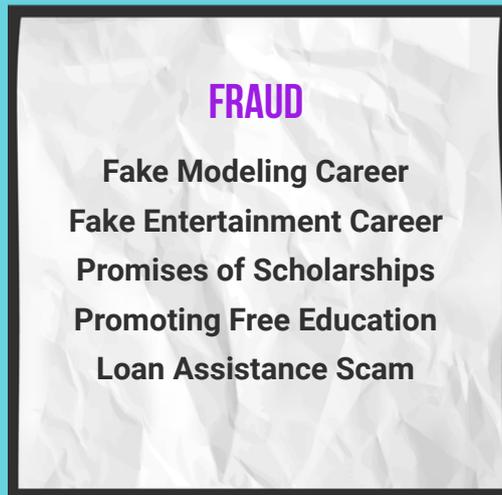
Source

Polaris Project (n.d.). Human Trafficking During the COVID and Post-COVID Era.

Polarisproject.org, pp. 3, 6. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hotline-Trends-Report-2023.pdf>

FRAUDULANT TACTICS



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2020-2022 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Report

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Source

Polaris Project (n.d.). Human Trafficking During the COVID and Post-COVID Era.

Polarisproject.org, pp. 3, 6. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hotline-Trends-Report-2023.pdf>

VOCABULARY

COERCE

To manipulate, threaten, or intimidate someone to act against their will.



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Section 7102. 22 USC Ch. 78: Trafficking Victims Protection, From Title 22—Foreign Relations and Intercourse.

15

Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FOR LEGAL DEFINITION:

18 USC 1591: Sex trafficking of children or by force, fraud, or coercion. (n.d.). Title 18- Crimes and Criminal Procedure, Part 1 - Crimes Chapter 77 - Peonage and Slavery.

Retrieved January 3, 2025, from [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title18-section1591&num=0&edition=2000#sourcecredit)

[req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title18-section1591&num=0&edition=2000#sourcecredit](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=granuleid%3AUSC-2000-title18-section1591&num=0&edition=2000#sourcecredit)

COERCIVE TACTICS

COERCION

Creates Substance Addiction
Exploits Substance Use
Threatens Harm to Family or Pets
Emotional or Verbal Abuse
Manipulation or Intimidation
Stalking or Monitoring
Withholding Food & Shelter



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2020-2022 U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline Report

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Source

Polaris Project (n.d.). Human Trafficking During the COVID and Post-COVID Era.

Polarisproject.org, pp. 3, 6. Retrieved February 27, 2024, from

<https://polarisproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Hotline-Trends-Report-2023.pdf>

VOCABULARY

MYTH

A false belief commonly held by a group.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

VOCABULARY

REALITY

A true fact based on what actually happens.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

MYTH OR REALITY?



Myth or Reality? Sex traffickers mostly target young people living in dangerous communities.



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Polaris Project (2025) Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers mostly target young people living in dangerous communities.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth - Sex traffickers target young people from all types of communities, including urban, suburban, rural, and online communities.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBlEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, traffickers target young people from all types of communities, including urban, suburban, rural, and online communities.

©2024-2026 Walking Wise

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

20

Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

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- A) Myth
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MYTH OR REALITY?



Myth or Reality? Sex traffickers mainly target young people they don't know.



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Polaris Project (2025) Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

21

Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Human traffickers mainly target young people they don't know.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER:

A) Myth - Victims often know their trafficker. Traffickers can be family members - including parents, intimate partners - including older boyfriends and spouses, and other known and trusted members of the community.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBlEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, victims often know their trafficker.

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Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Human traffickers mainly target young people they don't know.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

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MYTH OR REALITY?



Myth or Reality? Sex trafficking usually involves violence against victims.



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Polaris Project (2025) Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking usually involves violence against victims.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Sometimes violence is involved; however, traffickers often use manipulation, intimidation, and threats to control their victims.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, traffickers more often use manipulation, intimidation, and threats to control their victims.

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Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking usually involves violence against victims.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Sometimes violence is involved; however, traffickers often use manipulation, intimidation, and threats to control their victims.

Source

Polaris Project (2025). Myths, Facts, and Statistics. PolarisProject.org. Retrieved January 6, 2025, from https://polarisproject.org/myths-facts-and-statistics/?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAm-67BhBLEiwAEVftNpjEBS3aD54aH9qHzJjL01wnVgSL4rc8WgP7CHE_PvAjOR1wN9AchBoCgk8QAvD_BwE

MYTH OR REALITY?

Myth or Reality? Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.



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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. It's possible for someone to be kidnapped by a trafficker, but this is uncommon. Most traffickers use lies, manipulation, or pressure to trap people into trafficking situations.

Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, most trafficking does not involve kidnapping. Traffickers more often trick their victims.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex trafficking victims are usually kidnapped.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

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Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

MYTH OR REALITY?



Myth or Reality? Sex traffickers usually hold victims physically captive.



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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers usually hold victims physically captive.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Some traffickers may hold victims captive, but most people in trafficking situations stay for more complicated reasons:

- They don't have the basics to leave, like transportation or a safe place.
- They fear for their safety if they try to escape.
- They've been manipulated so much that they may not realize they're being controlled.

Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, most victims are not locked in. People usually stay because they are scared, controlled, or feel they have no choice.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers usually hold victims physically captive.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Some traffickers may hold victims captive, but most people in trafficking situations stay for more complicated reasons:

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- They fear for their safety if they try to escape.
- They've been manipulated so much that they may not realize they're being controlled.

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TRAFFICKING MYTH

Myth or Reality? Sex traffickers only target females.



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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers only target females.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

ANSWER

A) Myth. Both men and boys are also victimized by sex traffickers. Additionally, LGBTQ+ males are especially vulnerable to traffickers.

Source

National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families. Retrieved May 1, 2024, from <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/otip/fact-sheet/resource/fshumantrafficking>

ANSWER

MYTH. Reality is, females are most targeted, but males and boys are also trafficked.

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National Human Trafficking Hotline (n.d.). Fact Sheet: Human Trafficking. The Administration for Children and Families.

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Online Polling Interaction
Slido.com: Multiple Choice

Sex traffickers only target females.

- A) Myth
- B) Reality

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Message Especially for Teens:

Businesses worldwide use explainer-style animation as a training tool for their employees.

So, this 3-minute Walking Wise animated video series is appropriate for both teens (ages 11+) and adults to learn how sexual predators use manipulation, intimidation, and coercion to exploit young people.

NOTE

Log in to Walking Wise.com to watch the three-minute animated video with audiences.

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

In what types of business or industry are people commonly trafficked?



BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Industries Impacted by Sex Trafficking

- Social Media Platforms
- Illegal Massage Parlors
- Entertainment Industry: Strip Clubs & Casinos
- Hospitality Industry: Hotels & Motels



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Myth: People are only trafficked in illegal businesses.

Reality: Trafficking can happen anywhere people can be controlled or exploited, even in legal businesses and industries.

BUSINESS & INDUSTRY

Industries Impacted by Labor Trafficking

- Hotel Housekeeping & Maintenance
- Restaurants & Tourism
- Agriculture: Crops, Livestock, Fisheries
- Logging & Mining
- Construction, Factories, & Carnivals



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Myth: People are only trafficked in illegal businesses.

Reality: Trafficking can happen anywhere people can be controlled or exploited, even in legal businesses and industries.

VOCABULARY

MANIPULATION

Influencing or controlling someone's behavior or decisions deceptively or unfairly, usually for personal gain.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

VOCABULARY

INTIMIDATION

To influence or control another person's actions or behavior by causing fear.



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Assisting Source

OpenAI. (2024). ChatGPT [Large language model]. <https://chatgpt.com>

FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

When can young people experience a false sense of security?



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FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

A false sense of security refers to the feeling of being safer than one actually is.

FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

Stay Alert – Even When Things Seem Safe

- Talking or hanging out with an “Online-only” friend.
- Spending time with an older peer or adult.
- Receiving special attention, gifts, or favors from an adult.
- Going to unfamiliar places with people they don’t know well.

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A false sense of security occurs when a situation feels safe or normal despite the presence of certain risk factors.

Young people may feel comfortable with someone they only know online because of frequent conversations or shared interests.

Spending time alone with someone significantly older, especially in private settings, increases vulnerability due to power differences.

Unusual attention, gifts, or favors from an adult can be part of boundary-testing behaviors.

Likewise, being in unfamiliar places with acquaintances reduces natural safeguards.

Safety is not about fear; it’s about awareness, boundaries, and ensuring that relationships remain transparent and appropriate.

PLAIN SIGHT

What makes it possible for human traffickers to operate in plain sight?



PLAIN SIGHT

Someone We Wouldn't Suspect

- **Authority Figure:** Adult in charge of young or vulnerable people
- **Neighbor:** Adult or peer in the local community
- **Employer:** Boss or co-worker
- **Family Member:** Close or distant relative



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“Operating in plain sight” refers to visibly engaging in activities without attempting to conceal them or behaving in a way that attracts no suspicion despite the potentially harmful intentions.

Often, people believe criminal activity happens in dark alleys or places not visited by the average person. However, illegal activity often occurs in areas where people commonly spend time.

NOT MY COMMUNITY

What can happen if sexual exploitation is ignored in a community?



NOT MY COMMUNITY

Cost of Looking the Other Way

- **Silence can enable exploitation to grow.**
- **Vulnerable individuals may face greater danger.**
- **Victims can remain unseen and unsupported.**
- **Communities may lose the chance to prevent harm.**

When communities avoid talking about sexual exploitation, traffickers and exploiters benefit.

Silence creates space for manipulation, grooming, and abuse to continue unchecked.

Exploitation thrives in secrecy. When no one is watching, asking questions, or speaking up, harmful behavior becomes easier to hide.

AUTHORITY FIGURES

How can someone in authority misuse their power to harm others?



AUTHORITY FIGURES

How Power is Misused

- They **build trust** through manipulation and deception.
- They can use their position to **discourage questions** from others.
- They often **threaten consequences** to maintain control.
- They **blur boundaries** to test what they can get away with.

Traffickers rarely begin with force – they begin with persuasion. They slowly influence how a young person thinks about themselves, relationships, money, or loyalty.

Over time, this shapes decisions in ways the person might not have made before. They may apply pressure to push someone beyond their comfort zone, framing harmful behavior as normal, necessary, or proof of trust.

Mind games, such as guilt, blame, or mixed messages, create confusion and self-doubt, making it harder to think clearly or ask for help.