

DOCUMENT #6

What Is Human Trafficking?

Excerpted segments from the website of the National Human Trafficking Resource Center

Why Trafficking Exists

Human trafficking is a market-driven criminal industry that is based on the principles of supply and demand, like drugs or arms [weapons] trafficking. Many factors make children and adults vulnerable to human trafficking. However, human trafficking does not exist solely because many people are vulnerable to exploitation. Instead, human trafficking is fueled by a demand for cheap labor, services, and for commercial sex. Human traffickers are those who employ force, fraud, or coercion to victimize others in their desire to profit from the existing demand.

To ultimately solve the problem of human trafficking, it is essential to address these demand-driven factors, as well as to alter the overall market incentives of high-profit and low-risk that traffickers currently exploit.

Labor trafficking and sex trafficking of U.S. citizens and foreign nationals persist and thrive for a number of reasons, including:

1. **Low Risk:** Human traffickers perceive there to be little risk or deterrence to affect their criminal operations. While investigations, prosecutions, and penalties have increased throughout recent years, many traffickers still believe the high profit margin to be worth the risk of detection. Factors that add to low risk include: lack of government and law enforcement training, low community awareness, ineffective or unused laws, lack of law enforcement investigation, scarce resources for victim recovery services, and social blaming of victims.
2. **High Profits:** When individuals are willing to buy commercial sex, they create a market and make it profitable for traffickers to sexually exploit children and adults. When consumers are willing to buy goods and services from industries that rely on forced labor, they create a profit incentive for labor traffickers to maximize revenue with minimal production costs.