



# Sex Trafficking: **Root Causes**

## Ending sex trafficking requires understanding its root causes. The more insight we have there, the more we can understand why sexual exploitation is able to thrive—and ultimately, how we can stop it.

Human trafficking is a complex problem, but is simple at its core: **humans are sold by other humans. Sex trafficking and exploitation exists because people are willing to exploit other people.** Traffickers are people who choose to buy and sell other individuals for personal gain. It comes down to a trafficker's choice to sell vulnerable people. Without traffickers and people purchasing sex, there would be no sex trafficking.

### Why do traffickers exploit others?

Millions of people are bought and sold every year, which makes human trafficking a highly lucrative business. Traffickers are driven by profit, and the exploitation of vulnerable women and children is a low-risk, high-reward industry. In most places in the world, prostitution is normalized, and there is ample opportunity to take advantage of women and children for personal gain. Unfortunately, there is also significant demand to purchase sex in most places of the world, making human trafficking a booming industry. You can purchase a drug only once, but you can buy and sell a human being repeatedly, which produces a high-profit margin.

### Who do traffickers prey on?

Vulnerable people. Traffickers are opportunistic, taking advantage of people susceptible to making desperate life choices.

These vulnerabilities look like:

- 🌊 **Educational disadvantages, poverty, and economic instability:** Those lacking job opportunities find themselves desperate to survive and care for their families, and are more susceptible to false job offers and work at any cost.
- 🌊 **War, natural disasters, political conflict, civil unrest, and immigration challenges:** Already vulnerable people become more vulnerable in situations of conflict and crisis.
- 🌊 **Lack of human rights and lawlessness:** Without laws in place and being enforced to protect vulnerable people from trafficking, the reward far outweighs the risk for traffickers looking to exploit others for their own gain.
- 🌊 **People group disadvantages:** People valued less because of their nationality are more susceptible to traffickers. This most often includes vulnerable women and children being taken advantage of.
- 🌊 **Lack of human rights:** People forced to move against their will and victims used, exploited, and denied free movement.



**In its simplest form, the end of sex trafficking looks like decreasing vulnerability while stopping traffickers from taking advantage of vulnerable people. So what exactly does that look like?**

- 🌊 Enforcing basic human rights
- 🌊 Providing women and children access to education
- 🌊 Increasing gainful employment for economically vulnerable people
- 🌊 Implementing and enforcing policy and legislation against trafficking
- 🌊 Opposing gender inequality and gender-based violence
- 🌊 Decreasing demand, spreading awareness, and combatting pornography.

***“Each trafficker stopped, sends a message to other traffickers that their crime is not worth the risk, initiating a ripple effect of deterrence.”***

-John Cotton Richmond, Former US Ambassador

**At Atlas Free, we believe that every human being was made for freedom.**

That is why our work includes prosecuting and stopping traffickers. In recent years, we’ve expanded our work to include policy efforts which help to change laws that empower survivors, prosecute traffickers, and criminalize sex trafficking.

Learn more about our work at [atlasfree.org/our-work](https://atlasfree.org/our-work)



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