

# Child Trafficking: The Facts



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Children's Advocacy Institute  
UNIVERSITY OF SAN DIEGO SCHOOL OF LAW

Recently, there has been a great deal of information shared through social media about the scourge of child trafficking. Child trafficking is a very real issue and a tragedy that unfolds every day in our country and around the world. Many are passionate about the fight against human trafficking and the rise in public awareness is an encouraging step toward preventing trafficking and providing assistance and support to victims and survivors of child trafficking.

That said, it is vital that the information circulated about child trafficking is accurate. In the recent barrage of information about the issue, unfortunate misinformation and harmful conspiracy theories have circulated. To help individuals who are interested in learning more about the problem of child trafficking and the resources and organizations working to end it, we have developed this fact sheet. None of these facts are meant to diminish the reality that child trafficking is a legitimate and serious problem. Rather, these facts are offered to provide credible information to help the public better understand the issue and identify effective options for supporting solutions.

## The Facts:

- Most children enter trafficking between the ages of 14 and 16 (<https://sharedhope.org/> - national statistic, see also The Nature and Extent of Gang Involvement in Sex Trafficking in San Diego – specific regional example)
- According to Shared Hope International, traffickers most commonly find their victims on the social networks followed by the child victim's home neighborhood, then clubs or bars and school. (<https://sharedhope.org/>)
- Though children from all backgrounds and socioeconomic statuses are vulnerable to trafficking, those at greatest risk have a prior history of sexual abuse, foster care, running away, or homelessness. (<https://sharedhope.org/>)
- Runaways make up 91% of missing child cases. Nonfamily abductions make up less than 1% National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) (<https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/nonfamily>)
- Of the nearly 26,300 runaways reported to NCMEC in 2019, 1 in 6 were likely victims of child sex trafficking. National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) (<https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking>)

## Misinformation:

Misinformation about human trafficking that goes viral can be very harmful to the actual victims of trafficking for several reasons:

- It can adversely impact organizations on the ground by overwhelming them with calls about baseless concerns, crowding out calls from actual victims.
- It can cloud the realities of an already complex issue and hinder efforts at advocacy for effective laws and policies to address this serious issue and help victims.
- Some misinformation threatens to polarize an issue that is currently bi-partisan, further complicating efforts to pass effective legislation.
- It can lead well-intentioned people to perpetuate myths, and promote or donate to organizations that are not actually serving victims. In the end, this harms those in need of assistance

# Child Trafficking: Take Action

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## What can you do?

If you are interested in learning more about the tragedy of child trafficking and efforts to end it, here are some reputable, well-established organizations that have years of expertise and experience working to eradicate child trafficking, protect victims, and assist survivors:

- Shared Hope International: <https://sharedhope.org/>
- The Polaris Project: <https://polarisproject.org/>
- The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: <https://www.missingkids.org/theissues/trafficking>
- Save the Children (note that this legitimate organization it is not always associated with information put out under #Savethechildren – be cautious) <https://www.savethechildren.org>
- The Children's Advocacy Institute at the University of San Diego: <https://www.caichildlaw.org>
- UNICEF: <https://www.unicefusa.org/mission/protect/trafficking/end>
- Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST): <https://www.castla.org/> (This website contains information on efforts to end child labor trafficking)
- Human Trafficking In the United States - Literature Review: <https://aspe.hhs.gov/report/human-trafficking-and-within-united-states-review-literature>

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