

Factsheet on Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a modern form of slavery and affects all parts of the globe. Since it is illegal and traffickers aim to keep their victims isolated and humiliated, it is difficult to verify exact statistics. The true problem is likely to be significantly bigger than the statistics suggest.

- Worldwide, there are an estimated 27 million modern day slaves.
- UNIFEM estimates that between 500,000 and 2 million persons are trafficked across international borders each year. Other NGOs estimate the number is nearer 4 million.
- The Uzbek government estimates that around 1000 Uzbek women are illegally trafficked from their country each year, mainly to Turkey or the United Arab Emirates. In the past decade, five or six trafficked Uzbek women have been murdered each year in the UAE. Many others have been imprisoned for visa offences.
- About 80% of trafficking victims are women, 70% of whom are trafficked for the commercial sex industry.
- 60-95% of trafficked women in prostitution have been raped and physically assaulted.
- In some parts of Africa and in the Mekong region, the vast majority of those trafficked are children.
- Trafficking affects virtually every country in the world. The largest numbers come from Asia and the former Soviet Union, which is now believed to be the biggest source of trafficking for the sex industry. Victims are sent to Asia, the Middle East, Western Europe and North America.
- In many countries, women make up the largest proportion of traffickers. In Latvia, women made up 53% of trafficking convictions.
- Trafficking in persons fuels organised crime. Human trafficking in Eastern Europe is estimated to generate between US\$5 and 22 billion in annual revenue. It is closely associated with money laundering, drug trafficking and document forgery.
- Prostitution, legal or decriminalised, is a major global industry. In the Philippines, it is the 4th largest source of gross national product. 300,000 sex tourists from Japan visit the Philippines each year.
- In the Netherlands, the sex industry generates \$1billion per annum, with 2000 brothels and 30,000 working women, of whom 68-80% come from countries other than Holland.
- In a 9 country survey of nearly 800 women working in the sex trade, 89% wanted to leave the industry, 75% had been homeless at some point and 68% had symptoms of PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).

Women in developing countries face the highest risk of becoming victims of trafficking. Poverty, lack of equal opportunity and cultural practices create conditions of vulnerability, which traffickers easily exploit.

Sources: US Department of Justice, US State Department, Salvation Army Canada, UNIFEM, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute

A 2010 Lenten Study compiled by the World Council of Churches, the World Student Christian Federation and the World YWCA <http://women.overcomingviolence.org>.