

Far-Reaching Impact of Human Trafficking

[According to the DEA](#), “human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act.” This sinister form of exploitation continues to cast its shadow over communities worldwide. It affects individuals of all backgrounds, races, genders, ages, and socioeconomic conditions. Human trafficking’s reach is widespread; the State Department estimates that [27.6 million people are trafficked](#). Campaigns and anti-trafficking initiatives continue to spread awareness about this topic. However, more work is needed to equip the public with adequate resources and language to combat this societal ill.

While any demographic of person can become a victim of trafficking, most victims are vulnerable in some aspect of their lives. One particularly vulnerable demographic includes our college and university students. Naming this vulnerability is a crucial step toward continued efforts to empower students and communities to prevent human trafficking in higher education.

Vulnerability of College Students

According to the [Department of Homeland Security](#), college students may be particularly vulnerable to this crime for a variety of reasons:

- **Living away from home, often for the first time.** Students may have to build new social and community connections. The lack of which could make them vulnerable to traffickers who may offer emotional support to gain trust.
- **Economic instability and dependence.** Students may experience financial difficulties that traffickers can exploit by offering monetary support or false promises of jobs.
- **Common use of alcohol or substances on college campuses.** Taking advantage of students’ potentially newfound independence, traffickers may use drugs and alcohol to lure potential victims.
- **Immigration status.** International students may be at even greater risk because they are in a new country, further away from home. They also may not know their rights. Traffickers could also potentially use their temporary residency to manipulate them and build fear if they try to seek help. Human trafficking may also look very different in their home countries, so they may know even less about the signs to look for and how to protect themselves.

Deceptive Tactics of Traffickers

Contrary to popular belief, human trafficking in higher education does not always manifest in overt forms. While some students may fall victim to forced labor or sexual exploitation, others may become unwitting participants in illicit activities, such as drug trafficking or fraud, coerced by threats or manipulation. Victims may not recognize their exploitation or fear reprisal from their traffickers if they attempt to seek help.

Georgia’s strategic location, bustling cities, and diverse population make it an attractive target for traffickers. College campuses, with their dynamic environments and transient populations, provide fertile ground for exploitation and can complicate efforts to identify and support victims effectively. Students, often navigating newfound independence and financial challenges, can be particularly vulnerable to traffickers’ deceptive tactics, including the [false promises of lucrative opportunities or assistance in exchange for compliance](#).

Let’s name the reality of human trafficking, [educate ourselves](#) and our public about this topic, and dispel the myths

and misconceptions that obscure our ability to identify its victims correctly. By seeing it, we can identify it and maybe help save a life.

For the National Human Trafficking Hotline, call call 888.373.7888 or visit humantraffickinghotline.org.



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